



الإمام عبدالله ابن محمد نجيب سراج الدين الحسيني رحمته الله  
1342-1422



# Shaykh ‘Abdallāh Sirājuddīn

## *The Light of Aleppo*

by Hamoudeh al-Halabi

Released by [www.marifah.net](http://www.marifah.net) 1428 H

### Introduction

The Syrian city of Aleppo is famous for its rich history of Islamic scholarship; hence, it is often referred to as ‘the city of scholars’. It is in fact the cradle of many pious and leading scholars of Islam. Amongst them was the Friend and Gnostic of Allāh ﷺ, al-‘Allāmah ‘Abdallāh Sirājuddīn al-Ḥusaynī ؒ, an extraordinary scholar and saint who dedicated his entire life to the service of Islām.

It is without doubt that Shaykh ‘Abdallāh has had an important role in defining the scholarship of Aleppo during the past century. His qualities were many, his skills outstanding. Not only was he the leader of the Rifā‘ī Tariqa in his city, he was also a leading scholar of Ḥanafī Fiqh; thus balancing the two central sciences in the footsteps of the four great Imāms.

Yet he was an even more prominent scholar of Ḥadīth and Tafsīr. Shaykh ‘Abdallāh was in fact one of the last Ḥuffāz who memorized 100.000 Ḥadīth, and a leading exegete of the Qur’ān worldwide. However, all these expertises are not what he is most famous for. His true fame came with his immense and intense love for our Master Muḥammad ﷺ. Such incredible levels of love have not been seen elsewhere in our times.

### His Childhood and Education

A descendant of Imām Ḥusayn bin ‘Alī Abī Ṭālib ؑ on his father’s side, Shaykh ‘Abdallāh was born into an honorable and pious family, on the verge of the collapse of the Ottoman Sultanate in 1923 CE. During his childhood, Shaykh ‘Abdallāh was surrounded by the love and care of his father, Shaykh Muḥammad Najīb Sirājuddīn ؒ, who was also a leading scholar of Tafsīr, Fiqh, Ḥadīth and Tasawwuf. Shaykh ‘Abdallāh was known for expressing much respect, benevolence and love towards his family. It is also said that he was very enthusiastic about helping his mother in her domestic tasks. He loved his father dearly as well, and after his father passed away he always began his writings with a homage:

*Dear reader,*

When you read any of my books, please recite *Ṣūrat al-Fātiha*, and donate the reward of your recitation to the renowned scholar and great Gnostic, carrier of the banner of the authority of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, the Qur'ānic exegete and scholar of *Ḥadīth* - with sound chains of transmission from many great scholars of *Ḥadīth* in Aleppo, Damascus, Morocco and elsewhere in the Islamic world, complete with written authorisations which I have kept with me – my Shaykh and noble father, Shaykh Muḥammad Najīb Sirājuddīn al-Ḥusaynī, may Allāh have mercy on him, and reward him well on behalf of the Muslims; Indeed, He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

**Amīn**<sup>1</sup>

He began his pursuit of knowledge, under the guidance of his father, at an early age and memorized the Qur'ān at the age of thirteen. At this time he was studying at the Islamic school of al-Khasrawiyya, where he then applied to the study of the *Ḥadīth*. There he studied under leading scholars connected to the school, such as the Faqīh Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Salqīnī ؒ, the Sūfī Shaykh 'Isā al-Bayanūnī ؒ, Shaykh 'Umar Mas'ūd al-Ḥarīrī ؒ, Shaykh Fayḍallāh al-Ayyūbī al-Kurdī ؒ, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Shammā' ؒ and several other prominent scholars. As he remained in their proximity, the Muḥaddith, Hāfīz and leading historian of Aleppo, al-Shaykh Muḥammad Rāghīb al-Tabbākh noticed his intelligence and devotion, was drawn near to him and became his mentor. Shaykh 'Abdallāh also frequented other scholars who did not teach at his school, such as the Ḥanafī Faqīh Shaykh Aḥmad al-Kurdī ؒ, Shaykh Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Idlībī ؒ and several others.

