

Introduction to al-Tirmidhī

and his *Kitāb al-ʿIlal al-ṣaghīr*

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A bū ʿĪsā Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī is one of the most influential figures in the Sunni hadith tradition. Born in about 210/825 near the city of Tirmidh on the northern bank of the Oxus River in modern-day Uzbekistan, he traveled widely in northeastern Iran, Iraq, and the Hejaz to study with the most sought-after scholars and transmitters of hadiths in his day. These included scholars who had themselves travelled widely in the quest to hear hadiths, such as Qutayba b. Saʿīd of Balkh (d. 240/854), as well as scholars who would become famed for their mastery of both hadith and law, such as al-Dārimī of Samarqand (d. 255/869) and Abū Dāwūd (author of the famous *Sunan*, d. 275/889). They also comprised the most respected masters of hadith criticism, including Muslim b. Ḥajjāj of Nishapur (author of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, d. 260/875) and Abū Zurʿa al-Rāzī of Rayy (d. 264/878). But his most famous and influential teacher was none other than al-Bukhārī (author of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, d. 256/870). At some point al-Tirmidhī returned to his hometown, where he died in 279/892 at around seventy years of age. Today his grave can be visited just north of Tirmidh in Uzbekistan, enclosed in an idyllic brick mausoleum built in the old Samanid style and frequented by local pilgrims.

Al-Tirmidhī's legal and theological leanings are clear in his works. Though he predated the solidification of the four schools of law, he identified with the general legal and theological tradition that he refers to as the 'People of hadith' (*ahl al-ḥadīth*). Notably, he also refers to this group as the 'People of the Sunna and the Community' (*ahl al-sunna wa'l-jamā'a*)—perhaps the earliest recorded instance of a scholar identifying himself with this designation.¹ Al-Tirmidhī describes this group as looking to exemplars like Mālik (d. 179/796), Sufyān b. ʿUyayna (d. 196/811), ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 181/797), and Ishāq b. Rāhawayh (d. 238/853). But the most influential figure in al-Tirmidhī's theological universe was al-Bukhārī's teacher and the pivot of the Ahl al-Sunna in Baghdad, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855). Al-Tirmidhī's legal views

1. *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī: kitāb al-zakāt, bāb mā jā'a fī faḍl al-ṣadaqa*; cf. *kitāb ṣīfat al-janna, bāb mā jā'a fī khulūd ahl al-janna wa ahl al-nār*.

were mainly shaped by Ibn Ḥanbal and even more so by his most famous teacher, Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/820).

In matters of theology, al-Tirmidhī explains that the main position of Ahl al-Sunna is that they take Qur’anic verses and hadiths about God’s attributes and the unseen “as they come,” without offering figurative interpretations. This does not mean that al-Tirmidhī and his fellow early Sunnis interpreted verses referring to God’s hand or His movement literally. For example, after presenting a hadith in which the Prophet ﷺ tells his Companions that they need not shout loudly in their glorification of God while riding because their Lord “is not deaf or absent” but is “between you and the fronts of your saddles,” al-Tirmidhī explains that what is present there is not God Himself but God’s knowledge and power. This does not contradict what al-Tirmidhī listed as the Sunnis’ main principle in theology. Sunni disagreement was not with figurative or metaphorical interpretation per se—it was with figurative or metaphorical interpretation that did not originate in revealed guidance. Early Sunnis like al-Tirmidhī had no problem with the figurative interpretation of a Qur’anic verse or hadiths provided that this interpretation came from the Prophet ﷺ or a member of the early Muslim community, who would have learned it from the Prophet.²

Al-Tirmidhī’s greatest achievement was his legal and doctrinal hadith reference, the *Jāmi’* (‘The Compendium,’ finished in 270/884), containing approximately 4,300 hadiths from the Prophet. We know that the book was already being transmitted and copied widely by the early 900s CE, since the famous Ḥanafī hadith scholar and jurist of Egypt, al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/932), had a copy.³ By the mid-fifth/eleventh century Sunni masters like al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) considered the *Jāmi’* to be an “authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) book,” meaning that it contained many invaluable and reliable reports. In the 1100s CE it was included in the Six-Books hadith canon that had formed as the foundation for Sunni hadith study and reference.⁴ Others, like the famous Ḥanbalī sufi of Khurasan, Khwāje ‘Abdallāh al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1089), appreciated the *Jāmi’* for its accessible format and clear style, since it both provided ratings for the reliability of every hadith it contained and often explained their legal or theological interpretation. In fact, al-Tirmidhī’s *Jāmi’* is, in effect, an early book in the genre that lists the various positions of different schools of law (*ikhtilāf al-fuqahā’*). On each legal issue, al-Tirmidhī provides the relevant hadith, evaluates their authenticity, and then often tells the reader which legal scholars took which positions.

2. Jonathan Brown, “There Are No Literalists: Early Sunnis and Open Interpretation in Theology and Law,” in *Modernleşme Protestanlaşma ve Selefîleşme*, ed. Murteza Bedir, Necmettin Kızılkaya and Merve Özeykal (Isar Yayınları, 2019), 171-175.
3. ‘Abd al-Majīd Maḥmūd, *Abū Ja’far al-Ṭaḥāwī wa atharuhu fī al-hadīth* (al-Maktaba al-‘Arabiyya, 1395/1975), 120.
4. Jonathan Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim* (Brill, 2007), 9.

More importantly, the *Jāmi'* is a milestone in the development of hadith criticism. It is the first book known to provide a section defining critical terms for rating hadith authenticity, such as *ḥasan* (good) and *gharīb* (limited or unusual in its transmission). This is contained in a chapter called *al-'Ilal* at the end of the book, which is the text translated below. Al-Tirmidhī employs these terms to subtly evaluate not only the strength of every hadith's chain of transmission, but also the extent to which jurists acted on it. In addition, he provides invaluable information on the identities and reliability of transmitters, often citing al-Bukhārī.

5. Sham al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-i'tidāl fī naqd al-rijāl*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī, 4 vols. (Dār al-Ma'rifa, [n.d.]), 4:416.

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On the whole, al-Tirmidhī's *Jāmi'* is generally considered less reliable than the hadith collections of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, or al-Nasā'ī, in part because it was not a book of hadiths that its collector considered reliable or representative of the Sunna. Rather, it was a book of hadiths that were in circulation in legal and theological discourse during the author's time, regardless of what he thought of them. Al-Tirmidhī included many hadiths that scholars had used in deriving law even though he knew they were not rigorously authenticated. Nonetheless, later Sunni scholars frequently relied on al-Tirmidhī's declaration that a hadith was *ḥasan* and *ṣaḥīḥ* to establish its reliability, although influential critics like al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) declared that al-Tirmidhī was too lax in his criteria and that his judgment should not be relied upon in these issues.⁵

Kitāb al-'Ilal is a fascinating text for many reasons. First and foremost, it represents a very early stage in the effort of Sunni hadith scholars to elaborate their methods of transmission criticism. Forgery of hadiths had emerged as a serious problem as early as the time of the Companions, and Muslim scholars were presented with the challenge of figuring out how to distinguish forged attributions from true Prophetic reports. One method advocated by the broad school of Muslim rationalist theologians, which emerged in the mid 700s CE and became known as the Mu'tazila, was to compare any supposed hadith to 1) the Qur'an, 2) the established Sunna of the Prophet, and 3) reason. Anything that contradicted any of these criteria could not be the actual words of the Prophet.

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The Ahl al-Sunna disagreed strongly with this approach, and with good reason. First of all, it is very difficult to distinguish between contradiction and explanation. All scholars acknowledged that the hadiths of the Prophet provided crucial explanation for the Qur'an's intended meaning. For example, accepted hadiths describe the Prophet ﷺ approving of his Companions eating meat from a dead whale beached on the coast. But the Qur'an states that God prohibits Muslims from eating carrion (Q. 5:3). However, this was not a contradiction. It was part of an explanation that the Qur'anic prohibition on carrion is directed at land animals. The same challenge applied to the relationship between hadiths. Was a hadith whose meaning differed with another hadith a contradiction or an explanation? Second, 'reason' was in no way an objective or consistently agreed upon criterion for evaluating truth and falsehood. As al-Tirmidhī's contemporary Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) pointed out, Mu'tazila scholars—all citing the proof of 'reason'—disagreed with each other on what 'reason' entailed just as much as they disagreed with their Sunni opponents.⁶ Finally, Muslim rationalists were willing to interpret Qur'anic verses that described God in anthropomorphic terms, such as the verse describing God and the angels on the Day of Judgment as "coming rank on rank," figuratively. The Qur'an was clearly true, they believed, but the literal meaning of such verses could not be taken because it contradicted prevalent senses of reason. So why not interpret potential hadiths figuratively too, instead of rejecting them outright as forgeries because they clashed with 'reason'?

