

RELIGIOUS PLACES FREQUENTED BY MO'WA'HE'DOON DRUZE (MA'KA'MAT)

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(MO'WA'HE'DOON FI RISALAT WA MA'KA'MAT)

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SHU'AIB

Prophet Shu'aib was sent to the people of Madyan. They were merchants and traders. They were called forest dwellers because they lived near a thick forest. Shu'aib said to them: You should pray to Allah who has created you. You should not cheat other people who come to trade with you.

The forest dwellers did not listen to Shu'aib. They wanted to earn more money by cheating their customers. They refused Shu'aib's advice and continued cheating people. When Shu'aib insisted that they should fear God and treat others with honesty. They ordered him to stop interfering in their activities, and threatened to stone him and chase him out of town.

They argued, and said: 'If what you are saying is true, then we should have been punished a very long ago. We don't believe you, and we are not going to worship Allah. We are not afraid of His punishment.'

It did not take long for Allah's punishment. A devastating earthquake hit the town and they were all killed. Their wealth which was accumulated by their devious activities could not save them at all. They were punished for their dishonesty, and their bad deeds did not do them any good at all.

When the town was destroyed, only Shu'aib and his companions who believed in Allah were saved. Shu'aib said: "I always reminded them to worship Allah and not to cheat other people, they always refused to heed the Truth, and Allah has punished them."

Shu'aib was buried in Hottine, Palestine. His burial place is built of stone, and consists of three stories, it contains about thirty rooms.

MA'KAM EL SHAREEF

(BAHA EDDINE)

Baha Eddine was born in a village called Samoka, near Aleppo, Syria in 370 Hijra (*Islamic calendar*). In 406 Hijra he was appointed governor of Aleppo. Then in 408 Al Hakim Bi-Amr-Allah appointed him governor of Damascus. In 415 Hijra, he was appointed the governor of all El-Sham territories.

Baha Eddine was one of the five Principals to the Call of Taw'heed. The movement was considered a revolt on traditions. The followers of Taw'heed were chased and persecuted. Many were tortured and killed. Baha Eddine was taking his orders and instructions from Hamza Bin Ali, the Imam of the Call to Taw'heed.

Baha Eddine was known as Al Muqtana. He served the Call to Taw'heed for seventeen years. He devoted himself to the Call of Taw'heed and loved wisdom; his writings were characterized with knowledge and courage in an era of persecution, commotion and wars, between the Abbasids, Fatimite, and Roman Byzantines.

He wrote many letters (*part of the Hikma, Wisdom Books*) of instruction to many leaders in the area, calling them to Taw'heed. He wrote a letter to the Jewish Community asking them to respect and adhere to the teachings of their own prophets. He also sent letters to the Christian Community, quoting the Bible, and asking them not to divert from the true teachings.

He sent letters to the rulers of Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Bahrain, and Persia. He also sent letters to the Constantinopolitan Roman kings, and to India. In his letters, he always preached Taw'heed and asked them to accept the Call to Taw'heed, and to stop persecuting the followers of the Call.

Baha Eddine dispatched missionaries from Yemen to India, Hindustan, Kashmir, and Sinland to spread the Call.

Some of his letters were intercepted by the enemies of the Call, and its contents were distorted and tainted. This was the reason that caused many problems with his friends and turned them into his enemies. This conflict contributed to more persecution of the followers of the Call.

Some of those who joined the Call to Taw'heed tried to abuse its privileges, they were reprimanded. Their actions caused internal struggle within the Call between the adherents to the Call on one side, and the renegades. That resulted in wars and massacres, and in consequence many casualties fell on both sides. The Call was affected and was suspended from time to time.

When The Caliph, Al Hakim Bi Amr Allah disappeared, his successor Al Zaher, escalated the persecution of the followers of the Call to Taw'heed. Baha Eddine continued to spread the Call, in secret and in the open, until it was finally closed by the order of Hamza Bin Ali.

