

Al-Imam Al-A'dham: Abū Hanīfah Nu'mān Ibn Thābit رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ

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Al-Imām al-Adham, the jurist of Irāq, Nu'mān Ibn Thābit bin Zūṭā رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ was born in 80 A.H. It is narrated that Thābit went to Sayyidunā Alī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ، and the latter made *du'ā'* for the former and his children. Ismā'il Ibn Hammād Ibn Abū Hanīfah says that we hope from Allāh that the *du'ā'* of Sayyidunā Alī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ was accepted in our favour.

Allāmah Khawārizmī states in '*Jāmi' al Masānīd*' that from amongst his virtues that no one shares is that he narrates from the ṣahābah رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ. The scholars are unanimous upon this. They only differ regarding the amount of ṣahābah رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ Imām Abū Hanīfah رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ met and narrated from.

Imām Abū Hanīfah رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ had a very high status in Fiqh, Hadīth and the other Islāmic sciences. Makkī Ibn Ibrāhīm – a narrator in *Ṣaḥīḥ al Bukhārī* – says, "Abū Hanīfah was the most knowledgeable of his time." "Alī Ibn Āṣim says, "If the knowledge of Abū Hanīfah had to be weighed in contrast with the knowledge of the people of his time, his knowledge will outweigh theirs'." Wakī' Ibn al-Jarrāh says, "I have not met a greater jurist than Abū Hanīfah, or anyone that performs Ṣalāh better than him." Whenever A'mash was asked about intricate issues, he used to send the questioner to Imām Abū Hanīfah رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ. Khalaf bin Ayyūb said, "Knowledge went from Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى to Muḥammad صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. It then went to his companions, then to the followers, then to Abū

Hanīfah and his companions. Whoever wishes, he could be pleased and whoever wishes, he could be displeased."

The scholars say that Imām Abū Hanīfah رَحِمَهُ اللهُ was the leader of the *Mujtahidīn*. It is necessary in *Ijtihād* for a person to know that amount of Ahādīth that will allow him to deduce the rulings of *Sharī'ah*. A person cannot be a *Mujtahid* without being a *Muḥaddith*. So, if he is the leader of the *Mujtahidīn*, then it means he is the leader of the *Muḥaddithīn*, in fact, greater than the *Muḥaddithīn* because a *Mujtahid* understands the meanings of the Ahādīth. Shams ul A'immah Sarakhsī رَحِمَهُ اللهُ says, "Imām Abū Hanīfah was the most knowledgeable in Hadīth from all the scholars of his time, but due to his adherence to the condition of complete recording, his narrations are few." Imām Abū Yūsuf رَحِمَهُ اللهُ says, "I have not seen anyone more knowledgeable of the meanings of the Ahādīth than Abū Hanīfah." He used to also say, "Abū Hanīfah has more insight into authentic Ahādīth than me."

The greatest Imām not only excelled in terms of knowledge and understanding, but in terms of piety and a close relationship with Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى as well. Zā'idah narrates, he says, "I performed *'Ishā' Salāh* with Abū Hanīfah in his Masjid. The people left and they did not know I was still in the Masjid. I intended to ask him a ruling at a place where no one could see me. He stood up and recited until he reached the verse, '*Allāh did favour us and saved us from the torment of the fire's scorching breath*'<sup>1</sup> I stood in the Masjid waiting for

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<sup>1</sup> Sūrah at Tūr (the Mount of Tūr) 52:27

him to complete. He carried on repeating the verse until the *Muadh-dhin* called out the *Adhān* for *Fajr*.

Hammānī says, "My father narrated to me, he said, "I stayed with Abū Hanīfah for almost a year. I did not see him eating during the day, or at night except that he was standing (in *Salāh*). A morsel of another never entered his belly. He used to perform the morning *Salāh* with the *wudhū'* of the first part of the night. He used to finish every night when *Fajr* began and he used to perform two *rak'āt* at that time. Khārija Ibn Mus'ab says, "Four Imāms completed the entire *Qur'ān* in a single *rak'at*, Uthmān Ibn Affān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, Tamīm ad-Dārī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, Sa'id Ibn Jubayr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ and Abū Hanīfah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ." The entire night used to be spent in worship."

