TRACING THE SCHOLARS OF ISLAM

SERIES 7

IMAM AHMAD IBN HANBAL

Imam of Ahl as-Sunnah, Compiler of al-Musnad and the Scholar Who Stood Firm in Trial



HJ CHE ALIM HJ CHE HARON

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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"And We made from among them leaders guiding by Our command when they were patient and [when] they were certain of Our signs."

SURAH AS-SAJDAH 32:24

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who made from among His servants leaders who guide with patience and certainty. Blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and upon his family, his Companions, and the imams who stood firm in defending his religion.

This eBook is specially dedicated to my beloved wife,

ZAHARAH MOHD LATIF;

my dear children,

MUHAMMAD HAFIZ, NOOR HAZWANI, ABDUL HAKIM, NOOR HIDAYAH, NOR AQILA and **NOR ATIQAH**;

and my sons- and daughters-in-law,

FAZILAH, MALEK, HANIN, FAIRIZAL and **FIRWAN**.

This seventh book of Tracing the Scholars of Islam completes the story of the four imams of the schools. May the steadfastness of Imam Ahmad in trial strengthen our faith, and may this knowledge be ‘ilmun yuntafa‘u bih, knowledge that brings benefit.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

The cover of this eBook, in a **3D** illustration style, shows an imam **drawn from behind, without a face** — because no true likeness of Imam Ahmad exists, and the faces of the early scholars are not invented. This time the view is from **directly behind**, with the scholar **standing in prayer** on a prayer mat — for Imam Ahmad was famous for his night prayer.

He wears **a simple, patched robe**, a symbol of his zuhd. To his left are **bundled manuscript volumes** — a symbol of ***al-Musnad*** — and to his right **an open iron chain** lying on the floor: a symbol of the ***Mihnah*** he endured with steadfastness, yet the chain no longer binds him.

Through the window appears **the River Tigris in Baghdad at night**, with a full moon, and **a small clay lamp** lights the very simple room.

Two gold lines at the bottom frame the author's name, while the image runs in full to the edge of the page.

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Colour guide: green box = verses of the Qur'an; gold box = Hadith; brown box = history note (reports from the books of history and biography); blue table = comparison. Underlined blue narrator names can be clicked to open the narrator's page on sunnah.com.

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IMAM AHMAD IBN HANBAL

The seventh book of **Tracing the Scholars of Islam** completes the story of ***the four imams of the schools***: ***Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal*** رحمه الله, the student of Imam ash-Shafi'i (Series 6), compiler of ***al-Musnad***, and the imam called ***the Imam of Ahl as-Sunnah*** for his steadfastness in defending the creed when he was tested.

Imam ash-Shafi'i said: ***"I left Baghdad, and I left behind no man more virtuous, more learned, more knowledgeable in fiqh or more God-fearing than Ahmad ibn Hanbal."***

Note: The translation of the Qur'anic verses in this eBook is Sahih International. The grading of each Hadith is stated in its Hadith box. Information from the books of history and biography is placed in brown "History Note" boxes.

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LEADERS THROUGH PATIENCE AND CERTAINTY

SURAH AS-SAJDAH 32:24

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا ۖ وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

And We made from among them leaders guiding by Our command when they were patient and [when] they were certain of Our signs.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/32:24

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 32:24

Allah made leaders who guide people ***"when they were patient and [when] they were certain of Our signs"***. The scholars say that it is through ***patience and certainty*** that leadership in religion is attained. This verse almost describes the life of Imam Ahmad: he became ***an imam who is followed*** because of his patience in trial and his certainty in the signs of Allah.

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WHO WAS IMAM AHMAD?

His full name was ***Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Hanbal ibn Hilal ibn Asad ash-Shaybani***, with the kunyah ***Abu 'Abdillah***. He was an Arab of the tribe of Banu Shayban. He was ***born in Baghdad in 164 AH***, ***grew up an orphan***, and began seeking knowledge in earnest in his youth.

TEACHERS AND TRAVELS

Imam Ahmad travelled to Kufa, Basra, Makkah, Madinah, Syria and Yemen to collect Hadith. Among his teachers were ***Hushaym***, ***Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah***, ***'Abd ar-Razzaq as-San'ani*** in Yemen, and ***Imam ash-Shafi'i*** in Baghdad. His students included ***Imam al-Bukhari*** and ***Imam Muslim***.

THE VERDICT OF THE SCHOLARS

Ibn Hajar: "One of the imams — ***trustworthy, a hafiz, a jurist, an authority***." **'Ali ibn al-Madini:** "There is no one among our companions with ***a stronger memory*** than him." **Yahya ibn Ma'in:** "I have never seen anyone ***better*** than Ahmad." **Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Qattan** called him ***"one of the great scholars of this ummah"***.

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AN ORPHAN IN THE CITY OF BAGHDAD

Imam Ahmad was born in ***Baghdad***, the ‘Abbasid capital built by the Caliph Abu Ja‘far al-Mansur some twenty years earlier. The city had become ***the centre of learning and government*** of the Muslim world — where scholars, theologians and philosophers met.

His father, ***Muhammad ibn Hanbal***, died when Ahmad was small. He was raised by his mother, ***Safiyyah bint Maymunah***, who was widowed young and did not remarry so that she could raise her son.

HISTORY NOTE: A MOTHER WHO WAITED BEFORE DAWN

The books of manaqib relate that Imam Ahmad’s mother ***taught him the Qur’an*** as a child. When he began studying Hadith, she ***warmed his ablution water*** on cold nights, dressed him, and ***walked with him to the mosque*** before Fajr — because the streets of Baghdad were dark and unsafe — and waited until the lesson ended.

This is a ***biographical report*** (not a Hadith) from Ibn al-Jawzi’s Manaqib al-Imam Ahmad. Behind a great imam stood ***a self-sacrificing mother***.

