

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ كَمَا هُوَ أَهْلُهُ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى سَيِّدِ وَدِدِ أَدَمَ كَمَا يُحِبُّ وَيَرْضَى بِأَنْ يُصَلَّى عَلَيْهِ

Allah Almighty, in Whose Name we begin, The Most Compassionate,

The Most Merciful

All Praise is due to Allah Almighty, Countless Peace and Blessings be upon

His Beloved Messenger – *may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* – his family & his companions – *may Allah be pleased with them all*

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## A Student of Imam ibn Hambal

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Mohammed bin Saeed kept insisting to the owner of the local hotel, “Please have fear for Allah Almighty pertaining to this guest which you have in your hotel. He has certainly come from a far off place and I would request that you please do not expel him from you hotel. He is very ill and he has family with him. We have no idea how many valleys and countries he may have crossed to come to our country. Bear in mind that the only reason he has come here is to seek Islamic knowledge.”

The hotel owner asked, “You mean Baqi bin Mukhallid has come from a very distant land?”

Mohammed bin Saeed replied, “Yes that is the truth. Therefore, this person is certainly entitled for immense respect and hospitality. You must also understand that I have never ever asked you for any personal favours. The only personal favour I am asking you is that you do not remove him from your hotel. He is a Hadith scholar and a person

well-learned in the science of Isnaad and Ahwaal-e-Rijaal. (This is the science of Sanad recognition and a person who intimately knows the background of each narrator). Can such a person be left without a helper?”

The owner of the hotel replied, “You are correct, this person has been a guest in this hotel for the past years and never once have I ever asked him for anything. However, at this moment, he is extremely ill and I have the fear that if passes away, then people will begin to think that this is a bad luck hotel and they will then refuse to stay in this hotel any longer when they see that the Janazah of this person is leaving this hotel. In this way I will suffer major financial loss and become poor. Another reason is that this person is very ill and could pass away any moment. We have no idea when he will take his last breath and I feel extremely unfortunate to have given him a place at the beginning.”

However Mohammed bin Saeed said in displeased tone, “There is no doubt that you have reason to have fear. However, if you understood the history of this person, instead of complaining, you would actually go into Sajdah and make Shukr to Allah Almighty. When you become aware of this, only then you will realise what a respected person you have in your hotel. It is my advice that you look after him and make sure that he becomes well. There is no doubt that after taking care of person, I can assure you that Allah Almighty would certainly give you a lofty status in Jannah.”

However, the hotel owner again began to complain and stated, “If you only knew the real identity of this person, you will never complain to me about why I am being so difficult. I am the only person who knows his true identity. This is someone who stays for one night and the next day, it is quiet shocking what I see. He dresses up like a beggar, carries a cane and wraps an old shawl over himself and then goes out begging. I was shocked that this person actually goes out begging.”

However, ibn Saeed began to laugh when he heard this account and insisted that the hotel owner still has not recognized who this person really is.

The hotel owner then insisted that he reveals the actual identity of this person.

Ibn Saeed replied, “This is certainly someone with a great stature. This person has left Andalusia and all the comforts of his country and come to Baghdad Shareef for a very

special mission. He has only arrived in Baghdad Shareef with the purpose of acquiring religious knowledge and with the sole purpose of meeting Abu Abdullah.”

When the owner heard the name Abu Abdullah, it was like someone had cut his tongue. He was completely speechless. Suddenly, all the enmity and doubt he had about his guest, Baqi bin Mukhallid, seem to disappear. He himself was someone who admired Abu Abdullah. He again asked this person, “Is this true that he left such a beautiful country and has come to Baghdad Shareef merely with the intention of meeting Abu Abdullah Ahmed bin Hambal?”

Ibn Saeed mentioned that this was the sole purpose of this young man. The hotel owner wanted to know whether he had actually managed to meet the great Imam.

Mohammed bin Saeed then began to reveal the true story of this young student.

