



## **Imam Musa al-Sadr: An analysis of his life, accomplishments and literary output**

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IMAM MUSA AL-SADR: AN ANALYSIS  
OF HIS LIFE, ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LITERARY OUTPUT

By

Ibrahim Ali Naim

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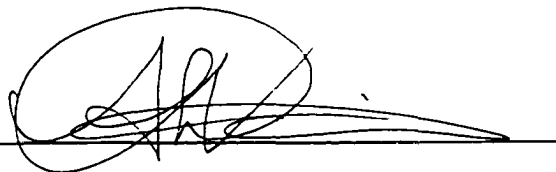
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A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'A' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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I would like to thank my parents for encouraging me to go to college and working very hard to support me pursue my education. May God grant me the strength to always be there for them.

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my lovely and supportive wife Fatima Ibrahim Naim. Without her support and encouragement I would not have been able to achieve my goal of completing this dissertation and realize my goal of achieving a doctorate degree.

I also want to dedicate this dissertation to my beautiful children `Ali (15), `Ali (6) and Yasmin (5), with special dedication to my daughter and my youngest son, who always sat next to me while I was typing the dissertation trying to help me.

I also want to dedicate this dissertation to my parents who have always been supportive of my academic and professional goals in life. They were the ones who worked very hard on making it possible for me to come to the United States to pursue my higher education.

And finally, I want to dedicate this dissertation to the memory of Imam Musa and all the innocent Lebanese civilians who lost their lives during the Lebanese civil war. May their souls pray over Lebanon and its people and give them the wisdom to live in peace and harmony.

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## ABSTRACT

Imam Musa al-Sadr (1347 AH, 1928 CE), is an Iranian Shi'i Imam with Lebanese ancestry. He became the leader of the Shi'i community in Lebanon in 1959 after the death of the local leader. He lived in Lebanon for about nineteen years before his sudden disappearance during an official visit to Libya in 1978. His stay in Lebanon marked a major transformation in the political, social, religious, and economic life of the Shi'i community. It also marked a major change in the history of Lebanon and the Lebanese as a whole. His work and accomplishments touched all the Lebanese no matter what religion, region, or political affiliation they belonged to.

This dissertation will discuss and analyze the life of Imam Musa, as he was known by his followers; his numerous writings, speeches, and manifestos; the contributions he made to the advancement of the Shi'i community in Lebanon. It will also analyze his appeal for Muslim unity around the world and religious tolerance between the various religious communities in Lebanon. Finally this dissertation will look at the legacy he left and the future of the Shi'ah in Lebanon.

This study is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is about the Shi'i community in Lebanon, its history, numbers and political and socio-economic status at the time of Imam Musa's arrival to Lebanon. The second chapter looks at the life of Imam Musa al-Sadr, his accomplishments, the changes he was able to affect for and within the Shi'i community, and his untimely disappearance in 1978. Chapter two also discusses the Imam by looking at him from three different points of view: the man, his

political thought and his role as a religious reformer. “Imam Musa: The man” is a personal look at the Imam and views of people who lived and dealt with him throughout the nineteen years he spent in Lebanon. “Imam Musa: His Political Thought” discusses his dealings with the Lebanese government, the Christian parties, the Leftist Muslim parties and the Palestinians. “Imam Musa: Religious Reformer” analyzes his views on religion and relations between religions. As a reformer Imam Musa advocated unity between Muslims around the world, a more active role for women in Islamic society, and tolerance for other religions.

The third chapter analyzes Imam Musa’s literary output (books, speeches, and manifestos) during his tenure in Lebanon. These will be analyzed in their relation to Imam Musa’s life and accomplishments in Lebanon. The fourth chapter looks at the legacy of the Imam, the fate of the Shi’i community since his disappearance, and the future of the community in Lebanon.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Imam Musa Ibn Sadruddin al-Sadr (1347 A.H., 1928 C.E.), is an Iranian born Shi'i religious leader and thinker, whose Lebanese ancestry dates back to the eighteenth century and who became the leader of the Shi'i Muslim community in Lebanon in 1959. The developments leading to his selection to become the leader of the Lebanese Shi'i community started with Imam Musa making a visit to visit his relatives in Lebanon in 1958. It was during this visit that the Imam impressed the Lebanese Shi'i leadership with his charisma, leadership skills and religious knowledge. When the leader of the Shi'i community passed away the following year, Imam Musa was sent an invitation to fill the leadership vacuum created for the largest religious community in Lebanon.

When Imam Musa accepted the invitation to become the leader of the Lebanese Shi'i community, he did not realize the enormity of the challenge he had taken on his shoulders. Imam Musa was coming from a country of about 45 millions, of whom 97 percent were Muslims (Shi'i Muslims) to one with 4.5 millions made up of Muslims, Christians, Jews and the various sects each of these religious groups were made up of. He came from a country ruled by a king of kings (*shahen-shah*) to a country ruled by a constitution written by the French colonial power when it had the mandate over Lebanon, based on religious preference and divisions. He came from a country rich in natural

resources, mainly oil and natural gas, to a country whose economy was based on tourism and agriculture. He came from a country that was considered fifth in the world in military power with no danger of daily incursions from neighbors, to a country that had more men and women in militias than in the regular army, and a country that faced almost daily attacks and incursions from the Israelis in the South and political pressure from Palestinians within Lebanon and Syrians from the North and the East. Coming to Lebanon for Imam Musa was a dramatic move. His work was really cut out for him.

In addition to the many external political and religious challenges he had to face as the leader of the Shi'i community, he had to also deal with challenges, competition and opposition from within the same community he was to lead. The Shi'i community was the least educated, economically poorest, and politically weakest of all the religious groups in Lebanon. The political leadership of the Shi'i community was in the hands of a few rich, land-owning families who did very little for their community in the sixteen years of Lebanese independence. How can one man come from the outside and deal with all these challenges and succeed. Imam Musa was not just any man. He was well-educated, charismatic, religious, and modern. Lebanon, the Arab world, the Muslim world and the West were not ready for him or used to someone like him.

Imam Musa was a leader who believed that he was the servant of his community and country and not the absolute authority in it. In his opinion, the responsibility of leadership is similar to that of religious responsibility. The most important task of the leader is to empower his community and advocate on behalf of them no matter what the circumstances or cost. He regularly referred to Imam Husain, the Shi'i martyr, as the

symbol of leadership and sacrifice. A leader, in his opinion, is someone who is willing to sacrifice his life for his community. This was a new concept in a country whose political machine was ruled by a select group of individuals who became richer in office and did for the most did little to improve the standard of living for their constituents. It was also a new concept, and maybe a dangerous one in a region ruled mostly by kings, princes and dictators who came to power by means of bloody coups and ruled by means of intimidation, fear and control.

Imam Musa was a social reformer. He used the resources and skills within his community to empower it. He believed that for a community to progress and improve its standard of living it needed to become educated, entrepreneurial and united. His did not wait for the government to build the schools, hospitals, and social service institutions his community desperately needed. He went to his community and asked them to give of their money time and skills, and built the schools, the hospitals, the orphanages and other social service institutions. He provided most of the services to the masses in the Shi'i community at no charge, since many of them could not afford them. He challenged his followers to actively participate in the political process and elect leaders and representatives who would best advocate for them and their children. Imam Musa's social mobilization and empowerment techniques were very new to Lebanon and threatened the very base of political power within the Shi'i community. Imam Musa went beyond the Shi'i community in Lebanon. He also advocated for the poor and disenfranchised from all Lebanese communities, regardless of their religious and political affiliation. Imam Musa went beyond the boundaries drawn by the Lebanese constitution

and the various religious groups. He advocated equal rights for all Lebanese and unity between them. In his opinion, these were vital for the future of Lebanon and the Lebanese.

But perhaps the most controversial issue Imam Musa dealt with and advocated for was the role of Muslim women within the society in Lebanon and the Muslim world as a whole. Imam Musa advocated for a more active role for Muslim women, including working outside the house and participating in politics. Even though more women in Lebanon were educated, worked and participated in the economy and politics compared to women in other Middle Eastern countries, Muslim women in Lebanon (especially Shi'i women) were the least literate and rarely participated in politics and work outside the immediate family. As a result, Imam Musa saw the Muslim *ummah* as working at only fifty percent of its potential. According to him, Islam afforded women many rights and made them equal partners in society capable of providing support and empowerment in the process of modernization and progress. This view of women went against the majority of religious leaders in Lebanon and the Muslim world.

Imam Musa was a religious reformer. He advocated and stressed the importance of Muslim unity and the unification of Muslim thought. Aware of the historical disagreements and emotional discourse between the Sunnis and the Shi'ah, Imam Musa stressed the many areas of agreement between the two groups and advocated dialogue and understanding rather than confrontation and intolerance. After all, he reminded everyone that the Shi'ah and Sunnis are both Muslims, recognized by the al-Azhar religious leadership. In his opinion, Muslim unity was vital in order to counter the threat

of communism and capitalism that according to him, were the main enemies to Islam and Muslims. Even though such view was welcomed by some Muslim religious leaders in Lebanon and the Muslim world, many did not and advocated a strict adherence to the radical view accusing the Shi`ah of not being Muslims.

Imam Musa's task was a very hard one to say the least. Just by looking at the various issues and controversies he encountered, it is very easy to see that in order for him to deal with such issues and controversies and be able to accomplish anything, he had to be a very savvy and charismatic person. He had to "buy" his way into the hearts and minds of the people he had to deal with. He did not have the money to bribe them to follow him or agree with him. He had to use his personal, religious and political attributes and abilities to accomplish his objectives. His best and only asset was his charisma. It was through his speeches, presentations, articles, and numerous visits around Lebanon and countries in the region that he was able to convey his message and win the support and trust of the people he came in contact with. It is said that he wrote as many as twenty books while he was teaching in Iran. Unfortunately only a few of them were translated into Arabic while he was alive. While in Lebanon, Imam Musa made over 2000 speeches, presentations, and wrote hundreds of articles that were published in Lebanese and Arab newspapers and magazines.

I have obtained two compilations of some of Imam Musa's speeches, presentations and articles. I have also been able to obtain two of Imam Musa's books. In addition, I have been able to obtain a good amount of information from his sister, Rabab, who is now the head of the Sadr Foundation in Lebanon. I have also met and

obtained materials from Sayyid Khalaf, one of Imam Musa's close associates and a former leader of the southern region of the AMAL (Afwaj al-Muqawamah al-Lubnaniyyah) Movement. All these materials are Arabic sources and I have translated and analyzed them in this dissertation. Other sources I have used came from books written in English about the Shi'i community in Lebanon and Imam Musa's life and disappearance.

The purpose of this dissertation is to discuss and analyze the life, accomplishments, and contributions of Imam Musa through his literary output (books, speeches, presentations and articles). These contributions will be analyzed in terms of their impact on the Shi'i community in Lebanon, the Lebanese people regardless of their religious and political affiliations, and the region (the Middle East) as a whole. The dissertation will also discuss Imam Musa's contributions as a social and religious reformer. I will look at Imam Musa's life until his disappearance in 1978. Even though I will discuss his disappearance and some of the theories offered as possible explanations for it, I will not discuss it in much detail and/or offer any theories as to what had happened and why.

Imam Musa's disappearance will be discussed in terms of the fate and future of the Shi'i community in Lebanon, and its relations with Libya. At least three books were written about Imam Musa's disappearance and I would highly recommend to anyone who is interested in the details and theories given for it, to read the books and make up their mind as to what really happened and why. These books offer very detailed information as to the various events that led to Imam Musa's disappearance. The events are covered



on a day-by-day basis, and include information from the Lebanese government, the Libyan government, the Italian and French governments, the INTERPOL and even the American CIA. They also offer various theories as to who could be behind such an act and why there wasn't much of a world reaction to it. The possible perpetrators of this "world conspiracy", according to the authors range from the CIA to the MOSAD and the SAVAK and even the Lebanese intelligence service (al-Maktab al-Thani), the Palestinians and the Libyans, the Christians and the Muslims in the region, and the communists. It seems like everyone in the world had a part in and benefited from Imam Musa's disappearance. Maybe this is why no one has been able to explain it and locate Imam Musa and his two companions.

But perhaps the most important purpose of this dissertation is to introduce Imam Musa to the West. The West and the world in general are not usually informed about the Arab and Muslim world in positive terms. They are usually informed about the "radical" and "fundamental" groups that sprout in the region over the years and the "terrorist acts" they carry out "against" the West. Imam Musa had been an obscure religious leader in the small, politically and economically unimportant, Lebanon. Unfortunately Imam Musa was introduced to the world only after his disappearance in Libya. But even with the books written about his life and disappearance, I am confident that very few westerners have read about him and learned about his contributions. Nowadays, the West and the world are bombarded with negative press about the Middle East, Islam and Muslims in general. It is my hope that this dissertation will show the world that the Middle East and the Muslims have contributed a lot to its civilization and will continue to

do so for many more years to come. Imam Musa was a product of the Middle East and of Islam. This is not to say that Imam Musa was the only Muslim thinker to come out of the Middle East and the Muslim world, to contribute positively to the world. He is one of many who had devoted their lives and continue to work to make this world a better place to live in for all humans, no matter what religion they belong to.

## **Literature Review**

The following is a review of the books that were written about Imam Musa's life and disappearance, and the Shi'i community in Lebanon: its history (ancient and modern). Some of these books were written in English while others were in Arabic.

1. *The Vanished Imam: Musa al-Sadr and the Shi'ah of Lebanon* by Fouad 'Ajami (1986). This is probably the most detailed book written about the life of Imam Musa al-Sadr. Dr. 'Ajami provides a detailed explanation of the background of Imam Musa and the history of the Shi'ah in Lebanon. Dr. 'Ajami utilizes interviews with some of Imam Musa's close relatives and associates to present his character and perception by the people around him. He looked at both the personal, political and religious aspects of Imam Musa's life. He also discussed the history of the Shi'i community in Lebanon focusing on their political and socio-economic situation at the time of Imam Musa's arrival to Lebanon. Dr. 'Ajami discussed in details Imam Musa's unique view of Shi'ism.

In his opinion, Imam Musa reinterepreted Shi'ism and gave it a new understanding. Imam Musa used religious occasions not to cry and lament the history and life the Shi'ah lived and continue to live. He used them as rallying points and a way to remind his followers that the sacrifices made by the ancestors were not for them to just remember and cry about in groups, but rather, they were to move them into action and to change the situation they were living in. According to Imam Musa, Shi'ism is the path of the path of the faithful and the truth, and Islam is a progressive religion that provides

peace, justice and equality for all its followers, men and women. This view went against the traditional understanding of Islam in Muslim countries at that time. Dr. 'Ajami discussed some of the political events during the time leading to the disappearance of Imam Musa. He discussed Imam Musa's relationship with the Syrians, the Palestinians, and the Christians in Lebanon. He also went into some of the events that took place after Imam Musa's disappearance and the Libyan role in such events, but he did not offer any definitive theory as to who was behind the disappearance. Finally, Dr. 'Ajami looked at the legacy Imam Musa left with the Shi'ah in Lebanon in terms of empowering them to fight for their rights as full Lebanese citizens. In the eighties, the Shi'ah would play a major role in the Lebanese civil war and would emerge as a power to reckon with.

2. *The Strange Disappearance of Imam Musa al-Sadr* by Peter Theroux (1987). This book was published about ten years after the disappearance of Imam Musa al-Sadr. It contains a detailed account of the events leading to Imam Musa's disappearance in Libya and the political atmosphere in the region and how it could have played a role in the Imam's disappearance. It also contains a step-by-step account of the last few days before the Imam went to Libya and the last days of Imam Musa's life in Libya and some theories as to who could have done it and why.

The book is divided into thirteen sections. The first three sections summarize the events that led to the disappearance of Imam Musa and his two companions, a brief history of the Shi'ah in the Middle East and Lebanon, and Imam Musa's family background and the events that led to his coming to Lebanon. The first three sections

also discuss briefly the Shi`i community in Lebanon, their political and socio-economic status within the Lebanon population.

Sections three through six are a detailed account of the events leading to Imam Musa's disappearance from the moment he received the invitation to visit Libya to the point when no else heard from him. These sections also discuss the first attempts made by the Shi`i leaders in Lebanon and Iran to ask Libya to account for the whereabouts of the Imam. In section seven, Theroux called Imam's disappearance the strangest event in history. In this section, he discussed in great details the contacts between the Lebanese government, the Italian and French governments, and the INTERPOL. He also discussed the statements made by hotel employees in Italy and Libya as to what they had seen or heard about Imam Musa and his two companions. The Italian and Lebanese governments had come to the conclusion that three imposters had traveled using the falsified passports and paperwork of the Imam and his companions. The imposters had just disappeared into thin air after managing to enter Italian soil.

Sections eight through eleven discussed "Iranian Intrigues" and the possibility of the Iranians being behind the Imam's disappearance. They look at the possibility that the Shah's SAVAK (Intelligence agency) were responsible for Imam Musa's disappearance because of his opposition to the Shah. The relationship between Libya, Iran and Syria is also discussed in terms of their common stand against Israel and the West and how they needed one another's support. They could not push each other on the case of Imam Musa, even though they all condemned what had happened and vowed to help with the investigations.

Sections twelve and thirteen discussed the various possible perpetrators of Imam Musa's disappearance and the reasons each of them had to get rid of him. The Palestinians wanted to get rid of Imam Musa because he became a liability and a threat to their power base in Lebanon and the Syrians wanted to get rid of him because he became very powerful and they wanted Lebanon to continue being dependent on it for security. The Libyans wanted him out of the way because they wanted to fulfill their dreams of settling the Palestinians in South Lebanon in order for them to fight the Israelis. For the Libyans, Imam Musa was a strong voice of opposition and threatened their influence and power base in Lebanon. The Iranians wanted to get him out of the picture because he became very vocal about his opposition to the Shah. The Israelis wanted him eliminated because he was a staunch supporter of the PLO and the Palestinian cause and he always said the "Israel was the ultimate evil."

3. *AMAL and the Shi'ah: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* by Augustus Richard Norton (1987). This book deals mainly with the Shi'i community in Lebanon and the changes it went through throughout its history in Lebanon and during the time of Imam Musa al-Sadr. Norton looked at the sources and the meaning of change within the Shi'i community from 1960 until the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. He looked at the Shi'ah in Lebanon in terms of their political, social and economic status within the Lebanese community and the changes they went through as a result of the political and social mobilization initiated by Imam Musa. These changes included the emergence of a political identity and leadership that recognized the plight of the Shi'i community and

worked with Imam Musa in order to improve its standard of living, political and economic status. But perhaps the most important development was the creation of the AMAL (Afwaj al-Muqawamah al-Lubnaniyyah) movement, which ushered in a new era for the Shi'ah in Lebanon, an era of military power they never had before.

Norton then discussed the sensitive yet very explosive relationship between the Shi'ah and the Palestinians in Lebanon and especially South Lebanon. He looked at the Palestinian actions against Israel and the retaliation against the Lebanese by the Israelis and how they damaged the "Natural Alliance" between the two communities. The Israeli invasions of 1978 and 1982 and the numerous incursions and raids by Israeli fighter planes were shown to have completely destroyed the relationship between the Shi'ah and the Palestinians. The Palestinian military groups were removed from South Lebanon and the AMAL movement filled the military and political vacuum that was created. According to Norton this caused some divisions between the Shi'i leadership since the various groups started fighting for power. AMAL would surface as the largest Shi'i political and military group with the Hizbullah as the second largest and a few smaller splinter groups in Beirut and the Bqqa'.

In one of the chapters, Norton looked at the squandered opportunity the Israelis had while in Lebanon to establish working relationships with the Muslim community and especially the Shi'ah in South Lebanon. The Israelis did not take advantage of the opportunity and allied themselves mainly with the Christians (Maronites), who in turn committed the Sabra and Shattila refugee camps massacres in 1984 during which thousands of Palestinian and Shi'ah civilians were killed. The Shi'ah started a resistance

campaign in South Lebanon which eventually led to the withdrawal of the Israelis from most of Lebanon. The Israelis established a ten-kilometer security zone inside South Lebanon and manned it with Christian militiamen and forced local men to become members of what is known as the South Lebanon Army (SLA).

In the end of his book, Norton provided a translation of the charter of the AMAL movement and an open letter from Hizbullah to all the oppressed and disinherited in Lebanon and the world. The Charter and the open letter basically discussed the ideological beliefs of the two organizations and the path they were to use in their attempt to provide leadership and support to their masses. Both addressed the issue of Zionism and its danger to the Arabs, Muslims and the world in general, but the Hizbullah letter demanded that Israel be wiped out.

4. *A Lebanon Defied: Musa al-Sadr and the Shi'i Community* by Majid Halawi (1992). This book is probably the most recent detailed depiction and presentation of the Shi'i community in Lebanon that I have found and read so far. Halawi provided a very detailed description of the history of the Shi'ah in Lebanon. His discussion of the history of the Shi'ah starts with the era of the Prophet (mpbuh) and the events that led to the establishment of the Shi'i sect in Islam. Then he looked at the history of the Shi'ah in Lebanon. According to Halawi, the Shi'ah existed in Lebanon as early as the era of the Umayyads in Syria. He went into a very detailed explanation of the struggles and tribulations the Shi'ah lived through in Lebanon under the various Muslim dynasties and rulers that ruled the region until the French Mandate in 1920.



Then Halawi discussed the Shi'ah society in Lebanon in terms of their numbers, education, industry, development (or their lack of it) as a result of their deprivation and marginalization within the Lebanese society. He also discussed the mass immigration to Africa and the Arab Gulf countries that resulted. He also discussed the confessional system of politics in Lebanon based on the constitution drafted by and with the support of the French mandatory authority, and how the Shi'i community fared in it. Towards the end of his book, Halawi looked at the events leading to Imam Musa's coming to Lebanon and his work in the political and social mobilization of its Shi'i community. He also looked at the events leading to the tenth of Muharram ('Ashura') and the way Imam Musa used these events and their aftermath as a way to encourage the disinherited and downtrodden to follow in the path of the martyrs in search of truth and justice.

In the conclusion, Halawi looked at the aftermath of the 1978 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the Islamic revolution in Iran. He discussed the aftermath of Imam Musa al-Sadr's disappearance in Libya in 1978 and the political atmosphere in the Middle East at the time. He also discussed the major changes that took place within the Shi'i community in Lebanon, and the 1989 Tai'f Agreement between the various warring and religious communities in Lebanon, which led to the end of the Lebanese civil war and opened a new page in the political and social history of Lebanon and the Lebanese.

5. *Ma` al-I'tizar lil Imam al-Sadr* by Adil Rida (1981). This book was designed to be a compilation of the interviews Adil Rida made with Imam Musa al-Sadr discussing the various Lebanese and Arabic issues. Mr. Rida met Imam Musa in 1976 while the

Imam was on an official visit to discuss the Lebanese civil war and the Israeli aggression with Egyptian leaders. Mr. Rida discussed the fact that he was looking forward to meeting Imam Musa after their initial meeting in 1976 as he (Imam Musa) became a well-known Lebanese political figure and Muslim leader in the region.

The book was divided into two sections. Section one dealt with the interview Adil Rida had with Imam Musa and the second section dealt with the disappearance of Imam Musa and his companions. Mr. Rida's first and only interview with Imam Musa concentrated on the Lebanese war and its consequences on the relationship between Christians and Muslims in the region, South Lebanon as the spark that will lead to the fifth Arab-Israeli war, the plans to divide Lebanon into sectarian entities, Israel's benefits from the Lebanese civil war, and the destruction of Lebanon's unique community as a result of the civil war.

Adil Rida explained that South Lebanon and the dangerous situation there were Imam Musa's main concerns as the Leader of the Shi'ah in Lebanon. He discussed Imam Musa's belief that Israel was interested in the water and land of South Lebanon and that it was ready to annex it. He also discussed the situation under which the Shi'ah in South Lebanon were living and that it reached an intolerable point. Imam Musa informed Rida that the situation in South Lebanon was a result of the lack of determination and unity of the Arabs, and that if anything happens to South Lebanon, the Arabs would be responsible for the suffering and humiliation that would follow. The interview also discussed the fact that Lebanon was a "land of confrontation" with Israel, the Arabs responsibility to support it morally and financially at the least, the history of the Shi'ah in

Lebanon, the relationship with the Christians and Palestinians in Lebanon, and the impending Islamic revolution in Iran, which the Imam predicted would take place within two years.

Adil Rida dedicated the second half of his book to discussing the disappearance of Imam Musa and his companions. This section was divided into the following sub-sections: The reasons behind the Imam's disappearance, the actions and statements made by regional and world leaders to find the Imam, the intelligence reports from the Lebanese and Italian authorities, the aftermath of his disappearance, and new evidence in the conspiracy that led to the Imam's disappearance. Rida looked at the possible reasons for Imam Musa's disappearance by discussing his political, religious and social activities in Lebanon and the region; the Lebanese civil war; the crisis between Syria and the Palestinians; and the Libyan role in the crisis in Lebanon and his relationship with the Imam, the Palestinians and the Syrians; and the revolution in Iran.

He then looked at and analyzed the various intelligence reports from the Lebanese, the Italians and the INTERPOL as they related to the events leading to Imam Musa's disappearance in August 1978. He discussed the developments leading to Imam Musa's disappearance and its aftermath almost on a daily basis from September 6, 1978 until October 15, 1980. At the end of his book, he presented new evidence regarding the Imam's disappearance. Yasser Arafat, leader of the PLO accused Qaddafi of kidnapping and killing Imam Musa after a falling-out between the two leaders in 1979. The accusation was published in the Palestinian magazine, "*Filistine al-Thawra*." A French spy by the name De La Porte, is arrested in Algeria on spying charges and during

his interrogation, he mentioned that he had a role in the disappearance of Imam Musa in Libya while working for Qaddafi's secret service. (Rida, p. 268). Billy Carter, brother of then American president Jimmy Carter and a business partner of Qaddafi, is said to have planned to convince Iran to release the American hostages in return for his help in asking Qaddafi to release Imam Musa and his companions. (Rida, page 270).

In the back of his book, Rida published copies of the reports, letters and articles dealing with Imam Musa's disappearance. He concluded by hoping that Imam Musa would return in good health and that he would finish his interviews and write the book he had planned to publish with the help of the Imam.

6. *Al-Wad' al-Hali fi Jabal Amil* by Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah (1983). This book is a detailed account of the history of Jabal 'Amil and its inhabitants (mostly Shi'ah), the political leadership of the region, the religious leadership, the young population, the peasants, and the immigrants. Mughniyyah also discussed the concept of *Ahl al-Bayt* as it relates to the Shi'ah; Shi'ism in general and the Twelver Shi'ah in specific; and the role of Zainab, sister of Imam Husain in Karbala' during 'Ashura'.

Mughniyyah looked at the situation under which the Shi'ah of Jabal Amil lived, their marginalization and the lack of support from the Lebanese government. He also criticized the Shi'i political leadership and accused them of neglecting their constituency. Then he looked at the phenomenon of immigration by Shi'i young men to Africa and the Arab Gulf states in search of work. He saw it as both draining Shi'i human resources from Lebanon and at the same time, providing the Shi'ah with the financial resources they needed to educate their children build their villages and improve their standard of

living. He also discussed the importance of maintaining the agricultural base of South Lebanon.

Shi'ism and its beliefs were discussed from the point of view of the twelver Shi'ah and how these beliefs encompass every aspect of their daily lives. He finally discussed the events leading to the birth and naming of Zaynab. It is said that the angel Gabriel told the Prophet that God wanted her to be named Zaynab. He also discussed the role of Zaynab, sister of Imam Husain, during 'Ashura' in Karbala', and how she stood up to the Umayyads and kept her brother's memory in the minds of his followers and followed his path in terms of fighting for the return to the basics set by the Prophet (mpbuh) and his companions.

7. *Al-Imam Musa al-Sadr: Mahattat Tarikhiyya-Iran, al-Najaf, Lubnan* by Husain Sharaf al-Din (1996). This book was written by Imam Musa's brother-in-law (Rabab al-Sadr's husband). It looked at the three stages of Imam Musa's life starting with his life and work in Iran, going through his time in al-Najaf, Iraq and the final stage of his life in Lebanon. The Iranian stage is discussed by means of interviews Mr. Sharaf al-Din made with Imam Musa's sisters who live in Iran; his mother, who still resides in Qum, Iran; and a few Iranian religious and academic colleagues who knew the Imam and interacted with him throughout his stay in Iran and kept in touch with him after he went to Iraq and Lebanon. His family remembered him as a caring and loving man who always kept in touch with them. His colleagues remembered him as a very enthusiastic and religious man who would do anything and everything for his friends, country and Islam.

The Iraqi phase is characterized by Imam Musa's studying under the Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, the highest Shi'i religious authority in the Shi'i world at the time. He remembered Imam Musa as playing a major role in the Islamic revolution in Iran and the drive to unite the Muslim voice around the world. This phase also featured Imam Musa's contacts with Ayatollah Imam Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din and Ayatollah Imam Muhammad Husain Fadlallah. Both were classmates of Imam Musa in al-Najaf and remembered him to be a very strong student who was involved in every aspect of his religious studies. Imam Shams al-Din became Imam Musa's successor as head of the Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council in Lebanon after nineteen years of his disappearance. Imam Fadlallah is now the spiritual leader of the Hizbullah militia in Lebanon and a Marja'-i-Taqlid for many Shi'ah in Lebanon and the Muslim world. The Iraqi phase was the shortest in duration.

The Lebanese phase looked at his coming to Lebanon and assuming the leadership of the Shi'i community there; the plan he devised to change the life of the Shi'i community in Lebanon; an overview of some of his accomplishments; his work in bridging the gap between the Sunnis and the Shi'ah; and his disappearance in 1978. In the back of his book, Mr. Sharaf al-Din provided a snapshot of Imam Musa's personal information and a family tree of the rich *hasab* and *nasab* (family background and blood relationships) of the Imam.

8. *Ma' al-Imam al-Sadr: Al-Haqiqa al-Jariha* by Yusef Qubaisi (1993). Mr.

Qubaisi was a friend and associate of Imam Musa. He wrote the book as his contribution

to the legacy of Imam Musa in Lebanon and the Muslim world. It discussed Imam Musa's family background, his education, accomplishments, coming to Lebanon and an overview of some of the writings of Imam Musa. The reasons for the establishment of the Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council and the AMAL Movement are discussed in brief details. Mr. Qubaisi also wrote about where the Shi'ah are found around the world and in what concentrations. Mr. Qubaisi briefly discussed many areas dealing with Imam Musa's accomplishments in Lebanon in the majority of his book.

Mr. Quabisi discussed the events leading to Imam Musa's two visits to Libya and his eventual disappearance in some detail. He also looked at some of the things that were said about Imam Musa by political, religious and social leaders in Lebanon in the aftermath of his disappearance. These individuals included Iranian friends and colleagues, Lebanese Sunnis, Christian and Shi'i political and religious leaders. He concluded his book by providing some information about Imam Musa's successor as the leader of the AMAL Movement (militia), Nabih Barri, who is now the speaker of the Lebanese parliament, and the many projects and accomplishments he provided for the Shi'i community.

9. *Shi'ite Islam* by Yann Richard (Translated by Antonia Nevill, 1995). This book is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter looks at some statistics on Shi'ism looking at where Shi'ah are found around the world but also explains the fact that it is hard to find accurate numbers on any Muslim community in the world, since most of them do not conduct censuses. According to this book, most Shi'i Muslims are found in

Iran, Lebanon, Iraq, India, Afghanistan, Turkey, Syria and the former Soviet Union Republic of Azerbaijan. This chapter also looks briefly at the doctrinal characteristics of the Shi'ah, their practices and their belief in the power of martyrdom and paradise. The second chapter discusses the holy family, the family of the Prophet. This family includes Fatima, daughter of the prophet, 'Ali, son-in-law and cousin of the Prophet, and their offsprings. According to the Shi'ah, they are the rightful successors of the Prophet. This chapter also looks at the crisis that came about after the death of the Prophet and how 'Ali had to wait 25 years before he became caliph of the Muslims. His appointment was opposed by the Umayyads and their supporters who fought him and his sons, Hasan and Husain. Husain's assassination at the hands of the Umayyads at Karbala' became the battle cry of the Shi'ah around the world and brought the Shi'i sect into existence.

Chapter three looked at Sufism and the Shi'ah. According to the information in this book, Sufism started as a Sunni phenomenon, but later became associated with Shi'i Islam because of their mystical beliefs and practices. Mr. Richard points out the fact that there are Sunni and Shi'i Sufi groups that exist in the Muslim world, mainly in Asia and North Africa (the Kizilbash, Order of the Kobraiya and the Ovesi Order are Shi'i orders found in Anatolia and Iran. This chapter also discussed contemporary Shi'i thinkers like Ayatollah Khomeini, Tabataba'i, Mutahari and Sayyed Husain Nasr. It also discussed the two new trends in Shi'ism, the Heideggerian movement which blames the West for reducing the divine to discursive rationality which will lead to nihilism. The second trend is Islamic esotericism. Leaders of these trends are mostly well-educated individuals in both Islamic and "modern" education. The last part of this chapter looked



at the two “new religions”, Babism and Baha’ism. The leaders of both ‘religions’ were Iranians. Both are considered to be counter the strict practies of the Islamic revolution in Iran and promote a more open and universal religion.

Chapter four looked at the fact that Shi`ism is strongly linked to Iran. According to the author, whenever one thinks of the Shi`ah, they automatically think of Iran. But the author reminds us that Shi`ism is not an Iranian version of Islam and that its leaders were all Arabs and lived and died in Arab lands. The “conversion” of Iran to Shi`ism was more a political move than a religious one, mostly related to the Arab-Persian historical conflict. Later in this chapter, the place of the clergy and their role as guides and teachers to the community are discussed. It also discussed the fact that the religious thinkers and leaders, the *ulema*, are in a constant struggle with the secular governments as they try to define their role within the Muslim community. Some Shi`i ‘ulama’ have opted for a more liberal role for the clergy, while the majority of Sunni and Shi`i clergy have stressed the need for strict adherence to the traditional tachings and practices of Islam. Finally, chapter four at the concept of mourning and the Shi`ah. The author sees mourning as the most moving aspect of Iranian Shi`ism. He reminds the reader that Christians and Sunni Muslims revere and celebrate martyrs, but that the Shi`ah take it to an extreme and make it an integral part of their religious pratice and beliefs. Mr. Richard discusses ‘Ashura’ (the commemoration of the ten days of suffering and torture experienced by Imam Husain and his family and followers and the hands of the Umayyads) ceremonies in great detail.

Chapter five looked at the Shi`ah outside Iran. The author looks at the various countries and regions where the Shi`ah are found, their numbers, political power and relations with the Sunnis among whom they live. The author identifies Iraq, Lebanon, the Arabian Peninsula as the main areas the Shi`ah are found outside Iran. He also discussed the fact that even though the Shi`ah make up the majority of the population in Iraq, Lebanon and some gulf countries, they are mainly ruled by Sunni governments. The author then discussed the fact that the Shi`ah in these countries have, since the Islamic revolution in Iran, become more politicized and are demanding a larger role in their countries and their future. He then discussed the Lebanese Shi`i groups, the AMAL movement and the Hizbullah and their rise to power in Lebanon and their influence on the region. He also looks at the Afghani Shi`i minority whose militias played a role during the war against the Soviets and now are involved in the internal war between the various Afghani groups vying for power within Afghanistan. The author pointed out the fact that Iran is a major supporter of and contributor to these groups.

Chapter six discussed women, Shi`ism and the concept of pleasure. Unlike Sunni Muslims, the Shi`ah believe in the concept of marriage for pleasure (*zawaj al-mut`ah*) which is also known as temporary marriage. This marriage has its criteria and is allowed only under special circumstances. The author informs us that such practice is mainly done in Iran, but that it is accepted by Shi`ah all over the world. He then recounted some stories of how such a practice came into existence and how Sunnis and Shi`ah came to disagree over its religious legality and authenticity. He then compared the beliefs between the sexes according to Christians and Muslims. Christians have the doctrine of

the indissoluble marriage, while Muslims range from single marriages, to multiple marriages, to temporary marriages.

The last chapter looked at the explanations of the Iranian revolution. The author offered two “simplistic explanations. According to him, the Iranian revolution was a result of the classic political mobilization hijacked by a better-prepared social category (the clergy); or according to the elitist view, it is a result of the clergy and their agents’ “awakening the consciousness” of the masses, since they were more educated and aware of the dangers facing their country. Then the author discussed the first Iranian government to rule after the revolution and the failure it met as its leader’s ideology ran counter to that of the clerics who were in control of the masses and the governmental bodies in the country. Finally, the author looked at the relation between the Sunnis and the Shi`ah after the Islamic revolution in Iran. He informs the reader that ‘twelver Shi`ah’, who are the majority of the Shi`ah in the world are more willing than their minority counterparts to open a dialogue with the Sunnis in an attempt to forge a closer relationship and better understanding between them. He also told us that some Sunnis, such as Hanafis and Shafi’is, are more willing to open a dialogue with the Shi`ah than are the Hanbalis and Wahabis.

10. *Shi`ah Islam: From Religion to Revolution* by Heinz Halm (translated from German by Allison Brown), 1997. This book is divided into three sections. The first section is a detailed description of the history of the Shi`ah from the era `Ali ibn Abi Talib, the last of the “Right Guided Caliphs”, their Imams, traditions, the occultation of

the twelfth imam, and the concept of the Mahdi. Section two gives a detailed description of the 'Ashura' ritual. The author discussed its origins and gives some European reports about the ritual from the times of the Safavid Dynasty in Iran (1501-1722). Then the author looks at the ten days of 'Ashura' and discussed in details what occurred on each day, from the massing of the opposing armies, to the daily massacring of the family and followers of Imam Husain, climaxing with the torture and beheading of Imam Husain. He informed the reader that in countries such as Iran, Iraq and Lebanon, the commemoration of the 'Ashura' became a social event and in many cases it is organized, funded and coordinated by municipal associations. The events of 'Ashura' are enacted in emotional public plays complete with tents, traditional dress, swords and bows and arrows.

Perhaps one of the unique aspects of the 'Ashura' ritual is the chest beating and flagellation performed by the participants, both in the play and the audience. The author informs the reader about some accounts of chest beatings dating back to European ambassadors to the Ottoman Empire. The author pointed out the fact that Christians perform similar acts as they commemorate the suffering and crucifixion of Christ. In many occasions, men lose consciousness and are taken to hospitals for treatment as a result of excessive loss of blood due to the beatings and flagellations. Some clerics in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon do not fully agree with the ritual of chest beatings and flagellation, but it is still widely practiced in countries where the Shi'ah are numerous enough and capable of publicly commemorating 'Ashura'.

Section three looks at the representatives of the Hidden Imam, the Mullahs, the Imam's money (*khums*= fifth), which is a percentage of income the Shi'ah has to pay to support the religious institution. This section also looks at the foundation of Shi'i Law, the "Four Books." These books are the basis of twelver Shi'i Law and they are: *The Kafi*, *If One Has no Expert at Hand (Man la Yahduruhu al-Fiqh)*, *Considerations of the Disputed Traditions*, and *Appeal of Decisions*. Then the author goes into the basis used by the Shi'ah to justify the authority of the Mullahs, the concept of *Marja' al-Taqlid* and who are the main sources of emulation among the Shi'ah. He finally looks at the struggle against Westernization (which is not just a problem that the Shi'ah deal with and attack), the Islamic revolution in Iran and the role of the leader of the revolution in guiding his people towards the right path and fighting evil.

11. *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* by Leila Ahmad, 1992. This book is divided into three parts. Part one looks at the pre-islamic Middle East and divides the region into Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean Middle East. Part two looks at the situation of women during the rise of Islam, the transitional age between pre- and post-Islam and the discourses as they relate to women in Muslim society. Part two finally looks at medieval Islam. Leila Ahmad focused her research on Egypt, Turkey and Syria during the Ottoman era (mainly fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries).

Finally, part three focuses on the new discourses: social and intellectual changes within Muslim societies, the veil, and feminism. The last section in part three looks at the many voices that are dealing with such discourses and the results of the work done by

the activists and reformers in these areas. It also looks at the struggle for the future of the role of women in Muslim societies in a world that is changing dramatically around them. According to Leila Ahmad some Muslim societies have become aware of the changing world around them and have given women the opportunity to play a more active role. She points out to the women in Egypt, Turkey, Morocco, Lebanon, as examples of how things are changing for women in the Middle East in general and the Muslim world in specific. But according to Ms. Ahmad much is still needed to educate the governments and societies in the region to accept the fact that women are and can be a major force for progress and development of society. In her opinion, women will need to play a vital role in the daily life of Middle Eastern and Muslim societies if they are to move forward and progress.

This study is divided into the following chapters:

The first chapter will be about the Shi'i community he inherited in Lebanon. It will include information about its history in Lebanon, which goes back to the times of the Umayyads. It will also present information on its numbers, areas of concentration and its political, economic and social status within the Lebanese population. This is important because it will draw a wider picture of the very complex and challenging situation the Imam inherited when he accepted the position of leader of the Shi'i community. The second chapter will be about the life of Imam Musa. It will include materials and information about his family background, upbringing, and education. This is important because his family background as it pertains to his Lebanese ancestry, made it possible for him to become the leader of the Shi'i community in Lebanon. His upbringing and education made it possible for him to become a prolific writer, a public personality, and a religious reformer.

The second chapter will also discuss the accomplishments of the Imam during his nineteen-year tenure in Lebanon. Imam Musa inherited a very illiterate community. In order to remedy this problem he encouraged his followers to become educated. He built many schools to provide free education, primary and secondary, for the thousands of Shi'i young men and women, who otherwise would have remained illiterate and never improved their lot in life. Even though the Shi'ah were the largest single community in Lebanon, they did not enjoy much political clout.

