

# ISLĀM IN AFRICA

THROUGHOUT HISTORY



BY SHAYKH MUḤAMMAD AMĀN AL-JĀMI

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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## Transliteration Table

### Consonants

ء	'	د	d	ض	ḍ	ك	k
ب	b	ذ	dh	ط	ṭ	ل	l
ت	t	ر	r	ظ	ẓ	م	m
ث	th	ز	z	ع	'	ن	n
ج	j	س	s	غ	gh	ه	h
ح	ḥ	ش	sh	ف	f	و	w
خ	kh	ص	ṣ	ق	q	ي	y

### Vowels

Short	ـَ	a	ـِ	i	ـُ	u
Long	ـَا	ā	ـِي	ī	ـُو	ū
Diphthongs	ـَي	ay/ai	ـَوْ	aw		

### Glyphs

ﷺ *Ṣallāllāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* (May Allāh's praise & salutations be upon him)

ﷺ *Raḍiyallāhu 'anhu* (May Allāh be pleased with him)

ﷺ *Raḍiyallāhu 'anhā* (May Allāh be pleased with her)

ﷺ *Raḍiyallāhu 'anhum* (May Allāh be pleased with them)

ﷺ *Raḍiyallāhu 'anhumā* (May Allāh be pleased with them both)

ﷻ *Raḥimabullāh* (May Allāh have mercy on him)

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## — TRANSLATOR’S INTRODUCTION —

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

All praises belong to Allāh, the Lord of all that exists. May Allāh exalt the rank of the final Messenger sent to mankind, Muḥammad bin ‘Abdullāh ﷺ.

Brought to us by the Ethiopian scholar Shaykh Muḥammad Amān al-Jāmi, *Islām in Africa Throughout History* chronicles three significant phases of Islām in Africa which helped shape the world. This classic manuscript begins with the courageous stance of the Abyssinian king an-Najāshi, which shook Heraclius of Rome, defied the tribes of Makkah while influencing the kings of Oman, and even softened the hearts of Prophet Muḥammad’s staunchest adversaries.

The second part of the book recounts two waves of *da’wah* in Africa: the Arab merchants and the Ṣūfis, both of which left a lasting imprint upon the continent.

The third part details the scholars who led the revival of the Salafi *da’wah* in Africa and advises the students of knowledge about the future of Islām in Africa.

As a bonus for the reader, I added some appendices:

- From Slave to King: An-Najāshi’s Rise to the Throne
- An-Najāshi: The First King to Accept Islām
- The Prophet’s Letter to An-Najāshi



## ISLĀM IN AFRICA THROUGHOUT HISTORY

- An-Najāshi's Letter to the Prophet
- Was An-Najāshi a Companion of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ?
- The Story of How 'Amr bin al-Āṣ Accepted Islām

I ask Allāh the Exalted to have mercy upon Shaykh Muḥammad Amān al-Jāmi and enter him into the highest level of Paradise.

**Rasheed ibn Estes Barbee**

**Durham, NC**

## — ABOUT THE AUTHOR<sup>1</sup> —

### **His Name**

He is Muḥammad Amān bin 'Alī al-Jāmi, known as Abū Aḥmad.

### **His Homeland**

He is from Ethiopia, in the region of Harar, from the village of Ṭaghā Ṭāb.

### **His Birth**

He was born in 1349 AH<sup>2</sup> (corresponding with 1931 on the Gregorian calendar).

### **His Early Studies in Ethiopia**

The *shaykh* began with studying the Noble Qur'ān in his village of Ṭaghā Ṭāb. Upon completing his Quranic studies, he began studying the books of Islamic jurisprudence according to the *madhhab* of Imām ash-Shāfi'i رَحِمَهُ اللهُ. He also studied the Arabic language in his village under the tutelage of Shaykh Muḥammad Amīn al-Harari.

He then left his village, as was the custom of the residents of that area, and moved to another village. There, he met with a man who became

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<sup>1</sup> This biography of the *shaykh* was written by his student Shaykh Muṣṭafā bin 'Abdul-Qādir al-Fulāni.

<sup>2</sup> "AH" (After Hijrah) denotes the Islamic calendar system, which begins after the Prophet's migration to Madīnah.

his colleague in seeking knowledge and migrating to Saudi Arabia: Shaykh ‘Abdul-Karīm. They formed an Islamic brotherhood and traveled together to a *shaykh* named Shaykh Mūsā. Under him, they studied the poem “Az-Zubd” by Ibn Raslān. Next, they studied the text of *Al-Minhāj* with Shaykh Abādir. And they studied a number of sciences in this village.

Both of them desired to travel to the holy land of Makkah to seek knowledge and perform the obligation of Ḥajj. Thus, they left Ethiopia, heading towards Somalia, where they boarded a ship heading to the city of Aden in Yemen. They experienced many hardships and dangers on both land and sea. Next, they continued to the city of al-Ḥudaydah in Yemen, walking by foot; and there they fasted the month of Ramaḍān. Then they traveled towards Saudi Arabia, passing through Ṣāmiṭah<sup>3</sup> and Abū ‘Arīsh<sup>4</sup> until they received permission to enter Makkah. And this journey was made on foot.

### **His Studies in Saudi Arabia**

The *shaykh* began by performing Ḥajj in the year 1369 AH. He then began to seek knowledge in the study circles held in al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. There, he learned from Shaykh ‘Abdur-Razzāq Ḥamzah رحمته الله, Shaykh ‘Abdul-Ḥaqq al-Hāshimi رحمته الله, Shaykh Muḥammad bin ‘Abdullāh aṣ-Ṣūmālī رحمته الله, and others.

In Makkah, he met the eminent Shaykh ‘Abdul-‘Azīz bin Bāz رحمته الله and he accompanied him in travels to Riyadh the year that the Educational Institute opened; this was in the early 1370s (AH).

He likewise clung to the circles of knowledge that took place in the Saudi capital. He benefited and was affected by the noble mufti, the *faqīh*, the scholar of *uṣūl*, Shaykh Muḥammad bin Ibrāhīm Āl ash-Shaykh رحمته الله.

He likewise clung to the noble Shaykh ‘Abdur-Raḥmān of Mali,

<sup>3</sup> A town and sub-division in Jizān Province, in southwestern Saudi Arabia.

<sup>4</sup> A city in Jizān Province, in southwestern Saudi Arabia.

Africa, رحمته الله as well as His Eminence ‘Abdul-‘Azīz bin Bāz رحمته الله. He benefited greatly from his abundant knowledge and noble character.

Likewise, he took knowledge in Riyadh from the noble Shaykh Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Jakni ash-Shanqīṭi رحمته الله, the *shaykh* and *muḥaddith* Ḥammād al-Anṣārī, and Shaykh ‘Abdur-Razzāq ‘Afīfī. He was greatly affected by Shaykh ‘Abdur-Razzāq ‘Afīfī, even in the way he taught.

He also benefited from and was affected by the noble Shaykh ‘Abdur-Raḥmān bin Nāṣir as-Sa’dī, for they used to correspond with each other. He also learned from Shaykh Muḥammad Khalīl Harrās and he was also affected by him. He also benefited from Shaykh ‘Abdullāh al-Qar‘āwī رحمته الله.

### **His Educational Credentials**

He attained his doctorate from the college Dār al-‘Ulūm in Cairo.

### **His Status and the Praise of the Scholars for Him**

The *shaykh* had a knowledge-based status among the people of knowledge and virtue. They praised him and considered him trustworthy. Rather, they trusted his knowledge and *‘aqīdah* to the point that when he was a student in Riyadh and his *shaykh*, the noble Shaykh ‘Abdul-‘Azīz bin Bāz, saw his seriousness and diligence in knowledge, he introduced him to the noble Shaykh Muḥammad bin Ibrāhīm رحمته الله and he hired him as a teacher in the Ṣāmiṭah Educational Institute in Jāzān. Also, from that which indicates the soundness of his knowledge and *‘aqīdah* as well as his status with the scholars is that when the Islamic University of Madīnah opened, he was appointed as a teacher there after being chosen by Shaykh ‘Abdul-‘Azīz bin Bāz.

### **That Which the Trustworthy Have Written in Commendation of Our *Shaykh*, Muḥammad Amān al-Jāmi**

In the written mandate of the noble mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (#64, dated 9/1/1418 AH), he said concerning Shaykh

Muḥammad Amān: “He is known by me to have knowledge and virtue as well as excellence in *‘aqīdah*. (He also has) efforts in calling to Allāh, the Glorified, and warning against innovations and superstitions.”

Our noble *shaykh*, ‘Abdul-Muḥsin bin Ḥamd al-‘Abbād al-Badr, teacher at the Prophet’s *masjid*, wrote: “I know Shaykh Muḥammad Amān bin ‘Alī al-Jāmi to have excellence in *‘aqīdah*, soundness in methodology, and great concern for clarifying the *‘aqīdah* upon the way of the Salaf, as well as warning against innovation. This is in his lessons, lectures, and writings. May Allāh forgive him, have mercy upon him, and give him abundant reward.”

The noble *shaykh*, Doctor Ṣāliḥ bin Fawzān al-Fawzān, said in what he wrote, dated 3/3/1418 AH: “Shaykh Muḥammad Amān al-Jāmi is from those rare and elite scholars who exerted his knowledge and efforts in benefiting the Muslims and directing them by way of calling to Allāh upon insight. He called to *tawḥīd* and spread the correct *‘aqīdah*. He directed the youth of the *ummah* towards the methodology of the Salaf aṣ-Ṣāliḥ and he warned them against the destructive ways and the deviant calls.”

The noble Doctor Muḥammad bin ‘Abdur-Raḥmān al-Khamīs, teacher at Imām Muḥammad bin Sa‘ūd Islamic University in Riyadh, may Allāh grant him success, wrote: “Indeed, the noble Shaykh Muḥammad Amān bin ‘Alī al-Jāmi, may Allāh bestow vast mercy upon him, according to what I know, was from the staunchest defenders of the *‘aqīdah* of the Salaf aṣ-Ṣāliḥ, may Allāh have mercy upon all of them. He was a caller to it and a defender of it in his books, lectures, and lessons.

“He was stern in repudiation of those who oppose the *‘aqīdah* of the pious predecessors; it was as if he had vowed his life to (safeguard) this *‘aqīdah*, learning, teaching, educating, and calling [to it], and he realized the importance of the *‘aqīdah* in the life of the people and the [importance of] rectifying it. Likewise, he realized the danger of innovations which oppose this *‘aqīdah*, upon the individual and the

society.”

From that which has preceded, from the speech of some of the people of knowledge and virtue regarding Shaykh Muḥammad Amān al-Jāmi, his status in knowledge and his efforts in calling to Allāh, ever since he was nearly 40 years of age, are clear, as is his connection with and trustworthiness amongst the scholars, and his concern for, affirmation, and clarification of the Salafi ‘*aqīdah*, and his refutation of the innovators who seek to distort the path of the Salaf aṣ-Ṣāliḥ and cast their deviant doubts which cannot be known except by way of the ‘*aqīdah*; and this was due to his concern for it.

This is the affair; likewise, he had a (large portion) of knowledge of *tafsīr* and *fiqh*, along with complete knowledge of the Arabic language.

### **Some of His Writings**

- *The Divine Attributes In the Book and the Prophetic Sunnah By Way of Affirmation and Absolving Them of Improprieties*
- *A Collection of Treatises by Al-Jāmi in ‘Aqīdah and the Sunnah*
- *Illumination of the Path of Da’wah to Islām*
- *A Lecture in Defense of the Sunnah of Muḥammad*
- *The Reality of Democracy and Proof That It is Not From Islām*
- *The Reality of Consultation in Islām*
- *Islamic Creed and Its History*

### **Some of His Students**

Due to the status of the *shaykh* in knowledge and his efforts in calling to Allāh, as well as his love for the Salafi ‘*aqīdah*, it is difficult to enumerate his students and pupils. However, we will mention some of them, by way of example:

- The noble Shaykh Rabī' bin Hādi 'Umayr al-Madkhali
- The noble Shaykh Zayd bin Hādi al-Madkhali
- The noble Shaykh 'Alī Nāṣir Faqīhi
- The noble Shaykh Ṣāliḥ as-Suḥaymi

### Some of His Noble Character

- **Sincerity:** He was sincere (based upon how I perceived him to be) to Allāh, His Book, His Messenger, the Muslim leaders, and their common-folk. This becomes apparent with just the slightest bit of reflection, because if one looks at his life, he will see that the *shaykh* sacrificed his entire life confirming the creed of the pious predecessors. This was accomplished by way of classes, writings, and lectures. He would refute those who opposed the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and he was fair and balanced when refuting those in opposition. And he did not follow partisanship or vain desires.

