



SHIA ISLAMIC HISTORY

شیعہ اسلامک ہستری

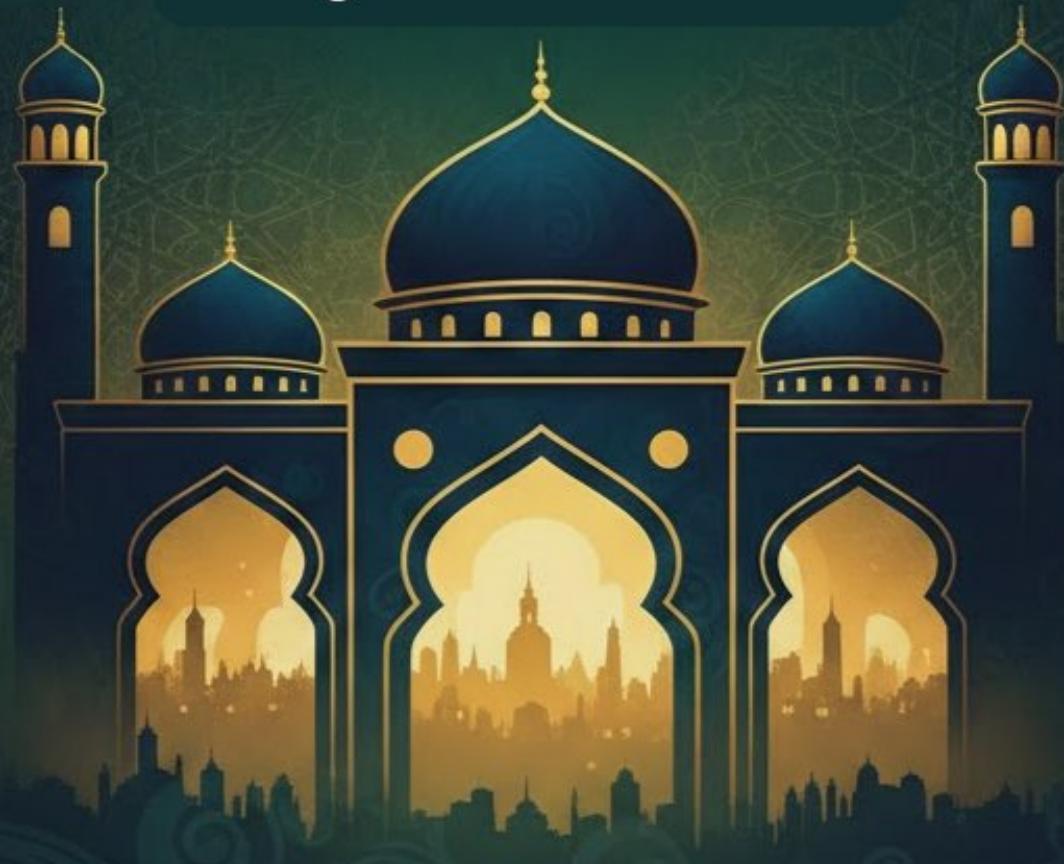


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The Names of Islamic (Arabic) Months:

- 1-Muharram
- 2-Safar
- 3-Rabi' al-Awwal
- 4-Rabi' al-Thani
- 5-Jumada al-Awwal
- 6-Jumada al-Thani
- 7-Rajab
- 8-Sha'ban
- 9-Ramazan
- 10-Shawwal
- 11-Zu al-Qa'dah
- 12-Zu al-Hijjah

Acronyms and Definitions:

AH: The year count in the Islamic lunar calendar began from the historical migration of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) from Mecca to Medina.

Ahlul-Bayt: The people of the household of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Ahlul-Bayt solely includes the Prophet's daughter Lady Fatimah (SA), his cousin and son-in-law Imam Ali (AS), his grandsons Imam Hasan (AS) and Imam Hossein (AS), and the nine Shia Imams from the progeny of Imam Hossein (AS). Thus, the Ahlul-Bayt of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) solely applies to Lady Fatimah (SA) and the 12 Shia Imams.

AS: Alayhi al-Salam, which in Arabic means "Peace be upon him". It is used after the names of the Shia Imams for respect.

Caliph: The title of Islamic rulers after Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Hijaz: Western region of Saudi Arabia where the holy cities of Mecca and Medina are located.

Ibn: Son of. Ibn is used in a person's name to specify his father, e.g. Hossein ibn Ali means Hossein the son of Ali. For females, bint is instead used which means daughter, e.g. Fatimah bint Muhammad means Fatimah the daughter of Muhammad.

Imam: Leader. The Shias follow 12 Holy Imams after Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as their sole religious and political leaders.

Imamat: Leadership.

PBUH: Peace be Upon Him. It is used after the name of Prophet Muhammad for respect.

SA: Salam Allah Alayha. It has the same meaning as AS, but is used after a female name for respect, especially Lady Fatimah.

Shaam: The Syrian region.

Shia: After the demise of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the Muslims were divided regarding whom they should follow as their political and religious leader. The Sunnis followed the Prophet's companions whilst the Shias followed the 12 Holy Imams from the Prophet's progeny.

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1- IMAM ALI (AS):

THE PROPHET'S UNIQUE COMPANION

This chapter is about the major historical events which occurred during the life of Imam Ali (AS) and also explores some of his undeniable characteristics.

1-1-Before Islam

1-1-1-Birth¹

Fatimah bint Asad, the mother of Imam Ali (AS), went to the Holy Ka'ba to pray when she was expecting. Miraculously, the wall of the Holy Ka'ba was cracked open for her to enter. And so, Imam Ali became the only human being to be born inside the Holy Ka'ba, the house of God.

1-1-2-Raised by the Prophet

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had a special love for the young Ali. A couple of years after Imam Ali's birth, Mecca underwent a severe drought. The Prophet brought Imam Ali to his home to help with the hardships of Imam Ali's father, Abu Talib. So, when Imam Ali was about 6 years old, the Prophet took him under his own care. Thus, Imam Ali grew up in the Prophet's shadow. Imam Ali himself stated that wherever the Prophet went, he followed him like a baby camel that follows its mother. He was also present at the time of Revelation to the Prophet in the Cave of Hira.

1-2-Beginning of Islam

1-2-1-The First Muslim Man

Imam Ali was the first male to testify to the message of the Holy Prophet. He showed his support from the day after the First Revelation.²

1-2-2-Invitation of Family to Islam

Three years following the Revelation, the Prophet was commanded by God to spread the message to his own folk. He invited his family to a banquet and proclaimed the message of Islam to them and asked them three times for their support. It was only Imam Ali who offered his

¹ 13 Rajab, 23 years before Hijri (10 years before Islam)

² 27 Rajab, 13 years before Hijri (Imam's age: 10)

support to the Prophet at every call. The Prophet responded by saying, “Ali is my brother and my successor among you.” People mocked the Prophet and Imam Ali for this announcement, since Imam Ali was just 13 years old.

1-2-3-Layl al-Mabit

The Meccans saw Islam as a threat to their interests and plotted to kill Prophet Muhammad in his sleep. God informed the Prophet of their evil plot. On the night of migration to Medina, the Prophet had Imam Ali sleep on his bed. He only trusted Imam Ali to do this dangerous task, which Imam Ali did without hesitation.

1-3-With the Prophet in Medina

1-3-1-Brotherhood with the Prophet

In Medina, the Holy Prophet created a brotherhood agreement between pairs of Muslims. He chose Imam Ali as his partner in brotherhood and said, “Ali, you are my brother in this world and the hereafter.”

1-3-2-Sadd al-Abwab (Closing of the Doors)

After building the Mosque (Masjid) of the Prophet in Medina, the Prophet built houses for his companions around the mosque. All of these houses had doors to access the mosque. By God’s order, the Prophet had all of the doors opening to the mosque closed, except his and Imam Ali’s.

1-3-3-Battle of Badr³

Imam Ali, Hamza, and Ubaidah were the three warriors who participated in the one-on-one opening fight of Badr. Imam Ali defeated his opponent, Walid. During the battle, many of the idolaters were killed solely by Imam Ali.

³ 17 Ramazan, 2 AH (Imam’s age: 25)

1-3-4-Marriage to Lady Fatimah⁴

Imam Ali got married to the daughter of the Prophet, Lady Fatimah (SA). Through this marriage, the progeny of the Prophet grew, and has continued to grow to this day. The people who called the Holy Prophet “Abtar”, or “without progeny”, saw that the lineage of the Holy Prophet continued through Lady Fatimah. This progeny is referred to as “Kauthar” or “abundance” in the Quran.

1-3-5-Battle of Uhud⁵

During the Battle of Uhud, the Muslims were initially victorious. However, the archers disobeyed the command of the Prophet and left their key positions to gather war booty. As a result, the Muslims were surrounded and defeated. After the majority of the Muslims had fled, Imam Ali bravely protected the life of the Holy Prophet. He dispersed or killed any enemy that came to attack the Prophet. Imam Ali’s courage led the Prophet to say: “There is no man like Ali; There is no sword like Zulfiqar (the name of Imam Ali’s sword).”

1-3-6-Battle of Khandaq⁶

During the Battle of Khandaq, the Muslims strategically dug trenches against the enemy. Although the trenches created a barrier, six of the enemy warriors managed to cross over. Among those who crossed over was Amr bin Abdewad, a fierce warrior famous in the entire Hijaz for his strength and power. He dared the Muslims to come fight him. Only Imam Ali accepted the challenge and defeated him. The Imam’s sacrifice was so significant that the Holy Prophet said, “Ali’s strike in the Battle of Khandaq is higher than the worship of the worlds.”

1-3-7-Battle of Khaybar⁷

In the Battle of Khaybar, the Muslims were able to conquer all but one

⁴ 1 Zu al-Hijjah, 2 AH (Imam’s age: 25)

⁵ 7 Shawwal, 3 AH (Imam’s age: 26)

⁶ Shawwal, 5 AH (Imam’s age: 28)

⁷ Safar, 7 AH (Imam’s age: 29)

of the forts of the Jews. The Holy Prophet then selected Imam Ali as the commander of the army, and the Imam defeated the well-known and fearsome warrior outside the fort, and eventually opened the giant door leading inside the fort.

1-3-8-Conquest of Mecca⁸

After the Muslims had conquered Mecca, the Prophet ordered to cleanse the Holy Ka'ba of the idols. Mounting on the shoulders of the Holy Prophet, Imam Ali helped him destroy the idols.

1-3-9-Battle of Tabuk⁹

Imam Ali had accompanied the Holy Prophet in all the battles except for the Battle of Tabuk, in which the Holy Prophet commanded Imam Ali to be his successor in his absence. This was because the Holy Prophet knew that in his absence, the hypocrites would revolt. During this incident, the hypocrites spread rumors that the relationship between the Imam and the Prophet had weakened. The Imam rushed to reach the Prophet and informed him of the situation. The Holy Prophet said to him, “You are to me like Haroon was to Musa, except that there is no Prophet after me.”

1-3-10-The Messenger of Revelation¹⁰

By the order of God, Imam Ali was appointed to deliver the verses for suppression of idol worship during the Hajj season to all of the Arab tribes.

1-3-11-Mubahilah (Cursing of the Untruthful)¹¹

After discussing Christian beliefs with the Holy Prophet, the Christians of Najran refused to accept Islam but were willing to do Mubahilah (cursing of the untruthful). To the surprise of the Christians, the Holy

⁸ Ramazan, 8 AH (Imam's age: 31)

⁹ Rajab/Shaban, 9 AH (Imam's age: 32)

¹⁰ Zu al-Hijjah, 9 AH (Imam's age: 32)

¹¹ 24 Zu al-Hijjah, 9 AH (Imam's age: 32)

Prophet did not bring an army or his companions. Instead, he brought his family, Imam Ali, Lady Fatimah, Imam Hasan, and Imam Hossein. After seeing them, the Christians were discouraged from Mubahilah. It was then, when the verse of Mubahilah [3:61] was revealed, calling Imam Ali the life of the Holy Prophet.

1-3-12-Ghadir Khum¹²

In the last year of the Holy Prophet's life, while he was returning from Hajj, the Prophet ordered the Muslims to stop at a place called Ghadir Khum. He ordered the Muslims who had traveled ahead to return, and waited for the Muslims who were behind to catch up. The Holy Prophet then recited a sermon to thousands of Muslims. In the sermon, the Holy Prophet held and raised Imam Ali's hand and said, "To whomever I am a master and a leader, this Ali is his master and leader." The Holy Prophet also asked the audience to pass this message to those who were absent.

1-4-During the Three Caliphs

1-4-1-Forceful Allegiance

After the Prophet's demise, while Imam Ali and his family were mourning him and were occupied with the burial ceremony, a group of Muslims gathered at a place called Saqifah and selected the first caliph. Imam Ali refused to pay allegiance to this caliph. Due to his refusal, they attacked his house and forcefully got his allegiance.

1-4-2-Martyrdom of Lady Fatimah¹³

Lady Fatimah was martyred only 75 or 95 days after the demise of the Holy Prophet. In the attack on her house, Lady Fatimah was fatally injured, which caused the miscarriage of her baby, and eventually she passed away. For the sake of the Muslim nation, Imam Ali kept silent throughout all of these calamities.

¹² 18 Zu al-Hijjah, 10 AH (Imam's age: 33)

¹³ 13 Jumada al-Awwal/3 Jumada al-Thani, 11 AH (Imam's age: 33)

1-4-3-Contributions

Imam Ali made many contributions to the Islamic society during the governance of the three caliphs. He interpreted the Quran and trained Islamic scholars. He also helped the poor by digging wells and planting date trees, dedicating them to the needy.

At times, the caliphs even referred to the Imam for his wisdom in political decisions and his answers to newly emerged religious and judicial questions in the expanding Islamic society.

1-4-4-The End of the Third Caliph

When the third caliph's house was surrounded by Muslims objecting his corrupt government, the Imam was against the murder of the third caliph and sent his sons to protect the caliph's house. He even personally brought water for the thirsty people in the caliph's house.

1-5-Caliphate

1-5-1-Democratic Selection¹⁴

After the murder of the third caliph, there was great civil unrest and disorder. The Muslims crowded around the house of Imam Ali and insisted he accept the government and become caliph. Imam Ali was the only caliph that was democratically elected by the people.

1-5-2-Battle of Jamal (Camel)¹⁵

Imam Ali ruled with justice, and treated the people of the society as equals, regardless of their fame or position. Two of the Prophet's companions, Talha and Zubayr, demanded governorship of some provinces, but were refused by the Imam. With the encouragement of Aisha, one of the Prophet's wives, they prepared an army against Imam Ali. Imam Ali defeated them in the Battle of Jamal and respectfully returned Aisha to her home.

¹⁴ 19 Zu al-Hijjah, 35 AH (Imam's age: 58)

¹⁵ 10 Jumada al-Awwal, 36 AH (Imam's age: 58)

1-5-3-Battle of Siffin¹⁶

Muawiyah refused to submit the governorship of Shaam to Imam Ali. He falsely accused the Imam of being the murderer of the third caliph and prepared an army to avenge his death. In the last stage of the Battle of Siffin, close to the Imam's victory, Muawiyah ordered his army to hoist Qurans on their spears, saying that the Quran should settle the matter. The Imam's troops refused to continue fighting and threatened the Imam to death if he did not call for a ceasefire.

1-5-4-Battle of Nahrawan¹⁷

The Khawarij, the people who had threatened the Imam in the Battle of Siffin to accept the negotiation with Muawiyah, soon realized their mistake and regretted their decision. They blamed Imam Ali and accused him of being a false leader. They had caused tensions and unrest among the Muslims. The Imam talked to them on several occasions and convinced many of them, but not all of them accepted. Eventually, he went to the Battle of Nahrawan against the remaining Khawarij.

1-5-5-Martyrdom¹⁸

Only ten of the Khawarij survived from the Battle of Nahrawan. Ibn Muljim was one of them, and he martyred Imam Ali in the mosque while the Imam was leading the morning prayer. After being struck with the poisoned sword, the Imam said, "By the Lord of the Ka'ba, I have succeeded." In his will, the Imam instructed to take revenge on ibn Muljim with only one strike. Imam Ali was born in the house of God and was martyred in the house of God.

1-6-Conclusion

¹⁶ 1 Safar, 37 AH (Imam's age: 59)

¹⁷ 9 Safar, 38 AH (Imam's age: 60)

¹⁸ 21 Ramazan, 40 AH (Imam's age: 63)

It is impossible to present the greatness of Imam Ali in just a few pages by simply referring to the major historical events of his life. Imam Ali has numerous undeniable characteristics that undoubtedly make him the Prophet's unique companion. Every single moment in Imam Ali's life, from his miraculous birth inside the Ka'ba, his upbringing by the Prophet before Islam, his companionship with the Prophet during his prophethood, to his endless efforts in establishing justice and guiding the Muslims, are all reflections of his divine and holy character. Even his enemies could not resist admiring him. His great personality gives honor and dignity to his Shia followers who proudly follow him as their first Imam.

IMAM ALI (AS):

**“O’ People, I fear two things more than anything for
you: following your whims and distant wishes.**

**Following whims and desires keeps one away from the
righteous path and following distant wishes causes one
to forget the hereafter.”**

2- IMAM HASAN (AS): THE PROPHET'S GRAND SON

This chapter reviews the major historical events of the life of Imam Hasan (AS) and gives an overview of the complicated political environment in which he lived, which led him to accept the treaty with Muawiyah.

2-1-With his Grandfather, the Prophet

2-1-1-Birth

Imam Hasan (AS) was born on the 15th of the month of Ramazan in the 3rd year of Hijri in Medina. He was the first born of Imam Ali (AS) and Lady Fatimah (SA) and the first grandchild of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). After his birth, the angel Gabriel revealed to the Prophet, "O' Prophet, Ali to you is like Haroon was to Musa, thus, name this child the name of Haroon's son Shubbar, which in Arabic is translated to Hasan." The Holy Prophet performed some rituals for the newborn, such as whispering the Azan in the baby's ear, sacrificing two sheep, shaving the baby's head, and paying silver equivalent to the weight of the baby's hair to charity.

2-1-2-With his Grandfather

The Holy Prophet had a special place in his heart for both of his grandsons, Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein, who are, according to the verse of Tat-heer (Purification) [33:33], a part of his household, and are purified. The Prophet encouraged all of the believers to love and respect his household, as the verse [42:23] from the Holy Quran states, "I do not ask you for any reward except love for (my) kin."

The Prophet had said, "Hasan and Hossein are the leaders of the youth of paradise" and are Imams whether they are sitting or standing, implying that they are leaders over people whether they are at peace, or at war against injustice.

On several occasions, the Prophet treated Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein as adults and honored them with a special social status despite their very young ages. For example, the Prophet accepted them as witnesses for the treaty with the tribe of Thaqif and accepted their allegiances in the allegiance of Rizwan. This was a privilege that no child had ever had in the Prophet's life.

2-1-3-Mubahilah (Cursing of the Untruthful)¹⁹

The Christians of Najran refused to accept Islam after discussing Christian beliefs with the Holy Prophet, but were willing to do Mubahilah (or cursing of the untruthful). To the surprise of the Christians, the Holy Prophet did not bring an army or his companions, instead, he brought his family, Imam Ali, Lady Fatimah, Imam Hasan, and Imam Hossein. After seeing them, the Christians felt discouraged from doing Mubahilah. It was then the verse of Mubahilah [3:61] was revealed, calling Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein the sons of the Holy Prophet.

2-1-4-Demise of the Prophet²⁰

Imam Hasan was seven years old when the Prophet passed away, and was present at his bedside during his last moments.

2-2-During the Three Caliphs

2-2-1-Martyrdom of Lady Fatimah²¹

Lady Fatimah, the only daughter of the Holy Prophet, was martyred within a few months after the demise of the Holy Prophet. In an attempt to forcefully gain allegiance for the first caliph from Imam Ali, her house was attacked and Lady Fatimah was fatally injured, which caused the miscarriage of her baby and her eventual passing. Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein witnessed this injustice and were present in the hidden, nighttime burial of their mother.

2-2-2-During the First Caliph

After the Prophet's demise, the first caliph was once speaking from the Prophet's pulpit. The young Imam entered the mosque and strongly demanded the Caliph "Come down from my father's pulpit!" The

¹⁹ 24 Zu al-Hijjah, 9 AH (Imam's age: 6)

²⁰ 28 Safar, 11 AH (Imam's age: 7)

²¹ 13 Jumada al-Awwal/3 Jumada al-Thani, 11 AH (Imam's age: 7)

Caliph replied, "Truly this pulpit belongs to your father as opposed to my father."

2-2-3-During the Second Caliph

When the second caliph was on his deathbed, he appointed a council of six people to select the next caliph. He chose Imam Hasan as one of the witnesses to the council. This shows Imam Hasan's social status and respect in the society and among politicians as the progeny of the Prophet.

2-2-4-During the Third Caliph

Abu-Zar, a companion of the Prophet, objected to the unjust and corrupt government of the third caliph, so the Caliph exiled Abu-Zar and ordered that no one accompany him. However, Imam Ali, his brother Aqeel, Imam Hasan, Imam Hossein, and Ammar went to bid Abu-Zar farewell. Imam Hasan expressed his sympathy and gave him comforting words of patience and perseverance, saying that in Paradise, he would meet the Prophet well-pleased with him.

When the Caliph's house was surrounded by people objecting to his unjust government, Imam Ali sent a group from Banu Hashem, including his sons, Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein, to protect the Caliph.

2-3-During the Caliphate of Imam Ali (AS)

2-3-1-Battle of Jamal (Camel)²²

During his father's caliphate, Imam Hasan always accompanied him and was his right hand. Imam Hasan was a brave and courageous warrior in the battles of Jamal, Siffin, and Nahrawan. He also advised people and delivered wise speeches during several occasions. The people witnessed his wisdom and great leadership skills.

Before the Battle of Jamal, Abu Musa al-Ash'ari was an obstacle against

²² 10 Jumada al-Awwal, 36 AH (Imam's age: 32)

the Kufans recognizing the truth and joining the Imam's army. Imam Hasan delivered a message from his father in Kufa and gave a powerful speech to destroy Abu Musa's propaganda. He succeeded in recruiting around 10,000 soldiers who formed a large portion of the Imam's army.

During the battle, Aisha's camel was the symbol for continuation of the war. Imam Ali sent Imam Hasan to bring down Aisha's camel from the midst of the enemy's army. Imam Hasan brought down the camel and ended the war. Imam Ali won the battle and respectfully returned Aisha to her home.

2-3-2-Battle of Siffin²³

Muawiyah refused to submit the governorship of Shaam, which he ruled from the time of the second caliph, to Imam Ali as the Muslims' caliph. He falsely accused Imam Ali of the murder of the third caliph and prepared an army to avenge his death. He then came to the Battle of Siffin against Imam Ali. The battle lasted for more than three months and resulted in around 70,000 casualties. During the battle, Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein were fighting so courageously that Imam Ali called them back from the battle so that the progeny of the Prophet would be saved. On the other side, seeing Imam Hasan's courage, Muawiyah tried to influence the Imam and offered him governorship, which was clearly rejected by the Imam.

At the last stage of the battle, close to the Imam's victory, Muawiyah ordered his troops to hoist Qurans on their spears, saying that the Quran should settle the battle. Imam Ali's troops were fooled and refused to continue fighting. They threatened Imam Ali to make him accept the negotiations and forcefully selected Abu Musa al-Ash'ari as their representative. After Muawiyah's representative, Amr ibn al-As, deceived Abu Musa al-Ash'ari during the negotiations, Imam Ali asked Imam Hasan to deliver a sermon for the unity of his army.

2-3-3-Imam Ali's Governorship after Siffin

²³ 1 Safar, 37 AH (Imam's age: 33)

After the long and harsh Battle of Siffin was left inconclusive, Imam Ali constantly urged the Kufans to rise against the injustice of Muawiyah. The Kufans, however, were reluctant to respond to the Imam's call. The Imam's recruiting for his army against Muawiyah coincided with the Khawarij's uprising. The Imam had no choice but to suppress the Khawarij, who were based close to Kufa. After the Battle of Nahrawan, the Imam wanted to take the army directly towards Muawiyah, but the troops did not support the Imam and urged him to return to Kufa.

During the upcoming months, Muawiyah and his army benefited from this situation and invaded Egypt, killed the Imam's governor and troops, and appointed Amr ibn al-As as the governor. They also caused unrest in the Imam's territories in Iraq, Mecca, Medina, and Yemen. Imam Ali was very disappointed with the people of Kufa and complained about them in many instances. According to one of the Imam's sermons in Nahj al-Balaghah, the Imam wished to have just 1,000 courageous and loyal men on horses ready for battle instead of his entire army.

2-3-4-Martyrdom of Imam Ali²⁴

Three of the Khawarij took an oath near the Holy Ka'ba's wall to kill Amr ibn al-As, Muawiyah, and Imam Ali. Only one of them completed the heinous crime of striking Imam Ali with a poisonous sword while the Imam was leading the morning prayer in the Mosque of Kufa. Before the Imam's martyrdom, he appointed Imam Hasan to take care of his personal affairs and introduced him as the next Imam to the Shias. Imam Hasan, Imam Hussein, and a few others buried Imam Ali secretly at night in fear of revenge and insults from his enemies. The progeny of the Prophet had to face many atrocities, causing Imam Hasan to witness both his mother and father being buried secretly at night. After Imam Ali's martyrdom, Imam Hasan performed the Qisas (retaliation) against his father's killer.

²⁴ 21 Ramazan, 40 AH (Imam's age: 37)

2-4-Caliphate

2-4-1-Allegiance²⁵

After Imam Ali's hidden burial, Imam Hasan delivered a sermon in the Mosque of Kufa to announce the martyrdom of his father from the strike of a poisonous sword. In this sermon, Imam Hasan remembered and mourned for Imam Ali. He then introduced himself as the progeny of the Prophet and described the greatness of the Prophet's household for God. The people, who were already grieved by the loss of their leader, Imam Ali, and feared Muawiyah's revenge for the Battle of Siffin, readily pledged allegiance to Imam Hasan. The Khawarij also pledged allegiance on the condition of war against Muawiyah, but the Imam only accepted unconditional allegiance. The Khawarij had no choice but to agree. After Imam Hasan was selected democratically, messengers were sent out to other parts of the government, and they all paid allegiance to the Imam.

2-4-2-Beginning of Caliphate

When Imam Hasan became the leader, he needed some time to settle the matters of the new government. Similar to the customs of the Prophet and Imam Ali, Imam Hasan advised his opponent, Muawiyah, by sending him a letter and inviting him to pledge allegiance. Muawiyah saw himself as closer to becoming the caliph after the martyrdom of Imam Ali, so he responded by saying, "Our example is like that of Abu Bakr (first caliph) and your father Ali for the caliphate. I am older than you and have more experience in politics."

Muawiyah continued his conspiracy and propaganda against Imam Hasan. He ordered his agents in Kufa to kill the Imam and blamed the Khawarij for causing turmoil in Kufa. An archer attempted to kill the Imam while he was leading the prayer in the Mosque of Kufa, but failed, causing only a minor injury to the Imam's neck.

Muawiyah sent his troops wearing the uniforms of the Imam's army to

²⁵ 21 Ramazan, 40 AH (Imam's age: 37)

attack villages and cause unrest so that the people would doubt the Imam. Muawiyah also tried to deceive and bribe tribal leaders who had pledged allegiance to the Imam by offering them wealth so they would change sides, or at least remain isolated during any war. Finally, Muawiyah gathered an army of around 60,000 men by joining the Egyptian forces under the leadership of Amr ibn al-As.

2-4-3-Preparation for War

After a short period, Muawiyah sent a message to the Imam and promised him governorship and wealth if he were to surrender. The Imam refused, and Muawiyah, who was well prepared for war, advanced his army towards Kufa.

The Imam called the people of Kufa to the mosque and gave a sermon to notify them of Muawiyah's invasion. He asked for immediate recruitments for the army. After the Imam's sermon, no one from the audience responded. A few of the Imam's companions, such as Qays ibn Sa'd and Adi ibn Haatem, could not tolerate everyone's silence and delivered a roaring speech. They encouraged the people to accept the call of the Imam. It was then that the people started joining the army and the Imam was able to gather around 40,000 men.

The Imam first sent 4,000 troops under the command of Hakam Kendi to stop the progression of Muawiyah's army. Muawiyah, however, bribed Hakam with gold and a promise of leadership, which convinced him to join Muawiyah with 200 of his men.

The Imam then sent 12,000 warriors under the command of Ibn Abbas towards the war's frontier. He appointed Qays ibn Sa'd and Saeed ibn Qays as the successors of Ibn Abbas, and ordered Ibn Abbas to consult with them prior to making any decision. Shortly after, the Imam followed the troops and went to Madain with his army to recruit more troops.

2-4-4-Preparing Grounds for Peace

Muawiyah wanted to overcome the Imam at the least expense. To

deceive the people, he introduced himself as a peaceful leader and spoke about Muslim unity. He accused the Imam of advocating for war. His spies simultaneously propagated unrest within the army of the Imam. They spread rumors that the Imam's army in the other location had accepted peace with Muawiyah. These rumors were effective, and at night, Ibn Abbas, the army's leader, joined Muawiyah. This caused a great division within the army, and 8,000 of the Imam's troops subsequently joined Muawiyah's forces.

Muawiyah sent negotiators to the Imam's base, and when they returned, they spoke positively about the Imam's character, pretending that the Imam is looking to make peace with Muawiyah. This caused great confusion among the people who wanted war with Muawiyah, including the Khawarij, who then invaded the Imam's tent and stole everything.

In another incident, one of the Khawarij attacked the Imam with a dagger and cut his thigh so deeply that it reached his bone.

2-4-5-Accepting the Treaty²⁶

This chain of events led to turmoil within the army of the Imam and the people were no longer united. They started leaving the Imam's army and joining Muawiyah group by group.

Muawiyah did not want to carry the shame of killing Imam Hasan, as Imam Hassan was the closest blood relative of the Prophet at the time, and he was democratically elected to be the caliph by the people. He sent a negotiator to the Imam, who carried betrayal letters from the commanders of the Imam's army and of tribal leaders who had promised Muawiyah that if he would come to them, they would surrender the Imam to him. The negotiator brought an offer for a peace treaty which would have any conditions requested by the Imam.

Despite being deeply injured, the Imam delivered a speech to his army to fulfill his responsibility, telling them that Muawiyah had offered a peace treaty. He said, "If you want God to be pleased with you, you

²⁶ 26 Rabi' al-Awwal, 41 AH (Imam's age: 37)

must fight Muawiyah. But if you want the life of this world, then accept Muawiyah's treaty." The troops responded by saying, they wanted this world so the Imam accepted the peace treaty with specific conditions.

2-4-6-Treaty Conditions

Although the conditions of the peace treaty vary in historical resources, the main conditions put forth by the Imam are as follows: 1. Muawiyah must follow the Holy Quran, the customs of the Prophet and the righteous caliphs, 2. Muawiyah should not appoint any successor after him, 3. Muawiyah must provide security for all of the people, including the lovers and followers of Imam Ali and Imam Hasan. He must provide safety and protection for the lives, wealth, and family of the followers of Imam Ali and Imam Hasan, 4. Muawiyah must stop cursing Imam Ali from the pulpit.

2-5-During the Government of Muawiyah

2-5-1-After the Treaty

With the acceptance of the treaty, the Imam's caliphate ended in less than seven months. After the treaty was agreed upon, the Imam sent a letter to Qays ibn Sa'd to return back. Qays ibn Sa'd had been courageously resisting against Muawiyah with around 4,000 of his troops. The troops of the Imam and Muawiyah came to Kufa, and the treaty was officially announced. Muawiyah gave a victory speech, in which he said that the peace treaty lays under his foot, and he threatened the people to pay allegiance to him within three days.

Muawiyah then returned to Shaam and had to pay a large bribe to the Eastern Roman empire, which had been opportunistically preparing to invade Shaam and benefit from the civil war between the Muslims.

2-5-2-Migration to Medina

After the treaty, the Imam migrated back to Medina. During his return, he received a letter from Muawiyah seeking his support against a group of the Khawarij who had revolted against him. The Imam declined any

support and responded by saying, “If I rise for war, you are my first opponent.” Although the Imam was forced by the circumstances to accept the treaty with Muawiyah, the cold war between them continued. On several occasions, the Imam confronted Muawiyah for insulting Imam Ali and Imam Hasan in his speeches.

Many times, the Imam was confronted and blamed, even by his own Shia followers, for accepting the treaty with Muawiyah. The Imam told them about the lack of loyal followers to support him against Muawiyah, which left him with no choice but to accept the treaty. He told some that he did what Prophet Khizr had done to the ship by making a hole in it [18:71], and Prophet Moses had not understood the wisdom behind it until later. On another occasion, he said that the treaty had saved the lives of the Shias from vanishing.

During his life in Medina, the Imam led the Shias and used all opportunities to guide and lead the people. The Imam was a symbol of piety in the society and he performed Hajj 25 times barefoot. He was so generous that on multiple occasions, he donated all or half of his entire wealth in the way of God.

2-5-3-Martyrdom²⁷

After years of being in power, Muawiyah decided to take allegiance for his son, Yazid, as his successor. However, he saw the Imam as a barrier due to the conditions of the treaty. He did not want to directly kill the Imam, so he deceived one of the Imam’s wives, Ju’da, with the promise of wealth and marriage to Yazid. Ju’da, encouraged by her father who was in support of Muawiyah, poisoned the Imam. When the Imam was poisoned, he told Imam Hossein that they had given him poison on past occasions, but that it was fatal this time. In his will, the Imam requested to be buried near the Prophet, his grandfather. If the burial near the Prophet was not possible, he wanted to be buried by his grandmother, Fatimah bint Asad, in the Baqi’ cemetery as he did not want even a single drop of blood to be spilled during his burial.

²⁷ 28 Safar, 50 AH (Imam’s age: 46)

2-5-4-Burial

Crowds of Muslims came for Imam Hasan's burial. They took his holy body towards the tomb of the Prophet, but were stopped by the troops of Marwan ibn al-Hakam, a prominent Umayyad. Aisha, one of the Prophet's wives, also joined in the opposition. There was a conflict between the crowd and the troops, which led to the Imam's body being hit by many arrows. Imam Hossein then directed the crowd towards the Baqi' cemetery by reminding them of Imam Hasan's will to not have any blood spilled during his burial. Later, Muawiyah became delighted when he found out about Marwan ibn al-Hakam's action and reappointed him as the governor of Medina.

2-6-Conclusion

Imam Hasan lived during a very complicated political environment that forced him to give up the caliphate and accept the treaty with Muawiyah. It is very surprising to see that even historical records differ in the content of the treaty to degrade its significance. There was wisdom behind the treaty. The treaty saved the Muslim nation as a whole against the threats of the Eastern Roman empire by avoiding a civil war. It also saved the few thousands of loyal Shias from being annihilated, and helped their population to survive and grow. The treaty revealed Muawiyah's true face, who just wanted to reach power by portraying an Islamic facade. Historical evidence proves that Muawiyah did not follow any of the treaty's conditions during his 20 years of power after the treaty. He also appointed his son, Yazid, as his successor. For the first time after the Prophet, Muawiyah changed the system of the Islamic government from a caliphate to a monarchy, which still exists until today.

Indeed, if the Imam had been killed by Muawiyah in war; people would have said that it was for the desire for power and usurping the caliphate. However, the Imam's treaty provided grounds for Imam Hossein's rise against Yazid, and justified the Imam's cause. The people of Kufa realized their mistakes and sent thousands of letters of support to Imam

Hossein right after Muawiyah's death.

When one studies the life of Imam Hasan, the Prophet's grandson, he is overwhelmed by the oppression the Imam had to face, such as the secret burials of his mother and father, the lack of loyalty from his troops, the multiple attacks and injuries he suffered from his own army and Muawiyah's army, the accusations from his own Shias for accepting the treaty, the poisoning and the betrayal by his wife, and even a burial in which the people launched arrows at his body. This oppression continued after his martyrdom through the many rumors spread to degrade the Imam, and continues to this day with his barren shrine.

IMAM HASAN (AS):

**“Your deeds for this world should be
as if you will live forever,
and your deeds for hereafter should be
as if you will die tomorrow.”**

3- IMAM HOSSEIN (AS): THE PROPHET'S NATION'S AWAKER

This chapter reviews the major historical events of the life of Imam Hossein (AS) and gives a preview of the complicated, political, and unfortunate series of events that led to his martyrdom.

3-1-With his Grandfather, the Prophet

3-1-1-Birth

Imam Hossein (AS) was born on the third of Sha'ban in the fourth year of Hijri in Medina. He was the second child of Imam Ali (AS) and Lady Fatimah (SA) after Imam Hasan (AS), and the second grandchild of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The age difference between Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein was less than 11 months. After his birth, the angel Gabriel came to the Prophet and said, "O' Prophet, Ali to you is like Haroon was to Musa, so name this child the name of Haroon's younger son, Shubair, which in Arabic is Hossein." After the Holy Prophet whispered the Azan in the baby's ears, he had tears in his eyes. He said, "This child will be killed by a group of rebellious and cruel men to whom God has forbidden my intercession (shifa'at)." The Prophet also performed similar traditions for the newborn as he did for Imam Hasan, such as sacrificing two animals, shaving the baby's head, and paying silver equivalent to the weight of the baby's hair to charity.

3-1-2-With his Grandfather

The Holy Prophet had a special place in his heart for both of his grandsons, Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein, who are, according to the verse of Tat-heer (Purification) [33:33], a part of his household, and are purified. The Prophet encouraged all of the believers to love and respect his household as the verse [42:23] from the Holy Quran states, "I do not ask you for any reward except love for (my) kin." The Prophet said, "Hasan and Hossein are the leaders of the youth of Paradise" and are Imams whether they are sitting or standing, implying whether they are at peace, or at war against injustice. The Prophet also said, "Hossein is from me and I am from Hossein."

There are a few incidents when the Prophet treated Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein as adults, honoring them with a special social status despite their young age. One such incident is when the Prophet accepted them as witnesses for the treaty with the Thaqif tribe and accepted their allegiances in the allegiance of Rizwan. This was a

privilege that no child ever had during the Prophet's history.

3-1-3-Mubahilah (Cursing of the Untruthful)²⁸

The Christians of Najran refused to accept Islam after discussing Christianity with the Holy Prophet but were willing to do Mubahilah or cursing of the untruthful. To the surprise of the Christians, the Holy Prophet did not bring an army or his companions. Instead, he brought his family, Imam Ali, Lady Fatimah, Imam Hasan, and Imam Hossein. After seeing the Prophet's family, the Christians felt discouraged from doing Mubahilah. The verse of the Mubahilah [3:61] was then revealed, calling Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein the sons of the Holy Prophet.

3-1-4-Demise of the Prophet²⁹

Imam Hossein was six years old at the Prophet's demise, and was present by his bedside. During his last moments, the Prophet hugged his grandsons, Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein, and said that they both would be oppressed after him and would be killed cruelly. The Prophet then cursed anyone who would oppress them three times.

3-2-During the Three Caliphs

3-2-1-Martyrdom of Lady Fatimah³⁰

Lady Fatimah (SA), the only surviving daughter of the Holy Prophet, was martyred within a few months after the demise of the Holy Prophet. The attack on her house in an attempt to forcefully gain allegiance from Imam Ali for the first caliph left Lady Fatimah fatally injured, causing the miscarriage of her baby and her eventual passing. Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein witnessed this injustice and were present at the secret burial of their mother at night.

3-2-2-During the Third Caliph

²⁸ 24 Zu al-Hijjah, 9 AH (Imam's age: 5)

²⁹ 28 Safar, 11 AH (Imam's age: 6)

³⁰ 13 Jumada al-Awwal/3 Jumada al-Thani, 11 AH (Imam's age: 6)

Abu-Zar, a companion of the Prophet, objected to the luxurious overspending of the third caliph's government. The Caliph exiled him and ordered that no one accompany him. However, Imam Ali, his brother Aqeel, Imam Hasan, Imam Hossein, and Ammar went to bid farewell to Abu-Zar. Imam Hossein expressed his sympathy and provided him with comforting words.

When the Caliph's house was surrounded by people objecting to his unjust government, Imam Ali sent a group from Banu Hashim, including his sons, Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein, to protect the Caliph.

3-3-During the Caliphate of Imam Ali (AS)

3-3-1-Battle of Jamal (Camel)³¹

Imam Hossein always accompanied his father during his caliphate and supported him in all circumstances. Imam Hossein was a brave and courageous warrior in the Battles of Jamal, Siffin, and Nahrawan. He also advised and delivered wise speeches on many occasions, and encouraged people to join the war and to support his father. During the Battle of Jamal, Imam Ali appointed Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein as the leaders of the right and left sections of his army, respectively.

3-3-2-Battle of Siffin³²

Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein had key roles in preparing and recruiting the army in the war against Muawiyah. They delivered impactful speeches to encourage participation in the war and also contributed in organizing and training the army.

When Imam Ali left Kufa with his troops for the Battle of Siffin, he stopped at the land of Karbala. Imam Ali was deeply sorrowful and cried. He informed Imam Hossein about his martyrdom on that land.

³¹ 10 Jumada al-Awwal, 36 AH (Imam's age: 31)

³² 1 Safar, 37 AH (Imam's age: 32)

Before the Battle of Siffin, when Muawiyah's troops blocked access to water for Imam Ali's troops, Imam Ali sent Imam Hossein with his troops and successfully regained access. Imam Ali said, "This first victory is due to the blessings of the presence of Imam Hossein."

During the battle, Imam Ali appointed Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein as the leaders of the right side of his army, and they fought courageously. Imam Hossein was also appointed as one of his father's witnesses during the negotiation after the battle.

Towards the end of Imam Ali's life, he was preparing an army to go against Muawiyah. He appointed Imam Hossein as the leader for 10,000 soldiers. Unfortunately, after Imam Ali's martyrdom, the army lost its unity.

3-3-3-Martyrdom of Imam Ali³³

After Imam Ali was struck, he appointed Imam Hasan to take care of his personal affairs and introduced him as the next Imam to his followers. These followers are known as Shias. He also appointed Imam Hossein as the next Imam after Imam Hasan. Imam Hasan, Imam Hossein, and a few others buried Imam Ali secretly at night for fear of revenge and insults from his enemies. The progeny of the Prophet had to face atrocities, which Imam Hossein witnessed, such as the secret nighttime burials of his mother and father.

3-4-During the Caliphate of Imam Hasan (AS)

3-4-1-With his Brother

When Imam Hasan became the caliph, Imam Hossein paid allegiance to his brother. He was Imam Hasan's right hand during the short caliphate that lasted less than seven months. Imam Hossein had a key role in the preparation of the army, and was with his brother when they moved to Madain for the war against Muawiyah.

³³ 21 Ramazan, 40 AH (Imam's age: 36)

When Imam Hasan had to accept the peace treaty with Muawiyah due to lack of support from his army, Imam Hossein obeyed his brother's decision and accepted the peace treaty. Imam Hossein refused a group of Shia followers who asked him to wage war against Muawiyah, and notified them of his adherence to his brother's decision. After the peace treaty with Muawiyah, Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein returned to Medina.

3-4-2-Martyrdom of Imam Hasan³⁴

When Imam Hasan was poisoned, in his will to Imam Hossein he requested to be buried near his grandfather, the Prophet. Imam Hasan did not want any bloodshed during his burial, and in case of any opposition, he requested to be buried near his grandmother, Fatimah bint Asad, in the Baqi' cemetery.

On the first day as an Imam, Imam Hossein faced a challenge during the burial of his brother. Marwan ibn al-Hakam and his troops, with support from Aisha, one of the Prophet's wives, did not allow Imam Hasan's body to get close to the Prophet's tomb. In the conflict between the people and the troops, many arrows were fired towards Imam Hasan's body. Imam Hossein controlled the situation and directed the crowd towards the Baqi' cemetery by reminding them of Imam Hasan's will.

3-5-During the Government of Muawiyah

3-5-1-Resistance Against Muawiyah

The conflict during Imam Hasan's burial was a strong message to Imam Hossein from the Umayyads, that in case of any opposition, he would be faced with their swords. During Muawiyah's time, Imam Hossein's life and activities were under intense pressure and surveillance by the government to the extent that even his supporters were sometimes

³⁴ 28 Safar, 50 AH (Imam's age: 45)

prevented from meeting him freely. Due to this pressure, the number of narrations quoted from Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein during Muawiyah's time are fewer than those from the other Shia Imams.

Imam Hossein continued his brother's policy regarding Muawiyah for around 10 years until Muawiyah's death. When the Imam's Shia followers from Kufa contacted him shortly after Imam Hasan's martyrdom and asked for his uprising against the injustices of Muawiyah, the Imam reminded them about his commitment to the peace treaty and asked them to wait until Muawiyah's death. If the Imam would have risen in Muawiyah's time, Muawiyah would have killed the Imam and accused him of violating the peace treaty. As a result, the Imam's death would have been misinterpreted by the Muslim community.

The Imam's commitment to the peace treaty did not stop him from objecting to Muawiyah's crimes and violations against the treaty's conditions. In many situations, the Imam contacted Muawiyah and condemned his actions, such as the killings of the Shia leaders and the Prophet's companions, Hujr ibn Adi and Amr ibn Hameq.

Imam Hossein was respected for being the closest living blood relative to the Prophet, and he was a symbol of piety in society. The Imam used all opportunities to guide the Muslims to the true Islamic teachings. He performed the Hajj 25 times on foot during his lifetime. His famous supplication of Arafah is narrated during this time.

3-5-2-Allegiance for Yazid

After years of being in power, Muawiyah decided to keep the government within the Umayyads by passing it to his only son, Yazid. For the first time since the Prophet's demise, Muawiyah intended to change the system of government from a caliphate to a monarchy. Muawiyah himself knew that Yazid lacked public popularity as he did not even keep an Islamic outlook in life like himself. Yazid publicly drank alcohol, womanized, and indulged in sinful behavior.

In order to get the allegiances for Yazid, Muawiyah poisoned and bribed

Yazid's main rivals for the caliphate. Muawiyah martyred Imam Hasan, as he knew that appointing a successor was explicitly against their peace treaty. Muawiyah tried bribing some of the political leaders, commanded some to advocate for Yazid as a good leader, and removed those governors who failed to implement this mission.

After years of planning, he finally succeeded in accumulating allegiances from people all around the Islamic territory. However, Imam Hossein refused to pledge allegiance. Muawiyah sent a letter to Imam Hossein, to which the Imam responded by condemning his actions to coerce allegiance for a successor, especially for someone like Yazid. Muawiyah then decided to personally visit Medina and made a public speech in which he spoke highly of Yazid to encourage the people to pledge allegiance to him. Imam Hossein interrupted the speech and disqualified Yazid, rejecting allegiance to someone of his character. Thus, Imam Hossein remained Yazid's primary opposition.

3-6-During the Government of Yazid

3-6-1-The Imam in Medina

Muawiyah died³⁵ after being in power for nearly 42 years. He was initially appointed by the second caliph as the governor of Syria, and was in control of the entire Islamic territory for around 20 years after the peace treaty was established with Imam Hasan.

After Muawiyah's death, his son, Yazid, came into power. Yazid sent letters to his governors, asking them to announce Muawiyah's death and demand allegiance from the people on his behalf. He sent an additional letter to Medina, in which he ordered his governor, Valeed, to demand immediate allegiance for him from Imam Hossein before the news of Muawiyah's death spread in the city. Yazid explicitly asked Valeed to either get the Imam's allegiance, or to send the Imam's severed head to him.

³⁵ 15 Rajab, 60 AH (Imam's age: 55)

In his efforts to get the Imam's allegiance, Valeed called the Imam to his palace. The Imam was suspicious of this meeting. He went with approximately 30 men from his family and supporters for protection. He told them to hide their swords, to stay behind the door, and to intervene only when he called. Inside, Valeed told the Imam about Muawiyah's death, and asked for the Imam's allegiance to Yazid. The Imam responded by saying that someone like him should not pay allegiance in private, but in public. Valeed accepted this statement and let the Imam go, as he did not want to bear the responsibility of killing the Imam. On the following day, the Imam notified Valeed about his refusal to pay allegiance to Yazid. Valeed reported back to Yazid, who responded by threatening Valeed and ordering him to force allegiance from the Imam.

3-6-2-Migration to Mecca

Imam Hossein knew that Medina was no longer safe for him, as Yazid would take drastic measures to eliminate him. The Imam did not want his death to be forgotten silently similar to the injustice that happened to Imam Hasan. Thus, the Imam decided to leave Medina, and migrated to Mecca in less than three days after his meeting with Valeed. The Imam decided to migrate with his family, as it was very likely that the government would imprison them as hostages to pressurize the Imam for allegiance.

Prior to migrating, the Imam bid farewell to his relatives and visited the tombs of his grandfather, the Prophet, as well as his mother, Lady Fatimah, and his brother, Imam Hasan. The Imam wrote a will and entrusted it to his brother, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah. In his will, the Imam clearly explained the purpose of his uprising. The Imam wrote, "My intention for this uprising is to guide the nation of my grandfather and enjoin the good and forbid the wrong."

The Imam left Medina at night while reciting the verse of the Quran that Prophet Moses was reciting when he was escaping alone from Egypt to Madyan in the fear of the pharaoh [28:21], "Therefore he got away from there while in fear. He (Moses) said, 'Oh My Lord, save me

from the wrongdoing people'."

On his way to Mecca, the Imam met some travelers and informed them of his intention to refuse allegiance to Yazid. A few of these travelers joined the Imam. When the Imam saw Mecca from afar³⁶, he recited the verse of Quran that Prophet Moses had said when he was moving towards Madyan [28:22], "And when he directed himself toward Madyan, he said, 'Perhaps my Lord will guide me to the sound way'."

Later, when Yazid was informed about the Imam's migration to Mecca, he revoked the governor of Medina in anger and assigned the duty to the governor of Mecca.

3-6-3-The Imam in Mecca

While in Mecca, the Imam was visited day and night by many pilgrims who had come to Mecca for Umrah and Hajj. The Imam spoke to them about his intention for uprising against Yazid, but the Imam had limited support from the Meccans. Mecca was dominated by the Quraysh tribe, who had opposed the Prophet ever since he began his mission. The majority of them did not convert to Islam until after the conquest of Mecca by the Prophet. Furthermore, they had hatred towards Imam Ali, as the Imam had killed their relatives during their wars against the Prophet.

When the people of Kufa found out that the Imam had not paid allegiance to Yazid and had migrated to Mecca, they decided to invite the Imam to Kufa, and pledged to support his uprising against Yazid. A flood of letters arrived to the Imam from Kufa. In just one day, the Imam received around 600 letters from Kufa, with a total of about 12,000 letters. The Imam had many Shia followers in Kufa and they had more political freedom. Kufa was a bigger city than Mecca or Medina, with a larger population and potential for troops. It was the main center of opposition to the Umayyads since the caliphate of Imam Ali. Thus, the Imam sent his cousin, Muslim ibn Aqeel, to investigate whether the

³⁶ 3 Sha'ban, 60 AH (Imam's age: 56)

Kufans were sincere in their intentions.

To fulfill his responsibilities, the Imam also sent letters to the tribal leaders of Basrah to ask for their support. Unlike the Kufans, the people from Basrah had not contacted the Imam prior to this. Only a small group of people from Basrah joined the Imam. One recipient of the Imam's letter took the letter to Ibn Ziyad, the governor of Basrah. In response, the governor ordered to kill the Imam's messenger, Sulayman ibn Razin, who became the first martyr of the Imam's uprising.

3-6-4-Muslim ibn Aqeel in Kufa

Muslim ibn Aqeel arrived in Kufa and 18,000 people paid allegiance to him on behalf of the Imam. He informed the Imam of this, and asked him to come towards Kufa immediately. People were continuously coming to Muslim for giving allegiance and a total of up to 40,000 people paid allegiance.

Yazid's supporters were continuously reporting the political status of Kufa to Yazid, and wanted him to replace the current governor of Kufa with a hostile one. Yazid thus gave the governorship of Kufa to Ibn Ziyad, the governor of Basrah, and ordered him to suppress the uprising of the Kufans.

Ibn Ziyad immediately departed towards Kufa and, upon arrival, he delivered a speech in the mosque during which he introduced himself as the new governor of Kufa. He promised kindness to the obedient citizens and threatened the supporters of Muslim. Ibn Ziyad also asked the city's record keepers to provide him with a list of all the politically active residents that were in support of Muslim's uprising. He also spread rumors in the city that Yazid's army was underway to suppress them.

Ideally, Muslim wanted the Imam to arrive before initiating the uprising. He secretly relocated to Haani ibn Urwah's house, who was an influential Shia leader. However, Ibn Ziyad's spies found Muslim's location and arrested Haani. People from Haani's tribe came in large numbers to Ibn Ziyad's palace to free him. The city's judge, whom the

people trusted, lied to them by telling them that Haani was safe and would be released soon, leading his supporters to disperse.

Muslim noticed his supporters dividing and scattering. With a governor like Ibn Ziyad, no one, including himself, would be safe in Kufa. Thus, Muslim started an uprising to release Haani by calling his supporters. As a result, nearly 4,000 people surrounded Ibn Ziyad's palace.

Ibn Ziyad ordered the elderly and influential individuals of Kufa to make promises to the people in obedience to the government, and to create fear in the hearts of the protesters by threatening them with a war against the army of Yazid. This fear caused families to separate their relatives from Muslim's army. The number of Muslim's supporters dwindled so drastically by nightfall, that Muslim was left completely alone. Eventually, Muslim was caught by Ibn Ziyad and martyred. Ibn Ziyad then ordered Haani to be killed, and sent Haani's and Muslim's heads to Yazid.

After Ibn Ziyad gained complete control over Kufa, he imprisoned many Shia leaders and followers, and threatened thousands of the Kufans into joining his army. He also blocked all access roads from Kufa to the Imam so no one from Kufa could join the Imam.

3-6-5-The Imam Towards Kufa

After receiving the letter from Muslim, the Imam left Mecca in the darkness of dawn on the 8th of the month of Zu al-Hijjah, one day before the Hajj pilgrimage started. This day coincided with the day of Muslim's uprising and defeat in Kufa. The Imam left Mecca as he verified news that Yazid was planning his assassination while the pilgrims would be performing Hajj, and would not be carrying any weapons. The Imam did not want his blood to be shed in the vicinity of the Holy Ka'ba due to the sanctity of the holy site. The Imam told some people that he preferred that his blood be shed outside, as opposed to inside the holy site's vicinity. Thus, the Imam left Mecca with a caravan, whose count is estimated by some to be about 130 people, after staying there for four months and five days.

When the Imam was leaving Mecca, the Meccan army stopped him. There was a physical tension between the two sides. The Meccan governor finally withdrew in fear of turmoil from the Hajj pilgrims. When the Imam left Mecca, the governor of Mecca sent a letter to the Imam and asked him to return to Mecca, which he refused.

Shortly after leaving Mecca, the Imam sent a messenger to Muslim to inform him of his departure towards Kufa. The Imam's messenger, Abdullah ibn Yaqtor, was arrested, and Ibn Ziyad ordered that Abdullah ibn Yaqtor be thrown off the roof of the palace, and martyred him. Halfway through his journey, the Imam sent another messenger, Qays ibn Mos-her, towards Muslim, but he too was arrested. Ibn Ziyad asked him to go to the pulpit and curse the Imam. Qays went on the pulpit and told the people that the Imam was underway, and cursed Ibn Ziyad. He was then martyred, similar to Abdullah ibn Yaqtor, and became the third martyred messenger of the Imam.

The Imam advanced forward at a very fast pace in the desert towards Kufa. This distance would normally take around one month for the travelers. On his way, he informed the travelers about his intention of the uprising against Yazid. Some people such as Zuhayr ibn Qayn, a famous warrior, as well as the Christian, Wahab, who converted to Islam, joined the Imam on his way.

The Imam had traveled most of the way towards Kufa for about 15 days. At the place known as Zubala, which is in the modern day border between Saudi Arabia and Iraq, the Imam received verified news of the martyrdom of Muslim, Haani, and Abdullah ibn Yaqtor. The Imam spoke to his supporters about the crisis in Kufa and allowed them to leave him. Many who had joined the Imam for power or political convenience separated from the Imam at this location.

There was no place for Imam Hossein, the dear grandson of the Prophet to go. It was as if the earth had shrunk for him. He had initially left Medina towards Mecca because Yazid had ordered his governor in Medina to force the Imam's allegiance, or kill him. The Imam had then left Mecca towards Kufa, as Yazid had sent his agents to assassinate him

during the Hajj pilgrimage. Now, in the middle of the vast desert between Hijaz and Iraq, the Imam had received disappointing news from Kufa.

The Imam decided to continue on his way towards Kufa, as he knew that his presence in Kufa would be much more effective than Muslim's. He believed he might still have an opportunity to unify his Shia followers, who had been divided for a long time by Muawiyah's politics. There was also a possibility that many other non-Shias, who had invited the Imam to Kufa, would change sides.

After a few days, the Imam was confronted by a Kufan army of about 1,000 horse riders under the leadership of Hurr with orders to arrest the Imam. The Imam resisted, and decided to return to Medina since he was left with no choice. Hurr opposed him, and stated his orders were to not leave the Imam alone under any circumstances. He told the Imam that he did not have an order for war, and gave the Imam two choices, to surrender and come with him to Kufa before Ibn Ziyad, or to go somewhere other than Kufa and Medina. Thus, the Imam had to redirect his caravan away from Kufa.

After a few days, Hurr received a letter from Ibn Ziyad in which he ordered Hurr to stop the Imam in the desert away from any residential areas. Therefore, on the second day of Muharram, the Imam entered the land of Karbala. Some of the Imam's companions suggested starting a war with the army of Hurr before any reinforcements joined him, but the Imam declined, as he did not want to initiate the war.

3-6-6-The Imam in Karbala

On the third day of Muharram, Umar ibn Sa'ad arrived in Karbala with 4,000 troops, and took away the leadership of the Kufan army from Hurr. Umar ibn Sa'ad was hesitant to come to Karbala, but Ibn Ziyad threatened his candidacy for governorship of Rey in Iran so he accepted. The Kufan army was arriving by the thousands each day. By the sixth day of Muharram, the Kufan army was complete at around 22,000 to 35,000 soldiers.

During this time, the Shia followers in Kufa were no longer united and had lost the power of unity. The majority of them were either in prison or hiding to save their lives and avoid joining the Kufan army. If they were forcefully recruited, they would escape before arriving in Karbala. According to some narrations, up to around 32 soldiers from the Kufan army joined the Imam in Karbala.

Over several days, the Imam held a few meetings with Umar ibn Sa'ad, during which he tried to warn him to avoid bloodshed and allow the Imam to return. Umar ibn Sa'ad wrote a letter to Ibn Ziyad and encouraged him to accept the Imam's offer.

Ibn Ziyad ordered Umar ibn Sa'ad to block access to the water from the Euphrates River to put more pressure on the Imam to pay allegiance. Thus, by the beginning of the seventh day of Muharram, the Imam did not have access to water.

On the ninth day of Muharram, Umar ibn Sa'ad received a letter from Ibn Ziyad, denying his proposal to avoid a war and threatening to replace him with Shimr if he failed to finish the Imam. Ibn Ziyad also asked Umar ibn Sa'ad explicitly to trample the Imam's body after his victory. Thus, after the afternoon prayers, Umar ibn Sa'ad prepared his army for war, where the Imam sent his brother, Abbas, to postpone the war until the next day's morning. Umar ibn Sa'ad accepted with hopes that the Imam would surrender.

At nightfall, the Imam delivered a speech to his companions and informed them that everyone who would stay with him would certainly be killed the next day in the war. The Imam appreciated them for being loyal to him, and informed them that their presence would not prevent his death. He urged them to use the darkness of the night to leave from his side, and asked each of them to take the hand of one of his male family members. The Imam's companions expressed their unwavering loyalty and no one left the Imam.

That night, the Imam asked his companions to rearrange the tents and to dig a trench behind the tents. He asked them to fill the trench with

wood and leaves. The Imam and his companions spent that night in prayer, and prepared for the war.

3-6-7-Tenth of Muharram (the Day of Ashura)³⁷

On the morning of Ashura, the tenth day of Muharram in the year 61 Hijri, after the morning prayers, the Imam prepared his thirsty army of 72 companions, which consisted of 40 soldiers on foot and 32 on horses. The Imam then ordered the trench behind the tents to be put on fire so that the enemy could not attack them from behind.

The Imam spoke to the Kufan army, reminding them that he was the grandson of the Prophet, and was very dear to him. He told them that he had arrived because of their invitations. He told them that if they did not want him in Kufa, he would go back to somewhere safe. The Imam also asked them if anyone wanted to join him.

Hurr, the army leader who had first confronted the Imam, was amongst the very few people who was touched by the Imam's words and decided to switch sides and joined the Imam. Hurr repented and requested to be sent to the battlefield immediately. The Imam accepted Hurr's repentance and allowed him to go into the battlefield.

Umar ibn Sa'ad was the first person to start the battle by firing an arrow. He asked his army to witness for Ibn Ziyad that he had initiated the war. His troops followed by firing thousands of arrows and then invaded the Imam's army. By that time, up to around 50 of the Imam's companions, a large fraction of his army, were martyred. No one from the Imam's companions were left without an injury caused by an arrow.

Only a small group of the Imam's companions remained alive against the thousands of enemy soldiers. The Imam's companions proceeded to the battlefield one by one and fought courageously with great honor. They were completely surrounded, but did not surrender until they were martyred, one after the other.

The battle continued until noon. The Imam called his companions for

³⁷ 10 Muharram, 61 AH (Imam's age: 56)

the prayer and shortened it by reciting the prayer of fear. The groups of companions protecting the Imam switched amongst each other, so that when one group of them prayed, the other groups protected them. During the Imam's prayer, many arrows were shot to stop the Imam, as Umar ibn Sa'ad did not want his army to know that the Imam was a practicing and dedicated Muslim. According to their propaganda, any action against the caliph violated the religion.

The Imam's companions did not allow any member of the Imam's family to go to the battlefield while they remained alive. After all of them were martyred, a total of 17 members from the family of the Imam went to the battlefield one after another, including his son, Ali al-Akbar, seven of his brothers, including Abbas, his nephews such as Aun, Muhammad, and Qasim, and his cousins.

Towards the end of the battle, the Imam came to the tents to bid farewell to his family. He saw his six-month old son, Ali al-Asghar, who was suffering from unbearable thirst. The Imam carried Ali al-Asghar to the Kufan army and requested them to take the baby and grant him some water. At that moment, an arrow shot by Harmalah pierced the neck of the baby while he was in the Imam's hands.

The Imam went to the battlefield and spoke to the army one last time to convey his message, but their hearts could not be guided. The Imam then went to the battlefield alone and after a brave combat, he fell with wounds from hundreds of swords, spears, stones, and arrows on his body. No one dared to go and kill the Imam, as no one wanted to bear the shame and responsibility of killing the Imam. Finally, Sinan ibn Anas approached the Imam and beheaded him from the back of the Imam's neck while he was still alive.

After the Imam was martyred, his sword, shoes, ring, clothes, armor, and all of his belongings were looted. His tents were attacked, looted, and put on fire.

To fulfill Ibn Ziyad's order, Umar ibn Sa'ad asked for volunteers to trample the headless bodies of the Imam and the other martyrs on the

sands of Karbala.

The women and children of the Imam were taken as captives to Kufa to Ibn Ziyad's palace, then to Damascus to Yazid's palace.

3-7-Conclusion

Only 50 years after the demise of the Holy Prophet, the leader of the Muslim nation was a man who did not abide by any of the Islamic commandments and openly indulged in sinful behavior. Yazid's family, the Umayyads, with the leadership of his grandfather, Abu-Sufyan, were the main enemy of the Prophet and had only converted to Islam after Muslims had conquered their home city of Mecca, solely to save their lives. They were not sincere in their belief in Islam, and were always looking for their power and benefits. They had the chance to reach power during the time of the second and third caliphs, and were able to stabilize their power during the long governorship of Muawiyah.

The title that Muslims used for the caliph was literally 'Successor of the Prophet', and they also called the caliph the 'Commander of the Faithful'. Muslims viewed the caliphate as a sacred religious leadership and believed in political obedience despite the character of the person in power. This belief was deeply rooted, to the extent that following the legacy of the previous caliphs was part of their faith, and a requirement for the new caliph. In this situation, any action against the caliph was interpreted as a false action against the unity of the Muslims and publicly condemned.

Imam Hossein knew that he had only two choices, pay allegiance to Yazid, or be killed. The Imam had said, "Even if I hide inside a hole, they will finally find me and kill me if I don't pay allegiance." However, the Imam knew that his allegiance would legitimize Yazid as a leader, as well as the Islam propagated by Muawiyah and the Umayyads. Therefore, the Imam pursued the second choice, and sacrificed everything he had for the sake of God and the awakening of the Prophet's nation. He was martyred in an unprecedented, horrifying, and

brutal way, where his family and companions were martyred thirsty, his six month old baby slayed, his head slaughtered, his belongings looted, his ring finger cut off, his body trampled, his family imprisoned, all in the holy month of Muharram, when war and bloodshed was strictly forbidden (Haram) in Islam.

The Imam made a series of wise decisions to maximize the effects of his martyrdom. The Imam's choice to move from Medina to Mecca, to informing the pilgrims from all over the Islamic territories, accompanying his family (women and children) to witness and carry his message, postponing the battle from the darkness of the night to the daylight of Ashura, and his martyrdom in front of thousands of witnesses, these were all reasons that his message would never be forgotten or misinterpreted.

