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## Brief Biographies of the Maraja' presented in this Book

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#### Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh 'Ali Araki

Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh 'Ali Araki was born in the early 1890's, but the exact date is not known due to the lack of appropriate birth records at the time, in the Iranian city of Arak.

Following his preliminary religious studies, he demonstrated an aptitude to further his Islamic studies, and commented on the scholarly book, 'Urwatul Wuthqa some 48 years ago (1952). This is a book upon which all Mujtahidin comment as soon as they are recognized as an expert in independent theological studies, according to their views. At the time of his review of 'Urwatul Wuthqa, he was in the company of such great leaders as Ayatullah al-Udhma Khunsari, and others.

Although he was learned and a declared Mujtahid, following the demise of Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Khusani and Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Hussein al-Burujerdi, he did not openly declare his Marja'iyah. He was one of Imam Khomeini's teachers, having taught the Founder of the Islamic Republic the initial course of the Hawza entitled Jami'atul Muqaddamat. In other classes, he was a contemporary of the late Imam.

Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh 'Ali Araki was a strong encouragement to the Islamic Republic, and frequently guided the government whenever requested. Upon the demise of Ayatullah Khomeini, many of his Muqalladin followed Ayatullah Araki. At the demise of the Grand Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj ash-Sayyid Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i (May Allah raise his rank), the Jamiatul Mudarrasin (Council of the Theological Schools) in Qum declared in a communique, the top most Marja' to be either Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh 'Ali Araki or Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Riza al-Gulpaygani, preferring the later, and on December 10, 1993, following the departure of Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Riza al-Gulpaygani from this mortal world, the Council declared

the grand Ayatullah Araki to be the Marja' for the Shi'a world.

Ayatullah Araki, up until his death used to lead students of the Hawza Faiziyah in the congregational Salat. His teaching was active right up to his hospitalization. The President of the Council, Ayatullah Ibrahim Amini, in his Friday sermon on December 10, 1993, said that the Shaykh was "since the time of the late Shaikh 'Abdul Karim Ha'iri (founder of the Qum Theological Center), one of the most brilliant personalities in the field of theology and religious sciences, and a friend among the Ulama..."

Ayatullah Yusuf Sana'i also of Qum said that the Grand Ayatullah has "a high expertise in fiqh and its different topics and also is skillful in manipulating the principle maxims of jurisprudence." As for his piety, Ayatullah Jawadi Amuli mentioned in a statement that the Ayatullah protected his "soul from wordly desires and his obedience to the Sacred Existence of the Master of the Seen and Unseen..."

The grand Ayatullah died on the 25th of Jumadi al-Akhar, 1994, one year to the day of the demise of Ayatullah al-'Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Riza al-Gulpaygani, and was buried in Qum on Thursday the 27th of Jumadi al-Akhar.

## **Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Muhammad Taqi al-Behjat**

Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Muhammad Taqi al-Behjat was born in 1915 in the city of Fuman, Iran. His father, Karbalai Muhammad Behjat was a trustworthy and reliable personality of that region. Ayatullah al-Behjat finished his primary education in one of the schools in Fuman. Later on, in that same city, he began his religious education until the year 1929, when he made the journey to Qum.

He completed studies in Arabic grammar and literature during his short stay in Qum, and then migrated to the holy city of Karbala, Iraq, where he attended the lectures of some of the great scholars – such as Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i.

In 1933, he left Karbala for the holy city of Najaf to complete his studies. While there, he attended the lectures of one of Ayatullah Khurasani's students. After participating in the classes of Ayatullah Dia' al-Iraqi and Ayatullah Mirza Naini', he began attending the lectures of Ayatullah al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Muhammad husayn al-Gharawi al-Isfahani (known as al-Kumpani).

Ayatullah al-Behjat also benefited a great deal from the lectures of Ayatullah al-Udhma hajj as-Sayyid Abu al-hasan al-Isfahani and al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Muhammad Kadhim ash-Shirazi.

Apart from Fiqh (Jurisprudence) and Usul (Principles of Jurisprudence), Ayatullah al-Behjat also studied the book al-Isharat of Ibn Sina and al-Asfar al-Arba' of Mulla Sadra ash-Shirazi, under the late as-Sayyid husayn al-Badkubi.

