

SUMMER IMMERSION

LEGACY: LIVES OF THE FOUR IMAMS



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SESSION 5

2. Imam Malik (Cont.)

- Students:
 - Imam Shafi'i
 - He was the most accomplished and brilliant pupil of Imam Malik, yet he developed a distinct legal methodology that differed from his teacher.
 - Ibn Qasim
 - His full name was Abdul Rahman ibn Qasim.
 - He was a descendant of the slaves of Ta'if who were freed by the Prophet after Hijrah. This is why he was known as al-Atiqi due to this historical connection of freedom.
 - He serves as the primary transmitter of the Maliki school, narrating Al-Mudawwana — the monumental legal text that forms the core of Maliki jurisprudence. It provided the vast majority of legal rulings and answers compiled.
 - The survival of a legal school relies on its students. Imam Malik's students successfully compiled and spread the Maliki school.
 - Imam al-Shafi'i stated that Al-Layth ibn Sa'd was more knowledgeable and a greater jurist than Imam Malik, but his students failed to properly preserve and spread his legal school, causing the local legal tradition of Al-Layth to fade away. Some intellectual rivalries and regional preferences did exist among their students regarding their legal methodologies.

- Ashhab ibn Abd al-Aziz
 - He was initially a student in Egypt that studied under Al-Layth ibn Sa'd but studied with Imam Malik in Madinah.
 - He became renowned for his uncompromising defense of Maliki jurisprudence alongside a stern rivalry with Imam al-Shafi'i in Egypt.
- Yahya ibn Yahya
 - He was originally from Al-Andalus (Spain).
 - He traveled all the way to Madinah to study under Imam Malik.
 - When other students ran out to see a rare elephant, Yahya stayed behind, telling Imam Malik he traveled far to learn from the teacher, not to look at elephants.
 - He is best known as the primary transmitter of Imam Malik's Al-Muwatta' in its finalized version.
 - His narration of Al-Muwatta' is the most popular, authoritative, and widely read version in the Islamic world. It became the standard text for the Maliki school.
 - He witnessed the final days, death, and janazah of Imam Malik.
- As'ad ibn al-Furat
 - He became one of the main Qadis of Iraq and was known for his sharp firasa (spiritual insight).
 - He was advised by Imam Malik to be gentle with people.
 - He taught hadith to Imam Muhammad and Imam Abu Yusuf; the students of Imam Abu Hanifa. And he consequently learned the fiqh of Imam Abu Hanifa from them.
- Advice to His Students:
 - He would say: "I am indebted to anyone who shared just one hadith narration from me".

- This saying was adapted from Ali ibn Abi Talib who used to say: "I am a slave to the person who has taught me even a single word. He may sell me, or set me free, or enslave me."
- This shows how much appreciation he had for his students and the transmission of sacred knowledge.
- He taught that a seeker of knowledge must possess two qualities:
 - 1. Tranquility (sakinah):
 - Meaning, students must display emotional composure and stillness rather than haste or loud behavior, so others will hold that knowledge in high regard.
 - 2. Following the Predecessors:
 - Meaning, it needs to be very clear that every scholar that came after the Prophet (ﷺ) only transmitted and followed his light.
 - Until today, we are just following the path and narrations of those who came before us. Thus, there is nothing new that is being invented.
- He stated: "The narrations (athar/traditions) do not decrease among a people except that personal desires (ahwa) increase among them."
 - Meaning, when people stop following authentic religious reports and guidance, they tend to follow their own subjective whims and desires instead, or innovations that deviate from established guidance.
- He highlights that when true, grounded scholarship fades from society, people lose their softness, empathy, and moral refinement. Instead, harshness, rigid egos, and coarse behavior become very visible among them.

- Meaning, that true religious knowledge instills humility and grace. And when authentic learning fades, society loses its warmth, turning interactions harsh, aggressive, and unkind.
- He took learning character and good manners (adab) seriously, that he emphasized: "Learn from a scholar, even in the smallest details like putting on your shoes."
 - Meaning, learning is not just memorizing texts but watching how a teacher carries themselves, treats others, and embodies spiritual discipline in daily routines.
 - Pay attention to every detail because all learning matters, no matter how small.
- Worship:
 - He often secluded himself in his home in Madinah, keeping his worship private and hidden from public view.
 - He taught that every person should have secret good deeds known only to Allah.
 - He intentionally bought soft prayer mats to ensure physical traces of worship — such as marks on the face from prostration — remained unnoticed.
 - He used to get stuck on repeating this one ayah all night long:

ثُمَّ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ

"Then, on that Day, you will be asked about the pleasure [you enjoyed in this world]."
(102:8)

- He would stay up to pray the entire night on Thursday nights.
- He would start off the first night of every new month spending the entire night in worship.
- Household:
 - He lived with his wife and children in Madinah.

