

The Creed of Sufyan ibn Uyaynah

Lecture Course: Comprehensive Explanation of the Classical Creed

Venue: Darul Hadith Edmonton, Alberta, Canada • Saturday, July 4th, 2026

Companion Document: Day 1 • Foundations of Hadith, Biography of Sufyan, and the Divine Decree (Al-Qadar)

I. Program Introduction & The Structure of Sahih al-Bukhari

This series of lectures commenced in the prophetic setting of **Darul Hadith Edmonton** under the auspices of the **Ahle-Hadith Society of Canada**. Welcoming students of knowledge who have gathered in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, the speaker emphasizes the great blessing and pleasure of seeing believers in these far-away Western lands dedicate themselves to studying, understanding, implementing, and spreading the authentic Hadith and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alaihi wasallam).

The textbook for the initial Hadith science component is the *Book of Knowledge* (**Kitab al-'Ilm**) from **Sahih al-Bukhari**, compiled by the Crown Jewel of Hadith scholars, **Imam Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari** (passed away in 256 AH). The Muslim Ummah is in unanimous consensus regarding the absolute authenticity of Sahih al-Bukhari, accepting its narrations with complete submission (*qabul*).

A profound reflection of Imam al-Bukhari's scholarly brilliance is his decision to omit a traditional academic introduction (*Muqaddimah*) from his compilation. Instead, he placed the famous Hadith of Intentions—'**Innama al-a'malu bin-niyyat**' (Actions are judged by their intentions), narrated by Umar ibn al-Khattab—as the opening Hadith of his book. By doing so, Imam al-Bukhari crafted a silent introduction, warning every reader, scholar, and student to continuously correct their intentions. The pursuit of Islamic knowledge must be undertaken solely for the sake of Allah, to remove ignorance from oneself, and to subsequently benefit others.

Following the opening Hadith, Imam al-Bukhari structured his work by presenting the *Book of Faith* (*Kitab al-Iman*) and then the *Book of Knowledge* (*Kitab al-'Ilm*), before diving into the legal chapters of purification, prayer, and transactions. This precise ordering establishes the foundational principle of the Salaf: **knowledge precedes statement and action** (*al-'Ilmu qabla al-qawli wal-'amal*). Furthermore, Imam al-Bukhari derived legal and theological understandings (*fiqh*) directly in his chapter headings. At times, he wrote a chapter heading without placing any Hadith under it. This indicates that while authentic Hadiths existed on that topic, they did not meet his uniquely strict, elite standards of verification, reflecting his unmatched intellectual rigor.

II. The Five Conditions of a Sahih Hadith

To establish whether a narration is *Sahih* (authentic and accepted) or *Da'if* (weak and rejected), the scholars of Hadith established a strict, systematic framework consisting of five non-negotiable conditions. If any single condition fails, the Hadith is disqualified from being used as a scriptural proof.

Condition (Technical Term)	Technical Meaning & Sub-Components	Application & Classifications
1. Ittisal al-Sanad (Connectivity of Chain)	Every single narrator in the chain must have directly heard or received the narration from their immediate teacher, forming an unbroken link from beginning to end.	Imam al-Bukhari enforced the strict condition of a proven historical meeting (<i>Liqā'</i>) between narrators. In contrast, Imam Muslim sufficed with contemporary coexistence (<i>Mu'asarah</i>) with the probability of meeting.
2. 'Adalah (Religious Integrity)	Each narrator must be upright in their religion and character. Defined by 5 sub-components: • Islam: Non-Muslim narrations are rejected. • Bulugh: Maturity (puberty). • 'Aql: Mental sanity. • Freedom from Fisq: Avoiding major sins or persistent minor sins. • Muru'ah: Adhering to noble moral customs.	A person may hear/carry (<i>tahamul</i>) Hadith while a child or non-Muslim, but they must be a Muslim and adult when conveying it (<i>adaa'</i>). Examples include Abu Sufyan witnessing events before his Islam and narrating them after. <i>Muru'ah</i> standards are based on societal norms and adapt over time (e.g., eating in public or wearing yellow/saffron was historically discouraged).
3. Dabt (Accuracy & Precision)	The narrator must possess flawless precision in preserving the Hadith. Divided into: • Dabtu Sadr: Precise memorization in the heart from the moment of hearing until narrating. • Dabtu Kitabah: Precision in writing down the Hadith and carefully safeguarding the manuscript.	Narrators are scrutinized by comparing their narrations against their peers. Rare errors keep them at the highest grade (<i>Thiqah</i>); increasing errors drop them to <i>Saduq</i> (acceptable), while equal/dominant mistakes lead to absolute weakness.
4. Freedom from Shudhudh (No Irregularity)	The Hadith must not contain any irregularity or contradiction, meaning a trustworthy narrator must not oppose someone who is more reliable or a group of narrators who are stronger.	Opposition is measured by levels of memory or quantity of narrators. For instance, if a reliable narrator elevates a Hadith to the Prophet (<i>Marfu'</i>) but a stronger group of narrators stops it at a Companion (<i>Mawquf</i>), the irregular narration is ruled as <i>Shadh</i> (rejected).
5. Freedom from 'Illah (No Hidden Defects)	The Hadith must be free from subtle, hidden, damaging defects that are not apparent to a general observer, even if the chain outwardly appears connected and reliable.	No human is free from error except the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam). Uncovering an ' <i>Illah</i> ' is the peak of Hadith sciences, requiring scholars to gather all chains of a Hadith and perform exhaustive comparative analysis.

