THE LIVES OF THE TWELVE

A Look at the Social and Political Lives of the Twelve Infallible Imams ('a)

Written By
Shaykh Mahdī Pīshvā'ī

• PART ONE •

A LOOK AT THE LIVES OF IMAM ALI ('a), IMAM HASAN ('a), AND IMAM HUSAYN ('a)

Translated By
Sayyid Ali Musawi

The Lives of the Twelve is a pioneering work that details the lives of the Twelve Shia Imams. While most works on the Twelve Imams focuses on the basics of their lives, this text goes into the details of their social and political lives and how they affected change throughout their societies. Through extensive research, Shaykh Mahdi Pishvai has been able to craft together many details which were not widely known before. This is the first time a book of this caliber has been published in the English language. Today, we live in times where morality and a sense of right and wrong have all but disappeared. In light of this, we can turn to the teachings and wisdom of the Twelve in order to see how we can help bring back morality and that human sense of differentiating between right and wrong in our society. This work is composed of four distinct volumes, each of which goes into the lives of three of the Twelve Imams.

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(Part One)

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Written By: Shaykh Mahdī Pīshvā'ī

Translated By: Sayyid Ali Musawi

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Preface and Acknowledgments

-By Sayyid Ali Musawi

In the name of God, the All-Beneficent, the Ever Merciful

Many times, the work on the lives of the Twelve Imams ('a) tend to be strictly biographical in nature and they do not deal with the social or political aspects of their lives. This book primarily summarizes the biographical aspects of their lives and it delves into the details of how they worked to spread the true teachings of the religion of Islam throughout their societies. Indeed, we are indebted to these Twelve Guides; without their teachings and their guidance, we would have been plunged into the depths of darkness.

Although this book began as a project many long years ago, it has finally reached completion during this 4th night of the month of Muḥarram in the year 1440 (September 14, 2018). We thank God for his blessings which weigh heavy on us and we ask that he guides us in his path and that he allows us to be more perfect in serving him. Truly, nothing is possible except through God.

I would like to extend my gratitude and thanks to my

parents, who have been so integral all of these years in teaching and guiding me. I would also like to thank everyone who has been a part of this journey thus far, particularly my teachers in the religious seminary of Qum, Iran. My years there proved invaluable to who I am today and I would not trade them for anything in this world. I would also like to thank the members of the Noor Collective in San Diego, California for creating the platform which inspired this publication. Finally, I would like to thank Issa K. for his help in the final editing of this manuscript, as well as Haider al-Shaher for his work on the cover page. May we all be worthy one day to call ourselves the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)...

Sayyid Ali Musawi,
September 14, 2018
San Diego, California

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Part One: A Look at the Lives of Imam Ali, Imam Hasan, and Imam Husayn

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The First Imam

Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib

A Brief Introduction into the Life of Imam ʿAlī

Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was born on the 13th of Rajab, 30 years after the 'Year of the Elephant'. He has the distinction of having been born inside of the Kaaba; this is a distinction held by no one other than him. His mother was Fāṭimah bint Asad and his father was Abū Ṭālib. During the 21st of the holy month of Ramaḍān in the 40th year of the Hijrah, he reached the rank of martyrdom in the city of Kūfah. His grave is located in the city of Najaf.

The Life of Imam ʿAlī

Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was born ten years before the start of the divine mission[1] of the Prophet (ṣ). Throughout the years, he was constantly by the Prophet's side, and he lived for an additional thirty years after his passing. His 63 years of life can be divided into five major parts:

1. From his birth until the start of the Prophet's (ṣ) mission (Biʿthah)
2. From the beginning of the prophetic mission until the emigration (Hijrah) of the Prophet (ṣ) to Medina
3. From the emigration to Medina until the passing of the Prophet (ṣ)
4. From the passing of the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) until Imam ʿAlī's (ʿa) succession of the caliphate
5. And finally, the period of his caliphate

1-From His Birth until the Commencement of the Prophet's Mission

If the life of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was divided into five major sections, the first of these would be that which occurred before the 'Biʿthah' of the Prophet (ṣ). This section is

[1] Biʿthah

comprised of just ten years of Imam ʿAlī's (ʿa) life and therefore, from the time of his birth, no more than thirty years had passed since the birth of the Prophet (ṣ). The Prophet (ṣ) reached his 'Biʿthah' at the age of 40 and at this time, Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was approximately 10 years of age.

Under the Care of the Prophet (ṣ)

Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), at the sensitive young age when character and spirituality is more easily formed, was constantly in the house of the Prophet (ṣ) and under the influence of his training and education. Islamic historians have written:

"One year, a great famine overtook Mecca. At that time, Abū Ṭālib, the uncle of the Prophet (ṣ), had a very large family and this caused him to have very heavy expenses. The Prophet (ṣ) approached another of his uncles, who was named ʿAbbās (one of the very wealthy individuals of the tribe of Hāshim) and suggested that each of them take one of Abū Ṭālib's children to their home and care for them as their own, in order that his financial burden be lessened. ʿAbbās agreed to this and they both went to Abū Ṭālib and presented their idea to him. Abū Ṭālib also agreed to their proposal and they each took one of his sons under their care. ʿAbbās took Jaʿfar and the Prophet (ṣ) took ʿAlī (ʿa). ʿAlī (ʿa) was at the Prophet's (ṣ) house until the time when he was commissioned with prophethood.[2] When this took place, ʿAlī (ʿa) confirmed his Prophethood (ṣ) and followed him in the new faith. The Prophet (ṣ), after selecting ʿAlī (ʿa) to bring to his home, declared: "I selected the same one whom God had selected for me."[3]

During the time when ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib had passed away,

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[2] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 58.
- Ibn Hishām, ʿAbd al-Malik, Al-Sīrā al-Nūbūwīyah, researched by Muṣṭafā al-Saqā', Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī, ʿAbd al-Ḥafīẓ Shalbī, Cairo, Maktabah al-Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī (Published by Maktabah al-Ṣadr Tehran), 1355 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 262.

[3] Abū al-Faraj Iṣfihānī, Maqātil al-Ṭālibīn, Najaf Ashraf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaīdārīa, (Bī Tā), p. 15.

the Prophet (ṣ) had ended up living at the house of his uncle Abū Ṭālib and he had been raised under his guardianship and loving care. By taking one of Abū Ṭālib's children under his wing, he wished to help compensate for the efforts and hardship that Abū Ṭālib and his wife Fāṭimah bint Asad had undergone in raising him.

Many years later, during his time as caliph, Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) mentioned his education and training under the Prophet (ṣ) in his sermon of 'Qāṣiʿah'. He said: "You (companions of the Prophet (ṣ)) are aware of my closeness with the Prophet of God (ṣ) and the special position which I had with him. You know that when I was a young child, he would embrace me in his arms, and would hold me tightly to his chest, and would lay me to sleep on his own bed in such a way that I would feel him close next to me and I would smell his sweet perfume, and he would feed me with his own hands. In the same way that a child follows his mother, I would follow him wherever he went and each day, he would enlighten me with one of his ethical and moral virtues. After teaching me, he would command me to act upon that which I had learned."[4]

Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) at the Cave of Ḥirā

Before the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) was given the mandate of prophethood, he would go to the Cave of Ḥirā for one month out of each year for worship.[5] When the month would reach its end, and it was time for him to return to his home, he would first go to Masjid al-Ḥarām and circumambulate around it. This was done either seven times or whichever number God had commanded at that time. When this was complete, he would then return to his home.[6]

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[4] Nahj al-Balāghah, Ṣubḥī Ṣālih, Sermon 192.

[5] Ḥirā is a mountain on the north side of Mecca and the Cave of Ḥirā is located at its summit.

[6] Ibn Hishām, al-Sīrāh al-Nabawīya, Researched by Muṣṭafā al-Saqā', Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī, and ʿAbd al-Ḥafiẓ Shalbī, Cairo, Maktabah al-Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī (Published by

Historical context shows us that in addition to the intense attention that the Prophet (ṣ) would pay to Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), he would also take him on his month long seclusions to the Cave of Ḥirā. When the Angel of Revelation revealed himself for the first time at the Cave of Ḥirā to the Prophet (ṣ), and conferred upon him the rank of Prophethood, ʿAlī (ʿa) was by his side.

Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), in his Sermon of Qaṣiʿah, has said about this incident that: "The Prophet (ṣ) would go every year to the Mountain of Ḥirā for worship, and except for me, no one would see him... At the time when he was first subject to revelation, I heard the sound of Satan wailing, and I asked the Prophet (ṣ): 'Whose wailing is this?' He replied: 'This is the sound of the wailing of Satan; he is wailing because he has become hopeless of being obeyed on this earth. That which I hear, you also hear, and that which I see, you also see, except for the fact that you are not a prophet but you are my successor and deputy and upon the path of righteousness"[7]

While these words can be taken to refer to the worship of the Prophet (ṣ) at the Cave of Ḥirā after the mandate of his prophethood, this would be incorrect, as the previous historical context shows that the Prophet (ṣ) would worship at the Cave of Ḥirā before he was commissioned. This shows that these words are referring precisely to the era before the start of his prophetic mission. Whatever the case may be, the spiritual purity of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) and his thorough education and training by the Prophet (ṣ) caused him to develop, at a very young age, a sensitive heart and an ability to perceive the world around him with superb clarity. With these faculties he was able to see and hear things which were impossible for normal people to distinguish.

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd Muʿtazalī, in his Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, has written: "In the authentic books it has been narrated that when the Angel Gabriel revealed himself to

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Maktabah al-Ṣadr Tehran, 1355 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 252.

[7] Nahj al-Balāghah, Ṣubḥī Ṣālih, Sermon 192.

the Prophet (ṣ) for the first time and commissioned him with prophethood, ʿAlī (ʿa) was next to him by his side."[8]

It is narrated from Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) that he said: "'Alī (ʿa), before the Prophet (ṣ) was mandated with prophethood, would see the light of prophecy and hear the sounds of angels along with the Prophet (ṣ). The Prophet (ṣ) would tell him: 'If I was not the "Seal of Prophets," you would have had the worthiness and capacity of prophethood. Yet you are my deputy and successor, the master of the successors, and the leader of the pious.'"[9]

2- From the Beginning of the Prophetic Mission until the Emigration of the Prophet

The second part of Imam ʿAlī's (ʿa) life is comprised of the time from the beginning of the prophetic mission until the emigration of the Prophet (ṣ) to Medina; this period consists of approximately 13 years. This part of the life of the Imam (ʿa) encompasses his prominent services and monumental struggles in the path of Islam. The things which he achieved are unique only to him; no one else in the history of Islam comes close to having the distinctions which he attained. His life seems to be a history book filled with a number of 'Firsts'.

The First Individual to Accept the Religion

The first honor which Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) attained in this period, was in being the first person to accept the religion of Islam. In reality, this acceptance was the outward manifestation of his inner submission to God which he already possessed. This is because ʿAlī (ʿa) had always been a monotheist, even from a very young age. He had never been soiled with the ignorance of idol worship[10], which was

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[8] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, Researched by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, First Edition, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1378 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 13, p. 208.

[9] Madrak Pīshīn, p. 210.

[10] Akhṭab Khawārizm, Al-Manāqib, Najaf, al-Maṭba'atah al-Ḥaīdārīyah, 1385 Hijrī

common amongst the people of that time. Therefore, his acceptance of Islam did not take on the meaning of forsaking idol worship. The same could not be said for the rest of the companions of the Prophet (ṣ).

Being the first of those who accepted Islam is a status which the Holy Quran has emphasized and proclaimed. It has been stated that those who had an early inclination towards becoming Muslims had a high value in front of God. The Holy Quran says: "And the Foremost Ones are the foremost ones: they are the ones brought near [to Allah]"[11]

The Holy Quran places high importance on the matter of those who 'overtake others in terms of their inclination to the religion of Islam'. For example, those who became Muslims before the conquest of Mecca, and placed their lives and wealth in the service of God, are known to be superior in comparison to those who became Muslims after the conquest of Mecca. Likewise, those who became Muslim from the beginning of Islam, even before the emigration took place, have a more special position in the eyes of God.

The Holy Quran mentions: "Not equal [to others] are those of you who spent and fought before the victory. They are greater in rank than those who have spent and fought afterwards. Yet Allah has promised the best reward to each and Allah is well aware of what you do. ... "[12]

The reason behind the superiority of the Muslims who had submitted to Islam before the conquest of Mecca (which took place in the 8th year Hijrī), lies in the fact that these people came to the faith at a time when Islam had not yet reached its peak of power. In fact, the idol worshippers still controlled the city of Mecca and it was a formidable power base for them. More importantly, the city was seen as being unconquerable. Due to this power balance, these early Muslims were under threat from every side and their lives and wealth were greatly

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Qamarī, p. 18.

[11] Surah Wāqi'ah, Verses 10 and 11.

[12] Surah Ḥadid, Verse 10.

in danger.

After the Prophet (ṣ) migrated to the city of Medina, and Islam was accepted by the tribes of Aws, Khazraj, as well as others, the situation of the Muslims improved slightly and they were victorious in a number of military conflicts. Even with these advancements, their lives were still in danger and the prospect of total destruction was still a very real threat.

Naturally, if accepting Islam in such conditions, and dedicating one's life and wealth to the cause was considered as such a monumental sacrifice, then dedicating oneself to Islam at its earliest stage, when there was no powerbase except for that of the Quraysh and the idol worshippers, naturally held one of the highest values. Being the first Muslim also had a very high value and worth in the eyes of the companions of the Prophet (ṣ) as well. Therefore, Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), by being the first Muslim, held an honor that was unparalleled and recognized by the Holy Quran, as well as the society in which he lived.

Evidence of Imam ʿAlī's Precedence in Accepting Islam

The evidence which shows that Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was the first to accept Islam are so numerous in quantity and quality in the Islamic texts, that it would not be possible to mention them all in this book. It will suffice to mention a few of them below:

A. The Prophet (ṣ) mentioned the precedence of Imam ʿAlī's (ʿa) acceptance of Islam. Amongst a gathering of his companions, he said: "The first person who will meet me next to the 'Spring of Kawthar' on the Day of Judgment will be the one who was foremost amongst you in accepting Islam: ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib."[13]

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[13] Ibn 'Abd al-Bir, Al-Isti'āb Fī al-Ma'rifah al-Aṣḥāb, First Edition, Beirut Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1328 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 28.,
-Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, Researched by : Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, First Edition, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1378 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 13, p. 119.

B. Scholars and experts of tradition narrate that: "The Prophet (ṣ) was commissioned to prophethood on a Tuesday and ʿAlī (ʿa) prayed with him on Wednesday (of the very next day)."[14]

C. Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), in his sermon of Qāṣiʿah, is quoted as saying: "On that day, Islam had not entered into any house but the house of the Prophet (ṣ) and Khadījah (ʿa), and I was the third person amongst them. I could see the light of revelation and the prophetic message, and I could sense the essence of prophethood."[15]

D. In another place, Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) remembers his precedence in becoming a Muslim by saying: "Oh God, I am the first individual who came towards you, heard your message, and answered the invitation of the Prophet (ṣ); before me, no one but your Prophet (ṣ) performed the prayer."[16]

E. Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) says: "I am the servant of God and the 'Brother of the Prophet (ṣ)'....this utterance will not be said after me by anyone, except for a liar. I prayed alongside the Prophet (ṣ) for seven years before anyone else."[17]

F. ʿUfayf ibn Qays Kindī has said that: "During the time of the 'Jāhilīyah',[18] I was a merchant in the bazaar and I dealt in perfumes. During one of my travels as a merchant, I entered Mecca and became a guest of ʿAbbās, who was one of the wealthy merchants of the city. During one of the days of my stay, I was sitting in Masjid al-Ḥarām alongside with ʿAbbās at a time when the sun had reached its peak. It was then that I saw a

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[14] Ibn 'Abd al-Bir, Al-Istiʿāb Fī al-Maʿrifah al-Aṣḥāb, First Edition, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1328 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 32.

- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 57.

[15] Nahj al-Balāghah, Ṣubḥī Ṣālih, Sermon 192 .

[16] Nahj al-Balāghah, Sermon 131.

[17] Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut, Dār al-Qāmūs al-Ḥadīth, (Bī Tā) vol. 2, p. 312.

-Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 57.

[18] Literally the 'Age of Ignorance' in reference to the time before Islam.

youth come into the mosque. The face of this youth reminded me of the moon when it is at its peak of luminosity and beauty. This youth looked at the sky and then commenced to face the Kaaba and pray. Not much time had passed when I saw an adolescent, who had a pleasant visage, join him at his right side in prayer. Then a woman, who had covered herself, came and positioned herself behind them. All three of them busied themselves in prayer by reciting, genuflecting, and prostrating.

I became amazed at this sight (from seeing these three following a different religion at the very center of idol worship). I turned to ʿAbbās and said: 'This is an amazing occurrence.' ʿAbbās repeated my words in agreement and added: 'Do you know who these three are?' I said: 'No.' He said: 'The first person who entered and who is standing in front of the others is my nephew Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullah; the second individual is my other nephew ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and the third individual is the wife of Muḥammad. Muḥammad claims that his religion has been revealed from God, and at this moment, on this very earth, no one follows this religion but these three.'"[19] This narration clearly shows that at the beginning of the Prophet's (ṣ) invitation to Islam, with the exception of his wife Khadījah (ʿa), no one had accepted him except Imam ʿAlī (ʿa).

The Supporter and Deputy of the Prophet

For a period of three years, the Prophet (ṣ) refrained from

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[19] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, in the very same book, has narrated this event. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary of the Nahj al-Balāghah, Researched by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, First Edition, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-ʿArabīya, 1378 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 13, p. 226.

- Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut, Dār al-Qāmūs al-Ḥadīth, (Bī Tā) vol. 2, p. 212. (With slight differences in the wording) from ʿAbdullah ibn Masʿūd, who on his journey to Mecca had been a witness to this scene.

giving a general invitation to his people. He only initiated personal contact with individuals whom he felt had the foundations for accepting Islam.

After three years of private invitations, the Angel of Revelation came down and conveyed God's command that the Prophet (ṣ) should begin inviting the general public to Islam. This general invitation was to be initiated with his family and close relations. God's command was as follows: "Warn the nearest of your kinsfolk, and lower your wing to the faithful who follow you. But if they disobey you, say, 'I am absolved of what you do.'"[20]

The reason why the close relations of the Prophet (ṣ) were selected as the first individuals to be invited was that until the closest people to a person claiming prophethood have faith in him and follow him, then his act of inviting strangers will not be successful. This is due to the fact that close relatives are always aware of the secrets of their family members, as well as their good and bad characteristics. They are aware of these to a much higher degree than people who are not related. Therefore, their having faith in such an individual can be counted as one of the signs of their truthfulness. On the other hand, if the closest people to an individual turn away from him, then this is a sign of his lack of sincerity and truthfulness in what he claims. Therefore, judging from this perspective, the Prophet (ṣ) commanded that Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) invite forty five of the important and notable individuals of Banī Hāshim for a lunch banquet, and to prepare a meal for them of meat and milk.

All the guests gathered in the presence of the Prophet (ṣ) at the appointed time. Soon, the food was served and the guests ate their meal. Unfortunately, when the Prophet (ṣ) wished to speak, Abū Lahab destroyed the proper mood and spirit of the gathering with his frivolous talk. The gathering ended without the Prophet (ṣ) being able to deliver his message, and the

[20] Surah Shu'arā, Verses 214-216.

guests, after having eaten their food and drink, left his house. The Prophet (ṣ) decided to invite them to his house the following day for yet another meal. He invited them all once again with the exception of Abū Lahab. ʿAlī (ʿa), based on the orders of the Prophet (ṣ), prepared another meal of meat and milk, and invited the prominent members of the tribe of Banī Hāshim to the house of the Prophet (ṣ) for this second gathering. All the guests gathered at the appointed time, and after the serving of the food, the Prophet (ṣ) began to speak.

He said: "No person has brought for his people anything better than what I have brought for you. I have brought you the good of both this world and the next. My God has commanded me to invite you towards his 'Tawhīd'[21] and my mission of Prophethood. Which person amongst you will aid me in this path and become my brother, administrator, and representative between all of you?"

He then paused to see which one of them would give him a positive reply. An absolute silence dominated over the gathering mingled with surprise. The people in the room were stunned to silence and become engrossed in thought.

Suddenly ʿAlī (ʿa), who at that time was no older than fifteen years in age, broke the silence and stood up facing the Prophet (ṣ). He said: "Oh Prophet of God (ṣ), I will help you on this path." He then stretched his hand towards the Prophet (ṣ) so that he could make his covenant official. At this time, the Prophet (ṣ) commanded ʿAlī (ʿa) to sit down. Again, the Prophet (ṣ) repeated his words. Again, ʿAlī (ʿa) stood up and announced his readiness. Again, he was asked to sit down.

Then the Prophet (ṣ) repeated his words for the last and final time, and ʿAlī (ʿa) responded to them in the affirmative once again. No one at the gathering but ʿAlī (ʿa) had answered the call of the Prophet (ṣ) to aid him in his divine mission. At this time, the Prophet (ṣ) took his own hand and struck it against Alī's hand in confirmation of the oath. Then he said

[21] The oneness and unity of God.

a line in that gathering of the Banī Hāshim that still resounds strongly throughout the pages of history. He (ṣ) said: "Behold, oh my relatives and near ones, ʿAlī (ʿa) is my brother, administrator, and caliph amongst all of you."[22]

Therefore, the first deputy of Islam, by means of the last divine Prophet (ṣ), had been selected at the very beginning of the prophetic mission, and this was at a time when only a small group considered themselves as Muslims.

Interestingly enough, on the very same day that the Prophet (ṣ) announced his own prophethood to his relatives and close ones, he also announced the imamate of ʿAlī (ʿa). The high rank and position of the imamate in Islam can clearly be distinguished and judged based on this timing and sequence of events. Even from the earliest days of Islam, imamate was a complementary program alongside prophethood and these two positions were not considered separate from one another.

The Great Act of Self Sacrifice

On the thirteenth year after the beginning of the prophetic mission, right after the second pledge of ʿAqabah, a new development took place in the world of Islam. The people of Yathrib invited the Prophet (ṣ) to their city and promised him assistance and safety. The night after this was finalized, the Muslims of Mecca began to migrate towards Yathrib one by one, leaving their city. The heads of Quraysh soon became aware of this and understood that a new power base had been realized for the spread of Islam in the city of Yathrib. They felt that this was a grave new danger for them. The danger was due to the fact that the Quraysh had tortured and harassed the Muslims a great deal. If the Prophet (ṣ)

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[22] Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut, Dār al-Qāmūs al-Ḥadīth, (Bī Tā) vol. 2, p. 217.
- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1388 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 63.
- Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, Researched by: Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, First Edition, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1378 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 13, p. 211.

wished to take revenge on them, he would be able to do so from this new city either through direct warfare or, at the very least, through threatening the Quraysh's trade routes which passed by the city of Yathrib.

For facing such a threat, the Quraysh gathered at a council on the last day of the month of Ṣafar (14 Hijrī) and struggled to find a solution for their newfound problem. During this council, some gave the suggestion that the Prophet (ṣ) be exiled or jailed, but this idea was rejected. Then they reached the consensus that he should be killed, but the killing of the Prophet (ṣ) was problematic because the Banī Hāshim would not sit quietly by, and they would react with a campaign of revenge for his murder. After thinking this issue over, they decided that they would select a young man from every tribe, and then all together this group would attack the Prophet (ṣ) and kill him while he slept in his bed. With this plan of action, the killer would not be a single individual, and the Banī Hāshim would not be able to wage war on all of the tribes in the area, thereby becoming content with simply receiving the blood money for the killing. The Quraysh selected the first night of the month of Rabīʿ al-Awwal for their attack.

God, in the Holy Quran, later mentioned these three plots of the Quraysh in the Quran. He said: "When the faithless plotted against you to take you captive, or to kill or expel you. They plotted and Allah devised, and Allah is the best of devisers."[23]

Following this decision by the Quraysh, the Angel of Revelation made the Prophet (ṣ) aware of the polytheist's plot, and conveyed the divine command that the Prophet (ṣ) was to leave Mecca and go towards Yathrib.

In order to subvert the plot of the polytheists and leave the city, the Prophet (ṣ) had to allow them to think that he was still in his home. For this method to be successful, it was necessary for a devoted and selfless individual to sleep in the

[23] Surah Anfāl, Verse 30.

bed of the Prophet (ṣ) that night. If someone slept in the bed, then the group which had surrounded the home would think that the house was still occupied. This individual was none other than Imam ʿAlī (ʿa).

The Prophet (ṣ) made Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) aware of the plan of the leaders of the Quraysh and asked if the Imam (ʿa) was willing to take this risk. The Imam (ʿa) accepted without any hesitation. When the Prophet saw this, he said to the Imam (ʿa): "Sleep in my bed tonight and pull my green cloth over yourself, so that they may think that I am in the bed."

Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) acted upon the Prophet's (ṣ) words, and the assassins surrounded the house as darkness fell. When the night passed and it became morning, they unsheathed their swords and rushed into the house. When they entered, they found none other than Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) rising from the bed.

The assassins had thought that their plan was certain to be successful; when they saw Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) in the bed, they were completely shocked and didn't know what to do. They turned to him and said: "Where is Muḥammad? Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) said: Did you entrust him to me to be asking for him now! You did something where he had to leave this house."

At this, they rushed at ʿAlī (ʿa) and according to Ṭabarī, they beat him and dragged him towards 'Masjid al-Ḥarām'. There, they questioned him at length, and then ended up freeing him after realizing the hopelessness of their situation. After this, the group went towards Medina in pursuit of the Prophet (ṣ). At this very time, the Prophet (ṣ) had concealed himself at the cave of 'Thawr'.[24] The Holy Quran mentions this great act of devotion and self sacrifice of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) in a verse which mentions him as those who are willing to sacrifice their lives in the way of God: "And among the people is he who sells his soul seeking the pleasure of Allah, and Allah

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[24] Ibn Hishām, 'Abd al-Malik, al-Sīrāh Nabawīya, Researched by: Muṣṭafā al- Saqā, Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī and 'Abd al-Ḥafīẓ al-Ḥalabī, Cairo, Maktabah al-Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī (Published by Maktabah al-Ṣadr Tehran) 1355 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 124-128.
- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 102.
- Muḥammad ibn Sa'ad, al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir (Bī Tā), vol. 1, p. 228.

is most kind to [His] servants."[25]

The commentators have said: "This verse was sent down for the great act of self sacrifice of 'Alī ('a) on the 'Night of Mabīt'.[26] Imam 'Alī ('a) himself mentioned this virtue as a testament against the six person council which was formed on the command of 'Umar. He mentioned: "I swear all of you by God, was there anyone but me on that night full of danger when the Prophet (ṣ) had left for the Cave of Thawr? (Was there anyone but me) who slept in the Prophet's (ṣ) bed, and became a shield against calamity? All of them responded together: 'It was no one but you.'"[27]

3 – From the Emigration until the Passing of the Prophet

Imam 'Alī, the 'Brother of the Prophet'

Islamic brotherhood and the joining together of people is a foundational element of Islam. The Prophet (ṣ) would strive to join people together in various ways and to then strengthen those bonds once they had been created. A famous example of this occurred when the Prophet (ṣ) first entered Medina and decided to create 'bonds of brotherhood' between the 'Muhājirs'[28] and the 'Anṣār'[29]. One day when the Muslims had

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[25] Surah Baqarah, Verse 207.

[26] - Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, Researched by: Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, First Edition, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1378 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 13, p. 262.

- Muḍaffar, Muḥammad Ḥasan, Dalā'īl al-Ṣidq, Second Print, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 80.

The late Muḍaffar narrates from prominent scholars and commentators of the Ahl al-Sunnah such as Tha'labī, Qandūzī, and Ḥākim where they all said: "This verse was revealed about 'Alī (a)."

[27] Shaykh Ṣadūq, Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Bābawīya, al-Khiṣāl, Edited by: 'Alī Akbar Ghaffārī, Qum, Manshūrāt Jāmi'ah' al-Mudarisīn Fī Hawzah al-'Ilmīyah Biqum, 1403 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 560.

- Ṭabarsī, Iḥtijāj, Najaf, Maṭba'at al-Murtaḍawīya, 1350 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 75.

[28] The Emigrants: This was the group which emigrated with the Prophet (s) from Mecca to Medina.

[29] The Helpers: These were the people of Medina who accepted Islam and invited the Prophet (s) to emigrate there.

gathered, the Prophet (ṣ) stood up and said: "In the way of God, become brothers two at a time." Then he proceeded to join the Muslims together in pairs, so that they took each other's hands as brothers, and unity and harmony was strengthened between them.

During this process, a type of compatibility was followed and individuals who were similar in terms of Islamic virtue, character, and faith were paired together. This aspect is very clear when the individuals paired are examined in terms of their characteristics and virtues.

After all the people in the gathering had been joined as brothers, Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), who had been left without having been paired, came to the Prophet (ṣ) with tears in his eyes and said: "You did not create the bonds of brotherhood between me and another." The Prophet (ṣ) replied, "You are my brother in both this world and the next."[30] Then he proceeded to recite the oath of brotherhood between them. This event clearly shows the level of virtue and greatness which Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) possessed and it shows how close he was to the Holy Prophet (ṣ).

In the Battlefields of War

The life of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), from the time of the emigration until his martyrdom, is one full of activity and great feats. What is particularly striking is his level of self sacrifice and selflessness during his participation in the early wars of the Muslims. After the Prophet's emigration to Medina, there were 27 wars which he personally led[31]. These wars were fought against polytheists, Jews, and various rebel groups during his lifetime. Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) participated in twenty-six of these and the only one that he did not participate in was the war of

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[30] - Al-Ḥākim Nayshābūrī, Al-Mustadrak ʿAlā al-Ṣaḥiḥain, Formatted by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Marʿashī, First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1406 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 14.
- Ibn ʿAbd al-Bir, Al-Istiʿāb Fī al-Maʿrifah al-Aṣḥāb, First Edition, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1328 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 35.

[31] In Arabic, the campaigns which the Prophet (s) himself led are termed 'غزو'. There were a number of other wars and battles which were not led by him personally.

'Tabūk'. During this war, the Prophet (ṣ) made him the governor of Medina due to the fear of sedition from the hypocrites who had stayed behind from the expedition.

To detail all of Imam 'Alī's ('a) wartime exploits would be out of the scope of this text, so we shall suffice with detailing his role during the four main battles which occurred during the lifetime of the Prophet (ṣ).

A- In the Battle of Badr

The Battle of Badr, which took place during the second year Hijrī, was the first full-fledged war between the newly formed Muslim community against the polytheists. Most importantly, it was the first military test between the two sides, and its outcome would prove highly crucial in deciding what was to come later.

During the second year, the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) became aware that a merchant caravan belonging to the Quraysh under the leadership of Abū Sufyān (a diehard enemy of Islam), would be passing by Medina. This caravan had departed from Damascus and was on its way to returning to Mecca; its return route passed close to Medina. The Prophet (ṣ), alongside with three hundred and thirteen members of the Muhājirs and Anṣār mobilized, and went towards an area called Badr that was along the route of the caravan; they went with the intention of seizing the caravan and what it was carrying. The polytheist's had stolen much of the property of the Muslims in times past, and this caravan contained some of these items.

The intention of the Prophet (ṣ) with such a tactic was to make the Quraysh aware that their route of trade was now under the control of the Muslims. If they were to continue blocking the freedom of the Muslims and the spread of Islam, then their economic artery could and would be severed. Abū Sufyān became aware of the move to intercept his caravan and so he chose another route that went alongside the Red Sea. Through these actions, he managed to move his caravan out

of danger. Simultaneously, he asked for help from the leaders of the Quraysh in Mecca.

In response to his request for help, approximately 950 to 1000 military men from the Quraysh came and began to march towards Medina. On the seventeenth day of the holy month of Ramaḍān, this group came head to head with the Muslims. The polytheists at this point possessed an army that was three times as large as that of the Muslims.

During the beginning of the battle, three individuals who were known for their mettle and courage, came to the middle of the battlefield and challenged their adversaries to fight them. These three were ʿUtbah (the father of Hind, who was the wife of Abū Sufyān), Shaybah (his older brother), and Walīd (ʿUtbah's son). Three of the people from the Anṣār, who were also known for their courage, came forward to meet this challenge. However, the fighters from the Quraysh did not accept them as their equals and yelled: "Oh Muḥammad (ṣ), bring us people who are from our relatives and who are our equals in standing to fight us".

At this challenge, the Holy Prophet (ṣ) ordered three other individuals to go forward for battle. They were ʿŪbaydah ibn Ḥārith ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, Ḥamzah ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, and Imam ʿAlī (ʿa). These three brave warriors went towards the battlefield and introduced themselves; the three polytheists accepted them and said: "These are our equals in standing." Ḥamzah went towards Shaybah, ʿŪbaydah with ʾUtbah, and Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), who was the youngest, went towards Walīd. Soon the fierce one on one battle began. Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) and Ḥamzah both killed their opponents quickly, but ʿŪbaydah and ʿUtbah were still battling, and neither was able to get the upper hand. Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) and Ḥamzah quickly went to the help of ʿŪbaydah and killed ʿUtbah.[32]

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[32] Ibn Ḥishām, al-Sīrāh al-Nabawīya, Researched by: Muṣṭafā al-Saqā', Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī and ʿAbd al-Ḥafīẓ al-Ḥalabī, Cairo, Maktabah al-Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī (Published by Maktabah al-Ṣadr Tehran) 1355 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 277.
- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 125.

Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), in one of his later letters to Mūʿāwīya, referred to this incident and said: "The sword which was used to kill your grandfather (ʿUtbah), your uncle (Walīd), and your brother (Ḥanẓalah), all in the course of a single battle, is still in my possession."[33]

After the victory of the three Muslim warriors over their opponents, the polytheists were hit hard psychologically by the defeat. Soon the general battle began, but it ended in defeat for the polytheists and they were soundly beaten. Moreover, 70 individuals from their army were taken prisoner.

In this battle, over half of those killed were killed by the sword of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa). The late Shaykh Mufīd has listed 36 of the polytheists killed in the battle of Badr and has stated: "Shia and Sunni narrators have both independently written that this is the number which ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (ʿa) killed personally. There are others as to which there is a difference of opinion as to whom they were killed by. In addition, there may have been others who were jointly killed by Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) and other individuals who were not counted in the number above."[34]

B – Imam ʿAlī's Courage at the Battle of Uḥud

After their defeat in the Battle of Badr, the Quraysh sustained a hard psychological blow. In order to get revenge for their war dead and to make up for their defeat, they decided to attack Medina with an even larger and better armed force than in the previous battle.

The Prophet (ṣ) had a group of sympathizers within the Quraysh who forewarned him of this plan which the leaders of the Quraysh had hatched. He then quickly formed a military commission in order to decide the best course of action. At this gathering, a group of people suggested that it would be better if the Muslims left the city of Medina and

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[33] Nahj al-Balāghah, Ṣubḥī Ṣālih, Letter 64: Amīr al-Mu'minīn in his twenty-eigth letter recalls this event.

[34] Al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 39.

fought with the polytheists on the city's outskirts.

This was accepted by the commission as being the best course of action and so the Prophet (ṣ) left the city with a force of one thousand men, moving towards the mountain of Uḥud, which was situated on the northern side of the city. On the way there, 300 soldiers from the supporters of ʿAbdullah ibn ʿUbayy, who was a known hypocrite, separated themselves from the army under his instigation and returned to Medina. The number of the Muslims had now decreased to seven hundred people. On the morning of the seventh of the month of Shawwāl, in the third year Hijrī, the two forces met and arrayed themselves into combat positions.

Before the hostilities began, the Prophet (ṣ) surveyed the battlefield from a military perspective and he saw that there was a place which could become a point of attack for the Quraysh and allow them to flank the Muslims from behind. The Prophet (ṣ) selected an officer by the name of ʿAbdullah ibn Jubayr to lead a group of fifty archers and he ordered them to position themselves on a hilltop and protect that position from the encroachment of the enemy. This group was ordered to not leave their positions under any circumstance and to stand their ground whether the Muslims had won or lost the battle.

Another interesting side note is that during the battles of that time, the flag bearers occupied a very important position in war. The flag was always given to individuals who were brave and steadfast in the face of danger. Their steadfastness, courage, and their flaunting of the flag in the face of the enemy would create feelings of fortitude and determination in the ranks of the fighters. Conversely, if this flag bearer was killed, and the flag was captured or destroyed, then the army would be shaken in spirit and demoralized. So before every battle, several of the most courageous members of the army were selected as flag bearers. If one fell, then the others would take his place, and this would continue until all the replacements were exhausted. In this battle, the Quraysh

likewise selected several flag bearers from the tribe of 'Banī 'Abd al-Dār', who were known for their courage.

Shortly after the battle began, the flag bearers who had been selected from the polytheist's army, began to be killed one after another, all by the capable hands of Imam 'Alī ('a). When the Quraysh saw this, fear and weakness swept through their ranks and they began to flee from the battlefield.

It has been narrated from Imam Ṣādiq ('a) that: "In the Battle of Uḥud, the flag bearers of the army of the Quraysh were nine individuals. All of them were killed by 'Alī ('a)".[35] Ibn Athīr also narrates: "The person who defeated the flag bearers of the Quraysh was 'Alī ('a)".[36]

In another tradition narrated by Shaykh Ṣadūq, Imam 'Alī ('a) used this event of the flag bearers as a testament against the six man council that was established after 'Umar's death in order to select a caliph. He said: "I bind you all to this oath before God, was there any person except me who killed the nine flag bearers of the tribe of Banī 'Abd al-Dār in the Battle of Uḥud?" Then he added: "And after these nine were killed, did not their slave, who had an immense stature, by the name of Ṣaw'ab come to the battlefield, while his mouth was foaming and his eyes were red with anger and say that for the revenge of his masters he would accept only the death of Muḥammad? When you saw him you become stunned and moved away from him, but I went towards him for battle; we fought and exchanged blows and then I struck him with such a blow that he was cut into two pieces." All the members of the council confirmed Imam 'Alī's ('a) words.[37]

When the army of the Quraysh began an all-out retreat, some of the 50 archers who were under the command of 'Abdullah ibn Jubayr, wanted to leave their position and go towards the main battlefield with the intention of gathering

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[35] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 47.

[36] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 154.

[37] Al-Khiṣāl, Edited by: 'Alī Akbar Ghaffārī, Qum, Manshūrāt Jāmi'ah' al-Mudarisīn Fī Ḥawzah al-'Ilmiyah Biqum, 1403 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 560

war booty. ʿAbdullah reminded them of the Prophet's (ṣ) orders, but they didn't pay any heed, and over forty of them left the hilltop and descended. ʿAbdullah ibn Jubayr was left alone with no more than ten fighters.

At this time Khālid ibn Walīd, who commanded a mounted cavalry division of the polytheists, and had been waiting in ambush for just such a moment, saw his opportunity and attacked the group. After killing them, he began an attack from the rear position of the Muslims. This coincided with the Qurayshī flag being raised by a woman named ʿAmrah bint ʿAlqamah, who had come to the battlefield in order to encourage the soldiers.

From this moment on, the situation began to reverse itself; the discipline and order that the Muslims had possessed fell apart and their ranks became chaotic. The lines of communication between the commanders and the troops were disrupted, and the Muslims were defeated. Nearly seventy individuals from among the ranks of the Muslim fighters were martyred; among them were Ḥamzah ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib and Muṣʿab ibn ʿUmayr.

Additionally, a rumor was spread throughout the battlefield that the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) had been killed. This rumor shook many of the Muslims to their core. Under the strong onslaught and with the gathering confusion of this rumor, many of the Muslims lost heart, retreated, and became scattered. At the battlefield, the number of individuals that were left with the Prophet (ṣ) could only be counted with one's hand. This was now a critical time where the fate and future of Islam was to be determined.

It was at this juncture that Imam ʿAlī's (ʿa) greatness once again manifested itself and he, with unparalleled courage and valor, fought alongside the Prophet (ṣ) and defended him against the waves of attack that repeatedly rushed towards him.

Ibn Athīr has written that: "The Prophet (ṣ) saw that a group of the polytheists were preparing for an attack. He

ordered ʿAlī (ʿa) to attack them. When he attacked them and killed a number of them, they dispersed. The Prophet (ṣ) then saw another group preparing to attack, and commanded ʿAlī (ʿa) to attack them as well. ʿAlī (ʿa) attacked them, killing a number of them, and causing the rest to disperse. At this point the Angel of Revelation came down and said to the Prophet (ṣ): 'This is the pinnacle of selflessness and self sacrifice which ʿAlī (ʿa) has shown of himself.' The Prophet of God (ṣ) said: 'He is from me and I am from him.' At this time a sound was heard from the heavens, which was saying: 'There is no sword but Dhūl Fiqār and there is no youth but ʿAlī.'"[38]

Likewise, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd has written:

"At the time when most of the companions of the Prophet (ṣ) began to run away, various groups of the enemy began to go towards him. A group from the tribe of 'Banī Kananah' and another group from the tribe of 'Banī ʿAbd Manāt' were present amongst these groups. Within these two groups there were four men who were renowned in Arabia for their fighting prowess. These groups began an attack on the Prophet (ṣ). The Prophet (ṣ) ordered ʿAlī (ʿa) to action by saying: Block this group's attack.

ʿAlī (ʿa), who was fighting without a horse as support, attacked the group, which numbered 50 individuals, and dispersed them. Several times, they regrouped and tried to attack, but each time the Imam (ʿa) repelled their attack and dispersed them. In these attacks the four men who were renowned for their bravery were killed alongside ten other individuals whose names have not been recorded in the books of history."

The Angel Gabriel told the Holy Prophet (ṣ): "Truly ʿAlī (ʿa) is engaged in a great act of self sacrifice; the angels are amazed and in wonderment about the manner of his self sacrifice." The Prophet (ṣ) replied: "Why should it not be so, for he is from me and I am from him." Gabriel said: "I am

[38] Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 154.

also from you." That day a sound was repeatedly heard from the heavens proclaiming: "There is no sword but Dhūl Fiqār and there is no youth but 'Alī." The sound was heard, but the one who was proclaiming it could not be seen. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) was asked as to who was saying these words. He replied that it was none other than the Angel Gabriel.[39]

C- During the Battle of Aḥzāb (The Confederates)

The Battle of Aḥzāb was a battle which put together all of the tribes and groups which were opposed to Islam and unified them for a final and complete assault on the new faith. Some historians have put the number of the polytheist's army at more than ten thousand men, while the Muslims numbered only about three thousand.

The heads of the Quraysh, who were personally leading this war expedition, had prepared their army well in terms of fighters and equipment. With their level of planning and preparation, they were completely certain that the Muslims would be wiped out, and they would finally get rid of Muḥammad (ṣ) and his followers. When news of the war expedition reached the Prophet (ṣ), he established a war council in order to decide the best course of action. During the gathering, one of the Muslims by the name of Salmān gave a suggestion that they construct a trench in the areas around the city which were susceptible to attack. This would block access to the oncoming army and they would be stopped in their tracks. This suggestion was approved, and through the hard work and efforts of the Muslims, the immense trench was constructed in just a few days. Its width was wide enough that a fighter on horseback could not jump over it and deep

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[39] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, Researched by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, First Edition, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1378 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 14, p. 253. Khawārizmī, in his book al-Manāt on page 223, narrates that 'Alī (a), in the matter of the nomination of the caliph, pointed to this issue as proof against the members of the six person council.

enough that if someone were to enter it, they couldn't easily come out.

Soon the army of the polytheists, assisted by a local Jewish tribe, arrived on the scene. The army had imagined that, just as with previous engagements, they would meet the Muslims in battle on the outskirts of the city. However, when they arrived, there were no signs of the Muslims, and so they were forced to continue towards the city. As they approached the city, they were stunned to see a profoundly wide and deep trench, which wound its way all throughout the areas susceptible to attack. They became bewildered since the use of such a stratagem was something the Arabs had never encountered before. With no other option at hand, they laid siege to the city and had their men surround it.

This siege, according to some traditions, lasted approximately one month. Whenever the soldiers would decide to encroach upon the trench and cross it, the Muslims would be in their positions waiting for them. The Muslims were positioned at short distances from each other, all across the length of the trench, and they would use arrows and stones to repel the invaders. There was a state of constant attack which continued through the days and the nights, and neither of the two sides could gain a victory over the other.

The siege of Medina, with such a great number of fighters, severely weakened the morale of the Muslims. They were almost literally staring ten thousand well equipped enemy soldiers in the face. The situation was worsened when news of the betrayal of a tribe of local Jews was confirmed. This tribe of neighboring Jews, by the name of Banī Qurayẓah, were a tribe who had signed a compact with the Muslims. In spite of their pledge, they had broken their treaty and promised the polytheists their help. They had promised that as soon as the polytheists were able to cross the trench, they would attack the Muslims from behind.

Dangerous Days

In Surah Aḥzāb, the Holy Quran beautifully lays out the critical situation of the Muslims during the days of the siege: "Oh you who have faith! Remember Allah's blessing upon you when the hosts came at you, and We sent against them a gale and hosts whom you did not see. And Allah sees best what you do. When they came at you from above and below you and when the eyes rolled [with fear] and the hearts leapt to the throats, and you entertained misgivings about Allah, it was there that the faithful were tested and jolted with a severe agitation. And when the hypocrites were saying, as well as those in whose hearts is a sickness, 'Allah and His Apostle did not promise us [anything] except delusion.' And when a group of them said, 'O people of Yathrib! This is not a place for you, so go back!' And a group of them sought the Prophet's permission saying, 'Our homes lie exposed [to the enemy]', although they were not exposed. They only sought to flee. Had they been invaded from its flanks and had they been asked to apostatize, they would have done so with only a mild hesitation... "[40]

Still, given the difficult position of the Muslims, the trench served its purpose and blocked access to the polytheist's army. The weather soon turned as well and became bitterly cold. The polytheists had brought only enough provisions and supplies for a short-term war; they were now running low on supplies and equipment. They had envisaged a war that would last approximately the same amount of time as the previous wars of Badr and Uḥud. As the siege dragged on, their level of supplies began to drop critically and this laid extra pressure on the army. Their enthusiasm and passion for war quickly faded, and their morale rapidly dropped.

The heads of the army realized that they had no choice but to quickly push through some of their best forces and break

[40] Surah Aḥzāb, Verses 8 - 14.

the siege. Five warriors who were known for their courage and supremacy in war pushed their horses into a gallop, and finding a narrow spot in the trench, spurred their horses on and jumped over the length of the trench. When they reached the other side, they shouted for equals to engage in one on one, as was the custom of the Arabs.

One of these fighters was a champion famous amongst the Arabs by the name of 'Amr ibn 'Abdu Wudd. He was considered to be one of the strongest and bravest of the Arab fighters, and his strength was famously compared to 1,000 regular fighting men. At one time, he had also been victorious in a land called 'Yalīl' against a large group of fighters, and therefore, he was popularly known as the 'Fāris Yalīl'. He had participated in the Battle of Badr and had been wounded during the course of battle; as a result of his injuries, he had not been able to participate in Uḥud. For this reason, he wished to truly show himself at the Battle of Aḥzāb so that he could make up for his absence in the previous battle.

'Amr, after passing over the trench, yelled out: "Who will fight me?" Since no one from amongst the Muslims prepared to meet his challenge, he became even more daring and mocked the beliefs of the Muslims. He said: "You are people who say that your war dead go to heaven, while our war dead go to hell! Is there no one amongst you whom I can send to heaven or that he sends me to hell?"

Then he sang out an epic war poem that was customary amongst the Arabs during battle. Amongst the lines he sang was one line where he said: "I have yelled out my challenge for an opponent amongst your army for so long that I have lost my voice." 'Amr's shouts and boasts had put such fear into the hearts of the Muslims that they had become like stones without the power of movement or reaction.[41]

Whenever 'Amr would yell out his challenge for an

[41] Wāqidī shows the fear of the Muslims with a line which says: "It was as if birds were sitting on their heads." Muḥammad ibn 'Umar ibn Wāqidī, al-Maghāzī, Edited by: Marsandense Jones, Beirut, Mu'assasah al-'Alamī, vol. 2, p. 470.

opponent, only one man would be seen rising in response, and that was ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (ʿa). He would rise up and ask permission from the Prophet (ṣ) to go towards the battlefield but the Prophet (ṣ) would refuse. This action was repeated three times. After the third time that Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) asked for permission to engage, the Holy Prophet (ṣ) told ʿAlī (ʿa): "(Don't you know that) this is ʿAmr ibn ʿAbdu Wudd!" ʿAlī (ʿa) replied: "And I am ʿAlī."[42]

Immediately, the Prophet (ṣ) gave his consent. He then took his own sword and gave it to Imam ʿAlī (ʿa). Then, he took his turban and wrapped it around Imam ʿAlī's (ʿa) head and prayed for him. As Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was en route towards the battlefield, the Prophet (ṣ) said: "The whole of Islam has now been arrayed against the whole of disbelief."[43]

This line clearly shows that the upcoming battle and the victory of either opponent over his adversary would mean the complete victory of Islam over disbelief or vice versa. To phrase this differently, this was the one battle which would decide the fate of Islam's future and whether it would prevail or be overtaken by polytheism.

Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) went towards ʿAmr while he was unmounted and on foot. When he came face to face with him he said: "You had made a promise to yourself that if a man from the tribe of the Quraysh came to you and asked you for one of three things, you would grant him his request." ʿAmr replied: "It is so." ʿAlī then said: "My first request is that you accept the religion of Islam." He replied: "Do not ask this of me." ʿAlī (ʿa) replied: "Then turn away from this war, leave this place, and leave the fate of Muḥammad (ṣ) to others. If he is truthful in what he claims, then you shall become fortunate and blessed, and if his claim is other than truthful, then you

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[42] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, Researched by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, First Edition, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1378 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 13, p. 248.

[43] Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīya, vol. 20, p. 215 (narrated from Kirājakī).

shall be successful in what you seek without any need for this battle." He replied: "The women of the Quraysh will never accept such an action from me. I have sworn an oath, that until I get my revenge on Muḥammad I shall not apply oil to my hair." ʿAlī (ʿa) then declared: "Then get off your horse and prepare for battle." ʿAmr said: "I never thought that any of the Arabs would ask such a thing of me. I do like for you to be killed by my hands, for your father was my friend. Return back from where you came, you are only a youth!" ʿAlī replied: "But know that I would like to kill you."

ʿAmr became enraged at this, and with the utmost arrogance, unmounted from his horse. He rushed towards ʿAlī (ʿa) for the attack. The two fighters engaged and a hard battle ensued. ʿAmr, when he saw an opportunity, struck a very hard blow at ʿAlī's (ʿa) head. ʿAlī (ʿa) blocked the blow with his shield, but his shield broke in two from the severity of the blow, and his head was cut. At this very moment, ʿAlī (ʿa) saw an opportunity and struck a hard blow at ʿAmr, knocking him to the ground. A cloud of dust and dirt had gathered, and the view of the battle was obscured for the two armies; everyone was waiting in anticipation of what had happened. Suddenly, the sound of ʿAlī (ʿa) reciting a 'Takbīr'[44] filled the air. The Muslims began to shout with happiness and everyone understood that ʿAlī (ʿa) had been the victor against one of the greatest fighters of the time.[45]

The death of ʿAmr caused the other four people who had come alongside him and who were waiting to see the results of the battle, to flee. Three of them were able to cross over the trench and escape, but one of them was not successful and fell into the trench, along with his horse. Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) followed after him, entered the trench, and killed him. With the killing of these Arab warriors, the army of the polytheists completely lost their morale and spirit of war, and felt hopeless of being

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[44] The phrase 'God is Greater'

[45] Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar ibn Wāqidī, al-Maghāzī, Edited by: Marsandense Jones, Beirut, Mu'assasah al-'Alamī, (Bī Tā) vol. 2, p. 471.

able to invade Medina. Each of the individual tribes began to think of ways to return back to their homes. The last blow against their army came from an act of God, in the form of severe winds and furious tempests. Seeing the utter desperation of the situation, the tribes became completely hopeless and left for their ancestral homes in frustration.[46]

The Holy Prophet (ṣ), in praise of the feat performed by ʿAlī (ʿa), said: "If this action, which you performed today, were to be compared with the whole of my nation's actions, it would be considered superior. This is because with the killing of ʿAmr, no house from the house of the polytheists remains but that disgrace and wretchedness has entered into it, and no house of the Muslims remains, but that honor and dignity has been added to it."[47]

The famous narrator of the Ahl al-Sunnah, Hākim Nayshābūrī, has narrated what the Prophet (ṣ) said about Imam ʿAlī (ʿa): "During the Battle of the Trench, the fight of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (ʿa) against ʿAmr ibn ʿAbdu Wudd, is superior to all of the deeds my nation will complete until the Day of Judgment."

The philosophy behind these words is clear: On that day, he religion of Islam and the Holy Quran were situated on a precipice from a military perspective, and these were some of the most critical moments for the new religion. It was an event which would influence the very fate of the religion. The one individual who saved Islam and guaranteed its existence until the Day of Judgment by allowing it to take root, was none other than Imam ʿAlī (ʿa). Hence, all of the worship which the Muslims have completed or will complete from that moment onwards until the Day of Judgment is indebted to that one act

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[46] The episode of Imam ʿAlī's (a) fateful battle with ʿAmr ibn ʿAbdu Wadd has been narrated, with slight differences in words, in the following texts:
- Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīya, vol. 20, p. 203-206.
- Al-Khiṣāl, Edited by: ʿAlī Akbar Ghaffārī, Qum, Jāmiʿah al-Mudarisīn Fī Ḥawzah al-ʿIlmiyah Qum, 1403 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 560.

[47] Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīya, vol. 20, p. 216.

of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa).

D - The Victor over the Fortresses of Khaybar

During the 7th year Hijrī, the Prophet (ṣ) decided to disarm the Jews of Khaybar. His purpose in doing this was twofold:

1. Firstly, Khaybar had become a focal point for various plots and subterfuges against the new Muslim government. The inhabitants of these fortresses had collaborated numerous times with the enemies of the Muslims in attacking the city of Medina. They had played an especially strong role in regards to the War of Aḥzāb, where they played a critical role in strengthening and aiding the enemy.
2. During this time, Persia and Rome were two of the main powers in existence, and they were constantly in a state of war with each other. With the advent of Islam, the Muslims became a sort of third rising power, which was unacceptable and intolerable for the first two. It was not improbable that in the event of an attack by one of these super powers, the people of Khaybar would join hands and become proxies for fighting against the Muslims. They had acted similarly in the past, when they encouraged the polytheists to attack the Muslims, and it was not farfetched that they would try to instigate the two superpowers against the newly formed faith.

These were issues which the Prophet (ṣ) had in mind when he departed, alongside with 1,600 soldiers, towards the fortresses of Khaybar. The fortresses of Khaybar were very well built and possessed immense fortifications and a full array of defensive equipment. Moreover, it was full of battle hardened men who were very willing to defend it at any cost.

With the brave feats and valor of the Muslim army, the fortresses fell one by one, but the Muslim victories were slow and arduous. Soon, all of them had fallen except for one: 'Qāmūs'. This was the largest of the fortresses and a sizable

number of the bravest fighters were assembled there. At this last fortress, the fighters were putting up fierce resistance and so the Muslim soldiers were not able to gain the upper hand over the enemy.

At the same time, the Prophet (ṣ) was ill with a severe headache and he was not able to personally command the operation. Every day he would turn over the flag to one of the Muslims and give him the responsibility of sacking the fortress. Unfortunately, one after the other, they would return without having achieved this goal. One day the flag was given to Abū Bakr and the day after it was given to ʿUmar, but both of them returned without having been successful.

This situation weighed heavily on the Holy Prophet (ṣ). When he saw these circumstances, he said: "Tomorrow I will give this flag to an individual through whom God will defeat this fortress. This is a person who loves God and his Prophet (ṣ), and whom God and his Prophet (ṣ) also love."[48]

That night, all of the Prophet's (ṣ) companions were thinking about what he had said and wondering whom the flag would be given to. When morning broke, all the companions surrounded the tent of the Prophet (ṣ) and each individual was hoping that the flag would be given to him on that day. Then the Prophet (ṣ) spoke, saying: "Where is ʿAlī?" They answered that he is afflicted with great pain in his eyes and he is resting. The Prophet (ṣ) said: "Bring him." When Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) came, the Holy Prophet (ṣ) made a prayer for his eyes, and by the blessing of that prayer, the pain was cured. Then the Prophet (ṣ) put the flag into ʿAlī's (ʿa) hands. ʿAlī (ʿa) said: "Oh Prophet of God (ṣ), I will fight with them to such a degree that they will submit to Islam." The Prophet (ṣ) replied: "Move towards them and when you reach their fortress, first invite them towards Islam and remind them of their duty towards accepting God's religion. I swear by God that if one person amongst them gains salvation through your

[48] Al-Istīʿāb Fī Maʿrifah al-Aṣḥāb, First Edition, Dār Aḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1328 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 36.

hands, it is better than if you were the possessor of red haired camels."[49] Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) departed for his mission, and with unparalleled courage and perseverance, he conquered the fortress.

The Ambassador and Deputy of the Prophet

It had been more than 20 years since the inception of Islam in the mainland of Arabia. The logic of Islam had spread throughout the lands and most of the Arabs had become aware that idols and idol worshiping were nothing but a blind following of their ancestors. They had come to realize that idols were not just incapable of helping people, but they were even incapable of helping themselves. In short, they had realized that idol worship was worthless and without any benefit for them.

The people who had listened to the words of the Prophet (ṣ) with open minds and hearts had realized the truth of Islam and the falsehood of idol worship, and they had submitted themselves to the way of Islam. When the Prophet (ṣ) took over Mecca, religious preachers were especially able to propagate the religion and spread the Islamic way of life. The results of this propagation was that the people in the nearby cities, districts, and villages began to destroy their idols and turn towards the religion of Islam. In most of the areas of the Arabian Peninsula, the call of Islam could be heard resonating amongst the people.

Unfortunately, there still existed a prejudiced and ignorant class, for whom the leaving of old ideas and beliefs was very difficult, and who were caught up in an internal struggle with themselves. This group could not bear to leave their old beliefs, even though these caused a number of ethical, moral, and social problems.

At this juncture, the time had come for the Prophet (ṣ) to use military action to remove all external traces of idol

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[49] Red haired camels were the most superior and expensive of all camels at that time.

worship. It was time to destroy idol worship at the root level since it was the root cause of many ethical and social ills. In reality, idol worship had destroyed the potential which people had in moving towards perfection and progress.

It was at this time that the verses of Surah Barā'ah were revealed. The Prophet (ṣ) was given the mission of announcing God's aversion to the polytheists and their actions at the Ḥajj rites. The Ḥajj was a ceremony which gathered pilgrims from all the various parts of the Ḥijāz region to the city of Mecca for worship. It had become a center of idol worship during the Prophet's (ṣ) time. The Prophet (ṣ) was to give the idol worshipers notice that they must change their ways and that they were to be given four month's notice to implement these changes.

The verses of Surah Barā'ah were revealed at a time when the Prophet (ṣ) had not made a decision for participating in the Ḥajj ceremony of that year. During the previous year, which was the year Mecca was conquered, the Prophet (ṣ) had visited the Kaaba and had made a decision to visit again in 2 year's time (which would later be called the Ḥajjatu al-Widā). Hence, the Prophet (ṣ) had to select someone else to go on his behalf and deliver the divine message. He selected Abū Bakr for this assignment and taught him the initial verses of Surah Barā'ah. He then dispatched him towards Mecca, along with 40 men, in order that they reach the 'Feast of the Sacrifice' and read their message.

As Abū Bakr was en route to Mecca, a divine message was suddenly revealed, and it commanded the Prophet (ṣ) that this message was only to be delivered by himself or from someone who was 'from him'. It was commanded that no one else had the authority to deliver this message.

The Prophet (ṣ) quickly summoned Imam 'Alī ('a) and ordered him to go towards Mecca. He was to intercept Abū Bakr on the way, and tell him that a divine revelation had been revealed, commanding the Prophet (ṣ) that the verses be delivered either by himself or from an 'individual who was

from him'. Clearly, the undertaking of this work had been turned over to Imam 'Alī ('a). Imam 'Alī ('a) went towards Mecca, while riding on the Prophets (ṣ) own camel, alongside with Jābir and a few other of the Prophet's (ṣ) companions. He soon overtook Abū Bakr and reiterated the Prophet's (ṣ) words; with this, Abū Bakr handed over his mission to him.

Imam 'Alī ('a) entered the city of Mecca during the tenth day of Dhī al-Ḥijjah. He went to the forward area of Jamara' 'Aqabah, and with a loud and far-reaching voice, recited the initial verses of Surah Barā'ah. He then announced the four point notice of the Prophet (ṣ), and this message was heard by all the participants of the Ḥajj.[50]

With the announcement of this message, the polytheists became aware that they had only four month's time to decide on a course of action and make clear their future intentions with the Islamic government. The verses of the Quran and the Prophet's (ṣ) announcement had a strange effect on the polytheists, and before the four months had even come to an end, they began to come to the Prophet (ṣ) in droves and accepted Islam. The tenth year had not yet concluded when the last external vestiges of polytheism had been completely effaced from the lands of the Ḥijāz.

When Abū Bakr was recalled from his delivery of the Prophet's (ṣ) message, he became very upset, and upon returning to Medina, he went to the Prophet (ṣ) and began to complain. He said: "You saw me worthy of doing this work (delivering the verses and the Prophet's announcement), but no time had passed when you dismissed me and set me aside. Did a divine command reach you from God about this matter?" The Prophet answered in response: "The Angel of Revelation came down and said that besides me or someone who is from me, no one else has the authority of this

[50] The four point announcement was as follows: A- The annulment of all treaties with the polytheists. B- Removal of the right of the polytheist's participation in the Ḥajj rites. C- The forbiddance of doing the circumambulation of Ḥajj while naked (this had become a common practice during that time). D- The forbiddance of the polytheists entering into the Masjid al-Ḥarām.

mission."[51]

4 – From the Passing of the Prophet until the Caliphate of Imam ʿAlī

Before beginning this section, let us first keep in mind an important point. During the time period of the Imamate, beginning from the time of the passing of the Prophet (ṣ) (which occurred in the month of Ṣafar during the 11th year Hijrī) until the passing of Imam Ḥasan ʿAskarī (ʿa) (which occurred during the month of Rabīʿ al-Awwal during the year 260 Hijrī), there existed four approximate eras. Each of these eras possessed their own particularities and differences in regards to how the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) worked towards their goals. These four eras were:

1- The period of patience and compromise of Imam Ali (ʿa) with the ruling powers of the time. This period comprises of 25 years, beginning with the passing of the Prophet (ṣ) (11 Hijrī) until the caliphate of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) (35 Hijrī).

2- The era of the Imams (ʿa) reaching the caliphate. This era includes the caliphate of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), which lasted 4 years and 9 months, as well as the few months that Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) was caliph. Even with the shortness of this period and the associated problems and difficulties, this period is still considered as one of the brightest times in the history of the Islamic government.

3- The era of short-term constructive change in order to bring about an Islamic government. This era includes the 20 years from the peace of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) (which took place during 41 Hijrī) until the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) during the month of Muḥarram in the 61st year Hijrī. After the episode of the peace, the

[51] Ālūsī Baghdādī, Maḥmūd, Rūh al-Maʿānī, Second Print, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, vol. 1 (Commentary on Surah Tawbah).

semi-secretive struggle of the Shias for the rightful return of power to the Imams ('a) began. This return wasn't something impossible to achieve and with the death of Mū'āwīya it became even more of a reality.

4- This era is a continuation of the last stage but it lasted for a longer period of time. This period lasted almost two centuries, and was comprised of various defeats and victories, ending with a final victory in the field of ideology.[52]

The Passing of the Holy Prophet and the Issue of Leadership

After the Prophet (ṣ), Imam 'Alī ('a) was the most worthy and able individual for administering the Muslim society. In the Muslim world, in terms of virtue, piety, jurisprudential capability, judgment, military prowess, striving in the path of God, and all of the human perfections and meritorious attributes, no one even came close to his acheivements.

Due to this worthiness, Imam 'Alī ('a) had been introduced as the future leader of the Muslims countless times. The most important of these was the event of Ghadīr Khum. It was in fact expected that after the passing of the Prophet (ṣ), Imam 'Alī ('a) would immediately take the reins of power and take over the government of the Muslims. Unfortunately, this never took place and the course of the Islamic caliphate, after the passing of the Prophet (ṣ), took a much different path. Imam 'Alī ('a) was left out of the government's political and administrative decision making process.

The Two Paths

Imam 'Alī ('a) did not tolerate this aberrant course which the caliphate had taken. He repeatedly criticized and protested

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[52] Ayatollah Khāmīnīī, Sayyid 'Alī, Pīshvāye Ṣādiq, Tehran, Sayyid Jamāl Publications, p. 21.

against the caliph and his supporters and admonished them with clear reasoning and proofs. With the passing of time, it became clear that the use of reason did not have much of an effect, and the caliph and his supporters were bent on protecting and continuing their power and rule. At this point, Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was situated at a critical juncture, which would decide the fate of Islam.

Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was faced with two options. The first was that he could gather the people who recognized the current government as illegitimate, and through the use of force, regain the caliphate. The second was that he could endure the current situation, and alongside this, help solve the many problems that the Muslims were facing. One interesting point that should be mentioned is that for truly pious rulers, power is not considered as the end goal. The end goal is something higher and more valuable than increasing one's status and ability to rule. In fact, the purpose of rule and governance is only something which gives fulfilment to these end goals; in essence, it is only a means to an end.

Therefore, if one day, a ruler is situated between two paths where he must choose between the end goal and his position of leadership, he must let go of his position and know that the end goal is foremost in importance. Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was faced with just such a situation and he selected the second path. He judged the situation of the time and his society's condition, and reached the conclusion that if he were to go after the reclaiming of the caliphate, then a situation would come about in which all of the work of the Prophet (ṣ) and the blood of the martyrs, who had been killed in the way of strengthening and defending Islam, would be squandered.

Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), in his sermon of Shiqshiqīya spoke of the difficult choice he made and the reason behind his selection of the second path. He said: "...But I was forced to close my eyes to this usurpation and turn my face away from the calamity. I was in dire straits; there were two alternatives before me: either to fight for my rights without the help of

supporters, or to patiently endure the bereavement. The endurance was going to be of such sadness and long duration that during this period young men would become old, the old would lose their vitality and the faithful would end their days unsuccessfully trying to improve the situation.

After having weighed the situation carefully, I came to the conclusion that the wisest course of action was for me to face the disaster with patience and courage. Therefore, I bore it all patiently, though the very thought of having my just rights usurped, was extremely painful and saddening to me..."[53]

Here Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) points to his chosen path of patience in the face of the usurpation of the caliphate and the deviation of the system of Islamic government. He bases his patience on the fact that any other action would have caused the foundations of Islam to weaken and crumble. When ʿUthmān was chosen as caliph by the other members of the six man committee, Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) faced the others and said:

"You have certainly known that I have the greatest right towards the position of the caliphate. By Allah, so long as the affairs of the Muslims remains intact, and there is no oppression in it save on myself, I shall keep quiet seeking reward for it (from Allah) and keeping aloof from its attractions and allurements for which you aspire."[54]

Domestic and Foreign Dangers

As mentioned previously, Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) deliberated over the dangers which faced the Muslim community if he chose to make an armed uprising. He came to the conclusion that it was best to abstain from initiating a movement at that period in time. One may wonder about the types of dangers which the Muslim community faced during that time. These

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[53] Nahj al-Balāghah, Jaʿfar ʿAskarī, Sermon 3.

[54] Nahj al-Balāghah, Sermon 74.

domestic and foreign dangers, and the various considerations and obstacles which the Imam ('a) had to reflect upon, which removed the possibility of an armed uprising, can be divided into the following:

1- The first reason was that if Imam 'Alī ('a) was to make an armed uprising and reclaim the caliphate, then many of his closest and strongest followers would be killed. These were people who believed whole-heartedly in his right of governance and Imamate. In addition to the loss of this group, there was another considerable group of the Prophet's companions who were opposed to the caliphate of Imam 'Alī ('a) while having no other issues with him. Even though this group was wrong to stand on old grudges and resentments, they were still a source of support against polytheism, idol worship, and the Christian and Jewish powers of the time. With the loss of this group, the power of Islam would have been considerably weakened.

As Imam 'Alī ('a) was on his way to Baṣrah in order to fight against the 'Pledge Breakers' (Ṭalḥah and Zubayr), he pointed out this critical issue and said: "When God took the soul of his Prophet (ṣ), the Quraysh, through their self interest, nominated themselves over us. Even though we were the most worthy of rule, they usurped our rights. I saw that patience and toleration is better than creating divisions amongst the Muslims and the spilling of their blood. The Muslim community, due to the newness of their faith, was much like a large leather container that was brimming over with milk. The least slack and irresolution would spoil it, and the least movement would spill it."[55]

2- The second reason was that many of the people who had converted to Islam during the last years of the Prophet (ṣ) had not yet had sufficient Islamic education and so the light of

[55] Subḥānī, Ja'far, A Deep Look at the Life of 'Alī (a), Qum, Jahān Ārā, p. 222, narrated from the Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah of Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd.

faith had not fully penetrated into their hearts. When news spread of the Prophet's (ṣ) passing, a group of these people raised the flag of apostasy and reverted to idol worship. They expressed hostility against the government in Medina and refused to pay their Islamic taxes. At the same time, they threatened Medina with attack through the initiation of military maneuvers. The first action of the new government was to raise an army of the Muslims and send them into battle against these apostates. Through the difficult battles which followed, the rebellion was quelled and the threat against the newly formed community of Muslims was eliminated.[56]

It is clear that the Muslims were at a critical juncture in their development and progress. At a time when the Muslims were under the threat of attack, it would have been dangerous for the Imam ('a) to raise another flag and begin a battle for the caliphate.

In a letter which he had written to the people of Egypt, Imam 'Alī ('a) emphasizes this point and says:

"When the Holy Prophet (ṣ) passed away, the Muslims started a tug-of-war for the caliphate. I swear by Allah that at that juncture I could not have even imagined that the Arabs would snatch the seat of the caliphate from the family and descendants of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and that they would be swearing the oath of allegiance for the caliphate to a different person. At every stage, I kept myself aloof from that struggle of supremacy and power politics until I found the heretics had openly taken to heresy and schism, and were trying to undermine and ruin the religion preached by our Holy Prophet (ṣ). I felt afraid that, after seeing and recognizing the evil, if I did not stand up to help Islam and the Muslims, it would be a worse calamity to me than my losing authority and power over you, which was only a transient and short-lived affair. Therefore, when I stood up amidst the sweeping surge of innovations and schisms, the dark clouds of heresy

[56] This cannot be taken as an endorsement of the actions of Abū Bakr's government. For example, refer to the killing of Mālik ibn Nuwayrah.

dispersed, falsehood and schism were crushed and the religion was saved."[57]

Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), during the initial days of his caliphate, mentioned this point during the course of a sermon. ʿAbdullah ibn Junādah is quoted as saying: "I had left Mecca and traveled to Medina during the early days of ʿAlī's (ʿa) caliphate when I saw the people gathered in the Prophet's mosque and awaiting ʿAlī's (ʿa) arrival. Suddenly ʿAlī (ʿa) came out of his house while carrying his sword and took his seat at the pulpit. All the people began to look intently at him. After praising and glorifying God, he began his speech as such:

'Oh people, know that on the day our beloved Prophet (ṣ) left from amongst us, we did not think that anyone would dispute and compete with us on the matter of the government which he had established. We did not think that anyone would look at it with covetous eyes, for we were his heirs, guardians, and family. In spite of our expectations, a group from our tribe transgressed upon our rights and took the caliphate away from us and the government fell into the hands of others...

I swear by God that if it was not for the fear of schism, disunity, and discord amongst the Muslims, and if there was no danger that polytheism and idol worship would once again return to the lands of Islam and completely destroy the religion, then we would have acted in a wholly different manner with them.'" [58]

3- In addition to the dangers of the apostates, a group of people appeared who claimed to be prophets. These included people such as Musaylamah, Ṭulayḥah, and Sajāḥ. They gathered supporters and military forces around themselves, and had the intention of attacking Medina. In the ensuing

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[57] Nahj al-Balāghah, Letter 62.

[58] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, Researched by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, First Edition, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1378 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 307.

battle, these groups were soundly defeated only due to the unity and perseverance of the Muslim army. If the Muslims had not been unified, then there is no saying as to how far these groups would have succeeded in their endeavors.

4- Another real threat to the newly formed community was an attack by the Roman Empire, which was one of the superpowers of that time. Up until that time, the Muslims and Romans had come face to face three times in various conflicts. The Romans considered them to be a serious threat and were waiting for the right opportunity to attack their center of power. If Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) had engaged in an armed uprising, then through the weakening of the Muslim's internal power balance, there would have arisen an easy opportunity for the Romans to attack.

By keeping these above points in mind, it becomes clear why Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) chose patience over an armed uprising and how he, through his patience, prudence, and far sightedness, saved the Muslim community from great dangers. If Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) did not fear for the unity of the Muslims and the consequences of schism, then he would have never allowed for the government of the Muslims to fall out of the hands of the divinely selected guardians and into the hands of others.

The Activities of Imam ʿAlī during the Time of the Three Caliphs

Some of the Imam's activities and work during this time included:

1- His acts of worship and servitude to God. These acts were so profound and deep that Imam Sajjād (ʿa), who was known for his acts of worship considered his acts to be nothing in comparison to the acts of his grandfather.

2- His commentary of the Holy Quran and the solving of the various mysteries of its verses. He also trained and educated a number of students, such as ʿAbdullah ibn ʿAbbās, who later became one of the greatest commentators amongst the companions.

3- Answering the questions of various scholars from throughout the world, including Jewish and Christian scholars. Many of these individuals would travel to Medina from far away lands in order to research the new religion. When they would ask their questions, there was no one but Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) who had a sufficient expertise in the Bible and the Torah who could answer them. If it had not been for ʿAlī (ʿa), the Muslim community would have been placed in an unacceptable position in the face of these questions. Whenever Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) would answer these questions with precision and completeness, the faces of the caliphs, who were sitting in the place of the Prophet (ṣ), would show deep amazement and wonder.

4- He would also answer and expound upon religious rulings in light of new incidents which had recently arisen amongst the Muslims. These were issues which had no precedence in past times. Some of these incidents were so complicated that the judges were completely dumbfounded and unable to make a ruling. If Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), who had been confirmed by the Prophet (ṣ) as being the most knowledgeable in the laws and principles of Islam was not amongst the Muslims, many of the new issues which came up in those early days would still be considered to be unsolvable mysteries.

It was these new issues, which came about after the passing of the Prophet (ṣ), that required an aware and infallible Imam to be amongst the people. This individual would have to be an expert in the principles and branches of religion just like the Prophet (ṣ), and have such a wide and deep knowledge that it would prevent the Muslim community from deviating and being forced to use tools such as analogies or even guesswork to derive their religious rulings. Amongst the companions, there was no one but Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) who had such qualifications and knowledge.

Some of Imam ʿAlī's (ʿa) rulings and judgments, and his profound use of the verses of the Holy Quran, have been mentioned in the books of history and the books of tradition.

In fact, some of the scholars have written individual books on these topics.[59]

5- Another group, which had the proper purity of heart and basic spiritual foundations, was trained and educated by Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) in spiritual wayfaring. He trained them in order that they could reach the heights of spirituality, and use the eyes of their heart to see what their physical eyes could not.

6- He would work hard in order to secure and safeguard the lives of the poor and the indigent. He would even go as far as establishing orchards and excavating aqueducts and then giving them in the way of God.

7- Whenever the caliphate would become entangled in a political issue and reach a dead end, Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) would be available as a trusted and experienced advisor. With his far sightedness, he would solve these problems and give direction to the Islamic government. Some of these consultations are recorded in the books of history, as well as in the Nahj al-Balāghah.

The Solving of the Political and Scientific Problems of the Caliphs

History shows us that Abū Bakr and ʿUmar would refer to Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) during the period of their caliphate and they benefitted greatly from his knowledge in matters related to politics, religious doctrine, spirituality, and Quranic exegesis. Let us take a look at a few of these incidents which have been recorded in history:

The War against the Romans

One of the diehard enemies of the new Islamic

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[59] As an example, refer to the following books: 'The Judgments of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib by Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Tastarī. Also, refer to 'The Book of the Judgments of Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, collected by Sayyid Ismāʿīl Rasūl Zādih.

government was the Roman Empire, which was situated on the northern borders of the Muslim lands. The Prophet (ṣ), up to the very last minutes of his life, was heedful of the danger that they posed. During the 8th year Hijrī, a group under the command of Ja'far Ṭayyār was dispatched to the coastal area of Syria.

Unfortunately, during the battle, the army lost three of its top commanders and a number of its soldiers. Therefore, they returned back to Medina without having met their goals. To compensate for this defeat, the Prophet (ṣ) sent an army towards Tabūk in the 9th year Hijrī, but they did not come into contact with the enemy and they returned back to Medina. Even at the very last moments, as the Prophet (ṣ) lay dying, he was busy raising an army to go towards the coastal region of Syria to fight the Romans. For certain reasons however, this army did not leave Medina. With the army encamped only a few kilometers away from the city, the Prophet (ṣ) ended up passing away and the army returned.

After the passing of the Prophet (ṣ), the political situation in Medina stabilized with the newly formed government, and went from a situation of crisis to one of relative calm. Abū Bakr, who had taken the reins of power, was conflicted in regards to Rome, in spite of the Prophets (ṣ) precedent. He consulted with a group of the Prophet's companions, but they gave suggestions which didn't satisfy him. Then he consulted with Imam 'Alī ('a) and the Imam ('a) encouraged him towards enacting the Prophet's (ṣ) command. He added: "If you engage in battle, you shall be victorious." The caliph became pleased with the Imam's ('a) words and said: "You have foretold of good things and given glad tidings."[60]

The Consultations of the Second Caliph with Imam 'Alī

During the era of the Second Caliph, the Imam (a) was an important advisor and problem solver of many of his

[60] Ibn Wāḍih Ya'qūbī, The History of Ya'qūbī, vol. 3, p. 39.

political, scientific, and social problems. One example where the caliph benefited from his knowledge is narrated as follows: "During the 14th year Hijrī, a hard battle ensued between the Muslims and the Persians in a land called 'Qādisīyah'. This was the battle in which the Muslims were victorious and Rūstam Farokh Zād, the top commander of the Persian forces, was killed. With this victory, the whole of Iraq came under the political and military authority of the Muslims. Madā'in, the seat of Sāsānī (Persian) power, was also taken over by the Muslims and the Persian forces were forced to retreat into the interior of the country.

The Persian military leaders and their advisors were worried that the Muslim army would slowly advance and take over the whole of the country. To counter such a dangerous threat, 'Yazdegerd', the king of Persia, raised an army of 150,000 soldiers and put them under the command of 'Fīrūzān'. They were ordered to put a stop to any sudden attacks by the Muslims and, in the case of favorable conditions, were given permission to engage in offensive attacks themselves.

Sa'ad Waqqāṣ, who was the top commander of the Muslims forces (although, according to some narrations, this was 'Ammār Yāsir), sent a letter to the Second Caliph and made him aware of the movements of the enemy. Then he added: The army of Kūfah is ready to begin the battle and we are prepared to preemptively attack in order to create even further intimidation in their ranks.

The caliph went to the mosque and gathered together the leaders from amongst the companions. When they were gathered, he informed them of his decision to leave Medina and go towards the areas near Kūfah and Baṣrah and use those areas as a command post in order to lead the Muslim army. When he had finished speaking Ṭalḥah stood up and encouraged the caliph in his undertaking with flattering words. After this, 'Uthmān stood up and also encouraged the caliph. He then added: 'Write a letter to the army of Syria and

Yemen and have them all leave their posts and come join you. With such a great army, you will undoubtedly be victorious over the enemy.'

At this moment Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) stood up and said: 'In this matter, victory or defeat is not dependent on the smallness or greatness of forces. It is Allah's religion which He has raised above all faiths, and His army which he has mobilized and extended, until it has reached the point where it stands now... We hold a promise from Allah, and He will fulfil his promise and support his army.

The position of the head of government is that of the thread for a group of beads, for it connects them and keeps them together. If the thread is broken, they will disperse and be lost, and they will never be gathered again. The Arabs today, even though small in number, are big because of Islam and strong because of unity. You should remain like an axis for them, and rotate the mill (of government) with (the help of) the Arabs, and be their root. Avoid battle, because if you leave this place, the Arabs will attack you from all sides and directions, until the unguarded places left behind by you will become more important than those before you.

If the Persians see you tomorrow nearby, they will say: "He is the chief of Arabia. If we do away with him, then we will be in peace." This will heighten their eagerness against you and their keenness to aim at you. You say that they have set out to fight against the Muslims. Well, Allah detests their setting out more than you do, and he is more capable of preventing what He detests. As regards to your idea about their (large) numbers, in the past we did not fight on the strength of large numbers, but we fought on the basis of Allah's support and assistance.'"[61]

When 'Umar heard Imam 'Alī's ('a) words, he accepted his suggestion and reconsidered leaving Medina.[62] It was in light

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[61] Nahj al-Balāghah, First Edition, Sermon 146.

[62] - Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 8.
- Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut Print, Dār al-Qāmūs

of these counsels which Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) offered, that ʿUmar would repeatedly say: "I seek protection with God from having a problem and not having Abū al-Ḥasan (Imam ʿAlī (ʿa)) present to solve it."[63]

From Imam ʿAlī's Caliphate until his Martyrdom

The Manner in Which People Swore Allegiance to Imam ʿAlī

During the period of his caliphate, ʿUthmān became involved in a variety of financial and administrative corruptions, which were unacceptable and illegal in the eyes of the people. He spent the money of the public treasury based on his whims and appointed unsuitable people from his tribe, the Banū Ummayyah, to government posts and positions. Many people who were suitable and deserving of government positions were brushed aside, while incompetent and undeserving people from his tribe were selected.

The handing over of the fate of the Islamic nation to such corrupt and unsuitable people aroused the anger of the masses. One particularly vexing complaint which the people had was the power of corrupt governors and government leaders. After repeated complaints and warnings to the caliph, no action was taken to remove these individuals and soothe the people's anger. As a result, open revolt broke out against him and it ended with a siege of his house and his subsequent killing.

After the revolt ended, the people gave their oath of loyalty to Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) and he was selected as the caliph. Therefore, the election of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), which came about after the killing of ʿUthmān, was in reality a revolutionary government

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al-Ḥadīth, vol. 4, p. 237.

63- Ibn Ḥajar ʿAsqalānī, al-Iṣābah Fī Tamayyūz al-Saḥābah, First Edition, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1328 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 509.

- Ibn ʿAbd al-Bir, Al-Istiʿāb Fī al-Maʿrifah al-Asḥāb, First Edition, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā'a al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1328 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 39.

and a consequence of the people's revolt against the corruption and oppression of the previous government.

One of the examples of corruption which occurred under the government of 'Uthmān was when he brought back 'Ḥakam ibn Abī al-'Aās' and his son 'Marwān' to Medina. These were individuals who had been exiled from Medina to the city of Ṭāif by the Holy Prophet (ṣ), and neither Abū Bakr, nor 'Umar had found the courage of bringing them back during their respective caliphates. 'Uthmān even went as far as wedding his own daughter to Marwān, and gave him the responsibility of bookkeeping in the office of his caliphate. This was one of the issues which enraged the people against him.

During the last days of the revolt, 'Uthmān's house was under siege for a period of 49 days.[64] Every time 'Uthmān wished to show flexibility towards the people in terms of reforming his policies, Marwān would act in ways that would arouse the people's anger even further against him. Finally, the anger of the Muslims boiled over; they overran his house, and he was killed.

The Lofty Position of Imam 'Alī

The revolutionaries were really only focused on removing 'Uthmān as caliph. Even though the name of Imam 'Alī ('a) would come up during the days of the mutiny, they had no clear plans as to what should be done after his removal. When 'Uthmān was killed and removed from the position of the caliphate, the people were faced with the new problem of selecting a ruler.

To further complicate matters, out of the six person council which had selected 'Uthmān as caliph, two of these individuals had passed away. These six had been Imam 'Alī ('a), 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Awf, 'Uthmān, Ṭalḥah, Zubayr, and Sa'ad ibn Waqqāṣ; the two that had passed away were

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[64] Mas'ūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 2, p. 346.

'Uthmān and 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Awf. Among the four that were left, Imam 'Alī ('a) was the most loved, and from the perspective of virtue and past history, no one could come close to reaching his achievements and status. Due to these factors, the people were drawn to selecting him as their caliph.

Imam 'Alī ('a) studied the conditions of the Muslims and the social transformations which had taken place during 'Uthmān's caliphate. He realized that ruling after such widespread corruption and scandal would be a very complicated and difficult matter. Another issue was that the people, particularly the regional or local leaders, would not submit to his programs of reform and would not tolerate equality and justice. Due to these reasons, when the revolutionaries came to give the Imam ('a) their oath of loyalty, he refused.

All historians agree that on the 35th year of Dhī al-Ḥijjah, 'Uthmān was killed, but there are differences as to the actual day on which it took place. In taking in all of the historical reports, there was a difference of at least 4-5 days between the time 'Uthmān was killed and when people gave their oath of allegiance to Imam 'Alī ('a). In the span of these several days, people were in a state of confusion and suspense.

During the span of these several days, the leaders of the rebellion kept approaching Imam 'Alī ('a), but he did not show himself publicly. The reason behind his non-acceptance of the caliphate was that he did not see the situation to be conducive or favorable at all. He is recorded as having said:

"Leave me and seek someone else. We are facing a matter which has (several) faces and colors and which neither hearts can stand nor intelligence can accept. Clouds are hovering over the sky, and faces are not discernible. You should know that if I respond to you, I would lead you as I know and would not care about whatever may be said or the abuse of the slanderers. If you leave me, then I am the same as you are. It is possible I would listen to and obey whomever you make in charge of your affairs. I am better for you as a counselor than

as chief."[65]

Still, the crowds of people came in waves and their numbers increased, along with their persistency and demands. They were tired of the past oppression and hopeful for a future of justice. Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) felt responsible and he finally ended up accepting the people's oath of allegiance with great reluctance.

In several places, the Nahj al-Balāghah mentions the people's enthusiasm and persistence in seeking the oath of allegiance with Imam ʿAlī (ʿa). It says: "They leapt upon me as the camels leap upon each other on their arrival to drinking water when they have been let loose from their chains... This continued until I thought they would either kill me or kill one another in front of me. I thought over the ins and outs of this matter to the extent that it prevented me from sleeping."[66]

In another place, it describes the scene where people were crowding around Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), after his acceptance of the caliphate. It also described their level of joy and exuberance. It says: "You were dragging my hand towards you to swear the oath of allegiance, but I was withdrawing it; this struggle continued until you gathered around me in such numbers, and in such a way, as if you were thirsty camels and as if I was he only spring of water. In your eagerness, you almost rushed me; you were pushing and dragging each other to reach me, until the laces of my shoes were broken, the cloak fell off of my shoulders, and old and weak individuals were crushed. You were so overjoyed on that occasion, that even young children came out toddling, running and joyfully jumping, old people were falling down and dragging themselves to reach my feet, the ill and sick came to me staggering and creeping, and even young girls came out of their houses running towards me to show their veneration and respect. Can you deny these facts?"[67]

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[65] Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 92.

[66] Ibid, Sermon 54.

[67] Nahj al-Balāghah, Translated by Jaʿfar ʿAskarī, Sermon 229.

In his sermon of Shiqshiqīya, the Imam has again detailed his acceptance of the caliphate and the enthusiasm of the people who thronged around him. He says: "After his death, the people flocked around me, imploring me to take up the caliphate. They gathered in such numbers and were so anxious to show their sincerity that both of my sons (Ḥasan and Ḥusayn ('a)) were almost trampled and my dress was torn. They were falling upon me to accept the position of leadership. I would have turned down their request, but I was afraid that with my refusal, they would completely lose touch of the truth and the religion.

But when I accepted their rulership, and made them follow the path of God, they revolted... All of the three groups behaved as if they have never heard the Quran saying: 'Heaven is meant for those who do not covet, do not create mischief and do not oppress human beings; the eternal peace and happiness is for those who lead a pious and holy life.'

I swear by God that they were made to hear these words of God repeatedly and their meaning was explained to them completely and fully. However, the vicious ways of ungodly life fascinated them and its luxuries, its pomp and glory, as well as its power and wealth enchanted them.

I swear by the Creator of this universe that had they not sworn unconditional allegiance to me, had they not manifested unbounded thankfulness in my accepting their rulership, had not the presence of helpers and supporters made it incumbent upon me to defend the faith, and had not God the Almighty taken a promise from the learned scholars to put a check upon the luxurious and vicious lives of oppressors and tyrants, as well as to try to reduce the pangs of poverty and the starvation of the oppressed and down-trodden... I would even now have left the rulership of this state, and would have allowed it to sink into anarchy and chaos as I did during the early days. The pomp and glory of a vicious life is worth less to me than even the sneeze of a

goat."[68]

His Engagement in the Three Battles

The caliphate of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was a government based on justice and equality. While his government greatly benefited the masses, there was a privileged class which had risen with the rule of the previous caliphs, who feared for the loss of their illegitimate power and wealth. This group began to array themselves against Imam ʿAlī's (ʿa) rule. The opposition of these groups consequently resulted in three battles which are respectively named as the battles against the: Nākithīn, Qāsiṭīn, and Māriqīn. Each of them will be discussed in some detail below.

The Battle against the Nākithīn

The battle against the Nākithīn (the pledge breakers) began with two individuals named Ṭalḥah and Zubayr. These were two of the more important men who had made their oath of allegiance with Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) at the start of his caliphate. They requested to be instated as the governors of Baṣrah and Kūfah, but Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) did not accept their request. It was at this time that they secretly left Medina and departed towards Mecca, where they raised an army with money from the Ummayids (money that had been stolen from the Muslim public treasury). After raising this army, they headed towards Baṣrah and took control of the city. Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) left Medina with his army, and near Baṣrah, a very severe battle erupted between the two sides in the year 36 Hijrī. Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was victorious and the Nākithīn were defeated. This battle is also popularly known as the Battle of the Camel.

The Battle against the Qāsiṭīn

Mūʿāwīya, before the election of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) as the

[68] Nahj al-Balāghah, Translated by Ja'far 'Askarī, Sermon 3.

caliph, had begun to build the prerequisites of a caliphate for himself in Syria, where he was governor. When Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) became caliph, he ordered the immediate dismissal of Mūʿāwīya and did not agree with keeping him as the governor of Syria. Mūʿāwīya refused to step down and the result of this conflict was a battle in a land called Ṣiffīn.

Due to the area in which the conflict took place, it is popularly known as the Battle of Ṣiffīn; this battle took place in the 37th year Hijrī. The army of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was leading towards a victory initially, but Mūʿāwīya used trickery which created differences and conflict within the Muslim army. After much insistence from the soldiers in his army, Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was forced to agree to an arbitration process. The person selected by his soldiers ended up being Abū Mūsā Ashʿarī, and on Mūʿāwīya's side, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAās. These two were selected to consider the interests of Islam and the Muslims, and to announce their opinions in order that a solution could be found.

Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was firmly opposed to this arbitration process as well as the selection of Abū Mūsā as the arbitrator, but in spite of this, a great deal of pressure was placed on him to accept the arbitration process. If he had outrightly refused the process, he might have been killed by his own men and the Muslims would have been placed in an even worse political crisis. After reaching the appointed time, the arbitrators came forward and announced their decision. ʿAmr tricked Abū Mūsā in this process and implemented the arbitration to Mūʿāwīya's clear benefit.

After this arbitration, the very people who were violently clamoring for Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) to accept the arbitration process became disenchanted at its results and began to criticize him for having accepted the process!

The Battle against the Māriqīn

The Māriqīn were the same group who had forced Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) to accept the arbitration process and then, after a span

of several days, regretted their decision and began asking for its annulment from the Imam ('a). Imam 'Alī ('a) refused to break his pledge and annul the treaty which had been made just a few days before. These men, who became known as the Khawārij, then rose against him in open defiance, and the resulting battle was called the Battle of Nahrawān. This battle took place during the 38th, or according to some, 39th year Hijrī. Imam 'Alī ('a) ended up being victorious in the battle, but some of the grudges which had fueled the battle remained in the hearts of his enemies.

Imam 'Alī ('a), after ruling for 4 years and several months, was martyred by 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muljam (one of the members of the Khawārij) during the 19th night of the holy month of Ramaḍān in the 39th year Hijrī.

The Second Imam

Imam Ḥasan

A Brief Introduction into the Life of Imam Ḥasan

Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) was born in the middle of the holy month of Ramaḍān during the 3rd year Hijrī, in the holy city of Medina. He was the son of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) and the Lady Fāṭimah (ʿa), the daughter of the Prophet of Islam (ṣ).

Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) was no older than seven when the Prophet (ṣ) passed away. After the passing of the Prophet (ṣ), his father Amīr al-Muʾminīn (ʿa) lived for approximately another 30 years, until he was martyred in the year 40 Hijrī. At this point, he was selected for the divine station of the imamate and he held this position for approximately 10 years, until his martyrdom at the behest of Mūʿāwīya in the year 50 Hijrī. He died at the age of 48 and was buried in the graveyard of Baqīʿ in Medina.

The Answerer of the Deprived

According to the religion of Islam, the wealthy hold a heavy responsibility towards the poor and impoverished members of society. According to its religious precepts of brotherhood and social harmony, the wealthy must always be diligent in providing for and meeting their needs. The Prophet (ṣ), and the Imams who came after him, not only gave repeated commands in these regards but they were also themselves living examples of providing for the poor and taking care of their needs.

Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) not only had a distinguished position in terms of piety, asceticism, and worship, but he was also known for his magnanimity, liberality, and giving nature towards the poor. His very presence in the Muslim society acted as a calming influence over the hearts of the impoverished and his home was a sanctuary and place of hope for them. No indigent person would leave the door of his house with empty

hands. Oftentimes, people would have their needs answered without even having to ask, because Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) would give them what they needed before they could hurt their dignity by having to ask him.

Suyūṭī has written in his book of history that: "Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī was the possessor of great morals and virtues. He was a magnanimous, forbearing, dignified, serene, generous, and giving individual and people greatly honored and praised him.[69]

An Instructive Lesson

Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) would at times give large amounts of money away to the poor. These amounts, which were given away at once, were so large that they would create amazement and wonder in the people. In these instances, he would give away enough that the individuals went from poverty to self-sufficiency and were able to live a respectable life from that point onwards. The Imam (ʿa) did not see it as acceptable that a poor person was given just enough to survive for that day and then have to go begging the very next day in front of others to meet his basic needs.

The Family of Knowledge and Virtue

One day ʿUthmān was sitting next to a mosque when a poor man approached him and asked him for help. ʿUthmān gave him 5 dirhams. The poor man said: "Guide me towards someone who will give me more help." ʿUthmān pointed the man towards three individuals who were sitting in a corner of the mosque; these three were Imam Ḥasan (ʿa), Imam Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (ʿa), and ʿAbdullah Jaʿfar. After ʿUthmān pointed out these three men, he said to the poor man: "Go to those three men and ask your need from them."

The man went towards the three and conveyed his request.

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[69] The History of the Caliphs, vol. 3, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 189.

Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) asked him: "Asking others for financial help is only correct in three situations. The first is for paying the Dīya[70] when he is unable to pay it himself. The second is a crippling debt which one has where there is no other means of paying it back. The third is a poor person who has no means of making money for himself. May I ask if one of these situations has occurred for you?" The man replied: "Actually, my problem is one of these three things." At this, Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) gave the man 50 Dinars. Following his example, Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) gave the man 49 dinars and ʿAbdullah ibn Jaʿfar gave the man 48 dinars.

As the man was returning, he passed by where ʿUthmān was sitting. ʿUthmān asked him: "What happened?" The man answered: "I asked you for money and you gave it to me, but you didn't ask me what the money was for. When I went to those three people, one of them asked me the reason behind my request and I answered him. Then all three of them gave me this amount of money." ʿUthmān said to the man: "This family is the center of knowledge and wisdom, and the fountainhead of goodness and virtue. Is it possible to find anyone equal to them?"[71]

Unparalleled Generosity

Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) would exert all of his efforts into actions which were pleasing to God. One aspect was his giving of wealth to the poor and indigent. Historians and scholars have recorded a generosity that was exceptional and unparalleled, and showed his heedlessness towards this world's material attractions. Historians have recorded that: "During the span of his life, Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) gave his whole wealth and possessions away twice in the way of God; he also split his wealth into two portions, giving away one half and keeping

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[70] Money which is given in certain situations in compensation due to harming someone

[71] Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīya, 1393 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 43, p. 333.

the other half in the way of God three times."[72]

His Indirect Assistance

Imam Ḥasan's ('a) generosity did not allow him to have anyone leave his house without having their needs met. Sometimes, when direct assistance was not possible, he would show the people ways to meet their needs indirectly. Through these indirect ways, he would help solve the problems which people had in their lives.

It was such a case when one day a poor man came to his door and asked for help from the Imam ('a). At that moment, the Imam ('a) did not have any money on hand, but in the face of a poor man leaving his house without having had his need met, he became embarrassed and said to the man: "Are you ready for me to guide you in an act where you will be able to meet your need?" The man asked: "What should I do?" The Imam ('a) said to him: "Today, the daughter of the caliph passed away, and he is in a state of mourning but no one has yet gone to pay their condolences to him. Go to him and tell him these words which I will teach you and offer him your condolences. In this way, you will reach your goal."

The man then asked: "How should I give him my condolences?" The Imam ('a) said to him: "When you go to the caliph, say the following to him: 'Praise be to God that when your daughter died, it was under the shadow of her father. If the caliph had passed away from the world before this, then your daughter, after your passing, would have been as one without a home to go to and might have been treated irreverently.'"

The poor man went to 'Uthmān and acted as he had been instructed. When he said these emotional words, the caliph was greatly affected, and his pain and grief lessened. He

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72- Suyūṭī, The History of the Caliphs, vol. 3, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 190.
- Ibn Wāḍih, Tārīkh Ya'qūbī, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Haydarīya, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 215.

ordered that the man be rewarded. Then he asked the poor man: "Were these your words which you recited?" The poor man replied: "Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī (ʿa) taught them to me." The caliph said: "You speak the truth; he is the fountainhead of eloquence and sweet speech."[73]

Examining the Causes and Reasons behind the Peace Treaty of Imam Ḥasan

The most critical part of Imam Ḥasan's (ʿa) life, which has also been the subject of numerous debates and speculation, is that of his peace treaty with Mūʿāwīya, and his stepping aside as caliph. Some people who have studied the life of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) have certain questions pertaining to his peace treaty with Mūʿāwīya. They ask why Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) signed a peace treaty with Mūʿāwīya when the Muslims, and more specifically his own followers, had made an oath of allegiance to the Imam (ʿa) himself? Couldn't Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) have initiated what his brother Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) initiated at an earlier time? In such a case, he either would have been victorious against Mūʿāwīya or, with his martyrdom, he would have shaken the foundations of Mūʿāwīya's rule just like Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) accomplished later on.

Before jumping into these questions, there are three crucial points which must be discussed first:

1- Imam Ḥasan's Role in the Wars before his Caliphate

Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) has been recorded in history as having been a brave and courageous individual who never showed any fear in the face of danger. He was never hesitant in engaging in acts of unbelievable bravery and he was always prepared to fight in the way of God.

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[73] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Ḥasan, Najaf, Maṭba'ah al-Ādāb, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 302.

At the Battle of the Camel

During the Battle of the Camel, Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) fought under the banner of his father, who was the caliph of the time. As narrated in the books of history, he showed courage and bravery in the face of the enemy. His attacks were routinely known to strike fear and terror into the hearts of the opposing army.[74]

Before the start of the battle, he was involved in going to Kūfah with ʿAmmār Yāsir and several other companions of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) in order to invite and encourage the people towards participation in the battle.[75] When he entered Kūfah, he was confronted with Abū Mūsā Ashʿarī who was the current ruler of the city and who was opposed to people joining the war effort. Abū Mūsā had been one of the supporters of ʿUthmān's rule and was opposed to Imam ʿAlī's (ʿa) caliphate. In the face of Abū Mūsā and his supporter's opposition and their efforts to prevent people from joining, Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) was able to raise 9,000 fighters and dispatch them towards the battlefront.

In the Battle of Ṣiffīn

Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) had an important role in raising forces for this war, as well as dispatching them towards the warfront for battle against Mūʿāwīya. He played a crucial role in rousing the people of Kūfah with his provocative and moving speeches, and encouraged them in battle against the enemies of the Muslims.[76]

Imam Ḥasan's (ʿa) devotedness and spirit of self sacrifice in the cause of Islam was so intense that Amīr al-Muʾminīn

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[74] Ibn Shahrashūb, Manāqib Āal Abī Ṭālib, vol. 4, p. 21.

[75] -Ibn Wāḍih, Tārīkh Yaʿqūbī, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Haydarīya, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 170.
- Ibn Qutaybah' Daynāwarī, al-Imāmah Wa al-Sīyāsah, Cairo, Maktabah al-Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1382 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 67.

[76] Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, Wāqīatu Ṣiffīn, Qum, Manshūrāt Maktabah Baṣīratī, 1382 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 113.

('a) had to ask his companions to prevent him and his brother (Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī ('a)) from continuing their battle against the enemy in order that the lineage of the Prophet (ṣ) would not be ended with their deaths.

2- Imam Ḥasan's Conflict with Mū'āwīya

Imam Ḥasan ('a) never showed any weakness or compromise in defending the religion or in announcing the truth. He would openly criticize the actions of Mū'āwīya, which were in open contradiction with Islam. He would criticize Mū'āwīya and his tribe's disgraceful deeds openly, without any apprehension or fear. As evidence, it is only necessary to look at Imam Ḥasan's harsh and critical words against Mū'āwīya and his officials and supporters such as 'Amr ibn 'Aās, 'Utbah ibn Abī Sufyān, Walīd ibn 'Uqbah, Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah, and Marwān Ḥakam. [77]

Even after the settling of the peace treaty, and the subsequent strengthening of Mū'āwīya's rule and the stabilization of his power, Imam Ḥasan ('a) went to the top of a pulpit in Kūfah (this situation took place right when Mū'āwīya had entered Kūfah) and began explaining the motives behind the signing of the treaty and the merits of the family of Imam 'Alī ('a). Then, in the presence of both groups, he mentioned the weaknesses of Mū'āwīya, and began to criticize his policies and methods of rule.[78]

After the martyrdom of Imam 'Alī ('a) and the peace of Imam Ḥasan ('a), the Khawārij mobilized all of their forces against Mū'āwīya. News soon reached Mū'āwīya that Hawthara' Asadī, one of the heads of the Khawārij, had risen up against him and had mobilized an army. Mū'āwīya, in order to solidify and stabilize his rule and in order to make it seem as if Imam Ḥasan ('a) was his follower and under his control, sent him a message telling him to first quell the

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77 Ṭabarsī, Iḥtijāj, Najaf, al-Maṭba'atu al-Murtaḍawīyah, p. 144-150.

78 Ibid, p. 156.

uprising of Hawthara and then to continue on his way to Medina.

The Imam ('a) answered his message in this manner: "I disengaged from hostilities against you for the sake of the Muslims. This does not mean that I will fight others on your behalf. If there is a call to war, before I fight against anyone else, I would first fight against you; for battle against you is more necessary than against the Khawārij."[79]

3- The Islamic Code of Law in Regards to Peace Treaties

In the Islamic canon of law, there is no singular instruction in regards to war. In certain situations, Islam has commanded the use of war to fight against its enemies, and in other situations, it has commanded that if war does not result in safety and security, then Muslims should use peaceful means to achieve safety and stability in their society.

In the history of the life of the Prophet (ṣ), both peace and war were used when appropriate. For example, in the Battles of Badr, Uḥud, Aḥzāb, and Ḥunayn, the Prophet (ṣ) used war because it was the most appropriate response for those particular scenarios. In other situations where the Prophet (ṣ) saw victory as not being possible, he made a treaty with the enemy and temporarily halted hostilities in order that Islam could progress and become stronger. His treaties with the Banī Ḍamrah, Banī Ashja', as well as the people of Mecca (in the treaty of Ḥudaybīya) are among such examples.[80]

Therefore, in the very same way that the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) temporarily made peace with certain tribes based on the

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79 - Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, First Edition, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1961 A.D., vol. 5, p. 98.
- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 409.

80 When someone objected to Imam Ḥasan's (a) peace treaty with Mū'āwīya, the Imam (a) invoked the peace treaties of the Prophet (s) and said: "For the same reason that the Prophet (s) signed a peace treaty with the tribes, I also signed a peace treaty with Mū'āwīya." Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktab al-Islāmīyah, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 44, p. 2.

greater good, likewise Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) acted in the same way and made peace for the greater good of the Muslims of that time. The reason behind Imam Ḥasan's (ʿa) actions may not have been apparent to all the people who were around him during that era. From the perspective of the Shias, the Infallible Imam is selected by God and is the most capable individual of that society to determine its greater good. He is someone who is able to see a situation from various angles and positions that an ordinary person is unable to see. Based on this perspective, Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) determined that the best course of action for the Muslim society of that time was in the signing of the peace treaty.

In order to better view the circumstances, after effects, and conditions of the peace treaty, it is useful for us to go forward using historical documents and references. This will allow us a deeper and clearer view of the situation.

Overall, it must be said that Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) did not initiate the peace treaty; it was in fact something that was forced upon him. The conditions and situations of that time were unfavorable, and various causes acted upon each other in creating a situation where the acceptance of the peace treaty became necessary. Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) did not have any other option but to accept the treaty; any other individual would have acted in the same manner due to the prevailing circumstances. These unfavorable circumstances included the international situation of the Muslim world, the domestic situation in Iraq, as well as the military situation of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa). We will review each of these issues in some detail below:

From the Perspective of Foreign Politics

From the perspective of the foreign politics of that time, a civil war would have greatly damaged the Muslim community. The Eastern Roman Empire felt threatened by the Muslims who were on their southern borders. They were waiting for an opportunity of civil war or weakness in order to strike a

decisive blow to the Muslims and finally rid themselves of their newfound neighbors.

When news of the impending battle between Mūʿāwīya and Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) reached the Roman leaders and military commanders, they realized that this was the opportunity they had been waiting for. They mobilized a large army and prepared them for a final and decisive assault on the Muslims.

Even if this event was to be viewed in isolation, it would have been enough of a reason to prevent the Imam (ʿa) from initiating what would have been a civil war between the Muslims. The existence and continuation of Islam naturally takes precedence over the details of rulership. With the acceptance of the peace treaty, the Muslims were saved from the division and subsequent destruction that the Roman Empire would have wrought. Yet it was bought at the price of the suffering of the Imams (ʿa) and their close followers.

Yaʿqūbī, the famous historian, has written: "When Mūʿāwīya returned to Syria (after the peace treaty with Imam Ḥasan (ʿa)), news reached him that the Roman Empire had raised a large and well-disciplined army, and they were en route to attacking the Muslims. Mūʿāwīya did not have the power to oppose them and so he signed a peace treaty and agreed to pay them 100,000 dinars."

These historical records show that at the initial stages of the conflict, the mutual enemy of the Muslims had prepared itself to use this opportunity for an attack and the Muslim community was exposed to a serious threat. If the war had been initiated between the forces of the two sides, then the only real victor would have been the Roman Empire. Neither Imam Ḥasan (ʿa), nor Mūʿāwīya would have been victorious and in essence, the real losers would have been the whole of the Muslim community. With Imam Ḥasan's (ʿa) far sightedness and prudence, this serious danger was averted. Imam Bāqir (ʿa) gave this reply to an individual who was criticizing the peace treaty of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa). He said: "If Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) had not done what he did, then a great

danger would have followed."[81]

From the Perspective of Domestic Politics

If any military commander wishes to be successful in the theatre of war, then the most important factors in regards to their army is that of numbers, organization, and coordination. Without these, participation in any war is clearly going to end in defeat.

Likewise, when researching the reasons behind Imam Ḥasan's ('a) peace treaty, we find that the most obvious reason was the lack of forces and a lack of cohesiveness in the remaining few. The people of Iraq, and in particular, the people of Kūfah, did not possess the mental preparedness for battle, nor did they possess the proper organization, coordination, and unity which was so vital for a war effort.

Weariness of War

Many battles had taken place before the time of Imam Ḥasan's ('a) caliphate, such as the Battle of the Camel, the Battle of Ṣiffīn, and the Battle of Nahrawān. Alongside these, there had been other high casualty battles after the event of the 'Arbitration' between the forces of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) and Mū'āwīya in places as varied as Yemen, the Ḥijāz, and Iraq. All of these wars had combined to create a feeling of weariness towards war amongst the people and an inclination towards making peace and abandoning of hostilities. During the five years when Imam 'Alī ('a) was caliph, his followers had only put down their weapons with the intention of picking them up the next day for another battle; it was a continuous period of harsh and demoralizing war. Furthermore, these wars were not wars with foreigners; they were in fact wars against brothers, past friends, and relatives who had joined Mū'āwīya's forces. Even without considering

[81] Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maṭba'at al-Islāmīya, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 44, p. 1.

the physical strain, these wars were demanding from a psychological point of view.[82]

For this reason, the people of Iraq showed sluggishness in dispatching forces against their enemies during the different conflicts which took place. There were many raiding parties which came from Syria, and who engaged in attacks against the areas of the Ḥijāz, Yemen, and Iraq. Instead of being resolute in warding off these attacks, the Iraqis showed feebleness and a willingness to compromise. Their sluggish response to the repeated call to arms of the Imam ('a) was partially due to this weariness of war.[83]

Dr. Ṭahā Ḥusayn, after narrating the events of the 'Arbitration', and how the situation had become more complicated after the Battle of Ṣiffīn, says:

"Then 'Alī ('a) decided to set out for Syria, but the hypocrites amongst his companions suggested that they return to Kūfah first and settle their individual affairs and then, with an even larger force and greater preparations, go towards the enemy. Imam 'Alī ('a) returned them to Kūfah. When they reached Kūfah, his companions became engrossed in their family affairs and became sluggish; they lost their desire for war.

This continued to such an extent that Imam 'Alī ('a) became hopeless of them. The Imam would continuously encourage them towards war, but even with his persistence, they would neither hear him, nor accept his call. This continued and reached the point where one day in his sermon, Imam 'Alī ('a) said: 'With your disobedience, you have ruined my command and things have reached the point where the

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[82] In the Battle of the Camel nearly 30,000 people were killed (The History of Ya'qūbī, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Haydarīya, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 172); The number of casualties on both sides during the Battle of Ṣiffīn reached 110,000 individuals (Mas'ūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, 1965 A.D., vol. 2, p. 393).

[83] Shams al-Dīn, Muḥammad Mahdī, Assessment of the Ḥusaynī (a) Revolution (Thawrat al-Ḥusayn), Translation by Mahdī Pīshvā'ī, Second Print, Qum, Tawhīd Publications, p. 197-200.

Quraysh say: The son of Abī Ṭālib is a brave man, but he does not have familiarity with war. Who has better knowledge of war than I?'"[84]

After the passing of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a), and the subsequent caliphate of Imam Ḥasan ('a), this situation grew in severity and became even more evident; when Imam Ḥasan ('a) would invite people towards war, they were incessantly sluggish in their response.

When news reached Imam Ḥasan ('a) that the army of Mū'āwīya was marching towards Kūfah, he called people to gather at the Mosque. Then he proceeded to give a sermon where he announced the approach of Mū'āwīya and exhorted the people towards war in the way of God and standing in the face of the oppressors. He reminded people of the necessity for patience, self-sacrifice, and the toleration of coming difficulties. The knowledge which Imam Ḥasan ('a) had of the people's state of mind and mentality worried him in that they would not answer his call. His worries were well-founded, as that is precisely what happened. When his rousing sermon came to an end, a dead silence ruled over the mosque and not one individual responded to his call.

This scene was so shameful that one of the courageous companions of Imam 'Alī ('a), who was present at the gathering, began to rebuke the people for their irresolution and apathy. He called them out for being false 'warriors' who were easily frightened and lacked in courage. Then he called on them to be real men and to get ready for war against Syria.

These historical records clearly show the people's inclination towards apathy and irresolution. The warrior's spirit, which had been alive in previous Muslim armies, had been extinguished in them and they were not prepared to participate in war against Mū'āwīya.

At this point, more speeches were made by the companions of Imam Ḥasan ('a) to encourage the people and a small army

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[84] The Religion of Islam, Translation by Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Āyatī Bīrjandī, Tehran, Sherkate Sahāmī Intishār, 1339 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 250-251.

was raised. This army left Kūfah and made camp a short distance away from the city in an area called 'Nūkhaylah'. They encamped there for 10 days waiting on further forces, but in the end only 4,000 individuals could be counted in the whole of the army. The Imam ('a) was forced to return to Kūfah in order to gather more forces.[85]

A Disunited Society

In addition to the problems mentioned above, the population of Iraq was not an organized, cohesive, and unified whole. It was effectively divided into distinct and often opposing groups, which had little coordination or harmony with one another.

Among these diverse blocs, there existed many different groups with independent agendas and goals. There were the supporters of the Ummayads, the Khawārij (who were enemies of both Imam 'Alī ('a) and Mū'āwīya), non-Arab Muslims (who were not native Iraqis and numbered approximately 20,000), as well as individuals who had no set political ideology but supported one group or the other. The Shias and followers of Imam 'Alī ('a) formed another segment of this diverse populace.[86]

A Discordant Army

Naturally, this diversity of backgrounds and ideologies resulted in discord and conflict in the ranks of Imam Ḥasan's ('a) army. With such high levels of dissonance in the ranks, it was not possible for Imam Ḥasan ('a) to rely on his army, especially given the dangerous and critical position he was in. Coordination and obedience were critical to success in what was to come.

Shaykh Mufīd, alongside other historians, has written on

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[85] Āali Yāsīn, Shaykh Rāḍī, Ṣulḥ al-Ḥasan, Manshūrāt Dār al-Kutub al-Irāqīyah Fī Kaẓimīyah, p. 102.

[86] Āali Yāsīn, Shaykh Rāḍī, The Peace of Ḥusayn (a), Manshūrāt Dār al-Kutub al-Irāqīyah Fī Kaẓimīyah, p. 102.

the dangerous situation of the Imam's army. He says: "The Iraqis prepared for war unenthusiastically and with much stalling. When they had finally prepared themselves, they were composed of very diverse segments of the society, consisting of the following factions:

1- The Shias and followers of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa)

2- The Khawārij (they were willing to use any means to fight against Mūʿāwīya. Their participation in the war was not due to their love of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa), but for their hatred of Mūʿāwīya.)

