

# The Messenger, *Our* Teacher

Being a translation of al-Rasūl al-Mu‘allim

AUTHORED BY SHAYKH

‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah

## THE MESSENGER, OUR TEACHER ﷺ

© 2023 Imam Ghazali Publishing  
First Print Edition, 2023

### ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Aside from fair use, meaning a few pages or less for non-profit educational purposes, review, or scholarly citation, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

*Published by:*

**IMAM GHAZALI PUBLISHING**

WWW.IMAMGHAZALI.CO  
info@IMAMGHAZALI.CO

### *Production Team*

**HILMY MUHAMMAD | MP**  
**MUHAMMAD SATTAUR | IGP**  
**DR. SALAH SHARIEF | WORDSMITHS**

### *Acknowledgements*

We publicly thank and ask Allah ﷻ to bless and reward our brother Bilal Sheikh. The Production Team's gratitude is also due to a large group of beautiful souls who have helped in various capacities. Allah ﷻ reward them, as it befits Him, for as long as this work is in circulation and put in practice by the beloved loving seekers of the Divine Countenance.

# The Messenger, *Our* Teacher

Being a translation of al-Rasūl al-Mu‘allim 

AUTHORED BY SHAYKH

**‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ إِنَّا نَعْبُدُكَ وَإِلَيْكَ


نَسْتَعِينُ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ

الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

سُورَةُ الْفَاتِحَةِ





This book was commissioned by Bilal Sheikh in honour of his beloved parents, Sheikh Muhammad Munir and Shameem Ara Bhatti, his grandparents, siblings, spouse, and children.

Readers and beneficiaries of this book are requested to make *du‘ā* for them all; that they are granted intercession by The Messenger, Our Teacher ﷺ, on the Day of Judgment and that they are all with him in Jannah al-Firdaws.

We ask Allah to accept this deed from them and to make it a deed that is done solely and purely for His sake. We ask Allah to make it a continuous act of charity and that everyone who reads it will benefit from it.

“My Lord! Inspire me to ever be thankful for Your favours which You blessed me and my parents with and to do good deeds that please You. And instil righteousness in my offspring. I truly repent to You, and I truly submit to Your Will.” (al-Aḥqāf, 15)



# CONTENTS

Author's Introduction .....	7
-----------------------------	---

## AL-RASŪL AL-MU‘ ALLIM

• Descriptions in the Noble Qur‘an of the Messenger ﷺ as a teacher .....	10
• Confirmation in the Sunnah of the Messenger ﷺ as a teacher of guidance and insight .....	10
• Historical evidence of the perfect educational character of the Messenger ﷺ .....	14
• His urging [to his followers] to expunge ignorance and his warning against complacency and lassitude in teaching and study .....	15
• A brief acquainting with the perfection of the Prophet ﷺ in his teaching and his outstanding character .....	21
• His warning against unbeneficial knowledge .....	22
• The educational character of the Prophet ﷺ .....	23
• Some concise, comprehensive words elucidating the special qualities and virtues and honourable manners and traits of the Messenger-Teacher ﷺ which illuminate aspects of his overall character .....	37

## HIS TEACHING METHODS

• The Prophet ﷺ teaching with excellence and outstanding manners .....	62
• His teaching of Divine Law in stages .....	72
• Observance of moderation and avoidance of long-windedness in his teaching .....	76
• His observance of individual differences between his students .....	78

• Teaching through conversation and questioning .....	88
• Teaching through intellectual discussion and negotiation.....	96
• Asking his Companions questions as a means of unveiling their intelligence and knowledge .....	98
• Teaching through analogies and examples.....	100
• Teaching through similes and metaphors.....	102
• Teaching by drawing on the ground or in the sand .....	105
• Teaching by a combination of speech and gesture .....	106
• Lifting things up with his hand to emphasize their impermissibility .....	110
• Offering beneficial wisdom to his Companions without being asked.....	111
• Responding to questions he was asked .....	114
• Responding to questions with more than that which he was asked about.....	120
• Responding to questions with more than that which he was asked about.....	122
• Asking a questioner to repeat their question so that he could clarify a ruling..	125
• Asking one of his Companions to answer a question on his behalf as a means of training them .....	126
• Testing someone who already knows something in order to praise them for their knowledge.....	129
• Teaching by remaining silent and authorizing something taking place in his presence.....	130
• Seizing opportune moments to teach.....	132
• Teaching through playfulness and good-natured jest.....	135
• Emphasizing a teaching point by swearing an oath .....	137
• Repeating statements three times to emphasize their certainty [or significance].....	138
• Indicating the importance of a statement by changing his sitting position or posture and repeating his words.....	143
• Emphasizing the significance of a saying by repeatedly calling someone and delaying his response.....	144
• Taking hold of the hand or shoulder of the person he was addressing to cap-	

ture their attention.....	145
• Keeping something ambiguous to motivate the listener to investigate it, as a way of encouraging it or warned against it.....	147
• Summarizing a concept first and then explaining it in more detail, to make it clearer to the listener and easier for them to comprehend and retain.....	150
• Mentioning a small number of points briefly and then explaining in further detail .....	156
• Teaching through reminders and exhortations .....	157
• Teaching by encouraging ( <i>targhīb</i> ) and frightening ( <i>tarhīb</i> ) .....	158
• Teaching through stories and tales of the past.....	159
• Preluding his answer when addressing a sensitive issue.....	164
• Alluding or intimating when addressing a sensitive issue .....	168
• Paying special attention to teaching and exhorting women .....	171
• Becoming angry and rebuking in his teaching when the situation demanded that .....	172
• Authorizing writing as a means of conveying his teachings .....	173
• Instructing some of his Companions to learn the Syriac language.....	176
• Teaching through his own noble persona.....	177



## AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

*In the Name of Allah – the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.*

**A**LL PRAISE AND GRATITUDE IS FOR ALLAH, THE ONE WHO TAUGHT by the pen; taught humanity what they knew not. May Allah send blessings upon and honour His Messenger, our Leader Muhammad, and upon his family and Companions and those who follow them in excellence until the Day of Reckoning.

To proceed, these sublime words and blessed, noble narrations were originally a public speech I gave in response to a request from the Shariah and Arabic Faculties at the university in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, at the beginning of the academic year 1375-1376 AH.<sup>1</sup>

I chose “The Teacher-Messenger ﷺ and his teaching techniques” as the lecture topic, for its strong connection to knowledge, scholars, education, and students. Then, I added much in the way of further research and investigation, as well as explanatory notes of varying length, and it thus turned into a complete book. I have taken care to ensure that it will be easy for every reader and beneficial to both seekers and instructors. The text is of considerable import, for it concerns a particularly important facet from the life of the Messenger ﷺ and his noble biography. It is thus a book of guidance, pedagogy, and refinement for teachers and students alike.

---

<sup>1</sup> I gave the address in the auditorium for public lectures in the faculty building in Riyadh, on the afternoon of Monday 17 Shawwāl 1385 AH.



The topic of the text is unique. I began delving into the subject thirty years ago, and not once have I come across a book composed in this fashion. Completing this book took such a long time, as I attempted to apply the finishing touches that would make it perfect. How many times has a desire for perfection blocked the fulfilment of honourable deeds?! And how many times has laxity and procrastination stopped incredible, unique texts being set to paper?! Many asked when the book would be ready after hearing my announcements of it being close to print, but only now was I able to finish it. And all praise and gratitude is for Allah for His Grace and granting of success.<sup>2</sup>

I have related many narrations which convey the guidance and methodology of the teaching of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and I have divided the book into two sections. The first section is dedicated to the character of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, his noble persona, and the second section presents his teaching techniques and sound instruction and counsel. I have endeavoured to ensure these noble hadiths comprise – alongside similes and explanation – clear guidance on teaching and education. They are carefully selected, purposeful examples that provide knowledge and direction, coming under instructive headings with every hadith being attributed to its source.

Where the narrations are taken from one of the Six Books of Hadith, which are the works of Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Nasā'ī, Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājah, I have used the name of the scholar to indicate that the narration is taken from their most renowned work. For example, where I have attributed a narration to Bukhārī, it is taken from his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Likewise, where I have attributed a narration to Muslim, it is taken from his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Where I have attributed narrations to Abū Dāwūd, Nasā'ī, Tirmidhī, and

---

2 Several honourable teachers and friends have followed my text with further work on the topic.

Ibn Mājah, they are taken from their *Sunans*.<sup>3</sup> I have only omitted the names of their works for reasons of brevity. When I have taken narrations from other than these six books, I have mentioned the source as well as its author.

In some instances, a single narration was relevant to more than one teaching method, making it suitable to be cited in a number of areas. In such cases, my bringing such narration in one area only does not mean it is restricted to that one area.

I ask Allah, the Noble, to allow people to benefit from this work, to accept it from me as a pure and righteous action, and to make it a catalyst and motivation for people to follow the example of our Leader, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, in his sayings, actions, and all his states and activities; that would be the pinnacle of good for us. Allah is the Guide of whoever seeks His guidance. He is our Lord and there is no Lord besides Him, success is in His hand, and He is capable of all things. All praise and gratitude is for Allah, Lord of all worlds, and may Allah send blessings and salutations upon our Leader Muhammad, his family, and his Companions.

Riyadh, 26 Muḥarram 1416 AH

---

3 Translator's note: I have done the same for narrations taken from the *Musnad* of Imam Aḥmad, and the *Sunans* of Dāraquṭnī and Dārimī.



## AL-RASŪL AL-MU‘ALLIM ﷺ

### Descriptions in the Noble Qur’an of the Messenger ﷺ as a teacher

The Noble Qur’an confirms that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was a teacher for all humanity despite his illiteracy and desert environment.

Allah Most High says: “He is the One Who raised for the illiterate [people] a Messenger from among themselves; reciting to them His Revelations, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom, for indeed they had previously been clearly astray.”<sup>4</sup>

“We have sent you [O Prophet] as a Messenger to [all] people. And Allah is sufficient as a Witness.”<sup>5</sup>

And: “We have sent you [O Prophet] only as a deliverer of good news and a warner to all of humanity, but most people do not know.”<sup>6</sup>

### Confirmation in the Sunnah of the Messenger ﷺ as a teacher of guidance and insight

The Pure Sunnah also confirms that the Messenger ﷺ was a teacher of guidance and insight.

---

<sup>4</sup> *al-Jumu‘ah*, 2.

<sup>5</sup> *al-Nisā’*, 79.

<sup>6</sup> *Saba’*, 28.

1. Ibn Mājah and Dārimī relate – and the wording here is from Ibn Mājah – from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه,<sup>7</sup> who narrates: “One day, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ came out from one of his homes and entered the mosque. There, he found two circles. One of them was reciting the Qur’an and supplicating Allah Most High, and the other was teaching and being taught. The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘They are both upon good. These people are reciting the Qur’an and supplicating Allah Most High; if He wishes, He will give them, and if He wishes, He will withhold from them. And these people are teaching and being taught, and I was sent as a

---

7 Imam Nawawī رحمته الله notes in the introduction to the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (1/39): “It is recommended for the transcriber of hadiths, when they come across the Name of Allah ﷻ to write ‘ﷻ’, ‘ﷺ’, ‘ﷺ’, or similar.

Likewise, when the Prophet ﷺ is mentioned, they should write ‘ﷺ’ in the complete form, mentioning both the ‘blessings’ and ‘salutations’, and not through an abbreviation.

For Companions, ‘رضي الله عنه’ should be written, and for a Companion who is the son of a Companion, ‘رضي الله عنه’. For any other righteous scholars after them, both ‘رحمته الله’ and ‘رحمته الله’ are recommended.

In all cases, the transcriber should write the honorific even if it is not included in the original text they are transcribing from, for it is a supplication rather than a [part of the] narration.

All the above should also be read even if they are not included in the text being recited. One should not grow weary from repeating the honorifics multiple times, for whoever neglects them has been deprived of a great reward and virtue.”

Imam Nawawī رحمته الله also mentions in *al-Adhkār* (p. 100) at the end of the chapter entitled “Sending blessings upon the Prophets and their people after them”: “‘ﷺ’ and ‘ﷺ’ are both recommended for the Companions, the Followers, and the devout scholars and righteous people who come after them.

As for the saying of some scholars that ‘ﷺ’ should be reserved for the Companions and ‘ﷺ’ for others, this is not accurate. The correct opinion, as held by the majority, is as stated above, and is supported by innumerable proofs.

If the person mentioned is a Companion who is also the son of a Companion, then one would say ‘Ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه narrates’, in order to combine between him and his father, and the same goes for Ibn ‘Abbās, Ibn al-Zubayr, Ibn Ja’far, Usāmah ibn Zayd, and the likes.”

teacher', and he went and sat with them (i.e., the latter group).<sup>899</sup>

2. Muslim relates, in the Book of Divorce in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, the story of the choice the Prophet ﷺ offered his honourable wives. He started with 'Ā'ishah and she chose him. She asked that he not inform anyone of her choice, and the Prophet ﷺ said to her: "Allah did not send me to cause others hardship or seek harm for them; rather, He sent me to teach and to make things easy."<sup>1099</sup><sup>11</sup>

---

8 Indeed, Allah sent the Prophet ﷺ as a teacher, and there was no human who was a greater teacher than him. He was a remarkable educator; an insightful, unlettered guide; and a radiant Messenger entrusted with news. Many nations were guided to Islam through his teaching and instruction, and hundreds of millions of tribes and communities throughout the world acceded to his words, were guided by his counsel, and attained the Pleasure of Allah by following and adhering to his way. Whoever uses their intellect to contemplate the beauty of his shepherding of the Arabs, despite their harsh and austere nature, and the way the Prophet ﷺ handled their unwillingness [to follow him] and remained steadfast in the face of their animosity until they eventually turned to him as a role model, gathered around him, fought in front of him against the most honoured members of their society (including their own forefathers and relatives), favoured him over themselves, and left their loved ones, homelands, tribes, and brothers in obedience to him and for the sake of his pleasure, and that they did all this for him despite the fact that he could neither read nor write and had no knowledge of the books or pedagogues of old, will come to the conclusion that he is the principal teacher, the Messenger who was sent, and the leader of all worlds ﷺ.

9 Reported by Ibn Mājah (229) and Dārimī (353). Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghḍādī relates the hadith in *al-Faṭḥ wa al-Mufaṭṭḥ* from multiple chains, so any reader seeking further elucidation can refer to his work.

Sakhāwī classified the hadith as *gharīb ḍa'īf* due to the weak memory of one of the narrators in the chain, Ziyād ibn An'um al-Ifriqī, but there are supporting evidences for the narration itself, as related by our great scholar and the *ḥāfiẓ* of Morocco, 'Abdul-Ḥayy al-Kattānī, in *al-Tarātib al-Idāriyyah* (2/220).

One of the supporting pieces of evidence is the hadith from *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* I have related after this one.

10 Imam Ghazālī رحمه الله says: "The ambiguity of the Prophet ﷺ [here] and the indirectness of his reproof of 'Ā'ishah is an indication that part of a teacher's expertise is to forbid their student from undesirable characteristics in as kind and gentle a manner as possible, without publicly announcing their fault, and with mercy rather than castigation; castigation lifts the veil of dignity, engenders the audacity to launch a campaign of opposition, and stimulates their desire to become unyielding and obdurate." As cited by Munāwī in *Fayḍ al-Qadīr* (2/573).

11 Reported by Muslim (1478).



3. Muslim also relates from Mu'āwiyah ibn al-Ḥakam al-Sulamī رضي الله عنه, who narrates: "I was praying with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when a man sneezed, so I said: 'May Allah have mercy on you'<sup>12</sup>. The people cast their eyes towards me. 'May my mother be bereft of me!<sup>13</sup>' I exclaimed. 'Why are you looking at me?!' They started slapping their thighs and when I saw that they were gesturing for me to be quiet, I fell silent. When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ completed the prayer, he called me. May my father and mother be his ransom – I have never seen a better teacher before or after him. For, by Allah, he neither upbraided me, struck me, or reviled me, and he said: 'Nothing of people's [ordinary] speech is appropriate in prayer. Rather, it is comprised of *tasbīḥ*<sup>14</sup>, *takbīr*<sup>15</sup>, and the recitation of the Qur'an.'<sup>16</sup><sup>17</sup>

---

12 "Yarḥamukallāh".

13 i.e., "the affliction that has befallen me is so great that I have been destroyed and my mother has lost me".

14 Translator's note: i.e., saying "*subḥānallāh*".

15 Translator's note: i.e., saying "*Allāhu akbar*".

16 The wording reported by Imam Aḥmad in *al-Musnad* (5/448) reads: "Rather, it is comprised of *tasbīḥ*, *takbīr*, *taḥmīd* (i.e., saying '*al-ḥamdulillāh*'), and the recitation of the Qur'an."

Meaning, the things that should be uttered during prayer are declarations of the Greatness of Allah, praise and glorification of Allah, recitation of the Qur'an, exaltations of Allah, declarations of the Oneness of Allah, and supplication, as has been elucidated in various narrations. Other forms of speech are prohibited during the prayer, including saying "*yarḥamukallāh*" after somebody sneezes, replying to the greeting of a Muslim, and answering a question, which are all types of speech that nullify the prayer.

Imam Nawawī رحمته الله says in the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (5/20), in his comments on this noble hadith: "This narration contains an elucidation of the excellent character of the Prophet ﷺ, as Allah Most High has borne witness to, his gentle manner with those who are ignorant, and his affection and compassion for his nation."

17 Reported by Muslim (537).

## Historical evidence of the perfect educational character of the Messenger ﷺ

History also confirms that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was an outstanding teacher, and a brief comparison between humankind's condition before the arrival of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and after his mission gives us a clear confirmation of that.

If we examine the various models of pedagogy witnessed after the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, we will see that they overwhelmingly point towards the magnificence of this great teacher and educator, in front of whom all the famous names recorded and mentioned in the fields of education and pedagogy fall short.

Which other teacher can boast a retinue of graduates as numerous and as guided as the Noble Prophet ﷺ under whom the Companions and the Followers graduated? How were they before him and what did they become after him? Each one of these Companions serves as an articulate proof of the greatness of this unique instructor, reminding us of a beautiful maxim of one of our erudite scholars, who narrates: "If the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had been blessed with no miracle other than his Companions, they would have sufficed as confirmation of his Prophethood."<sup>18</sup>

## His urging [to his followers] to expunge ignorance and his warning against complacency and lassitude in teaching and study

And no wonder such a huge number gained their education at the hand of the Prophet ﷺ and in such a short period of time, for he guided them to a vibrant, collective method of learning, urged them to eliminate igno-

---

<sup>18</sup> As mentioned by Imam al-Qarāfi in *al-Furūq* (4/170).

rance and stupidity, and sternly warned them against displaying lethargy or heedlessness in their studies. Because of this, the people came to him to attain knowledge, understand the religion, and to teach one another, and in a very short time they had wiped out their [previous] ignorance.

Mundhiri in *al-Targhib wa al-Tarhib*, in the chapter entitled “A warning against concealing knowledge” within “the Book of Knowledge”, and Haythamī in *Majma' al-Zawā'id*, in the chapter entitled “Teaching those who do not know” within “The Book of Knowledge”, both relate the following hadith:<sup>19</sup>

4. 'Alqamah ibn Sa'd ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abzā' narrates from his father, from his grandfather 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abzā' ﷺ, who said: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave an address one day. He praised Allah and glorified Him. He mentioned certain groups of Muslims in positive terms. Then, he said: ‘What is the matter with communities who neither educate, teach, remind<sup>20</sup>, enjoin, or forbid their neighbours?!<sup>21</sup> And what is the matter

19 *Al-Targhib wa al-Tarhib* (1/86) and *Majma' al-Zawā'id* (1/164). It was also mentioned by Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi al-Ma'thūr* (2/301), where he says, “It was reported by Ibn Rāḥwayh and Bukhārī in *al-Waḥdāniyyāt*; Ibn Mandah and al-Bāwardī in *Ma'rifat al-Ṣaḥābah*, and Abū Nu'aym and Ibn Mardwayh, from Ibn Abza' from his father”, and I have used [the most accurate] books to correct distortions that occur in certain renderings of this hadith.

20 The transmission in *al-Targhib wa al-Tarhib* uses “exhort” instead of “remind”, here and throughout the narration.

21 In his statement, “What is the matter with communities who neither educate [their neighbours]...”, the Prophet ﷺ indicates the magnitude of the latter's rights over their scholarly brothers and knowledgeable neighbours, owing both to the brotherhood of Islam and the neighbourly proximity between them.

The rights of neighbours in Islam are almost on the level of kinfolk who inherit. [The Prophet ﷺ said:] “Jibril kept advising me to treat neighbours well until I thought he would make them my heirs.” (Translator's note: Reported by Bukhārī, 6014; and Muslim, 2624). From this narration, we learn that a neighbour almost inherits their neighbour's wealth on account of the proximity of their homes.

Neighbours are of different ranks. There are direct or adjacent neighbours, and then there are neigh-

with communities who neither learn, acquire knowledge from, or are reminded by their neighbours?! By Allah, people will either educate, teach, remind, enjoin, and forbid their neighbours, and people will either learn, acquire knowledge from, and be reminded by their neighbours, or I shall hasten to punish them in this world.’

Then, he descended and entered his house. The people asked: ‘Who do you think he is referring to?’

‘We think he is referring to the Ash‘ariyyūn’, the others replied. ‘They are a scholarly people and they have neighbours who are people of the waters and the desert<sup>22</sup>.’

News of the incident reached the Ash‘ariyyūn. So, they came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, you mentioned a community in glowing terms and then you mentioned us negatively. What is wrong with us?’

He said: ‘People will either educate,<sup>23</sup> remind, enjoin, and forbid their neighbours, and people will either learn, be reminded by, and acquire knowledge from their neighbours, or I shall hasten to punish them in this world.’

---

bours who mix with each other at the mosque, at school, at the market, and so on. Inheritors are of two types: physical and spiritual. Physical inheritors are those who inherit wealth, and spiritual inheritors are those who inherit knowledge.

A neighbour has the right for his fellow neighbour to teach him that which is obligatory and that which benefits, and knowledge [of the religion] is the most beneficial thing a person can be taught. This is one of the most incontrovertible rights of a neighbour.

May the blessings and salutations of Allah be upon the best teacher and the guide of all humankind.

22 i.e., Bedouins.

23 In another transmission: “People will educate, teach...”

‘O Messenger of Allah, should we remind others?’ they asked. He repeated his statement, and they repeated their question: ‘O Messenger of Allah, should we remind others?’ Again, he repeated his instruction. ‘Give us a year,’ they requested.

So, he agreed to allow them a year to educate, teach, and remind them (i.e., their neighbours). Then, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ recited the following verse: ‘The disbelievers amongst the Banū Isrā’īl were condemned in the revelations of Dāwūd and ‘Isā, son of Maryam. That was for their disobedience and violations. They did not forbid one another from doing evil. Evil indeed was what they did!’<sup>24</sup><sup>25</sup>

Our shaykh and teacher, the esteemed scholar Muṣṭafā al-Zarqā’ رحمه الله, said, in his authoritative text *Al-Madkhal al-Fiqhī al-‘Ām*, in his comments on this honourable hadith: “Never in history, neither before nor after the Prophet ﷺ, has there been a viewpoint so sanctifying of knowledge as this powerful perspective and definition of deficiency in teaching

24 *al-Mā'idah*, 78-79.

25 Ibn al-Sakan said, “The chain of transmission for this hadith is valid”, as he related it in *Kanz al-Ummāl* (3/685). Mundhirī remarked: “It was related by Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr* from Bukayr ibn Ma'rūf from 'Alqamah.” Haythamī said: “It was related by Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr*, and the chain contains Bukayr ibn Ma'rūf. Bukhārī said: ‘Disregard him [as a narrator].’ Aḥmad declared him to be reliable in one transmission and weak in another. Ibn 'Adiyy said: ‘I am hopeful that there is no problem with him.’”

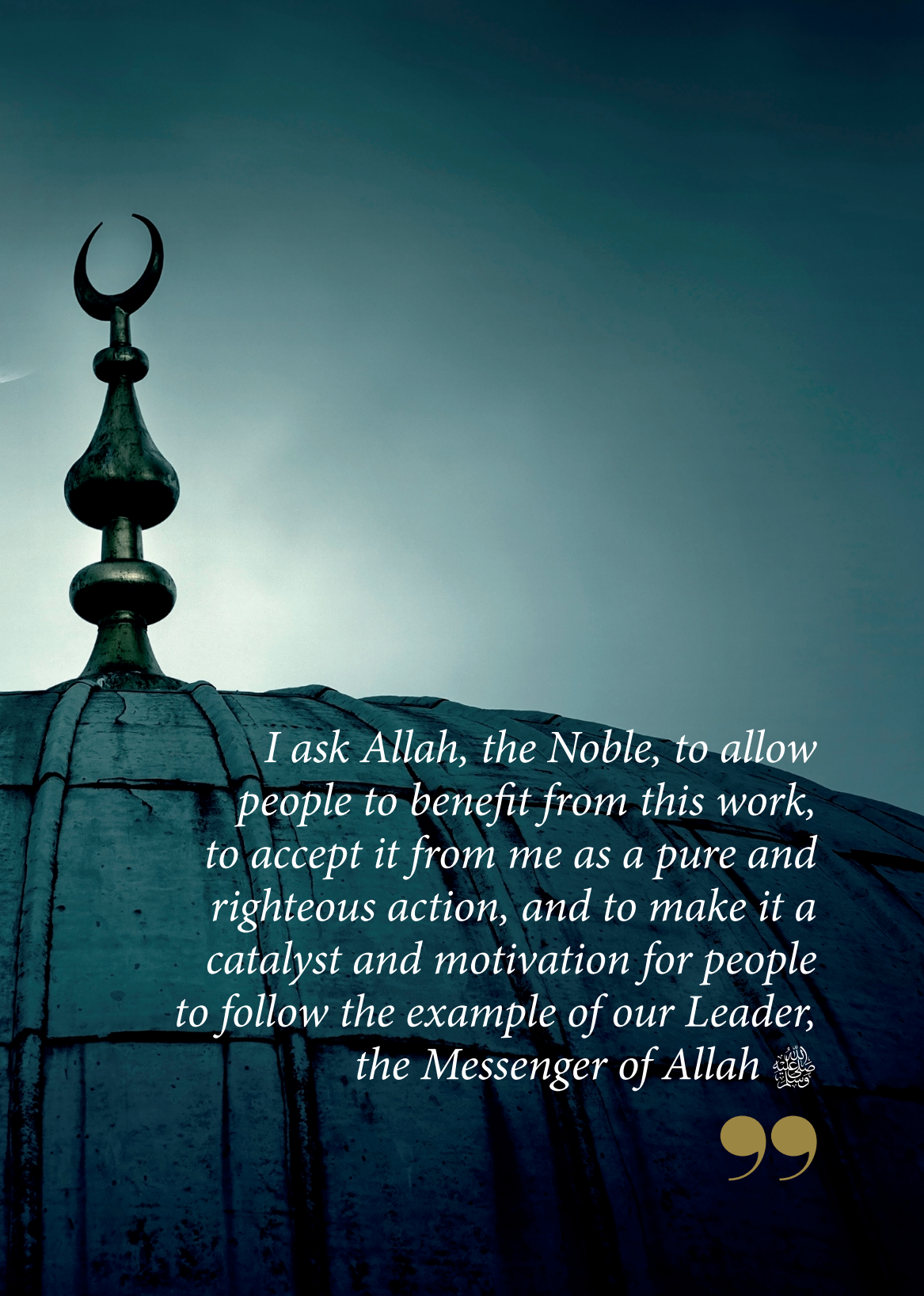
According to the above, the chain of the hadith is weak if we do not include the transmission of Aḥmad where Bukayr is declared to be reliable. If we do include it, then the chain is *ḥasan*, or almost *ḥasan*. This was the view asserted by Mundhirī in *al-Targhib wa al-Tarhīb*, where he narrates the hadith with the wording: “From 'Alqamah”. As he explains at the beginning of his book (p. 3): “If the chain of transmission for a hadith is *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan*, or close to the two, then I begin with the wording ‘From’, and if the chain contains someone who has been called a liar, then I begin with the wording ‘It was related’ but do not mention anything that was said about that narrator. Therefore, there are two indicators of a weak chain of transmission: if it is preceded with the phrase ‘It was related’ and no further explication follows it.”

So, the hadith is *ḥasan* according to Mundhirī, and all praise is for Allah, Lord of all worlds.









*I ask Allah, the Noble, to allow  
people to benefit from this work,  
to accept it from me as a pure and  
righteous action, and to make it a  
catalyst and motivation for people  
to follow the example of our Leader,  
the Messenger of Allah ﷺ*

”

and learning as a communal offense worthy of punishment in this world. Heedlessness in teaching (on the part of the scholar) and learning (on the part of the ignorant) is classed as a reprehensible deed worthy of a discretionary punishment, and falls under neglecting an obligation of the religion, for the Prophet ﷺ said:

5. ‘Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim.’<sup>26</sup>

The word ‘Muslim’ here includes men and women, for the ruling is contingent on a characteristic shared [by both], which is Islam.”<sup>27</sup> I would add to the commentary on the hadith “Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim” that when the Prophet ﷺ linked the obligation to seek knowledge to a person’s status as a Muslim, whether man or woman, it was an indication from the Prophet ﷺ that whoever ascribes to Islam must seek and obtain knowledge, for there is no room for ignorance in the code of Islam, [a religion] whose first words of its Book to be revealed were: “Read, [O Prophet,] in the Name of your Lord Who created – created humans from a clinging clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous, Who taught by the pen – taught humanity what they knew not.”<sup>28</sup>

## A brief acquainting with the perfection of the Prophet ﷺ in his teaching and his outstanding character

Although we would love to study and benefit from every facet of guidance of this premier teacher and noble, unlettered Prophet ﷺ, these pages will

---

<sup>26</sup> This narration has been related from many chains of transmission. Al-Mizzī declared it to be *ḥasan*, and Suyūṭī ﷺ deemed it sound. For a compilation of its chains, see, for example, *Fayḍ al-Qaḍīr* (4/267) by Munāwī.

<sup>27</sup> *Al-Madkhal al-Fiqhī al-‘Ām* (2/641).

<sup>28</sup> *al-‘Alaḳ*, 1-5.

only allow us a brief glance at his teaching techniques and methodologies in refinement. As for the greater goals towards which this august teacher was guiding people, these are discussed in other texts, and we ask Allah to grant us success in seeking out these works.

Despite being unlettered, neither able to read nor write, Allah gifted this teacher of goodness ﷺ with knowledge that He gifted to no other human, completed His Blessing upon him by endowing him with a unique and complete personality, and strengthening him with His Words ﷺ: “and He taught you what you never knew. Great [indeed] is the Favour of Allah upon you!”<sup>29</sup>

The Prophet ﷺ began to spread and disseminate knowledge amongst the people. In his beautiful oration, pure speech, clear articulation, sweet style, fine expression, illuminated soul, expansive chest, tender heart, abundant compassion, wise intensity, supreme attentiveness, lofty intellect, deep care, and abounding kindness towards the people, he truly was the “first” teacher [sent to humanity], to the extent that the Prophet ﷺ said himself: “I was sent as a teacher.”<sup>30</sup>

## His warning against unbeneficial knowledge

Before we delve into his teaching methods, I think it would be appropriate to succinctly mention this noble teacher’s warnings against knowledge that brings no benefit, which the Prophet ﷺ would frequently supplicate to seek refuge from.

6. Muslim relates from Zayd ibn Arqam ؓ, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to say: ‘O Allah, I seek refuge in You

<sup>29</sup> *al-Nisā'*, 113.

<sup>30</sup> Reported by Ibn Mājah (229).

from knowledge that brings no benefit,<sup>31</sup> a heart that does not humble, a soul that is not satisfied, and a supplication that goes unanswered.”<sup>32</sup>

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was a teacher in all his sayings and actions, so this supplication is a lesson for scholars and students alike to only teach and learn things that will benefit according to the criterion of the upright, distinguished Shariah.

## The educational character of the Prophet ﷺ

I also think it would be befitting to briefly discuss the educational character of the Prophet ﷺ and to acquaint ourselves with the noble personality Allah Most High bestowed upon His Messenger ﷺ, in order for him to do good for the people and spread the religion to all humankind.

In his compassion and mercy, leaving of [unnecessary] hardship and love of ease, affection and care towards [his] students, and generosity in bestowing knowledge and goodness upon them at every opportunity, the

---

31 “Knowledge that brings no benefit” is knowledge that harms either the person who learns it or others. Something that leads to evil is undoubtedly evil in itself, so this type of knowledge is despised because of what it leads to. Knowledge of how to trick people, spread corruption, and attack others, which enables the person who learns it to violate the rights of others, is to be abhorred, and refuge in Allah from it should be sought. Likewise, knowledge of how to steal people’s wealth, rob, and cover up the evidence of a crime is all classified as “knowledge that brings no benefit” and is undoubtedly destructive.

Ignorance is better for a person than these types of knowledge. It cannot be denied that certain types of knowledge are harmful for some people, just as poultry and certain exquisite desserts are harmful to a sucking child. In fact, ignorance of certain matters is beneficial for some individuals. How many individuals have plunged into topics that do not concern them, only to be harmed both in their religious and worldly affairs, and squandered a large portion of their time [on this Earth], which is the most precious thing they possess, in its pursuit. That is the greatest loss. There is no benefit in such futile knowledge which, had he not dived into, it would have been better for him.

O Allah, teach us that which will benefit us, benefit us by that which you teach us, and distance us from that which may harm us in our religious and worldly affairs, O Most Merciful of the merciful.

32 Reported by Muslim (2722).



Messenger of Allah ﷺ occupied a lofty rank and displayed a sublime character. Allah Most High said: “There certainly has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. He is concerned by your suffering,<sup>33</sup> anxious for your well-being, and gracious and merciful to the believers.”<sup>34</sup>

7. Muslim and Bukhārī relate – and the wording here is from Bukhārī – from Mālik ibn al-Ḥuwayrith ؓ, who narrates: “We came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when we were young men of similar ages and we stayed with him for twenty nights. He was merciful and affectionate [towards us]. When he sensed that we missed our families, he asked us about whom we had left behind, and we informed him. He said: ‘Return to your families, live amongst them, teach them and instruct them, and pray as you have seen me pray. When the [time for] prayer arrives, one of you should make the call to prayer, and the oldest of you should lead.’<sup>35</sup>”<sup>36</sup>
8. Tirmidhī relates from ‘Ā'ishah ؓ, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would not jabber in the way you do. Rather, he would speak with clear, measured expressions that those sitting with

---

33 Ibn Kathīr says in his *Tafsīr* (2/403): “i.e., he is ‘concerned’, meaning ‘pained’, by the things that cause his nation hardship and difficulty. For this reason, in a hadith which is related from the Prophet ﷺ through many chains of transmission, he says: ‘I was sent with pure and clement monotheism.’”

34 *al-Tawbah*, 128.

35 From the salient points regarding education communicated in this noble hadith, we can observe the practice of youths banding together and travelling to a scholar to stay with him for a period, study under him, and learn the religion from him. Their witnessing of his manner, guidance, and actions and their closeness to him illuminates their understanding. This method of pairing the knowledge they attain with action is clearer to the students and evinced in their conduct, as was the case for the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ with him [as their teacher].

36 Reported by Bukhārī (631) and Muslim (674).

him would memorize.<sup>37,38</sup>

9. Tirmidhī also relates from Anas رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would repeat statements three times in order for them to be [fully] comprehended.<sup>39,40</sup>
10. Tirmidhī also relates from al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “I asked my maternal uncle Hind ibn Abī Hālah, who was extremely skilled at describing the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, to describe him for me. He said: ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was always sorrowful<sup>41</sup> and reflective. He was never at rest. He would remain silent for long periods of time and did not speak without a purpose. He opened and ended any speech with the Name of Allah Most High, and he spoke in a comprehensive manner<sup>42</sup>.

---

37 i.e., his speech was coherent and clear-cut and he would leave pauses between his statements. In this way, the listener was easily able to distinguish and consider each statement, which made it easier for them to memorize and recall what they had heard without ambiguity or doubt.

38 Reported by Tirmidhī in *al-Shamā’il* (222).

39 i.e., so that his words would be completely understood and become firmly lodged in the mind of the listener. This was a part of his perfect guidance and kindness towards his entire nation and especially towards his students. This noble hadith signals that a teacher should endeavour to review and revise the topics they are teaching, strive in making the information as clear as possible, and repeat the subject matter until it is understood.

40 Reported by Tirmidhī in *al-Shamā’il* (223).

41 The scholars say: The intended meaning here is not that he was distressed by missing out on things he desired or encountering hardships in this world, for this was not the mindset of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Rather, the intended meaning is that he was constantly reflecting on the weighty matters that confronted him, calling people to Allah Most High, and winning people over to the cause. All this was at the same time as fighting against the polytheists, educating the ignorant, and leading the servants of Allah Most High in the best possible manner. The phrase is explained further by the statements which follow it: “He was never at rest. He would often remain silent.”

This was the manner of the Prophet ﷺ when he was alone. In hadith no. 11, we will learn about his manner in gatherings, when he was always cheerful.

42 i.e., the statements of the Prophet ﷺ were concise yet profound in meaning. For example:

1. “The religion is sincerity.”
2. “Be conscious of Allah and He will protect you.”

