

The Life of Shaikh al-Albaani

May Allaah, the Most High, have Mercy upon him

Questions and Answers

أبى حمزة محمد بن عيسى
أبو عبد الله

حياته - دعوته
جهوده في خدمة السنة

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His Birth and Migration

Al-Huwaini: O Shaikh, what is your date of birth?

Al-Albaani: I do not have in my possession that which can be relied upon as regards the date except what is known as a birth certificate, or ID or the passport—in it the year 1914CE is recorded.

Al-Huwaini: Were you born in Damascus or Albania?

Al-Albaani: I was born in Ashkoderë [Shkodër] which in those days was the capital of Albania, [then] in the days of that revolutionary Ahmed Zogu the capital was moved to Tirana. I was born in Ashkoderë, Albania.

Al-Huwaini: The story of your entry into Damascus, Syria, with your father, was it because of some persecution, for example, or something else?

Al-Albaani: It was not because of any persecution but in al-Jawndhar there was the control of that Ahmed Zogu, [who was intent] on ruling the country. For no sooner had he settled into position than he started to impose European legislative laws on the populace. So he started to make things difficult on those women wearing the *hijab*, and made it obligatory for the police and the army to wear the hat—the thing which forebode evil in the opinion of my father, may Allaah have mercy on him. For this reason he decided to migrate with his family [in the general direction of] Syria, and Damascus specifically, because he had read many *hadiths* concerning the excellence of Syria in general and Damascus in particular. Even though it is known, or we came to know later, that the *hadiths* regarding the merits of Syria range from being authentic, *hasan*, weak and fabricated—but the general idea is true and had taken hold of him, may Allaah have mercy on him, and for this reason he decided to migrate when he came to that opinion . This was the reason for the migration, so there was no immediate pressure [which made us leave].

Al-Huwaini: How old were you when you migrated?

Al-Albaani: What I recall is that when I settled in Damascus I was nine years old.



LEARNING ARABIC AS A CHILD

Al-Huwaini: Did you speak Arabic at the time?

Al-Albaani: I never knew anything from the Arabic language, in fact I never even knew any of the letters of the Arabic alphabet since there was not much attention on the part of my father, may Allaah have mercy on him, to teach us [that], despite the fact that he was the Imaam of a mosque, and even the Shaikh of a *madrassah*.

When we came to Damascus, we didn't know anything about reading or writing and as they say here in Syria, "We couldn't tell the difference between the letter *alif* and the *naftiyyah* [even though both are straight]." The *naftiyyah* is a long stick which the Shaikh in the *madrassah* would reach out with and use if he wanted to hit the last boy who [was sitting at the end and] was playing around.

The *madrassah* there was a private one owned by a charitable organisation called the Charitable Relief Organisation and it was there that I started my education. And naturally, because I was mixing with the students there, my acquisition of the Arabic language or to be exact, the Syrian dialect, was stronger than those who were not students at the *madrassah*. And I remember well that, apparently, because I was older than the other elementary students in the *madrassah* I completed the first and second years in one year, and so [at the end] I obtained my elementary certificate in four years. And it seems as though Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, had instilled in me a natural love for the Arabic language. And it was this love that was the real reason, after the Grace of Allaah, that I was [a] distinguished [student] and that I surpassed my Syrian classmates in the Arabic language and such.

I also remember very well that when the grammar teacher would write a sentence or a line of poetry on the slate and would ask the students to grammatically parse the syntax [*i'raab*] of a sentence or line of poetry—the last person he would ask would be al-Albaani. In those days I was known as ‘al-Arnaa’oot.’ As for the word ‘al-Albaani’ then [I started to use it] when I graduated from the *madrassah* and began to author. For the word ‘al-Arnaa’oot’ is similar to the term ‘Arab,’ in that just as the Arabs are divided into tribes, there being among them the Egyptian, the Syrian, the Hijaazi ... and so on, then in the same way the ‘al-Arnaa’oot’ are also divided into Albanians, Serbians from Yugoslavia, Bosniaks [Bosnians]. Thus, the words ‘al-Arnaa’oot’ and al-Albaani have generalities and specifics in meaning—al-Albaani is more specific than [the general term] al-Arnaa’oot.

So the grammar teacher would make me the very last student he would ask when all other students had failed to parse the sentence, he would call me [saying], “Yes, O Arnaa’oot, what do you say?” And I would hit the target with one word [or sentence] and so he would then start to shame the Syrians because of me saying, “Isn’t it a shame on you? This is an Arnaa’ootee [i.e, you are Arab speakers and he isn’t].”

So this was from Allaah’s Grace upon me.”



AL-ALBAANI THE CARPENTER

Al-Huwaini: After you finished your study why didn’t you go on to complete your academic education, i.e., secondary education and so on?

Al-Albaani: I didn’t increase upon my elementary education, and the reason for that goes back to my father. Perhaps this was a shot in the dark on his behalf [but a successful one at that], since what I witnessed later was that if I had continued in that line of education I wouldn’t have been able to do the study that I do. Since it is true that formal education makes it easy for someone who wants to progress in great strides in academic research, yet it is very rare to find this in those who do graduate.

My father, may Allaah have mercy upon him, had a bad opinion about the government schools, and he had a right to, since they would not teach anything from the *Sharee'ah* except its outline and not its reality [i.e., skim its surface]. For this reason he didn't send me to a preparatory school, for example, which in those days was known as a secondary school in Syria.

Due to that I started to study *Hanafi fiqh* and morphology [*sarf*] with my father; and with another Shaikh whose name was Shaikh Sa'eed Burhaani, and it became apparent to me later that he was a *Sufi*, a follower of a *tariqah*, I studied some *Hanafi fiqh* with this Shaikh, specifically [the book] *Maraaqi al-Falaah Sharh Nurul-Eedaah*. I also studied some books of Arabic grammar and modern day rhetoric with him using some books of contemporary writers.

I finished reading the Quran to my father with *tajwid* and at the same time I was pursuing work as a carpenter, that which these days is called Arabic carpentry. I finished learning [it] from two carpenters, one of them was my maternal uncle whose name was Ismaa'eel, may Allaah have mercy upon him, I worked with him for two years. The other was a Syrian known as Abu Muhammad who I also worked with for two years. Most of my work with them centred around repairing and restoring old houses, since old houses in Syria were made from wood and bricks. Over time and with rain, snow and such, parts of the floors would collapse and would require someone [specialising] in Arabic carpentry to come and fix them so I would go with them.

Most of the time in winter we would not be able to do any work whatsoever, so I would pass by my father who was working as a watch repairer. One day he said to me, when I had returned from my two [carpentry] instructors and he could tell that there was no work because it was an overcast and cloudy day, he said, "It looks as though there's no work today."

I replied, "Yes, no work."

So he said, "What do you think, I feel that this profession [i.e., carpentry] isn't easy nor is it a profession. What do you think about working with me?"

I said to him, "As you wish."

He said, “Come on then, climb up!” His shop was raised off the ground since he used to fear that damp would set in, and so from that day I stuck to him until I learnt the profession from him and then opened up my own shop.



LEARNING FROM HIS FATHER

Al-Huwaini: I asked Shaikh Shu’aib al-Arnaa’oot about some things and then he ended up saying, “I used to go to Shaikh Nooh (i.e., Shaikh al-Albaani’s father) but Shaikh Naasir would not be present at our sittings.”

Al-Albaani: I never used to attend those lessons which he is referring to. But we used to have a private lesson with my father with two other Arnaa’ooti youths one of whose names was Abdur-Raheem Zainul-Aabideen and he is still alive, the other has passed away and we used to read Al-Qadoori in *hanafi fiqh* to him, likewise we read *Al-Maraah* in morphology to him and we finished reciting the Quraan to him.

So this does not mean that we did not read to him, for I would not attend at the time he was attending just as the opposite [conclusion] is not binding—for he never used to attend these particular lessons of ours with my father, [but this does not mean] that he never sat with my father, this is not binding.



LEAVING THE HANAFI MADHHAB TO STUDY HADITH AND THE TIME HE WAS TOO POOR TO BUY A BOOK

Al-Huwaini: There is a matter here which draws one’s attention: how did you turn to *hadith* and such, bearing in mind that some of what you have said and what Shaikh Shu’aib said [shows] that your father was a *Hanafi*, he would revere the *Hanafi* school of thought greatly?