The emerging tradition of Sunni Islam tried to avoid these problems by focusing not on the contents of hadiths but on their transmission. The method described by al-Tirmidhī seeks to assess whether a report is corroborated or not and, by examining all the reports a transmitter passes on for corroboration, to decide on the reliability of specific hadith transmitters. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, early Sunni hadith critics like al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and al-Tirmidhī did reject alleged hadiths at times because of problematic meanings. Muslim, for example, rejected a report claiming that there were five suras of the Qur'an

6. Ibn Qutayba, *Ta'wīl mukhtalif al-hadith*, ed. Muḥammad Zuhri al-Najjār (Dār al-Jil, 1973), 14.
7. Muslim b. Ḥajjāj, *Kitāb al-Tamyīz*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-A'ẓamī (Maṭba'at Jāmi'at al-Riyāḍ, 1975), 144.
8. Brown, "The Rules of Matn Criticism: There Are No Rules," *Islamic Law and Society* 19 (2012): 362-3.
9. Al-Tirmidhī states that the hadith of killing the four-time drinker was abrogated (*mansūkh*), which al-Nawawī later confirms was agreed on by the consensus of scholars. Others have disagreed, primarily Imam al-Suyūṭī. He argues that 1) there are roughly ten *ṣaḥīḥ* narrations of this hadith, and that no similarly strong evidence exists against this position; 2) that a reported instance of the Prophet not doing this is an act that might well be isolated and therefore cannot stand as evidence against a command given by the Prophet in this hadith; 3) that the Companions found drinking were exempted from harsh punishment due to their piety and service; and 4) that those people who are addicted to alcohol and perennially deviant in their conduct should be killed. Al-Albānī also held that this hadith meant a judge could execute someone who committed the offense four times if there was *maṣlaḥa* in this. As for the hadith of combining prayers without the excuses of rain or danger, Aḥmad al-Ghumārī demonstrated that this was an accepted position amongst early scholars and in the Mālikī school; one could combine prayers for other reasons, provided it did not become habitual. In his comments on this hadith, Nūr al-Dīn 'Itr notes that it implies that there are other excuses for combining prayers, but that there is consensus rejecting combining them for no reason (as shown in another hadith in al-Tirmidhī's collection, which suffers from a weak transmitter: *man jama'a bayn al-ṣalātayn min ghayr 'udhr fa-qad jā'a bāban min abwāb al-kabā'ir*). Ibn Rajab adds that there is another hadith that al-Tirmidhī included in his work with a note that no one acted on it, namely the hadith from Jābir b. 'Abdallāh that during the time of the Prophet ﷺ the male Companions would call out the *talbiya* for the women. Al-Tirmidhī says that this was a *gharīb* narration and that "the scholars had come to consensus that the *talbiya* is not done on behalf of women." See *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī: kitāb al-ṣalāt, bāb mā jā'a fī al-jam' bayn al-ṣalātayn fī al-ḥaḍar; kitāb al-ḥajj, bāb*

that, if you recited them, equaled one fourth of the Quran's value. This resulted in five fourths.⁷ After 1000 CE, Sunni scholarship agreed that any report that contradicted the Qur'an, the established Sunna, the consensus of the community, or alleged events or teachings that, had they happened or been propounded, would have been transmitted by vastly more reports, could not really be the words of the Prophet ﷺ.⁸ But the Sunni tradition has always been conservative in applying these tests. Only if a report clearly fails one of these criteria would it be discarded because of its meaning. Otherwise, Sunni scholarship has relied on the methods of transmission criticism formalized by three generations prior to al-Tirmidhī and articulated in early texts like *Kitāb al-'Ilal*.

kitāb al-ḥudūd, bāb mā jā'a man shariba al-khamr...; Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, *Sharḥ 'Ilal al-Tirmidhī*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn 'Itr (n.p.: n.p., 1398/1978), 1:6; Aḥmad b. al-Ṣiddīq al-Ghumārī, *Izālat al-khaṭar 'amman jama'a bayn al-ṣalātayn fī al-ḥaḍar bidūn khawf wa lā maṭar*, ed. 'Alawī b. Ḥamīd (Dār al-Kitāb al-Thaqafī, 2006); Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Dār al-Qalam, n.d.), 11/12: 228; al-Suyūṭī, *Qūt al-mughṭadhī sharḥ Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī*, apud Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī al-muḥaṣṣhā (Qadīmī Kutubkhāne, n.d.), 335; Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, *Fatāwā al-Shaykh al-Albānī*, ed. 'Ukāsha 'Abd al-Mannān al-Ṭayyibī (Maktabat al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1994), 394.

The Book of Defects by al-Tirmidhī

[TOPIC: THE JĀMI' AS LEGAL REFERENCE & THE 2 HADITHS NOT ACTED ON IN LAW]

Abū 'Īsā [al-Tirmidhī] said: All the hadiths in this book are acted on in law, taken as proof by at least some of the People of Knowledge, with the exception of two hadiths.⁹ The first is the hadith of Ibn 'Abbās that the Prophet ﷺ joined his Noon and Afternoon prayers, and his Evening and Night prayers while in Medina without [the excuses] of danger, being in a state of travel, or rain. The second is the hadith of the Prophet ﷺ that he said, "If someone drinks wine, whip him, and if he does it four times then kill him." We have pointed out the flaws in both these two hadiths in this book.¹⁰

10. As noted by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, this statement suggests that al-Tirmidhī considers abrogation to be an obscure defect ('illa) in a hadith. In general, a hadith being abrogated would not be considered as falling within the scope of criticizing its *isnād*. It would be a matter of how a hadith that might well be totally reliable falls into the larger body of evidence on an issue. See Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ*, 1:8.

[TOPIC: AL-TIRMIDHĪ'S SOURCES FOR THE LEGAL OPINIONS IN HIS JĀMI']

As for the opinions of the jurists cited in this book, [their sources are as follows:] for the opinions of Sufyān al-Thawrī, most of that material was narrated to us by Muḥammad b. 'Uthmān al-Kūfī, narrated to him by 'Ubaydallāh b. Mūsā, from Sufyān. Some of that material was narrated to me by Abū al-Faḍl Maktūm b. al-'Abbās al-Tirmidhī, narrated to him by Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Firyābī, from Sufyān.

As for the opinions in this book from Mālik b. Anas, most of it was reported to us by Ishāq b. Mūsā al-Anṣārī, reported to him by Ma'n b. 'Īsā al-Qazzāz, from Mālik b. Anas. Some material from the chapters on fasting was reported to us by Abū Muṣ'ab al-Madanī, from Mālik b. Anas. Some was reported to us by Mūsā b. Ḥizām, reported to him by 'Abdallāh b. Maslama al-Qa'nabī, from Mālik b. Anas.

As for the opinions of ‘Abdallāh Ibn al-Mubārak in this book, that is what was reported to us by Aḥmad b. ‘Abda al-Āmulī¹¹ from the disciples of Ibn al-Mubārak, from him. Some were reported from Abū Wahb [Muḥammad b. Muzāḥim], from Ibn al-Mubārak. Some were reported from ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan, from ‘Abdallāh [Ibn al-Mubārak]. Some were reported from ‘Abdān, from Sufyān b. ‘Abd al-Malik, from Ibn al-Mubārak. Some were reported from Ḥibbān b. Mūsā, from Ibn al-Mubārak, and some were reported from Wahb b. Zam‘a, from Faḍāla al-Nasawī, from ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak. And there are other transmitters identified from Ibn al-Mubārak¹² other than those whom we have mentioned here.

As for the opinions in the book from al-Shāfi‘ī, most of it was reported to us by al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Za‘farānī, from al-Shāfi‘ī. And the material from al-Shāfi‘ī on the issues of ablution and prayer was reported to us by Abū al-Walīd al-Makkī, from al-Shāfi‘ī. And some material was reported to us by Abū Ismā‘īl al-Tirmidhī, reported to him by Yūsuf b. Yaḥyā al-Qurashī al-Buwayṭī, from al-Shāfi‘ī. And he also mentioned some things from al-Rabī‘, from al-Shāfi‘ī. Al-Rabī‘ gave us permission to [use] this material in a letter to us.¹³

As for the opinions in this book from Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm [Ibn Rāhawayh], it was reported to us by Ishāq b. Maṣṣūr, from Aḥmad [Ibn Ḥanbal] and Ishāq [Ibn Rāhawayh], except for what is in the chapters on the pilgrimage, compensation payments (*al-diyāt*), and corporal/capital punishment (*al-ḥudūd*), for I did not hear those from Ishāq b. Maṣṣūr. Rather, it was reported to me by Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Aṣamm, from Ishāq b. Maṣṣūr, from Aḥmad [Ibn Ḥanbal] and Ishāq [Ibn Rāhawayh]. Some of the statements of Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm [Ibn Rāhawayh] were reported to us by Muḥammad b. Aflaḥ, from Ishāq, and we have made that clear in a book on narrations not attributed to the Prophet (*mawqūf*).

[TOPIC: AL-TIRMIDHĪ’S SOURCES FOR ‘ILAL COMMENTARY]

As for instances in which there is mention of flaws in the hadiths, the transmitters, or dates, this is what I derived from the books of history (*tārīkh*). And most of this information I discussed with Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl [al-Bukhārī],¹⁴ and some of it I discussed with ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān [al-Dārimī]¹⁵ and Abū Zur‘a [al-Rāzī].¹⁶ Most of that material is from Muḥammad [al-Bukhārī], with the least of it being from ‘Abdallāh [al-Dārimī] and Abū Zur‘a [al-Rāzī], for I have not seen anyone in Iraq or Khurasan approaching Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl [al-Bukhārī] in the understanding of flaws [in hadiths], dates, and knowledge of *isnāds*.

11. Some editions have his name as Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-A‘lā.
12. This may also be al-Āmulī being referred to instead of Ibn al-Mubārak.
13. This procedure is called *mukātaba*, or giving written permission to transmit material. From the ninth to the eleventh century, this was used by scholars who had acquired reliable copies of a scholar’s book or hadith collection and who wanted to be able to transmit them directly from that scholar. Sometimes the scholar making the request had already heard this material from an intermediary, but the scholar wanted a shorter, more direct chain.
14. Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), the famous author of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* and one of al-Tirmidhī’s main teachers.
15. Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī (d. 255/869) of Samarqand, author of a famous *Sunan*, a leading hadith scholar and transmitter of al-Shāfi‘ī’s teachings in Transoxiana. He was a colleague of al-Bukhārī and a teacher of al-Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd.
16. Abū Zur‘a ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Rāzī (d. 264/878), one of the two great hadith critics of Rayy (now a neighborhood in modern-day Tehran) in his day, along with his friend Abū Ḥatīm al-Rāzī (d. 277/890).

**[TOPIC: AL-TIRMIDHĪ'S REASON FOR WRITING THE JĀMI' & THE
ACCEPTABILITY OF CRITICIZING HADITH TRANSMITTERS]**

Abū 'Īsa [al-Tirmidhī] said: What led us to elucidate the opinions of jurists and the flaws in hadiths in this book is that we were asked to do it but then did not take up the task for some time. Then finally we undertook the task hoping that it would provide some benefit to the people, for we found more than one of the imams burdening themselves with writing the likes of which had not been composed before, like Hishām b. Ḥassān, 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn Jurayj, Sa'īd b. Abī 'Arūba, Mālik b. Anas, Ḥammād b. Salama, 'Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak, Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā b. Abī Zā'ida, Wakī' b. al-Jarrāḥ, and 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī. They and others from the People of Knowledge and Virtue had composed books, and in that God allowed them to benefit the people greatly. So we hope that they will be amply rewarded for that by God for what He allowed them to provide the Muslims in terms of benefit. So they are the examples to be followed in their compositions. But some who have no understanding have criticized the People of Hadith (*ahl al-hadith*) for criticizing transmitters. But we have found that a number of the imams from the Successors spoke critically about transmitters, such as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Ṭāwūs, who criticized Ma'bad al-Juhanī. Sa'īd b. al-Jubayr criticized Ṭalq b. Ḥabīb. Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī and 'Āmir al-Sha'bī criticized al-Ḥārith al-A'war. And in this manner it had been reported that Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī, 'Abdallāh b. 'Awn, Sulaymān al-Taymī, Shu'ba b. al-Ḥajjāj, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Mālik b. Anas, al-Awzā'ī, 'Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak, Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd al-Qaṭṭān, Wakī' b. al-Jarrāḥ, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī, and others from among the People of Knowledge all criticized transmitters and declared some to be weak.

