Ibn Uthaymeen's Approach to Resolving Ambiguities in Prophetic Hadiths: An Analytical Study of His Commentary on Al-Arba'een Al-Nawawiyyah

أسلوب ابن عثيمين في معالجة الإشكالات الواردة في الأحاديث النبوية: دراسة تحليلية لشرحه على الأربعين النووية

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Abstract:

This study examines Ibn Uthaymeen's methodology in resolving ambiguities in Prophetic hadiths through his commentary on *Al-Arba'een Al-Nawawiyyah*. It identifies six types of ambiguities, including linguistic and contextual issues, and explores his reliance on the Quran, Sunnah, scholarly opinions, and poetry as tools for resolution. By addressing fifty-two cases, the study highlights his methodical approach, use of authentic narrations, and strategic organization of discussions within the "benefits" section. Ibn Uthaymeen's work stands out as a significant, balanced contribution to the study of problematic hadiths.

Keywords : Prophetic hadith; resolving ambiguities; problematic hadiths; Ibn Uthaymeen; Al-Arba'een Al-Nawawiyya .

الملخص:

تناول هذه الدراسة منهج ابن عثيمين في معالجة الإشكالات الواردة في الأحاديث النبوية من خلال شرحه على *الأربعين النووية* . وتستعرض أنواع الإشكالات التي عالجها، مثل الإشكالات اللغوية والسياقية، موضحة اعتماده على مصادر متنوعة في حلها، كالنصوص القرآنية والأحاديث النبوية وآراء العلماء والشعر العربي. وتبرز الدراسة اهتمام ابن عثيمين بمنهجية دقيقة تقوم على التفسير المتعمق للأحاديث، مع الالتزام بالروايات الصحيحة. كما تشير إلى تنظيمه الاستراتيجي للنقاشات المتعلقة بالإشكالات ضمن قسم "الفوائد"، مما يعكس وعيه بأهمية تقديم المعرفة بشكل منهجي. وتسلط الدراسة الضوء على معالجة ابن عثيمين لعدد من الحالات المشكلة، مؤكدة إسهامه في توضيح معاني النصوص النبوية ورفع اللبس عنها. وبهذا، يظهر عمله كإضافة متوازنة وعميقة تثري مجال دراسة مشكلات الحديث.

كلمات مفتاحية: الحديث النبوي، دفع الإشكال، مشكل الحديث، ابن عثيمين، الأربعين النووية.

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Introduction

The Prophetic Sunnah holds a significant position in Islam as a primary source of legislation. However, some hadiths may appear outwardly contradictory, raising questions or concerns among some individuals. Hence, the efforts of modern scholars to clarify these apparent ambiguities play a critical role. In this context, the prominent scholar Sheikh Muhammad ibn Salih al-Uthaymeen emerges as a notable figure for his extensive explanations of many Prophetic hadiths. Among his most distinguished works is his commentary on the book Al-Arba'een Al-Nawawiyyah (The Forty Hadiths of Imam al-Nawawi).

 The central research problem lies in examining Ibn Uthaymeen's approach to addressing ambiguities in Prophetic hadiths as found in his commentary on Al-Arba'een Al-Nawawiyyah, specifically focusing on his methods for resolving these concerns and his precise scholarly methodology in doing so.

The primary hypothesis of this study posits that Ibn Uthaymeen employed a unique, profound, and comprehensive methodology to address ambiguities surrounding the Prophetic Sunnah, grounded in well-established scholarly principles.

This study aims to define the nature of the ambiguities surrounding Prophetic hadiths as explored by Ibn Uthaymeen in his commentary on Al-Arba'een Al-Nawawiyyah. And to identify both external and internal characteristics of problematic hadiths as tackled by Ibn Uthaymeen. After that outline the key frameworks Ibn Uthaymeen relied upon to resolve apparent contradictions.

The study adopts the analytical method, focusing on Ibn Uthaymeen's commentary on Al-Arba'een Al-Nawawiyyah, to analyze the characteristics of problematic hadiths and his approach to resolving ambiguities. Additionally, the inductive method is used to collect material referenced by Ibn Uthaymeen in addressing and resolving concerns, while the descriptive method is applied to describe his techniques for defending Prophetic hadiths and refuting doubts in his commentary on Al-Arba'een Al-Nawawiyyah.

