

Shaikh al Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah

All praise is for Allaah Lord of the worlds. Peace and blessings be upon Muhammad ([sal-Allaahu `alayhe wa sallam](#)), his pure family, his companions and all those who strive to follow in their footsteps till the last day. To proceed :

Many people today accuse some of the greatest scholars of Islaam of blasphemy and kufr (disbelief). One who is frequently attacked is Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah - rahima-hullaah -. In actual fact he is slandered and lied against. People say things about him which he never said... in actual fact things which he was totally against!! These people who do should fear Allaah, and remember that they should be just and judge a man with justice and from knowledge, rather than judging him from ignorance and heresay ! subhaan-Allaah, Ibn Taymiyyah used to strive for the upliftment of the sunnah, and for the defence of this deen from those who in ignorance are changing it. And it was he who led the people to fight the tyrant tartars and it was he who suffered the darkness of the jails of Egypt so that Islaam can be lifted, and it was he who used to pray to Allaah to guide those who are misguided.

Therefore let there be a warning to those who blemish his name - a severe warning indeed- that they may not slander him, for a scholar's flesh is poisonous.

Many people accuse Ibn Taymiyyah of Likening Allaah to the creation.....this a big lie and slander...and these people should fear Allaah, and take account of the evil their tongues utter before its too late. Inshaa.-Allaah below are some quotes from the writings of the noble Shaykh which clarifies his position beyond doubt on this issue. And those who after reading this still utter salnder and lies agianst the Shaykh, then all that can be said about them is that they have an illness in their hearts, and we pray to Allaah that He cures them of this disease.

In "al-'Aqeedatul Waasitiyaah " Ibn Taymiyyah - rahima-hullaah - says:

"from faith (eemaan) is acceptance (eemaan) of what Allaah has ascribed Himself in the scripture as well as what the messenger ascribed to Him. [This creed] prevents any attempts at altering the sacred texts (tahreef), and rules out stripping Allaah of his tributes (ta'teel) or asking questions), concerning their modality ( takyeef..ie ..ascribing a "howness", or attempting to understand them analogically (tamtheel). Indeed [the ahlus-sunnah] hold that:

There is nothing like unto Him (Allaah); [that] He is the All-Hearing and All-Seeing One (42:11).

They do not negate what Allaah has attributed Himself, nor do they alter the meaning of His words on these matters, nor subscribe to heretical notions regarding the divine names (asmaa') and manifestations (aayaat). They do NOT (!!!) seek to explain His attributes (sifaat) or COMPARE THEM with those of HIS CREATURES, for He (Allaah) has no namesake (samiy), no equal, no peer (nidd) and, therefore, He, the One free of all imperfections and Most High, does NOT befit of being compared to His creatures."

Ibn Taymiyyah says in at-Tadmuriyyah (p20):

"It is a must to affirm that which Allaah affirms for himself , whilst NEGATING ANY likeness to Him to His craetion..... whoever says His Knowledge is like my knowledge, His Power like my power, or Love like my love, or Pleasure like my pleasure, or Hand like my hand, or istawaa (ascending) like my ascending-- then he has resembled and likened Allaah to His creation. Rather, it is must to affirm (Allaah's Attributes) without any resemblance, and to negate (what Allaah negates for Himself), without ta'teel (divesting Allaah of any of His affirmed Attributes)."

Ibn Taymiyyah wrote in Majmoo-al Fatawaa (5/262): "Whosoever considers the Attributes of Allaah to be like the attributes of creation- such that the Istawa (Ascending) of Allaah is like the ascending of the creation, or His nuzool (descending) is like the descending of the creation, or other than that-- then he is a DEVIATED INNOVATOR."