From the wisdom of Baha Eddine:

- *“The etiquette of religion is the Taw'heed Commandments. They are the virtues that God established as the foundations of the True and Just faith of Taw'heed.*
- *No leader, cleric, or instructor should lead you except those who comply with justice.*
- *No one is better than the others except those who employ wisdom.*
- *No progressions in life accept to those who are truthful, straightforward, obedient to what should be obeyed, and adversary to what should be challenged.*
- *Beware of regret when it is too late to do that, and be armed with the knowledge you have attained.*
- *Peace upon the most honorable one who called for worship of the most Glorious God.*
- *My Lord, to you we appeal, and to you we complain. You are the Master of death and life, and to you we flee and in you we reside.*
- *God does not desert His creation; they are separated from Him by their awful deeds.*
- *Taw'heed of the Lord is the utmost requirement, the finest assortment, and the most worthy acquisition.*
- *The world is divided into three groups;*
 - 1) *One group seeks to see Him with the naked eye.*
 - 2) *Another group seeks to identify Him with words, logic, and speeches.*
 - 3) *And a third group denies the above and seeks to associate with Him through the Mind.*
- *With Taw'heed all things are known, and not with things Taw'heed is known.*

Baha Eddine's burial place, which is also known as Ma'kam El Shareef, and Sham'leekh, is near the village of Sharon, in the area of Alley, Lebanon. Accessible from the town of Sowfar, or on the way to Shouf near the village of Azzonieh.

THE PROPHET AYOUB

(IN THE BIBLE KNOWN AS JOBE)

Ayoub was born south of Damascus. Throughout history he was famous for his patience. His faith helped him to confront his problems and disasters.

God in His wisdom, allowed the devil to put Ayoub to the test. The devil wanted to win Ayoub to his side, Ayoub refused to depart from God's guidance. The devil warned him, but that did not cause Ayoub to alter his faith. The devil caused the death of Ayoub's people; his farms were burnt, and his livestock was stolen.

Then the devil came to Ayoub disguised as a farmer, and said: "I watched the loss of your people, plantations, and livestock; they were not protected by the God that you worship."

Ayoub replied: "All what I possessed belong to God, He provided me with them. He can if He so desires take them from me or leave them to me. My wealth and body are destined to extinction."

The devil was very upset; he caused the destruction of Ayoub's house when all his family was in it. They were all killed with the exception of Ayoub and his wife. The devil came in disguise to Ayoub and told him that he saw how his house collapse on all the members of his family and crashed their bones, and they all bled to death. He asked him; where was you God? Why he did not save them?

Ayoub who was very sad for the loss of his family, he replied: "To Him belongs everything, I thanked Him when He gave me, and I will thank Him when He takes away from me."

Again the devil, who took from Ayoub all his family and possessions, could not corrupt him. He was defeated because he could not change the faith of the prophet.

One day the devil passed by Ayoub while he was praying, he greeted him, and blew from his nose a disease that made Ayoub feel his body itching all over. To relieve himself from the pain and itch, Ayoub had to scratch his skin with his nails. When his nails were worn out, he used stone and rough closing to scratch his skin. His skin started to fall, and everyone got away from him, except his loyal wife Rah'mat, the daughter of Yousef.

Ayoub lived alone, he lost all his fortune, had no children or relatives. His wife worked as a servant to support him. They lived like that for a long time. The people watched him in pain and suffering, and were bewildered by his patience and faith.

Seven years passed and Ayoub was still suffering from his ailments. He never ceased worshiping God. Maggots crept all over his body, eating his flesh. The devil said: "This person has tried my patience. I did not leave for him neither wealth, nor child and health. There he is stretched on the ground, everyone avoids him, and I never heard him complaining or protesting."

The devil disguised himself as a handsome man; he met Ayoub's wife Rah'mat and asked: "Where is your husband?"

"He is there over the hill scratching his itch," she replied.

"Was he not the owner of land, wealth, livestock, and servants?" The devil asked.

"He was also a person with good words and deeds," she said:

"Did he not have children, good health, and youth?" The devil asked.

"Yes he had all that," she replied.

The devil said: "I am the god of this earth; I own the rich and the poor, health and celebrity. I will promote whoever obeys me, and I will smash and destroy whoever defies me. If you want your husband to be cured take this little lamb, let him scarify it for me, and let him forget his God for one

day only, and I will grant him back all he had lost, including his health, children, family, land, and livestock.”

Ayoub’s wife took the little lamb and went to her husband and told him what the man told her, she said: “Forget you God for only one day, and scarify this lamb and make it an offering to the man and all your problems will be resolved.”

Ayoub asked: “Do you know for how many years we lived together with the blessing of God?”

“For eighty years”, she replied.

“And how many years in misery?” He asked.

“About eight years”, she said.

