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COLLECTIONS OF FORTY ḤADĪTHS

Al-Arbaʿīn

The Virtues of Shām and its People

الأربعون في فضائل الشام وأهلها

MUFTI SHABBIR AHMED



TURATH PUBLISHING

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

In the name of Allāh, the Most Clement, the Ever Kind. All praise belongs to Allāh, Lord of the worlds, and may peace and blessings be invoked upon Muḥammad, His chosen one, and upon his family and companions, one and all.

The tradition in Muslim religious literature of gathering collections of forty hadith dates to as far back as the second century after the Hijra. ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak al-Marwazī (d. 181 AH) is thought to be the first to have done so, and his lead was followed by later hadith scholars such as Muḥammad ibn Aslam aṭ-Ṭūsī (d. 242 AH), al-Ḥasan ibn Sufyān al-Fasawī (d. 303 AH), and many others. Perhaps the most well-known collection is that of Imām an-Nawawī (d. 676 AH) which has been translated into English and on which there exist several commentaries including Ibn Rajab's ex-

haustive *Jāmiʿ al-ʿulūm wa al-ḥikam*, published in translation by Turath Publishing in 2007.

The practice of gathering forty hadiths has its origins in a tradition narrated through several Companions that puts the spiritual rank of religious scholarship within reach of the ordinary believer: “Whoever memorises forty narrations for my Nation in matters of this religion, Allāh will raise him up as a scholar and I shall be an intercessor and a witness for him on the Day of Rising.” The narrators of the various versions of this hadith include illustrious names such as ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd, Muʿadh ibn Jabal, Abū al-Dardāʾ, Ibn ʿUmar, Ibn ʿAbbās, Anas ibn Mālik, Abū Hurayrah, and Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī, may Allah be pleased with them all.

This series sets out to present various subjects in the format of the *Arbaʿīn*, collections of forty hadith, as compiled by some of the greatest scholars of Islam of the past. In this particular *Arbaʿīn*, the contemporary scholar, Mufti Shabbir Ahmed, has been commissioned to compile a new collection on the subject of Shām, a region of central importance to Islam and of great relevance to our times.

Within this collection, Mufti Shabbir Ahmed gathers several hadith that point to the blessed nature of the Shām region, followed by short biographies that highlight the virtues of some of the Companions that lived and died here. The

hadith are supplemented with notes and comments to explain some of the background of the hadith, the personalities mentioned in it, or to explain some of the difficult expressions for the reader.

It is hoped that this collection will apprise the reader of the dearness of Shām and its people to the heart of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), and so will be encouraged to support the on-going relief effort in a region that is now in the throes of a terrible civil war.

YAHYA BATHA

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, the beneficent, the merciful. All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the universe and master of our fortunes, and may peace and blessings descend on his beloved Prophet Muhammad, his companions and upon all who follow in their footsteps.

Over a year ago, I was asked to speak at a conference organised by the UK based relief agency, *Ummah Welfare Trust*, on the virtues of Shām, an area which encompasses modern day Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, parts of Northern Egypt, parts of Southern Turkey and parts of Western Iraq. The conference drew attention to the immense distress experienced by the people of Syria and the wider region. In preparation for the speech, I gathered forty sayings with a direct chain of transmission (*marfūʿ*) to the Prophet ﷺ on the region of Shām, its virtues and its people. Once I had com-

pleted this, my son Yusuf translated these hadith with a brief commentary and the result is this publication before you.

The region of Shām is mentioned in the hadith literature and several scholars have gathered Prophetic statements on its virtues, including Ḥāfiẓ Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571 AH), Ḥāfiẓ Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Rabiʿī (d. 444 AH), Sheikh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyah (d. 728 AH), Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī (d. 795 AH) and others.

Any discussion on the virtues of Shām must begin with the Qurʾān itself which mentions the blessed nature of this region, containing, as it does, the Masjid al-Aqṣā, the holy mosque in Jerusalem. Almighty Allah says:

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ
الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ
(سورة الاسراء)

Glory be to Allah who did take His Servant for a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque (in Makkah) to the Aqsa Mosque (in Al-Quds) the precincts of which We have blessed, so that we might show him some of our signs. Indeed Allah is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing. (Qurʾān, 17:1)

The virtues of Masjid al-Aqṣā or the city of al-Quds are well known, and already documented in books such as the collection of forty hadith on this topic by my dear friend

and brother, Ismail Adam Patel. In this collection, therefore, I will not mention the virtues of Masjid al-Aqsā specifically, but instead focus on the virtues of the wider region of Shām which are perhaps less well known.

This collection is divided into three sections. The first focuses on the virtues of Shām; the second on the virtues of Damascus; the final on the virtues of selected companions of the Prophet ﷺ who passed away in Shām. Many thousands of companions passed away in Shām and it is not possible in a short compilation to mention all their details, however this fact in itself adds to the virtue and blessing of the region. Thus, the purpose of this collection is to act as a reminder of the importance of the region and our responsibilities to it as an Ummah.

This book is compiled in the format of the *arbaʿīn*, or collection of forty hadith, a traditional method hadith scholars have employed to outline a topic and provide some detail in digestible form to the layman. The most famous example of this literature is Imam Nawawī's (d. 676 AH) *arbaʿīn* which has several commentaries in different languages. Some of these *arbaʿīn* collections are a random collection of hadith, but there will usually be a binding theme such as a common narrator, chain of transmission, or subject matter, such as those in this collection. The practice of collating forty hadith has its origin in a hadith narrated by ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib,

ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar and others (May Allah be pleased with them) who related from the Prophet ﷺ: “Whoever preserves forty narrations for my nation in matters of its religion, Allah will raise him up as a scholar and I shall be an intercessor and witness for him on the day of uprising.” (*Talkhīṣ al-Habīr*, 3:93)¹

In compiling this collection, I have only gathered direct sayings of the Prophet ﷺ (*marfūʿ* narrations). The hadith are accompanied by brief notes where necessary.

I pray to Almighty Allah to make this collection a means of intercession for me and all who are involved in its dissemination, and revive the spirit of brotherhood and love for Shām in its true sense. May Almighty Allah shower his mercy on the people of Shām and unite the Ummah against tyranny and oppression in all its forms. Finally, I would like to thank Turath Publishers for undertaking the task of publishing this collection.

SHABBIR AHMED,

Blackburn, UK

16 Jumada al-Ula, 1435

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1 Imam Nawawī states in the preface to his *arbaʿīn* collection, “The Huffaz are unanimous on the weakness of this narration despite its multiple chains”.