

## LECTURE 3

### THE NEED FOR ILM AR-RIJAL

Hadith == Khabar (for the purposes of the discussion below).

There existed and still exists great debate amongst our scholars (both the Qudama and the Muta'akhirin) over the degree of need for Ilm ar-Rijal. That is, while others swear by it, others discard it near completely.

In order to understand this variation between them, what we need to do is to look at the different positions these same scholars hold in regards to another related topic, that is, what they require [place as a condition] for I'tibar (acceptance of / dependence on) a Khabar.

To this goal, we will refer to Shaykh al-Ansari's discussion over the Hujiyya of Khabar in his Rasail as a baseline since we find that he explains these differences in depth – which we can then summarize into five different categories as follows:

I. Those who say that only the Khabar which is **known with certainty** to be from the Imam has Hujiyyah (and therefore can be acted upon).

How do we achieve this certainty of knowledge? they say – if the Khabar is Mutawatir **or** if it is accompanied by an undeniable Qarina (indicator).

In other words, they say that if we **do not know with certainty** that a Hadith was said by the Imam [i.e. it is not Mutawatir **or** accompanied by an undeniable Qarina] then it cannot have Hujiyyah and we can therefore ignore it (i.e. not act upon its contents).

It is to be understood that more than one undeniable Qarina adds to the weight of the Khabar.

This position is attributed to Sayyid al-Murtada, Ibn al-Idris, Ibn al-Barraj, Ibn al-Zuhra, at-Tabrasiy and Ibn Qiba al-Razi; they all held that anything below this is just Dhann (supposition) which cannot be a Hujjah (does not require us to act upon it).

**II.** Those who say that the Khabar that has Hujjiyyah is the one for which we can have **sufficiency of trust** that it originates from the Imam (i.e. Wuthuq as-Sudur), even if we **do not claim to know with certainty** that it has come from the Imam.

How do we obtain this sufficiency of trust (i.e. **something that has overcome Dhann even if not certain**)? they say – if the Khabar is accompanied by a credible (**not undeniable**) Qarina (indicator).

It is to be understood that more than one credible Qarina adds to the weight of the Khabar.

To those belonging to this camp, only one of the numerous credible Qarina that can lead to sufficiency of trust is the Sanad of the Hadith consisting of all Rijal Mawthuq and being Muttasil (i.e. the modern day definition of Sahih was just a tool in the box).

This position is attributed to **most of the Qudama**, including al-Kulayni, Ibn al-Walid, as-Saduq, al-Mufid and at-Tusi, **and this is what they meant when they said a Khabar is Sahih** [not the definition of Sahih that the Muta'akhirin have formulated].

NOTE 1: This second position does not mean that if a Khabar is Mutawatir or if it is accompanied by an undeniable Qarina it is not a Hujjah to them, but it means that they add to this a Khabar that we can have sufficiency of trust that it actually originates from the Imam (i.e. unlike the first position – they have widened the circle).

NOTE 2: We will discuss the other Qarina that these Qudama considered providing sufficiency of trust for acting upon a Khabar in other lectures.

NOTE 3: The major question here has always been whether we can depend on the Qudama's Tashih [since they depended on Qarain that we may not agree with and that are definitely unknown to us – in other words should we make Taqlid of their decisions or NOT], most of the Usulis have decided **not to depend on them for this** for reasons that are well known.

But those that have, have no problems in acting upon a Khabar that is Dhaif [by modern day definition i.e. consists of weak or unknown individuals in the Sanad or being disconnected] since they argue that it is accompanied by credible Qarina or Qarain that provide sufficiency of trust.

-- The common nature of the remaining camps after these first two positions (discussed below) is that they argue that since most of the Qarain that were present to the Qudama are not available to us [due to passage of time], they will concentrate on the only Qarina that is available to us and that is the Sanad.

-- Note that the last camp will also add to the Sanad a second Qarina and that is Shuhra [Amal of the 12er Imami Fuqaha community based on a Hadith].

**III.** Those who say that **only** those Akhbar have Hujiyyah that meet this one single condition, that is – **have a Muttasil Sanad consisting of all Adil individuals.**

Adil meaning belonging to the Firqa al-Muhiqqa [rightful Madhab] i.e. [12er Imami and NOT to other Imami Madhahib like the Waqifis, Fathis or even the Amma] **whether these Akhbar have been acted upon by the previous 12er Imami Fuqaha [i.e. is the Mashhur opinion] OR NOT.**

This is the opinion of the the Muhaqiq, al-Allamah, Shahid II, and his son Shaykh Hasan [Sahib al-Maalim], and his grandson Shaykh Muhammad [Sahib al-Madarik], and it has also been attributed to Shahid I.