But what led them to this, in our opinion (and God knows best), was their sincere best wishes (*naṣīḥa*) for Muslims. It should not be thought that they wanted to impugn or slander people. Rather, they wanted to point out the weakness of those transmitters so that they could be known, for some of those people criticized as weak transmitters were guilty of heretical innovation and some were accused of [forging] hadiths. Some were heedless and committed many errors in hadith transmission, so those imams wanted to clarify their condition out of concern for the religion and out of caution. For indeed, testimony on matters of religion is worthier of being established as stronger than testimony in court over people's rights or property.

Abū 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī said: It was reported to us by Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl [al-Bukhārī] who said: it was reported to us by Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b.

Sa'īd al-Qaṭṭān, who said: my father told me: "I asked Sufyān al-Thawrī, Shu'ba, Mālik b. Anas and Sufyān b. 'Uyayna about a transmitter, if he were accused of some flaw or weakness, should I be silent about that or point it out? They said, 'Point it out.'"

It was reported to us by Muḥammad b. Rāfi' al-Naysābūrī, who said: it was reported to us by Yaḥyā b. Ādam, who said: "It was said to Abū Bakr b. 'Ayyāsh that some people sit [to teach] and their sessions are attended, but they are not worthy of it." Abū Bakr b. 'Ayyāsh said, "Anyone who sits to teach, some people will attend. A proponent of the Sunna (*ṣāhib al-sunna*),¹⁷ when he dies, God will revive his memory. A heretic is not remembered."

It was reported to us by Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Shaqīq, saying: it was reported to us by al-Naḍr b. 'Abdallāh al-Aṣamm saying: it was reported to us by¹⁸ Ismā'īl b. Zakariyyā, from 'Āṣim, from Ibn Sīrīn, who said, "In the early period no one would ask about the *isnād*. But when the Strife¹⁹ began, they would ask about *isnāds* so they could accept the hadiths of the Ahl al-Sunna and leave the hadiths of the People of Heresy (*ahl al-bid'a*)."

It was reported to us by Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan, who said: I heard 'Abdān say that 'Abdallāh Ibn al-Mubārak said, "For me, the *isnād* is part of the religion. If not for the *isnād*, whoever wanted would say whatever they wanted. But if you say to them, 'Who told you [that]?', they cannot respond."

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It was reported to us by Muḥammad b. 'Alī, who said: it was reported to us by Ḥibbān b. Mūsā, who said: A hadith was mentioned to Ibn al-Mubārak and he said, "For that you'd require pillars made of brick." Abū 'Īsā [al-Tirmidhī] said: meaning that he declared its *isnād* to be weak.

It was reported to us by Aḥmad b. 'Abda, who said: "It was reported to us by Wahb b. Zam'a, from 'Abdallāh Ibn al-Mubārak that he abandoned

17. As John Nawas has shown in his statistical study, those known as *ṣāhib sunna* were "the good guys" in the Sunni struggle against Muslim rationalists like the Mu'tazila. They predominately lived in Iraq between circa 150/750–350/950 and played a disproportionately large role in the transmission of hadiths as recorded in the Six Books. See John Nawas, "The Appellation *Ṣāhib Sunna* in Classical Islam: How Sunni Islam Came to Be," *Islamic Law and Society* 23 (2016): 18–19.

18. This is also the *isnād* through which Muslim narrates this report in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. It continues from Ismā'īl b. Zakariyyā Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. al-Ṣabbāḥ Muslim. In fact, all versions that I have found of this report ultimately stem from Ismā'īl b. Zakariyyā. See also Ibrāhīm b. Ya'qūb al-Jawzajānī, *Aḥwāl al-rijāl*, ed. Ṣubḥī al-Sāmarrā'ī (Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1985), 35–6.

the hadiths of al-Ḥasan b. ‘Umāra, al-Ḥasan b. Dīnār, Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Aslamī, Muqātil b. Sulaymān, ‘Uthmān al-Burrī, Rawḥ b. Musāfir, Abū Shayba al-Wāsiṭī, ‘Amr b. Thābit, Ayyūb b. Khūṭ, Ayyūb b. Suwayd, Naṣr b. Ṭarīf—namely Abū Juz’, al-Ḥakam, and Ḥubayyib b. Ḥujr. And with al-Ḥakam, Ibn al-Mubārak narrated one hadith in the Book of Refined Behavior (*Kitāb al-Riqāq*) but then abandoned him, saying ‘Ḥubayyib I do not know.’”

Aḥmad b. ‘Abda heard ‘Abdān say, “‘Abdallāh Ibn al-Mubārak had read the hadiths of Bakr b. Ḥubaysh, but later when he would come across them he would turn away from them and not mention him.”

Aḥmad said that it was reported to him by Abū Wahb that a man who had been impugned in hadith was mentioned to ‘Abdallāh Ibn al-Mubārak, who said, “I would rather become a highway robber than narrate hadiths from him.”

And it was reported to us by Mūsā b. Ḥizām, who said: I heard Yazīd b. Hārūn say, “It is not permitted for anyone to narrate [hadiths] from Sulaymān b. ‘Amr al-Nakha’ī al-Kūfī.”

{It was reported to us by Maḥmūd b. Ghaylān: it was reported to us by Abū Yaḥyā al-Ḥimmānī, who said: I heard Abū Ḥanīfa say, “I have not seen a bigger liar than Jābir al-Ju‘fī nor anyone more virtuous than ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ.”

Abū ‘Īsā al-Tirmidhī says: I heard al-Jārūd say that he heard Wakī’ [b. al-Jarrāḥ] say, “If it were not for Jābir al-Ju‘fī²⁰ then the people of Kufa would be without hadiths. And if not for Ḥammād [b. Abī Sulaymān]²¹ the people of Kufa would be without legal knowledge (*fiqh*).”²²

Abū ‘Īsā al-Tirmidhī said: I heard Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan say: “We were with Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and the topic of who is required to pray the Congregational Friday prayer was mentioned. Some people mentioned reports from scholars from among the Successors and others, and I said, ‘There is also a hadith from the Prophet ﷺ.’ Ibn Ḥanbal said, ‘From the Prophet ﷺ’, and I said, ‘Yes, it was reported to us by Ḥajjāj b. Nuṣayr, who said: it was reported to us by al-Mu‘ārik b. ‘Abbād, from ‘Abdallāh b. Sa‘īd al-Maqburī, from his father, from Abū Hurayra ؓ that the Prophet said, “The Friday congregational prayer is incumbent upon anyone who the night brings safely back to his family.”²³ Ibn Ḥanbal grew angry and said, ‘Seek forgiveness from your Lord’, twice.”²⁴

19. This Strife (*fitna*) was the Second Civil War (680-692 CE), between the followers of ‘Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr, those of the Umayyads, and the Shia.

20. Jābir al-Ju‘fī (d. 128/745-6) had extremist Shiite beliefs, so much so that even later Shiites kept their distance from him. See Hussein Modaresi, *Tradition and Survival: A Bibliographical Survey of Early Shī‘ite Literature* Vol. 1 (Oneworld, 2003), 92.

21. Ḥammād b. Abī Sulaymān (d. 120/738) was a leading scholar of Kufa and the main teacher of Abū Ḥanīfa.

22. Ibn Rajab states that this statement between braces { } is not found in some recensions of al-Tirmidhī’s *Jāmi’*, but he admits that al-Tirmidhī includes it elsewhere in his book (see *Jāmi’ al-Tirmidhī: kitāb al-ṣalāt, bāb mā jā’a fī faḍl al-adhān*). He mainly objects to its content, saying 1) that Jābir al-Ju‘fī had extremist Shiite beliefs, and 2) that the statement about Jābir al-Ju‘fī’s essentialness to Kufan hadith transmission is factually false. It ignores a slew of major hadith transmitters, such as al-A‘mash and Abū Ishāq al-Sabī‘ī; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ*, 1:69-70. Abū Dāwūd says in his *Sunan* that he only includes one hadith from Jābir al-Ju‘fī; *Sunan Abī Dāwūd: kitāb al-ṣalāt, bāb man nasiya an yatashahhad wa huwa jālis*.

23. I.e., one who can travel from his home to the mosque where Friday prayer is held and return home before nightfall.

24. Al-Tirmidhī also mentions this hadith in the body of his book; *Jāmi’ al-Tirmidhī: kitāb al-ṣalāt, bāb mā jā’a fī kam tu’tā al-jum’a*. In his time, some scholars acted on this opinion. For the Shāfi‘ī school, it is required for those who can hear the *adhān*; for the Ḥanbalis and Mālikīs, it is only required for those in the city where the mosque is located.

Abū 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī said: Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal did that because he did not believe that that report was from the Prophet ﷺ due to the weakness of its *isnād*. For he did not know of it being reported from the Prophet ﷺ. Ḥajjāj b. Nuṣayr is criticized as weak in hadith, and 'Abdallāh b. Sa'īd al-Maqburī was very much criticized as weak in hadith by Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd al-Qaṭṭān.

25. Abū 'Awāna's concern is that Abān would just confirm uncritically anything anyone had attributed to al-Ḥasan.

[TOPIC: DIFFERENT LEVELS OF CRITICISM]

Abū 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī said: So anyone from whom a hadith is narrated who is accused [of poor performance in hadith] or is criticized as weak in hadith for his lack of carefulness and numerous mistakes, if that hadith is only known through that report, it cannot be used as proof. And more than one of the *imāms* have narrated [reports] from weak transmitters and made clear their status to the people.

