

Chapter Four

SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE IN ISLAM

There are two main sources of knowledge in Islam:

- 1- The Qur'an
- 2- The Sunnah of prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Both sources of knowledge are divinely inspired. The Qur'an is the literal word of God, inspired to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through the Angel Jibreel (Gabriel) the angel of revelation. The Sunnah is the tradition of prophet Muhammad (PBUH) or what God told him to say or relate to us.

Other sources of knowledge include :

- Ijma'a or what the scholars have agreed upon collectively. The collective opinion of earlier scholars like the companions of prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is considered very valuable because they witnessed Qur'anic revelation, were close to the prophet and asked him if they had any doubt about the meaning of a Qur'anic verse or saying of the prophet, and knew the Arabic language. Also the agreed upon opinion of the scholars in a basic concept is relied upon. If there is a valid difference of opinion, then there is room for interpretation.

- Ijtihad or conclusions reached by religious scholars through research, study and reflection. This is based on proper interpretation of the two main sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah. There are criteria for a scholar to be qualified and able to do Ijtihad, namely proper knowledge and understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah and the sciences thereof; and command of the Arabic language, and a good mind and experience and the ability to reflect, deduce and reach conclusions.
- Qias : Is arriving at new ruling using comparison and deduction based on guidelines in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Therefore, we can see that the Jurists arrived at their opinions and conclusions based on study of and interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah. They differed with one another in peripheral issues because they understood the Qur'an and Haddeth in a different way. However, they respected each other's opinion and each scholar stated that my opinion could be wrong, and I am basing it on what I know.

The Qur'an

We will discuss the following concepts:

- The gradual revelation of the Qur'an
- The Qur'an is the words of God and not the writings of Muhammad
- The Qur'an gives guidelines but does not restrict us with too many details, because the needs of each society is different
- How did the Qur'an describe itself
- The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic because Muhammad was an Arab
- The Qur'an was preserved and safeguarded in contrast to previous Divine revelation
- Our obligations towards the Qur'an
- The reward for reading the Qur'an
- Qur'anic stories

Gradual revelation of the Qur'an

The Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) gradually over 23 years. The Qur'an came down to guide, answer questions and solve problems, and to chart a course for the Muslims and to provide a vision and purpose for life.

Those who reject faith argue and say: why was not the Qur'an revealed all at once? The Qur'an answers:

- In order to strengthen the heart of the prophet and reassure him that God is supporting him at all times
- It would have been impossible for the prophet and his companions to memorize, understand or apply the Qur'an if it came down all at once
- The Muslims faced many problems, and the Qur'an came to give solutions to these problems, answer questions and give direction. These problems varied depending on where Muslims lived and the structure of their community. More legislation was needed and could have been applied only when Muslims were able to establish a Muslim state in Madina.

﴿ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا ﴾

Those who reject Faith say: "Why is not the Qur-an revealed to him all at once? Thus (is it revealed), that We may strengthen thy heart thereby, and We have rehearsed it to thee in slow, well-arranged stages, gradually.

Al-Furqan 25 : 32

﴿ وَلَا يَأْتُونَكَ بِمَثَلٍ إِلَّا جِئْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيرًا ﴾

And no question do they bring to thee but We reveal to thee the truth and the best explanation (thereof).

Al-Furqan 25 : 33

The Qur'an is the word of God and not the writings of Muhammad

Those who doubt the authenticity of the Qur'an as a divine revelation say it is the writings of Muhammad or he heard it from other sources. The Qur'an mentions their claim and accusation, then refutes it:

﴿ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا إِفْكُ افْتَرَاهُ وَأَعَانَهُ عَلَيْهِ قَوْمٌ آخَرُونَ فَقَدْ جَاءُوا ظُلْمًا وَزُورًا ﴾ ﴿٤﴾

But the Misbelievers say: "Naught is this but a lie which he has forged, and others have helped him at it. "In truth it is they who have put forward an iniquity and a falsehood.

Al-Furqan 25 : 4

﴿ وَقَالُوا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ۚ آكْتَتَبَهَا فَهِيَ تُمْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا ﴾ ﴿٥﴾

And they say: "Tales of the ancients, which he has caused to be written: And they are dictated before him morning and evening."

Al-Furqan 25 : 5

﴿ قُلْ أَنْزَلَهُ الَّذِي يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴾ ﴿٦﴾

Say: "The (Qur-an) was sent down by Him Who knows the Mystery (that is) in the heavens and the earth: verily He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

Al-Furqan 25 : 6

And :

﴿ وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّمَا يُعَلِّمُهُ بَشَرٌ ۚ لِّسَانُ الَّذِي يُلْحِدُونَ إِلَيْهِ أَعْجَمِيٌّ ۖ وَهَذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴾ ﴿١٠٣﴾

We know indeed that they say, "It is a man that teaches him." The tongue of him they wickedly point to is notably foreign, while this is Arabic, pure and clear.

An-Nahl 16 : 103

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was illiterate: he could not read or write:

﴿ وَمَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُوا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكَ إِذًا لِآرْتَابِ الْمُبِطُلِينَ ﴾

And thou were not (able) to recite a Book before this (Book came), nor art thou (able) to transcribe it with thy right hands: in that case, indeed, would the talkers of vanities have doubted.

