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Chapter 1: The Beginning

The Sacred Wrath

Al-Shahid was verily a spirit full of sacred wrath ... a heart beating with faith (*iman*) and bravery ... a peremptory tongue like a trenchant sword, and a man knows nothing but the truth.

He persevered on rejecting oppression, deploring prodigality, and condemning extravagance and deviation. Thus his heart burst like an outbreaking volcano, ejecting its lava against the palaces of those unjust people given to luxury.

He found the straightforward path, being guided toward the right course, stepping forward with full confidence in Allah, relying upon his Lord, fearing neither the reproach of those who are entitled to reproach, nor the rulers' repression.

One day the Messenger of Allah, on looking at him, recognized his magnanimous self and high spirit, saying: "No meadow could overshadow and no earth could carry over it a man more truthful in speech than Abu Dharr."

True, it is Abu Dharr, the champion of the pricky hard way ... the way of bidding to good and forbidding evil. He recognized the truth, bidding people to follow it, and rea-

lized falsehood, forbidding from following it, being thus a source of fear for the oppressors, and a danger threatening the rulers. So, they did their utmost to dissuade him from his course, but failed, and all the abundant sums of money could never tempt him or weaken his resolute. All swords, lashes or other means of horror were humbled in front of his strong will.

Once upon a day a servant knocked at his house-door saying to him:

"O the Companion of the Messenger of Allah, here you are, this is the caliph's present to you ... an amount of money that is sufficient to sustain on all your life." Abu Dharr refused to accept the gift, but the servant insisted on him, begging him by saying:

"They promised to set me free ... O Abu Dharr, please accept it ... my emancipation is entailed from (your accepting) it.

Abu Dharr refused the rulers' presents, and decisively exclaimed:

"If it entails your emancipation, it causes my slavery. Yea, o gullible lad, are you asking such a thing from Abu Dharr? Are you asking him to have confidence in or submit to the oppressors?

In this way everywhere was resounded with Abu Dharr's voice calling for truth, demanding to establish justice on earth. Consequently, the orders were issued to arrest and exile him to Sham, separating him from his beloved people and his struggle comrades, depriving him from the tenement–houses of revelation, the scent of Pro phethood and warmth of Ahl al–Bayt (peace be upon them).

It was destined for Abu Dharr to tread, with his feet, the roads of Jabal Amil, that goodly region of the land of Lebanon, where lie simple hills, spacious valleys and limited-scope plains.

And thus was the fate of Jabal 'Amil to initiate a new chapter in its deep-rooted history. There, people came to discover a firebrand from the spirit of Muhammad (God's benediction be upon him and his pure Progeny), as from the heart of his great Companion, Islam's concepts and message values began to effuse, and the rebellious words started to proceed into the heart of earth and history. Hence, sun of Islam began to rise from among the clouds, overwhelming that land with light, warmth and hope.

The palaces of the Umayyad ruler began to be shaken violently by the Ghifari earthquake, and strong feeling of trepidation and fright overwhelmed Mu'awiyah, who gave his orders to return the honourable companion to the centre of caliphate, with instructions to treat him very harshly.

So the Companion of Allah's Messenger returned to alMadinah, to see nothing but frowned faces and executioners' lashes. There, the expulsion cycle started anew, till his last exile be at Rabadhah "the severest region in the world in respect of climate and voidness of any traces of life.

In this place, Abu Dharr passes away, joining the caravan of freemen and the righteous, with his words in Jabal 'Amil turning to be seeds and buds, growing, blossoming and setting their roots firm into the depths of earth, history and civilization. Thereafter, Jabal 'Amil commenced to play its effective role on the scene of life, producing to the mankind "over long ages and eras "numerous reputed 'ulama', litterateurs and thinkers.

Among the 'ulama' produced by that generous land, we can refer to the renowned scholar Zayn al-Din al-Jub'ii al-'Amili, who was known later with the name of al-Shahid al-Thani1.

His Household

Zayn al-Din ibn 'Ali ibn Ahmad al-'Amili is verily counted among the great 'ulama' and fuqaha', endowed

with a versatile personality, being prominent in the fields of literature and medicine too.

He was brought up in an inveterate family of noble social and theological status. His father was Nur al–Din 'Ali, one of the honourable 'ulama', and so also were his both grandfathers Jamal al–Din and al–Taqi, beside his great grandfather al–Shaykh Salih. Hence his family was called Silsalat al–Dhahab (Golden Chain). Further his only son al–Shaykh Yasan was one of the most eminent Imamiyyah 'ulama', compiling the book *al–Ma'ali2m* on usul al–figh.

