



***Shaykh Muḥammad Nimr al-Khaṭīb (1918-2010=1431)*¹**

Muḥammad Nimr ibn ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ ibn *Shaykh* Sa‘īd al-Khaṭīb was an eminent scholar whose lineage linked up with *Shaykh* Aḥmad al-Ṣayādī al-Rifā’ī. This has been established by Ḥusayn al-Rifā’ī in his book titled *Baḥr al-Anṣāb*. The Khaṭīb family is connected to the Ashrāf in Egypt and have a legacy of Islamic sacred knowledge and they even carried the responsibility of *fatwā* in Haifa for many years.

Shaykh Nimr was born in the 1918 in the city of Haifa in Palestine into a scholarly family. In his youth he learnt the Qurān and some of the basics of Islam. His first teacher was his father who was a renowned scholar and one of the persons who had a profound influence on his life. *Shaykh* Nimr grew up like his father and he displayed tremendous love, respect and obedience to his parents. His family was also known for their amazing hospitality and always welcomed students of sacred knowledge and other guests. In fact when students would pass by on the way to pursue their studies at the al-Azhar University in Egypt, many used to stop at their home for a few days.

As a young boy, he witnessed the attempts by the British to imprison his father, *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ. After his father’s release from prison, the young Nimr proceeded to the city of Akka to pursue his education. He completed his primary and secondary schooling and also studied at the al-Aḥmadī Institute. Here he studied under some renowned scholars. Some of them were:

- *Shaykh* al-‘Akkī
- *Shaykh* Tawfīq al-Anbatāwī
- *Shaykh* ‘Izz al-Dīn al-Qassām
- *Shaykh* Kāmil al-Qaṣṣāb
- *Shaykh* ‘Abd Allah al-Jazzār, *Mufti* of Akka
- *Shaykh* Muḥammad al-Lubābīdī, Senior Shāfi’ *Mufti*
- *Shaykh* Muḥammad al-Qablāwī

¹ Prepared by Shoaib Ahmed. The compiler visited the *Shaykh* a few times and was fortunate to receive Ijāza from him.

He then travelled to Egypt where he continued his studies at the al-Azhar University where he was fortunate to have studied under illustrious scholars who included:

- *Shaykh* Muḥammad Amīn al-Kurdī al-Naqshbandī
- *Shaykh* Muḥammad Bakhīt al-Muṭīī who was the Mufti of Egypt. With him he studied a portion of *al-Hidāya*, a famous text in the Ḥanafī *madhhab*.
- *Shaykh* Salāma al-‘Azzāmī
- *Shaykh* Muhammad Ibrāhīm al-Simālūṭī
- *Shaykh* Yūsuf al-Dujwī with whom he studied some ‘Tafsīr.
- *Shaykh* Dassūqī ‘Arabī
- *Shaykh* ‘Isa Mannūn
- *Shaykh* Yūsuf ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Mashhadī
- *Shaykh* Yūsuf al-Marsifī
- *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Lubbān
- *Shaykh* Muhammad al-Khiḍr al-Ḥusayn
- *Shaykh* Muhammad Ḥabīb Allah al-Shanqīṭī
- *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jazīlī

Some accomplished scholars were his colleagues at the time. They were:

- *Shaykh* ‘Abd Allah al-‘Alāyilī
- *Shaykh* Mukhtār al-‘Alāyilī
- *Shaykh* Ahmad al-‘Ajūz
- *Shaykh* Muhammad Subra
- *Shaykh* Muhammad Ḥarb
- *Shaykh* Muhammad Ghazāl

He remained in Egypt for seven years and he attained the Higher al-Azhar Certificate that was approved and signed by his teacher, *Shaykh* Ḥabīb Allah al-Shanqīṭī and *Shaykh* al-Simālūṭī.

When the al-Azhar restructured its system, he joined the Faculty of Uṣūl al-Dīn where he studied for an additional four years. Thereafter he returned to his home in Haifa after having already registered for the Masters Programme.

On returning to Haifa he was hurt when he observed the atrocities committed by the colonialists and he immediately engaged in teaching and guiding the people. He even established a school where he conducted classes at night with a special curriculum. He established various organizations and he was even appointed as the first Minister of Defence for the revolutionary ministry. He remained in Haifa from 1939 until 1948.

When the Arab and Muslim uprising took place and after the martyrdom of *Shaykh* ‘Izz al-Dīn al-Qassām, he led the revolt against the British and the Zionists. He was imprisoned in Haifa and released after a while. While teaching at the al-Burj Institute he was again imprisoned.

