The Lives of the Four Imams
(Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam malik, Imam Shafii, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal)

Notes By: Soma Sabori

- The four Imams were distinguished scholars known for their profound knowledge and wisdom. They never spoke without thorough understanding, often practicing and contemplating their knowledge before providing answers.
- An anecdote about Imam Ibn Taymiyyah emphasizes the wisdom in not intervening in every perceived wrongdoing. When he encountered people drinking alcohol, he refrained from immediate action, explaining that stopping the harm could lead to greater consequences. This gave rise to the saying, "If stopping a harm leads to a greater harm, leave that harm as it is and don't try to change it right now."
- Prophets, unlike leaving material wealth, left behind a valuable legacy of knowledge. Scholars, therefore, are considered the true inheritors of the prophets.
- Backbiting is likened to consuming the flesh of a sibling, while backbiting scholars is equated to ingesting poisonous flesh. Disparaging scholars means undermining the wisdom passed down through generations.
- Emphasizing equality among schools of thought, the scholars, including the four Imams, never exhibited a superiority complex. To claim one Madhab is superior to another is considered an act of ignorance.
- Differences in opinion among scholars are accepted, as long as they don't compromise one's faith. The great Imams, including the four, had disagreements on minor issues, not on the fundamental principles of Islam. Therefore, aligning with any Madhab does not adversely affect one's faith.

Overview:

Biographical Overview of the Four Great Imams				
Key elements	**Imam Abu Hanifa**	**Imam Malik Ibn Anas**	**Imam Al-Shafi'i**	**Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal**
Birth	Kufa, 699 CE	Medina, 711 CE	Gaza (around the same time Imam Abu Hanifa passed away)	Baghdad, same year Imam Malik passed away
Attributes	Deep knowledge, fair complexion, handsome	Revered, highly respected, deeply religious	Tall, healthy, strong, masculine	Known for piety, determination, resilience
Education	Learned from Hammad Ibn Abi Sulayman, Ata Ibn Abu Rabah, and others	Studied under notable scholars in Medina	Studied under Imam Malik, traveled extensively	Studied across various regions, extensive knowledge
Tittle	"The Great Imam" or "Imam Al-Azam."	"Imam of Dar al-Hijrah" (Imam of the Abode of Migration)	"The Encyclopedist" (for his extensive knowledge)	"Piety, Determination, Resilience, Muhaddith."
Legacy	Founded the Hanafi school of thought	Founded the Maliki school of thought	Established the Shafi'i school of thought	Founded the Hanbali school of thought

Teaching Style	Emphasized reasoning and analogy (Qiyas)	Emphasized local practices, traditions, and hadiths	Comprehensive knowledge, balanced approach	Emphasized adherence to hadith, simplicity
Students	Abu Yusuf, Muhammad al-Shaybani, and others	Notable students including Imam al-Shafi'i	Notable students including Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal	Notable students include his sons
Death	767 CE, poisoned in prison during Caliph Al-Mansur's reign	795 CE, in Medina	Lived the shortest life among the Imams, died in Egypt at 54, 820 CE	Lived for 77 years, died in Baghdad, 241 CE
Contributions	Codified Islamic law, established principles of jurisprudence	Compiled "Al-Muwatta," a significant collection of hadiths and jurisprudential principles	Introduced Usool-ul-fiqh, wrote "Ar-Risalah."	Compiled "Musnad Ahmad," stood against theological deviations

- Imam Abu Hanifa -

- Born in 699, 80H, in Iraq, Kufa
- **Tittle: the intellectually sharp and the loving**
- Tall, wide man with long black hair, from the persian origin, beautiful face and big eyes
- Abu Hanifa is not his real name and was in fact a nickname given to him, his real name is Numan ibn Thabit ibn Zuṭa ibn Marzuban
- He was married to 1 wife and had only one son
- Marzuban is a persian name, so Imam Abu Hanifa was of persian origin and was a non-arab, but he was born and raised among the arabs and learned their language
- He was also nicknamed as Imam-ul-Muslimeen, which translates to the leader of muslims and was also nicknamed as al-imam-ul-azam, the ever so great imam
- He was of the generation of al-tabi'in (the generation of the Tābi'ūn in Islam. The first generation of Muslims are known as the Sahabah or the companions of Muhammad).
- He was from this generation as he actually met some of the sahabas and lived at their time, one of these companions was Anas Ibn-Malik.
- He was a scholar of two important subjects, aqeedah or theology and fiqh or jurisprudence
- Most of the great scholars were non arabs and were not of the arab origin, many of them were sons of slaves who has been freed or non-arabs that migrated
- Imam Abu Hanifa, however was a free man and not a slave
- His grandfather was a friend of Ali (RA)
- Imam al-Shabi was a direct teacher of abu hanifa whom happened to be a great scholar of Kufa

➔ **How Did he become a scholar or Imam?**

- The other 4 imams were all raised in masajid, however Imam Abu- Hanifa was different, he was far away from knowledge at early stages of his life
- At a very young age, he was known to be a very intelligent and a rational person, filled with wisdom and reasoning and his thoughts were four-dimensional
- A roman man who was an envy, came to trick people about the religion and he said, i have come here today with three questions: 1. Who was there before allah? 2. Which direction is Allah facing right now? 3. What is Allah doing right now?. No one could answer his question and so Abu Hanifa who was a 10 ear old at the time offered to answer him. He said as whom was there before Allah, I want you to count from 10 backwards, and the man counted until he reached 0, and so he said just like that 0 there is also nothing before Allah (swt). As for which direction Allah is facing, he said, if you light up a candle could you tell me in which direction is the light facing and the man answered that it isn't facing any particular direction and its facing everywhere. Imam Abu Hanifa said, so what do you say about Allah (swt) who is

the light of lights. As for his 3rd question, Imam abu hanifa asked him to switch spots with him and let him go up so that people could hear his answers and so the man agreed. AN for his 3rd question which was what is ALlah (swt) doing right now, Imam Abu Hanifa said, right now Allah is making the one who is at falsehood come down of the pulpit and the one who is full of success, climb up the pulpit and prove you wrong.