In 1944, Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Muhammad Taqi al-Behjat returned to Iran and

became a student of Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Kukhmari's while also attending the lectures of Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Hussein al-Burujerdi on Fiqh and Usul.

For the past fifty years, he has been teaching the Kharij level of Fiqh and Usul in his home to avoid publicity.

## **Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Riza al-Gulpaygani**

Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Riza al-Gulpaygani departed for his heavenly abode on Thursday night, 9th of December at the age of 96. He suffered from acute respiratory deficiency and lung infection for which he was confined at hospital. The Ayatullah who was the supreme religious authority of the Shi'a world, became terminally ill immediately after midnight Tuesday and was shed to the Cardiac Care Unit of the hospital but his condition continued to deteriorate despite the extra care and attention of his doctors.

Ayatullah al-Gulpaygani went into a coma in the wee hours of Wednesday morning and eventually left the mortal world minutes before evening prayers Thursday.

He saw the light of day in the village of Koukeh near the city of Gulpaygan (135 kms north-east of Isfahan) in the closing years of the 19th century and at the age of 20 went to Arak which was the centre of the Theological studies. There, he received his education under Ayatullah al-Udhma ash-Shaykh 'Abd al-Karim al-Hairi. Later in 1921 he went to the city of Qum to complete his studies.

In the early 1960s following the death of Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Hussein al-Burujerdi and during the banishment Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Ruhullah al-Musawi al-Khomeini from Iran, he became superintendent of the Qum Theological Seminary.

He took over the administration of the school at a crucial time when both the theological school and Islamic scholars were in at stake due to repressive measures directed by Shah. At that time he had about 800 students who attended his classes and received advanced training in religious studies.

Ayatullah al-Gulpaygani is the author of a number of scholarly works and treatises as well as commentaries on various other works of scholastically abstruse character. Among them is an annotation on the 'al-Urwatul Wuthqa', 'Tawzih al-Masa'il', 'Manasik al-Hajj' and many others.

He rendered valuable services during his superintendence of the Theological Seminary in Qum, and also helped establish almost 30 theological schools in various towns and cities throughout Iran, as well as health clinics for students and other types of public utility centers in many parts of the country and abroad as well.

Ayatullah al-Gulpaygani was a great scholar and a Marja' and he had many followers throughout the

world. He subscribed to the concept of Wilayat-e-Faqihi put forwarded by Ayatullah al-Khomeini.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatullah as-Sayyid 'Ali al-husaini al-Khamenei', expressed deep condolence over the sad demise of the Grand Ayatullah Muhammad Riza al-Gulpaygani.

He was one of the pillars of the Islamic Revolution and The Islamic Republic, said the leader in a statement.

During the oppressive rule of the former regime and in confronting the bitter incidents which occurred in the years after the banishment from Iran of Ayatullah al-Khomeini (1963), there was some occasions when the voice of this great personality was the only threatening voice against the former regime, which raised from the Qum theological seminary and gave enthusiasm to the Islamic movement.

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, he had an active contribution in managing the general affairs of the revolution, said the statement adding that he unequivocally supported the Islamic Republic system and its exalted leadership. He was respected and honoured by the late Ayatullah al-Khomeini.

The departure of this divine scholar was a grave and irreparable loss, the statement added. The statement also said that the grand Ayatullah was a Marja' Taqlid for 32 years, and a teacher at the Qum theological seminary for about 72 years while keeping on learning and teaching Fiqh (Jurisprudence) for about 85 years.

He was the first person to establish modern theological seminary and the first great institute for Qur'anic studies in Qum. He was the first person to prepare a table of contents of Fiqh and hadith (Tradition) by using modern technology and knowledge.

He founded hundreds of schools, mosques and Islamic propagation centres in Iran and other countries and brought up thousands of disciples.

## **Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Ruhullah al-Musawi al-Khomeini al-Hindi**

On Jamadi al-Thani 20th, 1320 a.h. (24th September 1902) a child was born in Khumayn, a town in the central province of Iran, to a devout family educated in theology and devoted to migration and jihad and the progeny of Her Holiness Fatima al-Zahra (peace be upon her). The child was named Ruhullah al-Musawi al-Khomeini.