1. Definition of Research Terms

1.1 Hadith:

Linguistically: The term "ḥadīth" derives from the root "ḥ-d-th," meaning "new" or "news." It is the opposite of "old" and is used to describe both minor and significant information as it unfolds gradually. (Al-Fayruzabadi, 2005, p. 167).

Technically: Hadith refers to everything ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in terms of his sayings, actions, tacit approvals, physical characteristics, or biography, whether before or after his prophethood. (Mustafa al-Siba'i, 1982, p. 47).

1.2 Ambiguity (Istishkāl): From the Term Mushkil:

 Linguistically: The root "shīn-kāf-lām" primarily denotes resemblance or similarity. For instance, the phrase "this resembles that" signifies likeness. The term "istishkāl" refers to the state of ambiguity or confusion surrounding a matter. (Ibn Faris, 1979, vol. 3, p. 214).

Technically**: Istishkāl refers to something whose intended meaning becomes unclear due to its resemblance to other meanings, such that its purpose cannot be discerned except through evidence that distinguishes it from others. This concept closely aligns with the term mujmal (ambiguous). (Al-Sarakhsi, 1993, vol. 1, p. 168).**

1.3 Composition of Problematic Hadith (Mushkil Al-Hadith)

The definitions of mushkil al-hadith vary. It can be defined as (Osama Khayyat, 1421 AH/2001 CE, p. 32) "Hadiths authentically transmitted from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him),

whose apparent meanings might suggest impossible implications or contradict established Sharia principles."

2. Refuting the Existence of Genuine Contradictions in Prophetic Hadiths

2.1 Among Islamic Scholars:

Islamic scholars unanimously affirm that there are no genuine contradictions in the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). By "contradictions" here, we refer to what causes confusion or ambiguity for the listener, leading to the mixing of one matter with another.

There can be no real conflict between established texts, as they are divine revelations from Allah. Imam Al-Tahawi (may Allah have mercy on him) explained that those with sound understanding are obliged to grasp the Prophet's (peace be upon him) address to his nation. His intention is to guide them to the limits of their religion, its etiquettes, and rulings. Thus, there are no contradictions in his statements. Each statement he made, even if differing in wording, complements the meanings conveyed in his previous statements. Scholars are tasked with investigating these meanings whenever they sense an apparent contradiction. What might initially appear to be a contradiction will, upon examination, be found to be untrue. If some scholars fail to uncover this, it is due to their own limited understanding, not because of any actual contradiction. This principle stems from the belief that what comes from Allah cannot contradict itself, as the Quran states: **"And if it had been from other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction."** (Surah An-Nisa, 4:82) (Al-Tahawi, 1994, Vol. 1, p. 157).

For this reason, scholars and jurists have made significant efforts to reconcile texts that appear contradictory. Their efforts have spanned across Quranic texts, Prophetic hadiths, or both combined. These efforts are evident in their treatment of hadiths, whether through dedicated works such as Al-Shafi'i's Ikhtilaf Al-Hadith, Ibn Qutaybah's Ta'wil Mukhtalif Al-Hadith, Al-Tahawi's Sharh Mushkil Al-Athar, and Ibn Furak's Mushkil Al-Hadith Al-Nabawi or through their commentaries on Prophetic hadiths.

2.2 Ibn Uthaymeen's Perspective:

Sheikh Muhammad ibn Salih Al-Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) similarly denies the existence of any real contradictions or conflicts in Prophetic hadiths. He clarifies that any apparent contradiction is only superficial. While some may perceive certain hadiths as problematic, Al-Uthaymeen emphasizes that scholars have resolved every ambiguity and confusion.

The Sheikh highlighted that the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) would question the Prophet (peace be upon him) and raise doubts, to which he would provide clear answers. Therefore, there is no confusion in the Quran or Sunnah that has not been addressed, either through direct clarification in the Quran and Sunnah or by responses to specific inquiries (Ibn Uthaymeen, 1426 AH, Vol. 1, p. 71).