The praises of Imām Abū Hanīfah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ for his piety was even on the tongues of the children of his time. Imām Abū Yūsuf رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ narrates, "Once while walking with Abū Hanīfah I suddenly heard children screaming that this is Abū Hanīfah who does not sleep at night. He said to me, "O Abū Yūsuf, Do you not see what these children are saying, by Allāh, it is binding upon me that I do not place my side down on the bed until I meet Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى.""

Imām Abū Hanīfah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ studied under many teachers. Some of them are mentioned here. Āmir ash-Sha'bi رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, he met five hundred Sahābah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ. Sulaymān Ibn Mahrān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, he was the most knowledgeable regarding inheritance. Amr Ibn Abdullāh al-Hamdānī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, he heard from thirty eight sahābah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ. Mansūr Ibn Mu'tamir رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ and Salamah Ibn Kuhayl رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ. These were his teachers in Kufa. Imām Abū Hanīfah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ performed Hajj fifty five times.

During these journeys he studied under Aṭā' Ibn Abī Rabāh رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ، who met two hundred Sahābah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ. Ikramah رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ who narrates from Sayyidah 'Ā'isha رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا and Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ.

He went to Madīnah Munawwarah and benefitted from Nāfi' who narrates from Sayyidunā Abdullāh Ibn Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. He also took knowledge from Qāsim bin Muḥammad Ibn Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, Hishām Ibn Urwah رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ and Yahyā Ibn Sa'id Ansārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ. The scholars have lost count of the number of teachers Imām Abū Hanīfah رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ studied Hadīth from. Some say the number is four thousand.

Contrary to the famously false statement that Imām Abū Hanīfah رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ did not write any books, we find recorded in history that in fact he had written many books. The first one was Kitāb ul Āthār. Some others are Al Fiqh Al Akbar, Al Fiqh Al Absaṭ and Al 'Ālim wal Muta'allim.

Thousands of books were written throughout the ages on the virtues, status, knowledge and piety of Imām Abū Hanīfah رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ, hundreds of them by non-Hanafī scholars. May Allāh grant us the ability to understand his life and the ability to follow the teachings he has recorded and laid the foundations for. Āmīn

Imām Shāfi'i رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ praised Imām Abū Hanīfah رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ in the following words,

لقد زان البلاد ومن عليها  
إمام المسلمين أبو حنيفة

*The leader of the Muslims, Abū Hanīfah gave beauty to  
the world and those that inhabit it*

كآبات الزبور على الصحيفة بأحكام وآثار وفقه

*Through laws, ahādīth and fiqh, like the noble verses  
beautified the scripture of Dāwūd عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ*

فما بالمشرقين له نظير ولا بالمغربين ولا بكوفة

*He has no like in the east and west, nor in the north or  
south, and not in Kūfah*

فرحمة ربنا أبدا عليه مدى الأيام ما قرئت صحيفه

*May the mercy of our Rabb be always on him, as long as  
His book is recited*

Sources:

1. *Al Intisār wat Tarjīh li Madh hab As Saḥīḥ*, Abū al Muzaffar Jamāl ud Dīn Yūsuf bin Farghal (654 A.H) with commentary by Allāmah Muḥammad Zāhid al Kautharī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ، pp.40-52. Al Maktabah Al Azhariyyah lit Turāth, Egypt.
2. *Tadwīn Madh hab al Aḥnāf wa Usūluhu fil Ḥadīth*, Muḥammad Mufīd ur Raḥmān bin Aḥmad Ḥusayn Ash Shātghāmī, Zam Zam Publishers, Karachi