His speech was decisive<sup>43</sup>, neither verbose nor scanty<sup>44</sup>. He was

- 
3. "Be mindful of Allah wherever you are."
  4. "The permissible is clear and the impermissible is clear."
  5. "If you are immodest, then do whatever you wish."
  6. "Leave that which puts you in doubt for that which does not."
  7. "Certainly, Allah has prescribed excellence in all things."
  8. "Certainly, Allah is pure and He only accepts what is pure."
  9. "Paradise is surrounded by disliked things, and the Fire is surrounded by desires."
  10. "A Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe."
  11. "From the perfection of a person's submission [to Allah] is to leave things that do not concern them."
  12. "Certainly, actions are [judged] by their intentions, and for every person is what they intended."
  13. "Indeed, Satan flows through the son of Ādam like the flowing of blood."
  14. "You will not [truly] believe until you love for your brother what you love for yourself."
  15. "Have no desire for this world and Allah will love you, and have no desire for what people possess and the people will love you."
  16. "Refrain from what I have forbidden you, and do what I have commanded you to do to the best of your ability."
  17. "If people were given according to their claims, then men would claim the blood and wealth of others, but the burden of proof is upon the claimant and the oath is upon the one who denies [the claim]."
  18. "Do not cause harm or reciprocate harm."
  19. "Righteousness is that which the soul and the heart find tranquility in, and sin is that which grates at the soul and perturbs the chest, even if people repeatedly give religious verdicts in its favour."
  20. "The best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad, the most evil [religious] affairs are those which are newly-invented, and every innovation is misguidance."
  21. "Whoever introduces an innovation into this matter of ours which is not from it will have it rejected." Meaning: Any action which is not in accordance with the commands of Allah and the instructions of His Messenger ﷺ will be rejected, for only actions conforming to the guidance and wisdom of the Shariah are accepted [by Allah].

Most of the noble hadiths related above are mentioned and referenced by Imam Nawawī at the end of *al-Adhkār*.

43 i.e., his speech was conclusive and precise, easy to accept on an intellectual level because of its clarity and truth, and pleasurable to listen to for its fluency and eloquence.

44 i.e., neither excessive nor lacking.

neither rude<sup>45</sup> nor denigrated<sup>46</sup>. He valued any blessing, even if it was small, and would not find any fault in it, and he would neither criticise nor praise foods and drinks.<sup>47</sup> He would not become angry for the sake of this world or its affairs.<sup>48</sup> If the truth was violated, nothing could withstand his anger until he had avenged it, but he would never become angry or seek to avenge for his own sake. When he gestured, he did so with a full hand. When he was taken aback by something, he would turn his palms upwards, and as he spoke, he would strike his left palm with his right thumb. When he became angry, he would turn away.<sup>49</sup> If he was joyful, he would lower his gaze. His laughter was mostly a

---

45 i.e., rough or harsh.

46 Rather, he was respected and revered. Whoever saw him stood in awe of him, and whoever associated with him loved him.

47 The Prophet ﷺ would not mention his preferred foods and drinks at gatherings. This is in contrast to worldly people, who often make it their main topic of conversation.

48 The Prophet ﷺ would only become angry for the sake of Allah Most High.

49 i.e., he would turn away from whoever had angered him rather than responding with fury.

broad smile which revealed teeth like hailstones<sup>50</sup>”<sup>51</sup>

11. Tirmidhī relates again from al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī, who narrates: “Al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī said: ‘I asked my father, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, about the manner of the Prophet ﷺ at his gatherings. He said: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was always cheerful<sup>52</sup>, easy-going,

---

50 i.e., his teeth were beautiful, pure, and white, like pearls resembling hailstones. Expressing joy at appropriate times is a praiseworthy action, so it is no wonder that the leader of people and greatest of humankind ﷺ did so. Abū ‘Amr al-Jāhiz says, in the opening of his book *al-Bukhalā*’ (p. 5), after discussing the benefits of weeping to the soul and body: “What do you think, then, about laughter, which brings a person utmost joy until the thing that caused it desists? If laughter was a reprehensible act, either on the part of the one who caused it or the one who engages in it, then why is there a saying about blossoming flowers, jewellery, and palaces: ‘[It is as beautiful] as if it is laughing.’”

Allah Most High says: ‘Moreover, He is the One Who brings about joy and sadness. And He is the One Who gives life and causes death.’ (Translator’s note: *al-Najm*, 43-44). Here, He draws a parallel between joy (or ‘laughter’) and life, and between sadness (or ‘weeping’) and death, and Allah would never attribute a reprehensible action to Himself, neither is there any defect in His bestowal upon His creation.

How could laughter not have a great effect in cheering one’s soul and improving one’s mood when it is such a fundamental characteristic of human nature, and it is the first expression of joy in an infant, calming their soul, promoting their growth, and causing their serotonin to increase, which in turn increases happiness and strength?

The Arabs so valued this expression of joy, they would give their children names such as al-Ḍaḥḥāk, meaning the one who laughs frequently; Bassām, meaning the one who is always smiling; and Ṭalq or Taliq, which refer to an open, relaxed countenance. The Prophet ﷺ expressed joy and shared jokes, as did the righteous. When the Arabs wanted to praise someone, they would say, ‘He has a shining smile’, ‘He always smiles in the evenings’, ‘He is cheerful with his guests’, or ‘He is a person of energy and munificence’. On the other hand, when they wished to disparage someone, they would describe him as ‘constantly frowning’, ‘surly’, ‘scowling’, ‘displaying a hostile expression’, ‘always gloomy’, and ‘abhorrent’ person, with a ‘constricted’ or ‘sour’ expression, or ‘as if his face has been sprinkled with vinegar.’”

Laughter and joy have their proper place and appropriate measure. When a person exceeds these boundaries, their action becomes foolish and careless, for people only approve of laughter and joking in appropriate situations and measure.

51 Reported by Tirmidhī in *al-Shamā’il* (224).

52 i.e., he always had a relaxed and joyful countenance with the people.

and gentle. He was neither cruel<sup>53</sup>, harsh<sup>54</sup>, loud<sup>55</sup>, obscene<sup>56</sup>, reproachful<sup>57</sup>, or sycophantic<sup>58</sup>. He would overlook things that were not to his liking<sup>59</sup>, and he would never leave anyone who put their hope in him despairing or disappointed<sup>60</sup>.

With regards to himself, he abandoned three things: arguing<sup>61</sup>, excess<sup>62</sup>, and things that did not concern him. With regards to other people, he also abandoned three things: he would never castigate people, berate them, or seek out their faults<sup>63</sup>.

He only spoke about things for which he expected a reward [from Allah]. When he did speak, the people sitting with him would bow their

---

53 i.e., he was neither rude nor harsh in his speech.

54 i.e., he did not have a coarse or abrupt nature that would cause people to withdraw. Rather, he was easy-going and gentle. Allah Most High says: "Had you been cruel or hard-hearted, they would have certainly abandoned you" (Al 'Imrān, 159).

55 *Ṣakhb* refers to arguing loudly and aggressively. The form *ṣakhkhāb* is used here to negate any trace of this quality in the speech of the Prophet ﷺ, just as the form *ẓallām* in the verse "And your Lord is never unjust to [His] servants" (*Fuṣṣilat*, 46) negates any trace of injustice in Allah ﷻ.

56 *Fahsh* refers to any vulgar actions or statements. Again, the form *fahhāsh* is used to negate any trace of this quality in the Prophet ﷺ.

57 i.e., he would not criticize people or things in a way that belittled them. Rather, he was modest and polite.

58 i.e., he was not excessive in his praise of others. Rather, he would speak about people in a just and equitable manner.

59 i.e., he would give the impression he has unaware of actions or statements that he found distasteful, out of kindness for the person responsible and as a way of avoiding getting involved in every [minor] issue. Abū al-Ṭālib said:

"The fool is not a leader amongst his people,  
but the leader of his people is the one who feigns foolishness."

60 i.e., through his generosity and munificence, he would fulfil their hopes.

61 i.e., quarrelling, even though he was in the right.

62 i.e., in speech or wealth.

63 i.e., he would not spy on people or scrutinize their shortcomings.

heads<sup>64</sup>, as if there were birds perched on their heads<sup>65</sup>. When he was silent, they would conversate, but without arguing in his presence, and they would listen attentively to whoever spoke until he was finished.

Whoever spoke first in his presence would be allowed to speak.<sup>66</sup> The Prophet ﷺ would laugh at what the people laughed at and be amazed at what amazed them. He would show patience with newcomers who spoke or asked a question in a coarse manner;<sup>67</sup> his Companions would actually bring such people.<sup>68</sup>

---

64 i.e., they would look at the ground and listen attentively, joyful and at peace in hearing his speech. This was the most honourable and respectful way of listening to great leaders.

65 i.e., because they were so completely still and quiet. This was out of reverence and honour for the Prophet ﷺ and so that they would learn and benefit from his speech.

As for the origin of the saying "as if there were birds perched on their heads", a crow would perch on a camel's heads and pick off ticks. At that moment, the camel would remain perfectly still, because otherwise the crow would fly away and leave the ticks, which would cause the camel discomfort. Therefore, when people were perfectly still, one would say: "it is as if there were birds perched on their heads".

66 Even if they were the lowest in status. Then, when that person had completed what they wanted to say, someone else would speak.

67 i.e., he would patiently bear their rough manner of speaking, harsh words, and abrasive questions. This would often occur with Bedouins and nomads, who were not used to mixing with people.

68 i.e., his Companions brought Bedouins to the gathering of the Prophet ﷺ so that they could ask about something the Companions would not ask about out of respect.

Anas ؓ narrates: "We were forbidden in the Qur'an from asking the Prophet ﷺ about something, so it would please us when an intelligent nomad came and asked, and we would listen." Reported by Muslim (12).

The Qur'anic verse Anas ؓ was referring to is: "O believers! Do not ask about any matter which, if made clear to you, may disturb you" (*al-Mā'idah*, 101). Before this verse was revealed, they would ask excessively, both about urgent and non-urgent matters. So, they were forbidden to ask about non-urgent matters, but permitted to ask necessary or beneficial questions.

Anas says they were pleased when an intelligent nomad came, because they would be more knowledgeable about how and what to ask, thereby increasing the value of the question and meaning that they would all reap the benefits of any response the Prophet ﷺ gave.

Ibn al-Qayyim ؒ says in *Zād al-Mā'ād* (3/121): "They would present the questions and doubts that troubled them to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and he would answer them in a way that soothed their hearts. Both his enemies and his Companions presented him with questions; his enemies in an attempt to irritate or outsmart him, and his Companions to seek clarification and understanding and to increase in faith. The Prophet ﷺ would answer enquiries from both groups, except for questions

The Prophet ﷺ said: “If you see someone requesting something he needs, then provide it to him.” He never accepted praise, except from someone thanking him<sup>69</sup>. He never interrupted a person unless they transgressed, at which point he would cut them off either by telling them to stop or by standing up [to leave].<sup>70</sup>

The Prophet ﷺ would give each one of his associates and Companions their due portion of his attention and care, to the extent that each one of them would think that they were the most beloved person to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

12. Tirmidhī also relates from ‘Alī ؓ, who narrates, in his description of the gatherings of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: “He would give each person at his gathering their share, and not one of them would think that there was anyone dearer to the Prophet ﷺ than themselves.”<sup>71</sup>

The Prophet ﷺ was at his most humble when interacting with students, questioners seeking to benefit, and those who were weak in understanding.

13. Bukhārī, Muslim, and Nasā’ī relate – and the wording here is from Muslim – from Ḥumayd ibn Hilāl, from Abū Rifā’ah

---

that had no answer, like their question about the timing of the Hour.”

69 i.e., the Prophet ﷺ would only accept praise from someone thanking him for a blessing he had bestowed upon them, for he did not like to be praised for things he had not done.

70 Reported by Tirmidhī in *al-Shamā’il* (350).

This noble hadith clearly conveys the utmost degree of perfection, compassion, kindness, forbearance, patience, forgiveness, clemency, mercy, and outstanding character displayed by the Prophet ﷺ, all of which are demanded of any teacher who seeks to follow the example of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, the truthful, trustworthy teacher.

71 Reported by Tirmidhī in *al-Shamā’il* (335).



al-'Adawī ؓ, who narrates: "I came to the Prophet ؐ whilst he was giving an address. I said: 'O Messenger of Allah, an outsider has arrived asking about his religion. He does not know what his religion is.'

The Messenger of Allah ؐ came over to me, leaving his sermon. A chair was brought for him; I think the legs were made of iron. The Messenger of Allah ؐ sat down and started teaching me from that which Allah had taught him. Then, he went back and completed his speech.<sup>72</sup><sup>73</sup>

14. Bukhārī, Nasā'ī, and Ibn Mājah relate from Sharīk ibn Abī Namir that he heard Anas ibn Mālik ؓ say: "We were sitting in the mosque when a man arrived riding his camel. He knelt his camel at the mosque<sup>74</sup> and then tied it.<sup>75</sup> Then, he asked us: 'Which of you is Muhammad?'

The Prophet ؐ was reclining amongst us.<sup>76</sup> 'This fair man who

---

72 Imam Nawawī ؓ says in the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (6/165): "This hadith shows the humility of the Prophet ؐ and his affection, care, and lowering of his wing for the Muslims, and that is recommended for a person to speak in a kind and gentle manner when addressing or asking a scholar. It also shows the recommended nature of hastening to answer a person seeking a religious verdict and prioritizing matters in order of their importance. The scholars unanimously agree that if someone arrives asking about faith and how to enter Islam, it is obligatory to respond to them and teach them immediately.

[As an additional note,] the Prophet ؐ sat on a chair so that the rest of the people would be able to hear and see him."

The hadith also shows that it is permissible for a teacher to sit on a chair whilst they are teaching rather than standing up.

73 Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad* (1164), Muslim (876), and Nasā'ī (5377).

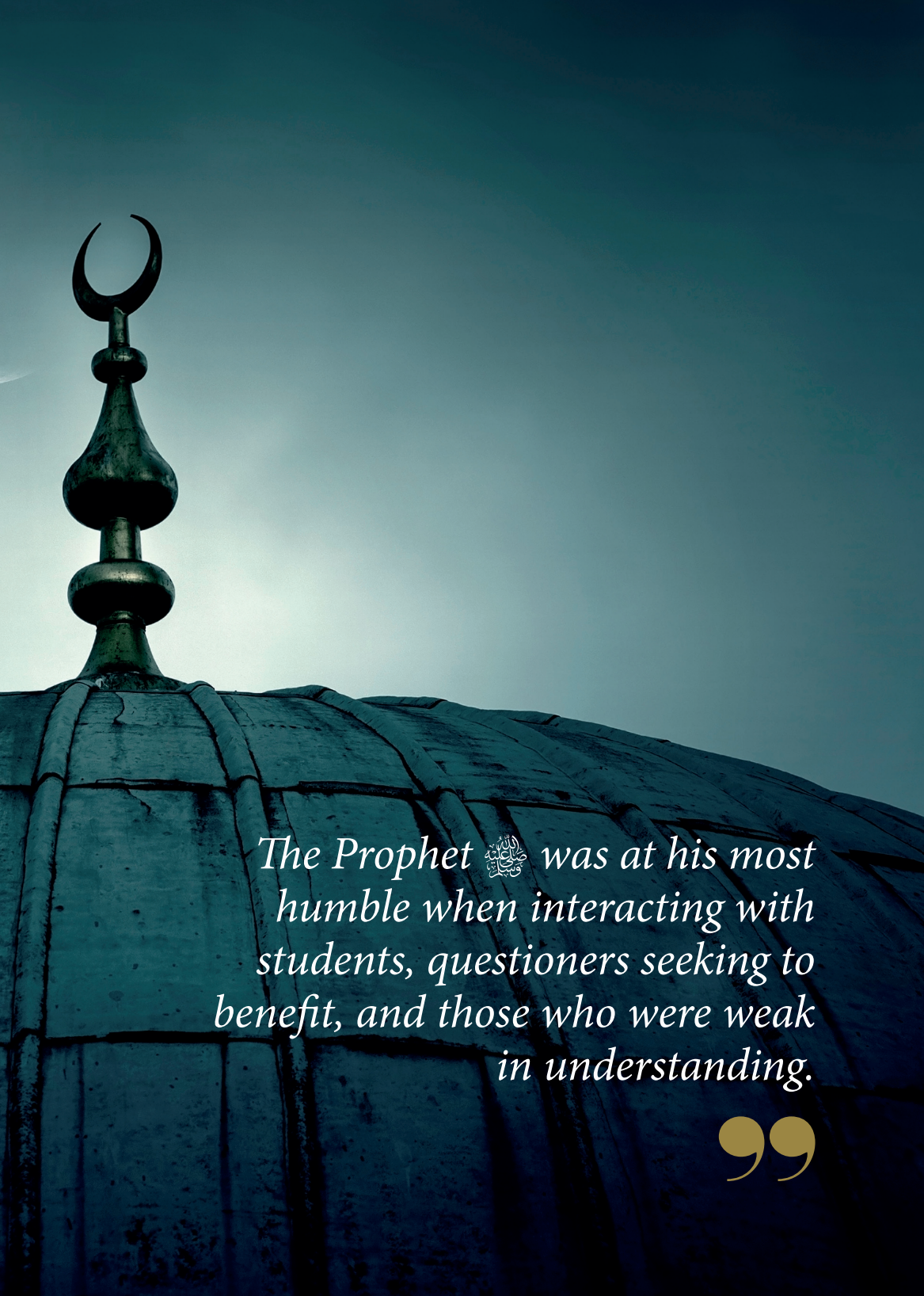
74 i.e., at the edge of the mosque. The transmission reported by Dārimī (1:131) from Ibn 'Abbās reads: "He knelt his camel at the entrance of the mosque and then tied it"

75 i.e., to prevent it from running away.

76 This reflects the humility and absence of conceit of the Prophet ؐ. It also conveys that it is permissible for a leader to recline amongst his followers.





A low-angle photograph of a mosque's dome and minaret. The minaret, topped with a crescent moon, rises from the left side of the frame. The dome, covered in dark, textured tiles, dominates the lower half of the image. The sky is a clear, deep blue, with a bright light source visible behind the minaret, creating a soft glow.

*The Prophet ﷺ was at his most  
humble when interacting with  
students, questioners seeking to  
benefit, and those who were weak  
in understanding.*

”

is reclining', we replied.

'O Ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib', the man said to him.

'I have responded',<sup>77</sup> the Prophet ﷺ replied.

'O Muhammad, I am going to ask you something and I am going to be severe in my questioning, so do not become angry with me', he said.

'Ask whatever occurs to you',<sup>78</sup> the Prophet ﷺ replied.

'I ask you by your Lord and the Lord of those who came before you, did Allah send you to all humankind?' the man asked.

'O Allah, yes',<sup>79</sup> the Prophet ﷺ replied.

'I implore you, by Allah, did Allah tell you that we should perform five prayers per day<sup>80</sup>?' the man asked.

'O Allah, yes', the Prophet ﷺ replied.

'I implore you, by Allah, did Allah tell you that we should fast this month<sup>81</sup> from the year?' the man asked.

'O Allah, yes', the Prophet ﷺ replied.

---

77 i.e., "I have heard you, so say whatever you wish."

78 The transmission reported by Dārimī (1:131) reads: "I am not angry. Ask whatever occurs to you." The hadith conveys the humility and compassion of the Prophet ﷺ towards a questioner seeking benefit, despite any severity or coarseness in their questioning. It also shows that is befitting for a student to precede their question by excusing themselves to the teacher.

79 The original response is "yes", but he adds "O Allah" as a means of seeking blessings and to indicate his certainty his answer.

80 Translator's note: lit., "within each day and night".

81 i.e., Ramadan.

'I implore you, by Allah, did Allah tell you that you should take this charity<sup>82</sup> from our rich and distribute it amongst our poor?' the man asked.

'O Allah, yes,' the Prophet ﷺ replied.

'I affirm my faith in what you have brought, and I am an envoy for my people behind me. I am Ḍimām ibn Tha'labah, the brother of the Banū Sa'd ibn Bakr', the man said."<sup>83</sup>

15. Muslim relates from Abū Ayyūb ؓ that a Bedouin presented himself before the Messenger of Allah ﷺ whilst he was on a journey. He took hold of the halter (or reins) of his she-camel<sup>84</sup>, and then said: "O Messenger of Allah (or: "O Muhammad"), inform me of that which will bring me closer to Paradise and distance me from the Fire."

He (i.e., Abū Ayyūb ؓ) continues: "The Prophet ﷺ paused and

---

82 i.e., *zakāh*.

83 Reported by Bukhārī (63), Nasā'ī (2093), and Ibn Mājah (1402). Similar narrations are reported by Muslim (12) and Dārimī (1/130).

This hadith was also reported by Nasā'ī and Baghawī from Abū Hurayrah, with the addition at the end the narration: "When the man left, the Prophet ﷺ said: "The man comprehended." Indeed, what an intelligent man he was, and what an excellent introduction he used to smooth the way for his question to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He asked the Prophet ﷺ to swear by each answer he gave, thereby consolidating his own belief in the truthfulness of the Truthful One to whom the truth was spoken ﷺ. When he had asked all his questions and been given answers, he declared his acceptance of Islam and that he was an envoy sent by his people to establish the veracity of the Messenger calling for people to affirm their faith in that which he had conveyed from Allah, after which they would embrace Islam. They would only do so after being completely confident that the Prophet ﷺ possessed a sound intellect, piercing insight, and true analysis. Allah turned both them and the Prophet ﷺ [to the truth]. Ibn 'Abbās ؓ said: "I never heard of a more virtuous envoy of a people than Ḍimām." Umar ؓ said: "I never saw a person more excellent or concise in their questioning than Ḍimām ibn Tha'labah." May Allah be pleased with him and pleasing to him.

84 i.e., the she-camel of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

looked at his Companions.<sup>85</sup> Then, he said: ‘He has been enabled (or: ‘he has been guided’).’<sup>86</sup> ‘What did you say?’ he asked [the Bedouin], and he repeated his request. The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Worship Allah and do not associate anything with Him, establish the prayer, give *zakāh*, and connect the ties of kinship. [Now, could you] let go of the camel.’<sup>87”88</sup>

16. Ibn al-Sakan, Ṭabarānī, and Abū Muslim al-Kajjī relate from al-Mughīrah ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Yashkurī that his father narrated to him: “I went to Kufah and entered the mosque, and I came across a man from the Qays [tribe] called Ibn al-Muntafiq. He said: ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was described to me, so I went to search for him. I found him at ‘Arafāt and I pushed through the crowds towards him.

“Keep your distance from him”, I was told.

“Leave the man”, the Prophet ﷺ said. “He has a need.”

So, I pushed through the crowds until I got to him. I took hold of the halter of his camel, and no-one impeded me<sup>89</sup>. Then, I said: “I will ask you about two things. What will save me from the Fire?

---

85 i.e., in amazement at the question.

86 i.e., the questioner has been granted success in finding the thing they needed or has been guided to it by the Grace of Allah Most High. The doubt in the wording is on the part of the narrator, and both are similar in meaning.

87 The Prophet ﷺ added the last statement because the Bedouin was still holding on to the reins of his camel to help him ask his question without strain. Then, when he had received his answer, the Prophet ﷺ said: “Leave her.” This hadith illustrates the utmost humility of the Prophet ﷺ and his compassion for the questioner, despite the rudeness and inappropriate confrontation of the Bedouin.

88 Reported by Muslim (13). The crux of the narration is also reported by Bukhārī (1396) and Nasā’ī (468).

89 i.e., neither the Prophet ﷺ nor any of his Companions became angry with him.

And what will cause me to enter Paradise?”

He looked up at the sky. Then, he turned back to me with his noble face and said: “Although your question was concise, it is both great and lengthy [in meaning], so pay attention [to my response]. Worship Allah and do not associate anything with him, establish the prescribed prayer, fulfil the obligatory *zakāh*, and fast Ramadan.”<sup>90</sup>

17. Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, and Tirmidhī relate – and the wording here is from Muslim – from Anas رضي الله عنه that a woman who had a mental illness said: “O Messenger of Allah, I need something from you.”

“O Mother of So-and-so”, the Prophet ﷺ replied, “pick whichever path you like so that I can deal with your need for you.” Then, he proceeded with her on one of the paths until her issue was resolved.

The transmission reported by Abū Dāwūd states: “She sat down, and the Prophet ﷺ sat with her until her need had been dealt with.”<sup>91</sup>

With that, I feel that it is appropriate here to relate Imam al-Māwardī’s elucidation of certain aspects of the personality of the great teacher, the

---

<sup>90</sup> Reported in *Fath al-Bārī* (3/264-265).

<sup>91</sup> Reported by Muslim (2326), Abū Dāwūd (4818), and Tirmidhī in *al-Shamā'il* (330).

Imam Nawawī رحمته الله says in the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (15/82): “This hadith conveys the humility of the Prophet ﷺ through his staying with a weak lady to resolve the issue she had and counseling her in private. This was not the prohibited way of a man and woman who are not related being alone together, for they were both in full sight of the people. However, because it was the type of issue that is not made public, [the Prophet ﷺ ensured that] they could not hear what they were saying, and Allah knows best.”

Noble Prophet ﷺ. His words –may Allah Most High have mercy on him – will complement and complete that which I have mentioned above.

### **Some concise, comprehensive words elucidating the special qualities and virtues and honourable manners and traits of the Messenger-Teacher ﷺ which illuminate aspects of his overall character**

Understanding these qualities, which were an indispensable part of his character, is a part of understanding the educational manner of the Prophet ﷺ. They also help to explain why his statements and judgements were so readily accepted and his actions emulated, and the magnitude of their impression on people's souls in all aspects of life and religion.

The statements that follow also contain guidance and instruction regarding the appropriate manner, attitude, character, actions, dealings, articulation, appearance, and judgement of a teacher, for “indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example.”<sup>92</sup>

Imam Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muhammad al-Māwardī al-Baṣrī al-Baghdādī ﷺ, the foremost jurist of his era, who was born in 364 AH and died in 450 AH, says in his text *A'lām al-Nubuwwah*, in chapter twenty and others, where he is discussing the distinguishing qualities that Allah specially bestowed upon His Prophet Muhammad ﷺ: “Since the Prophets of Allah were the pick of His servants and the best of His creation, due to the fulfilment of His due right with which He had entrusted them, He exclusively selected them from the most noble of descents and strengthened them with the most assiduous of relations. This was to protect them from aspersion and defamation, and so that souls would be humble before them, hearts would be sincere with them, and people would hasten to respond

---

<sup>92</sup> *al-Aḥzāb*, 21.



to them and obey their instructions. The signs of Prophethood displayed by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ were spectacular and the proofs were overwhelming, and their emergence bears witness to the authenticity of their conclusion. No falsehood can be confused with truthfulness therein, nor the rightful claimant with an imposter. Allah sent him after specifically selecting him and cleansed him of impurities, and He protected him from the accusations of the suspicious and covered him from scornful gazes. No intellect could overcome him, no heart could reject him, and no soul could abhor him. He was programmed and prepared with the most noble character and beauty in his actions, and suited for the highest rank and most virtuous deeds. [A person's] roots drive them towards that which befits and agrees with them, and repels that which it finds incompatible and disagreeable. There is no rank in the world higher than Prophethood, which serves as an ambassadorship between Allah Most High and His servants, and inspires rectification amongst the people and obedience to the Creator. [Surely,] the best of creation and the person most complete in exemplifying its conditions is most deserving of such a role.

Neither in the era of the Messenger ﷺ, nor before or after him, was there anyone who came close to him in virtue or perfection – neither in appearance and character, nor in speech and action. For that reason, Allah Most High described him thus: 'And you are truly [a man] of outstanding character.'<sup>93</sup>

Virtue – even if it is not one of the miracles of Prophethood, for it can also be possessed by others – is certainly a sign of Prophethood. Perfection of virtue, however, is extremely rare, and thereby effectively becomes a miracle [of Prophethood]. Perfection of virtue necessitates verity, and verity necessitates the acceptance of one's words, so it is possible

---

93 *al-Qalam*, 4.

to consider virtue as an evidence of Messengerhood. Now that this has been illustrated, there are four aspects to what is considered perfection in a human being:

1. Perfection of form
2. Perfection of character
3. Virtue in speech
4. Virtue in actions

The first aspect, the perfection of the form of the Prophet ﷺ and the balance in his appearance, is comprised of four qualities:

1. A serenity that induced respect and reverence and called for submission and obedience. The Prophet ﷺ was the person most revered, to the extent that even the envoys of Khosrow were dumbfounded when they came before him. Despite their training [in addressing notable figures], backed by the clout of the mighty Persian rulers, the Prophet ﷺ was greater in their eyes and more awe-inspiring to their souls, even though he neither magnified himself with ostentation nor flaunted his authority, but rather embodied the humility and simplicity for which he is known.
2. A relaxed expression that affirmed sincerity and love and induced goodwill and affection. The Prophet ﷺ was greatly loved, and the warmth of his countenance firmly established him in the people's hearts. No associate ever despised him, and no friend ever distanced themselves. Indeed, he was more beloved to his Companions than their parents and children, or than a cold drink to a parched throat.

3. An excellent reception [from others] that impelled hearts to turn, hastening to his obedience and acquiescing to him. The acceptance of his appearance captivated the people's hearts and his companionship became deeply rooted in their souls. No stubborn antagonist felt hatred towards him and no alienated adversary felt repelled by him, except for the one whose jealousy drove them to misery, or whose wretchedness incited them to oppose him.
4. The inclining of souls to following him, yielding to him, firmness in supporting him through hardship and difficulty. Those who were loyal to him never deviated from his way, and those who were blessed with his companionship for many years never argued against him.

These four qualities are indicators of wellbeing and principles of Messengerhood. The Prophet ﷺ perfected all four. As for the second aspect, the perfection of his character, it includes six qualities:

1. The judiciousness of his intellect, soundness of thought, and certainty of perception, an abundance of which is proven by his soundness in judgement, accuracy in planning, and excellence in uniting. He was not taken unawares by any sinister plot nor rendered incapable during times of difficulty. Rather, he would foresee consequences in advance, unveiling weaknesses and solving problems, which could only be achieved by a person of utmost perspicacity and resolve.
2. His firmness in the face of enemy attacks, steadfastness when conflict and disaster brought suffering and adversity. In differing situations, he remained calm within himself. He was neither

weakened by intense onslaught nor cowered by momentous events. The persecution he encountered in Makkah at the hands of the Quraysh was enough to turn forelocks grey and decimate garrisoned forts, but despite his vulnerability, he displayed a leader's steadfastness and a commander's resolve.

3. His indifference and turning away from [the luxuries of] this world, and his contentment with the bare minimum. He was neither lured by its splendour nor enticed by its sweetness. Despite being in command of a region stretching from the outermost bounds of the Ḥijāz to the edge of Iraq, and from the furthest point of Yemen to the coast of Oman, he was the most indifferent of people to the material possessions they would acquire and collect, and the most abstemious from the things they would capitalize upon and monopolize.

Neither did he leave behind assets or loans<sup>94</sup> nor did he dig a river, construct a palace, or bequeath money or material possessions to his children or wives. He wished to pull them away from the desire of this world, just as he had been pulled away, and for them to share his indifference towards it. It is not befitting for the person who lived in this world with this indifference to it to be accused of seeking it out, rejecting the invitations of Allah to the Hereafter, being content with the Immediate<sup>95</sup> when they have been robbed of the Deferred<sup>96</sup> and paucity in place of abundance, and feeling satisfied with a life of darkness and desolation.

---

94 i.e., loans owed to him by other people. In fact, when the Prophet ﷺ passed away, his armour was pawned with a Jewish man in exchange for food for his family. (Translator's note: See Ibn Mājah, 2438 and 2439).

95 Translator's note: i.e., this world.

96 Translator's note: i.e., the Hereafter.

4. His humility towards the people, even though they were his followers, and his lowering his wing to them, even though they obeyed him. He would walk in the markets, sit on the dusty ground, and mix with his Companions. In fact, the only way he could be distinguished from them was by his humbleness and modesty.

Once, a Bedouin came to visit him and was overawed by his dignity and prestige. The Prophet ﷺ said to him: 'Be calm, for I am the son of a woman who used to eat dried meat in Makkah.<sup>97</sup><sup>98</sup>

This was from the illustriousness of his characteristics and honour of his manners, [borne of] an instinct he was inclined towards and natural disposition that was inherent in him, and neither rare enough to be counted nor limited enough to be encompassed.

5. His forbearance and composure when rocked by the recklessness of others or provoked by foolishness and ignorance. He was the most patient and enduring in times of fear and the most self-controlled and restrained during disputes or arguments. He was confronted with the harshness of the Bedouins, but they never heard a bad word from him or provoked his ire. Any oth-

---

97 In saying "I am the son of a woman who used to eat dried meat in Makkah", the Prophet ﷺ was intending to refute any view of himself as regal or mighty. When he said "I am the son of a woman" rather than "I am the son of a man", he chose to ascribe himself to be even more humble and to calm his interlocuter's fears, for women were known for their [relative] weakness. Then, he described her as being a person "who used to eat dried meat", again showing his humility, for dried meat was known to be a leftover food that was consumed by the poor and destitute, whereas the mighty and arrogant would only eat meat that was freshly slaughtered. It is as if the Prophet ﷺ had said: "I am the son of a poor woman who ate leftover food, so how can you be afraid of me?" As detailed by the esteemed scholar Qaṣṣallānī رحمه الله in *al-Muwāhib al-Ladunniyyah* (4/319-320) with the explanatory notes of Zurqānī.

98 Translator's note: See Ibn Mājah, 3312.

er patient or composed person has occasional slips or mistakes, but Allah Most High had protected him from the incitement of desires and from careless errors, to establish him as a [Messenger who was] kind and gracious to his nation and compassionate and caring to all creation.

The Quraysh inflicted all types of punishment and violence upon him, but he was steadfast in front of them and turned away. It was not only lowly, foolish people of the Quraysh who opposed the Prophet ﷺ; rather, the elites and laymen of the tribe were united in their attack. But every time they harassed him, he turned away and forgave. Then, when he was victorious over them, he pardoned and absolved.

In the year of the Liberation<sup>99</sup>, when he had overcome them and the tribe had gathered around him, the Prophet ﷺ said to them: ‘What do you think of me?’

‘The son of a noble uncle’<sup>100</sup>, they replied. ‘If you pardon us, then that matches what we thought of you, but if you take vengeance upon us, then we had wronged.’

The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Rather, I will say as Yūsuf said to his brothers: “There is no blame on you today. May Allah forgive you! He is the Most Merciful of the merciful!”’<sup>101</sup>

Hind bint ‘Utbah – who had sliced open the stomach of his uncle, Ḥamzah, and chewed on his liver – came to the Prophet ﷺ, and he for-

99 i.e., the Liberation of Makkah.

100 “The son of a noble uncle” is how the response appears in the text of al-Māwardī, but what has been preserved from this narration is, “A noble brother, and the son of a noble brother”, as noted by Ibn Ishāq in his *Sīrah*, and as is related from him by Ibn Ḥajar in *Fath al-Bārī* (8/15) and Zurqānī in the explanation of *al-Muwāhib al-Ladunniyyah* (2/377), and as is found in *Kitāb al-Tārīkh wa al-Maghāzī* (2/835) by al-Wāqidi, ‘*Uyūn al-Athar* (2/178) by Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *Zād al-Ma’ād* (2/394) Ibn al-Qayyim, and *Bahjat al-Mahāfil* (1/410) by al-Yamanī.

101 *Yūsuf*, 92.

gave her and accepted her pledge of allegiance.

6. His honouring of treaties and fulfilment of promises, never violating a contract or reneging on a pledge. He viewed treachery as a major sin and breaking promises as one of the worst traits, so he firmly committed and adhered to any word he gave. If the other party in a contract broke the treaty, however, Allah Most High always made a way out for him. This happened when the Jewish Banū Qurayẓah and Banū al-Naḍīr tribes betrayed their treaties and when the Quraysh violated the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah, and Allah Most High gave His Prophet ﷺ something better instead.

Through these six qualities, which make up the perfection of his character, Allah Most High favoured him over all creation.

The third aspect, which concerns the virtue of his speech, is composed of eight qualities:

1. The eloquent wisdom and spectacular, comprehensive knowledge that was bestowed upon him. This was despite the fact that he was unlettered and the son of an unlettered mother and had never read a book, studied a science, or accompanied a scholar or teacher. Despite all this, the precision and accuracy of what the Prophet ﷺ came with dazzled intellects and bewildered minds, for neither in his speech or actions was he ever prone to a lapse or blunder. This natural disposition of the Prophet ﷺ reflected his purified and cleansed judgement and intrinsic nature.
2. His memorization and preservation of that which Allah Most High revealed to him, from the stories of Prophets and nations,

and tales of ancient times. Neither a minor or major detail escaped him, and he neither forgot a little nor a lot, even though he did not learn from a book that he could revise from, nor memorized by sight so that he had something to check over. This would only have been possible for someone with a sound intellect, broad chest, and expansive heart. These are the three tools required for being entrusted with the Message and loaded with the responsibilities of Prophethood, so it was only befitting that he be chosen to convey [Divine Revelation] and fulfil [the mission of Islam].

