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Introduction

Indeed, all praise is for Allah; we praise Him, repent to Him, and seek His forgiveness and help. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil of our own selves and of our wicked deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides, none can lead astray; and whomsoever Allah leads astray, none can guide. And I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah alone, and He has no partner; and I bear witness that our Prophet Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُوا إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾

"O you who believe! Fear Allah as He should be feared. And die not except in the state of Islam [as Muslims (with complete submission to Allah.)]" (Qur'an 3:102)

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾

"O mankind be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him He created his wife, and from them both He created many men and women, and fear Allah through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship). Surely, Allah is Ever an All-Watcher over you." (Qur'an 4: 1)

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ۝ يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا﴾

"O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allah and fear Him, and speak (always) the truth. He will direct you to do righteous good deeds and will forgive you your sins. And whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, he has indeed achieved a great achievement (i.e., he will be saved from the Hellfire and made to enter Paradise)." (Qur'an 33: 70, 71)

Indeed, the most truthful speech is Allah's Book, and the best guidance is that of Muhammad ﷺ. The most evil of affairs are newly invented ones (in the religion), for every newly invented practice is an innovation (*Bid'ah*), every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the Fire.

This is the second in a series of books on the biographies of Muslim scholars. I hope to focus not just on their contributions to the vast wealth of Islamic knowledge with which Allah ﷻ has blessed this nation, but also on the more private and personal aspects of their lives: their manners, their piety, and their worship. These are issues we need to learn about, for the people of this nation cannot hope to achieve a return to their past glory and honor unless they assume the qualities that, in effect, defined the Muslims of the first few generations of Islam.

Sadly, many Muslims are today ignorant of even the names of our past scholars, never mind their biographies or contributions to Islam. Thus cut off from the past, many Muslims are in a state of ignorance and confusion, and seem to be waiting for someone to light up the way for them. Most people are tired of listening to speeches, and everyone wants to

see people who represent, through their demeanor and deeds, a practical manifestation of the religion of Islam. One has to look far and wide to find people who fit these criteria — though we still have scholars who are noble in speech and in deed (and all praise is for Allah). But in reality, one does not have to go far to find such people, for their lives are recorded for us in history books; and here I am referring to the scholars of the early generations of Islam in particular, as well as to later scholars who followed the way of their pious predecessors.

As for the scholars to whom I am referring, Faith reached the deepest depths of their minds and hearts and flowed freely through their veins. One senses that every breath they took as well as every movement they made was for the sake of Allah. If they spoke, they spoke for the sake of Allah; and if they remained silent, that too was for the sake of Allah ﷻ. They illuminated the world with their piety, worship, and deeds. If one were to study their manners and deeds, one would feel that theirs were the manners and deeds of Prophets. And if one were to read about their dealings with people, one would feel that one had come across practical demonstrations of the teachings of the Noble Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ.

Some of my noble brothers have asked me to write a series of books in order to acquaint the general population of Muslims with their scholars. I sought help from Allah ﷻ and resolved to begin that monumental task. At first, I wanted to exhaustively write about the lives of scholars, covering every aspect of their lives, and giving a detailed account of all of

their scholarly activities and contributions to the Muslim nation. But the brothers who commissioned me to complete this project wanted me to present works that would be easy to read and accessible not just to students of knowledge, but also to the general population of Muslims. So I have tried, to the best of my ability, and seeking help from Allah ﷻ, to be as brief and concise as possible.

I would like to point out that, in writing the biographies of past scholars, I have not adhered to the principles of narrator scrutiny that are applied in the sciences of *Hadeeth*. What I found to be famously known about past scholars, I included in this work, so long as there was no cause to doubt a particular narration. If a particular narration about a scholar was dubious in nature — it was not historically plausible, it was not widely accepted, its authenticity was challenged by learned scholars, etc. — I did not include it in any of these biographies. I thus applied the principles that were adhered to by eminent biographers of the past — the likes of Al-Haafiz Adh-Dhahabee, Al-Haafiz Ibn Katheer, and Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on them all).