The Imam's martyrdom not only disqualified Yazid as a righteous caliph, but for the first time since the Prophet's demise, put an end to the so-called sacred caliphate system and the Islam that was propagated by those caliphs. Shortly after the Imam's martyrdom, a chain of objections against Yazid and the Umayyads initiated, which included the battle of al-Harrah in Medina, the uprising of Ibn Zubayr in Mecca, the uprising of Tawwabin in Kufa, the uprising in Kufa of Mokhtar, who took revenge against the people responsible for the Imam's martyrdom, the uprising of Zaid in Kufa, and the uprising of Yahya in Khorasan. Although these uprisings were defeated by the Umayyads, they removed the legitimacy and popularity of the Umayyads as the righteous governors and were a basis for the next uprising against them, until their destruction. The awakened nation of the Prophet realized that the true Islamic teachings were coming from the family of the Prophet, and they supported various uprisings against the Umayyads.

Imam Hossein was called Sayyid al-Shuhada or 'Master of the Martyrs', and became a symbol of justice, free will, and liberty. To this day, the message of Imam Hossein continues to resonate. Despite many difficulties and attempts at suppression, millions of people shed tears while grieving him, and visit his shrine in Karbala to honor his message.

3- Imam Hossein (AS): The Prophet's Nation's Awakener

They hope to include themselves as proponents of justice alongside Imam Hossein.

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IMAM HOSSEIN (AS):

“I am the martyr of tears.

No believer remembers me unless

his tears begin to flow.”

4- IMAM SAJJAD (AS): THE IMAM OF PRAYER

This chapter reviews the life of Imam Sajjad (AS), and gives an overview of the political instability during his lifetime. It also highlights the Imam's critical role in guiding the Muslims and reconstructing Islamic society.

4-1-Before the Government of Yazid

4-1-1-Birth

Imam Ali ibn Hossein (AS), also known as Sajjad, was born on the 15th of Jumada al-Awwal in the year 36 Hijri in Medina. His mother was Shahr-Banu, the daughter of Yazdegerd III, the last Persian king of the Sasanian Empire. She was captured as a captive, then brought to Medina where she married Imam Hossein (AS). Imam Sajjad's mother passed away shortly after giving birth to him. Historical records suggest that Imam Sajjad was the second son of Imam Hossein, after his older brother, Ali al-Akbar.

4-1-2-During the Government of Imam Ali

Imam Sajjad, who was born during the government of Imam Ali (AS), was only four years old when his grandfather, Imam Ali, was struck with a poisonous sword. When Imam Ali was on his deathbed, he passed his sword and his Holy Quran to Imam Hasan (AS), as directed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He then requested Imam Hasan to pass these items to Imam Hossein after himself, then asked Imam Hossein to continue passing these items to Imam Sajjad. Imam Ali then held the tiny hand of Imam Sajjad, telling him to pass these items, as well as his and the Prophet's greetings, to Imam Sajjad's future son, Muhammad.

4-1-3-During the Government of Muawiyah

Imam Sajjad grew up during the long caliphate of Muawiyah for about 20 years. Of these 20 years, 10 were during the Imamah of his beloved uncle, Imam Hasan. The other 10 were during the Imamah of his father, Imam Hossein. Imam Sajjad witnessed Muawiyah's oppression of the Ahlul-Bayt, the progeny of the Prophet. He lived during a time when he heard cursing of his grandfather, Imam Ali, from the pulpits all around Islamic territory, by order of Muawiyah. Imam Sajjad also witnessed his uncle, Imam Hasan, suffering from the poison which took his life.

4-2-During the Government of Yazid

4-2-1-The Uprising of Imam Hossein

Imam Sajjad supported his father with the uprising against Yazid. He migrated with his father from Medina to Mecca, then from Mecca to Karbala.

4-2-2-In Karbala

Imam Sajjad was only 24 years old in Karbala. He became sick a few days before Ashura. On the night before Ashura, while still very sick, he witnessed that his father, Imam Hossein, allowed his companions to freely leave and save their own lives, but none left.

On the day of Ashura, while Imam Sajjad was struggling with his illness and repeatedly falling unconscious, Imam Hossein came to see him for the last time. He embraced his beloved son, and said his final words to him. He also gave him a precious prayer to recite during a sorrowful calamity. This prayer was passed down from angel Gabriel to the Holy Prophet, and from the Prophet to Lady Fatimah (SA), and finally to Imam Hossein. When Imam Hossein was leaving for the battlefield and Imam Sajjad saw his father's loneliness, he leaned on a stick, attempting to walk, and proceeded to help him. While he was struggling to stand on his feet, Imam Hossein asked his sister to take care of Imam Sajjad, saying, "The earth should not be left without a representative from God."

In the afternoon of Ashura after Imam Hossein's martyrdom, while the tents were being attacked, looted, and set on fire, Lady Zainab, Imam Hossein's sister, asked Imam Sajjad about what the women and children should do, stay in the burning tents or escape the fire. Imam Sajjad's first ruling as an Imam was to command them to escape to the desert and save their lives. Lady Zainab herself stayed with Imam Sajjad to protect him from the enemies and fire. When the enemies saw Imam Sajjad and his severe condition, they left him to die from his illness. However, they looted his tent and even stole the rug he was laying on.

On the day after Ashura, Umar ibn Sa'ad and his troops, who were responsible for the tragedy of Karbala, stayed in Karbala until noon to bury the bodies of their men. They then took the surviving family of Imam Hossein and his companions to Kufa. The number of those captives is estimated by some to be around 61 people. The enemies tied their hands and made them ride camels without saddles. As the Imam was the eldest male among the captives, the enemies tied the hands of Imam Sajjad to his neck to afflict him with more suffering. Since the Imam was very sick and could fall, they also tied his legs to the underneath of the camel. When the captives passed by the bodies of Imam Hossein and the other martyrs, they wept and cried with hearts full of pain and sorrow.

4-2-3-In Kufa

Two days after Ashura, the captives arrived in Kufa. Ibn Ziyad, the governor of Kufa, ordered the captives and the severed heads of 72 martyrs and Imam Hossein, mounted on spears, to be taken throughout the city. He wanted to instill fear in the hearts of the people of Kufa. People came to the streets to watch the captives. Lady Zainab began to speak to the crowd such that the people were reminded of her father, Imam Ali. She condemned the Kufans for breaking their allegiance to Imam Hossein and killing him. She told them, "You have ruined your life in this world and the hereafter and have become deserving of the wrath and punishment of God." Imam Sajjad then started speaking, and introduced himself as the son of the one who they had martyred. He condemned their betrayal. He asked them how they could face the Prophet now that they have destroyed their hereafter. People started crying and said, "We are ready to submit and follow your orders." The Imam said, "I will not trust you anymore. Do you want to do the same thing that you did to my forefathers? You just killed my father. My only request to you is not to support our enemy nor claim to support us."

Ibn Ziyad gathered the people in his palace. Imam Hossein's head was brought before him, filling him with delight. With his stick, Ibn Ziyad kept hitting the teeth of Imam Hossein. Later, the captives were also

brought in. Ibn Ziyad addressed Lady Zainab and praised his own victory. He asked her, "How did you find God's action against your family and brother?" Lady Zainab responded by saying, "I didn't see anything but beauty. The family of the Prophet is blessed with the rank of martyrdom. Soon you will face them in the court of the Almighty and then you can see who overcomes." This conversation triggered Ibn Ziyad's anger. He decided to kill Lady Zainab, but someone advised him not to degrade himself by killing a woman and he reluctantly accepted.

Ibn Ziyad then pointed to Imam Sajjad and asked, "Who is this young man?" They said, "Ali son of Hossein." Ibn Ziyad said, "Didn't God kill Ali the son of Hossein?" Imam Sajjad responded, "I had a brother whose name was also Ali (Ali al-Akbar) and your army killed him." Ibn Ziyad said, "No, God killed him." The Imam responded by reciting the following verse of the Quran [39:42], "God takes the souls at the time of their death" implying that you killed my father and God took his soul upon his martyrdom. Ibn Ziyad angrily said, "How dare you talk back to me? He ordered the beheading of Imam Sajjad. Lady Zainab quickly embraced Imam Sajjad and said, "I swear by God, I will not let him go. You must also kill me with him." Upon seeing this, Ibn Ziyad said to leave the Imam be, since his illness is enough to kill him. He then ordered the imprisonment of the captives.

Three days after Ashura, upon becoming confident that Umar ibn Sa'ad and his troops had left Karbala, the tribe of Bani Asad, who lived nearby, came to bury the martyrs. The bodies were headless so they were unable to recognize them. Miraculously, Imam Sajjad came from imprisonment in Kufa and arrived at Karbala. He guided the Bani Asad tribe on where to bury the martyrs. Imam Sajjad himself buried the body of his father, Imam Hossein.

Ibn Ziyad sent a letter to Yazid to request his orders. Yazid ordered him to send the captives and the heads of the martyrs to Damascus, Syria. Ibn Ziyad only sent the captives from Imam Hossein's family and relatives to him, whose number is estimated by some to be around 25.

The captives were taken on camels and their hands were tied with ropes. Imam Sajjad's hands were tied tightly to his neck. During the journey, Imam Sajjad did not speak to anyone but his family. He constantly prayed, glorified God, and recited the Quran.

4-2-4-The Journey to Damascus

During the journey, the heads of the martyrs were transported in boxes, and upon arriving at any city, the heads would be mounted on spears in front of the captives. If the family and loved ones of the martyrs cried, the soldiers would beat them with spears. The caravan was taken from city to city to show off Yazid's power, and the captives were presented to the people as rebels.

When the caravan approached the city of Mosul, the governor ordered the city to be decorated to celebrate and welcome the caravan. However, when the people found out that the head of Imam Hossein was coming, they prepared an army of around 4,000 people to fight and capture the head of Imam Hossein to be respectfully buried. This news led the caravan to redirect its route and not to enter the city of Mosul to avoid conflict. After this incident, the caravan moved expeditiously towards Damascus.

The Syrian region was seized during the government of the second Caliph, who had appointed Muawiyah as the governor of Syria. He stayed in power for 42 long years until his son, Yazid, took over. Thus, the Syrians were only familiar with the Islam spread by Muawiyah's propaganda. Many Syrians did not know that the Prophet had left behind his family. Thus, the closer the caravan got to Damascus, the more people grew in favor of Yazid's government and celebrated his victory.

4-2-5-In Damascus

After about 12 days of traveling in hardship as captives, the caravan finally arrived in Damascus. This was the place Imam Sajjad recalled as the most difficult part of their captivity since Ashura. To expose the captives, particularly the ladies, they had to enter from the most

crowded entrance of the city. They also placed the spears with the mounted heads in the middle of the caravan to draw more attention to the women.

Yazid prepared a gathering in his palace and ordered the captives' presence. When he saw the heads approaching him from a distance, he said the following poem, "The Prophet killed my family (the Umayyads) in the Battle of Badr and I took my revenge by killing his children." The heads of the martyrs were brought to Yazid while, as usual, he was intoxicated. He was amused and used profanity to insult the head of Imam Hossein.

The captives were brought inside later, still tied to one chain. When Lady Zainab saw the head of her brother, Imam Hossein, she started weeping. The people in the palace became emotional, and started crying as well. However, Yazid was delighted by his victory. He asked for a stick and continuously hit the teeth of Imam Hossein. Yazid then addressed Imam Sajjad and said, "May God bless the one who killed your father." Imam Sajjad fearlessly said, "May God curse him." Yazid became furious. He wanted to kill Imam Sajjad, but God's plans altered the situation. During the discussion of the Imam with Yazid, Yazid justified his actions by reciting the following verse from the Holy Quran [42:30], "Whatever misfortune befalls you, it is because of what your hands have earned; and yet He (God) pardons much." The Imam rejected Yazid's justification and responded, "Our situation is instead described in the Quran in [57:22], 'No calamity occurs on earth or in your souls, but it is in a Book, even before We make it happen. That is easy for God.'" Later, Lady Zainab delivered a bold speech to Yazid, condemning him.

Yazid imprisoned the captives in an old and wrecked house, which could not protect them from the heat or the cold. His intention was that the house collapse and kill the captives. In that prison, the beloved daughter of Imam Hossein, Ruqayyah, passed away after enduring all the atrocities. Imam Sajjad had to perform his little sister's burial rites in the same place.

To flaunt his power to the people, Yazid took Imam Sajjad to the Mosque of Damascus and appointed a lecturer to deliver a sermon against Imam Hossein and his father, Imam Ali. The Imam rose up and asked to enlighten the people with his words. Yazid resisted, but his near ones insisted that he allow Imam Sajjad to speak. Imam Sajjad's most important and critical sermon in Damascus was delivered in this place. The Imam praised God and said, "We, as the Ahlul-Bayt, have been bestowed with six blessings and seven excellences from the Almighty. The blessings are knowledge, forbearance, chivalry, eloquence, courage, and the love of believers for us. The excellences are that Prophet Muhammad, Sediq (Imam Ali), Tayyar (Ja'far ibn Abi-Talib), Asad al-Allah (Hamzah), Lady Fatimah, and the leaders of the youth of paradise (Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein) are from our family." The Imam then continued, "Allow me to introduce myself for those of you who don't know me." The Imam glorified his lineage from the Prophet, Lady Khadija, Imam Ali, Lady Fatimah, and Imam Hossein and described them with their best attributes. The people were influenced by the Imam's sermon and began to cry. Yazid feared the effect of the Imam's words on the hearts of the people. Suddenly, he interrupted the Imam's speech by ordering that the Azan, the call to prayer, be recited. When the Azan reached the verse of bearing witness to the Prophet, the Imam looked at Yazid and strongly said, "Is Muhammad your grandfather or mine? For if you say he is yours, then you're a liar and if you believe that he is my grandfather, then why did you kill his family and capture his descendants?" When Yazid proceeded to lead the noon prayer, people dispersed, and not many followed him in the congregational prayer.

The Imam's words were so powerful that Yazid faced objections from the Syrians. Thus, Yazid had to change his policy towards the Imam to save his own government. He delivered a speech for the Syrians and said, "I did not kill nor did I order to kill (Imam) Hossein" and then he blamed his governor Ibn Ziyad for the horrific tragedy. During the Imam's short stay in Damascus, someone asked the Imam about his life. The Imam responded by comparing his life to that of the children

of Israel, when the pharaoh killed their sons and enslaved their women.

4-2-6-Arba'een (the Fortieth Day)³⁸

Yazid asked the captives from the family and relatives of Imam Hossein if they wanted to stay in Syria or return to their homes in Medina. They asked him to allow them to gather and mourn for the loss of their loved ones. Thus, one of the first gatherings of mourning for Imam Hossein was set up in the heart of the Umayyad government. The captives wore black, gathered people, and mourned for one week. Then, they decided to return to Medina.

Yazid gathered a caravan to respectfully return the captives to Medina so the people would think he was innocent. On their way to Medina, the captives requested the caravan to stop in Karbala. Exactly 40 days after the martyrdom of Imam Hossein, the caravan arrived in Karbala. They met Jabir ibn Abdullah, one of the Prophet's close companions and the first visitor to pay his respects to the grave of Imam Hossein. This day was called Arba'een, or Fortieth (Day), and became an important day on the Shia calendar. Many believe that, during this visit, Imam Sajjad returned the head of Imam Hossein to Karbala and buried it with the rest of his body. After a few days of mourning, the caravan continued its journey to Medina.

4-2-7-Return to Medina

When the caravan neared Medina, Imam Sajjad requested a poet to go and recite a poem for Imam Hossein to inform the people of Medina about their arrival. The entire city of Medina was overcome with grief. The grieving people came out of the city to receive the caravan. While weeping, the Imam delivered a sermon. He praised God and mourned Imam Hossein's martyrdom. The Imam reminded the people about the Prophet's command of loving and respecting his progeny, the Ahlul-Bayt. The Imam said, "Even if the Prophet had commanded a war against us, it could not be worse than the tragedy that we have endured."

³⁸ 20 Safar, 61 AH (Imam's age: 24)

The people of the caravan had returned to Medina after about seven long months, but without their loved ones. They visited the tomb of the Prophet, where they sorrowfully cried and mourned.

4-2-8-In Medina

When in Medina, Imam Sajjad visited Um Salamah, the Prophet's wife, and requested the items that Imam Hossein had entrusted her with, prior to leaving Medina. He received the swords of the Prophet and Imam Ali, and other holy scriptures that were special belongings of the Imam of the time. Imam Sajjad also received a scroll from his sister, Fatimah, that Imam Hossein had entrusted to her on the day of Ashura to pass on to Imam Sajjad.

During the rest of Yazid's government, Imam Sajjad and the Prophet's family, Banu Hashim, remained in deep sorrow and grief. Their pain was such that they only wore black clothes and never ate hot meals. The grief was so heavy on their hearts that Imam Hossein's sister, Lady Zainab, and his wife, Rabaab, passed away shortly after the tragedy of Karbala.

During this time, the Imam's activities and interactions were under intense surveillance by the government, as Yazid feared an uprising from the Imam to seek revenge for the tragedy of Karbala. Due to this, the Imam only had three companions. Eventually, the Imam moved outside of Medina for a few years and lived in a temporary residence. He isolated himself and limited his interactions with the people. The Imam's isolation from society protected him from Yazid's threats, since Yazid was looking for any excuse to eliminate him.

During this isolation, the Imam occasionally traveled in secret to visit the hidden grave of his grandfather, Imam Ali, in Najaf and his father, Imam Hossein, in Karbala. The well-known supplication of Ameenullah was originally narrated by Imam Sajjad during a visit to Imam Ali's grave.

4-2-9-Reviving Karbala

After Ashura, for around 34 years until the end of Imam Sajjad's life, the Imam always wept tears of sorrow for the tragedy of Karbala. The Imam is one of the five divine characters who wept the most, along with the Prophets Adam, Jacob, Joseph, and Lady Fatimah. The Imam was constantly reminded of Karbala. Every glance at water would evoke tears in his eyes. He used to fast during the day, and at night upon seeing food, tears would roll down his cheeks. Once the Imam saw a butcher slaughtering a sheep. He asked him if the animal had been given water before it was slaughtered. The Imam's eyes used to fill up with tears as he would say that the grandson of the Prophet had been slaughtered thirsty by the (Euphrates) river. Someone once requested the Imam to come out of grief, to which the Imam responded, "(Prophet) Jacob had 12 sons. God only hid one (Prophet Joseph) and he wept for 40 long years while he knew that his son was alive. Why shouldn't I cry when my beloved father, brother, and 17 of my family members were beheaded and cut into pieces?" Imam Sajjad was also the first person to perform his prayers on the sands of Karbala to keep the message of Imam Hossein alive. This custom exists until today.

4-2-10-The True Imam

At the beginning of Imam Sajjad's Imamat, there was confusion among some people about the true Imam of the time. Some thought Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah was the Imam, since he was older than Imam Sajjad. Also, in the past, Imamat had been passed through brothers from Imam Hasan to Imam Hossein. Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah was the son of Imam Ali and the younger brother of Imam Hossein, but was not from the progeny of the Prophet from Lady Fatimah. To convince the people of the truth, Imam Sajjad and Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah stood in front of the Ka'ba and called the Hajar al-Aswad stone to testify to their Imamat. The Hajar al-Aswad only responded to Imam Sajjad's call and testified to his Imamat.

4-2-11-The Uprising of Ibn Zubayr

Less than a year after the tragedy of Karbala, Abdullah ibn Zubayr started to rise against Yazid in Mecca. Although he was against Yazid,

he sought power for himself by portraying an Islamic outlook. Ibn Zubayr was an opponent of Yazid's caliphate who had not paid allegiance to him. After Imam Hossein's martyrdom, Ibn Zubayr found a suitable opportunity to gather people around him. He was the son of Zubayr, one of the Prophet's companions, and the nephew of Aisha, the Prophet's wife. He opposed Imam Ali and his family, and had played a key role in instigating the Battle of Jamal against Imam Ali. Imam Ali had said, "Zubayr used to be with us Ahlul-Bayt until his ill-fated son, Abdullah, turned him against us."

4-2-12-Battle of al-Harrah³⁹

Ibn Zubayr secretly sent his agents to encourage the people of Medina to pay allegiance to him. To overcome this plot, the governor of Yazid in Medina tried to influence the elderly of Medina by sending a group of them to visit Yazid in Damascus. The group received many gifts and hospitality from Yazid. However, upon returning to Medina, they informed the people that they had witnessed Yazid, their so-called Caliph, or successor of the Prophet, openly indulge in sinful behavior, intoxication, and womanizing. This led the people of Medina, the city of the Prophet, to rebel against Yazid and his family, the Umayyads. The people expelled Yazid's governor and approximately one thousand of the Umayyads, including Marwan ibn al-Hakam. Even though Marwan was an open enemy to Imam Ali and his family, and had a direct role in disrespecting Imam Hasan's body during his burial, he came to Imam Sajjad with a desperate request of entrusting his family, which the Imam accepted.

When Yazid was informed about the rebellion in Medina, he sent his troops, under the leadership of Muslim ibn Uqbah, to suppress it. This led to a battle on the outskirts of Medina called the Battle of al-Harrah, during which the people of Medina were defeated. The survivors withdrew and sought refuge in the Mosque and the tomb of the Prophet. Yazid's troops entered the holy mosque with their horses and

³⁹ 28 Zu al-Hijjah, 63 AH (Imam's age: 27)

created a bloodbath within it. Muslim ibn Uqbah allowed his army to loot, rape, and steal from the people of Medina, the city of the Prophet, for three days. Around 10,000 people were murdered, including hundreds of the Prophet's companions, as well as Islamic and Quranic scholars.

Imam Sajjad was isolated during this uprising. He had moved his family, along with 400 people who sought refuge to him, to the outskirts of Medina. They had all remained safe. Muslim ibn Uqbah had orders from Yazid to not get into a conflict with Imam Sajjad due to his isolation from the rebellion. Yazid knew of the Imam's isolation through his spies. Yazid also wanted to avoid the shame the Umayyads had brought upon themselves from the tragedy of Karbala, so they did not interfere with Imam Sajjad.

After three days, Muslim ibn Uqbah ordered the people of Medina to come to his presence. He demanded they renew their allegiance to Yazid, bear witness that they are Yazid's servants, and threatened to kill anyone who opposed this order. However, he did not harm Imam Sajjad and excluded him from this order. When Imam Sajjad came to him, the Imam's greatness struck fear in Muslim ibn Uqbah's heart. He stood up from his position, respected the Imam, and allowed him to return unharmed.

4-2-13-Yazid's Troops in Mecca

After the massacre in Medina, Yazid's army continued towards Mecca to suppress Ibn Zubayr's rebellion, despite the army leader, Muslim ibn Uqbah, dying on the way due to an illness. Yazid's army outnumbered Ibn Zubayr's army, and surrounded Mecca for a few months. They attacked Ibn Zubayr's army, who had sought refuge in the vicinity of the Ka'ba by shooting fire balls which burned the Ka'ba. This event proved that Yazid would go to any extent to eliminate his opponents, and highlighted the importance of Imam Hossein's decision to leave Mecca towards Karbala to keep the honor of the Ka'ba and avoid bloodshed within it. During this period, Yazid's army received the news

of Yazid's death⁴⁰, and they finally returned to Syria. During his short reign of only three years and eight months, Yazid committed three outrageous crimes, the tragedy of Karbala, the massacre of Medina, and the burning of the Holy Ka'ba.

4-3-During the Government of Ibn Zubayr

4-3-1-Muawiyah II in Damascus

The death of Yazid was a shock for the Umayyads, who had been in power for years. They tried to maintain their power by convincing the Syrians to pay allegiance to Muawiyah II, the 22-year old (and the oldest) son of Yazid, as the new caliph. When Muawiyah II appeared to deliver a speech to the people, he condemned the actions of his grandfather, Muawiyah ibn Abu-Sufyan, and his father, Yazid, against the Ahlul-Bayt, the progeny of the Prophet. He withdrew himself from the caliphate because he did not want to bear the sins of an unlawful government. The Umayyads were shocked by his speech, and blamed his teacher for his differing opinion. Even though Muawiyah's teacher rejected their claim, they still buried him alive. Muawiyah II also died less than three months later.

4-3-2-Turmoil within the Umayyads

Yazid's death and the lack of unity in Syria provided Ibn Zubayr with an opportunity to expand his government and declare himself as the caliph. He appointed some of the elderly to get allegiance from the people on his behalf from all around the Islamic territory. This led to a division among the Umayyads in Syria, where some were supportive of Ibn Zubayr's caliphate, and some, under the leadership of Marwan ibn al-Hakam, were against him. In a big battle known as Marj Rahit⁴¹, which took place between the two sides, Marwan ibn al-Hakam defeated the other Umayyads, taking control of Syria.

⁴⁰ 14 Rabi' al-Awwal, 64 AH (Imam's age: 27)

⁴¹ 15 Zu al-Hijjah, 64 AH (Imam's age: 28)

4-3-3-Ibn Zubayr and the Imam

Medina fell under the control of Ibn Zubayr. During his government, the pressure and cruelty on Imam Sajjad and the Prophet's family increased. Although Ibn Zubayr and the Umayyads were against each other for the caliphate, both hated the Ahlul-Bayt and their Shia followers. While the Umayyads followed Muawiyah's legacy of cursing Imam Ali from the pulpit, Ibn Zubayr said that he had hidden his hatred against the Prophet's family in his heart for 40 years. For 40 consecutive weeks, he removed the salutations to the Prophet from his Friday sermons, because he did not want Banu Hashim to feel the pride of belonging to the Prophet's family. He imprisoned 26 of the Banu Hashim, and threatened to burn them alive if they did not pledge allegiance to him. In this situation, the Imam did not approve of Ibn Zubayr's government, and was concerned about Ibn Zubayr's plots against the Shias. The Imam continued his strategy to appear isolated from politics, and he did not involve himself in any activity that would benefit Ibn Zubayr, or the Umayyads.

4-3-4-The Tawwabin's Uprising

The division in power provided an opportunity for the Shia followers in Kufa to seek revenge for Imam Hossein's blood from his killers. The Shias were outraged to see the killers of Imam Hossein living freely in Kufa. They were in deep sorrow after the tragedy of Karbala, and they felt guilty for inviting Imam Hossein to Kufa, but not supporting him. However, the Shia followers were split into two groups. One group was under the leadership of Mokhtar al-Thaqafi, a great warrior and politician, who initially wanted to establish a government in Kufa and then proceed to fight against the Umayyad army, which was under the leadership of Ibn Ziyad. The other group was called the Tawwabin, or the repents, who were determined to seek revenge by waging a war against the Umayyad army. They were under the leadership of Sulayman ibn Surad al-Khuza'i, a Shia scholar and a companion of the Prophet and the Imams.

The Tawwabin could not gather more than 4,000 troops, since many

were leaning towards Mokhtar. They proceeded to the Battle of Ayn al-Wardah,⁴² and were defeated by Ibn Ziyad's large army of around 30,000 troops, who tremendously outnumbered them.

There is no historical evidence of any relationship between the Tawwabin and Imam Sajjad. The Tawwabin were ashamed to contact Imam Sajjad and invite him for an uprising since they had invited his father, Imam Hossein, to Kufa but had failed to support him. In addition, the Imam's strategy was to avoid open involvement in any political activity. He was living with a few supporters in Medina and was far from his Shia followers in Kufa. The Imam had said, "We as the Ahlul-Bayt do not even have 20 people who love us within the entire cities of Mecca and Medina." Any political activity by the Imam would have endangered his life in Medina.

4-3-5-Abdul-Malik in Power⁴³

Marwan ibn al-Hakam died with a very short reign in government of less than a year. He kept the Umayyad's governorship in his lineage. This lineage is known as the Banu Marwan. After his death, his son, Abdul-Malik, assumed power. He proved to be a very cruel caliph, and had appointed oppressive and tyrannical governors to suppress people in order to keep his government stable.

4-3-6-Mokhtar's Uprising⁴⁴

With the defeat of the Tawwabin, Mokhtar found the opportunity suitable to initiate his uprising. He introduced himself as the representative of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah, and was able to gather around 17,000 allegiances. The survivors of the Tawwabin also joined his uprising. Mokhtar defeated Ibn Zubayr's governor in Kufa in a civil war and took control of the city.

About five years after the tragedy of Karbala, Mokhtar took revenge

⁴² Jumada al-Awwal, 65 AH (Imam's age: 29)

⁴³ Ramazan, 65 AH (Imam's age: 29)

⁴⁴ 12 Rabi' al-Awwal, 66 AH (Imam's age: 29)

from the Kufans who had been responsible for the tragedy. He sent his troops to fight against Abdul-Malik's army, which was under the leadership of Ibn Ziyad. In the Battle of al-Khazir, Mokhtar's troops defeated and killed Ibn Ziyad on the day of Ashura, exactly six years after the tragedy of Karbala.

Mokhtar had a brief government of about one-and-a-half years, and was eventually suppressed by Mus'ab, the brother of Abdullah ibn Zubayr, and his governor in Basrah, Iraq. Upon his victory, Mus'ab ordered the beheadings of around 7,000 of Mokhtar's troops, who had surrendered and left Mokhtar without support. This incident showed the cruelty of Ibn Zubayr's caliphate against Shias, and also highlighted that the Shias of Kufa were not fully dedicated to their faith and were still untrustworthy.

Due to the political circumstances, the Imam did not directly endorse Mokhtar's movement. However, there are historical records that show his consent for the revenge for the blood of Imam Hossein. When a group of Shia followers from Kufa came to Imam Sajjad in Medina to inquire about the legitimacy of Mokhtar's uprising, the Imam said, "Even if a slave stands up for us, the Ahlul-Bayt, the people must support him." The Imam then appointed his uncle, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah, to guide them on political matters. Also, when Mokhtar sent the head of Ibn Ziyad to Imam Sajjad, he fell into prostration and prayed for him. He then donated a large amount in charity to thank God for this event. After six long years, Imam Sajjad requested the ladies of the Banu Hashim, who had been mourning for Karbala, to change out of their black dresses and to come out of grief.

4-3-7-The Imam: Symbol of True Islam

While the Islamic territory was split between Abdul-Malik and Ibn Zubayr, Abdul-Malik feared the influence of Ibn Zubayr's propaganda on his people, as they were going to Mecca to perform Hajj. Thus, with the help of bribed scholars, they fabricated fake narrations from the Prophet to encourage the people to perform Hajj at Masjid al-Aqsa in Palestine, which was in his territory, instead of Mecca. To fulfill this

purpose, he also built the famous Dome of the Rock building in Masjid al-Aqsa.

Under these circumstances, where any governor could change Islamic rituals in his favor, Imam Sajjad was a representative of the true Islamic values taught by the Prophet. The Imam tried to guide the bribed scholars, and warned them about their actions. The Imam's powerful letter to al-Zuhri, one of the bribed scholars, is narrated in history. Despite the ban enforced on narrations from the Holy Prophet since his demise, the Imam tried to inform the Muslims about the actual teachings of the Prophet through his advice and character. The Imam explained the true way of performing Hajj in his *Manaasik al-Hajj* book in order to guide Muslims who did not even know how to perform Hajj correctly. The Imam performed Hajj more than 20 times during his lifetime. When he wore the white garments of pilgrimage and said, "Labbayk" to his Lord, he would faint. When he would regain consciousness, the people would ask him the reason for his loss of consciousness. The Imam would respond by saying, "I feared denial from my Lord (God)". As a result, people would think that if the Imam of the time, the great grandson of the Prophet, feared the acceptance of his Hajj, then what would become of their own Hajj.

4-3-8-The Downfall of Ibn Zubayr's Government

After a few years of suppressing various rebellious uprisings around Syria, Abdul-Malik moved his army towards Kufa. In the Battle of Dayr al-Jathaaleeq, he defeated Mus'ab and took control of Iraq. When the proud Abdul-Malik entered Kufa, he was presented with the head of Mus'ab in the town hall. A member of the audience said, "I was here in the town hall when the head of (Imam) Hossein was brought to Ibn Ziyad, the head of Ibn Ziyad for Mokhtar, the head of Mokhtar for Mus'ab, and now I see the head of Mus'ab in front of you." Abdul-Malik, who feared that this historical pattern would repeat with his head being offered next, ordered the roof above them to be destroyed.

After seizing Kufa, Abdul-Malik sent his troops under the leadership of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf to conquer and suppress Ibn Zubayr in Mecca. Hajjaj

surrounded Mecca for several months. Ibn Zubayr and his troops sought refuge in the vicinity of the Holy Ka'ba, but Hajjaj ordered his troops to launch rocks at them. As a result, the Ka'ba was entirely damaged. Abdullah ibn Zubayr was finally killed,⁴⁵ and his caliphate terminated after about nine years. After a long unrest in Hijaz and Iraq, Abdul-Malik was able to unify them under a single government.

After the Holy Ka'ba was heavily damaged, Imam Sajjad played a critical role in guiding the Muslims to rebuild the Ka'ba.

4-4-During the Government of Abdul-Malik

4-4-1-Banu Marwan and Degradation of Islam

Yazid's public indulgence in sinful behavior made it a custom for the upcoming caliphs, including Banu Marwan, to also openly indulge in those behaviors. This legitimized their sinful behaviors for the public. Furthermore, years of civil unrest, battles, cruel governors, and elimination of the Islamic scholars had taken away any motivation for religious practices. Religion was no longer a priority for the people. It became publicly common, even in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, to have open concerts by female singers, where many onlookers sought to womanize. According to historical records, in one incident, there was a famous female singer in Medina who decided to perform Hajj, and her fans also accompanied her in large numbers. Upon entering Mecca and returning to Medina, the people gathered in crowds to welcome her, and she sang in public to please them.

In such a society, people were not interested in any religious guidance and would also ridicule any advice or teaching provided to them. The Imam had described his situation by saying that, "If we give them the teachings of the Prophet, they ridicule us. However, we can not remain silent, either." The Imam used every opportunity to guide the people. He held weekly Friday lectures in the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina.

⁴⁵ 17 Jumada al-Awwal, 73 AH (Imam's age: 37)

The Imam's advice focused on the short duration of this life, and the significance of the hereafter. The Imam's words would impact the people who would listen to him, cause tears to flow from their eyes, and touch their hearts.

4-4-2-Hajjaj in Medina

As a token of appreciation, Abdul-Malik assigned Hajjaj as the governor of Medina. Hajjaj was a bloodthirsty man who would kill people for any excuse and had created a brutal and suppressive regime. He sought approval from Abdul-Malik to kill Imam Sajjad. In a letter to Abdul-Malik, he said, "If you want the stability and endurance of your government, kill Ali ibn Hossein (Imam Sajjad)." Abdul-Malik responded by warning against spilling the blood of the Banu Hashim and said, "I have witnessed that when Yazid killed (Imam) Hossein, the government was removed from his lineage."

The Imam had knowledge of this communication. He wrote a letter to Abdul-Malik to inform him about the content and the timing of his communication with Hajjaj, and that he had received this knowledge through the Prophet. The Imam wanted to let Abdul-Malik know that he had complete knowledge of his government, and reminded him about his close ties and revelations through the Prophet. Ultimately, the Imam wanted to prohibit Abdul-Malik from harassing him. Once Abdul-Malik confirmed that the Imam's statement regarding the timing of his communications was accurate, he responded by sending gifts to the Imam as recognition.

During this time, the Imam continued his isolation from politics. On one occasion, Abdul-Malik met the Imam near the Holy Ka'ba and complained to him about his distance from the Banu Marwan government, but the Imam rejected his request to come out of isolation.

4-4-3-Hajjaj in Iraq

Although Abdul-Malik had control over the entire Islamic territory, there were various rebellions during his government, especially in Iraq. Thus, he assigned Hajjaj as the governor of Iraq. Once Hajjaj arrived in

Kufa, he entered the mosque, removed the cover on his face, and threatened the people by saying that their heads were like ripe fruits ready to be cut.

Hajjaj brutally suppressed the people of Iraq, especially when he doubted they were Shia. He fought for years with the Khawarij. He also battled the rebellion by his army commander, Ibn Ash'ath, which had been the biggest threat to the Umayyads before their destruction. In total, Hajjaj killed around 120,000 people outside of war, and imprisoned tens of thousands of Iraqis during the 20 years of his government in Iraq until his death. The Imam did not support any side of these fights, since both sides were hostile against the Ahlul-Bayt.

4-4-4-The Imam and the Islamic Promotion

During this situation, the Imam was planning an ideal Islamic government in the long-term. His goal was to influence the people with his prayers and moral actions, and to attract them towards true Islamic teachings. The Imam also trained real Muslims in a society where everyone called themselves Muslims, yet did not abide by the Prophetic values. The Imam illustrated the framework of an ideal Islamic government in his book, Risalat al-Huquq.

Imam Sajjad was a symbol of prayer and piety in society. He fasted and prayed one thousand units of prayer daily. His face would become pale in worship in the presence of God. His prayers would often remind people of the prayers of Imam Ali. Imam Sajjad had multiple honorable titles reflecting his worship. He was known as 'Sajjad', which means 'the one who prostrates abundantly', and 'Sayyid al-Saajideen' which means 'the Master of the Prostrators'. He received these titles because he was constantly in prostration and prayer to God for every blessing he had received. He was also known as 'Dhu Thafanaat', which means 'someone who has grown calluses or hard thickened skin on all places touching the ground while prostrating', and he used to treat his hardened skin twice a year. He was also known as 'Zayn al-Abidin' which means 'the Adornment of the Worshippers'.

The Imam tried to attract the people to the true Islamic teachings. He wanted to open their relationships with God through the language of prayers. This was not suspicious for the governors, nor did it repel the people. Many supplications have been narrated from the Imam, such as the famous supplication of Abu Hamza al-Thumaali, which the Imam used to recite during the dawns of the month of Ramazan. A collection of 54 of the Imam's supplications is compiled in a book called al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya. This book is the greatest Shia book after the Quran and Nahj al-Balagha. It is also called 'Sister of the Quran', 'Gospel of the Holy Household', and 'Psalms of Muhammad's progeny', which clearly indicate the importance of the book. In this book of supplications, the Imam expresses Islamic knowledge regarding various aspects of individual, social, political, and cultural life. The famous Makarim Al-Akhlaq is just one of the supplications in al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya.

Imam Sajjad also worked hard to raise Muslims with true Islamic values. The Imam, who had started with only three companions, expanded to tens of companions during his lifetime. The names of more than 170 companions of the Imam are recorded in history. The Imam offered classes to teach Islamic lessons in the Mosque of the Prophet and in his own home. He would purchase enslaved men whom he didn't need, and would train them to become model Muslims. The Imam would even take them to Hajj with him, provide them with financial resources, and eventually free them into society. He would never keep any of them for more than a year, and every year at the end of the month of Ramazan, he would free about 20 slaves. The men freed by the Imam are estimated to be in the thousands. The Imam's actions conveyed his message against the discrimination of slaves in society.

Imam Sajjad taught how an ideal Muslim should act and live through his book, Risalat al-Huquq. In this book, the Imam stated 50 rights that every person should recognize and respect. These rights cover all of the rights involved in the relationships between an individual with God, an individual with himself, and an individual with others. These rights include the rights of God and our deeds to Him, of different organs of

the body, and of the social relationships such as family, various members of the society, and the government. Some of these rights are compulsory by Islamic rulings, but the majority of them are recommendations only identified in a true Muslim.

4-4-5-Abdul-Malik and the Imam

As time passed, Abdul-Malik's power grew, and so did his cruelty and oppression toward Imam Sajjad. He had spies to monitor the Imam's relations, and all details of his personal and social life. In one incident, he sent a letter to the Imam and threatened him while asking for the sword of the Prophet. The Imam rejected his demand and ended his statement with the following verse from the Holy Quran [31:18], "Verily, God does not love the proud and boastful." The Imam then asked Abdul-Malik to judge which one of them was more representative of this verse.

In another incident, Abdul-Malik summoned Imam Sajjad and ordered that he be brought to him in Damascus in chains. On the way, the Imam miraculously freed himself and voluntarily presented himself in Abdul-Malik's palace. The Imam asked Abdul-Malik firmly, "What business do you and I have together?" The Imam left the palace while Abdul-Malik was in great shock and fear.

4-4-6-Hisham ibn Abdul-Malik in Hajj

One year, Abdul-Malik sent his son Hisham to perform Hajj in Mecca. When Hisham was near the Ka'ba, he decided to touch Hajar al-Aswad, the heavenly rock, but he was unable to reach it due to the crowd. Shortly after, while watching the Ka'ba, he noticed Imam Sajjad coming through the crowd. The crowd moved away in respect to the Imam and made room for him to reach Hajar al-Aswad. Hisham felt offended by the great respect people had shown to the Imam, and pretended not to know the Imam. A poet named Farazdaq, who had close ties to Banu Marwan's government, witnessed this incident and told Hisham, "I know that man and can describe him for you." He then recited a long and beautiful poem describing and praising the Imam. Hisham became

angry and ordered that Farazdaq's allowance from Bayt al-Mal (public treasury) be cut and that he be imprisoned.

After his custody was lengthened, Farazdaq requested the Imam to pray for his release. He was released and came to the Imam and told him that his allowance was stopped by the government. The Imam provided him with an allowance, even though Farazdaq was hesitant to accept it. The Imam gave him the amount of allowance for a specific number of years and told him, "If I knew that you would need more, I would definitely provide you with more." Upon the completion of the specific number of years, Farazdaq passed away.

4-5-During the Government of Valeed

4-5-1-Valeed in Power

Abdul-Malik died after 21 years of being in power⁴⁶. His son, Valeed, replaced him. Valeed was a cruel and stubborn character who lacked literacy of the Arabic language, and would make obvious mistakes in his speech. In his first sermon as the caliph, he told the people that whoever stands against him would be beheaded, while whoever keeps silent and obeys his orders would die a natural death. He also kept Hajjaj in his position as the governor of Iraq. The majority of his reign was spent in military campaigns and the expansion of his territories into Northern Africa, India, Central Asia, and Andalusia in Europe.

4-5-2-The Imam and Hisham ibn Isma'il

Valeed replaced the cruel governor of Medina, Hisham ibn Isma'il, who had oppressed and harassed the people of Medina, and particularly Imam Sajjad. Hisham was persecuted for his atrocities and was tied in public where people could take revenge. Hisham said that he feared Imam Sajjad more than anyone else, since he had been the most oppressive towards the Imam. When the Imam and his companions passed by Hisham, the Imam asked his companions not to insult him.

⁴⁶ 15 Shawwal, 86 AH (Imam's age: 50)

The Imam greeted Hisham, treated him respectfully, and offered him help. By this treatment, Hisham was deeply ashamed. When the Imam left him, Hisham recited the following verse from the Holy Quran [6:124], “God knows best where to place His Prophethood.” This was one of many examples of how the Imam had influenced the hearts of the people by his actions.

4-5-3-Martyrdom

Imam Sajjad’s efforts to guide the Muslims and reconstruct Islamic society had made him the center of attention and respect from the Muslims. For example, the famous reciters of Quran in Medina would not leave for Hajj until Imam Sajjad left the city and they would follow him in large numbers, and the people would not return until the Imam left Mecca. The Umayyads, who were afraid for their own power, could not tolerate the Imam’s social popularity and influence among the people. Thus, Hisham ibn Abdul-Malik, who hated the Imam due to his observations at Hajj, encouraged his brother, Valeed, to order the poisoning of the Imam.

After Imam Sajjad was poisoned, he called his children and chose his son, Muhammad, as his successor in the Imamat. He addressed him with the title of Baqir. Imam Sajjad gave him a heavy chest passed down from the Imams. The chest was full of holy books, scriptures, and the swords of the Prophet and Imam Ali. Imam Sajjad (AS) spoke to his son, Imam Baqir (AS), in private for some time. Among his last words, the Imam emphasized the importance of kindness to the people. He also told Imam Baqir what his father, Imam Hossein, had passed down to him on the day of Ashura, which was to avoid oppressing someone who has nobody but God to defend him. Then, the Imam became unconscious. When he regained consciousness, he recited the chapters of Waqi’ah and Fath from the Holy Quran. The chapter of Waqi’ah describes the Day of Judgment and the categorization of the people on that day. The chapter of Fath describes the treaty of Hudaybiyyah during which the Muslims achieved victory peacefully. The Imam then recited the following verse [39:74], “Praise be to God, who has fulfilled

His promise to us and made us inherit the land, enjoying paradise as we please. How excellent is the reward of the workers.” Then, his soul ascended, and he passed away on the 25th of Muharram, in the year 95 Hijri, at the age of 58.

4-5-4-Burial

While preparing the body of the Imam for burial, calluses were found on his back from carrying sacks of food. The Imam used to distribute food secretly at night to around 100 needy families of Medina. After the Imam’s martyrdom, people discovered that their livelihoods had been coming from him. This was in addition to the two occasions where the Imam had split his entire wealth with the needy in the way of God. The Imam’s martyrdom brought grief to the entire city of Medina. The people of Medina gathered in a large crowd for his funeral. The Imam was buried in the Baqi’ cemetery within the vicinity of his uncle, Imam Hasan (AS).

4-6-Conclusion

Imam Sajjad is one of the Imams with the longest duration of Imamah. He lived in a critical and complex political situation. When studying the life of Imam Sajjad, one can divide his Imamah into two different periods. The first period begins at Karbala on the day of Ashura, continues to Kufa and Damascus, and ends with the Imam’s return to Medina. The second period begins after his return to Medina and lasts until his martyrdom, a period of about 34 years. During the first period, the tragedy of Karbala was the biggest sorrow of the Ahlul-Bayt, the progeny of the Prophet. Although Imam Sajjad was very sick and in captivity, he did not fear for his life, and knew that his silence would fade the message of Karbala. He spoke up against Ibn Ziyad and Yazid, condemned their actions, and confronted their justifications. The Imam also tried to awaken the people by delivering subjective lectures. The Imam’s lecture for the people in Kufa was focused on condemning their actions during the tragedy of Karbala. His focus in Damascus was to familiarize them with the Ahlul-Bayt, and in Medina, he reminded them

of the heartbreaking losses to the Ahlul-Bayt. The Imam's lectures pressured Yazid to deny his role in the tragedy of Karbala and free the captives, and caused the people to doubt the government. This contributed to the subsequent political unrest in the Islamic territory.

The second period of the life of Imam Sajjad in Medina was during a long period of wars and uprisings. It was as if God had punished the people responsible for the tragedy of Karbala. This punishment was not limited to just the killers of Imam Hossein, but everyone whose reluctance or approval led to the tragedy of Karbala from all around the Islamic territory. The Iraqis who had left Imam Hossein without support and killed him in Karbala suffered the most. They endured various wars, uprisings, and brutal governors. The Imam isolated himself from politics and put all of his efforts into saving the lives of his followers in the endless wars for power. Any political activity in this time would endanger the Imam's life, since the fugitive rulers were looking for any excuse to remove the Imam and stabilize their own governments.

The Imam was one of the closest living blood-relatives to the Prophet. He was the only light of guidance in a society that was lacking interest in Islamic teachings due to long wars, political unrest, and cruel governors. The Imam knew that it was not possible to establish an ideal Islamic government in the near future, so he decided to plan for such a society in the long-term through various efforts. The Imam attracted Muslims to the true Islamic teachings by his prayers, behavior, and supplications such as al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya. The Imam's supplications would not make the government suspicious, nor repel the people. The Imam taught true Islamic values to his companions and the freed slaves, so they would become true representatives of such an ideal society. He also depicted the framework of this ideal society with his book, Risalat al-Huquq.

With the Imam's martyrdom, the first Islamic century was almost over. The true Islamic teachings and values that were established by the Prophet had faded away gradually after his demise, so much so that

nothing could stop the so-called Muslims from attaining their political interests, even if they had to brutally kill his dear grandson in Karbala or destroy the Ka'ba, the holiest site in Islam. Imam Sajjad reconstructed the Islamic foundation from the beginning, similar to what the Prophet had done at the beginning. Imam Sajjad's efforts led the people to recognize the Shia Imams as the true representatives of Islam, and prepared an environment for Imam Baqir to establish a seminary in Medina to provide deep Islamic knowledge for the people who were eager for it.

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IMAM SAJJAD (AS):

Three things would save a believer:

- Holding one's tongue from backbiting and ill-talks about people
- Engaging in activities which would benefit this world and hereafter
- Feeling guilt and seeking forgiveness for mistakes

5- IMAM BAQIR (AS): THE IMAM OF KNOWLEDGE

This chapter reviews the historical events of the life of Imam Baqir (AS) and provides an overview of his social, scientific, and political achievements.

5-1-Before the Government of Valeed

5-1-1-Birth

Imam Muhammad ibn Ali (AS), also known as Baqir or Abu-Ja'far, was born on the 1st of the month of Rajab in the year 57 Hijri in Medina. He was the oldest son of Imam Sajjad (AS). His mother, Fatimah, was the daughter of Imam Hasan (AS) and was unique in piety among the children of Imam Hasan. Thus, Imam Baqir became the only Imam whose maternal and paternal grandfathers were Imams. All the following Imams from his lineage were related to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), through both Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein (AS).

5-1-2-Tragedy of Karbala

Imam Baqir was about three-and-a-half years old on the day of Ashura. He was the only child of Imam Sajjad who was present in Karbala. He was among the captives who were sent to Kufa, and from there to Damascus to Yazid's palace.

Imam Baqir, who had witnessed the tragedy of Karbala and all of the atrocities inflicted upon the Ahlul-Bayt, the progeny of the Prophet, became a narrator of the tragedy. The Imam used every opportunity to narrate the story of Karbala to the Muslims and remind them of the oppression the Umayyads imposed over the Ahlul-Bayt. The famous salutation, Ziyarat Ashura, was originally narrated by him. The Imam would gather people in his house to mourn and weep for the tragedy and oppression against Imam Hossein, and would encourage the people to visit his holy tomb in Karbala.

5-1-3-Meeting with Jabir ibn Abdullah

Jabir ibn Abdullah was a close companion of Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet had said to him, "O' Jabir, you will have a lengthy life and will meet someone from my progeny from the children of (Imam) Hossein whose name will be the same as my name, Muhammad." The Prophet had said that he would be called Baqir, "the one who splits open the doors of knowledge". The Prophet asked Jabir to pass his greetings to

him upon their meeting. After many years, Jabir met Imam Baqir in Medina when the Imam was young. The Imam's face reminded Jabir of the Prophet's face. Jabir passed the Prophet's greeting to the Imam and said, "You are Baqir, the one who will split open knowledge."

5-1-4-With his Father, Imam Sajjad

From his early childhood, Imam Baqir was recognized as a wise and knowledgeable figure in society. Jabir's narration about the Imam's title, Baqir, given by the Prophet, was also a reason for the people to recognize the Imam's knowledge. There are historical records that prove that the Imam responded to various questions raised by the Muslims while he was still young. The Imam was raised under the supervision of his father, Imam Sajjad. The well-known book, al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya, was recorded while Imam Sajjad narrated it to his sons, Imam Baqir and Zaid.

5-2-During the Government of Valeed

5-2-1-Valeed in Power

Valeed was a merciless and cruel governor who ordered the poisoning and martyrdom of Imam Sajjad. In his first sermon as caliph, he told the people, "Whoever stands against me will be beheaded, and whoever keeps silent and obeys my orders, will die by a natural death." The majority of his government was spent in military campaigns and the expansion of his territories into Northern Africa, India, Central Asia, and Andalusia in Europe. The tragedy of Karbala caused separation between the religious and political leaderships within the Muslims. Thus, at that time, the caliphate was just an authoritarian monarchy that was passed down in Banu Marwan's family, who were from the Umayyads. Ironically, the Muslim's caliph had absolute power and did not hold himself accountable to anyone, even God.

5-2-2-Martyrdom of Imam Sajjad⁴⁷

⁴⁷ 25 Muharram, 95 AH (Imam's age: 37)

Valeed could not tolerate Imam Sajjad's social popularity and his influence among the people. Consequently, he ordered the Imam to be poisoned. When Imam Sajjad was poisoned, he called his children near him and chose his son, Muhammad, as his successor. Imam Sajjad gave Imam Baqir a heavy chest full of holy books, scriptures, and the swords of the Prophet and Imam Ali, which were passed down from the Imams. Imam Sajjad spoke to his son, Imam Baqir, in private for some time. Amongst his last words, he emphasized the importance of kindness to people. He also told Imam Baqir what his father, Imam Hossein, had passed down to him on the day of Ashura, which was "to avoid oppressing someone who has nobody but God to defend him."

When Imam Sajjad was on his deathbed, someone visited him and asked him about whom he should refer to after him. The Imam told him to refer to his son, Muhammad. The person inquired if Muhammad was chosen due to his age. Imam Sajjad responded, "Imamat is not by age but is appointed by God." Imam Sajjad said, "I have found Imam Baqir's name as the successor of Imamat in the holy scripture that has been passed down to me from the Prophet."

When Imam Sajjad was martyred, Imam Baqir took care of his funeral arrangements and buried him in the Baqi' cemetery next to his uncle, Imam Hasan (AS). The fact that Imam Baqir took on this responsibility was also another sign of his Imamat, since only an Imam can perform the funeral rituals of another Imam.

5-2-3-Banu Marwan and Degradation of Islam

Yazid ibn Muawiyah's public indulgence in sinful behavior made it a custom for the upcoming Banu Marwan caliphs to also openly indulge in those behaviors, which in turn legitimized them for the public. Furthermore, years of civil unrest, battles, cruel governors, and elimination of Islamic scholars had taken away any motivation for religious practices. Religion was no longer a priority for the people. It became publicly common, even in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, to have open concerts by female singers, where many came to womanize.

5-2-4-The Imam: Representative of True Islam

Imam Baqir was the only source of true Islamic teachings in society. He embodied these teachings through his behavior and interactions with the people. The Imam used to pray 150 units of prayer on a daily basis. He was in constant remembrance of God and would recite, “La-Ilaha-Illal-lah”, meaning “There is no God but Allah” even while walking or interacting with the people. The Imam’s tears in prayer and his long prostrations had been witnessed by the people in the Prophet’s Mosque in Medina, and next to the Ka’ba during the Hajj season. The Imam would continue to shed tears humbly despite his social status. The Imam also used to encourage his children to stay awake between dawn and sunrise to recite the Quran or other prayers. Whenever the Imam wanted to pray for a great blessing from God, he would gather his family, make his request to God, and ask his family to respond by saying, “Amin.”

Once, a Christian called Imam Baqir, “Baqara”, which means “cow” in Arabic. He continued by insulting the Imam’s mother. The Imam treated him with patience and responded to him politely by saying, “If your statement is right, may God forgive my mother and if you are wrong, may God forgive you.” The Imam’s demeanor and greatness had such an impact on that person that he chose to convert to Islam.

The Imam was always interested in providing guidance to all the Muslims. Sa’ad was an Umayyad who came to the Imam, crying and denouncing his family for their injustices to the Ahlul-Bayt. The Imam accepted him and said, “You are from us if you have the correct beliefs.” The Imam referred to the Prophet Ibrahim’s statement in the Quran [14:36], “Everyone who follows me is from me.” The Imam then advised him to seek piety and provided him with guidance. The Imam’s statements are available in a collection known as Risala Sa’ad al-Khayr.

The Imam’s generosity was renowned among the people, though his lifestyle was ordinary. No needy person would return from the Imam without a reward. The Imam was an elder in the family of the Prophet, and was the oldest among the children of Imam Hossein, so he had to

financially support his relatives, who were struggling with their living expenses because they were deprived of their rights by the government. Furthermore, the Imam had to financially support some of his students who came to Medina to attend his classes and were in need. The Imam made particular emphasis for charity donation on Fridays, stating that it has a double reward, as Friday holds a special importance over the other days of the week.

5-3-During the Government of Sulayman

5-3-1-Sulayman ibn Abdul-Malik in Power⁴⁸

After a year into the Imamat of Imam Baqir, Valeed passed away and his brother, Sulayman ibn Abdul-Malik, assumed power. Valeed had wanted to nominate his son as his successor, but passed away before implementing his decision. Sulayman inherited the power of an expanded Islamic territory from Andalusia in Europe and Northern Africa, to Central Asia and India. Sulayman was a corrupt pleasure-seeker who kept himself busy with womanizing and other sinful behaviors. He and his governors were very cruel to the people, and oppressed them by collecting high taxes. The short government of Sulayman, about 3 years, and his engagement in opposing Valeed's governors, who were initially against his nomination for government, provided an opportunity for the Imam to spread his knowledge with more freedom.

5-3-2-Emergence of the False Theological Beliefs

Due to multiple factors, the time of Imam Baqir coincided with the appearance of various theological beliefs among the Muslims. After a long period of civil unrest following the tragedy of Karbala, Banu Marwan's government became stable. The Islamic scholars finally had a chance to become involved in education rather than political disputes. Various Islamic scholars and jurisprudents with different opinions

⁴⁸ 96 AH (Imam's age: 38)

about Islamic laws emerged. Schools and educational facilities were established in the big cities, and the educated people were more accepting of intellectual and theological thoughts, as opposed to before. Furthermore, due to military campaigns and the expansion of the Islamic territory, Muslims were exposed to various theological beliefs from the other civilizations, and had to find persuasive answers for the questions raised by the new Muslims or the followers of other faiths. However, there was turmoil among the Muslims about the true Islamic teachings of the Prophet, due to a gap of about a century from the Prophet's demise. In addition, all of the people who had witnessed the Prophet and could testify to his teachings had also passed away by this time. The ban on the Prophet's narrations, which had taken effect shortly after his demise, worsened the situation. Thus, the Muslims were split in the theological beliefs that were even contradictory to each other.

Khawarij was one of the false theologies which led people to believe that a person who has committed a major sin is an unbeliever and was ousted from the religion. They regarded Imam Ali and some of the other caliphs as unbelievers, and were in continuous dispute with the government. On the contrary, Morje'e was a group that believed one should not condemn the actions of any person, alive or deceased, and should leave all judgements to God for the hereafter. This indifference was clearly against the teachings of the Prophet, and his command to enjoin the good and forbid the evil. This theology was strongly supported by Banu Marwan's government, since their injustice and oppression were not held accountable. Jabriyah was another theological belief at the time. They believed that everything occurs according to God's will and people should accept this enforced reality, and should not object to it. As a consequence of this theology, no one was allowed to object to the government's actions. On the contrary, there was another group called Qadariyah which had considered full freedom for human actions.

The Imam strongly confronted these false theologies and demonstrated

the reality for the Muslims. Many of the Imam's debates with the leaders of these theological groups are narrated in history. The Imam argued with the Khawarij's leaders about their opinions, and falsified their argument that Imam Ali was an unbeliever since he had accepted negotiation with Muawiyah after the Battle of Siffin. The Imam used logical arguments, citing the Holy Quran and the Prophet's traditions to negate their arguments. The Imam also rebutted the theology of Morje'e in his debates by describing characteristics of true Islamic faith. The Imam argued with Jabriyah and Qadariyah that God's blessings are greater than the fact that He would force mankind to commit sins and then punish them for what they did. On the other hand, God is stronger than making an intention and not being able to fulfill it. The Imam expressed his moderate opinion and said that the space between these two extreme opinions is far greater than the space between the heavens and the Earth. The Imam also confronted the Ghulat, or the people who would exaggerate the status of the Ahlul-Bayt and would regard them at the level of God. The Imam publicly rejected and cursed their leaders for giving incorrect attributes to the Ahlul-Bayt. The Imam also challenged the thoughts of the Israelites that had entered and blended with the Islamic beliefs, as they portrayed a distorted and corrupt image of the Biblical and Quranic Prophets.

The Imam's engagement in education and interaction with the people in society did not stop him from working hard to earn sustenance. He used to work on a farm along with his laborers. He would not leave an overbearing task for his workers, unless he would himself be involved in completing the task. Once, a leader of the religious ascetics saw the Imam working on the farm during a very hot time of the day, sweating and looking exhausted. He told the Imam to stop working for the sake of this world, as death might overcome him. The Imam responded, "If my death comes at this time, it has met me at the best time since I am obeying God and am working to suffice myself from you and others." He then said, "I should rather be afraid if death meets me while I am disobeying God." The Imam's response was an example of his practical efforts to show true Islamic teachings to the people and guide those

who had found the Islamic practice in isolating themselves from this world.

5-4-During the Government of Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz

5-4-1-Umar in Power⁴⁹

When Sulayman was on his deathbed, he made a sudden decision to nominate his cousin, Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz, to take his position instead of his brother, Yazid, and appointed his brother as the successor to his cousin. Umar had a fair ruling strategy compared to the other Umayyad governors. He had a special respect for the scholars and was interested in receiving their advice. His short government of around 2.5 years was a relief for the people who had suffered from the Umayyads.

5-4-2-The Imam's Invitation to Damascus

Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz had respect for the Imam and was interested in seeking his advice. The Imam advised and guided him for the benefit of the Muslims. However, the Imam never endorsed his government nor any other Umayyad's. When Umar came to power, he sent an invitation for the Imam to come and meet him. The Imam accepted his invitation and went to Damascus. Umar provided the Imam with hospitality and sought his advice. The Imam recommended him to seek piety and to consider the elderly Muslims as his own father, the middle-aged Muslims as his own brothers, and the young Muslims as his own children. The Imam recommended that he practice kindness and mercy for his children, forgiveness for his brother, and good deeds for his father. The Imam asked him to be persistent in doing good deeds. Umar was surprised by the Imam's comprehensive advice and said, "You have given me instructions that, if implemented with God's help, would have eternal benefit for me."

5-4-3-Umar's Actions

During his short government, Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz performed a series

⁴⁹ Safar, 99 AH (Imam's age: 41)

5- Imam Baqir (AS): The Imam of Knowledge

of unprecedented actions that were beneficial to the people and the Ahlul-Bayt. He confiscated unlawful wealth that was taken by the Umayyads, and returned it to the Bayt al-Mal (public treasury). When collecting taxes, he was lenient and showed kindness to both Muslims and non-Muslims. He also asked his governor in Medina to distribute considerable funds among the children of Imam Ali (AS) and Lady Fatimah (SA), as they had been stripped from their rights for a long period of time. He also returned the Land of Fadak to Imam Baqir and stopped the cursing of Imam Ali from the pulpits. He also removed the ban from narrating the Prophet's traditions.

Once, Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz visited Medina and Imam Baqir went to meet him. In their conversations, the Imam advised him about the short duration of this world and the importance of preparation for the hereafter. The Imam told him that this world is like one of the markets, where some leave it with deeds that benefit them, while others leave it with deeds that harm them. The Imam then advised him to look after deeds that would please God in the hereafter and stop deeds that would displease him. The Imam also advised him to help the oppressed people and return their rights. Umar adhered to the Imam's words. He wrote a letter and returned the Land of Fadak to the Imam. Fadak was a precious land that had fruitful gardens with palm trees, and was gifted to Lady Fatimah by her father, the Holy Prophet. Fadak was confiscated by the first caliph after the Prophet's demise, and had never been returned to the children of Lady Fatimah since.

Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz also stopped the cursing of Imam Ali from the pulpits all across the Islamic territory. This horrible tradition had been initiated by Muawiyah due to his hostility towards Imam Ali and the Ahlul-Bayt. Muawiyah aggressively propagated this tradition after seizing the caliphate following the peace treaty with Imam Hasan. This unfortunate custom was continued by the other Umayyads after Muawiyah until the time of Umar, for about 60 years. It is said that either Umar's father or his childhood teacher was his guide in realizing the elevated status of Imam Ali.

Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz also removed the ban of narrating the traditions of the Prophet. This ban was placed by the first caliph shortly after the Prophet's demise, with the justification that it would divide the Muslims and that the Quran was sufficient. This strict ban continued to be enforced by the second and the third caliphs, and the Umayyad rulers until the time of Umar. Umar, who feared the loss of the Prophet's traditions with the passing of time, ordered the collection of the narrations.

5-4-4-The Imam: Source of Divine Knowledge

As a result of the narration ban, for approximately 90 years after the Prophet's demise, Muslims did not know much about the true Islam the Prophet practiced. Over this long period, many forged narrations were propagated among the Muslims by the rulers for their own political interests. As a consequence, authentic narrations from the Prophet were mixed with forged narrations. It was very hard, even for Islamic scholars to distinguish among them. For example, in the years later, Bukhari collected 600,000 narrations and only authenticated around 7,000 of them. These narrations were published in his book, Sahih al-Bukhari. Similarly, Abu-Dawud selected around 5,000 narrations that he felt were authentic in his Sunan book among a total of 500,000 collected narrations. Both books are regarded as core narration books among the Sunni schools of thought.

In this situation, everyone recognized the Imam's divine knowledge. The Imam had the most freedom for scientific activities and spreading his knowledge during Umar's government. He used this opportunity to establish himself as the main source for true Islamic teachings in society. His life was full of puzzling questions raised by the people to test his knowledge, and his answers to these questions would prove his knowledge. He also availed every opportunity to debate with various so-called Islamic scholars who were falsely interpreting the Quran or fabricating narrations. The Imam would use Quranic evidence and intellectual justifications to overcome them.

