

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



AN OCEAN OF AWLIYAA

THE LEGACY OF THE AL-YAQOUBI FAMILY IN DAMASCUS

BY HIS EMINENCE SHAYKH MUHAMMAD AL-YAQOUBI

Allah the Bestower, out of His Bounty, has blessed us with a son who was born on Saturday 9th *Shawwal* 1431. Remembering our great uncle Shaykh Shareef al-Yaqoubi, we named our newborn after him. Shaykh Shareef was the the Maliki Imam of the Grand Omayyad Mosque, who was the top of the *awliyaa* of his time. (d. 1362/1943 at the age of 80). I pray that he and his two brothers and sister will bring happiness to their grandfather, the best of mankind, our Master Muhammad, *sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. I pray that they become ulema and *awliyaa* to support this religion and defend their grandfather, *sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and revive his sunnah.

Shaykh Shareef al-Yaqoubi was one of the greatest saints in the Middle East in the first half of 14th century; his miracles are countless and are narrated by the Syrian and Lebanese people until today. He was one of the *Abdaal* of *Shaam*. Besides being a great scholar, he was the Imam of the Malikites in the Grand Omayyad Mosque in Damascus. The day he died, Damascus' shops closed mourning his death and the city followed after his funeral.

He fought the French when they invaded Syria in 1920 and participated in the Maysaloon Battle leading his family members and students in a battalion. He, together with his brother, my grandfather, Sayyid Ismail, were sentenced to death by the French. So they moved; My grandfather to the countryside continuing his jihad against the French; his brother, Shaykh Shareef to Lebanon's mountains, away from the French where he engaged in *da'wa*.

Many people in the mountains of Lebanon embraced Islam at his hands and he built over twenty mosques in the villages of Lebanon. In Beirut, he established an Islamic institute and taught many students, some became the ulema of the country in the second half of the 14th century, one of them is Shaykh Hasan Dimashqiyah, who was the Shaykh of al-Qur'an.

The ulema and the *awliyaa* of Damascus who were young in his time and live until today pride themselves on seeing him and narrate his miracles. Sayyid Taj al-Din al-Kittani, the second son of Sayyid Makki al-Kittani, told his students when I once visited him, "People who saw Shaykh Shareef will enter *al-Jannah*."

Shaykh Shareef had a face full of light and a hand which was source of *barakah*. His *du'a* was answered. He lived like royalty and walked with the Prophetic dignity. He never looked at a face of a

woman. He never missed a prayer in congregation in his life. He never sat in a place where someone smoked.

Business people who helped him became the richest in the country. Students who accompanied him became the top ulema of their time. And the disciples who served him became the top *awliyaa*. He was surrounded by miracles.

There was a drought once in Damascus, the ulema and the *awliyaa* went up to the mount of Qasyun at the blessed cave where many Prophets stayed. After three days of *dhikr* and *du'a* there was no rain. They decided to go home. Shaykh Shareef stood there while they were packing, held his beard and began beseeching Allah saying, "O Allah! By this grey beard I beg you, grant us rain and do not let us go home empty handed." As soon as he finished his *du'a*, rain started pouring such that they could not come back down from the mountain.

Sayyid Makki al-Kittani (d. 1393/1973), who was one of Shaykh Shareef's students, asked him once to teach him alchemy; Shaykh Shareef replied, "Give me what is in your pocket", he handed him a big, old style key. Shaykh Shareef read something on it and it immediately became gold. He handed it over to him saying, "This is our alchemy." Shaykh Shareef was well-known to go to Fez once every week to teach some of the students and meet the *awliyaa* and to come back carried by the power of Allah.

Amongst his students was the famous saint of Damascus Shaykh Ahmad al-Haroon and the famous scholar and the founder of al-Fateh Institute, Shaykh Salih al-Farfoor. Shaykh Shareef's nephew, my father, was his inheritor. His servant was the late Shaykh, Ahmad Habbal. My grandfather, Sayyid Ismail, used to wear the turban of *awliyaa* (a white hat similar to what I wear), while his brother Shaykh Shareef used to wear the turban of the ulema (a red fez). Once, before my father was born, Shaykh Shareef suggested to his brother, Sayyid Ismail, to wear the turban of the ulema, as he was also a scholar. Sayyid Ismail refused, opting for seclusion. Shaykh Shareef said to him, "We will keep this turban for one of your sons." My father was born later and inherited the rank of his uncle, then the rank of his father. In addition, he inherited the rank of several of the *awliyaa* of Damascus which he specified by name in his writings.