3- A group with materialistic inclinations who were there only to reap worldly benefit and gain.

4- An unsure and wavering group who were uncertain whether Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) was better to follow or Mūʿāwīya.

5- The last group consisted of people who did not fight for the sake of religion, but who fought for the sake of tribalism and for the honor and primacy of their group. They had only joined the war because their tribal leader had joined and so they had become obligated to do so as well."

Therefore, it is apparent that the army of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) was lacking in the harmony and unity which was so vital in facing a powerful enemy such as Mūʿāwīya.

A Self Evident Proof

The most telling document during this time period which shows the Iraqi peoples disunity and division, as well as their sluggishness in preparing for war, comes in Imam Ḥasan's (ʿa) own words. At the city of Madā'in, which was the furthest point his army had progressed to in the war, Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) delivered a comprehensive and thought provoking speech. He said:

"No doubt will prevent us from confronting the people of Syria. In the past, with your perseverance and understanding, we have fought against these people. Unfortunately today, due to the rancor in your hearts, you have lost your unity and mutual understanding which you possessed previously. You

have lost your firmness and your tongues have inclined towards complaining.

When you departed for the war of Ṣiffīn, you had given precedence to your religion over your material benefits. But today, you have given your material benefits precedence over your religion. We are today as we were in the past, but you are not faithful towards us as you had previously been. Some of you lost members of your family in the War of Ṣiffīn and others of you lost them in the War of Nahrawān. The first group cries over the people they lost and the second group asks for the blood money. As for the rest, they balk at following us.

Mūʿāwīya has given us a suggestion that is far from being equitable and is against our lofty goals and below our dignity. So if you are ready to die in the way of God, then say so, so that we can oppose and fight against him and give him his reply with our swords. And if you are after this life and your own welfare, then likewise announce this, so that we can accept his suggestion and secure your consent.

When the words of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) reached this poin people from all sides began to shout: We want life, we want t remain alive!"[87] With an army so demoralized and lacking in warrior spirit, it was impossible for Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) to oppose and defeat Mūʿāwīya's forces. In fact, an army in this condition is not only unable to fight a war, but it is a danger to itself as well.

If Mūʿāwīya and Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) had switched roles, and Mūʿāwīya had been left as the head of such an army, then it is certain that he would have made the same choices which the Imam (ʿa) made. It was the best option available in the given situation.

These circumstances, which were playing in the background, set a series of events into motion which we will

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[87] Ibn Athīr, Asad al-Qābah Fī Marifat al-al-Saḥābah, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, vol. 2, p. 13 and 14.
- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 405.

go into in the following pages.

Imam Ḥasan ('a) and the Mobilization of Forces

Some writers and historians, both in the past as well as in modern times, have distorted the realities of history and they have claimed that Imam Ḥasan ('a) never really wanted to fight against Mū'āwīya. They say that from the very first day he was only interested in securing financial gain and benefit from his opponent. They claim that he was only interested in an easy life and his opposition with Mū'āwīya was a ploy for gaining these material and financial benefits.

Historical records are much like live witnesses, and they show that these slanders are without basis. If Imam Ḥasan ('a) had not wished to fight against Mū'āwīya, then he would not have made such a great effort in raising a large army. Historical records clearly show that tremendous sacrifices were made in securing an army. This was not a one-time effort, but it was something which was repeated over and over again. After Imam Ḥasan ('a) raised this army, he then prepared for battle. Unfortunately, before meeting Mū'āwīya in battle, the army became dispersed due to their lack of coordination and harmony, as well as due to some of Mū'āwīya's plots, which affected some segments of the army. In the end, the Imam's army was totally torn apart and virtually disbanded. This occurred even before the commencement of armed struggle between the two sides. Due to this turn of events, Imam Ḥasan ('a) was forced to accept the peace treaty.

In summary, Imam Ḥasan's ('a) movement began with armed struggle but, after a thorough weighing and study of the situation, and of the condition of the people during that time, it was transformed into a type of long term cold war with the acceptance of the peace treaty.[88]

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[88] For this same reason, several of the historians have written books under the title 'The Uprising of Ḥasan (a)'. Several of these are referenced below:

A- Qiyām al-Ḥasan, Hishām ibn al-Sā'ib al-Kalbī.

B- Qiyām al-Ḥasan, Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Thaqafī, (Ḥakīmī, Muḥammad

The People Who Broke Their Pledge

As mentioned previously, the people of Iraq, and in particular Kūfah, were not of one ideology or group. This went so far that they were not even willing to work with one another in basic matters of common interest. They were fickle, disloyal, and completely untrustworthy. Furthermore, they followed whoever held the reins of power and were willing to change their loyalties very quickly.

As the flames of war were being stoked, and the armies were mobilizing, a group of tribal leaders betrayed Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) and began to write letters to Mūʿāwīya. At this critical juncture in the war, they wrote to him saying that they were on his side and expressed their support for him. They secretly encouraged him to march on Iraq and guaranteed that as soon as he came near, they would either seize Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) and hand him over to Mūʿāwīya, or they would assassinate him.

Mūʿāwīya took these letters which had been sent to him, and forwarded them to Imam Ḥasan (ʿa). He asked how he was prepared to fight against him with such people as his supporters.[89]

Treacherous Commanders

After leaving the city of Kūfah for war against Mūʿāwīya, Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) gave ʿUbaydullah ibn ʿAbbās the command of 12,000 men who were to constitute the advance guard of his army. He also appointed Qays ibn Saʿad and Saʿīd ibn Qays (who had both been longtime supporters of his family) as successors for ʿUbaydullah. In case anything happened to the first commander, these two men would be in line to

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Riḍā, The Imam in the Likeness of the Society, Tehran, The Office of Islamic Cultural Publications, p. 171.

[89] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Manshūrāt Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 191. When one of the Shias asked Imam Ḥasan (a) why he had not pushed forward in the war against Mūʿāwīya, the Imam (a) replied: "I swear by God that if I had gone to war with Mūʿāwīya, my own forces would have given me over to him." (Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 44, p. 20).

succeed his position.[90]

Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) set the route of his army and ordered that whenever they made contact with Mūʿāwīya's army, they were to check his army's movement and report the situation back to him so that he could connect his main army to theirs without delay.

ʿUbaydullah moved his division until he reached an area called 'Maskin'. There, he came face to face with Mūʿāwīya's army and the two forces encamped opposite to one another. Not much time had passed when news reached Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) that ʿUbaydullah, for the price of one million dirhams, had defected to Mūʿāwīya's side. Alongside his own treachery, he had also taken 8,000 of the men under his command with him.

This treacherous act, at that critical juncture in the war, weakened the morale of Imam Ḥasan's (ʿa) army and hampered its military effectiveness considerably. Mūʿāwīya also tried to bribe Qays in order to bring him over to his side but Qays, who was a long time friend of Amīr al-Mu'minīn's (ʿa) family, refused. He took control of the remainder of the army, delivered rousing speeches to improve their morale, and stood steadfast against Mūʿāwīya.[91]

The Plots of Traitors

Mūʿāwīya did not end his machinations with the bribing of ʿUbaydullah. Using his spies and agents who had established themselves in the army of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa), he began a systematic campaign of rumors and slander. He spread the rumor that Qays ibn Saʿad (who was now the primary commander of the army) had made a secret deal with Mūʿāwīya. Simultaneously, he spread the rumor in Qays'

[90] Yaʿqūbī has not named Saʿīd ibn Qays, but other historians have mentioned his name in the same order.

[91] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Maqātil al-Ṭālibīīn, Najaf Ashraf, Manshūrāt Maktabat al-Ḥaydarīa, 1375 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 42.

- Ibn Wāḍih, Tārīkh Yaʿqūbī, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Haydarīya, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 204.

army that Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) had made a peace treaty with Mūʿāwīya.

Things reached the point where Mūʿāwīya sent in a few individuals who were considered by the people to be trustworthy, to Imam Ḥasan's camp (ʿa). At his military camp in Madā'in, they held some talks with him and then after exiting his tent, they began to spread rumors amongst the soldiers and said: "God, through means of the children of the Prophet, has quelled the sedition and quenched the fires of war. Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī (ʿa) has made peace with Mūʿāwīya, and has safeguarded the blood of the people."

The people in the army trusted this group and so they did not bother investigating what they had said; they considered their speech as being truthful. They rioted against the Imam (ʿa), attacked his tent, and plundered it. They even intended to kill him but after a time they dispersed.[92]

The Khawārij

After this series of events, Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) departed from Madā'in and went towards the city of Sābāṭ. Along the way one of the members of the Khawārij, who had been laying in ambush, attacked the Imam (ʿa) and wounded him severely. The Imam (ʿa) began to bleed profusely and his physical condition deteriorated; his companions quickly took him back to Madā'in. When he reached Madā'in, his situation became even more critical. Mūʿāwīya used this situation to his advantage and attempted to increase his control over the overall situation. Imam Ḥasan (ʿa), with no standing army at his command, was left without any real options but to accept the offer of a peace treaty.

Here, it is interesting to note that Imam Ḥasan (ʿa)

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[92] As mentioned previously, the army of Imam Ḥasan (a) was composed of members of the Khawārij, as well as people who were seeking only material benefit from the war. It isn't that surprising to hear that at one point, they had the intention of killing Imam Ḥasan (a) and that they attacked his tent and plundered whatever they found in it. While his tent was being plundered, some of the men began to shout: This man has sold us to Mūʿāwīya and has abased the Muslims!

accepted the peace treaty only after he was completely out of any other options. Ṭabarī, as well as other historians, have written that: "Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī (ʿa) only became ready to accept the peace treaty when all of his followers had been dispersed and he had been left alone."[93]

Imam Ḥasan's Explanation behind the Acceptance of the Peace Treaty

Some time after the formation of the peace treaty, it has been narrated that an individual protested against what the Imam (ʿa) had done. The Imam (ʿa) answered him with the following words:

"The reason I gave the government and rulership over to Mūʿāwīya was because I had no companions and helpers left to support me in my fight against him. If I had had supporters, then I would have fought against him night and day until things had been settled. I know the Kufans quite well and I have tested them countless numbers of times. They are a corrupt people who will not be reformed. They are not loyal, nor bound by their pledges and commitments. No two of them will ever agree with one another. Outwardly, they seem to show obedience and fondness towards us, but in practice, they are with our enemies."[94]

In another instance, Imam Ḥasan (ʿa), who was severely disappointed with the sluggishness and lack of cooperation of his companions, delivered this sermon: "I am in a state of astonishment from a people who have neither religion, nor shame or modesty. Woe upon you! Mūʿāwīya will not abide by the terms of the treaty in which he has promised you that

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93 Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut Print, Dār al-Qāmūs al-Ḥadīth, p. 92.
- Ibn Athīr, Asad al-Qābah Fī Marifah al-al-Saḥābah, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, vol. 2, p. 14.

94 Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīya, 1393 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 44, p. 147.
- Ṭabarsī, Iḥtijāj, Najaf, al-Maṭbaʿat al-Murtaḍawiyyah, p. 157.

he will not kill me. If I give the pledge of allegiance to Mūʿāwīya, then I will be able to complete my personal obligations better than I am able to right now. However, if things were to fall into Mūʿāwīya's hands, then he will not let me enact the religion of my grandfather (ṣ) in the society.

I swear by God that if I am forced unwillingly (because of your sluggishness and disloyalty) to give over the government of the Muslims to Mūʿāwīya, then have certainty that under the flag of Banī Ummayah you will never see happiness and joy. You will become entangled in various difficulties and troubles.

Right now, it is as if I see that tomorrow your children are standing in front of their children's doors and are asking for bread and water; a bread and water which is their right and which God has apportioned for them, yet the Ummayids have taken it and have deprived them of their own rights." Then the Imam (ʿa) added: "If I had supporters who would aid me in the war against the enemies of God, then I would never give the government over to Mūʿāwīya, for this government is unlawful for the Ummayids."[95]

Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) clearly understood the corrupt nature of the government of Mūʿāwīya. One day he delivered a speech in a gathering in which Mūʿāwīya was also present. He said. "I swear by God that until the time the government of the Muslims is in the hands of the Ummayids, the Muslims will never be able to live in comfort and ease."[96]

This was the warning which Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) delivered to the Iraqis. The Iraqis assumed that by not fighting against Mūʿāwīya, they would be able to live in ease and comfort. This proved to be incorrect however, and the prediction of the Imam (ʿa) came strikingly true.

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[95] Shubbar, Sayyid 'Abdullah, Jalā al-'Uyūn, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, vol. 1, p. 345-346.

[96] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, First Edition, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1961 A.D. vol. 16, p. 38.

The Peace Treaty and the Goals of Imam Ḥasan

As mentioned previously, when Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) was faced with the unfavorable conditions of his army and the society at large, he was forced to accept the peace treaty with Mūʿāwīya. He judged the peace treaty to be the best means for the protection of the Muslim community, and through use of the peace treaty, he attempted to enact his divinely guided goals as much as the situation would permit.

On the other hand, in order to take power, Mūʿāwīya was willing to sign over all sorts of stipulations on the peace treaty. He even went as far as to send a blank piece of paper with his signature to Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) and said that whatever he writes would be accepted by him.[97] Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) took advantage of this and included important and sensitive matters into the text of the peace treaty. After including these critical matters into the contract, he had Mūʿāwīya take an oath to abide by them.

In the books of history, the articles of the peace treaty have not been mentioned in one complete source or in chronological order, and various historians have each cited ections of the whole treaty. Yet, by using these various ources, it is possible to piece together the whole of the treaty. 3y looking over these conditions, we can gain a sense of the extraordinary political wisdom and foresight which Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) possessed.

Before going into greater detail on these stipulations, we will first list the five main articles of the treaty below:

The Text of the Treaty

First Article: Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī will turn over the rulership and

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97 Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 405.
- Ibn ʿAbd al-Bir, Al-Istiʿāb Fī al-Maʿrifah al-Aṣḥāb, First Edition, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā'a al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1328 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 371.
- Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut, Dār al-Qāmūs al-Ḥadīth, vol. 6, p. 93.

government to Mūʿāwīya, conditional on Mūʿāwīya ruling based on the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (ṣ).
Second Article: After Mūʿāwīya, the caliphate will return back to Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī and in the case that something has happened to him, then Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (ʿa) will take over the caliphate of the Muslims. Mūʿāwīya does not have the right to select anyone as his successor.
Third Article: The innovation of cursing and disrespecting Amīr al-Muʾminīn ʿAlī must be halted and he must not be cursed during the prayers. Nothing but good should be mentioned about him.
Fourth Article: The five million dirhams, which is in the public treasury, must be spent under the guidance of Imam Ḥasan. In assigning stipends and money, Mūʿāwīya must prefer the Banī Hāshim over the Banī Ummayah. Also, out of the revenue of 'Dār Ibgard', Mūʿāwīya must give one million dirhams to the families of the martyrs of the War of the Camel and the War of Ṣiffīn, who were killed while fighting on the side of Amīr al-Muʾminīn. This money is to be divided amongst them.[98]
Fifth Article: Mūʿāwīya promises that people, wherever they are from, whether they are from Syria, Iraq, or the Ḥijāz, will be in safety from any persecution or harassment. If any people have been active against him in the past, then he must overlook it and not engage against them or harass them in any way. In particular, he must not harass the people of Iraq for their previous rancor against him.

In addition to this, Mūʿāwīya will give a promise of safety

[98] Dār Ibgard was one of the five cities of the Fars Province of Persia in times past. (Deh Khūdā Dictionary, Word: Dār Ibgard). The reason behind this stipulation may have been that this city surrendered without fighting against the Muslims and signed a peace treaty with them. According to Islamic law, the taxes from this city belonged to the Prophet (s) and his family (a), along with the orphans and the indigent. Due to this situation, Imam Ḥasan (a) stipulated the condition that the revenue from this city be given to the families of the martyrs of the War of the Camel and the War of Ṣiffīn. As mentioned previously, the money belonged to Imam Ḥasan (a). In addition, the poor families of the martyrs of these two wars were included in another category of Islamic law in which the revenue money was due. (Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1393 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 44, p. 10.

to all of the companions of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), wherever they may be. He may not harass them, and their lives, wealth, and honor are all protected. They may not be pursued or harassed by any means, nor should they be bothered in the least. The rights of each person should be given to them, and any wealth from the public treasury, which is in the hands of the followers (shias) of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) should not be taken from them.

Mūʿāwīya should not expose Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī (ʿa) or his brother, Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (ʿa), to any danger, and none of the members of the Prophet's household should at any time be terrorized or frightened by him. At the conclusion of the peace treaty, Mūʿāwīya swore an oath to uphold all of its points and to act upon them exactly as written. He held God as his witness in this matter and all of the notables of Syria bore witness to it.[99]

When Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) was only a child, the Prophet (ṣ) foretold of the event of the peace treaty when he said: "This child of mine is the master of the Muslims, and God, through him, will establish a truce between two groups of the Muslims."[100]

The Goals of Imam Ḥasan in the Peace Treaty with Mūʿāwīya

Whenever rulers and leaders from around the world see themselves on a path that is contrary to their goals, they attempt to chart a course in which the least possible harm will affect them and in which they will gain the most benefit. This is a very basic principle in political and social maneuvering.

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[99] For the details of this peace treaty please refer to the book 'The Peace of Ḥasan (a)', By: Shaykh Rāḍī Âali Yāsīn (Manshūrāt al-Dār al-Kītāb al-'Irāqīya Fī al-Kāẓimiyya) p. 259-261.

[100] This foretelling, with small differences in wording, have been narrated in the sources below: Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, Tadhkīrat al-Khawāṣ, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭbaʿah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 194; Asad al-Qābah, vol. 2, p. 12; Nūr al-Abṣār, p. 121; al-Fuṣūl al-Muhimmah, Ibn Ṣabbāgh Mālikī, p. 158; al-Iṣābah, vol. 1, p. 330; Kashf al-Ghammah, Farsi Translation, vol. 2, p. 98; Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb, vol. 2, p. 298; al-Ṣawāʿiq al-Maḥraqah, p. 82; Ḥafiẓ Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah Wa al-Nihāyah, Second Edition, Beirut, Maktabah al-Maʿārif, 1394 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 8, p. 36...

Based on these basic principles, Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) was striving hard in order to reach his goals through the means available to him. Therefore, when he became forced to reach a compromise with Mūʿāwīya, he gave the government to Mūʿāwīya based on the stipulations of the first article. This was that Mūʿāwīya would rule based on the principles of the Holy Quran and the methods of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). Imam Ḥasan's (ʿa) primary motivation in this was the preservation of the religion of Islam and the preservation of the society through the enactment of Islamic law. Therefore, by adding this stipulation, he reached some of his primary objectives.

In addition, according to the second article, Imam Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī (ʿa) would become the caliph of the Muslims after the death of Mūʿāwīya. Mūʿāwīya, at the time of the treaty, was about 30 years older than Imam Ḥasan (ʿa).[101] It was not unexpected that he would pass away after a short time, and with this stipulation in the peace treaty, things were weighted in favor of the Muslims and the Islamic society.

The rest of the points also have strong foundational supports; the situation of those times was in such a way that Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was cursed, disrespected, and slandered at every occasion possible. This action had become a sort of innovation in the religious practices of the society. Imam ʿAlī's (ʿa) family, as well as his followers, were pursued everywhere they went and they were under the constant threat of imprisonment, torture, and death. Taking an oath from Mūʿāwīya to abstain from these actions was definitely a positive step. Even if Mūʿāwīya ended up breaking the pledge, the proof of his written oath was left as a weight against him in the eyes of the people.

A Gathering in Kūfah

After the peace treaty was concluded, both sides entered Kūfah along with their supporters, and gathered at the city's

[101] Āali Yāsīn, Ibid, p. 278.

main mosque. People also gathered there in the expectation that the leaders of the two sides would give speeches where the peace treaty would be discussed, and through this, no room would be left for doubts or ambiguities.

After the people had gathered, Mūʿāwīya came forward and sat on the pulpit of the mosque and began to deliver a speech. During the course of this speech, he did not mention the stipulations of the treaty, and even went as far as to mock them. He said:

"I did not fight against you for the sake of prayer, your completion of the Ḥajj, or the paying of the poor rate. This is because I know that you do all of these things. I have fought against you so that I could make you obedient to me and rule over you." Then he added: "Know that whatever conditions and treaty I agreed to with Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī (ʿa), I have put them underneath my feet and they have no value whatsoever."[102]

In this manner, Mūʿāwīya openly nullified all of the promises he had made and the oaths which he had sworn, and canceled the whole of the peace treaty. This became the first step towards the awakening of the people to the realities of the Ummayid government. From this point onwards, things were about to get much worse for the Muslim community.

The Crimes of Mūʿāwīya

After announcing his nullification of the treaty, Mūʿāwīya went on to increase the severity and number of his crimes. He made the custom of cursing Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) even more widespread in the society until it was felt to be a part of the religion itself. He also increased the pressure on the Shias and the companions of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) until it had reached unbearable proportions. He made the killing and torture of the companions of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) very common, until it was

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[102] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, First Edition, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1961 A.D. vol. 16, p. 15.
- Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Maqātil al-Ṭālibīīn, Najaf Ashraf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabat al-Ḥaydarīa, 1375 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 45.

considered normal for them to either be in jail, undergoing torture, or having been exiled into far off lands. He went as far as murdering some of the most eminent Muslim personalities, amongst them Ḥujr ibn ʿAdī.

Mūʿāwīya also did not act as he had promised in regards to the revenue of 'Dār Ibgard'. Ṭabarī has narrated that: "The people of Baṣrah did not give their revenue of Dār Ibgard and said that this money belongs to the public treasury and is for us."[103] Ibn Athīr has written: "The people of Baṣrah refused to pay their revenue from Dār Ibgard and they did this under orders of Mūʿāwīya."[104]

The Awakening and Rising Awareness of the People

It was necessary for the same people who had been tired and disinclined towards war with Mūʿāwīya and had forced the subsequent peace treaty, to be awakened from their sleep and realize what the rule of Mūʿāwīya actually meant for them. It was necessary for these people to realize their mistake, in order for them to be roused into fixing it. This was not possible until they had seen with their very own eyes, the repercussions of allowing Mūʿāwīya to gain power.

In addition, it was necessary for the Muslims to practicall see the true face of the Umayyid government and to become familiar with its ensuing pressures, deprivations, and scare tactics.

What was necessary for Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) and his companions during this time was to reveal these realities and prepare the people's minds to reflect upon, understand, and then oppose their enemy's corrupt way of rule. Imam Ḥasan

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[103] Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut, Dār al-Qāmūs al-Ḥadīth, (Bī Tā) vol. 6, p. 95.

[104] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 405. Balādhūrī has written: "Mūʿāwīya gave orders to his governor in Baṣrah that he instigate the people against Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī (a). He obeyed this order and in conclusion of the instigations, the people of Baṣrah began to say: This money belongs to the public treasury; why should we give this money to others?" (Insāb al-Ashrāf, Researched by: Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir Maḥmūdī, Beirut, Dār al-Taʿāruf Lil Maṭbūʿāt, 1397 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 47).

('a) did not accept the peace treaty in order to shirk his responsibility in leading the Muslims. He did so in order to begin another type of war against Mū'āwīya. What ended up taking place after the conclusion of the peace treaty pushed the society in this direction and helped the Iraqis to see the true reality.

Ṭabarī has written: "Mū'āwīya, after the cease fire, encamped at a place called Nukhaylah (which is near Kūfah). At this time, a group of the Khawārij rose against him and entered into the city of Kūfah. Mū'āwīya sent one military column of the Syrians against them, but the Khawārij defeated them. Seeing this, Mū'āwīya ordered the people of Kūfah to rise up and defeat them, and threatened that if they did not do so, their lives and properties would not be safe (from his government)."[105]

Just like this, the same people of Iraq who were not ready to fight under the banner of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) and Imam Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ('a) were forced by Mū'āwīya to fight against the Khawārij. The irony behind this was that Mū'āwīya was the joint enemy of both the people of Iraq, as well as the Khawārij; now they were being forced to fight against each other. At this juncture it was proven that the peace and tranquility which the people sought, and for which they had refused to fight against Mū'āwīya, proved elusive to them once more.

Mū'āwīya's Policy of Fear and Hunger

In addition to what was mentioned above, Mū'āwīya enacted a policy of fear and hunger on the people of Iraq. They were deprived of their possessions and put under a number of severe restrictions. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, the famous Sunni scholar, has written: "Wherever Shias were found, they were killed. If anyone was suspected of being a Shia, their

[105] Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut Print, Dār al-Qāmūs al-Ḥadīth, (Bee, Taa), vol. 6, p. 95.

hands and feet were cut off. Whoever was known for their love and connection to the family of the Prophet (ʿa) was either imprisoned, his wealth seized, or his house demolished."

The severity of the pressure reached a point where being accused of friendship with Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), was considered worse in the society than Kufr (disbelief in God) or irreligiousness; it also entailed harsher judicial punishments. In the enactment of this policy of terror and widespread fear, Kūfah was the hardest hit, for it was counted as the center of the Shias of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (ʿa).

Mūʿāwīya appointed Zīyād ibn Summayyah as the governor of Kūfah, and later turned over the governorship of Baṣrah to him as well. Zīyād was an individual who had at one point been one of the companions of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa). Due to his background, he knew the Shias well and used this knowledge to pursue and kill them. The ones who were not killed were either threatened, had their hands and feet cut off, blinded, crucified on palm trees, or they were exiled from Iraq. This continued until not a single one of the famous Shia personalities could be found in Iraq.

The Peak of Pressure in Kūfah and Baṣrah

As mentioned before, the people of Kūfah were singled out for punishment and harassment by the government of Mūʿāwīya. This had gone to such an extent that whenever people would go to the houses of their friends and wished to speak privately to them, they would not do so until they had secured repeated oaths from the servants of the house that they would not turn them in to the authorities.

In the midst of all this, Mūʿāwīya sent a directive to all of his agents and officials throughout the country that they should not accept the judicial testimony of the Shias or the family of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa). In another directive, Mūʿāwīya wrote: "If two people give witness that an individual is one of the friends of ʿAlī (ʿa) or of his family, then remove his name from the registry of the public treasury and cut off his pension

and stipends."[106]

Zīyād, who alternated between ruling in Kūfah for 6 months and Baṣrah for 6 months, appointed Samūrah ibn Jundub to administer the city of Baṣrah in his absence. During the time that Samūrah was in charge, he killed 8,000 people. Zīyād later asked him: "Don't you have any apprehension that among the people you killed, one of them may have been innocent?" Samūrah replied: "Even if I had killed twice the amount, I would not have been concerned about such a thing."

Abū Sawār ʿAdawī has said: "During the morning of one day, Samūrah killed 47 members of my family who had the Quran memorized by heart."[107]

The Peace Treaty was the Foundation of the Revolution of ʿĀshūrā

These frightening turn of events showed the true nature of Mūʿāwīya's government. They shook the people of Iraq and brought them out of their state of sluggishness. They realized that their complacency had put them in a very dangerous position

During this time, it is true that the tribal chiefs were benefiting from their position of cooperation with Mūʿāwīya, but when it came to the masses, they were feeling the full brunt of Mūʿāwīya's oppression and deprivation. Quickly, the true nature of his rule became evident to them, and they realized their mistake in strengthening the Umayyid rule through their disinclination in fighting against them.[108]

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[106] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, First Edition, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-ʿArabīya, 1961 A.D. vol. 1, p. 43-45.

[107] Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut, Dār al-Qāmūs al-Ḥadīth, vol. 6, p. 132.

[108] Imam Ḥasan (a) had already predicted these turn of events. He knew well that if the government fell into the hands of the Ummayids, it would be the beginning of a dark period for the Muslims and specifically for the Shias. Unfortunately, until the Muslims had faced these bitter realities themselves, they would not be awakened. When they came face to face with these issues, they realized for the first time what an opportunity they had lost and how they had prepared the grounds for their own wretchedness and abasement.

Mū'āwīya appointed Mughayrah ibn Shu'bah as the ruler of Kūfah and gave Baṣrah over to 'Abdullah ibn 'Āmir (who had left the city after the killing of 'Uthmān and now returned in order to rule). Mū'āwīya returned to Syria and managed the apparatus of government from the city of Damascus.

Whenever the people of Iraq remembered their lives under the rule of Imam 'Alī ('a), they would feel pangs of regret. When they remembered their lack of cooperation and sluggishness in helping him, they felt deep remorse. They were hard hit by the fact that they had forced the peace treaty by their collective actions. Whenever they would meet each other, they would rebuke one another and ask what the future held for them and what they should do. Not even a few years had passed before the representatives of Kūfah began going back and forth to Medina and meeting with Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ('a).[109]

Therefore, this period of the peace treaty, was in reality a period of gradual preparation and practice for the Muslim community, in order to prepare for war against the corrup Umayyid government. It was a time of preparation an mobilization, until the time became ripe for a full-fledged revolution.

Overtures of Revolution

During the period when Imam Ḥasan ('a) concluded the peace treaty, the masses did not have the proper foundations for understanding the reality of their situation, nor did they

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Imam Ḥasan (a), as we mentioned previously, foretold of these dark and bitter events, which were about to unfold. He said: "I swear by God that if I am forced unwillingly (because of your sluggishness and disloyalty) to give over the government of the Muslims to Mū'āwīya, then have certainty that under the flag of Banī Umayyah you will never see happiness and joy. You will become subject to a variety of torments and tortures.... Right now, it is as if I see that tomorrow your children are standing in front of their children's doors and are asking them for bread and water; a bread and water which is their right and which God has apportioned for them, yet the Banī Umayyah has taken it and deprived them of their own rights."

[109] Ḥusayn, Ṭahā, 'Alī and his Two Noble Sons, Translation by: Aḥmad Ārām, The publication house and bookstore of 'Alī Akbar 'Alamī, 1332 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 207.

have the proper foresight to support the actions of the Imam ('a). In those days the Muslim society was imprisoned by their selfish desires and worldly aspirations.

Imam Ḥasan ('a) was working to prepare the masses to rise against the Umayyid government, and to give the people sufficient time until they themselves could see the true nature of the situation which they had placed themselves in. The people had to be awakened to the oppression and crimes of the government and its act of overstepping the bounds of Islam.[110]

Bit by bit, this reality began to ingrain itself into the consciousness of the people, as well as in that of the notable members of the Iraqi society. When it reached a certain point, they asked Imam Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī ('a) to rise up against the Umayyids.[111]

Reaction in Medina

After the martyrdom of Imam Ḥasan ('a), it was Imam Ḥusayn ('a) who succeeded the imamate and became the third leader of the Shias. It was during this time that news of Mū'āwīya's crimes began spreading amongst the people of Medina. Many discussions began to take place between Imam Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī ('a) and the notables of Kūfah. At the time when Mū'āwīya killed Ḥujr ibn 'Adī and his companions, a group of the Kufan notables came to Imam Ḥusayn ('a) and conveyed the news. When word spread about what had happened, a wave of hatred and disgust spread amongst the Muslims.

During this time, there was a small but organized anti-

[110] From this angle, it can be said that the peace treaty was like a double edged sword for Mū'āwīya. If he accepted the terms of the peace treaty and abided by them, then this would not be to his benefit. Likewise, if he nullified the peace treaty, this would cause disenchantment and create the grounds for the people's revolt against the Umayyid government. This was a matter which Imam Ḥasan (a) had kept in mind when forming the stipulations in the treaty.

[111] However, Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī (a) advised them to follow Imam Ḥasan (a) and said: "The current situation is unfavorable for an uprising; until the time that Mū'āwīya is alive, an uprising will not bear any fruit."

government movement against the Umayyids. This movement was spearheaded and pushed forward by a contingent of the more dedicated followers of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa), who had been saved from death by his farsightedness during the initial campaign against Mūʿāwīya. The aim of this group was to prepare the groundwork for revolution by broadcasting the news of Mūʿāwīya's crimes, until the hearts of the people had become ready, and the proper time had come for a full on rebellion.[112]

Why did Imam Ḥasan choose peace, while Imam Ḥusayn chose Rebellion?

In the previous discussion, the mystery around the peace treaty of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) was cleared up, but one question still remains that deserves discussion. This question is why Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) choose peace, while his brother Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) chose to rise up? If peace was the correct method why didn't Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) do the same thing? Likewise, i war was the correct method, then why did Imam Ḥasan (ʿa, not choose war?

The answer to these questions lies in the respective social conditions over which these two Imams (ʿa) presided, as well as in the differing actions and personal characteristics of Mūʿāwīya in comparison to his son Yazīd. Below we will explore certain aspects of these differences.

The Deception of Mūʿāwīya

During his period of rule, Mūʿāwīya was always attempting to give his government an Islamic aura and appearance. He would do this in order to make the masses believe in the Islamic legitimacy of his rule and to prevent

[112]Shams al-Dīn, Muḥammad Mahdī, Assessment of the Ḥusaynī (a) Revolution (Thawrat al-Ḥusayn), Translation by Mahdī Pīshvā'ī, Second Print, Qum, Tawhīd Publications, 1362 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 178-179.

them from seeing that he had departed from the ways of Islam. In reality, Mūʿāwīya had distorted Islam for his own benefit and had established a monarchical system of governance in place of the simple and pure concept of the Islamic caliphate. He had changed the Islamic society into an un-Islamic one.

In spite of his corruption, he protected the outer image of Islam and outwardly abided by some of the laws of the religion. In a manner of speaking, he was careful not to allow people to see what was behind the curtain. He understood that since he had gained the caliphate under the guise of religion, and he ruled over people in its name, he shouldn't openly commit actions which people would construe as opposition or even war against religion. His power was derived from his religious legitimacy; if he were to lose this, then his rule would be weakened significantly or even completely destroyed. Publicly, he was careful to act religiously, and if he wished to do things that he could not justify as Islamic, he was careful to do them in private. In addition to this, Mūʿāwīya also had n exceptional skill at political and social management. He was able to solve problems in very specific ways, and this was a skill which his son Yazīd would later prove to not possess.

It were these two main points which made the success of an uprising during Mūʿāwīya's time a subject of doubt. In addition, the masses had not fully developed the proper mentality for discerning the corruption of the Umayyid government. Due to this issue, an uprising and the consequent martyrdom of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) would not have provoked as much of a response as it did in the case of Imam Ḥusayn's (ʿa) martyrdom. In the case of an uprising by Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) during this time, it was probable that the masses would have judged it to be a case of political rivalry, and a fight over power and the right of rule, rather than viewing it as a fight of truth and justice against falsehood and tyranny. Morevover, such an uprising may have been distorted into hurting the rising tide of the movement against Mūʿāwīya's government.

An Unfavorable Atmosphere

As mentioned previously, the political climate during the time of Mūʿāwīya was not one in which a reformer could enact his policies properly, nor was it one where the people would follow and support him. It was a dangerous atmosphere in which a reformer had to watch the actions of his opponents and carefully craft an appropriate response, in view of his own resources and opportunities. This was the main problem during Imam Ḥasan's (ʿa) time.

Furthermore, during this time period, what was known as the concept of martyrdom did not elicit the response that it would later evoke in the people. Martyrdom, much like the current political situation, needed favorable conditions in order to have the necessary effects in the social order and to become fuel for the coming revolution.

History has shown that if Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) had continued the fight against Mūʿāwīya with the army that he had (under the conditions that were discussed in previous pages), then in all likelihood, he would not have ended up as a martyr but rather he would have been captured as a prisoner. This may sound surprising at first, but it is based on solid historical fact. When we look back in history, we see that Mūʿāwīya considered his family as having been humiliated from the time of the Conquest of Mecca onwards. His family had been well known for their animosity against Islam and the Prophet (ṣ), and they only converted when they had been completely defeated and had no other choice. As a result of this, he wished to take one of the notables of the family of the Prophet captive and finally have his revenge. If such a thing had happened, the battle of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) would not have had the effect that it ended up having on the Muslim society.

Another aspect is that if Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) had continued to fight against Mūʿāwīya, and had then proceeded to lose (which was exceedingly likely, judging by the situation he was in), Mūʿāwīya would have continued his campaign far into

the Muslim cities and a very large number of people would have been slaughtered. These cities would have included Mecca, Medina, Kūfah, and Baṣrah. The number of people killed would have far exceeded the ones who were martyred in Karbalā, and Imam Ḥasan ('a) was aware of this.

It may have been for these reasons that Imam Ḥusayn ('a) abided by the peace treaty after the martyrdom of his brother Imam Ḥasan ('a). For a period of approximately 10 years, from 50 to 60 Hijrī (the last years of Mū'āwīya's rule) Imam Ḥusayn ('a) did not revolt and instead waited for an appropriate opportunity; in the meantime, he prepared the people's minds and spirits. It is clear that if he had decided to revolt, the potential reaction of the people would not have been sufficient for a full blown revolution. An uprising would not have had a significant effect on the Muslims of that time period.

Yazīd: The Detested Leader

Yazīd differed greatly in terms of his personal characteristics from his father Mū'āwīya. He did not possess the diplomacy, experience, or management skills which his father wielded with such shrewd talent. In addition, he did not care to publicly clothe himself in the garb of Islam and to make a show of obeying its regulations. In reality, he was miles behind his father in all matters of governance and rule.

Yazīd was a youth who was inexperienced, lustful, obstinate, and lacking in foresight and precaution. He was also rash, self-indulgent, lewd, shallow in thought, and foolish. Before having gained the caliphate, he had been engrossed in enjoying himself through various extravagances. After reaching power, he was no more able to control himself than before. His father had been careful not to publicly show his corruption to the masses, yet Yazīd ended up exposing himself as an irreligious and faithless figure who blatantly trampled the laws and regulations of Islam under his feet. He would openly and visibly drink wine and commit other sins.

Yazīd was so inexperienced politically, that he openly exposed all of the things which his father had worked so hard to keep hidden. He showed the government of the Umayyids as being one that was monarchical in nature and opposed to the very essence of Islam.

Yazīd's inability to keep a cover on the nature of his government proved to the people that he was unworthy of the caliphate of an Islamic state. Even the agents of the government were unable to spin his activities in a way that legitimized him. When the time came, and Imam Ḥusayn ('a) rose against Yazīd, the agents were unable to effectively suppress the truth of the uprising. This was because the people had seen the true nature of the government with their own eyes. The behavior of Yazīd proved to become a solid and undisputable sanction for the revolution of Imam Ḥusayn ('a). It lent the uprising of Imam Ḥusayn ('a), who was the grandson of the Prophet of Islam (ṣ), with the air of a fight of justice against falsehood. It would be seen by the people as a fight for returning the government of the Muslims back to it original nature and not as a fight for worldly political pow and rule.

The Movement Gains in Number

To gain insight into Imam Ḥusayn's ('a) uprising, we have to look into all of its facets. One of these facets involves the opinions and thoughts of the masses, which drastically changed after the peace treaty of Imam Ḥasan ('a). In the days that came after the peace treaty, anti-government sentiment increased considerably amongst the people. The actions of Mū'āwīya, willingly or unwillingly, added to this outgrowth in both numbers and severity.

After the martyrdom of Imam Ḥasan ('a), Mū'āwīya felt as if there was no longer any real opposition to his rule and he slowly increased the pressure on the masses. In particular, he increased the pressure on the Shias and the followers of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a). He assumed that any crimes or oppression

that he committed were now without consequence or repercussion.

Mūʿāwīya repeatedly transgressed on the rights of the Muslims. There were attacks and night raids by his violent army. These occurred all over the Muslim lands and many innocent people were killed. His nullification of the peace treaty and his forcing of the people to give an oath of allegiance to his corrupt son Yazīd (which was a clear violation of the treaty), all added to the anger. To top all of these crimes, he also had Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) poisoned. All of these things slowly added to one another and began to stain the Umayyid government and weaken its position. These actions caused a process of unification amongst the Shias, and a tightening of the general anti Umayyid movement. Gradually these factors came together and built the foundations for the rise of the Ḥusaynī (ʿa) movement.

Dr. Ṭahā Ḥusayn, a famous Egyptian scholar and writer, after describing the difficulties of the Shias at the hands of Mūʿāwīya, goes on to say: "During the last ten years of Mūʿāwīya's rule, the work of the Shias began to bear fruit, and their invitations in the east of the country and in the south of the Arabian peninsula began to spread at an extraordinary rate. This reached a point where, at the time of the death of Mūʿāwīya, a great number of people considered the cursing of Mūʿāwīya and the love of the Ahl al-Bayt as part of their religious obligations."[113]

All of these things allowed the public to see the true face of their government, and they saw the way it tortured and took away the rights of Muslims all across the Muslim lands. In essence, the mask of the Umayyid government was cast off, and its true face was revealed. All of the things which had been obstacles towards an uprising during the time of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) were now in the open and to the advantage of an anti government rebellion. The death of Mūʿāwīya added further

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[113] ʿAlī and his Children, Translation by: Muḥammad ʿAlī Khalīlī, Third Print, Tehran, The Publications Company of Gutenburg Press, p. 298.

fuel to the fire and opened the door for a decisive revolt by Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa).

A Divinely Inspired Movement

The uprising of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) brought about a wide spread and comprehensive transformation in the Muslim society. It completely turned the status quo upside down and aroused the public opinion against the Umayyid government. It also gave rise to a number of future revolts and movements such as: the revolt of the Penitents (Tawwābīn), the revolt of the people of Medina, the revolt of Mukhtār Thaqafī, the rise of Zayd ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn, as well as many other large scale revolts. If this revolt had occurred during Imam Ḥasan's (ʿa) time, none of these later movements would have arisen.

Imam Ḥusayn's (ʿa) movement was in reality a continuation of his elder brother's movement. Imam Ḥasan (ʿa), with the utmost patience, bore the fault finding of shortsighted people and signed the peace treaty. With this action, he opened the door for people's recognition of th Umayyid government, and for the gradual building of the mental and ideological foundations. When the grounds hac been sufficiently prepared, Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) continued the movement of his brother by coming out in open revolt against the corrupt governmental system.

The Difference in Supporters

Moving past the differences between the conditions in the societies of the two respective Imams (ʿa), we must also look into the differences in their supporters. In previous pages we learned that the army of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) began to franticly disperse when a rumor was circulated in their midst. Before dispersing, they plundered the tent of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) and even carried away the rug which was under his feet!

We saw that the same people who wanted to fight under the banner of the Imam (ʿa) against the Syrians and who give

their lives for this cause, became themselves the cause of the Imam (ʿa) being left unsupported. The differences are rather striking when these men are compared with the companions of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) on the night of ʿĀshūrā. Many of their speeches have been recorded in the books of history. Let us take a look at one such speech from a companion of Imam Ḥusayn (a):

"We swear by God that if we know that we will be killed, and then be brought back to life, and then killed again, and our ashes be scattered to the winds, and that this will be repeated 70 times, even then we will not separate from you until we have given our lives in your cause. We can only die but once, and this is martyrdom and an immortal honor and happiness for us."

With a group of men like this, it was possible to initiate a movement called Karbalā which continues to echo in the hearts and minds of people to this very day. The reality shows that Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) began the struggle against the Umayyids, and Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) took it to its next stage.

Two Approaches for One Message

The late Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn ʿĀmūlī wrote in the .ntroduction of the invaluable book 'The Peace of Al-Ḥasan (ʿa),' which was authored by the great scholar Shaykh Rāḍī Āli Yāsīn, that: "...The most important aim of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) was to remove the curtain which was covering the true face of the Umayyid government and to expose them as they were, so that the people could come to know them. This would allow the people to restrain the government in its systematic eradication of the religion of Imam Ḥasan's (ʿa) grandfather, the Holy Prophet (ṣ). This goal of the Imam (ʿa) was completely fulfilled and the mask which covered the corrupt face of the Umayyid state, was taken off and their true nature was made evident for all to see (And we thank God for this blessing)."

It was from the blessings of the plan of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa),

that his brother 'The Master of Martyrs', was able to enact the great revolution, which revealed the reality to the people. These two brothers were two different faces for the very same message. Their duties and responsibilities, in the face of their respectively unique circumstances and situations, and in the face of overcoming various difficult challenges, were in reality one and the same.

Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) had no qualms in sacrificing his own life and Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) was not any more self sacrificing in the way of God than Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) was. The day of Sābāṭ and the day of ʿĀshūrā were two sides of the very same struggle. The sacrifice of the day of ʿĀshūrā was made of two components; the first was Hasani (ʿa) in nature and the second was Ḥusaynī (ʿa). It was Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) who built the foundations of ʿĀshūrā and allowed it to bear fruit.

It can be said that if Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) lived during the time of his brother and was faced with the same conditions and situation, he would have acted in the exact same manner, and vice versa. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) narrated a very telling tradition about his two grandsons. He said: "Ḥasan and Ḥusayn are two leaders of Islam whether they make peace or whether they make war." This is just one small detail from th life of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa), may God's peace and blessings b upon him.

The Third Imam

Imam Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī

A Brief Introduction Into the Life of Imam Ḥusayn

The third Imam (ʿa) was born on the 3rd (or possibly 4th) of the month of Shaʿbān in the 4th year Hijrī. He was born in the blessed city of Medina. He was the second child from the marriage of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) and the daughter of the Prophet, the Lady Fāṭimah (ʿa). Imam Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (ʿa) is famously known for his exceptional courage, bravery, and his timeless stand against oppression and tyranny.

The Many Facets of the Life of Imam Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī

Imam Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (ʿa) lived for a period of 6 years until the passing of his grandfather, Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ). After this, he spent 30 years alongside his father Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) and participated actively in many of the important events of his caliphate. After the martyrdom of his father (in the year 40 Hijrī), he spent a period of 10 years alongside his brother Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) in the political and social struggles which took place during that time. After the martyrdom of his brother Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) (in the year 50 Hijrī), he became involved in the struggle against Mūʿāwīya ibn Abī Sufyān, at the peak of Mūʿāwīya's political power. After Mūʿāwīya's death, Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) was faced with the rule of Mūʿāwīya's son, Yazīd. During this time, he engaged in an uprising against Yazīd and was martyred in the land of Karbalā in the year 61 Hijrī.

This last part of Imam Ḥusayn's (ʿa) life (which is also the period of his Imamate) can be considered as the most important, and so it will be the main focus of this chapter.

The Struggle of Imam Ḥusayn Against Mūʿāwīya

Imam Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (ʿa) was a witness to the deviation

of the Islamic government which took place during the course of his life; due to this, he was a constant supporter of his father's political activities and struggles. One day, when he was a child during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn Khaṭṭāb, he entered the mosque and saw that 'Umar was sitting on top of the pulpit. When he saw this scene, he went to the top of the pulpit and said to 'Umar: "Come down from the pulpit of my father and go on your own father's pulpit."

'Umar, who was dumbfounded, said: "My father did not have a pulpit." He then placed Imam Ḥusayn ('a) next to himself. After he came down from the pulpit, he took Imam Ḥusayn ('a) to his home and asked him: "Who taught you these words?" Imam Ḥusayn ('a) replied: "No one."

In the Battles against the Nākithīn and Qāsiṭīn

Imam Ḥusayn ('a) was also involved in his father's political and social campaigns.[114] These included the three battles, which occurred during Amīr al-Mu'minīn's ('a) caliphate. In the Battle of the Camel, Imam Ḥusayn ('a) was the commander of the left flank of Imam 'Alī's army.[115] In the Battle of Ṣiffīn, he also played an active role in the war, as well as his work in boosting the morale of the army.[116] In addition, he was one of the witnesses on Imam 'Alī's ('a) side in the matter of the Arbitration.

After the martyrdom of his father, the Imam ('a) participated in the socio-political activities of his brother Imam Ḥasan ('a). He was present at the battle against Mū'āwīya, and he was one of the individuals (along with 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far) with whom the matter of the peace treaty was discussed.[117] After the conclusion of the war and the

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[114] Ibn Ḥajar 'Asqalānī, al-Iṣābat Fī Tamayyuz al-Saḥābah, First Edition, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1328 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 333.

[115] Ḥafīẓ ibn 'Asākir, History of Damascus (the book concerning Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī (a)), Researched by: Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir Maḥmūdī, Beirut, al-Maḥmūdī Lil Ṭabā'ah Wa An-Nashr Institute, 1398 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 164.

[116] Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, Waqa'at Ṣiffīn, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 114, 249, 530.

[117] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 405.

signing of the peace treaty, he returned back to the city of Medina with his brother.[118]

The Political and Social Climate During the Life of Imam Ḥusayn

During the time of Imam Ḥusayn ('a), the deviations from the principles and foundations of Islam had reached their peak. These deviations had begun with the event of Saqīfah and they had rapidly worsened with the caliphate of 'Uthmān, until the point when they reached their peak with Mū'āwīya and his son Yazīd. Over a period of many years, Mū'āwīya, who had been appointed as the governor of Syria, had solidified his power base and eventually gained the office of the caliphate. With this seizure of power, he had established his tribe of Banū Ummayyah over the Muslims, and he had taken complete control of the public treasury and the wealth of the nation. Alongside this, Mū'āwīya had established an autocratic monarchical system, which was against the very spirit of Islam.

Mū'āwīya used a triple pronged tactic of suppression. Or one hand, he used political and economic pressure on the Muslims. The Muslims were subjected to a policy of hunger, poverty, and fear. He also engaged in widespread killings and torture of the people. These factors worked together to suppress any form of protest and quell any movement against his government. His second tactic of suppression included arousing racial discrimination, rivalry, and competition between various ethnic and tribal groups. This policy would create tension between the differing groups and both sides would be weakened in power and will, effectively suppressing any danger of revolt from all groups concerned.

His comprehensive program included plans to weaken the people both externally (through poverty, killings, and

[118] Ibn Ḥajar 'Asqalānī, al-Iṣābat Fī Tamayyuz al-Saḥābah, First Edition, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1328 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 333.

torture), as well as internally (through the instigation of petty conflicts). For his third tactic of suppression, he began a campaign of fabrication and distortion of religious traditions through the use of his governmental agents. These included both sayings of the Prophet (ṣ), as well as the interpretations of the verses of the Holy Quran. Both false sayings were attributed to the Prophet (ṣ), as well as false interpretations, and these were all naturally to the benefit of Mū'āwīya's government. Through this third tactic, he gave his government a respectable and legitimate face, as well as stupefying the intellect of the masses into accepting his government and rule.

These un-Islamic policies, in addition to the support of false and deviant sects such as the Jabrīyah and Murjī'ah, which lent support to the rule and policies of Mū'āwīya, created very dangerous and deadly changes in the fabric of the Islamic society. They also helped to quiet the masses and put them in a state of obedience and submission to the government.

These policies created a transformation of the character and collective values of the society. While the Muslims generally understood that their religion did not allow them to be meek and submissive in the face of an un-Islamic and oppressive government, they were too weakened and fearful to put up any meaningful resistance. The conclusion of these policies was that the Muslims, in spite of the logic of the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet (ṣ), were transformed into a fearful and submissive community. This period of Muslim history is full of testimony which exhibit how this transformation and deviation seeped into the very fabric of the society and changed it for the worse.

If we compare the reaction of the people to the rule of 'Uthmān versus their reaction to the rule of Mū'āwīya, we will see the effective power of Mū'āwīya's policies. During the rule of 'Uthmān, the people rose up violently; this included the people of the largest cities in the Islamic nation such as

Medina, Kūfah, Mecca, as well as the country of Egypt. In addition, most of the smaller cities and villages also participated. During the rule of Mūʿāwīya, we see that the situation was completely different. Oppression was much more widespread; murder and torture were rampant in the society, and Muslims were deprived of their rights and their wealth. In spite of all of these factors, there was no widespread revolt against Mūʿāwīya's rule and the people were submissive and obedient towards him.

At times, there were flashes of scattered protest such as those of Ḥujr ibn ʿAdī, ʿAmr ibn Ḥamiq Khuzāʿī, as well as others. These scattered protests showed that there was a great deal of suffering and oppression in the society. Yet, these examples of resistance were not wide enough in scope or organized enough to have the necessary effects. The flames of revolt were quickly suppressed, the leaders executed, and the society was not too greatly affected by these movements.[119]

The Obstacles of Revolt during the Time of Mūʿāwīya

With the existence of such conditions in the society, a uprising would have been neither successful nor even beneficial. There were two main causes that were the most important obstacles to an uprising against Mūʿāwīya. We will explore these in some detail below:

1- The Peace Treaty of Imam Ḥasan with Mūʿāwīya

If Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) had revolted during the period of Mūʿāwīya's rule, Mūʿāwīya could have used the treaty which he had signed with Imam Ḥasan (ʿa), and which had also been approved by Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), against him. It was known amongst the people that Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) and Imam Ḥusayn

[119] For further information, please refer to: Shams al-Dīn, Muḥammad Mahdī, Assessment of the Husseini (a) Revolution (Thawrat al-Ḥusayn), Translation by Mahdī Pīshvā'ī, Second Print, Qum, Tawhīd Publications.

(ʿa) had a consensus in staying silent for the duration of Mūʿāwīya's life. If Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) had risen against Mūʿāwīya's rule, it was possible that Mūʿāwīya would have painted him as an opportunist and as one who breaks his pledge. With the resources that Mūʿāwīya had, this would have proven to be a significant issue in mobilizing the people's support.

With this said, we know that Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) did not consider this treaty with Mūʿāwīya as being obligatory to follow. This treaty had not been signed based on free will and personal inclinations; it was a treaty signed under compulsion. It was signed under conditions in which debate and an exchange of opinions were of no use. In addition to all of these, Mūʿāwīya had himself nullified the treaty and had not acted based on its stipulations. Therefore, such a treaty was not obligatory on Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) due to Mūʿāwīya's own nullification of the treaty. Even with all this, if the terms of the 'treaty' had been broken by Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), then Mūʿāwīya would have used it as a propaganda tool against him and it would have proven to be a significant issue.

From another angle, we must consider how the public would have judged such an uprising. As explained previously, the public at the time of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) was one which had chosen submissiveness over rebellion. Therefore, in order to justify the continuation of their state, they would have branded the rebellion of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) as the breaking of a treaty with Mūʿāwīya and thus would not have followed him. It would have proven to be an easy out for a people who hadn't yet reached the point of wanting to resist.

2- Mūʿāwīya's Religious Pretenses

The rise of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) during the time of Yazīd was so energizing and motivating that its memory has lived on in the hearts of the people throughout the centuries. Even after the passing of all this time, the warriors of Karbalā are still used as inspirations and examples for all to follow. On the

other hand, if Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) had rebelled during the lifetime of Mūʿāwīya, his rebellion would not have had such a reverberation throughout history. The reason behind this is mainly in Mūʿāwīya's trickery, guile, and political cunning.

Even though Mūʿāwīya had transformed the Islamic society by enacting a tyrannical monarchical system in place of the pure Islamic government which had existed, he still realized that his power and authority were derived from the name of Islam. Due to this, he knew that he couldn't act in a way where people would see his actions as conflicting with the religion itself. He was always careful to cover his actions with a religious aura, so that his actions were always compatible with his position as the caliph of the Muslims. If he wished to do things which could not be religiously justified, then he would be careful to do them in private, away from the public eye.

From various historical documents, it is readily available that Mūʿāwīya was in reality an irreligious and corrupt individual, who had no religious convictions whatsoever. Mughayrah ibn Shuʿbah', who himself was an irreligious individual, was one of the people who would spend time with Mūʿāwīya in his private councils and as such he would hea his private words. After hearing Mūʿāwīya's words one day, h became regretful and ashamed, and said: "Mūʿāwīya is the most wicked person amongst the people."[120] This reality was naturally kept hidden from the masses, and the government was careful to keep their aura of Islamic respectability and legitimacy.

To keep this aura of legitimacy, Mūʿāwīya carefully raised the flag of ʿUthmān's death as his own personal cause. At the same time, he raised the issue of the arbitration with Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) as well as the peace treaty with Imam Ḥasan (ʿa). Using these three, he showed himself as the legitimate successor of a long line of Muslim caliphs and showed that

[120] We will explain the purpose behind Mughayrah's words in the following pages.

his authority derived from their line of rule.

Any challenge to his rule would have been judged by the masses to be a political and worldly challenge, and not a challenge based on his corruption and irreligiousness.

The Struggle of Imam Ḥusayn against Mūʿāwīya

While the above mentioned factors prevented Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) from an outright revolt, they did not prevent him from standing against the religious deviation and injustices of Mūʿāwīya's government. In the prevailing social atmosphere, where people were afraid to speak out, Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) stood against the oppression which was taking place in the society and began to normalize the act of speaking out. Here we will look at three examples of how he would resist against Mūʿāwīya's government:

1- Imam Ḥusayn's Letters and Speeches of Protest

For the duration of Mūʿāwīya's life (10 years) during the imamate of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), there was a great exchange of letters between them. After any crime had been committed by Mūʿāwīya, Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) would harshly criticize him and protest against his actions. This was a powerful way of emboldening the people towards criticizing the Ummayids. One of the most important of these exchanges was when Mūʿāwīya nominated his son Yazīd for the caliphate.

His Opposition with the Nomination of Yazīd as the Caliph

Mūʿāwīya, in continuing his widespread efforts to solidify the nomination of his son Yazīd as caliph, traveled to Medina in order to meet with the heads of the city. He wished to gain the pledge of the people, particularly the leaders of the city, for the successorship of his son, Yazīd. The head of these leaders was Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), and naturally, Mūʿāwīya

wanted to meet with him and receive his consent and approval. After entering the city of Medina, he visited Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) and ʿAbdullah ibn ʿAbbās, and brought up the matter of Yazīd's nomination. He tried hard to gain their consent and approval, but Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) gave him the following response: "In terms of your superiority and virtues, you are subject to errors and excess. By seizing the public's wealth, you have become guilty of oppression and injustice. You have not returned the people's wealth to them and have exercised stinginess in this matter. You have involved yourself in so many forays and invasions that you have exceeded the limits and since you have not given the people their due rights, Satan has reached his ultimate goal (in regards to you).

I have understood all of what you said about Yazīd's virtues and merits in order to nominate him for the governance of the Muslims. You describe Yazīd in such a way that it is as if his way of life is hidden from the people or that you have hidden knowledge of him which the people do not possess... No, Yazīd has shown himself quite sufficiently and he has manifested his true nature. Introduce Yazīd as he truly is. Yazīd is a youth who plays with dogs and pigeons. He i capricious and has passed his whole life listening to songs anc music. Introduce Yazīd this way and leave this fruitless quest of yours. The sins which you have accumulated already are enough for you. Do not do something that when you meet with your Lord, your sins are even heavier than this. You have continued on your path of injustice for such a long period of time... and you have involved yourself in such oppression that the people's patience has worn thin. The distance between you and death is but the blink of an eye. Know that your deeds have been recorded by your Lord and on the Day of Judgment you must answer for them...."[121]

[121] Ibn Qutaybah Daynāwarī, al-Imāmah Wa al-Sīyāsah, Cairo, Maktabah al-Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī , 1382 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 184.

Mūʿāwīya's Worry of a Rebellion by Imam Ḥusayn

During this same time, Marwān ibn Ḥakam, who was the governor of Medina on behalf of Mūʿāwīya, wrote a letter to him saying the following: "'Amr ibn 'Uthmān has informed me that: A group of the Iraqi and Hijāzi notables have been going back and forth to the home of Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī' and he has said: 'I do not have certainty that Ḥusayn will not revolt.'"

Marwān added to his letter that: "I have investigated this matter further, and based on the information that has reached me, he does not have the present intention of revolting and opposing us, but I do not have certainty that he will have the same intentions in the future. Write your own opinion on this matter."

After receiving this information, Mūʿāwīya wrote a letter to Marwān, as well as a second letter to Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa). The letter contained the following content: "I have received word of some of your doings. If what I have heard is correct, then I do not consider them worthy of you. I swear by God that if anyone makes a pledge, then they must be faithful to that pledge. On the other hand, if what I have heard is not true, then you are worthy of being above such things. Therefore, be careful of yourself and be faithful to your pledge. If you oppose me, you will be faced with opposition and if you act badly towards me, then you will see evil. Abstain from creating divisions in the society..."[122]

Imam Ḥusayn's Response to Mūʿāwīya

Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) answered Mūʿāwīya with these words: "Your letter has reached my hands. You have said that information has been received by you which you do not consider befitting for me and compatible with my rank and position. I must say that it is God alone who gives people

[122] Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Ansārī al-Rijāl (Famously known as Rijāl al-Kashshī), written and edited by: Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, p. 48.

salvation for their good deeds and gives them the blessing of being able to do good works.

As for the information which has reached you about me, they are words without basis, which are spoken by tale bearing flatterers who wish to create divisions in the society. They are lies and fabrications. These irreligious deviants have lied; I have neither prepared for war against you, nor do I have intentions to do so. But know that I am fearful before God for not having risen up against you and your oppressive and irreligious companions who are in reality the brothers of Satan and the party of the oppressors.

Were you not the killer of Ḥujr ibn 'Adī and his companions? The killer of men who were amongst the ones who prayed and worshipped God and who considered religious innovations as unlawful and fought hard against them? They commanded people towards the good and forbade them from the evil. After you gave them a promise of safety and swore repeatedly that you would not seek vengeance for the acts of the past, you killed them contrary to your pledge in a tyrannical manner. With this action, you showed insolence towards God and counted your pledge with him a being worthless.

Are you not the killer of 'Amr ibn Ḥamiq, the one who had submitted to God and whose body had become worn out and exhausted due to his (intense) worship? Did you not do this after giving him a promise of safety and a pledge? You killed him after giving him such a pledge that if you had given the same pledge to the animals of the desert, they would have come down from the mountains in hope of it.

Was it not you that declared Zīyād (the son of Sumayyah) as your brother and the son of Abū Sufyān, while the Prophet (ṣ) had said: 'The newborn is associated to its father and the adulterer must be stoned.'

How I wish this matter had been concluded with that, but it was not so; after declaring the son of Sumayyah as your brother, you made him powerful over the Muslim nation. By

attaching himself to your power, he began to kill the Muslims, cut off their hands and feet, and hung them from palm trees! Oh Mūʿāwīya, you made the world so narrow and confined for the Muslims that it was as if they are not of you and you are not of them.

Are you not the killer of Ḥaḍramy? His crime was that this same Zīyād told you that 'he is of the followers of 'Alī'. The religion of 'Alī ('a) is the very same religion of his cousin, the Holy Prophet (ṣ). It is in the name of this very religion that you are presently ruling. If it was not for this same religion, you and your fathers would still be in the state of ignorance and your greatest honor would be the toil and hardship of the two journeys during the summer and winter to Yemen and Syria. God, under our leadership, saved you from a life of such misery and wretchedness.

Oh Mūʿāwīya, one of the things you said was that I should not create division and conflict in this community. I do not see any sedition greater than that of your governance and rule. You also said that I should be careful of my actions, my religion, and the religion of Muḥammad (ṣ). Whenever I (think of my responsibilities and look at the religion of Muḥammad (ṣ)) I do not see any duty greater than that of fighting against you, and this would be counted a war in the way of God. If I restrain myself from rising up against you due to certain reasons, then I seek God's forgiveness and I ask that God guide me towards actions which are the cause of his good pleasure and satisfaction.

Oh Mūʿāwīya, you also mentioned that if I was to do evil towards you, then you would do evil towards me, and if I was to show you enmity, then I would see enmity in return. I must say that in this world the righteous have always faced the evil (ones) with enmity. I am hopeful that my enmity towards you does not bring me injury, and that the harm of your malevolence will return to yourself and be the cause of your own destruction. Therefore, have as much enmity as you are able to muster!

Oh Mūʿāwīya, fear God and know that all of your deeds, large or small, have been recorded before him. Know that God will not forget your crimes, in which you murder people based on suspicion, and where you arrest people based on the slightest doubt, and where you have appointed a youth who drinks and plays with dogs as the ruler of this government.

With these actions, you have sentenced yourself to perdition, corrupted your religion, and trampled over the rights of this nation. Wa Salām."[123]

2- Imam Ḥusayn's Sermon at the Annual Gathering of the Ḥajj

One or two years before the death of Mūʿāwīya, governmental pressure against the Shias had reached its peak in severity. During this time, Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) departed for the annual ceremony of the Ḥajj pilgrimage. While ʿAbdullah ibn ʿAbbās and ʿAbdullah ibn Jaʿfar were alongside him, he asked that the Ṣahābah,[124] the Tābiʿīn,[125] and the Banī Hāshim, as well as the notables of the Islamic community to gather in his tent at 'Minā'. Seven hundred members of th Tābiʿīn came, as well as two hundred members of th Ṣahābah. When they had gathered, Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) stooc up and began to deliver a sermon. He said: "Have you seen what this oppressive man has done with us and our followers? I am going to say something before you, which if it is true, confirm its truthfulness, and if it is untrue, then call out its untruthfulness. Hear my words and write them down. When you go to various cities and return amongst your own tribe, then convey this message to people who are trustworthy and invite them towards our leadership. I fear that this matter (the

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[123] Ibn Qutaybah Daynāwarī, al-Imāmah Wa al-Sīyāsah, Cairo, Maktabah al-Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī , 1382 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 184. This letter, with slight differences in wording, can be found in the following sources:
- Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīya, vol. 44, p. 212.

[124] A name used to refer to the companions of the Prophet (s)

[125] A name used to refer to the 'Companions of the Companions'

leadership of the Ahl al-Bayt) will be forgotten and the truth will be annihilated and overtaken by falsehood."

Then, Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) mentioned the virtues and radiant precedence of his father, Amīr al-Muʾminīn ʿAlī (ʿa), and the Ahl al-Bayt. He then explained[126] the religious innovations, anti-Islamic actions, and crimes of Mūʿāwīya's government. When this sermon was delivered and spread throughout the various cities, it ended up creating the foundations of anti-government activity against Mūʿāwīya and his government.

Hassan ibn ʿAlī ibn Shuʿbah, who was one of the famous scholars of the fourth century, has narrated a sermon from the book 'Tuḥaf al-ʿUqūl' from Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa). The location and date for the delivery of this sermon are not clear, but its historical context, witnesses, and textual context all point to it being the very same sermon that he delivered in Minā. In order to further understand this topic, let us narrate various parts of this sermon:

"Oh men of influence and strength! You are a group that is famed for its knowledge, goodness, and benevolence. Under the light of God's religion, the hearts of men have viewed you with the traits of greatness and majesty. The noble ones take :ount of you and the weak and powerless hold you dear. The)eople who are at the same rank, and whom you do not have any claims of precedence over, hold you in preference to themselves... I fear that difficulties and calamities will descend upon you, for you have reached a high rank and position, which others do not possess, and you have gained eminence over them, but you do not respect the pure and pious people, even though you are held in respect amongst the people because of God.

You see with your very own eyes that they break God's

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126 The Book of Salīm ibn Qay's al-Kūfī, Qum, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīya, p. 206.
- Ṭabarsī, Iḥtijāj, Najaf, al-Maṭbaʿat al-Murtaḍawīyah, vol. 2, p. 161.
- ʿAllāmah Amīnī, ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn, al-Ghadīr, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabī, 1397 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 198.

covenant and they oppose his law. Yet this does not bring about fear or apprehension in you. If a treaty of your father was nullified, you would feel distressed, but you don't pay any attention to the fact that the Holy Prophet's (ṣ) contracts have been broken and considered as paltry and worthless. The weak and disabled in this Islamic country have been left without guardians and assistance and no one has any mercy on them. Yet you do not do anything to help them, nor do you at least help those who are trying to help them. By collaborating and compromising with the oppressors, you have relieved yourselves of your responsibilities. God has given the order of preventing evil and restraining people from it, yet you are heedless of this law. The calamity of you scholars of this nation is more severe and more difficult than others. The situation and position of the scholars of this religion is under attack; how I wish you would understand this.

The reins of leadership must be in the hands of those who are knowledgeable in God's law and are trustworthy in its halal[127] and haram[128]. You were worthy of this rank, but they took it from your hands. They took it away from you when you left the limits of the truth, and in spite of clear reason you created differences in the Sunnah of the Prophet (ṣ). If you had tolerated difficulties in the way of God, then the government would be in your hands right now, and the society would be ruled under your guidance. Yet you gave the oppressors dominance over your destinies and delivered the rule of God (the government) over to them. When you did this, the oppressors mixed the halal and the haram together and they immersed themselves in lusts and capriciousness. Nothing caused the oppressors to dominate over you but your fear of death and your attachment to this world which lasts but a few days. You, by coming short in your responsibilities, gave the weak over to the oppressors so that they made one

[127] That which is lawful.
[128] That which is unlawful.

group as subdued slaves, and another group as utterly defeated and wretched individuals. You followed the wicked, and as a result of this audacity before the greatness of God, they acted on their whims and followed their capricious desires in their method of governance.

In every city, they sent their agents and helpers to the tops of the pulpits, and the whole of the Islamic nation is in their possession. They are able to do whatever they wish and the people are their slaves and under their control. Whenever they commit oppression on these powerless people, the people are unable to defend themselves. Some of these people are obstinate bullies who pressure whoever is weak and unable to defend themselves. Others among them are governors who are atheists and do not believe in God.

I am surprised at this situation! And why should I not be in a state of surprise when the land is overtaken by an oppressive, wicked, and deceitful individual, who rules over the Muslims without any pity or mercy. God is the judge over this struggle between us.

Oh Lord, this movement is not for power or a competition over who will govern, nor is it for gaining this world's wealth. It is rather for showing the people the signs of your religion and to enact reforms in the Islamic nation so that the oppressed will have sanctuary from the claws of the oppressors, and that your religion and way of life will be enacted.

Therefore, if you (notables of this nation) do not assist me, then the oppressors will prevail over you and will strive in extinguishing the light of your Prophet (ṣ)..."[129]

3- Seizing the Government's Wealth

At one point in time, a caravan from Yemen was passing through Medina to its final destination of Syria laden with

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[129] Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Shu'bah, Tuḥuf al-'Uqūl, Qum, The Publications Office of Jāmi'ah' Mudarisīn, 1363 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 237-239.

money and property belonging to the Ummayad government. When Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) learned of this, he went out and ended up seizing it. He then took the wealth and distributed it amongst the poor of the Hāshimites, as well as others. He then wrote a letter to Mūʿāwīya saying the following:

"A caravan from Yemen was passing through here carrying money, fabrics, and perfumes. It was headed to Syria's public treasury, where you and your relatives, who have been filling your stomachs and pockets with the public's money, would take it as your own. I had a need for the wealth, and so I seized it. Wa Salām."

Mūʿāwīya became extremely angry at this action and wrote a very harsh letter to Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa).[130] Yet, due to his own situation, he was not able to do anything beyond this letter at that point in time. Without doubt, this action of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) was an open step towards introducing Mūʿāwīya's government as illegitimate. He was openly announcing to the people that Mūʿāwīya was not worthy of his position and that they too could take steps in opposing him. At the same time, such an action was very dangerous and no one but Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) had the courage to do such a thing.

The Nature and the Factors Related to the Revolt o ʿĀshūrā

In regards to the rise of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), certain questions have been put forward which will help in shedding light on the Imam's actions. These are as follows:

1- If Yazīd had not attempted to force Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) to give him the oath of allegiance, would he have still opposed Yazīd's rule?

2- If the people of Kūfah had not invited Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), would his uprising still have taken place?

3- Was the movement of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) an unanticipated

[130] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, The Life of Imam Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (a), Qum, Maktabah al-Dāwarī, vol. 2, p. 231 (narrated from the Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah of Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd).

one which took place without careful consideration and planning? Was it simply the result of a buildup of social pressure? Or was it an uprising that was based on lengthy planning and preparation?

In order to shed some light on these questions, it is necessary to first keep in mind that, contrary to natural occurrences which are caused by one factor, social occurrences are usually caused by a multitude of factors.

The rise of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) consisted of various factors which all contributed to his movement. Let us take a look at these factors in some detail below:

The Factors Which Gave Rise to the Movement of Imam Ḥusayn

The factors which gave rise to the movement of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) can be divided into three main sections:

1- Yazīd's attempt to force a pledge of allegiance from Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa).

2- The people of Kūfah inviting Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) to their city and asking him for his leadership.

3- The element of 'commanding the good and forbidding the evil'. This was Imam Ḥusayn's (ʿa) slogan from the very first moment of his departure from Medina.

We will further explain each of these points in detail so that we can examine what role they played and how much weight they had in Imam Ḥusayn's (ʿa) movement.

1- Opposition in Pledging Allegiance to Yazīd

In terms of a timeline, one of the first developments in the movement of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) was when Yazīd attempted to force a pledge of allegiance from him. Historians have recorded that Yazīd began this process after the death of Mūʿāwīya during the middle of the month of Rajab in the year 60 Hijrī.[131] He wrote to Walīd ibn ʿUtbah ibn Abī Sufyān

[131] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 200.

(the governor of Medina) and asked him to get a pledge of allegiance from Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) and to not allow him any opportunity for delay.

When Yazīd's letter reached Walīd, Walīd called for Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) and explained the situation to him. Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), who had opposed the nomination of Yazīd from the beginning, again refused to give his pledge. This was because a pledge of allegiance to Yazīd did not only mean the confirmation of the right of a corrupt ruler over all of the Muslims, but it also meant the confirmation of his religious innovations and actions which were counter to the very essence of Islam. His rule was distinctly different from that of his father, Mūʿāwīya.

This pressure from the governor of Medina continued for several days, but Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) resisted and refused to comply. Due to the severity of the pressure, he eventually left for Mecca on the 28th of Rajab, alongside a group of his family members and relatives. During the third of Shaʿbān, he arrived in the holy city of Mecca.

The selection of Mecca for Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) was based c its religious significance as a city of sanctuary. In addition, was the season for the Ḥajj pilgrimage, and due to the vast numbers and variety of people who would come for the annual rite, it was the best location for the conveyance of Imam Ḥusayn's (ʿa) message.

Up to this point, Imam Ḥusayn's (ʿa) movement was more of a reactive movement than a proactive one. In essence, Yazīd, through the use of pressure, wished to secure a pledge from Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), but the Imam was refusing this request. In spite of this, it is clear that Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) began this movement of opposition against Yazīd even before the letters from the Kufans began to reach him. Even if they had failed to invite him as their leader, and promised him their support, it is clear that he still would not have acceded to the pledge of allegiance.

2- The Kufan's Invitation of Imam Ḥusayn

Imam Ḥusayn ('a), who had entered the holy city of Mecca on the third of Sha'bān, took up the city as his place of residence and began to publicly reveal the corrupt un-Islamic nature of the government of Yazīd. Reports of his opposition and his new place of residence soon reached the people of Iraq. The people of Kūfah still remembered the just rule of Imam 'Alī ('a), as only twenty years had passed since that time. The effects of his education and training on the populace had not been fully effaced by the Umayyid government. The orphans which Imam 'Alī ('a) had raised, alongside the widows that he had provided for and protected, were still alive at that time. Therefore, the people of Kūfah gathered amongst themselves, and through a judging of the situation, decided to disobey Yazīd and invite Imam Ḥusayn ('a) as their leader.

After much discussion, various Kufan leaders such as Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad, Musayyib ibn Najabah, Rafā'ah ibn Shaddād Bajali, and Ḥabīb ibn Maẓāhir wrote letters to Imam Ḥusayn ('a), and invited him personally to Iraq, asking for his leadership. The first of these letters reached Imam Ḥusayn ('a) on the 10th of the holy month of Ramaḍān during the 60th year Hijrī.[132] Likewise, the sending of these letters continued until it reached the point that 600 letters reached Imam Ḥusayn ('a) in the span of a single day. In total, he ended up receiving over 12,000 letters.[133]

In view of this flood of letters and requests, Imam Ḥusayn ('a) felt a definite responsibility to accept the request of the Iraqis. He showed a positive reaction towards the letters, and sent his cousin, Muslim ibn 'Aqīl, as his representative to Kūfah. Muslim ibn 'Aqīl was ordered to further appraise the situation and then report back about the conditions in Kūfah and the truthfulness of the people in what they were saying. If

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[132] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 203.
- Abū Mikhnaf, Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd ibn Mikhnaf Azdī, Maqtal al-Ḥusayn, Qum, p. 16.

[133] Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs, al-Lūhūf Fī Qatl al-Ṭufūf, Qum, Maktabah al-Dāwarī, p. 15.

the Kufans were being truthful, then Imam Ḥusayn ('a) would set off for Iraq.

Even before the arrival of the letters and requests from Kūfah, Imam Ḥusayn's ('a) duty was to reject the pledge of Yazīd; there was no way that he could pledge his allegiance to the new caliph. When the Kufans began to send letters, this added a new aspect to the conflict and it created a new responsibility for the Imam ('a). Imam Ḥusayn ('a) judged the situation as follows: At this point in time, the Kufans have insisted very strongly and with great enthusiasm on my coming. If they are true with their words, then this is good, and if they are not, then I will return to Mecca or even another city in the Muslim world.

It is exceedingly clear that his resistance to Yazīd's request for a pledge of allegiance came before the invitation of the Kufans. The first letter of the Kufans reached the Imam ('a) almost 40 days after he took up residence in the city of Mecca. Therefore, it is incorrect to say that Imam Ḥusayn ('a) refused to pledge allegiance to Yazīd only after the Kufans had invited him. This is clear from the sequence of events which took place. If the events of Kūfah had not taken place and the people had not invited him, he still would not have pledged his allegiance to Yazīd.

3- The Factor of 'Commanding the Good and Forbidding Evil'

The slogan of 'commanding the good and forbidding evil' was Imam Ḥusayn's ('a) most fundamental message from the very first day of his departure from Medina. Therefore, it is incorrect to say that since Yazīd was pressuring him for his pledge of allegiance, then (and only then) Imam Ḥusayn ('a) found it necessary to rise up against him. Even if Yazīd had not forced him into such a position, and even if the people of Kūfah had not invited him, still it would have been necessary for Imam Ḥusayn ('a) to rise up against the tyrant Yazīd.

The logic of Imam Ḥusayn's ('a) movement was one of

protest and rebellion against the corrupt and un-Islamic government of Yazīd. This was a government which had covered the Islamic world in social, political, and economic corruption. Unlike the government of Mū'āwīya, the conditions had become unbearably bad in these respects, and it was therefore a responsibility of Imam Ḥusayn ('a) to rise up against Yazīd.

All three of these factors played a role in the movement and uprising of Imam Ḥusayn ('a). Each one necessitated a type of responsibility and duty upon him. As to the first factor that was mentioned, it involved a condition of defense, since the government was attempting to force Imam Ḥusayn ('a) into a pledge of allegiance and he was refusing it at all costs. In terms of the second factor, an opportunity opened up for cooperation with the Kufans, and he showed a positive reaction to the invitation. As for the third factor, it had become an Islamic duty on Imam Ḥusayn ('a) to rebel and rise up against Yazīd due to the prevailing conditions and the situation of the Muslim nation. Therefore, even without the existence of the previous two conditions, the revolt would have still taken place.

The Weight of Each of These Three Factors

Now let us see which of these three factors carried the most weight in comparison to the others. Without doubt, the Kufan's invitation carried a great deal of weight since Imam Ḥusayn ('a) showed a positive response to their requests for leadership. If the conditions were favorable, then he would have gone on to establish an Islamic government in Kūfah.

Still higher than this factor was Imam Ḥusayn's ('a) refusal to pledge allegiance to Yazīd. This is shown by multiple announcements that he would not accede to pressure at any cost, nor would any amount of pressure cause him to change his stance.

In spite of this, the highest value must be given to the third factor, which was the commanding of good and the

forbidding of evil. This is proven by understanding that if the Kufan's support had been the most essential, then Imam Ḥusayn ('a) would have simply turned back when the people's support evaporated. Yet history shows that he did not turn back when the Kufan support failed to materialize, and he continued on his way to Iraq. Not only did he refuse to turn back, but his most spectacular sermons were delivered after the martyrdom of his cousin Muslim ibn 'Aqīl. This shows the high level of importance that 'commanding the good and forbidding the evil' had in the movement of Imam Ḥusayn ('a).

Through understanding this issue, it is clear that even without the invitation of the Kufans or the pressure of Yazīd, Imam Ḥusayn ('a) would have still risen up against the corrupt government of the Ummayids. In order for this third point to become even clearer, let us examine several historical documents which we have at our disposal.

1- Imam Ḥusayn's Will

Before leaving the holy city of Medina, Imam Ḥusayn ('a) wrote his will and delivered it to his brother Muḥammad Ḥanafīyah. In it, he explained his reasons for rising as the reformation of the Muslim community, 'commanding the good and forbidding the evil', and reviving the way of life of his grandfather, the Prophet, as well as his father, Imam 'Alī. In this will, Imam Ḥusayn ('a) first explained his beliefs in regards to the oneness of God, prophethood, and resurrection, and then he wrote the following: "I am not leaving Medina from selfishness or caprice. Nor am I leaving it to create corruption and oppression. My goal in this movement is to reform the corruption which has taken place in this nation. I aim to command the good and forbid the evil, and to advance the way of life of my grandfather, the Prophet (ṣ), and my father, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib ('a). Whoever follows me in this path... should know that I am about to depart, until the day that God judges between me and these

people, for he is the best of judges...."[134]

In this will, Imam Ḥusayn ('a) announces his four main motives. These are as follows:

1- Reforming the Muslim nation
2- Commanding the good
3- Forbidding the evil
4- Following and reviving the religious creed of his grandfather and father

2- Unacceptable Silence

Imam Ḥusayn ('a), on his way to Iraq, ended up delivering a sermon to the army of Ḥurr at a place called 'Bayḍah'. In it, he explained his motives and reasons for rising. He said: "Oh People, the Prophet of God (ṣ) said: 'Any Muslim who comes face to face with an oppressive king, who considers the haram[135] of God as being halal,[136] who breaks the divine covenant, opposes the way and laws of the Prophet (ṣ), opens the way for sinfulness, injustice, and enmity, and yet (he) does not show this king any opposition, either through his actions or his words, then it is up to God that he does not condemn and punish this (quiet) individual with the same punishment due to the oppressive king.'

Oh people, be aware that these people (the Umayyids) have rejected the obedience of God and are following (the path of) Satan. They promote vice and corruption, and have suspended the limits of God's legislation. They have made that which is exclusive for the family of the Prophet (ṣ), exclusive for themselves. I am the most suitable and competent person for guiding and leading the Muslim society and for rising against all of the corruption, as well as the corrupt ones, who have changed the religion of my

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[134] Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīya, vol. 44, p. 329.

[135] The things which are unlawful

[136] The things which are lawful

ancestors..."[137]

3- The Effacement of Prophetic Customs and the Propagation of Religious Innovations

After Imam Ḥusayn ('a) entered the holy city of Mecca, he sent a letter to the leaders of Baṣrah. In it, he mentions the era of the previous caliphs, where the true leaders where forced aside from politics and governance, and they endured this for the sake of not creating conflict and division amongst the Muslims. He mentioned how they had endured these difficulties for the sake of the greater good. After this, he mentioned: "...I am sending my messenger to you with this letter. I invite you towards the Book of God and the Sunnah of the Prophet, for we are positioned in a situation where the Prophet's way of life has been completely destroyed and the religious innovations are prevalent. If you listen to my words, then I will guide you to the right path. May the greetings, mercy, and blessings of God be upon you."[138]

4- The Truth is No Longer Being Acted Upon

On the way to Iraq, at a place called Dhī Ḥusum, Imar Ḥusayn ('a) stood up while amongst his companions an began to deliver a sermon. He said: "Our circumstances are exactly that which you see. The condition of our time has been seriously transformed; ugliness is openly manifest, and virtue and goodness have publicly departed and only a few droplets of it remain. People are passing their days in wretched and miserable conditions, and life has become much like a barren

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[137] Abū Mikhnaf, Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd ibn Mikhnaf Azdī, Maqtal al-Ḥusayn, Qum, p. 85.
- Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut Print, Dār al-Qāmūs al-Ḥadīth, vol. 6, p. 229.
- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, p. 48.

[138] Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut Print, Dār al-Qāmūs al-Ḥadīth, vol. 6, p. 200.
- Abū Mikhnaf, Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd ibn Mikhnaf Azdī, Maqtal al-Ḥusayn, Qum, p. 54.

and stony pasture in which life is harsh and difficult.

Do you not see that the truth is no longer acted upon, and people do not restrain themselves from falsehood? In such a situation, a person of faith would be eager to die and meet his Lord. In such abject and corrupt surroundings, I know of death as nothing but prosperity and happiness, while life (with these oppressors) is nothing but vexation, torment, and anguish.

These people are the slaves of this world, and religion is just a movement of their tongues. Their support and assistance of religion is to the point that their lives are in comfort and ease, and when they are put to the test, the religious ones will be but few."[139]

An Uprising Based on Awareness

Modern-day materialists view uprisings and rebellions as unavoidable social phenomenon, which occur when pressure builds up in a given society. A similar analogy can be drawn by a pot which is sealed off, while pressure builds within it. If the pressure is not relieved in one way or another, then inevitably the pot will explode from the pressure. Similar to this, certain pressures build up in any given society and over time, they will increase until they explode and give vent to these class differences and inequalities; this is considered a natural phenomenon in the timeline of all societies.

Another way of explaining this is the parable of an angry individual in whom the pressure of anger builds up to the point where he loses control. At this point, such an individual will simply react based on these internal pressures without really having a choice in the matter. Of course, this person will feel regret for their anger and their lack of control at a

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[139] Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Shu'bah, Tuḥuf al-'Uqūl, Qum, The Publications Office of Jāmi'ah' Mudarisīn, 1363 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 245.
- Abū Mikhnaf, Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd ibn Mikhnaf Azdī, Maqtal al-Ḥusayn, Qum, p. 86.
- Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut Print, Dār al-Qāmūs al-Ḥadīth, vol. 6, p. 229.

later time but at that specific moment, they will just react in order to vent their anger.

By reviewing the sermons and letters of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), it is clear that his movement did not have this nature and it was not of this category of social phenomenon. It was a calculated and well thought out uprising based on considerations of responsibility and duty; in addition, the dangers were also well understood. Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) welcomed martyrdom with full awareness and comprehension. He also wanted his companions to select it while being fully aware of their situation. It was for this very reason that on the night of ʿĀshūrā, he gave them the choice of freely leaving and announced to everyone that whoever remained with him would be killed by the next day. Therefore, his companions who remained, remained with full awareness of what it meant and what was waiting for them. They accepted their stand alongside Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) with full knowledge that they would be martyred.

From the perspective of materialists who believe in the theory of societal pressure, leaders of revolts do not have much influence in their movements; they are just simple figureheads. Due to this factor, leaders are not really holder of ethical or moral stances; instead, they are simply part of th pressure equation. This is naturally contrary to the Shia stance, and the words, intentions, and ethics of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) are open for all to research and see.

The Spread of Umayyid Influence in the Centers of Power

Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) launched his movement under the overall plan of reforming many key aspects of the Islamic society. The society had fallen into disarray due to the deviations caused by the corrupt and mismanaged Ummayid government. Due to this deviation, many social dangers and vices had reared their heads. Among them was a proliferation of religious innovations, the effacement of the prophetic way of life, and an increase in corruption and sin.

During this time, the government and the wealth of the Muslim nation had fallen into the hands of the Umayyid dynasty. The Umayyids had been one of the strongest opponents of Islam and the Prophet (ṣ) from the earliest days. They had continued fighting against the Muslims until the conquest of Mecca, when it became impossible to continue their fight openly. They were one of the last families to accept Islam, and even then, they did so only due to the fact that no other options were open to them. In doing so, they became known as hypocrites and slowly began a struggle for gaining dominance and power in the newly structured society and government. Over time, they gained power and took over the more important roles in the government until the martyrdom of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) when Mūʿāwīya took over the caliphate of the Muslim nation.

When this took place, the clan hid their evil intentions against the Muslims and tried to conceal the fact that they were replacing the Muslim government with one based on concepts from the 'Age of Ignorance' before the coming of Islam. However, as time passed, they couldn't conceal their true nature and it ended up manifesting itself in a significant way. At times, their words spoken in private gatherings would be leaked where people would begin to realize who and what they were.

During one incident, when ʿUthmān had recently become caliph, the Ummayids all gathered at his home and closed all of the doors. Abū Sufyān, who was present, asked: "Is there anyone here other than you (meaning the members of the Ummayid clan)?"[140] The people replied: "No." Then he continued and said: "Now that the government has reached your hands, pass it to one another much like a ball, and strive that it does not leave the Umayyid clan. I swear on what I believe that there is neither a punishment in the hereafter, nor an accounting; there is neither a Hell nor a Day of

[140] At this point in time, Abū Sufyān had become blind and that is why he was asking

Judgment."[141]

It was this very same Abū Sufyān who was one day[142] passing by the graves of the martyrs of Uḥud when he kicked the grave of Ḥamzah ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib and said: "The very thing which we were fighting with you for yesterday with our swords, is today in the hands of our children and they now play with it."[143]

Mūʿāwīya's Actions Against Islam

Mūʿāwīya, during his time as caliph, held a private night session where Mughayrah ibn Shuʿbah (who was one of his governors) was present. During this session, he told Mughayrah that his most important aims in life were all connected with the destruction and complete effacement of Islam. This would have remained a hidden matter, but because of Mughayrah's son, they have been recorded in the books of history. His son Muṭṭarrif narrates that: "My father and I were guests of Mūʿāwīya in Damascus. My father would go back and forth to Mūʿāwīya's palace and have sessions with him. He would return to his residence, all the while speaking highly of his wit and intellect, and praising him. One night though, he returned in a state of distress and melancholy. I understood that something eventful had happened that had caused this condition.

I asked him the reason and he replied: 'Oh my son, I have just now returned from the most filthy and evil of men.' I

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[141] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, Researched by: Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, al-Tab'at al-'ūlā, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1378 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 9, p. 53 (Exposition of the 139th sermon).
- The words of Abū Sufyān have been narrated by Ibn 'Abd al-Bir, Al-Isti'āb Fī al-Ma'rifah al-Aṣḥāb, First Edition, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1328 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, p. 87.
- They can also be found in Taqī al-Dīn Maqrīzī in his book al-Nizā' wa al-Takhāṣum Fīmā Bayn Banī Ūmayyah wa Banī Hāshim (Cairo, Maktabah Ahrām) with slight differences in who Abū Sufyān spoke to.

[142] This was during the time of 'Uthmān's caliphate

[143] Tastarī, Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī, Qāmūs al-Rijāl, Tehran, The Center for Book Publications, 1379 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 10, p. 80.

asked him what had happened. He replied: 'Tonight I was sitting in a private session with Mū'āwīya and I asked him: Now that you have reached your desires and goals and you have secured the government, what would happen if you acted with justice and goodness at this last stage in your life. What would happen if you would not act so badly against the Hashimites, for they are after all your relatives? In addition to this, they are not in a state to pose a danger to your rule anymore?'

Mū'āwīya replied: 'Alas! Alas! Abū Bakr took up the caliphate and he was just. Yet after his death, only his name remained. 'Umar also took up the caliphate for a period of 10 years, and he endured many hardships and difficulties; yet after his death, of him only his name remained. Then our brother 'Uthmān, whom no one can reach in dignity and honor, also came to power. Yet, at the moment of his death, his name was also buried alongside him. In spite of this, all across the Muslim nation, the name of this Hashimite man (the Prophet) is cried out five times each and every day (during the call to prayer). Now with this present condition that we are in (that the names of the three caliphs are no longer remembered, but the name of the Prophet (ṣ) is remembered 5 times daily), what way is there except to let his name die and have it buried.'"

These words of Mū'āwīya clearly show his disbelief. Many years later, these same words were mentioned by some narrators of tradition to the 'Abbāsid caliph Ma'mūn. When he heard these words, he issued a directive throughout the Muslim nation ordering that the people curse Mū'āwīya.[144] These are all indications of how deviant the Umayyid government had become. However much they attempted to conceal their true beliefs and ideology, the reality eventually did leak out and was recorded in the pages of history.

[144] Mas'ūdī, 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 3, p. 454.

Yazīd: The Detested Ruler

Yazīd, who was raised in the lap of the Umayyid family, was naturally raised with their ideology and way of life. At the time of his caliphate, he did not possess one iota of faith in the religion of Islam; and yet this was the same religion which his government claimed to represent.

Yazīd was a youth who was inexperienced, lustful, obstinate, and lacking in foresight and precaution. He was also rash, pleasure seeking, lewd, shallow in thought, and lacking in wisdom. Before having gained the caliphate, he had been engrossed in pleasure seeking and various extravagances. Unsurprisingly, after he reached power, he was still not able to control himself. His father had (at least publicly) not shown his corruption to the masses. Yazīd, on the other hand, ended up exposing himself as an irreligious ruler who publicly trampled the laws and regulations of Islam under his feet and went to the extreme limits of pleasure seeking. He would openly drink wine and commit other indecencies and sins. He would stay up at nights while drunk and compose verses o lewd poetry. Some of these have been recorded in the book of history:

"Oh my boon companions, get up and listen to the melodious and pleasing songs of the minstrels. Drink cup after cup of wine and leave debate and intellectual and moral thoughts behind you. The melodious music and singing of minstrels restrains me from hearing the Adhān[145] and the Takbīr[146]. I am ready to trade the heavenly 'Ḥūris' (which are promised for later) with a cask of wine (which is here in the present). (Let the things which are present be ours, and the things which are promised later to be for the people who believe in the hereafter.)"[147]

Yazīd would openly and directly deny the prophethood of

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[145] The Muslim call to prayer

[146] The phrase of Allāhu Akbar, or God is the Greatest

[147] Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ, Najaf, Manshūrāt Al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 291.

the Prophet (ṣ) and the revelation which he had received. Just like his grandfather, Abū Sufyān, he considered these things as nothing more than stories of the ancients. This became even clearer at the time of his supposed victory over Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), when he began to recite some verses of poetry. He said: "The Hashimites played with the kingship and governance, and there is no hereafter, nor was there any revelation."

He was also fueled by hate against the Muslim leaders who had killed his relatives in the Battle of Badr. He considered the killing of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) as revenge for the relatives that he had lost during the early days of Islam. He said: "How I wish our nobles, who were killed at Badr, were alive today to say: 'Oh Yazīd....well done.'"[148]

Another example is when Mūʿāwīya sent his son Yazīd (with Sufyān ibn Awf Ghāmidī) alongside the army for war against the Roman Empire. He wished to show that Yazīd was not only a man of the banquet table, but he was also a man of war. Yazīd brought along his favorite wife, Umm Kulthūm, on the campaign. Sufyān entered the Roman lands with his army before Yazīd, but at a land called Ghadh Ghadūnah,[149] which had a harsh climate and polluted water, the Muslim army was afflicted with fevers and smallpox.

Yazīd, who had not reached this area (he was in an area called Dīr Murrān), was busy resting and enjoying himself with Umm Kulthūm when he heard about the critical situation of the army. At hearing the news, he composed some verses of poetry, which are very telling. His poem, roughly translated, reads: "I am here in Dīr Murrān, [150] amid comfortable rooms, while leaning against plush cushions. Here, Umm Kulthūm is alongside me and I do not care if the Muslim soldiers, who are afflicted with fever and smallpox,

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[148] Ḥajj Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, Tatamah al-Muntahā Fī Waqāya' Ayām al-Khūlafā', Second Print, Tehran, The Book Share Publishing Company, 1333 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 44.

[149] Ghadh Ghadūnah is the name of an area on the borderlands of Syria and the ancient Roman Empire.

[150] Dīr Murrān is an area close to Damascus. It was an area famous for its corruption and sinful activities such as drinking and debauchery.

die at Ghadh Ghadūnah."[151]

It is very clear what fate would befall the nation if such an individual, whose measure of compassion and sympathy was nonexistent for the Muslim army (which he was supposedly the commander of), takes on the caliphate of the Muslims and has the keys to their public treasury at his disposal. Indeed, after his caliphate, Yazīd's court did become a center for various forms of corruption and sin. Stories of his corruption and irreligious nature soon spread throughout the society. Not only did stories spread throughout the society, but his very presence had a direct effect which spread waves of corruption and sin throughout the Muslim community. Things had gotten so bad that even the holy atmosphere of the twin cities of Mecca and Medina had become corrupted and polluted.[152] In the end, Yazīd ended up dying as a resul' of his caprice and loose lifestyle. His drinking of massiv amounts of alcohol poisoned him and he died as a result o it.[153]

It is interesting to note that Mas'ūdī, one of the famous historians of Islam, has narrated that: "Yazīd, in his dealings with the people, had taken up the method of Pharaoh; in fact, Pharaoh's behavior was better than his."[154] The number of historical witnesses and documents attesting to Yazīd's unclean lifestyle and corrupted rule are so many that mentioning them would be far outside the scope of this book. What has been introduced so far is sufficient in showing the overall conditions of his rule and his personal characteristics.

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[151] Ibn Wāḍih, Tārīkh Ya'qūbī, Third Print, Tehran, translation by Dr. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Āyātī, The Center For Cultural and Intellectual Publications, 1362 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 160.
- Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā Balādhūrī, Insāb al-Ashrāf, Baghdad, Maktab al-Muthannā, vol. 4, p. 3.

[152] Mas'ūdī, 'Alī ibn Al Ḥusayn, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 3, p. 67.

[153] Akhtab Khawārizmī, Maqtal al-Ḥusayn, Researched by Shaykh Muḥammad Samāwī, Qum, Maktabat al-Mufīd, vol. 2, p. 183.

[154] Mas'ūdī, 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 3, p. 68.

Yazīd's Inclination towards Christianity

In addition to what was mentioned above, evidence seems to show that Yazīd was raised based on Christian beliefs. Even if evidence of this is not one hundred percent certain, it is still very clear that he at least had an inclination towards Christianity.

Pointing towards this body of evidence, the scholar ʿAbdullah Alā'ily has written:

It may seem strange at first to consider Yazīd's upbringing as one based on Christianity and the reader may even reject it initially. Yet there is evidence for this claim in the historical texts. Yazīd's mother was from the tribe of Banī Kalb, who had been Christians before the time of Islam... Yazīd was raised in this tribe for the entire period of his youth. During his most critical years of training and education, when children are most open to forming their character and beliefs, Yazīd was raised in this tribe's midst. This aspect of Christian belief from his mother's side was mixed with a deep-rooted hatred of Islam from his father's side; both of them were embedded within his psyche.

In addition to this, the historians have mentioned that some of his teachers were also Christians. The negative effects of such an upbringing are quite evident for an individual who is to take hold of the destiny of the Muslim nation. According to historical accounts, Yazīd would not conceal his Christian inclinations; in fact, he would openly reveal them. He is recorded as saying: "If wine is unlawful in the religion of Aḥmad (Islam), then take it and drink it under the auspices of the religion of Christ."[155]

Another interesting point involves the government of

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[155] Ḥajj Shaykh ʿAbbās Qummī, Tatamat al-Muntahā Fī Waqāyaʿ Ayām al-Khūlafā, Second Print, Tehran, The Book Share Publishing Company, 1333 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 43. According to the original unaltered religion of Christianity, much like in Islam, the drinking of wine was also prohibited. Yazīd's inclinations were in reality an inclination to the corruptions and distortions which had taken hold in Christianity and not to its original pure form.

Rome having some influence in the workings of the Umayyid government; some of the Roman Empire's Christians were actually advisors to the Umayyid government. According to historians, it was a Christian named Sar Jawn the Roman[156] who advised Yazīd to place 'Ubaydullah Ibn Zīyād (the governor of Baṣrah at the time) as the governor of Kūfah when Imam Ḥusayn ('a) was traveling to that city. This was while the governor of Kūfah had been Nu'mān ibn Bashīr up to that point.[157]

The Messengers of Karbalā

It is interesting to note that most revolutions and movements are composed of two main components: there is 'blood' and then there is the 'message'. What is meant by blood is an armed uprising for the sake of the movement at hand. What is meant by message is the delivery and conveyance of the revolutionary message and goals of the movement to the masses.

In the success of a revolution or a movement, the second point isn't less important than the first. If the goals of the movement are not propagated and explained to the masses, then the movement will be bereft of any backing and support. Furthermore, whatever the movement's goals happen to be, the opposition (which usually holds the power and the reins of the mass media) will distort and twist the truth and convey an alternative image and message to the public.

Both of these aspects were present in Imam Ḥusayn's ('a) movement. The first component, which was that of armed uprising and revolution, was present up to the point of 'Āshūrā when the fighters were killed. After the fighters were killed, the second part was initiated by some of the survivors

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[156] According to some scholars, the word Sar Jawn is an Arabicized form of his original name.

[157] -Abū Mikhnaf, Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd ibn Mikhnaf Azdī, Maqtal al-Ḥusayn, Qum, p. 22.
-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut Print, Dār al-Qāmūs al-Ḥadīth, vol. 6, p. 199.

such as Imam Zayn al-ʿAbidīn (ʿa) and the Lady Zaynab (ʿa). Through their powerful and timely sermons, they delivered the message of the movement to the masses. When the masses began to hear the truth of what had happened, this proved to be a deadly blow to the government's reputation and their claims of legitimacy.

For many years, the Umayyid government had been busy with a widespread and extensive campaign of slander and lies against the family of the Prophet. This propaganda campaign had been particularly effective in Syria due to various political and social reasons. If the survivors of Imam Ḥusayn's movement had not engaged in awakening the masses and in spreading the true message of the movement, it is without a doubt that the truth would have been altered in the pages of history and shown in a greatly distorted form not just to the people of that era but to the people who were to come later, as well.

In the same manner that Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) was slandered and the history of his life distorted, the same phenomenon would have occurred to Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa). For example, some people have said that Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) was not poisoned but that he died from the effects of tuberculosis. Others have said that he died of cancer. Yet the survivors, due to the unique situation that they were placed in, did not allow the same distortions and alterations to happen to Imam Ḥusayn's (ʿa) name.

The survivors of Imam Ḥusayn's (ʿa) movement were essential in ruining the name and reputation of the Umayyid government, as well as in awakening the masses against the Umayyids. In order to better understand the background of this situation, it is critical that we backtrack a bit and take a look at the history of Mūʿāwīya's government in Syria:

The Monarchical Rule of Mūʿāwīya in Syria

It is essential to understand that from the very first day that Syria was taken over by the Muslims, its leaders were

people such as Khālid ibn Walīd and Mū'āwīya ibn Abī Sufyān. The people of this land had neither heard the words of the Prophet (ṣ), nor had they seen the way of life of his companions. They didn't understand the religion the way that it was understood in the city of Medina.

While it is true that 113 of the Prophet's companions did end up taking residence in Syria (either during the time of the conquest, or gradually moving there during later times), historians have shown that the majority of these individuals had not been with the Prophet (ṣ) for very long and they hadn't narrated more than a few traditions from him. In addition, the majority of these companions died during the time of the caliphate of 'Umar and 'Uthmān, and by the time Mū'āwīya had come into power, the vast majority had already passed away. During the time of Imam Ḥusayn's ('a) uprising, only 11 of these men were still alive. They were approximately 70 to 80 years in age and preferred to lead sequestered lifestyles and not mix with the people.

The results of these social conditions were that the youth who were about the same age as Yazīd, did not know much about true Islam. It is very possible that to the Syrian masses Islam was simply another government, much like the ones that they had had in the past. To the masses, the opulent lifestyle of rulers, the waste and theft of the public treasury, and the flaunting of extravagant ceremonies were normal occurrences which they were accustomed to. The jailing, torture, exile, and murder of political opponents was another ordinary occurrence. All of these things had been seen during past times and so the common people saw them as normal. The masses simply assumed that during the time of the Prophet (ṣ), things had been the same in the city of Medina as well.[158] In conclusion, the people of Syria believed that the actions and behavior of Mū'āwīya and his companions were simply business as usual in the history of Syria's rulers.

[158] Doctor Shahīdī, Sayyid Ja'far, The Rise of Ḥusayn (a), Tehran, The Office for the Propagation of Islamic Culture, 1359 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 185.

Mūʿāwīya ruled in Damascus for approximately 42 years. He spent 5 years ruling on the authority of the second caliph, and about 12 years on the authority of the third. He also remained governor for the 5 years of Imam ʿAlī's (ʿa) rule, as well as 6 months during the caliphate of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa). After his period of governorship, he also ruled as caliph for approximately 20 more years.[159]

Poisonous Propaganda

During his long tenure in power, Mūʿāwīya trained and educated the people in a way that dulled their intellects and their awareness of religion. He made the people submissive to his will and lacking in the ability to question his authority. During his long years of rule, Mūʿāwīya made people submissive to his authority in military and political matters; he also positioned himself so that whatever he taught as religion, the people accepted without questioning or reflecting over what had been taught to them. The people were made deaf, dumb, and blind in terms of religious thought and ideology.

Mūʿāwīya was also skilled in twisting religious traditions and sayings, and making them suit his own purposes in terms of strengthening his position and rule. For example, ʿAmmār Yāsir, who was a great companion of the Prophet (ṣ), died while fighting on Imam ʿAlī's (ʿa) side against Mūʿāwīya in Ṣiffīn. The Prophet (ṣ) had foretold that ʿAmmār would be killed by the oppressors. Mūʿāwīya attempted to distort this tradition's meaning by claiming that in reality, Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was the oppressor because he had brought ʿAmmār to the battlefield. In this twisted way, Mūʿāwīya was trying to make it seem like the responsibility of his death was on Imam ʿAlī's shoulders because he was the cause of bringing him to the battlefield where he had been killed.[160]

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[159] Āyatī, Dr. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, Research on the History of ʿĀshūrā, Second Print, Tehran, The Ṣadūq Library, 1347 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 47.

[160] Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā Balādhūrī, Insāb al-Ashrāf, Beirut, Mu'asasah al-ʿAlamīya Lil

Through the use of such methods and conditioning techniques on the population, the Umayyid government turned the pure image of the family of the Prophet into something corrupt and impure. Contrary to this, they set themselves up as the true relatives of the Prophet. This went on to such a degree that historians have written:

"After the victory of the ʿAbbāsids and the strengthening of Abū al-ʿAbbās Saffāḥ's government, ten of the Emirs[161] of Syria went to him and swore an oath that until the time of the death of Marwān (the last Umayyid caliph), they had not known that the Prophet (ṣ) had any other relatives besides the Ummayids."[162]

In another piece of history, it is recorded that: "At the time when the surviving captives of ʿĀshūrā arrived in Damascus, a man stood up in front of Imam ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) and said to him: 'I thank and praise God who killed and effaced you, and relieved our men of your evil, and made Amīr al-Mu'minīn (Yazīd) victorious over you.'

Imam ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) stood silently until the man had said whatever he wished to say. When the man had finished, he asked him: 'Are you familiar with the Quran?' The man said: 'Yes.' The Imam (ʿa) then asked: Have you rea the verse that says: "Say: I do not ask you any reward for except the love of [my] relatives?"[163] The man replied in th affirmative. Then the Imam (ʿa) asked if he had read the verse that says: "Give the relatives their due right."[164] The man again replied in the affirmative. He then asked: How about this verse: "And Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, you members of the Family, and to make you pure

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Maṭbūʿāt, 1394 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 317.

[161] Emīr's were local leaders similar to what a governor is during our time period.

[162] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, Researched by: Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, First Edition, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-ʿArabīya, 1961 A.D., vol. 7, p. 159.

[163] Surah Shūrā, Verse 23.

[164] Surah Isrā, Verse 26.

and spotless." [165] Again, the man replied in the affirmative. Then Imam 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a) said to the man: 'Oh respected old man, these verses have been revealed for us. We are the 'Dhil Qurbā'; we are the 'Ahl al-Bayt' who have been purified from all pollution.'

The man realized that the things that he had heard about these captives had not been true; they were not 'foreigners' and in fact they were the descendants of the Prophet of God (ṣ). He became regretful of the words that he had spoken and he said the following: 'Oh Lord, I seek repentance from you for the hatred that I held for them. I turn away from the enemies of Muḥammad and his family.'"[166]

A Gift from the Journey of the Captives

Judging from the perspective of the extensive and negative propaganda that the Syrians had been exposed to for so many years, the importance of the journey of the captives to Syria becomes even more manifest. These survivors of 'Āshūrā ended up destroying over 40 years of extreme propaganda and showing the true face of the Umayyid government to the masses. These few individuals awakened the people of Syria and made them aware of the realities which they had been blinded to. This small group of survivors completed the second stage of Imam Ḥusayn's ('a) revolution, and they returned to Medina with victory on their hands rather than defeat.

In order to examine the victory of the survivors of 'Āshūrā in more detail, let us now take a look at some historical aspects of what took place during that time:

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[165] Surah Ahzāb, Verse 33.

[166] Akhtab Khawārizmī, Maqtal al-Ḥusayn, Researched by Shaykh Muḥammad Samawī, Qum, Maktabah Mufīd, vol. 2, p. 61.
- Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs, al-Lūhūf Fī Qatl al-Ṭufūf, Qum, Maktabah al-Dāwarī, p. 74.

1- The Immunity of the Household of the Imam during the Tragedy of 'Ḥurrah'

After Imam Ḥusayn ('a) and his companions were martyred, news of the killings spread throughout the Muslim community. Bit by bit, cities such as Medina, along with other cities across the Muslim world, began to go into a state of shock and agitation. The governor of Medina decided to send a group of the city's notables to Damascus in order that they could see the young caliph from up close. In addition to seeing the caliph, they would be his special guests of honor and so the idea was that when they returned to their city, they would be happy at how they were treated and they would encourage people to obey their leader.

The truth of the matter, however, was that Yazīd had been brought up without proper training or education, and he completely lacked any foresight or wisdom. For this reason, he behaved in his usual manner in front of this group. He began to drink alcohol in front of them and he brought out his kennel of dogs[167] to play with. He also engaged in other behaviors which were considered to be sinful. When these representatives returned to Medina, they raised a big commotion and said to the people that: "Yazīd is an individual who drinks wine, plays with dogs, and is entirely corrupt; such a person cannot be the caliph and leader of the Muslims." Soon after, a rebellion broke out across the entire city and the Umayyid governor was kicked out, along with his entire family.

When news of this reached Yazīd in Syria, he sent a division of his army to Medina to crush the rebellion and named Muslim ibn 'Uqbah as its commander. Muslim surrounded the city and laid siege to it; as a result of the siege, the rebellion began to lose momentum and the people ended up surrendering.

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[167] During that time period, playing with dogs was considered as something frivolous and sinful for a man of such a position.

When the people surrendered, Yazīd's army marched in and began to massacre the city's population; they left no evil deed undone during this period. No one was given any mercy, and people who were known as being the most pious were slaughtered with impunity. Women and young girls were raped at will.[168] This terrible tragedy has gone down in history by the name of 'The Tragedy of Ḥurrah.'

Yet, in the midst of this horrible tragedy, the household of Imam Zayn al-'Abidīn ('a) and the Banī Hāshim was saved from aggression. Alongside them, tens of other families were saved when they took refuge with them during the siege and the subsequent massacre. Ṭabarī has written: "When Yazīd sent Muslim ibn 'Uqbah to Medina he first told him: "Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a) does not have anything to do with the rebels, so restrain yourself from him and act well towards him.'"[169]

Further, Shaykh Mufīd has written: "When Muslim ibn 'Uqbah entered the city of Medina, he sought Imam 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a). When Imam 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a) came, Muslim seated him near himself and treated him with respect, saying: 'Amīr al-Mu'minīn has ordered me to act well in regards to you and to account for you separately than the others.' Then Muslim told the people around him: 'Bring my mule and saddle it.' Then he told the Imam ('a): 'Return to your family, for we may have scared them and inconvenienced you by your coming here. If we had anything with us, we would have given it to you since you are worthier and more deserving than us.'"[170]

For reasons that will be explained in the chapter on Imam Zayn al-'Abidīn's ('a) life, the Imam ('a) did not join the rebellion, and this was one of the reasons that Muslim treated

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[168] Doctor Shahīdī, Sayyid Ja'far, The Rise of Ḥusayn (a), Tehran, The Office for the Propagation of Islamic Culture, 1359 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 170.

[169] Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut Print, Dār al-Qāmūs al-Ḥadīth, vol. 7, p. 421.

[170] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Manshūrāt Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 260.

him in this manner. Another reason was due to the wholesale slaughter which had taken place at Karbalā and the severe public pressure that the people had brought to bear on the Umayyid government. Due to this, Yazīd didn't wish to do anything which might cause more rebellions to take place. The Hashimites were therefore left alone during the course of this horrific event.

2- The Order of 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān to Ḥajjāj

Ya'qūbī has written: "'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān wrote to Ḥajjāj, the governor of Ḥijāz: 'Do not ruin me by the murder of the children of Abū Ṭālib, for I saw with my own eyes that when the children of Ḥarb (Abū Sufyān) clashed with them, they were destroyed.'"[171]

From what is known about 'Abd al-Malik, he was one of the more intelligent and diplomatic rulers from amongst the Umayyids.[172] He became caliph around five years after the tragedy of Karbalā. This letter shows us that with all the pressure that the Umayyid clan put on the children of Abū Ṭālib, they were still unsuccessful in reaching their end goals. They only succeeded in blackening their name and inciting the anger of God and the people.

Destroying the Umayyid's Ideological Foundations

Power alone is not enough for an oppressive government to maintain its hold over the people. All governments are in need of an intellectual, philosophical, and doctrinal basis in order to keep their grip of power over their people. In other words, oppressive governments, in addition to needing military and police forces, have an equally important need for

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[171] Ibn Wāḍih, Tārīkh Ya'qūbī, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Haydarīya, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 49. This matter has also been mentioned in Shaykh Mufīd's book al-Ikhtiṣāṣ (Irshād, Publications Office of Jāmi'ah' Mudarisīn, p. 215) as well as in Biḥār al-'Anwār (Majlisī, Muḥammad Bāqir, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīya, vol. 42, p. 119).

[172] Ibn al-Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī Fī Ādāb al-Sulṭānīyah wa al-Dawl al-Islāmīya, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, p. 122.

psychological and intellectual influence, in order to make complete the process of subjugation. With these two elements, the people will become submissive and obedient to their government.

Naturally, if people are left with their powers of intellect and reason, and they recognize their government as being corrupt and self-serving in nature, then they would never submit to their authority. Therefore, the need for an ideological and intellectual backing becomes essential to the long-term survival of an oppressive ruler and his governmental apparatus. Whatever concepts rulers introduce as small ideas slowly gather momentum over time and eventually consolidate into actual worldviews, such as various religious sects and schools of philosophy.

The oppressive Umayyid government felt an acute need for such a philosophical, intellectual, and ideological backing. Since the society was an Islamic society, they had no choice but to cover their crimes and sins with religious rationalizations and justifications. In addition to this, they made use of certain ideas in order to stupefy the masses enough so that they could not fully recognize the reality of their government. It shouldn't be thought that the Umayyids were content to simply allow people to think whatever they liked; they were very interested in changing the public opinion to the point where the masses thought that the situation which they were in was the best possible situation, or at least an extremely good one.