Al-Albaani: That is from the blessings of Allaah. But as for the reason then it is as is

said, “When Allaah intends a matter He facilitates the means for it.” So I truly was living in an atmosphere of bigoted *Hanafism*. My father, especially among the Arnaa’oots, was regarded as the most knowledgeable of them in *Hanafi fiqh*, he was the one they would recourse and refer back to.

When I finished elementary school and studied as I have previously detailed with some of the Shaikhs, I would have a very great desire to want to read as a hobby, but reading [those things]—as would seem to one looking in on it—that contained no benefit, indeed which could even have an adverse effect. But later on the effect of this reading became clear in my language for it had strengthened my oral skills. What is peculiar is that I was infatuated with reading modern day fiction works which were known as *hiwaayaat* [leisure reading/books that are read as a hobby], especially the stories of the American thief famous as Arsene Lupin. So I was truly infatuated with reading this type of story and narrative.

Then I found myself moving to the second stage which perhaps was better than the first, and it was studying Arabic stories, even though [most of them] were fiction. So for example I read A Thousand Arabian Nights, I read the story of Antar ibn Shaddaad, the story of Salaah ad-Deen al-Ayyoobi, a story of resoluteness and valiant champions, and so on. I was extremely captivated by such types of perusal and reading, and then from the perfectness of Allaah’s Plan and His Kindness to me was that when I changed my profession and accompanied my father I came across a lot of free time.

We would split the time [we’d sit] in the shop. So he would go [to it] in the morning and I would go with him [and he would stay there] until he prayed the midday prayer [*dhuhr*], then after he had prayed it he would go home to relax and I would remain in the shop until he returned [which would be] after the afternoon prayer [*asr*]. We were both workers and sometimes I would come across a lot of spare time, there would be hours and I would not [have to] repair any watches, so I would ask his permission to go out ... and to where? This was also from Allaah’s granting of success to me [that] I would go to the Amawi masjid and would give the people some general lessons, and I was influenced as regards ideology: some of it was correct, in what became apparent to me later, and some of it was incorrect.

That which was incorrect was connected to two points: blind following and Sufism. Then in this free time during which I would leave my father’s shop, Allaah ordained [that I

meet] an Egyptian man who would buy books left by people who had passed away and then [sell them and] put them on display in front of a shop of his [which was] in the direction of the western door of the Amawi mosque. So I would pass by the stack of books which he would pile up outside his small shop, turning over the pages, and I would find whatever I wanted from those narrations, and I would loan the book from him for some money, read it and then return it and so on.

One day I found some issues of the magazine called ‘*Al-Mannar*’ with him, and I remember very well that I read a chapter in it by as-Sayyid Rashid Rida, may Allaah have mercy upon him, speaking about the merits of al-Ghazaali’s book *Al-Ihya* and he [also] criticised it from some angles, likes its Sufism, for example, and the weak and baseless *hadiths* that were in it. In this regard he mentioned that Abul-Fadl Zainul-Aabidin al-Iraqi had a book which he authored about *Al-Ihya* in which he checked its *hadiths*, distinguishing between its authentic and weak ones and he called it, *Al-Mughni an Hamlil-Asfaar fil-Asfaar fee Takhrij maa fil-Ihya minal-Akhbaar*.

So I began to greatly yearn for this book, I went to the market asking after it like someone infatuated and madly in love [*aashiq*] [saying], “Where is this book?” Until I found it with one of them and it was in four volumes, the print of al-Baabi al-Halabi, on soft, yellow paper.

But I was poor like my father and could not afford to buy a book such as it, so I came to an agreement with its owner that I would loan it from him, I don’t recall now [whether it was] for a year or less or more, so I did, I took the book and was almost about to fly out of joy. I went to the shop and I would take advantage of the time when my father was away so I could be alone with my book. I made a plan to copy it out and so I started to do so. I bought some paper and got a ‘*mistarrah*’—and this refers to cardboard that had parallel lines on it.



WHAT WAS AL-ALBAANI DOING IN HIS TEENS?

Al-Huwaini: What year was this, when you started to read the magazine, *Al-Manaar*?

Al-Albaani: Less than twenty, it is possible that [I was] seventeen or eighteen or the like. So I started to write until I had arranged [part of] the first volume when I had an idea which was that I was a beginner in seeking knowledge, secondly I was a foreigner, an Albanian—[and so] many times I would come across sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) which I would not understand or some Arabic words which would be obscure and vague to me—words which I later came to realise were from [that special category of word] which occur in *hadiths* and are problematic/difficult to understand [i.e., *gharibul-hadith*].

So I said [to myself]: why don't I use some of the books which are in my possession or in my father's library to explain these words which I find difficult to understand? So I did that but I had just begun to make some notes when I started to blame myself and regard what I had done as something disagreeable. Because now the first volume seemed to be unorganised: the first part of it had no [such] commentary but the second part did, and this disparity did not please me. So I cancelled what I did and started all over again, commenting and explaining from the beginning of the book when the need arose.

In this manner the first volume was completed and then I started the second. [Until in the end] the difference in commentary between the first volume and the last volumes was clearly apparent. For in the first volume you will see that most pages only have a little commentary but after that the complete opposite is true: you could see one line [of main text] at the top and below it would be [nothing but] footnotes, written in a very fine script.

In Syria we had two types of writing pen: that which was for writing Arabic and the other for writing French, they would call the latter 'the French pen' because it had a very fine nib. So I would write the commentary in Arabic with the French pen to distinguish it from the main text, so you would find all of the page full of this minute writing and at the top [you would see] a line or two [of the main text for which the commentary was written] with the Arabian pen and so on.

Bearing in mind that I felt that I benefitted greatly from this revision in making up for this deficiency which I used to feel due to, firstly, being a beginner in seeking knowledge, and secondly, due to my foreignness.

So I benefitted from this work greatly, greatly indeed, and it is present with me, and all praise is due to Allaah, as a remnant of that work.¹



¹ Shaikh Muhammad al-Majdhoob said, “And the Shaikh showed me the work he did on that copy. And behold I came face to face with three volumes [which contained] four parts and whose pages reached two thousand and twelve in number, made up of two different types of handwriting. The first was normal whereas the second was fine, [and is] the one he used to write his commentary or corrections in the footnotes area. By Allaah, it is an effort which the people of high resolve from the people of knowledge today would lack the strength for, let alone the university graduates who have no firm will to give them the patience to check, verify and pursue [such matters].

Then what is the case when you add to that the fact that the Shaikh was not more than twenty years old? So there is no doubt that this colossal effort in writing those volumes, while using all those means of verification which were available to this youth at that time, had the greatest effect on him becoming accustomed to this kind of academic endeavour. For it, even though he was [still] not entirely satisfied with it in its complete form, had opened up the way for him to progress to a higher level in this field.

So through such a life and that development, and those problems that he faced, it seems to me [that the presence of] other hidden factors also steadily directed this youth to that path. To make him, in the end, one of the great aiders of the pure *Sunnah* in the lands of Syria.” *Ulamaa wa Mufikkiroon* (1/292).

AL-ALBAANI AND HIS FATHER DEBATING WHILE THEY WORKED IN HIS FATHER'S SHOP

Al-Huwaini: Did your father notice that you had turned to [the study of] the science of *hadith* and its like?

Al-Albaani: Naturally, he had a very negative effect, but Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, made me stand firm. What used to happen in reality, and thanks are for Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, for the sittings He decreed for me in his shop and for [the fact that I] learnt my father's profession such that he and I would work and debate [at the same time]—me [debating] with what would appear to me [to be the truth] from the *Sunnah* and the *hadith*, and him with what he had studied in Istanbul and other places, study in which he had spent a long time.

So when we would debate I would do so with the *hadith* and the *Sunnah* and he would say [i.e., debate with], 'The *madhhab*.' And when such research would become unbearable—and I had a lot of endurance for it, add to that the fact that I was a youth and he was middle-aged, an old man [shaikh] rather—he would say, "The science of *hadith* is the profession of the bankrupt!" May Allaah have mercy on him and forgive us and him.

Most of our time in the shop was like this, [spent] debating. And by continuing to study the *Sunnah* and the *hadith* the common mistakes of the people and the Shaikhs of the time became clear to me.

From all of my brothers I was the one son who would always go with his father to the mosque.

