

HOW TO MEMORIZE HADITH



A CONCISE GUIDE ON HOW TO
MEMORIZE HADITH FROM CLASSICAL
AND CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARS
ACCOMPANIED WITH PERSONAL
EXPERIENCES

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A Concise Guide on How to Memorize Hadith From
Classical and Contemporary Scholars Accompanied With
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Compiled by

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Forewords by

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First Edition 1442h (2021)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى،
فَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ،
وَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ لِدُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا أَوْ امْرَأَةٍ يَنْكِحُهَا، فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى مَا
هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِ.

“Verily, deeds are only with intentions and every person will have only what they intended. Whoever emigrated to Allah and His Messenger, his emigration is for Allah and His Messenger. Whoever emigrated to get something in the world or to marry a woman, his emigration is for that to which he emigrated.”

(Bukhari & Muslim)

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Forewords

In the Name of Allāh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. May the praise of Allāh, in the highest of assemblies, and His peace, safety and security, both in this world and the next, be on Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), the best of mankind and the seal of the Prophets and Messengers.

The prophetic sayings, as well as the sayings of the earlier and latter scholars contained in this small manual 'How To Memorize Hadith' represent a good selection of some of the most important advices necessary for a Muslim who has a sincere intent to memorize the Hadith of the Messenger of Allāh, (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

The first chapter, 'The Virtue of Learning Hadith and Its Companions' is replete with sayings of our beloved Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) which inspire and motivate a Muslim to study and memorize Hadith, as a means to becoming a 'companion' of Hadith.

The four (4) 'Tips on Memorizing Hadith from the Salaf' are essential for any Muslim who hopes to travel the path of seeking knowledge, in general, and especially a 'companion' of Hadith.

Every one of the '10 Personal Advices on Memorizing Hadith' - in my personal view - is an extremely valuable piece of advice and a practical step along the road to success in seeking knowledge, especially the first and the last of these 10 advices.

Finally, the poem of the late noble scholar, Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali b. Adam al-Itaybi (رحمه الله) entitled: 'Directing the Student of Hadith on How to Have its Gates Opened' is a treasure beyond measure.

It is expected that if we act upon these advices, exert ourselves in the memorization process, ask Allāh's Help, and do all of this sincerely for the pleasure of Allāh, we have a right to hope to achieve a great success.

Indeed, success is from Allāh, Alone, and we hope that He will grant success to this work and make it a benefit to all those who read it and reward all those who have had anything to do with its realization.

Indeed! He, the Mighty and the Majestic, is Generous and Able to do all things!

Written by,

Abu Muhammad Abdur-Ra'uf Shakir

23rd Dhul-Qadah, 1442 AH / 3rd July 2021 CE

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله وحده، والسلام على من لا نبي بعده، أما بعد:

It goes without saying, that memorization is a part of seeking knowledge. Understanding and comprehension alone is not enough to master any field of knowledge. It has to be coupled with memorization of its axioms, formulae, laws, principles, etc. This is all the more true for the knowledge of Islam, as it is based on divine texts, which act as its formulae and laws, and the words of which cannot be tempered with.

There are many articles and treatises out there on how to seek knowledge, but rarely will you find anything on this important aspect of seeking knowledge: memorization – the whys, the whens, and the hows of it.

Before you is a beneficial treatise written by our dear brother, Abu Awzaa'ee Abdus-Salaam al-Makki, on this very topic, with the focus on the memorization of Hadith.

May Allah bless him for compiling it, and may Allah make it a source of benefit for seekers of Islamic knowledge the world over. Amen

Written by,

Nabeel Nisar Sheikh,

Makkah, 3rd Dhil Hijjah, 1442

Introduction

I seek assistance in every name of Allah, the Possessor of limitless mercy, the Bestower of mercy. All praise is due to Allah. We praise him, we seek His help, we seek His forgiveness, and we seek refuge in Allah from the evil within ourselves and our evil deeds. Whoever Allah guides, there is none to misguide him. Whoever Allah leads astray, there is none to guide him. I testify there is nothing worthy of worship but Allah alone, without any partners, and that Muhammad ﷺ is His servant and His messenger. Allah Almighty said,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

“O you who have faith, fear Allah as it is His right to be feared and do not die unless you are Muslims” (3:102)

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

“Fear Allah, from whom you ask each other, and in your family ties, for Allah is ever watchful over you.” (4:1)

اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا

“Fear Allah and speak words as befitting. He will amend your deeds for you and forgive your sins. Whoever obeys Allah and His messenger has achieved a great triumph.” (33:70-71)

The truest word is the Book of Allah and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad. The vilest matters are those that are newly invented, for every newly invented matter is an innovation. Every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the Hellfire. To begin:

When I started my journey in acquiring Islamic knowledge, I always had a burning desire to learn Hadith and its sciences. During those early moments, I often searched for beneficial English resources on how to memorize Hadith but to no avail. Now that Allah has

permitted me to conduct a Hadith Program (T.me/K2K40Hadith) based on memorizing and understanding the following Hadith texts: 40 Hadith Nawawi, Umdatul Ahkām, Bulūgh al-Marām, and Riyādh as-Sālihīn — may Allah place His infinite blessings in this effort and accept from us all — I saw it as an opportune time to finally create a “How to Memorize Hadith” manual in English.

In this summarized manual I have:

1. Relayed narrations related to the virtue of learning Hadith and its Companions. I selected reports I believe every student of Hadith should memorize. The reader should know that all of the statements in this section have been authenticated by at least one reputable Hadith scholar from the past and/or the present.
2. Gathered and translated what the ancient Hadith Masters رحمهم الله have compiled related to memorizing Hadith. I intentionally omitted the biographies of these great scholars as the intent is to benefit from their words of wisdom and experiences. I believe too much information may distract the beginner student from the purpose of this compilation.
3. Included poetry and advices from my scholars and teachers غفر الله لهم.
4. Added my own personal experiences and advices related to this topic.
5. Ended this manual with Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali b. Ādam al-It̤yūbi's رحمهم الله short poem entitled: “Directing the Student of Hadith on How to Have its Gates Opened إرشاد وفقه الله وفقه الله” and translated by Shaykh Aboo Shaybah Riyād وفقه الله.

I pray the dear reader - may Allah have mercy on us all - will find this work as a sufficient provision and nourishment while on their journey in learning Hadith of our beloved Messenger ﷺ.

I would like to thank both Shaykh Abu Muhammad Abdur-Ra'uf Shakir and Shaykh Abu Ishāq Nabeel Nisar Sheikh as-Sindī الله خيرا ووفقهما الله for taking their valuable time to review this work and offering their indispensable suggestions. May Allah accept on their

behalf and grant them and their families the loftiest Abode in Paradise without reckoning nor punishment. Āmīn.

I ask Allah by all of His Beautiful Names and Perfect Attributes to make this effort sincere for His sake alone, to accept this on my behalf, and to bless everyone who reads, listens, and benefits from it. Āmīn, Yā Rabbāl ‘Ālamīn.

جزى الله خيرا من تأمل شرحتي ... وقابل ما فيها من السهو بالعفو

وأصلح ما أخطأت فيها بفضلہ ... وفطنته أستغفر الله من سهوي

“May Allah reward good to those who contemplate my explanation,

Countering any unintentional mistakes with (their) pardon,

And correcting my errors with their kindness and wisdom,

As I seek Allah’s forgiveness for my negligence.”

والله أعلم بالصواب، وإليه المرجع والمآب، وهو حسبنا ونعم الوكيل

إِنْ أُرِيدُ إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ

“I only intend reform to the best of my ability. My success comes only through Allah. In Him

I trust and to Him I turn.” (11:88)

Written by the poor servant in need of his Lord’s mercy, pardon, and forgiveness,

Abu Awzaa’ee Abdus-Salaam al-Amreeki al-Makki al-Hanbali وفقه الله.