Predestination as a Tool of Control

One of the traditional ways of dulling the thought process of the masses in order to make them submissive has been through the teaching of predestination. In history, typically the first line of defense for oppressive governments who wished to justify their actions was that of predestination. Effectively, this meant that they would relate everything back to the will of God, thereby placing the responsibility of their

actions upon God himself. It was very common for these governments to mention the phrase "It was God's will" when mentioning their various actions. They would also argue that if it was not "God's will," then it would have never taken place to begin with. The logic of predestination dictates that whatever has taken place is exactly what should have taken place, and whatever has not taken place is exactly that which could not have taken place.[173]

The Umayyids, much like other governments before them, took this idea of predestination and used it to put a choke hold on any potential dissension from the people. In order to further this goal, they gave their support to a group called the Jabrīyah. They also opposed the spread of another group called the Qadrīyah. The Qadrīyah was a group which believed in the free will and liberty of human beings in terms of their actions. They believed that whatever human beings did in their lives was due to the fact that they had chosen to do so out of their own complete free will. Since a person is free to choose their beliefs and complete their own actions, then the person is also responsible for these actions and beliefs. Therefore, liberty and freedom are concepts which necessarily entail responsibility.[174]

Since the Umayyids constantly feared opposition from amongst the masses, they considered the ideology of the Qadrīyah group as being a threat to their power. Therefore, they put the leaders of this group under pressure and simultaneously began to support the Jabrīyah group, who held completely opposite beliefs. This group preached to the people that the existence and actions of the Umayyid government, even when they engaged in corrupt and evil actions, was nothing but the will of God. They furthermore taught that the actions of the Ummayid rulers were not subject to change or transformation under any circumstances.

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[173] Muṭahharī, Murtaḍā, The Epic Saga of Ḥusayn (a), First Edition, Tehran, Ṣadrā Publications, 1361 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 312-313.

[174] Amīn, Aḥmad, Fajr al-Islam, Cairo, Maktabah Nihḍat al-Miṣrīya, 1964 A.D., p. 284.

Therefore, opposition against the Umayyids was of no use whatsoever; it could even be considered as a sin since it went against God's will.

Mūʿāwīya supported this group in order that his own actions were justified as being divinely willed and there was no possibility of him being removed as the caliph. Even if Mūʿāwīya engaged in sinful actions and various forms of corruption, since he was the caliph of the Muslims, he could not be removed and his position and status were, in a sense, untouchable. In this way, this concept of predestination became the thickest cover which concealed Mūʿāwīya and his actions from the criticism of the masses and gave him a screen of legitimacy.[175]

Benefiting from the Media

In order to establish the Jabrīyah school of thought, Mūʿāwīya and his governors used the medium of poetry in order to indoctrinate the masses. During that time period, poetry held a high place in Arab society and was considered as the highest form of literature and art. This was one of the reasons why the Holy Quran was revealed as the final messenger's miracle. Mūʿāwīya, along with later Umayyid caliphs, used poetry in order to expand the concept of predestination and the concept of divine will that accompanied it. These poems gained currency among the masses and became part of the society's social consciousness, effectively closing the doors for any dissent or rebellion amongst the people.

Lady Zaynab at the Palace of Ibn Zīyād

After the tragedy of Karbalā, Yazīd's agents began to use the Jabrīyah ideology and they publicized the Umayyids'

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[175] Shams al-Dīn, Muḥammad Mahdī, Assessment of the Husseini Revolution (Thawrat al-Ḥusayn), Translation by Mahdī Pīshvā'ī, Second Print, Qum, Tawhīd Publications, p. 135-137.

apparent victory against Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) as being the will of God. To these ends, ʿUbaydullah ibn Zīyād gathered the people at Kūfah's main mosque so that he could announce what had taken place. He gave himself an aura of religiosity and began to say to the people: "I praise God who made the truth victorious and aided Amīr al-Mu'minīn (Yazīd) and his companions, and killed the liar, the son of the liar."[176]

Imam ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) and the Lady Zaynab (ʿa) were very aware of what Ibn Zīyād was trying to achieve and quickly worked to counteract him. They began to speak, holding Yazīd and his companions as responsible for their criminal actions.

Lady Zaynab (ʿa), while wearing the worst of her clothing and surrounded by her servants and the women of her family, quietly came into the gathering that was being held and sat down in a corner. ʿUbaydullah saw her and asked: "Who is this woman who has entered and is surrounded by these other women?" Zaynab (ʿa) did not answer him. ʿUbaydullah agai repeated himself. One of the servants then replied: "She Zaynab the daughter of Fāṭimah (ʿa), who is the daughter o the Prophet of Islam (ṣ)." ʿUbaydullah then faced her and said: "I praise God who disgraced your family, killed them, and showed that what you said were all lies."

Zaynab (ʿa) answered him with these words: "I praise God who holds us honorable through the medium of his Prophet (ṣ) (who is from our family) and who kept us clean from corruption. No one besides a corrupt person can be disgraced, and no one but an evil doer will lie; we are not of the evil doers, but others are. (referring to Ibn Ziyād and his followers). And all praise is due to God."[177]

Ibn Zīyād then said: "Did you see what God did with your

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[176] Shams al-Dīn, Muḥammad Mahdī, Assessment of the Husseini (a) Revolution (Thawrat al-Ḥusayn), Translation by Mahdī Pīshvā'ī, Second Print, Qum, Tawhīd Publications, p. 137-140.

[177] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Manshūrāt Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 244.

family?" Zaynab ('a) replied: "I saw nothing but beauty. They were people whom God had destined to be killed and they obeyed him and went towards their resting place. Soon you and the ones around you will have to face God (on the Day of Judgment) and they will complain against you and ask God for his justice. Then, tell me who will be victorious on that day; may your mother grieve for you, oh son of Marjānah."

Ibn Zīyād became angry at Zaynab's straightforward and biting remarks; he was further incensed with the mention of his ill-reputed grandmother Marjānah. He began to think of taking action against her and having her harmed. However, one of the individuals there by the name of 'Amr ibn Ḥārith, said to Ibn Zīyād: "Commander, this is a woman and no one brings a woman to account for her words."

Ibn Zīyād once again addressed Zaynab ('a) and said: "God cooled my heart by the killing of your mutinous brother Ḥusayn and the rest of your rebellious family." Zaynab ('a) replied: "I swear by my life that you killed my elder, you cut the tree of my life, and you tore up my roots. If this is a cause for your healing, then may you have found your cure." Ibn Zīyād, who was affected by these words, responded with anger and derision. He said: "This here is just like her father, a giver of sermons; I swear by my life that your father was a poet and he would give speeches with rhythm and prose." Zaynab ('a) replied by saying: "Is now a time for poetry?"[178]

Ibn Zīyād wanted to show that whoever is outwardly defeated on a military battlefield has become disgraced, and if someone is on the path of truth, they would never be defeated. Zaynab ('a) knew what Ibn Zīyād was trying to do and so she quickly neutralized his words and disgraced him in front of the people. With her words, she showed that the measure of honor and righteousness is found in the search for truth, not the mere possession of external power.

'Ubaydullah ibn Zīyād expected Zaynab ('a) to act

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[178] Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs, al-Lūhūf Fī Qatl al-Ṭufūf, Qum, Maktabah al-Dāwarī, p. 68.

submissively and meekly in front of him since she had just seen her nearest and dearest of family members slaughtered before her. He expected tears, weakness, and entreaties. Yet Zaynab ('a) showed him no signs of weakness, and made him choke on the words that he had spoken, breaking his arrogance and conceit.

Truthfully, when has history ever witnessed such an individual like Zaynab ('a)? This was a lady who had just witnessed a massacre of enormous proportions. She had seen six or seven of her brothers killed, along with one of her own children and 10 of her nephews. In addition, she and all of her sisters and nephews had been taken as captives. In spite of this heartrending condition, she was still exceedingly capable of defending the religion and spreading the word of what had taken place at Karbala. She further explained that if the Imam ('a) and his companions had been martyred, then they had come for that very purpose, and if anything had taken place other than that, then that would have been a cause of worry and anxiety for them. She explained that the fighters of Karbalā had done their godly duties well, and they had gained the honor and glory of martyrdom. She then asked if ther was room for anything else besides praising and thanking Go for this success and grace.[179]

Lady Zaynab's Sermon at Kūfah

At this point, Zaynab ('a) was in the city of Kūfah, and Kūfah had many points of difference with the city of Damascus. Kūfah was a city which had been the center of Imam 'Alī's rule only 20 years before. The people who lived there were seekers of freedom and a just Islamic government, as well as supporters of the Prophet's family. In spite of these positive attributes, they weren't willing to pay the price for gaining these freedoms and blessings. They wished a life full

[179] Dr. Āyātī Bīrjandī, Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, Research on the History of 'Āshūrā, Second Print, Tehran, Ṣadūq Library, 1347 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 203.

of material wealth, power, and freedom from oppressors, yet when the hour of action would come; they weren't willing to stand up for their rights. If they came under pressure, or their material well-being was at stake, they would quickly back down. They were attributed as being two sided and fickle. On one hand, they invited the son of the Prophet with enthusiasm and emotion, but on the other hand, when they were put under pressure, they not only quickly forgot their pledges and promises, but they also went ahead and killed the very same people whom they had invited. Such people who have these attributes must be awakened from their slumber. They must be made aware of their mistakes and shown exactly what they did to themselves with the murder of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa).

This responsibility of awakening the masses (from the side of the women) fell mostly on Lady Zaynab (ʿa). The women in the city of Kūfah who were above 30 years in age had seen Zaynab (ʿa) 20 years ago when her father had been the caliph. They knew how much Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) respected and honored her, and they also had witnessed how their own fathers and husbands honored and respected her. Zaynab (ʿa) was a familiar figure to them, and when they saw the moving scene of the captives of the army of Yazīd, many long faded memories came vividly back to life for them. Zaynab (ʿa) used this opportunity and began to speak. The people heard a voice that sounded familiar to them; it seemed to them that it was Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) himself who was speaking at that moment.

Aḥmad ibn Abī Ṭāhir, who is more famously known as Ibn Ṭayfūr (d. 280 Hijrī), is the author of a book called Balāghāt al-Nisā'. This book contains a compilation of famous and eloquent speeches by Arab and Muslim women, and it is considered a classical text. In this book, he has narrated that: Khadīm Asadī[180] has said: "In the year 61 Hijrī, which was the year of the murder of Ḥusayn (ʿa), I entered Kūfah. I saw the women of Kūfah crying profusely in grief. I saw ʿAlī ibn al-

[180] In the book Luhūf, the narrator of the sermon has been mentioned as being Bashīr ibn Khazīm Asadī. He has also been mentioned in the book Balāghāt al-Nisā'.

Ḥusayn (ʿa) who was weakened by illness. ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) raised his head and said: 'Oh People of Kūfah, do you cry for us? Was it anyone but yourselves who killed us?'

At this time, Umm Kulthūm[181] signaled to the people to be quiet, and at this, they all became silent. Then she began to speak and I have not seen a modest lady speak more eloquently than her; it was as if she was speaking with the tongue of ʿAlī (ʿa). Her speech went like this: 'Oh people of Kūfah! Oh people of deceit and treachery! May your eyes never be free from tears! May your wails never stop! You are like women who weave what they have and then when finished break it apart. Neither your covenants are of value, nor your oaths trustworthy. What do you have besides boasting and self-praise? What do you have besides flattery in the open and making amends with the enemy in private? You resemble a green, wet, and fresh plant, which is growing on a pile of dung... What evil provisions you people have gathered for the next world! May God's wrath and the punishment of the Hellfire be upon you. Do you cry? Yes, by God you should cry, for you are worthy of crying. (You should) cry more and laugh less.

Why should you not cry, when you have gained such a disgrace for yourselves. This is a disgrace that cannot be washed off with any amount of water. What disgrace is worse than the killing of the son of the Prophet and the 'Master of the Youth of Paradise'? A man who was the light of your way and your helper on the 'Day of Darkness'. May you perish! May you be ashamed! All at once, you put to waste all of your past (actions), and you gained nothing for your future from it. Henceforth, you must live in abjectness and disgrace for you have gained God's wrath for yourselves. You have done something where the sky is about to fall upon the earth, and the earth is about to split, and the mountains are about to fall on one another.

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[181] Usually, whenever Umm Kulthūm is mentioned directly, it refers to Zaynab Kubrā (a), the elder daughter of Imam ʿAlī (a).

Do you know whose blood you have spilt? Do you know who these women and girls are, who have been brought into the streets and into the markets without their coverings? Do you know that you have broken the heart of the Messenger of God (ṣ)? What an evil and stupid thing you have done? The disgrace of your actions has reached every corner of this earth. Are you surprised that drops of blood are falling from the sky onto the earth? Yet know that the misery of the torment of the Day of Judgment will be more severe and more difficult. If God does not seize you at this very moment for your sins, do not feel at ease, for God does not punish immediately. At the same time, he does not leave the blood of innocents without punishment; God takes account of all things.'

These words which were spoken from the heart and were the consequences of faith in God, moved everyone who was there and created a great feeling of remorse. In the midst of this sorrowful scene, a man from the tribe of Banī Ja'fī, whose beard had become soaked with his tears, began to recite a poem which said: 'The sons of this family are the best of sons, and on this family there was never the least stains of disgrace or abjectness."[182]

Lady Zaynab in the Palace of Yazīd

Yazīd ordered that the captives, along with the heads of the martyrs, be sent to Syria. Ibn Zīyād's government agents, who were ill-tempered and harsh, began to head in that direction. Yazīd's court waited anxiously for the caravan to arrive, as they considered it a sign of great victory and triumph. According to historians, the caravan of captives entered the city, where thousands of spectators had assembled. The city of Damascus overflowed with joy and high spirits on that day since they were celebrating the victory of Yazīd. The caravan advanced street by street and was escorted into Yazīd's opulent

[182] Balāghāt al-Nisā', Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 24.
- Doctor Shahīdī, Sayyid Ja'far, The Rise of Ḥusayn (a), Tehran, The Office of Cultural Islamic Publications, 1359 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 182.

palace. All of the court officials were sitting in their special places; Yazīd had placed himself on the top of his throne, and was sitting with complete arrogance. All of them were waiting in anticipation of the captives.

There was one major difference between Yazīd's gathering and that of 'Ubaydullahs; Yazīd had only allowed the notables of the city, the tribal chiefs, as well as foreign representatives to be present, whereas in 'Ubaydullah's gathering, everyone had been allowed entrance. Owing to this difference, Yazīd's gathering had more potential effect, due to the many important individuals who were present.

The captives entered the palace and sat down in an area which had been prepared for them. When Yazīd's eye fell on the captives, he saw them standing before him, so he ordered the head of Imam Ḥusayn ('a) to be brought in a basin. When the basin was placed in front of his throne, he began to hit Imam Ḥusayn's ('a) teeth with a stick that was in his hand, and he began to recite verses of a poem, saying: "How I wish my elders, who were present in the battle of Badr and felt the bite of the arrows of the Khazraj, were here today and would feel joyous, saying: Oh Yazīd, well done. You have gotten our revenge for the day of Badr from the family of 'Alī ('a)..."

The Defiance of Lady Zaynab

If the gathering of Yazīd had concluded at this point, Yazīd would have been the victor and his actions would not have been considered as being too evil by the assembly. Zaynab ('a), however, did not allow the meeting to end on such a note. She turned what Yazīd had initially considered a victory into a bitter disgrace and defeat. She showed the people who were assembled that the very same people in front of Yazīd were the daughters of the Prophet of Islam (ṣ); this was the very same Prophet (ṣ) whom Yazīd claimed to rule on behalf of. Zaynab ('a) began to speak with courage and power, and she said the following words to Yazīd: "God and his Messenger (ṣ) have spoken the truth when they said: 'The end

of those who do evil is that they hold the signs of God to be as lies and they mock and ridicule them.'

Yazīd! Do you think because you have constricted the earth and skies around us and because you have ordered that we be made prisoners and taken from one city to another, that we have become abject and you have become great? Judging from your arrogance and conceit, do you think you have become higher in stature due to what you have done? When you see your power and kingship before you, you become so happy that your body can barely contain you, but don't you know that this opportunity which has been given to you is so that your nature is made manifest to all? Have you really forgotten the words of God when he says: 'The disbelievers think that the time they are given (on earth) is of benefit to them; We give them opportunity so that their load of sins increase; Then they will reach a torment that is a cause for abjectness and disgrace.'

Oh son of the freed ones,[183] is this justice that your wives, daughters, and servants are sitting in the seats of honor, while you have enslaved the daughters of the Prophet, disrespected them, stifled their cries, and allowed strangers to take them from one city to another on the backs of camels? All this, while no one has given them sanctuary, nor cared to see what state they are in, nor with any of their guardians from among their men present to accompany them? People gather from all around to look and stare at them.

Yet what can be expected from one whose heart is filed with animosity towards us? You are saying that you wish that your forefathers, who were killed in the 'Battle of Badr', were here right now, and then you proceed to hit the teeth of the son of the Prophet with a stick? Does it not occur to you that you have incurred a great sin and acted with disgrace? Why should

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[183] When the Prophet (s) took over the city of Mecca, the tribal heads and the notables of the city, with Abū Sufyān (Yazīd's grandfather) at their head, were fearful that they would be punished for their past deeds. The Prophet (s) told them: Go, for you are free. Zaynab (a), in her famous speech, pointed out this momentous event for the grandfather of Yazīd.

you not? By shedding the blood of the children of the Prophet and the family of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who were shining stars from amongst the people of the earth, you have renewed the enmity of the two families. Do not be joyous, for you will soon be positioned in front of God's presence, and this is when you will wish that you were both blind and dumb and that you had not seen this day, and that you had not said: 'If my forefathers were present in this gathering, they would not be able to contain their joy.' Oh Lord, you yourself give us our rights and take our revenge from the one who has oppressed us!

By God, you hurt and damaged yourself (with these actions). On the day when the Messenger and his family sit in the shade of the mercy of God, you will stand by him in great wretchedness. That day is a day, in which God will fulfil his promise, and these oppressed individuals, who are lying in their own blood, will all be gathered together. God says: 'Do not suppose that those who are killed in the way of God are dead; No they are alive and receiving sustenance from their Lord...' Yazīd, oh enemy of God and son of the enemy of God! I swear by God that in my view, you are not worthy of rebuke, and you are lesser than to be ridiculed. Yet, what can I do, for my eyes are filled with tears and my chest is full of pain.

After Ḥusayn ('a) was killed, the 'Party of Satan' took us from Kūfah to the 'Royal Court of the Foolish', in order that, through breaking the reverence of the family of Muḥammad (ṣ), they may reap their reward from the treasury of the Muslims. After the hands of these executioners has been colored with our blood, and their mouths are filled with pieces of our meat, and after the wild wolves have run around those pure bodies, what pain will your reprimand and criticism cure?

If you think that by killing and taking us as prisoners, you have gained advantage and benefit, then you shall soon see that what you thought to be to your benefit was in fact to your

detriment. On that day (the Day of Judgment), you will see the results of what you have done. On that day, you will ask help from the son of Zīyād, and he will ask for help from you. You and your followers will be gathered next to the measure of divine justice. On that day, you will know that the best provisions which Mū'āwīya prepared for you was that you killed the children of the Prophet.

I swear by God that I only fear him and I will only complain to him. Do whatever you wish! Enact whichever trick you are capable of! Bring forth every enemy that you can muster. By God, this disgrace that you have brought upon yourself can never be erased. I thank God that he made the life of the 'Masters of the Youth of Paradise' to end well and that he made paradise obligatory upon them. I ask God that he bestows upon them a high rank and that he spreads his mercy even more upon them for he is a guardian and helper most able and most powerful.'[184]

When Zaynab ('a) finished, a deathly silence hung over the palace and Yazīd began to see the signs of anger and displeasure on the faces of the people. In order to placate them, he could only manage to muster up these words: 'May God destroy the son of Marjānah, I did not want Ḥusayn to be killed...'"[185]

The Fourth Imam and the Propaganda War

In order to remove wretchedness and virtual slavery from the society, and to allow people to regain their freedom and honor, there was no option but to create awareness in the people. When people are made aware of the true reality, then the grounds of revolution are sown against tyranny and oppression.

The people had to be awakened and shown the reality, in

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[184] Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr, Ibid, p. 12-23.

[185] Doctor Shahīdī, Sayyid Ja'far, The Rise of Ḥusayn (a), Tehran, The Office for the Propagation of Islamic Culture, 1359 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 187-189, with slight differences in order and words.

order to feel responsible for the state which they were in, and to rise up against the oppressive powers that had just slaughtered the family of the Prophet. If they were given this understanding, then a revolution would invariably take form.

It was only through this type of struggle that the effects of the decades long propaganda campaign of the Umayyids could be uprooted. For this reason, the Imam (ʿa) would use every opportunity he had in order to educate the people about the reality of Islam and the reality of those who were ruling over them in the name of religion.

At one point, the Imam (ʿa) saw that a crowd had gathered to see the prisoners. He indicated to them to become quiet, and everyone became completely silent. After praising and thanking God the Almighty, the Imam (ʿa) began to speak; he said: "Oh people! Those who know me, know me, and for those who do not, I will introduce myself. I am ʿAlī, the son of Ḥusayn, the son of Abī Ṭālib. I am the son of he, whose sanctity was encroached upon, and whose wealth and possessions were plundered...and whose family was taken as prisoner.

I am the son of he, who was beheaded by the river Furā while he had neither oppressed anyone, nor engaged in any trickery towards anyone. I am the son of he, who was beheaded and this is an honor most high and great. Oh people, did you not write letters to my father? Did you not give your pledge to him? Did you not make a covenant with him? Did you not commit treason against him? Did you not go into battle against him? What evil actions! And what evil thoughts and deeds! If the Messenger of God (ṣ) tells you: You killed my children, and you encroached upon my honor— You are not of my Ummah! How will you bear to look at him?"

These short but powerful words created a firestorm of emotion and penetrated deep into the hearts of the people of Kūfah. The sounds of wailing and crying began to rise from every corner. People were saying to one another: 'We have destroyed ourselves but we do not yet realize.'

'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a) said: "May God bless the one who accepts my counsel and who hears what I have to say... Our lifestyle should be like the lifestyle of the Prophet (ṣ), which is the best of all lifestyles. Everyone said: 'Oh son of the Prophet (ṣ), we will listen; give orders and we will be faithful. We will not break away from you. We will fight with whomever you tell us and make peace with whomever you tell us. We will capture Yazīd and we are averse to the oppressors.' 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a) said: Alas, oh deceitful people. Do you wish to do with me what you did with my father and grandfather? No, by God the injury that you have done me is still raw and bleeding, and my chest is burning with the pain of the death of my father and brothers. The bitterness of this grief cannot be soothed and I want that you neither be with us nor against us."[186]

The Exchange of Words between Imam Sajjād and the Son of Zīyād

As explained previously, the Umayyid government used the ideology of predestination in order to ascribe all of its crimes to the will of God. Through such means, it eventually succeeded in stupefying the masses into submission. Yet, Imam Sajjād ('a) and Zaynab ('a) were aware of this ideological tool, and they used the means at their disposal to fight against it. One clear example of this is the clash of words between Imam Sajjād ('a) and Ibn Zīyād in Kūfah.

After the prisoners had been brought into the general gathering at the palace of Ibn Zīyād, and sharp words were exchanged between him and the Lady Zaynab ('a), Ibn Zīyād

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[186] Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs, al-Lūhūf Fī Qatl al-Ṭufūf, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Dāwarī, p. 66.
- Doctor Shahīdī, Sayyid Ja'far, The Life of 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (a), Tehran, First Edition, The Office for the Propagation of Islamic Culture, 1365 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 56.
- Ḥasani, 'Alī Akbar, The Fourth Imam, the Guardian of the Bloody Revolution of Karbalā, Qum, Young Generation Publications, p. 38-40.
* There is the possibility that this sermon was delivered on the return of the Ahl al-Bayt from Syria in the city of Kūfah. The reasons behind this is that this is a lengthy sermon, and when they were taken to Syria, there was no time or opportunity to deliver such a speech.

became aware of ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn's presence. He said: "Who is this?" Some of those who were present said: "It is ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (ʿa)." He said: "Did God not kill ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (ʿa)?" The Imam replied: "I had a brother who was called ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn, and the people killed him." Ibn Zīyād replied: "No, God killed him." The Imam (ʿa) replied with this verse of the Quran: "It is Allah that takes the souls (of men) at death; and those that die not (He takes) during their sleep."[187] Ibn Zīyād said: "With what impudence you answer me? Take him and cut off his head."

At this, Zaynab (ʿa) said: "Oh Son of Zīyād, you have not left any of our men alive. If you want to kill him, then kill me along with him." Imam ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) said: "Oh my aunt, please be quiet so that I can speak with him." Then he said: "Oh son of Zīyād, do you try to frighten me with fear of death? Do you not know that being killed is an ordinary affair for us, and martyrdom is a greatness for us?"[188] In this exchange, Ibn Zīyād wanted to show that it had been God who had killed Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) but Imam Sajjād (ʿa) quickly proved that there is a difference between the actions of the people (such as when they killed the Imam (ʿa)) and how God takes the souls at the time of death.

The Sermon of Imam Sajjād in Syria

When we look at the journey of the survivors of Karbalā to Syria, it becomes clear that these survivors played a fundamental role in spreading the message of Imam Ḥusayn's revolution. They also played a pivotal role in exposing the corrupt nature of the Umayyid government. This group in actuality took on the same function as prisoners that Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) took on by rising up and fighting against the oppressors. When the prisoners stopped in Syria, it gave them a good opportunity to raise awareness amongst the masses

[187] Surah Zumar, Verse 42

[188] Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs, al-Lūhūf Fī Qatl al-Ṭufūf, Qum, Manshūrāt Maktabah al-Dāwarī, p. 68.

about Islam and the family of the Prophet. This spreading of knowledge began to counteract around forty years of Umayyid propaganda and influence.

Imam Sajjād's ('a) famous sermon was delivered on one of the days that the Ahl al-Bayt were in Syria and it ended up playing a vital role in their mission. The result of this sermon was the complete and utter disgrace of Yazīd in front of the masses, as well as in front of the notables of his society. The late 'Allāmah Majlisī has narrated from the author of Manaqib that: "It has been narrated that one day, Yazīd ordered that a pulpit be erected so that a speaker could mount it and begin denouncing Imam Ḥusayn ('a) and Imam 'Alī ('a).

The speaker mounted the pulpit, and after praising and thanking God, he spoke many words against Imam 'Alī ('a) and Imam Ḥusayn ('a); then he eloquently began praising Yazīd and Mū'āwīya, and spoke of their goodness and virtue. Imam 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a) (who was present in the gathering) interjected and said: 'Woe upon you, oh speaker! You have bought the pleasure of the created with the wrath of the creator; and you have prepared a place for yourself in the fire of hell.'"

Then he continued and said: "Yazīd, do you allow me to go upon this pulpit and speak words wherein lie the pleasure of God, and which will count as a good deed for the listeners?" Yazīd did not give permission. The people began to say: "Oh leader, why not give permission for him to take the pulpit and let us see what he has to say?" Yazīd said: "If he ascends this pulpit, he will not descend until me and my family are disgraced." Someone said: "Oh leader, what can this young prisoner possibly know and what can he possibly say?" Yazīd said: "He is of a family who take in knowledge as young children alongside the milk that they suckle, until it becomes a part of their very blood and body."

Yet the people kept insisting until Yazīd was compelled to grant his permission. At this point, Imam Sajjād ('a) went and

positioned himself on the peak of the pulpit. He first began by praising and thanking God, and then proceeded to deliver a sermon which caused the listeners to begin crying profusely and their hearts to be shaken to the very core.

The Imam ('a) said: "Oh people, God has granted upon us (the family of the Prophet) six distinctions, and he has given us priority over others with seven virtues. The six distinctions are that God has given us: knowledge, forbearance, generosity, eloquence, courage, and he has placed our love in the hearts of the pious believers. Our seven virtues are that: the Chosen Messenger (ṣ) is from us, the Siddīq ('Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib ('a)) is from us, Ja'far Ṭayyār is from us, The Lion of God and his Messenger (ṣ) (Ḥamzah, the master of martyrs) is from us, the two 'Sibṭs[189]' of this nation, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn are from us, and the Lady Zahrā ('a) (or according to some narrations 'the Mahdī ('a)') is from us."[190]

"Oh people, whoever knows us, knows us; and whoever does not know us, let me introduce ourselves: I am the son c Mecca and Minā, I am the son of Zamzam and Safā, I am tl offspring of that great one who lifted the Black Stone with h. 'Abā (cloak),[191] I am the offspring of the greatest person who put on the Ihrām and circumambulated the Kaaba and performed the Sa'ī. I am the offspring of the best of human beings. I am the offspring of he, who (during the Night of Ascent) was taken from the Masjid al-Ḥarām to the Masjid al-Aqṣā. I am the son of he, who reached Sidrat al-Muntahā, I am the son of he, who in his celestial travels, came so near to the reality that he was given the title of 'Qāb Qawsayn Aw Adnā'. I am the son of he, who prayed with the angels of the sky. I am the son of he, who was subject to God's revelation. I am the son of Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā, I am the son of 'Alī al-

[189] The word Sibṭ literally means grandsons.

[190] Some historians, who have narrated this sermon of Imam Sajjād (a) with a slight difference in wording, have not mentioned the seventh virtue.

[191] This refers to the story of how the 'Black Stone' was lifted into its place through the medium of the Prophet (s). He was 35 years of age when this took place and he prevented conflict and discord from breaking out amongst the people of Mecca.

Murtaḍā. I am the son of he who fought with the polytheists, until they submitted to 'Lā Illāha Illallāh'.[192] I am the son of he who fought under the Prophet of God (ṣ) with two swords and two spears,[193] who emigrated twice,[194] who gave his pledge to the Prophet (ṣ) twice, fought bravely in the battles of Badr and Ḥunayn, and did not disbelieve in God for even a moment. I am the son of he, who is the best of the pious, the inheritor of the prophets, the destroyer of the disbelievers, the leader of the Muslims, the light of the fighters in the way of God, the adornment of the worshipers, the pride of the ones who cry (from the fear of God), the most patient of the patient ones, and the best of the ones who rise from the family of Yāsīn, the one sent by God.

My father is he whose supporter was Gabriel, his helper Michael, and he himself was the defender and guard over the honor of the Muslims. He was the one who fought against the Māriqīn, the Nākithīn, the Qāsiṭīn, and the spiteful enemies of God. I am the son of the best individual of the Quraysh, who attached himself to the Prophet (ṣ) before anyone else and preceded everyone in his Islam.[195] He was the adversary of the rebels, the destroyer of the polytheists, the divine arrow in annihilating the hypocrites, the source of the wisdom of the worshippers, the supporter of God's religion, the Walī Amr of God, the garden of divine wisdom, and the heart of divine knowledge..."

Then he said: "I am the son of Fāṭimah Zahrā ('a), I am the

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[192] The slogan of 'There is no God but Allah'

[193] This is perhaps a reference to the breaking of Imam 'Alī's (a) sword in the Battle of Uhud, where it is narrated that he was given the sword of 'Dhū al-Fiqār' from God.

[194] In regards to the two emigrations of Imam 'Alī (a), there exist a few possibilities: A- Emigrating from Mecca to Medina during the time of Islam, and then emigrating a second time from there to Yemen during the last years of the Prophet's (s) life, in order to educate and guide the people of that land. B- Emigrating from Mecca to Medina and then, emigrating from there to Kūfah (after the passing of the Prophet (s), during the period of his caliphate). C- Emigrating from Mecca to an area called 'Shib Abī Ṭālib' (this was 3 years in duration) and then onwards from there to Medina. (Ḥasanī, 'Alī Akbar, The 4th Imam (a), The Guardian of the Bloody Revolution of Karbalā, Qum, Young Generation Publications, p. 66).

[195] He was the first to accept Islam.

son of the leader of all women..."

Here Imam Sajjād ('a) began to introduce his family tree of imamate and prophethood. The people in the gathering had begun to cry and wail from the effect of his words. Yazīd became fearful that a riot would erupt, and so he ordered the call to prayer to be recited. The reciter stood up and began the call to prayer, saying: God is the greatest....

The Imam ('a) said: "Truly, nothing is greater than God." When the reciter announced: "I witness that there is no God but Allah," the Imam ('a) said: "Truly, my skin, my hair, my flesh, and my blood all testify to the oneness of God." As soon as the reciter announced: "I witness that Muḥammad (ṣ) is the Messenger of Allah," the Imam ('a) faced Yazīd from the pulpit and said: "Yazīd, is Muḥammad (ṣ) my grandfather or yours? If you say he is yours, then you have lied and disowned the truth, and if you say that he is my grandfather, then why did you kill our children...?"[196]

Ṭabarī, one of the scholars of the 7th century Hijrī ha written at the end of Imam Sajjād's ('a) speech that: "... (Imar Sajjād ('a)) said: 'Oh Yazīd, was the honored and respecte Prophet (ṣ) your grandfather or mine? If you say that he was your grandfather, then the people of this earth know that you are lying, and if you say that he was my grandfather, then why did you martyr my father without fault, plunder his wealth and possessions, and take his family as captives?'"

Imam Sajjād ('a) said this, tore his clothes, and began to cry. He then continued to speak: "By God, if there is no one else on this earth whose grandfather was the Messenger (ṣ), then why did this man kill my father unjustly, and bring us as they bring the slaves of Rome?" Then he said: "Oh Yazīd, you did this and you say that Muḥammad is the messenger of God (ṣ), and you turn towards the Qiblah (to pray)? Woe upon you, may my father and my grandfather be your adversaries on the

[196] Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1393 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 45, p. 137. Some portions of this speech have not been included; they are referenced with the proper grammatical notations.

Day of Judgment."

At this point, Yazīd cursed at the reciter of the call to prayer and ordered him to finish. A great commotion and pandemonium swept through the gathering and the people began to disperse, some having prayed, while others simply left without praying.'[197]

The Message and the Consequences of Karbalā

The movement and uprising of Imam Ḥusayn ('a) brought about widespread effects and consequences in the Muslim society. Let us take a look at some of these:

1- The Disgrace of the Umayyid Government

The Umayyids had traditionally presented themselves in the garb of religion, and they ruled in the name of Islam and the Muslims. They would use various tricks, such as the fabrication of traditions which were ascribed to the Prophet (ṣ) and his companions, in order to give themselves further religious legitimacy. They would also co-opt poets to write poetry praising them and they would strengthen the various sects who believed in predestination in order to push the idea of themselves as being divinely appointed rulers who could not be questioned or resisted.

The killing of Imam Ḥusayn ('a) was one of the biggest blows to the Umayyid government in this respect and it disgraced the whole apparatus of their government. The actions of the government, such as cutting off water to the Imam's camp, the killing of young children, and the taking of captives from among the women and children of the Prophet's family all struck a powerful blow against all of their claims of religiosity and divine will. Their reputation changed amongst the masses and people began to look at them with hatred and animosity. The situation changed so strikingly that Mujahid, one of the eminent personalities of the day, is

[197] Kāmil Bahā'ī, Tehran, Maktab Murtaḍawī, p. 301.

reported as having said: "I swear by God that the people are publicly cursing Yazīd and speaking ill of him. They consider him as disgraceful and have turned away from him."[198]

Yazīd, who had been joyous in celebrating his victory and in his killing of Imam Ḥusayn ('a), was now being forced to blame 'Ubaydullah ibn Zīyād for what had taken place. The tide had turned and he had lost control over the situation. Historians have written that: After the events of Karbalā, Yazīd invited 'Ubaydullah to Damascus, and gave him large amounts of wealth and valuable gifts. He sat 'Ubaydullah near himself and raised him in rank and status. He also introduced him to his wives at his harem and appointed him as his close counselor and friend...[199] However, not much time had passed when the power of public opinion reached its peak, and Yazīd was forced to do an abrupt about-face and absolve himself of any guilt. He instead blamed Ibn Zīyād for everything that had happened.

Ibn Athīr has written: "When they took the head of Imam Ḥusayn ('a) to Yazīd, the position of Ibn Zīyād was raised in his eyes and he became happy with what he had done. H ended up awarding Ibn Zīyād with many presents. Howeve not much time had passed before Yazīd received word that tl people had become angry with him and were cursing and speaking ill of him. When he realized what was taking place, he became rueful of his actions. He began to say: 'I wish that I had endured and brought Ḥusayn to my house, for the sake of the Prophet of Islam and the sanctity of Ḥusayn's connection with him. I wish I had given the choice over to him, however much it may have caused the weakening of my government. May God curse the son of Marjānah (Ibn Zīyād). He forced Ḥusayn in this matter while Ḥusayn had requested from him permission to give me his pledge in person or to go

[198] Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 262.

[199] Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 290.

to one of the frontier areas.[200] Yet the son of Marjānah murdered him without agreeing to his suggestion, and with this action, he made me the focus of the Muslim's hatred and anger and sowed the seeds of enmity in their hearts towards me. Now people from both the high and low levels of society have become my enemy. What sort of a predicament is this which the son of Marjānah put me in? May God curse him and place him under his torment."

In respect to his treatment of the survivors of Karbalā, Yazīd was initially very harsh towards them, but soon, under the pressure of public opinion, he was forced to change his manner of treatment. When the captives first arrived, he acted with arrogance and roughness towards them, and ordered that they be housed in a dilapidated and ruined structure which had been a home at one time. Soon, with the changing tide of public opinion and the emotions of the masses, he was forced to act towards them with kindness and changed their place of residence, saying: If you are so inclined, I will send you to

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[200] This part was added in by either Yazīd or the historians, because Imam Ḥusayn (a) was never prepared to give the oath of allegiance to Yazīd. In fact, the entire movement of 'Āshūrā, from the very beginning, until the very end, was one of rejecting the oath of allegiance to a corrupt ruler like Yazīd and all those who were like him.

- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, p. 87. This situation has been mentioned in brief by both Ṭabarī in his history (Beirut Print, Dār al-Qāmūs al-Ḥadīth, vol. 6, p. 266) and by Sibṭ ibn Jawzī in his Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ (Najaf Print, al-Maṭba'at al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 261 and 265).

After some time had passed, even Ibn Zīyād become worried about the consequences of the crimes that he had committed at Karbalā. His testimony of this lies in an exchange of words which took place between him and 'Umar ibn Sa'ad. Ṭabarī and Abī Mikhnaf have narrated this exchange as follows: After the killing of Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī (a), 'Ubaydullah ibn Zīyād told 'Umar ibn Sa'ad: Where is the written (order) that I had given to you in regards to killing Ḥusayn? 'Umar ibn Sa'ad said: I went to fulfil your orders and it was lost. Ibn Zīyād said: You must bring that to me. 'Umar said: It has been lost. Ibn Zīyād replied: I swear by God you must bring me that letter. His answer was: I have kept it in Medina so that I may show it to the old women as an excuse and pretext. I have done you a favor and a service so great that if I had done it for my father Sa'ad Waqqās, it would have fulfilled his rights of fatherhood over me. At this juncture, the brother of Ibn Zīyād, who was named 'Uthmān, said: 'Umar ibn Sa'ad has spoken the truth. I swear by God that I would have preferred that the lineage of Zīyād remained wretched until the Day of Judgment, but that Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī (s) would not have been killed. The narrator, who was himself a witness of this, added: I swear by God that Ibn Zīyād did not refute the words of his brother! (Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut Print, Dār al-Qāmūs al-Ḥadīth, (Bee, Taa), vol. 6, p. 268), (Abū Mikhnaf, Maqtal al-Ḥusayn, Qum, p. 229).

Medina.

Ṭabarī has written about this, saying: "Zaynab ('a) sent someone to Yazīd in order to get permission so that they could grieve over Imam Ḥusayn ('a). Yazīd gave permission and said: 'You must take her to the Dār al-Ḥijārah, so that they can grieve there.' For seven days, they held mourning ceremonies. Every day, a group of women would gather there and their numbers were so large that they could not be counted. The people's emotions soon became uncontrollable and a decision was made to attack Yazīd's house and kill him.

Marwān,[201] who had become aware of this state of affairs, came to Yazīd and said: 'It is not advisable for your rule that the Ahl al-Bayt, their children, and the people who are attached to Ḥusayn remain there. It is advisable that you settle their affairs and send them to Medina. By God, by God! Your rule and kingdom will be destroyed because of these women.'

When Yazīd heard this, he called Imam Zayn al-'Abidīn ('a) and sat him near himself. He then said: 'May God curs the son of Marjānah (Ibn Zīyād). If I had been in charge c this matter, I would have never allowed for things to reac this stage, and I would have given him (Imam Ḥusayn) anything that he asked for and desired. Alas, destiny did not allow it. When you reach Medina, write to me with anything that you need and desire.' Then he arranged gifts to be given to the Imam ('a) and also sent gifts for the women, but it is said that they did not accept them."[202]

Yazīd did not live for more than 4 years after the tragedy of 'Āshūrā, yet he left the disgrace and shame of Karbalā as his legacy and the legacy of the Umayyid dynasty. The situation was such that the Umayyid caliphs who came after him and who possessed even the lowest levels of intelligence were careful not to repeat what Yazīd had done. Ya'qūbī, the famous historian, has written:

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[201] Marwān was in Medina after the death of Mū'āwīya. Unless it is supposed that he had traveled to Syria during this time period.

[202] Ṭabarī, Kāmil Bahā'ī, Tehran, Maktab Murtaḍāwi, p. 302.

ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Marwān (when he had become the caliph) wrote to Ḥajjāj (the governor of the Ḥijāz) saying: "Do not implicate me with the killing of the children of Abū Ṭālib for I saw that when the children of Ḥarb (Abū Sufyān) got involved with them, they were destroyed."[203]

2- The Revival of the Prophetic Tradition of Martyrdom

When we look at the history of Islam, we find that the Prophet (ṣ) gave much importance to the concept of martyrdom in defending one's life and faith from the oppressive enemies. History shows that this concept of martyrdom was one of the root causes behind the many victories of the early Muslims. Unfortunately, after the passing of the Prophet (ṣ), deviations began to take place, and this warrior spirit was lost amongst the Muslims. Due to the great number of conquests and the accumulation of war booty, the people began to incline towards a lifestyle of ease and comfort.

Things reached a point that when a person achieved a position of power, the people would unquestioningly obey whatever he said out of fear of losing their material wealth and comfort. The tyrants who were ruling in the name of Islam over the people, took advantage of this lack of zeal. This situation became progressively more severe until it reached its peak towards the end of Mūʿāwīya's life and the beginning of Yazīd's rule.

During this time period, the men of religion and the tribal elders were predominately ruled by wealth and power, and they were obedient to its manifestations. They had traded their souls and principles for the wealth and property of this world. These religious and political leaders, even though they were fully aware of the evil characteristics of the family of ʿUbaydullah ibn Zīyād, had submitted themselves to him

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[203] The History of Yaʿqūbī, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 49. This letter has also been mentioned in previous pages.

completely. They were obedient not only to Yazīd and Ibn Zīyād, but also to those who worked under them because since power, wealth, status, and social influence were in the hands of this group, the religious and social leaders had become obedient and submissive to their every whim.

Another group of people, who were no better than the first group we mentioned, were those who practiced public ascetism and piety only to deceive the masses. They would engage in outward acts of piety in order to gain material benefits from the public. When their level of fame had grown and they had gained the attention and favor of the tyrants who ruled over society, they would then quickly place themselves in their inner circle of confidantes. The people of that time had become accustomed to such characters, and over time, their behavior and actions seemed natural and ordinary for them. Things were beyond the point of causing protest or criticism.

The people's condition had changed to where their only concern and goal was in securing their personal worldly desires. Each individual would work hard towards securin their personal interests, and they would give no thought as t anything but their own personal issues. The society and it immense set of problems was not an issue which the masses really thought about. The only concern of the masses was that their salaries and pensions are not cut off by the government. Out of fear of this, they obeyed and implemented the policies and orders of their leaders without any protest. In addition, when they witnessed any oppression or tyranny, they wouldn't protest against it or criticize it out of fear.

The revolution of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) completely turned this social condition on its head, and it revived the prophetic tradition of martyrdom in the Muslim society. With his uprising, Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) showed the people that if they were being oppressed, they could fight against their oppressors— the door to resistance was open. This path did have its difficulties and deprivations, but there was no

humiliation or servitude for the society who chose this option.

Before Imam Ḥusayn's ('a) insurrection, the society had been silent for twenty years and it had submitted itself to the whims of the oppressors for the sake of comfort and wealth. Twenty years is a relatively long period of time, and while there had been many sporadic uprisings, there had not been even the basic elements of a mass movement by the people.

When we examine what happened at Kūfah when Muslim ibn 'Aqīl arrived, we find that this state of abject servitude was deeply rooted in the collective mind of the people. With the false news of the coming of Yazīd's army from Syria, all the people who had gathered around Muslim scattered and completely dispersed. The people were not yet willing to truly stand up against their oppressors.

Yet with the tragedy of Karbalā, the society was awakened, and their social and religious consciousness was brought back to life. An overwhelming majority of the society was deeply affected by what they had witnessed. This awakening and spiritual revival was sufficient to push people towards defending their honor, dignity, and religion.

One of the earliest manifestations of this revival was the rise of 'Abdullah ibn 'Afīf Azdī in the city of Kūfah. When Ibn Zīyād attempted to give his first speech after the war, wishing to announce his victory against Imam Ḥusayn ('a) and speaking words of evil about him, he was confronted with the public protest and anger of 'Abdullah ibn 'Afīf (who had become blind at that point in time).[204] When Ibn Zīyād saw this, he gave the order for his capture and arrest. To prevent this, 'Abdullah's tribe escorted him back to his home, with Ibn Zīyād's guards in pursuit. 'Abdullah resisted their attack, but he was soon captured and executed.[205] This was the first

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[204] 'Abdullah ibn Afīf was one of the companions of Imam 'Alī (a). He had lost one of his eyes during the Battle of the Camel and he had lost the other during the Battle of Ṣiffīn.

[205] Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Tārikh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut, Dār al-Qamūs

indication that things had reached a boiling point amongst the Muslims. It was in essence the first sign of the coming storm....

3- The Rise of the Muslim Nation

The rise of Imam Ḥusayn ('a) became the source of many other resistance movements that swept the Islamic nation. Let us look at a few of these movements:

A- The Revolt of the Tawwābīn

The first direct response to the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn ('a) was the 'Movement of the Penitents' in the city of Kūfah. Immediately after Imam Ḥusayn ('a) was martyred and Ibn Zīyād returned to Kūfah, the Shias, who had lost their golden opportunity of aiding the Imam ('a) at Karbalā, became deeply regretful. They realized that they had committed a grave sin, for they had invited Imam Ḥusayn ('a) but when he came to help them, they had left him alone to be killed. This group felt that this sin and deep disgrace would always be upon them unless they rose up and took revenge o the killers of Imam Ḥusayn or at died trying.

The Shias who were thinking along these lines went to fi of their tribal heads for leadership. These five leaders were: Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad Khazā'ī, Musayyib ibn Najaba'h Fazārī, 'Abdullah ibn Sa'ad ibn Nufayl Azdī, 'Abdullah ibn Wāl Tamīmī, and Rifā'ah ibn Shaddād Bajalī; they all gathered together at the house of Sulaymān for a meeting. Musayyib ibn Najabah was the first to begin speaking, and after mentioning some preliminary matters, he said: "We were captivated by our supposed goodness and we would praise our companions and followers for these qualities, but during the

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al-Ḥadīth, vol. 6, p. 263.

- Abū Mikhnaf, Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd ibn Mikhnaf Azdī, Maqtal al-Ḥusayn, Qum, p. 207.
- Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs, al-Lūhūf Fī Qatl al-Ṭufūf, Qum, Maktabah al-Dāwarī, p. 69.

course of this test which God brought about, our lie was made manifest, and we came out of this test defeated and ashamed. We ended up being negligent in relation to the son of the Prophet.

Ḥusayn (ʿa), the son of the Messenger, wrote letters to us and sent us envoys. He asked us for help many times, both in secret and in the open; he closed the door to any excuse or pretext for us. Yet we refused in giving ourselves over in his service until he was killed in the harshest of ways right next to us. We showed so much irresolution that we neither aided him with our actions or our words, nor did we back him with our wealth and property, nor did we call our tribes to his aid. Now, what are we going to say in front of God and his Messenger (ṣ)? By God, we do not have any excuse in front of our Creator until and unless we punish the killers of Ḥusayn for their actions or die trying. Perhaps then, God will become pleased with us..."

After a few more emotional speeches, Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad Khazāʿī, who had been nominated as the group's leader, said: "We were expectant of the arrival of the family of the Prophet and we encouraged them in coming to the land of Iraq by giving them an oath of support. Yet when our request became reality and the son of the Messenger came to our land, we became irresolute and gave delay, until he was killed...

Behold! Stand upright and take hold of the hilts of your swords! We have provoked the wrath of God, and until we gain back his favor and satisfaction, we should not go in the midst of our wives and children. God will not be pleased with us until we take retribution for the blood of the son of his Prophet.

Do not fear death! I swear by God that whoever fears death is condemned to defeat and abjectness. You must be like the Tribe of Israel when Moses (ʿa) said to them: You, through the worship of the calf, have oppressed yourselves. Therefore, repent to God and kill the guilty ones amongst

yourselves..."[206]

In following up this matter, Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad also wrote about the situation to Sa'ad ibn Ḥudhayfah ibn Yamān and the other Shias of Madā'in, asking for their help and support; they likewise accepted Sulaymān's request. Sulaymān then wrote to Muthannā ibn Makhramah' 'Abdī and other Shias of the city of Baṣrah and they also sent back favorable responses to his request.

The Goals of the Tawwābīn

The Tawwābīn firmly believed that the real responsibility for Imam Ḥusayn's ('a) killing was with the ruling Umayyid government and not in the hands of individuals. Therefore, their decision was to march towards Syria for their day of retribution. After they had dealt with the Umayyids, they would return and go after the criminal parties in Kūfah.

As mentioned before, this movement was propelled by a feeling of remorse and penitence, as well as a keenness towards making amends for past mistakes. Between their speeches and letters, one could sense a deep feeling of regret and a burning desire for making amends for the past. Yet it was this ver same goal which made the Tawwābīn's mission seem like suicidal one.

The Tawwābīn's only goal was to get revenge and to make up for their past lapses and sins; they had no other goals besides these. This group was neither after conquest, nor were they after gaining power and wealth; their only goal was retribution. When the Tawwābīn finally left their homes, they left with the full certainty that they would never enter them again. When they were offered amnesty by the enemy, they refused it wholeheartedly for they considered it as the means of the destruction of their movement.

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[206] "And remember Moses said to his people: 'O my people! Ye have indeed wronged yourselves by your worship of the calf: So turn (in repentance) to your Maker, and slay yourselves (the wrong-doers).' Surah Baqarah, Verse 54.

The Tawwābīn's Forces

It was not only the Shias who formed the ranks of the Tawwābīn; people who wanted to see the end of the oppressive Umayyid government also joined their ranks. Given that the Tawwābīn's movement was one which sought full retribution or death, it isn't surprising that not many people joined them. The notebook of Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad contained 15,000 names of people who had joined, and from this number, only 5,000 people assembled when the time came for battle.[207] This was while the army of Syria contained 30,000 soldiers. It is clear that only those who are at a very high stage of faith and who are willing to do great acts of self sacrifice in the way of their beliefs are attracted to a movement which will lead to their ultimate martyrdom. In every age, the number of such people will naturally be small.

The Military Actions of the Tawwābīn

The movement of the Tawwābīn was initiated in the 61st year Hijrī. From this date onwards, the Tawwābīn began to collect military equipment, and to secretly invite people towards taking revenge for the killing of Imam Ḥusayn ('a). People, both Shia and otherwise began to join the movement. As the Tawwābīn were busy preparing for the preliminary stages of their revolution, news came that Yazīd had died. When this news reached them, the Tawwābīn began sending emissaries in order to invite others towards joining and cooperating with them. Additionally, there was no further reason for secrecy and so they began to openly invite people, as well as to build up their stock of weaponry.

The first flames of revolt were lit on a Thursday night on the 5th of Rabī' al-Thānī, in the 65th year Hijrī. On this night, the Tawwābīn gathered and departed for the burial place of

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[207] From Madā'in 70 individuals went towards joining the Tawwābīn, and from the city of Baṣrah another 300 also attempted to join, but when they arrived close to the battlefield, the Tawwābīn had already been defeated.

Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa). When they reached his grave, they lost all control of their emotions and began to weep and cry out, saying: "Oh God, we did not aid the son of your Prophet. Forgive our past sins, accept our repentance, and send your mercy on the soul of Ḥusayn (ʿa) and his righteous companions. We testify that we are on the same path that Ḥusayn (ʿa) was killed upon. Our Lord, if you don't forgive us our sins and look upon us with mercy and leniency, then we will be wretched and of those who have lost..."

After this emotional scene, they left the grave of the martyrs and began to move towards Syria. In a land called ʿAyn al-Warda, they met the Ummayid army, which was commanded by ʿUbaydullah ibn Zīyād. After three days of hard fighting, they were defeated. All of the commanders of the Tawwābīn, with the exception of Rifāʿah, were martyred. The surviving members, under the leadership of Rifāʿah ibn Shaddād, returned to Kūfah and joined the forces of Mukhtār,[208] who were active there.

Although the revolt of the Tawwābīn was without a larger political goal and was also defeated fairly quickly, it still had a very deep effect on the people of Kūfah. It also prepared the people and set the stage for a larger and more protracted struggle against the Umayyid government.

B- The Revolt of Mukhtār

In the 66th year Hijrī, Mukhtār ibn Abī ʿUbayd Thaqafī revolted in the land of Iraq in order to take revenge from the killers of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa).

During the time that Muslim ibn ʿAqīl had entered Kūfah, Mukhtār had come forward and joined forces with him. When the people lost heart and Muslim ended up being killed, Mukhtār was captured and jailed by ʿUbaydullah ibn Zīyād. After the tragedy of ʿĀshūrā, he was released from prison

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[208] Abū Mikhnaf, Lūṭ ibn Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd ibn Mikhnaf Azdī, Maqtal al-Ḥusayn, Qum, p. 248-310.
- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, p. 158-186.

through the mediation of 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, who visited Yazīd to secure his release. At the same time that he was released, 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr also revolted in Mecca and declared himself as the caliph of the Muslims. Mukhtār departed for Mecca and began participating in 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr's revolt.

During the year 64 Hijrī, five months after the death of Yazīd, Mukhtār realized that the people of Iraq were not supportive of 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr's government. In addition, he saw their anti Umayyid sentiments and their preparation for revolt against the government. Therefore, he left Mecca and began his own movement from Kūfah.[209]

The Reason behind Abdullah ibn Zubayr's Unrealized Goals

In order for us to understand why the people of Iraq initially followed Ibn Zubayr, and then later accepted Mukhtār's invitation, we must pay attention to the fact that the people of Iraq were after two main things during that time period:

1- Social reform and support of the Mawālī (non Arab Muslims who were subject to oppression during the rule of the Umayyids).

2- Revenge against the Umayyids for the blood of the Hashimites.

It was in the hopes of obtaining these two goals that the people of Iraq gave their oath of allegiance to Ibn Zubayr. The reason behind this was that Ibn Zubayr was the enemy of the Umayyids and he also showed himself as being a pious man

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[209] Abū al-'Abbās al-Mabrad, al-Kāmil Fī Lughah wa al-'Adab, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1407 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 112-116.

- Akhtab al-Khawarizmī, Maqtal al-Ḥusayn, Researched and compiled by Shaykh Muḥammad Samāwī, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Mufīd, vol. 2, p. 202 and onwards. During this time period, the Tawwābīn in Kūfah were busy preparing themselves and gathering more members. Yet Mukhtār was quoted as saying: Sulaymān does not have the necessary awareness and preparation in military matters and he will be quickly defeated.

who was unattached to worldly matters. Yet time showed the people that there was not much difference between the government of Ibn Zubayr and the government of the Umayyids. It is true that Ibn Zubayr freed Iraq from the influence and control of the Umayyids, but the killers of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) were yet unpunished. In fact, criminals such as Shimr ibn Dhī al-Jawshan, ʿAmr ibn Ḥajjāj, Shabath ibn Ribʿay, who had all played major roles in the killings, were not only still free, but they were considered as being very close to the ruling government!

From the perspective of enacting justice, Ibn Zubayr did not meet the Iraqi's expectations and wishes. The Mawālī (non-Arab Muslims) were still living a life of deprivation, and power and wealth were concentrated in the hands of the tribal leaders. This caused the people to abandon Ibn Zubayr, and to support Mukhtār's movement instead.

Muḥammad ibn Hannafiyah, the son of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), also supported Mukhtar; this caused the people to have further trust in his movement. Mukhtār made the slogan of his movement "Seeking revenge for the blood of Ḥusayn (ʿa)". This made the Iraqis hopeful that they would finally rea their long standing goals.

After reaching power, Mukhtār supported the Mawāl and took steps towards securing their social rights. This actio of Mukhtār instigated the tribal heads and leaders against him, and they formed a group to counter him. With the help of ʿAbdullah ibn Zubayr's forces, they began to prepare for war against Mukhtār. At the head of this group stood the killers of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), and this matter was enough to cause the revolutionaries to stand firm in their positions.

Mukhtār began to pursue the killers of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) mercilessly, and they were killed wherever they were found. This campaign was so relentless that in one day alone, 280 of them were captured and killed, and the houses of some of the leaders who had escaped were demolished. One such example was the house of Muḥammad ibn Ashʿath which was razed to

the ground. Mukhtār ordered that they take the material from Muḥammad ibn Ash'ath's house and rebuild the house of Ḥujr ibn 'Adī. Ḥujr ibn 'Adī had been a devoted follower of Imam 'Alī ('a) who was martyred by Zīyād ibn Abī, and whose house had been demolished on his orders many years before.[210]

4- The Overthrow of the Umayyids

The revolts of both Mukhtār and the Tawwābīn took place shortly after the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn ('a). In later years, many other revolts took place which were also inspired by Imam Ḥusayn ('a). The largest of these was that of the 'Abbāsids, which took place in the 132nd year Hijrī, and was victorious over the Umayyid government. The most powerful factor in the 'Abbāsid's victory was the oppression which the Umayyids had committed against the Banī Hāshim. Among these oppressive acts, the one act which raised the wrath of the people the most was the killing of Imam Ḥusayn ('a).

The historians have written that: "At the time when the head of Marwān (the last Umayyid caliph) was brought to Abū al-'Abbās (the first 'Abbāsid caliph), Abū al-'Abbās made a lengthy prostration, and when he lifted his head, he said the following to the head of Marwān: 'I praise God who took my revenge from you and your tribe. I praise God who made me victorious and triumphant over you.' Then he added: 'Now, it is not important when my death comes, for I have killed 2,000 people from the Umayyids for the revenge of the blood of Imam Ḥusayn ('a)...'"[211]

Abū al-'Abbās then ordered that the bodies of the Ummayids be taken out into the streets. He said to his soldiers: "Take them, and drag them through the streets. Leave

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[210] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kâmil fī al-Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, p. 211-244.

[211] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, Researched by: Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, First Edition, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1378 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 7, p. 130. Mas'ūdi has narrated this matter in Marwaj al-Dhahab (Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs) vol. 3, p. 257

them there so that the people can curse them after their deaths just as they cursed them when they were alive." Not much time had passed when the people saw that dogs had taken the corpses by their legs and were dragging them on the ground, while they were still dressed in their fine and expensive embroidered clothing.[212]

[212] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, Researched by: Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1378 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 7, p. 139.

THE LIVES OF THE TWELVE

A Look at the Social and Political Lives of the Twelve Infallible Imams (ʿa)

Written By
Shaykh Mahdī Pīshvā'ī

▪PART TWO▪

A LOOK AT THE LIVES OF IMAM SAJJAD (ʿa), IMAM BAQIR (ʿa), AND IMAM SADIQ (ʿa)

Translated By
Sayyid Ali Musawi

The Lives of the Twelve is a pioneering work that details the lives of the Twelve Shia Imams. While most works on the Twelve Imams focuses on the basics of their lives, this text goes into the details of their social and political lives and how they affected change throughout their societies. Through extensive research, Shaykh Mahdi Pishvai has been able to craft together many details which were not widely known before. This is the first time a book of this caliber has been published in the English language. Today, we live in times where morality and a sense of right and wrong have all but disappeared. In light of this, we can turn to the teachings and wisdom of the Twelve in order to see how we can help bring back morality and that human sense of differentiating between right and wrong in our society. This work is composed of four distinct volumes, each of which goes into the lives of three of the Twelve Imams.



NOOR COLLECTIVE
PUBLICATIONS



The Lives of the Twelve

(Part Two)

A Look at the Social and Political Lives of the Twelve Infallible Imams

Written By: Shaykh Mahdī Pīshvā'ī

Translated By: Sayyid Ali Musawī

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Preface and Acknowledgments

-By Sayyid Ali Musawi

In the name of God, the All-Beneficent, the Ever Merciful

Many times, the work on the lives of the Twelve Imams ('a) tend to be strictly biographical in nature and they do not deal with the social or political aspects of their lives. This book primarily summarizes the biographical aspects of their lives and it delves into the details of how they worked to spread the true teachings of the religion of Islam throughout their societies. Indeed, we are indebted to these Twelve Guides; without their teachings and their guidance, we would have been plunged into the depths of darkness.

Although this book began as a project many long years ago, this second part was finally completed in the middle of this cold (Southern California cold) winter in the month of December, 2018. We thank God for his blessings which weigh heavy on us and we ask that he guides us in his path and that

he allows us to be more perfect in serving him. Truly, nothing is possible except through God.

I would like to extend my gratitude and thanks to my parents, who have been so integral all of these years in teaching and guiding me. I would also like to thank everyone who has been a part of this journey thus far, particularly my teachers in the religious seminary of Qum, Iran. My years there proved invaluable to who I am today and I would not trade them for anything in this world. I would also like to thank the members of the Noor Collective in San Diego, California for creating the platform which inspired this publication. Finally, I would like to thank Issa D. for his help in the final editing of this manuscript, as well as Haider al-Shaher for his work on the cover page. May we all be worthy one day to call ourselves the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa)...

Sayyid Ali Musawi

December 20, 2018

San Diego, California

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Part Two: A Look at the Lives of Imam Sajjād, Imam Bāqir, and Imam Ṣādiq

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The Fourth Imam

Imam ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn

A Brief Look into the Life of Imam Zayn al-ʿAbidīn

Imam Zayn al-ʿAbidīn (ʿa) is the son of Imam Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (ʿa) and Shahr Bānūwīyah.[1] He is most famously known by his titles of Zayn al-ʿAbidīn and Sajjād. Zayn al-ʿAbidīn means 'the adornment of the worshippers' and Sajjād refers to someone who spends a great deal of time in the state of prostration before God.

Imam Sajjād (ʿa) was born in the year 38 Hijrī[2] and he spent the period of his youth in the city of Medina. He was alive for two years during the rule of his grandfather, Amīr al-Mu'minīn (ʿa), and after that, he was present for ten years of the imamate of his uncle, Imam Ḥasan (ʿa). During this time, Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) was the caliph of the Muslims for a period of six months. After the martyrdom of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) in the year 50 Hijrī, Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) became the next imam and his period of imamate lasted around ten years before he was martyred at Karbala. The last years in the imamate of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) coincided with the peak of Mūʿāwīya's political power, and were filled with constant altercations; Imam Zayn al-ʿAbidīn (ʿa) was witness to all of these events.

In the month of Muḥarram, 61 Hijrī, Imam Zayn al-ʿAbidīn (ʿa) was present at the revolt of Karbalā and the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) and his companions. After the tragedy of

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[1] Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb Kulaynī, Ūṣūl al-Kāfī, researched and edited by: ʿAlī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, Tehran, Maktabah al-Ṣādiq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 467.
- Shaykh Mufīd, Al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 253.
- Faḍl ibn Ḥasan Ṭabarsī, 'I'lām al-Warā Bi'I'lām al-Hudā, Third Edition, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, p. 256.
In the books of history, the name of the mother of the Fourth Imam (a) is one for which there are differences of opinion. In addition to Shahr Bānūwīyah, there are an additional 12 names, which she has been called by. Among these are: Shahi Zanān, Jahān Shah, Shahr Nāz, Jahān Bānūwīyah, Khawlah, and Salāfah. For more information, refer to: Doctor Shahīdī, Sayyid Jaʿfar, The Life of ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (a), First Print, Tehran, The Office for the Propagation of Islamic Culture, 1365 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 27-29.

[2] Shaykh Mufīd, Al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 253.
- ʿAllāmah Ṭabarsī, Tāj al-Mawālīd (part of a collection called Majmūʿah Nafsīyah), Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 112.

Karbalā, the imamate was transferred to him; the Imam (ʿa) and the rest of the captives were then taken to Kūfah and later to Syria. During this journey, he was the guardian and support of the rest of the group during the hard times and difficulties which they encountered. During this journey, Imam Zayn al-ʿAbidīn (ʿa) disgraced the government of Yazīd through his fiery and emotion-evoking sermons. After leaving Syria, he took up Medina as his place of residence. This continued until he was martyred in the year 94 or 95 Hijrī. He is buried in the graveyard of Baqīʿ, next to the grave of his uncle Imam Ḥasan (ʿa).

Caliphs Who Lived during the Time of the Fourth Imam

Imam ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) lived during the times of the following caliphs:

1- Yazīd ibn Mūʿāwīya (61-64 Hijrī)[3]
2- ʿAbdullah ibn Zubayr (61-73 Hijrī)[4]
3- Mūʿāwīya ibn Yazīd (several months in 64 Hijrī)
4- Marwān ibn Ḥakam (for nine months in 65 Hijrī)
5-ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (65-86 Hijrī)
6- Walīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (86-96 Hijrī)

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[3] The time periods mentioned, signify the time that they ruled during the imamate of Imam Sajjād (a). They do not necessarily encompass their entire period of rule.

[4] ʿAbdullah ibn Zubayr was among the small number of individuals who had not given the oath of allegiance to Yazīd. After the death of Mūʿāwīya, and a short time before the departure of Imam Ḥusayn (a) to Mecca, he entered the city and became engaged in political activities. After the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn (a), since he had no other rivals in the land of the Ḥijāz, he gathered some supporters and announced himself as the caliph. Yazīd, up to the very end of his life, was unable to defeat him, and he ruled in Mecca until 73 Hijrī. ʿAbdullah conquered the Ḥijāz, Iraq, Egypt, and part of the eastern Muslim lands, while Yazīd's successor was only able to rule Syria and some other limited areas. Therefore, from the year 61 until the year 73, the Muslim lands were governed by two separate rulers, who each had their own spheres of power. Later on, ʿAbdullah ibn Zubayr was defeated and killed by the forces of ʿAbd al-Malik in the year 73 Hijrī. After this, all of the Muslim lands were ruled under the government of the Marwanids, and Syria was once again considered the center of rule.

Divine Expediency - The Illness of the Imam

Unfortunately, some people who are unaware of history, view the Fourth Imam ('a) as the perpetually "Sick Imam". They conjure up an image of him as being physically pale and sickly, in addition to him being forever depressed and gloomy. The reality is far from this, as the Imam ('a) was only ill for a short period of time during the tragedy of Karbalā. He recovered quickly after 'Āshūrā, and for a period of 35 years, just like the rest of the Imams ('a), enjoyed full physical health and wellbeing.

Without a doubt, the illness which the Imam ('a) experienced was a form of divine protection. Through it, he became exempt from the duty of fighting,[5] and was protected from a certain death; through this, the line of the Imams ('a) was allowed to continue. If the Imam ('a) had not been bedridden with sickness, it would have been possible for him to fight against Yazīd and his soldiers, and he would have surely been martyred alongside his father and his companions. If this had taken place, the light of guidance for the Muslim world would have been extinguished.

Sibṭ ibn Jawzī has written: "Since 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a) was ill, he was not killed."[6] Muḥammad ibn Sa'ad has also written: "On that day ('Āshūrā), when 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a) was with his father, he was either 23 or 24 years of age. Whoever says that he was a child during this time, has no basis for saying such a thing. He was actually ill on that day, and because of this, he did not participate in the battle."[7]

Ibn Sa'ad has also reported: "After the killing of Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī, Shimr approached 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, while he was ill and

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[5] Mas'ūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīyah, Fourth Edition, Najaf, Al-Maṭba'at al-Ḥaydarīa, 1373 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 167.
Also refer to: Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 324.

[6] Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 324.
Also refer to: Ibn al-I'mād al-Ḥanbalī, Shadarāt al-Dhahab Fī Akhbār Min Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, vol. 1, p. 105.

[7] Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 5, p. 221.

bedridden. Shimr said: 'Kill him.' One of the companions of Shimr said: 'Glory be to God, shall we kill a young man who is both ill and has not participated in the battle?' At this time, 'Umar ibn Sa'ad arrived and said: 'Leave the women and this sick one alone.'"[8]

Shaykh Mufīd has narrated from Ḥamīd ibn Muslim, one of the soldiers of Yazīd, that: "On the day of 'Āshūrā, we arrived at the tent of 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn; he was exceedingly ill and bedridden. Shimr came with a group that was unmounted, and said to me: 'Are you not going to kill this sick one?' I responded: 'Glory be to God, do you also kill children?[9] This is a child and he is ill; his illness is going to kill him...' I continued with a few similar words, until I changed his mind from killing him. At this time, 'Umar ibn Sa'ad came. The women shouted at him and they cried. He told his soldiers: 'None of you can enter the homes of these women and do not disturb this sick youth.'"[10]

The illness of the Fourth Imam ('a) was clearly due to divine expediency, and through it, his life was saved. The illness itself does not entail psychological or spiritual weakness. In clear contradiction to this idea, during the time of the captivity of the survivors, the Imam ('a) was a beacon of hope and a source of strength for them. He also faced the enemy with bravery and courage, and his sermons in both Kūfah and Syria are clear evidence of this.

After the captives were sent to Kūfah, Imam Zayn al-'Abidīn ('a) exchanged some harsh words with 'Ubaydullah ibn Zīyād in his court. 'Ubaydullah became enraged and ordered that the Imam ('a) be executed. The Imam ('a) replied to this by saying:

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[8] Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, p. 212 and also refer to: Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, Second Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1977 A.D., vol. 9, p. 104.

[9] It is possible that Ḥamīd ibn Muslim called the Imam (a) a child in order to bring about feelings of mercy in the soldiers. It is also possible that he attributed such words to himself in front of the Shias, in order to lessen his share in the sin of what had taken place.

[10] Shaykh Mufīd, Al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 242. Also refer to: Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut, Dār al-Qāmūs al-Ḥadīth, vol. 6, p. 260; Akhtab Khawārizmī, Maqtal al-Ḥusayn, researched and edited by: Shaykh Muḥammad Samāwī, Qum, Maktabah Mufīd, vol. 2, p. 38.

"Do you threaten me with death? Do you not know that being killed is an ordinary affair for us, and martyrdom is an honor and distinction for us?"[11]

The Messenger of the Revolt of Karbalā

After the martyrdom of his father at Karbalā, Imam Zayn al-ʿAbidīn (ʿa) was left as the head of the survivors. In this role, he took on the responsibility of propagating the message of the revolution and the martyrdom of his father. During the time of his captivity, he used the power of his sermons to disgrace and destabilize the corrupt government of the Umayyids, and to awaken the masses to the reality of their government.

Due to the widespread and extensive propaganda which the Umayyid government had spread about the family of the Prophet, it is clear that if the family had not engaged in awakening the people and revealing the true nature of the Umayyids, the agents of the Umayyid government would have distorted the image of Imam Ḥusayn's revolution. With the passage of time, they would have shown it in a corrupt and twisted light. The the efforts of Imam Sajjād (ʿa) and the rest of the survivors were effective in showing the true nature of the revolt, and in not allowing the Umayyids to put their own spin on what had taken place. Through their actions, they showed the evil reality of the Umayyid government and this knowledge became a blow which the government found itself unable to withstand.

A Socially Stifled Era

When we look at the lives of the Twelve Imams (ʿa), we find that the era of the Imams (ʿa) can be divided into four general periods. The life of Imam Sajjād (ʿa) can be counted as part of the fourth era. These four eras are as follows:

- The era of a sense of hopelessness in gaining victory

[11] Akhtab Khawārizmī, Maqtal al-Ḥusayn, researched and edited by: Shaykh Muḥammad Samāwī, Qum, Maktabah Mufīd, vol. 2, p. 43.

through armed struggle

- A developmental struggle with the hope of bringing about an Islamic government through the family of the Prophet. (This was considered a long term struggle)
- Building the foundations for this movement through the educational and moral training of the people
- Spreading true Islamic teachings and thought, and exposing religious deviations and distortions

It is interesting to note that by itself, the tragedy of Karbalā was disastrous to the Shia movement in the short term. As news of what had taken place spread throughout the country (particularly in the lands of Iraq and the Ḥijāz), a great fear spread within the various Shia communities. It became clear that Yazīd was willing to go as far as killing the grandson of the Prophet and taking his whole family captive, in order to strengthen and solidify his rule. This meant that he was not averse to using any means (even the most horrific and evil) in reaching his goals.[12]

This fear, which had spread through the Shia community, and which was particularly evident in the cities of Medina and Kūfah, was made worse by the tragedy of Ḥurrah, which took place in the year 63 Hijrī. In this siege and subsequent massacre, the mercilessness of Yazīd's army was made even clearer for all to see. In the cities where the descendants of the Prophet lived, such as Kūfah and Medina, fear became the prevailing emotion. The Shias and the followers of the Imams (ʿa), who were counted as among the enemies of the Umayyids, were greatly weakened and their organization and order was disrupted. Imam Sajjād (ʿa) pointed out this sad state of affairs when he said: "In all of Mecca and Medina, there are not twenty

[12] The taking prisoners of the women and children, and the exhibition of the cut off heads of the martyrs was designed to instill fear and terror in the opponents of the Umayyid government.

individuals who love us."[13]

Mas'ūdī, the famous historian, has explained: "'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a) took on the imamate in a hidden way, with severe dissimulation, and during a very difficult time.'[14] Imam Ṣādiq ('a), in describing this bitter and sorrowful state of affairs said: "After the martyrdom of Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī ('a), they all turned back (from the family of the Prophet) except three individuals: Abū Khālid Kābulī, Yaḥyā ibn Umm al-Ṭawīl, and Jubayr ibn Maṭ'am."[15] Afterwards, people joined them and their numbers increased. Yaḥyā ibn Umm al-Ṭawīl would go to the mosque of the Prophet (ṣ) and speak to the people, saying: "We are opposed to you (your way and ideology). Between us and you, there is enmity and anger that is manifest and everlasting..."[16]

It is evident that these kinds of open words and actions, in a very constrained social and political atmosphere, could only be attributed to a select few individuals such as Yaḥyā ibn Umm al-Ṭawīl. These types of men had prepared themselves and they were ready to face the potential consequences of their stance. In essence, they were ready to give everything for what they believed in. Yaḥyā ibn Umm al-Ṭawīl later had his hands and feet cut off, and he was martyred for his support of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) by the governor Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf.[17]

Faḍl ibn Shādhān was one of the most prominent scholars and researchers of the Shias during the middle of the third century Hijrī; he was one of the students of Imam Jawād ('a) and Imam 'Askarī ('a). He is quoted as having said: "During the beginning of the imamate of 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a), there

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[13] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Second Edition, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1394 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 36, p. 143; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, researched by: Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, First Edition, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1378 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, p. 104.

[14] Mas'ūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīyah, Fourth Edition, Najaf, al-Maṭba'at al-Ḥaydarīa, 1373 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 167.

[15] According to the famous researcher, Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Shūshtarī, in place of Jubayr ibn Maṭ'am, the name Ḥakīm ibn Jubayr ibn Maṭ'am is correct. (Qāmūs al-Rijāl, Tehran, The Center for Book Publications, 1388 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 9, p. 399).

[16] Shaykh Mufīd, Al-Ikhtiṣāṣ, researched and compiled by: 'Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, Qum, Manshūrāt Jamā'at al-Mudarisīn Fī Ḥawzat al-'Ilmiyah Biqum al-Muqadasah, p. 64.

[17] Shaykh Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Ma'rifat al-Rijāl, 1348 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 133.

were only five people who were his followers. These were: Sa'īd ibn Jubayr, Sa'īd ibn Mussayyib, Muḥammad ibn Maṭ'am, Yaḥyā ibn Umm al-Ṭawīl, and Abū Khālid Kābulī."[18]

The Evil Reign of 'Abd al-Malik

The imamate of Imam Sajjād ('a) was concurrent with one of the darkest periods of rule in the history of Islam. As much as the previous governments had turned dictatorial and selfish in nature, the rulers during the time of the Fourth Imam ('a) were much worse; they would openly scorn the most holy of concepts in Islam, and they would publicly step on the most fundamental principles of the religion. In the face of all this, criticism was met with unbelievably harsh punishments from the Ummayids.

The greater part of the imamate of Imam Sajjād ('a) was during the rule of 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān; this was a period that was 21 years in duration. Historians have described 'Abd al-Malik as an individual who was clever, cautious, farsighted, educated, intelligent, and scholarly.[19] The writer Al-Fakhrī says: "'Abd al-Malik was an individual who was wise, intelligent, scholarly, learned, clever, tyrannical, awe inspiring, extremely diplomatic, a good manager, and prudent."[20]

Hindushāh has written: "He was intelligent, erudite, eloquent, a jurisprudent, learned in matters of traditions and poetry..." [21] Before he reached power, he was counted as one of the jurisprudents of the city of Medina.[22] He was famous for his ascetism, worship, and religiousness. He would spend his time at the mosque in worship in such a way that he was known

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[18] Shaykh Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Ma'rifat al-Rijāl, 1348 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 115.

[19] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, p. 520.

[20] Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 122 and 124.

[21] Tajārub al-Salaf, edited by: 'Abbās Iqbāl, Third Print, Tehran, Ṭahūrī Bookstore, 1357 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 75.

[22] Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 122.
- Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, researched by: Muḥammad Muhī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Cairo, Maṭba'at al-Madanī, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 216.

as the "The Dove[23] of the Mosque".[24]

It is said that when his father Marwān passed away, and the caliphate was passed on to him, the news reached him while he was busy reading the Holy Quran. When he heard this news, he closed the Quran and said: "Now a separation has occurred between me and you, and I have nothing more to do with you!"[25]

His words were in earnest and he ended up separating completely from the Quran. He committed such evil actions that historians have mentioned him with bitterness. Suyūṭī and Ibn Athīr have written: "During the course of Islamic history, ʿAbd al-Malik was the first individual to practice treachery and treason (ʿAmr ibn Saʿīd ibn al-ʿAās was killed after being guaranteed protection and security). He was also the first person to prohibit people from speaking in front of the caliph, as well as being the first person to prevent anyone from enjoining the good (which was one of the most basic Islamic precepts)."[26]

Two years after the defeat of ʿAbdullah ibn Zubayr in Mecca (in the year 75 Hijrī), he entered the city of Medina during the course of a Ḥajj pilgrimage. During his speech to the people, he said: "I am neither like the wretched caliph (ʿUthmān), nor like the lenient caliph (Mūʿāwīya), nor like the weak-willed caliph (Yazīd). I will cure the people through the exclusive use of my sword! You want us to act like the 'Muhājirs', yet you do not act like them yourselves (you tell us to act piously, but you do not act so yourselves). I swear by God that if any one after this, tries to guide me towards piety, I will cut off his head!"[27]

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[23] This is a term which indicates attachment and closeness to the Mosque.

[24] HindūShāh, Ibid, p. 76.

[25] Suyūṭī, Ibid, p. 217.
- Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 122.
- Georgie Zaydān, The History of the Islamic Civilization, translation by ʿAlī Jawhar Kalām, Tehran, Amīr Kabīr, 1336 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, p. 100.

[26] Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, researched by: Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, Cairo, Maṭbaʿat al-Madanī, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 218.
- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, p. 522. It must be noted that Mūʿāwīya had done some of these actions before.

[27] Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, researched by: Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd,

This last line was said for the benefit of the lecturers and Friday prayer leaders, for they would customarily begin their sermons with the words 'Fear Allah'.[28] It is evident that when a caliph says such words in the city of the Prophet (ṣ), right next to his place of burial, and then goes on to attack the very way of life which he has established, then it is clear how his governors will rule in the far flung provinces of the Muslim world.

During the long course of his rule, 'Abd al-Malik became so accustomed and inclined towards oppression, corruption, and injustice, that the light of faith was completely extinguished from his heart. One day he confessed this reality when he told Sa'īd ibn Mussayyib: "I have changed to the point that if I do good actions, I do not become happy, and if I commit evil actions I do not become upset." Sa'īd ibn Mussayyib replied: "The death of your heart has become complete!"[29]

'Abd al-Malik would frequently converse with a woman by the name of Umm al-Dardā'. One day Umm al-Dardā' said to him: "Oh Commander of the Faithful, I have heard that after worshipping and performing the night prayers, you have then gone on to drink wine?" 'Abd al-Malik replied by saying: "Not only did I drink wine, but I have also drunk people's blood!"[30]

This was the same man, who during one period of his life, would ask God to protect him from Yazīd's military campaign against 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr in Mecca, and he would show hatred towards Yazīd. Yet, when he himself reached power, he continued the same policies as his predecessor. Moreover, he appointed a cruel individual such as Ḥajjāj to implement them in the society. This individual went on to use stone laden

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Cairo, Maṭba'at al-Madanī, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 218.

- Georgie Zaydān, The History of the Islamic Civilization, Translation by 'Alī Jawhar Kalām, Tehran, Amīr Kabīr, 1336 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, p. 99.

[28] Doctor Shahīdī, Sayyid Ja'far, The Life of 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (a), First Print, Tehran, The Office for the Propagation of Islamic Culture, 1365 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 98.

[29] Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 122.

- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, p. 521.

- HindūShāh, Ibid, p. 76.

[30] Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, researched by: Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Cairo, Maṭba'at al-Madanī, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 216.

catapults against the Holy Sanctuary and the Kaaba, simply because Ibn Zubayr had taken refuge there.[31]

The Agents of Oppression

The governors and officials of ʿAbd al-Malik followed his lead and unleashed a terror inducing style of rule in their respective areas. They used brutality, bullying, and brute force against their subjects. Masʿūdī has written: "ʿAbd al-Malik was a murderous individual. His officials, such as Ḥajjāj, the governor of Iraq, Mahlab, the governor of Khurāsān, and Hishām ibn Ismāʿīl, the governor of Medina, were also like ʿAbd al-Malik in their merciless and cruel methods of rule."[32]

Hishām ibn Ismāʿīl, who was the ruler of Medina, was so harsh and severe against his subjects, and so merciless in harassing the descendants of the Prophet (ṣ), that when Walīd inherited the caliphate after the death of his father, he had no choice but to remove him from his post.[33] The worst among all of these was Ḥajjāj, whose savage crimes are well-documented in the books of history. After Ḥajjāj defeated ʿAbdullah ibn Zubayr, ʿAbd al-Malik chose him as the governor of the Ḥijāz which included the cities of Mecca, Medina, and Ṭāif and he remained in that post for a period of two years.[34]

In the city of Medina, Ḥajjāj had a group of the companions branded on the neck with hot irons. These companions included famous figures such as Jābir ibn ʿAbdullah Anṣārī, Anas ibn Mālik, Sahl ibn Saʿadī, among others. His intentions were to lower and degrade their position, under the pretext that they were the killers of ʿUthmān.[35]

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[31] Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, researched by: Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, Cairo, Maṭbaʿat al-Madanī, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 217.
- Hindūshāh, Ibid, p. 76.

[32] Marwaj al-Dhahab wa Maʿādin al-Jawhar, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 3, p. 91.

[33] Ibn Wāḍih, Tārīkh Yaʿqūbī, researched by: Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Najaf, Maktabah Haidarīah, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 27 and 29.
- Muḥammad ibn Saʿad, al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 5, p. 220.

[34] Ibn Qutaybah Daynāwarī, al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah, Third Edition, Cairo, Maktabah Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1382 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 31.

[35] Ibn Wāḍih, Tārīkh Yaʿqūbī, researched by: Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Najaf, Maktabah Haidarīah, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 18.

When Ḥajjāj was about to leave Medina, he said the following: "I thank God that he is removing me from this rotten city. This city is the filthiest of all cities, and its people, in relation to the Commander of the Faithful, are the most deceitful and brazen. If it was not for the command of the Commander of the Faithful, I would have made this city one with the earth. This city is nothing but a few pieces of wood that they consider the pulpit of the Prophet and a few decayed bones that they consider as the grave of the Prophet."[36]

Ḥajjāj in Iraq

After Ḥajjāj subdued the cities of Mecca and Medina, ʿAbd al-Malik realized that if anyone was going to make the Iraqis compliant to his orders, it would be Ḥajjāj. Therefore, in the year 75 Hijrī, ʿAbd al-Malik handed the rule of Iraq (Baṣrah and Kūfah) over to him. When Ḥajjāj arrived in Kūfah, he did not act in the ordinary manner of a governor sent there by the caliph. Normally a governor would enter the city with pomp, accompanied by a large entourage. In this case, he covered his face and entered the city mosque quietly, without being recognized. After entering, he broke through the ranks of the people, and went and sat on top of the pulpit. For a long period of time, he sat there in complete silence. A clamor began to rise from the people asking who this person was. One person said: "Let us stone him." Others in the gathering replied: "No, be patient until we can see who it is."

As soon as silence overtook the gathering, Ḥajjāj removed his face cover and began to speak. He said: "Oh people of Kūfah, I see heads, which are like fruits that have ripened and are ready to be plucked from their bodies. This is an action which will be performed by me. I also see blood which will run all over the turbans and the beards..." He then continued with his threatening words and frightened the people so much that

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[36] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, p. 359.
- Doctor Shahīdī, Sayyid Jaʿfar, The Analytical History of Islam Upto The Downfall of the Umayyid Government, Sixth Edition, Tehran, The Center For University Publications, 1365 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 182.

the small stones fell out of the hands of the man who had wanted to stone him.[37]

Ḥajjāj's entrance to Baṣrah was similar to his entrance into Kūfah. Ibn Qutaybah Daynāwarī described his entrance into Baṣrah in the following way: "Ḥajjāj, along with 2,000 Syrian soldiers and their supporters, as well as 4,000 additional soldiers, departed towards Baṣrah. When he was near the city, he decided to enter on Friday, during the time of the weekly congregational prayers. He took 2,000 of the soldiers with him and he ordered his soldiers to surround the mosque and stand guard at each of the mosque's seventeen doorways. One hundred soldiers were posted at each of these entrances and they were ordered to conceal their swords underneath their clothing.

Then he ordered his soldiers: "When you hear a commotion in the mosque, if anyone attempts to leave the building, make their head leave the mosque sooner than their body!" His soldiers positioned themselves next to the doors and laid in wait. Ḥajjāj entered the mosque, escorted by 200 of his soldiers. These soldiers were all armed with swords hidden underneath their clothing. One hundred of these men were in front of him, while the other one hundred were behind him. Ḥajjāj was armed and had a sword concealed underneath his own clothing as well.

Ḥajjāj then instructed his soldiers: "When we enter the mosque, I will speak to the people and they will throw stones at me. When you see me remove the turban from my head and put it upon my knee, pull your swords out of their sheaths and begin to kill." With this plan, when the time for prayer arrived, he ascended to the top of the pulpit and began to speak: "The Commander of the Faithful (ʿAbd al-Malik) has selected me to

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[37] Mabrad, Al-Kāmil Fī Luqah wa al-Adab, First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1407 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 311.
- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, p. 375.
- Masʿūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīyah, Fourth Edition, Najaf, al-Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥaydarīa, 1373 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 127. Refer to: Ibn Wāḍih, Tārīkh Yaʿqūbī, researched by: Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Najaf, Maktabah Haidarīah, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 19.

rule over this city and to divide the public treasury amongst you. He has ordered me to help the oppressed and to punish the oppressors; to commend the ones who do good, and to punish the ones who do evil... When the caliph selected me for this job, he gave me two swords: one is the sword of mercy, and the other is the sword of torment and punishment. Along the way, I lost the sword of mercy, but I still have here with me the sword of torment and punishment..."

When the people heard this, they began to throw stones at Ḥajjāj while he was on the pulpit. Suddenly Ḥajjaj removed his turban from his head and placed it upon his knee. Without delay, his soldiers began to attack and kill the people. When the people saw the situation, they tried to escape the slaughter in the mosque, but whoever tried to leave had his head cut off at the exit. Using this tactic, the people were forced to remain in the mosque, where they were all killed. There was so much killing that pools of blood flowed to the door of the mosque and through the bazaar.[38]

Using methods such as these, Ḥajjāj established a rule based on fear and terror in Iraq; many pious and innocent people were killed during the time of his reign. He spread such fear in the hearts of the people that this fear spread past the borders of Iraq, reaching far into Khūzistān and the eastern limits of the Muslim nation.

Waves of Killing and Fear

Masʿūdī, the famous historian, has written that: "Ḥajjāj ruled for 20 years. During this time, the number of people that were put to death by his executioners or who died under torture reached 120,000 in number! Moreover, this number does not account for the people who fought against Ḥajjāj and were killed by his forces.

When Ḥajjāj died, his infamous prison was found to contain 50,000 men and 30,000 women, of whom 16,000 were

[38] Ibn Qutayba Daynāwarī, al-Imāmah wa al-Sīyāsah, Third Edition, Cairo, Maktabah Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1382 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 32.

completely naked and had no clothes. Ḥajjāj would imprison the men and the women in one place, and his prisons contained no roofs. As a result, the prisoners would suffer from the hot sun of the summers and the bitter cold and rain of the winters."[39]

The Life of Walīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik

After the death of ʿAbd al-Malik, his son Walīd succeeded the caliphate. Some historians praise Walīd and consider him superior to his father ʿAbd al-Malik, his grandfather Marwān, as well as many other Umayyid Caliphs. This is because, with the exception of ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, no other Umayyid caliph engaged in so many works of public benefit and development. During the course of his caliphate, Walīd exerted efforts in developing, expanding, and renovating mosques and other holy sites; his governors and commanders were also independently encouraged in these endeavors.

The historians have written: "Walīd commissioned the construction of the main mosque of Damascus and he also expanded the Prophet's mosque in Medina and the Aqṣā mosque. He ordered that a mosque be built in each city that did not contain a place for prayers. In order to protect the Islamic borders, he had various fortresses and garrisons built. In addition, roads were built connecting different parts of the nation, wells were excavated, and schools and hospitals were erected. A portion of the public treasury was permanently set aside for the paralyzed, bedridden, sick, and needy.

Walīd also built sanatoriums for taking care of the blind, the lepers, and the disabled; doctors and nurses were selected to take care of these individuals, and it was ordered that they be given the necessary nutrition and rest. Orphanages were established to take care of the orphans and to see to their education and upbringing. He would also personally visit the city and the bazaars quite often and he would enact price

[39] Marwaj al-Dhahab wa Maʿādin al-Jawhar, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 3, p. 166 and 167.

controls to keep prices affordable for the people."[40]

Walīd's Corruption

In spite of these positive characteristics, Walīd also possessed certain negative characteristics as well— he was subject to many clear deviations that should not be left unsaid. According to historians, Walīd was an oppressive and tyrannical individual. His mother and father raised him from an early age to be capricious and unrestrained, and he was lacking in manners.[41] Walīd was also unlearned in matters of Arabic grammar and syntax, and until the very end of his life, he was not able to speak the Arabic language properly. In the course of speaking, he would make many obvious (and embarrassing) errors.

One day, in a gathering with his father and other individuals, he began to speak with an Arab man, and he uttered a very simple sentence incorrectly. His father rebuked him and said: "Whoever does not know the Arabic language properly, cannot rule over the Arabs." After this situation, Walīd took some teachers and retreated into a room in order to learn Arabic grammar; he dedicated himself to this task for a period of six months. Yet when he was finished, he came out even more ignorant and confused about the rules of grammar than when he had first entered![42] It is possible that one of the reasons why Walīd was so persistent in expanding the arts and sciences was that he himself felt lacking in them, and so he wished to make up and cover his lack of knowledge through these endeavors.

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[40] Sayyid Amīr 'Alī, A Short History of the Arabs, Translated by: 'Afīf al-Ba'albakī, Second Edition, Dār al-'Ilm Lil Malāyīn, 1967 A.D., p. 133; Also refer to: Ibn Wāḍih, Tārīkh Ya'qūbī, researched by: Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥr al-'Ulūm, Najaf, Maktabah Haidarīah, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 36.

- Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 127.

[41] Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, researched by: Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Cairo, Maṭba'at al-Madanī, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 223.

[42] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 5, p. 11.

- Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 127.

Oppressive Governors and Commanders

Walīd would appoint corrupt governors, commanders, and Emirs to rule on his behalf in various provinces of the Muslim world. Naturally, these corrupt leaders made life very difficult for their subjects. One of these governors was Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf; after the death of ʿAbd al-Malik, Walīd kept him in his position in spite of all the crimes that he had committed and the people he had killed.

During this period of time, the area of Syria was under the direct control of Walīd. In Iraq, Ḥajjāj ruled as a governor, while in the Ḥijāz, ʿUthmān ibn Ḥabārah ruled, and in Egypt, Qūrah ibn Sharīk. Each of these individuals was famous for their injustice and tyranny. ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, who was Walīd's nephew, spoke about the rule of these men and said: "The earth has been filled with oppression and injustice! Oh God, deliver the people from these difficulties."[43]

Why Didn't the Fourth Imam Revolt?

In the previous pages, we shed some light on the political ituation during the time of the Imam (ʿa), and in doing so, it became clear for us why he did not revolt. The political and social atmosphere was one in which the Umayyid government had complete control over the people. The smallest hint of a social movement or armed struggle was doomed to be swiftly crushed. The government had a network of spies who would report on any and all potential dangers, and nothing would remain hidden from their ears. For example, one day ʿAbd al-Malik's spies reported to him that: "'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) has a servant whom he has freed and then married." ʿAbd al-Malik wrote a letter to the Imam (ʿa) where he criticized him and protested as to why he hadn't married someone who was within his own social class.

The Imam (ʿa) replied to him: "There is no one greater or higher than the Prophet (ṣ), and he took servants and slaves as

[43] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 5, p. 11.

his wives. God raised the things which were considered as lowly through Islam and he made everything which was incomplete, complete through it; (indeed) every abject individual was granted dignity under its auspices. Therefore, no Muslim can be considered as lowly and no lowliness remains but the lowliness of ignorance."[44]

Obviously, the caliph did not really care about the Imam's ('a) personal life. Through these tactics, 'Abd al-Malik wished to let the Imam ('a) know that all of his actions were under close watch. This even included actions which were in the realm of his private life. In conditions such as these, a revolutionary movement was not possible.

A Difficult Path

After the tragedy of 'Āshūrā, the Fourth Imam ('a) was placed in a very difficult position. On the one hand, he could quickly create a mass of emotion and galvanize the population, raising a resistance movement and initiating the fight against the powers of the time; this would only work if all of the necessary conditions existed in sufficient number and quality.

His second option was that he could use a long term, well measured, and deliberate strategy in order to harness the power of the people. The first part of this strategy involved reviving the basic precepts of the Islamic society and its social order. For the time being, he had to preserve his own life as well as the lives of his small group of companions so that this plan could be implemented.

In reality, this was a strategy which would build up the society and prepare worthy individuals through education and training. In turn, these people would then be unleashed upon the system to fight against it in a hidden but systematic manner. This struggle would continue until the necessary conditions were met for an outright overthrow of the

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[44] Kulaynī, Furū Kāfī, Second Edition, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1362 Hijrī Shamsi, vol. 5, p. 344 (The Book of Nikāḥ, Section on the Mu'mīn Kufūw al-Mu'mīn); Also refer to: Muḥammad ibn Sa'ad, al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, vol. 5, p. 214.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 46, p. 105.

Ummayid government. It is without doubt that the first path was a path of sacrifice, but it isn't sufficient that one simply sacrifices towards something if it doesn't achieve the necessary results. These were factors which caused the Fourth Imam ('a) to take the second path, rather than the first.[45]

The Revolt of the People of Medina

The Revolt of Medina took place in the year 63 (or possibly 62) Hijrī, and became known as: "The Tragedy of Ḥurrah."[46] After the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn ('a), a wave of hatred and anger swept through the Muslim nation. The Muslim community held the Ummayid government responsible for the massacre at Karbalā. In the city of Medina, which was a centerpoint of the family of the Prophet, his companions, and the Tābi'īn,[47] the people were disturbed and angered at what had taken place. The governor of Medina, 'Uthmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Sufyān, who was similar to Yazīd in his inexperience, immaturity, and arrogance, organized a group of the city notables based on Yazīd's orders[48] and sent them to Damascus as representatives of the city. The goal was to allow them to see the caliph from up close and then return back to their city, encouraging the people of Medina to obedience towards him.

The governor of Medina ended up sending Mundhar ibn Zubayr ibn Awwām, 'Ubaydullah ibn Abī 'Amr Makhzūmī, 'Abdullah ibn Ḥanẓalah' Ghasīl al-Malā'ikah, as well as several other important personalities from the city to see Yazīd in Damascus. Yazīd, on the other hand, completely lacked any sense of Islamic manners and education. He had not chosen any advisors to guide him in such matters and tell him to at

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[45] Ayatollah Khāminiī, Sayyid 'Alī, Pīshvā'ī Ṣādiq, Tehran, Sayyid Jamāl Publications, p. 24.

[46] The word Ḥurrah is used for a stony area which is covered with volcanic stones. The area around Medina is known for possessing such characteristics.

[47] The companions of the companions of the Prophet (ṣ).

[48] Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhūrī, Ansāb al-Ashrāf, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, vol. 4, p. 31.

least act properly in front of these important men. Yazīd didn't have his father's prudence, and so he did not understand that since he was ruling as Islam's representative over the Muslims and his power was derived from his Islamic identity, he should at least put up a religious appearance for the benefit of the public, much like his father had done during his own rule.

When the guests from Medina arrived, Yazīd didn't restrain himself from drinking wine in front of them. He played with his dogs, had parties complete with singing and music, and exhibited his palace's general atmosphere of debauchery and libertinism. He also hosted them with great pomp and grandeur in his "Green Palace" and gave them extravagant gifts and expensive robes of honor. He assumed that by treating them in an intimate manner and by giving them expensive gifts, they would return to Medina and praise and commend him in front of the people. Yazīd had been corrupt for such a long period of time that he assumed that everyone else was just like him. His expectations naturally fell short, and instead of becoming pleased, the guests became enraged at what they were seeing.

All the representatives, with the exception of Mundhar ibn Zubayr ibn Awwām, who ended up going to Baṣrah, returned to Medina. There, they announced in front of the people: "We have returned from the presence of an individual who has no religion, who drinks wine, plays music, plays with dogs, and has gatherings with singers and coquettish women; he stays awake at night with a gathering of thieves and corrupt individuals. We hold you all as witnesses that we have deposed him from his position of caliph."

The son of Ḥanẓalah said: "I have returned from the presence of an individual, that even if no one helps me, I will still go to war against him with these few sons of mine. He granted me presents and treated me with respect, but I did not accept his gifts except on the condition that I use them against him in war." After this situation, the people of Medina gave their oath of allegiance to ʿAbdullah, the son of Ḥanẓalah. They marched towards the palace and threw out the governor

of the city, as well as all of the Umayyids who lived there.

When news of this reached Yazīd, he selected Muslim ibn ʿUqbah, a loyal and devoted follower of his, to lead a large army against them. He told him: "Give them three days reprieve. If they do not surrender by then, fight against them. When you become victorious, plunder everything that they possess, such as their wealth, animals, weapons, and food. Put all of these at your soldier's disposal..."

The Syrian army attacked Medina and a bloody battle ensued between the two sides. In the end, the rebels were defeated and their leaders were all killed. Muslim ordered his soldiers that for three days there was to be a mass killing spree, and a wholesale plundering of the city. The soldiers of Syria committed such crimes during this period that it is heartbreaking to describe them. After this event, Muslim was called Musrif by the people because of the severity and excess of his crimes. After the killing and plundering had stopped, Muslim took an oath of allegiance from the people, with the condition that they take the oath as slaves and not as free men.[49] In essence, they were made as de facto slaves of Yazīd.

The Role of Abdullah ibn Zubayr

ʿAbdullah ibn Zubayr was a power-hungry individual by nature. Shortly before Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) entered Mecca in the year 60 Hijrī, he had entered the city and took up residence there. During the time that Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) lived there, the people did not pay him much attention due to the Imam's (ʿa) presence. After the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), the path was opened for him and he announced his opposition to Yazīd and declared himself as the rightful caliph.

It must be noted that ʿAbdullah did not have any connection to the children of Amīr al-Mu'minīn. In addition,

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[49] Refer to: Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhūrī, Ansāb al-Ashrāf, Baghdad, Maktabah Al Muthannā, vol. 4, p. 30-36.
- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dāru Ṣādir, 1399 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, p. 102-103, and 111-121.
- Masʿūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 3, p. 68-71.

he played an important role in the infamous "Battle of the Camel." During his time in Mecca, he ended up removing the praise of the Prophet (ṣ), which was a long established religious tradition, from the beginning of his sermons. He was asked about this and he replied: "The Prophet has bad descendants who stick out their necks in arrogance upon hearing his praise."[50] It was in light of these past actions that Imam Sajjād ('a) would express his worry about the revolt.[51]

According to some historians, 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr played a role in the rebellion of the people of Medina. Due to political considerations, after Imam Ḥusayn ('a) had been martyred, he censured the people of Iraq for having invited the Imam ('a), and then not helping him when he had come. He would also speak against Yazīd, calling him a wine drinker, a person who would play with dogs, and a debaucher; he would invite the people towards dethroning Yazīd.[52] He also played a role in having the governor of Medina and the Umayyids thrown out of the city.[53]

Why Didn't the Fourth Imam Join the Rebels?

The reasons behind the actions of the Fourth Imam's ('a) are as follows:

1- Through gauging the situation and seeing the severe restrictions which had been placed on the society after the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn ('a), the Imam ('a) predicted the defeat of the rebellion. He saw that if he personally participated, he would not be successful. In addition, he and his companions would also be killed. The results would have been the destruction of the Shia forces, without any tangible results or benefits.

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[50] Ibn Wāḍih, Tārīkh Ya'qūbī, researched by: Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥr al-'Ulūm, Najaf, Maktabah Haidarīah, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 8.

[51] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah Fī Marifat al-'A'immah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 299.

[52] Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhūrī, Ansāb al-Ashrāf, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, vol. 4, p. 30.

[53] Mas'ūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 3, p. 69.

2- In regards to the past of 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr, and his influence over the rebels, the rebellion could not be considered as a purely Shia one. The Imam ('a) did not want the likes of Ibn Zubayr, who was a power-hungry man, to use him as a means for achieving his goals.
3- What ended up taking place was that the rebels nominated 'Abdullah ibn Ḥanẓalah as their leader and they never sought the opinion of Imam Sajjād ('a). Although the leaders of the rebellion were pious and pure men, and their criticisms and protests against the government of Yazīd were completely valid and justified, it was apparent that the movement was not a purely Shia inspired one; in the event of a victory, it was not clear if it would be to the benefit of the Shias or not.

It seems that due to these factors, the Imam ('a) chose not to participate in the rebellion of Medina. Yazīd also knew of this situation, and he was simultaneously aware of the public sentiments about the tragedy of Karbalā. Therefore, he ordered Muslim ibn 'Uqbah not to interfere or harass Imam Sajjād ('a) when the rebellion was quelled.

The Shelter for the Sanctuary Seekers

When the Umayyids were thrown out of Medina, Marwān appealed to the Imam ('a) to allow his wife and family to remain behind with him. The Imam ('a) graciously accepted because the women and the children were not guilty of any crimes. During the three days that Medina was awash in murder and plunder, the house of the Imam ('a) became a sanctuary for people seeking protection. Over four hundred women, along with their respective families, took refuge at Imam Sajjād's ('a) home, and he took care of them until the end of the ordeal.

The Imam's Struggle against the Corruption of His Time

After selecting the aforementioned second path, the Imam ('a) began a program of indirect education and training. He initiated these programs without raising the suspicions of the government. The most important of these activities are as

follows:

1- Keeping Alive the Remembrance of ʿĀshūrā

During the tragedy of ʿĀshūrā, the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) and his companions ended up costing the Umayyid government dearly in relation to their legitimacy. It affected how the masses viewed their government, as well as their support for their rulers. In order for this tragedy not to be forgotten as a result of government propaganda and the passage of time, the Imam (ʿa) used the weapon of mourning in order to keep the memory of the martyrs alive. The struggle was pushed forward indirectly using this innovative new medium of popular remembrance and mourning.

While this mourning was based on the emotions of what had taken place, it also possessed potent political dimensions as well. The repeated remembrance of the tragedy of Karbalā would not allow the oppression and crimes of the Umayyid government to be forgotten. Whenever the Imam (ʿa) wished to drink water, as soon as he would see the cup of water, his eyes would fill with tears. Whenever they asked him for the reason behind this, he would say: "How can I not cry when the followers of Yazīd allowed wild animals and beasts of prey to drink water freely, but they blocked my father from it (and they killed him while he was thirsty)." The Imam (ʿa) would also say: "Whenever I remember the killing of the children of Fāṭimah, I am choked with tears."

One day the servant of the Imam (ʿa) said to him: "Does your sadness and grief have no end?" Imam Sajjād (ʿa) replied to him, saying: 'Woe upon you, Yaʿqūb the prophet (ʿa) lost one of his twelve sons, and he cried so much that he lost sight in his eyes and from the severity of his grief, his back became bent. This was while his son was still alive (and he had not become hopeless of finding him). Yet I saw my father, brother, uncle, and 17 members of my family all killed and their bodies made one with the earth around me. After this, how is it possible that

my grief and sorrow will have an end?"[54]

Sahl ibn Shū'ayb, one of the notables of Egypt, has said: "One day I went to 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a) and asked him how he was doing? He replied: 'I did not think that an important personality from Egypt such as yourself would not know our state. If you do not know our condition, let me describe it for you: Our condition amongst our people is similar to that of the Tribe of Israel, when they were amongst the people of Pharoah, who would kill their sons and leave their daughters alive. Today, our situation is so difficult and strained that the people say evil about our nobles and leaders on top of the pulpits, in order to gain nearness to our enemies.'"[55]

2- Guiding and Advising the Nation

Since the Imam ('a) lived in a time when the government had maximum control and influence over the lives of its citizens, he could not explicitly give sermons about the matters that he wished. Instead, he would use a unique style of preaching to introduce and acquaint people with the correct ideas of Islamic thought and ideology. This method of teaching the people had also been forgotten by the society; therefore, it was a potent method of acquainting the masses with the realities of Islam.

Through researching these sermons, it is clear that the Imam ('a) would use a very intelligent manner of speaking to the people. While advising the people, the Imam ('a) would suggest certain ideas and concepts to them, and these would take form in their minds over time. This was the most effective way of teaching the people the realities of Islam in the prevailing

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[54] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Second Edition, Tehran, Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1394 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 46, p. 108.
- Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, Second Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1977 A.D., vol. 9, p. 107.
- Abū Na'īm Iṣfihānī, Ḥilyat al-'Awlīya wa al-Ṭabaqāt al-Aṣfīyā', Fifth Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1407 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 140.
- Al-Sayyid Muḥsin Al-Amīn, A'yān al-Shī'ah, researched by: Ḥasan al-Amīn, Beirut, Dār al-Ta'āruf Lil Maṭbū'āt, 1403 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 631 and 636.

[55] Ibn Sa'ad, Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 5, p. 220.

conditions of the time. Although these discussions were anti-government in both their substance and effect, they still did not arouse the sensitivities of the Umayyids at the time.

The Imam ('a) would expound and clarify upon the concept of the 'Imamate' as a system of Islamic governance and leadership for the entire Muslim society. He would also make the people aware of the current happenings in the society, such as the governance of tyrannical rulers and their governors, as well as their corruption and hypocrisy. He would cause the people to understand that a government led by the likes of Abd al-Malik, was not a government that was acceptable by Islam. Until the people could understand this powerful point, and realize that the Umayyid government was in essence a government which stood against the teachings of Islam, they could never come out of their political and religious stupor; this was a necessary prerequisite to a revolution by the people.

One example of the Imam's ('a) words can be found in the detailed sermons which he would deliver on Fridays at the Prophet's mosque. The following is a portion of a sermon he delivered there: "Oh people, be virtuous and know that you will return to your Lord. On that day (the Day of Judgment), each person will find with them all of what they have done, both good and evil. He will wish that there was a long distance between him and his evil deeds... The first affair that will take place in the grave is that the two angels, Munkar and Nakīr, will ask him the following questions: 'Who is your God that you worship, who is the Prophet that was sent to you, what is the religion that you follow, what is the (heavenly) book that you read, and who is your Imam that you have accepted....?'"[56]

When reading these words, there are a few things which catch one's attention:

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[56] Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Shu'bah, Tuḥf al-'Uqūl, researched and edited by: 'Alī Akbar Ghaffārī, Second Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt Jamā'at al-Mudarisīn Fī Hawzat al-'Ilmīyah Biqum al-Muqaddasah, 1363 Hijrī Shamsi, p. 249.

- Kulaynī, al-Rawḍat Min al-Kāfī, researched and edited by: 'Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, Fourth Edition, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1362 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 72.
- Ṣadūq, Al-'Amālī, Qum, Maṭba'at al-Ḥikmah, 1373 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 301 (Al Majlis al-Thānī).

1- The repetition of these words every Friday shows the attention of the Imam ('a) towards them and their importance.
2- It is clear that since the Imam ('a) began his words with the phrase "Oh People...", the listeners were not only from the Shias, but they also included those from among the many diverse segments of the society.
3- Throughout the duration of his speeches, the Imam ('a) would refer to verses of the Holy Quran in both implicit, as well as explicit terms. Here, his words were clearly directed towards the common masses, who did not see Imam Sajjād ('a) as their Imam. Therefore, in order to further prove his arguments, he would support them with hard evidence, as well as analysis and reasoning. If his words were directed purely towards his own followers, the use of such proofs and reasoning would have been unnecessary.[57]

Building a Framework

Another example of the words of the Imam ('a) is a detailed sermon which is narrated by Abū Ḥamzah Thumālī, one of his closest companions. The text of this narration shows that it was delivered in a gathering of the Shias and special followers of the Imam ('a). In the sermon, the following was mentioned:

"May God protect us from the deceit of the oppressors, the injustice of the jealous, and the force of the tyrannical. Oh you who are pious, do not be deceived by the 'Ṭāqūt' and its followers, who are seeking this world with all of its worthless... and short lived pleasures... I swear by my life, that in previous days, you have put events behind you, and you have successfully passed through various calamities, all while putting a distance between yourselves from the deviants, the innovators, and the sinners of this earth. Now you should seek assistance from God,

[57] Ayatollah Khāminiī, Sayyid 'Alī, A Research Into the Life of Imam Sajjād (a), First Edition, Tehran, Daftare Hezbe Jumhūrīye Islāmī, Nashrīye Shomāreye 63, 1361 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 36-38.

and return towards God's obedience and the obedience of the 'Walis' of God, who are more worthy than the current rulers.

...Hold in foremost importance the command of God and the obedience of the ones whom God has made their obedience obligatory. Never hold to the obedience of the 'Ṭāqūt' over the obedience of God and his divinely appointed rulers... Abstain from associating with the sinners, and do not cooperate with the oppressors, and abstain from contact and closeness from the corrupt ones; be wary of their sedition and stay far away from them. Know that whoever exercises opposition to God's 'Awlīyā' and follows a religion other than God's religion, and obstinately acts against the divine rulers, will be entangled in the flames of hell..."[58]

The Deterioration of the Moral Condition of the Muslims

The importance and necessity of the Imam's ('a) guidance and instructions becomes clear in light of the decadence and moral deterioration of the Muslim community during the rule of 'Abd al-Malik and his son Walīd. Moreover, many of the Prophetic traditions and the general Islamic way of life had been forgotten. This deterioration was something which wasn't recent; it had roots which extended far into the past...

From the 30th year Hijrī (the second half of the rule of 'Uthmān), economic, as well as moral corruption increased in the Muslim society. The nobles of the Quraysh had gained large incomes and were benefiting greatly from the caliph's generosity. Naturally, this "generosity" was funded by the Muslim treasury which belonged to the people. This group busied themselves in amassing vast amounts of wealth, and as a result, a general inclination towards a luxurious lifestyle become common in the society. In time, an aristocratic class was born. They amassed wealth, property, and estates, and they

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[58] Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Shu'bah, Tuḥf al-'Uqūl, researched and edited by: 'Alī Akbar Ghaffārī, Second Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt Jamā'at al-Mudarisīn Fī Ḥawzat al-'Ilmīya Biqum al-Muqaddasah, 1363 Hijrī Shamsi, p. 252.

- Kulaynī, al-Rawḍat Min al-Kāfī, researched and edited by: 'Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, Fourth Edition, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1362 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 15.

purchased many slaves. There was a particular demand for slaves who could sing and participate in banquets. Over time, gatherings with musicians, pleasure seeking, and singing became ubiquitous in the society.

These moral deviations became so prevalent during Yazīd's reign that even the most holy cities of Islam (Mecca and Medina) were not protected from them. Masʿūdī has written: "The corruption and immorality of Yazīd spread to his officials and advisors. During his rule, singing and music took place publicly in Mecca and Medina, and people openly engaged in drinking wine."[59]

This situation likewise continued during ʿAbd al-Malik's rule. Shawqī Ḍayf has described the prevalence of a super wealthy class and a culture of luxury-seeking in the cities of Mecca and Medina. He has mentioned that: "It seems as if these two big cities of the Ḥijāz were constructed for the musicians; things have reached the point that not only would the ordinary people go to their gatherings, but jurisprudents and ascetics would also be present there!"[60] Qāḍī Abū Yūsuf would say to some of the citizens of Medina: "Oh people of Medina, your situation with these singers is indeed astonishing because everyone from both the upper and the lower classes attend."[61] The atmosphere of Medina had become such that "neither the scholars would consider singing unlawful, nor would the worshippers refrain from it."[62]

It is narrated that one day, a singer named Daḥmān went in front of a judge in Medina by the name of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Makhzūmī because of a dispute between a citizen of Medina and an Iraqi. He gave his testimony to the benefit of the citizen of Medina, and the judge considered him as a just individual

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[59] Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 3, p. 67.

[60] Tārīkh al-Adab al-ʿArabī (al-Aṣr al-ʿAbbāsī), Old Print, Egypt, Dār al-Maʿārif, vol. 2, p. 347.

[61] Ibn 'Abdurabih, al-ʿUqd al-Farīd, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabīya, 1403 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 6, p. 11.

- Sharīf Qarshī, Bāqir, The Life of Imam Zayn al-ʿAbidīn (a), First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Aḍaw', 1409 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 409.