III. The Virtues of Knowledge & Scriptural/Historical Proofs

The speaker systematically details the high rank of religious knowledge in Islam, distinguishing beneficial knowledge (the Quran and Sunnah) from speculative theology (*Kalam*) and the pure opinions of men (*ar-Ra'y*). Knowledge is a light that elevates the believer in this life and the next.

- **Make Dua for Increase:** Allah never commanded His Prophet to ask for an increase in any worldly matter—neither wealth nor status—except for knowledge: *'And say, "My Lord, increase me in knowledge"'* [Ta-Ha: 114]. The Prophet remained in a state of continuous spiritual and intellectual growth until his final breath.
- **The Resolve of Musa:** Prophet Musa (Alayhis Salam) underwent a grueling journey for a massive portion of his life (scholars of Tafsir estimate 70 to 80 years, or a lifetime) to seek specific knowledge from Al-Khidr that he did not possess, illustrating that knowledge requires immense sacrifice, travel, and humility.
- **The Path to Paradise:** The Prophet said, *'Whoever treads a path seeking knowledge, Allah makes his path to Paradise easy.'* The angels lower their wings in pleasure, and every creation—including the fish in the deepest oceans—seeks forgiveness for the student. The scholar's virtue over the ignorant worshipper (*'Abid*) is like the full moon over the stars.
- **Perpetual Inheritance:** Prophets leave behind no gold or silver, but inherit knowledge. According to Sahih Muslim, a person's deeds cease upon death except three: ongoing charity, beneficial knowledge left behind, and a righteous child who prays for them. The speaker notes that charities can fade and offspring will die, but knowledge is perpetual—evidenced by Imam al-Bukhari, who continues to reap rewards 1,200 years after his death.
- **Sustenance of the Soul:** As stated by classical scholars, humanity's need for religious knowledge is far greater than their need for food and drink. Food and drink sustain the temporary body, whereas knowledge of the revelation sustains the eternal soul.
- **Voluntary Worship vs. Knowledge:** Classical scholars, including Imam ash-Shafi'i, held that seeking knowledge is the most virtuous deed after the obligatory duties (*Fara'id*). It far surpasses voluntary prayers, fasting, and pilgrimage (*Nawafil*) because those acts only benefit the individual performer, whereas knowledge is a transitive benefit (*Muta'addi*) that guides the entire community.

HISTORICAL MANIFESTATIONS: KNOWLEDGE RAISING THE LOWLY

The Salaf demonstrated how Quranic and Hadith knowledge raised those of low social standing, particularly freed slaves (Mawali), to the highest pinnacles of authority:

1. Umar ibn al-Khattab & Ibn Abza: During his caliphate, Umar met his governor of Makkah, Nafi' ibn Abd al-Harith, at Usfan. Umar asked who Nafi' had appointed as his deputy over Makkah. Nafi' replied, 'Ibn Abza, a freed slave.' Umar was shocked: 'You left a freed slave over the noble people of the valley?' Nafi' answered, 'Indeed, he is a reciter of the Book of Allah and a master of the laws of inheritance (Fara'id).' Umar wept and said: 'Indeed, your Prophet said: "Verily, Allah raises by this Book nations and dejects others."'

