The Biography of Imâm ibn al-Qayyim

By: Salâhud-Dîn ‘Ali Abdul-Mawjûd

Translated by:
Abdul-Râfi Adewale Imâm
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Preface

Indeed, all praise is due to Allah. We praise Him, we seek His Aid, and we seek forgiveness of Him. And we seek refuge in Allah from the evil of our selves and from the evil of our deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides, there is none that can misguide him, and whomsoever Allah misguides, there is none that can guide him.

And I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except for Allah—Alone and without partners. And I bear witness that Muhammad is His Slave and His Messenger.

"O you who believe, fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die except while you are Muslims [in submission to Allah]." [Al 'Imran (3):102]

"O mankind, fear your Lord who created you from a single soul. And from it He created its mate and dispersed from them both many men and women. And fear Allah through whom (i.e. in His Name) you ask one another (i.e. request favors and demand rights) and the wombs (i.e. fear Allah in regards to the
relations of kinship). Indeed, Allah is Ever-Watchful over you.’” [An-Nisâ’ (4):1]

“O you who believe, fear Allah and speak the truth, He will amend for you your deeds and forgive you your sins. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly attained a great success.” [Al-Ahzâb (33):70-71]

As to what follows:

Indeed, the most truthful of speech is the Book of Allah, and the best of guidance is the guidance of Muhammad, and the worst of affairs are the newly created matters. And every newly created matter is an innovation. And every innovation is misguidance.

This is a series of biographies of some the scholars and Muhaddithîn of this Ummah which Allah has granted glory and honor until the Hour. We will focus on certain aspects of the lives of these scholars such as their attributes, their manners, their knowledge, their worship, and their religion, and how great is our need in this age to know about these matters! There can be no return to the glory and honor that this Ummah possessed except by assuming the noble attributes that the first generations possessed.

The biographies of these scholars have been unknown to many of the Muslims for quite some time, and so the torch to guide those in confusion was extinguished. It has been waiting for the one who will set it alight again to illuminate the path. People have grown tired of hearing empty talk; everyone wants to see this religion become a practical reality just as it was in the lives of these scholars and in the lives of the Muslims who followed them. The religion was well-established in their time and it filled their hearts and minds, and it was part of their very flesh and blood. One senses that their every breath, every movement was for Allah’s sake. If they spoke, it was for Allah’s sake that they spoke, and when they remained silent, that too was for Allah’s sake.

They illuminated the world with their piety, their knowledge, their worship, and their righteous deeds. If you look towards their character and their morals, you would say, “Such was the character and morals of the Prophets.” If you were to look at their dealings with people, you would see a living translation of Allah’s Book, and a practical application of the Sunnah of Allah’s Messenger (S). The very mention of these scholars’ names soften the hearts, and it rejuvenates decrepit limbs in order to rush towards Allah. Whenever one of the characteristics of the righteous would be mentioned in the presence of Makhlan ibn al-Husayn,[1] he would say:

لا تَفْسَحُوا فَيَذُرُّونَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ لِبَيْنِهِمْ لَبِسَ الصُّحِيحِ إِذَا مَاتُوٍّ

“Do not think of mentioning us along with them for

Introduction

All praise is due to Allāh, the Lord of the Worlds, the Merciful, the Beneficent, the Owner of the Day of Recompense. He created man from clay, then He made him a fertilized sperm and egg in the womb. After that, he turned it into a clot which appears black to any who look at it. Then the clot becomes like a chewed morsel of flesh. Then he turns that morsel of flesh into bones well-proportioned and structured. Those bones are covered with flesh, until it becomes a different creation altogether, so Blessed is Allāh, the Best of Creators.

Exalted is the One who has power over all things. He decrees whatever He likes, and He alone possesses the Dominion of the heavens and the earth.

"He creates whatever He wills. He grants female (offspring) to whomever He wishes, and He grants male (offspring) to whomever He wills." [Ash-Shūrā (42):49]

Blessed is Allāh, the High, the Mighty, the Forbearing, the Generous, the Hearing, the Seeing, and the Knowing.

"He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He wills. Lā ilāha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped
but He), the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.’” [Al ‘Imrân (3):6]

I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except for Allah, alone, without partners. None can rival Him, and He is exalted above resembling His creation, for there is none like Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing.

