

Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhaab by Dr. Bilal Philips

Who was Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Wahhaab?

Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Wahhaab, was born in 1703 in the city of al-'Uyaynah, seventy kilometres northwest of Riyadh, the current capital of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. His father 'Abdul-Wahhaab ibn Sulaymaan, was himself a notable scholar and the judge of al-'Uyaynah and his grandfather, Sulayman ibn 'Alee, was one of the leading scholars of the region during his lifetime.

Ibn 'Abdul-Wahhaab acquired his primary Islamic education from his father and by the age of ten he had memorized the whole Qur'aan by heart and had begun the study of the major books on Tafseer (exegesis), Hadeeth and Fiqh. When he began to speak out against the innovations and pagan practices in 'Uyaynah, his father was dismissed from his post and the family was obliged to leave al-'Uyaynah for the nearby town of Huraymilah in 1726. Muhammad remained for some time in al-'Uyaynah attempting to rectify the polytheistic tendencies of its residents, before joining his father in Huraymilah.

On attaining the age of maturity, he went for Hajj and later proceeded to Madeenah, where he studied under, 'Abdullaah ibn Ibraaheem an-Najdee and Muhammad Hayaat Sindee (teacher of Shah Waliullah Dihlawi) for an extended period. In Madeenah, much of his time was spent studying the works of Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328). Muhammad travelled extensively to the centers of learning to the north of Arabia. He first went to Iraq and spent four years in Basrah in a village called al-Majmoo'ah. There he preached against innovations and pagan tendencies, without much success. He then intended to visit Damascus, but lost the money needed for the journey, and instead returned to Huraymilah by way of al-Ahsa. There is an anonymous account that he spent five years in Baghdad where he got married. He then went to Kurdistan for a year, two years in Hamadhan after which he went to Isfahan in Iran at the commencement of Nadir Shah's reign (1736). There he studied Sufism for four years before journeying to Qumm.

By the 18th century, the practice of Islaam in Arabia and much of the Muslim world was particularly degenerate. Grave worship was rampant involving veneration of tombs, performance of religious rites at such tombs, praying to saints, angels, prophets and even the Jinn. Fortune telling and magic were popular forms of entertainment and Sufism in its most corrupt forms was also wide spread with individuals claiming divine inspiration and the right to discard the obligatory rites of worship. In Najd reverence was even being paid to sacred trees and gifts of food were placed on graves.

On Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Wahhaab's return to Huraymilah, he began, once again, to call to his doctrines of reformation; a return to Islaam of the first three generations, as set forth in a manual, Kitaab at-Tawheed, which he compiled there. He met with some initial success, but also with much opposition. After his father's death in 1740, he returned to al-'Uyaynah under the protection of its governor, 'Uthmaan ibn Mu'ammara, who swore loyalty to the propagation and defence of Tawheed which he was preaching. The alliance was cemented by Muhammad's marriage to al-Jawharah, the aunt of 'Uthmaan ibn Mu'ammara. Muhammad then ambitiously embarked on a program to free al-'Uyaynah from the numerous tombs, caves, and trees, etc., which were worshipped by Muslims of that area. The most ambitious project was the demolition of the tomb) and brother of the Prophet (second caliph, who had died in the battle of Yamaamah against the false prophet, Musaylamah.

However, his own brother, Sulayman, wrote a tract against him, declaring him to be a heretic. During this period a woman came to him for purification from the sin of adultery and after investigation proved her to be of sound mind, he ordered that she be stoned to death. People began migrating to 'Uyaynah to seek his guidance in increasingly larger and larger numbers.

His views attracted attention outside 'Uyaynah and Sulayman ibn Shamis al-'Anazee, prince of al-Ahsa, sensing potential danger wrote to the governor of al-'Uyaynah, demanding that he be expelled. Muhammad departed with his family and was received at Dar'iyyah (at the time a village of 70 houses near present day Riyadh) where the chieftain, Muhammad ibn Sa'ood welcomed him, accepted his doctrines and pledged to him its defence and propagation. The alliance of Ibn 'Abdul-Wahhaab, as religious head, with Muhammad ibn Sa'ood, as political and military chief, was sealed by the marriage of Ibn Sa'ood's daughter to the reformer.

