
"Seyyed Hasan Nasrallah's Autobiography"

Ya Lesarat Ol-Hoseyn (Tehran)

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OSC Translated Text

My father Abdulkarim used to sell fruit and vegetables; my brothers would help him. When my father's financial status improved, he opened a small grocery store in the neighborhood, and I would go there to help him usually. We had a picture of Imam Musa al-Sadr hanging on the wall of the store. I would sit on a chair in front of the picture and stare at it. I wished that I would become like him one day.

We did not have a mosque in our neighborhood, which was called Kortina, so I would go to the San Al-Fil, Borj Jamud, or Nob'eh mosques for prayers. I would read any reading material I found, especially Islamic books. Any book that I could not understand, I would put aside to read it when I grew older.

I went to a school in the Al-Najah neighborhood for my primary education, and I was among the last group of students who gained the diploma certificate. After that, I went to the San Al-Fil state school to continue my education there, but the flames of the 1975 civil war erupted very soon afterward. Hence, I left Kortina and returned, along with my family, to the village of Bazuyeh, where I was born. After that, I finished my high school education in one of the state schools of the coastal city of Sur.

Earlier, when we lived in the Kortina neighborhood, none of my family members or I was affiliated with any political party. Meanwhile, several political organizations, of which some were Palestinian, were active in the area. But, later on, when we moved back to Bazuyeh, I joined the ranks of the Amal movement. That was a choice that I made very eagerly, because I deeply admired Imam Musa al-Sadr. At that time, I was just 15-years-old and the Amal movement was called and known as the movement of the underprivileged. I was becoming less interested in the village of Bazuyeh, because that village was turning into an arena for the activity of intellectuals, Marxists, and especially supporters of the Lebanese Communist Party. Anyway, my brother Seyyed Hoseyn and I became members of the Amal movement, and, in spite of my young age, I soon became the representative of our village.

Within a few months, I made a firm decision to go to Najaf Ashraf in Iraq. At that time, I was hardly 16-years-old and I faced many restrictions against going. But, since my reliance was on god, one day at the mosque of the city of Sur I met a religious scholar whose name was Seyyed Mohammad Gharavi. He worked there on behalf of Imam Musa Sadr as a teacher. As soon as he heard that I wanted to go to Najaf Ashraf for education, he wrote a letter and gave it to me. Seyyed Mohammad Gharavi was a close and favorite friend of Grand Ayatollah Seyyed Muhammad Baqr al-Sadr. The letter that he gave me was a recommendation for my admission to that dignitary's class.

With the help of friends and my father, and by selling some belongings, I gathered some money and flew to Baghdad; from there I took a bus to Al-Najaf. When I arrived in Al-Najaf, I had no money left in my pockets. But, there are more than a few strangers and lonely people in Al-Najaf. More important, of course, is the fact that a scholar must learn how to live a respectable

life with empty hands. My food was bread and water, and my bed was a rectangular piece of sponge mattress. As soon as I arrived, I asked the other Lebanese scholars living there how I could get my letter of recommendation to Ayatollah Al-Sadr, who was considered as a pillar of the religious seminary. They told me that Seyyed Abbas Musavi could do that for me.

When I met with Seyyed Abbas Musavi, because he was a little bit dark-skinned, I assumed he was Iraqi. Hence, I spoke to him in plain Arabic. But in response, Seyyed Abbas told me: "Do not bother; I am also Lebanese and I have come here from the Nabi Sheys area!" That was how our acquaintance and close friendship began. Musa was a friend, brother, mentor, and companion for me. We were separated from each other when the Israelis fired missiles at his vehicle from a helicopter and martyred Seyyed Abbas, along with his wife and little child. This incident happened 16 years after the sweet start of our friendship in the city of Al-Najaf.

Ayatollah Al-Sadr, after accepting me and reading my letter of recommendation from Seyyed Mohammad Gharavi, asked me: "Do you have any money?" I said: "Not a penny!" The Ayatollah then turned to Musavi and stated: "First, get him a room, then you be his tutor and take care of him." After that, he gave me some money to buy me some clothes and books, as well as some spending money for a month. Musavi got me a room at the seminary near his own house. At that time Seyyed Abbas Musavi had just got married, and married couples were allowed to have separate houses for themselves. But the single scholars had chambers, and sometimes two or even three of them would live together in one chamber. There was also a small monthly tuition of five dinars for each scholar.

Seyyed Abbas Musavi, who had already passed the preliminary course and had entered the next stage, had a number of pupils. I was one of them. Musavi was very strict and serious. Owing to his intensive teaching, we managed to complete a five-year course in only two years. We would study all the time, even on holidays such as our leave for the month of Ramadan and the Hajj season, without taking any breaks. We even studied on Thursdays and Fridays, which were the usual weekend holidays at the religious seminary.