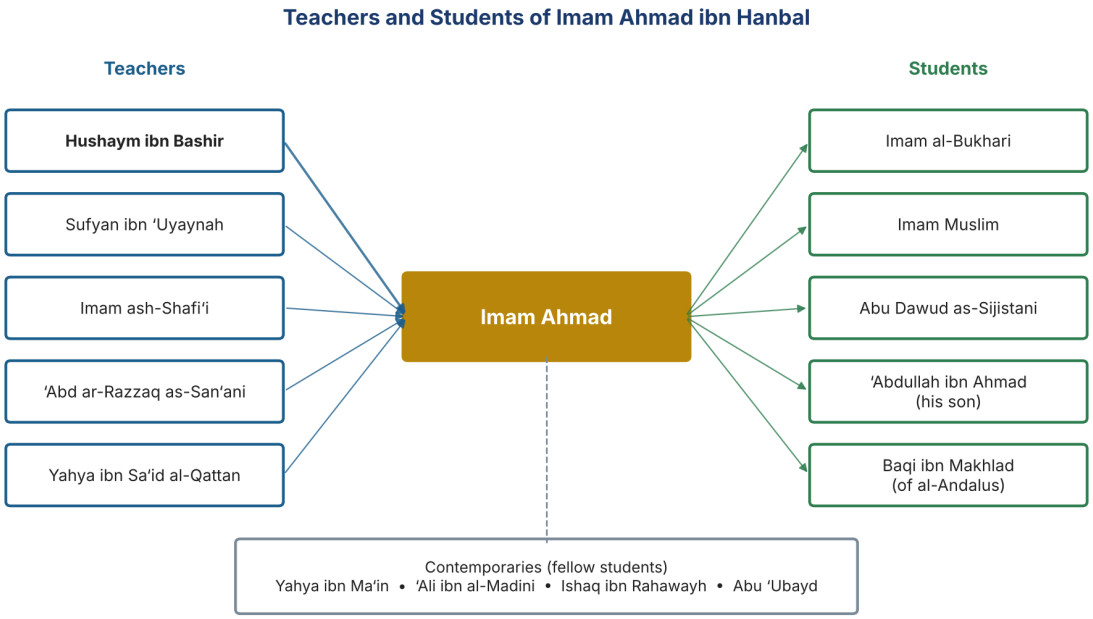
REFERENCES:

Ibn al-Jawzi, Manaqib al-Imam Ahmad; adh-Dhahabi, Siyar A‘lam an-Nubala’, vol. 11.

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BEGINNING TO SEEK HADITH

At ***about sixteen*** (179 AH), Ahmad began attending the Hadith circle of ***Hushaym ibn Bashir***, the muhaddith of Baghdad, and stayed with him for several years. Then he travelled across the Muslim world and studied with many great scholars.



Simplified diagram based on the books of narrators (Tahdhib al-Kamal, Siyar A'lam an-Nubala'). The real lists are much longer.

Figure 1: Teachers and students of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal.

The diagram shows something remarkable: three of ***the six compilers of the major Hadith collections*** — al-Bukhari, Muslim and Abu Dawud — were students of Imam Ahmad.

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DEVOTION TO ONE'S MOTHER

Imam Ahmad was raised by ***his mother*** after his father died (chapter 3). The sacrifice of a mother who walked her son to the circle of learning before Fajr is ***a debt of gratitude*** beyond measure.

SURAH AL-ISRA' 17:23–24

۞ وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوٓا۟ إِلَّآ إِيَّاهُ وَبِٱلْوَٰلِدَيْنِ إِحْسَٰنًا ۚ إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِندَكَ
ٱلْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَآ أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُل لَّهُمَآ أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُل لَّهُمَا قَوْلًا
كَرِيمًا ﴿٢٣﴾

And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much as], "uff," and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word.

وَٱخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ ٱلذُّلِّ مِنَ ٱلرَّحْمَةِ وَقُل رَّبِّ ٱرْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِى صَغِيرًا
﴿٢٤﴾

And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy and say, "My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] small."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/17:23-24

Allah commands: ***"My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] small"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 17:23

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HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5971

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا جَرِيرٌ، عَنْ عُمَارَةَ بْنِ الْقَعْقَاعِ بْنِ شُبْرُمَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي زُرْعَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ قَالَ جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَنْ أَحَقُّ بِحُسْنِ صَحَابَتِي قَالَ « أُمُّكَ ». قَالَ ثُمَّ مَنْ قَالَ « أُمُّكَ ». قَالَ ثُمَّ مَنْ قَالَ « أُمُّكَ ». قَالَ ثُمَّ مَنْ قَالَ « ثُمَّ أَبُوكَ ». وَقَالَ ابْنُ شُبْرُمَةَ وَيَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو زُرْعَةَ مِثْلَهُ.

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه said: A man came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said: O Messenger of Allah, who is most deserving of my good companionship? He said: **"Your mother."** He said: Then who? He said: **"Your mother."** He said: Then who? He said: **"Your mother."** He said: Then who? He said: **"Then your father."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Qutaybah ibn Sa'id, from Jarir ibn 'Abd al-Hamid, from 'Umarah ibn al-Qa'qa' ibn Shubrumah, from Abu Zur'ah ibn 'Amr, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Good Manners, chapter on who is most entitled to good companionship, Hadith No. 5971. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 2548).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:5971

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ mentioned ***the mother three times***. Behind many great scholars — ash-Shafi'i (Book 6) and Ahmad — stands ***a mother who sacrificed***. Praying for one's parents is a devotion that continues even after they pass away.

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ON FOOT TO YEMEN

To hear Hadith from ***'Abd ar-Razzaq as-San'ani***, Imam Ahmad travelled from Makkah to ***San'a' in Yemen*** — with his friend ***Yahya ibn Ma'in***. The journey was long, and he had no wealth.

> **HISTORY NOTE: CARRYING LOADS FOR KNOWLEDGE**
>
> Adh-Dhahabi and Abu Nu'aym relate that on the way to Yemen, Imam Ahmad's provisions ran out. He ***refused money*** offered by others and instead ***worked as a porter*** in the caravan until he reached San'a'.
>
> He stayed in Yemen for a time, copying Hadith for a fee to support himself. This is a ***biographical report*** showing ***the dignity and self-respect*** of a seeker of knowledge.
>
> **REFERENCES:**
> Adh-Dhahabi, Siyar A'lam an-Nubala'; Abu Nu'aym, Hilyat al-Awliya' — biography of Imam Ahmad.

This attitude matches the words of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ on the honour of earning with one's own hands:

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HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2072

حَدَّثَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بْنُ مُوسَى، أَخْبَرَنَا عِيسَى، عَنْ ثَوْرٍ، عَنْ خَالِدِ بْنِ مَعْدَانَ، عَنِ الْمِقْدَامِ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا أَكَلَ أَحَدٌ طَعَامًا قَطُّ خَيْرًا مِنْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ مِنْ عَمَلِ يَدِهِ، وَإِنَّ نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ دَاوُدَ ـ عَلَيْهِ السَّلاَمُ ـ كَانَ يَأْكُلُ مِنْ عَمَلِ يَدِهِ ».

