

A Brief Biography of Imam al-Nasā'ī rahimahullah (d.303 AH)

His name was Aḥmad ibn Shu'ayb ibn 'Alī ibn Sufyān ibn Baḥr ibn Dīnār al-Khurāsānī. He was born in approximately 215 AH in the city of Nasā located in modern-day southern Turkmenistan near the capital of Turkmenistan Ashghabat. Al-Sam'ānī relates an interesting anecdote as to why it was called Nasā, he states that when the Arab Muslims attempted to conquer it, the men were out of the city at the time. Hence, women came out to fight, when the Arab realised this, they refrained from fighting and said:

وَضَعْنَا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فِي النَّسَاءِ يَعْنِي التَّأخِيرَ حَتَّى يَعُودَ وَقْتُ عَوْدِ رَجَالِهِمْ

“We are leaving this village for a delay, i.e. a later time until the time returns for their men to return”

Al-Sakhāwī records, pg.119 that Abū Bakar al-Hāshimī stated that Al-Nasā'ī would prefer wearing green garments and would say:

هَذَا عَوْضٌ مِنَ التَّنْظُرِ إِلَى الْخَضْرَاءِ مِنَ النَّبَاتِ فِيمَا يَرَادُ لِقُوَّةِ الْبَصَرِ

“This is a replacement for looking towards green plants which are intended for increasing the strength of the eyesight”

Al-Dhahabī also records in Siyar 14:128 from Al-Hāshimī that he said:

وكان يكثر الجماع مع صوم يوم وإفطار يوم وكان له أربع زوجات يقسمهن ولا يخلو مع ذلك من جارية واثنين يشتري الواحدة بالمنة ونحوها ويقسم لها كما يقسم للحرائر

“And he would regularly have conjugal relations along with fasting one day and not fasting the next day, and he had four wives that he would distribute amongst, and along with this, he would not be alone without one or two concubines, he would buy one of them for approximately 100 dirhams and he would distribute for her like he distributes for his free women”

He would eat wheat daily and regularly consumed chickens stating they helped him in conjugal relations. He had four wives as well as concubines and yet would fast every other day and would perform tahajjud ṣalāh.

Imām al-Nasā'ī travelled in search of knowledge at the young age of 15 travelling first to Baghlān and spending a year with Qutaybah ibn Sa'īd as recorded by Al-Dhahabī in Siyar 14:125. to many places in search of sacred knowledge, these places include: Khurāsān, Naysapūr, Baṣrah, Egypt, Kūfah, Baghdad. Hijāz, Palestine, Damascus, Aleppo, Iraq, Merv and Al-Jazīrah.

Scholarly Praise

Al-Dāruquṭnī narrates that Abū Bakr al-Ḥaddād said, ‘I took upon myself that which Al-Rabī has narrated from Al-Shāfi'ī that he would complete 60 recitations of the Qur'ān in Ramaḍān other than that which he would read in ṣalāh and 30 recitations of the Qur'ān outside the month of Ramaḍān. As for the month of Ramaḍān, I was unable to complete 60, rather, the maximum I was able to reach in it was 59 recitations and outside the month of Ramaḍān I read 30 complete recitations.’ Al-Dāruquṭnī then states:

وَكَانَ ابْنُ الْحَدَّادِ كَثِيرَ الْحَدِيثِ وَلَمْ يُحَدِّثْ عَنْ أَحَدٍ غَيْرِ النَّسَائِيِّ وَقَالَ رَضِيْتُ بِهِ حُجَّةً بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى

“Ibn al-Ḥaddād had many aḥādīth, and he did not narrate from anyone besides Al-Nasā'ī and he said, ‘I am happy with him as an evidence between myself and Allah”

Ibn al-Athīr records in the introduction to Jāmi' al-Uṣūl, 1:196 that Ma'mūn al-Miṣrī said:

خرجنا مع أبي عبد الرحمن إلى طرسوس سنة الفداء فاجتمع جماعة من مشايخ الإسلام واجتمع من الحفاظ عبد الله بن أحمد بن حنبل ومحمد بن إبراهيم مريغ وأبو الأذان وكلية وغيرهم فتشاوروا من ينتقي لهم على الشيوخ؟ فاجتمعوا على أبي عبد الرحمن النسائي وكتبوا كلهم بانتخابه

”“

Al-Dāruquṭnī states as recorded by Al-Dhahabī in Siyar 14:131:

أبو عبد الرحمن مقدّم على كل من يذكر بهذا العلم من أهل عصره

“Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān was ahead of everyone who is mentioned in this field from his time”