I bear witness that Muhammad is His Slave and Messenger, the Best of His Creation, and His Trustee over His Revelation. He sent him as a mercy to all the worlds, and an example for all mankind. He is Allah’s Proof against all of His Creatures. Through him, Allah guided mankind while before they were misguided and taught them while before they had been ignorant. By sending him, Allah gave sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf. Muhammad delivered the Message and fulfilled the trust given to him by Allah; he sincerely guided the Ummah until all of Allah’s commandments became clear to them. Through him, the Party of ar-Rahmân attained honor, and the Party of Shaytân was humiliated. He filled the world with light after it had been full of darkness, and those wandering in confusion were guided. So may Allah send Salâh upon him, and may He grant him peace, mercy, and blessings.

To Proceed:

Every person, whether he is a believer or a disbeliever, seeks certain things in order to achieve happiness. Everyone seeks means to attain that which he desires, and everyone desires means to prevent that which they dislike. The intelligent person is the one who seeks the help of the One Who has the ability to grant him what he desires and prevent what he dislikes.

So who is truly intelligent? The truly intelligent person is the believer whose goal is to enter Paradise and to be as far away as possible from the Hellfire and its people. It is well known that salvation from the Hellfire and entrance into Paradise can only be attained by implementing the meaning of this Verse:

إِنَّكَ لَنَعْبُدُ وَإِنَّـا نَسْمَعُنَّ

“‘It is You (alone) we worship, and it is from You (alone) we seek help.” [Al-Fâtiḥah (1):5]

Therefore, servitude to Allah and seeking His Aid in attaining that servitude is the path that will take the person to Paradise and save him from the fire.

Servitude is not fitting to anyone besides Allah, and no one deserves worship other than him; this is the meaning of Tawhîd of al-Ulûhiyyah (Divinity). Aid is sought from Allah (س) to make it easy for a person to attain sincere servitude to Him and to guide him to its paths; this is the meaning of Tawhîd of Rubûbiyyah (Lordship).

Allah (س) Created all the Creation in order to worship Him with love and sincerity as He says:

أَوَمَّا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ

“And I have not created the jinn and men except to worship Me.” [Adh-Dhâriyât (51):56]

Certain things must be kept in mind to understand this Verse properly:
so many eyes that were blind and life to so many hearts that were dead. He is none other than Shaykh Al-Islām, Imam ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, may Allāh shower him with His Mercy.

**His Name and Lineage:**

He is Abū ‘Abdillāh, Shams ad-Dīn, Muḥammad ibn Abi Bakr ibn Ayyūb ibn Sa’d ibn Hariz ibn Makkī Zayn ad-Dīn, az-Zur‘ī then ad-Dimashqī, Al-Ḥanbālī. He is famous as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah.[1]

**His Birth:**

The biographical reference works are in agreement that he was born in the year 691 H. His student, aş-Safādī, mentioned that he was born on the 7th of Safar in that year. Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Ad-Dawūdī, and as-Suyūṭī followed him in that view.[2]

**The Title “Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah”:**

This great Imām is well-known amongst both the early scholars and the later scholars as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. Some shorten it and simply say Ibn al-Qayyim. The biographical reference works are in agreement that the one who became famous with the title “Qayyim al-Jawziyyah” was his father: Shaykh Abū Bakr ibn Ayyūb az-Zur‘ī. He was the Qayyim, or director, of al-Madrasah al-Jawziyyah (the Jawzi school) in Damascus for a long period of time. Therefore, he was called “Qayyim al-Jawziyyah.” Afterwards, his offspring and his grandchildren became famous with this ascription.

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**Introduction**

Qayyim, in the language, means someone who is in charge of directing and managing something. As for its definition according to its technical usage, it does not go beyond that. It has the same meaning as Nāzir or Waṣī, so a person can be called the Nāzir of a school, its Waṣī, or its Qayyim. They all have the same meaning. It is sufficient source of his pride that he should be in charge of this school because of the great influence it had amongst all the schools of that time.[1]

**Al-Madrasah al-Jawziyyah:**

Knowing the reason he became famous for this ascription, it is necessary to know something about al-Madrasah al-Jawziyyah. Al-Jawziyyah was one of the greatest Hanbali schools in Damascus in particular and Shām in general. It is attributed to its founder, ibn al-Jawzī; and he is Muḥyī ad-Dīn Yusuf, son of the famous Imām and preacher, Abū al-Faraj ‘Abdur-Rahmān ibn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn ‘Ubaydillāh ibn al-Jawzī al-Qurashi al-Bakrī al-Baghdādī al-Ḥanbālī. He died in the year 656 H.

It is mentioned in Munādāh Al-Atfāl, “This school was located at Al-Bazūriyyah which used to be called Sūq al-Qamh. Its neighbors have taken up most of it, and only a small part of it remains now. It remained functioning until the year 1327 H, but it is now closed and we do not know how it will fair with the passage of time.”

