



بلاد الشام

BILAD USH SHAAM



LEBANON



لبنان



MUFTI ABDOOL KADER SAHEB's حفظه الله VISIT TO LEBANON



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
نحمده و نصلي على رسوله الكريم. أما بعد

All praise is due to Almighty ALLAH, the Sustainer, Nourisher and Cherisher of the Universe. Peace, Blessings and Salutations be upon our Beloved Master and Leader, Nabi Muhammad Mustapha ﷺ.

INTRODUCTION

Lebanon is the smallest of four countries that were carved out of Bilad-ush-Shaam, the Levant, after the Second World War. Its population numbers about 6 million (2018 estimate), however, there are many divisions amongst them. The main groups are Sunni Muslims (27%), Shia (27%), Christians (41%) who are divided into different denominations, of whom the Maronite Catholics are the largest group (20%), and Druze (5%), whose beliefs constitute a mixture of religions and philosophies.

There are Christians who speak Arabic, which is the mother tongue for Muslims, as well. They also use the name 'ALLAH' so it is very difficult to differentiate between the two religious groups. French and Armenian are also spoken there.

The Shias are in power, especially the Hizbullah. We refer to them as the Hizbushaytaan, since they are 100% anti-Islam, as mentioned by Sheikh Yusuf Al Qardawi. They speak about Islam but, whether it is Iran or Bashar Asad's *kafir* regime or Hizbullah, they are all working with the Jews and the enemies of Islam. We do not consider them Muslims and do not offer salaah behind them.

BRIEF HISTORICAL OUTLINE

Sayyidina Khalid bin Walid رضي الله عنه led the Muslim army to victory against the Byzantines in the Battle of Yarmouk, near today's border between Jordan and Syria, in 14 AH (636 CE). This led to Muslims conquering Al Quds, Jerusalem, in 16 AH (638 CE), and eventually controlling Lebanon and Syria.

Sayyidina Muawiyah رضي الله عنه, became the Khalif in 37 AHS (658 CE), with his seat of governance in Damascus. His Umayyad Dynasty lasted about a century. The Abbasids then took control in 132 AH (750 CE) and moved the capital to Baghdad. By 369 AH (980 CE), the Fatimid Dynasty ruled over areas that included Lebanon and established Cairo as its capital.

Pope Urban II instigated the Crusades in November 487 AH (1095 CE) which resulted in vicious attacks on populations en route to Jerusalem. The city itself was captured in 492 AH (July 1099), after the Crusaders savagely butchered thousands of the local inhabitants.

Nuruddeen az-Zanqi (Zangi), of the Turkish Zengid Dynasty, defeated the Crusaders in Egypt, in 542 AH (1148 CE). By 548 AH (1154 CE), Shaam was united under his rule. His mission was continued by Salahuddeen al Ayyubi who recaptured Palestine in 583 AH (1187 CE). Salahuddeen's prosperous Ayyubid Dynasty was succeeded by the Mamluks, who had taken power in Cairo in 647 AH (1250 CE), and finally cleansed Bilad-ush-Shaam of the Crusaders by 701 AH (1302 CE).

From 921 AH (1516 CE) until the 19th century (1317 AH), the Ottoman Empire ruled Shaam. Then, under European influence, opposition to the Ottomans and the growth of Arab nationalism was fostered.

World War 1 broke out in 1914 (1332 AH) and lasted until 1918. The British instigated The Arab Revolt in 1916. This eventually led to the involvement of the French who were, subsequently, granted a mandate over Syria and Lebanon by The League of Nations.

The French divided their mandate and passed a new constitution for Lebanon in 1926 which, essentially, laid the foundation for sectarian strife and tensions which are still prevalent today.

Lebanon gained independence in 1946.

In the 1950s, its first civil war erupted. By 1958, the conflict had subsided and Lebanon began to prosper.

The region plunged into turmoil again during the 1960s, due to the outbreak of the 1967 Arab-Israeli Six Day War, which drove Palestinian refugees into Lebanon and further stoked sectarian tension.

November 1969: Lebanon signed the Cairo Agreement with the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization).