This is the second book in the series, and it deals with the biography of the *Imam of Hadeeth* scholars, whose lifelong pursuit of knowledge culminated in the authorship of a book that, in terms of its importance and truthfulness, ranks second only to the Book of Allah. I am of course referring here to none other than Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel Al-Bukhaaree — may Allah have mercy on him.

His Life

His Name and Lineage

Imam Bukhaaree was primarily known by two titles that were bestowed upon him: 1) "The *Imam of Hadeeth* Scholars," and 2) "The *Imam of the Believers, in Hadeeth*." And the following is his full name: Abu (Abu means 'father of') 'Abdullah Muhammad ibn (*ibn* means 'son of') Ismaa'eel ibn Ibraaheem ibn Al-Mugheerah ibn Bardizbah Al-Bukhaaree, Al-Ja'fee.

His Birth

'Muhammad' was his actual name (often in this work, he may be referred to as Muhammad or Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel or Abu 'Abdullah) but he became famously known as Imam Bukhaaree because of his place of birth: He was born in the city of Bukhaaraa. It was during the Banu Umayyah dynasty, or more precisely during the caliphate of Mu'aawiyah ؓ, that Bukhaaraa was conquered by Muslims. The general who led the Muslim army in the invasion of Bukhaaraa was Sa'eed ibn 'Uthmaan. This is the generally accepted view in the matter; however, it has been said that it was Qutaybah ibn Muslim who, during the rule of Al-Hajjaaj ibn Yousuf Ath-Thaqafee, led the Muslim army that conquered Bukhaaraa.

Imam Bukhaaree (may Allah have mercy on him) was born on Friday, after *Jumu'ah* prayer, the 14th of Shawwaal, in the year 194 H.^[1] Al-Mustaneer ibn

^[1] *Siyar A'laam An-Nubalaa* (12/392) and *Muqaddimatul-Fath* (501).

'Ateeq said, "Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel (Al-Bukhaaree) related this fact himself, showing me the date of his birth in a document that was hand-written by his father."^[1]

In *At-Tabaqaat Al-Kubraa*, Imam As-Subkee related that a man named Badh-dhabah was the father of Bardizbah — the very same Bardizbah who was the last known forebear of Imam Bukhaaree. Imam As-Subkee was the only scholar to make mention of Badh-dhabah; as for other scholars and historians, they mention Bardizbah as the last known ancestor of Imam Bukhaaree.^[2] At any rate, the names of those two men — Bardizbah and Badh-dhabah — indicate that Imam Bukhaaree's ancestors were non-Arabs. *Hadeeth* scholars mention that "Bardizbah" is Persian for 'farmer.'

We know almost nothing about Badh-dhabah and Bardizbah; in fact, all that we know about them is that they were Persians, and that they were adherents of the religion of their people. Imam Bukhaaree's Muslim ancestry began when his great grandfather, Al-Mugheerah, embraced Islam at the hands of Yamaan Al-Juf'ee, the ruler of Bukhaaraa. After he embraced Islam, Al-Mugheerah took up residence in Bukhaaraa. One of the prevailing customs at the time was that, if a man embraced Islam at the hands of someone, he would owe him some form of loyalty. It is for this reason that even Al-Mugheerah's great grandson, Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel Al-Bukhaaree, was

ascribed to Yamaan Al-Juf'ee (for, as is mentioned above, Imam Bukhaaree's full name was Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel ibn Ibraaheem ibn Al-Mugheerah ibn Bardizbah Al-Bukhaaree, Al-Juf'ee). He was ascribed thus in accordance with the jurisprudential view that, if a person embraces Islam at the hands of someone, he owes him a kind of loyalty (what that particular kind of loyalty involves is similar to the loyalty that is involved when someone emancipates his slave: the slave becomes free but still owes a form of loyalty to his former master).^[1]

As for Ibraaheem, the grandfather of Imam Bukhaaree, historians have not come across any information about his life.^[2]