It was reported to us by Ibrāhīm b. 'Abdallāh b. al-Mundhir al-Bāhilī: it was reported to us by Ya'ālā b. 'Ubayd: it was said to us by Sufyān al-Thawrī, "Be wary of [Muḥammad b. al-Sā'ib] al-Kalbī." It was said to Sufyān, "But you narrate [hadiths] from him?!", and he replied, "I know the true ones from the false."

It was reported to us by Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl [al-Bukhārī]: it was reported to us by Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn: it was reported to us by 'Affān, from Abū 'Awāna, who said, "When al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī died, I longed to know his opinions on issues, so I began seeking them out from his students, which brought me to Abān b. Abī 'Ayyāsh. He read to me all of it, from al-Ḥasan. So I do not consider it allowable to narrate any of that from [Abān]."²⁵

Abū 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī said: But more than one of the imams have narrated from Abān b. Abī 'Ayyāsh despite the weakness and carelessness in hadith that Abū 'Awāna and others have described in him. So do not be deceived by the fact that reliable narrators (*thiqāt*) narrate from people, because it is reported from Ibn Sīrīn that he said, "Indeed a man might narrate hadiths to me without me accusing him of any flaw, but I could find some flaw in the person who is above him [in the *isnād*]." And more than one person has reported from Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī, from 'Abdallāh Ibn Mas'ūd that the Prophet used to perform the *qunūt* invocation in his *Witr* prayer before he bowed, and Abān b. Abī 'Ayyāsh reported from Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī, from 'Alqama, from 'Abdallāh Ibn Mas'ūd that the Prophet ﷺ used to perform his *qunūt* in his *Witr* prayer before bowing. That is how Sufyān al-Thawrī narrated the report from Abān b. Abī 'Ayyāsh. And others narrated from Abān b. Abī 'Ayyāsh the same thing by that *isnād* but added that

‘Abdallāh Ibn Mas‘ūd said that his mother reported to him that she had slept at the Prophet’s house and seen him perform the *qunūt* invocation in the *Witr* prayer before bowing.²⁶

Abū ‘Īsā al-Tirmidhī said: And Abān b. Abī ‘Ayyāsh, even if he was known for his piety and effort, this is his condition as pertains to hadith. And that group [of hadith scholars], they were people of retention (*ḥifẓ*), so how many men were there who were righteous but who were not up to the standards of testimony (*shahāda*) and did not memorize it correctly? So anyone who was accused of lying/passing on forged material in hadith, or was careless, making many mistakes, most of the People of Hadith from among the imams are of the opinion that one should not concern oneself with narrations from him. Do you not see that ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak narrated hadiths from people from among the scholars, but when it became clear to him that this was their situation, he put narrating from them aside?

{It was reported to us by Mūsā b. Ḥizām, who said that he heard Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Abdallāh say, “We were with Abū Muqātil al-Samarqandī, and he started to narrate lengthy hadiths from ‘Awn b. Abī Shaddād concerning the advice of Luqmān [the Wise], the killing of Sa‘īd b. al-Jubayr²⁷ and things of that nature. So his nephew said, ‘O uncle, don’t say that ‘Awn reported that to you, for indeed you did not hear these things from him.’ Abū Muqātil said, ‘O my child, that is good speech (*kalām ḥasan*).”²⁸

**Anyone who was accused of lying/
passing on forged material in hadith,
or was careless, making many mistakes,
most of the People of Hadith from
among the imams are of the opinion
that one should not concern oneself
with narrations from him.**

And I heard al-Jārūd say: We were at the home of Abū Mu‘āwiya, and a hadith of Abū Muqātil was mentioned to him, from Sufyān al-Thawrī, from al-A‘mash, from Abū Zabyān, who said: “‘Alī (may God be pleased with him) was asked about wasp nests (*kūr al-zanābīr*). He replied: ‘There is nothing wrong with it, it is like something caught from the sea’. So Abū Mu‘āwiya said: ‘I am not saying that your friend is a liar, but that hadith is false (*kadhib*).”}

26. Al-Tirmidhī is drawing attention to the fact that only Abān b. Abī ‘Ayyāsh added in ‘Alqama to the *isnād*, and that he recorded this addition about Ibn Mas‘ūd’s mother in the text of the hadith from Ibn Mas‘ūd. That only Abān relates this makes his testimony uncorroborated, which reflects badly on his reliability as a hadith transmitter. Whether or not the *qunūt* was recited before or after bowing was the subject of much debate, with various narrations even from one Companion (Anas b. Mālik) differing on this, perhaps due to the Prophet ﷺ performing it differently at different times. See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: kitāb al-witr, bāb al-qunūt qabla al-rukū’ wa ba’dahu*.

27. Sa‘īd b. Jubayr (d. 94/712) was a prominent scholar of the Successors who lived in Mecca and later in Kufa. He participated in the revolt against the tyrannous Umayyad governor al-Ḥajjāj and was eventually executed for this.

28. {} does not appear in many published editions of al-Tirmidhī’s *Jāmi’*.

[Al-Tirmidhī said:] Indeed some of the People of Hadith have criticized respected members of the People of Knowledge and deemed them weak in hadith due to poor retention of what they transmit (*hifẓ*), while others from among the imams have declared them reliable due to their great status and truthfulness, even if they did err in some things they narrated. [For example,] Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān criticized Muḥammad b. ʿAmr and then narrated from him.

29. In other words, anytime Muḥammad b. ʿAmr was asked about where he had heard a hadith, he would always automatically cite these same teachers.

30. This means he did not really have a command of the material he was transmitting because if someone suggested he had made a mistake or provide an alternative, he would just agree.

It was reported to us by Abū Bakr ʿAbd al-Quddūs b. Muḥammad al-ʿAṭṭār al-Baṣrī: it was reported to us by ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī, who said: “I asked Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd [al-Qaṭṭān] about Muḥammad b. ʿAmr b. ʿAlqama, and he said, ‘Do you want to be easy or severe?’, and I said, ‘No, severe.’ He said, ‘He is not one of those that you want [to narrate from. He used to say:] “Our teachers Abū Salama, Yaḥyā b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥaṭīb used to say...”²⁹ Yaḥyā said, ‘I asked Mālīk b. Anas about Muḥammad b. ʿAmr and he said the same thing I did about him.’ Alī [b. al-Madīnī] said: ‘Yaḥyā [al-Qaṭṭān] said, “Muḥammad b. ʿAmr is better than Suhayl b. Abī Šāliḥ, and he is better than ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥarmala.”’ And ʿAlī said: ‘And I asked Yaḥyā [al-Qaṭṭān], “Then what do you think about ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥarmala?”’ and he said, “If I’d wanted to prompt him to say whatever I wanted I could have.”³⁰ I asked, ‘So he used to be prompted by people in his narrations?’, and Yaḥyā al-Qaṭṭān said, ‘Yes.’ Alī b. al-Madīnī added, ‘And Yaḥyā [al-Qaṭṭān] would not narrate hadiths from Sharīk, Abū Bakr b. Abī ʿAyyāsh, Rabīʿ b. Šabīḥ or al-Mubārak b. Faḍāla.”

Abū ʿIsā al-Tirmidhī said: Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān stopped narrating from those people, but what made him do so was not that he thought they were liars, but rather it was because of the condition of their retention of their material (*hifẓ*). It was reported that Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd, if he saw a person narrating from his memory one time like this and one time like that, with no one established narration, he would abandon him. But others like ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak, Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī and other imams all narrated from people that Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān rejected.

Abū ʿIsā [al-Tirmidhī] added: In this way, some of the People of Hadith criticized Suhayl b. Abī Šāliḥ, Muḥammad b. Ishāq, Ḥammād b. Salama and Muḥammad b. Ajlān, and others like them from among the imams. These were criticized for their retention of their material (*hifẓ*) in some of the things they narrated, and other imams narrated from them.

It was reported to us by al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī al-Ḥulwānī, who said: it was reported to us by ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī that Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna said, “We considered Suhayl b. Abī Šāliḥ firm (*thābit*) in hadith.”

It was reported to us by Ibn Abī ‘Umar that Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna said, “Muḥammad b. ‘Ajlan was reliable (*thiqa*) and trustworthy in hadith.” Abū ‘Īsā al-Tirmidhī said: “But Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān criticized with us the transmissions of Muḥammad b. ‘Ajlan from Sa‘īd al-Maqburī.”

It was reported to us by Abū Bakr, from ‘Alī b. ‘Abdallāh [b. al-Madīnī], that Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān said that Muḥammad b. ‘Ajlan said, “The hadiths [I have] from Sa‘īd al-Maqburī, some of them are from Sa‘īd from Abū Hurayra, and some are Sa‘īd, from some person, from Abū Hurayra, and I got them mixed up so I made them all ‘from Sa‘īd, from Abū Hurayra.” [Al-Tirmidhī said] so Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd criticized Ibn ‘Ajlan for that, but Yaḥyā [still] narrated a lot from Ibn ‘Ajlan.

Abū ‘Īsā [al-Tirmidhī] said: And in that manner, those who have criticized Ibn Abī Laylā have done so for his retention (*ḥifẓ*). Alī [b. al-Madīnī] said that Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān said that Shu‘ba narrated from Ibn Abī Laylā, from his brother ‘Īsā, from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Laylā, from Abū Ayyūb, from the Prophet ﷺ about sneezing (*al-utās*). Yaḥyā said, “Then I met Ibn Abī Laylā and he narrated [it] to us from his brother, ‘Īsā, from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Laylā, from ‘Alī, from the Prophet ﷺ.” Abū ‘Īsā [al-Tirmidhī] said: More than one thing has been narrated about/from Ibn Abī Laylā like that. He would say something one way once and another way another, meaning the *isnād*, and that concerned his retention (*ḥifẓ*).

And most of those past People of Knowledge would not write down [their hadiths], and those who did write them down would do so after hearing them [orally].

I heard Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan say that he heard Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal say, “Ibn Abī Laylā is not to be used as proof.” And such it is with those who have criticized Mujālid b. Sa‘īd, ‘Abdallāh b. Lahī‘a and others—they were criticized for their poor retention (*ḥifẓ*) and their great number of errors. But more than one of the imams have narrated from them.

