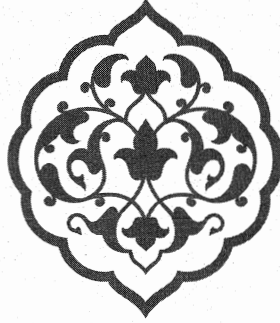


THE BIOGRAPHY
OF THE EMINENT IMĀM
AḤMAD BIN ḤANBAL
(D. 241AH)

BY SHAYKH
AḤMAD AN-NAJMĪ



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Transliteration Table

Consonants

ء	ا	د	d	ض	ḍ	ك	k
ب	b	ذ	dh	ط	ṭ	ل	l
ت	t	ر	r	ظ	ẓ	م	m
ث	th	ز	z	ع	‘	ن	n
ج	j	س	s	غ	gh	ه	h
ح	ḥ	ش	sh	ف	f	و	w
خ	kh	ص	ṣ	ق	q	ي	y

Vowels

Short	اَ	a	اِ	i	اُ	u
Long	آ	ā	إِي	ī	أُو	ū
Diphthongs	أَي	ay/ai	أَو	aw		

Glyphs

ﷺ *Ṣallāllāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* (May Allāh's praise & salutations be upon him)

ﷺ *Radīyallāhu ‘anhu* (May Allāh be pleased with him)

ﷺ *Radīyallāhu ‘anhum* (May Allāh be pleased with them)

ﷺ *Radīyallāhu ‘anhā* (May Allāh be pleased with her)

ﷻ *Raḥimullāh* (May Allāh have mercy on him)

ﷻ *Azza wa-Jall* (The Mighty and Majestic)



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Biography of Shaykh Aḥmad an-Najmī

HIS NAME & LINEAGE:

He is our noble *shaykh*, the *'allāmah*, the scholar of *ḥadīth*, the compiler, the jurist, the mufti of the area of Jāzān, the carrier of the flag of the Sunnah and *ḥadīth* of that area, Shaykh Aḥmad bin Yahyā bin Muḥammad bin Shabīr an-Najmī of the Shabīr family from Banū Ḥummad, one of the well-known tribes of the Jāzān area.

HIS BIRTH:

The Shaykh رحمته الله was born in the village of an-Najāmiyyah on the 22nd of Shawwāl in the year 1346 AH. He grew up in the home of two righteous parents who did not have any other children.

HIS UPBRINGING IN KNOWLEDGE:

The Shaykh frequented—along with his two uncles, Shaykh Ḥasan bin Muḥammad and Shaykh Ḥusayn bin Muḥammad an-Najmī—the gatherings of Shaykh 'Abdullāh al-Qar'āwī in the city of Ṣāmiṭah on (certain) days. In Ṣafar of the year 1360 AH, the Shaykh joined the Madrasah as-Salafiyyah and memorized the Qur'ān with proper *tajwīd* with Shaykh 'Uthmān bin 'Uthmān al-Ḥamalī رحمته الله. He likewise memorized *Tuhfah al-Atfāl*, *Hidāyah al-Mustafid*, *Thalāthah al-Uṣūl*, *Al-Arba'īn an-Nawawiyyah*, and *Al-Ḥisāb*, and he attained proficiency in handwriting.

He used to sit in the circles that the Shaykh held there until the younger students departed after Zuhur prayer; then, he would join the larger circles that Shaykh 'Abdullāh al-Qar'āwī would himself teach;

then, he would return with his two aforementioned uncles to his village of an-Najāmiyyah.

In the year 1369, he studied with Shaykh Ibrāhīm bin Muḥammad al-'Umūdī رحمته الله, the judge of Ṣāmiṭah at that time. He likewise studied with Shaykh 'Alī bin Shaykh 'Uthmān Ziyād aṣ-Ṣūmālī, at the command of Shaykh 'Abdullāh al-Qar'āwī.

In the year 1384, he attended the circles of the *shaykh*, the Imām of the Saudi lands, Shaykh Muḥammad bin Ibrāhīm Āl ash-Shaykh رحمته الله, for a period of about two months, studying *tafsīr*. He also, in the same year, attended the circles of our *shaykh*, the Imām, the *'allāmah*, Shaykh 'Abdul-'Azīz bin Bāz رحمته الله, for a period of approximately one and a half months, studying *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.

HIS OCCUPATIONS:

Our Shaykh worked for free as a teacher in the schools of his *shaykh*, 'Abdullāh al-Qar'āwī. Then he was appointed as a teacher in his village of an-Najāmiyyah. In the year 1382, he was transferred and became the *imām* and teacher in the village of Abū Subaylah, on the border. Then he was appointed as a teacher in the Educational Center in Ṣāmiṭah until the year 1384, and Allāh decreed for him to be appointed as a minister and Head of the Ministry of Justice in the area of Jāzān.

On the 1st of Rajab in 1387, he returned to be a teacher at the Educational Institute of Jāzān upon request, and at the beginning of the school year of 1389, he returned to teaching in the Educational Center of Ṣāmiṭah. He remained teaching until he retired on the 1st of Rajab in 1410.

FROM HIS TEACHERS:

- Shaykh Ibrāhīm bin Muḥammad al-'Umūdī, the judge of Ṣāmiṭah during his time
- Ash-Shaykh al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḥakamī

- The eminent scholar, the caller, the reviver within the south of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, ‘Abdullāh al-Qar’āwī رحمته الله. Shaykh Aḥmad graduated under him and benefited from him the most.
- The *shaykh*, the Imām, the eminent scholar, the former mufti of the Saudi lands, Shaykh Muḥammad bin Ibrāhīm Āl ash-Shaykh

HIS STUDENTS:

Our Shaykh had many students. We will mention a few of them to illustrate the status of the rest. From them:

- Our *shaykh*, the eminent scholar, the *muhaddith*, the Aider of the Sunnah, Shaykh Rabī’ bin Hādī al-Madkhālī
- Our *shaykh*, the eminent scholar, the *faqīh*, Shaykh Zayd bin Muḥammad bin Hādī al-Madkhālī
- Our *shaykh*, the eminent and noble scholar, Shaykh ‘Alī bin Nāṣir al-Faqihī

We will suffice with mentioning these three due to their prominence in the realm of knowledge.

HIS WRITINGS:

Our Shaykh رحمته الله had many knowledge-based writings. We will mention from amongst them:

- *Awḍaḥ al-Ishārah Fī ar-Radd ‘Alā man Abāḥa al-Mamnū’ min az-Ziyārah*
- *Irshād as-Sārī Fī Sharḥ as-Sunnah lil-Barbahārī*
- *Tā’sīs al-Aḥkām Sharḥ ‘Umdah al-Aḥkām*
- *Tanzīh ash-Sharī‘ah ‘An Ibāḥah al-Aghānī al-Khalī‘ah*

- *Radd al-Jawāb 'Alā Man Ṭalaba Minnī 'Adam Ṭab'īl-Kitāb*

May Allāh have abundant mercy upon the Shaykh and bring about benefit for Islām and the Muslims by way of his knowledge.

HIS DEATH:

The Shaykh رحمته الله died in King Fahd Medical City in Riyadh on Wednesday, the 20th of Rajab, 1429 AH after a long period of illness. Then his body was transferred to Jāzān where he was prayed over and buried in his hometown, the village of an-Najāmiyyah.

His funeral was large. A very large group attended, the likes of which had not been witnessed before in the region; the news of his death was tragic to those who loved him.

We ask Allāh the Exalted to cover him with His vast mercy and to make him reside within His majestic gardens. *Āmīn*.

May prayers and peace be upon our Prophet Muḥammad, his family, and his Companions altogether.

Introduction

All praise is for Allāh. May prayers and peace be upon the Messenger of Allāh.

To proceed:

Those in charge of As-Salām Religious Endowment Charitable Organization in Riyadh have sought for me to compile a biography of a notable scholar from the notable scholars of *ḥadīth*; an Imām from the Imāms. So I have chosen to compile a biography of Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal رحمته الله due to what this Imām has from love, acceptance, and eminence with everyone, in general, and in the realm of knowledge specifically.

I saw fit that the biography contain the following:

- His lineage
- His birth
- His upbringing
- The beginning of his quest for knowledge
- His teachers
- His travels in pursuit of knowledge
- His memorization of knowledge
- His piety and the praise of the scholars for him
- His personal attributes

- His firmness during the trial in the era of al-Mu'taṣim
- Him being prevented from narrating
- The trial during the time of al-Wāthiq
- The end of the trial by the leadership of al-Mutawakkil 'Al-Allāh
- The state of the Imām under the rule of al-Mutawakkil
- His *jihād* against the people of innovation
- His death
- His writings
- The methodology of Imām Aḥmad in compiling *Al-Musnad*

His Lineage

Imām Muḥammad bin Aḥmad adh-Dhahabī (d. 748 AH) said in his book *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'* (11/177-228, #78): “He is the true Imām, the affirmed Shaykh of Islām, Abū ‘Abdillāh Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin Ḥanbal bin Hilāl bin Asad bin Idrīs bin ‘Abdillāh bin Ḥayyān bin ‘Abdillāh bin Anas bin ‘Awf bin Qāsiṭ bin Māzin bin Shaybān bin Dhuhl bin Tha’labah.”