The prophet said: “Where is your faith and patience? Are you are not convinced of God’s fairness? Do you want me to forget my God and obey one of His creatures? Go; leave me alone I will seek the help of my God.”

She left him with tears in her eyes. She could not understand and tolerate her misery and what became of her life.

He survived few days of desperation and hunger, and then he meditated and cried out: “Lord, I am helpless and you are my only salvation.”

He heard a voice saying: “Ayoub, you have earned my piety and clemency, raise your head and I will respond to your prayer. Run to that spring and wash your body with its water.”

The prophet saw a spring with water gushing from it. He crawled to it, drank and washed his body. He felt that all his pains went away, and felt that his health was back. He saw his reflection in the water and saw himself young and handsome again. He knelt and prayed and thanked God for His all his blessings. Then he stood up and went picking and eating fruits from the trees.

Ayoub’s wife who was away for few days looking for work, she met a lady who liked her hair and wanted to buy it. She sold it to her hair for one loaf of bread and went back looking for her husband to feed him.

She did not find him where she left him, she was worried, and with tears in her eyes she went searching for him. He saw her, but she did not recognize him. He said: “What are you looking for?”

“I am looking for my sick husband, I left him here,” she said.

“If you see your husband, would you recognize him?” Ayoub asked.

“What woman does not recognize her husband?” She said, looking at him with fear and suspicion.” She continued: “He looked very much like you when he was healthy and well.”

He looked at her sad face and said: “It is me Rah’mat; I am your husband Ayoub.”

She was very happy. They both raised their hands and face to the heavens and said: “Thank you Lord, thank you Lord”.

Ayoub lived to the age of one hundred and forty years, and was calling on the people to worship and obey God. His wealth multiplied and he had many good children.

He was buried on a high mountain in Neeha, El-Shouf, Lebanon.

AL AMIR (THE PRINCE) EL SAYED (THE MASTER)

Prince Jamal Eddine Abdullah Al Tanoukhi was born in 1417 AD. His father died when he was young. Since an early age he was very interested in philosophy and religion.

He traveled to many cities seeking knowledge and education. He acquired the knowledge of Hikma (*Wisdom Books of the Taw'heed Faith*) and memorized it by heart, he also studied and memorized the Quran. He could recite either of them from memory.

In addition, he studied grammar, logic, and philosophy. He achieved a high degree of education, and became a scholar.

People from all walks of life came to him to listen to his words, or to seek his knowledge and advice. Many became regular visitors, then students. They would come every Thursday evening to listen to him explaining verses from the Hikma, and the Quran. These meetings became regular. The old students assisted Al Amir by teaching the new attendants.

New attendants had to be checked out and confirmed by the old ones. Those who were not in good standing, that is, who committed crimes; murder, theft, rape, forgery, perjury (*lie and deceit*), drank alcohol, and hurt others, were rejected from these meetings and boycotted by all their friends and relatives.

Those who were guilty of these and other crimes felt the shame of their deeds stayed at home and avoided meeting others. Whereby, those who did not commit any of these and other crimes made an effort to keep themselves honest by avoiding such bad deeds, and crimes. The result was less crime and more honesty and integrity among the people.

The Amir reorganized the Mo'wa'he'Doon Druze. He explained Al Hikma, and told them how to behave. He issued strict rules, regulation, and standards by which a Mo'wa'hid Druze should abide with. He prohibited; drinking of alcohol, anger, envy, greed, monopoly. He insisted on women's rights, and emphasized monogamy (*that man should marry one woman only*), and girls should not be forced into marriage. Their parents should not force them to marry someone they do not like. He insisted on cleanliness of body and cloths, simplicity of dress and appearance.

His teachings spread throughout the region; from the Shouf area in Lebanon to Damascus and Aleppo in Syria. Many people would seek out his wisdom and judgment, including; Moslems, Christians and Jews.

The Amir married Aisha the daughter of Prince Sayf Eddine Abu Bakr. He had four children. Three of them died at an early age. The fourth, Abdul Khalek, was a very intelligent boy. He was modest, honest, generous, and devoted himself to the faith. At the age of eighteen he was engaged to get married. On his wedding day, while the guests were enjoying the ceremony, he went down to the stables to feed his horse, the horse kicked him and he died instantly. His father was told about the death of his son, he asked the family not to announce the death, and tried to hide the news from the guests so that they will continue to enjoy their time.