Umm al-Qurā University, College of Sharī’ah, Makkah al-Mukarramah حرسها الله

13th of Dhul Qa’dah, 1442 corresponding to (6/23/21 C.E.)

The Virtue of Learning Hadith and Its Companions

Allah Almighty said:

أَتْتُونِي بِكِتَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِ هَذَا أَوْ أَثَرَةٍ مِّن عِلْمٍ

“...bring me a scripture ‘revealed’ before this ‘Quran’ or remnants of past knowledge...” (46:4)

Matar (al-Warrāq) said about, “or remnants of past knowledge” that it means,

إِسْنَادُ الْحَدِيثِ

“(It is) the chains of Hadith (narrations)”.¹

Yazīd b. Hārūn رحمه الله said, “I said to Hammād b. Zayd رحمه الله, ‘O Abā Ismā’īl, did Allah mention the Companions of Hadith in the Quran?’ He responded, ‘Of course, have you not heard His statement,

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنفِرُوا كَافَّةً فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِن كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ

“‘However,’ it is not necessary for the believers to go forth (to seek knowledge) all at once. Only a party from each group should march forth (to seek knowledge), so that they may enlighten their people (with the knowledge they have learned) when they return to them, so that they ‘too’ may beware ‘of evil’.”² (9:122)

(Hammād then commented:)

¹ “al-Madkhal”: (1) by al-Hākim and “al-Muhaddith al-Fāsil”: (96) by ar-Rāmahurmazi رحمه الله with a “Hasan” chain.

² Ibn al-Jawzi رحمه الله said the scholars of Tafsir differed over this verse’s interpretation. Is the statement, “Only a party from each group should march forth...” a command for a group of Muslims to march forth on an expedition? Or is it a command for a group of Muslims to travel and learn from the Prophet ﷺ then return to their people and teach them? (Refer to: Ibn al-Jawzi’s commentary on this verse in “Zād al-Masīr زاد المسير في علم التفسير”). Although both interpretations are acceptable, however I selected the second opinion to reflect in the translation as it is most suitable for this context. Allah knows best.

فَهَذَا فِي كُلِّ مَنْ رَحَلَ فِي طَلَبِ الْعِلْمِ وَالْفِقْهِ، وَيَرْجِعُ بِهِ إِلَى مَنْ وَرَاءَهُ، يُعَلِّمُهُمْ إِيَّاهُ

“This is relevant to every person who travels to seek knowledge and Fiqh (understanding), then returns with that knowledge teaching it to his people.”³

The Prophet ﷺ said,

بَلِّغُوا عَنِّي وَلَوْ آيَةً

“Convey from me, even a single verse.” (Bukhari)

The Prophet ﷺ said,

فَلْيُبَلِّغِ الشَّاهِدُ الْغَائِبَ، فَرُبَّ مُبَلِّغٍ أَوْعَى مِنْ سَامِعٍ

“So it is incumbent upon those who are present to convey it (this information) to those who are absent, because the informed one might comprehend (what I have said) better than those present.” (Bukhari)

Abu Hātim ar-Rāzi رحمه الله said,

نَشَرُ الْعِلْمَ حَيَاتُهُ، وَالْبَلَاغُ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ رَحْمَةٌ يَعْتَصِمُ بِهَا كُلُّ مُؤْمِنٍ

“Circulating knowledge is giving life to it, and conveying from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is a mercy which every believer holds dear to.”⁴

The Prophet ﷺ said,

نَضَرَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا سَمِعَ مِنَّا حَدِيثًا فَحَفِظَهُ حَتَّى يُبَلِّغَهُ فَرُبَّ حَامِلٍ فِقْهِهِ إِلَى مَنْ هُوَ أَفْقَهُ مِنْهُ وَرُبَّ حَامِلٍ فِقْهِهِ لَيْسَ بِفِقْهِهِ

³ رحمه الله al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (10): “الرحلة في طلب الحديث ar-Rihlah Fi Talab al-Hadith”

⁴ رحمه الله al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (18): “شرف أصحاب الحديث Sharaf Ashāb al-Hadith”

“May Allah brighten the face⁵ of a person who hears a tradition from us and he memorizes it until he can convey it to others. Perhaps he will convey it to one who understands better than him, and perhaps one who conveys knowledge does not fully understand it himself.” (Abu Dawud)

The Prophet ﷺ said,

سَيَأْتِيَكُمْ أَقْوَامٌ يَطْلُبُونَ الْعِلْمَ فَإِذَا رَأَيْتُمُوهُمْ فَقُولُوا لَهُمْ مَرْحَبًا مَرْحَبًا بِوَصِيَّةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَأَقْنُوهُمْ. قُلْتُ لِلْحَكَمِ مَا أَقْنُوهُمْ قَالَ عَلَّمُوهُمْ.

“People will come to you seeking knowledge. When you see them say to them, ‘Welcome, welcome,’ in obedience to the injunctions of the Messenger of Allah and instruct them in knowledge.” (One of the narrators said) “I said to Al-Hakam: ‘What is *أَقْنُوهُمْ*?’ He said: ‘Instruct them.’” (Ibn Mājah)⁶

The Prophet ﷺ said,

تَفْتَرِقُ الْأُمَّةُ عَلَى نِيفٍ وَسَبْعِينَ فِرْقَةً، كُلُّهَا فِي النَّارِ إِلَّا فِرْقَةً

“The Ummah will split into seventy-odd sects; all of whom are in the Fire except one.”

Imam Ahmad رحمه الله said,

إِنْ لَمْ يَكُونُوا أَصْحَابَ الْحَدِيثِ، فَلَا أَدْرِي مَنْ هُمْ

⁵ There are two possible meanings of this phrase نُضِرَ اللَّهُ. ar-Rāmahurmazī رحمه الله stated in “al-Muhaddith al-Fāsil”: (9) that it could take the meaning of:

1. May Allah beautify and adornه وزينه الله, or
2. May Allah lead him to Paradise’s radianceأوصله الله إلى نضرة الجنة.

There is no contradiction between the two interpretations and both meanings are applicable.

⁶ Scholars differed over the authenticity of this Hadith and its various routes. Imam Ahmad رحمه الله did not consider this Hadith authentic due to a hidden defect in one of the chains. Refer to: ١٤٠: رجال ومعرفة الرجال. While al-Hākim (المستدرک: ٢٩٨) judged one route of the Hadith with the following wording as authentic:

مرحبا بوصية رسول الله ﷺ كان رسول الله ﷺ يوصينا بكم

Both adh-Dhahabi (تلخيص الذهبی) and al-Albānī (سلسلة الأحاديث الصحيحة: ٢٨٠) came to the same conclusion. May Allah have mercy on them all and certainly Allah knows best.

“If they are not the Companions of Hadith, then I do not know who.”⁷

al-Qādhī ‘Iyādh رحمه الله said, “Ahmad intended by his statement, ‘the Companions of Hadith’ (that they are) Ahl-Sunnah wal-Jamā’ah and those who have the belief of Ahl-Hadith’s methodology.”⁸

The Prophet ﷺ said,

لَا تَزَالُ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْ أُمَّتِي عَلَى الْحَقِّ

“There will always remain a group of my nation who will remain upon the truth.”