Some of the genealogists place Dhuhl before Shaybān. The lineage goes up to Bakr bin Wā'il.

He (adh-Dhahabī) then said: “...Adh-Dhuhli ash-Shaybānī al-Marwazī and then al-Baghdādī; one of the notable Imāms. His lineage was cited thus by his son ‘Abdullāh. Abū Bakr al-Khaṭīb relied upon him in his book of history, as did others.”¹

His lineage meets the lineage of the Prophet ﷺ at Nizār bin Ma'dd bin ‘Adnān.

¹ *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'* (11/177-178)

His Birth

Imām adh-Dhahabī said:

Muḥammad, the father of Abū ‘Abdillāh [Aḥmad], was from the forefathers of Mawr. He died as a youth, being approximately 30 years old. Aḥmad was raised as an orphan. It was said that his mother moved from Mawr while she was pregnant with him, may Allāh have mercy upon her.¹

Abū Dāwūd said: “I heard Ya’qūb ad-Dawraqī say, ‘I heard Aḥmad saying: “I was born in the month of Rabī’ al-Awwal in the year 164 AH.””²

[End of adh-Dhahabī’s speech]

¹ *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/179)

² *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/179)

His Upbringing

He grew up an orphan in the home of his mother. Şālih transmitted from his father that he said: “My mother pierced my ears and she used to hang two pearls in them. When I got older, she removed them and they were with her; then she gave them to me, so I sold them for approximately 30 *dirham*.”¹

¹ *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'* (11/179)

The Beginning of His Quest for Knowledge

Imām adh-Dhahabī said: “He sought knowledge when he was 15 years old, in the year that Mālīk and Ḥammād bin Zayd died.”¹

I say: This was in the year 179 AH.

¹ *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'* (11/180)

His Teachers

Imām adh-Dhahabī said: “He listened to (studied with) Ibrāhīm bin Sa’d a little. Also, [he listened to] Hushaym bin Bashīr abundantly and in an excellent manner. He listened to ‘Abbād bin ‘Abbād al-Mu-hallabī, Mu’tamar bin Sulaymān at-Taymī, Sufyān bin ‘Uyaynah al-Hilālī, Ayyūb bin an-Najjār and Yaḥyā bin Abī Zā’idah, ‘Alī bin Hāshim al-Barīd, Qurān bin Tamām, ‘Ammār bin Muḥammad ath-Thawrī, and al-Qāḍī bin Yūsuf...”

Adh-Dhahabī mentioned a number of scholars from whom he took:

“The number of his teachers from whom he narrated in *Al-Musnad* was 280 or so. Al-Bukhārī narrated a *ḥadīth* from him and Aḥmad bin al-Ḥasan narrated another *ḥadīth* from him in *Al-Maghāzī*. Muslim narrated a great deal from him, as did Abū Dāwūd. Abū Dāwūd, an-Nasā’ī, at-Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājah (all) narrated from men who narrated from him. His two sons Ṣāliḥ and ‘Abdullāh also narrated from him, as did his cousin Ḥanbal bin Is’ḥāq.¹

“From his teachers are: ‘Abdur-Razzāq, Ḥasan bin Mūsā al-Ashyab, and Abū ‘Abdillāh ash-Shāfi’ī; however, he did not mention ash-Shāfi’ī by name. He would say, ‘A trustworthy person narrated to me.’ (The following are some who) narrated from him: ‘Alī bin al-Madīnī, Duḥaym, Aḥmad bin Ṣāliḥ, Aḥmad bin Abī al-Ḥawārī, Muḥammad bin Yaḥyā adh-Dhuhālī, and Aḥmad bin al-Farrāt.”²

Imām adh-Dhahabī then mentioned some of those who narrated

¹ *Sīyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/180-181)

² *Sīyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/181-182)

from him, and some of them were from his teachers:

“Ibn Abī Ḥātim said: ‘Abū Zur’ah informed us that the origin of Aḥmad was Baṣrī. His lineage can be traced to Mawr. Ṣāliḥ narrated to us, saying: “I heard my father saying, ‘Hushaym died, so I left for Kūfah in the year 183. My first trip to Baṣrah was when I was six. I went to Sufyān at the age of seven. We came when Fuḍayl bin ‘Iyād had died. I performed Ḥajj five times. Three of those times I came on foot, and in one instance I spent 30 *dirham*. Ibn al-Mubārak came in the year 179, and that year was the first time I heard (*aḥādīth*) from Hushaym. I went to the lesson of Ibn al-Mubārak but they said, “He left to Ṭarasūs.” I wrote more than 3,000 narrations from Hushaym. If I had 50 *dirham*, I would have gone to ar-Rayy to (sit with) Jarīr.’”

“I (adh-Dhahabī) say: He heard *aḥādīth* from him. He (Ṣāliḥ) said, ‘I heard my father saying: “I wrote (narrations) on tablets from Ibrāhīm bin Sa’d and I prayed behind him on numerous occasions. He would make *taslīm* once.”’ From Aḥmad’s teachers who (also) narrated from him is Ibn Mahdī.”³

³ *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/182)

His Travel in Pursuit of Knowledge

Al-Marwadhī said: “I heard Abū ‘Abdillāh [Aḥmad] say, ‘Hushaym died when I was 20 years old. So the Bedouin (i.e., a friend of Abū ‘Abdillāh) and I left on foot and we reached Kūfah (i.e., in the year 183), and we went to Abū Mu‘āwiyah while he had some people along with him. He gave the Bedouin 60 *dirham*, so he left me in the house alone, and I was alone. I had nothing except a saddlebag with my books in it. I used to place it on top of a brick and place my head upon it. I would review the *ahādīth* of Sufyān with Waki’.”¹

¹ *Sīyar A'lām an-Nubalā'* (11/186)

His Memorization of Knowledge

Al-Marwadhī said:

Once, he mentioned something and said, “Does Hushaym have this (narration)?” I said, “No.” He narrated perhaps ten narrations and I memorized them. When he stood, he said to me, “Dictate these to them.”

‘Abdullāh bin Aḥmad narrated to us, saying: “My father said to me, ‘Take any book you like from the books of Wakī’ from the *Muṣannaf*, and if you wish, ask me about the speech so that I may inform you about the *isnād*, or [ask me] about the *isnād* so that I may inform you about the speech.’”¹

[End of al-Marwadhī’s speech]

I say: The intended meaning of “speech” here is the text; i.e., the *ḥadīth* to which the chain of narration is connected.

Imām adh-Dhahabī said:

I heard Abū Ismā‘īl at-Tirmidhī mentioning that Ibn Numayr said, “I was with Wakī’ and a man came to him”—or he said, “A group from the companions of Abū Ḥanīfah came”—“and said to him, ‘There is a Baghdādī man speaking about some of the people from Kūfah.’ Wakī’ did not recognize him. While we were in this state, Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal came and they said, ‘Here he is!’ Wakī’ said, ‘Over here, O Abū ‘Abdillāh!’ And they made space for him. They began mentioning about Abū ‘Abdillāh that which they sought to repudiate. Abū

¹ *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/186)

'Abdillāh began responding with the narrations from the Prophet ﷺ, and they said to Waki', 'Do you see what he says in your presence?!' He (Waki') said, 'The man says, "The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said." What should I say to him?!' Then he said, "The (correct) statement is only as you have stated, O Abū 'Abdillāh.' Then the people said to Waki', 'By Allāh, the Baghdādī man has deceived you!"²

On the authority of Aḥmad ad-Dawraqī, who reported that Abū 'Abdillāh said: "When we would write the *aḥādīth* through six or seven routes of transmission, we were not able to be certain of its authenticity. So how can one be certain of its authenticity if he writes it through only one route of transmission?"

'Abdullāh bin Aḥmad said: "Abū Zur'ah said to me, 'Your father has memorized one million narrations. It was said, "How do you know?" I said, "I studied with him and put the narrations into chapters."'"

This report is authentic regarding the vastness of Abū 'Abdillāh's knowledge. They would count amongst those (narrations that he had memorized) those which were repeated narrations and the verdicts of the Tābi'īn, as well as that which was explaining (other texts) and the like, for the authentic texts which are traced back to the Prophet ﷺ directly do not equal a tenth of that.³

Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī said: "I saw Abū 'Abdillāh as if the knowledge of the first and last people had been gathered for him."⁴

Al-Khallāl said: "Al-Marwadhī narrated to us, saying: 'I heard Muḥammad bin Yaḥyā al-Qaṭṭān say, "I saw my father honoring Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal and he had given him his books," or he said, "his narrations."'"

Al-Qawārīrī said: "Yaḥyā bin Qaṭṭān said, "There has not come from Baghdad anyone more beloved to me than Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal.""

² *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'* (11/186-187)

³ *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'* (11/187)

⁴ *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'* (11/187)

‘Abdullāh bin Aḥmad said: “I heard my father [Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal] say, ‘The day that I left for Baṣrah was hard upon Yaḥyā bin Sa‘īd.’”

