

SUMMER IMMERSION

LEGACY: LIVES OF THE FOUR IMAMS



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SESSION 2

Reasons the Fuqaha Differed

- 1. Understanding Qur'an/Hadith:
 - One word has multiple meanings:
 - In the Arabic language, one word has a range of meanings.
 - Example: Term mawla can refer to a friend, a slave, the master of a slave.
 - Qira'at:
 - The different qira'at stem from varying interpretations of Arabic grammar.
 - Example: The verse in Surah Al-Mai'dah (5:6) regarding wudu concerning the feet is spelled وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ, but it can be read in two valid recitations, altering the physical act of purification:
 - Washing: Read as arjulakum (with a fatha on the 'lam').
 - Wiping: Read as arjulikum (with a kasra on the 'lam').
- 2. Not being aware of certain narrations:
 - In Ibn Taymiyyah's work 'Removing the Blame from the Great Imams', he points out that there is no scholar, even among the Sahabah or those who followed them (Tabi'un), who can claim to have come across every single hadith that exists.
 - Example: Umar ibn al-Khattab was unaware of the prophetic ruling regarding seeking permission to enter a home three times and leaving if no response is given.

- When Abu Sa'id al-Khudri recounted this tradition to Umar, he initially demanded a witness to corroborate that the Prophet (ﷺ) had indeed stated this, emphasizing that vital teachings could escape even the closest of the Prophet's Companions.
- 3. Error in narrations:
 - Even highly reliable narrators can occasionally make honest mistakes, and their human errors have been meticulously documented.
 - 'Awham al-Thiqah' (The Mistakes of Trustworthy Narrators), is a specialized genre in Hadith studies dedicated to identifying human error in transmissions.
- 4. Believing a narration is weak:
 - The foundation of 'Ulum al-Hadith relies heavily on biographical evaluation, where muhadditheen scrutinized the integrity and accuracy of every narrator.
 - Because assessing human character is fundamentally subjective, different muhadditheen established their own meticulous criteria (e.g. if two narrators met in person, when they met etc.).
 - For example, Imam Bukhari utilized some of the strictest standards in the field, which noticeably differed from the criteria used by other scholars.
- 5. Differing based on the actions of the Prophet (ﷺ)
 - The Sunnah encompasses a wide spectrum of actions that the Prophet (ﷺ) performed at different times.
 - Example: Saying 'Ameen'. There are two different narrations.
 - Saying 'Ameen' aloud: Narrations from Companions explicitly mention that the Prophet (ﷺ) would raise his voice when saying 'Ameen'.

- Saying 'Ameen' quietly: Other narrations detail occasions where the Prophet (ﷺ) lowered or whispered his voice when saying it.
- 6. Different ways of combining between conflicting reports
 - Scholars use two approaches to reconcile regarding which practice is preferable:
 - 1. تطبیق (Tatbiq) - Corroborating both narrations.
 - Accepting both narrations, explaining the difference in the Prophet's practice, and applying it in different contexts.
 - For example, the varying narrations regarding saying 'Ameen' are reconciled by explaining that the Prophet (ﷺ) sometimes said it aloud to teach the congregation, and sometimes quietly to emphasize inner humility. Therefore, both practices hold validity and can be applied contextually.
 - 2. ترجیح (Tarjih) - Giving preference to one narration over the other.
 - For example, when applying to the 'Ameen' narrations, scholars will argue that one specific narration is definitively more authentic or legislatively primary than the other. The preferred practice is then adopted, and the opposing narration is set aside as the less preferred option.
- 7. Differing in what is an accepted evidence:
 - Example:
 - 1. Dhahiri madhhab:
 - They completely rejected analogical reasoning (qiyās), deeming it an impermissible human interpretation of divine law.

- Other scholars viewed this rigid methodology as exclusionary, contributing to the school's gradual disappearance as a standalone madhhab.
- 2. Imam Malik:
 - He gave preference to Amal Ahl al-Madinah (the practices of Madinah). He considered the continuous lived practices of Madinah (the Companions and their descendants) to be a highly authoritative source of law.
 - Other scholars treated the consensus of Madinah as regional rather than absolute global consensus.
- 8. Abrogation:
 - It refers to the annulment or replacement of an earlier legal ruling with a later one.
 - Example: Raising the hands during takbir
 - The Hanafi madhhab argues that Raf' al-Yadayn (raising the hands) is only legislated at the beginning of the prayer. They reconcile with narrations that show the Prophet (ﷺ) raising his hands, arguing that those instances occurred early in Islam and were later abrogated by his final practice of keeping the hands at rest.
 - Other scholars consider raising the hands at multiple points in prayer to be a confirmed and continuous Sunnah. They maintain that the act was not abrogated.