Abu Hātim رحمه الله said, “I heard Ahmad b. Sinān رحمه الله say (after mentioning this Hadith):

هُمْ أَهْلُ الْعِلْمِ وَأَصْحَابُ الْأَثَارِ

“They are the People of Knowledge and the Possessors of Narrations.”⁹

The Prophet ﷺ said,

لَا تَزَالُ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْ أُمَّتِي مَنْصُورِينَ لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ مَنْ خَذَلَهُمْ حَتَّى تَقُومَ السَّاعَةُ

“A group among my nation will continue to be supported, unharmed by those who fail them until the establishment of the Hour.” (Tirmidhi, Ahmad)¹⁰

Muhammad b. Ismā’īl al-Bukhārī رحمه الله said, “Āli b. al-Madīnī رحمه الله said, ‘They are the Companions of Hadith’.”

The Prophet ﷺ said,

⁷ al-Hāfidh ibn Hajr رحمه الله said in “Fath al-Bārī: (13/293): “The route is authentic.”

⁸ “Ikmal al-Mu’lim المعلم”: (6/305).

⁹ Collected by al-Asbahānī رحمه الله with an authentic chain (المحجة: ٢٤٦/٨).

¹⁰ Tirmidhi رحمه الله graded this Hadith (2192) as: “Hasan Sahih” and al-Albānī رحمه الله graded it “Sahih” (سلسلة الأحاديث الصحيحة: ٤٠٣).

يَحْمِلُ هَذَا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ كُلِّ خَلْفٍ عُدُولُهُ يَنْفُونَ عَنْهُ تَحْرِيفَ الْغَالِينَ وَانْتِحَالَ الْمُبْطِلِينَ
وَتَأْوِيلَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

“This knowledge will be carried by the trustworthy ones of every generation. They will expel from it the alterations made by those going beyond bounds, the false claims of the liars and the false interpretations of the ignorant.”¹¹

The Prophet ﷺ said,

أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِي يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ عَلَيَّ صَلَاةً

“The closest of people to me on the Day of Resurrection are those who sent the most blessings upon me.” (Tirmidhi)¹²

al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī رحمه الله said, “Abu Nu’aym رحمه الله said to us, ‘This noble merit is reserved for the narrators and transmitters of narrations, because there is no group of people among the scholars who are known to send Salah to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ more than them.’”¹³

The Prophet ﷺ said,

تَسْمَعُونَ وَيَسْمَعُ مِنْكُمْ، وَيَسْمَعُ مِمَّنْ يَسْمَعُ مِنْكُمْ

“You will hear (hadith from me) and it will be heard from you, and then it will be heard from those who heard from you.” (Ahmad, Abu Dawud)¹⁴

¹¹ Authenticated by Imam Ahmad in “Tārīkh Dimashq”: (7/39) by ibn ‘Asākir and al-Albānī in “al-Miskhāh”: (248) رحمه الله.

¹² Tirmidhi رحمه الله said the Hadith is “Hasan” in his “al-Jāmi”: (484). al-Albānī رحمه الله originally graded this Hadith to be weak, but after researched, he changed his grading to “Hasan” due to other narrations. Refer to: “Sahih at-Targhib الترغيب”: (1668) and “Sahih al-Mawārid الموارد”: (2327).

¹³ “Sharaf Ashāb al-Hadith”: (59).

¹⁴ Authenticated by al-Hākim (328) and affirmed by adh-Dhahabi (تلخيص الذهبي). Ibn Hajr said it has an authentic chain (اللسان: ١٩٠/١). Graded “Hasan” by al-Albānī (١٧٨٤ سلسلة الأحاديث الصحيحة).

Tips on Memorizing Hadith from the Salaf

al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī رحمه الله wrote in his book, “al-Jāmi li-Ahkām ar-Rāwī wa Ādāb as-Sāmi’ الجامع لأحكام الراوي وآداب السامع”: (1771-1783),

1. It is essential for the intention of the student in memorizing (knowledge) to be: (A.) desiring Allah’s Face the Almighty, and (B.) offering Nasīhah (pure sincere advice) towards the Muslims when presenting and clarifying the (Sunnah).

Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنهما said:

إِنَّمَا يَحْفَظُ الرَّجُلُ عَلَى قَدَرِ نِيَّتِهِ

“Certainly a person will only memorize based on the extent of his intentions.”

‘Ali b. al-Madīnī رحمه الله said: As I bade farewell to Sufyān رحمه الله, he said:

أَمَّا إِنَّكَ سَتُبْتَلَى بِهَذَا الْأَمْرِ، وَإِنَّ النَّاسَ سَيَحْتَاجُونَ إِلَيْكَ، فَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ، وَلْتَحَسُنْ نِيَّتَكَ فِيهِ

“You will be unequivocally tested in this affair (of knowledge), and the people will be in definite need of you, so observe Taqwa of Allah and correct your intentions.”

Ibrahim b. Yahya b. Sa’īd رحمه الله narrated that after the death of Abu Āsim an-Nabīl رحمه الله, he saw (Abu Āsim) in his dream and asked, “What did Allah do with you”?

(Abu Āsim) responded, “(Allah) forgave me.” He then asked, “How are my narrations with you all?” I responded, “Whenever we say ‘Abu Āsim (narrated to us...)’ there is no one who rejects it (alleging it as a weak chain).”

(Abu Āsim) remained quite. He then came to me and said,

إِنَّمَا يُعْطَى النَّاسُ عَلَى قَدَرِ نِيَّاتِهِمْ

“People are given (amounts of knowledge) based off of their intentions.”

2. It is paramount for the student to steer clear of committing sins and falling into prohibited affairs¹⁵.

Yahya b. Yahya رحمه الله said: “A man asked (Imam) Mālik b. Anas رحمه الله: ‘O Abā Abdillāh, is there anything that is suitable for memorization?’ (Imam Mālik) responded,

إِنْ كَانَ يَصْلَحُ لَهُ شَيْءٌ، فَتَرَكَ الْمَعَاصِي

“If there was anything, then it would be abandoning sins.”

Bishr b. al-Hārith رحمه الله said,

إِنْ أَرَدْتَ أَنْ تُلْقِنَ الْعِلْمَ، فَلَا تَعْصِ

“If you desire to teach knowledge, then do not disobey (Allah).”

‘Alī b. Khashram رحمه الله said, “I asked Wakī’ رحمه الله: ‘O Abā Sufyān, do you know anything (to assist with) memorizing?’ He said,

تَرَكَ الْمَعَاصِي عَوْنٌ عَلَى الْحِفْظِ

“Abandoning sins assists in memorization.”

Abu Tālib Yahya b. ‘Alī رحمه الله recited,

شَكَوْتُ إِلَى وَكِيعٍ سُوءَ حِفْظِي ... فَأَوْمَأَ بِي إِلَى تَرْكِ الْمَعَاصِي

وَقَالَ بَأَنَّ حِفْظَ الشَّيْءِ فَضْلٌ ... وَفَضْلُ اللَّهِ لَا يُدْرِكُهُ عَاصِي

“I complained to Wakee’ about my poor memory, So he directed me to abandon sins.

He said: ‘Memorizing is a bounty (of Allah), and Allah’s bounty is not acquired by the disobedient.”

¹⁵ Allah Almighty said in His Book,

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَيَعْلَمَكُمُ اللَّهُ

“So observe Taqwa of Allāh; and Allāh teaches you.” (2:282)

Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه said,

إِنِّي لَأَحْسَبُ الرَّجُلَ يَنْسَى الْعِلْمَ بِالْخَطِيئَةِ يَعْمَلُهَا

“I certainly believe that a person forgets knowledge as a result of a sin he commits.”

3. (The student must) occupy himself with adherence to the commandments of the Hadith and its implementation.

