

ما هو الطاغوت

WHAT

IS A

TĀGHŪT?

ما هو الطاغوت
WHAT
IS A
TĀGHŪT?

Compiled by Abū Amīnah AbdurRahmān and AbdulHaq al-Ashantī

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful the Bestower of Mercy, all praise belongs to Allāh, the Lord of the Universe. May Peace and Blessing descend on the noblest of prophets and messengers, our Prophet Muhammad, and upon all of his believing household, companions and anyone who rightly follows them pending the Day of Recompense. As to what follows:¹

As we know, *tawhīd* is the foundation of Islām and the first obligation. *Tawhīd* serves as the footings upon which everything in Islām is built; therefore, if the footings are not set correctly, then the structure of Islam cannot be erected. *Tawhīd* is also the first obligation because it's the supreme right out of Creator, and because of that, it reveals the purpose behinds man's creation.

The term *tawhīd* serves as a synonym for the great testimony of faith *La ilāha illa Allāh*; we also know that this great testimony is predicated on a set number of conditions.² Without these conditions, the statement *la ilāha illa Allāh* is nothing more than a hollow declaration.

The last of these conditions, is a unique condition, unique in the sense that it requires a negation to truly unlock this declaration. All the other conditions, however, require affirmation, but this last condition is achieved through a negation. Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhāb al-Wāsābi says in

¹ This research is by no means exhaustive in the topic, and a complete book could easily be authored on this issue. However, the aim here is merely to provide an introductory study to an issue in which there is a dearth of material on the subject within the English language.

² Some equate these conditions to the teeth that are cut into a key. Therefore, the shahādah is the key but its conditions are the teeth and without these teeth, there can be no access to Jennah.

his book *al-Qawl al-Mufīd fī Adilati at-Tawhīd* when discussing the *tāghūt* as the eighth condition of *la ilāha illa Allah*:

الكفر بالطواغيت: وهي المعبودات من دون الله والإيمان بالله ربا خالفا ومعبودا بحق.
“Disbelief in *at-tāwāghūt*; and this includes all things that are worshipped besides Allāh, and to have true faith in that Allāh is the Lord, Creator and the only true object of worship.”

Then he goes on to quote from the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of His Messenger (sallallāhu alaihi wa sallam) as authoritative references for this condition:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنْ اْعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ ۗ

And Verily, we have sent among Every Ummah (community, nation) a Messenger (proclaiming): "Worship Allāh (Alone), and avoid the Tāghūt."³

On the authority of Tāriq ibn Ashīm who said that he heard Allāh’s Messenger say

من قال لا إله إلا الله وكفر بكل ما يعبد من دون الله حرم ماله ودمه وحسابه على الله.
“Whoever says ‘there is nothing worshipped in truth⁴ except Allāh’ and disbelieves in everything worshipped besides Allāh, his wealth and his blood become inviolable and His reckoning is with Allāh.”⁵

Therefore, in order for our statement of *Tawhīd* to be accepted, this eighth condition must be understood and achieved so that we can grab unto the most trustworthy handhold⁶. Allah states in His Noble Book:

فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انفِصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

So whoever disbelieves In Taaghout and believes In Allāh, then He has grasped the Most trustworthy handhold that will never break. And Allāh is All-Hearer, All-Knower.⁷

³ An-Nahl 16:35.

⁴ The phrase ‘in truth’ is implied in the statement of *tawhīd*; therefore, the actual statement is لا إله حق إلا الله (there is nothing worshipped **in truth** except Allāh).

⁵ Reported by Muslim and Ahmed.

⁶ The phrase العروة الوثقى (The Most Trustworthy Handhold) means: the testimony *lā ilāha illa Allāh*. And it includes both negation of all things that are worshipped besides Allāh and affirmation of all types of worship for Allah, alone without any partner.

⁷ Al-Baqara 2:256.

Shaykh Sulaymān as-Sahmān⁸ makes an interesting observation with regards to the sequence in which Allāh structures the above verse:

فبين تعالى أن المتمسك بالعروة الوثقى, هو الذي يكفر بالطاغوت: وقدم الكفر به على الإيمان بالله لأنه قد يدعي المدعي أنه يؤمن بالله, وهو لا يجتنب الطاغوت, وتكون دعواه كاذبة.