3. His precision in explaining his rulings and judgements in the clearest possible terms. The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘I was given concise, comprehensive expression, and speech was condensed for me’<sup>102</sup>, because he was able to use few words to express deep and complex meanings. He thus abstained from speaking at length and dismantled ignorance. And indeed, the Prophet ﷺ was only able to communicate in such a skilled manner because he was being assisted and steered [by Allah Most High].
4. The excellent character he enjoined, fine manners he advised, connecting ties of kinship he urged, and compassion towards

---

102 Reported by Abū Ya‘lā in his *Musnad* from ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ, and its chain of transmission is good (*hasan*). The wording related here, “I was given concise, comprehensive expression, and speech was condensed for me”, is close in meaning to the narration of Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī ؓ, which was related by Ibn Abī Shaybah, Ṭabarānī and Abū Ya‘lā, all with a good chain: “I have been granted the keys to expression, its concise profundity, and its comprehensiveness.”

The Prophet ﷺ was the most fluent and eloquent of speakers. He would open with sweet, concise, clear, and articulate words, and conclude with succinct, profound, and comprehensive expressions which left the listener yearning to hear him again.

The phrase “speech was condensed for me” means that he was given the ability to speak in a succinct manner and express rich, ample meaning with only a small number of words.



orphans and the weak he implored. He forbade hatred and envy and stopped the cutting of ties and distancing [from one's relatives] so that virtue would increase amongst the people, excellent characteristics would spread, fine manners would become manifest, and the people would be quicker to engage in good and stronger in withholding from evil. He actualized the words of Allah Most High: 'You are the best community ever raised for humanity – you encourage good [and] forbid evil.'<sup>103</sup> They adhered to his commands and paid heed to his warnings, and he perfected the rectification of their spiritual and worldly lives. Through them, Islam attained glory after its weakness, and polytheism was humiliated after its glory, and the Muslim community now found themselves as righteous leaders and noble generals.

5. His clarity in his responses whenever he was asked a question and lucidity in his arguments when someone debated or challenged him. He was never constrained by a stuttering or faltering expression or halted by an inability [to respond]. Any time he was confronted in debate, it was his response that was clearest and his argument that was most coherent.
6. His tongue was protected from distortion in speech and excessiveness in recountal. He was far above lying, and a close companion of the truth. Indeed, he remained renowned for his truthfulness from youth to old age, to the extent that he was marked with [the trait of] honesty and branded with [the virtue of] trustworthiness.<sup>104</sup>

---

103 Āl Imrān, 110.

104 Translator's note: Even before Prophethood, he was known as al-Amin (The Trustworthy).

Before Islam, all the Quraysh were certain of his truthfulness, only denouncing him as a liar when he called them to the religion. There were some who rejected him out of envy, others due to stubbornness, and others who simply did not accept that he was a Prophet or Messenger. However, if they had remembered a single lie he had uttered outside of the Divine Message, they would have [hastily] presented it as evidence that what he was conveying of the Divine Message was also false.

Whoever displays honesty at a young age will adhere to it even more so when they are older, and whoever upholds truth when speaking about personal matters is even more likely to do so in matters related to Allah Most High. This is sufficient as a response to any contender or adversary.

7. Speaking only when he needed to and restricting his conversation to that which sufficed. He would neither chatter excessively nor be halted by an inability to communicate. Whether in a state of need or sufficed, he was the best at holding his tongue and the finest in tranquillity. Because of that, his statements were preserved and not corrupted, his splendour became manifest without blemish, and mouths found sweetness in repeating his words until they became safeguarded in hearts and inscribed in books.
8. He was the most fluent of the people in language, the clearest in communication, the most concise in speech, and the soundest in meaning, without ever displaying signs of burden or fatigue. He was never flustered by [the demands of delivering] his meticulous articulation, and many of his compendious sayings have been written and recorded. His speech was unrivalled in eloquence and fluency, and his wisdoms are beyond reckoning or count.

If you were to mix his statements with the speech of others, you would be able to distinguish his words by their style, and you would sense a clear incongruity between the two. Falsely attributed statements could not be clothed as his truths, and his honesty would be clearly discerned from fictitious ascriptions.

The Prophet ﷺ was not a formal rhetorician, neither did he mix with public speakers, poets, or gifted linguists. Rather, this [ability to communicate] came from the natural disposition instilled in him, which was given to him solely for an intended aim.<sup>105</sup>

The fourth aspect, regarding his virtue in his actions, is also made up of eight qualities:

1. His exemplary manner and sound policies in guiding his people away from a way of life that was known and beloved to them and towards something new and unfamiliar. Souls acquiesced willingly to him, succumbing in hope and fear. That is neither an easy nor simple achievement, except for one who is both divinely supported and assisted by a firm resolve and unwavering determination.

If he was commanded in the things he legislated, then that serves as a compelling proof, and if he endeavoured to discern by his own judgement, that too is a dazzling sign.

Sufficient for you is the way his foundations have endured right up to the present day, increasing in sweetness and intensifying in potency and power as they passed from generation to generation. He has been taken as a model across eras that have differed in their customs and desires, and

---

105 Which was for him to carry out the responsibilities of Prophethood and convey the religion to the people.

that is enough of an evidence for those who stand by him and a clarification for those who doubt him.

2. His ability to combine [the support of] two distinct groups by inspiring hope in those who inclined towards him and striking fear in those who were strong and capable [in worldly affairs]. Both came to his aid and supported his mission, desiring the Immediate and the Deferred<sup>106</sup>, and fearing the loss [of blessings] and the affliction [of calamities]. By being aware of the different natures of these groups and the methods to which they responded, the Prophet ﷺ was able to enlist the help of both in fortifying the religion and establishing righteousness as a permanent presence.
3. His balance in his rulings, avoiding both excessiveness and deficiency and adopting a middle path. This is always the best path to take, and whoever exceeds this balanced approach will attain neither truth nor guidance.
4. The fact that he did not inspire his Companions to seek out this world, but neither did he encourage them to repudiate it entirely. Rather, he instructed balance and moderation, and he said: “The best of you is the one who neither neglects their worldly life for their Hereafter nor their Hereafter for their worldly life. Rather, the best of you is the one who take from this and this<sup>107,108</sup> This is

---

106 Translator’s note: i.e., this world and the Hereafter.

107 Translator’s note: i.e., they take their share from this world and the Hereafter.

108 Reported by Daylamī and by Ibn ‘Asākir in his *Tārīkh*, both from Anas ibn Mālik ؓ, with a wording close to what is related above. Their transmission reads: “The best of you is not the one who neglects their worldly life for their Hereafter or their Hereafter for their worldly life, but instead [is the one who] receives [their share] from both, for this world is a means to reach the Hereafter. And do not be a burden on other people.”

true, for completely abandoning one is an error, and combining between both is balanced and correct.

The Prophet ﷺ also said: 'What an excellent mount<sup>109</sup> this world is. So, ride it, and it shall carry you to the Hereafter.'<sup>110</sup> This is the case, for a person gathers provisions and increases in worship in this world in preparation for the Hereafter, and whoever neglects this preparation will inevitably be deprived and lost, in which case he is a wearisome burden, or lowly and pitied, in which case he is humiliated.

5. His engaging with the principles of the religion and complex rulings, which enabled him to clarify for his nation the acts of worship that were required of them and explain what was permissible and impermissible for them. He elucidated what was allowed and prohibited in contracts and dealings. [What the Prophet ﷺ taught was so just,] even the People of the Book would invoke his rulings in many business and inheritance related affairs, whereas he would never rely on any other set of laws for his judgements.<sup>111</sup>

The Prophet ﷺ facilitated [comprehension of] the Shariah by establishing foundational principles that would indicate solutions to novel or unknown issues [that occurred later on], and from which proven, reliable rulings could be extrapolated, removing the need for a [specific] written ruling [for every new issue] after he was raised or confusion and ambiguity after he passed away. Then, he instructed those who witnessed his teach-

---

109 Translator's note: i.e., riding animal.

110 I did not find a narration with this wording, but the follow hadith is close in meaning: "This world is a bridge to the Hereafter, so cross it, but do not take it as your home." This was reported by Daylamī in *Musnad al-Firdaws* (2/351), but he did not mention the chain of transmission.

111 Translator's note: i.e., the Jews and Christians would often utilize the Shariah in their own affairs, but the Muslims would never call upon Jewish or Christian law.

ings first-hand to convey to those who were absent, so that they could learn from his cautions and call upon his demonstrations. The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Convey from me and do not lie about me, for perhaps a person to whom it is conveyed will have a greater understanding than a person who heard it, and perhaps a person will carry the knowledge to someone who has a greater comprehension than him.’<sup>112</sup>

He consolidated his rulings with both explicit and expositive statements<sup>113</sup> and included everyone in his judgements, both those who were

---

112 It is as if al-Māwardī رحمه الله is combining between several different hadiths here:

1. Bukhārī (1741) and Muslim (1679) relate from Abū Bakrah رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘May whoever is present convey this to whoever is absent, for perhaps a person to whom it is conveyed will have a greater understanding than a person who heard it.’”
2. Abū Dāwūd (3660), Tirmidhī (2658), and Ibn Mājah (232) relate – and the wording here is from Tirmidhī – from Zayd ibn Thābit رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘May Allah illuminate a man who hears a narration from me, memorizes it, and conveys it to others, for perhaps he will carry the knowledge to someone who has a greater comprehension than him, and perhaps the person carrying the knowledge is not a scholar themselves.’”
3. Bukhārī (3461) and Tirmidhī (2669) relate from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘Convey from me, even if it is a single verse; narrate from the Banū Isrā’īl, for there is no harm in that; and whoever lies about me deliberately, let them take their seat in the Fire.’”
4. Bukhārī (106) and Muslim (1) relate from ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Do not lie about me, for whoever lies about me will enter the Fire.’”

113 The terms explicit statement and expositive statement here refer to their agreed upon meaning in the field of jurisprudence. An explicit statement is one which clearly and directly expresses a ruling, like the statement of Allah Most High, “so that you do not grieve over what you have missed” (*al-Hadid*, 23), or the saying of His Messenger ﷺ: “Seeking permission has been established [as a precept] because of sight.” Translator’s note: Reported by Bukhārī (6241) and Muslim (2156); i.e., so strangers or visitors cannot catch you unawares and peek at you without permission.

An expositive statement indicates or points towards the reason for a ruling, like the statement of Allah Most High: “As for male and female thieves, then cut off their hands” (*al-Mā'idah*, 38). In this verse, the letter *fā*, translated here as: then, indicates that the cause of the ruling that follows it, “cut off their hands”, is the stealing [mentioned before it]. Other examples are the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: “Whoever changes their religion, then kill them” (reported by Nasā’ī, 4063), and “A murderer does not inherit” (reported by Tirmidhī, 2109; and Ibn Mājah, 2735). [In] the first instance, [the *fā*, again translated as: then,] indicates that their abandonment of Islam is the reason for the prescribed punishment, and the second instance implies that such a person cannot inherit because they are

present and those who were distant, until he conveyed the Shariah with which he was entrusted and fulfilled the rights of his community for which he was responsible, ensuring that no right of Allah was overlooked and no benefit for his nation was omitted. The fact that he achieved all this within such a short period of time was both unprecedented and miraculous.

6. His rising up to fight against the enemy. They had surrounded him from all sides in a foreign land and when his numbers were scarce, but he bolstered those who were few and brought honour to those who were lowly. By inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy, he became feared, and by the awe and panic [of his adversaries], he emerged triumphant. The Prophet ﷺ combined between standing up for the Divine Laws of the religion until they became manifest and spread, and striving against the enemy until victory. Combining between these two actions would not be possible except for a person whom Allah reinforces with His Favour and supports with His Grace, and something that is impossible [without such Divine Support] is inimitable.
7. The courage in war and bravery in resisting the enemy that was bestowed upon him. In every nerve-racking conflict he participated in, he persevered until victory or survival. He never deserted his position or fled in fear. Rather, he remained firm with a peaceful heart and tranquil soul.

At the Battle of Ḥunayn, [the overwhelming majority of] his Com-

---


responsible for murdering the person from whom they would have inherited.

These two methods of extracting rulings point towards the breadth and universality of the Shariah in dealing with novel issues through analogy, whereby issues for which no specific, explicit statement exists are judged by comparison with an issue for which an explicit statement does exist and which shares a similar underlying reasoning.







A low-angle photograph of a mosque's dome and minaret. The minaret, topped with a crescent moon, rises from the left side of the frame. The dome, covered in dark, textured tiles, dominates the lower half of the image. The sky is a clear, deep blue, with a bright light source visible behind the minaret, creating a soft glow.

*He ﷺ consolidated his rulings  
with both explicit and expositive  
statements and included everyone  
in his judgements.*

”

panions fled. From a vast army, just nine men from his family and Companions stayed with the Prophet ﷺ. He was riding on the back of a mule completely unprepared for battle and, [despite the extreme danger of the situation,] calling out to his Companions, making himself visible, and saying: ‘Come to me, O slaves of Allah! I am the Prophet, and that is no lie. I am the son of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib.’ They returned individually and in groups, and the Hawāzin saw and balked at the sight.

The Prophet ﷺ never feared a conflict in which he was outnumbered, neither did he retreat from any duel with an adversary who sought to outlast him. Allah strengthened him with [Divine] aid and soldiers<sup>114</sup>, and the enemy yielded and he remained steadfast until Allah granted him victory. This level of courage is unparalleled.

One night, Medina was awoken in fright by a loud bang. The people went out in the direction of the sound, but they found that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had beaten them to it, and they met him on his way back. He was riding a bare horse<sup>115</sup> that belonged to Abū Ṭalḥah al-Anṣārī and carrying a sword, and [when he saw them,] he started saying: ‘O people, do not fear, do not fear.’ Then, he said to Abū Ṭalḥah: ‘I found it (i.e., the horse) to be an ocean (i.e., fast and flowing like the waves of the ocean).’ It had actually been a slow horse [before this incident], but after that, no other horse could outpace it.<sup>116</sup>

These were the actions of a person certain in the knowledge that Al-

---

114 Translator’s note: This refers to the Angels. See Āl ‘Imrān, 124-125.

115 i.e., without a saddle or anything else.

116 Reported by Bukhārī (6033) and Muslim (2307).

“*Lam turā’ū*”, translated here as “do not fear”, is taken from the wording related by Bukhārī. The word “*lam*”, which usually means “did not”, is used here to mean “do not”.

The transmission related by Muslim includes “*lan turā’ū*”. Zurqānī says in his explanation of *al-Muwāhib al-Ladunniyyah* (4/335): “‘*Lan*’ (which usually refers to the future) is used here to mean ‘*lam*’ (which usually refers to the past), as evidenced by the transmission of Bukhārī: ‘*lam turā’ū*’. So, the meaning here, [in the transmission of Muslim,] is: ‘There was nothing to fear there.’”

lah Most High would support him, and that His Religion would prevail, upholding the Words of Allah Most High, 'in order to make it (i.e., Islam) prevail over every religion',<sup>117</sup> and confirming the saying of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: 'The Earth was drawn together for me, and I saw its east and west. The dominion of my nation will reach as far as was drawn together for me.'<sup>118</sup> This is sufficient as evidence of his truthfulness.

8. The generosity and munificence he was gifted. He gave everything he had, giving preference to everyone over himself, until he passed away with his armour pawned with a Jew for some *ṣā's*<sup>119</sup> of barley to feed his family.<sup>120</sup>

He held sway over the Arabian Peninsula. The chiefs and *qayls*<sup>121</sup> possessed wealth and treasures and would hoard, flaunt, and arrogantly revel in their riches, but the Prophet ﷺ seized all their chiefdoms without taking a dinar or dirham for himself.

The Prophet ﷺ only ate tough foods and wore coarse clothing. He gave in abundance and reached a huge number, and he sipped the bitterness of scarcity and endured hunger and deprivation.

From the war spoils of the Hawāzin tribe, he captured 6000 prisoners

---

117 Translator's note: e.g., *al-Tawbah*, 33.

118 Reported by Muslim (2889), Abū Dāwūd (4252), and Ibn Mājah (3952) in a *marfū'* narration from Thawbān ؓ. The beginning of the wording related here is taken from Ibn Mājah, and the ending is taken from Muslim and Abū Dāwūd.

119 A measure used to weigh grains and the like.

120 Reported by Bukhārī (2916, 4467) and Muslim (1603) from 'Ā'ishah ؓ, with the wording: "When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ passed away, his armour was pawned with a Jew for thirty *ṣā's* of barley."

The transmission reported by Aḥmad (11993) from Anas includes: "The Prophet ﷺ did not find anything to redeem it with until he passed away."

121 The *qayls* were Yemeni leaders during the times of Ignorance (Jāhiliyyah) who were one rank beneath the main chief.

of war, 24,000 camels, 40,000 sheep, and 4000 ūqiyyah of silver. But the Prophet ﷺ donated his entire share and return emptyhanded. Abū Wā'il narrates from Masrūq, from 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها, who said: 'The Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not leave a dirham, dinar, sheep, or camel, nor did he leave any bequest.'<sup>122</sup> 'Amr ibn Murrah narrates from Suwayd ibn al-Ḥārith, from Abū Dharr رضي الله عنه, who said: 'It would not please me to have Uḥud's worth of gold which I spend in the way of Allah and then to die on the day I die and a dinar [of it] to remain with me, except for a small amount I would reserve for [repaying] debts.'<sup>123</sup>

If the Prophet ﷺ was asked for financial support but was penniless himself, he would instruct the person to purchase [whatever they needed] on his account, and would not turn them away emptyhanded. Hishām ibn Sa'd narrates from Zayd ibn Aslam, from his father, from 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه that a man came to the Prophet ﷺ and asked him for support. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'I have nothing on me, but purchase on my account. If something comes to me, I will settle the debt.'

'Umar said: 'O Messenger of Allah, I will give it to him, because Allah has not burdened you with something you cannot do.' The Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not like 'Umar's statement. Then, a man from the Anṣār said: 'O Messenger of Allah, spend, and do not fear scarcity from the Possessor of the Throne.' The Messenger of Allah ﷺ smiled, and his pleasure at the Anṣārī man's words was evident in his countenance. He said: 'That is what I have been commanded to do.'<sup>124</sup>

---

122 Reported by Muslim (1635) and Abū Dāwūd (2863), both from the chain of Abū Wā'il mentioned here by al-Māwardī, and how could the Prophet ﷺ have left a bequest when he still had something pawned?!

123 Reported with this chain by Dārimī (2/223), with the wording: "It would not please me to have Uḥud's worth of gold and then to die on the day I die and a dinar or half a dinar [of it] to remain with me, except for [a small amount I would reserve for repaying] debts."

124 Reported by Tirmidhī in *al-Shamā'il* (354).

The Prophet ﷺ used to say: 'I have a better claim to the believers than themselves. Whoever from the believers dies and leaves behind a debt, then I will be responsible for paying it off, or [if they leave] vulnerable children, then they will come to me, and I will be their protector. And whoever leaves behind wealth, then it is for their inheritors.'<sup>125</sup>

Can any other generosity and munificence or asceticism and temperance match this? Far from it! No-one could attain a slither of his merit, let alone realize these uncountable, immeasurable golden nuggets of virtue that not only did nobody match him in, but not one of his opponents disputed<sup>126</sup>.

Every hypocrite, stubborn adversary, heretic, and disbeliever has expended all their efforts and orchestrated their schemes in an attempt to abase the words or actions of the Prophet ﷺ, but no-one has been able to do so. What greater virtue can there be than the virtue that even one's enviers and enemies are forced to bear witness to? They could neither find any blemish to slander or defame him with, nor any flaw to expose or pounce upon. As the poet says:

'The creation bore witness to his virtue, even [his] enemies,  
and [true] virtue is that which enemies bear witness to.'

It is only befitting for the one who has attained the highest degree of virtue and the necessary tools for implementing that virtue to be entrusted

---

125 Reported by Bukhārī (2298, 2399, 4781, 5371, 6731, 6745) and Muslim (1619a, 1619c). The wording here is taken from the first two transmissions related by Bukhārī.

Imam Nawawī رحمه الله says in the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (11/60): "The meaning of this hadith is that the Prophet ﷺ said: 'I will stand for their interests in their life and death, and I am their ally in both. If one of them had an outstanding debt, I will pay it off myself if they did not appoint someone to do so; if they left behind money, it will be for their inheritors and I will not take anything from it; and if they left behind needy, vulnerable children, then they can come to me and I will be responsible for their food and expenses.'"

126 In fact, these honourable traits of the Prophet ﷺ were confirmed by both his supporters and adversaries.

with leadership of the world and the best interests of all creation, and to be made responsible for spreading righteousness and wiping out corruption. There is no rank more deserving of such responsibilities than Prophethood, and for that reason, when he was sent as a Messenger, he rose to fulfil its rights. He was perfectly suited to Prophethood, and Prophethood was perfectly suited to him. When it came to him, he was not bewildered or dumbfounded. Rather, he and Prophethood were perfectly harmonious, concordant, and in agreement with one another, and this agreement is the basis for any constancy or system.

This is one of the clearest proofs of the authenticity of his Prophethood and veracity of his Messengerhood, and only an ignominious individual would persist in denying this after such an exposition. All praise and gratitude is for Allah, the One who enables a person to obey Him and guides to faith in His Message.”

Here ends an abridged version of the passage I have taken from Imam al-Māwardī, with some minor additions and adjustments.

After this concise elucidation of the character and noble nature of the Teacher-Messenger ﷺ, I will now present a significant number of his teaching methods and his techniques in giving direction and guidance, as gleaned from the books of the pure, authentic Sunnah.





## HIS TEACHING METHODS

**T**HE MESSENGER OF ALLAH ﷺ CHOSE THE BEST AND MOST VIRTUOUS teaching methods. He utilized those techniques that had the most profound impact on the addressee, were most effective in imparting wisdom and understanding, led to the firmest comprehension and retention in the mind of the student, and were most efficient in clarifying concepts.

Whoever studies the books of the Sunnah and reads them with diligence will observe that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ spoke to his Companions in many different styles. On various occasions he was asking a question, responding to a question directly, responding with additional information not included in the question, or striking a metaphor or giving an example to communicate a point. Sometimes he would preface his speech with an oath sworn by Allah, and sometimes, through his wisdom, he would draw the questioner away from his original enquiry. There were instances where he taught through writing<sup>127</sup> and drawing. At times, he would teach through pronouncements or similes, and at other times through ambiguity or gesture.

Sometimes, the Prophet ﷺ would present ambiguities that he would then reveal the answer to, and he would variously teach through light-hearted anecdotes, debate, and analogy or comparison. There were

---

<sup>127</sup> Translator's note: e.g., by instructing someone else to write something down.

occasions where he would indicate the underlying reasoning behind a response, and he would test his Companions by asking them things he already knew. At times, he would ask them as a means of steering them towards an answer, and in other contexts he would impart a piece of knowledge before any question had been asked. He would dedicate some of his gatherings to teaching women the knowledge that was essential to them. And there were occasions when he paid special attention to the children in his presence, coming down to their level and instilling the things that suited the innocence of their youth.

All these and more teaching models, techniques, and practices of the Prophet ﷺ, as recorded in the books of the pure Sunnah, will be detailed below. My success comes only through Allah. In Him I trust and to Him I turn.

## **The Prophet ﷺ teaching with excellence and outstanding manners**

One of the most significant, greatest, and most prominent teaching techniques of the Prophet ﷺ was taking action, and conducting himself in an excellent manner and with outstanding manners. When the Prophet ﷺ gave any instructions, he would start by doing it himself first, and then the people would follow by acting as they saw him do. His character was the Qur'an, and he was of outstanding character. Allah Most High made him a superb example for His servants, and He says: "Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example for whoever has hope in Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah often."<sup>128</sup> So, the Prophet ﷺ is a role model for his nation in his manners, actions, and affairs.

Undoubtedly, teaching through action and doing is stronger, more

---

<sup>128</sup> *al-Aḥzāb*, 21.



influential upon the soul, more conducive to understanding and preservation, and more effective in impelling others to follow and emulate than teaching through words and speech [alone]. Teaching through action is the instinctive method of teaching, and it was the foremost technique employed by the Prophet ﷺ.<sup>129</sup>

Ibn Ḥajar comments in *Al-Iṣābah fī Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥābah*, in his biography of the honourable Companion al-Julandā, the king of Oman: “Wathīmah mentions in the book *Al-Riddāh*, on the authority of Ibn Ishāq, that the Prophet ﷺ sent ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ to him to invite him to [embrace] Islam, to which al-Julandā said: ‘I have been drawn to this unlettered Prophet ﷺ because he does not enjoin a good action except that he is the first to act upon it and he does not forbid an evil thing except that he is the first to abandon it. When he is victorious, he does not become arrogant or ungrateful, and when he is overcome, he does not use obscene language<sup>130</sup>; and he fulfils covenants and promises. I bear witness that he

---

129 The esteemed scholar al-Ḥajwī says in *al-Fikr al-Sāmī fī Tārīkh al-Fiqh al-Islāmī* (1/154): “One of the supporting evidences that explaining through action is more powerful than explain through speech, is that when the Prophet ﷺ concluded the peace treaty between himself and the disbelievers of the Quraysh at al-Ḥudaybiyyah, he instructed his Companions to take off their *iḥrām* (clothes worn for Ḥajj or ‘umrah) and slaughter their sacrificial animals. He said to them: ‘Get up and offer [the sacrifices], then shave [your heads].’ The Companions hesitated to do so, because they were still not pleased with the treaty and saw fighting as the better option. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ went in to see his wife, Umm Salamah ؓ, and informed her of the people’s contradiction of his instructions. She suggested for the Prophet ﷺ to start by shaving his own head and slaughtering his own sacrificial animal, for the people would inevitably follow his lead. The Prophet ﷺ did so. When the Companions saw that, they stood up, began offering their sacrifices and shaving each other’s heads [so zealously that] some almost [accidentally] killed others in their dejection. This narration displays the acute intellect of Umm Salamah ؓ, for she understood that they were finding it tough to let go of the sacrificial animals before completing the rituals [of Ḥajj] and that explaining through action was more potent than explaining through words, and in that respect, she had read the situation perfectly.”

130 “*Yuhjiru*”, translated here as “use obscene language”, could also be rendered as “*yuhjaru*”, which means: “be abandoned” or “be forsaken”; i.e., his Companions never forsook him because of their certainty in the veracity of both his Prophethood and of the fact that he was a perfect and sincere human being.

is a Prophet.”<sup>131</sup> Imam al-Shāṭibī رحمه الله says in his book *Al-I’tiṣām*: “The character of the Prophet ﷺ was the Qur’an, for he appointed the Revelation as an authority over himself until his knowledge and actions became totally adherent to it. His speech too was absolutely compliant and acquiescent to Revelation, halting at the boundaries prescribed therein. This special quality was one of the greatest evidences of his truthfulness in [conveying] that which he brought. He brought commands and himself complied with them; he forbade others and himself desisted; and he reminded others and took heed himself. He was both the most fearful of Allah and the driver of the hopeful. In essence, his imposition of Divine Laws upon himself is a definitive proof [of his Prophethood], and evidence of the Straight Path he followed.”<sup>132</sup>

In that way, he became a true servant of Allah, the most honourable appellation a person can have bestowed upon them. Allah Most High says: ‘Glory be to the One Who took His servant [Muhammad] by night from the Sacred Mosque’<sup>133</sup>, ‘Blessed is the One Who sent down the Standard’<sup>134</sup> to His servant’<sup>135</sup>, ‘If you are in doubt about what We have revealed to Our servant’<sup>136</sup>, and other, similar verses where he is extolled by being described as a ‘servant’.

If this is the case, then surely it is befitting for the rest of creation to make the Shariah an authority over themselves and a guiding light to direct themselves to the truth. The more they enter under the authority of

---

131 *Al-Iṣābah* (1/538).

132 *Al-I’tiṣām* (2/339-340).

133 *al-Isrā’*, 1.

134 Translator’s note: This is one of names of the Qur’an, meaning: “the standard to distinguish between right and wrong.”

135 *al-Furqān*, 1.

136 *al-Baqarah*, 23.

the Revelation and put it into practice in their speech, beliefs, and actions, the more their honour is affirmed. Their honour is not increased by their intelligence or their rank amongst their people, for Allah Most High states that honour is increased by mindfulness of Him, and nothing else, when He says: 'Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you.'<sup>137</sup> So, whoever is most diligent in their observance of honour is most deserving of honour, and whoever is less diligent will not reach the highest level of its observance. Therefore, honour is conferred according to the extent of one's observance of the Shariah.<sup>138</sup>

With this being the most prominent and oft-employed teaching method of the Prophet ﷺ, I will suffice with mentioning some examples of the teaching of the Prophet ﷺ that include it.

18. Muslim and Abū Dāwūd report – and the wording here is from Muslim – from Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh ؓ, who narrates: "We came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in this mosque of ours and he had an Ibn Ṭāb<sup>139</sup> date palm branch in his hand. He noticed some phlegm on the *qiblah*[-facing wall] of the mosque and he went and scraped it off with the branch. Then, he turned to us and said: 'Who amongst you would like for Allah to turn His Face away from them?' We were overawed.<sup>140</sup> He said again: 'Who amongst you would like for Allah to turn His Face away from them?' Again, we were overawed. Once more, he said: 'Who

---

<sup>137</sup> *al-Hujurāt*, 13.

<sup>138</sup> *Al-I'tisām* (2/339-340), at the beginning of Chapter 10, section 4.

<sup>139</sup> Translator's note: It was part of their custom to name each variety of date, and Ibn Ṭāb was a man from Medina who had a variety named after him.

<sup>140</sup> i.e., they lowered their heads and eyes to the ground.

amongst you would like for Allah to turn His Face away from them?’

‘Not us, O Messenger of Allah,’ we replied.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘When a person stands to pray, Allah ﷻ faces them.<sup>141</sup> So, do not spit in front of you or to your right. Rather, spit to your left, underneath your left foot.<sup>142</sup> If it is [too] sudden, then do this with your garment,’ and he folded his garment over itself.

(The transmission related by Abū Dāwūd reads: “...and he placed his garment over his mouth and then wiped it.”)

Then, the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Bring me some perfume.’ A young man from the neighbourhood stood up and rushed back to his family, and he returned with some fragrance in his palm. The

---

141 This is a metaphorical expression, in the same way as one might refer to “the house of Allah” or “the Kaaba of Allah”. The intended meaning is that the direction which Allah commanded people to face during prayer should be protected from spit. This direction is attributed to Allah as a means of magnification and honour, just as Allah says: “[Do not disturb] the camel of Allah and her [turn to] drink” (*al-Shams*, 13).

142 This is permitted if a person is praying or is inside the mosque and they are compelled to spit, provided that the ground is made from sand, pebbles, or similar, as was the case during the time of the Prophet ﷺ. As for in the carpeted mosques prevalent today, then if a worshipper is compelled to spit, they should endeavour to expel into in their garment, as it is obligatory to protect the mosque from anything that will compromise its cleanliness.

May Allah have mercy on Imam Bukhārī, for he had the utmost care and devotion for mosques. Ibn Ḥajar رحمه الله relates in *Hady al-Sārī Muqaddimah Faḥ al-Bārī* (2/196), in his biography of Imam Bukhārī: “Muhammad ibn Maṣṣūr said: ‘We were at the assembly of Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Bukhārī, and a person removed some dust from his beard and flicked it onto the ground. I saw Bukhārī glancing at it and glancing at the people. Then, when the people were not paying attention, he reached out, scooped it off the ground, and put it into his pocket. When he exited the mosque, I saw him take it out and throw it onto the ground.’”

Bukhārī protected the ground of the mosque from what the man was protecting his beard from. This is a true comprehension of [combining] knowledge and action, “so follow their guidance” (*al-An‘ām*, 90).

Messenger of Allah ﷺ accepted it and applied it to the tip of the branch. Then, he smeared it over the traces of where the phlegm had been.”

Jābir commented: “From then on, you started keeping perfume in the mosques.”<sup>143</sup>144

---

143 This noble hadith elucidates several matters related to teaching:

1. Repeating statements three times so that they reach all listeners.
2. Explaining through action as a means of leaving a deeper impression on listeners and to make one's teaching objective abundantly clear.
3. The magnitude of the humility of the Messenger-Teacher ﷺ, who dealt with the phlegm himself.
4. Condemning reprehensible actions with the tongue.
5. Removing [or correcting] reprehensible actions with the hand if one is able.

It also illustrates several points of jurisprudence and Islamic law:

6. The requirement to remove or purify any dirt from the mosque.
7. Revering the mosques and protecting them from any filth that could tarnish them.
8. That spit, mucus, and phlegm are all pure when a person expels them, as proven by the fact that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ spat into his garment and demonstrated what a person should do if they are suddenly overwhelmed by the need to spit.
9. Spitting or expelling phlegm during prayer does not invalidate the prayer, so long as the person does not articulate two clear letters or become completely overwhelmed.
10. Respecting and revering the direction of the *qiblah*.
11. When a person spits, they should spit to their left. They should not spit in front of them, out of respect for the *qiblah*, and they should not spit to their right, out of respect for the right, even if they are not engaged in prayer. Rather, they should spit to their left, unless they are prevented from doing so. Mu'adh ibn Jabal ؓ narrates: “I have not spat to my right since I embraced Islam.”
12. Condemnation or praise of anything should be according to Islamic law. The right side is favoured over the left side, the hand is favoured over the foot, and Friday is favoured over other days, and Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī was mistaken when he attributed this kind of favouring to fortune and luck rather than law and tradition. He said:  
“It is good fortune; even one eye surpasses the other,  
And one day becomes the master of another.”
13. An encouragement for even religious people to increase in good deeds, for the Prophet ﷺ, the leader of the Prophets and the righteous, scraped phlegm [off the wall] himself.
14. The fact that it is legally prescribed to perfume the mosques.
15. The head imam should pay care and attention to the condition of the mosque. This should

19. Muslim, Tirmidhī, Nasā'ī, and Ibn Mājah relate – and the word-ing here is from Muslim – the narration of Sulaymān ibn Buraydah from his father, from the Prophet ﷺ, that a man asked him about the times of prayer. The Prophet ﷺ said: “Pray these two (i.e., days) with us.”<sup>145</sup> When the Sun reached its zenith, the Prophet ﷺ instructed Bilāl, and he promptly called the *adhān*. Then, he instructed him again, and he called the *iqāmah* for *Ẓuhr*. Then, when the Sun was [still] high and a pure white, he instructed him again, and he called the *iqāmah* for 'Aṣr. Then, when the Sun had set, he instructed him again, and he called the *iqāmah* for Maghrib. Then, when dusk departed [and night fell], he instructed him again, and he called the *iqāmah* for 'Ishā'. Then, when dawn broke, he instructed him again, and he called the *iqāmah* for Fajr.

On the second day, the Prophet ﷺ instructed for *Ẓuhr* to be prayed at a cooler time, so he delayed the prayer until it was cooler. He prayed 'Aṣr when the Sun was still high, but he delayed it longer than the previous day. He prayed Maghrib just before dusk departed, he prayed 'Ishā' after a third of the night had passed, and he prayed Fajr when the morning was [already] light.

---

be a commitment and responsibility of every imam of the Muslims, for they are a location for the Muslim community to gather, their place of worship, a school for their study and cultivation, a forum for their assemblies and councils, a venue for their generals to meet, a base for their armies to set out from, a refuge from [military] encounters, a place to which their hearts cling, and a place to welcome visiting delegations. How deserving it is of inspection and care!

144 Reported by Muslim (3006-3014) and Abū Dāwūd (485).

145 i.e., so that they could learn the correct times for prayer in a practical manner.

Then, he said: "Where is the person who asked about the times of prayer?"

"[It was] me, O Messenger of Allah", the man said.

The Prophet ﷺ said: "The times of your prayers are between what you have seen."<sup>146</sup>

20. Abū Dāwūd, Nasā'ī, and Ibn Mājah relate – and the wording here is from Abū Dāwūd – from the narration of 'Amr ibn Shu'ayb, from his father, [and then] from his grandfather, that a man came to the Prophet ﷺ and asked: "O Messenger of Allah, how is purification<sup>147</sup> performed?"

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ called for some water in a vessel. He washed his hands three times. Then, he washed his face three times. Then, he washed his forearms three times. Then, he wiped his head. He inserted his index fingers<sup>148</sup> into his ears, wiping the outside of his ears with his thumbs and the inside with his index fingers. Then, he washed his feet three times each. Finally, he said: "This is how *wuḍū'* is performed. Whoever exceeds or is lacking from this has done wrong and transgressed." Or: "...transgressed and done wrong."<sup>149</sup>

---

146 Reported by Muslim (613), Tirmidhī (152), Nasā'ī (519), and Ibn Mājah (667).

Imam Nawawī رحمه الله says in the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (5/114): "This noble hadith conveys [the virtue of] explaining through action, for it is more effective in communicating a concept, both to the questioner and to others. It also demonstrates delaying an explanation until the necessary juncture, which is the school of thought followed by the majority of scholars of jurisprudence."

147 i.e., *wuḍū'*.

148 Translator's note: The word *sabbāḥah* is used for index finger, as in: the finger that points when making *tasbīḥ*.

149 Reported by Abū Dāwūd (135), Nasā'ī (140), and Ibn Mājah (422).

21. Bukhārī relates from Mu‘ādh ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān that Ibn Abān informed him: “I brought ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān water for purification whilst he was sitting on a chair. He performed *wuḍū’*, performing it perfectly. Then, he said: ‘I saw the Prophet ﷺ performing *wuḍū’* in this spot. He perfected his *wuḍū’* and then said: “Whoever performs a *wuḍū’* like this and then comes to the mosque, prays two units (*rak’ahs*) in which they do not distract themselves,<sup>150</sup> and then sits down, will be forgiven their previous sins.”