Shaykh Shareef was a disciple of his maternal cousin Shaykh Muhammad al-Tayyib (d. 1313) and later of his brother Shaykh Muhammad al-Mubarak (d. 1333). Shaykh Shareef was the Master of the *Shadhili* way in Damascus, he was appointed as a *khalifah* by his Shaykh Muhammad al-Mubarak. He left no sons as all his sons died in his lifetime. This is one of the clear signs of the *abdaal* (the 40 *awliyaa* of Damascus mentioned by the Prophet, *sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam*, in a sound hadith).

Shaykh Shareef is the son of Shaykh Siddiq al-Yaqoubi (d. 1307) who himself was a great *wali* less famous in Damascus now but no less in rank than his sons. Shaykh Siddiq left three children: Shareef (died 1362 left no sons), Ibrahim (died 1333 left no children; was a great *wali* and used to meet the Prophet, *sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam*, often - my father was named after him), and Ismail (died 1380). The three of them were great men of Allah.

I named my first son after my father, the great erudite scholar, the great gnostic, Shaykh Ibrahim al-Yaqoubi. He was the culmination of *shari'ah* and *haqiqah* in his time. I would need a few hundred pages to document the miracles of my father. To sum up, throughout my life with him, every day I witnessed a few miracles happening to me and to his students: curing sick people, healing people suffering from chronic diseases, telling people what was on their minds, seeing the future, making people rich by one *du'a*, finding lost people, bringing money from nowhere, answering people's questions before they

spoke, saving people from tribulations, coming to the rescue of people calling upon him, being at several places at the same time and many more.

The second of my sons, I named after my grandfather, the great saint Sayyid Ismail al-Yaqoubi, who was the head of the *awliyaa* of his time (died 1380/1960) both of them are still a great source of *barakah* in Damascus and the *du'a* is answered at their graves. My grandfather was trained in the *Shadhili* way by Shaykh Muhammad al-Mubarak and by Shaykh Ahmad al-Sousi (1350) and was given *ijaza* by them and from others and later he had the honour of receiving an *ijaza* directly from the Best of Mankind *sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam*, as he met him while he was awake. He was a man of seclusion, with a *himma* that would move mountains. He lived in a room in Sinaan Basha mosque in Damascus for 30 years, visiting his family once every week on Thursday. His *khalwa* in the above-mentioned Mosque is painted green and has many secrets, lights and *barakah*. My father told me of him, "He was full of *ikhlaas*. His *wird* which lead to his opening was 5000 times *Surat al-Ikhlaas* everyday for 5 years."

Before he died, my grandfather told my father, "Keep my turban, you are going to have a son, name him Muhammad, and give him my turban." The turban amongst the *awliyaa* is a symbol of secrets handed down from a *wali* to another. All the openings and miracles I have been given over these years are because of the *barakah* of my father, my grandfather, his brother Shaykh Shareef, their father Shaykh Siddiq (d. 1307) the Maliki Imam of Grand Omayyad mosque Shaykh 'Arabi al-Ya'qoubi (d. 1385 at the age of 91) who was my father's maternal uncle and my grandfather's cousin. My grandfather's grandfather Sayyid Muhammad al-Hasan (d. born in Algeria 1220 died in Damascus 1305) is the source of this *wilaayah* and *barakah* in our family. He was a great man of Allah. He followed the *khalwati* way under his Shaykh, Muhammad al-Mahdi al-Sighlaawi (d. 1278). He ruled over Jinn and some of their kings embraced Islam at his hand. He used to see angels and talk to them, and he had a healing hand. His *du'a* was always answered. He left 9 sons: the first of them was Shaykh Mizyaan who died 1320. He was *khalwati* in the beginning then after his Shaykh died he took the *Naqshbandi* way and became a great man of Allah. He secluded in the *Naqshbandi* mosque for over twenty years. My grandmother, Aisha al-Ya'qoubi (who was his niece) used to serve him and related many of his miracles.

My father told me several times that *wilaaya* will remain in our offspring and we and our children will be *awliyaa* and will enter the *diwaan* of the *awliyaa*. That was something which our great grandfather, Sayyid Muhammad al-Hasan was granted upon making *du'a* for his offspring. My father, *radiyallah-u 'anhu*, even confirmed to me that Allah had given him this gift that his offspring would be *awliyaa*. This is why when I am raising my children, I am not raising them for myself alone but I feel the obligation to raise them for the entire Muslim *ummah*, to support this deen and defend the way of the *awliyaa*.

Muhammad al-Yaqoubi
servant of the seekers of knowledge

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