- Imam Abu Hanifa was also asked to prove god's existence as a child, and so he said of you had a ship that was sailing in the sea and you had no people to steer the boat, no people to paddle, no sails or no nothing, just a pice of boat in the sea, and you wanted to sail fro m one direction to the other just to reach the destination, can that ship reach the destination by itself? And the person said no. He than said well how can someone and this world and everything live in some motion, live and go without someone controlling it.
- At his time there were umayra era, which was the time that khalifas were coming and going, he lived at the time of 40 different leaders which most of the new leaders were corrupt and it was hard for him to accept it as he was the man of justice and fairness.
- Imam abu Hanifa always refused to gain money for teaching his knowledge so thats why its encouraged for every person of knowledge to learn a skill which they can survive upon.
- At one point he had a 1000 students and instead of getting paid for teaching them, he used to pay them for them to be sustained in wealth.
- He spoke of the truth with no fear and would choose to speak the truth at the right time, when he knew it was gonna be beneficial.
- He was about 19 or 20 years old when he was passing by a great imam named Shaibani in kufa so the thing about this imam was that he was good at telling what kind of a person someone was just by looking at them. When looking at him, he mistakenly thought he was a student of him and so he asked him where he was going. Imam abu hanifa said I am going to a business errand and the imam told him that is not what he was asking him, he wanted to know why he was not in class andAbu HAnifa said, sorry but i am not a student of knowledge. And the imam said, no, you look like a very smart and intelligent person so I advise you to attend my class and that was where he started learning more about ISlam.
- Of the things he learned from Imam Al-Shaybani, there was one problem since the land was the land of argumentation and debates so he realized that these argumentations and philosophy was tuning into I am right and you are wrong conversations which hardened the hearts, thus once he passed away he went to his new sheikh, Hamad Ibn-Suleiman.
- This sheikh happened to be his teacher for the next 18 years
- On the first day of class sheikh Hamad made Abu Hanifa sit at the back, soon he realized that he had a very bright mind so he was moved and was always sitting on the right side of his sheikh.
- There was once a circle of studies and Imam Abu Hanifa, out of humbleness he had went and sat with Imam Malik who was 13 years younger than Abu Hanifa who was 40yro at the time, and when he left Imam malik said to the person sitting that this man was Imam Abu Hanifa and he's so intelligent that if he were to tell this tower was made of water I could get convinced.
- When he was 30 years old, he thought of teaching a class and coincidentally his imam was sick and asked him to take over his class and teach them, so during the lesson, 60 issues were reported to him and he answered them all, but once Abu Hanifa's imam came back, he went to have check over the answers and found out that 40 of the answers were correct and 20 were incorrect and so that day he said, I promise that I will never take over a class until my sheikh dies because I indeed need to learn more.
- Imam AbuHanifa developed something that no imam before him did, he developed a code of principles that directly look at quran and a ahadith and be able to study those in a way that would allow one to make 10 or more rulings out of it.
- He thought ways in which one could be able to differentiate whats permissible from whats not by using the given sources they already had and looking in depth and understanding them.
- Some people who might call his action an innovation should know that his action was only there to make the religion easier and it was not a form of innovation.
- He rahimuhullah alaihi said that his main goal is to draw people closer to the religion and his words can always be rejected if there is one who is more knowledgeable, he has said that his words can change and whats important is that it should always go bach to the quran and the sunnah and he also said that if your scholars were to give a different opinion that is closer to the truth than throw mine across the wall and follow whats right as every scholar's goal is to follow the quran and the sunnah in order to be righteous.
- He was a man of great faith and great connection to Allah (swt)