[62] Abū al-Faraj Iṣfihānī, al-'Aghānī, Beirut, Dārl Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, vol. 8, p. 225.

and accepted his testimony. The Iraqi man said to the judge: "This is Daḥmān!" ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz replied: "I know who he is—if I didn't know of his identity, I would have asked him." The Iraqi man responded: "He is a musician and a singer, and he teaches the slaves how to sing." The judge replied: "May God have mercy on you and us! Which one of us is not familiar with singing? Now go and give this man his due."[63]

In Medina, there would be gatherings of dancing and singing without any curtains being placed between the men and the women.[64] It has been narrated in the books of history that ʿĀ'ishah, the daughter of Ṭalḥah, would compose music and 'Izzat al-Maylā' would sing.[65]

Things reached a point that when the most famous female singer of that time, Jamīlah, was on a trip to Mecca, she was given such a grand reception on that journey that it has no precedence in Islamic history. No jurisprudent, commentator, narrator of tradition, judge, or ascetic has ever before been treated in such a matter. The story of this journey has been narrated as follows:

"When Jamīlah left Medina to go towards Mecca for the Ḥajj pilgrimage, a group of the famous male and female singers saw her off and a group of them accompanied her until the very end of her journey. When Jamīlah's caravan arrived near Mecca, she was welcomed warmly by the nobles and other important personalities of the city. When she returned back to Medina, she was welcomed by the city nobles, and there was such excitement and fervor, that the people of the city lined up from their doors to watch."[66]

This historical excerpt shows a small window into the moral decay and deterioration of the Medinan society during that

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[63] Abū al-Faraj Iṣfihānī, al-'Aghānī, Beirut, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, vol. 6, p. 21.

[64] Sharīf Qarshī, Bāqir, The Life of Imam Zayn al-ʿAbidīn (a), First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Aḍaw', 1409 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 410.

[65] Sharīf Qarshī, Bāqir, The Life of Imam Zayn al-'Abidīn (a), First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Aḍaw', 1409 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 411.

[66] Abū al-Faraj Iṣfihānī, al-'Aghānī, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, vol. 8, p. 208-210.
- Kaḥālah, 'Umar Riḍā, 'I'lām al-Nisā, Fifth Edition, Beirut, Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1404 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 211-214.

time period. The people who escorted Jamīlah during her trip were the most famous singers of their time and they were renowned throughout the nation. As for how numerous they were in number, if we take into consideration that each of them had at least a few students, and that at least some of the singers stayed behind in the city and did not see her off, then we will be left with a number that is hard to believe. When the condition of the most holy city of the Muslim nation was such, then we can imagine what the condition of the other cities was like, particularly in far off provinces like Damascus or Egypt, which had converted to Islam at a much later period.[67]

The Necessity of Spreading Pure Islamic Teachings

The situation during the time of the Fourth Imam ('a) was truly regretful; the people had little knowledge of Islamic teachings and religious deviations had begun to appear in a very frightening manner. It was through a deep and comprehensive understanding of these issues that the Imam ('a) would exert his utmost efforts in teaching the people the correct manner of Islamic life and in awakening them to its realities. For a further understanding of how bad the situation had become, let us look t a few examples of how unaware the people were in regards to heir religious duties:

1- According to some scholars, during the time of Imam Sajjād ('a), the Hashimites did not know how to pray correctly or how to properly perform the Ḥajj pilgrimage. It is clear that if the Hashimites were unaware of these matters, the rest of the Shias were in even worse shape religiously.[68]

When we are faced with an environment in which the correct manner of prayers are forgotten by the people, and in particular amongst the Banī Hāshim, when they should have been the foremost amongst the Muslims, this shows the deep

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[67] Doctor Shahīdī, Sayyid Ja'far, The Life of 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (a), First Print, Tehran, The Publications Office of Islamic Culture, 1365 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 104.

[68] Murtaḍā al-Ḥusaynī al-'Āmulī, Ja'far, Dirāsāt wa Biḥūth Fī Tārīkh wa al-Islam, (Majmū'ah Maqālāt) 1400 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 56 (Maqālah: al-Imām al-Sajjād Ba'ith al-Islām Min Jadīd).

extent of the moral decline and deterioration of the overall society. In particular, if Mecca and Medina were this hard hit, then other cities, which were farther away and had been influenced by Islam at a much later date, were naturally in even worse shape.

2- Anas ibn Mālik, the famous companion, is quoted as having said: "From the things which were commonplace during the time of the Prophet (ṣ), nothing has been left." The people said: "Then what about the prayers?" He replied: "Then what was it that you did during the prayers?"[69]

3- During the reign of Walīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, in the year 87 Hijrī, ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (the governor of Medina at the time), went to the Ḥajj pilgrimage as the Emir of the Ḥajj. In spite of his high position within the government, he did the ritual of the Wuqūf incorrectly during the ʿĪd of the Sacrifice.[70]

4- Muḥammad ibn Muslim ibn Shihāb Zuhrī is quoted as having said: "In Damascus, we went to see Anas ibn Mālik. We found him alone and crying. We asked him the reason as to why he was crying, and he responded: 'From all of the things that I learned about Islam, the only thing which I know to be left is these prayers, and even that has become ruined.'"

5- In the time after Anas, Ḥasan Baṣri is narrated as having said: "If the Messenger of God (ṣ) returns back to your midst, of all the things which he taught you, the 'Qiblah' is the only thing which he will recognize."[71]

3- Teaching Spirituality through Supplications

Another method which the Fourth Imam (ʿa) used to educate the masses and combat the Umayyid government's

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[69] Murtaḍā al-Ḥusaynī al-Āmulī, Jaʿfar, Dirāsāt wa Biḥūth Fī Tārīkh wa al-Islām, (Majmuʿah Muqallāt) 1400 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 56.
- Amīn, Aḥmad, Ḍuḥ al-Islām, Old Print, Cairo, Maktabah al- Nihḍat al-Miṣrīyah, vol. 1, p. 365 (narrated from Būkhārī and Tirmidhī - The Bāb of ʿItisām al-Sunnah).

[70] Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn, The History of the Caliphs, researched by: Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, Third Edition, Cairo, Maṭbaʾat al-Madanī, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 224.

[71] Murtaḍā al-Ḥusaynī al-Āmulī, Jaʿfar, Dirāsāt wa Biḥūth Fī Tārīkh wa al-Islam, (Majmūʿah Muqallāt) 1400 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 57.

influence, was the teaching of spirituality through the use of supplications. It is known that supplications are a medium that link human beings with their Creator. When these supplications are recited, there are powerful spiritual and physical effects. From the Islamic perspective, supplications have a very important and special status in the religion. If we were to collect all of the supplications from the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and the Imams ('a), we would have a very large and comprehensive collection. These supplications are an important educational and spiritual university which allow people to grow and mature as human beings.

The Collection of Sajjādīyah

As mentioned previously, Imam Sajjād ('a) lived in a very restricted social and political environment and so the Imam ('a) used the medium of supplications in order to spread various religious teachings and create change in the Muslim society. These supplications did not have overt political content and so they would remain undetected from the roving eyes of the government. The collection of Imam Sajjād's ('a) supplications are famously known as 'Saḥīfah' Sajjādīyah' in Arabic. After the Holy Quran and the Nahj al-Balāghah, the Saḥīfah' Sajjādīyah is considered as being the most important treasure trove of Islamic wisdom. In past times, this collection was also known by the names of 'Ukht al-Quran', 'Injīl Ahl al-Bayt', and 'Zubūr Āalī Muḥammad' by various scholars.[72]

The collection of Sajjādīyah is not only a collection of requests from God but it is, in reality, a limitless ocean of Islamic knowledge and spiritual secrets which contain ideological, cultural, social, and political teachings. It also contains natural laws, as well as religious rules and guidelines. All of these are contained in the format of supplications and entreaties to God. What is interesting about this collection is

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[72] Madanī, Sayyid Alikhān, Riyaḍ al-Sālikīn Fī Sharḥ Saḥīfat Sayyid al-Sājidīn, Mu'assasat Āl al-Bayt, Muqadamah, p. 4-5.
- Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Ma'ālim al-Ulamā, Najaf, al-Mathba'at al-Ḥaydarīa, 1380 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 125 and 131.

that at first glance, one would fail to see these deeper aspects and assume that one is just reading a simple prayer.

In the year 1353 Hijrī, the late Ayatollah Marʿashī Najafī sent a copy of the text to ʿAllāmah Ṭanṭāwī, who was the Mufti of Egypt. ʿAllāmah Ṭanṭāwī thanked him for sending him the present, and then replied with the following: "This is our own personal misfortune, that until the present time, we have not known about this great work which is from the inheritance of the Prophet (ṣ). When I look at it, I find its words superior to the words of the creation, and inferior to the words of the Creator."[73]

Due to the importance and veracity of the Saḥīfah' Sajjādīyah, many commentaries have been written on it throughout history, both in Arabic, as well as in Farsi. The late ʿAllāmah Shaykh Āghā Buzurg Tehrānī, in his book Al-Dhurīʿah, has mentioned over 50 commentaries (not including the translations) that have been written on the Saḥīfah' Sajjādīyah.[74] In addition to these commentaries, a number of scholars, both past and present, have completed many translations on the Saḥīfah'; a number of these have been published in recent years.

The Saḥīfah' Sajjādīyah contains 54 supplications whose respective titles have been listed below:

1- In praise of God
2- Sending benedictions on Muḥammad (ṣ) and his family (ʿa)
3- Sending benedictions on the angels who bear the "Throne of God"
4- Requesting mercy on the followers of the Prophet (ṣ)
5- Imam Sajjād's (ʿa) supplication for himself and his companions
6- A supplication for the time of morning and evening

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[73] Saḥīfah' Sajjādīyah, translated by: Sayyid al-Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ṣadr Balaghi, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, Muqadamah, p. 37.

[74] Shaykh Agha Buzurg, Ibid, vol. 3, p. 345-359.
In regards to the chain of narrators of the Saḥīfah' Sajjādīyah, please refer to: Sayyid Alikhān Madanī, Riyāḍ al-Sālikīn Fī Sharḥ Ṣahifat al-Sayyid al-Sājidīn, Muqadamah, ʿAbd Razzāq Mūsawī al-Muqqaram, al-Imām Zayn al-ʿAbidīn, Qum, Dār al-Shabastarī Lil Maṭbūʿāt, p. 95-118.

7- Imam Sajjād's ('a) supplication at the time of important events and occurrences, as well as during the time of sadness and grief
8- In fleeing towards God, away from improper behavior, as well as improper actions and deeds
9- On eagerness towards seeking forgiveness
10- On seeking sanctuary in the presence of God
11- On seeking a goodly end
12- On confessing one's sins and seeking repentance
13- On asking one's desires from God
14- On complaining (protesting) against oppressors at the time of being subject to oppression or seeing an act of oppression
15- In times of illness or the occurrence of grief and difficulty
16- In seeking forgiveness for one's sins and faults
17- In repelling the evil of Satan, and taking protection with God against Satan's enmity and deceit
18- A supplication for after a danger has been eliminated and for when a request has been answered speedily
19- In requesting rain during a time of famine and drought
20- In seeking praiseworthy behavior and actions
21- A supplication during the time of sorrow and grief
22- A supplication during the time of difficulties, problems, nd hardship
3- In seeking prosperity, and thanking and praising God for it
24- The Imam's supplication for his mother and father
25- A supplication for one's children
26- In regards to one's neighbors and friends
27- A supplication for the frontier guards
28- In seeking sanctuary with God
29- A supplication for when one's sustenance is straitened
30- In seeking God's help for paying back one's debts
31- In reciting the words of repentance (dhikr) and seeking repentance from God
32- A supplication after the night prayer
33- In seeking the best
34- A supplication in times of trouble, and in times of seeing someone who has been entangled in the disgrace of sin

35- A supplication for contentment at the time of seeing the wealthy
36- A supplication at the time of seeing lightning and hearing thunder
37- A supplication in confessing one's inability to truly thank God for his blessings and of one's everlasting indebtedness
38- In apologizing to God for ones lack in paying back the people's rights and dues
39- In seeking forgiveness and mercy.
40- A supplication in times when someone becomes aware of another person's death, or when he remembers death itself
41- In seeking the concealment of sins and protection from sins
42- During the time of completing the recitation of the Quran
43- In times of sighting the crescent moon
44- A supplication for the beginning of the month of Ramaḍān
45- A supplication for the end of the month of Ramaḍān
46- A supplication for the days of 'Īd al-Fitr and Friday
47- A supplication for the day of 'Arafah (the 9th of Dhu al-Ḥijjah)
48- A supplication for the days of 'Īd al-Qurbān and Friday
49- A supplication for the elimination of the deceit of enemies
50- On the fear of God
51- On supplication and weeping
52- In persistence on seeking from God
53- On one's humility in the presence of God
54- In seeking the removal of griefs and sorrows[75]

The Political Aspects of Saḥīfah' Sajjādīyah

The Saḥīfah' Sajjādīyah is not only a book of supplications and entreaties to God— it also contains various political, social, ideological, and cultural facets as well. In these supplications, Imam Sajjād ('a) has mentioned many issues, including that of the imamate and the leadership of the Muslim society. Let us

[75] Mutawakil ibn Hārūn (the narrator of the Saḥīfah') has said: "These duas were 75 in number; eleven of which were lost, while the other sixty or so were preserved."

take a look at several such examples:

1- In the 20th supplication (Makārim al-Akhlāq), the Imam ('a) is quoted as having said: "Oh Allah, bless Muḥammad and his household, appoint for me a hand against he who wrongs me, a tongue against he who disputes with me and a victory over he who stubbornly resists me. Give me guile against he who schemes against me, power over he who oppresses me, refutation over he who reviles me, and safety from he who threatens me..."

The people mentioned in this supplication are none other than the government officials of 'Abd al-Malik, such as Hishām ibn Ismā'īl Makhzūmī, the governor of Medina. The Imam ('a) was subject to their oppression and these supplications gave him (and his followers) a means of divine protection against their enemies. In addition to this element of divine protection, this supplication of the Imam ('a) was a public complaint and protest against the oppressive and tyrannical Ummayid government. It, therefore, contained some very potent political overtones and whomever read such a supplication could not help but feel the seeds of rebellion and revolution being planted in their hearts.

2- In the supplication which the Imam ('a) would recite on the ay of 'Īd al-Qurbān[76] and on Friday, the following is ıentioned: "...Oh Lord, this station (referring to the caliphate ınd the leadership of the Muslim community) is exclusive to your deputies and selected ones; these stations belong to your trustees, whom you have placed in high rank. Yet the oppressors have taken possession of it through force... and thus your chosen ones and caliphs have been defeated and overcome. All of this is while they see that your religious precepts have been changed, your book has been removed from the practical realm, the religious duties and obligations have been distorted, and the 'Sunnah' of the Prophet (ṣ) has been discontinued. Oh Lord, remove your mercy from the enemies of your chosen servants, from the first ones and the last ones, and likewise their

[76] The 'Id of the Sacrifice.

followers and all those who are satisfied with their actions..."

In this supplication, the Imam ('a) explicitly mentions the issues of the imamate and the leadership of the Muslim nation, which is specific to the descendants of the Prophet. He also mentions its usurpation by the oppressors and rejects the legitimacy of the Umayyid government.

3- In the supplication of the Day of 'Arafah, the Imam ('a) said: "My Lord, bless the best household, those whom you have chosen for your command, appointed the treasurers of your knowledge, the guardians of your religion, the vicegerents on your earth, and your proof against your servants, purified from uncleanliness and pollution, through a purification by your decree, and made the mediation to you, and the road to your paradise... Oh God, surely you have confirmed your religion in all times with an Imam whom you have set up as a guidepost to your servants and a lighthouse in your lands, after you linked him to yourself through an unseen connection. You have appointed him the means to your good pleasure, made obeying him obligatory and cautioned against disobeying him. (You have) commanded (that the people) follow his commands, abandon what he prohibits, and stipulated that no one should go ahead of him and that no one should fall behind him in obedience."

In this supplication, the Imam ('a) draws out the role and special position of the Imams and divine rulers from the Family of the Prophet. He also speaks of their distinctions, and this again negates the legitimacy of the ruling Umayyid government.

4- The Struggle against Government Scholars

One of the most dramatic parts of the lives of the Imams ('a), was their struggle against the illegitimate government "experts" in the field of religion. These individuals had taken on the guise of jurisprudents, narrators of tradition, commentators, judges, and reciters of the Holy Quran. These were people who would mold and shape the minds of the

masses in favor of the oppressive powers that ruled over them. In essence, they aided the Umayyid, and later on, the ʿAbbāsid governments, in strenghtening their rule. Through them, the people became obedient and submissive towards their rulers through a type of mental and psychological conditioning. Religion was the main vehicle used to create these changes in the society. One example of this is found in the Fourth Imam's (ʿa) clash against one of the government sponsored narrators of tradition by the name of Muḥammad ibn Muslim Zuhrī (58-124 Hijrī).

Who was Zuhrī?

Zuhrī was one of the 'Tābiʿīn'[77] and jurisprudents of his time. He was considered to be one of the great narrators of tradition in the city of Medina and he had taken in the knowledge of the seven great jurisprudents of the Sunni world. He was also known for having personally met ten of the companions of the Prophet (ṣ). His knowledge and standing was such that a large group of the famous jurisprudents and narrators, narrated traditions from him.[78]

Based on this foundation of scholarly knowledge and earning, Zuhrī was well respected and had acquired considerable fame and popularity in various jurisprudential and scholarly circles. His popularity reached a point where Mālik ibn Anas has narrated: "In Medina, I only saw one jurisprudent and narrator, and he was Ibn Shihāb Zuhrī."[79] Another example of this is found in a story when Makḥūl was asked: "Who is the most knowledgeable man that you have ever seen?" He responded: "Zuhrī." He was then asked: "And after him?" Again, he responded: "Zuhrī." He was asked again: "And after him?" Once again, he replied: "Zuhrī." For the final time he was asked: "And after him?" Again, he replied: "Zuhrī."[80]

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[77] The companions of the companions of the Prophet (ṣ).

[78] Ḥajj Shaykh ʿAbbās Qummī, Safīnat al-Biḥār, Tehran, Sanāʾī Bookstore, vol. 1, p. 573.

[79] Muḥammad ibn Saʿad, al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 2, p. 388.

[80] Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, Second Edition, Beirut, Maktabah Maʿārif, 1977 A.D., vol. 9, p. 343.

Even with all of these positive points, Zuhrī was captivated by the scholarly greatness, ascetism, and piety of Imam Sajjād (ʿa). He was additionally captivated by his spiritual rank and station. Zuhrī is quoted as saying: "I have seen no Qurayshī personality more pious or superior to ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (ʿa)." He would also say: "The best[81] and most learned individual of the Hāshimī clan... is ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (ʿa)."[82] Whenever Zuhrī would remember Imam Sajjād (ʿa), he would weep, and call him by the agnomen of Zayn al-ʿAbidīn, or the adornment of the worshippers.[83] Zuhrī also benefitted tremendously from the Fourth Imam (ʿa) and narrated a great number of traditions from him.[84]

Zuhrī was a local ruler on behalf of the Umayyids for a period of time during his life. During this time, he punished an individual and the man passed away as a consequence of the punishment. Zuhrī was shaken by this incident, and he left his home and set up a tent in the desert, saying: "After this, I will never live underneath the shade of a roof again."

One day, Imam Sajjād (ʿa) saw him and said to him: "Your hopelessness from the forgiveness of your Lord is worse than your sin; fear God and repent to him, pay the compensation money to the family of the deceased, and then return to your family." Zuhrī, in spite of his great knowledge and learning, had been ignorant of this, and he became overjoyed at this guidance from the Imam (ʿa). After this incident, he would oftentimes say: "I am indebted to ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn, more than I am indebted to any other individual."[85]

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[81] Ibn Kathīr, Ibid, p. 104.

[82] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, researched and edited by: Sayyid Hāshim Rasūl Mahallātī, Qum, ʿAllāmah Publications, vol. 4, p. 159.

[83] ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā ʾIrbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah Fī Marifat al-ʾA'immah, edited by: Sayyid Hāshim Rasūlī, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 288.

[84] For further information on these narrations, refer to:
- Biḥār al-ʾAnwār, Second Edition, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1394 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 46, p. 57, 64, 65, 73, 72, 107, and 150.
- Iḥtijāj Ṭabarsī, Najaf, Maṭba'at al-Nu'man, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 51.
- Al-Istibṣār, Second Edition, Najaf, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1375 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 80.

[85] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, researched and edited by: Sayyid Hāshim

Zuhrī as Imam Sajjād's Student

The beliefs and religious persuasion of Zuhrī are subject to controversy and disagreement amongst the Shia scholars. Some consider him as a Shia and have introduced him as a follower of Imam Sajjād ('a). These scholars have their own specific reasoning for this. Other scholars have considered him as an enemy of the Imams ('a), and a supporter of the Umayyid government, and have criticized him as a result.

The compiler of Rawḍāt al-Jannāt has proposed a middle path between these two possibilities. He is quoted as saying the following: "At first, (Zuhrī) was one of the supporters of the Umayyids, and one of their functionaries. Later on, due to his knowledge and awareness, he found the true path, and broke relations with the Umayyids, entering the circle of the followers and students of Imam Sajjād ('a)."[86]

In spite of this, there is much historical evidence and testimony which shows that during Zuhrī's youth, he had contact with Imam Sajjād ('a) and benefitted from his school of thought, but that during later times, he was drawn towards the Umayyid government and began serving as one of their functionaries and agents. Due to his past history, the Umayyids would sometimes taunt him and ask: "How is your prophet 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a)) doing these days?"[87] Below, we will briefly review the evidence of Zuhrī's connection with the Umayyids and how he served as one of their functionaries.

Zuhrī as a Functionary of the Umayyid Government

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd counts Zuhrī as one of the opponents of

Rasūl Mahallātī, Qum, 'Allāmah Publications, vol. 4, p. 59.

- 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah Fī Marifat al-'A'immah, edited by: Sayyid Hāshim Rasūlī, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 319-320.

[86] Mīrzā Muḥammad Bāqir Mūsawī Khansārī Iṣfihānī, Rawḍāt al-Jannāt Fī Aḥwāl al-Ulamā wa al-Sādāt, Qum, Ismā'īlian Publications, 1392 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 7, p. 245; In regards to the other side of this argument, please refer to: Ḥajj Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, Safīnat al-Biḥār, Tehran, Sanaei Bookstore, vol. 1, p. 573; Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Tastarī, Qāmūs al-Rijāl, vol. 8, p. 387...

[87] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, researched and edited by: Sayyid Hāshim Rasūl Mahallātī, Qum, 'Allāmah Publications, vol. 4, p. 159.

Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), and has written: "One day ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (ʿa) heard that Zuhrī and ʿUrwah ibn Zubayr were sitting in the Mosque of the Prophet and slandering Imam ʿAlī (ʿa). He went to the mosque, stood over them, and harshly denounced them."[88]

During the rule of ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān, Zuhrī departed towards the city of Damascus in order to benefit from the wealth and comfort which the Umayyid government offered. When he arrived, he used his education and knowledge as a stepping stone for greater material wealth and official titles. He soon attracted ʿAbd al-Malik's attention, and ʿAbd al-Malik set aside a monthly stipend for him from the public treasury. He also paid off his debts and placed a personal servant at his disposal. In this manner, Zuhrī positioned himself as one of the government scholars who served the cause of the Ummayid caliph.[89]

Ibn Saʿad has written that: "The person who initiated Zuhrī into the service of ʿAbd al-Malik was Qubayṣah ibn Dhū'ayb, the exclusive seal bearer of the government."[90] It was from this point onwards that Zuhrī included himself as one of the functionaries of the Umayyid rulers. Zuhrī was to taste the pleasures of affluence and a luxurious lifestyle as a government scholar under ʿAbd al-Malik, and after him, he served under later caliphs such as Walīd, Sulaymān, Yazīd, Hishām, as well as ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz.

From these later caliphs, Yazīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik selected Zuhrī to a position in the judiciary. After Yazīd, he was treated very well by the government of Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, and Hishām selected him as the personal teacher of his children. Zuhrī continued on this path until the very end of his life.[91] In

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[88] Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, researched by: Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Qum, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, vol. 4, p. 102.

[89] Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, Second Edition, Beirut, Maktabah Maʿārif, 1977 A.D., vol. 9, p. 341 and 346.

[90] Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, vol. 7, p. 447.

[91] Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, Second Edition, Beirut, Maktabah Maʿārif, 1977 A.D., vol. 9, p. 341.

- Ibn Khallakān, Wafīyāt al-Aʿyān, researched by: Doctor Iḥsān ʿAbbās, Second Edition,

addition, Hishām paid off 80,000 dirhams which Zuhrī had accrued in debt.[92]

Ibn Sa'ad has further written: "Zuhrī went to where Hishām lived in Riṣāfah, and for a period of 20 years before this, he lived with the Umayyids."[93] Likewise, Ibn Sa'ad has narrated from Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah that: "In the year 123 Hijrī, Zuhrī came to Mecca with Hishām (the caliph of that time), and resided there until the year 124 Hijrī."[94]

Zuhrī had become so comfortable with his courtly life of ease, luxury, and comfort that when he was asked to begin teaching the people during the later part of his life, he refused in a very telling manner. He was asked: "How we wish that now, in the last years of your life, you would take up residence in the city of Medina, and go and sit at one of the pillars in the Mosque of the Prophet and begin to teach the people." He responded by saying: "If I were to do such a thing, it would be very difficult for me. In addition, this type of work is not advisable for me unless I turn my back on this world, and reach out and grasp for the hereafter."[95]

The Caliph's Need for Government Scholars

In order for tyrannical and un-Islamic caliphs to rule over a Muslim population, it is imperative for them to gain the people's acceptance of their actions as being legitimate and Islamic in nature. During this point in Islamic history, quite some time had passed since the religion had first been revealed, and people were relatively strong in their faith. If they were to find out that their government, which ruled over them in the name of Islam, was in fact un-Islamic and against all of the values which the Prophet (ṣ) had introduced them, then the

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Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, 1364 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 4, p. 178.

[92] Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, Second Edition, Beirut, Maktabah Ma'ārif, 1977 A.D., vol. 9, p. 343.

[93] Muḥammad ibn Sa'ad, al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 7, p. 474.

[94] Muḥammad ibn Sa'ad, al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 5, p. 497.

[95] Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, Second Edition, Beirut, Maktabah Ma'ārif, 1977 A.D., vol. 9, p. 348.

people would not cooperate with these governments.

Without the people's support, these governments would not last very long and they would soon fall. While not every individual in the Muslim community cared for the legitimacy of their government, there were a very sizeable number who did, and this group only accepted the un-Islamic actions of the government based on their mistaken beliefs that whatever the government did was religiously legitimate.

Therefore, the caliphs worked to legitimize their rule through gathering scholars and narrators of tradition and inducing them to join their government. Once they had gathered these scholars into their court, they would have them fabricate various traditions from the Prophet (ṣ) and his companions. These traditions were made in a way where they were in favor of the caliphs and their corrupt ways. Through these means, they prepared the mental and ideological foundations for the acceptance of their rule in the minds and hearts of the Muslims.[96]

The goal of the Umayyid government in hiring Zuhrī was to use his religious position and the status which he held in the collective mind of the masses. Zuhrī accepted this arrangement and put himself completely at their service. He began writing books in their favor and fabricating narrations. In this way, he proved himself to be a great support for the Umayyid government.

An individual by the name of 'Mu'amar' has written: "We assumed that we had narrated a great number of traditions from Zuhrī, and this went on until Walīd, the son of 'Abd al-Malik, was killed. After he was killed, we saw a large number of books that were being carried by beasts of burden, and these books were coming out of Walīd's treasury. They said: 'This is from the knowledge of Zuhrī.'[97] Zuhrī had written so many

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[96] (Ayatollah) Khāminiī, Sayyid 'Alī, A Research Into the Life of Imam Sajjād (a), First Print, Tehran, Daftare Hizbe Jumhūriye Islāmī, Nashrīye Shomāraye 63, 1361 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 56.

[97] Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, Second Edition, Beirut, Maktabah Ma'ārif, 1977 A.D., vol. 9, p. 346.
- Muḥammad ibn Sa'ad, al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 2, p. 389.

books, and filled so many notebooks for Walīd, that when they needed to move them, they had no choice but to use beasts of burden to do so!"

Zuhrī himself is quoted as saying: "In the beginning, we did not like to write down and compose our knowledge. This continued until the rulers encouraged us in this field (so that our knowledge would be recorded in books), and thereafter, we decided that no Muslim should be deprived from them."[98] Ibn Kathīr has written: "The person who encouraged Zuhrī in writing down traditions was Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik. From that day when Zuhrī began to write down (traditions), the people also began to write down traditions."[99]

One day, Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik wanted Zuhrī to teach his children various traditions. When Zuhrī heard this, he requested a scribe, and he then dictated 400 traditions to him, which he wrote down.[100] ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, in the lines of a directive, was found to have written: "Do not be inattentive in narrating and writing down traditions from Zuhrī, for no one is left who is as knowledgeable and learned as he in matters of the past Sunnah (the Prophetic (ṣ) way of life)."[101]

Shamsh al-Dīn Dhahabī, Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz, Beirut, Dār al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, vol. 2, p. 112.

[8] Muḥammad ibn Saʿad, al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 2, p. 389.

- Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, Second Edition, Beirut, Maktabah Maʿārif, 1977 A.D., vol. 9, p. 341.

[99] Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, Second Edition, Beirut, Maktabah Maʿārif, 1977 A.D., vol. 9, p. 341.

[100] Ibn Ḥajar ʿAsqalānī, Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb, First Edition, Haydarabād Dukān, 1326 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 9, p. 449.

- Shamsh al-Dīn Dhahabī, Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz, Beirut, Dār al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, vol. 1, p. 110.

[101] Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, Second Edition, Beirut, Maktabah Maʿārif, 1977 A.D., vol. 9, p. 343.

The prohibition of narrating and writing down traditions was initiated during the caliphate of ʿUmar ibn Khaṭṭāb, upon his orders. This prohibition continued until the end of the first century Hijrī. During the rule of ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, this prohibition was officially discontinued. Islamic historians believe that this prohibition was enacted due to political reasons, in order to block certain books of tradition which had been composed by Imam ʿAlī (a). From the early days of Islam, Imam ʿAlī (a) had been gathering and compiling various traditions, as well as other knowledge which the Prophet (s) had narrated. The narration of these traditions was not to the benefit of the caliph of the time, for each of these traditions was in reality a testament to the truthfulness of Imam ʿAlī (a). Therefore, ʿUmar prohibited the narration, composition,

The Fabricated Traditions of Zuhrī

Zuhrī fabricated many traditions in favor of the Umayyids, and in this way, he justified their illegitimate rule and their various policies. In addition, he fabricated traditions which were against the Hāshimīs. Let us examine a few such examples:
1- Zuhrī claimed that the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) had said: "One should not set out on a journey except to go to one of these three mosques: the Mosque of the Ḥaram, my Mosque (in Medina), or the Al-Aqṣā Mosque; and the Al-Aqṣā Mosque has the same verdict as the Ḥaram Mosque."[102]

A similar tradition has been narrated by Mūslim, Abū Dāwūd, and Nisā'ī (three of the famous Sunni narrators) without any of them narrating the last part of the tradition: "and the al-Aqṣā Mosque has the same verdict as the Ḥaram Mosque." Therefore, we have three authoritative Sunni scholars who all quoted the same tradition, in the very same manner, without quoting the last part of it.[103]

It is clear that this tradition, with the last part fabricated, was created by Zuhrī under the orders of 'Abd al-Malik. The reasons behind its fabrication go back to the time of 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr, who ruled over the region of the Ḥijāz, where the holy city of Mecca was located. 'Abd al-Malik gained power in the region of Syria, and between these two rulers, a fierce military and political conflict developed. Whenever the people of Syria wished to go on the Ḥajj pilgrimage, they inevitably had to stay for at least a few days in Mecca (which was under

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and collection of all traditions in an absolute way. Historians have clearly shown that this prohibition was due to political reasons and, at the same time, the removal of the prohibition was also a political act by the likes of Hishām. In spite of this, the Shia did not take the prohibition of traditions seriously, and immediately after the death of the Prophet (ṣ), they began to collect all the authentic traditions that they could find. They were therefore the first to do so amongst the Muslims.

[102] Ibn Wāḍih, The History of Ya'qūbī, edited by: Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥr al-'Ulūm, Najaf, al-Maṭba'at al-Ḥaydarīa, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 8.

[103] Ṣaḥīḥ Mūslim, Cairo, Maktabah Muḥammad 'Alī Ṣabīḥ, vol. 4, (The Book of Ḥajj), p. 126.
- Sunan Abī Dāwūd, researched and edited by: Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Beirut, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, (The Book of Ḥajj), p. 216.
- Sunan Nisā'ī Bisharḥ Suyūṭī, Beirut, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, vol. 2, p. 37 and 38.

the rule of ʿAbdullah ibn Zubayr at that time). ʿAbdullah ibn Zubayr would use this opportunity to propagate against the rule of ʿAbd al-Malik.

Under this threat, ʿAbd al-Malik did not want the people of Syria to go on the Ḥajj pilgrimage and be negatively influenced by ʿAbdullah ibn Zubayr's propaganda. This would, in effect, delegitimize his rule. Therefore, he went ahead and banned the Ḥajj pilgrimage entirely. The people began to protest against this action, which prohibited them from one of their religious obligations. As an answer to these protests, ʿAbd al-Malik responded by saying: "Ibn Shihāb Zuhrī has narrated from the Prophet (ṣ), who said: 'One should not set out on a journey, except to go to one of these three mosques: the mosque of the Ḥaram, my mosque (in Medina), or the Al-Aqṣā mosque; and the Al-Aqṣā mosque has the same verdict as the Ḥaram mosque.' Then ʿAbd al-Malik said: 'And this is the very same stone that the Prophet of God (ṣ) put his foot over on the night of the Mi'raj, and it takes the place of the Kaaba.'"

Upon the orders of ʿAbd al-Malik, a dome was also constructed over that stone, silk curtains were hung around it, caretakers were selected, and the people began to circumambulate around it. This custom remained for the entire period of the Ummayid rule.[104]

The reason behind the fabrication of the last part of this tradition by Zuhrī was to prevent people from going to the Ḥajj pilgrimage, which was under the control of ʿAbd al-Malik's rival, ʿAbdullah ibn Zubayr. Instead of going to the Ḥajj pilgrimage, the people would turn their attention towards Palestine, which was under ʿAbd al-Malik's control. As a result of this, ʿAbd al-Malik's power and control over his subjects would increase.

2- In order to lessen the people's hatred towards the family of Marwān, and in order to destroy the Fourth Imam's (ʿa) status, Zuhrī has mentioned the following in one of his narrations

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[104] Ibn Wāḍih, The History of Yaʿqūbī, edited by: Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Najaf, al-Maṭba'at al-Ḥaydarīa, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 8.

about the Imam (ʿa): "'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn was the most moderate individual from his family, and he was the most obedient and loved by Marwān and ʿAbd al-Malik."[105] This was while the hatred of the Marwanids towards the descendants of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was not hidden from anyone and vice versa. Therefore, by saying that the Fourth Imam (ʿa) was obedient towards the Marwanids is hardly believable, much less to say that he was the most obedient individual from his family towards them.

3- Zuhrī has narrated from ʿĀ'ishah that she said: "One day I was with the Prophet of God (ṣ) when I saw ʿAbbās and ʿAlī coming. The Messenger of God (ṣ) said: "Ā'ishah, these two individuals will die in a state where they are not of my religion.'"[106]

It is apparent that this tradition has been fabricated in order to lessen the lofty rank of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) and to please the Marwanids. It is interesting to note that Zuhrī has narrated this tradition from ʿUrwah ibn Zubayr, who narrated from ʿĀ'ishah, who in turn was well known for her hatred of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa). Furthermore, we know that ʿUrwah was one of the enemies of the family of the Prophet. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd explains this by saying: "He, much like Abū Hurayrah, ʿAmr ibn ʿAās, and Mughayrah ibn Shuʿbah were amongst the functionaries of Mūʿāwīya who fabricated traditions against Imam ʿAlī (ʿa)."[107]

4- Zuhrī narrates: "One time, the Prophet of God (ṣ) entered the house of ʿAlī and Fāṭimah during the night, and said to them: 'Do you not pray?' ʿAlī replied: 'This is up to God— if he wishes, he will select us for this (action).' When the Prophet (ṣ) heard this, he did not say anything and returned. During this time, ʿAlī heard the Prophet (ṣ) striking his leg and saying: 'More than anything else, human beings engage in dispute[108]

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[105] Muḥammad ibn Saʿad, al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 5, p. 215.
- Also refer to: Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, Second Edition, Beirut, Maktabah Maʿārif, 1977 A.D., vol. 9, p. 106.

[106] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, researched by: Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Qum, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, vol. 4, p. 63.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Surah Kahf, Verse 54.

and polemics."[109]

Through fabricating and narrating this tradition, Zuhrī attempted to paint Imam ʿAlī as a person who believes in predestination, as well as an individual who engages in frivolous disputes.

5- Zuhrī narrates from Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) that he said: "I had an old camel that the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) had given to me from the war booty of the Battle of Badr. When I wished to get married to Fāṭimah (ʿa), the daughter of the Prophet (ṣ), I arranged with a man (who was a dyer of goods by trade) from the tribe of Banī Qaynuqā, so that he would come with me to the wilderness and assist me in gathering the herb 'Azkhar'. I would then bring this herb and sell them to the dyers, in order to pay for the cost of the wedding banquet (Walīmah).

In anticipation of this, I became busy in preparing the camel saddles, their gunny sacks, ropes, and other such items, and I stabled the camels next to one of the homes of the Anṣār. When I came back, I saw that the camel's humps had been cut off, their flanks had been cleaved, and their livers had been pulled out! When I saw this sight, I became exceedingly disturbed and said: 'Who has done such a thing?' The people said: 'This is the work of Ḥamzah ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib. He was ngaged with a group of the Anṣār in drinking, and slaves were usy singing to them. Ḥamzah came out of this gathering, picked up his sword, and cut off the humps of the camels, cleaving their flanks, and pulling out their livers.'

ʿAlī (ʿa) then said: 'I went to see the Prophet (ṣ), and I saw that Zayd ibn Ḥāritha was with him.' The Prophet (ṣ) saw how disturbed I looked and asked: 'What has happened?' I said: 'I have never seen an act so ugly before; Ḥamzah has done such and such with my camels, and right now he is in a house with a group, busy drinking.'

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[109] Būkhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Būkhārī, Cairo, Maktabah ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad Ḥanafī, vol. 9 (Kitāb al-'Itiṣām Bil Kitāb wa al-Sunnah), p. 106.
- Sayyid ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Sharaf al-Dīn, Ajūbah Masā'il Jārallah, Second Edition, Ṣaydā, Maṭba'at al-Irfān, 1373 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 69.
- Abū Na'īm Iṣfihānī, Ḥilyat al-Aw'līyā, Fifth Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1407 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 143.

The Prophet (ṣ) put on some clothes and left his house. Zayd ibn Ḥārithah and I followed him. The Prophet (ṣ) entered the house that Ḥamzah was in and began to reprimand and rebuke him. I saw that Ḥamzah was intoxicated and his eyes had become red. When this took place, Ḥamzah looked at the Prophet (ṣ) and after measuring him with his gaze, said: 'Are you not one of my father's servants?' The Prophet (ṣ) saw that Ḥamzah was intoxicated and returned to his home. We also left the house alongside him."[110]

Through the fabrication of this preposterous tradition, Zuhrī wished to show Ḥamzah, who was given the title "The Master of Martyrs", in a very wicked light. If we compare this to the facts of history where the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) prayed over his martyred body 70 times, then this image of him as a wine drinking, unruly, criminal individual does not add up. It is clear that a tradition such as this, is simply slander designed to show the Umayyids (who were involved in similar sins) in the same light as Ḥamzah. In this way, they wanted to bring down the family of the Prophet to the same level as the Umayyid family.

The Fourth Imam's Critical Letter to Zuhrī

In regards to Zuhrī's unworthy actions, Imam Sajjād ('a) wrote him a letter that was highly critical and, at the same time, an attempt to set him right. This letter is as follows:

"May God save you and us from the various seditions (which occur), and may he protect you (from the entanglement) of the fire of hell. You are situated in a position, that if a person was to recognize it, he would feel pity towards you. God has given you many blessings, and they hang heavy around you: He has given you a healthy body, a long life, and he has made you

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[110] Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, Cairo, Maktabah 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad Ḥanafī, vol. 5, p. 83.
- Sayyid 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Sharaf al-Dīn, Ajūba Masā'īl Jārallah, Second Edition, Ṣāydā, Maṭba'at al-Irfān, 1373 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 70.
- Abū Na'īm Iṣfihānī, Ḥilyat al-Aw'līyā, Fifth Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1407 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 144.

the holder of the Quranic sciences, as well as jurisprudence and an awareness of his religious precepts and the way of his Prophet (ṣ). Therefore, his proof has been completed on you... God has made the thankfulness of such blessings as obligatory on you, and he has tested you through these things, when he has said: '...If you are grateful, I will add more (favors) unto you; But if you show ingratitude, truly my punishment is terrible indeed.'[111]

Soon, when you are standing in front of your Lord, and he asks you how you thanked him for his blessings and how you responded to your obligations, in the face of his proof against you, what will your situation be like? Do not assume that God will accept your excuse and pass over your faults. By no means! God in his Holy Book has taken a pledge from the scholars that they must explain the realities to the people. He has said: '...to make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it...'[112]

Know that the smallest thing which you have concealed and the lightest thing which you have taken on your shoulders is that (through your support of the tyrants), you have converted their fear into tranquility, and because you gained nearness to them and accepted their invitation whenever they invited you, you made the path smooth for them to mislead the people. How I fear that, as the consequence for your actions, your place will be the same as the traitors, and that due to what you have received in exchange for your cooperation with the oppressors, you will be called to account.

When things were offered to you which were not yours to take, you took them, and you went near an individual who does not give the people their rights, and when he brought you near to himself, you did not do away with any falsehood, and you selected one as a friend who was an enemy of God. Is it not true that when he invited you and brought you near to himself, they made you an axis on which their cruelty and oppressive actions turn? Did they not make you a bridge, through which they

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[111] Surah Ibrāhīm, Verse 7.

[112] Surah Āli 'Imrān, Verse 187.

engaged in their criminal actions...?

You invite the people towards their (the oppressors) deviation and you walk on their path. Through you, they have created doubt in the (hearts) of the scholars, and through you, they have attracted the hearts of the ignorant towards themselves. (You have done such a service to them with your religious popularity) that the most intimate ministers and the most powerful of their companions have not been able (to achieve anything like it). (Indeed you have) created connections between them (the tyrants) and the people

The things which they have given to you (in terms of money, property, and jewels) are of such low value (and indeed worthless) compared with what they have taken from you (in terms of justifying their offenses). They have given you such a small sum for building up this world, and instead they have ruined your hereafter. Look at what you are doing and be careful of yourself; know that no one else will watch out for you. Consider yourself as responsible and account for the things which you are doing.

Look and see how you have paid back all of the blessings which God has given to you in your old age as sustenance. How I fear that you are included in these divine words which say: 'After them succeeded an (evil) generation: They inherited the Book, but they chose (for themselves) the vanities of this world, saying (as an excuse): "(Everything) will be forgiven us."'[113]

You are not in an eternal abode— you are in a world which has announced its temporary nature. (Ask yourself): how long will a person survive his companions and peers? Fortunate is he who is fearful of his sins in this world and woe upon the person who dies and his sins remain after him.

Be alert and heedful, so that through these means, the danger is shown to you. Take steps forward while you still have the opportunity. You are not facing an ignorant being, and the one who is keeping track of your deeds will never be found inattentive of your errors. Be prepared for the journey, for you

[113] Surah 'Arāf, Verse 169.

have a long ways ahead of you; remedy your sins, for your heart is severely ill.

Do not think that I wish to rebuke or revile you; I only wish for you to remedy your past mistakes and to regain your lost religion. In this, I brought to mind the word of God, when he says: 'And continue to remind, for surely the reminder profits the believers.' [114]

Keep in mind your companions and peers who have gone from this world, and who have left you (alone). Have you forgotten? Look and see whether they were as entangled (and contaminated) as you have become, and whether they fell as far as you have fallen. Have you really done anything (which they did not act upon)? Do you know anything which they did not know? No, it is not such. In the opportunity that you found, you gained in position and honor in the eyes of the masses, while your condition put them into troubles, for they followed your opinions and acted upon them. Whatever you consider as lawful, they consider as being lawful, and whatever you consider as unlawful, they (also) consider as being unlawful. But of course you do not have such authority and power (over what is lawful and unlawful). Yet, what has made you prevail over them is their covetousness over what you have, their loss of their scholars, the prevalence of ignorance over you and them, as well your thirst and their thirst for position.

Do you not see how deep you have entered into ignorance and arrogance, and how badly the people have been afflicted with difficulties and sedition? You have put them into adversity, and the people, through seeing your rank and status, have considered themselves as lowly and they have become enamored of your high position. The people's hearts have become anxious to attain the level of your knowledge and to reach your rank and high status. Through these means, due to the effects of your actions and conduct, they are drowning in a sea (of error) whose depth is undiscovered, and they are entangled in difficulties, whose distance is unknown. May God

[114] Surah Dhārīyāt, Verse 55.

save us and you, for he is the rescuer (of the helpless).

Therefore, leave aside all of your (official) positions and injustices, so that you can join the pure and righteous ones who came before you. The same ones who are now in their rotten burial shrouds, sleeping on their beds of dust, whose stomachs have been joined with their backs, and there is no veil and obstruction between them and their Lord. The world does not deceive them and they are not captivated by it. They set their hearts on the meeting with their Lord and then they were called by their Lord; it was not long before they joined the ones who had gone before them. Yet the world has captivated you and led you astray in this way, at this point of old age[115], and with this level of knowledge, and at the very precipice of death. Then what expectations should we have of the young, the ignorant, the easily swayed, and those engaged in wrong doing. 'To God we belong and to him we are returning'. Who should we take sanctuary with and from whom should we seek the cure for our ills? We complain to God of your calamity and what we witness from you, and we anticipate compensation from our Lord due to this calamity which has overtaken us because of you.

Look and think on how you have given thanks to God for his sustenance to you in your old age? Look and see how you have honored God, who has given you prestige amongst the people, under the auspices of his religion? And look and see how you protect the divine dress, which he has covered you with amongst the people? Look and see in regards to how close or how far you are to your Lord, while he has ordered that you should be close to him and submit yourself to his command; therefore see where you are in this matter.

What has happened to you, that you do not wake up from the sleep of negligence and you do not repent of your offences?

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[115] In regards to the reported birth of Zuhrī in 58 Hijrī and the martyrdom of Imam Sajjād (a) in the year 94 or 95 Hijrī... if the Imam (a) wrote this letter towards the end of his life, then Zuhrī would have been approximately 36 years old and he would not have been an old man. There are a few possible explanations for this matter: one of them is that Zuhrī was born earlier than 58 Hijrī, and in recording his birth, there had been a mistake. This is supported by the fact that Ibn Khallakān recorded his date of birth as being in the year 51, and that of Dhahabī as being 50 Hijrī.

And you say: "I swear by God that I have never acted in the way of God, so that I could revive his religion or destroy a falsehood." Is this the thanks for the blessings of God, where he has made you the bearer of the religious sciences? How I fear that you are the example which God has spoken of in the Quran when he said: 'But after them there followed a posterity who missed prayers and followed after lusts; soon, then, they will face destruction.'[116] God has made you the bearer of Quranic knowledge and he has given you knowledge of the religion as a deposit, yet you ruined it. I thank God that he saved us from your mistaken ways. May peace be upon you...."[117]

A Study in Freedom

It should not be thought that the Umayyids, just as they plotted and prepared traps for the likes of Zuhrī, did not try to do the same with the Fourth Imam ('a). In fact, they made many such plots and prepared many such traps for Imam Sajjād ('a), but he would not pay any attention to their attempted bribes or their threats. Let us take a quick look at two examples of such events:

1- One year, during the time of his caliphate, 'Abd al-Malik decided to participate in the Ḥajj pilgrimage. As he was engaged in his circumambulation, Imam 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a) was, by chance, in front of him, busy performing his circumambulation. The Imam ('a) was completely immersed in his worship and he did not pay the caliph any attention. 'Abd al-Malik, who had not seen the Imam ('a) in person and did not recognize him, asked: "Who is this man who is circumambulating in front of me and does not pay me any attention?" They replied: "He is 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn."

'Abd al-Malik went and sat in a corner, and he said: "Bring

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[116] Surah Maryam, Verse 59.

[117] Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Shu'bah, Tuḥf al-'Ūqūl An Āli Rasūl, researched and edited by: 'Alī Akbar Ghaffārī, Second Edition, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī (al-Tābia) Lijama'at al-Mudarisīn Biqum Musharrifah, 1404 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 277-274.

- Al-Mūsawī al-Muqarram, 'Abd Razzāq, al-Imām Zayn al-'Abidīn, Qum, Dār al-Shabastarī Lil Maṭbū'āt, p. 154-159.

him to me!" When they brought the Imam ('a), he said to the Imam ('a): "Oh 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, I am not your father's killer! Why do you not come and visit me?" Imam Sajjād ('a) replied: "The murderer of my father only killed him, while my father destroyed the man's hereafter. Therefore, if you want to be like my father's killer, then be so!"

'Abd al-Malik responded: "No, my intent was for you to come to us, so that you may benefit from our material blessings." When the Imam ('a) heard these words, he went and took a seat on the ground in front of the Caliph. As everyone was watching him, he spread out the lap of his clothes, and said: "Oh Lord, show the value and worth of your friends to him." Suddenly the Caliph and those who were around him saw the lap of the Imam ('a) covered with sparkling jewels. The jewels sparkled to such an extent that they dazzled the eyes. The Imam ('a) then said: "Oh Lord, take them, for we have no need of them."[118]

2- 'Abd al-Malik had received information that the sword of the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) was in the possession of 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a). This was a very valuable sword due to its symbolism. In essence, it was a manifestation of governmental authority and legitimacy for whoever possessed it. Since this sword was in the possession of Imam Sajjād ('a), it was a cause of worry for 'Abd al-Malik, and he feared that this would be a source of support for the Imam ('a). In order to resolve this issue, he sent a messenger to the Imam ('a) and requested that the sword be sent to him; on the bottom of the letter, he also wrote that if the Imam ('a) needed anything, or wished for something to be done, he was ready to comply.

The Imam ('a) replied to him in the negative, refusing his request for the sword. 'Abd al-Malik sent him a threatening letter, saying that if he did not send him the sword, he would

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[118] Qutb al-Rāwandī, al-Kharayij wa al-Jarāyih, researched and edited by: Shaykh Asadallah Rabbānī, Qum, Muṣṭafāwi Publications, p. 232.
- Al-Amīn al-'Āmūlī, al-Sayyid Muḥsin, al-Sahīfat al-Khāmīsah, Damascus, Maṭba'at Fīḥā', 1282 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 492.

cut off the Imam's ('a) stipend from the public treasury. During this time period, all of the Muslims received a stipend from the public treasury, and the Imam ('a) also had such a portion. The Imam ('a) fired back at him, saying: "God has taken the responsibility of saving his servants from the things which are unpleasant for them, and of giving them their sustenance from whence they do not expect, and in the Quran he says: 'Indeed Allah does not like any ingrate traitor.'"[119] [120]

5- Spreading Religious Knowledge

Another aspect of the Imam's ('a) struggle against the corruption and tyranny of his time was through means of spreading religious knowledge and explaining the various aspects of ethics and morality. The Imam ('a) took many long strides in this field and later scholars, such as Shaykh Mufīd, have written the following about him: "The scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah have narrated so many sciences from him that they are not easily counted. Moreover, many supplications, virtues of the Quran, sermons, and issues of the obligatory and the forbidden (the Ḥalāl and the Ḥarām) have been narrated by the Imam ('a). These things have been recorded by famous scholars, and if we wished to mention them all, it would be a lengthy affair..."[121]

An example of the educational and ethical teachings of the mam ('a) can be found in an anthology by the name of 'Risālat al-Ḥuqūq'. In this work, the Imam ('a) listed the various responsibilities and duties that human beings have, whether these duties are towards God or towards people, be it their relatives or other individuals. These are listed under 50 different sections, starting with some general points and then

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[119] Al-Amīn 'Āmūlī, Sayyid Muḥsin, A'yān al-Shī'ah, Beirut, Dār al-Ta'āruf Lil Maṭbū'āt, 1403 Hijir Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 635.
- Ayatollah Khāminiī, Sayyid 'Alī, A Research Into the Life of Imam Sajjād (a), First Print, Tehran, Daftare Hezbe Jumhūriye Islāmī, Nashrīye Shomaraye 63, 1361 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 73.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, vol. 46, p. 95.

[120] Surah Ḥajj, Verse 38.

[121] Al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 260.

becoming more specific as they go on.[122]

The 'Treatise on Rights' has been narrated through scholars of tradition, and it has been recorded in various books of tradition as well. It has also been printed a multitude of times and several commentaries and translations have been written on it. It is a beautiful work which details the rights and relationships that we have with one another.

6- Assisting the Needy

Another part of the Imam's ('a) life involved the way he would help support the people of his society. This support was all-encompassing in nature and included the time when people needed sanctuary during various civil conflicts, such as the tragedy of Ḥurrah, or during other times when peace prevailed and the poor were in need of assistance. In all such cases, his help to the people continued until the end of his life. History has recorded many telling and prominent examples of the Imam's actions.

One example which has been recorded in the history texts is that the Imam ('a) had taken on the responsibility of paying the expenses of 100 poor families in Medina.[123] A group of the people of Medina lived off of food which reached them during the night, and this was their source of sustenance. Yet they had no idea who the person was that would deliver this food to them each night. After the passing of Imam 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a), they realized that the individual had been none other than the Imam ('a) himself.[124]

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[122] This treatise has been narrated by the late Ṣadūq in his book Al-Khiṣāl (Abwāb al-Khamsīn wa Māfūqah) through a chain of narrators and in the book Man Lā Yahḍarahu al-Faqīh (vol. 2, p. 618) through a mursal narration. Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Shu'bah, in his book Tuḥaf al-'Ūqūl has narrated this without a chain of narrators and in a more extensive fashion.

[123] Abū Na'īm Iṣfihānī, Ḥilyat al-Aw'līyā, Fifth Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1407 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 136.
- Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 327.

[124] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah Fī Marifat al-'A'immah, Tabrīz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 289.
- Shablanjī, Nūr al-Absār Fī Manāqib Āali Baytin Nabī al-Mukhtār, Cairo, Maktabah al-Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 140.

The Imam ('a) would take a leather bag full of bread and other food items and personally carry them on his back. He would take the food to the houses of the poor and distribute them in a way where the people could not recognize him, saying: "Charity given in secret quenches the fire of God's wrath."[125] The people of Medina would later mention that: "We lost our source of (secret) charity at the time when 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a) passed away."[126]

During the years of his life, Imam Sajjād ('a) personally carried so many sacks filled with flour and other food items to the houses of the poor that his shoulder became bruised and callused. After his martyrdom, during his ceremonial washing, this bruise was seen by those who were present. When they asked what this bruise was from, it was mentioned: "This is the result of him carrying the heavy sacks of food to the houses of the poor."[127]

7- The Imam as the Centerpoint of Education

At the time of Islam's revelation, slavery was a common practice throughout the world and it was found in all of the major civilizations. Since it was not possible for it to be abolished all at once, Islam opened various other routes towards its gradual abolishment. From one angle, Islam reduced the ways that people could be taken as slaves and from another angle, it made the freeing of slaves an Islamic nstitution which was considered to be an act of worship. For xample, slaves were freed as expiation for various sins, as well as for abandoning certain obligatory religious duties. Through

- Abū Na'īm Iṣfihānī, Ḥilyat al-Aw'līyā, Fifth Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1407 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 140.

[125] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā, Ibid, p. 289.
- Abū Na'īm Iṣfihānī, Ibid, p. 136.
- Majlisī, Ibid, p. 88.

[126] Abū Na'īm Iṣfihānī, Ibid, p. 136.
- Shablanjī, Ibid, p. 140.
- Majlisī, Ibid, p. 88.

[127] Abū Na'īm Iṣfihānī, Ibid, p. 136.
- 'Alī ibn 'Īsā, Ibid, p. 289.
- Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Ibid, vol. 4, p. 154.

these steps, Islam reduced the means for the taking of new slaves, and opened wide the door for their release.

From a third angle, the Prophet (ṣ) recommended to the Muslims that they should treat the slaves which they already possessed with compassion, much like they would treat their own families. They were ordered to give the slaves the same food which they themselves ate and the same clothes which they themselves would wear. Even beyond such practices, the release of slaves was given a very high value and it was equated with religious virtue. In many traditions, it has been mentioned that freeing the slaves is one of the loftiest acts of worship that one can perform and it entails a great deal of divine reward. In this way, Muslims were highly encouraged to help release those who were in a state of slavery.[128]

When one researches the life of Imam Sajjād ('a), narrations recounting occasions when slaves are freed are very common. In fact, the Imam ('a) performed this action so many times that he must have had another reason other than just divine reward. When we examine this matter in some detail, we see that the Imam ('a) had goals which included the training and education of these slaves. History shows that he would buy them, and then he would spend a period of time training and educating them. When they had been sufficiently trained and educated to be independent, he would free them and they would go into the society as models of exemplary human beings. They would in turn begin the process of teaching and educating others in the society. It is interesting to note that even after their release, these former slaves would maintain their connection with the Imam ('a), remaining very close to him.

'Alī ibn Ṭāwūs, in the month of Ramaḍān, wrote: "'Alī ibn Ḥusayn ('a) would release 20 slaves on the last night of the month of Ramaḍān, and he would say: 'Every night in the month of Ramaḍān when the fast has been completed, God releases 70,000 of the people of hell from the torment of its flames; during the last night of the month, he releases a number

[128] Refer to: Irajī, Muḥammad Ṣādiq, Slavery in Islam, Tehran University.

equal to all the other nights of Ramaḍān combined. I would like that my Lord sees that I have released my slaves in this world, so that he will free me from the fire of hell on the Day of Judgment.'"

Imam Sajjād ('a) would never keep a slave for longer than one year. Whenever he would bring a slave at the beginning or middle of the year, he would free them on the night of 'Īd al-Fitr. During the next year, he would bring another individual in place of them and they would in turn be freed in the month of Ramaḍān; this continued until the very end of his life.

It has been narrated that the Imam ('a) would also bring some his slaves to the Ḥajj pilgrimage. During the Ḥajj rites, as he was departing towards Mash'ar, he would free them all and give them money.[129] According to one of the writers: "Whenever the slaves would become aware of this practice, they would find a way to free themselves from their slavery under the nobles and aristocrats and go into the service of Imam Zayn al-'Abidīn ('a)." Throughout the years, Imam Sajjād ('a) continued to free slaves in this way. On every occasion possible, he would repeat this action until there was a large group of slaves in the city of Medina who had been personally freed by him.[130]

It is evident that the Imam ('a) had in reality created an nstitution for training and educating others. He would buy slaves, keep them under his supervision for a period of time, and then train and educate them. When the time arrived for freeing them, each one of them was an example for other people in the society. After they were freed, they would not cut off their spiritual connection with the Imam ('a), and they would in turn spend their time training and educating others in the society. This program of the Imam ('a) is a truly fascinating one, and one worthy of further research and reflection.[131]

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[129] Iqbāl al-'A'māl, Second Edition, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1390 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 261.

[130] Sayyid al-'Ahl, 'Abd al-Aziz, The Life of Zayn al-'Abidīn (a), translated by Ḥusayn Wujdānī, Third Print, Tehran, New Month Magazine Publications, p. 55.

[131] In preparing this section, the following book was used: The Fourth Imam (a) as the Guardian of the Revolution of Karbalā, written by 'Alī Akbar Ḥasanī.

The Fifth Imam

Imam Muḥammad Bāqir

A Brief Look into the Life of Imam Bāqir

Imam Bāqir (ʿa) was born in the year 57 Hijrī in the city of Medina. He was 39 years old at the time of the death of his father, Imam Zayn al-ʿAbidīn (ʿa), who passed away in 94 Hijrī. His name is Muḥammad, while his kunya is Abū Jaʿfar, and his agnomens are Bāqir and Bāqir al-ʿŪlūm.

His mother is Umm ʿAbdullah, the daughter of Imam Ḥasan (ʿa). He was the first person who was a Fāṭimī and an ʿAlawī from both his mother and father's side. Imam Bāqir (ʿa) passed away in the year 114 Hijrī in the city of Medina, and was buried in the famous graveyard of Baqīʿ. He was buried next to the grave of his father and grandfather. The period of his imamate was eighteen years in length.

Caliphs Contemporary to Imam Bāqir

The Imam (ʿa) lived contemporaneously with the following caliphs:

1- Walīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (86-96 Hijrī)
2- Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (96-99 Hijrī)
3- ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (99-101 Hijrī)
4- Yazīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (101-105 Hijrī)
5- Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (105-125 Hijrī)

These caliphs, with the exception of ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, who was relatively just and inclined towards the family of the Prophet, were all tyrannical, despotic, and self serving. They were no less tyrannical and oppressive than their forbearers, and they were especially severe on Imam Bāqir (ʿa).

The Founder of a Great Movement of Learning

Although he lived in unfavorable and restrictive times, Imam Bāqir ('a) engaged in disseminating the reality of Islam. He is famously known for analyzing and explaining various intellectual issues. He brought about an extensive movement in learning and science, and laid the foundations for an Islamic university, which reached its zenith in the time of his son, Imam Ṣādiq ('a).

Imam Bāqir ('a) was superior in his knowledge, ascetism, eminence, and virtue, over all of the Hāshimīs. The eminent status of his knowledge and actions was verified by friend and foe alike. Many traditions have remained from him in the fields of Islamic rulings, Quranic commentary, the history of Islam, and various other subjects...[132]

The distinguished scholars of that day, along with a number of the companions of the Prophet (ṣ), benefitted greatly from the presence of Imam Bāqir ('a). Jābir ibn Yazīd Ja'farī, Kaysān Sajistānī (from the Tābi'īn) and jurisprudents such as: Ibn Mubārak, Zuhrī, Awzā'ī, Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, Shāfi'ī, and Ziyād ibn Mūndhar Nahdī all benefited from his knowledge and narrated his words both through intermediaries and without intermediaries.

The compilations of scholars and historians of the Ahl al-Sunnah, such as Ṭabarī, Balādhūrī, Salāmī, Khatīb Baghdādī, Abū Na'īm Iṣfihānī, and books such as Muwaṭṭa' Mālik, Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Masnad Abī Ḥanīfah, Masnad Marwazī, Tafsīr Naqqāshī, Tafsīr Zamakhsharī, as well as tens of others like them (which include some of the most important books of the Ahl al-Sunnah), all contain the narrations of the Fifth Imam ('a). All throughout these works, the words 'Qāla Muḥammad ibn 'Alī'[133] or 'Qāla Muḥammad al-Bāqir' can be seen.[134] The books of the Shia are also, naturally, full of the words and

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[132] Shaykh Mufīd, Al-'Irshād, Qum, Manshūrāt Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 261.

[133] This means: Muḥammad ibn 'Alī has said....

[134] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Mu'assasah' Intishārāt 'Allāmah, vol. 4, p. 195.

traditions of Imam Bāqir (ʿa), and these pertain to many subjects and fields.

Imam Bāqir according to the Scholars

The reputation of the knowledge and breadth of learning of Imam Bāqir (ʿa) rapidly spread to all corners of the Muslim nation. He was so well known for his knowledge that he was given the title 'Bāqir al-ʿŪlūm', which means: 'The opener of the doors of knowledge, and the solver of the problems of the sciences.' Ibn Ḥajar Haytamī has written: "Muḥammad Bāqir opened many hidden treasures of science, learning, and religious law, as well as various wisdoms and subtleties. These are all quite apparent, except for someone who is lacking in intelligence or is of bad character. It is for these traits that he was called the splitter of knowledge, the compository of learning, and the flag bearer of science."[135]

'Abdullah ibn 'Aṭā', who was one of the prominent personalities and scholars during the time of the Imam (ʿa), has said: "I never saw the scholars of Islam as being so lowly and humbled in terms of their learning, as when they were in the gatherings of Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī (ʿa). I saw Ḥakam ibn ʿUtaybah, who was known in all corners of the nation for his knowledge and jurisprudence, sitting like a child in front of his high ranking teacher before Muḥammad Bāqir (ʿa). He was sitting in a position of humility, captivated and absorbed by the words and character of the Imam (ʿa)."[136]

In his speeches, Imam Bāqir (ʿa) would frequently reference the verses of the Holy Quran, and he would bring evidence from the Book of God. He would say: "Whatever I say, ask me where the related verse is found in the Quran, so that I may present it to you."[137]

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[135] Al-Ṣawāʿiq al-Maḥraqah, Second Edition, Cairo, Maktabah Cairo, p. 201.

[136] Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭbaʿah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 337.
- ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah Fī Marifat al-'A'immah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 329.

[137] Ṭabarsī, Iḥtijāj, Najaf, al-Maṭbaʿat Murtaḍawīyah, 1350 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 176.

The Students of Imam Bāqir's School

Imam Bāqir ('a) educated many prominent students in the fields of fiqh, tradition, commentary, and various other Islamic sciences; each of these students was counted as a heavyweight in respect to their learning and knowledge. Prominent personalities such as Muḥammad ibn Mūslim, Zurārah ibn Ayn, Abū Basir, Burayd ibn Mū'āwīya 'Ajalī, Jābir ibn Yazīd, Ḥamrān ibn Ayn, and Hishām ibn Sa'alīm were all trained in the school of Imam Bāqir ('a).

The sixth Imam ('a) has mentioned: "Our school and the traditions of my father were kept alive by four individuals. These four are: Zurārah, Abū Baṣīr, Muḥammad ibn Mūslim, and Burayd ibn Mū'āwīya 'Ajalī. If it were not for these four, no one would have benefitted from the teachings of the religion and the school of thought of the Prophet. These individuals were the preservers of the religion. From amongst the Shias of our time, these were the first who became acquainted with our teachings, and on the Day of Resurrection, they will be joined with us sooner than others."[138] The students of Imam Bāqir's ('a) school were the heads of jurisprudence and tradition during their time, and they were considered superior to their non-Shia counterparts.

The Splitter of Knowledge and the Opener of the Doors of Learning

The scientific works of the Imam ('a), and the students which his school delivered to the Muslim nation, gave fulfilment to the prediction of the Prophet (ṣ). This foretelling is found in a tradition narrated from Jābir ibn 'Abdullah Anṣārī, the famous personality from the early days of Islam's revelation. Jābir was one of the great companions of the Prophet (ṣ) and he possessed a special affection for the family of the Prophet. He has mentioned that: "One day the Prophet

[138] Shaykh Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Ma'rifat al-Rijāl (famously known as Rijāl Kashī), researched and edited by Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, p. 136 and 137 (Tradition 219).

(ṣ) said to me: 'After me, you will see an individual who is from my family, whose name is (the same as) my name, and whose appearance will be similar to mine. He will open the doors of knowledge to the people.'

The Prophet (ṣ) foretold of this event at a time when Imam Bāqir ('a) had not yet been born; years passed from this foretelling, and the era of the Fourth Imam ('a) arrived. One day during this time period, Jābir was passing through the streets of Medina when his eye fell on Imam Bāqir ('a). When he paid careful attention, he noticed all of the exact signs which the Prophet (ṣ) had mentioned to him. He asked: "What is your name?" The Imam ('a) replied: "My name is Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a)." Jābir began to kiss his forehead and said: "Your grandfather, the Prophet (ṣ), sent you his greetings through me."

From that day on, in respect of the Prophet (ṣ) and as a sign of the greatness of Imam Bāqir ('a), he would visit the Imam ('a) twice each day. In addition to this, when he was in the mosque of the Prophet (ṣ), he would sit amongst the crowds and narrate the prediction of the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) in response to those who would criticize the Imam (a) with ill intentions.

An Important Point

It is important to mention that this event, where Jābir sees Imam Bāqir ('a) and conveys the Prophet's (ṣ) greeting to him, has been narrated through many traditions and quoted in a number of books. These books include: Rījāl Kashshī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Āmālī Ṣadūq, Āmālī Shaykh Ṭūsī, Ikhtiṣāṣ Mufīd, and as well as other texts.

When we begin to examine these traditions though, it does seem that they are contradictory in two ways: firstly, according to the context of some of these traditions, Jābir saw Imam Bāqir ('a) in the streets of Medina while other traditions recount that he saw him in the house of the Fourth Imam ('a). Another group of traditions narrate that Imam Bāqir ('a) went to see

Jābir, and Jābir then recognized him. Secondly, in certain traditions, it has been explained that Jābir had become blind at that time, while in other traditions it is mentioned that Jābir looked at the appearance of Imam Bāqir ('a) in detail. Clearly, if Jābir was blind, he couldn't have possibly seen the Imam ('a).

In answering the first potential contradiction, there is no real issue between the various traditions because the context of the traditions show that Jābir had a great deal of affection towards the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and he would repeat the foretelling and the greeting of the Prophet (ṣ) many times. His intention was to show the greatness of Imam Bāqir ('a) to the people. Therefore, it isn't an issue if the tradition is repeated multiple times in different places.

In regards to the second potential contradiction, the traditions which narrate that Jābir looked at the Imam ('a) can be from before the time of his blindness. Shaykh Mufīd has narrated from Imam Bāqir ('a): "I went to see Jābir ibn 'Abdullah Anṣārī and I gave him my greetings. He answered my greetings and asked: 'Who are you?' And this was after he had become blind..."[139] Sibṭ ibn Jawzī has narrated a similar tradition.[140]

The Political and Social Conditions during the Life of the Imam

Let us now take a look at the particularities of each of the five caliphs who ruled during the time of Imam Bāqir ('a). This will give us a deeper understanding of the social and political conditions which Imam Bāqir ('a) lived during his lifetime.

Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik

Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik was the first contemporary caliph during the time of Imam Bāqir ('a). Since we already described

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[139] Al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 262.

[140] Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 337.

this caliph's characteristics in the chapter on Imam Sajjād ('a), we will simply add a few new points in this section.

The period of the caliphate of Walīd was a period of victory and conquest of the Muslims over their enemies. During this time, the territory of the Ummayid government increased from both the east and the west. Since his caliphate occurred in a period where calm prevailed in the Muslim nation, Walīd was able to take up where the previous caliphs had left off, and make considerable gains in terms of battle and conquest. The lands under Walīd's dominion expanded considerably and he was able to conquer parts of India, as well as Kabul, Kashgar, Tūs, and various other territories. He even pushed into Andalusia, and the army of the Andulusians were defeated by the Muslims under the command of Mūsā ibn Nusayr. As a result of this, Andulusia also became part of the Muslim territories as well.[141]

Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Malik

The period of the caliphate of Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Malik was short in duration; it lasted approximately 3 years.[142] During the early period of his caliphate, Sulaymān showed much flexibility. For example, he opened the gates of the prisons of Iraq, which had been filled with innocent people by Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf, and allowed the prisoners to go free. He also removed the tax agents of Ḥajjāj and nullified many of the oppressive measures which had been in place.

The Fire of Vengeance

Sulaymān's initiative in freeing innocent prisoners in Iraq was one of his early actions as a ruler. Unfortunately, his methods would change later on and he completely reversed course. He began engaging in acts of personal vengeance, and

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[141] Dr. Āyatī, Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, Andulusia: The History of the Muslim Government in Europe, Tehran, Tehran University Publications, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 17-18.

[142] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dāru Ṣādir, vol. 5, p. 11 and 37.

- Mas'ūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab wa Ma'ādin al-Jawhar, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 3, p. 173 and 182.

his oppression reached epic proportions. He also began to support certain tribes over others. For example, he put the tribe of Muḍarā under pressure and supported their tribal rivals, the Qaḥṭānīs.[143] He also killed some of the heads of the army, as well as some of the notable personalities of the time. Mūsā ibn Nusayr and Ṭāriq ibn Zīyād were two champions of the victory over Andulusia. In spite of this, they fell in the caliph's disfavor and they were exiled as a result.[144]

The compiler of the text 'The History of Political Islam' has written: "Sulaymān would treat his governors in different ways. He would favor some of them, while plotting to eliminate others. Sulaymān had enmity towards individuals such as: Muḥammad ibn Qāsim, the governor of India, Qutaybīyah ibn Mūslim, the governor of Transoxiana, and Mūsā ibn Nusayr, the governor of Andulusia."[145] All of Sulaymān's animosity and enmity were based on his personal whims and impulses.

Corruption in the Government

Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd al-Malik was a man who was particularly avaricious, gluttonous, and pleasure seeking. He had an inordinate love of opulence and luxury. He would eat an amount of food sufficient for several normal people and his journeys were always colorful and displayed pretentious airs. He would wear very flashy, expensive clothing and he had special designs painstakingly embroidered into them.

He would engage in so much excess that he would not even allow his servants and butlers to approach him in ordinary clothing; they were forced to wear embroidered and colorful clothing as well. This love of extravagance and splendor soon went beyond the palace gates; it began to permeate throughout the cities of the Muslim nation, and the wearing of extravagant

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[143] Furūkh, 'Umar, Tārīkh al-Ṣadr al-Islam wa al-Dawlat al-Umawīya, Third Edition, Beirut, Dār al-'Ilm Lil Mulāyīn, 1976 A.D., p. 197.

[144] Sayyid Amīr ʿAlī, Mukhtasar Tārīkh al-'Arab, edited by 'Afīf al-Ba'albakī, Second Edition, Beirut, Dār al-'Ilm Lil Mulāyīn, 1967 A.D., p. 125.

[145] Doctor Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, The Political History of Islam, Fourth Print, Tehran, Everlasting (Javīdān) Publications, 1360 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 1, p. 401.

clothing was soon normalized amongst the common people of Yemen, Kūfah, and Alexandria.[146]

ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz

Although the will of ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (the father of Sulaymān) stated that the successor to Sulaymān would be his brother Yazīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, this was later changed. When Sulaymān became ill and knew that he would soon die, he chose ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz as his successor instead.

ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz was immediately faced with the troubled situation of the masses, and was witness to the rage and enmity which the people expressed towards the Umayyid government. From the beginning of his caliphate, he acted with an attitude of appeasement towards the oppressed masses; in his directives to his governors and representatives throughout the Muslim nation, he wrote the following: "The people are afflicted with difficulties and various burdens. They are victims of oppression and the religion has been implemented amongs them in a haphazard manner. Past oppressive governors anc representatives, through their policies, have not concentrated on protecting the people's rights, nor on acting with moderation and goodness towards them— they have taken the people to the very edge. Therefore, the past must be compensated for, and these types of actions must be stopped.

Henceforth, whenever someone wishes to go on the Ḥajj pilgrimage, you must give them their stipend from the public treasury sooner so that they can leave on their journey. Until you have consulted with me, none of you has the right to punish anyone, or cut off their hand, or to hang them from the gallows."[147]

The Struggle against Corruption

In addition to this, after strengthening and stabilizing his

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[146] Masʿūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab wa Maʿādin al-Jawhar, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 3, p. 175.

[147] Ibn Wāḍih, Tārīkh Yaʿqūbī, researched by: Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Najaf, Maktabah Haidarīah, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 50.

government, 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz put all of the horses and other quadrupeds of the caliphate for immediate auction, and then deposited the money from their sale into the public treasury. He then ordered his wife Fāṭimah (the daughter of 'Abd al-Malik) to return all of her jewelry, wealth, and expensive gifts, which her father and brother had gifted to her with money from the public treasury. Fāṭimah was warned that if she was not able to part with her ill gotten property, she would have to leave his house. Fāṭimah accepted and returned all of the jewelry and ornaments back to the public treasury.[148] 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz not only accustomed his wife with the rules of justice and fairness, but he also sold all of the possessions, real estate, and expensive clothing which had belonged to Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Malik. This money, too, was then deposited into the public treasury and it ended up amounting to 24,000 dinars.[149]

'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz began his social reforms and struggle against corruption from his own home and he expanded it to include the entire system of government which he had inherited. He then expanded his circle of reform to include the Umayyid clan which included his own cousins. He ordered them to return whichever portions of their wealth had been appropriated from the public treasury. With complete decisiveness, he took back the wealth that the Umayyids had forcefully appropriated from the people, and gave it back to their rightful owners. To a very large extent, he prevented the Umayyids from behaving as if the people's wealth completely belonged to them.[150]

This situation cost the Umayyids dearly, and they began to

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[148] Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, researched by: Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Cairo, Maṭba'at al-Madanī, (Published by Maktabah al-Muthannā – Baghdad), 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 232.

- Ibn Qutayba, al-Imāmah Wa al-Sīyāsah, Third Edition, Cairo, Maṭba'at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1382 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 116.

[149] Ibn Qutayba, al-Imāmah Wa al-Sīyāsah, Third Edition, Cairo, Maṭba'at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1382 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 116.

[150] Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, researched by: Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Cairo, Maṭba'at al-Madanī, (Published by Maktabah al-Muthannā–Baghdad), 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 232.

plot against 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz. When a group that was close to him visited, they said to him: "Are you not afraid that your clan will revolt against you and take your rulership?" 'Umar responded by saying: "I fear nothing but the accounting of the Day of Judgment."[151]

The Prohibition of Cursing Imam 'Alī

It is clear that 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz was a relatively just and benevolent ruler compared to the caliphs which had come before him. Although his rule is considered as religously illegitimate, since this position belonged to the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), he still fought against much of the corruption and oppression which had been established by past caliphs, and his government aimed to serve the needs of the people. Amongst these services, his most important and shining service was the prohibition of the cursing and slandering of Imam 'Alī ('a). Through this prohibition, he put a halt to a disgraceful religious deviation which had been going on for 69 years; this was a great service not only to the Shias, but to all of humanity.

The religious deviation of cursing Imam 'Alī ('a) was firs established during the time of Mū'āwīya's caliphate. After th martyrdom of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) in the year 40 Hijr Mū'āwīya gained complete political control and decided to transform the name of Imam 'Alī ('a) into that of the most hated man in the Islamic nation. He aimed to do this through the use of a continuous propaganda campaign.

In order to enact this policy, he first put the supporters and followers of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) under tremendous pressure, and through the use of death threats, he prevented many of the virtues of the Imam ('a) from being recounted. He did not allow the narration of even one tradition, or one word of wisdom, or even one poem in praise of Imam 'Alī ('a) to be recited in public. Furthermore, in order to portray Imam 'Alī ('a) in a negative light, he ordered his narrators of tradition and

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[151] Abū Ḥanīfah Daynāwarī, al-Akhbār al-Tawl, researched by: 'Abd Mun'im 'Āmir, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya (Published by Intishārāt Āftāb Tehran), p. 331.

his paid agents to fabricate various sayings against Imam ʿAlī (ʿa). In this way, numerous traditions were fabricated and became considered as common knowledge amongst the people.

Mūʿāwīya did not suffice with these actions— he also ordered that Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) be cursed and slandered from the pulpits at every Friday Prayer. This cursing was to be added to the traditional Friday sermon; in effect, it became a part of the religious tradition of the Muslims. This disgraceful deviation was put into effect and became a standard practice in the various territories of the Muslim world. It affected the masses and took root in the public consciousness so much so that children were born with the hatred of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), and they would grow old and die with this hatred in their hearts.

After Mūʿāwīya died, the succeeding Umayyid caliphs continued with this religious deviation, and it was still being practiced until the end of the first century Hijrī, when ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz reached the position of the caliphate.[152]

The Effect of One Teacher

Some people wonder why ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz was so ifferent from the rest of the Umayyid caliphs. The answer to his question lies in two seemingly minor events which took place during his youth. The first event took place with his teacher ʿUbaydullah, who was a godly and pious man, and who had been placed in charge of educating ʿUmar. One day, ʿUmar was busy playing with other children from the Umayyid clan and their relatives. While the children were playing they would use any excuse to curse Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) and they found this to be funny. This had become so normal in the society that even small children would would do it as they were playing. ʿUmar, too, copied this behavior that he saw in his young friends.

On that day, at that exact time, ʿUmar's teacher happened to pass by this group of children and he heard his young student cursing Imam ʿAlī (ʿa). The teacher didn't say anything

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[152] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, Second Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt Maktabah Ayatollah ʿUẓmā al-Marʿashī al-Najafī, vol. 3, p. 57.

and he went to the mosque. The time for classes arrived, and so 'Umar also went to the mosque in order to attend. When his teacher saw him, he began to pray. 'Umar sat down and waited for his teacher to finish praying, but his teacher continued praying for an unusually long time. 'Umar sensed that his teacher was upset at him and the prayer was simply an excuse to avoid him.

Eventually, the teacher finished his prayer, and he turned towards 'Umar with anger and said: "How did you come to think that after God was pleased with the 'People of Badr' and the 'Pledge of Riḍwān', he then became angry at them, and they are worthy of being cursed?"[153] 'Umar responded: "I don't know anything about this." His teacher then said: "Then why do you curse 'Alī ('a)?" 'Umar replied: "I apologize for my actions, and repent for what I have done— I promise that I won't repeat this action any more."

The logical and effective words of the teacher had a profound effect and they influenced the young 'Umar greatly. The son of 'Abd al-'Azīz decided from that day onwards not to bring up the name of 'Alī ('a) in any negative context. In spite of his personal beliefs, 'Umar would still hear the slander and cursing of 'Alī ('a) in the streets, marketplaces, and even when playing with his friends. This continued until the second event took place, which sealed his determination in this matter.

A Momentous Acknowledgement

The father of 'Umar had been selected as the governor of Medina on behalf of the Syrian government. At the weekly Friday Prayers, as was the usual custom, he would conclude his sermon by cursing Imam 'Alī ('a). One day, his son 'Umar asked him: "Oh father, when you are delivering your sermon, you express yourself with great eloquence and clear language, but when you begin to curse 'Alī, your tongue has a stammer to it. What is the reason behind this?"

His father replied: "Oh my son, you have become aware of

[153] Imam 'Alī (a) was a participant in the Battle of Badr and the Pledge of Riḍwān.

this?" 'Umar responded: "Yes father." His father replied: "My son, if these very same people who gather around our pulpit knew the virtues of 'Alī that I know, they would disperse from around us and follow his children!" 'Umar, who still remembered the words of his teacher, and who had now heard these words from his own father, was severely shaken. He pledged that if he ever reached power, he would put a stop to this religious deviation.

Later, when 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz reached the caliphate in the year 99 Hijrī, he acted on his personal pledge and sent a directive, ordering that the following verse be recited instead of the cursing of 'Alī ('a): "Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition."[154] This initiative was met with the people's approval, and the poets and narrators who had cursed Imam 'Alī ('a) were from that point on criticized by the people for what they had done.[155]

The Return of Fadak to the Descendants of Fāṭimah

Another directive of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz consisted of giving back the land of Fadak to the descendents of Fāṭimah ('a). This was an estate which had been unjustly taken from her long ago. The story of Fadak is truly a heartbreaking event in the pages of history. However, it is not within the scope of this book to discuss its details so let us just briefly review what happened:

Fadak is the name of a property which the Holy Prophet (ṣ) gave to his daughter Fāṭimah ('a) during his lifetime. After the passing of the Prophet (ṣ), Abū Bakr took this land by force from her and declared it as part of the government's assets. From that time onwards, this land was passed from one caliph

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[154] Surah Nahl, Verse 90.

[155] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 5, p. 42. Also refer to: Mas'ūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 3, p. 184; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Commentary on the Nahj al-Balāghah, Second Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt Maktabah Ayatollah 'Uẓmā al-Mar'ashī al-Najafī, vol. 3, p. 59.

to another, until Mū'āwīya gifted it to Marwān. Marwān in turn gifted it to his son 'Abd al-'Azīz, and after the death of 'Abd al-'Azīz, Fadak was passed down to his son 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz. 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz then returned this property to the descendants of the Lady Fāṭimah ('a), and said: "Fadak is theirs and the Umayyids have no right over it." Unfortunately, after the passing of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, when Yazīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik became caliph, this land was once again seized by the Umayyids.[156]

Ṣadūq, in his book Al-Khiṣāl, has narrated that when 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz went to Medina and met with Imam Bāqir ('a), he returned Fadak to him.[157] It was in regards to these types of services, where 'Umar would repeal various oppressive measures that had been placed on the family of the Prophet (ṣ), that Imam Bāqir ('a) said: "'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz is a decent individual from the clan of the Umayyids..."[158] The rule of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz only lasted for two years and it is mentioned that the Umayyids poisoned and killed him because of his policies.[159]

The Prohibition of Recording Traditions

One of the deviations which was implemented in the Muslim nation after the passing of the Prophet (ṣ) was the prohibition of writing down and recording traditions. This prohibition extended to collective traditions in book form as well. This policy resulted in great harm to the Muslims, and its effect was felt both immediately, as well as long term.

The traditions and words of the Prophet (ṣ) have always been considered as the most important source of guidance after the Holy Quran. They are the second greatest source of Islamic

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[156] Ibn Wāḍih, Tārīkh Ya'qūbī, researched by: Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥr al-'Ulūm, Najaf, Maktabah Haidarīah, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 50.

[157] Al-Khiṣāl, Bāb al-Thalātha.

[158] Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, researched by: Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Cairo, Maṭba'at al-Madanī, (Published by Maktabah al-Muthannā – Baghdad), 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 230.

[159] Ibn 'Abdrabih, Uqd al-Farīd, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1403 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, p. 439.

culture, and are in essence, inseparable from the text of the Quran. These traditions complement the Quran and vice versa. In spite of these realities, the first and second caliphs rose up in opposition to the narration and compilation of traditions, and through the use of certain frivolous pretexts, they prohibited the narration, recording, and compilation of these valuable gems.

Abū Bakr said: "Do not narrate anything from the Prophet of God (ṣ), and if anyone among you asks about a matter, then say that the Book of God (the Quran) is among us; consider what it has proclaimed lawful as being lawful, and what it has proclaimed unlawful as being unlawful."[160] In order to prevent the writing of the traditions of the Prophet (ṣ), the Second Caliph wrote a directive to all of the various areas in the Muslim lands, declaring: "Whoever has written a tradition from the Prophet (ṣ) must destroy it." The Second Caliph did not find this directive sufficient enough and he would repeatedly remind the companions of the Prophet (ṣ) and the memorizers of tradition to abstain from the narration and recording of their knowledge.

Qarẓat ibn Ka'b, one of the famous companions of the Prophet (ṣ), has said: "When 'Umar was seeing us off towards Iraq, he accompanied us a part of the way, and said: 'Do you know why I am seeing you off?' We replied: 'We suppose that the caliph, out of respect for us companions of the Prophet (ṣ), is favoring us with this.' 'Umar said: 'Even beyond this issue of respect, I am escorting you so that I can advise you on a matter.' Then he added: 'You are going to an area where the people have filled their mosques and their gatherings with the recitation of the Quran. My advice is that you leave them in this state, and do not busy them with traditions— do not prevent them from the recitation of the Quran with the narration of traditions. Present the Quran without any excess words or traditions, and narrate less traditions from the Prophet (ṣ). In this policy, I am going to work alongside you.' When Qarẓat entered the area

[160] Shams al-Dīn Dhahabī, Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz, Beirut, Dār al-Turāth al-'Arabī, vol. 1, p. 3.

that he was commissioned to serve, the people asked him: 'Narrate a tradition for us.' He answered: 'The caliph has prohibited us from the narration of traditions.'"[161]

One time during the period of his caliphate, it is narrated that 'Umar changed his mind and decided to write down the traditions of the Prophet (ṣ). He went ahead and consulted the people to see what they thought about the matter. After contemplating the issue for a whole month, he found a solution. He announced to the people: "I remembered the nations of the past who lagged behind in relation to their heavenly texts because they wrote down their traditions and paid too much attention to them. Therefore, I will never allow the 'Book of God' (Quran) to be mixed with anything else."[162]

The Second Caliph would severely punish anyone he found narrating or writing down traditions. One day, 'Umar said to Ibn Mas'ūd, Abū Dardā', and Abū Dhar (who were all from the famous personalities of Islam): "What are these traditions which you are narrating from the Prophet (ṣ)?" He then had them imprisoned, and they remained there until the death of 'Umar.[163] This overall atmosphere, combined with variou punishments and penalties, restrained the majority of th Muslims from narrating and writing down traditions. The people were prevented from writing down the traditions of the Prophet (ṣ) for almost one hundred years.

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[161] Shamsh al-Dīn Dhahabī, Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz, Beirut, Dār al-Turāth al-'Arabī, vol. 1, p. 7.
- 'Ajāj al-Khaṭīb, Muḥammad, al-Sunnah Qabl al-Tadwīn, Cairo, Dār al-Fikr, 1391 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 97.
- Ibn Mājah, Sunan, Beirut, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, vol. 1, p. 12.
- Al-Ḥākim Nayshābūrī, Al-Mustadrak 'Alā al-Ṣaḥiḥain, Beirut, Dār al-Ma'rifah, vol. 1, p. 102.

[162] Muḥammad ibn Sa'ad, al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 3, p. 287.
- 'Askarī, Sayyid Murtaḍā, A Look At The Fate of Traditions, Tehran, Rūzbeh Publications, 1353 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 23.
- Suyūṭī, Tadrib al-Rāwī Fī Sharḥ Taqrīb al-Nawāwī, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1409 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 64.

[163] Al-Ḥākim Nayshābūrī, Al-Mustadrak 'Alā al-Ṣaḥiḥain, Beirut, Dār al-Ma'rifah, vol. 1, p. 110. In Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ (vol. 1, p. 7) Abū Mas'ūd Ansārī has been named in place of Abū Dhar.

An Irreparable Harm

These measures prevented the traditions of the Prophet (ṣ) from being narrated, and they were confined to the hearts of those who had memorized them. For this reason, the Muslims did not have access to much prophetic knowledge for a long period of time. This approached such extremes that Shaʿbī has narrated: "I was a close associate of Ibn ʿUmar for one year, and I did not hear him narrate even one tradition from the Prophet (ṣ)."[164] Sā'ib ibn Yazīd[165] has also reported: "I traveled with Saʿad ibn Mālik from Medina to Mecca. During the length of the journey, he did not narrate even one tradition from the Prophet (ṣ)."

This prohibition resulted in far reaching negative effects in the society. For example, ʿAbdullah ibn ʿUmar, who had recorded traditions from the Prophet (ṣ) on his orders, hid his compilation due to the directive of the caliph. Today, no mention of his book of traditions is to be found— In essence, all of the traditions which he recorded were lost forever. The ill effects of this prohibition to Islam and the Muslims is quite obvious, and the harm is of such that it cannot be compensated for. Some of these books of tradition were abandoned for nearly one hundred years, and they were absent from the sphere of Muslim life for this entire period.

The worst of these ill effects came from a group of liars and paid agents, who used this opportunity to fabricate and falsify traditions. These traditions were oftentimes to the benefit of the groups in power. Naturally, when traditions are confined to the limits of individual memory, and there are no registry of traditions or any means of checking their authenticity, the door is opened to the fabrication and falsification of these holy narrations. In these circumstances, tens of Abū Hurayrahs came into existence, and for the right amount of money and wealth, they played the role of authentic narrators of tradition.

This situation continued towards the end of the first

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[164] Ibn Mājah, Sunan, Beirut, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, vol. 1, p. 11.

[165] Ibn Mājah, Sunan, Beirut, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, vol. 1, p. 12.

century Hijrī until the caliphate of ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz in the year 99 Hijrī. ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz eliminated this religious deviation from among the people, and he began the process of reintroducing the custom of compiling and spreading narrations. In one of his directives, he encouraged the scholars and narrators who were active in this field by telling them: "Collect and compile the traditions of the Prophet (ṣ), for I fear that the scholars and narrators of tradition will pass away and the light of knowledge will be extinguished." According to Būkhārī, ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz wrote a similar letter from Syria to Abī Bakr ibn Ḥazm, who was the governor of Medina on his behalf.[166]

Still, this was only the beginning and a long period of time was needed to rebuild what had been lost. What was now prevalent in the memories of the people was also naturally diluted and mixed with certain distortions and alterations. Some of these were purposeful, while others were the natural results of time and the fallible human memory.

Unfortunately, as the caliphate of ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz was short in its duration, this policy did not progress with much speed; after ʿUmar, Yazīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik and Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik succeeded the caliphate and they were not very concerned about these matters. In fact, truth be told, they were not too concerned about the progress of Islam and the Muslims at all, much less the collection and preservation of traditions. Some have written that: "The first individual who began gathering traditions by the order of ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz was Muḥammad ibn Mūslim ibn Shihāb Zuhrī."[167]

It should also be noted that while the narration and compilation of traditions was allowed during the time of ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, many fabricated and falsified traditions ended up entering into these collections as well. In

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[166] Būkhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ, Bisharḥ al-Kīrmānī, Second Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, vol. 2, p. 6.

[167] Mudīr Shanichī, Kāẓim, ʿIlm al-Ḥadīth Wa Dirāyat al-Ḥadīth, Third Print, Qum, Islamic Publications Office affliated to Jāmiaʿah Mudarisīn Ḥawzah ʿIlmīyah Qum, 1362 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 30.

addition, the official narrators of tradition and the supporters of the Umayyid government suppressed any narrations which were in support of the 'family of the Prophet' and their followers. Many of these traditions were concealed due to political considerations.

Baseless Justifications

One of the important questions that comes up during this discussion is why a ban was enacted on compiling and narrating traditions during the time of the early caliphs. What were the grounds on which the Second Caliph declared this prohibition? This is while it is quite well known that the traditions of the Prophet (ṣ) (in reality, the things that he said and did) are decisive arguments in the religion of Islam just like the Quran. In fact, the Quran and the traditions complement one another. Following these traditions is an obligation upon all Muslims, and the Quran says that when the Prophet (ṣ) speaks, he is not speaking based on his own whims and desires: "Nor does he say (aught) of (his own) desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him."[168]

God has explicitly declared the words and commands of the Prophet (ṣ) as being decisive arguments and proofs for all Muslims. The Holy Quran says: "So take what the Messenger assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you."[169] It is mentioned that 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar has narrated from the Prophet (ṣ) that he pointed to his lips, and said: "Oh son of 'Umar, I swear by the Lord who holds my life in his hands, that nothing comes from between these two but the truth; therefore write down what I say."[170]

Knowing the importance of prophetic traditions and their necessity in educating people in the realities of Islam, can it really be said that it was correct for the Second Caliph to

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[168] Surah Najm, Verses 3 and 4.

[169] Surah Ḥashr, Verse 7.

[170] Refer to: Suyūṭī, Tadrīb al-Rāwī, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1409 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 62.

prevent people from writing down and recording these traditions? The Second Caliph had written a directive addressed to all the various territories of the Muslim nation, saying: "Whoever has written down a tradition from the Prophet (ṣ) must destroy it." Was this directive compatible with the spirit of Islam, which always insists on the expansion and spread of knowledge and learning?

In answering these questions, the supporters of the caliph and his policies are left helpless but to create a sort of philosophy for their answer. They claim that Abū Bakr gave the following reason for the prohibition of the narration and compilation of traditions: "The reason for the prohibition of narrating prophetic traditions is so these traditions were not mixed (confused) with the verses of the Holy Quran."[171]

This is an exceedingly baseless pretext for enacting such a policy. It is common knowledge that on the day that the Prophet (ṣ) passed away, all of the chapters and verses of the Quran were already determined and preserved. The writers and memorizers of the Quran had already preserved the entirety of the book to their strong memories, and the chapters and verses were already ordered. No one was able to add or remove a single letter to the Quran. In view of such a situation, could the recording of traditions have really been detrimental to the integrity of the Quran? This does not seem to be a logical reason.

In addition, the Holy Quran is unique in terms of its eloquence, smoothness, fluency, appeal, and sentence structure. There is no other compilation like it, and it is impossible to mistake even the highest forms of literature with it. Even the sermons of the Prophet (ṣ) or the words of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) in the Nahj al-Balāghah, which is the peak of eloquence in expression, can never be mistaken with the words of the Quran. When the Infallibles ('a) gave sermons, the verses of the Quran were mentioned frequently in their speeches, yet it was clear for everyone where one began and where one ended.

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[171] Abawariiah, Ibid, p. 43.

Political Motivations

History shows us that this prohibition had political motives as its main driving force. The main motivation in banning the writing and narration of traditions was an attempt to suppress the traditions which Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) had compiled throughout his life. As a result of his closeness to the Prophet (ṣ), Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) had compiled a very large collection of traditions and these contained many different types of Islamic knowledge. Possession of such a vast treasure naturally gave him a position of distinction and status among the rest of the Muslims. The holder of these compilations was in reality the holder of Islamic knowledge, and the one who had access to such knowledge possessed authority in the religion as well. This was something which the ban attempted to prevent.

Did the Prophet Prohibit the Compilation of Traditions?

Some narrators of tradition attribute this act of prohibition o the Prophet (ṣ) himself. They claim that the Prophet (ṣ) said: 'Do not write down anything from me but the Quran, and whoever has written anything (besides the Quran) must destroy it."[172] History shows us that this is a completely baseless tradition. First of all, Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was the best student of the Prophet (ṣ), and he narrated many traditions from him; these traditions were then handed down to successive Imams. If the Prophet (ṣ) had prohibited the compilation of traditions, then Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) would never have disobeyed him in this matter.

Secondly, many letters on various subjects, such as religious rulings, religious precepts, judicial matters, and politics were written down in the time of the Prophet (ṣ) himself. Narrators and historians have recorded these traditions, alongside their authentic chains of narration. A very small number of these letters relate to inviting people towards Islam; the majority were written on reconciliation, Islamic punishments (ḥūdūd), as

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[172] Aḥmad Ḥanbal, Masnad, Dār al-Fikr, vol. 3, p. 12.
- ʿAbdullah Dārami, Sunan, Dār al-Fikr, vol. 1, p. 119.
- Abawariiah, Ibid, p. 42.

well as different religious rules and principles. Therefore, how can anyone believe that the Prophet (ṣ) prohibited people from writing down anything but the Holy Quran while 300 letters (216 of which are now in our possession) were written in front of his very own eyes.

The Shia: The First Compilers of Tradition

Luckily, the Shia were heavily involved in this field from the very first days of Islam. They followed Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) in narrating, recording, and compiling traditions, and the valuable results of their efforts are still with us today. It is known that Imam 'Alī ('a) was the first individual to collect the traditions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). The Prophet (ṣ) would dictate various traditions and Imam 'Alī ('a) would write them down. These traditions were then compiled in the form of book.

In time, this book was passed down successively to the res of the Imams ('a) until it reached Imam Bāqir ('a). One day, Ḥakam ibn 'Utaybah saw this book in the possession of Imam Bāqir ('a). The story behind this is that Ḥakam had developed a difference of opinion with Imam Bāqir ('a) on a particular issue, and the Imam ('a) showed him the specific tradition related to that issue in the book and said: "This is the writing of 'Alī ('a) and it was the dictation of the Prophet of God (ṣ)."[173]

In addition, Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) had compiled another book about 'Dīyāt' and this book was called 'Saḥīfah'. This work was in the form of a scroll and the Imam ('a) would attach it to his sword. It has been narrated from the Imam ('a) that he said: "There is no book with us that we read other than the Book of God and this Saḥīfah". The Saḥīfah contained information about the religious rulings of wounds and injuries.[174] These words of Imam 'Alī ('a) about the Saḥīfah,

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[173] Najjāshī, Fihrist Asmā' Muṣanfī al-Shī'ah, Qum, Maktabah al-Dāwarī, p. 255 (Translated by Muḥammad ibn 'Adhāfir).

- Al-Ṣadr, Sayyid Ḥasan, al-Shia wa Fanūn al-Islam, Lebanon, Ṣaydā, 1331 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 65.

[174] Sharaf al-Dīn, al-Sayyid 'Abd al-Ḥusayn, Mu'alaf al-Shī'ah Fī al-Ṣadr al-Islām, Tehran,

clearly indicate that at that time, no other book existed besides the Quran, and Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was the first compiler of traditions and jurisprudential rulings. Moreover, Suyūṭī has mentioned Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) and his son Imam Ḥasan (ʿa) as being the supporters of the compilation of traditions.[175]

If the Ahl al-Sunnah, due to the prohibition of traditions, did not narrate and record traditions for 100 years or more, it is fortunate that the Shias were pioneers in this field and prevented many valuable narrations from being lost. Besides Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), Abū Rāfiʿ (a companion of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa)) was also involved in compiling a book. This book was called al-Sunan wa al-Aḥkām wa al-Qaḍāyā.[176] He collected various rulings, such as those related to prayer, fasting, Zakāt, Ḥajj, and various judicial matters, and compiled them into book form. If we consider this the first book of tradition that was compiled by the companions, then we can consider this the first book of jurisprudence of its kind ever to be compiled.[177] Also noteworthy is that, at the time that Abū Rāfiʿ compiled his book, the writing of traditions was considered a great crime by the government.

After Abū Rāfiʿ, Shia writers busied themselves in the compilation of traditions even though it was considered illegal by the authorities. Through these means, they protected the words of the Infallibles (ʿa) from distortion and other potential dangers. This program of action began from the time of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (ʿa) and continued until the time of Imam Bāqir (ʿa). The progress was so great during the time of Imam Bāqir (ʿa) that when the decree of ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz came, which rescinded the prohibition on the collection and

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Maktabah Najāh, p. 14-15. The Late Sayyid Ḥasan al-Ṣadr has written: "I have with me a copy of this book, and Būkhārī, in the section of (Kītābat al-ʿIlm) has narrated from this book." (Ta'sīs al-Shīʿah Lil ʿUlūm al-Islam, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-'Alamī, p. 279).

[175] Tadrīb al-Rāwī Fī Sharḥ Taqrīb al-Nawawi, Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1409 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 61.

[176] Najjāshī, Fihrīst Asmā' Muṣanfī al-Shīʿah, Qum, Maktabah al-Dāwarī, p. 4.

[177] For a discussion on the recording and compilation of traditions, please refer to: Jaʿfar Subḥānī, Buḥūth Fī Milal wa al-Naḥl, Second Edition, Lajīnnah Idārat al-Ḥawzah al-ʿIlmīyah Biqum Muqadissah, Iran, 1410 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 58-73.

compilation of traditions, each of the prominent students and companions of the Fifth Imam ('a) had already memorized thousands of traditions.[178]

Muḥammad ibn Mūslim was one of the important Shia personalities who narrated traditions for a long period of time. He was known to be a virtuous man and an example of the prominent students of the Imam ('a) in jurisprudence and traditions. He was from the city of Kūfah, and while living in Medina for a period of four years, he would continuously visit Imam Bāqir ('a). After Imam Bāqir ('a), he began to visit Imam Ṣādiq ('a) in turn. Muḥammad ibn Muslim is quoted as saying: "Whatever matter came to mind, I would ask Imam Bāqir ('a), and he would give me an answer in such a manner that I learned 30,000 traditions from him ('a) and 16,000 traditions from Imam Ṣādiq ('a)."[179] Muḥammad ibn Mūslim compiled a book by the name of *Arba'mi'ah Mas'alah* (meaning 400 issues). This book was the answer to 400 issues that he had heard from the Fifth and Sixth Imams ('a).[180]

Another one of the fruits of Imam Bāqir's ('a) school wa Jābir ibn Yazīd Ju'fī. He was a Kufan who immigrated to th city of Medina to benefit from the presence of Imam Bāqir ('a). Under the guidance of the Imam ('a), he reached a high level of knowledge and learning. Jābir, through the use of the vast knowledge of the Imam ('a), ended up writing many books and compilations. The books of Jābir are as follows: 1- The Book of Commentary, 2- The Book of Rarities, 3- The Book of Virtues,

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[178] Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Suyūṭī insists on introducing the founders of the Islamic sciences as being from the Ahl al-Sunnah. He has mentioned: "The first individual who wrote a book on jurisprudence was Abū Ḥanīfah." This is while Abū Ḥanīfah was born in the year 100 Hijrī and passed away in the year 150 Hijrī, while Abū Rāfi' had passed away 60 years before Abū Ḥanīfah's birth. (Sayyid Ḥasan al-Ṣadr, Ta'sīs al-Shī'ah Lil 'Ūlūm al-Islām, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-'Alamī, p. 298). Therefore, the Ahl al-Sunnah began compiling books of traditions and jurisprudence in the beginning of the second century Hijrī, while the Shia began from the very first days of Islam's revelation.

[179] Shaykh Mufīd, al-Ikhtiṣāṣ, researched and edited by: 'Alī Akbar Ghaffārī, Qum, Manshūrāt Jama'at al-Mudarisīn Fī Ḥawzah 'Ilmīyah Biqum Muqadissah, p. 201.
- Shaykh Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Marifat al-Rijāl (Famously known as Rijāl Kashshī), researched and edited by: Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, p. 163 (Number 276).

[180] Sharaf al-Dīn, al-Sayyid 'Abd al-Ḥusayn, Mu'alaf al-Shī'ah Fī al-Ṣadr al-Islām, Tehran, Maktabah Najāḥ, p. 64.

4- The Book of the Camel, 5- The Book of Ṣiffīn, 6- The Book of Nahrawān, 7- The Book on the Death of Amīr al-Mu'minīn, and 8- The Book on the Death of Imam Ḥusayn.[181]

Yazīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik

After the death of ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, Yazīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik succeeded the caliphate. Yazīd was a hedonistic ruler who was not concerned with the religious or ethical precepts of Islam. His rule is counted as one of the darkest periods in the Umayyid dynasty. Nothing of importance, in the way of public works and the like, came about during his caliphate either.

During the caliphate of ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, Yazīd was the nominated successor. During this period of time, he hid his true nature and acted in an acceptable manner in front of the people. Through this method, he gained the goodwill of the public and as a result, when he succeeded the caliphate, the people welcomed him warmly. One key ingredient to his acceptance was that in the early days of his caliphate, he promised to continue the policies of his predecessor, ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz.

This promise held much attraction to the people since they ad tasted a bit of truth and justice in the time of the previous .aliph. Unfortunately, it wasn't long after his succession that this hope was transformed into hopelessness. The caliph soon reneged on his promises and showed his true colors, revealing himself as a world-class tyrant.

The False Testimony

One of the interesting things which has been narrated in the history books is that Yazīd went so far as to persuade forty individuals from the notable personalities and respected elders to testify to his immunity from sin. This group gave witness that the caliphs are not subject to any accounting on the Day

[181] Sharaf al-Dīn, al-Sayyid ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn, Mu'alaf al-Shīʿah Fī al-Ṣadr al-Islām, Tehran, Maktabah Najāḥ, p. 36.

of Judgment, nor any form of punishment.[182] The idea was to open the door for Yazīd to commit any sin that he wanted without fear of the people's criticism.

The testimony of this group of men was but one part of the Umayyid government's policy towards strengthening their rule. The Umayyids also brought into existence another group which was called the Murji'ah.[183] The Murji'ah's religious ideology was a useful tool towards strengthening the Umayyid government and covering up their crimes. Groups such as the Murji'ah would justify the un-Islamic actions of the government through various, clever rationalizations.

Ibn Qutaybah Daynāwarī has written: "Initially, Yazīd was liked by the Quraysh because he showed himself to be a just and reasonable ruler. If he had continued to behave in the same manner as ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, then the people would have similarly accepted and welcomed him. Unfortunately, he acted in a manner contrary to what was expected when he reached power. In essence, he continued the behavior of his brother Walīd. His behavior soon inspired a wave of hatred from the Muslims and this continued to the point that the people decided to depose him from the caliphate. Yazīd paid s little attention to the rights and wishes of the people that eve a group of the Quraysh and a number of the Umayyids protested his actions.

Instead of responding to the criticism of the people and changing his ways, Yazīd simply clamped down on anyone who posed a threat to him. He ended up accusing a group of the Qurayshī leaders of upsetting public order, rebellion, and planning a coup. He ordered his uncle Muḥammad ibn Marwān to arrest them and to place them in prison. This group ended up imprisoned for a period of two years until Ibn Marwān had them killed by poisoning.

In addition to these individuals, Yazīd arrested another

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[182] Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, researched by Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, Cairo, Maṭbaʿat al-Madanī, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 246.

[183] The Murji'ah were a sect which considered faith to be an issue of the heart, and they did not consider any sins to be incompatible with faith.

group of thirty leaders from the Quraysh. After fining them an exhoribitant amount of money, he confiscated their possessions, wealth, and real estate. They were subject to torture and exiled to various places in Syria, as well as other regions where they lived the rest of their years in poverty and deprivation. Yazīd did not suffice with even these actions; he ordered that all the people who had any contact with them be hung on charges of collaboration with rebels and anti government forces."[184]

Singing, Dancing, and Gambling

The early Umayyid caliphs would fill their times of leisure with hearing news of war, stories of brave acts of the past Arabs, and verses of poetry. During the time of the Umayyids (such as Yazīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik), these things were replaced with singing, dancing, and various types of gambling.

Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik

Hishām was a ruler who was known to be miserly, crude in behavior, tyrannical, and merciless towards his enemies.[185] He was known for his eloquence and oratory skills. He was also known for his vast accumulation of wealth and land. It has been noted that during the time of his caliphate, some of the industries in the Muslim nation flourished. Yet, since he was a cold-hearted individual and didn't care much for the common people, life became rather difficult for the masses overall. It is also interesting to see that since the caliph was quite cold hearted and uncaring, historians have noted that this kind of feeling began to permeate into the rest of society as well. The custom of doing good works and cooperating with others ceased to be acted upon, and this reached a point where the people did not really care for one another, nor did they attempt

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[184] Al-Imāmah wa al-Sīyāsah, Third Edition, Cairo, Maṭbaʿat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1382 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 125.

[185] Ibn Wāḍih, The History of Yaʿqūbī, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, vol. 3, p. 70.

to help each other with their problems and issues.[186]

The Influence of Corrupt and Deviant Individuals

Sayyid Amīr ʿAlī, the famous scholar and historian, has described the social and political conditions of the society of that time in detail. He has described the behavior and actions of Hishām as follows: "With the death of Yazīd the Second, the caliphate reached his brother Hishām. Hishām took hold of the caliphate during a time when he was able to quell domestic rebellions and upheavals, and quench the fires of foreign wars. During this time period, the central government was threatened by the Turkmens and Khazārs from the north. From the east, the leaders of the ʿAbbāsids were quietly plotting the destruction of the Umayyids and the establishment of their own caliphate. In the interior of the empire, the masses were angry, and the flames of the Khawārij, who were courageous and warrior spirited, were blazing.

In these internal and external conflicts, the best youth of the Arabs were being killed. Internal politics and personal grudge were also taking their toll. Due to the previous caliph's blir reliance on his governors and local advisors, these positio had fallen to unworthy and selfish leaders. Due to thes individuals, the people's anger had reached fever pitch, and the masses were disgusted with the situation at hand.

During these important times, the Muslim society was in need of a helping hand to save the government from its course of destruction. There is no doubt that Hishām was better than the previous caliph, Yazīd. During the time of Hishām, the government was purified of many unqualified individuals, and a more sober attitude was adopted in place of the frivolous one that had existed previously.

Still, the severity and raw treatment of Hishām reached the point of harshness, and his frugality gave him a reputation as a miser. He also had some behavioral shortcomings which made the situation even worse: he was despotic, skeptical,

[186] Masʿūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 3, p. 205.

shortsighted, distrustful, and pessimistic. In order to neutralize the plots that were being hatched against him, he engaged in deceptive behavior, and spied on large groups of people. He also was quick to believe things about others, and with one inkling of distrust, he would execute people, even if they had a flawless track record and had proven to be trustworthy. This extreme lack of trust caused a series of short lived nominations and removals in various government posts. This state of affairs later proved to have very negative consequences for Hishām and his government."[187]

Imam Bāqir in Syria

One of the important events during the life of Imam Bāqir ('a) was his trip to Syria. Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik, one of the caliphs during the time of the Imam ('a), was always fearful of his extraordinary rank and the people's love towards him. Since he also knew that his followers considered him as the Imam ('a), he was perpetually working to prevent the spread of the spiritual influence and numbers of these followers.

During one of the years that Imam Bāqir ('a) and his son Imam Ṣādiq ('a) were at the Ḥajj pilgrimage, Hishām was also participating in the pilgrimage. During the days of the Ḥajj, mam Ṣādiq ('a) gave a sermon to a group of the Muslims about he matter of the imamate of the family of the Prophet. Naturally, this event was immediately reported to Hishām by his agents who were present everywhere. Hishām considered the very existence of Imam Bāqir ('a) to be a threat to his government and so he became severely shaken by this sermon. Still, perhaps due to other considerations, he didn't arrest the Imam ('a) and his son ('a) at the Ḥajj pilgrimage itself. Instead, when he reached his capital city of Damascus, he immediately ordered the governor of Medina to have the Imam ('a) and his son ('a) sent towards Syria.

Without having a choice in the matter, the Imam ('a) left

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[187] Sayyid Amīr 'Alī, A Short History of the Arabs, translated by 'Afīf al-Ba'albakī, Second Edition, Dār al-'Ilm Lil Malāyīn, 1967 A.D., p. 139.

Medina with his son ('a) and entered the city of Damascus. Hishām, in order to lower the greatness of the Imam ('a) and to raise his own position in front of his officials, did not allow a meeting to take place for a period of three days. It is possible that Hishām spent these three days thinking about what he should do in order to lessen the Imam's ('a) position in the eyes of the people.

A Shooting Competition

Interestingly enough, if the government of Hishām had made itself the focus of learning and scholarly knowledge, then it would have had enough eloquent and knowledgeable scholars who could have at least discussed and debated various issues with the Imam ('a) at some level. Yet Hishām's government, much like other Umayyid governments which came before him, focused mostly on poets, storytellers, and eulogists who would spend their time praising the rulers.

Since his government sorely lacked in the field of knowledge, Hishām knew that if he tried to organize a debate with the scholars that he had, his scholars would come out it completely shamed and defeated. As of a result of this, he decided to engage the Imam ('a) in another way which he thought would assure him victory in the eyes of the people.

Hishām decided to hold a shooting competition and have the Imam ('a) participate. Hishām assumed that with the defeat of the Imam ('a) in such a competition, he would be lowered in the eyes of the people because they would see him as only a man of religion and not a man of the real world. In preparation, he gathered a group of people before the Imam ('a) had entered the palace, and had them begin to shoot at targets. Imam Bāqir ('a) entered the gathering and sat for a period of time watching.