When asked how to reconcile two hadiths that appear contradictory, Ibn Uthaymeen asserted that:

- The Quran cannot contradict itself.
- Authentic Sunnah cannot contradict itself.
- The Quran and authentic Sunnah cannot contradict each other.

- Neither the Quran nor the Sunnah can contradict reality or sound reason.

He grounded this assertion in the Quranic verse: **"And if it had been from other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction."** (Surah An-Nisa, 4:82) He further explained that Allah's words are absolute truth and cannot be contradictory. Similarly, the Prophetic Sunnah, when authentically transmitted, is truth and cannot contradict itself (Ibn Uthaymeen, 1434 AH, Vol. 2, p. 490).

Thus, Ibn Uthaymeen's approach to resolving apparent contradictions in Prophetic hadiths underscores the harmony and consistency inherent in divine revelation. His methodology relies on a firm belief in the infallibility of Allah's words and the Sunnah, as well as on rigorous scholarly investigation to resolve any perceived ambiguities.

3. Distinctive Features of Problematic Hadiths in Ibn Uthaymeen's Commentary

3.1 External Characteristics:

3.1.1 Abundance of Material: A detailed examination of Ibn Uthaymeen's commentary on Al-Arba'een Al-Nawawiyyah reveals a significant incorporation of material addressing problematic hadiths. Despite not authoring an independent work on the science of problematic hadiths, he addressed 52 instances in which he presented ambiguities related to Prophetic hadiths and provided answers to them. These instances span various types and categories of ambiguities as analyzed in his commentary.

3.1.2 Incorporating Problematic Hadiths within Enumerated Benefits: Ibn Uthaymeen frequently discussed problematic hadiths as part of the enumerated benefits he would derive from a particular hadith. He often introduced these ambiguities with phrases like, "Among the benefits of this hadith are," and then proceeded to list them numerically. The placement of these ambiguities varied based on context:

- Occasionally in the first benefit (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 88).
- At other times in the second benefit (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 371).
- Or in the third benefit (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 158).
- Sometimes ambiguities appeared in other benefits (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 21, 328).

Rarely did Ibn Uthaymeen address ambiguities in the main body of his commentary, preferring instead to discuss them within the benefits section (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 96).

3.1.3 Elaborate Responses to Ambiguities: Some instances of problematic hadiths required detailed explanations to provide convincing answers. Ibn Uthaymeen excelled in presenting extended and thorough responses in such cases, often elaborating significantly on the scholarly material. For instance, he once devoted three full pages to answering a single ambiguity (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 84).

One example is his discussion on affirming Allah's love, as mentioned in the hadith narrated by Abu Al-'Abbas Sa'd ibn Sahl Al-Sa'idi (may Allah be pleased with him), where a man asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) (Reported by Ibn Majah, Book of Zuhd, Chapter on Renunciation of the World, Hadith 4102): "O Messenger of Allah, guide me to an act which, if I do it, Allah will love me and people will love me." The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: **"Renounce the world, and**

Allah will love you; renounce what people possess, and people will love you". Ibn Uthaymeen raised an ambiguity concerning this hadith, questioning whether Allah's love is similar to the human love for things. He then provided a detailed response, elaborating on the concept of Allah's love, the methodology of Ahl al-Sunnah in understanding it, and contrasting it with the views of the deniers and interpreters of divine attributes. He exposed various forms of rejection, denial, and misinterpretation and emphasized the correct approach to understanding Allah's names and attributes. This detailed discussion spanned approximately two pages (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 348–350).

This does not imply that Ibn Uthaymeen always provided lengthy answers to ambiguities. At times, he responded succinctly without compromising the meaning (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 270, 297).

3.2 Internal Characteristics:
3.2.1 Authenticity of the Hadiths.

The majority of the problematic hadiths addressed by Ibn Uthaymeen in his commentary are authentic and fall within the realm of accepted narrations. However, there are instances where he discusses ambiguities related to weak hadiths and resolves them based on the sound meaning of the narrations.