And from his habits, may Allaah have mercy upon him, was to go and pray in the Bani Umayyah mosque, and he was influenced by some of the sayings and narrations in the books of the *Hanafis* regarding the excellence of prayer in the Bani Umayyah mosque. From them, for example, is what occurs in the last book from the books which the *Hanafis* rely upon, *Haashiyah Ibn Aabideen*, in it he mentioned [a narration] from Sufyaan ath-Thawri that prayer in the Bani Umayyah mosque is equivalent to seventy thousand prayers.

I could not conceive of such excellence for a mosque such as it which was made after the Prophet (ﷺ) and I was, instinctively, not prepared to accept this exaggeration regarding its excellence.

Then days turned into years, and my research and study led me to study the biggest known [collection] on Islamic history, ‘The History of Damascus,’ by Ibn Asaakir, and this narration [i.e., about the excellence of praying in the Bani Umayyah mosque] is present in, ‘The Commentary of Ibn Aabideen,’ in [the section about] the excellence of the Amawi mosque attributed back to Ibn Asaakir, and this is how the learned people of the end of time are, it satisfies them that the *hadith* is just attributed [to someone], even Ibn Asaakir, so that the narration can become, as the masses say, ‘An established *hadith*.’

So when I became sure of this, and naturally, this was years later [and by then] the time had come when I was studying all of the manuscripts in the Dhaahiriyyah library. And when, through my research and study I came to [the book], ‘The History of Damascus’ of Ibn Asaakir, I read all of it¹—and that which was present from it in the library was seventeen volumes, each one was huge, I came across this narration [i.e., regarding the excellence of the mosque of Bani Umayyah], and behold, its chain of narration was darkness upon darkness.

So I said [to myself]: *Subhaanallaah*, how these scholars of *fiqh*, due to their negligence of studying *hadith*, report a narration, which, firstly, if attributing to him is correct then [still] in the science of *hadith* it is a *mu’adal*² narration. So what is the case when attributing the narration back to him is darkness upon darkness, so for this reason they do bad whereas they intend to do good.

¹ Bayyoomi’s footnote: And this shows the very high resolve of Shaikh al-Albaani, may Allaah have mercy upon him, for this history of Ibn Asaakir has now been printed in seventy-four volumes, and it is well known that reading through a manuscript is much, much harder than reading a printed book.

² Trans. note: A *mu’adal* narration is one in which two or more people in a row are missing from the chain of narration.

Then I had a look at the story of the burial of Yahya, عليه السلام, or the presumed grave of Yahya, عليه السلام, in the Bani Umayyah mosque, I read that in the history of Ibn Asaakir too. The important thing is that the research led me to the conclusion that praying in the Bani Umayyah mosque was not allowed.

So I wanted to get the opinion of some of the Shaikhs, from them my father and Shaikh al-Burhaani, so one day I [think] maybe [it was] the midday prayer [*Dhuhr*] I prayed with him and Allaah knows best, I secretly confided in him that it had become clear to me that praying in a mosque in which there is a grave was not correct ...



AL-ALBAANI AND HIS FATHER

Al-Huwaini: Did you secretly confide in your father?

Al-Albaani: No, [I confided] in al-Burhaani. [So] he said, “Write down the things that you have come across.” So I wrote them down and presented them to him, they came to about three or four pages. The time then, as far as I can remember, was the month of Ramadaan, so when I gave him the papers he said to me, “*Inshaa Allaah*, I’ll give you the answer after *Eed*.”

Then [when the time came] after *Eed*, he said to me, “All of this that you have written and gathered has no value.” Astonished, I replied, “Why?” He said, “Because these books which you quoted from are books which are not reliable in our view. The books which are reliable with us are *Maraaqi al-Falaah* and *Haashiyah Ibn Aabideen* only.”

I had quoted to him from *Mubaarik al-Azhaar Sharh Mashaariq al-Anwaar* of Ibn Malik and he was a *Hanafi*, and from *Mirqaah al-Mafaatih Sharh Mishkaah al-Masaabih* of Mulla Ali al-Qaari, and he [too] was a *Hanafi*, and other texts along with them, but he cast them aside as you would a date-stone, and said, “These have no value.” Even though I had gathered *hadiths* for him but he didn’t bother with them and paid them no mind, and said,

“Our reference in the religion are only the books of *fiqh* and not the books of *hadith*,” and my father’s stance was the same and so that was the nucleus which led [me to write] my book Warning the One who Prostrates from Taking the Graves as Mosques. [Here on the blog: <http://shaikhalbaani.wordpress.com/category/taking-graves-as-mosques/>]

And I do not want my actions to oppose what I say, so as long as it had become clear to me that prayer in mosques built upon graves was not correct, then for sure I would not go with my father to the Bani Umayyah mosque again, and this, naturally, irritated and angered him, but he kept it to himself.



THE ISSUE OF THE SECOND CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER IN THE MOSQUE

Another issue came up in which I opposed the people and it was concerning performing a second congregational prayer in the mosque. The mosque which my father lived next to was called Jaami at-Tawbah and Shaikh Burhaani was the Imaam there. Since my father lived next to it, whenever Shaikh Sa’eed [i.e., Burhaani] would be absent he would appoint my father to lead [the prayer] on his behalf. There were two prayer niches [*mihraabs*] and two Imaams [in this mosque], a *Hanafi* Imaam who was Burhaani, and a *Shaaqi’ee* Imaam who would [often] be absent.

Al-Huwaini: Two congregational prayers at the same time?

Al-Albaani: No. I wanted to say to you that during the [time of the] Ottoman Empire, the *Hanafi* Imaam would lead the prayer before the *Shaaqi’ee* Imaam whether it was in the biggest mosque, i.e., the Amawi Mosque, or in any other mosque, like the Tawbah mosque and other than it.

Then when Shaikh Taajud-Deen took leadership of the [religious affairs of the] Syrian Republic, and he was the son of Shaikh Badrud-Deen al-Husaini who was well-known for being a scholar of *hadith*, he—since he followed the *Shaaqi’ee* school of thought—issued an order that the *Shaaqi’ee* Imaam should pray before the *Hanafi* Imaam. And so this order

was executed, as is the natural course of events, by the ruler as they say, he executed it in every mosque, included amongst them was Masjid at-Tawbah, and so the *Shaafi'ee* Imaam would pray before Burhaani, who was *Hanafi*.

So when I had gained some understanding and had come to know that the second congregational prayer has no basis in the *Sunnah*, I began to pray behind the *Shaafi'ee* Imaam, [who was] the first Imaam, and this opposition caused the most severe tension on the part of my father. Firstly, because it opposed his school of thought [*madhhab*] and secondly, because it opposed his actions, because he would delay his prayer so that he could pray with the *Hanafi* Imaam, Burhaani. But he was going his way, and I was going mine.

Then Burhaani travelled for *Hajj* or *Umrah*, I don't recall exactly, and so appointed my father to pray in his place—but I would not pray behind him, because there was no difference in my eyes between Burhaani and my father since both of them would delay [the time of] the first congregational prayer [*jama'ah*]. So I would leave my father to pray the second prayer, and I would pray with the first Imaam.



AL-ALBAANI'S FATHER GIVING HIM THE CHOICE TO STAY OR LEAVE

Then later the time came where [there was], as they say, calamity upon calamity. It so happened that my father had to be away for a day or two and so he requested that I [lead] the prayer on his behalf, i.e., the second congregational prayer, so I refused and said to him, "You know my opinion in the matter, and it is very difficult for me to change my opinion." A number of issues came up which ignited his fury against me.

So one day while we were having dinner he said to me in a clear Arabic tongue, after he spoke about the situation that he and I were living in as regards my opposition to him, he said, "Either there is agreement or separation." So I said to him, "Give me three days to think about the situation." He replied, "You have that."

So I came with the answer, i.e., that since you have given me the choice, then I choose to live far from you so that I do not trouble or upset you because of my opposition to your school of thought.

And so it was.

I left him and I did not own a single *dinar* or *dirham* [i.e., not a penny]. And I remember very well that he gave me twenty-five Syrian liras only when I left his house.

But during all this time I had established a nucleus of *Salafi* brothers. One of them had a store where he would sell grain, wheat, barley and beans and so on, and it was in the same place where I had rented my shop, so he borrowed me two hundred Syrian liras so that I could rent it.