So He, the most High, makes it clear that the one who grasps firmly to the ‘Most Trustworthy Handhold’ is he who disbelieves in all forms of *tāghūt*. And He gave precedence [to the part of the subordinate clause] ‘**to disbelieve in them**’ over the part ‘**to have eman in Allāh**’. And this is because the claimant may well maintain to faithfully believe in Allāh without ever avoiding the *tāghūt*, and therefore his claim is a false one.⁹

In following the footsteps of the scholars, we will firstly familiarise ourselves with its linguistic properties of the term *tāghūt* by quoting several scholarly and academic sources.

AT-TĀGHŪT IN THE ARABIC LANGUAGE

The Arabic word الطاغُوت is a derivative of طَغَى يَطْغُو طَغْيًا. According to *Hans Wehr Dictionary*, this verb expresses the following meanings in the English language:

(طغى and طغى) طغى *ṭaḡā u* and طغى *ṭaḡā a (ṭaḡy)*
and *ṭaḡiya a (ṭaḡan, ṭaḡyān)* to
exceed proper bounds, overstep the
bounds. be excessive: to be rough.

The common denominator that makes all of these words synonymous in meaning is the concept of *exceeding a point* or *over stepping a boundary*. This concept becomes more lucid when contextualised by the words of Allāh, the Mighty and Majestic, wherein he instructs Prophet Mūsā and his brother Hārūn:

اذهبَا إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى

"Go, both of you, to Fir'awn. Verily, He has transgressed (all bounds in disbelief and disobedience and behaved as an arrogant and as a tyrant).

⁸ His name is Shaykh Sulaymān ibn Sahmān ibn Muslih ibn Hamdān ibn Musfir ibn Muhammad ibn Mālik ibn ‘Aamir al-Khuth’am

⁹ *Risālah fī bayān at-Tāghūt wa wujūb ijtinābihi* (pp. 2).

Imām Muhammad bin Sālih al-'Uthaymīn stated when asked about the definition of 'at-Tāghūt':
الطاغوت مشتق من الطغيان ، والطغيان مجاوزة الحد ومنه قوله - تعالى - : {إنا لما طغى الماء حملناكم في الجارية} يعني لما زاد الماء عن الحد المعتاد حملناكم في الجارية يعني السفينة .
“at-Tāghūt is derived from *Tughyān* [transgression] and *Tughyān* is surpassing the bounds and from it is what Allāh says:

إِنَّا لَمَّا طَغَى الْمَاءُ حَمَلْنَاكُمْ فِي الْجَارِيَةِ

11. Verily! When the water rose beyond its limits [Nūh's Flood], we carried You (mankind) in the floating [ship that was constructed by Nūh (Noah)].¹⁰

Meaning: when the water overflowed its usual limit we carried you in the *Jāriyyah* which means a *Safīnah* [sailing ship].”¹¹

Above, we have two verses of Allāh using the same verb, but despite both of them denoting the concept of transgression, one is connected to something malevolent and the other is phenomenon.

So now we know what the verb means, but what about the term *tāghūt* (طاغوت)? In its basic descriptive qualities, they both mean the same, but the term *tāghūt* is an intensive descriptive word. In the Arabic language, there are set forms, which denote مبالغة (intensifiers). These forms are grouped together under the label صِيغَةُ الْمُبَالَغَةِ (intensifiers). These forms fall under the broad class of the إِسْمٌ فَاعِلٌ (present participle), but the basic difference between the two is that these patterns increase the amount of a thing or the rate of recurrence of the action. There are five basic forms for the noun of intensiveness:

1. فَعَّالٌ (ضراب وقوال)
2. مَفْعَالٌ (منوال ومكثار)
3. فَعُولٌ (صدوق وشكور)
4. فَعِيلٌ (رحيم وعليم)
5. فَعِلٌ (حذر وقلق)

¹⁰ Al-Hāqa 69:9

¹¹ *Majmū' Fatāwā wa Rasā'il Shaykh Muhammad bin Saalih al-'Uthaymeen*, vol.2, pp.199-201, fatwa no.268.

The term *tāghūt* (طاغوت), however, is formed on a lesser-known pattern, which is فَعْلُوت (originally طَعْنُوت). This pattern can function as both an اسم فاعل (active participle) and an اسم مفعول (passive participle).¹² This dual function will become obvious when we dig deeper into its technical definition and types.

No matter the type of *tāghūt* or whether it is active or passive, the basic property of the verb remains, and that is there is always an impression of excessiveness or extravagance.