Example: The hadith narrated by Abu Muhammad Abdullah ibn Amr ibn Al-As (may Allah be pleased with both of them), in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said(Reported by Al-Baghawi in Sharh As-Sunnah, 1/213, Hadith no. 104.): "**None of you truly believes until his desires are in accordance with what I have brought**." Ibn Rajab commented(Jami' Al-'Ulum wa Al-Hikam, Vol. 2, p. 394): "Authenticating this hadith is extremely difficult for several reasons".

Ibn Uthaymeen mentioned Ibn Rajab's critique of the hadith and acknowledged its weakness. Nevertheless, he affirmed the correctness of its meaning. He then raised an ambiguity regarding the hadith in the first benefit and addressed it (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 426–427).

3.2.2 Hadiths with Common Ambiguities Not Discussed by Ibn Uthaymeen.

Some hadiths from Al-Arba'een Al-Nawawiyyah have historically been subjects of ambiguity and doubt, yet Ibn Uthaymeen chose not to address these ambiguities.

Example: The hadith narrated by Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with both of them), in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said(Reported by Al-Bukhari, Book of Faith, Chapter: If They Repent and Establish Prayer, Hadith no. 25): "**I have been commanded to fight the people until they testify that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establish prayer, and give zakah. If they do this, they will have secured their lives and wealth from me except for the rights of Islam, and their reckoning will be with Allah**.". This hadith has been used by critics to malign Islam as a religion of violence and extremism, claiming it advocates for the killing of all people. Such allegations are not uncommon among modernists, atheists, and other adversaries of Islam and are widely propagated in contemporary media and social networks. The main ambiguity in this hadith lies in the statement: "**I have been commanded to fight the people**." Ibn Hajar provided an excellent refutation of these ambiguities from multiple perspectives (Ibn Hajar, 1379 AH, Vol. 1, pp. 76–77).

3.2.3 Addressing Ambiguities in Hadiths Outside Al-Arba'een Al-Nawawiyyah.

At times, Ibn Uthaymeen discussed ambiguities in hadiths not included in Al-Arba'een Al-

Nawawiyyah to clarify related concepts.

Example: While explaining the thirty-ninth hadith and discussing the issue of ignorance, he referenced the hadith of the man who prayed improperly (Hadith of Al-Musi' Salatihi). He then addressed an ambiguity regarding the hadith and resolved it (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 419–421).

3.2.4 Addressing Multiple Ambiguities in a Single Hadith.

Ibn Uthaymeen's commentary often includes several ambiguities for a single hadith. In total, he addressed 52 ambiguities within 32 hadiths. Of these, 18 hadiths contained only one ambiguity each, while 14 hadiths included multiple ambiguities.

The twenty-fourth hadith from Al-Arba'een Al-Nawawiyyah contains four ambiguities (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 262, 268, 270, 276).

Three ambiguities were addressed in the following hadiths:

- The second hadith (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 82, 88, 94).
- The twenty-eighth hadith (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 306, 310,313).
- The thirty-fifth hadith (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 371, 374, 379).
- The thirty-sixth hadith (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 389, 390, 393).

Additionally, he addressed two ambiguities in nine hadiths, including:

- The first hadith (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 15, 21).
- The sixteenth hadith (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 206, 207).
- The eighteenth hadith (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 222, 223).
- The twenty-second hadith (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 240, 241).
- The twenty-third hadith (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 255, 256).
- The twenty-sixth hadith (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 288, 289).
- The twenty-ninth hadith (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 324, 328).
- The thirtieth hadith (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 339, 345).
- The thirty-eighth hadith (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 408, 412).

3.2.5 Mentioning the Source of the Ambiguity.

Ibn Uthaymeen rarely identified the specific source or individual responsible for raising ambiguities in hadiths. Instead, he often attributed such questions to an unspecified person, frequently using phrases like "**If someone were to say**" or other general expressions that do not specify the inquirer.

However, in a few instances, he did explicitly identify the source of the ambiguity, such as referring to a group of Companions collectively (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 144), or mentioning specific individuals like Mu'adh ibn Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him) (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 322). He also occasionally referenced groups, such as the Qadariyyah sect (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 83), or described the inquirers by their attributes, such as referring to "people of sin" (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 133). At times, he identified the person raising the ambiguity by their belief system, such as those who consider the scales (Mizaan) to be merely metaphorical (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 255).