My father used to have some old [watch repairing] equipment which he would not use and had no need of so he gave it to me. So I started to work independently and from the Favours of Allaah upon me was that I was very precise in my work and honest in it and so the number of customers increased, and, as they say in Syria, “And the Generous One [i.e., Allaah] said, ‘Take.’”

Al-Huwaini: So our Shaikh, you were about twenty-three years old when this happened?

Al-Albaani: Yes, I was over twenty, because I have a book with me which I refer to sometimes called, *Ar-Rawd an-Nadeer fee Tarteeb wa Takhrij Mu’jam at-Tabaraani as-Saghir*, my age when I finished it was about twenty-one or twenty-two.

So what is meant is that I became independent in my work and thinking there, and we would hold lessons in the night with some of the brothers. Later, when the scope of *da’wah* increased we rented out a place, and would give lessons in *hadith* there: about the understanding [fiqh] of *hadith*, *hadith* terminology, and so on.



SHAIKH AL-ALBAANI WHEN HE GOT MARRIED

Someone at the gathering asked the Shaikh whether his father gave him any financial assistance after that or any other type of assistance?

So Shaikh Al-Albaani replied: I got married through my own efforts, I got married and my father did not get involved, nor did he visit me, nor congratulate me, nor ask Allaah to bless me. He would only come to the shop sometimes—but he would not enter.

But maybe he said something later which may be an expiation for the *madhhab*-based enmity which he showed to me. He said to me one time, “I do not deny that I have benefited from you,” and I was his youngest son, and I know this very well about him, that he did [indeed] benefit. Because he, like the other Shaikhs, used to go to the mosques in which there were graves and I used to say to him, “This, O my father, is not allowed, and in this is such and such ...” Likewise [he benefitted] as regards which *hadiths* were authentic and weak. So he did indeed benefit but his age and his social standing in the Arnaa’ooti community ... it didn’t give him the chance to be pleased with his son who was regarded as a deviant in front of the masses. So this is something from the story of the beginning of my seeking knowledge, and then my independence in it.

The point is that the *Al-Manaar* magazine was the thing that opened the path for me to become engaged in the science of *hadith*.

Al-Huwaini: But the first thing you actually authored was *Ar-Rawd an-Nadeer*?

Al-Albaani: Yes, that was the first thing I authored, because what I had copied from al-Mughnee and the commentary I wrote on it is not something which can be called the first thing I authored.

Then **Al-Huwaini** asked the Shaikh about his method in compiling *Ar-Rawd an-Nadeer*?

So Shaikh Al-Albaani replied: My method was that I gathered the *hadiths* of every Companion under his name, just like [the way it is done] in musnads. But I increased in that which is common in the *musnad* collections by arranging the *hadiths* of every Companion in alphabetical order and so here it took on a new quality. Then after I finished, I added all of the *hadiths* together and made a general index in alphabetical order. This is how I arranged it.

WAS AL-ALBAANI DISOBEDIENT TO HIS FATHER?

Al-Huwaini: As regards your father, did he carry on with this alienation towards you until the end of his life?

Al-Albaani: I said to you: he would come to me in the shop and give *salaam* but would not enter it.

Al-Huwaini: But, our Shaikh, isn't this regarded as disobedience [towards the parents]?

Shaikh al-Albaani started to laugh and then said: Some prejudiced people may think that, in fact, they openly say it, but, without doubt, it is not possible for a scholar in the world to say, "Preferring the *Sunnah* in opposition to the school of thought of the father is regarded as disobedience of the parents." Because in the eyes of the scholars disobedience of the parents is opposing the father ... opposing his orders and rebelling against him without there being any *ijtihaad* behind that opposition, without the *ijtihaad* being the incentive to follow the Book and the *Sunnah*. So I do not think that any fair individual will regard this as disobedience [of the parents] for if not, then Ibrahim, عليه السلام, would be [regarded] as having been disobedient to his father. Of course, someone may say: that was [an issue] of disbelief and monotheism [*tawhid*]. So I say: yes, but this too was [a matter] of the *Sunnah* or blind-following, so it is not permissible.

Then **Al-Huwaini** asked the Shaikh how he would gather between his job and seeking knowledge?

Al-Albaani: This is something, and all praise is due to Allaah, which Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, granted success in and gave me the ability to do.

As I said: when I would be with my father in the shop I would take advantage of any free time, when there would be no work in his shop, [so] I would go to the market, to that Egyptian to scour through whatever books he had. Later, I became totally free when I got my own shop. And it seems as though our Lord, the Mighty and Majestic, instilled in me a natural inclination towards being satisfied [with little/or whatever Allaah gives you], especially when I set up my own shop and built my own house, and so I was free from having to pay the rent for the shop and house.

And I said to you just now: that when I left my father[’s house] and became independent in my own shop and work, ‘And the Generous One [i.e., Allaah, *al-Kareem*] said, ‘Take ...’” my customers increased in number, and so due to that [such funds became available that] I was able to buy a piece of land ... a modest house so I became free from having to pay rent. Then some more [finance] became available and some of them borrowed me a goodly loan and so I bought a piece of land ... and was content and nothing remained except that with which I could support/feed myself, my wife and then my children.



HOW MANY A HOURS A DAY WOULD HE WORK IN HIS SHOP?

For this reason when I got this independence, I would work in the shop for one or two hours, up to eight or nine o’clock [in the morning] when the *Dhaahiriyyah* Library would open its doors. So I would close the door [to my shop] and make my way to the Library, [and spend] three hours at the very least [there] before midday prayer [*Dhuhr*]. Then I would pray *dhuhr* in it in congregation with some of the other people who would visit the library. So when it would close its doors, I would go to my shop and work there for about half an hour or an hour until it was lunch time and then I would go home.

I had bought a bicycle and would ride it [home], and for history I say: it was the first time that the people of Damascus saw a Shaikh in a white turban riding a bicycle ...

In those days I used to wear a turban based upon the previous line of thinking of the *madhhabs*, and some of the weak or rather fabricated *hadiths* such as, “Praying with a turban is seventy times better than praying without one.” I also used to wear a *jubba*, but with time I came to know that Allaah had not sent down any authority for these customs, so away went the *jubba* and the turban, and I started to wear what the people would wear.

The point is: I would be content with a little amount of work, spending all of my time in the *Dhaahiriyyah* Library. Then one time when working in the shop a Palestinian man who had emigrated to Damascus got to know me, and he suggested that his son work with me so that he could learn the profession. So this also aided me ... a bit more time became

available for me through that. In this manner, I gave a lot of time to study knowledge and to study [whatever was in] the *Dhaahiriyyah* Library.

Likewise, from the things that Allaah made easy for me were some of the bookshops which would sell books to the public ... they would lend me [those books] that I did not have, I would take a book or two or more than that from the[se] bookshops and would keep them with me in the shop, until when the person who had loaned me the book would have no more remaining copies [in his shop] and somebody had come who wanted to buy the copy that I had, he would send news to me and so I would send the book to him.

[At times] a book would remain with me for years, no one would ask for it, especially [the books on] the science of *hadith*, as you know, it was an abandoned subject. So the *Dhaahiriyyah* Library, the *Al-Qusaybaati* Library and the Arabic *Haashimi* Library, were also from the reasons which Allaah made subservient for me until I benefitted from their books as if I owned them.



THE STORY OF THE LOST PAPER

Al-Huwaini asked the Shaikh about the Story of the Lost Paper?

Al-Albaani: The reality is that I got an ailment in my eyes, when I would look at a white wall it would be as though I could see [something similar to] flies moving. When I took myself to the optician he said, “This is what we call the flying fly,” and this was an expression he used referring to a very fine blood vessel which had deteriorated and from which an extremely fine drop of blood had come out onto the eye—and that was what I could see coming and going.

The doctor asked me, “What work do you do?” I told him, “I’m a watch repairer.” He said, “This is due to exhausting [yourself].” I explained my situation to him, that I was a watch repairer and that I would [also] research a lot, so he asked me to take a six month break.

I went back to my shop and started to sit there: not doing anything, not in my job, nor reading or researching. A week or two passed by and boredom started to set in, so I started

to entice myself and justify to myself using many different reasons [as to what I could do]. Then an idea came to mind which was that there were a group of different treatises in the *Dhaahiriyyah* Library, one of which was The Dispraise of Idle Amusement [*Dhammal-Malaahi*] by Ibn Abid-Dunyaa, so I thought to myself that I could ask the transcribers there to copy out this manuscript, and that by the time they finish copying, I, maybe, would have gathered up and regained some of the health of my eyes and the rest [they required].