Suddenly, Hishām turned to the Imam ('a) and said, "Do you wish to participate in this archery competition?" The Imam ('a) replied: "I have become old and my time for shooting is past, so excuse me from this." Hishām, who assumed that he had gained an excellent opportunity and was about to

embarrass the Imam (ʿa), insisted, and at the same time, signaled for one of the notables of the Ummayids to give him a bow. The Imam (ʿa) reached out and took the bow. He set an arrow on the string and then took aim. He released the arrow, and the arrow hit the exact center of the target. Then he took a second arrow and notched it on the string; when he released his second shot, it hit the other arrow exactly and split it dead center. The third arrow again hit the second and split that one as well. In this fashion, the Imam (ʿa) shot nine arrows, all of which hit the previous arrows and split them in half.

This amazing scene affected everyone who was present, and they were left with amazement and surprise. Hishām, who had calculated incorrectly on all counts, was also taken by surprise. Uncontrollably, he said: "Amazing oh Abū Jaʿfar. You are the master of archers from amongst the Arabs and non Arabs; how was it that you said that you had become old?" Then Hishām looked downwards for several moments and he sat quietly thinking. Then he took Imam Bāqir (ʿa) and his son (ʿa) and sat them next to himself. He began to honor and praise them in an exceptional and unusual manner. Then he faced Imam Bāqir (ʿa) and said: "The Quraysh, due to the light of your existence, are worthy of being the masters amongst the Arabs and Ajams (non Arabs). Tell me, who taught you this skill of archery and how long did it take you to master it?" Imam Bāqir (ʿa) responded: "You know that the people of Medina practice this art; in the days of my youth, I also spent a period engaged in it, but later I left it— today, since you insisted, I accepted unwillingly."

Hishām said: "Does your son Jaʿfar (Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa)) also have this level of proficiency in shooting?" Imam Bāqir (ʿa) replied: "We, the Household, are the 'Perfection of The Religion' and the 'Completion of the Blessings'. The verse 'Today we have perfected your religion for you' has been revealed about us and we succeed one another in this. The earth will never remain empty of one of us."[188]

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[188] "This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favour upon you, and

A Debate with the Archbishop of the Christians

Although the palace of Hishām was not really a place for knowledge and learning, still, many opportunities came about where the knowledge of the Imam ('a) was shown to everyone there. Before Imam Bāqir ('a) left the city of Damascus, a particularly amazing opportunity presented itself to awaken the minds of the masses. Through this opportunity, the people were allowed to see a manifestation of the Imam's ('a) vast knowledge.

What ended up taking place was that Hishām did not have any pretext to hurt the Imam's position, and so, he did not have a choice but to allow the Imam ('a) to return back to the city of Medina. At the time that Imam Bāqir ('a) and his son ('a) were leaving the palace of the caliph, they saw a large gathering at the far ends of an arena, opposite to the palace. There were a large number of people who were all sitting down waiting for someone. Imam Bāqir ('a) inquired about them and the reason behind their gathering. They replied: "These are Christian priests and monks who gather in these large numbers every year waiting for the arrival of their great Archbishop. When h arrives at this yearly gathering, these scholars can then ask hi their questions and get answers to them." Imam Bāqir ('a entered into this gathering in a manner where the people did not really recognize him. The news of this was relayed to Hishām immediately. Hishām commissioned some of his agents to go into this gathering and see what was taking place.

It was not long until the Archbishop arrived. With much admiration and veneration, the people welcomed him, and he took his seat in front of the gathering. He looked into the crowd, and his eye was drawn to the face of Imam Bāqir ('a)– he felt that this was not an ordinary man. He faced the Imam ('a) and asked: "Are you a Christian or are you from the Muslims?" The Imam ('a) replied: "From the Muslims." The Archbishop asked: "Are you from their scholars or from their ignorant ones?" The Imam ('a) replied: "I am not from the

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have chosen for you Islam as your religion." Surah Māida, Verse 3.

ignorant ones." The Archbishop then asked: "Should I ask a question first or will you?" The Imam ('a) replied: "If you wish, you may ask."

The Archbishop asked: "Why do you Muslims claim that the people of paradise drink and eat food, but they have no need for using the restroom? Do you have any examples in this world for this matter, so that it can be made clear?" The Imam ('a) responded: "Yes, a clear example in this world is that in the womb of the mother, a child feeds, but it does not go to the bathroom."

The Archbishop replied: "How wonderful, but you said you were not from the scholars?" The Imam ('a) said: "I did not say this; rather I said I am not from the ignorant ones." The Archbishop then said: "I have another question." The Imam ('a) replied: "Please go ahead." The Archbishop asked: "On what basis do you believe that the fruits and blessings of paradise never decrease, and however much they are consumed, they still remain and do not lessen? Can you show a clear example of this from the phenomena of this world?"

The Imam ('a) replied: "Yes, the clear example of this is found in (the perceptible phenomenon of) fire. If you light another flame (from an existing flame), and repeat this one hundred times, the first flame will remain as it was and nothing will have decreased from it."

The Archbishop asked every difficult question that came to mind and all of them were answered clearly and completely by the Imam ('a). He was soon left looking extremely incompetent and weak, and he became angry. He said: "Oh people, have you brought a great scholar whose knowledge is higher than mine in order to disgrace me and to show the Muslims that their leader is superior and more learned than ours? I swear by God that I will never speak to you again, and if I remain alive until next year, you will not see me in your midst." He said these words, rose out of his seat, and left the gathering.

An Unworthy Accusation

The news of this event quickly spread throughout Damascus, and the people were very happy with what had taken place. Hishām, instead of becoming happy with this ideological victory, became even more fearful of the spiritual influence of the Imam (ʿa). In attempting to minimize the spread of the Imam's (ʿa) influence, Hishām sent him a message insisting that he leave Damascus that very same day. Hishām also attempted to slander the Imam (ʿa) in order to diminish what had taken place. In doing so, he accused the Imam (ʿa) of becoming inclined towards Christianity and he spread news of this throughout the Muslim world.

He wrote letters to some of his governors, saying the following: "Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, the son of Abū Turāb, came to me alongside his son. When I sent them back to Medina, they went to see some priests, and became inclined towards Christianity. However, due to the family relationship that they have with me, I have overlooked their faults and decided not to punish them. When these two individuals arrive in your city announce to the people that I am averse to their actions."

The desperate efforts of Hishām in hiding the truth of what had taken place were ultimately unsuccessful, and the people heard what had actually happened. Those who saw the reality of the deep knowledge of the Imam (ʿa) increased in number. As a result, the compulsory trip that began with threats of violence ended full of amazing results and the education of the masses to the reality of the imamate.[189]

The Debates of Imam Bāqir

During the time of Imam Bāqir (ʿa), there were a number of active groups, such as the Muʿtazilah, the Khawārij, and the Murjīʾah. Some of these were purely religious sects, while others

[189] Ṭabarī has given a detailed account of the events which took place during the Imam's (a) trip in his book Dalāʿīl al-Imāmah (p. 105-107). The Late Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs, in his book Amān al-Akhtār (p. 62), the Late ʿAllāmah Majlisī, in his Biḥār al-ʾAnwār (vol. 46, p. 307-313), as well as others, have narrated from Ṭabarī as well. It should be noted that there are some small differences in the various narrations.

were politico-religious in their nature. Imam Bāqir (ʿa) was much like a solid wall who stood against their deviant ideologies. Through his debates and discussions with them, he proved to them that the intellectual and ideological foundations upon which they stood were baseless. As an example, let us look over Imam Bāqir's (ʿa) exchange with Nāfiʿ ibn Azraq, one of the leaders of the Khawārij.

One day, Nāfiʿ went to the Imam (ʿa) and asked him about certain issues related to the lawful and the forbidden (the ḥalāl and the ḥarām). The Imam (ʿa) answered his questions and then said to Nāfiʿ: "Say to these Māriqīn (those who have gone out of the religion): 'Why have you considered the separation from Amīr al-Mu'minīn (ʿa) as being lawful, when before that, you would shed your blood next to him and in obedience to his commands, and you considered aiding him as a cause for gaining closeness to God?'"

Then Imam Bāqir (ʿa) added: "They are going to say that he set up an arbitrator in the religion of God. Tell them that: 'God, in the shariah of his Prophet (ṣ), set up two arbitrators in two situations; one of these was in the case of a dispute between a wife and a husband, where the Quran states: 'If ye fear a breach between them twain, appoint (two) arbiters, one from his family, and the other from hers; if they wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation: For Allah hath full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things.'[190]

The second arbitrator was Saʿad ibn Maʿādh, who was appointed by the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) as the arbitrator between himself and the Jewish tribe of Banī Qurayẓah; Saʿad gave his opinion based on the decree of God." Then the Imam (ʿa) added: "Do you not know that Amīr al-Mu'minīn (ʿa) accepted the arbitration on the condition that the two arbitrators judge based on the decrees of the Quran, and that they not exceed the limits set by the Quran; he made it conditional that if they judged in opposition to the rules of the Quran, then the arbitration would be rejected. When they said to Amīr al-

[190] Surah Nisā, Verse 35.

Mu'minīn ('a): 'The arbitration that you selected ended up judging to your loss,' he responded: 'I did not appoint him as an arbitrator, I appointed the Book of God as the arbitrator.' Then, how do the Māriqīn consider the arbitration of the Quran and the repudiation of judging against the dictates of the Quran as deviancy, and yet, they do not consider their own religious innovations and false accusations as deviancy?" When Nāfi' ibn Azraq heard this, he said: "I swear by God, I had neither heard these words before, nor had its possibility occurred to me; this is the very truth, God willing"[191]

[191] Ṭabarsī, Iḥtijāj, Najaf, al-Maṭba'at al-Murtaḍāwiya, 1350 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 176.

The Sixth Imam

Imam Jaʿfar Ṣādiq

A Brief Look at the Life of Imam Ṣādiq

The name of the sixth Imam (ʿa) is Jaʿfar, his agnomen is Abū ʿAbdullah, and his title is Ṣādiq. His honorable father was Imam Bāqir (ʿa) and his mother Umm Farwah. He was born on the 17th of Rabīʿ al-Awwal, in the year 83 Hijrī, in the city of Medina. He passed away at the age of 65 during the year 148, and was buried next to his father in the famous graveyard of Baqīʿ.

Caliphs Who Lived during the Time of the Imam

Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) reached the imamate during the year 114 Hijrī. The period of his imamate was contemporary with the end of the rule of the Umayyids, and the beginning of the ʿAbbāsid dynasty.

The following Umayyid caliphs were contemporary with Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa):
1- Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (105-125 Hijrī)
2- Walīd ibn Yazīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (125-126 Hijrī)
3- Yazīd ibn Walīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (126 Hijrī)
4- Ibrāhīm ibn Walīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (70 days in the year 1: Hijrī)
5- Marwān ibn Muḥammad [famously known as Marwān Ḥimār] (126- 132 Hijrī)

The following ʿAbbāsid caliphs were also contemporary to Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa):
1- ʿAbdullah ibn Muḥammad [famously known as Saffāḥ] (132-137 Hijrī)
2- Abū Jaʿfar [famously known as Manṣūr Dawānīqī] (137-158 Hijrī)

The Vast Knowledge of Imam Ṣādiq

History has recorded a great deal in regards to the vastness of Imam Ṣādiq's ('a) knowledge. Not only has his knowledge been confirmed by well known Shia scholars, but he is also well known amongst the scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah as well. Famous jurisprudents and scholars acknowledge this reality and praise the depth and breadth of his knowledge.

Abū Ḥanīfah, the famous leader of the Sunni Hanafi sect, is narrated to have said: "I have not seen (anyone) more learned and scholarly than Ja'far ibn Muḥammad."[192] He is also quoted as saying: "When Manṣūr (Dawānīqī) summoned Ja'far ibn Muḥammad, he also summoned me and said: 'The people have become captivated with Ja'far ibn Muḥammad; prepare a list of difficult questions in order to defeat him.' I prepared forty difficult issues. One day, Manṣūr, who was at 'Ḥīrah' at that time, summoned me. When I entered his assembly, I saw that Ja'far ibn Muḥammad was sitting to the right of him. When I saw him, I was so taken in with his presence and greatness that even the seeing of Manṣūr, who was a powerful king, did not have such an effect on me. I gave my greetings and, with the permission of Manṣūr, sat down.

Manṣūr faced him and said: 'This is Abū Ḥanīfah.' He answered: 'Yes, I know him.' Then Manṣūr looked at me and said: 'Oh Abū Ḥanīfah, ask your questions from Abū 'Abdillāh.' At this point, I began to ask my questions. Every matter that I set forth, he would answer by saying: 'Your opinion in this matter is such, the opinion of the people of Medina is such, and our opinion is such.' In some matters, he would agree with our opinion, in other matters he would agree with the people of Medina, and sometimes he would disagree with both. In this manner, I stated the forty issues and he answered them all. When Abū Ḥanīfah came to this point, he motioned towards Imam Ṣādiq ('a), and said: '(He is) the most knowledgeable of the people, and the most aware in the

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[192] Dhahabī, Shamsh al-Dīn Muḥammad, Tadhkīrat al-Ḥuffāẓ, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, vol. 1, p. 166.

differences of the people in jurisprudential matters and rulings.'"[193]

Mālik, the leader and founder of the Sunni Malikī branch, has said: "For a period of time, I would meet with Ja'far ibn Muḥammad, and always, I saw him in one of three states: either he was praying, fasting, or reciting the Quran; and I never saw him narrate a tradition without being in a state of ritual purity (Wudhū).[194] In relation to Ja'far ibn Muḥammad's knowledge, worship, and piety, no one has ever laid eyes on a better man, nor have any ears heard, nor has the heart of any human being ever experienced such excellence."[195]

Shaykh Mufīd has written: "So much knowledge has been narrated from him (Imam Ṣādiq ('a)) that it has become proverbial amongst the people and the news of it has spread everywhere. From no single individual in his family has so much knowledge and wisdom been narrated before."[196] Ibn Ḥajar Haytamī has written: "He has narrated so much knowledge that it has become proverbial amongst the people, and the news of it has spread everywhere. The biggest leaders (of jurisprudence and traditions) such as: Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd, Ibn Jarīḥ, Mālik, Sufyān Thawrī, Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah, Abū Ḥanīfah, Shu'bah, and Ayūb Sajistānī have all narrated traditions from him."[197]

Abū Baḥr Jāḥiẓ, one of the famous scholars from the 3rd century, has said: "Ja'far ibn Muḥammad is an individual whose knowledge and learning has filled the world and it is said that Abū Ḥanīfah and Sufyān Thawrī are from his students. (The fact) that these two are his students is sufficient proof of

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[193] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 47, p. 217.
- Ḥaydar, Asad, Al-Imām Ṣādiq wa al-Madhāhib al-Arbi'ah, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1390 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, p. 335.

[194] Ibn Ḥajar 'Asqalānī, Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1404 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 88.

[195] Ḥaydar, Asad, al-Imām Ṣādiq wa al-Madhāhib al-Arbi'ah, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1390 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 53.

[196] Al-'Irshād, Qum, Manshūrāt Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 270.

[197] Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Maḥraqah, Cairo, Maktabah Cairo, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 201.

the greatness of his knowledge."[198]

Sayyid Amīr ʿAlī has pointed out the various religious sects and philosophical schools of thought during the time of the Umayyids and has written that: "Initially, religious rulings and opinions had taken on a philosophical tone only among the 'Sādāt' and the 'Fāṭimīs'. The spread of knowledge during that time had kindled the spirit of debate and inquiry, and philosophical debates and discussions had spread to all circles. It is necessary to mention who the head of this intellectual movement was: the founder of this movement, which first blossomed in the city of Medina, was the great grandchild of Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (ʿa), Imam Jaʿfar Ṣādiq (ʿa). Imam Jaʿfar Ṣādiq (ʿa) was an active researcher and an amazing thinker who was deeply knowledgeable in the sciences of his time. It was he who founded the first philosophical school of Islam.

In his classes, not only did those attend who would go on to later establish their own jurisprudential schools of thought, but philosophers and students of philosophy from far flung regions also attended. Ḥasan Baṣri, the founder of the philosophical school of Baṣrah, and Wāṣil ibn ʿAṭā, the founder of the Muʿtazilah sect, were from his students."[199]

Ibn Khallakān, the famous historian, has written: "He was one of the Imams from the twelve (Imams) of the Imami sect, and one of the great ones from the descendants of the Prophet (ṣ). Due to the veracity and truthfulness of his words, he was called Ṣādiq (by the people). His merits and greatness are so famous that there is no need for their description or explanation. Abū Mūsā Jābir ibn Ḥayyān Tartusi was his student. Jābir compiled a book containing 1,000 pages which drew on Imam Jaʿfar Ṣādiq's (ʿa) teachings and contained 500 treatises."[200]

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[198] Ḥaydar, Asad, al-Imām Ṣādiq wa al-Madhāhib al-Arbiʿah, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabīya, 1390 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 55. (Narrated from Rasā'il Jāḥiẓ)

[199] Mukhtasar al-Tārīkh al-ʿArab, edited by ʿAfīf al-Baʿalbakī, Beirut, Dār al-ʿIlm Lil Malāyīn, 1967 A.D., p. 193.

[200] Wafāyat al-ʿAyān, researched by Doctor Iḥsān ʿAbbās, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Sharīf al-

The Political and Social Conditions during the Time of Imam Ṣādiq

Among the various Imams, the time of Imam Ṣādiq ('a) was unique in its social and political conditions, and he in fact lived in such conditions that were not present during the time of any of the other Imams. The reason behind this was that this was a period of weakness and instability for the Umayyid government, and the time of the rise of the 'Abbāsids; these two groups were entangled in a power struggle with one other. The 'Abbāsids initiated their movement during the rule of Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik and in the year 129 Hijrī, they began a military campaign against the Umayyids. In the year 132 Hijrī, they a gained decisive victory over the Umayyids, and established their own government.

Since the Umayyids were engaged in these political difficulties and conflicts, they did not have the opportunity to levy pressure on the Imam ('a) and his followers as they had done during the time of Imam Sajjād ('a). Moreover, once the 'Abbāsids reached power, due to the fact that they had revolted against the government with the slogan of supporting th family of the Prophet and seeking retribution for what ha been done to them, no pressure was levied from their sic either. The Abbasids were also busy building up their own government which had just been established. Therefore, this time period was a period of calm and relative freedom for Imam Ṣādiq ('a) and the Shia. It was also an extremely good opportunity for intellectual and religious activities.

The Social Conditions of the Imam's Time

In terms of culture and learning, the time of Imam Ṣādiq ('a) was a time of various intellectual and religious movements. During this time, an unprecedented inclination and desire towards knowledge manifested itself in the society, and various sciences, such as the science of the recitation of the Quran, the

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Rāḍī, 1364 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 327.

science of Quranic commentary, the science of traditions, the science of jurisprudence, and the science of theology all began to blossom. Natural sciences such as medicine, philosophy, astronomy, and mathematics also began to spread. The social situation was such that every person had their own opinions on these matters, and they would present them for debate and discussion. A very strange thirst for knowledge appeared in the society and it was necessary for Imam Ṣādiq ('a) to quench this thirst.

The causes of this thirst for learning and the various intellectual movements can be summarized in the following points:

1- It is apparent that Islam affords a great deal of freedom for intellectual thinking and development. While the 'Abbāsids played a part in the manifestation of this social phenomenon, the root cause of it is found in the teachings of the religion.

2- The Muslim community was one which was religious in nature, and heavily influenced by Islamic teachings. The encouragement of the Prophet (ṣ) towards gaining knowledge, as well as the encouragement and invitation of the Quran towards knowledge, learning, reasoning, and reflection were the foundational pillars of this movement.

3- The various nations who had accepted Islam had a history of intellectual thinking as well. When we look at groups such as the Iranians, the Egyptians, and the Syrians, we find that they each possessed their own respective civilizations and heritage. These nations, in order to deeply understand the teachings of Islam, engaged in research and the exchange of opinions and viewpoints.

4- The final cause was the peaceful coexistence with people who were non Muslims, particularly the 'People of the Book'. The Muslims believed in tolerance and coexistence with the 'People of the Book' and they did not consider this as running counter to their religious teachings. During that time, the People of the Book were a relatively scholarly and learned group. As a result, the Muslims would have dialogue with them and this in turn

would bring about debate, discussion, and reflection.[201]

The Meeting of Various Religions and Sects

The time of Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) was a time for the meeting of different ideas and the appearance of various sects and religions. Due to the encounter of the Muslims with the differing ideologies and opinions of the People of the Book, as well as the Greek scholars, various doubts and problems began to manifest within the society. During this time, various sects such as the Muʿtazilah, the Jabrīyah, Murjiʿah, Ghullāt,[202] Zanādiqah,[203] Mushabbih, Maṭsūfah, Mujasimah, Tanāsakhīyah, as well as others appeared, with each one propagating their own specific ideology.

Moreover, in the fields of each of the Islamic sciences, various different opinions began to emerge. For example, in fields such as the science of the recitation of the Quran, commentary, traditions, jurisprudence, and theology, there were varying discussions and heated debates. Each person would present their own opinion in support of their respective ideology.

The Great Jaʿfarī University

Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa), in light of the great opportunity which ha come about due to the political situation, and in view of th great public need and the social readiness for such a movement, continued the great tradition of knowledge of his father, Imam Bāqir (ʿa). He created a large university and trained students in the various fields of intellectual and narrative sciences. Some of his students included: Hishām ibn Ḥakam, Muḥammad ibn Mūslim, Abān ibn Taghlab, Hishām ibn Sālim, Mu'min Ṭāq, Mufaḍal ibn ʿUmar, Jābir ibn Ḥayyān, as well as many others.

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[201] Shahīd Muṭaharī, Murtaḍā, Sayrī Dar Sīreye A'īmma' Aṭḥār (ʿa), First Print, Qum, Ṣadrā Publications, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 142-160.

[202] Ḥaydar, Asad, al-Imām Ṣādiq wa al-Madhāhib al-Arbiʿah, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabīya, 1390 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 113-126.

[203] The Zanādiqah were deniers of God and religion. They also happened to have knowledge of the sciences and languages of their time.

His students were numbered at 4,000 strong.[204]

Each of these students was counted as a prominent intellectual personality who did great services in the pursuit of knowledge and learning. A group of them compiled intellectual works and had their own students. As an example, Hishām ibn Ḥakam wrote 31 books[205], and Jābir ibn Ḥayyān wrote over 200[206] books in various fields including rational and natural subjects, as well as in chemistry, which was known as alchemy during that time. For this same reason, Jābir ibn Ḥayyān is famously known today as the father of chemistry. Jābir's books were also translated into various European languages during the Middle Ages, and the historians of science all mention him with respect and admiration.

Mufaḍal's Treatise on the Oneness of God

As we mentioned previously, Imam Ṣādiq ('a) raised certain discussions in the natural sciences and brought forward a number of facts which are still the subject of amazement by modern day scientists. A clear example of this is Mufaḍal's treatise on the oneness of God (Tawhīd) which Imam Ṣādiq ('a) dictated over a period of four days. This treatise was written down by Mufaḍal ibn 'Umar Kūfī and so it famously became known as 'Mufaḍal's Tawhīd'.

In the introduction of the treatise, Mufaḍal has said: "One day during the evening, I was sitting in the Prophet's mosque contemplating on the greatness of the Prophet (ṣ) and on the nobility and virtue... which God had bestowed upon him. I was immersed in these thoughts when suddenly Ibn Abī al-'Awjā', who was one of the atheists of that time, entered and sat down

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[204] Shaykh Mufīd, Al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 271.
- Ḥaydar, Asad, al-Imām Ṣādiq wa al-Madhāhib al-Arbi'ah, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1390 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 69.

[205] Ṣafā'ī, Sayyid Aḥmad, Hishām ibn Ḥakam Madāfi' Ḥarīm Wilāyat, Tehran, Āfāq Publications, Second Edition, 1359 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 19.
- Fattāl Nayshābūrī, Rawḍat al-Wā'iẓīn, Beirut, Mu'assasat al-'Alamī Lil Maṭbū'āt, 1406 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 229.

[206] Ibn Nadīm, in the book al-Fihrīst, has attributed over 220 volumes to Jābir. (Al-Fihrīst, Cairo, al-Maktabah Tijārīyat al-Kubrā, p. 512-517.

within hearing distance.

After this, one of his friends also entered and sat close to him. They began to speak of some matters in regards to the Prophet (ṣ)... Then ibn Abī al-ʿAwjā said: 'You must stop speaking of Muḥammad, for my mind is confused about him... You must speak about the principles which he brought forth.' At this point, they began to speak about the creator of the universe until their words reached the conclusion that there was no creator or manager in the world of existence, and that everything had simply come into existence by itself. They further said that it had always been like this and would always remain as such."

Mufaḍal then says: "When I heard these words from this... individual, I could not hold back my anger and said: 'Oh enemy of God, you have become an atheist and you have denied the Creator who created you in the best form, and has taken you through various stages and carried you to this final position. If you reflect within yourself and refer to your own mind, you will surely discover the signs of your creator within yourself and you will see that the evidence of the existence of God and his power, and the indications of his knowledge and wisdom are manifest and clear within you.'

Ibn Abī al-ʿAwjā said: 'Oh man, if you are of the theologians, then I will speak to you in their method— if you defeat us, then we will follow you. If you are not of them, then discussing this matter will have no benefit. And if you are of the companions of Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad Ṣādiq, then he himself never speaks to us in this manner and he does not debate with us like this. He has heard much worse than you have heard, and with greater frequency, yet he has never slandered us. In the debates between him and us, he has never left the limits of courtesy. He is calm, patient, dignified, wise, and he never allows himself to become angry. He listens to our words and arguments until we have said everything possible and we think that we have defeated him, when suddenly, with a few words, he refutes our arguments and reasoning, and with the least amount of words, he completes his argument over us

in such a manner where we cannot answer or respond at all. Therefore, if you are of his followers, speak to us in a way that is worthy of him.'"

Mufaḍal then narrates: "I left the mosque in a state of distress thinking about how Islam and the Muslims were afflicted by the disbelief of these atheists and their rejection of the Creator. While I was in such a state, I suddenly saw my master, Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa)." The Imam (ʿa) saw that I was in a distressed state and so he asked me: "What has happened?"

I repeated the words of the atheists to the Imam (ʿa) and the Imam (ʿa) said: "I will describe for you the wisdom of the Creator in his creation of the world... in such a way that the lesson takers will take lesson from it and it will give increase to the insight of the pious believers, and the atheists and disbelievers will remain bewildered within it. Come to us tomorrow morning...."

After this meeting, Mufaḍal visited the Imam (ʿa) for four consecutive days. Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) spoke about the creation of human beings from the beginning of the creation, their internal and external faculties, their instinctive (fitrī) characteristics, and the creation of the body parts and limbs. He detailed the creation of various animals, as well as the heavens and the earth... and the philosophy behind calamities, in addition to other issues. Mufaḍal wrote all of these down in great detail. This work from Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) is available to this very day for us to benefit from.

The Breadth of Imam Ṣādiq's University

Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) played a key role in confronting the intellectual and ideological issues of his time. He manifested the strength of the Shia position and showed the superiority of the Islamic worldview over all others. The students who studied under Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) were not limited to only those of the Shia faith— followers of the Ahl al-Sunnah were also among those who enjoyed the fruits of his knowledge. Famous Sunni leaders, either directly or through intermediaries, are

considered as well known students of the Imam (ʿa).

At the head of these famous leaders was Abū Ḥanīfah, who was a student of Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) for a period of two years. Abū Ḥanīfah later called these two years as the corner stone of his knowledge and learning, and is famously known to have said: "If it were not for those two years, Nuʿmān would have been ruined."[207] The students of Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) came from various corners of the Islamic world, including: Kūfah, Baṣrah, Wāsiṭ, Ḥijāz, and elsewhere. They also included individuals from various tribes such as the: Banī Asad, Makhāriq, Ṭayy, Salīm, Ghaṭfān, Azd, Khūzāʿah, Khathʿam, Makhzūm, Banī Ḍabbah, and the Quraysh (in particular the Banī Ḥārith ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib and the Banī al-Ḥasan).[208]

It is sufficient to mention that in terms of the breadth of the Imam's school, Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Zīyād Washāʿa', who was one of the students of Imam Riḍā (ʿa) and one of the famous narrators of tradition of his time, has narrated that: "I witnessed 900 individual teachers of tradition in the Mosque of Kūfah who were all narrating traditions from Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad."[209]

According to Ibn Ḥajar ʿAsqalānī, jurisprudents an narrators of tradition such as: Shuʿbah, Sufyān Thawrī, Sufyā ibn ʿUynah, Mālik, Ibn Jarīḥ, Abū Ḥanīfah, Pasrawī Mūsā, Wahīb ibn Khālid, Qaṭān, Abū ʿĀsim, and others were among the individuals who narrated traditions from the Imam (ʿa).[210] Yāfiʿī has written: "He has many exquisite sermons on the knowledge of the oneness of God, as well as in other fields. His student, Jābir ibn Ḥayyān, has composed a book containing 1,000 pages, which contains 500 treatises."[211]

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[207] Ḥaydar, Asad, al-Imām Ṣādiq wa al-Madhāhib al-Arbiʿah, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabīya, 1390 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 70. The name of Abū Ḥanīfah was Nuʿmān ibn Thābit.

[208] Ḥaydar, Asad, al-Imām Ṣādiq wa al-Madhāhib al-Arbiʿah, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabīya, 1390 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 38.

[209] Najjāshī, Fihrīst Asmā' Muṣanfī al-Shīʿah, researched by: Sayyid Mūsā Shabīrī Zanjānī, Qum, The Islamic Publications Office affliated with Jamiʿah Mudarisīn, p. 39 and 40.

[210] Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb, First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1404 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 88.

[211] Mirāt al-Jinān, Second Edition, Beirut, Mu'assasat al-ʿAlamī, 1390 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2,

Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) would encourage and teach each of his individual students according to whichever field they had a natural talent and passion for. As a result, each one of them would specialize in one or two of the sciences- these included: traditions, Quranic commentary, the science of theology, as well as many others. Sometimes, when scholars would come to the Imam (ʿa) in order to debate him, he would direct them towards one of his students, who had specialized in that particular field.

Hishām ibn Salīm has narrated: "One day we were sitting in the presence of Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) with a group of the Imam's (ʿa) companions. A Syrian man asked for permission to enter, and after gaining permission, entered the gathering. The Imam (ʿa) said: 'Have a seat.' Then he asked: 'What do you need?' The Syrian man said: 'I have heard that you give answers to all of the people's questions and problems; I have come to debate with you.' The Imam (ʿa) asked: 'In which subject?' The Syrian man replied: 'On the manner of the recitation of the Quran.' The Imam (ʿa) faced Ḥamrān and said: 'Ḥamrān, the answer of this man lies with you.' The Syrian man replied: 'I want to debate with you, not with Ḥamrān.' The Imam (ʿa) replied: 'If you defeat Ḥamrān, then you have defeated me.'

The Syrian man began to debate with Ḥamrān hesitantly. Whatever the Syrian man would ask, he would receive a decisive and well reasoned answer from Ḥamrān, and this reached the point where he became helpless in continuing the debate and the signs of frustration and anger became apparent on his face. The Imam said: 'How did you find Ḥamrān?' The man replied: 'In truth, Ḥamrān is very skilled; whatever I ask him, he gives me the appropriate answer.' The Syrian man continued and said: 'I want to debate on the lexical sciences and Arabic grammar with you.' The Imam (ʿa) looked at Abān ibn Taghlab and said: 'Debate with him.' Abān debated with the man in a very skilled way and soundly defeated him. The Syrian man said: 'I want to debate with you on the subject of religious

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p. 304.

rulings.' Imam Ṣādiq ('a) looked at Zurārah and said: 'Debate with him.' Zurārah engaged in debate with the Syrian man and quickly defeated him.

The Syrian then said: 'I want to debate with you on scholastic theology.' Imam Ṣādiq ('a) directed Mu'mīn Ṭāq to engage in debate with him. It was not long before the Syrian was defeated by Mu'mīn Ṭāq. In this same manner, when the Syrian asked to debate in the fields of Istiṭā'ah (the ability of human beings in committing or not committing good and evil), Tawhīd (the oneness of God), and the imamate, Imam Ṣādiq ('a) directed Ḥamzah Ṭayyār, Hishām ibn Sālim, and Hishām ibn Ḥakam to debate with him. All three defeated him by putting forward decisive arguments and reasoning. When Imam Ṣādiq ('a) witnessed this scene, a smile played on his lips out of happiness at the knowledge of his students."[212]

The Debates of Imam Ṣādiq

As mentioned previously, the time of Imam Ṣādiq ('a) was a time of the meeting of different ideas and ideologies, as well as the coming about of various sects and faiths. Due to the interaction of these varying creeds and ideologies with Islam, certain doubts and problems arose. In order to introduce Islam and the ideology of the Shia school of thought, Imam Ṣādiq ('a) engaged in many debates with the leaders and heads of various schools of thought. In these debates, he proved through the use of sound logic and reasoning that their ideologies were without foundation.

As an example from among the many debates of Imam Ṣādiq ('a), we will present his debate with Abū Ḥanīfah, the leader of the Sunni Ḥanafī sect. It has been narrated that: "One day Abū Ḥanīfah went to the house of the Imam ('a), and asked for permission to meet with him. The Imam ('a) did not give him permission. Abū Ḥanīfah then says: 'I waited for a period

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[212] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Ma'rifat al-Rijāl (Popularly known as Rijāl Kashshī), researched by: Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 275-278.
- Tastarī, Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī, Qāmūs al-Rijāl, Tehran, The Center for Book Publications, vol. 3, p. 416.

of time near the door, until a group of Kūfans arrived and asked for permission to enter.'

The Imam ('a) gave them permission. I also entered the house discreetly alongside them, and when we came to the Imam ('a), I said: 'It would be opportune that you send a representative to Kūfah and prohibit the people there from speaking abusively about the companions of Muḥammad. There are more than 10,000 people in that city who abuse the companions of the Prophet.' The Imam ('a) replied: 'The people will not accept that from me (meaning they will not listen to me).' Abū Ḥanīfah said: 'How is it possible that they will not listen to your words, while you are the descendent of the Prophet of God (ṣ).' Imam Ṣādiq ('a) replied: 'You yourself are of those who do not listen to me. Did you not enter the house without my permission, and did you not sit down without my permission, and did you not (then) begin to speak without my permission?'

Then Imam Ṣādiq ('a) said: 'I have heard that you give religious rulings based on qīyās (deductive analogy)?' Abū Ḥanīfah replied: 'Yes this is correct.' Imam Ṣādiq ('a) said: 'Woe upon you, for the first individual who gave an opinion on this basis was Satan. When God ordered him to prostrate before Adam, he said: "I will not prostrate, for you have created me from fire and (created him) from dirt, and fire is superior to dirt."' Then the Imam ('a) mentioned some Islamic issues which are contrary to the matter of qīyās. He ('a) asked: 'In your opinion, is the unlawful killing of an individual worse or fornication?'

Abū Ḥanīfah answered: 'The unlawful killing of an individual is worse.' The Imam ('a) said: '(If acting upon qīyās is correct) then why is it that for the proving of murder, two witnesses are sufficient, while for the proving of fornication four are necessary? Is this ruling of Islam in concordance with qīyās?' Abū Ḥanīfah replied: 'No.' Again, the Imam ('a) asked: 'Is urine more unclean or semen?' Abū Ḥanīfah said: 'Urine.' The Imam ('a) replied: 'Then why has God ordered people to do the ritual ablution (wudhū), while for the second (impurity)

he has ordered them to do the ritual bath (ghusl)? Is this ruling in concordance with qīyās?' Again, Abū Ḥanīfah replied: 'No.'

Then Imam Ṣādiq ('a) asked: 'Is prayer more important or fasting?' Abū Ḥanīfah said: 'Prayer is more important.' Imam Ṣādiq ('a) said: 'Then why is the compensatory fast of a 'Ḥā'iḍ' woman obligatory, but the make up of her prayers is not? Is this ruling in concordance with qīyās?' Abū Ḥanīfah again replied in the negative. The Imam ('a) asked: 'Is a woman weaker or a man?' Abū Ḥanīfah said: 'A woman.' Imam Ṣādiq ('a) said: 'Then why is the inheritance of a man twice that of the inheritance of a woman? Is this ruling in concordance with qīyās?' Again, Abū Ḥanīfah replied in the negative.

Then Imam Ṣādiq ('a) asked: 'I have heard that you interpret this verse "Then you shall be questioned that day about the joy you indulged in"[213] to mean that: 'God will call to account the people on the delicious food and cold water that they have drank in the summers.' Abū Ḥanīfah replied: 'That is correct- I have interpreted this verse in this manner.' Imam Ṣādiq ('a) said: 'What would you say about a person who invites you to their home and hosts you with delicious food and cold water, and then afterwards, places an obligation on you due to his invitation?' Abū Ḥanīfah said: 'I would say he is a miserly individual.' Imam Ṣādiq ('a) then said: 'Is God miserly (in that he would call us to account for the food that he has given us)?' Abū Ḥanīfah then asked: 'Then what is the meaning of these blessings which the Quran says human beings will be called to account for?' Imam Ṣādiq ('a) replied: 'The meaning is the blessing of our friendship, the family of the prophetic message.'"[214]

Explaining Religious Precepts from the Shia Viewpoint

In the matter of the establishment of Imam Ṣādiq's ('a) university, one matter that oftentimes remains concealed from

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[213] Surah Takāthur, Verse 8

[214] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, vol. 10, p. 22.
- Muḥammad Ray Shahrī, Muḥammad, Debates About Ideological Issues, Qum, Dār al-Fikr Publications, p. 130-132.

his biographers and researchers is the political aspect of his school. Before delving into this matter, we must address certain issues first:

To begin with, the system of government in Islam is different from all other systems in one respect, and this is the fact that the government is not solely a political entity; it is the synthesis of a political and religious system unified into one cohesive whole. The designation of the term caliph for the Islamic ruler is an indication of this reality, where he is more than a simple political figurehead— he is in reality the successor to the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) and his divinely inspired religion.

Therefore, the position of a ruler in Islam is more than merely a position of state power and authority. An Islamic ruler is the people's guardian in both religious and wordly matters. This indisputable fact showed itself when later Islamic rulers (who did not have the proper religious qualifications, or sometimes had no religious qualifications at all) took scholars into their courts in order to alleviate their weaknesses in this matter.

These court scholars were used to give religious rulings in ccordance to the despotic ruler's whims and wishes; the ommon people in the society were not capable of knowing the difference between authentic rulings and fabrications. Therefore, religious rulings could be created on the basis of the "greater good" of the time, and they would override traditional religious principles established by the Prophet (ṣ). Writers and historians of previous centuries have mentioned many terrible examples and consequences of the fabrication of traditions and the interpretation of Islam based on people's personal opinions. Naturally, these acts were most oftentimes instigated at the behest of the political powers of the time.

The interpretation of the Quran based on personal opinion was another problem which would manifest itself at times— the Quran was interpreted based on a scholar's personal opinion, and this self-serving interpretation could easily twist the rulings of God in the minds of the people and incline them towards whatever the scholar wished (which was almost always in

concordance with the desires of the ruler of the time).

From the earliest times in Islamic history, religious rulings, traditions, and commentary flowed into two different and distinct directions. The first path was affiliated with the official (and usually oppressive) system of government, which would sacrifice the truth for political expediency and power. In this case, the laws of God were twisted and perverted in the quest for power and wealth. The second path was the pure path, which did not consider any expediency higher than divine expediency, and which was by nature opposed to the first system. Oftentimes, this second path found itself as the unofficial and unauthorized form of Islam.

The Imam's Stance against Deviation

It is clear that 'Ja'farī jurisprudence', as opposed to the official jurisprudence of the government, was not simply the manifestation of a religious difference of opinion; it possessed two intrinsically critical elements. The first and most important of the two, was the assertion that the government lacked any religious awareness and was unable to manage th intellectual affairs of the society. In other words, tl government completely lacked the competance necessary fo being entrusted with the office of the caliphate.

The second was showcasing the various distortions which had been created in the official version of the religion. These distortions were the result of governmental scholars bending reality to suit the desires the governing powers. Through the propagation of knowledge in a manner wholly different from the government scholars, Imam Ṣādiq ('a) positioned himself in opposition to the prevailing system. Through these means, the Imam ('a) showed the inherent faults in the government version of the religion and in this way, he stripped the government of its authority which it derived from its façade of religiosity.

In the discussions and teachings of Imam Ṣādiq ('a) to his companions, the topic of the 'lack of knowledge of the caliphs

in the religious sciences[3] was mentioned as one of the reasons why these rulers did not have the right to rule over the Muslim nation. Therefore, the criticism of the Imams ('a) was not always indirect in nature; they were oftentimes direct attacks as well. For example, the following tradition is narrated from Imam Ṣādiq ('a) where he said: "We are a group whose obedience God has made obligatory, while you are a people who follow an individual whose ignorance will not be a legitimate excuse in front of God."

This means that the people who became deviated from the true path of God due to the ignorance of their rulers and governors, cannot use that as an excuse in the presence of God. They cannot say to God: "We followed our rulers and we became deviated in our religious beliefs and practices because of them." Following such leaders is itself a sin, and it cannot excuse the other sins that will naturally follow.[215]

Examples of the Imam's Students

As mentioned before, the number of students educated at he Imam's university was approximately four thousand in number. To avoid taking too much time, let us suffice by introducing just one of these students who studied under the Imam ('a):

The Genius of Hishām ibn Ḥakam

Hishām was a prominent scholar and famous theologian who possessed expressive eloquence and extraordinary skills in the art of debate. He was one of the greatest students of the school of Imam Ṣādiq ('a) and Imam Kāẓim ('a). Hishām tirelessly served the cause of Shiaism during a time when they were under great pressure politically from both the ruling powers, as well as various sects and schools of thought. He defended the belief of the imamate, which is one of the foundational beliefs of the Shia, and explained the role of the

[215] (Ayatollah) Khāminiī, Sayyid 'Alī, Pīshvāye Ṣādiq, Tehran, Sayyid Jamāl Publications, p. 87-91.

Imam as the leader of the society.

Hishām's intellectual and ideological foundations were formed and strengthened in Imam Ṣādiq's ('a) school. After 148 Hijrī, with the martyrdom of Imam Ṣādiq ('a), his intellectual powers continued to grow and blossom under the guidance of Imam Kāẓim ('a).

In Pursuit of the Truth

A look into the life of Hishām shows that he was a man captivated with a love for knowledge, and who was thirsty for the truth. In order to quench his thirst for knowledge and science, Hishām first began his intellectual career by learning the common subjects of his time; he soon found that he had mastered these. Then, in order to further his knowledge, he began readings the books of Greek philosophy. He eventually gained such an expertise in this subject that he even wrote a book refuting some of the ideas of Aristotle.

Then, in pursuit of even more knowledge, he began to research the beliefs and ideas of various sects. After muc searching, none of the ideas of these sects appealed to him ve much. In time, he grew disillusioned and pulled away fron these groups completely. Later on, he became aware of Imam Ṣādiq ('a) through his uncle. From that time onwards, the course of his life changed completely, as he embraced the teachings of the Shia school of thought.

Some scholars have narrated that: "Hishām ibn Ḥakam began his intellectual career as the student of Abū Shākir Dīṣānī, a famous atheist and materialist. He then entered the Jahmīyah sect and became one of the followers of Jahm ibn Ṣafwān, a Jabrī, who believe in predestination. Some have considered these two things as points of weakness for Hishām, and have accused him of holding a deviant ideology."[216] This is while firstly, Hishām was never a student of Abū Shakir and on the contrary, he held debates with him, causing Abū Shakir to

[216] For the history of Hishām's life, refer to: Na'mah, 'Abdullah, Hishām ibn Ḥakam, Second Edition, Lebanon, Dār al-Fikr, p. 39-53.

become a Muslim.[217] Also, even if we were to suppose that this was true, and that he was involved in the debates and gatherings of various sects, this does not mean that he accepted their point of view. The contacts which he had with these different groups could have simply been for the purpose of debate and of gaining knowledge of their beliefs.

Secondly, for an individual who is after the truth and who wishes to truly recognize the truth with full understanding, this point cannot be counted as one of weakness.[218] Searching for the truth, even if one stumbles at first, is actually a point of strength. In addition, Hishām continued to propagate Shia Islam until the end of his life and he has left behind a brilliant record of his achievements and fulfilments.

A Time for the Meeting of Different Ideas

As mentioned in previous pages, the second century Hijrī was a period of intellectual growth and achievement. It was a time of learning, research, and the clash of different ideas. In addition to this, it was a time when many schools of thought were formed. Even though Islam was a religion that promoted learning and knowledge from its very inception, this particular century was particularly known for its high level of intellectual growth and developement. The reasons behind this increase was that, on the one hand, the Muslim scholars were exposed to the ideas of Greek philosophy. On the other hand, they also began to be introduced to ideas held by non Muslim scholars from different nations. From another perspective, due to the formation of various sects inside the Muslim society, there was a great increase in the fervor of debates, discussions, and gatherings which were taking place. A great multitude of scholars had risen in various fields and there were many academic heavyweights in each field.

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[217] Tastarī, Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī, Qāmūs al-Rijāl, Tehran, The Center for Book Publications, vol. 9, p. 351.

[218] Ṣafā'ī, Sayyid Aḥmad, Hishām ibn Ḥakam, Madāfi' Ḥarīm Wīlāyat, Second Edition, Tehran, Āfāq Publications, Second Edition 1359 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 14.

- Māmaqānī, 'Abdullah, Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl, Tehran, World Publications, vol. 3, p. 301.

Moreover, since many of the intellectual and scientific fields were still in their infancy and had not taken on a concrete form yet, the field for discussion and debate was quite vast.[219] Due to these causes, discussions and debates between various sects and religions took on a special importance and many of these have been recorded in the books of history and are with us today. The sum total of these factors caused a blossoming of the intellectual sciences, and increased awareness among the Muslims in such a manner that the books of history have treated this time period in a special fashion.

Hishām ibn Ḥakam was born and nurtured in this period and since he possessed a strong intellect and enthusiasm towards gaining knowledge, he quickly joined the ranks of the scholars and became known as one of the foremost intellectuals of his time.[220]

The First Meeting

Although Hishām had spent much time in his earlier days researching various sects and schools of thought, he was still left unsatisfied and he felt that nothing he had come across wa what he was searching for. He continued to debate and hol discussions with many of the famous scholars of his time an there was only one individual left whom Hishām had not yet met. This individual was none other than Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad (ʿa), the sixth Imam of the Shias.

Hishām believed that in meeting with Imam Jaʿfar Ṣādiq (ʿa), some new doors would be opened to him, and so he had his uncle, who was a Shia, set up a meeting with the Imam (ʿa). The story of this first meeting is quite interesting and worthy of mentioning here. Hishām's uncle, ʿUmar ibn Yazīd, is quoted as saying: "My nephew Hishām, who was one of the followers of the Jahmīyah sect, asked me to take him to Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) in order that he could discuss religious issues with

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[219] Amīn, Aḥmad, Ḍaḥya al-Islām, Seventh Edition, Cairo, Maktabah Nihḍat al-Miṣrīyah, vol. 2, p. 54.

[220] Ṣafā'ī, Sayyid Aḥmad, Hishām ibn Ḥakam, Madafī Ḥarīm Wīlāyat, Second Edition, Tehran, Âfāq Publications, 1359 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 14.

of thought, and he quickly traversed through its highest stages of learning. He then began to teach others the essentials of the faith and defend it against its enemies. In doing so, he left behind many great intellectual works. When we look at the list of his works (which equal thirty or so volumes in number), we begin to slightly grasp his intellectual greatness and the vast depths of his knowledge. The list is as follows:

1- The book of the Imamate.
2- The causes behind the taking place of things.
3- A refutation of the Atheists.
4- A refutation of the Thanawīyah (Dualists).
5- The book of Tawhīd (the oneness of God).
6- A refutation of Hishām Jawālīqī.
7- A refutation of the Materialists.
8- The old and the young.
9- Pondering on Tawhīd (the oneness of God).[223]
10- The Measure.
11- The Field.
12- A refutation for those who believe in the Imamate of the lesser individual.[224]
13- The dispute of the people in the issue of the Imamate.
14- Testaments (wills) and a refutation of those who disbelieve in them.
15- Free will and predestination.
16- Ḥakamayn.
17- A refutation of the Mu'tazilah's beliefs on Ṭalḥah and Zubayr.
18- Qadar
19- Words
20- Understanding
21- Ability
22- The eight doors
23- A refutation of the Shayṭān Ṭāriq.

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[223] This book was compiled by one of Hishām's students by the name of 'Alī ibn Manṣūr.

[224] The meaning of Mafḍūl is when there is someone more virtuous and capable than someone else.

24- What is the cause behind the introduction of traditions?
25- A refutation of Aristotle in Tawhīd.
26- A refutation of the beliefs of the Mu'tazilah.
27- Sessions on the Imamate.[225]
28- 'Ilal Taḥrīm.
29- Farā'īḍ (Inheritance).[226]

The Imam's Political Activities

Here it is important to mention that Imam Ṣādiq's ('a) intellectual activities, while vast in their breadth and scope, did not comprise his only legacy. Imam Ṣādiq ('a) was also engaged in various political activities, and unfortunately, this aspect of his life has remained concealed from many historians and writers.

In order to displace this false image of Imam Ṣādiq ('a) as not being involved in politics and simply going along with the policies of the rulers of his time, we will bring forward some examples of his political activities.

The Dispatch of Representatives in the Propagation of th Concept of the Imamate

One of the political activities of Imam Ṣādiq ('a) was the dispatching of representatives into various areas of the Muslim world for the purpose of propagating the concept of the imamate. For example, an individual was sent from the people of Kūfah to Khurāsān, where he began inviting people to the leadership (Wīlāyah) of Imam Ṣādiq ('a). One group accepted this invitation and obeyed, while another group rejected it. A third group refrained from giving an answer out of caution and a fear of causing problems in the society.

One individual was selected from each of these three groups in order to meet with the Imam ('a). During the journey to meet the Imam ('a), the representative from the third group did an

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[225] Shaykh Ṭūsī, al-Fihrīst, Mashhad, Dānishkadeye Ilahīyāt wa Ma'ārif Islāmī, p. 355.
- Najjāshī, Fihrīst Asmā' Muṣanfī al-Shī'ah, Qum, Maktabah al-Dāwarī, p. 304.
[226] Najjāshī, Fihrīst Asmā' Muṣanfī al-Shī'ah, Qum, Maktabah al-Dāwarī, p. 304.

inappropriate act with the servant of one of his fellow travelers, but no one realized what had taken place. When these individuals arrived and met with the Imam (ʿa), this representative began to speak first, saying: "An individual from the people of Kūfah came to our area and began inviting the people towards your obedience and Wīlāyah; one group accepted, another group rejected, and the third group refrained out of caution."

The Imam (ʿa) asked: "Which group are you from?" The man replied: "I am from those who have practiced caution." The Imam (ʿa) said: "Since you are of the people of caution and abstinence, then why did not show caution on that specific night, when you engaged in that treacherous act?"[227]

This is one example of how the Imam (ʿa) would work to increase the people's knowledge of the imamate. In reality, this was a politically inspired action because it was negating the authority of the government of that time....

The Factors behind the Downfall of the Umayyids

One of the interesting points in regards to the life of Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) is that the deterioration and ultimate collapse of the Umayyid government took place during his era. When we examine the Umayyid government, we find that one of their most glaring characteristics were the many religious deviations which they had caused in the Muslim community. Over time, this had caused the people to rise up in defiance and open rebellion against them. The reasons behind the anger of the people can be summarized into the following few points:

1- From the time of Mūʿāwīya onwards, the Islamic government had been transformed into a despotic and hereditary monarchy.

2- The public treasury was primarily used for the luxury-filled lifestyles of the rulers and their cronies; very little of it was used for the benefit of the public.

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[227] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Second Edition, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 47, p. 72.

3- The normalization of arrest, imprisonment, torture, murder, and, at times, the wholesale slaughter of the people.
4- Another issue was that during the time of the Umayyids, the caliphs had no hesitation in creating religious rulings which were openly against the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet (ṣ). For example, in open contradiction with the explicit ruling of the Prophet (ṣ), Mū'āwīya illegitimately named Zīyād as the son of Abū Sufyān which made him his brother.
5- The religion of Islam contains rules and injunctions for the punishment of criminal offenders. These set of rules are known as 'Ḥudūd and Dīyāt'. While criminal offenders are to be punished strictly according to the guidelines and limits set by the 'Ḥudūd and Dīyāt', this was changed during the time of the Umayyids. Arrested individuals would at times be set free, while others who were innocent were executed. In other situations, people would be punished far in excess of what their offenses called for.
6- Although famous scholars were educated in the Islamic school system, much of the time, people did not pay any real attention to what they said. Moreover, if a scholar exercised religious ruling which was to the detriment of a ruler, he woul be persecuted and possibly even killed as a result. In this wa the commanding of good and the forbidding of evil were suspended in the society, even though these were two of the fundamental pillars of Islam.
7- The rites and rituals of Islam were insulted openly. Even the Kaaba and the Masjid al-Ḥarām were destroyed at certain times in history. The grave of the Prophet (ṣ), alongside his mosque and pulpit, were dishonored. The people of Medina were subject to wholesale slaughter for a period of three days during the Massacre of Ḥurreh.
8- For the first time in the history of Islam, the descendants of the Prophet were collectively killed, and their wives and daughters taken as captives and paraded around in various cities.
9- A form of praise through poetry existed which was a common practice during the 'Age of Ignorance'. This type of

poetry had been prohibited during the time of the Prophet (ṣ) and the early days of Islam. Later on, with the rise of the Ummayids, it was made a common custom once again.

10- A group of scholars, who were primarily after worldly gain and who were willing to sell their religion for the sake of it, began to ascend in social status and position. With their actions, they bought the pleasure of their rulers while gaining the displeasure of their Creator. This group of individuals interpreted the verses of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (ṣ) as they desired, and in this way, they gave legitimacy to the actions of their corrupt leaders.

11- There was an increasing trend towards opulence and luxury in matters of lifestyle, food, clothing, buildings, and everyday household items. Magnificent palaces were built as the houses of government. There were even palaces built on the hunting grounds of the rulers.

12- Wine drinking, womanizing, and the buying of singing slaves became customary. For certain caliphs, the daily subject of their speech turned wholly to women, food, and wine. This was the only thing which they were concerned about.[228]

13- The concept of the equality of the people of different races was always an important foundation of the Islamic system. The Ummayids eliminated this system and replaced it with a racist and aggressive ideology of Arab supremacy. This policy benefited the Arabs, while being to the detriment of all non Arabs. This was while the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (ṣ) had abrogated all notions of racial superiority in the eyes of God.

The only thing that mattered in Islam was the piety and sincerity which a person lived by. In spite of this, the Umayyids counted the Arabs as being a superior race, and proclaimed that: "Since the Prophet of Islam was from the Arabs, therefore the Arabs are superior to all other races, and amongst the Arabs, the Quraysh are the most superior." Based on this policy, Arabs

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[228] Doctor Shahīdī, Sayyid Ja'far, The Analytical History of Islam Up to the Downfall of the Umayyid Government, Sixth Print, Tehran, The Center For University Publications, 1365 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 204.

were preferred over non Arabs in all positions of rank and authority. The Umayyid imperial system of government considered the 'Mawālī' (Muslims of non Arab stock) as being like servants or slaves, and deprived them of all rights and social positions of authority; the word Mawālī was made synonymous with a very low social position.

In regards to work, the Mawālī were deprived of working in any of the respectable professions. They did not have the right to make weapons, ride on horses, or to marry Arab women. Even desert dwelling Arabs (Bedouins) who were considered to be of low rank in society were forbidden to them in marriage. If someone secretly married an Arab woman, the woman would be forcibly divorced from him and the man would be punished by a vicious lashing. All the positions of government and leadership were reserved exclusively for the Arabs and no non Arab could ever secure such positions. In essence, the Arab Umayyids believed that their race was created to rule over others and that hard work and struggle were reserved for the Mawālī. Their attitude in this matter was one of the bigges contributors to their fall by the hands of the Iranians. In tl revolution against the Umayyids, the 'Abbāsids used the issues in mobilizing mass support against them.

While all of these factors played a role, there were two factors which had the greatest effect: the subjugation of the Mawālī, and the oppression against the family of the Prophet. The 'Abbāsids gained much political ground because of these two matters and in reality, these two issues can be considered as the primary tools which allowed them to gain supremacy in their struggle for power against the Ummayids.

Why Did Imam Ṣādiq Reject the 'Abbāsid Revolutionaries?

Another interesting issue in the life of Imam Ṣādiq ('a) was his rejection of an oath of allegiance from the heads of the 'Abbāsid movement. If we look at the 'Abbāsid revolution with a superficial view, we would see that religious inclinations seemed to have had a strong part in forming and sustaining the

movement. For example, the slogans were all religious in nature, the words that were on the flags were all verses of the Quran, and the leaders were claiming to be working for the benefit of the family of the Prophet. The apparent goal of the 'Abbāsids was retribution from the Umayyids and the Marwānids for the blood that had been spilt from the family of the Prophet. They also attempted to connect their revolution with the family of the Prophet as well. In the beginning of the Abbasid revolution, it was not clear who the leader of the movement was going to be, but their slogan was the following: "We have revolted in order to pledge allegiance with the chosen one from the family of Muḥammad."

It is said that Abū Mūslim had many companions and helpers from among the Arabs as well. During the time of pledging allegiance to Abū Mūslim, they swore that they would remain firm in following the Book of God, the Sunnah of the Prophet, and in obeying a yet unknown, but selected individual from amongst the family of the Prophet. They swore that they would not show delay in following this individual, and that they would obey his commands without question.

They even swore an oath that when they were victorious, they would not engage in killing the enemy except under the rules of Islam and their commanders. The standard under which they were recognized consisted of black clothing and black flags. They had chosen this color possibly because the flag of the Prophet was reputed to have been this same color and their intention in the revolt was to return to the pure essence of the religion of the Prophet.

Another reason for this color may have been as a sign of their mourning and sorrow over what had been done to the family of the Prophet. They may have also thought of themselves as the living examples of the news of 'Malāḥim,' which spoke of black flags in Khurāsān as the sign of the downfall of an oppressive and tyrannical government, and the

establishment of a just one.[229] [230] In any case, the superficial view of the situation showed that the revolt of the ʿAbbāsids was an immense movement containing many Islamic elements.

Letters from the Leaders of the Movement to Imam Ṣādiq

At one point during the Abbasid struggle, Abū Mūslim wrote the following to the Imam (ʿa): "I am inviting the people to the friendship of the family of the Prophet; if you are so inclined, there is no one better for the caliphate than you." The Imam (ʿa) wrote him that: "Neither are you of my companions, nor is this time, my time."[231] Faḍl Kātib also narrates that: "One day I was with Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) when a letter arrived from Abū Mūslim. The Imam (ʿa) told the messenger: 'Your letter is not answerable, so leave our midst.'"[232]

Abū Salmah' Khallāl, who later was introduced as the "Vizier of the family of Muḥammad," saw himself situated in a position which he felt was to his detriment; in order to change these circumstances, he decided to leave the people he was with, and attach himself to the children of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa). Therefore, he wrote letters to three of the well-known Alawīs: Imam Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq (ʿa), ʿAbdullah ibn Ḥasan ibn Ḥasaı ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (ʿAbdullah Maḥḍ), and ʿUmar al-Ashra. ibn Zayn al-ʿAbidīn (ʿa). After he had written the letters, he

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[229] In regards to the black flags and clothing, please refer to the following sources: Zarīn Kūb, ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn, Two Centuries of Silence (Do Qarne Sukūt), Seventh Edition, Tehran, The Everlasting Publications Organization, p. 116.

- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 5, p. 479.
- Khaṭīb Baghdādī, The History of Baghdad, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabīya, vol. 10, p. 208.
- Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, First Edition, Beirut, Maktabah Maʿārif, 1966 A.D., vol. 10, p. 67.

[230] In regards to the signs of the 'Reappearance', one of them involves the coming of black flags from the east; this is a sign of the coming of a just government. Refer to: Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 52, p. 217-229 (The Section on the Signs of the Reappearance) Irshād Mufīd, p. 357.

[231] Shahrīstānī, al-Milal wa al-Niḥal, researched by: Muḥammad Sayyid Gīlānī, Beirut, Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1402 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 154.

[232] Kulaynī, al-Rawḍat Min al-Kāfī, Second Edition, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1389 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 274.

- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 47, p. 297.

entrusted them to one of his friends and told him: "First go to Ja'far ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq ('a); if he accepts, then destroy the other two letters. If he does not accept, then visit 'Abdullah Maḥḍ, and if he also does not accept, then visit 'Umar."

The messenger first went to Imam Ṣādiq ('a) and turned over his letter. Imam Ṣādiq ('a) said to him: "Abū Salmah' is the follower of others; what connection does he have to us?" The messenger said: "Read the letter." Imam Ṣādiq ('a) asked one of his servants to bring the lamp nearer, and when the lamp was brought close, Imam Ṣādiq ('a) put the letter on the fire of the lamp and burned it. The messenger asked: "Will you not give an answer to the letter?" Imam Ṣādiq ('a) replied: "My answer was exactly as you saw."

The messenger then went to 'Abdullah Maḥḍ and gave him the second letter. When 'Abdullah finished reading the letter, he kissed it, and quickly mounted and rode towards Imam Ṣādiq ('a). When he arrived, he said: "This letter arrived just now through one of our followers (Shias) in Khurāsān. It is from Abū Salmah' who has invited me to the position of the caliphate." Imam Ṣādiq ('a) said to 'Abdullah: "Since when have the people of Khurāsān become your followers (Shias)? Do you know even a single individual from amongst them? Since neither you know them, nor do any of them know you, how are they of your followers (Shia)?" 'Abdullah said: "From your speech, it seems that you have an opinion in this matter?"

The Imam ('a) said: "God knows that I consider seeking the best for each and every Muslim as a personal obligation; how can I not, then, consider it in your case? Oh 'Abdullah, seek distance between yourself and these futile aspirations. Know that this government will be of the family of 'Abbās, and that a letter just like this was also sent to me." At this point, 'Abdullah left (the Imam ('a)) in a state of distress. 'Umar ibn Zayn al-'Abidīn also gave Abū Salmah's letter a negative reply. He rejected the letter, saying: "I do not know the sender of this letter so that I can reply to him."[233]

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[233] Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 154.

When the flags of victory were being raised and the signs of triumph were made manifest, Abū Salmah' wrote a letter to Imam Ṣādiq ('a) for the second time, saying: "Seventy thousand warriors are mobilized under our command, so make your position clear." The Imam ('a) once again repeated his previous answer.[234]

Abū Bakr Haḍramī narrates that he and Abān ibn Taghlib went to Imam Ṣādiq ('a), and this was during the time that the black flags had been raised in Khurāsān. They said: "How do you judge the situation?" Imam Ṣādiq ('a) replied: "Sit in your houses; whenever you see us gathered around a man, then hasten towards us with your weapons (in support)."[235]

In another instance, the Imam ('a) told his companions: "Take care of your tongues and do not come out of your homes, for what is exclusively for you (the true Islamic government) will not arrive this soon...."[236] From what has been mentioned in the previous pages, Imam Ṣādiq's ('a) position, in view of Abū Salmah and Abū Muslim's invitation, may seem difficult to understand at first. In spite of this, with deeper research and understanding, the reasons behind the Imam's ('a) actions reveal themselves quite clearly. Imam Ṣādiq ('a) knew that the leaders of the revolt had no real motivations besides reaching power. Even if they were using slogans claiming the support of the family of the Prophet, this was only to attract the support of the masses, who themselves supported this family ('a).

Historical documents clearly show that after the Khurāsānī troops reached Kūfah, Abū Salmah' Khallāl took the reins of power and began to divide various military and political positions amongst his supporters. He indeed wanted to have an Alawite caliph, but he wanted the decision making powers and main functions of government to be in his own hands. In this

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- Mas'ūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 3, p. 253- 254. Mas'ūdī does not mention the letter of 'Umar ibn Zayn al-'Abidīn.

[234] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 47, p. 133.

[235] Ibid, vol. 52, p. 138.

[236] Ibid, vol. 52, p. 138.

case, the caliphate would have been in reality a ceremonial position for anyone who had taken it.[237] The Imam ('a) knew that Abū Mūslim and Abū Salmah' were only after a famous personality from amongst the family of the Prophet in order to use the people's love for them for their own purposes. The Imam ('a) knew that they did not believe in his imamate, or else it would have been meaningless for them to send three identical letters to three individuals from the family of the Prophet.

With the highest levels of awareness, the Imam ('a) knew that the original planners of the revolution were the 'Abbāsids, and that they only sought to gain power for their own ends. People such as Abū Mūslim and Abū Salmah' were only disposable tools in their hands. The Imam ('a) knew that the real leaders of the revolt would soon replace or kill anyone who was of no use to them or who stood in the way of their goals. This very thing ended up befalling Abū Mūslim, Abū Salmah', Sulaymān ibn Kathīr, and others like them.

The Imam ('a) knew that the likes of Abū Salmah' and Abū Mūslim had been tricked, and that they were not on the true path of Islam. Therefore, he was not ready, under any condition, to cooperate with them and to give legitimacy to their undertakings. He knew that the leaders of the revolt were not people of his school of thought. These people practiced excess in the ways of seeking power and taking revenge; they engaged in actions that no true Muslim could ever approve of.

Ibrāhīm Imām's Horrifying Command to Abū Mūslim

The books of history have recorded the commands of Ibrāhīm Imām, which were directed to Abū Mūslim Khurāsānī during the initial stages of the revolt. Abū Mūslim was a famous champion who had been named 'Commander of the family of Muḥammad' in the movement. During a trip to Mecca, he visited Ibrāhīm Imām for his orders. Ibrāhīm Imām gave him a black flag, which was to become one of the symbols

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[237] Doctor Fārūq, 'Umar, Ṭabīat al-Da'wat al-'Abbāsīah, First Edition, Beirut, Dār Al-'Irshād, 1389 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 226.

of the revolt, along with a set of orders. Abu Mūslim was ordered to begin a general revolt in the Khurāsān region. In order to truly comprehend the reality of the likes of Ibrāhīm Imām, Abū Mūslim, and other 'Abbāsid leaders, let us examine the exact orders he was given, verbatim.

During the beginning of the order, Ibrāhīm Imām, in order to deceive Abū Mūslim (who was an inexperienced young man at the time), says: "You are a man from our 'Ahl al-Bayt', act upon my orders... in being loyal towards us, kill anyone whom you have a doubt or misgiving about. If you are able to not leave even one Arab speaking individual alive in Khurāsān, then do so. Wherever you see a child of five hand spans in height and you have misgivings about him, then kill him also."[238]

In this way, Ibrāhīm Imām explicitly commanded Abū Mūslim to engage in unrestrained murder and the spilling of blood. Maqrizī is quoted as saying: "If Ibrāhīm Imām wished to dispatch Abū Mūslim to the lands of the polytheists in order to invite them towards Islam, such an order would have been unacceptable even then. This is while he sent him to the Muslim territories and commanded him towards the killing of Muslims."[239]

The Crimes of Abū Mūslim

Unfortunately, Abū Mūslim followed this bloody order t the letter. Things soon reached the point where according to 'Yāfi'ī', he became the 'Ḥajjāj' of his time by killing countless numbers of people.[240] Historians have noted: "The number of people that Abū Mūslim killed during his period of rule is

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[238] Ibn Khaldūn, Al-'Ibr, Translated by 'Abd al-Muḥammad Āyatī, vol. 1, Tehran, The Institute for Cultural Research and Study, 1364 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 2, p. 167.

- Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, Second Edition, Beirut, Maktabah Ma'ārif, 1977 A.D., vol. 10, p. 28.

[239] Maqrizī, Al-Nizā' wa al-Takhāsum Fīmā Bayna Banī Ummayah wa Banī Hāshīm, Cairo, Maktabah Ahrām, p. 67.

[240] Mirāt al-Jinān, Second Edition, Beirut, Mu'assasat al-'Alamī, 1390 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 285.

numbered to be 600,000 individuals."[241]

Abū Mūslim himself acknowledged these crimes; when he became fearful of Manṣūr, he wrote him a letter saying: "Your brother (Saffāḥ) ordered me to draw out my sword, to arrest on the count of a single misgiving, to kill on the smallest implication, and to accept no excuses. In fulfilling his commands, I dishonored many sanctified trusts which God had made obligatory their honoring. I spilt much blood which God had made unlawful to spill, and I took the government from its owners and gave it over to others..."[242]

Later on, Manṣūr also acknowledged this matter when he was about to kill Abū Mūslim. When he was counting off his crimes, he said: "Why did you torture 600,000 individuals and kill them?" Abū Mūslim, without denying anything, replied: "These were all done in order to strengthen the foundations of your government."[243] On another occasion, Abū Mūslim calculated the number of people killed by him in non-war situations as being 100,000 in total.[244]

Abū Mūslim did not even leave his long time companions alone; he ended up killing Abū Salmah' Khallāl, his longtime friend and supporter, who had been named the 'Vizier of the family of Muḥammad'.[245] This was while Abū Salmah' played a significant role in the 'Abbāsid victory and was in reality the economic foundation of the revolution. Therefore, it isn't particularly surprising when we read in history that when Abū Mūslim was going to the Ḥajj pilgrimage, the Bedouins fled

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[241] Ibn Kathīr, Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, Second Edition, Beirut, Maktabah Ma'ārif, 1977 A.D., vol. 10, p. 72.
- Ibn Khallakān, Wafīāt al-'Ayān, researched by: Doctor Iḥsān 'Abbās, Second Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Sharīf al-Rāḍī, 1364 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 3, p. 148.

[242] Ḥaydar, Asad, al-Imām Ṣādiq wa al-Madhāhib al-Arbi'ah, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1390 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 533.
- Khaṭīb Baghdādī, The History of Baghdad, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, vol. 10, p. 208.

[243] Doctor Fārūq, 'Umar, Ṭabīat al-Da'wat al-'Abbāsīah, First Edition, Beirut, Dār Al-'Irshād, 1389 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 45.

[244] Ibn Wāḍih, The History of Ya'qūbī, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 105.

[245] Ibn Khallakān, Wafīāt al-'Ayān, researched by: Doctor Iḥsān 'Abbās, Second Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Sharīf al-Rāḍī, 1364 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 2, p. 196.

from near the roads becaue of what they had heard about his bloodthirsty nature.[246]

Selection and Planning

When it comes to the leaders of the ʿAbbāsid movement and their rejection by Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa), it is clear that the Imam saw them as being incapable of being the head of such a movement. Naturally, if the movement had been a sincere one, and had its leaders been capable, then the Imam (ʿa) would have definitely taken up the cause of the revolution.

Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) understood the practical conditions of the Muslims with great depth, and he was also aware of their political and social circumstances. The Imam (ʿa) did not consider war and a subsequent victory as being sufficient in bringing about a true Islamic government. In order to establish a true Islamic government, it was not enough to array military forces for an attack on the opposing side. It was necessary first and foremost to form an ideological army who fully believed in the Imam (ʿa) and who were fully dedicated towards th cause. These forces were essential in supporting the new formed government and watching over it. Without such foundation, it is clear that the government would quickl become deviated; in time, it would become the same or worse as that which it had replaced.

The words of Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) to one of his companions brings this issue into even clearer focus. It is narrated from Sadīr Ṣayrafī that he said: "I went to visit the Imam (ʿa) and said: 'Why are you sitting?' He said: 'Oh Sadīr, what has happened?' I said: 'I am speaking of the abundance of your friends, followers, and companions.' He said: 'How many do you think they number?' I said: '100,000.' He said: '100,000?' I said: 'Yes, and perhaps 200,000.' He said: '200,000?' I said: 'Yes, and perhaps half of this world's population.'

After these words were spoken, Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) went to Yanbiʿ alongside with Sadīr. There, the Imam (ʿa) saw a flock

[246] Ibn Khallakān, Ibid, vol. 3, p. 148.

of young goats and said: 'Oh Sadīr, if the number of our companions and followers reached the number of these goats, we would never remain sitting.'"[247]

From this tradition, it can be concluded that the Imam ('a) correctly understood that it was not sufficient to simply take the reins of power. As long as the government and its initiatives were not supported by the masses, then the success of an Islamic reformation could never be assured. What was initially needed were forces who could understand the goals of the government, have faith in its views, and support its institutions. In addition, these forces were necessary in order to explain various government matters to the masses, and to stand steadfast and firm against the various trials and difficulties which would invariably come their way.

From the words of Imam Ṣādiq ('a), it is understood that if he could have had the support of certain people who could have given fulfilment to the aims and goals of Islam after the armed victory, then he was prepared to engage in such an uprising. Unfortunately, the situation and conditions of his time did not fulfil these necessary qualifications and permit such a movement. It was for this reason that the Imam ('a) continued with his mission of educating the people in the hopes that one day soon, they would finally be ready for just such a movement.

mam Ṣādiq in Opposition to the 'Abbāsids

As we have seen, the 'Abbāsids used slogans of supporting the family of the Prophet and the fulfilment of justice in the society from the very beginning of their struggle against the Umayyids. Throughout the rule of the Umayyids, the oppression against the family of the Prophet (ṣ) had wounded the hearts of the Muslims, and the Umayyids had not restrained themselves from any act of wholesale oppression and tyranny. The 'Abbāsids used this extreme hatred which the masses felt towards the Umayyids for their own political purposes. Under

[247] Kulaynī, al-Ūsūl Min al-Kāfī, Second Edition, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 242.

the guise of supporting the family of the Prophet, they initially gathered the support of the people towards their cause.

In time, the ʿAbbāsids did not follow through on their pledge of removing the oppression which had been enacted against the family of the Prophet, nor did they work to establish justice in the society. In reality, it was not long before they renewed the anti-Islamic policies of the Umayyids, and in fact increased them in severity and scope. The severity of their policies and actions reached the point that the people began to wish for the return of the Umayyids!

When we look at the caliphate of Saffāḥ, the first ʿAbbāsid caliph, we find that the duration of his rule was short and the foundations of his government had not yet been fully established. For this reason, not much pressure was applied on the masses during his time and the family of the Prophet was not put under too many difficulties. Yet with the ascension of Manṣūr Dawānīqī as the caliph, the situation began to worsen, and the pressure on the society was increased dramatically. Manṣūr also ruled for a relatively long period of time (about 21 years) and his rule was contemporary with the life of Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa). Seeing as this was the case, let us take a look at some instances from the rule of Manṣūr when he reached the caliphate:

The Politics of Economic Hardship

Abū Jaʿfar Manṣūr, the second ʿAbbāsid caliph, was an individual known for his tyrannical and cold-hearted nature. He was known for his extreme suspicion towards everyone and his first impulse was to have people killed at the slightest hint of criticism. He transformed the state of the Muslims into one of difficulty and misery.

In addition to Manṣūr's tyranny and oppression, he was extremely materialistic and miserly. He is famous amongst the ʿAbbāsid caliphs for his level of stinginess and his worship of money. The books of history have narrated many stories of his excess in this regard. In spite of this, the financial pressures

which he enacted on the society and his extravagance cannot be explained as a simple side effect of his materialism.

During his rule, Manṣūr actually implemented a policy where he purposely crippled the economic situation of the Muslim society and deprived the people of everything which they possessed. He not only considered the public treasury as his own personal wealth, but he also took the personal property of the people for his own private use. He even abstained from acts of public development and construction. He did not leave wealth for anyone, and by doing so, he accumulated approximately 800 million Dirhams during the period of his rule.[248]

Historical documents indicate that this policy of Manṣūr was a cold and calculated strategy designed to cripple the economy and bring about certain results for Manṣūr's government. Manṣūr's goal in enacting this economic policy was to create a constant condition of neediness and hunger in the masses, forcing them to rely on him for all of their needs. As a result, the people would only think of meeting their basic needs and they would become incapable of thinking about the larger social issues that were at hand.

One day, in a gathering of his friends and court officials, Manṣūr sarcastically mentioned his reasons behind keeping the people hungry. He said: "The Bedouin Arabs have said it well when they say: 'Keep your dog hungry so that he will follow you in the hope of some bread.'" At this, one of the people present became upset at this demeaning remark and said: "I fear that another will show a piece of bread to this dog, and in order to get the bread, the dog will follow him and leave you."[249]

During the period of his caliphate, Manṣūr not only implemented this policy of economic deprivation and hunger, but he also taught this inhumane method to his son Mahdī as well. During the course of one of his testaments to his son, he

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[248] Ibn Wāḍih, The History of Ya'qūbī, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, vol. 3, p. 125.

[249] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (a), Second Edition, 1389 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 369.

said: "I have made the people obedient and submissive towards me by using various methods. Know that the people are of three groups. One group is the poverty stricken and helpless, who will stretch a hand of need towards you. Another group are the fugitives and they are always fearful for their lives. The third group passes its days in the corners of the prisons and sees their freedom only in your forgiveness and pardon. When you reach the caliphate, do not give the people any room to enjoy comfort and ease."[250]

These realities show that Manṣūr's economic policies were devised as a way of strengthening and further stabilizing the foundations of his government; he also wished to prevent any organized opposition from taking form amongst the people. For this reason, it is not correct to say that Manṣūr was just materialistic and loved wealth— his policies were coldly calculated and designed according to long term planning.

A Wave of Blood

Manṣūr's policies were not confined only to economic hardship, financial deprivation, and forced starvation. In addition to his economic policies, he also instilled fear in the people through the use of mass murder and torture. He ha professional executioners in his government and every sing day, a fresh group would fall victim to them.

One day, Manṣūr's uncle said the following words to him: "You have assailed the people with such ferocity and harshness that it is as if the word 'forgiveness' has never reached your ears." Manṣūr gave him the following reply: "The bones of the Marwanids are not yet rotten and the swords of the Hāshimīs have not yet been put back into their sheaths; we are passing our days amongst a people who just yesterday saw us as ordinary individuals and today see us as rulers. Therefore, we can only inspire awe and fear in their hearts by letting go of the

[250] Ibn Wāḍih, The History of Ya'qūbī, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, vol. 3, p. 133.

concept of forgiveness and exercising punishment on them."[251]

Manṣūr's oppressive policies existed in virtually every facet of his government and they extended to all the cities under his rule, but they were particularly severe in the city of Medina. The reason behind this severity was that the people of Medina had a close relationship with the teachings of Islam because of the central role they had played in the growth and defense of the new religion. Due to this background, they were not ready to live under a corrupt government and submit to the likes of Manṣūr. They did not accept every act of the government as being the final word in Islam. Moreover, after the Prophet (ṣ) passed away, the city of Medina was predominantly the center of the guidance and preaching of the Imams ('a). Until the time of the Eighth Imam ('a), the Imams ('a) resided in Medina and they were a continuous source for the rise of successive Islamic movements.

Medina under Economic Siege

After the revolt of Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullah ibn al-Ḥasan, famously known as 'Nafsu Zakīya', Manṣūr selected Rīyāḥ ibn 'Uthmān for the governorship of Medina. Rīyāḥ was an extremely cruel, cold-hearted, and merciless individual, and Manṣūr wished to recruit him to put an end to the revolt. Rīyāḥ entered the city of Medina and gathered the people in order to speak to them. He said: "Oh people of Medina, I am a viper and the son of a viper. I am the son of the uncle of Muslim ibn 'Uqbah,[252] who brought your city to destruction and killed your men. I swear by God that if you do not submit, I will crush your city in a way where no signs of life will remain."

When he reached this point in his speech, a group of the Muslims stood up and shouted in protest: "An individual such

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[251] Ḥaydar, Asad, al-Imām Ṣādiq wa al-Madhāhib al-Arbi'ah, Second Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1390 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1-2, p. 480.

- 'Abd al-Raḥmān Suyūṭī, The History of the Caliphs, Third Edition, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 267.

[252] Mūslim ibn 'Uqbah was one of the commanders of Yazīd ibn Mū'âwīya who attacked the city of Medina under his orders, and engaged in three days of wholesale murder, rape, and plunder. As a result of his crimes, he became known as Mūsrif ibn 'Uqbah.

as yourself, who has such a disgraceful past in Islam, and whose father was twice lashed for his crimes, is unworthy to do such a thing. We will never allow you act in this manner with us."

Rīyāḥ reported back to Manṣūr that the people of Medina had revolted and were not obeying his commands. Manṣūr sent a harsh letter through Rīyāḥ to the people of Medina and threatened that if they continued to disobey, then he would shut down the routes of trade from both the sea and the land, leaving them to live under an economic siege. He also promised to send military forces to fight against them and crush their revolt.

Rīyāḥ called the people to gather at the mosque and when everyone was present, he went to the top of the pulpit and began to read the caliph's letter. He had not yet finished reading the letter when the people began to shout in protest from every corner of the mosque. The people's rage had been kindled and they began to throw stones at him while he was on the pulpit. Rīyāḥ fled from the gathering in order to save his life and he was forced to hide from the people...[253] When Manṣūr heard about this, he acted on his threat and closed off all routes c trade into the city. Medina was placed under siege, and th situation lasted until the caliphate of his son Mahdī ʿAbbāsī.[2

Imam Ṣādiq and Manṣūr

Abū Jaʿfar Manṣūr was extremely worried about the political activities of Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa). The love of the people towards the Imam (ʿa) and his intellectual greatness further added to these feelings. Due to these worries, from time to time, Manṣūr would summon Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) to Iraq and draw up plans to have him killed. Every single time, his plans were neutralized.[255]

Manṣūr was also very careful about the Shias of Medina and he did his utmost to watch them and keep them under control.

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[253] Ibn Wāḍih, The History of Yaʿqūbī, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, vol. 3, p. 114-115.

[254] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 5, p. 551.

[255] ʿAllāmah Majlisī has created an independent section for the meetings of Imam Ṣādiq (a) and Manṣūr in his Biḥār al-'Anwār. Refer to: vol. 47, p. 162-212.

He even had a group of spies in the city who were commissioned with seeking out and killing anyone who started to become close with the followers of Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa).[256]

Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) was very careful to prevent his companions from becoming close and cooperating with the government of the Abbasids. One day, one of his companions asked him: "Some of the Shias are sometimes afflicted with difficulties in making a living and it is suggested to them that they build homes or dig canals for the ʿAbbāsids. What is your opinion on this matter?" The Imam (ʿa) replied: "I would not like to tie (even) a knot or to fasten the lid on a water skin for them, even if they were to give me a large sum of money for it. Verily the ones who help the oppressors will be encircled with fire until God judges over his servants."[257]

The Imam (ʿa) would also prohibit the Shias from referring any cases to the governmental courts, and he did not consider the rulings that were issued from these courts as being religiously obligatory to follow. The Imam (ʿa) would also warn the jurisprudents and narrators of tradition to not affiliate themselves with the government in any shape or form. He would say: "The jurisprudents are the trustees of the Prophets (ʿa); if you see them turn towards the kings (and become close to them and cooperate with them), then become suspicious of them and do not rely upon them."[258]

One day, Abū Jaʿfar Manṣūr wrote the following to Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa): "Why do you not visit us like everyone else?" The Imam (ʿa) wrote back: "We do not possess anything (in terms of worldly wealth and possessions) to be fearful on its behalf from you, and you, in terms of the next world, do not have anything upon which we can be hopeful for. You are neither the possessor of any blessings that we should congratulate you

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[256] Shaykh Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Marifat al-Rijāl (Famously known as Rijāl Kashshī), researched and edited by Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, p. 282.

[257] Shaykh Hurr ʿĀmūlī, Wasā'il al-Shīʿah, Beirut, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, vol. 12, p. 129.

[258] Ḥaydar, Asad, Al-Imām Ṣādiq wa al-Madhāhib al-Arbiʿah, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabīya, 1390 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3-4, p. 21 (narrated from Ḥilyat al-Aw'līyā).

on its behalf, and neither do you see yourself under any calamity or affliction so that we can console you; therefore why should we come to you?"

Manṣūr wrote back in response: "Come and advise us." Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) replied: "If someone is from the people of this world (those who are worldly and materialistic), they will not admonish you, and if they are from the people of the hereafter (the religious), then they will also not come to you."[259]

The Creation of Religious Scholars

The Umayyid rulers worked hard through various means and methods to create a distance between the people and the Imam's school of thought. They would encourage people to refer to their own government sponsored jurisprudents, and if they were not willing to do that, they would at least encourage them to refer to the non-government jurisprudents who were not a threat to their rule. Although the ʿAbbāsids began their movement with slogans in solidarity and in support of the Hāshimīs, they ended up pursuing the very same policies of the Umayyids once they had strengthened and solidified th foundations of their power.

The ʿAbbāsid caliphs, much like their Umayyid counterparts, considered the Imams as threats to their power and rule. They realized that the people were attracted to their spiritual presence and drawn to their coherent religious and theological philosophy. For this reason, they would do their best to isolate them through whichever means they could think of. This issue was most apparent during the time of Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa). The ʿAbbāsids worked to introduce certain individuals, some of whom had been the students of Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa), as comprehensive scholars whom the people could refer to in matters of religion. Abū Ḥanīfah and Mālik ibn Anas are two examples of these efforts.

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[259] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 47, p. 184.

A Compulsory Compilation

To these ends, Manṣūr Dawānīqī would honor and respect Mālik ibn Anas to an extraordinary degree, and he introduced him as the official religious jurisprudent which the people could refer to in matters of religion. In the city of Medina, an 'Abbāsid spokesman declared that: "Besides Mālik ibn Anas and Ibn Abī Dhi'b no one has the right to issue religious rulings."[260]

Manṣūr also ordered Mālik to compile a book of religious traditions and put it at the disposal of the scholars in the field of traditions. Mālik tried to refrain from this action, but Manṣūr insisted. One day, Manṣūr said to Mālik: "You must write this book, for today no one exists that is more knowledgeable than you."

In response to his insistence, Mālik ending up compiling the book Muwaṭa.[261] Following this, the government put all of its weight behind supporting and propagating Malik's school of thought. Through propagating Mālik's school of thought, they wanted to pull the people away from Imam Ṣādiq ('a) and his revolutionary school of thought. Manṣūr said to Mālik: "If I live long enough, I will send your religious rulings to all of the cities just like the Quran, and I will oblige the people to act upon them."[262]

Naturally, these scholars were the witting or unwitting supporters of the interests of the governments of their time. If this were not the case, the caliphs wouldn't have put so much money and effort into supporting them. If the caliph had even suspected that a scholar had taken a step against their interests,

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[260] Ibn Khallakān, Wafīāt al-'Ayān, researched by: Doctor Iḥsān 'Abbās, Second Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Sharīf al-Rāḍī, 1364 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 4, p. 135.
- Suyūṭī, Tanwīr al-Ḥawālik 'Alā Muwaṭa' Mālik, Cairo, Maṭba'at al-Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, Muqadamah.

[261] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (a), Second Edition, 1389 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 91 (narrated from Sharḥ Zarqānī on Malik's Muwaṭa'). The book Muwaṭa' is one of the famous books of the Ahl al-Sunnah today and its compiler is Mālik ibn Anas, the head of the Mālikī school which is one of the four main Sunni schools of thought.

[262] Dhahabī, Shamsh al-Dīn Muḥammad, Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, vol. 1, p. 212.

or that they were secretly in disagreement with them, they would be punished severely. This is precisely what ended up happening to Mālik ibn Anas, in spite of initially being so honored by Manṣūr. When Mālik began to criticize Manṣūr in front of the son of Manṣūr's uncle, Malik was lashed seventy times on the caliph's orders. This criticism was in relation to an edict which Mālik had issued against the wishes of the caliph.[263]

The Revolt of Zayd ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn

Zayd ibn ʿAlī was the brother of Imam Bāqir (ʿa), and he was known as a virtuous individual from the family of the Prophet (ṣ). He was a learned man who was an ascetic, pious, courageous, and intrepid.[264] He also lived during the rule of the Umayyids. Throughout his life, Zayd had seen a great deal of oppression and tyranny from the rulers of his time. He believed that the only option to stop the Umayyid government was to fight against them in an armed revolt and so he decided to prepare the grounds for just such a movement.

The Summoning of Zayd to Damascus

Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik was aware of the revolutionary spirit of Zayd, and he had decided to have him killed in order to save himself from any danger which he posed. Hishām drew up certain plans aimed toward these ends. He then had Zayd, who was in Medina at that time, summoned to Damascus. When Zayd entered Damascus and went to the government palace to meet with Hishām, Hishām initially greeted him very coldly. He began to ridicule him and he did not allow him to be seated.

Hishām then said to him: "Yūsuf ibn ʿAmr Thaqafī (the governor of Iraq) has reported to me that Khālid ibn ʿAbdullah Qasrī has given you 600,000 dirhams, and you must return this

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[263] Ibn Khallakān, Wafīāt al-ʿAyān, researched by Doctor Iḥsān ʿAbbās, Second Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Sharīf al-Rāḍī, 1364 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 4, p. 137.

[264] Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 132.

money." Zayd replied: "Khālid has not given anything to me." Hishām said: "Then you must go to Yūsuf ibn ʿAmr in Iraq until he settles things between you and Khālid." Zayd said: "Do not send me to an ignoble individual from the tribe of Thaqīf so that he can disrespect me." Hishām replied: "You have no choice, you must go!" Then he added: "I have heard that you consider yourself suitable for the caliphate and entertain thoughts about it. This is while you are nothing more than the son of a slave, and it does not befit the son of a slave to sit on the seat of the caliphate."

When Zayd heard this, he replied: "Do you think that the circumstances of my mother takes away from my worth? Have you forgotten that Isḥāq was born from a free woman, while the mother of Ismāʿīl was a slave? Yet God selected the line of the prophets from Ismāʿīl's lineage and the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) is from his lineage." Then Zayd admonished Hishām and invited him towards piety and virtue. Hishām said: "Is it that an individual such as yourself is inviting me towards piety and virtue?" Zayd replied: "Yes, for enjoining the good and forbidding the evil are two of the important commandments of Islam and their application is obligatory upon everyone. No one should refrain from this duty due to the humbleness of their position and rank, and no one has the right to refuse to listen to it based on the pretext of their high rank."

A Compulsory Journey

After Hishām had finished speaking with Zayd, he sent him to Iraq and he wrote a letter to Yūsuf ibn ʿAmr, saying: "When Zayd arrives, confront him with Khālid and do not give him permission to stay in Kūfah for even one hour, for he is a man of eloquence, an orator, and of charismatic presence. If he remains there in Kūfah, the people will begin to follow him." As soon as Zayd entered the city of Kūfah, he went to see Yūsuf and said: "Why have you dragged me all the way here?" Yūsuf replied: "Khālid claims that he has given you 600,000 dirhams." Zayd said: "Bring Khālid, so that if he has a claim,

he can make it personally." Yūsuf ordered that Khālid be brought from prison. Yūsuf turned to him and said: "This is Zayd ibn ʿAlī, therefore declare anything that you have given to him." Khālid replied: "I swear by God that I have not given anything to him and your purpose in bringing him here is only to harass him."

Upon hearing this, Yūsuf faced Zayd and said: "The Commander of the Faithful Hishām has ordered that I am to expel you from Kūfah this very day." Zayd said: "Give me three days reprieve so that I may rest and then leave Kūfah." Yūsuf said: "It is not possible and you must leave this very day." Zayd said: "Then give me reprieve so that I may remain today." Yūsuf replied: "Even one hour's reprieve is not possible."[265] Following this event, Zayd left Kūfah accompanied with some of Yūsuf's government officials, and began traveling towards Medina. After some distance from Kūfah, the officials returned and left Zayd to travel alone...

In Kūfah

Zayd's entrance into Iraq caused excitement and turmoil amongst the people, and news of what had taken place between him and Hishām spread everywhere. The people of Kūfah, who were witness to these events from up close, quickly went to meet Zayd when news reached them that he had left for Medina. When they reached him, they expressed their support and said: "Come and live in Kūfah, and take the people's oath of allegiance. You should be certain that 100,000 individuals will give their oath to you and are prepared to fight under your command. This is while the Umayyids are only few in number; in the very first attack, they will be put to flight."

Zayd knew the history of the Kufans in regard to their disloyalty and how quickly they would break their oaths and pledges. He had not forgotten what had taken place during the time of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), Imam Ḥasan (ʿa), and Imam Ḥusayn

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[265] Ibn Wāḍih, The History of Yaʿqūbī, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, vol. 3, p. 67-68.

('a). As a result, he didn't put much weight on their promises and oaths. In spite of his misgivings, the Kufans continued to insist and so he changed his mind in regards to Medina and returned back to Kūfah. The people began to come to him in groups and gave him their oath of allegiance. This reached the point where there were 25,000 individuals prepared for war from Kufah alone.

The Great Battle

At the same time, the authorities were keeping careful watch over the situation. Yūsuf ibn 'Amr was constantly reporting back to Hishām on the anti Umayyid forces which were gathering around Zayd. Hishām became extremely frightened about the rebellion gaining momentum and so he ordered Yūsuf to attack Zayd's forces without delay and crush the revolt before it could gather steam.

Both sides gathered their forces and a hard battle ensued. Zayd fought with great bravery and courage, and he was constantly encouraging his troops to fight with everything that they had. The battle went on until nightfall. As the battle continued to rage, an arrow flew out and struck Zayd's forehead, penetrating it. Zayd was unable to continue leading the battle, and this was while a number of his companions had also been killed. Another group soon became scattered and Zayd realized that it was not possible to continue the fight. Without having any other option, he ordered his forces to retreat.

The Martyrdom of Zayd

During that night, a doctor who specialized in surgery was called in to remove the arrowhead from Zayd's forehead. Unfortunately, the arrowhead had penetrated so deeply that its removal was a very difficult process. After much effort, the surgeon was finally able to bring out the arrowhead. However, due to severity of the wound, Zayd ended up passing away.

The companions of Zayd deliberated for a period of time

and they decided to bury Zayd's body under a river which was flowing through that area. This was to prevent the enemy from taking the body and desecrating it as was their custom in such situations. These companions decided to divert the water from its original course, bury the body, and then allow the water to flow back where it had once been. In this way, they would conceal the body from Hishām's government agents.

Unfortunately, one of Hishām's agents was watching the burial and he reported the incident to Yūsuf ibn ʿAmr. Under the order of Yūsuf, the body of Zayd was disinterred and his head was cut off from his body. His body was then hung in the garbage pit of Kūfah, and it remained there for a period of four years. The body was then brought down, burned, and the ashes thrown to the wind!

Did Imam Ṣādiq Agree with the Revolt of Zayd?

In regards to Zayd, there are many contradicting traditions which have been reportedly narrated from the Imams (ʿa) in regards to whether he was a Shia, as well as whether he himself claimed to be an imam. In some of these traditions, he i rebuked, while in others he is praised.

The majority of our scholars and researchers, from both pas times, as well as modern times, have rejected the traditions which criticize Zayd on the basis of their chains of narration, and they have considered them to be inauthentic. As an example, the late Ayatollah Khū'ī spent some time researching these traditions and he ruled them to be weak in terms of their chain of narration and thus unreliable. He said: "As a result of what we found, we have concluded that Zayd was a great individual and worthy of praise. No (authentic) document exists which shows him to be deviated in regards to his beliefs or which criticize him."[266]

The late ʿAllāmah Majlisī has also mentioned these traditions concerning Zayd and has written: "Know that the traditions concerning Zayd are varying and contradictory. The

[266] Muʿajam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth, Qum, Madinat al-ʿIlm, vol. 7, p. 345-356.

news which praises and honors him, and mentions that he did not have any illegitimate claims are greater in number. As a result, the majority of the Shia scholars have attested to his high rank and status. Therefore, it is appropriate to assume the best about him and refrain from criticizing him..."[267]

In regard to Zayd's revolt, there is testimony and evidence that it was started with the permission and consent of Imam Ṣādiq ('a). Amongst this evidence is the answer of Imam Riḍā ('a) to a question which Ma'mūn asked. Imam Riḍā ('a) said: "My father, Mūsā ibn Ja'far ('a), narrated that he heard from his father Ja'far ibn Muḥammad ('a) that: '...Zayd consulted with me in regards to his revolt and I said to him: Dear uncle, if you like to be that same individual who will be hung in the garbage pit (of Kūfah), then this is the path.' And when Zayd left the presence of Imam Ṣādiq ('a), the Imam ('a) said: 'Woe upon the person who hears his call and does not hasten to his assistance.'"[268]

This tradition is potent evidence that Zayd's revolt was initiated with the permission of the Imam ('a). Due to the dangers of the time, it was necessary that this consent was hidden and not allowed to reach the ears of the enemy. For this reason, neither the Imam ('a), nor Zayd, nor any of the close companions were interested in disclosing this information to the general public.

When Imam Ṣādiq ('a) was speaking with one of the companions of Zayd who had killed six individuals from the Umayyid Army during the battle, he said: "May God make me a partner in this blood (referring to the Umayyids who he killed). I swear by God that my uncle Zayd took up the method of 'Alī ('a) and his companions."[269] Zayd was also a believer in

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[267] Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 46, p. 205. Also refer to: The Personality and Revolt of Zayd ibn 'Alī, p. 514-527.

- It should be noted that the praise of Zayd from the Shia scholars should not be construed as support of the sect which has taken on his name.

[268] Ṣadūq, 'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā (a), First Edition, Beirut, Mu'assasah' al-'Alamī Lil Maṭbū'āt, 1404 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 225, Section 25, Ḥadīth 1.

[269] Tastarī, Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī, Qāmūs al-Rijāl, Second Edition, Mu'assasah' al-Nashr al-Islāmī, vol. 4, p. 570.

the imamate of Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa). It has been narrated from him that he said: "Jaʿfar is our Imam in the Ḥalāl (lawful) and the Ḥarām (unlawful)."[270]

Zayd would also say: "During every era, one individual from us, the family of the Prophet, is the proof of God. The proof of our time is my nephew Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad (ʿa). Whoever follows him will not be misguided, and whoever opposes him, will not gain salvation."[271] Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) is also narrated to have said: "May God bless my uncle Zayd; whenever he was victorious, he would be faithful (to his words). My uncle Zayd would invite the people towards the leadership of the chosen one from the family of Muḥammad (ṣ) and that individual was none other than myself."[272]

In another tradition from Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa), it is narrated that he said about Zayd: "May God bless him; he was a pious man... learned and truthful. If he was victorious, he would be faithful to his pledge, and if he had gained power, he knew who to entrust it to."[273] The news of the martyrdom of Zayd and his companions ended up having a deep effect in Medina. More than anyone else, Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) was the most deeply affected. After Zayd's martyrdom, such a deep sorrow and grief tool over the Imam (ʿa) that whenever the word Kūfah and Zayc were mentioned, tears would come out of his eyes and he would speak in praise of his martyred uncle and his companions.

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[270] Shaykh Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Marifat al-Rijāl (Famously known as Rijāl Kashshī), researched and edited by: Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 361.

[271] Ṣadūq, Al-Amālī, Qum, al-Maṭba'at Hikmah, 1373 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 325, Majlis 81, Ḥadīth 6.

[272] Tastarī, Ibid, p. 566.

[273] Shaykh Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Marifat al-Rijāl (Famously known as Rijāl Kashshī), researched and edited by: Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 285.

THE LIVES OF THE TWELVE

A Look at the Social and Political Lives of the Twelve Infallible Imams ('a)

Written By
Shaykh Mahdī Pīshvā'ī

▪PART THREE▪

A Look at the Lives of Imam Kazim ('a), Imam Reza ('a), and Imam Jawad ('a)

Translated By
Sayyid Ali Musawi

The Lives of the Twelve is a pioneering work that details the lives of the Twelve Shia Imams. While most works on the Twelve Imams focuses on the basics of their lives, this text goes into the details of their social and political lives and how they affected change throughout their societies. Through extensive research, Shaykh Mahdi Pishvai has been able to craft together many details which were not widely known before. This is the first time a book of this caliber has been published in the English language. Today, we live in times where morality and a sense of right and wrong have all but disappeared. In light of this, we can turn to the teachings and wisdom of the Twelve in order to see how we can help bring back morality and that human sense of differentiating between right and wrong in our society. This work is composed of four distinct volumes, each of which goes into the lives of three of the Twelve Imams.



NOOR COLLECTIVE
PUBLICATIONS



The Lives of the Twelve

(Part Three)

A Look at the Social and Political Lives of the Twelve Infallible Imams

Written By: Shaykh Mahdī Pīshvā'ī

Translated By: Sayyid Ali Musawi

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Preface and Acknowledgments

-By Sayyid Ali Musawi

In the name of God, the All-Beneficent, the Ever Merciful

Oftentimes, the work on the lives of the Twelve Imams ('a) tend to be strictly biographical in nature and they do not deal with the social or political aspects of their lives. This book primarily summarizes the biographical aspects of their lives and it delves into the details of how they worked to spread the true teachings of the religion of Islam throughout their societies. Indeed, we are indebted to these Twelve Guides; without their teachings and their guidance, we would have been plunged into the depths of darkness.

Although this book began as a project many long years ago, it has finally reached completion today, February 2, 2019. We thank God for his blessings which weigh heavy on us and we ask that he guides us in his path and that he allows us to be more perfect in serving him. Truly, nothing is possible except

through God.

I would like to extend my gratitude and thanks to my parents, who have been so integral all of these years in teaching and guiding me. I would also like to thank everyone who has been a part of this journey thus far, particularly my teachers in the religious seminary of Qum, Iran. My years there proved invaluable to who I am today and I would not trade them for anything in this world. I would also like to thank the members of the Noor Collective in San Diego, California for creating the platform which inspired this publication. Finally, I would like to thank Issa K. for his help in the final editing of this manuscript, as well as Haider al-Shaher for his work on the cover page. May we all be worthy one day to call ourselves the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)...

Sayyid Ali Musawi
February 2, 2019
San Diego, California

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Part Three: A Look at the Lives of Imam Kāẓim, Imam Riḍā, and Imam Jawād

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The Seventh Imam

Imam Mūsā Kāẓim

A Brief Look into the Life of the Imam

The first name of the Seventh Imam is Mūsā, while he was also known by the title of al-Kāẓim. His mother was a virtuous lady by the name of Ḥamīdah and his father was the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ('a). The Imam was born in the year 128 Hijrī in an area called Abwā', one of the outlying areas of Medina. He was ultimately martyred in the year 183 (or 186) Hijrī.

Caliphs Who Ruled during the Life of the Imam

From the year 148 Hijrī, when Imam Ṣādiq ('a) attained martyrdom, the imamate of Imam Kāẓim ('a) began. Imam Kāẓim lived contemporarily with the following caliphs:

1- Manṣūr Dawānīqī (136-158 Hijrī)
2- Muḥammad, better known as Mahdī (158-169 Hijrī)
3- Hādī (169-170 Hijrī)
4- Hārūn (170-193 Hijrī)

At the time of the martyrdom of Imam Ṣādiq ('a), Manṣūr Dawānīqī, the tyrannical 'Abbāsid caliph, was at the peak of his power and influence. Manṣūr was known for killing a large number of people for the sake of strengthening and stabilizing the foundations of his government. He not only persecuted the Shias, but also the jurisprudents and notable personalities of the Sunni sect who opposed him. Abū Ḥanīfah, the founder of the Sunni Hanafī sect, was lashed and imprisoned for the crime of supporting a man named Ibrāhīm with a religious ruling. Ibrāhīm was the son of 'Abdullah Maḥḍ, and the leader of an anti-'Abbāsid uprising in Iraq.[1]

After his father passed away, Imam Kāẓim ('a) was faced with this oppressive individual as the uncontested ruler of the Muslim nation while he was only 25 years old. When Manṣūr learned about the passing of Imam Ṣādiq ('a)

[1] 'Abd al-Raḥmān Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafāh, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, p. 259.

through Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān, the governor of Medina, he wrote a letter to his governor, saying: "If Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad has nominated a successor for himself, summon him and cut off his head."

It was not long after this that the governor of Medina sent the following response to Baghdad: "In his official will, Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad has nominated five individuals as his successors. These five are:

1- The caliph, Manṣūr Dawānīqī

2- Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān, the governor of Medina

3- ʿAbdullah ibn Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad, the elder brother of Imam Kāẓim (ʿa)

4- Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar (ʿa)

5- Ḥamīdah, the wife of the Imam (ʿa)."

The governor then asked which of these five he should kill. Manṣūr, who had never imagined that he would face such a situation, became enraged and replied: "It is not possible to kill them."

This official will of the Imam (ʿa) was written in this way or an important reason. Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) had previously ntroduced the next Imam, Imam Kāẓim (ʿa), to certain individuals from among his followers, as well as to his family members. Since he was aware of Manṣūr's evil intentions, he wrote such a will in order to protect the life of the Seventh Imam (ʿa) and disrupt Manṣūr's plans.

The Guardian of the Jaʿfarī University

Gauging the situation and circumstances of that time revealed that any overt political activity would be met with a severe reaction on the part of Manṣūr's government—naturally this was not advisable. It was for this reason that Imam Kāẓim (ʿa) followed the plan of action of his father and established a school through which he could educate the Muslims. This school was not as large as his fathers, but it proved to be quite influential in its own way.

Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs has written: "A large group of the

companions and select followers of Imam Kāẓim ('a), as well as notable individuals from the Hāshimīs, would gather around the Imam ('a) and write down his valuable words and his answers to various questions which people would ask him. They would also record his religious edicts on incidents which had taken place."[2] Sayyid Amīr 'Alī has written: "In the year 148, Imam Ja'far Ṣādiq ('a) passed away in the city of Medina. Luckily, his school did not close, and continued under the leadership of his son and successor, Mūsā ibn Ja'far ('a)."[3]

Mūsā ibn Ja'far ('a) was not only superior to all of the scholars and men of science in terms of his knowledge, but he was also superior in terms of his behavior and ethics. He was famously known among the common people, as well as among the notables, for his lofty characteristics. All of the scholars who are familiar with his life history pay tribute to his characteristics and attributes.

Ibn Ḥajar Haytamī, the famous Sunni scholar and narrator of tradition, has written: "Mūsā Kāẓim was the inheritor of the knowledge and sciences of his father, and possessed his virtues and perfections. He was given the title Kāẓim due to his forgiveness, overlooking nature, and the extraordinary forbearance which he showed when dealing with ignorant people. During his time, no one was able to reach him in terms of divine teachings, knowledge, and magnanimity."[4]

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[2] Ḥajj Shaykh 'Abbās Qummi, Al-Anwār al-Bahīah, Mashhad, Mu'assasah' Manshūrāt Dīnī Mashhad, p. 170.

[3] Sayyid Amīr 'Alī, A Short History of the Arabs, translated by: 'Afīf al-Ba'albakī, Second Edition, Dār al-'Ilm Lil Malāyīn, 1967 A.D., p. 209.

[4] Al-Sawā'īq al-Muḥriqah, Cairo, Maktabah Cairo, p. 203.

The Dark Record of the Caliphate during the Time of Imam Kāẓim

1- Mahdī ʿAbbāsī

The dark rule of Manṣūr, which had extended its shadow of fear over the entire Islamic nation, finally came to an end with his death. At long last, the people were able to breathe freely again. After him, his son Muḥammad, who was known as Mahdī, took on the reins of power. Mahdī's rule was at first greeted warmly by the masses, for he initially presented himself in a way which drew the people to him. He gave the order for a general pardon of all political prisoners, which also included many Hāshimīs who had been imprisoned. He also put an end to the killings, torture, and harassment of the people which had been common during his predecessor's rule. He returned all of the liquid assets (such as money), as well as non-liquid assets (such as homes and land) which his father Manṣūr had seized from the people. Moreover, he divided much of the wealth of the public treasury freely amongst the people.[5]

According to the writings of Masʿūdī, the famous historian, Manṣūr had seized approximately 600 million dirhams and 400 million dinars of wealth. This was aside from the wealth he amassed in the form of taxes levied on farm lands.[6] This wealth was collected and kept in one place, under the title of 'The Public Treasury of Injustice', and each parcel of wealth had its owner's name on it. Due to this small detail, Mahdī was able to separate this treasure trove of wealth and return it back to its rightful owners. In some cases, the owners had already passed away, so it was then returned to their inheritors.[7]

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[5] Ibn Wāḍih, The History of Yaʿqūbī, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, vol. 3, p. 132.

[6] Masʿūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 3, p. 312.

[7] Sayyid Amīr ʿAlī, A Short History of the Arabs, translated by: ʿAfīf al-Baʿalbakī, Second Edition, Dār al-'Ilm Lil Malāyīn, 1967 A.D., p. 213.

Perhaps one of the reasons behind such actions by Mahdī was that when he began his rule, all of the revolts by the Alawīs had already been crushed by Manṣūr, and a period of relative calm had been established. Mahdī did not fear rebellion in the same way that his father had. In any case, this newfound economic freedom, security, and ease brought about the satisfaction of various social groups, and it injected new economic and social life into the nation. If this program had continued, it would have shown extremely positive results. Unfortunately, it was not long before the political situation reversed itself and the new caliph showed his true colors by reviving the policies of the previous caliphs with fresh vigor.

The Center of Debauchery and Corruption

Mahdī, following in the fashion of Manṣūr (who had a very dry and unyielding personality), did not allow any corrupt individuals into his court. He also distanced himself from grandiose banquets and feasts, whereas it was a normal occurrence in the palaces of his predecessors. He always stayed away from gatherings of singing, drinking, and vain amusement.

Yet, before one year had passed, all of this changed and he began to engage in hedonism and wild parties. In essence, he began to act in the same way that the previous caliphs had acted. He also had an extraordinary inclination towards court jesters, and however much he was advised and admonished by his well-wishers of the evil consequences of his newfound lifestyle, he did not pay any heed. He engaged in these actions to such excess that he would not even listen to the counsel and advice of his trusted vizier, Yaʿqūb ibn Dāwūd. This was in spite of the fact that he would never deviate from the advice of Yaʿqūb in his administrative and managerial decisions, and he would apply his recommendations with complete faith.

While all of this was taking place, Yaʿqūb was tormented

by the corruption and pleasure seeking he was witnessing in the royal court. When he saw the current situation where wine was openly being drunk in the palace of the Islamic caliphate, he would say: "Is it for the sake of these actions that you have entailed the responsibility of viziership to me and nominated me for this position? Is it right, that after five prayers in congregation at the central mosque, you now come and sit at a table covered with wine?" Yet the court jesters, who had become accustomed to passing their days merrymaking using public money, only ridiculed these words of Ya'qūb, and encouraged Mahdī towards drinking even more alcohol. Sometimes, they would compose verses of poetry, saying: "Leave Ya'qūb and his words and become as one with the wine."[8]

The lifestyle of Mahdī began to cause changes within the Muslim society, and an atmosphere of corruption and recklessness began to become ever more prevalent. As the orruption spread, and the quality and level of modesty and hastity began to be affected, the voices of the elders and the notables began to rise in protest.[9] The caliph, who was engrossed in his own self-indulgence, was not aware of the social situation, and as a result, corruption and bribery became rampant, and tax officials used their positions to make life difficult for the people. The caliph made the situation even more difficult by taxing the merchants of Baghdad for the first time,[10] as well as entangling the farmers in various bureaucratic difficulties and hardships.[11]

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[8] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 6, p. 73.

- Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 185.

[9] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (a), Second Edition, Najaf, Maṭba'at al-Ādāb, 1389 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 436.

[10] Ibn Wāḍih, The History of Ya'qūbī, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, vol. 3, p. 137.

[11] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (a), Second Edition, Najaf, Maṭba'at al-Ādāb, 1389 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 442.

Mahdī's Harsh Treatment towards the Alawīs

The behavior and actions of Mahdī were usually different from those of his father, Manṣūr, but with respect to how he treated the Alawīs, his actions and policies mirrored those of his father completely. Mahdī would not refrain from any chance of harassing and oppressing the Alawīs. At times, this treatment surpassed even Mansurs in its severity and extreme nature. Since Mahdī saw the descendants of ʿAlī (ʿa) as being dangerous to his government, he was continuously on watch to strike down any movement led by them, and he would actively combat any inclination from the people towards the Shia, and likewise any cooperation with the Alawī leaders.

Historians have written: "When Qāsim ibn Majāshi Tamīmī was passing away, he wrote a will, and sent it to Mahdī for a signature. Mahdī began to read the will, but when he reached a line where Qāsim had written down his Islamic beliefs and had mentioned the oneness of God, the prophethood of Muḥammad (ṣ), and then continued by writing of ʿAlī (ʿa), declaring him as the Imam and successor of the Prophet (ṣ), he threw the will on the ground in anger and did not finish reading it."[12]

The Prohibition of Wine in the Quran

Another example of Mahdī's opposition to Shia teachings is found in an exchange of words he had with Imam Kāẓim (ʿa) in the city of Medina. One year, Mahdī entered Medina, and after visiting the grave of the Prophet (ṣ), he visited Imam Kāẓim (ʿa). In order to supposedly test the Imam's (ʿa) breadth of knowledge, he began a discussion about wine, as mentioned in the Quran. He asked: "Has wine been prohibited in the Holy Quran? The majority of people know that drinking wine has been prohibited, but they do not know whether the meaning of this prohibition is an absolute forbiddance or simply a recommendation."

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[12] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 6, p. 84.

The Imam ('a) replied: "Indeed, the absolute prohibition of wine has been mentioned explicitly in the Holy Quran." Mahdī asked: "Where in the Quran?" The Imam ('a) replied: "It is where God says: 'Say: the things that my Lord has indeed forbidden are: shameful deeds, whether open or secret; sins and trespasses against truth or reason...'"[13] The Imam ('a) then mentioned a few other issues which were prohibited in this verse and said: "The meaning of the word 'Ithm' in this verse which has been prohibited, is that of wine, because God says in another verse: 'They ask you concerning wine and gambling. Say: In them is great sin (Ithmun Kabīr), and some profit for men; but the sin is greater than the profit.'"[14]

Then he continued and said: "The 'Ithm' which has been explicitly introduced as being forbidden in Surah 'Arāf, has been used in Surah Baqarah in regards to wine and gambling; therefore, the Holy Quran has explicitly forbidden wine." Mahdī was deeply affected by the logic of the Imam ('a); he suddenly looked at 'Alī ibn Yaqṭīn and said: "By God, this ruling is a Hāshimī ruling." 'Alī ibn Yaqṭīn replied: "We thank God that he has placed this knowledge in you, the family of the Prophet."[15] When the caliph heard this, he became exceedingly angry, and while trying his best to hide his rage, he said: "You speak the truth, oh Rāfiḍī."[16] [17]

2- Hādī 'Abbāsī

The year 169 Hijrī was a very chaotic and difficult time in Islamic history. In this year, Mahdī 'Abbāsī passed away and his son Hādī succeeded the caliphate. Hādī was a young man who was known for his arrogance, inexperience, and pleasure

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[13] Surah 'Arāf, Verse 33.

[14] Surah Baqarah, Verse 219.

[15] It was perhaps his intention, that due to the family relationship which existed between the Banī 'Abbās and the Banī Hāshim, the knowledge and learning of Imam Kāẓim (a) would be a cause of pride for Mahdī.