Wakee' رحمه الله said: “Ismā'il b. Ibrāhīm رحمه الله used to say,

كُنَّا نَسْتَعِينُ عَلَى حِفْظِ الْحَدِيثِ بِالْعَمَلِ بِهِ

“We would seek assistance in memorizing Hadith through its implementation.”

al-Hasan b. Sālih رحمه الله said,

كُنَّا نَسْتَعِينُ عَلَى طَلَبِهِ بِالصَّوْمِ

“We would seek assistance in seeking Hadith through fasting.”

4. (The student must) purify his earnings, set right his nutrition, and lessen his (intake of) food.

Abu Abdur-Rahmān al-'Umary رحمه الله said,

إِذَا كَانَ الْعَبْدُ وَرِعًا تَرَكَ مَا يَرِيبُهُ إِلَى مَا لَا يَرِيبُهُ

“When the servant is devout/Allah-fearing, he will abandon what causes him to doubt for that which does not make him doubt.”

A man said to 'Isa b. Maryam عليه السلام. “O Ruh of Allah, advise me.” He said,

انْظُرْ خُبْزَكَ مِنْ أَيْنَ هُوَ؟

“Look at your bread; where is it from (meaning, did it come through permissible means or not)?”

Al-'Asma' رحمه الله said: "A bedouin admonished his brother saying,

يَا أَخِي، خُذْ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا مَا يَكْفِيكَ، وَدَعْ مِنْهَا مَا يُطْغِيكَ، وَإِيَّاكَ وَالْبَطْنَةَ؛ فَإِنَّهَا تُعَمِّي عَنِ الْفُطْنَةِ

'O my brother, take from the worldly life that which will suffice you, desert that which will oppress you, and beware gluttony/being satiated for certainly it blinds the intellect.'"

Recommended Foods to Consume That Assists in Memorization **إن شاء الله**

The general principle related to consuming food and drink is found in the Quran and the Sunnah; Allah said:

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا ۚ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

“Eat and drink, but do not waste/be excessive. Surely He does not like the wasteful/
those who commit excess.” (7:31)

The Prophet ﷺ stated:

**مَا مَلَأَ آدَمِيٌّ وِعَاءَ شَرًّا مِنْ بَطْنٍ بِحَسْبِ ابْنِ آدَمَ أَكَلَاتُ يُقْمِنُ صَلْبَهُ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَا مَحَالَةَ
فَثَلَّثُ لِبَطْنِهِ وَثَلَّثُ لَشِرَابِهِ وَثَلَّثُ لِنَفْسِهِ**

“The son of Adam cannot fill a vessel worse than his stomach, as it is enough for him
to take a few bites to straighten his back. If he must, then he may fill a third of it with
food, a third of it with drink, and a third of it (empty for) his breath.” (Tirmidhi)

The Salaf, based off of their experiences, noticed there were certain types of foods that assisted them in memorizing Hadith which they then advised their students to consume. al-Khatib al-Baghdadi رحمه الله mentioned a few in his book: “al-Jāmi’ li-Akhlāq ar-Rāwi الجامع لأخلاق الراوي (1786-1797):

az-Zuhri رحمه الله said: “Consume honey for it is good for memorizing.”

He also said: “Whoever is delighted with memorizing Hadith, then let him eat raisins.”

Ālī رضي الله عنه said: “Consume sweet pomegranates as it certainly cleanses the stomach.”

Abdullah b. Ja’far رحمه الله said: “A man came to Ālī b. Abi Tālib رضي الله عنه and complained to him about forgetfulness, so he said: ‘Consume cow’s milk as it enlivens the heart and removes poor memory.’”

There may be other foods - that have been proved through trial and error - which are confirmed to assist in improving the memory¹⁶. Ultimately, we should realize that Allah is the only reason for our success and that these means will not work unless He Wills. Our complete reliance should be in Allah alone.

¹⁶ For example: green, leafy vegetables, fatty fish due to their omega-3 fatty acids, berries, tea and coffee, and walnuts, etc., and Allah knows best.

Studying at Night and Reciting Audibly

al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī رحمه الله related the following narrations¹⁷:

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه said,

جَزَأْتُ اللَّيْلَ ثَلَاثَةَ أَجْزَاءٍ: ثُلُثًا أُصَلِّي، وَثُلُثًا أُنَامُ، وَثُلُثًا أَذْكَرُ فِيهِ حَدِيثَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ

“I portion my nights into three: I pray for a third, I sleep for a third, and a third for when I review the Hadith of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ.”

al-Mundhir said to an-Nu’mān (his son) رحمه الله: “O my dear child, I love for you to look at the etiquette of night, as the heart during the day is busied, but at night it is tranquil. Every time you fill your vessel (i.e., fill your heart) with knowledge at night, it remains therein.”

The Salaf favored studying at night due to the heart being free of thoughts; an unoccupied heart hastens memorization.

Ibrāhīm b. Abdur-Rahmān رحمه الله said, “It was said to Hammād b. Zayd رحمه الله: ‘What is the greatest assistance in memorizing?’ He replied: قَلَّةُ الْغَمِّ ‘Less stress’.”

Less stress cannot occur except through isolation and emptying the heart; the night is the best time for that.

Ahmad b. Wāḍih رحمه الله said, “I heard Abu Mas’ūd Ahmad b. al-Farrāt رحمه الله say: ‘We still hear our scholars mentioning tips about memorizing. They all agreed that there is nothing more impactful than constant gazing (at the text) and memorizing mostly during the night over the day.’”

And he said: “I heard Ismā’īl b. Abi Ways رحمه الله saying, ‘If you intend to memorize something then: sleep, wake up in the early morning (before Fajr), light a lamp, look at the text (i.e. commence your memorization), and you won’t forget - if Allah wills.’”

¹⁷ “al-Jāmi’ li-Akhlāq ar-Rāwī”: (1798-1804).

It is desirable for one who reads his book (with the intent of memorizing) to read audibly to the extent that he hears himself.

az-Zubayr al-Bakkār رحمه الله said, “My father entered while I was reading from my book silently to myself, and he said to me: ‘You will have of this narration (depending on) what your sight conveys to your heart. So if you want (to memorize) the narration, then do so by looking at it while reciting audibly. That will cause your sight and hearing to direct (the narration) into your heart.’”

A beneficial tip I would like to add: before going to sleep, be sure to read the Hadith you would like to memorize vociferously multiple times without mistakes. The intent here is to simply read fluently. Once you wake up in the morning, the text will become easy to memorize إن شاء الله.

Repeating From The Heart

al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī رحمه الله related¹⁸:

‘Alqamah رحمه الله stated,

أَطِيلُوا ذِكْرَ الْحَدِيثِ

“Extend your mentioning of Hadith.”

Sufyān رحمه الله said,

اجْعَلُوا الْحَدِيثَ حَدِيثَ أَنْفُسِكُمْ، وَفَكَرَ قُلُوبِكُمْ تَحْفَظُوهُ

“Make the Hadith (of the Prophet ﷺ) the discussion in your souls and the thoughts of your hearts which you have memorized.”

Muhammad b. al-Qāsim b. Khallād رحمه الله said, “It was said: ‘Safeguarding what is already in a person’s chest is more essential than (memorizing something new) in one’s book. A letter you have memorized in your heart is more beneficial than a thousand Hadith in your book.’”

Ahmad b. Yahya رحمه الله said, “It was said to al-Asma’ī رحمه الله: ‘How do did you memorize when your companions have forgot?’ He replied: ‘I studied (reviewed) whilst they abandoned (that).’”

¹⁸ “al-Jāmi’ li-Akhlāq ar-Rāwī”: (1805-1809).