March 1970: Christian Phalangists gunmen attacked a Beirut bus, killing 27 Palestinian passengers.

13 April 1975: Beginning of the civil war which continued for the next 15 years. Many massacres were perpetrated:

6 December, 1975: 'Black Saturday'. About 300 Muslims killed. Christians also targeted.

January 1976: Phalangists massacred 1 000 Palestinians in Karantina, Beirut.

Two days later, Palestinians retaliated, killing more than 500 Christians in Damour.

August: Phalangists killed between 2 000 and 3 000 Palestinian civilians in the Tel Al Zaatar refugee camp, northeast Beirut.

The Green, or Demarcation, Line was established. It split Beirut in two, with Christians in the east and Muslims in the west.

1976: Syria sent troops into Lebanon, ostensibly, in support of the Palestinians.

1982: Israeli troops entered Lebanon and headed for Beirut, with the support of Maronite and Phalangist leaders. The city was devastated by Israeli bombardment and about 20 000 people, Muslims and Christians, were killed.

16 -18 September 1982: Phalangist forces perpetrated horrific massacres of Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila, which were refugee camps under Israeli control. The Lebanese army also joined the Phalangists and Israelis against the Druze and Shi'ite Amal militia in the Chouf (Shuf) Mountains.

1983 - 1984: Islamic Jihad attacks on US and French targets in Beirut.

1985: Hasty withdrawal of US and other foreign troops.

5 November 1989: Formal ratification of The Taif Accord, which was an attempt to bring peace to Lebanon.

August 1990: The National Assembly voted to accept terms of Taif Accord and peace prevailed for the first time in 15 years.

13 October 1990: An end to the civil war was declared.

May 1991: Most militias – except Hizbullah – were officially dissolved. As required by the Taif Accord, Syria began to withdraw its military in March 1992.

1993-2000: Israel launched repeated attacks against Hizbullah and Palestinian fighters. It was eventually forced to withdraw from Southern Lebanon, on 24 May 2000, due to heavy losses.

14 February – 27 April 2005: The Cedar Revolution, sparked by the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri; one of its goals was to end 30 years of Syrian occupation, which happened on 27 April when Syria withdrew its last troops; the first parliamentary elections were held.

Factional discord has prevented further elections, with the current President having been appointed in 2016. Ongoing political attempts are being made to bring stability to the country.

OUR VISIT

I went to Beirut in the late 1990s. We travelled from Syria to Beirut without prior arrangements so we had no accommodation reserved. We were shown a couple of hotels but they were not to our liking. Eventually, we were taken to the hotel, Funduk Lamedina, which we found satisfactory. It was about 100 metres from the ocean. One could simply take a walk along the beach early in the morning without encountering anybody.



Lamedina today (Jounieh)



Because of the name 'Medina', we assumed it was Muslim-owned. At that time, we did not know that the entire city was divided into Muslim and Christian sections and that our hotel, which was right at the edge of the beach, was in the Christian section. We were charged \$50 per night.

When I told the owner, "I want to read Salaat." He responded, "Do you know where you are?" I asked, "What do you mean?" He said, "This is the Christian side. You won't find a masjid here."

Nevertheless, we decided to stay there as we were staying for three nights only and it was reasonably-priced, for a 4-star hotel.

We travelled from there to the Muslim side, visiting masjid and bookshops.

AL
OMARI
MASJID,
BEIRUT



IMAM AL-AUZA'I (OUZA'I) رحمه الله عليه



We went to the grave of Imam Al-Auza'i رحمه الله عليه, which we saw from a distance. Imam Abdul Rahman Al-Auza'i was called Imamu Ahli Shaam. He was born in Ba'la Bakka (Baalbek) in the year 88 AH and passed away in 157 AH. His grave is in Beirut. His fatawa were applicable to the whole of Shaam and Andalus, Muslim Spain. He is honoured for his piety and knowledge.

The suburb of Al Auza'i was formerly called Hantous and is located 4 km south of Beirut. Its masjid was also known as Hantous Masjid. Imam Al-Auza'i had lived in his *Zawiya* in Souk Al-Tawile in central Beirut where his home was a school of Islamic studies, as well.

