

Core Curriculum

5 The Qur'an and Hadith

5.6 **Hadith and Sunnah, difference and variations**

Hadiths and Sunnah are often confusing terms for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The distinction between the two are sometimes hard to make so what we'll try to do here is try to unwrap some of these concepts so as to get a better understanding going.

Sunnah means tradition and practice. As such, Sunnah refers to the practice and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (s) and at times, that of his Ahl al-Bayt (as). Of course, everything the Prophet did was his own Sunnah, but in technical terms, sunnah refers to the good practices the Prophet did that are not necessarily obligatory. So, for example, one of the "sunnahs" of the Prophet was that he used to brush his teeth before prayer

Hadith means "saying," in other words, it refers to the transmitted sayings of the Prophet (s) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as). When we say transmitted, we mean that they were transmitted by a chain of people who heard the teachings of the Prophet and related it down onwards to other people until it was compiled into a book.

So as the Sunnah refers to the practices of the Prophet, the hadiths are the vehicles through which much of the Sunnah is transmitted to us from.