He even led some skirmishes and battles and was wounded in some of these and very often he would return home to return bullets or shrapnel from his clothing. He was wounded and then imprisoned in the uprising of 1948. He was taken to Beirut for medical treatment and was subsequently summoned to Damascus by the President, Shukrī al-Qūṭlī who took a liking to the *Shaykh* and personally appointed a doctor to attend to him. From then on his relationship with the President had strengthened. In

Damascus, he taught at the al-Anbar School, at the Faculty of Sharia' and at various Islamic Schools. He even conducted a daily programme on Damascus Radio. He established an organization for the Palestinian Refugees. The Syrian President sent him for Hajj and he was tasked to deliver a special letter to the Saudi King. He was also a member of the delegation to Pakistan. He remained in Syria for about three years and in 1951 he moved to Baghdad in Iraq.

In Iraq, he taught at some of the institutions and was even the lecturer (khaṭīb) at the *Shaykh* 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jaylānī Mosque. He eventually returned to Beirut where he established the Jamiyyat al-Rābita al-Islamiyya and the al-Fath al-Islami School which later became known as the Imam al-Awzā'ī Secondary School. He left Beirut again and returned to Iraq where he continued teaching in various mosques including Jāmi' Darrāgh and Jāmi' al-Bunya.

He even taught at the Centre for Higher Studies and Research in Tunisia and at the Islamic University in Libya and completed some duties with the Ministry of Endowments in Morocco.

He travelled extensively making people aware of the dangers and plans of the Zionists. Over the years the *Shaykh* had become acquainted with some orientalists, particularly when he travelled to Germany and a few other European countries.

Shaykh Nimr was a reputable scholar and an eloquent and prolific lecturer. When he first arrived in Madina Munawwara in (1402), he taught at the Islamic University at the post-graduate level and thereafter he taught at the College of Education. After retiring from formal teaching he opened the doors to his home to students. He resided in Madina where he conducted lessons from his home. His son, *Shaykh* Ahmad is a young aspiring scholar.

Some of the books authored by him are:

- *Min Hadyī al-Qurān*
- *Min Athār al-Nakba*
- *Al-Madkhal ilā Dirāsa al-Manṭiq*
- *Falsafat al-Hajj*
- *Al-Islam Dīn al-Hidāya*
- *Aḥdāth al-Nakba*
- *Al-Imān Tarīquna ilā al-Naṣr*
- *Ḥaqīqat al-Yahūd wa al-Maṭāmi' al-Sahyūniyya*
- *Mursbi al-Du'āt*
- *Abbāth Tamhīdiyya fī al-'Aqīda al-Islamiyya*
- *Manqif al-Dīn min al-'Ilm*

The following books are still in the process of being published:

- *Falsafat al-'Ibāda fī al-Islam*
- *Qabas min Nūr al-Islam*
- *Min 'Ulūm al-Qurān*
- *Dirāṣāt fī al-Falsafat al-Islāmiyya*
- *Al-Falsafat al-Islāmiyya min Masādiribā al-Aṣliyya*
- *Tārīkh al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*
- *Muqaddimāt fī al-Falsafat*

- *Ayyām fi Pakistan*
- *‘Aām fi Tunus wa Libya*
- *Shubūr I al-Maghrib al-Aqsā*
- *Muḥādarāt Islamiyya*
- *Ahsan al-Hadīth*
- *Shakhsīyāt ‘Araṭubā*
- *Fatāwa Islamiyya*
- *As’ilat wa Ajwibatuhā*
- *Al-Nasrāniyya fi al-Qurān wa kamā fahimahā al-Mufasssīrūn*
- *Ibn ‘Arafa, ‘Alim al-Maghrib*

Shaykh Muhammad Nimr shared an excellent relationship with many ‘*ulama*, among them is the renowned Syrian scholar who also resides in Madina, *Shaykh* Khalīl Mullā Khātīr who was present at the Ithnainiyya gathering that was held in honour of *Shaykh* Nimr.

Shaykh Khalīl addressed the gathering at the above mentioned event and he said that his relationship with *Shaykh* Nimr dates back to about thirty-seven years. Among the points raised in his speech was that our honour and respect for the ‘*ulama* will never equal the respect and honour afforded to them by Allah. He also spoke about *Shaykh* Nimr’s personality and his generosity.

Others who spoke at the above function spoke about the honour and dignity of a believer and this as evident in *Shaykh* Nimr along with his impeccable etiquette and his immense knowledge. He as an excellent, profound and eloquent orator who had an amazing effect on his listeners. He carried the responsibility of *jihād* and sacrifice in the true sense and was very conscious of the plight of the Umma and particularly the Palestinians.