3.2.6 Responding with a Counter-Example.

In addressing a hadith where ambiguity arose, Ibn Uthaymeen provided explanations by offering counter-examples to clarify the concept.

Example: He referred to the ambiguity concerning the application of the term "action" to speech in

the Prophet's (peace be upon him) statement(Reported by Al-Bukhari, Book of Faith, Chapter: If They Repent and Establish Prayer, Hadith no. 25): "**If they do that**..." (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p.152). The term "action" was used to describe the declaration of faith (shahadah), which is primarily verbal. Ibn Uthaymeen resolved this ambiguity by explaining that speech involves movement of the tongue, and movement is an action. He further supported his argument with the counter-example of the Prophet's statement in the hadith of Ammar ibn Yasir (may Allah be pleased with him) (Reported by Al-Bukhari, Book of Tayammum, Chapter on Blowing into the Hands, Hadith no. 338; and Muslim, Book of Menstruation, Chapter on Tayammum, Hadith no. 368.): "The Prophet (peace be upon him) struck the ground with his hands like this."

This demonstrates that the Prophet's physical act was described as speech, highlighting the interchangeable usage of the terms speech and action (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 152).

3.2.7 Addressing Ambiguities from Multiple Angles.

Ibn Uthaymeen often addressed ambiguities in hadiths from various perspectives. In many instances, he structured his responses systematically, enumerating them as "The first aspect," followed by "The second aspect," and so forth (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 310). Alternatively, he used phrases like "From one perspective..." and "From another perspective..." (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 308). At times, he transitioned between points with "As for..." to indicate a shift in focus (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 241).

3.2.8 Expanding Responses with Fiqh Questions and Issues.

In many instances, Ibn Uthaymeen enriched his responses to ambiguities by introducing related jurisprudential (fiqh) questions and issues.

Example: While addressing the ambiguity in the twenty-ninth hadith, he introduced the jurisprudential question of whether it is permissible to say "Allah said" before reciting Quranic verses, and whether it is obligatory to seek refuge from Shaytan (i.e., recite aʿudhu billahi min al-shaytan al-rajim) before reciting verses, as it was not explicitly mentioned in the hadith. He resolved these ambiguities with detailed explanations (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 328–329).

Frequently, he began his discussions with fiqh-based questions, such as "Is it permissible to commit a prohibited act in cases of necessity?" This was often followed by clarifying the ambiguity in the hadith and then providing a detailed answer (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 158). Such examples are abundant throughout his commentary (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 190–198).

4. Ibn Uthaymeen's Use of Quotations in Addressing Ambiguities:

Scholars often rely on various sources to establish a legal ruling or support an opinion. Ibn Uthaymeen, in his commentaries, including his commentary on Al-Arba'een Al-Nawawiyyah, frequently referred to the Quran and Sunnah as primary sources for resolving ambiguities in hadiths. Additionally, he incorporated insights from other scholars and sources to further clarify and address these issues.

4.1 Quotations from Scholars

Ibn Uthaymeen occasionally included statements from earlier scholars to dispel ambiguities and elucidate problematic hadiths. Sometimes, he explicitly mentioned the scholar's name; other times, he used general phrases such as "the scholars said" or "the scholars answered." However, such

references are relatively infrequent in his treatment of problematic hadiths in Al-Arba'een Al-Nawawiyyah, appearing in only a few instances.

4.1.1 First Instance.

Ibn Uthaymeen referred to the statements of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Al-Qayyim in addressing a problematic hadith that, on the surface, appears to endorse using divine decree (qadar) as a justification for committing sins.

The Hadith in Question: The hadith narrates a dispute between Adam and Musa (peace be upon them), in which Musa said to Adam (Reported by Al-Bukhari, Book of Prophets, Chapter on the Death of Musa, Hadith no. 3409.): "You are our father who caused us harm and expelled us and yourself from Paradise." Adam replied: "Do you blame me for something that Allah decreed upon me before He created me?" The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said: "**Adam defeated Musa in the argument**." Ibn Uthaymeen explained that this hadith is sometimes misused by individuals to justify sinful behavior based on divine decree. He then elaborated on how to refute such misuse (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 83–84).