Phases of Fiqh

- Two approaches to fiqh:
 - 1. Ahl al-Hadith (Text-based approach):
 - Based in Madinah.
 - This methodology was shaped by the direct descendants and students of the Sahabah who remained in the city.

- They were not fond of hypothetical scenarios, because they prioritized textual evidence over personal rationalism or abstract analogical deduction.
- If there was a hadith addressing a specific situation, they accepted it directly and didn't discard it. They based their rulings directly on these narrations.
- Famous scholars of this approach:
 - Imam Malik ibn Anas
 - Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal
- For instance, Imam Ahmad would often hold multiple valid opinions on a single issue based on different hadith evidence.
 - Example: The Kusuf (eclipse) prayer
 - Rather than strictly standardizing a single ritual, Imam Ahmad allowed for the various authentically reported methods of the eclipse prayer, accepting that multiple valid practices exist based on different narrations.
- 2. Ahl al-Rai (Analytical approach):
 - Based in Iraq.
 - This methodology developed in a bustling, rapidly expanding region that was a melting pot of varying cultures, urban challenges, and new societal issues.
 - They brought many rulings for hypothetical scenarios and relied on an analytical and systematic approach to sources.
 - They extracted overarching principles and objectives to ensure rulings were pragmatic, logical, and adaptable to evolving societal needs.
 - Famous scholars of this approach:
 - Imam Abu Hanifa and his students

- Abdullah ibn Mubarak
- Imam Tahawi

The Era of the Four Imams

1. Imam Abu Hanifa

- Born 80 AH in Iraq.
 - Approximately 70 years after the passing of the Prophet (ﷺ).
- The only Imam of fiqh recognized as a Tabi'i.
 - While scholars note different numbers based on historical transmission, he is widely recognized as having met several Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) in his youth.
 - Historical consensus validates that he met at least four notable Sahabah during his lifetime:
 - Anas ibn Malik
 - Abdullah ibn Harith
 - Abdullah ibn Abi Awfa
 - Amir ibn Wathilah (the last Sahabi to pass away)
 - Scholars have listed roughly 16 other Companions that Imam Abu Hanifa may have seen or met. However, unlike the four mentioned above, there is no universal consensus regarding direct narration or meeting these specific 16 individuals.
- Family Lineage:
 - His full recorded name is Nu'man ibn Thabit ibn Zuti.
 - His paternal ancestors, tracing back to his grandfather Zuti, originated from Kabul, which is in modern-day Afghanistan.
 - His grandfather was originally from Kabul and was brought to Kufa.
 - According to historical records, his grandfather embraced Islam and eventually changed his name to Nu'man. Thus, Imam Abu Hanifa was given the birth name Nu'man, which was shared with his grandfather.

- His father, Thabit, was an affluent silk and cloth merchant. Imam Abu Hanifa subsequently inherited this thriving family business.
 - Narrations highlight that Thabit, had the unique privilege of meeting Caliph Ali ibn Abi Talib in Kufa.
 - During this meeting, Thabit requested a du'a for his descendants. The impact of Imam Abu Hanifa's immense success and legacy is often attributed to the fulfillment of this prayer.
- Studying Knowledge:
 - He memorized the Qur'an during his childhood, around 8 to 10 years old, and formally began studying knowledge at age 18.
 - He narrated that his journey into Islamic scholarship began when he met Imam Ash-Sha'bi (Amir ibn Shurahbil), scholar of the Tabi'un generation and one of his oldest teachers.
 - While running an errand in the market, he was spotted by Ash-Sha'bi, who asked him "Where do you frequent?" He named a merchant whom he was going to see.
 - "I did not mean [your going to] the market," Ash-Sha'bi said. "Rather, I meant which scholars you go to." He said: "I hardly ever attend any (of their classes)."
 - Upon learning he did not attend classes, Ash-Sha'bi advised, "I see signs of intelligence in you. You should sit in the company of learned men".
 - Ash-Sha'bi advised him to learn from Ibrahim al-Nakha'i and Hammad ibn Abi Sulayman. Taking this advice, he began attending religious study circles.