[16] The term Rāfiḍī means "those who reject." It was used as a disparaging term for the Shia since they were considered to have rejected the "Sunnah" of the Prophet.

[17] Kulaynī, Al-Furū Min al-Kāfī, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, vol. 6, p. 406.

seeking nature. This event initiated the beginning of many bitter episodes for the Muslim world.

At the same time, it must be mentioned that the rule of Hādī in comparison to that of his father, was not really the main problem that the Muslim nation faced. It had been a long time that the tyrannical caliphs had been succeeding one another in a hereditary fashion; during this time, the caliphate was either passed down within the Umayyid family or within the ʿAbbāsid family. This had gone on for so long that it had become normal for the people.

What was relatively new and dangerous was that the destiny of the Muslim nation had now been passed on to a young man who was inexperienced, incompetent, whimsical, and self-indulgent. When Hādī reached the position of the caliphate, he was no older than 25 years in age.[18] From a moral and behavioral perspective, he was by no means fit for the position. Hādī was a rash individual who drank wine, and was so undisciplined, that even after reaching the caliphate, he could not restrain himself from his past habits. He would not bother to keep up the outer appearances of Islam, which the position of the caliphate required.[19]

In addition to this, he was a cold hearted individual who was known for his short temper and ill manners.[20] Hādī had been raised and trained in the court of the ʿAbbāsids from childhood, and as a result, he had absorbed the long established Abbasid characteristics of selfishness, tyranny, and brutality from his very first days. The entirety of the Abbasid dynasty was such that even if the caliphate had not fallen into the hands of Hādī himself, it would have ended up in the hands of other people who had been raised with the exact same principles.

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[18] Masʿūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-ʾAndalūs, vol. 3, p. 324.

[19] Masʿūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-ʾAndalūs, vol. 3, p. 325.
- Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, al-Aghānī, Beirut, Dār Aḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, vol. 5, p. 184.

[20] Abul Raḥmān Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, p. 279.

Disgraceful Parties

During the caliphate of his father, Hādī ʿAbbāsī and his brother, Hārūn, would invite singers to their royal feasts and parties. All of these events were naturally funded with money from the public treasury. They would then engage in wine-drinking and revelry. Hādī would go to such excess in these matters, that sometimes his father Mahdī would lose his patience and punish his favorite singers and court jesters.[21] This went on to such an extent that Ibrāhīm Muṣalī, a famous singer of that time, was prohibited from performing at Hādī's parties and feasts. In spite of this prohibition, Hādī would simply not take no for an answer, and as a result, Ibrāhīm Muṣalī was thrown in prison on the orders of the caliph.[22]

During other instances, Hādī was faced with the opposition of his father due to his repulsive and obscene behavior. Unfortunately, after reaching the caliphate, he was completely free to act as he wished, and he moved forward in spending the wealth of the Muslim nation on nightly parties and feasts. According to historians, Hādī would invite Ibrāhīm Muṣalī to his court and spend hour after hour listening to his songs. He was so attached to him that he would pay him large sums of money. On just one day alone, he gifted him 150,000 dinars. Ibrāhīm's son would oftentimes say: "If Hādī had lived longer, we would have built the walls of our home out of gold and silver."[23]

It has been narrated that one day, Ibrāhīm Muṣalī sang several bawdy songs for Hādī, and the caliph enjoyed them greatly. Hādī encouraged him to sing them once more. At the conclusion of the party, he told one of his court officials to take Ibrāhīm by the hand and to lead him to the door of the public treasury. There, Ibrāhīm was permitted to take as

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[21] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 6, p. 102.

[22] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, al-Aghānī, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, vol. 5, p. 160.

[23] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Ibid, vol. 5, p. 163.

much money as he desired. It has to be understood that this was not the caliph's personal wealth— it was money which belonged to the people. He mentioned that even if Ibrāhīm wished to take all of what the public treasury contained, he was free to do so. Ibrāhīm later said: "I entered the public treasury and only took 50,000 dinars."[24]

Through such actions and behavior, it was evidently clear that Hādī was not capable of taking on the leadership role of the Muslim world. It was for this very reason that while Hādī had initially inherited a relatively calm and obedient population to rule over, he was soon faced with an agitated and vengeful populace. From every corner of the Muslim world, protests began to pop up.

While there were many reasons for this anger, one of the main reasons was Hādī's persecution of the Hāshimīs and the descendants of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa). From the very beginning of his rule, he placed the Hāshimīs under extreme pressure and cut off the stipends and wages they had been receiving during the time of the previous caliph. The Hāshimīs were dealt with like criminals, and an atmosphere of terror and intimidation was brought upon them. The caliph would order his agents throughout the nation to have them arrested wherever they were found and sent to Baghdad where they could be kept under close surveillance.[25]

The Bloody Tragedy in the Land of Fakh

These types of pressures angered the Hāshimīs and caused them to begin resisting the unrelenting harassment of the ʿAbbāsid government. The tyranny and oppression which they were subjected to, planted the seeds of a revolutionary movement and this movement began to gain momentum and strength. The leadership of this movement was taken up by one of the grandsons of Imam Ḥasan al-Mujtabā (ʿa), by the

[24] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Ibid, vol. 5, p. 185.

[25] Ibn Wāḍih, The History of Yaʿqūbī, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 142.

name of Ḥusayn Sāḥib Fakh.[26]

Although the time had not yet come for the revolt to be started (the Ḥajj season had been selected as the specified time), the persecution of the governor of Medina proved to be so unbearable that the flames of revolt were lit before the set time had arrived. Historical records have shown that the governor of Medina was known to be a staunch enemy of the family of the Prophet. In order to show himself as being worthy of his position and of properly serving the central government, he would use any possible excuse to summon, on a daily basis, the notables from among the Hāshimīs.

These men were forced to assemble every day in the office of the governor and introduce themselves. The governor did not settle for just this— he also made each of them personal guarantors for one another, and if one of them was not present for any reason, the other individual would be arrested as a result.[27] One day, Ḥusayn Sāḥib Fakh and Yaḥyā ibn ʿAbdullah were both arrested and held as virtual hostages simply because one of the notables from the Hāshimīs was not present. This deliberate power play by the governor proved to be too much and as a result, the rebellion was started before its set date.

Who was the Marytr of Fakh?

The leader of this rebellion was Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī, the grandson of Imam Ḥasan al-Mujtabā (ʿa); he later became famously known as "The Martyr of Fakh." He was one of the prominent men from the Hāshimīs, and was known for his virtue, courage, generosity, and magnanimity. He was also

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[26] Ḥusayn Sāḥib Fakh's name was Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥasan ibn Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Since he was killed fighting against the army of the Abbasid caliph in a land called Fakh, he became famously known as Sāḥib Fakh or The Martyr of Fakh.

[27] Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut, Dār al-Qamūs al-Ḥadīth, vol. 10, p. 25.

- Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Maqātil al-Ṭālibīīn, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 294-295.
- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Sadir, vol. 6, p. 90.

widely known in the society of his time as an exceptional individual.[28] He was born from a mother and father who were also known for their virtue and purity to the point that they were called Zawju Ṣāliḥ. His entire family was in fact known for their exceptional virtue, piety, and courage.

Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī's father, grandfather, uncles, as well as other members of his family, were all killed by Manṣūr Dawiniqi. This wholesale slaughter, which killed so many of their family members, caused them much grief and sorrow.[29] Ḥusayn, who had been raised and nurtured in such a family, never forgot the memory of the martyrdom of his father and other family members at the hands of Manṣūr's executioners.

The memory of their murder gave him a spirit of courage and bravery in opposing the ʿAbbāsids, while their very existence tormented him. Yet, due to the circumstances and conditions of his time, he had no choice but to quietly wait for an opportunity to strike. In time, as he witnessed more and more of the tyranny and oppression of Hādī ʿAbbāsī and the governor of Medina, his patience wore thin and he decided to rise up in revolt against the ʿAbbāsids.

The Defeat of the Revolt

As soon as Ḥusayn revolted, a large group of the Hāshimīs and the people of Medina pledged allegiance to him, and began to battle against the government forces of Hādī who were in the area. After they forced the government forces to retreat, they used the span of several days to reorganize their forces and march towards Mecca. In Mecca, they intended to use the Ḥajj pilgrimage and the combined mass of the

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[28] After the martyrdom of Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī, when his severed head was brought to Medina, the seventh Imam (a) was affected deeply by the scene, and he said the following with grief and sadness: "I swear by God that he was a righteous Muslim. He would fast and pray a great deal, and fight against corruption and impurity. He would do his duty in regards to commanding the good and forbidding the evil. He was without equal among his own family." (Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Maqātil al-Ṭālibīīn, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 302)

[29] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Maqātil al-Ṭālibīīn, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 285.

Muslims, who were present at the annual rite, in order to make the city their main base of operations.

Once they had taken control of the city, they planned to expand their movement and take further territory. Soon, news of the Medina revolt and the movement of the rebel army towards Mecca reached Hādī. Hādī, in turn, sent an army to quell the rebellion. At the land of Fakh, the two armies met, and a hard battle ensued. During the battle, Ḥusayn, along with a group from the notables of the Hāshimīs were martyred. A group from the remaining army was scattered while the rest were taken as prisoners; these prisoners were relocated to Baghdad, where they were soon executed.

Hādī's government officials did not suffice with the simple killing of these prisoners of war; they went as far as to not allow the bodies to be given a burial. Moreover, their heads were cut off and sent to Hādī 'Abbāsī in Baghdad. According to some historians, the number of these heads exceeded one hundred.[30] The defeat of this movement was an exceedingly bitter and painful event for the Shias and it proved to be particularly painful for the family of the Prophet. It reminded them once again of the painful tragedy of Karbalā. This event was in fact so bitter and painful that many years later, Imam Jawād ('a) would say: "After the tragedy of Karbalā, no tragedy was as great for us as the tragedy of Fakh."[31]

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[30] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 6, p. 93.
- Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, Beirut, Dār al-Qamūs al-Ḥadīth, vol. 10, p. 28.
After the defeat of Ḥusayn Sāḥib Fakh's army, and his subsequent martyrdom, Yaḥyā ibn 'Abdullah went to Daylam with a group and initiated some activities in that area. The people were drawn to him and soon, a noticeable force was mobilized. Hārūn used certain tricks to bring him to Baghdad, and when he arrived, he had him killed in a savage manner. The details of his martyrdom are mentioned in the coming section: "The Tricks of Hārūn."

[31] Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 48, p. 165.

The Seventh Imam and the Martyr of Fakh

This rebellion was not without connection to the Seventh Imam ('a)— the Imam ('a) was aware of this rebellion from its very inception and remained informed in regards to it throughout its various stages. He was also in contact with Ḥusayn Shahīd Fakh. Although the Imam ('a) predicted the defeat of the rebellion, he saw Shahīd Fakh's firm resolution and intent, and so he said to him: "Although you will be martyred, still be diligent in this battle and Jīhād. This group (consists) of a wicked and wrong-doing people, who have the outer appearances of faith, but they have no faith or conviction inside their hearts. I ask for your reward and compensation in this path from God, the Most High."[32]

From another angle, Hādī 'Abbāsī knew that the Seventh Imam ('a) was one of the greatest personalities from among the family of the Prophet. He also knew that the Hāshimīs and Sādāt followed in his example and acted under his leadership and guidance. After the tragedy of Fakh, he became very angry because he believed that behind the scenes, the Seventh Imam ('a) had been the true leader of the rebellion and that he had coordinated its actions. As a result of this, he threatened the Seventh Imam ('a) with death, saying: "I swear by God that Ḥusayn (Sāḥib Fakh) revolted against me on the orders of Mūsā ibn Ja'far. The leader of this family is none other than Mūsā ibn Ja'far. May God kill me if I leave him alive."[33]

While this threat was met with coolness and indifference on the part of the Imam ('a), it created great fear within the Shia community and all those who supported the family of

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[32] Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 48, p. 169.
- Kulaynī, al-Ūsūl Min al-Kāfī, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 366.
- Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Maqātil al-Ṭālibīīn, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 298.

[33] Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 48, p. 151.

the Prophet. Yet, before Hādī could act upon his threat, his life came to an end. The news of his death was met with waves of happiness and joy in the city of Medina.

3- Hārūn al-Rashīd

The rulers of the Umayyid and ʿAbbāsid dynasties governed over the Muslims for many long centuries. Throughout this time period, they always desired to strengthen their spiritual influence over their subjects in order to bolster their rule and solidify their control. They also sought out the people's trust and respect since their authority, to a very large extent, depended upon it. The greater gains they made in this domain essentially meant that the people would be more obedient towards them. The people would even consider it their religious and God ordained duty to obey and bow down before their authority. Naturally, this level of heartfelt obedience and reverence cannot be inspired by force. The only methods which were found to work by the rulers were ones which involved wholesale deception and deceit.

Moreover, the ʿAbbāsids had a winning card in this matter which the Umayyids did not. This was the kinship and nearness which the ʿAbbāsids could claim to the family of the Prophet. The ʿAbbāsids were from the descendants of the uncle of the Prophet of Islam, ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib. Due to this kinship, they made many propagandistic gains, and they introduced themselves as the inheritors of the caliphate.[34]

Still, when faced with the spiritual authority and lineage of the Shia Imams, these claims were found to be quite shallow. Firstly, in the matter of the caliphate, the issue of inheritance was not something with religious sanction; what

[34] While the Ummayids did not possess such lineage and could not make such claims, they still attempted to gain the love of the people through various other means. Mūʿāwīya engaged in much fabrication of traditions through hiring liars who were willing to fabricate anything for the right amount of money.

was important was the worthiness and purity of the caliph and leader himself.

Secondly, even if it were supposed that inheritance could be an issue of consideration, the descendants of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) would have prevalence over others due to being nearer in kinship to the Prophet (ṣ). The Shia Imams ('a) possessed both the personal worthiness of rule, as well as the familial relationship and nearness to the Prophet (ṣ). These individuals were perpetually respected and honored by the people, and all of the efforts of the Umayyid and 'Abbāsid rulers to sway the scales to their benefit could only come up short.

Governance over the Hearts

During the time of the 'Abbāsid caliphs, this issue manifested itself the most during the rule of Hārūn. Even with all of his power and the expansion of territories which had taken place, Hārūn still sensed that the hearts of the people were with Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far ('a). He was tormented deeply by this matter, and through various methods, he attempted to neutralize the influence of the Imam ('a).

For Hārūn, it was intolerable that each day he would receive reports that the people had secretly given their Islamic taxes to Mūsā ibn Ja'far ('a). This action of the people was in reality their declaration that they considered Hārūn's rule to be illegitimate, and showed their enmity towards his caliphate. This is why, when Hārūn saw the Imam ('a) next to the Kaaba one day, he asked him: "Is it you that the people have secretly pledged their allegiance to and selected as their leader?" The Imam ('a) replied: "I govern over the hearts of the people, while you rule over their bodies."[35]

[35] Ibn Ḥajar Haytamī, al-Ṣawā'iq al-Muḥriqah, Cairo, Maktabah Cairo, p. 204.

Who Is the Descendent of the Prophet?

Hārūn would use every opportunity to openly introduce himself as the heir of the Prophet, and he would lean on this relationship as a source of legitimacy and honor. One day, Hārūn entered the city of Medina, and went to visit the holy grave of the Prophet (ṣ). When he reached the sanctuary, there was a large gathering of people from the Quraysh, and other tribes, assembled there. Hārūn turned, faced the resting place of the Prophet (ṣ), and said: "Greetings upon you, oh Prophet of God. Greetings upon you, oh son of my uncle." Here, Hārūn was attempting to show his proximity to the Prophet (ṣ) in front of the masses, in order to bolster the legitimacy of his rule and tie it to his genealogical relationship with the Messenger (ṣ).

The Imam ('a) was also present in that gathering, and he understood the intent behind Hārūn's words. He went close to the resting place of the Prophet (ṣ) and said with a loud voice: "Greetings upon you, oh Prophet of God (ṣ), Greetings upon you, oh father." Hārūn became so upset at this that his face changed color and he murmured involuntarily: "This is truly an honor."[36]

Hārūn not only worked hard to show his familial relationship with the Prophet (ṣ), but he also wished to downplay the family relationship of the Imams to the Prophet (ṣ) as well. One day, he said to the Seventh Imam ('a): "How do you claim that you are the descendent of the Prophet, while in reality you are the children of 'Alī ('a), and every individual is linked through their male ancestors and not their female ancestors?" Imam Kāẓim ('a) answered him by reciting the following Quranic verse: "...and among his (Ibrāhīm's) progeny, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron: thus do we reward those who do good... And Zakariya and John, and Jesus and Elias: all in the ranks of the

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[36] Shaykh Mufīd, al-Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 298.
- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 6, p. 164.

righteous."[37]

He then said: "In this verse, Jesus is counted as being from the children of the great prophets ('a) of the past, while he did not have a father and is linked with the prophets ('a) only through his mother. Therefore, according to the ruling of this verse, the children of a mother are counted as descendants. We are considered as children of the Prophet (ṣ) through the medium of our mother (Fāṭimah ('a))."[38] In the face of this irrefutable logic, Hārūn could not say anything and he remained silent before the Imam ('a).

In a similar discussion between the Imam ('a) and Hārūn, the Imam ('a) was asked why they were considered the children of the Prophet and not the children of 'Alī ('a). The Imam gave the following answer: "If the Prophet (ṣ) was brought to life and he wished to marry your daughter, would you wed your daughter to the Prophet (ṣ)?" Hārūn replied: "Not only would I wed my daughter, but through this union, I would feel honored over all the Arabs and non-Arabs." The Imam ('a) answered: "But this matter would not apply to me; neither would the Prophet (ṣ) seek to marry my daughter, nor would I wed my daughter to him." Hārūn asked: "Why?" The Imam ('a) answered: "Because I have descended from his lineage and this marriage would be unlawful (religiously forbidden), but you are not from his lineage." Hārūn replied: "I see... this is certainly correct."[39]

Who is the Owner of This Palace?

One day, the Seventh Imam ('a) entered one of Hārūn's extremely opulent and luxurious palaces in Baghdad. Hārūn,

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[37] Surah An'ām, Verses 85 and 86.

[38] Shablanjī, Nūr al-Abṣār, Cairo, Maktabah Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 149.
- Ibn Ṣabbāgh Mālikī, al-Fuṣūl al-Muhimah, Najaf, Maktabah Dār al-Kutub al-Tijārīa, p. 220.
The Imam (a) also used the verse of Mubahīla in this exchange, where Imam Ḥasan (a) and Imam Ḥusayn (a) are considered (ابنـاءنـا), and counted as the children of the Prophet (s).

[39] Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 48, p. 127.

who was intoxicated with power and might, pointed towards his palace and asked in an arrogant tone: "Who is the owner of this palace?" Hārūn, through these words, wanted to show the Imam ('a) the magnificence of his power and position. The Imam ('a), without paying the least bit of attention to the palace and its adornments, replied with the utmost frankness: "This house is the house of the corrupted ones; the same ones whom God has spoken about, saying: 'Those who behave arrogantly on the earth in defiance of right - them will I turn away from my signs: Even if they see all the signs, they will not believe in them; and if they see the way of right conduct, they will not adopt it as the way; but if they see the way of error, that is the way they will adopt. For they have rejected our signs, and failed to take warning from them.'"[40]

Hārūn became very angry at these words, and while trying his best to control his rage, he said: "Then who is the owner of this house?" The Imam ('a) replied without hesitation: "(If you wish to know the truth), this house belongs to the Shias and our followers, but others have usurped it through force." Hārūn replied: "If this palace belongs to the Shias, then why do the owners not take it back?" The Imam ('a) replied: "The home was taken from its true owner at a time when it was flourishing and whenever he (the owner) can return it back to its flourishing state, he will take it back."[41]

Hārūn: A Man of Many Personalities

Most individuals, in terms of their manner of thinking and personality, have certain distinguishing features and qualities which are unique to them. Some individuals, on the other hand, due to various inadequacies in their upbringing, or some other factors, are beset with disharmonious personalities and thought processes. These individuals are

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[40] Surah 'Arāf, Verse 146.

[41] Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 48, p. 137.
- 'Ayāshī, Tafsīr 'Ayāshī, Qum, al-Maṭba'at al-'Ilmīyah, vol. 2, p. 30.

not characterized by one personality; they instead have two or sometimes even more sets of separate personalities, which can at times conflict with one other. These individuals act in ways which are oftentimes contradictory and as a result, people are oftentimes confused and frightened by their behavior. While accepting such examples of contradictory behavior may be difficult at first, through some research, it becomes clear that not only are such things possible, but there have in fact been many individuals throughout history who have been afflicted with such disorders.

In a well-known psychology text, we find the following excerpt: "Human beings can easily find themselves in the grip of false emotions, and baseless whims and desires. For example, they may find themselves in a state of extreme emotion at times, while at other times, they become completely emotionless. Or they may find themselves in a state of pure truthfulness, yet they will then switch to a state of lying about everything. They may find themselves in a state of unpretentiousness and then quickly switch to deceiving even their own family members. These are contradictory states which can potentially be found in human beings, and they are composed of conscious and subconscious parts of the individual."[42]

Such individuals undergo deceptive and contradictory emotions, and for this reason, they behave in an unbalanced manner. Sometimes they are affected by a love of wealth and luxury, and at other times, they incline towards asceticism and Sufi-like behavior. Sometimes, they are affected by religious preachings, and at other times, they run wild after pleasure and worldly desires. If they pass by a mosque, they stand next to the pious ones in prayer, and if they pass by a place of wine drinking, they stop and drink their fill. From one angle, they can become exceedingly wrathful, beyond normal boundaries, and from another angle, they can become

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[42] Doctor Sāḥib al-Zamānī, Nāṣir al-Dīn, Ānsūye Chehrehā, Tehran, Mu'assassah Maṭbū'ātī 'Aṭā'ī, 1343 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 31.

very merciful and forgiving. History has many examples of such individuals with multiple personalities— one such example in Islamic history is Hārūn al-Rashīd.

Hārūn was born in the ʿAbbāsid palaces, and from an early age, he was raised with luxury and pleasure seeking as a normal way of life. Unsurprisingly, he became inclined towards such things. Yet, at the same time, the nation in which he lived was an Islamic nation and there was pressure on him to live according to Islamic standards and ideals. From this perspective, he formed many differing and contradictory tendencies within himself; he was composed of both good and bad, as well as the ugly and beautiful.

In his inner self and personality, Hārūn was composed of various strange and contradictory qualities. For example, he could be both an oppressor, as well as a man of justice. He could be extremely merciful, as well as extremely vengeful. At times, he was a believer in Islam, yet also a disbeliever. During some instances, he was cooperative, while also being very harsh.

On the one hand, he was an oppressor who killed many innocent people without hesitation, particularly from the family of the Prophet. Yet, on the other hand, whenever he heard religious teachings and sermons, and he remembered the Day of Judgment, he would cry heavily. He would both pray and drink wine. When he heard the admonition of scholars, he would show himself as the most pious and faithful of individuals. Yet when he sat on the seat of the caliphate, and engaged in managing the affairs of the nation, he was one of the most oppressive of rulers.

Historians have written: "One day, Hārūn went to visit Fuḍayl ibn ʿAyāḍ, who was one of the upright and progressive individuals of that time. Fuḍayl began to criticize Hārūn's illegitimate actions in severe terms, and warned him of the divine punishment which was awaiting the oppressors in the hereafter. When Hārūn heard these words, he began to weep, and he wept so much that he lost consciousness. When he

came to, he asked Fuḍayl to repeat his admonishment. Fuḍayl repeated what he had said and Hārūn began to weep heavily for a second time until he passed out and became unconscious from the severity of his weeping. This same event was repeated several times in succession. Afterwards, Hārūn gave 1,000 dinars to Fuḍayl, so that he could spend them on various causes."

Through these actions, Hārūn is a perfect example of a dual personality which was at complete odds with itself. Perhaps, according to Hārūn, it was sufficient to cry out in fear of God and then pass out, after which he would feel free to engage in whatever he wished without concern for the consequences. It has also been mentioned that Hārūn possessed 1,000 female slaves, 300 of whom were exclusively trained in singing, dancing, and playing music.[43] It is narrated that he once went into a state of extreme excitement in a gathering, and ordered that 3 million dirhams be spent on 1,000 similar gatherings. Another time, he was again absorbed into a deeply excited state, and he ordered that the singer who was responsible for this be made the governor of Egypt.[44]

At one point, Hārūn bought one female slave for 100,000 dinars, and he bought another for 36,000 dinars; yet he kept this second slave for only one night, and the next day, he gave her to one of his officials. Only God knows what his reasons were for such bizarre actions.[45] It goes without saying that Hārūn would use the wealth of the public treasury, which was the rightful property of the people, to fund these whims. This wealth had been taken from the hard work and labor of the masses, and it belonged to them. In spite of this, Hārūn would freely spend it as he wished, as if he had earned it from

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[43] Jurjī Zaydān, The History of the Islamic Civilization, translated by: 'Alī Jawāhir Kalām, Tehran, Mu'assasah Maṭbū'ātī Amīr Kabīr, 1336 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 5, p. 162.

[44] Jurjī Zaydān, Ibid, p. 173.

[45] Jurjī Zaydān, Ibid, p. 163.

his own labor and hard work.[46] In spite of this waste and extravagance, Hārūn would cry these crocodile tears and consider himself to be a pure and pious individual.

The True Face of Hārūn

Aḥmad Amīn, the contemporary Egyptian historian, mentions three reasons for Hārūn's inclinations towards pleasure seeking. These are namely the higher standards of living that society had attained at that moment in time, the influence of the Iranians, who had a historical precedent for inclinations toward such behavior in his court, and finally: "The third reason relates to the type of upbringing and the subsequent nature of Hārūn himself. In my opinion, during the period of his youth, he possessed many sharp emotions, but he did not completely submit to them, for he possessed a rather strong will. In regards to his temperament and upbringing, a military type of spirit was formed in him. Due to his strong emotions, the power of his will, and the effects of his youth, many divergent conditions were formed in him. For example, when he heard a sermon, he was deeply affected and would weep loudly. At the same time, if he heard music, he was so deeply affected that he would leave his normal state of being and go into a trance like state." When Ibrāhīm Muṣalī would sing, and Barṣūmā would play his musical instruments, and Zalzal would play his tambourine, Hārūn's very state was transformed and he would say in an audacious manner: "Oh Adam, if today you could see who participates in my parties, you would become happy."[47]

While religious feelings were present in Hārūn, a love of music, singing, and self-indulgence were also present. As a result, he would both pray and also listen to a great deal of music, poetry, and singing. His feelings would go in many

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[46] Doctor Alvardī, 'Alī, The Role of Preaching in Islam, translated by: Muḥammad 'Alī Khalīlī, Tehran, New Month Magazine Publications, p. 39.

[47] Aḥmad Amīn has narrated this section from Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī in his book Al-Aghānī (vol. 5, p. 241).

directions, and he would act out in excess, in whichever direction he was led by his fickle emotions. On one occasion, when he became pleased with the Barāmakah family, he became unusually attached to them and drew them close to himself. However, when he became angry with them, or when certain jealous individuals aroused his ire against them, he went ahead and completely wiped them out.

Hārūn so thoroughly enjoyed Ibrāhīm Muṣalī's singing that he raised him in rank and position so that he was similar to the judges and scholars in social status. Yet he never questioned on what authority and with whose permission he would pour the money of the Muslims into the pockets of these individuals. The writer of the book Al-Aghānī has written a very interesting line on this matter, in which he encapsulates these contradictory and unusual states that were present in Hārūn: "When he was subject to a sermon, Hārūn would cry more than anyone else, and when he became angry, he was more oppressive than anyone else."

From this perspective, it is not surprising that Hārūn would, at times, seem extremely religious and he would thus spend time praying, yet at the same time, there were many days when he would kill and spill blood without hesitation. Then, on another day, he would listen to music and become so excited, that he would lose control over his senses and faculties. These characteristics are very difficult to fathom and understand when found in a single individual. In truth, they may seem like the characteristics of multiple individuals.[48]

This is a true sketch of Hārūn al-Rashīd as an individual, with all of his various characteristics. Unfortunately, some historians have not presented his characteristics in a comprehensive way and they have instead showed only half of his reality (namely, the good half). This is not sufficient in

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[48] Amīn, Aḥmad, Ḍuḥ al-Islām, Seventh Edition, Cairo, Maktabah al-Nihḍat al-Miṣrīyah, vol. 1, p. 112-113. With slight summarization.

understanding him as a person; indeed, both halves are necessary to see the whole of him as an individual.

Hārūn's Trickery and Religious Pretensions

As mentioned before, although the Umayyid and ʿAbbāsid rulers were similar to each other in how they deviated the Islamic government from its primary course, as well as in their position against the family of the Prophet, there was still a difference between the two in terms of their relationship with the religious scholars of their respective eras. The Umayyids, with the exception of Mūʿāwīya and one or two other individuals, did not have much of a relationship with the religious scholars, nor did they interfere much in their work. They were mostly busy with managing the political situation of their time and this mostly involved crushing rebellions and social movements, as well as winning wars in foreign lands. Moreover, they were also busy with managing the economic situation of their country and therefore, they left the religious scholars mostly alone and did not interfere with religious matters too deeply.

But when the Umayyid dynasty fell, and the ʿAbbāsids came to power, the situation was completely reversed. The ʿAbbāsids adopted a religious facade and they worked towards benefitting from the religious atmosphere that was prevalent during their time. Contact between the government and the religious scholars, particularly during the time of the first ʿAbbāsid caliph, became commonplace. This shift was caused by the ʿAbbāsids reluctance to be recognized only as political rulers, for they also wished to take on the mantle of religious authority as well.[49]

There are many examples of the ʿAbbāsids feigning religiosity and thereby gaining the people's respect and admiration. Jurgi Zaydan has written: "The ʿAbbāsid caliphs, the Fatimid caliphs of Egypt, and the Umayyid caliphs of

[49] Amīn, Ibid, vol. 2, p. 162-163.

Andalusia were made impervious to many issues and problems due to their superficial religious appearance and pretensions. For this very reason, some of the non-Arab governments, such as the Ottoman Empire, ended up lasting longer than other governments due to the manifestation of this religious (guise)..."

In order to garner the love of the masses, these governments always proclaimed that they ruled under the shadow of God, and that their government was something that was legitimized by God himself. Jurgi Zaydan , in regards to the deceptive propaganda and influence of the caliphs amongst the masses, has further added: "...the people would say: 'The ʿAbbāsid caliphate will continue until the coming of the Christ, and if the caliphate is overthrown, then the sun will set, it will no longer rain, and the plants will all dry up.'"

The ʿAbbāsids approved of these exaggerations and stories. Even Hārūn, who was an intelligent man and who lived in a time when Islamic culture had progressed to a very advanced level, approved of these types of stories... It is evident that if such a state was promoted by the caliphs at a time of the advancement of Islam and its greatness, these superstitions would have completely overtaken the minds of the people during eras of more transparent corruption.

It was in this manner that Mutawakil, the ʿAbbāsid caliph, was named the "Shadow of God." Furthermore, it was said: "This is the shadow of God's mercy which has been spread for protection from the burning of the fire." Court poets would also recite similar things in their poetry. For example, Ibn Hani praised al-Muʿīz Fāṭimī by saying: "Whatever you will, comes into existence, and not what is destiny. Then command and be the commander, for you are Wāhid al-Qahhār."[50]

Hārūn, in turn, had a strange insistence that all of his actions be given religious sanction. He would give religious

[50] Jurjī Zaydān, The History of the Islamic Civilization, translated by: ʿAlī Jawāhir Kalām, Tehran, Mu'assasah Maṭbūʿātī Amīr Kabīr, 1336 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 4, p. 242.

justifications for all of his crimes, and attempt to show that all of them were in accordance with religious law. During one of the years of his rule, Hārūn ended up going on the Ḥajj pilgrimage. At the conclusion of the Ḥajj rites, he began to supplicate at length for his Christian physician (Jibrīl ibn Bakhtīshū'). This was while it was forbidden in Islamic law to do so.

When the Hāshimīs saw this, they became very angry with Ḥārūn. In the face of their protest, Hārūn said: "It is true that this man is not a Muslim, and that supplicating for him is not proper— this is all correct. At the same time, my health and physical well-being are in his hands, and the interest of the Muslims is in my well-being. Therefore, the well-being and welfare of the Muslims is on his shoulders and so there is no problem in supplicating for him."[51]

Hārūn's logic in this case was indeed very telling. According to his logic, the welfare of the Muslim nation was contingent upon his very existence. With this line of reasoning, Hārūn showed himself as not just a dispensable political ruler, but as an individual whose very existence was necessary for the survival of the Muslim nation. It might be thought that justifying the actions of an individual such as Hārūn would be a very difficult task. Nonetheless, Hārūn managed to do this, and he did so through the employment of a group of well-paid judges and jurisprudents. These hired agents were instrumental in using religious language to explain the actions of the caliph to the people in a way which exonerated him completely.

The Council of Judges

One of the very clear and manifest examples of Hārūn's deceit is found in the martyrdom of Yaḥyā ibn 'Abdullah. Yaḥyā ibn 'Abdullah was the grandson of Imam Ḥasan ('a) and one of the notables of the Hāshimī family. He was a

[51] Doctor Alvardi, 'Alī, The Role of Preaching in Islam, translated by: Muḥammad 'Alī Khalīlī, Tehran, New Month Magazine Publications, p. 55.

prominent individual and one of the select companions of Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa).[52]

Yaḥyā participated in the revolt of Ḥusayn Shahīd Fakh, against the ʿAbbāsid government. In fact, he was one of the commanders of Ḥusayn Shahīd Fakh's army. After the defeat of the rebel army and the martyrdom of Ḥusayn, Yaḥyā went to Daylam with a group of people and began engaging in various activities there. The people of that area began to follow him, and a sizable force was soon established.

Hārūn sent Faḍl ibn Yaḥyā Barmakī, along with a division of his army to Daylam. After entering Daylam, Faḍl, under the orders of Hārūn, opened up a line of correspondence with Yaḥyā. He began promising various things to Yaḥyā and gave him a pledge of safety and security. Yaḥyā saw his forces beginning to disperse at the prospect of these promises. Without having much of an alternative, he, too, accepted the offer of security from Hārūn. After securing a handwritten letter of security from Hārūn himself, and having a large group of the notables witness it, Yaḥyā entered Baghdad.

Outwardly, Hārūn treated Yaḥyā with kindness and gifted him with a large amount of wealth. Secretly though, Hārūn wished to kill Yaḥyā as punishment for his activities; he accused Yaḥyā of planning a secret revolt and attempting to rise up against him. Still, due to the explicit and very public guarantee which he had given him, Hārūn was not able to simply put him to death. Therefore, he decided to nullify the letter of security through a religious ruling, which in turn

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[52] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Maqātil al-Ṭālibīīn, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 308. The late Kulaynī, in his book Kāfī (vol. 1, p. 366), narrates a letter from Yaḥyā ibn ʿAbdullah addressed to Imam Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar (a), in which Yaḥyā criticizes his method and his father's method (Imam Ṣādiq (a)), and where Imam Kāẓim (a) answers back with a fierce response. The late ʿAllāmah Māmaqānī, in his book (Tanqiḥ al-Maqāl, Tehran, Jahān Publications, vol. 3) has said about this letter that: "Its chain of narration is not subject to question, but its content is in conflict with the information we have about Yaḥyā. Here, it is possible that the narrators made a mistake in what they recorded." The compiler of the book The Life of Imam Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar (a) has proven that this tradition is unreliable, for firstly, it is a mursal tradition, and secondly, its chain of narration contains individuals who are unknown and who cannot be found in the books of Rijāl. (Ḥayāt al-Imām Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar, Second Edition, Najaf, Maṭbaʿat al-Ādāb, 1390 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 99).

would give him the necessary authority to kill him. In order to achieve this, he ordered a group of judges to assemble, in order to review the letter and issue the proper ruling. In this council, Muhamad ibn Ḥasan Shaybānī, Ḥasan ibn Zīyād Lu'lu'ī, and Abū al-Bakhtarī[53] were all present.[54]

When the council gathered, Muhamad ibn Ḥasan, who was a relatively impartial individual (unlike his teacher Abū Yūsuf, who had sold his services to Hārūn)[55] read the letter of security and said: "The letter of security is sound and credible, and there is no way to nullify it."[56] Abū al-Bakhtarī then took the letter, looked at it, and said: "This letter of security is void and without value. Yaḥyā revolted against the caliph and spilled the blood of a group of individuals. Kill him; the responsibility of killing him is on me." Hārūn became overjoyed at this ruling and said: "If the letter of security is null, then you yourself should tear it into pieces." Abū al-Bakhtarī spit on the letter and tore it. Hārūn then gave one million and six hundred thousand dirhams to Abū al-Bakhtarī, as well as a number of cattle. He also selected him for the position of the judgeship.[57] On the other hand, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan, due to his ruling, was prohibited from making any further rulings,[58] and after some time,

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[53] Wahab ibn Wahab Abū al-Bakhtarī Qarshī was originally from Medina, but he lived in Baghdad. During the time of the caliphate of Mahdī 'Abbāsī, he was assigned the arbitrational judgeship of the military, and afterwards, he was assigned to the judgeship of Medina. Abū al-Bakhtarī was a corrupt and deviant individual, who was known as someone who would openly lie. According to the scholars of tradition, Abū al-Bakhtarī's traditions are without value and credibility. (Shamsh al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, Muḥammad, Mizān al-I'tidāl Fī Naqd al-Rijāl, First Edition, Cairo, Maṭba'at Sa'ādah, 1325 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 278).

[54] Yaḥyā ibn 'Abdullāh had previously shown his letter of security to Mālik ibn Anas and various other jurisprudents, and they had all corroborated the letter's soundness and credence.

[55] Amīn, Aḥmad, Ḍaḥya al-Islām, Seventh Edition, Cairo, Maktabah Nihḍat al-Miṣrīyah, vol. 2, p. 203.

[56] Amīn, Ibid, vol. 2, p. 204.

[57] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (a), Second Edition, 1389 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 100. Also refer to: Doctor Alvardi, 'Alī, The Role of Preaching in Islam, translated by: Muḥammad 'Alī Khalilī, Tehran, New Month Magazine Publications, p. 52.

[58] In addition to this, he was removed from his position of judgeship. (Amīn, Ibid, vol.

Yaḥyā was killed by the caliph.[59]

Religious Rulings Based on Expediency

Abū Yūsuf was nominated by Hārūn as the "Judge of Judges," one of the highest positions in the nation.[60] He, in turn, protected Hārūn's caliphate through the use of his power of argumentation and sophistry. He had an extraordinary skill in justifying various issues, and he would use these skills to conceal Hārūn's illegitimate actions and behavior, rationalizing them through religious terminology and logic. Let us take a look at just two incidents which took place during his life:

1-During the beginning of Hārūn's caliphate, Hārūn fell in love with a female slave who had been owned by his father, Mahdī. When he expressed his affection to the slave, she said to him: "Don't even think about such a thing, for your father and I shared the same bed." In spite of this, Hārūn was captivated by her and could not hold himself back. He summoned Abū Yūsuf, explained the situation, and asked him for a way out.

Abū Yūsuf coolly said to Hārūn: "Must every claim that a slave makes be accepted? Do not listen to her, for she is not a

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1, p. 204).

[59] The method of how Yaḥyā was killed is a matter of dispute (Sharīf Qarshī, Ibid, vol. 2, p. 100).

Ya'qūbī has written: "Yaḥyā died of starvation in prison. An individual who was imprisoned with him has mentioned: 'We were both imprisoned in the same area, and our cells were next to each other. Sometimes Yaḥyā would speak to me from behind a short wall, which was between us. One day he said to me: Today it has been nine days that they have not given me any food or water. On the tenth day, the guard who was assigned to Yaḥyā's cell, entered and began to search it. After searching the cell, he then removed Yaḥyā's clothing and began to search his body. From underneath the clothing, the guard found a reed which was filled with oil (perhaps Yaḥyā, in times of severe hunger, would suck on the reed and drink the oil, in order to remain alive). The guard then confiscated the reed. Following this event, Yaḥyā lost the last of his energy, collapsed on the ground, and soon thereafter, passed away.'" (Tārīkh Ya'qūbī, Najaf, Manshūrāt Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 145).

[60] It is said: During that time, a 'Judge of Judges' was an individual who was selected to run in the highest possible position of the judgeship in the country. It is clear that Hārūn would not give such a high position to just anyone.

truthful slave."[61] This is while Islam has clearly shown that in a case like this, her words would have had to be accepted at face value.

Deceiving the Conscience

2- One day, Hārūn asked his personal cook to prepare a meal for him, which included the meat of a young camel. After the food was served, Ja'far Barmakī said: "Each bite which the caliph takes from this meal comes out to 400,000 dirhams." When Hārūn heard this, he expressed surprise, so Ja'far Barmakī explained what he meant. He said that some time before, the caliph had asked for a similar food, and at that moment, it had not been possible to prepare it for him. From then on, a young camel was slaughtered for the palace kitchen every single day, and the collective price of these camels had amounted to 400,000 dirhams.

Hārūn, who was normally used to spending the money of the Muslims on his various whims, now began to express regret and sorrow for what had taken place. He commanded that in order to make up for this act, several million dirhams should be given to the poor as charity. This act, while seemingly benevolent, does not take into consideration that this money belonged to the public anyway, as it was from the public treasury. This money was not the caliph's personal wealth where he could spend it as he pleased. It should have been divided among the people in a well-planned and just manner, and it definitely could not be considered as a form of personal charity from the caliph's own pockets.

In any case, news of this reached Abū Yūsuf. In order to justify the caliph's actions, and to also show his own usefulness to Hārūn's rule, he devised an interesting way to justify the actions of the caliph. He went to Hārūn and asked him the reason behind his distress. Hārūn explained what had happened. Abū Yūsuf looked at Ja'far and asked: "Was

[61] 'Abd al-Raḥmān Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, p. 291.

the meat from these camels wasted or did the people end up using them?" Ja'far, who had perhaps understood Abū Yūsuf's intent in asking this question, replied: "The people would end up using the meat."

When Abū Yūsuf heard this, he said happily: "Glad tidings be upon the caliph who has gained a great reward, for all of the meat which was prepared was put at the disposal of the Muslims. God has made this charity as a means of great reward for the caliph."[62] It is ironic that a few pieces of spoiled meat which were about to be given to the dogs of Baghdad, and were instead given to some half-starved people, was considered by Abū Yūsuf to be a charity and a means of reward from God. This was clearly a misuse of the public treasury, and not a means of blessing and reward for Hārūn.

By understanding the prevailing situation of the time, it becomes easier to understand the level of difficulty which Imam Kāẓim ('a) faced. Imam Kāẓim ('a) was faced with a deceptive and cunning caliph who hid his true nature behind a garb of religiosity. Hārūn was indeed very careful to show himself as a just and faithful Muslim ruler in the eyes of the masses.

'Alī ibn Yaqṭīn: The Imam's Agent in Hārūn's Government

'Alī ibn Yaqṭīn was one of the prominent and distinguished students of the Seventh Imam ('a). 'Alī was a pure and honorable individual, and enjoyed a special position before the Imam ('a). He was also highly respected and honored in the Shia community.[63] 'Alī was born in the city of Kūfah in the year 124 Hijrī, during the last years of the Umayyid government. His father Yaqṭīn was one of the leading supporters of the 'Abbāsids, and for this reason, Marwān Ḥimār (the caliph of the time) attempted to arrest

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[62] Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, First Edition, Beirut, Maktabah Ma'ārif, 1966 A.D., vol. 10, p. 216.

[63] Shaykh Ṭūsī, al-Fihrīst, Mashhad, Daneshkadeye Ilahīyāt wa Ma'ārife Islāmī, p. 234.

him. He was forced to flee as a result and became a wanted fugitive.

During his time as a fugitive, Yaqṭīn's wife took their two sons, ʿAlī and ʿUbayd, to the city of Medina with her. After the fall of the Umayyid government, and the rise of the ʿAbbāsids, Yaqṭīn returned to Kūfah and joined Abū al-ʿAbbās Saffāḥ. His wife, alongside with their children, returned to Kūfah as well.[64] ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn grew up in Kūfah as a result and he ended up joining the circle of the Seventh Imam's (ʿa) students.

The Intellectual Rank of ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn

According to the scholars of Rījāl and history, ʿAlī was one of the prominent students and companions of the Seventh Imam (ʿa), and he benefitted greatly from his relationship with the Imam (ʿa). He also narrated a great number of traditions from the Imam (ʿa), but he was only able to narrate one tradition from Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa).[65]

He possessed fame and a sociable personality, while at the same time possessing deep scholarship and learning; he was considered to be one of the foremost intellectuals of his time. He was also an author, who compiled the following books:

1- Mā Sa'al ʿAnhū al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) Min al-Malāḥim.[66]
2- Manāẓirah al-Shak Biḥaḍratihī.
3- Various issues which he learned from Imam Kāẓim (ʿa).[67]

ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn, through the use of his rank, as well as his social and political position, did many great services for the Shia. As will be mentioned in the coming pages, he was counted as an ever-present sanctuary and refuge for the Shias whenever they faced difficulties.

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[64] Shaykh Ṭūsī, al-Fihrīst, Mashhad, Daneshkadeye Ilahīyāt wa Maʿārife Islami, p. 234. - Najjāshī, Fihrīst Asmā' Muṣanfī al-Shīʿah, Qum, Maktabah al-Dāwarī, p. 194.

[65] Najjāshī, Fihrīst Asmā' Muṣanfī al-Shīʿah, Qum, Maktabah al-Dāwarī, p. 195.

[66] This contains the predictions of Imam Ṣādiq (a) about the events of the future as an answer to some questions which were asked from him.

[67] Shaykh Ṭūsī, al-Fihrīst, Mashhad, Daneshkadeye Ilahīyāt wa Maʿārife Islāmī, p. 234.

The Ministry of ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn: A Support for the Shia

During the caliphate of Manṣūr and Hārūn, the continuous revolts of the Alawīs and Hāshimīs were met with a series of defeats. With the martyrdom of the leaders of these revolts, and the scattering of their forces, it became clear that the prevailing conditions of the time were not conducive to an armed uprising, and that the struggle must be continued in a different form.

Owing to these conditions, the Imam (ʿa) refrained from engaging in any overt anti-government activities, and he concentrated his efforts in awakening the masses and working on individuals who could later develop into leaders. The Imam (ʿa) also worked to reveal the corrupt nature of the ʿAbbāsid government to the people and spread Shia teachings throughout the society

It was based on this plan of action that the Imam (ʿa), in spite of a general prohibition of cooperating with oppressive governments, allowed certain individuals to take on certain official government positions. This allowed these individuals to gain access to the inner workings of the government itself, and also to protect and support the Shias whenever they ran into various problems.

When ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn reached his position in Hārūn's government, it was as a part of this same plan of action. ʿAlī, in contrast to his father, who was one of the supporters of the ʿAbbāsids and did not believe in the imamate of the Twelve Imams (ʿa), was a staunch and loyal Shia, and his worldview was that of a true follower of the Ahl al-Bayt.[68] One of the foundations of his beliefs was that of Intidhār— the belief in the establishment of a just and rightful government, which necessitated the rejection of the legitimacy of the

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[68] Ibn Nadīm, in his index, has introduced Yaqṭīn (the father of ʿAlī) as a Shia. Some of the famous scholars from the past, as well as from contemporary times, have referenced his words without narrating any sources. But some contemporary researchers have proven that the father of ʿAlī was not a Shia. (Tastarī, Muḥammad Taqī, Qāmūs al-Rijāl, Tehran, The Center for Book Publications, vol. 7, p. 90).

oppressive rulers.

This issue becomes clear through a conversation which took place between ʿAlī and his father. One day, Yaqṭīn asked his son: "How is it that the things which your leaders have foretold about us ʿAbbāsids have all come to fulfilment, but the things which they have foretold about you (the Shias and the establishment of the promised government) have not yet been fulfilled?" ʿAlī answered: "What has been said about you and us, comes from a single source, but because your government's time is at the present, thus the foretelling has been fulfilled clearly and without any ambiguity. You saw that all of it came to pass truthfully. But since the time of our promised government has not yet come to pass, we have hope and aspire towards it. If our leaders had said that the government of the family of the Prophet will, for example, come after 200 or 300 years, the hearts would be anguished due to the long period of waiting and the people's faith in regards to this event would be lessened. Yet, in order that the people's faith remains steadfast, our leaders have not designated its time and have instead simply said: 'It will come soon.' Through these means, they have made the people hopeful and have introduced the coming of the Imam (ʿa) as being near."[69] In light of ʿAlī's history, the importance of his coming to power can clearly be appreciated.

The Imam's Conditional Approval

ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn accepted the viziership of Hārūn with the approval of Imam Kāẓim (ʿa).[70] Afterwards, on multiple occasions, he sought to resign from his position, but Imam Kāẓim (ʿa) dissuaded him from doing so.[71] The intention of

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[69] Nuʿmānī, Ibn Abī Zaynab, Kitāb al-Ghaybah, Tehran, Maktabah al-Ṣadūq, p. 295. ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn had learned this from the Imam (a), for one day he had asked this same question from the Imam (a) and the Imam (a) had given him this same answer. (Nuʿmānī, Ibid, p. 296, footnotes, narrated from ʿIlal al-Sharāyaʿ).

[70] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Maʿrifat al-Rijāl, researched by: Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 433.

[71] Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 48,

Imam Kāẓim ('a) in encouraging 'Alī through his tenure was the protection of the lives, wealth, and rights of the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), and in the aiding of their movement in secret.

In one instance, Imam Kāẓim ('a) said to 'Alī ibn Yaqṭīn: "Guarantee one thing (for me), so that I may guarantee three things for you." 'Alī asked: "What are they?" The Imam ('a) said: "The three things which I will guarantee for you are: 1. That you will never be killed by the sword. 2. That you will never be in poverty, and 3. That you will never be imprisoned. However, what you must guarantee is that whenever one of our followers refers to you, you should fulfil whatever he needs and desires, and you should treat him with respect and honor." 'Alī ibn Yaqṭīn accepted this, and the Imam ('a) guaranteed him the three provisions.[72]

In addition to these words, the Imam ('a) said: "Your position is a means of honor for your brothers (the Shia), and there is hope that God, through you, can remedy the breakages and quench the fire of the sedition of the enemies." 'Alī ibn Yaqṭīn was loyal to his pledge, and in all of the time that he held his position, he was an unwavering and solid support for the Shia. He also played a crucial role in protecting the lives and wealth of the Shia.

A Covert Assignment

'Alī ibn Yaqṭīn would secretly send his Khūms to the Imam ('a) and in some instances, this would take place under very dangerous circumstances. Two of his companions have narrated the following: "One day, 'Alī ibn Yaqṭīn summoned us and gave us some money and letters. He then said to us: 'Buy two animals for transportation and travel through the

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p. 157.

[72] Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 48, p. 136.

- Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Ma'rifat al-Rijāl, researched by: Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 433.

secondary roads away from the main roads. Deliver this money and these letters to Imam Abū al-Ḥasan (ʿa) (Imam Kāẓim (ʿa)) in a manner that no one will know of it.'"

They continue to narrate that: "We arrived in Kūfah, bought animals for transportation, and provisions for the journey. We began the journey and traveled from various secondary roads until we finally arrived in the area of Baṭnu al-Rammah. We tied our mounts, gave them some food, and sat down to eat. At this time, we saw two riders who were coming towards us. As they came closer, we saw that one of them was Imam Kāẓim (ʿa).

We stood up, gave our greetings, and turned over the money and letters that we had with us. At this time, the Imam (ʿa) took out some letters, gave them to us, and said: 'These are the answers to your letters.' We then said: 'Our food and provisions have been exhausted— if you give us permission, we will go to Medina so that we can both visit the Prophet (ṣ) and also buy some supplies. The Imam (ʿa) said: 'Bring what is left of your supplies.' We brought out what remained from the supplies and he examined them with his hands. He then said: 'This will allow you to reach Kūfah.' The Imam (ʿa) did not consider our journey to Medina as being advisable and said: 'You have (in reality) seen the Prophet (ṣ), therefore return under the protection of God.'"[73]

Strengthening the Economic Condition of the Shia

Without doubt, any group which shares a common goal and wishes to develop itself is in need of financial backing and support. In cases where this financial support is severed, the very growth of the group is paralyzed and will come to a standstill.

Based on these same general principles, the Shias were also in need of financial backing in order to pursue their goals and ideals. In spite of this very real need, the Shias had

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[73] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Maʿrifat al-Rijāl, researched by: Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 436-437.

historically lived under great economic pressure. The governments of the time had a habit of weakening them economically, as a means of weakening the Shias politically.

In addition to the seizure of Fadak from Fāṭimah Zahrā ('a), which was in reality a political act designed to weaken the economic position of Imam 'Alī ('a) and the Hāshimīs, the history of Islam is replete with many other such examples. One of the tactics which Mū'āwīya used in his attempt to secure the approval of Imam Ḥusayn ('a) for the successorship of his son Yazīd for the caliphate, was to block all financial grants to the Hāshimīs from the public treasury. His goal was to pressure Imam Ḥusayn ('a) to approve the successorship of his corrupt son and give him his pledge of allegiance.[74]

Another example of this economic pressure is found with the second 'Abbāsid caliph, Abū Ja'far Manṣūr. Manṣūr enacted a program of poverty and hunger which brought the entire economy to a standstill. He enacted this both on a general scale, and on a more micro scale. His aim in keeping the people hungry and indigent was that they would always be in need of him. Because the people were destitute, they would only be able to think of fulfilling their basic needs in life. They would not have the capacity to think of larger social issues or to even be in a position to pose a danger to the caliph's rule.

One day, Manṣūr, in front of his court officials, mentioned the reasons behind his program of poverty and hunger, saying sarcastically: "The Bedouin Arabs speak well when they say: 'Keep your dog hungry, so that he will follow you in the hope of bread.'"[75] The share of the Shias and Alawīs in this economic hardship was proportionally greater than the rest of the population. This was due to the fact that

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74- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 3, p. 551.
- Ibn Qutayba, Al-Imāmah wa al-Sīyāsah, Third Edition, Cairo, Maktabah Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 191.

75 This was also mentioned in the section on the life of Imam Ṣādiq (a).

they were always the first to revolt against the oppressive caliphs. The caliphate of Hārūn, with its wholesale waste, extravagance, and complete usurpation of the public treasury, was not an exception to such rebellions and so the Shias were continually deprived of their legitimate rights and purposely weakened from an economic perspective.

ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn, the staunch companion of Imam Kāẓim (ʿa), gained the trust of Hārūn in spite of his history of keeping the enemies of the Shia at bay. He became Hārūn's minister, and used all the means at his disposal to aid the Shia and to help counteract the economic difficulties they faced. He would also send his Khūms, which was a considerable sum of money,[76] anywhere from 100,000 to 300,000 dirhams, to the Imam (ʿa).

The son of ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn is narrated as having said: "Whenever Imam Kāẓim (ʿa) needed anything or needed for something important to be done, he would write a letter to my father saying: 'buy the following items for me.' Or he would say: 'Do the following action but do it through Hishām ibn Ḥakam.' This condition of gaining Hishām's consent was only done in important and sensitive matters."[77]

During the course of Imam Kāẓim's (ʿa) journey to Iraq, ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn complained of his situation, saying: "Do you see my situation and state (in reference to the government he worked for and the people he had to deal with on a daily basis)?" The Imam (ʿa) replied: "God has beloved individuals from within the midst of the oppressors, through whom he supports his good servants, and you are among those beloved men of God."[78]

On another occasion, ʿAlī asked the Seventh Imam (ʿa) about his responsibilities in cooperating with the ʿAbbāsids.

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[76] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Maʿrifat al-Rijāl, researched by: Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 434.

[77] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Maʿrifat al-Rijāl, researched by: Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 269.

[78] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Maʿrifat al-Rijāl, researched by: Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 433.

The Imam ('a) said to him: "If you don't have a choice in doing this, then make sure to be careful in regard to the wealth of the Shia." 'Alī ibn Yaqṭīn accepted this order of the Imam ('a). He would outwardly collect government taxes from the Shia, but he would secretly return the money back to them.[79] The government of Hārūn was not a legitimate Islamic government and thus paying taxes to it was not a religious obligation of the Muslims. The true divine government belonged to Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far ('a), and on his orders, 'Alī ibn Yaqṭīn would return the wealth of the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) back to them.

The Ḥajj Pilgrimage

One of the great distinctions of 'Alī ibn Yaqṭīn was that he would send a group of people to the Ḥajj pilgrimage every year on his behalf. Moreover, he would give each pilgrim anywhere from 10,000 to 20,000 dirhams.[80] These individuals numbered anywhere from 150 to 250, sometimes becoming as many as 300.[81]

This action, in view of the importance and virtue of the Ḥajj pilgrimage in the religion of Islam, is an important indicator of the piety and devotion of 'Alī ibn Yaqṭīn. When we look at the great amount of money which was being spent on this, we also begin to see it as more than just an act of religious devotion. If we consider the number of people that 'Alī ibn Yaqṭīn sent on his behalf to the Ḥajj pilgrimage, and the amount of money which was given to each one of them, the numbers are staggering. If say, an average of 200 people were sent each year, and each one was given 10,000 dirhams, this amounts to a total expenditure of two million dirhams every year.

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[79] Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 48, p. 158.

[80] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Ma'rifat al-Rijāl, researched by: Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 434.

[81] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 437 and 434.

From another perspective, the amount that was given each year was only a small fraction of ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn's total expenditure. It was an amount which did not include what he paid in Khūms, Zakāt, and various other charities and religious taxes. When considering all of this, we see that this was just part of an even greater sum of money. A question naturally arises as to how much money ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn possessed, in order that he was able to give away so much?

From among the Shia scholars, the late Shaykh Bahā'ī is seemingly the first person to pay detailed attention to this interesting point. He has addressed this issue with the following words: "I believe that Imam Kāẓim ('a) gave ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn permission to appropriate money from the public treasury, and that ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn would give from this money to the Shias under the guise of a reward for completing the Ḥajj pilgrimage on his behalf. Through these means, he would not leave any pretext for his enemies to attack him."[82] Therefore, this act of having people go to the Ḥajj on his behalf was in reality a calculated policy, and ʿAlī, under the cover of this act, was strengthening the economic situation of the Shia community.

Further proof of this lies in the fact that many important personalities, such as ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥajjāj and ʿAbdullah ibn Yaḥyā Kāhilī[83] were among these Ḥajj pilgrims

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[82] Māmaqānī, Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl, Tehran, Jahān Publications, vol. 2, p. 317.

[83] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥajjāj was fortunate enough to benefit from the presence of both Imam Ṣādiq (a) and Imam Kāẓim (a). He was from the pious, distinguished, and prominent Shia notables. (Najjāshī, Fihrīst Asmā' Muṣanfī al-Shī'ah, Qum, Maktabah al-Dāwarī, p. 65; Māmaqānī, 'Abdullah, Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl, Tehran, Jahān Publications, p. 141).

The sixth Imam (a) said to him: "Oh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, engage the people of Medina with intellectual discussions and debate, for I like there to be men like yourself among the Shia." (Ardibilī, Jāmi'ah al-Rawāt, Manshūrāt Maktabah Ayatollah Uẓmā Mar'ashī Najafī, vol. 1, p. 447; Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Ma'rifat al-Rijāl, researched by: Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 402).

ʿAbdullah ibn Yaḥyā Kāhilī benefited from a special position in relation to Imam Kāẓim (a). His rank was such, that on multiple occasions, Imam Kāẓim (a) advised ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn in regards to him. On one occasion, he said to ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn: "Secure the welfare and comfort of Kāhilī and his family so that I can guarantee paradise for you." (Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 402).

Until the end of his life, ʿAlī followed these words of the Imam (a), and secured the

and these were individuals who were from the select companions of the Imam (ʿa). Due to their special status, they were excluded from the government system and deprived of their salaries.[84] Another important aspect of this policy involved actually sending the Shias to the great gathering of the Ḥajj pilgrimage. Through these means, the Shia, and in particular the Shia scholars, were introduced to the broader Muslim society. There, they engaged in debates and discussions with various other Muslim sects and brought about a great Shia cultural revolution.

Keep This Piece of Clothing!

ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn was continuously engaged in serving Imam Kāẓim (ʿa) and, as a result, he was placed in dangerous situations from time to time. The Imam (ʿa) would in turn advise him and this advice was such that it saved his life on several occasions. One year, Hārūn sent a number of robes as an official gift to ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn. Among these articles of clothing was a black fur coat covered with gold brocade, which was a special type of clothing worn only by the caliphs. ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn took the majority of these expensive clothes, and along with the gold brocaded robe, gifted them to Imam Kāẓim (ʿa). He also turned over some money to the Imam (ʿa) which he had set aside as Khūms.

The Imam (ʿa) accepted all of the clothing and money which had been sent, with one exception; he had that specific robe sent back. In a letter to ʿAlī, he said: "Keep this piece of clothing and do not part with it, for an event will befall you and it will be of use to you." ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn did not understand why the Imam (ʿa) had refused the robe, but he followed his advice and kept it. Incidentally, one day he fired one of his close employees for negligence in his duties. That

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welfare and comfort of him, his family, and relatives. They were always under his protection and support (Ṭūsī, Ibid, 448).

[84] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Maʿrifat al-Rijāl, researched by: Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 435.

individual, who knew of the close relationship between ʿAlī and Imam Kāẓim (ʿa) (and who also knew that ʿAlī would oftentimes send money and presents to the Imam), went to Hārūn and complained of him. He said to Hārūn: "He believes in the imamate of Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar (ʿa) and every year, he sends his khūms to him."

Then the man proceeded to tell the story of the clothing which had been sent to ʿAlī from Hārūn. He said: "He sent the special (gold embroidered) robe, which the caliph gifted him on this specific date, to Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar." When Hārūn heard these words, he became enraged and said: "I must find out the truth of this matter; if your claims are true, I will kill ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn." Hārūn had ʿAlī summoned immediately and questioned him about the gold embroidered robe that he had given him. ʿAlī said to Hārūn: "I have put it in a pack and it is there right now."

Hārūn said: "Bring it here immediately!" ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn quickly sent one of his workers to retrieve the robe and said to him: "Go to this specific room in our house, get its key from the treasurer, unlock the door, then go to this specific chest and open it. When you have opened it, you will find a pack there; bring that pack with the seal intact." It was not long that the worker brought the pack of clothes, with the seal intact, and placed it in front of Hārūn. Hārūn ordered that the seal be broken and the pack opened. When the pack was opened, Hārūn saw that the exact same gold embroidered robe was there.

Hārūn's anger cooled and he said to ʿAlī: "After this, I will never believe the words of any complainant against you." He then ordered that a very valuable reward be given to ʿAlī ibn Yaqṭīn. He then had ʿAlī's accuser severely punished for what he had done.[85]

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[85] Shaykh Mufīd, al-Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 293.
- Shablanjī, Nūr al-Abṣār, Cairo, Maktabah Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 150.
- Ibn Ṣabbāgh Mālikī, al-Fuṣul al-Muhimah, Najaf, Maktabah Dār al-Kutub al-Tijāriah, p. 218.
- Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Muʿassasat al-Intishārāt ʿAlāmah,

The Goal of Establishing an Islamic Government

Hārūn knew that Imam Kāẓim ('a) and his followers considered him as a usurper of the Prophet's (ṣ) government; he knew that they considered him as an oppressor who had taken control over the destiny of the Muslims through brute force. He also knew that if one day, these forces gained the power to fight against him, they would not hesitate to destroy his government. One conversation between Hārūn and the Imam ('a) illustrates this point very well.

One day Hārūn, perhaps as a means of testing the Imam ('a) and gaining an understanding of his goals, announced to the Imam ('a) that he was ready to return the property of Fadak back to him. The Imam ('a) said in response: "I am ready to receive Fadak on the condition that you return it to me with all of its limits and boundaries." Hārūn asked: "What are its limits and boundaries?" The Imam ('a) replied: "If I tell you its limits, you will never return it to me." Hārūn insisted and swore that he would return Fadak. The Imam ('a) delineated Fadak's boundaries in the following way: "The southernmost boundary is 'Adan, the easternmost boundary is Samarqand, the westernmost boundary is Africa, and the northernmost boundary is the land of Armenia and the Caspian Sea."

As Hārūn heard each of these limits, the color of his face gradually began to change, and with the description of the fourth boundary, he wasn't able to control himself and said with great anger: "With these boundaries, nothing will be left for us!" The Imam ('a) replied: "I knew that you would not accept and that is why I abstained from saying it."[86]

With this answer, the Imam ('a) indirectly told Hārūn that Fadak was a metaphor for the entire Muslim

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vol. 4, p. 289.

[86] Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 350.
- Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Intishārāt 'Alāmah, vol. 4, p. 320.
- Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, al-Aghānī, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, vol. 5, p. 350.

government. When the people of Saqīfah took Fadak from Fāṭimah (ʿa) and Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), this act was in reality the taking away of the rule of the Muslims from the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). Therefore, if Hārūn wished to truly return the right of the family of the Prophet, he would have to return the whole of the government back to them.

A Second Public Treasury

Although the caliphate was in the hands of Hārūn, the truth was that he only ruled over the bodies of the people and not over their hearts. The one who ruled over the hearts of the people was the Imam (ʿa). From all across the vast Muslim nation, people with insight and courage would send their wealth in the form of khūms and other Islamic taxes to the Imam (ʿa).

News that people from all across the nation were sending their money to the Imam (ʿa) was not hidden from Hārūn. In fact, he had many spies who reported this matter to him on a regular basis. The meaning behind these actions was also not hidden from Hārūn. He understood that this phenomenon meant that the people considered the Imam (ʿa) as their true leader. Things even reached the point that Hārūn's spies reported that Imam Kāẓim (ʿa) had formed a second public treasury in order to receive all of this wealth from the people.[87] This is an indication of the spiritual authority which the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) held over the people.

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[87] Majlisī, Ibid, vol. 48, p. 232.
- Shablanjī, Ibid, p. 151.
- Ibn Ṣabbāgh Mālikī, Ibid, p. 220.
- Ibn Ḥajar Haytamī, al-Ṣawāʿīq al-Muḥriqah, Cairo, Maktabah Cairo, p. 204.
In order to grasp the volume of how many people sent their money to the Imam (a), the following rough figure will prove helpful: "During the time of the martyrdom of Imam Kāẓim (a), 70,000 Dinars were with Zīyād ibn Marwān Qandī and 30,000 Dinars were with ʿAlī ibn Abī Ḥamzah (two of the representatives of the Imam (a)). In addition to these sums, 30,000 Dinars were with ʿUthmān ibn ʿĪsā Rāwasī, who was the Imam's (a) representative in Egypt." (Majlisī, Ibid, vol. 48, p. 252-253).

The Eighth Imam

Imam ʿAlī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā

A Brief Look at the Life of the Imam

Imam ʿAlī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (ʿa) was born on the 11th day of Dhī al-Qaʿdah, in the year 148 Hijrī.[88] His mother was a virtuous lady by the name of Tuktam, and she was given the name Ṭāhīrah by Imam Kāẓim (ʿa) after the birth of Imam Riḍā (ʿa).[89]

Contemporary Caliphs

The period of his imamate was twenty years in duration; ten years was contemporary with the caliphate of Hārūn al-Rashīd, five years with the caliphate of Muḥammad Amīn, and the last five years with the caliphate of ʿAbdullah al-Maʾmūn. Imam Riḍā (ʿa) lived in Medina, the city of his birth, until the beginning of the caliphate of Maʾmūn. When Maʾmūn reached the caliphate, he invited the Imam (ʿa) to Khurāsān (the easternmost province of modern Iran), where he was martyred in the month of Ṣafar in the year 203 Hijrī. The Imam (ʿa) was 55 years old at the time of his martyrdom and he was buried in Khurāsān.[90]

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[88] Ṭabarsī, ʿIlām al-Warā Biʿlām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 313.
- Kulaynī, al-Ūsūl Min al-Kāfī, Second Edition, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 486.

[89] Ṭabarsī, ʿIlām al-Warā Biʿlām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 313.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 49, p. 5 and 7.

[90] Kulaynī, al-Ūsūl Min al-Kāfī, Second Edition, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 486.
- Shaykh Mufīd, al-Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 304.

Imam Riḍā during the Time of Hārūn

In the year 183 Hijrī, Imam Kāẓim (ʿa) was poisoned in prison in Baghdad, under the orders of Hārūn. After his martyrdom, the imamate passed on to his son, Imam Riḍā (ʿa), and for 10 years his imamate was contemporary with Hārūn's caliphate. This period can be counted as a period of relative freedom, as well as of religious and intellectual activity for the Imam (ʿa). During this time period, Hārūn did not harass the Imam (ʿa) and he was free to engage in various activities. Imam Riḍā (ʿa) began to educate and train a group of students in the Quran and the Islamic sciences.

It is possible that the reason behind this period of relative freedom was Hārūn's fear of repercussions for the murder of Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (ʿa). Although Hārūn tried his utmost to keep the murder a secret, in the end, it became public knowledge and the news angered the people greatly. When word of the murder became public, Hārūn tried his best to exonerate himself of this crime. At one point, Hārūn wrote a letter to his uncle Sulaymān ibn Abī Jaʿfar (who had been the individual who buried Imam Kāẓim (ʿa)) saying: "May God curse Sandī ibn Shāhik, for he did this (Imam Kāẓim's murder) without my permission."[91]

Another piece of evidence in this matter is found in the words of Hārūn about Imam Kāẓim (ʿa) in response to Yaḥyā ibn Khālid Barmakī's words. Yaḥyā, who had previously slandered and criticized Imam Kāẓim (ʿa), said to Hārūn: "After Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar (ʿa), his son is now sitting in his place and making claims to the imamate." He probably felt that Hārūn's agents should keep an eye on ʿAlī ibn Mūsā (ʿa) from that moment onwards, rather than waiting for something to happen. Hārūn, who had not yet forgotten the murder of Imam Kāẓim (ʿa) and was continuously worried about its

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[91] Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 48, p. 227.
- Ṣadūq, ʿUyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā (a), First Edition, Beirut, Muʿassasah' al-ʿAlamī Lil Maṭbūʿāt, 1404 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 100.

consequences, replied: "Is not what we did to his father enough? Do you want me to take up a sword and kill all of the Alawīs at once?"[92] Hārūn's anger quieted his officials and no one thereafter dared to bring up the matter of Imam Riḍā ('a).

Imam 'Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā ('a) used this opportunity during the rule of Hārūn and openly declared his imamate. There was no need to hide this matter as the previous Imams ('a) had been forced to do. This went to such an extent that some of the Imam's ('a) sincere companions cautioned him on this matter and the Imam ('a) assured them that not the least amount of harm would come to him from Hārūn.

Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥyā is quoted as saying: "When Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far ('a) passed away and 'Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā ('a) openly declared his imamate and caliphate, the people said to the Imam ('a): 'You have made a serious and momentous declaration, and we are afraid for you, because of this oppressor (Hārūn al-Rashīd).' The Imam ('a) replied: 'As much as he will try, he will find no means of overcoming me.'"[93]

It has also been narrated from Muḥammad ibn Sunan[94] that: "I expressed the following to Abī al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā ('a) during the caliphate of Hārūn: 'You have declared the issue of your caliphate and imamate openly and have taken the place of your father, while blood still drips from the sword of Hārūn.' The Imam ('a) replied: 'The words of the Prophet (ṣ) give me strength and courage, for he said: If Abū Jahl was able to remove one hair from my head (cause

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[92] Ṣadūq, 'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā (a), First Edition, Beirut, Mu'assasah' Al-'Alamī Lil Maṭbū'āt, 1404 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 100.
- 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 105.

[93] Ṣadūq, Ibid, p. 226.
- 'Alī ibn 'Īsā, Ibid, vol. 2, p. 105.

[94] Kulaynī, al-Rawḍat Min al-Kāfī, Fourth Edition, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1362 Hijrī Shamsi, p. 257.
-Muhaqiq, Sayyid 'Alī, The Life of the Eighth Imam, Imam 'Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (a), Qum, New Generation Publications, p. 52-59.

harm to me), then know that I am not a prophet, and so I say to you: If Hārūn is able to remove one hair from my head, then know that I am not an imam.'"[95]

Amīn and Ma'mūn; Contrasts and Differences

During his caliphate, Hārūn appointed Muḥammad Amīn (whose mother was Zubayda) as his successor, and he took the people's pledge of allegiance for him. As a secondary successor, he selected 'Abdullah al-Ma'mūn, who had been born from an Iranian mother. In the year 193 Hijrī, news reached Hārūn that a revolt had erupted across Khurāsān, and the commanders of his military, in spite of their cruelty and lack of mercy, were unable to suppress it.

After consulting with his viziers and advisors, Hārūn considered it advisable that he personally travel to Khurāsān and suppress the rebellion himself. He left his son Muḥammad Amīn in Baghdad, and took his other son, Ma'mūn (who was incidentally the governor of Khurāsān) with him on the campaign. Hārūn was able to calm the turbulent conditions of Khurāsān, but he never returned back to Baghdad. He died on the third of Jamādī al-Ukhrā in the year 193 Hijrī in the city of Tūs, leaving his two sons to fight one another in a fierce power struggle over who would ultimately rule as the next caliph.[96]

The Defeat of Amīn

On the night of Hārūn's demise, the people of Baghdad

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[95] Later in Khurāsān, the Imam (a) remembered his situation and his popularity in this period in Medina and he mentioned to Ma'mūn that: "...This matter (the successorship) has by no means added to my blessings. When I was in Medina, my orders were obeyed in both the East and the West. During that time, I would mount my mule and calmly pass through the streets of Medina; there was no one more beloved and honored than myself in the city..." (Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 49, p. 155; Kulaynī, al-Rawḍat Min al-Kāfī, Fourth Edition, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1362 Hijrī Shamsi, p. 151; also refer to: Ṣadūq, 'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā, vol. 2, p. 167).

[96] Muhaqiq, Sayyid 'Alī, The Life of the Eighth Imam, Imam 'Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (a), Qum, New Generation Publications (Intishārāte Nasle Javān), p. 58-59.

pledged their allegiance to his son Muḥammad Amīn. No more than 18 days had passed from the start of Amīn's rule that he began to plan for the removal of Ma'mūn as his successor; he wished to instead appoint his own son Mūsā, for that position.

He consulted with his viziers, and all of them, with the exception of 'Alī ibn 'Īsā ibn Mahān, advised against taking such an action. In spite of the almost unanimous consensus of his advisors, Amīn still decided to depose his brother. In reaction to this news, Ma'mūn announced his deposition of Amīn from the caliphate. After a series of bloody conflicts, Amīn was killed in the year 198 Hijrī.[97] After Amīn's killing, the rule of the entire nation was left in the hands of Ma'mūn.

Relative Freedom during the Rule of Amīn

During the rule of Amīn, and in general, during the years between the death of Hārūn and the caliphate of Ma'mūn, there are no historical records of conflict between the Imam ('a) and the 'Abbāsid government. It is clear that in the few years of conflict between Amīn and Ma'mūn, the 'Abbāsid government had neither the desire, nor the capacity to interfere with Imam Riḍā ('a) and the Alawīs. They were entangled in various domestic conflicts, which continued even after the battles over the successorship of the caliphate had concluded. Thus, we can consider the years 193 to 198 Hijrī to be years of relative freedom in regards to religious activity for the Imam ('a).[98]

Who Was Ma'mūn?

Ma'mūn's mother was a Khurāsānian slave by the name of Marājil, who passed away several days after giving birth to him. As a result, Ma'mūn was an orphan from his infancy and was raised without a mother. Historians have written

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[97] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 6, p. 287.

[98] Muhaqiq, Sayyid 'Alī, The Life of the Eighth Imam, Imam 'Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (a), Qum, New Generation Publications (Intishārāte Nasle Javān), p. 60.

that: "Ma'mūn's mother was the ugliest and dirtiest slave in Hārūn's kitchen, and this itself reveals the story behind her pregnancy."[99]

Ma'mūn was born in the year 170 Hijrī, on the very same night that his father reached the caliphate, and he passed away in the year 218 Hijrī. Ma'mūn's upbringing was entrusted to Ja'far ibn Yaḥyā Barmakī. His teacher was Faḍl ibn Sahl, who was famously known as Dhū al-Rīyāsah, and who later became Ma'mūn's vizier. The supreme commander of his army was Ṭāhir ibn Ḥusayn Dhū al-Yamīnayn.

Ma'mūn's Characteristics

The life of Ma'mūn was a life full of activity and struggle, devoid of easy living and comfort. This was in full contrast to his brother Amīn, who was raised in the lap of luxury. Amin's mother was Zubayda, after all, and whoever comes to know how she lived, will come to understand to what extent Amīn's life was filled with self-indulgence and leisure. Ma'mūn, unlike his brother, did not feel that he came from nobility, and therefore was not sure about what the future held for him. In fact, he knew that the 'Abbāsids would never accept his caliphate, and that he lacked family support. For this reason, he figuratively rolled up his sleeves and began to plan for his future. Ma'mūn realized what he had to do from the moment that he discovered he possessed certain abilities and talents, which his brother Amīn did not.

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[99] It is narrated that Zubayda would play chess with Hārūn, and because Hārūn lost a bet to her, she ordered that he would have to sleep with the ugliest girl who worked in his kitchen. Hārūn, who did not want to do such a thing, offered to give all of the taxes of Egypt and Iraq to Zubayda as a gift instead, but she did not accept. Hārūn reluctantly asked for a slave named Marajil, who was considered the ugliest and dirtiest slave in his kitchen, and slept with her.
This story is not inconsistent with the fact that Hārūn reached the caliphate on the night that he was born, for the successors ruled over vast tracts of land and possessed great amounts of wealth even before becoming caliphs. For example, even Hārūn divided his country between three of his sons during his lifetime. (Murtaḍā al-Ḥusaynī, Sayyid Ja'far, The Political Life of the Eighth Imam, translated by Sayyid Khalīl Khalīlian, Fourth Edition, Tehran, The Office of Islamic Cultural Publications, 1365 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 97.)

Ma'mūn quickly adapted himself and began to learn from Amīn's weaknesses. For example, when Faḍl witnessed Amīn's inclinations towards music and festive gatherings, he instructed Ma'mūn to show himself as being pious, religious, and well-natured. Ma'mūn would then act in this very manner, and every time Amīn would do something badly, Ma'mūn would perform that same action in a graceful and competent manner.

In due time, Ma'mūn gained expertise in various sciences and attained a high level of knowledge for himself. He proved himself to be superior to all of his peers, and even excelled over the whole of the ʿAbbāsid clan. Some would proclaim that there was no one more knowledgeable from among the ʿAbbāsids, than Ma'mūn.

Ibn Nadīm has said the following about Ma'mūn: "He was the most aware of the caliphs in jurisprudence and theology." It has also been narrated about Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), that one day he was speaking about the ʿAbbāsids, when he mentioned: "The seventh one from among them will be the most knowledgeable."

Suyūṭī, Ibn Taghri Bardī, and Ibn Shākir Katbī have praised Ma'mūn with the following words: "In terms of far-sightedness, will-power, patience, knowledge, cleverness, courage, generosity, and preeminence (over his peers), he was the best man from among the ʿAbbāsids, even though these characteristics were marred by his belief in the created nature of the Quran." Even Ma'mūn's father testified to his superiority over his brother Amīn and said: "I have decided to amend the successorship and hand it over to one whose behavior I approve of more, whose course of action I praise, in whose politics I have trust, and of whose lack of weakness I am assured of— this is none other than ʿAbdullah. But the ʿAbbāsids, out of their own personal desires, want Muḥammad, even though he is completely submerged in his base desires, and is wasteful, extravagant, and lets women and female slaves become his partners in decision making. This is

while ʿAbdullah behaves in a positive manner and has uncorrupted judgment. Truly, he is best suited for the caliphate..."[100]

The Eighth Imam during the Time of Ma'mūn

With the stabilization of Ma'mūn's caliphate, the Imam's (ʿa) life also began to change; this was a change where the Imam (ʿa) began to live under increasing levels of hardship and difficulty. The caliphs, whether they belonged to the ʿAbbāsid dynasty or the Umayyid dynasty, all feared the Alawīs above everything else. These were individuals whom the majority of the masses had accepted as having the right of rule over the Muslim nation. In addition to this, they witnessed the existence of every type of virtue in these people. It was for this reason that the descendants of ʿAlī (ʿa) were always subject to torture and persecution from the caliphs of their time. In addition to the torture and persecution, many of these descendants were also murdered by the caliphs.

Outwardly, Ma'mūn would occasionally make a pretense of being inclined towards Shiism. The reason behind this was that many of the people in his government were Iranians who happened to be inclined towards the descendants of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) and the Shia Imams (ʿa). For this reason, Ma'mūn was unable to imprison Imam Riḍā (ʿa), unlike his predecessors Hārūn and Manṣūr. Not only was he unable to imprison him, but he wasn't even able to persecute him like his predecessors had been free to do.

In order to meet his goals and neutralize the danger which he felt from the Imam (ʿa), he was forced to come up with a more nuanced method than the previous caliphs. This method, although not unprecedented, was better from a public relations standpoint. As a result, many later caliphs adopted similar methods in order to strengthen their rule.

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[100] Murtaḍā al-Ḥusaynī, Sayyid Jaʿfar, The Political Life of the Eighth Imam, translated by Sayyid Khalīl Khalīlīan, Fourth Edition, Tehran, The Office of Islamic Cultural Publications, 1365 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 97-100.

Ma'mūn decided to take Imam Riḍā ('a) to Marw, the administrative center of his government, and make a show of friendship and kindness towards him. His ulterior motive in doing so, was to keep a close eye on the Imam and his activities. Furthermore, his government would benefit from the Imam's ('a) great knowledge and social standing. From both perspectives, it was of great benefit to Ma'mūn.

Why Did Ma'mūn Wish to Turn Over the Caliphate to Imam Riḍā?

Ma'mūn's Invitation of the Imam to Khurāsān

At first, Ma'mūn invited Imam Riḍā ('a), as well as the notables from the descendants of Imam 'Alī ('a), to come to Khurāsān, in a very polite manner.[101] The Imam ('a) did not accept Ma'mūn's invitation initially, but Ma'mūn kept insisting. Many letters exchanged hands, until, Imam Riḍā ('a) finally began to travel towards Marw with a group of the Alawīs.[102]

Ma'mūn ordered Julūdī, (or according to other narrations, Rajā' ibn Abī Ḍahak), who was in charge of the Imam's ('a) caravan, to act very respectfully towards the travelers and to the Imam ('a) in particular. In spite of this, and in order to raise awareness in the masses, Imam Riḍā ('a) openly showed his displeasure with the trip. On the day that he was set to depart from Medina, he gathered all of his family together and asked them to cry for him, saying: "I will not return to my family again."[103] Then, Imam Riḍā ('a)

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[101] In various historical documents, there is no initial mention of any successorship or caliphate in the invitation of the Imam (a) to Khurāsān. This was possibly an afterthought which occurred to Ma'mūn later. Even if the idea had occurred to him earlier, he did not mention it publicly.

[102] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 65.
- Shaykh Mufīd, al-Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 309.
- Fattāl Nayshābūrī, Rawḍat al-Wā'iẓīn, First Edition, Beirut, Mu'assat al-'Alamī Lil Maṭbū'āt, 1406 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 247.

[103] Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 49,

entered the Mosque of the Prophet (ṣ), in order to say his farewells to the Messenger. Several times the Imam ('a) gave his farewell to the Prophet (ṣ) and began to leave, when he would once again return to the grave and weep in a loud voice.

Makhūl Sīstānī has narrated: "At this time, I went to the Imam ('a), gave my greetings, and wished him well on his journey. He said: 'Makhūl, look at me closely; I am going to be separated far from my grandfather, and I will die alone, and I will be buried next to Hārūn.'"[104] The caravan of the Imam ('a) traveled from Medina to Marw by passing through Baṣrah, Ahwāz, and Fars. This travel route was probably chosen so that the caravan would not pass through Jabal, Kūfah, Kermanshah, and Qum,[105] which were known as Shia cities.[106]

Entering the Capital City

The Imam's caravan entered Marw on the tenth of Shawwal. With several farsakhs remaining between him and the city, the Imam ('a) was greeted by Ma'mūn, Faḍl ibn Sahl, and a large group of the notables from the 'Abbāsids. He entered the city with great respect and honor, and Ma'mūn ordered that all means of comfort and rest be supplied for the Imam ('a). After several days spent resting from the long journey, discussions began between Imam Riḍā ('a) and Ma'mūn, and Ma'mūn suggested that the caliphate be given over at once to the Imam ('a). The Imam ('a) strongly rejected

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p. 117. Also refer to: 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Ibid, vol. 3, p. 95.

[104] Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. 49, p. 117.

[105] The late Sayyid 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Ṭāwūs, the author of Farḥat al-Qūrā (d. 693 Hijrī), has narrated a piece of commentary on the entrance of the Imam (a) to Qum; this narration is not mentioned by any other source. If we consider that Shaykh Ṣadūq himself was a resident of Qum and did not mention anything about the Imam's (a) passage through his city, and instead mentioned another route of travel, then the narration of Ibn Ṭāwūs does not seem to be authentic. (Muhaqiq, Sayyid 'Alī, The Life of the Eighth Imam, Imam 'Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (a), Qum, New Generation Publications (Intishārāte Nasle Javān), p. 74.)

[106] Muhaqiq, Ibid, p. 70-74.

this suggestion.

Faḍl ibn Sahl later mentioned this event with amazement. He said: "I never saw the caliphate as being so worthless and abject as on that day. Ma'mūn would try to turn over the caliphate to 'Alī ibn Mūsā ('a) and he would reject it outrightly."[107] Ma'mūn, who had perhaps gauged such a reaction from the Imam ('a), then said: "Now that it is so, accept the successorship." Imam Riḍā ('a) replied: "Exempt me from this as well."

Ma'mūn did not accept this and spoke with anger; his words took on a more menacing tone. He said: "When 'Umar ibn Khaṭṭāb was passing away, he organized a council of six individuals, and one of those individuals was Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a); he recommended that whoever would object should have his head cut off... you, too, must accept my suggestion, for I do not see any other way but this."[108] He also threatened Imam Riḍā ('a) in even more explicit terms by saying: "You are always moving in opposition to my wishes and consider yourself secure from me. I swear by God that if you do not accept this proposal I will force you to do so, and if you still do not comply, then I will kill you."[109]

Without having a choice, the Imam ('a) accepted Ma'mūn's suggestion and said: "I will accept the successorship on the condition that I will never have authority over matters of state, and that I will have no mediation in matters of electing and removing governors, judges, or jurisprudents."[110]

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[107] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 66.
- Shaykh Mufīd, al-Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 10.

[108] Shaykh Mufīd, al-Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 310.
- 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 65.
- Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā Bi'Ilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 333.

[109] Ṣadūq, 'Ilal al-Sharāya', Qum, Manshūrāt Maktabah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, vol. 1, p. 226.
- Fattāl Nayshābūrī, Rawḍat al-Wā'iẓīn, First Edition, Beirut, Mu'assat al-'Alamī Lil Maṭbū'āt, 1406 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 247.

[110] Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā Bi'ilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-

The Successorship Which Never Reached Fruition

The people of Marw were preparing themselves for the fast of the month of Ramaḍān (in the year 201 Hijrī), when news of the successorship of the Imam (ʿa) spread through the city. The city was swept with a wave of happiness, albeit tempered with surprise. On Monday, the seventh of Ramaḍān, the declaration of the successorship was written out in Maʾmūn's handwriting, and on the back of that same paper, Imam ʿAlī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (ʿa) added a foreword to the letter announcing his acceptance. He also surprised the people by explicitly telling them that this matter would not come to fruition— that he would not become the next caliph. Then on the side of that same paper, various governors and military leaders, such as Yaḥyā ibn Aktham, ʿAbdullah ibn Ṭāhir, and Faḍl ibn Sahl bore witness to the document.[111]

An official ceremony was then held on Thursday, which was the tenth of that month. The first person who was ordered to pledge his allegiance to the Imam (ʿa) was ʿAbbās, the son of Maʾmūn. After him, Faḍl ibn Sahl, the grand vizier of Maʾmūn, Yaḥyā ibn Aktham, the court scholar, and then ʿAbdullah ibn Ṭāhir, the commander of Maʾmūn's army all gave their pledge. Then, the ʿAbbāsids and other notables proceeded to come forward and give their pledge to the Imam (ʿa).[112]

The matter of the Imam's (ʿa) successorship was naturally a cause for much joy amongst his followers and friends, but he himself expressed sadness over the matter. When the Imam (ʿa) saw a man who was showing a great deal of happiness over the successorship, he said to the man: "Do not take this

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Islāmīya, p. 334.
- Shaykh Mufīd, al-Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 310.

[111] ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā al-'Irbilī is quoted as saying: "I personally witnessed this agreement, which was written in the handwriting of the Imam (a) and Maʾmūn, in the year 670 Hijrī." He also copied the text of that document and reproduced it in his book Kashf al-Ghammah (vol. 3, p. 123-128).

[112] Muhaqiq, Sayyid ʿAlī, The Life of the Eighth Imam, Imam ʿAlī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (a), Qum, New Generation Publications (Intishārāte Nasle Javān), p. 82-87.

matter to heart and do not become happy over it, for it will not last."

The Political Difficulties of Ma'mūn

If one were to research the conditions and the political situation under the rule of Ma'mūn, historical documents will show that he was beset with a series of difficult political issues, which he continuously strived to free himself from. To solve these issues, he created a multi-faceted plan of action— the successorship of Imam Riḍā ('a) was in fact one facet of this plan.

1- The Dissatisfaction of the 'Abbāsids with Ma'mūn

Although Ma'mūn was considered a worthier ruler than his brother Amīn as far as the masses were concerned, still, the 'Abbāsids opposed his rule. Hārūn was quite aware of the stark differences between his two sons and so he would complain of the 'Abbāsid's opposition to the rule of Ma'mūn.

It is possible that the 'Abbāsids opposed Ma'mūn because they considered his brother Amīn to be a pure 'Abbāsid, for his father was Hārūn and his mother was Zubayda. Zubayda was both a Hāshimī and the grandchild of Manṣūr Dawānīqī; she was considered as one of the most noble of the 'Abbāsid women. Amīn was raised by Faḍl ibn Yaḥyā Barmakī, the foster brother of Hārūn, and the most influential man in his court. In addition to all of this, his teacher was Faḍl ibn Rabī.

Ma'mūn, on the other hand, was raised by Ja'far ibn Yaḥyā, whose court influence was considerably less than his brother Faḍl. Secondly, his teacher was an individual whom the 'Abbāsids did not like, for he was accused of having inclinations towards the Alawīs. Also, there existed a great deal of enmity and hatred between Amīn's teacher (Faḍl ibn Rabī) and Ma'mūn's teacher. Faḍl ibn Sahl Irānī later became the grand vizier of Ma'mūn. The 'Abbāsids feared the Iranians, and as soon as they were able to, they transferred

their positions over to the Turks and people of other nationalities.

2- Amīn's Superior Position

Amīn possessed very powerful relatives and companions who worked towards strengthening his power and position. These individuals included the likes of his uncles, as well as Faḍl ibn Yaḥyā Barmakī (in fact, the majority of the Barmakīs can be listed here), and his mother Zubayda. If we consider that these individuals possessed a great deal of influence in Hārūn's government and were instrumental in his government's politics, it is obvious as to why Hārūn ended up following their wishes and selecting his younger son Amīn for the successorship. He only appointed his elder son Ma'mūn for the successorship after Amīn.

It is also possible that the tribal loyalties of the 'Abbāsids, and likewise, the great rank of 'Īsā ibn Ja'far (the uncle of Amīn) played an important role in the nomination of Amīn for Hārūn's successorship. Zubayda also played an instrumental role in her son's nomination. Even beyond these crucial issues, the Arabs of that time had very specific beliefs in regards to lineage, and it is a strong possibility that Hārūn selected Amīn over Ma'mūn for this reason. Some historians have expressed this opinion in the following manner: "In 176 Hijrī, Hārūn gave the successorship to his son Amīn. Ma'mūn was one month older than Amīn, but Amīn was the son of Zubayda, who was the daughter of Ja'far and a Hāshimī. This was while Ma'mūn was the son of a slave named Marajil, who had passed away shortly after giving birth."

What Was Ma'mūn's Situation in regards to the Caliphate?

Although Ma'mūn's father had nominated him for the secondary successorship which would come about after Amīn's death, this was still no guarantee that he would ever

be able to rule; his future was therefore completely uncertain. Ma'mūn couldn't be sure that his brother and the ʿAbbāsids would not break their pledge and depose him. As a result, Ma'mūn was not confident as to whom he could trust in order to support his aspirations to be caliph.

How could Ma'mūn gain the caliphate and take on the reins of power? And if he were to potentially reach the caliphate, how would he strengthen the foundations of his rule? These were the questions which continuously occupied Ma'mūn's mind. He knew that he would have to quickly find the answers to these questions and he decided to act sooner than later. Ma'mūn began to search for people who would support him in the coming dangers and battles that would ensue in his fight for power. In order to understand who his potential supporters were, we have to consider the spheres of influence which existed at that time:

1- The Position of the Alawīs towards Ma'mūn

Naturally, the Alawīs did not support Ma'mūn. Not only did they not support Ma'mūn, but in fact they did not support any of the ʿAbbāsids, for they had far worthier candidates in mind for the position of the caliphate. In addition to this, Ma'mūn was affiliated to a clan that had harassed and persecuted the descendants of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) to a far greater extent than even the Umayyids. There was no love lost between the ʿAbbāsids and the Alawīs. It is well-known how much Alawī blood the ʿAbbāsids spilled, and how they seized their wealth and exiled them from various cities. From the perspective of the Alawīs, it was enough of a stain to be the son of Hārūn al-Rashīd, an individual who had committed numerous crimes against them and their Imams (ʿa).

2- The Position of the Arabs towards Ma'mūn and His Rule

The Arabs also opposed the rule of Ma'mūn due to the

reason that his mother, his teacher, and his 'manager of affairs' were all non-Arabs. This did not go over well with the Arabs of that time period, whose worldview was exceedingly tribalistic. The Iranians in particular, who, with their specialized skills were so indispensable in ruling over such a large empire, had made the Arabs very nervous. In these circumstances, it was natural that the Arabs would be sensitive towards the Iranians and towards whomever had close contact with them. Due to Ma'mūn's close relationship with this group, he was the focus of a great deal of Arab anger and suspicion.

3- The Killing of Amīn

Although the killing of Amīn was a great military victory for Ma'mūn, it was not without negative consequences for him, particularly in regards to his plans and goals. The methods which Ma'mūn adopted in the conflict with his brother Amīn, only exacerbated these negative consequences. For example, he ordered Ṭāhir to execute Amīn, and when the head was brought to him, he prostrated in thanks and gave 1,000,000 dirhams to the individual who had brought him the head. He then ordered that his brother's head be placed on a wooden plank in his royal court, so that anyone who came to the palace to receive their salary would have to first curse the head and then receive their wages.

Ma'mūn did not suffice with these actions— he ordered that the head of Amīn be taken and paraded in Khurāsān. He then had the head sent to Ibrāhīm ibn Mahdī and rebuked him for grieving over the death of Amīn. Ma'mūn, through killing his brother and displaying his head in such a savage manner, naturally elicited a very negative response from the people. At the very least, it can be said that he damaged his reputation in the eyes of the people, shook their trust in him, and aroused their enmity and disgust.

A Difficult Situation

In addition to this, it was the people of Khurāsān who had played an instrumental role in bringing Ma'mūn to power. Now, they had turned away from him and were considered as a threat to his rule. In the midst of this situation, the Alawīs used the conflict between Ma'mūn and his brother Amīn to their benefit as a means of increasing the scope of their activities. Ma'mūn was placed in an increasingly difficult position, and a growing number of revolts by the Alawīs began erupting from various regions of the nation.

The Revolts of the Alawīs

Abū al-Sarāyā, who was once on Ma'mūn's side, engaged in a revolt in the city of Kūfah against him. However, his army was routinely routed, and he could not hold on to the territories he conquered for very long. It has been mentioned that, in spite of this, 200,000 of the caliph's forces were killed in this rebellion, even though the entirety of the revolt did not last more than ten months.

Revolts began to spring up in other cities as well:

- In Baṣrah, which was a stronghold of the Uthmānīs, the Alawīs rose in revolt under the leadership of Zayd al-Nār.
- In Mecca and the territories of the Ḥijāz, Muḥammad ibn Ja'far, who was known as Dhībāj, revolted and was even called Amīr al-Mu'minīn by his followers.
- In Yemen, Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā ibn Ja'far also revolted against Ma'mūn.
- In Medina, Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān ibn Ḥasan revolted.
- In Wāsiṭ, where the majority of the people leaned towards the Uthmānīs, Ja'far ibn Zayd ibn 'Alī and Ḥusayn ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Hassan ibn 'Alī, likewise,

revolted.

- In Madā'in, Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl ibn Muḥammad revolted.

In conclusion, there was no region in which the Alawīs, either under their own initiative or due to the will of the people, rose up in revolt against the 'Abbāsids. Things even reached the point that the people of Bayn al-Nahrayn (between the two rivers; i.e. the Tigris and the Euphrates) and Syria, who were famous for their cooperation and collaboration with the Umayyids and the family of Marwān, began to follow Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Alawī (the close companion of Abū al-Sarāyā) and wrote him a letter stating that they were waiting for his representative to arrive in order to convey his command to their people.[113]

A Multi-faceted Solution

Ma'mūn had understood that in order to save himself from these problems, he would have to accomplish several things:

1- He would have to first quell the Alawī revolts.
2- He would need to have the Alawīs acknowledge that the 'Abbāsid government was a legitimate government.
3- Undermine the people's love and respect for the Alawīs.
4- Gain the trust and love of the Arabs.
5- Gain the acknowledgment of his government's legitimacy from the Khurāsānians in particular and the Iranians overall.
6- Keep the 'Abbāsids and their supporters satisfied.
7- Regain the trust of the masses. Due to the killing of his brother, he had lost a great deal of the people's trust and his reputation had fallen drastically.
8- Lastly, Ma'mūn wished to somehow secure himself from the danger that he felt from Imam Riḍā ('a).

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[113] Murtaḍā al-Ḥusaynī, Sayyid Ja'far, The Political Life of the Eighth Imam, translated by Sayyid Khalīl Khalīlīan, Fourth Edition, Tehran, The Office of Islamic Cultural Publications, 1365 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 97-123. Summarized and with slight differences in word usage.

Through the successorship of the Imam ('a) and his participation in the government, many of Ma'mūn's goals would be secured. Since Imam Riḍā ('a) was the leader of the Alawīs, his successorship would in effect disarm the Alawīs and remove the main reason behind their many revolts. As a result, they would also lose public support for their revolts.

From another perspective, Ma'mūn would gain the support of the Khurāsānians and the Iranians who were all supporters of the family of the Prophet. He could also then rationalize the killing of his brother, under the pretense of handing over the government to the family of the Prophet.

In addition to all of these reasons, Ma'mūn, through bringing the Imam ('a) to Marw (which was his center of power) became relatively safe from the dangers that he felt from him. In Marw, he would be under the watchful eye of Ma'mūn and his activities could be somewhat controlled. Out of all the groups mentioned, only the Arabs and the 'Abbāsids were left, and Ma'mūn felt that he could put them in check with the support of the Iranians and the Alawīs.

Criticism and Deliberation

There exists a great deal of clear historical evidence, which calls into question Ma'mūn's sincerity in giving the successorship to Imam Riḍā ('a). If Ma'mūn had sincerely wanted to give the caliphate over to the Imam ('a), then the question remains as to why he did not perform the following actions:

1- Why didn't Ma'mūn give the successorship over to the Imam ('a) while he was in Medina? Why did he bring the Imam ('a), along with an entourage of his agents to Marw, when the Imam himself did not want to do so? Ma'mūn could have simply made a public announcement and furnished the necessary documents and had witnesses sign them without the Imam ('a) ever needing to travel to Marw.

2- Why did Ma'mūn order that Imam Riḍā ('a) be brought through the way of Baṣrah, Ahwāz, and Fars, which happened

to be a very difficult route since it passed through extremely hot climates and probably also passed through the harsh salt desert of Lūṭ? Why was the Imam ('a) not taken through the route of Kūfah and Qum, in which he would have been welcomed enthusiastically, thus giving Ma'mūn's goal in transferring the successorship a higher potential for success?
3- Why did Ma'mūn, in his first round of discussions with the Imam ('a), name himself as the Imam's successor? He could have given the successorship of Imam Riḍā ('a) to his son Imam Jawād ('a) or at least left the choice up to him.
4- When we consider that the Imam ('a) was approximately 20 years older than Ma'mūn, then based on ordinary calculations, it could naturally be expected that the Imam ('a) would pass away sooner than Ma'mūn. Therefore, making someone who is expected to pass away sooner than you your successor does not make much sense.
5- If Ma'mūn was engaging in these actions out a sense of faith and conviction, why did he still force the Imam ('a) into accepting the successorship when the Imam ('a) outrightly refused his offer?
6- Why did Ma'mūn not pass on the successorship to Imam Jawād ('a) after the death of his father? This was while he would express the same affection and love towards Imam Jawād ('a) as he would towards his father, Imam Riḍā ('a).
7- Why did Ma'mūn, in the famous event of the 'Īd prayers, force the Imam ('a) to return?
8- When Ma'mūn left Marw in order to return to Baghdad, why didn't he allow the Imam ('a) to stay in Marw? If the Imam ('a) was to be the successor, what was the issue with him remaining in Marw and ruling that region?

These are questions which clearly indicate that Ma'mūn was not sincere and truthful in his offer of the successorship. There were indeed ulterior motives which caused him to propose the offer of the successorship, which we will discuss

in the following pages, God willing.[114]

The Reasons behind the Acceptance

Imam Riḍā (ʿa) accepted the successorship of Maʾmūn only when he judged that if he continued to refuse, not only would he lose his own life, but the lives of the Alawīs and his companions would be in danger as well. It was necessary for the Imam (ʿa) to protect the lives of his Shias, as well as his own life, as the Muslim nation was in dire need of his guidance and teachings.

If the Imam (ʿa) had given a definitive refusal to the successorship, then it was clear that he and his companions would be killed. It is not, however, clear if this sacrifice would have had the same effect as the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa). In addition to this, reaching this station of successorship was an implicit acknowledgment from the ʿAbbāsids that the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt deserved a significant share in the government.

On another level, the successorship allowed the people to see the family of the Prophet (ṣ) active on the political stage. Through these means, they would not mistakenly assume that he Imams (ʿa) were only religious scholars and jurisprudents, without any relevance in the management of the worldly affairs of the Muslims. It is possible that when Ibn ʿUrfah asked Imam Riḍā (ʿa) a question about his successorship, the Imam's (ʿa) answer was in reference to this reality. One day, Ibn ʿUrfah asked the Imam (ʿa): "Oh son of the Prophet of God, what was your reason for accepting the successorship?" Imam Riḍā (ʿa) answered: "The same reason whereby my grandfather ʿAlī (ʿa) was compelled to enter into the 'council.'"[115]

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[114] Muhaqiq, Sayyid ʿAlī, The Life of the Eighth Imam: Imam ʿAlī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā, Qum, New Generation Publications (Intishārāte Nasle Javān), p. 138-141.

[115] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Muʿassasat al-Intishārāt ʿAlāmah, vol. 4, p. 364.

- Ṣadūq, ʿUyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā (a), First Edition, Beirut, Muʿassasah' Al-ʿAlamī Lil Maṭbūʿāt, 1404 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 141.

Above and beyond all these issues, Imam Riḍā (ʿa) showed the true face of Maʾmūn during the matter of his successorship. Through revealing Maʾmūn's true intentions, any reasonable doubt was removed from the collective minds of the people as to who was ruling over them.

Did the Imam Wish to become the Successor?

The factors mentioned above do not reveal the personal inclinations of Imam Riḍā (ʿa) in the matter of the successorship. As later events proved, Imam Riḍā (ʿa) knew that he could not save himself from the plots of Maʾmūn and his companions. He also knew quite well that his life would not be spared by them. Moreover, the Imam (ʿa) understood that Maʾmūn would use all the means at his disposal to destroy him, whether physical (such as killing him), or propagandistic (such as attempting to destroy his standing in the society).

Even if we were to assume that Maʾmūn held no ev intentions, still, in view of the Imam's (ʿa) age, it is extremel unlikely that he would have lived to take on the caliphate. Therefore, none of these reasons were strong enough to support the acceptance of the successorship by Imam Riḍā (ʿa). It is an action which does not make apparent sense from his perspective. If we were to disregard these issues and assume that the Imam (ʿa) hoped to live until after Maʾmūn, even in such a case, his confrontation with the influential elements in the government who were opposed to him was inevitable. Likewise, the plots of the ʿAbbāsids and their followers, and the mobilization of those who opposed the government of the Imam (ʿa) due to their own personal self-interest and greed, left the Imam (ʿa) in a disadvantageous and dangerous situation.

- Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 49, p. 140.

The Only Correct Stance Was to Take an Oppositional Stance

In view of what has been mentioned above, it can be understood why the Imam ('a) would reject such a dangerous and harmful means of reaching the caliphate. This path was one where none of the Imam's goals could be fulfilled, and in fact, posed a great danger to himself, as well as to his followers and indeed the entirety of his movement. Therefore, an affirmative response to the offer of the successorship would have been considered not just illogical, but even suicidal.

The Imam's Opposition to Ma'mūn's Suggestion

As a result of this difficult situation, the Imam ('a) was stuck between a rock and a hard place. If he accepted the offer, then nothing would come of it as Ma'mūn would outlive the Imam, either because of the age gap or by having him killed. In addition to this, Ma'mūn would be able to create policies which he would brand as having been written by the Imam ('a) himself. However, if the Imam ('a) refused the offer, this refusal posed its own set of unique problems. On a basic level, it is clear that Ma'mūn would have used it as a pretext to have the Imam executed. Therefore, Imam Riḍā ('a) used a unique approach towards the matter of the successorship, which included elements and strategies which even the clever Ma'mūn was not able to foresee. Ultimately, this strategy ended up neutralizing Ma'mūn's meticulous plans. The Imam's strategy consisted of the following:

The First Element: Rejecting the Suggestion of Successorship

For as long as Imam Riḍā ('a) was in Medina, he continuously rejected Ma'mūn's suggestions for the successorship. The Imam ('a) continued to publicly show himself as being completely opposed to the successorship

until it was proven to the people that Ma'mūn would not take no for an answer. Even historical texts (which tend to narrate from the perspective of those who hold power) mention that the Imam's ('a) journey from Medina to Marw did not come from his own personal will but rather from force and compulsion.

The taking of such a stance by the Imam ('a) was designed to show the people that he would not be a subject of Ma'mūn's trickery and that he was fully aware of the caliph's secret intentions and machinations. By doing this, the Imam ('a) was able to remove any doubt people had in regards to his nomination as the successor.

The Second Element: Not Getting the Family Involved

Although Ma'mūn had asked the Imam ('a) to bring anyone that he wished from his family to Marw, the Imam ('a) refused, and he didn't even bring his son Jawād ('a). This was while the journey was fairly long, and supposedly of immense importance, since it was— at least on the surface— one in which the Imam ('a) would take up the leadership of the Muslim nation.

The Third Element: Getting Back to the Basics

During a stop in Nayshābūr, the Imam ('a) showed himself to a crowd of tens of thousands— or possibly even hundreds of thousands— who had come to greet him. He then recited the following tradition: "God, the most High, has said: 'The expression of Tawhīd
(لا اله الا الله) is my fortress, and whoever enters my fortress will be secure from my punishment.'"

On that day, this tradition was written down by approximately 20,000 individuals as soon as it was recited by the Imam ('a). It is interesting to note that the Imam ('a), under the conditions he was in, did not speak of any secondary issues of religion or the life of the people. He did not speak about prayer, fasting, or even encourage the people

towards abstaining from various worldly affairs. In spite of being on a political journey to Marw, he did not bring up any political issues either and he did not speak about his own personal situation.

Instead of all these issues, the Imam ('a) focused their attention on something which was the most important issue of their lives, both at that time and for posterity. During that critical time period, the Imam ('a) only brought forward the issue of monotheism, for monotheism is the foundation of a virtuous life, through which entire nations have rescued themselves from difficulties and hardships. If any individual forgets the matter of Tawhīd, then, in reality, he has lost everything. The Imam ('a), with this sentence, and with the sentence which he mentioned a few moments later, wished to remind the Muslim nation, that in spite of all of its vastness and power, it was lacking in this critical reality.

The Relationship between Wīlāyah and Tawhīd

After reciting this tradition on monotheism, the caravan of the Imam ('a) continued on its way, with thousands of people still looking on. The people were still engaged in thought when suddenly the caravan halted once again and the Imam ('a) leaned out of the coach and mentioned some additional words. He said in a loud and far reaching voice: "The expression of Tawhīd also has certain stipulations, and I am one of its stipulations."

Here, the Imam ('a) expressed another foundational issue, which is that of Wīlāyah (Guardianship). Wīlāyah is much like the trunk of a tree, while Tawhīd is its root. Indeed, if the masses do not attach themselves to the matter of Wīlāyah, then they will continuously be ruled by oppressors and illegitimate rulers. These oppressors will naturally consider law making, which is God's right alone, to be their own right. Through these means, they will drag the Muslim nation into hardship and wretchedness...

Moreover, if we truly understand the matter of Wīlāyah,

we will understand that the sentence of the Imam (ʿa): "And I am from its stipulations," was not said from a sense of self regard, but rather to illustrate a very essential and foundational matter. It is interesting to note that before reciting this tradition, the Imam (ʿa) also mentioned its chain of narrators, and in this manner, he helped the people understand that this tradition is the word of God, which was narrated from the Imam's father, grandfather, and so on, until this chain reached the Prophet of God (ṣ). This manner of reciting a tradition amongst the Imams (ʿa) is quite rare, and it was used in this specific case to connect the issue of the leadership of the Muslim nation to the issue of the oneness of God. It was also used to introduce the family tree of the Imams (ʿa) to the Muslims.

In front of thousands of people in the city of Nayshābūr, in the midst of an exceedingly sensitive political situation, Imam Riḍā (ʿa) introduced himself as the guardian of the fortress of monotheism. Through this, he neutralized Maʾmūn's most important goal, for Maʾmūn, through bringing Imam Riḍā (ʿa) to Marw, had intended to make the statement that his government was legitimate and Islamic.

The Fourth Element: Circumventing the Conspiracy

When Imam Riḍā (ʿa) reached Marw, many months passed in discussions with Maʾmūn, through which he still refused the successorship. He did not accept the offer of the caliphate, nor the offer of the successorship. Both of these were continuously rejected, until Maʾmūn became enraged and began to threaten the Imam's life.

Through holding this specific position against Maʾmūn, the Imam (ʿa) forced Maʾmūn to face the reality of the situation. The Imam (ʿa) said: "I wish to do something so that the people do not say that ʿAlī ibn Mūsā has inclined towards the world (dunyā), but it is in fact the world that is following him." Through this stance, he had Maʾmūn understand that his stratagem was not going to be successful, and that in the

future, he would have to give up his machinations. In addition to this, the Imam ('a) created doubt in the hearts of the masses against Ma'mūn and his rule.

The Fifth Element: Foreseeing the End

With every possible opportunity, Imam Riḍā ('a) emphasized the fact that Ma'mūn had forced him into accepting the successorship by threatening him with death. In addition to this, he would tell people that Ma'mūn intended on breaking his pledge. The Imam ('a) also explicitly proclaimed that he would eventually be poisoned by Ma'mūn. It has been narrated that he would mention this matter in front of Ma'mūn personally. Imam Riḍā's actions during his successorship also showed his evident dissatisfaction in the matter as a whole. All of this ran counter to the results that Ma'mūn sought when he had first devised this plan.

The Sixth Element: The Rightful Owners

The Imam ('a) would also remind others that the reality of the situation was that Ma'mūn had not done him a favor in making him his successor. The caliphate in reality belonged to him and his family, and it had been usurped by Ma'mūn and his predecessors. The Imam ('a) was constantly reminding the people of the illegitimacy of Ma'mūn's caliphate in this manner.

The Seventh Element: Refusal to be Associated with the State

After ultimately accepting the successorship, Imam Riḍā ('a) applied certain stipulations to his acceptance. He mentioned that he would never appoint anyone to a position, nor depose them. He would not draw up laws, or change anything about the prevailing situation; on the contrary, he stipulated that he would be a distant advisor in the affairs of

the government.

Ma'mūn, in turn, accepted these stipulations. Thus, Imam Riḍā ('a) neutralized many of the plans which Ma'mūn wished to implement. Through such stipulations, the Imam ('a) gave clear expression to the following points:
A- A rejection of the legitimacy of Ma'mūn's government.
B- Clearly showing that the prevailing system would never accept the Imam's views as its official policy and position.
C- Placing Ma'mūn in a position where he was no longer able to do things in the name of the Imam ('a).
D- Showing that the Imam ('a) was by no means ready to enact the policies of the government.[116]

The Special Social Circumstances during the 'Abbāsid Era

Although Islam did not spread past the borders of the Ḥijāz region during the lifetime of the Prophet (ṣ), yet, due to its firm foundations, it quickly spread to all corners of the civilized world after his passing. The great empires of Rome Iran, Egypt, Yemen, Chaldea, and Assyria, which were locate to the North, East, West, and South of the Ḥijāz, respectivel were all affected greatly by the spread of Islam. Over time, many of their people became Muslim.

In addition to this, the Islamic respect for knowledge caused the Islamic territories to absorb the scientific, political, and theological knowledge of various civilizations. Many books from these countries (from Greece and Egypt all the way to India) were translated into the Arabic language, which became the lingua franca of the new multi-national Muslim world. The scholars of Islam, who had taken their knowledge from the radiant light of the Quran, began to research and critique these new sciences and fields of knowledge. They continuously expanded these fields, and

[116] Murtaḍā al-Ḥusaynī, Sayyid Ja'far, The Political Life of the Eighth Imam, translated by Sayyid Khalīl Khalīlian, Fourth Edition, Tehran, The Office of Islamic Cultural Publications, 1365 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 168-183. Summarized and with slight differences in word usage.

interpreted them through the lens of their own Islamic worldview.

The translation of foreign scholarly works began in the time of the Umayyids (who were themselves strangers both to Islam and the sciences) and reached its peak during the era of the ʿAbbāsids. Under the Abbasids, the rule of Hārūn and Maʾmūn can be considered as a high point with respect to the sciences and the spread of knowledge. This was also the time period when the Muslim world had reached its peak in terms of land mass. Of course, this cultural ascension was not something which was initiated by the ʿAbbāsids or Umayyids; rather, this was the direct result of Islamic teachings and the Islamic inclination towards learning and knowledge. These teachings encouraged the Muslims to pursue knowledge no matter the cost, even if it meant going to far-off regions of the world.