So people please read and pay heed to the words of the noble scholar !!!! This is enough proof for those that are just and who are sincerely seeking the truth ...and Allaah knows best. Taqi.ud-deen Abul-'Abbaas Ahmad Ibn 'Abdul-Haleem Ibn 'Abdus-Salaam Ibn Taymiyyah al-Harraanee al-Hanbalee, was born on Monday the 10th of Rabi' al-Awwal 661 A.H./22nd of January 1263 C.E. at Harraan (northern Iraq) into a well known family of "mutakallimoon"(theologians). His grandfather, Abu al-Barkat Majd-ud-deen ibn Taymiyyah (d.653 A.H./1255 C.E.) was a reputed teacher of the Hanbaleete school and his "Muntaqa al-Akhbaar (selections of prophetic sayings) which classifies such Ahaadeeth upon which Islaamic legislation is based, is even today regarded as a very valuable work. Likewise, the scholarly achievements of Ibn Taymiyyah's father, Shihaabuddeen 'Abdul-Haleem Ibn Taymiyyah (d.682 A.H./1284 C.E.) were wide spread.

This was the time when the Tatar hordes under Hulagu Khaan were inflicting their barbaric onslaught throughout the world of Islaam - especially the mesopotamium region. Ibn Taymiyyah was only seven when the Tatars launched their attack on Harraan. Consequently, the populace left Harraan to seek refuge elsewhere. Ibn Taymiyyah's family proceeded to Damascus in 667 A.H./1268 C.E. which was then ruled by the Mamlooks of Egypt. It was here that his father delivered sermons from the pulpit of the Umayyad Mosque and was invited to teach Hadeeth in the mosque as well as in the Daarul-Hadeeth 'Assaakuriyyah in Damascus. These discourses were attended by a large number of students as well as by the scholars. Damascus was the center of Islaamic studies at that time, and Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah followed in the footsteps of his father who was a scholar of Islaamic studies by studying with the great scholars of his time, among them a woman scholar by the name Zaynab bint Makkee who taught him hadeeth.

## Education

From his early childhood, Ibn Taymiyyah was an industrious student. He fully acquainted himself with all the secular and religious sciences of his time. He devoted special attention to Arabic literature and gained mastery over grammar and lexicography. Not only did he become an expert on the great Arab grammarian Seebawayh's al-Kitaab which is regarded as the greatest authority on grammar and syntax, but he also pointed out the errors therein. He commanded knowledge of all the prose and poetry then available. Furthermore, he studied the history of both pre Islaamic Arabia and that of the post-Islaamic period. Finally, he learnt mathematics and calligraphy.

As for the religions sciences, Ibn Taymiyyah studied the Qur.aan, Hadeeth and [Sharee'ah](#). He learnt the Hanbalee fiqh (law) from his own father and then became a distinguished representative of the Hanbalee school of law. He is reported to have acquired his knowledge on Hadeeth in Syria like Ibn 'Abduddayaam. Another of his teachers was Shamsuddeen 'Abdurrahmaan al-Maqdisee (d.682 A.H./1283 C.E.). Thus Ibn Taymiyyah received a thorough grounding in the Sihaah Sittah and the Musnad of Imaam Ahmad.

Ibn Taymiyyah had great love for tafseer (Qur.aanic exegesis). He read over a hundred commentaries of the Qur.aan.

He completed his studies when he was a teenager and at age 19 he became a professor of Islaamic studies. Well versed in Qur.aanic studies, Hadeeth, fiqh, theology, Arabic grammar and scholastic theology, etc., he started giving fatwas on religious legal matters without following any of the traditional legal schools, the Hanafee, Maalikee, Shaafi'ee and Hanbalee. He defended the sound prophetic traditions by arguments which, although taken from the Qur.aan and the Sunnah, had hitherto been unfamiliar to people of his time. The freedom of his polemics made him many enemies among the scholars of the traditional Orthodox Schools, who falsely accused him, of all kinds of heretical beliefs. Among them was the famous Muslim medieval traveler, Ibn Batutah, who visited Damascus while Ibn Taymiyyah was in jail. This did not hinder Ibn Batutah in testifying in his book that "he witnessed Ibn Taymiyyah on the pulpit saying, 'every night Allaah descends to the lower heaven like my descent', and he descended one step down the pulpit". From reading this 'aqeedah we learn that Ibn Taymiyyah accepted the attributes of Allaah without questioning (bi-laa kayfa).