TRANSLATION:

Al-Miqdam رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"No one has ever eaten food better than what he eats from the work of his own hands. And the Prophet of Allah David عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ used to eat from the work of his own hands."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Ibrahim ibn Musa, from 'Isa ibn Yunus, from Thawr ibn Yazid, from Khalid ibn Ma'dan, from al-Miqdam ibn Ma'dikarib رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Sales (Kitab al-Buyu'), chapter on a man's earning and the work of his hands, Hadith No. 2072.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:2072

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

The best provision is what one earns with one's own hands. Imam Ahmad chose to carry loads rather than hold out his hand — and this is what later allowed him to ***refuse the caliph's gifts*** with dignity.

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JOURNEYS IN SEARCH OF HADITH

Like other Hadith scholars, Imam Ahmad travelled to many cities to ***hear Hadith directly*** from teachers. Such a journey is called ***rihlah fi talab al-hadith***.

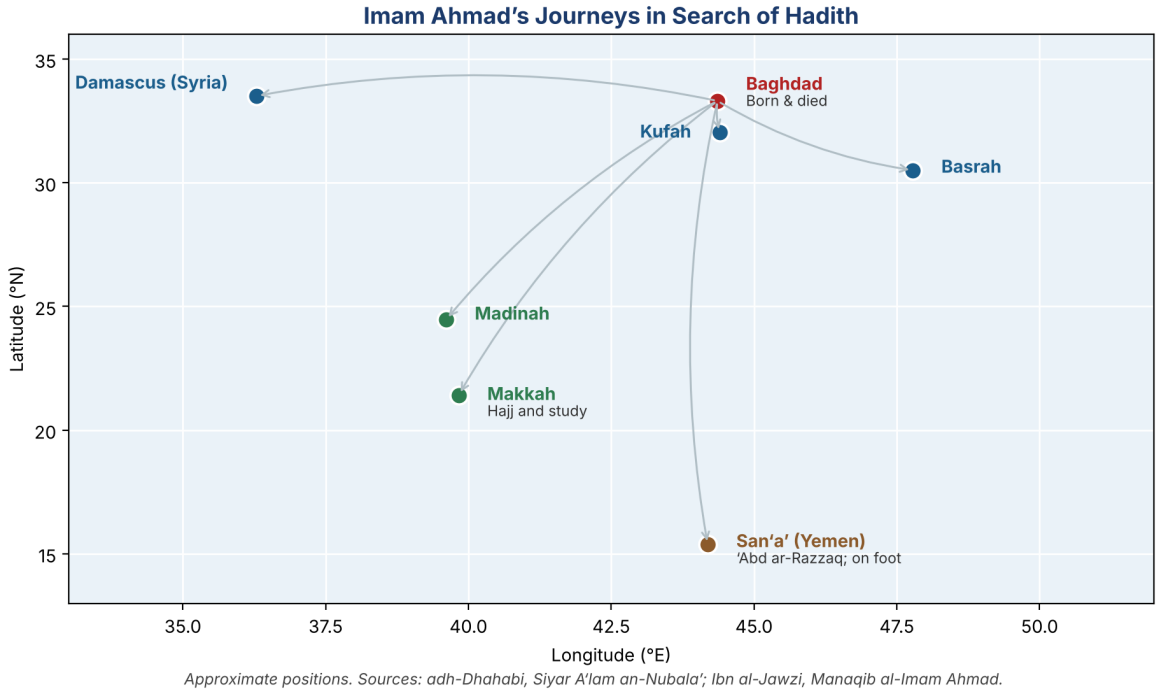


Figure 2: Some of the cities Imam Ahmad visited in search of Hadith (approximate positions).

CITY	ITS IMPORTANCE
Baghdad	His birthplace, place of study and place of death.
Kufah and Basrah	Centres of Hadith and fiqh in Iraq.
Makkah and Madinah	Hajj and circles of learning in the Holy Land.
San'a', Yemen	Hearing Hadith from 'Abd ar-Razzaq (chapter 5).

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AL-MUSNAD: AN OCEAN OF HADITH

Imam Ahmad's greatest work is ***al-Musnad*** — a collection of Hadith arranged by the names of the Companions who narrated them, containing about ***27,000 Hadith*** (according to the count of modern printed editions, including repetitions). Imam Ahmad was also a teacher of Imam Muslim, who narrated Hadith directly from him in Sahih Muslim. Among them:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2421 — NARRATED BY IMAM AHMAD HIMSELF

حَدَّثَنِي أَحْمَدُ بْنُ حَنْبَلٍ، حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ بْنُ عُيَيْنَةَ، حَدَّثَنِي عُبَيْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ أَبِي يَزِيدَ، عَنْ نَافِعِ بْنِ جُبَيْرٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَنَّهُ قَالَ لِحَسَنٍ «اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أُحِبُّهُ فَأَحِبَّهُ وَأَحْبِبْ مَنْ يُحِبُّهُ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said about al-Hasan (ibn 'Ali) رضى الله عنهما: **"O Allah, I love him, so love him, and love whoever loves him."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, from 'Ubaydullah ibn Abi Yazid, from Nafi' ibn Jubayr, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of the Merits of the Companions, chapter on the virtues of al-Hasan and al-Husayn, Hadith No. 2421. Imam Muslim narrated it directly from his teacher, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, the second most authentic book of Hadith after Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2421a

LESSON FROM THIS HADITH

Look at its chain: ***Imam Muslim, from Imam Ahmad, from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah*** (the teacher of Imam ash-Shafi'i). Three great imams in one chain! Its content shows ***love for the Prophet's family*** ﷺ — something Imam Ahmad held dear, who wrote the book ***Fada'il as-Sahabah***.