- When his imam, imam Hamad dies, Abu Hanifa took over his school which consisted of more than 1000 students, in 1 year every other school in Kufa was closed and they joined his school so more than 50000 students
- A lot might think that the only thing about Iamam Abu hanifa is that he uses logic and is opinionated, however there was story: Imam Bakeer who was the great, great, grandson of prophet Muhammed (saw), one day came up to Imam Abu Hanifa and told him that he is the one who contradicts the sayings of his grandfather by using logic, so you don't accept what he says and you accept your own logical reasons. Imam ABu Hanifa replied, I seek refuge in Allah, who dares to contradict the quran and the Sunnah? And so he continued his conversation with him explaining 3 ways in which he could've used what seemed logical to everyone, rather he went with the saying of the prophet (saw).
- Imam Abu Hanifa reached the stage of mujtahid or mufti (someone who can look at a verse or a hadith and from that directly makes a ruling).
- There were two groups, mu'tazila ans khawarij
- Mu'tazila: political or religious neutralists, particularly in reference to an Islamic school of speculative theology
- Khawarij: were the worst people, who were the extremist and believed that doing some major sins will make one a kafir and that doing a sin would take you out of the fold of Islam, they were even the ones that killed Ali (RA)
- At the time of Imam Abu HAnifa, there were so many khawarij that at one point they came to him and wanted to kill him
- There was a khawarij named Taha who came to him and told him to repent, and Abu Hanifa said repent from what, he said repent from agreeing with Ali (RA) who at the time was accused and so he believed in having an empire in between to mak ethe judgment, so Abu Hanifa was asked to repent form agreeing with ALi (RA)
- Abu Hanifa told the kharij person to have him debate with him and he said ok, but whose gonna be the judge between ud, we need someone to say who’s right and who’s wrong and Imam Abu Hanifa said sure lets have an empire judge us, and they both agreed so once that was down, Abu Hanifa told him see how can you tell me Ali (RA) was wrong when you did the same thing and the khawarij person put his head down and had nothing to say to him
- Abu Hanifa always distanced himself from any kingdom and palace because they used to use scholars for their own benefits
- One time, Abu Hanifa wanted to merchandise something so he took one his pupils named Hafs and asked him to sell this silk in the market place, he said however before you sell it, there are defects in this product and you should tell the people about its defects before selling it, and Hafs said sure, but when he went to sell it, he was so excited that he forgot to even tell the people about its defects and he ended up making so much profit, when he took it to Imam Abu Hanifa, he was very happy and was ready to spend the money on his students, but out of curiosity he asked Hafs how did people buy it all after knowing about its defects and Hafs responded that he never told about the defects as he had forgotten, so Imam Abu Hanifa said well than this money is unlawful to us and you should give it in for charity.
- The students of Abu HAnifa were among the most pious, the chief judge Abu-Yusuf was his most imminent student as well as ibrahim
- They asked huis student how was Abu Hanifa, your teacher in character? And he described him as the following: “He was extremely pious, he avoided forbidden things, he remained silent and absorbed his thoughts most of the time, he answered questions only if he know the answer to them, he was very generous and self respected, he never asked anyone for a favour, he avoided gossip and slander and never spoke bad of anyone even his enemies, he had profound abilities”.
- The Hanafi madhab is so strict in musical instruments that even the sound of stick is not acceptable, however considering that Abu Hanifa had an alcoholic neighbor who used to drink and sing that nobody like his and he wish he was dead, every night he would be singing and chanting that, one time Abu Hanifa didn't hear him so he went to check on him and found out that he was taken into prison by the governer, he went to the governer and due to the respect the governor had for Abu Hanifa he said what made you come here, you could've asked and i would have come to you, and ABu Hanifa said that I am here for my alcoholic neighbour, he asked them to release him and they immediately did, when his neighbour was leaving on his way Abu HAnifa asked if he has done him any good as a neighbour and the guy responded by Allah, you have done too good and I promise that from this day on I will not drink again and later this man become one of his closest students.
- Abu Hanifa and other great scholars has something called war’a, which is somethings might be halal, but its better to still avoid it and there is no need to do it, especially when one knows that too much of it will lead to something haram.
- If at times Imam Abu Hanifa was unable to answer a question that he was asked, je would get so distressed that he would think Allah (swt) didn't allow him to answer it because he committed some sort of a sin.
- He was imprisoned for simply not accepting the position of being a chief judge

- He kept speaking up against injustice an dhow corrupt the government was so at the time of being in prison he was fed poisoned food to be killed and so he died as a result of that at the age of 70, and at the time of his death he was in a state of prayer making sajdah

- Imam Malik Ibn Anas -

- Born in 93 hijri, in madina (760)
- Died in 179 hijri 86 or 90 years old
- Imam Malik did not give fatwas until he has 70 scholars qualify him
- **Tittle described: a man of aura and respect**
- Tall, broad chested man, wide eyes, strong looking man, white face, blonde hair, long bear, wore the most elegant and eloquent clothing
- Imam Malik was a tabi
- Imam Malik started his knowledge when he was 10
- He lived in madina his whole life and never even left it, and he never left up his foot off the ground or rode a camel or anything out of the respect he had for the prophet (saw) whos grave was in madina, except when he went to hajj
- He never went to any ruler unless he had to go advise them
- He met Imam Shaafi and some of the students of Imam Abu Hanifa (Yusuf)
- He was an arrowmaker and that allowed him to earn decent money
- Imam Malik lived a live of religion and was raised in masajid unlike Abu Hanifa and so there was a big role play of his mother for making the biggest turnover in terms of knowledge in his life
- He had 3 brothers and 1 sister and his eldest brother was the man who was known for his knowledge
- As a child he was very active and was cheeky, was boyish and his parents had a bit of hard time with him as he wouldn't listen
- A point that could have caused his turnover in knowledge was that one day when he was having dinner with his family his dad asked them a question about the deen to test their knowledge and Imam Malik was unable to answer it while his elder brother immediately answered so his dad than looked at him and said, your pigeons have in fact distracted you from pursuing knowledge and that really angered imam Malik, anger in the sense that motivated him to change and do better, not to be jealous or fight with the parents
- Another major turning point was that one day his mom showered him and applied perfume for him, made him dress nicely and made him look really presentable. His mother said that she wanted to take him to the greatest scholars of madina to learn knowledge, but imam malik said that he wanted to become a singer/musician. In response to this, his mother who was very smart and patient said, “Malik, singing comes with good looks, and unfortunately you don't have that”. This made him believe that he couldn't be a singer.
- When she went there, of all the imams in madia she deliberately chose one specific imam for him named Rabbi’a Ibn Abdul Rahaman who is today known as rabiatu raee’ (the garden of best opinions)
- His mom told him, I took you to this imam not only to learn knowledge from him, but to also learn from his adab
- He was what’s known today as teacher’s pet and mommy’s boy which are the two things looked down upon in today's society to deter people form knowledge
- Iban Ibn Hormoz was his 2nd imam for 8 years and he never liked people to stop him and ask questions at the time of his dars
- Ibn Hormoz was a freed slave
- Imam malik had one wife, 3 sons and 1 daughter and his sons were not into knowledge
- His daughter however, was very intellect and learned a lot from his father to a point that she became ethe one to correct the students of his father
- One day, during eid he went to Imam zuhri who was his 4th teacher and was waiting outside his door for hours and when the servant saw him he informed the imam that the blonde boy was there waiting to be let in so he said to let him in, when he entered Hormoz put the plate of food in front of him thinking he wanted to eat but Imam malik said he wasn't there to eat he was there for Hormoz to teach him ahadith so the imam taught him 14 ahadith with their chains of narrations and so malik told him to teach him more, the Imam said learn these first and I shall teach you more and little did he know that just by writing them down he had learned them all, when Malik told him each one by all the chains of narration he was shocked and so he aksed him to stand up as you're one of the vessels of knowledge.
- By the age of 20, he became a mufti and was qualified to give fetwa
- Imam Shaafi said about him that if it wasn't for Sufeyan and Malik, knowledge would cease in madina