AT-TĀGHŪT ACCORDING TO SCHOLARLY TERMINOLOGY

In order for us to achieve the imperative in the verse of Allāh “...and avoid the Tāghūt” so that we can grasp unto ‘The Most Trustworthy Handhold’, we first must be able to discern what exactly makes up a *tāghūt*. The only way to do this is by referring back to our Salaf (Predecessors) who have unravelled for us its technical usage.

The salaf and the later scholars have various definitions and classifications for the term الطاغوت. We will look at some of these definitions and classifications so that we get a better understanding of this word.

The Imām of *Mufasssireen*, Ibnu Jarīr at-Tabarī, in his celebrated exegeses, provides a detailed account of the various views of the Salaf with regard to the meaning of الطاغوت. We will now quote some of these views to further our understanding of this expression. The Imām starts by saying:

Allah, the Most High states:

أَمْ تَرَى إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيحًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْجِبْتِ وَالطَّاغُوتِ وَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَؤُلَاءِ أَهْدَىٰ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا سَبِيلًا

Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Scripture? They believe In Jibt and Tāghūt and Say to the disbelievers that they are better guided as regards the Way than the believers (Muslims).¹³

¹² *Ismul Fā'il fi al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (pp. 129)

¹³ An-Nisā' 4:50.

The Imām of *Mufasssireen*, Ibn Jarīr at-Tabarī in his tafsīr of Surah an-Nisā’, ayah 51 provides a detailed account of the various views of the Salaf vis-à-vis الطاغوت. We will now quote some of these views to further our understanding of this expression. The Imām starts by saying:

اختلف أهل التأويل في معنى " الجبت " و " الطاغوت

“The scholars of *Ta’wīl* (interpretation) differ with regard to the meanings of ‘*al-Jibt*’ and ‘*at-Tāghūt*.’”

He then goes on to mention various notables from the salaf and their views. So he says:

عن عكرمة أنه قال: " الجبت " و " الطاغوت"، صنمان

“On the authority of ‘Ikramah who said, *al-Jibt* and *at-Tāghūt* are two idols.”

وقال آخرون: " الجبت " الأصنام، و " الطاغوت " تراجمة الأصنام

“Others said that *al-Jibt* refers to idols and *at-Tāghūt* refers to those who interpret on behalf of the idols.”

The part ‘those who interpret on behalf of the idols’ was explained by Ibn ‘Abbās (*radi Allaahu ‘anhu*) to mean:

الذين يكونون بين أيدي الأصنام يعبرون عنها الكذب ليضلوا الناس.

“They were those who used to stand in the presence of these idols deceitfully speaking on behalf of them in order to misguide the people.”

Perhaps the most telling view is the statement of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb (*radi Allaahu ‘anhu*), who stated:

" الجبت " السحر، و " الطاغوت " الشيطان.

“*Al-Jibt* is sorcery and *at-Tāghūt* is the Shaytān.”

The great student of Ibn ‘Abbās, Mujāhid ibn Jabr commented on the verse “**They believe in Jibt and Tāghūt...**” by saying:

“الجبت " السحر، و " الطاغوت "، الشيطان في صورة إنسان يتحاكمون إليه، وهو صاحب أمرهم.

“*Al-Jibt* is sorcery and *at-Tāghūt* is the Shaytān in the image of a man who the people refer to for legal decisions, and he is in charge of their affairs.”

Ibn Jarīr at-Tabarī provides for us his view:

والصواب من القول عندي في الطاغوت: أنه كل ذي طغيان على الله، فعبد من دونه، إما بقهر منه لمن عبده، وإما بطاعة ممن عبده له، إنساناً كان ذلك المعبود أو شيطاناً، أو وثناً، أو صنماً، أو كائناً ما كان من شيء. اهـ الطبري

The accurate view according to me regarding *at-Taghūt* is that it applies to every type of transgression against Allāh, and thus it worshipped besides Him. Either due to him [i.e. *the tāghūt*] compelling those who worship him, or out of obedience from the one who worships him. This is whether the thing being worshipped is a person, a Shaytān, an idol or a statue or whatever the thing maybe.¹⁴

وقال الإمام مالك: "الطاغوت": هو كل ما يعبد من دون الله.

Imām Mālik ibn Anas said, "The *Tāghūt*, by definition, is anything which is worshipped besides Allāh".¹⁵

HOW CAN THE SHAYTĀN BE A TĀGHŪT AND EVERYTHING ELSE?