**IV.** Those who say that **only** those Akhbar have Hujiyyah which meet this one single condition, that is – **have Muttasil Sanad which consists of Mawthuq individuals [i.e. individuals who are Thiqah].**

Thiqah meaning having Tawthiq regardless whether they belong to 12er Imami or the other Imami Madhahib like the Waqifis, Fathis or even the Amma, **regardless whether these Akhbar have been acted upon by the previous 12er Imami Fuqaha [i.e. is the Mashhur opinion] or not.**

The only scholar to hold this position and take it to its full conclusion has been Sayyid al-Khoei, and some of his students of the present age [who is not?].

It should also be understood that in the beginning of his career Sayyid al-Khoei believed that if the previous 12er Imami Fuqaha did not act upon a Khabar [even if it had Muttasil Sanad and consisted of Mawthuq individuals] it was to be dropped [since it loses strength], but change came to him at the beginning of his

third cycle of teaching Usul and onwards, and that is why if you refer to his first discussion on Salat in al-Urwa and the two discussions on Makasib before this change you will see his first world view in effect [ref. Taqirrat al-Dirasat of Sayyid Ali Shahroudi], but most of his life was spent in this position [i.e. IV]

**Here may come a question, how is it possible that a Khabar that has a Muttasil Sanad which consist of Mawthuq individuals not be acted upon?**

**\*It is because there are other factors weakening it, which when considered collectively made the Khabar unusable, and that is why it is not the Mashhur opinion\***

V. The last position is that **only** those Akhbar have Hujjiyyah which meet these two conditions together:

(\*) Have Muttasil Sanad and consist of Mawthuq individuals [i.e. individuals who are Thiqah – regardless whether they belong to 12er Imami or the other Madhahib like the Mamtura (wet dog) Waqifis, Fathis or Amma].

(\*) The Akhbar that have been acted upon (used) by previous 12er Imami Fuqaha [i.e. is the Mashhur opinion].

This is the opinion of Sahib al-Kifaya (Akhund al-Khurasani), and Sayyid ash-Shahid as-Sadr, and Shaykh Wahid al-Khurasani from the contemporaries.

After elaborating on the above five camps in regards to delimiting the I'tibar of the Akhbar, we come to the heart of the topic, and say: the need for Ilm ar-Rijal is in the Istinbat of the Ahkam from the sources of the Ahkam.

It is well known that the sources of the Ahkam according to the Usulis are four:

(a) Kitab

(b) as-Sunnah

(c) Ijmaa (consensus)

(d) Aql

As for the Kitab, we know that the Ayat that contain the Ahkam are around 500 [with repetitions], and these do not go into detail i.e. are general – requiring specification. Therefore the Kitab alone is not to be used to obtain all the Ahkam of the Shariah.

As for Ijmaa, then mentioning it as an independent source apart from the Sunnah is a mistake when one ponders over it, since the Ijmaa that we consider a source is that which reveals the position of the Imam, therefore all it does is to record a Sunnah that is not encapsulated in the Hadith, add to this that to prove the presence of an Ijmaa which reveals the position of the Imam is quite difficult and thus this is not a practical source.

As for Aql, even though it is the greatest bounty of God – it does not have the capability to shed light on the nature and reason for the smaller details of the Shariah, all it can do is to recognize some general principles of the Shariah such as the inherent ugliness of injustice; and establish some cardinal relations in the Shariah such as the Wujub of the preliminaries of a Wajib act. Therefore it is also not a practical source.

This being the case, we are left with nothing except for the Sunnah, that is to say, the words and actions of the Ma'sumin recorded in the Ahadith as the main source of the Shariah.

And the Ahadith that are Mutawatir or have undeniable Qarina in the corpus of our Hadith literature are very few if not non-existent.

Thus most of the Ahadith are Ahad, so we can say that we derive most of the Shariah from Ahad Ahadith.

So we say, whatever camp you belong to from the five camps discussed above, there will still be a need for Ilm ar-Rijal, the only thing that will change is the degree of the need for it i.e. for some camps Ilm ar-Rijal will be central and for the others secondary at best.

Let us go through the five camps again, this time relating it with its need for Ilm ar-Rijal.

A. The first camp which believed in the Hujjiyyah of only the Akhbar that are (a) **Mutawatir** or (b) **Accompanied by undeniable Qarina**.