- Imam Malik had a very significant quality known as the “Golden Chain”, if any chain of narration who is **Malik** from **Nafi’** who heard it from **Ibn Umar**, who heard it from **Prophet (saw),** is known to be of the strongest chain of narration
- Imam Jafar Sadiq was his fifth Imam, who was a friend of Abu Hanifa and many people have now misled people using his name when in reality he was a very good man
- Imam malik was a zahid and ascetic, and when we talk about Sufism the idea of asceticism where they disconnect themselves form the luxurious of the world was an idea that was prac ticed by many including, Imam Abu Hanifa, rasulullah (saw) and Imam Malik to an extent, however some ideas of today’s sufism does not correlate with proper theology and aqeedah which came from greek philosophy such as visiting the graves and praying to scholars and what not
- Imam Malik was a man of great personality and would say the truth with daleel and when he was lecturing in circles he hated to be interrupted, unlike Imam Abu Hanifa who encouraged his student to discuss and intervene
- Unlike Abu Hanifa he didn't even attempt to answers questions that were illogical for example which direction Is Allah (swt) facing or where he came from and he would say the harsh truth and let the person take it as it is
- Yahya Ibn Yahya used to report a lot from Imam Malik, so he reported that one time a person asked him a question, that ya imam I have a question, “the most merciful rose above his throne”, what does rose above his throne mean? His students say that Imam Malik put his head down and you could see sweat coming down his forehead out of anger, he said Allah is above and not below and as for how we don't know. so you are no one but a a person of fitna and innovation trying to mischief people so he asked his students to kick him out
- Imam Malik was a traditional ,an and didn't like getting involved in controversial and modernist ideas
- He used to spend a lot on clothing and loved to look presentable
- The sources that Imam malik and all the other imams looked at were first the Quran, if there was not a clear solution to the issue they moved on to hadith of the prophet (saw), if nothing clear there, they would than look at the opinions of the sahabas, and if no solution found, they would consider looking at the ijma of the great scholars. In this process Imam Malik different with other imams by following the practices that were done in madina if he did not find a solution
- His friend layth whom malik believed was much more knowledgeable than him told him that it was not right to follow the practices of the people of madonna as people’s traditions differed, however imam malik respected him and followed his own idea
- If he still was unable to find a solution from the practices of madina, than he did what Imam Abu Hanifa used to do and that was looking at the qiyas (to come to a sulling by making a comparison to whats similar to it), eg., smoking cigarette was considered makrooh at first, but than when compared to drinking alcohol and other drugs it was considered to be very toxic drug and thus, the ruling changed to it being haram
- One major thing that Imam Malik differed on was that in madhab there was 3 things that he always looked at:
    1. **Al- Istihsan:** the better of the two fiqh of matters (took the one that was easier)
    2. **Sadd Al-Dhara'i':** Making things things lawful/unlawful depending on what it would lead to or avoiding halal that might lead to haram as will as surpassing haram
    3. **Al Masalih Al-Musliha (the benefits of the public):** if something was gonna effect the community despite being halal than it was prevented
- Due to these 3 factors, his madhab came off to be very flexible which other madhabs did not agree with except the Hanafi school of thought
- One time, Rabi Abdul Rahman and Zohri were disagreeing on a matter and so they asked imam malik as to what he thought, at first he was quite and when insisted by imam zuhri, he said, “the master has answered” referring to rabi his main teacher. Then, imam zuhri continued saying they wont leave until he has answered, so imam malik than gave his answer which happened to be the exact opposite of his teacher Rabi, imam zuhri than looked at him saying he agreed with him. This showed the level of respect he had for an elder or his teacher.
- Imam malik was never a government scholar, nor did they ever rely on anything besides their own skills
- Malik had two sources of income, one was from his business, the second was from his friend and 3rd was from the khalifa
- In regards to asceticism which is staying away from luxuries of the world, he believed that asceticism should come from heart and be displayed in actions and not appearance and his reasoning came from a hadith of the prophet (saw) which says, “Allah likes one’s blessings to be shown in public”, so meaning if Allah (swt) grants you something nice than., he would like you to show it, but not to show off. ANother reasoning for him was that he was standing in the

position of prophet Muhamed (saw) so he had to be present as his best self as Allah (swt) says in the quran to decorate yourself at every masjid especially for the jummah to wear your best of clothings