Ibn 'Asākir records in Tārīkh Dimishq, 71:174 that Al-Dāruquṭnī was asked:

إذا حدّث محمد بن إسحاق ابن خزيمه وأحمد بن شعيب النسائي حديثا من تقدّم منهما؟ قال النسائي لأنه أسند على أيّ لا أقدم على النسائي أحدا وإن كان ابن خزيمه إماما ثبتا
معدوم النظر

“When Muḥammad ibn Ishāq Ibn Khuzaymah and Aḥmad ibn Shu'ayb al-Nasā'ī narrate a ḥadīth, who should be given preference? He said, ‘Al-Nasā'ī because he narrates more authentic narration, this is whilst mentioning that I do not consider anyone ahead of Al-Nasā'ī, even though Ibn Khuzaymah is a reliable Imām who is unparalleled”

Al-Mizzī records in Tahdhīb al-Kamāl, 1:338 that Al-Dāruquṭnī said:

كان أبو عبد الرحمن النسائي أفقه مشايخ مصر في عصره وأعرفهم بالصحيح والسقيم من الآثار وأعلمهم بالرجال

“Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nasā'ī was the most juristic scholar from the scholars of Egypt in his time and the most knowledgeable from amongst them in regard to the authentic and weak aḥādīth and the most knowledgeable in regard to the narrators of ḥadīth”

Al-Dhahabī states in Siyar, 14:133:

ولم يكن أحد في رأس الثلاث منة أحفظ من النسائي هو أحذق بالحديث وعلمه ورجاله من مسلم ومن أي داود ومن أي عيسى وهو جار في مضمار البخاري وأبي زرعة

“And there was none at the end of 300 AH more”

Al-Tāj al-Subkī states, 3:16:

سألت شيخنا الذهبي أيهما أحفظ مسلم أو النسائي؟ فقال النسائي ثم ذكرت ذلك لوالدي فوافق عليه

“I asked our Shaykh Al-Dhabī, ‘Who is a greater ḥāfiẓ, Muslim or Al-Nasā’ī?’ So, he replied, ‘Al-Nasā’ī,’ then I mentioned this to my father (Taqī al-Subkī) and he agreed with it”

However, Al-Sakhāwī explains that this does not mean that Al-Nasā’ī’s book is more authentic than Imām Muslim’s book. He writes, pg.49:

فترجيح العالم وإن كان ظاهرا في ترجيح مصنفه فذاك في الغالب وإلا فرب مرجوح يكون مصنفه أرجح

”

His contemporary, Imām al-Ṭahḥāwī states as quoted by Tāj al-Subkī in Ṭabqāt al-Shāfi’iyyah, 3:15:

النسائي إمام من أئمة المسلمين

“Al-Nasā’ī is an Imām from the A’immah of the Muslims”

Muḥammad ibn al-Muẓaffar states as quoted by Tāj al-Subkī, 3:16:

سمعت مشايخنا بمصر يصفون اجتهاد النسائي في العبادة بالليل والنهار وأنه خرج إلى الفداء مع أمير مصر فوصف من شهامته وإقامته السنن الماثورة في فداء المسلمين واحترازه عن

مجالس السلطان الذي خرج معه والإنبساط في المآكل وأنه لم يزل ذلك دأبه إلى أن استشهد بدمشق من جهة الخواج

”

Imām al-Nasā’ī’s Madhhab

Ibn al-Athīr writes in Jāmi’ al-Uṣūl, 1:196:

وكان شافعي المذهب له مناسك ألفها على مذهب الشافعي

”

Accordingly, both Al-Isnawī, 2:480 and Tāj al-Subkī 3:14 have added him in to their books on the *Ṭabqāt al-Shāfi’iyyah*. However, it is more accurate to state that which Shāh Waliullah has mentioned.

His famous teachers include:

1. Ishāq ibn Rāhywayh *raḥimahullah* (d.238 AH)
2. Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī *raḥimahullah* (d.277 AH)
3. Abū Zur’ah al-Rāzī *raḥimahullah* (d.264 AH)
4. ‘Abdullah ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal *raḥimahullah* ()
5. Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Dhuhālī *raḥimahullah* (d.258 AH)
6. Imām Abū Dāwūd *raḥimahullah* (d.275 AH)
7. Imām al-Tirmidhī *raḥimahullah* ()
8. Al-Rabī’ ibn Sulaymān al-Murādī *raḥimahullah* ()
9. Muḥammad ibn Naṣr al-Marwazī *raḥimahullah* ()
10. Imām al-Bukhārī *raḥimahullah* (d.256 AH)

Due to his early travels in the pursuit of knowledge, he managed to narrate from many of the teachers of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Al-Nasā’ī has written a treatise in which he has mentioned the names of some of his teachers, this list has 196 teachers. However, Ibn ‘Asākir has mentioned 444 teachers of Al-Nasā’ī.