- His sister, whom he has a close relationship with, also lived with him. He praised her towards the end of his life as she assisted in caring for him and his children throughout the difficult moments of his life.
- He had three children — Yahya, Muhammad and Fatima. Some narrations mentioned a third son.
 - While all three children narrated hadith from him, his daughter was considered the most knowledgeable of his children regarding his teachings.
 - She was known to narrate his Al-Muwatta' with utmost precision and memorized the entire Al-Muwatta' by heart.
 - She would sit concealed behind the door of her home while her father taught his students. When a student made a mistake reciting a narration to Imam Malik, she would tap on the door to signal the error, and Imam Malik would make the correction.
 - She formally issued legal rulings (fatwa) after her father's death.
- Al-Muwatta':
 - It was the first book of its kind to be compiled in this manner; combining hadith and fiqh.
 - It blends statements of the Prophet (ﷺ), the Sahabah, the Tabi'in, regional legal practice ('amal of Madinah), and Imam Malik's own scholarly rulings.
 - It was compiled over a span of roughly 20 years.
 - Upon completion, he showed the text to various scholars, all of whom agreed (wata'a) with its contents, leading to the name al-Muwatta' meaning "The Approved" or "That upon which there is agreement".
 - It is highly valued for its concise chains of narration linking back to the Prophet (ﷺ).

- It is a foundational text studied across Islamic schools of jurisprudence.
- It was widely respected that Caliph Harun al-Rashid of the Abbasid Caliphate wished to make Al-Muwatta' the mandatory, universal law for the entire empire, but Imam Malik politely refused the proposal.
 - He stated that the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) held diverse views and different interpretations across various regions, and that people should not be forced into a single legal uniformity and that legal flexibility was a mercy.
- Torture:
 - During the rule of the Abbasid Caliphate, he faced severe tension and persecution from the Abbasid government.
 - Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya led a major revolt in Madinah against Banu Abbas in 145 AH.
 - People in Madinah were forced by the state to swear allegiance (bay'ah) to the Abbasids.
 - When many asked if Imam Malik could join this revolt, he validated the legitimacy of the grievances behind the revolt.
 - He issued a fatwa stating that oaths of allegiance taken under coercion are invalid, using the legal principle that "the divorce of the coerced is null and void".
 - Upon the declaration of his fatwa, the governor of Madinah, Ja'far ibn Sulayman, who was a relative of the Prophet (ﷺ), had him arrested, stripped, publicly whipped (around 100 lashes, in a span of 10 days), and hoisted or stretched by his arms until his shoulders were dislocated.
 - He was paraded or mounted on an animal through the streets where he proclaimed his identity and steadfastly repeated his legal position.

- Despite the extreme pain and public humiliation, he forgave the governor, refusing to hold him accountable because of his kinship to the Prophet (ﷺ). He stated that he did not want anyone related to the Prophet (ﷺ) to face difficulty on the Day of Judgment because of him.
- Madinah had supporters who were ready to defend him by force. However, he strictly forbade his followers from fighting the authorities or starting an armed rebellion. He directed his followers toward patience to prevent civil unrest and bloodshed among Muslims in the Prophet's city.
- When Caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur later found out and offered to punish the governor or give him exact justice, he declined, asking the Caliph to spare him because of his relation to the Prophet (ﷺ), stating that he forgave him entirely.
- Whenever he recounted this event, he would say: "There's no good in anybody that doesn't struggle in this field." This statement reflects that true scholars expect pain when they refuse to bend Allah's law for worldly powers.
- Death
 - He fell ill towards the end of his life. Some say this was due to the sufferings he endured from the facing torture years earlier, while others say it was general old age.
 - His final illness lasted for roughly 22 days. It kept him confined and unable to attend congregational prayers at the Prophet's Mosque (Masjid an-Nabawi).
 - Nearing his end, he would say: "I wish that I got lashed for every single question that I ever answered in my life."
 - He died in 179 AH at the age of 84 in Madinah.
 - When he passed away, the fifth governor, the grandson of Abdullah ibn Abbas, Muhammad ibn Zaynab ibn Sulayman ibn Ali ibn Abbas, led his janazah.
 - He was laid to rest in Jannat al-Baqi' cemetery.