‘Amr bin al-‘Abbās said: “I heard ‘Abdur-Raḥmān bin Maḥdī mention the people of *ḥadīth*, and he said, ‘The most knowledgeable of them regarding the narrations of ath-Thawrī is Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal.’ Then Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal came, so he (Ibn Maḥdī) said, ‘So he who wishes to see that which was between the shoulders (i.e., what Sufyān ath-Thawrī has memorized), then let him look at this man.’”⁵

Abul-Walīd at-Ṭayālīsī said: “There is not anyone amongst the people of the two cities⁶ more beloved to me than Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal.”⁷

‘Abdullāh bin Aḥmad said: “I heard my father [Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal] say: ‘I came to Ṣana‘ā’ along with Yaḥyā bin Ma‘īn and I proceeded to ‘Abdur-Razzāq in his village while Yaḥyā stayed behind. When I arrived, I knocked on the door. A grocer near his home said, “Do not knock on his door, for indeed, he is a respected *shaykh*.” So I sat until before Maghrib and he came out. I rushed to him, having within my hand the narrations I had selected (to review with him), and I greeted him with *salām* and said, “Narrate to me these narrations, may Allāh have mercy upon you. Indeed, I am one who is a stranger.” He said, “Who are you? And step away from me.” I said, “I am Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal.” He altered his tone and began to speak mildly, and he pulled me close to him and said, “By Allāh, are you Abū ‘Abdillāh?” Then he took the narrations and began reading them until it got dark. He then said to the grocer, “Bring me a lamp.” ‘Abdur-Razzāq delayed the Maghrib prayer (due to reviewing the narrations).”⁸

[End of *adh-Dhahabī’s* speech]

⁵ *Siyar A‘lām an-Nubalā’* (11/189-190)

⁶ Meaning Baṣrah and Kūfah.

⁷ *Siyar A‘lām an-Nubalā’* (11/190)

⁸ *Siyar A‘lām an-Nubalā’* (11/192)

His Piety & the Praise of the Scholars for Him

Imām adh-Dhahabī mentions in As-Siyar:

Al-Khallāl said: “Ar-Ramādī narrated to us, saying: ‘I heard ‘Abdur-Razzāq mentioning Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal until his eyes welled up with tears. He said, “It reached me that his finances had been depleted, so I took him by his hand and stood with him behind the door while there was no one with us and I said to him, ‘Indeed, we do not have a lot of *dīnār*. When we sell our crops, we utilize that money in certain things. I found with our womenfolk ten *dīnār*, so I took them, and I hope that they will not spend them until you are able to benefit from that.’ He said, ‘O Abū Bakr, if I were to accept anything from anyone, I would have accepted it from you.’””

‘Abdullāh said: “I said to my father [Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal], ‘It has reached me that ‘Abdur-Razzāq offered you some *dīnār*.’ He said, ‘Yes. And Yazīd bin Hārūn gave me 500 *dirham*, but I did not accept them. (He also offered them to) Yaḥyā bin Ma‘īn and Abū Muslim, and they both accepted them.’”¹

Al-Marwadhī said: “Abū ‘Abdillāh said to me, ‘We were with Yazīd bin Hārūn and he was confused about an affair, so I spoke with him about it. He pulled out his book and found it to be just as I had stated, so he changed it (i.e., changed his position). When he would sit, he used to say, “O Ibn Ḥanbal, sit here with me.” I became sick and he visited me and was frequently at the door (i.e., for visita-

¹ *Siyar A‘lām an-Nubalā’* (11/192-193)

tion).”²

Al-Marwadhī said: “I heard someone from the people of Wāsiṭ saying, ‘I have not seen Yazīd bin Hārūn abandon joking with anyone other than Ibn Ḥanbal.’”³

Qutaybah said: “The best of people in our time is Ibn al-Mubārak, then this young man here (meaning Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal).”⁴

Ḥarmalah said: “I heard ash-Shāfi‘ī saying: ‘I left Baghdad, and I have not left behind any man better, more knowledgeable, having better understanding, or more pious than Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal.’”⁵

Naṣr bin ‘Alī al-Jahḍimmī said: “Aḥmad is the best of people in his time.”⁶

The Imām of Imāms, Ibn Khuzaymah, said: “I heard Muḥammad bin Saḥnūn saying: ‘I heard Abū ‘Umayr bin an-Niḥḥās ar-Ramlī mention Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, saying: “May Allāh have mercy upon him on behalf of the *dunyā*; how patient is he and how resemblant is he to those who have passed away and the righteous people, and how near is he to them! The *dunyā* was presented to him, but he refused it. Innovation was presented to him and he refuted it.”’”⁷

Qutaybah said: “Were it not for ath-Thawrī, piety would have died. Were it not for Aḥmad, the people would have innovated into the religion. Aḥmad is the Imām of the *dunyā*.”⁸

It is reported that Is’ḥāq bin Rāhawayh said: “Aḥmad is a proof between Allāh and His creation.”

² *Sīyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/194)

³ *Sīyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/194)

⁴ *Sīyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/195)

⁵ *Sīyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/195)

⁶ *Sīyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/197)

⁷ *Sīyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/197)

⁸ *Sīyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/195)

And it is reported that Ibn al-Madīnī said: “Allāh honored the religion by way of aṣ-Ṣiddīq on the day of apostasy and by way of Aḥmad during the trial.”⁹

An-Nufaylī said: “Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal is from the eminent Imāms of the religion.”

‘Alī bin Khashram said: “I heard Bishr bin al-Ḥārith saying: ‘I am asked about Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal?! Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal was placed in the blacksmith’s fire and he emerged as red gold.’”

Ibn Abī Ḥātim said: “I asked my father about ‘Alī bin al-Madīnī and Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal—which of them had memorized more? He said, ‘They were similar in terms of memorization, and Aḥmad had greater understanding. If you see someone whom Aḥmad loves, then know that he is a person of Sunnah.’”

Abū Zur’ah said: “Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal is greater than Is’hāq and has more comprehension than him. I have not seen anyone more complete than Aḥmad.”

Ibn Wārah said: “Aḥmad was a man of understanding; a man of memorization; a man of cognizance.”

An-Nasā’ī said: “Aḥmad combined awareness of the narrations, *fiqh*, piety, abstemiousness, and patience.”¹⁰

Al-Khallāl said: “Muḥammad bin Mūsā narrated to me saying: ‘I saw Abū ‘Abdillāh, and (on one occasion) a Khurāsānī man said to him, ‘All the praise is for Allāh that I have seen you.’ He said, ‘Sit down. What is this? Who am I?’”

It has been said: “I saw displeasure on the face of Abū ‘Abdillāh when someone praised him, and it was said to him, ‘May Allāh reward you with good on behalf of Islām.’ He said, ‘Rather, may Allāh reward Islām with good on behalf of me. Who am I and what am I?’”

⁹ *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/196)

¹⁰ *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/197-199)

Al-Khallāl said: “Alī bin ‘Abduṣ-Ṣamad aṭ-Ṭayālīsī said, ‘I placed my hand upon Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal while he was looking, and he became angry and moved my hand, saying, “Where did you get this from?”’”¹¹

‘Abdullāh bin Bishr aṭ-Ṭālaqānī said: “I heard Muḥammad bin Ṭāriq al-Baghdādī saying: ‘I said to Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, “May I borrow your inkwell?” He looked at me and said, “Neither my piety nor your piety has reached this level.” And he smiled.’”¹²

‘Abdullāh bin Aḥmad said: “I heard my father [Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal] saying: ‘I would love that I be saved from this affair and that I break even, having it be neither for me nor against me.’”

Al-Marwadhī said: “Ibrāhīm al-Ḥuṣrī, who was a righteous man, entered upon Abū ‘Abdillāh and said, ‘My mother saw you in a dream doing such-and-such, and she mentioned Paradise.’ He said, ‘My brother, indeed Sahl bin Salāmah was a person to whom the likes of this was mentioned, yet he went out and began to spill the blood of the people.’ And he said, ‘Dreams please the believer, but they do not delude him.’”¹³

[End of adh-Dhahabī’s speech]

Imām Ibn Kathīr mentioned in *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah* (10/359-365), in the biography of Imām Aḥmad, his lineage in a similar fashion to that which was mentioned in *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* up to Bakr bin Wā’il; thereafter, he connected it to Nizār bin Ma’dd bin ‘Adnān, stating that his father came from Mawr to Baghdad carrying him (i.e., while his mother was pregnant with him) and his mother gave birth to him in Baghdad in the year 164 AH in Rabī’ al-Awwal. He went on to say: “His father died when he was three years old and his mother took care of him. Around the time that his father passed away, she would carry him to the class of al-Qāḍī Abū Yūsuf. Then he

¹¹ *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/225)

¹² *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/225)

¹³ *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/227)

left that and began listening to the narrations.”¹⁴

Ibn Abī Ḥātim reported from his father that Ḥarmalah said: “I heard ash-Shāfi‘ī say, ‘Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal promised to come to me in Egypt, but he was not able to come.’” Ibn Abī Ḥātim said, “It is as if fear had prevented him from fulfilling that promise.”

Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal traveled to many lands and he heard from the scholars of his era, and they would honor and respect him while he was learning from them. Our Shaykh mentioned the names of his scholars in his book *At-Tabdhīb*, and they reached an entire volume. This was also the case of those who narrated from him.

Al-Bayhaqī said about Imām Aḥmad, after mentioning a number of the scholars: “Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal mentioned—in *Al-Musnad* and other than it—narrations from ash-Shāfi‘ī and a great deal of his speech regarding the lineage of the Quraysh.”