The political system in Lebanon had been based on a formula dictated by the colonial power, France, which ruled the area in the twentieth century. It became known

as the “National Pact” and was signed in 1943 by leaders of all the religious groups in Lebanon. It divided the power base of the government among the various religious communities. The Maronites, who according to the census conducted at the time were the majority, were given the presidency and the leadership of the armed forces. The Sunnis, who at that time accounted for the second largest community in Lebanon, were given the prime minister’s seat and the Shi`ah were given the speaker of the house seat because they made up the third largest religious community.

In addition to this, those who were selected to represent the Shi`i community were feudal lords who were not in touch with their community’s needs and aspirations. Imam Musa had to work with the political system in Lebanon to fight for the rights of the Shi`i community. He was able to secure the blessing from the government to establish the first ever Shi`i Council, which represented the Shi`i community and advocated its needs and rights.

Fearing the deteriorating situation in southern Lebanon, where about a million Shi`ah live, and realizing that the central government wasn’t doing much to safeguard the population in the south, Imam Musa embarked on establishing a militia whose main function was to protect the border and fight against Israeli attacks. The Harakat al-Mahrumin (Movement of the Disinherited) was born on March 17, 1974. Imam Musa realized that the government was incapable of or willing to provide security for the southerners, and thought that the only way to provide protection for his people was to train them to fight for themselves. This movement will eventually play a very important role in the life of the Shi`ah community in Lebanon and the overall future of the country.



In addition to worrying about what Israel would do next, he had to walk a very tight rope when dealing with the PLO, the Palestinian Liberation Organization. Even though he was very supportive of the overall Palestinian right to struggle against the Israelis, he was concerned about the means they used to accomplish their goals.

Imam Musa was always aware of the delicate religious situation in Lebanon. He had to deal with the Sunnis and Druze on one side and the Maronites and other Christian denominations on the other. He also recognized the fact that each community was fighting for its share of political power, its economic status, and areas of control. The Imam worked hard on narrowing the gap between the various religious communities. He urged both Muslims and Christians, regardless of their sect and affiliation, to unite and not allow the outside world to destroy the delicate balance they had maintained over the years. He warned all of them that if they do not unite and work with each other, the alternative would be very bloody and would destroy Lebanon as they knew it. "There is no nation without nationality" and "Lebanon is threatened by destruction, and only the unity of its children will save it." These are just two of the many statements the Imam made on this subject in his speeches and writings.

The second chapter will also look at Imam Musa's personal characteristics and the views of some of the people from the various religious groups in Lebanon who dealt with him. It will discuss his political thought as it pertains to the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, his relationship with the Lebanese government and his relationship with the many Christian and Muslim political parties and militias in Lebanon. It will also look at his relationship with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the

Palestinian refugees who numbered about half a million when Imam Musa arrived to Lebanon in 1959.

The third chapter will analyze the literary output of Imam Musa al-Sadr. Imam Musa wrote a total of twenty books, made over ninety speeches, and wrote over fifty letters and manifestos, during his short life. The topics of the books he wrote range from discussion of all areas of agreement the various Muslim sects have, to Islam and modernism, to the role of the woman in Muslim society. Some of the books have been translated into Arabic, but the majority of them are still in Persian manuscript form. The new Iranian President, Dr. Khatami, has undertaken the task of translating all of Imam Musa's books into Arabic in order to mass produce them and distribute them throughout the Muslim world. All his speeches, presentations, and manifestos have been published, but no one has analyzed them yet.

The fourth chapter deals with the legacy of Imam Musa and the future of the Shi'i community in Lebanon. It will also look at what has happened with the Shi'ah of Lebanon since his disappearance. Imam Musa made the Shi'ah aware of their importance to Lebanon and to the existence of Lebanon as a sovereign country. He made them aware of their strength politically, socially, and economically. He stressed the importance of education and the importance of maintaining faith and using it as a tool for advancement and modernization. But perhaps the most important legacy of the Imam is the fact that he made them aware of their ability to fight for their rights and not allow anyone to gamble their rights away for political power and financial gain. The situation of the Shi'i community in Lebanon now has turned around 180 degrees from what it was ten to

fifteen years ago. The Shi`ah in Lebanon have achieved political strength never seen before the civil war. They have also advanced economically, socially, and academically. The community that was at the bottom of the ladder and never respected is now on its way to the top and is playing a major role in rebuilding Lebanon.

**Imam Musa al-Sadr: Analysis of his life, political thought, literary output and accomplishments**

My research will focus on the changes Imam Musa al-Sadr affected on the Lebanese community, especially the Shi`i community of Lebanon, through his social, political and religious work.

Imam Musa al-Sadr lived in Lebanon for only nineteen years, but the accomplishments and changes that resulted from his hard work have changed Lebanon forever. He came to Lebanon in 1959 as a religious leader to replace the head of the Shi`ah community in Lebanon after the latter's passing. When he arrived in Lebanon, he was regarded as a stranger from Iran, even though his family roots were well established in the area of Jabal `Amil, in South Lebanon. Part of his family had migrated to Iran, where he was born, raised, and educated, but the majority of his family lived in South Lebanon.

He had a daunting task. He had to lead and empower a community that was very poor, disenfranchised, and illiterate, on the one hand, and had to establish some legitimacy in a country and region which was not very tolerant of the Shi`ah sect, on the other hand. Even though the Shi`ah make-up forty percent of the population in Lebanon, they were the least educated, least represented in state and local governments, and the poorest. As a result, they did not have as much of a voice as a community, as did other communities, such as the Maronites and the Sunnis. A handful of Shi`ah families owned most of the land in South Lebanon and were wealthy and influential in the Lebanese government. Instead of using their wealth and political muscle to help improve the lot of

their constituents, they used them to benefit themselves and gain even more wealth and power.

Imam Musa al-Sadr was a religious man who preached tolerance and acceptance of the way others lived and praised God. He worked to bridge the gap between the Muslims in Lebanon (Sunnis and Shi'is). He also worked to bridge the gap between the Muslims and the Christians in Lebanon. He often said: "Muslims and Christians can't live separately in Lebanon. Their success is one, and their failure is one." He attended many sermons in churches and made presentations in many others. He visited the pope in the Vatican in an attempt to ease the fear of the Vatican about what would happen to the Christian minority in Lebanon if the Shi'ah became more powerful. He also knew that the Vatican wielded much influence with the Maronites, the largest single Christian community in Lebanon.

Imam Musa al-Sadr was also a man who believed in equal representation and opportunity for all Lebanese, regardless of color, religion, or race. He pleaded with the Lebanese government to improve the living standards of the Shi'ah in Lebanon, to protect the Southern borders from Israeli aggression, and to become a real representative of all the Lebanese. The government did none of the above. It was up to Imam Musa al-Sadr to rally the people around him, collect the monies of wealthy Shi'ah around the world, especially Africa, and empower the common man.

Imam Musa al-Sadr lived through the first two years of the Lebanese civil war. He warned all parties that if a war would erupt in Lebanon, it would be both devastating and costly to all involved and that the only winner from such a conflict would be Israel.

He had a good relationship with all parties and used his influence to help stop the bloodshed, but to no avail. In 1975 he was invited to visit Libya and has never been seen or heard from since.

Imam al-Sadr was anti-communism and anti-capitalism. This did not mean that he didn't want to deal with either system. He saw that there were many benefits for the Muslim community in keeping ties with the super powers, but he saw these ties as based on mutual respect and understanding. He saw Islam and Middle Eastern culture as being capable of adapting modern views and concepts without having to lose its value and beliefs. He did not want to fight the outside world, but rather strengthen the inside. Whether it was the Lebanese or the Muslim community as a whole, he saw that a strong, united community on the inside was capable of fighting whatever came at it from the outside.

He fought for more participation of women in the daily economic and industrial life of the Middle East and Muslim community. In Lebanon, he established many schools and training facilities for girls and women. He encouraged them to get educated and to support in the process of uplifting the community as a whole. In fact, his sister, Rabab, was and is still a very strong leader in the Shi'i Muslim community in Lebanon. She has basically taken over the administration of the many social and educational services established by her brother. He saw women as fifty percent of the work force in the Muslim world and that they could play a vital role in its advancement. This did not mean that the Muslim woman was to act like her Western counterpart. The Muslim

woman in his view was an integral part of the Muslim community that lived and progressed as one unit.

His untimely and mysterious disappearance in 1978 cut short the historical metamorphosis that was taking place in Lebanon and the Middle East as a whole. His legacy is preserved in the form of twenty books he authored, over a hundred sermons and speeches, and numerous trips he took to Middle Eastern and other countries around the world.

One can only imagine what would have happened in Lebanon and the Middle East had he not been kidnapped and then mysteriously vanish. What could have happened in Lebanon? What could have happened in the Muslim-Christian relationship in the Middle East? What could have happened in the Muslim World as a whole?

## THE SHI'AH COMMUNITY IN LEBANON

### History of the Shi'ah in Lebanon

“The Lebanese Shi'ah are as old as Lebanon itself. They have participated with the other communities in cultivating its plains and mountains, developing its land, and protecting its frontiers. The Shi'ah have survived in Lebanon in prosperity and adversity. They have soaked its soil with the blood of their children, and have raised its banners of glory in the sky, for they have led most of its revolts.”  
(Halawi, p. 19.) -Imam Musa al-Sadr

“The Shi'ite is a mutineer by his very nature,” wrote a commentator in the Arab magazine, *Al-Tadamun* (Solidarity) in 1984, in an attempt to explain to its vast Sunni readership the dissatisfaction of the demoralized, oppressed Shi'ah.

“He is an uncaptalist antagonist. Opposition lurks in the essence of his faith and his thoughts. Perceiving himself as wronged by history, he is always ready to erupt or explode. His rights have been usurped; he may only choose between evolution and mutiny. It is said that the difference between a Shi'ite and a Sunni is that the Sunni is born with his eyes on the throne, while the Shi'ite is born with the Karbala complex gleaming in his eyes. He waits impatiently for Ashura every year. The history of the Shia through the ages, is a history of constant revolutions, most of them crushed. Yet every generation of Shi'ites gathers its revolutionary strength and awaits another revolution.” (Thoreaux, p. 12.)

Imam Musa learned in detail about the history of the Shi'ah in Lebanon. This was important for him if he wanted to show the Lebanese and their government that the Shi'ah deserved much more than they had been given since independence. It was also important for him to learn about the community he was going to lead. They were in Lebanon before it became a country. His research showed that they had endured a lot under many foreign powers, but continued to fight for their rights.



Lebanese Shi'i history sources claim that Jabal `Amil, the area in Lebanon where most of the Shia live, was named after “`Amila... a tribe from Yemen....which migrated to al-Sham (geographical Syria) and settled near Damascus, on a mountain. This is how the mountain became known as Jabal `Amil (Mountain of `Amil).” (Halawi, p. 51.) The Shi`ah lived in relative peace through the rule of the Umayyads, the Abbasids, and the Fatimids. This was made possible by the fact that they practiced *taqiyyah*, the process of denying one's religious sect to avoid religious persecution. When the Mamluks came into power, they raided Lebanon on many occasions in order to fight the Crusaders. After the Crusaders were chased out of Lebanon, the Mamluks turned their attention to the Shi`ah. They sent military expeditions into the Shi`ah populated area of Kisrawan, in Mount Lebanon. In 1305 the Mamluks sent a major military expedition into Kisrawan and were successful in defeating the Shi`ah, and killing-off most of them. The survivors took refuge in various parts of Lebanon, mainly Jabal `Amil and the Biqa` Valley. (Halawi, p. 53.)

“(The Armies)...ascended Mount Kisrwan from its most difficult trails. The soldiers converged on them (The Kisrwanis), surrounded their mountains, and set foot in land its inhabitants thought no one could trample. Their vineyards were plundered, and many of them were killed and were scattered throughout the country....Asandamur, (the Mamluk ruler of Tripoli, employed some of them...(However, the majority) retreated into the hinterlands, their influence vanished, and they regressed into oblivion.” (Halawi, p. 54.)

The Ottomans would bring an end to the Mamluks' reign, but they would not bring an end to Shi`ah persecution. This was due to the fact that the Ottomans were a hundred percent Sunni, and because of their feud with the Shi'i Safavids of Persia. The Ottomans divided their subjects into Muslim, Christian, and Jewish millets, with the

Shi`ah being assigned to the Muslim millet, but were not acknowledged as a different *madhab* (sect). They were not allowed to perform any Shi`i ceremonies or rites. In 1777 Jamal Basha al-Jazzar (the butcher), was appointed governor of the al-Sham region (Syria and Lebanon). He was anti-Shi`ah and slaughtered thousands of them in Jabal `Amil. Comte Volney, a Frenchman who traveled in the area during the reign of Jamal Basha said: "Since 1777, Djezzar, master of Acre and Saida (Sidon), has incessantly laboured to destroy them...It is probable they will be totally annihilated, and even their name become extinct." The actions of al-Jazzar were so horrific that fifty years after the Ottomans were kicked out of Lebanon, local villagers still spoke of his atrocities. (Thoreaux, p. 25.)

Sayyid Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah, a native historian, wrote about the time and life of the Shi`ah before al-Jazzar came to Lebanon. His writings show a land full of promise and a people living in relative peace and prosperity. The following summarizes his view of how the Shi`ah of Jabal `Amil lived right before al-Jazzar became ruler over the area of today Lebanon and Syria. (‘Ajami, p. 19.)

"The people of Jabal `Amil lived in dignity and prosperity even during times of war and catastrophies. No taxes overwhelmed them; no rulers oppressed them and plundered their wealth...After storms blew over they devoted themselves to their agricultural work, exploiting their land the way they wanted, without taxes, without fees, and without monopoly. Their own rulers were merciful toward them. If a Shia traveled to some other place beyond his land, he traveled proud of his heritage, with none daring to challenge or belittle him. Peace reigned among the zu`ama (the leaders) and they were united. Each za`im (leader) was free in his own territory, governing it, protecting its borders, preserving it. No authority was higher than that of the za`im, and no guardian, except the authority of the ulama." (Mughniyyah, p. 36.)

Shi'i '*ulama*', historians and storytellers were prolific in writing books in order to keep the history and culture of the Shi'ah in Lebanon always updated and well known by everyone who lived in the region. When al-Jazzar ruled over Lebanon he ordered his soldiers to collect all the books that were written by and about the Shi'ah and burn them. He also ordered all the libraries and religious institutions in Shi'i areas demolished. After these devastating events the Shi'ah of Jabal 'Amil were basically cut off from the rest of the world, and did not produce much in terms of literary or religious books.

In addition to destroying the literary and religious output of the Shi'ah of Jabal 'Amil, al-Jazzar turned his attention to their land and wealth. He raised taxes to such an extent that Shi'i farmers could not be independent or prosperous. He also confiscated some of their land and awarded it to some of his loyal generals and soldiers. As the overall result of such actions by al-Jazzar the Shi'ah became marginalized within the Ottoman Empire. It is said that in one of the Ottoman chronicles from the time of al-Jazzar, the reason given for the ruthlessness of the way the Shi'ah were treated was "revenge for the lives of the first two caliphs, Abu Bakr and Omar." Apparently al-Jazzar was brainwashing his soldiers in order to inspire them to do their "duty" to their religion, Islam. But looking at the history of the four right-guided caliphs, one can easily realize that such justification was not historically supported. This situation would continue until the defeat of the Ottomans at the hands of the Allies. (Halawi, p. 24.)

David Urquhart, a British traveler, wrote the following about the defeated and oppressed Shi'i community:

“Whence it came, how it came, what its race, what its character, and whence its name have been matters... of much doubt and mystery. To all inquiries respecting them, even on their immediate border, the only answers to be obtained were fables revealing utter ignorance mixed with fear and hatred... In their character, which combines dignity of manners, and pride of descent and ferocity with lawlessness of disposition... survived through a succession of many generations of struggle, misery, and persecution. In religion, they are Shi`ah, in race Arabs. Their position in the Lebanon was neither that of princes called on to govern, nor... that of a tribe which has displaced the original population and occupied the soil.” (‘Ajami, p. 56.)

The defeat of the Ottomans at the hands of the Allies in WWI brought the French Mandate to the region of Lebanon and Syria. The French courted the Maronites and claimed to be protecting the Christians in Lebanon and the Middle East from the Muslim majority in the region. The French Mandatory Authority tried to mold the Lebanese according to French traditions and culture. The Shi`i community revolted against the policies of the French in Lebanon and joined their compatriots in the struggle for independence. The French authority organized a council of deputies from the various religious communities in Lebanon in order to work with them directly.

The Shi`ah were given five seats on the 25-seat council. Twelve seats went to the Maronites, the allies of the French. The five Shi`i deputies took advantage of their newly found power in order to demand some rights for their community. They demanded that the Shi`ah be classified as a separate religious community, with its own rights and privileges. In 1926 the French governor of Lebanon decreed the following:

“The Shi`i Muslims in greater Lebanon form an independent religious community; they are to be judged in matters of personal status according to the principles of rite known as the ‘Ja`fari rite’ (art.1), by their qadi (art. 2), and on appeal by a special Chamber of the Court of Cassation, composed of the President and two assessors chosen from among the Shi`i jurists” (art.3). (Halawi, p. 67.)

This decree would give the Shi'i community legitimacy for the first time in their history in Lebanon, but unfortunately, it did not help the Shi'i masses move from under the huge weight of poverty and desperation. The Shi'i elite benefited the most from the political system. Instead of using their political clout to effect change in the Shi'i community they represented, they spent most of their time fighting among themselves in search of personal political and financial gains. As a result, the Shi'i cities, town, and villages became even more desperate and neglected than before the Shi'ah were given political power.

In 1943 the French "gave" Lebanon its independence. In addition, they gave it a constitution by which it was supposed to rule itself and deal with its religious communities. The National Pact, as the Lebanese Constitution became known, divided political offices and governmental ministries along sectarian lines. The Maronites received the lion's share as they were given the presidency, the army command, and most of the managerial positions in governmental and public service offices. The Sunnis were given the premiership, and some high positions in governmental and public service offices. The Shi'ah who at the time were third in total numbers, received the post of Speaker of the House of Representatives. This formula has been followed ever since. The first Lebanese Parliament was made up of representatives who were members of the rich and famous in Lebanon. The Shi'i representatives were the *zu'ama'* (local landlords) of the various families that ruled the South and owned most of its arable land. Yusef Beidas, a Lebanese historian expressed it best when he said: "Lebanon has

approximately one hundred families that consider themselves the proprietors of this small country.” (Halawi, p. 82.)

### **SHI’I NUMBERS, AREAS OF CONCENTRATION, AND MAJOR INDUSTRY**

Even though the Shi`ah in Lebanon, according to estimates and sources of population numbers, were not the majority, they were a major community throughout the history of the country. Nowadays the Shi`ah number about one and a half million, the largest single community in Lebanon, and they make up about one third of the total population of Lebanon. (Halawi, p. 50.)

The following table shows how the number of the Shi`ah increased over the years. It also shows the population shifts as it pertains to the Christian-Muslim communities. This is important as it became a major point of contention in the past fifteen years. In fact many Lebanese, mainly Muslims, are now demanding that the constitution of Lebanon be amended, and even re-written, in order to account for these changes in populations. This is because the constitution of Lebanon, which was drafted under the guidance of the French Mandatory Authority in 1943, divided the political power in Lebanon according to religious and population numbers of that time. There has been no official census since the Lebanese civil war erupted in 1975, but it is safe to say that numbers of the Shia`h in Lebanon have kept rising and now account for at least a third of the population.

Table 2.1 *Lebanon: Major population groups in 1932 and estimates for 1956, 1975, and 1988 by religion*

| <i>Religious Group</i> | <i>1932</i>    | <i>1956</i>      | <i>1975</i>      | <i>1988</i>      |
|------------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>Muslim</b>          | 383,180        | 624,434          | 1,530,000        | 2,405,204        |
| Druze                  | 53,047         | 88,131           | 178,500          | 218,204          |
| Shi'ah                 | 154,208        | 250,605          | 688,500          | 1,325,499        |
| Sunni                  | 175,925        | 285,698          | 663,500          | 861,046          |
| <b>Christian</b>       | <b>392,544</b> | <b>769,558</b>   | <b>1,020,000</b> | <b>1,639,580</b> |
| Greek Catholic         | 45,999         | 87,788           | 127,500          | 165,612          |
| Maronite               | 226,378        | 423,708          | 586,500          | 999,672          |
| Armenian Orthodox      | 25,462         | 63,679           | N/A              | 163,190          |
| Greek Orthodox         | 76,522         | 148,927          | 178,500          | 271,984          |
| <b>POPULATION</b>      | <b>785,543</b> | <b>1,407,868</b> | <b>2,550,000</b> | <b>4,044,784</b> |

*SOURCES:* 1932: Yousef Courbage and Philippe Fargues, *La Situation Demographique au Liban*. 2 vols. (Beyrouth: Publications de l'Universite' Libanaise, 1973 & 1974), 2: 21.

1956: *Estimates by al-Nahar* (26 April 1956).

1975: Fisches du Monde Arabes, *Lebanon—Economy: Population data*, IL-17 (24 September 1980).

1988: Estimates based on figures by David McDowall, *Lebanon: A Conflict of Minorities*, Minorities Rights Group 61 (London: MRG, 1983), 9, and rates of natural increases for the various religious groups provided by Jaseph Chamie in *Religion and Fertility* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 85. The rates are as follows: Druze 1.8%; Non-Catholic Chritians 1.7%; Catholic Christians 2%; Shia'ah 3.8%; and Sunnis 2.8%.

The Shi'ah live mainly in the southern suburbs of Beirut, the capital, in the Bika' Valley in the Eastern Lebanon, and in the south, in Jabal `Amil. It is necessary to mention that these regions of Lebanon were the least developed and the most populated. After reading about the conditions under which the Shi'i community lived and survived

in, the word deprivation comes to mind. Deprivation in a society is defined as the relation between objective conditions of human existence and the subjective understanding of such conditions. This is of course a relation that does not always hold firm, as societies change over the years. Poverty was defined poverty as “lack of freedom and choice.” (Norton, p. 26.)

The Shi`ah in Lebanon were mainly uneducated and worked in agriculture. The Shi`ah of the southern suburbs of Beirut were the laborers, custodians, and taxi drivers. The Shi`ah of the Bika` Valley were mostly involved in the harvesting of hashish. They were working in farms owned by large landowners, and the harvest was sold by the government to pharmaceutical companies in Europe. The Shi`i workers did not benefit much from the enormous profits the crops brought to the government and the landowners. In South Lebanon (Jabal `Amil), over ninety percent of the population worked in agriculture. Many worked on their lots, but the majority of them were day laborers on huge farms owned by large feudal families. (Halawi, p. 74.)



## Chapter 2

### THE LIFE OF IMAM MUSA AL-SADR

#### The Geneology of Imam Musa

Imam Musa al-Sadr was born in the holy city of Qum, Iran, in 1928. He is the son of Ayat Allah Sadr al-Din Sadr and Safiyah bint Husain al-Qummi. The family originated in Southern Lebanon, from the village of Shhour, located next to the city of Sur (Tyre). The Sadr family was a family of *sayyids*, tracing their ancestry back to the Prophet Muhammad (mpbuh) through Imam Husain, the famous Shi'i martyr of the eighth century. (Ajami, p. 34.)

The Sadr family had a hard life, full of struggle and militancy. Habat al-Din, son of Sharaf al-Din, an ancestor of the Sadr's, was assassinated at the age of 21 in 1776, by the soldiers of the Ottoman commander of the region, Ahmad Basha al-Jazzar. Habat al-Din was assassinated in front of his father as an attempt to teach his father a lesson. His father Sharaf al-Din was arrested and jailed for nineteen months in Acre before he fled to Najaf, Iraq. In Iraq he settled with his brother Muhammad. He married a second time and was blessed with two sons, Sadr al-Din and Muhammad 'Ali. Sadr al-Din would eventually move to Isfahan and marry the daughter of the great Shaikh Kashif al-Ghita', a religious scholar who devoted all his life to reconciling the Sunni and Shi'i views of Muslim theology and history. Sadr al-Din's third marriage produced five sons. Two of the sons took the surname Sadr, which is a title that belonged to the Shah's chief advisor on religious affairs. (Thoreaux, p.12.)

Hasan, one of the sons of Sadr al-Din, married an Iraqi, and his son Muhammad became the family's first leader. Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Sadr, was called the "Rasputin of Iraq" due to his challenge to the British in the region, preaching jihad against them. Gertrude Bell, the remarkable traveler and Arabist who served as Oriental Secretary to the High Commissioner in Iraq arranged to visit Sayyid Muhammad. She was the first foreign woman to visit the Shi'i stronghold in Iraq, and refused to be veiled for the occasion. This is an excerpt from her diary about the visit:

"Sayyid Hasan's son, Sayyid Muhammad stood on the balcony to welcome us, black robed, black bearded, and on his head the huge dark blue turban of the mujtahid class. We talked about the Sadr family in all its branches around the Muslim world. Then we talked about the books and collection of books produced by the family and found in Cairo, London, Paris, and Rome. I said I wanted to talk to him about Syria and I told him all I knew down to the latest telegram, which was that Faisal was going to be crowned. "Over the whole of Syria down to the sea?" he asked, with sudden interest. "No," I answered, "the French stay in Beyrout." "Then it is no good," he replied, and we discoursed the matter in all its bearings. Then we talked of Bolchevism. He agreed that it was the child of poverty and hunger, "but," he added, "all the world's poor and hungry since this war." I said that as far as I made out the Bolchevist idea was to sweep away all that ever had been and build afresh. I feared they did not know the art of building. He approved that." (Ajami, p. 32.)

His opposition to the British led to a short exile in Iran in 1922. A Western diplomat described Sayyid Muhammad as "the most active of the Baghdad Shi'i nationalists." In 1948 after a mass uprising among the mainly Shi'i poor, the Regent of Iraq, Abd al-Ilah, asked him to form a new government. While he was the premier of Iraq, his uncle Isma'il, came to Iraq and became the President of the Shi'i General Authority. The sons of Isma'il, Muhammad and Sadr al-Din, went on to establish religious seminaries and found small religious movements while in their twenties. Sadr

al-Din would eventually move to Khurassan, Iran, where he would marry the daughter of the Khurassani Alim, Shaikh Husain al-Qummi. (‘Ajami, p. 33.)

Sadr al-Din moved to Qum at the invitation of Abd al-Karim Yazdi. He established a number of religious and social welfare organizations with Shaikh Yazdi and the Grand Ayat Allah al-Sayyid Husain Borujurdi, who was then the highest religious authority in the Shi‘i Muslim world, *marja`-i- taqlid* or “source of emulation”. He had five children, two daughters and three sons – Isma‘il, Musa, and Rida. They were all born in Qum and studied religion. Reza became an *Ayat Allah*, and Ismail a *hujjat al-Islam*. (‘Ajami, p. 36.)

It is very important for us to look at the family and background of Imam Musa al-Sadr to gain a better understanding of the atmosphere in which he grew up and the personality he developed as a result. It also gives an indication of the path he followed and the kind of education he pursued. In Lebanon, and even in the whole Middle East region, *hasab* and *nasab* (family and ancestry) are more important than birthplace. The value of a man is measured by his reputation and the reputation of his ancestors. Knowing one’s *hasab* and *nasab* was important in “estimating his worth.” His *hasab* and *nasab* enabled others to judge what a man was made of and what he could be in the future. There is a presumption in Middle Eastern societies that a member of a distinguished family had to live up to the tradition and reputation of his ancestors.

As one historian put it, “A man whose ancestors had great talent and high estate would fear the loss of the collective ‘force’ that his ancestors had bequeathed to him.” Imam Musa’s lineage, both paternal and maternal, was of high esteem and reverence.

This explained how Imam Musa became well known to many religious scholars in Iran and Iraq. It also explained the process by which he ended up in Lebanon at the end of 1959, to lead its Shi'i community. Imam Musa had to live up to the reputation of a line of ancestors that was well known and respected throughout the Muslim world.

(Thoreaux, p. 14.)

### His Education and Early Works

Musa on the other hand decided not to pursue a religious career after he completed his diploma in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), at Qum. He was the first "black-turban" to receive a degree in Law and Political Science at the University of Tehran's School of Law and Political Economy. Shi'ah religious leaders wear a black turban, while Sunni *shaikhs* wear white turbans. The black color of the turban is attributed to the suffering of the Shi'ah. While in Tehran he also learned French and English and developed a liking for Western-style clothes and music. In 1954 after the death of his father, Imam Musa moved to Najaf under the guidance and encouragement of Ayatollahs Borujurdi and Khomaini. In Najaf Imam Musa studied under the two greatest Shi'i theologians of the time, Ayat Allahs Muhsin Hakim and Abd al-Qasim Khou'i (who succeeded Borujerdi as *marja`-i-taqlid*). (Thoreaux, p.13.)

Imam Musa returned to Iran and joined Khomaini on the faculty of the Religious University at Qum. He taught Islamic Law and Logic, and founded the magazine *Maktab-i-Islam* (The Islamic School). *Maktab-i-Islam* became the most widely published and read religious magazine in Iran. In 1954 Imam Musa moved to Iraq, where he lived

until he moved to Lebanon in 1959. He became known as a modern religious scholar, learned and open to the world. He helped establish many educational institutions, participated in various religious and social conferences. It is also said that he liked writing poetry. (Halawi, p. 126.)

He married the daughter of the religious leader Ayat Allah al-Kashani and was blessed with four children, Sadr, Hamid, Hawra', and Malihah. Imam Musa was well known among many of the religious leaders in Iran and Iraq. Dr. Muhammad Husain Tabataba'i, the author of the book *Tafsir al-Mizan*, had a major influence on Imam Musa. (Ajami, p. 48.)

#### His First Visits to The Land of His Ancestors

Imam Musa was always interested in knowing about his ancestry and had learned about his Lebanese background from his father and grandfather. Imam Musa visited Lebanon for the first time in 1957. He met and learned more about his relatives in Sur, Shhour, and Ma'rakeh. He was the guest of Sayyid Abd al-Husain Sharaf al-Din, the Shi'i religious leader at the time. Sayyid Sharaf al-Din had met and followed the development and education of Imam Musa while he visited Iran and Iraq over the years. (Qubaisi, p. 15.)

Sayyid Sharaf al-Din is said to have been one of the most famous and learned Shi'i *'ulama'* of his time. He wrote many books and was a major player in the independence struggles in Syria and Lebanon. He had a very close relationship with al-Azhar in Cairo, and one of his books, *Al-Muraja'at*, is a compilation of letters he wrote

and received from one of the shaikhs of al-Azhar (Sadr, Beirut 1972.) Sayyid Sharaf al-Din was so impressed with Imam Musa's abilities and characteristics, that he asked his followers to invite Imam Musa to become the leader of the Shi'i community in Lebanon.

Sayyid Sharaf al-Din died in 1958 in the city of Sur (Tyre) in Southern Lebanon. The sons of Sayyid Sharaf al-din wrote a letter to Imam Musa and asked him to return to Lebanon. Sayyid Borujerdi, the Shi'i *Marja-i-Taqlid*, encouraged Imam Musa to accept the invitation. In 1959, Imam Musa would return to Lebanon for the second time, and would settle in Sur (Tyre). (Ajami, p. 44.)

Imam Musa al-Sadr came to settle in Lebanon in early 1960. It didn't take him long to find out that the task he had accepted was not going to be easy. He found out that the Shi'ah living in the Bika', Jabal `Amil, and the southern suburbs of Beirut, were in a desperate situation. They were uneducated, very poor economically, had little political power, and were socially disunited.

### The Disappearance of Imam Musa al-Sadr

#### Prelude to the fateful trip to Libya

The year 1978 was a very bad year in the history of the Arab and Muslim world. Egypt was getting closer to signing a peace treaty with Israel, Iran was in chaos and the Palestinians tightened their stranglehold over south Lebanon. Israeli shelling of southern Lebanese villages intensified and Lebanese civilian casualties were mounting and the southerners became very uneasy about the control of the PLO over their region. The Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council denounced Palestinian infractions of the Cairo treaty and

demanded that the Lebanese government and army intervene to save the people of the south.

In March of 1978 Israel launched a major attack on southern Lebanon killing over a hundred Lebanese civilians and destroying ten villages. Imam Musa directed his boldest attack on the Arab countries for their lack of action against Israeli aggression on the PLO, giving Israel the pretext to kill and destroy in the south.

“Lebanon and its south have borne the responsibility for the actions of Palestinian resistance....the sea and land are shamefully polluted and destroyed, killed, burned and annihilated. Now there is outright Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory.

The United Nations Security Council has been powerless in stopping the genocide in south Lebanon, satisfying world opinion with a bunch of decrees condemning Israeli action and asking it to withdraw from south Lebanon. The Arabs—What have they done for Lebanon and especially for southern Lebanon? The Palestinians are acting as if Lebanon is their battleground with no regard to people’s lives and property.” (Sadr, 1979, p. 38.)

It is necessary to point out that during this time there were about 30,000 Syrian troops in Lebanon. They came at the request of the Lebanese government in an attempt to stop the Lebanese civil war and enforce the rule of law in the country. But the Syrian troops did not interfere when Israelis bombed or attacked any part of Lebanon. It was said that by the middle of 1978, there were over 100,000 troops (Syrians, Israelis, Palestinians and Lebanese) in Lebanon, of which only 5,000 were Lebanese.

Colonel Qaddafi in a television broadcast asked the Arabs to support his plan of settling the Palestinians in south Lebanon and giving them arms and necessary financial support to fight the Israelis. Imam Musa responded to the serious and alarming developments by saying: “This conspiracy is harmful to the Palestinian cause. Their

acceptance of an alternative home will cost them their existence as a people. This conspiracy will also cause irreparable damage to the Lebanese society and will destroy Lebanon as a sovereign country.” (Norton, p. 43.)

Imam Musa was in Beirut during all these developments and wasn't able to travel to the south because of threats to his life. He took advantage of his being in Beirut to visit some Arab capitals and plead with their leaders to intervene and save Lebanon and the Palestinians from a sure disaster. While he was out of the country Christian forces claimed the formation of a separate entity with its own administrative offices and currency. On the western side of Beirut, Palestinian forces took over the international airport and the radio and TV stations, virtually dividing the country in two, a Muslim and a Christian state. Imam Musa urged the Lebanese government and parliament to pass a law barring any group from making such divisions within the country. The Lebanese parliament passed the law even though they could not enforce it at the time.

It is important to explain the background of the relationship between Libya and Imam Musa and the circumstances that led to his fateful trip to Libya. Colonel Qaddafi had been very involved in the murky political and religious situation in Lebanon and the Middle East. He was an arms provider to the PLO and many of the leftist militias in Lebanon as well as a financial supporter of the armed men and women who fought in their ranks. During the first few years of Imam Musa's tenure in Lebanon Colonel Qaddafi was one of his admirers. He invited Imam Musa to visit Libya for the first time in 1975. Libya was hosting an Islamic Conference and Qaddafi wanted to meet Imam



Musa and talk to him about the situation in Lebanon. Imam Musa accepted the invitation to visit Libya.

After the conference Qaddafi asked Imam Musa to meet him in the presidential palace. Imam Musa was given the red carpet treatment and Qaddafi greeted him warmly and informed him that he was a big admirer of his work and accomplishments. Imam Musa returned the pleasantries and praised Qaddafi for all the good work he had done supporting the Palestinians and Muslims in Lebanon. Qaddafi asked Imam Musa about the situation in south Lebanon and before the Imam was able to answer interrupted with the following questions: "What will it take to establish an Islamic state in Lebanon?" Surprised at the question Imam Musa replied by saying: "The establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon is not the goal of any of the Lebanese communities. Lebanon is an Arabic country with a unique religious configuration. Transforming Lebanon into a Muslim State will destroy its special status within the Arab world and the world as a whole." (Thoreaux, p. 60.)

Qaddafi was not very satisfied with the Imam's answer and asked him the same question once more, and Imam Musa gave him a similar answer. According to associates of Imam Musa, Qaddafi stormed out of the meeting room and Imam Musa left for his hotel and flew to Lebanon the following morning. This meeting took place on the first day of September 1975, exactly three years to the day of his disappearance on his second and last visit to Libya.

As the situation in Lebanon deteriorated and Israel invaded Lebanon in 1978, Imam Musa went to visit Arab leaders seeking their assistance for an end to the Lebanese

civil war and a united front against the Israeli invasion. During the same time there were some rumors that the leftists in Lebanon, with the aid of some Arab countries, were planning to send thousands of Palestinians into Lebanon and especially the south. The rumors also spoke of a plan to settle the Palestinians in south Lebanon in order to make it easier for them to attack Israel. Imam Musa declared that settling the Palestinians in any part of Lebanon was not acceptable and attacking Israel across the Lebanese border was not a sound strategy.

On July 28, 1978 Imam Musa received the Libyan ambassador to Lebanon, Mahmud ibn-Kura, who invited him to visit Libya and participate in The National People's Conference of the Jamahiriyyah al-Arabiyyah al-Libiyyah (the name Qaddafi gave to his country). The conference was scheduled for the last week of August 1978. The Libyan ambassador also informed Imam Musa that Colonel Qaddafi wanted to meet with him since he had not seen him or spoken to him in three years. Imam Musa accepted the invitation and decided to visit Libya on August 26, 1978. Imam Musa's wife was sick in a French hospital and he saw it as an opportunity to see her before going to Libya. (Thoreaux, p. 62.)

The Libyan ambassador provided Imam Musa and his two companions with plane tickets and informed them that all the necessary hotel arrangements and meetings were made for them in Tripoli. The day before his scheduled departure from Beirut Imam Musa was approached by some of his close associates who advised him to cancel the Libyan visit because of rumors of an attempt on his life. "We were trying to get him to cancel his trip," Shaikh Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din, a very close associate of Imam

Musa, said to an Italian magazine after Imam Musa's plane took off from Beirut. He informed the magazine Imam Musa refused for ethical reasons. He had promised to visit Libya and could not go back on his given word. Imam Musa promised to call his associates a few days later to assure them that he was alright. (Thoreaux, p. 59.)

Imam Musa set off on his fateful visit to Libya on Thursday, August 24 on a Libyan Arab Airline flight 255. The day happened to be the twenty-first day of *Ramadan*, the anniversary of Imam `Ali's martyrdom. His close associates and the Libyan ambassador to Lebanon saw him off at the airport. None of them would ever see him or talk to him again. Imam Musa arrived in Tripoli on August 26 and was taken to his hotel in a government car by representatives of the Libyan government. Imam Musa was supposed to meet with Qaddafi on the afternoon of August 26, but Qaddafi postponed the meeting until August 31. Imam Musa spent the first five days meeting with low-level government representatives and attending sessions of the Peoples' Conference.

On the evening of August 31 a government car came to the al-Shatti Beach Hotel to take Imam Musa and his companions to meet with Qaddafi. Imam Musa and his companions would disappear then. When Imam Musa did not call his associates in Lebanon, and that was very uncharacteristic of him, they became concerned and contacted the Libyan authorities for information. Imam Musa's associates were stunned when they were told that he did not make it to the meeting with Qaddafi and that he had decided to go to France to visit his sick wife. They contacted the French authorities but they were told that Imam Musa was not there. When the Libyans were told of the French

response, they said that he also said that he wanted to visit some friends in Italy. The Italian authorities denied the Libyan statement and launched an investigation with the help of the INTERPOL and came to the conclusion that Imam Musa had never left Libya. The three men had disappeared. (Thoreaux, p. 61.)

The Lebanese government and all political parties condemned the disappearance and put the responsibility upon Libya and its leadership to clarify the circumstances behind Imam Musa's disappearance. In a rare show of solidarity 300,000 Lebanese from all walks of life and representing all religious communities in Lebanon went to Damascus in a convoy to face Qaddafi, who was attending a meeting with Arab leaders opposed to the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty. When representatives of the convoy approached Qaddafi, he asked them why they were so worried about Imam Musa's fate. He asked them: "Isn't he a Persian and why does he wear a black turban, not a white one?" Shaikh Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din replied by saying that Imam Musa was a Lebanese and an Arab. Shaikh Ahmad al-Zain, a Sunni Shaikh from the city of Saida (Sidon) in south Lebanon, followed by saying that the black turban Imam Musa wore and the white one he wore were two of the same. (Thoreaux, p. 68.)

Theories about the reasons for and the perpetrators of the disappearance of Imam Musa are many. Some say that SAVAK, the Iranian secret police, was behind the Imam's disappearance as he had become a major opponent of the shah and had encouraged the Iranians to topple him. Some claim that the PLO was behind the disappearance because Imam Musa became critical of its actions in Lebanon and caused it to lose support among the Shi'ah, from whom they recruited many of their fighters.

Others believed that Imam Musa's disappearance was a communist conspiracy to get rid of him as he was an ardent opponent of communism and communists, while others blamed Israel for the disappearance as he had become the voice of resistance and mobilization of the Arabs against the Jewish state and its expansionist policies in the region. Some went as far as claiming that the Muslim Shaikhs of al-Azhar were behind the plot. They wanted to get rid of him because he was not living up to the traditional role of a Muslim clergyman. (Thoreaux, p. 119.)

No matter how many theories there are and how each one is justified, the fact stays that Imam Musa arrived in Libya and no one heard from him ever since. The investigations launched by the French, the Italians and the Lebanese authorities point to one important conclusion: Imam Musa and his companions never left Libya. They also point out many eyewitnesses at the hotel where they stayed, who saw the Imam and his companions go into a Libyan government car on that fateful night.

