

SUMMER IMMERSION

LEGACY: LIVES OF THE FOUR IMAMS



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SESSION 4

2. Imam Malik

- Lineage:
 - His full name is Malik ibn Anas ibn Malik ibn Abi Amr.
 - Great-grandfather:
 - His great-grandfather Abu Amr, embraced Islam in the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), in Yemen but later relocated to Madinah after the Prophet's death.
 - He resided in Madinah during the era of the four Rashidun Caliphs. He met all four Caliphs, and some recorded him as one of those who buried Uthman ibn Affan.
 - While a few narrations suggest he was a Sahabi, the consensus among major historians classify him as Mukhadram — someone who lived in both the pre-Islamic and Islamic eras, accepted Islam, but did not physically see or meet the Prophet (ﷺ).
 - Grandfather:
 - His grandfather, Malik ibn Abi was also a Tabi'i.
 - He studied under and narrated directly from major Companions, including Talha ibn Ubaydallah, Aishah.
 - He served as one of the trusted scribes for Uthman ibn Affan, assisting in official state duties, including the compilation of the standardized Quranic codices. It is mentioned he was among the small group who assisted in the burial of Uthman.

- Father:
 - Anas ibn Malik was a significant muhaddith in Madinah; primarily known within the hadith circle.
- Mother:
 - His mother was named 'Aliyah bint Sharik Al-Azdiyah.
 - She belonged to the Azd tribe of Yemen.
 - She famously supported his pursuit of religious studies.
- Brother:
 - His older brother was named Nadr ibn Anas.
 - He was the classmate of Imam al-Zuhri, the earliest major scholar to systematically compile and record Hadith by the order of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz.
 - Imam Malik was initially recognized in Madinah as "the brother of Nadr". After his scholarly achievements, Nadr was known as the "the brother of Malik."
- Other family members:
 - His uncles etc. were muhadditheen, connected to great scholars of the time.
 - They were known to be directly involved with Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz who was the governor of Madinah when Imam Malik was a child.
- Birth:
 - His birth is historically cited between 93 and 97 AH.
 - The most favored and widely accepted year of his birth is 93 AH. This is the same year that Anas ibn Malik, the prominent Companion passed away.
 - He had a unique birth. His mother famously carried him in her womb for an extended period of time before his birth.
 - Some narrations claim he remained in his mother's womb for two to three years.

- Physical Description:
 - He was often described as having very fair/pale skin.
 - He had light blonde to white hair.
 - His eyes were distinct and blue.
 - He was known for his towering, robust stature.
 - He was described as being bald.
 - He made it a point to consistently wear fine, clean, and predominantly white clothes.
- Pursuit of Knowledge:
 - In his early years, he had no interest in knowledge. He had the passion of raising pigeons.
 - Despite his inclination for play, he memorized the Qur'an at a young age of 10, as this was part of early education.
 - The turning point:
 - One day, his father quizzed both him and his brother. While his brother answered correctly, he failed the test.
 - So his father said to him: "Playing with birds has distracted you from the quest for knowledge."
 - From that day onwards, he was determined to dedicate himself to studying knowledge, around the age of 12-13.
 - When he approached his mother stating his intention to learn hadith, she dressed him in the best scholar's attire.
 - She placed a tall cap on his head, and wound a turban (imama) around it to signal the dignity and identity of a student of knowledge.
 - She advised him: "Go to Rabi'ah Abdur Rahman and learn his manners and etiquette before you acquire knowledge from him."
- Lifestyle:
 - He hails from a respected, well-off family.
 - He helped out in his family's business and trade, during his youth.

- He frequently chose a life of poverty.
- He often gives away his earnings to the needy until he has nothing left.
- According to historical accounts, he faced such financial duress that he dismantled the wooden beams and lumber from the roof of his own house and sold them to fund his daily life and studies.
- High Standards and Strict Criteria:
 - He was known for being meticulous when selecting who to study from.
 - He told his students: "Indeed, this knowledge is your flesh and blood, and on the Day of Resurrection, you will be questioned about it. Therefore, look to whom you take it from".
 - He established strict criteria for hadith narrators. He learned from narrators who were a faqih (jurist) rather than mere muhadditheen.
 - He once visited Aisha bint Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas to learn from her. Despite her being an authentic narrator, he left without noting her narrations out of concern that her advanced age had affected her memory.
 - His foundational compilation, Al-Muwatta', was based on narrations from 110 teachers despite meeting many scholars.
 - He refused to issue fatwas or teach until he was formally authorized by 70 scholars of his time. He began this endeavor at age 21.
- Teachers:
 - Abdur-Rahman ibn Hurmuz
 - He was one of his most influential teachers.
 - He was nicknamed Al-A'raj (the limping one), due to a physical disability he had.
 - He was his primary teacher whom he studied with for many years.