In the books of history, it has been narrated that one night, Maʾmūn had a dream involving Aristotle, the famous Greek philosopher. In this dream, Maʾmūn saw himself asking Aristotle a question. When he woke up, he began to think about translating the works of Aristotle. He therefore wrote a letter to the emperor of Rome, and requested that a collection of ancient books on the sciences be sent to him. The emperor of Rome, after consulting with many people, accepted this request. Maʾmūn then commissioned some scholars, such as Ḥajjāj ibn Mathar, Ibn Baṭrīq, and Salmā (the director of Bayt al-Ḥikmah, an extremely large and famous library in Baghdad), to be in charge of this important project. This group reviewed the material from Rome and they sent the material that they considered to be worth translating to Maʾmūn. Maʾmūn then gave the order for the translation of these works.[117]

It is without doubt that the dreams of seasoned politicians such as Maʾmūn are never simple in nature, and they almost

[117] Ibn Nadīm, al-Fihrīst, Cairo, al-Maktabah Tijārīat al-Kubrā, p. 353.

always involve political and social considerations. Such "dreams" most probably served to strengthen the foundations of their oppressive governments. This program of action by Ma'mūn could have had any number of potential political motivations:

1- Ma'mūn, in order to be portrayed as a pious supporter of knowledge and learning, did this in order to gain popularity and esteem.

2- He wished to create a means of diversion for the people, in the face of various social problems and the bleak political outlook which was imposed over them.

3- His goal was to absorb the intellectual power of the scholars towards himself, and as a result, strengthen the foundations of his government.

4- He wished to create an intellectual powerhouse with which to compete with and counterbalance the family of the Prophet. This was because the family of the Prophet were renowned for their knowledge, and had many followers and admirers. It is possible that Ma'mūn wanted to absorb some of these followers into his own 'intellectual camp', thereby decreasing the followers of the family of the Prophet.

5- He wished to prove that the political system of the 'Abbāsids was worthy of ruling over the nation, similar to the great empires of Rome, Persia (Iran), and Egypt.

Of course, there are no natural contradictions between these five possibilities and it is possible that they were all considered by Ma'mūn. In any case, there is no doubt that he was instrumental in the translation of Greek texts and allocated a great deal of resources towards these projects. It is said that he sometimes gave the weight of the books in gold to those who had translated them. It is also said that whichever book was translated in his name, he would place a mark within it, and encourage the people reading and learning that specific science in various ways. He would also hold private sessions with various wise and learned individuals and he would take great joy in spending time with

them.[118] In this fashion, various foreign sciences were propagated alongside the traditional Islamic sciences, and expertise in these fields became highly sought after in the society. Many of the notables in the society followed in Ma'mūn's footsteps and began to honor scholars who were learned in logic, philosophy, and other sciences. As a result, a large group of translators from Iraq, Syria, and Persia immigrated to Baghdad to translate these texts.[119]

Jurgi Zaydan, the famous Christian historian, has written the following on this matter: "Hārūn al-Rashīd (who ruled from 170-193 Hijrī) reached the caliphate at a time when scholars and physicians from India, Iran, and Greece had come to Baghdad, and by means of their arrival, their ideas had given maturity to the opinions of the people and raised public awareness of various sciences and ancient historical books. Non-Muslim scholars, who had learned the Arabic language and who socialized with Muslims, encouraged them to learn these ancient sciences. In spite of this, the Muslims had trepidations about learning these foreign sciences (with the exception of medicine), because they believed that these foreign sciences conflicted with Islam.

In spite of this, because various (foreign) physicians gained nearness and favor with the caliphs, and because they were predominantly inclined towards sciences such as logic and philosophy, over time, the caliphs were introduced to these topics. Gradually, the caliphs became familiar with logic and philosophy and began to favor them as a science. In fact, whenever they would conquer a region, they would not burn their books but rather order that the books be brought to Baghdad, translated into Arabic, and studied. One example of this is found in Hārūn's conquest of Ankara, Umurīa, as well as other cities of Rome. After their conquest,

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[118] Jurjī Zaydān, The History of the Islamic Civilization, translated by: 'Alī Jawāhir Kalām, Tehran, Mu'assasah Maṭbū'ātī Amīr Kabīr, 1336 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 3, p. 216.

[119] The Second Congress of the Collection of The Works of Imam Riḍā (a), 1366 Hijrī Shamshi, An article by Ayatollah Nāṣir Makārim Shirāzī, vol. 1, p. 428-432. With slight summarization and change in words.

Hārūn gained access to many books, and he had them collected and sent to Baghdad. He then ordered his personal physician Yūḥanā ibn Māsawīyah to translate them into Arabic. These books were all about Greek medicine and did not contain any material on logic or philosophy."

Under Hārūn, the book Ūqlīdis was translated into Arabic for the first time by Ḥajjāj ibn Mathar. This first translation was named the Hārūnīya, and when the book was translated for a second time, it was called the Ma'mūnīya. Yaḥyā ibn Khālid Barmakī (during the time of Hārūn) translated the book 'Majesty' for the first time into Arabic and a group of academics gave their commentary on it. However, since this group was unable to complete the commentary with the necessary level of expertise, Hārūn ordered Abū Ḥasān and Salmā (the head of the Bayt al-Ḥikmah library) to do the commentary and they edited and commented on the book in detail.

Ma'mūn and the Sciences of Philosophy and Logic

Various books of philosophy were translated during Ma'mūn's time, and this was primarily due to Ma'mūn's own personal interest in the subject. From the very beginning of Islam, the Muslims were accustomed to freedom of thought and freedom of speech. If a political or social matter came to the mind of any Muslim, he would unflinchingly express it to the governor or caliph of his time, and the presence of the rulers did not restrain them from this matter. This same atmosphere prevailed in religious matters as well; if someone understood a matter from a verse in the Quran or from a tradition of the Prophet (ṣ), and this was in opposition to the opinion of others, they would feel free to engage those individuals in open debate and discussion.

One consequence of this freedom of thought and belief was that it caused a myriad of sects to come about. When the era of the Companions (of the Prophet (ṣ)) came to an end and the second century Hijrī began, various sects began to

appear within the Islamic world. One of these sects was called the Mu'tazilah. The Mu'tazilah were a large group in the Muslim world that believed in the absolute concordance of the human intellect with religion, and vice versa. If their beliefs are studied carefully, it is clear that many of their views are on par with some of the most rigorous religious critiques in the modern world.

Ma'mūn and the Mu'tazilah

The Mu'tazilah, as a sect, was formed at the end of the first century Hijrī. Since the foundation of their beliefs was logic and justice, they gained many followers in a short period of time. In the field of fiqh, the caliph Manṣūr 'Abbāsī agreed with the followers of a concept known as Qīyās (analogy), and therefore supported Abū Ḥanīfa. This precedent was followed by the rest of the 'Abbāsid caliphs. Coincidently, the Mu'tazilah sect had much common ground with the followers of Qīyās. The former strived to prove their beliefs strictly through logic and reason, and to these ends, they engaged anyone whom they saw as being conversant with Aristotelian logic, and sought assistance from them in proving their points. Due to the prevalence of atheism which persisted during the caliphate of Mahdī, this ideology of following logic and logic alone, became more widespread.

The Barāmkih sect were also adherents of Qīyās, and naturally had a strong inclination towards knowledge and learning. As such, they engaged in translating various scholarly texts before Ma'mūn's time and they also organized gatherings for debate and discussion in their homes. It seems that Hārūn was not in agreement with this and therefore, out of fear, the Barāmkih did not openly engage in these actions and kept their activities hidden.

As soon as Ma'mūn reached the caliphate (he ruled from 198 to 218 Hijrī), the situation began to change. Ma'mūn was a very intelligent and learned individual, with a strong

inclination towards Qīyās[120]. He had studied many of the ancient books which had been translated in the past, and due to his inclination towards Qīyās, he accepted the Mu'tazilah sect and brought many of their notable figures close to himself (such as Abī al-Hadhīl 'Allāf, Ibrāhīm ibn Sayyār, and others). He also engaged in debates and discussions with the scholars of theology. Through it all, he remained a steadfast believer in the Mu'tazilah sect, and aided its followers and scholars. As a result of Ma'mūn's support, certain things which were ordinarily considered impossible to express publicly (out of fear of the rest of the scholars in the society) were now openly said in the public sphere; one of these issues was the notion of the createdness of the Quran, which was one of the claims of the Mu'tazilah.

Coincidently, Ma'mūn, before reaching the position of the caliphate, was a believer in the notion that the Quran was created. Many from among the Muslims feared that Ma'mūn would become the caliph and end up spreading this belief This fear reached the point that Fuḍayl ibn Ayyadh woul openly say: "I ask God to prolong the life of Hārūn so that can be safe from the evil of Ma'mūn's caliphate."

In spite of such fears, Ma'mūn reached the caliphate and began his support of the Mu'tazilah sect. When the scholarly class saw this, they raised their voices in protest, and since the majority of the Muslims were against the Mu'tazilah, this caused many problems for Ma'mūn. Ma'mūn, who was not able to backtrack on this issue, engaged the people through the medium of debate and discussion. He held many intellectual gatherings where this issue was discussed, and ordered that books of philosophy and logic be translated from Greek to Arabic as soon as possible; he would then study these translations personally.

Although his own opinion was strengthened through his studies and the various debates and discussions that were

[120] Analogy used in religious matters

held, the masses were not so much affected in this regard. When Ma'mūn realized this, he lost hope that the people would accept the Mu'tazilah and toward the end of his caliphate, he acted very harshly against the opponents of this group. When he left the city of Baghdad, he ordered Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm (the governor of Baghdad) to test the judges and scholars. If anyone from among these individuals believed in the "createdness" of the Quran, they were to be left alone, and those who did not have this opinion should be educated in regards to it.[121]

In addition, it seems that Ma'mūn had no fear with respect to translating various Greek texts into Arabic, due to an atmosphere where knowledge of all types had become prevalent in the society. The society had become such where it was very conducive to freedom of thought, freedom of belief, and an inclination towards analogy and logical deduction. In order to corroborate the beliefs of the Mu'tazilah, Ma'mūn began commissioning the translation of books of logic and philosophy. Then he initiated the translation of the books of Aristotle (both philosophy books, as well as other texts). In this manner, the translation of these texts began in earnest during the beginning of the third century Hijrī. The Mu'tazilah, much like thirsty men after water, began to study the philosophy of Aristotle, and engaged in exhaustive research. As a result, they gained a great deal of new intellectual ammunition to use against those who opposed their beliefs.[122]

Translating Scientific Texts from Other Languages

Doctor Ibrāhīm Ḥasan has written the following on this subject: "The translation of foreign texts into the Arabic

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[121] We have mentioned the troubles which came about in regards to the 'createdness' of the Quran in some detail in the chapter on the life of Imam Hādī (a).

[122] Jurji Zaydan, The History of the Islamic Civilization, translated by: 'Alī Jawāhir Kalām, Tehran, Mu'assasah Maṭbū'ātī Amīr Kabīr, 1336 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 3, p. 212-215.

language was not prevalent under the Umayyids. Khālid ibn Yazīd ibn Mū'āwīya was the first individual who initiated the translation of books of medicine and chemistry into the Arabic language. Khālid summoned a group of Greek natives who were living in Egypt at that time, and requested that they translate a large number of Greek and Egyptian texts on the subject of applied chemistry, into Arabic. Khālid labored in this path because he wished to discover the method of making synthetic gold. During the era of 'Abd al-Malik Marwān, the government registers— which had all been in Farsi and Greek up to that point— were changed back into Arabic. In addition to this, the complete poetical works of Egypt, which had been in Egyptian and Greek, were also translated into Arabic."

When the 'Abbāsids took the reins of power, they were somewhat inclined towards the Iranians, and therefore, there was much fusion between the Arabs and the Iranians in the capital city. Furthermore, the caliphs showed much interest in the Greek and Iranian sciences. Manṣūr ordered that some foreign books be translated. Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq translated some of the books of Socrates and Galen into Arabic fc Manṣūr. Ibn Muqaffa' translated Kulīlah into Arabic, as we as the book of Euclides. In addition to Ibn Muqaffa', many other scholars become renowned in translating texts into Farsi, such as the family of Nūbakhtīyān, Ḥasan ibn Sahl (the vizier of Ma'mūn), Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā Balādhūrī (the compiler of Futūh al-Baldān), and 'Amr ibn Farkhān.

Under Hārūn, the translations picked up pace and became more commonplace. Hārūn gained possession of various books from the large cities of Rome and he ordered that all available books from Greece be translated. The encouragement of the Barmakīs in the field of translation and the expensive gifts which were given to the translators were very effective in increasing the quality and quantity of translators. Even Ma'mūn would personally translate texts; he was especially fond of Greek and Farsi texts. He had people

sent to the city of Constantinople in order that they could bring back rare books on philosophy, geometry, music, and medicine. Ibn Nadīm has mentioned: "There was an exchange of letters between Ma'mūn and the Emperor of Rome, and Ma'mūn asked that various ancient scientific texts, which were held in the Roman treasury, be sent to him. After initially refusing, the emperor ended up accepting the request."

Ma'mūn then sent Ḥajjāj ibn Mathar, Ibn Baṭrīq, and Salmā (the head of the Dār al-Ḥikmah library) to Rome, so that they could bring back whichever of the books they wanted. When they brought Ma'mūn the books, he ordered that they be translated into Arabic. Qasṭā ibn Lūqā supervised over the Greek, Syriac, and Chaldean translations, while Yaḥyā ibn Hārūn managed the Farsi translations. The encouragement in these translations did not only come from Ma'mūn; it is said that "the people follow in the ways of the kings," and so, many of the books were translated into Arabic through the efforts of the wealthy in the society. For example, Muḥammad, Aḥmad, and Ḥasan, who were the followers of Shākir (a well-known astronomer of that time), spent a great deal of money obtaining books in the field of mathematics, and they also had a vast library collection of geometry, music, and astronomy texts. They also sent Ḥusayn ibn Isḥāq to Rome so that he could bring back rare and precious books which were found there.

Under Ma'mūn, many great mathematicians came to the forefront and Muḥammad ibn Mūsā Khawārīzmī was one such individual. He was the first person to do organized research on the topic of algebra and thus established it as a separate science from arithmetic. The prevalence of translations, naturally caused many Muslims to begin discussing and researching the newfound sciences. They also began to add footnotes to the texts and corrected any errors which they found in them.

In this field, the name of Ya'qūb ibn Isḥāq Kindī cannot

go unmentioned; he was an individual with mastery in the fields of medicine, philosophy, mathematics, logic, geometry, and astronomy. In his compilations, he followed the methods of Aristotle, and he also translated a great number of books on philosophy while correcting the errors within them.

Besides him, three other individuals were also very famous in this field: Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq, Thābit ibn Qarrah' Ḥarānī, and 'Amr ibn Farkhān Ṭabarī. The 'Abbāsids translated all the works that they could find in Greek and Farsi. These included subjects such as: philosophy, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, music, geography, logic, astrology, maxims, and travels. Ibn Nadīm has mentioned that: "The children of Shākir Munjam gave approximately 500 dinars each month to the translators, which included Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq, Thābit ibn Qarrah' Ḥarānī, and Jaysh ibn Ḥasan."

By contrast, under the Umayyids, libraries were not given much importance. Yet during the 'Abbāsid era, in addition to translations beginning in earnest, the papermaking industry also progressed. They also had centers where literar figures and scholars would gather. As a result of th movement, many great libraries were established in which large number of religious and scientific texts were kept. Later, these libraries became the most renowned cultural centers of the Islamic world.

Dār al-Ḥikmah, which was most probably founded by Hārūn and was later headed by Ma'mūn, was the largest library of the 'Abbāsid era and it remained in existence until the sack of Baghdad by the Mongols. This great library contained books on all the sciences which were prevalent during that time. The scholars who studied at the library would often end up extremely influential in their respective fields, and through them, religious and scientific knowledge became prevalent amongst the masses, both in the Muslim nation and beyond.

The spreading of knowledge was not only the domain of

the caliph; even viziers and other government officials began to support such causes. Mas'ūdī has written: "Yaḥyā ibn Khālid Barmakī was much inclined towards intellectual debate and discussion, and he held gatherings during which Islamic theologians, as well as people from other nations, would assemble and engage in debate."[123]

Imam Riḍā's Role against a Wave of Un-Islamic Thought

As a result of these far reaching intellectual activities, there was one factor which was a cause for alarm, and this was that in the midst of these translators, there were individuals who were zealous and stubborn practitioners of other religions, including Zoroastrians, Sabeans, Nestorians, Roman Catholics, and Indian Brahmins. These individuals were engaged in translating Greek, Farsi, Syriac, Indian, Latin, as well as other texts into the Arabic language.

Certainly, not all of the individuals engaged in these works possessed purity of intention, and a group from amongst them tried their best to project various un-Islamic ideas and concepts into the Muslim domain. As expected, certain superstitious, deviant, and un-Islamic concepts were transmitted to the people through these translated works. These concepts quickly began to influence elements of the Muslim society.[124]

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[123] Doctor Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, Ḥasan, The Political History of Islam, translated by Abū al-Qāsim Pāyandih, Fourth Edition, Tehran, Everlasting (Jāvīdān) Publications, 1360 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 2, p. 296-299.

[124] Doctor Ṭahā Ḥusayn, the famous Egyptian intellectual, has written on the effect that contact with foreign cultures had on the Muslims. He has written: "It was not long before the Muslims became familiar with various foreign cultures, and in particular with the culture of Greece and its philosophy. All of these had an effect on the Muslims, and they soon considered philosophy as a method of defending their religion. Then they went further and considered the defective human intellect as having preeminence over all matters, and thought that the intellect was the ultimate source of knowledge. Gradually, as a result of this, they felt themselves needless of the divine source of revelation. This excessive faith in the human intellect deceived them and left them bereft of the truth; it was this very mistake that caused them to cling to various logical deductions and caused them to split into more than 70 different sects." (The Religion of Islam, translated by Doctor Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Āyātī, Tehran, The Publication Company, 1339 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 266).

In addition, there was no powerful intellectual supervisory council in the ʿAbbāsid government of that time. There was no group created to overlook the works being translated and carefully check the material that was being released into the public domain. If such a council had been in existence, they could have carefully sifted through the material and only allowed certain works (or sections of works) which were in line with Islamic thought to be propagated in society.

It goes without saying that these cultural and intellectual changes placed a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of Imam Riḍā (ʿa). The Imam (ʿa) deeply understood the dangerous situation of the society and he began acting in a manner that created nothing short of an intellectual revolution. Through this, he ended up protecting the Islamic society against a wave of un-Islamic thought which threatened it from every corner. The importance of this issue becomes even more apparent when we realize that the geographical boundaries of the Muslim nation had reached its outermost limits during the rule of Hārūn and Ma'mūn. The expanse of the nation was so large that some historians have written that there was never a larger government in recorded history up to that point. They have compared the breadth of the Islamic nation to that of the empire of Alexander the Great.

During that time period, the following countries or regions were considered part of the Muslim world: Iran, Afghanistan, The East Indies, Turkistan, the Caucasus, Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Arabia, Sudan, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Spain (Andalusia). Therefore, if the Muslim nation was measured during the time of the ʿAbbāsids without even considering Spain, it would be found that it was at least equal to the area of the entire European continent, and possibly even more than this.[125] It is natural that the

[125] Gustave Luboun has mentioned: "The truth of the matter is that the political sultanate of the Arabs reached its peak power during the time of Hārūn and his son

prevailing culture of these outlying nations would affect the Muslims, and these effects would eventually take root in the religious practices and belief system of the religion itself.

Ma'mūn's Primary Goal in Organizing Gatherings of Debate

Ma'mūn, after imposing the acceptance of the successorship on Imam Riḍā ('a), began to organize widespread sessions of debate and discussion. He invited the distinguished intellectuals of that time, both Muslim and non-Muslim, to these grand gatherings of debate. Without doubt, the overt reason behind these sessions was the establishment of Imam Riḍā's ('a) high rank and position in various fields and sciences, both religious and otherwise. In spite of this overt reason, there was also a more hidden reason which has been mentioned by the researchers, some of which are listed below:

1- One group sees these gatherings of debate and discussion in a negative light because the actions of tyrants have always been based on self-benefit and the consolidation of power. This group states that Ma'mūn's primary reason behind this was to bring down the rank and position of the Imam ('a) in the eyes of the masses. Moreover, they have mentioned that Ma'mūn wished to lower the Imam's rank in the eyes of the Iranians in particular, who were very attached to the family of the Prophet. Ma'mūn assumed that the Imam ('a) was only learned in simple matters of the Quran and the traditions, and was unlearned in other intellectual fields.

This group of researchers, in order to prove their claims, have referenced Ma'mūn's own words, which have been recorded in the books of history. In a tradition from Nawfalī, the close companion of Imam Riḍā ('a), it is mentioned that:

Ma'mūn. The eastern limits of their empire reached China; in Africa, the Arabs had driven out the uncivilized tribes to the borders of Ethiopia and they had driven the Romans to the Bosporus strait and the Atlantic Ocean..." (The History of The Islamic and Arab Civilization, translated by Sayyid Hāshim Ḥusaynī, The Islamic Library, p. 211).

"Sulaymān Marwazī, the famous theologian, went to Ma'mūn (in Khurāsān). Ma'mūn treated him with much respect and gave him many gifts. Then he said to him: 'My uncle's son, 'Alī ibn Mūsā, has come to me from the Ḥijāz, and he is fond of the science of theology (Aqā'id) and its scholars. If you are so inclined, come to us on the Day of Tarwiye (the 8th day of the month of Dhī al-Ḥijjah) and engage in debate and discussion with him.' It was possible that this specific day was selected so that a larger group of the scholars could be present at the gathering.

Sulaymān, who was very proud and arrogant of his knowledge, said: 'Oh Commander of the Faithful, I would prefer not to engage him with questions in front of the Hāshimīs, for perhaps he would not be able to answer and would be lowered in terms of his social position. I cannot pursue a discussion too deeply with the likes of him.' Ma'mūn replied: 'My goal in this matter is nothing but that you close the doors of escape for him, for I know that you are a man powerful in matters of knowledge and debate.' Sulaymān replied: 'Now that it is so, there is no problem; invite us both to a gathering so that in this way, there will be no blame placed on me.'"[126] This debate was organized as promised, and Imam Riḍā ('a) debated with Sulaymān in such a way that he was left unable to answer in front of the entire audience.

Another piece of evidence which corroborates this theory is a tradition narrated from Imam Riḍā ('a) himself. At the time that Ma'mūn had organized the debate sessions, Ma'mūn would personally sit opposite to the opponents of the family of the Prophet and debate with them. He would speak about the superiority of the imamate of Imam 'Alī ('a) over the rest of the companions; through such means, he

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[126] Ṣadūq, 'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā (a), First Edition, Beirut, Mu'assasah' Al-'Alamī Lil Maṭbū'āt, 1404 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 179.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 49, p. 177.

would attempt to gain nearness to Imam Riḍā (ʿa). The Imam (ʿa) mentioned the following to a group of his trusted companions, saying: "Do not be fooled by his words. I swear by God that no one will murder me but him, but I have no option but to be patient, until my life comes to an end."[127]

Of course, it was to Ma'mūn's benefit to defend the right of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) since the original slogan of the ʿAbbāsids was "Al-Riḍā Min Āli Muḥammad."[128] It was through the use of this slogan that they were able to establish their government in the first place. In addition to this, the backbone of the government was composed of Iranians who were inclined to the family of the Prophet, and there was no way to retain their support except through such slogans.

In any case, the explanation of the Imam (ʿa) in the tradition clearly shows that Ma'mūn was not sincere in organizing the debates. Abū al-Ṣalt, a liaison of the Imam (ʿa), has mentioned: "...Since the people are increasing in their love for the Imam (ʿa) on a daily basis, owing to his virtues and spiritual perfections, Ma'mūn decided to summon all the scholars of theology from the various corners of the Muslim world, in order that the Imam (ʿa) could be proven weak and incapable in debate. Through these means, his rank in the view of the scholars would be lowered and the common people would see his shortcomings and deficiencies. In spite of these plans, Imam Riḍā (ʿa) defeated all of his debate opponents, whether they were Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Brahmins, Sabeans, or Atheists..."[129]

It is also interesting to note that while Ma'mūn was very much interested in these debates and discussions, after the Imam (ʿa) was martyred, such gatherings came to an abrupt end. Imam Riḍā (ʿa) was well aware of Ma'mūn's intentions and he would say: "Once I debate the people of the Torāh

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[127] Ṣadūq, Ibid, vol. 2, p. 185.
- Majlisī, Ibid, p. 189.
[128] For the satisfaction of the Family of Muḥammad (ṣ).
[129] Ṣadūq, Ibid, vol. 2, p. 239.
- Majlisī, Ibid, p. 290.

with their Torāh, the people of the Injīl[130] with their Injīl, the people of the Zabūr with their Zabūr, the star worshippers in Hebraic, the Zoroastrians through the method of their Parsī, the Romans with their own method, and the people of debate in their own language, and they all acknowledge (the truth of the matter), then Ma'mūn will understand that he has chosen a wrong method (in overcoming me), and he will deeply regret it."[131]

Therefore, it is understandable that many look at the seemingly pro-intellectual policies of Ma'mūn in a cynical light.

2- If we were to leave aside this first potential intention of Ma'mūn, there is still a second possibility which would catch our attention, that being that perhaps Ma'mūn wished to define the Imam's ('a) status as limited to intellectual circles, and thus gradually separate him from political matters. Through this method, he wished to show that the Imam ('a) is a man of learning and a sanctuary for the nation in academic matters, but that he does not have anything to do with politics. As a result of this, Ma'mūn would gradually raise a slogan of the separation between politics (in essence his rule) and religion (the Imam's position).

3- Skillful political players always wish to keep the people busy and occupied through different means. Through these means, the masses will be diverted from the essential matters of society and the deficiencies of the ruling establishment. It is possible that Ma'mūn organized these intellectual meetings so that the people who were captivated and inclined towards the Imam ('a) would attend and later speak about the Imam's ('a) victory, leaving Ma'mūn free in his political intrigues to do whatever he wished.

4- The fourth possibility is that Ma'mūn was not lacking in

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[130] What is known today as the New Testament.

[131] Majlisī, Ibid, p. 175.

- al-Shaykh Azizullah al-'Aṭarī al-Khabūshānī, Masnad al-Imām Riḍā (a), al-Mu'tamar al-'Alāmī Lil Imām Riḍā, 1406 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 75.

personal merit and thus he wished to be introduced to the Muslim society as a knowledgeable scholar. Presenting himself as a lover of knowledge and learning was favorable for his government and it had the potential to attract many individuals towards himself.

If we consider that these gatherings of debate and discussion possessed a definite political angle, and that furthermore, political matters are usually not driven by a single cause, then it is a strong possibility that Ma'mūn considered all four of these points.

In any case, extensive organized gatherings of debate and discussion were set up by Ma'mūn. Yet, contrary to what Ma'mūn had initially expected, he ended up not achieving what he had intended, and in fact, he was left in the opposite situation. To illustrate this issue better, let us examine a few examples of the debates which the Imam ('a) participated in. It is unfortunate to note that these debates and discussions have not been fully recorded in the books of history and only short summaries have been preserved.

The Debates of the Imam with the Followers of Other Religions and Sects

While the debates of Imam Riḍā ('a) were numerous, the most important ones are listed below. These debates have been narrated by the late Shaykh Ṣadūq, in his book 'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā. The late 'Allāmah Majlisī has also narrated from the book 'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā in his forty ninth volume of Biḥār al-Anwār, as well as in the book Masnad al-Imām Riḍā, in its second volume. These debates are as follows:

1- The debate with Jathlīq[132]

[132] Jathlīq (minus the ث and the ق) is a Greek name which refers to the head of the Arch Bishops. It is a title which was given to the great Christian scholars and it is not a specific individual's name (al-Mūnjid). It is possible that it was the 'Arabicized term for the Catholics.

2- The debate with the Ra's Jālūt[133]
3- The debate with Harbuz Akbar[134]
4- The debate with 'Umrān Ṣābī[135]

These four debates took place in one gathering where Ma'mūn and a group of the scholars and notables of Khurāsān were all present.

5- The debate with Sulaymān Marwazī[136] (which came about spontaneously in a gathering in the presence of Ma'mūn and his officials)
6- The debate with 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Jahm[137]
7- The debate with the leaders of various religions in Baṣrah

Each one of these debates contains deep points of wisdom. Although 1,200 years have passed since these debates were held, one finds that they do not fail to educate and inspire. This is true from both the perspective of their content, as well as the technique and style of engagement which the Imam ('a) utilized.

As an example, let us look at the debate with Jathlīq, which took place in one of the large gatherings of Ma'mūn.

The Efforts of Ma'mūn

In the book 'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā, the following has been narrated that: "When 'Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā ('a) entered

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[133] 'Ra's Jālūt' was a term for the scholars and notable individuals from the Jewish faith. This was also not a specific individual's name.

[134] Harbuz Akbar, or Hīrbad Akbar, was a title given to the leader of the Zoroastrians. It meant the 'great religious leader, Zoroastrian judge, and servant of the fire temple'.

[135] 'Umrān Ṣābi, as is apparent from his name, was defending the religion of the Sabeans. The Sabeans are a group who consider themselves the followers of Yaḥyā. They are divided into 2 subgroups, one of whom are monotheists and the other, polytheists. One group began engaging in star worship and are sometimes colloquially called star-worshippers. Their main center was previously the city of Ḥarān in Iraq, and then they moved to other areas in Iraq and southern Iran. In accordance with their beliefs, they are most often found living next to large rivers. To this day, they can be found in Ahwāz and other areas in the region.

[136] Sulaymān Marwazī was the most famous scholar of theology in Khurāsān during the time of Ma'mūn. Ma'mūn would show him a great deal of respect and reverence.

[137] 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Jahm was a Nasibī and an enemy of the Ahl al-Bayt. (Ṣadūq, 'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā, First Edition, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1377 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 204).

Ma'mūn's court, Ma'mūn ordered Faḍl ibn Sahl (his high ranking vizier) to gather the heads of the various religions. These included: Jathlīq (the great leader of the Christians), Ra's al-Jālūt (the great leader of the Jews), the heads of the Sabeans, Harbuz Akbar (the leader of the Zoroastrians), Nisṭās Rūmī (the great scholar of the Christians), as well as other scholars of theology. They were all invited in order to discuss various issues with Imam Riḍā ('a) and also in order that Imam Riḍā ('a) could hear of their beliefs.

Faḍl ibn Sahl invited all of these individuals, and when they had gathered, he came to Ma'mūn and announced: 'They are ready.' Ma'mūn replied: 'Have them enter.' After they entered, he greeted them and thanked them for coming. Then he said: 'I have invited all of you here for a worthy cause, and I would like if you would debate with the son of my uncle who is from Medina and has just arrived. Tomorrow, all of you should assemble here and none should be absent.' They all replied: 'Yes, we will all obey and we shall be here tomorrow.'

Ḥasan ibn Sahl Nawfalī has narrated: We were in the presence of Imam 'Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā ('a), busy speaking with him, when suddenly, Yāsir, who was in charge of Imam Riḍā's ('a) affairs, entered and said to the Imam ('a)—Ma'mūn has sent you his greetings and says: 'May your brother be at your service. The leaders and scholars of various religions have all gathered; if you like, accept this inconvenience and come to the gathering tomorrow and listen to their words. And if you prefer not to come, then I will not insist. Moreover, if you like, we will come to you, for this not difficult for us.'

Imam Riḍā ('a), in a short yet meaningful line, said: 'Send him my greetings and tell him that I know what he wants; God willing, I will come tomorrow.'[138] Nawfalī, who was one of the companions of Imam Riḍā ('a) says: When Yāsir left

[138] Ṣadūq, 'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā, First Edition, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1377 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 155.

the gathering of the Imam (ʿa), the Imam (ʿa) looked at me and said: 'You are from Iraq and the people of Iraq are subtle and intelligent; what do you think about this matter? What is Maʾmūn's plan in assembling polytheists and the scholars of various religions?' I replied that he wants to test you and gauge the extent of your knowledge. His actions are based on a weak foundation; I swear by God that he has devised a bad plan...' The Imam (ʿa) replied: '...and what has he planned?

Nawfalī, who perhaps was not yet fully aware of the breadth of the Imam's knowledge and feared Maʾmūn's plot, replied: 'The scholars of the science of theology are known for their deviations and their opposition to the scholars of Islam. This is because a scholar does not deny the truth, whereas these people are known for their denial and sophistry. If someone introduces a statement that God is one, they will not accept this statement, and if someone says that Muḥammad (ṣ) was the Prophet of God, they will ask you to show proof for his prophethood. They are a dangerous group of individuals and... they use sophistry against people to such an extent that the people recant what they have said and change their views based on their arguments. May I be sacrificed for you, beware of these people.'

The Imam (ʿa) smiled and said: 'Oh Nawfalī, are yo afraid that they will invalidate my arguments and close th way of debate for me?' Nawfalī, who had become regretful ot what he had said, replied: 'No, I swear by God that I do not fear for you; I am hopeful that God will make you victorious over them.' Imam Riḍā (ʿa) then said: 'Oh Nawfalī, would you like to know if Maʾmūn will regret this?' Nawfalī replied in the affirmative.

Imam Riḍā (ʿa) said: 'When he hears my reasoning against the people of the Torāh through their Torāh, and against the people of the Injīl through their Injīl, and against the People of the Zabūr through their Zabūr, and against the Sabeans through their Hebrew language, and against the Zoroastrians in their Farsi language, and against the Romans through their

Roman language, and against the followers of various religions through their own languages... Indeed, when I have nullified the arguments of each group separately, in a manner that they leave their religion and accept my words, then Ma'mūn will know that he is not worthy of his position. When this happens, he will become regretful and there is no action or power but through God, the most High.'

Nawfalī later mentions: When it was morning, Faḍl ibn Sahl came to the Imam ('a) and said: 'May I be sacrificed for you, your cousin (Ma'mūn) is waiting for you and the group has assembled; what is your opinion on this matter?' Imam Riḍā ('a) said: 'You go ahead; I will come, God willing.' Then he performed the Wudhū and drank some Sawīqī[139]; he gave us some to drink and we also drank. Then we left alongside the Imam ('a) and entered Ma'mūn's gathering.

The gathering was full of renowned individuals. Muḥammad ibn Ja'far,[140] along with a group from the Hāshimīs and the descendants of Abū Ṭālib, as well as a group of the army commanders were all present. When Imam Riḍā ('a) entered, Ma'mūn stood up; Muḥammad ibn Ja'far and all of the Hāshimīs also stood up. Imam Riḍā ('a) took a seat alongside Ma'mūn, but they, out of respect for the Imam ('a), continued to stand until the order to sit was given, after which they took their seats. For a time, Ma'mūn was busily engaged in speaking with the Imam ('a). Then, he turned towards Jathlīq and said: 'Oh Jathlīq, this is the son of my uncle, 'Alī ibn Mūsā ibn Ja'far ('a). He is of the descendants of Fāṭimah ('a), the daughter of our Prophet (ṣ), and 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib ('a). I would like that you debate with him, but do not forsake fairness in this debate.' Jathlīq said: 'Oh Commander of the Faithful, how can I debate with him, while he will argue using a book which I reject, and while he believes in a prophet which I do not have faith in.'

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[139] Sawīqī was a special drink made with flour.

[140] The son of Imam Ṣādiq (a) and the uncle of Imam 'Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (a).

The Debate with Jathlīq

At this point, Imam Riḍā (ʿa) began to speak: 'Oh Christian, if I reason with you using your Injīl, will you accept?' Jathlīq replied: 'Is it possible for me to reject the words of the Injīl? Indeed, I swear by God that I will accept, however much it may be to my disadvantage.' Imam Riḍā (ʿa) then said: 'Ask whatever you wish and you will hear its answer.' Jathlīq then asked: 'What do you have to say about the prophethood of Jesus (ʿa) and his book? Do you reject anything with respect to these two?'

Imam Riḍā (ʿa) replied: 'I acknowledge the prophethood of Jesus (ʿa), his book, and what he has given tidings of to his nation and that which his disciples have acknowledged; I reject the prophethood of that Jesus who has not acknowledged the prophethood of Muḥammad (ṣ) and his book to his people.' Jathlīq said: 'At the time of rendering judgment, do you not use the testimony of two just individuals?' Imam Riḍā (ʿa) replied: 'Yes.' Jathlīq said: 'Then present two witnesses from the people who are not of your religion and whom the Christians do not reject thei testimony in regards to the prophethood of Muḥammad (ṣ likewise, ask us to bring two similar witnesses from peop who are not from our religion to do the same.' Imam Riḍ (ʿa) replied: 'Oh Christian, you have now observed equity; will you accept an individual who was just and preferred by Christ, Jesus the son of Mary?' Jathlīq asked: 'Who is this just man, what his name?' Imam Riḍā (ʿa) said: 'What do you say in regards to Yuḥnāy Daylamī?' Jathlīq said: 'Most excellent, you have mentioned the most beloved man in the eyes of Christ.'

Imam Riḍā (ʿa) said: 'I ask you under oath whether the Injīl contains the following words of Yuḥnāy, where he says: Christ gave me the news of the religion of Muḥammad the Arab and gave me glad tidings that after him (after Jesus), such a prophet would come. I gave these glad tidings to the apostles and they professed faith in him.' Jathlīq said: 'Yes,

Yuḥnāy has narrated these words from Christ and he has given the glad tidings of the prophethood of a man and his family and successor, but he has not mentioned during which time this will take place and he has not mentioned his name so that we can recognize him.'

Imam Riḍā ('a) said: 'If we bring forward a person who reads from the Injīl and recites verses from it, which mention the name of Muḥammad (ṣ), his family, and his nation, will you profess faith in it?' Jathlīq said: 'Indeed I will.' Imam Riḍā ('a) said to Nīsṭās the Roman: 'Do you have the third book of the Injīl memorized?' Nīsṭās replied: 'Yes, I have it memorized.' Then the Imam ('a) faced Ra's al-Jālūt (the great leader of the Jews) and said: 'Do you also read the Injīl?' He replied: 'Yes, I swear by my life (that i read it).' The Imam ('a) said to him: 'Then take the third book, if there was a mention of Muḥammad and his family, then witness in my favor, and if there was none, then do not bear witness.' Then Imam Riḍā ('a) began to recite the third book until he came to the name of the Prophet (ṣ); at this point he paused and turned towards Jathlīq, saying: 'Oh Christian, by the right of Christ and his mother, do you accept that I am aware of the Injīl.' Jathlīq replied in the affirmative.

The Imam ('a) then recited the name of the Prophet, his family, and his nation; he then said: 'Oh Christian, what do you say? Are these the words of Jesus, the son of Maryam? If you deny what the Injīl has said in this matter, then you have denied Moses and Jesus both, and you have become a disbeliever.' Jathlīq said: 'I do not deny that of which its existence in the Injīl has become clear to me and I acknowledge it.' The Imam ('a) then said: 'All of you witness that he has acknowledged this.' Then he said: 'Oh Jathlīq, ask any question that you wish.'

Jathlīq asked: 'Tell us how many apostles Jesus, the son of Mary, had, and also how many in number the scholars of the Injīl were?' Imam Riḍā ('a) said: 'You have asked from a person who knows. The Apostles were twelve in number and

the most knowledgeable and virtuous one from among them was Luke. The notable Christian scholars were three individuals: Yuḥnāy Akbar, from the land of Bakh, Yuḥnāy from Qarqīsā, and Yuḥnāy Daylamī from Rajāz; the name of the Prophet, his family, and his nation were with him and it was he who gave the glad tidings to the nation of Jesus and the Children of Israel.'

He then added: 'Oh Christian, I swear by God that we have faith in the Jesus ('a) who had faith in Muḥammad (ṣ), but the only fault that we have with your Prophet Jesus ('a) was that he would fast and pray little.' Jathlīq was astonished at this and said: 'I swear by God that you nullified your knowledge and made weak the foundations of your work. Here I thought that you were the most knowledgeable of the Muslims.' The Imam ('a) said: 'What is it that has happened (for you to think this)?' Jathlīq said: 'You say that Jesus ('a) was weak, and prayed and fasted but little, while Jesus ('a) did not break his fast even for one day, and there was no night that he would sleep; he was perpetually fasting and standing throughout the nights (in worship).' Imam Riḍā ('a) said: 'For whom would he pray and fast?' Jathlīq found himsel' unable to answer and became quiet (because if h acknowledged the worship of Jesus ('a), then this would no be in concordance with his divinity).

Imam Riḍā ('a) said: 'Oh Christian, I have another question for you.' Jathlīq, with humility, said: 'If I know the response, I will answer.' The Imam ('a) said: 'Do you reject that Jesus would raise the dead with the permission of God, the most High?' Jathlīq found himself at a dead end, and without having a choice, he said: 'I do deny it because that person who raised the dead, and cured those born blind and afflicted with leprosy was God himself and worthy of divinity.'

The Imam ('a) said: 'The Prophet 'Ilyas' would also do these things, and he would walk on water, raise the dead, and cure the blind and the lepers, yet his nation did not consider

him as a deity and thus no one worshipped him. The Prophet Jizqīl ('a) raised the dead and performed these miracles as well.'

Then the Imam ('a) turned towards Ra's al-Jālūt and said: 'Oh Ra's al-Jālūt, do you see in your Torāh that when Nebuchadnezzar brought the prisoners to Bābul, during the time that the government was fighting against Bayt al-Muqaddas, that God sent Ḥizqīl to them and he would raise their dead? This reality is preserved in the Torāh, and no one but the rejecters of truth deny it.' Ra's al-Jālūt replied: 'We have heard this and know it.' Imam Riḍā ('a) said: 'You speak the truth,' adding: 'Oh Jew, take this section from the Torāh.' Then he began to recite verses from the Torāh. The Jewish man was utterly amazed by this.

Then the Imam ('a) faced the Christian man and began to recount some of the miracles of the Prophet of Islam (ṣ), such as bringing the dead back to life and curing the ill who were seen as incurable. He said that while all of these were astonishing miracles, we would never consider the Prophet (ṣ) as being God. If, due to these miracles, you consider Jesus as being God, then you must also consider Ilyas' and Ḥizqīl as being God, for they also raised the dead. Similarly, Prophet Abraham ('a) once took some birds, killed them, and put their pieces onto various mountains; then he called them and they all came to life. Prophet Moses ('a) did something similar with 70 people who died after being struck by lightning in the mountain of Tūr. You can never deny these realities, for the Torāh, Injīl, Zabūr, and the Quran have all spoken of them; therefore, you must consider all of these individuals as your God. Jathlīq was left without an answer; thus, he submitted and said: 'The word is yours, and there is no God but the one God.'

Then Imam Riḍā ('a) asked Jathlīq and Ra's al-Jālūt questions from the chapter of Isaiah. He replied: 'I am well informed about it.' The Imam ('a) said to him: 'Do you remember where Isaiah said: I saw an individual who was

riding a mule and wearing clothing of light (indicating Prophet Jesus ('a)) and I saw another individual who was riding on a camel and his light was like the light of the moon (indicating the Prophet of Islam (ṣ)).' They replied: 'Indeed, Isaiah has said such words.'

Imam Riḍā ('a) then added: 'Oh Christian, do you remember these words of Christ in the Injīl when he said: I am going towards my Lord and your Lord, and Barqlīṭā will come and give a true testimony about me (the same way that I testified about him) and he will explain everything for you?'[141] Jathlīq said: 'We acknowledge what you have said about the Injīl as being correct.'

Then Imam Riḍā ('a) spoke about the Injīl and how the first Injīl was lost and then later written individually by four people: Mark, Luke, Matthew, and John. Moreover, he mentioned some contradictions in the speech of Jathlīq. At this point, Jathlīq found himself in a state of helplessness where he could find no way of escape. When Imam Riḍā ('a) once again asked Jathlīq: 'Oh Jathlīq, ask whatever you wish.' Jathlīq refrained from asking any more questions and said: 'Let someone other than me ask a question, for I swear by the right of Christ, I did not think that there existed anyone like you amongst the Muslims.'"[142]

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[141] The meaning of Barqlīṭā or Farqlīṭā, whose coming was foretold by the Prophet Jesus (a), is Prophet Muḥammad (s). This foretelling is recorded in the bible of Yuḥannā, in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters. The Holy Quran, in verse 6 of Surah Ṣaff, has mentioned the same matter by Jesus (a). (For further information, please refer to the book Aḥmad Maw'ūd Injīl, by Ja'far Subḥānī, Tawhid Publications, Qum, 1361 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 97-133).

[142] The Second Congress of the Collection of The Works of Imam Riḍā (a), 1366 Hijrī Shamshi, article by Ayatollah Nāṣir Makārim Shīrāzī, vol. 1, p. 432-452. With slight summarization.

The Ninth Imam

Imam Muḥammad Jawād

A Brief Look at the Life of Imam Jawād

The Ninth Imam's name is Muḥammad, his agnomen Abū Ja'far, and his titles are Taqī and Jawād. He was born in the Holy Month of Ramaḍān, in the year 195 Hijrī, in the city of Medina.[143] His mother was named Sabīkah and was from the family of the wife (Mārīya' Qubṭīya) of the Prophet of Islam (ṣ).[144] She possessed a high ethical and moral rank, and was the best of the women of her time.[145] Her position was so high that Imam Riḍā ('a) would remember her as a woman of purity and virtue.[146] On the day that the father of Imam Jawād ('a) passed away, he was approximately 8 years old. He was martyred at the age of 25[147] and buried in the graveyard of the Quraysh in Baghdad, next to the grave of his grandfather, Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far ('a).

Caliphs Who Lived during the Time of the Imam

The Ninth Imam's ('a) imamate coincided with the caliphate of two 'Abbāsid caliphs, Ma'mūn (193-218) and Mu'taṣim (218-227). Both of these individuals forced Imam Jawād ('a) to leave Medina and take up residence in Baghdad this was in line with a political tactic initiated by Ma'mūn

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[143] Kulaynī, al-Ūsūl Min al-Kāfī, Second Edition, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 492.
- Shaykh Mufīd, al-Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 316.
Some have mentioned the birth of Imam Jawād (a) as having taken place in the middle of the month of Rajab of that same year. (Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā Bi'ilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 344)

[144] Kulaynī, Ibid, p. 315 and 492.
- Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Intishārāt 'Alāmah, vol. 4, p. 379.

[145] Mas'ūdī, Ithbāt al-Wasīya, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭba'at al-Ḥaydarīa, 1374 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 209.

[146] Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 15.

[147] Kulaynī, al-Ūsūl Min al-Kāfī, Second Edition, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 492.
- Shaykh Mufīd, al-Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 316.

with respect to Imam Riḍā (ʿa). There, in the capital of the Islamic world, Imam Jawād's activities were closely monitored by the caliph and his many agents.

A Blessed Birth

In the family of Imam Riḍā (ʿa) and in the gatherings of the Shia, the birth of Imam Jawād (ʿa) was commemorated as a particularly blessed and auspicious birth. Abū Yaḥyā San'ani has mentioned that: "One day I was with Imam Riḍā (ʿa), when they brought his son Abū Jaʿfar, who was a child at that time. The Imam (ʿa) said: 'For our Shias, there has never been a more blessed birth than his birth.'"[148]

It seems that the Imam (ʿa) would use various occasions as opportunities to mention his son to the people, and this became well-known among the Shias and companions of Imam Riḍā (ʿa). Two individuals from amongst the Shia— Ibn Asbāṭ and ʿAbbād ibn Ismāʿīl— have mentioned: "We were in the presence of Imam Riḍā (ʿa), when they brought Abū Jaʿfar. We asked: 'Is this the blessed and auspicious son?' The Imam (ʿa) replied: 'Indeed, this is he, of whom no birth in Islam has equaled in blessing.'"[149]

Again, Abū Yaḥyā Ṣanʿānī has mentioned: "In Mecca, I was honored to be able to see Imam Riḍā (ʿa). I saw the Imam (ʿa) peeling a banana and giving it to his son Abū Jaʿfar. I asked: 'Is this the same blessed and auspicious birth?' He said: 'Indeed, there has never been a more blessed birth in Islam and for our Shias than his birth.'"[150]

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[148] Shaykh Mufīd, al-Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 319.
- Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā Bi'ilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 347.
- Fattāl Nayshābūrī, Rawḍat al-Wāʿīẓīn, First Edition, Beirut, Muʿassat al-ʿAlamī Lil Maṭbūʿāt, 1406 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 261.

[149] Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 20.

[150] Kulaynī, al-Ūsūl Min al-Kāfī, Second Edition, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 361.
- Qazwīnī, Sayyid Kāẓim, al-Imām al-Jawād Min al-Mahd 'Il al-Laḥd, Beirut, Muʿassasat Balāgh, 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 337.

At first glance, perhaps people may think that the meaning of these traditions is that Imam Jawād's (ʿa) existence possessed more blessings than all of the preceding Imams (ʿa) for the Shia, but such an assumption cannot be accepted. By researching the specific situation and the historical context around the event, we can conclude that the meaning of this tradition was that the specific situation and context of Imam Jawād's (ʿa) birth is what resulted in special blessings for the Shia. The time period of Imam Riḍā (ʿa) was a unique one, and the Imam (ʿa) faced many issues during the time of his imamate which were without precedent in the times of the previous Imams (ʿa).

On the one hand, after the martyrdom of Imam Kāẓim (ʿa), there was a group known as the Wāqifīya, who rejected the imamate of Imam Riḍā (ʿa) based on certain worldly pretexts. On the other hand, Imam Riḍā (ʿa) did not have a child until he was 47 years of age. Since there were traditions from the Prophet (ṣ) stating that the Imams (ʿa) were twelve in number and that nine of them would come from the line of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), thus, the lack of a child brought both Imam Riḍā's (ʿa) own imamate, as well as the continuation of the imamate, under question. The Wāqifīya used this matter as a pretext for rejecting the imamate of Imam Riḍā (ʿa).

Testament to this can be found in the acknowledgeme of Ḥusayn ibn Qīyāmā Wāsiṭī to the Eighth Imam (ʿa), well as in the Imam's (ʿa) answer to him. Ibn Qīyāmā, one o the leaders of the Wāqifīya,[151] wrote a letter to the Eighth Imam (ʿa) accusing him of being sterile, writing: "How is it possible that you are an Imam, while you do not have any children?" The Imam (ʿa) answered him with the following words: "How do you know that I will not come to have children— I swear by God that it will not be more than a few

[151] Shaykh Mufīd, al-Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 318.
- ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā al-ʾIrbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 142.
- Tastarī, Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī, Qāmūs al-Rijāl, Tehran, The Center for Book Publications, vol. 3, p. 37.

days when God will grant me a son who will separate the truth from the falsehood."[152]

These attacks from the likes of Ḥusayn ibn Qīyāmā, as well as other followers of the Wāqifīya, were not limited to this one instance; they would use various occasions and events as opportunities to repeat their claims, and Imam Riḍā ('a) was continuously refuting their words and arguments.[153] This continued, until the birth of Imam Jawād ('a) put an end to their words, and the Shia were saved from a difficult situation and their position was further strengthened.[154]

The suggestions of the Wāqifīya and the enemies of the Imams ('a) had reached such a level, that even after the birth of Imam Jawād ('a), another group from the family of Imam Riḍā ('a), due to their jealousy, came forward to claim that Imam Jawād ('a) was actually not the son of Imam Riḍā ('a). This group had no evidence for their slanderous claims, and so their only argument was that Imam Jawād ('a) had a different skin tone from Imam Riḍā ('a). They said: "Amongst us, there has never existed an Imam that was wheat (brown) complexioned." Imam Riḍā ('a) told them: "He is my son." They said: "The Prophet of Islam (ṣ) arbitrated using the science of facial recognition (physiognomy)[155]; therefore

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[152] Kulaynī, al-Ūsūl Min al-Kāfī, Second Edition, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 320.
- Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā Bi'ilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 346.

[153] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Ibid, p. 142.
- Tastarī, Ibid, p. 316.

[154] Qazwīnī, Sayyid Kāẓim, Al-Imām al-Jawād Min al-Mahd 'Il al-Laḥd, Beirut, Mu'assasat Balāgh, 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 337.

[155] Considering the matter of physiognomy as an authentic science from the Prophet (s) was a claim made by this group but it was never accepted as such by Imam Riḍā (a). If the Imam (a) accepted their suggestion in bringing such an individual, it was perhaps because he knew that in conclusion, it would clear the matter up and show the group the weakness of their claim.
Physiognomists were people who would determine the lineage of individuals from the similarity of their body parts (such as the shape of their feet, hands, face, etc.), and they played an important role in the Arab society of that time. The Shia scholars have considered the teaching, learning, and the gaining of money from this field to be unlawful (*Ḥarām*). Some from the Shia scholars have considered this matter to be unequivocally unlawful, while others have considered it unlawful if it involves a *Ḥarām* action or if it results in the presentation of a definite answer (meaning that an

such an individual (physiognomist) must arbitrate between you and us." The Imam ('a) replied: "Then go and call someone (if you please), but I will do no such thing; also, remember to not tell them for what reason you have called them..."

One day, in accordance to a previous appointment, the uncles, brother, and sisters of Imam Riḍā ('a) went to an orchard and sat down, while Imam Riḍā ('a)— adorned in loose-fitting wool clothing and a hat, shovel in hand, was busy working in the orchard. It seemed as if he was an ordinary worker and did not have any relationship with the people sitting in the orchard.

Then Imam Jawād ('a) was brought there as well and the physiognomists were asked to identify his father from among the people in the gathering. The physiognomists all said: "The father of this child is not present in this gathering; however, this individual is his father's uncle, this one is his own uncle, and this is his aunt. If his father is present here, it can be no other than that individual who is in the orchard carrying the shovel on his shoulder, for the ankles of these two individuals (the son and the father) are of the same type." At this time, Imam Riḍā ('a) joined the group. Th physiognomists altogether stated: "This is his father."

At this point, 'Alī ibn Ja'far, the uncle of Imam Riḍā ('a), stood up from his place and kissed Imam Jawād ('a), saying: "I witness before God that you are my Imam."[156] In this manner, the plots of those working against the imamate were defeated, and the truth was made manifest for all to see.

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answer is given as being the absolute truth). For further information, refer to: Muqqaram, Sayyid 'Abd al-Razzāq, A Passing Glance At The Life of Imam Jawād (a), translated by Doctor Parvīz Lawlāvar, Mashhad, The Foundation For Islamic Researchers Ostāne Qudse Razavī, 1370 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 35.

[156] Kulaynī, al-Ūsūl Min al-Kāfī, Second Edition, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 322.

- Muqqaram, Sayyid 'Abd al-Razzāq, A Passing Glance At The Life of Imam Jawād (a), translated by Doctor Parvīz Lawlāvar, Mashhad, The Foundation for Islamic Researchers Ostāne Qudse Razavī, 1370 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 36.

The Young Imam

Since Imam Jawād ('a) was the first Imam to reach the position of the imamate in his childhood, the first question which comes to mind when looking at his life is how a child was able to take up the heavy responsibility of the imamate of the Muslim nation. Is it possible for a human being to have reached such a high level of perfection at such a young age? If such a thing is possible, did it have precedence in previous nations?

In answering these questions, we must pay attention to the following points: It is true that the maturation of the human mind and body have a typical timeline. As this timeline progresses, the body and mind are said to have reached the point of potential completion and perfection. In spite of this, what is there to prevent God, who is all-wise and all-knowledgeable, to make this maturation process shorter in duration for certain specific individuals, and to have them reach perfection before the normal time has been reached? In society, from the beginning of time all the way until present times, there have always been individuals who have been made exempt from this principle, and through the favor and special attention of God, they have reached a position of leadership at a very young age.

To clarify this issue further, let us look at some of these special cases from history:

1- The Quran has mentioned the case of Prophet Yaḥyā ('a), his prophetic mission, and the fact that he reached the rank of prophethood during his childhood. The Quran says: "To his son came the command): 'O Yaḥyā, take hold of the Book with might": and we gave him wisdom even as a youth"[157]

Some commentators have considered the word 'ḥukm' in the above verse to mean intelligence and insight, while others are of the position that: 'The meaning of this word is

[157] Surah Maryam, Verse 12.

prophethood.' Further evidence of this view is found in a tradition narrated in the book Ūṣūl al-Kāfī. This tradition is narrated from the Fifth Imam ('a), where the Imam ('a), in regards to the meaning of 'ḥukm' in the above mentioned verse, cites the prophethood of Prophet Yaḥyā ('a) from the period of his childhood and says: "After the passing of Zakarīyā ('a), his son Yaḥyā ('a) inherited the book and the wisdom from him and this is the same (matter) where God says in the Quran: 'O Yaḥyā, take hold of the Book with might': and we gave him wisdom even as a youth"[158]

2- Although it typically takes twelve months for a child to begin speaking, we know that Prophet Jesus ('a) began to speak from the very first days of his birth. He went on to use his powers of speech to defend his mother from slanderous accusations and he used logic to refute the words of his enemies. This was while such a feat of eloquent speech almost always belongs exclusively to the realm of mature human beings and not children. The Quran has narrated his words in the following verses: "He (Jesus) said: 'I am indeed a servant of Allah: He has given me revelation and made me a prophet, and He has made me blessed wheresoever I be, and has enjoined on me prayer and charity as long as I live, (He has made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing o. miserable..."'[159]

Therefore, it is clear that before the time of the Imams ('a), other divine figures were, likewise, given this blessing and this matter cannot be considered as specific to members of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a).

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[158] Ūṣūl al-Kāfī, Tehran, Maktabah al-Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 382.

[159] Surah Maryam, Verses 30-32.
From some traditions, it is understood that at the time that Jesus (a) spoke, he was a Nabī (prophet) but did not yet possess the position of Risālah. Then at the age of seven, he reached the position of Risālah (messengerhood). Therefore, it is not implausible that the Imams (a) could reach the position of the imamate at a similar age (Kulaynī, Ūṣūl al-Kāfī, Tehran, Maktabah al-Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 382).

The Words of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) on This Issue

When researching the lives of the Imams ('a), it becomes evident that this question was raised during their time as well, and it was specifically asked during the time of Imam Jawād ('a). The Imams ('a) answered this question with the same reasoning we mentioned above. As an example, let us look at three traditions which have been narrated on this subject:

1- 'Alī ibn Asbāṭ, one of the companions of Imam Riḍā ('a) and Imam Jawād ('a), has narrated: "One day I went to visit Imam Jawād ('a), and during the visit I stared intently at the face of the Imam ('a), in order that I could commit his features to memory, so that when I returned to Egypt, I could describe the Imam ('a) to his devotees.[160]

At that very moment, Imam Jawād ('a), as though he had read my mind, sat in front of me and said: 'Oh 'Alī ibn Asbāṭ, what God has done in regards to the imamate is similar to what he has done in regards to prophethood. God has said in regards to Yaḥyā ('a): "...We gave him the command of prophethood even as a youth." In regards to Joseph ('a) he says: "When Joseph attained full manhood, we gave him power (prophethood) and knowledge: thus do we reward those who do right."[161] And with respect to Moses ('a), he says: "When he reached full age and was firmly established (in life), we bestowed on him wisdom (prophethood) and knowledge."'[162]

Therefore, just as it is possible for God to give knowledge and wisdom to an individual at the age of forty, it is possible for that same wisdom to be given to an individual while he is a child.[163]

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[160] From the words of 'Alī ibn Asbāṭ, we can understand that the Imam (a) also had followers in Egypt and they wished to know what he looked like.

[161] Surah Yūsuf, Verse 22.

[162] Surah Qasas, Verse 14.

[163] Kulaynī, al-Ūsūl Min al-Kāfī, Second Edition, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 384 and 494. In addition, refer to: Qazwīnī, Sayyid Kāẓim, al-Imām al-Jawād Min al-Mahd 'Il al-Laḥd, First Edition, Beirut, Mu'assasat Balāgh, 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 232.

2- One of the companions of Imam Riḍā (ʿa) said: "In Khurāsān, we were in the presence of Imam Riḍā (ʿa). One of the people present there said: 'Oh my master, if (God forbid), something were to happen (to you), who should we follow and refer to?' The Imam (ʿa) said: 'To my son, Abū Jaʿfar.'[164]At this point, that individual felt that Imam Jawād (ʿa) was too young, so Imam Riḍā (ʿa) added: 'God made Jesus, the son of Mary, a prophet, a messenger, and the possessor of a new religious law at an even younger age than the age of Abū Jaʿfar.'"[165]

3- Imam Riḍā (ʿa) said to one of his companions, Muʿamar ibn Khallād: "I have seated Abū Jaʿfar in my place and have appointed him as my successor. We are a family in which our youth inherit everything their elders encompass."[166]

An Ideological Whirlpool

In spite of all that was mentioned with respect to divine leadership at a young age, the issue of Imam Jawād's (ʿa) age was not yet fully resolved for some of the people. Not only was it not yet resolved for many of the ordinary Shias, but it was also something which was debated and discussed by some of the scholars and notables of the time. Therefore, after the martyrdom of Imam Riḍā (ʿa), and the initiation of Imam Jawād's (ʿa) imamate, the issue of his age manifested itself as an unprecedented problem for the Shia, particularly amongst

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- Masʿūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīya, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥaydarīa, 1374 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 211.

[164] Abū Jaʿfar is the agnomen of Imam Jawād (a); he is called Abū Jaʿfar al-Thānī (the second) to differentiate between him and Imam Bāqir (a).

[165] Kulaynī, Ibid, vol. 1, p. 322 and 384.

- Shaykh Mufīd, al-Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 319.
- Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā Bi'ilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 346.

[166] Shaykh Mufīd, Ibid, p. 318.

- Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 346.
- ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā al-'Irbilī, Ibid, p. 141.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 21.
- Kulaynī, Ibid, p. 320.

the masses.

Ibn Rustam Ṭabarī, a scholar from the fourth century Hijrī, has written about Imam Jawād (ʿa) that: "When he reached approximately six years of age, Ma'mūn murdered his father and the Shias fell into a state of confusion; differences of opinion appeared amongst them. The people considered Abū Jaʿfar's age as being too young and the Shias in other cities were also in a confused state."[167] In order to alleviate this situation, the Shias organized meetings and gatherings with Imam Jawād (ʿa), in order to test him and thereby obtain certainty that he possessed the knowledge of the Imams (ʿa). In these assemblies, they asked the Imam various questions and when they heard definitive and clear answers, they became assured of his imamate and gained certainty in this matter.

Historians have written that: "When Imam Riḍā (ʿa) passed away in the year 202 (Hijrī), Abū Jaʿfar was seven years old. Subsequently, in Baghdad and in the rest of the cities, differences of opinion came about among the people. Rayyān ibn Ṣalt, Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥyā, Muḥammad ibn Ḥakīm, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥajjāj, and Yūnus ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, along with a group of the notables and trustworthy Shia individuals, gathered in the house of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥajjāj, in Baraka' Zalzal, a neighborhood in Baghdad.[168] When they gathered there, they began to cry and weep out of sorrow for the Imam (ʿa) when... Yūnus said to them: 'Leave this crying and weeping, we must see who is capable of the responsibility of the imamate. Until this child (Abū Jaʿfar (ʿa)) has grown, who must we ask about our affairs?'

At this point, Rayyān ibn Ṣalt stood up, squeezed Yūnus's throat, and began to hit him on the face, while angrily saying: 'In front of us, you profess faith, while you have hidden your

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[167] Dalā'il al-Imāmah, Third Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 204.

[168] In some sources, the name has been narrated as Baraka Zalūl, but Zalzal is the correct name.

doubt and hypocrisy? If his imamate is from God, then even if he is one day old, he will be like a one hundred year old man. And if he is not from God, then even if he is one hundred years old, he will be like an ordinary individual. Deliberate upon this matter.' At this point, the other participants in the gathering began to reprimand Yūnus for what he had said."[169]

At that time, the season of the Ḥajj pilgrimage was near and seventy individuals from the jurisprudents and scholars of Baghdad and other cities departed for the pilgrimage. They headed towards the city of Medina with the intention of seeing Abū Ja'far ('a). Upon arriving in Medina, they went to the house of Imam Ṣādiq ('a)— which was empty— and sat on a large carpet which was there. 'Abdullah ibn Mūsā, the uncle of Imam Jawād ('a), then entered the house and sat at the heart of the gathering. One man stood up and said: "This is the son of the Messenger of God; whoever has any questions should ask him." A few people posed various questions and 'Abdullah ibn Mūsā gave them incorrect responses...[170] The Shias became perplexed and saddened, while th jurisprudents became upset and stood up, intending to leav They said: "If Abū Ja'far was able to answer our questions 'Abdullah would not have come here and would not have given these incorrect answers."

At this point, a door in the house opened and a servant by the name of Muwaffaq came out. He faced the gathering

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[169] Yūnus (and also Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥyā) are from the 'Ashāb Ijmā', meaning that the Imami scholars agree on the authenticity and correctness of their traditions. Yūnus possessed a very high degree of spirituality and was praised by the Imams (a). The scholars of Rijāl have also praised him. In spite of these characteristics, when such a high-ranking personality says such a thing, it shows the regrettable state of the common people. Moreover, due to his characteristics, some of the modern day scholars do not believe that his words were literal. They explain that it is possible his intention was to test the people at the gathering, so that they could become known. (Muqqaram, Sayyid 'Abd al-Razzāq, A Passing Glance At The Life of Imam Jawād (a), translated by Doctor Parvīz Lawlāvar, Mashhad, The Foundation For Islamic Researchers Ostāne Qudse Razavī, 1370 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 110).

[170] The historians have recorded the details of the questions and answers, but due to the scope of this book, we have not mentioned them.

and said: "Abū Ja'far is coming." The Imam ('a) entered the room and everyone welcomed him. He then sat down and all the people became silent. Then the people began to ask their questions from the Imam ('a). They all heard definitive and clear answers to their questions and so they became immensely relieved and joyful. They prayed for the Imam ('a) and said: "Your uncle, 'Abdullah, gave certain religious rulings (which were incorrect)." The Imam ('a) said: "Uncle, it is heavy in the eyes of God that tomorrow you will stand in front of him and it will be said to you: 'While in the Ummah (religious community) there existed someone more knowledgeable (than you), why did you give them religious rulings without knowledge?'"[171]

Isḥāq ibn Ismā'īl, who was with this group, has said: "I had written down ten questions in a letter to ask the Imam ('a). At that time, my wife was pregnant. I said to myself: 'If he answers my questions, I will request that he prays for me, so that God gives me a son.' When the people began to ask their questions, I also took my letter and stood up, in order to ask my questions. As soon as the Imam ('a) saw me, he said: 'Oh Isḥāq, give him the name of Aḥmad. After this incident, my wife gave birth to a boy and I named him Aḥmad.'"[172]

These meetings, discussions, and debates caused the Shias to gain full certainty in the imamate of Imam Jawād ('a).[173] All the doubts and questions which had previously existed, were dispelled and the people were put at complete ease.

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[171] Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 98-100.
- Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Rustam, Dalā'il al-Imāmah, Third Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 404-406.
- Mas'ūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīya, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭba'at al-Ḥaydarīa, 1374 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 213-215. With slight differences in wording.

[172] Mas'ūdī, Ibid, p. 215.

[173] Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 90.
- Mas'ūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīya, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭba'at al-Ḥaydarīa, 1374 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 210.
- Shaykh Mufīd, al-Ikhtiṣāṣ, edited by: 'Alī Akbar Ghaffārī, Manshūrāt Jama'at al-Mudarisīn Fī Ḥawzah al-'Ilmiyah Qum Muqadissah, p. 102.

The Debates of Imam Jawād

Since Imam Jawād ('a) was the first of the Imams to reach this rank[174] during his childhood, there followed many interesting and animated discussions and debates between him and the people. The main reason behind these discussions was that, due to his age, the imamate of Imam Jawād ('a) was not yet fully proven for many Shias. Therefore, in order to gain certainty and to examine the Imam ('a), they asked him a great deal of questions on a variety of issues.

Furthermore, during that time, the Mu'tazilah sect— supported and assisted by the government— had grown in strength and had reached the peak of its power and influence. Not only were they backed by the government both financially and politically, but the government worked to suppress other ideologies which were opposed to them, making them even stronger.

As mentioned previously, the Mu'tazilah believed excessively in the powers and abilities of the human intellect. The followers of this sect would take all religious principles and assess them with the human intellect; whatever issues their intellects agreed upon, they would accept; everything else was then rejected. Additionally, since the matter of leadership by a young child could not be rectified by their sense of intellect, they proceeded to ask extremely complicated and difficult questions in order to defeat the Imam ('a) and show his unworthiness for the rank of the imamate.

In spite of this, Imam Jawād ('a) easily answered their questions, clearly and definitively, and all of their doubts and misgivings about his imamate were quickly allayed. In fact, the misgivings of the people were allayed to such a degree that with the coming of the next Imam (Imam Hādī ('a)), who also happened to be a child when he was appointed to this

[174] After the Imam (a), his son 'Alī Hādī (a) reached the imamate at an even younger age. After him, Imam Mahdī (a) reached this position when he was no older than 5 years in age.

position, the issue of his young age did not create any problems whatsoever. At this point, it had become clear to all that childhood does not have any effect whatsoever on the validity or invalidity of being appointed to this divine rank.

The Debate with Yaḥyā ibn Aktham[175]

When Ma'mūn left Tūs for Baghdad, he wrote a letter to Imam Jawād ('a), inviting him to Baghdad. This invitation was similar to the invitation that his father, Imam Riḍā ('a) had received, in the sense that it was not an optional invitation, but rather, a compulsory one. The Imam ('a) had no choice but to accept and so, a few days after entering Baghdad, Ma'mūn invited him to his palace. There, in the palace, Ma'mūn proposed that the Imam ('a) marry his daughter, Umm al-Faḍl. The Imam ('a) remained silent in the face of the proposal.[176] Ma'mūn decided to take this silence as an affirmation, and he began to make plans for the marriage.

Ma'mūn decided to organize a wedding celebration, but the spread of this news created a proverbial bombshell amongst the 'Abbāsids. The 'Abbāsids organized a meeting and said to Ma'mūn in protest: "What is this? Now that 'Alī ibn Mūsā has passed away and the caliphate has returned back to the 'Abbāsids, you wish again to return it to the family of 'Alī? Know that we will not allow this to happen. Have you forgotten the deep-seated animosity between our

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[175] Yaḥyā was one of the famous scholars during the rule of Ma'mūn, the Abbasid caliph. His fame extended to both the masses and the notables. He possessed such an exceptional level of expertise in jurisprudence that Ma'mūn, although he himself was very knowledgeable, favored Yaḥyā and entrusted him with managing the affairs of the nation. In essence, all of the affairs of the vast Islamic nation were under his supervision. He was considered to be so close to Ma'mūn that no one else even came close to his position.

In spite of his immense knowledge, Yaḥyā did not possess much in the way of spiritual rank. He had sought after knowledge for the sake of worldly position, fame, and superiority to others. Whenever a scholar would meet with Yaḥyā, he would ask him a number of questions on various topics until that individual was forced to admit his lack of knowledge in front of him.

[176] In the coming pages, we will discuss this marriage of Imam Jawād (a) in more detail.

households?" Ma'mūn asked them: "What is it that you want?" They replied: "This youth is a child and he possesses nothing in knowledge and learning." Ma'mūn said: "You are not familiar with this family. Their youth and their elders alike, possess great knowledge." The Abbasids did not accept this. Ma'mūn then said: "Since you do not accept my words, just test him— Bring a knowledgeable scholar which you yourselves accept, so that he can debate with him in order that the truth of my words becomes clear."

The ʿAbbāsids selected Yaḥyā ibn Aktham and Ma'mūn organized a gathering for testing the knowledge of Imam Jawād (ʿa). When the time for the gathering came and everyone had assembled, Yaḥyā turned towards Ma'mūn and asked: "Do you give me permission to ask this young man a question?" Ma'mūn replied: "Seek permission from himself." Yaḥyā asked for permission from Imam Jawād (ʿa). Imam Jawād (ʿa) said: "Ask whatever you wish." Yaḥyā then asked: "What do you say of an individual who is Muḥrim (in the state of Iḥrām during the Ḥajj pilgrimage) and has hunted an animal while in that state?"[177]

Imam Jawād (ʿa) replied: "Has this individual killed the animal in the 'Hīll' (outside the limits of the Ḥarām) or inside the Ḥarām? Did he know the rules on hunting while in Iḥrām, or was he ignorant? Did he kill the animal on purpose or on accident? Was he a free man or a slave? Was he a minor or was he mature (bāligh)? Was this the first time he committed such an action or has he done so several times before? Was it a bird or another type of animal? Was the animal small or large? Does he have no regret for what he has done, or is he regretful? Did he hunt in the night or in the daytime? Was he in the Iḥrām of 'Umrah or the Iḥrām of Ḥajj?"

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[177] One of the actions which is forbidden (*Ḥarām*) for those who are in a state of Iḥrām during the Ḥajj or 'Umrah pilgrimage is hunting. In matters of jurisprudence, the jurisprudence of Ḥajj is particularly complicated. Therefore, it is highly probable that Yaḥyā ibn Aktham asked a question regarding Ḥajj because he assumed that the Imam (a) would become confused and be left unable to give him a proper answer.

Yaḥyā was astonished at all of these secondary issues which the Imam (ʿa) had presented. His face revealed that he was at a loss for words, and when he tried to speak, he began to stammer. His compromised state was so evident that all the people present fully understood his weakness and incapacity. At this point, Ma'mūn said: "God, I thank you for this blessing that exactly what I thought would take place, has now taken place." Then he looked at his relatives and family members, and said: "Now do you comprehend what you were not willing to accept before?"[178]

The Ruling of Hunting in the Various States of Iḥrām

Then after some further discussions, the majority of the people left, and only those who were very close to the caliph remained. Ma'mūn turned towards the Imam (ʿa) and said: "May my life be given in your place, please explain the various rulings for the individual who hunts under the conditions that you mentioned, so that we may gain this knowledge." Imam Jawād (ʿa) replied: "Of course. If a Muḥrim (in the state of Iḥrām at the Ḥajj pilgrimage) hunts in the Hill (outside of the Ḥarām)[179] and the hunted animal is a large bird, then its expiation is one sheep and if he kills it in the Ḥarām, the expiation is doubled. If he kills the chick (child) of a bird outside of the Ḥarām, the expiation is one lamb which has just stopped weaning and if it is killed in the Ḥarām, then both a lamb and the price of that chick must be given. If the hunted animal is wild (undomesticated), in the

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[178] Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 75-76.
- Qazwīnī, Sayyid Kāẓim, al-Imām al-Jawād Min al-Mahd 'Il al-Laḥd, Beirut, Muʿassasat Balāgh, 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 168-172.
The narrator of this is Rayyān ibn Shabīb, the uncle of Muʿtaṣim, who was one of the companions of Imam Riḍā (a) and Imam Jawād (a); he was considered a trustworthy narrator of tradition. (Qazwīnī, Ibid, p. 168; Shaykh Mufīd, al-Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 319-321; Ṭabarsī, al-Iḥtijāj, Najaf, al-Maṭbaʿat al-Murtaḍāwiya, 1350 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 245; Masʿūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīya, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥaydarīa, 1374 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 216)

[179] The Ḥarām is the holy sanctuary within which the Kaaba is located.

case that it is a zebra, its expiation is one cow; if it is an ostrich, its expiation is one camel; if it is a deer, then its expiation is one sheep, and if any of these are killed inside the Ḥarām, the expiation is doubled.

If the Muḥrim individual engages in any actions which necessitate a sacrifice (qurbānī), and if he is in the Iḥrām of Ḥajj, he must sacrifice the animal (the qurbānī) at Minā, and if he is in the Iḥrām of 'Umrah, he must sacrifice the animal in Mecca. The expiation of hunting is the same for a knowledgeable ('Ālim) individual and an ignorant (Jāhil) individual; but if it is done intentionally, then— in addition to the obligation of the expiation— he has sinned. However, in the case of it being committed by error, there is no sin. The expiation of a free man is his own responsibility, whereas the expiation of a slave is upon his owner. There is no expiation required for a minor (child), but it is obligatory on one who is physically mature (bāligh). The punishment of the hereafter is removed from one who is regretful of his actions, but the one who is not regretful will be punished."[180]

The Supreme Judge is Checkmated!

Ma'mūn said: "Well done, oh Abū Ja'far, may God give you all that is good. Now it would be appropriate if you ask Yaḥyā ibn Aktham a question in the same manner that he asked you a question." Imam Jawād ('a) asked Yaḥyā: "Should I ask?" Yaḥyā replied: "May my life be given in exchange for yours, it is your prerogative to ask; if I am able, I will answer, and if not, I will learn from you." Imam Jawād ('a) then asked: "Explain to me (the situation) of a man who in the morning looks at a woman and his look is unlawful. As the day progresses, that lady becomes lawful to him (she becomes his wife). When the day reaches noontime, again she becomes unlawful to him. When it becomes evening time, she becomes

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[180] Majlisī, Ibid, p. 77.
- Qazwīnī, Ibid, p. 174.
- Shaykh Mufīd, al-Irshād, p. 322.

lawful to him again. When the sun sets, she becomes unlawful to him. When the time of 'Ishā' (nightfall) comes, she becomes lawful to him, and when midnight approaches, she becomes unlawful to him. With the break of the dawn, she again becomes lawful to him. What kind of a woman is this and through what means does she become lawful and unlawful to him in such a manner?"

Yaḥyā replied: "I swear by God that I do not know any way of solving this question— I do not know how she becomes lawful and unlawful to him so many times over. If possible, please acquaint us with the answer."

Imam Jawād ('a) said: "This woman was the slave of someone. In the morning, a (male) stranger looks at her and the look is an unlawful one. As the day goes on, the man buys the slave from her owner and he becomes lawful to her. When noon arrives, he sets her free and becomes unlawful to her. When evening comes, he marries her (through nikah) and becomes lawful to her. During the evening time (Maghrib), he does Ẓihār to her[181] and she becomes unlawful to him. When the time of 'Ishā' arrives, he pays the expiation of Ẓihār, and she becomes lawful to him again. At midnight, he divorces her and she becomes unlawful to him, and with the break of dawn, he returns to her and the woman becomes lawful to him again."[182]

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[181] Ẓihār is when a man says to his wife: "Your back is the same to me as my mother, sister, or daughter." In this case, the expiation of the Ẓihār must be given before the wife becomes lawful to the husband again. Ẓihār, during the age of ignorance, was considered as a type of divorce and resulted in an irrevocable divorce. Islam repudiated this and made obligatory only the afore mentioned state of unlawfulness and the giving of some money as expiation (kaffarah).

[182] Majlisī, Ibid, p. 78.
- Qazwīnī, Ibid, p. 175.
- Shaykh Mufīd, al-Irshād, p. 322.

Manifestations of the Imam's Vast Knowledge

1- The Ruling of the Imam and the Defeat of the Court Scholars

Imam Jawād ('a), in addition to his debates, would use other means to show the intellectual poverty of the government-paid scholars and jurisprudents. He would use these opportunities to expose their weakness, while also showing the people the divine knowledge the Imams ('a) possessed and proving to them the legitimacy of the imamate. One such time was when he gave his jurisprudential ruling on cutting the hand of a thief.

Zurqān,[183] who was a close friend of Ibn Abī Du'ād,[184] has narrated: "One day, Ibn Abī Du'ād was returning from a gathering with Mu'taṣim (the 'Abbāsid caliph), while he was in a state of deep distress. I asked him why he was in this state and Ibn Abī Du'ād replied: 'Today, I wished that I had died twenty years ago.' Zurqān asked him: 'Why... What has happened?' He said: 'Because of what happened to me in the gathering of Mu'taṣim, thanks to Abū Ja'far (Imam Jawād ('a)).' Zurqān asked him: 'What exactly took place?' Ibn Abī Du'ād said: 'An individual confessed to a robbery and requested that the caliph (Mu'taṣim) apply the punishment and purify him of his sin. The caliph gathered all of the jurisprudents and also called upon Muḥammad ibn 'Alī (Imam Jawād ('a)). He asked us: "Where should the hand of a thief be cut off from?" I replied: "From the wrist." He asked: "What is your reasoning behind this?" I said: "This is because the meaning of the hand, as revealed in the verse of Tayammum, has mentioned:[185] '...rub therewith your faces and hands (upto the wrists).'"'

A group of the jurisprudents concurred with me and said:

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[183] Zurqān was the title of Abū Ja'far, a narrator of tradition.

[184] Ibn Abī Du'ād was the judge of Baghdad during the caliphates of Ma'mūn, Mu'taṣim, and Mutawakil 'Abbāsī. (Majlisī, Ibid, p. 5, Footnotes).

[185] Surah Mā'īdah, Verse 5.

'The hand of a thief must be cut at the wrist, while another group of them said that it is necessary that the arm be cut at the elbow.' When Mu'taṣim asked them the reason behind this, they said: 'The meaning of the hand has been explained in the verse of ablution, where it says: "...wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbows..."'[186].

At this point, Mu'taṣim turned towards Imam Jawād ('a) and asked: 'What is your opinion on this matter?' Imam Jawād ('a) replied: 'They have given their opinions, therefore exempt me.' Mu'taṣim insisted and swore that the Imam ('a) must give his opinion. Imam Jawād ('a) said: 'Since you swore an oath, I will give my ruling. Both of the opinions mentioned are in error, for only the fingers of a thief must be cut and the rest must be left (alone).' Mu'taṣim asked Imam Jawād ('a) his reasoning behind this. The Imam ('a) said: 'The Prophet of God (ṣ) has said: "Prostration finds fulfillment (is performed) upon seven parts of the body: the face (the forehead), the two palms of the hands, the two knees, and the two feet (the two big toes of the feet)." Therefore, if the hand of a thief is cut off from the wrist or from the elbow, then no hand is left for him so that he can perform the prostration of the prayer. Also, God, the Most High, has said: 'And the places of worship (the seven parts which prostration is performed with) are for Allah (alone): So invoke not any one along with Allah,'[187] and that which is for God, is not cut

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[186] Surah Mā'īdah, Verse 5.

[187] The word Masjid here means a place of prostration (Sajdah). Since mosques and houses of God are places where the foreheads come into contact with the ground, they are thus considered places for prostration. The forehead and the other six parts of the body which come into contact with the ground, are considered places of prostration. Based on this meaning, this tradition uses the word al-Masājid in the sense of the seven body parts which are used to prostrate with. In two other traditions from Imam Ṣādiq (a) narrated in the books of Kāfī, and in another tradition in the Commentary of 'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm Qummī, the word al-Masājid is used in this same sense (the seven body parts). This meaning has also been narrated from Sa'īd ibn Jubayr, Zajjāj, and Farrā' as well. We should keep in mind that if this sense of the word al-Masājid (meaning the seven body parts) was incorrectly used by the Imam (a), the rest of the jurisprudents who were present in Mu'taṣim's gathering would have mentioned it and pointed out its error. Since none of the individuals present in the gathering mentioned this point, it shows that it was a well-established view which they all agreed

off.'[188]

Mu'taṣim approved of Imam Jawād's ('a) answer and ordered that the fingers of the thief be cut (and we were thus shamed in front of those present at the gathering). Right then and there, I wished for death.'"

2- The Fabricators of Tradition Are Disgraced!

It has been narrated that after Ma'mūn wedded his daughter to Imam Jawād ('a),[189] there was a gathering in which Ma'mūn, Imam Jawād ('a), Yaḥyā ibn Aktham, and many others were present. Yaḥyā said to the Imam ('a): "It has been narrated that Gabriel visited the Prophet (ṣ) and said: 'Oh Muḥammad, God has sent you his greetings (salaam) and says: I am satisfied with Abū Bakr, ask him whether he is satisfied with me? What is your opinion on this tradition?'"[190]

Imam Jawād ('a) replied: "I am not a denier of Abū Bakr's virtue, but for the individual who narrates this tradition, they must also keep in mind another tradition from the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) during the Ḥajjat al-Widā, where he said: 'The people who attribute lies to me have become large in number and after me, they will also be large in number. Whoeve attributes a lie to me intentionally, his place shall be the fir Therefore, when a tradition from me is narrated to you compare it with the Book of God and the Sunnah; take whatever conforms with the Book of God and my Sunnah, and leave that which is in opposition to the Book of God and the Sunnah.'" Imam Jawād ('a) added: "This tradition (in regards to Abū Bakr) is not in conformance with the Book of

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upon. Even if we assume that they did not agree upon it, it was still a point which they considered a distinct possibility. (The Ninth Leader, Imam Muḥammad Taqī, Mu'assasah Dar Rāhe Ḥaq, p. 26-29; Narrated from Tafsīre Ṣāfī, vol. 2, p. 752; Tafsīr Nūr al-Thaqalayn, vol. 5, p. 440; Tafsīre Majma'ah al-Bayān, vol. 10, p. 372).

[188] Surah Jinn, Verse 18.

[189] We will discuss this marriage in more detail in the coming pages.

[190] 'Allāmah Amīnī, in the book al-Ghadīr (vol. 5, p. 321) has written: This is a prevarication and is from the fabricated traditions of Muḥammad ibn Bābshādh.

God, for God has said: 'It was we who created man, and we know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for we are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein.'[191] Was the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of Abū Bakr hidden from God that he asked this from the Prophet (ṣ)? This is logically impossible."

Yaḥyā then asked: "It has been narrated: 'Abū Bakr and 'Umar on this earth are similar to what Gabriel is in the heavens.' Imam Jawād ('a) said: 'In regards to this tradition, we must look into it in detail, for Gabriel and Michael are two esteemed angels in the presence of God. They have never committed any sins nor have they left the obedience of God for even a second. Yet Abū Bakr and 'Umar were polytheists, and however much they became Muslims after the advent of Islam, much of their lives had been spent in polytheism and idol worship. Therefore, it is impossible that God would liken them to Gabriel and Michael.'"

Yaḥyā then asked: "Likewise, it has been narrated that: 'Abū Bakr and 'Umar are the two masters of the elders of paradise.'[192] What do you say about this tradition?" Imam Jawād ('a) said: "It is impossible for this tradition to be authentic, for the people of paradise are all young, and thus no old individual would be found amongst them (so that Abū Bakr and 'Umar can be their master). This tradition was fabricated by the Umayyids in opposition to the tradition narrated by the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) in regards to Ḥasan ('a) and Ḥusayn ('a), where he said: 'Ḥasan and Ḥusayn are the two masters of the youth of paradise.'"

Yaḥyā then asked: "It has been narrated that 'Umar ibn Khaṭṭāb is the light of the people of paradise." Imam Jawād ('a) said: "This is also impossible, for in paradise there are the

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[191] Surah Qāf, Verse 16.

[192] 'Allāmah Amīnī has considered this tradition to be the fabrication of Yaḥyā ibn 'Anbasah and has determined it to be inauthentic. This is because Yaḥyā was a known fabricator of traditions. (Al-Ghadīr, vol. 5, p. 322). Dhahabī has also considered Yaḥyā ibn 'Anbasah a fabricator of traditions and a liar. (Mīzān al-'I'tidāl, First Edition, Researched by 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī, Dār 'Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīa, 1382 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, p. 400).

esteemed angels of God, Adam, Muḥammad (ṣ), and all of the prophets and individuals which God has sent. How is it that paradise is not lit by their light, but it is (instead) lit by the light of 'Umar?"

Yaḥyā then asserted: "It has been narrated that Sakīnah speaks with the voice of 'Umar (that whatever 'Umar says, he says on behalf of an angel)." Imam Jawād ('a) said in response: "I am not a denier of 'Umar's virtue, but Abū Bakr, in spite of being more virtuous than 'Umar, would say (the following) while on the pulpit: I have a Satan who causes me to deviate; whenever you see me deviated from the right path, then return me back to it."

Yaḥyā said: "It has been narrated that the Prophet (ṣ) said: 'If I had not been commissioned to prophethood, then surely 'Umar would have been commissioned (to it).'"[193] The Imam ('a) replied: "The Book of God (the Quran) is more truthful than this tradition. God in his book has said: 'And remember we took from the prophets their covenant: As (We did) from thee: from Noah...'[194] From this verse, it is explicitly understood that God has taken a covenant from the prophets ('a); therefore, how is it possible that they would change their covenant? Not one of the prophets committed polytheism not even to the extent of the blink of an eye. How is i possible that God would commission someone with prophethood, who has spent the better part of his life in polytheism? In addition to this, the Prophet (ṣ) said: 'When Adam was in between the spirit and the body (meaning he had not yet been created), I became a prophet.'"

Again Yaḥyā said: "It has been narrated that the Prophet (ṣ) said: 'The revelation was never interrupted from me, except when I thought it had been revealed upon the family of Khaṭṭāb (the father of 'Umar), meaning that the prophethood had been transferred to them.'" Imam Jawād

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[193] 'Allāmah Amīnī has proven that the narrators of this tradition were liars (al-Ghadīr, vol. 5, p. 312 and 316).

[194] Surah Aḥzāb, Verse 7.

(ʿa) said: "This is also impossible, for there is no chance that the Prophet (ṣ) would doubt his own prophethood; God has said: 'Allah chooses messengers from angels and from men...'[195] (meaning, through the medium of divine selection, there is no longer any room for self-doubt as to the status of a prophet)."

Yaḥyā said: "It has been narrated that the Prophet (ṣ) said: 'If (divine) torment were sent down, no one would be saved from it but 'Umar.'" Imam Jawād (ʿa) said: "This is, once again, impossible, for God said to the Prophet of Islam (ṣ): 'But Allah was not going to send them a penalty while you were amongst them; nor was He going to send it while they could ask for pardon.'[196] Therefore, as long as the Prophet (ṣ) was in the midst of the people and as long as the Muslims ask for forgiveness, God will not punish them."[197]

The Personality and Characteristics of Imam Jawād from the Perspective of the Scholars

The discussions and debates of Imam Jawād (ʿa) and the resolution of various intellectual and jurisprudential problems inspired the amazement and admiration of Islamic scholars and researchers. These scholars included those from both the Shia and Sunni schools of thought, and each one of them would praise Imam Jawād (ʿa) in a myriad of ways. For example, Sibṭ ibn Jawzī has said: "He followed the method of his father in knowledge, piety, asceticism, and generosity."[198]

Ibn Ḥajar Haytamī has written: "Maʾmūn chose him as his son in law, for in spite of his youth, he was superior to all

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[195] Surah Ḥajj, Verse 75.

[196] Surah Anfāl, Verse 33.

[197] Ṭabarsī, al-Iḥtijāj, Najaf, al-Maṭbaʿat al-Murtaḍāwiya, 1350 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 247-248.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 80-83.
- Qarshī, Sayyid ʿAlī Akbar, The Family of Revelation, First Print, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1368 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 644-647.

[198] Tadhkirat al-Khawāṣ, Najaf, Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 359.

the scholars with respect to knowledge, awareness, and forbearance."[199] Shablanjī has said: "Ma'mūn was constantly in awe of him, for in spite of his youth, he had shown his virtue, knowledge, and perfection of intellect."[200] Shaykh Mufīd and Fattāl Nayshābūrī have described the Imam ('a) with the following words: "Ma'mūn was utterly captivated by him, for he saw that in spite of his young age, he had reached such a high rank in knowledge, wisdom, culture, and intellectual perfection that no one from the intellectual masters of the day could come close to reaching him."[201]

Jāḥiẓ 'Uthmānī Mu'tazilī, who was one of the opponents of the family of Imam 'Alī ('a),[202] has mentioned Imam Jawād ('a) as one of the ten Ṭālibis, adding: "Each one of them is learned, ascetic, worshipful, courageous, forgiving, pure, and noble. Some of them were caliphs, and some nominees for the caliphate, and up to ten of them directly descended from one another. They are: Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Mūsā ibn Ja'far ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī. No family, neither from the Arabs, nor the Ajams, possesses such a noble lineage."[203]

A Conspiratorial Marriage Offer

As explained in the chapter on the life of Imam Riḍā ('a) Ma'mūn became entangled in a series of political difficulties. In order to find a solution from his problems, he decided to

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[199] Al-Sawā'īq al-Muḥriqah, Second Edition, Cairo, Maktabah Cairo, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 205.

[200] Nūr al-Abṣār, Cairo, Maktabah Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 161.

[201] Al-Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 319.
- Rawḍat al-Wā'iẓīn, First Edition, Beirut, Mu'assasat al-'Alamī Lil Maṭbū'āt, 1406 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 261.

[202] Jaḥiẓ lived in Baṣrah and possessed great knowledge. He was a contemporary of Imam Jawād ('a), and wrote many books on the sciences and branches of knowledge which were prevalent during his time. After the death of Imam Jawād (a), he also lived through the era of Imam Jawād's (a) son.

[203] Murtaḍā al-'Āmūlī, Ja'far, A Look At The Political Life of Imam Jawād (a), translated by Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusaynī, Qum, The Office of Islamic Publications affiliated to Jami'ah Mudarisīn, 1365 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 106. (Narrated from the Collection of Jaḥiẓ).

position himself nearer to the family of the Prophet. In order to do this, he imposed the successorship of the caliphate on Imam Riḍā (ʿa); through this plan, he hoped to bring about the successful application of a multi-faceted, long-term political strategy.

However, the ʿAbbāsids became very upset at Ma'mūn's policy; they felt that there was a possibility that the caliphate would end up leaving the ʿAbbāsid family and be transferred to the Alawīs. Thus, they stood in opposition to Ma'mūn and only calmed down when Imam Riḍā (ʿa) was poisoned to death. Only after this, did they once again become satisfied with Ma'mūn's rule.

When Ma'mūn poisoned the Imam (ʿa), he tried his best to keep the matter a secret; he did not want the public to find out what had taken place. Keeping in line with this, he made a pretense of grieving and mourning over the Imam's (ʿa) death. When all was said and done however, the Alawīs found out that Ma'mūn had killed Imam Riḍā (ʿa), and they became extremely angry. Once again, Ma'mūn felt that his caliphate was in danger and that his grip on power had weakened. In order to rectify the situation, he devised yet another plan. He decided to marry his daughter to Imam Jawād (ʿa), the son of Imam Riḍā (ʿa). In this way, he wanted to gain all the benefits which he had sought when he appointed Imam Riḍā (ʿa) to the successorship.

With this newly devised plan, Imam Jawād (ʿa) was brought from Medina to Baghdad in the year 204 Hijrī, which was approximately one year after the martyrdom of Imam Riḍā (ʿa). After some preliminary discussions in a gathering with Yaḥyā ibn Aktham, Ma'mūn offered his daughter Umm al-Faḍl in marriage to Imam Jawād (ʿa).

Ma'mūn's Motives

History shows us that this marriage, which Ma'mūn insisted so much upon, was strictly political in nature. Ma'mūn had several goals which he hoped to secure through

this marriage, namely:
1- By sending his daughter into the house of the Imam ('a), Ma'mūn would always have him under close scrutiny. He would have a window into the Imam's ('a) life. Ma'mūn's daughter, in turn, played her role well in passing along information, and the books of history testify to her spying activities.
2- Ma'mūn imagined that through this marriage, the Imam ('a) would be pulled towards luxury and self-indulgence, with all of its corresponding corruption and debauchery. He thought that if such a thing took place, the Imam ('a) would surely be brought down in the eyes of the public, and he would thus be deprived of his infallible position as an Imam ('a).
3- Through this marriage, the Alawīs would be deprived of any excuse to rise up against him, and Ma'mūn could position himself as their benefactor and supporter.[204]
4- Ma'mūn's fourth goal was the general deception of the masses. He would sometimes say: "I initiated this marriage so that Abū Ja'far ('a) would have a child by my daughter and so that I could be the grandfather of a child that is from the lineage of the Prophet and 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib." Fortunately, this stratagem of Ma'mūn never bore any fruit and his daughter never gave birth to any child.[205] All of Imam Jawād's ('a) children were from his other wife.

These were all goals which Ma'mūn sought to reach from the marriage of his daughter with Imam Jawād ('a). Now we have to look into the reasons behind Imam Jawād's ('a) consent to this union. It is very clear that Imam Jawād ('a) was fully aware of Ma'mūn's true intentions in forcing the

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[204] The Ninth Leader, Imam Muḥammad Taqī, Dar Rāhe Ḥaq Institute, Qum, 1366 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 38.

[205] Ibn Wāḍih, Tārīkh Ya'qūbī, Najaf, al-Maṭba'at al-Ḥaydarīa, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 189.

- Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Intishārāt 'Alāmah, vol. 4, p. 380. Ma'mūn had previously wed another of his daughters to the Eighth Imam (a) and in that case, likewise, he did not achieve what he was seeking.

issue of this marriage. He also knew that Ma'mūn was the same individual who had murdered his father, Imam Riḍā ('a). It seems that Imam Jawād's ('a) consent was primarily due to the pressure which Ma'mūn exerted on him. Such a marriage was only to the advantage of Ma'mūn and definitely not to the benefit of Imam Jawād ('a).

Another possibility is that perhaps consenting to this marriage presented an obstacle to the murder of the Imam ('a) at the hands of Ma'mūn, as well as helping to prevent the suppression of the Shia leaders and companions of the Imam ('a). Therefore, one possibility is that this action was similar to that of 'Alī ibn Yaqṭīn, when he accepted the viziership of Hārūn and was able to exert influence in the court of the caliph to the benefit of the Shia.

Ḥusayn Makārī, one of the companions of Imam Jawād ('a), has been quoted as saying: "I had the honor of visiting Imam Jawād ('a) in Baghdad, and I saw his manner of living. When I saw this, I thought to myself that now that the Imam ('a) is living in this comfortable manner, he will never return to the city of his birth, Medina. For a moment, the Imam ('a) lowered his head, and then raised it. The color of his face had turned pale with sorrow. He said: 'Barley bread and rough salt in the mosque of the Prophet is dearer to me than (the condition that you see me living in).'"[206]

The Imam ('a) did not end up staying in Baghdad, and he returned to Medina with his wife Umm al-Faḍl, where he would live until the year 220 Hijrī.

Imam Jawād's Connection with the Shia

Imam Jawād ('a), in spite of all the limitations he was placed under, still maintained his contact with the Shia

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[206] Rāwandī, al-Kharā'ij wa al-Jarā'ih, edited by Ḥajj Shaykh Asadullah Rabbānī, Muṣṭafāwi Publications, vol. 1, p. 344.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 48.
- Qazwīnī, Sayyid Kāẓim, al-Imām al-Jawād Min al-Mahd 'Il al-Laḥd, Beirut, Mu'assasat Balāgh, 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 152.

through means of various deputies and representatives. The Imam ('a) dispatched these deputies throughout the lands controlled by the 'Abbāsids, and through their activities, helped to prevent the breakup and disintegration of the Shia. His deputies were active in many of the provinces, including Ahwāz, Ḥamedan, Sīstān, Bost,[207] Ray, Wāsiṭ, Baghdad, as well as the traditional centers of the Shia, namely Kūfah and Qum.

The Imam ('a) gave permission to his supporters to take hold of various influential government positions. Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl ibn Bazī' and Ahmad ibn Ḥamzah Qummī are two examples of such individuals who reached very high positions in the 'Abbāsid government. Another example is that of Nūḥ ibn Darrāj, the judge of Baghdad, who later on became the judge of Kūfah.

Others from among the Shia, such as Ḥusayn ibn 'Abdullah Nayshābūrī, became the governor of Bost and Sīstān, and Ḥakam ibn 'Alīyā Asadī became the governor of Bahrain. Both of these individuals would give their khūms dues to Imam Jawād ('a), indicating the strength of thei relationship with the Imam ('a).[208] As mentioned befor when 'Alī ibn Asbāṭ came to visit the Imam ('a), he gazed a his face with concentration in order that he could memorize the Imam's ('a) exact features, and describe him to his followers and companions in Egypt. This is an indication that even in Egypt, Imam Jawād ('a) had followers and supporters.

It has also been mentioned that: "The expansion of the influence of the Shias during that time period in Egypt came about as a result of the migration of Kufan narrators of

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[207] Abū al-Fidā' (672-721 Hijrī Qamarī) writes: "Bost is located next to the river Hindmand. It is one of the cities of Sajistān (Sīstān Province). It is a large and prosperous city containing many palm groves and vineyards. The distance from Bost to Ghaznah is 14 stations." (Taqdīm al-Baldān, translated by Abū al-Muḥammad Āyatī, Bunyāde Farhangī Irān Publications, 1349 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 391).

[208] Doctor Ḥusayn, Jāsim, The Political History of the Ghaybah of the 12th Imam (a), translated by Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Ayatollāhī, First Print, Tehran, Amīr Kabīr Institute, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 79.

tradition to that land, and their subsequent activities there. These included individuals such as: Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ashʿath, Aḥmad ibn Sahl, Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī Miṣrī, and Ismāʿīl ibn Mūsā al-Kāẓim."[209]

The late Shaykh Kulaynī has narrated that Imam Jawād (ʿa), in relation to a request he received from one of the Shias of Bost and Sīstān, dispatched a letter to the governor of that province and instructed that he not give that individual a hard time in the collection of his taxes. The governor, who was one of the followers of the Imam (ʿa), not only refrained from collecting the man's taxes, but also announced that as long as he was governor, the man would be exempt from paying them entirely. In addition to this, he ordered that the man be apportioned a permanent pension.[210]

The Intellectual School of Imam Jawād

One of the main features of the lives of the Imams (ʿa) was their methodology in teaching and educating the people. Each of the great Imams (ʿa) engaged in teaching and training a number of students; the Imams' knowledge and science spread in part through these students. At the same time, it must be said that the social and political conditions during the various periods of each of the Imams (ʿa) were not equal. For example, during the time of Imam Bāqir (ʿa) and Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa), the social conditions were relatively favorable, and for this reason, the narrators and students in the school of Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) numbered 4,000.

However, from the time of Imam Jawād's (ʿa) imamate until the time of Imam Ḥasan Askarī (ʿa), due to the unfavorable circumstances and severe political pressure from the caliphs, the scope and breadth of the Imams' activities was comparatively limited. If we were to simply look at the raw number of students and narrators of these later Imams

[209] Doctor Jāsim Ḥusayn, Ibid, p. 78.

[210] Furūʿ Kāfī, vol. 5, p. 111.

and compare that with, for example, the number of students of Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa), we would see a significant disparity. Hence, we should not be surprised when we read that the narrators and companions of Imam Jawād (ʿa) were only 110 individuals,[211] and that only 250 traditions were narrated from the Imam (ʿa) in total.[212] On the one hand, the Imam (ʿa) was under close political scrutiny by the caliphs, and on the other hand, he was martyred at a very young age. According to historians, he was no older than 25 years at the time of his martyrdom.

In spite of these factors, these companions and narrators included many brilliant scholars and personalities. These included individuals such as: ʿAlī ibn Mahziyār, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Naṣr Baznaṭī, Zakarīyā ibn Ādam, Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl ibn Baziʿ, Ḥusayn ibn Saʿīd Ahwāzī, and Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Khālid Barqī. These individuals were each considered as heavyweights in their respective intellectual and jurisprudential fields, and some of them had numerous works to their name.

Moreover, the narrators of Imam Jawād (ʿa) are not only found from among the Shia; Sunni narrators and scholars have transmitted much Islamic knowledge and teachings from Imam Jawād (ʿa) as well. For example, Khaṭīb Baghdādī has narrated traditions directly from Imam Jawād (ʿa).[213]

Likewise, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Akhḍar Janābadhī, in his text Maʿālim al-ʿItrat al-Ṭāhirah,[214] as well as other writers, such

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[211] Shaykh Ṭūsī, Rijāl, First Edition, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 397-409. The compiler of Masnad al-Imām al-Jawād has noted that Imam Jawād's (a) companions and students were 121 in number (Aṭāridī, Shaykh Azizullah, Masnad al-Imām al-Jawād, Mashhad, al-Muʿtamar al-ʿAlami Lil Imām al-Riḍā (a), 1410 Hijrī Qamarī) while Qazwīnī has concluded that they were 257 in number (Qazwīnī, Sayyid Kāẓim, al-Imām al-Jawād Min al-Mahd 'Il al-Laḥd, Beirut, Muʿassasat Balāgh, 1408 Hijrī Qamarī).

[212] Mr. Aṭāridī, in his Masnad al-Imām al-Jawād, has counted the total number of traditions narrated from Imam Jawād (ʿa) in various fields, such as jurisprudence, ideology, ethics, and others.

[213] Tārīkh Baghdādī, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabīya, vol. 3, p. 54 and 55.

[214] Amīn, Sayyid Muḥsin, Aʿyān al-Shīʿah, Beirut, Dār Taʿāruf Lil Maṭbūʿāt, 1403 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 35.

as: Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Thābit, Abū Isḥāq Thalabī, and Muḥammad ibn Mandah ibn Mahrbadh, have all narrated traditions from Imam Jawād (ʿa) in their books of history and commentary.[215]

The Martyrdom of Imam Jawād

Maʾmūn passed away in the year 218 Hijrī, and his brother Muʿtaṣim succeeded the caliphate. In 220 Hijrī, Muʿtaṣim brought the Imam (ʿa) to Baghdad, in order to keep a close eye on his activities. There, he attended a gathering organized by Muʿtaṣim, in order to decide what the correct Islamic punishment for a thief would be (i.e. at what point the hand should be cut off). In this gathering, the judge of Baghdad (Ibn Abī Duʾād) as well as others, were embarrassed in front of the caliph as a result of the Imam's ruling.

After the passing of a few days, Ibn Abī Duʾād visited Muʿtaṣim and out of a sense of jealousy and hatred, said to the caliph: "Since I wish the best for you, I wanted to tell you that what took place a few days ago was not in your government's best interest. During that gathering, you selected the religious edict of Abū Jaʿfar (Imam Jawād (ʿa)) over that of all the other scholars and government officials. This is while at least half of the Muslims consider Abū Jaʿfar as their legitimate caliph and consider you a usurper to his position. The news of this has spread amongst the people and has shown itself to be a decisive proof in regards to his position amongst his followers."

Muʿtaṣim, who was rather sensitive on this matter, was provoked to action by these words of Ibn Abī Duʾād, and decided to kill the Imam (ʿa). By way of one of his agents, he had the Imam (ʿa) poisoned, and thus the Imam (ʿa) was martyred.[216] At the time of his martyrdom, Imam Jawād (ʿa)

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[215] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Qum, al-Ṭabʿat ʿIlmīyah, vol. 4, p. 384.

[216] ʿAyāshī, Kītāb al-Tafsīr, edited by Ḥajj Sayyid Hāshim Rasūlī Mahallātī, Qum, al-Ṭabʿat al-ʿIlmīyah, vol. 1, p. 320.
- Majlisī, Ibid, p. 7.

was no older than 25 years in age.[217]

We have not mentioned the particulars of the martyrdom of Imam Jawād (a) due to the constraints of space. For further information, please refer to:
-Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Intishārāt 'Alāmah, vol. 4, p. 380; Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. 50, p. 8 and 9; Fattāl Nayshābūrī, Rawḍat al-Wa'iẓīn, p. 267.

[217] Shaykh Mufīd, al-Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 326.
- Majlisī, Ibid, p. 7.
- Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Rustam al-Ṭabarī, Dalā'īl al-'Imāmah, Third Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 208.

THE LIVES OF THE TWELVE

A Look at the Social and Political Lives of the Twelve Infallible Imams (ʿa)

Written By
Shaykh Mahdī Pīshvā'ī

▪PART FOUR▪

A Look at the Lives of Imam Hadi (ʿa), Imam Askari (ʿa), and Imam Mahdi (ʿa)

Translated By
Sayyid Ali Musawi

The Lives of the Twelve is a pioneering work that details the lives of the Twelve Shia Imams. While most works on the Twelve Imams focuses on the basics of their lives, this text goes into the details of their social and political lives and how they affected change throughout their societies. Through extensive research, Shaykh Mahdi Pishvai has been able to craft together many details which were not widely known before. This is the first time a book of this caliber has been published in the English language. Today, we live in times where morality and a sense of right and wrong have all but disappeared. In light of this, we can turn to the teachings and wisdom of the Twelve in order to see how we can help bring back morality and that human sense of differentiating between right and wrong in our society. This work is composed of four distinct volumes each of which goes into the lives of three of the Twelve Imams.

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The Lives of the Twelve

(Part Four)

A Look at the Social and Political Lives of the Twelve Infallible Imams

Written By: Shaykh Mahdī Pīshvā'ī

Translated By: Sayyid Ali Musawi

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Preface and Acknowledgments

-By Sayyid Ali Musawi

In the name of God, the All-Beneficent, the Ever Merciful

The existing biographical works on the lives of the Twelve Imams ('a) tend to be strictly narrative in nature, and do not deal with the social or political aspects of their lives. This book, by contrast, in addition to narrating the biographies of the Imams, goes into the details of how they worked to spread the true teachings of Islam in their respective societies. Indeed, we are indebted to these Twelve Guides; without their teachings and guidance, we would have been plunged into the depths of darkness.

Although this book began as a project many years ago, it has finally reached completion today, April 25, 2019. We thank God for his blessings, which weigh heavy on us, and we ask that he guides us on his path and that he allows us to be more perfect in serving him. Truly, nothing is possible except through God.

I would like to extend my gratitude and thanks to my parents, who have been integral in teaching and guiding me throughout all of my years. I would also like to thank everyone who has been a part of this journey thus far, particularly my teachers in the religious seminary of Qum,

Iran. My time there proved invaluable in forging me into the person I am today, and I would not trade those years for anything in this world. I would also like to thank the members of the Noor Collective in San Diego, California for creating the platform which inspired this publication. Finally, I would like to thank Issa D. for his help in the final round of editing this manuscript, as well as Haider al-Shaher for his work on the cover page. May we all be worthy one day to call ourselves the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)...

Sayyid Ali Musawi
April 25, 2019
San Diego, California

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The Tenth Imam

Imam ʿAlī al-Hādī

A Brief Look at the Life of Imam Hādī

Imam ʿAlī al-Hādī (ʿa) is the tenth of the twelve leaders of the Shia world. He was born in the middle of the month of Dhul Ḥijjah, in the year 212 Hijrī. His place of birth is an area called Ṣarīya,[1] located on the outskirts of Medina. His father is the Ninth Imam, Imam Jawād (ʿa), and his honorable mother was a virtuous and pious woman by the name of Samānah.[2] Naqī and Hādī are some the more famous titles of the Tenth Imam, and he is also known as Abū al-Ḥasan the Third (Thālīth).[3] Imam Hādī (ʿa) succeeded the imamate in the year 220 Hijrī, after the martyrdom of his father, when he was only eight years old. The period of his imamate lasted thirty three years, and he lived until 254 Hijrī, before being martyred at the age of 41 in the city of Sāmarrā, Iraq.

Caliphs who Lived during the Time of Imam Hādi

Imam Hādī (ʿa) lived during the time of several ʿAbbāsid caliphs during the period of his imamate. These caliphs were:

1- Muʿtaṣim, the brother of Maʾmūn (217-227)
2- Wāthiq, the son of Muʿtaṣim (227-232)
3- Mutawakil, the brother of Wāthiq (232-248)
4- Muntaṣir, the son of Mutawakil (6 months)
5- Mustaʿīn, the son of Muntaṣir's uncle (248-252)
6- Muʿtazz, the other son of Mutawakil (252-255)

Imam Hādī (ʿa) was poisoned under the last caliph. He

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[1] Ṭabarsī, ʿIlām al-Warā Biʿilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 355.
- Shaykh Mufīd, al-ʾIrshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 327.

[2] Ṭabarsī, ʿIlām al-Warā Biʿilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 355.
- Shaykh Mufīd, al-ʾIrshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 327.

[3] Ṭabarsī, ʿIlām al-Warā Biʿilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 355. According to the Shia narrators, Abū al-Ḥasan the first was Imam Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar (a), and Abū al-Ḥasan the second was the 8th Imam (a).

was martyred and buried in his own house.

Political and Social Conditions during the Life of the Imam

This particular period of time in the ʿAbbāsid caliphate has certain characteristics which sets it apart from other periods. These particularities include:

1- The decline of the power of the caliphate: The caliphate, whether under the Umayyads or under the ʿAbbāsids, possessed a great deal of power and prestige. However, Imam ʿAlī al-Hādī's era saw the gradual dissipation of this power due to the influence of the Turks, as well as various slave groups over the government. The government fell into the hands of certain parties, and the position of the caliphate became more of a ceremonial one, rather than a position of supreme power and command. At the same time, it must be noted that if any danger ever presented itself, the caliphs, their supporters, and the functionaries of the government all rallied behind one another to suppress that danger.

2- The self-indulgence of the court officials: The ʿAbbāsid caliphs of this period spent most of their time engaged in parties, wine drinking, and other forms of pleasure-seeking. The palace was fully immersed in corruption and sin. The pages of history have recorded in detail what transpired in these parties.

3- The prevalence of oppression and injustice: Oppression, tyranny, and the continuous plunder of the public treasury caused people's mass discontent towards their rulers.

4- The spread of Alawī movements: During this time, the ʿAbbāsid government sought to create enmity against the Alawīs in the wider society. Through such means, they wanted to weaken the power of the Alawīs and neutralize their ability to revolt against the rulers. Whenever the government felt the smallest threat from the Alawīs, it would initiate a disproportionate and merciless response.

The reason behind the severity of their actions was that the 'Abbāsids felt their government to be weak and fragile, in spite of their tight control over the society. It was for this reason that they feared these Alawī movements to such a degree.

During this time, the Alawīs invited the people under the leadership of a "Selected Individual from the Family of Muḥammad," deliberately not naming any single individual to the leadership position of their movement. The reason for this was that the leaders of the movement knew that their Imams ('a) were somewhere in the fortress city of Sāmara'. They were carefully being watched and thus, naming any of them to this position would certainly result in their murder. These movements were a reaction to the widespread oppression and tyranny which hovered over the Muslim society, and they had a direct relationship to the amount of pressure exerted over the people by the caliphs. For example, under Muntaṣir's rule, there were no revolts. This was because Muntaṣir was inclined to a certain degree towards the family of the Prophet, and so, he did not persecute the Shias too greatly during his rule. Yet history has recorded 18 revolts from the year 219 until 270 Hijrī. These revolts were all suppressed and defeated by the 'Abbāsid government.

The Reason behind the Defeats

The reason behind the defeats of these various revolts can, on the one hand, be argued to have been caused by weak leadership, while on the other hand, it can be argued that it was caused by weaknesses in the supporters of these movements as well. Virtually all of the leaders of these revolts lacked a correct and complete program of action and therefore, disorganization and chaos appeared in their movements. From yet another perspective, their revolts could not be justified as one hundred percent Islamic in orientation. Due to this reason, they were not sanctioned

by the respective Imams of their time.