The noble father of Imam al-Khomeini was the late Ayatullah as-Sayyid Mustafa Musawi, a contemporary of the late grand Ayatullah Mirza Shirazi. After acquiring considerable Islamic knowledge during several years of stay in Najaf, and obtaining the license to practice Ijtihad, Imam Khomeinis father returned to Iran and become a religions guide and support for the people of Khumayn. When Ruhullah was barely five months old his father who had risen against the tyranny of the government agents, in

response to his call to search for truth, was martyred while commuting from Khumayn to Arak.

His childhood and youthful years were spent under the supervision of his devout mother (Banu Hajar) herself coming from a family of knowledge and chastity, a grand-daughter of Ayatullah Khunsari (author of *Zubdatul-Tasanif*), and his noble aunt (Sahiba Khanum), a brave, truth-seeking lady.

By the age of 15, the young Khomeini was deprived of the supervision of these two cherished personalities. From his childhood and early in his youth, Imam Khomeini learned, by the grace of his superlative intelligence, a great deal of the conventional sciences and acquired a considerable amount of preliminary knowledge – these included Arabic literature, logic, Jurisprudence and principles. For learning these he had instructors such as Agha Mirza Mahmud Eftekhar al-`Ulama, Mirza Riza Najafi Khomeini, Agha Shaikh `Ali Muhammad Burujerdi, Shaikh Muhammad Gulpaygani, Agha `Abbas Araki, but mostly, his own elder brother Ayatullah Seyyed Murtaza Passandideh.

Shortly after migration of the grand Ayatullah haj Shaikh `Abd al-Karim Haeri Yazdi to Qum, in Rajab 1340 a.h, Imam Khomeini, also migrated to the Qum Theological Assembly and took the complementary lessons with the scholars of the assembly of Qum. These included lessons from the lengthy book of Mutawal on rhetoric (*Ma`ani & Bayan*) taken with the late Mirza Muhammad-Ali Adib Tehrani; completion of the Level studies with the late Ayatullah Seyyed Muhammad Taqi Khonssari but mostly with the late Ayatullah Seyyed Ali Yathrebi Kashani; (*Fiqh*) Jurisprudence principles with the master of the Qum Assembly, Ayatullah al-Hajj Sheikh Abdulkarim Haeri Yazdi.

The sensitive and searching spirit of Imam Khomeini could not settle with just Arabic literature and lessons in “*Fiqh*” Jurisprudence and Principles. He was interested in other sciences as well. Therefore, along with learning jurisprudence and Principles “*Fiqh*” from the “*Fuqaha*”, jurisconsults of the time, he took lessons in mathematics, astronomy and philosophy from the late Haj Seyyed Abulhasan Rafiey Qazvini and continued taking the same lessons in addition to spiritual sciences and mysticism from the late Mirza Ali-Akbar Hakami Yazdi. He also took lessons in prosody, and rhyme, as well as Islamic and western philosophies with the late Agha Sheikh Muhammad-Reza Masjid-Shahi Isfahani. He then took lessons in Ethics and “*Erfan*” gnosticism from the late Ayatullah Haj Mirza Javade-Maleki-Tabrizi and he further studied the highest levels of Theoretical and practical “*Erfan*” (gnosticism) for a period of 6 years with the late Ayatullah Agha Mirza Muhammad-Ali Shahabadi.

For many years, Hazrat Imam Khomeini taught “*Fiqh*”, jurisprudence and principles, mysticism and Islamic Ethics in Qum Theological schools including the Faiziyya, the Aazam mosque, the Muhammadiyya Mosque, the Haj Mulla Sadiq School, the Salmasi Mosque etc. He taught “*Fiqh*” and the knowledge of the *Ahl-e-Bayt*, at the highest level, for 14 years at the Sheikh Ansari (s) Mosque in Najaf Theological Centre. It was at Najaf that Imam Khomeini (s), for the first time included, in his lessons on “*Fiqh*”, the Theoretical foundations of the Islamic government. His students declared his lessons and classes among the most credible in the Theological Assembly of Najaf. Some of his classes at Qum had as many as 1200 students which, included scores of established jurisconsults (*mujtahedeen*) who

benefited by the Imam's school of "Fiqh" jurisprudence and principles.