The answer for this is provided by the Imām of *Mufasssireen*:

وذلك لأن الشيطان هو الداعي إلى عبادة ما يُعبد من دون الله كما أنه الداعي إلى كل كُفرٍ، قال تعالى: (أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ تَوَزُّهُمْ أَزْوَاجًا) [مريم: 83]، فكل من كُفر، وكل من عبَد غير الله، فببزيين الشيطان، وكل من عبَد غير الله فهو إنما يعبد الشيطان على الحقيقة، كما قال تعالى: (أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ) [يس: 60]، وقال تعالى عن إبراهيم: (يَا أَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ ([مريم: 44]، مع أن أباه كان يعبد الأصنام، كما قال تعالى: (وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ أَرَزَرَ اتَّخَذُ أَصْنَامًا آلِهَةً ([الأنعام: 74]. فالشيطان هو الطاغوت الأكبر، فكل من عبَد صنماً من حجرٍ، أو شجرٍ، أو بشرٍ، فهو إنما يعبد الشيطان، وكل من تحاكم إلى بشرٍ، أو قانون، أو دستور من دون الله، فهو إنما يتحاكم إلى الشيطان، وهذا هو معنى تحاكمه إلى الطاغوت.

And this is because the Shaytān is the one who essentially propagates the worship of all things that are worshipped besides Allāh, just as he is the propagator of every type of disbelief. Allah the Most states:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ تَوَزُّهُمْ أَزْوَاجًا

See you not that we have sent the Shayâtin (devils) against the disbelievers to push them to do evil.¹⁶

¹⁴ Tafseer Imām at-Tabarī, vol.3, p.21

¹⁵ Related by as-Suyūṭī in *ad-Durarul-Manthūr*, vol.2, p.22 by way of Ibn Abī Hātim

So everyone who disbelieves and everyone who worships something besides Allah, has done so due the adornment of the Shaytān. And therefore, everyone who worships something besides Allāh, in effect, he is worshipping the Shaytān, just as Allāh stated:

أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ ۖ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ

Did I not ordain for you, O Children of Adam, that you should not Worship Shaitân (Satan). Verily, He is a plain enemy to you.¹⁷

Allāh, the Most High, also stated about Ibrāhīm:

يَا أَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ ۖ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ عَصِيًّا

"O My father! Worship not Shaitân (Satan). Verily, Shaitân (Satan) has been a rebel against the Most Beneficent (Allāh).¹⁸

Ibrāhīm said this although his father used to worship idols, as mentioned by Allah the Most High:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ آزَرَ أَتَتَّخِذُ أَصْنَامًا آهَةً ۖ إِنِّي أَرَاكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

And (remember) when Ibrāhīm said to his father Azar: “Do you take idols as gods? Verily, I see you and your people in manifest error.”¹⁹

So Shaytān is the ultimate *Tāghūt* and everyone who worships an idol in the form of a stone, tree or human, then in reality he is worshipping the Shaytān. And everyone who seeks a judgement, law or constitution from other than Allah, then in reality he is seeking the judgement of the Shaytān. And this is the meaning of seeking judgement from the *Tāghūt*.²⁰

Now that we have familiarised ourselves with the linguistic and the technical definitions of *tāghūt*, we can now see how the scholars classify and index the various types of *tāghūt*.

¹⁶ Maryam 19:81.

¹⁷ Yāsīn 36:60.

¹⁸ Maryam 19:43.

¹⁹ Al-An’ām 6:74.

²⁰ The story that reveals the origins of shirk also provides an in depth look into how the Shaytān lead the people to the worship of idols that were erected as monuments of the righteous.

SCHOLARS AND THEIR CLASSIFICATION OF TĀGHŪT

The *Mujaddid* of his time, Imām Muhammad ibn 'AbdulWahhāb said:

والطواغيت كثيرة، ورؤسهم، خمسة، إبليس لعنه الله، ومن عبد وهو راض، ومن ادعى شيئاً من علم الغيب، ومن دعا الناس إلى عبادة نفسه، ومن حكم بغير ما أنزل الله.

“The *Tawāghūt* are many but their heads are five: (1) Iblīs and (may he curse of Allāh be upon him), (2) **whoever is worshipped and he is pleased with it** (3) whoever claims to know a part of the unseen (4) whoever calls the people to worship him, (5) and whoever rules by other than what Allāh has revealed.”