Revising Hadith With The General Folk

al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī رحمه الله related¹⁹:

Ishāq b. Rāhawayh رحمه الله said, “I asked Wakī’ رحمه الله about a person who seeks knowledge and from his intentions is to revise and convey it to others, or something along the likes, is there anything wrong with that? So he said, ‘No my nephew, Sufyān رحمه الله narrated to us that Habīb b. Abī Thābit رحمه الله said,

طَلَبْنَا هَذَا الْعِلْمَ وَمَا لَنَا فِيهِ نِيَّةٌ، ثُمَّ جَاءَتْنَا النِّيَّةُ وَالْعَمَلُ بَعْدُ

“We started to seek this knowledge while not having any intentions, then the intentions and actions came after.”

Abu Sa’īd رحمه الله said,

تَحَدَّثُوا؛ فَإِنَّ الْحَدِيثَ يَهَيِّجُ الْحَدِيثَ

“Relay Hadith for certainly doing so incites more Hadith (to narrate, memorize and recall).”

‘Alqamah رحمه الله said,

تَذَاكُرُوا الْحَدِيثَ؛ فَإِنَّ حَيَاتَهُ ذِكْرُهُ

“Review Hadith with each other for certainly giving life to it is through mentioning it.”

Ibrahīm an-Nakha’ī رحمه الله said,

مَنْ سَرَّهُ أَنْ يَحْفَظَ الْحَدِيثَ، فَلْيُحَدِّثْ بِهِ وَلَوْ أَنَّ يُحَدِّثَ بِهِ مَنْ لَا يَشْتَهِيهِ، فَإِنَّهُ إِذَا فَعَلَ ذَلِكَ كَانَ
كَالْكِتَابِ فِي صَدْرِهِ

¹⁹ “al-Jāmi’ li-Akhlāq ar-Rāwī”: (1811-1816).

“Whoever is delighted with memorizing Hadith, then let him narrate it, even if he must do so to those who have no desire for it. If he carries that out, the Hadith will become like a book in his chest.²⁰”

Ibrahīm an-Nakha'ī رحمه الله said,

اذْكُرِ الْحَدِيثَ عِنْدَ مَنْ يَشْتَهِيهِ وَعِنْدَ مَنْ لَا يَشْتَهِيهِ؛ حَتَّى تَدْرُسَهُ، ثُمَّ تَحْفَظْهُ كَأَنَّهُ أَمَامَكَ

“Mention Hadith to both those who desire (to hear it) and those who do not. (Do this) until you have repeated it often for memorization, then you will memorize it as if it is in front you.”

Ibn Shihāb رحمه الله said that he would hear knowledge from ‘Urwah رحمه الله and others. He would then goto a servant-girl of his who was sleeping and wake her up saying, “Listen (to this): ‘So and so narrated such and such... (he read chains of hadith)’”. She said, “What do I have to do with this Hadith?” He replied, “I certainly know you would not benefit from this, however, you’ve already heard it and I (simply) wanted to revise it.”

²⁰ Meaning, and Allah knows best, it will be firmly established in his memory and he will be able to recite it as if he is reading from a book.

Revising Hadith With Your Peers

al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī رحمه الله related²¹:

Muslim b. al-Batīn رحمه الله said, “I saw Abu Yahya al-‘Araj رحمه الله - who was knowledgeable of the Hadith of Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنهما - gather with Sa’id b. Jubayr رحمه الله in Kūfa’s masjid and they were reviewing Ibn Abbas’ Hadith together.”

Yazīd b. Abi Ziyād رحمه الله said, “Ibn Abī Laylā and Abdullah b. Shaddād met and reviewed Hadith together. I then heard one say to the other,

يَرْحَمُكَ اللَّهُ، فَرُبَّ حَدِيثٍ أَحْيَيْتُهُ فِي صَدْرِي كَانَ قَدْ مَاتَ

‘May Allah have mercy on you, for perhaps you have revived a Hadith in my chest that vanished.’”

Sa’id b. Abdil-‘Aziz رحمه الله would admonish al-Awzā’ī’s companions رحمه الله saying,

مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَجْتَمِعُونَ؟! مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ

“What is the matter with you all that you do not gather? What is the matter with you all that you do not review together?”

al-Khalīl b. Ahmad رحمه الله said,

ذَا كَرُّ بِعِلْمِكَ تَذَكُّرُ مَا عِنْدَكَ، وَتَسْتَفِيدُ مَا لَيْسَ عِنْدَكَ

“Review your knowledge and you will remember that which you possess, and you will also benefit from that which you did not know previously.”

Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali b. Ādam al-Iṭyūbi رحمه الله said in طريق فتح إلى طالب العلم (lines 14, 15):

وَحَافِظًا مُذَكِّرًا مَا نَقَلَا ... مَعَ رُفَقَائِهِ الْهُدَاةِ النَّبَلَا

²¹ “al-Jāmi’ li-Akhlāq ar-Rāwī”: (1823-1826).

فَإِنَّ ذَا يَحْطَى بِفَتْحِ الْبَابِ ... مِنْ رَبِّهِ الْكَاشِفِ لِلْجَبَابِ

“...And then memorizing what he wrote and revising it,

with his esteemed peers of sound guidance.

That is the person who will have the gates opened for him,

by his Lord, who removes all barriers.”

10 Personal Advices on Memorizing Hadith

These are ten advices and tips based on my experiences with memorizing. I've ensured to include points that were not previously mentioned. Although these suggestions are targeted to those with a desire to memorize Hadith, it can be applied to committing anything to memory **إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ**. I pray the reader will venture to implement the following and find it to be beneficial.

وَمَنْ لَمْ يُجَرِّبْ لَيْسَ يَعْرِفُ قَدْرَهُ ... فَجَرِّبْ تَجِدْ تَصْدِيقَ مَا قَدْ ذَكَرْنَاهُ

“And whoever hasn't experimented for themselves will not know its value,

Therefore attempt for yourself and you'll attest to what we have mentioned.”²²

1. The Quran.

Allah Almighty described His Book as being “Mubārak” (containing consistent blessings that increase and its “barakah” spills over onto other affairs),

وَهَذَا ذِكْرٌ مُبَارَكٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ

“And this ‘Quran’ is a blessed reminder which We have revealed.” (21:50)

Having a consistent daily connection with the Quran has a magnificent impact on how much barakah you will experience in your time and efforts when memorizing Hadith.

Ad-Diyā al-Maqdisi said, “al-‘Imād al-Maqdisi advised me:

أَكْثِرْ مِنْ قِرَاءَةِ الْقُرْآنِ وَلَا تَتْرُكْهُ، فَإِنَّهُ يَتَسَيَّرُ لَكَ الَّذِي تَطْلُبُهُ عَلَى قَدْرِ مَا تَقْرَأُ

“Be plentiful in your recital of the Quran and never abandon it; for it will certainly facilitate that which you are searching depending on how much you recite.”²³

Abbās b. Abdil-Dāyīm narrated the same statement from his scholar and added,

²² This couplet was mentioned by Imam as-San’ānī رحمه الله in his poem about Hajj entitled: “ذكري الحج وبركاته”.

²³ Dhayl Tabāqāt al-Hanābilah (3/205).

فَرَأَيْتُ ذَلِكَ وَجَرَّبْتُهُ كَثِيرًا، فَكُنْتُ إِذَا قَرَأْتُ كَثِيرًا تَيْسَّرَ لِي مِنْ سَمَاعِ الْحَدِيثِ وَكِتَابَتِهِ الْكَثِيرِ، وَإِذَا لَمْ أَقْرَأْ لَمْ يَتَيْسَّرْ لِي

“I saw that (to be true) and I experienced that many times. Whenever I read (from the Quran) profusely, listening and writing down many Hadith became easy for me. And (I noticed) whenever I did not read the Quran (often), listening and writing down many Hadith was not facilitated for me.”²⁴

This is one of the greatest tips.