Al-Ankabut 29 : 48

﴿ بَلْ هُوَ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ فِي صُدُورِ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا

الظَّالِمُونَ ﴾

Nay, here are Signs self-evident in the hearts of those endowed with knowledge: and none but the unjust reject Our Signs.

Al-Ankabut 29 : 49

The Qur'an asks those who doubt to read the Qur'an to find out if it could have been produced by a human being or is it indeed a miracle that only God could have done? In other words, the Qur'an itself has the proof of its authenticity, since it has no contradiction and its verses complete and complement each other:

﴿ أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا ﴾

Do they not consider the Qur-an (with care)? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy.

An-Nesa'a 4 : 82

The Qur'an also defies anyone to bring a Book like the Qur'an. The Arabs at the time of Qur'anic revelation were masters of poetry, yet despite their eloquence were unable to compose a book or a chapter like the Qur'an:

﴿ وَمَا كَانَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ أَنْ يُفْتَرَى مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ

وَتَفْصِيلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

This Qur-an is not such as can be produced by other than Allah; on the contrary it is a confirmation of (revelations) that went before it, and a fuller explanation of the Book - wherein there is no doubt - from the Lord of the Worlds.

Yunus 10 : 37

﴿ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ^ط قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَضَعْتُمْ مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

Or do they say, "He forged it?" Say: "Bring then a Sura like unto it, and call (to your aid) anyone you can besides Allah, if it be ye speak the truth!"

Yunus 10 : 38

﴿ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Sura like thereunto; and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides Allah, if your (doubts) are true.

Al-Baqara 2 : 23

﴿ فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

But if ye cannot - and of a surety ye cannot - then fear the Fire whose fuel is men and stones which is prepared for those who reject Faith.

Al-Baqara 2 : 24

﴿ قُلْ لِّئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا ﴿٨٨﴾

Say: "If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur-an they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support.

Al-Isra'a 17 : 88

This challenge exists today, but no one at any time has been able to produce a book like the Qur'an or one of its chapters, because it is Divine in origin and no human being has the ability to create such a book

To summarize the evidence that the Qur'an is the word of God and not the sayings or writings of Muhammad:

- The evidence for the authenticity of the Qur'an is in the Qur'an itself, since it addresses our hearts and minds in a logical way and has a commanding effect
- There is no contradiction in the Qur'an: its verses complete and complement one another
- Muhammad was illiterate: he could not read or write: how can he produce such a magnificent work?
- No human being can produce the like of this Qur'an

Composition of the Qur'an

The Qur'an is made up of 114 Suras (chapters). Some are quite short, consisting of only few verses, while others are quite long, more than 200 verses. Each Sura is a separate entity. A topic may be discussed in many Suras from different aspects.

The Qur'an revealed in Macca deals with principles of faith and urges patience. The Qur'an revealed in Madina discusses, in addition, laws that govern the Muslim community and its relationship with others.

The Qur'an has parables and stories. The goal is to learn morals and lessons, not the details of the story or its historical context.

The Qur'an gives guidelines and principles but does not restrict us with details because the needs of each society is different

If the Qur'an came down with specific and exhaustive details about every matter it would have restricted our ability as human beings to apply its orders under different situations. Each society has different needs and unique circumstances. The Qur'an can be applied in the Middle East as it can be applied in America or Europe because its principles are valid for all times. For example the Qur'an

stresses the concept of Justice, equality and righteousness but does not specify any certain form of government because each society is different and one form of government may not apply to all locale.

Similarly, the Qur'an gives the guidelines of honesty and not cheating others in financial transactions, and emphasizes our obligation in helping the poor and needy and not using our power to enslave or oppress others. It does not tell us how to conduct business or interfere in financial transactions. These Qur'anic guidelines can be applied in any society, though the form of financial transaction will vary from one society to another

How did the Qur'an describe itself ?

The Qur'an mentions various functions :

- It is sent down by the Lord of the worlds
- It is a book to study and reflect upon its verses
- It is a guidance
- It is a mercy
- It is a cure for the ills of the heart

The Qur'an came from God

﴿ تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿١﴾ ﴾

The revelation of this Book is from Allah, the Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom.

Az-Zumar 39 : 1

﴿ تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾ ﴾

(This is) the revelation of the Book in which there is no doubt, from the Lord of the Worlds.

As-Sajda 32 : 2

﴿ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۗ بَلْ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَتْهُمْ مِنْ نَذِيرٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٣﴾ ﴾

﴿ قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٣﴾ ﴾

Or do they say, "He has forged it?" Nay, it is the Truth from thy Lord, that thou mayest admonish a people to whom no Warner has come before thee: in order that they may receive guidance.

As-Sajda 32 : 3

Consider, reflect and study the Qur'an

﴿ كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبْرَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴾

(Here is) a Book which We have sent down unto thee, full of blessings, that they may meditate on its Signs, and that men of understanding may receive admonition.

SA'D 38 : 29

The Qur'an is full of guidance

﴿ وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَقَالُوا لَوْلَا فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ ؕ أَعْجَمِيٌّ وَعَرَبِيٌّ ؕ قُلْ هُوَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هُدًى وَشِفَاءٌ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ فِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرٌ وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَمًى ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ يُنَادَوْنَ مِن مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ ﴾

Had We sent this as a Qur-an (in a language) other than Arabic, they would have said: "Why are not its verses explained in detail? What! (a Book) not in Arabic? And (a Messenger) an Arab?" Say: "It is a guide and a healing to those who believe; and for those who believe not, there is a deafness in their ears, and it is blindness in their (eyes): they are (as it were) being called from a place far distant!"