His Father

His father, Ismaa'eel, went by the *Kunyah* (*Kunyah* is a name by which one is usually, but not always, ascribed to one's son, in the form of 'Abu so-and-so,' since *Abu* means 'father') Abul-Hasan. Ismaa'eel was an eminent *Hadeeth* scholar in his own right, and was one of the students and associates of Imam Maalik (may Allah have mercy on him). A brief biography of Ismaa'eel is mentioned in *Ath-Thiqaat*, which was authored by Ibn Hibbaan. Ibn Hibbaan wrote: "Ismaa'eel ibn Ibraaheem, the father of Al-Bukhaaree, related *Hadeeth* narrations from Hammaad ibn Yazeed and Maalik; and Iraqi scholars related *Hadeeth* narrations from him."

And his more famous son mentioned him in *At-*

^[1] *Muqaddimatul-Fath* (501).

^[2] Refer to *Al-Insaan* by As-Sam'aan (1/293); and to *Taareekh Baghdad* (2/6).

^[1] *Muqaddimatul-Fath* (1/5).

^[2] *Muqaddimatul-Fath* (501).

Taareekh Al-Kabeer: "Ismaa'eel ibn Ibraaheem ibn Al-Mugheerah heard *Hadeeth* narrations from Maalik and Hamaad ibn Zaid, and with both of his hands, he shook hands with Ibn Al-Mubaarak. And he would say around the time of his death that none of the wealth he earned throughout his lifetime was derived through unlawful or dubious means."^[1] Ahmad ibn Hafs related a similar account about Ismaa'eel's death: "I visited Ismaa'eel, the father of Abu 'Abdullah (Al-Bukhaaree), when he was dying, and he said, 'I know of no dirham from my wealth that was earned through unlawful means, nor of any dirham (from my wealth) that was earned through dubious means.' When he said that, I thought very disparagingly about myself."^[2]

Although we do not know the exact year during which Ismaa'eel died, nor consequently how old Imam Bukhaaree was at the time, we do know that, when Ismaa'eel parted from this world, Imam Bukhaaree was still a young child. After the death of Ismaa'eel, Imam Bukhaaree was raised in the household of his mother.

His Mother

Although the name and lineage of Imam Bukhaaree's mother is not mentioned in any extant historical account, we do know that she was a pious woman and a prolific worshipper. She was even blessed with a *Karaamah* — a miracle (both *Karaamah* and *Mo'jizah* are

^[1] *Muqaddimatul-Fath* (502).

^[2] *Siyar A'laam An-Nubalaa* (12/447) and *Muqaddimatul-Fath* (502) (12/447).

terms that denote the meaning of 'a miracle'; however, a *Mo'jizah* is specific to Prophets, whereas a *Karaamah* occurs to other human beings). Muhammad ibn Ishaq As-Simsaar said that he heard his *Shaikh* say, "Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel (Al-Bukhaaree) lost his eyesight when he was a young child. His mother then saw (the Prophet) Ibraaheem Al-Khaleel ﷺ in a dream, and he said to her, 'O woman, Allah has returned to your son his eyesight because of your crying,' or, 'because of your many supplications.' When Muhammad ibn Ismaa'eel woke up [after that very night], he found that Allah had indeed returned to him his eyesight."^[1] Not only did Imam Bukhaaree regain his eyesight, but it also became stronger than it was before, to the extent that, later on his life, he would write chapters of his book *At-Taareekh Al-Kabeer* using no source of light other than the moonlight to see what he was writing down.^[2]

His Early Years

Based on Imam Bukhaaree's achievements as an adult, it should come as no surprise that he was raised in the best of households — a household of piety and knowledge. Even though his father died when he was still a young child, he inherited from him his love of knowledge.

Muhammad ibn Abu Haatim Al-Warraaq related that he heard Imam Bukhaaree say, "I was inspired to memorize *Hadeeth* narrations when I was still in school."

^[1] *Taareekh Baghdad* (2/10), *Siyar A'laam An-Nubalaa* (12/393), and *Muqaddimatul-Fath* (502).

^[2] *Seeratul-Bukhaaree* by Al-Mubaarakpooree (43).