

Living Spiritually in Ramadhan: Introduction to Fiqh



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Introduction To Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence)

- In the beginning, there was just Rasulullah ﷺ.
- The Qur'an was revealed to him, he taught the Qur'an to the companions.
- Anything he taught that was not Qur'an, became sunnah, which was memorised and recorded by the companions as hadith.
- Both the Qur'an and sunnah were a collection of commands, prohibitions, teachings, principles, and stories that had broad applications.
- Like all speech, the Qur'an and sunnah also needed to be understood and interpreted through human language.
- The Prophet ﷺ taught the companions to seek answers from the Qur'an and the sunnah, and *if they didn't find an answer in them, use their intellect to arrive at an answer through interpretation.*

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Introduction To Fiqh: *Ijtihad* and the *Mujtahids*

- This process of interpretation came to be known as *ijtihad*. *Ijtihad* did not apply in clear matters, only in matters where there were different levels and modes of ambiguity. In such matters, the companions of the Prophet ﷺ, after his passing, often arrived at different conclusions.
- Hence began the phenomenon of difference of opinion or *ikhtilaf*.
- In later times, during the second to the fourth centuries, as more and more new situations arose, the need for interpretation increased, and scholars excelled at it. During this time, hundreds of brilliant minds inferred rulings and judgements using the process of *ijtihad* for thousands of different issues. Some of these scholars became famous for their brilliance and became known as *Mujtahids*.

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Introduction To Fiqh: The Four Schools

- In time, the *Mujtahids* with the most organized methods, the most varied and comprehensive judgements, and the most prominent students, became widely celebrated and followed.
- Their methodology was studied further by their students, and they gained huge followings, giving rise to what we now know as schools or *madhahib* (sing. *Madhab*).
- Four schools eventually rose to prominence as the most widely followed, and most Muslims including states accepted their rulings for matters that required interpretation.
- These are the Hanafi school named after Imam Abu Hanifa Nu'man ibn Thabit (80 - 150 AH), the Maliki school named after Imam Malik Ibn Anas (93-179 AH), the Shafi'i school named after Imam Muhammad ibn Idrees al-Shafi'i (150-204 AH), and Hanbali school named after Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (164-241 AH).

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Introduction To Fiqh: The Four Schools

- There were other schools such as those of the Shi'a. These four mentioned above were the main schools of sunni Islam.
- Within sunni Islam smaller schools continued, such as the Dhahiri school.
- These schools spread throughout Muslim lands for various demographic and socio-political reasons.
- Eventually, most Muslims of vast regions came to follow one or other of the schools.
- You too were most likely taught your religion based on one of the schools depending on where you are from.

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Introduction To Fiqh: How Do Schools Work?

- Ordinary people mostly follow the school that is prominent in their region.
- Most scholars also based their learning and teaching on a school. Although on some issues they may take a different view to the school based on their own research and interpretation. This is a scholar's prerogative.
- The way schools work is simple. If you look carefully, you will find that all schools agree on matters that are clearly and categorically stated in the Qur'an or the sunnah.
- Where things are not clear and categoric, and there are various reasons for this, there is difference of opinion between the schools.

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Introduction To Fiqh: Is It Ok To Follow A School?

- Following a school, or a scholar from a school is inevitable for ordinary Muslims. They simply do not know how to navigate the rulings themselves. They do not know the interpretive tools used by scholars to arrive at rulings so they follow scholars.
- This is valid for them because Allah ﷻ commanded people: 'Ask the people of knowledge if you do not know.' (al-Nahl 16:43)
- The only people who do not follow a school strictly are scholars of the highest calibre. That too depends on their methodology. There are many brilliant scholars who choose to stick to a school for most of their religious practices.

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Introduction To Fiqh: What School is This Course Based on?

- The rules taught in this course are based on the Hanafi school.
- Why?
- Because your teacher is Hanafi (mostly).
- It is also true that the majority of Muslims in the UK are Hanafi. That's simply a matter of demographics. Most Muslims are from south Asia, and most south Asians are Hanafi.
- If you do not know which school you follow. The map below will give you a good idea.
- If you are on this course, and you are not Hanafi, do not worry, many of the rules are the same. And if you follow the rules as taught here, your worship is perfectly valid.

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