Ibn Kathīr said: “The instances wherein Aḥmad narrated from ash-Shāfi‘ī were rare and there are no more than 20 of them. And from the best of that which is reported is what comes from Imām Aḥmad from ash-Shāfi‘ī from Mālik bin Anas from az-Zuhrī from ‘Abdur-Raḥmān bin Ka‘b bin Mālik from his father, who said that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said:

نَسَمَةُ الْمُؤْمِنِ طَيْرٌ يَلْقَى فِي شَجَرِ الْجَنَّةِ حَتَّى يَرْجِعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَى جَسَدِهِ يَوْمَ
الْبَعْثِ.

“The soul of the believer is a bird that sits in the trees of Paradise until Allāh returns it to its body on the Day of Resurrection.”¹⁵

Ash-Shāfi‘ī said to Aḥmad, when he met him during the second trip to Baghdad in the year 190 (Aḥmad at that time was nearly 30 years old): “O Abū ‘Abdillāh, if a narration is considered by you to

¹⁴ *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah* (10/359)

¹⁵ Reported by Aḥmad in *Al-Musnad* (25/25, #15787); al-Albānī graded it *ṣaḥīḥ* in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi’* (#4138).

be authentic, then inform me of it and I will take to it, whether that narration comes from the people of Ḥijāz, people of Shām, people of Iraq, or the people of Yemen.”¹⁶

This statement of ash-Shāfi‘ī to him is a tremendous statement to Aḥmad, and it is a way of honoring him and a testament that he has this level, such that if he deems the narration to be authentic or weak, then ash-Shāfi‘ī would refer to him.

Ibn Kathīr said: “Al-Bayhaqī narrated from ar-Rabī’ saying: ‘Ash-Shāfi‘ī sent me with a letter from Egypt to Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal. I came to him while he was returning from the Fajr prayer, so I presented the letter to him; he said, “Have you read it?” I said, “No.” So he took it and read it, and his eyes welled up with tears. I said, “Abū ‘Abdillāh, what does it contain?” He said, “It mentions that he saw the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ in a dream and he said, ‘Write to Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal and convey to him, from me, the *salām*, and say to him: Indeed, you will be tried and called to a statement that the Qur’ān is created, but do not respond to them. Allāh will elevate you as a sign until the Day of Judgment.’””¹⁷

¹⁶ *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah* (10/360)

¹⁷ *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah* (10/365)

His Physical Description

Imām adh-Dhababī mentions in As-Siyar:

Ibn Dhariḥ al-‘Ukbarī said: “I sought Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal and greeted him with *salām*. He was an elderly man with dyed hair; tall and dark complexioned, with very brown skin.”

Muḥammad bin ‘Abbās an-Naḥwī said: “I saw Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal having a handsome face, evenly built. He dyed his hair with henna and he was not red-complexioned. He had black hair in his beard. I saw him having tarnished white clothing and he was dark complexioned, wearing an *izār*.”

Al-Marwadhī said: “I saw Abū ‘Abdillāh most commonly when he was in his home sitting crossed-legged in a state of humility. When he was amongst the people, lowliness would not be apparent upon him. Whenever I would enter upon him, he had a book in his hand, reading.”

Ḥanbal said: “I heard Abū ‘Abdillāh [Aḥmad] saying: ‘I was married when I was 40 years old, and Allāh provided me with abundant good.’”

Abū Bakr al-Khallāl said in his book, *Akhlāq Aḥmad*, in the volume which Zuhayr bin Šāliḥ bin Aḥmad dictated: “My grandfather (Imām Aḥmad) married ‘Abbāsah bint al-Faḍl from amongst the Arabs, and there were no children born for him from her except my father, and she (my grandmother) died. After her, he married Rayḥānah and she gave birth to my uncle ‘Abdullāh; then she passed away. And he purchased a slave girl and she gave birth to Umm ‘Alī Zaynab. She

also gave birth to al-Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, who were twins; they died after their birth. Then she gave birth to al-Ḥasan and Muḥammad, and they lived to be nearly 40 years old. Then she gave birth to Sa'īd.”

It is said that she was the mother of 'Abdullāh 'Awrā', and she stayed with him for many years.¹

[End of adh-Dhahabī's speech]

¹ *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'* (11/184-185)

His Firmness During the Trial in the Time of al-Mu'taşim

Ibn Kathīr mentioned in *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah* that which has come regarding the trial of Abū 'Abdillāh Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin Ḥanbal رحمته الله during the days of al-Ma'mūn, then al-Mu'taşim, then al-Wāthiq, due to their statement regarding the magnificent Qur'ān—that it is created—and what he was afflicted with due to that from long imprisonment, severe beating, threats of death, horrible punishment, and painful torment, and the little concern he had for what they did to him due to that. Likewise, [he mentioned] his patience in enduring this and holding fast to what he was upon from the upright religion and the Straight Path. Aḥmad was a scholar, knowledgeable of what has come regarding that from cited verses and reported narrations.

Ibn Kathīr went on to mention the statement of Allāh the Exalted:

﴿الم ﴿١﴾ أَحْسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ ﴿٢﴾ وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۗ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٣﴾﴾

Alif lām mīm. Do people think that they will be left alone because they say, “We believe,” and will not be tested? And We indeed tested those who were before them. And Allāh will certainly make (it) known (the truth of) those who are true, and will certainly make (it) known (the falsehood of) those who are liars.

[Sūrah al-'Ankabūt 29:1-3]

Likewise, His statement:

﴿وَأَصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ ۖ إِنَّ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ﴾

**And bear with patience whatever befalls you. Verily!
These are some of the important commandments
ordered by Allāh with no exemption.**

[Sūrah Luqmān 31:17]

And he cited the *ḥadīth* of Saʿd bin Abī Waqqāṣ which is reported by Aḥmad in his *Musnad* by way of his son Muṣʿab bin Saʿd, who reported that his father said: “I asked the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ which of the people are more severely tested. He said:

أشد الناس بلاء الأنبياء ثم الأمثل فالأمثل.

“The prophets, then those who are similar to them, then those who are similar to them.”^{1 2}

I say: Within this narration is a glad tiding for those who are afflicted with calamities—that they shall have an abundant reward and a tremendous portion with Allāh ﷻ, for they have been connected to the prophets.

Ibn Kathīr رحمه الله mentioned on p. 365 a summary of the tribulations and trials from the speech of the Imāms of the Sunnah.

Ibn Kathīr said:

We have mentioned in what has preceded that al-Ma'mūn was surrounded by a group of the Mu'tazilah, and they led him astray from the path of truth to the path of falsehood, and they beautified to him the statement that the Qur'ān is created and they beautified the negation of the attributes of Allāh ﷻ.

Al-Bayhaqī said: “There was not amongst the *khulafā'* before him

¹ Reported by Aḥmad in *Al-Musnad* (3/87, #1494); al-Albānī said concerning it in *At-Tāliqāt al-Ḥisān* (#2890): “It is *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*.”

² *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah* (10/364)

of Banū Umayyah and Banul-'Abbās a single *khalīfah* except that they were upon the methodology and way of the Salaf. So when the rulership was handed to him, these Mu'tazilah gathered around him and inspired him to take to that, and they beautified it for him. He resolved to go to Ṭarṭūs to battle the Romans. Thus, he wrote to his deputy in Baghdad, Is'hāq bin Ibrāhīm bin Muṣ'ab, commanding him to call all of the people to the statement that the Qur'ān is created. And he agreed to this at the end of his life, a few months before his death in the year 218. When the letter reached—as we have mentioned—a large number of the Imāms of *ḥadīth*, he called them to that and they refused to accept it. So he threatened them with beating and cutting off their provisions. So the majority of them accepted it begrudgingly, but Imām Aḥmad continued to withhold. Muḥammad bin Nūḥ al-Jundaysābūrī also withheld, so they were arrested and carried upon a camel, taken to the *khalīfah* at his command. They were bound and chained on one camel.

“When they reached the land of ar-Raḥbah, a worshiper from the Bedouins, known as Jābir bin 'Āmir, came to them. He greeted Imām Aḥmad with *salām* and said to him, ‘Indeed, you are an ambassador for the people. Do not be a cause of gloom for them. Indeed, you are a leader for the people today. Beware of responding to them in that which they are calling you to, thus causing the people to respond as well. Bear their harm and thus they will bear their sins on the Day of Judgment. If you love Allāh, then be patient with that which you are upon. Indeed, there is nothing between you and Paradise except you being killed. And if you are not killed, then you will die, and if you live, then you will live a life of praise.’ Aḥmad said, ‘His speech was from that which strengthened my resolve regarding what I was upon in withholding from what they were calling me to.’

“When they drew near to the army of the *khalīfah* and they descended a distance away from them, a slave came to them, wiping his sweat with his *thawb* and saying, ‘I am worried, O Abū 'Abdillāh, for al-Ma'mūn has unsheathed a sword which he has not unsheathed before today, and he is swearing by his relation to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ that if you do not respond to him in the statement that

the Qur'ān is created, then he will surely kill you with that sword.' Imām Aḥmad fell to his knees and looked towards the heavens and said, 'My Master, Your forbearance has deceived this wicked person. Thus, he has been emboldened against Your *awliyā'*, beating them and killing them. O Allāh, if the Qur'ān is Your speech and it is not created, then suffice us from his trial.' An announcement came to them thereafter of the death of al-Ma'mūn in the last third of the night.