Ḥāfiẓ al-Mizzī mentions what he considers as strong evidence to show that Imām al-Nasā’ī did not meet Imām al-Bukhārī. Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhabābī has also mentioned the same in his Al-Kāshif and Tārīkh al-Islām. However, Hafiz Ibn Hajar and Hafiz Al Sakhawi have shown how he has narrated from Imam Al Bukhari. Hafiz Al Sakhawi states that in the narration of Ibn Al Ahmar, there are many narrations of Imām Al Nasā’ī narrating from Imam Al Bukhari.

His famous students include:

1. Imām Ibn Ḥibbān ()
2. Abū Ja’far al-‘Uqaylī ()
3. Ibn ‘Adī ()
4. Al-Dūlābī ()
5. Abū ‘Awānah ()
6. Abū Sa’īd ibn Yūnus ()
7. Abu’l Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī ()
8. Ibn al-Sunnī ()

The books of Imām al-Nasā’ī

Imām al-Nasā’ī’s other printed books include:

1. ‘Amal al-Yawm wa’l-Laylah (عمل اليوم والليلة); this is a part of *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*
2. Khaṣā’iṣ ‘Alī radiyAllāhu ‘anhu (خصائص علي رضي الله عنه); this is a part of *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*

Sh. Nūristānī records, pg.41 from Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Taymiyyah that this book contains weak and fabricated narrations as well as his purpose was to simply gather the narrations and not to record only the authentic narrations.

Some scholars have critiqued his writing of this book and have stated that he held some tendencies of partisanship for Sayyidunā ‘Alī raḍiyAllāhu ‘anhu. Al-Dhahabī records in Siyar 14:133:

فيه قليل تشيع وانحراف عن خصوم الإمام علي كعواوية وعمرو والله يسامحه

“In him there is a small amount of partisanship for ‘Alī and slight disdain for the opposition of Imām ‘Alī such as Mu‘āwiyah and ‘Amr, and may Allah forgive him”

However, Al-Dhahabī himself records in his Siyar 14:129 that Muḥammad ibn Mūsā mentioned to Al-Nasā‘ī how people are criticising the fact that he has written a book on the virtues of Sayyidunā ‘Alī raḍiyAllāhu ‘anhu and not on the virtues of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr raḍiyAllāhu ‘anhu and Sayyidunā ‘Umar raḍiyAllāhu ‘anhu. So, Al-Nasā‘ī responded:

دخلت دمشق والمنحرف بما عن علي كثير فصنفت كتاب "الخصائص" رجوت أن يهديهم الله تعالى

“I entered Damascus and there were many people who had a disdain for ‘Alī, thus I wrote the book Khaṣā‘is, I hoped Allah would guide them”

In fact, Ibn ‘Asākir relates an incident in Tārīkh Dimishq, 71:175, which proves that Al-Nasā‘ī harboured no hatred for Sayyidunā Mu‘āwiyah raḍiyAllāhu ‘anhu. Al-Nasā‘ī was once asked about Sayyidunā Mu‘āwiyah raḍiyAllāhu ‘anhu, he responded:

إنما الإسلام كدار لها باب في باب الإسلام الصحابة فمن آذى الصحابة إنما أراد الإسلام كمن نقر الباب إنما يريد دخول الباب فمن أراد معاوية إنما أراد الصحابة

“Indeed, Islām is like a house which has a door, thus the door of Islām is the Ṣaḥābah, he who attacks the ṣaḥābah intends [to attack] Islām. Like the one who knocks on a door, indeed he desires to enter the door, thus he who intends [to attack] Mu‘āwiyah, indeed he intends [to attack] the ṣaḥābah”

3. *Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān* (تفسير القرآن)
4. *Faḍā‘il al-Qur‘ān* (فضائل القرآن); this is a part of Al-Sunan al-Kubrā
5. *Tasmiyah Man Lam Yarwi ‘Anhu Ghayr Rajul Wāḥid* (تسمية من لم يرو عنه غير رجل واحد)
6. *Faḍā‘il al-Ṣaḥābah* (فضائل الصحابة)
7. *Al-Ḍu‘afā wa’l-Matrūkīn* (الضعفاء والمتروكين)
8. *Musnad Ḥadīth Mālik* (مسند حديث مالك)
9. *Musnad Maṣṣūr ibn Zādhān* (مسند منصور بن زاذان)

His unprinted books are:

10. *Al-Ighrāb* (الإغراب)
11. *Asmā al-Ruwāt wa’l-Tamyīz Baynahum* (أسماء الرواة والتمييز بينهم)
12. *Majālis Min Amāliḥ* (مجالس من أماليه)
13. *Gharā‘ib al-Zuhrī* (غرائب الزهري)
14. *Kitāb al-Kunā* (كتاب الكنى)
15. *Musnad ‘Alī* (مسند علي)
16. *Musnad Ḥadīth Sufyān ibn Sa‘īd al-Thawrī* (مسند حديث سفيان بن سعيد الثوري)
17. *Musnad Ḥadīth Shu‘bah* (مسند حديث شعبة)
18. *Musnad Ḥadīth Yahyā ibn Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān* (مسند حديث يحيى بن سعيد القطان)
19. *Musnad Ibn Jurayj* (مسند ابن جريج)
20. *Manāsik al-Ḥajj* (مناسك الحج)
21. *Ma‘rifah al-Ikhwah wa’l-Akhawāt* (معرفة الإخوة والأخوات)

Imām al-Nasā‘ī as a scholar of Al-Jarḥ wa’l-Ta‘dīl

Dr. Qāsim ‘Alī Sa‘d has written a treatise upon the narrators that Al-Nasā‘ī has made a comment upon, he concludes that Al-Nasā‘ī has made comments upon the reliability of 2,679 narrators of ḥadīth. However, Al-Nasā‘ī was considered a strict assessor of the narrators of ḥadīth. Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī states as quoted by Tāj al-Subkī in Ṭabqāt al-Shāfi‘iyyah al-Kubrā, 3:16:

سَأَلْتُ سَعْدَ بْنَ عَلِيٍّ الرَّجُلَيْنِ عَنْ رَجُلٍ فَوَثَّقَهُ فَقُلْتُ قَدْ ضَعَّفَهُ النَّسَائِيُّ فَقَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ إِنَّ لِأَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ شَرْطًا فِي الرِّجَالِ أَشَدَّ مِنْ شَرْطِ الْبُخَارِيِّ وَمُسْلِمٍ

”

His partisanship against Ahmad ibn Ṣālih

Despite his complete precaution in narrating aḥādīth, there were times where Imam Al-Nasā'ī mentioned disparaging remarks against certain individuals who were not worthy of the remarks. From amongst them was the great Egyptian ḥadīth scholar and teacher of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, Abū Jā'far Aḥmad ibn Šāliḥ, regarding whom Al-Nasā'ī said in Al-Ḍu'afā wa'l-Makrūkīn, pg.22:

إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ بِثِقَةٍ

“Indeed, he is not reliable”

This is a harsh comment as it is a negation of honesty and recollection despite both Al-Bukhārī and Muslim having narrated from him in their Ṣaḥīḥ collections. Al-Sakhāwī explains that the reason behind this was that Aḥmad ibn Šāliḥ would not narrate to anyone until two witnesses would testify that the individual is reliable, accordingly, when Al-Nasā'ī came to Aḥmad, he was expelled due to not having two witnesses. This made Al-Nasā'ī upset and made their relationship sour.

Death

Three and a half months before his passing he left Egypt. However, there is a difference of opinion over where he went to and for what reason.

His student Ibn Yūnus states that people in Egypt grew jealous of Al-Nasā'ī, thus he left for Ramlah and went through a tribulation there.

This is whilst Al-Dāruquṭnī states as recorded by Al-Dhahabī in Siyar, 14:132 that he left Egypt for Ḥajj and went through a tribulation in Damascus and left there for Makah, passing away there. Some narrations even mention that he was buried between Šafā and Marwah.

Sh. Nūristānī states that it is possible that both played a role, hence, he left Egypt for Ḥajj due to the growing animosity of the people for him, perhaps because he was not an Egyptian and he had a troubled relationship with the leading scholar, Aḥmad ibn Šāliḥ. As for where he went, Sh. Nūristānī prefers the view of Al-Dhahabī in Siyar, 14:132 that he went through a tribulation in Damascus and was then moved to Al-Ramlah in Palestine passing away there.

All have agreed that he passed away in 303 AH.