- One time a pearson came to him telling him that ya Imam, leave the eloquence and luxuries of this world behind and go live a simple life in the desert where your time is only spent on worshiping ALlah (swt) (note: this is an example of asceticism in sufism) and Imam MAlik responded to him< "Allah distributed his creations the same way he distributed their substance and livelihood, He gives some people the pleasure in salah more than the pleasure in song, or in hajj more than zakat for instance. You happen to find your pleasure in abstinence from luxuries of the world and beautification and I happen to find mine in knowledge and teaching, so I am content with what Allah has given me and so I like to show it and I hope that both of us are on the right path".
- Imam MAlik produced his own book called Muwatta which consists of 1720 prophetic hadith (this was probably one of the first books of the hadith even before muslim and bukhari that was considered authentic)
- It took him 11 years to complete it, he did not write it himself his students collected it for him
- The most frightening thing to all these imams were if someone were to ask them questions which they had to give fatwa for
- One time there was a moroccan man who had a question and none of the scholars could answer him, so they referred him to go to the great scholar known im Madina named malik to get his question answered, this man waited and travelled for 4 months to get to Madina and when he visited the imam, the imam asked him to give him a day, the next day the imam made wudu and sat to answer his question and his answer was that he did know. The man was shocked as to how he could go back and say that the great scholar did not know the answer to the question and his response was that well you go and tell your scholars that the im am said he does not know as that is better.
- Unlike Abu HAnifa, Malik used to accept gifts from Mansoor the khalifa as he believed that his wealth was the wealth of the ummah and so it had to be spent on the ummah, however Imam Abu Hanifa used to trick the khalifa and tell him to keep the gifts with him so that theifs don't steal it form him and later on after his death Manoor found out why he didn't do so
- Imam malik clashed with the state and he supported the leader of this movement that was made against the regime

- Imam Muhammad Ibn Idris Al-Shafi'i -

- Born in Gaza the same year Imam Aby Hanifa died in and so he did not get to meet imam abu hanifa
- He was tall, very healthy, had a strong build, masculine
- Some scholars describe him to be the 9th great scholar of all time after the prophet (saw) and the companions
- He was among the 3 best generation after the prophet (saw)
- Imam al shafi'i was a copy of imam malik as when he was sent to learn the deen from him he also learned his manners and adab
- **Tittle: the encyclopedist**
- A tittle that can be given to him is encyclopedist, as he had knowledge of everything (was very educated in the area of medicine)
- His teacher was Imam Malik
- He was known as the imam of makkah, because when he was a child (13 yrs), his mom took him from gaza to makkah (he travelled a lot)
- Imam al-shafi'i was from the blood lines of prophet muhamed (saw) - comes from the hashimi bloodline
- His father and mother were both in close lineage to the prophet (saw)
- His mother was a scholar in jurisprudence
- Similar to Imam Malik, his mother was the inspiration for him as well
- His birth story was similar to the story of abdul mutalib, the grandfather of prophet muhamed (saw)
- As for his teenager life, Imam al-shafi'i loved sports and had a very beautiful voice in quran, was an excellent horse rider:)
- He lived in dessert for 17 years of his life, when he was 5 years old his mother sent him to the dessert for until he was 13 and than later pon, he went there himself fir another 12 years
- His mother helped him to memorize the quran by the age of 7
- His inspiration was his mother and a scholar
- His uncle when he was a child, told him "son, I see intelligence and brilliance in you"
- Imam al-shafi'i had the gift of memory, although the rest also had great memory, imam shafi'i stood out to be the best (if he was to read one page one tim,e he would have it memorized)

- He memorized quran at 7, beca,e a reference poet at 10
- He read the quran every single day
- One times its said that he was memorizing and at the same time a woman passed by, as he saw the woman he immediately looked down and said astaghfirullah, once he continued his memorization he realized that it has decreased by a lot, so he went and complained to his teacher, Waqia, about his lack of memory, and his teacher said knowledge of the deen is a gift from Allah (swt) and one should abstain from any kind of sin to gain it
- Imam al shafi'i was one of imam malik's favourite students and he always told him that a brilliance was gonna come out of him
- Imam shafi'i loved and respected his teacher and also found some flaws in his work which if imam Malik was able to see ity he would have praised him
- Subsequently, imam syafi'i favourite student was imam Ahmad ibn hanbal
- Imam shafi'i had a total of 17 teachers while some say he had 26
- Direct teachers: imam Malik, Sufiyan (direct student of imam abu hanifa), his 3rd teacher was Muhammed Ibn Al-Hassan (direct/best student of imam aby hanifa),
- Indirect teachers: imam **al-**ʾAwzāʿī who had a madhab of his own which didnt last as his students were givimng him a hard time, the only thing that did last from his madhab was the international law, imam layth Ibn Asad (best friend of imam malik)
- No one ever commented a flaw about imam shafi'i adba and respect
- Imam hanbal considered imam shafi to be a mujaddid, theres even a hadith of the prophet saw that every 100 years a person comes who will take people back to the teaching of quran and the teachings of the prophet saw
- The scholars agree that the first mujaddid was after the prophet (saw) in the 1st century was Umar Ibn Abdul-Aziz and the 2nd one according to imam hanbal and other scholars was imam al-shafi'i
- Imam Shafi'i was the scholar of hadith and was a genius
- His student learned arabic and and the most difficult type of poetry from him which was called the ashanthara, this helped in the tafseer of the quarn as well
- Imam al-shafi'i was the first to document his work with his own hands unlike the other imams whom their students did it for them and he summarized it all in a book called al-um
- The book al um contains opinions of imam abu hanifa and others as well as al awzai
- His greatest legacy however was the book ar-risalah which was simplified and all madabis agreed on, this made imam a-shafi'i the first to establish something called usool-ul-fiqh which consisted of the opinions of all 4 madhabs
- When Hisham came to him to ask about Ilm of man, he brought up discussing the idea of ilm-ul-nisa and had memorized hundreds of womans scholars who were great hadith narrators and what not
- In the time of imam al-shafi'i two things developed: Ahl al-ra'yi (the people of opinions) and ahl al-hadith (the people of hadith)
- Ahlul ra'yi (the people of opinions): introduced and deduced opinions based on daleel
- Ahlul hadith (the people of hadith): people who are more literature and they had a problem identifying sunnah that cones from shari'a and people who doesn't
- Lived the shortest life in comparison to all other imams
- Lived the last 5 years of his life and egypt and died there, thus many people know him as an egyptian imam
- Died at the age of 54
- Imam al-shaffi'i taught one of his imams so imam abu suffiyan
- These imams all did not have any extreme following of the madhab or blind following the madhab that resulted in misguidance and division and thus the teachers used to even learn from their students as they knew their can be alterations made in what they have learned
- These imams did have to differ in some aspects as the deen of islam there for us to help us come up with solutions that are best and will help us be set on the straight path
- It is crucial to realize that they are humans and they can make mistakes, it is only reasonable to understand that their main goal was to help us follow the quran and the sunnah in a better sense so having differed ideas on some of the small issues and changing it according to what seems right is acceptable
- There can be some issues touched upon that did not exist in the quran or the sunnah and depending on where they lived they had to deal with different communities and philosophy
- Imam shafi'i went to the grave of imam abu hanifa and so according to his madhab, he used to raise hands when praying, once seen there it was said that he did not raise his hands and when asked why when that is his own saying, he said it was due to the respect he had for imam abu hanfi