At the Ithnainiyya, *Shaykh* Nimr was afforded the opportunity to address those present. Among the things he said was that Allah has indeed honoured ‘*ilm* (sacred knowledge) and we will find about one-sixth of the Qurān discussing ‘*ilm* and those who possess it. He went on to state that there is no distinction between Islamic Knowledge and Modern knowledge. He said that all knowledge is Islamic because we have been commanded by our Prophet Muhammad to acquire it. Yes the acquisition of some aspects and some skills is *fard kifāya* (if some members of the Muslim community learn it then the responsibility is waived from the rest) and some branches of knowledge will lead a person closer to Allah than others. The object of every branch though is ultimately to take the individual closer to Allah.

The *Shaykh* also spoke about those Muslim students who are over awed by the West when they study in universities in Europe etc. these students return to their countries ridiculing their countries and cultures and they even attribute ignorance to our illustrious scholars of the past. They fail to realise that the Muslims have contributed to the rise of European Culture and scholarship. While Muslim scholars were being honoured in their communities, scholars were being persecuted and killed in Europe. This changed when European scholars went to Cordoba in Spain and studied at the feet of Muslim scholars. Similarly, today our youth travel to Britain and France to study and are totally impressed with their cultures. We are the Umma of the greatest Prophet, with the greatest Book. If it were not for the Prophet and this great Qurān, the world would still be in darkness and ignorance. We must therefore guard against having our children lured to the lands of disbelief.

He related an incident from the time of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz when a Muslim army from Azerbaijan entered an area without giving its inhabitants one of three options. These options were: (1) To accept Islam (2) To pay the jizya (3) To face the Muslims in battle. A delegation from Azerbaijan informed ‘Umar about this. He summoned a judge and asked him to investigate the claim. The judge proceeded alone and established that the Muslim army had acted wrongfully. He immediately ordered the Muslim army and its commander to withdraw. The people of Azerbaijan observed that a single Muslim could request a victorious army to withdraw. This convinced them that Islam is indeed a true religion and they accepted Islam.

Shaykh Nimr also elaborated about the position and sacredness of the land of Palestine and the link between Masjid al-Ḥarām in Makka and Masjid al-Aqṣā as is mentioned by Allah in the Qurān. He spoke about the Jews, the Zionists and their religious ideology and the worlds perception and affiliation to these ideologies. He referred to his book ‘*al-Yahūd wa Ḥaqīqat al-Maṭāmi’ al-Suhyūniyya*’ (The Jews and the reality of the Zionists Aspirations).

He spoke about the promise of Allah that the Jews will eventually gather in the land of Palestine, but at the same breath the words of the Prophet Muhammad are also true when he informed us of a decisive battle between the Muslims and the Jews. He said that it is no coincidence that when 300 000 Jews arrived from Russia to settle on the west of Jordan, at the same time 300 000 Muslim Palestinians gathered and settled on the East of Jordan. The land of Palestine is for the Muslims and the Palestinians have been placed there by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī as custodians and guards of the land.

Shaykh Nimr also responded to questions that were posed to him on various topics including his understanding of Tasawwuf. In his answer he mentioned that the basis of Tasawwuf is *ihṣān* mentioned in the famous Ḥadīth of Jibrīl wherein the angel Jibrīl posed a few questions to our Prophet Muhammad. One of these was about *ihṣān* to which the Prophet replied and said that is to worship Allah as if one sees Him, and if one cannot then be aware that Allah is watching him.

He went on to mention that the Sūfī’s are like a hospital. Usually in a hospital we have patients who go there to receive treatment for different illnesses. Likewise is the case with Tasawwuf, because through it different spiritual ailments like jealousy etc are treated.

Just like we have jurists (*fuqahā*) who teach us the practical aspects of our religion like fasting and *Ṣalāt*, we also have ‘*ulama*’ who teach us the fundamentals of Tawḥīd (theology). In this way we have ‘*ulama*’ who teach and guide us as to how we can cleanse ourselves from evil characteristics. This is *ihṣān*. Tasawwuf has been described with more than thirty names all of which evolve around character (*akhlāq*). Thus whoever is better than you in character then he is more of a Sūfī than yourself. We have observed this in other disciplines where imposters have managed to enter the ranks and corrupt or tarnish the image. In the same way there are imposters who have tarnished the name of Tasawwuf. Thus Tasawwuf may be classified into two categories: (1) Those who concentrate on refining character (2) Those who use it as a means to disbelief and in actual fact follow *Shayṭān*.

Shaykh Muhammad Nimr passed away on the night of ‘Īd al-Aḍḥā (10 Dhil Ḥijja 1431) corresponding to the 16th November 2010 in Madina Munawwara.