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	JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 7.184	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

SOI: [1.1/TAS](#) DOI: [10.15863/TAS](#)
International Scientific Journal
Theoretical & Applied Science

p-ISSN: 2308-4944 (print) e-ISSN: 2409-0085 (online)

Year: 2025 Issue: 05 Volume: 145

Received: 28.05.2025
Accepted/Published: 30.05.2025 <https://T-Science.org>



Numonjon Nasibjonovich Turaev
International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan
ICESCO Chair
Associate Professor, PhD in Theology
Department of Islamic Studies and Islamic Civilization
numonjon.turaev@mail.ru

Muhammadqodir Mahmudali oğlu Mahmudjonov
International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan
Student

HADITH QUDSI: DEFINITION, FEATURES AND AUTHENTICATION CRITERIA

Abstract: This article examines the concept of Hadith Qudsi, which holds a significant position in the science of hadith studies. It provides a scholarly definition of Hadith Qudsi, highlighting its distinctive features in comparison to the Prophetic Hadith and the Qur'an. The article analyzes the various modes of narration and explores the attitudes of classical muhaddithun (hadith scholars) as well as contemporary researchers towards these texts. Additionally, the sources that compile and comment on Hadith Qudsi are categorized and their classifications and thematic orientations are critically examined. The article further demonstrates, on a scientific basis, the status of Hadith Qudsi within the sources of Sunnah, its application as evidence in Islamic jurisprudence, the scope of its themes, and its diverse literary evaluations.

Key words: Hadith Qudsi, Qur'an, Prophetic Hadith, Sunnah, muhaddithun, narration, Sufism, spiritual education, collections of Hadith Qudsi, sanad, meaning and wording, divine speech.

Language: English

Citation: Turaev, N.N., & Mahmudjonov, M.M. (2025). Hadith Qudsi: definition, features and authentication criteria. *ISJ Theoretical & Applied Science*, 05 (145), 360-363.

Soi: <https://s-o-i.org/1.1/TAS-05-145-43> **Doi:** <https://dx.doi.org/10.15863/TAS.2025.05.145.43>

Scopus ASCC: 3300.

Introduction

Hadiths constitute the foundational texts of Islamic teachings and its moral principles, serving as the second most important source after the Qur'an.

Depending on whose words the hadith text is attributed to, hadiths are classified into two types: *Qudsi* and *Nabawi*.

The term *Hadith Qudsi* is derived from the combination of two concepts. Specifically, it arises from the fusion of the word *hadith*, which in the Arabic language means "speech," "report," or "new," and the word *quds*, which signifies "pure" or "sacred." The term *quds* is etymologically opposed to *qadim* (meaning "ancient" or "old") [11:235].

If we generalize the meanings of the words hadith and quds, the term Hadith Qudsi can be

understood as "sacred speech" or "holy utterance." Hadith Qudsi is also referred to as "divine hadith" or "lordly hadith" [12:4].

Muhammad Awwama defined the term *Hadith Qudsi* as follows: "Hadith Qudsi is every clear and explicit statement narrated by Muhammad (peace be upon him) from Allah" [7:7]. According to the muhaddith, the original source of this definition is found in Abdullah Sirajiddin's *Sharh al-Manzuma al-Bayquniyya*, where Hadith Qudsi is described as "the words narrated by the Prophet (peace be upon him) from Allah the Almighty".

In his commentary on the definition, the scholar emphasizes that only those hadiths which contain the words of Allah can be classified as *Hadith Qudsi*. Narrations that describe divine actions or deeds (*fi'l*)

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do not fall into this category. Accordingly, the narration found in Imam Bukhari's *Al-Adab al-Mufrad*, in which Abu Hurayrah reports: "*The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: 'Allah the Almighty created mercy in one hundred parts. He kept ninety-nine of them with Himself and sent down only one part to the earth. It is through this single portion that all creatures show mercy to one another – so much so that even a mare lifts its hoof away from its foal, fearing it might harm it'*" [3:86]. This hadith is not considered a *Hadith Qudsi*, because it conveys information about Allah's actions, not His direct words.

Similarly, hadiths that begin with phrases such as "*It was revealed to me*" or "*A caller called out*" cannot be classified as *Hadith Qudsi*. In contrast, hadiths that explicitly attribute the message to Allah – such as "*Allah revealed to me*," "*Allah revealed to Abraham*," or "*Allah revealed to Moses*" – are considered *Qudsi*. Therefore, the narration reported by Muslim, in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "*Indeed, Allah has revealed to me: 'Be humble.' (From this, my ummah should learn) so that no one boasts over another, and no one oppresses or acts with enmity towards another*". This narration is classified as a *Hadith Qudsi*.