Fusselat 41 : 44

The Qur'an is mercy from God

﴿ يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾

O mankind! there hath come to you a direction from your Lord and a healing for the (diseases) in your hearts, and for those who believe, a Guidance and a Mercy.

Yunus 10 : 57

The Qur'an is a cure for the ills of the heart

﴿ وَنُنزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا ﴿٥٧﴾ ﴾

We send down (stage by stage) in the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe: to the unjust it causes nothing but loss after loss.

Al-Isra'a 17 : 82

The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic because prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was an Arab

﴿ وَإِنَّهُ لَتَنْزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ ﴾

Verily this is a Revelation from the Lord of the worlds:

Ash-Shura'a 26 : 192

﴿ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ ﴿١٧﴾ ﴾

With it came down the Spirit of Faith and Truth,

Ash-Shura'a 26 : 193

﴿ عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ ﴾

To thy heart and mind, that thou mayest admonish

Ash-Shura'a 26 : 194

﴿ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُّبِينٍ ﴿١٩٥﴾ ﴾

In the perspicuous Arabic tongue.

Ash-Shura'a 26 : 195

﴿ تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٤١﴾ ﴾

A revelation from (Allah), Most Gracious, Most Merciful;

Fusselat 41 : 2

﴿ كِتَابٌ فَصَّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ ﴾

A Book, whereof the verses are explained in detail; a Qur-an in Arabic, for people who understand;

Fusselat 41 : 3

﴿ إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴾

We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur-an, in order that ye may learn wisdom.

Yusuf 12 : 2

Since Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was an Arab, the Qur'an came in Arabic so his people would understand it. Each messenger was sent in the tongue of his own people:

﴿ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانِ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ فَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ

وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴾

We sent not a Messenger except (to teach) in the language of his (own) people, in order to make (things) clear to them. Now Allah leaves straying those whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases: and He is Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom.

Ibrahim 14 : 4

The Qur'an was safeguarded from alteration, and corrects mistakes humans introduced into divine revelation

God promised to safeguard the Qur'an. The Qur'an that we read today in its Arabic form is the same original Qur'an revealed to prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It has not changed despite 1430 years since it was inspired.

﴿ إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ﴾

We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption).

Al-Hijr 15 : 9

Previous divine revelation was entrusted to the scholars and religious authorities but they did not safeguard God's revelation. With time the Torah changed :

﴿ إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرَةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ تَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّونَ الَّذِينَ أَسْلَمُوا لِلَّذِينَ هَادُوا
وَالرَّبَّانِيُّونَ وَالْأَحْبَارُ بِمَا اسْتُحْفِظُوا مِنْ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَكَانُوا عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَاءَ ۚ فَلَا
تَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَآخِشُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِعَاقِبَتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۚ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ
فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

It was We who revealed the Law (to Moses): therein was guidance and light. By its standard have been judged the Jews, by the Prophets who bowed (as in Islam) to Allah's Will, by the Rabbis and the Doctors of Law: for to them was entrusted the protection of Allah's Book, and they were witnesses thereto: therefore fear not men, but fear Me, and sell not My Signs for a miserable price. If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) Unbelievers.

Al-Maeda 5 : 44

﴿ قَوْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ
ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۚ قَوْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَقَوْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: "This is from Allah," to traffic with it for a miserable price! Woe to them for what their hands do write, and for the gain they make thereby.

Al-Baqara 2 : 79

Since the Qur'an remained pure and unaltered in contrast to previous divine revelation, and because the Qur'an is God's words, in contrast to other books which were written by human beings like the Bible, Muslims are instructed to let the Qur'an judge the authenticity of other books. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(Do not believe the people of the Book, nor disbelieve them)

This means we cannot confirm the truth of what they say, nor can we deny it, because there is certainly an element of truth in the writings of the Rabbis and scholars. What agrees with the Qur'an we as

Muslims accept, and what runs contrary to the Qur'an we reject, and what the Qur'an is silent in, we stop, neither denying it nor confirming it. The Qur'an states :

﴿ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيِّمًا عَلَيْهِ ۗ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ ۗ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَٰكِن لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ ۗ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ ۚ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَبِئْسَ لَكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ ﴾

To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the Scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety: so judge between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that hath come to thee. To each among you have We prescribed a Law and an Open Way. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single People, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you; so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute;

Al-Maeda 5 : 48

Our obligations towards the Qur'an

- To read it properly with concentration and devotion
- To understand its guidelines and principles
- To apply its orders and directives in our life and to establish in our character what the Qur'an espouses of noble character
- To teach the Qur'an and spread its useful message
- To defend the Qur'an against false accusations

The Qur'an warns us against neglecting the Qur'an and denying ourselves its benefit. Such neglect may involve not reading it or applying its guidelines in our life, or reading it with no concentration or in a hurry.

﴿ وَقَالَ الرَّسُولُ يَرَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا ﴿٢٥﴾ ﴾

Then the Messenger will say: "O my Lord! truly my people took this Qur-an for just foolish nonsense."