The Imam was the most authentic narrator of the traditions of the

Prophet and the best interpreter of the Holy Quran. The Imam narrated authentic narrations from the Prophet and his forefathers. He had mentioned his forefathers as the chain of reference for his narrations from the Prophet. There are thousands of narrations cited from Imam Baqir, which is the second highest number among the Shia Imams after his son, Imam Sadiq (AS). He also presented the correct interpretation of the Holy Quran for the Muslims who used to have different opinions about its interpretation. He used to encourage the Muslims to ask for a reference to the Quran for every part of his speech. There is a commentary of the Holy Quran known as ‘Abu Jarud’, which is attributed to the Imam.

5-4-5-Umar’s Death⁵⁰

Despite Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz’s fair character and his valued actions, the Imam did not endorse him or any other Umayyad caliph. The Imam viewed them as the usurpers of the position that belonged to him as the true successor of the Prophet. On the night when Umar passed away in Syria, the Imam was far away from him in Medina. The Imam said, “Someone has passed away tonight whom the residents of the earth cry for, yet the angels in heaven curse.” It is said that the Umayyads who were against Umar’s ruling strategy poisoned and eliminated him.

5-5-During the Government of Yazid II

5-5-1-Yazid II in Power

After Umar, Yazid ibn Abdul-Malik, or Yazid II, assumed power. Yazid II ruled for approximately four years. Initially, he continued Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz’s ruling strategies for a short period. However, the Umayyads convinced him to change his ruling approach. They brought him 40 witnesses from the elders who testified that there will be no trial for the caliphs in the hereafter. Thus, Yazid reverted the ruling strategy of Umar, and followed the footsteps of the other Umayyads. He

⁵⁰ 25 Rajab, 101 AH (Imam’s age: 44)

pressured the people by forcefully collecting high taxes, a practice that was in place prior to Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz.

Yazid ibn Abdul-Malik, similar to Yazid ibn Muawiyah, drank alcohol, womanized, and indulged in other sinful behaviors. He had a wine pool to swim in while womanizing. He had two slave mistresses who had overpowered his mind through their love. One day, he was spending time with one of his mistresses and she coincidentally died by choking. Yazid didn't leave her body for three days, and his grief for her passing led to his death a few days later.

5-5-2-The Imam: Splitter of Knowledge

Imam Baqir continued his father, Imam Sajjad's efforts, to interpret the true Islamic teachings. The Imam was known as Baqir, which means the splitter of knowledge, and was given this title by the Prophet. The Prophet knew that the Imam would reveal and expand the secrets of the Islamic sciences and had great respect for him. Today, the Imam is also known as the founder of Fiqh, or “Islamic jurisprudence” in the Shia school of thought. Fiqh is the knowledge about Islamic laws according to the Quran and the teachings and practices of the Prophet. The Imam not only responded to the thousands of Fiqh questions raised by Muslims during his life, but also established the principles that are used in Fiqh to derive the Islamic laws, known as the Usul al-Fiqh. These principles are still used by scholars to interpret Islamic laws for newly emerged questions. Furthermore, there are many narrations available from the Imam on other Islamic sciences, such as the interpretation of the Quran, traditions of the Prophet, ethics, history, judicial affairs, medicine, and Ilm al-Kalam, which is about defending the principles of the Islamic faith against skeptics.

The Imam established an Islamic university to benefit hundreds of students who were interested in learning Islamic studies. The names of more than 460 of the Imam's students are recorded in history. No one would visit Medina without attending the Imam's lectures to benefit from his knowledge. Many of the Islamic scholars would sit by the Imam humbly to learn from his knowledge, similar to a child sitting in

the presence of an honorable teacher. Many of the people who had benefited from the Imam's knowledge were non-Shias, such as Abu-Hanifa, the founder of the Hanafi school of thought.

Many students came from all over the Islamic territory to Medina to benefit from the Imam's knowledge, especially from Kufa, in Iraq, and Khorasan, in Iran. These students then travelled all over the Islamic territory. They played a key role in propagating the Islamic teachings and familiarizing the Muslims with the Imam. As a result, Khorasan provided the grounds for the followers of the Ahlul-Bayt after Kufa. It became the center for the emergence of the Abbasid uprising and the destruction of the Umayyads in the upcoming years.

Imam Baqir also had a few notable companions who greatly contributed in recording and spreading the Imam's knowledge. Muhammad ibn Muslim is one of those who recorded 30,000 narrations from the Imam, and was known as one of the most knowledgeable scholars among the Shias. Zurarah ibn A'yan was another notable companion and more than 1,200 narrations from Imam Baqir are narrated by him in the Fiqh books. Aban ibn Taqlib was a scholar whom the Imam had asked to sit in the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina and answer the people's questions regarding Islamic laws. With this, the Imam began to connect with people through his representatives. This strategy was further developed by the next Imams and became an effective method to propagate Shi'ism. Jabir ibn Yazid al-Ju'fi is another scholar who had recorded 70,000 secret narrations from Imam Baqir. He was instructed by the Imam to hide these narrations from the people. When he complained to the Imam that the knowledge in his chest burdened him, the Imam recommended that he go to a desert, dig a hole, and talk to the hole about his narrations.

5-6-During the Government of Hisham

5-6-1-Hisham ibn Abdul-Malik in Power⁵¹

⁵¹ 105 AH (Imam's age: 48)

After Yazid, his brother, Hisham, assumed power. He ruled for around 20 years and was the last powerful ruler of the Umayyads before their destruction. He was very picky and would personally supervise work-related affairs. He was very stingy, jealous, cruel, and heartless. He was the one who began hating Imam Sajjad ever since he saw the people respecting the Imam, while being indifferent to him near the Ka'ba during the Hajj season. His hatred and conspiracy encouraged his brother, Valeed, to order the poisoning and martyrdom of Imam Sajjad.

5-6-2-Hisham in Hajj

Imam Baqir used Hajj as an opportunity to introduce himself to the Muslims as the true source of the Islamic teachings. During the Hajj season, the Imam was surrounded by the crowds of pilgrims from all over the Islamic territory who were interested in finding convincing answers to their questions. The Imam was once seen sitting by the Ka'ba, and he did not leave his position until he responded to 1,000 of their Islamic Fiqh questions.

One year, Hisham went to Mecca for Hajj⁵² and saw the Muslims gather around Imam Baqir in large crowds to ask him their questions. Hisham was also informed by his brother that Imam Baqir's son, Imam Sadiq has delivered a powerful speech for the pilgrims about the honor and divine status of the Shia Imams. Hisham decided to humiliate Imam Baqir. He sent one scholar to ask the Imam some difficult questions, but the Imam was able to respond to all of the questions. The scholar returned to Hisham, admitting the Imam's knowledge. Hisham was very angry with the outcome, but he decided not to confront the Imam during Hajj. However, right after Hajj, he summoned the Imam and his son, Imam Sadiq, to his palace in Damascus to intimidate them.

5-6-3-The Imam Summoned to Damascus

When Imam Baqir arrived in Damascus, Hisham did not allow him to enter his palace for three days. On the fourth day, he accepted the Imam

⁵² Zu al-Hijjah, 106 AH (Imam's age: 49)

into his palace, where he had arranged for an archery exercise to humiliate the Imam. Hisham had assumed that the Imam was only a scholar and would not have any military skill. He insisted that the Imam participate in archery, but the Imam showed hesitation. The Imam finally accepted the challenge and shot an arrow which landed exactly on the target. He continued his archery and shot nine arrows in such a manner that each arrow landed on the tail of the previous arrow. Hisham was shocked by the Imam's skill and performance, and confessed that the Imam was the best archer he had ever witnessed.

Hisham later met the Imam and angrily asked him, "How is it that you are chosen by God for His knowledge while we are all from the same Arab origin?" The Imam responded that Prophet only chose Imam Ali for sharing his secrets by referring to this verse of the Quran [75:16], "Do not move your tongue too quickly to recite the Quran." and God revealed this verse for describing Imam Ali's status [69:12], "And that receptive ears might remember it." The Imam said that the Prophet taught 1,000 doors of knowledge to Imam Ali, and each door had 1,000 doors within it. The Imam said that this knowledge is passed down solely to us from Imam Ali. Hisham asked, "How did (Imam) Ali know the knowledge of the unknown while God has kept it solely for Himself?" The Imam responded by saying that God has revealed a book to His Prophet that contains the knowledge of the past and everything that will happen until the Day of judgment by referring to these verses of the Quran [16:89], "We have revealed to you the Book, as an explanation of all things, and guidance, and mercy, and good news for those who submit" and [36:12], "We have tallied all things in a clear record" and [6:38], "We neglected nothing in the Scripture." Hisham was unable to respond to the Imam's Quranic justifications, and eventually allowed the Imam to return to Medina.

When the Imam left Hisham's palace, he saw a crowd of Christians who were waiting to meet their most knowledgeable leader. Their leader would appear once a year to answer their questions. The Imam went among them as well. When the Christian leader saw the Imam and

realized that he was a Muslim, he decided to humiliate the Imam by asking him a challenging question. He asked the Imam how he could prove that the people in heaven eat and drink without any need to discharge. The Imam said, “The proof is a baby who is in a mother’s womb and eats without any discharge.” The Christian leader realized the Imam is a knowledgeable Muslim and asked him another question, “How would you prove that the fruits in heaven don’t decrease upon use?” The Imam replied, “The proof is similar to a candle flame that can light hundreds of other candles, yet its own light does not decrease.” The leader was shocked and asked the Imam another question, “When is the time which is neither a part of the day nor the night?” The Imam said, “This is the time between dawn and sunrise.” The leader then raised his voice and swore that the Imam would not be able to respond to his last question. He asked, “Who are the two who were born together and died together on the same day while one lived for 50 years and the other for 150?” The Imam said, “They are the Prophet Ezra (Uzair) and his twin brother. Ezra passed by a ruined town and asked God how He could bring them back to life after their death. God took his life for 100 years to show him His power. He died with his brother at the same time while he had lived for 100 years less than his brother.” The Christian leader felt humiliated and left the crowd, promising not to appear in front of them ever again. The news of the Imam’s debate with the Christian leader spread quickly in Damascus. Hisham feared people gathering around the Imam in the heart of his government, so he sent a messenger to the Imam, asking him to leave the city immediately.

Hisham sent a messenger to Madyan, a city between Damascus and Medina, which was historically the city of Prophet Shuaib (Jethro). Hisham introduced Imam Baqir and his son, Imam Sadiq, as unbelievers who had converted to Christianity and warned the people to avoid any greeting or trade with them. Hisham’s goal was for the Imam to perish by hunger during the long desert travel between Damascus and Medina. When the Imam arrived at Madyan, the people did not open the city doors to the Imam and used abusive language

toward him. The Imam talked to them, but they did not listen. Imam Baqir then went to a mountain overlooking the city, and recited the verses in the Quran that describe the story of Prophet Shuaib. The Imam continued his recitation until the verse [11:86], “What is left by God is best for you, if you are believers. And I am not a guardian over you.” The Imam then said, ‘I swear by God we are who God has left for you.’” A strong wind blew and took the Imam’s words to the city for everyone to hear. An old man screamed that the Imam is standing on a place that Prophet Shuaib would stand to invite the people of Madyan, and he warned the people to allow the Imam into the city before God’s punishment arrived. The people became frightened and opened the doors of the city to trade with the Imam. The Imam then safely returned to Medina after having confronted Hisham, defeating all of his conspiracies.

5-6-4-Peaceful Confrontation

Hisham hated Imam Baqir and his Shia followers. The Imam was under the most pressure during Hisham’s government. Hisham asked his governors to increase the pressure on the Shias and deprive them of their rights. He also banned the people of Iraq, who were the largest Shia community, from meeting the Imam freely in Medina. He ordered his governor in Kufa to kill Komait, a poet who had recited poetry to praise the status of Imam Baqir and the Ahlul-Bayt. Komait escaped from Kufa to save his life, but eventually had to recite poetry praising Hisham and his son to seek Hisham’s forgiveness. Hisham had also ordered the killing of Jabir ibn Yazid al-Ju’fi, one of the Imam’s notable companions. However, by the Imam’s secret message to Jabir, Jabir pretended to be insane and saved his life. The Imam had advised his followers to distance themselves from the Umayyads, and not to accept any governmental position.

Imam Baqir did not endorse any request from his followers for an uprising against the injustices of the Umayyads. Once, a Kufan man told the Imam that he has many loyal Shia followers in Kufa. The Imam replied by doubting their sincerity to him. He said that if 313 loyal

companions gather around an Imam, equaling the number of the Prophet's companions in the Battle of Badr, it is obligatory upon an Imam to rise up against the injustice of the government. In one incident, the Imam's brother, Zaid, wanted to initiate an uprising against the Umayyads. The Imam convinced him to change his mind by reminding him of the disloyal nature of the Kufans. Around seven years after the martyrdom of Imam Baqir, Zaid initiated an uprising against Hisham. Although Kufans had paid allegiance to support Zaid in secrecy, when Zaid initiated his uprising, only a fraction of them stayed loyal to him. Zaid fought bravely with his loyal army and was eventually martyred. This historical event supports Imam Baqir's wise decision to keep himself away from an uprising to save himself as the only source of guidance in that society during his time.

5-6-5-The Abbasid's Hidden Activities

The Abbasids, who were the children of the Prophet's uncle, Abbas, had started their hidden political activities against the Umayyads. They increased these hidden activities during the government of Hisham by sending delegates to Khorasan to take allegiance for the Prophet's family from the people on behalf of the government. This shows the public interest and respect that was present for the Ahlul-Bayt in the Islamic territory, including Khorasan. In the later years, the Abbasids took advantage of the people's love for the Ahlul-Bayt in order to replace the Umayyads with their own.

5-6-6-Martyrdom

Although Imam Baqir was pursuing a peaceful confrontation with the government, Hisham had hatred towards the Imam. Hisham feared the Imam's social popularity as the most knowledgeable person in society. The events that occurred during the Imam's visit to Damascus also influenced Hisham's decision to martyr the Imam. These events included the Imam's archery skills, his debate with Hisham leading to Hisham's humiliation, and his debate with the Christian leader, which spread the Imam's name among the Syrians. Thus, Ibrahim ibn Valeed, Hisham's nephew and the governor of Medina, poisoned the Imam by

Hisham's orders. There is historical evidence suggesting that the Imam might have been poisoned multiple times by the Umayyad rulers, but God had saved him.

As a result of the poisoning, the Imam became very sick. He informed everyone that he would not make it to the following day. When the Imam was on his deathbed, he made a will to his son, Imam Sadiq, to spend a part of his wealth to hold a mourning service in Mina during Hajj season for 10 years, to remind people about the oppression against him from the government. Imam Baqir also asked Imam Sadiq to bring some of the elders of Medina as witnesses for his will. In his will, he asked Imam Sadiq to take care of his burial and requested him to follow some specific instructions for his shroud and grave. Later, Imam Sadiq asked his father about the reason for having witnesses for such simple requests, to which Imam Baqir replied that he wanted to avoid any doubt after him, and have the people realize that Imam Sadiq was his rightful successor and the next Imam.

Imam Baqir's soul ascended, and he passed away on the 7th of Zu al-Hijjah, in the year 114 Hijri, at the age of 57. Imam Sadiq took care of his father's funeral and was followed by crowds of grieving Muslims. Imam Baqir was buried at the cemetery of Baqi' next to the graves of his father, Imam Sajjad (AS), and his great uncle, Imam Hasan (AS).

5-7-Conclusion

The Imamat of Imam Baqir was at the beginning of the second Islamic century. After a long political unrest that occurred following the tragedy of Karbala, power was finally stable in Banu Marwan's family, who were from the Umayyads. At that time, the Islamic society was under the influence of various false theological beliefs, and each one had its own set of followers. Islamic scholars had different opinions on Islamic laws and beliefs due to their different interpretations of the Quran and the Prophet's teachings. This was also impacted by the ban on narrations from the Prophet that was in place right after his demise, which discontinued the true teachings of the Prophet for the new generations

of the Muslims.

Imam Baqir, in almost 20 years of his Imamat, split the doors of Islamic knowledge and sciences from their divine source for the Muslims who were eager to learn it. The Imam provided the Muslims with authentic narrations from his forefathers and the Holy Prophet. He familiarized them with the correct interpretation of the Holy Quran and challenged the false beliefs that had spread through Islamic society. The Imam used every opportunity to connect the Muslims with true Islamic teachings, and revitalized them in society. The Imam had a better situation in the first half of his Imamat to spread his knowledge, due to the short-lived rulings of governors who did not find time to confront the Imam. However, during the second half of his Imamat, when Hisham established his government, Hisham put pressure on the Imam and his activities.

The time of Imam Baqir was different as compared to the time of Imam Sajjad. Imam Sajjad did not even have 20 followers within the entire cities of Mecca and Medina. Imam Baqir was instead surrounded by crowds of people who were interested to know more about true Islam. He created an Islamic university in Medina, where many students from all over the Islamic territory attended. These students later travelled through the Islamic territory, and introduced the people to the teachings of the Imam. This led to public awareness about the Ahlul-Bayt, which was one the main reasons for the destruction of the Umayyads in the upcoming years.

At the time of Imam Baqir, the people recognized the unlimited divine knowledge of an Imam. From then on, the Imams became the source of knowledge to address people's questions. The Imam's Shia followers learned Islamic laws regarding various aspects of their practices directly from the Imam's teachings, and they spread this knowledge to the other Muslims; whereas before they had to refer to other Muslims with their inquiries. Imam Baqir provided an environment for his son, Imam Sadiq, to continue and expand his scientific work to a much greater extent by training thousands of students. As a result, Imam Baqir and

5- Imam Baqir (AS): The Imam of Knowledge

Imam Sadiq have the largest number of narrations among all of the 12 Shia Imams, which are in the thousands, and are preserved for us until today. Therefore, the Shia school of thought would not have the scientific and cultural backbone without the efforts of these two Imams.

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IMAM BAQIR (AS):

“A scholar whose knowledge benefits the people is better than the worship of 70,000 worshippers.”

6- IMAM SADIQ (AS): THE IMAM OF JURISPRUDENCE

This chapter reviews the life of Imam Ja'far Sadiq (AS) and gives an overview of the complicated political instability during his lifetime. This critical period of history coincides with the change in power from the Umayyad to the Abbasid caliphate. This chapter also highlights the Imam's critical role in spreading knowledge and establishing the Ja'fari Shia school of thought as a prominent sect in Islam.

Please read this chapter in its entirety to avoid misunderstandings about the life of Imam Sadiq (AS).

6-1-Before the Government of Hisham

6-1-1-Birth

Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad, also known Sadiq or Aba-Abdullah, was born on the 17th of Rabi' al-Awwal in the year 83 Hijri in Medina. His birthday coincides with the birth anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The title of Sadiq, which means truthful, was originally given to him by the Prophet to distinguish him from another Ja'far from the Imam's lineage, who would later claim Imamah. Imam Sadiq was the oldest son of Imam Baqir (AS).

Imam Sadiq's mother was Um-Farwah, who was the most pious among the other ladies of her time. She was very knowledgeable in Islamic studies, and had recorded narrations from Imam Sajjad (AS) and Imam Baqir (AS). Her father, Qasim ibn Muhammad, was one of the renowned Islamic scholars of Medina during his time, and trusted by Imam Sajjad. She was from the descendants of Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr, who had grown up in the house of Imam Ali (AS) since childhood. Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr had always been loyal to Imam Ali, and was finally martyred during Imam Ali's government as his representative in Egypt.

6-1-2-During the Life of Imam Sajjad

Imam Sadiq was 11 years old when his grandfather, Imam Sajjad, was martyred. He grew up observing Imam Sajjad's prayers and efforts to guide the Muslims. Imam Sadiq had witnessed his grandfather, Imam Sajjad, narrating the supplications of al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya to his father, Imam Baqir, for documentation.

6-1-3-Childhood Years

Imam Sadiq was brought up under the care of his father, Imam Baqir. He participated in Imam Baqir's classes from early childhood. His intelligence and superior knowledge were well recognized amongst the students and companions of Imam Baqir. There are historical records indicating the Imam's gifted ability in responding to questions about

Islamic sciences, as well as the other sciences including natural sciences, history, and astronomy from a very young age. The Imam would challenge the established theories of his time with new theories, providing clear logical reasoning for them. One of the wide-spread theories that he disproved was that the sun and the moon rotate around the earth. The Imam also rejected Aristotle's 1,000 year-old theory that this world is made from four basic elements of soil, water, wind, and fire. The Imam instead stated that soil is not one element, but rather, it is composed of many other elements itself. He elaborated on the Quranic verses that state a human is made from soil, by mentioning that the human body is made from the elements that are found in soil but in varying proportions.

6-1-4-The Abbasid's Hidden Activities

Muhammad ibn Ali initiated the Abbasid's political activities against the Umayyads. He was from the descendants of Abbas, the Prophet's uncle. The Abbasids were also from the Prophet's clan of Banu Hashim, and had close ties and relationships with the Prophet's descendants through Lady Fatimah (SA). The Abbasids had claimed that Abu-Hashim, the grandson of Imam Ali from his son, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah, had asked Muhammad ibn Ali to follow his political activities prior to his death in Syria. He had also selected Muhammad ibn Ali as an Imam for his followers known as Kaysanites (or Kisaniyeh).

Muhammad ibn Ali initiated the hidden organization of the Abbasids during the government of Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz to encourage the people to rise up against the Umayyads⁵³. The Abbasids selected Kufa as the center for their secret organization while they were living undercover outside the city. They were only able to attract a small group of supporters in Kufa, as it was the center for the Shias who were mostly the followers of Imam Baqir and Imam Sadiq. In order to gain more support, they sent delegates to Khorasan to gather allegiance from the people. Their delegates would collect the Muslims' obligatory dues

⁵³ 100 AH (Imam's age: 17)

(Zakat) for the Abbasids to spend in this movement. They selected “al-Reza min Ale-Muhammad” as their slogan, implying that once they would gain power from the Umayyads, they would select a representative from the Prophet’s family as the caliph who all of us have consensus on. The most important aspect of this slogan was the intended ambiguity in its meaning. This slogan motivated and united many people to support the Abbasids’ movement, despite their differences in interpreting who would be the righteous representative from the Prophet’s family for the caliphate. The Abbasids also had strict orders for their delegates to not reveal the Abbasids as the leaders behind this movement, as this could endanger their lives by the Umayyads. More importantly, the exposure of their names as the representatives from the Prophet’s family would not attract the people’s trust towards their movement. This was because the Abbasids were not directly from the Prophet’s lineage, but were from his relatives, and they were not well-known in society.

6-2-During the Government of Hisham

6-2-1-The Imam Summoned to Damascus

Imam Baqir used the Hajj as an opportunity to connect with Muslims from all over the Islamic world. There were no major restrictions which would be imposed on him in Medina by the Umayyads. Imam Sadiq would accompany his father during his trips as his right hand. One year, Hisham ibn Abdul-Malik, the Umayyad caliph, went to Mecca for Hajj where he witnessed large crowds of Muslims gathered around Imam Baqir to ask questions⁵⁴. Hisham was also informed by his brother that Imam Sadiq has delivered an impressive speech for the pilgrims about the honor and divine status of the Shia Imams. Hisham, who felt inferior to the Imams, did not find the time suitable to confront them during the Hajj. However, right after Hajj, he summoned the Imams to his palace in Damascus to attempt to intimidate them. During this trip,

⁵⁴ Zu al-Hijjah, 106 AH (Imam’s age: 23)

Hisham failed in his multiple attempts to defame and insult the Imams. The Imams further spread their names and the Shia beliefs among the Syrians by debating with Hisham and the Christian leader, and delivered multiple speeches to the people of Damascus and Madyan.

6-2-2-Martyrdom of Imam Baqir⁵⁵

Imam Sadiq was 31 years old when his father, Imam Baqir, was poisoned and was on his deathbed. Imam Baqir made a will for Imam Sadiq to spend a portion of his wealth to hold a mourning service in Mina during the Hajj season for 10 years. He wanted to remind the Muslims about the oppression against him from the Umayyads. Imam Baqir also asked Imam Sadiq to bring some of the elders of Medina as witnesses for his will. In his will, he asked Imam Sadiq to take care of his burial and requested him to follow specific instructions for his shroud and grave. Later, Imam Sadiq asked his father about the reason for taking witnesses for such simple requests. Imam Baqir replied that he wanted the people to realize that Imam Sadiq was his rightful successor and the next Imam, and to avoid any doubts after him. Imam Sadiq took care of his father's funeral, and was followed by crowds of grieving Muslims. The fact that Imam Sadiq took on this responsibility was also another sign of his Imamat, since only an Imam can perform the funeral rites of another Imam. Furthermore, Imam Baqir's lineage was only continued through his eldest son, Imam Sadiq. Imam Baqir was buried in the cemetery of Baqi' next to the graves of his father, Imam Sajjad (AS), and his great uncle, Imam Hasan (AS).

6-2-3-Hisham and the Imam

Hisham ruled for around 20 years, and was the last powerful ruler of the Umayyads before their destruction. Unlike his predecessors, he was very particular and would personally supervise work-related affairs. Hisham was very stingy, jealous, cruel, and heartless. There are insufficient historical records about the relationship between Imam Sadiq and Hisham during this time. However, the pressure on the Imam

⁵⁵ 7 Zu al-Hijjah, 114 AH (Imam's age: 31)

from Hisham and his government can be easily inferred. Hisham's hatred towards Imam Sajjad began when he saw the people respecting the Imam around the Ka'ba during the Hajj season, and being completely indifferent to him. This incident eventually caused him to encourage his brother, Valeed, to order the poisoning and martyrdom of Imam Sajjad. Hisham's animosity did not stop there, as he was also hostile toward Imam Baqir and his Shia followers. Eventually, he ordered his governor in Medina to poison and martyr Imam Baqir. At this time, Imam Sadiq became the Imam after his father. Imam Sadiq had to bear Hisham's oppression for the rest of his government of about 10 years. During that decade, Imam Sadiq fulfilled his father's will to arrange mourning services for him during the annual Hajj pilgrimage, to remind the people about the Umayyad's oppression against Imam Baqir. Imam Sadiq followed his father's policy during Hisham's government, and recommended that his followers distance themselves from the illegitimate Umayyad government and their judicial system.

6-2-4-The Imam's Scientific Contribution

Imam Sadiq took full control of the Islamic university that his father, Imam Baqir, had established in Medina. The Imam brought this university to the height of its prosperity by training thousands of students. In this university, the Imam emphasized to his students that they document his teachings. The names of around 4,000 of the Imam's students who have narrated his teachings have been recorded in history. Each one of them recorded many narrations from the Imam and spread them amongst the Muslims all over the Islamic world. As a result, the Imam became very well-known among the Muslims, and many referred to him to benefit from his knowledge.

The Imam trained many distinguished scientists of his time who were experts in one or more scientific fields. They not only spread what they learned from the Imam in his university, but also authored books and conducted research in different fields. The Imam had full trust in the knowledge of these individuals. He would frequently refer people who wanted to ask him questions, or to debate with him on a particular

subject, to his distinguished companions who were experts in that subject. Aban ibn Taqlib was one such scholar whose knowledge was exceptional in Islamic law, Arabic literature, interpretation of the Quran, and traditions of the Prophet. Imam Baqir had asked him to sit in the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina to answer questions regarding Islamic laws. Aban alone recorded 30,000 narrations from Imam Sadiq. Muhammad ibn Muslim was another scholar who recorded 16,000 narrations from the Imam, and was known as one of the most knowledgeable scholars amongst the Shias. Hisham ibn Hakam was another scholar who was a master in Ilm al-Kalam, which is the study of Islamic doctrine that involves defending Islamic principles against skeptics. It is said that no one could defeat him in a debate, despite his young age. He also authored many books related to Islamic sciences. Zurarah ibn A'yan was yet another scholar who was an expert in Islamic law. His narrations from Imam Baqir and Imam Sadiq on various topics of Islamic law are still available today. The majority of authors of the famous 400 Usul (principles) books are also the companions of Imam Sadiq. These 400 books are the most authentic narrations in the Shia school of thought, which were dictated by the Shia Imams to their companions for documentation. The narrations from these books were classified by Shia scholars in the centuries later, and generated the top narration books for the Shia school of thought.

Imam Sadiq laid down the foundation for all Muslims, including non-Shias, to benefit from his teachings. Among them were the famous Islamic scholars, Abu-Hanifa and Malik ibn Anas, the founders of the Hanafi and Maliki schools of thought, respectively. Abu-Hanifa was a student of the Imam for two years. He had said, "If it wasn't for those two years, I would have perished." Malik ibn Anas was another student of the Imam in Medina. He had said that whenever he came to the Imam, he would see the Imam fasting, praying, or reciting supplications. In the decades that followed, Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i, the founder of the Shafi'i school of thought, became a prominent student of Malik ibn Anas. Also, later, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the founder of the Hanbali school of thought, became a student of Muhammad ibn Idris

al-Shafi'i. Therefore, all four schools of thought in the Sunni sect of Islam have benefitted from the Imam's knowledge, either directly or indirectly and their interpretations of the Islamic law were influenced by his teachings. Even today, Imam Sadiq is highly regarded in all four Sunni schools of thought. Narrations from Imam Sadiq can be found in prominent Sunni books, including Sahih Muslim, Sunan Abu-Dawood, Jami' at-Tirmidhi, Muwatta' Malik, Sunan Ibn Majah, and Sunan an-Nasa'i. These books are amongst the Kutub al-Sittah, which are the primary books of narrations in the Sunni sect of Islam. The only book within Kutub al-Sittah that has not mentioned any narration from Imam Sadiq is Sahih al-Bukhari.

The Imam's teachings were focused on Islamic science. However, the Muslims also benefited from the Imam's knowledge in the other sciences of the time. Currently, there are many books and written documents available on various sciences that are attributed to the Imam. These documents serve as evidence to show the wide extent of knowledge spread by the Imam. These documents cover a wide array of topics, including several interpretations of the Holy Quran, multiple documents on the benefits of reciting various chapters of the Holy Quran, Misbah al-Shari'ah, which is a collection of the recommendations on ethics, many supplications and prayers, Risala al-Ehlilajeh and Tauheed-e-Mufazzal on the wonders of nature, al-Jafr, which contains hidden knowledge about the events in the future, books on the interpretation of dreams, astronomy, and auspicious or inauspicious aspects of various times and days of the year, and multiple books on medicine and curing diseases.

The Imam also trained distinguished scholars in these scientific fields. Jabir ibn Hayyan was the Imam's student, and is famous for his articles in chemistry, though he was also an expert in the other sciences of his time. Discoveries of multiple metals and chemical compounds such as nitric acid and hydrochloric acid, as well as several chemical processes such as distillation and crystallization, are attributed to him. Among his publications is a 1,000-page collection, which contains 500 of his

scientific articles.

6-2-5-Zaid's Uprising

Zaid was the son of Imam Sajjad and the uncle of Imam Sadiq. He believed in the Imamat of his nephew, Imam Sadiq. He was a pious and knowledgeable man with a revolutionary spirit. Hisham recognized the threat that Zaid would pose to his government, and decided to warn him by summoning him to his palace in Damascus. When Zaid arrived at Hisham's palace, Hisham treated him disrespectfully and humiliated him. Hisham also accused Zaid of receiving a large amount of illegitimate wealth from Khalid, the previous governor of Kufa. Zaid refused Hisham's accusation, but Hisham forced him to travel to Kufa and asked the governor of Kufa to bring Zaid and Khalid face to face. In their encounter, Khalid rejected Hisham's claim that Zaid received any wealth from him, exposing Hisham's plot to defame Zaid. The governor of Kufa, who knew that Zaid had many supporters in the city, then forced him to immediately leave for Medina at Hisham's order.

When Zaid left Kufa, many rushed to him and insisted that he rise up against the injustices of the Umayyads. Due to their insistence, Zaid secretly returned to Kufa, and over the period of several months, tens of thousands from Kufa and the other cities paid allegiance to him in support of his uprising. The governor of Kufa, who had realized the imminent threat of Zaid's uprising, was searching for him in Kufa. This forced Zaid to initiate his uprising earlier than he had planned. Also, the Umayyads plotted a conspiracy to create division among Zaid's troops. They sent some elders to question Zaid about his belief about the first and the second caliphs. Zaid, who didn't want to cause division among his diverse troops, refused to condemn the first and the second caliphs. The Umayyad's plot worked, and Zaid's response caused great disappointment among his extreme Shia supporters and they left him. Eventually, Zaid went into battle with his remaining troops and fought bravely with the Umayyads. In the end, an arrow hit Zaid's forehead.

He became severely injured and was martyred⁵⁶.

After Zaid's martyrdom, his companions decided to hide his body by burying him under a creek. However, an individual who had witnessed the burial revealed the secret location to the government. They beheaded Zaid and sent his head to Hisham in Damascus. They hanged his naked body in the waste dumping neighborhood of Kufa, known as Kunaseh, to instill fear in the hearts of the people. Zaid's body was hanged for the rest of Hisham's government, for around 4 years. When Hisham's successor, Valeed ibn Yazid, came into power, he ordered Zaid's body to be burned and his ashes thrown in the Euphrates River.

Historical records suggest that Zaid's uprising was approved by Imam Sadiq, but due to life threats from the Umayyads, the Imam could not publicly endorse it. Moreover, Zaid's uprising was initiated in hiding, and any public approval by the Imam could have exposed his plans. Zaid had discussed his intentions with the Imam, and the Imam had given him the choice for his uprising. The Imam knew that an uprising by a great character like Zaid would have a significant impact on removing the legitimacy of the Umayyads. It would also serve the Islamic ritual of enjoining good and forbidding evil in society. However, the Imam had informed Zaid about his fate, that he would be killed and hanged in Kufa in the case of initiating an uprising. When Imam Sadiq heard the news of the martyrdom of his Uncle Zaid, he cried and mourned for him. The Imam also distributed some wealth among the families of the martyrs of Zaid's uprising. The Imam always remembered Zaid with greatness, and said that if Zaid had succeeded, he would have returned the government to the Imam as the true successor of the Prophet.

Zaid's martyrdom and the brutality against his body increased the hatred of the people against the injustices of the Umayyads. The people began sympathizing with the Prophet's family. This tragedy also influenced the people in Khorasan, who were under the influence of

⁵⁶ 3 Safar, 122 AH (Imam's age: 38)

the hidden activities of the Abbasids, to be more willing to support their uprising in hopes to return the government back to the Prophet's family. Zaid had intended to rise against Hisham in the years earlier, but Imam Baqir had advised him to avoid the uprising, which he obeyed. If Zaid had initiated his uprising earlier, his martyrdom would have been without any result, as Hisham had a stable and long government. However, his martyrdom in the last few years of Hisham's government increased the public awareness and hatred against the Umayyads, which showed itself in the uprisings and the instability that initiated after Hisham's death.

Zaid believed in the Imamat of his nephew, Imam Sadiq. Despite this, after his martyrdom, some Shias separated their path from Imam Sadiq, and created a faction in Shi'ism. They were called the Zaidis, and believed that anyone from the Prophet's lineage who initiates an uprising against the cruel government is the Imam of the time. This belief was clearly against the lifestyle of the previous Imams, such as Imam Hasan, and Zaid's father, Imam Sajjad. The Zaidis accused Imam Sadiq of not believing in an uprising against the injustice. The Imam rejected their accusation, and stated that he could not equate his knowledge with their ignorance. Although the Imam's loyal Shia followers had accepted him as their sole religious and political leader, the Zaidis were able to recruit from the Shia extremists and other people who had sympathy for the Prophet's family. The Zaidis caused a serious problem for Imam Sadiq, and undermined his leadership in the Shia community. History proved that Imam Sadiq's leadership consolidated the Ja'fari Shia as an important Islamic school of thought, while the Zaidis engaged in various uprisings, became a weakened minority, and lost their scientific backbone as an independent school of thought in Islam.

6-3-During the Government of Valeed II

6-3-1-Valeed II in Power

Hisham passed away after a long period of being in power for about 20

years. Following Hisham's death⁵⁷, his nephew, Valeed ibn Yazid or Valeed II, assumed power. The Umayyad government had been under the control of Abdul-Malik ibn Marwan's sons for many years. Valeed II was the first grandson of Abdul-Malik ibn Marwan to assume power. He was very corrupt, and would publicly indulge in sinful behavior. He would openly drink alcohol and sing poetry in praise of alcoholism. Once, he wanted to openly drink alcohol in the vicinity of the Holy Ka'ba, but feared the reaction of the Muslims and changed his mind. He would openly insult Islam, the Prophet, and the Holy Quran.

6-3-2-Yahya's Uprising

Yahya was Zaid's son, and supported his father during his uprising. After Zaid's martyrdom, Yahya fled to Khorasan to save his life. He lived there undercover for about four years, until Hisham's death. He was arrested at the time of Valeed II's rule, but was pardoned and released. Yahya was ordered to come to Damascus to meet Valeed II, but he preferred to stay in Khorasan and initiated his uprising against the injustices of the Umayyads. With just 70 companions, he went into battle against the governor of Abar-Shahr in current day Neyshabur, Iran, with an army of about 10,000 soldiers. Yahya and his companions were able to kill the governor and defeat his army. Yahya then moved to other distant cities of Khorasan. He eventually fought another battle against the Umayyads at Jowzjan in current day Afghanistan. Yahya fought for three days. Like his father, Yahya was struck by an arrow in his forehead and died at the age of 18⁵⁸. The Umayyad's army beheaded his body, and sent his head to Damascus for Valeed II. Yahya was killed like his father and his headless body was hanged for a few years like his father.

Yahya's death and the brutality to his body incited hatred against the Umayyads in Khorasan, where he was killed. The Abbasids, who did not support the uprisings of Zaid nor his son Yahya, were now utilizing

⁵⁷ Rabi' al-Thani, 125 AH (Imam's age: 42)

⁵⁸ 125 AH (Imam's age: 42)

their names for their own agenda. The Abbasid's delegates, who were secretly inviting the people of Khorasan for a government led by a representative from the Prophet's family, used Yahya's death as a clear example of the Umayyad's oppression against the Prophet's family. This led to a significant increase in support for the Abbasids, specifically for Abu-Muslim, who later became their main leader in Khorasan. Abu-Muslim, who wanted to incite people for his uprising, promised them revenge for Yahya's blood. Yahya's body was hanged in Jowzjan for a few years, until Abu-Muslim seized Jowzjan from the Umayyads during his uprising. He then respectfully buried Yahya's headless body, and took revenge against all of his killers. The people of Khorasan mourned for Yahya for seven days, and named their newborns Yahya or Zaid in their memory during that year.

Yahya's uprising was self-motivated and started in Khorasan, far from the Imam's residence in Medina. Imam Sadiq did not endorse his uprising, and was actually worried about Yahya's fate. Yahya's uprising only benefited the Abbasids' hidden movement, and helped them recruit more people from Khorasan.

6-3-3-Establishment of Ja'fari Shia School of Thought

Hisham's death marked the beginning of a downhill spiral that led to the destruction of the Umayyad caliphate. This period of turmoil lasted about seven years, and was the ideal opportunity for the Imam to expand his scientific contributions without any significant pressure from the Umayyads. Imam Sadiq took full advantage of this opportunity to accelerate the propagation of the Islamic sciences to their peak. None of the other Imams ever had such an opportunity in their lifetime. The number of narrations recorded from Imam Sadiq is the highest amongst all of the Shia Imams. The Imam would always recommend that his students document his narrations for the future, when they would not have access to him. Similar to tradesmen who would load their animals with trading articles to sell in other cities, the scholars would load their animals with the books from Imam Sadiq's teachings, and spread the Imam's knowledge all around the Islamic

territory. One of these cities was Kufa, which was the center of Shi'ism since the short government of Imam Ali. Close to 900 scholars are recorded to have narrated sayings of Imam Sadiq in the Mosque of Kufa. This shows the extent of the spread of Imam's knowledge in this city. Thousands of narrations from the Imam have survived throughout history until today. These narrations encompass various subjects of the Islamic sciences. The Imam's teachings established Shi'ism as a prominent school of thought among the sects of Islam. As a result, similar to other schools of thought, like Hanafi and Maliki that were named after their founders, the Shia school of thought was also named Ja'fari, after Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq. This name was used not only by the Imam's followers, but also by other Muslims to refer to the Imam's teachings ever since his time.

6-3-4-The Imam: Source of Guidance

As a result of the opportunity that was available to the Imam, he became very well-known among the Muslims as a prominent Islamic scholar, an elder from the Prophet's descendants, and a spiritual leader. The Imam was respected by all of the Muslims, and many referred to him to benefit from his knowledge and advice. There are also many words of wisdom and advice narrated from the Imam. Among the Imam's advice is the Risala al-ahvaziyah, which is in response to Najashi, the governor of Ahvaz in Iran, who had asked the Imam for advice on his government. Another general letter is the Imam's advice to his Shia followers on instructions for a lifestyle and behaviors as a true Shia Muslim. In this letter, the Imam had requested his Shia followers to be good Muslims, as they are affiliated with him, and their negative actions would be a reflection on him. Hadith Unwan al-Basri is another set of recommendations that the Imam told Unwan al-Basri, a 94-year old man who wanted to use the Imam's knowledge but the Imam could not benefit him due to the restrictions upon him from the government at the time. The Imam instead told him a set of recommendations for purifying the soul and acquiring knowledge.

The Imam would use the Hajj as an opportunity to connect with the

Muslims from all over the Islamic territory. Many Muslims would come annually for the Hajj pilgrimage, and this was the best time for the Imam to answer their questions. The Imam would organize meetings with the pilgrims so they could ask him their questions. No one left the Imam, unless the Imam provided him with a satisfactory answer. The Imam would answer each person in his own language, which further illustrated his divine knowledge.

6-3-5-Ibrahim Imam: The Abbasid's New Leader⁵⁹

Muhammad ibn Ali, the founder of the Abbasid's movement, died after more than two decades of political activities. He selected his oldest son, Ibrahim, as his successor prior to his death. Ibrahim became known as Ibrahim Imam. Ibrahim Imam received approval for his leadership from the delegates of the Abbasids, and became the number one person in their movement.

At that time, the Abbasids accelerated their hidden efforts in Khorasan. They had strategically selected Khorasan, as it was located at the boundary of the Islamic territory, and was far from the capital, Damascus, in Syria. The Umayyads could not have full authority over Khorasan, and could not easily remove the brewing threat. The Umayyad's internal conflict had manifested itself in Khorasan, as the Arab tribes living in Khorasan split into two. One group was against the Umayyads, while the other group was in support of them. This internal conflict not only weakened the Umayyad's power, but also led the Umayyad's opponents to be easily attracted to the Abbasid's movement. The people of Khorasan had also become compassionate towards the Prophet's family. Yahya's martyrdom in Khorasan had a great impact in recognizing the oppression of the Prophet's family by the Umayyads. Furthermore, many of the Iranians had become frustrated with the Umayyad's discriminations against them. The Umayyads regarded the non-Arabs as an inferior race, and would deprive them of equal social rights as the Arabs. This was clearly against the teachings of the

⁵⁹ 125 AH (Imam's age: 42)

Prophet, who had treated all of the Muslims the same, regardless of their race or origin. These various factors led to the popularity of the Abbasid's movement in Khorasan. While the supporters of the Abbasids were diverse and had different motivations for their support, they were all united in their hostility against the Umayyads.

Imam Sadiq had urged his followers to avoid participating in any wars aiming to obtain power. He had advised them to investigate the intentions and the leaders behind any call for uprising which used his name. He had reminded them that they did not have two lives, and if they died, they would not be given another chance to repent from their actions. While the Imam had ordered his Shia followers to avoid participating in the Abbasids uprising, they were still able to deceive and recruit the Shias of Khorasan. Unlike the Shias in Kufa, who mostly followed Imam Sadiq as their sole religious and political leader and were in close communication with him in Medina, the majority of the Shias in Khorasan only sympathized with the Prophet's family. They were unaware of the different opinions within the Shia community and among the Prophet's family. They only had love and respect for Imam Sadiq as a descendent of the Prophet. They were against the oppression of the Prophet's lineage by the Umayyads, such as in the tragedy of Karbala, and the murders of Zaid and Yahya. Historical evidence show the presence of representatives in Khorasan, and their difficulties in inviting the people to the true teachings of Imam Sadiq. Thus, the real Shias following Imam Sadiq as their sole religious and political leader were a minority in the Khorasan region. Ibrahim Imam had asked his delegates to avoid contacting them for the uprising, as they could reveal the real intention of the Abbasids to the people of Khorasan.

6-4-During the Government of Yazid III

6-4-1-Yazid III in Power

Due to Valeed II's sinful behavior and corrupt character, Hisham wanted to remove him as his successor. However, Hisham passed away before implementing his decision. When Valeed II assumed power, he

confiscated Hisham and his children's wealth, removed Hisham's governors, tortured those who had approved Hisham's decision to remove him as Hisham's successor, and appointed his two sons as his successors. Valeed II's actions and corruption caused division among the Umayyads. His opponents, under the leadership of his cousin, Yazid ibn Valeed, or Yazid III, prepared an army and invaded Damascus. They defeated the army of Valeed II and killed him⁶⁰. Valeed II's caliphate ended after a short period of more than a year, and Yazid III assumed power after him.

6-4-2-Confrontation with the False Theological Beliefs

Imam Sadiq continued his father's policy against the false theological beliefs of his time, and strongly confronted them. Some of these theological beliefs existed from the time of Imam Baqir, such as Jabriyah, Qadariyah, and the Ghulat. However, some theologies emerged at the time of Imam Sadiq, such as atheism and Mu'tazila. The Imam would debate with the leaders of these false theologies, and defeat them to reveal the reality to the Muslims. The Imam was frequently contacted by his followers from all over the Islamic territory who were looking for persuasive reasoning to the doubts raised by the followers of these theologies. The Imam would guide them by providing them with justifiable reasoning.

Ironically, one of the newly emerged theologies at the time of Imam Sadiq was atheism, which was being openly spread among the Muslims. During the stressful times of unrest and political turmoil in society, the atheists not only could deny the Prophecy of the Holy Prophet, but could also openly deny the existence of God, which goes against the most basic principle of Islam. They would freely create doubts among the Muslims and propagate their theology, even next to the tomb of the Holy Prophet in Medina.

The Imam would debate with the leaders of the atheists. He would patiently listen to their false reasonings and justifications. He would

⁶⁰ Jumada al-Thani, 126 AH (Imam's age: 43)

then negate their arguments by presenting them with clear evidence. In addition to the intellectual evidence, in his debates, the Imam used natural evidence about the wonders of the creation to guide the atheists to the Almighty Creator. On one occasion, the Imam spoke to them about the wonders behind the creation of just an egg. On another occasion, the Imam debated with an Indian physician who didn't believe in the existence of God. The Imam's debate is known as Risala al-Ehlilajeh, because in the debate, the Imam referred to halile, an herbal grain the Indian physician was using to prepare his medicine.

In another incident, the Imam's close companion, Mufazzal ibn Umar, encountered the leaders of the atheists next to the tomb of the Prophet. He came to the Imam disappointed with their audacity. To console him, the Imam asked Mufazzal to meet with him so the Imam could tell Mufazzal about the philosophy and wisdom behind God's creations. He attended four sessions with the Imam, and documented his teachings. During the first session, the Imam spoke to him about the wonders and wisdom behind the creation of human beings. In the second session, the Imam talked about the wonders behind the creation of animals. In the third session, the Imam discussed the other wonders of nature, such as the sun, the sky, the day, the night, and the plants. In the last session, the Imam spoke about the wisdom behind the disasters and calamities of this world, and answered the false reasoning of the atheists, who used the calamities in this world as a sign of no God. Mufazzal's documentation from the Imam is known as Tauheed-e-Mufazzal, which is full of wisdom and scientifically valuable information. For instance, the Imam had discussed the blood circulation in the human body hundreds of years prior to its discovery.

Another false theology that emerged during the time of Imam Sadiq was Mu'tazila. This theology was created as a result of internal arguments between the non-Shia Islamic scholars. Mu'tazila developed the principles of its own theology by preferring intellectual reasoning over the pure narrations. In some areas, they adopted the beliefs of the other theologies, such as Qadariyah and the Shia school of thought.

However, they developed their theology in other areas, and introduced themselves as a separate theology. The debates of Imam Sadiq and his notable companion, Hisham ibn Hakam, with the leaders of Mu'tazila are recorded in history. One of the topics of the Imam's debates with Mu'tazila was the Shia concept of Imamat. During the political unrest in the Umayyad's government, the leaders of Mu'tazila came to the Imam and informed him about their candidate for the caliphate. They asked for the Imam's support, as the Imam was a spiritual character in society and had many followers. The Imam challenged their decision by asking them several questions about their ruling strategy after they would acquire power. Through his challenge, the Imam revealed their lack of knowledge about the Islamic laws and how to rule the government. The Imam showed them that there would be no difference between the Umayyads and their potential government. He then refused to endorse their candidate.

The Imam followed his father's policy against the Ghulat, who would exaggerate the status of Imam Sadiq and the other Ahlul-Bayt, and would regard them at the level of God. The Ghulat were active in Kufa, which was the center for Shi'ism and the followers of Imam Sadiq. Their intention for propagating their false belief was to gather followers and gain political power. Their false theology not only caused a division among the Shia community, but also defamed Shia beliefs in the eyes of the other Muslims, and decelerated the expansion of Shi'ism in the society. The Imam publicly rejected and cursed the Ghulat's leaders for giving incorrect attributes to the Ahlul-Bayt and himself. The Imam described their belief to be worse than the beliefs of the atheists, and warned his followers against having any relationships with them.

6-5-During the Government of Ibrahim

6-5-1-Ibrahim ibn Valeed in Power

Yazid III passed away⁶¹ after a short caliphate of about six months. His

⁶¹ Zu al-Hijjah, 126 AH (Imam's age: 43)

brother, Ibrahim ibn Valeed, assumed power as Yazid III's successor. Ibrahim ibn Valeed was the governor of Medina at the time of Hisham, and was responsible for the poisoning and martyrdom of Imam Baqir. At his time, there was turmoil in the government, and only a small group of Syrians accepted him as the caliph. Many other Syrians objected to his authority, including Marwan ibn Muhammad, or Marwan II, who was an army leader and the governor of Northern Iraq, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. He moved his army towards Damascus and defeated Ibrahim ibn Valeed's army in a fierce battle. Marwan II gained power in Syria and introduced himself as the new Umayyad caliph. Ibrahim ibn Valeed resigned from the caliphate after a short government of about two months and paid allegiance to Marwan II⁶².

6-5-2-Al-Abwa Meeting⁶³

After years of hidden activities, the Abbasids had gathered many followers in Khorasan. They had called people to the caliphate of a representative from the Prophet's family. However, the Prophet's descendants were still politically neutral. The Abbasids needed their political activities to seem as if they were supported by the Prophet's lineage. The Abbasids also feared an independent uprising from the Prophet's lineage, as they could have caused a great division among their followers. This was because the Prophet's lineage was more well-known in society than the Abbasids, who were just the relatives of the Prophet. The Abbasids knew that they could not exploit Imam Sadiq, the most well-known character from the Prophet's lineage, so they decided to deceive the other descendants of the Prophet by turning them towards themselves.

The Abbasids organized a hidden meeting with the Prophet's descendants from the children of Imam Hasan and the other elders of Banu Hashim in al-Abwa, a place between Mecca and Medina, during the Hajj Season. In this meeting, the Abbasids urged the attendees to

⁶² 14 Safar, 127 AH (Imam's age: 43)

⁶³ Hajj Season, 126 AH (Imam's age: 43)

select someone from amongst themselves as the next caliph. One of the attendees was Abdullah ibn Hasan, an elder from the children of Imam Hasan. He was known as Abdullah Mahz, since he was the grandson of Imam Hasan from his father's side, and the grandson of Imam Hossein from his mother's side. After Imam Sadiq, Abdullah Mahz was the most influential person among the Prophet's lineage. Abdullah Mahz introduced his oldest son, Muhammad ibn Abdullah, as the promised 'Mahdi' by the Prophet, who would be the savior of the Prophet's nation at the time when the injustice prevailed in the world. He urged everyone to pay allegiance to his son, and everyone accepted it. They knew that Imam Sadiq would not have allowed the Abbasids to deceive the others if he had been present in their meeting. After they selected Muhammad ibn Abdullah, who was also known as Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, or "Muhammad The Pure Soul", as their next caliph, they demanded Imam Sadiq's presence and approval.

Upon the Imam's arrival, they asked him to pay allegiance to Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya as the 'Mahdi'. The Imam rejected their false nomination and said, "The 'Mahdi's' time has not yet come and he is not the 'Mahdi'." The Imam expressed his willingness to pay allegiance to Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya if his intention was for an uprising against the Umayyads to advocate for the religion, enjoin the good, and forbid the evil. The Imam's statement resulted in a harsh reaction from Abdullah Mahz, who accused the Imam of jealousy towards his son. The Imam rejected his accusation and said that the caliphate would not reach Abdullah Mahz nor his two sons, but would instead reach the Abbasids. The Imam predicted that Ibrahim Imam's brothers, Saffah and Mansur from the Abbasids, would be the next caliphs, who were ironically present in the meeting. The Imam also told Abdullah Mahz that his two sons would be killed, and he revealed their killer, Mansur, who had ironically paid allegiance to Muhammad. When the people dispersed, Mansur came to Imam Sadiq and asked, "Will I truly become a caliph?" and the Imam confirmed his previous prophecy. The hidden meeting at al-Abwa ended, with the Abbasids having successfully drawn some of the Prophet's descendants to use

them for their agenda to gain power. They had ensured that the Prophet's descendants would not have an independent uprising to threaten their activities.

6-6-During the Government of Marwan II

6-6-1-Abdullah ibn Muawiyah's Uprising⁶⁴

Abdullah ibn Muawiyah was from Banu Hashim, the Prophet's clan. He was from the descendants of Ja'far ibn Abi-Talib, the great companion of the Prophet who was martyred in the Battle of Mu'tah during the life of the Prophet. When Abdullah ibn Muawiyah traveled to Kufa and witnessed the lack of unity in power due to the internal turmoil amongst the Umayyads, he decided to rise against them. He collected allegiance from the opponents of the Umayyads. Abdullah initially took over control of Kufa, but after being defeated by the Umayyads, he fled to Iran. Abdullah established a government in central parts of Iran, and called upon the people to pay allegiance to him as their new ruler. The expansion of his territory at the time when the Umayyads were weak attracted some people towards his government. Among those who migrated to him for power and wealth were the Abbasids, namely their first two caliphs, Saffah and Mansur, who were not well-known in the public eye and were looking to gain power. After about two years, Abdullah was defeated again by the Umayyads and fled to Khorasan in the hope of getting support from Abu-Muslim, who had started the Abbasid's uprising in Khorasan. However, Abu-Muslim feared the emergence of a rival for himself in Khorasan, and killed Abdullah and his companions.

Abdullah ibn Muawiyah's uprising was not obviously endorsed by Imam Sadiq, as Abdullah was looking for his own power. Abdullah's followers were mostly Zaidi Shias and the Ghulat. Neither of these groups followed Imam Sadiq as their sole religious and political leader. His uprising further undermined the power of the Shia community, and

⁶⁴ 127 AH (Imam's age: 44)

provided the Abbasids with the opportunity to accelerate their independent activities against the Umayyads.

6-6-2-Abu-Muslim's Uprising

After nearly three decades of political activities, the delegates of the Abbasids found the situation in Khorasan suitable for a rebellion against the Umayyads. They contacted Ibrahim Imam, urged him to approve a military uprising, and he accepted. During the Hajj season, Ibrahim Imam met Abu-Muslim, a brave, young, loyal, talented Iranian, and selected him as his representative for Khorasan. He asked Abu-Muslim to initiate the uprising in Khorasan, and appointed him as the governor for every land that he seized. He also gave him a black cloth as the flag for his army, which later became the flag of the Abbasids during their government. The black color symbolically represented that they were mourning the oppression of the Umayyads against the family of the Prophet. Their intention was to trigger the emotions of the people, and to incite them towards their uprising. Ibrahim Imam suggested that Abu-Muslim massacre every person who was against their uprising, or was a supporter of the Umayyads.

Abu-Muslim initiated his uprising in a village close to the city of Merv, in the current Mary, Turkmenistan⁶⁵. In one night, the residents of about 60 villages in that area joined him. The governor of Khorasan asked the Umayyad Caliph, Marwan II, to recruit an army. However, Marwan II could not support him, as he was dealing with internal conflicts in his government. Due to his politics, Abu-Muslim did not allow the Arab tribes in Khorasan to be reunited to support the Umayyads. Over a period of around two-and-a-half years of continuous military combat, Abu-Muslim seized all of Khorasan, and moved his army towards Iraq. His army could finally enter Kufa without any notable resistance from the Umayyads⁶⁶.

Upon achieving power, Abu-Muslim killed all of his rivals in Khorasan.

⁶⁵ 25 Ramazan, 129 AH (Imam's age: 46)

⁶⁶ 14 Muharram, 132 AH (Imam's age: 48)

He killed everyone who was against him, including the delegates of the Abbasids, and the tribal leaders. He was a merciless man who would kill anyone whom he feared, or was suspicious of for his position. In total, he killed more than 600,000 people to establish and stabilize the Abbasid government. This number is multiple times higher than the number of the people who were killed by Hajjaj, the brutal governor of Iraq, decades ago.

Abu-Muslim contacted Imam Sadiq to gain his influential support for his uprising. He sent a letter to the Imam claiming to invite the people to the Imam, and supporting the Imam's candidacy for the caliphate. The Imam responded, "You are not my follower, nor is this time my time." The Imam knew that Abu-Muslim was serving the Abbasids, and was loyal to them. He was also a bloodthirsty man responsible for the loss of many innocent lives. Truly, such a government would not have been accepted by the Imam as an eligible authority. Thus, the Imam rejected any support or collaboration with Abu-Muslim.

6-6-3-Urging the Imam for Uprising

During the political and military riots in Khorasan, Imam Sadiq was urged by his followers and the other Muslims to initiate an uprising against the Umayyads. The Imam refused and emphasized the lack of sincere companions. In one incident, a person from Khorasan visited the Imam in Medina and urged him for an uprising. He said that 100,000 people in Khorasan were ready to fight at the Imam's command. The Imam surprisingly asked his servant to prepare a fire inside the furnace, and asked that person to sit inside the furnace. The man became fearful, and excused himself from the Imam. At the same time, one of the Imam's loyal companions entered the gathering. The Imam asked him to sit inside the furnace. He followed the Imam's order without any hesitation. Shortly after, the Imam's follower came out of the blazing furnace completely unharmed. The Imam then asked, "How many such men do I have in Khorasan?" The man swore that there was not even a single such individual. The Imam then told him, "We will not initiate an uprising when we do not even have five such supporters."

Although the Imam did not support various uprisings of his time, as they were initiated by groups intending to gain power for themselves, he was concerned about the unity of his followers, and the ever-growing Shia community. The Imam established a network organization of his representatives in the Shia communities in various cities. The Imam chose these representatives from his loyal and knowledgeable companions. These representatives were responsible for answering questions about Islamic laws and principles, and collecting the Islamic dues (Zakat). The Zakat was transferred to the Imam in Medina, spent on cases assigned by the Imam, or used to resolve any division between his followers to keep the Shia community united. This strategy grew during the next Imams, and became an effective way of communication between the Imams and their Shia followers in the later years. Imam Sadiq's effort led to the increase of Shia followers, kept the Shia community from further division, and provided the Shia with scientific and cultural identities, which have lasted until today.

6-6-4-Death of Ibrahim Imam

While Abu-Muslim's army had full control over Khorasan, and had seized Kufa without significant resistance, the hidden location of Ibrahim Imam in Syria was exposed to the Umayyads by the betrayal of the messenger who had delivered Abu-Muslim's letter to him. Ibrahim Imam was then arrested and killed in prison⁶⁷. Prior to his death, he had sent a message to his younger brother, Saffah, selecting him as his successor. He had asked his brother to travel to Kufa with his family and seek refuge with Abu-Salama al-Khallal, their main representative in Kufa. Abu-Salama was referred to as 'the Minister of the Family of Muhammad' in the Abbasid's propaganda, due to his loyal services to the Abbasid organization. With the seizure of Kufa by Khorasan's army, Abu-Salama revealed his presence and assumed the role of ruler over the city.

While the people who had formed Abu-Muslim's army were very

⁶⁷ Muharram, 132 AH (Imam's age: 48)

motivated to establish a government for a representative from the Prophet's family, Ibrahim Imam's death caused a serious doubt about an eligible leader for the caliphate among the top officials in the Abbasid organization. One of these officials was Abu-Salama al-Khallal, who had given refuge to the Abbasid leaders, namely Saffah and Mansur. Abu-Salama, who did not accept Saffah's eligibility for the caliphate, isolated him and his family from receiving any news, including the success of Abu-Muslim's army in controlling Kufa. Abu-Salama instead decided to secretly nominate one person from the Prophet's family for the caliphate. He sent a messenger to Medina with three letters with the same content. He asked the messenger to deliver the first letter to Imam Sadiq, and to destroy the other two letters if the Imam accepted his offer for the caliphate. If the Imam refused, he told the messenger to deliver the second letter to Abdullah Mahz; if he refused as well, the last letter had to be delivered to one of the sons of Imam Sajjad. The hidden intention of Abu-Salama for communicating with Imam Sadiq is unclear in history. It is highly possible that he wanted to be a key player in the future government by nominating someone from the Prophet's progeny and helping him to reach power. However, he was not a sincere Shia follower of Imam Sadiq as he had contacted two more people besides Imam Sadiq. He just wanted to use the well-known elders from the Prophet's progeny to implement his own plan.

When the messenger came to Imam Sadiq, the Imam responded without reading the letter. He said, "I have nothing to do with Abu-Salama and he is the follower of someone else." The messenger insisted for the Imam to at least read the content of the letter. The Imam asked for a flame and burnt the letter while reciting a famous poem from Komait, "O' You who are making a fire, someone else will get its light. And O' you who are collecting firewood in the desert, you are wrapping your firewood for someone else (someone else will take your firewood)." The Imam then told the messenger to deliver what he had witnessed as his response. The messenger then went to Abdullah Mahz. Abdullah happily accepted the offer. He thought that the Abbasids were sincere, since they had paid allegiance to his son, Muhammad al-Nafs

al-Zakiyya, as the caliph years ago at the al-Abwa meeting.

The following day, Abdullah Mahz happily came to Imam Sadiq and showed him the nomination letter. The Imam asked him the following questions to guide him about the truth of the letter. The Imam asked, “When did the people of Khorasan become your followers? Did you send Abu-Muslim to Khorasan? Did you order them to wear black clothes? Did you ask the troops to come to Iraq or did they come because of you? And do you know any of them?” Abdullah Mahz did not expect the Imam’s response, and blamed the Imam of having bad intentions. Abdullah insisted that his son, Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, is the Mahdi, and that the people were waiting for him. The Imam told him that he had also received the same letter prior to him, and informed him about the plot behind the letters. The Imam said, “The power will fall in the hands of the Abbasids” and told him that his sons would be killed if they initiate an uprising. Abdullah Mahz left, upset with the Imam.

6-6-5-The Abbasids as a New Government

Prior to the return of Abu-Salama’s messenger from Medina to Kufa, the leaders of Khorasan’s Army, who had full control of Kufa, found the Abbasid leaders’ hidden location. They brought Saffah to the Mosque of Kufa, and paid allegiance to him as the new caliph⁶⁸. Abu-Salama found himself weak in his plots, and rushed to pay allegiance as well. In his first speech as the caliph, Saffah falsely introduced the Abbasids as the Ahlul-Bayt of the Prophet that deserve the leadership over the Muslims. Even though Abdullah Mahz happily accepted Abu-Salama’s offer for the caliphate, his acceptance did not benefit him. This incident shows Imam Sadiq’s deep understanding of the political events of his time. The Imam’s refusal of Abu-Salama’s offer did not give the Abbasids any excuse to threaten him as a rival in their new government.

6-6-6-Battle of Zaab⁶⁹

⁶⁸ 12 Rabi’ al-Awwal, 132 AH (Imam’s age: 48)

⁶⁹ Jumada al-Thani, 132 AH (Imam’s age: 49)

Shortly after declaring himself as the new Caliph in Kufa, Saffah sent Khorasan's army to fight against the Umayyads under the leadership of Marwan II. The two armies met at the Battle of Zaab in Northern Iraq, and the Umayyads were defeated even though they outnumbered the Khorasan army. The main reason for their defeat was Marwan II's strategic mistake to pass his troops over a temporary bridge on the Zaab River, then destroying the bridge upon his initial defeat by Khorasan's army. He abandoned most of his soldiers on the other side of the Zaab River, which led to them drowning upon withdrawal. Marwan II escaped to Egypt after his defeat, and was captured and killed by the Abbasids.

Upon Marwan II's death, the Umayyad Caliphate was officially terminated. The Umayyad Caliphate was founded by Muawiyah after the peace treaty with Imam Hasan (AS) in the year 41 of Hijri, and lasted for around 91 long years. The Umayyads, who are called the accursed tree in the Quran [17:60], were the main enemies of the Prophet during his time. Under the leadership of Abu-Sufyan, Muawiyah's father, the Umayyads had led the unbelievers' army and participated in multiple battles against the Holy Prophet. After years of opposition, they did not convert to Islam, except to save their lives when the Muslims had conquered their home city of Mecca. They never had sincere belief in the teachings of the Prophet. Surprisingly, these opponents of the Prophet acquired the government over the Prophet's followers, and established the first monarchy after him. The Umayyads were not only looking out for their own interests, but also used every opportunity to eliminate the true teachings of the Prophet. They interpreted Islam in a way that would benefit them, twisting it into a fallacious rendition. The Shia Imams, who had realized the threat of the Umayyads against Islam, used their entire potential to confront them since the beginning of their existence. The military activities of Imam Ali, Imam Hasan, and Imam Hossein against the Umayyads had aimed for this. The tragedy of Karbala was enough to disqualify the Umayyads as legitimate Islamic governors. After the tragedy, the focus of the activities of Imam Sajjad, Imam Baqir, and Imam Sadiq was to provide the true teachings of the

Prophet for the Muslims, and confront the false Islam that was presented in the society by the Umayyads.