In his final year at the Khasrawiyya, the ministry of education assigned a new program which came to replace the old program. Shaykh 'Abdallāh objected to this fiercely, for the new program contained a very poor amount of Islamic sciences. In spite of the fact that he was in his last year and very near to obtaining his degree, Shaykh 'Abdallāh left the school and turned his back on the tempting future salary that he could have obtained. Instead, he chose to continue his studies in the nearness of the scholars of his city.

He continued his studies under the supervision of his father, Shaykh Muḥammad Najīb Sirājuddīn, who attracted large crowds to his lessons. In this environment Shaykh 'Abdallāh was given the opportunity to further develop his skills and increase his knowledge, and his fame as a scholar came to conquer Aleppo. He began teaching Islām in various mosques, such as the Hamawī mosque where he tutored one hour in the morning, four times a week. Soon he was asked to teach at various colleges as well as the Sha`bāniyya school, in addition to the many courses and lessons he gave in various mosques. He continued to teach at his mosque, even when the funds that provided his payment were stopped.

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<sup>1</sup> Shaykh 'Abdallāh Sirājuddīn, *Our Master Muḥammad the Messenger of Allah* ؐ, from the forthcoming English translation of his famous work *Sayyidinā Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh* ؐ - *Shamā'il al-Ḥamīda, Khīṣālat al-Majīda* translated by Sidi Khalid Williams and to be released as by **Sunni Publications** [[www.sunnipubs.com](http://www.sunnipubs.com)]. Previews are hosted by [www.marifah.net](http://www.marifah.net) and to be found at [[http://www.marifah.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=category&sectionid=13&id=23&Itemid=73](http://www.marifah.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=category&sectionid=13&id=23&Itemid=73)]

Then came one year in which his father's age prevented him from continuing his courses. Shaykh 'Abdallāh, by then only twenty-two years old, carried the heavy load of succeeding his father in his scholarship. The demands of the public and the level of his father's courses made this a great test for him, but by the Grace of Allāh ﷺ he succeeded in it, and honouring this responsibility caused the admiration of the public for him.<sup>2</sup>

## His Scholarship and Piety

Following the vacuum caused by the closing of the Sha`bāniyya Islamic school, Shaykh 'Abdallāh felt the need to found a large Islamic school in Aleppo that would take charge of training future scholars and preachers. He then decided to revive religious teachings and founded the School of Islamic Teachings in 1958. Its program combined legal courses, Islamic spirituality, the life and qualities of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ as well as the sciences of Ḥadīth. In addition, he founded a Qur'ānic school whose mission it was to teach its students the Qur'ān. Generous scholarships were granted to the pupils in order to encourage the preservation of this knowledge.

As Shaykh 'Abdallāh became the leading scholar of Aleppo, he conveyed in his courses the quintessence of Islamic legislation and spirituality. In a moving voice, he often spoke of the love towards the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and the duty to follow his excellent manners. He promoted love for the Sunnah and revived it in his behaviour and exhortations. In addition, he confronted the tenets of immoderation which sought to work their way through the city of Aleppo.

Shaykh 'Abdallāh was truly in love with the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. He did not cease pointing out his qualities, his ethics and the nobility of his status in nearness of Allāh ﷻ. He did not accept anyone to be given the importance of our Master Muḥammad ﷺ, and for this incredible love Shaykh 'Abdal Raḥmān al-Shāghūrī ﷺ<sup>3</sup> called him, "*the Pole of Prophetic love of our times.*"<sup>4</sup> His great love for the Prophet ﷺ is sensed in almost every single line with which he described him ﷺ.