The Tribulation of Al-Nasā'ī in Damascus

Ibn 'Asakir records in Tārīkh Dimishq, 71:175 that when Imām al-Nasā'ī reached Damascus around three months before his demise, he was assaulted in the Masjid due to his position on the virtues of Sayyidunā Mu'āwiyah raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu. However, Ibn 'Asakir states regarding the response of Al-Nasā'ī:

هَذِهِ الْحِكَايَةُ لَا تُدَلُّ عَلَى سُوءِ اعْتِقَادِ أَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ فِي مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ أَبِي سُفْيَانَ وَإِنَّمَا تُدَلُّ عَلَى الْكَفِّ عَنِ ذِكْرِهِ بِكُلِّ حَالٍ

“This incident does not indicate upon an incorrect belief of Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān in regards to Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān, rather, it indicates upon withholding of discussing him (Mu'āwiyah) in any way”

He then moved to Al-Ramlah and passed away there at the age of 93.

A Brief Description of Sunan al-Nasā'ī

Dr. 'Umar Īmān Abū Bakr states that Al-Nasā'ī labelled this book as Al-Mujtabā. This is also the name found on many manuscripts of the book. Similarly, many scholars such as Abū 'Alī al-Ghassānī, Ibn al-Athīr and Al-Dhahabī have referred to the book with this name.

The book is considered a key book when it comes to the field of appreciating and realising defects found within a ḥadīth, a key reason as to why the leading scholar in the field of hidden defects, Al-Dāruquṭnī has tremendous admiration for Al-Nasā'ī. Sh. Sa'd writes in Manāhij al-Muḥaddithīn, pg.247:

كتابه هذا يعتبر من كتب العلل

“This book of his is considered from the books of 'Ilal”

The difference between Al-Sunan al-Kubrā and Al-Mujtabā

There are two books attributed to Imām al-Nasā'ī; a big book titled Al-Sunan al-Kubrā and Al-Sunan al-Ṣuḡhrā. However, there is much debate over the authorship of Al-Sunan al-Ṣuḡhrā, famously known as Al-Mujtabā.

- 1) One group of scholars hold the opinion that Al-Mujtabā was not compiled by Al-Nasā'ī, but rather, it was compiled by Ibn al-Sunnī who chose specific narrations from Al-Sunan al-Kubrā.

This is the position of Al-Dhahabī (d.748 AH) [Siyar, 14:131], Tāj al-Subkī (d.771 AH) [Ṭabqāt al-Shāfi'iyyah, 3:96] and Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimishqī (d.842 AH) [as recorded in Shadharāt al-Dhahab, 3:50]. Sh. Sa'd al-Ḥumayyid mentions in Manāhij al-Muḥaddithīn, pg.251 that this seems to be the position of Al-Mundhirī (d.656 AH) and Al-Mizzī (d.742 AH)

From the contemporary scholars, this was the opinion of Sh. Shu'ayb al-Arnaout who vehemently advocates this opinion.

Response:

There are several issues with this opinion:

- In several places in Al-Mujtabā, Ibn al-Sunnī himself explicitly mentions at the start of a chapter that he heard it from Al-Nasā'ī
- Every great scholar of the past who has a chain of narration of Al-Mujtabā has their narration ending with Al-Nasā'ī

- There are additional narrations in Al-Mujtabā that are not found in Al-Sunan al-Kubrā, accordingly, if Ibn al-Sunnī had chosen specific narrations from Al-Sunan al-Kubrā, why would there be additions in Al-Mujtabā?
- 2) Another group of scholars hold the opinion that Al-Mujtabā was compiled by Al-Nasā'ī

These scholars divide into two groups:

- Some scholars hold the opinion that Al-Nasā'ī in this book compiled only the authentic narrations from his Al-Sunan al-Kubrā

This is due to a story recorded by Ibn Khayr in his Al-Fihrist, pg.116 that Abū 'Ali al-Ghassānī said:

أن بعض الأمراء سأله عن كتابه في السنن أكله صحيح؟ فقال لا قال فأكتب لنا الصحيح منه مجرداً فصنع "المتبى" فهو المتبى من السنن ترك كل حديث أورده في

السنن مما تكلم في إسناده بالتعليل

""

Ibn al-Athīr has also recorded this story in his introduction to Jāmi' al-Uṣūl, 1:197. This view has been adopted by the vast majority of scholars including Ibn Kathīr in Al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah, 14:793 and Sakhāwī in Bughyah al-Rāghib, .

From the contemporary scholars, this is the opinion of Sh. Muḥammad 'Awwāmah as explained in Tadrīb al-Rāwī, 3:, Fārūq Ḥammādah in his introduction to 'Amal al-Yawm wa'l-Laylah and Sh. 'Abd al-Ṣamad Sharaf al-Dīn.