The consequences of Imam Musa's disappearance are numerous. The Shi'i community in Lebanon lost its leader and the Shi'ah lost an Imam who provided guidance and leadership to their movement. The Muslim community lost a great theologian who produced many books on Islam and the Muslims. They also lost a clergyman who advocated and fought for unity among Muslims around the world and a more open and progressive view of the world in which they lived. The Lebanese lost a leader who was loved by all of them. They lost a leader who fought on behalf of all of them, and advocated social harmony and religious tolerance among them. The Middle

East lost a man who could have played a major role in finding a solution to the problems that had kept it in a state of war for about thirty years.

The Shi'i community in Lebanon commemorates the anniversary of Imam Musa's disappearance annually. They kept a glimmer of hope for nineteen years that he would come back some day. Whenever they referred to him, they always said: "May God bring him back to us." It wasn't until early 1997 that the Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council in Lebanon proclaimed Imam Musa a martyr for the sake of Islam and Muslims. Shaikh Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-din, who was always referred to as vice president of the SISC, was finally given the title of president. Imam Musa's sister Rabab is now in charge of the al-Sadr Foundation and all the institutions he established during the time he lived in Lebanon.

### **Accomplishments of Imam Musa al-Sadr**

It is said that action is better than words. Imam Musa symbolized the meaning of this saying with all it entails. He made many presentations and demanded many things for the Shi'i community and all the poor in Lebanon and fought to make sure that they were fulfilled. He did not sit down and wait for things to get done. He pursued assistance from the community, businesses, foreign governments and the Lebanese government. He established the Imam Musa al-Sadr Foundation, which is made up of a combination of elementary, secondary and technical schools, clinics and hospitals for the needy, orphanages and shelters for the poor, a nursing college and the Institute of Islamic Studies. These were only a few of the social service and academic installations Imam Musa is credited with establishing. In addition, he was credited with many religious, political and military accomplishments that have helped the Shi'i community until now, and which will continue to help them in the future.

#### **The Technical Institute of Jabal 'Amil (Muassasat Jabal 'Amil al-Mihaniyyah)**

The technical Institute of Jabal Amil, a trade school, was established in the city of Sur (Tyre) in South Lebanon in 1962. It was open in 1969 after securing all necessary funding, materials and instructors. The institute was able to accommodate 150 students during the first year of operation. Preference was given to poor, financially disadvantaged, and qualified students from south Lebanon regardless of their religious affiliation. Most of the schools and academic institutions in Lebanon offered the

traditional educational system. They did not provide much preparation in the technical areas. The institute offered the following areas of specialization:

1. General mechanics
2. Agricultural mechanics
3. Electronics
4. Electrical Engineering
5. Auto mechanics
6. Carpentry and home décor
7. Persian rugs

When reading the list of specialties, it is very easy to observe that Imam Musa wanted a special kind of education provided to some of the southerners. He wanted to provide them with the kind of education that would meet their needs and was relevant to their daily lives. This does not mean that he did not want them to learn in traditional schools and become doctors, lawyers and the like. He wanted this to be one of the choices they had for a better future. It was also free of charge for students, since most of them could not afford it anyway. It is also important to point out that the above listed specialties are much in demand in Lebanon, where an auto mechanic sometimes makes more money than a college professor.

In 1973 the first group of 150 students graduated and their performance on the government standard examination impressed the Lebanese Ministry of Education. The Lebanese civil war caused all institutions of learning to close their doors, but the Imam Musa al-Sadr schools worked hard to keep their doors open and provide education to the



young men and women who did not become militiamen. In fact, many of the students of the institute were orphans, whose parents were killed by Israeli shelling and invasions into villages of southern Lebanon. Many of the students lived in the dormitory of the institute for most of their lives until they graduated and found a job by which they could survive. (Qubaisi, p. 26).

#### The Girls' School (Bayt al-Fatat)

Imam Musa al-Sadr founded Bayt al-Fatat in 1964. It is a private college for girls. It offered programs in home economics, sewing, and literacy classes designed to erase illiteracy among females within the Shi'i community, which topped seventy percent at the time of his arrival in Lebanon. The programs were twelve months long each, and the Imam al-Sadr Foundation secured jobs for the graduating young women. Imam Musa believed that Muslim women had to be educated if Muslim society is to advance. This belief went against some of the traditions accepted by some Muslim societies and '*ulama*.' Imam Musa had to even convince some within the Shi'i community in Lebanon that educating females was a good thing for their future.

#### Al-Huda School (Madrasat al-Huda)

Imam Musa al-Sadr founded the al-Huda School in 1964 in the city of Sur (Tyre). This school was founded in order to assist girls and boys who have not yet reached the age to start elementary school. It prepares students for regular school by teaching them basic information (the alphabet, numbers, games, etc.) The school accommodates a total

of 200 children a year and is free. The students selected for this school come from poor families or families who are not able to send their children to regular kindergarten schools. (Qubaisi, p. 29).

Education in Lebanon is not free and many families, especially the ones who are financially disadvantaged, can't afford to educate their children. Madrasat al-Huda and the other schools established by the Imam were the only chance for poor families and children to receive an education.

#### The Institute of Islamic Studies (Ma'had al-Dirasat al-Islamiyyah)

The Institute of Islamic Studies was established by Imam Musa in 1964. It is centrally located in the town of Bourj al-Shimali in South Lebanon and was designed to teach religious studies. The goal behind its founding was to establish a public college, similar to that found in al-Azhar of Cairo that would graduate religious teachers. These religious teachers would in turn go into all areas of Lebanon and teach religion in local religious schools. It was a residential institute free for all its students. The instructors were a select group of religious scholars. The institute accepted students from all over the world and sent some of them to preach and recruit in all parts of Lebanon. It accommodated a total of a hundred students annually. This was the first institute of its kind in Lebanon. It had a one-year course of study after which graduates were placed all over Lebanon and the rest of the Muslim world. Most of the religious schools were designed to teach the Qur'an, the Hadith, and the Muslim way of life, but not to graduate religion teachers. Previously Lebanese Muslims who wanted to study to become religious scholars had to go to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, or Iran.

### Institute of Nursing (Ma' had al-Tamrid)

The Institute of Nursing was established in 1969-70 also in the coastal city of Sur (Tyre). It is a secondary school that offered girls a complete program in nursing. It also provided them with placement services after graduation. The fifty students who graduated every year were placed in local clinics and hospitals. They also had the choice of continuing their education in a higher institute of learning. Many of them were encouraged and financially assisted to establish clinics in villages deep within the south in order to provide some health care services to the residents. The institute was residential and free for all its students. Most of the residents of the south had to go to the cities of Sur (Tyre) or Saida (Sidon) to receive medical attention because most doctors and clinics were located in these two large cities. The hundreds of villages located in the south didn't have much in the way of health care services. Many depended on local healers and natural herbs for medication. (Qubaisi, p. 31).

### The al-Sadr Village (Qaryat al-Sadr)

Imam Musa al-Sadr was able to secure funding from the Lebanese government, the Lebanese University, building contractors, and businessmen to build a village to house families affected by Israeli shelling of southern border villages. The village was built on a piece of land with an area of 45 square km, located in the southern part of the capital city to the east of the international airport. The village was made up of a hundred buildings divided into 420 apartments and was able to accommodate 4000 inhabitants. (Qubaisi, p. 54).

In addition to building the apartments, the Imam was able to negotiate funding from the government and labor from the residents of the village for roads, lighting, water and sewer facilities. A medical clinic and a *masjid* were also built to serve the village and its surroundings. The al-Sadr village was almost completely destroyed during the Lebanese civil war. It was located near the dividing line between the eastern and western sectors of the capital city, Beirut.

#### The Association of Muslim Scouts (Jam'iyat Kashshafa al-Risalah al-Islamiyyah)

Imam Musa established the Kashshafa al-Risala al-Islamiyyah in an attempt to give the young Muslim men and women a chance to participate in the development and advancement of their community and country. The association organized many community activities such as clean-ups, blood drives, fund raising for the poor, and the like. They also participated in religious and national ceremonies. Members of the association were provided free religious, civic and academic classes. This association played a very important role during the Lebanese civil war and is still functioning as a social service organization, providing assistance and services to communities around the country.

#### The Zahra' Hospital (Mustashfa al-Zahra')

Imam Musa established al-Zahra' Hospital in the Beirut suburb of Jnah in 1974. It was built on a piece of land with an area of fifteen square kilometers bought by the Imam's Foundation. It was the first and only hospital to be found in the southern

suburbs of Beirut. It was equipped with top-of-the line medical equipment and facilities. Only one year after the hospital was opened the Lebanese civil war started and the hospital became a valuable resource for the community during the war. Even though it was targeted it continued to operate and provide services to the community. Records from the hospital show that during the war, the hospital performed an average of 241 operations a week, received 3750 emergency cases a month (52 a day), and had enough beds for 675 patients. The hospital became fully operational in 1978, the same year Imam Musa disappeared in Libya. (Qubaisi, p. 56.)

It is important to point out that services provided by this hospital were mostly free of charge. The budget of the hospital was made up of donations from wealthy Shi'i businessmen, government funds, and funds from Muslim groups and associations from around the world. Patients who were able to afford paying for the medical services, were charged a minimal fee, but the majority of patients were poor and received services free.

Imam Musa's most important political accomplishments in my opinion, as far as the Shi'i community in Lebanon is concerned, were the creation of the Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council (al-Majlis al-Islami al-Shi'i al-A'la) and the Movement of the Deprived (Harakat al-Mahrumin). On the social level, his most important accomplishments were removing the traditional belief in 'revenge' from the Shi'i community and uniting them under the umbrella of a common goal, future and destiny.

The Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council (al-Majlis al-Islami al-Shi'i al-A'la)

“The Shi'i cause is a just cause,” Sayyid Musa declared, and “a cause long forgotten by the country and its leadership.” “The Lebanese always talked about the illiterate and the uncultured, but did not question the reasons for this state of affairs,” he said. (Sadr, 1981, p. 11). The problems the Shi'ah faced were a direct result of deprivation and lack of spiritual and cultural guidance. They were also a result of the deteriorating physical conditions they lived in and the fact that they were part of, but not full participants in, the state of Lebanon. These situations caused the Shi'ah to have low self-esteem, to be disunited, and not have faith in the government and its institutions, according to the Imam.

“This is what the Shi'i community wants,” Sayyid Musa asserted, “An apparatus that would guarantee the autonomous conduct of its religious affairs and oversee endowments and private institutions. It would have to be one that the community itself would organize and direct according to the dictates of the Shari'ah.” This was the declaration that started the process of creating the “al-Majlis al-Islami al-Shi'i al-A'la (The Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council). The Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council (SISC) was created by Act 72/67 of the Lebanese Parliament during the first session of 1967. The bill was signed into law at the end of 1967, by then President Charles Helu and Prime Minister Rashid Karami. Article 1 stated the main goal of the bill:

“The Islamic Shi'i Community is independent in its religious affairs, endowments and institutions with representatives...(who spoke and worked) on its behalf according to the prescripts of the honorable Shari'ah, and the jurisprudence of the Ja'fari doctrine, within the framework of the fatwas issued by the general marja' of the community in the world.” (Thoreaux, p. 23.)

Sayyid Musa, the main writer and supporter of the bill, was in Africa at the time, on one of his many trips to visit Shi'i compatriots to raise money for projects in Lebanon. The passage of the bill was a major triumph for the Shi'i community in Lebanon. For the first time in their history in Lebanon, the Shi'ah were to be represented by an institution that was created by and for them. It took three years for this dream to become a reality. It was first introduced in 1966. The main opposition for the bill came from some Shi'i deputies in the parliament whose loyalties were mostly for the traditional Shi'i feudal lords and not the community itself. But the strongest and most dangerous opposition to the bill came from the chairman of the Committee of Administration and Justice, who was a Sunni. He vowed that the bill would never pass. The Shi'i bill was saved by the support and vote of the Christian deputies in the parliament. (Halawi, p. 139.)

Imam Musa was elected first chairman of the SISC in May 1969 for a renewable term of six years. In 1975, the assembly of the SISC renewed for the Imam, but now they gave him until 1993, which would become his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. The following were the main principles of Imam Musa al-Sadr's program, introduced at his inauguration:

1. To organize the affairs of the community and to work toward improving the socio-economic conditions of its members.
2. To carry out his responsibilities according to the dictates of the scriptures.
3. To strive for equality and harmony among the Muslims.
4. To cooperate with all Lebanese communities, and to protect the integrity and freedom of the Lebanese nation.
5. To fight ignorance, poverty, underdevelopment, social injustice, and moral deterioration.
6. To support the Palestinian resistance and to participate effectively with Arab countries for the liberation of Palestine. (Halawi, p. 143.)

The program the Imam adopted was a tall order for anyone in Lebanon. Every item in the program was full of obstacles and needed much diplomacy on his part, as well as support and cooperation on the part of the parties directly involved and affected.

Musa al-Sadr was given the title of *Imam* during the inauguration ceremonies. Imam Musa was very wary about the responsibility the title of *Imam* gave him. In the Muslim tradition, the title of *Imam* gave the person in the leadership position the full responsibility of the fate of the community he led. Imam Musa did not want the Shi'i community in Lebanon to depend on him solely, but rather, he wanted them to be actively involved in the process of its own transformation. The Imam was only able to personally serve as chairman until 1978, the year during which he disappeared.

The council did not elect another chairman, because they always had hoped that the Imam would eventually be found and would return to assume his position. It wasn't until 1996, nineteen years after his disappearance, that the council decided to accept the fact that Imam Musa wasn't going to return and proclaimed him a martyr in the cause of Islam and Muslims. The council vowed to follow in the footsteps of the Imam and to keep the goals he set for them and for the Shi'i community.

### The Movement of The Disinherited (Harakat al-Mahrumin)

The situation in South Lebanon was deteriorating day after day between 1969 and 1973, and the Shi'i community was paying for the struggle between the Israelis and the Palestinians. During these four years the Israelis and the Palestinians would attack and counterattack each other in ways that were never seen in the area since the 1948 and 1967



Arab-Israeli wars. The major difference between the two main time periods was that Lebanon, and specifically South Lebanon, was bearing the brunt of the Israeli wrath. When Palestinian guerillas attacked Israelis anywhere around the world, Israelis would attack South Lebanon and the Palestinian camps in Beirut. The camps were not in isolated areas of the South or of Beirut. They were located in the middle of the most populated areas in Lebanon. Lebanese civilians and infrastructure were always victims and targets of Israeli attacks.

Imam Musa had requested and in some cases demanded that the government provide security for the south in the form of Lebanese army units that were to be stationed at the border, facing the Israelis. The Imam knew that the Lebanese government and Army were not able to defend the South in a very effective manner, but he thought that some show of force might hinder the Israelis and show them that the Lebanese care about the South. The Israelis used the Palestinian attacks as pretexts to attack Lebanon. They were convinced that if the Lebanese became harmed, they would back off and not support the Palestinians.

On the one hand, the Lebanese government was not able to control the movement and the arming of the Palestinians in Lebanon. The Lebanese Government was bound by the "Cairo Agreement," which gave the Palestinians in Lebanese refugee camps the right to carry arms and use Lebanon as a base to fight the Israelis. On the other hand, the Lebanese Army was militarily weaker than the Palestinians.

On March 17, 1974, Imam Musa delivered one of his famous speeches in the eastern city of Ba'labakk, in the Biqa' Valley before a crowd estimated at 100,000. He

criticized the army for not protecting the citizens of the South, declaring that “arms are an adornment for men.” This statement became the battle cry for the Shi`ah in Lebanon, and especially in South Lebanon. He used the event to remind the government of a few concerns, and warn them that the future would not be very stable if they did not take care of them. He reminded the Lebanese government that hundreds of Lebanese in the South and northern Lebanon did not have identity cards, that the Communists and Ba`athists were becoming very strong and corrupting the youth of the country, and that Israel was planning to annex parts of South Lebanon rich with water resources. He said that “He had no other choice but to do whatever he could in order to protect his people from the many dangers that were facing them.” (Sadr, 1981, p. 67.)

It was also during this rally that Imam Musa announced the birth of the Movement of the Deprived (Harakat al-Mahrumin). This movement was to provide the protection the Lebanese in the South really needed. He declared that the movement would cease once the government provided the necessary protection against Israeli attacks. The militia, Lebanese Resistance Detachments, or Afwaj al-Muqawamah al-Lubnaniyyah, was also announced as an adjunct to the movement. The militia was trained and armed partly with the help of Fatah, the wing of the PLO that Yasser Arafat headed. Imam Musa presented AMAL (Afwaj al-Muqawama al-Lubnaniyyah) as a necessity, but made sure to put all the Lebanese fears to rest, by declaring it a movement for all Lebanese.

“Harakat al-Mahrumin in Lebanon is. . .an expression of the human ambition for a better life which drives him to resist all that undermines his life, dulls his talents, and threatens his future. Haraket al-Mahrumin is not a sectarian movement, nor a

charitable organization.... It is the movement for all the disinherited,...of those who feel deprived...and fearful about their future, as well as those who bear responsibility toward the disinherited and the fearful with honor and dedication. It is the movement of the Lebanese for the betterment of their lives. (Sadr, 1981, p. 88.)

In its early years, the movement received wide national support from various religious and political groups in Lebanon. The movement had shared its program with the Lebanese in an attempt to show them that it was a nationalist movement. It promoted pride in the Lebanese nationality, harmony between the various Lebanese communities, and the protection of all the deprived in Lebanon. The goal of protecting southern Lebanon against Israel, was a very genuine one, and could not be denied by anyone. The fact that it was created by the Shi'ah was due to the fact that they were the most affected by what was happening in and around the country, and not because they wanted a Shi'i movement and militia to take over the country.

Ghassan Tueini, a renowned journalist and writer put it best when he said: "the Shi'ah in Lebanon have become, according to the modern socioeconomic terminology, the 'proletariat of the earth,' in other words, the class most subdued in its exterior and most revolutionary in its interior." "Perhaps, it is the fate of the Shi'ah to be at the forefront of the revolt of all—all regions, all confessions, and all classes." (Khalifa, p. 68.)

The AMAL movement would play a very crucial role in the Lebanese civil war, in the early eighties. The movement stayed on the sidelines during the first six years of the war, but became involved during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and the subsequent clashes with the PLO in the southern suburbs of Beirut, in 1985-86. During

the last four years of the civil war, AMAL and the Shi'ah became a force to be reckoned with. This would help them demand some major changes, politically, economically, and socially at the end of the war.

In 1990 when the various warring factions signed a cease-fire treaty and agreed on a government of reconciliation, all militias were banned, and their arms were collected. AMAL ceased to exist as a military force, and most of its members have joined the armed forces, became politicians and civil servants and are currently active in the reconstruction of Lebanon. The leader of AMAL is now the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament. I can only wonder what would have happened had Imam Musa been alive, and what would his reaction be to see how the community he once led, had prospered and is now one of the strongest in the country.

#### The Problem of 'revenge' in Ba`labakk and the Ba`labakk Oath

Ba`labakk is the largest city in eastern Lebanon and the largest Shi'i populated city in the region. Families living in Ba`labakk were very traditional and in many cases lived under a tribal code of conduct. If a man from one family was murdered by a member of another family as a result of some misunderstanding, the only solution for the problem was to kill someone from the offender's family. This went on and on for years and sometimes hundreds of men were killed from these families, and there was no end in sight for a more humane and civilized way to resolve such issues.

Imam Musa realized that such behavior was detrimental to the Shi'i community and that a divided community was a weak one. After being elected president of the

Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council, one of his main goals was to find a solution for the madness that was destroying a large number of his community. He called for a meeting of all the family leaders and discussed the situation in the region with them. He asked them to workout a different way of dealing with conflict and misunderstanding between them. He offered them the council's services in providing guidance and expertise in resolving conflicts that might arise between them.

In one of his characteristic moves he asked them to pledge that they would not resort to revenge every time there is a misunderstanding between them. After the leaders had met for sometime and agreed on a set of actions to take whenever two families had a problem, he asked them to return the following day and bring some of their fellowmen with them to swear an oath. The following day ten thousand men from the largest families in the city of Ba`labakk gathered in the city center to listen to the Imam. He spoke to them for about half an hour and then asked them to repeat the following oath:

“We pledge that any man who commits a crime (murder and the like) no matter what the reasons behind it, will be isolated by everyone, and will be the only responsible person for that crime. The criminal shall be disinherited by his family, and shall not be aided by anyone in any way, form or shape. The criminal will be tracked down by everyone, and especially his own family, and anyone who aids him shall be treated the same way as he by his family and everyone else. We shall all be enemies of this person and the persons who aid them.” (Sadr, 1979, p. 112.)

The incidents of revenge killings in the Ba`labakk region decreased by eighty percent. The following years after what became known as the “Ba`labakk Oath.” Imam Musa used the opportunity to ask all Lebanese communities to do the same. This is because the idea of revenge was not only a Ba`labakk problem, it was prevalent in many

other cities and towns in Lebanon. Ba`labakk just happened to have the highest number of 'revenge' incidents.

## IMAM MUSA, THE MAN

“He entered people’s hearts without a bribe”  
(Halawi, p. 121.)

--Ahmad Ismail

Imam Musa al-Sadr was a physically imposing man (six feet six inches tall), of intelligence, personal charm, and enormous energy. These characteristics are important for the Lebanese people. They are very much into the way people and things look and feel. Imam Musa’s characteristics were heaven-sent for the Shi`ah in Lebanon. He was the leader of a community that was always looked down upon by the rest of the population. Imam Musa stood out in a country of mainly short people. He was, as it was said by many that met him and spoke to him, a “man unlike others.” There was something different about him that others easily saw and commented about. An American diplomat who visited the Imam cabled home the following message:

“Made one hour courtesy call on Imam Sadr. Although we conversed through an interpreter, he is without debate one of the most, impressive individuals I have met in Lebanon. He is over six feet tall, has piercing, deep-set eyes. Although he spoke in a quiet, detached manner, I could well imagine him inciting a group of men to go to any extremes that he desires. His charisma is obvious and his apparent sincerity is awe-inspiring. He dwelt at some length on his admiration for our country’s attachment to the rights of man and the books he read on Washington, Lincoln, and the other leaders. He then discussed the Communist menace....He is optimistic that peace can return to this part of the world and that Muslims can devote their energies to repairing the inroads the Communists have made in recent years....He believed that the Government of Lebanon, and other observers here, have underestimated the effectiveness of Communist propaganda which has found fertile soil among young southerners who are able easily to compare Beirut extravagance with backwardness and poverty that exist only an hour or so away from the affluent capital. The “rulers” in Beirut are only slowly realizing the importance of this problem.”  
(Ajami, p. 48.)

A Lebanese publisher of Greek Orthodox background, and one of the moderate politicians in Lebanon, met and became a friend of the Imam for many years, recorded the following impression he had of him:

“Calm.... ‘the tranquil force,’ his face marked with deep gentleness, the Imam Musa al-Sadr seemed to come from nowhere... By his charisma, he obliged his enemies and friends alike to venerate him, to respect his clairvoyance. His credibility was never questioned, in spite of the rumors about his origins..... He was tall, very tall: To the point of seeming to soar over the often frenzied crowds that his presence drew together: black turban tilted with a slight negligence. His enemies seemed charmed by his enigmatic and benevolent smile, whereas his friends found that his bearded face constantly reflected profound melancholy.... One often had the impression, watching him, that his immense head was constantly trying to rise even higher. And his hands gave the impression of gathering up his floating robe, the ‘abaya, in which he wrapped himself, as if he were preparing himself to step out of some antique miniature.

Even while he harangued the masses, his words were calm and sybilline, an oracle of love and hope, punctuated with mysterious accents of some mystic vision that appealed as much to reason as to the heart.

His personal contacts were a ritual of seduction. When he would humbly open the door and invite you to enter a modest office or an ordinary salon of some home which sheltered him, one would wonder why this man was there, by what mystery, and how such a mythic persona could seem so familiar. Then, as in a Persian miniature, one would sit at his feet, looking to reap the teachings of the master, only to leave with more questions than one had brought in.” (‘Ajami, p. 49.)

From the above statements, it is easy to see that Imam Musa was not a man the Lebanese were used to. The way his followers acted during his presentations and rallies showed that he was a very charismatic man. His charisma was both important in the task of leading the Shi‘ah community in Lebanon, as well as dealing with the various forces that were acting on him in Lebanon and the Middle East.

He came to Lebanon as a Persian and a stranger, but he soon was accepted, first by the community he was going to lead, and then by the government and other communities of Lebanon. He was given Lebanese citizenship in 1963 by then President



Charles Helu. After securing Lebanese citizenship Imam Musa assumed the presidency of the Ja'farite College the al-Bir wa-al-Ihsan Society (a charitable institution that assisted poor families with daily needs and education), both of which were founded by his predecessor, Sharaf al-Din al-Musawi. They were both located in the southern coastal city of Sur (Tyre), where he kept a small residence. Even though Sur was his main residence, he regularly visited the other Shi'i areas of the Biqa' Valley and the southern suburbs of Beirut. ('Ajami, p. 87.)

He spoke with a Persian accent when he first arrived in Lebanon, a fact some of his critics used against him, but it did not take him much time to adapt to the Lebanese accent. Karim Bakraduni, a Christian Phalangist Leader, said the following to describe the Imam's use of the Arabic language: "He murdered the Arabic language when he first arrived to Lebanon, but by 1975 he spoke the language with an elegance that matched his personal grooming and demeanor." (Halawi, p. 127.)

An observer who followed the Imam said: "It took only six years for Imam Musa's reformist themes, his fame, and his spark to catch on." He emerged as a reformer, a religious man with an enlightened view of the world. He was a prolific speaker and a great persuader. In a country where religious leaders mainly kept to their strongholds and lived in areas where most of their members lived, the Imam changed all these expectations. He traveled all over Lebanon, from north to south, east to west. He visited all areas of Lebanon, Christian and Muslim, rich and poor.

He entered the political arena head-on. He realized that the only way to effect change in a country like Lebanon, is to become part of its political formula. This did not

mean that he wanted to become a deputy or a minister, but rather, he became a politician by means of his religious status. He had torn down the traditional wall, which had been built between the traditional 'religious' role of a cleric and that of an enlightened, reformer cleric. Conservative clerics in Lebanon doubted his religiosity as a result of his actions and criticized his words and actions whenever they could. They were not used to a Muslim cleric going into churches and making presentations; making an official visit to the Pope in Rome; a Muslim cleric promoting the fact that science and religion were compatible; and a Muslim cleric who fought for unity between the various Muslim sects. He wanted the Muslim Community (*al-Ummah al-Islamiyyah*) to live up to its history and traditions. He also wanted the *ummah* to move forward and become open to the world. He believed that all these goals could be achieved without losing the basics. In fact, he saw change and openness as forces that would strengthen Islam and the Muslims.

Imam Musa saw himself as the "servant" of the impoverished in Lebanon, regardless of their religious or ethnic background. He brought with him the education, both religious and traditional, his family prestige (as a *sadr* and a *sayyid*), and his charisma. The deprivation of the Lebanese Shi'ah was not debatable, it was very clear. They were the least educated, the poorest, and the most marginalized politically. He needed all the help and support he could have in order to work with the government and the communities in which the Shi'ah lived. In his opinion, truth was supreme, and God was always on the side of the truth. He said that no matter how strong the oppressor was, and how long the oppression lasted, the oppressed would eventually be victorious.

Imam Musa was anti-communist. According to him, "Marxism's negation of God is not so much in its open atheism, as in its affecting the individual and denying his freedoms." His position on communism can be summarized in the following statements he usually repeated in speeches and press conferences he made: "We are neither the right nor the left, but we follow the path of the of the just (*al-sirat al-mustaqim*)", and the Qur'anic verse: "He who sleeps while having a needy neighbor is not considered a believer." During the first two years of the Lebanese civil war, the Ba`thists and the Communists in Lebanon played a very crucial role in the clashes between the Christians and the Palestinians. (Sadr, 1979 p. 93.)

Imam Musa warned the Muslims that "Islam in Lebanon was in danger." Many historians and observers often wondered whether the Imam's opposition to the Communists and Ba`thists in Lebanon was based on religious grounds or whether his main goal was to discourage young Shi'i men from joining their ranks. Young Shi'i men had been the major group of men in Lebanon from which the Communists, the Ba`athists and the Palestinians recruited their members and fighters.

He was an ally of the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) at the beginning of the civil war, but as the war became more serious and the situation looked very bleak, Imam Musa became wary of the LNM's intentions. The Lebanese National Movement was an inclusive name given to the various leftist and Palestinian militias and groups that fought against the Christian coalition of Phalangists and other militias. He blamed its head, Kamal Jumblatt, the leader of the Druze and Druze militia in Lebanon, for prolonging the agony of the Lebanese. During a meeting with Bakraduni, a Phalange

Party leader, he stated: "The National Movement is willing to fight until the last Shi'i man in Lebanon." He said: "Without him (Jumblatt) the war would have been terminated in two months. Because of him it was prolonged two years, and only God knows how long the encore would last." His words would be prophetic. The Lebanese Civil War lasted fifteen years. (Thoreaux, p. 39.)

Imam Musa was a man blessed with many positive characteristics and personal abilities. He came into a 'strange' country, to lead a community without knowing much about the situation in which its members lived. He had to learn and learn fast about the country, its people, and its politics. He lived in Lebanon for only eighteen years, but the changes he affected and the accomplishments attributed to him will live on in its history. The Shi'i community in Lebanon will never be the same.

## THEY SAID OF THE IMAM

Al-'Allamah Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din Shaikh Muhammad Mahdi

Shams al-Din was one of the closest associates of Imam Musa al-Sadr. He became the vice president of the Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council after the disappearance of the Imam. The following is an excerpt from his speech during the first annual commemoration of the disappearance of the Imam:

“Imam Musa was both a religious man and a man of politics. As a religious man, he was a great *alim* who was well known in the Arab and Muslim worlds. He worked very hard to narrow the gap between the various religious groups in Lebanon. He also struggled to unite the Muslims under a common mission. As a man of politics, Imam Musa was very active and capable. He had to work with a very complicated political system and deal with at least five other religious groups. On the one hand, he wanted to improve the lot of the community he led, and on the other hand, he wanted to keep a united country, both physically and socially. His accomplishments are too many to name and his impact on the history of Lebanon will be felt forever. His worries were not only local. They dealt with issues that affected the Arab and Muslim worlds. Some of these issues included the Sunni-Shi'i debate, the Palestinian Crisis, and the danger facing Islam in the world.

Perhaps the most important accomplishment of the Imam as it relates to the Muslims around the world, was his leadership in establishing the Dar al-Taqrīb in Egypt in the late sixties. The mission of this “house” was to work on bridging the gap between the various Muslim sects. It was also during the same time that Shaikh Muhammad Shaltout, Shaikh of al-Azhar Mosque, made his famous decree (*fatwa*), both Sunni and Shi'a sects as valid.

Imam Musa is a great *alim* who spent his life in the service of his community, the Muslims, and all the oppressed around the world. We hope that he returns to us to continue his invaluable work.” (Qubaisi, p. 193.)

Shaikh Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din occupied the post of vice president of the Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council until 1996, nineteen years after Imam Musa's

disappearance. In 1997 he was appointed president of the council after it had considered Imam Musa a martyr.

Shaikh Ahmad al-Zain Shaikh Ahmad al-Zain is the Sunni Mufti of the city of Saida (Sidon), the capital of Southern Lebanon. He was a very good friend of the Imam and collaborated with him on a variety of programs and conferences aimed at promoting religious tolerance between the various religious groups in Lebanon. The following is part of his statement during the first annual commemoration of the disappearance of the Imam:

“Today commemorates one of the saddest and most puzzling events in the history of the world. We commemorate the disappearance of the man who became the friend of all the Lebanese people regardless of their social, economic, religious, or political orientation. I still remember the visit I made with the Imam to the village of Kfarshouba, after it was bombed by the Israelis. Imam Musa insisted on praying in the ruins of the village’s mosque. He told me that this scene will be repeated many times in the coming years. How true he was. Greetings to you Imam Musa wherever you are!

I can still see him touring the villages in the south, caressing the heads of the children who lost their parents to Israeli bombings, and assuring the villagers that he will do whatever it takes to alleviate their suffering. He is still among us, encouraging us to continue in his footsteps and not allow Lebanon to become part of history.” (Qubaisi, p. 121.)

Shaikh al-Zain is still very active in the social and religious movement Imam Musa established in Lebanon. He is one of the many Sunni religious leaders in Lebanon who have heeded the challenge of the Imam to unite the Muslims of Lebanon.

Dr. Salim al-Huss Dr. Salim al-Hoss is a leading Sunni politician in Lebanon. He is a member of a prominent Sunni family in Beirut, the Lebanese capital. He served

as prime minister for four years during the Lebanese civil war. He is considered one of the most nationalistic politicians in Lebanon. In fact, some have said that the reason why Dr. al-Hoss did not serve more than one term as prime minister was because he wasn't corruptible and did not belong to any specific political bloc or militia.

“As the situation in Lebanon become worse and the end of the war nowhere in sight, I wonder: was the disappearance of Imam Musa a warning to all of us that a phase of the conspiracy against Lebanon and its people has ended and another started? If we look at the situation in the country now and look back at it when the Imam was with us, it doesn't take much to conclude that there must be some connection between the two.

Imam Musa was a symbol of the ideal Muslim cleric and a voice for all Muslims regardless of their sect. He fought hard to unite the Muslim voice around the world. Apparently someone did not want such a man to stay around to accomplish his goals. The conspiracy that started with the disappearance of the Imam, was not only directed at Lebanon, but the whole Arab and Muslim world.

It is our duty as Lebanese, Arabs and Muslims to be loyal to the path the Imam chose for all of us. The path of returning to the basics of our religion, to the traditions of our ancestors, and to standing in the face of the enemy no matter what the cost. The alternative is complete destruction and loss of identity. Let's work with the word of God: I'tasimu bi-habli Allah jami'an wala tafarraqu. God is always truthful. Imam Musa, you will always be with us and among us, no matter where you are!” (Qubaisi, p. 214.)

Dr. al-Hoss was elected representative of Beirut to the Lebanese House of Representatives in 1996, a post he has held for the past twenty years. He is also a lecturer at the Lebanese University and regularly publishes articles in the commentary section of Lebanese newspapers and magazines. He is now a member of a watchdog group that analyzes government officials and policies.

Mustafa Ma`ruf Sa`d Mustafa Sa`d is the president of the Nasserite Party of Lebanon. He is the son of Ma`ruf Sa`d, a well known Sunni leader from the

southern city of Saida (Sidon). It is believed that his father's assassination in 1974 was the spark that started the Lebanese civil war. Ma'rouf Sa'd called for a major strike against the government to oppose its policy of privatizing the fishing industry. The fishing industry is the main industry of the southern cities, employing over ten thousand. As the march went through the heart of the city, soldiers from the Lebanese Army trying to keep the peace were accused of firing into the demonstration, fatally striking Ma'rouf Sa'd in the chest. The situation in Lebanon was never the same after the assassination of Ma'rouf Sa'd. It was a month after this incident that another incident in which Palestinians returning from a funeral in a refugee camp in eastern Beirut, were shot at and thirty Palestinians, both civilian and armed guerillas, were killed. This led to direct clashes between the Palestinians and the Christian Phalange.

One year after the assassination of Ma'rouf Sa'd, his son Mustafa fell victim to a car bomb that exploded as his motorcade went through the center of the city of Saida (Sidon). Mustafa's wife and daughter were killed with some of his personal bodyguards, and Mustafa lost his eyesight and right leg. Mustafa took over the helm of the Nasserite Party and joined the Coalition for the Protection and Preservation of Southern Lebanon, which was established by Imam Musa. The following is an excerpt from his statement commemorating the disappearance of the Imam:

“The Imam will always be present in our hearts, in our thoughts, and in our struggle for equality, peace and freedom. During this very dangerous and bleak time in the history of Lebanon, we are in a dire need for someone like Imam Musa. He was a freedom fighter, a nationalist, and



an ardent supporter of the Palestinian cause. It is the fate of the freedom fighters to be exiled or become martyrs, and this was the fate of the leaders Ma'ruf Sa'd and Imam Musa. They probably were in the way of those who were scheming to destroy Lebanon and the Palestinians, and they had to be removed from the picture.

The conspiracy against South Lebanon has started and will continue. The only way to put an end to it is to fight the Zionists and kick them out of our land. We need to be led by his statement: "How can Lebanon smile while its South is in pain?" We need to promise him and his colleagues that we will continue the fight against the occupiers. There is no fight but fighting the enemy, and no duty but that of liberating the land." (Qubaisi, p. 225.)

Mustafa Sa'd is still very active in the political arena in Lebanon. Even though Sa'd lost his militia as a result of the ban on all militias in Lebanon under the Ta'if Agreement that ended the Lebanese civil war, Sa'd still holds a very prestigious position in the local and national politics. He is also a member of the Lebanese House of Representatives.

Dr. `Ali `Ammar Dr. Ali Ammar is the leader of the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Lebanon. He became a very close friend of Imam Musa as the Imam was working on getting the Sunnis and Shi'ah in Lebanon to become more united. Dr. Ammar was one of the first religious leaders in Lebanon who supported Imam Musa's call for a more concerted effort to bridge the gap between the Muslims in Lebanon and the Muslim world. He also supported Imam Musa's policy of religious tolerance towards other religions.

"He approaches with his beautiful figure, his piercing eyes, warning to hard times to come.  
Beware of the stare of the faithful, he is looking with God's light.  
Weapons are the adornment of men.

The enemy is behind you and in front of you.  
 Don't fight, don't argue, be brothers in front of God.  
 The Zionists can not be trusted.  
 Israel is the ultimate evil.

These are only a few sayings the Imam left us with. It was through his hard work and never-ending energy, that he brought to our attention the many issues that affect us and the Muslim world as a whole. He taught us that we are all God's children. He warned all the Muslims that their problems are a result of their loss of the basics. He asked us to follow the teachings of Islam in order for us to be successful in life. Our mission in life is to fight the enemy until we liberate our land. The danger to Islam and the Muslims is not limited to the Zionists in Israel, but rather, it is a policy of the West. It was his vision to establish the Movement of the Oppressed to fight for the rights of the dispossessed. The trip will be long and treacherous, but we must continue until the ultimate victory." (Qubaisi, p. 228.)

Patriarch Yuhanna Haddad Patriarch Haddad is the head of the Christian Orthodox community in southern Lebanon. He was a very close friend of Imam Musa and collaborated with him on a variety of different activities aimed at promoting Muslim-Christian dialogue in Lebanon. Throughout the fifteen year Lebanese civil war, no Christians in south Lebanon were harassed, killed or asked to leave. To the contrary, Imam Musa made it a point to encourage the Christians to stay in south Lebanon and personally assured their safety. In fact, many Christians who fled the fighting in East Beirut and the mountains took refuge within the Christian community in Southern Lebanon. Patriarch Haddad was a member of the Coalition for the Protection and Preservation of Southern Lebanon.

"Imam Musa as a friend to all the Lebanese, Muslims and Christians. He did not differentiate between them and always encouraged them to be united and to love each other. His speeches and works were aimed at spreading the spirit of nationalism among all the Lebanese regardless of

their religious, socio-economic status, race, and political affiliation. For him all Lebanese were equal and had to fight to keep their country intact. According to the Imam, Lebanon was the symbol of how Islam and Christianity can survive and flourish within a country.

I remember an incident when Imam Musa went to eat ice cream store in the southern city of Sur (Tyre) owned by a Christian. Imam Musa ate ice cream at the Christian store and told his followers at the time that eating from a Christian was not a sin. A sin according to the Imam is not eating something from the hands of a faithful man, but rather his/her evil thoughts and actions, regardless of what religious community they belong to.

His charisma and love for all humans made him loved and wanted by Christians all over Lebanon. They invited him to make presentations in their churches and to attend meetings to promote inter-religious tolerance and understanding.

We consider his disappearance at this time in the history of Lebanon a major loss to all of us. At this time, Lebanon and the Lebanese are in need for his love, charisma, vision, and spirit of compassion. Let's keep his memory alive by loving one another and abandoning the language of war and destruction. He told us that it was against all the teachings of Islam and Christianity for a brother to hold a gun against his brother. We are all brothers and citizens of this country. We need to help build a stronger society, government and country, capable of withstanding any outside aggression and intervention." (Qubaisi, p. 231.)

## **IMAM MUSA-AL SADR: POLITICAL THOUGHT & ACTIVISM**

### Relations with the Government

Imam Musa realized very quickly that he had to deal with the political system in Lebanon, a system that he was not used to, but was very much prepared for. The first thing he did was to learn about the “National Pact,” which divided political power in the country among its various factions according to their numbers at the time the pact was drawn, 1943. The Shi`ah were given the lowest and the least number of positions in the government. He also realized that the Shi`i areas were the least developed, the poorest, and the most neglected by the government. But perhaps, the issue that concerned him the most was the situation in South Lebanon. In addition to the poverty, illiteracy, and backwardness of the region, it was the target of the Israelis fighting against the Palestinian guerillas. At the beginning he needed to establish bridges with the political powers in the country in order to secure their support and demand action from them.

“The region of Sur (Tyre) has sixty villages, to which God Almighty gave all kinds of beauty, but which the rulers have deprived of their rights. Of these sixty villages, only ten have anything that could be called schools or paved roads. Over forty villages do not have schools....or even a road....These sixty villages are without running water even in this age of technology,...and live totally in darkness. Electricity is the good fortune of the more privileged districts...These sixty villages are almost deserted, inhabited only by old men and women; many of the young have left to toil in the heat of Africa or Kuwait. Thousands more have come to Beirut, to toil among others of their kind.” (Sadr, 1982 p. 55.)