In 1982, I completed the first course with a passing grade. In the same year, the Iraqi Ba'thist regime started to put pressure on the Kurdish scholars, deporting many of them back to their own countries. Many scholars of different nationalities were forced to leave their education unfinished. Even worse, the Baghdad politicians singled out Lebanese scholars and accused them of being agents for the Amal movement. Sometimes, they would even link us to the Da'vat Party or to the Syrian Ba'thist Party. Eventually, they said, whatever our agenda was, we had been sent there by the Syrian intelligence organization. Finally, in 1987, the Lebanese scholars, like those of other countries, were banished from Iraq (many of them after being held in detention for months).

During that time, Saddam's forces raided the religious seminary. Seyyed Abbas Musavi was in Lebanon on that particular day, but his family was still in Al-Najaf. His students notified him not to return to Iraq, because he was wanted there. A short while after that, his students were also expelled from Iraq. I was lucky that time, because I was not there when the police raided the religious seminary. As soon as I found out what had happened, I left Al-Najaf immediately. Since my arrest warrant was only issued for the District of Al-Najaf, and not the whole country, I did not have any problem at the border checkpoint. I was able to leave Iraq easily and return to Lebanon eventually.

Musavi, along with a number of theological lecturers, founded a school of religious sciences in Ba'albak, which is still open to this day. I continued my studies in that school and I maintained my cooperation with the Amal movement. In 1987, the Amal movement appointed me as its

political representative in the Biqa region; this was how I became one of the political members of the central office. In the same year, I also finished the second course at the seminary.

In June 1982, Israel started its full-scale invasion of Lebanon. When the Israelis captured Beirut, a front called the National Salvation Front was established. Amal leader Nabih Birri showed a lot of interest in joining the Amal movement with that front, but the religious principle-ists (osulgarans) of the Amal movement were opposed to this. From that point the differences began to escalate and the principle-ist group separated from the movement. This matter was obvious and predictable, because some differences of opinion, especially regarding their views and versions of Imam Musa al-Sadr's advice, were quite noticeable from an earlier stage. The religious forces realized that Amal was going astray. They noticed that the Salvation Front was planning to make Bashir Gemayel president of Lebanon, which was a decision that the religious wing of Amal would not accept at all. The religious forces believed that the leader of the Falangist paramilitary groups was quite willing to come to terms with the Israelis. But, from their point of view, coming to terms was against the interests of the front, as was speaking and shaking hands with him.

The principle-ists left Amal and entered into coalition with other groups outside that movement, in order to establish and found Hizballah. When I left Amal, my brother Hoseyn did not do the same thing; he has stayed with Amal to date. For a short while, he represented the movement in the Shiyah region, but he resigned from that post later due to his health condition (because he got sick).

I was the eldest son in an 11-member family. There were nine brothers and sisters. Hoseyn comes after me; behind him are Zeynab, then Fatemeh, who is still at home. After her there is Muhammad, a businessman, then Ja'far, who is employed. After them, in order of age, are Zakiyeh, Ameneh, and Sa'ad, all of whom are married.

All of my sisters are active members of Hizballah. But, as for the brothers, they were all in the Amal movement first. Now, all of them, except for Hoseyn, have left it. Muhammad is basically not interested in politics; even though he is not a member of Hizballah, he approves of it. However, Ja'far is politically undecided at the present time; we have been discussing and exchanging views with each other for some time now.

Today, Hizballah is making good progress and changing for the better. Its goal is to move in the right direction with the necessities of the time and to uphold its Shiite principles. It is wrong to think that any one person, no matter how exalted his standing might be, can accumulate and monopolize all of the intellectual, religious, theological, and political knowledge in the world for himself. The Hizballah members believe that the greatest, most dignified, and undisputed personality of the century (the twentieth century) was Imam Khomeyni. After Imam Khomeyni's departure, naturally Imam Khamene'i was the most righteous successor to Khomeyni. In our opinion, the previous views and thoughts are still valuable.

When Hizballah was founded, I was 22-years-old and a member of the Basij resistance force. Later, I became the party's director in the Ba'albak district. After that, I became the party's director for the whole Biqa region. After a while, I was appointed as the assistant and deputy to Seyyed Ebrahim Ayman al-Seyyed, who was the party's director in Beirut. Shortly afterward, the party decided to separate its political affairs from its operational and organizational activities. Seyyed Ebrahim picked the political branch, and I became the director for the Beirut District after him. Then the post of general executive director was created, the responsibility of which was to implement the orders of the Consultative Council. I was appointed to that post.