Also his grandson, from his daughter, al-Sayyid Muhammad 'Ali al-'Amili, who was one among the most reputable Shi'ah researchers. He authored the book *al-Madarik* on *fiqh*.3

To him belong scientific personages of great influence and role in the thought and social fields, like al-'Imam Musa al-Sadr, 4 the President of the Supreme Shi'i Council in Lebanon, and the martyr al-Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr5 with his sister the martyr Aminat al-Sadr, known as Bint al-Huda.

His Birth

On the thirteenth of Shawwal 911 H., at Jub'i, one of south Lebanon villages, a lightening planet has brightened from Nur al–Din 'Ali's house, overshadowing the world with a shining comely face, overwhelming his parents heart with warmth and hope. So they gave him the name Zayn al–Din, and after elapse of few days, the signs of smartness and genius, began to emerge as talents endowed on him. The boy grew up inside a chaste house, overfull of piety (*taqwa*), faith and modesty. He recited the whole holy Qur'an before reaching the age of nine.

His Learning

Al-Shahid has betaken himself at this prime age to study the arts of Arabic literature and jurisprudence (fiqh). His first teacher was his father, who was among the grand 'ulama' of Jabal 'Amil during his time, teaching him the books al-Mukhta'ar al-nafi'i and al-Lum'ah alDimashqiyyah. For the latter one, al-Shahid has compiled his well-known exposition (sharh) under the title: al-Rawdhah al-bahiyyah, beside other various literary books.

Enough be for his father to boast of, is that he has educated al-Shahid in a way that put him on the course leading to geniusness and aptitude. He continued his study till the year 925 H. when his father deceased, while his age was less than 14 years.

But the dread of this shock and bitterness of orphanhood could never curb his activity, or frustrate his enthusiastic spirit from seeking knowledge, as it was the conduct of other genius unique men, whose talents were burnished by experiences of life.

Toward Mays Village

Thus Zayn al-Din, the novice pupil, has set off toward the village of Mays in Jabal 'Amil, after being aware of the presence of a great scholar like al-Shaykh 'Ali ibn Abd al-'Ali in it. Under that man he learnt *Shara'i'i al-'slam* of al-Muhaqqiq al-Hilli, *Irshad al-'adhhan* of al'Allamah al-Hilli, and *al-Qawa'id* of al-Shahid al-'Awwal Muhammad ibn Makki, which all being among sublime *fiqhi* books.

Al-Shahid resided for eight years at Mays, till 933 H., prompted by the fact that his teacher was the husband of his aunt, who used to treat him compassionately, taking care of him throughout all that period.

His Marriage

Al-Shahid persevered on learning so hard and actively, acquiring knowledge, and quaffing from its serene fountains, till reaching the age of twenty-two. Thereat he thought that it was opportune time to complete the other half of his religion, and start a new life ... a life common with his dreamgirl. And no one could be better than the daughter of his compassionate aunt and of his honourable professor. Thus al-Shahid found his promised resto in that faithful girl, whose character was distinguished with all features of a goodly village, such as simplicity, content and serenity.

Toward Karak Noah

Within only a short time after Zayn al–Din's marriage to his aunt's duaghter, the idea of migration has striken the mind of his new family, so they packed off to another village, being Karak Noah. 7 So, the knowledge–seeker, after acquiring much *figh* and other fields of knowledge, set off with his family.

In Karak Noah, he attended the lessons of literature, *fiqh*, philosophy, *kalam* and *usul*, under al–Sayyid Badr al–Din Yasan al–'A'raji, who taught him *al–Qawai'd* of Ibn Maytham al–Bahrani, on *ilm al–kalam*, beside *al–Tahdhib* and *al–'Umdah al–jaliyyah* on *usul al–fiqh*, with the book *al–Kafiyah* on *'lm al–nahw* (grammar).

After only seven months, the knowledge-seeker was bereaved with the decease of his teacher, whereat he recalled the passing away of his father a long time ago, yearning strongly for Jub', his birthplace.

Returning Home

In Jumada al-Thaniyah 934, Zayn al-Din departed Karak Noah, betaking himself toward Jub', in which he stayed till the year 937, which he spent in reading, preaching and meeting people's needs. Hence he attained high position among people, deserving much applause and appreciation.