Within a year of Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Wahhaab's arrival at Dar'iyyah, he won the assent of all the inhabitants except four, who subsequently left. He proceeded to build a simple mosque with a floor of uncarpeted gravel where he taught his doctrines of reform. The people of Dar'iyyah beginning with Ameer Muhammad ibn Sa'ood and his family became his students. Dar'iyyah became a bustling center of learning with a constant flow of students eager to learn from the Shaykh. Scholars from Makkah, Madeenah and Yemen who had responded positively to his communications, supported his call to reform and some of them joined him. People started migrating to Dar'iyyah in large numbers. Shaykh Muhammad lectured continually in the various branches of Islamic knowledge namely, 'Aqeedah, Tafseer, Fiqh, Hadeeth, Seerah and Arabic language. His enemies accused him of sorcery, heresy, blasphemy, and some excommunicated him. However, this did not deter the Shaykh. Instead, he debated with his opponents logically and respectfully and managed to win some of them over to his mission. Delegates from every corner of the Arabian Peninsula visited Dar'iyyah to pledge their support to the Shaykh, to study with him and return to their areas to teach the same to their people.

Shaykh Muhammad continued to write letters to the rulers, and scholars of Eastern and Western Arabia as well as the scholars of Syria, Iraq, India and Yemen drawing their attention to pagan practices which had become rampant among Muslims. In 1746 Jihaad was officially declared against all who did not accept the correct understanding of Tawheed which the Shaykh taught, as they were considered non-believers, guilty of shirk and apostasy. The movement soon

became involved in a military struggle with the ruler of Riyadh, Dahhaam ibn Dawwaas which, commencing in 1747, lasted for 28 years. During this period, Ibn Sa'ood and his son 'Abdul-'Azeez, who proved a capable general, gradually expanded the realm of the emerging state to include most of the town of eastern Arabia.

A year after Ibn Sa'ood's death in 1765, 'Abdul-'Azeez sent a deputation to Makkah, which was honourably entertained by the Shareef, and satisfied the theologians appointed to discuss matters with it, that the "Wahhaabee" doctrine accorded with the math'hab or legal system of Ibn Hambal. In 1773, the most stubborn opponent of the movement, Dahhaam, fled from Riyadh, which was occupied by 'Abdul-'Azeez, who was now ruler of the whole of Najd, from Qaseem in the north to Kharj in the south. Meanwhile relations became strained with the new Shareef of Makkah, Suroor, who banned Wahhaabees, as they came to be called by their enemies, from making pilgrimage. However, owing to the difficulties that resulted to pilgrims from Iraq and Persia, this prohibition was withdrawn in 1785.

In 1792 Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Wahhaab died, at the age of 89. As a result of his continued Da'wah, vigorous struggle and Jihaad in the way of Allaah for almost 50 years, the entire region of Najd was purified of grave worship, innovation (bid'ah) and Sharee'ah was established, mosques were filled with worshippers.

Most of the Shaykh's time was spent in teaching and leading the emerging reform movement, consequently, his writings are few and they mostly took the form of brief compilations of hadeeths and Qur'aanic verses as well as sayings of the Companions and their students, and some condensed classics.

Kitaab at-Tawheed (the subject of this work), Kashf ash-Shubuhaat (Riyadh, 1968), Masaa'il al-Jaahiliyyah (Madenah: al-Jaami'ah al-Islamiyyah, 1975), al-Usool ath-Thalaathah (), and Mukhtasar Seeratur-Rasool (a condensation of Ibn al-Qayyim's Zaad al-Ma'aad). A compilation of his works was made by Imaam Ibn Saud University entitled, Mu'allafaat ash-Shaykh al-Imaam Muhammad ibn 'Abdil-Wahhaab.

Source: bilalphilips.com

Students of Shaykh al-Islam Muhammad Ibn 'Abdul Wahhaab[(rahimahullaah) died 1206H]

by Maktabatul Imaam Ibn Qudaamah (source)

His Students.[Abdul-Muhsin ibn Baaz, vol. 1, pp. 93-95.]

The number of his students—many who reached prominence as scholars and judges—probably reached into the hundreds. They include:

(1) His son Husain (d. 1224). He was blind yet known to be an excellent scholar. He had studied with his father and other scholars.

He became the successor to his father. He was a judge in al-Diriyyah. He had classes for the jurists and scholars of hadith. He was dedicated to acts of worship. He died in the plague of al-Diriyyah. He had a number of children who became scholars in their own right, such as 'Ali, Hasan and 'Abdul-Rahmaan.