Soon the wedding guests new about the death of the groom, they became sad and some of them started to wail and weep. The prince, who did not weep, begged them not to do that. He said: "Our lives are pledged to the moment, and that moment is imminent to each soul."

He continued with his speech and said: "*There is no escape from death; we are all in the hands of the Creator. Blessed be those who accepted God's instructions, and confessed that death is a fact.*"

The Amir lived the rest of his life as a messenger and a guide. He died in 1479 AD at the age of sixty two. He was buried in the town of Obeih, Southeast of Beirut, Lebanon.

From his teachings:

- *"He who seeks glory and prestige will never attain his wishes.*
- *High positions are not attained except by those who accepted whatever came from God, and submit to His Will.*
- *The wise person observes with his Mind and vision, whereas, the foolish person observes with his sight and hearing.*

- *Life is a race course, our bodies are the horses, souls are the riders, and the contest is to seek out God."*

AL DA'I AL SHAHEED (THE MARTYR) AMMAR

Hassan Al Mughrabi Ammar was born in Libya. He came to Egypt and studied at Dar El Hikma. He was a fine soldier, very disciplined and courageous, and very well knowledgeable in the Taw'heed Faith.

Baha Eddine chose him to lead many difficult missions. He admired his faith; truthfulness, and support of the truth.

When some of people in Wadi el Taim, south of Lebanon, abused the Call, and practiced deficit and immorality, Baha Eddine decided to prevent them from corrupting the people. Since the Taw'heed Faith does not encourage violence, which should be avoided except in two cases; self defense, and/or defending ones land, property, family, and country, he sent a peaceful delegate to Wadi el Taim led by SITT (*Lady*) SARAH - accompanied by her father Abu Hassan Taqi Bin Ahmad. She met the people and delivered the message from Baha Eddine, and re-emphasized the Call to Taw'heed. She called on the women, and lectured them. She asked them to resist temptation, educate their children, and protect their family. She encouraged them to pray and be patient. Then she went back to report to Baha Eddine.

(There are two places to commemorate SITT (*Lady*) SARAH, one in Wadi El Taim, South Lebanon, and the second on the way to the village of Sharon, in the area of Alley, Lebanon).

The renegades, who did not care about the message which SITT (*Lady*) SARAH conveyed to them, increased their activities and decreed many illicit laws that contradict with the teachings of Taw'heed.

Then in 418 Hijra, Baha Eddine chose Ammar to lead another mission to confront the renegades. Ammar, armed with his faith and sword, and a warning letter from Baha Eddine, came to Wadi el Taim a stranger not acquainted with the land and the people. He went to a village called Bak'kifa and asked about Sheikh Abi Al-Khair Salama. Ammar explained to Salama his mission, and Salama welcomed him and promised to help.

Zu'kain was the leader of the renegade. He was surrounded by those who corrupted the faith. Salama advised Ammar to meet with Zu'kain and to try to convert him back into the faith peacefully. Ammar left his sword and went to Zu'kain and his followers and told them that he has a message from Baha Eddine. When Ammar read the letter, which contained strong reprimanding and stern warning to Zu'kain, Zu'kain became very angry. He ordered his men to arrest Ammar and torture him. They attacked Ammar and stoned him to death, thus he became known as Al Shaheed (*Martyr*) Ammar.

His body was picked by some travelers on their way to Palestine. They took it with them and buried it in the El-Hulat Valley in Palestine. People visit his cemetery for blessing. A place was also built for him in the village of Bak'kifa where it contains some of Ammar's possessions which he left with Salama when he went to meet Zu'kain. This place is visited frequently by the faithful.

SHEIKH EL FADEL

(THE VIRTUOUS SHEIKH)

(1579-1640 AD)

Muhammad Abu Hilal was born in 987 Hijra in a village called Al Shaeerat, on the Western part of Jabal El Sheikh in Lebanon.

He lived as an orphan, and tended few goats. He attained knowledge and education from educated travelers he met. When he grew up he worked for Sheikh Muhammad Abi Ebahah, cultivated the land and grew silkworms. Sheikh Abi Ebahah was a scholar; he liked Abu Hilal and became his tutor. Abu Hilal pursued knowledge and became better than his teacher.

Then Abu Hilal traveled to Damascus where he lived for twelve years and attained higher education. Then he came back home to become as a scholar in the Taw'heed Faith, and the teaching of the Quran. He never married, lived a modest life, and refrained from all the pleasures of life. He only ate dried bread and almonds.