This is how the Imam summarized the situation of the Shi`ah in South Lebanon during one of his speeches admonishing the government for its lack of interest and support of the citizens of that region. It is necessary to note that the situation in other Shi`i areas was not much better. The southern suburbs of Beirut are usually called the

slums of Beirut. They have running water and electricity, but the roads are dirty, sewers are open in the streets, and the half million Shi`ah who live in the area are served by only a few schools. The Bika` Valley area is in the same, and even in a worse shape than the south.

After a year and a half of continuous Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon, and the death and destruction they caused, the Imam called for a strike to bring the suffering of the people in the south to the attention of all the Lebanese, and especially its government. In a speech to more than fifty thousand demonstrators at the steps of the SISC headquarters, many of them refugees from the south, the Imam made the following statement:

“For a year and a half... we have been calling for the necessity to attending to the situation of the South... Then the crisis began to advance in a shocking vacuum,...killing, destroying, dispersing, and threatening the entire country...After this, what do the rulers expect? Do they want the the southerners to keep silent about this neglect,...the calamity, death and destruction?...The strike is the minimum...the first step which we hope will awaken in the rulers the spirit of responsibility and a sound national conscience.” (Sadr, 1982 p. 60.)

In 1970, and after a major Israeli attack that left at least 150 Lebanese and Palestinian civilians dead, and 50,000 refugees, the Imam formed the Aid to the South Committee to help southerners with rebuilding their homes and feeding their children. The government promised thirty million liras (200,000 dollars) to the committee, but only 10,000 of it was actually provided. He also called for a strike and civil disobedience all over Lebanon. At a rally at the SISC, the Imam commented about the government’s “generosity”:

“The government is like a charitable society which gives aid to the victims but does nothing to protect them in the first place. The inhabitants of South Lebanon do not believe that the state is defending their security. The state is content with issuing communiques that distort the truth and convey ‘appropriate’ reactions, nothing more...it has reached the point where we feel ourselves a burden to our own country. We appear despicable in our own eyes, for we are no longer full citizens.” (Thoreaux, p. 24.)

When the Red Cross offered tents and small food gifts for the refugees, Imam Musa rejected them and demanded “dignity for our region” and threatened that he would ask the refugees to go to the palaces of the rich in Beirut and occupy them. The tents were a temporary fix for the problems that the Shi`ah were facing. The Imam wanted a long-term solution that would take care of his community once and for all. It was a solution that the Imam would not see during his lifetime, nor would the Shi`ah in the south. The Israelis are still bombing, kidnapping, destroying, and killing in South Lebanon. In addition to this, they have occupied a ten-kilometer strip of Lebanon as their security zone.

During the ‘Ashura’ ceremonies of 1974 Imam Musa used the occasion to remind the audience of their historical background and the fact that they needed to fight hard in order to change their future. He also used the occasion to remind the Lebanese government of its responsibility towards all its citizens and the consequences of inaction and neglect.

Addressing the audience, he said:

“Don’t be content with these observations, lest they become formal, petrified rites and ceremonies behind which the guilty may hide. That would allow the tyrants to shuck off responsibilities they bear before the people. Tears and funerals must not become substitutes for action, means of avoiding rage and vengeance or excuses for not doing anything constructive. This revolution did not die in the

sands of Karbala'. It flowed into the lifestream of the Islamic World and passed from one generation to another, up to the present. It is for us a source of new reform, a new position, a new movement, a new revolution to repel the darkness, to end tyranny and crush evil."

Addressing the government, he said:

"Choose your people, and spend your plunder as you wish. But the rights of the people, of the citizens, of regions and communities must be realized. Otherwise your monopolization and despotism will turn against you. Brothers choose sides: the side of tyranny or the side of al-Hussain. I am certain that you will choose only the line of revolution and martyrdom for the realization of justice and the destruction of tyranny." (Al-Sadr, 1982 p. 98.)

During the following days, the Imam went all over Lebanon, making speeches to all Lebanese from the Israeli border to the city of Tripoli in the north. Two of the most memorable statements on those trips were:

"We do not want to clash with the regime, with those who neglect us. Today we shout out loud the wrongs against us, that cloud of injustice that has followed us since the dawn of history. Starting from today, we will not weep or complain. We are not metwalis [a derogatory term used to refer to the Shi'ah of Lebanon and Syria], but rejectionists, avengers and revolutionaries, even if it costs us our blood and our lives. Hussain faced his enemies with seventy men, and it was a much bigger and well-armed enemy. Today we are more than seventy, and our enemy is no longer a quarter of the world's population.

"The men in power say that the clergy should only pray, and not meddle in other things! They exhort us to pray and fast for them, so that the foundations of their reign will not be shaken, while they distance themselves from religion and exploit it to hold on to their thrones. The people in power are the most infidels of infidels and the most atheist of atheists!

In this country justice is not given, it must be taken." (Norton, p. 46.)

It is with these powerful words that the Imam announced the birth of the Movement of the Deprived, Harakat al-Mahrumin. This movement became a popular expression of the Shi'ah dissatisfaction with the status quo. It was the first time the Shi'ah had ever presented a united front against the dangers that surrounded them. It also

became the voice of the Shi`ah community in Lebanon, socially, politically, and militarily.

The Imam did not only have to worry about and deal with the Christian and Sunni factions of the government, he had very strong opposition and animosity from one of the strongest Shi`i blocks in the government, that of the Speaker of the Parliament, Kamil al-As`ad (1964-1984). Kamil al-As`ad was from a village in the south and represented the Shi`ah in Lebanon, but he had never visited any of the Shi`i regions, even his own village. He had hired some men to be his enforcers and representatives in the south. He was the son of one of the ten feudal, land-owning families in the south, who basically controlled all land, money and agriculture.

When asked about the antagonism between him and Kamil al-As`ad, he replied:

“If I have any complaints against President al-As`ad , the cause is that I do not know of an era in the history of Lebanon which had given so many opportunities to a politician from the South as this era had given to President Kamil al-As`ad. And if these occasions were not sufficient for him to serve the South, then when would the time come to demand justice for the South and heal its suffering? (Halawi, p. 148.)

The history of the As`ads in the government goes back to the 1950's when Kamil's father, Ahmad, was also Speaker of the Parliament. An incident that took place during one of the visits the father made to the south, during the election season, exemplifies the disinterest of the Shi`ah leaders of that time in the affairs and for the needs of their constituents. It is said that while on a visit to his home village, representatives from surrounding villages came to wish him well and request his support with some projects to help them. A Shaikh from the village of Juayyah asked ‘Ahmad Baik’ (a title given to feudal lords at the time), “Why don’t you help us build a school to



teach our children”? Ahmad replied: “Why do you want to teach your children, my son Kamil is learning in France, and that is enough. He is learning for all of you.” This incident became the talk of the town all over Lebanon. The rest of the Lebanese used it to show the backwardness and simplicity of the Shi`ah. (‘Ajami, p. 66.)

Kamil Baik was not the only opposition to the Imam within the Shi`ah political elite. Another old politician from South Lebanon, Kazim Baik al-Khalil, worked hard to destroy the reputation of the Imam within the country and among his constituents and followers. In an attempt to show that the Imam was not a trustworthy man of religion, he contracted with a woman who taped a statement saying that the Imam was having an affair with her. Kazem Baik sent the tape to all forms of the media. When the Imam heard the news he requested a meeting with the young woman. Arrangements were made and the two met at the headquarters of the SISC (Supreme Islamic Shi`I Council). With TV cameras and reporters from local and foreign papers and TV stations present, it is said that the Imam asked her to look into his eyes and repeat her claims. Reporters and witnesses said that as soon as the young woman looked into the eyes of the Imam, she fell to his feet, kissed them, cried and confessed that she had been paid by Kazim Baik to make the statement. She apologized to the Imam and left. (‘Ajami, p. 111.)

In addition to the fact that the woman’s confession had cleared the Imam of the claim of impropriety, it also showed the Lebanese, and especially those who were not very sure about his character, that he was genuine. The incident also exposed the politicians and their schemes. They wanted to destroy his power base because his popularity and actions were chipping away at their power base. They were not used to

being in the background of events. They were used to being in the spotlight and forefront of things. Here came a black-turbaned man from Iran, and he was out-shining and out-performing them. These two personalities were the most famous opponents of the Imam, but they were not the only ones. The rest of the opponents were mostly low-level politicians who were on the payroll of feudal lords such as the As'ads and the Khalils.

In a famous speech of his in 1974 the Imam declared that "the threat to the Shi'ah and Lebanese did not come from the outside, but rather, from the inside." (Sadr, 1979, p. 35.) This was a clear reference to the all the politicians in Lebanon, Shi'ah as well as others, who basically took the fate of their communities in the palm of their hands.

The tense relationship between the Imam and the Lebanese government with all its branches and political parties continued all through the time he lived in Lebanon. Even though he was able to get some recognition for the needs and hopes of the Shi'i community, he wasn't able to dramatically change the attitude of the government towards addressing their main concerns. The one thing that he was able to do was create awareness among the Shi'ah of the neglect the whole government was exercising on them, and gave them the option to fight for their rights and change their future.

#### Relations with Arab and Muslim Governments

The one characteristic that distinguished Imam Musa from other politicians in Lebanon and the region as a whole was his ability to gain the respect of others and build bridges to them. He saw himself as the representative of the Shi'i community in Lebanon to the world. The Shi'ah were the largest group in Lebanon, but they were a minority in the Arab and Muslim Worlds. The Imam maintained a link to his country of

birth, Iran, and used his contacts there to help get moral and financial assistance for the Shi'i community in Lebanon. He also maintained a good relationship with the Shi'i community and religious establishment in Iraq. But perhaps his most important contacts were the ones he made with the neighbors of Lebanon. He realized that good relations with Syria, Egypt, and Jordan were vital in securing recognition for his community. In addition to maintaining strong relations with neighbors, he also strove to establish and strengthen relations with countries like Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Algeria, and the Gulf States.

Imam Musa al-Sadr received an official invitation from Kuwait in 1965. The invitation was a happy surprise for both the Imam and the Lebanese compatriots who lived and worked in Kuwait. While in Kuwait, the Imam met with and spoke to the Lebanese community there. He reminded them about the need to be faithful and appreciative to the government of Kuwait for giving them the opportunity to live and work there. He also met with Kuwaiti leaders, religious leaders and businessmen. It is important to point out that many Shi'ah men were working in Kuwait at the time, and the money they sent back to family and relatives in Lebanon helped produce a class of Shi'ah which had money and thus political power. (Qubaisi, p. 59.)

In 1970 Imam Musa was invited to the Islamic Conference, which was held in Cairo, Egypt. As the conference was winding down, two pieces of news carried by Egyptian newspapers and magazines caught the attention of everyone in Egypt and the world. The first piece of news was the fact that Imam Musa al-Sadr prayed the Friday prayer, *Salat al-Jum'ah*, in the great al-Azhar Mosque. When the prayer was finished the

Imam stood at the podium and spoke to the thousands of faithful who filled the mosque and its surroundings. He praised the sacrifices the Egyptian had made and continue to make on behalf of the Arabs and the Muslims. At the conclusion of his speech, it was reported that worshipers ran to shake and kiss his hands, and touch his robe (*`abayah*). (Qubaisi, p. 86.)

The second piece of news referred to the fact that President Gamal Abd al-Nasir welcomed the Imam in his residence in Manshiya al-Bukra. They met for over an hour, during which they discussed the situation in Lebanon, and especially the situation of south Lebanon. (Qubaisi, p. 87). President Abd al-Nasir expressed his concern at the serious situation in south Lebanon and promised to do whatever he could to support and protect what he called: "this dear part of Lebanon." After the meeting president Abd al-Nasir asked the Imam to be his guest for another week, but the Imam had to return to Lebanon after receiving news of another Israeli massacre in one of the villages of South Lebanon.

It is necessary to point out that the relationship between the Shi`ah and al-Azhar in Egypt is very important. It was Shaikh Muhammad Shaltut, the head of al-Azhar Mosque, who proclaimed the Shi`ah, one of the six Muslim rites (Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki, Shafi`i, Ja`fari, and Isma`ili). This religious proclamation (*fatwa*) was very important for the Shi`ah not only because it gave them recognition, but more importantly, because it was made by the Shaikh of al-Azhar, the highest Sunni religious authority in the Muslim world.

King Husain of Jordan invited Imam Musa to visit in 1977. The king welcomed the Imam and his companions very warmly. The visit lasted five hours, one and a half of which were spent in a one-to-one meeting with the king. (Qubaisi, p. 91.) The Imam also met with representatives from the Jordanian government. After the meetings, the Imam gave a press conference in which he praised the role Jordan is playing in helping the Palestinians fulfill their dream of returning to Palestine. He compared Jordan to Lebanon as it pertained to its proximity to Israel and asked the Jordanian people and government to play an even more active role in the struggle against the Zionist State. He also reminded the Palestinians who lived in Jordan to respect its laws and sovereignty. (Qubaisi, p. 92.)

#### Maintaining Ties with Iran

Imam Musa kept an eye on the political developments in Iran. He was a friend of Imam Khomeini and studied under him while he was in Najaf, Iraq in 1955-58. In fact, Imam Khomeini frequently referred to him as 'my dear son'. The relationship between them was both based on their blood relations and their descendancy from the prophet's family (*sayyids*). They both lived and studied in the West and they are both of mixed Arab and Persian ancestry. While in Iraq and France, Imam Khomeini received Imam Musa on numerous occasions and discussed the future of Iran and the Islamic revolution he initiated. In fact, two of Imam Khomeini's closest advisors while in exile, Sadiq Ghotbzadeh and Sadiq Tabataba'i and two of the first cabinet ministers in the post

Islamic revolution government, Mustafa Shamran and Ibrahim Yazdi, were some of Imam Musa's best friends. (Thoreaux, p. 84.)

The first president of the Islamic Republic of Iran Abu al-Hasan Bani Sadr and the first Prime Minister, Mahdi Bazargan, were also some of Imam Musa's best friends. They would eventually go into exile after a power struggle between them and the mullahs of Iran. They also commented on the disappearance of Imam Musa and the possibility of the involvement of some of the mullahs in it. Imam Musa kept his communication lines open to the shah's government until 1973, when Iran sided with Israel against the Arabs in the war. After that, Imam Musa launched a major media attack against the shah and his government and publicly supported Imam Khomeini and his revolution. Imam Musa's last published article, 'The Call of the Prophets', in August 1978, a week before his fateful visit to Libya, defended the revolution and expressed complete confidence in its victory. During the same period of time, Imam Khomeini gave his first interview with foreign press in Najaf, where he denounced the shah and condemned Israeli aggression in South Lebanon. (Thoreaux, p. 85.) It seemed like both were speaking from the same tongue and their ideas and pronouncements were almost interchangeable. It was the last time the two met or spoke before Imam Musa's disappearance and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Imam Musa also kept in touch with his friends and family in Iran. He visited Iran regularly and was welcomed each time by the Shah and the Prime Minister of Iran. It is also said that the Shah provided Imam Musa with financial support, but that the Imam continued to criticize the Shah's policies towards the rising Muslim movement against his

rule. The former Iranian Defense Minister Ahmad Madani said the following when he was asked about the special relationship the Imam had with Iran and the Shah: “Imam Musa tried to correct the Shah’s policies since he perceived them as secular and not friendly towards the Arabs”. He went on by saying: “He was able to get away with it because there was no questions about his loyalty, and besides he was Imam of Lebanon’s Shi’i community—not an internal irritant to the Shah in Iran.” (‘Ajami, p. 181.)

When Imam Musa visited Iran, he always went to Qum and Isfahan to meet with his friends and followers. He usually met them in public parks where music used to be played and young men and women used to sit and socialize. The Imam’s relationship with the Shah and his government in Iran turned sour in the ‘70’s. Imam Musa became a major opponent of the Shah and a proponent for his removal from power. Imam Musa saw the Shah as a puppet of the West and criticized his policies towards his Arab neighbors in the gulf. The Iranian government using its newspapers and press launched an attack on Imam Musa, accusing him of being an agent of the Arab countries and a traitor to his country, Iran. In fact his bad relationship with the Shah would be used as one of the possible scenarios for his disappearance in 1978. Some sources came to the conclusion that Imam Musa was kidnapped and killed by the SAVAK (Iranian secret police). (‘Ajami, p. 192.)

Another trip of importance the Imam launched in 1963 was his trip to Europe. The most important phase of this trip was his visit to the Vatican and his subsequent meeting with the pope (‘Ajami, p. 96). It was said that this visit was the first made by a Muslim religious leader to the headquarters of Catholicism in the world, but Imam Musa

initiated this trip. This is because he recognized the importance of the Vatican and its occupant to the Christians in Lebanon and to the process of establishing a sense of harmony between the two religions. It is necessary to point out that the Maronites who make up the largest Christian community in Lebanon look up to the pope of Rome as their spiritual leader. The Imam met with the pope (Paul VI) and his curia for over an hour. Topics discussed during the meeting ranged from the situation in Lebanon, to the importance of narrowing the gap of misunderstanding between Islam and Christianity. The trip scored pointed for the Imam among the Christians in Lebanon, but many Muslim '*ulama*' in Lebanon and around the Muslim world criticized it. Some accused him of giving the pope and Christianity a high status, while others went as far as accusing him of apostasy. (Ajami, p. 101.)

An incident that took place in France exemplified the character of the Imam and set him apart from many Muslim and Christian religious leaders. "Aren't we in the house of God? Aren't we both God's children?" The Imam asked the astonished French priest who found him saying his prayers in his black cloak and turban in the cathedral at Strassbourg in the mid 1960's. (Ajami, p. 115.) He reminded audiences at many of his lectures at the University of Strassbourg, the Sorbounne and Aix-la-Chapelle that Islam and Muslims revere Christ's prophethood and miracles, and accept the doctrine of the immaculate conception. He also quoted liberally from the Gospel. (Thoreaux, p. 53.)



### Relations with Christians in Lebanon

Imam Musa recognized that in addition to tackling the many social and economic problems of the Shi'ah community in Lebanon, he needed to build bridges to all the Lebanese, Christians and Muslims. He saw it as going hand-in-hand with his tough task of uniting and empowering the Shi'ah community. He was convinced that good relations with the other Lebanese communities were vital in breaking down the walls of misunderstanding and mistrust between them. This he believed would result in a more stable society and would ensure a prosperous future for all.

In an attempt to build a bridge to the Christians during a very tense period in Lebanese history, Imam Musa planned the most astounding act yet. With the help of his friend, Maronite Patriarch Antonios Bulus Khoreich, the Imam delivered a Lenten sermon at the Cathedral of Saint Louis des Capuchins at Bab Idris, a major street in the capital city of Beirut. It is said that he moved the worshipers in attendance to tears and a long ovation at the end of his sermon. The topic of his sermon was "Humanity and Lebanon." (Sadr, 1981, p.104.) The topic he chose was intentional. He wanted to make the audience aware of the fact that the history of Lebanon was full of examples of man's suffering and oppression, and that replacing one form of oppression with another was not the answer. He asked them to get rid of oppression and misunderstanding and unite. Unity and equality, he said, would ensure a bright future. The alternative, he warned, was very dark and would bring the end of Lebanon as they knew it. This is how he started his sermon:

"In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. We praise and thank you, oh God our Lord, God of Abraham and Ishmael, God of Moses, Jesus and

Muhammad, Lord of the oppressed and of all creation. Praise be to Him who comforts the fearful, saves the godly, exalts the downtrodden, and humbles the arrogant, destroys kings and appointed all others. Praise be to the Smasher of all oppressors, breaker of all tyrants, from Whom no one may flee, the Warner of despots and Cry of all supplicants.”

This is how he ended his sermon:

“Self love, the fuel of human perfection and the accomplisher of man’s ambitions creates a dreadful problem when it becomes self-adoration. Love of country, though the noblest of sentiments, becomes in its extreme form, a blind heresy, as when men permit themselves to build the majesty of their country on the rubble of others. Self love, patriotism and family and tribal loyalties are healthy attitudes in human life within their natural limits, but let us not forget the Nazi nationalism that scorched the whole earth more than once.” (Sadr, 1982, p.105.)

Reaction to the sermon ranged from the unbelievable to the wary. This was the first time in the history of Lebanon that a Muslim leader would attempt such a move. The newspapers and magazines heralded it as a momentous event in Lebanese history, discussing the courage of the Imam, and the meaning of his message. Even though most were positive and optimistic, some were alarmed by his words while others wondered why he did not mention anything about the Palestinians in Lebanon.

Imam Musa also attended ceremonies to open new churches and religious centers. He was invited to and spoke at two mainly Christian colleges in Lebanon. He was the first Muslim religious leader to ever set foot in these establishments throughout the history of Lebanon. In addition to this, Imam Musa visited villages in South Lebanon and towns in eastern Lebanon, which had mainly Christian residents and were located in mainly Shi`ah areas.

The aim of these visits was to meet with the locals and their religious leaders in order to assure them that no matter what happens, their lives would not be in danger. It is

necessary to point out that Christians who lived in the south and the east among Shi'i population, enjoyed a sense of safety throughout the fifteen years of the war. In fact, Christian populations in the southern city of Sur (Tyre) increased in number and prospered without any harassment from the locals. When two villages in the Bika' Valley were attacked by Palestinians in 1977, Imam Musa went to the villages and apologized for such an act. He promised them that he would do all he can to avoid such attacks in the future.

#### Relations with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)

Imam Musa was a supporter of the Palestinian cause from the beginning. He made it clear during many of his sermons and presentations that the Palestinian cause was a just one and that the world needs to help the Palestinian regain their land. The Imam also maintained a working relationship with the Palestinians and PLO leaders in Lebanon. It is important to point out that the Palestinians who lived in Lebanon were mainly found in areas of Shi'i concentration. The main areas of Palestinian refugee settlement were those of the southern suburbs of Beirut and the south. In fact, the southern concentration of Palestinians was of most concern to the Imam and the Shi'ah in general. It is important to point out that of the twelve Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, only one was located in a Christian-dominated area.

In 1970 a group of Palestinian fighters and leaders living in Jordan tried to topple King Husain, but the king crushed the coup and expelled them from the kingdom. Hundreds of Palestinian fighters were killed and the base of the Palestinian Liberation

Organization was destroyed. The majority of the Palestinian fighters and leaders who survived the Jordanian crackdown were expelled. (Shururu, p. 40.) Most of them ended up in Lebanon and more specifically in South Lebanon. As a result of the freedom of press and organizing political parties in Lebanon, the Palestinian organization grew strong and began recruiting Lebanese young men and women as members and fighters. Young, poor Shi'i men became the main recruits of the Palestinians.

In addition to the fact that the Palestinian numbers and power had increased dramatically in Lebanon, the Arab League, meeting in Cairo to discuss the Palestinian crisis after the Jordanian campaign, gave the Palestinians the right to bear arms to protect themselves within their refugee camps. It also gave them the power to attack Israel from its bases in the Arab world. Lebanon would end up bearing the brunt of the consequences of this treaty because the majority of the Palestinian organization and fighters were located in Lebanon. The Palestinians started launching attacks against Israelis all around the world and across the border from Lebanon. Israelis retaliated by assassinating many PLO leaders all around the world and in Lebanon. It also started bombing Beirut and the south in an attempt to discourage the Lebanese and their government from allowing the Palestinians to continue with their attacks using Lebanon as their base. South Lebanon would become the battleground between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and the Shi'i residents would pay the ultimate price: their lives and those of their families.

Imam Musa became very concerned with the deteriorating security situation in South Lebanon and would ask both the government of Lebanon to provide protection to

its people in the south, and the Palestinians to stop using South Lebanon as a base for their rocket attacks across the border into Israel. He was heard saying: “The problem is not one of *fida’iyyin* infiltration, but of launching rockets and grenades against Israel across the south. This is something that is totally impermissible. The launching of rockets and grenades across a border is not at all a revolutionary *fida’iyyin* action. This also means that Lebanon is in a state of war with Israel. Who is opening fire? This is not important. The gist of the matter is that the Lebanese territory became a base for launching missiles and grenades.” (Norton, p. 43.) He made sure that he was behind the Palestinians, but did not accept some of their actions that put the Shi`ah in south Lebanon in danger.

He also warned a few years later, as the PLO became a virtual state within a state, that “it was not in the interest of the of the Palestinian people and their cause to establish a state within a state in Lebanon.” (Sadr, p. 75.) These words were prophetic, as the Palestinians would clash with the Lebanese army in 1973. The Lebanese army was outnumbered and outgunned. The incident was defused, but its meaning and consequences reverberated all across Lebanon, especially across the Christian heartland. The Christians had always been wary of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, and after the clash with the army they became more convinced that the Palestinian presence in Lebanon was bad for them and for Lebanon. Only a year and a half later the spark of the Lebanese Civil War was ignited. Many observers and rightist politicians in Lebanon blame the Palestinians and their Muslim supporters for the war.

The Palestinians became concerned with the Imam's statements that were aimed at controlling the Palestinian power and base in Lebanon. In an attempt to silence the voice of the Imam, Palestinian armed men resorted to intimidation and attacks against him. In 1974 a group of armed Palestinians attacked the office of Imam Musa in west Beirut, killing one of its guards and ransacking its contents. The Imam was not present during the attack. In another incident in 1976, a mortar attack was launched on the headquarters of the SISC in east Beirut. There were no casualties, but the building sustained major damage. (Qubaisi, p. 48.) In 1977 a Syrian helicopter trying to land at Beirut's International Airport and bearing Imam Musa who was returning from a meeting with President Asad of Syria was attacked with gun fire. The helicopter sustained eighty bullets but landed safely with the Imam and the rest of the passengers and crew. The Syrian helicopter incident was the third assassination attempt on the Imam's life during the summer of 1976. (Qubaisi, p. 49.)

The Palestinian leadership also launched a media campaign against Imam Musa. They accused him of being an Iranian agent, a member of SAVAK, the Iranian secret service. They also accused him of being an agent of the Lebanese Army's Second Bureau, the Lebanese intelligence agency. After the fall of the mainly-Shi'ah town *Nab'ah* in eastern Beirut to the Phalangists during the civil war, the Palestinians accused the Imam of being a traitor and handing the town over to them. The Phalangists had encircled the town and cut it off from all sources of food, medicine, water, and reinforcements. In order to stop the suffering of its inhabitants, who were ninety percent Shi'ah, Imam Musa agreed with the Phalangists to surrender the town to them with the

condition that its residents be allowed to pass to the Muslim sector of Beirut without any restrictions. The Phalangists agreed, but when the town surrendered they rounded-up all the young Shi'ah and Palestinian men and killed them. Women and children were harassed, but allowed to pass through.

The PLO representative in Egypt issued a statement in which he denounced the Imam's conspiracy against the Palestinian people and the Palestinian leadership in southern Lebanon condemned him as an American agent. During a ceremony commemorating the Lebanese and Palestinian martyrs that fell defending the Lebanese and Palestinian masses, a PLO speaker compared the Imam to the head of a serpent and said: "The agents who exploit these circumstances to strike at the masses must be killed." (Rida, p.114.) The symbol of a serpent is usually used to describe evil and conspiracy. The Lebanese leftist parties and militias followed suit and condemned Imam Musa's actions and called him an agent of the Phalangists.

When Imam Musa was asked by the Egyptian journalist `Adil Rida in 1977 about the Palestinian presence in Lebanon and its consequences on Lebanon, he replied by saying:

"The protection of the campus is the responsibility of the Lebanese Army and this mission has been officially passed on to the Arab Deterrent Force. It is well known that the Cairo Agreement provides a place in the South and west-central part of Lebanon, where Palestinians are allowed to pass armed. The implementation of the agreement has given the radicals in the PLO the pretext to arm themselves and move around freely within Lebanon. This has also given the Lebanese Front (group of Christian militias), the pretext and opportunity to rearm themselves. This will eventually lead to military confrontation and the future of Lebanon will be in grave danger." (Rida, p. 125.)

In 1976 Colonel Qaddafi called on all the Arabs to support his plan of making southern Lebanon “one giant military base to destroy Israel.” Imam Musa responded to Qaddafi’s announcement during one of his interviews by saying: “A catastrophe is threatening southern Lebanon. We would like to ask all the Arab countries to keep Lebanon free of their quarrels and not give Israel the pretext of attacking and occupying southern Lebanon.” (Sadr, 1981, p. 88.) These words would go into the history books as both very accurate and prophetic. It was also during this interview that Imam Musa attacked someone by name for the first time ever. He accused Colonel Mu`ammar Qaddafi of being the main agitator behind the Palestinian-Lebanese disturbances.

#### Relations with the Lebanese Left

Imam Musa maintained a very cautious but workable relationship with the Lebanese left. Lebanon was home to over twenty leftist parties and organizations in addition to at least one dozen Palestinian factions. The leftist parties and the Palestinians forged a union of sorts whose aim was to counter the Christian right. In fact, for the most part the leftist and the Palestinians were engulfed in so much infighting that they were rarely united. The only time they spoke with one voice was when they had to counter a Christian challenge whether it was military or political. The Sunni parties were mostly gangs of young men who were armed by Palestinians and mostly kept to their strongholds in the western sector of Beirut. The Druze party and militia was mostly active in the Shuf Mountains east of Beirut. They had a limited presence in Beirut itself



until the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The Palestinians controlled most of west Beirut but were involved in many bloody feuds and small turf wars.

Imam Musa criticized the infighting between the various leftist militias and parties, and warned that such acts would ultimately lead to the destruction of Lebanon and make it harder for the Maronites and the other Christians to trust living among them. The other issue Imam Musa was very concerned was that most of the armed militiamen who made up the bulk of these parties were young uneducated Shi'i men who were lured to arms by the money they made as fighters. During one of his press conferences at the beginning of the Lebanese civil war, Imam Musa expressed his frustration with the leftists and the Palestinians when he said: "The left and the Palestinians are willing to fight until the last Shi'i man in Lebanon." This statement did not win the Imam many friends. In fact, from that time on the left looked at Imam Musa as a threat to their very existence and used every public and print opportunity to attack him and accuse him of being an agent of the West, the Israelis, and the Shah. (Norton, p. 76.)

He blamed the communists and the extreme Palestinian left as well as Israel for the deteriorating situation in southern Lebanon. He blamed the radical Palestinian groups for not removing heavy weapons from the refugee camps and for attacking Israel from South Lebanon and blamed the communists for using the civil war and the religious frictions in Lebanon to get rid of the Lebanese government. He also blamed the Israelis for using southern Lebanon as their punching bag for attacking the Palestinians.

"The communists had a prominent role in kindling the Lebanese civil war and pushing the Palestinian resistance to continue fighting. They used dirty methods and illegal means such as the seizure of shops and houses, and considering them the spoils of war. The communists also tried to exploit sectarianism. Actually,

they are few in number, but they have been funded and encouraged by the negative role played by Colonel Mou' ammar al-Qaddafi." (' Ajami, p. 76.)

This would be the second time Imam Musa had ever accused anyone by name of being responsible for the crisis in Lebanon. The first time Imam Musa attacked someone by name in one of his speeches or presentations was when he attacked the Shah of Iran. It would also be used by some sources as the motive Colonel Qaddafi had for getting rid of Imam Musa in 1978.

When ' Adil Rida asked Imam Musa in an interview about his relationship with the left in Lebanon, he answered by saying:

"I am not harshly against the left as some people think. If we define the left as a force for change, I consider myself one of its pillars. But I do not trust anyone who does not believe in God....I am against materialists and those who deny God. I am not with absolute violence, just as I am not with absolute mildness. I am with absolute truth, and that sometimes means violence and at other times mildness. In this I emulate the Prophet, Ali, Hussein, and the great prophet the Lord Messiah, a man of peace and love, who when he found money changers and merchants taking over the temple, he did not deal with them mildly. He expelled them using force and said, "This is the Lord's house, and you have turned it into a den of thieves." (Rida, p. 142.)

### **Imam Musa al-Sadr: Religious Thought and Activism**

#### **Shi'ism: A Movement and not an Institution**

Most people look at Shi'ism as a *madhab* (Islamic school of thought), compare it to the 'Ash'ari movement and the Mu'tazali movement, or see it as a response to the questions of succession that faced the Muslim community after the death of the Prophet. According to Imam Musa, Shi'ism is the ideology and the behavior of Muslims among whom are the infallible *Imams* of *Ahl al-Bait* (the direct family of the Prophet) and their followers. Shi'ism and its vision go beyond religious thought, history and interpretations of these movements ('Ash'ari and Mu'tazali) and political ideologies, even though some of them came about as a result of and/or during the same period of time. (Sadr, 1992, p. 506.)

Imam Musa reminds us that the first person to use the word Shi'ah was the Prophet Himself when he said: "*Ya 'Ali satadkhulu anta wa shi'atuka radiyyin mardiyin*" ('Ali, you and your party (followers) will go to heaven with God's blessings). (Shi'i hadith quoted and interpreted by Imam Musa al-Sadr.) It is important to point out that the party of Ali (*shi'at 'Ali*) during the time of the Prophet were some of the Prophet's closest companions, among whom were Fatimah (the Prophet's daughter and 'Ali's wife), Salman, Abu Dhurr, al-Mukdad and 'Ammar. (Sadr, 1992, p. 506.)

Imam Musa also saw Shi'ism as the vision of the early *mujahidin*. After the death of the Prophet there was opposition to 'Ali and his companions with regards to the issue of succession. 'Ali and his companions wanted to appoint a successor to the Prophet according to religious interpretations and not human selection. They regarded this issue

to be very important as it was going to build and sustain the Muslim *ummah* during such times, and as such should not be delegated to just anyone. He pointed out the statement made by the Prophet at al-Jahfa after he performed his last *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca, which is required by all able-bodied Muslims at least once during their lifetime). (Sadr, 1992, 507.)

The Prophet said: “*Al-Nabi awla bi-al-mu'minin min anfusihim*,” (The Prophet knows what is best for his followers). (Sadr, 1992, p. 507.) The Shi`ah interpreted this statement to be the Prophet’s wish and directive as to the issue of succession after His death. They interpreted it as saying that the family of the Prophet has preference over all others in terms of succeeding Him after his death. The other camp did not agree with this interpretation and decided to ask Ali to support their process of selection. When Ali saw that the situation was causing problems between the Muslims, he agreed with the rest of the *Sahabah* (the companions of the Prophet) and supported the “right-guided caliphs”.

Imam Musa summarized the philosophy of the Shia`h as accepting all the basic teachings of Islam and, as it pertains to *fiqh*, the Shi`ah believe in the continuation of *ijtihad* (studying and interpreting the teachings of the Prophet and Islam). From the ideological point of view, the Shi`ah believe in the issue of loyalty and sacred status of the *Ahl al-bait* (the direct family and descendants of the Prophet). According to Imam Musa Shi`ah belief in the special and sacred status of the family of the Prophet means learning about them and their ways of life. (Sadr, 1992, p. 512.)

He then went into the issue of the Shi`ah belief in the *Mahdi*, the twelfth Shi`i Imam, who is now in occultation and will only come back at the end of the world. When

he does come back, he will establish a new world based on faith love, and peace. He pointed out to the fact that the idea of a *mahdi* is also part of the beliefs of Christianity and Judaism. He also reminded people that the idea of the *mahdi* is mentioned in the following *ayahs* (chapters) of the Qur'an:

“We wrote in the Zabur that my followers will inherit the world”,  
and

God promised those of you who believe and do the right thing that you will be successors of the world, as were those before you. He will also establish their religion as that of the world and give them peace and harmony, and make them submit to him without anyone else”,

and

“We (God) will have mercy on the disinherited of the world and make them Imams and inheritors of the world.” (Sadr, 1992, p. 502.)

He finally discussed the role of the Imam (leader) of the religious community and his responsibility towards his followers and Islam. The leader according to Imam Musa must be just, courageous and willing to lead his people to the right path. “The responsibility of the leader has no limits.” (Sadr, 1981, p. 45.) Imam Musa believed that the leader must live under the same conditions as his people. In fact, he thinks that a good leader is a leader who makes sure that his people are living in peace and have all they need. This in turn make him a strong and just leader and makes him highly respected and revered by his people. A leader must be willing to fight for the truth and the rights of his people, and even give his life to them if necessary. He pointed to the history of Islam and the Shi`ah as being full of great examples of leaders who were just and gave their lives for the betterment of their followers.

### Islam and Modernism

Imam Musa's religious ideas were modernist and reflected a new view of Islam, that of one aware of and adaptable to the changing world. He said that: "Islam is a discourse that echoes the concerns of the modernists, but people nowadays have turned it into a ritual." (Sadr, 1979, p. 64.) According to Imam Musa Islam was a movement full of vitality and work and now it has become stagnant and a set of rituals. Imam Musa was pointing out the fact that Muslims have become complacent and were not actively involved in their religion. He said that Muslims have fallen behind everyone in the world because they had strayed from the basics of their faith and culture.

Imam Musa looked at Islam as being open and adaptable to modernism. He saw the man of religion, *rajul al-din*, as a very open person who is capable of interpreting Islam in such a way as to accommodate changes around the world that affect his people, thus keeping them competitive and innovative. He did not see the men of religion mainly reading the Qur'an and interpreting the *hadith* to themselves, but rather, he saw them using the wisdom of the Qur'an and the *hadith* to help their people advance with the rest of humanity. According to him anything less would keep the Muslims behind in all aspects of life.

He saw that the world was changing at a fast speed and that the Muslim leaders needed to acquaint themselves with these changes and not close their eyes and ears to them. This went back to his belief that Islam was not just a set of rituals and that all a Muslim had to do was to perform these rituals and that would take care of him and his future. This was a concept that was not frowned upon by many Muslim leaders both

Sunni and Shi'i. Many Muslim leaders accused him of being "westernized," a word usually used to brand someone who has betrayed his/her Muslim culture and traditions.

### Islam and Women

When talking about Islam and women in the Middle East one usually thinks of veiled women walking up and down the streets with only their eyes showing to the public. Unfortunately very little research has been done on women in the Middle East and in Muslim countries in order for the West and the rest of the world to formulate a better picture about who they are, how they live, and how do they feel. Before the book *Women and Gender in the Middle East*, by Leila Ahamd was written in 1992, there was only one other book written about women in the Middle East. The book was *Women in Islam* by Wiebke Walther. It was published in 1982 and was mostly a series of anecdotes. Things have changed quite a bit since 1982 and the role and status of women in Middle Eastern societies have also changed. More and more women in Middle Eastern societies have joined the labor force and have become more educated than their counterparts of only ten to fifteen years ago. They have also become more actively involved in the social, political and economic aspects of their countries.

The issues of veiling, women rights and responsibilities, feminism, and education have been discussed over the years by many women groups, religious and social reformers, and the world community. It is important to point out here that when talking about the Middle East or Muslim countries, it is necessary to mention that they are not made up of homogenous societies. In fact, they are made up of many religious, racial

and cultural groups, each of whom has its own agenda, way of life and traditions.

Therefore it is not fair to lump the people of the Middle East and those of the Muslim world and make generalizations about them. In fact, in some cases things vary within the same country. Changes in the status of women in the Middle East and the Muslim world seem to go hand-in-hand with changes in the political and economic arenas.

Women in pre-Islamic times were used as property and did not have much to say about how they live and they could do. When Islam came to the region, it gave women more rights in terms of how they lived and their contribution to society and to religion.

Throughout the history of Islam in the region and the world, women emerged as leaders, businesswomen and counselors and confidants of rulers. They also participated in religious activities and listened to the Prophet's discourses. (Ahmad, p. 72.) They also had much to do with who ruled when, how and for how long.

There were few major changes in Middle Eastern and Muslim societies until the early nineteenth century. Colonialism, economic and cultural encroachment by the West, and the establishment of 'modern' states caused a major transformation in the region. Some of these changes were positive for women but the majority, were negative as they took away from women some of the control over their lives and means of production. Western goods became abundant in the region and replaced some of the locally made products that were in many cases, produced by women. Egypt was the leader in the process of transformation and giving women a bigger role in society and politics. It was also in Egypt at the turn of the nineteenth century that the debate over the veil came to the surface. The debate at the time was mostly a reaction to the colonial



powers that ruled the region and tried to indoctrinate the people into emulating them. Since then, the issue of the veil has been discussed by many societies and governments in the region.

During the early nineteenth century, women in Egypt and Turkey attended schools in larger numbers than ever in the past. They attended government schools, religious schools, and in the case of the Copts (Christian sect in Egypt), missionary schools. Muhammad `Ali and Khedive Ismail promoted education as the “base to every progress”. Their daughters were taught by European tutors in European subjects and by local educators in Arabic and religion. Upper class families also educated their daughters, even though some of the mothers did not feel very comfortable entrusting them to male tutors. In most of these cases the fathers supported their daughters’ pursuit of education. (Ahmad, p. 135-36.)

From the middle to the end of the nineteenth century, nationalist intellectuals Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abdu preached the importance of education and encouraged everyone in Muslim society to obtain a well-balanced one as a way to move up in society and to secure jobs in the government. They became very influential intellectual figures in Egypt, Turkey, Iran and other parts of the Muslim world. Muhammad Abdu established Muslim benevolent societies and private committees for the purpose of establishing schools. (Ahmad, p. 138.) The religious schools accommodated more students than did government schools and catered to both sexes. In 1923, the Egyptian government declared that education is a priority and made primary education compulsory for all children. The number of girls in schools increased dramatically

eventhough the government did not have the resources to implement its plan and make education available to all.