"Aḥmad said, 'And we rejoiced upon hearing that. Then the news came that al-Mu'taṣim had assumed leadership and Aḥmad bin Abī Du'ād had attached himself to him, and [we heard] that the affair was severe. So they sent us back to Baghdad in a ship along with some other prisoners, and I experienced great harm from them.' His feet were bound together.

"His companion, Muḥammad bin Nūḥ, died on the way, and Aḥmad prayed the funeral prayer for him. When Aḥmad returned to Baghdad, he entered in the month of Ramaḍān and was placed in the prison for approximately 28 months. It was also said that it was closer to 30 months. Then, he was taken out to be beaten in front of al-Mu'taṣim. While Aḥmad was in the prison, he was the one who would lead the people in the prison in prayer while having his legs bound together." [End of al-Bayhaqī's speech]³

Then Ibn Kathīr رحمته الله *said:*

His beating in front of al-Mu'taṣim: When al-Mu'taṣim had him brought out from the prison, he was bound more. Aḥmad said, "I was not able to walk with these binds upon me; they were connected to my pants and I carried them in my hands. Then, they came to me and brought more chains and I was made to carry them. I was nearly about to fall upon my face due to the weight of the chains, and I had no one along with me to hold me up. Allāh kept me safe until we reached the home of al-Mu'taṣim. I was made to enter his home, and the door was locked behind me and there were no lights. I

³ *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah* (10/364-365)

wanted to perform *wuḍū'*, so I extended my hand, and behold, there was a container of water. I performed *wuḍū'*. Then, I stood, but I did not know the direction of the *qiblah*. So the morning came, and behold, I was facing the direction of the *qiblah*, and for Allāh is all praise. Then I was called to enter upon al-Mu'taṣim. When he looked at me—and Ibn Abī Du'ād was present with him—he said, 'Did you not claim that he was young? This is a middle-aged *shaykh*.'"

Aḥmad said, "I drew near to him and greeted him with the *salām*. He said to me, 'Come closer.' And then he continued to bring me closer to him until I was near him. Then he said, 'Sit down.' So I sat down, and the weight of the steel (from the chains) was heavy upon me, so I remained there for an hour; then I said, 'O Chief of the Believers, to what did your cousin, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, call?' He said, 'To the testimony that none has the right to be worshiped except Allāh.' I said, 'Then indeed, I testify that none has the right to be worshiped except Allāh. Moreover, I recall the *ḥadīth* of Ibn 'Abbās regarding the delegation of 'Abdul-Qays.' Then I said, 'This is that which the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ called to.'"

Aḥmad said, "Then Ibn Abī Du'ād spoke with speech that I did not understand—meaning, I was not able to comprehend his speech. And al-Mu'taṣim said, 'Were it not for the fact that you were in the hand of the one that was before me, then I would not have subjected you to this.' Then he said, 'O Abū 'Abdir-Raḥmān, did I not command you to lift the trial?' So I said, 'Allāh is the Greatest. This is a victory for the Muslims.' Then he said, 'Examine him, O Abū 'Abdir-Raḥmān. Speak to him.'"

Aḥmad said, "So Abū 'Abdir-Raḥmān said to me, 'What do you say concerning the Qur'ān?' I didn't respond to him. So al-Mu'taṣim said, 'Respond to him.' So I said to him, 'What do you say concerning knowledge?' He remained silent. So I said, 'The Qur'ān is from the knowledge of Allāh, so whoever claims that the knowledge of Allāh is created has disbelieved in Allāh.' He remained silent."

Aḥmad said, "They said between themselves, 'O Chief of the

Believers, he has declared you and us to be disbelievers.’ But he paid no attention to that. Abū ‘Abdir-Raḥmān said, ‘Allāh was, even when there was no Qur’ān.’ So I said, ‘Allāh was, and there was no knowledge.’”

Aḥmad said, “He remained silent, and they began speaking here and there between themselves. So I said, ‘O Chief of the Believers, give me something from the Book of Allāh or the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ so that I may speak with it.’ Ibn Abī Du‘ād said, ‘Is it that you will not speak except this or that?’ I said, ‘Is it not that Islām cannot stand except by way of these two (i.e., the Qur’ān and the Sunnah)?’”

The debate carried on for a long time, and they used as evidence the statement of Allāh:

﴿ مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ ذِكْرٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ مُّحَدَّثٍ إِلَّا اسْتَمَعُوهُ وَهُمْ يَلْعَبُونَ ﴾

Comes not unto them an admonition from their Lord as a recent revelation but they listen to it while they play.

[Sūrah al-Anbiyā' 21:2]

And likewise, the statement of Allāh:

﴿ اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ﴾

Allāh is the creator of all things.

[Sūrah az-Zumar 39:62]

And [Aḥmad] responded to them by saying the summary of which is: This is general, made specific by way of the statement of Allāh:

﴿ تُدَمِّرُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ بِأَمْرِ رَبِّهَا ﴾

Destroying everything by the command of its Lord!

[Sūrah al-Aḥqāf 46:25]

Ibn Abī Du'ād said, "By Allāh, O Chief of the Believers, he is astray leading others astray; an innovator. And here are your judges and jurists, so ask them." He said to them, "What do you all say?" They said, "We say the likes of that which Ibn Abī Du'ād says."

The next day, they brought him and debated with him, and again on the third day, and in this sitting he raised his voice at them. He established the evidence against them, and when they were silenced, Ibn Abī Du'ād spoke, while he was the most ignorant of them in terms of knowledge and speech.

Aḥmad said, "They had various types of argumentation, yet they had no knowledge of the narrations, and they began rejecting the narrations and rejecting (the concept of) using them as evidence. I heard from them statements which I did not think anyone would ever say. Ibn Ghawth spoke with me in a long discussion in which he mentioned the body and other than it from that which contained no benefit. I said, 'I don't know what you are saying; however, I know that Allāh is One and Self-Sufficient and there is nothing similar to Him.' He remained silent, and I cited to him the *ḥadīth* which speaks about seeing Allāh and the Hereafter. They tried to declare its chain of narration to be weak and attached to it some of the narrators who have been criticized, and they brought arguments that were far-fetched. In the course of all of this, the *khalīfah* displayed kindness and said, 'O Aḥmad, respond to me (accept this statement) so that I can make you from those who are near to me and from those who are acting upon my authority.'"

Aḥmad said, "I said to him, 'O Chief of the Believers, tell them to give me a verse from the Book of Allāh or [something from] the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ so that I may accept it.'"

Aḥmad continued to debate with them when they rejected the narrations, utilizing the statement of Allāh:

﴿ يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكَ

شَيْئًا ﴾

“O my father! Why do you worship that which hears not, sees not, and cannot avail you in anything?”

[*Sūrah Maryam* 19:42]

And the statement of Allāh:

﴿ وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا ﴾

And to Mūsā (Moses) Allāh spoke directly.

[*Sūrah an-Nisā'* 4:164]

Likewise, the statement of Allāh:

﴿ إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي ﴾

Verily, I am Allāh! None has the right to be worshiped but I, so worship Me.

[*Sūrah Ṭā-Hā* 20:14]

And His statement:

﴿ إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْنَاهُ أَنْ نَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ﴾

Verily! Our word unto a thing when We intend it, is only that We say unto it: “Be!” and it is.

[*Sūrah an-Nahl* 16:40]

And the likes of this from verses. When they could not establish an evidence against him, they resorted to utilizing the status of the *khalifah*. They would say, “O Chief of the Believers, this is a deviant disbeliever who leads people astray.” Is'ḥāq bin Ibrāhīm, the governor of Baghdad, said, “O Chief of the Believers, it is not from the scope of the *khilāfah* to allow his way to go free and thus spawn two *khulafā'*.”

Upon hearing this, [al-Mu'tasim] became red and his anger intensified, and he was the mildest of them in temperament. He perceived them to be onto something. Aḥmad said, “Upon hearing this, he said to me, ‘May Allāh curse you. I had hope that you would respond to

me, but you have not responded.' Then he said, 'Take him, strip him, and drag him.'"

Aḥmad said, "I was taken, stripped, and dragged, and I was taken to two executioners while I was looking, and I was placed between them. I said, 'O Chief of the Believers, fear Allāh, fear Allāh! Indeed, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said:

لا يحل دم امرئ مسلم إلا بإحدى ثلاث.

““The blood of a Muslim who testifies that none has the right to be worshiped except Allāh is not permissible except in one of three cases.””⁴

“And I recited the narration in which the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said:

أمرت أن أقاتل الناس حتى يقولوا لا إله إلا الله، فإذا قالوها عصموا مني دماءهم وأموالهم.

“I have been commanded to fight the people until they say: “None has the right to be worshiped except Allāh,” and if they say this, they have safeguarded from me their blood and their property.”⁵

“So by way of what do you deem my blood to be permissible, while I have not done any of this, O Chief of the Believers? Remember when you will stand before Allāh, just as I am standing here before you.’ And it is as if this made him withhold, yet they continued to

⁴ Reported by Aḥmad in *Al-Musnad* (6/120, #3261) on the authority of ‘Abdullāh bin Mas’ūd ﷺ, who said that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said:

لا يحل دم امرئ مسلم يشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وأني رسول الله إلا بإحدى ثلاث الثيب الزاني والنفس بالنفس والتارك لدينه المفارق للجماعة.