After the words of ibn Badrān, al-Ustādh Ahmad ‘Ubayd said, “Then it was closed for some time until it was reopened by Jam‘iyah al-Is‘āf al-Khayrī and

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transformed into a school for teaching children. Then, it burned down in the first Syrian Revolution, and it remains in that state until today.”

Al-Ustādh Muḥammad Muslim al-Ghunaymī said, “Then it burned down in the year 1925 CE during the Syrian Revolution against the French, but now its structure has been rebuilt.”[1]

**Others Also Known as ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah:**

Those who share this ascription with him can be divided into the following:

1) Those who are descended from Abū Bakr ibn Ayyūb, his father, from amongst his sons and grandsons, as shall be mentioned shortly.

2) The grandson of Imām ibn al-Qayyim through his daughter and his children as mentioned by As-Sakhāwī in ad-Ḍaw’ al-Lāmi’ in his statement, “Abdur-Rahmān ibn Abī Ḥamd ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhim al-Khawājā ad-Dimashqī; he settled in Makkah. He is the father of Abī Ḥamd, Muḥammad, Yaḥyā, and others. His grandfather is known as Abū al-Faraj and he was known as ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. His mother was the daughter of ash-Shams ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. He came to Makkah shortly after the year 30 and settled there. He purchased a home there and he used to travel regularly to Calicut[2] for business. He died in Makkah during Rabi’ al-Awwal in the year 856 H.

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As-Sakhāwī also wrote a biography of his son, Abī Bakr ibn Abdir-Rahmān, and he said concerning it, “Like his father, he was also known as ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. He died in Cairo in the year 973 H.”[1]

**His Father:**

His father was Shaykh Abū Bakr ibn Ayyūb az-Zur’ī. He became known as Qayyim al-Jawziyyah because he was the Qayyim of al-Madrasah al-Jawziyyah in Damascus for some time. After him, his children and grandchildren became famous for that, so one of them would be called “ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah.”

Ibn Kathīr said, “He is the Shaykh, the worshipper, Abū Bakr ibn Ayyūb ibn Sa’d az-Zur’ī al-Ḥanbali, the Qayyim of al-Jawziyyah. He was a righteous worshipper, and he was straightforward. He was a noble man, and he heard some of Dalā’il an-Nabuwwah from ar-Rashid al-‘Āmirī. He died suddenly on the night of Sunday, 19th Dhū al-Ḥijjah at al-Madrasah al-Jawziyyah. His funeral prayer was performed after Zuhr in the Jāmi’ (large Masjid). He was buried at Bāb aṣ-Ṣaghīr. His funeral was witnessed by many, and the people praised him greatly, may Allāh have mercy on him. He is the father of al-‘Allāmah Shams ad-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, the author of many extremely beneficial works. He was very knowledgeable concerning the regulations of inheritances, and his son Shams ad-Dīn learned about

[1] Ibn al-Qayyim, Ḥayātu hu Wa Āthāruhu (p. 15).
it from him, may Allāh have mercy on both of them.”[1]

His Brothers:

His brother was Zayn ad-Dīn Abū al-Faraj ‘Abdur-Rahmān ibn Abī Bakr. He was born about two years after his brother, ash-Shams, for he was born in the year 693 H. He shared most of the same teachers as his brother, and al-Ḥāfiẓ ibn Rajab was one of his students. He died on the night of Sunday, the 18th of Dhū al-Ḥijjah, in the year 769 H in Damascus. He was buried in the graveyard of Bāb aṣ-Ṣaghīr.[2]

The son of his brother Zayn ad-Dīn was ‘Imād ad-Dīn Abū al-Fidā’ Ismā’īl ibn Zayn ad-Dīn ‘Abdir-Rahmān. He was a noble person, and he acquired most of the library of his uncle Shams ad-Dīn. He died on the day of Saturday, the 15th of Rajab in the year 799 H.[3]

His Children:

1) ‘Abdullāh — he is Sharaf ad-Dīn and Jamāl ad-Dīn ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Imam Shams ad-Dīn Muḥammad. He was born in the year 723 H. He was extremely intelligent and possessed an excellent memory. He memorized Sūrah al-A’rāf in two days, and he recited the Qur’ān while (leading) the prayer in the year 731 H, while he was still about nine years old. He is the one who took charge of teaching at aṣ-Ṣadriyyah after his father, and his biographers lavished him with praise of his knowledge, his piety, his sharp intellect, and his Ghayrah (sense of jealousy) for Allāh’s sake. Al-Ḥāfiẓ ibn Kathīr mentioned in at-Tārīkh that he was the one who eliminated the innovation of al-Waqīd, lighting of lamps, in the Jāmi’ of Damascus on the night of the 15th of Sha’bān, and (he also mentioned) that this was one of the amazing achievements that no one had attained the likes of in two hundred years.[1]

