



ABDULLAH IBN AL-MUBARAK

رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ

The Epitome of Blessed Wealth and Deep Knowledge



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Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak ibn Wadhih al-Handhali al-Tamimi was born in Marw, a prominent city in Khurasan, in the year 118 AH. He spent his early years in Marw and set out on his journey for knowledge when he was around twenty years old.

His father, though formerly a slave, was renowned for his righteousness and often secluded himself in the worship of Allah. Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak was raised in a household characterized by virtue, nurtured by parents known for their piety, justice, and humility.

Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak initially received education in one of the local kuttab (schools). Even as a young child and student, he showcased a sharp intellect and an impressive memory. There is a notable incident where he memorised an entire khutbah simply by listening when he was quite young.

Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak's remarkable memory and skills during his youth propelled him to greater heights in acquiring and retaining knowledge. He passionately pursued knowledge, embarking on extensive travels to connect with scholars and explore regions renowned for their rich intellectual heritage.

Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak traveled a significant portion of the world in his quest for Hadith, leaving no region untouched—from Yemen to Egypt, and from al-Sham (Syria) to the Arabian Peninsula, covering both Basra and Kufa. Imam al-Dhahabi characterised him as ‘Al-Saffar’ (one known for his frequent and extensive travels) and ‘a companion of vast and distant journeys.’

Abdullah not only made the effort to venture out in search of knowledge but also worked diligently to ensure the authenticity of the narrations and statements he collected. Wherever he journeyed, he meticulously recorded the statements and narrations, ensuring they included authentic chains of transmission from scholars and every trustworthy individual possessing knowledge.

Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak not only achieved excellence in the realm of knowledge and scholarship but also found success in business. He viewed trade and business as a means to support his pursuit of knowledge, ensuring financial stability and independence from reliance on others.

Ibn al-Mubarak traveled through cities, reaping substantial profits that made him financially robust. This prosperity served to enhance his pursuit of knowledge and exploration of different lands. Ibn al-Mubarak firmly declined to accept handouts or monetary gifts from rulers and governors.

Ibn al-Mubarak generously dedicated more to others than he did for himself. It is documented that each year he would allocate a hundred thousand dirhams to support the poor and needy. Additionally, on an annual basis, he would financially support and sponsor his students and others for their pilgrimage to Hajj.

Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak, a distinguished scholar in Hadith, earned accolades from numerous scholars and authorities. Both peers and elders held him in high esteem, recognising and respecting his expertise in this field.

His approach was to convey narrations from his books rather than relying solely on memory, a practice rooted in reverence for the sacred sayings of the Prophet ﷺ. He served as a living reference for many, a reliable source people turned to for the verification of Hadiths.

His teachers included Abu Hanifah, the two Hammad ibn Zayd, Hammad ibn Salamah, Sufyan ibn Uyaynah, Ibn Jurayh, Sufyan al-Thawri, Shu'bah, Al-A'mash, Yahya ibn Sa'id, Ibn Shurayh, Al-Awza'i, Isma'il ibn 'Ayyash, and Ibn Abi Dhi'b.

As a devoted student of knowledge, Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak held his teachers and seniors in high esteem. On one occasion, when asked about a matter in the presence of Sufyan ibn Uyaynah, he respectfully replied, “We have been advised against speaking in the presence of our seniors!”

Among his students were notable figures such as Abu Ishaq al-Fazari, Ibn Wahb, Abdur-Rahman ibn Mahdi, Abu Dawud, Yahya al-Qattan, Yahya ibn Ma'in, Ibn Abi Shaybah (both Abu Bakr and his brother Uthman), Hasan ibn al-Rabi', and Fudhayl ibn Iyadh.

In addition to being a scholar in Hadith, Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak was also a Faqih, meaning he was well-versed in Islamic jurisprudence. Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak acquired this knowledge of Fiqh from eminent jurists, including Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, and Sufyan al-Thawri.

He had a thorough understanding of Islamic Jurisprudence and a profound knowledge of intricate issues in Fiqh. This is evident in the words of Ibn Hajr al-'Asqalani, who described Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak as trustworthy, reliable, and a knowledgeable jurist.

Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak penned numerous works across various disciplines, including Hadith, Fiqh, Tafsir, History, Poetry, and Heart-softeners. Some of his notable titles include Kitab al-Arba'een, Kitab al-Isti'dhan, Kitab al-Birr & al-Silah, Kitab al-Tarikh, and Kitab Riqa' al-Fatawa.

He firmly opposed deviant beliefs, heretical groups, and misguided methodologies. As a scholar in Hadith and Fiqh, he openly disassociated himself from those who endorsed and spread deviancy.

He was renowned for his lengthy and regular prayers, frequent recitation of the Qur'an, and his humble and tender heart. He extended his time in the mosque, dedicating himself to the worship of Allah. Imam Ahmad remarked, "Allah honoured him due to the fear Ibn al-Mubarak had for Allah. Khurasan has not produced anyone like Ibn al-Mubarak."

Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak passed away in the blessed month of Ramadan, during the year 181 AH (797 CE), in the early hours just before dawn at the age of 63. May Allah bestow His mercy upon him.

REVIEW YOUR READING

1. Who characterized Abdullah bin al-Mubarak as ‘Al-Saffar’ (one known for his frequent and extensive travels)?
2. Did Ibn al-Mubarak accept handouts or monetary gifts from rulers and governors?
3. How many dirhams did Ibn al-Mubarak allocate to support the poor and needy?

*** MUSLIM PERSONALITIES (SERIES-09/BOOK-14) ***



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