It is important to note that, based on the aforementioned definition, any narration that is not transmitted directly by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) cannot be considered a *Hadith Qudsi*. An example of this is found at the end of Muhammad Madani's book *Al-Ithafāt al-Saniyya*. It is narrated from 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him): "In one of the reports that was conveyed to me, it is said that Moses or Jesus asked, 'O Lord, what is the sign of Your pleasure with Your servants whom You have created?' Allah said, 'That I send rain upon them during the season of cultivation...'" [12:14]. This narration is not considered a *Hadith Qudsi*, as it was not directly reported by the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Likewise, a statement narrated by a Companion from earlier revealed scriptures (*Samawī books*) cannot be classified as a *Hadith Qudsi*. An example of this can be found in the hadith reported by Imam Bukhari from 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As regarding the characteristics of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He said: "By Allah, he is described in the Torah with some of the same attributes with which he is described in the Qur'an..." [4:157]. This narration is not considered a *Hadith Qudsi*, as it reflects the words of a Companion quoting from previous scriptures, not a direct transmission from the Prophet (peace be upon him) reporting Allah's words.

Narrations in which the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) quotes an angel or Jibril (Gabriel) are also not considered *Hadith Qudsi*. An example of this is the hadith describing the beginning of revelation.

Other scholars have offered different definitions of *Hadith Qudsi*. For example, some define it as "a narration whose wording is from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), while its meaning is from Allah." This definition is broader than the previous one. According to it, a narration may still be considered *Hadith Qudsi* regardless of whether the content is a statement or an action, whether it is attributed to Allah explicitly or implicitly, and whether it is reported by the Prophet himself or by others [6:4].

If this broader definition is adopted, then even the previously mentioned narrations—whose classification as *Hadith Qudsi* was denied—would fall under this category. This indicates that there are differences of opinion regarding the precise definition of the term.

In this context, it is also appropriate to mention the definition provided by Muhammad Mutawalli Sha'rawi. According to his explanation, a *Hadith Qudsi* is a narration in which the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) conveys a message from his Lord, yet it does not resemble the Qur'an in its structure, wording, or miraculous nature. Instead, it is similar in form and style to the *Prophetic (Nabawī) hadiths* [8:5].

By synthesizing the definitions mentioned above, *Hadith Qudsi* can be defined as narrations attributed to Allah but conveyed by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him).

At this point, it is necessary to highlight the differences between *Hadith Qudsi* and the Qur'an, as both are considered the words of Allah. The distinctions between *Hadith Qudsi* and the Qur'an are as follows:

- Allah's Book is called the Qur'an, but *Hadith Qudsi* cannot be referred to as the Qur'an;
- The Qur'an was revealed solely through *wahy* (divine revelation), whereas *Hadith Qudsi* is conveyed through *wahy*, inspiration, or dreams;
- The wording and meaning of the Qur'an both come entirely from Allah, while in *Hadith Qudsi*, the meaning is from Allah but the wording is from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him);
- The Qur'an is entirely *wahy*, whereas *Hadith Qudsi* may sometimes come through *wahy* and sometimes through inspiration;
- The Qur'an is recited, and this act is considered worship, but *Hadith Qudsi* is not recited and is not considered an act of worship [10:4].

Sheikh Nuriddin Khaliqnazar emphasized that words attributed to Allah can be divided into three categories. Specifically:

- The Qur'an — whose wording and meaning are from Allah, possessing a unique style and miraculous eloquence, revealed to Muhammad (peace be upon him) through divine revelation;

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- Divine scriptures such as the Torah, the Gospel, and the Psalms;

- *Hadith Qudsi* — whose meaning is from Allah but are conveyed in words by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) [12:20].

It should be noted that some scholars hold the view that both the wording and the meaning of *Hadith Qudsi* come from Allah [12:20].

Scholars have also pointed out other differences between the Qur'an and *Hadith Qudsi*. Specifically, the Qur'an has been transmitted through *mutawatir* (mass transmission) chains, whereas *Hadith Qudsi* are generally *ahad* (solitary) narrations. The recitation of the Qur'an is considered an act of worship, and each letter recited is rewarded tenfold. This characteristic is not attributed to *Hadith Qudsi*. Verses of the Qur'an are recited in prayer, but *Hadith Qudsi* are not read during prayer. The meaning of the Qur'an cannot be reported as a narration, whereas the meaning of *Hadith Qudsi* can be transmitted. While the Qur'an consists of chapters (surahs) and verses (ayahs), *Hadith Qudsi* does not have this structure.

There are several differences between *Hadith Qudsi* and *Hadith Nabawi*:

a) **Difference in definition:** *Hadith Qudsi* refers to every explicit word narrated by the Prophet (peace be upon him) from Allah. *Hadith Nabawi*, on the other hand, includes the Prophet's own words, actions, approvals (taqrir), physical attributes, and character traits.

b) **Difference in attribution:** The meaning of *Hadith Qudsi* is from Allah, while the wording is from the Messenger of Allah. In *Hadith Nabawi*, both the wording and meaning belong to the Prophet himself.

c) **Difference in subject matter:** *Hadith Qudsi* typically focuses on virtues and spiritual merits. The topics of *Hadith Nabawi* are very broad and encompass all aspects of Islamic law and teachings.

d) **Difference in status:** Although *Hadith Qudsi* is included in the category of *Hadith Nabawi*, it holds a higher rank in status.

e) **Difference in degree:** All *Hadith Qudsi* are solitary narrations (*ahad*), while *Hadith Nabawi* include solitary narrations as well as verbal and conceptual *mutawatir* (mass-transmitted) reports.

f) **Difference in quantity:** The number of *Hadith Qudsi* is much fewer compared to *Hadith Nabawi* [12:21].