At Damascus

Al-Shahid migrated to Damascus, the capital of Sham in 937 H. when he was twenty-six years old, prompted by the keen desire to seek knowledge. So he resided there for one year, attending the lectures of the philosopher Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Makki, learning under him the books authored by his teacher: *Sharh al-Mujaz* and *Ghayat al-Qa'ld fi mairifat al-fa'ld*. Besides, he learned the book *Fu'lul al-Farghani* on *'ilm al-hay'ah*, and *Hikmat al-'Ishraq* of al-Suhrawardi on philosophy. Also he learned under al-Shaykh Ahmad ibn Jabir, the book al Shalibiyyah on *'Im al-qira'ah* (science of reading), studying the readings of Nafi', Ibn Kathir, Ibn 'Amr and 'A'lim.

Returning Home

Homesickness has pushed al–Shahid to return home, *Jub'i*, staying at his village till the year 941. Throughout all that period, he was engaged in reading, verification, teaching and preaching people.

Damascus Again

Again, at the outset of 942, al-Shahid returned to Damascus to resume his learning there. During that period, he established contacts with many personalities from different Islamic schools of thought, to be acquainted with other thought trends.

So he met, on this course, the Damascene scholar al-Shaykh Shams al-Din ibn Ãawlawn, reading for him parts of *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*, after which Ibn Ãawlawn has licensed him to narrate both of them. At that time, his disciple Ibn al-'Awdi came out to light, accompanying him for a long time.

In Land of Pyramids

On the fifteenth of Rabi'i al-'Awwal 942 H., al-Shahid al-Thani departed Damascus8 toward Egypt, in order to enrich his religious knowledge, and living in new thought spheres.

Since Egypt, at that time, was a huge thought centre, al-Shahid endeavoured, on his arrival there, to make contact with the leaders of other schools of thought.

He started to closely study their trends of thought, for having full knowledge of their rational point of view, and comprehending their scientific signification.

Al-Shahid proved his effective attendance at various circles of learning held everywhere, in mosques and schools, learning under a large number of professors of *fiqh*, exegesis (*tafsir*) and *hadith* (tradition). Among them he refers to:

"Al-Shaykh Shahab al-Din Ahmad al-Ramli al-Shafi'i, studying under him Minhaj al-Nawawi on figh,

and *Mukhtaar al-'u'lul* with reading the commentaries (*hawashi*) on it: *al-Sa'diyyah* and *al-Sharifiyyah*. I also heard under him many books on Arabic and rational arts, and other fields, like: *Sharh al-Talkhi'l* for the book *al-Mukhtaar fi al-maAni wa al-bayan* of al-Mulla Sa'id al-Din; al Shaykh Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni's *Sharh* on *u'sul al-fiqh*; and Ibn Hisham's *Taw'ih* on *nahw* (grammar), beside other books whose mention is out of scope here, and he granted me a general license in reporting what is permitted to be narrated in 943 H.

"Among them also is al-Mulla Husayn al-Jurjani, under whom I learned al-Mulla 'Ali al-Qawashachi, with Mulla Jalal al-Din al-Dawwani's *Aashiyah*, *Sharh ashkal alta'sis* on geometry by Qa'li Zadah al-Ruhi and *Sharh alJaghmini* on *hay'ah* by him.

"Among them too is al-Mulla Muhammad al'Astrabadi, under whom we learned a portion from the book al-Mulawwal, with al-Sayyid Sharif's Aashiyah and Sharh al-Kafiyah. Beside al-Mulla Muhammad 'Ali al-Jilani, under whom we heard some parts of ma'ani (rhetoric) and manliq (logic).

"Among them further is al-Shaykh Shahab al-Din ibn al-Najjar al-Yanbali, under whom I learned all of the books *Sharh al-Shafiyah* and *Sharh al-Khazrajiyyah* on prosody and rhyming of al-Shaykh Zakariyya al-'Ansari, reciting numerous books on arts and *hadith*, among which are *al-Sahihan*, and he licensed me to report whatever I heard and recited, beside all that was permitted for him to narrate in the said year.

"Also among them is al-Shaykh Abu al-Yasan al-Bakri, under whom I heard a number of books on *fiqh* and exegesis (*tafsir*), beside his *sharh* on *al-Minhaj*.

