

Zayd ibn Thābit narrated, saying: I heard God's Messenger (peace be upon him) say:

1

May God grant comeliness to a person who might have heard a hadith from us, and he retained it in memory until he delivered it.

2

It may happen that someone carries real knowledge to one who is a better scholar.

3

And it may happen that someone carries real knowledge, but he himself is not a scholar.⁽¹⁾

From the Qur'an

- ﴿Let there become of you a nation who invite to all that is good, enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid what is wrong. Such are they who shall prosper.﴾ (3: 104)
- ﴿If any matter pertaining to peace or war comes to their knowledge, they make it known to all and sundry; whereas, if they would only refer it to the Messenger and to those from among them entrusted with authority, those of them who are engaged in obtaining intelligence would know it.﴾ (4: 83)
- ﴿Messenger, proclaim what has been revealed to you by your Lord. For, unless you do it fully, you will not have delivered His message.﴾ (5: 67)
- ﴿Those are the ones who convey God's messages and stand in awe of Him, and hold none but God in awe. Sufficient is God to reckon all things.﴾ (33: 39)
- ﴿He does not speak out of his own fancy. (3) That [which he delivers to you] is nothing less than a revelation sent down to him.﴾ (53: 3-4)

The Narrator

Abu Sa'īd Zayd ibn Thābit ibn al-Ḍaḥḥāk belonged to the Najjār clan of the Anṣār. He was a scribe who wrote down Qur'anic revelations as dictated by the Prophet (peace be upon him). He was eleven years of age when the Prophet migrated to Madinah. He took part in the Battle of Uḥud and all subsequent military expeditions. He was a most distinguished scholar among the first generation of Muslims, and excelled in Fiqh and the division of inheritance. Some reports suggest that his first participation in military activities was at the time of the siege of Madinah, i.e. al-Khandaq. He was one of the Prophet's companions who memorized the Qur'an in full during the Prophet's lifetime. He died in Year 45 AH, 665 CE.

Summary

The Prophet (peace be upon him) encourages Muslims to memorize hadiths and narrate them to people. He prays for whoever does this, because the Muslim community is always in need of knowing what God makes lawful or unlawful. It may be that a person who listens to a hadith but does not understand its purport will report it to someone who will understand its meaning and what it entails, thereafter teaching it to people.

1 Related by Abu Dāwūd, 3660; al-Tirmidhī, 2656. (Abu Dāwūd's text.)



Message and Meaning

1

The Arabic term *naḍḍara*, which the Prophet (peace be upon him) uses in his prayer for the one who learns his hadith and delivers it to others, refers to 'a comely, shiny face'. Thus, by praying to God to give such a person comeliness and a shiny face, the Prophet encourages his companions and the later generations of the Muslim community to learn his Sunnah and to spread its knowledge. This is a part of their reward for preserving the Sunnah, learning its texts in full, which requires good listening and learning as well as faithful transmission, so that it reaches others with the same words and meaning.

It is permissible to transmit a hadith by meaning, if one is fully aware of its meaning. It is forbidden to attribute a false statement to the Prophet, even though the transmitter claims that it is done for some good purpose.

2

The Prophet (peace be upon him) explains the reason. The person who listens to a hadith may transmit it to someone who is able to understand the hadith better. Had everyone who listens to a hadith reported only his own understanding, without stating the exact text of the hadith, we would lose much of Prophet's Sunnah and his guidance. In this hadith, the Prophet uses the word *rubba*, translated as 'may happen', which indicates that this is often the case, perhaps more than generally expected.

3

The Prophet then tells us that it is not a condition that the one who transmits a hadith should be a scholar. What is required is that he should learn and transmit its text accurately. It often happens that a person who transmits a hadith is not himself a scholar, but he nonetheless earns God's reward by delivering it to others.



Implementation

1

Zayd ibn Thābit was a young lad, but the Prophet (peace be upon him) took care to keep him close to himself, recognizing his intellectual ability. He made him one of his scribes, and he wrote Qur'anic verses as dictated by the Prophet himself. Both Abu Bakr al-Şiddīq and 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān used him in collating the text of the Qur'an and writing the master copies sent to the major cities of the Muslim State. He excelled in learning the Islamic rules of inheritance, assigning the rightful shares to each of the heirs. It is important not to belittle the ability of any young person.

2

The Prophet (peace be upon him) prayed that God grants comeliness, beauty and radiance to a person who delivers his Sunnah. Whoever wants to have such qualities, whether man or woman, should seek to transmit the Prophet's Sunnah, and to join the ranks of those who memorize the Prophet's hadiths. Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah said: 'Whenever you meet one of the Hadith scholars, you will recognize comeliness in his face, because of the Prophet's supplication'.⁽¹⁾

3

It is important to develop our skill of memorization, particularly the texts of what God and His Messenger say. Their wordings may have meanings that may escape our understanding at times or permanently. It is sufficient that one benefits by what one understands of them. One may even revisit a text at a later time and find that one understands it better. On the other hand, one may report it to other people, and they may benefit by it more than oneself.

4

Be careful not to listen to the argument of those who discourage memorization. Memorization does not lessen your ability to understand; on the contrary, it helps it. It benefits the memorizer and others. There is hardly a discipline of knowledge which does not have certain rules and texts that should be learnt literally.

5

Every Muslim should be careful to transmit the hadith as it was learnt. Accuracy in learning and reporting is indicative of a sound mind.

6

It is not a condition for the transmission of the Sunnah that the transmitter should be a qualified scholar, or that he should thoroughly understand everything he transmits. Indeed, it is perfectly appropriate for a person who listens to a Qur'anic verse, an authentic hadith, or a scholarly statement by a reliable scholar to transmit it accurately.

7

A wise person benefits by the wisdom expressed in the Qur'an or the Prophet's Hadith, or in a statement made by his companions, even though he might learn such wisdom from someone who is a lesser scholar. In this way, he should be keen to benefit by what is transmitted, even if the transmitter is not a scholar of high standing.

1 Quoted by Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, Vol. 1, p. 11.



8

The hadith states the highly honourable status of the people of Hadith who transmit what the Prophet (peace be upon him) said. Imam al-Shāfi‘ī said: ‘When I meet a Hadith scholar, I feel as if I am meeting one of the Prophet’s companions’.⁽¹⁾ Al-Shāfi‘ī said this because they are fulfilling the same role as the Prophet’s companions who transmitted his hadiths. Therefore, we should give high respect and honour to scholars of Hadith.

1 Ibid.