So I went to the *Dhaahiriyyah* Library and requested the copyist transcribe the treatise, and so he started. When he got half way through he came to me saying that there was a gap in the manuscript, that there was something lacking. I went to the library and had a look at the manuscript and there was indeed something missing, so I told him, “Carry on as you are doing ... and Allaah creates that which you do not know.”

He finished copying out the manuscript, and it was as they say ... my unconscious mind was working day and night [trying to figure out] where this missing part could be. So I hypothesised that when [all the different individual] manuscript treatises were gathered together to be put into this volume, maybe a page or two from this [particular] treatise fell out and were then later added to a different volume [of manuscript treatises]. And so there would be no path [to find it] except by searching through the collection present in the *Dhaahiriyyah* Library.

The manuscripts in the *Dhaahiriyyah* Library were arranged according to subject as is the general [classification] system [used in libraries] ... except that there were about one hundred and fifty volumes entitled *Majaamee* [collections], and it was a befitting title, because every volume contained a number of [different] books, differing in the way they had been arranged and in their classification and topic, for this reason they had been put under the title *majaamee* [collections].

So I said to myself that I would start with these *majaamee*, and so I did. One of the things which made the search easier was that just as these volumes differed in their topics and authors they also differed in the type of paper [they were written on]. So you would find some large [pieces] and some small, some white and others gray, and at times [you would find some that were] blue, and so on.

All of this made the way to search easier for me, so I started with the first volume, then the second and third, I don't remember exactly. Then all of a sudden I came across the title of the book [that I was looking for, *The Dispraise of Idle Amusement*]-and by Allaah, it is an important book-but it was the second part that I found, if it had been the first the matter would have been over.

So when I would find the second or third parts I would leave them and carry on, after [going through] a number of volumes I came across the first part of one of those [other] treatises [that I had come across in earlier volumes], so I lamented myself and was regretful, saying, "Would that I had written down the title and number [showing exactly where I had found] the second part and this first part."

I learnt a lesson and began to record anything that interested me, even if it was not complete.

And you will note here that I was [initially] doing one thing when I began to do something else: I was searching for the lost paper whereas now I had started to record the titles of what can be regarded as treasures, even if they [i.e., the manuscripts] were incomplete.

What is important is that I finished going through the one hundred and fifty volumes but I did not come across the lost paper in the volumes [of the books of] *hadith*, but I left with huge benefit in terms of knowledge. So I said to myself, "You must complete this journey you are upon and that search for the lost paper."

The number of volumes of *hadith* books with us in the *Dhaahiriyyah* Library are more than five hundred so I began to search, and here the search for the lost paper was much easier, because the *majaamee* were small in size as for the [books of] *hadith* they were bigger, and the lost paper was small [so it would be easier to find], but [in reality] I had [now] entered into searching for something different, which was the acquisition of the important topics from these priceless books.

So I started to take down the titles, even if the book was a large volume, recording it on my scratch paper-and I finished going through five hundred volumes without coming across the lost paper.

And as they say here in Syria, “Without [giving you] a long biography ...” i.e., in short I went through every single manuscript in the *Dhaahiriyyah* Library, and I was hoping that it might be in [the section of books on] such and such topics, maybe, since it was a mistake that had occurred in a volume [somewhere in the library], so I started to look through the books of biographies [seerah], the books of history, literature, books on Sufism, i.e., every branch of knowledge that had manuscripts [I looked through].

And Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, facilitated this search for me, [whereas it would] normally not have been easy except for someone officially employed [by the library] and specially assigned to the task. He facilitated it to such an extent that I would put a ladder up to the treasures, because there were shelves there that were high and could not be reached by hand, so I would stand on the ladder. The shelf was about a metre in width, I would take a book from here [i.e., this end] and finish there [at the other end], all while I was on the ladder. When I would find something precious I would come down and record it, and then continue on my journey.

In this way I went through the entire library without finding the lost paper.

But I felt that it was I who was the winner: I gained hundreds of names and book titles from those priceless works. In the end, I knew that they had something that was called ‘*Disht*’, and that was a term for stacked up papers which no one [ever] went to or stretched their hands toward. So I said to the specialist librarian—and he was someone whom Allaah had facilitated to help me in my knowledge-based matters and was someone who would respond positively to me—“O Abu Mahdi! Where can the ‘*disht*’ [collections] be found?” So he showed me the two or three collections.

So I started to search through these jumbled up papers and did not find anything, but I did find treasures: among them [the fact that] with us in the *Dhaahiriyyah* Library are two copies of the *Musnad* of ash-Shihaab of al-Qudaa’ee, both of which had parts missing. One of these copies was the eastern one and the other the western copy.

The script in the western copy was very beautiful and had been given careful attention by some of the preservers of *hadith* [*huffaadh*], the people of *hadith*, and written next to many of these *hadiths* if not all were [things like: a] weak [*hadith*], [a] fabricated [*hadith*]

and so on, but the first fascicle of it was missing. All of a sudden, while going through this *disht* I was taken aback to find the missing part of the western copy [of the *Musnad* of ash-Shihaab], and with that a priceless manuscript was completed.

So I took it with great delight and exhilaration and went to the manager responsible for the manuscripts and said to him, “This part is from the *disht* and this is the book which you have written down with you in the index as being from an unknown source, its author is unknown and nor is it known what the book is about. [Now] here is the book and this is the author ...” but he paid no attention to that, because he, as they say here in Syria, “Everyone sings about his own Layla ...” [i.e., each to his own]: this research was of importance to me but not him.

Then days and years went by and our brother Abdul-Majid as-Salafi printed the book from this self-same manuscript. And so that you know the [differing] nature of people ... the *Musnad* of ash-Shihaab by al-Qudaa’ee was published by the printers in which Shu’ayb [al-Arnaa’oot] worked, i.e., *Mu’assasah ar-Risaalah* and on this manuscript for history I had written, “Drawn out from the *disht* collection by Naasir,” [i.e., Al-Albaani himself] I only wrote ‘Naasir,’ but what did he do?

He put a piece of paper on it and covered this fact and now you can find a copy of this main title page from this book in the manuscript copy of the *Musnad* of ash-Shihaab which our brother Hamdi checked but this knowledge-based reality is wiped out [i.e., that Shaikh al-Albaani was the one who found it after all that hard work]. What makes him do that? You know the answer.

The point is that these are the priceless things that I gained through this research, in the end I gave up hope of finding the lost paper, but I never regretted it, since what I acquired was more than I could have imagined.

What is important is that later I went back to the names that I had written down of those works and their authors and so wrote them out again on cards, arranging them in order of the names of the authors, listing every work that the author had written.

Then after I finished listing the names of the authors I arranged the works in alphabetical order, and from that came the index of the chosen manuscripts from the *Dhaahiriyyah* Library.

Then the final stage came and it was the blessed fruition of that initial effort: I started to read these manuscripts, extracting the *hadith* benefits from them with their chains of narration [something] which I have with me now, and it is what helps to provide me with [what I need] for my knowledge-based projects in about forty volumes, in it are the *hadiths* which I took from these manuscripts with their chains of narrations, arranged in alphabetical order to make them easier to refer back to.

So this is a summary of the story of the lost paper.

[Here is the other version of the same story translated in an earlier post: <http://www.shaikhalbaani.wordpress.com/2011/03/10/the-shaikhs-life-in-his-own-words-16/>]



THE SPECIAL ROOM THAT AL-ALBAANI WAS GIVEN AT THE DHAHIRIYYAH LIBRARY

Al-Huwaini: One of the things that I read about you in your books is that you were allocated a special room in the *Dhaahiriyyah* Library. How did you get to that level, bearing in mind that such a thing can be quite difficult [to obtain] in Islamic countries?

Al-Albaani: I don't recall very well now [the reason], it was either because the administration at the *Dhaahiriyyah* Library felt that I was a person in love with knowledge for I used to sit in the general [reading] area and say to Abu Mahdi, "Give me, and of course he would, such and such book," i.e., the manuscript, and I would hardly have finished with it when I would request a second book and a third and a fourth ...

