

# The Life of Imam Abu Hanifa

Monthly Taleem Focus Slides  
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# Background

- Born in the city of Kufa, 80 years after Hijrah (690 C.E.)
- At the time the King was Abdul-Malik ibn Marwaan
- His real name was “Nu’man”
- When Islam spread in Iran, Imam Abu Hanifa’s grandfather, Zoota, converted to Islam. His family opposed his conversion and so he left and moved to Kufa at which time was under the Khilafat of Hazrat Ali (ra)
- Imam Abu Hanifa (rh) originally studied fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence) under Imam Hammad (rh)



# Education

- When Imam (rh) was born 63 years after the death of Holy Prophet (sa), there were still many sahaba alive. Anas bin Malik (ra) died in 93 AH. Imam (rh) has directly narrated ahadith some ahadith from Sahaba.
- Imam Abu Hanifa (rh) also went to Basrah and Syria to learn Hadith from various scholars.
- He learned so much from his teachers that one of them said, “O Abu Hanifa! You have learned so much from me that you have rendered me empty.” Meaning that whatever knowledge the teacher had he had taught it to Imam Abu Hanifa (rh)
- Later on in his life Imam Abu Hanifa (rh) traveled to Mecca in the quest for more knowledge where he spent time with Imam Ja’far Al-Sadiq (rh) who was the great-great-great grandson of Holy Prophet (sa)
- In Mecca he also studied under Ata ibn Abi Rabbah (rh).

# Life as a Teacher

- Imam Abu Hanifa (rh) eventually returned to Kufa and continued his life there.
- Since he had so much respect for his teacher, Imam Hammad (rh) he never even thought to open up his own school. But after the demise of his teacher Imam Hammad (rh) in 120 (after Hijrah), people requested Imam Abu Hanifa (rh) to open up his own school
- At the insistence of others he started giving lessons in the same school of his teacher
- One night, after he had already started teaching, he saw in a dream that he was digging up the grave of the Holy Prophet (saw) and was gathering his blessed bones. When he woke up he was frightened at what he saw and thought that perhaps teaching wasn't meant for him. He relayed the dream to Imam Ibn Seeren (rh) who was used to interpret dreams and he said, "The one who sees this dream will revive the forgotten knowledge"
- And so Imam Abu Hanifa (rh) continued teaching

# Trader, Mathematician, City Planner

- He was involved in his family business of silk cloth trading.
- He was known for his honesty. Sometimes tradesmen would come and try to sell their goods to him he would tell them that their goods are worth more than they are trying to sell it for and would give them the real price
- He was also a mathematician and a city planner
- He was tasked by the Abbasid Caliph to find a new place for his Capital, the city of Baghdad.
- He selected the site for the new city and took active part in its planning and construction

# His Works

- Imam Abu Hanifa (rh) is most well known for his work in fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence)
- His compilation of work is called Fiqah-e-Hanafiyya which is predominant in South Asia and is still dominant in various parts of the world
- He had many students who were great religious scholars in their own right.
- His daughter, Hanifa (rh), was also well known for her piety and knowledge and used to teach the ladies of Kufah. Unlike the Arab custom, he took his name Abu Hanifa, from his daughter instead of a son
- He is known as Imam-e-A'azm i.e. the great Imam.

# Promised Messiah's Verdict

- Promised Messiah (as) said, “It is incumbent on my Jama‘at to follow any hadith which does not oppose and contradict the Holy Quran and sunnah, regardless of its authenticity and give preference to it over manmade jurisprudence. And if they are unable to find [elaboration on] a certain matter from the hadith, the sunnah or from the Holy Quran, in such a case, they should follow the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, because this school constitutes the majority [among the Muslims] and this is an indication of God’s will. If, because of modern developments, the Hanafi school of jurisprudence is unable to provide an adequate judgement, the scholars of the community ought to determine such issues in accordance with their God-given reasoning. However, at the same time they must exercise caution, lest they unjustly denounce the hadith like Maulavi ‘Abdullah Chakrhalavi. Nonetheless, they ought to reject any such hadith which is at variance with the Quran and sunnah. (A Review of Debate between Batalvi & Chakralvi, Pg 11)