When Ibn Taymiyyah lost his father in 682 A.H./1283 C.E. at the age of twenty two, he succeeded at the 'Assaakuriyyah. He began to teach "Tafseer" at the Umayyad mosque and in 695 A.H./1296 C.E. he began to teach at the Hanbaleeyyah in Damascus. Soon he became prominent among the leading scholars of Syria and also became immensely popular with the masses.

## The Mongol Threat

In the meanwhile, Iraq, Iran, and Khuraasaan continued to smother under the cruel domination of the Tataars. The Mamlooks who were ruling over Egypt, Syria and the Hijaaz (Arabian peninsula) attempted several times to capture Iraq but failed each time. When it was learnt that the Tataars were planning to conquer Damascus, the Mamlook Sultaan, al-Maalik an-Naasir Muhammad bin Qalawoon left Egypt with a powerful army to check the advance of the Tataars.

The two forces met in a bloody battle in 699 A.H./1299 C.E. but the Sultaan was defeated and he returned to Egypt. Now Damascus lay open before the Tatar forces led by Ghazzaan, also known as Mahmood, the great grandson of Ghengis Khaan. Consequently, all the nobles including the religions scholars, judges, administrators and traders fled from Damascus where total chaos and anarchy held sway in the face of the Tatar invasion.

At this critical moment Ibn Taymiyyah and their remaining notables decided to lead a delegation to meet Ghazzaan and pursue for peace of the city. Accordingly, the delegation led by Ibn Taymiyyah met Ghazzaan at Nabak (near Damascus) and he agreed to grant amnesty to the people of Damascus.

News of the Tatar army advancing towards Syria again reached Damascus in 702 A.H./1303 C.E. Delay in the arrival of Sultaan Qalawoon from Egypt caused panic among the people, many of whom began to abandon their homes for safer places. When Ibn Taymiyyah saw this, he began to urge the people to defend themselves and their city, thereby arresting the exodus. He also went personally to appeal to the Sultaan to speed up his journey to Damascus.

At last the Muslim forces of Egypt and Syria encountered the Tatar forces at Thaqab during Ramadhaan 702 A.H./1303 C.E. and after a bloody conflict the Muslims defeated and dispersed the Tatar armies.

## Jihaad Against Heretics

Ibn Taymiyyah's fight was not limited to the Soofees and the people who followed the heretical innovations; in addition, he fought against the Tataars who attacked the Muslim world and almost reached Damascus. The people of Syria sent him to Egypt to urge the Mamlook Sultaan, the Sultaan of Egypt and Syria to lead his troops to Syria to save it from the invading Tataars. When he realized that the Sultaan was hesitant to do what he asked of him, he threatened the Sultaan by saying: "If you turn your back on Syria we will appoint a Sultaan over it who can defend it and enjoy it at the time of peace". He was present at the battle of Shaqhab near Damascus against the Tataars which took place during the fasting month of Ramadhaan and gave a fatwa to the army to break their fast in order to help them against their enemy, as the Prophet Muhammad ([sal-Allaahu `alayhe wa sallam](#)) did during the battle of the liberation of Makkah. The Muslims won the battle against the Tataars and drove them away from Damascus and all Syria. Ibn Taymiyyah's courage was expressed when he went with a delegation of 'ulamaa. to talk to Qazan the Khan of the Tataars to stop his attack on the Muslims. Not one of the 'ulamaa. dared to say anything to him except Ibn Taymiyyah who said: "You claim that you are Muslim and you have with you mu'adhdhins, judges, Imam and Shaykh but you invaded us and reached our country for what? While your father and your grandfather, Hulago, were non-believers, they did not attack the land of Islaam, rather, they promised not to attack and they kept their promise. But you promised and broke your promise."