- **Minimal mixing with the people:** He did not mix with the people often, except for good. Consequently, most of his time and days were reserved. His manner of doing this was well known. He would leave his home to work in the Islamic University, then return home, then go to the Prophet's *masjid* to give classes there after 'Aṣr, Maghrib, 'Ishā', and Fajr. He continued to follow this schedule until he was bedridden when his illness worsened.

- **Safeguarding his tongue:** The *shaykh* ﷺ did not talk a lot and he would not speak ill of people, insult them, or backbite. He would not allow anyone to backbite others in his presence nor would he allow people to convey gossip or the faults of the people to him. If any students of knowledge fell into error, he would request the tape or the book so he could listen to it or read it. If it became apparent to him that it was in fact an error, he would fulfill his requirement and advise the person.

- **Forgiveness and forbearance:** He would respond with forbearance and forgiveness to those who harmed him, plotted against

him, and abused him. Those who had harmed him by insulting his character, slandering him, and lying against him would come to him apologizing and asking his forgiveness. The *shaykh* ﷺ would say, "I hope Allāh does not enter anyone into the Fire because of me." He would pardon those who slandered him, saying, "There is no need for anyone to approach me seeking my pardon, for surely I have already pardoned everyone." And he requested those in his sittings to convey this.

• **His concern for his students:** The *shaykh* ﷺ gave special care to his students, and this did not end when the lessons ended. He would attend their special functions, ask about their situations, and take care of some of their family problems. In general, he would make use of his money, repute, and time in order to assist those students of his that were needy. This had a profound impact on his students; thus, they had true love for him. After he died, his students felt a great void in this regard.

In reality, the *shaykh* ﷺ possessed many good characteristics. We will suffice with what has been previously mentioned as transmitted from the scholars.

### **His Illness and Death**

He was afflicted with a chronic illness at the end of his life which had him bedridden for nearly a year, but he was patient and sought the reward from Allāh. On the morning of Wednesday, the 26th of Sha'bān, in the year 1416 AH (1996 on the Gregorian calendar), his soul was submitted to its Creator. His funeral was after Zūhr and he was buried in the Baqī' graveyard in Madīnah. Many scholars, judges, students of knowledge, and others attended his burial. We ask Allāh the Exalted to forgive him, have mercy upon him, and to bring about many diligent scholars in his place.

*[End of Shaykh Muṣṭafā bin 'Abdul-Qādir al-Fulāni's writing]*



## THE STORY OF SHAYKH MUḤAMMAD &amp; THE LONE STUDENT

*Shaykh ‘Abdullāh al-Bukhārī<sup>5</sup> reads a question<sup>6</sup>:*

The questioner asks: “Is it true that Shaykh MuḤammad Amān al-Jāmi رحمته الله delivered a lecture and no one attended the lecture except for one student, and that student was you?”

*Shaykh ‘Abdullāh al-Bukhārī replied:*

This man, this gallant Imām رحمته الله, was harmed during his life and abused after his death, and up until this present day of ours he is still being abused. I swear by Allāh, they harm him with oppression, lies, fabrications, and slander. They never speak against the *shaykh* with the truth; rather, it is all pure lies. And I don’t believe those who slander him will have an answer that will save them when they stand before Allāh. This man رحمته الله was harmed in the path of Allāh a great deal. They harmed him because he adhered to the pure Sunnah and he called to the truth with knowledge and justice. He was abused during his life and after his death, and perhaps this harm will be a reason for him to continue receiving good deeds after his death.

As for the question: The *shaykh* was not just delivering a lecture; rather, he was teaching a class. From the ways they harmed him was by turning people away from his classes, and they continue to do so until now. They lie upon the people of the truth by saying that they break into groups and speak against the people, while in reality, no one speaks against the people of truth more than them. They do not speak with knowledge and justice; they only speak with oppression and lies. And I know some of them specifically, and I swear by the Lord of the heavens they know they are lying. They have no argument in front of Allāh, yet they spread this falsehood amongst the people.

At any rate, the *shaykh* was not delivering a lecture; rather, he was

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<sup>5</sup> Shaykh Dr. ‘Abdullāh al-Bukhārī from the city of Madīnah, Saudi Arabia, is a professor at the Islamic University of Madīnah.

<sup>6</sup> Translated from audio questions and answers; visit [www.elbukhari.com](http://www.elbukhari.com).

teaching a class. This class took place in the Prophet's *masjid* around the year 1407 AH (1986 on the Gregorian calendar) during the month of Ramaḍān. The *shaykh* ﷺ was teaching from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in "The Book of Fasting." There was only the *shaykh* sitting in the chair and me in front of him with my book; just the two of us. The *shaykh* taught me as though the gathering was full. He was not discouraged because there was only one student. After the class, the *shaykh* said to me, "Who are you?" I responded, "I am so-and-so." He asked, "What brought you to class?" I responded, "I came to learn." Thus, he began to supplicate to Allāh to bless me and grant me success. In this regard, the *shaykh* resembled what has been mentioned in the biography of Imām 'Aṭā' bin Abī Rabāḥ, the scholar, the chief of the people of Makkah in knowledge ﷺ.

'Aṭā' bin Abī Rabāḥ<sup>7</sup> was born a slave and then became a freed slave. His appearance was unsightly.<sup>8</sup>

﴿ فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ ﴾

**So blessed be Allāh, the best of creators.**

[*Sūrah al-Mu'minūn* 23:14]

'Aṭā' bin Abī Rabāḥ's mother said to him one day, "Come here, 'Aṭā', listen: You are a small, clumsy freed slave, and one-eyed. It is upon you to seek knowledge."

She mentioned some characteristics of his unsightly appearance and then advised him to seek knowledge. Her words toughened his heart, so he began to seek knowledge. Consequently, his knowledge overshadowed everything the people would deem reprehensible about him. 'Aṭā' bin Abī Rabāḥ became the chief of the people of

<sup>7</sup> 'Aṭā' bin Abī Rabāḥ was born in Yemen from Nubian parents and raised in Makkah as a slave.

<sup>8</sup> Ibn Sa'd said: "He was a freed slave of Banī Fihri. All the people of Makkah would go to him and Mujāhid for religious verdicts, with most of them going to 'Aṭā'. The scholars described 'Aṭā' bin Abī Rabāḥ as a black man who was one-eyed, snub-nosed, and crippled." Collected in *Siyār A'lām an-Nubalā'*.

Makkah, such that the leader of the Muslims said, “No one can give religious verdicts to the pilgrims performing Ḥajj except ‘Aṭā’.” This was despite him being in the presence of the Imāms and leaders of the Islamic nation.

Concerning the issue of blind following and independent judgment, Imām Ibn al-Qayyim mentioned a tremendous statement from Imām ash-Shāfi‘i in his book *A’lām al-Muwaqqi‘īn*. Imām ash-Shāfi‘i, who was from the tribe of Quraysh, a pure Arab, a master in the Arabic language, used to say, “If I am asked about an issue and I do not have proof concerning the matter, then I blind-follow ‘Aṭā’.” This Arab blind-followed the freed slave. They were all Imāms in the religion, and no man has virtue over the next man except by way of piety and knowledge.

Imām al-Awzā‘i رحمته الله said, “The day ‘Aṭā’ died, he was from the most beloved people upon the earth.” Despite this, only seven or eight people attended his lessons. Thus, our *shaykh* (Shaykh Muḥammad Amān) was not concerned with the number of attendees, whether large or small. He did not care if one person or 10 people came, or if the *masjid* was full.

Leave my testimony on his behalf and the testimony of others, and listen to his tapes for yourself. Listen to his strong, knowledge-based speech. Listen to his explanation of *Tajrīd at-Tawḥīd* by al-Maqrīzi. Listen to his explanation of *Fath al-Majīd* or *At-Tawḥīd* by Imām Muḥammad bin ‘Abdul-Wahhāb. Listen to his explanation of *At-Tadmuriyyah* by Ibn Taymiyyah. By Allāh, you will not find a better explanation from the contemporary scholars. It is from the best, strongest, and firmly grounded explanations. Listen to his explanation of *Al-Qawā‘id al-Muthlā* by the scholar Imām Muḥammad al-‘Uthaymīn رحمته الله. Some scholars who listened to his explanation said, “His explanation is better than the author’s explanation.”

He showed a great deal of respect to the scholars. When Shaykh ‘Uthaymīn would come to Madīnah, Shaykh Muḥammad Amān would sometimes attend his lessons in the Prophet’s *masjid*. He would

stop his lessons and attend the lessons of Shaykh ‘Uthaymīn with us. This was from his good manners.

His soul did not leave his body and go to its Creator except that he was speaking about *tawḥīd* (monotheism). The doctor who was with him the last night of his life was a witness to this. This doctor was not from his students and he had no personal connection to the *shaykh*. The doctor said, “He would go in and out of consciousness. When he awoke, he said to his son ‘Alī, ‘O ‘Alī, convey to the scholars and students of knowledge that they must give precedence to *‘aqīdah* and *tawḥīd*.’” The doctor went on to mention that after that, he fainted a few more times, and then he was not able to speak but he continued to point with his index finger.<sup>9</sup>

May Allāh forgive us and him and pardon us all.

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<sup>9</sup> **Translator's Note:** Pointing with the index finger denotes the oneness of Allah.

## —AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION—

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Verily, all praises belong to Allāh. We praise Him and we seek His assistance and we seek His forgiveness. And we seek refuge in Allāh from the evil of our souls and from the evil of our actions. Whomever Allāh guides, none can misguide him, and whoever is misguided, there is no guide for him. I bear witness that nothing has the right to be worshiped except for Allāh alone, without partners, and I bear witness that Muḥammad is His slave and His Messenger ﷺ.

I intended with this title to take a quick tour to see what has occurred in some parts of this continent concerning those matters that are important to us in relation to the call of Islām, so we can know this continent's past and connect it with its present. Thus, we can become familiar with the phases of Islām upon this continent by tracing its steps, beginning with the arrival of Islām during the era of an-Najāshi<sup>10</sup> up until present day. This writing is a brief summary.

I say—seeking the assistance of Allāh alone...

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<sup>10</sup> **Translator's Note:** An-Najāshi was a king of Abyssinia known for his wisdom and objectivity. "*An-najāshi*" was the title given to every king of Abyssinia during that era; the name of this particular king was Aṣḥamah, which means "a gift." In this book, he is referred to using his formal title, "an-Najāshi."

## THE FIRST PHASE

### Islām Enters Africa

The continent of Africa was the first continent privileged and illuminated with the light of Islām after the Arabian Peninsula. This occurred when Islām leaped from the honored city of Makkah and the first migrants from the Arabian Peninsula settled in a part of Africa known then as Abyssinia. Today, that area is known as Ethiopia; specifically, Eritrea. Islām settled in that part of Africa before it emerged in any other place, including Madīnah, the land of migration. The disbelievers (of Makkah) harmed the Prophet of Mercy and his Companions severely, and his Companions were not able to worship their Lord freely.

Therefore, the Prophet ﷺ permitted his Companions to migrate to Abyssinia after they were assured they would find a king in that land who did not oppress anyone in his vicinity. This king was an-Najāshi رضي الله عنه. At the time they migrated to him, he was still a Christian.

The Muslim migrants arrived from the honored city of Makkah after the roads of Makkah and its mountains—rather, the entire land, despite its length and width—became constricted for them. They arrived in the land of an-Najāshi and found a man just as he was described by the Prophet ﷺ.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّ بِأَرْضِ الْحَبَشَةِ مَلِكًا لَا يُظْلَمُ أَحَدٌ عِنْدَهُ ، فَالْحَقُّوا بِبِلَادِهِ ، حَتَّى يَجْعَلَ  
اللَّهُ لَكُمْ فَرَجًا ، وَمَخْرَجًا مِمَّا أَنْتُمْ فِيهِ .

**Verily, in Abyssinia there is a king who does not oppress anyone**

**around him. Enter his country until Allāh grants you relief and a way out from the difficulty you are experiencing.<sup>11</sup>**

He was a man blessed with a strong mind, resolve in his affairs, and amicable manners. He was a man not influenced by expensive gifts or embellished speech, even when speaking to the cleverest of men—the Arabs—who were known for their superior discourse, excellent dialogue, and magical words<sup>12</sup>; those like ‘Amr bin al-‘Āṣ.