The blessings of Imam Khomeini's teaching included training and education of hundreds, better yet, considering the length of his teaching, thousands of learned men and scholars each one of whom is currently illuminating a theological Assembly. Today's jurisconsults, "mujtahedeen" and prominent Gnostics have been among Imam Khomeini's students in Qum or at other centres of knowledge. Outstanding thinkers such as the great scholar Shaheed Mutahhari and the wronged Shahid Beheshti felt honoured to have benefited by Imam Khomeini's teachings. Today the prominent clergy who guide the Islamic Revolution and system of the Islamic Republic in all civil affairs are all among those educated by the school of Fiqh and politics of Imam Khomeini.

On October 13, 1965 Imam Khomeini, accompanied by his son Ayatullah haj Mustafa were sent from Turkey to their second country of exile, Iraq. Upon arrival in Iraq, Imam Khomeini went on pilgrimage to the holy Shrines of the Infallible Imams in Kazamain, Samarra and Karbala. A week later he moved to his residence in Najaf.

Imam Khomeini began his Lecture teachings in jurisprudence, in Aban, 1344 (November, 1965), inspite of all obstacles and oppositions, in the Sheikh Ansari Mosque in Najaf, and continued these classes until his migration to Paris, France. Imam Khomeini's firm fundamentals in (Fiqh) jurisprudence and Principles and his proficiency in Islamic sciences was such that after a short time, inspite of all the impediments, his teaching classes came to be known as the most outstanding theological Assemblies of Najaf both qualitatively and quantitatively.

A large number of clergy students of Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, India and countries of the Persian Gulf area attended his teaching lectures daily. Those attached to the Imam from Iranian theological Assemblies wanted to make collective migration to Najaf, but desisted at the recommendation of the Imam, that, it was necessary to keep the theological assemblies in Iran, active. However, a large number of those deeply attached to Imam Khomeini had already reached Najaf and, gradually, a centre of revolutionary figures who believed in the path of the Imam was formed in Najaf, and it was this group that undertook the responsibility of relaying the Imam's fighting messages, in those years of strangulation.

On the 12th of Mehr, Imam Khomeini left Najaf for the border of Kuwait. The government of Kuwait did not let the Imam in, on a hint by the Iranian Regime. Previously there was talk of Imam's departure for Lebanon or Syria. However, after consulting his son (Hojjatul Islam Haj Seyyed Ahmad Khomeini), the Imam decided to migrate to France and on the 14th of Mehr, he entered Paris and two days later he was stationed in the house of an Iranian, in Noefel Le Chateau (Suburbs of Paris).

During the four-month stay of Imam Khomeini in Paris, Noefel Le Chateau was the most important news centre in the world. Imam Khomeini's various interviews and his visits revealed to the world, his views of Islamic rule, and the future aims of his Movement. Thus a larger number of people of the world, became

aquainted with the Imam's thought and uprising, and it was from this stage and station that he guided the most critical period of the Movement in Iran. During the four-month stay of Imam Khomeini in Paris, Noefel Le Chateau was the most important news centre in the world. Imam Khomeini's various interviews and his visits revealed to the world, his views of Islamic rule, and the future aims of his Movement. Thus a larger number of people of the world, became acquainted with the Imam's thought and uprising, and it was from this stage and station that he guided the most critical period of the Movement in Iran.

## **Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Muhammad Fazil al-Lankarani**

Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Muhammad Fazil al-Lankarani was born in 1931 in the Holy city of Qum. His father, the late Ayatullah Fazil Lankarani was a great teacher and scholar in the Islamic Seminary of Qum. His dear mother, was a pure and noble woman of descent from the family of the Prophet of Islam, Peace be upon him and his family.

At the age of 13, after the completion of primary school, he began studying Islamic studies in the seminary of Qum, where due to his great ability and aptitude, he was able to finish the preliminary stages of Islamic studies within six years.

At the age of 19, he started attending lessons in Fiqh (Jurisprudence) and Usul (Principles of Jurisprudence) at the Kharij level (the highest level of Islamic studies), which were being taught by Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Hussein Burujerdi, May Allah raise his status.

Because of his young age and his ability to pick up information very quickly, his fellow students and his teachers quickly recognized him. One of his close friends and study partners, during his quest for knowledge, was none other than the beloved son of the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the late Shaheed Mustafa Khomeini, May he be showered in Allah's peace.