2) Ibrāhīm — he is the ‘Allāmah, the grammarian, the great jurisprudent, Burhān ad-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn Shams ad-Dīn. He was born in the year 716 H, and he died in the year 767 H. He learned from his father and other teachers. He would issue legal verdicts, and he taught at aṣ-Ṣadriyyah. He attained a good reputation and he tread the path of his father. He was an expert in grammar. He wrote a commentary on Alfiyyah ibn Mālik titled Irshād as-Sālik Ilā Ḥall Alfiyyah ibn Mālik. He was affluent, and he left tremendous wealth behind approaching one hundred thousand Dirhams, may Allāh have mercy on him.

Ibn Ḥajar mentions amongst the interesting stories about him in ad-Durar al-Kāminah, “There occurred a dispute between him and ‘Imād ad-Dīn ibn Kathīr in teaching, ibn Kathīr said to him, ‘You dislike me because I am Ash’ārī.’ He responded, ‘If there was hair (Sha’r) all the way from your head down to your feet, people would not believe you if you say that you are an Ash’ārī while your Shaykh was ibn Taymiyyah.’”[2]

[1] Shadharāt adh-Dhahab (6/180). Translator’s note: He means that this innovation was so strongly rooted in the local practice that it was shocking he was able to succeed in this.

[2] This is a play on words, a person who is very hairy, or hirsute, is called Ash’ar in the Arabic language.
His Teachers

Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd, may Allah preserve him, said, "The following list reveals the famous teachers of ibn al-Qayyim who played a role in the development of his intellectual framework and his maturation as a scholar. They are listed alphabetically (in Arabic):

1. **Qayyim al-Jawziyyah**: His father Abū Bakr ibn Ayyūb. As-Safādī, ibn Taghrī Bardī, and ash-Shawkānī mentioned him amongst his teachers. They mentioned that he learned *al-Farā‘īd* from him, and he was expert in that field.

2. **Ibn ‘Abd ad-Dā‘īm**: He is Abū Bakr ibn al-Musnīd Zayn ad-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd ad-Dā‘īm ibn Nī‘mah al-Maqdīsī, the *Musnīd* of his age. He lived a very long time and died in the year 718 H.

3. **Shaykh al-Islām ibn Taymiyyah**: Aḥmad ibn ‘Abdīl-Ḥalīm ibn ‘Abdis-Salām an-Numayrī; he died in the year 728 H, may Allah have mercy on him. He learned from him: *Tafsīr, Hadīth, Fiqh, al-Farā‘īd*, the Two Foundations, ‘ilm al-Kalām. He kept close to him until he learned his Fiqh. He was one of his brightest students, and he acquired a tremendous deal of knowledge from him. As-Safādī clarified a number of essential books that ibn al-Qayyim read to ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah have mercy on them; he said:

‘He read to him a section of *al-Muḥarrar*[[1]](fn:1) by his

[[1]] *Al-Muḥarrar* is a book concerning Hanbali Fiqh in two volumes.
found healing in them to an extent that is truly astonishing.

3. He performed Ruqyah\(^1\) on himself and drank from Zamzam. In his book Madārij as-Sāliḥīn, while discussing the topic of Ruqyah, he states, “I have experienced amazing occurrences with myself and with others concerning this, particularly while I was residing in Makkah. I used to suffer extreme pains as a result of which I could not even move while I was in Ṭawāf and at other times, so I would hasten to recite al-Fāṭiḥah, and then I would wipe the area that was in pain, and it would go away as if I was wiping away pebbles. I experienced this numerous times. Also, I would take a cup of Zamzam and recite al-Fāṭiḥah over it a number of times, then I would drink from it and it would give me more benefit and strength than I have ever experienced from any medicine. In fact, the affair was even greater than that, but it is in accordance with the strength of one’s faith and the degree of certainty, and with Allāh is all help sought.

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\(^{1}\) Ruqyah is to seek healing through reciting of Qur’ān or by invoking Allāh through the legislated invocations.