He is buried in a corner inside the Hantous, now Al-Auza'i, Masjid and his marble tomb is surrounded by a wooden enclosure. The masjid consists of two sections: a new one added to the eastern side of the old one. The simple cylindrical minaret was built in 1939.

A new Al-Imam Al-Auza'i masjid was built nearby in 1954 (1375 AH). The Lebanese General Directorate of Islamic Waqfs restored the old masjid and its historical minaret and made some additional improvements.

We should remember Imam Al-Auza'i as one of the people that ALLAHU TA'ALA had chosen for the protection of His Deen.

MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES

One of the best places in the world to buy Arabic books is Beirut so, I went to a bookshop. My wife, Fathima, was sitting at the back.



I told the seller – I think his name was Sadiq – “I want these kitaabs,” and proceeded to list them. He said, “Fine.” When he brought them, he said, “*Asharah*” meaning, ten books.

So, I responded, **تِلْكَ عَشْرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ**

"*Tilka ashara kamila*" – "Those are ten complete" (quoting Surah Baqarah, ayat 196, which is a reference to people performing *tamattu* or *qiraan* Hajj. They have to slaughter a goat or sheep, the *hadi* or *damm-i-shukr*. If they unable to do so, they have to keep ten fasts.)

I asked him for another book. He brought it and said, "What do you say now?"

I responded, **إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا**

"*Inni ra-aytu ahada ashara kowkaba*" – "Indeed I have seen [in a dream] eleven stars," as Nabi Yusuf عليه السلام said (Surah Surah Yusuf, ayat 4).

I added yet another book to the pile. The seller brought it and asked, "What do you say?"

I said, **إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا**

"*Inni 'iddatash-shahoori 'indALLAHi ithna ashara shahran*" – "Indeed, the number of months with ALLAH is twelve months" (quoting Surah Taubah, ayat 36).

This was all spontaneous, not deliberate. I then added one final book to my order. The count now stood at thirteen, a number that is not mentioned explicitly in the Qur'aan. The book-seller was convinced (being Arab, while I am not) that he had cornered me now and that I had no answer. However, ALLAHU TA'ALA put the following in my mind, in my heart: Tell him,

وَالشَّفْعَ وَالْوَتْرَ

"*Wash-shaf'i wal watr*" – "And [by] the even [number] and the odd" (Surah Fajr, ayat 3).

The seller looked at me. Between us was the shop counter. He came from behind it, hugged me and said, "Sheikh, take all these kitaabs free of charge. I will pay for them."

That is the Mercy of ALLAH.

When I returned to South Africa, I emailed him in Arabic, thanking him for his wonderful gesture.

A crazy incident occurred while we were in Beirut.

Fathima and I were travelling by taxi. I had fallen asleep, when, suddenly, about twenty or thirty policemen surrounded our car. One of them wanted to sit at the back with Fathima but I objected, saying I would sit there while he could sit in front. We were taken to the police station.



I told the policeman there, "I am a visitor from South Africa."

At that time (1996-97) Nelson Mandela was President and everybody knew about him.

I asked "What is wrong with you all?"

They explained that a bomb had exploded in the vicinity. It seems that I was the first 'suspicious' person they saw and, because of my appearance – I had a beard and kurta – they assumed I had something to do with it. However, they realised their folly and released us.

The taxi driver then argued with us, demanding payment because he had been waiting all this time. I told him, "Ask these chaps," meaning the policemen, as they had been responsible for the delay. A

huge argument ensued after which the police offered us tea and biscuits. The matter was eventually settled and, the next day, the taxi driver arrived again and offered to take us sightseeing. The incident was scary on one hand, but comical on the other.

CONCLUSION

Although it is a very beautiful country, immorality is widespread. There are casinos and bars where alcohol flows like water. Vices are prevalent in that society. Sometimes, we really wonder about these Muslim countries.

We should, therefore, always make du'a that ALLAHU TA'ALA protects Shaam.

May Almighty ALLAH protect the Muslims wherever they are, Aameen.

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