2. Less is more.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

خُذُوا مِنَ الْعَمَلِ مَا تُطِيقُونَ

“Select actions you are capable of doing.” (Muslim)

And he ﷺ said in another narration,

أَحَبُّ الْأَعْمَالِ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى أَدْوَمُهَا وَإِنْ قَلَّ

“The acts most beloved actions to Allah are those which are done continuously, even if they are few.” (Bukhari and Muslim)

Ma'mar رحمه الله said,

مَنْ طَلَبَ الْحَدِيثَ جُمْلَةً ذَهَبَ مِنْهُ جُمْلَةً، وَإِنَّمَا يُدْرِكُ الْعِلْمُ حَدِيثٌ وَحَدِيثَانِ

“Whoever seeks Hadith all in one go will have it leave him in one go. Knowledge is only obtained by taking one or two Hadith at a time.”²⁵

al-Khatīb al-Baghadādī رحمه الله wrote,

²⁴ “Dhayl Tabāqāt al-Hanābilah”: (2/98).

²⁵ “al-Jāmi’ li-Akhlāq ar-Rāwī”: (438).

“It is necessary for the learner to have compassion (for himself) by not overburdening his soul more than its capacity. He should limit himself to learning (the amount that) will allow him to retain its memorization and will become firmly rooted in his heart.”²⁶

Shaykh Muhammad b. ‘Alī b. Ādam al-Iṭyūbi رحمه الله would advise memorizing only **three Hadith** per day.

Shaykh Āmir Bahjat حفظه الله says:

قَلِّلْ وَكَرِّرْ

“Take less and repeat more.”

Everyone’s capabilities differ from the other, so know what is sufficient for yourself and stick to it.

3. Memorize with understanding.

I’ve found one of the best ways to help in memorizing Hadith is to understand its meaning. It doesn’t hurt to take 5 to 10 minutes out to read the explanation of what you’re memorizing for that day. Here are some guidelines when selecting an explanation:

- A. Search for the best explanation recommended by scholars and specialists.
- B. Attempt to find the shortest explanation possible from a reputable scholar. If the explanation is lengthy, it will distract you from memorizing.
- C. If there are any obscure wordings, known as “Gharīb al-Hadith”, then the explanation should focus on clarifying its definition while also providing a general concise understanding of the Hadith as a whole. If not too burdensome for the memorizer, the explanation should also include a “Benefits Derived From The Hadith” section.

After you’ve completed your memorization of the Hadith text and developed a basic understanding from this initial explanation, that’s when you can move on to more extensive works.

²⁶ “al-Faqīh wal-Mutafaqqih والمتفقه والفقيه”: (879).

Many of my teachers suggest that before you attend a class or open an explanation, try to test your understanding of the Hadith first. After that, compare your deductions with a scholar's explanation. I've found this tip to be beneficial in the retention of the Hadith.

4. Repeat and review often.

Allah described only the Quran, the foundation for all knowledge, as being “easy to remember”,

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ

“And We have certainly made the Quran easy to remember. So is there anyone who will be mindful?” (54:22)

However, the Prophet ﷺ said,

تَعَاهَدُوا الْقُرْآنَ، فَوَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَهُوَ أَشَدُّ تَفَصِّيًا مِنَ الْإِبِلِ فِي عُقْلِهَا

“Be committed to the Quran. By the One in whose hand is my soul, it can leave you faster than a camel from its reins.” (Bukhari and Muslim)

If the Quran is easy to remember - yet can still leave faster than “a camel from its reins” - then what about memorizing and preserving other types of knowledge? This shows the importance of constant repetition and revision.

Shaykh Muhammad b. ‘Alī b. Ādam al-It̤yūbi رحمه الله would say:

أَمَّا تَرَى الْحَبْلَ بِتَكَرَّارِهِ قَدْ ... أَثَّرَ فِي الصَّخْرِ الْأَصَمِّ فَاِنْخَضَ

“Haven't you seen the rope, with its repeated tugging,

leaving marks on a solid boulder & eventually break?”

Meaning, constantly repeat and you will obtain that which you seek.

Shaykh Āmir Bahjat حفظه الله says:

مَا تُكْرَرُ تُقَرَّرُ

“What is repeated often will be firmly established.”

Our scholars relay to us that some would repeat their portion 100 times from memory before moving onto memorizing something new.²⁷

There is a famous saying that goes,

حَفِظْ سَطْرَيْنِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ كِتَابَةِ وَقْرَيْنِ، وَخَيْرٌ مِنْهُمَا مُذَاكَرَةُ اثْنَيْنِ

“Memorizing two lines is better than writing two tomes,
and better than that is revision between two.”

There are two notable lines of poetry recited by the people of knowledge:

مَنْ حَازَ الْعِلْمَ وَذَاكَرَهُ ... صَلَحَتْ دُنْيَاهُ وَآخِرَتُهُ

فَأَدِمَ لِلْعِلْمِ مُذَاكَرَةً ... فَحَيَاةُ الْعِلْمِ مُذَاكَرَتُهُ

“Whoever acquires knowledge and reviews,
both his worldly affairs and Hereafter are rectified.

So constantly review knowledge,
as giving life to knowledge is through revision.”²⁸

Revision also includes constant gazing at the Hadith. Imam Bukhari رحمه الله was asked if there was a medicine for memorizing, and he replied,

²⁷ Shaykh Nabeel as-Sindī رحمه الله added that dividing your revision of the same text into two+ parts in one day is more beneficial than reciting it all in one sitting. For example, instead of repeating 100 times in one sitting, you should recite 50 times in the morning and 50 times in the evening. May Allah reward the Shaykh with good for sharing this tip.

²⁸ at-Tha’alaby attributes these lines to al-Hāfidh Abul Hajjāj al-Mizzī رحمه الله. Refer to: منتخب الأسانيد في وصل رحمه الله. Refer to: المصنفات والأجزاء والمسانيد in its manuscript form found in al-Masjid al-Haram’s library, page no. 29.

لَا أَعْلَمُ شَيْئًا أَنْفَعُ لِلْحِفْظِ مِنْ نَهْمَةِ الرَّجُلِ، وَمُدَاوَمَةِ النَّظَرِ

“I do not know anything more beneficial for memorizing than an intense desire (memorize) and constant looking (at the desired text).”²⁹

With Allah’s assistance, constant revision and looking at the text will help to cement that knowledge into your memory. Also be sure to review from the same copy you memorized from and never abandon it.

5. Memorize with a present heart, attentive ear and in areas without distractions.

Allah Almighty said,

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرَى لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ أَوْ أَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ

“Surely in this is a reminder for whoever has a ‘mindful’ heart and lends an attentive ear.” (50:37)

al-Hasan al-Basrī رحمه الله said about this verse,

اسْتَمِعْ وَقَلْبُكَ شَاهِدٌ؛ فَإِنَّ قَلْبَهُ إِذَا حَضَرَ عَقْلٌ مَا يُقَالُ، وَإِذَا غَابَ الْقَلْبُ لَمْ يَعْقِلْ مَا يُقَالُ لَهُ

“Listen while your heart is present. Whenever the heart is present it will certainly understand what is being said. (However,) if the heart is absent, then it will not understand what is being said.”³⁰

al-Awzā’ī رحمه الله said,

حُسْنُ الاسْتِمَاعِ قُوَّةٌ لِلْمُحَدِّثِ

“Excellent attentive listening is the scholar of Hadith’s strength.”³¹

To assist yourself in having a present heart, here are few things you should capitalize on:

²⁹ “Hudā as-Sāri”: (488).

³⁰ “al-Jāmi’ li-Akhlāq ar-Rāwī”: (432).

³¹ “al-Jāmi’ li-Akhlāq ar-Rāwī”: (320).