In spite of all the responsibilities that I had in the party, which took up all of my time effectively, I also decided to continue my studies. But, following the full-scale Israeli invasion, I had to put my studies aside. Seven years later in 1989, the situation became suitable for studying once again. Hence, with the party's permission, I went to Qom to finish my education. Of course, even then the rumormongers did not stop working. They said Seyyed Nasrallah had left Lebanon because of his dispute with the Hizballah leaders.

Following the escalation of the differences with the Amal movement and the outbreak of armed conflicts in the Biqa region, I considered it my duty to return to Lebanon. Of course, that was also what the party wanted me to do. Hence, again I was not able to use the opportunity and continue my studies to the point where I wanted. Today, my greatest wish is that my brothers will lighten my workload and excuse me as general secretary of the party, so that I can return to the seminary and continue my studies as a scholar.

After the assassination of Abbas Musa by the Israelis, I was made the leader of Hizballah and the general secretary of the party. Before that, and during the time of my residence in Qom, they gave my executive responsibility in the party's high council to my assistant Sheikh Na'im Qasem. Hence, when I returned, I merely served as a member of the command cadre, without having any particular responsibility. However, when Seyyed Abbas Musa was chosen as the general secretary of Hizballah, he appointed Na'im Qasem as his deputy, and I returned to my previous post again.

In 1992, the Israelis assassinated Seyyed Abbas Musa. Hence, the members of the Consultative Council arranged a meeting to choose his successor, which turned out to be me. The day I was chosen by the Consultative Council, I had a lot of fear and anxiety, because I was much younger then. Up to that point I had only been in charge of the internal arrangements of the party and I had no experience with the party's external affairs. But, the council insisted that I take the job. At first, I refused, but later, when the experts insisted again, I accepted this responsibility finally.

In 1978, I married Ms. Fatemeh Yasin from the Abbasiyeh neighborhood of the city of Sur.

Besides my son Hadi, who was martyred at the age of 18, I have three other children:

Muhammad Javad; Zeynab; and Muhammad Ali. When I set foot in my house, I leave all of my work and difficulties at the door, in order to become a caring husband and father at home. I try to value my private life and my faith. I read a lot, especially about the adventures of politicians. I have been reading Sharon's biography for a while now, and I am going to read the book again.

In my opinion, Hizballah does not just mean resistance. Today, Hizballah is also a political doctrine and ideology that is based upon Islam. In brief, to us, Islam is not just a simple religion that is limited to worship and religious observances. Islam is a special divine duty for all humanity and is the answer to all the general and specific concerns of mankind. Islam is the religion for any society that wants to revolutionize and establish a government. Islam is the religion on which you can establish a government on the basis of its principles. I would not deny that Hizballah's wish is to establish an Islamic Republic system one day, because Hizballah believes that establishing an Islamic government is the only way to bring stability to a society and is the only way to settle social differences, even in a society that is composed of numerous minorities. Nevertheless, establishing an Islamic Republic is not possible with force and resistance. It requires a national referendum. A referendum that wins 51 percent of the vote is still not the solution. What it needs is a referendum for which 90 percent of the people vote. Hence, with this assumption, and in view of the status quo, establishing an Islamic Republic system in Lebanon is not possible at the present time.

Death is nothing but a gateway between the two worlds. Some people pass through this gateway with difficulty and agony, and some do it with ease and willingness. Martyrdom is the best way of passing to the eternal world, because martyrdom is one of the glorious gifts of god almighty. When a martyr dies (moves from one place to another), it is like a person who goes to the heavens with precious gifts. This is why martyrdom is so valuable to other people (Muslims). Even in those nations that do not believe in god, when people dedicate their lives for their homeland, their nation, and a goal in which they believe, it is laudable and admirable. As a father who has lost his son, I have no worries; I am sure that my son is in paradise with god almighty. Before his martyrdom, Hadi's picture was only found in our house. However, today his picture is found everywhere and in every house. It is true that my family and I have lost our dear and beloved son, but we are confident that we will meet him in the eternal life some day. As for the charisma that you say people see in me, this is not something about which I should talk. It is something about which the people talk, but charisma in general means the influence that a person has over others. This is, in fact, a godly blessing that one can improve further with knowledge and experience, although knowledge, expertise, and experience is not sufficient to make a person charismatic. It also needs god's blessing and attention.

(Description of Source: Tehran Ya Lesarat ol-Hoseyn in Persian -- extremely conservative Tehran weekly. Organ of Ansar-e Hezbollah)