[TOPIC: ACCEPTABILITY OF USING CRITICIZED TRANSMITTERS]

But if one of those [criticized transmitters] narrated something alone and that hadith was not corroborated, he is not used as proof, just as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal said about Ibn Abī Laylā—he meant if he narrated

something alone. And this is even more serious when the narrator has not preserved the *isnād* correctly, and added someone or left someone out, or changed the *isnād*, or transmitted something that changes the meaning of the hadith. But as for those who got the *isnād* correct and preserved it but changed the wording [of the hadith], there is more flexibility there among the People of Knowledge if he did not alter the meaning.

[TOPIC: IMPRECISE NARRATION OF HADITHS/NARRATION OF THE MEANING OF HADITHS]

It was reported to us by Muḥammad b. Bashshār, saying: it was reported to us by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī, saying: it was reported to us by Mu‘āwiyā b. Ṣālīḥ, from al-‘Alā’ b. al-Ḥārith, from Makḥūl, from Wāthila b. al-Asqa’, who said, “When we tell you a hadith with just its meaning, that should suffice you (*ḥasbukum*).”

It was reported to us by Yaḥyā b. Mūsā, saying: it was reported to us by ‘Abd al-Razzāq [al-Ṣan‘ānī], saying: it was reported to us by Ma‘mar, from Ayyūb, from Muḥammad b. Sīrīn, who said, “I would hear a hadith from ten people, the wordings different but the meaning the same.”

It was reported to us by Aḥmad b. Manī‘ saying: it was reported to us by Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Anṣārī, from Ibn ‘Awn, who said, “Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī, al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] and al-Sha‘bī narrate hadiths by their meaning. And al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad [b. Abū Bakr], Muḥammad b. Sīrīn and Rajā’ b. Ḥaywa recite hadiths back word for word.”

If it were not permitted to narrate hadiths by their meaning (*bi’l-ma’nā*), the people would have perished.

It was reported to us by ‘Alī b. Khashram, saying: it was reported to us by Ḥafṣ b. Ghiyāth, from ‘Āṣim al-Aḥwal, who said, “I said to Abū ‘Uthmān al-Nahdī, ‘Indeed you tell us a hadith and then tell us it again in a different way.’ He replied, ‘Stick with the first hearing.’”

It was reported to us by al-Jārūd, saying: it was reported to us by Wakī‘, from al-Rabī‘ b. Ṣabīḥ, from al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī], who said, “If you conveyed the meaning, it counts for you (*ajza’aka*).”

It was reported to us by ‘Alī b. Ḥujr, saying: it was reported to us by ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak, from Sayf b. Sulaymān, who said: I heard Mujāhid say, “Shorten a hadith if you want, but do not add to it.”

It was reported to us by Abū ‘Ammār al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥurayth, saying: it was reported to us by Zayd b. Ḥubāb, from someone who said: Sufyān al-Thawrī came to us one day and said, “If I tell you that I am going to report to you all hadiths as I heard them, do not believe me, it is all by the gist (*bi’l-ma’nā*).”

It was reported to us by al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥurayth, who heard Wakī‘ say, “If it were not permitted to narrate hadiths by their meaning (*bi’l-ma’nā*), the people would have perished.”

[TOPIC: LEVELS OF MASTERY, EXACT NARRATION OF HADITHS, WRITING DOWN HADITHS]

Abū ‘Īsā al-Tirmidhī said: The People of Knowledge differed from one another in memory, mastery, and firmness in hearing hadith, although not very many at all of the imams, regardless of their mastery (*ḥifẓ*), were free of errors.

It was reported to us by Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī, saying: it was reported to us by Jarīr, from ‘Umāra b. Qa’qā’, who said: Ibrāhīm al-Nakha’ī said to me, “If you tell me hadiths then tell me them from Abū Zur’a b. ‘Amr b. Jarīr, for indeed he once told me a hadith and then I asked him about it years later and he did not get a single word wrong.”

It was reported to us by Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Amr b. ‘Alī, saying: it was reported to us by Yaḥyā b. Sa’īd al-Qaṭṭān, from Sufyān, from Maṣṣūr who said: “I said to Ibrāhīm [al-Nakha’ī]: ‘What is it that makes Sālim b. Abī al-Ja’d more complete in hadith than you?’ He said, ‘Because he would write down [his hadiths].’”

It was reported to us by ‘Abd al-Jabbār b. al-‘Alā’ b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, saying: it was reported to us by Sufyān, who said that ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Umayr said, “Indeed, I tell you hadiths and I do not omit one single letter.”

It was reported to us by al-Ḥusayn b. Maḥdī al-Baṣrī saying: it was reported by ‘Abd al-Razzāq, saying: it was reported to us by Ma’mar, who said that Qatāda [b. Di’āma] said, “My ears never heard anything that my heart did not capture (*wa’āhu*).”

It was reported to us by Sa'īd b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Makhzūmī, saying: it was reported to us by Sufyān b. 'Uyayna, from 'Amr b. Dīnār, who said, "I saw no one more precise (*anaṣṣ*) in hadith than al-Zuhrī."

It was reported to us by Ibrāhīm b. Sa'īd al-Jawharī, saying: Sufyān b. 'Uyayna narrated to us, saying: Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī said: "I did not know anyone more knowledgeable about the hadiths of the people of Medina after al-Zuhrī than Yaḥyā b. Abī Kathīr."

It was reported to us by Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl [al-Bukhārī], saying: it was reported to me by Sulaymān b. Ḥarb, saying: it was reported to us by Ḥammād b. Zayd, who said, "Ibn 'Awn would narrate hadiths, and if I told him hadiths from Ayyūb [al-Sakhtiyānī] that contradicted [the hadiths he was narrating], he would abandon his hadiths. I told him: 'But you heard these?' And he said, 'Indeed Ayyūb was the most knowledgeable of all of us on the hadiths of Muḥammad b. Sīrīn.'"

It was reported to us by Abū Bakr, from 'Alī b. 'Abdallāh [b. al-Madīnī], who asked Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd [al-Qaṭṭān]: "Who is more accurate, Hishām al-Dastawā'ī or Mis'ar?" He replied, "I have not seen the likes of Mis'ar; he was one of the most accurate of people."

It was reported to us by Abū Bakr 'Abd al-Quddūs b. Muḥammad, saying: it was reported to us by Abū al-Walīd, who heard Ḥammād b. Zayd say, "Shu'ba never disagreed with me on anything except that I abandoned what Shu'ba had disagreed with."

It was reported to me by Abū Bakr, saying: it was reported to me by Abū al-Walīd that Ḥammād b. Salama said to him, "If you want hadiths, then stick with Shu'ba (*'alayka bi-Shu'ba*)."

It was reported to us by 'Abd b. Ḥumayd, saying: it was reported to us by Abū Dāwūd [al-Ṭayālīsī] that Shu'ba had said, "I never transmitted a single hadith from anyone without going to him more than once [to hear hadiths]. And those people from whom I narrated ten hadiths, I went to them more than ten times. And those from whom I narrated fifty hadiths, I went to them more than fifty times. And those from whom I narrated one hundred hadiths, I went to them more than one hundred times, except Ḥayyān al-Kūfī al-Bāriqī, for I heard these hadiths from him and then went back but found that he had died."

It was reported to us by Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl, saying: it was reported to us by 'Abdallāh b. Abī al-Aswad, saying: it was reported to us by

[‘Abd al-Raḥmān] b. Maḥdī, who heard Sufyān say, “Shu‘ba is the Commander of the Faithful (*amīr al-mu‘minīn*) in hadith.”

It was reported to us by Abū Bakr, from ‘Alī b. ‘Abdallāh [b. al-Madīnī], who heard Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd [al-Qaṭṭān] say, “No one is more beloved to me than Shu‘ba, and no one equals him in my eyes, but if Sufyān differs with him then I take the opinion of Sufyān.” Alī [b. al-Madīnī] said to Yaḥyā: “Which of the two is better in memory/preservation of long hadiths, Sufyān or Shu‘ba? Shu‘ba was more at ease with them (*amarra fihā*).” Yaḥyā said, “Sufyān was strong in them, and Shu‘ba was more knowledgeable about transmitters like so-and-so from so-and-so; but Sufyān had organized material topically (*kāna ṣāhib abwāb*).”

It was reported to us by ‘Amr b. ‘Alī, who heard ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī say, “The imams of hadith are four: Sufyān al-Thawrī, Mālik b. Anas, al-Awzā‘ī and Ḥammād b. Zayd.”

It was reported to us by Abū ‘Ammār al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥurayth, saying: I heard Wakī‘ say that Shu‘ba said, “Sufyān has better retention than me. He never reported a hadith to me from a transmitter that I asked him about except that I found that it was as he said.” I [al-Tirmidhī] heard Ishāq b. Mūsā al-Anṣārī, [who heard Ma‘n b. ‘Isā al-Qazzāz say, “Mālik b. Anas would be very strict with hadiths of the Messenger of God ﷺ in dotting his i’s and crossing his t’s.”³¹

It was reported to us by Abū Mūsā, who said: it was reported to me by Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abdallāh b. Quraym al-Anṣārī, the judge of Medīna, that Mālik b. Anas came upon Abū Ḥāzim seated and passed by him. It was said to Mālik, “Why did you not sit down?” He replied, “I did not find a place to sit down and did not want to receive the hadiths of the Messenger of God ﷺ while standing.”

It was reported to us by Abū Bakr, from ‘Alī b. ‘Abdallāh [b. al-Madīnī] that Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd [al-Qaṭṭān] said, “Mālik, from Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab is dearer to me than Sufyān al-Thawrī, from Ibrāhīm al-Nakhā‘ī. There is no one with more authentic hadiths than Mālik b. Anas; he was an imam in hadith.”³²

I heard Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn say that he heard Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal say, “My eyes never saw the likes of Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān.” Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn said, “And Ibn Ḥanbal was asked about Wakī‘ and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī, and he said, ‘Wakī‘ has greater knowledge/piety (*akbar fī al-qalb*), but ‘Abd al-Raḥmān is an imam.’”

31. In other words, he was very careful about the smallest details of the hadiths.

32. Note that here we see the use of “an/from” in a way that does not indicate direct transmission, but merely ‘from’ without the two people ever having met.