Shaykh Sulaymān ibn Sahnān says:

حاصله: أن الطاغوت ثلاثة أنواع: طاغوت حكم، وطاغوت عبادة، وطاغوت طاعة ومتابعة.
“In summary, the *tāghūt* is of three types: (1) the *tāghūt* of *hukm* (i.e. ruling/legislation), (2) the *tāghūt* of *ibādah* (worship) (3) and the *tāghūt* of *tā'ah* and *mutāba'ah* (obedience and following).”

HOW TO AVOID THE TĀGHŪT

Like we said earlier, in order to achieve ‘The Most Trustworthy Handhold’, not only must we have firm faith in Allāh but we also must avoid every type of *tāghūt*. We’ll hand over here to Shaykh Sulaymān ibn Sahnān to explain

Shaykh Sulaymān ibn Sahnān said:

والمراد من اجتنابه هو بغضه، وعداوته بالقلب، وسبه وتقييحه باللسان، وإزالته باليد عند القدرة، ومفارقتة، فمن ادعى اجتناب الطاغوت ولم يفعل ذلك فما صدق.

“The intended meaning of ‘avoiding it [i.e. *tāghūt*]’ is to hate it; hold enmity in the heart towards it; to revile and verbally denounce it; to remove it whenever possible and to abandon it. So whoever claims to have avoided the *tāghūt* without doing all of that [i.e. the above], then his word is not to be trusted.”²¹

²¹ *Risālah fī bayān at-Tāghūt wa wujūb ijtinābihi* (pp. 2).

IS EVERY TĀGHŪT A DISBELIEVER?

Whenever we hear the word *tāghūt*, our minds instantly conjure up images of a disbeliever. As far as many are concerned, the word *tāghūt* is a strict synonym for ‘disbeliever’. Qualifying someone as a *tāghūt*, however, does not necessitate that the qualified individual be a *kāfir*. This is because the word also serves as a title for a select group of other notorious individuals. All of these notorious figures have one thing in common: they have respectively transgressed a various *shari’ah* boundaries, but it is not necessary the boundary of kufr and shirk. The above proposition can be substantiated from various viewpoints.

POINT ONE

Imām al-Qurtabī says as an explanation of the following verse:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ ۗ

And Verily, we have sent among Every Ummah (community, nation) a Messenger (proclaiming): "Worship Allāh (Alone), and avoid the Tāghūt."²²

أي : اتركوا كل معبود دون الله ؛ كالشيطان , والكاهن , والصنم , وكل من دعا إلى الضلال.

Meaning: forsake every object of worship besides Allāh, like the Shaytān, soothsayers, idols, and **anyone who calls to misguidance**.²³

Majd ad-Dīn Al-Fīrūz Ābadī said:

والطاغوت : اللات , والعزى , والكاهن , والشيطان , وكل رأس ضلال , والأصنام , وما عبد من دون الله , ومردة أهل الكتاب.

The Tāghūt is Lāt, ‘Uzza, soothsayers, devils, **all leaders of misguidance**, idols, anything worshipped besides Allāh and the rebellious from the people of the Book.²⁴

Based on the above two quotes, it can clearly be said that the word *tāghūt* is not always a label that describes a disbeliever. In some cases, it may well be a disbeliever, and in other cases, it may well be someone who has transgressed some type of boundary, but not the boundary of shirk and kufr.

²² An-Nahl 16:35.

²³ *Tafsīr* al-Qurtabī, vol. 5, p. 75.

²⁴ *Al-Qāmūs al-Muhīt* under the content on the verb طغى.

POINT TWO

There are scholars from Ahl as-Sunnah who qualify a thing as being a *tāghūt* simply because it passively caused someone to exceed the boundaries. Imām ibn al-Qayyim states:

والطاغوت : كل ما تجاوز به العبد حده من معبود , أو متبوع , أو مطاع ..

“The *Taghūt* is anyone whom the servants go beyond the due bounds, whether it is worshipped, obeyed or followed.”

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Sālih al-‘Uthaymīn commented on this statement:

ومراده : من كان راضياً . أو يقال : هو طاغوت باعتبار عابده , وتابعه , ومطيعه ؛ لأنه تجاوز به حده حيث نزله فوق منزلته التي جعلها الله له , فتكون عبادته لهذا المعبود , واتباعه لمتبوعه , وطاعته لمطاعه : طغياناً ؛ لمجاوزته الحد بذلك.