Once the Tatar threat was eliminated, Ibn Taymiyyah again devoted himself to his mission of his intellectual pursuit and teaching. At the same time, he continued to wage [Jihad](#) against the heretical sects like the Baatinites, Ismae'elites, Haakimites and Nusayrites living in the hilly tracts of Syria who had invited the Crusaders and the Tatars to invade the Muslim lands, helped these invaders against the Muslims and looted and plundered the weak and defenceless population. Ibn Taymiyyah personally led expeditions against these sects.

### **Religious Condition Of The Muslims**

Apart from the external threats mentioned above, Islaam was also confronted at this time with internal dangers. There were Baatinites (an extremist Shi'ite sect which confronted the Muslim Government at that time) and their followers, the Assassins (Hashshiyoon). Their creed was a mixture of Magian dogma and Platonic concepts which could easily sow the seeds of intellectual dissension and spread irreligiosity and apostasy among the simple minded people. Then there were Muslims who, under the influence of the polytheistic beliefs and customs of the non-Muslims with whom they had free associations, began to glorify their saints (highly pious Soofee personalities - Walee-Allaah) as the Jews and the Christians were doing. Further more, some Soofee's orders like the Rifaa'iyyah had adopted certain neo-Platonic and Hindu doctrines which became so confused with the true Islaamic beliefs that it became almost impossible to distinguish one from the other.

In the wake of crusaders, some Christians were emboldened to censure Islaam and criticise the Prophet in their speeches and writings. In the intellectual circles of the Muslims there was stagnation and rigidity in their theological disputations and in their approach to the re-interpretation of the [Sharee'ah](#). There was continuous polemical wranglings between the 'Asharites and Hanbaleeites. Finally, some of the philosophers, influenced by the theories of Plato and Aristotle, began to spread their agnostic ideas and concepts in total disregard to the teachings of Islaam.

These were the conditions pertaining to the time of Ibn Taymiyyah and which he had to contend. Ibn Taymiyyah formed a society along with his students and followers to renounce the polytheistic cults, un-Islaamic cults, un-Islaamic influences and heretical beliefs and practices among the Muslim masses. As a result of his enthusiastic and zealous reformative activities and condemnation of heresies, un-Islaamic innovation and practices at the visitation of graves of saints, he earned the displeasure of certain sectors of the population. Nonetheless, his popularity among the Muslim masses increased tremendously.

All this jihad against the enemies of Islaam did not help Ibn Taymiyyah with the 'ulamaa.. The authorities put him in jail many times until he died in jail because of his daring and free progressive opinions on many legal and social issues which angered his opponents, the followers of the Orthodox Schools of law.

However when Ibn Taymiyyah had the chance to punish his opponents among the 'ulamaa. who caused him all kinds of trouble and put him in jail many times, he showed the utmost of magnanimity and forgave them when the Sultaan an-Naasir Qalawoon gave him the chance to do so. He said: "If you kill them you will never find 'ulamaa. like them." The Sultaan said: "They harmed you many times and wanted to kill you!" Ibn Taymiyyah said: "Whoever harmed me is absolved, and who harmed the cause of Allaah and His Messenger, Allaah will punish him."

The Muslim historians, like adh-Dhahabee, Ibn Katheer, Ibn al-'Imad al-Hanbalee and many others praised Ibn Taymiyyah and considered him one of the greatest scholars of Islaam of all time.

He fought heretical innovations in religion which were wide spread during his time all over the Muslim world, especially certain acts and beliefs of some Soofee orders, like saint worship and visiting saints' tombs, and throwing themselves in the fire. His attack on the Soofees caused him a lot of trouble with the authorities whose leaders were under the influence of certain soofee leaders.

As a result of Ibn Taymiyyah's popularity, some influential religious scholars became jealous of him and even annoyed because he challenged the Qaadhees on juridical matters. They therefore sought ways and means to discredit him in the eyes of the Government and the people. Ibn Taymiyyah rejected the teachings expounded in the al-Futuhaat al-Makkah ("the Makkah Revelations") and Fussoos al-Hakeem ("The Mosaic of Wisdom") of Shaykh Muheeddeen ibn al-'Arabee (d.638 A.H./1240 C.E.) the most respected Soofee and teacher of tasawwuf - as incompatible with the teachings of the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, thereby earning the wrath of the Soofee's, and by being outspoken on Government policies, he earned the hostility of the government. Consequently he was summoned to Egypt in 705 A.H./1305 C.E.