Ayatullah Lankarani benefited from Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Hussein Burujerdi's lectures in the subjects of Fiqh and Usul for almost 11 years. He also participated in the classes of the late Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Ruhullah al-Musawi al-Khomeini for 9 years. Under these two great teachers, he was able to benefit a great deal, and quickly excelled in his studies.

He also took part in the lectures on philosophy and Tafsir (Explanation) of the Holy Qur'an under the great scholar, 'Allamah as-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i, May Allah raise his rank, in which he gained much knowledge and enlightenment.

Because of her perseverance and endeavors, he was able to reach to the great stage of Ijtihad at the early age of 25, something that his eminent teacher, the late Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Hussein Burujerdi gave to him in writing.

For many years, he was busy teaching the intermediate level of studies in the Islamic Seminary of Qum to a great number of students. In addition to this, for the past 25 years, he has been teaching lessons of Kharij in the areas of Fiqh and Usul (Kharij is the highest level of Islamic studies after which, if completed in their entirety, elevate the person to a Mujtahid).

His lessons are so popular that in any one lesson, over 700 scholars and personalities of the hawza 'Ilmiyyah of Qum can be seen taking part! In addition to this, for the past few years, his lessons on Fiqh have been broadcast by Iranian Radio, thus, those living within the Islamic Republic, and even those in foreign countries have benefited from his vast amount of knowledge.

From the beginning of the political and social struggle and defiance of Ayatullah Khomeini against the oppression, corruption and tyrannical government of the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran, Ayatullah Fazil Lankarani was one of the helpers and supporters of Ayatullah Khomeini. Step by step in every movement that the defenders of Islam took, Ayatullah Lankarani was there and played an active role. One of his important moves was to be involved with the Jami'ah Mudarasin, a group that consists of the teachers in the hawza 'Ilmiyyah of Qum in which they were busy spreading the word of Islam and the Islamic Revolution among the masses.

More than this, it was they who announced the Marja'iyat and Leadership of Ayatullah Khomeini...Many times during this difficult period, Ayatullah Fazil Lankarani was jailed, and finally, as if the Shah could no longer take the 'Ulama and their standing up for the truth, he was forced to exile him to an area known as Bandar Lange. After staying there for 4 months, we was moved to the city of Yazd, where he was forced to reside for a period of 18 months.

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Ayatullah Fazil Lankarani continued to play an important role along side the leader, Ayatullah Khomeini, May his spirit be sanctified, and even today, under the leadership of Ayatullah Khameni'i, he is still fully supportive and active.

After the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Ayatullah Lankarani was appointed as a member of The Council of Experts, and for more than 10 years, served as the administrator of the Islamic Seminary of Qum.

From the earliest of times, himself and his family have been lovers and followers of the Ahl al-Bait, Peace be upon all of them, and as has been noted, weekly gatherings to commemorate the martyrdom of Abu 'Abdillah al-Husayn, Peace be upon him, and his loyal family and followers, gatherings to commemorate the martyrdom of the Ma'sumin, Peace be upon all of them, and programs to celebrate the birth anniversaries of the Leaders of Islam, Peace be upon all of them, were held by his late father, and even today, continue to be held.

After the passing away of Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Sayyid Shahab ad-Din Najafi al-Mar'ashi, he was inundated with requests from the students of the hawza 'Ilmiyyah of Qum, as well as from the people of Qum, not to mention from those in charge to oversee and run the daily programs of the haram of Fatimah al-Ma'sumah, Peace be upon her, to lead the Salat al-Jama'at. He humbly accepted this



responsibility, and every night, under the graceful eyes of the sister of Imam 'Ali ibn Musa al-Riza who is buried in Qum, thousands of scholars, students, visitors to this holy city and residents of Qum offered their prayers behind this humble man.

After the death of Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Ruhullah al-Musawi al-Khomeini, May Allah raise his rank, the believers turned to him for Taqlid. After the untimely demise of Ayatullah al-Udhma ash-Shaykh Araki, May Allah raise his rank, Ayatullah Fazil Lankarani was officially introduced, by the hawza 'Ilmiyyah of Qum in their statement, as the number one Marja Taqlid of the Muslim Ummah.

Along with the important task of teaching the future scholars of Islam, and raising up the guardians of the Religion, he also finds time to write and compile books. To date, he has some 40 books to his credit.