And his intent behind “whoever is pleased with it” or it is said “he is a *tāghūt*” in consideration of his worshipper, follower or the one obeying him, because he has surpassed the bounds in regards to him and given him a status above his rightful status which Allāh gave him. Thus, his worship to this one being worshipped, his following of the one being followed and his obedience to the one being obeyed – is all *tughyān* [transgression] due to his surpassing the bounds in that.

POINT THREE

The People of knowledge qualify inanimate objects that are worshipped besides Allāh as types of *tāghūt*. Needless to say, an inanimate object cannot be labelled as a *kāfir*. Shaykh al-Islām Ibnu Taymiyyah states:

وهو اسم جنس يدخل فيه : الشيطان , والوثن , والكهان , والدرهم , والدينار , وغير ذلك.

“It [*tāghūt*] is a generic noun which includes devils, idols, soothsayers, dirham and dinar and many other things.”

POINT FOUR

Some of the people of knowledge label a person who persistently commits sins as a *tāghūt*. Shaykh Muhammad ibn Sālih al-‘Uthaymīn stated:

وعلماء السوء الذين يدعون إلى الضلال والكفر , أو يدعون إلى البدع , أو إلى تحليل ما حرم الله , أو تحريم ما أحل الله : طواغيت.

“The evil scholars - who call to misguidance and disbelief, **or they call to innovation** or they make permissible what Allāh has made forbidden and vice versa - are *Tawāghūt*.”

POINT FIVE

The explicit statement of Shaykh Ibn Bāz regarding the reality of a *tāghūt*. He states:

فحدُّكَ أن تكون عبداً مطيعاً لله ، فإذا جاوزت ذلك : فقد تعدَّيتَ وكنْتَ طاعوتاً بهذا الشيء الذي فعلته .. فقد يكون كافراً ، وقد يكون دون ذلك.

Your limit is to be a servant obedient to Allah, if you surpass that then you have transgressed and become a *tāghūt*, on the basis of what you have done... he could thus be a disbeliever or he could be in a state lesser than that..²⁵

ARE THE RULERS WHO ARE LABELLED AS TĀGHŪT AUTOMATICALLY DISBELIEVERS DUE TO THE LABEL TĀGHŪT?

What we have here is actually a sub section of *the* section ‘**is every tāghūt a disbeliever?**’, but due to the nature of some eccentric groups and their fixation with the Muslim rulers, we decided to give this subsection a temporary standalone status to highlight a very important point.

Before we look at the subheading in a bit more detail, let us see what the scholars say about the verse:

يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُتَحَاكَمُوا إِلَى الطَّاغُوتِ وَقَدْ أُمِرُوا أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا بِهِ وَيُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُمْ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا

“They wish to refer legislation to Taghūt, while they were commanded to reject it; and Satan wishes to lead them far astray.”²⁶

The *Lajnah ad-Dā’imah li-Buhūth al-’Ilmiyyah wa’l-’Iftā’* [Standing Committee for Academic Research and Rulings] in Saudi Arabia, while under the presidency of Imām bin Bāz (*rahimahullāh*), fatwa no.8008 was asked about the meaning of *at-Tāghūt* in the verse:

“They wish to refer legislation to Taghūt, while they were commanded to reject it; and Satan wishes to lead them far astray.” Answer:

²⁵ These five points were summarised from a paper called هل يصح إطلاق وصف طاغوت على الفاسق هل كل طاغوت كافر؟

²⁶ An-Nisā’

The intent of *at-tāghūt* in the verse is for all who turn away from Allāh’s Book and the Messenger’s Sunnah (*sallallāhu ‘alayhi wassallam*) to refer legislation to systems, man-made laws, traditions and inherited customs or tribal leaders so as to adjudicate among themselves with that, or with what the leader of the group or sorcerer views. Thus, it is clear that systems developed for legislation to emulate Allāh’s Rule are within the meaning of *at-Tāghūt*.²⁷

The *Lajnah ad-Daa’imah*, while also under the presidency of Imaam bin Baaz (*rahimahullaah*), stated when asked: “when can we specifically brand a person as being a *tāghūt*?” Answer:

If he calls to shirk or the worship of himself, or claims to have knowledge of the unseen realm, **or rules by other than what Allaah has revealed intentionally** or the likes...²⁸

By “intentionally” ruling by other than what Allāh has revealed this needs further explanation and it means “intentionally ruling by other than what Allaah has revealed via *istihlaal*, which will be explained by Imaam Bin Baaz below in further detail. Imām Bin Bāz was also asked in his *Sharh of Kashf ush-Shubuhāt*:

“May Allaah be good to you. If [a ruler] makes it *halāl* [to rule by other than what Allaah has revealed], is he considered a *tāghūt*?”