‘Umar said: ‘The Prophet ﷺ added: “Do not be deceived.”<sup>151”</sup>”<sup>152</sup>

The Prophet ﷺ also once led the people in prayer stationed on the pulpit so that they would all be able to see the way he prayed and learn by witnessing his movements.

22. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Bukhārī – from Sahl ibn Sa’d al-Sā’idī ؓ, who narrates: “I saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ standing on the pulpit. He faced the *qiblah* and said ‘*Allāhu akbar*’ [to open the prayer], and the people stood behind him. He recited and [then] bowed, and the people bowed behind him. Then, he lifted his head, walked

150 i.e., without busying or distracting themselves with worldly affairs. This phrase, “in which they do not distract themselves”, is taken from another transmission reported by Bukhārī (1934).

151 Ibn Hajar comments in *Fath al-Bārī* (1/228, 11/214): “In this hadith, we see that teaching through action has a deeper and more precise impact on the learner. The statement of the Prophet ﷺ, ‘Do not be deceived’, means: do not take this as a universal forgiveness that allows a person to commit sins without consequence. Firstly, the type of prayer that wipes out previous sins is a prayer that is accepted [by Allah], and no-one knows if their prayer has been accepted. And secondly, this applies only to minor sins, and not to major sins or [violations of] the rights of others.” This is an abbreviated form of his comments, with some minor additions.

152 Reported by Bukhārī (6433).



backwards,<sup>153</sup> and prostrated on the ground. He then returned to the pulpit, recited, bowed, lifted his head, walked backwards, and prostrated on the ground again. When he was finished, he turned to the people and said: 'O people, I did this so that you can follow me and know my [manner of] prayer.'<sup>154</sup>”<sup>155</sup>

23. Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Mājah relate – and the wording here is from Ibn Mājah – from Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ؓ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ passed a young boy who was skinning a lamb. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Stand back so that I can show you.” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ put his hand between the skin and the meat, pushing his arm in until it disappeared up to his armpit,<sup>156</sup> and said: “Son, this is how you skin.” Then, he continued

---

153 Thereby avoiding turning away from the *qiblah*.

154 i.e., “...learn my [manner of] prayer.” Imam Nawawī remarks in the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (5/75): “The Prophet ﷺ made it clear to them that his ascending and praying upon the pulpit was for the purpose of teaching and so that all of them would see his movements. If he had prayed on the ground, on the other hand, only those near him would have been able to see.”

Ibn Hajar says in *Fatḥ al-Bārī* (2/331): “It can be understood from the statement of the Prophet ﷺ, ‘O people, I did this so that you can follow me and know my [manner of] prayer’, that the wisdom of his praying on the highest part of the pulpit was to enable those whose vision would have been obscured had he prayed on the ground to see him.

We also learn that it is appropriate for anyone who performs an action outside of normal affairs to clarify the wisdom behind it to their companions. The narration also shows the permissibility of teaching the prayer to the believers through physical demonstration, the permissibility of minor movements during the prayer, and the desirability of utilizing the pulpit to enable a greater number of people to hear and see the speaker.”

155 Reported by Bukhārī (377, 917) and Muslim (544).

156 The verb “*daḥasa*” refers to inserting one’s arm between the inner and outer layers of a lamb’s skin (epidermis and dermis) in order to skin it. The word is included in some exquisite, sublime verses of poetry composed by the honourable Companion al-‘Alā’ ibn al-Ḥaḍramī ؓ (from Hadramaut), the conqueror of Bahrain. He was appointed governor of the region by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and remained so until his death in either 14 or 21 AH, during the caliphate of ‘Umar ؓ. Although digressing from the topic at hand, I will mention the verses here for their ingenuity, sagacity, truth, and eloquence:

“Come, people with grudges, capture their hearts,

on his way, and he led the people in prayer without performing *wuḍūʾ*.<sup>157</sup>

## His teaching of Divine Law in stages

The Prophet ﷺ followed a gradual approach in his teaching, prioritizing matters in order of importance and teaching topics gradually in instalments to make them easier to digest, memorize, and comprehend.

24. Ibn Mājah relates from Jundab ibn ʿAbdillāh ؓ, who narrates: “We were with the Prophet ﷺ when we were young boys on the cusp of adolescence<sup>158</sup> and he taught us faith before he taught us the Qurʾan. Then, he taught us the Qurʾan, and it increased us in faith.”

---

with excellent greetings, for [even] a worn-out leather sock may be patched up.  
If they treacherously target you [*dahasa*] with hatred, pardon them graciously,  
and if they avoid conversation, do not ask,  
for the thing you hear from them may harm you,  
and the thing said behind your back was never said.”

These sublime, guiding verses advise the listener that those with grudges should neither shun each other nor cut ties, but rather should greet each other when they meet, for the enmity and acrimony between them may depart, and communication and good relations may resume. The poet gives the example of a worn-out leather sock or shoe which is discarded because of its ragged condition but may later be restored, and he uses this example to encourage those with animosity between them to persist in positive interaction.

In the introduction to Tabrizi's explanation of *Dīwān al-Hamāsah* (1/3), published by Bulaq Press, the word “*al-naqal*” is replaced by “*al-naʾl*”, but the former is more accurate and does not break the metre of the verse.

I apologize for this digression, but I was overcome by the beauty of these verses and their exaltedness in meaning and compelled to include them here, so that whoever reads them may benefit, by the Will of Allah.

157 Reported by Abū Dāwūd (185) and Ibn Mājah (3179).

158 Reported by Ibn Mājah (61).

25. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Muslim – from Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه that the Prophet ﷺ sent Mu‘adh رضي الله عنه to Yemen and said: “You will come to a community from the People of the Book. Call them to bear witness that there is no deity [worthy of worship] except Allah and that I am the Messenger of Allah. If they observe that, then teach them that Allah has made a charity (*zakāh*) obligatory for them which will be taken from their rich and returned to their poor. If they observe that, then avoid taking their most prized possessions (i.e., as charity). And beware of the supplication of the oppressed, for there is no barrier between it and Allah.”<sup>159</sup>160
26. Imam Aḥmad relates from Muhammad ibn Fuḍayl, from ‘Aṭā’ (who is Ibn al-Sā’ib), from Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (who is al-Sulamī al-Muqri’), who narrates: “The Companions of the Prophet ﷺ who used to teach us [the Qur’an] told us that they would learn ten verses from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and would not move onto the next ten until they had understood the knowl-

---

159 One of the benefits to be taken from this hadith is that, in education and calling [to the religion], topics should be addressed in order of importance.

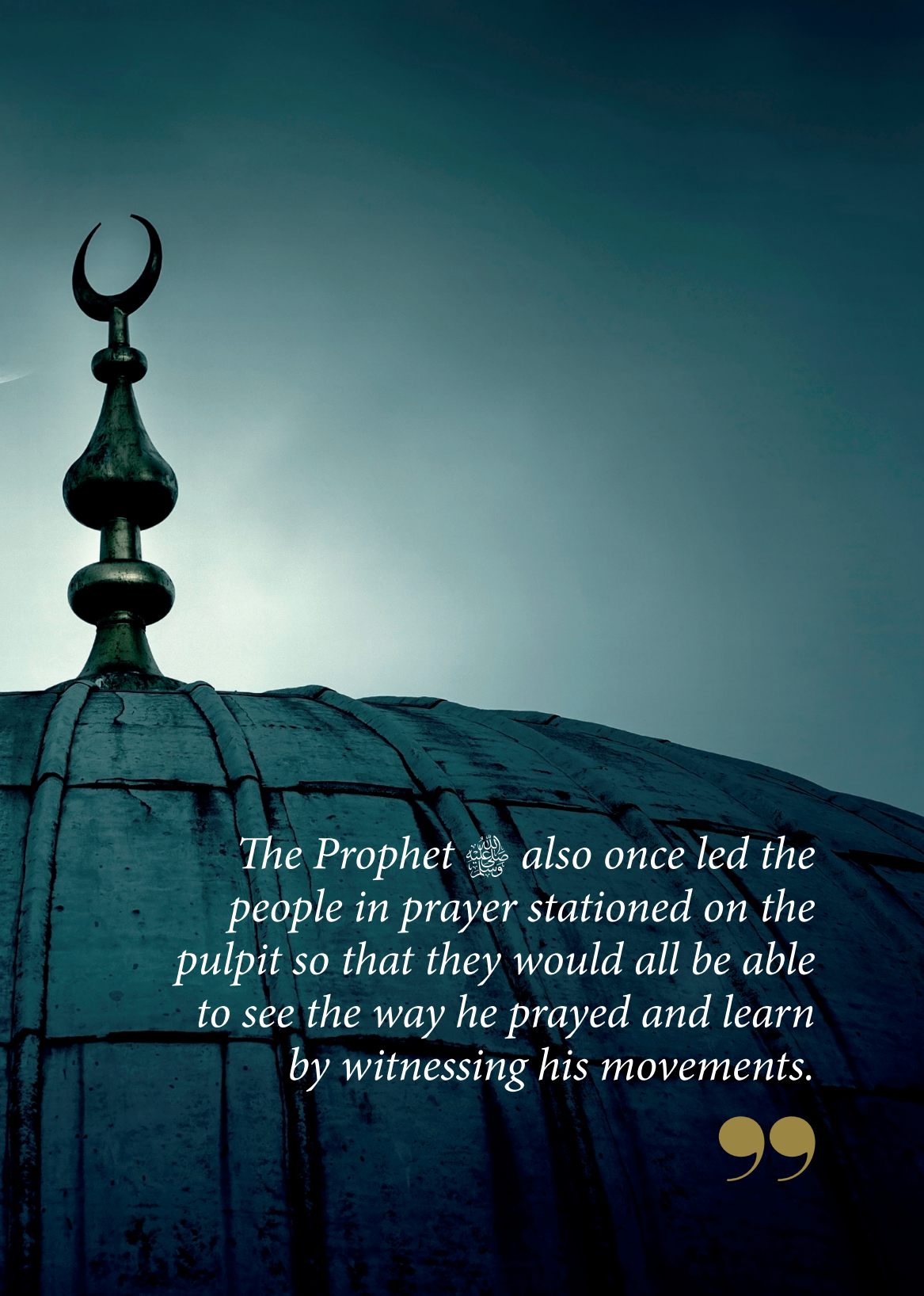
Bukhārī says in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*: “The ‘*rabbānī*’ (i.e., the ‘educator’ or ‘nurturer’) is the one who teaches the people basic knowledge before advanced knowledge.” Ibn Ḥajar comments in *Fatḥ al-Bārī* (1/162): “Basic knowledge refers to the clear points related to a topic and advanced knowledge refers to its intricate details. Other opinions state [that it means] to teach the people particular before general [applications of principles], branches of a topic before its foundations, or the introduction to an issue before its objectives.”

Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr relates in *Jāmi’ Bayān al-‘Ilm* (1/431) from Yūnus ibn Yazīd, who narrates: “Ibn Shihāb said to me: ‘O Yūnus, do not go to excess in acquiring knowledge, for knowledge is like [many] valleys; whichever one you take will bring you to a halt before you reach its end. Rather, acquire knowledge with the days and nights. Do not acquire it in one go, for whoever acquires it in one go, it will leave him in one go. Rather, [acquire it] a piece at a time with the days and nights.’”

160 Reported by Bukhārī (1496) and Muslim (19).





A low-angle photograph of a mosque's dome and minaret. The minaret, topped with a crescent moon, rises from the left side of the frame. The dome, covered in dark tiles, occupies the lower half of the image. The sky is a clear, pale blue. The text is overlaid on the right side of the dome.

*The Prophet ﷺ also once led the people in prayer stationed on the pulpit so that they would all be able to see the way he prayed and learn by witnessing his movements.*

”

edge and actions they contained.”<sup>161</sup>

27. Ṭabarī reports from al-Ḥusayn ibn Wāqid that al-A‘mash narrated to him, from Shaqīq, from Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “When a man amongst us learnt ten verses [of the Qur’an], he would not move on until he had understood their meaning and put them into practice.”<sup>162</sup>

### Observance of moderation and avoidance of long-windedness in his teaching

The Prophet ﷺ would pay attention to the time commitments and personal circumstances of his Companions when reminding and teaching them so that they would not become disinterested or weary.

28. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Muslim – from al-A‘mash, from Shaqīq Abū Wā’il, who narrates: “We were sitting at the door of ‘Abdullāh [ibn Mas‘ūd] waiting for him when Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiyah al-Nakha‘ī passed us. We said [to him]: ‘Let him know that we are here.’”<sup>163</sup>

He entered, and almost immediately ‘Abdullāh رضي الله عنه came out to us. ‘I was informed that you were here, but the only thing preventing me from coming out was not wanting to bore you. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was considerate of giving us reminders on

---

161 Reported by Aḥmad (23482).

162 Reported by Ṭabarī (1/44).

163 i.e., “let him know that we are waiting for him.”

certain days, for fear of making us weary.<sup>164”165</sup>

29. Bukhārī and Muslim also relate – and the wording here is from both – from Manşūr, from Shaqīq Abū Wā'il, who narrates: “‘Abdullāh would remind the people every Thursday. A man said to him: ‘O Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (which was the *kunyah* of ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd), we love your talks and long for them. [In fact,] we would love for you to address us every day.’

‘The only thing preventing me is not wanting to bore you,’ he replied. ‘I am considerate of giving you reminders, just as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was considerate of us when giving reminders, for fear of making us weary.’<sup>166”167</sup>

30. Bukhārī and Muslim also relate from Anas ؓ that the Prophet ﷺ said: “Facilitate, and do not make things difficult. Convey

---

164 i.e., the Prophet ﷺ would remind and exhort his Companions on some days and leave them on others, not wanting to bore them and to ensure that they would learn from him willingly, attentively, and energetically rather than becoming impatient and irritated and missing out on the intended meaning of the lesson.

165 Reported by Bukhārī (68) and Muslim (2821a).

166 Ibn Hajar comments in *Fath al-Bārī* (1/163): “We learn from this hadith the desirability of avoiding constant exertion in righteous actions for fear of exhaustion. Consistency is desirable, but it should be one of two types: either every day without overburdening, or on alternate days with a rest day in between, and this will differ from person to person based on their circumstances, the needs of the community, and their levels of energy.”

167 Reported by Bukhārī (70) and Muslim (2821c).



good news, and do not drive [people] away.<sup>168</sup>169

31. The transmission related by Muslim from Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī رضي الله عنه reads: “Whenever the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent one of his Companions on an errand, he would say: ‘Convey glad tidings, and do not repel. Facilitate, and do not make things difficult.’”<sup>170</sup>

## His observance of individual differences between his students

The Prophet ﷺ paid great attention to the individual differences between those who came to learn from him, speak to him, and ask him. He would address each person according to their level of understanding and in a way that was commensurate with their standing. The Prophet ﷺ was especially careful with the hearts of those who were new to Islam and did not address them in the same way as those who were more accomplished in the religion. Furthermore, when somebody asked him a question, he

---

168 Imam Nawawī says in the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (12/41): “This hadith enjoins conveying good news of the Favour of Allah, the greatness of His Reward, the abundance of His Gifts, and the vastness of His Mercy, and forbids making frightening threats and warnings without accompanying them with good news.

The hadith also clarifies [the importance of] tenderness to those who have recently embraced Islam and not being severe towards them. Likewise, those who have reached or almost reached puberty and those who have repented from sins should all be treated with kindness and gradually introduced to the various forms of obedience [to Allah].

The obligations of Islam are introduced gradually. Whenever [engaging in] a form of obedience is easy for a person, the result is usually an increase [in performing that action], but whenever a form of obedience is difficult for a person, then it leads to them not engaging in that action, not remaining consistent in it, or not finding pleasure in it.”

Ibn Ḥajar comments in *Fath al-Bārī* (1/163): “Likewise, teaching knowledge should be in stages, because if something is easy in its beginning, then it will become beloved to the person that engages in it, they will be energized, and the outcome will usually be that the person increases [in knowledge], whereas the opposite scenario will lead to a different result.”

169 Reported by Bukhārī (69) and Muslim (1734).

170 Reported by Muslim (1732).

would answer with that which was most prescient and most suited to their particular circumstance.

32. Bukhārī and Muslim also relate – and the wording here is from both – from Anas ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه that the Prophet ﷺ, with Mu'adh ibn Jabal رضي الله عنه riding behind him on his camel, said: “O Mu'adh!”

“At your service and pleasure, O Messenger of Allah”, Mu'adh replied.

“O Mu'adh!” the Prophet ﷺ repeated.

“At your service and pleasure, O Messenger of Allah”, Mu'adh replied.

“O Mu'adh!” the Prophet ﷺ said [for a third time].

“At your service and pleasure, O Messenger of Allah”, Mu'adh replied.

The Prophet ﷺ said: “There is no slave who bears witness that there is no deity [worthy of worship] except Allah and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger sincerely from his heart except that Allah will make the Fire forbidden for him.”

“O Messenger of Allah”, Mu'adh asked, “shall I inform the people [of this] so that they rejoice?”

“In that case, they will rely [on this principle alone]”,<sup>171</sup> the

---

171 i.e., do not give them this good news, for they will stop performing good deeds, relying on the meaning that is immediately apparent, that just bearing witness to the Oneness [of Allah] and to the [truth of] the Messenger is sufficient to save a person from the Fire, and they will not pay attention to the fact that the intended meaning is to bring the *shahādah* whilst fulfilling its requirements of

## Prophet ﷺ replied.

---

obeying Allah and His Messenger ﷺ [by following] Divine Laws and Rulings.

This hadith also clarifies that advanced knowledge should be reserved for people of precision and sound understanding and should not be bestowed upon those students who are not worthy of it from amongst those you fear will make [unwarranted] concessions or those you are sure are lacking in their understanding, as was stated by al-Badr al-'Aynī in *ʿUmdah al-Qārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (2/208).

Ibn Rajab remarked in his commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: “The scholars said: ‘We take from the fact that Mu’adh was forbidden from informing the people [of this principle] lest they rely [on it] that the narrations of concessions should not be spread amongst the general public, due to their lack of understanding of the intended meaning behind them. Mu’adh heard of [this concession], but he only increased his efforts in performing righteous deeds and in his awe of Allah ﷻ. As for a person who had not reached his level, however, they would not be safe from decreasing [in their good deeds] and relying on the surface meaning of the statement.’” As related in *Faṭḥ al-Mulḥim* (1/588), the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* by esteemed scholar Shabbīr Aḥmad al-ʿUthmānī.

In the same vein, whoever avoids narrating everything to every person is following the practice of the Companions and the people of knowledge who came after them. Bukhārī (127) reports from ‘Alī ﷺ, who said: “Speak to the people according to what they know. Would you like for Allah and His Messenger to be denied?” Adam ibn Abī Iyās adds to his statement, in *Kitāb al-ʿIlm*: “...and leave what they are unfamiliar with”. As related by Ibn Ḥajar in *Faṭḥ al-Bārī* (1/225).

The meaning of “what they know” is “what they understand”, and the meaning of “what they are unfamiliar with” is “what they will have difficulty understanding”. As for the statement, “Would you like for Allah and His Messenger to be denied”, this refers to the fact that if a person hears something they can neither comprehend nor conceptualize, they may ignorantly presume that thing to be impossible and not believe in its existence. If such a person is told about such a statement from the Prophet ﷺ, it could push them into denying it, and denying the Prophet ﷺ is tantamount to denying Allah ﷻ.

Ibn Ḥajar says in *Faṭḥ al-Bārī* (1/225): “This is proof that the general masses should not be exposed to issues that are not explicit. An example of this is the statement of Ibn Masʿūd ﷺ that was reported by Muslim (14): ‘Narrating hadiths to people that their intellects cannot grasp will cause a trial (*fitnah*) for some of them.’

Amongst those who disliked narrating to certain people were Aḥmad with narrations whose apparent meaning indicated [the permissibility of] rebelling against the ruler, Mālik with narrations relating to the Characteristics of Allah (i.e., those whose apparent meaning could be [falsely] perceived as anthropomorphism), Abū Yūsuf with *gharīb* narrations, and before them Abū Hurayrah and Ḥudhayfah.



The criterion for this [restraint] was if a narration’s surface meaning could foster [unwarranted] innovation [in the religion], and when that surface meaning was not intended in origin. In such cases, withholding the narration from those who it is feared may take it at its surface meaning is advisable, and Allah knows best.”

This is a major principle in the field of education, for a teacher to pay attention to the cognitive abilities of their student, instruct them according to what their intellect can handle, and avoid anything further than that.

Mu'adh did relate it at the time of his death, however, for fear of being sinful [by concealing the knowledge]<sup>172 173</sup>.

### 33. Imam Aḥmad relates from 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ ,

---



Imam Ghazālī  comments in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (1/57-58): "One of the responsibilities of a teacher is to restrict themselves with their student according to their level of comprehension. The teacher should not expose them to things their intellect cannot grasp. In doing so, the teacher should follow the example of the Leader of Humanity  – who would always pay attention to this in his teaching, speaking, and reminding – and disseminate truth to the student [only] if he knows that they will be able to comprehend it.

It is not appropriate for a scholar to spread everything they know to every person. This applies even if the students understand something but is not in a position to benefit from it, so how about if they do not even understand it?! For that reason, it was said (by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī in *Qūt al-Qulūb*): 'Gauge for every slave [of Allah] according to the measure of their intellect and weigh for them according to the scale of their understanding, until you are safe from them and they benefit from you. Otherwise, disavowal will occur due to the incongruity in measurement.'

Allah Most High said, 'Do not entrust the incapable [among your dependents] with your wealth' (*al-Nisā'*, 5), indicating that it is better to withhold knowledge from those it will corrupt and harm, and the injustice of giving to one who is not deserving is no less than the injustice of withholding from one who is.

For a beginner student, a teacher should introduce them to material that is clear, easy to understand, and appropriate to their level. The teacher should not mention that there is more intricate knowledge that they are storing [for a later date], for that will extinguish their desire for the clear material [you have taught them], disturb their heart, and give them the mistaken impression that you are stingily withholding [knowledge] from them, for every individual believes that they are worthy of [advanced,] intricate material.

Indeed, it is not appropriate to even enter the realities of intricate sciences with the general masses. Rather, a teacher should restrict themselves to educating them in acts of worship, teaching them integrity in the occupations that concern them, and filling their hearts with yearning for Paradise and fear of the Fire, as the Qur'an articulates, and should not disturb them with doubtful or elusive matters, for perhaps one of those doubts will attach itself to their heart, be difficult to remove, and lead them to misery and destruction."

172 Imam Abū 'Amr ibn al-Ṣalāh says in his commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, p. 185: "My explanation of Mu'adh's relating of that at the time of his death, even though the Prophet  had forbidden him from doing so, is: the Prophet  forbade him from publicly announcing it, fearing that someone with no knowledge or experience would hear it, be misled, and rely [solely] upon it, but he did inform specific individuals from the people of knowledge of realities who were safe from falling into that trap, and he informed Mu'adh. Following that example, Mu'adh informed particular individuals whom he saw as deserving [of that knowledge], for fear of being sinful by concealing the information, and Allah knows best."

173 Reported by Bukhārī (128) and Muslim (32).

who narrates: “We were with the Prophet ﷺ when a young man arrived and asked: ‘O Messenger of Allah, can I kiss when I am fasting?’

‘No’, he replied.

Then, an old man arrived. ‘Can I kiss when I am fasting?’ he asked.

‘Yes’, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied. The people exchanged glances. ‘I know why you are looking at one another’, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘[but] the old man can control himself.’<sup>174,175</sup>

34. Bukhārī and Muslim relate from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ؓ, who narrates: “A man came to the Prophet ﷺ seeking permission to join the struggle [in the path of Allah]. ‘Are your parents alive?’ he asked.

‘Yes’, he replied.

‘Then strive with them’, he said.<sup>176,177</sup>

35. Muslim relates from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ ؓ, who narrates: “A man approached the Prophet ﷺ and said: ‘May I pledge allegiance to you upon migration and striving [in the path of

---

174 i.e., the old man is not in fear of breaking his fast by engaging in intercourse, whereas for the young man, kissing might push him towards intercourse or ejaculation, thereby ruining his fast. Because of the different circumstances of the two questioners, the Prophet ﷺ gave them different answers.

175 Reported by Aḥmad (6739).

176 i.e., if you have your parents, then exert yourself in being dutiful and righteous towards them, for that will be your equivalent of striving [in the path of Allah] and fighting the enemy.

177 Reported by Bukhārī (3004) and Muslim (2549).

Allah], seeking reward from Allah thereby?’

‘Are either of your parents alive?’ the Prophet ﷺ asked.

‘Yes. In fact, both are,’ he replied.

‘Are you seeking reward from Allah?’ the Prophet ﷺ asked.

‘Yes,’ he replied.

‘In that case, go back to them and look after them in a beautiful manner,’ the Prophet ﷺ said.”<sup>178</sup>

The Prophet ﷺ would regularly stress the importance of striving [in the path of Allah] and migration and galvanize people to engage in them, but for this individual, he discerned that taking care of his parents was more important and more virtuous than joining the struggle [in the path of Allah].

The topic of the Prophet ﷺ giving different answers depending on circumstances and abilities of the questioner is a broad one, and there are many examples of this found in the books of the pure Sunnah.

An example of this is the distinct responses he gave when asked for advice by different individuals, for he would advise each person according to their situation.

36. Imam Aḥmad and Tirmidhī relate – and the wording here is from Aḥmad – from Abū Dharr رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “I said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, advise me.’

---

178 Reported by Muslim (2549).

‘Be mindful of Allah wherever you are, follow a bad action with a good deed to wipe it out, and treat the people in an exemplary manner.’”<sup>179</sup>

37. Bukhārī and Tirmidhī also relate – and the wording here is from both – from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه that a man said to the Prophet ﷺ: “Give me some advice, but make it concise so that I am able to internalize<sup>180</sup> it.”

“Do not get angry”, he advised. The man repeated his request several times, but each time, the Prophet ﷺ said: “Do not get angry.”<sup>181</sup><sup>182</sup>

38. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Muslim – from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه that a Bedouin came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said: “O Messenger of Allah, direct me to an action that, if I perform it, will make me enter Paradise.”

He replied: “Worship Allah and do not associate any partners with Him, establish the prayer, give the obligatory *zakāh*, and fast [the month of] Ramadan.”

The man said: ‘By the One with my soul in His hand, I will not exceed that.’

When he had left, the Prophet ﷺ said [to his Companions]:

---

<sup>179</sup> Reported by Aḥmad (21392) and Tirmidhī (1987).

<sup>180</sup> i.e., comprehend and memorize.

<sup>181</sup> Khaṭṭābī said: “Meaning: do not expose yourself to the causes of anger, for anger is a part of a human’s natural disposition and cannot simply be erased. Or: do not perform the actions or say the things that compel you to anger.” As related by al-Badr al-‘Aynī in ‘Umdat al-Qārī (22/164).

<sup>182</sup> Reported by Bukhārī (6116) and Tirmidhī (2020).



“Whoever is pleased to see a man from the people of Paradise should look at him.”<sup>183</sup><sup>184</sup>

39. Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah relate – and the wording here is from Tirmidhī – from ‘Abdullāh ibn Busr رضي الله عنه that a man said: “O Messenger of Allah, the legislations of Islam have mounted up on me, so inform me of something I can cling on to.”

He replied: “Keep your tongue moist with the remembrance of Allah.”<sup>185</sup>

40. Muslim, Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājah relate – and the wording here is from Muslim – from Sufyān ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Thaqafī رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “I said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, tell me such a statement about Islam that I will not [need to] ask anyone after you.’

He replied: ‘Say, “My Lord is Allah”, and then remain steadfast.’<sup>186</sup><sup>187</sup>

The wording related by Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah reads: “I said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, tell me something I can hold on to.’

---

183 People sometimes utter this statement, “Whoever is pleased to see a man from the people of Paradise should look at him”, about righteous individuals, but this should be avoided, for this implies an absolute certainty on the part of the speaker that the individual they are describing is from the people of Paradise, and no-one can know this except for Allah and His Messenger ﷺ through Revelation from Allah, so pay attention to this reminder.

184 Reported by Bukhārī (1397) and Muslim (14).

185 Reported by Tirmidhī (3375) and Ibn Mājah (3075).

186 Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ remarked: “This is one of the concise yet comprehensive statements of the Prophet ﷺ, and it corresponds with the words of Allah Most High: ‘Surely those who say, “Our Lord is Allah”, and then remain steadfast’ (*Fuṣṣilat*, 30; *al-Aḥqāf*, 13). Meaning: they single out Allah [in worship] and affirm their faith in Him, then they remain steadfast, do not deviate from their belief in His Oneness, and remain in His obedience ﷺ until they die in that state.” As related by Imam Nawawī in the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.

187 Reported by Muslim (38).

He replied: ‘Say, “My Lord is Allah”, and then remain steadfast.’

‘O Messenger of Allah, what do you fear most for me?’ I asked.

He took hold of his own tongue. ‘This,’ he said.”<sup>188</sup>

41. Tirmidhī relates from ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Āmir ؓ, who narrates: “I asked: ‘O Messenger of Allah, what is salvation?’

He replied: ‘Control your tongue, let your home be spacious for you,<sup>189</sup> and weep over your sins.”<sup>190</sup>

And there are other narrations where the Prophet ﷺ gave concise, comprehensive counsel tailored to the needs and circumstances of the questioner. Also pertinent to this topic are the different responses he gave when asked about “the most virtuous” or “the most beloved” of deeds. Each time he was asked, he would give the answer he saw as most applicable to the questioner or most appropriate at the time of the question. Again, he would always take the individual’s needs and circumstances into account.

42. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Muslim – from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ؓ that a man asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: “What is the best [deed in] Islam?”

He replied: “Providing food, and conveying greetings to those you know and those you do not.”<sup>191</sup>

---

188 Reported by Tirmidhī (2410), and Ibn Mājah (3972).

189 Translator’s note: i.e., stick to your home for the purpose of worshipping Allah.

190 Reported by Tirmidhī (2406).

191 Reported by Bukhārī (12) and Muslim (39).

43. Muslim relates from 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr رضي الله عنه that a man asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: "Who are the best of the Muslims?"<sup>192</sup>

"The one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe", he replied.<sup>193</sup>

44. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Bukhārī – from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه that the Prophet ﷺ was asked: "What is the most virtuous action?"

"Belief in Allah and His Messenger", he replied.

"Then what", he was asked.

"Striving in the cause of Allah", he replied.

"Then what?" he was asked.

"An accepted Hajj", he replied.<sup>194</sup>

45. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Muslim – from 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه, who narrates: "I asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: 'Which action is the most virtuous?' (And in another transmission: 'Which action is the most beloved to Allah?')

'Prayer at its correct time', he replied.

'Then which?' I asked.

'Being dutiful to one's parents', he replied.

---

192 i.e., in their embodiment of the characteristics of Islam.

193 Reported by Muslim (40).

194 Reported by Bukhārī (1519) and Muslim (83).

‘Then which?’ I asked.

‘Striving in the path of Allah,’ he replied. I only left asking for more out of sympathy for him.<sup>195”196</sup>

46. Abū Ya’lā relates from a man from the Khath’am [tribe], who narrates: “I came to the Prophet ﷺ whilst he was with a group of his Companions. ‘Are you the one who claims to be the Messenger of Allah?’ I asked.

‘Yes,’ he replied.

‘O Messenger of Allah, which action is most beloved to Allah?’ I asked.

‘Faith in Allah,’ he replied.

‘O Messenger of Allah, then what?’ I asked.

‘Then, connecting ties of kinship,’ he replied.

‘O Messenger of Allah, then what?’ I asked.

‘Then, enjoining good and forbidding evil,’ he replied.

‘O Messenger of Allah, which action is most hated by Allah?’ I asked.

‘Associating partners with Allah,’ he replied.

---

195 i.e., “I did not continue asking about more deeds and their order of virtue out of compassion for the Prophet ﷺ.” This is an example of the mercy and affection a student should have for their teacher and shows that they should always look out for their best interests, as stated by Imam Nawawī in his commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (2/79).

196 Reported by Bukhārī (527) and Muslim (85c).

‘O Messenger of Allah, then what?’ I asked.

‘Then, cutting ties of kinship’, he replied.

‘O Messenger of Allah, then what?’ I asked.

‘Then, enjoining evil and forbidding good’, he replied.<sup>197</sup>198

There are further narrations in a similar vein, where the Prophet ﷺ gave different responses in explaining the “best” or “most beloved” of deeds. The variation in his answers was always in observance of either the individual traits of the groups and individuals who asked him or the time and context of the question. The Prophet ﷺ taught each person what they needed to know, a pillar of Islam they had not yet completed or learnt about, that which they were yearning for, or that which suited them.

Or, he would tell the questioner the most pertinent piece of information for that moment in time. For example, in the early days of Islam, *jihād* was the best of deeds, for it was a means of establishing and implanting the pillars of the religion. Also, there may be many proofs indicating that prayer is a more virtuous action than charity, but at times of difficulty and need, charity becomes more virtuous.<sup>199</sup>

The Prophet ﷺ was a guiding, counselling, and discerning teacher,

---

197 This narration and the one before it show that a person giving religious rulings or a teacher should have patience with the person they are giving the ruling to or teaching, and should be prepared to deal with both numerous and repetitive questions.

198 Reported by Abū Ya‘lā (6839). Mundhirī says in *al-Targhib wa al-Tarhib* (3/336): “Its chain of transmission is accurate (*jayyid*).”

199 Sometimes, the differences in the answers the Prophet ﷺ gave can also be attributed to a difference in the wording of the question, or to the various forms of tutelage the Prophet ﷺ employed for different individuals, for the ranks of virtue and levels of righteousness are many.

For further scholarly discussion of these noble narrations, see the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (2/77-78) by Imam Nawawī, *Faṭḥ al-Bārī* (2/9) by Ibn Hajar, *Faṭḥ al-Mulhim bi Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (1/623-627) by Shabbir Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī, and *Fayḍ al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (1/80-81) by al-Kashmīrī.

blessing each person with the specific insight they required and the information that best suited their situation.

## Teaching through conversation and questioning

One of the most prominent teaching methods of the Prophet ﷺ was through conversation and questioning. This technique was used to capture the attention of the listener and make them crave an answer to the question he had posed. He would encourage them to engage their minds in formulating an answer themselves. That way, when they were unable to do so, the answer of the Prophet ﷺ would have a direct impact on the listeners and be immediately comprehensible.

47. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Muslim – from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘Can you imagine if there was a river at one of your doors in which you bathed five times per day; would any dirt remain?’

‘Not a speck of dirt would remain,’ the people replied.

He said: ‘Likewise with the five [daily] prayers; Allah wipes away sins with them.’”<sup>200</sup>

48. Imam Aḥmad relates from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asking: ‘Do you know who the Muslim is?’

‘Allah and His Messenger know best,’ the people replied.

‘The one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe,’ he

---

200 Reported by Bukhārī (528) and Muslim (667).

said. 'Do you know who the believer is?'

'Allah and His Messenger know best', the people replied.

'The one whom the believers trust with their lives and wealth,' he said, 'and the emigrant is the one who emigrates away from evil and avoids it.'<sup>201</sup><sup>202</sup>

49. Muslim relates from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه, who narrates: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: 'Do you know what<sup>203</sup> a bankrupt person is?'

201 The words "Muslims" and "believers" in this narration are not used to exclude others from the principle being described. Harm and deception are both impermissible in Islam, regardless of whether they are committed against a Muslim, or against a person protected by a covenant with the Muslims (*dhimmī*). In fact, I believe that harming or deceiving a *dhimmī* is even more prohibited, because of the narration reported by Abū Dāwūd (3052) with a good chain of transmission: "Indeed, if anyone wrongs a person protected by covenant (i.e., a *dhimmī*), diminishes his right, burdens him beyond his capacity, or takes something from him without his approval, then I will be their adversary on the Day of Judgement." Therefore, the Noble Prophet ﷺ established himself as the enemy of anyone who wrongs a *dhimmī*.

202 Reported by Aḥmad (6925).

203 The transmission includes the word "*mā*", meaning "what". The question here is about the reality of "a bankrupt person", and for that reason the word "*mā*", or "what", rather than "*man*", or "who", is used. Sanūsī notes in his commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (8:18), regarding the saying of the Prophet ﷺ, "Do you know what a bankrupt person is": "Qurtubī said, 'This is the narration. The word "*mā*" is traditionally used for unconscious things, but here it is applied to conscious beings.' Ubayy said: 'Some said that Sibawayh's school of thought allowed for the word "*mā*" to [also] be applied to conscious beings', and Ibn al-Hājj took that from Sibawayh's statement *Al-Kitāb*, after completing his discussion on the word '*man*': 'And like it is [the word] "*mā*", [which may be applied] abstractly to everything.'

The question here, using '*mā*', is about a reality, and a reality is an unconscious thing, just as if you were to ask, 'What is humanity?', and so on. An example [from the Qur'an] is, 'Fir'awn asked, "And what is 'the Lord of all worlds'" (*al-Shu'arā*, 23). Here, Allah Most High did not say '*man*', or 'who', and [instead,] '*mā*' has taken its place."