During the early part of the twentieth century another very influential movement came into existence. The Muslim Brethren (Al-ikhwan Al-Muslimun), was established by Hasan al-Banna, a very anti-British, anti-Western reformer who believed that only education and the return to Muslim teachings and traditions would free the Muslims from the West. He studied with Muhammad Abdu and had similar views regarding women and their role in Muslim society. Eventhough all reformers encouraged women to become educated, they also reiterated that a woman's first and foremost responsibility is her family and home. Hasan Ismail Hudaybi, Al-Banna's successor as leader of the Brethren, stated the following as their view on women:

“The woman's natural place is in the home, but if she finds that after doing her duty at home she has time, she can use part of this time in the service of society, on the condition that this is done within the legal limits which preserve her dignity and morality.” (Ahmad, p. 195.)

From the middle of the twentieth century until nowadays the roles of Arab and Muslim women in society underwent a major transformation. Women in Egypt, Turkey, Iran, Lebanon, Iraq, Morocco and other Arab and Muslim countries, entered all arenas of labor from business to aeronautics, to engineering to the government. The situation of women in most Gulf countries remained the same, eventhough more women were sent abroad by the governments to get an education. The Islamic revolution in Iran, the Afghan civil war, the military coups in Sudan and Mauritania have been seen as events

that rolled back the advances and progress made by women in these countries. The full impact of these events will not be seen and felt until some time in the future.

“During the early days of Islam, women worked even though opportunities for paid work were very limited. Today half of our society is paralyzed,” (Sadr, 1981, p. 99.) was a statement Imam Musa made during one of his speeches. It was a very controversial one as it went against the personal understanding of the role of women in Islam espoused by many of the Muslim clergy, both Sunni and Shi'i at the time. He reminded everyone that the wife of the Prophet, Khadijah was a businesswoman and many great Muslim women throughout history were very active politically, socially and economically in the life of Muslim society. This did not mean that Imam Musa wanted Muslim women to emulate their western counterparts, to the contrary, he saw Muslim women as role models for all women in the world.

He reminded Muslims that according to the Qur'an, the Sunnah and hadith, women were given a very special status within Muslim society. Not only are they the ones who give birth to the future generations of Muslims, they are the main educators of these generations. This according to him is probably the most important responsibility anyone can be given. He also reminded them that according to Islamic teachings and traditions, a woman has rights that many Western and “developed” countries don't have for their women. He followed this by stating: “The way women are treated in many Muslim countries around the world does not follow the teachings of the Prophet and Islam. Many leaders, governments and religious leaders have interpreted Islam in their own way so as to meet their ambitions and keep control over their people.” (Sadr, 1981,

p. 104.) He did not mention any country or leader by name as it is something he thought was obviously clear to Muslims who knew what Islam and its teachings were about. He finally reminded them that it was this straying from the real teachings of the Prophet and Islam that had brought Muslims to the situation they were in.

### Islam and Science

The Imam used some of his presentations as an opportunity to explain the close relationship between religion and science. “Genuine faith sustains scientific inquiry and supports it,” he said to a group of intellectuals at a conference in Beirut (Sadr, 1979, p. 78.) According to Imam Musa the believer who fights science and reason and fears them does not fully understand his religion. “Fear of truth means that one’s religion is at odds with the truth.” (Sadr, 1979, p. 81.) He went on by saying that some people believe that man’s incursions into outer space was against the teachings of religion, while others claim that the Qur’an had foretold all scientific advance. He said that both views were wrong.

“Our Islamic education connects heaven to earth and man to his creator.” He noted the many contributions to science, literature and philosophy Muslims had made throughout history. He referred to the work of a famous Muslim philosopher Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi who was known as Mullah Sadra (d. 1640) and explained that his ideas were much more advanced than those of Western philosophers in the twentieth century. He quoted the German philosopher, Karl Jaspers, who said: “Eastern mysticism still illuminated the world,” and the French scholar, Henri Corbin who said: “Europe is in dire

need of the timeless wisdom of Eastern philosophy and that such philosophy can still rescue Europe from the confusion in which it lives and from its eventual decline.” (Sadr, 1981, p. 65.)

Imam Musa explained that God sent His messengers in order to save man from darkness and ignorance. At first things worked well and man made some major discoveries ensuring a better future for humanity. But according to Imam Musa this did not last long and “the tyranny of the men of religion exploited religion in order to impede the advances in science... They declared that their ancestors had discovered all the good that could be discovered, and any new discoveries were heresy and deviation.” The relationship between religion and science continued its confusing and complex history until the twentieth century. According to Imam Musa the twentieth century created a balance between the two.

“Science has calmed down... It has begun to discern the reality of religion, to believe in it, respect it and depend on it. In turn the men of religion have begun to appreciate the services of science to them and to....mankind... We are now at the beginning of the road, and on our horizon appears a true dawn hailing the birth of the true civilization and the beginning of a bright day for humanity, when man can realize his existence, individuality and potential. (Sharaf al-Din, 1997, p. 62.)

In the preface to the book, *Natural Sciences and the Qur'an* by Yusef Muruwweh, Imam Musa wrote the following statement: “God ordained science and religion as twins when He create human beings, for there exists a fateful connection between religion and science; together they determine man’s destiny and his perfection. If science is the light to uncover reality and to know the truth and truth is the act of God and His command, then science is a natural way to see the effects of God.” (Muruwwah, p. 2.) He also

compared the history of both religion and science as being similar in the fact that they both had to endure ignorance, confusion and superstition.

### Towards a United Muslim Front

Imam Musa participated in many conferences that discussed Islamic issues and research. He also visited the Shaikh al-Azhar and many other religious figures throughout the Arab and Muslim world. The goal of his visits and meetings with Muslim religious leaders was to encourage them to sit down and discuss the issues they did not agree on in order for them to become united and speak with one voice. He was well known and respected by religious leaders (Sunni and Shi'i) around the Muslim world.

One of the things Imam Musa tried to do was fulfill his desire of Muslim unity in Lebanon and by doing so be able to use it as a stepping stone to Muslim unity and understanding around the Muslim world. He called for a meeting that included the Sunni community leader in Lebanon, Shaikh Hasan Khalid, and the Druze community leader, the Shaikh al-'Aql. This was the first time anyone had ever called such a meeting between the three leaders of the Muslim communities in Lebanon. The only other occasions the three religious leaders were found together were usually national ceremonies and the like, where they represented their respective communities. The agenda of the meeting was very simple, getting to know one another and establishing lines of communication between the three communities in order to pursue future

cooperation. Unfortunately the three leaders never met in order to discuss specific areas of concern after the first historic meeting.

Imam Musa in 1969 right after he was elected President of the Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council did send a letter to *Mufti* Hasan Khalid. He started his letter by describing the general situation in the Muslim world and how dangerous it is for the future of Islam and Muslims. He informed the *mufti* that the only way to face such serious concerns was to seek complete unity between all Muslims in order to make up for the time they had lost and to ensure future success.

“We the leaders of the Muslims need to be role models to our followers. It is our responsibility to encourage Muslim unity and foster trust and understanding between all Muslims. It is the message of our Prophet that we stay united and not lose sight of what is important and necessary.”

The Prophet commanded us to abide by the teachings of God and not let anything or anyone divide us.” (Qubaisi, p. 71.)

He reminded the *mufti* that for thirty years, a group of top Muslim thinkers and ‘*ulama*’, both Sunni and Shi'i, had been working in the *Dar al-Taqrīb bayna al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyyah* (The Institute for Harmonizing between Muslim Sects), to bridge the gap between the various Muslim groups. Members of this institute included the dean of the Al-Azhar College of Shari‘ah, Shaikh Muhammad al-Madani and some of the top Muslim ‘*ulama*’ from Lebanon, Iran and Iraq. A book on the steps towards a common Muslim *fiqh* (jurisprudence) was written and published by the dean of the Najaf College of Fiqh, Sayyid Muhammed Taqi al-Hakim. (Qubaisi, p. 73.)

He ended his letter by pointing out to the *mufti* that the month of *Ramadan* (month of Muslim fasting) was fast approaching, and asked him to appoint a few Sunni

Shaikhs to meet with some Shi`ah Shaikhs, in order to plan joint events for this sacred month. It is important to point out here that Sunnis and Shi`is usually do not start or end fasting on the same days. Each group tends to follow the guidance of different Muslim states and religious leaders. The Sunnis usually refer to guidance from al-Azhar and Saudi Arabia, while the Shi`ah refer to guidance by Iran and Iraq.

The answer of *Mufti* Khalid was short and to the point. He acknowledged receipt of the Imam's letter and thanked him for his hard work towards better relationship and understanding between Muslims. He did promise Imam Musa that he would refer his letter to the *Majlis al-Islami al-Shar'i* (The Islamic Shari`ah Council), for further discussion and action. Unfortunately almost thirty years after Imam Musa's letter the council had not yet discussed it.

### Tolerance of Other Religions

Imam Musa believed that *ijtihad* was vital for Muslim survival in the world. *Ijtihad* gave Muslims the ability to discuss issues that may not be easily explained in Islamic laws and teachings. One of the biggest challenges Imam Musa thought Islam and Muslims had was the ability to tolerate other sects and religions. He said that Shi`ism is tolerant and open to understanding other sects and religions. "There are many examples throughout history of Shi`ah tolerance of other sects and religions, the same can't be said about other Muslim sects and religions that came into contact with the Shi`ah." (Sadr, 1982, p. 214.)



From the beginnings of Shi'ism, the Shi'ah have always been very critical of leaders and governments that did not follow the rules of Islam and did not treat their followers with dignity and mercy. In fact, in many cases they fought them in order to change the way the Muslims were treated. They had also been very involved in the struggle for equality for all people regardless of what religion or ethnic background they came from. He believed that learning about other sects and religions enriched and strengthened Islam and Muslims. It made them capable of dealing with each other and with the outside world in a more knowledgeable way.

Imam Musa embarked on some actions that on one hand earned him respect around the world and enabled him to work with others regardless of their religion or ethnic background, and on the other hand earned him rebuke and criticism from Muslim leaders. He was the first Muslim clergyman to make a sermon inside a Christian church, and he also was the first Muslim clergyman to visit the Pope in the Vatican. The goal behind such actions was both political and religious. Making sermons in Christian churches in Lebanon gave him the opportunity to show his fellowmen in Lebanon that Islam and Muslims were not a threat to them, and that they all had similar aspirations for their communities and country. Making sermons in churches in France and Germany gave him the opportunity to show the world community that Islam was not the backward and stagnant religion many thought it was.

### Chapter 3

## **Imam Musa al-Sadr: Scholarly Output**

Imam Musa was a prolific writer and presenter. He wrote a total of twenty books and made over one hundred presentations and speeches during his brief stay in Lebanon. I will divide his presentations and speeches into the following four categories: 1. the situation in South Lebanon, 2. Lebanese issues (sectarianism, citizenship, etc), 3. religious and social issues, and 4. regional issues. Only four of his books have been translated into Arabic. The rest of his books were written in Persian and have not been translated yet. According to his sister, Rabab al-Sadr, the new Iranian president, Muhammad Khatami, had promised her that he will pursue the project of translating Imam Musa's books into Arabic and eventually into other languages. All his speeches, articles and presentation have been preserved, and I was able to obtain a few books that contain the compilations of all of them.

Imam Musa spent most of his energy and time on two important issues facing Lebanon and the Lebanese people, the situation in south Lebanon and the relationship between the various religious communities and the Lebanese government. By just looking at the number of speeches, articles and presentations and the topics they covered, it is very easy to find out that the situation in south Lebanon was on the top of his agenda, and the relationship between the Lebanese and their government was second on his list. Religious, social and regional issues went hand in hand with the main concerns and had to be addressed in order to ensure a stable and peaceful country and region.

It is important to point out here that the titles of the speeches and books I used in this dissertation I have translated from Arabic to the best possible English equivalent. This has been the first time they have been translated into English. The titles of the presentations, speeches and books were taken directly from the original writings of the Imam and compiled. All were compiled and published after the Imam's disappearance. The remainder of his work will hopefully be translated into Arabic and English soon, published and distributed to the world.

I have arranged the speeches and presentations in sequence of when they were made, from the earliest to the latest. This was intentional since the tone and content of Imam Musa's speeches and presentations changed as the months and years passed. In his early years in Lebanon, Imam Musa's speeches were mostly informative and reconciliatory, but as the years went by and the situation in Lebanon and the region became very unstable, the speeches became more fiery and demanding. His goal at the beginning was to make the Lebanese government and the Lebanese people aware of the plight of the Shi'i community in Lebanon and recommend some ideas and solutions to the problem. When the government dragged its foot and did not fulfill its responsibilities towards the Shi'ah and other neglected communities, Imam Musa's words became more demanding of action, and encouraged the people to rise and fight for their rights. His attitude towards Arab leaders and Iranian government was also one of relationship building and cooperation at first, but as the situation in South Lebanon and the region reached a very dangerous point, Imam Musa's words became more accusatory and even

got to the point where he accused, by name, some Arab and Iranian leaders of collusion with Israel and the West.

#### A. The Situation in South Lebanon

“The Crisis in south Lebanon is that of all of Lebanon” was the first recorded speech he made regarding the situation in south Lebanon. It was the first speech he made after being elected the president of the Supreme Islamic Shi`i Council on May 22, 1969. He started the speech by addressing all the Lebanese as his brothers and as the faithful and loyal citizens of Lebanon. He warned the Lebanese that their country was facing a very dangerous time in its history and that only their unity and heroic actions would protect it. He asked all the Lebanese to take responsibility for their land and for its future. He stressed to them the fact that the situation in south Lebanon was not only the responsibility of the southerners, but rather that of all Lebanese. He said, “I feel that it is my responsibility to cry out to you, all of you, regardless of what religious or political group you belong to. I am just a regular citizen who is worried about the future of his country and wants to work with my fellow countrymen to safe guard it against the impending danger it is facing.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 22.)

He reminded the Lebanese that the Shi`i community is an integral part of Lebanon and that it has fought for Lebanon’s existence and would continue to do so. He also reminded them that the Supreme Islamic Shi`i Council is open to all Lebanese, would work on improving the relationship between the Shi`i community and the rest of the Lebanese, and would always fight for a united Lebanon.

“South Lebanon is the responsibility of all Lebanese and Arabs” is a press conference Imam Musa conducted on November 20, 1969. It was published in most Lebanese daily newspapers. At the beginning of the press conference, Imam Musa listed the three points of agreement between all Arabs living in the region: 1. The existence of Israel and its Zionist policies are a danger to Lebanon and the region as a whole; 2. Being the neighbors of such a danger, we need to be ready to defend ourselves and our land militarily, politically, economically and personally; 3. One of the best strategies we must have in preparing for the ultimate confrontation with the enemy is to weaken it in whatever way we can. The Palestinian struggle against Israel is very important and must always be supported.

He then followed up by expanding on the three areas of agreement by explaining how such goals could be achieved. He started by stressing the fact that all the Arabs in the region and the Muslims as a whole need to support the Palestinian cause. Then he explained the vulnerable position of South Lebanon and how the Israelis would use it in order to divide the Arabs and weaken Lebanon. He proposed that resources be set aside for the strengthening of the south and its population; that its population be trained and armed to protect itself against the enemy; and that all the Lebanese would need to participate in the defense and protection of south Lebanon. He looked at it as not just a religious or social issue only but rather the right of human beings to defend themselves against outside aggression.

He reminded the Lebanese and the Arabs that in order for them to stand in the face of the enemy, they would need to be united. He told them that no matter how

numerous they were and how much armament they have they would not be able to defeat the enemy unless they had love for and faith in each other. He assured them that so far the enemy had not been able to divide them and that they needed to work very hard in order to make sure that the enemy would never be able to come between them.

“A society does not continue as individuals (we have seen many such societies come and go), but as an ideology and a sacred mission, even if some of its members leave and many others are killed of. This is the secret of a strong country and the weak point of all societies and states. The enemy thought that by bombing the airport and killing some of our civilians in the south that we will break down and surrender. They have misjudged us.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 32.)

“Lebanon without the south is a myth, and with a weak south, a handicapped body” is a letter Imam Musa wrote and sent to all members of the Lebanese House of Representatives on December 4, 1969. After the salutations Imam Musa informed the representatives that he was writing them on behalf of the Supreme Islamic Shi`i Council. The mission behind this letter was to give the representatives a clearer idea as to the situation in South Lebanon and the needs of its people. He reminded them that South Lebanon was in constant danger as long as Israel had its designs on its land and water and that the southerners were fighting the enemy alone. He also reminded them of their responsibility towards all the Lebanese who elected them to represent and protect them. He proceeded by pleading for help: “I deplore you as a brother in our time of need to take responsibility, share the pain of the people in south Lebanon, and provide them with all your support and political power. This is because Lebanon without the south is a myth and a weak south means that Lebanon will be handicapped.”

(Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 36.)

“Answer the call before it is too late!” is an interview Imam Musa gave on May 22, 1970 to the newspaper *Al-Muharrir*. The first question the Imam was asked was about the situation in south Lebanon. Imam Musa answered by telling the reporter that there is hunger, homelessness and despair in south Lebanon. He also invited the reporter to go to south Lebanon and see for himself. When asked what was needed in order to help the people of the south and improve their standard of living, he replied by saying that the government was responsible for the well being of its citizens and that it needed to take responsibility and help the people of the south. Imam Musa made it clear to the reporter that the help the south needed was both financial and military. Financial help was needed to build the south and provide the necessary basics to its people and military help was needed to train the southerners and arm them in order for them to be able to defend themselves against the enemy. He ended the interview by saying: “I warn you that if you do not act now, the future of Lebanon and the Lebanese will be bleak. This is my call to all of you, please heed it before it is too late!” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 52.)

“Standing with the south will save Lebanon” is a speech Imam Musa made on May 26, 1970 which was a day of a general strike he called for to show solidarity with the people of South Lebanon and to oppose any division between the Lebanese. The strike was usually used by the Lebanese to express their views and feelings about issues facing them and their country. Imam Musa also saw the general strike as the best way to

deal with the dangerous situation in the country. It was his way of asking the Lebanese people, no matter what religion they belonged to or part of Lebanon they came from, to show their leaders that they did not want to get embroiled in such destructive behavior. There was a bigger and more pressing danger facing Lebanon in the South. He spent the day going from university to university in Bairut in order to bring his message to the Lebanese educated young men and women whom he saw as the only hope for a more tolerant and united Lebanon in the future.

This came on the heels of the armed conflict between the Lebanese army and the Palestinian guerillas and a major attack by the Israelis on southern Lebanon in which over a hundred Lebanese and Palestinian civilians were killed and ten villages were destroyed. Imam Musa saw the conflict between the Lebanese army and the Palestinians as very serious and would eventually threaten Lebanese unity as the Christian militias and leadership sided with the Lebanese army and most Muslim militias and their leaders sided with the Palestinians. This alarmed the Christians who had always felt that the Palestinians were getting very strong and were arming the Muslims in an attempt to undermine their political control over the country.

This event marked the first serious clash between the Lebanese and the Palestinians and was the precursor of the Lebanese civil war that started five years later. It also marked the largest single-day attack by the Israelis on South Lebanon. The strike was very successful as all Lebanese communities and political parties supported and participated in it. Imam Musa took advantage of this popular show of unity and



addressed all the Lebanese during a speech at the Lebanese University in Bairut. The beginning of his speech basically said it all:

“My sons the students, my brothers the workers, the educated, people of consciousness, free people, my suffering brothers and sisters of the south, my fellow Muslims who care about everyone, my Christian brothers and sisters who carry the cross of the suffering, political parties and professional organizations of Lebanon, my dear Lebanese brothers and sisters: for a year and a half now, I have been asking your support in helping your brothers and sisters in south Lebanon. I also have warned you about the deteriorating situation in our dear country and the consequences of no action.”  
(Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 55.)

He asked the Lebanese and the Palestinians to act with caution and not let the crisis get out of hand. He informed them that the south was at the mercy of the Israelis and that the southerners had suffered enough on behalf of the Lebanese, the Arabs and the Palestinians. He assured the Lebanese that by standing in support of the south and the southerners, they were protecting and saving Lebanon from destruction. He told them that in order for the strike to succeed they needed to follow it with action and compassion towards the south. He urged all the strikers not to resort to any destructive actions that might make the situation worse in the country. He closed his speech by saying: “My dear brothers and sisters; be with the truth, so that the truth can be with you. Be faithful so that God can guide you and make you victorious.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 57.)

“Being silent about the south is betraying all of Lebanon” is another speech Imam Musa made on May 26, 1970 (the day of the general strike) at the American University of Beirut. Twelve hundred college students filled the auditorium of the AUB (American

University of Beirut) in order to listen to the Imam's speech about the situation in south Lebanon. Imam Musa enumerated the reasons that led to the sad situation in south Lebanon. He told them that the government and its ministries, even the Shi'i representatives in the government, do not care about the south. They only care about their people and their regions of the country. He reminded them that he had made sixty speeches, written ten newspaper and magazine articles, given at least four press conferences, participated in over 6200 discussions, and met with so many government officials regarding the situation in south Lebanon, but to no avail.

When asked about the role of the Palestinian armed organizations and the Lebanese militias (both left and right), he was very blunt. He supported and encouraged support of the Palestinian struggle, but he opposed the use of Lebanese villages to launch attacks against Israel. He made it perfectly clear that armed Palestinians needed to be put under control and they had to respect the sovereignty of Lebanon. He also was critical of the many armed militias in Lebanon and the fact that many of them were working on behalf of some foreign country or political ideology.

"Israel does not want a stable, strong Lebanon" is a press conference Imam Musa made at the offices of Arab league in the city of Bonn in West Germany on August 10th, 1970. At the beginning of his press conference, Imam Musa reminded the audience about the close relationship between the peoples of Lebanon and Germany. He also praised the hard work and unity of the German people and the progress they had been able to achieve through planning and foresight. He then went into explaining the reasons why many

Germans and Western Europeans don't know much about the Arabs and the importance of educating the West about the culture and traditions of people of the Middle East.

Imam Musa informed the German press that Israel is after the water of south Lebanon and that it had been planning for many years to attack south Lebanon and control its water resources. He referred to the statement made by the Israeli defense minister: "If there is a chosen people, then there is a chosen land, and according to the Torah, the chosen land extends from today's Israel to the city of Khalde in southern Beirut." (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 66.) He also revealed that information had been unearthed about Israeli college students researching and putting plans together about the use of water from south Lebanon.

I would like to point out that since 1984 Israel has been digging canals from the Litani River, which runs from the Bika' through south Lebanon, to divert water into Israel. In addition to this, Israel has basically annexed seven villages located at the border between the two countries and has encouraged their inhabitants to leave by both peaceful and non-peaceful means.

Then he went into a very detailed discussion of how the Israeli State came into existence. He pointed out that the Zionists went against the wishes and directives of the United Nations and attacked the Arab State and annexed it, causing the misery and suffering the Palestinians have had to deal with ever since. He also reminded the audience that what the Jews are doing to the Palestinians and their Arab neighbors is very much similar to what the Jews endured under the Nazis. He addressed the religious interpretation of the Jews regarding God's chosen people by saying that Ibrahim is the

father of all Jews, Christians and Muslims and interpreting the religious text as saying God preferred one group over the others goes against everything that God and religion stand for.

He ended his presentation by asking the people and the government of Germany to take responsibility towards the Middle East. He reminded everyone that the Germans provide financial, military and economic support (in the millions of marks annually) to the Israelis and that they need to evaluate their role as it pertains to the Palestinian and Lebanese situations.

“We Need to Protect Lebanon. Let’s Move all the Men and Arms to the South” is a speech Imam Musa made on July 9, 1975 at one of the mosques in the Shiyyah suburb of Beirut. In this speech Imam Musa pleaded with all the Lebanese to unite and focus their efforts and energy on saving south Lebanon and its inhabitants. He referred to the Shi’i areas around the capital and those in the Bika’ and South Lebanon as the *hizam al-bu’s* (the belt of misery). He told them that the Shi’ah in these areas do not have the basic human necessities and have to endure the terrorism of the Israelis. He informed them that they need to rise up and demand justice and equality from their leaders.

“The people in the south and the Bika’ have sacrificed a lot and have received very little in return. Because of the lack of opportunities, they had to emigrate to the outside to look for their livelihood. They left their villages and became refugees within their own country in Beirut. They are seen as the dirt of the society. They are not the dirt of society. The leaders who put them in this situation are the dirt of society and need to be cleaned. I call on all the Lebanese masses to rise and take over the palaces and villas the leaders have built on the backs of the poor. Maybe by doing so, our leaders will wake up and do something about the suffering and misery that had engulfed half of the population.

Let us all go to the south and fight to save it. Let's all say: with our blood and our souls, we will protect the south." (Sharaf al-Din, 1980, p. 228).

This was the first time that Imam Musa had encouraged the people to fight for their rights by force. Until then Imam Musa had been advocating only peaceful revolt and disobedience. The speech was so emotional and moving that it is said that most of the attendees were in tears. Many of them took up their arms and pledged to go to the south to join the resistance against the Israelis. Unfortunately, many of them were prevented from going south by Palestinian fighters who controlled the roads leading to the south, and by the fighting between Christian militias and Palestinian and leftist militias in coastal towns leading to the south.

"Sur, we started from your soil" is a speech Imam Musa gave in Sur (Tyre) the largest Shi'i city in South Lebanon) on May 5, 1974. The day happened to be the anniversary of the death of Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet and the wife of Imam 'Ali (from whose supporters Shi'ism takes its name.) Imam Musa started his speech by calling the crowd "the heroes of Lebanon, the preservers of the south." He reminded them that they were celebrating the memory of Fatima because of her special status within the Muslim community. "We are celebrating Fatima's memory because of all the things she did for Islam and Muslims. This is the essence of Islam and truth. This is the essence of the Qur'an, where it is said that man is only worth what he does for others." "The memory of Fatima is the memory of work, heroism and *jihad*." (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 122.)

When he stopped to take a breath, some of the armed men in the audience started firing into the air. Imam Musa asked them to stop firing and to save the bullets for the battle against the enemy. But after the Imam spoke for a few more minutes, the firing started again. This continued until he finished his speech. He talked to them about the fact that the government had promised millions of Lebanese pounds for projects in south Lebanon and the Biqa', but nothing came out of them. He encouraged the listeners to fight for their rights from now on and not to wait for the government to feel sorry for them and give them things that they were entitled to. He asked them to repeat the following oath after him:

“In the name of God the merciful. We swear to God that we will fight for all our rights and the rights of the oppressed without being weak or hesitant. We will not stop until there is no oppressed man in all of Lebanon. We pledge to abide by the laws of our country and the tradition of our religion and culture and stay loyal until our goal is achieved. We swear with the beauty of Lebanon, its mountains, its north south and east, its sunrise and sunset. We swear by the blood of the martyrs, the tears of the orphans, the cries of the mothers and the pain of the wounded. We swear not to waste any energy in showing the truth and vanquishing the evil, fighting the oppressors and the enemies of our country and people. God is our witness.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 127.)

He told them that he was leaving them but that he would always be with them. The sound of gunfire was so loud and continuous that he was not able to say his last words for at least five minutes. When he was able to speak once again, he reminded them to save their bullets for the upcoming battle. “I put myself and my life at your service. My goal in life is to make sure that you will live in dignity and peace.” “May God bless you and guide you on your way to victory,” was his closing remark. (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 130.)

“We Will Face Many Crisis, but We Will not be Silent or Bow Down” is a speech Imam Musa gave during the commemoration of the birth of the Prophet at one of the villages in south Lebanon on March 26, 1975. He started his speech by saying that the world was materialistic, people care more about money than about God and humanity, and leaders have become so much self-involved that they have forgotten about their people. He talked about the absence of the government and its laws and protection from the areas of the south and the Bekaa. “We long for the government in south Lebanon. We miss the army at our border protecting us from the constant humiliation and sense of defeat. We are protecting ourselves and no one in the world cares or does anything to help us.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 43.) He encouraged them to train and get armed because they are going to be the only ones who will have to defend themselves when the Israelis decide to invade.

He told them that the worst form of being a refugee was being a refugee in one’s own country, among one’s people. He used the Palestinian refugees and their struggle against Israel as an example. “The Palestinians were made refugees by force and now they are fighting to return to their country, but we are in our country and we need to demand our right to be treated as full citizens. We have sacrificed a lot for our country and the least we deserve is to live in peace and dignity in it.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 53.) He ended his speech by asking the audience to pledge that they will do all they can in order to ensure a better life for all Lebanese. Mustafa Ma`ruf Sa`d, the son of Ma`ruf Sa`d who was a well-known activist from the southern city of Saida (Sidon), was among the attendees with a delegation from his city. It was the assassination of Ma`ruf

Sa'd during a strike march that lit the first spark that led to the fifteen year Lebanese civil war.

“Lebanon Must Always be the Great Lebanon We are Used to or Not be at All” is a speech Imam Musa gave on May 26, 1975 at the funeral of a young man from northern Lebanon who became a martyr as he fought against the Israelis in southern Lebanon. “In front of your soul I will use one aspect of your life which I think is the secret of your greatness. I hope that we will be able to follow in your footsteps in order to protect our country and our society forever.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 62.) He pointed out to the audience that the martyr, `Aref al-Nakadi, was from northern Lebanon and could have stayed there with his family and friends, but he decided that it was more important for him to go to the south and fight with his brothers and sisters against their enemy. He told the audience that what `Aref did show the world that Lebanon is big and will always be big because of its people. He warned them that once the people of Lebanon decide to be individualistic, Lebanon would cease to exist as they knew it.

“Let’s Take the War to the Enemy” is an article Imam Musa wrote about the start of the Lebanese civil war. It was published on May 25, 1975 in the newspaper *Al-Nahar*, a non-aligned, non-denominational Lebanese newspaper. The article starts with a reference to three young Lebanese men who lost their lives in the southern village of `Aita al-Sha`b while fighting the Israelis. “Right there in `Aita al-Sha`b, three candles were lit by the blood of the three young men: Ahmad Blaibil of the Hermel, a region in



the Bekaa valley populated by Shi`ah, Fayez Salameh from west Beirut, and Adil Bijani from east Beirut. "They left their mothers' bosoms to the side of their creator." (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 72.)

The three young men were a Shi'i, a Sunni, and a Christian. He pointed out to the audience that what these three men made history by their martyrdom. What they did was the real definition of unity. They decided to leave their peaceful homes and go to south Lebanon to show their brothers and sisters there that they were not alone in their struggle. Imam Musa wondered, "Is this the Lebanon we inherited from our forefathers? Will we be able to preserve it for our grandchildren? These three young men showed us that we can and we must." He called on all the Lebanese to abandon their cities and go to south Lebanon and fight for their land. "Let's take the war to the enemy! Israel is not invincible. We can defeat the enemy with our unity, faith and determination. Let's us follow the teachings of our God and do whatever it takes to hold on to this sacred land. God will lead us to victory." (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 76.)

"You Need to Make the Crisis of South Lebanon an Arab Crisis" is an open letter Imam Musa sent to all the Arab leaders at an Arab League meeting in Cairo in 1976. He starts his letter by explaining to all the Arab leaders about the special relationship Lebanon has with its Arab sisters. He then goes into describing the desperate situation in south Lebanon. He reminds them about the fact that the Lebanese and especially the southerners had sacrificed very much and have paid the ultimate price for protecting the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and their struggle against Israel.

“Honorable leaders, please save this part of the Arab world before it is too late, before it becomes a part of history like Palestine. Save its people who have fought with heroism against a constant danger and against an enemy that is bent on its expansionist ideology without regard to any laws, national or international. Make the crisis of south Lebanon the crisis of all the Arabs, like that of the Palestinians, because they are inseparable. The success of the Palestinian cause will be dependent on the future of south Lebanon. Consider south Lebanon the front line for all the Arabs, but you need to support it with all your means.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 96.)

He urges them to use their international network and diplomacy in order to put pressure on the Israelis to stop their aggression against Lebanon. He told them that he was not asking for them to send people to fight, but rather to send financial support, arms, and use their political clout in the United Nations and other international organizations. He also urges them to go back to their countries and mobilize their people to do whatever they can in order to help their brothers and sisters in Lebanon.

“South Lebanon Will Never Become the Alternative Home to the Palestinians” is a speech Imam Musa gave in the city of Ba’labakk in the Bika’ Valley on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1976. It happened to be the commemoration of the birth of the *Imam* al-Mahdi (the Shi’i Imam who is believed by the Shi’ah to be in occultation and will appear at the end of the world, in order to establish a peaceful and fair world full of harmony and justice). It was the first speech Imam Musa gave after the fall of the city of Nab’ah, a home for about 250,000 Shi’is in the heart of eastern Beirut. Nab’ah was also used by the Palestinians to fight with the Christian militias. (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 261.)

The city was surrounded by Christian militias and besieged for over three months

without water, food or medicine. Imam Musa negotiated a political solution with the Phalangists (Christian militia) in order to allow the civilians to leave safely and for the fighters to turn in their arms, but the Phalangists reneged on their promise and massacred thousands of young Shi'i and Palestinian men who used to fight before the fall of the city.

He started his speech by reminding them about the sad times Lebanon and the Lebanese were living. He told them that what happened in Nab'ah was the saddest thing so far in the civil war, and that he had tried his best to save the people of the city. He also warned them that if the war was to continue, more incidents like the one in Nab'ah would occur. In fact, just a few weeks later, the Christian City of Damur, on the coastal highway leading to South Lebanon, was overrun by the Palestinians and their leftist allies. Hundreds of Christian civilians were massacred and their homes burned down.

He told them that he was not going to analyze the situation and try to find out who started the war and why. He wanted to ask all the parties in the war to stop the killing and destruction and get involved in a meaningful dialogue to find a workable solution for everyone. He did point out to the audience the fact that the Shi'ah had been attacked and killed by both the right and the left even though they were not a party to the war. "Our brothers and sisters have been attacked, killed and made refugees by the right. They have also been killed and attacked by some of our brothers on the left even though they fought with them and died for them in the same trench." (Sader Publishing Co, 1990, p. 110.)

Imam Musa told the audience that the reason the Shi'ah were attacked was because they did not want to become party to the madness that was sweeping Lebanon.

“The Shi`ah were attacked because they believed that the problems of the Lebanese could be resolved with reason and without interference from the outside.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 112.) But he went on by saying that no matter what the warring parties do, the Shi`ah will continue to hold on to their beliefs and not get drawn into the destruction of their country. “The best example of Shi`ah determination to preserve Lebanon is the fact that they have given their lives for and will continue to sacrifice until all the Lebanese realize that they are the only ones who will ensure a better future for their country.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 118).

This speech was one of the longest Imam Musa made. It covered many issues relevant to the Shi`ah community in Lebanon and how these issues affected and would continue to affect it for many years to come. It was also the first time Imam Musa blamed both the right and left militias for the start and continuation of the civil war. Palestinians and foreign countries were also mentioned as major contributors to the chaos and deterioration of the situation in Lebanon. He used what happened to the city of Nab`ah as an example of what the future held for the Lebanese and the Palestinians if they did not act fast and put an end to the death and destruction.

The parties of the civil war did not heed the warnings of the Imam and went on fighting. Within two months of the fall of Nab`ah the residents of two Christian and two Muslim cities would have the same fate as their counterparts in Nab`ah. The misery would continue for another fourteen years before they were forced to sit down and agree to end the war. Imam Musa disappeared two years after making this remarkable speech

and only God knows what would have happened had he been alive during the fourteen years of the civil war.

“I Paid a High Price for my Devotion to the Palestinian Cause” was an article published in the weekly political magazine *Al-Sayyad* in September 1976. It was based on an interview made with the Imam by the editor of the magazine. The editor started his questioning by asking Imam Musa “What is the solution to the crisis in south Lebanon and what can be done to save it and its people? Imam Musa answered by referring to his call a week earlier to all the Lebanese and Palestinians to realize the gravity of the situation in the south and act before it is too late. He listed five items he said must be followed in order to resolve the problem. He said that all parties must,

- “1. Not allow themselves to be blindly drawn into the deadly conflict by means of religious and political propaganda.
  2. Allow the Arab Deterrent Force to go to south Lebanon to protect its people.
  3. Establish a national reconciliation government that will work right away to tackle the many concerns dividing their people from economic development to social awareness.
  4. Reopen and staff all governmental offices in order for them to work to meet the needs of the people.
  5. Clarify the presence of the Palestinians in Lebanon and their responsibilities towards Lebanon and its government.”
- (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 299.)

The second question was about the change in the relationship between the Lebanese and the Palestinians? Imam Musa responded by saying:

“The presence of the Palestinians in Lebanon was governed by the Riyadh and Cairo treaties that described the manner in which the Palestinians were to conduct themselves, and the responsibility of the Lebanese government towards them. Once the agreements were not followed to the law, disagreements and clashes caused distrust and preparation for an eventual war by both sides.”

(Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 301.)

Imam Musa pointed out that the only way to defuse the current tense situation was for both parties to go back to the discussion table and reaffirm their responsibilities and expectations of each other. He warned that anything less than total trust and understanding would lead to the ultimate destruction of both the Palestinian cause and Lebanon. "The situation is not hopeless yet and the alternative will not be acceptable by either party."

When the Imam was asked what he meant by his statement that he paid a very high price for his loyalty to the Palestinian cause, he said that he did not mean that he regretted being a supporter of the Palestinians. He was saddened by all the attacks and criticism lobbed at him by the Palestinian leadership after all he had done for their cause. "I support the Palestinian cause because I believe that it is my religious and personal responsibility to do so. No matter what the enemies of the Palestinians will do, I will continue supporting it and I am ready to sacrifice my life for it." (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 305.) He told the reporter that there were two types of Palestinian cause supporters, those who give it lip service only and those who sacrifice their lives for it. He asked the reporter to look at the history of the Palestinians in Lebanon and all the Lebanese people did to accommodate them and support them over the years.

The last question the Imam was asked dealt with the role of the Shi`ah in the Lebanese civil war and the importance of the establishment of the AMAL movement to the Shi`i community in specific and Lebanon in general. Imam Musa answered this question by saying: "I do not believe that the opinion of the Shi`ah towards the civil war

has changed. The Shi`ah are holding on to a united Lebanon and are ready to do whatever is expected of them to preserve it.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 306.)

He added that the Shi`ah community’s support of the Palestinian cause was very strong and would not falter regardless of all the attacks and accusations thrown at it by the enemies of the Palestinians. As far as the AMAL movement was concerned, Imam Musa reiterated that the movement (The Lebanese Resistance Brigades) means exactly what it says. “The Lebanese Resistance Brigades were designed to stand in the face of the enemy that crosses our borders to kill our people and destroy our country. The AMAL movement was only established to fight for the dignity of our people and protect their lives and not for anything else.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 306.)

“There Will be no Peace in Lebanon Without Peace in the South” is the longest article Imam Musa wrote. It was twelve pages long and was published in the magazine *Sawt al-Mahrumin* (The Voice of the Dispossessed) in its December 1976 issue. This article was written after a cease fire agreement between the warring factions in the Lebanese civil war, which gave the Lebanese a glimmer of hope that their suffering would finally stop.

Imam Musa called the period before the cease-fire agreement the “season of pain.” He described the progression of the events that led to the “season of pain” in terms of the following points:

1. At the beginning of the crisis all the Lebanese communities were united against any division of the country and loyal to the Lebanese unique society. They were also in agreement as to the Palestinian presence in Lebanon. But as

the clashes continued and intensified, the various parties became concerned about the future and began to prepare for a major showdown.

2. The party that started the civil war underestimated the desire of the Lebanese to live in peace with one another, and started using religious slogans in order to execute their vicious plan. The right thought that by using religious agitation it will succeed and unfortunately as a result of some very sad events the people were mobilized to fight for their existence.

3. The fact that both sides did not have a real plan to go by and had to mobilize their constituents by using fear tactics and religious slogans, made it very hard for the people to realize what was happening until it was too late. Killing caused more killing and destruction caused more destruction. Even though the majority of the Lebanese people were against what was happening, they were not armed and could not stop the destruction of their country.

4. Once the two sides drew their lines in the sand, they turned on groups within their sphere of allies. Palestinian groups fought each other for control of parts of Beirut and the south; leftist militias fought each other for control over west Beirut and the representation of their community; and the Christian militias fought each other for the bragging rights of representing their community.

5. Foreign countries became very involved in the financial support of the various groups and used them to achieve their political and religious goals in the region. The worst thing about this issue was the fact that the Lebanese did not realize what they were getting themselves into and were bought by the money they received from these countries and blinded by the political and religious slogans these countries made on their behalf.

6. A very interesting result of this chaos was the fact that groups from the two warring factions were united in their pursuit of destroying the Palestinian movement. The Palestinians became involved in so much infighting, that they were sucked into the conspiracy without realizing it.

7. Once the conspiracy was implemented, the rules of law and humanity were lost. Each warring party started outdoing the another in terms of the killings, destruction, mutilation and dismemberment. Thousands of innocent civilians from both sides fell victim to this period of inhumanity.

8. Each warring faction used the press (national and international) in order to promote its agenda and to show the world the bad things the other was doing. Pictures of mutilated bodies and bombed out buildings and towns became the norm in the news and newspapers.



9. There were so many warring factions in Lebanon fighting on behalf of foreign countries and groups during this period that it felt as if Lebanon became the battle ground for all Arab countries and the super powers. (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 411.)

After listing the various steps that led to the civil war, Imam Musa talked about the lessons that were learned from this period of pain. He pointed out the fact that throughout this period, the Shi'i community and the AMAL movement were not a party to the war and tried their best to distance themselves from it. He also pointed out the fact that the Lebanese people realized that they were responsible for what happened to them and to their country, and the Palestinians realized that their resistance against the Israelis was not being helped by their infighting and alienating the Lebanese.