Answer from Imaam bin Baaz:

A disbeliever, a disbelieving *tāghūt* [as he has made *istihlāl*], [and] he is called a “*tāghūt*” even if he does not make it *halāl* to rule by other than what Allāh has revealed, even if he does not make *istihlāl*.

Imaam Bin Baaz was also asked:

“Is the word “disbeliever” applied to the one who does not rule by Allāh’s rule? As Allāh says:

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

“Whoever does not rule by what Allāh has revealed, then they are the disbelievers.”²⁹

Or is this word [i.e. ‘disbeliever’] applied to the one who says “Allāh’s rule is inappropriate for this worldly life?”

Answer from Imaam Bin Baaz:

²⁷ Fataawaa Lajnah ad-Dā’imah li Buhūth al-’Ilmiyyah wa’l-Iftā’ (Riyadh, KSA: Dār ul-’Aasimah, 1411 AH, ed. Ahmad ‘AbdurRazzāq ad-Duwaysh), vol.1, pp.542-543.

²⁸ Ibid. under ‘Tawāghūt’, fatwa no. 5966.

²⁹ Al-Mā’idah 5:44.

The terms *kāfir*, *dhālim* and *fāsiq* are all to be applied to him. However, if he views that Allāh’s rule is inappropriate, or that it is allowed to rule by man-made laws, then this is major kufr. If he does not view this yet does it [i.e. rules by other than what Allāh has revealed] due to disobedience and desire then this is *kufr dūna kufr*, *dhulm dūna dhulm* and *fiṣq dūna fiṣq*. So the terms *kufr*, *dhulm* and *fiṣq* can be applied to either of these two or three cases. However, if he makes it permissible to rule by other than what Allāh has revealed and permits it whether he says “Allāh’s rule is better” or “Allāh’s rule is the same”, or says “the rule of *tāghūt* is better” – then due to this he is a *murtad* (apostate), and his kufr is major kufr, his *dhulm*, major *dhulm* and his *fiṣq*, major *fiṣq*. Yet if he rules by other than what Allaah has revealed due to a desire in himself against the ruled, or due to a benefit for the ruled, or due to bribery which he has taken from the ruled, then all of this is out of minor *kufr*, minor *dhulm* and minor *fiṣq*. If ‘kufr’ is applied in this instance then it is applied with the meaning of admonishment, we ask Allāh for good health.³⁰

Al-ʿAllāmah Sālih al-Fawzān states when discussing the meaning of *at-Tāghūt*:

Fifth: whoever rules by other than what Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, has revealed. This is because Allah says

“Have you not seen those who claim to have believed in what was revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what was revealed before you? They wish to refer legislation to Taghūt, while they were commanded to reject it; and Satan wishes to lead them far astray.”

{*an-Nisaa* (4): 60}

So the one who rules by other than what Allāh has revealed views that his rule by other than what Allāh has revealed is better and more beneficial for people; or that it is the same as what Allaah has revealed; and that he has a choice between ruling by what Allaah has revealed or ruling by other than it; or that ruling by other than what Allāh has revealed is permitted, **this one is considered a tāghūt and he is a disbeliever in Allaah the Mighty and Majestic.**³¹

The newspaper *ash-Sharq al-Awsat* (no.6156, dated 12/5/1416 AH) published an article wherein Imaam ‘Abdul’Azeez Bin Baaz stated:

I came across a beneficial answer from the noble Shaykh Muhammad Nāsiruddīn al-Albānī (may Allaah grant him success), which was printed in the newspapers *ash-Sharq al-Awsat* and *al-Muslimoon*, wherein the noble Shaykh answered a question that was put to him regarding *takfīr* due to not ruling by what Allāh has revealed without explanation. He made

³⁰ From the official website of Imaam Bin Baaz here: <http://www.binbaz.org.sa/mat/9086>

³¹ Al-ʿAllāmah Saalih al-Fawzaan, *Maʿnaa at-Taaghoot* [The Meaning of Taaghoot], available in audio and written format from Shaykh Fawzaan’s official website: <http://www.alfawzan.af.org.sa/node/10323>

it clear (may Allaah grant him success) that it is not permissible for anyone to make *takfīr* of whoever does not rule by other than what Alāah has revealed due to the mere action without knowing if he considered it lawful to do that in his heart. He made use of what is found from Ibn ‘Abbaas (radi Allāhu ‘anhuma), and others from the salaf of the ummah. There is no doubt that what he mentioned in his answer in the *tafsīr* of the verse