In some books that relate from *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, such as *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn*, the narration includes the word "*man*". This contradicts the original narration, as you can see, and could be a mistake on the part of one of the transmitters, and Allah knows best.



‘We understand a bankrupt person to be someone with no dirhams (i.e., money) or belongings’, the people replied.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘The bankrupt person from my nation is the one who comes on the Day of Judgement having prayed, fasted, and given *zakāh*, but he has also insulted this person, hurled abuse at this person, [unlawfully] consumed the wealth of this person, spilt the blood of this person, and beat this person. So, this person (i.e., the complainant) is given from his good deeds, [then] this person is given from his good deeds. If his good deeds run out before the claims against him are settled, then their evil deeds will be taken and cast on him. Then, he shall be tossed into the Fire.’”<sup>204</sup>

In the narration above, the Prophet ﷺ first asks his Companions a question, then informs them of its [true] answer, alerting their intellects to the fact that the real bankruptcy will be the bankruptcy of the Day of Judgement.

One of the most famous examples of [his teaching through] conversation is the hadith of Jibrīl elucidating the pillars of Islam, which is narrated by ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ and other Companions. In this narration, the most important articles of faith are presented to the Companions in the form of a dialogue between the Messenger ﷺ and Jibrīl ؑ as a way of teaching them the landmark features of their religion.

50. Muslim and other imams relate from ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ, who narrates: “We were with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ one day when a man appeared before us. His clothes were a pure white

---

204 Reported by Muslim (2581).

and his hair was jet-black. He showed no signs of travel and none of us recognized him. He sat in front of the Prophet ﷺ, bringing their knees to meet, and placed his hands on his thighs.<sup>205</sup> Then, he said: 'O Muhammad, tell me about Islam.'

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: 'Islam is to bear witness that there is no deity [worthy of worship] except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, to establish the prayer, to give *zakāh*, to fast [the month of] Ramadan, and to make the pilgrimage to the House if one is able to do so.'

'You have spoken the truth', the man said. We were astonished that he would ask [the Prophet ﷺ] and then confirm the veracity [of his response]!<sup>206</sup> [Next,] the man said: 'Tell me about faith.'

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: '[Faith is] to believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in predestiny – both the good and the bad thereof.

'You have spoken the truth', the man said. 'Tell me about *iḥsān*', he continued.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: '[*Iḥsān* is] to worship Allah as if you can see him, for although you do not see him, He cer-

---

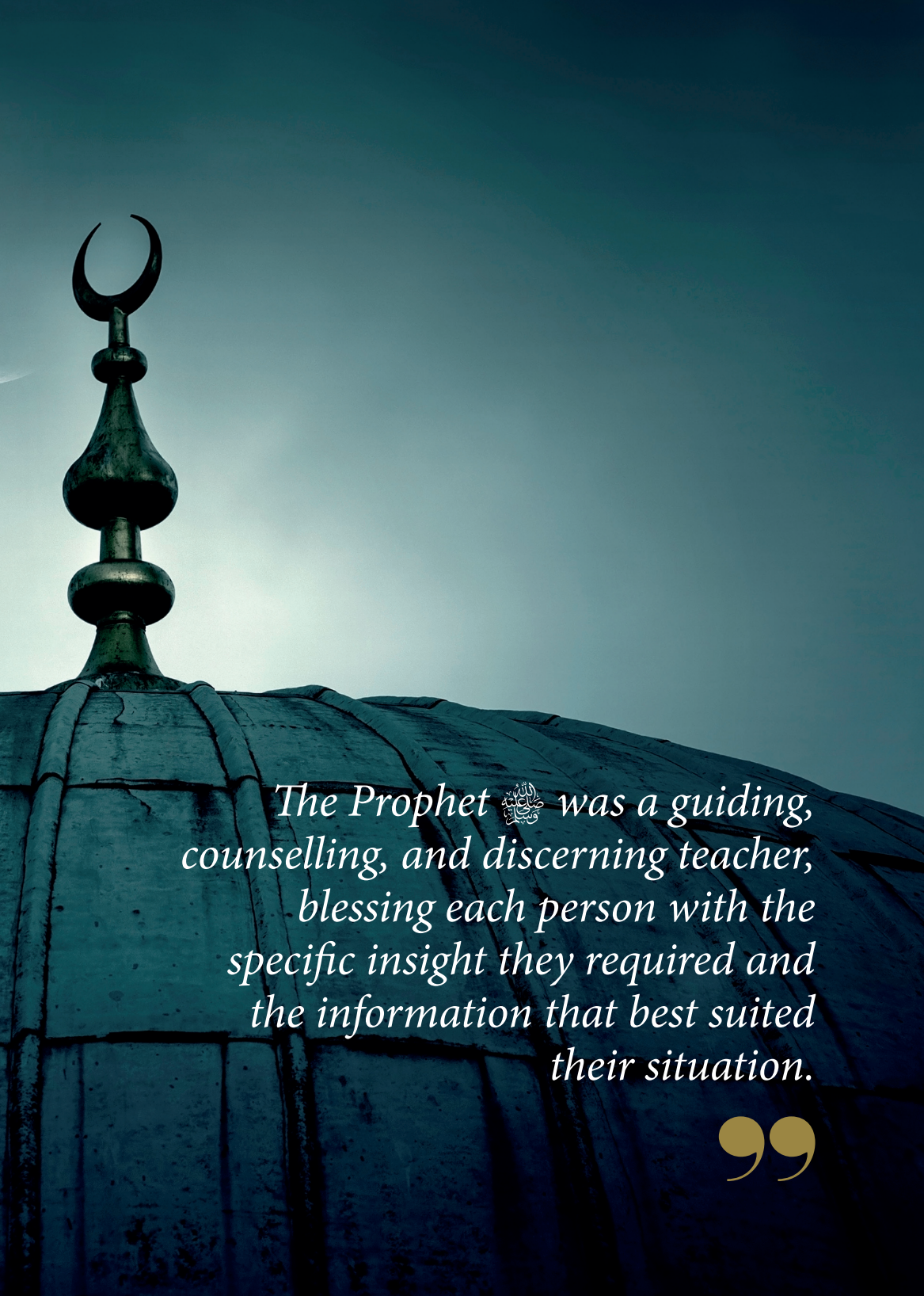
205 i.e., the man entered and placed his hands on his own thighs, sitting in the manner of a student. As stated by Nawawī.

206 They were astonished because usually a question indicates that the person asking it is ignorant on the matter, whereas confirming the answer suggests that they already know it. Furthermore, the response that the Prophet ﷺ gave was something that only could have been learnt from him, and they had no knowledge of this man having ever had met the Prophet ﷺ, let alone heard from him.

In some transmissions, they say about Jibril: "We had never seen a man like him. It was as if he was teaching the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, saying to him: 'You have spoken the truth. You have spoken the truth.'"





A low-angle photograph of a mosque's dome and minaret. The minaret, topped with a crescent moon, rises from the left side of the frame. The dome's surface is visible in the foreground, showing its curved structure and some wear. The background is a clear, bright blue sky. The overall tone is serene and majestic.

*The Prophet ﷺ was a guiding, counselling, and discerning teacher, blessing each person with the specific insight they required and the information that best suited their situation.*

”

tainly sees you.”<sup>207</sup>

‘Tell me about the Hour’, the man said.

‘The questioned is no better informed than the questioner’, the Messenger ﷺ replied.<sup>208</sup>

‘Then tell me about its signs’, the man said.

The Messenger ﷺ replied: ‘A female servant will give birth to her master, and you will see the destitute<sup>209</sup>, naked<sup>210</sup>, and barefoot shepherds competing in the height of their buildings.’<sup>211</sup> The man then went on his way. I stayed for some time. Then, the Messenger ﷺ said: ‘O ‘Umar, do you know who the questioner was?’

---

207 Imam Nawawī says in the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (1/157-158) and the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, pp. 245-246: “If we appreciated the fact that when we stand in worship, our Lord ﷻ is watching us, we would have absolutely no lack in our humility and submission. We would present ourselves in the best form and posture, and take extreme care, both inwardly and outwardly, to conduct our acts of worship in the best possible manner.”

208 He did not say, “I am no better informed than you about it”, as the situation seems to call for, [because he wished] to indicate the universality of his response, and to teach the listeners that any person questioning or being questioned about the time of the Hour’s establishment is in the same position.

Imam Nawawī says in the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (1/158): “We learn from this that if a scholar, mufti, or anyone else is asked about an issue they do not have knowledge of, they should say, ‘I do not know’. To do so is not sign of deficiency; rather, it indicates a person’s piety, consciousness [of Allah], and abundant knowledge.”

209 An “‘aīl” is a destitute person with many dependents.

210 An “‘ārī” is a person who has a part of their body which should be covered exposed.

211 The intended meaning is that the circumstances of the people of the desert will be changed by them taking power and capturing land through conquest, thereby increasing in wealth and turning their efforts towards constructing and showing off their buildings. Also relevant here is the narration: “The Hour will not be established until the happiest person in the world is *luka*’, the son of *luka*.” (Translator’s note: Reported by Tirmidhī, 2209). “*luka*” here refers to a wicked or depraved person. Also pertinent is the narration: “When power is bestowed upon those who do not deserve it, then await the Hour”. (Translator’s note: Reported by Bukhārī, 59). See *Faṭḥ al-Bārī* (1/123) and *Faṭḥ al-Mulhim* (1/487-488).

‘Allah and His Messenger know best’, I replied.

The Messenger ﷺ said. ‘It was Jibrīl. He came to teach you your religion.’<sup>212</sup>

This hadith clearly conveys that the coming of Jibrīl ﷺ and his questioning of the Prophet ﷺ was for a noble, educational purpose.

## Teaching through intellectual discussion and negotiation

Another teaching method which the Prophet ﷺ would employ on occasion was a process of intellectual adjudication in a question-and-answer format. He used this method either to eradicate false ideas from the souls of those viewed them favourably, or to strengthen the truth in the hearts of those who considered it far-fetched or strange. From the first application of this method:

51. Aḥmad and Ṭabarānī relate – and the wording here is from Aḥmad – from Abū Umāmah al-Bāhili ؓ that a young man came

---

212 Reported by Muslim (8a). Also reported by Bukhārī (50) from the transmission of Abū Hurayrah ؓ. The best sources for the numerous chains of transmission and wordings of this narration are the first volume of *Kitāb al-Imān* by Ibn Mandah and *Faṭḥ al-Bārī* (1/115-125) by Ibn Ḥajar.

From the beneficial points related to education that we can take from this narration, [we learn] that if a person who is attending a scholar's gathering knows about an issue the people have but have not asked about should ask about it themselves so that they can all benefit from the response; that a scholar should be kind and affectionate to a questioner and draw them close to themselves, so that they are able to put forward their enquiry without fear or anguish; and that a questioner should be courteous in their questioning. As related by Imam Nawawī in the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (1/160).

We also learn the permissibility of a questioner asking a scholar something they already know the answer to for the benefit of other listeners.

The statement of the Prophet ﷺ, “to teach you your religion”, is proof that asking a question is both a way of learning and a way of teaching, for although Jibrīl ﷺ only asked a question, the Prophet ﷺ described him as a teacher. And there is also the famous expression: “A good question is half of knowledge.” As related in *Faṭḥ al-Bārī* (1/119, 125).

to the Prophet ﷺ and said: "O Messenger of Allah, give me permission to engage in fornication."

The people turned to the man to reprimand him, saying: "Stop! Stop!"

"Come close", the Prophet ﷺ said. The man came closer and sat down. "Would you like that for your mother?" the Prophet ﷺ asked.

"By Allah, no, O Messenger of Allah. May Allah make me your ransom", he replied.

"Neither do the people like it for their mothers", the Prophet ﷺ said. "Would you like it for your daughter?" he asked.

"By Allah, no, O Messenger of Allah. May Allah make me your ransom", the man replied.

"Neither do the people like it for their daughters", the Prophet ﷺ said. "Would you like it for your sister?" he asked.

"By Allah, no, O Messenger of Allah. May Allah make me your ransom", the man replied.

"Neither do the people like it for their sisters", the Prophet ﷺ said. "Would you like it for your paternal aunt?" he asked.

"By Allah, no, O Messenger of Allah. May Allah make me your ransom", the man replied.

"Neither do the people like it for their paternal aunts", the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said. "Would you like it for your maternal aunt?" he asked.



“By Allah, no, O Messenger of Allah. May Allah make me your ransom”, the man replied.

“Neither do the people like it for their maternal aunts”, the Prophet ﷺ said.

[Abū Umāmah continues:] “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ placed his hand on the young man and said: ‘O Allah, forgive his sins, purify his heart, and protect his private parts.’ After that, he never inclined towards anything [impermissible].”<sup>213</sup>

Look at how the Prophet ﷺ excised the desire for illicit sexual relations from the heart of this young man through discussion, spiritual argumentation, and intellectual debate, and without telling him the [Qur’anic] verse that prohibits fornication or the verse that prescribes the punishment for a male or female who engages in the act. The Prophet ﷺ had observed that at that moment and for that young man, this was the most efficient and effective way of achieving such an outcome.

This also serves as guidance for those calling to Islam to sometimes make use of their intellect when addressing certain individuals, if the occasion demands it, just as the Prophet ﷺ did when he employed guided, intellectual argumentation in purifying this young man’s heart. And from the second application of this method:

52. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Bukhārī – from Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī ؓ, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ went out to the prayer area<sup>214</sup> on [Eid]

213 Reported by Aḥmad (22211) and Ṭabarānī (8/190). Haythamī said in *Majma’ al-Zawā’id* (1/129): “The narrators in the chain of this hadith are *ṣaḥīḥ*.” Irāqī said in *Takhrīj Aḥādīth al-Iḥyā’*: “This narration was reported by Aḥmad with a good chain, and its narrators are *ṣaḥīḥ*.”

214 i.e., the Eid prayer area.

al-Adha or Fitr and said: ‘O assembly of women, give in charity, for I have seen that you are the majority of the people of the Fire.’

‘Why, O Messenger of Allah?’ they asked.

‘[Because] you curse frequently and are ungrateful to your husbands,’ he replied. ‘I have not seen anyone deficient in intellect and religion more capable of making a sensible man lose his mind than one of you.’

‘What is the deficiency in our intellect and religion?’ they asked.

‘Is the witness statement of a woman not equal to half that of a man?’ the Prophet ﷺ said.

‘Yes,’ the women replied.

‘That is from the deficiency in their intellect,’ he said. ‘Does a woman not leave off praying and fasting when she is menstruating?’

‘Yes,’ the women replied.



‘That is from the deficiency in their religion,’ he said.”<sup>215</sup>

## Asking his Companions questions as a means of unveiling their intelligence and knowledge

At times, the Prophet ﷺ would ask his Companions about something he already knew as a way of inciting their perception and activating their intellect and supply them with knowledge through the mould of a discussion designed to test what they already knew.

---

<sup>215</sup> Reported by Bukhārī (304) and Muslim (80).

53. Bukhārī and Muslim relate from 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar , who narrates: "We were sitting with the Prophet  when he was brought some palm heart of the date tree. He said, whilst he was eating them: 'Amongst trees, there is a green tree whose blessings<sup>216</sup> are like the blessings of a Muslim, whose leaves neither fall nor scatter, and which [always] yields its fruit in every season by the Will of its Lord. It is just like a Muslim, so tell me what it is?'"

'Abdullāh said: "The people started thinking of the trees of the desert, saying: 'It is such-and-such tree. It is such-and-such tree.' It occurred to me that it was the date-palm. I wanted to say so, but the people were advanced in years, and I disliked to speak whilst I was [such] a young boy. Then, I turned around and I saw that I was the youngest and smallest of the ten people present, and I saw Abū Bakr and 'Umar were not speaking, so I remained silent.

After the two of them did not speak, the people said: 'Tell us what it is, O Messenger of Allah.'

'It is the date-palm', the Messenger of Allah  replied.

When we stood to leave, I said to my father 'Umar: 'By Allah, O Father, it occurred to me that it was the date-palm.'

'What prevented you from saying so?' he asked.

'I did not see you (plural) speaking', I replied. 'I did not see you

---

216 i.e., goodness and benefit.

and Abū Bakr speaking, and I am a young boy, so I was shy and did not like to say anything [either], and I remained silent.’

‘For you to have said it would have been more beloved to me than owning such-and-such and such-and-such,’ ‘Umar said.”<sup>217</sup>

## Teaching through analogies and examples

On other occasions, the Prophet ﷺ would draw analogies for his Companions and demonstrate the rationale behind certain rulings. In particular, when there were judgements they had not fully grasped or were having difficulty comprehending, he would use analogies to clarify their understanding and help them discern the broader goals and objectives of the Shariah.

54. Bukhārī relates from Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ that a woman from the Juhaynah [tribe] came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: “My mother vowed to perform Hajj, but she died before making the pilgrimage. Can I make the pilgrimage on her behalf?”

“Yes, make the pilgrimage on her behalf”, the Prophet ﷺ replied. “Tell me, if your mother had an outstanding debt, would you pay it off for her?” he asked.

“Yes”, she replied.

“Then pay Allah what is due to Him, for Allah is more worthy of

---

217 Reported by Bukhārī (61, 62, 72, 131, 2209, 4698, 5444, 5448, 6122, 6144) and Muslim (2811a, 2811b, 2811c, 2811d, 2811e).

Here, to draw out all the meanings of this noble hadith, we have combined between the transmissions of Bukhārī and Muslim.

It is also reported by other authors of the six authentic collections, by Aḥmad in his *Musnad*, and by other scholars of Hadith.

repayment”, he said.<sup>218</sup>

55. Also pertinent is what Muslim relates from Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, that a group from the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: “O Messenger of Allah, the wealthy have taken all the reward. They pray as we pray and fast as we fast, and they give charity from their surplus wealth.”

The Prophet ﷺ replied: “Has Allah not given you a way to give charity? Every ‘*subhānallāh*’ is a charitable act, every ‘*Allāhu akbar*’ is a charitable act, every ‘*al-ḥamdulillāh*’ is a charitable act, and every ‘*lā ilāha ill Allāh*’ is a charitable act. Enjoining good is a charitable act, forbidding evil is a charitable act, and your intimacy [with your spouse] is a charitable act.”

“O Messenger of Allah,” the people said, “is that to say that when we fulfil our physical desires, we are rewarded?!”

He replied: ‘Do you see that if you placed it (i.e., your private part) in something unlawful, you would be sinful? Likewise, if you place it in something lawful, you will be rewarded.’”<sup>219</sup>

Here, he drew a parallel between two things so that the matter becomes clear to them and they understand what never occurred to them, namely that a person would be rewarded for this lawful, enjoyable activity, due to the positive outcome that ensues.

56. Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, Nasā’ī, and Ibn Mājah relate from Sa’d

218 Reported by Bukhārī (1852). The phrase “what is due to him” is not found in the transmission of Bukhārī printed in *Faṭḥ al-Bārī*. Rather, it is taken from *Naṣb al-Rāyah* (3/158) by Zayla’ī, who relates the hadith on the authority of Bukhārī.

219 Reported by Muslim (1006).

ibn Abī Waqqāṣ ؓ, who narrates: “I heard the Prophet ﷺ being asked about trading dried dates for fresh dates. ‘Do fresh dates decrease [in volume] when they dry?’ he asked. The people said ‘Yes,’ so he forbade that.”<sup>220</sup>

It is self-evident that the Prophet ﷺ already knew that unripe dates decrease [in volume] when they dry, for he lived in the heart of the Arab Peninsula, the home of dates, and even the person with the least [knowledge] would know such a thing. Nevertheless, the Prophet ﷺ asked them, ‘Do fresh dates decrease [in volume] when they dry?’, to clarify to his Companions, listeners, and followers that the reason it was prohibited to trade fresh dates for dried dates was that fresh dates decrease [in volume] when they dry, and therefore, it would not be appropriate to sell them as like-for-like in weight. He illuminated the reasoning behind the ruling that had been obscured from them, and this was established as a principle of trade that will endure until the end of time.

## Teaching through similes and metaphors

The Prophet ﷺ would often rely on similes and metaphors to elucidate the meaning he wished to convey, using comparisons with things people could see, taste, sense, or touch. This is a way of quickly explaining the thing against which one is teaching or warning, and makes it easy for students to understand whichever topic upon which one is expounding.

The scholars of rhetoric have established that the use of similes and metaphors is a weighty, majestic tool for illuminating hidden meanings and unveiling nuances. Allah ﷻ frequently utilizes similes in His Great Book, and the Prophet ﷺ followed the Qur’an by regularly employing the

---

220 Reported by Abū Dāwūd (3359), Tirmidhi (1225), Nasā’i (4545), and Ibn Mājah (2264).

technique in his addresses, exhortations, and speeches.

Several scholars have compiled the narrations of the Prophet ﷺ which contain similes in dedicated tomes, including Abū al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (d. 310 AH), Abū Aḥmad al-‘Askarī, and Abū Muhammad al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khallād al-Rāmahurmuzī. The *Ṣaḥīḥs*, *Sunans* and *Musnads* also contain many such narrations. For example:

57. Abū Dāwūd relates from Anas ؓ, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘The believer who recites the Qur’an is like a citron; its fragrance is sweet and its taste is delicious. The believer who does not recite the Qur’an is like a date; its taste is sweet but it has no fragrance. The immoral person who recites the Qur’an is like basil; its fragrance is sweet but its taste is bitter. And the immoral person who does not recite the Qur’an is like a colocynt; it has no fragrance and its taste is bitter.

A righteous companion is like a person wearing musk; even if none of it touches you, its fragrance will. And an evil companion is like a person with bellows<sup>221</sup>; even if its black [soot] does not touch you, its smoke will.”<sup>222</sup>

This noble, Prophetic comparison encourages to goodness and warns against evil in the most efficient and effective manner of communication. It also encourages seeking the company of righteous people, scholars, and their associates, for that brings a benefit both in this world and the Hereafter, as well as cautioning against keeping evil and immoral companions.

In a similar style:

221 A device used by a blacksmith to pump air into the forge and increase the heat of the fire.

222 Reported by Abū Dāwūd (4829).

58. Bukhārī and Muslim relate from Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī رضي الله عنه that the Prophet ﷺ said: “The guidance and knowledge Allah has sent me with are like abundant rain that falls on the earth. There is a pleasant, pure portion that absorbs the water and gives rise to many plants and herbs. There is a barren portion of the land which holds the water [on its surface] and through which Allah benefits the people, from which they drink, feed [their animals], and irrigate [their crops]. And then there is a completely infertile<sup>223</sup> portion of the land which neither holds the water nor gives rise to plants.

[The different portions] are like the person who develops an understanding of the religion of Allah and benefits from that with which Allah sent me, comprehends it, and teaches it, and the person who does not [even] lift their head<sup>224</sup> and does not accept the guidance of Allah that I have been sent with.”<sup>225</sup>

59. Bukhārī and Tirmidhī relate from al-Nu‘mān ibn Bashīr رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Those who hold true to the boundaries of Allah and those who transgress and breach them are like a group of a people who drew lots on a ship. Some ended up on the upper deck and others on the lower deck. The people on the lower deck had to pass those on the upper deck to get water, which irritated them. So, [one of the people from the bottom deck] took an axe and started making a hole in the bottom of the ship. “What is wrong with you?” the people said, rushing

223 A “*qā’*” is a smooth, level land in which nothing grows.

224 Translator’s note: A saying used to convey extreme arrogance and conceit.

225 Reported by Bukhārī (79) and Muslim (2282).



towards him.

“You were bothered by me, and I need water”, he replied. If they stop him, they will save him and themselves, but if they leave him, they will destroy him and themselves.”<sup>226</sup>

60. Nasā'ī relates from Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه, who narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “A hypocrite is like a lamb that vacillates between two flocks of sheep, sometimes drifting to one and sometimes to the other, [but] not knowing which to follow.”<sup>227</sup>

## Teaching by drawing on the ground or in the sand

Sometimes, the Prophet ﷺ would draw on the ground or in the sand to explain certain concepts. For example:

61. Imam Aḥmad relates from Jābir ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه and Abū 'Abdillāh al-Marwazī relates from Jābir and Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, who narrate: “We were sitting with the Prophet ﷺ when he drew with his hand a line on the ground in front of him like this. He said: ‘This is the path of Allah ﷻ.’ Then, he drew two lines to his right and two lines to his left, and he said: ‘These are the paths of Satan.’ Then, he placed his hand on the line in the centre, and recited the following verse: ‘Indeed, that is My Path – perfectly straight. So, follow it and do not follow other ways, for they will lead you away from His Way. This is what He has commanded you, so perhaps you will be conscious [of Allah].’<sup>228,229</sup>

226 Reported by Bukhārī (2493, 2686) and Tirmidhī (2173).

227 Reported by Nasā'ī (5037).

228 *al-An'ām*, 153.

229 Reported by Aḥmad (15277) and Marwazī in *al-Sunnah* (p. 6).

62. Bukhārī relates from ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Prophet ﷺ drew a square, a line sticking out from its centre, and a number of smaller lines pointing out from the sides of the line in the centre. He said: ‘This [drawing] represents the human being. This [square] is their lifespan, this [line] which is sticking out is their aspiration; and these smaller lines are the trials [of life]. If they all miss him, then senility will get him.’”<sup>230</sup>

Here, with the lines he drew in front of them on the ground, the Prophet ﷺ demonstrated how a human being can be hindered from their far-reaching aims in life by a sudden death, restricting illness, or debilitating senility. He spurred his Companions to limit their aspirations and prepare for unexpected death, and his tools for explaining this were the ground and the sand, as we have seen.

63. Imam Aḥmad relates from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ drew four lines on the ground, and asked: ‘Do you know why I have drawn these lines on the ground?’

‘Allah and His Messenger [ﷺ] know best’, the people said.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ explained: ‘[They represent] the best women from the people of Paradise: Khadījah bint Khuwaylid; Fāṭimah bint Muhammad;<sup>231</sup> Maryam bint ‘Imrān; and Āsiyah bint Muzāḥim, the wife of Fir‘awn.’”<sup>232</sup>

<sup>230</sup> Reported by Bukhārī (6417).

<sup>231</sup> Translator’s note: i.e., the daughter of the Prophet ﷺ.

<sup>232</sup> Reported by Aḥmad (2957).

## Teaching by a combination of speech and gesture

At times, the Prophet ﷺ would combine expressing things verbally and gesturing with his noble hands as a means of clarifying the concepts he was teaching his listeners. This is reflected in several narrations. For example:

64. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Bukhārī – from Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘[The relationship between] one Muslim and another is like a building; each strengthens the other.’ Then, he intertwined his fingers.”<sup>233</sup>
65. Muslim relates the lengthy narration of Jābir ibn ‘Abdillāh رضي الله عنه regarding the pilgrimage of the Prophet ﷺ, which includes the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: “If I had known about my matter (i.e., my pilgrimage) what I know now, I would not have brought the sacrificial animal, and I would have made it an ‘umrah. So, whoever does not have a sacrificial animal with them should release themselves (i.e., exit the state of *iḥrām*) and make it an ‘umrah.”

Surāqah ibn Mālik ibn Ju'tham stood up and said: “O Messenger of Allah, [does this principle apply] for this year [only] or forever?”

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ intertwined one of his fingers with another and said: “‘Umrah has joined Hajj, ‘umrah has joined Hajj. Indeed, [it applies] forever, forever.”<sup>234</sup>

<sup>233</sup> Reported by Bukhārī (6026) and Muslim (2585).

<sup>234</sup> Reported by Muslim (1216).

66. Bukhārī relates from Sahl ibn Sa‘d al-Sā‘idī رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘The guardian of an orphan and I will be like these two in Paradise’, and he gestured with his two fingers, the index and middle, [wrapping them together and] leaving a small gap between them.”<sup>235</sup>
67. The three narrations that speak about the cradle that are related by Bukhārī and Muslim – and the wording here is from Bukhārī – from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه, where the Messenger of Allah ﷺ mentioned ‘Isā ibn Maryam and the boy with Jurayj the Monk. Then, he said: “There was a woman from the Banū Isrā’īl breastfeeding a son of hers. A dignified, finely-dressed man riding [an animal] passed by. She said: ‘O Allah, make my son like this man.’

[Suddenly,] he left her breast, turned towards the rider, and said: ‘O Allah, do not make me like him.’ Then, he turned back to the breast and continued to feed.”

Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه said: “It is as if I am looking at the Prophet ﷺ [now] sucking his finger [to demonstrate].”

“Then, a slave-girl passed them, being dragged and played with [by the people with her].<sup>236</sup> She (i.e., the baby’s mother) said: ‘O Allah, do not make my son like this woman.’

The baby left her breast again, turned towards the woman, and said: ‘O Allah, make me like her.’

‘Why is that?’ the mother asked.

<sup>235</sup> Reported by Bukhārī (6005).

<sup>236</sup> This sentence is reported by Bukhārī (3466).

The baby replied: "The rider was an arrogant, oppressive man, and this slave-girl...they are saying to her, 'You stole and committed fornication', but she did not, and she is saying, 'Allah is sufficient for me and [He is] the best Protector.'<sup>237</sup><sup>238</sup>

68. Imam Aḥmad relates from 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه, who narrates: "We were with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, almost 80 men from the Quraysh; every one of them was a Qurashī and indeed, by Allah, I had never seen faces more glowing than their faces that day.

They mentioned the women, and he spoke with them about that until I hoped he would stop<sup>239</sup>. Then, I came to him. He uttered the *shahādah*, and then said: 'O assembly of the Quraysh, you are the rightful possessors of this matter<sup>240</sup>, so long as you do not disobey Allah Most High. If you do disobey Him, then He will send someone who will strip you [of power] just like this stick is stripped.'

He was referring to a stick in his hand. He stripped it of its bark, and it was a brilliant white [underneath]."<sup>241</sup>

69. Muslim and Tirmidhī relate – and the wording here is from Tirmidhī – from Sufyān ibn 'Abdillāh al-Thaqafī رضي الله عنه, who narrates: "I said: 'O Messenger of Allah, tell me something to which I can hold on.'

237 This last paragraph is reported by Aḥmad (8071).

238 Reported by Bukhārī (3436) and Muslim (2550).

239 Translator's note: i.e., so that he could get his attention.

240 Translator's note: i.e., leadership or authority.

241 Reported by Aḥmad (4380).

‘Say, “My Lord is Allah,” then remain steadfast,’ he replied.

‘O Messenger of Allah, what do you fear most for me?’ I asked.

He took hold of his own tongue and said: ‘This.’<sup>242</sup>

70. Dāraqūṭnī relates from Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was asked on the Day of Sacrifice (Yawm al-Naḥr) about a person who slaughtered before pelting and a person who shaved before slaughtering.<sup>243</sup> The Messenger of Allah ﷺ raised his hand and said: “No problem. No problem.”<sup>244</sup>
71. Muslim relates from al-Miqdād ibn al-Aswad رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: ‘The Sun will draw closer to the creation on the Day of Judgement until it is only a mile’s distance from them. The people will be [submerged] in sweat according to their actions. Some will be [submerged] up to their ankles, others up to their knees, others up to their waist, and others will have a bridle<sup>245</sup> made of sweat.’ The Messenger of Allah ﷺ pointed with his hand to his mouth<sup>246</sup>.”<sup>247</sup>
72. Haythamī relates from ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Āmir رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘The Sun will come close to the Earth, and the people will sweat! There will be some people whose sweat reaches their ankles, others whose sweat reaches their knees, oth-

242 Reported by Muslim (38) and Tirmidhī (2410).

243 i.e., from the rituals of Hajj.

244 Reported by Dāraqūṭnī (2574).

245 i.e., the sweat will reach up to their ears and mouth, the same place in which animals are bridled.

246 i.e., The Prophet ﷺ pointed at his noble mouth [to demonstrate where the bridle would be].

247 Reported by Muslim (2864).

ers whose sweat reaches their thighs, others whose sweat reaches their waist, others whose sweat reaches their neck, others whose sweat reaches the middle of their mouth ('Uqbah gestured with his hand, bridling his mouth, and said: "I saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ gesturing like this"), and others whose sweat submerges them [completely], and he gestured with his hand<sup>248</sup>.”<sup>249</sup>

### Lifting things up with his hand to emphasize their impermissibility

On some occasions, the Prophet ﷺ would lift up the thing he was forbidding for the people he was addressing to see. He would combine between verbally forbidding against a thing and letting the people see it with their own eyes, using this method to make the prohibition clearer to his listeners and more explicit in their minds.

73. Abū Dāwūd, Nasā'ī, and Ibn Mājah relate – and the wording here is from Ibn Mājah – from 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib ؓ, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ picked up a piece of silk with his right hand and a piece of gold with his left. Then, he raised both hands and said: “These two are impermissible for the males of my nation and permissible for the females.””<sup>250</sup>
74. Imam Aḥmad relates from 'Ubādah ibn al-Ṣāmit ؓ, who narrates: “The Prophet ﷺ would take hold of the hairs on the side of a camel from the battle gains and say: ‘I have no more right to

248 i.e., The Prophet ﷺ demonstrated the person who will be completely submerged in their sweat by pointing above his head.

249 Reported by Haythamī in *Mawārid al-Zam'ān ilā Zawā'id Ibn Ḥibbān 'alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, p. 64.

250 Reported by Abū Dāwūd (4057), Nasā'ī (5144), and Ibn Mājah (3595).

this than any of you. Beware of stealing from the spoils of war, for stealing from the spoils of war will be a humiliation for the person who did it on the Day of Judgement. Hand in [as little as] a needle and thread and anything greater than that [in the spoils of war]. Strive in the path of Allah Most High whether near or far, for striving (*jihād*) is a gate from the gates of Paradise, and through it, Allah ﷻ relieves people of depression and anxiety. Establish the limits [ordained by Allah] upon both those who are close and near, and do not let the blame of any blamer make you lenient in [implementing the Laws of] Allah.”<sup>251</sup>

## Offering beneficial wisdom to his Companions without being asked

The Prophet ﷺ would often take the initiative in conveying points of wisdom to his Companions without them asking, especially concerning important matters that some people would not have been aware of had they not asked about them. He would also teach his Companions the answers to doubts before they occurred, for fear that they would befall a person, become embedded in their soul, and then do their evil work.



75. Bukhārī and Muslim relate from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘Satan comes to one of you and starts saying, “Who created such-and-such and such-and-such?,” until he [eventually] says: “Who created your Lord?” So, if it gets as far as that, seek refuge in Allah and put an end [to such thoughts].”<sup>252</sup>

---

251 Reported by Aḥmad (22795).


252 Reported by Bukhārī (3276) and Muslim (134).





76. Abū Dāwūd also relates from Abū Hurayrah , who narrates that the Messenger of Allah  said: "People will keep questioning each other until the following is asked: 'Allah created the creation, so who created Allah?' So, whoever comes across [anyone saying] anything like that should say: 'I affirm my faith in Allah.'"

And in another transmission: "If they say that, then say: 'He is Allah – One [and Indivisible]; Allah – the Sustainer [needed by all]. He has never had offspring, nor was He born. And there is none comparable to Him.'<sup>253</sup> Then, one should spit to their left three times and seek refuge [in Allah] from Satan."<sup>254</sup>

77. Ibn Ḥibbān says in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, in the ordering of 'Alā al-Dīn al-Fārisī:<sup>255</sup> "Proof of the permissibility of a scholar giving his students the choice of what topic they wish him to teach them about first, and his encouragement for them to continue [asking]:

Anas narrates that that the Messenger of Allah  went out when the Sun passed the meridian and led them in the Ṣuḥr prayer. Then, after he completed the prayer, he stood upon the pulpit, mentioned the Hour, and mentioned that great, extraordinary events would precede it. Then, he said: 'Let whoever wishes to ask me about something ask now, for by Allah, I will answer anything you ask about for as long as I am standing here.'"