The migration of the Companions was unquestionably unique. It was not migration from the land of disbelief to the land of Islām, as some people say. It was not a transition from a good place to a better place; on the contrary, it was from the honored city of Makkah to the land of Abyssinia in Africa. And Abyssinia was not the land of Islām; rather, Islām had not yet entered Africa. Certainly, this migration did not fulfill either of the aforementioned goals. The purpose of their migration was to flee with their religion and their beliefs, which they were being punished for, so they could find a place where they could worship Allāh freely without opposition.

They achieved this objective with an-Najāshi—and all praises belong to Allāh—before they achieved this with anyone else. It is apparent from their circumstances and the context of their story that they were refugees striving to find a land where they could display the rites of their religion and worship Allāh, their Lord, free from pressure and persecution. This was their obvious intent which can be extracted from their story. But Allāh is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise; He blessed this peerless journey, so it became a journey of Islamic *da’wah* (Islamic propagation) to the pristine continent of Africa.

The Quraysh<sup>13</sup> understood the potential of the Islamic *da’wah* when

<sup>11</sup> **Translator's Note:** Collected by al-Bayhaqi in his *Sunan* (9/9), and declared authentic by al-Albāni in his collection of authentic narrations (3190). Also collected in the *Sirah* of Ibn Hishām (1/343).

<sup>12</sup> **Translator's Note:** The Prophet ﷺ said, “Some eloquent speech is magic.” (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 5767)

<sup>13</sup> **Translator's Note:** The Quraysh are an Arab tribe descended from the tribe of Kinānah,

they learned that the migrants were accepted in Abyssinia with honor and support. They were granted freedom to practice their religion; thus, they began to worship Allāh, their Lord, without fear or secrecy. Subsequently, the Quraysh became fearful of the tolerant religion of Islām, fearing that it would make a path in Africa, reaching the good hearts and open minds of the Africans if they left it unchecked. Thus, it would flourish, and they would rush to accept Islām while the people of Makkah had rejected it. They began to plot while observing what was taking place in Abyssinia.

While pondering their next move, the pagans were surprised during the Battle of Badr by way of an awful defeat, the day Allāh empowered Islām and the Muslims while humiliating polytheism and the pagans. This only increased their apprehension about the migrant Muslims. They finally decided to send a delegation to seek the extradition of the migrants back to Makkah. At the head of the delegation was a man from the cleverest men of the Arabs, with magical speech: ‘Amr bin al-‘Āṣ, a man who needs no introduction.

## THE KING, THE QURAYSH, AND THE MIGRANTS

It has been collected in the *tafsīr* of al-Baghawi<sup>14</sup> from the *ḥadīth* of Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ that the delegation sent by the Quraysh arrived in

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who were descended from the prophet Ismā‘il, the first son of the prophet Ibrāhīm (peace be upon them both). Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said, “Verily Allah granted eminence to Kinānah from amongst the descendants of Ismā‘il, and he granted eminence to the Quraysh amongst [the descendants of] Kinānah, and he granted eminence to Banū Hāshim amongst the Quraysh, and he granted me eminence from the tribe of Banū Hāshim.” (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 2276) At the time of the Prophet Muḥammad, the Quraysh were a powerful merchant tribe that controlled Makkah and the Ka‘bah, and they were pagans with a violent aversion towards Islām.

<sup>14</sup> **Translator’s Note:** Shaykh Muḥammad bin Hādi said, “*Tafsīr al-Baghawi* is a concise explanation. The author of this book is Salafi, with Salafi ‘*aqīdah* and methodology ﷺ. It is from the best books. Shaykh-ul-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah mentioned that it is a condensed version of *Tafsīr ath-Thālabi* but his (al-Baghawi) *tafsīr* is protected and free of fabricated *aḥādīth* and the views of the innovators.”



Abyssinia as guests of an-Najāshi, bearing gifts.<sup>15</sup> They brought the items that were most beloved in the kingdom of Abyssinia, according to the scholars of history. The delegation presented gifts to the patri- cians, also, hoping they would assist them in influencing an-Najāshi so he would hand over the asylum-seekers to them. In their estima- tion, they had bribed the entire country and paved the way. But their bargaining yielded the opposite result.

They wanted an-Najāshi to hand over the migrants before hearing from them; rather, they wanted him to expel the migrants after merely hearing their embellished explanation. But an-Najāshi did not agree to that. Instead, he summoned the migrants so he could listen to their side of the story just as he had listened to the Quraysh. This is the process that agrees with logic and reason. This is the only decision expected from an-Najāshi, as we have been informed by the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ that he was a king who did not oppress anyone in his vicinity. How great was his investigation of these affairs and his pursuit of fairness!

An-Najāshi summoned the group of Muslim migrants so he could hear their case. When they reached the door of the king, they stopped at it before entering. This is consistent with the teachings of Islām, that one seeks permission to enter.

How do you imagine they would enter? Rather, it is more appropriate to ask, “How did the Quraysh imagine they would enter?” They were a strange group of vulnerable refugees in a remote land entering upon a frightening king. There is no doubt that the Quraysh expected the migrants to enter like the weak and defenseless enter: bowing their heads to the king, kneeling to him upon their knees, and prostrating upon their faces in front of this imposing king who had extended his

<sup>15</sup> **Translator's Note:** This narration has been collected in the *tafsir* of al-Baghawi from the *hadith* of Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ for the verse, “Verily, among mankind those who have the best claim to Ibrāhīm are those who followed him, and this prophet (Muḥammad) and those who have believed” (Sūrah Āli ‘Imrān 3:68). The narration of Ibn ‘Abbās mentions the account of their migration in its entirety, including the debate between the migrants and the Quraysh. Shaykh Muḥammad Amān al-Jāmi narrates this *hadith* as it appears in the *tafsir* while adding some additional comments.

hand to them with support and respect. But this did not happen.

The leader of the Muslim migrants, Ja'far bin Abī Ṭālib, stood at the door and yelled, "The party of Allāh seeks your permission to enter." An-Najāshi replied, "Tell him to repeat what he said." So he repeated his words. Then an-Najāshi said, "Yes, allow them to enter with the trust of Allāh and His protection."

They entered upon him, and of course, they did not prostrate to him. An-Najāshi said, "What prevented you from prostrating to me?" Ja'far replied calmly, in an impactful manner, "We prostrate to Allāh, the One who created you and granted you sovereignty. As for prostrating to other than Allāh, this was our greeting when we were idol worshippers. Allāh raised amongst us a truthful Prophet and commanded us with an approved greeting. It is the greeting of *salām*, the greeting of the inhabitants of Paradise." An-Najāshi knew they were the true party of Allāh who were confident, not fearing the blame of the critics. And he knew that what they were saying could be found in the Tawrah and Injil.

This courageous position from the delegation of Muḥammad was a lesson for two groups in attendance: the Quraysh and the Africans. The address was directed towards all of their hearts, if only they understood.

It was as though Ja'far said to them, "If the delegation of Quraysh is overconfident due to the eloquent, articulate, magical speech of 'Amr and the expensive gifts presented to the patriarchs to expel us, and if the patriarchs view us as weak and try to influence their king, an-Najāshi, to hand us over to 'Amr bin al-Āṣ—despite all of this, we are the party of Allāh, the Most High, the All-Powerful. We have placed our trust and confidence in Him. Therefore, we are not concerned about them because Allāh the Exalted is our protector, and what a blessed Protector and Helper He is! Yes, we are the party of Allāh, and certainly, the party of Allāh is victorious."

Ja'far's statements were received by an-Najāshi. An-Najāshi asked

which one of them would represent their group to dispute the claims of the Quraysh delegation. Ja'far replied, "I will represent our group."<sup>16</sup>

### THE DEBATE BETWEEN THE MUSLIMS AND THE PAGANS OF THE QURAYSH

Ja'far began with words that proved his intelligence and his knowledge of addressing every individual according to their rightful status. He said, "You are a king, [so] it is not befitting that one is longwinded or lies in your presence." After this short prologue, Ja'far requested that an-Najāshi direct the following questions to the delegation of Quraysh:

- Were the migrants slaves or free men?
- Did they murder someone and then flee?
- Did they steal the people's wealth and then escape with it?

'Amr answered in the negative for each question. The migrants were not slaves, they had not murdered anyone, and they did not steal.

An-Najāshi said, "In that case, why are you pursuing them?"

'Amr said, "We and they were upon one religion—the religion of our fathers—and they abandoned that religion and followed another one."

So you see that 'Amr narrowed down their point of contention to leaving the religion of their fathers and following a new religion. There were no issues other than this. Ja'far was asked, "What was the

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<sup>16</sup> **Translator's Note:** Shaykh Muḥammad Amān al-Jāmi said in his lecture: "What do you know about Oromia (a region in Ethiopia)? It has been mentioned that the king an-Najāshi was raised in the Arabian Peninsula during his youth, so he perfected the Arabic language. For this reason, he did not require a translator to understand the leader of the migrants, Ja'far bin Abī Ṭālib, during their conversation. Likewise, he did not need a translator when Ja'far recited the Noble Qur'ān."

religion they abandoned and what was the new religion?" The answer to these two questions revealed the truth and eliminated falsehood. And in the end, falsehood is always eliminated, and the good ending belongs to the righteous.

Ja'far courageously said, "As for the religion we were upon and abandoned, then it was the religion of the Shayṭān." He explained his statement by saying, "We used to disbelieve in Allāh and we worshiped stones. As for the religion we adopted, then it is the religion of Allāh: Islām. Allāh sent us this by way of a Messenger and a Book similar to the book given to Jesus, the son of Maryam; it agrees with it."

These last words had an effect upon the soul of an-Najāshi. He ordered the bell rung—as was their habit—and every priest and monk gathered, and then he began to question them. He said, "I ask you by Allāh: Who sent the Injīl down to Jesus? Is there in the scripture a mention of a prophet to appear between Jesus and the Day of Judgment?" They replied in the affirmative. They (the priests and monks) said, "Jesus has given us glad tidings of him. Jesus said that whoever believes in him believes in me, and whoever disbelieves in him disbelieves in me."

An-Najāshi began to ask Ja'far concerning the message of the Prophet ﷺ; what did he command with and what did he prohibit? Ja'far answered with the following points, saying, "He recites to us the Book of Allāh. He commands us with good and forbids evil. He commands us to show kindness to the neighbor, keep the ties of kinship, treat the orphan with benevolence, and worship Allāh alone without partners."

Then, an-Najāshi expressed interest in hearing some of what was revealed to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Thus, Ja'far recited to him something from the Noble Qur'ān. The eyes of an-Najāshi and some of his companions began to swell with tears. Qatādah and some of the scholars of *tafsīr* said that the following verse was revealed concerning them:

﴿ وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَى أَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ  
الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوا مِنَ الْحَقِّ ﴾

**And when they (who call themselves Christians) listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger (Muhammad), you see their eyes overflowing with tears because of what they have recognized of the truth.**

[*Sūrah al-Mā'idah 5:83*]

An-Najāshi wanted to hear more; he said, "Give us more of this good speech." Some narrations mention that he (Ja'far) recited *Sūrah al-Kahf* to them while 'Amr bin al-'Āṣ was sitting, watching and waiting for an opportunity to say something that would affect an-Najāshi. As Ja'far continued to recite and an-Najāshi continued to shed tears, 'Amr's anger intensified. Agitated, he exclaimed, "Surely, they insult Jesus and his mother!"

It is as if Allāh the Exalted wanted to clarify the truth even if it was clarified in this manner. As Allāh the Exalted said:

﴿ وَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ ﴾

**And it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you.**

[*Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:216*]

Ja'far began to recite *Sūrah Maryam* as a rebuttal to the claim of 'Amr. When an-Najāshi heard what was mentioned concerning Jesus and his mother, he took a stick on the ground and said, "Jesus did not exceed what they have said about him any more than the length of this stick," as he pointed to the stick in his hand. This gesture was his unofficial way of pronouncing his faith in the Arab Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Some of the patricians present, in whose hearts faith had not entered, began to snort. An-Najāshi said to them, "(It's the truth) even if you snort, I swear by Allāh."

Then he said to the migrants, "Go; you are free in my land. Whoever insults you or harms you will pay a penalty." He went on to say, "Glad tidings and do not fear; today there will be no difficulty upon the party of Ibrāhīm." 'Amr<sup>17</sup> said, "O Najāshi, who is the party of Ibrāhīm?" An-Najāshi replied, "This group and their companions." Then an-Najāshi ordered that the gifts he and the patricians had received from 'Amr and his companions be returned. He said, "Your gifts were nothing more than bribery, so take them back."