For (a) we say that: Ilm ar-Rijal will aid in evaluating the possibility, nature and quality of the Tawatur, as an example, Tawatur can be more easily declared if the number of chains consist of Rijal who are well known for their greatness in the Taifah and are Mawthuqin – knowledge of which can only be obtained from Ilm ar-Rijal and Ma'rifah of Jarh and Ta'dil of the Ruwat.

Also for (b) we say that: Ilm ar-Rijal will also play a strengthening role in establishing the legitimacy of the **undeniable Qarina** that gives a Khabar Hujjiyyah according to this first camp.

B. The second camp which believed in the Hujjiyyah of only the Akhbar that bring **sufficiency of trust** due to being accompanied by credible Qarina.

We say that: there is not a more credible Qarina than the Hadith coming from a connected chain consisting of trustworthy individuals, and knowledge of the connectivity of the chain and it consisting of trusted individuals can only be obtained from Ilm ar-Rijal.

Now it is true that the other credible Qarina that they considered such as corroboration of Matn in more than one Usul, Imam's declaration of Sihha etc. may not require Ilm ar-Rijal, but one among these credible Qarina definitely does.

In short, Sidq or Kidhb of the narrator of the Khabar was an important credible Qarina that goes a long way in providing the much sought after **sufficiency of trust**.

NOTE: The Qudama had a wholistic view of all these Qarina before making a decision, but Ilm ar-Rijal definitely played a part.

C. As for the third camp, the matter becomes simpler, for they believe that the **Hujjah is in the Khabar of of the Adil**, which Ilm informs us of the Adalat of the Ruwat (narrators) of the Akhbar if not Ilm ar-Rijal, infact the very goal of Ilm ar-Rijal is nothing more than to provide the status of the narrators of the narrations.

Thus this camp needs Ilm ar-Rijal much more, and therefore the members of these camp are the first ones to show their open need for Ilm ar-Rijal eg. Muhaqiq, Allamah, Shahid I, Shahid II, Sahib al-Maalim, Sahib al-Madarik, so as they could differentiate between the Adil narrators and the non-Adil ones so as they can then act only on the Akhbar of the Adil narrators.

D. There is no camp that would require Ilm ar-Rijal more than this camp that **simplifies acceptance or non-acceptance of Hadith to the Wathaqa of its narrators and nothing else**, for scholars belonging to this camp the whole process of Istinbat boils down to Ilm ar-Rijal, and their need for Ilm ar-Rijal is paramount.

And this explains why Sayyid al-Khoei gave such importance to Rijal after shifting to this camp, when previously he did not give much importance to it, when his outlook was similar to his teachers Naini and al-Hamadani who belonged to camp V as will come after this.

as-Suwaydan here recalls that Sayyid Hashim the son of Sayyid Ali ash-Shahroudi possesses the manuscript of al-Khoei's whole discussion of Salat (when he was in camp V), and states that it does not consist of a single Rijali opinion in the whole of it, the main concentration in it was in looking at what the Mashhur opinion was in all the Abwab of Fiqh.

E. The fifth camp gives **equal importance or balances between Wathaqa of narrators of the Khabar and there not being a weakening factor that goes against acting upon the Khabar of the Thiqah** [and the most important weakening factor to them is the Fuqaha not acting upon the contents of a Khabar even if it was from a Thiqah Rawi].

The hidden concept being that by not acting upon the Khabar the Fuqaha had disclosed a hidden flaw that it has.

This camp too cannot escape from Ilm ar-Rijal since the first pillar they consider for I'tibar of Khabar is still Wathaqa of narrators which cannot be proven except from Ilm ar-Rijal.

In Summary, we can say that there is no way to avoid Ilm ar-Rijal in whatever camp we belong to, and all the Usuliyun require Ilm ar-Rijal though there is difference on the extent of the need, from some having huge dependence on it and others not as much, based on what they require for accepting a Khabar.

Finally, there is a notorious group upon whose belief it can be said that Ilm ar-Rijal has no importance, and these are those who consider all the Akhbar in our book as having Hujjiyya and some of them claim that they all definitely originated from the Aimmah, and due to the weakness of their claim, there is no benefit from discussing them.

But even for these we say that there will still remain some importance since in cases of conflict (Ta'arudh) in the Riwayat there is still the requirement for taking from the more Adil and the more Dhabit and knowledge of this requires Ilm ar-Rijal (Tarjih).