Al-Furqan 25 : 30

The rewards of reading the Qur'an

- When we read the Qur'an we are guided to the straight path that God has chosen for us. He created us and He knows what is good for us:

﴿ وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا ۗ مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِي مَا أَلَكْتُبُ وَلَا الْإِيمَنُ وَلَٰكِن جَعَلْنَاهُ نُورًا نَّهْدِي بِهِ مَن نَّشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا ۗ وَإِنَّكَ لَتَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ

مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٢٦﴾ ﴾

And thus have We, by Our command, sent inspiration to thee: thou knewest not (before) what was Revelation, and what was Faith: but We have made the (Qur-an) a Light, wherewith We guide such of Our servants as We will; and verily thou dost guide (men) to the Straight Way;

AshShura' 42 : 52

﴿ صِرَاطِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ أَلَا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَصِيرُ الْأُمُورُ ﴿٥٢﴾ ﴾

The Way of Allah, to Whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on earth. Behold (how) all affairs tend towards Allah!

Ash_shura' 42 : 53

The Qur'an stresses that it guides to what is good and it explains our role and mission in life:

﴿ إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّٰلِحٰتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٥٣﴾ ﴾

Verily this Qur'an doth guide to that which is most right (or stable), and gives the glad tidings to the Believers who work deeds of righteousness, that they shall have a magnificent reward;

Al-Isra a 17 : 9

- For every letter that we recite of the Qur'an we are rewarded one good deed. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: (I do not say ALM is one letter but A is a letter, L is a letter and M is a letter) Bokhari.

We obviously need all the good deeds that we can get. As human beings we make many mistakes, and these good deeds atone for our bad deeds.

- The Qur'an intercedes on our behalf on the Day of Judgment if we read it, applied its message in our life and taught it to others. In contrast, if we knew the Qur'an but behaved contrary to its teachings then the Qur'an will bear witness against us during our accountability
- Those who memorize the Qur'an are with the Angels. Our status in heaven depends on our knowledge of the Qur'an. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told us that the person will be asked to recite what he knew of the Qur'an, and that he will ascend as he recites. His place in heaven will be the last part that he recites of the Qur'an.
- The Qur'an fills our heart with peace and contentment because we remember God and we understand that He is with us with His grace and mercy:

﴿ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ ﴾

"Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction.

Ar-Ra'd 13 : 28

Qur'anic stories

The Qur'an relates to us many stories like what happened to previous prophets and their struggle. It gives general outline but no

specific details like how many years they lived or the exact names of the people they encountered. The purpose of the story in the Qur'an is to learn lessons and morals, not just to be entertained. We identify with the characters in the story and they become alive and we learn from their example and their triumph as well as from their mistakes and setbacks. For example the Qur'an talks about Prophet Abraham and how he struggled with his people and his father and how he invited them to serve God and leave the idols that they worshipped. The lesson and the moral is how we invite others to God, and how we explain to them the fallacy of serving power, money and their vain desires and not serving God who gave us life and who provides for us. Therefore, it is not important to mention the details of the names of those whom Abraham came in contact with. Rather, it is more important to describe their way of thinking and why and how they resisted the call to change what they have accepted as tradition. The Qur'an asks us to reflect on these stories and learn from them:

﴿ لَقَدْ كَانَتْ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةً لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ۗ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ وَلَٰكِن تَصَدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١١﴾ ﴾

There is, in their stories, instruction for men endowed with understanding. It is not a tale invented, but a confirmation of what went before it, a detailed exposition of all things, and a Guide and a Mercy to any such as believe.

Yusuf 12 : 111

Prophet Abraham (PBUH) asked God to show him how He gives life to the dead. God did not get angry and showed him His power and ability:

﴿ وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ ۗ قَالَ أُولَٰئِمُتَّؤْمِنُونَ ۗ قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَ لَٰكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي ۗ قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ أَجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا ۗ وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١١٢﴾ ﴾

Behold! Abraham said: "My Lord! Show me how Thou give life to the dead." He said: "Dost thou not then believe?" He said: "Yea! but to satisfy my own understanding." He said: "Take four birds; tame them to turn to thee; put a portion of them on every hill, and call to them; they will come to thee, (flying) with speed. Then know that Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise."

Al-Baqara 2 : 260

We learn from this Qur'anic story several lessons:

- There is nothing wrong in asking questions, even in matters of faith, if our goal is to learn and increase our understanding and faith
- We see God's powers and miracles, but we may not know the how of His power. God showed Abraham that indeed He is capable of giving life to the dead birds, but He did not show him how. We learn that our knowledge in some areas is indeed limited, and we learn to be humble

In the story of Joseph and Jacob (Israel), chapter 12 in the Qur'an, we learn several important morals:

- We should be just and not favor some of our children over others to avoid jealousy.
- When we are in a position of power or authority it is better to forgive than seek personal revenge
- We should be grateful To God for His blessings and we should turn to Him with humility and not become arrogant
- We learn organization and proper planning as Joseph devised a plan to save Egypt from famine

Surat Maruim (Chapter Mary or chapter 19) in the Qur'an relates to us the story of the virgin Mary and how she conceived Jesus (PBUH) through the command of God:

﴿ فَأَخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا ۗ ﴾

She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then We sent to her Our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects.