- As other imams, imam shafi'i had to faced a great trial (considering these imams weren't government scholars and didn't go what what the majority said, rather went with daleel and what was haqq), his greatest fear was answering a question incorrectly, so he always used the phrase I don't know
- The imam pointed out two important factors, he said not to live in a land that does not have scholars or doctors because without the knowledge of the deen you will go astray spiritually and without doctors you will become unhealthy
- Imam shafi'i studied all the madahebs and learned them fully and mastered all of them, including the mu'tazila
- One of his expertise was in something called the ahlul-bayt
- He started abu hanifa's madhab as well, and encouraged understanding the quran and the hadith
- The students couldn't help but flock when seeing his lectures, there used to be 54 halqas in the masjid, and when he was to start his halqa, people would all leave the other halqas and scholars their own scholars and would jin his circle, including his teacher which later became his student (Sufiyan)
- He had a sense of humour
- Imam shafi'i was nasir al sunnah (the victor of sunnah), the one who gives victory
- He differed from imam malik by using more reasoning
- In his time, there were two thoughts that were becoming a bit extreme (ahl al-ra'y and ahl al- hadith)
- Ahlul ra'y: the people of opinion (after looking at the quran and the sunnah, they would also use or look at logic and reasoning)
- Ahlul hadith: the people of hadith (they would look at text and if there were no text they wouldn't go into anything further)
- Imam shafi'i fell under both categories, he was somewhere in between as he used both
- Imam shafi'i would look at the quran and the sunnah and then the ijma (consensus), so if all the scholars and Sahabas agreed on something he would take it
- The fourth source that he used was qiyas (coming to a ruling based on analogy and something that is like it) and he did not go further than that
- He wrote 170 books and the most monumental books were, kitab ul um and ar-risalah
- The scholars say that you can see the spirit of imam abu hanifa in imam shafi'i's kitab-ul umm
- In his books he corrected imam malik as well in a very respectful manner and always referred to him as his master, however after he died the students of imam malik started to hate imam shafi'i as a result of extremism until one day they beat him up
- Imam shafi'i used to praise imam abu hanifa by saying that the scholars and people are like children, dependent on imam abu hanifa's knowledge as he also built the foundation
- Imam shafi'i faced two great trials: one of which was khalqul people, in which a group of people who were the mu'tazila said that the quran was created
- Back in time, there was no formal name know as shia, but there was a group developing form among the people who started to claim love for the family of the prophet (saw) in a zealous or extreme way, whereupon they started to overpraise and this started into a political arena
- There were two great empires, bani abbas and bani Omaya, bani abbas was more linked to the prophet Muhamed (saw) and bani Omaya was from the mu'awiya, but they all were cousins and came from the descendants of hashim, but they all had hate for each other and said that the khilafah should be for them and there was another group (the alawites) as in the ones who carried the blood that went back to Ali (ra) and the ones who supported them
- The alawites of then (not the ones of today), were actually great people like Zayn al-Abidin who went to imam abu Hanifa and earned his support
- So the point is that, there were a group of people that claimed to be the ahl-al bayt and this idea wasd getting really overwhelming that the khilafah should be for ahl-al bayt, and the problem was as to who even is, ahl-al bayt who are they in the first place
- This continued until came a khalifa named Harun ar-Rashid, who was better than other and in his time there was a ruler in yemen who hated imam shafi' because he would publicly announce him as an unjust ruler, so this ruler wanted to get back at the imam in any ways possible
- Since this idea of ahl-al bayt was there, so he took that to an advantage and captured 9 people who spoke against the government using the idea of ahl-al bayt, and so he accused imam shafi'i as one of them and said that all these 9 needs to be headed at the spot
- As for the imam, he was sent to Harun ar-Rashid and one of the student of imam abu hanifa interceeded for imam shafi'i in front of the khaliufa and said that imam shafi'i is not a foolish man to just talk like this and he is innocent

from all this and the imam also stood his ground and draw boundaries in regards to the idea of ahl-al bayt and so he was let off