I heard Muḥammad b. ‘Amr b. Nabḥān b. Ṣafwān al-Thaqafī al-Baṣrī say that he heard ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī say, “If I were to swear something between the corner [of the Ka‘ba] and the Prayer Place [of Abraham], it would be that I had never seen anyone more knowledgeable than ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī.”

Abū ‘Īsā al-Tirmidhī said: this type of description and narrations are common from the People of Knowledge, so we only showed some of it here to prove the stations of the People of Knowledge and their preferring one over the other in different ways concerning memory, retention, and who was criticized from among the People of Knowledge and for what reason.

[TOPIC: READING HADITHS TO A SCHOLAR VS. HEARING THE SCHOLAR READ HIS HADITHS/‘ARḌ VS. SAMĀ’]

Abū ‘Īsā al-Tirmidhī said: reading [hadiths] to a scholar—if he has memorized what is read to him or is looking at his original notebook (*aṣl*) of what is being read to him but he has not memorized it—is sound practice among the People of Hadith, just like audition (*samā’*).

It was reported to us by Ḥusayn b. Maḥdī al-Baṣrī: it was reported to us by ‘Abd al-Razzāq: it was reported to us by Ibn Jurayj, who said, “I read [hadiths] to ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ and asked him, ‘How do I phrase this?’ and he said, ‘Say: “He narrated it to us (*ḥaddathanāhu*).””

It was reported to us by Suwayd b. Naṣr: it was reported to us by ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Wāqīd, from Abū ‘Iṣma, from Yazīd al-Naḥwī, from ‘Ikrima that a group of people from Ṭā’if went to Ibn ‘Abbās with a number of his books, and he started to read them to the people. But he started moving things around, forward and back, and then said, “Indeed I’ve fallen victim to this stupid issue, so read [these books] to me, and my affirmation of what you read is like me reading to you.”

It was reported to us by Suwayd b. Naṣr: it was reported to us by ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Wāqīd, from his father, from Maṣṣur b. al-Mu‘tamir, who said, “If a man gives his book to another and says, ‘Narrate this from me’, then he can narrate it.”

I heard Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl [al-Bukhārī] say, “I asked Abū ‘Āṣim al-Nabīl about a hadith and he said, ‘Read it to me’, but I really wanted him to read it to me, so he said, ‘Do you not allow reading (*al-qirā’a*) when Sufyān al-Thawrī and Mālik b. Anas allowed it?!”

It was reported to us by Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn: it was reported to us by Yaḥyā b. Sulaymān al-Ju'fī al-Miṣrī, who said that 'Abdallāh b. Wahb said, "When I say 'he narrated to us (*ḥaddathanā*)', then that is what I heard in a group of people, and when I say 'he narrated to me (*ḥaddathanī*)', then that is what I heard by myself. And when I said, '*akhbaranā*', then it is what was read to the scholar while I was watching, and '*akhbaranī*' means what was read to the scholar while I was with him alone."

I heard Abū Mūsā Muḥammad b. Muthannā say that he heard Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd al-Qaṭṭān say that '*ḥaddathanī*' and '*akhbaranī*' mean the same thing.

Abū 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī said: We were with Abū Muṣ'ab al-Madīnī, and some of his hadiths were read to him. So I said to him, "What do we say [to phrase this]?" He said, "Say Abū Muṣ'ab al-Madīnī narrated to us (*ḥaddathanā*)."

Abū 'Īsā said: "And some of the people of knowledge have allowed the Permission in Narration (*ijāza*), so when a scholar gives permission to someone to narrate some hadiths from him, then he can narrate them."

It was reported to us by Maḥmūd b. Ghaylān: it was reported to us by Wakī', from 'Imrān b. Ḥudayr, from Abū Mijlāz, from Bashīr b. Nahīk, who said, "I copied a book of hadiths from Abū Hurayra and asked him, 'Can I narrate it from you?' and he said, 'Yes.'"

It was reported to us by Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Wāsiṭī: it was reported to us by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Wāsiṭī, from 'Awf al-A'rābī, who said that a man had said to al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī], "I have some of your hadiths, can I narrate them from you?" and he replied, "Yes."

Abū 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī said: And Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan is known as Maḥbūb b. al-Ḥasan, and more than one of the imams has narrated hadiths from him.

It was reported to us by al-Jārūd b. Mu'ādh: it was reported to us by Anas b. 'Iyāḍ, from 'Ubaydallāh b. 'Umar, who said, "I went to al-Zuhrī with a book [of hadith] and said to him, 'These are your hadiths, can I narrate them from you?' and he said, 'Yes.'"

It was reported to us by Abū Bakr, from 'Alī b. 'Abdallāh [b. al-Madīnī], from Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd, who said, "Ibn Jurayj came to Hishām b. 'Urwa with a book [of hadiths] and said, 'These are your hadiths, can I narrate them from you?' and he said, 'Yes.'"

Yaḥyā said, "In my soul, I do not know which of the two [people] was more amazing."

Alī b. al-Madīnī added, "I asked Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd about the hadith of Ibn Jurayj, from 'Aṭā' al-Khurāsānī, and he said it was weak. I objected that [Ibn Jurayj] had said 'he reported to me

(*akhbaranī*),’ but Yaḥyā said, ‘It’s nothing, rather it was a book that [‘Aṭā’] gave to him.’”

[TOPIC: MURSAL HADITHS]³³

Abū ‘Īsā added: “And the hadith, if it is *mursal* (i.e., it has a break in the *isnād*), then it is not authentic in the eyes of most of the People of hadith; more than one has declared such a hadith to be weak.”

It was reported to us by ‘Alī b. Ḥujr; it was reported to us by Baqīyya b. al-Walīd, from ‘Utba b. Abī Ḥakīm, who said that al-Zuhrī heard Ishāq b. ‘Abdallāh b. Abī Farwa say, “The Messenger of God ﷺ said...”, so al-Zuhrī said, “May God oppose you, O Ibn Abī Farwa, you come to us with hadiths with no halter or bridle!”³⁴

It was reported to us by Abū Bakr, from ‘Alī b. ‘Abdallāh [b. al-Madīnī], who said that Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd [al-Qaṭṭān] said, “The *mursal* hadiths of Mujāhid are much dearer to me than those of ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ. Aṭā’ used to take hadiths from any type of person.” ‘Alī then said that Yaḥyā said, “The *mursal* hadiths of Sa‘īd b. Jubayr are dearer to me than those of ‘Aṭā’.” ‘Alī said that he asked Yaḥyā, “Are the *mursal* hadiths of Mujāhid better than those of Ṭāwūs?” He replied, “They are very close to one another.” ‘Alī said that he heard Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd say, “The *mursal* hadiths of Abū Ishāq for me are close to nothing, [as are] the *mursal* hadiths of al-A‘mash, al-Taymī and Yaḥyā b. Abī Kathīr. And the *mursal* hadiths of Ibn ‘Uyayna are like the wind.” Then he said, “By God, also those of Sufyān b. Sa‘īd [al-Thawrī].” ‘Alī said that he asked Yaḥyā, “And the *mursals* of Mālik?” He replied, “They are dearer to me,” adding, “There is no one among the people more accurate in hadith than Mālik.”

Abū ‘Īsā [al-Tirmidhī] said: And those who have considered *mursal* hadiths to be weak, they have done so because the imams would narrate from reliable transmitters and unreliable ones, so if they cited the hadith without a complete *isnād* (*arsalūhu*), it may be that they had taken it from an unreliable person.

33. After the 5th/11th century, *mursal* came to indicate hadiths that were attributed to the Prophet by a Successor who had never met him; in other words, the *isnād* lacks a Companion. In the early period, and in the writings of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), however, *mursal* meant any hadith that has a break in the *isnād*, typically occurring in the first three or four levels in the *isnād*. The verb ‘*arsala*’ literally meant ‘to cast’ a hadith to a source that one had not actually met.

34. I.e., without *isnāds* to verify them.

It was reported to us by Sawwār b. ‘Abdallāh al-‘Anbarī, who heard Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān say, “Whatever al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] said with ‘The Messenger of God ﷺ said...’, we have found some basis for it [in hadiths with full *isnāds*], except one or two hadiths.”

Abū ‘Īsā [al-Tirmidhī] said: And those who have considered *mursal* hadiths to be weak, they have done so because the imams would narrate from reliable transmitters and unreliable ones, so if they cited the hadith without a complete *isnād* (*arsalūhu*), it may be that they had taken it from an unreliable person. [For example,] al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī criticized Ma‘bad al-Juhanī but then narrated hadiths from him.

It was reported to us by Bishr b. Mu‘ādh al-Baṣrī: it was reported to us by Marḥūm b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-‘Aṭṭār: it was reported to me by my father and his brother, that they heard al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī say, “Be wary of Ma‘bad al-Juhanī, for indeed he is astray and leads others astray.”

Abū ‘Īsā [al-Tirmidhī] said: And it is narrated from al-Sha‘bī [who said,] “al-Ḥārith al-A‘war narrated hadiths to us, but he was a liar.” But [al-Sha‘bī] narrated hadiths from him, and most of the material that he had concerning inheritance law (*farā’id*) that al-Sha‘bī narrated from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and others were via al-Ḥārith. And al-Sha‘bī had said, “al-Ḥārith al-A‘war taught me inheritance law, and he was one of the best people at that.” [Al-Tirmidhī continued,] “And I heard Muḥammad b. Bashshār say that he heard ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī say, “Do you not marvel at Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna! I left aside over a thousand hadiths from Jābir al-Ju‘fī because of what Ibn ‘Uyayna said about him, and then he narrates hadith from him!” Muḥammad b. Bashshār added, “And ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī abandoned the hadiths of Jābir al-Ju‘fī.” But some of the People of Knowledge have used *mursal* hadiths as proof.

It was reported to us by Abū ‘Ubayda b. Abī al-Safar al-Kūfī: it was reported to us by Sa‘īd b. ‘Āmir, from Shu‘ba, from Sulaymān al-A‘mash, who said, “I said to Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī, ‘Give me [hadiths with] *isnāds* through ‘Abdallāh Ibn Mas‘ūd.’ Ibrāhīm said, ‘If I narrate hadiths to you from a person from Ibn Mas‘ūd then he is whoever I name him as, but if I say that ‘Abdallāh [Ibn Mas‘ūd] said something then [I’ve left out the intermediary between me and him because] the report is from more than one source from ‘Abdallāh [b. Mas‘ūd].’”³⁵

35. Many Muslim scholars in the first three generations would narrate from the Prophet ﷺ or from a Companion without citing their immediate source, as there was not yet the obsessive care with always citing one’s full *isnāds* that would come to characterize the Sunni hadith tradition in subsequent generations. This is often pointed out by scholars of the Ḥanafī school to explain why early figures in Kufan scholarship, such as Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī and Abū Ḥanīfa’s teachers, did not provide full *isnāds* when citing hadiths.