Marium 19 : 17

﴿ قَالَتْ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ مِنْكَ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَقِيًّا ۗ ﴾

She said: "I seek refuge from thee to (Allah) Most Gracious: (come not near) if thou dost fear Allah."

Marium 19 : 18

﴿ قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَامًا زَكِيًّا ﴿١٨﴾ ﴾

He said: "Nay, I am only a Messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a holy son."

Marium 19 : 19

﴿ قَالَتْ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ وَلَمْ أَكُ بَغِيًّا ﴿١٩﴾ ﴾

She said: "How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?"

Marium 19 : 20

﴿ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّنٌ وَلِنَجْعَلَهُ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَرَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَكَانَ أَمْرًا ﴿٢٠﴾ ﴾

﴿ مَقْضِيًّا ﴿٢١﴾ ﴾

He said: "So (it will be): thy Lord saith, 'That is easy for Me: and (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us': it is matter (so) decreed."

Marium 19 : 21

﴿ فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانْتَبَدَتْ بِهِ مَكَانًا قَصِيًّا ﴿٢١﴾ ﴾

So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place.

Marium 19 : 22

﴿ فَأَجَاءَهَا الْمَخَاضُ إِلَى جِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ قَالَتْ يَلَيْتَنِي مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا ﴿٢٢﴾ ﴾

And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree: she cried (in her anguish) "Ah! would that I had died before this! would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight!"

Marium 19 : 23

﴿ فَنَادَاهَا مِن تَحْتِهَا أَلَّا تَحْزَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحْتَكِ سَرِيًّا ﴿٢٣﴾ ﴾

But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm-tree): "Grieve not! for thy Lord hath provided a rivulet beneath thee;

Marium 19 : 24

﴿ وَهَزَىٰ إِلَيْكَ بِجِدْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسْقِطُ عَلَيْكَ رَطْبًا جَنِيًّا ۖ ﴾

"And shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm-tree; it will let fall fresh ripe dates upon thee.

Marium 19 : 25

We learn from this Qur'anic story several important lessons:

- Mary was a chaste woman. She was frightened and surprised to see the Lord's Angel and sought God's protection
- She wondered how she can conceive without interaction with a human.
- We see God's power and will in granting her a son in a very unusual way
- We see the humanity of Mary as she cried in anguish and pain during labor
- We witness God's mercy and how He provides for her, yet she is asked to shake the tree to get the dates: so we have to work to get results

Qur'anic parable

In chapter 13 we are told about the scum and froth that disappears, and the water that gives life to the dead earth and by comparison the falsehood that vanishes compared to the truth that is useful, which God allows to stay and benefit mankind:

﴿ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِيًا وَمِمَّا يُوقِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاءَ حَلِيَّةٍ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِثْلُهٗ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ ۚ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً ۖ وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ ۖ ﴾

He sends down water from the skies, and the channels flow, each according to its measure: but the torrent bears away the foam that mounts up to the surface. Even so, from that (ore) which they heat in the fire, to make ornaments or utensils therewith, there is a scum likewise. Thus doth Allah

(by parables) show forth Truth and Vanity. For the scum disappears like froth cast out; while that which is for the good of mankind remains on the earth. Thus doth Allah set forth parables.

Ar-Ra'd 13 : 17

How was the Qur'an preserved ?

The Qur'an was inspired to prophet Muhammad (PBUH) over a period of 23 years, and this divine revelation came interrupted and gradual. It was written on what was available at the time of bones, cloth or other material. Paper as we know it today was not available at that time. The Qur'an was also memorized by the prophet and by a select group of his companions. Every verse or verses revealed of the Qur'an was both memorized and written. There were a group of scribes that wrote these Qur'anic verses. Just before the prophet's death at age 63, all the Qur'an was memorized and written. The Angel Jibreel (Gabriel) used to teach the Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad , and the prophet would recite the Qur'an to him every Ramadan. In the last year of the prophet's life the Angel came twice to hear and make certain that the Qur'an was complete.

When the prophet (PBUH) died, the whole Qur'an was kept safe, written and memorized. During the reign of Abou Bakr 70 Muslims who memorized the Qur'an were killed in one battle, and Abou Bakr gave the order to collect and record the Qur'an from its sources and to compile it in one place. Many of the verses were written and kept by some of the prophet's companions. The task was taken seriously and every verse was verified and authenticated. Then this Qur'an was kept with Hasfa the prophet's wife.

During the reign of Othman, the third righteous Caliph many non-Muslims accepted Islam. Because their native language was not Arabic, the way they recited the Qur'an was somewhat different from others. It was feared that with time this difference in recitation may increase or become a problem. Therefore, Othman ordered that the Qur'an be compiled and collected and written in one version only and this is the Qur'an that we have today.

The people responsible for writing the Qur'an were extra careful not to accept any verse that was not thoroughly authenticated by being

present in writing in other manuscripts as well as being memorized in the hearts of those whose job was to memorize the Qur'an. Therefore, we can feel assured that the Qur'an that we have today is the exact Qur'an that was revealed to prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The original Qur'an that was written did not have vowels or markings because the Arabs at that time knew their grammar and did not make mistakes in recitation. Markings and vowels were introduced later to make sure that everyone can properly recite the Qur'an correctly and not make mistakes in grammar.