The blood of a Muslim who testifies that none has the right to be worshiped except Allāh and that I am the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ is not permissible to be spilled except in one of three cases: the one who commits adultery, a life for a life, and the one who abandons his religion and separates from the *jamā’ah*.

It is also reported by al-Bukhārī (6878) and Muslim (1676).

⁵ Reported by Aḥmad in *Al-Musnad* (1/229, #68) from the *ḥadīth* of Abū Hurayrah ﷺ. Al-Bukhārī also reported it (392) as did Muslim (21).

say to him, ‘O Chief of the Believers, indeed he is astray, leading others astray; a disbeliever.’”

Aḥmad said, “So he commanded me, and I stood up between the two executioners. A chair was brought, so I stood upon it. He commanded me to grab onto a piece of wood. I didn’t understand what he meant, so my hands were snatched away [from it] and two punishers were brought, having whips with them. One of them began beating me while al-Mu’taṣim said to him, ‘Beat him harder, may Allāh cut off your hands!’ The other came and began beating me, and then the other. They continued beating me in this fashion until I passed out, and I lost consciousness several times. When the beating would stop, my consciousness would return to me. Al-Mu’taṣim stood before me and called me to their statement, but I did not respond, and they continued to say, ‘Woe to you! The *khalīfah* is at your head!’ Yet I did not accept this, and they continued the beating.”

Aḥmad said, “Then he returned to me, but I did not respond, so they returned to the beating. Then he came to me a third time, and he called me, but I did not comprehend what he said to me due to the severity of the beating, yet they returned to the beating and my consciousness left to the point that I did not feel the beating. And he commanded them and they stood me up, and I did not feel anything until I went into an apartment of a house and the binds had been removed from my legs. This was on the 25th of Ramaḍān in the year 221 AH.”

Then the *khalīfah* commanded that he be taken back to his family. In general, he was struck around 30 times. It was also said that he was struck 80 times. However, each blow was injurious and extremely severe. Imām Aḥmad was a man who was thin, brown-skinned, and had much humility. May Allāh have mercy upon him.⁶

[End of Ibn Kathīr’s speech]

⁶ *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah* (10/367)

Being Prevented from Narrating

I used to believe that he was prevented from narrating *ahādīth* by the government at that time, and based upon what I read, I was not able to find anything that explicitly states this. What I have found is that, once Imām Aḥmad returned to his home after the beating, he sat in his home and didn't go out for Jumu'ah or for the congregational prayers. And this, therefore, prevented him from narrating.

Ibn Kathīr رحمته الله mentions in *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah*: “After the trial, when he departed from the home of the *khalīfah*, Imām Aḥmad stayed inside his home until he healed, and all praise is for Allāh. He clung to his house and did not go out for Jumu'ah or for the congregational prayers, and he withheld from narrating *ahādīth*. His sustenance came from that which he owned, which equaled 17 *dirham* per month; he would spend that upon his family and suffice with that, being patient, anticipating the reward from Allāh. This continued throughout the leadership of al-Mu'tasim, and likewise during the days of his son, Muḥammad al-Wāthiq.”¹

¹ *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah* (10/371)

The Trial During the Era of al-Wāthiq

Imām adh-Dhahabī said:

Ḥanbal said: “Abū ‘Abdillāh [Imām Aḥmad] continued, after healing from the beating, to attend Jumu‘ah and the congregational prayer. He would also narrate and issue verdicts until al-Mu‘taṣim died and his son al-Wāthiq assumed leadership and what occurred from trials (thereafter) and the leaning (of al-Wāthiq) toward Ibn Abī Du‘ād and his companions. When the affair became intense upon the people of Baghdad and the judges instituted trials, and Faḍl al-Anmāṭ and Abū Ṣāliḥ were (forcefully) separated from their wives, Abū ‘Abdillāh used to attend the Jumu‘ah prayer and would repeat the prayer when he returned. He said, ‘Jumu‘ah is attended due to its virtue, but the prayer is repeated [if it’s made] behind whoever says the likes of this statement.’”

Ḥanbal said: “A group of people came to Abū ‘Abdillāh saying, ‘This affair has spread from the people who have been put to trial, and we are afraid that more than this will occur.’ And they mentioned Ibn Abī Du‘ād and the fact that he commanded the educators to teach the children in the schools that the Qur‘ān is created, and they said, ‘We are not pleased with his leadership.’ And [Aḥmad] prevented them from that and debated them, and Aḥmad clarified the affair for them and commanded them to have patience. During the days of al-Wāthiq, Ya‘qūb came one night with a letter from the *amīr* Is‘ḥāq bin Ibrāhīm, saying, ‘The chief of the believers has mentioned you, saying that no one is to gather with you nor are you to reside in a land or city that I am in. So go wherever you will in the earth of Allāh.’ So Abū ‘Abdillāh secluded himself for the duration of al-Wāthiq’s life, and this was a tribulation for him.”

Ḥanbal said: “Aḥmad bin Naṣr al-Khuzā‘ī was killed while Abū ‘Abdillāh continued to be secluded in his home. He did not go out to any prayer nor to other than it until al-Wāthiq died.”¹

It is mentioned on the authority of Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Būshanjī that he said: “Aḥmad narrated openly in Baghdad, and I returned from Kūfah and met him in the month of Rajab in 227 AH while he was narrating. Then, he discontinued narrating in the last three days of Sha‘bān without being prevented. Rather, al-Ḥasan bin ‘Alī bin al-Ja‘d, the judge of Baghdad, had written a letter to Ibn Abī Du‘ād, saying: ‘Aḥmad continues to narrate *ahādīth*.’ This reached Aḥmad, so he discontinued narrating until he passed away, may Allāh have mercy upon him.”²

[End of adh-Dhahabī’s speech]

¹ *Siyar Alām an-Nubalā’* (11/263-264)

² *Siyar Alām an-Nubalā’* (11/265)

The End of the Trial with the Leadership of al-Mutawakkil 'Al-Allāh

Adh-Dhahabī said:

Ḥanbal said: “Al-Mutawakkil Ja’far assumed leadership, and Allāh manifested the Sunnah and vindicated the people. Abū ‘Abdillāh would narrate and his companions would narrate during the days of al-Mutawakkil. I heard him saying, ‘The people are not more in need of the *ḥadīth* and knowledge than they are in this time of ours.’ Then, al-Mutawakkil mentioned him and wrote to Is’ḥāq bin Ibrāhīm regarding his release, and a messenger came to his house commanding him to be present. Abū ‘Abdillāh went and then returned, and my father asked him about that for which he had been summoned.

“[My father] said, ‘He read to me a letter of Ja’far commanding him to go out into the open. Abū ‘Abdillāh said: “Is’ḥāq bin Ibrāhīm said to me, ‘What do you say concerning the Qur’ān?’ I said, ‘The chief of the believers has prohibited this.’ Is’ḥāq bin Ibrāhīm said to me, ‘You are not to inform anyone that I asked you concerning the Qur’ān.’ So I said to him, ‘Are you consulting me or asking me to see what I will say?’ He said, ‘Rather, I am consulting you.’ I said, ‘The Qur’ān is the speech of Allāh, and it is not created.’”¹

[End of adh-Dhahabī’s speech]

Ibn Kathīr رحمته الله said:

When al-Mutawakkil ‘Al-Allāh assumed leadership, the people

¹ *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/265)

rejoiced with his appointment because he was one who loved the Sunnah and its people, and he lifted the trial from Imām Aḥmad. He wrote letters to all of the provinces saying that no one is to speak with the statement that the Qur'ān is created. Then he wrote to his deputy in Baghdad, Is'ḥāq bin Ibrāhīm, saying that he is to send Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal to him. So Is'ḥāq summoned the Imām and ennobled him and venerated him due to that which he knew from the respect and veneration of the *khalīfah* for him, and he asked him secretly regarding the Qur'ān.

Aḥmad said to him, "This question of yours, are you asking me to describe it for you or are you consulting me?" He said, "I am consulting you." So [Aḥmad] said, "It is the speech of Allāh revealed, not created." He held fast to his statement regarding this. Then he prepared to go to the *khalīfah* in Sāmarrā'.²

[End of Ibn Kathīr's speech]

² *Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah* (10/371)

The Condition of Imām Aḥmad During the Rule of al-Mutawakkil

Imām adh-Dhahabī said:

Ṣāliḥ bin Aḥmad said: “My father [Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal] said, ‘Is’ḥāq bin Ibrāhīm said to me, “Pardon me for attending your beating.” I said, “I pardon all of those who attended my beating.” He said to me, “Why do you say that it is not created?” I said, “Because Allāh has said:

﴿أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ﴾

Surely, His is the creation and command.

[*Sūrah al-A’rāf* 7:54]

““[Allāh] differentiated here, in this verse, between the creation and the command.” Is’ḥāq said, “The command is created.” I said, “*SubḥānAllāh!* Is it the case that a creation can create another creation?!” I said this meaning that Allāh has created all that exists by way of His command, which is His statement “Be.” Is’ḥāq said, “Then from where do you narrate that it is not created?” I said, “From Ja’far bin Muḥammad, who said that it (the command) is neither a creator nor is it created.””