## **Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Nasir Makarim ash-Shirazi**

Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Nasir Makarim ash-Shirazi was born in 1929 in Shiraz, Iran. He completed his primary and high school studies in Shiraz, and at the early age of fourteen, began his Islamic studies in the Agha Bab Khan School. Despite the fact that there were no individuals of a scholarly theological background in his family, a great inclination and abundant love for Islamic knowledge and sciences directed his eminence towards the theological studies and the selection of this path.

When he became eighteen, he moved to the city of Qum, and started his seminary studies. In Qum, he benefited from the lectures of Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Hussein al-Burujerdi and other eminent scholars of that time.

In 1959, Ayatullah Nasir Makarim ash-Shirazi traveled to Najaf, Iraq to continue his Islamic studies. While in Najaf, he attended the lectures of Ayatullah al-Hakim, Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i, and Ayatullah as-Sayyid 'Abd al-Hadi ash-Shirazi. He received the authority of absolute Ijtihad from two of the distinguished Ayatullahs of Najaf, by the time he reached the age of 30!

It was in the year 1960 that he returned to Iran and began teaching Fiqh (Jurisprudence) and Usul (Principles of Jurisprudence). His lectures are very popular among the students and scholars, and he has been teaching these courses continuously now for over 30 years. It should also be mentioned that over 2000 students and distinguished scholars of the Qum hawza regularly attend his classes.

Among the other achievements of Ayatullah Nasir Makarim ash-Shirazi are the establishments of the Imam 'Ali ('a), Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba ('a), and Imam husayn ('a) Hawzahs. Recently, a new hawza has also been opened under his supervision dedicated exclusively to the study of the Holy Qur'an.

He has written over one hundred books, all of which have been published, and some have been

repeatedly reprinted – up to 30 editions! Many have also been translated and published in Arabic, Urdu, and English to name a few of the many languages.

His comprehensive work, *al-Amthal Fi Tafsir-e-Kitab Allah al-Munzal*, is an encyclopedia on the commentary of the Qur'an, published in 37 volumes in Arabic, and over 30 volumes in Farsi. He has also opened a new chapter in the field of commentary of the Qur'an, by writing a topic-wise commentary, now totalling 11 volumes in Farsi which are also available in Arabic.

Ayatullah Nasir Makarim ash-Shirazi also played an important role in the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. During the rule of the tyrant Shaw, he was exiled three times to remote cities in Iran. He also played a vital role in the writing of the Islamic Constitution in the first Council of Experts.

## **Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid 'Ali al-Husaini as-Seestani**

Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid 'Ali al-Husaini as-Seestani was born in 1928 in the month of Rabi' al-Awwal in the holy city of Mashad, Iran, where the sacred shrine of Imam 'Ali ibn Musa al-Riza is located. Ayatullah as-Sayyid as-Seestani began his introductory 'Arabic studies, including *Balagha* (Eloquence), in Khurasan, under a renowned teacher of 'Arabic, named Muhammad Taqi Adib Nishaburi.

Ayatullah as-Seestani began his introductory 'Arabic studies, including *Balagha* (Eloquence), in Khurasan under a renowned teacher of 'Arabic, named Muhammad Taqi Adib Nishaburi. He also studied *Fiqh*, *Usul*, *Mantiq*, and *Aqaid* under the great 'Ulama and teachers of Khurasan.

It was in this same city, that he took part in *Dars-e-Kharij* (the highest level of studies in the hawza). At this time, he also benefited from the presence of Allamah Muhaqqiq Mirza Mahdi Isfahani (may Allah sanctify his spirit).

In order to advance further and complete his studies, he traveled to the city of Qum in 1948, so that he would be able to study under various 'Ulama of the grand hawza in this city.

Ayatullah Seestani who was present in the lessons of *Fiqh* and *Usul*, which at that time were being taught by Ayatullah Burujerdi, was quickly recognized as one of the brightest students in the fields of *Fiqh*, *Usul*, and *Rijal*. He also took part in the classes of Ayatullah al-Udhma hujjat Kuhkumrai and other scholars so that he could further quench his thirst for knowledge.

In the year 1951, Ayatullah Seestani once again moved, this time to Najaf al-Ashraf. For more than 10 years he took part in the lessons of Ayatullah al-Udhma as-Sayyid Abu al-Qasim al-Musawi al-Khu'i (may Allah be pleased with him).