A. Memorize when you have just woken up and on an empty stomach; this is when your mind is the clearest.

There are selected times in the day which are considered to be optimal for memorization. These times are mentioned by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali b. Ādam al-It̤yūbi رحمه الله in poetry³²:

وَأَجُودُ الْأَوْقَاتِ لِلْحِفْظِ السَّحَرُ ... مُنْتَصَفُ النَّهَارِ بَعْدَهُ اسْتَقَرَّ

ثُمَّ الْغَدَاةُ ثُمَّ لَيْلٌ أَنْفَعُ ... مِنَ النَّهَارِ ثُمَّ جُوعٌ أَنْجَعُ

“And the best times for memorizing is: (1.) the early morning (before Fajr),

then (2.) midday after settling down³³, then (3.) early morning (after Fajr).

Night is more beneficial than the morning, and (being in a state of) hunger is most effective.”

Imam ash-Shāfiʿī رحمه الله said,

مَا شَبِعْتُ مِنْ سِتِّ عَشْرَةِ سَنَةٍ لِأَنَّ الشَّبَعَ يَثْقُلُ الْبَدَنَ، وَيَقْسِي الْقَلْبَ، وَيَزِيلُ الْفِطْنَةَ، وَيَجْلِبُ
النَّوْمَ، وَيُضْعِفُ صَاحِبَهُ عَنِ الْعِبَادَةِ

“I have not eaten to my full for 16 years because doing so: causes the body to become heavier and sluggish, hardens the heart, removes insight, brings about sleepiness, and weakens its companion from performing acts of devotion.”³⁴

B. Abandon noisy areas.

If you have the choice, avoid places where there are distractions and excessive bothersome noises (like car horns, sirens, etc.). I say “excessive bothersome noise” because for some, places where there is consistent background noise isn’t an issue e.g., Masjid Haram. Some people prefer to study with background noise and find comfort in that. To each their own.

³² Notice that these selected times coincide with when a person wakes up from a long sleep or a nap.

³³ Meaning, after the siesta (midday nap) that occurs after Dhuhr Salah.

³⁴ “Ādāb ash-Shāfiʿī wa Manāqibuhu ومناقبه الشافعي (78).

Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali b. Ādam al-Iṭyūbi رحمه الله said,

وَأَجُودُ الْأَمَاكِينِ الْغُرَفُ ثُمَّ ... مَا كَانَ أَبْعَدَ عَنِ الْمُلْهِي تَوَمَّ
وَأَجْتَنِبِ الْحِفْظَ لَدَى النَّبَاتِ ... نَهْرٍ طَرِيقٍ أَوْ لَدَى الْخُضْرَاتِ
إِذْ هَذِهِ الْأَشْيَاءُ تَكُونُ مَشْغَلَةً ... لِلْقَلْبِ عَنْ حُضُورِهِ وَمَعْطَلَةً

“The most preferable places (to memorize) are (secluded) rooms,

Then places that are furthest away from distractions.

Avoid memorizing near plants, rivers, or near vegetation,

Since these things will preoccupy the heart from being present and empty.”

When you’re memorizing, you’ll notice many new ideas and thoughts will pop into your head. You will recall an issue of knowledge or suddenly develop a burning desire to read X book. This is from Shaytān’s plots to distract and busy you with what is less beneficial. Be disciplined, seek refuge in Allah, and focus completely on the task at hand. After you’ve finished your allotted time for memorizing, then you can address those other thoughts.

Additional Helpful Tips:

- Remove all devices and books from your peripheral vision at the time of memorizing.
- Record yourself and have it playing in the background, or listen to someone’s recital, as you are completing your daily tasks.

6. Schedule your time and write down your goals.

Create a block schedule of what you will be studying and when. Post it somewhere in your room where you’ll see it daily.

Additionally, plan out: what you are memorizing, how much of it daily, and when you plan to finish. When you write this down, it’s an encouragement to hold yourself accountable. As you progress, you will become even more motivated to finish بإذن الله.

7. Time yourself.

As you are memorizing, put a timer on. I find that the pressure helps to focus better and complete the task in its allotted time. Having a deadline of when you will recite that portion to someone also helps.

8. Write it down.

In a weak narration collected by Tirmidhi (2666), it is narrated that Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه said, “There was a man from the Ansār who would sit with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and he would listen to the Hadith of the Prophet ﷺ. He was amazed by (these statements) but he could not remember them, so he complained about that to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

He said, ‘O Messenger of Allah! I listen to your Hadith and I am amazed but I can not remember them.’ The Messenger of Allah ﷺ (is reported to have) said,

اَسْتَعِنْ بِيَمِينِكَ

‘**Help yourself with your right hand**’ and he motioned with his hand as if writing.”

al-Mubārakfurī رحمه الله explained, “‘Help yourself with your right hand’ meaning: write down what you fear will be forgotten and it will help in your memorization.”³⁵

Abdur-Rahmān b. Harmalah رحمه الله said, “I used to have bad memory - a narrator added: ‘or I never used to memorize’ - so Sa’īd b. al-Musayyib رحمه الله permitted me to write down (hadith).”³⁶

After you’ve memorized, try to write the Hadith from memory multiple times. Be sure to have a notebook specifically for this purpose. Test yourself and see if you’re able to write the Hadith down 5 times in a row without any mistakes. Once you can do that fairly easily, increase in number.

³⁵ “Tuhfatul Ahwadhi تحفة الأحوذى”: (7/470).

³⁶ “Musannaf ibn Abi Shaybah”: (13/461).

9. Preserve your time.

These precious moments in your life will never return, so use your time wisely and be selective in how often you socialize with others. Knowledge is a vast ocean and you need to dedicate all of your time in learning, memorizing, and reviewing.

Remember Allah's statement,

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِيْ جَوْفِهِ

“Allah does not place two hearts in any person's chest.” (33:4)

And as the famous saying goes: “Knowledge is something that will not give you even a fraction of itself until you give it your all.”

Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali b. Ādam al-It̤yūbi رحمه الله said,

وَيَنْبَغِي أَنْ تَقْطَعَ الْعَلَائِقَا ... فَكُلُّ شَاغِلٍ تَرَاهُ فَارِقًا

“And it is imperative for the student to cut off all unnecessary contacts

As you'll see the one who is busied with many affairs separated from knowledge.”

Al-Humaydi رحمه الله is reported to have said:

فَأَقْلِلْ مِنْ لِقَاءِ النَّاسِ إِلَّا ... لِأَخْذِ الْعِلْمِ أَوْ إِصْلَاحِ حَالٍ

“Lessen meeting others except if it is concerning acquiring knowledge or rectifying a situation.”

Other than fulfilling your responsibilities, all of your time should be spent with knowledge. Take advantage of every second. For example, try to memorize one Hadith or piece of a Hadith while you are walking or driving to the masjid, then review it as you're heading back home. Try to memorize between the Adhān and Iqāmah. Try to memorize as you're heading to work or to school, or during your lunch break or between classes. When you utilize the little free time you do possess, you will notice that Allah will grant you more time. Whenever you meet someone, use it as an opportunity to review a Hadith or two.

10. Abundant supplication.

Know that you will never achieve your goals except with Allah's help and permission. Allah Almighty said,

وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“But you cannot will ‘to do so’, except by the Will of Allah, the Lord of all worlds.”

(81:29)

Recognize this and constantly beg Him for success. He said,

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ

“Your Lord has proclaimed, ‘Call upon Me, I will respond to you. Surely those who are too proud to worship Me will enter Hell, fully humiliated.’” (40:60)

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

“When My servants ask you ‘O Prophet’ about Me: I am truly near. I respond to one’s prayer when they call upon Me. So let them respond ‘with obedience’ to Me and believe in Me, perhaps they will be guided ‘to the Right Way’.” (2:186)

The Prophet ﷺ said:

لَا يَزَالُ يُسْتَجَابُ لِلْعَبْدِ مَا لَمْ يَدْعُ بِإِثْمٍ أَوْ قَطِيعَةٍ رَحِمَ مَا لَمْ يَسْتَعْجِلْ

“The servant will continue to have his supplications answered as long as he does not ask for sin or cutting family ties and he is not impatient.”

قِيلَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا الْإِسْتِعْجَالُ

They said, “O Messenger of Allah, what is its impatience?”

The Prophet ﷺ said,

قَالَ يَقُولُ قَدْ دَعَوْتُ وَقَدْ دَعَوْتُ فَلَمْ أَرَ يَسْتَجِيبُ لِي فَيَسْتَحْسِرُ عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ وَيَدَعُ الدُّعَاءَ

“He says: I have supplicated again and again, but I have not seen an answer. He becomes frustrated with that and gives up supplicating.” (Muslim)

Abu ad-Dardā رضي الله عنه said,

جِدُّوا بِالدُّعَاءِ، فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ يُكْثِرُ قَرْعَ الْبَابِ يُوشِكُ أَنْ يُفْتَحَ لَهُ

“Be assiduous (or diligent) in supplication, as he who frequently knocks on the door will soon have it opened.”³⁷

تِلْكَ عَشْرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ

³⁷ “Musannaf ibn Abi Shaybah”: (29175).

Recommended Supplications For Beneficial Knowledge

Allah Almighty commanded,

وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

“...and pray, ‘My Lord! Increase me in knowledge.’” (20:114)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

سَلُوا اللَّهَ عِلْمًا نَافِعًا وَتَعَوَّذُوا بِاللَّهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ لَا يَنْفَعُ

“Ask Allah for beneficial knowledge and seek refuge in Allah from knowledge without benefit.” (Ibn Majah³⁸)

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه said, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would supplicate,

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْأَرْبَعِ ، مِنْ عِلْمٍ لَا يَنْفَعُ ، وَمِنْ قَلْبٍ لَا يَخْشَعُ ، وَمِنْ نَفْسٍ لَا تَشْبَعُ ، وَمِنْ دُعَاءٍ لَا يُسْمَعُ

‘O Allah, I seek refuge in you against four things: from knowledge that does not benefit, from a heart without reverence, from an ego that is never satisfied, and from a supplication that is unanswered.’” (Abu Dawud)³⁹

Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه said, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْفَعْنِي بِمَا عَلَّمْتَنِي وَعَلِّمْنِي مَا يَنْفَعُنِي، وَارْزُقْنِي عِلْمًا تَنْفَعُنِي بِهِ

“O Allah, benefit me with what you have taught me, teach me what will benefit me, and increase my knowledge. All praise is due to Allah in every circumstance and I seek refuge in Allah from the condition of the people of the Hellfire.” (al-Hākim⁴⁰)

³⁸ Graded “Hasan” by al-Albānī رحمه الله in “Sahih ibn Majah”: (3114).

³⁹ Graded “Sahih” by al-Albānī رحمه الله in “Sahih Abi Dawud”: (1548).

⁴⁰ al-Hākim said, “‘Sahih’ based on (Imam) Muslim’s conditions (for accepting hadith)” (1/510), adh-Dhahabi agreed with this ruling in تلخيص الذهبية and al-Albānī agreed (refer to: سلسلة الأحاديث الصحيحة: [3151]). May Allah have mercy on them all and certainly Allah knows best.

Umm Salama رضي الله عنها said, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to say in supplication after completing the morning prayer,

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ عِلْمًا نَافِعًا، وَرِزْقًا طَيِّبًا، وَعَمَلًا مُتَقَبَّلًا

‘O Allah, I implore You for beneficial knowledge, good Halal provision, and accepted actions.’” (Ibn Majah⁴¹)

Whenever an affair became difficult for the Prophet ﷺ it is reported that he would say,

اللَّهُمَّ لَا سَهْلَ إِلَّا مَا جَعَلْتَهُ سَهْلًا، وَأَنْتَ تَجْعَلُ الْحَزْنَ إِذَا شِئْتَ سَهْلًا

“O Allah, there is no ease except in that which You have made easy, and You make the difficulty, if You wish, easy.”⁴² (Ibn Hibban)

⁴¹ Graded “Sahih” by al-Albānī رحمه الله in “Sahih ibn Majah”: (925).

⁴² Graded “Sahih” by ibn Hajr (١١٩/٤) (نتائج الأفكار في تخريج أحاديث الأذكار: ٩٧٠) and al-Albānī (السلسلة الصحيحة: ٩٧٠) may Allah have mercy on both of them.

Closing

I end this manual with a short poem composed by our late Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali b. Ādam al-Iṭyūbi رحمه الله entitled: “*Directing the Student of Hadith on How to Have its Gates Opened*” وفقه الله إرشاد طالب علم الحديث إلى طريق فتح بابه and translated by Aboo Shaybah رحمه الله.

The Shaykh رحمه الله said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ ... لَا بُدَّ فِي ذَا الْفَنِّ أَنْ تُتْقِنَهُ

[1] My dear one, you must know that \ when it comes to this discipline, it is imperative for you to gain proficiency in it

مُلَازِمًا مَجَالِسَ الْحَفْظَةِ ... مُحْتَرِمًا لَهُمْ بِلاَ أَنْفَةٍ

[2] by regularly attending the gatherings of those who have preserved its knowledge, \ remaining respectful towards them without any disdain;

بِالْحِفْظِ وَالْفَهْمِ وَلِلتَّقْوَى الزَّم ... مَعَ التَّوَاضُّعِ لِكُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ

[3] memorizing, understanding, always observing taqwaa, \ and maintaining humility towards every Muslim;

مُذَاكِرًا بِالْفَهْمِ مَعَ أَوْلِي الْهُدَى ... مُجَانِبًا ذَوِي الْخَبَالِ وَالرَّدَى

[4] revising with comprehension along with others of sound guidance, \ and avoiding individuals who are foolish and destructive.

إِنْ لَمْ تَجِدْ مُذَاكِرًا فَلْتَلْزَمْ ... مُطَالِعًا كَلَامَ أَهْلِ الْقَدَمِ

[5] If you find none to revise with, then you must continue \ poring over the statements of the well-versed scholars.

فَإِنَّ مَنْ رُزِقَ أَنْ يُطَالِعَا ... كَلَامَهُمْ بِالْحِفْظِ وَالْفَهْمِ مَعَا

[6] Indeed, anyone who has been blessed to peruse \ their words, with both memorization and comprehension,

فَإِنَّهُ يَنَالُ فَتْحَ الْبَابِ ... مِنْ رَبِّهِ الْكَاشِفِ لِلْحِجَابِ

[7] shall certainly have the gates opened for him \ by his Lord, who removes all barriers.

نَسْأَلُكَ اللَّهُمَّ أَنْ تَجْعَلَنَا ... مِنْ فَيْضِ هَذَا الْفَنِّ قَدْ نِلْنَا الْمُنَى

[8] O Allaah, we implore You alone to enable us \ to achieve our aspirations in this expansive field.⁴³

And Allah knows best.

⁴³ Source: <https://sites.google.com/view/qaryah/home/TwoPoems?authuser=0>.

حمدا على جمعه ... راجيا تمام نفعه

شكرا لمن جل وعلا ... على ما أولى فنعم المولى

ثم صلاته سرمدا ... كذا سلامه مسردا

على النبي الهادي ... محمد خير العباد

وعلى صحبه الأوتاد ... وآله أولى الرشاد

وتابعيهم بإحسان ... إلى يوم الجمع والميزان