(2) His son 'Abdullah, born in 1165 A.H. in al-Diriyyah and raised there. He specialized in Hanbali fiqh, Quranic commentary, Aqeedah and Arabic language. He accompanied Saud ibn 'Abdul-'Azeez when they entered Makkah in 1218 A.H. He was known for his bravery and fought valiantly when Ibraaheem Pasha's army attacked al-Diriyyah. He was taken prisoner in 1233 A.H. and sent, with his son 'Abdul-Rahmaan and other members of his family, to Egypt where he remained a prisoner and died in 1242 A.H. His son Sulaimaan died in al-Diriyyah while fighting against Ibraaheem's army.

(3) His oldest son 'Ali (most likely d. 1245). He was perhaps the greatest scholar and jurist of Ibn Abdul-Wahhaab's children. He was known for his great piety. He was offered the position of judge but refused to take it. He was also sent to Egypt in 1233 A.H. by Ibraaheem's army. However, it is said that he returned to Najd in 1241.

(4) His son Ibraaheem. He also died in Egypt. He was known for his knowledge but never took a position as judge.

(5) His grandson 'Abdul-Rahmaan ibn Hasan. He was the judge for both Turki ibn 'Abdullah and Faisal in Riyadh. Known for his numerous excellent writings.

Other prominent students include 'Abdul-'Azeez ibn 'Abdullah al-Husayyin, Hamad ibn Naasir ibn 'Uthmaan ibn Muammar, Muhammad ibn Suwailam, 'Abdul-Rahmaan ibn Khamees, Husain ibn Ghannaam and many others.

Of course, one cannot forget the first leaders of the Saudi state. There was, for example, 'Abdul-'Azeez, the son of the Ameer of al-Diriyyah Muhammad ibn Saud (1132 A.H./1720-1218 A.H./1803 C.E.). While a very young man, he wrote to Ibn Abdul-Wahhaab while Ibn Abdul-Wahhaab was still in Huraimila, asking him to send an explanation of soorah al-Faatihah. He became the leader of the state after the death of his father in 1179 A.H. The size of the state grew greatly under his rule. He was assassinated in 1218 A.H. *Al-Shaukaani had great praise for the epistles that 'Abdul-'Azeez wrote filled with evidence from the Quran and hadith emphasizing Tawhiid and avoidance of shirk, grave-worship.

Saud ibn 'Abdul-'Azeez ibn Muhammad ibn Saud, the third leader of the new state (1163 A.H./1750 C.E.-1229 A.H./1814 C.E.), studied for two years with Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Wahhaab. He was known to be very intelligent and a student of fiqh and hadith. He wrote to his governors and workers to teach them about Islam. The pledge of allegiance was given to him on the day that his father died in al-Diriyyah. About Saud ibn Abdul-'Azeez ibn Muhammad, Lothrop Stoddard wrote, "Though possessing great military power, Saud always considered himself responsible to public opinion and never encroached upon the legitimate freedom of his subjects. His government, though stern, was able and just.

The Wahhabi judges were competent and honest. Robbery became almost unknown, so well was the public peace maintained.”

Thuniyaan and Mushaari, the brothers of Muhammad ibn Saud, became ibn 'Abdul-Wahhaab's students while he was still in al- Uyainah, beginning with correspondence and then going to al- Uyainah to work directly with ibn 'Abdul-Wahhaab.

NOTE: Muhammad ibn Ismaaeel al-Sanaani (1099-1182 A.H.) and Muhammad ibn Ali al-Shaukaani (1173-1250 A.H.) were two great scholars of Yemen who believed in the same message as that of ibn Abdul-Wahhaab. In fact, both al-Sanaani and al-Shaukaani wrote lengthy odes to Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhaab. Furthermore, their writings were quite similar to his type of writings, stressing the pure beliefs, fighting against acts of shirk and opening the door to itjihaad. Hence, one cannot really say that they were influenced by him but they definitely were supporters. Logically, they would have also encouraged their students to study and be in touch with the followers of Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhaab. In fact, Muhammad ibn Naasir al-Shareef al-Tuhaami was a student of al-Shaukaani who wrote a book refuting Daawood ibn Jarjees in his attacks against Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhaab.[For more details on ibn Abdul-Wahhaab's influence in Yemen, see al-Abood, vol. 2, pp. 382-395.]