He was also, according to Shaykh Nūruddīn 'Itr, "*extremely scrupulous and avoided any doubtful thing.*"<sup>5</sup> He was generous and helpful towards the poor, lenient towards the pupils of his school, and known for his humility and devotion. The love that the people of Aleppo had for Shaykh 'Abdallāh can still be noticed throughout the city, where his photograph is commonly seen and his name is frequently mentioned. Yet, no matter how much the people

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<sup>2</sup> See the French article '*Sheikh `Abd Allāh Sirāj Ad-Dīn*', translated by Al-Murtada and published by [www.islamophile.org](http://www.islamophile.org) which can be found at [<http://www.islamophile.org/spip/article930.html>].

<sup>3</sup> Shaykh 'Abdal Raḥmān al-Shāghūrī ﷺ was the leader of the Shādhilī Tarīqa in Damascus, as well as the *murshīd* of Shaykh Nuh Ha Mim Keller and other prominent scholars of our times.

<sup>4</sup> This has been mentioned by Shaykh Faraz Rabbani introducing a translated article from Shaykh 'Abdallāh's book '*al-Ṣalāt `alāl Nabī*' for SunniPath, to be found at [[http://qa.sunnipath.com/issue\\_view.asp?HD=7&ID=5005&CATE=108](http://qa.sunnipath.com/issue_view.asp?HD=7&ID=5005&CATE=108)].

<sup>5</sup> Shaykh Nūruddīn 'Itr is his nephew and one of his foremost students. See: '*Sheikh `Abd Allāh Sirāj Ad-Dīn*', at [<http://www.islamophile.org/spip/article930.html>].

loved him, he loved the Prophet ﷺ even more; and this love was sensed in everything that surrounded him. It is said that he was constantly visited by the Prophet ﷺ. Such an event is also mentioned by Shaykh Gibrīl Fouād Haddād in the words of Shaykh Nūruddīn ‘Itr,

He said Shaykh Sirāj would see the Prophet ﷺ asleep and awake, that one time the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, ordered our liegelord ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib to dress the Shaykh with his cloak, and another time the Prophet himself dressed him with his noble hand, and another time the Prophet ﷺ told him: “You are our dedicated servant,” after which he would say: “The Prophet is pleased to have me as his servant.”<sup>6</sup>

In a time when Islām was weakened severely in many ways, one man inspired the people to return to the righteous path as no other. And even though Aleppo is the city of scholars, some said that no scholar was left in Aleppo any longer after his passing away.

### His Works

Shaykh ‘Abdallāh wrote over twenty works, entailing mostly Islamic spirituality, creed, ethics and the noble manners of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. Other works were treatises on the sciences of Ḥadīth and Tafsīr of the Qur’ān.

He has written the following works:

- *Sayyidinā Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh ﷺ - Shamā’il al-Ḥamīda, Khiṣālat al-Majīda*
- *Al-Ṣalāt ‘alā al-Nabī ﷺ*
- *Sharḥ al-Manzūmat al-Bayqūniyya fī Muṣṭalaḥ al-Ḥadīth*
- *Shahādat an Lā Ilāha Illā Allāh, Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh ﷺ*
- *Durūs Ḥawla Ba’d al-Tafsīr Āyāt al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*
- *Talawat al-Qur’ān al-Majīd*
- *Hadyī al-Qur’ān ilā Ma’rifat al-‘Ulūm wal-Tafakkur fī al-Akwān*
- *Hadyī al-Qur’ān al-Karīm ilā Ḥujjat al-Burhān*
- *Al-Ḥadī al-Nabawī*
- *Al-Taḡarrub ilā Allāh Ta’ālā*
- *Al-Du‘ā’*
- *Al-Ṣalāt fīl Islām*
- *Al-Īmān bi- ‘Awālim al-Ukhrā wa-Mawāqifuhā*
- *Ṣu’ūd al-Aqwāl wa-Rafa’a al-‘Amāl*
- *Al-Īmān bil Malā’ika*
- *Al-Ad’iyyāt wal-Adhkār al-Wārīda Ānā’ al-Layl wa-Iṭrāf al-Nahār*
- *Tarjumat al-Shaykh Muḥammad Najīb Sirājuddīn al-Ḥusaynī*
- *Muhāḍarāt Ḥawla Mawāqif Sayyidinā Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh ﷺ*
- *Mawāqif Sayyidinā Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh ﷺ ma’a al-‘Ālam*
- *Ada’iyyāt al-Ṣabāḥ wal-Masā’*
- *Manāsik al-Ḥajj wal-‘Umra*
- *Ḥawla Tafsīr Ṣūrat al-Fātiḥa*
- *Ḥawla Tafsīr Ṣūrat al-Mulk*