فَوَاللَّهِ مَا أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنِّي الرِّشْوَةَ حِينَ رَدَّ عَلَيَّ مُلْكِي، فَأَخَذَ الرِّشْوَةَ فِيهِ.

"I swear by Allāh, Allāh did not accept bribery concerning me when He returned my kingdom to me such that I should accept it concerning Him."<sup>18</sup>

Ja'far said, "So we left, and we were in a good land and honored. That day, Allāh sent down the verse to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ:

﴿ إِنَّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ لَلَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهَذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ  
آمَنُوا وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾

**Verily, among mankind who have the best claim to Ibrāhīm are those who followed him, and this prophet (Muhammad) and those who have believed (Muslims). And Allāh is the Walī (Protector and Helper) of the believers.**

[Sūrah Āli 'Imrān 3:68]

Thus, the delegation of Quraysh departed defeated.<sup>19</sup> Allāh honored an-Najāshi with Islām while he was in his land by blessing this

<sup>17</sup> **Translator's Note:** 'Amr bin al-Āṣ eventually accepted Islām and became from the best of the Muslims. Refer to the appendix, "The Story of How 'Amr bin al-Āṣ Accepted Islām" (p. 71).

<sup>18</sup> **Translator's Note:** Refer to the appendix, "From Slave to King: An-Najāshi's Rise to the Throne" (p. 61).

<sup>19</sup> Collected by Aḥmad (1742).

successful journey. This journey was blessed because it was sincerely for Allāh alone, and what is done sincerely for Allāh alone will prosper and remain.

This is how Islām entered the continent of Africa under these critical circumstances during the early days of Islām, at a time when Islām was repelled from the first place it originated. And this is from the virtue of Allāh.

### THE DEATH OF AN-NAJĀSHI

This period of time is considered the first of three phases of Islām in Africa. During this phase, Islām entered and laid down its mark. It is clear from what has been previously mentioned that those who carried Islām to Africa during this phase were the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and may Allāh be pleased with them. They were those who understood Islām just as it was revealed, before any foreign thought or corrupt belief entered it. They received Islām directly from the mouth of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, fresh,<sup>20</sup> just as it was sent down. They conveyed it just as they understood it with the utmost reliability and utmost sincerity. Consequently, their conveyance had an effect on an-Najāshi and those from his followers whom Allāh desired to guide. We saw how they were affected upon hearing the Qur'ān.

The faith of an-Najāshi did not waver when the letter of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ inviting him to Islām reached him,<sup>21</sup> because he had already believed with his heart before the letter arrived. He believed upon hearing the message of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ from the Muslim migrants. Thus, when he received the letter, he openly proclaimed his belief, because in reality, he was already a believer.

<sup>20</sup> **Translator's Note:** Abū Bakr and 'Umar gave him the glad tidings that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said, "Whoever would like to recite the Qur'ān as fresh as when it was revealed, let him recite it like Ibn Umm 'Abd." (*Sunan Ibn Mājah* 143)

<sup>21</sup> **Translator's Note:** Refer to the appendix, "The Prophet's Letter to An-Najāshi" (p. 66).

Therefore, an-Najāshi was the first king upon the face of the earth to believe in the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and accept the religion of Islām. Similarly, Africa was the first continent (outside of Arabia) walked on by the pure feet of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ. Among those who went to Africa were members of the Prophet's family; rather, some of his daughters migrated there.

This entrance of Islām into Africa was only in a part of Africa, namely Abyssinia. My mentioning the whole of Africa even though it was only a part of Africa is not an innovation on my part; rather, it is the well-known usage of the Arabic language.

Those from the Africans who accepted the call to Islām understood it with a true understanding because they received it from an elite group. Their teachers learned the religion from the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, and it's no secret that the teacher will have an effect—good or bad—upon his students. Therefore, it is not strange that they were able to achieve this excellent level of understanding Islām. Likewise, they had an excellent manner of propagating Islām and [establishing] its importance; as a result, their call affected an-Najāshi. An-Najāshi accepted their call and became their brother. The day he died, they prayed the funeral prayer for him and prayed for his forgiveness. It was narrated from Abū Hurayrah:

أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ نَعَى لِلنَّاسِ النَّجَاشِيَّ وَخَرَجَ بِهِمْ  
فَصَفَّ بِهِمْ وَكَبَّرَ أَرْبَعَ تَكْبِيرَاتٍ.

**The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ announced the death of an-Najāshi to the people, and he led them out and arranged them in rows, and said the *takbīr* four times.<sup>22</sup>**

And it was narrated from Abū Hurayrah:

أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ نَعَى لَهُمُ النَّجَاشِيَّ صَاحِبَ الْحَبَشَةِ  
فِي الْيَوْمِ الَّذِي مَاتَ فِيهِ، وَقَالَ: اسْتَغْفِرُوا لِأَخِيكُمْ.

<sup>22</sup> Sunan an-Nasā'i 1980



The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ informed them (his Companions) of the death of an-Najāshi, the king of Ethiopia, on the very day<sup>23</sup> the latter died, and he said, “Ask Allāh’s forgiveness for your brother.”<sup>24</sup>

Imām as-Sihayli mentioned that an-Najāshi died during the month of Rajab in the 9th year after migration.

When the Prophet ﷺ led the funeral prayer for an-Najāshi, some of the hypocrites said:

تَأْمُرُنَا أَنْ نَسْتَغْفِرَ لِهَذَا الْعِلْجِ يَمُوتُ بِأَرْضِ الْحَبَشَةِ.

He commands us to pray for this infidel<sup>25</sup> that died in Abyssinia?<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the verse was sent down:

﴿ وَإِنَّ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ ﴾

And there are, certainly, among the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) those who believe in Allāh and in what has been revealed to you, and in what has been revealed to them.

[Sūrah Āli ‘Imrān 3:199]

The Prophet ﷺ never prayed the funeral prayer for any infidel.

﴿ قَاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴾

<sup>23</sup> **Translator's Note:** At-Tirmidhi said, “This is from the miracles of the Prophet ﷺ—despite the distance between Abyssinia and Madīnah, he informed the Companions of his death on the very day he died.”

<sup>24</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 3880

<sup>25</sup> They would use this word, *al-‘ilj* (الْعِلْجِ), to refer to a non-Arab disbeliever.

<sup>26</sup> Collected by Ibn Abī Ḥātim in his *tafsīr* from Thābit, by ad-Dāraqūṭni in the book *Al-Afrād*, and by al-Bazzār, from Ḥamīd narrated by Anas; also collected by al-Ḥāfiẓ in *Al-Fath* (3/188).

**May Allāh curse them (the hypocrites)! How are they denying (or deviating from) the Right Path.**

[Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn 63:4]

Rather, when he prayed the funeral prayer for an-Najāshi, he was praying for a man whom Allāh honored with Islām such that he became from the followers of the Prophet ﷺ.

It has been narrated from Ibn Ḥibbān from the *ḥadīth* of ‘Imrān bin Ḥusayn:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: إِنَّ أَخَاكُمْ النَّجَاشِيَّ تُوْفِّي فَقُومُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ، فَقَامَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَصَفُّوا خَلْفَهُ فَكَبَّرَ أَرْبَعًا وَهُمْ لَا يَظُنُّونَ إِلَّا أَنَّ جَنَازَتَهُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Verily, your brother an-Najāshi has passed, so stand and pray for him.” The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ stood, lined the rows, and said *takbīr* (Allāh is the Greatest) four times. All of them prayed as though the deceased was in front of them.<sup>27</sup>

### AFTER THE DEATH OF AN-NAJĀSHI

After the death of an-Najāshi and before Islām spread in the Arabian Peninsula, there was a period of time when the call to Islām on the continent of Africa stalled because there was no one there to lead it, and the ruler who had protected the Islamic call and the callers was gone due to the death of an-Najāshi رضي الله عنه.

As the authority of Islām spread over most of the world and the Arabs began to enter Islām in crowds during the reign of the third caliph, ‘Uthmān bin ‘Affān رضي الله عنه, the Islamic call was rejuvenated in Africa. This occurred with the Islamic armies marching on North Africa. They conquered Tunisia in the battle known as the Battle of al-‘Ibādalah. Seven Companions, each bearing the name ‘Abdullāh, participated in

<sup>27</sup> Collected by al-Awzā‘i from Yahyā bin Abī Kathīr from Abū Kilābah.

this battle. They were:

- 1) 'Abdullāh bin Abī Sarḥ
- 2) 'Abdullāh bin az-Zubayr
- 3) 'Abdullāh bin 'Umar
- 4) 'Abdullāh bin 'Abbās
- 5) 'Abdullāh bin Ja'far
- 6) 'Abdullāh bin Mas'ūd
- 7) 'Abdullāh bin 'Amr bin al-'Āṣ

When everything was established and settled for Mu'āwiyah رضي الله عنه, the Islamic armies resumed their march on North Africa until they were granted victory and conquest. Islām entered North Africa and West Africa, carrying the doctrine of pure monotheism and pure beliefs free from the filth of paganism. Sometimes Islām entered this continent peacefully through inviting the people to Islām and displaying good manners, and sometimes it was the effect of war, as was the case with North Africa. This is considered the first phase of Islām in Africa.

## ———— THE SECOND PHASE ————

### The Spread of Islām in Africa

Like other continents, this continent was not fortunate to have a comprehensive, organized Islamic propagation after the brief period that we called “the first phase.” As a result, we notice that in most cases (during the second phase), Islām was *not* propagated in Africa by knowledgeable scholars with understanding; those who were able to distinguish between the foundational matters of Islām and the newly invented matters introduced into Islām; those scholars who could separate the wheat from the chaff.

#### THE ARAB MERCHANTS IN EAST AFRICA

Those who disseminated Islām in Africa during this phase were of two categories. In East Africa, the Arab merchants traveled from the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula and entered Abyssinia, Sudan, and Somalia. They entered these lands with the intention of trade and they brought Islām along with their trade. As expected, the average merchants were from the common people who did not have an understanding of Islām; they only understood business techniques and how to grow their wealth. Despite their lack of understanding, they were proud to be Muslim. They even invited non-Muslims to Islām based upon what they knew of the religion.

Due to this limitation in religious understanding, they would take an inaccurate version of Islām to every region, which would contradict what other merchants had taken to other areas, and perhaps they would attribute something to Islām which was not from Islām, but rather from their customs and traditions. This was not because the

merchants had evil intentions; rather, it was due to their incorrect understanding of Islām, because they were not grounded in religious knowledge. They crossed the sea for business and trade. When they entered the various areas, they considered themselves to be the best people to propagate Islām, so they began to give *da'wah*. They were like the people who gather firewood at night—they pick up whatever their hands touch.<sup>28</sup>

So, they began to teach the inhabitants of these areas. They passed on what they knew of Islām to this continent, knowing that an African man living during those times would not question an Arab man's knowledge of Islām. He would not debate with him or ask him if what he was saying about Islām was correct or incorrect. They believed that an Arab man would not say something in the name of the religion or spread something among the people that was not from the unlettered Arab Prophet. This is how the African viewed the Arab, especially if the person was a caller to Islām. And I believe with certainty that the men of all non-Arab continents share this belief with the Africans, and this belief is an exaggeration concerning the Arabs. I have observed this during visits to non-Arab countries.

Based upon this exaggerated belief the Africans had about the Arabs, the residents took everything the merchants told them was Islām without researching the matter or debating. Due to the lack of insight on behalf of the merchants, they took everything to these areas under the pretense that it was Islām. The residents had a good thought about them, so they accepted everything from them.

Thus, the spread of Islām upon this continent was weak and inadequate. As the saying goes, "You can't give what you don't have." The character of the merchants was such that they loved Islām and they wanted good for the residents of Africa. Consequently, they were diligent in teaching the people everything they knew, whether it was correct or incorrect, and they were not seeking to make any financial gain. May Allāh reward them with good for their good intentions and

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<sup>28</sup> **Translator's Note:** This means they went about the matter blindly without proper knowledge.

efforts. This is the category of callers to Islām from the merchants. We hope Allāh will reward them with good.

## THE ṢŪFIS IN EAST, WEST, AND NORTH AFRICA

The next group of callers—as they claim to be—was the Ṣūfis. They put forth work in the name of Islām in the East, West, and North of Africa. We will summarize the actions of the Ṣūfi scholars. We say: Indeed, they called to everything *except* the correct understanding of Islām. As for the pure Islām brought by the Messenger of Islām, the best of mankind—their *da'wah* has no connection to this whatsoever.