He related, “When he arrived in Baghdad Shareef, he stopped at your hotel and went in search of Imam Ahmed bin Hambal. Bear in mind that these were very dangerous days for the great Imam. Remember that the great Imam was constantly under surveillance by the government and anyone who was caught talking to him was also arrested. In fact, life was made so difficult for people around him that many of them went into hiding. Imam Ahmed bin Hambal was also under house arrest and anyone who went to meet him was immediately arrested.

When the young student, Baqi, heard about all of this, he was also extremely upset and concerned. He then decided to find out more about the great Imam and he went to one of the Jamia Masjids where Hadith lessons were being taught. There were many other students in this class. When people saw the young man, they immediately knew that he was a stranger and someone who was also very poor from his appearance. This is also the first time that I had met him and after shaking his hand he asked me who was the Muhaddith that was teaching these students. I replied that this was Yahya bin Mo’een. He already knew the name and reputation of this eminent Muhaddith and his eyes light up when he heard the name. He then sat in these classes and after the lesson, the eminent Muhaddith gave an opportunity to the students to ask him different questions in the Science of Ahadith. In fact, he wanted them to ask about those narrators who were considered weak, authentic, etc. Suddenly, this young man stood up and asked, “O Abu

Zakariyah! May Allah Almighty bestow His infinite Mercy on you. I am a poor stranger in this place and I wish to ask a few questions and I would appreciate if you would kindly answer my questions”.

The great Shaikh then told him to ask whatever question he wanted.

Bear in mind that the lessons in that class at that moment were questions on the credibility of various narrators and authorities in the field of Hadith. He had mentioned previously that Hishaam bin Ammaar, who was his teacher, was not considered an authentic narrator but someone who was also beyond the status of authenticity. In fact, even if there was slight possibility of a mistake, still his mere status and stature will outweigh this fault. The other students also looked at this stranger because they also wanted the opportunity to ask some questions as well. However, before anyone could ask any question, again this young man asked, “I wish to inquire about another scholar named Ahmed bin Hambal. What is your opinion of him?”

When he asked this question, there was dead silence in the hall and everyone began to look at this young man. The great Muhaddith then looked at everyone and without the slightest display of fear, he declared, “Who are you to ask about someone like this. However, since you have asked this question, it is my duty to answer your question. Listen very carefully. At this moment and time, he is the Imam of the Muslims and the most noble and respected Muslim anywhere in the world.”

The person then asked where the great Imam was staying. People mentioned to him that he should be concerned about the authorities before asking such questions. Some people then pointed out to him the residence of the great Imam and again warned him to be careful.

He then knocked on the door of the great Imam and when the great Imam opened the door, the young man stated, “Hadrat! I have travelled from a very distant land so that I can enjoy your respected company”.

The great Imam asked him where he came from and he mentioned that he came from a place which is also separated by a large ocean. When he mentioned the name Andalusia, Imam Ahmed bin Hambal - *may Allah be pleased with him* - asked him what was his

purpose of visiting him. He replied that he wanted to study Hadith at the feet of the great Imam. His intention was also to take this knowledge and convey it to others in his country.

Imam Ahmed bin Hambal - *may Allah be pleased with him* – said that he could not guarantee his safety in these dangerous times. However the young man mentioned that he was prepared to face whatever difficulties that came in front. At the same time, one of the strategies adopted by this young man was that he would wear the clothing of a beggar and come every day to the great Imam so that he could acquire knowledge of Hadith. Hence, the false impression which was created in the mind of the hotel owner.

Another miracle of the great Imam was that when this young man became very ill, he personally came to the hotel and made Du'a for him and a few days later he regained his health.

Imam Zehbi - *may Allah be pleased with him* - in the *Tadkiratul Huffaz* mentions the statement of Baqi bin Mukhallid which is, "I have planted the seed of knowledge in Andalusia and until the time of the appearance of Dajjal, no one will be able to uproot it."