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HONOURING THE COMPANIONS

Al-Musnad is arranged by ***the names of the Companions*** who narrated the Hadith (chapter 7). This arrangement itself shows Imam Ahmad's ***honour*** for the generation of the Companions:

SURAH AT-TAWBAH 9:100

وَٱلسَّٰبِقُونَ ٱلْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ ٱلْمُهَٰجِرِينَ وَٱلْأَنصَارِ وَٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّبَعُوهُم بِإِحْسَٰنٍ
رَّضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا۟ عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّٰتٍ تَجْرِى تَحْتَهَا ٱلْأَنْهَٰرُ خَٰلِدِينَ
فِيهَآ أَبَدًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ ٱلْفَوْزُ ٱلْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾

And the first forerunners [in the faith] among the Muhajireen and the Ansar and those who followed them with good conduct - Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. That is the great attainment.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/9:100

"Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him". Tafsir Ibn Kathir 9:100

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HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3673 (MUTTAFAQ ‘ALAYH)

حَدَّثَنَا آدَمُ بْنُ أَبِي إِيَاسٍ، حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، عَنِ الأَعْمَشِ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ ذَكْوَانَ، يُحَدِّثُ عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ قَالَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم «لاَ تَسُبُّوا أَصْحَابِي، فَلَوْ أَنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ أَنْفَقَ مِثْلَ أُحُدٍ ذَهَبًا مَا بَلَغَ مُدَّ أَحَدِهِمْ وَلاَ نَصِيفَهُ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri رضى الله عنه said: The Prophet ﷺ said: **“Do not revile my Companions. If one of you were to spend gold equal to Mount Uhud, it would not reach a mudd (handful) of one of them, nor even half of it.”**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Adam ibn Abi Iyas, from Shu‘bah, from al-A‘mash, from Dhakwan (Abu Salih), from Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Virtues of the Companions, Hadith No. 3673. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 2541).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3673

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

The Companions are ***the carriers of the Qur’an and the Sunnah*** to us. Reviling them means doubting the path by which this religion reached us. Imam Ahmad preserved their names in ***thousands*** of chains.

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CARE IN ACCEPTING REPORTS

Imam Ahmad did not only memorise Hadith; he also ***assessed narrators***. His verdicts on narrators — trustworthy or weak — are widely quoted in the books of rijal. Imam Muslim opened his Sahih with this warning:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, INTRODUCTION NO. 5 — FROM IMAM MUSLIM'S OWN INTRODUCTION

وَحَدَّثَنَا عُبَيْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مُعَاذٍ الْعَنْبَرِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي ح، وَحَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْمُثَنَّى، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ مَهْدِيٍّ، قَالاَ حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، عَنْ خُبَيْبِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ، عَنْ حَفْصِ بْنِ عَاصِمٍ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «كَفَى بِالْمَرْءِ كَذِبًا أَنْ يُحَدِّثَ بِكُلِّ مَا سَمِعَ».

TRANSLATION:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"It is enough of a lie for a person to narrate everything he hears."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from 'Ubaydullah ibn Mu'adh al-'Anbari, from his father Mu'adh ibn Mu'adh; and from Muhammad ibn al-Muthanna, from 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Mahdi, both from Shu'bah, from Khubayb ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman, from Hafs ibn 'Asim. In the following narration, Imam Muslim narrates it with a connected chain: from Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah, from 'Ali ibn Hafs, from Shu'bah, with the same chain, from Hafs ibn 'Asim, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in the Introduction to Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 5; the connected narration through Abu Hurairah is in the Introduction, narration 7 (sunnah.com/muslim/introduction/7).

GRADE: SAHIH — Imam Muslim placed it in the Introduction to Sahih Muslim and narrated it with a connected chain through Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:5

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

In the age of social media this warning is very relevant: ***do not spread everything you hear***. Check the source first — as in the table of popular stories in chapter 20 of this eBook.

THE HADITH SCHOLARS' ATTITUDE	OUR ATTITUDE TODAY
Checking the chain	Checking the source of news.
Assessing narrators	Assessing the reliability of the messenger.
Rejecting fabrications	Not spreading fake news.

AHMAD AND ASH-SHAFI'I

Imam Ahmad studied with ***Imam ash-Shafi'i*** (Series 6) while ash-Shafi'i was in Baghdad. Though Ahmad later became the imam of his own school, the love between this teacher and student became an example for all time.

HISTORY NOTE: PRAISING AND PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER

Ash-Shafi'i is reported to have said on leaving Baghdad: ***"I left Baghdad and did not leave behind anyone with more fiqh, more zuhd, more wara' or more knowledge than Ahmad ibn Hanbal."***

Imam Ahmad is reported to have ***prayed for ash-Shafi'i in his prayers*** for years. When his son 'Abdullah asked who ash-Shafi'i was that he prayed for him so much, Imam Ahmad replied that ash-Shafi'i was ***like the sun for the world and health for the body***. Both are biographical reports (not Hadith).

REFERENCES:

Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad; adh-Dhahabi, Siyar A'lam an-Nubala' 10/45.

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Friendship for the sake of Allah is what the Messenger of Allah ﷺ named as one of the signs of the sweetness of faith:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 16

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْمُثَنَّى، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْوَهَّابِ الثَّقَفِيُّ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا أَيُّوبُ، عَنْ أَبِي قِلاَبَةَ، عَنْ أَنَسٍ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « ثَلاَثٌ مَنْ كُنَّ فِيهِ وَجَدَ حَلاَوَةَ الإِيمَانِ أَنْ يَكُونَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِمَّا سِوَاهُمَا، وَأَنْ يُحِبَّ الْمَرْءَ لاَ يُحِبُّهُ إِلاَّ لِلَّهِ، وَأَنْ يَكْرَهَ أَنْ يَعُودَ فِي الْكُفْرِ كَمَا يَكْرَهُ أَنْ يُقْذَفَ فِي النَّارِ ».

TRANSLATION:

Anas رضى الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Whoever has three qualities will taste the sweetness of faith: that Allah and His Messenger are dearer to him than anything else; that he loves a person only for the sake of Allah; and that he hates to return to disbelief as he hates to be thrown into the fire."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Muhammad ibn al-Muthanna, from 'Abd al-Wahhab ath-Thaqafi, from Ayyub as-Sakhtiyani, from Abu Qilabah, from Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Faith, chapter on the sweetness of faith, Hadith No. 16. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 43).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:16

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Loving someone purely for the sake of Allah brings the sweetness of faith. Ahmad and ash-Shafi'i differed on many questions of fiqh, yet their love for Allah's sake never lessened.

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THE QUR'AN IS THE SPEECH OF ALLAH

SURAH AT-TAWBAH 9:6

وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِّنَ ٱلْمُشْرِكِينَ ٱسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّىٰ يَسْمَعَ كَلَٰمَ ٱللَّهِ ثُمَّ أَبْلِغْهُ
مَأْمَنَهُۥ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْلَمُونَ ٦

And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the words of Allah. Then deliver him to his place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/9:6

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 9:6

In this verse, Allah calls the Qur'an ***"the words of Allah"*** — in Arabic كَلَٰمَ ٱللَّهِ , ***Kalamullah***. The scholars of Ahl as-Sunnah took this verse and others as proof that the Qur'an is ***the Speech of Allah, not created***. This is the creed that Imam Ahmad defended with his whole soul.