At times I would have a [whole] pile of manuscripts on the table. This table was for four people, two [to sit] on one side and two on the other. Due to this, no student would be able to sit down at the table along with me. And without doubt there was some objection from the students [due to this], especially at exam times.

So it was as though the administration found a solution to the problem. They had a dark room [there] which was not good enough to place firewood in, so they suggested it to me ... and put me in this room, placing in it whatever books I needed for reference so that I

would not overburden the employees there [by saying], “Bring such and such book ... take this book [back] ...” They even left some manuscripts with me [in the room].

This is the first possibility [as to why they gave me the room], and it is the most likely in my opinion, since this was a long time ago.



**AL-ALBAANI ALONE BEING ALLOWED TO ENTER THE DHAAHIRIYYAH LIBRARY
AT ANY TIME OF THE DAY OR NIGHT**

The second possibility was that the College of *Sharee’ah* at the Syrian University held a number of meetings in which they decided to establish the core for a *hadith* encyclopaedia. And with sadness I say: they couldn’t find anyone amongst their doctors who could undertake this task. So they sent for me to confer on the topic. I met with them at the university and they presented their idea to me and requested that I work on this curriculum that they had drawn up.

After exchanging views on the topic I agreed with them that I would work four hours a day for them and the remaining hours would be for my personal work—on the condition that I be given permission to enter the *Dhaahiriyyah* Library at whatever time of day or night I wanted. So I said to them, “If the administration at the library agrees to that, I will give you four hours every day.” They replied saying that they would speak to the person in charge there.

So one day Mustafaa as-Subaa’ee or Muhammad al-Mubaarak came, I don’t recall exactly, and they went up to see the manager and spoke to him about the topic and then sent for me and said, “We have come to an agreement with the manager and he will order the caretaker that every time you come he will open the gate for you.”

In this way I gave them four hours a day, so I would work on a project on the *hadiths* of trading.

The point is that at this time I cannot be totally sure either way, as to whether they made

this room available to me for this reason or before that ... what I think is more probable is that they gave me the special permission to enter whenever I wanted, at any time of day or night ...

So this is the story of the room which I alone was given to the exclusion of all the other people who would come there.

Al-Huwaini: You mentioned before that that you rented a house in Damascus to give lessons in. What was the methodology that you followed at that time? Would you read through a book or were they general lessons?

Al-Albaani: I remember that the first thing that I taught the students was from Ibn al-Qayyim's *Zaad al-Ma'aad fee Hadyi Khairil-Ibaad*. I would read a part of the book to them and then comment on it [from memory] based upon some previous knowledge that I had [concerning it] or from notes that I would prepare before I would give the lesson. In those days the lesson was from three quarters of an hour to an hour long, then after that there would be half an hour to answer questions.

After I finished the first volume of *Zaad al-Ma'aad*, I think, and Allaah knows best, if I have not forgotten, they requested that I teach them the book *Ar-Rawdah an-Nadiyyah Sharh Ad-Durar al-Bahiyyah*, because the reality is that [Ibn al-Qayyim's book] *Zaad al-Ma'aad* is a knowledge-based book—not all students can handle it, whereas *Ar-Rawdah an-Nadiyyah*'s subject matter is condensed. So I did teach them the entire book, from its start to its end.

Later, I think, came the turn of *At-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb*, and there was an academic exertion behind these lessons: the principle regarding them would be preparation, from the results of which was [the commentary on *Zaad al-Ma'aad* called] *At-Ta'leeqaat al-Jiyaad alaa Zaad al-Ma'aad*, the first volume, and *At-Ta'leeq ar-Ragheeb 'alat-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb*. For it was from my nature not to teach them a *hadith* until I had ascertained its authenticity and made sure of the understanding [*fiqh*] or meaning intended by it. This is how I would give lessons there ...

Someone at the gathering asked: O Shaikh! Through your constant visits to the Dhaahiriyyah Library, who do you know from the students of knowledge at that time who were serious and striving from your contemporaries?

Shaikh Al-Albaani: I, unfortunately, never used to see anyone constantly visiting the *Dhaahiriyyah* Library, not from the students, neither from the Shaikhs, nor any doctors [i.e., those holding PhDs]. But Shaikh Abdul-Qadir al-Arnaa'oot would be there, he was ok ...

Al-Huwaini: Regarding [Ibn Taymiyyah's] book, *Iqtidaa as-Siraat al-Mustaqeem*, did you teach it?

Al-Albaani: I taught parts of it, not all of it.

Al-Huwaini asked Shaikh al-Albaani about Shaikh Muhammad Bahjatul-Baitaar: was he from your ranks or from those who came before you?

Al-Albaani: He was from those who came before [me].

Al-Huwaini: Did you take any knowledge from him?

Al-Albaani: No, but there used to be lessons on literature which the great and well-known authors of that time in Damascus would attend, members of the Arabic Scientific Academy in Damascus, from them for example was Ustaadh Izzud-Deen at-Tanookhi, may Allaah have mercy on him, and others like Mustafaa ash-Shihaab.

They would gather and study the book called *Al-Himaasah* of Abu Tamaam. The specialist among them, like at-Tanookhi, was the one who would give the commentary, explanation and clarification. So I and a friend of mine who has passed away to the Mercy of Allaah, his name was Munir Abu Abdullaah, we would go to this sitting successively in order to strengthen [our] Arabic, and to learn something of its ethics.

From the members of this sitting was Shaikh Bahjatul-Baitaar, but I did not [sit with him specifically and] learn anything from him..

Al-Huwaini: Did you meet al-Kawthari?

Al-Albaani: No. I do not know him except from what he left behind.

Al-Huwaini: He was a contemporary of yours?

Al-Albaani: Yes but he was in Egypt and I was in Damascus. I did go to Egypt and he was alive ...



HOW WAS AL-ALBAANI CHOSEN TO TEACH AT MEDINAH UNIVERSITY?

Al-Huwaini: How were you chosen to teach at the Islamic University of Medinah? Because the norm is that one needs a doctorate to teach academic study [at university]?

Al-Albaani: This is the first time that I've been asked this question. What I recall now are two things. The first is that the university was new to university level teaching [only recently having been established], especially in Saudi, this is the first reason.

The second is the reputation of some of the books [that I authored] and the satisfaction of the people [i.e., scholars etc.,] with them, and [also], from what seems apparent to me, their appreciation of the books as they deserved to be appreciated—this is what caused them to send for me.

I didn't ask and I wouldn't ask—and I [have] lived like this, and all praise is due to Allaah, not requesting any job, for since childhood I would earn my daily sustenance through the labour of my own hands and the sweat of my own forehead.

At this time a request came to me from Shaikh Muhammad ibn Ibrahim who was then the Mufti of the Kingdom [of Saudi Arabia, i.e., the Mufti before Ibn Baaz], and he was the Principal of the university, asking me to agree to teach *hadith* sciences at Medinah University which would soon open its doors.

I took the counsel of some of my brothers there whose understanding and knowledge I trusted, so one of them said to me, “Try it for a year, if you enjoy teaching [there] you can carry on with them for as long as it’s written for you.” And the reality was that when I went there I found a truly wonderful climate, that was ready and willing to, firstly, accept the call and, secondly, the academic methodology which I was naturally predisposed to and continued upon.



HOW WOULD AL-ALBAANI INTERACT WITH HIS STUDENTS AT MEDINAH UNIVERSITY?

My story at the university, in my opinion, was something that happened rarely with someone who was a teacher of a subject there—for I was with the students as though I was one of them, and there are [different] situations which may make this reality clearer for you.

For example, when my class would finish and it was break time, the [normal] habit of the lecturers was to go to the staff room and sit there for the length of the break, drinking tea or coffee and talking about different things.

As for me, I would turn away from all of that, and would leave the lesson [heading to] to the courtyard and I would sit there on the sand—and the students who I had been teaching only a few minutes earlier would gather [around me], and students from all [other] years [too], because this sitting was in the open.

I would give them some guidance and advice and answer some questions. This was how I spent all of the years I taught at the university.

And I recall very well that someone who in university language was called an assistant professor, passed by me [while I was sitting outside] one day and said, “*As-Salaamu alaikum.*” So I replied, “*Wa alaikum salaam.*”

He then said, “You know, O Shaikh, the real lesson—this is it.”

Because the students were free [and open] in this sitting, as for the official lesson [in class], even though it is true that I was very liberal with them, yet even then there have to be limits and restrictions. This was a way that was unique to Al-Albaani from amongst all of the other teachers at the university.

