

Chapter – 35

Imam Ibn Hanbal

(781 - 856 AD)

Ibn Hanbal's name is Ahmad, and Kunniya is Abu 'Abdullah. He was awarded the titles of Sheikh-ul-Islam, Imam-ul-Muslimeen and the Qudwat-ul-Muttaqeen. He was born in 164AH/781AD in the city of Baghdad. His father's name is Muhammad bin Hanbal. Two years after his birth, his father passed away. That's how his mother took care of him.

His early education took place in Baghdad. At the age of about 15, he started learning Hadith. His first teacher was Imam Abu Yusuf. Imam Shafi'i was also one of his teachers. Later, he was benefitted by other Muhadditheen as well. Moreover, his teachers include Basher bin al-Mufazzal, Ismail bin Aliya, Sufyan bin A'iniya, Yahya bin Saeed, al-Tabalisi and 'Abdullah bin Numair. Among those who were narrating for and from him are Imam Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, Aswad bin 'Amir and Yazid bin Haroon. These people passed on their wealth of Hadith to Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal and got his capital from him.

He performed Hajj several times between 180AH/796AD and 198AH/814AD. Once, he stayed in Makkah for almost a year. In 199AH/815AD, he went to Yemen and learned Hadith from Muhaddith Abdul Razzaq. During this course, Imam al-Jarah, Imam ul-Mushriq Ishaq Rahu, and others have also participated with him. After that he returned to Iraq, but this time he was settled in Kufa, instead of Baghdad.

Among the well-known books of Imam ibn Hanbal are the Kitab al-Amal, Kitab al-Nassikh and al-Mansookh, Kitab al-Zahid, Kitab al-Masa'il, Kitab al-Fazail, Kitab al-Manasik and Kitab al-Eemaan. The most famous book of Imam Hanbal is the book "*Kitab-al-Masnad*", in which he has collected thousands of hadiths. Hanbal ibn Ishaq narrated that my uncle Imam Ahmad used to say: "I have collected more than 50,700 hadiths in it. If Muslims dispute for any Hadith they should search in it. If they get it then they are right and if not then they are wrong."

The same thing has been said by his son 'Abdullah. He says that I asked my father that you were of the opinion that writing of Hadith is not a good practice then why you yourself have written al Masnad? He said, "If people disagree with any Hadiths of the Messenger of Allah, then turn to this book". However, Abu Musa says that how it can be said that "everything" is in al-Masnad.

During the reign of Abbasi ruler, Mamoon-al-Rashid, the Mu'tazilah sect came very close to Mamoon. The Caliph was eager to sit in their company and became fond of holding debates, and to reject and resolve issues of religion as well. In those days, a group of Mu'tazilah scholars declared the Quran as (مخلوق) "*a creation*" and (حادث) "*a newly made*", and provoked Mamoon to force the entire Ummah to accept it. Most of them were forced to accept it, but some resisted it strictly. Among them there was Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal who refused to accept it. Mohammed bin Noah Nishapuri also supported him. Mamoon-al-Rashid called them both to his court. But before Mamoon did something against them, Mamoon himself was put to death. After that Mu'tasim took over the power. Mu'tasim put chains on the feet of Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Mohammed bin Noah Nishapuri and sent them to Baghdad. On the way,

Muhammad ibn Noah died. Imam Ahmad was jailed in Baghdad and he remained there with chains on his feet for about two years. Then one day he was brought to Mu'tasim. He asked for his position. Imam Ahmad said: "*The Quran is the knowledge of Allah, and whoever says that Allah's knowledge is a creature, means he has done Kufr.*" The debate continued on this subject between Imam Ahmad and Mu'tazilah scholars. He subjugated them with all kinds of arguments, but the Caliph still refused. Imam was beaten so badly that he became seriously injured, yet he was not ready to withdraw his position. At one time Mu'tasim was exhausted so he sent him back to Baghdad. The Imam arrived home after this incident. He started treating his wounds first and God bestowed him health. However, after that he had gone in self confinement to that extent that he did not even go for his teaching classes. This situation continued until the time of Caliph Mu'tasim and then Caliph Wasiq Muhammad. When Mutawakkil A'lullah came to power, people were happy that he belonged to the Ahl Sunnat wal Jamaat, instead of the Mu'tazilah community. The Caliph Mutawakkil A'lullah also took care of the Imam personally and never lost any respect for him. However, his deputies kept Imam Ahmad worried for all his life.

Masdad bin Masram, a disciple of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, was much confused with the afflictions of Mu'tazilah sect about Quran being creation, so he wrote a letter and asked to his teacher Ahmad ibn Hanbal, what the true Sunnah of the Noble Prophet is? In reply to this query whatever Imam Ahmad wrote may be summed up in the following points: In a way, these points can also be called as the actual narrative of the Hanbali doctrine.

- Do not give supremacy of anything on the Quran. It is the verbal communication of Allah and it is not a creation.

Whatever is safe in لوح محفوظ (*the Preserved Tablet*) is also a non-creation. The one who called them creatures is an infidel.

- After the Words of Allah, is the Hadith of the Prophet. Along with the Hadith of the Prophet the texts of the Companions and the Taba'i are also acceptable.
- Faith is the name of words and action. Faith increases by doing good and decreases by doing evil. Sometimes a person goes out of faith, but when he repents, faith comes back into him.
- If a person relinquishes any obligation due to his negligence, then Allah Almighty has the power to forgive or punish him.
- The decree and destiny, good deed and evil deed, well and unwell are all from Allah.
- Allah created, Heaven and all its entitled, or Hell and all its deserving, even before the creation of the universe.
- Whoever thinks that the blessings of Paradise or the punishment of Hell are annihilated, he is a disbeliever.
- With the intercession of the Noble Prophet, a party will come out from hell and will go to heaven.
- The people of Paradise can see the Almighty with their own eyes.
- The Dajjal will certainly come out in this Ummah.
- Isa, the Son of Mary, will appear in this world.
- Ten gentlemen deserve paradise: Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, Talha, Zubair, Sa'ad, Saeed, Abdul Rahman bin Auf and Abu 'Ubaida bin Jarah. ---- I called them men of paradise because the Prophet called him as men of paradise.
- Prevent your language from mentioning the faults of the Companions of the Prophet and mentioning their differences. Instead, you must describe their virtues.

- Marriage, without Wali (*girls representative*), Qazi and two witnesses, is not valid.
- Muta' (*short time marriage*) has been declared as unlawful till the Day of Resurrection.
- During prayers it is good to rise up hands on Takbeer, to say Ameen loudly, and to pray for Muslim Leaders.
- On entering to the mosque, it is necessary to pray two Rakat prayers.
- Witr prayer is one Rakat.
- Prayer, whether it is Friday or Eid, is permissible behind every good and bad person. His case is with Allah.
- Perform the funeral prayer for each Qiblah Person (*Muslim*).
- In our view, the principals of the Sunnah are those on which the Companions of the Prophet were practicing, and we should follow those rules. Innovations must be abandoned because all the innovations are misleading.
- It is not obligatory for disbelievers to give up any act except prayer and actions.
- Every Ruler and Leader, whether bad or good, must be obeyed. Every Caliph, whether properly selected or came up by force, is the Caliph of Muslims. If a Caliph is a wicked person even then Jihad and participation in the battles with him should not be avoided. Similarly, the distribution of war booty and the execution of punishments are in the hands of the Ruler.

Hanbali religion is practiced in some parts of Arabian countries. Nowadays, this is the official religion of Saudi Arabia. ---- Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal died in 241AH/856AD after a long illness.