6-7-During the Government of Saffah

6-7-1-The Abbasids' Power Stabilization

Upon seizing power, the Abbasid's new government was fearful of rebellion by the remaining Umayyads and their followers. Due to their hostility to the Umayyads, they dug up the graves of the Umayyad caliphs in Damascus, and insulted the remains of their corpses. It is said that the name Saffah, which means bloodthirsty, was given to him because of his brutality in killing the Umayyads. Saffah appointed his close ones as the governors of the Islamic territory. He assigned his brother as the governor of Mosul in Northern Iraq. His governors had to stabilize the power of the new government. After his brother came to the city, he committed a massacre, sparing not even the women, children, or animals. Among the men of Mosul, only about 400 survived the massacre. People who were disappointed with the oppression of the Umayyads, and were expecting justice from the new government, were now facing the Abbasid government with more oppression than ever before.

The Abbasids established authority by eliminating any opposition or suppressing any suspicious activity. Among the first who were killed by the Abbasids was Abu-Salama al-Khallal, the Abbasid's top representative in Kufa. He was assassinated⁷⁰ a few months after the establishment of the Abbasid government, after their victory in the Battle of Zaab. His assassination took place in Kufa at night, after he had returned home from visiting Saffah. The Abbasids had become suspicious of him, as he had isolated the Abbasid leaders under his control in Kufa, and hid his communications with Imam Sadiq and the other elders from the Prophet's progeny. Thus, the Abbasids eliminated him. Abu-Muslim supported the assassination, as he had always

⁷⁰ Rajab, 132 AH (Imam's age: 49)

perceived Abu-Salama as his rival in the government.

The Abbasids' confiscation of power for themselves, as well as their brutality, caused people to separate from them. One of the first groups who objected to the Abbasid government and regretted their prior support for them were the Shias of Khorasan. These Shias had not been following Imam Sadiq as their sole religious and political leader. However, in their hearts, they had love and respect for the Imam and the other members of the Prophet's family. They rose against the Abbasids in Central Asia under the leadership of Sharik ibn Shaikh within the first months of Saffah's government. They were able to form an army of around 30,000 people, all united against the Abbasids. Their uprising did not last for more than several months. It was finally suppressed by Abu-Muslim, who had full control of Khorasan, and was obedient to Saffah.

At this time, Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, who had hoped to inherit the government, was now seeking refuge to save his life from the threats of the Abbasids. He did not pay allegiance to Saffah. He knew himself to be more eligible for the caliphate, as he was closer to the Prophet in relation than the Abbasids. Also, the Abbasid leaders had paid allegiance to him as the caliph in the past, at the al-Abwa meeting. He was in communication with the elders, and had sent delegates to collect allegiance from all over the Islamic territory. Saffah did not find the time suitable to persecute Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya during his short government, because he was a direct descendent of the Prophet and had social status. Furthermore, Saffah was the ruler of a government established to support the Prophet's family. He feared that his persecution might lead to a conflict in his new government.

Saffah also moved the capital of his government from Kufa to Heerah, a town in southern proximity to Kufa. Saffah did this because he feared objections to his new government from Kufa, the center of Shi'ism. He knew that only a small group of people from Kufa had supported the Abbasid uprising in the past.

6-7-2-Saffah and the Imam

Saffah was suspicious of the Imam since the beginning of his government. He selected his uncle, Dawood ibn Ali, as the governor of Hijaz. When Dawood came to Medina, he delivered a speech, warning the people that he would suppress any opposition using lashes and swords. He summoned Mu'alla ibn Khunais, the Imam's servant and close companion, to force the names of the Imam's companions from him. Mu'alla resisted, even under severe torture, and was martyred without revealing any names. The Imam was in Mecca when this incident happened. Upon his return, he heard the news of Mu'alla's martyrdom. The Imam was extremely saddened, and protested to Dawood. The Imam did not leave his court until justice was ordered for Mu'alla's killer, the head of Dawood's army. When Dawood continued his harassment against the Imam, the Imam prayed for him to be cursed. As a result, Dawood died immediately. Dawood's death saved the Imam's companions from prosecution. The Imam's prayers and perseverance showed the Abbasids that he would not respond to their injustice and oppression with military action.

Despite the Imam's peaceful activities, Saffah feared him. He exiled the Imam to his capital, Heerah, so that he could oversee his activities. The Imam's policy at that time was to convince Saffah that he did not have any plans for an uprising against him, and to decrease his sensitivity towards him. After about two years of staying in Heerah, Saffah allowed the Imam to return to Medina. The Imam could continue his scientific activities in Medina, albeit with more restrictions compared to the time before the establishment of the Abbasid government.

When the Imam was in Heerah, he was surrounded by crowds of Muslims, and would answer their questions. Large numbers of Iraqis who had heard about the Imam, but did not have the chance to visit him in Mecca or Medina during the Hajj travel, used this opportunity to seek him out. At that time, the Imam would guide his loyal companions secretly, telling them there was no difference between the Umayyad and the Abbasid government. The Imam advised them to distance themselves from the government, and to avoid helping the

Abbasids, even if it was for building a mosque. With the passing of time, the cruelty of Saffah towards the Imam increased. He limited the Imam's interaction with the people, to the extent that it was very hard for Shias to contact the Imam, and to ask him their usual questions about the Islamic laws.

The Imam would frequently visit the hidden grave of his forefather, Imam Ali (AS), in Najaf, which was close to Heerah. The Imam would often take his close companions with him to show them this hidden location. Thus, at the time of Imam Sadiq, the Shia scholars became aware of the location of the holy grave, and would visit it while it was still not publicly known. The Imam would also visit and pray in other holy sites in Iraq. As a result of the Imam's prayers, there are currently sanctuaries labelled with his name in the Mosque of Kufa, the Mosque of al-Sahlah, and in the holy city of Karbala. Also, many supplications have been narrated from Imam Sadiq, which include the supplication of Alqamah, Ziyarat of Imam Hossein on the day of Arba'een, and Ziyarat Warith.

6-8-During the Government of Mansur

6-8-1-Mansur in Power

Saffah passed away⁷¹ from an illness after a short government of less than five years and his older brother, Mansur, assumed power. Mansur was a very stingy, cruel, and vicious person who would not hesitate to kill any of his opponents. He was known as Davaniqi due to his stinginess, accounting for even the smallest expenses. He issued orders for making Daniq a new currency, which became the smallest currency of his time. Once he assumed power, his uncle, Abdullah ibn Ali, the governor of Syria, claimed the caliphate. Mansur asked Abu-Muslim, the powerful army leader in Khorasan, to help him suppress his uncle's rebellion. Abu-Muslim reluctantly accepted, moved his army towards Syria, and suppressed the rebellion in a battle.

⁷¹ 13 Zu al-Hijjah, 136 AH (Imam's age: 53)

After this battle, the only powerful man that Mansur feared the most for his government was Abu-Muslim himself. Mansur asked Abu-Muslim to visit him in Kufa, right after his military campaign in Syria before returning to Khorasan, but Abu-Muslim refused. Mansur contacted the companions of Abu-Muslim, and asked them to encourage him to travel to Kufa to visit him. This plot prevailed and Abu-Muslim came to Kufa without his army to meet Mansur. During their meeting, Mansur insulted Abu-Muslim, and had him killed in his presence⁷². Abu-Muslim, who had devoted his life to the Abbasids and had fought for their government, was killed by the Abbasids themselves when he was no longer needed.

Abu-Muslim's murder caused outrage among the Iranians. Sandbad, a close companion of Abu-Muslim, prepared an army against the Abbasids. In a massive battle between both armies near Saveh, Iran, Sandbad was defeated and around 60,000 of his soldiers were killed⁷³. The Iranians realized they were exploited by the Abbasids to gain power, and became hostile towards their government. Many uprisings against the Abbasids during their government originated from Khorasan and Iran. This eventually led to the establishment of autonomous governments from the Abbasids in that region in the decades to come.

6-8-2-Mansur and the Imam

Mansur initially wanted to draw the Imam toward himself, and use the Imam's influential support for his government. He sent a letter to the Imam and complained to him about the lack of his interest in having a relationship with his government. The Imam responded, "Why should I come to you when I have not done anything wrong to fear you, nor you are the man of piety to have any hope in you?" Mansur asked the Imam to come and advise him. The Imam's response was, "The one who seeks this world would not advise you and the one who seeks the

⁷² 24 Sha'ban, 137 AH (Imam's age: 54)

⁷³ 138 AH (Imam's age: 55)

hereafter, would not accompany you.”

After being unsuccessful to attract the Imam towards his government, Mansur tried to destroy the Imam’s reputation of being the most knowledgeable scholar and religious leader among the Muslims. For this purpose, he summoned the Imam to his palace at Heerah, and asked Abu-Hanifa, Kufa’s well-known scholar, to prepare some challenging questions and challenge the Imam in his presence. Abu-Hanifa, who was a student of the Imam, prepared 40 questions regarding Islamic laws. The Imam not only responded to all of his questions in detail with patience, but also illustrated the different opinions between various scholars for each question. Abu-Hanifa then admitted to the Imam’s knowledge, and Mansur was unsuccessful in his plot. In the years later, Mansur introduced Malik ibn Anas, a renowned scholar in Medina and former student of the Imam, as his official Islamic scholar in the city of Medina. He banned the other scholars from issuing any rulings. He ordered Malik’s thoughts and teachings, and especially his famous book, *Muwatta*’, which was about the traditions of the Prophet, to be strongly propagated among the Muslims to undermine the Imam’s teachings.

As time passed, Mansur’s cruelty towards the Imam increased, to the point that the Imam’s family feared for his safety. When Mansur was traveling to Mecca for the Hajj⁷⁴, he stopped by Medina. Mansur sent someone to complain to the Imam about his isolation from him and summoned him. His messenger came to the Imam and entered his house without permission while the Imam was praying. When the Imam’s prayers finished, the messenger delivered Mansur’s message. The Imam recited some verses from the Quran as advice for Mansur to remind him of his wrongdoings. He told the messenger to tell Mansur that his family feared him, and if he would not stop his cruelty, the Imam would pray during his daily prayers for God to curse him. When Mansur received the Imam’s message, he responded that the Imam was free to keep his distance, and assured the Imam that his family would

⁷⁴ 140 AH (Imam’s age: 57)

remain safe from him.

6-8-3-Demise of Isma'il⁷⁵

Isma'il was the oldest son of Imam Sadiq. He was very pious and respected by the Imam. Many thought that Isma'il would be the next Imam after Imam Sadiq, as Imamat had passed down to the oldest son in the past, from Imam Sajjad to Imam Baqir, and from Imam Baqir to Imam Sadiq. During the time when the Imam's activities were under intense surveillance by the Abbasids, and his own life was in danger, the Imam could not publicly introduce the next Imam. Any public announcement of this news would have put the life of his successor in danger. The Imam had introduced his younger son, Imam Musa al-Kazim, as his successor in the Imamat only to his very close companions.

Isma'il passed away during the life of Imam Sadiq, about six years before the Imam's martyrdom. The Imam, who knew that some might be misled about Isma'il's death in the future, showed the body of Isma'il to as many as 30 of his companions and asked them to testify to his death. Also, when the Imam and the other Muslims were sorrowfully taking Isma'il's body for burial in the Baqi' cemetery, the Imam ordered to stop the procession and uncovered Isma'il's face for the crowd to observe his corpse. The Imam repeated this action multiple times during the funeral. However, after Imam Sadiq's martyrdom, some rejected Isma'il's demise and assumed him to be the promised Mahdi who had disappeared from sight. Some others accepted Isma'il's demise, but believed in the continuation of Imamat from his lineage. These people are known as the Isma'ilis, which is one of the surviving factions of Shi'ism today.

6-8-4-Uprising of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya

Mansur, who had paid allegiance to Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya as the caliph at the al-Abwa meeting, feared his potential uprising as a rival

⁷⁵ 142 AH (Imam's age: 59)

for the caliphate. Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya continued his policy from the time of Saffah. He did not pay allegiance to Mansur and challenged his legitimacy for the caliphate. He and his younger brother, Ibrahim, were living undercover to protect themselves from the prosecution of Mansur. They continued to collect allegiance from the people all over the Islamic territory.

Mansur knew that confronting Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya would endanger the legitimacy of the Abbasids for the caliphate, as they were inheriting a government that was established with the slogan of supporting the Prophet's family. He falsely claimed that the Abbasids would inherit from the Prophet, not the children of Lady Fatimah. He justified this by arguing that his forefather, Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, was the only uncle of the Prophet who was alive at the time of the Prophet's demise. Thus, he would inherit from the Prophet, not Lady Fatimah, because of his gender. Mansur ordered poems to propagate this claim, so as to attract the people towards his government.

After a few years, Mansur, who had finally stabilized his government, became determined to eliminate the threat of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya forcefully. He imprisoned their father, Abdullah Mahz, in Medina. He attempted to force him to reveal his sons' secret location, but he resisted. Instead, he sent a secret message to his sons to motivate them to continue their activities.

At this time, Medina was under intense surveillance by Mansur's spies to monitor any suspicious activities. His spies had even penetrated the Prophet's family to collect any possible information about the location of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya. One technique used by these spies was to introduce themselves as dedicated Shia followers who wanted to financially support the potential uprising against the government. The spies would ask for a document to confirm their donation. They would later use this document as proof of conspiracy against the government. They were also tasked to closely monitor Imam Sadiq and his activities. The Imam would frequently advise these intruders against their ill intentions. On one occasion, the Imam had sent a message to Mansur

using his own spies. The Imam was careful not to provide Mansur with any excuses to endanger his life. He would advise his companions to minimize and be cautious of their communications with him to prohibit possible prosecution.

Mansur, who was aware of the imminent uprising of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in Medina, personally visited the city when returning from the Hajj to manage the situation⁷⁶. He regarded the Imam as a threat, though his spies had confirmed that the Imam was not related to the uprising. He was suspicious of the Imam, as he was the most respectable and well-known character from the Prophet's lineage. Mansur sent someone for the Imam, and intended to kill him immediately. The Imam constantly whispered prayers, seeking protection from God while approaching Mansur. Suddenly, Mansur's behavior changed, and he greeted the Imam with respect and returned him to his house safely. During this meeting, Mansur expressed his anger about the people of Medina for their support in the uprising of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya against him. He made his intention to suppress this uprising by threatening to cause a massacre in the city. The Imam suggested that Mansur follow the attributes of one of these Prophets, either Job's patience with calamities, Solomon's gratitude for his blessings, or Joseph's forgiveness when he could have retaliated. The Imam was able to control Mansur's anger with his words, and stopped him from committing bloodshed in the city.

Mansur increased pressure on Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya to surrender. Mansur arrested some of his close relatives, who were the elders from the descendants of Imam Hasan. Mansur imprisoned them in Hashimiyyah, a city close to Kufa in Iraq⁷⁷. Among these captives was Muhammad's father, Abdullah Mahz, who had been imprisoned in Medina for a few years. These hostages, estimated to be around 13 people, were kept in a dark prison that was completely isolated. They could not even figure out the time of the day for their prayers.

⁷⁶ Hajj Season, 144 AH (Imam's age: 61)

⁷⁷ 144 AH (Imam's age: 61)

Eventually, the majority of these hostages, including Abdullah Mahz, were either murdered or buried alive by collapsing the prison on them. The Abbasids also disgraced Imam Hasan and propagated forged narrations to hurt his reputation. Some of these shameful narrations are still available until today. The Abbasids, who misused the name of the Prophet's family to gain power during the uprising against the Umayyads, were now committing horrific crimes and brutality against the progeny of the Prophet. This was unprecedented, even during the time of the Umayyads. Mansur's oppression against the relatives of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya made him and his brother, Ibrahim, even more determined to initiate their uprising.

Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya eventually initiated his uprising in Medina⁷⁸. He was able to establish control over the city for around 2.5 months. Mansur sent his troops, and they surrounded the city for a while, which led to a significant drop in Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya's supporters. A battle arose between the two, and Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya was killed. Shortly before the battle, Muhammad's younger brother, Ibrahim, initiated his uprising from Basrah in Iraq⁷⁹. After establishing power in Basrah, he moved his large army towards Kufa. He was initially victorious in the battles against Mansur's army, but during one of the battles, he was struck by an arrow and killed⁸⁰. After his death, his army was no longer united, and dispersed. His uprising was suppressed after around three months. The name of the place where Ibrahim was killed was titled after him, and he became known as Ibrahim Ghatil Baakhamraa. Mansur later sent Ibrahim's head to his father, Abdullah Mahz, in prison. Shortly after, Mansur killed him as well.

The uprisings of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and his brother, Ibrahim, were supported by many people who were against the Abbasids, including Zaidi Shias and Mu'tazila. Their uprisings were

⁷⁸ Jumada al-Thani, 145 AH (Imam's age: 62)

⁷⁹ 1 Ramazan, 145 AH (Imam's age: 62)

⁸⁰ 25 Zu al-Hijjah, 145 AH (Imam's age: 62)

endorsed by many Islamic scholars, such as Abu-Hanifa and Malik ibn Anas. However, Imam Sadiq did not approve of their uprisings. The Imam was among the few from Banu Hashim who did not pay allegiance to Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya. The Imam had objected to his nomination as the Mahdi since the al-Abwa meeting years ago. The Imam had also predicted his fate on multiple occasions; that he would be killed if he initiated an uprising. The Imam's prophecy had spread in the city since then. During the uprising of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in Medina, the Imam left the city. He went to his property outside of Medina, since he did not want to support either side of the battle, and he returned after the uprising was suppressed.

However, Imam Sadiq was in great grief, and even became sick over Mansur's actions against his relatives from the descendants of Imam Hasan. The Imam's concern shows his greatness, as he had frequently received insults and pressure from his relatives for not supporting their uprising under the leadership of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya. This insult was to the extent that when Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya seized Medina during his uprising, he temporarily imprisoned the Imam and confiscated his properties to pressure the Imam to pay allegiance to him. However, the Imam did not concede. When Abdullah Mahz and the other elders from the children of Imam Hasan were arrested and moving towards Iraq, the Imam sent Abdullah Mahz a long letter and provided him with comforting words, and recommended him to exercise patience and submission to God's will. When any captive was transferred to Iraq, there was no hope for his return. Um-Dawood was the mother of one of these captives. She was in great grief about the fate of her son. She approached the Imam and asked for his prayers. The Imam instructed her with a special ritual known as 'A'mal Um-Dawood'. After following the Imam's words, her son was released from the prison of Mansur in Iraq.

After the uprisings of Muhammad and Ibrahim were suppressed by Mansur, his governor in Medina slandered Imam Ali and his lineage during his sermon in Friday prayer. He blamed them as the ones who

wanted to cause division amongst the Muslims and had corrupted the earth. During the suffocated political environment that was dominant in Medina, no one could object to the governor, but the Imam rose amongst the crowd and objected to the sermon. The Imam asked the crowd if they knew who would be in the worst condition in the hereafter. The Imam said that such a person would be the one who destroys his fate in the hereafter for the sake of obtaining this world for others. The Imam then introduced the governor as an example of this statement. As a result, the governor left the mosque in anger.

6-8-5-Mansur and the Imam

Mansur gained full control over his government after defeating the uprisings of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and his brother, Ibrahim. He constructed the city of Baghdad as a capital for his government to show off his incomparable power. He regarded the Imam as the only threat for his established government. In these few years, until the Imam's martyrdom, Mansur made multiple attempts to kill the Imam. He was looking for any excuse to kill the Imam. Mansur had said that he had killed many from the Prophet's lineage, and yet their master, Imam Sadiq, was still alive. He had also said that the Imam was like a bone in his throat; he did not have any excuse to kill him, nor could he ignore his status in society.

Mansur, who was worried about any other rebellions against his government, forcefully migrated the elders of Banu Hashim, including Imam Sadiq, from Medina to Iraq. It was highly possible that he would order their beheading. They selected two people among themselves, including Imam Sadiq, to represent them in the meeting with Mansur. In the meeting, the Imam stated three narrations from the Prophet about the impact of devotion and maintaining the relationship with kin on the elongation of life. Mansur, like the other cruel governors, feared death. He was influenced by the Imam's words on elongation of life, and decided to release the Imam and the other elders of Banu Hashim who were his own relatives, as the Abbasids belonged to the Prophet's clan of Banu Hashim.

On one occasion, someone accused the Imam of plotting an uprising against Mansur by collecting weapons and wealth in hiding. Mansur became furious. He sent a letter to his governor in Medina, and asked him to send the Imam to Baghdad immediately. When the Imam received Mansur's order, he went to the Prophet's Mosque, prayed, and recited some supplications. The Imam left Medina the following day. When the Imam met Mansur, Mansur angrily accused the Imam of conspiracy against his government. The Imam firmly denied Mansur's claims. Mansur then brought forth the accuser as a witness, who swore by God that he was telling the truth. The Imam rejected his oath, and asked him to take an oath without taking refuge in the merciful names of God. The person took an oath as instructed by the Imam, fell, and died immediately. Mansur, who was overtaken by fear upon seeing this, allowed the Imam to return to Medina, and promised to not accept any person's conspiracy against the Imam in the future.

The Imam remained under intense surveillance by Mansur's spies. Anyone who would contact the Imam would be arrested and beheaded. No one dared to contact the Imam, even to ask him simple Islamic laws. The Imam had asked his followers to stop visiting him, in order to protect their lives. Mansur once contacted the Imam and asked him for a precious and unique gift. The Imam sent him a wooden staff of the Holy Prophet, and Mansur was overjoyed. Mansur cut the gift into four pieces, and kept each piece in a different place to spread the blessings. For a short while after, Mansur eased the pressures upon the Imam, and allowed him to freely have visitors to share his knowledge with them.

One year, Mansur intended to perform the Hajj⁸¹. He stopped at a place called al-Rabazah outside of Medina. Due to his still-brewing hatred towards the Imam, he decided to kill him. He ordered someone to wrap the Imam's turban around his neck and to drag him to his place. Mansur's agent found the Imam and informed him about Mansur's order. The Imam prayed and asked God for protection. The agent

⁸¹ 147 AH (Imam's age: 64)

respected the Imam, so he did not drag the Imam as Mansur ordered, but rather held the Imam's arm and brought him to Mansur. During the meeting, Mansur swore by God that he would kill the Imam. The Imam asked him to give up his intention, and said, "Our relationship will not last long." Mansur, who believed in the Imam's words, suddenly changed his mind, and allowed the Imam to go. He then sent someone to ask the Imam which one between him and the Imam, would die first. The Imam responded, "I will die first." When Mansur heard this, he was delighted.

Every so often, there were days when the bloodthirsty Mansur would sit in his palace in Baghdad and order the execution of specific people. Mansur had brought the Imam from Medina to Baghdad during such a time, and ordered the Imam's presence in his palace immediately. It was clear to everyone that the Imam would be killed on that day. Mansur's agent climbed a wall and entered the Imam's residence, where he found the Imam praying. As instructed by Mansur, he took the Imam without even permitting him to wear his shoes, or change his clothes. The Imam was taken to the palace barefoot. In this meeting, Mansur angrily accused the Imam of conspiring against his government. The Imam denied his accusations. The Imam told him that when he had been young, he had not followed any military actions against the Umayyads, who had been extremely hostile towards him. So, how could he take any actions when he was now old and close to death? To assure him, the Imam asked to be placed under surveillance by Mansur's army until his death, which would be soon. However, Mansur did not accept any of the Imam's excuses. He had begun to take out a hidden sword from under his seat. Suddenly, Mansur became silent and softened his treatment towards the Imam. He gave the Imam some gifts and allowed him to return to his residence with respect. He also let the Imam decide between staying in Baghdad or returning to Medina. After this incident, Mansur's trustee asked him about the reason for the sudden change in his behavior. Mansur responded that every time he intended to kill the Imam, he would visualize the Holy Prophet in anger, so he was afraid that the Prophet would harm him if he killed the Imam.

6-8-6-Martyrdom

Mansur, who had plotted to murder the Imam on several occasions, finally ordered Muhammad ibn Sulayman, his governor in Medina, to poison the Imam. The Imam was given a poisoned grape, which caused him to become fatally ill and lose most of his body weight.

When the Imam was on his deathbed, he called for all of his relatives. He advised them about the importance of the daily prayers. The Imam told them, “Our intercession in the hereafter will not include individuals who take their daily prayers lightly.” In his will, the Imam not only excluded those who do not perform their daily prayers from his intercession, but also extended it to those who take it lightly. The Imam also asked for some of his wealth to be distributed amongst his near ones. One of these recipients was his cousin, Hasan ibn Ali, who had once attempted to kill the Imam with a dagger. When the Imam heard objections about this decision, he responded that, as prescribed by God, he did not want to cut relations with his kin, because those who do will not even smell heaven.

The Imam’s soul ascended on the 25th of Shawwal, in the year 148 Hijri, at the age of 65, in Medina. The Imam’s martyrdom filled the entire city of Medina with grief, and the people attended his funeral in crowds. Imam Musa al-Kazim took care of his father’s funeral, and buried him in the Baqi’ cemetery. Imam Sadiq was buried next to the graves of his father, Imam Baqir, his grandfather, Imam Sajjad, and his great uncle, Imam Hasan.

When Mansur received the news of the martyrdom of Imam Sadiq from his governor, Muhammad ibn Sulayman, he expressed sorrow and admitted that no one would ever replace him. However, Mansur wanted to terminate the chain of Imamat after Imam Sadiq. He sent a message to his governor to inquire about whom Imam Sadiq had selected as his successor in his will. Mansur had ordered his governor to capture the Imam’s successor and behead him. Imam Sadiq had predicted such a situation, and wanted to save his true successor, Imam Musa al-Kazim. He named five people as his successors in his will, Caliph Mansur, the

governor of Medina, Muhammad ibn Sulayman, two of his sons, Abdullah and Musa (al-Kazim), and his wife, Hamideh, the mother of Imam Musa al-Kazim. When Mansur heard about the Imam's will, he cancelled his order. With this clever trick, the Imam saved his true successor, Imam Musa al-Kazim, and also made his successor evident to his followers to easily recognize him. His followers knew that the Abbasid Caliph and governors were oppressors, and therefore disqualified for the Imamat, and that a female could not become an Imam. His oldest son, Abdullah, was not qualified either, since he had a physical disability in his leg, had limited religious knowledge, and could not respond to the questions raised by the people and Imam Sadiq's companions. Abdullah passed away within seventy days after Imam Sadiq's martyrdom. Thus, all indications for the Imamat pointed towards the qualifications of Imam Musa al-Kazim.

6-9-Conclusion

The Imamat of Imam Sadiq was during a critical period of history, which coincided with the change in power from the Umayyads to the Abbasids. As a result, Imam Sadiq was the only Shia Imam who received pressure and calamities from both the Umayyads and the Abbasids. His Imamat started right after the martyrdom of his father, Imam Baqir, and lasted for around 34 years, 10 of which were during the government of Hisham ibn Abdul-Malik. Hisham was the last powerful ruler of the Umayyads before their destruction. He was responsible for the martyrdom of Imam Sajjad and Imam Baqir. After Hisham's death, turmoil within the Umayyads began and four rulers came into power over just seven years. This period was a golden time for Imam Sadiq, because he could freely spread his divine knowledge and benefit the Muslims.

Once Saffah gained power as the first Abbasid Caliph, he became suspicious of the Imam. He ordered to bring the Imam to his capital city of Heerah in Iraq for around two years, and kept the Imam's activities under surveillance. For the rest of Saffah's government and

the beginning of Mansur's government, the Imam was able to continue his scientific work in Medina, but with less freedom due to surveillance by the Abbasids.

However, after a few years, Mansur stabilized his government and his focus shifted to the activities of the Prophet's descendants in Medina. The uprising of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, who was a direct descendent of the Prophet and Imam Hasan, was a serious threat for the Abbasid's legitimacy as the righteous representatives from the Prophet's family. The last period of Imam Sadiq's life, prior to this uprising until his martyrdom, was the most challenging and difficult period in his life. Mansur feared the Imam, though he knew that the Imam was not connected to the uprisings against his government. His concern was with the Imam's social status as a well-known Islamic scholar, an elderly from the Prophet's progeny, and a spiritual leader who was recognized and respected by all the Muslims. The Imam also had many followers, especially in Iraq, at the center of Mansur's government. During this time, Mansur put the Imam under severe unprecedented pressure. He summoned the Imam to Iraq approximately four times while the Imam was an elderly. He attempted to kill him at least five times, and finally martyred the Imam by asking his governor in Medina to poison him.

The main political event in the life of Imam Sadiq was the change of the government from the Umayyads to the Abbasids. Due to the tragedy of Karbala and the efforts of Imam Sajjad, Imam Baqir, and Imam Sadiq, the Muslims found the behavior of the Umayyad government contradictory to the Prophet's teachings. They became aware of the Umayyad's long-lasting oppression against the Prophet's family. This led to the illegitimacy of the Umayyad government in the eyes of Muslims, and led them to love and respect the Prophet's family. However, there were multiple claimants for the government among the Prophet's relatives, such as Abdullah ibn Muawiyah, Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, and the Abbasids. Eventually, the Abbasids were able to use the anti-Umayyad hatred the Muslims had in their own favor to

gain power and establish their own government. The Abbasids, who were proud of being the relatives of the Prophet, killed hundreds of thousands of Muslims to gain power and stabilize their own government. History proved that the Abbasids were much more tyrannical and oppressive while governing than the Umayyads.

In this situation, Imam Sadiq did not find it suitable to initiate his uprising, since Muslims who were all united against the Umayyads had diverse opinions about the next government. Therefore, any new government would not have been stabilized without horrific bloodshed, which was completely against the teachings of the Imam. The Imam instead used the golden opportunity of his time to establish the Shia as a prominent school of thought in Islam forever. As a result, the Shia school of thought was named Ja'fari, after Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq. Through the Imam's teachings, Shias are proud of having a doctrine in every aspect of Islamic sciences and knowledge.

IMAM SADIQ(AS):

Maintaining ties of kinship improves character, cleanses the soul, increases sustenance, and delays death.

7- IMAM KAZIM (AS): THE IMAM OF PATIENCE

This chapter reviews the historical events of the life of Imam Kazim (AS), and provides an overview of his social, scientific, and political achievements. This critical period of history coincides with the peak power of the Abbasid caliphate. This chapter also shows the excessive pressure and oppression on the Imam by the Abbasid government during his lifetime.

7-1-Before the Government of Mansur

7-1-1-Birth

Imam Musa ibn Ja'far, also known as Kazim, was born on the 7th of Safar in the year 128 Hijri. He was born at al-Abwa, located between Mecca and Medina. Al-Abwa is the gravesite of Aminah, the Prophet's mother. He was born as his parents were returning from Hajj. He was the third son of Imam Sadiq after his brothers, Isma'il and Abdullah. Imam Sadiq was very grateful for the birth of his son, Musa, and celebrated by throwing a feast for three consecutive days upon returning to Medina. Imam Kazim's mother was Hamideh, originating from Northern or North-Western Africa. She was captured as a slave and brought to Medina, where she married Imam Sadiq. Imam Sadiq had high regards for her. He had said, "Hamideh is purified from any impurity and was being protected by angels until I married her." She was very pious and knowledgeable, and Imam Sadiq had referred the women of the community to her to ask their questions regarding Islamic law.

7-1-2-The Umayyad's Downfall⁸²

Imam Kazim was about four years old when the Umayyad Caliphate was overthrown by the Abbasid Caliphate. The Umayyads, under the leadership of Abu-Sufyan, had been the main enemy of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during his prophethood. They fought multiple wars against the Prophet, refusing to convert to Islam until the Muslims conquered their home city of Mecca. They converted to Islam in fear for their lives, but the light of guidance never touched their hearts. Surprisingly, these hateful enemies of the Prophet had a chance to control the rulership of the Prophet's followers during the government of Muawiyah, who turned the Islamic caliphate into the Umayyad's monarchy. The Umayyads ruled over the Islamic world for about 90 years, until their destruction by the Abbasids. During this long period, the Umayyad caliphs degraded Islam. They were not afraid to publicly

⁸² Jumada al-Thani, 132 AH (Imam's age: 4)

insult the Prophet, the Quran, or Islam, and would publicly indulge in sinful behavior.

Contrary to the Umayyads, the Abbasids, who were the descendants of Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, were proud of being from the Prophet's clan of Banu Hashim. They used their relationship with the Prophet to legitimize their government. They would respect the Prophet in their speech, and had an Islamic outlook for their government. However, the Abbasids' crimes and murders against the people and the Prophet's lineage outnumbered the Umayyad's crimes. The number of people they killed to stabilize their government was far more than the people killed by the Umayyads. The Shia Imams at the time of the Abbasids faced the challenge of disproving the caliphate's legitimacy and revealing the Abbasids' true intentions for the Muslims.

7-1-3-Childhood Years

There are limited historical records about the life of Imam Kazim during his childhood. Despite that, the available records show the Imam's divine status and knowledge. Imam Kazim was the third oldest son of Imam Sadiq after his brothers, Isma'il and Abdullah. Imam Sadiq had a special love for Imam Kazim. When someone asked Imam Sadiq about how much he loved Imam Kazim, Imam Sadiq responded, "I love him to an extent that I wish I did not have any other children, so I could have my entire fatherly love for my son, Musa."

The divine knowledge, an intrinsic characteristic of the Shia Imams, manifested in Imam Kazim from his childhood. Abu-Hanifa, the founder of the Hanafi school of thought, once visited Medina and came to Imam Sadiq's house to ask him a question. While he was waiting for permission to see Imam Sadiq, he saw Imam Kazim, who was just a few years old. He wanted to mock Imam Kazim and asked him, "Where can a visitor go to the bathroom in your city?" The Imam precisely responded to him according to the Islamic laws by counting the places that are prohibited to be used as a bathroom. The Imam then said, "You can use any other place as a bathroom." Abu-Hanifa was shocked by the Imam's response, and asked him the question that he had prepared

to ask Imam Sadiq, “Does sin originate from God or from His servant?” Imam Kazim responded with such a logical and persuasive answer that Abu-Hanifa returned from Imam Sadiq’s house and said that this answer was enough for him.

7-2-During the Government of Mansur

7-2-1-Mansur’s Cruel Government

Mansur was the second caliph of the Abbasids after his brother, Saffah. During Saffah’s short government of less than five years, the main goal of the newly established Abbasid government had been to remove the remaining Umayyads and to suppress their potential uprising. After succeeding in this goal, the next Abbasid caliph, Mansur, implemented a tyrannical and oppressive regime to remove all other potential threats to the Abbasid government. He killed Abu Muslim and fought various battles with his opponents in Iran, Hijaz, and Iraq, including the uprisings of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and his brother, Ibrahim. He finally made himself the sole powerful ruler in the Islamic territory by murdering thousands of people. He also constructed the city of Baghdad as a capital for his government to show off his power.

Mansur was heartless, blood-thirsty, and very stingy. Mansur’s policy was to put excessive economical pressure on the people to keep them hungry and thus make them obedient to himself. These hungry people would focus only on the struggle to feed themselves, and would not have the opportunity for any political activities.

7-2-2-Demise of Isma’il⁸³

Isma’il was the oldest son of Imam Sadiq. He was very pious and respected by the Imam. Many thought that Isma’il would be the next Imam after Imam Sadiq, since Imamat had passed down to the oldest son in the past, such as from Imam Sajjad (AS) to Imam Baqir (AS) and from Imam Baqir (AS) to Imam Sadiq (AS). While Imam Sadiq’s

⁸³ 142 AH (Imam’s age: 14)

activities were under intense surveillance by Mansur's spies and his own life was in danger, the Imam couldn't publicly introduce the next Imam. Any public announcement of this news would have put the life of his successor in danger. The Imam had introduced his younger son, Imam Kazim, as his successor in the Imamat only to his very close companions.

Isma'il passed away during the life of Imam Sadiq, about six years before the Imam's martyrdom. The Imam, who knew that some might be misled about Isma'il's death in the future, showed Isma'il's body to as many as 30 of his companions and asked them to testify to his death. Also, when the Imam and the other Muslims were sorrowfully taking Isma'il's body for burial in the Baqi' cemetery, the Imam ordered the procession to stop several times to uncover Isma'il's face for the crowd, so they may witness his corpse. However, after Imam Sadiq's martyrdom, some rejected Isma'il's demise. They assumed that he was the promised Mahdi, who had disappeared from sight. Some others accepted Isma'il's demise, but believed in the continuation of Imamat from within his lineage. Thus, they did not follow Imam Kazim as the seventh Imam. These people are known as the Isma'ilis, which is one of the surviving sects of Shi'ism till today. The Isma'ilis initially had a small group of followers, so they began to spread their faith. Around two centuries later, they gained power by establishing the Fatimid government in Egypt and Northern Africa. Upon gaining power, they extensively propagated their beliefs all around the Islamic territory and managed to increase their followers.

7-2-3-Martyrdom of Imam Sadiq⁸⁴

Mansur, who had plotted to murder Imam Sadiq on several occasions, finally ordered Muhammad ibn Sulayman, his governor in Medina, to poison the Imam. Imam Sadiq's martyrdom filled the entire city of Medina with grief, and the people came in crowds to his funeral. Imam Kazim took care of his father's funeral and buried him in the Baqi'

⁸⁴ 25 Shawwal, 148 AH (Imam's age: 20)

cemetery by his father, Imam Baqir (AS), his grandfather, Imam Sajjad (AS), and his great uncle, Imam Hasan (AS).

When Mansur received the news from his governor, Muhammad ibn Sulayman, that Imam Sadiq had been martyred, he expressed sorrow and admitted that no one would ever replace him. Despite this, Mansur wanted to terminate the chain of Imamat after Imam Sadiq. He sent a message to his governor to inquire about whom Imam Sadiq had selected as his successor in his will. Mansur had ordered his governor to capture the Imam's successor and behead him. Imam Sadiq, who had predicted such a situation, had named five people as his successors in his will: the Caliph Mansur; the governor of Medina, Muhammad ibn Sulayman, two of his sons, Abdullah and Imam Kazim, and Imam Sadiq's wife who was the mother of Imam Kazim, Hamideh. When Mansur heard about the Imam's will, he cancelled his initial order. Imam Sadiq, with this clever trick, not only saved his true successor, Imam Kazim, but also made it evident to his prominent followers to recognize him because his followers knew that the Abbasid caliph and governors were oppressors, and thus disqualified for Imamat. Also, a female could not become an Imam. His oldest son, Abdullah, could not qualify either, since he had a physical disability in his leg and had limited religious knowledge. He could not respond to the questions raised by the people and Imam Sadiq's companions. Abdullah passed away shortly within seventy days after Imam Sadiq's martyrdom. Thus, all indications for Imamat were towards the qualifications of Imam Kazim.

7-2-4-Confusion in Recognizing the Imam

An unprecedented suppressive regime dominated society at the time of Imam Sadiq's martyrdom. Mansur's agents and spies were looking to identify and kill the Shia followers of Imam Sadiq. The Shias could not even hold a small gathering to discuss the next Imam. Imam Kazim could not directly call the people to his Imamat, as it could have led to his martyrdom. The claim of Imamat by the Imam's older brother, Abdullah, was also another reason for the people's confusion in finding the true Imam of the time. Mansur had provided freedom for Abdullah

to claim his Imamat, as this had caused division among the Shia community and would benefit his government. Although Imam Sadiq had indirectly specified Imam Kazim as the next Imam in his will, there was still confusion among the Shias about the next Imam. This was to an extent that, even some of Imam Sadiq's loyal companions did not know the Imam of their time.

On one occasion, after the martyrdom of Imam Sadiq, two of his loyal companions, Hisham ibn Saalim and Mu'min al-Taaq, were looking to find their next Imam. They initially referred to Imam Sadiq's oldest son, Abdullah, and tested him with a question. However, Abdullah's response was quite different from the teachings of Imam Sadiq. They left Abdullah as they were confused about whom to follow, and which theological belief they should choose. Suddenly, an old man hinted to them to follow him. They became frightened, and thought that he might be one of Mansur's spies, whose intention was to kill them. To take precaution, only Hisham ibn Saalim followed the old man. The old man was Imam Kazim's envoy. He brought Hisham to Imam Kazim. The Imam greeted Hisham, and began his conversation by addressing Hisham's concern without him telling the Imam anything, which showed the Imam's knowledge of the unseen. The Imam told Hisham not to follow any theological belief, but to refer to him. Hisham then asked the Imam some questions, and found the Imam's response in accordance with the teachings of Imam Sadiq. Hisham, who witnessed the Imam as the ocean of knowledge, testified to his Imamat. He then asked the Imam for permission to guide the Shias to him. The Imam only permitted him to guide the mature and trustworthy Shias to him, with the condition to promise to keep his Imamat hidden. The Imam, while referring to his neck, told Hisham that if his Imamat was revealed, it would certainly lead to his own beheading.

Although the notable companions of Imam Sadiq believed in the Imamat of Imam Kazim, Abdullah was still able to gather groups of Shias around himself. However, Abdullah passed away after a short period of around 70 days after the martyrdom of Imam Sadiq. He did

not have any son to claim the Imamat after him. This caused the majority of his followers to return to Imam Kazim and accept his Imamat.

7-2-5-The Imam's Scientific Contribution

Due to Imam Sadiq's martyrdom and extensive fear in society at the hands of Mansur, the Islamic university, which was established in Medina by Imam Baqir and expanded to its prosperity by Imam Sadiq, gradually closed. No one dared to share his identity as a Shia or associate himself with Imam Sadiq or Imam Kazim. However, during the long Imamat of Imam Kazim for around 34 years, there were times when the people could refer to the Imam and ask him questions. Depending on the political situation and the pressure of the government on the Imam, the people would refer to the Imam in various numbers to benefit from him. More than 3,000 of the Imam's narrations are currently collected and compiled in the book known as *Musnad al-Imam al-Kazim*. Furthermore, a famous statement about the importance of wisdom is narrated from the Imam to his companion and Shia scholar, Hisham ibn Hakam. Also, various supplications are narrated from the Imam, including the famous supplication of Jaushan Sagheer, which is recommended for protection from enemies and catastrophes.

The Imam also trained many notable scholars. Today, six of Imam Kazim's companions, and 12 of Imam Baqir and Imam Sadiq's companions, are regarded as 'As-haab-e-Ejma' or 'Companions of the Consensus'. These 18 companions are the most verified companions of the Shia Imams, whose narrations are regarded with the highest level of trust by scholars in the seminaries.

7-3-During the Government of Mahdi

7-3-1-Mahdi in Power⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Zu al-Hijjah, 158 AH (Imam's age: 30)

After Mansur, his son, Muhammad, assumed power. Muhammad was given the title of 'Mahdi' by his father in order to draw more attention from the Muslims to the Abbasid government. This was due to a widely accepted narration from the Prophet, which promised the appearance of the Mahdi from his lineage, whose name would be the same as his own name, and would appear as the savior in a world filled with injustice and oppression. Mansur had followed the footsteps of Abdullah Mahz, who had also given the title of 'Mahdi' to his son, Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya. Mansur, whose original name was Abdullah, named his son Muhammad and called him with the title of 'Mahdi' to exploit the Prophet's narration in his favor.

Mahdi inherited a vast and stable government, which was the result of his father, Mansur's, brutal strategies. In one of his wills to Mahdi, Mansur mentioned that he had prepared the smooth transition of government to Mahdi by classifying people in three groups: the poor and needy who need him for help, the fugitives who are constantly looking for a shelter to save their lives, and the prisoners who request their freedom. During Mahdi's time, the Abbasids had some victories in expanding their territory into modern day Turkey.

7-3-2-Mahdi and the Imam

At the beginning of Mahdi's government, he was lenient in his treatment of the people and the Prophet's lineage. Mahdi was looking to gather legitimacy for his new government after years of the tyranny and oppressive government of his father, Mansur. He distributed a large amount of the stored wealth in Bayt al-Mal (public treasury) among the people. He freed the prisoners and returned the properties that Mansur had forcefully confiscated from the people. He also returned the properties that Mansur had seized from Imam Sadiq to Imam Kazim. Imam Kazim knew that Mahdi's policy was solely to stabilize his government. Once, the Imam came to Mahdi while he was returning the unlawfully confiscated wealth to their owners. The Imam asked Mahdi, "Why don't you return the Land of Fadak (the Prophet's gift to Lady Fatimah (SA) which was confiscated by the first caliph) to us?"

He asked the Imam to define the boundaries of Fadak. The Imam defined the limits of Fadak as the four corners of the Islamic world of that time. With this response, the Imam implied that the entire Islamic kingdom belonged to him, and the Abbasid government was illegitimate. Mahdi, who was shocked and nervous by the Imam's response, left his place.

Mahdi once came to Medina and met the Imam. He decided to test the Imam's knowledge. He asked the Imam about consuming alcohol, which he himself indulged in. He asked the Imam if there was any Quranic evidence for why intoxication is Haram or prohibited, since the Quran only orders to maintain distance from it. The Imam said that God prohibits the sin in the Quran [7:33]: 'Say: My Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those that are concealed, and sin and rebellion without justice....'. The Imam continued that one of the sins that God has prohibited is intoxication which is explicitly mentioned in the following verse of Quran [2:219]: 'They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: In both of them there is a great sin and means of profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit'. Mahdi was completely convinced by the Imam's logic, and admitted that the Imam's answer had originated from the Prophetic source.

With the passing of time, Mahdi became suspicious of Imam Kazim, as more and more people were referred to him as the Imam. Mahdi summoned the Imam from Medina to his palace in Baghdad, and imprisoned him. After a short period, he decided to kill the Imam. However, Mahdi saw Imam Ali (AS) in his dream, who recited the following verse of the Quran [47:22]: "May it not be that if you were to wield authority you would cause corruption in the land and ill-treat your blood relations?" Mahdi was frightened by his dream. He understood that Imam Ali's addressee was Imam Kazim, as he was from the children of Imam Ali, and also had a familial relation with the Abbasids. Mahdi summoned Imam Kazim from the prison and greeted him with respect. He asked the Imam to pledge that he would not rise against

him, nor any of his children. The Imam responded that he did not have any intention for an uprising, and that was not his tradition. Mahdi then released the Imam respectfully, and the Imam returned to Medina. For the rest of Mahdi's government, there is no historical evidence of any action by Mahdi against the Imam.

7-3-3-The Imam's Divine Character

Multiple titles are attributed to Imam Kazim that reflect his elevated character. He is known as al-Kazim, which means the one who harnesses his anger. This title has a Quranic origin, and is one of the characteristics of the pious people in the Quran [3:133,134]: “[Paradise] is prepared for the pious; who spend their property for the cause of God in prosperity as well as in adversity and who also harness their anger and forgive the people. God loves the righteous ones.” The Imam was given this title, as he was patient against all the difficult calamities that he endured during his lifetime. Whenever someone insulted, harassed, or spoke ill about the Imam, he would not retaliate. Instead, the Imam would treat him well and send him a generous gift to soften his heart towards the Imam. The Imam's gifts in Medina were famous among the people, though his lifestyle was simple. Also, despite the Imam being imprisoned multiple times in various locations, he did not curse his prisoners. He was patient with the calamities that befell him during his imprisonment.

Imam Kazim was also known as ‘Abd Saaleh’ or ‘Righteous Servant [of God]’ due to his long prayers and prostrations. The Imam was renowned among the Muslims for his long prayers and worship. During the suppressive government of the Abbasids, when no one dared to name the Imam in public, the Imam's Shia followers would use a cover name for the Imam, including ‘Abd Saaleh’ or ‘Abul-Hasan’, to refer to him, his narrations, or advice.

7-4-During the Government of Hadi

7-4-1-Hadi in Power⁸⁶

After Mahdi, his son, Hadi, who was just around 25 years old, assumed power. He was rude, harsh, heartless, and biased. He kept himself busy with amusement and musical parties. He gave huge amounts of wealth from the public Bayt al-Mal to the famous singers for his amusement.

Hadi put a substantial amount of pressure on the Prophet's lineage and the children of Imam Ali in Medina. He cut their allowances from the Bayt al-Mal. He chose someone from the descendants of the second caliph as the governor of Medina, who was known to be hostile toward the Prophet's lineage. The governor forced them to show up at a governmental facility every night to confirm their presence in Medina. If anyone was ever absent, he would summon the others and threaten their lives and wealth.

7-4-2-Tragedy of Fakh

Hadi's harsh policies against the Prophet's lineage motivated them to pursue an uprising against the Abbasids and their unjust government. The Prophet's lineage came around Hossein ibn Ali, who was one of their elders with a great personality. Hossein ibn Ali was from the descendants of Imam Hasan, and had witnessed long-standing oppressions from the Abbasids against the Prophet's lineage. Some of his relatives were already imprisoned or had been killed by Mansur's orders when he was young, such as his father, his maternal grandfather, Abdullah Mahz, and his uncle, Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya. They encouraged him to initiate an uprising, which he finally accepted. He initiated his uprising in Medina, where he conquered the city. He freed the prisoners and imprisoned the Abbasid agents. He then moved his troops of about 300 soldiers to Mecca to use the upcoming Hajj season as an opportunity to recruit from the Muslims and expand his forces. He eventually engaged in a battle with the Abbasid army, composed of around 4,000 soldiers, at a valley named Fakh outside Mecca, where he

⁸⁶ Muharram, 169 AH (Imam's age: 40)

was defeated and martyred⁸⁷. Many of the Prophet's descendants within his troops were also martyred along with him. He was then named 'the martyr of Fakh' after the place he was martyred. This incident was the most difficult for the Prophet's lineage after the tragedy of Karbala.

Imam Kazim had confirmed the uprising of Hossein, the martyr of Fakh. The Imam had informed him about his fate of martyrdom in his uprising. The Imam, who had witnessed his strong will for uprising, advised him to be strong and persistent in his chosen destiny, and wished him a great reward from God. When the Imam received the news of the martyrdom of Hossein, he cried and expressed his sorrow by saying that Hossein was a righteous believer, and unique in his family. The Imam testified that Hossein was martyred while he was inviting the people to good and forbidding them from evil.

When the hostages and the heads of the martyrs arrived at Hadi's palace in Baghdad, he ordered the beheading of the hostages and hanged their bodies in the city. He angrily accused Imam Kazim of providing hidden authority and guidance for the uprising. Hadi claimed that Hossein, the martyr of Fakh, followed Imam Kazim's order for the uprising, as the Imam was the most well-known person in the Prophet's lineage. He then vowed firmly to kill and finish the Imam.

Ali ibn Yaqteen was a loyal companion of the Imam who held a high-ranking position in the Abbasid government. He sent a letter to the Imam informing him about Hadi's absolute decision to kill him. The Imam showed Ali's letter to his family and close companions. They urged him to hide or escape Hadi's prosecution. However, the Imam responded that he had sought refuge in God by reciting the Jaushan Sagheer supplication, and that the Prophet had foretold him in a dream about Hadi's death. The Imam told them that the news of Hadi's death would arrive in Medina through the first messenger who would come from Iraq, which happened exactly as the Imam had predicted. Hadi

⁸⁷ 8 Zu al-Hijjah, 169 AH (Imam's age: 41)

passed away suddenly⁸⁸ before being able to martyr the Imam, leading a short government of just 14 months.

The Imam was aware of the animosity by the Abbasid family and the life threats that endangered him from their government. To decrease the sensitivity of the Abbasids and prohibit any potential life threats, the Imam, in his role in politics, sent a letter to Khayzuran, Hadi's mother. In the letter, the Imam expressed his condolences to her for the death of Hadi, and congratulated her for the selection of her other son, Haroon, as the next caliph. She was one of the most influential characters in the Abbasid family. However, she had been hostile towards her son, Hadi, for his rulership. She preferred her younger son, Haroon, for the caliphate. The Imam's action was effective in prohibiting the Abbasids from taking any action against him, especially because Haroon succeeded his brother, Hadi, as the Abbasid Caliph and Khayzuran's influence on the Abbasid government substantially increased.

After the Battle of Fakh, the Prophet's descendants lost hope in resisting the Abbasids in Hijaz. Idris ibn Abdullah, the brother of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, was one of the survivors from the Battle of Fakh who escaped to the corner of the Abbasid government in northwestern Africa. With the aid of local tribes, Idris was able to establish the autonomous Idrisid government in present-day Morocco and some parts of Algeria⁸⁹. Although the Idrisids became the first government established by the Prophet's descendants, there is no historical evidence of the Shia Imams approving their government. The Idrisid government lasted for around two centuries in that region. Thus, there were two autonomous governments in the western boundary of the Islamic territory that existed apart from the Abbasids: the Idrisids, and the remaining Umayyads in Andalusia (modern day Spain). The long distance between the Abbasid capital in Baghdad and the Idrisid territory limited their ability to defeat the Idrisid government by military

⁸⁸ 14 Rabi' al-Awwal, 170 AH (Imam's age: 42)

⁸⁹ 172 AH (Imam's age: 44)

operation.

7-5-During the Government of Haroon

7-5-1-Haroon in Power⁹⁰

After Hadi, his brother Haroon assumed power who was just 25 years old. He portrayed himself as a religious person, while in reality he was very heartless and cruel in his rulership. Haroon inherited a large, stable, and rich government from Northern Africa to India. Like his brother, Hadi, he had kept himself busy with amusement and music parties and would give huge sums of wealth from the public Bayt al-Mal to the famous singers for his amusement. Young Haroon's government was practically managed by his mother, Khayzuran, and his minister, Yahya ibn Khalid Barmaki.

7-5-2-Haroon and the Imam

In the beginning of Haroon's government, he was lenient with the Imam. He knew that the Imam was the leader in people's hearts, and that he, himself, was just a ruler overcoming them by sword and force. The Imam tried not to give Haroon any excuse to harass or kill him, as he was the only source of guidance in society. The Imam also did not initiate any uprising against Haroon, as he had pledged to his father Mahdi in the years back to not rise against him or any of his children. However, the Imam did not accept Haroon as a righteous caliph. He stood against Haroon's conspiracies to deceive the people through his false portrayal of an Islamic lifestyle, and his undermining of the status of the Imam.

On one occasion, Haroon sent his messenger to call the Imam. The Imam told his near ones that if it was not because of Haroon's threats against his life, he would never visit him. On another occasion, Haroon came to Medina and the Imam went to him. Haroon respected the Imam and asked his sons to accompany the Imam on his way back.

⁹⁰ Rabi' al-Awwal, 170 AH (Imam's age: 42)

Later, one of his sons (Ma'mun) asked him about his out-of-ordinary respect for the Imam. Haroon responded that the Imam has the heart of the people, and I am just a ruler by sword and fear. Haroon then said to his son that power does not recognize any family relationships. He continued to say to his son that even if it is you who stands against me and my government, I would eliminate you. When Haroon left Medina, he sent gifts for the elders of Medina. However, the gift he sent the Imam was negligible compared to the others. When his son inquired him about this difference, Haroon responded, "I am afraid that if I send him a large amount, he will prepare an army of around 100,000 soldiers from his family and followers to rise against me."

The Abbasids, who were proud of being related to the Prophet, exploited and abused this relation to deceive the people and legitimize their own government. However, this deception was not going to work against Imam Kazim and the other descendants of the Prophet, as they were more closely related to the Prophet than the Abbasids. There are multiple occasions when the Imam confronted Haroon, during which there were serious debates between them regarding their relationship to the Prophet.

During one of Haroon's visits to Medina, he was standing by the Prophet's tomb and saluted the Prophet by addressing him as his cousin. At this time, the Imam approached Haroon from within the crowd, and saluted the Prophet by addressing him as his father. Haroon was embarrassed and ashamed in front of the crowd of people, and did not have anything to add or claim. He said to the Imam, "Your relationship to the Prophet is indeed a pride for you."

On another occasion, Haroon asked the Imam why he had claimed to have a closer blood relation to the Prophet than the Abbasids. The Imam replied, "If the Prophet were to resurrect from his tomb and propose to your daughter, would you accept the proposal?" Haroon responded with excitement, "Absolutely." Haroon continued that he would feel proud among all the Muslims for such a marriage. The Imam then said, "The Prophet would not propose to marry my daughter as

he would be her grandfather and such a marriage is forbidden in Islam.” Haroon was shocked by the Imam’s logical answer, and admitted that the Imam was correct.

Haroon then asked the Imam why he claimed to be from the Prophet’s lineage while the Prophet had not left behind any sons. He said lineage applies for the children of a person from his sons, not from his daughters. Haroon explicitly asked the Imam to convince him using Quranic evidence. The Imam asked Haroon about the father of Prophet Jesus. Haroon responded that Prophet Jesus did not have a father. The Imam responded, “Prophet Jesus has been named as an offspring of Prophet Abraham and the other Prophets in the Quran through his mother, Lady Mary, by referring to these verses of the Quran [6:84,85]: ‘And We gave him (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob and guided each of them... and from his (Abraham’s) offspring, David and Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron, and Zechariah, John, Jesus and Ilyas (Elijah).’ Similar to Prophet Jesus, we are the offspring of the Prophet and are related to him through our mother, Lady Fatimah.”

The Imam then asked Haroon if he was interested to hear more evidence from the Quran and Haroon accepted. The Imam referred to the verse of Mubahilah in the Quran [3:61]: “Tell those who dispute this with you even after the knowledge that has reached you: Come, let us gather our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, and pray and solicit God to condemn those who lie’. No single Muslim has ever claimed that the Prophet took anyone else with himself for Mubahilah against the Christians other than Imam Ali, Lady Fatimah, Imam Hasan, and Imam Hossein. According to the verse of Mubahilah, Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein are the sons of the Prophet. Thus, the children of Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein are indeed the Prophet’s lineage.” Haroon was completely convinced by the Imam’s Quranic reasoning, and admitted that the Imam’s answer was correct.

7-5-3-Discovery of Imam Ali's Grave⁹¹

An important event during the government of Haroon was the discovery of the hidden grave of Imam Ali (AS) in Najaf. The Shia Imams knew its hidden location and had kept it as a secret. They had only revealed it to their close companions. This location was hidden from the public for about 130 years until the government of Haroon. During this long period, the holy grave of Imam Ali was protected from the vengeful actions of the Khawarij and the Umayyads, who hated Imam Ali's justice. For example, during the government of Hajjaj in Kufa, around 3,000 graves were exhumed by his order in an attempt to find and disrespect Imam Ali's grave. At the time of Haroon, no serious threat was facing the unveiled grave of Imam Ali. The Khawarij ideology had been weakened and their activities were limited to the boundaries of the Islamic territory in Northern Iraq, Khorasan, and Sistan. Also, the Umayyads were overthrown by the Abbasids, who were proud of being related to the Prophet and Imam Ali. Thus, Haroon ordered the construction of a building upon the gravesite of Imam Ali.

7-5-4-The Imam's Leadership

To meet the needs of the growing Shia community, Imam Sadiq had established a networking organization of his trusted companions as his representatives in various cities around the Islamic territory. Imam Kazim took advantage of this organization effectively during his Imamat. He began by proving himself as the next Imam for the representatives who had travelled to Medina to transfer the Muslims' charity dues (Zakat) and to ask their Islamic questions from him. At the time, the Abbasid spies were closely monitoring the Imam's activities. There were serious threats against his life and the Imam could not be the center of communication with his Shia followers. The Abbasid rulers were especially in great fear of allowing the transfer of the Muslims' charity dues to the Imam in Medina, as they thought this could

⁹¹ 171 AH (Imam's age: 43)

facilitate the Imam's potential for an uprising against them. Thus, the Imam expanded this organization as an effective method of leading the Shia community. The Imam would guide his representatives on how to spend the Muslims' charity dues and responded to their questions through letters. The Imam had also advised his representatives to avoid meeting him directly in Medina, and to instead contact his chosen representative in Medina, Mufazzal ibn Umar. Overall, many aspects of this organization have not been recorded in history due to its hidden nature.

During Haroon's rulership, there was excessive pressure and surveillance on Imam Kazim and his Shia followers by the government. The Imam had introduced the Abbasids as an oppressive government, and had given strict advice to his followers to avoid any relationship with them. The Imam did not even allow simple business deals with the government. In one incident, the Imam confronted one of his companions who had rented his camels to Haroon for travelling to Mecca to perform Hajj. The Imam told him that by providing this rental, you expect Haroon to return safely from his travel to pay you and return your camel. The Imam then said that anyone who expects them to be alive is from them, and his eternal place in the hereafter is in the hellfire along with them. By this strict advice, the Imam's companion sold all of his camels to avoid doing business with the government.

Despite the general order of the Imam to boycott any relationship with the oppressive Abbasid government, the Imam allowed his pious companions to be involved in some sensitive positions in the government. This was one of the Imam's important strategies in leading the Shia community. The Imam's intention for this exception was to save the wealth and lives of his Shia followers from persecution and oppression of the government. Ali ibn Yaqteen was one of these pious companions. He became close to the government due to his father's loyalty and status to the Abbasid government. Ali ibn Yaqteen was unlike his father. He was a loyal companion of the Imam. With the

Imam's approval, Ali ibn Yaqteen held a high-ranking position in the Abbasid government, including Haroon's government. He had wanted to resign from his position on multiple occasions, but the Imam had asked him to stay in his position, and he obeyed. The Imam had guaranteed that he would not be killed by the sword of an enemy nor be imprisoned, and that he would never become poor. In return, the Imam had asked him to respect any of his Shia followers who came to him in the government. Ali ibn Yaqteen used his position to help the Shias and saved their lives and wealth from the oppression of the Abbasids. For example, he would secretly return illegitimate taxes that the government was taking forcefully from the Shias. He would also send his Islamic obligatory dues to the Imam in Medina, or spend it according to the Imam's guidance. He would donate a large amount of money by sending a few hundreds of Shias to Hajj annually, and would pay a large allowance to each of them. The Imam saved him on various occasions from the conspiracies and the plots of the Abbasids against him. The Imam would meet his representatives outside Medina, return his valuable gifts back to him, or send him specific instructions on performing religious rituals to save him from the Abbasids who were suspicious of him from time to time.

7-5-5-Arresting the Imam

After years of being in power, Haroon began laying the groundwork to keep the Abbasid Caliphate within his own lineage. He selected his son, Amin, as his successor. He then selected his other son, Ma'mun, as Amin's successor. He was concerned about the social popularity of the Imam and its consequences upon his sons' future government. Any minor excuse was enough to trigger him to take action against the Imam. One such excuse was given to him by his minister, Yahya ibn Khalid Barmaki, who became jealous of Amin's selected private teacher. Yahya was afraid of losing influence in Amin's future government, especially since he had been Haroon's teacher during his childhood and knew the importance of the position. He frequently talked ill about the selected teacher to Haroon and labeled him as a Shia follower of Imam

Kazim. However, he failed to prove his accusation to Haroon. Yahya's conspiracy instead caused Haroon to investigate the Imam's whereabouts.

Yahya plotted with Muhammad ibn Isma'il, the Imam's nephew. Muhammad ibn Isma'il was poor and prone to bad decisions. Yahya brought him from Medina to Baghdad before Haroon. Muhammad ibn Isma'il, who was bribed by Yahya, said to Haroon, "I didn't think that the world has two Caliphs, you in Baghdad and my uncle, Musa ibn Ja'far (Imam Kazim), in Medina. The Muslims from all over the Islamic territory send their obligatory Islamic dues to him (the Imam) in Medina." He accused the Imam of collecting large sums of wealth and of establishing his own government by printing his name on the coins of his wealth. At the meeting, Haroon promised Muhammad ibn Isma'il a significant reward, but Muhammad ibn Isma'il died of sudden illness before receiving his reward.

Yahya's conspiracy triggered Haroon to act against the Imam. Haroon wanted to get the Muslims' allegiance for his son, Amin's, nomination as his successor. He called the Muslims to Mecca for Hajj. On his way to Hajj, he stopped in Medina to arrest the Imam. He decided to first justify his action against the Imam to the Muslims. To do this, while he was visiting the tomb of the Holy Prophet, he addressed the Prophet and said loudly, "I am sorry about my decision against Musa ibn Ja'far. I want to imprison him because I am afraid that he would make a riot that would perish the blood of your nation."

The following day, Haroon ordered the Imam's arrest. Haroon's soldiers captured the Imam in the Prophet's Mosque while he was praying next to the Prophet's tomb⁹². The soldiers interrupted the Imam's prayers, forcefully took him outside the mosque, and brought him before Haroon. Haroon insulted and disrespected the Imam. He ordered the preparation of two caravans towards Iraq, one to Basrah and the other to Kufa. His intention was to leave the Imam's destination

⁹² 20 Shawwal, 179 AH (Imam's age: 51)

unknown and to confront any attempt by the Imam's followers to have him released. The caravan's long travel time from Medina to Basrah of around 47 days also shows that the government feared attempts to save the Imam from captivity. They must have transported the Imam through obscure roads or have taken winding travel paths. When the Imam was finally brought to Basrah as a captive, he was received by Basrah's governor, Isa ibn Ja'far, who was Haroon's cousin⁹³.

