

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Introduction

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Badr (حفظه الله) said in his introduction:

The book ash-Shamā’il by al-Imām at-Tirmidhī is a great and blessed book in one of the most noble and most honoured branches of knowledge. This branch of knowledge is: the shama’il of our Noble Prophet ﷺ, meaning his high character, his noble attributes, his excellent manners, his gracious etiquettes, and his kind and pleasant way of dealing with others ﷺ.

This book of Ash-Shamā’il by al-Imām at-Tirmidhī describes the qualities of the best of Allah’s servants and the most beloved to Him, the chosen and selected one ﷺ. He ﷺ was the most complete in worship to Allah, the purest in character, the best in his inner self, the finest in how he treated others, and the greatest in knowing Allah and fulfilling true worship of Him alone.

Allah chose him to be His Messenger; the link between Him and His servants, guiding people to what is good and calling them to guidance and the truth. Allah chose him from the best and purest family lines. Allah honored him with the most perfect human qualities, both in his appearance and his character. Allah blessed him with the most beautiful features - his shining face, his pleasant look, and his elevated and noble qualities. May Allah’s prayers and peace be upon him.

Allah also distinguished him with the most complete qualities, the best morals, and the finest manners, and made him ﷺ a role model for everyone and an example for all of creation. Allah says:

﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا﴾

Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example for whoever hopes in Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah often. [al-Ahzāb: 21]

Ibn Kathīr said in his Tafsīr regarding this ayah: ‘It is a great principle and foundation for following the Messenger of Allah in his words, his actions, and his way.’

It is known that following the Prophet ﷺ and taking him as our example depends on knowing his qualities, traits, and characteristics. This is because we cannot truly follow his way, imitate him, or hold onto his guidance unless we know his life, his noble qualities, and his great characteristics.

Because of this, every Muslim needs to give special attention to learning about the biography and the qualities of the Prophet ﷺ - an attention more than we would give to anyone else. This is because he ﷺ is the purest of all people, the best of Allah's servants, the example for everyone who strives to do good, and the leader of all the children of Ādam.

The term *ash-shamā'il* refers to a person's physical traits, qualities, characteristics, morals, manners, and things similar to this. You can say: 'So-and-so has good *shamā'il*,' meaning they have good character. And you can also say: 'So-and-so has noble *shamā'il*,' meaning they have noble manners. Because of this, al-Imām at-Tirmidhī and other scholars used this term to describe the qualities, character, manners, and everything related to the Prophet ﷺ.

In studying the *shamā'il* of the Prophet ﷺ and in knowing his characteristics, there are great benefits, which include:

Firstly: One of the obligations of the believers is to believe in the Prophet ﷺ, and this can only be achieved by knowing him. The more a person learns about him ﷺ, the stronger their belief becomes, and the more they will follow him. This is because whoever truly knows him will never doubt his truthfulness or the truth of what he brought: meaning the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the true religion of Allah.

Secondly: Loving him ﷺ is an obligation that Allah has obligated upon His servants. In fact, the love of the Prophet ﷺ must come before the love of parents, children, all the people, even before the love of yourself. This is a condition of *Imān*, and *Imān* is not complete without it. Therefore, there is no doubt that knowing him ﷺ, and knowing his noble qualities increases the heart's love for him, strengthens its respect and reverence for him, and deepens its understanding of his great status and high rank.

Thirdly: Allah made him a role model for His servants and an example for all people, and He commanded us to follow him and walk upon his path. He is the greatest leader and the most perfect example. Allah says:

﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ﴾

Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example. [al-Ahzāb: 21]

Therefore, following him and taking him as an example is built upon knowing him, and knowing his traits, his qualities, and his *shamā'il*.

Fourthly: Allah made him closer to the believers than their own selves. The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘There is no believer except that I am more entitled to him in this world and the Hereafter. Recite if you wish: ‘The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves.’ [al-Ahzāb: 6] He is closer to them than their own selves because he provided them with such advice, compassion, and kindness that he was the most merciful and kindest of creation.