Perhaps it will not trouble anyone if I digress a bit from the topic in order to explain the *da'wah* of the Ṣūfis, because the belief commonly heard upon the tongues of the people is that the Ṣūfi scholars had a prominent, important role in the affair of Islamic *da'wah*. And they believe that Islām entered Africa and other areas at the hands of the Ṣūfis.

The reality is that the Ṣūfi scholars have substantial works and efforts in this continent, and they called the people to something, but that something was not Islām in its reality and essence. Most of them attest to this fact themselves, even if you find some of them who are ignorant of this reality and believe they are doing something good. Everyone who has interacted with the people knows the details of what I have mentioned in general. Even those who have repented from the Ṣūfi methodology have clearly stated that, before their repentance, they were not upon anything at all. We ask Allāh to grant us and you safety and security.

As for some of the acts of worship they perform in accordance with the teachings of Islām and some of the invocations they sing in their gatherings, deceiving the gullible, and their outward display of Islām in front of the common people—all of that is like a spoonful of honey in a cup full of deadly poison. Thus, beware of that so you may be safe.

## THE GOAL OF THE ṢŪFI SCHOLARS

In most cases, they intend by their *da'wah* in the name of Islām the following matters:

- **Exploiting the common Muslims:** They seek to exploit the laymen and use them for their own specific purposes by claiming they are the chosen people of Allāh and His elite. Thus, it would be upon everyone to submit to them and obey their command regardless of how difficult it may be. If they do not comply, they are under the threat of having faith removed from their hearts and dying a miserable death. In an effort to avoid this grave danger, the laymen submit to them, to the extent that it becomes worship. This is one of their concepts of inviting to Islām. So what is your view of this, O noble reader?

Based upon this understanding, there is a well-known Ṣūfi principle that states: “The pupil should be in front of his *shaykh* like the deceased is in front of the person washing his body.” [This means] robbed of freedom and choice and void of will and movement, even movement of the heart and soul. This is because they believe it is from the attributes of their “*shaykh*” that he knows what is in the hearts. Based on this principle, the person exposes himself to the anger of his *shaykh* and he will be destroyed.

- **Turning the Muslims away from the scholars:** They want the people to avoid the scholars of Islām, the students of knowledge, the Book, and the Sunnah, claiming that they (Ṣūfi scholars) are the true scholars. They claim that Ṣūfi scholars are the people of “hidden knowledge” while the Islamic scholars are the people of “apparent knowledge,” which is just the outside peel and of no benefit. They call the knowledge of the Ṣūfi the “inner knowledge.” As you can see, this is a blatant fight against what the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ came with from the knowledge of the Book and the Sunnah, and it is in opposition to Allāh and His Messenger ﷺ, from ways they perceive not, and sometimes they do perceive it.

- **Absolute freedom:** They put in tremendous efforts to reach

what they call “absolute freedom.” It is to destroy all religious responsibility; it is the religion of pantheism,<sup>29</sup> and it is what was practiced by some of the atheists like Ibn ‘Arabi and Ibn al-Fāriḍ.<sup>30</sup> They try to escape the Book and the Sunnah. They give these hypocrites such epithets as “those who reach the goal,” “those who know Allāh,”<sup>31</sup> and “the final authority, the greatest relief.” These epithets are great lies!

Furthermore, can it be correct to consider the Ṣūfi *mashāyikh* (pl. of *shaykh*) as callers to Islām (as some people consider them to be such), as well as examples of Islām for non-Muslims (as some of the deceivers call them)? This representation may distort the beauty of Islām among the non-Muslims and tarnish the eminence of Islām, because the Ṣūfi *mashāyikh* display pagan rituals. This is a means by which the enemies of Islām are able to attack Islām.

Based upon all this, I do not permit myself or anyone who hears my advice to call the Ṣūfis “callers to Islām.” Rather, it is obligatory to say—in order to clarify the reality and uncover the truth—that indeed, they call the people to worship their *mashāyikh* and leaders and they divert the people from the correct understanding of Islām.

One of them might say, “Surely, we have entered many pagans into Islām.” In reply to this, I say, “In reality, they have removed them from blatant paganism and entered them into camouflaged paganism after calling it Islām so that it would be accepted and easy to swallow.” As for Islām with the correct understanding, then the Ṣūfis themselves are detached from it, let alone entering others into its core. How could they do that? You cannot give something you don’t have.

There is no doubt that this is confusion resulting from negligence of

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<sup>29</sup> **Translator's Note:** This is the belief that Allāh is one with the universe.

<sup>30</sup> **Translator's Note:** ‘Umar bin ‘Ali bin al-Fāriḍ (1181–1234 CE) was a Ṣūfi mystic poet born in Cairo from Syrian parents.

<sup>31</sup> **Translator's Note:** Shaykh Muḥammad Amān al-Jāmi said in his explanation of the book *At-Tadmuriyyah* by Ibn Taymiyyah, “This term is used by the Ṣūfis to refer to their *mashāyikh* who believe they have ascended the laws of Islām and no longer have to abide by the rules of the permissible and impermissible.”



the callers to Islām and their shortcoming in fulfilling their obligations to the affairs of Islamic *da'wah*. They bear the responsibility for this, because despite their understanding and ability in the field of *da'wah*, they left the job to others, and this opened the door for the Ṣūfi *mashāyikh* and those who follow them upon evil.

Someone may be afraid to say (even to himself), "All of what you have mentioned from their descriptions is considered *da'wah*, so do you have any proof of what you say?" Thus, we will mention some of the affairs of their leaders; from them is Ibn al-Fāriḍ.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ believed he was one with Allāh, such that if he prayed, he was praying to himself, prostrating to himself, and bowing to himself! He said in some lines of poetry he wrote, "As for my prayers in the abode, I establish them; I testify I am praying to myself." This is a famous poem read by the Ṣūfi *mashāyikh*. And you see that he alleges he became a Lord and a slave. He prays and sometimes he prays to himself! One of their leaders—I believe it was Ibn 'Arabi—clearly stated this. He said, "The Lord is a slave and the slave is a Lord."

These are the efforts put forward by the Ṣūfi scholars, as is well known by anyone who has interacted with them. Can this possibly be called Islamic *da'wah*? Al-Kawlakhi<sup>32</sup> of Africa called the people to deify him and worship him. He believed that loving him and seeing him guaranteed entrance into Paradise for the individual. He said, "Whoever loves me and sees me is in Paradise to remain forever, and this is no lie."

I will suffice with these examples. The words of a people are like a witness and evidence against their character.

### THE AFTERSHOCKS OF THE ṢŪFI DA'WAH

With this concise explanation, we clarified that Islām first entered the continent of Africa with the correct understanding. And with

<sup>32</sup> **Translator's Note:** Ibrāhīm Niass al-Kawlakhi (1900–1975 CE) was a Ṣūfi mystic from Senegal.

pure hearts, its sweetness was tasted. Then, after some time elapsed, it was spread by the hands of a group who loved Islām and loved good but did not have a proper understanding of Islām. This group was the merchants. When the Ṣūfis saw that the arena of *da'wah* was empty and they saw the failure of the true callers, they entered the field of *da'wah*, giving themselves the erroneous epithets previously mentioned. Thus, they entered the field of *da'wah* to take the religion as a business and to use Islām to call towards their pagan—and sometimes atheist—beliefs. They corrupted the *da'wah* such that their followers and students began to fear them like only Allāh should be feared, or even more than they feared Allāh. They fear their *mashāyikh* more than they fear Allāh; is this from the religion?! Is this propagating Islām? What kind of Islām is this?!

It is very unfortunate that this is their understanding of the religion. This is the Islām of the general Muslims who took Islām from the hands of the Ṣūfi orders. Many of them have taken a position against the scholars who teach what was brought by the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. They do not have any understanding of the religion. The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ بِهِ خَيْرًا يُفَقِّهْهُ فِي الدِّينِ .

**Whomever Allāh wants good for, He gives them an understanding of the religion.**<sup>33</sup>

Studying is one thing, while understanding is something different.

﴿ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي هَدَانَا لِهَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْلَا أَنْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ ﴾

**All praises and thanks be to Allāh, Who has guided us to this. Never could we have found guidance, were it not that Allāh had guided us!**

[Sūrah al-A'rāf 7:43]

<sup>33</sup> Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāri 3116

To Allāh belongs the praise and from Him alone come the favors.

لَا أُحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَيَّ نَفْسِكَ.

**I cannot enumerate Your praise as You have praised Yourself.<sup>34</sup>**

### SUFISM EMPOWERS THE CRIME OF COMMUNISM

When communism entered many of the Islamic countries, whose residents claim they are believers, how did their faith stand up to the fire of communism? Did their faith extinguish the fire of communism such that it became cool and peaceful upon the inhabitants of those countries? Or did the fire of communism ignite their hearts like the burning of sugarcane? Or did the faith of the residents melt in the face of communism like salt melts in water? Did communism consume them like fire consumes firewood? This is the reality of what happened.

Why is this? Why didn't the believers resist or defeat the spread of communism? What is the subtlety in this? We all know that doubts and desires cannot stand in front of true faith; rather, it does not encounter true faith except that it is burned. The scholars mention that this is the situation with true faith from the scholars of the Islamic legislation; the source of their faith is the divine revelation of the Book and the Sunnah. Where are the Ṣūfi followers as it relates to a strong position like this?

I say—seeking the help of Allāh—that my answer to this question is: When the ideology of communism reached this area, they found some of the hearts floating around physical idols while they found other hearts floating around the idols of animalistic desires. They

<sup>34</sup> 'Ā'ishah ؓ narrated, "One night, I missed Allah's Messenger ﷺ from the bed, and when I sought him, my hand touched the soles of his feet while he was in the state of prostration; they (his feet) were raised and he was saying, 'O Allah, I seek refuge in Your pleasure from Your anger, and in Your forgiveness from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praise as You have praised Yourself.'" (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 486)

found some of the hearts floating around the paganism of Sufism connected to the tombs of their *mashāyikh*, kneeling and prostrating in front of the “greatness” of the *shaykh* while forgetting their Lord, their Creator. Communism found those hearts in these filthy places. Despite their claim of faith, they were corrupted around those cheap gods. And there is no might and power except with Allāh.

These hearts had the shallow faith of blind following and did not reach the level of certainty. The hearts of most of the Muslims who claimed faith at the hands of the Ṣūfi *mashāyikh* and their followers were ignorant, and faith was not firmly rooted in their hearts nor did they taste the sweetness of faith. It was not only the continent of Africa that felt this calamity—it was more widespread than that. And with Allāh help is sought.

As for the hearts of the believers, they are content and pleased with Allāh. Idol worship is not able to reach their hearts because they worship Allāh and they remember Allāh in the houses of Allāh. They are busy remembering Allāh, so this distracts them from other than Him. They reflect upon the Book of Allāh and His signs and creations, and His many favors. They distance themselves from materialism, desires, and the traps of the Ṣūfis. These hearts are in one valley and communism is in a completely different valley. The two never mix; rather, if communism passes by them, their faith dissolves it and they remain upon their faith, believing in Allāh, His Books, His messengers, and the Last Day. And with Allāh lies all success.

## — THE THIRD & FINAL PHASE —

### Rectification

No two people with a correct understanding of Islām will disagree that many Muslims are in need of a rectification of their Islām, those in Africa and in other continents. And perhaps the establishment of the University of Madīnah will have a global effect in the role of rectification, and those responsible personnel will comply and take full advantage in the field of rectification. This is because Muslim children gather from around the world in this young university to study the methodology of the Muslim in an Islamic environment, and then they return to their homes to teach their people. This work is a type of rectification if the university students make their action sincerely for Allāh and fulfill what is expected of them by Allāh's permission.

I explained to the Islamic University and the Department of Scholarly Research, Religious Verdicts, *Da'wah*, and Guidance in Riyadh the urgent need the continent of Africa has for rectification, as much as these two institutions are able to assist. They both recognized the need and they both agreed to assist and coordinate the rectification efforts between them. The university would select graduates and present them to the president of the Department of Scholarly Research in Riyadh to send them to East, West, and Central Africa. And they did so, and their efforts are appreciated and they will be rewarded by the permission of Allāh, but there remains the need for more planning and organization.

We ask Allāh the Exalted for increased success for all those responsible for the Islamic University and the Department of Scholarly Research so that this noble endeavor is actualized and this goal can be achieved. This goal is to correct the understanding of Islām among the Muslims

and remove the traces of idol worship connected to their beliefs, and to remove the innovation that has crept into their worship, corrupted their character, and become prevalent in their ranks, and [to remove] the atheism imported from the country of their enemies, which they put in place of the Book of their Lord and the Sunnah of their Prophet ﷺ. The goal is to remove the alienation that has sealed the hearts, causing an absence of closeness to Allāh, placing trust in Him, seeking refuge in Him, and sufficing with Him alone. This is the field of rectification and renewal.