Anas said: "The people wept profusely when they heard that from the Messenger of Allah , and the Messenger of Allah 

---

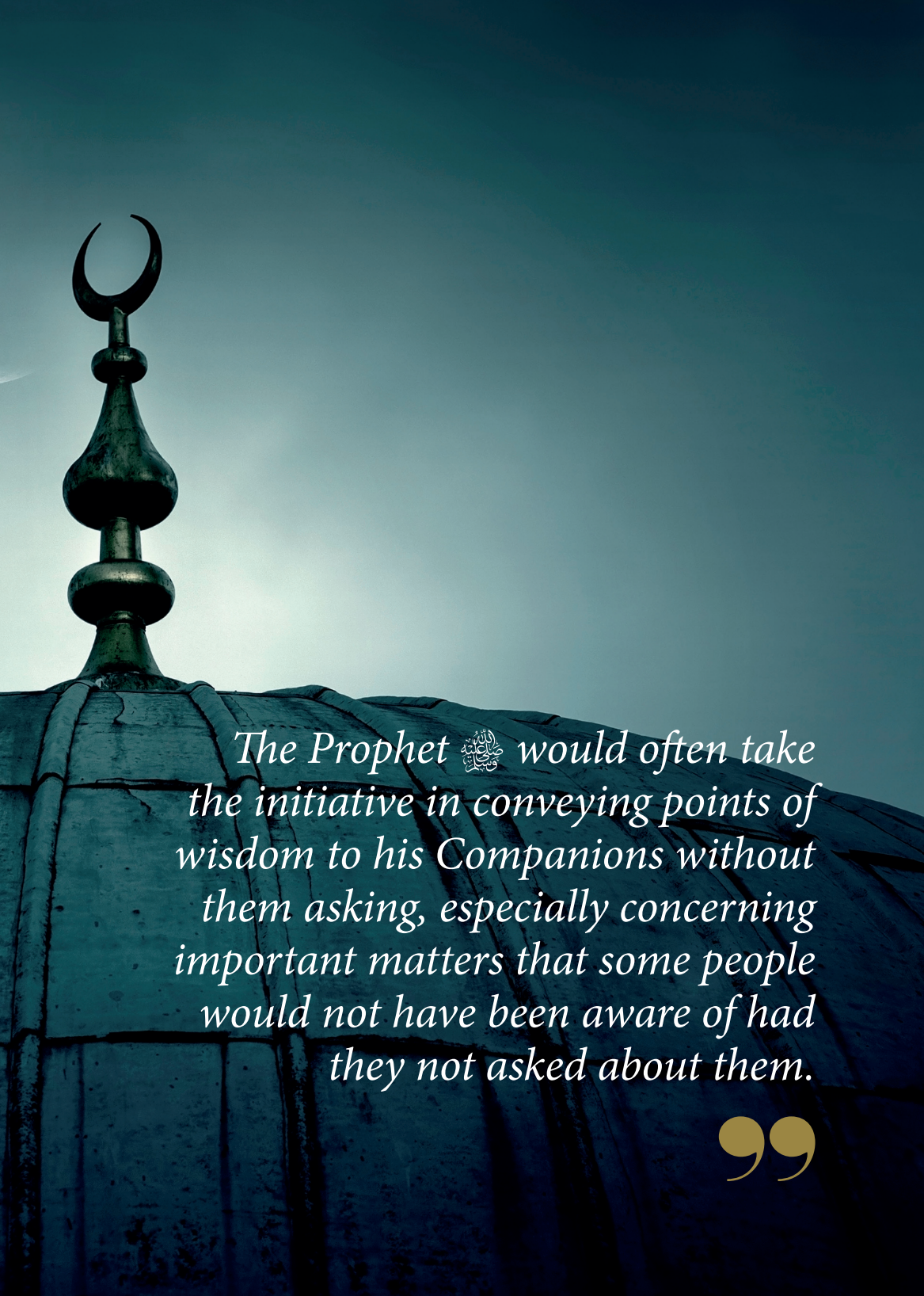
<sup>253</sup> *al-Ikhlāṣ*, 1-4.

<sup>254</sup> Reported by Abū Dāwūd (4721).

<sup>255</sup> (1/286), and in the second print (1/306).







*The Prophet ﷺ would often take the initiative in conveying points of wisdom to his Companions without them asking, especially concerning important matters that some people would not have been aware of had they not asked about them.*

”

kept saying: ‘Ask me. Ask me.’

‘Abdullāh ibn Ḥudhāfah stood up and asked: ‘Who is my father, O Messenger of Allah?’

‘Your father is Ḥudhāfah,’ he replied.”<sup>256</sup>

78. The above hadith is also related by Bukhārī and Muslim – and the wording here is from Muslim – from Anas رضي الله عنه, [who narrates] that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ went out when the Sun passed the meridian and led them in the *Zuhr* prayer. Then, after he completed the prayer, he stood upon the pulpit, mentioned the Hour, and mentioned that great, extraordinary events would precede it. Then, he said: “Let whoever wishes to ask me about something ask now, for by Allah, I will answer anything you ask about for as long as I am standing here.”

Anas said: “The people wept profusely when they heard that from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ kept saying: ‘Ask me.’

‘Abdullāh ibn Ḥudhāfah stood up and asked: ‘Who is my father, O Messenger of Allah?’

‘Your father is Ḥudhāfah,’ he replied.

After the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had said ‘Ask me’ many times, ‘Umar رضي الله عنه knelt down and said: ‘We are pleased with Allah as our Lord, Islam as our religion, and Muhammad as our Messen-

---

256 Translator’s note: This hadith is reported by Ibn Ḥibbān (106).

ger.<sup>257</sup> The Messenger of Allah ﷺ stayed quiet whilst 'Umar said that. Then, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: 'That was close.'<sup>258</sup> By the One with the soul of Muhammad in His hand, Paradise and the Fire were presented to me earlier, on the display of this wall,<sup>259</sup> and I have never seen good and evil like [I did] today."

Muslim then relates from 'Ubaydullāh ibn 'Abdullāh ibn 'Ut-bah, who narrates: "Umm 'Abdillāh ibn Ḥudhāfah said to 'Abdullāh ibn Ḥudhāfah: 'I never heard of a son more disobedient than you! Do you feel safe from your mother having committed some of what the women from the People of Ignorance used to commit and then you shaming her in full sight of the public?'

'Abdullāh ibn Ḥudhāfah said: 'By Allah, if the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had connected me to a black slave, I would have connected [myself to him].'<sup>260</sup>"<sup>261</sup>

## Responding to questions he was asked

The Prophet ﷺ would also respond to questions he was asked. He taught

257 Ibn Hajar comments in *Fath al-Bārī* (13/270): "A *mursal* narration related by Ṭabarī mentions a similar story to this, where 'Umar went and kissed the foot of the Prophet ﷺ and said, 'We are pleased with Islam as our religion, Muhammad as our Messenger, and the Qur'an as our guide. Pardon [us], and may Allah pardon you', and he did not stop until he was contented."

258 The word here is "*awlā*". Al-Mubarrid said: "If a person is saved from a difficulty, you would say '*awlā* to you', meaning: 'you were almost destroyed.'" Others said that "*awlā*" is used to warn and exhort.

259 i.e., on the centre or side of the wall [whilst he was praying].

260 i.e., if the Prophet ﷺ had said that I was the son of a black slave, I would have accepted that lineage. We understand from this that 'Abdullāh ibn Ḥudhāfah was white, for the implication is that even if had been attributed to a father from a completely different background and [apparent] lineage to his, he would have believed the Prophet ﷺ. This was an expression of his firm adherence to the words of the Prophet ﷺ and the absolute legitimacy and veracity of the Prophet ﷺ in his eyes.

261 Reported by Bukhārī (93, 540, 7294) and Muslim (2359c).

many laws, rulings, and parameters of the religion by answering the queries of his Companions, and he encouraged them to ask both about issues that were important to them and regarding laws and obligations they needed to know.

79. Abū Dāwūd relates from Jābir رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘The cure for ignorance is asking.’”<sup>262</sup>

The Companions of the Prophet ﷺ would bring questions and ambiguities that were troubling them in order for them to be elucidated, to bolster their understanding, and to increase them in faith, and the Prophet ﷺ would answer each questioner with that which made them delighted.

The books of hadith are replete with the responses of the Prophet ﷺ to the queries of his Companions concerning religious matters. Such narrations are found throughout this book, and a portion are included below:

80. Muslim relates from al-Nawwās ibn Sam‘ān al-Kilābī رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “I stayed with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in Medina for a year. There was only the issue of questioning [the Prophet g] that prevented me from emigrating: when one of us migrated [to Medina], he would not ask the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about [religious] matters.<sup>263</sup> So, I asked him about righteousness and

---

<sup>262</sup> Reported by Abū Dāwūd (336).

<sup>263</sup> Meaning, as Imam Nawawī states in the commentary to *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (16/111): “He stayed there as a visitor and without moving there from his homeland. The only thing preventing him from emigrating – which meant leaving one’s home and settling in Medina – was his desire to ask the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about religious matters, for he would allow that from visitors but not from Emigrants. The Emigrants would rejoice when Bedouin or other visitors asked things, for their questions would be tolerated and excused, and they (i.e., the Emigrants) would benefit from the answers [they received from the Messenger of Allah g]. As Anas رضي الله عنه says in the hadith reported by Muslim (12): ‘it would please us when an intelligent nomad came and asked him.’”

The Emigrants were not prevented from asking the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about urgent religious

sin. He said: 'Righteousness is excellent character, and sin is that which perturbs the heart and which you would hate others to find out about.'<sup>264</sup>

81. Muslim and Abū Dāwūd relate – and the wording here is from Abū Dāwūd – from Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, who narrates: "The Messenger

---

matters, but in their reverence [of the Prophet g], they did not like to ask unless the need was great. The narration of Jibril transmitted through Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه reads: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, 'Ask me [about religious matters], but they were too awestruck to ask him. A man came, sat in front of his knees, and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, what is Islam...'" Reported by Muslim (10).

The books of Hadith include many examples of questions of the Emigrants and Helpers who had settled in Medina and the answers the Prophet ﷺ gave them, some of which have preceded.

Ibn Abī Mulaykah narrates that whenever 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها heard something she did not understand, she would keep returning to it until she had understood, and that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Whoever is held to account will be punished."

'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها narrates: "I asked: 'Does Allah Most High not say: "they will have an easy reckoning"?' (Translator's note: *al-Inshiqāq*, 8.)

The Prophet ﷺ replied: 'Rather, that is the presentation [of one's deeds], but whoever is thoroughly examined in their reckoning will be destroyed.'

Ibn Ḥajar says in *Fath al-Bārī* (1/197), in his commentary on this narration: "This hadith clarifies that this type of question does not fall under what the Companions were forbidden from in the words of Allah Most High, 'do not ask about things' (Translator's note: *al-Mā'idah*, 5), or the narration of Anas, 'We were forbidden from asking the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about things' (Translator's note: Reported by Muslim, 12), and similar is reported from other than 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها. In the narration of Ḥafṣah رضي الله عنها, she states that when she heard, 'No-one who participated at Badr or al-Ḥudaybiyyah will enter the Fire', she asked: 'Did Allah not say: "There is none of you who will not pass over it" (Translator's note: *Maryam*, 71)?' And she was answered with the Words of Allah: 'Then We will deliver those who were devout' (Translator's note: *Maryam*, 72).

When [the verse], 'those who are faithful and do not tarnish their faith with wrongdoing' (Translator's note: *al-An'ām*, 82), was revealed, the Companions asked: 'Who amongst us does not wrong themselves?' And they were told that the intended meaning of 'wrongdoing' [in this context] was associating partners [with Allah].

The censuring of those who ask about problematic issues applies to those who do so in an obstinate or harassing manner. As Allah Most High says: 'Those with deviant hearts follow the elusive verses seeking [to spread] doubt' (Translator's note: *Āl 'Imrān*, 7). And in the narration of 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها, [in which the the Prophet ﷺ said:] 'If you see those who ask about that (i.e., elusive verses), then they are the ones Allah has named [as having deviant hearts], so beware of them.' (Translator's note: See Bukhārī, 4547.) And in the same vein, 'Umar رضي الله عنه rebuked Ṣabīgh ibn 'Isl al-Tamīmī when he saw him asking many questions about such matters and punished him."

264 Reported by Muslim (2553).



of Allah ﷺ sent So-and-so al-Aslamī<sup>265</sup> with 18 sacrificial camels. The Aslamī man said to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: ‘What do you think [I should do] if one of them is brought to its knees<sup>266</sup>?’

‘Slaughter it, dye its [garlanded] sandal with its blood, and then mark the side of its hump with that, and neither you nor any of companions should eat it’, he replied.”<sup>267</sup>

82. Bukhārī and Muslim relate from Rāfi‘ ibn Khadij ؓ, who narrates: “I said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, we are afraid that we will encounter the enemy tomorrow with no knives at our disposal.’

He said: ‘Whichever [animal is slaughtered with a tool that] causes the blood to flow and then has the Name of Allah pronounced upon it, then eat it, except [if it slaughtered with] a claw or a tooth, and I will tell you [why]: the tooth is a bone, and the claw is the knife of the Ethiopians.”<sup>268</sup>

83. Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Nasā’i, Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājah relate – and the wording here is from Bukhārī – from Abū Tha’labah al-Khushanī ؓ, who narrates: “I came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, we are [living] in the land of a community from the People of the Book; can we eat from their utensils? We are [also] in a hunting land, and I hunt with my bow, my untrained hound, and my trained hound; so, which [of those methods] is suitable for me [to consume]?’

265 Translator’s note: i.e., a man from the Banū Aslam tribe.

266 i.e., becomes exhausted and is unable to continue.

267 Reported by Muslim (1325) and Abū Dāwūd (1763).

268 Reported by Bukhārī (5503, 5509) and Muslim (1968).

‘As for what you have mentioned about being in the land of the People of the Book: do not eat from their utensils unless you have no other choice, in which case you should wash them and then eat from them. As for what you have mentioned about being in a hunting land: whatever you hunt with your bow having mentioned the Name of Allah thereupon, you should eat; whatever you hunt with your trained hound having mentioned the Name of Allah thereupon, you should eat; and whatever you hunt with your untrained hound and then manage to slaughter [before it died], you should eat.’”

The transmission related by Abū Dāwūd reads: “O Messenger of Allah, we are neighbours with People of the Book, and they cook pork in their pots and drink intoxicants from their utensils.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘If you find other [utensils], then eat and drink from those, but if you do not, then wash [their utensils] thoroughly with water, and then eat and drink from them.’”<sup>269</sup>

## Responding to questions with more than that which he was asked about

On some occasions, when the Prophet ﷺ saw that the questioner would benefit from additional information, he would respond to a question with more than the specific answer he was asked for. This was a part of the perfection of his affection and compassion and the immensity of his care

---

269 Reported by Bukhārī (5478, 5488, 5496), Muslim (1930), Abū Dāwūd (2855), Nasāʾī (4266), Tirmidhī (1464, 1560, 1797), and Ibn Mājah (3207).

Ibn Hajar comments in *Fath al-Bārī* (9/523): “One of the benefits we can glean from this narration is dealing with several questions in one go, separating between each answer with the words ‘as for.’”

towards those seeking knowledge and understanding.

84. Imam Mālik and Abū Dāwūd relate – and the wording here is from Abū Dāwūd – from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “A man from the Banū Mudlij [tribe] asked the Prophet ﷺ: ‘O Messenger of Allah, we sail on the ocean, and we only carry a small amount of [fresh] water with us. If we use it to perform *wuḍū’*, we will become thirsty,<sup>270</sup> so can we perform *wuḍū’* with seawater?’

‘Its water is pure, and its creatures are permissible [to eat],’ the Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied.”<sup>271</sup>

In this instance, the Prophet ﷺ responded to the Mudlijī sailor concerning the permissibility of using seawater to perform *wuḍū’* by telling him that it is pure and indeed permissible to use for performing ablution. Then, out of his concern for the sailor, he combined this information with the ruling concerning dead creatures of the ocean, which is something he was bound to come across whilst sailing. The Prophet ﷺ explained that creatures of the ocean are lawful to consume and benefit from. Expanding on his initial answer, the Prophet ﷺ said: “...and its creatures are permissible [to eat].”

This addition was important, because it clarifies that seawater is pure even when its creatures have died in it, and it clarifies the permissibility [of consuming or utilizing] those creatures. Such information is essential for a sailor, for he may want to eat these creatures at times – either out of choice or necessity – and now [he knows that] he may eat them or pre-

<sup>270</sup> Translator’s note: i.e., we will not have enough to drink.

<sup>271</sup> Reported by Mālik in *al-Muwaṭṭa’* (2/12) and Abū Dāwūd (83).

serve them [for future consumption] without fear of blame. This was one of the pearls of wisdom in the teaching methodology of the Prophet ﷺ, guiding the learner to what they needed to know.

85. Muslim, Abū Dāwūd and Nasā'ī relate from Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, who narrates: "A woman who was performing Hajj lifted up an infant son of hers and asked: 'O Messenger of Allah, can this one perform Hajj?'"

'Yes, and you will be rewarded,' he replied."<sup>272</sup>

Again, the Prophet ﷺ responded with more than the information requested of him. He was asked about the Hajj of an infant, and he said: "Yes, [there is a Hajj for him]." Then, he expanded on his answer, adding: "...and you will be rewarded." She was the person responsible for the infant's affairs, so he informed her of her reward. That was a powerful motivation for her to perform this righteous action and for all mothers and fathers after her to follow her example, despite the hardships of carrying a small child on the pilgrimage to the Majestic House of Allah. The objective was to plant a seed in their hearts by allowing them to witness this glorious sight, impress [the importance of] this momentous fifth pillar [of Islam] on their young souls, and move the hearts, souls, and tears of other pilgrims surrounding the House with the sight of their [innocent] infants.

## Responding to questions with other than that which he was asked about

Sometimes, the Prophet ﷺ would turn the attention of the questioner away from their original enquiry and towards a comprehensive ruling [on

---

272 Reported by Muslim (1336), Abū Dāwūd (1736), and Nasā'ī (2645).

the topic]. For example:

86. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Bukhārī – from Anas رضي الله عنه that a man asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: “When is the Hour, O Messenger of Allah?”

“What have you prepared for it?” he replied.

“I have not prepared a great deal for it in terms of prayer, fasting, or charity, but I love Allah and His Messenger”, the man said.

“You will be with whom you love”, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied.<sup>273</sup>

Here, the Prophet ﷺ turned the man’s focus away from the specific time of the Hour, of which only Allah Most High has knowledge, and towards something of which he was more in need: righteous in deeds in preparation for the Hour. He asked the man: “What have you prepared for it?” The man said: “Love for Allah and His Messenger.” And the Prophet ﷺ replied: “You will be with whom you love.” Thereby, the Prophet ﷺ expanded on his initial response, informing the man that people will be gathered [on the Day of Judgement] alongside those they accompanied [in this life] and those they loved. This is an eye-opener for human beings and a caution against taking people who are not righteous as associates in this world and consequently accompanying them, wherever they end up, in the Hereafter!

This technique of turning the attention of the questioner is known as “the method of the wise”, and it involves shifting the questioner’s focus towards something important, or more important or beneficial than their

---

273 Reported by Bukhārī (3688, 6171, 7153) and Muslim (2639).

original question, for them to know. In another example:

87. Bukhārī and Muslim relate from Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه that a man asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: "What should a person in a state of *iḥrām* wear, O Messenger of Allah?"

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: "He should not wear a *qamīṣ*, a turban, trousers, or a hooded cloak, neither should he wear a garment that has been perfumed with *wars*<sup>274</sup> or saffron. If he does not have sandals, then he should wear leather socks and cut them so they are below the ankles."<sup>275</sup>

As you can see, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was asked what a person in a state of *iḥrām* should wear. He answered the question implicitly by instead detailing what they should not wear, because the number of things they should not wear is fixed and limited whereas what they should wear is not. Therefore, the Prophet ﷺ judged this to be a more concise way of answering the question. If he had chosen to list everything a person in a state of *iḥrām* can wear instead, his answer would have been prolonged and may have been difficult for the man to retain and put into practice.

Then, the Prophet ﷺ expanded on his answer by including the ruling on wearing leather socks if sandals are unavailable, a situation of pressing need which was related to the question asked, stating: "If he does not have sandals, then he should wear leather socks and cut them so they are below the ankles."

In another example of a narration of this style:

<sup>274</sup> Translator's note: A type of plant used for dyeing and perfuming clothes.

<sup>275</sup> Reported by Bukhārī (1842) and Muslim (1177).

88. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Muslim – from Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī رضي الله عنه that a Bedouin man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: “O Messenger of Allah, a man fights for the spoils of war, another man fights to be remembered,<sup>276</sup> and another man fights for his rank to be seen<sup>277</sup>; which of them is [considered to be fighting] in the path of Allah?”

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: ‘Whoever fights for the Word of Allah to be supreme is [fighting] in the path of Allah.’<sup>278</sup>

In this hadith, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ again altered the focus of the conversation from the specifics of the original question and towards the crux of the matter instead, informing him that what was truly important for a fighter was to be pure in their intention and objective.

This hadith is also counted as an example of the succinct yet comprehensive speech of the Messenger ﷺ, for his statement “Whoever fights for the Word of Allah to be supreme is [fighting] in the path of Allah” is the epitome of eloquence and concision. If he had mentioned a list of things that are not considered to be “fighting in the path of Allah”, it would have implied that everything else is, which is not the case. Instead, the Prophet ﷺ responded with a short, conclusive statement that answered the question and more, ridding the questioner of any ambiguity and increasing him in understanding.

## Asking a questioner to repeat their question so that he could clarify a ruling

<sup>276</sup> i.e., to be remembered amongst the people for his bravery and heroism.

<sup>277</sup> i.e., for people to see that he is courageous and strong.

<sup>278</sup> Reported by Bukhārī (3126) and Muslim (1904).



At times, the Prophet ﷺ would ask a petitioner to repeat their inquiry, even though he knew what it was, as a way of either increasing them in knowledge, amending the answer he gave them, or clarifying his initial response. For example:

89. Muslim and Nasā'ī relate – and the wording here is from Muslim – from Abū Qatādah ؓ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stood up amongst them and mentioned striving in the path of Allah and faith in Allah as the best of actions. A man stood up and asked: “O Messenger of Allah, if I am killed in the way of Allah, do you think will that expiate for my sins?”

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to him: “Yes, if you are killed in the way of Allah whilst you are steadfast, hopeful [of His reward],<sup>279</sup> and facing the enemy and not turning your back.” Then, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “What did you say [just now]?”

The man repeated: “If I am killed in the way of Allah, will that expiate for my sins?”

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: “Yes, if you are steadfast and hopeful [of His reward], and facing the enemy and not turning your back, unless you have outstanding debts,<sup>280</sup> for Jibrīl has informed me of that.”<sup>281</sup>

---

279 This is describing a person who is sincere to Allah Most High and fights not for tribe, spoils, fame, or repute, but purely for the sake of His Pleasure.

280 i.e., they will not be cancelled.

281 Reported by Muslim (1885) and Nasā'ī (3157).

## Asking one of his Companions to answer a question on his behalf as a means of training them

On some occasions, the Prophet ﷺ would assign one of his Companions the responsibility of answering a question that had been raised with him, as a way of familiarizing them with how to respond to such inquiries. For example:

90. Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājah relate from Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ, who narrates: “Abū Hurayrah ؓ used to narrate that a man came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ after his departure from Uḥud and said: ‘Last night, I saw in a dream a shady cloud<sup>282</sup> with droplets of butter and honey falling from it. I saw the people catching the droplets in their palms; some were catching a lot, and some were catching a little. I saw a rope extending from the Heavens to Earth. And I saw you, O Messenger of Allah, holding on to it and ascending with it. Then, another man took hold of it after you and ascended with it. Then, another man took hold of it after him and ascended with it. Then, another man took hold of it after him and the rope was cut, but then it was reconnected and he ascended with it.’

Abū Bakr ؓ said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, may my father and mother be your sacrifice. By Allah, allow me to interpret it.’

‘[Go ahead,] interpret it’, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ agreed.

‘As for the shady cloud, it is Islam. As for the droplets of butter and honey, they are the Qur’an with its sweetness and softness.

---

282 A *zillah* can refer either to a shady cloud, or any canopy or shelter that provides shade.

As for the people catching it in their hands, they are the ones who acquire a lot or a little of the Qur'an. As for the rope extending from the Heavens to Earth, it is the truth that you are upon. You took hold of it, and Allah caused you to ascend. Then, another man took hold of it after you and ascended with it. Then, another man took hold of it after him and ascended with it. Then, another man took hold of it after him and it was cut, but then it was reconnected and he ascended with it.

Tell me, O Messenger of Allah, was I correct or did I err?

'You were correct in parts and incorrect in parts,' the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said.

'I swear by Allah, O Messenger of Allah, tell me: which part was incorrect?' Abū Bakr asked.

'Do not swear, O Abū Bakr,' the Prophet ﷺ replied."<sup>283</sup>

Another example of the way the Prophet ﷺ would train and coach his Companions was his practice of asking them to judge in disputes that had been brought before him. For example:

91. Aḥmad and Dāraqūṭnī relate – and the wording here is from Dāraqūṭnī – from 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ ﷺ, who narrates: "Two men who were disputing came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ: 'Adjudicate between them.'

---

283 Reported by Bukhārī (7046), Muslim (2269), Abū Dāwūd (4632), Tirmidhī (2293), and Ibn Mājah (3918).

‘Whilst you are here, O Messenger of Allah?’ ‘Amr exclaimed.

‘Yes,’ he replied.

‘Upon what basis should I adjudicate?’ ‘Amr asked.

‘If you endeavour and are correct, you will have ten rewards, and if you endeavour and are mistaken, you will have one reward,’ he replied.”<sup>284</sup>

92. Aḥmad and Dāraqūṭnī relate – and the wording here is from Dāraqūṭnī – from ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Āmir al-Juhanī رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “Two disputants came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, arguing with one another. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to me: ‘Stand up, O ‘Uqbah, and adjudicate between them.’

‘O Messenger of Allah, you are more befitting of that [responsibility] than me,’ I protested.

‘Even so, adjudicate between them,’ he replied. ‘If you endeavour and are correct, you will have ten rewards, and if you endeavour and are mistaken, you will have one reward.’”<sup>285</sup>

93. Ibn Mājah and Dāraqūṭnī relate – and the wording here is from Dāraqūṭnī – from Jāriyah ibn Zafar al-Ḥanafī al-Yamāmī رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “There was a house shared between two brothers, and they erected a partition between them. Then, both brothers passed away, each leaving behind children. Both sets of descendants claimed that the partition belonged solely to them, and they took their dispute to the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ sent

284 Reported by Aḥmad (17858) and Dāraqūṭnī (4/203).

285 Reported by Aḥmad (17825) and Dāraqūṭnī (4/203).

Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān, and he adjudicated between them, ruling in favour of the family who had the knot<sup>286</sup> of the rope on their land. Then, he went back and informed the Prophet ﷺ [of his decision]. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'You did the right thing and you have done well.'<sup>287</sup>

### Testing someone who already knows something in order to praise them for their knowledge

In certain situations, the Prophet ﷺ would test some of his Companions by asking them regarding a particular aspect of knowledge, with the purpose of displaying their intelligence and awareness. If the Companion was correct in their response, he would praise and extol them and strike their chest as a way of signalling their worthiness of the love of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his appreciation of their excellent response. For example:

94. Muslim relates from Ubayy ibn Ka'b (whose *kunya* was Abū al-Mundhir), who narrates: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: 'O Abū al-Mundhir, which verse from the Book of Allah is the greatest, according to you?'

'Allah and His Messenger know best', I replied.

'O Abū al-Mundhir, do you know which verse from the Book of Allah is the greatest, according to you?' he asked.

I said: 'Allah! There is no deity [worthy of worship] except Him, the Ever-Living, All-Sustaining.'<sup>288</sup>

286 A "*qimāṭ*" originally referred to swaddling clothes for infants and later came to refer to a rope.

287 Reported by Ibn Mājah (2343) and Dāraqutnī (4/229).

288 *al-Baqarah*, 255.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ struck me on the chest. ‘May knowledge bring you bliss, O Abū al-Mundhir,’ he said.”<sup>289</sup>

95. Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, Dārimī, Ibn Sa’d, and Wakī’ relate from Mu’adh ibn Jabal رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent me to Yemen. He asked me: ‘How will you judge if they bring legal matters to you?’

‘I will judge by the Book of Allah,’ I replied.

‘And if you cannot find [a suitable evidence] in the Book of Allah?’ he asked.

‘I will judge by the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah [ﷺ],’ I replied.

‘And if you cannot find [a suitable evidence] in the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah [ﷺ],’ he asked.

‘I will endeavour to form an opinion and I will spare no effort,’ I replied.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ struck my chest with his hand and said: ‘All praise and gratitude is for Allah, the One who assisted the messenger of the Messenger of Allah [ﷺ] in attaining that which pleases the Messenger of Allah [ﷺ].’”<sup>290</sup>

## Teaching by remaining silent and authorizing something taking place in his presence

<sup>289</sup> Reported by Muslim (810).

<sup>290</sup> Reported by Abū Dāwūd (3593), Tirmidhī (1327), Dārimī (1/55), Ibn Sa’d in *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* (2/437), and Wakī’ in *Akhbār al-Qudāh* (1/98).

This is one of the principles of the Sunnah, as affirmed by the scholars of jurisprudence and Hadith. In cases where a statement was uttered or action performed in front of the Prophet ﷺ and he either remained silent or showed his contentment, then his reaction is as an elucidation of the permissibility of that statement or action. Many aspects of knowledge were gleaned from the Prophet ﷺ in this way. Here, we will suffice with two such hadiths:

96. Bukhārī relates from Abū Juḥayfah Wahb ibn 'Abdillāh ؓ, who narrates: "The Prophet ﷺ established a pact of brotherhood between Salmān and Abū al-Dardā'. Salmān went to visit Abū al-Dardā', and he saw Umm al-Dardā' wearing tattered clothes. 'What is happening with you?' he asked.

'Your brother Abū al-Dardā' has no need of this world', she replied.

Abū al-Dardā' arrived and made him some food. He said to Salmān: 'Eat, for I am fasting.'

'I am not going to eat until you eat', Salmān replied. So, Abū al-Dardā' ate.

When night fell, Abū al-Dardā' went to stand up [to pray]. 'Sleep', said Salmān, so he slept. Then, [after some time,] he went to stand up [to pray] again. 'Sleep', said Salmān, and he slept. When the last portion of the night entered, Salmān said, 'Now, stand up', and they both prayed. Then, Salmān said to Abū al-Dardā': 'Your Lord has a right upon you, your soul has a right upon you, and your family has a right upon you, so give each rightful being their due right.'



Abū al-Dardā' came and mentioned that to the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'Salmān has spoken the truth.'<sup>291</sup>

97. Abū Dāwūd relates from 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ ﷺ, who narrates: "One cold night, during the Battle of the Chains, I had a wet dream. I feared that if I perform the purificatory bath (*ghusl*) I will perish, so I performed *tayammum* and then offered the morning prayer alongside my companions. They mentioned that to the Prophet ﷺ, and he said: 'O 'Amr, did you pray with your companions whilst in a state of major impurity?'

I informed him of what had prevented me from bathing and said: 'I heard Allah saying: "And do not kill [each other or] yourselves. Surely Allah is ever Merciful to you."<sup>292</sup>

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ smiled and did not say anything."<sup>293</sup>

## Seizing opportune moments to teach

The Prophet ﷺ would regularly take advantage of opportune moments which corresponded with the matter he wished to teach. For the addressee, the way the Prophet ﷺ connected an opportunity with the knowledge he wanted to convey made the lesson clearer and more comprehensible.

98. Muslim relates from Jābir ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was on his way back [into Medina] from one of the elevated areas [on its outskirts] when he passed through a market, and the people were either side of him. He passed a dead, small-eared kid goat,

<sup>291</sup> Reported by Bukhārī (6139).

<sup>292</sup> *al-Nisā'*, 29.

<sup>293</sup> Reported by Abū Dāwūd (334).

and he took hold of it by the ear and asked: "Who would like this for one dirham?"

"Even for free, we would not want it," the people replied. "What would we do with it?"

"Would you like to have it?" he asked [again].

"By Allah, it would have been deficient even if it was alive because of its short ears, let alone dead!" they replied.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "By Allah, this world is less important to Allah than this [kid goat] is to you."<sup>294</sup>

99. Bukhārī and Muslim relate from 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه, who narrates: "Some prisoners of war were brought to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, amongst whom was a lactating woman running back and forth<sup>295</sup>. Whenever she found an infant, she would pick them up, hold them to her chest, and allow them to feed. 'Can you imagine this woman throwing her child into the Fire?' the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked us.

'No, as long as she has the ability not to,'<sup>296</sup> we responded.

He said: 'Allah is more merciful with His slaves than this lady is with her child.'<sup>297</sup><sup>298</sup>

---

294 Reported by Muslim (2957).

295 i.e., searching for her child.

296 i.e., "as long as she can protect him".

297 Ibn Hajar comments in *Fath al-Bārī* (10/361): "This is an example of drawing an analogy between something the senses can perceive and something they cannot, even if, as with the Mercy of Allah that is described here, it is something that cannot be grasped by the human intellect."

298 Reported by Bukhārī (5999) and Muslim (2754).

Here, the Prophet ﷺ seized upon an opportune moment with his Companions to depict the tenderness of a mother who loses and then finds her breastfeeding infant, and then compares that with the Mercy of Allah Most High, so that the people could become acquainted with the Mercy of their Lord. The Prophet ﷺ did not initiate the topic in this instance, but rather mentioned it at an appropriate time. This was a lesson and explanation of the vastness of the Mercy of Allah Most High and His Care for His creation, “and Allah is Ever Gracious to [His] servants.”<sup>299</sup>

100. Bukhārī relates from Jarīr ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Bajalī ؓ, who narrates: “[One night,] we were sitting with the Prophet ﷺ when he looked at the full Moon and said: ‘Certainly, you will see your Lord on the Day of Judgement just as you can see this Moon, and you will have no difficulty seeing Him.’<sup>300</sup> If you can avoid being overcome with respect to the prayer before the rising of the Sun and the prayer before its setting, then do so.’ Then, he recited: ‘And glorify the praises of your Lord before sunrise and before sunset.’<sup>301</sup>”<sup>302</sup>

This time, the Prophet ﷺ took advantage of the Companions witnessing the full Moon to explain to them that the believers would see Al-

---

299 *al-Baqarah*, 207.

300 i.e., you will not be wronged. It is also transmitted as “you will not be squeezed together”, meaning there will be no crowding or congestion, as when people crowd together to sight the crescent at the beginning of the month.

Ibn Hajar comments in *Fath al-Bārī* (10/357), whilst explaining the narration, “and you will have no difficulty seeing Him”: “You will see Him ﷻ from every direction, and He is Far Above [being restricted by] direction. The comparison to Moon is in regards to your seeing it, and not in regards to the thing being seen, for Allah is Most Exalted above that.”

301 *Qāf*, 39.

302 Reported by Bukhārī (7436).

lah Most High in Paradise with the same clarity and ease.

## Teaching through playfulness and good-natured jest<sup>303</sup>

Sometimes, the Prophet ﷺ would joke and speak playfully with his Companions, although he only ever spoke the truth,<sup>304</sup> and many points of knowledge were taught in this manner.

101. Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājah relate – and the wording here is from Abū Dāwūd – from Anas ibn Mālik ؓ, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to visit us. I had a younger brother nicknamed Abū ‘Umayr; he had a nightingale he used to play with, and the bird died. The Prophet

---

303 Friendly joking relaxes human beings and provides relief from the burden of the difficulties and strains affecting or afflicting them. Bitterness and disliked things are a part of life, and good-natured jest lightens the weight of that upon the soul.

A person learns more from a teacher who is smiling and cheerful than one who is frowning and scowling. Constant seriousness overstrains the intellect and exhausts the mind, and pleasant, congenial joking from time to time restores a person's energy and attentiveness. How knowledge was this wise teacher, the dignified, kind, and compassionate ﷺ.

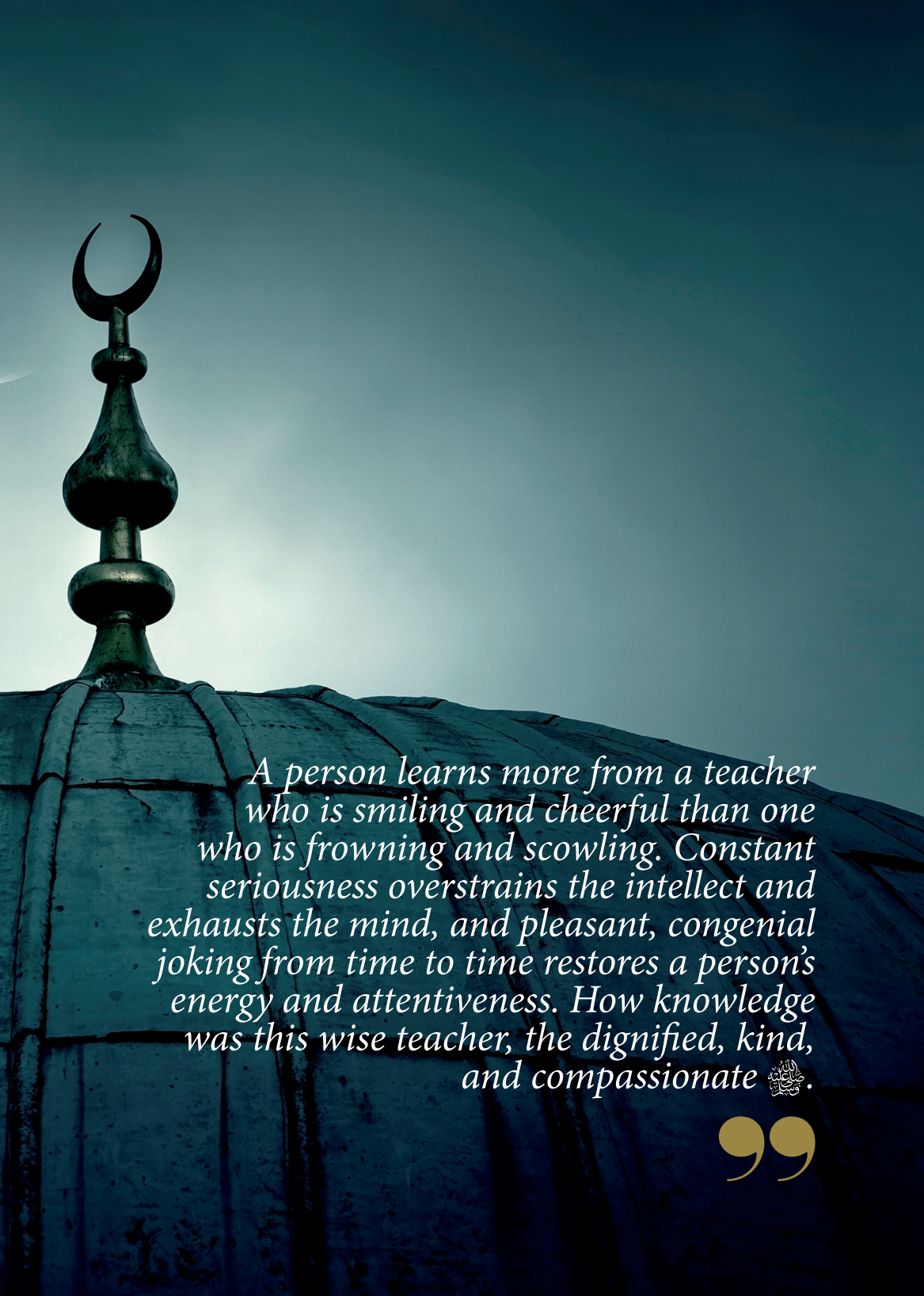
Ibn Qutaybah ؓ says: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to joke, because the people had been commanded to follow his example and adhere to his guidance. So, if he gave up smiling and constantly frowned and scowled, the people would also do so when confronted with difficulties and hardships that upset their mood. Therefore, he joked so that the people would joke, and he would only say the truth.” As related by Ibn ‘Allān in *Al-Futūḥāt al-Rabbāniyyah ‘alā al-Adhkār al-Nawawīyyah* (6/297).