He cared for the people, and shared with them their happiness and misery. He never accepted a gift. People visited him to seek his knowledge and advice. He became very popular. He adopted and practiced the teachings, interpretation, and regulations introduced by Al Amir El Sayed. He is considered second to Al Amir El Sayed in the Taw'heed Druze Faith.

Whenever he was angered he would meditate to let his anger out. He preached righteousness, morality, virtue, and principles. He ordered that in funerals meals should not be served, and people should not wail and cry.

He was very kind, yet very strict when it came to applying the Faith and its instructions. He insisted on parents to make knowledge and education available to their children. He ordered that animals should be well cared for; well fed, and should never carry more than their burden.

He stated that there are fifteen rules in the Taw'heed Faith that should be abided with, and without them Taw'heed is not achieved. They are:

1. *Fear of God*
2. *Learning the Hikma*
3. *Be acquainted with religious duties*
4. *Treat people well*
5. *Adhere to the good ethics*
6. *Depart from praying for wishes*
7. *Simplicity in dress and appearance*
8. *Do not be arrogant*
9. *Do not envy anyone*
10. *Be free from glory and distinction*
11. *Be ware of negligence and carelessness*
12. *Do not lie*
13. *Pray every day*
14. *Dress decently*
15. *Purify your body and soul.*

He said that worship is two kinds: one is earned by obedience, and the other is achieved by abstaining from sin and evil.

One of his prayers:

“My Lord, the day is full with your might and prestige.

Your door is open to all seekers.

I came to you in modesty, and I beg your forgiveness, you are my God and Creator.

Bless me with your compassion.

On judgment day have clemency on my soul.

My God forgive what I did, and protect what is left of my life.”

He died in 1050 Hijra, and was buried in a village called Ain Atta, between Hasbia and Rashia in South Lebanon. This place is visited frequently by the faithful.

SITT (LADY) SHA’WANI

The holy man approached the king and said:

“I bring you a message from the Lord that there is no God but Him.

He is the Ruler that there is no objection to His judgment.

He is Just beyond any justice.

He is the Provider with no limits to His generosity.

He is the Authority whose forgiveness has no equal, and whose punishment is beyond comparison.

He has no partner in His kingdom.

He is the Supreme Creator, the one and only, the Observer, the Responsive, the Creator, and the Eradicator.”

The king said: “You talk about the One who sent the message, but say anything about the message itself.”

“I invite you to heed His call, confess His oneness (Taw’heed), obey His instructions, and worship Him.” The holy man replied.

“I hear you”, the king said: “I accept your invitation. I have always seen His vision in my dreams. I heard before what you are telling me now, but never heeded the call. But now I am convinced and I wish to improve my relation with my God.”

The king summoned his council. He told them about his intentions. He appointed a fair ruler to lead the people, and told them that he was leaving for good.

The king had a daughter who was ten years old. Her mother had died few years ago. He told her about his decision and assured her that she will be well taken care of.

She refused to stay behind and insisted that her father should take her with him.

“I am going to the King of kings,” her father said.

“He is also my King”, she said.

“The journey is very difficult and dangerous,” he said.

“We will be protected by Him whom nothing happens without His knowledge,” she said.

“But you are a girl, and we are going to live among men,” he said.

“I will dress like them, and work like them. You may also call me Sha’wan (*masculine of Sha’wani*),” she said.

The king could not argue with her. He agreed with her decision, and they departed to the mountains of Lebanon where they joined other worshiping hermits living in the mountain. Sha’wani became known by everyone as “the boy”.

In those cold mountains, in the caves and woods, lived many hermits who departed from the physical and material pleasures of life, and journeyed into faith and Taw'heed.

They endured the cold weather, and were content with the little vegetables and fruits they could collect in the wild. They dressed in wool, and used dried grass as mats to sit and sleep on.

“The boy”, Sha'wan, made rugs and baskets and sold them to travelers who passed by where they were living. With the money he earned he bought food and gave them to all the worshipping hermits.

Some of those hermits were ex-traders, ex-governors, ex-farmers, ex-kings. They all departed the physical pleasures of life and chose to be close to their Creator through worship and meditation.