Imam Musa ended his article by wondering whether the Lebanese and the Palestinians would take advantage of this opportunity and look for a less destructive means of settling their disagreements. He saw a brighter future for everyone involved if they step back and analyze the situation and work towards a positive solution, but he also reminded them that as long as south Lebanon is in danger, all of Lebanon is in danger.

“The future will depend on establishing peace all over Lebanon, north, south, east and west. The future will depend on the relationship between the Arabs and between the Arabs and the rest of the world. But the most important thing that will need to take place in order to assure a peaceful future, is for the Lebanese, the Palestinians and the Syrians to sit down and put together a strategy to deal with the concerns of all sides.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992 p. 423.)

“The Palestinians Must Control Their Actions and Allow the Lebanese Army to enter the south” is a Friday *khutbah* (sermon) Imam Musa gave at a mosque in the southern suburbs of Beirut on February 3, 1978. It coincided with an incident in which Palestinian and Lebanese army troops clashed as Lebanese troops were on their way to

the southern city of Sidon to support their comrades who were surrounded and besieged by Palestinian and leftist militiamen. The clash was the result of a rumor that the Lebanese army was going to attack the Palestinians in southern Lebanon, confiscate their weapons and confine them to their camps. It resulted in the death of ten Lebanese soldiers and three militiamen. Imam Musa pleaded with the Palestinians and the Lebanese army to act wisely and cautiously and said the following:

“The Palestinians need not worry about their future in Lebanon. The Lebanese will not ask them to leave Lebanon unless they have a place to go to. In fact, the Lebanese have and will continue to support and sacrifice for the Palestinian cause. All we are asking is that you control your actions in south Lebanon and abide by the laws of the State of Lebanon. Fighting the Lebanese army will not win you any friends in Lebanon and the only winner of such clashes are the Israelis. I plead with you to allow President Sarkis to implement his national reconciliation plan and allow the Lebanese army to enter the south to protect you and us.”  
(Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 368.)

He reminded everyone who cares about Lebanon that Israel’s ultimate goal was to annex the south and that it would use the pretext of security on its border as a reason to invade south Lebanon and control it. Fighting between the Lebanese army and the Palestinians is the ultimate disaster for Lebanon and for the Palestinian cause.

This speech was denounced by the Palestinians and their leftist allies as a conspiracy by the Imam in conjunction with the Lebanese army to destroy the Palestinian resistance. Palestinians accused Imam Musa of being an Israeli agent and of trying to destroy the Palestinian people. The leftist militias accused Imam Musa of being a puppet of the Lebanese Christian government and of weakening the Lebanese national movement to which all leftist militias belonged.

“Arabs, What Did you do with South Lebanon” is a speech (plea) Imam Musa made on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1978 that was published in the monthly magazine, *Al-Nahar al-Arabi wa-al-Dawli* (The Arab and World Day). This plea came out a few days after Israel invaded Lebanon in 1978. The Israelis moved over 25,000 troops and armament into south Lebanon as a response to the assassination attempt on the Israeli ambassador to Switzerland by Palestinian commandos. The Israelis were able to control most of southern Lebanon up to the city of Sur (Tyre). They killed over 10,000 Lebanese and Palestinian civilians and destroyed at least thirty villages in this latest act of aggression. (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 386.)

He called on the Arabs and asked them “What have you done with south Lebanon. Is this a conspiracy to destroy the Palestinian resistance and at the same time destroy Lebanon? Thirty years ago the Israelis used the pretext of defending themselves to attack and annex Palestine, and now they are doing the same to Lebanon. Is this what you want?” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 388.) He asked them to wake-up and act quickly before it was too late for Lebanon too. He urged them to use all their diplomatic connections around the world to put pressure on Israel and demand its withdrawal from south Lebanon. He warned them that south Lebanon was the last defense for the Arabs. Losing south Lebanon would mean the loss of Arab dignity and reputation around the world. He wondered how 124,000,000 Arabs could not stand up to 3,000,000 Israelis and demand their rights.

He told them that the Arabs had the manpower, the arms (the Arabs were some of the largest military equipment buyers in the world), the land and the ability (potential) to

fight Israel and regain their occupied land. But he also told them that they lacked the desire and the determination to fight and win. In fact he reminded them that the most important factor in the Israeli victories over the Arabs was their desire and determination to survive. Of course, it is important to point out that Israel is supported financially, militarily and morally by the United States and that the United States has pledged not to let anything or anyone threaten it.

This is how he ended his statement, “We are not asking for too much. In fact, what we are asking for now will be paid for dearly by all the Arabs and Muslims around the world. All we are asking is for you to take responsibility and act within your rights to assist us morally, financially and militarily. The return on your investment will be a billion fold.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 389.)

### **Lebanese Issues**

“The Danger to Lebanon is Mostly From the Inside not the Outside”, is an interview with a Lebanese reporter, Adil Malek, from the newspaper *Al-Jaridah* published on June 21, 1969. The reporter asked Imam Musa about his opinion regarding the situation in Lebanon and the Arab world as a whole, and what were some of the steps that could be taken to help the Arabs and the Lebanese better prepare for the future. Imam Musa responded by saying that everything in the world from a small council of people in a village to the United Nations must be built on strong foundations. As far as Lebanon was concerned, Imam Musa suggested that Lebanon had a very strong history full of successes and development and that the Lebanese were and should always be

proud of it. In addition to its great history Lebanon was geographically, strategically located between three continents, Asia, Europe and Africa. This gave Lebanon and the Lebanese the opportunity to become major players in the history and trade of the area. Lebanon was also blessed with a great weather and numerous tourist attractions.

“The most important issue that will bring us closer together is mutual respect. This is not something specific to Lebanon. It is necessary for any group or country. A society that does not have mutual respect and a common goal will divide upon itself and get destroyed.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 415.)

Imam Musa suggested that the Lebanese communities, no matter how small or large they are, must be treated equally and be well represented in the government and all institutions and organization that will affect the future of their country. “Giving one community rights over others will eventually lead to abuses and friction between them.” When Imam Musa was asked about the dangers that are facing Lebanon and what was the responsibility of all Lebanese towards protecting south Lebanon, he responded by saying the following: “I do not see any significant danger to Lebanon from the outside. The main danger to Lebanon is from the inside. In fact, the enemy is using our differences in order to divide and conquer us.” Imam Musa wanted to make sure that he did not mean that the Zionist threat was not significant, he meant that for the Zionists to be successful in achieving their expansionist goals, they would need help from the inside. “No country in the world perished as a result of oppression or outside interference. Countries perished as a result of the death of their society’s responsibility towards the country.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 397.)

Imam Musa described Lebanon as having a 'society of war' and a 'society of wealth'. The society of south Lebanon was living under the conditions of constant danger and war, while Beirut and other areas of Lebanon are living in luxury and wealth. According to Imam Musa this is not possible within the same country and especially Lebanon. "The citizens of a country need to be aware of and responsive to the needs and aspirations of their fellow citizens. When the southerners see the rest of Lebanon living as if there is nothing wrong and they are dying every day, they will naturally feel left out and not part of the society." (Sader Publishing Co., p. 1992, p. 398.)

"Sectarianism in Lebanon is Political and not Religious" is a press conference Imam Musa gave in Cairo in March 1970. It was done at the end of an Islamic conference. Imam Moua was asked about sectarianism in Lebanon, the possibility of uniting the Sunni and Shi'i communities in it, and whether there was a man of religion in Islam. Imam Musa said that there was no 'man of religion' in Islam but rather an authority in religious affairs or a religious scholar. "Happiness is not owning something, but rather it is not being owned by anything." (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 268.) He reminded the reporter that the conference that had just ended was attended by Muslim '*ulama*' from all over the Muslim world.

As far as sectarianism in Lebanon was concerned, Imam Musa explained that the government divisions were not based on religious basics, but rather on political motives. "I can assure you that those who support sectarian divisions are the furthest people from being religious. Sectarianism in Lebanon had been instituted in order to divide the

Lebanese and not just to elect a president or a parliament. Therefore, the discussion about sectarianism is a political and not a religious one.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 269.)

“Lebanon is a Social and Religious Necessity” is a press conference Imam Musa gave in May 1970 to the Parisian newspaper, *La Croix*. Imam Musa was asked about his role within the Lebanese society and the relationship between religion and the Lebanese government. “My role within the Lebanese society is that of the leaders of the other religious communities in Lebanon.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 275.) He added that the situation in south Lebanon where the majority of his constituents live made his job a very complicated and serious one. The situation in south Lebanon took most of his time, and he did not spend enough time on what he liked to do, mainly being the representative of his community to the rest of the Lebanese and working on developing strong ties with them.

“The government in Lebanon is very unique because of its population. The government represents the various Lebanese communities, respects each of them and works closely with them in order to help them.” According to the Imam, it is this uniqueness that makes Lebanon so special in the eyes of the rest of the world. “Lebanon is a meeting place for all the religious communities and Lebanese outside the country are great ambassadors and proofs of how different religious groups can live in peace with one another and prosper.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 277.) This in his opinion is what

makes Lebanon a social and religious necessity and a role model that the rest of the world can emulate.

“We Need Solutions to our Basic Problems” is a presentation Imam Musa made during a press conference on the eve of Lebanese parliamentary elections in April 1972. In this presentation Imam Musa discussed the following issues facing Lebanon: the crisis in south Lebanon, the social issues, the topic of behavior, and the Lebanese system of government. Imam Musa started by saying that he wanted to delay his presentation until after the elections were over, but that the situation was critical and something had to be done about it. He wanted to give the Lebanese voter a clear picture of what was happening around him and what he was to expect in the future. This in his opinion, would allow the Lebanese to vote in a more informed way and thus, vote for a better and more peaceful future. He also saw it as his responsibility as the president of the Supreme Islamic Shi`i Council.

The crisis in south Lebanon was becoming very serious and the Lebanese needed to know about it in order for them to do their national duty to protect it. “Lebanon possesses the human power, the technology and the will to face the enemy in south Lebanon and protect it from becoming an occupied land. The will and unity of the people of Lebanon, will be the only successful weapons to use against the enemy, both internal and external.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 288.) Imam Musa pointed out to the fact that Lebanese nationals have prospered and succeeded around the world in leading some countries and developing the economies of others, and that it is this Lebanese will power and sense of hard work that would save the south.



The social issue in Lebanon was another important topic Imam Musa eluded to in his presentation. He pointed out to the fact that Lebanese young men and women were not being utilized to their fullest. They also did not have enough opportunities after completing their education to find a job and contribute to the economy and future of their country. Many of them were migrating to other countries in search of work and education. He made it clear that he was not against emigration, but he warned against it if it became a braindrain for Lebanon. "Emigration is one of the cornerstones of the Lebanese economy and its culture and tradition. We do not want it to become so passive (we do not our brains to go to the outside) that it develops into a crisis for Lebanon. Lebanese emigration had provided Lebanon with many benefits over the years and we want to support it as long as it stays helpful." (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 290.)

The Lebanese political system had been used for many years and has had its ups and downs, but the Lebanese accept it and abide by it. "It is a system that worked for a long time, but needs some alterations in order to meet the changing needs and aspirations of the Lebanese people." (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 291.) He pointed out the fact that the current system did not give skilled and well-qualified Lebanese the opportunity to participate and prosper. Nevertheless, Imam Musa thought that it was one of the best when compared to what was happening in places like Ireland, the United States and other countries around the world at the time. He proposed giving qualified and skilled Lebanese the opportunity to compete with others and participate in the government.

“The Role of a Citizen During Crisis” is a *khutbah* Imam Musa gave in the Mosque of Sur in May 1973. His topic was al-Sayyidah Fatimah al-Zahra’, daughter of the Prophet, peace be upon Him. Fatimah was the example in Islam from the point of view of women of the role of women, the participation of women and the thought of women in the life of the *ummah*. The Prophet treated Fatimah in a very special way and made sure that everyone around Him knew it. Imam Musa stated the special status Fatimah given by the Prophet was a result of her faith and hard work and not as a result of her relation to the prophet. The Prophet said: “*Ya Fatimah, i'mali li-nafsiki fa-inni la aghniya anki fi Allah shay'an*” (Fatimah, work for yourself because I depend on you after God).

He pointed out the situation in Lebanon as a whole and the south in specific. He told them that people were desperate and had lost faith in God and humanity. “Faith is something that you see during crisis, suffering, victory and defeat. The Islamic scriptures tell us that the faithful person is like a strong mountain that can’t be moved by the strongest storm.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 302.) According to Imam Musa faith is not just a thought or a feeling. It is a strong relationship with God that can’t be shaken by anything human. It is what makes humans strong to stand up to anything that comes his/her way without weakening. He asked the audience to have the kind of faith Fatimah had and the kind of faith that would help them in the coming years. “The next few years will be very hard and God will test your faith. Let’s pledge to be stronger than the crisis we will face.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 305.)

The final topic he spoke about was very interesting. He told his audience that they needed to be aware of the misinformation that some were selling to the people during the very hard times Lebanon and its people were going through. "We need to hold on to our gains so far and continue demanding what is our right. We need to hold on to Lebanon and fight for its unity and future without any hesitation." (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 307.) He then pointed to a question someone asked him about whether someone had made an attempt on his life. He answered by saying: "I have not been injured yet. I have not spilled a drop of my blood yet, but I am ready to give my life to you and to the this country." He ended his *khutbah* by asking all the Lebanese to: "Follow the path drawn by the Prophet of Islam and al-Sayyid al-Masih (Jesus Christ), the path followed by `Ali and the *Sahabah* (Companions) of the Prophet. We ask God to guide us and give us the will to continue their path and meet our responsibilities." (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 308.)

"Accept your Responsibilities and Avoid Conflict" is a report Imam Musa made during the joint meeting of the judicial and executive committees of the Supreme Islamic Shi`i Council in December 1973. At the beginning of the report, Imam Musa discussed the state of the Shi`ah community in Lebanon.

"The Shi`ah community in Lebanon has fourty percent of its rights and is denied the other sixty. The level of poverty among the Shi`ah is seventy two percent and eighty eight percent of them are denied the opportunity to work within the government and its institutions. The Shi`ah live in the most underdeveloped regions of the country and are denied the most basic human services and the Lebanese government spends 25 percent less from the national budget on the Shi`ah community, than on other communities." (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 354.)

He then referred to the lack of water, electricity, sewer system, schools, medical services and paved roads in most Shi'i regions. He also informed them that in the month of June, 65 Lebanese civilians were killed and 145 were injured in Israeli shelling of southern villages, and Israel had occupied two border villages causing about 500 of their inhabitants to become refugees. "This dark and sad picture is what our people in south Lebanon are living under day after day. I am pleading with you to take responsibility and do something to help our people. The situation is very serious and we need to act now before it is too late." (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 355.)

"We are the Preservers of Lebanon" is a *khutbah* Imam Musa made during the 'Ashura' ceremonies in the border village of Yater, in February 1974. He informed the audience that he chose to hold the 'Ashura' ceremonies in Yater because it had been the target of Israeli aggression. He wanted to bring the 'Ashura' to the border and show the Israelis that the people of the south will stand in their face like Imam Husain stood in the face of his enemies. He started his *khutbah* with the following statement: "We must not be satisfied with just celebrating the memory of Imam Husain because it will just become another routine act of worship and faith. (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 357.)

Imam Hussein based his movement on the following words: "You can't play with the truth and you can't ignore evil". (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 360.) He told them that all they needed to do was look around them to see that the people of the south had been treated unfairly and that they can't ignore it. He wondered why they were being treated this way? "The government does not spend a penny on improving the life of the

people of the south. They do not want to protect us or arm us to protect ourselves against the enemy.” He reminded them that the Shi`ah were an integral part of Lebanon and that they had sacrificed a lot for its independence and prosperity. “We are the preservers of Lebanon and we are willing to carry arms and protect it to the last man. We won’t accept to be treated as second class citizens anymore. We want justice and protection for all.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1990, p. 361.)

“Lebanon is not South Africa Even Though We Have Sectarianism and They Have Racism” is a speech Imam Musa made in a town in the Biqa` valley during the ceremony commemorating the anniversary of the death of Imam Zain al-`Abidin, in Februray 1974. He started his speech by saying:

“Imam Zayn al-`Abidin in our beliefs is the symbol of opposition to oppression, surrender and evil. This is the way of *ahl al-bayt*. This is the way of our predecessors. They call us *mitwalis*, antagonists, revolutionaries and fighters of evil and oppression. It does not matter what they call us, we know who we are and we will continue in the path of the Imams. Imam Hussein stood with seventy in front of his enemy numbering in the thousands. We are much more than seventy and we will never be defeated. We will change the status quo and start a new page in our history.” (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 232.)

He told the audience that Lebanon was not South Africa even though sectarianism is practiced in it. He also told them that there was no Shi`i diplomat in any industrial country in the world. Shi`i diplomats were usually assigned to countries in Africa and South America and that Maronites and in some cases, Sunni diplomats are usually assigned to posts in Europe and other industrialized countries. A Shi`i couldn’t easily become a high ranking military man either. In many cases they needed some strong collateral including money and government contacts. “They want me only to pray in the

mosque and counsel people in religious issues. I will never do just that. I will fight and die for all the disinherited in this country.' (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 233.)

Imam Musa concluded that the Shi'i community in Lebanon was living under worse conditions than the blacks in South Africa. The only interesting thing about this situation was that South Africa's system was based on racism but Lebanon was supposed to be a democratic country. He also warned them that 'Ashura' was coming soon if the situation does not change and that they need to be prepared for it. He ended his speech by extending greetings to the audience from their brothers and sisters in the south. This statement was very important as the Imam was eluding to the fight the Shi'ah had with the Umayyads, whom the Shi'ah considered bad rulers, and that if the situation of the Shi'ah in Lebanon was not going to improve they (the Shi'ah will rise and fight the rulers whom they consider unfair and bad to them.

"The Shi'i Community in Lebanon will Fight for Lebanon's Future" is a speech Imam Musa made at the Ba'labakk gathering he called for in March 1974. The speech was published in the newspaper, *Al-Nahar*, the following day. The gathering was estimated to have over 75,000 in attendance and over 10,000 pieces of firearms of all types and shapes. The gathering was on the fortieth day of the commemoration of the death of Imam Husain. Representatives from all the religious and political groups in Lebanon were in attendance. In addition, representatives from the government were also in the audience. There were banners of all sizes and shapes blanketing the audience. Some of the banners read: "No to evil, yes to the truth"; "We will fight until the last

man”; “Hail the revolutionary Imam”; and “Yes to unity, no to sectarianism”. (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 193.)

As soon Imam Musa was visible to the audience, the sound of bullets and cheers filled the air. It is said that the sound of bullets and cheers lasted for twenty minutes. Finally, Imam Musa waved his hands and asked them to stop shooting in the air. “You will hurt someone with the flying bullets and you need every bullet and every man to fight the upcoming battle.” (Dar al-Arqum, p. 194.) The shooting stopped but as soon as Imam Musa ended a sentence, shooting started again. He started his speech by saying: “this anniversary of the “*Sayyid* of martyrs” reminds me of an incident 1335 years ago that took place in this city.

When the caravan taking the head of Imam Husain to Damascus passed in the city of Ba’labakk, the people of the city asked them who they were? Zaynab, daughter of Imam `Ali answered: “We are the family of Muhammad.” The residents of the city revolted and attacked the soldiers who were accompanying the caravan. Later, they built a mosque and named it ‘The *Masjid* of the Head of Imam Husain’ and a site for the daughter of Imam Husain who died from the hardship of the long trip.” (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 197.)

He reminded the audience that the city of Ba’labakk does not have one public school. All schools in the city were rented from private owners. He told them that there was a school during the French Mandate that provided free education to children in the area, but that after the mandate was ended, the city had to provide its own buildings, teachers and materials to educate its children. He also told them about the fact that there

were two projects designed to provide enough water for the city and its surroundings, but that the government had not funded any of them even though the projects were agreed upon eleven years earlier.

He then updated them on the situation in south Lebanon. He told them that the situation in south Lebanon was desperate and that they needed to support their brothers and sisters there. He also informed them that the Lebanese government was diverting the waters of the Litani River (the largest river in Lebanon which runs from the Bika' to the border in the south), to satisfy the needs of those living in Beirut and the mountains. This left the people of the south without sufficient water resources to water their fields and raise their cattle. "Why don't they complete the projects in the north and Mount Lebanon in order to get more water for them and leave the Litani water for the Bika' and the south to survive? This is another example of the government's lack of responsibility towards our people." (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 200.) He asked them to demand a better treatment from the government, and to ask it to live up to its responsibilities towards the Shi'i community.

He then discussed the issue of thousands of Shi'ah in the Bika' and the south who do not have a Lebanese identity card. The government denied them cards because they did not have any paperwork that identified them. Many of these individuals had lived in rural areas of the Bika' and the south without any exposure or access to the mainstream society. They did not keep records of anything and no government representative cared to help them and educate them about their rights and privileges as Lebanese citizens. Furthermore, the government had not counted these individuals in any census they



conducted and as a result the number of the Shi`ah community was not accurate. “We deserve twice as many government seats and jobs and three times the budget we get. We constitute thirty five percent of the population but get only get twenty seven percent of our just share.” (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 201.)

He ended his speech by asking them to repeat the following oath with him: “We will not be deterred. We prefer to die rather than live under these conditions. We are Lebanese citizens and will continue to be until the end of the world. We demand our full share of the Lebanese government, economy and citizenship. We will fight for the unity and sovereignty of Lebanon no matter who the enemy or aggressor is. As Husain is our witness, we will never allow another ‘Ashura’ to happen to our people.” (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 202.)

“The Future Will be Dark if We are not Careful” is an article Imam Musa wrote on Christmas Eve in 1974. The article was published in the Lebanese newspaper, *Al-Hayat*. He started the article with the following statement: “The meaning of Christmas is a new beginning. Let’s use this great event to open a new page in the history of our country and a new beginning for all the Lebanese people.” (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 237.) He reminded the readers that events such as the birth of Jesus Christ, and the willingness of Ibrahim to sacrifice his only son must teach humans that they need to do whatever it takes to save the world around them. He encouraged the Lebanese to stop fighting one another and work hand-in-hand to build a brighter future for their sons and daughters.

“Let us remember the time Jesus walked into the temple of God and kicked out the merchants who were using it as a trading post and the time the Prophet Muhammad walked into the Ka’bah and destroyed the stone statues the people worshiped at the time.” (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 238.) He told them that these incidents teach us that no matter how tough the situation facing us is, we must act and act firmly in order to correct it. According to Imam Musa God demands from His people to right the wrong and fight evil everywhere. At the end of his article, he asked the Lebanese people to look around them, identify what is wrong and do their duty of righting it. “I do not want to put you down during this happy season but it is my responsibility to make you aware of what is happening so that we will be able to celebrate more Christmases in the future.” (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 240.)

“What is Needed is a ‘Just Government’ in Place of Sectarianism” is an article Imam Musa wrote in 1974. It was published in the newspaper, *Al-Hayat*. In this article, Imam Musa discussed the Lebanese political system and its consequences to the people and the future of Lebanon. “We have always believed that nationality is both a combination of rights and responsibilities. Rights without responsibilities is what animals in a farm have, and responsibilities without rights is what slaves have. Neither is acceptable all by itself for all the Lebanese people without exception.” (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 215.)

He told the Lebanese that the current formula used to establish a government in Lebanon was acceptable as long as it fairly represented all Lebanese communities and

met their needs and aspirations. “The current government in Lebanon is not a fair representation of the Lebanese population and is not meeting their needs and aspirations. It is not fair for some Lebanese people to live in peace, luxury and harmony while others are dying and living under subhuman conditions.” (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 216.) He pleaded with all the Lebanese to demand a more just government that they can trust and support. He warned them that inaction would result in the destruction of their country and the future of their children.

“We Must Have Lebanese Resistance in Order to Protect our Country” is a speech Imam Musa made in the auditorium of the `Amili College of Beirut in January, 1975. It was the anniversary of `Ashura’ and the speech was published in the newspaper, *Al-Nahar*. He started his speech by talking about the role of women in Muslim society. “I will talk about the missing half of the Husain revolution and Islam.” (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 161.) He reminded the audience that throughout history Muslim women had played a very important role in the preservation and the spread of Islam around the world. “When Imam Hussein was killed and his head cut off, it was Zaynab, his sister who took his head and body to bury them in dignity and with accordance to Islamic teachings. She also stood up to `Ubaid ibn-Yazid when she went around the Muslim world to announce the killing of her brother and continue in his mission.” (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 165.)

He then said to them: “The way Muslim women are treated in Muslim countries around the world is not acceptable. She is not wanted when born. She is controlled

throughout her life and finally is forced to marry anyone her father or brother wants her to marry. In some countries women are only used to bare children and/or for pleasure.” (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 167.) He told them that women are a great resource to Muslim society and the world as a whole. He urged that they be treated with utmost care and love. They need to be loved, educated and empowered, not oppressed and used as slaves. He reminded them of the words of the Prophet: “Inna afdala awladikum al-banat.” “In our society nowadays, we are in dire need of strong, well-educated and well-skilled women. We are in dire need of preparing all our resources to achieve God’s mission for us.” (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 172.)

He then discussed the issue of militias in Lebanon. He asked the audience why there are so many militias in Lebanon and what are they getting ready to fight? “There are many armed militias in Beirut. Why? Is it because they are afraid of each other? Isn’t the Israeli threat to south Lebanon serious enough for them to go there and fight to preserve it instead of preparing for each other?” (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 174.) He told them that Israel finds itself facing strong armies on all its borders, except that of Lebanon. Lebanon’s border is the weak link and they needed to get ready, get armed and go to it and protect it. “I don’t believe in the Husain of crying. He died in order to establish justice and champion the truth and we need to follow in his path.” (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 179.)

“We all Believe in Lebanon” is a speech Imam Musa made in the funeral of Ma`ruf Sa`d on March 13, 1975. Ma`ruf Sa`d was an activist in the southern city of

Saida (Sidon). He led a fisherman's strike march during which he was shot and killed by some Lebanese soldiers trying to control the demonstration. They were demonstrating against a government plan to give a foreign company the right to exploit the fishing industry in Lebanon. Fishing was a main source of income for thousands of southerners. "Here we are celebrating the passing of a week since your martyrdom. You have gone ahead of us on this great path. We are celebrating this event not to cry for your great soul, but rather, to salute you and to wish that we follow you soon." (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 200.) He told the audience that Ma'ruf Sa'd was a force of pride and strength for Lebanon. He fought for the oppressed and the poor, regardless of what religious or ethnic group they belonged to. He urged them to keep his fight alive and not allow those who tried to silence him to succeed.

"We all believe in a strong and prosperous Lebanon. We also believe that the Lebanese people are the greatest asset of Lebanon. We want a strong Lebanese army for all Lebanese people. We want it to be there to protect our country by fighting Israeli aggression and constant attacks on its civilians." (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 201.) He warned that those who perpetrated the assassination of Ma'ruf Sa'd were trying to weaken the Lebanese army. They wanted the army to fight their internal wars and not the real enemy on the border. He pointed out to the fact that not even one bullet was fired during the funeral of Ma'ruf Sa'd even though there were thousands of armed men and women in the procession.

He concluded by saying: "Today, my brothers, is a special day. It is a day of truth and eternity. It is the beginning of the process of realizing the rights of the

oppressed. Ma`ruf Sa`d proved to us that the oppressed are very powerful and we must unite them and fight with them. He also convinced us that martyrdom is the only path to follow in order to achieve victory against all the enemies of Lebanon, internal and external.” (Dar al-Arqum, 1981, p. 202.)

“I Want to be a Servant to all the Lebanese People” is a statement Imam Musa made on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1975 to a group of well-wishers who were congratulating him on his recent election to a new six-year term as president of the Supreme Islamic Shi`i Council. The audience included representatives from all religious and political groups in Lebanon. “My dear brothers, I want to thank you for coming. I especially want to thank Father Jurg Khudr, Father Yuakim Mubarak and Shaikh Pierre Gemayyel. This event is very special because it fell on the great day of Easter.” (Dar al-Ta`aruf, 1979, p. 9.) Father Khudr was the leader of the Catholic community in Lebanon and Father Mubarak was the leader of the Orthodox community in Lebanon. Shaikh Pierre Gemayyel (the title *Shaikh* here is used to denote family stature and not a religious one), was the leader of the Phalangist Party and militia in Lebanon.

He reminded the audience that people who are faced with a crisis must act accordingly. First of all they need to assess the situation and put a plan in action to remedy it. They start by bringing their concerns to the people in power by means of demonstration and public statements. If the first behavior does not result in a solution, then he acts verbally and finally acts physically. “Even Jesus, the symbol of love and caring acted with force when He found out that the merchants were using the temple as a

trading post, instead of a house of prayer. He said: ‘This is the house of my Father and you have turned it into a den of thieves’ and then kicked them out of the temple.” (Dar al-Ta`aruf, 1979, p. 11.)

He went on and said that even the Pope in the Vatican had proclaimed in one of his statements that when violence is used to right wrong and fight evil, it is the best type of violence. He then remembered an occasion where he heard Father Khudr refer to the statement of one of the Christian saints that went as follows: “The hand that is splattered with the blood of tyrants is like the hand that wipe off fatigue and dust from the foreheads of the suffering.” (Dar al-Ta`aruf, 1979, p. 12.) He hoped that the Lebanese will not resort to such extreme action and that they will change the situation in a peaceful manner. He concluded by asking the government to change its attitude toward the poor and the oppressed and to provide opportunities to all the Lebanese. “Give the chance to all Lebanese to live in peace and dignity and you will give Lebanon the chance to continue as the model of religious and social harmony.” (Dar al-Ta`aruf, 1979, p. 18.)

“The Lebanese Mountains will Remain the Protectors of Truth and Justice” is a statement Imam Musa gave on April 14, 1975 during the first anniversary of the assassination of Ma`ruf Sa`d. The assassination of Ma`ruf Sa`d became known as the first spark that led to the Lebanese civil war. It also came a few days after another serious incident in which more than thirty Palestinian mourners were shot and killed as they passed through a Christian neighborhood in East Beirut. It became known as “the Massacre of the bus”. A busload of Palestinian mourners had the misfortune of passing

through the neighborhood of `Ayn al-Rummaneh at the heels of an assassination attempt on the life of Pierre Gemayyel, the leader of the phalangist militia in Lebanon.

Imam Musa started by saying: "Today we are commemorating two very sad incidents in Lebanon. But we can't allow our pain and the sadness to cloud our vision and our emotions to get the best of us. We must show the world that we are able to withstand these horrible blows and still be able to continue as a people and a country." (Dar al-Ta'aruf, 1982, p. 28.) He warned the audience that Israel was and will be the only winner of such incidents. He told the audience that the Lebanese and Palestinian situations were two faces of the same truth. He also told them that Lebanese resistance and the Palestinian revolution were born from the same base and will go on the same path, towards a single goal, and have the same enemy. He then called on the Lebanese to stand firm against any attempts to divide them and to drive a wedge between them and the Palestinian cause. He also called on the Palestinians to faithfully stand behind and safeguard their cause against any attempts to weaken it. "Wake up, unite, and fight against all the traitors from inside and outside Lebanon! Expose them to the people and to the whole world! Be up to your faith in God, to the great history and tradition of your forefathers, to your community and religion and to the world that is watching." (Dar al-Ta'aruf, 1982, p. 30.)

"Our Country and our History are in Grave Danger" is a report on the Lebanese situation Imam Musa presented to the Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council on September 13, 1975. The report was made up of six pointed. It started with a description of the overall



condition of poverty and desperation that characterized the Shi'i community in Lebanon, went through the period of the creation of the Palestinian crisis and ended with the incidents that led to the start of the Lebanese civil war. He asked the council to spend most of the meeting on studying the current situation and identify some workable solutions to it. "We must discuss the situation because our sons and daughters, our country, and even our history are in grave danger." (Dar al- Ta'aruf, 1982, p. 41.)

He urged them to look into the situation by analyzing the six pointed of the report and to concentrate on the incidents that led to the deteriorating conditions in the country. "It is very important for us to identify the real perpetrators behind the latest violence because if we do not do it now, it will result in the destruction of Lebanon, the weakening of the Palestinian revolution, and the overall pride and reputation of our people and culture. Israel is the only beneficiary of what is happening." (Dar al-Ta'aruf, 1982, p. 42.)

He saw that the short-term consequence of Lebanese and Palestinian fighting was the weakening of the Palestinians so that they won't be able to fight for their land, while the long-term consequence was the slow death of the Lebanese society, culture and history. He also saw it as the national responsibility of the Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council to do whatever was in its power to assist in the finding of a solution to the serious situation facing Lebanon.

"What Did We Do with Ourselves and Our Country" was a *khutbah* Imam Musa gave during the ceremonies of the 'Id al-Adha in December, 1975. Imam Musa started

his *khutbah* by talking about the six months of bloodshed and destruction that had engulfed all of Lebanon. He asked the audience to remember the great day they were celebrating and that they needed to sacrifice in order to stop what is happening to them and their country. He also reminded them that Christmas was approaching and that the Lebanese people need to take advantage of these sacred days and work according to their heavenly messages. He then asked them:

“What have we done to ourselves and to our country?  
 What have we done with our history and reputation around the world?  
 What have we done with the future of our children?  
 What have we done with our children’s present as they observe our heinous crimes? What will we tell our children in the future when they ask us about these days and read our history? What will we tell the world, our friends and comrades? How will they treat us in the future diplomatically, economically and socially? How will we be able to participate with the rest of the civilized world after what we have done to each other? We were the leaders of the world, the builders of nations, the symbol of peace, prosperity and intelligence. Who is the beneficiary of all this? (Dar al-Ta’aruf, 1982, p. 50.)

He wondered why, when a person was kidnapped from a certain religious Community, ten were kidnapped from the opposing one in his stead. He saw it as a major miscarriage of justice that civilians who had nothing to do with the fighting had to pay with their lives for the mistakes of others, and for the fact that their identification card clearly pointed out to their religious affiliation. He blamed the warring parties for the breakdown in humanity in Lebanon. He also pointed out that the majority of the dead, wounded and kidnapped were civilians and that the armed militias were attacking civilians in order to inflame the religious feelings and fan the fire of civil war.

He couldn’t understand why the Lebanese people had not realized that the only thing they were doing was bringing their own death and destruction. He urged them to

learn from the mistakes they made in the past six months and return to their senses. "The only beneficiary from this carnage is Israel and the enemies of Lebanon." (Dar al-Ta'aruf, 1982, p. 53.) He wondered why the world community and even the Arab and Muslim world had not done anything to stop the destruction of Lebanon and the Lebanese. He concluded by asking the masses to stand up to their leaders and force them to act before it is too late. He pleaded with the warring parties to have mercy on the children of their country.

"The Most Important Thing Now is the Unity of Lebanon...Do not be Deceived by all the Political and Religious Slogans Around You" is a *khutbah* Imam Musa gave in the mosque of Sur (Tyre) during the commemoration of another Muslim holiday in December 1975. He started his *khutbah* by saying: "I do not remember Lebanon having a crisis as serious as the one it is living through now." (Dar al-Ta'aruf, 1982, p. 56.) He pointed out to the fact that Lebanon was facing a three-pronged danger. The first danger was identified as the dismemberment of Lebanon. He informed of the religious cleansing being practiced by both warring factions, especially the Phalangists who had emptied four towns in the eastern part of Beirut from their Muslim (Shi'i) inhabitants. "This is a conspiracy to establish another Israel in Lebanon, but they we will not allow them to succeed. We will fight until the last man in Lebanon to stop it." (Dar al-Ta'aruf, 1982, p. 57.)

The second danger was identified as the increase in Israeli attacks on South Lebanon. He saw it as a plan by Israel to occupy south Lebanon in order for it to exploit

its natural resources and realize its expansionist goals. What he thought was even harder to accept was the fact that the people in the south and those who were being cleansed from their homes, did not have enough fire power to fight back. But he promised that the “sons and daughters of the Husain revolution” would not bow down and accept this fate. They will fight with everything at their disposal and foil the enemy’s plan.

The third danger was identified as the destruction of the Palestinian resistance. “Israel is the ultimate evil. It is a danger to all the Arabs, Muslims and Christians, to peace, freedom and human dignity.” (Dar al-Ta’aruf, 1982, p. 60.) This became one of his famous sayings and a rallying cry for his followers. He informed them that Zionists classify humans as Jews and gentiles (gentiles are seen usually seen as second class people). He also informed them that all world religions and teachings do not support the claim of the Jews of being “God’s chosen people.” He then wondered: “Who will fight this ultimate evil? The Arabs? They are busy fighting with one another and enjoying the pleasures of this world. The rest of the world is paying no attention to what’s happening.” (Dar al-Ta’aruf, 1982, p. 61.) He came to the conclusion that the Lebanese people are the only ones who will fight this evil and defeat it.

He ended his *khutbah* by telling the Lebanese that their country and existence were in danger and that they needed to arm themselves, get ready and be vigilant of what is happening around them. He then warned the Shi`ah that they are not to attack or harass any Christian who lives among them, no matter what happened in other areas of Lebanon. He reminded them that this was not Imam `Ali’s way of behaving with people who lived under his realm, especially minorities. “Whoever attacks or harasses a civilian, attacks

God and His messengers. We are not to take revenge. I have lost two thousand sons and daughters and we can take revenge for each one of them, but will it do? I will only be doing exactly what these criminals want us to do, but we are not criminals.” (Dar al-Ta’aruf, 1982, p. 63.)

“Dividing Lebanon Must not Happen” is a call Imam Musa made to all Lebanese during ‘Ashura’ in January 1976. The call was published in the leftist Lebanese newspaper, *Al-Safir* a few days later. He started by asking the Lebanese ambassadors around the world why they had not said or done anything about what is happening in Lebanon. “Did you forget your country, your culture and your people? Why did you abandon your country and your people and allowed it to burn and die slowly?” (Dar al-Ta’aruf, 1982, p. 66.) He asked them to come down from their ivory towers and fulfill their responsibility towards their country and people.

He then discussed the various ‘solutions’ to the crisis presented by the various political and religious factions in Lebanon. He classified them as either sectarian or bias to one group or another, and concluded that they were all unacceptable. He said that what was needed was a solution that would give all the Lebanese their fair share and treat them as equals. “Our country is going through the worst crisis in its history and we must not be satisfied with the status quo. We must change it in such a way that we will be able to live in peace and harmony in the future. The enemies from inside and outside our country are exploiting our religious differences in order to weaken and divide us. Let’s us unite and foil their evil schemes.” (Dar al-Ta’aruf, 1982, p. 68.)

“We Must Forget the Past and Return to Our Senses” was a call Imam Musa made to all Lebanese in January 1976. It was a short message designed to remind the Lebanese people of their responsibility towards what was happening around them. “What is happening to us now is a result of the many mistakes our leaders committed in the past thirty years, and our silence.” (Dar al-Ta’aruf, 1982, p. 81.) He told the Lebanese that they needed to get rid of the current leaders and install a more socially, religiously and humane government. They needed to learn more about each other’s culture and religious beliefs in order for them to be able to communicate better with one another. They also needed to abandon all the militias because according to him they were not fighting for them, but rather, they were fighting for their foreign masters. “Rise all of you, the believers in Lebanon and the keepers of the generations to the defense of your country and to the defense of the civilians! Let’s have mercy on the orphans and the broken hearts of the mothers all over this great country. You are the only saviors of Lebanon.” (Dar al-Ta’aruf, 1982, p. 84.)

“We Call on Our Brothers the Maronites to Move and Help us Find a Final Solution For This Crisis” was a call Imam Musa made on Radio Beirut in March 1976. This was probably one of his boldest call yet to find a solution for the deteriorating situation in Lebanon. He urged the president of Lebanon, Sulaiman Franjiyyah, to resign in order to save Lebanon, himself and the people of Lebanon. “I plead with you Mr. President to resign in order for the massacres to stop and calm the situation. According

to Imam Mosua the situation in Lebanon had deteriorated to such an extent that the only possible things we should call for were:

“First of all, we call on the president to resign in order to stop the madness. The politicians and military leaders must rally around the constitution and protect the masses. The House of Representatives must elect a president who is strong and capable of dealing with the very sensitive situation in our country. The president must work very closely with Syria in order to work on a plan that will ensure the preservation of Lebanon and the security of Syria and the Arab world.”

Secondly, we call on our brothers the Maronites, their religious and military leaders, their masses and their armed men and women to save our country. We call on them to stop the massacres and the destruction of our country and end the crisis. We call in the name of all God’s religions, the name of the future and the aspirations of the people of Lebanon. We also call in the name of the millions of Lebanese immigrants and the friends we have around the world to help us.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 214.)

“This War is For Political Maneuvers, Stop it!” was a radio message Imam Musa made on the first anniversary of the civil war in May 1976. It was made after the parliament’s session to elect a new president was postponed for a week. He started by saying: “The battle is heating up once again and it is killing our people and destroying our country. They postponed the election of a new president knowing fully well that is was going to cause the situation to deteriorate anew.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 92.) He wondered who was benefiting from such delays and maneuvers. He also asked why the politicians were playing with the lives of innocent people and under what law or religion they justified it.

He reminded them that thousands of innocent civilians were refugees all over Lebanon and had no work, food or protection. He also reminded the politicians that the

situation in the country was very serious and delaying a possible solution was the worst thing any human being in their right mind would do. He urged them to: "Let the parliament elect the president. Demand that the new president follow up with the pointed you agreed upon in order to find a solution to this disaster. The old system did not work. You must demand a completely new system based on justice, peace and equality." (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 94.)

