

MIFTAAH SEMINAR

THE LEGEND SERIES



Imam Yousef Wahb

SESSION 2

- We are able to relate more to the stories of these scholars because, just like us, they lived in a time without the Prophet SAW.
 - This is why it is important to study their lives.
- While learning about the 4 imams our goal is not to compare between them but it is to learn from their dedication and sincerity.

Imam Al-Shafi'i

- He was the third of the four scholars in terms of chronological order.
- Imam Ahmad said about Imam Al-Shafi'i that not one of the scholars of hadith touched a pen except that he owed a huge debt to Al-Shafi'i.
 - This is how beneficial his knowledge was.
- He was born in Gaza in 150 AH.
 - This is the same year that Imam Abu Hanifa passed away.

- People took this as a sign from Allah that He is sending someone else to preserve the religion and carry it on.
- His lineage meets with the lineage of the Prophet SAW at Abdi Manaf.
- His father died at an early age and his mother was worried about him.
 - When he was five years old she wanted to take him to Mecca because she feared that he would lose his title of being a Sharif (being from the lineage of the Prophet SAW).
- He went to Mecca and began studying the deen.
- He had a very sharp memory.
 - He memorized the Quran quickly and he began memorizing the hadith of the Prophet SAW.
 - He was poor so he would write hadith on pieces of clay and anything he could find.
- Then he found himself interested in language and he wanted to increase his eloquence.
 - During that time the most pure Arabic was spoken in small tribes in the middle of the desert.
 - He decided he would leave Mecca and live with one of these tribes to improve his Arabic.
- He stayed with a tribe called Huthail.
 - He said that he started learning how they used the language and their habits and customs.

- He said that this tribe was the most eloquent tribe that he had ever seen.
- He stayed with them for about 10 years.

Life in Mecca

- Then he returned to Mecca.
 - His main interest was poetry.
 - He was also very skilled in horsemanship and archery.
 - These are both sports which are emphasized in the sunnah.
- He said that his only interests were in knowledge and in archery.
 - He would shoot 10 arrows and not miss the target once.
- He would say that he became very good at archery but then he would be silent.
 - He would not say that he became very good at knowledge as well.
 - The people around him would say that he was even better at knowledge than he was at archery.
- Later on he began to seek knowledge about fiqh and the sunnah of the Prophet SAW.
- Ibn Khalid Al Zinji was the mufti of Mecca during this time. One day he saw Al-Shafi'i in the street and he asked him where he was going. Al-Shafi'i said that he was going to a session about grammar and literature.

- Ibn Khalid asked him where he was from and Al-Shafi'i said he was from Mecca. Then Ibn Khalid asked him specifically which tribe he was from and Al-Shafi'i said that he was from Abdi Manaf (this showed that he was from the lineage of the Prophet SAW). Ibn Khalid was shocked and he said "Allah has honored you in this life and in the hereafter." Then Ibn Khalid asked him "wouldn't it be better if you put your effort into fiqh?" and he left.
 - This was the moment that changed the life of Al-Shafi'i.
 - It made him ambitious towards fiqh and this is what made him one of the greatest scholars until today.
- Later on Ibn Khalid told him that he should begin giving fatwas to the people.
 - At this point he was not even 20 years old yet.
 - This shows the amount of knowledge that he gained during his early years of life.
- Then Imam Al-Shafi'i decided that he wanted to go to Madinah because that is where Imam Malik was.
 - During this time Imam Malik was very old.
 - People were not able to simply walk in and see him.
- Al-Shafi'i went to the mayor of Mecca and asked him if he could help him to get into the gathering of Imam Malik.
 - The mayor of Mecca wrote him a letter and told him to give it to the mayor of Madinah and that the mayor of Madinah would help him get into the gathering.

- People say that on his way from Mecca to Madinah, he memorized the entire book of Al Muwata, which is a book containing a few thousand ahadith from the Prophet SAW.

Life in Madinah

- When he got to Madinah he showed the letter to the mayor. The mayor told him that he could ask for anything else but he was too intimidated to go knock on the door of Imam Maalik.
 - During this time scholars were the most respected individuals.
 - This shows the amount of honor and awe the people had for the scholars.
- Al-Shafi'i continued to ask the mayor and eventually he went with him to the house of Imam Maalik. They knocked on the door and a servant opened the door and asked them what they wanted. The mayor explained that they wanted to talk to Imam Maalik. The servant went inside for a long time and came back out and said that Imam Maalik said that if they wanted a fatqa they can write it on a paper and she can give it to him and if they want something else they can come to his halaqa later on. They asked her again if they could just come and speak to him so she went in and asked Imam Maalik again and then came back and allowed them in. They sat and waited for Imam Maalik. When he came the mayor handed him the letter.