Ḥanbal said: “Abū ‘Abdillāh did not possess anything to spend or to take care of his needs, and I had 100 *dirham* so I gave them to my father and he took them to him, and he used them to look after his needs. He rented an animal and left, and Muḥammad bin Is’ḥāq bin Ibrāhīm went with him, and he did not send him back until he left. Is’ḥāq bin Ibrāhīm said to al-Mutawakkil, ‘Aḥmad has

departed from Baghdad and your servant Muḥammad has not come.’ Al-Mutawakkil said, ‘He will send him back, even if by force.’

“Aḥmad had reached Shām and he sent him back, and he returned and withheld from narrating except to his son and to us, and he would read to us in our apartment. Then, he was taken to al-Mutawakkil and it was mentioned that Aḥmad requested an appropriate meeting time in his home and that he desired to pledge his allegiance to him, and we were unaware of that (meeting). One night in the summer while we were sleeping, we heard a loud sound and we saw a fire in the home of Abū ‘Abdillāh, so we raced towards it; behold, he was there sitting wearing an *izār*, and Muḥaffar bin al-Kalbī and a group along with him were there, and someone brought a letter from al-Mutawakkil. The person with the letter read it: ‘It was reported to the chief of the believers that you have an ‘Alawī man to whom you have attached yourself and that you intended to pledge allegiance to him.’ And he spoke with them at length.

“Then, Muḥaffar said, ‘What do you say about this?’ He said, ‘I don’t know anything about this. Indeed, I hold that he (the ruler) should be heard and obeyed at times of difficulty and ease; at times of sickness and in health; and indeed, I supplicate to Allāh for him to be upright and to be successful by night and by day abundantly.’ Muḥaffar said, ‘The chief of the believers has commanded me to make you swear by Allāh to this.’ He said, ‘I swear by Allāh to it three times, that I have nothing against the chief of the believers.’

“Then, the home of Abū ‘Abdillāh was emptied and searched, and a box of books was taken out and the women were investigated, as were their dwellings; and nothing was found. And they did not sense anything afoul. Allāh has said:

﴿ وَرَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِعَيْظِهِمْ ﴾

**And Allāh drove back those who disbelieved in their
rage.**

[Sūrah al-Aḥzāb 33:25]

“This was written about and taken to al-Mutawakkil, and he held him in high regard, and he knew that Abū ‘Abdillāh had been lied upon and that those who had sought to sully his reputation were from the people of innovation. And he did not die until Allāh had clarified his affair to the Muslims. And his name was Ibn ath-Thaljī.”
[End of Ḥanbal’s speech]¹

[End of adh-Dhahabī’s speech]

¹ *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/266-267)

His *Jihād* Against the People of Innovation

Adh-Dhahabī said:

Muḥammad bin Ismā‘īl at-Tirmidhī said, “I, along with Aḥmad bin al-Ḥasan at-Tirmidhī, was with Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal. Aḥmad bin al-Ḥasan said to him, ‘O Abū ‘Abdillāh, they have mentioned the people of *ḥadīth* to Ibn Abī Qutaylah in Makkah and he said, “The people of *ḥadīth* are evil people.”’ Abū ‘Abdillāh stood and gathered his garment, saying: ‘*Zindīq, zindīq* (he is a heretic, he is a heretic)!’ And he entered his house.”¹

Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin Ismā‘īl al-Adamī said, “Al-Faḍl bin Ziyād reported to us saying: ‘I heard Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal saying, “He who rejects the *ḥadīth* of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ is on the brink of destruction.”’”²

Al-Ḥākim said: “Al-Aṣamm narrated to us, saying: ‘I heard Muḥammad bin Is’ḥāq aṣ-Ṣaghānī say: “I heard Fawrān, the companion of Aḥmad, saying: ‘Al-Athram and Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Mu‘īṭī asked me to request a private meeting with Abū ‘Abdillāh. So I asked him in it regarding our companions who differentiate between *al-lafẓ* (the articulation of the Qur’ān) and the Qur’ān itself. So I asked him and he said, “How can one separate between His statements and His actions? They are not created. As for our actions, they are created.” I said, “The Lafẓiyyah (those who say: ‘My articulation of the Qur’ān is created’)—do you consider them, O Abū ‘Abdillāh, to be amongst

¹ *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/299)

² *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/297)

the Jahmiyyah?" He said, "No; the Jahmiyyah are those who say that the Qur'ān is created.""

"And with that he [Muḥammad bin Is'hāq aṣ-Ṣaghānī] said: "I heard Fawrān say, 'Ibn Shaddād came to me with a letter containing a number of issues; amongst them was the statement that our articulation of the Qur'ān is not created, and that Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal was beaten due to this. And he wrote, "The Qur'ān is the speech of Allāh; not created."'"

Ṣāliḥ bin Aḥmad said: "I heard my father saying, 'Whoever says that the names of Allāh are created, he is a disbeliever.'"

Al-Marwadhī said: "I heard Abū 'Abdillāh saying, 'Whoever delves into theological rhetoric will never be successful. Whoever delves into theological rhetoric will not be saved from being from the Jahmiyyah.'"

Ḥanbal said: "I heard Abū 'Abdillāh saying, 'He who loves theological rhetoric will never be successful. This is because their affair leads to confusion. It is upon you to cling to the Sunnah and the *aḥādīth*, and beware of delving into theological rhetoric and argumentation. We have encountered a people who know nothing about theological rhetoric, [yet] they would enter theological rhetoric and did not acquire good.'"

There is much speech from Imām Aḥmad warning against innovation and its people, and there are many statements from him regarding the Sunnah. He who looks into the book *As-Sunnah* by Abū Bakr al-Khallāl will see within it abundant knowledge and many transmissions. I [adh-Dhahabī] have cited some of that in general in the biography of Abū 'Abdillāh in *Ta'rikh al-Islām*, as well as in the book *Al-'Izzah lil-'Alī al-'Azīm*. I do not see fit to cite it here, so we ask Allāh for guidance and good intentions.

Imām Aḥmad possessed a large amount of knowledge and action regarding the Sunnah and *ḥadīth* and its sciences. And he possessed cognizance of *fiqh* and its subsidiary branches. He was a leader in

abstemiousness, piety, worship, and truthfulness.³

Al-Marwadhī said: “I informed Abū ‘Abdillāh that Abū Shu‘ayb as-Sūsī ar-Raqī separated his daughter from her husband when he hesitated regarding the Qur’ān, and he said, ‘He has done well, may Allāh pardon him.’ And he began to supplicate for him.”

When Ya’qūb bin Shaybah displayed hesitation regarding the Qur’ān, Abū ‘Abdillāh warned against him and commanded that he be boycotted.

Abū ‘Abdillāh has numerous statements regarding the affair of the statement that one’s articulation of the Qur’ān is created. The first of those to say this was Ḥusayn bin ‘Alī al-Karābīsī, and he was from those who possessed an abundance of knowledge. He authored a book regarding those who fabricated narrations, and a large group of people referred to him. In it, he mentions that Ibn az-Zubayr was from the Khawārij, and it contains narrations which support the Rāfiḍah. Aḥmad was informed of that, so he began to warn against him; this reached al-Karābīsī, so he became angry and said, “I will say a statement so that Ibn Ḥanbal will speak in opposition to it and thus become a disbeliever.” So he said, “My articulation of the Qur’ān is created.”

So al-Marwadhī said in the book *Al-Qaṣaṣ*: “I mentioned to Abū ‘Abdillāh that al-Karābīsī said, ‘My articulation of the Qur’ān is created.’ And that he said, ‘I say that, indeed, the Qur’ān is the speech of Allāh, not created from any perspective. However, my articulation of it is created, and whoever does not say “My articulation of the Qur’ān is created” has disbelieved.’ Abū ‘Abdillāh said, ‘Rather, he is the disbeliever. May Allāh fight him. And what thing did the Jahmiyyah say except this? Yet it did not benefit. His latter statement nullifies his first statement.’ And he said, ‘What is the report of Abū Thawr? Is he in agreement with him regarding this?’ I said, ‘He has boycotted him.’ He said, ‘He has done well. The people of theologi-

³ *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/291-292)

cal rhetoric will never be successful.’”⁴

Is'hāq bin Ibrāhīm al-Baghawī said: “I heard Aḥmad saying, ‘Whoever says that the Qur'ān is created is a disbeliever.’” Salamah bin Shabīb heard Aḥmad saying this and this is successively reported from him.

Abū Ismā'īl at-Tirmidhī said: “I heard Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal saying, ‘Whoever says that the Qur'ān is an incident is a disbeliever.’”

Ismā'īl bin al-Ḥasan as-Sirrāj said, “I heard Aḥmad saying about the one who says the Qur'ān is created: ‘He is a disbeliever, and whoever says “My articulation of the Qur'ān is created” is a Jahmī.’”

I [adh-Dhahabī] say: That which is affirmed is that Abū 'Abdillāh used to say, “Whoever says ‘My articulation of the Qur'ān is not created’ is an innovator, and whoever says ‘My articulation of the Qur'ān is created’ is a Jahmī.” And he ﷺ neither said this nor that. Perhaps I will clarify this: Whoever says “My articulation of the Qur'ān is created,” intending by way of that the Qur'ān, then he is a Jahmī.

Aḥmad bin Zanjawayh said: “I heard Aḥmad saying, ‘The Lafziyyah are more evil than the Jahmiyyah.’”⁵

[End of adh-Dhahabī's speech]

I say: His *jihād* against the people of innovation was abundant, and he has much speech regarding them. I will suffice with this out of fear of making the speech long.