During this time, he also attended the lessons taught by Ayatullah al-Udhma Mohsin al-hakim (may

Allah sanctify his spirit); and he finished one complete course in Usul al-Fiqh under the auspices of Ayatullah al-Udhma ash-Shaykh Husayn al-Hilli (may Allah be pleased with him).

In the year 1960, in recognition of his achievements he was awarded the distinction certifying that he had attained the level of Ijtihad – deduction of legal judgement in matters of religion, by as-Sayyid al-Khu'i and again, by ash-Shaykh al-Hilli.

In the same year, he was also awarded certification by the distinguished traditionalist and scholar ash-Shaykh Agha Buzurg al-Tehrani, testifying to his skill in the science of 'Ilm al-Rijal (research into the biographies of the narrators of ahadith). He achieved this grand status when he was a mere 31 years of age!

In the year 1961, after years of studies and participating in the lessons of Usul, Fiqh, and Mantiq in the hawzas of Mashad, Qum, and Najaf, he started to teach his own lessons in Dars-e-Kharij, revolving around the book, al-Makasib by Shaykh Murtaza Ansari (may Allah be pleased with him). After teaching Dars-e-Kharij based on the framework found in al-Makasib for several years, he advanced his lessons onto a higher level by teaching from the book Urwatul Wuthqa.

Some scholars of the Najaf center for theological studies (hawza an-Najaf) were quoted as saying that after the death of as-Sayyid Nasrullah al-Mustanbit, they advised the late as-Sayyid al-Khu'i to choose someone for the office of the supreme religious authority and the supervision of the Najaf hawza. as-Sayyid as-Seestani was chosen for his merits, knowledge, and impeccable character. Accordingly, he started leading the prayers in Imam al-Khu'i's masjid, al-Khadra, during the lifetime of his late teacher, and writing and compiling his annotation based on as-Sayyid al-Khu'i's Tausihiul Masa'il.

After the passing away of the Marja' Taqlid of the Shi'a world and the Guardian of the hawza 'Ilmiyyah, Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i (may Allah raise his rank), Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid 'Ali al-husayni as-Seestani was among the six people who were allowed to take part in his funeral and performed the services on the dead body.

Ayatullah Seestani, for the past 28 years, has been continuing the important task of teaching Dars-e-Kharij in Fiqh, Usul, and Rijal. The fruits of his struggle for knowledge and the accomplishments of this Faqih have been preserved in writing (now numbering over 40 books) – many of which have been translated into English, Urdu, French, Spanish, German, Turkish, Malay and countless other languages of the world.

## **Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Mirza Jawad at-Tabrizi**

Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Mirza Jawad at-Tabrizi was born in 1926 in the city of Tabriz, Iran. After finishing his secular studies, and reaching to the age of eighteen, he entered a theological school in his hometown. Within four years of entering this, he managed to complete the preliminary and

intermediate levels of his Islamic studies.

In the year 1948, he migrated to Qum and finished other lessons at the intermediate level. In Qum he reached to the Kharij level; thereupon he attended the lectures of the late Ayatullah al-Hujjat, and Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Hussein Burujerdi.

Asides from studying, he also taught the intermediate to advanced courses of Islamic studies in Qum.

Ayatullah Mirza Jawad al-Tabrizi then migrated to Najaf al-Ashraf and was fortunate enough to benefit from eminent scholars such as the late Ayatullah al-Sayyid Abu al-Hadi ash-Shirazi, and the late Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i, where he reached to the level of Ijtihad.

Ayatullah al-Tabrizi was invited by Ayatullah al-Udhma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i to join the Assembly of Consultants, which was an organized group of scholars that responded to the questions of the people.

Ayatullah al-Tabrizi stayed in the holy city of Najaf for about 23 years, leaving only in the holidays to do propagation in different countries. He later returned to Iran and began teaching Fiqh (Jurisprudence) and Usul (Principles of Jurisprudence) in the Islamic Seminary of Qum, where he currently is until today.

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1. We apologize to the dear readers for the brevity of the biographies of some of the Maraja' Taqlid mentioned in this book. We had repeatedly tried to get more information on these great figures from their offices in Qum, but they were not cooperative with us.

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