"Our Civil War Must End!" was a speech Imam Musa made during the ceremonies of the 'Day of the Martyrs' in May 1976. He started his speech with the following statement: "Pure souls.....our sacred martyrs.....we stand humbly in front of you, listening to you and appreciating the great sacrifice you had made on our behalf." (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 232.) He told the audience that the martyrs had shown them that it is better to die with dignity than to live in humiliation, and that they must be prepared to follow in their footsteps.

He summarized the events leading to the civil war and the events that expired since. He also reiterated his plan for a solution to the crisis. He went further by saying that the conspiracy was aimed at isolating Lebanon from its Arab sisters and taking away all that connected it to the Arab culture, tradition and society.

He ended his speech with a message to the leader of the Palestinian Liberation organization (PLO). "My brother Abu `Ammar, the honor of al-Quds (Jerusalem) will only be returned by the hands of the faithful. We ask God that we will walk into al-Masjid al-Aqsa (al-Aqsa Mosque) with you and pray like our forefathers did for hundreds



of years.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 238.) He saw the liberation of Jerusalem as the duty of all Arabs and Muslims around the world, and that abandoning it will bring the end to the Arabs and Muslim society. “My revolutionary brothers, you are like the waves in the ocean. If you stop moving, you will be finished.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 240.)

“Saving Lebanon Will Only be Possible by the Hand of the Lebanese” was an interview Imam Musa gave to the magazine, *Monday Morning* in July 1976. The interview was done after a visit Imam Musa made to Damascus, Syria to discuss the deteriorating situation in Lebanon and Syria’s role in easing the tensions. He was asked whether he was representing any warring party in Lebanon or whether he was a mediator between the Palestinians and their leftist allies and the Syrian government. He answered by saying that he was neither. He was visiting Lebanon as a concerned leader who was worried about what was happening to his country and people. “My main goal is to find some common ground between the Palestinians and the Syrians in order to put an end to the serious situation between the two.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 243.)

The second question asked Imam Musa whether he believed that the Syrian troops would leave the areas in Lebanon they had controlled and go back to their country. Imam Musa informed the reporter that Syria was more interested and eager to get its troops out of Lebanon than Lebanon was. “What Syria is trying to do is force the Lebanese and Palestinian warring factions to sit down and discuss their concerns at the table and not with the gun. Syria is spending a lot on keeping its troops in Lebanon. It is also

concerned about the role of the Israelis in the crisis in Lebanon and how it will affect Syrian security in the future.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 245.)

The other questions focused on the possibility of finding a solution to the conflict between the Syrians and the Palestinians and whether after all what had expired, Syria could still act as a mediator in the Lebanese civil war. Imam Musa clarified that both the Syrians and Palestinians were ready for a ceasefire and for repairing the relationship between them. As far as the role Syria could play in the Lebanese crisis, Imam Musa pointed out that the Arab League had sent the Syrian forces to Lebanon to assist in finding a solution to the fighting between the Lebanese and Palestinians. He also reminded the reporter that the Lebanese president and government asked Syria to intervene in the situation.

At the end of the interview Imam Mosua was asked about any suggestions he had to stop the carnage and destruction in Lebanon. Imam Musa reiterated his earlier messages of unity and understanding between all Lebanese communities, of Arab involvement in voicing support for the Lebanese and Palestinian crisis and for the world community to take its responsibility towards one of its members. “The Lebanese themselves are the only ones capable of finding a solution for what is happening in their country. The Arabs and the world can help by both not becoming a party to the madness and by assisting in the search for a diplomatic solution.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 246.)

“My Lebanese Brothers and Sisters, You Need to Find an Internal Solution to Your Disagreements. The Enemy Will not Have Mercy on You”, was a call Imam Musa made to all Lebanese communities and all the Arabs during the Arab Leaders Conference in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in October 1976. In his call he reminds the Lebanese that the crisis in Lebanon had lasted for about a year and a half and had involved everyone from Lebanese against Lebanese, to Lebanese against Palestinian and Lebanese/Palestinian against Syrian. “Today must be the day when all we Lebanese, Palestinians, Syrians, Saudis, *et al.*, stand together and face the enemy who had taken advantage of all the chaos in our country and had invaded the south. We need to set everything aside and concentrate on this crisis. The loss of the south will mean the end of Lebanon and we will have nothing to discuss after that.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 285.)

He also told them that Israel was claiming that it is protecting the people of the south from the Palestinians by its actions. It was bringing medicine and food into villages of south Lebanon and providing arms to the people to ‘protect themselves’. “Israel’s actions are very strange but calculated. They believe that if they show the people of the south that they are good samaritans, the people will welcome them with open arms. This will never happen. The poor people of south Lebanon will never forget that the grave situation they are living in was the result of Israeli aggression.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 286.) He asked the Lebanese to be careful and not help the Israelis to establish a base in Lebanon. He warned them that working with the Israelis is the ultimate betrayal to Lebanon and all the Lebanese. “I call on you in the name of God and humanity, in the name of Jesus and Muhammad, in the name of Lebanon, to avoid

falling into this trap. The consequences of such actions will bring the end of Lebanon and the Lebanese culture and society as we know it.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 287.)

He finally called on all militias and armed men and women in Lebanon to go to the south to defend it. He also called on the Arabs to act quickly and help in finding a solution to the Lebanese crisis. “All of us in Lebanon are looking up to you in this conference to take a historic move and stand up to the enemy. Our crisis is your crisis and our fate is yours. Please help Lebanon and the Lebanese before they become another statistic in the Zionist conspiracy.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 288.)

“The Shi`ah in Lebanon Will be Victorious With the Unity of Lebanon” was an interview Imam Musa gave to the Lebanese newspaper, *Al-Anwar* in December 1976. Imam Musa had just returned to Lebanon from a whirlwind trip to many Arab countries seeking their support for a United Nation urgent conference to discuss the situation in Lebanon. The Lebanese had formed a new government while the Imam was outside the country. It was called the ‘government of reconciliation and peace’. Imam Musa was asked his opinion of the new government and whether it had the mass support of the Lebanese people to stop the war. Imam Musa said that anything that can be done to help solve the crisis in Lebanon was welcome. He was content with the relationship the new government had with the president. He saw it as an important step in establishing the necessary dialogue between the various Lebanese communities and thus would eventually find a workable formula to address their concerns.

When asked whether he was working on uniting the Shi`ah community after what had happened to it during the war, Imam Musa answered by saying: "The Shi`ah community went through the same crisis as its counterparts in Lebanon. It came out of it victorious because Lebanon is still united and the enemy wasn't successful in creating a wedge between us and our Lebanese brothers and sisters." (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 315.) He was then asked about a meeting he called for all religious leaders in Lebanon. Imam Musa was disappointed that the fighting did not allow the meeting to take place, but he would continue his efforts in bringing all the leaders of the various religious communities together for a conference to discuss the concern of each. He saw it as another good step in reaching understanding and harmony within Lebanese society.

The last question Imam Musa was asked dealt with the freedom of the press in covering the events in Lebanon. Imam Musa answered with a quote from Imam `Ali, "*Man taraka al-shahawat kana hurran*" ("Whoever abandons his desires is free"). He explained the meaning of the statement as when someone infringes on another person's peace and privacy, he is not considered free, but greedy and unethical. He concluded by saying that Lebanon was a democratic country and that the people had the freedom to express themselves, but he urged that they adhere to acceptable behavior of the culture and traditions they live in.

"If the Lebanese Formula Fails, it Will be a Dark Day for Human Civilization" was a presentation Imam Musa made during a meeting with Lebanese newspapers editors in January 1977. He started his presentation by saying that the Lebanese formula (i.e. the system of government and society) were vital to the world. He also reminded the

audience that the world had become very small and anything that happens in one country even a small country like Lebanon, affects the rest of the world. He saw the Lebanese formula as a role model for other countries with similar characteristics to emulate. He also discussed the strategic location of Lebanon and its historic relationship with the world (Europe, Africa and Asia). "If the Lebanese society is destroyed as a result of this conspiracy, the whole world will suffer because they will lose an example of Muslim-Christian understanding that may help in resolving other crisis around the world dealing with religious issues." (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 319.)

He was asked whether he believed that the Lebanese constitution as it was written would be able to provide a solution to the Lebanese dilemma. Imam Musa answered by reminding the audience that the crisis in Lebanon was partly a result of the inherent inequality found in the constitution. He saw it as a starting point for a dialogue in which all Lebanese communities would be represented and actively involved. He finally commented on the statement made by one of the editors that Lebanon was on its way to finding a workable solution to its crisis. "I still believe a hundred percent that the Lebanese are the only saviors of this country. The Lebanese people (of all religious faiths) have lived in harmony with one another for hundreds of years. They ate together. They prayed together. They laughed and cried together and fought their enemies together. I have no doubt that they will find a solution together and live in peace and harmony once again." (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 223.)

### Religious Issues

“Muslim-Christian Harmony is a Treasure that we Must Hold on To”, was a opening article Imam Musa wrote for the magazine, *Sawt al-Mahrumin* (The Voice of the Disinherited) in September 1976. The article was based on an interview he gave a few weeks earlier to the Egyptian reporter and writer, `Adil Rida. `Adil Rida asked Imam Musa whether he thought the Lebanese crisis had affected Muslim/Christian relations and caused a major rift between the Muslims and Christians in Lebanon? Imam Musa answered by saying that as long as the unity of Lebanon was preserved, the Muslim/Christian relations are still intact and the dialogue between them will continue. He blamed the many crimes perpetrated on civilians based on their religious affiliation on foreign agents who understood the delicate religious situation in the country. “There were foreign elements working in our communities to encourage us to fight each other. In addition to that, there are some traitor within our communities who can be bought and sold with a few dollars.” (Rida, p. 84.)

When asked whether he believed that all Christians in Lebanon were involved in the fighting, he answered quickly and assuredly by saying “no.” “Many Christians in Lebanon are against what is happening and have voiced their concerns and objections to us and the world on many occasions. He reminded the reporter that Muslims in the northern part of Lebanon lived in peace and harmony among their Christian neighbors throughout the crisis.” (Rida, p. 85.) He also mentioned that the opposite was also true. Many Christians in West Beirut and in southern Lebanon lived among their Muslim brothers and sisters without being harassed or attacked throughout the crisis.

“Peace is the Ultimate Destiny between Islam and Christianity” is an open letter Imam Musa wrote to all the Lebanese during the commemoration of ‘Ashura’ in December 1977. He started his letter by describing the scene in Karbala’ after the death of Imam Husain and his family and followers. “On this day, 1337 years ago, the bodies of Imam Husain and his family and followers were strewn all over the desert, under the burning sun. The women and some of the children who were spared were getting ready for a long trip without their loved ones, in the vast desert.” (Rida, 91.) He told them that in the middle of all this misery the Husaini revolution was born. He said that Karbala’ was not the battleground of the Shi’ah only, but rather the battleground of human dignity. He compared the situation in Lebanon to that of Karbala’ and warned of a revolution that will move the world.

“Humans around the world are living in a very precarious way. Religions are promoting separatism and radicalism and are contributing to the atmosphere of misunderstanding and intolerance in the world. We must struggle to stop such actions and ideologies. Peace is the ultimate and only viable alternative. Anything else will lead to the demise of humanity.” (Rida, p. 92.) He finally asked the Lebanese to look forward to the approaching Christmas celebrations and use it as the beginning of a new tomorrow for all and a bright light on the road to Muslim-Christian harmony and tolerance.

“Every Faithful Muslim Calls for Unity Between the Various Muslim Sects” was an interview Imam Musa gave during a conference on Islamic thought in Algeria in



August 1973. Imam Musa was asked whether having many sects was a positive or negative thing for Islam. Imam Musa replied by saying that Islam was able to survive through the centuries as a result of the hard work and faith of the many Muslims who fought to keep Islam united. He also said that it was easy to say that it was good or bad. In his opinion, there was more to the issue than just who was right and who was wrong. He identified the two faces to the issue as follows: Islamic Beliefs and Islamic Thought.

He described Islamic beliefs as the rules under which member of a certain sect live. “As the Muslim *ummah* is shown to have differing beliefs, it loses credibility and becomes weak.” (Rida, p. 66.) He saw that the majority of the people were not well learned in religious teachings and were easily swept into emotional and blind acceptance of rumors and beliefs that may not have anything to do with the real meaning and teachings of Islam. He described Islamic Thought as the arena of the learned in religious affairs ‘*ulama*’. “Disagreement in this area is not a bad thing, in fact, it enriches Islam and Muslims. It gives them an opportunity to discuss and debate such issues in a purely religious atmosphere. It helps in the advancement of the Muslim *ummah* and facilitates *ijtihad* (religious debate).” (Rida, p. 68.)

The second question concentrated on the Imam’s call for Islam to be open to the new world (technology, social changes and world relations). Imam Musa answered this question with the following words: “Within Islam one can find the roots of progress, modernization and openness to the world. Islam’s teachings, culture and tradition have always been sensitive to the needs and aspirations of Muslims throughout history, and have always encouraged them to be creative and revolutionary.” (Rida, p. 71.) He also

reminded the reporter that the Muslim Empire had lived in peace with its neighbors, had traded with the world and maintained an open and working relationship with them.

The last question dealt with the possibility of a dialogue between Islam and Israel and whether Islam can agree with its existence. Imam Musa replied by saying: “As a Muslim, I will never accept the fact that al-Quds (Jerusalem) is under the rule of Zionists, and as a Muslim cleric it is my duty to always be vocal about it. Islam does not allow us to sit around while one foot of Palestine is still occupied.” (Rida, p. 73.)

“Who Created Religious Friction in Lebanon but Israel” was a speech Imam Musa gave in August 1977, during a ceremony to commemorate the passing of forty days on the assassination of Dr. ‘Ali Shari’ati, a well known Iranian thinker and writer, by the Iranian secret police, SAVAK. His speech focused on the deteriorating religious relations between the Lebanese communities. “Who created the religious friction we are dealing with in Lebanon now? Israel of course! Should we just sit and accept it? No, we must respond to it and foil the enemy’s plan of dividing us by using our religious differences.” (Rida, p. 36.) He asked the audience to ask Patriarch Khraish who was leader of the Christian community in the Palestinian cities of Haifa and Jaffa in northern Palestine about what the Zionists did when they started their plan to occupy the Palestinian state. He informed them that the Zionists first started by dividing the Muslims and Christians and then by dividing the Christians among themselves.

He then strongly criticized the Shi’ah Muslim ‘*ulama*’ in Iran who stood by as the shah’s secret police assassinated Dr. Shari’ati and arrested many other clerics who were

opposed to the policies of the shah. He accused them of being traitors and on the payroll of the shah and other tyrants in the Muslim world. “Every day we hear of a new Imam who claims to be working for the unity of the Shi`ah, but so far all they have done was make speeches and nothing else. We do not accept anything less than the Husaini revolution against the enemies of God and Islam.” (Rida, p. 38.) He divided people into four types: the first type is the one that surrenders and assimilates into society and becomes part of it. The second type is the one that does not agree with the status quo but can’t do anything about it and emigrates. The third type is the one that tries to change the situation by going to the outside and importing a foreign idea to solve a local problem. This type describes the people Imam `Ali pointed out to in his saying: “One who asks for the truth in the wrong way, is the same as the one who asks for evil and gets it.” (Rida, p. 39.) The fourth type is the one that believes in the presence of an ideology within his/her country and religion in order to change the *status quo*. They adopt this ideology and struggle to change the *status quo*.

“Ali Shari`ati represents the fourth type of people. I would even consider him one of its leaders, and that’s why we respect him and celebrate his memory and work.” (Rida, 41). He concluded his speech by asking the Christians and Muslims in Lebanon and around the Arab world to unite and not allow traitors from within and without their communities to destroy them.

“Sectarianism and the Young People in Lebanon” was a presentation Imam Musa made in the school of Saint Joseph in the town of `Ainturah in the Lebanese Mountains in

April 1970. His presentation focused on two areas the various sects in Lebanon and the system of sectarianism that is practiced between them. “The fact that Lebanon has many religious communities is not the problem. The problem is using sectarianism to divide them.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 439.) He saw the various religious communities in Lebanon as an asset to Lebanon because their interaction created a better society in his opinion. He informed the audience that the system of sectarianism practiced in Lebanon was not a healthy one. It only benefited a small section on the Lebanese society.

“Those who wrote the Lebanese constitution in 1943 probably thought that they were doing their best for their country and people. But I ask you did they succeed?” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 440.) He told them that the formula put into action in the forties was acceptable and workable for that era, but as the Lebanese society changed and its needs and aspirations had changed too. According to him the constitution must be amended in order for it to truly represent the current Lebanese society. He also pointed out that those who wrote the constitution and those who are fighting to keep it as it is had and have nothing to do with religion. “All they care about is their personal gain and power.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 440.)

He told the young people in the audience that sectarianism can’t just be erased by taking it out of the official government papers. According to him, it must be erased from the hearts of the people first. He told them that they were the only hope for Lebanon and the Lebanese to achieve such goal. He ended his presentation by encouraging the young people to establish organizations all over Lebanon made up of all religious groups in order to protect Lebanon and its future. “The responsibility of ensuring a better future

for Lebanon and its people lies with you. You are the future leaders of this country and we are looking up to you for the leadership and understanding needed to protect the unique society we have here in Lebanon.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 440.)

### Regional Issues

“The Arabs Have Caused the Lebanese Crisis to Drag-on” was an interview Imam Musa gave to the Kuwaiti newspaper, *Al-Qabas* in October 1976. This interview was made after the first Arab conference held to discuss a solution to the crisis in Lebanon. The conference was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and was very successful as it called for a cease-fire and dialogue between the warring parties. (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 289.) The Imam was first asked about his feelings after the conclusion of the conference. Imam Musa expressed his deep appreciation and gratitude to all the Arab leaders who helped make the conference a success. He also hailed the agreement as an important starting point for a long-term solution to the Lebanese and Palestinian crisis. He especially thanked the leaders of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for their hard work in getting the conference together and hosting it.

When asked whether this agreement was the beginning of the end of the crisis, Imam Musa hoped for the best but warned that there was much more to do before they can feel comfortable. He reminded them about the situation in south Lebanon that was still unresolved. He accused the press of spreading rumors and encouraging the situation. He mentioned a few occasions when the press published information about

battles that did not take place and of attacks by Syrian planes that never materialized. He said that all this did was inflame the emotions of the people and encourage them to fight for their 'dignity and lives.'

He then spoke of the fact that the Arab states and their leaders were at odds with each other and thus did not help the situation. He mentioned the Syrian-Egyptian crisis, the Syrian-Iraqi crisis, the Yemenis crisis, the Libyan-Egyptian crisis, etc. Lebanon had to deal with all these issues in order to get the Arab leaders to sit together and discuss its crisis. He concluded his interview by urging unity among the Arabs to face what he called the 'fight for the future and dignity' of the Arab world.

"Lebanon Paid the Price for Arab Peace" was an opening article in the magazine *Sawt al-Mahrumin* (Voice of the Disinherited) in March 1977. This article was published on the day commemorating the birth of Prophet Muhammad. Imam Musa wrote the article in a way as if he was calling on the Prophet to help Lebanon and the Lebanese through their crisis. He describes the situation in which Lebanon was living and the events that led to it. He also describes the changes that had occurred to and within the Arab and Muslim *ummah* and how both have been rendered helpless. "We, Messenger of God, have strayed from the right path. We have become more interested in the material than the spiritual world. Worship has become routine for us. We have lost the creativity, hard work and revolutionary attitude towards change." (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 108.)

He explained how the Arab world seemed content with the fact that Jerusalem (Al-Quds), the second holiest site for Muslims was in the hands of Zionists. They also seemed content with the fact that south Lebanon was becoming another Palestine (occupied by the Israelis). The Arabs talked a storm but when it came to action, there was none. They are in conflict with each other and have allowed the outside to interfere in their lives. He concluded his article by asking the Prophet “to shine His light on the Arab leaders, to guide them and give them the strength and faith to fight for what is rightfully theirs.” (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 110.)

“Let’s Struggle Against the Rule of the Shah” was an interview Imam Musa gave to the Lebanese leftist newspaper, *Al-Muharrir* in January 1974. The topic of the interview was the Iranian rule and the struggle of the Shi’i ‘*ulama*’ in Iran. The reporter pointed out to the Imam that Iranian newspapers had launched a personal attack on him because of his opinions regarding the conflict between Iran and some of its Gulf neighbors, and asked him what he thought about it. Imam Musa answered by saying that the Iranian press was critical of him because of the statements he made about the conflict, and that he stood by what he said at the time. Imam Musa was critical of the way the shah’s regime was dealing with its Gulf neighbors in terms of the conflict over the sovereignty of some islands in the Persian Gulf. Imam Musa was of the opinion that a solution can be arrived at by means of negotiation and not force. The Iranian press accused him of being a traitor and of being an ‘Arab lover’.”

When Imam Musa was asked about rumors that Iran was providing aid to the Shi'ah in Lebanon, he was very clear about the fact that no aid from Iran had been received by any organization in Lebanon for at least ten years. And when the Imam was asked about how Iranians viewed the Arabs and the Palestinian issue, Imam Musa was very quick to assure the reporter that the Iranian people saw the Arabs as their brothers and sisters in religion and culture. "The Palestinian crisis is more important to the Iranian people than it is for some Arabs." (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 97.) When the Imam was asked what he thought would happen to the shah, he answered by saying that the reign of the shah and the Pahlavis was coming to an end. "The people of Iran are fed-up with what the shah had done with Iran and they will struggle and get rid of him no matter what the price will be." (Sader Publishing Co., 1992, p. 99.) He informed the reporter that in addition to the masses, the religious clerics were also fighting the rule of the shah and that under the guidance of Imam Khomeini, the Iranian people will eventually be victorious.

It is important to point out here that the demonstrations against the shah increased dramatically over the subsequent four years. Thousands of Iranians were killed, tortured and imprisoned during this period. Imam Khomeini provided spiritual guidance by means of smuggling his speeches on tapes to the opposition in Iran from his exile in France. The people of Iran would eventually topple the shah and send him into exile. Imam Khomeini returned to Iran and assumed the leadership of the country. The new regime imposed Islamic Law on the people of Iran and purged the army and the secret police for all crimes they had committed against the people of Iran during the revolution.



“We are not the Fodder for Anyone” is a speech Imam Musa made in the village of Kaunin in 1975, during the commemoration of the assassination of Imam Muhammad Baqer Ibrahim at the hands of the Iraqis in al-Najaf. He started his speech by informing the audience that Imam Husain’s struggle in the year 61 A.H. was not just an event that took place and passed, but rather, it was a unique phase in the struggle between truth and evil. “This struggle will go on forever as long as there are people in the world who are oppressed and as long as there is evil in the world.” (Sader Publishing Co., page 153.) He told them that if Imam Husain was alive then that he would not just sit around and accept what was happening in Lebanon and the Muslim world. “He would pick up his sword and fight for the rights of all the downtrodden people around the world.” (Sader Publishing Co., page 153.)

“The Husaini attitude compels us to act and not be passive in the face of injustice and evil.” (Sader Publishing Co., page 153). He told them that the Arabs and the world had basically given up on Israel and the Lebanese. They are telling us that if we fight Israel, we will lose our land. I tell you that our land is occupied as long as Israel can invade it whenever it wanted” (Sader Publishing Co., page 153.) He concluded by saying that the Arabs and the rest of the Lebanese were using South Lebanon as a way to live in peace and not have to deal with the truth. He reminded them that the Palestinians were going to lose everything forever until they decided to fight for their land. He ended his speech by saying: “There must be some of you who are like the martyrs who fought the Israelis and died for the freedom of South Lebanon. It is only when all of you stand

up and fight that we can say: “*al-salam alaykum ya warathat al-Husain*: peace be upon you, oh inheritors of Husain.”

“This is a historical intersection for Lebanon and the region” is a speech Imam Musa made during the celebration of “making peace” between two warring families in 1975 in the Bika’ Valley. Imam Musa took advantage of the opportunity to remind the audience that God had provided man with religion in order to make their lives better and not to cause content and fighting among them. “Let us take advantage of this peace treaty and use it as a beginning by which we can make peace between the various Lebanese religious families. We are brothers and citizens of Lebanon. Lebanon needs us and we must stand up to the task of protecting it from all the dangers that are facing it from the outside and from the inside.” (Sader Publishing Co., page 177.)

He told them that the future of Lebanon and the region as a whole was in grave danger. According to Imam Musa, this crisis was the most dangerous since Lebanon’s independence and since the Palestine was occupied by the Zionists. “The consequences of this crisis will affect everyone in the region and especially Syria and the Palestinians. Thousands have been killed, injured and made refugees. Entire villages have been destroyed and the economy of the South has also been destroyed.” In his opinion the Arabs had given up and accepted the fact that South Lebanon and the Palestinian causes were not winnable. He encouraged the audience not to accept what was happening to them and to the region, and to fight to the last man, woman and child in order to achieve a lasting peace and show the world that truth will eventually be victorious.

“South Lebanon is the final frontier for the Arabs. It is where they can show that they have pride and dignity, or they can show that they have lost the spirit of their forefathers who always fought with pride and courage.” He called on all the Lebanese and the Arabs to take up arms and head to South Lebanon to face the Israelis there in a fateful stand that will show them and the world once and for all that no inch of Arab land is dispensable, no matter how big or strong the enemy might be, they will not be intimidated. This is how he concluded his speech: “The world looks down on us while we fight one another and the enemy sees us as inferiors and is more than happy to see us destroy ourselves.”

“The Arabs are settling their scores by using the Lebanese Civil War “ is an open letter Imam Musa wrote to the Lebanese and published it in the daily Lebanese newspaper, *Al-Nahar*, in 1976. In the beginning of his letter, Imam Musa informed the readers that all the attempts at a ceasefire and getting the warring parties to meet and discuss a workable solution had failed. “All the voices of truth and peace have been silenced. All we can hear now are the voices of fear, death and destruction” (Sader Publishing Co., page 243.) He wondered why all the voices of nationalism, Lebanese unity and Arab nationalism and pride had suddenly disappeared from within Lebanon and the Arab world. He then talked about the fact that the world talked a lot about the Lebanese and Palestinian problems, but that none had done much to find a solution for them.

He told them that regardless of all the hard times they were going through, he encouraged them to continue fighting and support the Palestinian cause and people. “Supporting and fighting for Palestine and the Palestinian are our duty as Aarbs, Lebanese and Muslims. We have sacrificed a lot and we will continue to do so until final victory” (Sader Publishing Co., page 244.) He told them that one of the main goals of the conspiracy is to destroy the Palestinian armed resistance and remove the Palestinian cause from the world agenda. He reminded that whenever the Palestinian or Lebanese causes are brought to the world’s attention through the United Nations, some countries lobby in order to set them aside. “The world seems to ignore the situation in the Middle East and the Arab and Muslim worlds do not seem to think that the situation is serious or important enough to fight for them.” (Sader Publishing Co., page 244.)

He called on the Arab and Muslim leaders to set aside their infighting and unite to fight their common enemy. He told them that they need to stop settling their scores by providing arms and money to the various militias in Lebanon to fight for them. He closed his letter by saying: “*Illa fa-l-yattaqu Allah wa-li-yahtharu al-mustaqbal wa-sa`ata wa`y al-sha`b*” (They need to praise (“fear”) God and be careful about the future and beware of the power of the people when they wake up).

“We Want Everyone to Stop Meddling in Lebanon” is a televised message Imam Musa made in 1976. He started his message by saying: “My fellow Lebanese, our crisis have surpassed everyone’s imagination and has entered a new phase. The Arabs do not seem to be able or willing to help find a solution for it and getting the rest of the world involved in finding a solution for it will invite all kinds of agendas and ideologies.” He

told them that unfortunately the UN did not possess the power or authority to impose and maintain peace in the region. He felt that the “cold war” being fought in the Middle East and the presence of oil in the region were palying a major role in the lack of genuine effort on behalf of the world to find a solution for the main problem of the region.

He warned the Lebanese and the Arabs that the new phase in the crisis will be much more difficult to deal with than the first one and will result in much more death and destruction than before. “What we (the Lebanese) were fighting about is not clear anymore. We are now fighting for bigger and more dangerous goals set for us by the Arab governments, the West and the Israelis.” (Sader Publishing Co., page 246.) He called on all the countries involved in the “conspiracy” against Lebanon and the Palestinians to stop meddling in Lebanon’s intenal affairs and cease and desist from arming the militias and encouraging them to fight and kill the innocent. “I call on all the Lebanese and Arab political and religious leaders to their best in finding a civilized way to solve the problems facing Lebanon and the Lebanese. Enough death, destruction and suffering for the Lebanese and the Palestinians!”. (Sader Publishing Co., page 247.) He addressed the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) and reminded them that they held their fate in their own hands, and that they need to be aware of what is happening to them and adhere to the principles that created their resistance movement and made it successful over the years.

He ended his message by reminding the Lebanese that they were (Christian and Muslim) the only hope for the future of Lebanon and that only through their unity and faith Lebanon will survive. He pleaded with the President of Lebanon and the new

elected government to work hard on uniting their country and people. He also called on the Pope John Paul the VI, the Shaikh al-Azhar and the Marja' al-A'la in al- Najaf to use their influence to save Lebanon, the Lebanese and the Palestinians. He asked the Lebanese from all regions to remember their past, and resent and to fight for a better future. He finally asked the people of South Lebanon keep up the faith and never give up no matter how hard the situation gets.

“The Traitors who are Destroying Lebanon are Stronger than the Warring Factions” is a press conference Imam Musa gave to the daily Lebanese newspaper, *Al-Safir*, in 1977. When asked about his opinion regarding the fact that South Lebanon was outside the area of control of the Arab Deterrent Forces, which was sent to Lebanon to keep the warring factions apart while the diplomatic efforts continued in an attempt to end the fighting, Imam Musa was very straight-forward in his answer. “This is a major problem and the Israelis are using the presence of Arab forces as a pretext to meddle in our country’s affairs. South Lebanon makes up thirty percent of Lebanon and does not have any protection from anyone. I am sure that the Israelis will claim that the Arab Deterrent Force in Lebanon poses a danger to its security and will use it as a reason to enter and occupy parts of South Lebanon.” (Sader Publishing Co., page 335.)

Then Imam Musa was asked about what could be done to stop the situation in South Lebanon from deteriorating further. Imam Musa answered by reminding the reporter that there were many forces at play in the South and that the Lebanese alone could not solve the problem. According to him, the problem was an international one and only

an international agreement and enforcement would put an end to the crisis. When asked about whether the Cairo and Riyadh agreements were still valid and would help with the situation, the Imam said that they were still valid but they needed to be enforced fully. “The Arabs need to throw their full weight behind these agreements and those of the UN in order to ensure a just solution to the problems of South Lebanon and that of the Palestinians.” (Sader Publishing Co., page 337.)

The reporter then asked Imam Musa to comment on his relationship with the various political and military groups in Lebanon and their role in the crisis and how they can help find a solution for it. Imam Musa reminded the reporter that he saw political and social work as apart of his religious mission. “We tried to keep a working relationship with all parties in order to assist in anyway possible in getting them to work together for the common good of all the Lebanese. We may not agree on everything, but we agree on the fact that Lebanon is a necessity and must be preserved at all cost.” (Sader Publishing Co., page 338.) When asked about whether he will try to get the warring parties together for a national reconciliation meeting, Imam Musa replied by saying that he would dedicate the rest of his life to bringing an end to the Lebanese civil war.

Imam Musa was asked about what it would take to get things back to normal in Lebanon. Imam Musa listed the following as the steps needed to achieve peace:

1. Complete and unconditional cease fire.
2. Release of all prisoners of war and the kidnapped.
3. Establish a national reconciliation government.
4. Rebuild the Lebanese Army and send it to the South.

5. Renegotiate the nature of the presence of the PLO in Lebanon.
6. Lobby the UN with the support of the Arabs to enforce its decrees regarding Israel, Lebanon and the Palestinians.

The last question he was asked was whether he would support a confederacy with Syria and Jordan. Imam Musa replied by saying that such an issue was not on the table of discussions and if it was, it would need the agreement of all the Lebanese. He told the reporter that he would support all efforts leading to a more united Arab world and that this did not mean that the countries had to join a confederacy. According to him, unity between the Arabs could be achieved in economic, educational, military and so on, without the necessity of a country or a people losing their national, cultural or religious identity. He ended the interview by reminding the reporter and the world that the situation in South Lebanon was so grave that if something isn't done about it soon, there would be no Lebanon and the Arabs would have to deal with another humiliation. "The situation in South Lebanon is the responsibility of everyone in the world, and history will register what was or wasn't done to help. I have no doubt that God will be the ultimate judge and we will abide by what He gives us."



### BOOKS:

Imam Musa wrote a total of twenty books during his short life in Iran and Lebanon. All his books were written in Persian and only a few had been translated into Arabic before his disappearance. I was able to get my hands on two of the books that were translated into Arabic and will discuss them in the following pages. These books were published in Beirut by *Dar al-Ta'aruf li-al-Matbu'at* and the *Sharikat Juni li-al-Nashr* between 1977 and 1982. The other books are still available in the city of Qum in Iran, in the library of the school Imam Musa studied and taught at. According to Imam Musa's sister Rabab, the new president of Iran, Dr. Muhammad Khatami, had promised her that he would personally be in charge of the process of translating Imam Musa's books into Arabic and even other languages. This promise was made to Mrs. Sharaf al-din a few months before Dr. Khatami was elected president of Iran. We will need to wait and see if he will be able to fulfill his promise now that he has to deal with the concerns of a country of sixty million people. One thing is clear, the translation of Imam Musa's books is necessary as it will add to the wealth of Muslim writings found in the world nowadays. It will add a new point of view.

Islam and Education of the Twentieth Century This book is divided into three major chapters. The first chapter looked at the three basic understandings of Islam. The second chapter discusses the teachings of Islam and the third chapter looked at education in the twentieth century and Islam's view of it. It was the first of Imam Musa's books

translated into Arabic. It was published in Beirut by the *Sharikat Juni li-al-Nashr* in 1979, and was distributed in countries around the Arab and Muslim world.

The first chapter looked at the three basic understandings of Islam, ideologies, work and behavior. They are considered to be the first step in understanding the identity of a Muslim. These understandings are designed to establish a strong base for a Muslim to focus on his faith, worship, rights, responsibilities and human behavior. Islam believes in the understanding that there is one and only one God and this God is just, all-understanding and possesses the characteristics of eternity and independence from His creation. These understandings establish the right path for faith. It explained the meaning of prayer and all types of worship. They are not supposed to be used to satisfy God and bring good things to Him, but rather they make the faithful loyal to his/her religion and avoid the belief in more than one God. In addition, these understandings give the faithful the energy and power to practice their religion to its full meaning.

This chapter also talked about the universe and the way it was created. Islam stresses the point that the universe was created with all the possible beauty and spirituality. It is organized and balanced and based on justice and truth. Its parts are complimentary to one another and were created by direct coordination from their creator. He referred to the Qur'anic *ayah* that states: "*Alam tara inna Allaha yasjidu lahu kullu man fi al-samawat wa-man fi al-ard, al-shams, al-qamar, al-nujum, al-jibal, al-shajar, al-dawab, wa-al-nas. Wa ma min shai'in illa yasbahu bihamdihi.*" "Don't you see that everyone in the heavens and on earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the

trees, the animals and the people....worship God and there is nothing save that it glorifies Him.” (Sadr, 1979, p. 47.)

For Islam the human being is the most important part of the universe. He was created in the image of God and is given some of His names and characteristics. He is generous by birth, he is capable of learning about the religion of His creator and is willing to walk in the path of righteousness. The human being was also made the successor of God on earth. The keys of the universe were given to him, all its resources, and all the angels were made to bow to him. The only way humans can achieve the position of successor of God on earth is by using their power to work and not to destroy, to learn about the universe around them, discovering the laws under which they need to live with the blessing of their creator.

Islam also establishes the parameters under which the relationships between individuals, individuals and society, and individuals and the universe are based. It explained how a human should treat his fellow humans in order to establish and maintain a working relationship between them that will lead to a peaceful and harmonious future for all. In addition this special relationship ensures justice in a society and avoids conflict.

From the relationship between individuals, the chapter moved into the understanding of and the need for a society. The concept of society is very important in Islam because it sees it as a meeting of humanity and not necessarily of individuals and groups. Society according to Islam must be strong and united, not divided and in

conflict. All the members of a society work together in order to advance the society as a whole and to seek God's mercy and acceptance.

Finally, chapter one looked at the concept of work and its importance to Islam and Muslims. Work according to Islam is a form of worship when it is combined with loyalty and faith. Islam also provides explanations to heaven and hell, to body and soul, and good and evil.

These understandings are seen as the first step in Islamic education and the cornerstone for building a Muslim's ideology, deeds and behavior. The chapter concludes with "Surat al-zariat," *ayah* 47 "*Wa al-sama' banaynaha bi-aydin wa-inna la-muasssi'un*" ("We built heaven by hand and We are expanding"). (Sadr, 1979, p. 48.)

Chapter two discusses the teachings of Islam. The Qur'an and the *hadith* are the two main sources of Islamic education. Literature, art, stories, sayings, human behavior, and ideologies have been part of Muslim life for centuries. They had enhanced the minds and set the acceptable behavior of Muslims. These teachings cover social, philosophical, economic and even psychological aspects of Muslim life. Imam Musa referred to the *hadith* that fights jealousy by asking people not to talk about it or encourage it. He also referred to the *hadith* that fights worry by not caring and the one that fights sexual complications by encouraging early marriage and discouraging fornication.

The basic realities of Islamic teachings are as follows: belief in the relationship between heaven and earth (God and man), eternal quality of faith, continuity, dynamism and unity. According to Islamic teachings, God is unique and has designed the universe to act in a special way. God is independent of His creation. The following *hadith*

explained this concept: “God made sure that nothing happens around the universe without His knowledge and always with a specific reason. God doesn’t change a community unless it changes itself. God doesn’t accept blind adherence to religion and encourages man to think critically and plan his actions accordingly. Then Imam Musa went on by referring to the following *hadith*: “When we sent a messenger to a village, its occupants told him that they were following the traditions of their forefathers.” (Sadr, 1979, p. 55.)

God’s creation is eternal and can not be altered. It is also designed to give the faithful internal peace, a strong will and self-confidence. It also designed to ensure success no matter what he/she achieves in life. This does not mean that human beings can’t use religious thought and teachings to explore the world around them and expand their understanding of it. In fact, according to Imam Musa, Islam encourages Muslims to practice *ijtihad* (critical interpretation of Islamic teachings) in order to deal with the world around them and advance as an *ummah*. *Mujtahids* (learned, religious men who interpret Islamic teachings) strive to base all their *ijtihad* and any new concept on the basic teachings of Islam. (Sadr, 1979, p. 61.)

A *faqih* (a learned person in *fiqh*, religious law) does not look at a specific issue and gives his opinion on, but rather, his interpretation of what has been written in the religious writings about such an issue. He does not work with uncertainty and/or guessing, and does not make decrees according to them. He only decrees using knowledge and bases all his decrees on the basic teachings of Islam. “They divide their

judgements into two categories, reality based on the truth of the situation and apparent reality that can be used to lead to reality.” (Sadr, 1979, p. 62.)

Continuity of Islam is a basic concept in the Islamic teachings. Imam Musa referred to the book, *Modern Directions of Islam*, written by Professor Jebb of Oxford University that contains an explanation of why Islam and Muslims were not able to advance with the rest of the world. In his book, Professor Jebb concludes that eastern thought and especially Muslim thought, is apologetic and unable to create and design. Imam Musa answers him by referring to the book written by the Algerian researcher, Malik ibn Nabi, who in his book *Jabhat al-'Alam al-Islami*, clearly addresses this concept. Ibn Nabi states, “The educational heritage attributed to Islam will always be a witness to and proof of Islamic spirit of creativity, adventure and love of knowledge.” According to him, Islamic creativity and invention were certainly very sophisticated in both design and form. (Sadr, 1979, 65.)

Imam Musa found that the Islamic code of law was based on an order that was not found in other codes such as the Roman code of law. He also pointed out to the work done by Abu al-Wafa` in the field of astronomy when he discovered changes in the movement of the moon around the earth. He also refereed to the work done by Ibn Khaldun, who is credited with the extensive and detailed work with the laws of history and their relationship to all aspects of human social organization.

Dynamism is discussed in terms of the status of man as the successor of God on earth. Man was given this honor because of his ability and knowledge. God said to His angels: “I am putting my successor on earth”, the angels asked Him “Do you put in it

him who will destroy it and shed blood, while we pray to you and worship you always.” (Sadr, 1979, p. 53.) God replied by telling them that He knew what they did not, and that they must bow to Adam. The concept of successor here does not mean a tool, such as the pen for a writer, but rather it means he is the person who implements the plan according to specific guidelines set for him by the Creator. It also means that the successor must be learned and knowledgeable in the teachings of the Creator in order for him to be able to implement such a plan.

Man is given the choice (freedom) of deciding what to do with his life. He may choose the way of evil or good. Man is also given the will to decide what is good for him and choose the way of good through knowledge which is the main characteristic that differentiates him from the rest of living things. According to this chapter the only way to achieve the main goal of God in making man his successor on earth is for him to learn, understand and practice the various teachings and characteristics of the religion. The section concludes by saying that Islamic teachings move the person towards progress in all aspects of mental capacities. It welcomes exploration and learning new things, and sees them as a way to the mercy of God and the formation of a complete person. According to the teachings of Islam moving towards progress is a duty and shows the degree faith and knowledge a human being has.