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The honour of the Qur'an was also described by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5027

حَدَّثَنَا حَجَّاجُ بْنُ مِنْهَالٍ، حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي عَلْقَمَةُ بْنُ مَرْثَدٍ، سَمِعْتُ سَعْدَ بْنَ عُبَيْدَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ السُّلَمِيِّ، عَنْ عُثْمَانَ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «خَيْرُكُمْ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ وَعَلَّمَهُ». قَالَ وَأَقْرَأَ أَبُو عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ فِي إِمْرَةِ عُثْمَانَ حَتَّى كَانَ الْحَجَّاجُ، قَالَ وَذَاكَ الَّذِي أَقْعَدَنِي مَقْعَدِي هَذَا.

TRANSLATION:

'Uthman رضى الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"The best of you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it."** (Sa'd ibn 'Ubaydah) said: Abu 'Abd ar-Rahman (as-Sulami) taught the Qur'an from the caliphate of 'Uthman until the time of al-Hajjaj, and he said: "That is what has kept me sitting in this seat of mine."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Hajjaj ibn Minhal, from Shu'bah, from 'Alqamah ibn Marthad, from Sa'd ibn 'Ubaydah, from Abu 'Abd ar-Rahman as-Sulami, from 'Uthman ibn 'Affan رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Virtues of the Qur'an, Hadith No. 5027.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:5027

LESSON FROM THIS HADITH

Abu 'Abd ar-Rahman as-Sulami taught the Qur'an for decades because of this Hadith. Imam Ahmad, for his part, was willing to be imprisoned and flogged ***to defend the honour of the Qur'an***.

THE TRIAL OF THE MIHNAH

HISTORY NOTE: THE MIHNAH (THE TRIAL OF "THE CREATED QUR'AN")

According to the history books, in 218 AH the caliph ***al-Ma'mun*** — influenced by the Mu'tazilah — forced the scholars to declare that ***the Qur'an was created***. Many scholars gave in under threat. Imam Ahmad ***refused***, and kept saying: "The Qur'an is the Speech of Allah."

He was shackled and imprisoned for more than two years, and under the caliph ***al-Mu'tasim*** he was ***flogged*** until he lost consciousness. The trial continued under ***al-Wathiq***, until it was finally ended by the caliph ***al-Mutawakkil***.

The Hadith scholar 'Ali ibn al-Madini is quoted as saying that Allah honoured this religion through two men: Abu Bakr on the day of the apostasy, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal on the day of the Mihnah.

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Such steadfastness was described by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when the Companions complained of persecution in Makkah:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3612

حَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْمُثَنَّى، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى، عَنْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ، حَدَّثَنَا قَيْسٌ، عَنْ خَبَّابِ بْنِ الأَرَتِّ، قَالَ شَكَوْنَا إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَهْوَ مُتَوَسِّدٌ بُرْدَةً لَهُ فِي ظِلِّ الْكَعْبَةِ، قُلْنَا لَهُ أَلاَ تَسْتَنْصِرُ لَنَا أَلاَ تَدْعُو اللَّهَ لَنَا قَالَ «كَانَ الرَّجُلُ فِيمَنْ قَبْلَكُمْ يُحْفَرُ لَهُ فِي الأَرْضِ فَيُجْعَلُ فِيهِ، فَيُجَاءُ بِالْمِنْشَارِ، فَيُوضَعُ عَلَى رَأْسِهِ فَيُشَقُّ بِاثْنَتَيْنِ، وَمَا يَصُدُّهُ ذَلِكَ عَنْ دِينِهِ، وَيُمْشَطُ بِأَمْشَاطِ الْحَدِيدِ، مَا دُونَ لَحْمِهِ مِنْ عَظْمٍ أَوْ عَصَبٍ، وَمَا يَصُدُّهُ ذَلِكَ عَنْ دِينِهِ، وَاللَّهِ لَيُتِمَّنَّ هَذَا الأَمْرَ حَتَّى يَسِيرَ الرَّاكِبُ مِنْ صَنْعَاءَ إِلَى حَضْرَمَوْتَ، لاَ يَخَافُ إِلاَّ اللَّهَ أَوِ الذِّئْبَ عَلَى غَنَمِهِ، وَلَكِنَّكُمْ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ».

TRANSLATION:

Khabbab ibn al-Aratt رضى الله عنه said: We complained to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ while he was reclining on his cloak in the shade of the Ka'bah. We said: "Will you not ask for help for us? Will you not pray to Allah for us?" He said: **"Among those before you, a man would be seized, a pit dug for him in the earth and he placed in it; then a saw would be brought and put on his head and he would be split in two, yet that would not turn him away from his religion. And he would be combed with iron combs that reached beneath his flesh to the bone or sinew, yet that would not turn him away from his religion. By Allah, Allah will surely complete this matter (of religion), until a rider travels from San'a' to Hadramawt fearing none but Allah, or a wolf for his sheep. But you are being hasty."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Muhammad ibn al-Muthanna, from Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Qattan, from Isma'il ibn Abi Khalid, from Qays ibn Abi Hazim, from Khabbab ibn al-Aratt رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Virtues, chapter on the signs of prophethood, Hadith No. 3612.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3612

LESSON FROM THIS HADITH

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught that ***the believers before us*** were tested even more severely, yet ***did not turn away from their religion***. Imam Ahmad inherited that steadfastness.