When we call this phase “the rectification phase,” it is not to disparage the tremendous work put forth by the callers there, because the rectification we speak of is not by the stroke of a pen; rather, it is to eradicate the chronic ignorance about Islām and replace this ignorance with Islām and purify the hearts from the traces of paganism, innovation, and ancient heresies until the hearts are enlightened with the light of faith, monotheism, and sincerity. The intent is to establish the fair and just laws of Islām and remove the laws left by colonialism or inherited from others.

And this is not an easy task; rather, it is a very difficult task—it is a great *jihād* (struggle). May Allāh grant us sincerity in this endeavor such that we seek His Face and seek to benefit His slaves and teach them what they are ignorant of.

﴿ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴾

**Verily, He is the All-Knower of what is in the breasts  
(of men).**

[*Sūrah al-Mulk* 67:13]

## SOME PROMINENT SCHOLARS OF AFRICA

Here is an important matter I must mention. The continent of Africa has enjoyed local callers and reformers throughout various times and places, covering a long span of history. From the most important are

those who preceded us.

- **The *sultān*, the *mujāhid*, the Salafi: Shaykh ‘Uthmān bin Muḥammad, known as Ibn Fūdi al-Fulāni:** He was born in the year 1169 AH (corresponding with 1754 on the Gregorian calendar) and he passed away in 1232 AH (corresponding with 1817 on the Gregorian calendar).

He began his work of reform and *da’wah* to Islām in 1188 AH (1774 Gregorian calendar) and he called the people to the correct understanding of Islām that many of them were distant from. He fought in the cause of Allāh when there was a need for fighting. He reached out to the leaders and scholars who had strayed away from the truth and called them to return to the truth and to the correct understanding of Islām as pure as the day it was revealed from Allāh, with its correct beliefs, worship, politics, and manners. The effects of his *da’wah* are still felt in northern Nigeria, especially in the mother cities, which were the principal cities for his *da’wah* and the *da’wah* of his children and grandchildren after him, like the cities Sokoto, Zaria, Jos, and others.

Whoever wants to know the man, his *da’wah*, and his manners should read some of his writings. From his most important writings is *A Lamp For the Brothers Concerning the Most Important Matter Required During This Era*. This book is small in size yet huge in knowledge, with much benefit. It demonstrates the knowledge of its author and his extreme diligence in guiding the people, along with his attention to detail in clarifying the truth.

His descendants: From his descendants was the martyr (*inshāAllāh*) al-Ḥajj Aḥmadu Bello, the Premier of northern Nigeria. Allāh sealed his life with him calling to Islām. At his hand, Islām freed many people from idol worship and Christianity.

We (I and fellow members of a delegation from the Islamic University) attended a great campaign in propagating Islām in northern Nigeria in 1385 AH (1965 Gregorian calendar). Many Christian or pagan areas became Muslim areas, and all praise belongs to Allāh

the Exalted. How many villages had become Christian or pagan and then, by way of his *da'wah* efforts, these villages became Muslim! How many Christian churches turned into Islamic *masājid* overnight!

The daily Nigeria newspapers used to present to the reader fictitious statistics surrounding new Muslims, just as the local radio station would broadcast news to delight the Muslims and enrage the envious ones from the Zionists and the Christians, those who collaborated the vicious assassination of the Premier after he had put forward noble acts. We ask Allāh the Exalted to accept his good deeds and to join him with the righteous.

﴿ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾

**Indeed, Allāh does not allow to be lost the reward of those who do good.**

[*Sūrah Yūsuf* 12:90]

• **Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh from Madīnah by way of Mali:** This caller lived in the city of Madīnah for a long time and became the *imām* of the Prophet’s *masjid* during the early years of King ‘Abdul-‘Azīz’s term ﷺ. Then he traveled to India, and then to Ṣan‘ā’ in Yemen, and then he entered Africa through Somalia and Ethiopia. This was both a journey of seeking knowledge and *da'wah*. He ended his journey in his homeland of Mali.

His reason for traveling to his homeland was so the truth could prevail over the ignorant ones from the Ṣūfi *mashāyikh*, the sorcerers, and the blind-following leaders of the Mu’tazilah and their followers. He began to spread the knowledge of the Book and the Sunnah and the creed of the Salaf of this *ummah*, those whom all good comes from following. They are the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and those that followed them in goodness. How good was the saying of the person who said, “All good lies in following the Salaf and all evil lies in following those who came later.”

He started his blessed call in eastern Mali in the year 1357 AH (1938



Gregorian calendar) and continued his *da'wah* and struggle until he died in the year 1373 AH (1953 Gregorian calendar) ﷺ.

He left behind obvious traces of his call and a significant number of students who inherited the knowledge and Salafi creed. They treaded his path after him and became worthy successors in *da'wah* and reform to the best of their ability.

• **Shaykh Tāhir from Algeria** (b. 1268 AH [1852 Gregorian calendar], d. 1338 AH [1920 Gregorian calendar]): His *da'wah* reformed an extremely important area, the area of creed and beliefs. He authored a number of treatises which were beneficial, by the permission of Allāh. From his books are:

- *Al-Īmān (Faith)*
- *Shirk (Polytheism) and Its Manifestations*
- *Verbal Gems in Clarifying the Islamic Faith*

He is from those scholars considered to be heroes, those who participated in the bitter struggle against the French in Algeria. And in the end, Allāh decreed for the Muslims to be successful.

This clarifies, O noble reader, that studying African history and the stages of Islamic *da'wah* and its history invalidates the well-known slogan “the unknowns of Africa.” This slogan is a historical myth that contradicts the concrete reality upon this continent.

After this, I believe I have given the noble reader a clear picture about the Islamic *da'wah* in Africa throughout history, or at least stirred something in the soul for the reader to study the history of Africa, the stages of Islamic *da'wah*, and the position of those who carried Islām to the continent, and they were the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. I hope I have given this to the noble reader. As for those who have the *da'wah* in their hands today, then I will speak about the necessary conditions for the success of the *da'wah*.

## NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL DA'WAH IN AFRICA

Indeed, in most cases, the success of the job depends upon the quality of the workers. Thus, I see it as a necessity to list the conditions that define the quality of the callers sent into the field, so those responsible can select the proper callers.

- **The caller must be a person of firm, truthful 'aqidah.**

How many people have suffered due to callers whose hearts were void of sound Islamic 'aqidah? How many have suffered due to people propagating Islām without knowing the reality of Islām with a true understanding? Some of them invite Muslims to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet ﷺ. Some of them call the people to specific acts of worship during the months of Rajab and Sha'bān. Some call the people to chant the Ṣūfi invocations. Rather, some of the callers call the people to negate the attributes of Allāh the Exalted or distort the attributes He has affirmed for Himself, under the guise that they are avoiding resembling Allāh to His creation. Some of them even call to abandoning virtuous character to make evil vices permissible, under the guise of religious freedom. They call to all of this in the name of Islām, while they have maligned Islām.

- **The caller must have understanding in the religion and insight into the methodology of da'wah.**

This is based upon the statement of Allāh the Exalted:

﴿ قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَالِي بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي ﴾

**Say, this is my way; I invite to Allāh with insight, I and those who follow me.**

[Sūrah Yūsuf 12:108]

- **The caller must have wisdom and poise and not be reckless.**

﴿ اذْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ <sup>ط</sup>  
وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِلَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ﴾

**Invite (mankind, O Muhammad) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better.**

[Sūrah an-Nahl 16:125]

﴿ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ﴾

**He gives wisdom to whom He wills, and whoever has been given wisdom has certainly been given abundant good.**

[Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:269]

In short, wisdom is to use kindness in the time for kindness and to use harshness in the time for harshness.

- **The caller must avoid flattery;** it is from the most dangerous qualities of a person involved in *da'wah*.

Flattery is to compliment and praise the people at the expense of the religion such that, in the end, the person is unable to clarify the truth, enjoin the good, and forbid the evil. This is because they are always concerned about what the people will think of them. Thus, if the people do good, he does good with them, and if they do evil, he does evil with them.

- **The caller must have patience and endurance,** because the treatment for the existing ailments in the Muslim lands requires a long time, about as long as the ignorance has existed, if not longer.

If the callers apply these conditions or come close to adorning themselves with the attributes required for the caller who works in the field of rectification, then we will be close to the path of success by the permission of Allāh the Exalted. However, we are in urgent need of reconsidering the organization of the *da'wah* efforts in general,

because a little work that is organized brings about more fruits than a lot of unorganized work.

A person can see the work of the missionaries and the precise organization of the missionary movements and the sacrifices they make with patience, and then compare it to the chaos and confusion that has prevailed in the ranks of those who connect themselves to the Islamic *da'wah* movement and the lack of seriousness in their work. Rather, it has become a secondary task the person does in his spare time when he completes his serious business, in his estimation. If someone were to compare the two, they would find that the people of falsehood are serious about calling to their falsehood and are sincere towards it, while the people of the truth are neglectful and lazy in this right and they do not compete in this path. And with Allāh aid is sought.

Despite the large number of Islamic centers that carry the name of "calling to Islām" and despite the numerous people who affiliate themselves with *da'wah* and live under the banner of *da'wah*, and despite the numerous writings and broadcasts under the banner of *da'wah*, there are still complaints that the correct Islamic call lacks seriousness from its people.

Rather, many people take advantage of this to use *da'wah* as a means of livelihood or to reach a worldly position they could only reach by using the name of *da'wah* so they can attain fame. There are also complaints concerning insufficient knowledge, little wisdom, and weak sincerity from the callers. And with Allāh aid is sought.

I am certain that the heads of the Department of Scholarly Research, Religious Verdicts, *Da'wah*, and Guidance understand this reality and are trying to remove the Islamic call from this gridlock by uniting the *da'wah* centers and mobilizing them for *da'wah*, and by recruiting those men who have knowledge and wisdom and are serious about the *da'wah*, not those who are looking for a huge salary and world-wide fame.

This is the hope of all Muslims at home and abroad, that the noble

president of the Department of Scholarly Research, Religious Verdicts, *Da'wah*, and Guidance—after placing our hope in Allāh—will establish this important Islamic task. Thus, by way of his hand, Allāh may establish this work, because he is most qualified to perform this task, may Allāh preserve him and benefit the Muslims by way of his knowledge.

### THE DA'WAH IN AFRICA

By the grace of Allāh, I have been able to visit many countries on this continent, mostly in West Africa. After thanking Allāh for this, thanks are then due to the Islamic University, as I was a member of the delegation of the university, which frequently returned to these countries to visit our brothers and to call to Islām along with the callers there.

Looking back on our visits in 1385 and 1386 AH (1965 and 1966 on the Gregorian calendar) and our visit last summer in 1395 AH (1975 on the Gregorian calendar), we find what delights the hearts concerning the Islamic *da'wah* in those countries. And to Allāh belong the praise and the bounty. The countries I visited are:

- Chad
- Cameroon
- Nigeria
- Republic of Dahomey<sup>35</sup>
- Togo
- Niger
- Ivory Coast
- Republic of Upper Volta<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> **Translator's Note:** On November 30, 1975, the country was renamed Benin.

<sup>36</sup> **Translator's Note:** The country changed its name on August 4, 1984, from the Upper

- Mali
- Senegal
- Liberia
- Sierra Leone
- Mauritania
- Ghana
- Guinea

During our first and second visits, I was taking notes. In some of the countries, I mentioned that there was a very strange atmosphere. The callers and the Islamic call were both stigmatized. The situation of the Muslims there resembled the situation of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ during the days when the Muslims would meet in the home of al-Arqam bin Abil-Arqam<sup>37</sup> before 'Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb and Ḥamzah accepted Islām ﷺ. The *da'wah* there was in its infancy and secret. They feared that they and the *da'wah* would be labeled as Wahhabism. And how much does today resemble yesterday.

As for our third visit last summer, it resembled when 'Umar and Ḥamzah entered Islām. The fear was gone, the people felt safe, and the *da'wah* was safe. They had even built *masājid* for the Friday prayer and founded schools and associations under the names "The Muḥammad Society" or "The Sunnah Society" or different names based upon their particular country.

I noticed the callers to the Sunnah were in good spirits and had strong resolve and sacrifice, despite what they lacked in material resources. In reality, they were more active and sincere in their *da'wah* than those who have vast resources. And with Allāh aid is sought.