When Ibn Taymiyyah arrived in Egypt, he was asked to attend a meeting of theologians, jurists and the chiefs of the state. During the session certain charges were levelled against him relating to his concepts of the nature and attributes of Allaah. He was not allowed to defend himself and was promptly imprisoned for about 16 months. While in prison, he diverted the attention of his followers from indulgence in frolics and amusements to a sense of piety, discipline and temperance. A number of prisoners became his devoted disciples on their release.

After Ibn Taymiyyah was released from prison in 707 A.H./1307 C.E. he decided to remain in Egypt for a while. Soon he began to deliver lectures in various Mosques and educational institutions before select gatherings of scholars, jurists and theologians. However, Ibn Taymiyyah's views on pantheistic monoism, intercession, etc were not received kindly and numerous complaints were made against him to the Sultaan. The religious scholars to whom the complaints were referred could not find any fault with Ibn Taymiyyah. However, as the administration was growing weary of the charges brought against him, he was detained for a while but was soon released on the unanimous request of the religious scholars. But when Sultaan Qalawoon abdicated in favour of his viceroy Baybaan al-Jashnakeer in 709 A.H./1309 C.E., Ibn Taymiyyah was exiled to Alexandria where, inspite of his internment, he earned himself a respectable position in the

Academic and literary circles. Soon though Baybaan abdicated and Sultaan Qalawoon returned to Egypt and ordered Ibn Taymiyyah.

### **Return To Damascus**

In Cairo, Ibn Taymiyyah had busied himself in his teachings and reformative activities for about 3 years. At the same time, he acted as adviser to the Sultaan and was instrumental in having several important reforms introduced in Egypt and Syria. Several royal edicts were issued on his advice in 712 A.H./1312 C.E. He visited Jerusalem in the same year, then went for Hajj (pilgrimage) and eventually returned to Damascus in 713 A.H./1313 C.E. From now onward he devoted his attention primarily to juristic problems though he continued teaching. His chief disciple was ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d.751 A.H./1350 C.E.) who was chiefly responsible for spreading his ideas.

### **The Question Of Three Talaq's**

Ibn Taymiyyah like his forefathers was a Hanbaleeite and his legal opinions conformed to that school, though not exclusively. He often rejected the Hanbaleeite view just as in some matters he expressed disagreement with all the four principal juridical schools. One such case in which he differed with them was in regard to the repudiation of one's wife by three divorces given at one time.

The issue was whether a divorce pronounced thrice at the same time took legal effect or not. This issue raised the following considerations:

- whether revocation of such a divorce was possible or not.
- whether the three sentences of divorce would be counted as one revocable pronouncement (talaq) or taken as an irreversable separation.
- whether the wife so divorced could return to her husband or not without a halaalah (i.e until his divorced wife was married to another man who, in turn, after the consummation of the marriage, divorces).

All the earlier jurists and traditionalists, likewise a good number of the Prophet's companions were of the view that such a pronouncement, although being repugnant to the law as well as irregular and sinful, would be regarded as an implied divorce with legal effect. As against that Ibn Taymiyyah firmly held the opinion that the three sentences of divorce spoken at the same time should be regarded as one revocable divorce. The view of Ibn Taymiyyah happened to be against the official view which naturally brought him in conflict with the 'ulamaa on one hand and with the government on the other.

Consequently, the theologians tried to prevent him from expressing further legal opinion on such matters. In fact, a royal edict was issued from Cairo in 718AH/1318AD forbidding him from giving legal opinions in such cases.

Initially Ibn Taymiyyah abided by the edict but later again began giving legal judgment on this issue as he decided that it was improper for him to desist simply for fear of the government. As a result in 720 A.H./1320 C.E. he was detained in a citadel for just over five months till he was released on direct orders from Cairo.