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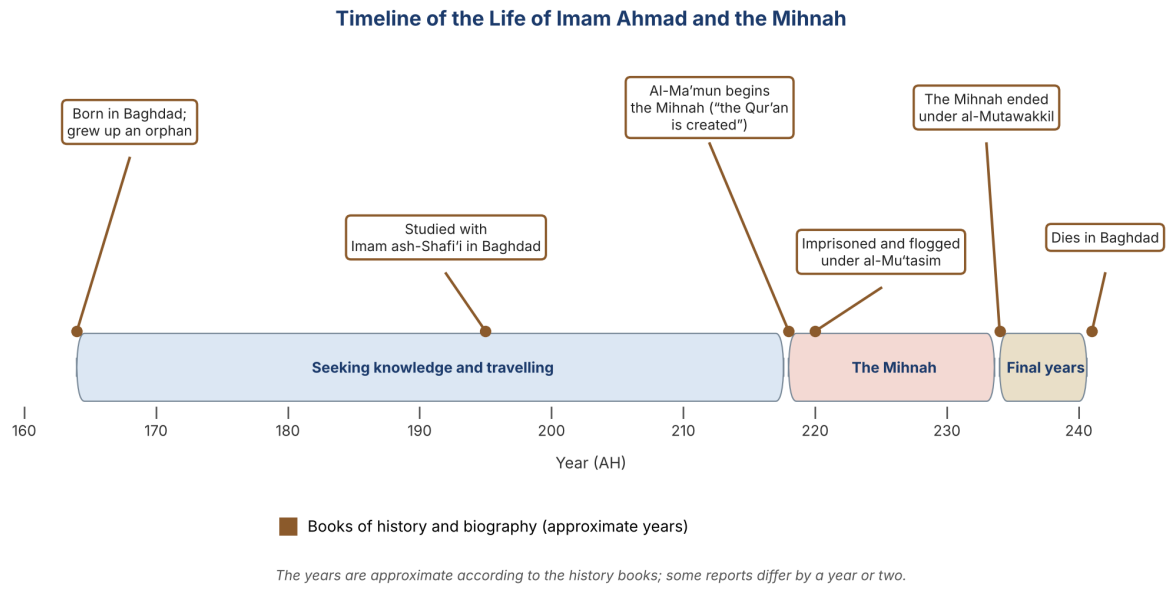
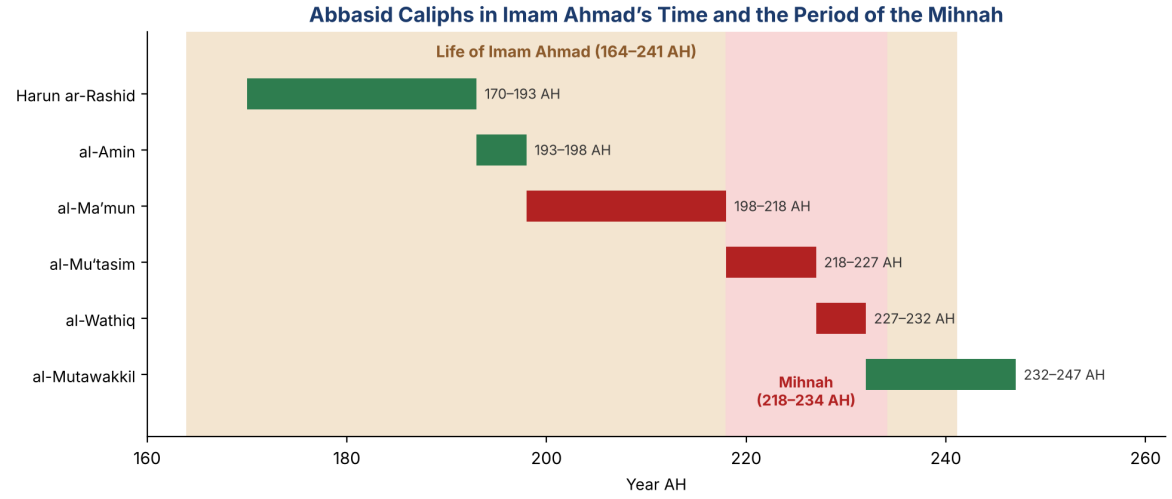


Figure 3: Timeline of the life of Imam Ahmad and the Mihnah.

THE CALIPHS AND THE PERIOD OF THE MIHNAH

The Mihnah lasted under ***three caliphs*** in succession, before it was stopped by the fourth.



Red: caliphs who pursued the Mihnah; green: others. Approximate years (Mihnah 833–848 CE). Sources: Wikipedia, "Mihna", "Abbasid Caliphate".

Figure 4: Abbasid caliphs in Imam Ahmad's time and the period of the Mihnah (approximate years).

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HISTORY NOTE: THE MIHNAH ACCORDING TO HISTORIANS

According to Wikipedia, the Mihnah began in ***833 CE (218 AH)***, about four months before the death of ***al-Ma'mun***, and was continued by ***al-Mu'tasim*** and ***al-Wathiq***. The caliph ***al-Mutawakkil*** reversed the policy around ***847–848 CE***.

Under al-Mu'tasim, Imam Ahmad was interrogated and held firm that the Qur'an is ***uncreated***. He was imprisoned and ***flogged until he lost consciousness***. When the people of Baghdad threatened to rise up, al-Mu'tasim released him.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Mihna". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mihna

LESSONS

Three caliphs with the power of the state could not force ***one scholar*** to change his creed. This steadfastness became ***a fortress*** for the creed of the Ummah after him.

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ZUHD AND FORGIVENESS

HISTORY NOTE: A SIMPLE LIFE

The books of biography mention that Imam Ahmad lived very simply: wearing ***patched*** clothes, refusing the caliph's gifts after the Mihnah ended, and working with his own hands. He feared that worldly wealth would harm his religion.

He is also quoted as having ***forgiven*** everyone who harmed him during the Mihnah, except the innovators who called to misguided beliefs — for he did not want anyone to be punished because of him.

LESSON

Steadfastness in principle ***does not mean revenge***. Imam Ahmad stood firm in defending the truth, yet was gentle and forgiving towards people personally.

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THE STRENGTH OF FORGIVING

The biographical works say Imam Ahmad ***forgave*** those involved in torturing him (chapter 14). This is the strength praised by the Qur'an:

SURAH ASY-SYURA 42:40

وَجَزَٰٓؤُاْ سَيِّئَةٖ سَيِّئَةٞ مِّثۡلُهَاۖ فَمَنۡ عَفَا وَأَصۡلَحَ فَأَجۡرُهُۥ عَلَى ٱللَّهِۚ إِنَّهُۥ لَا يُحِبُّ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ٤٠

And the retribution for an evil act is an evil one like it, but whoever pardons and makes reconciliation - his reward is [due] from Allah. Indeed, He does not like wrongdoers.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/42:40

Allah says: ***"whoever pardons and makes reconciliation - his reward is [due] from Allah"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 42:40

SURAH ASY-SYURA 42:43

وَلَمَن صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ لَمِنۡ عَزۡمِ ٱلۡأُمُورِ ٤٣

And whoever is patient and forgives - indeed, that is of the matters [requiring] determination.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/42:43

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HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6114

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ، أَخْبَرَنَا مَالِكٌ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ الْمُسَيَّبِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «لَيْسَ الشَّدِيدُ بِالصُّرَعَةِ، إِنَّمَا الشَّدِيدُ الَّذِي يَمْلِكُ نَفْسَهُ عِنْدَ الْغَضَبِ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"The strong one is not the one who overcomes others in wrestling; rather, the strong one is the one who controls himself when angry."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Abdullah ibn Yusuf, from Imam Malik, from Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri, from Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Manners, Hadith No. 6114; also narrated by Muslim (No. 2609).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6114

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

The truly strong one is he who ***controls himself in anger***. Imam Ahmad was stronger than the whip that lashed him — because he was able ***to forgive***.