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Volta to Burkina Faso.

<sup>37</sup> **Translator's Note:** During the early days of Islām, the Muslims could not openly practice Islām due to the harm of the Quraysh tribe, so they would meet in the home of al-Arqam. There, the Prophet ﷺ would teach his Companions Islām.

At this point, you should ask a question and I should give you an answer.

The question is: Who put forth these efforts in calling to the Sunnah in some of these West African countries?

The answer is: This was accomplished from a number of different directions.

1) Some of the small students of knowledge living in Africa who had previously lived in Makkah and Madīnah for a moment and studied in some of the universities returned back to their respective countries and conveyed what they knew of the religion. This is in accordance with the statement of Allāh the Exalted:

﴿ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ ﴾

**So keep your duty to Allāh and fear Him as much as you can.**

[Sūrah at-Taghābun 64:16]

They worked according to the little they knew. May Allāh increase us and them in beneficial knowledge.

2) The *da'wah* of the affiliates of the Department of Scholarly Research, Religious Verdicts, *Da'wah*, and Guidance. And they are well known, so it is not necessary to mention who they are.

3) The delegation from the Islamic University and the delegations from the Department of Scholarly Research who repeatedly came to the area and established what they could of lessons, awareness, and guidance through lectures and seminars, some formal and some informal.

4) Visits from some Saudi dignitaries after receiving a formal invitation. An example of this is the visit of the *imām* of the Prophet's *masjid*, Shaykh 'Abdul-Azīz bin Ṣāliḥ, who visited some of these countries. And he was instrumental in bringing awareness and fight-

ing innovations and widespread pagan practices there.

5) Some of the Africans repeatedly perform Ḥajj to Makkah and they benefit from what they hear from the lessons given in the *masājid* in Makkah and Madīnah. Some of them delay their return after Ḥajj so they can attain more beneficial knowledge.

These are five ways (that I know of) in which the *da'wah* has grown in these countries. Allāh blessed the efforts such that the call to Islām reached the heights we have mentioned. And to Allāh belongs all the praise and from Him come all blessings. We ask Allāh to grant success to the African universities so the construction can be completed by our brothers we have previously mentioned.

## AFRICAN UNDERGRADUATES

When speaking of Islamic *da'wah* in the African continent throughout its long history, beginning with the migration of the Companions رضي الله عنهم of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم up until present day, we are not able to forget speaking about the role of African undergraduates. They are from the best of those who live upon this continent because they are the people of knowledge and understanding.

﴿ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾

**Say: "Are those who know equal to those who know not?"**

[*Sūrah az-Zumar* 39:9]

They give us optimism about the future of Africa. The Islamic universities, at the forefront this university of ours (the Islamic University of Madīnah), has graduated a large number of African children during a time rightfully considered the best time and [having the] best rectification on our continent. This is a time when people are trying to rid the country of the traces of Western and Eastern colonialism, to tie the bond with their brothers in faith and belief from the Arabs



and all the Muslims. This is a time when people are taking advantage of Islamic awareness, as we have seen in our repeated visits. It is a time when mechanisms are in place to promote Islamic works. Our university has graduated African children so they may take their place among the ranks of Islamic rectification.

These students give their Muslim brothers the best anyone could receive: they give them sound Islamic creed and beliefs, deep faith, and Islamic direction, which affects every facet of our lives. These graduates are able to play a role in Africa that others cannot accomplish. With the aid of Allāh, they are in a position to change Africa into a purely Islamic land after shaking off the dust of colonialism from her face. Africa can become Islamic in its politics, personality, economics, morals, and all aspects of life. We hope the graduates will be successful, if they are sincere towards Allāh. Because it is Allāh Who controls all the affairs and all good is in His Hand. We believe they can be successful if they fear Allāh and avoid laziness. Islamic work in Africa requires planning before action, and this is the case with every action you want to succeed. It requires long, silent study, without fanfare or the beating of drums or ringing bells.

In short, I say that Africa needs strong, sincere efforts from its children, with wisdom and precision. Africa needs African students more than it needs foreign students, because they are familiar with its traditions, customs, etiquettes, and many languages, which others are not familiar with. Thus, I say again, African graduates must be at the forefront in the ranks of this arena as they are the most deserving and qualified to do so. They can solve the chronic political and social problems left by Western colonialism and increased by new Eastern colonialism in this land, which took hold while our people were heedless.

O brother graduates, now is a great time to take advantage of this opportunity, because the African people are turning to Islām like never before seen in history. As proof of what I say: I remember when I came for a seminar in Nouakchott<sup>38</sup> held during the month

<sup>38</sup> **Translator's Note:** Nouakchott is the capital of Mauritania.

of Jumādā al-Awwal. As I was preparing my lecture, I picked up a newspaper from Madīnah that was published Wednesday, the 6th of Jumādā al-Awwal 1396 AH (1976 on the Gregorian calendar). The headline read “African Islamic Conference Looking to Spread Islām in Africa.” The title surprised me, so I began to read what the journalist had written.

The text read, “The main lecture hall was filled on the first day of the African Islamic conference that opened in Nouakchott. The theme of the conference is the spread of Islām in Africa, the dissemination of the Arabic language, unity, and solidarity.” Perhaps the intent behind “unity” and “solidarity” was Islamic unity and Islamic solidarity. These efforts are best performed by the university graduates, as they are the best to take advantage of this opportunity. And with Allāh lies all success.

# **APPENDIX**

## — FROM SLAVE TO KING —

### An-Najāshi's Rise to the Throne

His name was Aṣḥamah bin Abjar the Abyssinian an-Najāshi, the king of Abyssinia. The name Aṣḥamah means “gift.”

Jābir رضي الله عنه narrated:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: صَلَّى عَلَى أَصْحَمَةَ النَّجَاشِيِّ فَكَبَّرَ أَرْبَعًا.

The Prophet ﷺ offered the funeral prayer for Aṣḥamah an-Najāshi and said four *takbīr*.<sup>1</sup>

Jābir رضي الله عنه narrated:

قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ حِينَ مَاتَ النَّجَاشِيُّ: مَاتَ الْيَوْمَ رَجُلٌ صَالِحٌ فَقُومُوا فَصَلُّوا عَلَى أَخِيكُمْ أَصْحَمَةَ.

On the day an-Najāshi died, the Prophet ﷺ said, “Today, a righteous man died, so stand and offer the funeral prayer for your brother Aṣḥamah.”<sup>2</sup>

It has been narrated by Umm Salamah, the wife of the Prophet ﷺ: “When we reached Abyssinia, we reached the best welcome from an-Najāshi. We were safe to practice our religion, so we worshiped Allāh and we did not hear anything harmful.” Then she mentioned the story of the Quraysh sending someone to expel the migrants from Abyssinia, and she mentioned the dialogue between an-Najāshi and the migrants up to the statement of an-Najāshi:

<sup>1</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1334

<sup>2</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 3877

فَوَاللَّهِ مَا أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنِّي الرِّشْوَةَ حِينَ رَدَّ عَلَيَّ مُلْكِي، فَأَخَذَ الرِّشْوَةَ فِيهِ.

“I swear by Allāh, Allāh did not accept bribery concerning me when He returned my kingdom to me such that I should accept it concerning Him.”

Az-Zuhri said, “‘Urwah narrated this *ḥadīth* to Umm Salamah. He said to her, ‘Do you know the meaning of his statement, “I swear by Allāh, Allāh did not accept bribery concerning me when He returned my kingdom to me such that I should accept it concerning Him”?’ She replied, ‘No.’ ‘Urwah said, ‘Ā’ishah narrated to me:

“‘An-Najāshi’s father was the king of his people, and he had a brother who had 12 sons, while an-Najāshi was the only son of his father. The Abyssinians conspired amongst themselves, saying, “If we kill the father of an-Najāshi and give the throne to his brother, he has 12 sons from his loins, so they will inherit the throne and Abyssinia after him without any voids between them.” So they killed him and placed his brother on the throne.

“‘An-Najāshi entered upon the throne with his uncle; they were very close. His uncle did not pass an order without consulting an-Najāshi, as he was extremely intelligent and resolute. When the Abyssinians saw the position an-Najāshi held with his uncle, they said, “This young man has taken over his uncle’s job. We are not safe from the king placing his nephew as the successor to his throne. And if he does, he will execute all of us (responsible for killing his father)! So we will speak to the king about him, and give him the option to either kill his nephew or exile him.”

“‘They went to his uncle (the king) and said, “We have seen the position this boy has with you, and you know we killed his father and placed you on his throne. If you place him over us, we will not be safe from him executing us. So you [must] either kill him or exile him from our country.”

“‘The king replied, “Woe to you, you killed his father yesterday and

you will kill him today? Do not do so; rather, exile him from the land.” So they exiled the young an-Najāshi, took him to the marketplace and sold him to a merchant, who threw him on a ship for the price of 600 or 700 *dirham*. And the merchant left with him.

“When the evening came, the clouds of autumn stirred. The king went out seeking rain beneath the clouds and was struck by lightning and killed. The people went to his sons (to choose a successor to the throne) and found they were all foolish. Not one of them was suitable. Thus, the affair of the Abyssinians was in disarray.

“They said to one another, “By Allāh, you know that the only person suitable for the job of king is the one we sold yesterday! So if you care about the affairs of Abyssinia, go get him before he leaves.” So they left looking for him, and they found him. They took him back, placed the crown on his head, sat him on the throne, and made him the king. The merchant came and said, “Return to me my money, just as you took the youth from me.” They replied, “We will not return your money.” The merchant said, “Then, by Allāh, I will speak to the king.”

“[The merchant] went to speak to him and said, “O king, I purchased a young boy and the sellers took my money from me, then they took the boy from my hands and did not return my money.” This was the first time [an-Najāshi's] wisdom and justice would be apparent. He said, “You will either return his wealth to him, or you will place the young boy in his hand and then he can take him wherever he likes!” They responded, “No, we will give him his money.” And they returned the money to him.

“So this was the meaning of his statement, “I swear by Allāh, Allāh did not accept bribery concerning me when He returned my kingdom to me such that I should accept it concerning Him.””<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> From the *ḥadīth* of Umm Salamah collected in the *Musnad* of Imam Aḥmad (202/1, 291/5) with an authentic chain of narration.

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## AN-NAJĀSHI

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### The First King to Accept Islām<sup>1</sup>

*Ibn al-Qayyim رحمته الله said:*

‘Amr bin al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه went to the king of Oman with a letter from the Prophet ﷺ inviting him to Islām.

The king asked him, “Where did you accept Islām?”

He replied, “With an-Najāshi.” And he informed the king that an-Najāshi had entered Islām.

The king asked, “What did his people do with his kingdom?”

‘Amr replied, “They affirmed it and followed him.”

He said, “Did the bishops and monks follow him?”

‘Amr said, “Yes.”

The king said, “O ‘Amr, what are you saying? It is not from the noble traits of a man to be exposed as a liar.”

‘Amr replied, “I did not lie, and it is not permissible in our religion.”

The king said, “I don’t believe Heraclius is aware of an-Najāshi’s Islām.”

‘Amr replied, “On the contrary [he knows].”

The king said, “Why do you think he knows?”

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from *Zād al-Ma’ād* (3/694)

'Amr said, "An-Najāshi used to pay him a tax, but when he accepted Islām and believed in Muḥammad ﷺ, he said, 'No, I swear by Allāh, if he asks me for one *dirham* I will not give it to him.' So his statement reached Heraclius. His brother Yanak said to him, 'Will you allow your slave to refuse to pay the tax and practice a new religion?' Heraclius replied, 'A man desires a religion and chooses it for himself; what am I to do with him? I swear by Allāh, if I were not afraid to lose my kingdom, I would do just as he did.'"

The king of Oman said, "Look to what you are saying, O 'Amr."

'Amr replied, "I swear by Allāh, I have told you the truth."

*Ibn al Qayyim* رَحِمَهُ اللهُ سَائِدًا:

When Heraclius heard news of an-Najāshi becoming Muslim, he said, "By Allāh, were it not for the sake of holding on to my kingdom, I would have done what he has done." His fear for himself and his kingdom prevented him from becoming Muslim and migrating to the Prophet ﷺ. But if Heraclius had really understood the words of the Prophet ﷺ in the letter that he sent to him—"Become Muslim and you will be safe"—and he had understood that, in general terms, this applied both to this world and the Hereafter, he would have been safe from all that he feared if he had become Muslim. But guidance is in the Hand of Allāh. An-Najāshi, the king of Abyssinia, became Muslim and remained in power.



