

Biography: Imaam Abu Ja'far Ahmad At-Tahaawee

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Sources: Introductions to Sharh Al-'Aqeedah At-Tahaawiyyah (pg. 17-19) with checking from Shaykh Al-Albaanee

Al-'Aqeedah At-Tahaawiyyah with notes from Shaykh Al-Albaanee

He was the Imaam, the Muhaddith, the Faqeeh, the Haafidh, the noble Scholar, Abu Ja'far Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Salaamah Ibn Salama 'Abdil-Malik Ibn Salama Al-Azdee At-Tahaawee. Al-Azadee is an ascription to a well-known tribe from Qahtaan. At-Tahaawee is an ascription to the land Tahaawee in Upper Egypt.

His lineage in knowledge is connected to his family and uncles, for his father was from the scholars and his uncle was the Imaam Isma'eel Ibn Yahyaa Al-Muznee (died 264H). He was born in 239H. When he reached the age of adolescence, he moved to Egypt in search of knowledge. Al-Muznee was the one with the most knowledge of Fiqh amongst the companions of Imaam Muhammad Ibn Idrees Ash-Shaafi'ee in his land. And likewise his mother was from the people of knowledge and narrations.

Then he linked with the scholars of Egypt as well as those who came to Egypt. And his teachers were many, as were his students.

Every time the scope of his horizons would widen, he would find himself confused amidst a score of Fiqh issues. And he would not find the sufficient answers from his uncle that would soothe his confusion over these issues. So he began to examine what his uncle would do when he was faced with these kinds of contradictory issues. His uncle would refer a lot to the books of the associates of Abu Haneefah (i.e. Hanafis), and he would favour many of the opinions of Abu Haneefah with regard to these issues. These favoured opinions of his were recorded in his book "Mukhtasar Al-Muznee."

So after that he was left with no choice but to look into the books of the associates of Abu Haneefah and adopt their methodology in establishing fundamental principles and deriving subsidiary rulings. This is such that when he completed his knowledge of the madh-hab of Imaam Abu Haneefah, he changed to that madh-hab and became one of its followers. But this did not prevent him from opposing and contradicting some of the (erroneous) opinions held by the Imaam (Abu Haneefah) and preferring the opinions of the other Imaams (on certain issues). This is because he, (Rahimahu 'Llah), was not a muqallid (blind follower) of Abu Haneefah. But rather he only saw the methodology of Abu Haneefah in Fiqh as being the most exemplary of methodologies, according to his opinion - so he treaded that path. This is why you will find him in his book "Ma'aanee Al-Athaar" affirming some views that his Imaam (Abu Haneefah) did not hold. What supports what we stated just now, is what Ibn Zoolaaq stated:

"I heard Abul-Hasan 'Alee Ibn Abee Ja'far At-Tahaawee say: I heard my father say: ' (and he mentioned the virtues of Abu 'Ubaid Harbaway and his Fiqh and said) He would ask me about (Fiqh) issues. So one day I gave my answer to one issue, so he said to me: 'This is not the opinion of Abu Haneefah.' So I said: 'O judge (Qaadee), do I have to hold the same opinion for every opinion that Abu Haneefah held?' So he said: 'I didn't think you were more than a blind follower.' I said to him: 'And does anyone blindly follow someone except he who is a

fanatic?' He said: 'Or a simple-minded person.' So this story spread throughout Egypt, such that it became a proverb and the people memorized it."

He was educated under many shuyookh, whom he took knowledge and benefited from. He had more than three hundred teachers. He would spend lots of time with those scholars that came to visit Egypt from different parts of the world, such that he would add to his knowledge what knowledge they had. This shows you the extent of the concern he had for benefiting from the scholars, as well as the intense eagerness he had for acquiring knowledge. Many scholars praised him and described him as being reliable, trustworthy, a Faqeeh, intelligent, a good memorizer and a pious worshipper. He had a high proficiency in Fiqh and Hadeeth. Ibn Yoonus said: "At-Tahaawee was reliable, trustworthy, a Faqeeh, intelligent, the likes of whom did not come afterward."

Imaam Adh-Dhahabee said in his At-Taareekh al-Kabeer: "He was the Faqeeh, the Muhaddith, the Haafidh, one of the elite personalities, and he was reliable, trustworthy, knowledgeable of Fiqh and intelligent."

Ibn Katheer said in Al-Bidaayah wan-Nihaayah: "He was one of the reliable, trustworthy and brilliant scholars of Hadeeth (Haafidh)."

He served as an intermediary for the knowledge between those who came before (Salaf) and those who came after (Khalaf). The scholars praised him and mentioned him as being a Muhaddith (scholar of Hadeeth), one whose report was reliable and an established narrator. He was distinguished and highly proficient in writing. And he became the most knowledgeable of Fiqh amongst the Hanafis in Egypt. This was even though he had a share in the Fiqh of all of the madh-habs of Fiqh and Hadeeth, and he knew of the various sciences of Islaam.

As for his writings, then for the most part, they are verifications and compilations, containing many benefits. Among his writings is "Al-'Aqeedah At-Tahaawiyyah", which we are writing the introduction for now, as well as for its explanation (by Ibn Abee Al-'Izz). Even though the size of the book is small, its benefits are many and its methodology is that of the Salaf. And you will find that it contains everything the Muslim needs concerning his Creed. There is also his book "Ma'aanee Al-Athaar", which is a book in which he presents different areas of research in Fiqh along with their evidences. And during the course of his research, he mentions the issues in which there are differences of opinion among the scholars. And he lists the proofs and evidences for each opinion and debates them, outweighing which one appears to be the truth according to him. This book will accustom the student of knowledge with understanding Fiqh and it will acquaint him with the areas of difference of opinion.

He left behind many other great works, close to forty different books, amongst which are: Sunan Ash-Shaafi'ee, Mushkil Al-Athaar, Ahkaam-ul-Qur'aan, Al-Mukhtaar, Sharh Al-Jaam'i-ul-Kabeer, Sharh Al-Jaam'i-us-Sagher, Ash-Shuroot, Nawaadir-ul-Fiqhiyyah and others.

Imaam At-Tahaawee was well known and famous for commanding good and forbidding evil, for voicing out the truth and returning to that which he held to be the truth without being affected by the (other) scholars, rulers and associates.

Sufficient for us is the agreement of the majority of the scholars upon accepting this Creed, which has been truthfully called: "An Explanation of the Creed of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah." And no one speaks against it except for those who rebel against the Creed held within it such as some remnants from the Mu'tazilah

and the people of Hulool and Ittihaad (Sufi belief that Allaah is incarnate within His creation), and those who follow any opinion.

Imaam At-Tahaawee died on a Thursday at the beginning of Dhul-Qa'adah in 321H and was buried in the Qaraafah graveyard in Egypt (Rahimahu `Llah).