7-5-6-Prison of Isa ibn Ja'far

Isa ibn Ja'far imprisoned the Imam in a cell inside his own house. The Imam was kept in this prison for about a year. The door of his cell would open twice each day: once for delivering food and once to allow him to refresh his ablution. Isa ibn Ja'far was a corrupt character who would hold music and dance parties in his house. The Imam was harassed in this prison by the loud sounds of these parties. The Imam's activities and prayers remained under intense surveillance by Isa ibn Ja'far's agents. One of these agents had said that the Imam would repeatedly recite the following sentence in his prayers to God: "O' my Lord, I used to ask you constantly to bless me with a quiet corner to pray and now I am thankful to You for fulfilling my request."

Haroon frequently asked Isa ibn Ja'far to kill the Imam, but he would not accept Haroon's order. He did not want to take the responsibility and blame for killing the Imam. His friends also advised him to do the same. After a year, Isa ibn Ja'far sent a letter to Haroon complaining to him about the lengthy imprisonment of the Imam in his house⁹⁴. He told Haroon that he would not kill the Imam, and if Haroon would not transfer the Imam, he would release him. He reminded Haroon that he was closely watching the Imam and had witnessed him in constant prayer. He stated that the Imam had never cursed nor said anything bad against anyone, including Haroon, in his prayers. When Haroon received the letter of Isa ibn Ja'far, he sent a delegate to transfer the

⁹³ 7 Zu al-Hijjah, 179 AH (Imam's age: 51)

⁹⁴ 180 AH (Imam's age: 52)

Imam to Baghdad. The Imam was transferred to one of Haroon's loyal politicians, Fazl ibn Rabi', who was the son of Rabi', one of the most trusted individuals to the Abbasid caliphs.

7-5-7-Prison of Fazl ibn Rabi'

Fazl ibn Rabi' imprisoned the Imam in a cell in his house, secretly monitoring all of his activities. He witnessed the Imam fasting daily and that, except for a small part of the night, the Imam remained in constant prayers and long prostrations.

Haroon would frequently go to the roof of the Imam's cell to personally spy on him. From the opening of the roof, he would only see a part of the Imam's clothing on the ground. He would ask where the Imam was in the cell. He was told that the clothing was actually the Imam in long prostrations continuously from sunrise to noon. When Haroon was asked, "If you know the Imam's conditions, why do you still keep him in the prison?" Haroon responded, "I don't have any other choice and the Imam's imprisonment is better for my government."

After a while, Fazl ibn Rabi' was influenced by the Imam's character and prayers. He refused Haroon's orders to finish the Imam. Haroon, who was disappointed at Fazl ibn Rabi', ordered the transfer of the Imam within Baghdad to Fazl ibn Yahya's house. Fazl ibn Yahya was one of Haroon's loyal politicians and the son of his famous minister, Yahya ibn Khalid Barmaki.

7-5-8-Prison of Fazl ibn Yahya

The Imam's character and prayers had great influence on the hearts of his jailers. Although Yahya ibn Khalid Barmaki encouraged Haroon to imprison the Imam, his son, Fazl ibn Yahya, who was keeping the Imam in his custody, was influenced by the Imam's character. Fazl ibn Yahya witnessed the Imam in long prayers, prostration, and constant fasting. He changed his treatment of the Imam, giving him respect and comfort. When Haroon received the news that the Imam was in comfort, he became angry and ordered Fazl ibn Yahya be lashed. He ordered the transfer of the Imam in Baghdad to one of his most heartless and

obedient agents, Sendi ibn Shahak, who was the head of the guard forces (police) in Baghdad.

7-5-9-Prison of Sendi ibn Shahak

The Imam's imprisonment in the house of Sendi ibn Shahak was the hardest among his other imprisonments. Sendi ibn Shahak was a heartless military leader who would obey Haroon's orders blindly. Despite the harsh treatment from Sendi ibn Shahak, the Imam's presence had influenced anyone who would meet him. Ironically, Sendi's own family members were among those who were influenced and guided by the Imam. In the years later, Sendi's grandson, Kashaajim, became a great Shia poet and scholar who publicly recited poetry to eulogize the Shia Imams.

After a few years of the Imam's imprisonment, Haroon was determined to do anything to defame the Imam in the eyes of the Muslims. One of his plots was to attract the Imam towards himself in order to legitimize his government. He sent a messenger to the Imam in the prison. The Imam completely ignored the presence of the messenger and continued his long prayers. After a while, the messenger worried that his long stay might make Haroon suspicious and angry, so he began talking immediately between the Imam's prayers. He told the Imam that Haroon had brought the Imam to Iraq because of ill-talks against him, but Haroon's investigations had found the Imam innocent, and all the rumors against the Imam to be lies. He said that Haroon preferred to keep the Imam near him because it gave peace to his heart, and that he liked to provide the Imam with any food that he desired. The Imam responded with just a concise sentence, "My wealth is not with me to benefit me and I am not created to ask." The Imam then immediately started his next prayer. The Imam's reaction showed Haroon that even after a few years of imprisonment, the Imam would not surrender to him.

On another occasion, Haroon forcefully sent a female slave into the Imam's cell. His intention was to have her as a witness to speak against the Imam's character in public. However, she was influenced by the

Imam's prayers and divine personality. After a while, Haroon was informed that she was now a different person, constantly in prostration and asking forgiveness from God. When she was brought to Haroon, he accused the Imam of placing a spell on her. However, she objected to Haroon, spoke highly of the Imam, and testified to the Imam's divine character. Haroon, who initially wanted to have her as a witness against the Imam, now had to ask someone from his close ones to hide her from the public. The lady remained a pious servant of God until her last breath.

The Imam once sent a letter to Haroon from prison. He told Haroon that each hard day that passes for him, that same day also passes from Haroon's happy days, and they all lead to a day when both of them will meet in the hereafter. On that day, the Imam wrote, the followers of falsehood will admit to their losses. The Imam's message showed Haroon that the Imam would not beg for his freedom and would resist against all of the inflicted calamities until his martyrdom.

7-5-10-Martyrdom

After around four years of the Imam's imprisonment, Haroon had become completely hopeless to break the Imam's resistance against his government and decided to kill the Imam. He left Baghdad and went to Raqqa, a faraway city in modern day Syria, to portray himself as innocent in the Imam's martyrdom. He sent his minister, Yahya ibn Khalid Barmaki, to Baghdad with a secret mission to poison the Imam. Yahya was motivated to gain Haroon's trust because Haroon had been disappointed by Yahya's son, Fazl ibn Yahya, in how he had honored the Imam during the Imam's imprisonment in his house. Yahya delivered Haroon's order to Sendi ibn Shahak and gave him poisonous dates. Sendi served the poisonous dates to the Imam, which led to the Imam's martyrdom.

Immediately after poisoning the Imam and before his martyrdom, Sendi wanted to portray the Imam's martyrdom as a natural death to the public. He moved the Imam to a comfortable setting with nice carpets. He then gathered a group of around 80 people from the scholars and

the elders of Baghdad in his house. He brought them face to face with the Imam and asked them to testify that the Imam was physically safe and unharmed. He told them, “The people think we are hurting Musa ibn Ja’far but as you see, he is healthy and in comfort, and we have only kept him here until Haroon returns to Baghdad to speak and debate with him.” The Imam unexpectedly began to talk and told them that he had just been poisoned and would pass away in three days. By the Imam’s words, Sendi became nervous and his plot failed.

Three days after the Imam’s poisoning, his soul ascended. He was martyred on the 25th of Rajab, in the year 183 of Hijri, in Baghdad, at the age of 55.

7-5-11-Burial

After the Imam’s martyrdom, Sendi still wanted to complete his previously unsuccessful plot of portraying a natural death for the Imam to the people. He gathered more than 50 people who knew the Imam to his house. He showed them the Imam’s body, and asked them to testify that there was no sign of injury or suffocation on his body.

In order to insult the Imam and his Shia followers, Sendi then ordered only four of his soldiers to take the Imam’s corpse to the streets of Baghdad. He asked his soldiers to loudly announce in the streets of Baghdad, “Anyone who wants to see the body of the vicious, son of the vicious, come to us as we are carrying the body of the Imam of the Rafidhi.” Rafidhi was a derogatory term used against the Shias. They then placed the Imam’s corpse on the bridge over the Tigris River for part of a day. The people came to see the Imam’s corpse and witnessed that his body did not have any sign of torture or injury.

Haroon’s uncle, Sulayman ibn Abi-Ja’far, was one of the most influential members of the Abbasid royal family. He was in his palace by the Tigris River when he heard the turmoil and the people’s voices. When he was informed about Sendi insulting the Imam’s corpse, he condemned Sendi’s action, and found it politically unwise and dangerous for Haroon’s government. Though he did not believe in the

Imamat of Imam Kazim, he was afraid that Sendi's action could trigger the Shias, who were large in numbers in Baghdad and the other cities, to rise against the government. He sent his agents to take the Imam's corpse from Sendi's soldiers, and even advised them to use force if necessary. He then attended the Imam's burial while barefoot. He told his agents to announce in the city that anyone who wants to look at the face of the blessed, son of the blessed, should come and look at the face of Musa ibn Ja'far. Crowds of Muslims then came for the Imam's burial, and a respectful burial ceremony was performed for the Imam. The crowd carried the Imam's corpse towards one of the city's graveyards that belonged to the Quraysh, the tribe that the Imam, the Abbasids, and Banu Hashim belonged to, where they respectfully buried the Imam.

While in Raqqa, Haroon received the news about the Imam's martyrdom and burial. To pretend that he was innocent, he sent a letter to his uncle, Sulayman ibn Abi-Ja'far, and praised his actions of burying the Imam respectfully. In his letter, Haroon cursed Sendi ibn Shahak for his actions during the Imam's burial and said that Sendi had acted based on his own decision without any approval from him.

7-6-Conclusion

The Imamat of Imam Kazim coincides with one of the most difficult periods in Islamic history. During this period, the Abbasid government was stable and at its peak of power. Mansur stabilized the Abbasid government by applying his iron-fist policy and eliminating his opponents brutally. The Imamat of Imam Kazim began at the time of Mansur, when the Imam could not even publicly declare his Imamat, as Mansur's spies were looking to find the Shia Imam after Imam Sadiq to behead him. The Imamat of Imam Kazim continued to the government of Mahdi, who initiated his government by declaring public amnesty. However, as time passed, Mahdi became suspicious of the Imam and brought him to Baghdad and imprisoned him. He decided to kill the Imam, but his dream changed his mind and he released the Imam.

When Hadi assumed power, he put an extensive amount of pressure on the Prophet's lineage in Medina. This pressure eventually led to the uprising of the Prophet's lineage under the leadership of Hossein, the martyr of Fakh. Hadi attributed this uprising to Imam Kazim and vowed firmly to kill him, but God saved the Imam through Hadi's sudden death. When Haroon assumed power, he was initially lenient towards the Imam. Later, however, he imprisoned the Imam in various locations for about four years and ordered the poisoning and martyrdom of the Imam. The Imam was martyred and buried in Baghdad, far from his family in Medina.

With the unprecedeted oppressive regime of the Abbasid government dominating the society, the Imam had a critical role to lead the Shia community, guide them in their religious beliefs, and save them from division. The Imam expanded the organization of his representatives as an effective method of communication between himself and his Shia followers who were spread across the Islamic territory. This hidden organization allowed the Imam to indirectly connect to his followers, guide them, answer their questions, and ultimately grow the Shia community as a primary sect among the other factions of Islam. Despite serious threats against his life, the Imam never accepted the Abbasids as a righteous and legitimate government. He introduced the Abbasids as an unjust government to his Shia followers and asked them to distance themselves from it. In certain circumstances, the Imam allowed his pious companions to take sensitive governmental positions to save the wealth and lives of his Shia followers from the persecutions of the Abbasids. The Imam strongly confronted the Abbasid propagandas, such as their claim to their relationship with the Prophet in order to deceive the people and legitimize their government.

The life of Imam Kazim was full of oppression, calamities, imprisonments, and life threats, which he endured from multiple Abbasid caliphs. The lack of historical records and information about the condition of the Imam during his imprisonment is another proof for his oppression. The Abbasids hid the Imam's condition in prison to

avoid reactions from the Muslims. During the Imam's life, he manifested the true meaning of his title, 'Kazim', the one who controls his anger. The Imam remained patient despite all of the calamities he was inflicted with by the government and the ignorant people. He was blessed by God with a special status known by the people of Iraq as 'Bab al-Hawaij Ilallah', which means 'the door of fulfillment of requests from God'. Even today, many Muslims of various sects visit Imam Kazim's holy shrine in Baghdad, and their requests from God are fulfilled through the Imam.

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IMAM KAZIM (AS):

**Whoever wishes to be the strongest of people
should put his trust in God.**

8- IMAM REZA (AS): THE IMAM OF CONTENTMENT

This chapter reviews the life of Imam Reza (AS) and provides an overview of his social, scientific, and political achievements. This chapter also highlights the conspiracy and political complexity that led to his selection as the crown prince by the Abbasid Caliph.

8-1-Before the Government of Haroon

8-1-1-Birth

Imam Ali ibn Musa (AS), also known as Reza, was born on the 11th of Zu al-Qa'dah in the year 148 of Hijri in Medina. He was also known as 'Abul-Hasan'. As per family traditions of the Ahlul-Bayt, Shia Imams with the name of Ali were also honored with Imam Ali's title of 'Abul-Hasan'. The Imam was born less than a month after the martyrdom of his grandfather, Imam Sadiq (AS), who had been eager to meet him. Imam Sadiq had frequently told his son, Imam Kazim (AS), "The scholar of the Prophet's family will be from your lineage and I wish to meet him." Some historical records suggest that Imam Reza was the oldest son of Imam Kazim. Imam Reza's mother was a slave who was originally from Africa, from an area that is currently between Egypt and Sudan. She was owned by Imam Kazim's mother, Hamideh, who noticed her piety and great character. Hamideh then decided to marry her to Imam Kazim. She was called by various names, including Najmeh Khatoon. To purge bad memories from the period of her captivity, she was named Tuktam by Imam Kazim after their marriage. Also, when she gave birth to Imam Reza, Imam Kazim called her by the title of 'Tahereh', which means 'the pure one'.

8-2-During the Government of Haroon

8-2-1-Haroon's Government

When Haroon assumed power⁹⁵, the Abbasid government was at its peak, and had expanded from Northern Africa to India. Haroon portrayed himself as a religious individual, but he was heartless and cruel in his government. He kept himself busy with amusement, musical parties, and gave huge amounts of wealth from the public Bayt al-Mal to famous singers for his amusement.

8-2-2-Before Imamat

⁹⁵ Rabi' al-Awwal, 170 (Imam's age: 21)

Imam Reza's birth coincides with the martyrdom of Imam Sadiq and the beginning of the Imamat of his father, Imam Kazim. Imam Reza grew up under the direct guidance of his father. He witnessed his father's extensive oppression by multiple Abbasid caliphs during his father's long Imamat of around 34 years. There are limited historical records on the life of Imam Reza before his Imamat. The available records show the Imam's divine knowledge and his special status in the eyes of Imam Kazim.

Divine knowledge, which was an essential characteristic of the Shia Imams, was apparent in Imam Reza years before his Imamat. The Imam would sit in the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina and would answer the people's questions regarding the Islamic laws when he was in his early 20s.

Imam Reza grew up in a large family and had many siblings, including 17 brothers. However, Imam Kazim paid special attention to Imam Reza over his other children. He introduced Imam Reza to his sons as 'the scholar of the Prophet's family', and asked them to refer to him for their religious questions and to seek guidance. Despite the extensive pressure enforced on Imam Kazim during his lifetime, he introduced Imam Reza as his successor to the Imamat on various occasions. Once, Imam Kazim came to a family gathering in the Mosque of the Prophet with his son, Imam Reza. He introduced Imam Reza as his deputy during his lifetime, and his successor after his death. He asked everyone to testify to his statement. On another occasion, Imam Kazim gathered a group of his family members and companions as witnesses for his will. In his will, Imam Kazim chose Imam Reza as his successor and gave him full authority to decide various aspects of his family affairs after himself. These affairs included decisions about the marriages of Imam Kazim's daughters, the spending of one third of his wealth, and stipends to be paid to his wives. Imam Kazim and the witnesses then sealed the will.

8-2-3-Martyrdom of Imam Kazim⁹⁶

During the time of Haroon, there was an excessive amount of pressure and oppression on Imam Kazim by the government. Haroon ordered the imprisonment of Imam Kazim at various locations in Basrah and Baghdad for around four years. He eventually ordered the poisoning and martyrdom of Imam Kazim. Historical records suggest Imam Reza's miraculous travel from Medina to Baghdad on the night of the martyrdom of Imam Kazim to take care of his father's funeral rites. The Imam then returned to Medina on the same night, in hiding. On the following day, Imam Reza informed his family about his father's martyrdom, but asked them to keep it confidential until the news of the martyrdom was officially delivered to Medina. After a few days, when the news was brought to Medina by a messenger, the family of Imam Kazim publicly grieved for their loss.

8-2-4-Beginning of Imamat

At the beginning of Imam Reza's Imamat, he did not publicly declare his Imamat due to the extensive amount of pressure dominating the society following Imam Kazim's imprisonment and martyrdom by Haroon. It was highly possible that Haroon would have been a threat for Imam Reza, so the Imam only revealed his Imamat to his family, as well as to his father's loyal companions and representatives.

Imam Reza was a source of Islamic ethics and morals in the society. He would respond to bad behavior with good behavior. At the beginning of his Imamat, one of his brothers, Abbas, accused him of inheriting large hidden wealth from their father, Imam Kazim. He brought the Imam to the court and asked the judge to order the Imam to open the sealed will that had been passed to him from Imam Kazim. The Imam and two of the witnesses of Imam Kazim's will rejected Abbas's accusation, but Abbas opened the sealed will in the court and read it. He realized that there was no indication of wealth left by Imam Kazim in his will. Instead, Imam Kazim had explicitly chosen Imam Reza as

⁹⁶ 25 Rajab, 183 AH (Imam's age: 34)

his successor and had asked his other sons to fully obey him. Upon revealing the will, Imam Reza did not retaliate against his brother. Instead, Imam Reza explained to his brother that the motive behind his brother's accusation had been his debt and the fact that he needed money. He told Abbas that he would pay off all of his debt and would not hesitate to help him in the future and prayed for him.

8-2-5-Confrontation with the Vaghefis

The main challenge Imam Reza faced in the beginning of his Imamat was from a few of his father's representatives who refused to accept him as the Imam after Imam Kazim. They were among the representatives of Imam Kazim in his network of representatives across the Islamic territory. They were responsible for guiding the Shias according to the Imam's teachings and advice, collecting their obligatory Islamic dues, and resolving issues among the Shias in their community. These individuals were among the Shia scholars spreading the narrations of the Shia Imams, and were qualified in their Islamic knowledge. For around four years, during the imprisonment of Imam Kazim, they did not transfer the collected obligatory Islamic dues from their communities to Imam Kazim, nor did they spend it according to his guidance. The stored wealth in their possession grew to a significant amount and was enough to entice them against their duties. When Imam Reza asked them to transfer the collected wealth to him as the next Imam, they refused. They instead denied the Imamat of Imam Reza by denying the martyrdom of Imam Kazim. They claimed that Imam Kazim was not martyred, but instead was the Mahdi promised by the Prophet and had simply disappeared from sight. These representatives were able to gather some support from their Shia communities and separated themselves from the majority of the Shias who accepted Imam Reza as the next Imam. This faction of Shia was known as the Vaghefi, or those who stopped at the Imamat of Imam Kazim.

The denial of Imam Kazim's martyrdom by the Vaghefis was against clear historical evidence, as many had witnessed the martyrdom of

Imam Kazim and had attended his burial. For example, right after Imam Kazim's martyrdom, Sendi ibn Shahak, who poisoned the Imam, tried to portray the Imam's martyrdom as a natural death. He gathered more than 50 people in his house and exhibited the Imam's body. He asked them to testify that the Imam's body did not have any sign of injury or suffocation. He later put the Imam's corpse on the bridge of Baghdad over the Tigris River to disrespect the Imam and the Shia belief. The people of Baghdad visited the Imam's corpse to witness his demise. Later, when Haroon's uncle, Sulayman ibn Abi-Ja'far, was informed of Sendi ibn Shahak's actions, he found it against the political favors of the Abbasid government. He feared this could trigger Shias, who were in large numbers, in Baghdad and the other cities to rise up against the government. Thus, he sent his agents to retrieve the Imam's corpse from Sendi ibn Shahak's soldiers. He then held a grand burial ceremony for the Imam, where crowds of Muslims participated. Despite the clear evidence surrounding the martyrdom of Imam Kazim, the Vaghefis insisted on their belief and continued in their ignorance.

The Vaghefi faction began with three of Imam Kazim's representatives who had monetary interests. They were able to gather some supporters from the Shias, as they had social acceptance in their communities and were known as scholars who recited narrations from the Shia Imams. They fabricated narrations from Imam Sadiq and the other Shia Imams in their own favor to prove their false claim that Imam Kazim was the promised Mahdi and was still alive. They also misinterpreted some narrations from the Shia Imams to their own benefit. Among their fallacies was to use Imam Kazim's name, Musa, and relating it to the story of Prophet Moses who had isolated himself and disappeared from his nation for around 40 days. They concluded that Imam Kazim had disappeared temporarily and would later appear before the people.

While Imam Reza had not yet publicly declared his Imamat, he did not stay silent in confrontation with the Vaghefis who had branched from the Shia community. Imam Reza debated with the leaders and the followers of the Vaghefis on multiple occasions to guide them. The

Imam proved to them that his father was no longer alive and that his inheritance had been distributed amongst his children. The Imam also corrected fabricated narrations by the Vaghefis and interpreted the true meaning of the vague narrations they misused. The Imam also provided them with the knowledge of the unseen to prove his divine knowledge, a sign of the Shia Imams. Consequently, the Imam was able to guide many of the Vaghefis to his Imamat.

The remaining Vaghefis caused trouble for Imam Reza during his Imamat. They instilled doubts in the hearts of his Shia followers. They looked for any excuse to blame the Imam and to justify their own beliefs. They asked the Imam, if he was the righteous Imam, why had he not declared his Imamat publicly? The Imam responded that he was following the Prophet, who had started his mission of prophethood in hiding. They also challenged the Imamat of Imam Reza, since he did not have any sons to inherit his Imamat in the future. Imam Reza countered their challenge by telling them that God would bless him with a son who would be the next Imam after him. Imam Reza's son, Imam Javad, was born when he was 46 years old⁹⁷. After all of the accusations, the Vaghefis insisted in their belief. The Imam cursed the leaders of the Vaghefis and introduced them as being in the same rank as infidels due to their lies that they associated with the Shia Imams. The Imam told his followers to cut any relationship with the Vaghefis and to isolate them in the community. Historically, the Vaghefi ideology did not last long and has become extinct.

8-2-6-Haroon and the Imam

Haroon did not regard the Imam as an immediate threat for his government. However, he was frequently advised by those close to him, particularly his minister, Yahya ibn Khalid Barmaki, to take action against Imam Reza who was being followed by the Shias as the Imam after Imam Kazim but Haroon rejected their wishes to act against the Imam. Haroon would respond, "We have killed his father. Should I kill

⁹⁷ 15 Ramazan, 195 AH (Imam's age: 46)

them all (to satisfy you)?” Haroon was aware that Muslims, especially the Shias, held him responsible for the martyrdom of Imam Kazim. He did not want to put his government in further trouble by aggravating the long-standing hostilities between the Prophet’s descendants and the Abbasids.

Haroon had appointed spies in Medina to closely monitor all aspects of Imam Reza’s activities. Once, Haroon received a report from one of his spies that the Imam had gone to the market and purchased some domestic animals. Later, someone came to Haroon and claimed the Imam had opened his house to the people and had been calling them to his Imamat. Haroon surprisingly responded that the spy earlier had given a contrary report to what he just reported, and thus Haroon did not pay attention to this obvious conspiracy against the Imam.

Due to the frequent ill-talks against the Imam, Haroon once decided to kill him. He sent someone to bring the Imam into his presence. When the Imam saw Haroon, he quietly recited a supplication which had been passed down to him from the Prophet. When Haroon looked at the Imam, his decision suddenly changed. He told the Imam that he had ordered a large reward to be paid to him, and told the Imam to write down his family’s needs. When the Imam returned, Haroon consoled himself by saying that he had wanted something and God had wanted something else, and whatever God wants is better.

8-2-7-Declaration of Imamat

After a period estimated by some to be around four years, Imam Reza publicly announced his Imamat to the people. He was frequently warned by his close companions that the declaration of his Imamat might trigger Haroon to persecute him. The Imam dismissed their warnings and promised them that Haroon could not harm him, similar to how the Prophet had made a prophecy that Abu-Jahl, one of his prominent opponents in Mecca, would not be able to harm him. The Imam assured them that they could consider this prophecy a sign of his Imamat.

The Imam's declaration of his Imamat coincided with the time that Haroon decided to remove the powerful Barmaki family from his government. Haroon was afraid that the increasing power of the Barmaki family in his government could endanger his power. As a result, he killed⁹⁸ or imprisoned influential characters and politicians from the Barmaki family. He also imprisoned his famous minister, Yahya ibn Khaild Barmaki, whose hostility led to Imam Kazim's martyrdom. Yahya was kept in prison for a few years until his death. The elimination of the Barmakis from power benefitted the Imam, as they were hostile towards the Ahlul-Bayt and would frequently speak ill of Imam Kazim and Imam Reza to Haroon.

Shortly after, Haroon's attention was diverted to the riots and unrest in the eastern parts of his government. Hamza's rebellion in Sistan and Raafi' ibn Layth's rebellion in central Asia were able to gather support from the people, as they had been subject to the oppression and the injustice of Ali ibn Isa, Haroon's governor in Khorasan. Haroon wanted to create a smooth transition of power for his sons and was concerned about the uprisings and the instabilities in those regions. Thus, he personally travelled to Khorasan to manage the situation⁹⁹. After meeting with Ali ibn Isa in Rey, Iran, he decided to return to Baghdad, as he had received the news of instability at the border with the Roman Empire. The insecurity in Khorasan remained unsolved until Haroon removed Ali ibn Isa from the power and sent troops towards central Asia for a war against Raafi' ibn Layth. He travelled to Khorasan again to oversee the situation despite his illness. However, he could not complete his journey, and died close to the city of Tus in Khorasan, current day Mashhad, Iran¹⁰⁰.

Haroon's engagement in various problems in his government benefitted Imam Reza, as Haroon did not find an opportunity to persecute the Imam. Thus, the Imam continued his Imamat in Medina

⁹⁸ Muharram, 187 AH (Imam's age: 38)

⁹⁹ 189 AH (Imam's age: 40)

¹⁰⁰ 11 Jumada al-Thani, 193 AH (Imam's age: 44)

without any major threats from Haroon's government, and his prophecy that Haroon would be unable to harm him became a reality.

8-2-8-Haroon's Plan for the Future of the Abbasids

Haroon, who was concerned about the power struggle between his sons after his death, decided to implement an innovative plan that was unique in the history of the Abbasids. He divided the entire Islamic territory under his control amongst three of his sons and provided them with independent resources and income. He gave the mainland of his territory to Amin, his primary successor. It included Iraq, Hijaz, Syria, and Northern Africa, with the capital in Baghdad. This large portion of his kingdom was stable and dominated by the Arabs, who were supportive of an Arab caliph. He chose Ma'mun as Amin's successor in the caliphate, and gave him rulership over the eastern parts of his territory, including Iran and Khorasan, with the capital in Merv, current day Mary, Turkmenistan. These areas were unstable and subject to various uprisings. Haroon knew that Ma'mun, with his leadership skills, could manage the instability in these areas. Furthermore, Ma'mun's mother was an Iranian slave, and he could better collect support from the Iranians in that area. Finally, Haroon selected his son, Qasim, as Ma'mun's successor in the caliphate and gave him rulership over small territories around Turkey and northern Iraq. This area was also unstable, however, due to its small size, Haroon was hopeful that Qasim would be able to manage it. Haroon also authorized Ma'mun to remove Qasim from his position in the future. To ensure that his plan would be implemented after his death, Haroon performed Hajj¹⁰¹ with his sons and asked them to write a testimony to promise that they would abide by the deal. Haroon then ordered the testimony to be hung inside the Ka'ba as evidence for the other Muslims who were not present in the Hajj that year.

8-3-During the Government of Amin

¹⁰¹ 186 AH (Imam's age: 38)

8-3-1-Amin in Power

After Haroon, his son, Amin, became the caliph as his primary successor. Amin was a corrupt pleasure-seeker and lacked common leadership skills. His government was mainly managed by his minister, Fazl ibn Rab'i. Haroon initially wanted to select Ma'mun as his primary successor instead of Amin, since he was more clever and had stronger leadership skills than Amin. However, he changed his mind to respect his beloved wife, Zubaidah, who was Amin's mother and belonged to the Abbasid royal family. Ma'mun's mother, however, was an Iranian slave. Thus, Amin had more support among the Abbasid family and the Arabs for the caliphate compared to Ma'mun.

8-3-2-Amin and Ma'mun in War

Right after Haroon's death in Khorasan, Amin called his troops and treasury to Baghdad. He initiated a series of actions against Ma'mun, which damaged the relationship between the two brothers. He then asked Ma'mun to resign from his position, which Ma'mun clearly rejected. Amin ousted Ma'mun and Qasim from their positions. Instead, he appointed his infant son, Musa, as his successor. He also destroyed the testimony about Haroon's order for succession hung inside the Ka'ba.

This chain of events led to extreme animosity between the two brothers. Ma'mun was at a disadvantage against Amin, so he needed more support from the people under his rulership. Ma'mun began treating his people kindly. He reduced their taxes, rewarded the elderly, increased the salary of his troops, and portrayed himself to be an open-minded and caring ruler. He emphasized his mother's Iranian heritage to gather more support from the Iranians. He selected his minister, Fazl ibn Sahl, and the head of his army, Taahir ibn Hossein, from the Iranians to show his commitment to them. He also built a good relationship with his neighboring governments and settled the uprising of Raaf'i ibn Layth by accepting his surrender.

Amin was certain of his victory and deployed a large army towards

Khorasan to forcefully eliminate Ma'mun from power. He selected Ali ibn Isa, the former governor of Khorasan for around ten years during Haroon's government, as his army's leader. The people in Khorasan hated Ali ibn Isa due to his oppression and injustice during his past government. This mistake by Amin was effectively used by Ma'mun to warn the people in Khorasan about the consequences of Ali ibn Isa's victory, and thus more people joined Ma'mun's army. Ali ibn Isa's army confronted Ma'mun's army near Rey in Iran in a battle under the leadership of Taahir ibn Hossein¹⁰². Although Ali ibn Isa's army extensively outnumbered the army of Taahir ibn Hossein, they were unexpectedly defeated, and Ali ibn Isa was killed in the battle.

After this battle, Amin repeatedly recruited more men for his army and sent them to battle against Ma'mun's army. Over more than two years, multiple battles took place between the two brothers. These battles ended with victories for Ma'mun, and his army moved closer to Baghdad, the capital of Amin's leadership. Ma'mun's army surrounded Baghdad for more than a year before they finally seized the city and killed Amin¹⁰³.

After Amin's death, Ma'mun officially became the only Abbasid Caliph. Instead of relocating to the capital, Baghdad, Ma'mun decided to stay in Merv and made it the capital of his government. With this decision, Ma'mun wanted to show appreciation to his companions and the people of Khorasan who had supported him to gain power. Also, Baghdad was the center of the Abbasid royal family who had betrayed Ma'mun and supported Amin in the battles against him. They were hostile toward Ma'mun, so Ma'mun preferred to distance himself from them.

8-3-3-Amin and the Imam

There are no historical records about any communication between Amin and Imam Reza during the five years of Amin's government.

¹⁰² 195 AH (Imam's age: 46)

¹⁰³ Rabi' al-Awwal, 198 AH (Imam's age: 49)

Amin was a corrupt pleasure-seeker who indulged in intoxication and other sinful behaviors. His confrontation and frequent wars against Ma'mun prohibited him from taking any action against the Imam.

8-3-4-The Imam: Source of Divine Knowledge

Imam Reza was known for his knowledge amongst the Islamic scholars. He was given the title of 'Alim-e-Ale-Muhammad' or 'the scholar of the Prophet's family'. The Imam was frequently referred to by the scholars of Medina for persuasive answers to their questions, which covered various aspects of Islamic faith and law. Almost two centuries after the demise of the Prophet, Muslims were surrounded by many challenging questions about their beliefs and needed guidance from a divine source. This was also the case for the Shias who were constantly guided by the Shia Imams since the demise of the Prophet. The Shias had received high levels of teachings from Imam Baqir (AS) and Imam Sadiq (AS) about various aspects of the Islamic beliefs. However, more than 40 years had passed from the time they could freely access Imam Sadiq in Medina and ask him their questions. They were under an extremely oppressive regime during the end of Imam Sadiq's life and over the long Imamat of Imam Kazim. Towards the end of Haroon's government, there was a great opportunity for Muslims to access Imam Reza and ask him their questions with relative freedom. For around five years, during the government of Amin, the Imam had a good opportunity. This was the calmest period of Imam Reza's Imamat, and he used it effectively to guide Muslims and openly spread Shia theology.

Imam Reza trained many notable scholars during his Imamat, six of which are among the most authentic companions of the Shia Imams. These scholars have recorded precious narrations from both Imam Reza and Imam Kazim. These six scholars, along with six of Imam Baqir's companions and six of Imam Sadiq's companions, are known as 'As-haab-e-Ejma' or 'the companions of the consensus'. These 18 companions are the most trusted companions of the Shia Imams whose narrations are currently regarded with the highest level of authenticity and trust by the Shia scholars in seminaries.

8-4-During the Government of Ma'mun

8-4-1-The Alavid Uprisings

About five years after Haroon's death, Ma'mun was finally able to oust Amin from power and take control over the entire Abbasid territory. However, his government remained unstable, and various uprisings and riots kept threatening his power. The main threat to his government was led by the Alavids, who had viewed the Abbasids as an illegitimate government since their establishment. The term 'Alavids' refers to the children of Imam Ali (AS), which also includes the Prophet's descendants from his daughter, Lady Fatimah (SA). The Shia Imams were also from the Alavids.

The Alavid uprisings were initiated in Kufa by one of the descendants of Imam Hasan, known as Ibn Tabataba. Ibn Tabataba initially met Abul-Saraya, one of Ma'mun's former military leaders who had separated from Ma'mun's army due to a financial conflict. Ibn Tabataba, as the spiritual leader, and Abul-Saraya, as the army leader, led a joint uprising in Kufa, the center of the Shias. They were able to quickly gather many supporters for their cause, including the Zaidi Shias. They seized Kufa and took it under their control. Shortly after the victory, Ibn Tabataba died suspiciously¹⁰⁴. Some believe that he was eliminated by Abul-Saraya, who then became the sole powerful leader of the uprising. After seizing Kufa, Abul-Saraya sent delegates to the other cities to encourage them to join his uprising. Soon, his uprising expanded to the other cities including Mecca, Medina, Yemen, Basrah, Madain, and Ahvaz, and became a serious threat for Mamun's newly established government. The governors of the seized cities were selected from among the Prophet's descendants. Imam Reza's brothers, Ibrahim, Zaid, and Isma'il became the governors of Yemen, Ahvaz, and Fars, respectively. After nearly ten challenging months, Ma'mun was able to defeat these widespread uprisings.

Imam Reza did not approve nor comment on the Alavid uprisings,

¹⁰⁴ Rajab, 199 AH (Imam's age: 50)

though his close family members, including his own brothers, participated in them. Obviously, the Imam could not support these uprisings led by someone like Abul-Saraya, who was seeking his own power. The nominated governor for Medina during the Alavid uprisings was Muhammad ibn Sulayman, one of the descendants of Imam Hasan (AS). The majority of the Prophet's descendants and the other members of Banu Hashim accepted him as the governor and paid allegiance to him. They then sent the head of their army as a messenger to Imam Reza and asked for his allegiance to Muhammad ibn Sulayman. The Imam requested some time and postponed his decision for 20 days. After exactly 18 days, the Abbasid troops defeated the Alavid uprising in Medina and retook control of the city. On that day, the Imam saw the messenger who had asked for his allegiance in the street as he was fleeing. The Imam called him by his name and asked him if his requested time period of 20 days was over.

8-4-2-Ma'mun's Plot for the Imam

Although Ma'mun was finally able to defeat the widespread Alavid uprisings, he could not put an end to the long-standing conflict between the Alavids and the Abbasids, which had existed since the establishment of the Abbasid government for more than 60 years. During this time, the Alavids rose up against the Abbasid's oppression in various uprisings, including those of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and his brother, Ibrahim, the uprising of Hossein ibn Ali, the martyr of Fakh, the establishment of the Idrisid government in North-Western Africa, and the most recent uprising by Ibn Tabataba, which quickly expanded to various cities in Iraq and Hijaz. The potential for future uprisings by the Alavids was a serious threat to Ma'mun's government and the future of the Abbasids.

The Shia Imams, who were also Alavids, were against the Abbasids and never endorsed their government. Ma'mun had witnessed that his father's harsh and severe policies against Imam Kazim could not stop the Imam from opposing the Abbasid government. Instead, the Shia followers of the Imam grew so much that they even reached critical

government positions.

Ma'mun realized that years of restrictions, oppression, and enforcement upon the Alavids could not eliminate their threats. Thus, Ma'mun, who is known as the most strategic caliph among the Abbasid caliphs, decided to find an innovative solution for dealing with the potential threat of the Alavids. He decided to appoint one of the Alavids into his government. This person could not be anyone but Imam Reza, who was the most well-known person among the Alavids for all of the Muslims. Imam Reza was recognized for his divine knowledge among the Muslims due to his scientific work in Medina. He was the spiritual leader and the Imam for the Shia Muslims.

This plot could provide various benefits for Ma'mun and his government. Firstly, the threat of the Alavid uprisings against Ma'mun would cease, as a representative from the Alavids would be associated with the government. The Alavids would no longer be able to introduce the Abbasids as an illegitimate government to the people and could not recruit an army for any future uprisings. Secondly, Ma'mun's government would be legitimized for Muslims, as it would be regarded as a union between the Abbasids and the Alavids. Thirdly, Imam Reza's affiliation with the government would put his spiritual and infallible character in question among Muslims by portraying the Imam as a worldly and materialistic individual. The Imam would also be held responsible for the injustices and the oppression from the government. Lastly, Ma'mun would be able to separate Imam Reza from the people and reduce his influence on their hearts. He could fully supervise the Imam's activities and would prohibit his potential to initiate any independent uprising against the Abbasids. Ma'mun kept his plot to himself and did not inform anyone of his true intentions.

The only main opposition to this plot was from the Abbasid royal family, who did not want to lose their influence in the government. They had opposed and betrayed Ma'mun in the past and supported Amin's decision to remove Ma'mun as his successor, though they had pledged allegiance to it during the time of Haroon. They had also

supported Amin in his wars against Ma'mun, so Ma'mun was not intimidated by their opposition. Instead, he wanted to instill fear in their hearts and demonstrate that he had enough power to stand without them.

To implement his plot, Ma'mun sent a letter to Imam Reza in Medina and invited him to his capital, the city of Merv. Imam Reza was fully aware of Ma'mun's conspiracy and plot, so he rejected his invitation. Ma'mun sent other invitations, repeatedly insisting that the Imam travel to meet him in Merv. The Imam rejected Ma'mun's invitations each time, but could not change his decision. Finally, Ma'mun sent military delegates to Medina to bring the Imam to Merv. Imam Reza realized that Ma'mun would not give up and he was forced to travel to Merv with Ma'mun's delegation.

8-4-3-Farewell to Medina

Before leaving Medina, Imam Reza made a series of unprecedented actions to make it clear to everyone that his invitation to Merv was a conspiracy against him, and that he did not want to travel there. When the Imam bid farewell to his family, he asked them to cry loudly for him and informed them that this would be their last meeting. The Imam then held the hand of his five year old son, Imam Javad, and visited the tomb of the Prophet to pray for protection. Imam Reza then asked his companions and representatives to obey Imam Javad. He revealed Imam Javad as his successor in the Imamat. Also, when the Imam visited the Prophet's tomb to bid farewell, he cried loudly, and he repeatedly returned to the tomb while doing so. At that time, someone approached the Imam and congratulated him on his invitation by the Caliph. The Imam did not accept his greeting and told him, "I will be taken far away from the vicinity of my grandfather, the Prophet, and will pass away in a distant place and will be buried by Haroon's tomb."

8-4-4-Travel to Merv¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Began at 25 Zu al-Qa'dah, 200 AH (Imam's age: 52)

Ma'mun had advised his military delegates to avoid passing by the Shia dominated cities of the time, Kufa and Qom. The people of Kufa had led multiple rebellions against the Umayyads and the Abbasids in the past. The Alavid uprising in Kufa had been suppressed in months prior to the Imam's travel. Qom was also the main center for the Shias in Iran. Also, traveling with the Imam through Baghdad, the center of the Abbasid royal family, was not a wise decision either, as the royal family and their supporters were hostile toward both Ma'mun and the Imam. Therefore, the delegates avoided traveling on the common route of that time, which was from Medina to Merv, and passed by the cities of Kufa, Baghdad, and Qom. Instead, they travelled a more difficult route passing through the hostile deserts of central Iran.

The Imam's itinerary from Medina to Merv was about 3,450 kilometers, and the journey took approximately six months. Today, this route is divided amongst five countries: 850 kilometers in Saudi Arabia, 200 kilometers bordering Kuwait and Iraq, 150 kilometers in Iraq, 2,100 kilometers in Iran, and 150 kilometers in Turkmenistan. The Imam's travel route in Iran is currently known as 'Wilayat Road'. After more than 1,200 years, many historical monuments are still affiliated with the Imam along this route, and are regarded respectfully by the local citizens who honor the Imam's presence in the locations.

After Basrah, the Imam's caravan entered the border of current day Iran from Shalamcheh. Shortly after, the caravan arrived in Ahvaz. The Imam became sick in Ahvaz due to the high temperatures and excessive humidity of the city, so he stayed there for a while to recover.

The Imam's divine character influenced many who interacted with him during this long journey. The Imam's caravan obeyed Ma'mun's order to follow a route that limited the Imam's ability to interact with the locals and any people along the way. However, the members of the caravan witnessed the Imam's piety and long prayers during this long journey. One member of the caravan who was greatly influenced by the Imam was Abasalt Heravi, who went on to become one of the Imam's closest companions. Later, when Rajaa ibn Abi-Zahhak, the

delegation's leader, told Ma'mun about his observations of the Imam's prayers and divine character, Ma'mun asked him to keep his observations secret and to not reveal them to the public.

Neyshabur was the biggest city in the region, with a Sunni-dominated population and the well-established school of Hadith. The news of the Imam's arrival in Neyshabur had spread in the city, but the people could not openly contact the Imam due to the enforced protection around him by the military. When the caravan was leaving the city, the people saw an ideal opportunity to meet the Imam, so they came in large numbers to the city's gate and surrounded the Imam's caravan. A few Islamic scholars approached the caravan. They called out to the Imam and asked him to show his face for the sake of his forefathers. They asked him to benefit them with a narration from the Prophet that had been passed to him by his forefathers. They told the Imam that they wanted to save his narration as a memory from his visit to their city.

The Imam asked the caravan to stop, opened the curtains, and let people see his face to which they cried tears of joy. The people advised each other to remain silent to allow the Imam to speak. The Imam recited a narration from his father who had heard it from his father. The Imam then named all of his forefathers up to the Prophet as the chain of narrators for his narration. The Imam said that the Prophet had heard this narration from the angel Gabriel, who had heard it from God. The Imam said, "God says the monotheistic expression of "La-Ilaha-Illal-lah" ("No God but Allah") is His fortress, and anyone who enters His fortress will be protected from His punishment." The caravan was ordered to continue on its way, as they did not want to allow the Imam to have any interaction with the people. While moving, the Imam addressed the crowd and said, "This narration is true under some conditions and I am one of the conditions." With this concise narration, the Imam introduced his Imamat as a requirement to enter God's fortress. After decades of continuous oppression of the Shias, the Imam used this opportunity to directly speak to the crowd of the Muslims about the Shia's key concept of Imamat. The Imam's narration is known

as ‘Hadith al-Silsilah al-Dhahab’, which means ‘The Narration of the Golden Chain’, in which the chain refers to the Imam’s divine forefathers who connect him to the Prophet. The number of people who heard and recorded the Imam’s narration was estimated to be more than 20,000.

The Imam’s caravan continued on its route. When the Imam’s caravan reached Deh Sorkh, the Imam asked for water to perform ablution for the noon prayer, but there was no water in the caravan. The Imam then dug into the soil with his hands, and a spring miraculously appeared. The Imam and the others then prayed there.

Shortly after Deh Sorkh, the caravan stopped at a location known as Kooh Sangi. The Imam leaned on the cliffs of the mountain, which was used by the locals to make stone pots. The Imam prayed for this mountain to be blessed, as well as anything cooked in these stone pots.

Shortly after, the Imam’s caravan stopped at Haroon’s tomb. At this location, the Imam marked a line on the ground next to the tomb of Haroon and revealed it as his own grave. He said, “God will make this location a place for the gathering of my Shia followers and friends.” He then swore by God, “Anyone of them who visits my grave or salutes me, will be blessed by God’s mercy and forgiveness.” The Imam prayed there and ended his prayers with a long prostration.

After around six months, the Imam’s caravan finally entered Merv¹⁰⁶, where Ma’mun welcomed the Imam.

8-4-5-The Imam as Ma’mun’s Crown Prince

After the Imam had taken a short rest from the long journey, Ma’mun revealed his real intention for bringing the Imam to Merv. In a meeting, he told the people, “I found no one better than Ali ibn Musa (Imam Reza) for the Caliphate among the entire Abbasid and Alavid family so I want to pass the caliphate to him.” The Imam was aware of Ma’mun’s real intentions and refused to accept his offer. He responded to

¹⁰⁶ 10 Jumada al-Thani, 201 AH (Imam’s age: 52)

Ma'mun, "If the Caliphate belongs to you, you should not pass it to someone else; and if it does not belong to you, you do not have the right to pass it to someone else." No one would believe that Ma'mun, who had fought for more than two years with his own brother and had killed him to gain power, would let his power go to someone else. Ma'mun wanted to make the Imam the spiritual leader for the Caliphate and to keep the real power for himself. He wanted to use the Imam's name to make any decisions and to influence the hearts of the people.

Over the course of about two months, there were multiple discussions between Ma'mun and the Imam about his offer to the Imam for the caliphate. Ma'mun, who faced the Imam's stern rejection, instead proposed to appoint the Imam as his successor, or the Crown Prince, in the Caliphate. Ma'mun had not chosen any of his sons as his successor since defeating Amin, so people were expecting him to choose someone for this position. However, the Imam's nomination as the crown prince was very unusual for the public, because the Imam was about 22 years older than Ma'mun. Everyone was expecting a younger person than the Caliph to be chosen as the crown prince, since he was supposed to inherit the Caliphate after the Caliph. The Imam rejected the proposal to be the Crown Prince. However, Ma'mun, who had lost his patience, threatened to kill the Imam. He told the Imam, "The second Caliph formed a council with six of the Prophet's companions in order to choose the third Caliph, and one of them was your forefather, Ali ibn Abi-Talib. The second Caliph ordered the beheading of anyone of the six who disagreed with the outcome of the council." Ma'mun threatened to have similar treatment to the Imam if he refused to accept his proposal to be the crown prince.

Ma'mun left the Imam with only two choices, either accepting his offer or being killed. Thus, the Imam was forced to accept Ma'mun's offer¹⁰⁷. However, he accepted with the following conditions. The Imam said he would not appoint or oust any governmental agents, and he would not change any governmental legislations. The Imam emphasized that his

¹⁰⁷ 7 Ramazan, 201 AH (Imam's age: 52)

role would only be to observe governmental affairs from a distance, and would only serve as a consultant. Ma'mun immediately accepted the Imam's conditions with the hope that he could later further involve him in the government.

Ma'mun wrote the official document to appoint Imam Reza as his crown prince. In the document, he emphasized the elevated status of the Imam. Imam Reza then annotated the back of the official document. He explicitly wrote, "Ma'mun has appointed me as his crown prince to gain his power after him if I am alive." It appears that the Imam wanted to imply that he would not be alive after Ma'mun.

Ma'mun set up a big ceremony, where all of the high ranking political and military officials were in attendance. He asked them to change the color of their outfits from black, which represented the Abbasid government, to green. Although green was not known as the Alavid flag at the time, it became known as the Alavid flag later in history. Ma'mun then called the Imam with the title "Reza", which referred to the famous slogan, 'al-Reza min Ale-Muhammad', which the Alavids used during their uprisings against the Abbasids. Ma'mun wanted to emphasize that the person chosen from the Prophet's family, who had consensus for the Caliphate, was none other than Imam Reza.

Ma'mun asked everyone to pay allegiance to the Imam as his Crown Prince. The first one to pay allegiance to the Imam was Abbas, one of Ma'mun's sons who had been a candidate for becoming the crown prince. Then, all of the other governmental representatives and the people followed. Everyone who was present paid allegiance, except for three officials, whom Ma'mun then ordered to be imprisoned.

Ma'mun distributed gifts amongst the audience and paid a one year's salary in advance to his troops. The poets and preachers performed in celebration. Ma'mun then asked the Imam to deliver a speech to benefit the people. The Imam delivered a very short speech that conveyed his dissatisfaction. He praised God and then said, "O' people, we have rights over you due to our close relation with the Prophet and in turn, you have rights over us too. If you fulfill our rights, it is obligatory for

us to fulfill your rights.”

After the ceremony, Ma’mun sent letters around the Islamic territory and informed the people about the appointment of his crown prince. He ordered the Imam’s name to be recited along with his name in the Friday sermons. He asked his governmental officials across the Islamic territory to wear green outfits instead of their black ones which represented the Abbasids. He also ordered new coins with the imprinted names of himself as the Caliph and the Imam as his Crown Prince. As a result, the Imam became a very well-known person around the Islamic territory.

8-4-6-After Appointment as the Crown Prince

Shortly after the Imam’s appointment as the Crown Prince, Ma’mun asked the Imam to propose someone from among his loyal companions as a governor for one of the regions with unrest. His intention was to use the Imam’s reputation and influence on the hearts of the people to control the turmoil in parts of his government. The Imam opposed this request by reminding Ma’mun of his condition for accepting his position, which included not to appoint nor oust any governmental representatives. Ma’mun realized the Imam’s strong stance and gave up on his request. Although the Imam had been forced to accept his own governmental position, he never allowed Ma’mun to misuse him for his political gains.

Ma’mun tried to portray that his government was a joint government between the Abbasids and the Alavids. He arranged for some marriages between the two families, and appointed some of the Alavids to governmental positions. For instance, he appointed the Imam’s brother, Ibrahim, as the governor of Yemen and chose him as the head organizer of the Hajj that year.

Zaid was one of Imam Reza’s brothers who joined the Alavid uprisings without the Imam’s consent. He led one of the Alavid uprisings and took control of the city of Basrah. He killed the Abbasids and whoever was affiliated with them, and set their houses on fire. Due to the

atrocities he inflicted, he was named ‘Zaid al-Naar’ or ‘Zaid, the Fire’. His uprising in Basrah was eventually defeated by the Abbasid army. He was arrested and sent to Ma’mun in Merv. Ma’mun had just selected Zaid’s brother, Imam Reza, as his Crown Prince. Thus, he freed Zaid, but he informed the Imam that he had done so only because of the Imam. He also told the Imam, “Your brother followed the tradition of Zaid ibn Ali who had risen up in the past.” The Imam disagreed with Ma’mun’s comparison between his brother and Zaid ibn Ali, the son of Imam Sajjad (AS). The Imam said, “Zaid ibn Ali was a scholar from the Prophet’s family and his intention for the uprising was for the sake of God.” The Imam then addressed his brother and condemned his actions. The Imam told him that his affiliation to the Prophet would not help him in the hereafter, and that he would be held responsible for his wrongdoings.

When the Imam had no choice but to forcefully accept Ma’mun’s appointment as the crown prince, he was criticized by some people, including his own Shia followers. The Imam’s situation was very similar to Imam Hasan’s when he had been criticized by his Shia followers after accepting the peace treaty with Muawiyah. Both Imam Hasan and Imam Reza had put conditions on accepting the situations forced on them as a sign of their resistance. Imam Reza responded in various ways to these criticisms. Once, he responded, “My action is similar to my forefather, Imam Ali, when he participated in the council of six of the Prophet’s companions to select the third Caliph.” The Imam implied that both of them had accepted their political roles due to their life-threatening situations. On another occasion, the Imam reminded them about Prophet Joseph’s decision to voluntarily accept the position of a treasurer of the land due to the critical circumstances of his time. The Imam then recited the following relevant verse of the Quran [12:55]: “[Joseph] said, Appoint me over the storehouses of the land. Indeed, I will be a knowing guardian.” The Imam told them, “Prophet Joseph accepted his position voluntarily while I accepted it forcefully.” On another occasion, the Imam said that he did not have any choice but to accept the appointment. The Imam then continued, “If you stay patient,

you will witness that I will never attain the Caliphate in the future.”

8-4-7-The Imam as the Divine Leader

Three weeks after the Imam’s appointment as the Crown Prince, Eid al-Fitr was observed¹⁰⁸. Ma’mun asked the Imam to lead the Eid prayer for the people of Merv. The Imam refused by reminding Ma’mun of his condition for accepting the appointment, which was not to be involved in any governmental role. Ma’mun insisted by saying that his intention was for the people to see the Imam’s greatness and to confess to his merit. The Imam accepted Ma’mun’s offer with the condition of performing the Eid prayer according to the traditions of his forefathers, the Prophet and Imam Ali, which Ma’mun accepted. The news of the Imam leading the Eid prayer spread quickly in the city.

On the day of Eid, the Imam exited his house by sunrise in a simple outfit while he was barefoot. The Imam’s simple clothing and his loud tekbirs of the Eid prayer made an impact on the people. They had been expecting to see someone with luxurious clothing surrounded by bodyguards, similar to other high-ranking officials. Tears began to roll down from their eyes, and they followed the Imam by taking their own shoes off. The army leaders and soldiers waiting for the Imam also dismounted their horses, took off their shoes, and followed the Imam barefoot. The Imam would stop every ten steps and loudly recite the tekbirs of the Eid prayer. The people would then stop and recite tekbirs right after the Imam’s recitations. The loud tekbirs of the huge crowd following the Imam resonated across the city. Fazl ibn Sahl warned Ma’mun that if the Imam continued the Eid prayer, the people would become his devotees and it was better to have him return so Ma’mun sent someone to bring the Imam back. The Imam wore his shoes, boarded his ride, and returned before even starting the Eid prayer. The Eid prayer was performed as usual by someone who had led the prayers during the previous years. The Eid prayer was going to be performed with magnificence as a sign of Muslim unity, but instead was performed

¹⁰⁸ 1 Shawwal, 201 AH (Imam’s age: 52)

without much glory.

During the Imam's stay in Merv, a severe drought hit the region. Many who had hatred for the Imam attributed the drought to the Imam's presence and his appointment as the Crown Prince. As a result, Ma'mun asked the Imam to pray for rain. The Imam accepted Ma'mun's request, and said that he would perform the prayer for rain after three days. On the promised day, the Imam exited the city and went to the desert with a crowd of Muslims following him. The Imam delivered a speech and addressed God. Among his words, he said "O' God, You are the one who has rewarded us, the Ahlul-Bayt, with a great position. As You have ordered, these people have referred to us to fulfill their requests. They request Your Mercy and are seeking Your Blessings and Beneficence. O' God, quench their thirst with a beneficial rain that does not harm them and send it after the people have returned from the desert to their homes." After the Imam's speech, strong winds began to blow, dark clouds covered the sky, and sounds of thunder filled the air. As per the Imam's prayer, the rain did not begin until the people returned to their homes. Then a heavy rain covered the area. By witnessing this miracle, the people publicly admitted to the Imam's dignity in the eyes of God. After the rain, the Imam delivered another speech in the city to the people. He advised them to be pious and urged them to admit the elevated rights of the Prophet's family. He also advised them to practically appreciate and have gratitude for God's blessings by helping the other Muslims.

8-4-8-Travel to Meet the Imam

While the Imam was in Merv, some well-known individuals travelled to meet him. Poetry was the greatest source of media at the time and had deep influence on the hearts of the people. The poets would travel to Merv to recite their poetry in praise of Ma'mun and his Crown Prince, the Imam, in hopes of receiving a reward from Ma'mun. Also, the Shia poets could now publicly recite their poetry without having any fear of persecution from the government.

De'bel Khuzaei was a famous Shia poet who travelled to Merv to visit

the Imam without any monetary expectations. He told the Imam that he had written poetry for him and had not recited it to anyone before. He wanted the Imam to be the first person to hear it. He recited his poetry in the eulogy of the Ahlul-Bayt, describing the oppression against them. He ended his poetry by addressing Lady Fatimah to resurrect from her tomb and mourn at the tombs of her children who were martyred in various locations. The last tomb that was mentioned in the poetry was Imam Kazim's tomb in Baghdad. At this time, Imam Reza asked permission from De'bel to add and complete his poetry and De'bel happily accepted. The Imam then recited the following line of poetry, "(O' Lady Fatimah) a tomb (of one of your children) will also be in Tus, whose tragedy will be horrible and agonizing until God raises the promised one (Mahdi) who will remove our sadness and sorrow." De'bel then asked the Imam about the tomb in Tus and to whom it belonged. The Imam responded, "It will be my tomb and soon Tus will become a place for my followers and pilgrims." When the Imam gave a reward to De'bel, he said, "I didn't recite my poetry for monetary purposes." Instead, he asked for one item of the Imam's clothing, which the Imam granted to him.

Ma'mun had transported the Imam alone from Medina to Merv, and had never wanted his family to join him. This could be attributed to the fact that he had malicious intentions for the Imam from the beginning. Ma'mun had thought that it would be harder for him to eliminate the Imam in the presence of his family. While the Imam's own family needed Ma'mun's permission to travel to Merv, the other members of the Imam's extended family could travel to Merv freely. One of the Imam's family members who decided to travel from Medina to Merv to visit him was his sister, Lady Masoumeh (SA). She was worried about her beloved brother so shortly after the Imam's travel to Merv, Lady Masoumeh left Medina with a Hajj caravan that was returning to current day Iran. Unlike the Imam's caravan, which followed Ma'mun's order to travel through a route from the deserts of central Iran, Lady Masoumeh's caravan followed the usual route of that time, which passed by Kufa and Qom. Although she was eagerly waiting to meet

her brother in Merv, she became sick in Saveh. She asked for help to move her to Qom, which was not far, as she had heard from her father, Imam Kazim, that the city of Qom was a center for the Shias. After 17 days of staying in Qom, she passed away¹⁰⁹ and was buried in the city. She was so elevated in piety that Imam Reza recommended to visit and pay respects to her, and promised a heavenly reward for anyone who would visit her tomb in Qom.

8-4-9-The Imam's Debates

The Imam's presence in Khorasan was a great opportunity for the locals to directly ask him questions. Ma'mun himself also asked many questions from the Imam in public and private meetings. Ma'mun, who himself was knowledgeable in the Islamic faith, had asked the Imam many questions regarding the interpretations of the Quran, the traditions of the Prophet, and the fundamentals of the Shia belief. The Imam provided him with convincing answers.

Ma'mun arranged a series of debates in his palace between the Imam and the well-known Islamic and non-Islamic scholars. His intention was to defeat and disgrace the Imam during the scientific debates. If Ma'mun would have been able to fulfill his intention, he would have ruined the Imam's reputation in the eyes of the Muslims, who respected the Imam for his endless knowledge. In the most famous debate, Ma'mun gathered the leaders of Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and Sabians in his palace. He held a grand official event for their debate with the Imam. Crowds of people and government officials attended. The Imam knew that there would not be a common ground with the leaders of the other religions for the debate, because they would deny the Imam's reasoning with Quranic evidence and the traditions of the Holy Prophet. To everyone's surprise, the Imam debated each of the leaders according to their respective holy books. The Imam demonstrated that his knowledge was not limited to Islamic resources, and that he was more knowledgeable than the leaders in their own teachings.

¹⁰⁹ 10 Rabi' al-Thani, 201 (Imam's age: 52)

The Imam first debated with the Christian leader. The Christian leader asked him to bring two witnesses who had testified to the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and were approved by the Christians. The Imam recited parts of the Gospel in which Prophet Jesus and his apostle had spoken about the last Prophet. During the debate, the Imam said that he believed in Prophet Jesus, but had only found one flaw about him. The Imam said that Prophet Jesus did not pray or fast much. The Christian leader surprisingly responded, “You are wrong because he fasted every day and prayed every night.” The Imam then asked him, “If that was the case, who was he praying to and fasting for?” Through this, the Imam challenged the Christian belief that Prophet Jesus is God’s manifestation on earth, because if he were God, he would not pray to himself. With the Imam’s reasoning, the leader became silent.

The Imam then asked the Christian leader why he denied that Prophet Jesus was able to give life to the dead with God’s power rather than with his own. The leader responded that someone who could raise the dead and heal the blind was indeed God himself, and deserved worship. The Imam then brought forth multiple cases of evidence from the Gospel, Torah, Psalms, and Quran where the other Prophets such as Elisha, Ezekiel, Abraham, Moses, and Muhammad (PBUH) also performed miracles of resurrecting the dead. The Imam himself recited the related parts from Torah and the Jewish leader was astonished by the Imam’s clear recitation of the Torah. At the end of their debate, the Christian leader confessed that there was no such scholar among the Muslims like the Imam.

The Imam then debated with the Jewish leader, who asked the Imam to provide proof from the Torah that Muhammad was a Prophet. The Imam recited a few verses from the Torah that described the coming of Prophet Muhammad near Mount Faran, close to Mecca. He also recited Prophet Moses’ statement in which he addressed the Israelites about the forthcoming news of a Prophet from the children of Prophet Isma’il. He then recited a verse from Prophet David in the Psalms and a verse from Prophet Jesus in the Gospel about Prophet Muhammad.

The Imam then asked the Jewish leader why the Jews did not believe in the miracles of the other Prophets after Prophet Moses. The leader responded that they would not accept any miracles other than those similar to what Prophet Moses had brought to them. The Imam then challenged him in their belief of the Prophets before Prophet Moses, who had brought different miracles than him. The leader could not respond to the Imam's reasoning and became silent.

The Imam then asked the Zoroastrian leader about their beliefs. The leader said, "Zoroaster brought us miracles that no one had brought us before him. He legalized some things for us that were forbidden before." The Imam asked him, "Is it not the case that you are following Zoroaster just because you have received some news about him from your ancestors?" and the leader agreed. The Imam then said, "This is not an acceptable reason for your belief, as the followers of the other religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have also received similar news from their ancestors about the miracles of their Prophet." The Zoroastrian leader could not offer a stronger reasoning for their belief in Zoroaster and became silent.

The Imam then asked if there was anyone amongst the audience who was against Islam and willing to ask questions. Emran Sabei, one of the most famous debaters of his time, stood up and started a long philosophical debate with the Imam regarding God and His attributes. In the middle of their debate, the time of prayer set in, and the Imam stopped the debate to perform his prayer. At this time, Emran asked the Imam to continue their debate, as his heart had softened toward the Imam's guidance, but the Imam did not accept his request. After a short break for the prayers, the Imam returned, and they continued their debate until Emran fell into prostration and converted to Islam. After this incident, no other scholars stepped forward to debate with the Imam, as they all knew that Emran was a strong debater. The Imam left after a long day of debate. Later, Emran became one of the Imam's companions.

Ma'mun arranged multiple other debates between the Imam and the

other scholars of the time in hopes of defeating the Imam. Once, Ma'mun brought Sulayman Marvzi, a strong philosopher and debater, to debate with the Imam. Ma'mun had told Sulayman that if he could defeat the Imam in just one topic, he had served his purpose. The Imam had a long philosophical debate with Sulayman regarding God and His attributes. During the debate, Sulayman did not want to accept defeat and started to contradict his own words. His contradictions caused Ma'mun and the audience to laugh.

On another occasion, the Imam debated with Ali ibn Jahm, who used Quranic verses to reject the infallibility of the Prophets. The Imam answered all of his doubts and provided him with the correct interpretation of the Quranic verses that he quoted. The Imam then narrated the true historical facts about the lives of the Prophets that demonstrated their infallibility. Ali ibn Jahm was convinced by the Imam's response, realized his mistake of misinterpreting the Quran, and cried in repentance.

On yet another occasion, Ma'mun gathered scholars from various sects of Islam to debate with the Imam. They debated with the Imam about various topics, including the Shia concept of Imamat. The Imam responded to their questions with convincing Quranic and logical answers. During the debate, one of them asked about the signs of validating the true Imam. The Imam responded, "One can confirm that someone is the true Imam with two signs: his (divine) knowledge and the fulfilment of his prayers (by God)."

8-4-10-The Imam's Scientific Contribution

The Imam's stay in Merv was the golden period of his Imamat, as he had an exceptional opportunity to spread his knowledge, as well as Shia theology. The Imam's role as Crown Prince had officially made him the second top person in the government. After around 160 years from the time of Imam Ali and Imam Hasan, who had both been able to publicly speak as Muslim caliphs, only Imam Reza from the Shia Imams spoke from a governmental position. Many of the Imam's speeches, his responses to the questions, and his debates with the scholars had been

witnessed by the people and are recorded in history. These records are currently regarded as precious resources in the Islamic seminaries. Many of these records are available in the book named ‘Oyoun Akhbar al-Reza’.