[TOPIC: STATUS OF TRADITIONS BASED ON NUMBER/QUALITY OF NARRATIONS & DEFINITION OF ḤASAN AND GHARĪB & RULES ON ADDITION (ZIYĀDA)]

Abū 'Īsā [al-Tirmidhī] said: the People of Knowledge have disagreed on declaring transmitters weak just as they have disagreed on other issues of knowledge. It has been mentioned that Shu'ba considered Abū al-Zubayr al-Makkī, 'Abd al-Malik b. Abī Sulaymān, and Ḥakīm b. Jubayr to be weak and refused to narrate hadiths from them. But then Shu'ba narrated hadiths from others who were lesser than them in memory/mastery and uprightness (*adāla*): he narrated from Jābir al-Ju'fī, Ibrāhīm b. Muslim al-Hajarī, Muḥammad b. 'Ubaydallāh al-'Arzamī and others who are declared weak in hadith.

It was reported to us by Muḥammad b. 'Amr b. Nabḥān b. Ṣafwān al-Baṣrī: it was reported to us by Umayya b. Khālīd, who said to Shu'ba, "You leave 'Abd al-Malik b. Abī Sulaymān, and you narrate hadiths from Muḥammad b. 'Ubaydallāh al-'Arzamī?" Shu'ba said, "Yes." Abū 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī said: Shu'ba had narrated from 'Abd al-Malik b. Abī Sulaymān, then he stopped doing so due to 'Abd al-Malik narrating an uncorroborated hadith from 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ, from Jābir b. 'Abdallāh, from the Prophet ﷺ, that "A person is most entitled to land adjoining [his land], and he should be waited for [before selling to others] even if he is absent, if the road [to the two pieces of land] is the same." And more than one of the imams has affirmed and narrated from Abū al-Zubayr, 'Abd al-Malik b. Abī Sulaymān, and Ḥakīm b. Jubayr.

It was reported to us by Aḥmad b. Manī': it was reported to us by Hushaym: it was reported to us by Ḥajjāj and Ibn Abī Laylā, from 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ, who said, "We used to, when we'd leave Jābir b. 'Abdallāh, repeat his hadiths to one another, and Abū al-Zubayr was the most accurate in preserving his hadiths."

It was reported to us by Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Abī 'Umar al-Makkī: it was reported to us by Sufyān b. 'Uyayna, who said that Abū al-Zubayr said, "'Aṭā' used to move me to the front [of the group] to hear Jābir b. 'Abdallāh so that I could memorize hadiths for them."

It was reported to us by Ibn Abī 'Umar: it was reported to us by Sufyān, who heard Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī say, "It was reported to me by Abū al-Zubayr, and Abū al-Zubayr is Abū al-Zubayr," and Sufyān showed by clenching his fist how firm Abū al-Zubayr was. Abū 'Īsā [al-Tirmidhī] says: He means by that his mastery and memorization. And it is

reported from ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak that Sufyān al-Thawrī said, “‘Abd al-Malik b. Abī Sulaymān was the scale of knowledge.”

It was reported to us by Abū Bakr, from ‘Alī b. ‘Abdallāh [b. al-Madīnī], who said, “I asked Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd [al-Qaṭṭān] about Ḥakīm b. Jubayr, and he said that Shu‘ba rejected him because of the hadith that he narrated about charitable giving (*ṣadaqa*), namely the hadith of ‘Abdallāh b. Mas‘ūd, from the Prophet ﷺ: whoever asks the people [for charity] and he has what suffices him, on the Day of Judgment, his face will be scarred. It was said to the Messenger of God ﷺ, ‘And what suffices?’ The Prophet said, ‘50 *dirhams* or the equivalent value in gold.’ ‘Alī [b. al-Madīnī] said: Yaḥyā said that Sufyān al-Thawrī and Zā‘ida had narrated from Ḥakīm b. Jubayr. ‘Alī had said: “And Yaḥyā did not see any problem with Ḥakīm’s hadith.”

It was reported to us by Maḥmūd b. Ghaylān: the hadith of charitable giving (*ṣadaqa*) was reported to us by Yaḥyā b. Ādam, from Sufyān al-Thawrī, from Ḥakīm b. Jubayr. Yaḥyā b. Ādam said that ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Uthmān, the student of Shu‘ba, asked Sufyān al-Thawrī, “Would that someone other than Ḥakīm narrated this hadith,” and Sufyān said, “What is the matter with Ḥakīm? Shu‘ba does not narrate from him?” ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Uthmān said, “Yes.” So Sufyān al-Thawrī said, “I heard Zubayd relate that hadith from Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yazīd.”

Abū ‘Isā al-Tirmidhī said: And what we’ve mentioned in this book as a *ḥasan* (fair)³⁶ hadith, we mean the ‘good quality (*ḥusn*)’ of its *isnād* in our opinion. Every hadith that is narrated and does not have in its *isnād* someone who is accused of lying/forging, and the hadith is not ‘anomalous (*shādhah*)’³⁷, and is narrated via more than one chain of transmission (*wajh*), for us it is a *ḥasan*’ hadith.³⁸

And as for what we have mentioned in this book as a *gharīb* (rare, unusual) hadith, indeed the Scholars of Hadith consider a hadith *gharīb* for several reasons. [For example,] how many hadiths are *gharīb*, not narrated except by one sole chain of transmission (*wajh*), like the hadith that Ḥammād b. Salama narrated, from Abū al-‘Usharā’, from his father, who said, “O Messenger of God, is sacrificing an animal (*dhakāt*) not only by the throat (*ḥalq*) or lower neck (*labba*) valid?” The Prophet said, “Even if you cut its thigh it is allowed.” This hadith was narrated only by Ḥammād b. Salama, from Abū al-‘Usharā’, and no other hadith is known from Abū al-‘Usharā’ from his father. And although this hadith is well-known among the People of Knowledge, it is only known through Ḥammād b. Salama and his hadith. But how many imams have narrated a hadith, and that hadith is known only

36. Classical manuals on the technical terms of the hadith sciences (*muṣṭalahāt*) usually state that al-Tirmidhī coined the term *ḥasan*. Some modern Muslim scholars, like ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (d. 1997) and Muḥammad ‘Awwāma, point to usages of the term by al-Tirmidhī’s teacher al-Bukhārī and his teacher ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī (d. 234/849). I think it is debatable whether these usages qualify as technical, however, and al-Tirmidhī certainly was the first to provide a technical definition for the term; ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda, *al-Fawā’id al-mustamadḍa fī ‘ulūm muṣṭalah al-hadīth*, ed. Mājid al-Darwish (Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmiyya, 1426/2005), 139-51; cf. ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī, *al-‘Ilal*, ed. Ḥassām Muḥammad Abū Qurayṣ (Gharās, 1423/2002), 237.

Al-Tirmidhī’s definition did not ultimately prevail. What became the definitive definition came from the Shāfi‘ī scholar of Bost, Abū Sulaymān Ḥamd al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998), namely “a hadith whose point of origins has been identified and whose narrators are well known, and this is the basis for most hadiths (*mā ‘urifa makhrājuhu wa ishtahara rijāluhu wa ‘alayhi maḍāru akthar al-hadīth*)”; Al-Khaṭṭābī, *Ma‘ālim al-sunan*, 1:6.

37. *Shādhah* was defined by al-Shāfi‘ī as what contradicted what was transmitted by more reliable sources. The definition given by al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405/1014) was what was transmitted by one, uncorroborated chain of transmission. I have favored translating the term according to al-Shāfi‘ī’s definition (which became standard) because al-Tirmidhī was heavily influenced by al-Shāfi‘ī and because al-Ḥākim’s definition would be redundant given the following clause in al-Tirmidhī’s text; Ibn ‘Adī, *al-Kāmil fī ḍu‘afā’ al-rijāl*, 7 vols. (Dār al-Fikr, 1984), 1:124; al-Ḥākim, *Ma‘rifat ‘ulūm al-hadīth*, 148.

38. Several prominent hadith scholars, including Ibn Diḥya (d. 633/1235), al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (d. 1952), and Aḥmad al-Ghumārī (d. 1960) have concluded that al-Tirmidhī was very lax in rating hadiths as *ḥasan* and that many of those he so described are actually unreliable. See ‘Umar b. Ḥasan Ibn Diḥya, *Adā’ mā wajab min bayān waḍ’ al-waḍḍā’ fī rajab* (al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1998), 137-38; Jamāl al-Dīn al-Zayla‘ī, *Naṣb al-rāya*, 4 vols. (Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1407/1987), 2:217-18; al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-‘itidāl*, 4:416; al-Kawtharī, *Maqālāt*, 236; Aḥmad b. al-Ḥaddād al-Ghumārī, *al-Mudāwī li-‘ilal al-jāmi’ al-ṣaghīr wa sharḥayy*

from them, and then it becomes well-known due to the great number of people who narrate from him. Like what ‘Abdallāh b. Dīnār narrated from Ibn ‘Umar, that the Messenger of God ﷺ forbade selling the right to a slave estate portion (*walā*) or granting it for free, and we only know that hadith from ‘Abdallāh b. Dīnār; it was narrated from him by ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Umar, Shu‘ba, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Mālik b. Anas, Ibn ‘Uyayna, and other imams. And Yaḥyā b. Sulaym narrated that hadith from ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Umar, from Nāfi‘, from Ibn ‘Umar, but Yaḥyā b. Sulaym erred in that hadith. The correct version is ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Umar, from ‘Abdallāh b. Dīnār, from Ibn ‘Umar. That is how ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Thaqafī and ‘Abdallāh b. Numayr narrated it from ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Umar, from ‘Abdallāh b. Dīnār, from Ibn ‘Umar. And al-Mu‘ammal narrated that hadith from Shu‘ba, and Shu‘ba said, “Indeed I wished that ‘Abdallāh b. Dīnār gave me permission to stand and kiss his head.”