Response:

There are several issues with this story:

- This story is not proven through an authentic chain of narration
 - There are many inauthentic narrations in Al-Mujtabā at times explained by Al-Nasā'ī himself after presenting the ḥadīth
 - There are several chapters - such as Kitāb al-Ṣulḥ and Kitāb al-Īmān - that are found in Al-Mujtabā that are not found in in Al-Sunan al-Kubrā which would suggest that it is not simply taken from Al-Sunan al-Kubrā
 - There are numerous authentic narrations - some of them found in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim - that are found in Al-Sunan al-Kubrā that have not made their way into Al-Mujtabā
- Other scholars hold the opinion that Al-Mujtabā is simply a narration of Al-Sunan al-Kubrā that has been narrated by Ibn al-Sunnī, however, considering that it is a lot smaller than the other narrations of the book, it has been referred to as Al-Mujtabā.

This is the opinion preferred by Sh. Sa'd al-Ḥumayyid and Sh. Nūristānī. Sh. Sa'd writes in Manāhij al-Muḥaddithīn, pg.256:

فيمكن أن تضم هذه الروايات بعضها مع بعض لتشكّل مقداراً كبيراً يسمّى السنن الكبرى للنسائي سواء أكان من رواية ابن السني أو من رواية غيره

""

Some of the key methodologies of Imām al-Nasā'ī in his book Al-Mujtabā are as follows:

- 1) Imam al-Nasā'ī's methodology is like Imam Bukhari in the sense that the relationship between the Hadith and the chapter under which they are presented is at times difficult to understand or indicate towards Imām al-Nasā'ī's extraction of a deeply layered meaning from the Ḥadīth. This also shows the deep understanding Al-Nasā'ī had of the meanings of aḥādīth, such that Al-Dāruqūṭnī said as quoted by Al-Ḥākim in Ma'rifah 'Ulum al-Ḥadīth, pg.82:

أما كلام أبي عبد الرحمن على فقه الحديث فأكثر من أن يذكر في هذا الموضوع

"As for the statements of Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān upon the jurisprudence within a ḥadīth, then it is more than that which can be mentioned here"

- 2) At times, he presents multiple chapters together but presents the same Hadith in all the chapters. At times, there may be two similar chapters under which one Hadith with the same chain of narration is presented in both chapters.
- 3) When the chain of narration changes in the middle of the chain of narration, he does not present the letter ح to show the change in the chain of narration very often, this is like what Imam Bukhari has done in Sahih Al Bukhari.
- 4) He has also utilized Imām Muslim's methodology in the sense that he differentiates between which narrators used the word "أخبرنا" and which narrators used the word "حدثنا".

However, Al-Sakhāwī disagrees with this and feels that Al-Nasā'ī does not differentiate between the two.

- 5) Also, much like Imam Muslim, if there is a slight difference in the words of the narration between two narrators in the chain of narration, he will mention it, for example, if Ḥajjāj and Rawḥ have both narrated the Ḥadīth from Ibn Jurayj, then after presenting the Ḥadīth, he will mention the differences in words by stating:

قال حجّاج "بعد ما يسلم" وقال روح "وهو جالس"

- 6) At times, he has summarised the narration, however, he indicates that he has summarised the text of the narration and writes after the narration:

مختصر

- 7) He also differentiates between the narrators who have used the words 'الرسول' and the narrators who have used the word 'النبى'.

- 8) Also, at times, when there are multiple reliable narrators in the chain of narration and there is a weak narrator with them narrating from the same teacher as the reliable narrators, then he will not mention the name of the weak narrator explicitly, rather, he will simply refer to him with words such as:

عن محمد بن عبد الله بن يزيد المقرئ عن أبيه عن حيوة وذكر آخر

There are three reasons for mentioning the weak narrator with these words:

1. It indicates towards the fact that the narrator is weak
2. It displays that the narrator is not according to his condition
3. It indicates that there are multiple chains of narrations for the narration therefore supporting the text of the narration

- 9) At times, Imām al-Nasa’ī explains certain words found in the text of the narration

For example, after presenting the ḥadīth in which the Prophet ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam states: هذه ركسٌ

Al-Nasā’ī writes:

الركس طعام الجنّ

‘Riks is the food of Jinn’

- 10) At times, he clarifies the names of certain ambiguous sentences and titles in the chain of narration and the text of the narration
- 11) At times, he mentions the names of the narrators who are present in the chain of narration with their teknonyms
- 12) At times, if there are two or more names that are the same, he specifies the individual that has been referred to
- 13) At times, if the chain of narration is broken, then Imām al-Nasā’ī clarifies where the chain of narration has a breakage
- 14) At times, if a narration has been narrated in a Mursal manner, then Imām al-Nasā’ī mentions this (he regularly refers to any breakage in the chain of narration (الإنقطاع) as مرسل (Mursal). Al-Sakhāwī writes in Bughyah, pg.74:

وكثيرا ما يسمي المنقطع مرسلا

“And he regularly labels a breakage in the chain of narration as Mursal”

- 15) At times, he also mentions if any of the narrators are weak
- 16) At times, he also indicates towards the Hadith that is the strongest in that chapter
- 17) At times, he also mentions if the narration is Munkar
- 18) At times, he also mentions if there is singularity () Tafarrud in a word from the words of the narration or in it being narrated from the Prophet or in all the words of the narration
- 19) At times, he also mentions if a mistaken addition is found in the text of the narration (الإدراج) is found, or Al-Tadlīs, or Al Tashif, or a hidden defect (العلة)
- 20) At times, if there is a difference amongst the narrators in how the narration has been narrated, then he mentions the preferred version of the narration
- 21) At times, he mentions the lineage of a narrator, or the lineage of his teacher, or the place where he heard the narration from his teacher

Many scholars have referred to the book with the title Ṣaḥīḥ, they include Ibn Mandah (), Ibn al-Sakan (), Abū ‘Alī al-Naysapūrī (), Al-Dāruqūṭnī (), Ibn ‘Adī (), Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī () and Al-Dhabābī (). However, Ibn Ḥajar explains in his Al-Nukat, 1:292 that this is consideration of the majority of the book.

The shortest and longest chains of narration

The shortest chains of narration found in the book are *rubā’iyyāt*: that is that there are four narrators between Imām al-Nasā’ī and the Prophet ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam. The longest chain of narration found in the book is *‘ushāriyyat*: that is that there are ten narrators between Imām al-Nasā’ī and the Prophet ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam.

Sh. Sa’d explains in Manāḥij al-Muḥaddithīn, pg.249 that Al-Nasā’ī’s shortest chain is a rubā’ī and not a thulāthī as is the case with Al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah because Al-Nasā’ī’s conditions are more stringent. He concludes that Al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah do not have an authentic thulāthī narration.

Imām al-Nasā’ī’s conditions

It is famously mentioned that Imam al-Nasa’i has narrated from those narrators whose narrations are not rejected by consensus. Ḥāfiẓ al-Sakhāwī explains that this means that Imam Al Nasa’i presents the narrations of a narrator as long as the narrator is not one whom both the lenient and strict assessors of Hadith have labelled as weak.

Along with this, Imam Al Nasa’i states:

لما عزمت على تصنيف (السنن) استخرت الله تعالى في الرواية عن شيوخ كان في القلب منهم بعض الشيء فوقعته الخيرة على تركهم ونزلت لذلك في جملة من الحديث كنت أعلو

فيها عنهم فوقعته الخيرة على تركهم

”“

Hence, at times, he narrated a narration through a longer chain of narration to avoid narrating from a narrator upon whom he had some doubt. Ibn Ḥajar records in Al-Nukat, 1:287 Māhir, that Aḥmad ibn Naṣr said:

من يصبر على ما يصبر عليه النسائي كان عنده حديث ابن لبيعة ترجمة ترجمة فما حدث منها بشيء

“Who can be as patient upon that which Al-Nasā’ī is patient? He had by him the aḥādīth of Ibn Lahī’ah on topic by topic, but he did not narrate anything from it”

Ḥāfiẓ al-Sakhāwī mentions that Sunan al-Nasā’ī has the least weak narrations; however, it is not immediately mentioned after the other books as the author passed away the latest.

Praise of the Book

As we have discussed already in our discussion on Sunan Abī Dāwūd, several scholars considered Sunan al-Nasā’ī to be the most authentic book from the six famous books after Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim. Ibn Rushayd states as quoted by Ibn Ḥajar in Al-Nukat, 1:288:

كتاب النسائي أبدع الكتب المصنفة في السنن تصنيفا وأحسنها ترصيفا وكان كتابه جامع بين طريقي البخاري ومسلم مع حظ كبير من بيان العلل

“The book of Al-Nasā’ī is the most unique of the Sunan books that have been written and the best in terms of presentation, and it is as though his book has combined between the paths of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim along with a tremendous focus in discussing hidden defects”

His narrations from Al-Ḥārith ibn Miskīn

Ibn al-Athīr records in his Jāmi’ al-Uṣūl, 1:196:

وكان ورعا متحريرا ألا تراه يقول في كتابه "الحارث بن مسكين قراءة عليه وأنا أسمع" ولا يقول "حدثنا" ولا "أخبرنا" كما يقول عن باقي مشايخه وذلك أن الحارث كان يتولى القضاء بمصر وكان بينه وبين أبي عبيد الرحمن خشونة لم يمكنه حضور مجلسه فكان يستتر في موضع ويسمع حيث لا يراه فلذلك تورع وتحرى فلم يقل حدثنا وأخبرنا وقيل إن الحارث كان خائضا في أمور تتعلق بالسلطان فقدم أبو عبد الرحمن فدخل إليه في زي أنكره قالوا كان عليه قباء طويل وقلنسوة طويلة فأنكر زيّه وخاف أن يكون من بعض جواسيس السلطان فمنعه من الدخول إليه فكان يجيء فيقعده خلف الباب ويسمع ما يقرؤه الناس عليه من خارج فمن أجل ذلك لم يقل فيما يرويه عنه "حدثنا وأخبرنا"

”

However, what is interesting is that Imām Abū Dāwūd narrates from Al-Ḥārith ibn Miskīn in the same manner.

Famous narrators of the book

There are approximately 11 narrators of the book from the author, they include:

- 1) The author’s son, Abū Mūsā ‘Abd al-Karīm
- 2) Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ishāq al-Dīnuri Ibn al-Sunnī

This is the only narration that has reached us of the book currently. This is of course if we assume Al-Mujtabā to be a separate book from Al-Sunan al-Kubrā and not a narration of Al-Sunan al-Kubra as is the view of Sh. Sa’d al-Ḥumayyid and Sh. Nūristānī.

- 3) Abu’l Ḥasan Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Tamām
- 4) Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Tammām
- 5) Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Al Muhandis
- 6) Abū Ali Al Hasan ibn Al Khidr ibn Abdillāh Al Asyuti
- 7) Abū Muhammad Al Ḥasan ibn Rashīd Al Asakari
- 8) Abu’l Qasim Hamzah ibn Muhammad ubn Ali ibn Abbas Al Kinani
- 9) ‘Ali ibn Abi Ja’far Ahmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Salamah Al Tahawī
- 10) Abu’l Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn Zakariyyā ibn Ḥaywah al-Naysāpūrī
- 11) Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim Ibn Muḥammad ibn Sayyār al-Qurṭubī
- 12) Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Mu’āwiyah al-Qurashī al-Andalūsī Ibn al-Aḥmar

This is the largest and most complete narration of *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*.

There are of course differences between their narrations in terms of some of them presenting words before others and additions in the actual text of the narration. However, the largest edition of the book is the book written by Ibn al-Aḥmar.

Commentaries upon Sunan al-Nasā’ī

While several commentaries have been written on Sunan al-Nasā’ī, more commentaries have been written upon Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Sunan Abī Dāwūd and Jāmi’ al-Tirmidhī. Sh. Nūristānī writes, pg.103:

اعتنائهم به دون اعتنائهم بالصحيحين بل دون اعتنائهم بسنن أبي داود وجامع الترمذي

“Their attention to it has been less than their attention to Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, rather, less than their attention to Sunan Abī Dāwūd and Jāmi’ al-Tirmidhī”

Nonetheless, the famous commentaries of Sunan al-Nasā’ī include:

- 1) *Zahr al-Rubā ‘Ala’l Mujtabā* (زهر الربى على المجتبى) by Ḥāfiẓ al-Suyūṭī (d.911 AH)
- 2) *Ḥāshiyah al-Sindī ‘Alā Sunan al-Nasā’ī* (حاشية السندي على سنن النسائي) by Abu’l Ḥasan al-Sindī (d.1138 AH)

- 3) *'Arf Zahr al-Ruba* (عرف زهر الربى) by Bujum'awī (d.1306 AH)
- 4) *Al-Fayḍ al-Samāwī 'Alā Sunan al-Nasā'ī* (الفيض السماوي على سنن النسائي) by Shaykh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī (d.1323 AH) with additions from Shaykh Zakariyyā (d.1402 AH)
- 5) *Dhakhīrah al-'Uqbā fī Sharḥ al-Mujtabā* (ذخيرة العقبى في شرح المجتبى) by Shaykh Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Ādam al-Ithyūbī (); this is an enormous commentary printed in 41 volumes

[Al-Sakhāwī, *'Bughyah al-Rāghib al-Mutamannī*, (Riyāḍ: Maktabah al-'Ubaykān, 1993) entire book summarised]

[Al-Sakhāwī, *'Al-Qawl al-Mu'tabar fī Khatm al-Nasā'ī Riwāyah Ibn al-Aḥmar*, (), entire book summarised]

[Al-Nūristānī, *'Al-Madkhal Ilā Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, (), entire book summarised]

[Umar Īmān Abū Bakr, *'Al-Imām al-Nasā'ī wa Kitābuhū al-Mujtabā*, (), entire book summarised]

MUADHDH CHATI