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WARA‘ TOWARDS DOUBTFUL MATTERS

Imam Ahmad was known for ***wara‘***: great caution towards what is not clearly lawful. The biographical works say he refused ***gifts and grants from the rulers*** (chapter 14). The basis of this attitude is the saying of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 52

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو نُعَيْمٍ، حَدَّثَنَا زَكَرِيَّاءُ، عَنْ عَامِرٍ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ النُّعْمَانَ بْنَ بَشِيرٍ، يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ «الْحَلاَلُ بَيِّنٌ وَالْحَرَامُ بَيِّنٌ، وَبَيْنَهُمَا مُشَبَّهَاتٌ لاَ يَعْلَمُهَا كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ، فَمَنِ اتَّقَى الْمُشَبَّهَاتِ اسْتَبْرَأَ لِدِينِهِ وَعِرْضِهِ، وَمَنْ وَقَعَ فِي الشُّبُهَاتِ كَرَاعٍ يَرْعَى حَوْلَ الْحِمَى، يُوشِكُ أَنْ يُوَاقِعَهُ. أَلاَ وَإِنَّ لِكُلِّ مَلِكٍ حِمًى، أَلاَ إِنَّ حِمَى اللَّهِ فِي أَرْضِهِ مَحَارِمُهُ، أَلاَ وَإِنَّ فِي الْجَسَدِ مُضْغَةً إِذَا صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ، وَإِذَا فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ. أَلاَ وَهِيَ الْقَلْبُ».

TRANSLATION:

An-Nu‘man ibn Bashir رضى الله عنهما said: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: “The lawful is clear and the unlawful is clear, and between them are doubtful matters that many people do not know. Whoever avoids the doubtful matters has protected his religion and his honour… **Indeed, in the body there is a piece of flesh; if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Indeed, it is the heart.**”

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Abu Nu‘aym al-Fadl ibn Dukayn, from Zakariyya ibn Abi Za’idah, from ‘Amir ash-Sha‘bi, from an-Nu‘man ibn Bashir رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Faith, Hadith No. 52; also narrated by Muslim (No. 1599).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:52

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LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Avoiding doubtful matters ***protects one's religion and honour***. A pure heart is born of pure provision — and it is the heart that determines whether all of one's deeds are sound.

LEVEL OF WARA'	EXAMPLE
Leaving the unlawful	The duty of every Muslim.
Leaving the doubtful	Like Imam Ahmad refusing the rulers' grants.
Leaving excess	Living simply even when able to do more.

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LIKE A STRANGER IN THIS WORLD

Imam Ahmad's simple life — a small house, ordinary clothes and little food — reflects the advice of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to Ibn 'Umar:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6416

حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ أَبُو الْمُنْذِرِ الطُّفَاوِيُّ، عَنْ سُلَيْمَانَ الأَعْمَشِ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي مُجَاهِدٌ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ قَالَ أَخَذَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم بِمَنْكِبِي فَقَالَ «كُنْ فِي الدُّنْيَا كَأَنَّكَ غَرِيبٌ، أَوْ عَابِرُ سَبِيلٍ». وَكَانَ ابْنُ عُمَرَ يَقُولُ إِذَا أَمْسَيْتَ فَلاَ تَنْتَظِرِ الصَّبَاحَ، وَإِذَا أَصْبَحْتَ فَلاَ تَنْتَظِرِ الْمَسَاءَ، وَخُذْ مِنْ صِحَّتِكَ لِمَرَضِكَ، وَمِنْ حَيَاتِكَ لِمَوْتِكَ.

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ took hold of my shoulder and said: **"Be in this world as though you were a stranger or a traveller."** Ibn 'Umar used to say: "When evening comes, do not wait for the morning; when morning comes, do not wait for the evening. Take from your health for your sickness, and from your life for your death."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Ali ibn 'Abdullah al-Madini, from Abu al-Mundhir at-Tufawi, from Sulayman al-A'mash, from Mujahid, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Softening of Hearts, Hadith No. 6416.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6416

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LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

A traveller does not build a palace in the middle of his journey. Imam Ahmad used this world for ***knowledge and worship***, and did not let the world rule his heart.

THE TRAVELLER'S ATTITUDE	EXAMPLE FROM IMAM AHMAD
Just enough provision	A simple life from his own earnings.
Not tied to one place	Travelling far for Hadith.
Always mindful of the destination	Patient in trial for the sake of the Hereafter.

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THE DAY OF THE FUNERAL AND THE HANBALI SCHOOL

Imam Ahmad died in Baghdad on ***12 Rabi‘ al-Awwal 241 AH***, aged 77. He had once said to those who opposed him:

> **HISTORY NOTE: “BETWEEN US AND YOU ARE THE DAYS OF FUNERALS”**
>
> It is reported that Imam Ahmad said: ***“Tell the people of innovation: between us and you are the days of funerals.”*** He meant that a person’s true standing in the hearts of the ummah appears on the day of his death.
>
> The history books mention that his funeral was attended by ***a sea of people*** never before seen in Baghdad. The actual numbers vary between reports — as explained in the “Stories and Their Status” table that follows.
>
> **REFERENCES:**
> Adh-Dhahabi, Siyar A‘lam an-Nubala’; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah, events of 241 AH.

THE HANBALI SCHOOL

Imam Ahmad disliked his opinions being written down; he wanted people to hold to ***the Qur’an and the Hadith***. Yet his students recorded his answers in books of ***Masa’il***, and from them the ***Hanbali school*** was born — the school most attached to the texts. Among its great scholars are ***Ibn Qudamah***, ***Ibn Taymiyyah*** and ***Ibn Rajab***. Today it is followed mainly in ***Saudi Arabia*** and ***Qatar***.

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THE HANBALI SCHOOL TODAY

HISTORY NOTE: A SMALL BUT INFLUENTIAL SCHOOL

According to Wikipedia, the Hanbali school is the majority school only in ***Saudi Arabia and Qatar***, and is followed by ***a small minority*** of Muslims worldwide.

Though small, it produced scholars of great influence, such as ***Ibn Qudamah*** (d. 620 AH), whose ***al-Mughni*** is consulted by researchers from ***all schools***, and ***Ibn Taymiyyah*** (d. 728 AH).