The Sunnah (Tradition of Prophet Muhammad PBUH)

The following concepts will be discussed:

- 1- What is meant by the Sunnah
- 2- How was the Sunnah preserved
- 3- Books of Hadeeth
- 4- The function or role of the Sunnah
- 5- Do we follow everything that prophet Muhammad says?
- 6- Do we follow the literal words or the meaning and spirit of the Hadeeth?

The meaning of the Sunnah

Scholars understand the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to mean the following:

- 1- The sayings of the Prophet (PBUH)
- 2- What he did of actions
- 3- What he approved and what he did not object to

The Hadeeth literally means what the prophet (PBUH) said. Therefore, the Sunnah is more wider in its meaning and implication than the Hadeeth because it also includes the Prophet's actions and what he approved of the sayings or actions of his companions and what he did not object to.

How was the Sunnah preserved?

The Sunnah was preserved in two ways:

- Orally by memorization
- And by writing the sayings of the prophet (PBUH)

Both of these two methods were used early on, though the memorization was the predominant method. What helped preserve the Sunnah was the following:

- 1- The Prophet (PBUH) was clear and used short sentences and did not talk fast. He also repeated his saying to make sure those listening to him would be able to memorize his words.
- 2- The Arabs at that time were gifted with a good memory. They could listen to a long poem and repeat it word for word
- 3- The prophet's companions understood the vital role the prophet's words implied and its significance. They were honest and sincere and delivered his words as they heard them from him. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

(May Allah make the face of a person beam with delight, the person who hears what I say, memorize it and delivers it accurately as I said, for sometimes a person carrying knowledge may not be a scholar himself, and he may relate my sayings to someone else who has more knowledge)

Termedhi & Ahmad.

- 4- Some of the Prophet's companions used to study the Hadeeth. For example Abou Horaira said: (I divided the night into three parts: one part to sleep; a second part to pray; and the third part to study the Hadeeth of the Prophet)
- 5- Allah willed that the sayings of His prophet (PBUH) be preserved, and allowed the efforts of the Muslims to succeed. For example the prophet (PBUH) prayed to Allah to help Abou Horaira remember the Hadeeth and God responded to the prayer of His messenger. After this Du'a (prayer to God) Abou Horaira never forgot a word.
- 6- Muslim scholars were very careful in not accepting except what was thoroughly authenticated by scientific method to be a true and accurate saying of the prophet. We will discuss this point when we discuss Books of Hadeeth.

Books of Hadeeth

There are several books written about the sayings of prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Some books enumerate what the prophet said, while others comment on his words and authenticate its sources.

Among the most important books of Hadeeth are the following:

- 1- Bokhari
- 2- Muslim
- 3- Malik
- 4- Termedhi
- 5- Abou Dawood
- 6- Ahmad
- 7- Nesa'ee
- 8- Ibn Majja
- 9- Hakim
- 10-Ibn Hibban
- 11-Tabarani
- 12-Baihaqi
- 13-Daremi

Books of Hadeeth are also divided into:

- 1- Saheeh : highly reliable and authenticated
- 2- Hasan : good and reasonably well-authenticated
- 3- Others which may contain sayings that have some weakness

Criteria to judge the authenticity of a Hadeeth

- 1- The person narrating the Hadeeth
- 2- The series of men relating the Hadeeth
- 3- The words of the Hadeeth
- 4- Is there any possible weakness or doubt because it has something wrong

The narrator of the Hadeeth

- 1-The character of the person was investigated: was he honest and righteous. Could he have lied? In other words both the character and integrity were scrutinized.
- 2- His ability to memorize, and did his memory fail him later on?

- 3- Where did he live? Who were his teachers? Did he actually hear the Hadeeth from the person he claimed to have heard the hadeeth from?
- 4- Is there any doubt about his narration? Either because his narration contradicts another Hadeeth, or contradicts a basic principle of Islam, or there is something hidden that casts doubt on the Hadeeth, though we cannot put our finger on it?

So we can see that each narrator was subjected to scientific scrutiny and only those who passed this strict test were accepted in authentic books of Hadeeth.

The series of men relating the Hadeeth

This indicates who said the Hadeeth and whom he heard it from. This goes on till it reaches the companion who heard the Hadeeth from prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Each person in this series of men was subjected to the same scrutiny as his predecessor. If all the men relating the Hadeeth were exemplary in their honesty and memorization, then this series was called "Golden" and deemed reliable. In Bokhari and Muslim only highly reliable and authentic narrators of Hadeeth were accepted and included in these two books.

People used to travel weeks and months to hear one Hadeeth from a reliable source. Schools of Hadeeth emerged as each master of Hadeeth had his students as he related to them his knowledge of the Hadeeth. These scholars spent their lifetime searching for and authenticating the sayings of the Prophet (PBUH).