<sup>6</sup> From the commentary by Dr. Shaykh Gibrīl Fouād Haddād on Dr. Shaykh Nūruddīn ‘Itr’s lecture ‘About the Life of Shaykh ‘Abdallāh Sirājuddīn’, to be found at

[[http://www.marifah.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=80&Itemid=77](http://www.marifah.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=80&Itemid=77) ].

- *Ḥawla Tafsīr Ṣūrat al-Ḥujurāt*
- *Ḥawla Tafsīr Ṣūrat Qāf*
- *Ḥawla Tafsīr Ṣūrat al-Insān*
- *Ḥawla Tafsīr Ṣūrat al-‘Alaq*
- *Ḥawla Tafsīr Ṣūrat al-Kawthar*
- *Ḥawla Tafsīr Ṣūrat al-Ikhlās*

Perhaps his most famous work was ***Sayyidunā Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh*** ﷺ (Our Master Muḥammad the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ), an incredible expression of Prophetic love. It is one of the most beautiful discourses on the Prophet’s ﷺ characteristics, impressing and moving one instantly when reading it.<sup>7</sup> The following is a small excerpt from this work:

Of all people, the Prophet ﷺ had the most beautiful face, and the brightest countenance. All of the Saḥāba who described the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ agreed that his face was bright and radiant, and shone with resplendent light, and clear brilliance. Some of them compared the brilliance of his ﷺ light to the sun, others to the moon. Some of them likened the shining light of his face to the beams of the moon. All of this confirms for us the clear radiance of his face, and his dazzling luminescence ﷺ.<sup>8</sup>

Another one of his famous works is ***al-Ṣalāt ‘alā al-Nabī*** ﷺ (The Prayer upon the Prophet ﷺ), what follows is a small excerpt from this book.

... Allāh Himself sends blessings upon this Prophet, as an honouring and ennobling; and Allāh's angels send blessings upon this Prophet, to seek the honour of doing so and to acquire blessings (*tabarruk*) from this, and to be dyed by its lights and drowned in its spiritual secrets. Then, when those of the lower worlds heard of this, their hearts found intimacy in this, and their resolves and determinations were stirred towards seeking the honour of sending blessings upon this noble Prophet ﷺ. Thus, the tongues of their states-expressing their needs--called, ‘*O Lord! Grant us permission to attain unto the honour of sending blessings upon this noble Prophet ﷺ whom the angels have been honoured by sending blessings upon.*’ The Divine Call same, ‘*O you who believe, send blessings upon him and give peace.*’<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Scholars worldwide have commended this great book, being one of the greatest expressions of Prophetic love in our times. This astonishing work is forthcoming at **Sunni Publications** [[www.sunnipubs.com](http://www.sunnipubs.com)] and expected to be released in 2008 *inshā’ Allāh*. Order the original now at [[http://www.sunnipubs.com/index.php?page=shop.product\\_details&flypage=shop.flypage&product\\_id=26&category\\_id=14&manufacturer\\_id=0&option=com\\_virtuemart&Itemid=26](http://www.sunnipubs.com/index.php?page=shop.product_details&flypage=shop.flypage&product_id=26&category_id=14&manufacturer_id=0&option=com_virtuemart&Itemid=26)]. For Previews, see:

[[http://www.marifah.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=category&sectionid=13&id=23&Itemid=73](http://www.marifah.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=category&sectionid=13&id=23&Itemid=73)]

<sup>8</sup> From the preview of the forthcoming translation of *Our Master Muḥammad the Messenger of Allāh* ﷺ, to be found at [[http://www.marifah.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=68&Itemid=73](http://www.marifah.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=68&Itemid=73)].