REFERENCES:

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FOUR SCHOOLS, ONE UMMAH

THE FOUR SCHOOLS	MAIN REGIONS TODAY
Hanafi (Book 4)	Turkey, Central Asia, South Asia.
Maliki (Book 5)	North and West Africa, parts of the Gulf.
Shafi'i (Book 6)	The Malay world, the Horn of Africa, Yemen.
Hanbali (Book 7)	Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

With Book 7 we have met ***all four imams of the schools*** — who differed in opinion, yet ***respected one another***.

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ESTABLISHED REPORTS AND POPULAR STORIES

Many stories about Imam Ahmad circulate in lectures and books. The following table distinguishes what is established from what needs checking.

THE STORIES AND THEIR STATUS

POPULAR STORY	STATUS
Born in Baghdad in 164 AH and died in Baghdad in 241 AH.	Established in the books of biography.
He was imprisoned and flogged for refusing to say the Qur'an is created.	Established and well known in the history books.
Al-Musnad contains about 27,000 Hadith.	According to the count of modern editions; older counts vary.
Imam Ahmad memorised a million Hadith.	Quoted from Abu Zur'ah; the scholars explain that "Hadith" here includes repeated chains and reports.
The story of the baker who constantly sought forgiveness and whose prayers were answered, found by Imam Ahmad.	Widely shared on social media, but has no chain in the recognised books. Not included.
His funeral was attended by hundreds of thousands.	Quoted in the history books; the actual numbers vary between reports.

REFLECTION — THE TRUTH IS STRONGER THAN STORIES

The steadfastness of Imam Ahmad ***is enough*** to move the heart. We do not need to add stories without chains.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

LESSONS FROM THIS EBOOK

First: Patience and certainty produce leaders in religion (32:24).

Second: Poverty and orphanhood are no barrier — like his teacher, ash-Shafi'i.

Third: Honour and learn the Qur'an (9:6; Sahih al-Bukhari 5027).

Fourth: Stand firm in trial without turning away from religion (Sahih al-Bukhari 3612).

Fifth: Love the Prophet's family and Companions (Sahih Muslim 2421).

Sixth: Firm in principle, forgiving towards people.

Seventh: Value your mother's sacrifice. Behind Imam Ahmad was a mother who waited before dawn.

Eighth: Keep your dignity by your own work (Sahih al-Bukhari 2072).

Ninth: Love for Allah's sake even when you differ (Sahih al-Bukhari 16).

Tenth: Be devoted to your mother (17:24; Sahih al-Bukhari 5971).

Eleventh: Honour the Companions (9:100; Sahih al-Bukhari 3673).

Twelfth: Check before you share (Sahih Muslim, Introduction 5).

Thirteenth: Forgive, and avoid doubtful matters (42:40; Sahih al-Bukhari 6114, 52).

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CONCLUSION

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal رحمه الله died in Baghdad in 241 AH. With this book, the story of ***the four imams of the schools*** is complete. In sha' Allah, **Tracing the Scholars of Islam** will continue with Imam Ahmad's own student, the compiler of the most authentic book after the Qur'an: ***Imam al-Bukhari***. And Allah knows best.

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GLOSSARY AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GLOSSARY

TERM	MEANING
Musnad	A Hadith book arranged by the names of the Companions who narrated them.
Mihnah	The inquisition of scholars who refused to say the Qur'an is created (218–234 AH).
Mu'tazilah	A theological school that put reason first and held the Qur'an to be created.
Kalamullah	The Speech of Allah; Ahl as-Sunnah hold that the Qur'an is Allah's Speech, not created.
Wara'	Scrupulous avoidance of doubtful matters out of fear of Allah.
Masa'il	Collections of Imam Ahmad's answers to questions, recorded by his students.
People of innovation	Those who introduce new matters into the religion that have no basis.
Rihlah	A long journey to seek knowledge, especially Hadith.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What sacrifices did our mothers make so that we could be who we are today? Have we repaid them?

2. Why did Imam Ahmad choose to carry loads rather than accept free money?

3. How could Ahmad and ash-Shafi'i differ in opinion yet still love one another?

4. What "principle" are we willing to defend even when tested?

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SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:261

مَّثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنۢبَتَتۡ سَبۡعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنۢبُلَةٖ مِّاْئَةُ حَبَّةٖۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُضَٰعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٢٦١

The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:261

SURAH SABA' 34:39

قُلۡ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبۡسُطُ ٱلرِّزۡقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهِۦ وَيَقۡدِرُ لَهُۥۚ وَمَآ أَنفَقۡتُم مِّن شَيۡءٖ فَهُوَ يُخۡلِفُهُۥۖ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ٣٩

Say, "Indeed, my Lord extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts [it] for him. But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/34:39

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2588

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، وَابْنُ، حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلاَّ عِزًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلاَّ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Charity does not decrease wealth.

Allah does not increase a servant who forgives except in honour. And no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises him in rank."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining the Ties of Kinship (Kitab al-Birr wa al-Silah wa al-Adab), chapter on the encouragement of forgiveness and humility, Hadith No. 2588.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2588

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1631

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيدٍ - وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - هُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « إِذَا مَاتَ الإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلاَّ مِنْ ثَلاَثَةٍ إِلاَّ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: an ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him."

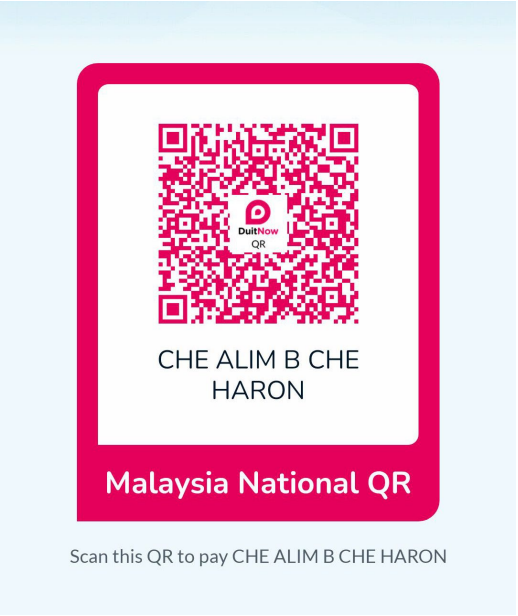
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REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Wills (Kitab al-Wasiyyah), chapter on the reward that reaches a person after his death, Hadith No. 1631.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1631

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