Therefore the criteria for judging the Hadeeth to be Saheeh (reliable and authentic) are:

- 1- The narrators of the Hadeeth are righteous persons of high integrity
- 2- Their memorization is excellent
- 3- Both tests of memorization and character are present in all levels of the Hadeeth: all the series of men relating the Hadeeth
- 4- There is no doubt about the contents of the Hadeeth
- 5- There is nothing that casts doubt about the Hadeeth

- 6- The Hadeeth was cross referenced to other Hadeeth to make sure there is no discrepancy

The Role or Function of the Sunnah

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) came to deliver God's message, and to explain it and to apply its principles in his character and behavior. Therefore the Sunnah is meant to:

- 1- Explain the Qur'an and give details of how we as Muslims can apply Qur'anic principles in our life.
- 2- The Sunnah also explains what we may have not been able to understand of the Qur'an or gives new meaning
- 3- The Sunnah can legislate new areas that the Qur'an was silent about
- 4- The Sunnah complements the Qur'an and does not contradict its basic principles or teachings

Explaining Qur'anic guidelines

The Qur'an orders Muslims to pray and gives outline of when to pray, like morning and evening. But it is the Sunnah that explains the exact times of prayer and shows how we should pray. If we follow the Qur'anic guidelines alone we would not be able to pray. It is prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who showed us the method of prayer and said: (Pray as you see me pray). He also taught us what to say in the various phases of prayer. He explained what Du'a (prayer to Allah) to say starting our prayer, what to say during the phase of bowing down, and during the phase of prostration, and when we say "Tashahhud" and what to say after we complete our prayers.

During Hajj, prophet Muhammad (PBUH) showed the Muslims how to perform the various activities during Hajj and said: (Take your rites after me).

During the month of Ramadan, it is prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who explained the proper manners and attitude of a fasting person and gave clear meaning for the rationale and wisdom of fasting and its great reward.

In his sayings and in the way he behaved as a human being, he exemplified how a Muslim and believer should behave and what noble character he should exhibit.

In interaction with others, and in buying and selling the Prophet (PBUH) gave clear guidelines for how a Muslim should behave.

We cannot understand the Qur'an and we cannot live as Muslims without the Sunnah of prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

He also served as an example and a role model to follow. He inspired and still inspires generations of Muslims with his sayings and with his character, behavior and example. As Human beings we need not only a Divine Book, but also a human being to explain it and to apply it and to serve as an example to follow. That is why God in the Qur'an states:

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

اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا ﴾

Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the praise of Allah.

Al-Ahzab 33 : 21

And :

﴿ وَكَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ وَأَنْتُمْ تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ وَفِيكُمْ رَسُولُهُ ۗ وَمَنْ يَعْتَصِم بِاللَّهِ

فَقَدْ هَدَىٰ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴾

And how would ye deny Faith while unto you are rehearsed the Signs of Allah, and among you live the Messenger? Whoever holds firmly to Allah will be shown a Way that is straight.

Al-Imran 3 : 101

The Sunnah explains what may be difficult to understand

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained “Zulm“ or wronging one’s soul as worshipping others besides God. His companions were very distressed

because they knew that as human beings they had shortcomings and wronged their own souls.

﴿ وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴾

Behold, Luqman said to his son by way of instruction: "O my son! Join not in worship (others) with Allah: for false worship is indeed the highest wrong-doing."

Luqman 31 : 13

The Prophet (PBUH) explained how to understand some verses of the Qur'an by referring to other verses in the same subject.

In his capacity as a teacher and a messenger from God, the Prophet was informing us how to live our lives as God willed and commanded:

﴿ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴾

(We sent them) with Clear Signs and Scriptures and We have sent down unto thee (also) the Message; that thou mayest explain clearly to men what is sent for them, and that they may give thought.

An-Nahl 16 : 44

The Sunnah has a legislative function

As God's messenger and prophet, Muhammad (PBUH) was able to set new legislation. Among these we mention the following:

- The charity given at the end of the month of Ramadan
- Allowing a share of the inheritance for the uncle and aunt and giving the grandparent a share.
- Explaining the punishment for adultery as stoning, but requiring four witnesses

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained his role as a legislator:

(It is possible that a man listening to one of my sayings, may say: "Between us and you is the Book of Allah, whatever we find lawful in it we accept, and whatever unlawful we find in it we avoid and make it unlawful". Indeed whatever Allah's messenger makes unlawful is similar to what Allah has made unlawful") Ahmad & Abou Dawood.

In another version of this Hadeeth, the prophet (PBUH) continues:
(Indeed I was given the Qur'an and another Divine revelation similar to it. Indeed it is not lawful for you to eat donkeys, nor any vulture, nor is it lawful to take the possessions of an ally; and if a person comes as a guest it is the duty of others to take care of him and give him shelter and food)
Ahmad & Abou Dawood

In other words, this Hadeeth tells us that as a prophet from God, Muhammad (PBUH) can make laws that are not in the Qur'an, because God inspires to him, not just the Qur'an but other revelation. This concept that as a prophet he does not speak of his own accord but is divinely inspired and relates to us God's commands is mentioned in the Qur'an:

﴿ وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ﴾

Nor does he say (aught) of (his own) Desire.
An-Najm 53 : 3

﴿ إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ ﴾

It is no less than inspiration sent down to him:
An-Najm 53 : 4

The Sunnah does not contradict the Qur'an

One of the criteria to judge whether the Hadeeth is authentic or not is the issue whether it confirms the guidelines and principles in the Qur'an or does it run contrary to Qur'anic teachings. No Hadeeth can be accepted if it contradicts the Qur'an. If there is an apparent contradiction and the Hadeeth is authentic, then there has to be a proper explanation: either we did not understand the meaning of the Qur'anic verse, or we misunderstood the meaning and spirit of the Hadeeth. Otherwise, this Hadeeth contradictory to the Qur'an is rejected as false.