- When discussing different fields, Ash-Sha'bi pointed out the vital importance of the faqih — the one who extracts practical rulings and understands the overarching objectives of the Shari'ah. He recognized that a jurisprudential understanding of the religion was exactly what society needed.
- Exposed to the bustling marketplace from a young age, he sharpened his intellect by listening to theological disputes, developing a natural fluency in kalam and aqidah. Following encouragement from Ash-Shabi, he shifted his focus to fiqh and studied under Imam Hammad for 18 transformative years.
- The profound impact of this brief interaction turned into a lifelong pursuit of learning. It teaches us:
 - The value of casual reminders:
 - Even informal conversations about the Deen and encouragement to learn can bring about massive, long-lasting benefits.
 - The importance of having a good demeanor:
 - Just as Imam Abu Hanifa's heart was struck by ash-Sha'bi's advice, this demonstrates the approach of giving people guidance using kind words, a cheerful disposition, and respect draws people in rather than pushing them away.
- Physical Description:
 - Dark complexion:
 - Accounts describe his skin tone as leaning towards darkness.
 - Moderate height:
 - Sources mentioned he was a well-proportioned man of medium height.

- Well-groomed:
 - He was known for presenting himself very well, maintaining clean, elegant, and high-quality clothing that reflected his successful cloth trade.
 - He was known to abundantly use pleasant fragrance, and people could recognize him by his good scent.
- Mannerisms:
 - He exemplified the pinnacle of taqwa (God-consciousness) in his business dealings.
 - He was extremely cautious and scrupulously honest in his business transactions.
 - He consistently went above and beyond in his ethics, embodying the belief that any good you do will ultimately be rewarded by Allah, proving true tawakkul (trust in Allah).
 - He refused to take advantage of others and insisted on paying something for its true value.
 - Example: A woman approached Imam Abu Hanifa in the market, needing to sell a piece of silk cloth, and asked for 100 dirhams.
 - Recognizing the quality and true value of the goods, Imam Abu Hanifa kept telling her it was worth even more than that, showing absolute integrity over seizing a cheap bargain.
 - The woman assumed he was mocking her and haggling downward. She repeatedly raised the price, suggesting 200, 300, and eventually 400 dirhams, but he insisted it was still more valuable.
 - To put the woman's mind at ease, he called over an independent expert appraiser to examine the silk. Once the expert evaluated the garment at 500 dirhams, Imam Abu Hanifa paid the woman the full and fair amount of 500 dirhams.

- He was known to point out the exact defects in his merchandise to buyers rather than hiding flaws for profit.
 - Example: Imam Abu Hanifa sent 70 expensive garments to his business partner.
 - He left a specific note warning the man that one of the garments was damaged and explicitly ordered him to point out the flaw to any buyer.
 - The partner sold the batch for a massive profit of 30,000 dirhams. When asked if he had mentioned the defect, the partner admitted he forgot.
 - Because he could not identify the exact buyer to return the money, Imam Abu Hanifa took none of the profit and donated the entire 30,000 dirhams to charity.
- He donated one dinar every time he swore by Allah (saying wallah).
 - This self-imposed penalty acted as a strict discipline to prevent breaking promises or taking light oaths.
- He would donate an equal value for every item he purchased for his own personal use (i.e. garment) — or spend the equivalent amount for someone else; a student of knowledge or scholar.
 - This is a practice of extreme generosity and detachment from material wealth.
- He was extremely clear and cautious in his speech.
 - As both a faqih and a merchant, Imam Abu Hanifa practiced immense caution in his speech.
 - He was renowned for his measured, clear, and careful delivery, ensuring that his legal rulings could not be misinterpreted or cause confusion among the people.
 - Despite his elevated status and the intense jealousy or slander he faced later in life, his heart remained free of malice.

- His students consistently narrated that he never spoke ill of anyone.
 - Example: When his closest student, Imam Abu Yusuf, informed him that a known detractor and enemy had passed away, Imam Abu Hanifa did not celebrate. Instead, he wept, made du'a for the individual, and prayed for Allah's mercy upon them.
- He was famously quiet, spoke very little, and was constantly absorbed in thought.
- He never yields his principles or his commitment to truth.
 - One of his students said: "The entire dunya was offered to Imam Abu Hanifa but he didn't desire it, and later he was beaten and tortured, and he didn't accept it."