Imam Nawawī says in *Al-Adhkār*, p. 29: “The type of joking around that is prohibited is that which is excessive and constant, for it leads to [excessive] laughter and a hardening of the heart, and pre-occupies a person from remembrance of Allah Most High and reflection upon important religious matters, and is often interpreted as insult, which in turn leads to enmity, and removes a person's dignity and grace. As for joking which is free of these characteristics, it is the permitted kind which was occasionally practiced by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ for a particular utility, and to cheer and calm the soul of the person he was addressing. This [type of joking] is not prohibited in any way. Rather, if it adheres to this description, it is a recommended *sunnah*. So, stick to this [type of joking], for it is something that is greatly needed, and success is [only] through Allah.”

304 As reported by Tirmidhī (1990) from Abū Hurayrah ؓ, who narrates: “They said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, you joke around with us?’ He replied: ‘I only say the truth.’” Tirmidhī said: “This hadith is *ḥasan*.”





A low-angle photograph of a mosque's dome and minaret. The minaret, topped with a crescent moon, rises from the left side of the frame. The dome's surface is visible in the foreground, showing its curved structure. The sky is a clear, deep blue, and the sun is visible as a bright, hazy glow behind the minaret.

*A person learns more from a teacher who is smiling and cheerful than one who is frowning and scowling. Constant seriousness overstrains the intellect and exhausts the mind, and pleasant, congenial joking from time to time restores a person's energy and attentiveness. How knowledgeable was this wise teacher, the dignified, kind, and compassionate ﷺ.*

”

ﷺ came in one day and saw that he was sad. ‘What is the matter with him?’ he asked.

‘His nightingale died’, they said.

‘O Abū ‘Umayr, what happened to the *nughayr*<sup>305</sup> (little nightingale)?’ he said.”<sup>306</sup>

102. Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī relate from Anas رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “A

305 “*Nughayr*” is the diminutive form of “*naghr*”, which is a finch-like bird with a red beak.

306 Reported by Bukhārī (6129), Muslim (2150), Abū Dāwūd (4969), Tirmidhī (333), and Ibn Mājah (3740).

This hadith includes many beneficial points related to teaching:

1. An imam visiting people from his congregation.
2. Members of the congregation socializing with each other.
3. The permissibility of a scholar transmitting his knowledge to those it will benefit.
4. The permissibility of playful jest, and the permissibility of the joking of young children who have not reached the age of discernment.
5. The permissibility of giving someone without children a *kunyah*. (Translator’s note: e.g., “Abū So-and-so” or “Abū such-and-such”.)
6. The permissibility of a child playing with a bird, provided they do not distress it, and the permissibility of their guardian giving them the ability to do so.
7. The permissibility of spending money on allowed things that will entertain children.
8. The permissibility of keeping a bird in a cage or similar.
9. Socializing with people according to their level of intellect and discernment.
10. The permissibility of calling someone by the diminutive form of their name without it being insulting, for the Prophet ﷺ said: “O Abū ‘Umayr”.
11. The permissibility of someone asking something they already know the answer to without being mocking, for the Prophet ﷺ asked, “what happened to the *nughayr*?”, after learning it had died.

There were scholars who explained this narration in dedicated volumes. Some extracted more than 60 points of benefit, as in *Fath al-Bārī* (10/481), and others found more than 300, as indicated by our Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī in *Al-Tarātib al-Idāriyyah* (2/150). In *Naḥḥ al-Ṭīb* (6/215), the esteemed scholar, historian, and writer Aḥmad al-Maqqarī says, whilst mentioning “the Tongue of the Religion” Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s description of the city Maknāsah: “In his teaching of the hadith, ‘O Abū ‘Umayr, what happened to the *nughayr*’, in Maknāsah, Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh dictated 400 points of benefit”



man requested a mount from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.<sup>307</sup> The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to him: 'I will give you the child of a female camel.'

'What am I going to do with the child of a female camel?' the man asked.

'Does anything give birth to a camel other than a female camel?'<sup>308</sup> the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said."<sup>309</sup>

In this gentle, light-hearted tone, the Prophet ﷺ helped the man understand that any camel, even if it is big and carries heavy loads, is still the child of a mother camel.

## Emphasizing a teaching point by swearing an oath

The Prophet ﷺ would often precede his statements by swearing an oath by Allah Most High, to alert the listener to the importance of what he was saying and the firmness of the ruling.<sup>310</sup>

103. Muslim relates from Abū Hurayrah ؓ, who narrates: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "By the One with my soul in His Hand,

307 i.e., asked for one of the charity camels to carry his things.

308 Translator's note: The man thought that the Prophet ﷺ was referring to an infant camel when he said "the child of a female camel", which would not be suitable as a riding mount, but he was actually talking about all camels, for all camels are "the child of a female camel".

309 Reported by Abū Dāwūd (4998) and Tirmidhī (1991).

310 Ibn al-Qayyim ؒ notes in *I'lām al-Muwaqqi'īn* (4/165) and *Zād al-Ma'ād* (2/313): "The Prophet ﷺ swore to the truth of what he reported in more than eighty places, and these can be found in the *Ṣaḥīḥs* and *Musnads*. Allah Most High commanded swearing to the veracity of that which is reported in three places in the Qur'an: 'Say, "Yes, by my Lord! Most certainly it is true!"' (*Yūnus*, 53); 'Say, [O Prophet,] "Yes, by my Lord, it will certainly come to you!"' (*Saba*, 3); and 'Say, [O Prophet,] "Yes, by my Lord, you will surely be resurrected"' (*al-Taghābun*, 7)."

you will not enter Paradise until you believe, and you will not [truly] believe until you love each other. Shall I not teach you something that, if you do it, will make you love one another? Spread the greeting of *salām* amongst you.”<sup>311</sup>

104. Muslim relates from Anas رضي الله عنه from the Prophet ﷺ, who said: “By the One with my soul in His hand, a servant will not [truly] believe until he loves for his neighbour (or, he said: “for his brother”) what he loves for himself.”<sup>312</sup>

105. Bukhārī relates from Abū Shurayḥ al-Khuzāʿī رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “By Allah, he does not [truly] believe! By Allah, he does not [truly] believe! By Allah, he does not [truly] believe!”

“Who, O Messenger of Allah?” he was asked. “The one whose neighbour is not safe from his harm”, he replied.<sup>313</sup>

The oaths sworn by the Truthful One to Whom truth was spoken ﷺ in these narrations were solely intended to highlight the significance of the impact of spreading *salām*, which is the emblem of Islam, upon strengthening ties and mutual affection amongst the people; the necessity of loving good for one’s neighbour and brother; and the obnoxiousness of harming or disturbing one’s neighbour.

## Repeating statements three times to emphasize their certainty [or significance]

<sup>311</sup> Reported by Muslim (54).

<sup>312</sup> Reported by Muslim (45).

<sup>313</sup> Reported by Bukhārī (6016).

The Prophet ﷺ would repeat his statements to emphasize their content and to aid the listener's comprehension and accuracy [in understanding] his words. Bukhārī devoted a sub-chapter to this topic within the Book of Knowledge, in which he relates the following two hadiths:<sup>314</sup>

106. Bukhārī relates from Anas ؓ that when the Prophet ﷺ spoke, he would repeat his words three times so that they were [fully] understood.<sup>315</sup>

107. Bukhārī relates from 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ؓ, who narrates: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was delayed during a journey we were making. When he caught up with us, we were pressed for time for the 'Aṣr prayer<sup>316</sup>. We were making *wuḍū'* and had started wiping over our feet when he called out in his loudest voice, 'Woe to the heels from the Fire, two or three times.'<sup>317</sup>

In addition:

---

314 In another narration reported by Bukhārī (103), Ibn Abi Mulaykah states that whenever 'Āishah ؓ heard something she did not understand, she would keep returning to it until she had understood, and that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Whoever is held to account will be punished."

'Āishah ؓ narrates: "I asked: 'Does Allah Most High not say: "they will have an easy reckoning"?' (Translator's note: *al-Inshiqāq*, 8.)

The Prophet ﷺ replied: 'Rather, that is the presentation [of one's deeds], but whoever is thoroughly examined in their reckoning will be destroyed.'

Ibn Ḥajar comments in *Fath al-Bārī* (1/197): "This hadith elucidates 'Āishah's persistence in understanding the meaning of narrations and that the Prophet ﷺ did not tire of revising knowledge. It also clarifies the permissibility of debate and discussion, and comparing [proofs found in] the Sunnah and the Book (i.e., the Qur'an), and it highlights the divergence there will be in different people's reckonings [of their deeds on the Day of Judgement]."

315 Reported by Bukhārī (95).

316 i.e., the time for the prayer had not only entered but had almost passed.

317 Reported by Bukhārī (96).

108. Imam Aḥmad relates from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghanam, from Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal ؓ, who narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ marched out with the people in the direction of Tabūk. When morning came, he led the people in the morning prayer. Then, the people mounted [their animals]. When the Sun rose, the people felt drowsy from their night [travelling]. Mu‘ādh ؓ stayed close to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, following his footsteps.

Then, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ lifted his visor. When he turned around, no man in the army was closer to him than Mu‘ādh. So, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ called him: “O Mu‘ādh!”

“At your service, O Prophet of Allah”, he replied.

“Come closer”, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said. Mu‘ādh approached until their riding camels were touching. “I did not expect the people to be so far away from us”, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said.

“O Prophet of Allah, the people were sleepy and their riding animals split them up, [some] grazing [and some] continuing on their way”, Mu‘ādh replied. “I was also sleepy”, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied.

When Mu‘ādh ؓ noticed the contentment of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and that they were alone together, he said: “O Messenger of Allah, give me permission to ask you about a matter that [thinking about] has made me ill, immobilized, and gloomy.”

“Ask me about whatever you wish”, the Prophet of Allah ﷺ replied.

“O Prophet of Allah, tell me a deed that will cause me to enter Paradise, after which I will have no need to ask you anything else”, he said.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Bravo! Bravo! Bravo! You have asked about something great. You have asked about something great. You have asked about something great. But it is easy for whomever Allah wishes goodness. But it is easy for whomever Allah wishes goodness. But it is easy for whomever Allah wishes goodness.”

Each time he uttered a statement, he repeated it three times to make sure it would be accurately understood and retained.

The Prophet of Allah ﷺ said: “Believe in Allah and the Final Day, establish the prayer, and worship Allah alone and without partners, until you die upon that.”

“O Prophet of Allah, repeat it for me”, Mu'adh requested, and the Prophet ﷺ repeated it three times.

Then, the Prophet of Allah ﷺ said: “If you wish, I can tell you, O Mu'adh, the crux of this matter<sup>318</sup>, the foundation of this matter, and the pinnacle of this matter.”

“Yes, may my father and mother be your ransom, O Prophet of Allah, tell me”, he replied.

The Prophet of Allah ﷺ said: “The crux of this matter is to bear witness that there is no deity [worthy of worship] except Allah,

---

318 “This matter” either refers to the religion or to the deed that will cause a person to enter Paradise.

alone and without partners, and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger. The foundation of this matter is establishing the prayer and giving *zakāh*. And its pinnacle is striving (*jihād*) in the way of Allah.

I have been commanded to fight the people until they establish the prayer, give *zakāh*, and bear witness that there is no deity [worthy of worship] except Allah, alone and without partners, and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger. If they do that, then they are protected, as are their blood and wealth – except by due right – and their account is with Allah ﷻ.”<sup>319</sup>

### Indicating the importance of a statement by changing his sitting position or posture and repeating his words

At times, the Prophet ﷺ would highlight the gravity of his words or warn against something by changing his sitting position and repeating what he had said.

109. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Bukhārī – from Abū Bakr ؓ, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘Shall I not inform you of the greatest of the major sins? Shall I not inform you of the greatest of the major sins? Shall I not inform you of the greatest of the major sins?’

‘Yes, O Messenger of Allah,’ we replied.

He said: ‘Associating partners with Allah, disobeying one’s parents,’ (he was reclining and now sat up) ‘and, indeed, words of falsehood and bearing false witness. And, indeed, words of false-

---

319 Reported by Aḥmad (22122).

hood and bearing false witness.'

He kept saying it (i.e., the last sentence) until I said [to myself]: 'He will not stop.'"

And in the transmission related by Muslim: "He kept repeating it until I said: 'If only he would stop.'"<sup>320</sup>

When he sat up and repeated himself, the people listening were immediately alerted and focused to the seriousness of the matter being cautioned against, which was words of falsehood.

### Emphasizing the significance of a saying by repeatedly calling someone and delaying his response

Sometimes, the Prophet ﷺ would call out to a person several times and delay the answer as a way of underlining the value of what he was informing them of and amplifying their understanding and retention of his words.

110. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Bukhārī – from Mu'ādh ibn Jabal رضي الله عنه, who narrates: "I was riding behind the Prophet ﷺ, with nothing between me and him except the back of his saddle, when he said: 'O Mu'ādh!'

'At your service and pleasure, O Messenger of Allah, I replied.

Some time passed. 'O Mu'ādh!' he repeated.

'At your service and pleasure, O Messenger of Allah, I replied.

---

320 Reported by Bukhārī (6871) and Muslim (88).

Again, time passed. Then, he said: ‘O Mu‘adh ibn Jabal!’

‘At your service and pleasure, O Messenger of Allah,’ I replied.

‘Do you know the right of Allah upon [His] slaves?’ he asked.

‘Allah and His Messenger know best,’ I replied.

‘The right of Allah upon [His] slaves are that they worship Him and do not associate partners with Him,’ he said. Again, time passed. Then, he said again: ‘O Mu‘adh ibn Jabal!’

‘At your service and pleasure, O Messenger of Allah,’ I replied.

‘Do you know the right of the slaves upon Allah if they do that<sup>321</sup>?’ he asked.

‘Allah and His Messenger know best,’ I replied.

‘The right of the slaves upon Allah is that He does not punish them,’ he said.’<sup>322</sup>

## **Taking hold of the hand or shoulder of the person he was addressing to capture their attention**



On other occasions, the Prophet ﷺ would capture the attention of his addressee by holding their hand or shoulder, so that they would turn to him with their hearing, sight, and heart, and be more attentive to and retentive of what he was teaching them.



---


321 i.e., if they worship Him sincerely and without associating any partners with Him.


322 Reported by Bukhārī (6500) and Muslim (30).



111. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Bukhārī – from ‘Abdullāh ibn Sakhbarah Abū Ma‘mar, who narrates he heard Ibn Mas‘ūd  say: “The Messenger of Allah  taught me, with my hands between his, the *tashahhud*, just as he would teach me a *sūrah* from the Qur’an: ‘Salutations are for Allah, [as are] prayers, and good words. May peace be upon you, O Prophet, and the Mercy of Allah and His Blessings. May peace be upon us and upon the righteous servants of Allah. I bear witness that there is no deity [worthy of worship] except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.’”<sup>323</sup>

112. Bukhārī and Tirmidhī relate from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar , who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah  held me by the shoulder and said: ‘Be in this world like a stranger or wayfarer and count yourself as one of the inhabitants of the graves.’”

Ibn ‘Umar  used to say: “If you live until evening, do not expect to see the morning, and if you live until morning, do not expect to see the evening. Take from your health in anticipation of illness, and take from your life in anticipation of death, for, O ‘Abdullāh, you do not know how people will describe you tomorrow.”<sup>324</sup><sup>325</sup>

Similarly, the Prophet  would sometimes strike the thigh of a Companion he was speaking to.

---

323 Reported by Bukhārī (6265) and Muslim (402).

324 Translator’s note: lit., “what your name will be tomorrow”. The scholars mentioned that this refers to whether a person will be described as miserable or prosperous, or dead or alive, because a person’s actual name does not change.

325 Reported by Bukhārī (6416) and Tirmidhī (2333).

The phrases “and count yourself as one of the inhabitants of the graves” and “for, O ‘Abdullāh, you do not know how people will describe you tomorrow” are related by Tirmidhī but not Bukhārī.

113. Muslim relates from the honourable Follower Abū al-‘Āliyah, who narrates: “[The Commander] Ibn Ziyād delayed the prayer. ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Šāmit came to me. I brought a chair for him, he sat down, and I told him what Ibn Ziyād had done. He bit his lip, struck my thigh, and said: ‘I asked Abū Dharr just as you have asked me. He struck my thigh just as I have struck your thigh and said: “I asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ just as you have asked me. He struck my thigh just as I have struck your thigh and said: ‘Perform the prayer at its [proper] time. If you catch the [congregational] prayer with them, then pray [with them], and do not say, “I have already prayed, so I will not pray [again]”, for it is an increase in good.’”””<sup>326</sup>

### Keeping something ambiguous to motivate the listener to investigate it, as a way of encouraging it or warned against it<sup>327</sup>

On occasion, the Prophet ﷺ would employ ambiguity to impel the listener to yearn for the thing he was referring to, increasing the impact that thing had upon the person and further encouraging them to acquire it.

114. Anas ibn Mālik ؓ narrates: “We were sitting with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and he said: ‘A man from the people of Paradise will come to you now.’ A man from the Anṣār arrived,<sup>328</sup> his beard

<sup>326</sup> Reported by Muslim (648e).

<sup>327</sup> For an example of ambiguity being used to warn against something, see hadith no. 105, where the Prophet ﷺ said: “By Allah, he does not [truly] believe...The one whose neighbour is not safe from his harm.”

<sup>328</sup> It was Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ ؓ. He is mentioned by name in the transmission related by Ibn Kathīr in *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah* (8/74) in his biography of Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ from the chain of Ibn Wahb, “...from Anas ibn Mālik, who narrates: ‘We were sitting with the Messenger of Allah

dripping from his *wuḍū'* and his sandals hanging from his left

ﷺ, when he said: 'A man from the people of Paradise will come to you now.' Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqāṣ arrived...'" Then, the story continues with the same wording related above.

He is also mentioned by name in the transmission related by Mundhirī in *Al-Tarḥīb wa al-Tarḥīb* (5/178) from the narration of al-Bazzār from Anas ibn Mālik and transmission reported by Bayhaqī from Sālim ibn 'Abdillāh, from his father, from 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, who narrates: "We were sitting with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and he said: 'A man from the people of Paradise will come to you from that entrance.' Sa'd ibn Abi Mālik arrived and entered from it", and then the narration continues with the same wording, and Sa'd ibn Abi Mālik is Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqāṣ ﷺ.

Imām Aḥmad relates the narration in abbreviated form in his *Musnad* (7069) with a weak chain: "... from 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-ʿAṣ, that the Prophet ﷺ said, 'The first person to enter from this door will be a man from the people of Paradise', and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqāṣ entered."

And Dhahabī says in *Tārīkh al-Islām* (2/282), in the biography of Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqāṣ: "It has come from 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, Anas, and 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr in a weak form, that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, 'The first person to enter from this door will be a man from the people of Paradise', and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqāṣ entered." Dhahabī also mentions something similar in *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'* (1/72-73).

Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqāṣ ﷺ was a Makkan Emigrant and not one of the Helpers by consensus. So, the phrase "from the Anṣār" reported in the *Musnad* and other sources could be an oversight of one of the narrators, and Allah knows best. It is also possible that the word "Anṣār" was used with its general meaning of "a helper", and not as opposed to the Muhājirūn, as in the story of 'Abdullāh ibn Abi al-Sarḥ's embracing of Islam on the day of the Liberation of Makkah. A man from the Anṣār said: "O Messenger of Allah, gesture for us to kill him..." Zurqānī says in the explanation of *al-Muwāḥib al-Ladunniyyah* (2/371): "The man was 'Ubād (or 'Umar) ibn Bishr al-Anṣārī, and he was named 'the Anṣārī' or 'the Helper' in the general sense, [as Allah Most High says:] 'O believers! Be helpers of Allah' (Translator's note: *al-ṣaff*, 14)."

Trāqī says about the narration in *Takhrīj al-Ihyā'* (3/187): "It was related by Aḥmad with a chain that was *ṣaḥīḥ* by the conditions of the two Shaykhs (Translator's note: i.e., Bukhārī and Muslim), and it was related by Bazzār, who names the unknown man in one of his transmissions as Sa'd, and its chain contains Ibn Lahī'ah."

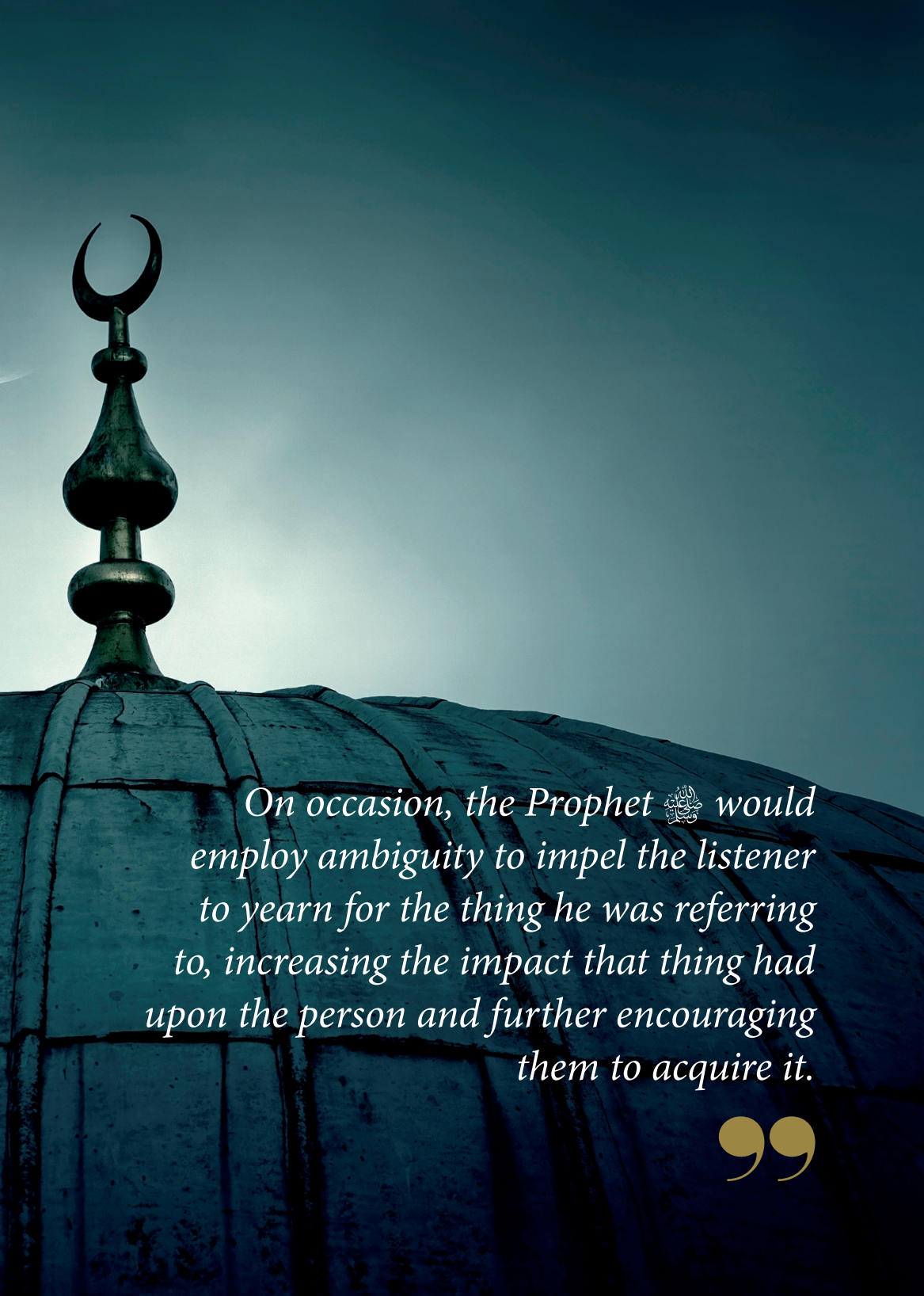
In Zabidī's manuscript of *Takhrīj al-Ihyā'*, "Sa'd" is changed to "Sufyān", as can be seen in his *Ittiḥāf al-Sādat al-Muttaqīn* (8/51). It is not clear who this "Sufyān" refers to, and the reality is that it is Sa'd, as related by Bazzār (3/208) and in many other manuscripts of *Takhrīj al-Ihyā'*. Trāqī's statement "its chain contains Ibn Lahī'ah" is subject to further scrutiny, for Bazzār's chain does not contain Ibn Lahī'ah but does contain 'Abdullāh ibn Qays al-Raqāshī.

The name of the Companion who confirmed that it was Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqāṣ is altered in several sources. In *Al-Tarḥīb wa al-Tarḥīb* (5/178) by Mundhirī, at the mention of Bayhaqī's transmission of this hadith, it says: "'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar said...", and exactly the same appears in *Al-Zawājir* by Ibn Ḥajar al-Makkī, who relates the wording of Mundhirī but without attributing it to him. This suggests that the alteration is from *Al-Tarḥīb wa al-Tarḥīb*, as it would not be possible for the same mistake to be repeated on numerous occasions.

The transmission related by Haythamī in *Majma' al-Zawā'id* (8/78) reads: "Ibn 'Umar narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said...and he was followed by 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar". This is a mistake, and it should be "'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr". He is mentioned by name as "'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-ʿAṣ" in the *Mus-*





A low-angle photograph of a mosque's dome and minaret. The minaret, topped with a crescent moon, rises from the left side of the frame. The dome's surface is visible in the foreground, showing its curved structure and some wear. The sky is a clear, deep blue, and the sun is visible as a bright, hazy glow behind the minaret.

*On occasion, the Prophet ﷺ would employ ambiguity to impel the listener to yearn for the thing he was referring to, increasing the impact that thing had upon the person and further encouraging them to acquire it.*

”

hand. The next day, the Prophet ﷺ said the same thing. The same man arrived, just like the first time. On the third day, the Prophet ﷺ said the same words again, and the same man arrived, [still] in his original manner. When the Prophet ﷺ left, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr followed the man. [When he caught up with him,] he said: ‘I had an argument with my father, and I swore that I would not go by him for three [nights]. Do you think I would be able to stay with you until they pass?’

‘Yes,’ he replied.”

Anas continues: “‘Abdullāh said that he stayed with the man for those three nights and did not see him stand to pray for any of it. All he saw was that if the man tossed and turned on his bed, he would remember Allah and declare His Greatness until it was time for the Fajr prayer.

‘Abdullāh said: ‘I did not hear him say anything but good. When the three nights had passed and I was on the verge of dismissing his deeds as insignificant, I said: “O Slave of Allah<sup>329</sup>, there is no

---

*nad* of Imam Aḥmad, *al-Muṣannaf* by ‘Abd al-Razzāq, and *Al-Zuhd* by Ibn al-Mubārak, as well as in the books of *Aṭrāf*. (Translator’s note: The books of *Aṭrāf* are those in which the author mentions only a part of the narration.)

Mizzī relates a portion of the hadith from the chain of Ma‘mar ibn Rāshid, from al-Zuhri, from Anas, in *Tuhfat al-Ashraf bi al-Ma‘rifat al-Aṭraf* (1/394), as is found in the *Musnad*, and he attributes it both to the *Musnad* and to Nasā’i in *Al-Yawm wa al-Laylah*. He says: “It contains the story of ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ.” This is confirmed by Ibn Ḥajar in *Al-Nukat al-Aṭraf*, and he adds that it was related by Bayhaqī in *Shu‘ab al-Īmān* and Kharā’iṭi in *Makārim al-Akhlaq*. This clarifies that the Companion who confirmed that it was Sa’d was ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ and not ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar ؓ, for it would not be possible for the same mistake to be repeated on numerous occasions, as previously discussed. All praise and gratitude is for Allah for His Favour and granting of success.

329 He called him “‘Abdullāh”, or “slave of Allah” in a general sense, for all human beings are slaves of Allah. His actual name was Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās, as previously mentioned.

enmity or split between me and my father. Rather, I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say three times, 'A man from the people of Paradise will come to you now', and then you came by three times. I wanted to stay with you and observe your actions so that I could follow your example, but I did not see you performing many deeds. So, what is it that made you reach the status the Prophet ﷺ attributed to you?"

"It is just as you have seen", he replied. When I turned to leave, he called me: "It is just as you have seen, O Nephew, with the addition that I have no rancour in my heart for any Muslim and do not envy any Muslim for the goodness Allah has given to them."

'Abdullāh said: "That is the thing that has caused you to reach [such a status] and that is the thing we cannot endure."<sup>330</sup>

### **Summarizing a concept first and then explaining it in more detail, to make it clearer to the listener and easier for them to comprehend and retain**

At times, the Prophet ﷺ would answer in a summarized form as a way of encouraging those he was addressing to question further and motivating them to discover the true meaning of his statement before then explaining it in detail.

115. Bukhārī, Muslim, and Ibn Mājah relate – and the wording here is from Muslim – from Anas ibn Mālīk ؓ, who narrates: "A funeral procession passed by, and the person being laid to rest was

---

330 Reported by Aḥmad (12697). Also reported, with a very similar wording, by 'Abd al-Razzāq in *al-Muṣannaḥ* (11:287) and Ibn al-Mubārak in *al-Zuhd* (p. 241), from the chain of Mu'ammār, from al-Zuhri, from Anas.



spoken well of. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'It has become incumbent. It has become incumbent. It has become incumbent.'

Then, another funeral procession passed by, and the person being laid to rest was spoken badly of. [Again,] the Prophet ﷺ said: 'It has become incumbent. It has become incumbent. It has become incumbent.'

'Umar ؓ said: 'May my father and mother be your ransom. A funeral procession passed by and the person being laid to rest was spoken well of, and you said: "It has become incumbent. It has become incumbent. It has become incumbent." Another funeral procession was passed and the person being laid to rest was spoken badly of, and you said [again]: "It has become incumbent. It has become incumbent. It has become incumbent."'"<sup>331</sup>

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: 'Paradise has become incumbent for the one you spoke well of, and the Fire has become incumbent for the one you spoke badly of. You are the witnesses of

---

331 Imam Nawawī says in the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (7/19): "This is how the narration originally appears. 'It has become incumbent. It has become incumbent. It has become incumbent' three times, and 'You are the witnesses of Allah upon the Earth' three times."

Al-Badr al-'Aynī says in *Umdat al-Qārī* (8/195): "Repetition in a hadith is to emphasize a statement and so that no-one has any doubt about it."

Allah upon the Earth.<sup>332</sup>”<sup>333</sup>

116. Muslim relates from Ma'bad ibn Ka'b ibn Mālik that Abū Qatādah ibn Rib'īyy رضي الله عنه used to narrate that a funeral procession once passed by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and he said: “The one who gets a rest and the one from whom others get a rest.”

The people asked: “O Messenger of Allah, what is [the meaning of] ‘the one who gets a rest and the one from whom others get a rest’?”

---

332 The statement of the Prophet ﷺ, “You are the witnesses of Allah upon the Earth”, was addressed to the Companions رضي الله عنهم, but the scholars say that it is not restricted to them. Rather, it applies both to the Companions and to the male and female believers and righteous individuals who follow them in character.

The scholars differed in their interpretation of this noble narration. Imam Nawawī says in the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (7/19), and he is quoted by Ibn Hajar in *Fatḥ al-Bārī* (3/231): “Some say that the meaning of the hadith is that if an individual [who has passed away] is praised by the people of virtue and piety and is deserving of that praise, then they will be from the people of Paradise, but if they are not deserving of it then they will not, and the same goes for the opposite.

The correct meaning is a general and absolute interpretation, and that for any Muslim who passes away, Allah Most High will inspire the people to praise them, and that is a proof that the individual is from the people of Paradise, regardless of whether their actions merit that [praise] or not, for actions come under His Will, and if Allah ﷻ inspires the people to praise them, it is a sign that Allah ﷻ has willed forgiveness for them. This clarifies the benefit of [such] praise and explains the statements of the Prophet ﷺ: ‘It has become incumbent’ and ‘You are the witnesses of Allah upon the Earth’. If praise only benefited a deceased person when their actions deserved it, then it would be of no benefit, whereas the Prophet ﷺ has established that it is of benefit.”

This hadith clarifies the following education-related point: the desirability of emphasizing important statements through repetition, so that they are more easily retained and are more impactful on the listener. And from the teaching methods elucidated in this narration: summarizing [concepts] and then explaining [them] in detail as a means of increasing their poignancy and effect. The Prophet ﷺ [first] summarized by saying “It has become incumbent” regarding the two deceased individuals, and then explained what it was that it was Paradise that had become incumbent for the one they had spoken well of, and the Fire that had become incumbent for the one they had spoken badly of. “To become incumbent” here means “to be established”. A foundational principle is that nothing is incumbent upon Allah. Rather, reward is from His Favour, and punishment is from His Justice.

333 Reported by Bukhārī (1367), Muslim (949), and Ibn Mājah (1491).

He said: “The believing servant gets rest from the exertion of this world unto the Mercy of Allah, and the people, lands, trees, and animals get a rest from the sinful servant [when he passes away].<sup>334</sup>”<sup>335</sup>

The hadith previously mentioned which warns against harming one’s neighbour also falls into this category:

117. Bukhārī relates from Abū Shurayḥ al-Khuzā’ī رضي الله عنه, who narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “By Allah, he does not [truly] believe! By Allah, he does not [truly] believe! By Allah, he does not [truly] believe!” “Who, O Messenger of Allah?” he was asked. “The one whose neighbour is not safe from his harm”, he replied.<sup>336</sup>

As does the caution of the Prophet ﷺ against falling short in one’s duty to their parents:

118. Muslim relates from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘May his nose rub in dust!’<sup>337</sup> Again, may his nose rub in dust! And again, may his nose rub in dust!’

---

334 Imam Nawawī says in the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (7/20): “The meaning of the hadith is that the dead fall into two categories: those who get to rest and the one who others get a rest from. As for the respite that servants [of Allah] get from an evil person, it refers to the evil person’s harm towards them being repelled. Such a person’s harm can take several forms, including both oppression and committing reprehensible acts. If the people denounce such acts, they will experience hardship and perhaps be harmed by him, and if they remain silent, they will be sinful themselves. Animals also get respite from such a person’s harm, for he used to distress them, hit them, load them with burdens they could not manage, sometimes starve them, and so on.”

335 Reported by Muslim (950).

336 Reported by Bukhārī (6016). See hadith no. 105.

337 Translator’s note: i.e., “May he be humiliated!”

‘Who, O Messenger of Allah?’ the people asked. ‘The one who finds his parents, either one or both of them, in their old age, and still does not enter Paradise.’”<sup>338</sup>

## Mentioning a small number of points briefly and then explaining in further detail

Similarly to the previous teaching technique, the Prophet ﷺ would aid the retention and comprehension of his listeners by mentioning a small number of points briefly and then explaining them one at a time.

119. Ḥākim relates from Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘Take advantage of five before five: your youth before your decrepitude, your good health before your illness, your wealth before your poverty, your free time before you become occupied, and your life before your death.’”<sup>339</sup>

120. Bukhārī and Muslim relate from Abū Hurayrah ؓ, who narrates: The Prophet ﷺ said: “A woman is married for four things: her wealth, her lineage, her beauty, and her religion. Achieve success by [choosing] a religious woman, may your hands be rubbed with dust!”<sup>340</sup>

---

338 Reported by Muslim (2551).

339 Reported by Ḥākim (7846).

This narration highlights the importance and great benefit of the five things it mentions, all of which are not truly appreciated until they are lost. Another hadith states: “There are two blessings which many people are deceived about: health and free time.” (Translator’s note: Reported by Bukhārī, 6412).

340 “May your hands be rubbed with dust” is an Arabic saying meaning “may you become destitute” – i.e., if you do not heed this advice – but, like the expression “woe to you”, it is not meant literally.