"Of them too is al-Shaykh Zayn al-Din al-Jarmi alMaliki, under whom I recited Alfiyyat Ibn Malik.

"Of them again is al-Shaykh al-Muhaqqiq Na'sir al-Din al-Malaqani al-Maliki, the time researcher and honourable man of that town, who was the best scholar in rational and Arabic sciences, under whom I read *al-Bayawi fi altafsir*, with other books.

"Of them is al-Shaykh Na'sir al-Din al-Hablawi al-Shafi'i, under whom I recited the Qur'an according to Ibn Amr's reading (*qira'ah*), and a treatise on reading authored by him.

"Of them is al-Shaykh Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Abi al-Nahhas, under whom I read al-Shalibiyyah fi al-qira'ah wa al-Qur'an al-Aziz li al-'A'immah al-Sabah. Then I started to recite for him the ten without completing them to the end.

Ibn al-Awdig commented on this by saying: "Most often al-Shahid was labelling this Shaykh with piety, uprightness and modesty. It was customary for the virtuous men of Egypt to frequenting to him for reading under him arts of the holy Qur'an due to his being distinguished in this field. He was so concerned with this profession, that people used to recite (the Qur'an) for him while he being busy in his occupation, never dropping the hammer from his hand, except when visited by one of the great

dignitaries, whereat he would spread a rug for him, whereas he himself sat on a straw mat."

Some of them are mentioned by al-Shahid when saying: Among them is the virtuous perfect Shaykh 'Abd al Hamid al-Sanhuri, for whom I read a good sum of arts, after which he granted me a general license.

Ibn al-Awdi commented thus:

This Shaykh also deserved the appraisal of our Shaykh, may Allah sanctify his soul, al-Shahid al-Thani, who used to ascribe to him the two virtues of *'ilm* (knowledge) and generosity. He says that during the Month of Ramadhan, he used to invite all his friends to break their fasting at his house, so as that once upon a night they were absent during the time of *iflar* (breakfast at *maghrib* during RamaAn), but when coming after that, he treated them so kindly, saying:

"We all felt lonely and longed for you yesterday, even Latifah (his younger daughter).

He owned a maid servant, that whenever someone would come to invite him, he would tell her:

"Inform your master that so-and-so has invited the company to be his guests tonight.

Thereat she would reply:

"I never apprise him of this news at all.

Al-Shahid al-Thani goes on to introduce the Egyptian personalities he met, saying:

Among them is al-Shaykh Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Abd al-Qadir al-Far'i al-Shafi'i, for whom I read many books on Indian arithmetic, and *al-Yasaminah* with its *sharh* (exposition) on algebra and comparison science, besides reciting *Sharh al-Wasilah* for which he granted me a general license.

In the same country, I recited under a large number of shaykhs, whose mention is out of scope, among them are: al-Shaykh 'Umayrah, al-Shaykh Shahab al-Din ibn Abd al-Yaqq, al-Shaykh Shahab al-Din al-Balqini, and al-Shaykh Shams al-Din al-Diruti, beside others. 10

This document explicitly indicates the extent of al Shahid's activity, and his keenness to be acquainted with the different sciences prevalent at that time, besides endeavouring to comprehend the different schools of thought and methods of teaching. Though the period spent by al Shahid in the land of Egypt was so short "eighteen months "but he exploited it in an astounding way, as it was feasible for him to grasp numerous fields of knowledge, that others could not grasp, during that comparatively short time.

Toward the Ancient House

When the youth felt quenched of knowledge and science, his sublime spirit started to strongly yearning

for Makkah, the descension place of revelation and cornerstone of the everlasting message. So he eagerly set out to make pilgrimage to the Ancient House, on the seventeenth of Shawwal 943 H., taking with him as companions two of his disciples.

The small caravan crossed the thorney deserts and sandy flat lands, to reach the land of Makkah ... the homeland of Ibrahim and Isma'iil and Hajar, to witness by his own eyes the first house placed for mankind. Also to sight al-Madinah, which witnessed the birth of the best of human beings Muhammad (peace and benediction be upon him and his pure Progeny), and that of the eternal champion of Islam 'Ali (A). There at the youth began to recall to mind the vivid images of the *jihad* of the earlier Muslims ... Abu Talib, the Messenger's uncle and guardian, Khadijah with her sacrifices, Yasir with his steadfastness, Sumayyah the first martyr throughout the Islamic history and Bilal ... etc.