There were multiple documents written by Imam Reza during his stay at Merv, and they are still available today. For example, ‘Javaame’ al-Shariah’ was written by the Imam in response to Ma’mun asking him for an abstract about pure Islam. In this document, with no fear of Ma’mun, the Imam explicitly reviewed the main principles of the Islamic faith, including the Shia belief of the Imamat. The Imam’s response also contained the answer to tens of questions regarding various aspects of the Islamic law. In a letter, the Imam also responded to questions asked by Muhammad ibn Sinan, one of his companions, about the logical reasoning behind various Islamic laws including the ritual bath (ghusl), ablution, zakat, Hajj, fasting, trading laws, and halal meat.

Another document that is attributed to the Imam is ‘Al-Risalah al-Dhahabiah’ or ‘The Golden Treatise’ in medicine. The Imam wrote this Risalah in response to Ma’mun asking the Imam to document his recommendations in medicine. When Ma’mun received the Imam’s Risalah, he became delighted and ordered for it to be written in golden ink.

8-4-11-The Imam’s Life in Merv

Although the Imam held the highest governmental position after Ma’mun, his lifestyle was quite simple, and his interaction with the people was humble, as usual. With his behavior, the Imam showed his detachment from this material world. Once, the Imam donated his entire wealth in the way of God on the Day of Arafah. Fazl ibn Sahl was shocked by the Imam’s action, and told the Imam that his action was a loss. The Imam responded, “My donation is indeed a profit and whatever gains God’s reward is not a loss.”

One of the goals of Ma’mun’s plot in bringing the Imam to Merv was

to isolate him from the people and his followers. He also wanted to prohibit the potential for any independent uprising by the Imam. However, the event during the Eid prayer showed Ma'mun that if he did not restrict the Imam's interactions with the people, they would be attracted toward the Imam, so Ma'mun put the Imam's life under intense surveillance. He deceived Hisham ibn Ibrahim, one of the Imam's close companions and his representative in Medina who had travelled to Merv, by appointing him as the doorkeeper of the Imam. Hisham would report any of the Imam's meetings and any word that the Imam had spoken inside his house to Ma'mun and Fazl ibn Sahl. He would also restrict the Imam's followers and companions from meeting him freely. A year after the Imam's arrival in Merv, Ma'mun proposed his daughter, Um-Habib, to the Imam and insisted that the Imam marry her. By this political marriage, Ma'mun was able to monitor all aspects of the Imam's private life, but even this marriage could not bring the Imam to favor Ma'mun and his government.

8-4-12-Ma'mun Defeated in his Plot

As time passed, Ma'mun realized that he could not defeat nor defame the Imam in any debate. Instead, the news of the Imam's victory in the debates spread across the Islamic territory and led to even more popularity and respect for the Imam. Ma'mun had to find a way to distract the Muslims from being attracted to the Imam and his divine knowledge. He had established a good relationship with the neighboring countries as a policy to overcome the internal problems in his government, such as the war with Amin and the Alavid uprisings, so he ordered abundant translations of foreign literature, such as Greek philosophy, into Arabic. He then spread the translations among the Muslims in hopes of distracting them from favoring the Imam's knowledge.

A year after appointing the Imam as his Crown Prince, Ma'mun realized that his plots against the Imam were unsuccessful. The only benefit from his decision during this time was a temporary halt in the Alavid uprisings against his government. Ma'mun could not defame the Imam

nor justify his decisions using the Imam's name, as the Imam always kept himself distant from Ma'mun and his government. With his wise actions, the Imam made his position an invaluable opportunity to spread Shia theology through the Islamic territory. Ironically, the main positive outcome from the Imam's appointment as the Crown Prince was that after decades of hostility against the Shia Imams, for the first time, the Islamic caliph and the government had to confess to the elevated status of the Shia Imams. This outcome proved the authenticity of the Shia theology to the Muslims around the Islamic territory and accelerated their familiarity with it. Across the Islamic territory, the Imam was regarded with respect as the Crown Prince. The Shias, who had always hid their belief in fear for their lives, were now proudly declaring and spreading their belief. Ma'mun had hoped to disgrace the Imam's divine character by affiliating him to his government, and was now witnessing the opposite outcome from what he had intended. The Imam's interactions with the people filled their hearts with love and respect for him to an extent that many of the people believed that the Imam had much more merit for the caliphate than Ma'mun. Also, the Imam's debates with the greatest Muslim and non-Muslim scholars of the time proved his divine knowledge to the people. Therefore, Ma'mun could not find any way to stop the Imam other than to kill him.

One reason Ma'mun rushed to kill the Imam was the instability in Baghdad, the former capital of the Abbasids. The Abbasid royal family was outraged by Ma'mun's decision to appoint Imam Reza as his Crown Prince. They could not tolerate seeing the Abbasid government fall into the Alavid lineage in the future. They selected Ibrahim ibn Mahdi, one of their family members, as their chosen caliph and paid allegiance to him. Ibrahim ibn Mahdi was a corrupt character who was famous in public for his singing and intoxication.

Ma'mun decided to move to Baghdad to manage the instability in the city. He knew that the Abbasids would never approve of the Imam as the Crown Prince. They also considered Ma'mun's minister, Fazl ibn

Sahl, as their enemy and held him responsible for Ma'mun's wars with Amin, whom they had supported. Ma'mun believed that the Abbasids would still accept him as their caliph if he could address their excuse by killing both the Imam and Fazl ibn Sahl.

8-4-13-Martyrdom

Ma'mun wanted to prepare a favorable environment in Baghdad ahead of his arrival, so he decided to eliminate Imam Reza and Fazl ibn Sahl without delay. Shortly after leaving Merv towards Baghdad, his caravan arrived in Sarakhs, which is the current day border between Iran and Turkmenistan. Ma'mun decided to implement his plot there. Fazl ibn Sahl decided to go to the bathhouse, and Ma'mun asked the Imam to accompany Fazl, but the Imam refused the request. When Ma'mun insisted, the Imam responded that he had seen the Prophet in his dream, and he had told him to not go to the bathhouse, so Ma'mun finally accepted. In the bathhouse, Fazl ibn Sahl was surrounded and murdered by Ma'mun's hidden agents. Shortly after this, Ma'mun's agents were arrested and brought to him. To prove his innocence in Fazl's murder, Ma'mun ordered the execution of his agents. When these agents were being taken for execution, they were crying aloud, saying that it was Ma'mun who had ordered them to murder Fazl.

Ma'mun and his army continued on their way towards Baghdad. They stopped by his father, Haroon's tomb, which was in a garden in the village of Sanabad near the city of Tus in Khorasan. At this place, Ma'mun decided to poison the Imam. He called the Imam into his presence and poisoned him with pomegranate juice or grapes. Imam Reza became the only Shia Imam who was directly poisoned by the hands of a Muslim caliph.

It can be inferred that the Imam was poisoned with a very detrimental and strong poison, because his poisoning was a political assassination and could not have been left incomplete. Ma'mun wanted to remove the Imam as soon as possible, since he wanted to continue his journey to Baghdad. It is highly possible that he had gotten the poison from the Romans, as he had a good relationship with them at that time. The

poison affected the Imam's body almost immediately. When the Imam left Ma'mun, he returned directly to his residence. He told his companion, Abasalt Heravi, to close all of the entrance doors since he was sick and could not meet anyone. The Imam then laid down on the bed.

When the Imam was on his deathbed, Ma'mun came to visit him. He told the Imam, "I don't know which tragedy is harder for me, losing you or the people's accusation that blame me for your condition." The Imam ignored Ma'mun's words. He opened his eyes and warned Ma'mun to treat his only child, Muhammad, well because both of them would die soon after the other.

During the last hours of the Imam's life, his companion, Abasalt Heravi, saw a young boy inside the Imam's residence. He came to the boy and asked him how he had entered the house since he had closed all of the entrance doors. The boy responded, "The Almighty, who had brought me from Medina to Tus in just a moment, entered me into the house through the closed door." Abasalt asked him who he was. The boy responded, "I am your Imam, Muhammad ibn Ali. I am here to meet and bid farewell to my lonely and poisoned father." When Imam Reza saw his seven-year-old son, he got up and hugged him. They talked in private for a while, until the Imam's soul ascended. Imam Reza was martyred on the last day of Safar in the year 203 of Hijri at the age of 54. He was martyred after holding the position of Crown Prince for only about one-and-a-half years.

Imam Muhammad ibn Ali (AS) known as 'Javad', performed his father's rituals alone. He washed and prayed on the Imam's body and then disappeared without anyone else noticing his presence.

When Ma'mun was informed about the Imam's martyrdom, he came to his residence. Ma'mun showed grief and sorrow to portray to the people that he was innocent in the Imam's martyrdom. He came barefoot and grieving at the Imam's burial. The burial was performed under the intense control of Ma'mun's army. It can be inferred that most of the attendees were from his army.

Ma'mun had decided to bury the Imam by his father, Haroon's, tomb. He ordered a grave dug for the Imam behind Haroon's tomb, but the earth did not open even after frequent attempts. His men then tried to dig a hole in the surrounding locations, and when they dug in front of Haroon's tomb, the earth opened, where they discovered a fully prepared grave. They did not hesitate, and buried the Imam in that grave, even though Ma'mun did not favor it.

After the Imam's martyrdom, Ma'mun sent a letter to the Abbasid royal family to inform them about the Imam's death. He asked them to obey him, as their animosity was only due to the Imam's appointment as the Crown Prince. He then continued his journey to Baghdad.

8-5-Conclusion

The Imamat of Imam Reza began with the martyrdom of his father, Imam Kazim, and continued for almost 20 years until his own martyrdom. His Imamat was during the government of three Abbasid Caliphs: Haroon and two of his sons, Amin and Ma'mun. Half of his Imamat, for around 10 years, coincided with the government of Haroon, one of the most powerful Abbasid Caliphs. Initially, the Imam did not declare his Imamat, as it was strongly possible that Haroon would persecute him, similar to what he had done to the Imam's father, Imam Kazim. Later, the Imam publicly declared his Imamat. At that time, Haroon was overwhelmed by serious challenges in his government, including eliminating the powerful Barmaki family and suppressing the riots in the eastern parts of his government, so he did not find an opportunity to persecute the Imam. When Amin assumed power, a series of conflicts and battles occurred between him and his brother, Ma'mun. Amin's government was an exceptional opportunity for Imam Reza to publicly spread his knowledge for about five years, since Amin did not have any opportunity to put pressure on the Imam's activities in Medina. Imam Reza's Imamat continued into Ma'mun's government for around five years, until his martyrdom by Ma'mun himself.

The main incident during the Imamat of Imam Reza was his appointment as Ma'mun's Crown Prince. To fulfill his plot, Ma'mun brought the Imam from Medina to his capital in Merv and threatened the Imam to accept his proposal to be his Crown Prince. The Imam's nomination as the Crown Prince was a very unusual proposal, as the Imam was about 22 years older than Ma'mun. Everyone was expecting a younger person than the Caliph for the Crown Prince, as he would inherit the Caliphate after the Caliph. Ma'mun, with his well-planned and secret conspiracy, intended to eliminate Shi'ism entirely by showing the Imam as a worldly and materialistic individual, disgracing him in the eyes of Muslims. However, the Imam, with his wise decisions and behaviors, made Ma'mun's conspiracy ineffective. With his actions in Medina, the Imam made it clear to everyone that Ma'mun's invitation to Merv was a plot against him, and that he would not return to Medina. The Imam resisted accepting Ma'mun's offer to be his Crown Prince for about two months after his arrival in Merv. He was forced to accept the offer upon receiving life threats from Ma'mun. The Imam's conditions for accepting the position prevented Ma'mun from using the Imam's name and influence on the hearts of the people to justify his actions and decisions.

The Imam used his position to further expand the Shia theology. He used every opportunity to familiarize Muslims with his divine character and the Shia concept of the Imamat. He narrated the 'Hadith al-Silsilah al-Dhahab' to the crowds of Muslims in Neyshabur and emphasized the Shia's key concept of Imamat. He also led the Eid prayer and the rain prayer at Merv and demonstrated his divine character to the people. With his multiple debates, the Imam proved that he held divine knowledge and consolidated the Shia school of thought as a prominent sect in Islam with a strong scientific backbone. The main positive outcome from the Imam's appointment as the Crown Prince was that, after decades of hostility against the Shia Imams, ironically for the first time, the Islamic Caliph and the government now had to confess to the elevated status of the Shia Imams. This outcome proved the truth of the Shia theology to the Muslims across the Islamic territory, and

accelerated their familiarity with the Shia theology. As a result, the Imam became very well-known to the Muslims to such an extent that, in the decades that followed, the next Shia Imams from his lineage were commonly called 'Ibn al-Reza' or 'the son of Reza'. Ma'mun realized that his plots against the Imam had failed, so he poisoned the Imam himself, martyring him after the Imam had been the Crown Prince for only about one-and-a-half years.

With Imam Reza's martyrdom, the second Islamic century had passed. Over time, the true Islam taught by the Prophet was misinterpreted by Muslims after his demise. Muslims had many battles and civil wars against each other, due to their political benefits and support for their own tribes. They split into many sects due to their differences in interpreting the true meaning of the Quran and the Prophet's teachings. The Shia Imams, however, were able to guide their followers continuously after the Prophet's demise. They provided their followers with correct interpretations of the Quran and the Prophet's teachings, and guided them on political views. As a result, by the beginning of the third Islamic century, Shi'ism was a strong and growing theology among the other sects of Muslims, with a strong scientific and cultural backbone. Its undeniable influence led Ma'mun to appoint Imam Reza as his crown prince.

The Imam's travel to Khorasan brought many blessings to the people of this land. With the Imam's guidance, many of the people in Khorasan became familiar with the Shia school of thought. Also, many of the Prophet's descendants, including the Imam's siblings and relatives, travelled to present-day Iran, and Iranians became more familiar with Shia theology. After the Imam's martyrdom, the village of Sanabad gradually expanded and turned into a city named 'Mashhad', which means 'the place of martyrdom'. Currently, Mashhad is the second largest city in Iran after the capital city of Tehran. Imam Reza's holy shrine is the largest shrine in the Islamic world. Millions of Muslims travel to Mashhad annually to visit the holy shrine of Imam Reza. For those Shias who visit his shrine, Imam Reza holds a special place in their

8- Imam Reza (AS): The Imam of Contentment

hearts. Despite the branches within the Shia, today any Shia who believes in the Imamat of Imam Reza is regarded as the follower of the 12 Shia Imams.

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IMAM REZA (AS):

Aside from performing obligatory prayers,
nothing is more valuable to God than
making a believer happy.

9- IMAM JAVAD (AS): THE IMAM OF GENEROSITY

This chapter reviews the life of Imam Javad (AS) and provides an overview of his social, scientific, and political achievements. It also highlights the unique aspect of the Imamat of Imam Javad, which was that his Imamat was at a very young age.

9-1-During the Government of Amin

9-1-1-Birth

Imam Muhammad ibn Ali (AS), also known as Javad or Taqi, was born on the 15th of Ramazan in the year 195 Hijri in Medina. He was given the title of Abu-Ja'far by his father Imam Reza (AS), which was originally the title of Imam Baqir (AS). To distinguish him from Imam Baqir, he would also be called Abu-Ja'far al-Thani, or “The Second Abu-Ja'far”. He was the only child of Imam Reza. His mother was Lady Sabikeh who, before marrying Imam Reza, was a slave. Similar to Najmeh Khatoon, the mother of Imam Reza, Lady Sabikeh was also originally from an area in Africa that is between modern day Egypt and Sudan. She belonged to the same tribe as Maria al-Qibtiyya, the Prophet’s wife and the mother of Ibrahim, who passed away in early childhood during the life of the Prophet. To purge bad memories from the period of her captivity, Imam Reza also called her by the name of Khayzuran. She was unique in piety among the other women of her time. She had such great status that, years earlier, before Imam Kazim’s imprisonment, Imam Kazim had asked someone to pass his greetings to her.

9-1-2-Difficulties of Late Fatherhood

Imam Javad was born when his father Imam Reza was 46-years old, when 12 years had passed from the start of Imam Reza’s Imamat. During these 12 years, many doubted if Imam Reza was the true Imam of the time, as he did not have a son to inherit the Imamat. Among the skeptics were the Vaghafi Shias, who did not believe in the Imamat of Imam Reza, and were looking for any excuse to challenge his Imamat. Imam Reza was patient with the accusations against him. He would confidently respond with a prophecy that God will certainly bless him with a son who will inherit the Imamat after him.

Even after Imam Reza’s prophecy became a reality and Imam Javad was born, the accusations against him did not stop. Some doubted and spread rumors that Imam Javad was not really Imam Reza’s son. This

went so far that even some of the Imam's close relatives were also influenced by the rumors. They came to the Imam and questioned Imam Javad's darker complexion, which was rare in the family. They asked the Imam to allow them to bring some experts who could confirm that Imam Reza was the biological father of Imam Javad, by matching their faces and body gestures. Due to their insistence, the Imam finally agreed. The experts came and verified that Imam Reza was indeed Imam Javad's biological father.

9-1-3-Honorable Childhood

The Imam Javad's birth brought great joy to Imam Reza and his family. This was not only because Imam Reza had become a father at an old age, but also because it verified his Imamat. The Shia community gained trust and confidence in their belief in the Imamat of Imam Reza, as he now had a son to become his successor. Imam Reza described Imam Javad as a newborn more auspicious and blessed for the Shias than any other newborns. The Imam would stand by Imam Javad's cradle and speak to him in private for a long time. When Imam Reza was asked about their conversation, he responded that he was giving his son the benefits of his knowledge.

Imam Reza had frequently introduced Imam Javad as his successor in the Imamat, to his companions and representatives, despite Imam Javad's very young age. Once, one of Imam Reza's companions asked him whom he should refer to after the Imam. Imam Reza revealed Imam Javad as his successor. The companion reacted with surprise at Imam Javad's very young age, who was just 3 years old. Imam Reza responded that age is not a limitation for the Imamat. Imam Reza then continued with the example of Prophet Jesus from the Quran, who began his Prophethood as a newborn.

Imam Reza had special honor and respect for his only child, Imam Javad. He would always call Imam Javad by his title of Abu-Ja'far instead of his original name Muhammad, which in Arab culture, shows respect. Also, when Imam Reza travelled to Merv, he would address Imam Javad with his title of Abu-Ja'far in his letters.

Imam Javad was also very attached to his beloved father. Before Imam Reza was taken to Merv, he had taken Imam Javad to Mecca for pilgrimage. The Imam, at such a young age, had realized that his father was performing his farewell prayers around the Ka'ba as if it were his last visit. Imam Javad was extremely saddened and did not move from his place until Imam Reza asked him to do so.

9-2-During the Government of Ma'mun

9-2-1-Ma'mun in Power

After multiple battles that took place over a course of more than two years, Ma'mun was finally able to defeat and kill¹¹⁰ his brother Amin. With Amin's death, Ma'mun officially became the only Abbasid Caliph. Instead of returning to the original Abbasid capital of Baghdad, Ma'mun decided to stay in Merv, present day Mary in Turkmenistan, and made it the capital of his government. However, his government was unstable, and various uprisings and riots threatened his power. The main threat to his government was led by the Alavids, who viewed the Abbasids as an illegitimate government from its very beginning. The term Alavids refers to the children of Imam Ali (AS), which also include the Prophet's descendants from his daughter, Lady Fatimah (SA). The Alavid uprisings were initiated in Kufa by one of the descendants of Imam Hasan (AS), known as Ibn Tabataba. The uprising in Kufa quickly spread to other cities including Mecca, Medina, Yemen, Basrah, Madain, and Ahvaz, and became a serious threat for Ma'mun's newly established government. After around ten challenging months, Ma'mun was finally able to defeat these widespread uprisings.

9-2-2-Ma'mun's Plot for Imam Reza

Although Ma'mun was able to defeat the widespread Alavid uprisings, he could not put an end to the long years of conflict between the Alavids and the Abbasids. Thus, Ma'mun, who is known as the most

¹¹⁰ Rabi' al-Awwal, 198 AH (Imam's age: 2)

strategic caliph among the other Abbasid Caliphs, decided to find an innovative solution to deal with the potential threat of the Alavids. He decided to associate the Alavids with his government. He chose Imam Reza for his plot, who was the most well-known character among the Alavids. Imam Reza was famous among the Muslims for his divine knowledge, due to years of scientific work and contributions in Medina. Imam Reza was also the spiritual leader and the Imam for Shia Muslims.

To implement his plot, Ma'mun sent invitations and insisted that the Imam travel to Merv and meet him. The Imam rejected all of Ma'mun's invitations, but could not change his decision. Finally, Ma'mun sent military delegates to Medina to bring the Imam to Merv. Imam Reza realized that Ma'mun would not stop, and was finally forced to travel to Merv along with Ma'mun's delegates¹¹¹.

Before leaving Medina, Imam Reza held the hand of his beloved five-year old son, Imam Javad, and visited the tomb of the Holy Prophet. He sought the Prophet's protection for his son. Imam Reza then asked his companions and representatives to obey Imam Javad, and revealed him as his successor to the Imamat.

9-2-3-Imam Reza in Merv

After Imam Reza was brought to Merv¹¹², Ma'mun finally informed the Imam about his real intentions. Over a course of about two months, there were multiple discussions between Ma'mun and the Imam about having the Imam take a role in the government. The Imam rejected all of Ma'mun's offers. Eventually, Ma'mun lost his patience and threatened to kill the Imam. It was then that the Imam accepted Ma'mun's offer to be the Crown Prince, with certain conditions¹¹³. The Imam emphasized that his role would only be to observe governmental affairs from a distance and serve strictly as a consultant. With these conditions, the Imam prohibited Ma'mun from making any

¹¹¹ Travel began at 25 Zu al-Qa'dah, 200 AH (Imam's age: 5)

¹¹² Arrival in Merv at 10 Jumada al-Thani, 201 AH (Imam's age: 5)

¹¹³ 7 Ramazan, 201 AH (Imam's age: 5)

governmental decision using the Imam's name or influence on the hearts of the people.

Part of Ma'mun's plot in bringing Imam Reza to Merv was to isolate him from the people and his Shia followers. Thus, Ma'mun put the Imam's life under intense surveillance. A year after the Imam's arrival in Merv, Ma'mun proposed that his daughter, Um-Habib, marry Imam Reza, and insisted that the Imam marry her. Through this marriage, Ma'mun was able to monitor all aspects of the Imam's private life. Furthermore, Ma'mun, who knew that Imam Reza already had a beloved son, decided to promise his other daughter, Um-Fazl, to Imam Javad while both Imam Javad and Um-Fazl were very young. He made this decision in Imam Javad's absence, whom he had never even met.

When Imam Reza was in Merv, he missed his beloved son and communicated with him through letters. In one letter, Imam Reza advised Imam Javad to use the main entrance of his house, despite the opinion of his caretakers. They wanted Imam Javad to use the other door of the house to avoid any contact between him and the needy, who would wait in front of the main entrance of the Imam's house in hopes of receiving charity. In the letter, Imam Reza also specified a minimum amount of charity for Imam Javad in his donations. With this advice, Imam Reza wanted the title of 'Javad', which means generous, to shine in his son's character. Thus, Imam Javad was well known for his generosity even before his Imamat.

9-2-4-Martyrdom of Imam Reza¹¹⁴

As time passed, Ma'mun realized that his plots against Imam Reza were ineffective. Also, the situation in Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasids, was unstable and out of control. The Abbasid royal family was outraged by Ma'mun's decision to appoint Imam Reza as his Crown Prince. They could not tolerate seeing the future of the Abbasid government fall into the Alavid lineage. They selected Ibrahim ibn Mahdi, one of their family members, as their chosen caliph and they all paid allegiance to him.

¹¹⁴ Last day of Safar, 203 AH (Imam's age: 7)

9- Imam Javad (AS): The Imam of Generosity

Thus, Ma'mun decided to personally move to Baghdad to handle the instability in the city. He knew that the Abbasids would never approve Imam Reza as his Crown Prince. Ma'mun believed that the Abbasids would still accept him as their caliph if he could eliminate their objection by killing Imam Reza.

Ma'mun wanted to prepare a favorable environment in Baghdad ahead of his arrival. Therefore, he decided to eliminate Imam Reza as soon as possible. On their way to Baghdad, Ma'mun and his army stopped by his father, Haroon's tomb, which was in a garden near the city of Tus in Khorasan. Here, Ma'mun called the Imam to his presence and poisoned him. Thus, Imam Reza became the only Shia Imam directly poisoned by the hand of a Muslim caliph. He was martyred after being Ma'mun's Crown Prince for only about a year and half.

When Imam Reza was on his deathbed, Ma'mun came to visit him. He told the Imam that he did not know which tragedy was harder for him, losing the Imam or the people's accusations that he was responsible for the Imam's condition. The Imam ignored Ma'mun's words. He only opened his eyes and told Ma'mun to treat his son Imam Javad well. The Imam warned him with a prophecy, that both of them would die in a short period from each other.

During the last hours of Imam Reza's life, his companion, Abasalt Heravi, saw a young boy inside the Imam's residence. He asked the boy how he had entered the house, as he had closed all of the entrance doors because Imam Reza was sick and could not meet anyone. The boy responded that the Almighty, who had brought him from Medina to Tus in just a moment, had gotten him into the house through the closed door. Abasalt asked him who he was, and the boy responded that he was his Imam, Muhammad ibn Ali (Imam Javad). He said that he was there to meet and bid farewell to his lonely and poisoned father. When Imam Reza saw his seven-and-a-half-year-old son, he got up and hugged him. They talked in private for a while, until the Imam's soul ascended to the heavens. Imam Javad then performed his father's rituals alone. He washed and prayed over the Imam's body, and then

disappeared without anyone else noticing his presence.

9-2-5-Beginning of Imamat

After the martyrdom of Imam Reza, Imam Javad publicly declared his Imamat in Medina. He came to the Mosque of the Prophet, stepped on the Prophet's pulpit, and addressed the people. He introduced himself and told the people that he is the one with divine knowledge.

In the beginning of Imam Javad's Imamat, there was great confusion among the Shias about his eligibility for the Imamat. Undoubtedly, Imam Reza had only one child to inherit the Imamat from him. However, it was difficult for some Shias to accept the Imamat of a seven-and-a-half-year-old boy who was much younger than the Islamic pubertal age of 15. This confusion caused some divisions among the Shia community. Some referred to the Vaghefis or Zaidis, and some others sought their Imam from among the brothers of Imam Reza. Furthermore, those who were against Shia theology found a great opportunity to mock the Shia belief in the Imamat of a young boy.

The confusion in recognizing the Imam of the time was not limited to ordinary Shia followers, but also included some Shia elders who doubted the Imamat of Imam Javad. When the news of Imam Reza's martyrdom reached Baghdad, the Shia elders and scholars held a meeting in their house to discuss the next Imam. In this meeting, one of the elders suggested taking care of Imam Javad until he aged and could take leadership of the Shia community. His suggestion received a strong reaction by another elder, who responded that if the Imamat is granted by God to even a one-day old child, his knowledge is superior than an old scholar's; and if it is not granted by God, then even a thousand-year-old person would have the same knowledge as an ordinary person. This latter opinion was approved by the other Shia elders. However, they decided to visit Medina and personally investigate the true Imam of the time.

After a few months, the Hajj season arrived. The Shias, particularly about eighty of their elders and scholars, stopped by Medina during

their travel to perform Hajj. In their gathering in Medina, Abdullah, one of the brothers of Imam Reza, came and someone from the audience told them to ask him questions as their Imam. However, some of the scholars challenged his Imamat. They told the others that we have received narrations from Imam Baqir (AS) and Imam Sadiq (AS) that it is impossible for two brothers to become an Imam, except in the case of Imam Hasan (AS) and Imam Hossein (AS). Ever since the time of Imam Baqir, the Shias knew that the Imam of the time must have divine knowledge, and that they could verify his Imamat with their questions. Hence, they decided to verify Abdullah's knowledge by asking him some questions. However, he was not able to respond. His answers caused great disappointment to the audience, and they decided to leave the meeting. They said amongst themselves that they wished Imam Reza's son was older so that they were needless of someone like Abdullah.

At this time, Imam Javad entered the gathering. He addressed his uncle, Abdullah, and warned him about how difficult his situation would be in the hereafter in front of God. Imam Javad told him that God will question him about his ruling (Fatwa) over something that he did not have knowledge about, while someone more knowledgeable (than him) was present among the Muslims. The audience then repeated their questions, and Imam Javad provided them with correct and convincing answers according to the teachings of the Prophet and the previous Imams. The Imam's answers delighted and satisfied the audience. During their stay in Medina, the Shias asked many questions from Imam Javad. The number of questions that they asked were estimated to be in the thousands. For many of the questions, the Imam provided short answers or responded in advance, even before the question had completed. This in itself was a miracle and validated the fact that the Imam held the knowledge of the unseen.

Once the Shias verified Imam Javad's divine knowledge, they began to have faith in his Imamat. They did not have any doubt that the Imam's knowledge was given to him directly by God, and the Imam could not

have obtained his knowledge through education due to his very young age. Thus, many Shias who had been attracted to the other sects such as the Vaghefis also returned to accept Imam Javad's Imamamat. Thus, the majority of Imam Reza's Shia followers also followed Imam Javad as their next Imam. However, out of curiosity, they frequently questioned Imam Javad about his Imamamat at such a young age. The Imam would respond in various ways. Once, the Imam told them about the story of Prophet Solomon, about when his father, Prophet David, appointed him as his successor while he was just a young boy. The elders and the scholars of the Israelites initially rejected this decision, but God provided them with a miracle to prove His selection for them. On another occasion, the Imam told them that God has repeated in the Imamamat what he had chosen for the Prophethood in the past. The Imam then reminded them about the Prophethood of Prophet John at a young age by referring to the following verse of the Quran [19:12] "We granted him (John) wisdom while yet a child". Prophet Jesus is another example who announced his prophethood as a newborn, as mentioned in the following verse of the Quran [19:30] "He (Jesus) said: Verily I am God's servant. He has granted me the Book and has made me a Prophet." On another occasion, the Imam clarified that the invitation to God is not dependent on the age of he who invites. He referred to the following verse of the Quran [12:108]: "Say, This is my way; I invite to God, based on clear knowledge—I and whoever follows me". The Imam then reminded them about Imam Ali as the first male to follow Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in his invitation to God while he was just nine years old.

9-2-6-Ma'mun's Plot for Imam Javad

After the martyrdom of Imam Reza, Ma'mun and his troops returned to the Abbasid capital of Baghdad and were able to bring the city under their control¹¹⁵. Ma'mun also changed the color of his outfit from green to black, which represented the Abbasids. With this decision, Ma'mun

¹¹⁵ 16 Safar, 204 AH (Imam's age: 8)

wanted the Abbasid's trust and loyalty, and to assure them that the Caliphate would stay in their family. Previously, when Ma'mun had selected Imam Reza as his Crown Prince, he had asked his governmental officials to wear green outfits to entice the Alavid's support.

Although Ma'mun had concealed his direct role in Imam Reza's poisoning and martyrdom, he was held responsible by the public as soon as the Imam was poisoned. When the Imam was on his deathbed, Ma'mun came to visit him. He told the Imam that he did not know which tragedy is harder for him, losing the Imam or the people's accusation that he was responsible for the Imam's condition. To portray his innocence, Ma'mun showed great sorrow and grief immediately after Imam Reza's martyrdom and during his burial. However, it became apparent to the people, especially for the Shias, that Ma'mun was in fact the one who had martyred the Imam. Ma'mun had brought Imam Reza to Merv and appointed him as his Crown Prince to peacefully remove the threat of the Alavid uprisings against his government. He was now afraid that his role in Imam Reza's martyrdom might trigger the Alavids into initiating military action against him. Thus, he decided to find a peaceful solution for this problem. He wanted to portray to the public that he still held as good a relationship with the Alavids as before.

Thus, about a year after the martyrdom of Imam Reza, Ma'mun decided to pursue his initial plan of marrying his daughter, Um-Fazl, to Imam Javad. He had promised Um-Fazl to Imam Javad around two years earlier in Merv during Imam Javad's absence. By this time, the Shias had verified Imam Javad's divine knowledge and had accepted his Imamat. Thus, Ma'mun knew that Imam Javad had the same status in the eyes of the Shias as his father, Imam Reza. The elevated status of Imam Reza had led Ma'mun to select the Imam as his Crown Prince. This political marriage was a peaceful sign to portray to the people that the two families, the Alavids and the Abbasids, were united and had strong ties. Ma'mun had thought that this marriage could have multiple other

benefits for him as well. He could closely monitor the Imam's activities, especially his communications with the Shia leaders and representatives. Also, the young Imam would be affiliated with the Abbasid royal family, and he would be prone to sinful behavior that they would indulge in. In such a situation, the Imam's holy character would be damaged in the eyes of the Muslims, particularly his Shia followers.

9-2-7-The Imam in Baghdad

To Implement his decision, Ma'mun sent a letter to Imam Javad in Medina and invited him to Baghdad. Prior to his meeting with Ma'mun, the Imam coincidentally encountered Ma'mun in the streets of Baghdad while Ma'mun was going hunting with his troops. The people in the streets ran in fear of Ma'mun's troops. However, Imam Javad, as young as he was, remained in the street unafraid of Ma'mun's troops. The Imam's calmness attracted Ma'mun's attention. He approached the Imam and asked him why he did not run away like the others. The Imam responded: "O' Caliph, the road is not narrow which would require me to open it up for you. I have also not committed any guilt or mistake to run away from you; and I don't think that you would prosecute anyone without a guilt." Ma'mun was shocked by the Imam's confidence and wise response, and asked for his name. The Imam introduced himself and this was the first time that Ma'mun met the Imam.

After a short conversation, Ma'mun left to go hunting. On his way back to the palace, he met the Imam again. He asked the Imam if he knew what he had hunted today. The Imam then told Ma'mun about his special hunt, proving to him that he held divine knowledge like his father Imam Reza. Ma'mun then brought the Imam to his palace with respect. Now, he was even more determined to pursue his plan to marry his daughter, Um-Fazl, to the Imam.

9-2-8-The Imam's Islamic Marriage

The Abbasid royal family became worried when they heard about Ma'mun's decision to marry his daughter to Imam Javad. They feared that Ma'mun would eventually choose Imam Javad as his Crown Prince,

similar to how he chose Imam Javad's father, Imam Reza, in the past. They did not want to lose their power and influence in the future government. They came to Ma'mun to object and tried to convince him to revert his decision. In their discussion, they told Ma'mun that Imam Javad was still a child and lacked knowledge and maturity for marriage. They asked Ma'mun to wait at least until Imam Javad grew up and learned Islamic teachings. Ma'mun responded that Imam Javad belongs to a family whose knowledge is given by God. Ma'mun knew this, as he had tested Imam Reza's knowledge in Merv by setting up multiple debates between him and the top scholars of the time. He had also witnessed Imam Javad's divine knowledge when he had met him for the first time on the streets of Baghdad. However, he allowed the Abbasids to set up a scientific debate to test Imam Javad's knowledge and verify his claim.

The Abbasid royal family accepted Ma'mun's challenge. They asked Yahya ibn Aktham, the chief justice of Baghdad, to debate with Imam Javad. They promised him a great reward if he could overcome Imam Javad in the debate. Ma'mun held a grand event where the people, the top scholars, and officials attended. In this event, Yahya asked for Ma'mun's permission to begin the debate. He then asked the Imam about the Islamic ruling for someone who has hunted while he is in the state of Ihram or in Hajj garment. The Imam responded by asking him to specify the conditions under which the hunting had taken place, as this influenced the ruling. The Imam asked him if the hunting had happened intentionally or by mistake, whether the person knew the relevant Islamic law or not, whether the location of the hunt was inside the holy site or not, whether the person was free or a slave, whether the hunt had happened at night or during the day, and whether the person was performing Hajj or Umrah. The Imam mentioned 11 different conditions that would influence the ruling. Yahya became greatly shocked by the young Imam's response and could not continue debating with the Imam, as he did not know that this single question could have various answers depending on the relevant conditions. Furthermore, the Imam's response demonstrated his full knowledge

about all aspects of the Islamic law regarding this question.

Ma'mun, who witnessed Yahya's inability to continue debating with the Imam, told the Abbasids that they have now realized what he had told them before about the Imam's knowledge. He then told the Imam that he had selected him as his son-in-law, and asked the Imam to recite the Islamic marriage contract. The Imam accepted this political marriage, as it was enforced by the Muslim Caliph, and his refusal could have negative consequences for himself and the Shia community. The Imam set the mahriyah (dower) of Um-Fazl equal to the amount of mahriyah of his great grandmother, Lady Fatimah (SA), in her marriage to Imam Ali (AS). After reciting the marriage contract, Ma'mun held a ceremony, distributed gifts among the audience, and arranged a feast for the people.

At the end of the ceremony, the people dispersed, and only the close officials of the government stayed in the palace. Ma'mun asked the Imam to provide the answer to the question raised by Yahya ibn Aktham regarding hunting. The Imam then explained the Islamic law about all various conditions under which the hunt might have occurred. He provided answers for each condition that he had presented to Yahya. The Imam's response resulted in Ma'mun's applause and admiration.

Ma'mun then suggested to the Imam to ask Yahya ibn Aktham a question in return. The Imam asked Yahya how a man and a woman could be Islamically unlawful to each other early in the morning, and then lawful before the noon, then become unlawful to each other at noon, and then lawful in the afternoon, then become unlawful to each other at sunset, and then lawful in the evening, then become unlawful at midnight, and then lawful at dawn. Yahya swore by God that he did not know the answer, and asked the Imam to shed light. The Imam then provided him with a comprehensive answer. Ma'mun then asked the Abbasid royal family if they could provide such a concise answer to either of the questions raised by the Imam or Yahya. They then admitted to having limited knowledge, and that Ma'mun knew better

about the status of Imam Javad than they did. Ma'mun then ended the meeting by highly praising the Imam.

9-2-9-The Imam's Stay in Baghdad

The Imam was the leader of the Shia community. He used every opportunity to defend the principles of the Shia belief. During the Imam's brief stay in Baghdad, Yahya ibn Aktham, who had been defeated in his previous debate with the Imam, tried to challenge him with a critical question about the Shia belief against the first and the second caliphs. He asked the Imam's opinion about a fabricated narration stating that angel Gabriel came to the Prophet and told him that God says that He is pleased with the first caliph, and asked the Prophet to ask the first caliph if he is also pleased with God. The Imam responded that the Prophet told the Muslims in his last Hajj that many will attribute lies to him after his death. The Prophet advised the Muslims to validate any narration attributed to him with the Quran and his tradition. The Imam then told Yahya that this narration was not valid as it was against the Quran by referring to the following verse [50:16]: "Surely We have created man, and We know the promptings of his heart, and We are nearer to him than even his jugular vein." The Imam questioned how it was possible that God did not know the first caliph's opinion about Himself and needed to ask the Prophet.

Yahya did not give up and asked the Imam's opinion about another narration attributed to the Prophet, which states that the first and the second caliphs on the earth are like the angels Gabriel and Michael in heaven. The Imam responded that the angels Gabriel and Michael were never infidels, nor ever disobeyed God by committing even a single sin. The Imam then challenged this unequal comparison and said that the first and the second caliphs were infidels before converting to Islam and spent most of their lives in infidelity to God.

Yahya then asked the Imam's opinion about another narration attributed to the Prophet, which states that the first and the second caliphs are the leaders of the elders in paradise. The Imam responded that all of the people in paradise will be young, and no elderly person

will be found. The Imam then said that this narration was fabricated by the Umayyads to belittle the Prophet's narration that Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein are the leaders of the youth in paradise.

Yahya continued and stated another fabricated narration in which the Prophet had said, "If I was not selected for the Prophethood, indeed the second caliph would have been selected instead." The Imam rejected this false narration by referring to the following verse of the Quran [33:7]: "Recall, (O' Prophet), that We received a pledge from the prophets, and from you, and from Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, and Jesus son of Mary. We received from them a solemn pledge." The Imam then said that God had taken a pledge from the Prophets for their prophethood, so how could he change his covenant? He questioned Yahya that none of the prophets became an infidel for even a single moment in their life, so how it could be possible for God to select someone as his prophet who had spent the majority of his life in infidelity?

Yahya continued and stated yet another fabricated narration, where the Prophet had said that if God sends His punishment, no one would be spared other than the second caliph. The Imam rejected this narration by referring to the following verse of the Quran [8:33]: "But God would not punish them while you (the Prophet) are amongst them; and God would not punish them as long as they seek forgiveness." The Imam then denied the authenticity of this narration. This debate came to an end with the Imam achieving his goals without sparking any controversy on this sensitive subject.

After a short stay in Baghdad and his marriage to Um-Fazl, the Imam returned to Medina alone. Imam Javad and Um-Fazl were both too young to live with each other, and their marriage was only limited to recitation of the Islamic marriage contract.

9-2-10-The Imam's Divine Character

The Imam was the only source of true Islam, and his piety and divine character was observed by all those who interacted with him. The Imam

had multiple elevated titles, such as Javad, which means “generous”, and Taqi, which means “pious”. There are also some prayers and supplications narrated from the Imam. Among them is a special prayer recommended to be recited on the first day of the lunar month for guaranteeing health during the upcoming month. Also, there is a supplication from the Imam specific for the month of Ramazan. Another well-known supplication narrated from the Imam is known as “Herz-e-Javad”, which is recommended to be carried as an amulet, for protection.

9-2-11-The Imam’s Scientific Contribution

The Imam was the true source of divine knowledge in Islamic society. He was referred to by many to answer questions regarding various aspects of Islamic sciences. The names of 193 individuals who had narrated Hadith from the Imam are still available. The Imam had also trained multiple notable scholars. These scholars had a special role in preserving and spreading the Imam’s narrations. They were not only scholars in the Islamic knowledge, but were also unique in piety and character.

Ali ibn Mahziar was one of the Imam’s notable companions who was also his representative in Ahvaz. He was a great scholar of Islamic law. He authored 33 books on various topics in Islamic law and belief. Multiple letters of communication between him and the Imam are recorded in history. These letters show his special status and respect in the eyes of Imam Javad. The Imam frequently expressed his satisfaction and approval for Ali ibn Mahziar and prayed for him. Fazl ibn Shazan was another great companion of Imam Javad. He was a master in various Islamic fields, such as the Islamic law and Ilm al-Kalam, which is the study of Islamic doctrine for defending Islamic principles against skeptics. He had authored dozens of books on various topics, such as defending the Shia belief and falsifying the claims of other sects and theologies. Abd al-Azim al-Hasani, who was from the descendants of Imam Hasan, was another notable companion of Imam Javad. A few of the Imam’s companions were also among the eighteen companions

of “As-haab-e-Ejma”, or “the Companions of the Consensus”, whose narrations are currently regarded in the seminaries with the highest level of trust. Safwan ibn Yahya was one of the companions of “As-haab-e-Ejma” who authored around 30 books, 11 of which have survived until today. He had narrated hundreds of Hadiths from the Shia Imams, including Imam Javad.

Ma’mun had realized that Imam Javad belonged to a family that was blessed with divine knowledge. He had tested Imam Reza’s knowledge in Merv by holding multiple debate sessions between him and the top Islamic and non-Islamic scholars of the time. Ma’mun had realized that he could not defeat Imam Reza in any scientific debate. Instead, the news of the Imam’s victory in the debates had spread across the Islamic territory and had led to even more popularity and respect for the Imam. Ma’mun also verified Imam Javad’s knowledge in his first meeting with him on the streets of Baghdad. He later witnessed the Imam’s knowledge in responding to the questions raised by Yahya ibn Aktham, the chief justice of Baghdad. Thus, Ma’mun did not attempt to challenge Imam Javad’s knowledge in public debates, unlike what he did to Imam Reza in the past. Instead, he had to find a way to distract the Muslims from the Imam and his divine knowledge. He had established a good relationship with the neighboring countries as a policy to overcome the internal problems in his government, such as the war with Amin and the Alavid uprisings. Thus, he ordered the extensive translation of foreign literature, such as Greek philosophy, into Arabic. He then spread the translations among the Muslims in the hopes of distracting them from the Imam’s knowledge.

9-2-12-The Imam’s Wedding Ceremony¹¹⁶

Although Imam Javad was the son-in-law of the Caliph, he was completely indifferent to this material world. After reciting the marriage contract to Um-Fazl, the Imam did not stay long in Baghdad, and returned to Medina alone. He continued his role in Medina as the divine

¹¹⁶ 215 AH (Imam’s age: 19)

9- Imam Javad (AS): The Imam of Generosity

Shia leader. While in Medina, before his official wedding ceremony to Um-Fazl in Iraq, the Imam married a slave girl named Samaneh. The Imam's marriage to a slave was a practical lesson in the equality of the people in the eyes of the Imam, as he regarded the Caliph's daughter and a slave with equal esteem. It was also a clear message that his marriage to Um-Fazl was in fact a political marriage due to the circumstances that the Imam was living in.

After around 11 years from the time of the marriage contract to Um-Fazl, the Imam was brought to Baghdad for his official wedding ceremony. At this time, Imam Javad's oldest son, Imam Hadi, had been born to his wife Samaneh in Medina, and was two years old. Prior to the Imam's arrival in Baghdad, Ma'mun had already left Baghdad towards current day Turkey, to personally manage the instability in that region. The Imam was then taken to Ma'mun. The Imam met Ma'mun at Tikrit, a city in northern Iraq, and his wedding ceremony to Um-Fazl was officially held there.

Ma'mun would always portray that he was proud of the Imam and treated him respectfully. However, on multiple occasions, he attempted to force the Imam into sinful behavior that he and the other Abbasid royal family members would indulge in. His intention was to defame the Imam and his infallibility in the eyes of the Muslims. During the Imam's wedding ceremony, Ma'mun prepared beautiful slave girls with precious jewels in their hands and sent them towards the Imam to accompany him when he was walking towards the stage. However, the Imam was completely indifferent to them.

On another occasion, a singer told Ma'mun that he could influence the Imam's heart towards sin and fulfill Ma'mun's ill intentions. He approached the Imam, sat in front of him and started singing with his musical instrument. The people gathered around the singer to enjoy his performance. However, the Imam looked at the singer and loudly addressed him: "O' long bearded one, fear God!" Suddenly, his hand froze, the instrument fell, and he could not continue his performance.

With this political marriage, the Imam became affiliated to the Abbasid

royal family and was required to meet them. Even with this affiliation, his lifestyle was quite simple and his interaction with the people was as usual. The Imam showed his detachment from this material world in his everyday practice. Once, one of the Imam's companions saw the Imam in the palace and thought to himself that the Imam would never want to leave the palace and return to Medina. At this time, the Imam addressed him and told him that a simple meal made of bread and salt near the Prophet's tomb is more pleasant for him than what he sees here in the palace.

After the wedding, the Imam stayed in Baghdad for several months until the upcoming Hajj season¹¹⁷. He then left Baghdad with Um-Fazl towards Mecca to perform Hajj. After performing Hajj, they returned to Medina and stayed there for the rest of Ma'mun's government for about two-and-a-half years.

9-2-13-The Imam's Leadership

To meet the needs of the growing Shia community, Imam Sadiq had established a networking organization of his trusted companions as his representatives in various cities around the Islamic territory. This organization was further developed during the Imamah of Imam Kazim and Imam Reza and became an effective way of communication between the Shias and their Imam. Imam Javad took leadership of this organization effectively during his Imamah. The Imam had selected representatives in various cities including Kufa, Baghdad, Basrah, Wasit (a city in the region between Kufa and Basrah), Qom, Ahvaz, Rey, Hamedan, and Bost, a city in Sistan. Historical records also indicate the expansion of Shi'ism into Egypt at this time. The names of 13 of the Imam's representatives are recorded in history. Many of the communications between the Imam and his representatives were in the form of letters. The Imam would respond to their questions and provide them with advice in these letters. Dozens of the Imam's letters are recorded in history. The Imam's leadership led to the expansion of

¹¹⁷ Hajj of 215 AH (Imam's age: 20)

the Shia community to an extent that they could even reach top governmental positions. For instance, the governors of Bahrain and Bost were from the Shia followers of the Imam. Reaching these positions was an opportunity for them to secretly benefit the Shia community and save their wealth and lives from the persecution of the Abbasid government.

Although the Imam had married Ma'mun's daughter, his affiliation with the government did not legitimize the Abbasid Caliphate in the eyes of the Muslims, particularly the Shias. During the Imammat of Imam Javad, the people of Qom, the main center of the Shias in Iran, rose up against Ma'mun's government two or three times. Their uprisings were suppressed by the government at every attempt. As a result, many were killed, and the city endured serious damage.

9-3-During the Government of Mu'tasim

9-3-1-Mu'tasim in Power

Ma'mun was at war with the Romans in current day Turkey when he suddenly became sick and died¹¹⁸. His body was taken back towards the Islamic territory to protect it from possible disrespect or revenge by the Romans. He was then buried in Tarsus, in current day Turkey. Prior to his death, Ma'mun had selected his brother, Mu'tasim, as his successor instead of his sons. Mu'tasim was a warrior and an army leader. However, he lacked literacy to the point that he could not even write a letter. Ma'mun had found his brother as the best candidate to manage the ever-increasing unrest within the Abbasid government. Although Ma'mun's troops favored his son, Abbas, for the Caliphate, Abbas decided to respect his father's decision and paid allegiance to his uncle, Mu'tasim. Ma'mun's army then followed Abbas and paid allegiance to Mu'tasim as the Caliph.

9-3-2-Summon to Baghdad

¹¹⁸ 8 Rajab, 218 AH (Imam's age: 22)

Once Mu'tasim assumed power, he was worried about the chaos and unrest threatening his new government. Among them was the long-standing threat of the Alavid uprisings. He was also concerned about the popularity and social status of Imam Javad. The Imam was the divine leader of the growing Shia community, which refused to accept the legitimacy of the Abbasid government. He decided to closely monitor and control every aspect of the Imam's life and isolate him from his followers. Thus, he ordered his governor in Medina to send the Imam to Baghdad. As a result, the Imam left Medina with his wife, Um-Fazl, towards Baghdad¹¹⁹. The Imam knew that he would not return to Medina again unlike his prior two trips to Baghdad. Thus, he revealed his oldest son, Imam Hadi, as the next Imam to his companions.

Mu'tasim pretended to be respectful to the Imam during his stay in Baghdad. However, he was carefully monitoring the Imam's life. After around ten months from the Imam's arrival in Baghdad, an incident triggered Mu'tasim to expedite his plot against the Imam, and martyred him.

A thief was brought to Mu'tasim's presence and confessed to his theft. Mu'tasim decided to implement Islamic law and cut off one of his hands. However, he did not know how much of his hand he should order to be cut off, as a long time had passed since the last time this law had been applied to thieves. He then prepared an official meeting and invited Islamic scholars, including Imam Javad, to his presence and asked for their opinion. In this meeting, Ahmad ibn Abi Du'ad, who was the chief justice of Baghdad, determined the cutting limit to be at the wrist by referring to the Quranic verse that describes performing tayammum (or sand ablution) on hands. This opinion was supported by some of the scholars. However, some other scholars determined the cutting limit to be at the elbow by referring to the Quranic verse about performing ablution where the hands are washed at the elbows.

¹¹⁹ Imam's arrival in Baghdad: 28 Muharram, 220 AH (Imam's age: 24)

Mu'tasim then turned to the Imam and asked for his opinion. The Imam, who was fully aware of the threats and conspiracies against himself, refused to answer and told Mu'tasim that the other opinions were enough for him. However, Mu'tasim swore that he will not let the Imam go unless he got his opinion. When the Imam was forced to express his opinion, he told Mu'tasim that all of the provided answers were wrong. The Imam then determined the cutting limit to be at the fingers and emphasized that the palm of the hand should not be cut. Mu'tasim asked for the reasoning on this ruling. The Imam responded that the Prophet had determined seven body parts, including both palms, which must be placed on the earth during prostration to God. The Imam then said that these seven body parts belong to God, and if the thief's hand was cut from the wrist or the elbow, he would not be able to properly prostrate to God. To strengthen his point, the Imam provided Quranic evidence for his claim as the other scholars had done. He referred to the following verse of the Quran [72:18]: "And the places of prostrations are for God, so do not invoke anyone along with God." The word 'masjid' in Arabic, which is commonly translated to mosque in English, in its essence means the place of prostration. Mu'tasim liked the Imam's opinion and ordered the thief's fingers to be cut according to the Imam's opinion. This meeting finished and Ahmad ibn Abi Du'ad was ashamed of his defeat in front of the young Imam. He later said he wished he had died before attending this meeting.

After three days, Ahmad ibn Abi Du'ad came to Mu'tasim and advised him that his action of accepting the Imam's opinion over that of other scholars was not a wise decision for his government. He told Mu'tasim that the Imam's followers see the Imam deserving of the Caliphate and regard Mu'tasim as the one who has occupied his position. He said that the news of this official meeting has already spread in society and was strong evidence for the Imam's followers for their belief in him. This conversation triggered Mu'tasim to expedite his plot to martyr the Imam. Shortly after this incident, the Imam was poisoned and martyred.

9-3-3-Martyrdom

To implement his plot, Mu'tasim ordered one of his trusted ministers to invite the Imam to his house and offer him a poisonous meal. The Imam initially rejected this invitation, however, the minister insisted and said that he wanted the Imam to bless his house with his presence. He also told the Imam that another minister wanted to meet the Imam during this event. Due to the excessive insistence, the Imam accepted his invitation. After eating a small portion of the meal, the Imam found himself poisoned and suddenly left the minister's house. When the minister insisted the Imam stay longer, the Imam responded that it would be better for the minister if the Imam left his house immediately. Due to the hidden nature of the plot for the Imam's martyrdom, his wife, Um-Fazl, was also regarded as a suspect. She had a good motive since she did not have any children from Imam Javad, and was jealous of the Imam's other wife, who was the mother of his children. Also, she was from the Abbasid royal family and could have been tempted by her uncle Mu'tasim.

The Imam was martyred within a day of his poisoning, which shows the potency of the poison. He was martyred on the last day of Zu al-Qa'dah, in the year 220 Hijri, in Baghdad. He was martyred around ten months after his arrival in Baghdad by Mu'tasim's order. Imam Javad was martyred at the age of only 25. He was the youngest Shia Imam at the time of martyrdom. Historical records suggest Imam Hadi's miraculous travel from Medina to Baghdad to take care of his father's rituals. He then secretly returned to Medina.

A large burial was held for the Imam, as he was affiliated with the Abbasid royal family. Additionally, Mu'tasim wanted to portray to the people, particularly the Shias, that he was innocent in the Imam's death. A huge crowd of the Muslims attended the Imam's burial. Wathiq, Mu'tasim's son, officially led the prayer over the Imam's body. The crowd carried the Imam's corpse towards one of the city's graveyards that belonged to the tribe of Quraysh, and respectfully buried the Imam next to the tomb of his grandfather, Imam Kazim (AS).

9-4-Conclusion

The Imamat of Imam Javad began with the martyrdom of his father, Imam Reza, when he was just seven-and-a-half years old. He was the only child of Imam Reza, and the only heir to inherit the Imamat in the eyes of the Shias. However, the Shias did not fully accept his Imamat until they validated his knowledge by asking him many questions. The Imamat of Imam Javad continued for about 17 years until his martyrdom. The majority of his Imamat, about 15 years, coincided with the government of Ma'mun. Ma'mun had portrayed a good relationship with the Alavids. He had selected Imam Reza as his Crown Prince, and later wed his daughter, Um-Habib, to him. Ma'mun, who knew that Imam Reza had a beloved son, decided to also promise his other daughter, Um-Fazl, to Imam Javad. He did this without the Imam's presence in Merv while he was still a child. About two years later, he invited Imam Javad to Baghdad and witnessed the Imam's divine character and knowledge. He then Islamically married his daughter to the Imam while the Imam was just eight or nine years old. Imam Javad returned to Medina alone, and after about 11 years, came back to Iraq for his official wedding ceremony to Um-Fazl. After a stay in Baghdad for several months, the Imam then returned to Medina with Um-Fazl and stayed there for the rest of Ma'mun's government. Imam Javad's Imamat continued for about two years into Mu'tasim's government. Mu'tasim, who was worried about the social status of the Imam, brought him to Baghdad. After a short stay of about ten months, he martyred the Imam.

The unique aspect of Imam Javad's Imamat was its start at a very young age. Two centuries after the Prophet's demise, and after the Imamat of eight holy Imams among the Shia community, it was now time for the Shias to fully realize the elevated status of their Imams. The acceptance of the Imamat of a seven-and-a-half-year-old boy, who was far younger than the Islamic pubertal age of fifteen, was a practical lesson for the Shias to recognize that the Imamat is a position determined by God. Once the Shias verified the Imamat of Imam Javad, they became proud

and regarded his young age as proof of their theology and verification of the divine teachings they had received from the previous Imams. Thus, they did not later object to the Imamat of Imam Hadi and Imam Mahdi, who also became Imams at a very young age.

Imam Javad was the first Shia Imam to assume Imamat in his childhood. At the age of twenty-five, he was also the youngest Shia Imam to be martyred. He is known as Javad, which means “Generous”. He is also known as “Baab al-Murad” or “The Gate of Wishes”. Many Muslims visit his holy shrine in Baghdad and ask God to bless them for the sake of the Imam with ease in sustenance and relief in their financial hardships. Also, the youth who visit his holy shrine feel especially connected with their young Imam.

IMAM JAVAD (AS):

One will not regret his decision if he follows these three steps:

- Avoiding hastiness
- Consulting with others in the matter
- Trusting in God after making the decision

10- IMAM HADI (AS): THE IMAM OF GUIDANCE

This chapter reviews the life of Imam Hadi (AS) and provides an overview of his social, scientific, and political achievements. This chapter also highlights the political circumstances which led to the Imam's exile to Samarra and the oppression and hardships that he endured during his Imamah. This period of history also coincides with the decline in the Abbasids' power as a result of the increasing influence of the Turks.

10-1-During the Government of Ma'mun

10-1-1-Birth

Imam Ali ibn Muhammad (AS), also known as Hadi or Naqi, was born on the 15th of Zu al-Hijjah, in the year 212 Hijri. He was also known as Abul-Hasan. As per family traditions of the Ahlul-Bayt, Shia Imams with the name of 'Ali' were also honored with Imam Ali's title of Abul-Hasan. Later, Imam Hadi named his son Hasan, and the title of Abul-Hasan truly manifested in the Imam. To distinguish him from Imam Kazim (AS) and Imam Reza (AS), who also had the title of Abul-Hasan, Imam Hadi was commonly referred to as "Abul-Hasan al-Thaalith" or "Abul-Hasan the Third". He was born in Surya, a village close to Medina, which was founded by Imam Kazim. He was the oldest son of Imam Javad (AS). His mother was Samaneh, who was a slave before marrying Imam Javad. She was originally from Morocco, in North-Western Africa. She was very pious and unique in character, and was constantly fasting.

10-1-2-Upbringing by Father

Due to the political circumstances that Imam Javad was living in, he had to marry Um-Fazl, the daughter of the Caliph Ma'mun. However, Imam Javad did not have any children from Um-Fazl. All of Imam Javad's children, including Imam Hadi, were born from his other wife, Samaneh. There are limited historical records about the life of Imam Hadi during his childhood. However, those available show the Imam's bravery and his special status in his father's eyes.

10-1-3-Ma'mun's Government

Ma'mun, the Abbasid Caliph, defeated his brother, Amin, in multiple battles and brought the entire Islamic territory under his control. However, his newly established government was facing a serious threat from the Alavid uprisings. Ma'mun thus decided to devise a good relationship with the Alavids and affiliate his government with them. He thought this plot would eliminate their threat and legitimize his government. He chose Imam Reza, the most well-known and respected

character from the Alavids, for this plot. He sent his troops to Medina to bring Imam Reza to Merv, and forcefully appointed the Imam as his Crown Prince. Ma'mun, with his well-planned and secret conspiracy, had intended not only to legitimize his government, but also to eliminate Shi'ism entirely by portraying the Imam as a worldly and materialistic individual, thus disgracing him in the eyes of the Muslims. However, Imam Reza made Ma'mun's conspiracy ineffective with his wise actions and behavior. The ironic positive outcome from the Imam's appointment as the Crown Prince was that, after decades of hostility against the Shia Imams, the Islamic caliph and government had to confess to the elevated rank of the Shia Imams for the first time. This outcome validated the truth of the Shia theology for Muslims all around the Islamic territory and accelerated their familiarity with the Shia theology. As a result, Imam Reza became a famous character for all of the Muslims to an extent that, in the decades that followed, the next Shia Imams from Imam Reza's lineage, including Imam Hadi, were commonly called "Ibn al-Reza" or "the Son of Reza". Ma'mun, who realized that his plots against Imam Reza had failed, poisoned the Imam with his own hands and martyred him after being the Crown Prince for only one-and-a-half years. Later, Ma'mun brought Imam Javad to Baghdad and witnessed the Imam's divine character and knowledge. He then married his daughter, Um-Fazl, to Imam Javad. However, even this political marriage could not legitimize his government for the Shias, nor stop the growth and propagation of Shi'ism.

Ma'mun was the follower of Mu'tazila theology, which derived its beliefs on Islamic principles using intellectual reasoning. The Mu'tazila theology opposed the beliefs of the people of Hadith who believed in the absolute literal meaning of the Hadith. Among various differences between these two groups of Sunni schools of thought, there was a particular subject about the creation of the Quran that took much attention in their debates. Both groups believed that God always existed. However, Mu'tazila believed that the Quran was created by God when it was revealed to the Prophet, while the people of Hadith believed the Quran existed ever since God has existed.

In the last year of Ma'mun's government, he decided to enforce Mu'tazila's belief about the creation of the Quran. He ordered his government officials, including judges, to be questioned about their belief regarding the creation of the Quran and ousted anyone who had beliefs opposing the Mu'tazila's. Ma'mun's decision caused outrage among the people of Hadith. Many were tortured and imprisoned because they held onto their belief. For example, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the founder of the Hanbali school of thought, was among those who insisted in their belief and was punished by lashes. This incident is known in history as "Mihnat al-Quran" or "Ordeal [regarding the creation] of the Quran", and was the first time in Islamic history that the people were questioned about their beliefs. Ma'mun's policy to enforce the Mu'tazila's belief about the creation of the Quran was continued by his successors, Mu'tasim and Wathiq.

Although Mu'tazila's belief about the creation of Quran was the same as the Shias, the Shia Imams asked their followers not to involve themselves in such an absurd dispute in the society. The Shia Imams knew that this endless, trivial debate will only cause hatred and division among the Muslims, thus weakening the entire Islamic society. When one of the Shias from Baghdad asked Imam Hadi in this regard, the Imam responded to him in a letter that the debate about this topic is a deviation in the religion. The Imam advised him to avoid falling into this debate, and told him that God is the only creator and everything else is His creation. The Imam then told him that the Quran is God's word and not to put any other names on it, as he would be misled.

10-2-During the Government of Mu'tasim

10-2-1-Mu'tasim in Power

Ma'mun was at war with the Romans in current day Turkey when he suddenly became sick and died¹²⁰. His body was moved back towards the Islamic territory to protect it from possible disrespect by the

¹²⁰ 8 Rajab, 218 AH (Imam's age: 5)

Romans. He was then buried in Tarsus, in current day Turkey. Prior to his death, Ma'mun had selected his brother, Mu'tasim, as his successor after himself instead of his sons. Mu'tasim was a warrior and military leader. However, he lacked literacy and could not even write a letter. Ma'mun had found his brother to be the best candidate to manage the increasing unrest within the Abbasid government. Although Ma'mun's troops favored his son, Abbas, for the caliphate, Abbas decided to respect his father's decision and paid allegiance to his uncle, Mu'tasim. Ma'mun's army then followed Abbas' example and paid allegiance to Mu'tasim as their caliph.

Upon assuming power, Mu'tasim was faced with various rebellions against his new government. His government of less than nine years was primarily spent in suppressing various uprisings within the vast kingdom of the Abbasids. At the beginning of his government, Muhammad ibn Qasim, one of the Alavids, initiated an uprising in Khorasan. His uprising was supported by thousands of people, especially the Zaidi Shias; however, it was suppressed by the Khorasan governor. Muhammad ibn Qasim was arrested, sent to Samarra before Mu'tasim, and imprisoned.

The main threat to Mu'tasim's government was from Babak Khorramdin in Azerbaijan, northwestern Iran. This uprising was an anti-Arab and anti-Islamic movement. Babak wanted to revive the historical glory of the Iranian kingdoms. He caused serious problems for the Abbasid government from the mountainous region where he was active. Ma'mun was unable to suppress Babak's uprising. However, before his death, Ma'mun had advised his brother Mu'tasim to fight Babak and suppress him. Mu'tasim followed Ma'mun's advice and sent his army to war against Babak. He arranged sophisticated military techniques against Babak and carefully oversaw military decisions from Samarra. After more than two years of continuous military operation, his army was eventually able to defeat Babak and arrest him. Babak was sent before Mu'tasim in Samarra, and was brutally killed.

Mu'tasim also went to battle with the Romans in current day Turkey.