# Taqwa vs. Fatwa

- It is written in regards to Imam Abu Hanifa (rh) that once he was seen washing his cloth because of a tiny spec of dirt. Someone asked him that you have not given a fatwa with regards to cleaning one's cloth to this degree. He beautifully responded, 'That was a Fatwa, and this is Taqwa'.
- Meaning that, as far as Fatwa (or religious law) is concerned it does not instruct someone to wash their clothes as a consequence of this insignificant amount of dirt, but as far as his conscience and Taqwa is concerned he feels compelled to clean his cloth.
- He also had a great sense of humor. Once a young man asked him, "When bathing in river should I face Qibla or away from it?". He replied, "You should face the bank of the river and watch your clothes".

# The Promised Messiah (as) on Imam Abu Hanifa (rh)

”Noble Imam Abu Hanifa (rh)...He was like a flowing river of religious knowledge... fully devoted on the path of Allah....He was a vast ocean and all else were his branches. To call him a person who just gave his opinions is a great injustice. The Noble Imam (rh) was not only an expert in the traditions of Holy Prophet (sa) but he had a unique ability to solve difficult issues from the Holy Quran. May Allah have mercy on Mujaddad Alif Sani (Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (rh)) has written in his book on page 307 that the coming Messiah will have a similarity with Imam A’azm (rh) in finding new and difficult meanings from the Holy Quran

(Al-Haq Mubahatha Ludhiana Ruhani Khazain Vol 4. Page 88 and 99)

# Three Questions by a Roman

Once a Roman came to Baghdad and went to the King and asked him to bring someone that would be able to answer his 3 questions. And so the King gathered many religious scholars and among them was Imam Abu Hanifa (rh) as well. The Roman then went up to the pulpit and asked his three questions which were: 1) Who was there before God? 2) In which direction is God? 3) What is God doing at this moment in time?

At this, all of the religious scholars became quiet and Imam Abu Hanif (rh) stepped forward and said that I will answer your questions but first come down from the pulpit. So, the Roman individual came down and Imam Sahib (rh) went and stood at his place.

The Roman then asked his first question: Who was there before God? Imam Sahib (rh) asked him to start counting and so he started to count. Imam Sahib (rh) then abruptly stopped him and said, “Stop, what comes before the number one?”

# Continued

The Roman responded, “There aren’t any numbers before one (in terms of counting physical objects)” Imam Sahib (rh) said, “Hence, there wasn’t anyone before God either.”

Then the Roman asked his second question: In which direction is God? Imam Sahib (rh) lit a candle and then asked him, “Tell me, which direction is the light shining?” The Roman responded, “It’s going in all directions.” Imam Sahib (rh) said, “Such is the case with God, He’s in all directions.”

After this Imam Sahib (rh) said, “With regards to your third question, the answer is that at this moment God has made you descend the pulpit and has elevated me to it.”

After this interaction, the Roman embarrassingly left the audience.

# Imprisonment and Demise

- At that time the leadership changed from the Ummayyad to the Abbasid dynasty. Abu Ja'far al-Mansoor, the new ruler, who was tyrannical.
- He also put Imam Abu Hanifa (rh) in jail for refusing to serve as a court judge under his regime. The King wanted Imam Abu Hanifa (rh) to work under him and obey his rule of law as he knew that he had many followers and students.
- Imam (rh) said to him that he was unfit to be appointed a judge, Al-Mansoor accused him of lying to which he said that "Then I am doubly correct, how can you appoint a liar as Chief Qadhi"
- But as a consequence of his imprisonment, Imam Abu Hanifa (rh) became even more popular and well known. So the imprisonment had the opposite effect and instead of removing him and putting him to the side Imam Abu Hanifa (rh) became even more famous.
- The King then decided to poison Imam Abu Hanifa (rh). But he knew that the drink had poison in it and so he refused to drink it. Despite this, he was forced to drink the poison. When he began to sense that the poison is taking its effect he fell in prostration and in that manner departed from this world (750 C.E.). He is buried in Baghdad.