2. Abdullah ibn Abbas & Abu al-'Aliyah: Abu al-'Aliyah, a freed slave, recounted that whenever he visited Ibn Abbas in Makkah, the great scholar would bring him in and sit him next to him on the high cushions in the presence of the noble Quraysh. Seeing their displeasure, Ibn Abbas remarked: 'This is the virtue of knowledge; it increases the noble in their nobility and seats the slave upon the high chairs in front of the people.'

3. Imam al-A'mash's Reflection: The great Tabi'i and Hadith scholar al-A'mash was physically weak, partially blind, and a freed slave. He famously reflected: 'I am of those whom Allah raised solely by way of knowledge. By Allah, had it not been for this knowledge, I would have been a despised sidewalk seller (baqqal) whom no one would buy from.'

IV. Biography of Imam Sufyan ibn Uyaynah (107–198 AH)

Before unpacking the theological creed, the speaker presents a structured biography of the text's author, **Imam Sufyan ibn Uyaynah**, who stood as one of the twin pillars of Hadith preservation in the Hijaz alongside Imam Malik.

Lineage, Birth, and Residence: Abu Muhammad Sufyan ibn Uyaynah ibn Abi Imran al-Hilali was born in **Kufa in 107 AH**. His family were freed slaves (*Mawali*) of Muhammad ibn Muzahim, the brother of the famous Tabi'i scholar of Tafsir, Dahhak ibn Muzahim. He traveled to Makkah at a young age, took up permanent residence there, and became the celebrated *Sheikh of Makkah*, widely known as **Al-Maki**.

Precocious Seeking & High Chains: Sufyan began seeking Hadith at the age of 10 or 11, around the year 119 AH. Imam Abu Hanifah recalled seeing him as a small child carrying scrolls from gathering to gathering, still wearing a childhood earring. Because of his exceptionally early start and long life (living 91 years), he possessed incredibly high chains of narration (*Ali chains*), meaning there were very few links between him and the Prophet. This made his narrations highly prized, as fewer narrators significantly reduce the probability of error.

Teachers and Giants of Students: He learned from the prime scholars of the Tabi'un, including Amr ibn Dinar, Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri, and al-A'mash. His students were the absolute founders of classical Islamic scholarship: Imam ash-Shafi'i, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ali ibn al-Madini, Yahya ibn Ma'een, and his close student Imam al-Humaydi (whose *Musnad* is principally a preservation of Sufyan's narrations). Imam ash-Shafi'i famously stated: 'If it were not for Malik and Sufyan ibn Uyaynah, the knowledge of Hijaz would have been lost.' Shafi'i also

noted that of the 500 foundational Hadiths of Halal and Haram, Imam Malik memorized all except 30, whereas Sufyan memorized all except six.

Extreme Caution & Asceticism: Despite his oceanic knowledge, Imam Sufyan was deeply characterized by his fear of Allah. His contemporaries noted that no scholar shied away from giving fatwas more than him. He lived a life of poverty, embracing it as a natural consequence of dedicating oneself to Hadith. He once asked a young man what his profession was, and when the youth replied, 'I seek Hadith,' Sufyan told him: 'Give glad tidings to your family of poverty!' He also remarked that *'inkpots do not enter a house except that the wife and children become unpleased'* due to the lack of material wealth. He taught that *'knowledge, if it does not benefit you, will harm you'* because it will be used as a proof against you on the Day of Judgment, and that *'the true scholar is not he who knows good and evil, but he who knows good and follows it, and knows evil and stays away from it.'*

IMAM SUFYAN'S FIVE LEVELS OF MASTERING KNOWLEDGE

Imam Sufyan ibn Uyaynah outlined a precise, sequential methodology for the student to successfully absorb and master sacred knowledge:

1. **Al-Istima' (Attentive Listening):** Listening with a fully engaged heart and mind, avoiding all distraction.
2. **Al-Insaat (Silent Focus):** Remaining silent and respectful in the presence of the teacher, not cutting off or interjecting, and in modern times, keeping oneself completely detached from phones and outside matters.
3. **Al-Hifdh (Precise Memorization):** Committing the knowledge to memory and safeguarding the written scrolls.
4. **Al-'Amal (Acting upon Knowledge):** Implementing the knowledge in one's character, worship, and actions, as knowledge without action is a curse.
5. **Al-Nashr (Spreading Knowledge):** Teaching, publishing, and distributing the knowledge to others to preserve its legacy.