<sup>9</sup> Shaykh ‘Abdallāh Sirājuddīn, ‘*al-Ṣalāt ‘alā Nabī*’ (Translated by Shaykh Faraz Rabbani for SunniPath) to be found at [[http://qa.sunnipath.com/issue\\_view.asp?HD=7&ID=5005&CATE=108](http://qa.sunnipath.com/issue_view.asp?HD=7&ID=5005&CATE=108)].



## His Colleagues and Students

Shaykh ‘Abdallāh maintained good contacts with other scholars in the Middle East. During his three pilgrimages to Mecca and various trips to Damascus, Homs, Hama, Baghdad and Jerusalem, he maintained brotherly relations with the scholars and preachers of those cities. His colleagues were his friends, and amongst them was the great scholar of Ḥadīth, Shaykh ‘Abdal Fattāh Abū Ghudda رحمته الله.

His students are many, and some of them have become leading scholars worldwide by following in his footsteps. Here we shall mention only a few of them.

- Shaykh Nūruddīn ‘Itr
- Shaykh Muḥammad Awwāma
- Shaykh Majd Makkī
- Shaykh Sāmīr al-Nass
- Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ninowy

He was also the teacher of our Imām and beloved friend, Shaykh ‘Alī al-Khalaf, may Allāh preserve him.

## The Return to his Lord

Following a surgical operation that was carried out at the end of his life, the health of Shaykh ‘Abdallāh deteriorated. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2002 (1422 H) he passed away. The news of his death was announced throughout the Muslim world, and covered it with a veil of sorrow. Words of condolences flowed from many Muslim countries, and Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī recalled the merits of this noble scholar on al-Jazeera:

“It is a word of mourning, because we have a habit in this program to say farewell to our great scholars as they leave our lower world to rest in the other world. Last week, our brothers in Syria, in the flourishing city of Aleppo, said farewell to one of the greatest senior scholars who dedicated his life for scholarship, religion, the call to Allāh and education: Shaykh ‘Abdallāh Sirājuddīn, may Allāh grant him His mercy and place him in the higher realms of the Paradise. Shaykh ‘Abdallāh Sirājuddīn was a man of scholarship, of religion. He was heir of the scholarship of his father. ... This man was a scholar of Ḥadīth and Fiqh. Moreover, he was a preacher and a teacher. It is said that he knew the work *taysīr al-wusūl ilā ahādīth al-rasūl* by heart. He memorized the exact narrations and terms therein, and taught it to his pupils. I was not fortunate enough to meet Shaykh ‘Abdallāh Sirājuddīn in person, but I knew him through his students and followers who spoke to me in length about him. ... Our brothers in the city of Aleppo said farewell to him, and we offer them, as well as ourselves, our condolences, in these days when many great scholars of the community leave us.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> This was aired by al-Jazeera on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2002, the original transcript can be found at [<http://www.aljazeera.net/programs/shareea/articles/2002/3/3-19-1.htm>]. CF: ‘*Sheikh ‘Abd Allāh Sirāj Ad-Dīn*’, at [<http://www.islamophile.org/spip/article930.html>].

In his tradition of love for his father, I ask the dear reader to recite Şūrat al-Fātiha and donate the reward of its recitation to the renowned scholar and great Gnostic, carrier of the banner of the Qur'ān and Sunnah in the footsteps of his noble father, the Qur'ānic exegete and scholar of Ḥadīth, the Pole of Prophetic love in our times, Shaykh 'Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad Najīb Sirājuddīn al-Ḥusaynī, may Allāh ﷻ have mercy on him, and reward him well on behalf of the Muslims; Indeed, He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

*O Allāh, bless this great scholar and grant him jannat al-firdaws,  
and pardon our errors and mistakes for the sake of Your Most Beloved,  
Our Master Muḥammad, and our love for those righteous servants who love him most.*

**Amin**