⁴ *Siyar A'lam an-Nubalā'* (11/289)

⁵ *Siyar A'lam an-Nubalā'* (11/288-299)

His Death

Adh-Dhababī said:

His illness:

‘Abdullāh [bin Aḥmad] said: “I heard my father saying, ‘I have reached 77 years of age and I am entering the 78th year.’ And he fell ill on this night and died on the tenth day.”

Ṣāliḥ [bin Aḥmad] said: “At the beginning of Rabī’ al-Awwal in the year 241, my father came down with a fever on Wednesday night; he held this fever for the duration of the night and was breathing heavily. I was aware of his condition and I would treat him during his illness. I said to him, ‘My dear father, with what did you break your fast last night?’ He said, ‘With *bāqilā*.’”¹

[End of adh-Dhababī’s speech]

I say: *Al-bāqilā*’ refers to “bean soup” in the dialect of the people from the south.

Imām Aḥmad was one who was abstemious. He did not accept anything from anyone. He used to live on 17 *dirham*. He would take them from the employees of his home which his father had left for him, and 17 *dirham* was the equivalent of 4 $\frac{4}{10}$ *riyāl*. His family would, at times, spin yarn and send it to the marketplaces to sell for approximately two *dirham*. And when his clothing was taken while he was in Makkah and some of his companions were lost and searching for him, he was not able to leave due to being in a state of loss. Some

¹ *Siyar Alām an-Nubalā*’ (11/334)

things were offered to him, yet he refused. So his companions said to him, “It would be a loan.” But he refused and said, “I will transcribe for you that which we have heard from so-and-so and accept a wage for that transcription.”

And when his money ran out while he was in Ṣana‘ā', his teacher, ‘Abdur-Razzāq, offered him some *dinār*, but he refused to accept them. He labored, choosing to work for his wages, and his abstemiousness was abundant.

He sat while being ill and he died in the forenoon on a Friday, the 12th of Rabī' al-Awwal.

Ṣāliḥ said: “He was afflicted with an illness in his stomach and other than this. And his intellect was still intact. So on Friday the 12th of Rabī' al-Awwal, he passed away during the forenoon.”²

His funeral was large such that the likes of it has never been seen. It was said that those who prayed over him from amongst the men were approximately 800,000. And from amongst the women, 60,000.

Adh-Dhahabī said:

Mūsā bin Hārūn al-Ḥāfiẓ said: “It is said that Aḥmad was such that, when he passed away, the place wherein the people stood to pray over him was filled and the number of people in the area was approximately 600,000 or more. And if the number of those that were in the rural areas, villages, and remote places had been counted, the number would reach one million.”³

Ja'far bin Muḥammad bin Ḥusayn an-Naysābūrī said: “Al-Fat'h bin al-Ḥajjāj narrated to me saying, ‘I heard in Ibn Ṭāhir’s home that the *amīr* sent 20 men to count how many had prayed over Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal. They counted them and the number reached approximately 1,080,000 people, including those who prayed on boats.’ And they

² *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'* (11/335)

³ *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'* (11/339)

reached in total 1.3 million people.”

‘Abdur-Raḥmān bin Abī Ḥātim said: “I heard Abū Zur’ah saying, ‘It has reached me that al-Mutawakkil ordered that the place wherein the people stood to pray over Aḥmad be counted. And its people were found to be 2.5 million.’”

Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī said: “It has reached me from Abul-Qāsim al-Baghawī that Ibn Ṭāhir commanded that the people in the *janāzah* of Aḥmad be counted, and they were in agreement that there were 700,000 people.”⁴

[End of adh-Dhahabī’s speech]

I say: Some of the narrations regarding this are (possible) exaggerations. The last narration which mentions that there were 700,000 is most likely to be the closest to that which is correct, and Allāh knows best.

⁴ *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/340)

His Writings & His Methodology in Authorship

Adh-Dhahabī said: “Ibn al-Jawzī said, ‘Imām Aḥmad did not see fit to author books, and he prohibited others from writing his speech and edicts. Had he seen fit to do so, he would have had many writings. He compiled *Al-Musnad*, which consists of 30,000 narrations.’”¹

I say: In the numbered print, there are 28,199 narrations, and this is the print of Bayt al-Afkār ad-Dawliyyah for Printing and Publication. We have reviewed the numbering in *Al-Musnad* and it consists of 45 volumes. We found that the last number in it was 27,647 narrations based upon the verification of Shu‘ayb al-Arnā‘ūṭ and those with him from the verifiers; and this was in the printing of Ar-Risālah Foundation.

Adh-Dhahabī said: “Imām Aḥmad used to say to his son ‘Abdullāh, ‘Memorize this *Musnad*, for indeed this shall be an Imām for the people.’ (He had a) *tafsīr* which consisted of 120,000 narrations. However, it was lost. He also wrote *An-Nāsikh wal-Mansūkh*, *At-Ta’rikh*, *Ḥadīth Shu’bah*, *Al-Muqaddim wal-Mu’akh’khir fil-Qur’ān*, *Jawābāt al-Qur’ān*, *Al-Manāsik al-Kabīr waṣ-Ṣaghīr*, and other things.”²

Adh-Dhahabī did not mention the refutation of Imām Aḥmad against the Jahmiyyah.

Imām adh-Dhahabī said: “From his writings as well was *Kitāb*

¹ *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/327)

² *Siyar A’lām an-Nubalā’* (11/327-328)

al-Īmān and *Kitāb al-Ashribah*. I have also seen pages from *Kitāb al-Farā'id*, as well as his *tafsīr* that was previously mentioned. And if it were in existence, then the virtuous people would have striven hard to obtain and circulate it. Had he authored a *tafsīr*, then it would have contained tens of thousands of narrations and filled up five volumes.”³

³*Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'* (11/328)

The Methodology of Imām Aḥmad in the Compilation of *Al-Musnad*

[The methods of] compilation are divided into categories:

1) Compilation into chapters, as was found in the compilations of the authors of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Likewise, the people of the *Sunan*: Abū Dāwūd, at-Tirmidhī, an-Nasā'ī, and Ibn Mājah.

2) Compilation into *masānīd*. This is when the narrations of each one of the Companions are compiled in one place. This was the method of Imām Aḥmad in *Al-Musnad*.

3) Compilation in the path of *al-ma'ājim*. This is when one categorizes the narrations by way of his scholars (from whom he narrates) and in order. Perhaps they are ordered in *al-masānīd* and *al-ma'ājim* in accordance with those who come first in virtue or those who come first in age, or in sequence based upon alphabetical order.

Imām Aḥmad رضي الله عنه arranged his *musnad* by way of the Companions, as was the way of those who compiled in *masānīd*; and this was by way of placing the *ḥadīth* of each Companion in order, beginning with that which is *ṣaḥīḥ* or that which is *ḥasan* or that which is weak, without consideration for the subject matter or chapterization. Then, in the sequence of the chapters of the Companions, he followed a number of methods. Perhaps they were arranged in alphabetical order or by way of those who had precedence in Islām or nobility in terms of lineage or other than this. Perhaps he sufficed in some of them with mentioning the narrations of one Companion, such as the *musnad* of Abū Bakr; or the narrations of a number of them, such

as the *musnad* of the four (rightly guided *khulafā'*), or the *musnad* of the ten who are promised Paradise; or a specific group which he gathered on one page, such as the *musnad* of those Companions who only narrated a few *aḥādīth* and the *musnad* of the Companions who moved to Egypt.¹

It is evident that Imām Aḥmad رحمته الله compiled and ordered the Companions in *Al-Musnad* with consideration to a number of facts. Amongst them is the virtue of the Companions and their precedence in Islām, the nobility of their lineage, and the abundance of their narrations. Hence, he began *Al-Musnad* by collecting the narrations of the four rightly guided *khulafā'*, then the *musnad* of the remaining ten who were promised Paradise, and then the narrations of the family members of the Prophet ﷺ; likewise, the narrations of those who narrated an abundance of narrations, such as the four 'Abdullāhs (Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn Mas'ūd, Ibn 'Umar, and Ibn 'Amr bin al-'Āṣ رضي الله عنهم). Then the *musnad* of those from Makkah and the *musnad* of those from Madīnah. Then the *musnad* of those who traveled to Shām and the *musnad* of those who traveled to Kūfah. Then the *musnad* of those who traveled to Baṣrah. Then the *musnad* of the Anṣār, then the *musnad* of the female Companions.²

¹ *Ar-Risālah al-Mustaṭarifah* (pp. 60-61)

² Introduction of *Al-Musnad* (1/54-55) with the verification of Shu'ayb al-Arnā'ūt.

Conclusion

All praise is for Allāh, for the completion of the biography of a notable from the notables of the religion and an Imām from its Imāms. I have endeavored to summarize this biography. However, the books about the Imām are many. Adh-Dhahabī wrote approximately 180 pages regarding the biography of Imām Aḥmad in *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'*, and some authors have specifically written regarding his biography in separate books.

In conclusion, it is befitting for us to take an example from this Imām in terms of his character, his actions, and his exemplification of the Sunnah; and Allāh is the granter of success. May prayers be upon our Prophet Muḥammad, his family members, and his Companions.