- Al-Shafi'i narrated that as he was reading the letter his face began to turn red out of anger. When he finished reading he threw the paper away. Then he said "we are in a time that the knowledge of the Prophet SAW would be sought by asking people to intercede?"
 - Imam Malik had extreme respect for the knowledge of the Prophet SAW and he was not happy that the intercession of the mayor was needed for someone to come and gain knowledge.
- Then Imam Al-Shafi'i introduced himself and asked to be accepted as a student. Imam Malik said to him "Oh Muhammad, have taqwa and stay away from sin for you will be a great man. Allah SWT has put a light in your heart so do not extinguish it with sins." Then Imam Malik told him that he could come to his gathering the next day and that he should bring someone who is able to read the text for him.
 - Imam Malik did not know that Imam Al-Shafi'i was eloquent enough to read the text on his own because most people needed to have someone who knew the language to read for them.
- Imam Al-Shafi said that the next day he went to the gathering and he opened the book and began to read but he did not actually look in the book because he already memorized it.

- He said that he would recite the book and then he would feel honor and shyness in the presence of Imam Maalik so he would stop, but Imam Maalik would tell him to continue.
 - He finished the entire book with Imam Maalik in just a few days.
- After this he had a companionship with Imam Maalik. He would accompany him everywhere until Imam Maalik passed away in 179 AH.

The Later Life of Imam Al-Shafi'i

- After this he began traveling around the world to gain knowledge from all of the other scholars.
 - He went to Iraq and learned from the students of Abu Hanifa.
 - Then he went to Egypt to learn from the great scholars there.
- Later on he wanted to get a job to support himself financially.
 - The president of Yemen at that time was in Hijaz (the area including Mecca and Madinah) so the President of Hijaz spoke to him and asked him if he had a job for Imam Al-Shafi'i. The president of Yemen said that he did and he took Imam Al-Shafi'i with him to Yemen.
- He was working in an administrative position with the president.
 - He gained a lot of political and social experience in this position.

- He had some trouble because people would try to bribe him and give him gifts but he always refused.
 - He remained very pure and strict in his work and many people did not like this.
- During the time of the Abbasids there was a lot of political turmoil because of a specific group of people who had a problem with the Khalifa at the time.
 - People accused Al-Shafi'i of supporting this group.
 - Betrayal was an action that people would be executed for.
 - Ten people, including Al-Shafi'i, were brought to the Khalifa, who was Haroon Al-Rasheed, and they were to be executed because of their betrayal.
 - The narration stated that nine of these people were executed and Al-Shafi'i was the only one who remained.
 - He was saved because:
 - He was very eloquent and was able to argue his case well with the Khalifa.
 - He defended himself very well in front of the Khalifa.
 - Muhammad ibn Al Hasan was a student of Abu Hanifa and he was the judge of the Khalifa at that time. He saw Al-Shafi'i and how he spoke and he fell in love with him.

- After this, he dedicated himself to knowledge and he left any political positions.
- He began studying with Muhammad ibn Al Hasan and he learned all of the knowledge of the Iraqi school of Imam Abu Hanifa.
- When he left Iraq he said that he had a camel full of all of the books of Muhammad ibn Al Hasan and these were all books which he already finished studying with him.
- During the time that he was studying with Muhammad ibn Al Hasan, he would debate with his other students because he also had all of the knowledge from Imam Malik.
 - None of the other students were able to win a debate against him.
 - Out of his shyness he would never debate with Muhammad ibn Al Hasan. He would wait for him to leave the gathering and then he would debate with the students.
- People began to realize that no one could beat him in a debate and one day Muhammad ibn Al Hasan challenged him to a debate.
 - At this point Muhammad ibn Al Hasan was the judge of all of the judges.
 - Al-Shafi'i was too shy to debate him but ibn Al Hasan kept insisting.

- These debates were not so that one person could beat the other, but it was so that people were able to gain knowledge and better themselves.
- Finally they debated and Al-Shafi'i won the debate.
- Then he went back to Mecca.
 - At this time Imam Ibn Hanbal was a young man and he began studying under Imam Al-Shafi'i.
 - He spent 9 years in Mecca teaching, learning, and interacting with the people.
- In 195 AH he went back to Baghdad.
 - At that point he had his own madhhab (school of thought).
 - During this time he wrote his book The Message (Kitaab ul Risaalah).
 - This was the first written manuscript from the science of usool ul fiqh.
 - This was written because a scholar from Egypt sent him a letter asking him how to deduce things from the Quran and Hadith. This book was "the message" which Al-Shafi'i wrote back to answer his question.
- In 199 AH he went to Egypt.
 - This would be his final destination before he passed away.
 - Most people in Egypt followed the madhhab of Imam Maalik because some of his students left Madinah and came to Egypt to spread it.