He was able to defeat them and stabilized the region. Although Mu'tasim was able to suppress and control various uprisings of his time, the number and the extent of these uprisings showed that the time of glory for the Abbasid government had passed.

10-2-2-Martyrdom of Imam Javad¹²¹

Once Mu'tasim assumed power, he was worried about the chaos and unrest that threatened his new government. Among these threats was the long-standing threat from the Alavid uprising. He was also concerned about the popularity and social status of Imam Javad, as he was the divine leader of the growing Shia community that did not accept the legitimacy of the Abbasid government. He decided to closely monitor and control every aspect of the Imam's life and isolate him from his followers. Thus, he ordered his governor in Medina to send the Imam to Baghdad. The Imam knew that unlike his prior two trips to Iraq, he would not return back to Medina. Thus, he revealed his eldest son, Imam Hadi, as the next Imam after himself.

After about ten months from the Imam's arrival in Baghdad, Mu'tasim poisoned and martyred Imam Javad. Mu'tasim held a grand funeral ceremony for Imam Javad in Baghdad. Mu'tasim's son, Wathiq, officially prayed over the Imam's body to portray to the people that the government was innocent in the Imam's martyrdom.

Imam Hadi was aware of the exact time Imam Javad was martyred in Baghdad. He cried loudly while grieving and informed his family of his father's martyrdom. The Imam's prophecy was validated later when the news of Imam Javad's martyrdom arrived in Medina. Historical records suggest Imam Hadi's miraculous travel to Baghdad to take care of his father's funeral rites. The Imam then returned to Medina without anyone noticing his presence in Baghdad.

10-2-3-Beginning of Imamat

Imam Hadi took leadership of the Shia community as an Imam after

¹²¹ Last Day of Zu al-Qa'dah, 220 AH (Imam's age: 7)

the martyrdom of his father, Imam Javad. At that time, Imam Hadi was only two weeks short of becoming eight years old. However, his Imamat was not challenged by the Shias because of his young age. The Shias had already validated and accepted the Imamat of Imam Javad at the very young age of seven-and-a-half years old. Therefore, age was no longer an obstacle when believing in the Imamat of a young boy. Imam Hadi was the oldest son of Imam Javad, and his Imamat had been prescribed by Imam Javad on various occasions. Furthermore, before Imam Javad's martyrdom, his will of appointing Imam Hadi as his successor in the Imamat was passed to ten Shia elders by letter. These letters were effective in removing any doubts among Shia scholars and followers about the Imamat of Imam Hadi. As a result, the Shias accepted Imam Hadi as their next Imam.

At this time, Shi'ism was a well-established and growing theology with a strong scientific backbone. Ever since their establishment, the Abbasid caliphs used whatever means possible to confront and terminate Shi'ism. However, neither the extreme suppressive policy of Mansur and Haroon against Imam Sadiq and Imam Kazim, nor the conspiracies of Ma'mun, who portrayed a good relationship with Imam Reza and Imam Javad, could stop the growth and propagation of the Shia theology among the Muslims. The Shia Imams falsified the conspiracies against themselves, guided the Shias to the true Islamic teachings, and advised them on political matters. As a result, after two centuries from the demise of the holy Prophet, Shi'ism was a strong and growing theology among the other sects of Islam with many followers across the Islamic territory. Therefore, the undeniable influence of the Shias and their leader, Imam Hadi, could not be ignored by any of the Abbasid caliphs.

10-2-4-Mu'tasim and the Imam

After the martyrdom of Imam Javad, Mu'tasim was concerned about the Shias gathering around Imam Hadi as their next Imam. He asked Umar ibn Faraj, his governor in Medina, to assign the Imam's upbringing and training to a teacher trusted by the government.

Mu'tasim's intention was to train the Imam with non-Shia teachings and restrict his interactions with his followers. Umar ibn Faraj gathered a group of people from Medina that were against the Shias and inquired about such a teacher. He was then referred to Junaidi, who was well-known for his hostility to the Shias. He selected Junaidi as the Imam's private teacher, and asked him to restrict the Imam's interactions with his Shia followers.

After a while, someone asked Junaidi about the situation of the boy that he was training. Junaidi responded with surprise as to why he called the Imam a boy, and not a respected elder. He then said, "I am the master in science and literature over all others in Medina. I say something regarding the literature and think that my opinion is at its perfection and maturity. However, he completes my statement with many new scientific facts." Junaidi then said, "the people think I am his teacher, but in reality, he is my teacher." After a while, the same person met Junaidi for the second time and asked about the Imam's whereabouts. Junaidi responded that the Imam is the best person on the earth and the most virtuous person that God has ever created. He then admitted that the Imam has the entire Quran in memory, has the best voice in recitation of the Quran, and has the full knowledge of the interpretation and the true meaning of the Quran. Junaidi, who was greatly influenced by the Imam's holy character and divine knowledge, eventually became a Shia follower of the Imam.

10-2-5-Samarra: The Abbasid's New Capital

Unlike the Umayyad Caliphate, which was solely an Arab-led government, the Abbasid Caliphate provided an opportunity for the Iranians to participate in the government. The Iranians, under the leadership of Abu-Muslim, were key players in establishing the Abbasid government. Upon gaining power, the Abbasid caliphs involved the Iranians in their government. For instance, during Haroon's government, the powerful Barmaki family, including Haroon's famous minister, Yahya ibn Khalid Barmaki, were Iranians. Later, the Iranians helped Ma'mun gain power by defeating his brother, Amin. Ma'mun,

whose mother was an Iranian slave, awarded the Iranians with esteemed governmental positions and selected Merv, in Khorasan, as his capital, instead of Baghdad. As a result of the Iranian presence in power, there was struggle and jealousy between the Arab and Iranian officials during the Abbasid government.

Soon after reaching power, Mu'tasim decided to reduce the influence of the Arab and Iranian officials in his government. Mu'tasim, whose mother was a Turk, brought thousands of Turks from Central Asia to Baghdad and formed a powerful army from them. He also gave sensitive government and military positions to Turks and chose them as his elite guards. Turks became influential in Mu'tasim's government and gradually replaced the Arab and Iranian officials.

The Arab officials, who were worried about the increasing influence of the Turks in Mu'tasim's government, decided to rise against him. They gathered around Abbas, Ma'mun's son, who was a candidate for the Caliphate after his father. They encouraged Abbas to act against Mu'tasim. However, their plot was exposed and suppressed before any notable action. Mu'tasim imprisoned Abbas and banned water from reaching him, which led to his death by thirst.

The presence of thousands of Turk soldiers in Baghdad, the Capital of the Abbasids, was problematic for Mu'tasim. The Turk soldiers were treating the people of Baghdad harshly, and their presence had caused continuous clashes between the Turk soldiers and residents of Baghdad. The people of Baghdad complained to Mu'tasim about the behavior of the Turk soldiers and warned him that they would rise against him if he failed to resolve this issue. Thus, Mu'tasim decided to remove the Turk soldiers from Baghdad. He chose Samarra at the north of Baghdad as an army base for his Turk army. Samarra had better weather than Baghdad, and was conveniently connected to Baghdad through Tigris River. He then constructed a city in Samarra and made it the new Capital of the Abbasid Caliphate after Baghdad.

10-2-6-The Imam's Scientific Contribution

The Imam was the true source of divine knowledge in the society. He was referred by many to answer questions regarding various aspects of the Islamic sciences. The names of 185 individuals that narrated Hadith from the Imam is recorded in history. The Imam had also trained multiple notable scholars. These scholars had a special role in recording and preserving the Imam's narrations. They were not only scholars of Islamic knowledge, but were also unique in piety and character.

Ali ibn Mahziar was one of the Imam's notable companions, who also served as his representative in Ahvaz, Iran. He was a great scholar of Islamic law. He authored 33 books on various topics in Islamic law and belief. Fazl ibn Shazan was another great companion of Imam Hadi. He was a master in various Islamic literature, such as the Islamic law and Ilm al-Kalam. Ilm al-Kalam is the study of Islamic doctrine that involves defending Islamic principles against skeptics. He had authored dozens of books on various topics, such as defending the Shia belief and falsifying the claims of various sects and theologies. Abd al-Azim al-Hasani was another notable companion of Imam Hadi who was from the descendants of Imam Hasan (AS). He met Imam Hadi and presented his Islamic beliefs to the Imam. He asked the Imam to confirm or correct his beliefs. The Imam then listened to him and approved his beliefs. He was an Islamic scholar, and Imam Hadi referred his Shia followers who were living close to Abd al-Azim al-Hasani to ask their questions directly from him.

The Imam, like his forefathers, confronted the false theological beliefs of his time and guided his followers to the true Islamic teachings. Once, the Imam and his companions were in the Mosque of the Prophet when a group of Sufis (or Islamic mystics) entered the Mosque. The Imam referred to them as the allies of the devils and the destroyers of Islam. The Imam, in his speech to his companions, falsified the Sufis' beliefs and warned his companions of any interactions with them.

The Imam also strongly confronted the Ghulat, who would exaggerate the status of Imam Hadi and the other Shia Imams. The Ghulat would regard the Imams at the level of God. They were active in Shia centers

in Iraq and Iran, and would often falsely introduce themselves as the Imam's representatives. The Imam openly rejected and cursed the Ghulat's leaders for giving wrong attributes to the Ahlul-Bayt and himself. In the letters to his representatives and followers, the Imam frequently cursed the Ghulat and warned them against being influenced by the Ghulat's false beliefs. After insisting on their false belief and continuing to misguide the Shias from their true beliefs, the Imam, on rare occasions, allowed his companions to physically confront the Ghulat's leaders.

Many supplications have been narrated from Imam Hadi and remain today. As a result, Imam Hadi has been also titled as 'the second Imam Sajjad'. Imam Hadi has provided supplications about the status of the Shia Imams, which are recommended for recitation when visiting their holy tombs. Once, Imam Hadi visited the holy tomb of Imam Ali (AS) in Najaf on the day of Eid al-Ghadir. The Imam recited a long supplication as a eulogy for his forefather, Imam Ali, which became known as "Ziyarat Ghadiriyyah". In this supplication, Imam Hadi honored Imam Ali's sacrifices in the way of God. The Imam reviewed many of Imam Ali's virtues in relation to Quranic verses, narrations from the Prophet, and historical facts.

Once, one of the Imam's companions asked him for a supplication that he could recite whenever he visited any of the Shia Imams' tombs. The Imam taught him the long supplication of "Jami'ah Kabirah". In this supplication, the Imam provided a comprehensive and unique description of the Shia Imams and described their elevated and divine status as determined by God. The high contents of the supplication of "Jami'ah Kabirah" could not be told by the previous Shia Imams to their followers, as they were not yet prepared for it. However, after more than two centuries from the Imamat of ten holy Imams, and close to the occultation of the 12th Imam, the Shias were now ready for this special supplication. The Shias had continuously observed the divine character and knowledge of the previous Shia Imams and had witnessed many miracles from them, such as the Imamat of Imam Javad and

Imam Hadi at a very young age. Furthermore, the activities of the Ghulat, who would regard the Shia Imams at the level of God, was another obstacle for the Shia Imams to talk about their elevated status in public. In the supplication of “Jami’ah Kabirah”, the Imam drew a distinguishing line between the true status of the Shia Imams as determined by God and the false words of the Ghulat. The Imam defined a boundary where any other descriptions of the Shia Imams beyond that would be wrong and associated with the Ghulat. The supplication of “Jami’ah Kabirah” is a strong historical document in studying the Shia Imams.

Due to the intense surveillance on the Imam’s life, especially when the Imam relocated to Samarra, the Capital of the government, there were times when his Shia followers and representatives were unable to meet him freely. Therefore, the interactions of the Imam with his followers were often through the exchange of letters. The content of dozens of the Imam’s letters is recorded in history. In these letters, the Imam would provide his followers with guidance and answers to their Islamic questions. For example, the Imam responded to a letter from the people of Ahvaz, who had asked him about “Jabr and Tafviz”, or “Predestination and Delegation”. The Imam, in this long letter, rejected both beliefs of predestination and delegation, and stated the correct belief, which lies between these two extreme beliefs.

10-3-During the Government of Wathiq

10-3-1-Wathiq in Power

After Mu’tasim, his son, Wathiq, who was his successor, assumed power¹²². He was an expert in immodest poetry and music. He followed Ma’mun and Mu’tasim’s policy regarding the creation of the Quran and prosecuted anyone who was against his belief. This was to such an extent that, on one occasion, the Romans agreed to free a few thousand of their Muslim hostages in exchange for their own hostages. Wathiq

¹²² Rabi’ al-Awwal, 227 AH (Imam’s age: 14)

agreed to deal with the Romans, however, he asked his agents to first question each Muslim hostage about his belief about the creation of the Quran and only release those who shared his opinion. However, he gave up his enforcement towards the end of his short government of less than six years. He also followed his father's policy of appointing Turks to sensitive governmental and military positions. Thus, the Turk's power increased during Wathiq's government to the extent that they selected the caliph after him.

10-3-2-Wathiq and the Imam

Wathiq followed Ma'mun's policy towards the Alavids and treated them respectfully. He was referred to as "Ma'mun the Second", or "Junior Ma'mun", as he portrayed to have a good relationship with the Alavids. He did not enforce any major restriction on the young Imam. At the time of Wathiq, the tribe of Bani Sulaim invaded Medina and rebelled in the city. Wathiq sent his Turk army to Medina to suppress this rebellion. When his troops were in Medina, the Imam saw them on the streets. The Imam called out to one of the Turk soldiers in Turkish. The Turk soldier got off from his horse, respectfully approached the Imam, and inquired if he was a prophet. He said that the Imam had called him by his childhood name, which he was known by in his hometown, and no one else knew about it. Although the Turks were new in the Abbasid government, they gradually became familiar with the Imam's divine character and became respectful towards him.

10-4-During the Government of Mutawakkil

10-4-1-Mutawakkil in Power

Wathiq's death marked the end of the Abbasid Caliphate's first period¹²³. During this period, the Abbasid caliphs had sole power in governing their vast kingdom. They brutally suppressed any uprising against their government, and the caliph would rule by direct order.

¹²³ 24 Zu al-Hijjah, 232 AH (Imam's age: 20)

However, during the second period of the Abbasid Caliphate, the Turks became very influential and powerful in the government. The Turk leaders became so powerful that they could even kill and substitute the caliph. The Abbasid caliphs were a hostage in the hands of the Turk leaders, and could not make any important decisions without their approval. The lack of central power led to various riots against the Abbasids and their government became weak and unstable. As a result, their governors would rule their territory as an autonomous state.

The significant Turkish influence in the Abbasid government manifested itself right after Wathiq's death. Wathiq had not selected anyone as his successor. Thus, the political and military officials were divided upon selecting the next caliph. The Abbasid royal family, and some other politicians, supported Wathiq's son for the Caliphate. The Turks supported Mutawakkil, one of Mu'tasim's sons and Wathiq's brother. The Turks were committed to keeping the Abbasid Caliphate in Mu'tasim's lineage, as he was the one who initially gave them power in the government. The Turks had an upper hand in the dispute for selecting the next caliph, and thus chose Mutawakkil.

At this time, the Sunni sects of Islam were divided in their reasonings about the Islamic principles such as God's attributes. One group followed Mu'tazila's theology, and the other followed the people of Hadith. Mu'tazila was based on intellectual reasoning and was opposing the people of Hadith, who would take the literal meaning of the Hadith. Ma'mun followed Mu'tazila's theology and supported its propagation. After Ma'mun, Mu'tasim and Wathiq also followed and supported Mu'tazila's theology. However, Mutawakkil banned Mu'tazila's theology and supported the people of Hadith, due to his hatred and hostility against Shia theology. This was due to the fact that, in reasoning the Islamic principles, Mu'tazila had closer beliefs to Shia theology than the people of Hadith. Mutawakkil's prosecution against the followers of Mu'tazila put an end to this theology. As a result, he took the side of the people of Hadith in the creation of the Quran and stopped inquiring about the people's beliefs in this regard.

10-4-2-Migration to Samarra¹²⁴

Upon gaining power, Mutawakkil became concerned about the popularity and the social status of Imam Hadi among the Muslims. The Imam was also the political and religious leader of the well-established and large Shia community. Furthermore, every so often, Mutawakkil would receive criticisms against the Imam from his officials who wanted to trigger him into action. One of these officials was Abdullah ibn Muhammad, his governor in Medina. He sent a letter to Mutawakkil and informed him about the Shias who had believed in the Imamat of Imam Hadi, and also wrongfully placed accusations upon the Imam. Imam Hadi, who was aware of Abdullah's communication, sent a letter to Mutawakkil to falsify Abdullah's accusation and reminded Mutawakkil of Abdullah's wrongdoings against himself. However, the Imam's letter could not change Mutawakkil's intentions. Thus, Mutawakkil, who was one of the most hostile Abbasid caliphs toward the Shias, decided to take action against the Imam. He decided to exile the Imam to his Capital in Samarra. By this decision, Mutawakkil could separate the Imam from his followers and also closely oversee his activities. He would also ensure that the Imam could not rise up against the Abbasids' injustices. Furthermore, the Imam was accessible to him in case he decided to eliminate him at any time.

Mutawakkil's decision to exile Imam Hadi to his Capital in Samarra was not an unprecedented conspiracy against a Shia Imam. His plot was consistent with the conspiracies of the previous Abbasid caliphs against the Shia Imams since their establishment. For example, Saffah, the first Abbasid Caliph, exiled Imam Sadiq to his Capital in Heerah, a city near Kufa, for about two years. His successor, Mansur, forcefully brought Imam Sadiq to his Capital in Baghdad on a few occasions and finally ordered his martyrdom. Later, Haroon imprisoned Imam Kazim in Baghdad and martyred him. Ma'mun also moved Imam Reza to his Capital in Merv and selected him as his Crown Prince. He then martyred

¹²⁴ 234 AH (Imam's age: 21)

Imam Reza after a short period of just about one-and-a-half years. After Ma'mun, his successor, Mu'tasim, also moved Imam Javad to his Capital in Baghdad, and after a short period of about 10 months, martyred the Imam. The long-standing hostilities and conspiracies of the Abbasid caliphs against the Shia Imams were due to the fact that the Shia Imams never endorsed the legitimacy of any of the Abbasid caliphs. The Shia Imams had social status and were respected by the Muslim community for their divine knowledge, spirituality, and being the Prophet's descendants. They were also the leaders of the Shia community, who regarded the Abbasids as an oppressive and illegitimate government.

To implement his plot, Mutawakkil sent an army of 300 soldiers to Medina to escort the Imam to Samarra. He also gave the army commander, Yahya ibn Harthamah, an invitation letter for the Imam. In this letter, Mutawakkil expressed his respect and honor for the Imam to deceive the public that he did not have bad intentions against the Imam. Mutawakkil informed the Imam about his decision to replace the governor of Medina due to his hostilities against the Imam. He also invited the Imam and his family to Samarra and expressed his willingness to meet him. The Imam did not want to leave Medina, but Mutawakkil had left him no choice. He had officially invited the Imam to Samarra and had sent his army for the Imam's journey. If the Imam were to resist his relocation to Samarra, Mutawakkil would regard it as a confirmation of all of the complaints against the Imam and would use this as an excuse to increase his harassment toward the Imam.

Unlike Imam Reza (AS), who had taken a series of unprecedented actions before leaving Medina towards Merv, there are no historical records of such actions by Imam Hadi before he left Medina. This was due to the fact that Ma'mun had portrayed himself to be a fair and just ruler, and Imam Reza had to make it clear for the people that Ma'mun's invitation to Merv was a conspiracy against him. However, Mutawakkil's hostilities against the Shias were well known. Thus, the people of Medina were worried about Mutawakkil's conspiracies against Imam Hadi.

The people of Medina were saddened when they found out about the intention of Mutawakkil's army to move the Imam from Medina to Samarra. An unprecedented grief and sorrow dominated the city. The people of Medina loved and respected the Imam. The Imam was always among the people and treated them well. He would never forget the city's needy and would aid them. He was constantly seen in the Mosque of the Prophet, worshipping God. The people's reaction caused Yahya ibn Harthamah to talk to them and calm them down. He assured them that Mutawakkil did not have bad intentions against the Imam.

Although Mutawakkil had sent an invitation letter to respectfully invite the Imam to Samarra, he was looking for any excuse to eliminate him and somehow justify this action to the public. Thus, his army commander, Yahya ibn Harthamah, searched the Imam's entire house in hopes of finding any evidence against him. However, he only found the Quran and some other books in his search. He found the Imam's lifestyle to be very simple, even though he was the leader of the Shia community and had many followers.

After three days, the Imam and his family left Medina towards Samarra, escorted by Mutawakkil's army. The Imam's divine character influenced many who interacted with him during this journey. Ironically, one of those who was greatly influenced by the Imam was Yahya ibn Harthamah, the army commander. After witnessing the Imam's greatness and miracles, Yahya became a Shia follower of the Imam. Before leaving Medina, the Imam asked tailors to prepare raincoats and thick clothing and covers for himself and his family. The Imam's action caused Yahya to question the Imam's qualification for the leadership of the Shias. He thought that the Imam did not know much about traveling through the hot deserts between Hijaz and Iraq, particularly during the summer. One day during the trip, the Imam wore the raincoat and prepared his horse for the downpour. The Imam's actions on such a hot summer day in the middle of the desert caused laughter among the army soldiers. They assumed that the Imam did not know anything about the climate. Shortly after, a strong storm hit the caravan where

rain and hail poured down on the caravan. The storm was so severe that it resulted in the death of 80 of the 300 soldiers. However, the Imam and his family were safe due to the Imam's forecast and preparation for the storm. After witnessing this incident, Yahya came to the Imam and accepted his Imamat.

After passing through the deserts of Hijaz and Iraq, the Imam's caravan arrived in the vicinity of Baghdad. The governor of Baghdad knew about his people's enthusiasm to welcome and meet the Imam. To avoid any contact between the Imam and the people, he ordered for the caravan's arrival in the city to be in the darkness of the night.

Although Mutawakkil was a clear enemy of the Imam, his governmental and military officials had special status and respect for the Imam. For example, the governor of Baghdad met Yahya ibn Harthamah and reminded him about Mutawakkil's animosity towards the Imam. He warned Yahya to avoid saying even a single word against the Imam to Mutawakkil, as he would certainly kill the Imam. He then continued by saying that if Mutawakkil killed the Imam, the Prophet would be your enemy in the hereafter. Yahya then swore by God that he did not observe anything from the Imam that could be used as an excuse for Mutawakkil, and all of the Imam's actions were righteous and correct. The caravan then continued its journey and arrived in Samarra. Before meeting Mutawakkil, Yahya met Wasif, one of the influential Turk leaders in the government. Similar to the governor of Baghdad, Wasif also warned Yahya of saying anything against the Imam to Mutawakkil. Wasif then threatened Yahya if he were to incite Mutawakkil against the Imam.

Although Mutawakkil had officially invited the Imam to Samarra, he wanted to humiliate and instill fear in the Imam before their first meeting. Thus, he ordered the Imam and his family to be sheltered in a place similar to where the needy and homeless were sheltered. Despite the exhaustion from the long journey, the Imam spent the night in such an inferior place and did not ask Mutawakkil for any favors. On the following day, the Imam moved to his house in Samarra.

Mutawakkil's primary motivation in moving the Imam to Samarra was to closely oversee the Imam's activities and interactions with his followers and representatives. Thus, the Imam's life was under intense surveillance by the government. Both Imam Hadi and his son, Imam Hasan Askari, were given the title of "Askari", which means "army". This title referred to the Imam's residence in the city of Samarra, which was originally built to accommodate Mu'tasim's Turkish army. The city was then developed and became a capital for the Abbasids. As a result, many moved to this city for living and business, and the city grew to multiple neighborhoods. The Imam's title of "Askari" also referred to the name of the city's neighborhood where the Imam lived, which was within the army base and governmental offices. Therefore, the Imam's activities were intensely monitored by the government, and his interactions with his representatives and the people were significantly limited.

10-4-3-Mutawakkil and the Imam

Mutawakkil was the most hostile caliph against the Imam and his Shias during the Imamat of Imam Hadi. Due to his animosity toward Imam Ali, Mutawakkil named two of his sons Talha and Zubayr, after two of the Prophet's companions who had later led the battle of Jamal against Imam Ali. Mutawakkil was not intimidated to express his feelings about Imam Ali. He would ridicule Imam Ali (AS) and curse Lady Fatimah (SA) in his private gatherings. This was an unprecedented action among the other Abbasid caliphs, as they would show pride for being the relatives of the Prophet and would portray to have respect for Imam Ali and Lady Fatimah. For instance, when Imam Ali's hidden grave was first revealed to the public during the time of Haroon, the Abbasid Caliph who imprisoned and martyred Imam Kazim, he ordered the construction of a building on the gravesite of Imam Ali. Mutawakkil also banned the Shias from visiting the holy shrines of Imam Ali and Imam Hossein, and ordered the destruction of Imam Hossein's holy shrine twice. He also imposed excessive economical pressure on the Shias and the Alavids. This pressure was to such an extent that the

female Alavids in Medina had to wear old and torn clothes. They even lacked an appropriate cover to put on for their prayers. Consequently, they passed along and shared the appropriate cover amongst one another, and took turns for the prayer. Mutawakkil ruled for about 15 years and had the longest duration of the caliphate among the other caliphs who ruled during the Imamat of Imam Hadi. Therefore, the Imam endured many calamities from Mutawakkil, and the Shias were under excessive pressure from him.

Once, a wound appeared on Mutawakkil's body. The physicians could not treat the wound, and it gradually became life-threatening. Mutawakkil's minister, Fath ibn Khaqan, suggested someone be sent to Imam Hadi for guidance. Mutawakkil accepted, and sent a messenger to the Imam. Although Mutawakkil was a clear enemy of the Imam, the Imam did not withhold his divine knowledge from him, which shows the Imam's greatness. The Imam then gave instructions that were effective in curing the wound. Mutawakkil's mother then sent a pocket of sealed gold coins to the Imam to show appreciation to him. Shortly after recovery from his illness, someone spoke ill of the Imam to Mutawakkil. He accused the Imam of receiving and storing a large amount of wealth and weapons from his followers in order to initiate an uprising. Although Mutawakkil had just observed the Imam's greatness in recovering from his serious illness, he immediately sent his special doorkeeper to inspect the Imam's house in the middle of the night. Mutawakkil's doorkeeper used a ladder and climbed on the roof of the Imam's house, but could not find a way to come down because of darkness of the night. Suddenly, the Imam called him by name and brought him a candle to help him get down. He observed the Imam in simple clothing and realized that the Imam was awake and worshipping God. He then inspected the Imam's entire house and found only a sword and a sealed pocket of gold coins, which he brought to Mutawakkil. Mutawakkil, who saw his mother's name on the seal of the pocket containing the gold coins, questioned his mother and discovered her gift to the Imam. He then asked his doorkeeper to return the Imam's belongings to him along with another pocket of gold coins from

himself. He also asked him to apologize to the Imam. When the doorkeeper came to the Imam and apologized, the Imam responded by simply reciting the following verse of Quran [26:227] “And, the unjust will soon know how terrible their end will be.”

Despite Mutawakkil’s hostilities against Imam Hadi and his Shia followers, Shi’ism was a well-established and a growing theology with many followers across the Islamic territory. This was to the extent that the Shias could attain critical governmental positions. One influential character was Ibn Sekkit, a scholar in Arabic literature. He became the chosen teacher for Mutawakkil’s sons, Mu’tazz and Mu’ayyad. This role was very critical, as this teacher would shape the thoughts of the next possible caliph, and could greatly influence his beliefs and ruling strategies. Once, Mutawakkil asked Ibn Sekkit if his two sons, Mu’tazz and Mu’ayyad, were better to him than Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein. Ibn Sekkit, who was known to be a silent person, broke his silence and responded fearlessly. He said, “even Qanbar, the slave of Imam Ali, is dearer to me than your two sons”. Upon hearing this response, Mutawakkil became furious and ordered Ibn Sekkit be brutally killed¹²⁵.

Mutawakkil was aware of the Imam’s social status and his influence on the hearts of the people, including his own personnel in the palace. He decided to humiliate the Imam in the presence of his personnel. He ordered his doorkeepers not to open the curtains of the palace when the Imam wanted to enter to meet him. When the Imam came to the palace, miraculously a wind blew and opened the curtain for him. Upon hearing the news of this incident, Mutawakkil ordered his doorkeepers to follow his previous order when the Imam wanted to exit the palace after their meeting. Incredibly, the same miracle happened, and a pleasant wind blew in the opposite direction to open the curtains for the Imam. When Mutawakkil heard about this incident, he worried about the spread of this news among the people, which could garner even more respect for the Imam. Thus, he ordered his doorkeepers to

¹²⁵ 244 AH (Imam’s age: 31)

always open the curtains for the Imam as before.

On various occasions, Mutawakkil and his affiliated scholars challenged the Imam's knowledge by asking him complex questions about Islamic teachings and history. Mutawakkil's intention was to degrade the Imam's reputation in the eyes of the Muslims as the one who holds divine knowledge. However, the Imam responded with complete and convincing answers every time.

When Mutawakkil lost hope in directly damaging the Imam's social status, he decided to pursue his bad intentions through the Imam's close family members. He invited the Imam's brother, Musa, to Samarra to tempt him with intoxication and sinful gatherings that Mutawakkil and the Abbasid royal family regularly held. When Musa arrived in Samarra, the Imam welcomed his brother¹²⁶. The Imam informed him of Mutawakkil's bad intentions and asked him to avoid him. However, Musa did not listen. The Imam then prayed to God to have Mutawakkil's plot be unsuccessful. As a result, every time Musa went to meet Mutawakkil, he was rejected, as Mutawakkil was either occupied or unavailable and thus their meeting never took place.

During Mutawakkil's reign, a woman claimed to be Lady Zainab, the daughter of Imam Ali and Lady Fatimah. Mutawakkil asked her how it was possible that after such a long time she was still alive. She responded that the Holy Prophet had prayed for her to become young every 40 years. Mutawakkil gathered the elders of Banu Hashim and talked to them about her claim. They informed Mutawakkil that Lady Zainab had passed away around two centuries ago, and even presented the time of her demise. However, Mutawakkil found their response inadequate to falsify her claim. The elders then asked Mutawakkil to inquire Imam Hadi regarding this issue, which he accepted. Imam Hadi came before Mutawakkil and was informed of the situation. The Imam responded that the bodies of the children of Lady Fatimah are forbidden for wild animals. The Imam then asked Mutawakkil to put

¹²⁶ 244 AH (Imam's age: 31)

her in front of wild animals to verify if she was in fact a child of Lady Fatimah. Upon hearing the Imam's reasoning, she started to argue about the Imam's intention to kill her rather than logically falsifying her claim. Mutawakkil then challenged the Imam to verify his words with his own action. The Imam accepted this challenge and expressed his willingness to go among the wild animals to prove his words. Mutawakkil was hoping that the wild animals would kill the Imam and peacefully remove the threat of the Imam from his government. Mutawakkil's agents brought a ladder, and the Imam went down to the lions' pit and sat among them. The lions came to the Imam quietly, and the Imam pet their heads. The Imam then pointed to a corner of the cage, and they all followed the Imam's order. Upon seeing this miracle, Mutawakkil's minister urged him to remove the Imam from the pit before the news of the Imam's miracle spread amongst the public. Mutawakkil asked the Imam to exit the pit. He then asked the woman to go inside the pit if she was sincere in her claim. She refused and confessed that she was pretending to be Lady Zainab due to her poverty.

On another occasion, some people reported to Mutawakkil that the Imam had received weapons and wealth from his followers, and had hid them inside his house. Mutawakkil sent his soldiers to inspect the Imam's house without notice. He wanted to find any excuse to give to the public to justify killing the Imam. His soldiers invaded and searched the Imam's entire house. They found the Imam wearing simple clothing and sitting on a simple mat while reciting verses from the Quran. The soldiers brought the Imam before Mutawakkil, who was intoxicated as usual. Mutawakkil offered wine to the Imam, which he strongly refused. The Imam told Mutawakkil that his body and blood have never been contaminated with wine. Mutawakkil then asked the Imam to instead recite an exciting poem for him. The Imam responded that he rarely recites poetry. However, Mutawakkil insisted the Imam recite poetry for him. The Imam then recited a strong poem affiliated with his forefather, Imam Ali. The Imam's poetry was about the status of the arrogant rulers in their tombs, when their bodies would be eaten by

worms, and their wealth and power would not help them. The Imam's poetry influenced the audience, including Mutawakkil, so much that he began crying and his face became wet. He then ordered to remove all of the wine and returned the Imam to his house respectfully.

Mutawakkil harassed the Imam in various ways. He would summon the Imam to his presence at any time of the day or night. He would also send his agents to search the Imam's entire house at any time, including the middle of the night. Nothing could stop Mutawakkil from persecuting and harassing the Imam. On one occasion, he even imprisoned the Imam. To further intimidate the Imam during his imprisonment, a grave was also dug in the Imam's cell. However, through the Imam's resistance, Mutawakkil eventually freed him. This incident was not the only time that the Imam was imprisoned by Mutawakkil. Historical records show that the Imam was imprisoned on at least one other occasion by Mutawakkil.

Mutawakkil's harassment against Imam Hadi continued until his very last day in power. Mutawakkil decided to insult and humiliate the Imam during the observation of Eid al-Fitr, which is an auspicious day for the Muslims¹²⁷. Mutawakkil asked his minister to have the Imam walk on foot in front of him while he could ride on a horse and watch the Imam. His minister warned him that this action could disgrace Mutawakkil, as the people would regard it as a clear act of insult and harassment against the Imam. However, Mutawakkil insisted on his desire to insult the Imam. His minister instead suggested ordering all of the elders and government officials to accompany the Imam, so as to deceive the public that his action was not specifically targeting the Imam. Mutawakkil accepted his suggestion and organized a parade in which the Imam, and all of the elders and government officials, marched in front of him and his minister, Fath ibn Khaqan, on foot. The Imam was forced to walk a long distance on that hot summer day. As a result, the Imam was exhausted. When the Imam returned, his head and face were

¹²⁷ 1 Shawwal, 247 AH (Imam's age: 34)

completely soaked in his sweat. At this time, someone met with the Imam and told him that Mutawakkil's actions were specifically to harass the Imam. The Imam responded that he was more honored than the camel of Prophet Salih in the eyes of God. The Imam then recited the following verse from the Quran regarding the story of Prophet Salih [11:65]: "But they killed her (the camel). So, he (Salih) said: Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days. This is a promise that will not be belied." Similar to Prophet Salih, who promised God's wrath for his people upon killing his miraculous camel, the Imam also made a prophecy that Mutawakkil will be killed in three days. The Imam also prayed to God to curse Mutawakkil by reciting a supplication that became known as "the Prayer of the Oppressed Upon the Oppressor". As the Imam had predicted, Mutawakkil was murdered in three days.

10-4-4-Demolition of Karbala

Due to his animosity against the Shias, Mutawakkil could not tolerate them gathering around the holy shrine of Imam Hossein. Imam Hossein has been a symbol of liberty and resistance against oppression throughout history. His holy shrine was a base for the Shias to be reminded about the tragedy of Karbala to gain strength and motivation to stand against oppression. Thus, Mutawakkil destroyed the shrine of Imam Hossein twice during his government. On the first occasion, he sent his army to ruin and plow the holy shrine and the surrounding structures, disperse the pilgrims, and ban any pilgrimage¹²⁸. However, he could not stop the people from visiting the holy shrine of Imam Hossein. The people told Mutawakkil's army that even if they kill them all, they would still not be able to stop the rest of the Shias from gathering at Imam Hossein's shrine. When Mutawakkil was informed about the people's message, he ordered his army to leave Karbala. After this incident, the people continued to visit Karbala. This was to an extent that, on special religious occasions, a large market was set up to fulfill the needs of the pilgrims. Consequently, Mutawakkil ordered the

¹²⁸ 237 AH (Imam's age: 24)

destruction of the holy tomb of Imam Hossein for the second time¹²⁹. This time, Mutawakkil gave orders to plow and flood the holy tomb to remove any sign of it. This latter incident occurred after around 10 years from the first incident and coincided with the last year of Mutawakkil's caliphate.

Like his forefathers, the Imam would highly recommend his followers to visit the holy shrine of Imam Hossein and not allow the memory of Imam Hossein to be forgotten. On one occasion, the Imam became sick and asked his companion to pay one of his Shias on the Imam's behalf to travel to Karbala and pray for his recovery. The Imam's companion asked him why he did not pray for himself, as he was an infallible Imam like Imam Hossein, and his prayer would certainly be fulfilled by God. He continued by emphasizing that Imam Hadi was the best living creation of God and had a higher status than the structure of a shrine. The Imam responded that the Holy Prophet had a higher status than Ka'ba and Hajar al-Aswad, however, he would rotate around the Ka'ba and would pay respect to Hajar al-Aswad. The Imam then told his companion that God has designated some holy sites where he likes to be worshiped. The Imam then continued by saying that he favored prayer for his recovery at those holy sites, and the shrine of Imam Hossein was indeed among those sites.

10-4-5-Network of Representatives

To meet the needs of the growing Shia community, Imam Sadiq had established a network organization of his trusted companions as his representatives in various cities across the Islamic territory. This organization was further developed during the Imamat of the next Imams, and became an effective way of communication between the Shias and their Imam. Imam Hadi took leadership of this organization, effectively during his Imamat. Due to the expansion of Shi'ism at this time, Imam Hadi divided the territory where this hidden organization was active into four geographical regions. The first region covered

¹²⁹ 247 AH (Imam's age: 34)

Baghdad, Madain, and Kufa, in Iraq. The second region covered Basrah and Ahvaz. The third region spanned Hamedan and Qom, in Iran. The fourth region covered Hijaz, Yemen, and Egypt. The Imam had appointed one representative for each of these regions. Each of them would further manage the local representatives of that region. These representatives were responsible for answering questions about Islamic laws and principles, transferring the letters between the Imam and his Shias, and resolving any division between the Shias to keep the Shia community united. They were also collecting the Islamic dues (Zakat) and transferring it to the Imam, or spending it on cases prescribed by the Imam. The names of 14 of the Imam's representatives are recorded in history. The Imam's leadership led to the expansion of the Shia community and prepared them for the occultation, during which they would not have direct access to their Imam.

During the time when the Imam's life at the Abbasid Capital was under intense surveillance by the government, the Imam could not always be the center for managing this hidden organization. Historical records suggest that the Imam had appointed his loyal companion, Uthman ibn Saeed al-Amri, to secretly manage the affairs of this organization from Samarra during the last 10 years of the Imam's life. Many of the communications between the Imam and his followers were through letters. Dozens of these letters are recorded in history and remain until today.

Mutawakkil had particularly focused on revealing the members of this hidden organization to prosecute them. He arrested Muhammad ibn Faraj, one of the Imam's representatives in Egypt, and imprisoned him for eight years. Ali ibn Ja'far was another representative of the Imam, who was imprisoned for years. When his imprisonment lengthened, he contacted the Imam and asked for the Imam's prayers for his release. The Imam responded that he will pray for him. Upon the Imam's prayer, Mutawakkil became sick the following day. After three days, Mutawakkil's illness worsened, and he feared for his life. He then ordered the release of the prisoners, including Ali ibn Ja'far. After his

release, Ali ibn Ja'far relocated to Mecca by the Imam's orders to save him from further prosecution. Ayub ibn Nooh was another representative of the Imam. He sent a letter to the Imam and complained to him about the injustice he received from Kufa's judge. The Imam replied by informing him of relief in two months. After two months, the judge was replaced, and the Imam's prediction for good news became a reality.

10-4-6-Mutawakkil's Assassination¹³⁰

Mutawakkil followed Haroon's tradition of appointing his successors after himself. He appointed three of his sons as his successors and gave each one a portion of the Abbasid territory. He appointed his oldest son, Muntasir, as his primary successor. He then appointed his two other sons, Mu'tazz and Mu'ayyad, as Muntasir's successors. However, he later decided to replace Muntasir with Mu'tazz, as a sign of love for Mu'tazz's mother. Muntasir did not accept giving up his position. As a result, his relationship with his father deteriorated.

Unlike his father, Muntasir, who may have been influenced by the royal teacher, Ibn Sekkit, had positive opinions about the Ahlul-Bayt. He had heard his father cursing Lady Fatimah in his presence and became upset with him. Once, Muntasir came to his father, Mutawakkil, while he was intoxicated and enjoying a performance where someone was acting and ridiculing Imam Ali. Muntasir objected to his father holding an insulting performance about Imam Ali, and reminded him that they all belonged to the Prophet's clan of Banu Hashim. Mutawakkil responded harshly to his son and insulted him using shameful words. This insult triggered Muntasir to act against his father. He conspired with a group of Turk leaders to kill his father. The Turks were motivated for this plan, as they feared losing their influence in the government due to Mutawakkil's prior decisions to reduce their power. Subsequently, one night Muntasir came to his father with a group of armed Turks. They killed Mutawakkil and his minister, Fath ibn Khaqan. This incident shows the significant

¹³⁰ 4 Shawwal, 247 AH (Imam's age: 34)

amount of power that the Turks had in the Abbasid government, to the extent that they could kill and replace the Caliph. As a result, the next Abbasid caliphs were practically powerless compared to the Turks.

10-5-During the Government of Muntasir

10-5-1-Muntasir in Power

After Mutawakkil's assassination, his oldest son, Muntasir, who was also his primary successor, assumed power. He had plotted the murder of his father with the aid of the Turks. Therefore, he could not rule as an independent caliph, and had to accept their significant power in his government. Soon after becoming the Caliph, the Turks forced Muntasir to remove his brothers, Mu'tazz and Mu'ayyad, from his successorship. The Turks were afraid that Muntasir's brothers might assume power in the future and take revenge for the blood of their father, Mutawakkil. Muntasir followed their instructions and removed his brothers from his successorship.

As time passed, Muntasir became worried about the Turk's power and capacity to make decisions in his government. He called them "the Caliph Killer" to express his frustration with them. The Turks soon realized his threat to their power and decided to assassinate him. They bribed Muntasir's physician to implement their plot. Once, Muntasir became sick and his physician prescribed wet cupping. The physician then used poisonous tool which led to Muntasir's death¹³¹. He died after a short government of just six months.

10-5-2-Muntasir and the Imam

There is no historical evidence of any relationship between Muntasir and the Imam during his brief government of six months. However, it can be inferred that Muntasir's Caliphate was one of the calmest periods during Imam Hadi's Imamat. Muntasir, unlike his father, adopted a good relationship with the Alavids and the Shias. He replaced the

¹³¹ 5 Rabi' al-Thani, 248 AH (Imam's age: 35)

governor of Medina, who was very hostile with the Alavids, and advised his new governor to treat the Alavids well. He also removed the ban on the pilgrims to visit the holy shrines of Imam Hossein and other Shia Imams, and ordered the reconstruction of Imam Hossein's shrine.

10-6-During the Government of Musta'in

10-6-1-Musta'in in Power

After Muntasir, the Turk leaders held a consul to choose the next caliph. They did not want the Caliphate to reach Muntasir's brother, Mu'tazz, who had been appointed as Muntasir's successor by their father, Mutawakkil. The Turks had forced Muntasir to remove Mu'tazz from his successorship, as they feared his potential revenge for Mutawakkil's assassination. However, the Turks still wanted to keep the Abbasid Caliphate in Mu'tasim's lineage, as he was the one who had given them power in the Abbasid government. Thus, they chose Musta'in, one of Mu'tasim's grandsons and Muntasir's cousin, for the Caliphate¹³².

At this time, Musta'in was just a caliph by title, and the real power lay in the hands of the Turk leaders. At the beginning of Musta'in's Caliphate, the people in Samarra rebelled against his selection as the Caliph by the Turks. They protested the ever-increasing influence of the Turks in power. However, their rebellion was quickly suppressed by the Turks.

Despite their significant power, the Turk leaders were not always united. During Musta'in's government, one of the Turk leaders was killed as a result of a power struggle amongst themselves. To save himself from the conspiracy of the Turks, Musta'in secretly moved to Baghdad with some of the Turk leaders who were supporting him¹³³. However, Musta'in's action of moving his government to Baghdad caused an outrageous reaction by the Turks in Samarra, and they united against

¹³² Rabi' al-Thani, 248 AH (Imam's age: 35)

¹³³ 25 Muharram, 251 AH (Imam's age: 38)

him. They decided to choose Mu'tazz, one of Mutawakkil's sons, for the Caliphate. Mu'tazz was originally Muntasir's successor. The Turks released Mu'tazz from prison and paid allegiance to him as the new Caliph. They then sent their troops towards Baghdad for war against Musta'in's troops and supporters. Over a period of around 10 months, there were multiple battles between the two sides, which finally ended in Mu'tazz's victory. Musta'in resigned¹³⁴ from the Caliphate and was exiled to Wasit, a city in the area between Kufa and Basrah, in Iraq. However, after several months, Mu'tazz sent his agent to kill Musta'in in exile¹³⁵.

10-7-During the Government of Mu'tazz

10-7-1-Mu'tazz in Power

Mu'tazz became a Caliph at the young age of just 19, and was the youngest Abbasid Caliph by then. He, like his predecessors, had gained power by the aid and decision of the Turks, and thus had to blindly follow their orders in the government. The Turks had ordered his brother, Muntasir, to remove Mu'tazz from his successorship, as they feared his potential revenge from the Turks for their role in his father, Mutawakkil's, assassination. However, later, when the Turks disagreed with Musta'in, they freed Mu'tazz from prison and selected him as the new Caliph. Mu'tazz had a caliphate of about three-and-a-half years and was finally tortured, killed, and replaced by the Turks. During his government, he feared for his power and struggled to stabilize it. He killed his brother and successor, Mu'ayyad, as he feared his conspiracy against his power.

10-7-2-Demise of Syed Muhammad¹³⁶

Muhammad was the oldest son of Imam Hadi. He was very pious and had a great character. Many of the Shias thought that he would be the

¹³⁴ 11 Zu al-Hijjah, 251 AH (Imam's age: 38)

¹³⁵ 3 Shawwal, 252 AH (Imam's age: 39)

¹³⁶ 29 Jumada al-Thani, 252 AH (Imam's age: 39)

next Imam after Imam Hadi, as in the past the Imamat was commonly inherited by the oldest son. However, around two years before the martyrdom of Imam Hadi, his son Muhammad passed away while he was travelling. He became sick and passed away close to the city of Balad, between Samarra and Baghdad. His demise brought great sorrow and grief to his father and his younger brother, Imam Askari. Thus, at Imam Hadi's time of martyrdom, Imam Askari was his oldest living son.

10-7-3-Martyrdom

Upon gaining power, Mu'tazz followed his father, Mutawakkil's policy, in dealing with the Alavids. He treated the Alavids harshly. He could not tolerate Imam Hadi's holy character, and feared his social popularity as a threat to his government. Thus, after only two years into his Caliphate, he ordered the poisoning and martyrdom of Imam Hadi.

Imam Hadi's soul ascended on the 3rd of Rajab, in the year 254 Hijri, in Samarra, at the age of 41. He was martyred after living in Samarra for about 20 years. Imam Hadi's oldest living son, Imam Askari, took care of his father's funeral rites, including washing and praying over his body.

When the news of the Imam's martyrdom spread in the city, crowds of people came to the Imam's house to express their sorrow to his family and participate in his burial. The top government and military officials, including members of the Abbasid royal family, were also among those who came to the Imam's house and expressed their sorrow to Imam Hadi's son, Imam Askari. The people then took the Imam's body to the streets of Samarra, and a large funeral procession was held for the Imam. Historical records show Imam Askari's exhaustion during the funeral due to the pressure of the crowds and high temperature of that day. Although Imam Askari had already prayed on his father's body, an official prayer was led by the Caliph's brother. The Imam's body was returned to his house for burial, and was buried within the site where he used to pray.

10-8-Conclusion

The Imamat of Imam Hadi coincides with the caliphate of six Abbasid caliphs due to instability caused by the increasing power of the Turks. His Imamat began upon the martyrdom of his father, Imam Javad, during Mu'tasim's government. Imam Hadi became an Imam at the very young age of almost eight years old. However, his Imamat was not questioned or challenged by the Shias due to his age, as they had already validated the Imamat of Imam Javad at the very young age of seven-and-a-half years old. After Imam Javad's martyrdom, Mu'tasim decided to appoint a hostile teacher for the young Imam in hopes of reshaping his beliefs. However, the teacher was influenced by the Imam's divine knowledge and character, and eventually became the Imam's Shia follower. The Imamat of Imam Hadi continued into the Caliphate of Wathiq, who followed Ma'mun's policy of portraying a good relationship with the Alavids and the Imam.

However, when Mutawakkil assumed power, he used his entire authority to confront and harass the Imam. Mutawakkil's 15-year long Caliphate was the hardest period during Imam Hadi's Imamat, as Mutawakkil had the most hatred toward the Shias and the Ahlul Bayt. Mutawakkil was a clear enemy of the Shias, and would not hesitate to even ridicule or curse Imam Ali and Lady Fatimah in his private gatherings. He relocated Imam Hadi to his Capital in Samarra to isolate and oversee the Imam's activities. Mutawakkil harassed the Imam in various ways. He would summon the Imam to his presence at various times of the day or night. He would send his agents to search the Imam's entire house at any time, including the middle of the night. He imprisoned the Imam on at least two occasions. Mutawakkil's harassment against Imam Hadi continued until his very last day in power.

After Mutawakkil's murder, his oldest son, Muntasir, assumed power. Muntasir opposed his father's policy against the Alavids and the Shias. His short government was one of the calmest periods during the Imamat of Imam Hadi. The last period of Imam Hadi's Imamat began

with the murder of Mutawakkil and coincided with the time when the Turks had sole power in the Abbasid government. The Turks eliminated Muntasir and replaced him with Musta'in after a short government of just six months. They later replaced Musta'in with Mu'tazz after about three years. Mu'tazz, who could not tolerate Imam Hadi's holy character and feared his social popularity, poisoned and martyred the Imam. There are no historical records of any relationship between the Imam and the Abbasid Caliphs Muntasir, Musta'in, and Mu'tazz, which could be attributed to the living conditions of the Imam in Samarra.

The long Imamat of Imam Hadi of around 33 years is a transition to the time when the Shias would not have direct access to their Imam. Imam Hadi lived around 13 years of his Imamat in Medina, where he relatively had more freedom to guide his followers and benefit them with his knowledge. However, when the Imam was forcefully relocated to Samarra, his interaction with his followers and companions was significantly limited. This was because the Imam's life and interactions were under intense surveillance by the government at the Abbasid Capital. The hardest time for the Imam in Samarra was during the government of Mutawakkil.

The Imam, during his Imamat, manifested the true meaning of his title, Hadi, which means "the one who guides". The Imam used every opportunity of his time to guide the Muslims, especially his Shia followers, to the true Islamic teachings. After more than two centuries from the demise of the Prophet, the Shias had deeper and more challenging questions about their beliefs. The Imam responded in person, or in writing, to many questions regarding the Islamic teachings and law. The Imam also trained many scholars who had a great role in propagating Shia theology. The Imam expanded the network organization of his representatives across the Islamic territory as an effective method of communication between the Shias and their Imam. The Imam's effort brought this organization to a unique state where it could continue its activity independently without the Imam's direct

involvement. The Imam highlighted the role of the scholars among the Shias as his representatives. The Imam's intention was to prepare the Shias for the upcoming time of occultation, during which they would not have direct access to their Imam, and would need to refer to the scholars for guidance in their Islamic affairs.

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IMAM HADI (AS):

The people are with their wealth in this world
and with their deeds in the hereafter.

11- IMAM ASKARI (AS): THE IMAM IN CONFINEMENT

This chapter reviews the life of Imam Hasan Askari (AS) and provides an overview of the oppression and the hardship that he endured during his Imamat. This chapter also highlights the Imam's efforts to prepare the Shias for the occultation of his son, Imam Mahdi (AS).

11-1-Before the Government of Mu'tazz

11-1-1-Birth

Imam Hasan ibn Ali (AS), also known as Askari, was born on the 8th of Rabi' al-Thani, in the year 232 Hijri, in Medina. Similar to the second Shia Imam, Imam Hasan Mujtaba (AS), Imam Askari was also given the title of "Aba Muhammad". He was also known by the title of "Ibn al-Reza" or "the son of Reza", as he was from the lineage of Imam Reza (AS). Imam Reza had become very well-known among the Muslims after becoming Mamun's Crown Prince, and thus the next Shia Imams from his lineage were known as "Ibn al-Reza". Imam Askari's mother was a slave before she married Imam Hadi. She is referred to by various names, including Hudaith, Saleel, and Saosan. It was the Ahlul-Bayt's family tradition to attribute multiple honorable names to their slave wives to remove bad memories from their period of captivity. Imam Askari's mother was so pious that Imam Hadi had described her as "the one who was far from any impurity and evil."

11-1-2-Migration to Samarra¹³⁷

Imam Askari was about two years old when Mutawakkil forcefully relocated Imam Hadi and his family to Samarra. Imam Askari left Medina forever, and never had an opportunity to return to Medina or Mecca. As a result, Imam Askari is the only Shia Imam who did not perform the Hajj.

Similar to his father, Imam Hadi, Imam Askari was given the title of "Askari", which means 'the army'. This title referred to the Imam's residence in the city of Samarra, which was originally built to accommodate Mu'tasim's Turkish army. "Askari" also referred to the name of the city's neighborhood where the Imam was living, which was within the army bases and government offices. Therefore, the Imam's activities during his Imamat were intensely monitored by the government, and his interactions with his representatives and the

¹³⁷ 234 AH (Imam's age: 2)

people were significantly limited.

11-1-3-Before Imamat

There are limited historical records about the life of Imam Askari before his Imamat. The available records suggest that many had never seen the Imam before his Imamat. This was to such an extent that some saw Imam Askari's face for the first time during the memorial program for the demise of his brother, Syed Muhammad, when the Imam was 20 years old. The Imam had limited public interactions due to the pressure imposed on him by the government. This may also be attributed to an intentional plan by Imam Hadi and Imam Askari to train and prepare the Shias for the minor occultation of Imam Mahdi, during which the Shias would not have direct access to their Imam and would have to communicate with him through letters.

11-2-During the Government of Mu'tazz

11-2-1-Mu'tazz in Power

Since Mutawakkil's assassination, the Turks held most of the power, and nothing could stop them from replacing or even killing an Abbasid Caliph. When Musta'in assumed power, he was only a caliph by title and the real power was held by the Turk leaders. Despite their significant power, the Turk leaders were not always united with each other. During Musta'in's government, one of the Turk leaders was killed as a result of a power struggle among the Turk leaders. To save himself from the Turks' conspiracy, Musta'in secretly moved his government from Samarra to Baghdad. His action caused an outrageous reaction by the Turks in Samarra, and they united against him. They decided to choose Mu'tazz, one of Mutawakkil's sons, for the Caliphate. The Turks released Mu'tazz from Musta'in's prison and paid allegiance to him as the new Caliph. They then sent their troops towards Baghdad for war with Musta'in's troops and supporters. Over a period of around 10 months, they had multiple battles that finally ended with Mu'tazz's victory and Musta'in's resignation from the Caliphate. He was later

killed at Mu'tazz's order¹³⁸.

11-2-2-Demise of Syed Muhammad¹³⁹

Muhammad was the oldest son of Imam Hadi. He was very pious and had a great character. Many of the Shias thought that he would be the Imam after Imam Hadi, because the eldest son often inherited the Imamat. However, about two years before Imam Hadi's martyrdom, his son, Muhammad, passed away while he was travelling. He fell sick and passed away close to the city of Balad, between Samarra and Baghdad. His demise brought great sorrow and grief to his father and his younger brother, Imam Askari.

Imam Hadi would often correct his companions' assumptions about his eldest son, Muhammad, being the next Imam. During his Imamat, he had revealed Imam Askari to his close companions as his successor. After Muhammad's demise, which took place about two years before Imam Hadi's martyrdom, the Imam had become more deliberate in introducing Imam Askari, his eldest son alive, as the next Imam. For example, in the memorial program that Imam Hadi held in his house for his son, Muhammad, many attended, including his companions and the elders of Banu Hashim. Imam Hadi openly addressed Imam Askari and told him to be thankful to God for His decree upon him. Imam Hadi had implied God's decree of Imam Askari's Imamat after himself. This became more evident for the Shias after Muhammad's demise.

11-2-3-Martyrdom of Imam Hadi¹⁴⁰

Upon gaining power, Mu'tazz followed his father, Mutawakkil's policy in dealing with the Alavids. He treated the Alavids harshly. He could not tolerate Imam Hadi's noble character, and feared the Imam's social popularity as a threat to his government. Two years into his caliphate, Mu'tazz ordered the poisoning and martyrdom of Imam Hadi. Imam

¹³⁸ 3 Shawwal, 252 AH (Imam's age: 20)

¹³⁹ 29 Jumada al-Thani, 252 AH (Imam's age: 20)

¹⁴⁰ 3 Rajab, 254 AH (Imam's age: 22)

Hadi was martyred in Samarra after he had lived there with his family for around 20 years. Imam Askari took care of his father's funeral rites, including washing and praying over his body.

When the news of Imam Hadi's martyrdom spread in the city, crowds of people came to the Imam's house to express their sorrow to his family and to participate in his burial. Top government and military officials, including members of the Abbasid royal family, were also among those who came to the Imam's house and expressed their sorrow to Imam Hadi's eldest son, Imam Askari. The people then took the Imam's corpse to the streets of Samarra, and a large funeral procession was held for the Imam. Historical records show that Imam Askari had suffered excessive exhaustion during the funeral due to the heavy crowds and high temperature of that day. The Imam's body was returned to his house, and it was buried within the spot where he used to pray.

11-2-4-Beginning of Imamat

At the age of 22, Imam Askari took on leadership of the Shia community after his father, Imam Hadi's martyrdom. On various occasions, Imam Hadi had introduced Imam Askari to his companions as his successor in the Imamat. He had informed some that the Imamat would be inherited by his oldest son. After the demise of his oldest son, Muhammad, Imam Hadi had openly announced Imam Askari's Imamat, since he was now his eldest living son. About four months prior to Imam Hadi's martyrdom, he had announced Imam Askari's Imamat to a group of his visiting Shias and asked them to testify to his statement. After Imam Hadi's martyrdom, the Shia scholars and followers readily accepted the Imamat of Imam Askari.

At that time, Shi'ism was a well-established and growing theology with a strong scientific backbone. Ever since their establishment, the Abbasid caliphs used whatever means possible to oppose and eradicate Shi'ism. Mansur and Haroon's extremely oppressive policy against Imam Sadiq and Imam Kazim, Ma'mun's conspiracies falsely portraying a good relationship with Imam Reza and Imam Javad, and Mutawakkil's

intense surveillance and constant harassments of Imam Hadi could not prevent the growth and propagation of Shia theology among the Muslims. The Shia Imams falsified the conspiracies against themselves, guided the Shias to the true Islamic teachings, and advised them on the political affairs. Due to their efforts, about two-and-a-half centuries after the Holy Prophet's demise, Shi'ism had become a strong and growing theology among the Islamic sects and had many followers across the Islamic territory. The influence of the Shias and their leader, Imam Askari, were undeniable and could not have been ignored by any of the Abbasid Caliphs.

There was another important reason for the Abbasids to increase their pressures and surveillance on Imam Askari. The Abbasids, like the Shia Imams, were from the Prophet's clan of Banu Hashim. They had received the news of the Prophet's prophecy about the last Shia Imam, Imam Mahdi, who would establish justice on earth. They feared Imam Mahdi would endanger their government and were actively looking to seek and eliminate him.

Imam Askari's circumstances were an opportunity for him to train the Shias for his son, Imam Mahdi's minor occultation, during which the Shias would not have direct access to their Imam and would have to communicate with him through writing. This is the reason why the majority of Imam Askari's communications with his Shia followers and representatives were through exchanging letters. Thus, Imam Askari became the first Shia Imam who primarily communicated with the Shias by letters, rather than in person. The Imam would respond to their questions in writing and guide them on their religious and political affairs. The Shias found the Imam's answers in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet and the previous Imams. However, it was still difficult for some to connect with the Imam when they could not physically access him. Imam Askari had described his situation by saying that the Shias were not in doubt about the Imamat of any of his forefathers as much as they were in doubt of his Imamat. To remove these doubts and prove his Imamat, the Imam would often inform his

Shias about future events in his letters to them. Many of the Imam's prophecies are recorded in history. The Imam's policy was effective in strengthening the hearts of the Shias and uniting them toward his leadership.

11-2-5-Mu'tazz and the Imam

Historical records suggest that the Imam was under relatively less pressure at the beginning of his Imamat. Mu'tazz, who had just martyred Imam Hadi, did not perceive Imam Askari as an imminent threat to his government. During this time, the Imam had the chance to meet some of the Shia representatives and elders in his residence. Some Shias also had the chance to have a short conversation with the Imam outside of his residence when the Imam was commuting,

However, soon after, Mu'tazz became suspicious of and hostile towards the Imam and changed his policy towards him. During the short caliphate of Mu'tazz, which lasted only for a year after Imam Askari's Imamat had begun, Mu'tazz imprisoned the Imam. While the Imam was imprisoned, some of the Abbasids came to one of the Turk leaders who had the Imam in his custody and asked him to make the Imam's imprisonment harder on him. The Turk leader responded that he did not know what else he could do to make prison harder on the Imam. He said that he had appointed two of his most cruel and heartless guards to oversee the Imam, but they had both been influenced by him and were now dedicated believers who had reached elevated statuses through their worship. The Turk leader requested the guards and asked them about their observations of the Imam. They admitted that in prison, the Imam did nothing except for worshipping God. They said, "We observed someone that was constantly fasting during the days and praying through the nights. Whenever we looked at the Imam, our bodies shook, and we felt a strange feeling." The Abbasids had not expected such a response from the Imam's guards, and returned disappointed with their plot.

During his short government, Mu'tazz decided to martyr Imam Askari. He told his doorkeeper to take the Imam towards Kufa and kill him in

secrecy. The plot was exposed, and the Imam's Shias found out about it. A companion of the Imam contacted him to inform him about Mu'tazz's plot. The Imam responded to his concern by writing, "You will be relieved from your concern in three days." Three days after the Imam's response, the Turks ousted Mu'tazz from the Caliphate. Shortly after, Mu'tazz was killed, and the Imam's prophecy had come true. Thus, Mu'tazz never got the chance to implement his plot against the Imam.

11-2-6-Imam's Scientific Contribution

The Imam was the true source of divine knowledge in society. Many people referred to him with their questions about various aspects of Islamic sciences. 149 names of those who narrated the Imam's sayings are recorded in history. Due to the intense surveillance and pressure on the Imam, he could not always meet with his representatives and followers in person. Thus, Imam Askari became the first Shia Imam who primarily communicated with the Shias through letters. Whenever the Shias had a disagreement about any of their Islamic beliefs, they would send a letter to the Imam and ask for his guidance. Tens of letters from the Imam are recorded in history and are still available. These letters contain the Imam's guidance on the false theological beliefs of the time and his answers to doubts about the Islamic principles, such as monotheism (tawhid) and Islamic laws such as Hajj, fasting, and marriage, etc. There are also multiple general letters from the Imam to his Shia followers. In one of these letters, the Imam advised his Shias to maintain piety, and gave them a list of ethical recommendations for their life and interactions with other people in society. In this letter, the Imam asked his Shia followers to be good members of society and to treat others respectfully. Historical records show that the Imam was in continuous communication with his followers and representatives until his martyrdom.

The Imam would respect and pay high regards to the Shia scholars for guiding people to the true teachings of the Prophet and the Imams, for defending the Shia beliefs, and for their direct role in spreading Shi'ism.

The Imam wanted to prepare the Shias for the upcoming time during which they would have to refer to Shia scholars for their Islamic affairs. Abd al-Azim al-Hasani was a Shia scholar and a descendant of Imam Hasan (AS). Imam Hadi had referred his Shia followers living close to Abd al-Azim al-Hasani to ask him their questions. Once, a group of Shias from Rey, in Iran, visited Imam Askari in Samarra and told him that they were returning from visiting Imam Hossein (AS)'s shrine in Karbala. To their surprise, the Imam told them, "If you had visited the tomb of Abd al-Azim al-Hasani in Rey, it would be like visiting the tomb of Imam Hossein in Karbala." The Imam wanted to remind them of Abd al-Azim al-Hasani's high status, his righteousness, and his service to the Imams and the Shia community.

Fazl ibn Shazan was another great Shia scholar during the time of Imam Askari. He was an expert in various Islamic literature, such as Islamic laws and Ilm al-Kalam, which is the study of Islamic doctrine that involves defending the Islamic principles against skeptics. He authored dozens of books on various topics, such as defending Shia belief and falsifying the claims of various sects and theologies. Historical records show Fazl ibn Shazan's high status before Imam Askari. The Imam had once remembered him by saying, "The people of Khorasan are blessed and fortunate for having such a scholar amongst them." Once, one of the Shias visited the Imam and showed him one of Fazl ibn Shazan's books about the daily rituals and asked for the Imam's opinion. The Imam reviewed the book and verified its contents. The Imam then recommended that he and the other Shias follow the contents of the book. The Imam also talked highly of Fazl ibn Shazan, and prayed for God's mercy on him, because he knew that he had already passed away by that time. When the Imam's Shia follower returned to Khorasan, he realized that Fazl ibn Shazan had died around the time when he had met the Imam. He then recognized the Imam's words as a sign of the Imam's knowledge of the unseen.