Sha'wani or Sha'wan “the boy” grew up taller and prettier. People would stare at him/her beauty with admiration. He was a hard worker, and earned the love and respect of all the people in that area. Some people called to work in the gardens of their expensive homes and castles.

Sha'wani's father became very old; he gathered his friends and told them: “I am going to depart you all very soon; I want you to look after my son Sha'wan.”

They all promised to take care of “the boy”. Soon the father died. Sha'wani's continued to live as she did before, but became more discrete, and avoided socializing and traveling with her friends.

One day Sha'wan “the boy” was asked to work in the gardens of a big house that belonged to the ruler. The daughter of the ruler saw Sha'wan and was taken by his looks. She never saw any one so handsome. She asked him to come inside the house. He did. She closed the doors and approached him and started to touch him all over. She told him that she wanted him more than anything.

Sha'wan was very embarrassed and confused; he never expected anything like that. He stood there with his head bent down and did not react positively. She became very mad with him and said:

“Look into my eyes.”

“I am scared, I cannot look,” he said.

“You have beautiful eyes,” she said.

“Those are the first thing that will perish when I die,” he said.

“You smell nice,” she said.

“Three days after my death I will smell very bad,” he said.

“Why you do not come close to me?” she said.

“Because that will put a distance between me and my God,” he said.

“I will give you wealth and happiness,” she said.

“You will deprive me from entering heaven,” he said.

“You will be punished if you disobey me,” she said.

“God will protect me,” he said.

She let him go, but decided on hurting him. As she always did, she slept with a man, but this time she got pregnant. Her mother noticed her pregnancy and asked her how that happened.

The daughter confessed her pregnancy to her mother, and told her that she was raped by Sha'wan. The mother asked her how did that happen. The daughter told her mother that she asked Sha'wan to come into the house because she wanted to buy a rug from him. She continued with her deceit, and told her mother that when he entered the house, he attacked her, and when she resisted him he raped her. She said that she did not tell anyone because she was afraid from her father.

The mother decided to tell her husband about the disgrace that begot their daughter. The ruler was very angry. He ordered his men to go to the mountains and capture Sha'wan and all the hermits.

They captured all the worshippers, tied them down and started whipping them. Then they tied their feet and dragged them behind their horses to the residence of the ruler. There they continued torturing them by more whipping, and they inserted sharp instruments and nails into their skin.

During all the time, Sha'wan was praying to God not to expose his secret to others. Then they brought in the daughter of the ruler to identify the rapist. She pointed at Sha'wan, and said: "He is the one".

All the hermits were released back to their caves in the mountains. Sha'wan was arrested and imprisoned. He was very quiet and patient, and did not speak at all. He spent a long time in prison and was continuously tortured. He never lost faith. He prayed the entire time saying:

*"Glorious god, I thank you.
You indulged me with your wisdom.
You asked me to obey you.
You brought me close to you.
You inspired me.
You protected me.
You pity me.
Your instructions are above all.
Your understanding is above all.
You are honest with your promise.
Your terms are reasonable.
Your judgment is fair.
Your face is the light.
Your forgiveness is great.
God, you are the healer of all disorder.
You are the supporter of the distressed.
You are the protector from evil.
You know everything.
You are the witness of all secrets.
Your knowledge surrounds everything.
God, you are my hope.
You are my salvation, and my integrity.
Guide me, and save me.
To you I pray.
Your piety I seek and you are my destiny."*

God responded to Sha'wan's prayers, he sent a messenger to the ruler to tell him the true story, and the deceit of his daughter. He proved to him that "the boy" was innocent. The ruler agreed but ordered that Sha'wan should marry his daughter. The messenger said:

"Both partners to a marriage should consent to it, and Sha'wan does not consent to that."

"Then he deserves to be put to death." The ruler said.

"No," said the messenger, "he deserves your forgiveness and he should be released."

The ruler consulted with his wife and daughter. By this time the daughter has delivered a baby. She pointed at the baby and said to her father: "Then let him take the child".

They gave Sha'wan the baby and released him. He left carrying the child. He did not go toward the caves where the worshippers were. They hermits new about his release and they came to him. They assured him of their confidence of his innocence, and support, and they prayed with him.

In the evening the child started crying. Sha'wan who had no relation whatsoever with the child, pitied him. He raised his hands and eyes to the heavens and prayed, he said:

"My God, I ask you by your name, you are the living truth.

You are the sovereign one, the dear one.

You are the great Creator.

You are the beginning and the end.