Islam welcomes any positive movement that leads to enhancing one's thought process. In fact it sees it as the mission of a human being in life and one of his duties. Islam is not worried about independent and critical thought because it gives religion the highest status and anything else is secondary and dependent on it. No field of study or

thought, no matter how extensive it is, comes close to the amount of knowledge and insight offered by the Qur'an and the teachings of Islam. Imam Musa referred to a statement from the Qur'an that states: "The faithful must answer the call of God and His Prophet because God is the guiding force behind everything they do or learn." (Sadr, 1979, p. 56.) He then went into discussing Islam's spread around the world and the many civilizations and idea it came in contact with.

At first, Islam was skeptical and doubtful but eventually it adopted and adapted the new ideas and discoveries and championed them. Imam Musa pointed out to the fact that education was introduced into the Muslim world in the first *hijri* century, by means of one of their amirs who enlisted the help of some scientists from Alexandria. This process went on for centuries and by the mid second *hijri* century Muslims and Arabs became very much involved in learning foreign languages and publishing their own books. (Sadr, 1979, p. 57.)

One of the early Arab authors of the time were Istfan al-Qadim who translated the first of Chemistry Book and Masarjis the author of the books: *The Power of Food: Advantages and Disadvantages* and *The Power of Medicine: Advantages and Disadvantages*. Masarjis' son 'Isa wrote the book *Foods and Scent*. He also pointed out to others who wrote in the field of medicine and philosophy. Some of the famous Arabs who produced in the field of philosophy were Ibn al-Muqaffa' and his son, Ibn Muhammad who translated, wrote about and introduced Greek philosophy into Muslim society. Al-Naubajt (the Naubajt clan) translated work on astronomy and Abu-Zakariyya Yuhanna Ibn Masawaih, who was president of the Bayt al-Hikmah (House of



Wisdom) in the early third century, wrote extensively about medicine, disease, infertility, and some cures for these ailments and conditions. (Sadr, 1979, p. 57.) These were just a sampling of the rich heritage Arabs and Muslims had in these fields. He listed more than thirty other Arab and Muslim thinkers and writers who did work in areas ranging from philosophy to medicine to psychology to engineering and architecture.

This chapter can be summarized as follows: Islam is very interested in establishing a sound and a well-rounded Islamic education for its faithful. It welcomes new ideas and discoveries, adopts them, and sees them as a lifelong duty for human beings.

The last chapter in this book looked at Islam and education in the twentieth century. Islamic education and thought has provided the world with a rich history and many resources. Muslims ruled large areas of the world and maintained commerce and diplomatic relations with the rest of the powers of the time. Imam Musa talked about Abu Raihan al-Biruni who was the first person in the world to predict that there was a continent on the other side of the world. He talked about the fact that the Muslims were the ones who worked extensively in the field of geography and lists some of the most famous geographers of the time: Muslim Ibn Hamir and Ja'far al-Marwi. He then looked at Jabr Ibn Hayyan and Muhammad Ibn Zakariyya who are considered the fathers of modern chemistry. (Sadr, 1979, p. 62.)

Medicine was another important field of study Muslims worked with and enhanced. He pointed out to a surgery performed by al-Zahrawi in which a dead fetus was removed from a pregnant woman. He also talked about the removing of pieces of

bone from a human skull and replacing it with bones from a dog. Muslim doctors established clinics and hospitals, opened pharmacies and used numbing medicine before performing surgeries. In addition to all this, they established labs to research plants and herbs. In the field of optometry Abu al-'Ali al-Hasan Ibn Haitham wrote a book of which the only surviving edition is a Greek translation done by Witlo in 1270. Ibn Haitham studied the eye and identified its various parts and how it fit into the human face cavity. He also discovered the concept of defraction of light six centuries before and Descartes. (Sadr, 1979, p. 62.)

Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi was the first to explain the phenomenon of the rainbow by discussing the reflection and refraction of light. Ibn Nafis in his discussion about the dissection of Ibn Sina, described the small blood circulatory system in a detailed manner, three centuries before William Harvey discovered it. Professor Platam from Manchester University supports this statement in his writings. (Sadr, 1979, p. 63.) Imam Musa went on and discussed other Muslim scientists and philosophers who worked in every field imaginable and gave names of individuals and their contribution to education and human advancement.

After looking at all the contributions Arabs and Muslims made to the world and humanity Imam Musa looked at the following areas of twentieth century education and discusses Islam's view of them. He looked at the areas of law and justice, philosophy, the sciences, the arts, history and literature. In the area of Law and Justice, Islam sees ethics and fairness as the most important aspects of a just society. Imam Musa pointed

out to the fact that Islam protects private property and respects and encourages contracts between individuals, societies and states.

In the area of philosophy, Imam Musa talked about the famous Muslim philosopher, Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi about whom the West does not know much. Al-Shirazi wrote many books on human existence, psychology and the relationship between body and soul. Philosophy Professor Corbin of the University of Paris was the first Western scholar to study about the life of al-Shirazi. Imam Musa considered many of his works as more advanced and more detailed than some used during the twentieth century. After researching and studying eastern culture and philosophy, Professor Corbin admitted the superiority of eastern philosophy in the following statement: "Eastern Philosophy is the answer to the deteriorating social and behavioral conditions in Europe and Europe in dire need for the wisdom that eastern philosophy provides." (Sadr, 1979, p. 68.)

Islam looks at science with much respect and admiration, and sees it as the way humans realize their mission in life. Science is seen as the process of providing truth and understanding to the world we live in. Imam Musa considered a Muslim who fears and fights science and science exploration as fearing truth and God, and being ignorant of the real meaning of his/her religion. When man embarked on discovering the universe and its beginning, many religious clergymen criticized it and said it was impossible and unnecessary. They claim that everything man needs to know is available in the Qur'an, and he does not need to go to the ends of the world to discover it. Imam Musa sees both opinions as wrong and contrary to Islamic teachings and its spirit of curiosity and exploration.

Art and literature are considered a very important part of a society and Islamic art and literature are considered a major part of the eastern culture. Art in Islam is seen from the understanding that the universe is beautiful and God loves beauty. This can be seen in every aspect of Muslim life. The fact that Islam prohibited the building of statues caused Muslim artists to develop a very sophisticated art of architecture and engraving. Imam Musa considered modern art and literature to have gone beyond their intended design and of being used as an exploitation tool.

The last part of this chapter looked at whether Islam can find a solution to the world's biggest problem, peace. Imam Musa saw Islam playing a very important role in the search for a solution to this problem. Islam encourages its faithful to seek peace with others and uses the word *salam* as its form of greeting. Peace (*al-Salam*) is one of the beautiful names of God and one of His main attributes. It is a concept that God gives us as human beings and encourages us to fight for it and maintain it at all cost. After all, according to Imam Musa "seeking peace is seeking the essence of God." (Sadr, 1979, p. 71.) The universe is the stage where the struggle for peace is being played. Societies and individuals are the characters in this play of survival and it is only through internal, individual peace that societies will find peace and finally the universe will live in the state of peace and harmony God intended it to live in.

*Islam is Our Choice to Change the Current Reality.* This book was published in 1982 by the Dar al-Ta'arruf li-al-Matbu'at in Beirut Lebanon. It is divided into four chapters. The first chapter talked about Islam and the status God gave to humans in the

universe while the second chapter discusses the belief in all God's messengers and books. The third chapter deals with the responsibility of the Imam (the leader) towards his community and martyrdom, and the fourth chapter looked at the reasons why Islam is the choice to change the current reality in the Arab and Muslim world.

According to the information in the first chapter, Islam sees the upbringing of human beings as very important in developing individuals who are aware of their responsibilities and encourages them to fight for their human rights. Islam encourages Muslims to work hard in order to improve their standard of living and to love themselves. Loving one-self here does not mean that they will ignore others and become individualistic in their behavior, but rather, it means that they need to be aware of their need to take care of themselves in order for them to be able to take care of others. (Sadr, 1982, p. 15.) Working hard to improve living standards is discussed in terms of working to provide for family and community and not to stress out in order to obtain luxuries that are only beneficial to individuals.

Islam believes that man is God's successor on earth for whom all the angels bowed. The chapter referred to the *ayahs* (verses) 28-32 in "Surat al-Baqarah." (Sadr, 1982, p. 18.) The concept of successor here means that man has complete freedom of action on earth, but he must act according to the laws and regulations established and sent to him by His creator. God gave man the ability to think and learn and provided him with unlimited resources to live and survive on. God has afforded man a special status in the universe by awarding him such characteristics and by making everything else at his disposal. This chapter then referred to *ayahs* 71, 72 and 75 in "Surat al-Sadd" that talk

about God creating man breathing life into him, and asking the angels including Iblis (the devil), to bow for him. It also referred to *ayahs* 4-6 in “Surat al-Tin” that discuss that man was created to be the best and those who did not follow God’s way were afforded the worst status in life. *Ayahs* 12-14 in “Surat al-Mu’minin” that explained the process of human creation from a sperm to a complete individual. (Sadr, 1982, p. 22.)

Islamic teachings state that God is very close to man and that man is the closest thing to God. *Ayah* 15 of “Surat Qaf” states: “We created man and we know what worries him. We are closer to him than his blood vessels.” *Ayah* 183 of “Surat al-Baqarah”, states that God is always available to listen to man’s calls and needs. Islamic teachings also state that a Muslim must take care of himself and his fellow man. (Sadr, 1982, p. 23.) The faithful must always be aware of his neighbor and help him in times of need. It was forbidden for Muslims to worship inanimate objects and other human beings. He must always worship the one and only God. It was also mentioned in many Islamic teachings that a Muslim must be careful about what he says. *Ayahs* 70-71 in “Surat al-Ahzab” clearly describe it: “Oh faithful, praise God and always say what is best... God will guide your actions and forgive your sins.” (Sadr, 1982, p. 29.)

The last thing discussed in this chapter is the fact that man is the creator of history. Man is the main force behind the making of history and its consequences. Nothing in the universe has more impact on history than man does. Man chooses his history by his actions. When man learns about his universe and its creator and abides by His rules, he ensures a very prosperous and continuous history. But when man chooses to go the wrong way and ignore God’s teachings, he will lead his community to

destruction. What happens in the universe is a direct result of the relationship between man and the universe. Imam Musa saw man as the hero in the making of history: "Man interacts with his universe to create history and improve the lot of human beings in it. There is no higher status or responsibility than can be given to man than that of creating history and preserving humanity." (Sadr, 1982, p. 34.)

Chapter two deals with one of the basic Islamic beliefs, belief in the messengers of God and His books. The Qur'an stresses the fact that belief in the Prophet Muhammad is not enough but rather a Muslim must believe in all the messengers of God. The following *ayah* clearly states this belief: "The Prophet believes in what was sent to him by God and the faithful are those who believe in God, His angels, His messengers and books." In other *ayahs* it is stated that "We (God) do not differentiate between the messengers." Yet in other *ayas* it is said that every prophet must preach about the ones that came before Him and the ones who will come after Him. Ibrahim, Ismail, Musa, Issa, and Muhammad are all considered part of the line of prophecy that God intended to be continuous and to keep His name in the life of people. (Sadr, 1982, p. 35-36.)

Imam Musa concludes that all the messengers are the messengers of the one God, for the one man, and all have the same mission, that of God. The basic message is submission to God and His teachings. Man is seen as the human face of God's message and the messengers are its spiritual face. From this understanding, Islam encourages tolerance, respect and openness to other religions. In one of the Qur'anic *ayahs* it is stated that: "We (God) wrote in the Zabur, that our faithful will inherit the earth." (Sadr, 1982, p. 38.) In other *ayahs* similar statements are made about the Torah. This

according to Imam Musa proves that God's intention was to have a continuous message using the three religions (Islam, Christianity and Judaism). It is a basic Islamic belief that Muslims believe in the other religions, messengers and books. He went into the fact that according to the Qur'an, early messengers announced the coming of the Prophet Muhammad in the real Bible (the current Bible is seen as not being the complete and real text) and the Jewish Torah. He then referred to the way the messengers were treated by the people they were sent to and how God sent them to different societies. All of them were mistreated and accused of being magicians.

The third chapter deals with the concept of a leader (*Imam*) and its importance for the existence and continuity of a religious society. The word *Imam* is now used to describe religious scholars '*ulama*', but this chapter looked at the definition of Imam from the Shi'i understanding and beliefs. According to the Shi'ah an *Imam* is a human being who has reached a certain point of spirituality and completeness. In the Shi'i belief an *Imam* is the successor of God on earth, the speaking book of God, the mirror of Islam and the personification of Islam. Imam Musa quotes a *hadith* of the Prophet to clarify and explain such a strong Shi'i belief: "*Ana mizan al-a'mal wa-`Ali lisamuhu*" (I am the balance of works and `Ali is its mouthpiece). (Sadr, 1982, p. 46.) The death of an *Imam* is not seen as the end of the authority of that *Imam*, but rather, the authority of the Imam continues forever (dead or alive). This goes into the concept of martyrdom and how it relates to the concept of *Imam* and its understanding by the Shi'ah.

He then discussed three categories that relate to the concept of Imam: martyrdom of the *Imam*, *Imamat al-Shahid* and *Shahadat al-Imam*. The first one deals with the fact



that the *Imam* and martyrdom have a very close relationship. In fact, martyrdom is seen as one of the basic responsibilities of an *Imam* as a leader. The believer who dies in the defense of religion is given the characteristics of an *Imam* and seen as a part and a continuation of the mission of the *Imam*. The last category deals with the martyrdom of Husain in 'Ashura'. It is seen as the ultimate personification of what an Imam is and should be. Imam Husain is called the "father of all martyrs". He concludes by saying that the *Imam* is a very important part of Shi'i ideology and beliefs. (Sadr, 1982, p. 67.)

The last chapter in this book looked at the reasons why Islam is the only choice for changing the *status quo*. First of all, he identified the three choices man has: 1. Accepting the *status quo*, 2. Emigrating to escape the *status quo*, and 3. Staying and fighting to change the *status quo*. According to Imam Musa, man is always striving to become a complete person, a person who seeks wisdom, knowledge and does what is right. "Man does not like to accept the *status quo*. He is always trying to become better and to fight for his rights and privileges. Man likes to live in a fair and civilized society, and if he does not feel that the society he lives in is fair and civilized, he decides to emigrate to another one." (Sadr, 1982, p. 88.) Imam Musa identified two types of human emigration: 1. Man can emigrate to seek knowledge from societies that are more advanced, or for work if opportunities in his society are not available, and 2. Man can emigrate by using drugs and alcohol in order for him to forget about the reality he lives in. Man sees drugs and alcohol as a way to deal with the miserable life and conditions he lives under. (Sadr, 1982, p. 90.)

The third category is that of a man who analyzes his reality and instead of giving up or running away, stays and fights to change it. But changing things needs a plan and a process. Therefore man decided to adopt a variety of different beliefs and ideologies in order to change the *status quo*. Some men chose Communism and tried to change their societies into communist ones. Others chose capitalism and worked hard to change their societies into capitalist ones. According to Imam Musa this person is better than the one who decides to surrender or run away. He quotes Imam `Ali who said: "Man who asks for the truth and does not fight for it, is the same as the man who asks for evil and works for it." (Sadr, 1982, 91.) The last choice according to Imam Musa is the best choice man can make. "Islam is our choice to change the *status quo*." (Sadr, 1982, p. 92.) But according to Imam Musa just saying that we want Islam is not enough. Muslims must fight to change what is happening to and around them. Muslims according to Imam Musa don't need to borrow ideologies and beliefs from the outside. They have all they need in Islam. Islam here denotes all the heavenly religions and beliefs. Muslims benefit from the experiences of all the prophets, Muhammad, Musa, `Isa, Ibrahim and others. He concludes by saying: "We should not be affected by imported ideologies and beliefs and should not accept them. We do not want to be classified as third-world people but rather fourth- world people, people who use faithful rebellion and real struggle to change the world. We consider all faithful movements around the world to be our allies, and we shall strive to connect and coordinate with them. (Sadr, 1982, p. 93.)

## Chapter 4

### **IMAM MUSA'S LEGACY AND THE FUTURE OF THE SHI'I COMMUNITY IN LEBANON**

Imam Musa's nineteen years in Lebanon have left a legacy that no other individual who came into the life and history of Lebanon has ever come close to. Imam Musa was instrumental in the process of mobilizing the Shi'i community in Lebanon, empowering them and giving them the hope that they could make things better for themselves and their children. He was also able to challenge the government and its offices to be sensitive to the needs of the masses, regardless of their ethnic or religious background, and to work for a better future for all Lebanese. The future of Lebanon depended on a fair government that represented all Lebanese and worked to improve their standard of living. Imam Musa also made the various Lebanese religious communities aware of their differences but encouraged them to use their diversity to make their life better instead of using it to impose their views on each other. He informed them that their diversity made Lebanon unique among its neighbors, and that it was only through unity, hard work and tolerance of others that they would be able to survive as a people and maintain the uniqueness of their country. According to him, Lebanon's diverse, ethnic and religious groups and the harmony in which they lived and worked were a model that could be emulated by other countries around the world with diverse ethnic and religious populations.

The major changes within the Shi'i community in Lebanon can be seen in the areas of politics, education and community cohesion. Other areas are still in the process

of changing and it will take time, energy and leadership for the Shi`ah in Lebanon to realize their rightful place in Lebanese society and history. The Shi`ah in Lebanon have by no means taken care of all their problems. They still have a long way to go in order to achieve such a goal. The path started by Imam Musa was a good starting point. In addition to changes within the Shi`i community, the Imam's legacy can be seen in terms of the overall dynamics of religious and ethnic politics and the historical implications to Lebanon and Lebanese society.

### Politics

The most important change (improvement) the Shi`i community has been through was its gains in the political arena. For the first time in the history of the Shi`ah in Lebanon, there is a council made up of Shi`i clerics and advocates who represent the community and fight for its rights as a full fledged Lebanese community and not a second class community. The Supreme Islamic Shi`i Council under the direction of Imam Musa provided the voice the Shi`i community needed, lobbied the government for assistance it needed, and took advantage of Shi`i monies and talent in order to improve their standard of living. The AMAL movement for the most time proved to be an asset for the Shi`i community. It provided them with the military support they needed to protect them and to lobby for a better position on the negotiation table. Lebanon after all was a land where every religious community had its own militia(s) and they used them for protection against the other communities and to hold on to the territory or region it lived in.

In the Lebanese government, the Shi`ah are now better and more adequately represented. The Speaker of the Parliament, Nabih Barri, the former leader of the AMAL movement and a close associate of Imam Musa, controls the largest and most influential political bloc in the parliament. Since taking office in 1990 Mr. Barri has provided more projects, support and political clout to the Shi`i community than did all his predecessors (all Shi`ah) since Lebanon's independence in 1943. Today in South Lebanon streets are paved, there's running water, electricity, and numerous new schools. Up till 1990 none of these services were available to citizens of South Lebanon who are mostly Shi`ah. In addition the Shi`i representatives in the parliament and the government are mostly well educated and not the traditional *zu`ama'* (clan leaders and wealthy landlords) who had a monopoly on these government positions. This was a direct result of Imam Musa's work in empowering the Shi`i masses and encouraging them to get more involved in the process of selecting those who represented them and not bow to the traditional way things were done. This phenomenon (replacing traditional leaders with more well educated and politically savvy ones) had spread beyond the Shi`i community. During the 1996 elections, most Lebanese communities replaced their traditional leaders with leaders who would better represent them, work hard for them and improve their standard of living.

### Education

Perhaps the most important development that took place within the Shi`i community in Lebanon was the dramatic increase in the number of young Shi`i men and women who pursued higher education. This was a result of the many schools and

technical institutes established by Imam Musa and funded by the new founded Shi'i bourgeoisie. Imam Musa spent a lot of time travelling to Africa, South America and the Arab Gulf States in order to solicit donations from Shi'i businessmen in order to build schools, hospitals and orphanages in South Lebanon. These schools established by the Sadr Foundation provided and continue to provide free education and skills to thousands of poor and orphaned Shi'i young men and women. Some of these young men and women received scholarships to continue their education in universities around the world. They went back to Lebanon to serve their communities.

The hospitals and clinics provided and continue to provide free medical services and advice for southerners that could not afford the very expensive medical services provided by public and private health providers. The orphanages provided and continue to provide shelter, food and education to the hundreds of orphaned young men and women who lost their parents to Israeli attacks on South Lebanon or the Lebanese civil war. The establishment of schools, hospitals and orphanages did not stop after the disappearance of Imam Musa. Nabih Barri, following the path set by Imam Musa, established the following social and educational institutions between 1985-1991:

1. The Martyr Bilal Fahs Educational Complex is made up of ten major buildings providing classes, vocational skills, research facilities, dormitories, a cafeteria, a bomb shelter, a mosque and a medical clinic, for 800 students and their instructors and staff.
2. The Martyr Muhammad Sa'd Foundation provides free education for 1400 students from kindergarten through middle school.
3. The Martyr Mustafa Shamran Multi-Educational Complex provides free high school level education and a teacher training college.
- 4.

The Village of the Handicapped provides rehabilitation services skills training for 200 handicapped persons. 5. The Imam Sadr Foundation of the Harmil provides free and reduced cost education for students from kindergarten through middle school.

### Community Cohesion

Another result of the Imam's hard work was uniting the Shi'i community under the banner of Islam and Lebanese nationalism. Before Imam Musa the Shi'i community was very disunited and paid allegiance to a variety of different political and ideological views. The Shi'ah were the PLO's foot soldiers, the leftists' political parties members, and some were even members of the Christian rightist political parties and militias. Imam Musa knew that he had to tread very carefully when working on changing the Shi'i allegiance. The PLO, the left and the Christians were very powerful and were able to pay the young Shi'i men for their membership. Imam Musa could not. He used his persuasive abilities and his social services as a lure to persuade them that their future would be better served by their working for their community and not being the fodder for others.

Imam Musa was successful in his efforts of realizing a more cohesive community which rallied around itself in times of crisis and worked hard to ensure a better life for its children. Imam Musa was also adamant about asking his community to always be faithful to Lebanon and its unique position in the Middle East. His most important success in this area was achieving peace and unity between the many tribes in the Bika'. Eventhough the population in South Lebanon and the Bika' is Shi'ah, they are more

distant from one another than they were from other religious groups in Lebanon. The Bika' is mostly tribal in nature, poorer and less developed than South Lebanon. Its population is even less educated than that of South Lebanon and rarely emigrated outside of Lebanon. The Shi'ah of South Lebanon on the other hand have more access to education and thousands of its young men emigrated to the Arabian Gulf and to Africa in search of better opportunities and jobs. It was their money that improved life in South Lebanon and allowed them to live at a higher standard of living than their counterparts in the Bika'.

#### Challenges Facing the Shi'i Community

Many things have changed since the disappearance of Imam Musa in 1978. The Lebanese civil war went on for eleven more years; Israel invaded Lebanon and occupied parts of it for over two years and the AMAL Movement had broken into three different organizations. In addition, in 1989 Lebanese political leaders signed a new national pact in which some of the privileges afforded to specific religious groups were changed and the political representation of the Muslims and the Christians were made equally between them, and the Palestinian power base in Lebanon was destroyed. All these events have affected the Shi'i community more profoundly than they did other Lebanese communities.

The Lebanese civil war proved very costly for the Shi'i community. The Shi'ah lost about a 100,000 of its members and more than 500,000 were injured and made refugees throughout Lebanon. This is not taking in consideration the land and



infrastructure lost. It will take many years for the Shi'i community to recover the human and infrastructure it lost during the fifteen years of the civil war. The Shi'i community will need to follow Imam Musa's policy of pooling its human and financial resources in order to rebuild what was lost during the war and continue on the path of more education, social mobilization and economic development.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1980 was perhaps the costliest single event that the Shi'i community endured and continue to suffer from in the past eighteen years. In addition to the thousands of men, women and children who lost their lives, became refugees or were orphaned as a result of it, the Israelis continue to occupy a ten-kilometer area of South Lebanon. This area is called the "security zone" by the Israelis and its population is at the mercy of the Israeli army and its policy of "group punishment." The Shi'ah in South Lebanon have been waging a guerilla war against the Israelis and their Lebanese supporters in the area and have proven to be a formidable foe eventhough they do not have the military equipment and technology possessed by the Israelis. But perhaps the positive outcome of this occupation has been the fact that the Shi'ah and the rest of the Lebanese are united on the need to fight it and liberate their land. The Shi'i community will need to continue its struggle against the Israeli occupation and continue to rebuild it and educate its future generations.

The AMAL Movement which became a symbol of strength for the Shi'i community in the mid-eighties was divided into three different organizations, each with its own ideology and agenda. Eventhough AMAL retained the majority of the membership and political clout, the divisions hurt the cohesion of the community and

threatened to return it to the days when the Shi`ah were mostly in conflict with one another and not working together for a common cause and future. Hizb Allah, one of the two organizations that came out of the division of AMAL has become part of the Lebanese political system, while AMAL al-Islamiyyah (Islamic AMAL), remained confined to a small group of followers in the Biqa`. The Shi`i community will need to combine its resources in both AMAL and Hizb Allah in order to provide it with the protection, moral and political support it needs.

The destruction of the PLO power base in Lebanon, which was strongest in Shi`i areas in Beirut and South Lebanon, was a major development for the Shi`i community. During the days of Imam Musa, Shi`i areas were basically controlled politically, economically and militarily by the PLO. The Shi`ah were fighting among themselves on behalf of the many Palestinian factions that made up the PLO at the time. Nowadays the Shi`i community is its own protector and ruler. The challenge lies in their ability to work closely together to maintain the social and political unity they need to succeed and prosper as a community.

The Ta'if Agreement of 1989 is an agreement worked out by the various religious and political groups in Lebanon in order to end the civil war in Lebanon and to amend the constitution in order to equally divide political power and authority between Muslims and Christians in Lebanon. It increased the number of representatives in the Lebanese parliament to 104 (52 Muslims and 52 Christians) from 99 (60% Christians and 40% Muslims) before the war. The agreement also reduced the power of the president, a Maronite Christian by law, and increased the power of the Prime Minister and speaker of

the parliament, Sunni and Shi'i Muslims by law respectively. It ushered in a new era in the history of Lebanon and the Lebanese, provided the Shi'i community with many positive things but has also challenged them. The number of Shi'i representatives to the Lebanese parliament was increased by three and their political clout has become a force to reckon with. The challenge for the Shi'i community is to continue electing the kind of representatives who will work for their well being and advancement. If the 1996 elections are any indication, the Shi'i community is on the right path.

## CONCLUSION

Imam Musa accomplished many of the goals and objectives he had set for himself and for the community he led. Imam Musa's plan included creating a power base from which the Shi'i leadership would work to improve the lot of their constituents; educating the young men and women within the Shi'i community not matter what the cost was. The plan also was aimed at uniting the Shi'i community which was divided geographically and marginalized economically; and establishing a military power base to protect them against the attacks from within and without Lebanon.

In addition, Imam Musa was aware of the fact that his community was part of a very religiously and politically diverse population and that it needed to survive and prosper within such a population. He spent quite a bit of his time building bridges to the rest of the Lebanese communities and stressing to them the importance of unity and trust between them. Imam Musa was also cognicent of the fact that Lebanon was part of a wider Arabic and Muslim region and that it was important to maintain close and workable ties with all the contries and leaders of the region.

Imam Musa was also very much aware of the challenges he faced both in Lebanon and the region as a whole. Lebanon was not the homogenous country and population he was used to. The politics and traditions of its people were not very familiar to him. The history of Lebanon and the Lebanese was full of conflict and mistrust. Lebanon was strategically located between the East and the West, between the Israelis and the Arabs, and between the Muslim and Christian worlds. But perhaps the most important characteristic of the new country he adopted was the fact that it was a

democratic country, one of a handful in the whole region. This attribute would cost Lebanon and the Lebanese dearly as groups, governments and political ideologies would “fight it out” on Lebanese soil and in most cases use Lebanese lives and property.

Imam Musa had much to do and very little time, resources and support to do it in. He started by mobilizing (politically, socially and militarily) and uniting the Shi`i community in Lebanon. During the first few years of his reign in Lebanon and after much negotiation and lobbying, he was able to give a voice to the Shi`i community in Lebanon for the first time in their history in Lebanon. The Supreme Islamic Shi`i Council gave the Shi`ah of Lebanon a power base from which they could work and fight for their rights as Lebanese citizens and as Muslims in the Muslim world. But having a power base and no leaders to work in it and improve the standard of living of the Shi`i community in Lebanon, was not acceptable and was not complete. Believing that education was vital for the progress of the Shi`ah in Lebanon, he encouraged all his followers and constituents to get educated. Realizing that many of them were not able to afford it, he built schools and technical institutes and provided free education for the masses that would otherwise not be able to get educated. He also established orphanages and other social service offices and institutions in order to provide his community with the many services it lacked. He used the resources, skills and financial support of the Shi`ah both in Lebanon and abroad to achieve these goals.

The AMAL Movement was established to provide the Shi`i community in Lebanon, specifically South Lebanon, with the necessary military protection and support they Lebanese government did not or could not provide against the permanent danger and

almost daily aggression of the Israelis. In addition, the AMAL Movement provided young Shi'i men and women with an opportunity to help their community and fight for it, instead of fighting for everyone and everything else in the region. AMAL participated in the resistance against the Israelis when they invaded and occupied parts of Lebanon in 1978 and 1982. They had also participated in the "Lebanese civil war" and the struggle to create a new Lebanon. Even though AMAL was dismantled with the other Lebanese militias as a result of the "Ta'if Agreement" which ended the civil war, it is still very active in the resistance against the Israelis and their puppets in South Lebanon. The former leader of the AMAL Movement, Nabih berri, is now the speaker of the Lebanese parliament and has been instrumental in improving the standard of living of the Shi'ah in Lebanon.

Imam Musa united his community by means of being visible among his constituents and bringing them together regularly to discuss issues affecting them and encouraging them to help one another succeed. He was successful in erasing the tribalistic traditions many of them lived under and showing them the importance of being politically active. He encouraged them to vote for leaders who will "serve" them and not leaders who were only interested in enhancing their personal political power and becoming wealthier. Long gone are the days when politicians would go to a village, a town, or a city and pay off the mayor or elder for the vote of the whole village. Nowadays, Lebanese voters question the abilities, educational accomplishments and background of candidates. For the first time in 55 years of Lebanese independence, Shi'i leaders are working for the betterment of their constituents' standard of living.

Imam Musa succeeded in tearing down some of the walls built over the years between the various religious communities in Lebanon. His open dialogue with the Christian leadership in Lebanon and the region opened the lines of communications between the two faiths and showed them that only through tolerance, trust and understanding they will be able to build a better and more peaceful future for their children. In addition to this, he worked very hard on tearing down the walls of distrust and misunderstanding between the various Muslim sects. The regular trips Imam Musa took to Muslim countries in the region and the many presentations he made during religious conferences, kept the Shi'i community visible in the Muslim world. The numerous articles and books he wrote explaining the need for Muslim unity and understanding, were vital in keeping this issue on the priority list of the Muslim leadership and made the Muslim masses aware of their responsibility towards each other and towards the future of Islam.

Imam Musa came to Lebanon as a stranger from another land. He did not speak the language, did not understand the politics and wasn't very familiar with the local culture and way of life. During the nineteen years of his life in Lebanon, he learned the language, became an 'expert' in Lebanese politics and became a household name in every Lebanese religious community. He led a poor, marginalized community that was divided upon itself and had no direction and leadership. He united it and empowered it to stand on its own and fight for its rights. He provided it with the religious, political and social voice that it did not have since Lebanon's independence. He did more for the Shi'i community in the nineteen years he lived in Lebanon than did all his predecessors and

Shi'i politicians the modern history of Lebanon started in 1943. His disappearance delayed but did not completely stop the development and advancement of the Shi'i community in Lebanon. No one knows what Imam Musa could have done for Lebanon and the Arab and Muslim world had he not disappeared twenty years ago. One thing is very clear Lebanon and the Lebanese will no longer take the Shi'i community for granted or ignore it.

Imam Musa always reminded his followers that the highest state of faith and human sacrifice is that of martyrdom. He also taught them that action was more important than words. Imam Musa lived his life practicing what he believed in. The Arab and Muslim world are in dire need of leaders and thinkers like Imam Musa. The future of the Arab and Muslim world will be dependent on having the kind of leadership and foresight that will take us into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Imam Musa did not have a militia to force his views and ideas on others, nor did he have the money to buy them off. Imam Musa's weapon was his personality, charisma and religious convictions.



## GLOSSARY

- Ayat Allah-** The highest academic title accorded to Shi'ite Muslim clerics, it is Surpassed only by Grand Ayat Allah (ayat Allah al-uzma), of whom there are about a half a dozen, and marja-i-taqlid, of which there is just one.
- Hizb Allah-** The 'Party of God', the title adopted by a Shi'i Muslim Militia in Lebanon whose aim is to establish an Islamic government in Beirut.
- Hujjat al-Islam-** 'Proof of Islam'. As a title for Shi'i Muslim clergymen, it was once equivalent to ayat Allah but is now an honorific for almost any learned religious shaikh.
- Ja'fari-** The Twelver Shi'i school of law, named after the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq, who numbered among his students two of Sunnism's great jurists, Abu Hanifa and Malik Ibn Anas, founders of the Hanafi and Maliki schools.
- Mahdi-** The twelfth Shi'i Imam who is believed by the Shi'ah will come at the end of the world and will establish Justice and equality on earth at the end of time as a prelude to Judgement Day. It is common to most Muslim sects, though for the Shi'ah it is with specific reference to the twelfth Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi, son of the Eleventh Imam Hasan al-Askari. He went into hiding upon the death of his father. On the Last Day he will appear and bring peace to the world.
- Marja'-i-taqlid-** 'Source of emulation'. The supreme living authority on religious law in the Shi'ite Muslim world, synonymous with al-Na'ib al-'Amm, the deputy for the missing Imam al-Mahdi.

## Appendix

**Dates of Importance to Lebanon and the Life of Imam Musa al-Sadr:**

- 1920 French Mandate over Lebanon starts.
- 1928 Imam Musa al-Sadr is born in Qum, Iran.
- 1941 Lebanon declares independence.
- 1943 Lebanese National Pact created.
- 1946 French mandatory forces evacuate Lebanon.
- 1958 First Lebanese civil war erupts between Christian and Druze communities.
- 1954-1958 Imam Musa lives and studies in Najaf, Iraq.
- 1955 Imam Musa makes first trip to Lebanon to visit relatives.
- 1958 Imam Musa makes second trip to Lebanon and meets with Sayyid Sharaf al-Din.
- 1959 Sayyid Sharaf al-Din dies. Imam Musa is invited to become leader of Shi'i community of Lebanon.
- 1960 Imam Musa becomes leader of Shi'i community of Lebanon and settles in Sur, South Lebanon.
- 1962-1974 Imam Musa establishes hospitals, orphanages, social service offices, schools and colleges for poor Shi'i population in Lebanon.
- 1967 Bill sponsored by Imam Musa becomes law and establishes Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council.
- 1969 Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council is created and Imam Musa is elected its president for life. Cairo Agreement signed giving PLO power to defend itself against Israel attacks in Lebanon.
- 1970 PLO transfers its main base from Jordan to Lebanon after fight with Jordanian army.
- 1973 Clashes between PLO and Lebanese army.

- 1974 Imam Musa declares birth of the AMAL Movement.
- 1975 Lebanese civil war starts.
- 1976 Syrian forces intervene in Lebanese civil war and clash with PLO and leftist forces in Lebanon.
- 1977 Kamal Jumblatt, Druze and leftist leader, assassinated.
- 1978 Imam Musa visits Libya on an official visit and disappears with two companions. Israel invades South Lebanon.
- 1979 Shah of Iran leaves Tehran and Imam Khomeini returns to Iran. Islamic Republic of Iran is established.
- 1980-1988 Iraq-Iran war.
- 1982 Israel invades Lebanon and destroys PLO bases. PLO evacuates Beirut and moves its headquarters to Tunisia.  
Bashir Gemayyil is elected president of Lebanon. Assassinated a month later.  
Amin Gemayyil, Bashir's brother, is elected president.  
Massacre of Palestinians and Lebanese civilians at Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut, Lebanon at the hands of Phalangist fighters.
- 1983 Suicide bomber attacks US Marine headquarters in Beirut and kills 241 marines.
- 1984 US Marines and allies evacuate Lebanon.  
Israeli forces evacuate most of Lebanon but keeps ten-kilometer strip of South Lebanon as security zone.
- 1985-1988 Palestinian-Shi'ah fighting in Beirut.
- 1989 Tai'f Agreement signed by Lebanese religious and political groups.
- 1990-1998 Postwar Lebanese government formed with Rafiq Hariri as Prime Minister and Nabih Barri as speaker of the parliament. Elias Hrawi is president.

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(All these books were written in Farsi by Imam Musa al-Sadr in Qum, Iran between 1948 and 1954. The Arabic titles of these books were obtained and mentioned in the book *Al-haqiqah al-jariha* by Yusef Qubaisi, 1993).

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*Al-Muharrir*: a daily Lebanese Newspaper published in the afternoon (leftist) published in Beirut, Lebanon.

*Amal wa-al-Risalah*: a weekly magazine published by the AMAL Movement in Beirut, Lebanon.

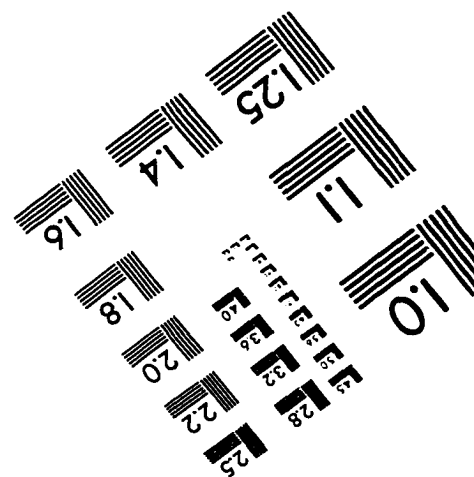
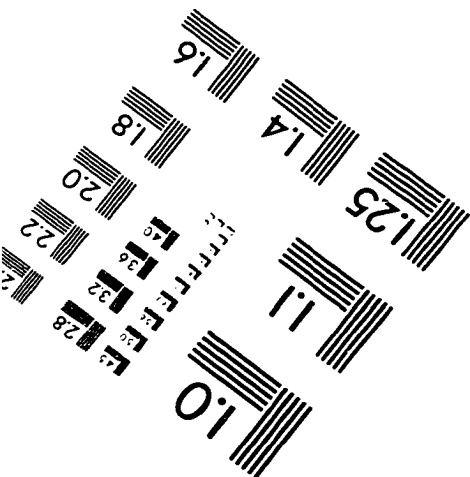
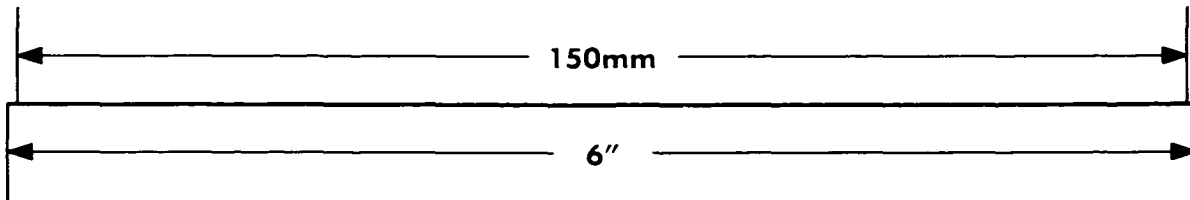
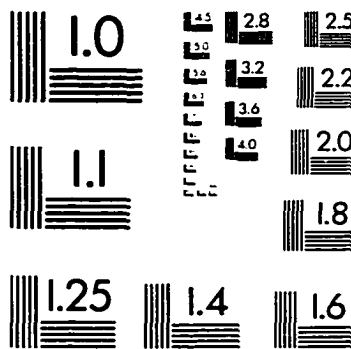
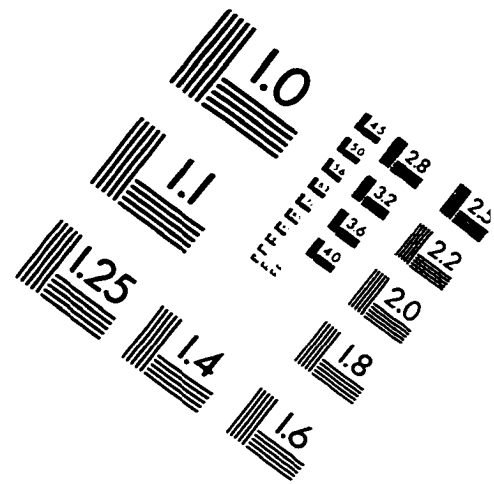
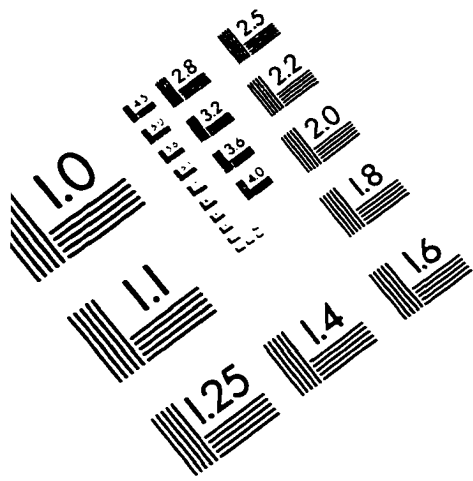
*Al-Nahar*: a daily Lebanese Newspaper (non-aligned) published in Beirut, Lebanon.

*Al-Safir*: a daily Lebanese Newspaper (leftist) published in Beirut, Lebanon.

The International Herald Tribune (London): a daily British Newspaper.

The New York Times (New York): a daily American Newspaper.

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