- He would never knock on his door but sit quietly outside for extended periods, willing to wait however long it took to acquire knowledge.
- He studied under him daily. He would arrive early in the morning and stay until nightfall.
 - He emphasized the principle of sitting with a local master (from Fajr to Isha) over traveling, believing that consistent, prolonged mentorship builds deep understanding and character.
- He went to great lengths to ensure his teacher wasn't disturbed. He famously brought dates for his teacher's children, telling them to announce to any visitors that their father was busy.
- Amr ibn Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr and Hisham ibn Urwa ibn al-Zubayr
 - They were the grandchildren of the prominent Companion, Zubayr ibn Al-Awwam
- Imam al-Zuhri
 - He would wait outside his home as the door was always crowded with eager seekers of knowledge.
 - He had high praise for Imam Malik:
 - After Eid salah, knowing that other students would be occupied celebrating, Imam Malik went and sat at Al-Zuhri's door hoping for a quiet, one-on-one session.
 - Al-Zuhri asked his maidservant to check who was at the door. When she returned and said it was his "slave," Al-Zuhri told her to let him in.
 - Imam Malik requested to learn Hadith. Al-Zuhri dictated 17 narrations to him on the spot, without him notating them. Some mention 40 narrations.

- After Al-Zuhri finished, Imam Malik recited all 40 Hadith back to him from memory with flawless accuracy, which caused Al-Zuhri to remark that he was "truly a vessel of knowledge."
- Ja'far al-Sadiq
 - He was a descendant of the Prophet (ﷺ) and an immensely respected scholar in Madinah.
 - He is the great-great-grandson of Ali ibn Abi Talib. His lineage goes: Ali ibn Abi Talib → Husayn ibn Ali → Ali Zayn al-Abidin → Muhammad al-Baqir → Ja'far al-Sadiq.
 - He maintained ritual purity at all times, often described as renewing his wudu before every class.
 - Imam Malik would follow this meticulous routine. Before beginning any class to narrate hadith, he would perform a ghusl.
- 'Amrah bint Abdur Rahman
 - She was a prominent jurist, muhaddithah and one of the closest students of Aisha bint Abu Bakr.
 - She became one of the most authoritative transmitters of Aisha's hadith.
 - Her grandfather was the prominent Companion, Sa'd ibn Zurarah; the brother of the famous Sahabi As'ad ibn Zurarah.
 - As'ad was the first person (Ansari) in Madinah to embrace Islam.
 - He led the early Muslims in Madinah in the first congregational Friday prayer.
 - He passed away shortly after the Prophet's migration to Madinah.
 - He was honored by being the very first Companion from the Ansar to be buried in Al-Baqi.

- Imam Nafi' al-Madani
 - He was a foundational master of Tajweed and one of the canonical Ten Qira'at imams.
 - He was a key teacher of Imam Malik in both Qur'an recitation and Hadith.
- Nafi'
 - He was the freed slave of Abdullah ibn Umar, and one of the most important teachers of Imam Malik.
 - He spent his formative years seeking knowledge from Nafi', approaching him for Hadith and legal rulings, especially during the later stages of Nafi's life.
 - In the two to three years he spent with him, he narrated approximately 70 hadiths directly from him. The shortest chain of narration he has: Ibn Umar → Nafi' → Malik.
 - He passed away when Imam Malik was in his early twenties.
 - His reserved, stern demeanor and rigorous scholarship served as an influence, shaping Imam Malik's own solemn, dignified, and authoritative character.
 - Imam Malik would wait outside Nafi's home in the intense sun, biding his time to ask questions without agitating his teacher, who was known to be very stern and temperamental.
 - The Seven Fuqaha of Madinah were either his direct teachers or grand-teachers.
- Adab in Gatherings:
 - Scholars widely regard this hadith as a prophecy specifically foretelling the coming and prominence of Imam Malik as a Madinan scholar.