You are the answer, the observer, the kind.

You are the generous, the wise, and the guardian.

You are the omnipresent, the able, and the vanquisher.

You are the One the Self-sufficient Master.

You begot none, and was not begotten, and there is no one equal to you.

You are knowledgeable of all that is.

You are aware of my misery God; I do not want anything to distract you from my attention."

Sha'wan cared for the baby, and fed him deer milk. The baby soon became ill. Sha'wan asked one of the old worshippers to come and help him with the baby. He also wanted a witness to confirm that the illness of the baby was not due to his negligence. Soon the baby died.

Sha'wan went back to his companions. He was very ill. He called a senior hermit and begged him to listen to his will and testament. The hermit agreed.

He told him: "I am about to depart this life. I beg you to bury me in my cloth."

The old man replied: "but we need to prepare you, wash and wrap your body before burial."

"If you insist on that," Sha'wan replied: "I ask you that when I die, and before you do anything, please cut my shirt from my neck to my chest."

"I promise you that." The old man said.

Sha'wan continued with prayers and meditation for few days. When his soul departed his body, the old man came in with some of the other worshippers. He tore the shirt open, and then suddenly closed it back.

He said: "He is a female. This Female who lived among us all this time as a male was wrongfully accused."

His friends asked him to look again and make sure that he was saying the truth. He said that he cannot, because the second look will be considered a sin. They called upon the ruler, and asked him to send them some women to come and witness that Sha'wan was a female, and to wash and wrap the body for burial.

The ruler sent women to do that. They confirmed that Sha'wan was a woman, and they wanted to take the body and bury it in the town's cemetery, but the hermits insisted on having Sha'wani buried in the mountain close to them.

The ruler realized his injustice. He ordered his daughter to be put on trial. They proved her guilt and ordered her execution.

The ruler ordered that they cut her head and hang it at the entrance of the town, with a sign that said:

“THIS IS THE PUNISHMENT OF THOSE WHO COMMIT LEWDNESS AND FALSE WITNESS.”

Sitt Sha’wani is buried in the middle of West Bekaa, east of Jabbal El Barouk, on the way from Chtou’rah and Qub Elias.

SHEIKH ABU HASSAN AREF HALAWI

Sage and spiritual mentor who helped to inspire unity among the Druze during troubled times in Lebanon

Sheikh Abu Hassan Aref Halawi, Druze spiritual leader, was born in 1899. He died on November 26, 2003, aged 104.

WHEN Sheikh Abu Hassan Aref Halawi was buried in his home village of Barouk in Mount Lebanon, at least 160,000 people were said by the Government to have attended his funeral. Mourners came from Europe, as well as from neighbouring Syria and Jordan.

The large attendance was a measure of the new-found unity among the Druze, a historically fractious people, which the sheikh had helped to inspire. Yet the sheikh was one of the least politically active of Druze spiritual figures of modern times and held no official position, even among the clergy. He was a sage, rather than a cleric, and so politicians made a display of seeking his advice.

Abu Hassan Halawi was born in Barouk in 1899 and gravitated early in youth towards the household of a Yazbaki sheikh in a neighbouring village. Sheikh Haseeb Sayeq was a leading religious and political figure in the struggle for power between the Yazbakis and the other major clan, the Jumblats.

The young man was more spiritually inclined than his mentor and when he eventually married Sheikh Haseeb’s daughter, Sheikha Zahr, a revered figure in her own right, the marriage was said to be abstinent from the start. “See and desire, but do not touch” was an old motto for such marriages, in which complete abstinence was seen as a vehicle to promote self-discipline on the way to achieving unity with the divine.

The Druze, like a number of other sects in the Middle East, believe not in a physical after-life but in reincarnation, in which souls return to other human lives to be cleansed by suffering until, at last, they are fit to attain eternal happiness by becoming part of God himself.

During that tragic conflict, Sheikh Abu Hassan strongly disapproved of hostage-taking by the Druze, let alone massacres of enemy civilians. After the assassination of Kamal Jumblat by Syrian agents, the more warlike Walid Jumblat still paid special attention to Sheikh Abu Hassan’s advice.

The Late Sheikh Abu Hassan has a Ma’kam in the city of Barouk in the Shouf area in Lebanon. Thousands of Druze from Lebanon and all over the world visit his Ma’kam to assert their beliefs in the Taw’heed faith