## — THE PROPHET'S LETTER —

### To An-Najāshi<sup>1</sup>

*Ibn Ishāq said:*

The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ sent 'Amr bin Umayyah to an-Najāshi with a letter. It read:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ مِنْ مُحَمَّدٍ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ إِلَى النَّجَاشِيِّ الْأَصْحَمِ  
مَلِكِ الْحَبَشَةِ: فإني أحمّد إليك الله الملك القدوس السلام المؤمن  
المهيمن، وأشهد أن عيسى روح الله وكلمته ألقاها إلى مريم البتول  
الطيبة الحصينة، فحملت بعيسى، وإني أدعوك إلى الله وحده لا شريك  
له، وأن تتبعتني وتؤمن بالذي جاءني، فإني رسول الله وقد بعثت إليك  
ابن عمي جعفرًا ومعه نفر من المسلمين، والسلام على من اتبع الهدى.

**In the name of Allāh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, from Muḥammad the Messenger of Allāh to an-Najāshi Aṣḥamah the king of Abyssinia: Verily, I convey to you my praise of Allāh, the King, the Holy, the One Free from all defects, the Giver of security, the Watcher over His creatures. And I bear witness that Jesus is the spirit created by Allāh, and His word which He gave to the pure, chaste virgin Maryam, thus she became pregnant with Jesus. Verily, I invite you to worship Allāh alone without any partners and to follow me, and to believe in what has been revealed to me, for indeed I am the Messenger of Allāh. I sent to you my cousin Ja'far and a group of Muslims with him. Peace be upon those who accept guidance.**

<sup>1</sup> Taken from *The History of the Messengers and the Kings* by aṭ-Ṭabarāni (2/1079) and *Al-Kāmil* by Ibn Athīr (4/213).

## — AN-NAJĀSHI'S LETTER —

To Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ<sup>1</sup>

*Ibn Ishāq said:*

An-Najāshi read the letter and wrote his response to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. He wrote:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ إِلَى مُحَمَّدٍ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنَ  
النَّجَاشِيِّ الْأَصْحَمِ، سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ الَّذِي لَا  
إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الَّذِي هَدَانِي إِلَى الْإِسْلَامِ، أَمَا بَعْدَ فَقَدْ بَلَّغَنِي كِتَابُكَ يَا رَسُولَ  
اللَّهِ فِيمَا ذَكَرْتَ مِنْ أَمْرِ عَيْسَى، فَوَرَبِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَنْ عَيْسَى لَا  
يَزِيدُ عَلَيَّ مَا ذَكَرْتَ تَفْرُوقًا، إِنَّهُ كَمَا قُلْتَ، وَلَقَدْ عَرَفْنَا مَا بَعَثْتَ بِهِ إِلَيْنَا  
، وَقَدْ قَرِينَا ابْنَ عَمِّكَ وَأَصْحَابَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّكَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ  
وَسَلَّمَ صَادِقًا مُصَدِّقًا وَقَدْ بَايَعْتُكَ وَبَايَعْتَ ابْنَ عَمِّكَ، وَأَسْلَمْتُ عَلَيَّ يَدِي  
لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَبَعَثْتَ إِلَيْكَ بَابِنِي، وَإِنْ شِئْتَ أَنْ آتِيكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ  
فَعَلْتُ، فَإِنِّي أَشْهَدُ أَنْ مَا تَقُولُهُ حَقٌّ، وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ.

**In the name of Allāh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, to Muḥammad the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ from an-Najāshi Aṣḥamah: Peace be upon you, O Prophet, and the mercy of Allāh and His blessings; the One whom there is nothing worthy of worship except for Him, the One who guided me to Islām. As to what follows: Indeed, I received your letter, O Messenger of Allāh. As for what you**

<sup>1</sup> Taken from *The History of the Messengers and the Kings* by aṭ-Ṭabarāni (2/1079) and *Al-Kāmil* by Ibn Athīr (4/213).

mentioned concerning the affair of Jesus, then I swear by the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Jesus is no more than what you have mentioned, any more than the hair of a date stone. The affair is as you have mentioned. And we are aware of what you have sent to us. Your cousin and his companions have accompanied us. And I bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, the one who is truthful and believed. I have given you the pledge and [pledged] to your cousin. I accepted Islām by way of his *da'wah* for the sake of Allāh, the Lord of all that exists. I am sending my son to you. And if you want me to come to you, O Messenger of Allāh, I will do so. For surely, I testify that what you say is the truth. Peace be upon you, O Messenger of Allāh.

The son of an-Najāshi left from Abyssinia with 60 others headed to the Prophet ﷺ. They boarded a ship, and when they were halfway through their journey, the sea storms raged and they all drowned.

## — WAS AN-NAJĀSHI —

### A Companion of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ?

An-Najāshi is not considered to be a Companion; rather, he has a special classification known as *mukhadram* (مُخَضَّرَمٌ) ﷺ.

*Shaykh 'Uthaymīn said*<sup>1</sup>:

- **Companions:** The Companions are those who met or saw the Prophet ﷺ while believing in him and who died upon that belief. This includes those individuals who left the religion of Islām and then returned to it, like al-Ash'ath bin Qays. He left Islām after the death of the Prophet ﷺ and he was brought to Abū Bakr as a prisoner of war. He then repented and entered Islām [again], and he was accepted by Abū Bakr ﷺ.

[This category] does not include those who believed in the Prophet ﷺ during his lifetime but did not meet him, like an-Najāshi. And it does not include those who left the religion of Islām and died upon disbelief, such as 'Abdullāh bin Khaṭal. He was killed the day of the Conquest [of Makkah]. And like Rabī'ah bin Umayyah bin Khalaf; he left Islām during the leadership of 'Umar and died an apostate.

- **Mukhadram:** Al-Hāfiẓ Ibn aṣ-Ṣalāḥ (643 AH) said in his book *The Sciences of Ḥadīth*, “The *mukhadram* is a person from the Tābi'ūn who was alive during the pre-Islamic Days of Ignorance and during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. They entered Islām, but they never met the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.”

The scholars mentioned there were about 40 individuals who fit

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<sup>1</sup> *The Science of Ḥadīth* by Shaykh 'Uthaymīn

this category. From them were: al-Aḥnaf bin Qays, Abū Muslim al-Khawlāni, al-Aswad bin Yazīd, Abū 'Amr ash-Shaybāni, Sa'd bin Iyās, 'Abdullāh bin 'Ukaym, 'Amr bin Maymūn, and an-Najāshi the king of Abyssinia. And this is a level between the Companions and the Tābi'ūn. Thus, they were greater than the Tābi'ūn but less than the Companions.

- **Tābi'ūn:** They are those individuals who met the Companions while believing in the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and who died upon that.

## THE STORY OF HOW

### 'Amr Bin al-'Āṣ Accepted Islām<sup>1</sup>

*'Abdul-Ḥamīd bin Ja'far narrated that 'Amr bin al-'Āṣ said:*

I used to be adverse to and antagonistic towards Islām. I fought alongside the pagans in the Battle of Badr and I survived, then I fought in the Battle of Uḥud and I survived, and then I fought in the Battle of the Trench and I survived. So I said to myself, "How many battles will I participate in?! By Allāh, Muḥammad will surely defeat the Quraysh. So I will take my wealth and go to al-Wuhayṭ and avoid the people."

When the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah occurred and the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ signed the treaty, and the Quraysh returned to Makkah, I started saying, "Muḥammad is going to enter Makkah with a tribe of his Companions. I have no place in Makkah or Ṭā'if; there is nothing better to do than leave. And I am far from Islām. In my view, if the tribe of Quraysh were to accept Islām—all of them—I would not accept Islām."

So I went to Makkah and gathered the men of my tribe. They used to respect my opinion, listen to me, and put me forward to represent them. I said to them, "By Allāh, I believe the affair of Muḥammad is going to overwhelm everything. So I have an idea." They said, "What is your idea?"

I said, "We should go to an-Najāshi and live with him. If Muḥammad is victorious, we will be with an-Najāshi. Living under an-Najāshi

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by Aḥmad in his *Musnad* (4/198), by al-Bukhāri in *At-Tarikh al-Kabir* (2/311), and by Ibn Jarīr in *Tarikh at-Ṭabari* (2/146).

is more beloved to us than living under Muḥammad. And if the Quraysh are victorious, then we are known to them.” They all agreed with this opinion. I said, “Let’s gather some gifts for him, and the most beloved gift to him is leather.” So we collected a lot of leather, then we went to an-Najāshi.

By Allāh, we were with him when ‘Amr bin Umayyah came. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ had sent him with a letter he authored. And an-Najāshi married him (the Prophet) to Umm Ḥabībah, the daughter of Abū Sufyān. He (‘Amr bin Umayyah) entered upon him (an-Najāshi), then he left. I said to my companions, “That’s ‘Amr bin Umayyah. If I go to an-Najāshi and ask him to give ‘Amr bin Umayyah to me he will, and then I will cut his neck. And when I do this, the Quraysh will be delighted, as I will have taken revenge against Muḥammad by killing his messenger.”

I entered upon an-Najāshi and prostrated to him like I used to do. He said, “Welcome, my friend. Did you bring me anything from your country?” I said, “Yes, O king, I brought you a lot of leather.” I gave him the leather and he was impressed by it, and the rest we gave to the priests. When I saw he was happy, I said, “O king, I saw a man leaving from you and he is a messenger of my enemy; he has killed our leaders and notables. Give him to me so I can kill him.” This angered [an-Najāshi], so he lifted his hand, hitting my nose such that I thought it was broken and my nose began to run. If the earth would have opened, I would have entered it to flee from him. I said, “O king, if I thought this would anger you, I would not have said it.”

He said, “O ‘Amr, you ask me to give you the messenger of a man who is visited by the chief angel that used to visit Mūsā and used to visit Jesus, so you can kill him?!”

So Allāh changed my heart from what it was before, and I said to myself, “The Arabs and non-Arabs recognize that this is the truth and you are going to oppose it?!” Then I said, “Do you bear witness to this, O king?” He said, “Yes, I bear witness to it with Allāh, O ‘Amr. So obey me and follow him; I swear by Allāh, he is upon the truth.

And he will be victorious over those who oppose him just as Mūsā was victorious over Pharaoh and his army." I said, "Will you accept the pledge of my Islām?" He said, "Yes." So I stretched my hand and gave the pledge of Islām. I came out to my companions and I hid my Islām from them.

Then I left, intending to go to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ with my Islām. I encountered Khālid bin al-Walīd, and this was before the conquest of Makkah. He was heading towards Makkah. I said to him, "Where are you going, Abū Sulaymān?" He said, "By Allāh, I am getting on the road; this man is surely a prophet. I am going to him to accept Islām; how long will I delay it?" I said, "As for me, by Allāh, I only came for Islām."

We reached the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and Khālid went to him first. He accepted Islām and gave him the pledge. I then went close to him. I said:

اَبْسَطْ يَمِينَكَ فَلَا بُايِعَكَ. فَبَسَطَ يَمِينَهُ، قَالَ: فَقَبَضْتُ يَدِي. قَالَ: مَا لَكَ يَا عَمْرُو؟ قَالَ: قُلْتُ: أَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَشْتَرِطَ. قَالَ: تَشْتَرِطُ بِمَاذَا؟ قُلْتُ: أَنْ يُغْفَرَ لِي. قَالَ: أَمَا عَلِمْتَ أَنَّ الْإِسْلَامَ يَهْدِمُ مَا كَانَ قَبْلَهُ.

"Give me your right hand so that I may swear allegiance to you." He held out his hand and I withdrew my hand. He said, "What is the matter, O 'Amr?" I said, "I want to stipulate a condition." He said, "What do you want to stipulate?" I said, "That I will be forgiven." He said, "Do you not know that Islām destroys what came before it?"



# ISLĀM IN AFRICA THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Brought to us by the Ethiopian scholar Shaykh Muḥammad Amān al-Jāmi, *Islām in Africa Throughout History* chronicles three significant phases of Islām in Africa which helped shape the world. This classic manuscript begins with the courageous stance of the Abyssinian king an-Najāshi, which shook Heraclius of Rome, defied the tribes of Makkah while influencing the kings of Oman, and even softened the hearts of Prophet Muḥammad's staunchest adversaries.

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- The Prophet's Letter to An-Najāshi
- An-Najāshi's Letter to the Prophet
- Was An-Najāshi a Companion of Prophet Muḥammad?
- The Story of How 'Amr bin al-'Āṣ Accepted Islām



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