Fifthly: Allah commanded the believers to send *ṣalāt* (prayers) and *salām* (peace) upon him, following His own example (meaning Allah’s example) and the example of the angels, and as a recognition of the Prophet’s rights over us. Allah says:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ، يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا﴾

Indeed, Allah and His angels send blessing upon the Prophet. O you who believe, ask Allah to send blessing upon him and ask Allah to grant him peace. [al-Ahzāb: 56]

The more a person knows the *shamā’il* of the Prophet ﷺ and strengthens their understanding of him, the more sincere and complete their *ṣalāt* upon him becomes. This is why the *ṣalāt* of the scholars, those who truly know his *Sunnah* and his guidance, are not like the *ṣalāt* of the general people, whose only share is the movement of their limbs and raising of their voices.

Sixthly: His noble *shamā’il* and blessed way ﷺ serve as a complete way of life for every Muslim who wants goodness, honour, and a dignified life in this world and the Hereafter. Children should be raised upon it, and generations should grow up living by it. When young people turn away from it, they fall into loss, as we see with many youth today.

Allah has tied the happiness in both worlds to following him ﷺ, and has tied misery in both worlds to opposing him. For his followers there is guidance, security, success, honor, sufficiency, support, protection, help, and a good life in this world and the next, and for those who oppose him, there is humiliation, fear, misguidance, abandonment, and misery in this world and the Hereafter.

Seventhly: Knowing him ﷺ is one of the greatest things that increases Imaan. It is even one of the greatest causes that leads a disbeliever to Imaan, and it also increases the Imaan of the believer. Allah says:

﴿أَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوا رَسُولَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ﴾

Or did they not know their Messenger, so they deny him? [al-Mu’minūn: 69]

Meaning: knowing him ﷺ is something that leads to, and is a great cause for, attaining *Imān* for the one who has not yet believed.

In his time, there were people who spent long periods of time with no one more hated to them than the Prophet ﷺ because of the false rumours and lies that were spread about him. Yet as soon as they saw his radiant face, learned his *seerah* closely, and saw

his manners and interactions, they instantly changed, and no one on earth became more beloved to them than him.

Therefore, in summary, one of the great blessings Allah gives a person is making it easy for them to connect with the qualities and noble characteristics of the Prophet ﷺ. This is a huge doorway to goodness, and it is an honour and a gift from Allah to whoever He wills among His servants.

This blessed book we have before us, *Ash-Shamā'il an-Nabawiyyah* by al-Imām at-Tirmidhī, is one of the greatest and most beneficial works written about the *shamā'il* of the Prophet ﷺ. al-Imām at-Tirmidhī gathered the most important points of this subject, its core meanings, and its finest gems. al-Imām at-Tirmidhī arranged the book beautifully and kept it concise, not too long and tiring, and not too short or incomplete. It is a moderate-sized book that still covers its topic in a complete way.

He organized it with great care and divided it in an excellent way into fifty-six chapters and collected four hundred and fifteen *aḥādith* about the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

He began with the physical characteristics of the Prophet ﷺ - his height, the color of his skin, his hair, the description of his face, and other physical features. Then he moved on to the things the Prophet ﷺ owned and used, like his sword, his clothing, and similar items. After that, he discussed the Prophet's qualities, character, manners, and dealings with others, then he spoke about his acts of worship.

He ended his book with the topic of seeing the Prophet ﷺ in dreams. In that section, he mentioned the guidelines for such dreams and how to know whether a dream is true or not. One of the conditions for recognizing a true dream - as will be explained at the end of the book - is having knowledge of the Prophet's physical description.

Therefore, it was a beautiful touch to begin his book with the Prophet's physical description and end it with the topic of seeing him in a dream. This is because the Prophet ﷺ said: '*Whoever sees me in a dream has truly seen me, because the Shayṭān cannot take my form.*' [Muslim]

Many people have claimed to see the Prophet ﷺ in a dream, but the appearance they saw does not match the descriptions recorded in the books of *al-shamā'il* and the books of *seerah*. In such a case, that person they saw is not the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Allah has made it easy for me, and He is the One who helps and grants success, to prepare this explanation of *al-Shamā'il*. I made it a medium-length explanation: not long and tiring, and not short and lacking. I ask Allah to make it beneficial and to accept it in a good way. And now I will begin the explanation, relying on Allah, the Most High, and asking for His help, His ease, and His *tawfīq* (or success), for He alone is the *muwaffiq* (granter of success) and He has no partner.