- Narrated Abu Salih reported a narration from Abu Hurairah:

"يُوشِكُ أَنْ يَضْرِبَ النَّاسُ، أَكْبَادَ الْإِبِلِ يَطْلُبُونَ الْعِلْمَ فَلَا يَجِدُونَ أَحَدًا أَعْلَمَ مِنْ عَالِمِ الْمَدِينَةِ"
"It shall soon be that people are beating the livers of camels (meaning that they are hastening and traveling upon them) seeking knowledge. But they will not find anyone more knowledgeable than a scholar of Al-Madinah."

- His chosen teaching spot was in between the Rawdah; between the Prophet's grave and minbar, continuing the profound legacy of his teacher Nafi'.
- He sat at the exact pillar where the Prophet (ﷺ) performed i'tikaf, the same spot Umar would give his speeches. He regarded this exact area as the most virtuous place on earth to pray Salah.
- In his gatherings, he would frequently refer to the Prophet (ﷺ) as "the dweller of this grave" when introducing the hadith.
- Out of his reverence and awe for the Prophet (ﷺ), it was noted that whenever the name of the Prophet (ﷺ) was mentioned in his company, the color of his face would change, turning pale.
 - He would explain to his students that if they had witnessed the generation that came before him — the Tabi'in who personally sat with the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) — they would understand the gravity and weight of mentioning his name.
 - He said: "If I experienced a lapse in my spiritual state or felt sluggish, I would look at Muhammad ibn al-Munkadir to inspire myself, as his state and worship would deeply move me."
- His gatherings were described as resembling those of a king. It was filled with profound, meticulous reverence for sacred knowledge. No one dared to speak loudly, joke, or talk idly.

- One of his students Ibn Wahab remarked: "We have been in his company for more than thirty years, and we never saw him laugh until this day." This rare moment occurred when a man from Nasibin described a group of people who ate excessively, then began to sing and dance, with some striking their own heads and faces in their spiritual states.
- When Imam Abu Hanifa's son, Hammad, traveled to Madinah to study under him, he greeted him with Salam. However, the students in Imam Malik's gathering instructed him to remain silent. Imam Malik then recited astaghfirullah multiple times out of humility and respect for the transmission of knowledge before proceeding to narrate 20 hadiths to his students. This highlights the different temperaments of the scholars' gatherings and illustrates that students of knowledge must adapt their demeanor to match the unique environment and methodology of each teacher.
- The very first sentence he would say in his study circles, is the phrase:

سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

*Subhanaka la 'ilma lana 'illa ma allamtana innaka antal-Alimul Hakim
Glory be to You. We have no knowledge except what You have taught us (2:32)*

- He was extremely humble and cautious when it came to issuing religious verdicts. He often stated "I don't know" when people traveled to meet him and asked questions.
 - He told his students: "The shield of the scholar is to say, 'I do not know'; if he drops it, his attacker will strike him."

- Admitting "I don't know" frequently was his way of honoring the gravity of sacred knowledge, protecting himself from the spiritual danger of misguidance, and keeping the door open to continued learning.
- If someone asked for a Hadith casually — such as while walking in the street or without showing proper seriousness — he would refuse to answer them. He strictly required students to approach sacred knowledge with dignity rather than treating it casually.
- When someone asked him even a simple question, he took his time to answer them. He would bow his head in silence, his brow dripping with sweat as if he was standing between Jannah and Jahannam.
- He strongly discouraged debating, arguing, and disputation in religious matters. He considered it a waste of time and a detriment to spiritual and intellectual growth.
 - When approached by individuals with differing or heretical desires, he would say: "As for me, I am upon clear evidence from my Lord and my Deen. And as for you, you are in doubt, so go to a doubter and argue with him."
- Many of the scholars who initially taught him became his students by the end of his life, narrating hadith from him (i.e., Imam Zuhri). It shows that he surpassed them in hadith.
- He never traveled for the sake of education and only left the Madinah to perform Hajj. Some mentioned he did this once in his life, others say he went for multiple Hajj.