The Response: Ibn Uthaymeen quoted both Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Al-Qayyim, stating (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 84).: "Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) provided one explanation, and his student Ibn Al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) offered another. Ibn Taymiyyah said… As for his student, Ibn Al-Qayyim, he responded with…"

4.1.2 Second Instance.

Ibn Uthaymeen addressed the perceived contradiction between Umar ibn Al-Khattab's statement, (Reported by Al-Bukhari, Book of Tarawih Prayers, Chapter on the Merit of Night Prayers in Ramadan, Hadith no. 2010) "What an excellent innovation this is" (referring to congregational Tarawih prayer), and the Prophet's statement (Reported by Abu Dawud, Book of Sunnah, Chapter on Adhering to the Sunnah, Hadith no. 4607) :"**Beware of newly invented matters, for every innovation is a deviation.**"

The Ambiguity Raised: Ibn Uthaymeen posed the question: "What do you say about the statement of the rightly guided caliph Umar ibn Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) when he gathered the people to perform Tarawih prayer under one imam and remarked, 'What an excellent innovation this is?' Didn't he call it an innovation?" (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 313).

The Response: Ibn Uthaymeen cited a scholarly opinion that Umar referred to a linguistic innovation rather than an innovation in religion. However, he expanded on this explanation, arguing that this interpretation might not fully align with the context, as Tarawih is a form of prayer. Instead, he suggested that it was a relative innovation concerning its prior abandonment (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 313).

4.1.3 Third Instance.

Ibn Uthaymeen examined another ambiguity concerning whether human actions, such as good deeds, are sufficient for entry into Paradise.

The Hadith in Question: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said (Reported by Al-Bukhari, Book of Patients, Chapter on Prohibition of Wishing for Death, Hadith no. 5673): "**None of you will enter Paradise by his deeds.**" The Companions asked: "Not even you, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied: "**Not even me, unless Allah envelops me in His mercy**." Ibn Uthaymeen raised the question of how to reconcile this hadith with others that emphasize the role of one's deeds in attaining Paradise (Ibn

Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 324).

The Response: Ibn Uthaymeen quoted scholars' explanations, stating (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 324): "The scholars (may Allah have mercy on them), the jurists of Islam, and the physicians of the hearts and bodies those whom Allah has granted such knowledge explained this by noting that the Arabic preposition 'bi' has two meanings: sometimes it indicates causation, and other times it indicates equivalence or compensation. Thus, the meaning of the Prophet's statement, '**None of you will enter Paradise by his deeds**,' refers to compensation, not causation." .

Frequently, he began his discussions with fiqh-based questions, such as "Is it permissible to commit a prohibited act in cases of necessity?" This was often followed by clarifying the ambiguity in the hadith and then providing a detailed answer (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 158). Such examples are abundant throughout his commentary (Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, pp. 190–198).

4.2 Ibn Uthaymeen's Use of Poetry
4.2.1 First Example

The same ambiguity mentioned in **4.1.3**, concerning whether one's deeds suffice for entering Paradise, serves as a basis for Ibn Uthaymeen's use of poetry. After quoting scholarly explanations, Ibn Uthaymeen elaborated on Allah's countless blessings and how no action by a servant can fully reciprocate these blessings. He highlighted that guidance to perform righteous deeds itself is among the greatest blessings, one denied to many nations. Thus, constant gratitude is required, and even gratitude itself is another blessing that necessitates further gratitude. To illustrate this, Ibn Uthaymeen quoted two lines of poetry (Reported by Ibn Abi Dunya, 1400 AH/1980 CE, Vol. 31, p. 83; cited in Ibn Uthaymeen, 2004, p. 325):

> **If my gratitude for Allah's blessings is itself a blessing**
> **Then gratitude for that blessing also requires gratitude.**
> **How can one ever reach full gratitude except through His favor,**
> **Even if days extend and life is prolonged?**

4.2.2 Second Example

While discussing the

> **Indeed, one who leads, followed by his father's leadership,**
> **And then his grandfather's leadership, is truly noble.**

Conclusion:

Upon concluding this chapter, and after a meticulous examination of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Salih al-Uthaymeen's commentary on Al-Arba'een Al-Nawawiyyah, it becomes evident that his engagement with mushkil al-hadith (problematic or seemingly ambiguous hadiths) reflects a profound scholarly effort rooted in traditional Islamic sciences and a nuanced understanding of textual interpretation. This chapter has explored the nature of the problematic hadiths addressed in the

his commentary, analyzed their internal and external features, classified the types of ambiguities he focused on, and evaluated the terminological and methodological frameworks he employed in resolving them. The findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

• **Richness and Interdisciplinary Depth of the Commentary**:

Ibn Uthaymeen's commentary on Al-Arba'een Al-Nawawiyyah stands as a comprehensive scholarly work that transcends the mere explanation of text. It integrates elements of usūl al-fiqh (principles of jurisprudence), 'ilm al-hadith (hadith sciences), theology, and ethical instruction. Within this rich tapestry, the study identified 52 instances in which Ibn Uthaymeen either directly or implicitly addressed textual ambiguities. These instances reflect his awareness of the interpretive challenges some narrations may pose and his commitment to preserving the coherence and integrity of the Prophetic Sunnah.

• **Focused yet Selective Treatment of Ambiguities**:

Despite the breadth of the commentary, Ibn Uthaymeen did not attempt to exhaustively address every form of ambiguity found in the forty hadiths. Notably absent from his treatment are problematic hadiths that conflict—whether in appearance or inference—with established jurisprudential consensus (ijmā'), analogical reasoning (qiyās), general maxims of Islamic law, or verified historical facts. Instead, his attention was concentrated on six identifiable types of textual or conceptual ambiguities, such as apparent contradiction with other hadiths, unclear wording, or misinterpretation risks due to linguistic or contextual factors.

• **Commitment to Resolution and Clarity**:

One of the salient features of Ibn Uthaymeen's approach is that he does not leave any ambiguity he addresses without proposing a clarification, resolution, or reconciliation. His explanations are methodical and pedagogical, often framed in a way that guides both novice readers and advanced students toward proper understanding.

• **External Characteristics of his Methodology**:

The analysis also revealed several stylistic and structural patterns in Ibn Uthaymeen's treatment of ambiguous hadiths. These include:

–His frequent and explicit identification of textual ambiguities.

–A preference for placing discussions of problematic hadiths within the section of fawā'id (benefits and lessons) rather than the main body of the commentary, thus maintaining a pedagogical flow while not neglecting deeper analysis.

–The tendency to elaborate extensively on certain hadiths while offering succinct resolutions in others, reflecting an awareness of the pedagogical needs of his audience.

• **Internal Characteristics of the Addressed Hadiths**:

Most of the hadiths identified as problematic were authentic in terms of isnād, indicating that the perceived issue lies not in transmission but in interpretation. Moreover, Ibn Uthaymeen tends to avoid delving into highly controversial hadiths, such as those that have historically attracted broader criticism or speculative reinterpretation. His responses are marked by technical precision, contextual awareness, and theological sensitivity, showing a balance between textual fidelity and rational clarity.

• **Use of Supporting Evidences and Literary Tools**:

Ibn Uthaymeen does not limit his responses to Quranic or Prophetic texts. Rather, he enriches his analysis by invoking opinions of earlier scholars, especially those from the Salafi tradition, and by referencing Arabic poetry to illuminate linguistic meanings or rhetorical devices within the hadiths.

This multidimensional approach enhances both the accessibility and the scholarly rigor of his commentary.

In conclusion, the study confirms that Ibn Uthaymeen's approach to mushkil al-hadith within Al-Arba'een Al-Nawawiyyah is a model of contemporary hadith interpretation grounded in tradition yet responsive to contemporary doubts and misconceptions raised against the Prophetic Sunnah. His work offers not only a defense of the Prophetic Sunnah but also a methodology for engaging with ambiguity that remains faithful to classical principles while being attuned to the evolving questions of contemporary Muslim discourse. Further research could explore whether similar patterns are found in his other works, particularly his lectures and fatawa, to construct a more unified theory of his hermeneutical framework

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