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His Occupations and Pursuits

Ibn al-Qayyim’s professional occupations were linked to his scholarly pursuits the way that the soul is linked to the skeleton. There is not a single one of his known occupations that does not relate to spreading knowledge. From examining the biographical references concerning his life, we find that they were the following:

1. **Imām at al-Jawziyyah**

2. **Teacher at aṣ-Ṣadriyyah\(^1\) and other locations**

3. **Issuing Fatwās (legal verdicts)**

4. **Authoring books**

1) **Imam at al-Jawziyyah:**

Most of his biographers mention he held the position of Imām at al-Madrasah al-Jawziyyah. For this reason, ibn Kathīr stated, “He is the Imām of al-Jawziyyah and the son of its Qayyim.”

Ibn Kathīr also mentions amongst the events of the year 736 H that ibn al-Qayyim delivered the sermon at one of the Jāmi’ Masjids of Damascus. He states, “At the end of Rajab, Jumu‘ah was offered at the Jāmi’ established by Najm ad-Dīn ibn Khulaykhān towards the Gate of Kaysān. The sermon was delivered by al-Imām, al-‘Allāmah

\(^{1}\) Aṣ-Ṣadriyyah is an ascription to its founder, Šadr ad-Dīn As’ad ibn ‘Uthmān ibn al-Munjā (D. 657 H). Ibn Badrān said, “It is confirmed that all traces of Aṣ-Ṣadriyyah are gone, and there are now homes in its place.”
His Love of Ḥadīth

Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allāh have mercy on him, had a love of Ḥadīth and he was knowledgeable of what is authentic and what is weak. He had full knowledge of the various routes of the Ḥadīths and of the science of narrators.

Ibn al-Qayyim states:

“One of the ways in which it is known that a Ḥadīth is fabricated is that authentic texts clearly indicate its falsehood as in the Ḥadīth of ‘Īwaj ḥā-Tawāl, and it is a false, forged Ḥadīth. It is not shocking that one would dare to fabricate this Ḥadīth and lie against Allāh (ﷻ). What is shocking is those who included this Ḥadīth in books related to sciences such as Tafsīr and yet they do not clarify its affair.” Then he said, “and there is no doubt that this Ḥadīth and its likes were fabricated by the Zindīqs of the People of the Book who wished to mock the noble messengers, upon them be Ṣalāh and peace, and upon their followers.”[1]

On the authentic Ḥadīth

“Indeed, the creation of the son of Ādām is gathered in the womb of his mother forty days as a nutfah,[2] then it is a clot for a similar amount of time, then it is a chewed morsel of flesh for a

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[2] Translator's note: the term Nutfah means a small amount of liquid. This is referring to the zygote, and Allāh knows best.
Suddenly there is a piercing bright light
Filling the far corners of the Gardens
The Lord of the Heavens Manifests Himself for them openly
He Loves from above His Throne and then He speaks,
"Peace be upon You," as all of them hear
With their ears His greetings of peace when He greets them.
He says, "Ask me whatever you wish for all that you
Wish is with me and I am Most Merciful."
They all say, "We ask You (Your) Pleasure
For You are the One who owns all that is beautiful and shows mercy."
He grants this to them and they all bear witness
That Allâh (ﷻ) is Most Generous.
So O you who would sell this for a measly price hastily given
It is as if you do not know; indeed, you shall know!
So if you do not know, then that is a calamity,
And if you know, then the calamity is greater!

The Death of ibn al-Qayyim

The biographical references are in agreement that he died on the night of Thursday, the 13th of Rajab, at the time of the Adhân for 'Isha' in the year 751 H. He reached a full sixty years in age, may Allâh (ﷻ) have mercy on him.

His Funeral Prayer and Burial

The funeral prayer was performed for him the following after the Zuhr prayer in al-Jâmi' al-Umawi[1] then at Jâmi' Jarâh.[2] The people came in large crowds to attend his funeral.

Ibn Kathîr states, "He had a crowded funeral, may Allâh (ﷻ) have mercy on him. It was witnessed by the judges, important figures, and righteous people, both from the commonfolk and the elite. The people swarmed to carry his bier. He was buried in Damascus at the graveyard of al-Bâb as-Šaghîr next to his mother, may Allâh (ﷻ) have mercy on both of them.[3]

Dreams Related to His Death

His biographers mention that many good dreams

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[1] It is the largest Masjid of Damascus, and it continues to have regular attendance to this day. There is disagreement concerning the date of its construction: it is said it was built during the rule of al-Walid ibn 'Abdil-Malik in the year 96 H and there are other views.

[2] It is located next to al-Bab as-Šaghîr in Damascus.