And how many hadiths are there that are narrated from multiple chains of transmission but are declared *gharīb* due to the condition of the *isnād*.

Abū ‘Isā al-Tirmidhī said: And how many hadiths there are that are considered *gharīb* because of an addition in the hadith, but this is correct as long as the addition is from someone whose memory/mastery (*ḥifẓ*) can be relied upon. Like what Mālik b. Anas narrated from Nāfi‘, from Ibn ‘Umar that the Messenger of God ﷺ made the tithe of the End of Ramadan (*zakāt al-fīṭr*) obligatory for every free person and slave, man or woman from among the Muslims, one *ṣā’* (about 3 liters) of dates or barley. And Mālik[’s narration of] of this hadith added the phrase “from among the Muslims.” But Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī, ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Umar, and more than one other from among the imams have narrated this hadith from Nāfi‘, from Ibn ‘Umar without mentioning “from among the Muslims.” And some of those who have narrated from Nāfi‘ like what Mālik narrated, their memories/master cannot be relied upon. And more than one of the imams have taken Mālik’s hadith and used it as proof, like al-Shāfi‘ī and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. They said, “If a man has non-Muslim slaves then he does not render the End of Ramadan tithe on their behalf,” and used the hadith of Mālik as proof. So if a hadith master (*ḥāfiẓ*) whose memory/mastery can be relied upon, what he adds [in his narrations of a hadith] is accepted.

al-Munāwī, 6 vols. (Dār al-Kutub, 1996), 1:10.

Discussions of what al-Tirmidhī meant when he described a hadith with compound and sometimes seemingly contradictory terms, such as *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* or *ḥasan gharīb*, have also been legion and mostly far-fetched. In my opinion, the most plausible explanations are, for *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*: 1) Ibn Rajab offers the explanation, then, that a hadith that al-Tirmidhī rates as *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* has been narrated by an *isnād* of all reliable (*thiqāt*), upstanding (*‘adūl*) narrators, is not *shādhḥ*, and is narrated by more than one chain. A *ṣaḥīḥ* hadith would be one that fulfills these conditions but does not necessarily have to be narrated by more than one chain. But it cannot be *shādhḥ*, adds Ibn Rajab, since a *ṣaḥīḥ* hadith could not be allowed to contradict more reliable material; 2) Along similar lines, Ibn Ḥajar and al-Suyūṭī suggest that *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* means that the hadith has at least one *ṣaḥīḥ isnād* and multiple other *isnāds*, or perhaps that al-Tirmidhī means ‘*ḥasan* or *ṣaḥīḥ*,’ i.e., that some critics consider it *ḥasan* and others *ṣaḥīḥ*; 3) Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Razzāq (an Egyptian scholar who served as the *khaṭīb* in the Ḥaram Mosque in Mecca, d. 1972) contended that *ḥasan* meant that a hadith was acted on, while *ṣaḥīḥ* addressed the reliability of the *isnād*. The compound ratings of *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ gharīb* or *ḥasan gharīb* have long puzzled scholars, since *gharīb* seems to contradict the multiple narrations required for a *ḥasan* rating. Al-Kawtharī argues that *ṣaḥīḥ/ḥasan gharīb* means that the narration of a hadith starts out with only one chain but then branches out into several. ‘Abdallāh al-Ghumārī thinks that *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ gharīb* applies to a sound hadith but one that only has one *isnād*. Nūr al-Dīn ‘Itr suggests that *ḥasan gharīb* and *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ gharīb* indicate a hadith that has several narrations but which al-Tirmidhī is citing by a narration not well known. See Ibn Kathīr and Aḥmad Shākir, *al-Bā’ith al-ḥathīth sharḥ Ikhtisār ‘ulūm al-hadīth* (Maktabat Dār al-Turāth, 1423/2003), 37; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ*, 1:388; al-Suyūṭī, *Tadrib al-rāwī fi sharḥ Taqrīb al-Nawāwī*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Awwāma, 6 vols. (Dār al-Yusr and Dār al-Minhāj, 2016), 3:26-33; al-Kawtharī, *Maqālāt*, 235; ‘Abdallāh al-Ghumārī, *Afḍal maqūl fi manāqib afḍal rasūl* (Maktabat al-Qāhira, 1426/2005), 10; Nūr al-Dīn ‘Itr, *Manhaj naqd al-muḥaddithīn* (Dār al-Fikr, 2008), 272; Khaldūn al-Aḥḍab, *Asbāb ikhtilāf al-muḥaddithīn*, 2 vols. (Dār Kunūz al-‘Ilm, 1422/2001), 2:695-6; James Robson, “Varieties of the *Hasan* Tradition,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 6, no. 1 (1961): 47-61.

And how many hadiths are there that are narrated from multiple chains of transmission but are declared *gharīb* due to the condition of the *isnād*.

It was reported to us by Abū Kurayb, Abū Hishām al-Rifāʿī, Abū al-Sāʿib, and al-Ḥusayn b. al-Aswad, they said: it was reported to us by Abū Usāma, from Burayd b. ʿAbdallāh b. Abī Burda, from his grandfather Abū Burda, from Abū Mūsā, from the Prophet ﷺ, who said, “The unbeliever eats with seven stomachs, and the believer eats with only one.” Abū ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī says: This is a hadith that is *gharīb* from this chain of transmission, and it has been narrated via more than one chain of transmission from the Prophet ﷺ, but it is considered *gharīb* from the hadith of Abū Mūsā. I asked Maḥmūd b. Ghaylān about this hadith, and he said, “This is the hadith of Abū Kurayb, from Abū Usāma.” And I asked Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl [al-Bukhārī] about this hadith and he said, “This hadith of Abū Kurayb, from Abū Usāma, we do not know of it except via Abū Kurayb, from Abū Usāma.” So I said to him, “More than one person has narrated it to us from Abū Usāma,” and he was bewildered by that and said, “I hadn’t known that anyone had narrated this hadith except Abū Kurayb.” Muḥammad said, “We used to think that Abū Kurayb had taken that hadith from Abū Usāma while they were discussing hadiths informally (*mudhākara*)” (i.e. not during a formal transmission session).

[EXAMPLES OF GHARĪB HADITHS THAT ARE ESTABLISHED VIA OTHER ISNĀDS]

It was narrated to us by Abdallāh b. Abī Ziyād and more than one other person: they said: it was reported to us by Shabāba b. Sawwār: it was reported to us by Shuʿba, from Bukayr b. ʿAṭā, from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Yaʿmar that the Prophet ﷺ prohibited [using] gourds or a pitch-smeared pot (*al-dubbāʾ wa al-muzaffat*) [for fermenting drinks]. This hadith of Shabāba is considered *gharīb* from the perspective of its *isnād*. We know of no one who narrated it from Shuʿba except Shabāba. And it was transmitted from the Prophet ﷺ via many paths that he prohibited fermenting drinks in gourds or pitch-smeared pots. So Shabāba’s hadith was deemed *gharīb* because he alone narrated it from Shuʿba. And Shuʿba and Sufyān al-Thawrī narrated by that *isnād* from Bukayr b. ʿAṭā, from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Yaʿmar, from the Prophet ﷺ that he said that the Pilgrimage is [standing on the day] of ʿArafa. This hadith is well-known by the People of Hadith by that *isnād*.

It was narrated to us by Muḥammad b. Bashshār: it was reported to us by Muʿādh b. Hishām: it was reported to me by my father, from

Yaḥyā b. Abī Kathīr: it was reported to me by Abū Muzāḥim that he heard Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه say that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, “Whoever follows a funeral procession and prays for the dead person, to him is a carat [of reward in the Afterlife], and whoever follows it until it is finished, to him is two carats.” They said, “O Messenger of God, what are the two carats?” He replied, “The smaller one is the size of [the mountain of] Uḥud.”

It was reported to us by ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān [al-Dārimī]: it was reported to us by Marwān b. Muḥammad, from Mu‘āwiya b. Sallām: it was reported to me by Yaḥyā b. Abī Kathīr: it was reported to us by Abū Muzāḥim, who heard Abū Hurayra, from the Prophet ﷺ, who said, “Whoever follows a funeral procession, to him will be a carat...” and he mentioned a meaning similar to the previous hadith. Abdallāh said: it was reported to us by Marwān, from Mu‘āwiya b. Sallām: Yaḥyā said, and it was reported to us by Abū Sa‘īd the client of al-Mahrī; from Ḥamza b. Safīna, from al-Sā‘ib, who heard ‘Ā’isha رضي الله عنها, from the Prophet ﷺ say something along the same lines. I asked Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān [al-Dārimī], “What did they consider *gharīb* from your hadiths in Iraq?” He replied, “The hadith of al-Sā‘ib, from ‘Ā’isha, from the Prophet ﷺ” and he mentioned the hadith. And I heard Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl [al-Bukhārī] narrate that hadith from ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. Abū ‘Īsā al-Tirmidhī said: But this hadith has been narrated by more than one chain of transmission (*wajh*) from ‘Ā’isha, from the Prophet ﷺ. And this hadith was only deemed *gharīb* due to its *isnād* due to al-Sā‘ib’s narration from ‘Ā’isha, from the Prophet ﷺ.

It was reported to us by Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Amr b. ‘Alī: it was narrated to us by Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān: it was reported to us by al-Mughīra b. Abū Qurra al-Sadūsī, who said that he heard Anas b. Mālīk رضي الله عنه say, “A man said, ‘O Messenger of God, should I tie up [the camel] and trust in God or leave it free and trust in God.’ The Prophet said, ‘Tie it up and trust in God.’” Amr b. ‘Alī said that Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd [al-Qaṭṭān] said, “In my opinion this hadith is *munkar* (not acceptable).” Abū ‘Īsā al-Tirmidhī said: This is a hadith that is *gharīb* from this chain of transmission (*wajh*), we do not know of it from Anas b. Mālīk except through this chain of transmission (*wajh*). But its likes has been narrated from ‘Amr b. Umayya al-Ḍamrī, from the Prophet ﷺ.

We have put forth this book in an abbreviated manner in what we hope will provide some benefit to the people. We ask God to grant benefit through what is in the book and to make it evidence for us by His mercy and not against us as punishment. Ameen.