There are two common ways to narrate *Hadith Qudsi*:

1. "The Messenger of Allah narrated from his Lord, saying..." — This phrasing was used by the early generations (Salaf).

2. "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) reports from Allah the Exalted. Allah says..."

Both expressions convey the same meaning. However, the question arises: is it necessary for

a *Hadith Qudsi* to begin with these specific expressions to be considered *Qudsi*? Scholars have answered this question by stating that it is not mandatory for the *Hadith* to start with these phrases. Rather, it suffices that somewhere in the narration there is a phrase that attributes the statement to Allah [12:21].

Since *Hadith Qudsi* is part of the Sunnah corpus, its sources are the books of *Hadith Nabawi* (Prophetic traditions). *Hadith Qudsi* mainly appear in collections such as *Sahih*, *Sunan*, *Musnad*, and *Mu'jam*.

Scholars differ in their opinions regarding the total number of *Hadith Qudsi*. This variation depends largely on how they define the term. For instance, Ali Juma states that their total number is around 1500, of which about 200 are authentic (*sahih*). Muhammad Siddiq Muhammad Yusuf also estimates the number of *Hadith Qudsi* to be approximately 200 [11:336]. Some scholars claim that the total number of *Hadith Qudsi* exceeds 1000, with fewer than 200 considered authentic, while others estimate the number to be over 200. This discrepancy is connected to the conditions that determine whether a hadith is authentic or not.

Hadith Qudsi mainly cover topics such as faith (iman), sincerity (ikhlas), worship ('ibadah), knowledge ('ilm), virtues of certain Qur'anic surahs, asceticism (zuhd), various forms of remembrance (dhikr), good manners, bad morals, the Last Day (akhirah), the creation of humanity, miracles, intercession (shafa'ah), paradise (jannah), and hellfire (jahannam). They rarely contain jurisprudential rulings such as obligations (fard), recommendations (wajib), or lawful and unlawful (halal-haram) matters.

In *Hadith Qudsi* that do mention rulings, the focus is usually not on detailed jurisprudential aspects but rather on encouragement or admonition regarding certain actions.

When discussing independent commentaries specifically on *Hadith Qudsi*, it is appropriate to first consider the history of the writing of commentaries on Prophetic hadiths in general. Initially, *Hadith Qudsi* were included alongside *Hadith Nabawi* (Prophetic traditions) within the same collections and presented side by side.

The practice of recording hadith and compiling them into books began quite early, around the 2nd century Hijri. From that period onward, the compilation and classification of hadith became widespread. Especially in the 3rd century Hijri, this process reached its peak with the production of comprehensive scholarly works. During this era, a large portion of hadith was gathered into books.

In the following century, further additions were made, resulting in nearly complete collections of hadith.

In the general collections of hadith, *Hadith Qudsi* also appear, but they are scattered and rare. It was only by the 6th century Hijri that *Hadith*

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Qudsi began to be gathered into separate dedicated books.

Among the most famous books written specifically about *Hadith Qudsi* is “**al-Aḥādith al-Ilāhiyya**” by Abul-Qāsim Zāhir ibn Tāhir ibn Muhammad Shahomiy Nishapuri. This book is considered the first dedicated collection of *Hadith Qudsi*.

It is also worth noting that historically, the practice of writing independent commentaries on *Hadith Qudsi* started much later than the commentaries on Prophetic (Nabawi) hadith.

In this regard, most of the conducted studies have the character of collections, with commentaries being relatively rare among them.

CONCLUSION

Hadith al-Qudsi holds a unique position as a source in Islamic teachings, and its definition, content, methods of narration, as well as its distinctions from the Qur'an and the Prophetic hadith, require careful and detailed study. The analysis presented in this article shows that the wording of Hadith al-Qudsi

belongs to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), while its meaning is attributed to Allah, which is the primary distinction from the Qur'an. Additionally, Hadith al-Qudsi is regarded in the Shariah not as a basis for worship, but as a means of moral and spiritual education.

Differences in definitions of Hadith al-Qudsi among scholars and researchers indicate the methodological complexity of this field. This results in variations in the number of Hadith al-Qudsi and the volume of collections compiled. This article comparatively analyzes these differences and proposes a general definition based on the meaning. The main themes of Hadith al-Qudsi — divine mercy, repentance, humility, remembrance (dhikr), worship, Paradise, and Hell — are also emphasized.

In conclusion, Hadith al-Qudsi is not only of academic interest within the science of hadith but also serves as a rich spiritual heritage for Islamic ethics, Sufism, and moral upbringing. Its scholarly study plays an important role in deepening the understanding of the Islamic worldview and the relationship between God and humanity.

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