Imam Nawawī says in the commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (1/25): “This hadith is an encouragement to be with people of religion in all matters, for the one who accompanies such a person will benefit

## Teaching through reminders and exhortations

One of the most important and outstanding teaching techniques of the Prophet ﷺ was to exhort and remind, in line with the Words of Allah Most High in the Noble Qur'an: "But [continue to] remind. For certainly reminders benefit the believers."<sup>341</sup> And: "So, [continue to] remind [all, O Prophet], for your duty is only to remind."<sup>342</sup> Indeed, many of the lessons the Prophet ﷺ taught were taken from his reminders and public speeches.

121. Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājah relate – and the wording here is from Abū Dāwūd – from 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Amr al-Sulamī and Ḥujr ibn Ḥujr, who narrate that they visited al-'Irbād ibn Sāriyah رضي الله عنه. They greeted him and said: "We have come as visitors and to acquire [knowledge]."

Al-'Irbād said: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ led us in prayer one day. Then, he turned to us and addressed us with a profound reminder that caused eyes to brim with tears and hearts to tremble. Someone asked: 'O Messenger of Allah, it is as if this is a farewell reminder, so what do you command us?'"

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: 'I advise you to be conscious of Allah, and to listen and obey, even if an Ethiopian slave is appointed over you. Whoever lives after me will see much discord, so it is incumbent upon you to stick to my way (Sunnah) and the way of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs. Hold firm to it and clench on

---

from their manners, blessings, and excellent ways, and will not be subject to a negative or corrupting influence from their direction."

341 *al-Dhāriyāt*, 55.

342 *al-Ghāshiyah*, 21.

to it with your teeth. And beware of newly-invented practices, for every newly-invented practice is an innovation, and every innovation [in the religion] is misguidance.”<sup>343</sup>

122. Muslim, Nasā'ī and Ibn Mājah relate – and the wording here is from Muslim – from Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh al-Anṣārī رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ delivered an address, his eyes would redden, his voice would rise, and his passion would intensify, until it was as if he was warning of [enemy] troops and saying: ‘[They will attack] by morning and by evening.’ He would say, ‘The Hour and I have been sent like these two’, and join his forefinger and middle finger together. And he would say: ‘To proceed: The best of speech is the Book of Allah, and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad. The worst of affairs are those which are innovated, and every innovation is misguidance.’ Then, he would say: ‘I have a stronger affinity to every believer than they have to themselves. If anyone leaves behind wealth, it is for their family [to inherit], and if anyone leaves debts or dependents, then they are my responsibility.’”<sup>344</sup>

### Teaching by encouraging (*targhīb*) and frightening (*tarhīb*)

One of the most amazing teaching methods of the Prophet ﷺ was to inspire yearning for the good he was calling to and frighten from the evil he was warning against. He would awaken desire by mentioning the reward and alerting people to the benefit of the thing he was encouraging, and he would frighten by detailing the punishment and detriment of the evil act

343 Reported by Abū Dāwūd (4607), Tirmidhī (2676), and Ibn Mājah (42).

344 Reported by Muslim (867), Nasā'ī (1578), and Ibn Mājah (45).

he was discouraging. He would combine these two approaches, encouraging on some occasions and frightening on others. He would not restrict himself to the latter, thereby driving people away, nor would he suffice upon the former, thereby leading to laziness and abandonment of good deeds.

The scholars of Hadith have collected the narrations from the honourable Prophetic Sunnah that pertain to encouraging and frightening in dedicated volumes. Amongst these works, the book which has collated the most hadiths of this genre, and which is most beneficial and accessible is *al-Targhīb wa al-Tarhīb min al-Ḥadīth al-Sharīf* by the noble scholar Abū Muhammad Zakī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Mundhirī رحمه الله.

Many narrations pertain to encouraging and frightening have been related in the previous chapters, and they will suffice as evidence of this teaching technique of the Prophet ﷺ.

## Teaching through stories and tales of the past

The Prophet ﷺ would often teach his Companions through the stories and events of past nations. These stories left an indelible mark on the hearts of those who heard them and their guiding influence was immeasurable; they did not directly address the listener with a command or prohibition, but rather spoke about others for them to take as a reminder, exhortation, model, and example.



Indeed, Allah Most High legislated this noble method in His teaching of His Prophet ﷺ. Allah ﷻ says: “And We relate to you [O Prophet] the stories of the Messengers to reassure your heart.”<sup>345</sup>

An example of this technique is the Prophetic narration encouraging love for the sake of Allah and sincere brotherhood in goodness and piety.

---

345 *Hūd*, 120.



123. Muslim relates from Abū Hurayrah  that the Prophet  said: "A man wanted to visit a brother [in faith] of his in another town, and Allah Most High assigned an Angel to meet him on his way.<sup>346</sup> When the Angel came to him, he asked [the man]: 'Where are you headed?'



'Towards a brother of mine in this town,' he replied.

'Is there any favour you did for him and now hope to have repaid?' the Angel asked.

'No, [I have no reason to visit him] except that I love him for the sake of Allah,' the man replied.

The Angel said: 'I am a Messenger [sent] to you from Allah, [to inform you] that Allah loves you just as you love him (i.e., your brother) for His sake.'<sup>347</sup>

Also pertinent are his statements encouraging mercy and kindness to animals and warning against harming or mistreating them.

124. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Muslim – from Abū Hurayrah , who narrates: "The Messenger of Allah  said: 'A man was walking on a path when his thirst became severe. He found a well and went down into it, drank, and then left. He saw a dog panting and licking the mud out of thirst and said [to himself]: "This dog is suffering from thirst just as I was suffering!" He lowered himself back down into the well, filled his leather sock with water, and held it in his mouth until

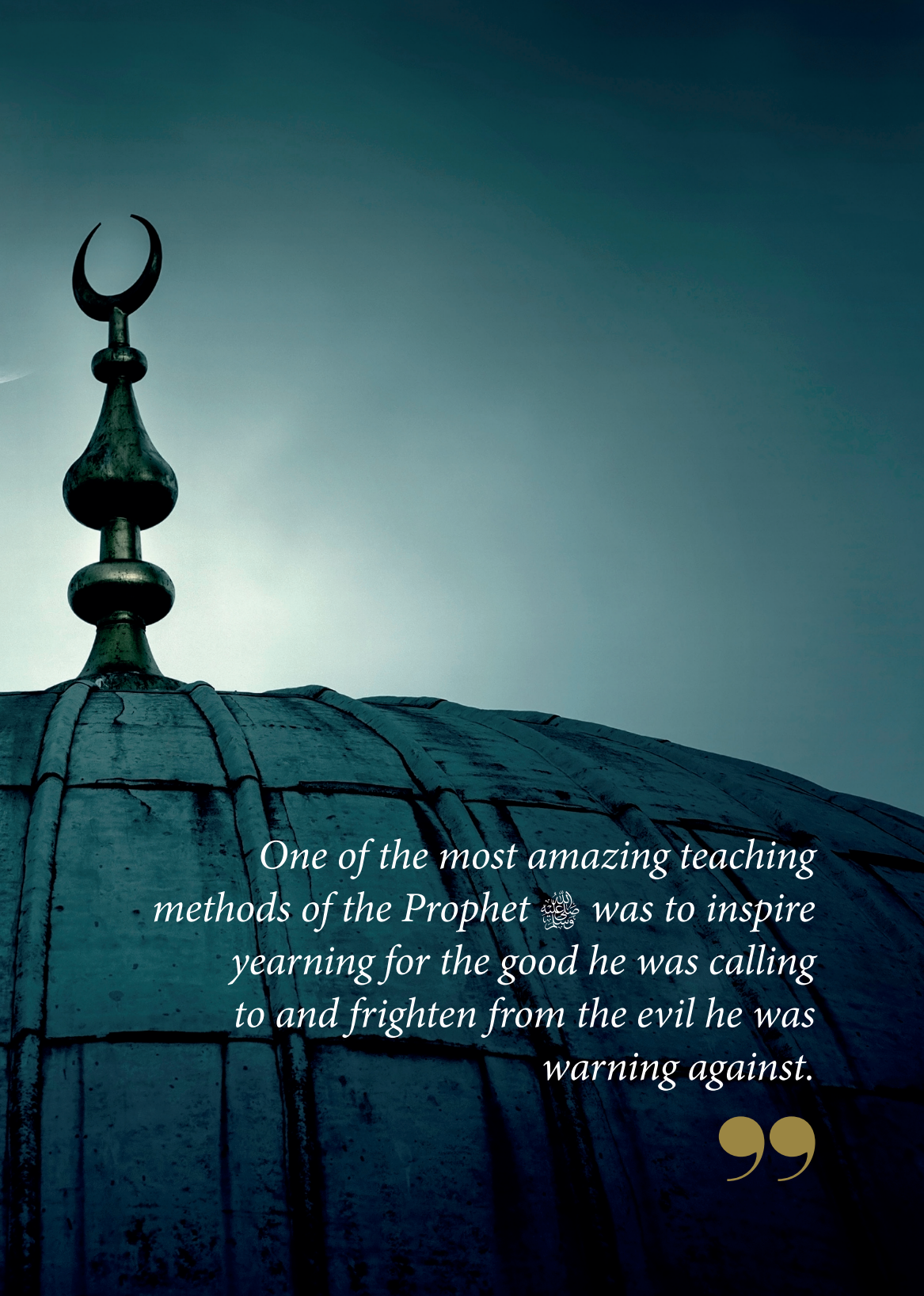
---

346 The Angel sent by Allah Most High appeared in human form rather than its true form.

347 Reported by Muslim (2567).





A low-angle photograph of a mosque's dome and minaret. The minaret, topped with a crescent moon, rises from the left side of the frame. The dome, covered in dark tiles, occupies the lower half of the image. The sky is a clear, deep blue.

*One of the most amazing teaching  
methods of the Prophet ﷺ was to inspire  
yearning for the good he was calling  
to and frighten from the evil he was  
warning against.*

”

he climbed back out. Then, he let the dog drink. Allah appreciated him [for his action] and forgave him.’

The people said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, are we rewarded even for animals?’

‘There is a reward in every moist liver’<sup>348</sup>, he replied.”<sup>349</sup>

125. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from both – from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ‘A dog was circling a well almost dying of thirst when a prostitute from the Banū Isrā’īl saw it. She took off one of her leather socks, tied it with her shawl, used it to draw out water [from the well], and gave it to the dog to drink. She was forgiven because of that.’”<sup>350</sup>

126. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Bukhārī – from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “A woman was punished because of a cat she kept tied up<sup>351</sup> until it died. Because of that, she entered the Fire. She had neither fed it or provided it with water when she tied it up, nor let it free to eat the bugs of the Earth.”<sup>352</sup>

In another example:

127. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Muslim – from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Prophet ﷺ

348 i.e., “There is a reward for excellence and generosity towards every creature with life and spirit”, whether a human being or an animal. The “moistness” of the liver refers to life.

349 Reported by Bukhārī (2363) and Muslim (2244).

350 Reported by Bukhārī (3467) and Muslim (2245).

351 In another transmission: “kept imprisoned”.

352 Reported by Bukhārī (3482) and Muslim (2242).

said: 'None spoke in the cradle except for three<sup>353</sup>:

- 'Īsā ibn Maryam.
- The companion of Jurayj. Jurayj was a devout man, and he was in a private sanctum he had taken for himself [for worship]. His mother came whilst he was praying and called for him: "O Jurayj!" So, he said: "O Lord of mine! My mother or my prayer?" Then, he continued with his prayer and his mother left. The next day, his mother came again whilst he was praying and called for him: "O Jurayj!" He said: "O Lord of mine! My mother or my prayer?" Once again, he continued with his prayer and his mother left. The next day, his mother came yet again whilst he was praying and called for him: "O Jurayj!" He said: "O Lord of mine! My mother or my prayer?" And once more, he continued with his prayer. [This time,] his mother said: "O Allah, do not take his life until he sees the faces of prostitutes." The story of Jurayj and his worship spread amongst the Banū Isrā'īl. There was a prostitute amongst them who was known for her beauty, and she said: "If you wish, I will seduce him." She went and offered herself to him, but he paid her no attention. Then, she went to a shepherd who used to seek shelter at his monastery and offered herself to him. He slept with her, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth, she said: "He (i.e., the baby) is from Jurayj." The people went to Jurayj, dragged him out, demolished his monastery, and started beating him. "What is wrong

---

353 Ibn Ḥajar mentions in *Fatḥh al-Bārī* (6/344) that there are others who spoke in the cradle, as confirmed in the Sunnah, and he details the conciliation between the apparent meaning of this hadith with other narrations.

with you all?” Jurayj cried. “You slept with this prostitute and now she has given birth to your baby!” they replied. “Where is the baby?” Jurayj asked, and they took him. “Let me pray first”, Jurayj then prayed. When he had finished, he went to the baby, prodded his stomach, and said: “Child, who is your father?” “So-and-so, the shepherd”, the baby replied. The people rushed to Jurayj, kissing him and touching him. “We will build you a monastery made of gold”, they said. ‘No’, he replied, ‘rebuild it from clay, just as it was’, and they did.

- There was a baby boy who was breastfeeding from his mother when a finely-dressed man riding a nimble animal passed by. His mother said: “O Allah, make my son like this man.” [Suddenly,] the baby left her breast, turned towards the man, and said: “O Allah, do not make me like him.” Then, he turned back to the breast and continued to feed.” (Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه said: “It is as if I am looking at the Messenger of Allah ﷺ now as he talks about the baby’s feeding and places his index finger in his mouth and starts sucking it [to demonstrate].”) Then, a group of people passed by with a slave-girl. They were beating her and saying: “You have committed fornication and theft.” But she kept replying: “Allah is sufficient for me and [He is] the best Protector.” The baby’s mother said: “O Allah, do not make my son like this woman.” [Suddenly,] the baby left her breast, turned towards the woman, and said: “O Allah, make me like her.” At this point, the mother and her baby spoke to each other. His mother said: “How unbelievable you are! A handsome man passed by and I said, ‘O Allah, make my son like this man,’ and you said: ‘O Allah, do not make me like him.’ Then, a group of people passed by with this slave-girl,

beating her and saying: 'You have committed fornication and theft.' I said, 'O Allah, do not make my son like this woman,' and you said: 'O Allah, make me like her.'" The baby replied: "That man was arrogant and vain, so I said: 'O Allah, do not make me like him.' And this [slave-girl]; they are saying to her, 'You committed fornication,' but she did not, and [they are saying], 'You stole,' but she did not, so I said: 'O Allah, make me like her.'<sup>354</sup>""<sup>355</sup>

These are stories of truth and tales of guidance conveyed to encourage and frighten and to warn and deter, and they require no further explanation or elucidation.

### Preluding his answer when addressing a sensitive issue

At times, when the Prophet ﷺ wished to teach his Companions about a sensitive or embarrassing topic, he would prelude his answer with a delicate, subtle introduction.

128. Muslim, in an abbreviated form, and Abū Dāwūd, Nasā'ī, and Ibn Mājah in its complete form relate – and the wording here is from Ibn Mājah – from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه, who narrates: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: 'I am like a father to his son to you, and I teach you. If one of you comes to a sunken, secluded area,'<sup>356</sup>

354 i.e., "make me free of sin like she is free of sin". The intended meaning is not: "make me like her in regards to being accused of a reprehensible deed of which I am innocent."

355 Reported by Bukhārī (3436) and Muslim (2550).

356 The word "*ghā'it*" is used here with its original meaning, which is "a sunken, secluded area", and which people would seek out when they wished to relieve themselves, using its banks to conceal themselves from the surrounding land. This was before people had bathrooms inside their houses. Later, the word "*ghā'it*" came to refer to excrement, but that is not the intended meaning here.



they should neither face nor turn their back to the *qiblah*<sup>357</sup>. He instructed us to use three pebbles,<sup>358</sup> forbade us [from using] animal dung<sup>359</sup> or bones<sup>360</sup>, and forbade a man<sup>361</sup> cleaning themselves with their right hand<sup>362</sup>.”<sup>364</sup>

---

357 i.e., the direction of the Ka’bah. The prohibition here includes passing urine or feces.

358 i.e., to clean oneself, and performing *istinjā’* with water is preferred if available.

359 “*Rawth*” refers to the excrement of hooved animals like cows, horses, and sheep. When their droppings are dried out, they could be used to perform *istinjā’* instead of stones, but the Prophet ﷺ forbade that because of its impurity in and of itself.

360 “*Rimmah*” refers specifically to decayed bones, but the intended meaning here is any type of bones.

361 The word “man” is used in the statement of Abū Hurayrah ؓ, but women are also included in the ruling.

362 The Messenger of Allah ﷺ brought the prohibition against cleaning oneself with the right hand in accordance with the general system in Islam concerning actions of the hands. Namely, that every noble action is performed with the right hand, and every lowly action with the left.

From the matters related to education, this noble hadith conveys the humility of the Premier Teacher ﷺ, the perfection of his care for students, the beauty of his kindness towards them in teaching them about embarrassing issues, and his educating them in observance of the system [of Islam] in [all] their movements, affairs, and matters of cleanliness.

The transmission reported by Abū Dāwūd (8) reads: “[Abū Hurayrah ؓ narrates:] ‘The Prophet ﷺ said: “I am like a father to you. If one of you comes to a sunken, secluded area, they should neither face nor turn their back to the *qiblah*, nor should they clean themselves with their right hand.” He used to instruct [us to use] three pebbles and forbid [us from using] animal dung or bones.”’

Munāwī gives an outstanding explanation of this hadith in *Fayḍ al-Qaḍīr* (2/570), which I will relate here in full: “The saying of the Prophet ﷺ, ‘I am like a father to his son to you,’ means: for your sake, I am just like a father, and I take the position of a father, [but] in terms of compassion and affection rather than rank and elevation and in teaching the things that are essential [to know]. So, just as a father teaches their children good manners, I teach you what is [obligated] for you and upon you. The father who benefits is greater than the birth father, and he is the one through whom Allah has salvaged us from the darkness of ignorance [and taken us] to the light of faith. The Prophet ﷺ opened with this phrase, before the information he intended [to communicate], in order to make it known that teaching them the matters of the religion was obligatory upon him, just as a father must teach their children whatever they need to know, regardless of whether it is related to an embarrassing topic. This was a prefatory statement from the Prophet ﷺ to introduce teaching them the etiquettes of relieving oneself – which is a topic that is embarrassing to mention, especially in an assembly of noble figures – and out of courtesy to those he was addressing, who were too shy to ask about the embarrassing issues they were confronted with.

We learn from this narration that Prophet ﷺ is like a father to his entire nation, and likewise his wives are the Mothers of the Believers, for from him and his wives, males and females have learnt

## Alluding or intimating when addressing a sensitive issue

In other instances, he would allude to or intimate when teaching sensitive issues.

129. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Muslim – from ‘Ā'ishah ﷺ that Asmā' bint Shakal ﷺ asked the Prophet ﷺ about cleansing [oneself] after menstruation. The Prophet ﷺ replied: “One of you should take some water and lote leaves”<sup>363</sup>

---

all the concepts of the religion. Therefore, righteousness towards them is more of an obligation than any other obligatory act, and disobeying them is more destructive than any other destructive action. Ibn al-Hājj said in his book *Al-Madkhal*: “The nation of the Prophet ﷺ are in reality like his children, for he is the cause in them receiving the blessing of eternal life [in Paradise] and a perpetual stay in the Blissful Abode, so his rights are even greater than the rights of the parents. The Prophet ﷺ said to some of his Companions, “Start with yourself, and then your dependents”, expressing that a person should prioritize themselves above others, and then Allah ﷻ prioritizes the Prophet ﷺ above every believer in His Book, where he says: “The Prophet has a stronger affinity to the believers than they do themselves” (Translator’s note: *al-Aḥzāb*, 6). The meaning of this is that if a believer finds themselves confronted by a right for themselves and a right for the Prophet ﷺ, then the right of the Prophet ﷺ is more emphatic and more of an obligation. Then, he can attend to his own right, following the first.

If we ponder the reality of the matter, we find that the benefit of the Chosen One ﷺ is greater than the benefit of fathers, mothers, and all of creation, for he rescued you and your ancestors from the Fire. Your parents gave birth to you and were a cause of you exiting into the abode of burdens, hardships, and trials, whereas the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was a cause of your salvation and entering into the abode of honour and blessing, so may Allah reward our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ with that which he deserves.”

Because of the weighty meaning contained in the statements of Ibn al-Hājj ﷺ, Imam Ghazālī says in *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (1/55), when discussing the magnitude of a teacher’s responsibility towards their students and the necessity of their care for them: “Because of this, the right of the teacher becomes greater than the right of the parents, for a father is a cause of one’s existence and presence in the fleeting life, whereas a teacher is a cause [of one reaching] the eternal life. If it were not for the teacher, one would drift from the side of the parents towards eternal destruction. Rather, it is the teacher who brings the benefit of the other, eternal life. I am speaking of a teacher of the sciences of the Hereafter, or of the sciences of this world but with the intention [of seeking] the Hereafter. As for teaching with the intention this world – i.e., with the intention of attaining the detritus of this world, possessing its adornments, and boasting therein of clothing, food, and mounts – it is ruin and destruction and we seek refuge in Allah from it.”

363 The *sidr* (lote) is a well-known tree that grows in rural areas, mountains, and sandy areas.

and purify herself, perfecting her purification. Then, she should pour water over her head, rubbing vigorously until it reaches the roots of her hair. Then, she should pour water over herself, before taking a perfumed cloth<sup>364</sup> and cleaning herself with it.”

“How should she clean herself with it?” Asmā’ asked.

“Glorified is Allah, she should clean herself with it”, he repeated.<sup>365</sup>

‘Ā’ishah said, (privately)<sup>366</sup>: “Apply it to the traces of blood.”<sup>367</sup>

Then, she (i.e., Asmā’) asked the Prophet ﷺ about *ghusl* after intercourse. He said: “She should take some water and purify herself, perfecting her purification (or: “performing her purification thoroughly”). Then, she should pour water over her head, rubbing vigorously until it reaches the roots of her hair. Then, she should pour water over herself.”<sup>368</sup>

When it is cultivated, it produces more leaves and fruits. Its fruits have a pleasant smell, and its leaves are used to cleanse and soften the body and strengthen the hair. If you come across a mention of “*sidr*” in narrations relating to washing oneself, then it refers to powdered leaves, as highlighted by Fayyūmī in *Al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr* and Dāwūd al-Anṭākī in his *Tadhkirah*.

364 A “*firṣah*” is a piece of cotton or similar.

365 The Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not explain exactly how she should clean herself with the perfumed cloth, for the place a woman does so is something that one shies away from mentioning directly. Instead, he sufficed with glorifying Allah, indicating thereby that this was something that a woman of her status ought to know.

366 “Privately” is a comment added by a sub-narrator. Meaning: only the person ‘Ā’ishah was addressing could hear what she said.

367 i.e., wipe the place the blood comes out from with the perfumed cloth to remove the unpleasant smell remaining from the menstruation.

368 The Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught her in this narration that the ritual bath performed after menstruation adds to the ritual bath performed after sexual intercourse a recommendation to place lote leaves in the water [used for washing] and to perfume the place the blood came out of after cleaning it.

‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها said: “How amazing are the women of the Anṣār! Their modesty never prevents them from learning the religion.”<sup>369</sup>

## Paying special attention to teaching and exhorting women

---

369 Reported by Bukhārī (314) and Muslim (332c).

This noble narration contains many salient points related to education.

1. A teacher saying “glorified is Allah (*subhānallāh*)” when they are taken aback. Its meaning here was: “How can this evident thing, which requires only thought to be understood, be concealed from you?”
2. The desirability of using euphemisms when teaching things related to one’s private parts.
3. A scholar asking women about the issues of theirs that they are too shy to ask about.
4. Sufficing with gesture and intimation when referring to unpleasant things.
5. Clarifying an answer to help the questioner understand. When Asmā’ bint Shakal did not understand at first, the Prophet ﷺ clarified his answer by turning away when he said, “she should clean herself”, meaning: in the place that is embarrassing to mention directly in front of a woman. In this way, he sufficed with the communication of his manner in place of verbal communication, and ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها understood him and took over instructing the questioner.
6. The permissibility of explaining the statements of a scholar whilst they are present to someone who has not grasped their meaning if you know that would please the scholar.
7. The permissibility of taking [knowledge] from one who is less in virtue (or less qualified) – in this case, ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها – in the presence of the most virtuous (or the most qualified), who [in this case] was our leader, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.
8. The soundness [of a hadith] presented (i.e., recited by the student) to the narrator if they approve, even if they do not say “yes” after what they have presented.
9. That a transfer of knowledge is not conditional upon the listener understanding everything they hear.
10. Kindness to students and granting excuses to those who do not understand.
11. That a person should conceal their faults, even if they are part of their nature. This can be deduced from the instruction given by the Prophet ﷺ for a woman to perfume themselves to remove the unpleasant smell.
12. Not addressing the questioner directly in one’s response when speaking about these types of embarrassing issues. The Prophet ﷺ said to her “one of you should take” rather than “you should take” out of tactfulness and politeness.
13. The excellent character, outstanding manner, and intense modesty of the Greatest Teacher ﷺ, may Allah increase him in honour, nobility, and greatness, and may my father and mother be his ransom.

The Prophet ﷺ would take particular care to teach women the things they needed to know and dedicate some of his assemblies and reminders specifically to them.

130. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Muslim – from Ibn ‘Abbās, who narrates: “I bear witness that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ prayed (i.e., the Eid prayer) before the sermon. Then, he gave the sermon, [but] he saw that the women had not been able to hear, so he went over to them and reminded them, exhorted them, and instructed them to give in charity. Bilāl had his garment stretched out and the women started throwing rings, earrings, and other things [into it].”<sup>370</sup>

131. Bukhārī and Muslim also relate – and the wording here is from both – from Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī ؓ, who narrates: “The women said to the Prophet ﷺ: ‘O Messenger of Allah, the men have beaten us regarding you (i.e., in benefitting from your time), so fix a day for us [women] to come to you and for you to teach us from that which Allah has taught you.’

‘Gather on such-and-such day’, he instructed, and they did so. The women came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and he taught them from that which Allah had taught him. Then, he said: ‘If any one of you is preceded [to the Hereafter] by three of her children, they will serve as a barrier between her and the Fire.’

‘And two? And two? And two?’ a woman asked.

---

<sup>370</sup> Reported by Bukhārī (98) and Muslim (884).

‘And two, and two, and two’, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ confirmed.”<sup>371</sup>

## Becoming angry and rebuking in his teaching when the situation demanded that

When a student transgressed and started investigating or questioning a matter that should not be delved into, the Prophet ﷺ would become extremely angry. For example:

132. Ibn Mājah relates from ‘Amr ibn Shu‘ayb, from his father, from his grandfather ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ ﷺ, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ went out whilst we were arguing about predestiny (*qadr*). He was so angry, it was as if his face was bursting with pomegranate seeds,<sup>372</sup> and he said: ‘Is this what I ordered you to (Or: ‘Is this what you were created for’),<sup>373</sup> arguing with one part of the Qur’an against another?! The nations that came before you were destroyed because of this.’

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr said: ‘I was never so pleased to have missed a gathering with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ as I was to have missed that gathering.’”<sup>374</sup>

---

371 Reported by Bukhārī (101) and Muslim (2633).

372 i.e., he got angry and his face turned so red it was as if pomegranate seeds had burst in his cheeks. The redness of his noble face increased because his anger increased, and he was angry because predestiny (*qadr*) is one of the secrets of Allah Most High, and seeking out the secrets of Allah Most High is forbidden, for the person who investigates one them is not safe from slipping on their feet, just as the Jabarīs and Qadarīs slipped up. Slaves are commanded to accept whatever the Shariah demands of them, without seeking out secrets that are not allowed to be sought out.

373 Meaning: you were neither ordered to nor created for this [type of arguing], so what is your concern with it?!

374 Reported by Ibn Mājah (85).

133. Tirmidhī relates from Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ came out to us whilst we were arguing about predestiny (*qadr*). He became so enraged that his face reddened as if pomegranates had burst in his cheeks, and he said: ‘Is this what you were ordered you to do?! Is this what I was sent to you with?! The people who came before you were only destroyed when they argued about this matter. I absolutely command you, I absolutely command you not to argue about it.’”<sup>375</sup>

### Authorizing writing as a means of conveying his teachings

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would also teach through the written word. He had more than 15 scribes who would transcribe the Qur’an from him; other specially designated scribes who would write his letters to distant kings, conveying the message of Islam to them and inviting them to embrace the religion; and another group of scribes who would write down other matters. This is as detailed in the comprehensive text of our teacher, premier Hadith authority of Morocco in his era, and esteemed scholar, ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī: *Al-Tarātib al-Idāriyyah*.<sup>376</sup>

Amongst those who transcribed the Qur’an from him were the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs: Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, and ‘Alī. Also amongst them were Zayd ibn Thābit, Ubayy ibn Ka’b, al-Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwām, Khālīd ibn Sa’īd and his brother Abān ibn Sa’īd ibn al-‘Āṣ, Ḥanzalah ibn al-Rabī’, Mu’āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān, and others رضي الله عنهم. Whenever the Revelation of the Qur’an was sent down to the Prophet ﷺ, he would call for them, and they would transcribe it directly from the mouth

<sup>375</sup> Reported by Tirmidhī (2133).

<sup>376</sup> *Al-Tarātib al-Idāriyyah* (1/114-172).



of the Prophet ﷺ.

There are reliable reports of the Prophet ﷺ either permitting or instructing his Companions to write down his sayings:

134. Abū Dāwūd relates from 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ؓ, who narrates: "I used to write down everything I heard from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, wanting to memorize it, but the Quraysh forbade me, saying: 'Are you going to write down everything you hear when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is a human being who speaks both in anger and when pleased?' So, I stopped writing.

I told the Messenger of Allah ﷺ what had happened. He pointed with his finger to his mouth. 'Write', he said, 'for by the One with my soul in His hand, nothing comes out from it but the truth.'"<sup>377</sup>

135. Bukhārī and Muslim relate – and the wording here is from Bukhārī – from Abū Hurayrah ؓ, who narrates: "When Allah granted victory over Makkah for His Prophet ﷺ, he stood up amongst the people, praised and glorified Allah, and then said: 'Allah held back the elephants from [attacking] Makkah and gave His Messenger and the believers authority over the city. [Makkah] is not permissible to anyone after me; its game should not be hunted, its thistles should not be weeded out, and its lost, fallen items are not permissible except to the person announcing it. Whoever has a relative killed has two options: either blood money or [having the killer executed in] retaliation.'

Ibn 'Abbās said: 'Except camel grass (*idkhir*), for we use it for our graves and our houses.'

---

<sup>377</sup> Reported by Abū Dāwūd (3646).

‘Except camel grass,’ the Messenger of Allah ﷺ confirmed.

Abū Shāh, a man from Yemen, stood up and said: ‘Have it written down for me, O Messenger of Allah.’

‘Write it for Abū Shāh,’ the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said.”

[Al-Walid, one of the sub-narrators, said:] “I asked al-Awzā’i: ‘What did he mean by “Have it written down for me, O Messenger of Allah.”’

‘This very address he heard from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ,’ he replied.”<sup>378</sup>

136. Bukhārī relates from Abū Juḥayfah, who narrates: “I said to ‘Alī: ‘Do you have anything written<sup>379</sup>?’

‘No, except for the Book of Allah, understanding which is bestowed [by Allah] upon a Muslim man, and what is [written] on this sheet<sup>380</sup>, he replied. ‘What is [written] on the sheet?’ I asked. ‘[The laws concerning] blood money, the ransom for [Muslim] prisoners, and [the principle that] no Muslim should be executed [as retribution] for [killing] a disbeliever,’ he replied.<sup>381</sup>”<sup>382</sup>

---

378 Reported by Bukhārī (112, 2434) and Muslim (1355).

379 i.e., something written down which they had taken from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and which contained things that were [divinely] revealed to him. Abū Juḥayfah asked this question because the Shiites were claiming that the family of the Prophet ﷺ, especially ‘Alī, had pieces of revelation that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had specifically given to them but that no-one else had seen.

380 i.e., a written sheet of paper. It contained narrations of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

381 These sheets of paper also contained other narrations concerning other than these three topics, as is explained in detail in *Fath al-Bārī* (1/205), and in *Fayḍ al-Bārī* (1/213) by Shaykh Anwar al-Kashmīrī.

382 Reported by Bukhārī (111).

The Prophet ﷺ also sent letters in his own noble name to distant lands and kingdoms in which he called to Islam and faith in Allah Most High and clarified the laws and rulings of Islam for those who wished to enter the religion. These noble letters and their wordings are preserved in the books of Prophetic biography, Hadith, and history.

These letters and messages have also been collated in dedicated volumes, some of which are published and widely available. One of the most comprehensive works in this area is *I'lām al-Sā'ilīn 'an Kutub Sayyid al-Mursalīn* ﷺ, by Ibn Ṭulūn al-Dimashqī (d. 954 AH) ﷺ.<sup>383</sup>

## Instructing some of his Companions to learn the Syriac language

137. Bukhārī and Tirmidhī relate – and the wording here is from Tirmidhī – from Khārijah ibn Zayd ibn Thābit, from his father Zayd ibn Thābit, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ instructed me to learn some phrases from the writing of the Jews. He said: ‘By Allah, I do not trust the Jews with my letters.’

Before half a month had passed, I had learnt that for him. After I had learnt [their language], if he wished to write a letter to the Jews, I would write it for him, and if they wrote to him, I would read it to him.”<sup>384</sup>

Tirmidhī graded the hadith sound and authentic (*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*), and he also related it from al-A'mash, from Thābit ibn 'Ubayd,

383 Published by Ḥussām al-Dīn al-Qudṣī in Damascus before 1348 AH. A comprehensive text related to this topic is *Majmū'at al-Wathā'iq al-Siyāsiyyah li al-'Ahd al-Nabawī wa al-Khilāfat al-Rāshidah*, by Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamidullāh, may Allah preserve and protect him.

384 Reported by Bukhārī (7195) and Tirmidhī (2715).

from Zayd ibn Thābit, who narrates: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ instructed me to learn Syriac.”

As we can see above, utilizing foreign languages when required in educating, inviting to Islam, and conveying [its message] was part of the guidance of the Prophet ﷺ and one of his teaching techniques.

Today, languages are the keys to accessing universal fields of knowledge that have become essential in living side-by-side with westerners and foreigners and advancing ourselves. Languages have also become the key to becoming acquainted with other communities, which is essential for people’s prosperity and security in mixed societies. Shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥilī, who learnt several languages, said:

“A man’s benefit increases by the number of languages he knows and they assist him at times of hardship.

So quickly, hasten to learn languages

for every language, in reality, represents a human being.<sup>385</sup>”

## Teaching through his own noble persona

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was specially chosen by Allah Most High to teach humankind the religion of Allah and His Final, Eternal Law, and there is nothing more valuable to Allah than the religion of Allah Most High. So, to propagate and teach His religion, Allah Most Glorified chose the best of all Prophets and Messengers, Muhammad ﷺ. This Noble Teacher was chosen by Allah to convey His Law to the people and to teach them through his appearance, judgement, manner, speech, and everything he did. The perfection of his character serves as a model which teaches students to aspire to follow his honourable example and lofty guidance.

---

<sup>385</sup> Translator’s note: i.e., every language a person acquires is a window to a new culture, place, and people.

One of the most important characteristics of a teacher is to be complete and consummate in their intelligence, virtue, knowledge, wisdom, appearance and elegance, manners and decorum, movement and stillness, sweet speech, impeccable judgement, clean clothing, handsome countenance, and excellence in expression, conduct, and leadership.

All these were displayed to the utmost degree in the persona of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Therefore, his own noble character was a teaching tool and example for every student and seeker of guidance. The Prophet ﷺ was an epitome of the pinnacle of teaching through all different techniques, as all of these means and methods were for every Muslim to realize the Words of Allah Most High: "You are the best community ever raised for humanity."<sup>386</sup>

This comprehensive perfection of the Prophet ﷺ was the most sublime of all his techniques and the essence of his education and refinement. Indeed, the Prophet ﷺ received the highest and most emphatic praise from Allah Most High when He said: "And you are truly [a man] of outstanding character."<sup>387</sup>

It is no wonder that we have counted his noble character as one of his teaching techniques. Which teacher has had a greater impact on humanity, whose religion and Sacred Law people – with all their ethnicities and languages – accepted, and has been taken as an excellent model and example in all facets of life more than this Noble Messenger and Majestic Prophet ﷺ?

This is a small passage that I wished to include as a conclusion to the Prophetic teaching techniques, to complete the section with a total of 40 techniques and as a musk-scented ending to perfume the pages that preceded. And all praise and gratitude is for Allah, Lord of all worlds.

---

<sup>386</sup> *Āl 'Imrān*, 110.

<sup>387</sup> *al-Qalam*, 4.



To conclude, these are some samples of the teaching techniques that our Leader, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, practised and guided towards. I have related them by way of reminding and explaining, not with the intention of fully encompassing or limiting. Undoubtedly, the one who follows up by investigating the narrations and noble biography of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ will discover further techniques. That was not my intention here. Rather, I sufficed with those techniques I happened to come across during my reading and research, hoping for Allah to grant me success and sincerity, and for the intercession of the leader of all humankind and our Leader, Muhammad ﷺ.

I ask Allah ﷻ for His pleasure and acceptance, and for the honour of following the Sunnah of His Messenger ﷺ. I also ask for Him to be pleased with the Noble Companions and those who follow them in excellence until the Day of Reckoning. And all praise and gratitude is for Allah, Lord of all worlds.