- This is where he wrote the rest of his books. He would either write it himself or he would dictate it to his students and they would write it.
- Imam Ibn Hanbal said that Imam Al-Shafi'i was a philosopher in four things:
 - Language
 - People and scholar's differences
 - Rhetoric
 - Fiqh
- Imam Al-Raazi said that people before the time of Al-Shafi'i were of two trends: the people of hadith/transmission and the people of reasoning/logic. When Al-Shafi'i came he mastered both and he established something common between these two groups.
- His students would say that when he started talking about tafseer it was as if he was there when the Prophet SAW got the revelation, and when he spoke about hadith it was as if he was a companion of the Prophet SAW and he heard the Prophet SAW say it.
- Al-Shafi'i said: "Whoever learns the Quran will have an immense value. Whoever cites hadith strengthens his proof and evidence. Whoever examines fiqh has a noble position amongst people. Whoever studies language refines his nature. Whoever considers reckoning has a sound opinion and reasonable thinking. Whoever does not protect himself does not benefit from his knowledge."

- He would start his halaqa after fajr. People would come and speak to him about the Quran until the sun would rise and then they would leave. Then people of hadith would come and speak to him about hadith and sunnah until the sun was at its peak. Then people would study and debate information between each other until mid morning. Then the people of language, grammar, and poetry would come and sit until mid day.

Key Characteristics of Imam Al-Shafi'i

- He was very intelligent and open minded.
 - He would debate a person and beat them. Then he would tell them to switch sides and debate again. He would adopt their opinion and they would adopt his opinion and he would debate them and win again, even though he was now debating from the other side.
 - This was done to teach the students and not to cause confusion.
 - It shows how intelligent he was and how much information he knew about all the different opinions and proofs.
 - He was very eloquent.
 - He was very wise.
 - He understood the realities of life and the cultural differences between people.
 - He said that he spent 20 years learning human experiences to aid him in understanding fiqh.

- He was very clear in his opinions.
 - He would not go back and forth between opinions when he believed one was true.
 - He didn't submit to political and social pressure from people when they criticised his opinions or accused him of different things.
- He had a great respect for the sunnah of the Prophet SAW.
 - One day a man asked him a question and Al-Shafi'i told him the answer which was something that the Prophet SAW said. The man then asked him what he thought about it. Al-Shafi'i began shaking and his face turned yellow. He said what earth will carry me and what sky will shelter me if I narrate something from the Prophet SAW and I don't immediately submit to it.
- He was very noble.
 - One scholar said that if lying was halal, Al-Shafi'i still would not lie.
 - This is to show how good his character was.
- He had a great passion for knowledge.
 - He would encourage his students to seek knowledge.
 - He would say: Nothing, after fulfilling the obligations, is better than seeking knowledge.
 - He would also say: If you want dunya you need knowledge and if you want akhira you need knowledge.

- He would put his knowledge into action.
 - One of his students said that he was with him in Egypt and they traveled to be with the Murabitoon (those who volunteered to protect the borders of the Muslim country). Everyday he would pray the 5 prayers in a masjid that was near the sea and then he would sit by the sea and read Quran all day and night. He would do this in Ramadan to get the reward of Ribaat, fasting, and praying.

The Death of Imam Al-Shafi'i

- He spent 4 years in Egypt and then he passed away.
- While he was passing away people were wondering who would be appointed to take his place.
 - One of his favorite students was named Muhammed ibn Abdul Hakam.
 - Everyone expected that he would be appointed to be the next successor.
 - While Al-Shafi'i was on his death bed some people came and asked him who the next successor would be. Muhammed ibn Abdul Hakam was there and he assumed it would be himself so he slightly sat up. Al-Shafi'i said, "Subhanallah, is there a doubt? It is Abu Yacoub Al Buwayti." The people were shocked.
 - This showed Imam Al-Shafi'i's sincerity because he did not just choose his favorite or most beloved student but he chose the person who he knew would be able to handle this position the best.

- Al Buwayti was much more capable of ruling when there was trials and corruption.
 - He was eventually placed in jail because of one of his opinions which everyone did not agree with.
 - The officer of the jail told people that every Friday Al Buwayti would take a shower in the morning, put on perfume, and wear his best clothing. When he heard the athan he would stand up and walk towards the gate of the cell. The officer would tell him to sit down before he gets into trouble. Al Buwayti would say “Oh Allah I answered your call but they are preventing me.”
 - Even though he knew he would not be able to pray this was his level of commitment to salah.