### **The Final Years**

Between 721 A.H./1321 C.E. and 726 A.H./1326 C.E. Ibn Taymiyyah devoted himself to teaching in the Madrasah Hanbaleeyyah and his own Madrasah Qassaaseen and revising some of his earlier works. In 726 A.H./1326 C.E. his adversaries again conspired to have him imprisoned. Here he continued writing his exegesis of the Qur.aan as well as treatises and monographs on various issues.

Ibn Taymiyyah died in jail in Damascus on the night of Sunday-Monday 20th Dhul-Qa'dah 728 A.H./26-27 September 1328 C.E. at the age of 67, and is buried in the cemetery of the Soofiyyah in Damascus.

The people of Damascus, who held him in great honor, gave him a splendid funeral and an estimated 200,000 men and 15,000 women attended his funeral. He was buried at the Soofee cemetery in Damascus where his mother was buried.

### **Character And Achievements**

Ibn Taymiyyah occupied a highly honorable place among his contemporary religions scholars due to his prodigious memory, intellectual brilliance, encyclopedic knowledge and dauntless courage. He is described as a great orator, brave and fearless, resolute, disciplined, very pious, resigned and contended, noble and forgiving, just and ever determined.

**Ibn Taymiyyah's reformative endeavors and literary pursuits cover a vast field which can be summarised as follows:**

- 1 revival of faith in and adherence to "Tawheed"(oneness of Allaah).
- 2 eradication of pantheistic beliefs and customs.
- 3 criticism of philosophy, syllogistic logic and dialects in order to demonstrate the superiority of the Qur.aan and the sunnah.
- 4 extirpation of un-Islaamic beliefs through refutation of Christianity and Sheeism.
- 5 rejuvenation of Islaamic thought and its related sciences.

**The total number of Ibn Taymiyyah's works is 621 though many of his writings have been lost. Some of Ibn Taymiyyah's writings dealing with the themes are listed below:**

- 1 al-Jawaab as-Saheeh liman baddala Deen al-Maseeh (an answer to the criticism against Islaam by the Christians).

- 2 Radd 'ala al-Mantiqiyyeen (a refutation of the philosopher).
- 3 Kitaab as-Siyaasah ash-Shar'iyyah (deals with political theory and government in Islaam).
- 4 Minhaaj as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah (a refutation of Sheeite beliefs written in response to Minhaaj al-Karanmah of Ibn al-Mutahhir al-Hillee).
- 5 Ziyaarah al-Quboor (a criticism of saint-workshop, intercession, superstitious beliefs).
- 6 Majmoo'at ar-Rasaail al-Kubra (this book contains articles on various subjects).
- 7 Majmoo'at al-Fataawa (a collection of opinions on various issues).
- 8 Majmoo'at ar-Rasaail wa al-Masaail (contains articles and legal opinions on various issues).
- 9 Majmoo'at Shaykh al-Islaam Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah (contains discussion on Islaamic jurisprudence and legal opinions enunciated by Ibn Taymiyyah).

### **Conclusion**

To include in the words of Mawlaana Abu al-Hasan 'Alee Nadawee who has paid a glowing tribute to Ibn Taymiyyah as follows:

"Ibn Taymiyyah interpreted the Qur.aan and Sunnah, established the superiority of Islaam over heresy, Philosophical concepts and other faiths and contributed to a genuine revival of religion after a deep study and deliberation that was necessary for lighting the religions and intellectual waywardness of the time. Seeking to surpass his opponents he mastered the methodology employed by them to attack Islaam. In fact, his learning, his erudition, his intellectual attainment and his mental grit always left his adversaries spell bound"(\*1)

Little wonder then that Ibn Taymiyyah's contemporary and succeeding scholars have acclaimed him with such complimentary remarks as "The master spirit of the age", "The crown of scholars", "Last of the Enlightened scholars", and "A sign among the signs of God".

(\*1) A. H. A. NADAWEE, Saviours of Islaamic spirit, Vol. 2, Academy of Islaamic research and publications, Lucknow, India, 1974, p24.

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