There were other good results too, for example, when Al-Albaani would enter the university a few minutes before the lesson, the students would gather round the car, until it would be lost among them and couldn't be seen, every one of them would try to beat his brother in order to direct a question to me. And when I would leave [at the end of the day], they would again compete to sit in the car with me in order to seize the opportunity.

This was my habit when coming or going—I would never stop anyone from sitting in my car, so it was always full of students, coming and going.

This situation produced an amazing and great deal of love in the hearts of the students for Al-Albaani, add to that the fact that something came to them which they had not heard before: a teacher of *tafseer*, *fiqh*, *usool* relating *hadith* to them which was relevant to their lessons so the [other] teachers themselves started to hear a new language, “O teacher, who narrated this *hadith*? Is its chain of narration authentic?”

And I remember an event that occurred very well, the teacher of *usool*, i.e., *usool al-fiqh*, quoted the *hadith* of Mu'aadh ibn Jabal, “O Muaadh! With what will you judge ...” he brought this *hadith* to the students using it as a proof for *qiyaas*, this occurred in the lesson of our brother Abdur-Rahmaan Abdul-Khaaliq, he was in the third year, so he said to him, “O teacher, is this *hadith* authentic?” He replied, “Yes.” He said, “We heard Shaikh al-Albaani say that it is a *munkar hadith*.” I do not know what his answer was but he was not pleased with what this student had said.

After a few days this Shaikh, the teacher of *usool al-fiqh*, came to my house and said to me, “It has reached me that you say that this *hadith* is *munkar* [i.e., not authentic]?” I replied, “Yes.” He said, “Have you written anything about this *hadith*?” I said, “Yes, in ‘*Silsilah al-Ahadith ad-Da'eefah*,’ in the second volume,” and it had not been printed in those days. He said, “Can I have a look at it?” So I showed it to him, and [in it] I had mentioned all of its paths of narration and had clarified its baseless defects.

Then lo and behold in another lesson [of his] he reconfirmed [what he had first said] to the students that the *hadith* was authentic and that Shaikh al-Albaani himself had brought different paths of narration for it which strengthened it—whereas those paths of narration did nothing except add invalidity to invalidity.

So situations like this, and this very uncommon display at the university where the students would gather around me stirred up the wrath of the teachers so they wrote directly to the Mufti, and Allaah knows best, or to the King, and made it seem to them that I was setting up a faction or group and that it was feared that I might do something.

The third year ended and so I returned to Damascus to spend the summer vacation there. In those days Shaikh Ibn Baaz, may Allaah reward him with good, was the Assistant Principal. A week or two before I returned to Medinah he wrote to me, and I remember very well that one of my children, Abdul-Lateef, had to compete one of his courses so I sent him ahead of me so that he could take his exam. And he was then shocked by the letter from Shaikh Ibn Baaz which stated that he [i.e., Ibn Baaz] had received a letter from the Mufti that there was no need to renew the contract with Shaikh al-Albaani this year.

For this reason my connection with the university ended, and Shaikh Ibn Baaz, may Allaah reward with him good, wrote a good word to me, saying, “The likes of you, whichever situation he is in, will fulfil what is obligatory upon him.”

In summary, I was requested to teach there, it seems as though this was because they were not strictly applying the rules of universities and because they needed a person whose knowledge and creed they could trust at one and the same time. So for this [reason] and that, they appointed me to teach ...



“In their biographies of Shaikh al-Albaani, the two Shaikhs, Eed Abbaasi and Ali Khashaan said, ‘Due to that continued effort and the *tawfiq* that Allaah, the Most High, gave him, many beneficial works [authored by the Shaikh] in the fields of *hadith*, fiqh, creed and others came to light which show the people of knowledge and excellence what Allaah had bestowed upon him from correct understanding, abundant knowledge, exceptional expertise in the field of *hadith* and

its sciences and narrators, along with a sound knowledge-based methodology making the Book and the *Sunnah* the judge and scale for everything, taking guidance from the understanding of the Pious Predecessors and their way in understanding and deriving rulings.

That [same] methodology which many researchers and verifiers from the people of knowledge [before him] tread upon, especially the Shaikh of Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah, his students, and whoever followed them in that.

All of this made the Shaikh a distinguished and renowned authority that the people of knowledge would refer back to. People supervising institutes of knowledge appreciated his worth, something which made those in charge of the Islamic University in Medinah al-Munawwarah when it was established—and at the head of them the Shaikh, the *Allaamah*, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Aali-Shaikh, the Principal of the Islamic University and the Mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at that time—choose Shaikh al-Albaani to take up the teaching of *hadith* and its sciences, during which he was an example of earnestness and hard work, to the extent that he would sit with the students on the sand during the breaks between lectures and some teachers would pass by him while he was sitting on the sand and would say, “This is the real lesson—not the one you just came of it or the one you will go back to [inside].”

The Shaikh would do that whereas the other teachers would head to the staff room and have some dates or tea and coffee, and this is from the Grace of Allaah which He gives to whoever He pleases.

And maybe this habit of his and his sincerity was something which led some people to become jealous of him, amongst whom were some of the people of knowledge, due to the affection and love the students had for him and how they would present themselves to him at the university and outside it during the trips which the university would supervise.

The Shaikh’s relationship with the students was that of friend with a friend, without formality, and not like [the relationship] between a teacher and his student, for he wiped out formality which would [normally] prolong matters and replaced it with trust and brotherhood.

He said, “In my car I would take with me whichever students I happened to meet on the way to the university and also back to Medinah. So at all times, my car would be full of them, going and coming.”

The desire of the students to be with the Shaikh and their love for him and the fact that they felt as though there was no difference between them and their teacher reached such an extent that one day after having given his lectures the Shaikh went to the [university's] administration and left his car outside the building and entered. Then it so happened that *Ustaadh* Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhaab al-Bannaa wanted to go to the city, so he came out [of the building] with Shaikh Al-Albaani heading to Shaikh Al-Albaani's car so that he could take him with him—only to find that Shaikh al-Albaani's car was [already] full of students! So when the students saw Shaikh al-Bannaa, one of them was compelled to get out for him, and this is how it was.

And when he would enter the university in the morning you would hardly be able to see his car due to the multitude of students gathered around it, giving the Shaikh salaam, asking him questions and benefitting from him.

THE PLANS OF THE MALICIOUS AND SPITEFUL ONES

All of these things which we just mentioned when put together stirred up those teachers at the university who were malicious and spiteful, so they plotted against him and reported him to the university administration fabricating false accusations against him, bearing false witness against him and slander, conspiring and machinating against him. And they forgot Allaah, the Most High, and the [fact that all will have to] stand before Him, on the Day when nothing will be hidden from Him, the Most High.

So the administration terminated his contract.

The Shaikh bore the accusations and slander against him, saying, "Sufficient for us is Allaah, and He is the Best Disposer of affairs," and Allaah wills and chooses, and none can repel His Will, the One free and far removed from all defects.

So the Shaikh was satisfied with Allaah's Decree with a believing and truthful soul, in fact he was happy because Allaah had blessed him to be able to understand complex issues and Islamic problems such that he returned [to Syria] with an even greater fervour to research and investigate those things which would be of benefit to the Muslims in many different fields of knowledge from the pure Sharee'ah, which he had been kept away from while he had to teach at the university.

[When all of this happened] Shaikh Abdul-Aziz ibn Baaz said some important words to Shaikh al-Albaani, consoling him, he said, “Wherever you are, you will fulfil the obligatory duties of calling to Allaah, there is no difference to you [whether you are here or there].”

And that is because he knew of the strength of Shaikh al-Albaani’s faith in Allaah, the Most Great, his vast knowledge and his patience in the face of calamities.

And maybe this explains why Shaikh al-Albaani would so often repeat the supplication of Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq, may Allaah be pleased with him, “O Allaah! Do not hold me to account for what they say, and make me better than what they think, and forgive me concerning those things they do not know about.”



HIS MIGRATION TO JORDAN AND THE SECRET SERVICE

Al-Huwaini: In some of your books you mentioned in general terms your entrance into Amman, Jordan and then your return to Syria once again due to some powerful circumstances. We’d like to know about this situation.