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

“Whoever does not rule by what Allaah has revealed, then they are the disbelievers.”³²

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

“Whoever does not rule by what Allaah has revealed then they are the transgressors.”³³

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

“Whoever does not rule by what Allaah has revealed then they are the sinful.”³⁴

is correct, and he (may Allaah grant him success) made it clear that kufr is of two types: major and minor, just as transgression is two, and likewise sin is major or minor. So whoever makes it lawful to rule by other than what Allāh has revealed or makes it lawful to make *zinaa* or to legalise interest or legalises anything else from the prohibited acts, which are agreed upon as being impermissible, has disbelieved due to major kufr. Whoever does such actions however, without making them lawful, then his kufr is minor kufr and his transgression is minor transgression and likewise is his sin.

This is what the *Lajna ad-Daa’imah* (*Standing Committee for Research and Legal Verdicts*) was upon under the presidency of Shaykh ‘AbdulAziz ibn Bāz. It answered the following question (*fatwā* no. 5741):

“Question: Is the one who does not rule by what Allaah has revealed a Muslim or a disbeliever who has committed major kufr?”

Answer: Allaah said,

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

“Whoever does not rule by what Allaah has revealed, then they are the disbelievers.”

{*al-Maa’idah: 44*}

And Allaah has said,

³² Al-Mā’idah 5:44.

³³ Al-Mā’idah 5:45.

³⁴ Al-Mā’idah 5:47.

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

“Whoever does not rule by what Allaah has revealed then they are the transgressors.”
{*al-Maa'idah: 45*}

And Allaah has said:

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الفَاسِقُونَ

“Whoever does not rule by what Allaah has revealed then they are the sinful.”
{*al-Maa'idah: 47*}

However, if he makes that lawful and believes that it is permissible, then it is major kufr, major transgression and major sin which expels one from the religion. As for doing it out of bribery or out of another intent whilst believing that it is prohibited then such a person has sinned and is considered a disbeliever who has committed minor kufr and minor sin which does not expel the person from the religion, as the people of knowledge had elucidated in their explanations of the mentioned verses.³⁵

Imām bin Bāz (*rahimahullāh*) also said:

Whoever rules by other than what Allāh has revealed does not escape from four issues:

1. The one who says “I rule by this (i.e. man-made laws) because they are better than the Divine Legislation of Islaam (i.e. *Sharī'ah*)” then such a person is a disbeliever, who has committed major *kufr*.
2. The one who says “I rule by these man-made laws as they are like the Divine Legislation of Islaam, and ruling by it is permitted, just as ruling by the Divine legislation of Islām is also permitted” such a person is a disbeliever who has committed major *kufr*.
3. The one who says “I rule by these laws, but the Divine Legislation of Islām is better, but ruling by other than what Allāh has revealed is permitted.” Such a person is a disbeliever who has committed major *kufr*.
4. The one who says “I rule by these man-made laws” yet believes that it is not permissible to rule by other than what Allaah has revealed and says “Ruling by the Divine Legislation of Islaam is better and it is not permissible to rule by other than it” yet is weak or does this out of what his rulers have originated before him, such a person is a disbeliever who has committed minor *kufr* which does not expel him from the religion and the action is considered to be from the major sins.³⁶

³⁵ *The Standing Committee for Research and Legal Verdicts*, its members being: Abdullaah bin Ghudayn, 'AbdurRazzaaq 'Afeefee (vice-president), 'Abdul'Azeez bin 'Abdullaah bin Baaz (president). Further see: *Majmoo' al-Fataawa wa Maqaalaat Ibn Baaz* (vol.3, pp.990-992) and what has been transmitted from Shaykh bin Baaz in the magazine *al-Furqaan* (nos.82 and 94).

³⁶ *Qadeeyat ut-Takfeer Bayna Ahl us-Sunnah wa Furuq ad-Dalaal [The Issue of Takfeer Between the People of Sunnah and the Misguided Groups]*, pp.72-73.

What is a Tāghūt?

This section also provides a stern reminder for those groups (think al-Muhajiroun et al) who use the word ‘*tāghūt*’ as a battering ram to arbitrarily ram down the gates of the Muslim rulers. In the lexicon of these individuals, the word *tāghūt* only has one meaning: *kāfir*!