The Imam was the true source of guidance for the Muslims and was concerned about deviations in their belief. Is-haaq Kendi, a famous

Iraqi philosopher, was writing a book about what he had perceived as contradictions in the Quran. He was so committed that he spent most of his time in his house to finish his book. He was using the literal meaning of the Quranic verses and would misinterpret them to falsely prove contradictions between the verses. On one occasion, the Imam saw one of Kendi's students and expressed his concern regarding Kendi's actions. The student responded with his own inability and lack of knowledge to confront his teacher. The Imam asked him if he was willing to follow his advice to guide Kendi and he accepted. The Imam then instructed the student to become close to Kendi, and at an appropriate time ask him if it is possible that the Quran's author might have meant to convey a different meaning than his interpretation. The student followed the Imam's instruction. When Kendi heard his student's suggestion, he was shocked, and found it rationally correct. He then confessed that there could be other meanings for the Quranic verses from what he had interpreted. He asked his student about who he had learned this perspective from. His student hesitated to answer, but due to Kendi's insistence, he confessed that Imam Askari had been guiding him. Kendi then confessed to the Imam's elevated status and ordered that his incomplete book be burned.

11-2-7-Mu'tazz's Death¹⁴¹

Mu'tazz, like his predecessors, was not able to reduce the Turks' influence upon his government. Once, a group of Turks came to him and asked for their allowance. Mu'tazz did not have enough money at the moment to pay them, so he asked his mother for money. Although his mother was wealthy, she refused to pay him anything. The Turks were disappointed by Mu'tazz and decided to kill him. They dragged him by his feet, beat him, and kept him barefoot under the sweltering sun. Due to the high temperature that day, Mu'tazz could not keep both of his feet on the ground and switched between them for relief. The Turks did not give him food or water for three days, isolated him, and

¹⁴¹ 2 Sha'ban, 255 AH (Imam's age: 23)

left him to die. Mu'tazz died after his short caliphate of about three-and-a-half years.

11-3-During the Government of Muhtadi

11-3-1-Muhtadi in Power¹⁴²

Before killing Mu'tazz, the Turks had selected Muhtadi, one of Wathiq's sons and Mu'tazz's cousin, as the next Caliph. Muhtadi had been imprisoned by Mu'tazz in Baghdad, as Mu'tazz had feared for his government. When the Turks decided to remove Mu'tazz from the Caliphate, they freed Muhtadi and quickly transported him from Baghdad to Samarra. The Turks brought Mu'tazz, who was injured from his imprisonment, in the presence of Muhtadi. He abdicated the Caliphate and paid allegiance to Muhtadi as the new caliph.

Upon assuming the Caliphate, Muhtadi became concerned about the limited power of the caliph, which he had seen among his predecessors. To stabilize his power and build his social status among the Muslims, he decided to adopt a different ruling strategy from his predecessors. He followed Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz's policy, which was fair compared to the other Umayyad Caliphs' strategies. In an attempt to gain social popularity, he adopted a simple lifestyle in his eating, clothing, and expenses. He banned serving alcohol and holding musical parties in the palace. He also made himself available for the public to fulfill their judicial requests.

11-3-2-Network of Representatives

To meet the needs of the growing Shia community, Imam Sadiq had established a network organization of his trusted companions as his representatives in various cities around the Islamic territory. This organization was further developed during the Imamat of the next Imams and became an effective way of communication between the Shias and their Imam. The organization's representatives were

¹⁴² 29 Rajab, 255 AH (Imam's age:23)

responsible for answering the questions about the Islamic laws and principles, transferring letters between the Imam and his Shias, and resolving any division between the Shias to keep the Shia community united. They were also collecting the Islamic dues (Zakat) and transferring it to the Imam or spending it on situations per his instructions.

During Imam Hadi's time, his life in the Abbasid Capital was under intense surveillance by the government. Due to this, the Imam was not always able to manage this secret organization, so he built it to a unique status of managing itself with his limited direct involvement. This organization was structured hierarchically, where the Imam appointed representatives for each geographical region, and the representatives in turn managed the local representatives of their regions.

Imam Askari, led this hidden organization and took on its responsibility from the day that Imam Hadi was martyred in such a way that the Shias and the representatives felt Imam Hadi's presence even after his martyrdom. Imam Askari would respond to the questions raised by the Shias, and would guide them for their religious and political affairs. The names of 21 of the Imam's representatives are recorded in history. The Imam's leadership led to the expansion of the Shia community and prepared them for Imam Mahdi's occultation, a time during which they would not have direct access to their Imam.

Due to the intense surveillance and pressures on Imam Askari, there were times when communication with the Imam would endanger the lives of his followers and representatives. During those difficult times, any communication with the Imam was done in secret using undercover methods. Uthman ibn Saeed al-Amri was the Imam's top representative in Samarra. He would manage the other representatives in the Imam's network organization. He was often the point of contact for the Imam's representatives who wanted to transfer the collected Islamic dues or letters to the Imam and get his response. His cover up job was as an oil seller. He would often hide the collected Islamic dues and the letters to the Imam inside oil containers. He would then send those oil containers

to the Imam's house. The Imam would also communicate with Uthman ibn Saeed al-Amri using other secretive means.

For example, once the Imam hid some letters inside a hollow, long piece of wood to pass it to Uthman. The Imam asked someone who was working inside his house to pass the wood to Uthman. That person took the wooden log and left the Imam's house. However, on his way, he was blocked by a mule, and he used the wooden log to hit the animal to clear his way. As a result, the wooden log broke and the hidden letters inside it were exposed. He then took the letters back to the Imam's house. The Imam became upset with him, and advised him to be careful and focus his attention on the task given to him.

The Imam was sensitive about the occurrence of any monetary or ethical corruption in the organization. This was because, for the Shias, the representatives in the organization represented the Imam. This organization was supposed to serve as a systematic means for managing the Shia community's affairs in the future, when the Shias would not have direct access to their Imam. Any corruption in this organization could cause great disappointment and division among the Shias. The Imam once confronted and discharged a representative who had crossed the ethical limits.

11-3-3-Uprising of Saahib al-Zanj¹⁴³

Due to the significant power the Turks had, the Abbasid government weakened and lost its supreme authority over parts of its territory. There were various uprisings and rebellions against the Abbasids around this time. One of the major uprisings was of the African slaves in southern Iraq, which became known as the uprising of Saahib al-Zanj. The leader of this uprising wrongfully claimed to be an Alavid and was able to gather many followers, especially from the African slaves. His rebellion lasted about 14 years, and became a serious challenge for the Abbasids. This uprising had many casualties, but was eventually suppressed by the Abbasids. When a companion of the Imam wrote to

¹⁴³ 255 AH (Imam's age: 23)

him to ask his opinion about the uprising of Saahib al-Zanj, the Imam rejected any affiliation of the uprising's leader with himself and the Alavids. The Imam did not endorse this uprising, which was led by a liar seeking his own power.

The uprising of Saahib al-Zanj continued after the short rule of Muhtadi. When Mu'tamid, the next caliph, assumed power, he was also concerned about this uprising and sent his troops under his brother's leadership to suppress it. When the Abbasid troops were leaving Samarra, the Imam accompanied the Caliph and they watched the army leave¹⁴⁴. The Imam's presence was a public announcement that he condemned the uprising of Saahib al-Zanj and the gruesome bloodshed that it had caused. This also helped to decrease Mu'tamid's life-threatening hostilities and conspiracies against the Imam.

11-3-4-Muhtadi and the Imam

Although Muhtadi had adopted a fair ruling strategy compared to his predecessors, his policy against the Imam and his Shia followers remained as hostile as the other Abbasid caliphs. His hostility towards the Imam was to such an extent that he swore by God to exile the Imam and the Alavids from every land on the earth they settled. One of Muhtadi's military leaders, Nasr ibn Ahmad, also agreed to implement his decision against the Imam, but Muhtadi's short government did not allow him to exile or kill the Imam. Around this time, problems in Muhtadi's government intensified. Muhtadi had to send Nasr ibn Ahmad to a war in which he was killed¹⁴⁵. In a letter, the Imam had referred to Nasr ibn Ahmad's death as a sign of God's power.

Around this time, one of the Imam's companions wrote a letter to him and told him what Muhtadi had sworn against the Imam. He praised God for keeping the Caliph busy in government affairs so that he was distracted from harassing and killing the Imam. The Imam responded to him by writing, "Muhtadi's life is shorter than what you even can

¹⁴⁴ 1 Rabi' al-Awwal, 258 AH (Imam's age: 25)

¹⁴⁵ 1 Rajab, 256 AH (Imam's age: 24)

imagine.” The Imam informed him that Muhtadi would be humiliatingly killed in just six days. Muhtadi was killed six days later, and the Imam’s prophecy had come true.

Despite the problems in Muhtadi’s government, he had decided to imprison the Imam just a few days before his death. While in prison, the Imam told his companion, who was imprisoned with him, that Muhtadi had decided that night to eventually kill the Imam. He repeated his previous prophecy that God had shortened Muhtadi’s life and he would be killed the following day. As the Imam had predicted, Muhtadi was killed by the Turks the next day, before getting the opportunity to implement his decision against the Imam.

11-3-5-Muhtadi’s Death¹⁴⁶

Although Muhtadi followed a different ruling strategy, he could not resolve the main problem in the Abbasid government, which was the amount of power that the Turks had. Despite their power, there was a constant struggle between the Turk leaders for more power and wealth. Thus, Muhtadi decided to tackle this problem by turning the Turk leaders against each other. However, his plot failed and led to suspicions against him. When Muhtadi imprisoned and killed a Turk leader, his action caused a rebellion within his army in Samarra. This rebellion quickly turned into a massive war between his divided army, during which many were killed. His supporters in the army were defeated, and the remaining fled. Muhtadi found himself lonely and helpless. He called the people to come out to Samarra’s streets to support him as their caliph, but no one came to his aid. He ran to the prison and freed the prisoners, hoping to get support from them. However, the freed prisoners did not support him either. The Turks then arrested the lonely caliph and imprisoned him. They asked him to renounce his caliphate, but he refused and told them that he preferred to be killed instead so the Turks beat him to death. Muhtadi died after a short caliphate of only about 11 months.

¹⁴⁶ 18 Rajab, 256 AH (Imam’s age: 24)

11-4-During the Government of Mu'tamid

11-4-1-Mu'tamid in Power

After Muhtadi, the Turks selected Mu'tamid, one of Mutawakkil's sons, as the next caliph. Mu'tamid had been imprisoned by Muhtadi, who feared for his government. However, when the Turks decided to remove Muhtadi from the Caliphate, they freed Mu'tamid and selected him as the next caliph. Due to the excessive competition and disagreements among the Turk leaders during Mu'tamid's government, the Turk leaders decided to have Mu'tamid appoint one of his brothers as the head of the army. Mu'tamid appointed his brother, Muwaffaq, for this position. Mu'tamid, like the other Abbasid caliphs, indulged in sinful behaviors. His government was practically managed and run by his brother, Muwaffaq. Since Mutawakkil's assassination, the Turk leaders had substituted five Abbasid caliphs over the course of a decade. Muwaffaq was able to control the Turks' power and stabilize his brother's government, thereby allowing Mu'tamid to have a long government of about 23 years. By stabilizing his government, Mu'tamid moved his capital to the traditional Capital of the Abbasids, Baghdad, and Samarra lost its political significance.

11-4-2-Birth of Imam Mahdi¹⁴⁷

During his Imamat, one of Imam Askari's main concerns was to protect the life of his only child, Imam Mahdi. Imam Mahdi would inherit the Imamat after Imam Askari as the last Shia Imam. Imam Askari kept Imam Mahdi's birth a secret, even from his close family members. By God's miracle, Imam Mahdi's mother, Narjis Khatoon, did not show any sign of an expectant mother. This miracle was similar to the miracle of Prophet Moses' mother, who had also not shown any sign of an expecting mother because God had wanted to save Prophet Moses from the Pharaoh. On the night of Imam Mahdi's birth, Imam Askari asked his aunt, Hakimeh, who was Imam Hadi's sister, to stay at his

¹⁴⁷ 15 Sha'ban, 256 AH (Imam's age: 24)

home and help with Narjis Khatoon's delivery. Hakimeh was shocked, as she had not known that Narjis Khatoon was expecting. Hours later, at dawn, Imam Mahdi opened his eyes to this world and was born secretly. Even after Imam Mahdi's birth, Imam Askari continued to keep his son's existence a secret. He only showed Imam Mahdi to certain trusted companions.

11-4-3-Mu'tamid and the Imam

Like his predecessors, Mu'tamid was concerned about the Imam for his government for two main reasons. First, Imam Askari was the leader of the Shias, who did not accept the legitimacy of the Abbasid government. By this time, the Shias were large in number and were widespread in the Abbasid territory. Second, the Abbasids had received the news about the last Shia Imam, Imam Mahdi, who would establish justice on the earth. They feared Imam Mahdi for their unjust government. Thus, Mu'tamid, who wanted to closely monitor the Imam, ordered to imprison him. While in prison, the Imam's condition and interaction with some Shia elders imprisoned with him remained under surveillance by the government through spy prisoners. The Imam once identified a spy prisoner to the Shia elders, and they confiscated the spy's report to the Caliph.

A while into the Imam's imprisonment, Mu'tamid released the Imam because he had to refer to him. A severe drought had hit Samarra, and Mu'tamid ordered the people to pray for rain. The Muslims prayed for three consecutive days, but it did not rain. On the fourth day, the Christians, including their leaders and monks, went outside the city to pray for rain, and it rained. Large drops of rain would fall from the sky every time one of the monks among the Christians raised his hands towards the sky. To the surprise of the Muslims, the Christians repeated their prayer the next day and it rained again. As a result of the Christian prayers, the need for water was fulfilled. This incident caused serious doubt among the Muslims about their faith, and some were even attracted towards Christianity. This unpleasant news forced Mu'tamid, the Muslims' Caliph, to act. He ordered the release of Imam Askari

from prison and brought him to his presence. He talked to the Imam about what had happened, and asked the Imam to save the faith of the nation of his forefather, the Prophet. The Imam told Mu'tamid to ask the people to leave the city for the prayer the following day. Mu'tamid responded that the people no longer needed water. The Imam replied that his intention was to remove doubts from the hearts of the people. The following day, the Imam and the people went outside the city. The Christians prayed for rain, and when a particular monk raised his hands towards the sky again, it began to rain. The Imam then asked to hold the hands and reveal what he was hiding in his hand. A small bone was found between the monk's fingers and brought to the Imam. The Imam then wrapped the bone around a piece of cloth and asked the Christians to pray again for rain. This time when they prayed, it did not rain; instead, the clouds dispersed and the sky became sunny. The Caliph asked the Imam about the bone. The Imam responded that the bone belonged to a prophet, and that whenever the bone of a prophet is exposed to the sky, rain would fall. The Caliph was delighted by the Imam's guidance and freed him with high regards. The Imam then asked for the release of his companions from the prison, which the Caliph accepted.

Although the Imam was freed from prison, the pressure on him continued and his life remained under intense surveillance. This was to an extent that the Imam had to present himself at the Abbasid palace twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays, to confirm his presence in Samarra. Whenever the Imam wanted to go to the palace, crowds of people who expected his commute would gather in the streets to see him. This shows the Imam's social status and respect in people's hearts, which was obviously one of the reasons for the Abbasid Caliphs' hostility towards him. The Imam was also respected by the workers inside the Abbasid palace, who would call the Imam by his title of "Aba Muhammad" or "Ibn al-Reza", which conveys respect in Arabic. Only certain people in the palace were called by their titles, such as the Caliph and his Crown Prince.

The Imam's Shia followers were also among the crowd who would wait to see him on the streets of Samarra. The Imam was concerned about his Shias being identified in the crowd, which could endanger their lives. If they ever wanted to approach the Imam and initiate a conversation with him under unsafe circumstances, the Imam would hint to them to remain silent. On one occasion, the Imam sent a letter to his Shias who were in Samarra and intended to meet him. In the letter, the Imam warned them about risking their lives by visiting him. In another letter, the Imam asked his Shia followers not to wear their rings on their right hands, as the Shias were known in society for always wearing their rings on their right hands. Through his advice, it is clear the Imam did not want his Shia followers to be identified and hence to protect their lives.

On another occasion, Mu'tamid imprisoned the Imam and his brother, Ja'far¹⁴⁸. Mu'tamid would frequently inquire about the Imam's condition in custody. The Imam's guard would report that the Imam spent the days fasting and the nights in prayer. After a while, Mu'tamid saw the Imam's guard again. He repeated his inquiry and heard the same response. He then ordered the guard to go to the prison right away, pass his greetings to the Imam, and release him from imprisonment. When the guard went to the prison, he observed that the Imam had already prepared for his release by wearing his formal clothing. After being released, the Imam did not leave. Instead, he told the guard that he had entered the prison with his brother, and should leave the prison with him. The guard delivered the Imam's words to Mu'tamid, who then ordered the release of the Imam's brother as well.

When the Imam was released from prison, he described his situation in a letter by referring to the following verse of the Quran [61:8]: "They want to extinguish God's Light with their mouths; but God will complete His Light, even though the disbelievers dislike it." By referring to this verse, the Imam revealed the real intention of the government, which was to kill him before he would have any children to inherit the

¹⁴⁸ Safar, 260 AH (Imam's age: 27)

Imamat. The Imam emphasized God's absolute will about the twelfth Imam, which would be manifested with certainty.

11-4-4-Martyrdom

Mu'tamid had known that killing the Imam in prison would endanger his government, as he would be blamed. Thus, he released the Imam from prison. Within a month, he ordered the Imam's poisoning. He wanted to eliminate the Imam before the Imam could have any offspring to inherit the Imamat from him.

Even though Mu'tamid had silently poisoned the Imam to eliminate him, he was afraid that his plot would be revealed. When the Imam was on his deathbed, Mu'tamid isolated him from his followers and the outside world. He also wanted to use this isolation to portray to the public that the Imam's condition mattered to him. When the news of the Imam's illness was brought to Mu'tamid, he ordered five of his trusted close ones to stay in the Imam's house and continuously report the Imam's condition. He also ordered a physician to visit the Imam twice a day and closely monitor the Imam's condition. Two days later, the Imam's illness worsened, and his body weakened. When Mu'tamid's minister was informed about this, he personally visited the Imam and ordered the physicians not to leave the Imam. He also ordered ten known scholars to stay with the Imam. They all closely monitored the Imam's condition until his martyrdom.

After about eight days of illness, the Imam's soul ascended on the 8th of Rabi' al-Awwal, in the year 260 Hijri, in Samarra, at the age of 27. He was martyred after a short Imamat of less than six years. Thus, Imam Askari had the shortest duration of Imamat compared to the other Shia Imams. Historical records show Imam Mahdi's presence by his father's deathbed before his father's martyrdom. By God's decree, his presence was miraculously hidden from the government agents who were monitoring the Imam.

When Mu'tamid was informed about the Imam's martyrdom, he sent his agents to search the Imam's entire house for any trace of a possible

heir. He also sent female agents to inspect the women in the Imam's house to inquire if any of them were expecting. There was suspicion about one female worker in the Imam's house, who seemed like she might be expecting. Mu'tamid then instructed his trusted servant to keep her isolated to validate the suspicion. She was kept isolated for about two years, but did not show any sign of pregnancy.

After the Imam's close companions and family members had prepared to pray before the Imam's body, the Imam's brother, Ja'far, stepped forward to lead the prayer. Imam Mahdi, who was less than four years old, approached Ja'far. He pulled Ja'far's cloak and told him, "O' Uncle, step back, as I am more deserving than you to lead the prayer on my father." Ja'far, who did not expect to be stopped by a child, was shocked and moved back unintentionally. Imam Mahdi then led the prayer over his father's body and disappeared quickly after.

When the news of the Imam's martyrdom spread in the city, crowds of people came to the Imam's funeral, including the top government officials. Mu'tamid, who wanted to portray his innocence regarding the Imam's martyrdom, appointed his brother, Abu-Isa, to officially perform the prayer over the Imam's body. Before praying, Abu-Isa showed the Imam's face to the elders, scholars, and officials and asked them to witness that the Imam had died by a natural death. He also told them that some trusted scholars and physicians were surrounding the Imam during his illness and can testify to the Imam's natural death. After the prayer and the funeral procession, the Imam's body was carried towards the tomb of his father, Imam Hadi, and buried by his side.

11-5-Conclusion

Imam Hasan Askari's short Imamat coincided with the governments of three Abbasid caliphs. His Imamat started with the martyrdom of his father, Imam Hadi, during the caliphate of Mu'tazz. Although the Mu'tazz's caliphate lasted for only a year after the beginning of Imam Askari's Imamat, Mu'tazz could not tolerate the Imam and had him

imprisoned. While the Imam was in prison, the Abbasids demanded more pressure and harassment upon the Imam. Their plot was ineffective, as the Imam's guards were influenced by his divine character and continual prayers. Later, Mu'tazz even decided to kill the Imam, but due to his sudden murder at the hands of the Turks, his plot had failed.

Imam Askari's Imamat continued during the short caliphate of Muhtadi, who adopted a fair ruling strategy compared to the other Abbasid caliphs in an attempt to gather social popularity and stabilize his own government. However, Muhtadi followed the other Abbasid caliphs in confronting and harassing the Imam. He had sworn by God to exile the Imam and the Alavids from every land on the earth they settled. He also imprisoned the Imam and even decided to kill him. However, the complications in his government and his sudden murder by the Turks did not allow him to implement his plot against the Imam.

Imam Askari's Imamat continued into the caliphate of Mu'tamid, who followed the policy of his predecessors in confronting and harassing the Imam. He imprisoned the Imam, put pressure on him, and monitored his activities. Mu'tamid could not tolerate the Imam and finally ordered the Imam's poisoning, which led to the Imam's martyrdom.

The Imam was martyred at a very young age, a month before turning 28 years old. Imam Askari was the second youngest Shia Imam when he was martyred, after Imam Javad, who was martyred at the age of 25. Imam Askari also had the shortest duration of Imamat among the Shia Imams, which lasted for less than six years.

The Imam, during his short Imamat, was the source of guidance for all of the Muslims. The Imam had defended Islamic beliefs against the Christians by revealing their secret when they had prayed for rain. He guided Is-haaq Kendi, an Iraqi philosopher, and stopped him from writing a book against the Quran, which could have misled many Muslims. The Imam was the sole religious and political leader for the Shias. Due to the intense surveillance and pressures on the Imam, he could not always meet with his representatives and followers in person.

Thus, the majority of their communications were through letters. The Imam responded to questions in writing, and would guide the people about their religious and political affairs. The Imam's communications with his followers continued until the last day of his life.

The most unique aspects of Imam Askari's Imamat were his efforts to protect the life of his son, Imam Mahdi, and preparing the Shias for Imam Mahdi's occultation. Imam Askari kept the birth of Imam Mahdi a secret, even from his family members. Even after his son's birth, the Imam only showed him to certain members of his family and his most trusted companions. The Abbasids, who had received the news of the last Shia Imam, were afraid of his justice and feared for their government. They put Imam Askari's life under intense surveillance. The Imam was imprisoned multiple times by every Abbasid caliph who ruled during his Imamat, and he was finally martyred after his brief period of leadership.

Imam Askari's circumstances were an opportunity for him to train the Shias for the minor occultation of his son, Imam Mahdi, when the Shias would not have direct access to their Imam, and would need to communicate with him in writing. Therefore, the majority of Imam Askari's communications with his Shia followers and representatives were through exchanging letters. The Imam respected and highly regarded the Shia scholars because they guided the people to the true teachings of the Prophet and the Imams. With his respect, the Imam wanted to prepare the Shias for the upcoming time when they would have to refer to the Shia scholars for their Islamic queries. The Imam also expanded the network organization of his representatives as a systematic means of managing the Shia community's affairs. The Imam trained this organization to be managed without his direct involvement. Overall, the Shias are in debt to Imam Askari for his efforts to protect the life of Imam Mahdi and to prepare them for Imam Mahdi's lengthy occultation.

IMAM ASKARI (AS):

**If all of the evils were to be locked up in a house,
its key would be lying.**

12- IMAM MAHDI (AS): THE IMAM OF TIME

This chapter reviews the life of Imam Mahdi (AS) and provides an overview of, and answers to, common questions about his minor and major occultations.

12-1-Before Imamat

12-1-1-Birth

Imam Muhammad ibn Hasan (may God hasten his reappearance) also known as “Mahdi”, was born on the dawn of the 15th of Sha’ban, in the year 256 Hijri, in Samarra. He is known by various titles that reflect his elevated status, that he is alive, and that he is the Imam of our time. He is known as “Mahdi” or “Guided One”, “Saahib al-Zaman” or “Master of the Age”, “Muntazar” or “ Awaited One”, “Hojjat Allah” or “Proof of God”, “Baqeeyat Allah” or “Whom God has left on earth (as His last proof)”, and “Qa’em” or “One who stands up (against injustice)”.

Imam Mahdi was the only child of Imam Askari (AS). His mother, Narjis Khatoon, was a Roman princess and the granddaughter of the Roman emperor. When living at the palace, she saw a miraculous dream in which Prophet Jesus and some of his apostles were preparing for the arrival of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Imam Ali (AS), and some of the children of Imam Ali. When Prophet Muhammad arrived, he addressed Prophet Jesus and proposed the marriage of Imam Askari to Narjis Khatoon. Prophet Jesus then asked his apostle, Saint Peter, who was also Narjis Khatoon’s forefather, to accept the proposal. Saint Peter happily accepted. Prophet Muhammad then recited the marriage contract for Narjis Khatoon and Imam Askari. After this dream, Narjis Khatoon saw other miraculous dreams and, as a result, converted to Islam. After a while, she received instructions in her dream to secretly follow the Roman troops, who were being deployed for war against the Muslims. She followed the instructions, was arrested by Muslim troops, and brought to Baghdad to be sold as a slave. Imam Hadi, aware of this incident through his divine knowledge, sent someone from Samarra to Baghdad with detailed instructions to purchase and transfer Narjis Khatoon to Samarra. Imam Hadi then married her to Imam Askari and gave her the good news of becoming the mother of a son who would fill the earth with justice after it would have become filled with oppression.

One of Imam Askari's main concerns during his Imamat was to protect the life of his only child, Imam Mahdi, who would inherit the Imamat after him as the last Shia Imam. Imam Askari kept Imam Mahdi's birth a secret, even from his close family members. By God's miracle, Imam Mahdi's mother, Narjis Khatoon, did not show any signs of an expecting mother, similar to the miracle of Prophet Moses' mother, who had also not shown any signs of an expecting mother because God had wanted to save her son from the Pharaoh. On the night of Imam Mahdi's birth, Imam Askari asked his aunt, Hakimeh, Imam Hadi's sister, to stay at his home and help with Narjis Khatoon's delivery. Hakimeh was shocked, because she had not known that Narjis Khatoon was expecting. Hours later, at dawn, Imam Mahdi was born in secret and opened his eyes to this world.

12-1-2-Preparation for the Occultation

After Imam Mahdi's birth, Imam Askari continued keeping his son's existence a secret. The Imam's intention was to protect his son's life from enemies, particularly the Abbasid government. However, Imam Askari needed to inform or provide hints to his Shias, especially the Shia scholars and representatives, about the birth of his son. After the birth of Imam Mahdi, Imam Askari asked Uthman ibn Saeed al-Amri, his top representative in Samarra, to donate a large amount of bread and meat to the needy and to sacrifice some sheep. The Imam also informed his representative in Qom, in Iran, about the birth of Imam Mahdi in a letter. This news brought great happiness to the Shias of Qom. While being confined in Samarra, the Capital of the Abbasids, Imam Askari only showed Imam Mahdi to certain trusted companions. On one special occasion, around 40 of the trusted Shia scholars and representatives had gathered in Imam Askari's house in Samarra. The Imam used this opportunity to show them his young son, Imam Mahdi, and introduced him as their next Imam.

There was an excessive amount of pressure on Imam Askari during his short Imamat of about six years. The Imam's activities in Samarra, the Abbasid Capital, were closely monitored by the government and his

interactions with his representatives and the people were significantly limited. The Imam was pressured for two main reasons. First, Imam Askari was the leader of the Shias, who did not accept the legitimacy of the Abbasid government. The Shias had grown to be large in numbers and were widespread in the Abbasid territory. The undeniable influence of the Shias and their leader, Imam Askari, could not be ignored by any of the Abbasid caliphs. Second, the Abbasids had received the news of the Prophet's prophecy about the last Shia Imam, Imam Mahdi, who would establish justice on earth. They feared Imam Mahdi would endanger their government and thus sought to eliminate him.

Imam Askari's circumstances were an opportunity for him to train the Shias for his son's minor occultation, during which the Shias would not have direct access to their Imam, and would need to communicate with him through writing. This is why the majority of the Imam's communications with his Shia followers and representatives were through exchanging letters. Imam Askari was the first Shia Imam who primarily communicated with the Shias by letters, rather than meeting them in person. The Imam respected and highly regarded the Shia scholars, because they would guide the people to the true teachings of the Prophet and the Imams. Through this, the Imam prepared the Shias for the upcoming time during which they would have to refer to Shia scholars for their religious affairs. The Imam also expanded the network organization of his representatives that acted as a system of managing the affairs of the Shia community. He organized it to be managed without his direct involvement.

12-1-3-Martyrdom of Imam Askari¹⁴⁹

Due to the Abbasid government's enmity for Imam Askari, the Imam was imprisoned multiple times during his short Imamat. Eventually, Mu'tamid, the Abbasid Caliph, ordered the Imam's poisoning due to his concern about Imam Askari's influence on the government. Mu'tamid wanted to eliminate the Imam before the Imam could have

¹⁴⁹ 8 Rabi' al-Awwal, 260 AH (Imam's age:3)

any offspring to inherit the Imamat. Although Mu'tamid had secretly poisoned the Imam, he was afraid that his plot would be revealed. When the Imam was on his deathbed, Mu'tamid isolated the Imam from his followers and the outside world. He ordered his trusted close ones to stay in the Imam's house, and continuously report the Imam's condition to him. They closely monitored the Imam's condition for several days, until the Imam's martyrdom at the young age of 27. Imam Askari had the shortest duration of Imamat compared to the other Shia Imams, lasting for less than six years. Historical records show Imam Mahdi's presence by his father's deathbed before his martyrdom. Miraculously, Imam Mahdi's presence was not observed by the government agents monitoring the Imam.

When Mu'tamid was informed of the Imam's martyrdom, he sent his agents to search the Imam's house for any trace of a possible heir. He also sent some female agents to inspect the women in the Imam's house, and to inquire if any of them were expecting. There was suspicion about one female worker in the Imam's house who seemed like she might be expecting. Mu'tamid asked his trusted servant to keep her isolated to validate the suspicion. She was kept isolated for about two years, but did not show any sign of carrying a child.

When the Imam's close companions and family members were about to pray over his body, the Imam's brother, Ja'far, stepped forward to lead the prayer. At this time, Imam Mahdi, less than four years old, approached Ja'far, pulled on his cloak, and told him, "O' Uncle, step back as I am more deserving than you to lead the prayers over my father." Ja'far, who had not expected to be stopped by a child, was shocked and moved back unintentionally. Imam Mahdi then led the prayer over his father's body, and disappeared quickly after. Imam Mahdi's presence proved his existence to his family members and Imam Askari's close companions. Later, a large funeral procession was held for Imam Askari by the Abbasid government in Samarra to portray to the public that the government was innocent regarding the Imam's martyrdom.

12-2-The Minor Occultation

12-2-1-Beginning of Imamat

Imam Mahdi became an Imam after the martyrdom of his father when he was just three years and seven months old. His Imamat was not challenged by the Shias because of his young age. The Shias had already validated and believed in the Imamat of Imam Javad (AS) and Imam Hadi (AS) at their young ages of seven. Thus, age was not a barrier for the Shias to accept the Imamat of a young boy.

Imam Askari's brother, Ja'far, continued in his ignorance, even after witnessing Imam Mahdi's prayer over Imam Askari's body. Ja'far lacked the divine knowledge of the Shia Imams and had a corrupt character. Ja'far proceeded to introduce himself as the next Shia Imam, but he failed to prove his Imamat and to convince the Shias. He instead became known among the Shias as "Ja'far, the liar". After Imam Askari's burial, Ja'far came to Mu'tamid's minister and asked the Abbasid's approval for himself as the next Shia Imam. His request was faced with an insulting and harsh reaction from the minister who responded to him, "The Abbasid Caliph has used his entire power to change the belief of the Shias of your father (Imam Hadi) and brother (Imam Askari), but has failed. If you are an Imam of the Shias, you would not need the Caliph's approval; and if you are not an Imam of the Shias, you will never reach it."

Ja'far continued his efforts to announce himself as the next Shia Imam and successor to Imam Askari. A group of people once came to Samarra to deliver the Islamic dues from the Shias of Qom and North-Western Iran. Upon their arrival in Samarra, they were informed about the martyrdom of Imam Askari. They were referred to Ja'far as Imam Askari's successor. Upon meeting Ja'far, they asked him to reveal the names and the amounts of the Islamic dues that they had brought to Samarra for delivery. Ja'far responded harshly by saying, "You expect me to know the knowledge of the unseen (which only belongs to God)" to which they responded, "Imam Askari would inform us of the names

and the amounts in the packages in our previous deliveries to him. If you are an Imam, you should also know the names and the amounts in the packages like Imam Askari.” They emphasized that they were entrusted by the Shias to deliver the packages safely to Imam Askari, and if he could not prove that he is an Imam, they would return the packages back to their owners. Ja’far was disappointed about losing the packages. He tried to forcefully seize them with the Caliph’s power, but he failed to gain the Caliph’s support. When these individuals could not find the Shia Imam to deliver their packages to, they decided to return them to their owners. When they left Samarra, someone approached them, called them by their names, and asked them to follow him to meet their Imam. They followed him and met Imam Mahdi, who informed them about the names and the amounts in the packages. They happily delivered the packages to the Imam and asked him their questions. The Imam told them not to bring any more deliveries to Samarra and to submit them to his representative in Baghdad.

Imam Mahdi’s Imamat began with the minor occultation, which lasted about 69 years. During this long period, four Shia scholars were the points of contact between the Imam and the Shias. These four scholars were referred to as the special deputies of Imam Mahdi, and were appointed by the Imam for this special role. The Shias would pass their letters with questions or requests to the special deputy of the Imam and would receive the Imam’s responses back through him. This method of communication was not a new method for the Shias. They had experienced it in the past during the Imamat of the previous Shia Imams, especially during the Imamat of Imam Askari, whose main method of communication had been through letters. Imam Mahdi would respond to the letters with the same handwriting as Imam Askari, which was familiar for the Shias. His intention was to remove any doubts about his presence, and to strengthen the Shias’ hearts about the authenticity of their communications. The Shias would find Imam Mahdi’s letters in accordance with the letters of Imam Askari, both in style and content. By the Imam’s will, these special deputies had some particular capabilities, such as informing the Shias of the unseen future

to prove their connections to the Imam. The minor occultation was a period for the Shias to be trained for Imam Mahdi's major occultation, during which they would not have access to their Imam, even through exchanging letters.

12-2-2-The First Special Deputy

Imam Mahdi's first special deputy was Uthman ibn Saeed al-Amri, a companion of Imam Hadi since Uthman ibn Saeed al-Amri was eleven years old. He was Imam Hadi's loyal and deeply trusted companion. During Imam Hadi's life in Samarra, the Abbasid Capital, he was under intense surveillance by the Abbasid government. The Imam could not always manage the hidden network organization of his representatives, so he had appointed Uthman ibn Saeed to secretly manage the affairs of this organization from Samarra during the last 10 years of the Imam's life. Uthman ibn Saeed's role continued during the Imamat of Imam Askari. He was Imam Askari's top representative in Samarra, and managed the other representatives in the Imam's network organization. He was often the point of contact for the Imam's representatives who wanted to transfer the collected Islamic dues, and the letters to and from the Imam. His cover job was as an oil salesman. He would often hide the dues and letters to the Imam inside the oil containers, and would transfer them to the Imam's house. Imam Askari had announced Uthman ibn Saeed as his trusted representative to the Shias on various occasions. When Imam Askari was martyred, Uthman ibn Saeed managed his burial. His high status in the eyes of Imam Hadi and Imam Askari was well known among the Shias, so they readily accepted his selection as Imam Mahdi's special deputy.

Uthman ibn Saeed took control of the hidden network organization of representatives among the Shia communities across the Islamic territory. By this time, the Shia communities had spread widely across the Islamic territory. They were present in Iraq, Iran, Hijaz, Yemen, and Egypt. Uthman ibn Saeed began his role as the Imam's special deputy in Samarra immediately after Imam Askari's martyrdom. Historical records suggest that, while Imam Mahdi had just begun his Imamat with

the minor occultation, his hidden primary residence was still in Samarra. After a while, with the Imam's approval, Uthman ibn Saeed permanently moved from Samarra to Baghdad and continued his activities from there. Mu'tamid, the Abbasid Caliph, moved the Capital of the Abbasids from Samarra to Baghdad, too, and Samarra lost its significance.

There are limited historical records about the activities of Uthman ibn Saeed as the Imam's special deputy. This could be attributed to the excessive pressure from the government on the Shias and their representatives. Uthman ibn Saeed continued his activities undercover, and used his career as an oil seller to conceal his role. In addition, since Imam Askari's martyrdom, the government was looking for any trace of his successor, Imam Mahdi. Thus, Uthman ibn Saeed advised the Shias not to mention the name of Imam Mahdi, as this could incite the government into increasing surveillance of the Shias and their hidden network of representatives.

12-2-3-The Second Special Deputy

Uthman ibn Saeed's role as Imam Mahdi's deputy lasted until his death¹⁵⁰. This short period is estimated by some to be around five years. Prior to his death, Uthman ibn Saeed informed the Shias about the appointment of his son, Muhammad, by Imam Mahdi as the next special deputy. Imam Askari had foretold the appointment of Muhammad ibn Uthman as Imam Mahdi's representative when a group of Shias from Yemen had visited Imam Askari in Samarra. The Imam had introduced Uthman ibn Saeed as his deputy and told them, "His son will also be my son's deputy." Imam Mahdi also gave Muhammad ibn Uthman a letter as proof of his appointment. In the letter, the Imam expressed his condolences to Muhammad ibn Uthman for his father's demise, and expressed his high regards for his father. The Imam then appointed Muhammad ibn Uthman as his father's successor and the next special deputy.

¹⁵⁰ 265 AH

From Baghdad, Muhammad ibn Uthman continued his father's policy of leading the network organization of the representatives. He guided the Shias about Imam Mahdi's occultation, explained that it occurred by God's decree, and reminded them of the many narrations from the previous Shia Imams about the occultation of the last Imam. At the same time, he would portray to the Abbasids that Imam Askari had left no successor to the Imamat. He did this in order to convince the Abbasids that the Shias were without an Imam, and were no longer a threat to the government. Ever since the establishment of the Abbasid government, the Shia Imams and their followers had not accepted its legitimacy. Muhammad ibn Uthman's policy was to distract the Abbasids from putting pressure on the Shias and their hidden network of the representatives. Like his father, he banned the Shias from revealing Imam Mahdi's name, as this could have posed a threat from the Abbasids to the Shia communities and their activities.

Imam Mahdi also guided and helped his Shias to overcome their challenges. In one incident, Mu'tazid, the Abbasid Caliph, received a list with the names of the representatives in the hidden network organization of the Shias. He ordered undercover agents to deliver money to each of the representatives, pretending to pay the Islamic dues. His intention was to confirm the representatives' affiliation with the network organization and to arrest them. To protect the representatives, Imam Mahdi issued a letter with instructions for them. In this letter, he stated that they should not receive any Islamic dues, and should pretend that they were unaware of such a role. The Imam's message was passed to the representatives and saved them from the conspiracy of the Abbasid Caliph. The agents approached the representatives and even insisted on delivering the Islamic dues, but were faced with denial of such a role, thereby failing in their scheme.

Muhammad ibn Uthman was a scholar of religion. He had authored multiple books on Islamic laws. He had received his knowledge from Imam Askari, Imam Mahdi, and his father. He passed his books onto the next special deputy before his death. Despite his knowledge, he

would not engage himself in religious debates about Shia theology and beliefs. His intention was to keep his main role as the special deputy of the Imam hidden from the government.

Muhammad ibn Uthman's role as a special deputy lasted for about 40 years, the longest period among the other special deputies of Imam Mahdi. The majority of the communications between the Shias and Imam Mahdi occurred during Muhammad ibn Uthman's tenure. Various narrations and supplications from Imam Mahdi were narrated by Muhammad ibn Uthman to the Shias, supplications such as the famous, "Dua Iftitah", which is recommended to be recited every night during the month of Ramazan, and "Dua Samat", which is recommended to be recited in the closing hours before sunset on Fridays. Muhammad ibn Uthman also told the Shias that Imam Mahdi participates in Hajj every year, and that the Imam sees the people and knows them, while the people see the Imam and do not recognize him.

12-2-4-The Third Special Deputy

Before his death¹⁵¹, Muhammad ibn Uthman introduced Hossein ibn Rouh al-Nawbakhti, one of his trusted assistants and representatives, as the next special deputy. He told the Shia elders and followers that he was entrusted with the mission from Imam Mahdi to make this announcement. Muhammad ibn Uthman, who had been informed by Imam Mahdi about his approaching death, would refer the Shias to deliver their Islamic dues to Hossein ibn Rouh as much as two years prior to his death. His intention was to familiarize the Shias with the Imam's next special deputy.

The role of Hossein ibn Rouh as the Imam's special deputy lasted for about 21 years, until his death. He was socially popular among the Muslims of various theological backgrounds. Despite his social status, due to the conspiracies against him, he was imprisoned by the Abbasids for about five years¹⁵². As the special deputy, Hossein ibn Rouh took

¹⁵¹ 305 AH

¹⁵² 312 AH

control of the network organization of the representatives, and managed it from Baghdad. He tried his best to guide the Shias, and strictly confronted any deviation in the Shias' beliefs. During one incident, when Hossein ibn Roush was in the Abbasid prison, one of his representatives deviated and spread false beliefs among the Shias. While in prison, Hossein ibn Roush informed the Shia elders and his other representatives about these false beliefs and asked them to distance themselves from the corrupt representative. He also informed them about a letter from Imam Mahdi, in which the Imam had falsified and denounced the beliefs of that representative. Hossein ibn Roush's efforts as the special deputy of Imam Mahdi proved to be effective in guiding the Shias.

As the special deputy, Hossein ibn Roush was a point of contact between the Imam and the Shias. The Shias would seek guidance and make their requests from the Imam in writing. Once, one of the Shia scholars of Qom gave a letter to Hossein ibn Roush to pass to the Imam. In this letter, he asked for the Imam's prayer to be blessed with a child, as he did not have any children. The Imam responded in a letter that he had prayed to God for him, and soon he would be blessed with two sons. As a result of the Imam's prayer, God blessed the scholar with two sons, whom he named Muhammad and Hossein, and both of them became Shia scholars. Muhammad became a noble scholar, known by the name "Shaykh al-Saduq" or "Ibn Babuwayh". He authored notable books, such as 'Man La Yahzuruhu al-Faqih', which is among the top four books of the Shia Hadith collection, and 'Oyoun Akhbar al-Reza', a comprehensive book about the life of Imam Reza (AS). He was always proud of coming to this world as a result of his Imam's prayer.

12-2-5-The Fourth Special Deputy

Prior to his death¹⁵³, Hossein ibn Roush informed the Shias about appointing Ali ibn Muhammad al-Samuri, one of his trusted assistants and representatives, as the next special deputy by the Imam. Ali ibn

¹⁵³ Sha'ban, 326 AH

Muhammad had a very short period of service, lasting only three years as the fourth and final special deputy. He took control of the network organization of the representatives and managed it from Baghdad.

Prior to his death, Ali ibn Muhammad showed the Shias a letter that he had received from Imam Mahdi. This letter was the last communication between Imam Mahdi and the Shias during the minor occultation. In this letter, the Imam told Ali ibn Muhammad to prepare for his approaching death in six days. The Imam told him not to appoint anyone as the next special deputy, since the major occultation was going to begin soon. The Imam continued that his reappearance would only be by God's decree, which would occur after a long time, when hearts would harden and the earth would fill with injustice. The Imam mentioned two signs for the time of his reappearance: the uprising of Sufyani (an evil person from the descendants of Abu-Sufyan, Muawiyah's father, who would rule the Syrian region) and a loud cry in the sky. The Imam then told the Shias that anyone who claimed to have any direct connection to him before the occurrence of these two signs is a liar.

As the Imam had foretold, Ali ibn Muhammad died after six days, on the 15th of Sha'ban, in the year 329 Hijri. When Ali ibn Muhammad was on his deathbed, the Shias asked him about whom they should refer to as the next deputy of Imam Mahdi. He responded that he did not have any instructions from the Imam to appoint anyone after himself. Even at his last moments, he was asked again about whom the Shias should refer to as the next special deputy. He responded that God has a plan, referring to the major occultation, which will prevail. These were his last words before his death. With his death, the minor occultation ended, lasting about 69 years.

12-3-The Major Occultation

12-3-1-The Major Occultation

With the end of the minor occultation, the major occultation of Imam

Mahdi began, and it continues until today. During the major occultation, the Imam is living behind covers and the Shias cannot directly access him or communicate with him. The Imam reaches out to the people, particularly the Shia scholars and the followers, directly or indirectly to guide them on their affairs and problems. There are many such stories which have been narrated throughout history since the Imam's occultation. It is mentioned that the Imam is like the sun behind the clouds, which means that, though we cannot see the Imam directly, we are still receiving the blessings of his presence. The Imam will be in the major occultation until a time that is only known by God. Upon God's Will, Imam Mahdi will reappear to fill the earth with justice and bring forth the peak of humanity and prosperity on earth. Prophet Jesus will also come after the reappearance of Imam Mahdi, and will follow the Imam in establishing justice on the earth.

12-4-Common Questions and Answers about Imam Mahdi

12-4-1-Are the Shias the only people who believe in a savior?

No. The concept of a savior, referring to the one who will come to save the people from oppression and injustice, is common amongst various theologies, though they differ about who the savior is. The savior in Zoroastrianism is known as "Sosyant", in Hinduism as "Kalki", in Buddhism as "Maitreya", in Judaism as "Moshiach", and in Christianity as "Messiah". The savior in Islam is known as "Mahdi", and all the Muslims, regardless of their sects, believe in him. There are frequent narrations from the Prophet about the Mahdi in 'Kutub al-Sittah', the primary books of narrations in the Sunni sect of Islam. Also, various books have been authored throughout history by non-Shia Islamic scholars about the Mahdi. All of the Muslims believe in the Mahdi, who is from the progeny of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and has the same name as him. The Shia Muslims believe in the Mahdi as their 12th Imam, who was born in the year 256 Hijri in Samarra, and is still alive.

12-4-2-Is the Mahdi a concept made-up by the Shia scholars?

Due to the importance of this concept, there are thousands of narrations from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and each of the Shia Imams about Imam Mahdi, his occultation, and his reappearance. The belief in Imam Mahdi has been an essential part of Shia theology since the time of the Prophet. There are many historical records and narrations to validate his Imamah and occultation. The Shia scholars had spread the narrations about Imam Mahdi even before his birth. Some of them also authored specific books about Imam Mahdi and his occultation. The names of about 30 such books, written before the birth of Imam Mahdi, are available in history. For example, Fazl ibn Shazan, a great scholar in Khorasan who passed away during the Imamah of Imam Askari, wrote multiple books about Imam Mahdi and his occultation.

The belief in the Mahdi is not just specific to the Shia Muslims; all the Muslims believe in the Mahdi, who is from the Prophet's descendants. There are various narrations from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) about the Mahdi, which have been recorded in top narration books of the Sunni sect of Islam. The Sunni scholars have also authored various books about the Mahdi throughout history. Many non-Shia Muslims have tried to misuse the concept of the Mahdi to their own benefit throughout history. They would not have tried to misuse this concept if it was not important and well-known to the Muslims. For example, Mansur, the second Abbasid Caliph, named his son Muhammad and called him by the title of Mahdi. Mahdi then replaced his father as the third Abbasid Caliph. Other examples of famous people who falsely claimed to be the Mahdi in our contemporary time are Muhammad Ahmad in Sudan, Ali Muhammad Bab in Iran, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in India, and Muhammad ibn Abdallah al-Qahtani in Saudi Arabia.

12-4-3-How can Imam Mahdi live such a long life?

Although Imam Mahdi's long life of about 1,200 years is much more than the average life expectancy of a human being, it is not impossible based on current scientific theories and various current theological

beliefs. Scientists are actively researching elongating the life of human cells and protecting them from disease, aging, and other deteriorating factors. Some scientists believe that science has the potential to increase human life up to several hundreds of years. The natural world is full of wonders, where plant and animal species have been alive for thousands of years.

The mysterious stories of people with long lives of several hundreds of years have been mentioned in various cultures and religions. For example, the longevity of several people has been explicitly mentioned in the Torah, such as Prophet Adam's age of 930 years and Prophet Adam's son, Seth's age of 912 years. Some pre-Islamic Prophets are believed to still be living today, such as Prophet Elijah (Ilyas), who was raised to the sky according to the Old Testament. Muslims of various sects believe that the pre-Islamic Prophets Elijah, Enoch (Idris), Khizr, and Jesus (Isa) never died and are still alive.

The Holy Quran explicitly mentions a few examples of noble characters who were blessed with exceptionally long lives. For example, the prophethood of Prophet Noah amongst his people lasted for 950 years, and is mentioned in the Quran [29:14]: "And certainly We sent Noah to his people, so he remained among them a thousand years save fifty years". We thus deduce that Prophet Noah lived for more than 950 years. Prophet Jesus is another example of a prophet who did not die per the Quran [4:157,158]: "And for their saying, "We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, the Messenger of God. In fact, they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them as if they did. Indeed, those who differ about him are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it, except the following of assumptions. Certainly, they did not kill him. Rather, God raised him up to Himself. God is Mighty and Wise." We thus deduce that Prophet Jesus has been living now for over 2,000 years.

Another Quranic piece of evidence is the story of Prophet Ezra (Uzair), where God took his life away for 100 years and then made him alive again, as mentioned in the following verse [2:259]: "(Or have you heard)

of the one who, on passing through an empty and ruined town, said, ‘How will God bring it to life?’ God caused him to die and brought him back to life after a hundred years and then asked him, ‘How long have you been here?’ He replied, ‘One day or part of a day’. The Lord said, ‘No, you have been here for one hundred years. Look at your food and drink. They have not yet decayed.’ According to this verse of the Quran, God not only elongated Prophet Ezra’s life for 100 years, but He also miraculously preserved his food and drink, which would have naturally decayed in a day or two.

The companions of the cave are another Quranic story in which a few believers took shelter in a cave and slept there for 309 years, as mentioned in the following verse of the Quran [18:25] “And they stayed in their cave for three hundred years, adding nine.” During these long years, they were sleeping, and their body was functioning without any need for water or food.

The Shias believe that the long life of Imam Mahdi is a miracle of God, and nothing is impossible for The Creator. God can elongate the life of His chosen savior and prevent him from aging. According to the narrations from the Shia Imams, when Imam Mahdi will reappear, he will look like a 40-year-old or younger.

12-4-4-How do the Shias interpret Islamic belief during the occultation?

The Shias refer to their scholars to interpret Islamic beliefs during the occultation. The Shias follow the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as the essential part of their belief. They also follow the 12 Shia Imams from the progeny of the Prophet, who continued the message of the Holy Prophet. There are no differences or contradictions between the teachings and the traditions of the Prophet and the 12 Shia Imams. Thus, the Shias are blessed to have divine guidance and teachings from the generations of 12 Imams who lived among the Muslims for about 250 years after the demise of the Prophet. There are countless narrations from the Shia Imams about every aspect of the Islamic teachings and laws. The history of these 12

holy individuals is full of wisdom for any person's life, with lessons for overcoming any challenges. The Shia theology is unique among the other Muslim sects in having access to the precious historical resources from the Prophet and the 12 Imams. As a result, the Shias are proud of having a doctrine in every aspect of the Islamic sciences.

The massive collection of the narrations and historical records from the Prophet and the 12 Shia Imams have survived through history. They are used by Shia scholars in seminaries to defend the Islamic principles and to respond to any new questions regarding Islamic laws. The Shia Imams would always encourage their followers to refer to the trusted Shia scholars for their Islamic affairs. The efforts of the Shia Imams in training scholars, spreading their knowledge, and establishing a network organization of their representatives among the Shia communities were all towards preparing the Shias for their future. This policy was also approved and prescribed by Imam Mahdi. In one of his letters during the minor occultation, Imam Mahdi explicitly referred his Shia followers to the scholars by writing, "In the events that happen, refer to the narrators of our traditions (scholars), because they are my proof upon you, and I am God's proof upon them.". Thus, the Shias refer to their scholars to acquire their Islamic knowledge and interpretations during the occultation.

IMAM MAHDI (AS):

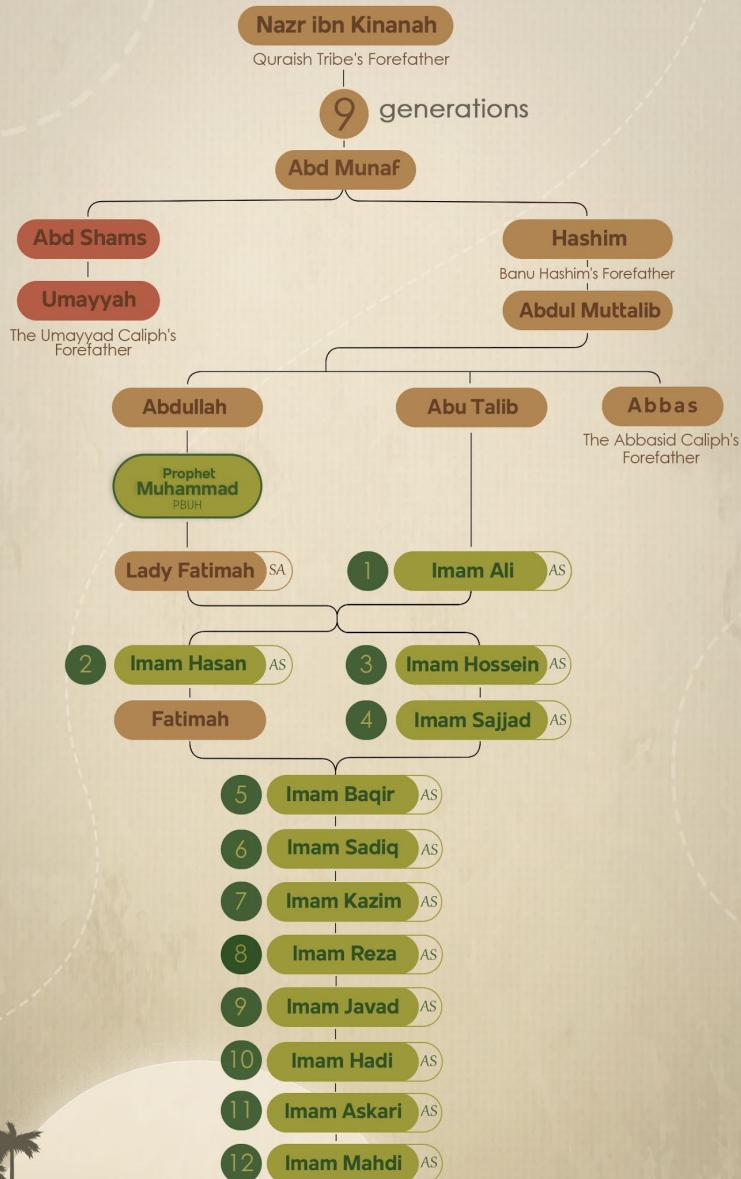
**Pray abundantly for my reappearance,
as your relief will be within it.**

Main References

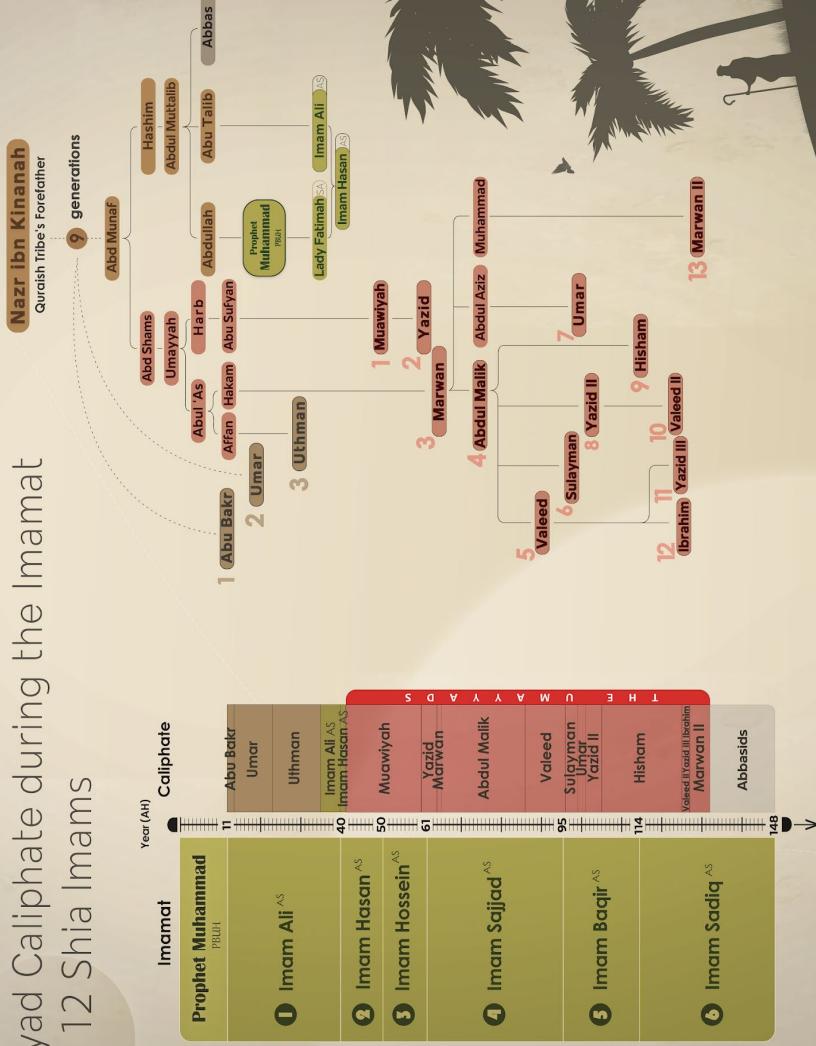
- Muntaha al-Aamal, Shaykh Abbas Qummi (Farsi)
- Mosooa al-Tarikh al-Islami, Muhammad Hadi Yusufi Gharawi (Arabic)
- The leaders of the Guidance, Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (Farsi)
- The lives of the Twelve Imams, Hashim Maroof al-Hasani (Farsi)
- The Lives of the Twelve: A Look at the Social and Political Lives of the Twelve Infallible Imams, Shaykh Mahdi Pishvai (English)
- Tarikh al-Dawlat al-Abbasiyah, Muhammad Suhail Taqoosh (Farsi)
- The organization of the Representatives and Its Role during the Age of the Imams, Muhammad Reza Jabbari (Farsi)

Appendix

Family Tree of the 12 Shia Imams



Umayyad Caliphate during the Imamah of the 12 Shia Imams

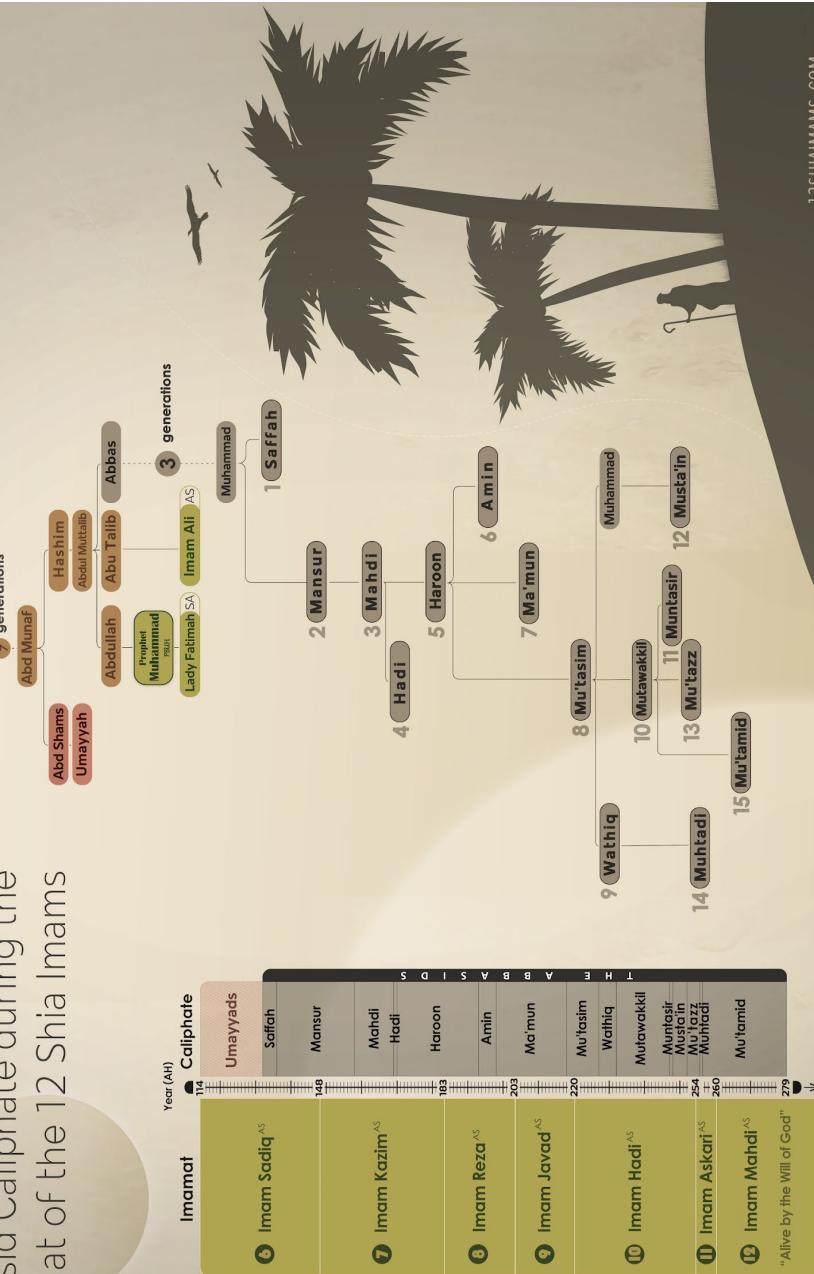


Abbasid Caliphate during the Imammat of the 12 Shia Imams

Nazr ibn Kinanah

Quraish tribe's Forefather

9 generations



The 12 Shia Imams at a Glance

Name	Title	Birth		Place	Mother	Length of Imamah (Years)		Martyrdom		Buried in	Age (Years)
		Date	Year (AH)			Date	Year (AH)	Ordered by	Implemented by (Killer)		
1	Amir al-Mu'mineen	13 Rajab	-23	Ka`ba Mecca	Fatimah bint Asad	29	21 Ramazan	40	Pact among 3 of the Khawarij	ibn Mujim	Najaf
2	Mujtaba	15 Ramazan	3	Medina	Lady Fatimah (SA)	9	28 Safar	50	Muawiyah	his wife Ju`da	Baqi` Cemetery, Medina
3	Aba-Abdeliah	3 Sha`ban	4	Medina	Lady Fatimah (SA)	10	10 Muhamram	61	Yazid	Sinan ibn Anas	Karbala
4	Ali	15 Jumada al-Awwal	36	Medina	Shahr-Banu	34	25 Muhamram	95	Valeed ibn Abdul-Malik	Conspiracy by Hisham ibn Abdul-Malik	Baqi` Cemetery, Medina
5	Muhammad	15 Rajab	57	Medina	Fatimah bint Hasan	19	7 Zu al-Hijjah	114	Hisham ibn Abdul-Malik	Ibrahim ibn Valeed	Baqi` Cemetery, Medina
6	Ja`far	17 Rajab al-Awwal	83	Medina	Fatimah Um-Farwah	33	25 Shawwal	148	Mansur	Muhammad ibn Sulayman	Baqi` Cemetery, Medina
7	Musa	7 Safar	128	Abwa	Hamideh	34	25 Rajab	183	Haroon	Sendi ibn Shahak	Kazimayn, Baghdad
8	Ali	11 Zu al-Qadah	148	Medina	Najmeh/ Tuktam	19	Last day of Safar	203	Ma`mun	Ma`mun	Mashhad
9	Muhammad	15 Ramazan	195	Medina	Sebrikeh	17	Last day of Zu al-Qadah	220	Mu`tasim	his wife Um-Faz/ Mu`tasim's minister	Kazimayn, Baghdad
10	Ali	15 Zu al-Hijjah	212 (Surya)	Medina	Samaneh	33	3 Rajab	254	Mu`tazz	-	Samarra
11	Hasan	8 Rajab al-Thani	232	Medina	Hudaith/ Sa`eel	5	8 Rajab al-Awwal	260	Mu`tamid	-	Samarra
12	Muhammad	15 Sha`ban	256	Samarra	Narijs						He is alive by the will of God and He is the Imam of our time