False Hadeeth

The scholars of Hadeeth pointed out in many books examples of Hadeeth wrongly attributed to prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and explained why these sayings were a fabrication and must be rejected. The reasons for such false Hadeeth are several and include:

- The desire to dignify or pay homage to certain rulers by attributing to them qualities and stating that the prophet (PBUH) praised them. This occurred at the time of the rulers of Bani Umayya and also Bani Al-Abbas
- Someone wanting to gain fame would fabricate a Hadeeth and name the series of men relating the Hadeeth, especially in areas of noble character
- Some of the enemies of Islam had the goal and desire to cause confusion among Muslims and distort the Sunnah by attributing false Hadeeth to the prophet.
- Some of the tales about creation and stories of the prophets found its way in the Sunnah coming from Jews or Christians who turned to Islam, but held to their heritage and traditions

Therefore, it is our duty before we attribute any saying to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to know whether this Hadeeth is authentic or not. Clarifying the Sunnah and defending it is an important task and a responsibility. If this duty is not honored, many Muslims can become misguided.

Do we follow everything that the prophet said?

We must distinguish between Muhammad as a man living in a certain environment and Muhammad as a prophet and messenger of God. This distinction is easy at times, much more difficult at other times. Muhammad (PBUH) served both functions: a human being who had a noble character and righteous behavior, as well as a messenger and prophet from God.

As God's messenger, delivering God's orders, Muslims have no option but to obey:

﴿ إِنَّمَا كَانَ قَوْلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ يَقُولُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴾

The answer of the Believers, when summoned to Allah and His Messenger, in order that he may judge between them, is no other than this: they say, "We hear and we obey": it is such as these that will attain felicity.

An-Nur 24 : 51

To obey the prophet is a criterion of belief:

﴿ فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ

حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَدُسَلِمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٦٥﴾

But no, by thy Lord, they can have no (real) Faith, until they make thee judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against thy decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction.

An-Nesa'a 4 : 65

But it is not crucial or necessary to obey Muhammad (PBUH) as a man, or to like the food that he likes, or to dress in the way that he dressed. The companions of the prophet (PBUH) did not follow him blindly at all times. They questioned his decision when they felt it was not appropriate. For example in the battle of Badr, when the prophet gave the order to encamp away from the water, one of his companions: Al-Hubab Bin Al-Mundhir asked: Is this an order from God, or is it your opinion ? When he was told it was not a Divine order, he suggested encamping close to the water to have the advantage of drinking and denying their enemy this advantage. The Prophet (PBUH) accepted his counsel.

This shows the human nature of Muhammad and that his judgment as a man may not be always correct. As a prophet God always corrected any misjudgment, and the Qur'an has examples of this. When the prophet (PBUH) frowned on the blind man who came seeking guidance, while the prophet was talking to the leaders of Qoraish, the Qur'an came down:

﴿ عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ﴿٦٦﴾

(The Prophet) frowned and turned away,

Abasa 80 : 1

﴿ أَنْ جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَىٰ ﴿٦٧﴾

Because there came to him the blind man (interrupting).

Abasa 80 : 2

﴿ وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّهُ يَزَكِي ﴿٦٨﴾

But what could tell thee but that perchance he might grow (in spiritual understanding)?

Abasa 80 : 3

﴿ أَوْ يَذَّكَّرُ فَتَنْفَعَهُ الذِّكْرَى ﴾

Or that he might receive admonition, and the teaching might profit him?

Abasa 80 : 4

Do we follow the literal words or the spirit of the Hadeeth?

The prophet (PBUH) gave examples to clarify his point. He addressed the needs of the person asking the question and provided answers to suit the situation. We should not take the prophet's words out of context and make them applicable at all times if the situation is different and the needs are different. For example once the prophet (PBUH) saw a man walking arrogantly and his robe was washing the floor behind him. He commented that: (What is below the ankles is in Hell Fire). If we follow the literal words then all our clothes must be above the ankle. This meaning is obviously not what the prophet (PBUH) intended. He was cautioning against arrogance and feeling superior to others.

In another Hadeeth, prophet Muhammad said:

(O God makes me a Miskeen (needy person) and resurrects me in the company of Masakeen (needy persons). Does this mean that God's prophet is inviting us to be poor and dependant on others? Of course not. He was showing humility, compassion and solidarity with those who are poor and needy. This understanding is strengthened by other Hadeeth in which the Prophet (PBUH) is seeking God's protection from poverty and being dependant on the charity of others and in which he is stressing that the upper hand that gives is better than the lower hand that receives. He stressed the importance of working and being self-sufficient and not begging or asking others for help.

Many Muslims are afraid of thinking critically about the prophet's sayings that makes one uneasy. They find comfort in relying on others and in not

questioning the validity or applicability of these sayings. Some may be scientists and have a brilliant mind, but once it comes to matters of religion they withdraw and become passive and accept traditional points of view even if it does not make sense. Their argument that they do not have the necessary qualification or proper knowledge to analyze and judge this subject. God gave us our mind to think and reflect and reach conclusions. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: (a person who reaches a conclusion after adequate study will have one reward if he is wrong, and two rewards if he is right).

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