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The Striving Sheik: ABDULLAH AZZAM

Among The Believers are men who Truly fulfilled their covenant with Allah (i.e. they have gone out for Jihad and showed not their backs to the disbelievers); of them some fulfilled their pledge (i.e. have been martyred), and some are still waiting, but they have never changed (i.e. they never proved treacherous to their covenant which they concluded with Allah) in the least." [33:23]

His Birth & Upbringing

Despite the fact that Sheikh Abdullah Azzam was buried in the Pakistani city of Peshawar on the borders of Afghanistan, he was born in the village of Ass-ba'ah Al-Hartiyeh, province of Jineen in the occupied sacred land of Palestine in 1941 AD. He was brought up in a humble house where he was taught Islam, and was fed with the love of Allah, His Messenger (s.a.w.), those striving, the righteous people and the desire for the hereafter.

In 1966 he graduated from the University of Damascus with a Bachelor Degree in *Shariah* (Islamic Law). In 1969 he graduated from Al-Azhar University in Cairo, with a Masters Degree, and in 1979 he obtained his Ph.D. in the principles of Jurisprudence.

The late Sheikh understood the meaning of *Iman* and *Tawhid* (Science of oneness of Allah) in their true and complete sense. He held the essential belief that the concept of the Oneness of Allah's Names and Attributes would be defective and incomplete unless it is reinforced with the Doctrine (Aqeedah) of loyalty towards the Believers and to be clear from and immune to the disbelievers (i.e. Alwala' Wa Albara'). Allah says: *"..Whoever takes them (i.e. disbelievers) as protectors (Awliyah) then he surely is one of them"* [5:51]. Therefore the truth of Allah's Oneness implies the belief that only Allah is The Sole Ruler and Omnipotent Prescriber of Laws in the *Shariah*; in His Hands rests the command of permission and prohibition. He alone is worthy of worship and there is none worthy of worship except Him.

The Sheikh's life revolved around a single goal, namely the establishment of Allah's Rule on earth, this being the clear responsibility of each and every Muslim. So in order to accomplish his life's noble mission of restoring the *Khilafah*, the Sheikh focused on Jihad (the armed struggle to establish Islam).

He believed Jihad must be carried out until the Khilafah (Islamic Rule) is established so the light of Islam may shine on the whole world.

Jihad: The Only Solution

From his pulpit Sheikh Azzam was always reiterating his conviction that "Jihad must not be abandoned until Allah (SWT) alone is worshipped (by mankind). Jihad continues until Allah's Word is raised high. Jihad until all the oppressed peoples are freed. Jihad to protect our dignity and restore our occupied lands. Jihad is the way of everlasting glory".

When Sheikh Azzam realised that only by means of an organised force would the Ummah ever be able to gain victory, then Jihad and the Gun became his pre-occupation and recreation. "Jihad and the rifle alone: no negotiations, no conferences and no dialogues." he would say.

By practicing what he was preaching, Sheikh Azzam was one of the first Arabs to join the Afghani Jihad against the communist USSR. Prior to this, he did his share of Jihad in his own country: Palestine. His heroic deeds in the Aal-Shaykh refugee camps in Jordan spoke loudly for him and rightly justified his long experience with Jihad.

Emigration For Aqeedah

In the early 1980's, Sheikh Azzam came to experience the Jihad in Afghanistan. In this Jihad he found satisfaction of his longing and untold love to fight in the Path of Allah. Allah's Prophet (s.a.w.) once said, "A few moments spent fighting in the Path of Allah, is worth more than seventy years spent in praying at home." [Authentic, At-Tirmithi and Al-Hakem]

Inspired by this *Hadith*, Sheikh Azzam asked to be transferred from the University of Jordan where he taught, to Islamabad in Pakistan. He immigrated with his family to Pakistan in order to be closer to the field of Jihad (against USSR). He then moved from Islamabad to Peshawar to be even closer to the field of Jihad and Martyrdom.

In Peshawar, Sheikh Azzam founded the *Mujahideen Services Bureau* with the aim of offering all possible assistance to the Afghani Jihad and the Mujahideen through establishing and managing projects that supported the cause. The Bureau also received and trained volunteers pouring into Pakistan to participate in Jihad and allocating them to the front lines.

Unsurprisingly, this was not enough to satisfy Sheikh Azzam's burning desire for Jihad. That desire drove him finally to go to the front-line. On the battlefield, the Sheikh gracefully played his destined role in that generous epic of heroism.

In Afghanistan he hardly ever settled in one place. He traveled throughout the country, visiting most of its provinces and states such as Lujer, Qandahar, Hindukush Heights, the Valley of Binjistr, Kabul and Jalalabad.

These travels allowed Sheikh Azzam to witness first hand the heroic deeds of these unkempt and disheveled people who had sacrificed all that they possessed -including their own lives - for the Supremacy of the religion of Islam.

In Peshawar, upon his return from these travels, Sheikh Azzam spoke about Jihad constantly. He prayed to restore the Unity among the divided Mujahideen commanders; called upon those who had not yet joined the fighting to take up arms and to follow him to the front before it would be too late.

His Character & Example

History, as well as anyone who knew Sheikh Azzam closely, all testify to his courage in speaking the truth, regardless of the consequences. He always bore in mind the command of Allah to: "Proclaim openly that which you were commanded, and turn away from the polytheists (*Mushrikeen*)" [15:94].

On every occasion Sheikh Azzam reminded all Muslims that, "Muslims cannot be defeated by others. We Muslims are not defeated by our enemies, instead, we are defeated by our own selves."

He was a fine example of Islamic manners, in his piety, his devotion to Allah, his modesty in all things and he would never adulate in his relations with others. Sheikh Azzam always listened to the youth, and he was dignified and did not allow fear to have access to his brave heart. He practiced continual fasting especially the alternate daily fasting regime of Prophet Dawood peace be upon him. He strongly counseled others to practice fasting on Mondays and Thursdays. The Sheikh was a man of uprightness, honesty and virtue, and was never heard to slander others or to talk unpleasently about an individual Muslim.

His Martyrdom

When Allah (s.w.t.) willed that Sheikh Azzam should leave this world to be in His closest company, the Sheikh did departed in a glorious manner. This great martyr of Islam was assassinated when a land mine exploded beneath the car he was driving with his two sons on the way to the local mosque for Friday Prayer.

That fateful blast indeed ended the worldly journey of Sheikh Azzam which had been spent well in struggling, striving and fighting in the Path of Allah (s.w.t.). It also secured his more real and eternal life in the gardens of Paradise - God willing-, that he will enjoy along with the illustrious company of *"those on whom is the Grace of Allah, the Prophets, the Sincere ones, the Martyrs and the Righteous. The Best of company are they"*. [4: 69]

We ask Allah The Almighty to raise up many examples of Sheikhs of his calibre, to support the Mujahideen everywhere, to grant us the *Shahadah* (martyrdom), and to resurrect us with the most righteous servants for He is most capable n

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