➔ **What is Ahl Al- Bayt?**

- First of all, ahl-al bayt has nothing to do with shiasim and what is claimed for this idea as for shias is that they have ordered the 12 imams in ranks from highest to the lowest and as for sunnis they believe that they should all be loved the same except for the 12th imam which sunnis believe is made up, so the order that shias have ranked these imams starts with ali (ra) being the first followed by hussein, followed by muhamed al baqir, jafar al sadiq, kadhim, rida, ismalei and so on. And from this they have isna sharia, khamsiya, ismaelia and all these types
- According to these imams, anyone that comes from the bloodline of hisham is the ahlul bayt and the family of the prophet saw
- However the debate to taking this idea to an extremism goes that it is really hard to identify who is what and despite having respect for the ahlul bayt, we also need to realize that we all are equal
- The ibrahimia that we recite in our salah is one of the biggest signs of respect that is held towards them however, some groups say no we are equal buit we are more equal than other which is absolutely wrong
- So the line that imam shafi'i courageously introduced was that the deen and the ahlul bayt has nothing to do with the political makeup, so dont any of you come around saying that the khalifa has to be from ahlul bayt and the poloiutical movement over the bloodline and all that stuff and said that we shall separate the two and this was very courageous ofg him as he could have been killed over stating this fact
- So people starting to get jealous of him calling him the sympathizer of the ahlul bauyt and accused him and all the other imams (abu hanifa, malik and sadiq) to be shias just because they were studying under the ahlul bayt
- Imam shafi' even wrote a poem saying that loving ahlul bayt has nothing to do with Rafidi, and if people are to call me that so let it be
- The 2nd accusation that they made of him was that he was a worshiper of philosophy just because he was a scholar of philosophy interpretation, but he has nothing to do with shiasim and philosophy
- Imam shafi'i noticed the students of imam malik getting so extreme that at time when people would say qala rasulullah and the other would say qala imam malik
- So one day when he was teaching in his class, the extremists of the students of imam malik came in and attacked hi, they beat him up and so as a result he died a few days later
- Now some say, he didn't die due to the wounds but had other disease which the wounds added up to and had him die
- So becoming zealous in the field of the deen can be very scary and in fact it is very important to understand the religion in a good way that would extend the limits and turns one into a zealous

- Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal -

- Was an extension to imam shafi'i and was one of his students
- Imam ahmad said i have never made dua so much so for anyone, but imam shafi'i
- Imam ahmad was a great scholar of hadith and fiqh who had a great character just like imam shafi'i
- He was born in the year 164 hijri and lived for 77 years
- He was born in baghdad, and died there
- He was born the same year imam malik died
- Tittle: piety, determination, resilience, muhaddith
- He was a copycat of the prophet (saw), he was so strict to following him out of love for him
- Unfortunately when we hear hanbali, there are people who associate him and his school to extremism, strictness and fanaticism, which is absolutely shameful to those who do attach these qualities to someone like him
- Just like other imams he was also accused– the word hanbali in the dictionary means someone who is rigid and one minded which obv does not help with their accusations
- Same idea goes with wahabi, however the name does not always align with who one is, as a person
- Imam hanbal studied in khorasan, morocco and he travelled a lot just to learn knowledge and would travel 4-5 months from one place to the other just to learn knowledge
- Imam hanbal had extreme financial difficulties to a point that he would never asked for any money from anybody, the scholars even offered him money, but he never accepted it from anyone until he died
- Just like imam shafi'i and imam malik his inspiration and channel of knowledge was his mom
- Both imam shafi'i was an orphan raised by their mother, same with imam ahmed

- There was a tribe named banu shayban, who had a combat with the persians, and for the first time in the history of arabs he beat up the persians which was very shocking
- There is a hadith of the prophet (saw) which explains that the reason why banu shayban won the battle against the persians was because it was the same day the prophet (saw) was born
- Imam ahmed also comes from the same line (banu shayban), and these people were very strong willed people which explains the strength imam ahmed had against his trials as well as the strong will his mother had who was also a scholar
- SubhanAllah, his mother was so knowledgeable that heb spoonfed his child, and if we actually think about it, one of the reasons why women talk so much unlike men is because god has just created them like that, so that they can talk to their children and spoonfed them as the children always look for details and ask a lot of questions and so Allah (swt) has given them that patience and ability
- This woman, after the death of her husband stayed single all along and dedicated her life to teaching his son
- Imam ahmad had so much love for him mom unlike other sons that in fact when he was 21 years old, his friend asked him to cross the tigris river with him for some reason and he said no, my mother said to never cross the tigris river
- One time when he was praying a voluntary prayer and his mom called him, he stopped and responded to her and even in his school of thought, if one is praying a voluntary prayer and their mom calls them for a need, they should immediately stop and respond to her
- Unfortunately, when looking at today's society we barely see those women or men and we find majority in two extremes: mothers who have completely let go of themselves and are depressed and mothers who are too zealous in their beauty and etc, thats why as scholars say when marrying a woman you have to check her software as well and not only her hardware and if a woman decided to marry a man they should definitely check a man's brain programming because their mentality is what they are and you can never change that
- There is a saying that goes "when you prepare a mother, you prepare generations and generations"
- As a muhadith, he had memorized about about 700000 hadiths
- His Ahadith were produced in a book known as Kitab al-Musnad
- His book is carried in authenticity
- As mentioned, he was an imam of piety and taqwa and his piety would always stand out
- He was a man of determination, someone who would make a decision and stick to it until the end
- He was resilient as everytime a calamity came his way, he stood strong and did not give up
- Every imam had a turning point in which after that major event they went on to study the deen, however as for imam ahmed. There was no such turning point (as a child he was always raised in religion and had knowledge of the deen)
- His background: he was an orphan and his father's name was Muhamed, but he was named after his grandfather Ibn Hanbal who was also a scholar as well as an activist, and was known for his words
- Imam Ahmad had no siblings, the only person he had in his life was his mother
- His mother was known for her piety, modesty and adab
- Juts like she dedicated her life to her son, imam ahmed wanted to repay her as he also did not get married until she was alive and dedicated his whole life to her
- He was 40 years old when he got married
- His first wife was Aisha Umm Saleh who lived with him for 30 years, imam ahmed used to describe his relationship to his students that Aiha and him lived for 30 years and in these 30 years they never disagree in one word
- After Aisha died, he married another woman named Raihan, whom gave birth to another son named Abdullah
- His sons, Salhe and Abdullah both became scholars and muhaditheen
- His sons were the ones that wrote about him
- After Rihana died, he went on and married again and had two children after the age of 74 years and than he died at the age of 77
- There is narration from his son which says, everytime a person or a friend of him came into our house and he would call me to come and say Salaam to him, and would tell to be like that man
- He had many other children as well, Saleh, Abdullah, Zainab, al-Hassan, al-Hussein,
- Al Hassan and Hussein died after they were born, and after them came Hashim, Muhamed and Saed
- Saed became the judge in kufa and he stood out after Saleh and Abdullah
- He always stood behind what was right and did not care what people thought of him
- He was a true acetic man and did not want anything form this world
- He memorized the whole quran as a child, and was the person who could read and write
- He would write letters for the people that could not read and write and out of piety, everytime they would ask him to write "I love You", he would take that part out as he wouldn't want to sit in front of a woman reading that