Al-Albaani: I used to live there in a small, modest house, and was searching for [a piece of] land upon which to build a house, so I chose this piece and started to build. Our brothers were very eager for me to start giving them a lesson, as had been the case before I had settled here. I used to come [to Jordan from Syria] every month, or every other month or every third month—depending on my circumstances, and would give them lessons in the house of Shaikh Ahmad Atiyyah. I would also visit Zarqa and give some lessons there. This was my habit before I settled here.

When I [actually] moved there I became busy with building a house ... we [finally] did finish building it and moved in, and all praise is due to Allaah. We used to hold the lesson on the roof of Shaikh Ahmad’s house here not the previous one in which I would give the lesson. The roof filled up with people even though it was large, and the lessons were on *Riyaad as-Saaliheen* [and would last] for about three quarters of an hour and then questions and answers.

The third lesson had hardly come when the secret service turned up behind me. I had prayed dhuhur in Noor Mosque along with my older brother whose name is Muhammad Naaji Abu Ahmad and that day my son, Abdul-Musowwir, was also with me. I was going up the stairs and my brother was behind me and then my son when someone said to my brother, “Are you so and so?” So I turned around and said, “I am so and so.” So he said, “We need you for a while.”

They took me to the secret service and asked me for my ID and asked me about my work and so on. Then someone else came in and it seemed as though he was senior in rank and said to me, “O Shaikh, your presence in this city here is not wanted.”

So I said to him, “Why? For I have been living here for one year now, and not only this, but in fact I bought a piece of land with the permission of the state, and not only this, but I built a home on it with the permission of the state, and not only this, but I got married to one of its women [too].”

So the senior one among them consulted with another and then left.

They then transferred me to another room and questioned me again. After which they took me downstairs with a soldier and put me in a military car and started to take me from place to place until they took me somewhere where there was a group of people, and judging by their faces most of them were base people, i.e., criminals, and they had their belongings with them. Close to them was an army vehicle so I realised that they were about to be transported, and in one of the centres which they had taken me to, one of the people there had said, “They now want to expel you to Syria.”

Then the sergeant came and said, “Come on them, O Youth, get on.” I was the last of them and refused to get on saying to the sergeant, “I do not want to go to Syria,” even though my exit from Syria was totally normal [i.e. the Shaikh had not fled Syria for doing something wrong etc.], and this is a point which many people are ignorant of, because a few months after I had left, the Syrian Revolution had taken place. After I had settled here [i.e., in Jordan] I didn’t think it a good idea to go back to Syria.

So the sergeant lied to me and said, “We will not take you to Syria, we’re taking you to Erbil instead.” Then they took us in the car to the Jordanian-Syrian border and handed me

over to a Jordanian officer, who then permitted me to go to the Syrian border and [once] in Syria they questioned me and so I mentioned the story to them. They gave me a piece of paper which had a note [written] on it, saying, “You must report to the Syrian Secret Service after three days.”

When I went to my brother’s house there and stayed there for two nights I consulted with my brothers: should I go to the Syrian Secret Service or should I leave Syria? So all opinions were unanimous in that I should not go to the Secret Service. They said, “Because you do not know what they [might] do to you.” So based upon this I made my decision and travelled to Lebanon.

I remained there for six months approximately and then one of our brothers from the Emirates came and he had a pass to allow me entry into the Emirates and [so] I spent a few months there.

Then one of our brothers here like Abu Maalik [Muhammad Ibrahim Shaqrah] and others made an effort and got in touch with those in authority [in Jordan] until they were able to take the matter to the King [telling him] that the Shaikh is not a revolutionary and nor is he a political person—he is only a person of knowledge. And they presented two boxes full of [my] books to the Chief Minister and said to him, “This is the Shaikh.” And so those in authority allowed me to enter.

So this is how it was, this is the story you asked about.

Al-Huwaini asked the Shaikh about his reason for leaving Syria [to go to Jordan in the first place] and how it happened?

Al-Albaani: Leaving Syria was a natural matter, a plan for the future, i.e., I had made a plan for myself, saying, “I must withdraw myself from the people in whatever remains from my life, and dedicate what remains from it to complete my projects,” or some of my projects at least. Because as you know in Syria I used to travel widely: from Damascus to Homs, to Hama, to Aleppo, to Idlib, to Latakia. So I didn’t want to become busy with the people such that I would not be able to complete my knowledge-based projects.

So I said [to myself], “I will go to a country where I am not well-known.” But the reality turned out to be the total opposite, and this is as it is said in some of the Israaeeliyyat narrations [i.e., narrations from the People of the Book], “My servant wants [something], and I want something, and nothing will happen except that which I want,” and this is true without doubt.

So I came for this purpose so that I could live far away from being referred back to and [from being asked] questions and so on, and to devote myself to knowledge, so my departure [from Syria] was totally normal.



HIS IMPRISONMENT

Then **Al-Huwaini** asked the Shaikh about the circumstances surrounding his imprisonment in Damascus two times?

Al-Albaani: One of those times was when Jewish planes struck Damascus, so what seems apparent is that the state feared that the Shaikhs might start a revolution, so as a precautionary measure they arrested all the Shaikhs.

Then Shaikh al-Albaani said while he was laughing, “And I don’t know how they regarded me to be from among the Shaikhs this time.”

The second time was when the secret service called me in and said, “What is your opinion about the rulers of today?” So I said to them, “I don’t know them.” They said, “What is your opinion about the system of the ruler, do you support it?” I said, “No.” They said, “Why?” I said, “Because it is against Islaam.”

They took me in a car transferring me from place to place and then put me in police headquarters in order to transfer me—to where, I did not know. A person from my people, an Arnaa’ooti, passed by me and asked why I was present there so I told him about the situation, and he left. He went and asked about the place to which I was about to be transferred and then came back to me and said, “They have decided to expel you to al-Hasakah,” i.e., [an area in the] north-east [corner of] Syria.

So I asked him to go to my son in the shop and tell him to bring my bag to me in which he should place a copy of *Sahih Muslim*, a sharpener, a pencil, an eraser etc., and that he should meet me here, and that if he does not, then he should meet me at the place where the cars leave for Aleppo.

So the man went to my son who then hurriedly came and brought everything that I had asked for and met me at the place where the vehicles depart just as it was reversing getting ready to go. He climbed on heading towards me and gave me salaam, hugged me and bid me farewell, and then it left with us for Aleppo, and from Aleppo to al-Hasakah.

There is a new, very large and towering prison in al-Hasakah. They placed me in an area which was very long and full of Muslims from *Hizb at-Tahrir*, the head of them used to attend my lessons in Aleppo, i.e., he was a *Salafi* and then he turned towards *Hizb at-Tahrir*. I said to myself, “Many a calamity is beneficial,” [for] I was in constant debate with this group, day and night—but I had brought my provisions with me and wanted to start work but the lamp [where I was] was attached to the ceiling which was very high, so I did not benefit from its light whatsoever.

So I spoke to this companion of ours who used to be a *Salafi*, his name was Shaikh Mustafaa, and, unfortunately, he had spent about two years in the prison. Due to him having spent such a long time there, some companionship had developed between him and the warden, and it seemed as though the prison warden had some [positive] natural disposition [in character], even though he was a Ba’athist. He indeed used to respond positively to Shaikh Mustafaa and with this group of Muslims and would help them as much as he was able to. They would eat together, sharing their food, and I did so with them too.

The point is that I needed some electricity [i.e., a way of getting more light to be able to read], so Shaikh Mustafaa spoke to the prison warden saying to him, “Shaikh al-Albaani is a student of knowledge and wants to study, because he brought his books with him.” So the warden said to him, “We will bring him what he needs but on his account.” So I told them this was fine and good, he would bring what I needed and I would pay.

So [as a result] the lamp was brought down from the top of the ceiling to the top of my head, totally above it—so I never felt any loneliness in the prison whatsoever, just as Ibn Taymiyyah said, “My imprisonment is my solitude.”

Then Al-Huwaini asked the Shaikh about his works which he had finished and those he was still working on and about his methodology in authoring some of those works and he finally asked him to give him some knowledge-based advice so the Shaikh gave him some and encouraged him to fear Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, and finished off by saying:

“I hope that you are given even more *tawfeeq* [from Allaah].”



And the translation was finished after Isha on the 11th of Jumaada 1 which corresponds to the 15th April, 2011. And all praise is due to Allaah through whose Blessing righteous actions are completed.