After performing the rites of 'umrah and hajj, al Shahid betook himself toward al-Madinah al Munawwarah ... to the land that witnessed the great miracle "the miracle of Islam and birth of the new Ummah (nation).

Peace be on Ahmad in the Worlds

As the small caravan set out toward Yathrib, the youth started to imagine the memoir of the perilous travel, when the Prophet (S) decided to depart Makkah and migrate toward Yathrib, the event recording the Hijrah calendar that changed the face of the world, and rectified the human course all the world over.

There at the love fountains began to gush out, with the youth starting to chant:

Peace and salutation be upon the best of mankind, Whose grace exceeding limitation and confinement, That who ascended the seven skies with slippers, Whom Allah substituted with Barraq for his foal, Whom the Almighty Allah addressed with His love, Orally, that never occurred for a slave or freeman, My inability to citing your virtues is seemly,

Of which my tongue is fatigued through poetry or prose, What have people to say in praise of that those,

Lofty laudations are mentioned in the holy Book, I rushed toward him hastily as a powerless

Burdened with abundant sins on my back, But love wind instigated my vigour,

And soul of hope in my self-weakness with poverty, The generous Arabs' habit toward their guest,

Is showering him with good, cheerness and affluence, They abundantly give their guest with no precedence, How then of the good you promised me in Egypt, 11

My master, make me realize my hope of the visit, Through attaining my wish and intercession at resurrection. 12

Returning to Homeland

After traversing some parts of the Islamic world, travelling between Damascus and Cairo, then Makkah and al-Madinah, in a journey taking two years, strong yearning controlled him, pushing him to return to Jub`, his small lamblike village. So he set out, betaking himself toward it, on the fourteenth of Safar 944 H.

His arrival to the village turned to be a feast for its inhabitants, as all without exception went out for his reception with extreme hospitality.

Ibn al-Awdi says:

"His coming to the town resembled a descending mercy, or downpouring rain. With his knowledge he revived souls deadened by ignorance (*jahl*), and around him men of knowledge and virtue crowded, thronging to him as if gates of knowledge that were closed began to open witnessing the blossoming of his mart that was stagnant. The darkness of illiteracy was illuminated by his bright lights, and the hearts of men of knowledge were rejoiced and enlightened. He exposed and propagated all the sciences he acquired through his tireless exertion, benefitting people to a matchless extent, arranging the knowledge–seekers like men, showing the right way for whoever sought it."

Thus al-Shahid's arrival to the small village led to the revival of a cultural movement, activating the thought arena, with his being object of attention of knowledge seekers who betook themselves to him from different cities and countries, and the *'ulama'* gathered around him. So al-Shahid took upon his shoulders the responsibility entrusted to him in preaching and guiding people, besides conducting the religious affairs, building a new mosque, executing some public charitable programs.

- 1. Al-Shahid al-'Awwal is the scholar Muhammad ibn Makki al-'Amili, who was martyred in 786 H., after a fictitious unjust trial. (Translator).
- 2. The book is still occupying an outstanding position among the curricula in the theological schools, though it was compiled several centuries ago.
- 3. It is among the well-known fiqhi books among the Shi'ah.
- 4. He disappeared in 1978 in vague circumstances, and his fate is still unknown. (Translator)
- 5. He was murdered by the Tyrant of Iraq Saddam in 1980. (Translator)
- 6. In reference to the holy verse: "And of His signs is this: He created for you helpmeets from yourselves that ye might find rest in them ..." (30:21).
- 7. It is situated near to Ba`labakk. It is called with this name due to its nearness to the tomb of the Prophet Noah (A).
- 8. The expenses of his travel to Egypt were subscribed by al– Hajj Shams al–Din Muhammad ibn Hilal. It is worth mentioning that his benevolent man, about whom nothing is reported in history books, had allotted for al–Shahid a special stipend during his learning period in Damascus. Later on he was found slain with his wife and two sons, one of whom was still fosterling in the cradle, in 952 H., through dubious circumstances. (Translator)
- 9. He was one of al-Shahid's disciples, enjoying his company for a long time during which he wrote a part of his biography.
- 10. Excerpts from Ibn al-'Awdi's treatise on al-Shahid's biography.
- 11. It is a reference to a vision he dreamt of in Egypt.
- 12. Rawdat al-jannat, Vol. III, p. 363.

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