V. Creed of Sufyan ibn Uyaynah & Point 1: Al-Qadar

Imam Abu al-Qasim al-Lalaka'i preserved the creed of Sufyan ibn Uyaynah in his monumental encyclopedia *Sharh Usul I'tiqad Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah* with a connected, authentic chain. Sufyan stated: *'The Sunnah consists of ten points. Whoever implements them has completed the Sunnah, and whoever leaves any of them has left the Sunnah.'*

Defining the Sunnah: The speaker notes that while the *Fuqaha* (jurists) define Sunnah as the recommended actions (*Mandub*), and the *Muhaddithun* (Hadith scholars) define it as everything narrated from the Prophet, the early Salaf used the term '*Al-Sunnah*' to denote the **fundamental orthodox creed** of Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah in contrast to deviant sects.

Point 1: Affirming Al-Qadar (The Divine Decree): Believing in Al-Qadar is one of the six pillars of Faith (Iman), tied to Tawhid al-Rububiyah (Oneness of Lordship) and Tawhid al-Asma' was-Sifat (Oneness of Names and Attributes). It represents the belief in Allah's perfect, absolute dominion over all affairs. The belief in Qadar is structured around four distinct levels, all of which must be fully affirmed.

Level of Qadar	Theological Meaning & Details	Scriptural Evidence & Deviances
1. Al-'Ilm (Eternal Knowledge)	Believing that Allah's knowledge is perfect, eternal, and absolute. He knows all past, present, and future events, both in their generality and minute details, before they ever manifest.	<i>"Indeed, Allah is Knower of all things"</i> [Al-Baqarah: 282]. Precedence: This level, alongside writing, precedes the occurrence of any event.
2. Al-Kitabah (Divine Writing)	Believing that Allah wrote the decrees of all creation in the Preserved Tablet (<i>Al-Lauh al-Mahfudh</i>) 50,000 years before creating the heavens and the earth.	<i>"We have not left any matter in the Book without writing it"</i> [Al-An'am: 38]. Aspects: Includes the general decree, lifetime decree (written in the womb at 120 days), yearly decree (on <i>Laylat al-Qadr</i>), and daily decree.
3. Al-Mashi'ah (Absolute Will)	Believing that nothing occurs in existence except by the absolute, sovereign Will of Allah. What He wills happens, and what He does not will can never happen.	<i>"If Allah had willed, they would not have done so"</i> [Al-An'am: 137]. Precedence: This level, alongside creation, occurs simultaneously with the event.
4. Al-Khalq (Complete Creation)	Believing that Allah is the sole Creator of everything in existence, including the physical bodies, the wills, the capabilities, and the actions of His servants.	<i>"Allah has created you and your actions"</i> [As-Saffat: 96]. Sovereignty: Everything in the universe belongs strictly to His dominion and sovereignty.

Deviations and the Balanced Middle Path: The speaker details how deviant theological sects fractured on the issue of Qadar, and how Ahl al-Sunnah holds the balanced, scriptural middle path:

1. The Qadariyyah (Deniers of Qadar): Initiated in Basra by Ma'bad al-Juhani during the era of the minor Companions. The extreme Qadariyyah negated Allah's *Ilm* and *Kitabah*, claiming that Allah does not know an event until it happens. Abdullah ibn Umar severely declared his dissociation from them, stating that if they spent gold equivalent to Mount Uhud, Allah would never accept it from them until they believed in Al-Qadar. The later Qadariyyah (the Mu'tazilah) affirmed knowledge but claimed that humans are the independent creators of their own deeds, separating human action from Allah's Will and Creation.

2. The Jabariyyah (Determinists): Emerging from the Jahmiyyah, they went to the opposite extreme. To affirm Allah's absolute Will, they stripped humans of any free will, claiming that people are completely forced (*majbur*) to commit their actions, whether good or evil, with no more choice than a feather in the wind.

3. Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah: Resolving all texts, they affirm that Allah is the sole Creator and that nothing occurs outside His Will. However, they also affirm that Allah has created a real free will (*Iradah*) and capability (*Qudrah*) within humans. A person acts by their own choice and is justly rewarded or punished for those choices, yet their human will always remains subservient to the supreme Will of Allah. This is beautifully captured in Surah at-Takwir: *'For whoever among you wills to go straight. And you do not will except that Allah, Lord of the worlds, wills'* [At-Takwir: 28-29].