- Everyone loved imam Ahamd and as a teenager, people would look at him and wish their children were just like him
- People used to say if Imam Ahmad lives, he would become the evidence to the people of misguidance
- His first teacher was Abu Yusuf al-Qadri, who was a student of Imam Abu Hanifa
- His second teacher was Haitham Ibn Jamain, who said that this boy will become an influential person to the ummah
- His third teacher was Yazid, who was a very powerful and influential person so much so that until he was alive the khalifa was not able to go and say the quran was created only when he died, was when that happened
- His fourth teacher was Abdul Rahman Ibn Mahdi, the scholar who encouraged Shafi'i to write his book
- His fifth teacher was wakiya from Basra
- 6th teacher was Abdul Razaq Ibn Uman
- 7th teacher was Imam Shafi'i, who was the most influential and loved teacher of imam Ahmad also known as nasr-al hadith
- He was in his 20s when he went to mecca to Abu Sufiyan's halqa, and his friend Yahya could not find imam Ahmad until he went and see that he was sitting with imam shafi'i and he asked him why are you sitting here, when imam sufiyan is talking, you will miss his lecture and he said, Imam Sufiyan, if you miss his lecture you can hear it again, as for this man referring to imam shafi'i if you miss his words the first time, you will never hear it from anyone again and soon after, his circle became the largest circle of all
- So imam ahmed had this in him, which by just looking at a person he could tell if they are the person of knowledge or not
- He was 22 years old when he left baghdad and travelled around the world, including yemen, kufa, yemen, mecca and madina and he went to all these places by walking as he had financial difficulties

➔ **The trials he went through:**

- Imam Ahmad was known for his trails, and if he did not go through all these trials he would probably not be remembered
- The first trial was the khalq al quran (the creation of the quran), so there was a group called the mu'tazila at the time of imam abu hanifa which they did not show up until the time of Imam Ahmad
- He had been tortured and went through this ordeal over three consecutive khalifas which one died (Ma'mun)
- During the reign of Caliph Al-Ma'mun (813–833 AD), there was a theological debate regarding the nature of the Quran. Al-Ma'mun promoted the view that the Quran was created, while Imam Ahmad held the belief that the Quran was the uncreated and eternal word of God. Imam Ahmad refused to accept the caliph's theological stance, and as a result, he faced persecution and imprisonment.
- Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal stood firm in his convictions, enduring flogging and imprisonment for his refusal to renounce his beliefs about the Quran. Eventually, the succeeding caliphs, including Al-Mu'tasim and Al-Wathiq, abandoned the policy of enforcing the createdness of the Quran, and Imam Ahmad was released from prison. His steadfastness in the face of persecution contributed to the preservation of the orthodox Sunni belief in the uncreated nature of the Quran.
- The amount of torture they put imam Ahmad through was insane, they whipped him and if he was to lean on one side they would beat him so that he wound lean back straight
- Yet he stood firm on his believe that the quran was not created, and told him to bring one evidence that could make him believe the quran was created and they brought a verse that say "the quran was sent down to believers" and he said, the verse says it was sent down and not created
- So many people came to him asking him to just agree with them and say yes the quran was created, yet he said i do not lie in the matter of deen
- One day a guy came to him and sai ya imam, just say yes we cannot see you be tortured like this and the imam asked him if he was a student of knowledge, the guy said yes and so he continued on asking him to look put the window and tell him what he sees and the guy said i see thousands of people with their pen and paper, and the imam responded these thousands of people are students of knowledge and they are waiting to see what i am going to say and that answer of mine will be passed down for generations and allah is the witness that I will never lie and say it was created
- When he was finally let out and found as a truthful man, people came to apologize from him and he put all the mu'tazila in prison and proved the world that they lied, and had some of them undergo the same torture
- He forgave all those who asked for apology and except the mu'tazila for he believed that if they were to be forgiven, that that would've been the greatest disrespect to his deen
- He also forgave al mutasim without him asking for forgiveness, because he conquered a land for allah (swt)

- Imam shafi'i moved to egypt from mecca and said that I leave behind me a great man, and when time passed imam shafi'i wanted to see him but knew that Imam ahmad couldn't due to his financial needs so he got him a job as a judge in yemen, but imam ahmed refused and said he wouldn't work in a governmental post
- Imam shafi'i kept insisting and told abdullah to tell him to accept it, but imam he said to abdullah that if the subject is brought up again, than you will never see me
- Unfortunately he couldn't make it and imam shafi'i ended up dying, he went to visit his grave 2 months after his death and said that his biggest regret was not seeing him
- SubhanAllah, when imam Ahamad died, he had a great funeral and hundreds of thousands of people attended his funeral, people left whatever they were doing and attended his funeral
- After his death, some of his students became zealous and extreme to a point that they beat up imam malik and some of them went to an extreme believing that the only pious man after the prophet (saw) was imam Ahmad