Of course, it must be mentioned that a segment of the people who participated in these revolts were sincere and true Shias, who fought to the death for their Islamic ideals. At the same time, it has to be understood that these individuals were usually very small in number, and the majority of the rebels were people who did not possess clear Islamic goals. They would simply rise up as a reaction against the oppression and tyranny that had been inflicted upon them, and so their primary goal was to just improve their immediate situation. When these individuals felt the first indications of defeat or impending death, they would quickly disperse, causing the movement to fall apart.

As mentioned before, most of these revolts were not given sanction by the Imams (ʿa). This was either due to issues with their leaders, or because the movements did not have Islamic aims in mind, or due to various other problems related to their organization. Sometimes, their plans and policies were so ineffectual that it was obvious that they were going to be defeated. If the Imams (ʿa) had openly sanctioned these revolts, and they were in turn defeated, the very foundation of the Shia movement would have been exposed to grave danger.

The Secret Activities of the Imam

As the timeline of the ʿAbbāsid caliphs shows, Mutawakil ruled for the longest period of time during the imamate of Imam Hādī (ʿa). For this reason, it is important for us to take a brief look at Mutawakil's policies towards the Imam and his followers. When we look at Mutawakil's rule, we find that he treated the Hāshimīs with a high degree of harshness and oppression. He was very suspicious of them and would go to great lengths to vilify them in the eyes of the people. His vizier, ʿUbaydullah ibn Yaḥyā ibn Khāqān, would always speak ill of the Hāshimīs in front of Mutawakil, and incite the caliph to persecute them. In

regards to the Alawīs, Mutawakil was the most severe of the 'Abbāsid caliphs during the time of the Imam.[4] It has been noted that Mutawakil had a strange hatred and animosity for Imam 'Alī ('a) and his descendants. If he ever learned that someone was inclined towards them, he would quickly seize their wealth and have them executed.[5]

It was due to these considerations that Imam Hādī ('a) was careful to conceal whatever activities he was engaged in. Whenever he would interact with his followers, he was careful to uphold the highest degree of secrecy and discretion. Evidence of this is found in an incident that historians have narrated-

Muḥammad ibn Sharaf has narrated: "I was walking with Imam Hādī ('a) in the city of Medina. The Imam ('a) said: 'Are you not the son of Sharaf?' I answered in the affirmative. At that point, I wanted to ask the Imam a question, when he said to me: 'Right now we are passing through this (busy) road; this area is not suitable for asking questions.'"[6] This shows the severity of the conditions which prevailed in the society and the degree of the Imam's ('a) secrecy and caution.

Having no other choice, Imam Hādī ('a) would show the same degree of discretion in his relations with the Shia. This was true whether they lived in far off regions, or whether they lived close by. In addition, he would collect money, gifts, and charitable dedications[7] with the same level of secrecy and caution. An example of this has been narrated in the books of history: Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd

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[4] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Maqātil al-Ṭālibīīn, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 395.
- Imam Hādī (a), The Islamic Organization of Information, The Office of Translations and Compilations, 1368 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 67.

[5] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 7, p. 55.

[6] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 176.
- 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 175.

[7] Nudhūr

Qummī and Muḥammad Ṭalḥī have narrated: "We were transporting money and other valuables from Qum (and its nearby areas), which included khūms, charitable dedications, gifts, and jewels for Imam Abū al-Ḥasan Hādī (ʿa). Along the way, a message from the Imam reached us and informed us that we should return, for the situation was not suitable for the delivery of this wealth.

We returned, and we kept what was in our possession until some time after, when the Imam (ʿa) ordered that the wealth be loaded on some camels that he had sent. He ordered that the camels be sent towards him without a driver to lead them. We loaded the camels and sent them on their way. After some time, we went to visit the Imam (ʿa). It was then that he said to us: 'Here is the wealth that you had sent.' We saw that the wealth was hidden in the house of the Imam in the same condition we had sent it in."[8] Although it is not clear whether this incident took place when the Imam (ʿa) was living in Medina or while he was in Sāmarrā' (where the severity of control was much greater), in either case, it is a clear example of the Imam's utmost secrecy in his dealings.

The Imam's Representatives

The restrictive conditions which the Imams (ʿa) lived in during the time of the ʿAbbāsid caliphate caused them to find new methods of maintaining connections with their followers. One such method involved the selection of representatives and deputies throughout the Muslim world and their organization into a tightly knit network through which they could maintain connections with their followers. One goal of this network was the collection of Khūms, Zakāt, charity, and gifts which were sent from various regions of the Muslim world. This economic network was vital to the survival of the Shia movement. In

[8] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 175.

addition to this, these representatives were instrumental in relaying questions related to various jurisprudential and ideological issues the Shias wished to ask the Imams. The Imams would answer these questions and their answers would in turn be sent back. This organization proved to be exceedingly effective in creating a hierarchy through which wealth was spread in strategic ways and the ideological basis of the Shias was strengthened.

Imam Hādī (ʿa) lived in a condition of severe restrictions in the city of Sāmarrā'. In spite of this, he continued the selection of the representatives; this was a policy which his father, Imam Jawād (ʿa), had first enacted. The absence of direct contact between the Imam (ʿa) and his followers enhanced the religio-political aspect of the deputies, and they took on an even higher level of responsibility. The deputies of the Imam (ʿa) gradually gained valuable experience in organizing the affairs of the Shias. Numerous pieces of historical evidence shows that the deputies had defined Shias as belonging to one of four different districts, according to where they lived within the Muslim world.

The first region included Baghdad, Madā'in, and Iraq (Kūfah). The second region contained Baṣrah and Ahwāz. The third contained Qum and Ḥamidān, while the fourth contained the Ḥijāz, Yemen, and Egypt. Each region was the responsibility of an independent deputy who would in turn select and supervise various local deputies. The duties of this group of representatives is evident from the commands of Imam Hādī (ʿa). It has been narrated that Imam Hādī (ʿa) once wrote a letter to his local deputy (in Baghdad), ʿAlī ibn Balāl. In it, he instructed: "...I have selected Abū ʿAlī (Ibn Rashīd) to replace ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd Rabih.[9] I have entrusted this duty to him for he

[9] ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd Rabih passed away in the year 229 in the city of Mecca and Imam Hādī (a) appointed Abū ʿAlī in his place. (Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Maʿrifat al-Rijāl (Popularly known as Rijāl Kashshī), researched by: Ḥasan Muṣṭafāwi,

possesses the necessary qualifications, and no one has precedence over him (i.e. there is no one better suited for this position). I know that you are the leader of your area, and so I wished to make you aware of this matter through a separate letter. Nevertheless, it is necessary that you follow him and entrust him with the money that has been collected. Encourage our other followers in this matter and inform them that they are to assist him, so that he may perform his duties..."[10]

In another letter, Imam Hādī ('a) wrote to his deputies in Baghdad, Madā'in, and Kūfah, saying: "Oh Ayūb ibn Nūḥ, as a result of this order, refrain from hindering Abū 'Alī. You are both charged with acting upon your duties in your specific areas. In this case, you can perform your duties without resorting to my consultation. Oh Ayūb, in the basis of this order, do not accept anything from the people of Baghdad and Madā'in, **and do not give any of them permission to contact me.** If anyone brings you money from outside of your area of responsibility, instruct him to send it to the deputy of his area. Oh Abū 'Alī! I also instruct you to enact exactly what I ordered Abū Ayūb to do."[11]

The Imam ('a) also sent a letter to his followers in Baghdad and Madā'in, as well as the surrounding regions, through Abū 'Alī ibn Rashīd. In that letter, he wrote: "...I have selected Abū 'Alī ibn Rashīd to replace Ḥusayn ibn

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Mashhad, University of Mashhad, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 510, Ḥadīth 984).

In some traditions, Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd Rabih (meaning the father of 'Alī) has been mentioned, but 'Allāmah Muḥammad Taqī Shūshtarī has brought forward some evidence which shows that the individual that was the representative of Imam Hādī (a) was 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd Rabih, and not his father (Tastarī, Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī, Qāmūs al-Rijāl, Tehran, The Center for Book Publications, vol. 3, p. 468).

[10] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 513, Ḥadīth 991.

- Doctor Ḥusayn, Jāsim, The Political History of the Ghaybah of the Twelfth Imam, translated by Doctor Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Ayatollāhī, First Print, Tehran, Amīr Kabīr Institute, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 137.

[11] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 514, Ḥadīth 992.

- Doctor Ḥusayn, Jāsim, Ibid, p. 137-138.

ʿAbd Rabih and my previous deputies, and his position is the same to me as that of Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd Rabih. I have also given the authority of the previous deputies to Abū ʿAlī ibn Rashīd, so that he can collect the money related to me. I have appointed an individual to this position who is worthy of and suitable for managing your affairs. You, may God's mercy be upon you, should go to him to pay your dues. May it not be that you strain your relations with him, and do not even think of opposing him. Hasten towards the obedience of God and the purification of your wealth. Abstain from shedding each other's blood. Assist one another in the path of good action and piety, and be pious so that God covers you with his mercy. Remain connected with God and do not die except as Muslims. **I consider obeying his orders to be as necessary as obeying mine, and disobeying him to be a form of disobedience against myself.** Therefore, remain on this path and God will reward you; through his grace, he will improve your situation. (Allah) is giving and generous with his treasures, and he is merciful and magnanimous towards his servants. Both us and you are under his protection. I have written this letter with my own hand. All praise and thanks is only to God."[12]

ʿAlī ibn Jaʿfar was one of the other deputies of Imam Hādī (ʿa). He was from Hamīnīya, a village near Baghdad. The news of ʿAlī ibn Jaʿfar's activities reached Mutawakil, and Mutawakil arrested and imprisoned him. After spending a long period of time in jail, he was freed, and by the order of Imam Hādī (ʿa), he left for the city of Mecca and took up residence there.[13] In mentioning the deputies

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[12] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 513-514.
- Mudarisī, Muḥammad Taqī, Imāmāne Shīʾah va Janbishhāye Maktabī, translated by Ḥamīd Riḍā Ājhīr, Mashhad, The Islamic Research Institute, p. 323.

[13] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 607, Ḥadīth 1129.
- Masʿūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīya, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥaydarīa, 1374 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 233. God willing, we will discuss ʿAlī ibn Jaʿfar's activities in Mecca in further detail in the chapter on Imam ʿAskarī (a).

of Imam Hādī ('a), we must also mention Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad Hamidānī. Imam Hādī ('a) wrote a letter to him saying: "The money you sent has arrived. May God accept this from you and be satisfied with our Shia, and place them with us both in this world and the next."

This letter clearly shows that Ibrāhīm had financial responsibilities which he performed on behalf of the Imam ('a). In addition to this, he was also responsible for delivering the collected money of the Shia to the Imam. Later in that letter, Imam Hādī ('a) commended his activities and said: "I wrote a letter to Naḍr[14] and instructed him not to hinder you or oppose you; I have made your position clear to him. I have also instructed Ayūb[15] in the exact same matter. Likewise, I sent a letter to your friends in Ḥamidān and have established that they should follow you, and have reminded them that: 'We do not have any deputies in that area besides yourself.'"[16]

In any case, the role of the deputies and representatives (particularly, during the rule of Mutawakil) is quite clear at this point. Mutawakil, in turn, engaged in training military forces who were ideologically anti-Alawī, in order to counter these organizations which were working against him. He enacted a policy of arresting Shias and applied this policy with such severity and harshness that some of the Imam's deputies in Baghdad, Madā'in, Kūfah, and other regions of Iraq, died while under torture. Another group was arrested by Mutawakil and they suffered greatly in his jails.[17] These policies seriously hampered the Imam's

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[14] Naḍr ibn Muḥammad Hamidānī (Tanqīh al-Maqal, vol. 3, p. 271).

[15] Ayūb ibn Nūḥ ibn Dāraj (Qāmūs al-Rijāl, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmīya, al-Ṭabia'at Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn Biqum al-Mushariffah, Second Edition, 1410 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 242).

[16] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Ma'rifatul Rijāl, Mashhad, Mashhad University, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 611-612, Ḥadīth 1136.

[17] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 603 and 607 (Ḥadīth: 1122, 1129, and 1130).

- Doctor Ḥusayn, Jāsim, The Political History of the Ghaybah of the Twelfth Imam, translated by Doctor Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Ayatollāhī, First Print, Tehran, Amīr Kabīr Institute, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 83.

network, but despite these serious challenges, Imam Hādī ('a) was able to keep the system active and effective in achieving its goals.

The Expulsion of the Imam to Sāmarrā'

Mutawakil, following the policy of his forefathers, decided to do something which would finally set his mind at ease in order to keep Imam Hādī ('a) under closer surveillance and control. In previous pages, we learned about Ma'mūn's method of dealing with the Imam who lived during his time period. Ma'mūn, through the marriage which he brought about, was able to create a means of control over the Imam's ('a) life. This level of control was so great that even when the Imam ('a) was in his own house, he was under the watchful eye of the caliph. Virtually all of the Imam's ('a) actions and words were under close watch.

After the martyrdom of Imam Jawād ('a), and the succession of Imam Hādī ('a) to the imamate, the need for similar policies became apparent to the caliph. If Imam Hādī ('a) was allowed to continue living in Medina, he would be out of reach of the caliph and thus pose a serious danger to his power and authority. It was here that whenever the least news reached the caliph about the potential danger of the Imam ('a), he would become encouraged towards acting upon his plans. When a letter from the governor of Medina reached the caliph, it became a cause for concern, and he decided to move the Imam ('a) from Medina to Sāmarrā'.

'Abdullah ibn Muḥammad Hāshimī, the governor of Medina at that time, had written a letter to the caliph warning him in severe terms of the political activities of the Imam ('a). This letter described the grassroots support of the Imam ('a),[18] which made the caliph fearful. At the same

- Ṭūsī, Kītāb al-Ghaybah, Tehran, Maktabah Naynawā al-Ḥadīthah, p. 212.

[18] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol.

time, Imam Hādī ('a) dispatched a letter to Mutawakil rejecting the claims of 'Abdullah, and complaining against him.

Mutawakil, much like the majority of the politicians of this world, through careful calculation, decided on a move which would kill two birds with one stone. He ended up removing 'Abdullah ibn Muḥammad from his position and he also ordered the scribe of his court to send a letter to the Imam ('a) which, while appearing to express great love towards him, was in reality an arrest warrant for the Imam ('a).

The letter mentioned the following: "In the name of God. After praising and thanking God, the Commander of the Faithful knows you quite well and observes your greatness and lineage to the Prophet of God. His only goal is in gaining the satisfaction and pleasure of you and of God. At the present time, it has been ordered, according to your request, that the military commander and Friday prayer leader, 'Abdullah ibn Muḥammad, be removed due to his disrespect towards you. Muḥammad ibn Faḍl has instead been appointed in his place. He has been instructed to be obedient to your orders, and to do his utmost in respecting and honoring you, so that through these means, he may gain nearness to God, his Prophet, and to the Commander of the Faithful (Mutawakil).

The Commander of the Faithful is eager to see you, in order that the pledge may be renewed. If you are inclined to visit the caliph and you have love towards him, you can depart, along with your family, friends, and supporters. The details of the journey are up to you, and you may stop

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50, p. 200.

- Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 333. In addition to 'Abdullah ibn Muḥammad, according to the narration of Mas'ūdī, Barīḥah 'Abbāsī, who was the supervisor of order in the ranks of prayer in the Ḥaramayn (Mecca and Medina), had also written to Mutawakil numerous times, saying: "If you have a need of the Ḥaramayn, then expel 'Alī ibn Muḥammad from there, for he invites the people towards himself, and a diverse group is following him." (Mas'ūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīya, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭba'at al-Ḥaydarīa, 1374 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 225).

wherever you wish. If you are thus inclined, Yaḥyā ibn Harthamah, the caliph's official, will accompany the caravan, and would be honored to serve you. You are very respected in our eyes and we are greatly inclined towards you. May the peace and blessings of God be upon you."[19]

Without a doubt, the Imam ('a) was well aware of Mutawakil's evil intentions, but he had no choice but to depart towards Sāmarrā'. Not accepting this invitation would have been used as evidence for the ones who had complained against him, and become a cause for the further incitement of Mutawakil. It would have given Mutawakil an even greater pretext and created further problems for the Imam ('a). Testimony that the Imam ('a) was aware of Mutawakil's intentions are found in a letter from the Imam ('a) himself where he said: "They brought me from Medina to Sāmarrā' by force."[20] In any case, the Imam ('a) received the invitation letter, and without having a choice, departed towards Sāmarrā' alongside Yaḥyā ibn Harthamah.[21]

The Report of the Commander of Mutawakil's Castle

Yaḥyā ibn Harthama, who was charged with taking Imam Hādī ('a) from Medina to Sāmarrā', explained the events of his mission in the following words: "I entered the city of Medina, and went to the house of 'Alī (al-Naqī).

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[19] Majlisī, Ibid, vol. 50, p. 200.
- Kulaynī, Ūṣūl al-Kāfī, Tehran, Maktabah al-Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 501.

[20] Majlisī, Ibid, p. 129.

[21] Ibn Shahr Âshūb, in his book Manāqib Āli Abī Ṭālib, has mentioned the summoning of the Imam (a) to Sāmarrā' to have taken place in the year 234 Hijrī. This is because he considers the residence of the Imam (a) in Sāmarrā' to have been 20 years in duration, and his passing to have taken place in 254, which therefore would place the Imam's (a) displacement in the year 234. The late Shaykh Mufīd in his Irshād (p. 333) has written: "Mutawakil wrote a letter to the Imam (a) in the year 243, but the narration of Kulaynī on this matter shows that in the year 243 a copy of this letter was made" (Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 501), and it was not the actual year that the Imam (a) was summoned to Sāmarrā'. From a political angle, the opinion of Ibn Shahr Âshūb seems more substantial, for if we pay attention to the fact that Mutawakil's caliphate began in the year 232 Hijrī, then it is unlikely that he was uninformed or did not care about the Imam's activities for a period of 11 years.

After I entered his house, the people realized that he had been summoned, and a strange disquiet and distress arose in the city. There was so much yelling and wailing, that, until that day, I had never witnessed anything quite like it.

At first, through swearing and giving my pledge, I tried to calm them down. I said: 'There are no ill intentions in this matter, and I am not an agent designed to harass or bother him.' Then I engaged in inspecting and searching the (Imam's) house and his belongings. I did not find anything in his room except for a number of Qurans and books of supplication. Several agents then escorted him outside of his house, and I served him from there until Sāmarrā'.

After entering Baghdad, I initially met with Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm Ṭāhirī, who was the governor of Baghdad. He said to me: 'Yaḥyā, this gentleman is the descendent of the Prophet; if you encourage and provoke Mutawakil in killing him, then know that his avenger and your enemy will be the Prophet of God himself.' In response, I said: 'I swear by God that I have not seen anything but goodness from him, for me to do such a thing.' Then I began to journey towards Sāmarrā', and after entering the city, I narrated what had taken place to Waṣīf Turkī.[22] He, in turn, said to me: 'If one hair on his head is harmed, you will be the one responsible.' The words of Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm and Waṣīf Turkī surprised me. After entering the palace of Mutawakil and meeting with him, I gave him a report of my journey. At this point, I saw that Mutawakil was also treating the Imam ('a) with much respect and honor."[23]

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[22] Waṣīf was one of the influential court officials during the time of Mutawakil.

[23] Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 359-360.
From the words of Yaḥyā ibn Harthamah, in regards to the people's reaction to the summoning of the Imam (a), it is quite clear how the Imam (a) was regarded and his level of social support. Also, from the words of Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm and Waṣīf, a similar understanding can be gained as to how much the Imam (a) was loved by the masses, as well as by individuals in the caliph's court.

The Imam's Arrival into Sāmarrā'

In accordance with Mutawakil's order, and on the pretext that the place where the Imam ('a) was to live was not yet ready, the Imam ('a) was instead housed in a very low scale and humble residence. The inn he was taken to was known as Khān al-Ṣa'ālīk, a place where the poor and needy were housed; the Imam ('a) spent his first day at this inn. The intention behind this arrangement was to humiliate the Imam ('a) and lower his position in the eyes of the people.[24] The next day, another place was selected as the permanent residence of the Imam ('a).[25]

As far as appearances were concerned, the Imam ('a) was free to do whatever he wished and go wherever he pleased, but the reality was that he was essentially a prisoner. In his residence, he was constantly under watch, and the agents of the caliph would know of all his comings and goings, as well as his meetings. Yazdād, the Christian physician and the student of Bakhtīshū', has written on the issue of the forced transfer of the Imam ('a) to Sāmarrā: "If anyone has knowledge of the unseen, it is he. They have brought him here in order to prevent the people from rallying around him, for they view his very existence as a threat to their government."[26]

The fear and terror that Mutawakil felt from the spiritual influence of the Imam ('a) over the people can be properly felt from his selection of the Imam's ('a) place of residence. Even in spite of all these precautions, Mutawakil still felt fearful and anxious about the presence of the Imam ('a); he felt that his government was under serious

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[24] The intention behind this action was not hidden from the people— Sālih ibn Sa'īd is included amongst them. He has mentioned: "On the day that the Imam (a) entered Sāmarrā', I said to him: 'They are continuously trying to extinguish your light, and for this very reason, they have put you in this lowly and wretched inn.'" (Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, p. 334; 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, vol. 3, p. 173).

[25] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 334.

[26] Majlisī, Ibid, vol. 50, p. 161.

threat. He feared that, somehow, the followers of the Imam ('a) would secretly get in touch with him and plan a revolt against the caliph. He further imagined that they were collecting money and stockpiling weapons to these ends, and that they were training individuals to fight against him.

From time to time, the people who surrounded the caliph would warn him in regards to the possibility of the Imam ('a) revolting. Therefore, Mutawakil would order that the house of the Imam ('a) be searched carefully. Although the agents would return empty-handed each time, Mutawakil remained deeply anxious and felt a sense of acute danger.

A Drinking Party is Disrupted

During one incident, some individuals complained about Imam Hādī ('a) in front of Mutawakil. They claimed that there were weapons, letters, and other things in his house which had been sent from his followers in Qum and that the Imam ('a) was about to revolt against the government. Mutawakil quickly sent a group of agents to raid his house at night, but they did not find anything of value. They instead found the Imam ('a) sitting alone in a room, wearing woolen clothing, with the door closed. He was sitting on the ground, which was covered with sand and grit, busy worshipping God and reciting the Quran.

They took the Imam ('a) in that very state to Mutawakil and said: "We did not find anything in his home, and we found him facing the Qiblah and reciting the Quran." When Mutawakil saw the Imam ('a), he was taken by the Imam's ('a) majesty and dignity. He began to treat the Imam ('a) with respect and honor and sat him next to himself. He then offered him the cup of wine that he had in his hand. It appears that the caliph had become so accustomed to drinking and other such sins that he had long forgotten what was considered lawful and unlawful in

Islam. The Imam ('a) said: "My blood and my flesh has never been mixed with such a thing, so excuse me." Mutawakil withdrew the cup and instead said: "Then recite a poem."

The Imam ('a)... said: "I have few poems memorized by heart." Mutawakil said: "In that case, you must recite something." The Imam ('a) then recited a poem, which roughly translates into: *"The predatory and powerful rulers have turned night into day on the mountain peaks, while the strong protected them. Yet the mountains were unable to save them from death. After a period of honor and majesty, they were pulled down from their secure places and placed in their graves; what a disagreeable house and resting place. After they were entrusted to the dirt, a voice calls out: 'Where are the bracelets, crowns, and fine clothing? Where are those faces which were nurtured in blessings and finery, and for whom fine curtains were hung?' The Grave answered for them, saying: 'The worms are fighting each other over who gets to consume those very faces!' They drank and ate in this world, but today, those very people, who were the devourers of all things, are food for the insects and worms of the grave— they are now to be devoured.*

Such homes did they build to protect themselves from the vicissitudes of time, but in the end, they left those homes and families, and hastened towards the abode of the grave! What wealth and savings they had stored, yet they left them all and went, leaving these riches for their enemies. Their homes and palaces were transformed into ruins, and their inheritors likewise hastened towards their own dark graves."

The effects of the Imam's words were such that Mutawakil began to weep deeply, until his beard was soaked with his tears. The other individuals who were present, also began to cry. Mutawakil ordered that the wine cups be put away, and he presented 4,000 dirhams to the Imam ('a), and returned the Imam ('a) to his home with dignity and

respect.[27]

Imam Hādī in Mutawakil's Prison

Mutawakil possessed a strange hatred and animosity towards the Imam ('a), and he was always working on new plans to harass and persecute him. Although the Imam ('a) lived the life of a virtual prisoner in Sāmarrā' and was constantly under surveillance, this proved to not be enough for the caliph. At one point, Mutawakil ordered that the Imam ('a) be imprisoned for a period of time.

Ṣaqar ibn Abī Dalf has narrated: "When they brought Imam Hādī ('a) to Sāmarrā', I went to see how he was doing. Zarrāfi, the doorkeeper of Mutawakil, saw me and instructed me to enter. I entered and he asked: 'What is the reason behind your visit?' I said that: 'I have come for a good cause.' He then told me to sit and wait. I sat down, but after some time, fear overtook me and I went deep into thought, thinking that I had perhaps made a mistake in coming to visit the Imam ('a).

Zarrāfī took care of the other people who had come and he then excused them. When the room became empty, he said: 'What did you need and for what reason did you come?' I said: 'I have come for a good cause.' He said: 'Perhaps you have come to see how your master is doing.' I said: 'Who is my master? My master is the caliph!'

He then said: 'Be silent, for your master is on the path of the truth. Do not be afraid, for I am also on (the path) of your conviction and consider him as my Imam.' After

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[27] Mas'ūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 4, p. 11.
- Shablanjī, Nūr al-Abṣār, Cairo, Maktabah Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 166.
- Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 361.
- Ibn Khallakān, Wafīyāt al-'Ayān, Researched by: Doctor Iḥsān 'Abbās, Second Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Sharīf al-Rāḍī, 1364 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 3, p. 272.
- Qalqashandī, Māthar al-'Anāfah Fī Ma'ālim al-Khalāfah, Second Edition, Maṭba'at Ḥūkūmat al-Kuwayt, vol. 1, p. 232.

In various historical texts, there are some small differences in the number of couplets and lines.

hearing this, I thanked God. He then said: 'Do you wish to see him?' I said: 'Yes.' He said: 'Sit for a while until the messenger leaves.' When he left, he indicated towards me and said to his servant: 'Take him to the room where the Alawī is imprisoned; leave him there, and return.'

When I went to see the Imam ('a), I saw him sitting on a straw mat, and there was an open grave excavated in front of him. I gave him my Salāms (greetings). He asked me to sit and so I sat down. He asked: 'For what reason have you come?' I replied: 'I have come to see how you are doing.' At this point, I looked at the grave and began to weep. He said: 'Do not cry, for no harm will come to me during this captivity.' Hearing him say this, I thanked God. Then, I went ahead and asked him the meaning of a tradition, and the Imam ('a) answered. After answering, he said: 'Leave me and go outside, for I do not feel safe for you and I fear that they may harm you.'"[28]

From one perspective, this event shows the severity and harshness of Mutawakil's treatment of Imam Hādī ('a), and from another perspective, it shows the extent of the Imam's ('a) influence over the court officials, even the very high ranking officials of the caliph. During the last days of his life, Mutawakil ordered his agent Sa'īd ibn Ḥājib to murder the Imam ('a). Yet, the Imam ('a) said: "It will not be more than two days until Mutawakil shall be killed," and the events took place in exactly this manner.[29]

The Crimes and Persecution of Mutawakil against the Shia

Out of all the 'Abbāsid caliphs, Mutawakil was known for having committed the most crimes during his rule. He

[28] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 49, p. 194.
- Imam 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Hādī, Mu'assaseye Dar Rāhe Ḥaq, p. 16.

[29] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 184.

had a very particular hatred and animosity against Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), his family, and his followers. As a result, his rule is counted as being among the most difficult for the Shias and the Alawīs. While, for the sake of space, we cannot mention all of his crimes, let us take a cursory look at a few of them:

1- During his rule, a group from amongst the Alawīs was imprisoned, while another group was forced to flee and became fugitives. Muḥammad ibn Ṣālih, who was from the grandchildren of Imam al-Mujtabā (ʿa), and Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar, who was one of the emissaries of Ḥasan ibn Zayd, who had revolted in Tabaristān, are two examples of such individuals.[30]

2- In the year 236 Hijrī, Mutawakil ordered that the shrine of the Master of Martyrs, Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), be demolished, and the land around it cultivated. He also had a military post built nearby, in order that visits to the shrine could be prevented. It seems that no one from among the Muslims was prepared to demolish the shrine of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), so Mutawakil gave the task to an individual named Dīzaj, who was from among the Jews. Mutawakil then announced that visiting Imam Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (ʿa) was now prohibited, and if anyone were to do so, they would face punishment.[31] Mutawakil feared that the shrine of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) would become a base of action against him. He feared that the martyrdom of the Imam (ʿa) would serve as an example for people willing to fight to the death against his oppressive government, in the same way that the Imam (ʿa) had been killed fighting against the oppressors of his time. In spite of these measures, the Shias and supporters of the Imam (ʿa) did not give up their pilgrimages to the shrine. These pilgrims suffered through

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[30] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Maqātil al-Ṭālibīīn, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 397-418.

[31] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Ibid, p. 395.

- Masʿūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 4, p. 51.

- Suyūṭī, Tārikh al-Khūlafā, Third Edition, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, p. 347.

every kind of torture and harm, but they were not willing to give up their visits under any circumstance. After the death of Mutawakil, the Shias, with the assistance of the Alawīs, once again rebuilt and restored the shrine of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa).[32]

The destruction of the shrine of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) enraged the Muslims, and this reached the point that the people of Baghdad began to write slogans against Mutawakil on the doors and walls of buildings and mosques. Poets would compose and recite verses satirizing and insulting him.

3- Under his rule, he martyred many notable individuals from among the Muslims and the supporters of the family of the Prophet; one of these individuals was Ibn Sikkīt, a loyal companion of Imam Jawād (ʿa) and Imam Hādī (ʿa). Ibn Sikkīt was a famous Shia poet and literary figure, who was executed on the orders of Mutawakil, due to his crime of loving Imam ʿAlī (ʿa).[33] One day, Mutawakil pointed to his two sons and asked him: "Are these two sons of mine more beloved in your view or Ḥasan and Ḥusayn?" Ibn Sikkīt became very angry at this outrageous comparison and his blood began to boil. Without hesitation, he said: "I swear by God that in my view, Qanbar, the servant of ʿAlī is better than both you and your two sons." Mutawakil became enraged and ordered that his tongue be pulled out from the back of his head.[34]

4- Khatīb Baghdādī, has written on the subject of the torture and persecution of the supporters of the family of

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[32] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Ibid, p. 396. Also refer to: Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Sadir, vol. 7, p. 55.

[33] The name of Ibn Sikkīt was Yaʿqūb, and the name of his father was Isḥāq. He was one of the famous Shia scholars and literary figures. His expertise extended to many sciences, including the Quranic sciences, poetry, and grammar. He also composed his own books on these subjects, and according to certain experts in these fields, these books were unmatched in their depth and excellence. (Mudarris Tabrizī, Muḥammad ʿAlī, Rayḥānat al-'Adab, Third Print, Tehran, Khayyām Bookstore, 1347 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 7, p. 570).

[34] Suyūṭī, Ibid, p. 348.

- Māmaqānī, Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl, Tehran, Jahān Publications, vol. 3, p. 570.

the Prophet by Mutawakil. He has written: "Mutawakil the ʿAbbāsid had Naṣr ibn ʿAlī Jahaḍmī lashed for narrating a tradition about the virtues and merits of Imam ʿAlī, Fāṭimah, Imam Ḥasan, and Imam Ḥusayn. He was lashed 1,000 times and Mutawakil did not leave him alone until people had testified that he was from the Ahl al-Sunnah sect."[35]

5- Mutawakil would give exorbitant amounts of money to poets like Marwān ibn Abī al-Junūb, in order that they compose poetry about the legitimacy of the ʿAbbāsid government and in slander of the Hāshimīs.[36]

6- When Mutawakil began to form a new kind of military force called the Shākirīya, he hired individuals from areas which were known for their anti-Alawī sentiments, such as Syria, Algeria, Jabal, Ḥijāz, and ʿAnaba.[37]

7- He ordered the governor of Egypt to exile the descendants of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) from Egypt to Iraq; the governor did as he was ordered. This group was later forcibly transferred to Medina in the year 236 Hijrī.[38]

8- He would fire the Shia from their government positions and destroy their standing in the public eye. For example, Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm was removed from his position as the governor of Sāmarrā' and Sayrawān, in the province of Jabal. He was removed on the charge of being a Shia. Other individuals lost their positions for similar reasons.[39]

Mutawakil, through the application of these methods, attempted to suppress any potential danger from the Shias towards his government. Ultimately, he was unsuccessful in preventing Shia movements from taking place, and as

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[35] Tārīkh Baghdad, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabīya, vol. 13, p. 289.

[36] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Hādī (a), First Edition, Beirut, 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 292.

[37] Doctor Ḥusayn, Jāsim, The Political History of the Ghaybah of the Twelfth Imam, translated by Doctor Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Ayatollāhī, First Print, Tehran, Amīr Kabīr Institute, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 82.

[38] Doctor Ḥusayn, Ibid, p. 84.

[39] Doctor Ḥusayn, Ibid, p. 84.

mentioned previously, Imam Hādī ('a) continued to communicate with the Shia in secret.

Economic Pressure on the Shia

In order to weaken the power of the Shia and destroy their potential for revolt, Mutawakil placed them under severe economic pressure. The pressure was unprecedented, in spite of the existence of many tyrannical and oppressive rulers throughout the past history of the nation. It is known that after the passing of the Prophet (ṣ), the Shia were continuously under economic stress and difficulty. In addition to the seizure of Fadak from Fāṭimah ('a), which was in reality a political move designed to weaken the economic power of Imam 'Alī ('a) and the Hāshimīs, many other examples can be witnessed throughout Islamic history. One such example involves Mū'āwīya and his tactics against the Shia, and in particular against the Hāshimīs. One of the tactics which Mū'āwīya employed in order to gain the pledge of allegiance from Imam Ḥusayn ('a) for the successorship of his son Yazīd was to put a stop on all stipends to the Hāshimīs. He hoped that by stopping the flow of money from the public treasury to the Hāshimīs, pressure would be exerted on Imam Ḥusayn ('a) and he would eventually accept the nomination of Yazīd to the successorship of the caliphate.[40]

Another example would be the economic tactics of Abū Ja'far Manṣūr Dawānīqī, the second 'Abbāsid caliph. Manṣūr implemented a widespread and comprehensive program of economic repression, and his goal in doing so was to make the people dependent upon him. He reasoned that, if the people were too busy trying to fulfil their most basic needs and satiate their hunger, they would have neither the energy, nor the time to contemplate issues

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[40] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 3, p. 511.
- Ibn Qutayba, al-Imāmah wa al-Sīyāsah, Third Edition, Cairo, Maktabah Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1382 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 191.

related to their society and government. One day, Manṣūr, in a gathering of his court officials, sarcastically explained the reasons behind his economic policies. He said: "The Bedouin Arabs have said it well, when they say: 'Keep your dog hungry, so that he will follow you in the hopes of bread.'"[41] These words show how petty and worthless the people were in the eyes of the ʿAbbāsid rulers.

With these policies of economic deprivation, the Shias were hit with a disproportionate share of repression and hardship. This was due to the fact that they were continuously first in revolting and fighting against the oppressive rulers. As a result, the caliphs considered them to be a major threat against their government. Harun's government was not an exception to such economic tactics. Hārūn took complete control over the public treasury and spent vast amounts of money on his personal whims and desires; his court officials also engaged in similar behavior. While the caliph was busy spending massive amounts of money on his own personal whims, he would deprive the Shias of their legitimate financial rights, and through these means, he sought to cripple them economically.

Therefore, it is evident that the Shia had a long history of such economic deprivation— they were no strangers to such policies. Still, as mentioned before, the pressures exerted during the caliphate of Mutawakil were unique in their severity and breadth. To understand this issue more clearly, let us look at the following points:

1- He was so economically severe on the Shia that it has been narrated that: "During that time period, a group of Alawī women in Medina did not have even a single proper pair of clothing with which to pray. They only collectively possessed one tattered piece of clothing; during the time of prayer, they would take turns with one another in using it

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[41] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar (a), Najaf, Maṭbaʿat al-Adab, Second Edition, 1389 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 369. (Narrated from the book: The Era of Ma'mūn (Aṣr al-Ma'mūn)).

in order to pray. They remained in such difficulties until Mutawakil was killed."[42]

2- Mutawakil made 'Umar ibn Faraj Rukhkhajī the governor of Mecca and Medina. 'Umar would prohibit the people from acting kindly and with goodness towards the descendants of Imam 'Alī, and he was very severe and uncompromising in this matter. The people feared for their lives and so they stopped assisting the Alawīs and as a result, the lives of the descendants of Imam 'Alī became even more difficult.[43]

3- Mutawakil seized Fadak, which belonged to the Alawīs.[44] It has been narrated that the income generated from Fadak was equal to 24,000 dinars during that time. Mutawakil gifted Fadak to 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar Bāzīyār, who was one of his supporters.[45]

4- He ordered his governor in Egypt to:

A- Not allow any of the Alawīs to own property, ride horses, or travel from Fustat to any of the other cities.

B- Not allow any Alawī to own more than one slave.

C- In the case that a dispute arose between an Alawī and a non-Alawī, the judge must first hear the testimony of the non-Alawī, and then, without hearing the Alawī's testimony, he should rule in favor of the non-Alawī.[46]

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[42] Ḥajj Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, Tatamat al-Muntahā, Tehran, Markazī Bookstore, 1333 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 238 and 239.

- Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Maqātil al-Ṭālibīīn, Second Edition, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 396.

[43] Ḥajj Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, Ibid, p. 238 and 239.

- Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Ibid, p. 396.

[44] In Fadak, there were 11 date palms which the Prophet (s) had planted with his own hands. The descendants of Fāṭimah would gift the fruits of those trees to the Ḥajj pilgrims, and as a result of the blessing of those trees, they came to possess a great deal of wealth. 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar Bāzīyār sent an individual by the name of Bishrān ibn Abī 'Ummaya Thaqafī to Medina, in order to cut down those trees. The man cut down the trees but as soon as he returned to Baṣrah, he became paralyzed. (Mūsawī Qazwīnī Hā'irī, Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥasan, Fadak, Second Edition, Cairo, Maṭbū'āt al-Nijāḥ, 1397 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 195).

[45] Doctor Ḥusayn, Jāsim, The Political History of the Ghaybah of the Twelfth Imam, translated by Doctor Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Ayatollāhī, First Print, Tehran, Amīr Kabīr Institute, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 84.

[46] Doctor Ḥusayn, Ibid, p. 84 (narrated from the book Walāt Miṣr, written by Kindī).

Luxurious Castles and Parties

Along with the severe pressures and restrictions which the Shia were living under, Mutawakil engaged in the wholesale plunder of the nation's public treasury. He spent exorbitant amounts of money on building luxurious palaces, and organized wasteful ceremonies and events. His palaces were both plentiful in number and exorbitant in price; he built the following palaces which each had their own names: Shāh, 'Arūs, Shabdāz, Badī', Gharīb, and Burj. The last palace, which was called Burj, cost 1 million and 700,000 dinars to build.[47] He also built another palace which was famously known by the name of Burkuwā'; this palace was considered to be the largest and best of his palaces, costing around 20 million dirhams to build.[48]

Mutawakil also had other palaces built for pleasure and sport; they were given such names as: Ja'farī, Malīḥ, Gharw, and Mukhtār. Each of these palaces ran millions of dirhams in cost, and historians have mentioned this issue in detail.[49] Mutawakil decided to circumcise his son 'Abdullah Mu'taz, and he organized a large number of expensive and wasteful ceremonies to these ends. Historians have recorded the details of these ceremonies:

"Mutawakil had a carpet made for his palatial hall, which had a length of 100 cubits and a width of 50 cubits. For the reception of the guests, 4,000 chairs were ordered which were made of gold and encrusted with jewels. By the order of Mutawakil, twenty million dirhams were set aside for "scattering." This referred to the act of giving away money to the invitees by throwing it in the air at them. One million dirhams were given away to the makeup artists, the circumcisers, and the special slaves in charge of the event.

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[47] Ibn Wāḍih, Tārīkh Ya'qūbī, Najaf, al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 223.

[48] Faqihī, 'Alī Asghar, Âali Buye, Ṣabā Publications, 1365 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 415.

[49] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Hādī (a), First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-'Aḍawā', 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 309-315.

On the day of the event, it was asked from the circumciser of Mu'tazz how much money had been gifted to him before the food was even served? He replied: "Eighty thousand dinars were gifted to me, and this is not counting the ring, jewels, and gold items." When the total expenses of the circumcision ceremony were presented to Mutawakil, the amount equaled 86 million dirhams."[50]

This is just one example of the extravagance of Mutawakil. Naturally, it was not his money that he was spending so freely, but the money of the public treasury which belonged to the people. There are many more such examples of his government's waste, but they cannot all be mentioned for the sake of space. Suyūṭī has mentioned: "He had 4,000 female slaves in his palace and had sexual relations with all of them."[51] Mas'ūdī, the famous historian, has similarly stated that: "Money was never spent in any one period of rule, like it was spent during the rule of Mutawakil."[52]

Historical Evidence

Abū Bakr Khawarizmī, the famous historian of the Buyids (who died in either 383 or 393 Hijrī), has described the crimes of Mutawakil against the Shia and the Sādāt,[53] and he has also spoken of the aforementioned ceremony. He has written: "A leader of leaders and the master of Sayyids passes away from this world, yet no one escorts his body to the graveyard, and his grave is left unadorned. Yet when a court jester or royal clown of the 'Abbāsids passes

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[50] Faqīhī, 'Alī Asghar, Āali Buye, Ṣabā Publications, 1365 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 417.
- Doctor Munjid, Ṣalāḥudīn, Bayn al-Khūlafā wa al-Khula'ā', Third Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīth, 1980 A.D, p. 33-35. The extravagant ceremony of Mu'tazz's circumcision has been mentioned by Qalaqshandī (with some slight differences in wording) in the book Māthar al-'Anāfah Fī Ma'ālim al-Khūlafā (Maṭba'at Ḥukūmat al-Kuwayt, Second Print) vol. 3, p. 367.

[51] Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, Third Edition, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 350.

[52] Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 4, p. 40.

[53] The descendants of the Prophet (ṣ).

away, all the government judges prepare to escort his body to the graveyard, and the generals and governors all attend his funeral.

The atheists and sophists are secure from the evil of the ʿAbbāsids, yet anyone who is considered a Shia by them is put to death; whoever names his son ʿAlī is killed. If a Shia poet mentions the virtues of the Successor and the miracles of the Messenger, they cut out his tongue, and destroy his (poetical) works. Wāthiq and Jaʿfar Mutawakil would only give gifts to individuals who slandered the family of Abī Ṭālib, such as ʿAbdullah ibn Muṣʿab Zubayrī, Wahab ibn Wahab Buḥtarī, Marwān ibn Abī Ḥafṣah' Umawī, ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Qūrāyb Aṣmaʿī, and Bukkār ibn ʿAbdullah Zubayrī. For a period of one thousand months,[54] Amīr al-Mu'minīn (ʿa) was cursed and vilified from the pulpits, yet in the matter of his successorship, we did not doubt him in the least.

They prohibit the Alawīs from eating a single course of food, while they spend the revenue of Egypt and Ahwāz, as well the charity of the two noble Ḥarāms and the Ḥijāz on the likes of (singers) such as: Ibn Abī Maryam Madanī, Ibrāhīm Muṣalī, Ibn Jāmiʿ Sahmī, Zalzal Ḍārib, and Barṣūmā Zāmir (a flute and trumpet player). Mutawakil ʿAbbāsī possessed 12,000 slaves, yet the Master of the Sayyids was only allowed one Zangī or Sīndī slave. The pure wealth of the nation was spent on court jesters, **parties commemorating the circumcision of children**, and dog and monkey trainers. This is while they withheld every last morsel of food and drink of water from the children of Fāṭimah (ʿa).

The people upon whom khūms is Ḥalāl and charity is Ḥarām, and whose friendship and honoring is made obligatory, are at the point of death from poverty. One of them is forced to sell his clothing, while the other gives up

[54] One thousand months was the period of the Umayyid rule.

his sword as collateral. They have no sin but that their grandfather is the Messenger (ṣ), and their father is the Successor (ʿa), and their mother is Fāṭimah (ʿa), and the mother of their mother is Khadījah (ʿa), and their creed is faith in God, and their guide is the Quran. What can I say about a people who ploughed over the grave of Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa), began farming around it, and exiled the visitors of that grave to various far-off cities..."[55]

The Murder of Mutawakil and the Caliphate of Muntaṣir

One night, when Mutawakil was in a completely drunken state after a party in his palace, he was killed in a plot by his son Muntaṣir with the help of the Turks. He and his vizier, Fatḥ ibn Khaqān, were killed in the year 247 Hijrī, and Muntaṣir became the next caliph.[56]

The story of Mutwakil's murder involves an incident which took place with his court jester, ʿIbādah Makhannath. During various gatherings with Mutawakil, ʿIbādah would take a pillowcase and stuff it underneath his shirt. He also happened to be balding, and so he would shave his head. Then, he would begin to sing and dance for Mutawakil, while other singers who were present would recite in unison: "This bald and fat man is here to become the caliph of the Muslims." This act was meant to disparage Imam ʿAlī (ʿa), and Mutawakil would drink wine and laugh drunkenly at this.

During one of ʿIbādah's performances, Muntaṣir (Mutawakil's son) was also present. He became upset at the performance and motioned at ʿIbādah in a threatening way. ʿIbādah became quiet out of fear. Seeing the

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[55] Khawārizmī, Rasā'īl, al-Maṭbaʿat al-ʿUthmānī, 1312 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 76-83.
- Faqīhī, Ibid, p. 53.

[56] Masʿūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 4, p. 38.
- Ḥajj Shaykh ʿAbbās Qummī, Tatammat al-Muntahā, Tehran, Markazi Bookstore, 1333 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 238.

performance come to a sudden stop, Mutawakil asked: "What happened?" ʿIbādah stood up and explained what had happened. At this, Muntaṣir stood up and said: "Oh Amīr al-Mu'minīn! The person who this individual is making fun of and the people are laughing at is the son of your uncle, and a great individual of your family; he is considered a cause of honor for you. If you want to eat his flesh yourself, then do so, but do not allow this dog and the likes of him to eat of his flesh." Mutawakil, in ridicule, ordered the singers to recite the following poem:
"This young man has become sensitive over the honor of his uncle's son.... May his head be placed in his mother's..."[57]

It was after this tense situation that Muntaṣir decided to continue with his previous plan, and kill his father with the support of the Turks. Muntaṣir, contrary to his father, was inclined towards Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) and his descendants. He instructed the people to go on the pilgrimage of Imam Ḥusayn's (ʿa), and he also changed the situation of the Alawīs, which had been one of fear and terror in the time of his father, to one of security and peace.[58]

Beyond these efforts, he also implemented three important initiatives:
1- He returned Fadak to the Alawīs.
2- He restored the Alawī endowments.
3- He removed the governor of Medina, Sāliḥ ibn ʿAlī, who had acted unjustly towards the Hāshimīs. He appointed ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn in his place, and instructed him to act with the utmost goodness towards them.[59]

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[57] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 7, p. 5 and 6.
- Imam Hādī (a), Sazmāne Tablīghātī Islāmī, Translation and Compilation Division, 1368 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 63.

[58] Qalqashandī, Māthar al-'Anāfah Fī Maʿālim al-Khalāfah, Second Edition, Maṭbaʿat Ḥūkūmat al-Kuwayt, vol. 1, p. 238.

[59] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 7, p. 116.
- Masʿūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 4, p. 51.
- Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Hādī (a), First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-'Aḍawā', 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 275.

Still, the rule of Muntaṣir was short in duration, and after him, the situation again returned to its previous unfortunate state.

Imam Hādī in Opposition to the Government Jurisprudents

Generally, it was the policy of the 'Abbāsid caliphs to focus the people's attention on the government jurisprudents and scholars, and to recognize their rulings at an official level. Still, from time to time, when Imam Hādī ('a) was in Sāmarrā', differences of opinion in jurisprudence would arise between the government scholars, and out of necessity, they would call on the Imam ('a) to help resolve their problems. The Imam ('a), with his divinely inspired knowledge and wisdom, opened up these jurisprudential issues in such a manner that the other scholars could only praise and respect him. We will mention two examples of such incidents in the following pages-

1- The Punishment of an Adulterous Christian

One day, a Christian who had committed adultery with a Muslim woman, stood trial before Mutawakil. When Mutawakil sought to punish him, the Christian suddenly converted to Islam. When Yaḥyā ibn Aktham, the supreme judge of the country saw this, he said: "His new faith has removed all traces of his actions and disbelief, and the punishment should not be enacted." Some of the other jurisprudents said: "The punishment must be enacted upon him three times." Yet other jurisprudents gave their own rulings as well. The differences in the jurisprudential rulings forced Mutawakil to seek the opinion of Imam Hādī ('a).

The situation was explained to Imam Hādī ('a) and the Imam ('a) responded: "He must be flogged..." This ruling of the Imam ('a) was faced with staunch opposition from

Yaḥyā ibn Aktham and the other jurisprudents. They said: "This ruling has no basis in any (Quranic) verse or in any tradition." They then asked Mutawakil to request a letter where the Imam ('a) explains the evidence behind his ruling. Thus, Mutawakil wrote a letter to the Imam ('a), asking him for evidence of his ruling's validity. The Imam ('a) referred to the Quranic verse which states: "But when they saw Our punishment, they said: 'We believe in Allah- the one Allah - and we reject the partners we used to join with Him.' But their professing the faith when they (actually) saw Our punishment was not going to profit them. (Such has been) Allah's way of dealing with His servants (from the most ancient times). And even thus did the rejecters of Allah perish (utterly)."[60]

Mutawakil accepted the logical response of the Imam ('a), and ordered that the adulterer be punished according to the ruling of the Imam ('a).[61] Through the mention of this noble verse, the Imam ('a) made them understand that in the same way that the faith of the polytheists did not avert God's punishment upon them, the faith of the Christian individual also did not nullify his punishment.

2- Mutawakil's Vow

One day, Mutawakil became ill, and so he swore an oath that if he was cured, he would give a "large amount" of dinars (gold coins which were used as currency during that time) in the way of God, as charity. When he was cured, he gathered the jurisprudents and asked them: "How many dinars do I need to give as charity, for it to be considered a large amount?" The jurisprudents gave different rulings in this matter. With no other recourse, Mutawakil asked the

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[60] Surah Ghāfir, Verse 84-85.

[61] Shaykh Hurr 'Āmūlī, Wasā'il al-Shī'ah, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, vol. 18, p. 408 (Bāb 36, Min Abwāb Hadd al-Zina).
Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Hādī (a), First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-'Aḍawā', 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 240.

same question from Imam Hādī ('a). The Imam ('a) answered that he must give 83 dinars. The jurisprudents were surprised at this answer and said to Mutawakil: "Ask him based on what evidence he gave this ruling?" Mutawakil therefore asked the Imam ('a). The Imam ('a) replied: "God, in the Quran, has said: 'Assuredly Allah did help you in many battlefields...' and all of our family has narrated that the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) participated in 83 wars and expeditions over the course of his life."[62]

Imam Hādī and the Various Theological Schools of Thought

During the time of Imam Hādī ('a), many theological schools of thought had become prevalent— these included schools such as the Mu'tazilah and the Ashā'irah. Due to their prevalence, a myriad of opinions spread throughout the Muslim society, and there were many heated debates between the proponents and opponents of these schools of thought. Various issues such as predestination, Tafwīḍ,[63] the possibility or impossibility of seeing God, the corporeality of God, and various other topics had become intensely debated.

In different situations, the Imam ('a) was asked questions which were clearly inspired by the debates and opinions presented by these schools of thought. The influence of incorrect concepts and ideologies within the Shia circles manifested the dire need of guidance and intellectual leadership from the Imam ('a). As a result, the Imam ('a) engaged in many debates and discussions which proved the lack of substance and baselessness of the

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[62] Sibṭ ibn Jawzī, Tadhkirah al-Khawāṣ, Najaf, Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 360.
- Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Hādī (a), First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-'Aḍawā', 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 240.

[63] This concept means that God created the world and then left it completely to its own destiny.

viewpoints of these new schools of thought. [64]

Research and study into the intellectual life of Imam Hādī ('a) shows that the majority of his debates were in regards to these theological subjects. In addition, many traditions were narrated on this subject, which clearly prove the superiority of the Shia theological foundation over that of other schools of thought. An example of this is found in a detailed letter of the Imam ('a), which he wrote in response to the questions of the people of Ahwāz, regarding predestination and Tafwīḍ. In it, through clear reasoning, he proved that the truth of the matter is neither complete predestination, nor complete free will.[65]

The Conflict with the Ghulāt

The Ghulāt were one of the deviant and misguided groups, which were active during the imamate of Imam Hādī ('a). While the Ghulāt considered themselves Shia, their ideology and beliefs were deviant and outside the fold of the Shia creed. They had certain exaggerated beliefs in regards to the Imam ('a) and considered him as a divine being. Moreover, they would sometimes claim that they had been selected by the Imam ('a) and, as a result, they would give a bad reputation to Shias among Muslims belonging to other sects. Imam Hādī ('a) renounced this group and actively worked against them, so that through their rejection, they could not give a bad name to the Shia creed.

Some of the reasons behind the belief of the Ghulāt in the divinity of the Imam ('a), as well as their other beliefs, were partly based on:

A- The miracles, knowledge of the unseen, and other extraordinary faculties which were witnessed from the

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[64] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Ibid, p. 130.
- Ṭabarsī, Iḥtijāj, Najaf, al-Maṭba'at al-Murtaḍāwiya, 1350 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 249.

[65] Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Shu'bah, Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl, Second Edition, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmīya Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn, 1404 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 458-475.

Imams ('a). Since this group was not capable of explaining these things in the correct way, they took it as proof of absolute divinity.
B- This deviated group wanted to remove the limits and restrictions of Islamic law, and act based upon their lower desires. They considered many of the unlawful (Ḥarām) matters as being lawful (Ḥalāl).
C- In addition, they had fixed their eyes on the property of the people and wished to appropriate the taxes paid by the Shia for their own personal use.

In any case, the Ghulāt were a dangerous group with much potential to deviate the masses. Their leaders included the following individuals:
1- 'Alī ibn Ḥasakah' Qummī
2- Qāsim Yaqṭīnī
3- Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Bābāī Qummī
4- Muḥammad ibn Nusayr Fahrī
5- Fāris ibn Ḥātim

As an example, the beliefs of 'Alī ibn Ḥasakah' were as follows:
A- Imam Hādī is God, the creator and manager of the entire universe
B- Ibn Ḥasakah' is the messenger and the one sent by Imam Hādī for the guidance of the people.
C- None of the Islamic precepts, such as Zakāt, Ḥajj, or fasting are obligatory.

Muḥammad ibn Nusayr Fahrī is quoted as having said:
A- Imam Hādī ('a) is the creator and lord of the universe.
B- Marriage with the close relatives (Mahārim) such as one's mother, daughter, or sister, are allowed and lawful.
C- Sodomy is lawful, and is one of the legitimate ways of fulfilling one's lusts, which God has not forbidden.
D- The souls of the dead transmigrate into the bodies of

the people who are born in the future (reincarnation).[66]

Imam Hādī ('a), in the letters and responses that he provided to the questions of the Shia on this matter, introduced this group as disbelievers and possessors of a deviant ideology. He further instructed the Shia to distance themselves from them. The Imam ('a), in his response to a question from one of the Shias about Ibn Ḥasakah and his beliefs, wrote the following:

"Ibn Ḥasakah, may God's curse be upon him, has lied. I do not consider him to be from my friends or followers. What is wrong with him? May God remove his mercy from him! I swear by God... that Muḥammad (ṣ) and the previous prophets ('a) were sent only in the religion of worshipping the one God, and enjoining towards the prayer, the Zakāt, the Ḥajj, and the Wīlāyah (the guardianship of the Imams); Muḥammad (ṣ) has only invited people towards the one God, for whom there is no equal. We, who are his successors, are the slaves of God and do not associate others with him. If we obey him, we will be subject to his mercy, and if we disobey him, we will be subject to his punishment. We do not have any Ḥujjah over God, but God has a Ḥujjah over us and over all of his creation. I am averse to anyone who says such things, and seek God's protection against such words. Stay away from them and place them in difficulty and hardship. If you gain access to one of them, break his head with a stone."[67]

In a letter to 'Ubaydī, the Imam ('a) wrote of his aversion to Fahrī and Ibn Bābāī Qummī. He wrote the following in regards to them: "I am averse to Fahrī (Muḥammad ibn Nusayr) and Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Bābāī Qummī, and I warn you and all of the Shias against

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[66] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Hādī (a), First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-'Aḍawā', 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 335.

[67] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Marifat al-Rijāl, Mashhad, Mashhad University, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 519, Ḥadīth 997.

- Shaykh Ḥurr 'Âmūlī, Wasā'īl al-Shī'ah, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, vol. 18, Kītāb al-Ḥudūd, Abwāb Ḥad al-Muḥārib, Bāb 7, p. 554.

their sedition, and I curse them. These two individuals eat the property of the people in our name, and are the cause of sedition and trouble. May God punish them and entangle them in sedition. Ibn Bābāī thinks that I have nominated him to prophethood and he is my Bāb (gate). May God curse him. Satan has gained mastery over him and has misguided him. If you can, break his head with a stone. He has tormented me— May God torment him in this world and the next."[68]

Fāris ibn Hātam, who was one of the leaders of the Ghulāt, was cursed and refuted by the Imam ('a). In addition, during a dispute that took place between him and 'Alī ibn Ja'far,[69] 'Alī was supported by the Imam ('a). The religious deviation and the deviating presence of Fāris were so great that the Imam ('a) ordered his killing, and guaranteed paradise for the one who killed him. He wrote: "Fāris has committed certain actions in my name, and he is deceiving the people, calling them towards deviation in the religion. Shedding his blood is now permissible. Who is it who will relieve us through his killing? In return, I will guarantee paradise for that person." One of the companions of the Imam ('a), by the name of Junayd, complied with his order and rid the society of his evil by killing him.[70]

The Controversy over the Created Nature of the Quran

One of the most heated controversies during the era of Imam Hādī ('a) was the debate over whether the Holy Quran was created or not. The Mu'tazilah were a group who believed, to an excess degree, in the power of the

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[68] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 520, Ḥadīth 999.

[69] 'Alī ibn Ja'far was one of the most important and industrious representatives of Imam Hādī (a).

[70] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Marifat al-Rijāl, Mashhad, Mashhad University, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 524, Ḥadīth 1006.
- An Analysis of the History of the Time of the Tenth Imam- Imam Hādī (a), Markaze Tahqīqāt Islāmī, Qum, 1370 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 132-134.

human intellect, and they used this power to attempt to understand various ideological issues. This group expressed the belief of the created nature of the Quran, and in turn, its non-eternal essence. They opposed the belief of the Ashā'īrah and the Ahl al-Ḥadīth, who believed that the Quran was eternal (Qadīm). This controversy soon gained even more momentum, and took on the form of two diametrically opposed ideological outlooks.

According to researchers, the debate over the created nature of the Quran began towards the end of the Umayyad era, which was the beginning of the second century Hijrī. It is known that the first individual who brought up this issue within Islamic circles was Ja'd ibn Dirham, the teacher of Marwān ibn Muḥammad, the last Umayyad caliph. He, in turn, had learned about this topic from Ābān ibn Sam'ān, who in turn had learned it from Ṭālūt ibn A'ṣam, who was from the Jews. Ja'd, after discussing this issue, became a wanted man and was forced to flee to Kūfah. There, he taught this concept to Jahm ibn Ṣafwān Tirmidhī.[71]

Some believe that the concept of the eternal nature of the Quran in the Islamic society was the result of Christian influence, for Christians consider Christ to be the "Word of God," and as a result, the word of God is from God himself, who is eternal. Support for this viewpoint is found in a directive of Ma'mūn, who wrote to Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm, the governor of Baghdad at the time, condemning the Ashā'īrah, who speak of the Quran in the same manner as the Christians speak about Jesus.

In any case, during the rule of Hārūn, Bishr Marīsī, who was, again, of Jewish extraction, continued this discussion,

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[71] Khālid ibn 'Abdullah Qasrī killed Ja'd on the day of 'Īd al-Qurbān in the city of Kūfah. Jahm was killed in the year 128 by Sālim ibn Ahwāz in the city of Marw. (Aḥmad Amīn, Ḍaḥya al-Islām, vol. 3, p. 162) It is perhaps for this reason that during later times, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, an important leader of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth, would call those who believed in the created nature of the Quran as disbelievers and "Jahmīs."

and spent a period of 40 years propagating the concept of the created nature of the Quran. One day, he received news that his teachings had come to Hārūn's attention, and that Hārūn had threatened him with death in absentia; after this, he became a fugitive.

This heated debate continued between these groups until Ma'mūn exacerbated the situation and poured further fuel on the fire. Ma'mūn was an individual who was learned and scholarly, and as such, he was familiar with philosophy, jurisprudence, and the rules of Arabic grammar. He was also someone who liked to discuss and debate intellectual matters in great detail. From his youth, he had an inclination towards the Mu'tazilah, and supported the concept of the created nature of the Quran. The jurisprudents and Ahl al-Ḥadīth worried that he would perhaps take the reins of the caliphate and spread this ideology. This reached the point that Fuḍayl ibn 'Ayāḍ would openly state: "I seek long life for Hārūn from God, so that I can be free from the evil of the caliphate of Ma'mūn."[72]

His prediction ended up being accurate. Ma'mūn, after reaching the caliphate, officiated the Mu'tazilah as the official school of thought of the Muslim nation. As a result, the opinion of the created nature of the Quran was officially supported by the government, and furthermore, the power of the government was mobilized into suppressing those who disagreed with this viewpoint. The people who opposed this opinion, who were called the Ahl al-Sunnah at the time, resisted, causing the situation to spiral out of control and become much more than a simple theological difference. It was quickly transformed into an ideological and political matter, becoming the most fiercely debated issue of the time, both among the masses, as well as the scholars.

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[72] Jurjī Zaydān, The History of the Islamic Civilization, translated by 'Alī Jawāhir Kalām, Tehran, Mu'assassah Amīr Kabīr, 1336 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 3, p. 214.

In the year 218 Hijrī, Ma'mūn sent a directive to Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm (the governor of Baghdad), instructing that all judges, witnesses, narrators of tradition, and government officials should be given ideological examinations. Anyone who believed in the created nature of the Quran was to be allowed to remain in their position, and all those who did not, were to be removed.[73] This directive came to be famously known as the Miḥnat al-Qurān.[74]

The individual who encouraged Ma'mūn, and later Mu'taṣim and Wāthiq 'Abbāsī in this action was Ibn Abī Du'ād, the famous 'Abbāsid government appointed judge, who had reached his position after the removal of Yaḥyā ibn Aktham as the supreme judge of the land. Ibn Abī Du'ād was very famous in the society and he was sometimes compared to the Baramakah family. His role in the Miḥnat al-Qurān is an important one, and some have even mistakenly assumed that the original idea was his.

In any case, the persecution of the 'Abbāsid government reached the point that those opposed to this idea were tortured and the prisons were filled with them. Even the well-known Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, who persisted in defending his beliefs, was flogged.[75] It has been mentioned that during the rule of Wāthiq, Aḥmad ibn Naṣr Khazā'ī was also killed, and Yūsuf ibn Yaḥyā Burayṭī, the student of Shāfi'ī, was tortured and ended up dying as a result, in an Egyptian prison. Ya'qūbī has narrated a strange story on this matter. He has written: "The Emperor of Rome wrote a letter to Wāthiq, the 'Abbāsid caliph, informing him that he had a large number of Muslim prisoners of war with him. If the caliph was willing to pay a ransom for them, he was prepared to free them. Wāthiq accepted this proposal and sent some of his representatives to the border. The

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[73] Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 6, p. 423.
- Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, p. 308.

[74] The word "Miḥnah" means an examination.

[75] Mas'ūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 3, p. 464.

representatives of the caliph began to process the prisoners, one at a time, asking each one of them their respective opinion on the created nature of the Quran. Only those who said they believed in the created nature of the Quran were then released. After their release, they were given some clothing and money."[76]

This form of persecution and harassment aroused the anger of the masses against the Mu'tazilah. Therefore, when Mutawakil 'Abbāsī reached the caliphate, he took the side of the Ahl al-Ḥadīth and put an end to the Miḥnat al-Qurān. Still, this controversy did not easily die down and it remained an important topic of discussion in the society for a long period of time.[77]

Imam Hādī's Position

Since the Imams ('a) were responsible for teaching the true Islamic belief system, they considered silence in the face of such debates and discussions as being impermissible. They helped to clarify where the line between falsehood and truth stood, and engaged in teaching authentic Islam to the people. They also warned people against engaging in useless debates and discussions. Rayyān ibn Ṣalt said to Imam Riḍā ('a): "What is your opinion in regards to the Quran?" The Imam ('a) said: "The Quran is the word of God— just that! Do not debate on this matter more than this for you will become misguided."

The words which have been narrated from Imam Hādī ('a) on this subject are also very clear. In response to one of the Shias of Baghdad, he wrote the following:[78] "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Gracious. May God save

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[76] Tārīkh Ya'qūbī, Najaf, al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 215.

[77] For further information on the debate over the created nature of the Quran, please refer to the following sources: Tārīkh Khūlafā, Suyūṭī, p. 306-312; Ḍaḥya al-Islām, Aḥmad Amīn, Seventh Edition, Cairo, al-Maktabah Miṣrīyah, vol. 3, p. 155-207; Buḥūth Fī Milal wa al-Niḥal, Ja'far al-Subḥānī, Second Edition, Qum, Lajinat Idārat al-Ḥawzah al-'Ilmīyah, 1411 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 252-269.

[78] Ṣadūq, al-Tawhīd, Tehran, Maktabah al-Ṣadūq, 1387 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 224.

(both) you and us from becoming entangled in this deviation, for in this case he has bestowed upon us the greatest blessing; if not, then there is destruction and misguidance. In our opinion, debate and dispute over the Quran (over its created or non-created nature) is a (religious) deviation, in which those who question and those who answer are both implicated. The one who questions is after something which he is not worthy of, and the one who answers puts himself into difficulty and hardship for something which is beyond his reach.

The creator is none other than God, and besides him, all (things) are created. The Quran is also the word of God. Do not create a name for it (from yourself), for you will become misguided. May God make us an example of his word, for he says: 'Those who fear their Lord in their most secret thoughts, and who hold the Hour (of Judgment) in awe.'"[79] This stance of the Imams ('a) caused the Shia to stay away from becoming involved and entangled in these disputes, and saved them from its various associated problems.

The Students of Imam Hādī's School

As mentioned before, the era of Imam Hādī ('a) was one of tyranny and oppression, and the Imam ('a) did not possess widespread freedom of action. His era was significantly different than the time of Imam Bāqir ('a), and in particular, the time of Imam Ṣādiq ('a). Still, Imam Hādī ('a), in those unfavorable circumstances, continued to train and educate scholars in various fields, including the narration of traditions and history. He would also train particular individuals as leaders who could guide the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). He taught these individuals various Islamic sciences, and they in turn, transmitted these treasures to later generations.

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[79] Surah Anbīyā', Verse 49.

Shaykh Ṭūsī, the well-known Muslim scholar, has mentioned the number of the Imam's (ʿa) students to have been 185 individuals.[80] Among these individuals were various notable personalities, including Faḍl ibn Shadhān, Ḥusayn ibn Saʿīd Ahwāzī, Ayūb ibn Nūḥ, Abū ʿAlī (Ḥasan ibn Rashīd), Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī Nāṣir Kabīr, ʿAbd al-Aẓīm Ḥasanī (buried in the city of Ray), and ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd Ahwāzī. Some of these individuals left behind valuable compilations and books in various Islamic sciences, and their contributions have been noted in the books of Rijāl.

The Martyrdom of the Imam

Although Imam Hādī (ʿa) lived in a state of continuous observation and restriction, he did not cooperate with the oppressors of his time to the least degree, in spite of the difficulties which this caused him. The very existence of the Imam (ʿa) and the love of the people towards him created a great deal of worry and agitation for the government. In the end, the ʿAbbāsid government decided that the only way of neutralizing the threat from the Imam (ʿa) was by having him killed. Therefore, much like the previous Imams who were all martyred, Imam Hādī (ʿa) was poisoned during the rule of Muʿtazz.[81] He reached the rank of martyrdom in the month of Rajab in 254 Hijrī, in the city of Sāmarrā, and was buried in his home.[82]

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[80] Rijāl Ṭūsī, First Edition, Najaf, al-Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥaydarīa, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 409-429. Certain individuals, such as Fāris ibn Hātim and 'Alī ibn Ḥasakah', became misguided and the Imam (a) rejected them. These individuals must naturally be removed from the total. For further information on the students of Imam Hādī, refer to the following: Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Hādī (a), First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-'Aḍawā', 1408 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 170-230.

[81] Shablanjī, Nūr al-Absār, Cairo, Maktabah Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 166.

[82] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 334.

The Eleventh Imam

Imam Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī

A Brief Look at the Life of the Imam

Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) is the Eleventh Imam of the Shia who was born in the year 232 Hijrī.[83] His father was the Tenth Imam, Imam Hādī (ʿa), and his mother was the worthy lady Ḥudaythah,[84] whom some have mentioned as being named Sūsan.[85] This virtuous lady was a possessor of great Islamic wisdom and goodness. She became a great support for the Shias after the death of Imam Ḥasan ʿAskarī (ʿa), during a time which proved to be very critical and sensitive.[86]

Since the Eleventh Imam (ʿa) was forced to reside in Sāmarrā' under the orders of the ʿAbbāsid caliph, he came to be known as ʿAskarī.[87] The most famous of the Imam's (ʿa) titles are Naqī and Zakī,[88] and his kunya is Abū Muḥammad. He was 22 years of age when his father was martyred and the period of his Imamate was 6 years in duration. He lived to be 28 years old, being martyred in the year 260 Hijrī. He was buried in his home in Sāmarrā', next to the grave of his father.[89]

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[83] Kulaynī, Ūṣūl al-Kāfī, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 503.
- Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 335.
- Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Intishārāt ʿAlāmah, vol. 4, p. 422.

[84] Shaykh Mufīd, Ibid, p. 335.
- Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 366.

[85] Kulaynī, Ibid, p. 503.
- ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 192.

[86] Ḥajj Shaykh ʿAbbās Qummī, al-Anwār al-Bahīyah, Mashhad, Ja'farī Bookstore, p. 151.

[87] Ṣadūq, 'Ilal al-Sharāya', Qum, Maktabah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, vol. 1, Bāb 176, p. 230.
- Ṣadūq, Ma'ānī al-'Akhbār, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq- Mu'assasah Dār al-'Ilm, 1379 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 65.

[88] Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, Dalā'il al-Imāmah, Third Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 223.

[89] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 345.
- Shaykh ʿAbdullah al-Shabrāwī, al-'Ituḥāf Biḥub al-'Ashrāf, Second Edition, Qum,

Caliphs Who Lived During the Time of the Imam

During his short imamate, Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) lived through the time of three ʿAbbāsid caliphs. Each one of these caliphs proved to be more oppressive than his predecessor. These three are:

1- Muʿtazz Billāh (252-255 Hijrī)
2- Mohtadī Billāh (255-256 Hijrī)
3- Muʿtamid Billāh (256-279 Hijrī)

It is interesting to note that, from the very beginning of their political activities, the ʿAbbāsids revolted in the name of supporting the Alawīs and taking revenge for the wrongs committed against them by the Umayyads. Unfortunately, once they gained power, they put aside their promises and began to act in the same manner as the Umayyads. In fact, their oppression and self-centered rule was noticeably worse than that of the Umayyads.

In order to shine some light on the dark record of these three caliphs, let us take a look at a few incidents from the time of their rule:

1- Muʿtazz

He was the child of Mutawakil ʿAbbāsī, who himself reached the caliphate after Mustaʿīn was deposed in the year 252 Hijrī. After the killing of Mutawakil, the Turks gained control over the government, and things reached the point that instead of the Turks obeying the caliph's orders, the caliph would instead obey theirs. If the caliph did not do as they wished, he would either be removed or killed outright. One story in particular is a potent reminder of the situation of that time period:

One day, Muʿtazz brought his fellow companions and close friends together for a gathering. An astrologer was called upon to foretell how long Muʿtazz would remain in power as the caliph. At this critical point, a clever

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Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 178-179.

individual who was present in the gathering said: "I am more aware of the period of your life and caliphate than the astrologer is." Then he expressed himself in the following words: "As long as the Turks protect the caliph and are content with his rule, he will remain firmly situated in the seat of power. And when he arouses the displeasure of the Turks, that day will be the last day of his rule."[90]

The Killing of Mu'tazz

Due to the influence and power of the Turks over the position of the caliphate, things reached the point that the caliphate became only a ceremonial position, and the actual management of affairs was practically in the hands of the Turks. One day, a group of the Turks entered the castle of Mu'tazz, took hold of him, and pulled him into one of the palace chambers. There, they began to beat him with wooden bars, burning his shirt and pushing him into the courtyard of the castle which was bathed in the hot sun. That day in particular was exceedingly hot; so hot that the ground had become like a furnace, and one could not stand still without being burnt. As a result, the caliph was seen continuously hopping up and down.

At this point, the Turks deposed him from the caliphate and had individuals witness his removal. Then, in order to kill the deposed caliph, they decided to hand him over to a person who would kill him by starving and torturing him to death. They took the former caliph, who was at this point already half dead, and threw him into a basement. The door of the basement was then boarded up and plastered, and Mu'tazz was buried alive in this fashion.[91]

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[90] Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 243.

[91] Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, Ibid, p. 243.

- Ibn Athīr, Al-Kāmil Fī Tārīkh, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, vol. 7, p. 195-196.

The manner of Mu'tazz's killing has also been described in other ways. Refer to: Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, Third Edition, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 360.

- Mas'ūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 4, p. 97.

2- Mohtadī

Mohtadī was the second caliph during the time of the Eleventh Imam ('a), as well as being the 14th 'Abbāsid caliph overall. He reached the caliphate after the murder of his brother, Mu'tazz, in the year 255 Hijrī. Mohtadī, much like his brother, did not have any independence in his government. He was completely at the mercy of the Turks and was forced to comply with their wishes. Mohtadī, in comparison to the other 'Abbāsid caliphs, was a moderate individual, and in terms of his attitudes and actions, can be compared to 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, one of the Umayyad caliphs. He would sometimes say: "Amongst the Umayyad caliphs, there was at least one pure individual ('Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz); it is shameful that no one exists like him amongst the 'Abbāsid caliphs."

In the same manner as 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, Mohtadī would, to some degree, pay attention to the complaints of the people, and he would adopt a moderate stance in relation to his food, clothing, and various expenditures. After reaching the caliphate, he removed all the outer vestiges of aristocratic rule which were present in the palace. In addition, all the wine-drinking implements were removed. Historians have praised him for his characteristics and actions.[92]

In spite of this positive record, it does seem that Mohtadī acted more based upon social and political considerations than anything else. He understood that in the Islamic society, there were individuals who were more knowledgeable and worthier for the position of the caliphate than himself. Through these actions, he wished to build social support and backing for his rule. If Mohtadī

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[92] Doctor Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, The Political History of Islam, translated by Abū al-Qāsim Pāyānde, Fourth Print, Tehran, Jāvīdān Publications, 1360 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 3, p. 377.
- Mas'ūdī, Marwaj al-Dhahab, Beirut, Dār al-'Andalūs, vol. 4, p. 96 and 103.
- Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 246.

was truly an individual who fasted daily and broke his fast with bread, salt, and vinegar,[93] then he should have suppressed his desires to the degree that he would leave the seat of power and give it over to those who were truly worthy of it.

Contrary to this, history shows that he remained in the seat of power until his final days, when he was killed, much like his brother, Mu'tazz. History has seen many such individuals, and it is very unlikely that their positive actions were done with pure intentions. The clearest example of Mohtadī's worldly nature was that he imprisoned Imam 'Askarī ('a), and kept him confined until the very night that he was murdered. Mohtadī had even made up his mind to murder the Imam ('a) but he was killed before he could act upon this.[94]

3- Mu'tamid

The third and final contemporary caliph was Mu'tamid 'Abbāsī. The Imam ('a) lived under Mu'tamid's rule for four years. Mu'tamid was born in the year 229 Hijrī and reached the caliphate with help from the Turks in the year 256; he died in the year 279.

If historians have written in praise of Mohtadī (Mu'tamid's cousin),[95] then, in direct contrast, they have written much about Mu'tamid's ethical corruption, and are in agreement that he was greatly inclined towards self-indulgence. What he apparently did not care much about, however, were the problems and difficulties of the people whom he ruled over. As a result, the people gradually

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[93] Ibn Athīr, Ibid, p. 234.
- Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, Ibid, p. 246.
- Doctor Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, Ibid, p. 377.

[94] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 313.
- Mas'ūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīyah, Fourth Edition, Najaf, al-Maṭba'at al-Ḥaydarīa, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 245.

[95] Mohtadī was the son of Wāfiq ibn Mu'taṣim, and Mu'tamid was the son of Mutawakil ibn Mu'taṣim.

withdrew their support, and fastened their hopes onto his brother, Muwaffaq (Ṭalḥah). Mu'tamid was so immersed in having fun that his brother had, in reality, taken over the management of the nation's affairs. Historians have written the following in regards to Muwaffaq's authority, during the time of Mu'tamid: "Although the caliphate was officially in the hands of Mu'tamid, Muwaffaq was really in charge of handling its every day affairs, and Mu'tamid was the caliph only in name."[96]

The Political and Social Situation during the Time of the Imam

As we have seen, the 'Abbāsid caliphs did not hold themselves back from any act of pressure or control in regards to the Imams ('a). These pressures reached their peak during the times of Imam Jawād ('a), Imam Hādī ('a), and Imam 'Askarī ('a) in Sāmarrā'. The severity of the pressure was so great that the three Imams who lived in Sāmarrā', were all martyred at a young age. Imam Jawād ('a) was martyred at the age of 25, Imam Hādī ('a) at 41, and Imam 'Askarī ('a) at 28. Collectively, the lives of the three Imams were only 92 years in total. The pressure on the Imams was severe overall, but the era of Imam 'Askarī ('a) can be considered as the most severe out of these three Imams; this was for two reasons in particular:

1- Under Imam 'Askarī ('a), the Shia had manifested themselves as a great power in the land of Iraq. All the people considered the government of each and every 'Abbāsid caliph as illegitimate, and they also understood that this group (the Shia) was steadfast in their opposition to the caliphs, as they believed that the divine imamate was only to be found in the descendants of Imam 'Alī ('a).

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[96] Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 250.
- Doctor Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, The Political History of Islam, translated by Abū al-Qāsim Pāyānde, Fourth Print, Tehran, Jāvīdān Publications, 1360 Hijrī Shamshi, vol. 2, p. 378.

Evidence of the Shia's power can be found in the words of 'Ubaydullah, the vizier of Mu'tamid 'Abbāsī. After the martyrdom of Imam 'Askarī ('a), his brother Ja'far (known as Ja'far the Liar) went to 'Ubaydullah and said to him: "Leave the position of my brother to me; in exchange, I will give you 20,000 dinars yearly." The vizier yelled at him and said: "You idiot! The caliph unsheathed his sword against the people who believed that your brother and father were the Imam, in order that he could turn them away from this belief. Yet he could not do so, and in spite of his best efforts and struggles, he was not successful. If the Shia considered you to be their Imam, then you would have no need for support from the caliph or any other individual, and if they do not view you as the Imam, then our struggles in this path will not have the least use or success."[97]

2- According to Mutawātir traditions, the Abbasid clan and their supporters knew that the 'Mahdī', the promised destroyer of all oppressive and tyrannical governments, was to be from the lineage of Imam Ḥasan 'Askarī ('a). For this reason, they kept close watch on him, in order that when he had a son, they could quickly kill him and put an end to their worries. This bears a resemblance to the futile efforts of the Pharoah, when he sought to kill Prophet Moses ('a). Due to these reasons, the pressure and control over the Eleventh Imam ('a) was extraordinarily severe, and he was always under surveillance. The 'Abbāsids were so worried about the Imam's social influence, that they would summon him to the governmental palace every Monday and Thursday.[98]

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[97] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 197.
- Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Intishārāt 'Alāmah, vol. 4, p. 422.
- Kulaynī, Uṣūl al-Kāfī, Tehran, Maktabah al-Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 503.
- Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 338.

[98] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Intishārāt 'Alāmah, vol. 4, p. 434.
- Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī, Dalā'īl al-Imāmah, Third Edition, Qum,

In fact, the ʿAbbāsid government was so fearful of the Imam (ʿa), that they did not suffice with such actions; Muʿtazz had the Imam (ʿa) arrested and imprisoned.[99] He went as far as ordering Saʿīd Ḥājib to take the Imam (ʿa) to Kūfah and have him killed along the way. Fortunately, after three days, the Turks ended up killing Muʿtazz instead.[100] After Muʿtazz, Mohtadī arrested the Imam (ʿa) and had him imprisoned. He also decided to kill him, but again God protected the Imam (ʿa), and the Turks revolted against the caliph and he was killed by them as a result.[101]

The Imam's Security Situation

Historical evidence shows the utter depth and breadth of the ill intent of the ʿAbbāsid government against the Imam (ʿa) and his companions. These historical records also show the dire security situation of the Imam (ʿa) during that time:

1- Abū Hāshim Dāwūd ibn Qāsim Jaʿfarī[102] has

Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 226.

- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 251.

In spite of the malevolent intentions of the caliph, each time the Imam (a) would go out in public, thousands of people would gather along his path, and they would show deep happiness and emotion. Due to the sheer number of people, the roads would become congested and blocked. At the moment that the people would see the Imam (a), they would become completely silent, and they would open the way for him. After the Imam (a) had passed, the situation would once again return to normal. (Refer to: Ghaybate Shaykh Ṭūsī, Tehran, Maktabah Naynawā al-Ḥadītha, p. 29.

[99] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 311.

[100] Majlisī, Ibid, p. 313.

[101] Shaykh Ṭūsī, Kītāb al-Ghaybah, Tehran, Maktabah Naynawā al-Ḥadītha, p. 134.

[102] Abū Hashim Jaʿfarī was from the descendants of Jaʿfar Ṭayyār (Samʿānī, al-'Ansāb, vol. 1, p. 67). He was from Baghdad, and was one of the famous personalities from among the Shia. He was also one of the very close companions of Imam Jawād (a), Imam Hādī (a), and Imam ʿAskarī (a). He, in turn, was regarded very highly by these Imams (a). (Muḥammad Taqī Shūshtarī, Qāmūs al-Rijāl, vol. 4, p. 255-257). Since he was a courageous and intrepid individual, he was arrested in the year 252 Hijrī in Baghdad, and transferred to the prison in Sāmarrā'. (Khaṭīb, Tārīkh Baghdad, vol. 8, p. 369; Samʿānī, al-'Ansāb, vol. 2, p. 67).

According to Shaykh Ṭūsī, his arrest (as well as the arrest of his companions) was related to the killing of 'Abdullah ibn Muḥammad 'Abbāsī. (Al-Ghaybah, Tehran,

narrated: "There were several of us already in prison, when they brought Imam 'Askarī ('a) and his brother Ja'far there. In order to pay our respects, we went towards the Imam ('a) and gathered around him. In the prison, there was also a Jamaḥī ('Ajamī, i.e. non-Arab) present, who claimed that he was of Alawī descent. When the Imam ('a) saw that he was there, he said: 'If an individual who was not from amongst you was not present in your midst, I would tell you when you would be released.' Then he signaled to the Jamaḥī man to leave, and he left. Then he said: 'This man is not one of you; be cautious of him. He has prepared a report for the caliph on the things which you have said, and right now he is concealing the report within his clothing.' One of the people began to search him, and they found a report which he had hidden underneath his clothes. The man had written very important things about us."[103] This narration shows that even in prison, the government had planted spies, in order to keep watch over the Imam ('a).

2- One of the companions of the Imam ('a), by the name of Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq, has narrated: "I went to the Imam ('a) and requested that he write something for me, so that I could see his handwriting. That way, if a letter reached me from him, I could recognize his writing (and be certain that it was not a forgery). The Imam ('a) said: 'My handwriting is sometimes with a thin pen and sometimes with a wide pen; therefore, if you see such a difference, do not be worried...'"[104]

3- One of the companions of the Imam ('a) has narrated: "A group of us entered Sāmarrā' and we were waiting for

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Maktabah Naynawā al-Ḥadītha, p. 136). Ṭabarsī has mentioned: "In the year 258 Hijrī Qamarī, he was imprisoned with Imam 'Askarī (a) and a group of the Alawīs." ('Ilām al-Warā, p. 373). Khatīb Baghdādī and Sam'ānī have written that he passed away in the year 251 Hijrī.

[103] Ibn Ṣabbāgh Mālikī, al-Fuṣūl al-Muhimah, Old Print, p. 304.
- Shablanjī, Nūr al-Absār, Cairo, Maktabah Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 166.
- 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 222.

[104] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Ibid, vol. 4, p. 433.

the day that the Imam ('a) would leave his house so that we could see him in the streets or alleyways. At this time, a letter reached us which said: 'None of you should greet me, and none of you should signal towards me, for therein lies the danger of death for you.'"[105]

4- 'Abd al-'Azīz Balkhī has narrated: "One day I was sitting on a street that ended at the sheep seller's market. Suddenly, I saw Imam Ḥasan 'Askarī ('a) walking towards the gate of the city. I thought to myself: 'It would be good if I yelled out- "Oh people, this is the proof of God; recognize him!" But then I thought to myself that if I say this, they will kill me.' When the Imam ('a) reached me and I looked at him, he put his finger on his lips, indicating that I should be quiet. I quickly moved forward and began to kiss his feet. He said: 'Be careful, for if you reveal, you will be killed.' That night, I went to see the Imam ('a) once more. He again repeated his words and said: 'You must be a keeper of secrets, otherwise, you will be killed. Do not place yourself in danger.'"[106]

5- During the time of Imam 'Askarī ('a), an Alawī left Sāmarrā' in search of livelihood, and went towards the land of Jabal, a mountainous region in western Iran near Ḥamedān and Qazvīn. An individual who believed in the Imam ('a), from the people of Ḥalwān, happened to meet him and asked where he had come from. The 'Alawī man replied that he had come from Sāmarrā'. He asked: "Are you familiar with the following area and street?" He said: "Yes." The man asked: "Do you have any news of Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ('a)"? He replied: "No." He again asked: "For what reason have you come to Jabal?" He replied: "In search of livelihood." The man said in response: "I have 50 dinars. Take them, and let us go to Sāmarrā' together, so that you may show me the house of Ḥasan ibn 'Alī." The Alawī

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[105] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Second Edition, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 269.

[106] Mas'ūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīya, Fourth Edition, Najaf, al-Maktabah Haidarīah, p. 243.

accepted and took the man to the house of the Imam ('a)...[107] This interesting event shows how great the restrictions of the Abbasid government over the Imam ('a) were.

In addition, the amount of money that the Halwani man gave to the Alawī to guide him, was a very large sum of money, and it showed how important seeing the Imam ('a) was during that time period. For example, scholars have mentioned that during that time, the value of one dinar was equal to the value of one camel;[108] this meant that one could purchase 50 camels with fifty dinars.

Seven Elements of the Imam's Activities

Imam 'Askarī ('a), in spite of the continuous pressure and control he was placed under by the 'Abbāsid government, still engaged in a series of political, social, and intellectual activities, for the sake of protecting Islam and countering the unislamic ideology which was being propagated at that time. These can be summarized into several categories:

1- The Imam's ('a) activities in defending the religion of Islam, refuting various problems and doubts that were raised by his opponents, and expanding upon the correct Islamic ideology.

2- Creating a network of representatives, through which contact was maintained with the Shias of various regions in the Muslim world.

3- Secret political activities in spite of heavy control by the 'Abbāsid government.

4- Economic assistance and support of the Shia in general and his select companions in particular.

5- The training and education of various people from

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[107] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 216.

[108] Sharīf al-Qarshī, Bāqir, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-'Askarī (a), Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmī, 1409 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 181.

among the Shias.
6- Widespread use of the knowledge of the unseen in winning over the hearts of the deniers of the imamate, as well as in boosting the morale of the Shia.
7- Preparing the Shia for the time when the Twelfth Imam (ʿa) would not be directly present in the society.

Let us now look at each of these seven areas of activity in greater detail:

1- Intellectual Activities

Although the Imam (ʿa) was not able to engage in the widespread propagation of knowledge due to the restrictions placed upon him by the ʿAbbāsid government, he still managed to train and educate various important figures within the Muslim world. Each one of these individuals went on to play very effective roles in spreading Islamic knowledge and resolving various doubts which had been spread by the enemies of Islam.

Shaykh Ṭūsī has recorded the number of the Imam's (ʿa) students as exceeding 100 individuals.[109] Among these students were various prominent figures, including Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq Ashʿarī Qummī, Abū Hāshim Dāwūd ibn Qāsim Jaʿfarī, ʿAbdullah ibn Jaʿfar Ḥumayrī, Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd ʿAmrī, ʿAlī ibn Jaʿfar, and Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan Ṣaffār. To list the efforts and activities of each of them would be beyond the scope of this book but the details of their lives can be found in the books of Rijāl.

In addition to training and educating these students, there were times when severe problems would arise for the Muslims, and the only one able to solve these problems was Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa).

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[109] Rijāl, First Edition, Najaf, al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 427 and onwards.

A- The Mistake of the Philosopher

Ibn Shahr Āshūb has written: "Isḥāq Kindī was one the Muslim philosophers who lived in Iraq.[110] He wrote a book titled 'The Contradictions of the Quran.' He had spent a great deal of time in seclusion at his home, busy writing this book. One day, one of his students visited Imam 'Askarī ('a). When the Imam ('a) saw him, he asked: 'Is there not any wise individual among you, who can respond to the words of your teacher, Kindī?' The student replied: 'We are his students and we are not able to say anything against the mistakes of our teacher.' The Imam ('a) said: 'If I instruct you on an issue, can you narrate what I say to your teacher?' The student said: 'Yes.' The Imam ('a) then said: 'When you have returned from here, go to your teacher and act warmly and with great love towards him; attempt to gain closeness to him.

At the time that you have gained a high level of familiarity and closeness with him, say to him: A problem has arisen for me, whom no one is capable of answering but you. Is it possible that the author of the Quran has meant a meaning other than what we may have assumed in regards to it?' He will reply: Yes, such a thing is possible. At this time, you should say: Then how are you certain that perhaps the author of the Quran has meant something other than what you have assumed and you have used its wording in a manner other than its (true) meaning?' Then the Imam ('a) added: "He is an intelligent man— the presentation of this point is enough to make him aware of his error.

The student went to his teacher and acted just as the

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[110] The philosopher who had written this book was actually the son of Isḥāq Kindī, Ya'qūb, and not Isḥāq himself. According to the writings of Muḥammad Luṭfī Jumu'ah, Isḥāq was the ruler of Kūfah during the time of three Abbasid caliphs, namely Mahdī, Hādī, and Hārūn. (Tārīkh Falāsafat al-Islām Fī Mashriq wa al-Maghrib, al-Maktabah 'Ilmīyah, p. 1). It is also possible that the name of the father and son were mixed up, or during the time of the narration or transcription, the name of the son was accidently omitted.

Imam ('a) had instructed until he felt the time was right. He then asked the question of the Imam ('a) in the following way: 'Is it possible that a narrator can relate a matter, and intend a certain meaning, which is not grasped by the one who hears it, so much so that the intent of the narrator is lost on him? The philosopher listened attentively to the question. After thinking for a few moments, he said: 'Repeat your question.' The student once again repeated his question. The teacher deliberated for some time and said: 'Yes, this is not improbable at all. It is possible that the narrator possesses something in his mind (an intention), which does not occur to the one who hears it, and the one who hears it understands a meaning which runs counter to that which the narrator has expressed.'

The teacher, who knew that his student was not yet at the intellectual level of expressing such a question himself, looked at him and said: 'Tell me the truth; how did such a question occur to you?' The student answered: 'Why couldn't such a question just have come to me naturally?' The teacher replied: 'It is still much too early that you would have formulated such a question yourself; tell me where you learned of this?' The student said: 'The truth of the matter is that Abū Muḥammad (Imam Ḥasan al-'Askarī) introduced this question to me.' The teacher said: 'Now you have mentioned the truth of the matter. Such advanced questions can only come from this family.' Then the teacher, realizing his error and understanding the truth, ordered that a fire be kindled, and he burned all of what he had written about the 'Contradictions of the Quran.'"[111]

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[111] This event has been narrated by Ibn Shahr Āshūb in his book Manāqib (vol. 4, p. 424), who narrated from the book al-Tabdīl, which was written by Abū al-Qāsim Kūfī. Some modern day scholars have expressed doubt about the authenticity of this event and have written that: "This event shows that Kindī passed his days in intellectual instability and did not believe in Islam. Although this matter is possible, it has been narrated only in Abū Qāsim Kūfī's book in a mursal manner, meaning that it has no chain of narration attached to it and Ibn Shahr Āshūb has, in turn, narrated from him. Therefore, we cannot attest to the historical veracity of this event." (Muḥammad al-Ṣadr, Tārīkh al-Ghaybat al-Sughrā, p. 196).

B- The Monk's Fist Is Opened

One year in Sāmarrā', a very severe drought took place. Mu'tamid, the caliph of that time, ordered that the people gather and perform the prayer of Istisqā', which was a prayer for rain. For three continuous days, the people gathered and supplicated for rain, but no rainclouds formed. On the fourth day, Jathlīq, the Arch Bishop of the Christians, came to the area where the Muslims held their prayers, along with a group of monks and lay Christians. One of the monks began to pray and as soon as he lifted his hands towards the sky, large raindrops suddenly began to fall.

The following day, Jathlīq once again came and did the same thing. On that day, it rained so much that the people had no more need for rain. This caused a great deal of surprise and amazement among the people. It also caused many people to begin doubting their religion and inclining towards Christianity. This news proved disagreeable to the caliph, and without having any other way to resolve the issue, he called for the Imam ('a), who was at that time imprisoned on his orders. He said: "Help the community of your grandfather, for they are being misguided."

The Imam ('a) said: "Ask Jathlīq and the monks to go to the desert on Tuesday." The caliph said: "It has rained so much that the people do not have any more need for rain. What use is there to go to the desert now?" Imam 'Askarī ('a) said: "In order that, God willing, I can put an end to the doubt and uncertainty of the people."

The caliph ordered that the leader of the Christians, along with the monks, gather in the desert on Tuesday. On that day, Imam 'Askarī ('a), along with a great number of Muslims, also came to the desert. The Christians and their monks raised their hands in supplication to God, seeking rain; the sky soon became cloudy and it began to rain. The Imam ('a) ordered that the hand of a certain monk be held, and the object which was concealed between his fingers,

taken from him. In between his fingers, a greyish bone was found, which turned out to be a human bone!

Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) took the bone, wrapped it in a cloth, and said to the monk: "Now supplicate for rain." The monk then held his hands out towards the sky, but contrary to his previous attempts, the clouds disappeared and the sun's rays were seen. When the people saw this, they were left in a state of amazement and surprise. The caliph asked the Imam (ʿa): "What is this bone?" The Imam (ʿa) replied: "This is the bone of a prophet, from among the divine prophets, which they had taken from their grave. No bone of a prophet is manifested (with the intention of prayer) but that rain is sent down." The caliph praised the Imam (ʿa) for his knowledge and wisdom. Later, the bone was examined and found to be exactly as the Imam (ʿa) had described. It had been taken from the grave of one of the prophets (ʿa).

This event caused the Imam (ʿa) to be released from prison, and he was elevated in the eyes of the public. The Imam (ʿa) used this opportunity and sought the freedom of his companions, who had been imprisoned along with him. This request of the Imam (ʿa) was accepted and his companions were released.[112]

2- The Creation of a Communication Network Amongst The Shia

During the time of Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa), Shi'ism had spread to various cities and areas in the Muslim nation, and there were certain areas in particular where the Shias were concentrated. These cities and territories included Kūfah, Baghdad, Nayshābūr, Qum, Ābih (Āvih), Madā'in, Khurāsān, Yemen, Ray, Azarbaijan, Sāmarrā', Jurjān, and

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[112] Shablanjī, Nūr al-Absār, Cairo, Maktabah Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 167. Also refer to: Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Intishārāt ʿAlāmah, vol. 4, p. 425.
- ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 219.

Baṣrah; these cities were considered as bases or strongholds for the Shia. Among them, Sāmarrā', Kūfah, Baghdad, Qum, and Nayshābūr were of particular importance.[113]

The vast spread and dispersion of the Shias necessitated a well-structured communication network, in order to connect them both with the Imams ('a), as well as with one another. Indeed, such a network was needed to connect them for both religious reasons, as well as political reasons. This need was initially felt during the time of the Ninth Imam ('a), and as explained previously, such a system was first created during that time. Representatives were selected and dispatched to various regions and cities for the purpose of creating this communication network.

This program was continued during the time of Imam 'Askarī ('a). According to historical records, Imam 'Askarī ('a) selected representatives from among the notables of each area. He was in close contact with these representatives, and through these contacts, he kept close watch over the Shias. One of these representatives was an individual by the name of Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abdih, who had been selected by the Imam ('a) as the representative of Nayshābūr.

In a detailed letter addressed to Isḥāq ibn Ismā'īl and the Shias of Nayshābūr, the Imam ('a) first explained the role of the imamate in guiding the Muslim community, the necessity and importance of following the Imams ('a), and of being cautious from deviating from their instructions. He then wrote: "... Oh Isḥāq, you are my messenger to Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abdih, in order that he may act upon what I have written in the letter sent through Muḥammad Mūsā Nayshābūrī. You, and all those who are in your city, are duty-bound to act based upon this letter.

Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abdih is to read this letter for everyone, in order that no room is left for any question or

[113] Ṭabsī, Shaykh Muḥammad Jawād, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-'Askarī (a), First Edition, Qum, Daftare Tablighāte Islāmī, 1371 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 223-226.

uncertainty... May the greetings and abundant mercy of God be upon Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdih, and upon you, and upon all of our followers. All of my followers, who reside in your city, who read this letter, and who have not deviated from the truth, must give over our monetary dues to Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdih, and he must transfer this to Rāzī[114] or to an individual whom he introduces, and this is my order..."[115]

In this letter, in addition to establishing the collection of the monetary dues of the Shia (which played an integral role in strengthening their economic position overall), it is also understood that there was a hierarchy in regards to the representatives of the Imam (ʿa), and each one of them had his sphere of activity clearly defined. The gathered funds were given to the main representative and he, in turn, would deliver it to the Imam (ʿa).

The Imam (ʿa), perhaps in order to strengthen and establish the position of Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdih, and also to clarify his sphere of activities, wrote the following in a letter to ʿAbdullah ibn Ḥamdiwīyah Bīhaqī: "I have appointed Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdih for the collection of the monetary obligations of your city and region, and I have established him as my trustworthy representative amongst my followers. Be pious and be careful; pay your obligatory financial dues, for no individual is excused in not paying or in delaying their payment..."[116]

It is possible that some of the Shias had expressed doubt and uncertainty in regards to the authenticity of the

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[114] Apparently, Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq Rāzī is the individual meant by this; he was one of the notable personalities from amongst the Shia's of Ray (which is today a part of southern Tehran) and another one of Imam ʿAskarī's (a) representatives. Refer to: Ḥayāt al-Imām al-ʿAskarī (a), Shaykh Muḥammad Jawād Ṭabsī, p. 332.

[115] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Marifat al-Rijāl, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, p. 575-580, Ḥadīth # 1088.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Second Edition, Tehran, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 219-323.

[116] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Marifat al-Rijāl, Mashhad, University of Mashhad, p. 580, Ḥadīth 1089.

handwriting and letter of the Imam (ʿa) in regards to Ibrāhīm, and they had thought that the letter was possibly a fabrication. Therefore, the Imam (ʿa) had written the following in a separate letter: "The letter from me, regarding the appointment of Ibrāhīm for the collection of monetary dues... is indeed written in my own handwriting..."[117]

Another one of the Imam's (ʿa) representatives was Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq ibn ʿAbdullah Qummī Ashʿarī, one of his select companions and an elite personality from the Shias of Qum. Some of the scholars of Rijāl have mentioned him as being the liaison between the Imam (ʿa) and the people of Qum.[118] Other scholars have considered him as being one of the representatives of the Imam (ʿa).[119] From a tradition narrated in Biḥār al-'Anwār, it is understood that he was a representative of the Imam (ʿa) in regards to the endowments which existed in Qum.

Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī has written that: "Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq Qummī Ashʿarī, the teacher of Shaykh Ṣadūq, was the representative of Imam Abū Muḥammad ʿAskarī. When the Imam (ʿa) passed away, he took on the responsibility of becoming the representative of the Twelfth Imam (ʿa). The Imam (ʿa) would write letters to him, and he would collect the monetary dues from Qum and its surrounding areas, and have them delivered to the Imam (ʿa)."[120] Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq delivered 160 sacks of gold and silver, which he had received from the Shias of Qum, to the Imam (ʿa).[121] This is a small indication of the vast amount of wealth that was being collected and distributed.

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[117] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 580, Ḥadīth 1089.

[118] Najjāshī, Fihrīst Asmā' Muṣanfī al-Shīʿah, Qum, Maktabah al-Dāwarī, p. 66.
- Shaykh Ṭūsī, al-Fihrīst, Mashhad, Danishkadeye Ilāhīyāt va Maʿārife Islāmī, 1351 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 23.

[119] Ṭabsī, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-'Askarī (a), p. 333.

[120] Dalā'il al-Imāmah, Third Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 272.

[121] Ṭabarsī, al-Iḥtijāj, Najaf, al-Ṭabʿat al-Murtaḍāwiya, 1350 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 257.

Ibrāhīm ibn Mahzīyār Ahwāzī was another representative of the Imam ('a). An amount of wealth had been collected by him from the public treasury, and he had not been successful in transferring this sum to Imam 'Askarī ('a). After the martyrdom of the Imam ('a), Ibrāhīm became ill and he willed that his son, Muḥammad, deliver that sum to the Twelfth Imam ('a). His son acted as he had been instructed, and was selected in the place of his father as the representative of the Imam ('a).[122]

At the head of the hierarchy from among the representatives of the Imam ('a) was Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān 'Amrī. It was through him that all of the other representatives were in contact with the Imam ('a). These representatives would collect the financial dues and turn them over to him, and he, in turn, would transfer them to the Twelfth Imam ('a).[123]

Couriers and Letters

In addition to the communication network, the Imam ('a) used a courier system to maintain contact with his followers. In this way, he would help resolve their various problems and difficulties. As an example, we can look at the activities of Abū al-'Adyān, one of the closest companions of the Imam ('a).[124] Abū al-'Adyān was encharged with delivering the letters and messages of the Imam ('a) to his followers. He would also take the letters, questions, khūms, and other financial dues of the Shias,

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[122] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 351.
- Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā Bi'Ilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 445.

[123] Ṭūsī, Ikhtīyār Marifat al-Rijāl, Mashhad, Mashhad University, 1348 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 532, Ḥadīth 1015.
- Tastarī, Ibid, vol. 1, p. 315.

[124] Abū al-'Adyān 'Alī Baṣrī passed away towards the end of the third century Hijrī and his agnomen was actually Abū al-Ḥasan. He was famously known as Abū al-'Adyān for his debates with members of various religions and his subsequent and complete refutation of these individuals. The appointment of Abū al-'Adyān shows that the Imam (a) would choose select individuals for such duties.

and deliver them to the Imam ('a) in Sāmarrā'. His last duty, which was performed during the end of Imam 'Askarī's life, will be explained later in the section on the martyrdom of the Imam ('a).

Besides the courier network itself, the Imam ('a) used letters and correspondences to maintain contact with his followers, and these were used as a means of guiding them through the various problems which they were facing. An example of such correspondences is found in a letter which he wrote to Ibn Bābawīyah, which we will explore in more detail in the coming pages.[125] Besides this example, the Imam ('a) had written two letters to the Shias of Qum and Ābih (Āvih), whose contents have been preserved in our books,[126] as well as various other letters which are also present with us today.[127]

3- Secret Political Activities

Imam 'Askarī ('a), in spite of all the limitations and restrictions he was placed under by the 'Abbāsid government, still managed to lead a series of secret political activities, and concealed these from the government spies though a series of subtle methods and tactics. Since there are numerous examples of these activities, let us narrate just two of them below:

1- 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd 'Amrī was one of the closest and most confidential companions of Imam 'Askarī ('a).[128] He would use the pretense of selling oil to conceal his true activities.

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[125] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Intishārāt 'Alāmah, vol. 4, p. 425.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 317.

[126] Fayḍ Kāshānī, Ibid, p. 264.
- Majlisī, Ibid, p. 317.

[127] Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Shu'bah, Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl, Second Edition, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmīya Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 486.

[128] 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd 'Amrī was later selected as the representative of the Twelfth Imam, during the period of his minor 'Ghaybah', when he was not directly active in the society.

When the Shias of Imam 'Askarī ('a) wished to give him their monetary dues, they would give them to 'Uthmān, who would conceal them in casks of oil, and through such means, deliver them to the Imam ('a).[129]

2- Dāwūd ibn Aswad was an individual who worked for the Imam ('a) and was in charge of stocking wood and heating the bath of the Imam's ('a) home. He has narrated: "One day, the Imam ('a) asked for me and gave me a piece of wood that was long, round, and thick, much like the bracket of a door. He said: 'Take this piece of wood and go give it to 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd.' I took the piece of wood and went on my way. Along the way, I encountered a water carrier, whose mule happened to block my path. The water carrier asked me to help move the animal; I used the piece of wood to hit the mule to get it to move. When I did this, the wood broke, and I noticed that there was a letter concealed inside. I quickly tucked the piece of wood under my arm and returned, while the water carrier yelled insults and curses at me (for having hit his mule with the stick)...

When I reached the Imam's ('a) home, 'Īsā, who also worked for the Imam ('a), greeted me by the door and said: 'Your master asks why you hit the mule and broke the piece of wood?' I replied: 'I did not know what was inside of it.' The Imam ('a) then said to me: 'Why did you do something where you were forced to apologize? Do not do such a thing ever again. Even if you hear someone slandering us, continue on your path and do not quarrel with him. We are passing our days in an evil city and region; just do your own work and know that the report of your actions reaches us.'"[130]

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[129] Shaykh Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, Tehran, Maktabah Naynawā al-Ḥadītha, p. 214.
- Ḥajj Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, Safīnat al-Biḥār, Tehran, Sanā'ī Bookstore, vol. 2, p. 158.

[130] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib, Qum, Muṣṭafāwi Bookstore, vol. 4, p. 427.

4- Economic Support of the Shia

Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) also helped to economically support the Shia, particularly his close and select companions. Through studying the life of the Imam (ʿa), it is clear that on some occasions, the companions of the Imam (ʿa) found themselves in financially difficult positions, and when they would tell the Imam (ʿa) of their situation, he would resolve their financial troubles. In some instances, he would resolve their problems even before they had asked anything of him. These initiatives of the Imam (ʿa) were designed as a preventative measure, so that these individuals who were in financial straits, would not become susceptible to being absorbed into the oppressive ʿAbbāsid system. There are several examples of such cases:

1- Abū Hāshim Jaʿfarī has narrated: "I was in a difficult financial situation, and I wanted to write of my situation to Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa), but i was too embarrassed, and so, I decided not to. One day, while I was at home, the Imam (ʿa) sent me 100 dinars, as well as a letter, where he had written: 'Whenever you need something, do not be embarrassed... Ask from us, in order that, through the will of God, you will reach your goals.'"[131]

2- ʿAlī ibn Zayd Alawī has narrated: "Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) gave me a sum of money and said: 'With this money, buy a servant, for your servant has died.' When I returned home, I saw that my servant had passed away."[132]

3- Abū Hāshim Jaʿfarī has narrated: "I sent news of my financial situation to the Imam (ʿa). The Imam (ʿa) gave me a satchel containing approximately 500 dinars and said to

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[131] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 343.
- Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Muʿassasat al-Intishārāt ʿAlāmah, vol. 4, p. 439.
- Masʿūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīyah, Fourth Edition, Najaf, al-Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥaydarīa, 1384 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 242.

[132] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Muʿassasat al-Intishārāt ʿAlāmah, vol. 4, p. 431.
- ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 218.

me: 'Abū Hāshim, take this and if it is not enough, accept our apologies.'"[133]

4- One year, Abū Ṭāhir ibn Balāl left for the Ḥajj pilgrimage. While he was there, he witnessed 'Alī ibn Ja'far[134] giving away a considerable amount of money in the way of God. When he returned from the Ḥajj, he reported the incident to the Imam ('a). In reply, the Imam ('a) wrote: "Before, we had instructed that 100 dinars be given to him; then we instructed that this same amount be transferred to him once again, but he did not accept..." After this incident, 'Alī ibn Ja'far visited the Imam ('a), and according to the instructions of the Imam ('a), 30,000 dinars were transferred to him.[135]

This tradition shows that 'Alī ibn Ja'far would distribute large amounts of money in the Ḥijāz. Although the exact total has not been mentioned in the traditions, the large amount that has been mentioned shows that this was according to a well thought out and comprehensive program. The Shias who were in need, as well as the active individuals from among them, were supported thanks to this policy of the Imam ('a).

The large amount of money that was reportedly being distributed should not cause us to immediately reject the authenticity of such narrations. While the Imam ('a) was living under the tight control and restrictions of the 'Abbāsid government, his system of representatives were successful in delivering large amounts of money to him. For example, historical records state that: On one occasion,

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[133] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Ibid, p. 431.
- 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Ibid, p. 218.

[134] 'Alī ibn Ja'far was one of the close and trusted companions of Imam Hādī (a) and Imam 'Askarī (a); in addition, he worked as an agent of these Imams. He was charged with being a representative of Imam Hādī (a) by Mutawakil 'Abbāsī, and spent a period of time in prison. After he was released, he went to Mecca on the instructions of the Imam (a) and took the city as his place of residence. It is possible that he was in Mecca at the time that Abū Ṭāhir saw him giving money in the way of God.
- Shaykh Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, Tehran, Maktabah Naynawā al-Ḥadītha, p. 212.

[135] Shaykh Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, Tehran, Maktabah Naynawā al-Ḥadītha, p. 212.

an individual from Gorgan visited the Imam ('a), and delivered the money of the Shias of that area to the Imam's agent.[136]

Another person from the region of Jabal, a mountainous part of Iran between the cities of Hamedan and Qazvīn, with the guidance of an Alawī individual, visited the Imam ('a), and delivered 4,000 dinars to him.[137] Another example is when the representative of the Imam in Qum, Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq, delivered 160 sacks of gold and silver, which he had collected from the residents of his city, to the Imam ('a).[138] There are records of other large sums of money, collected by the representatives of Imam 'Askarī ('a), which were delivered to the Twelfth Imam ('a) at the time of his father's martyrdom.[139] Other examples in history are the 700 dinars that were with one of the residents of Jabal,[140] as well as the 500 dinars that were with one of the Shias by the name of 'Imrān Hamdānī.[141] There is no question that large amounts of wealth were being transferred throughout the Shia world, and it was this economic lifeblood which allowed the Shias to survive and thrive in spite of the efforts of their enemies.

5- The Development of Political Strength and Influence

One of the most interesting aspects of Imam 'Askarī's ('a) political activities involve his support and fostering of important Shia figures. Since these elite individuals faced a higher level of pressure and difficulty, the Imam ('a) would guide and support each of them commensurate with their individual situation. He would give them guidance, in

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[136] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 217.

[137] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Ibid, p. 216.

[138] Ṭabarsī, Iḥtijāj, Najaf, al-Maṭba'at al-Murtaḍāwiya, 1350 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 257.

[139] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 351.
- Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā, Third Edition, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, p. 445.

[140] Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 448 and 449.

[141] Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 448 and 449.

order that their tolerance, patience, and awareness would increase in the face of the pressures and poverty that they were dealing with. All of this was in order that they could be well prepared in implementing their social, political, and religious duties.

Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn Maymūn has narrated: "I wrote a letter to Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) complaining of my poverty. Later on though, after I had sent the letter, I said to myself, did not Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) say: 'Poverty with us, is better than affluence with others, and being killed with us, is better than remaining alive with our enemies.' After some time, the Imam (ʿa) wrote to me in response, saying: 'Whenever the sins of our friends go beyond a certain point, God entangles them in poverty and he overlooks a great deal of their sins as a result of this. As you said to yourself, poverty with us is better than affluence with others. We are a sanctuary for those who seek refuge with us, and we are for those who seek guidance from us, a light. We are the guardians of those who turn to us (for guidance). Whoever loves us, possesses a lofty rank (in nearness to God), and whoever is not a follower of our way will go towards the fire.'"[142]

Another example of this is a letter which Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) wrote to ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn ibn Bābawīyah Qummī, one of the famous Shia jurisprudents. In this letter, after addressing some necessary issues, the Imam (ʿa) says: "Be patient and (actively) await the deliverance, for the Prophet (ṣ) has said: 'The most superior deed of my nation (Ummah) is awaiting the deliverance.' Our Shia will be associated with grief and sorrow until my son (the Twelfth Imam) appears. He is the same person whom the Prophet (ṣ) has given glad tidings that he will fill the earth with

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[142] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Muʿassasat al-Intishārāt ʿAlāmah, vol. 4, p. 435.
- ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā al-'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 217.

justice and equity, just as it had been filled with oppression and tyranny. Oh my great and trusted jurisprudent, be patient and command my Shias towards patience. This earth (belongs) to God, and he will make the inheritors (ruler) whomever he wishes from amongst his servants. The future belongs only to the pious. May the greetings and mercy of God and his blessings be upon you and on all of the Shia."[143]

6- Widespread Use of the Knowledge of the Unseen

We know that the Imams ('a), due to their close connection with the creator of the universe, possessed knowledge of the unseen. When a situation arose wherein the foundations of Islam or the greater interests of the Muslim nation were in danger, they would use this knowledge as a tool in guiding the people. The reports and foretellings of the Imams ('a) are among the important aspects of their life history. One noteworthy point is that Imam 'Askarī ('a) manifested his knowledge of the unseen more than any of the other Imams ('a).

According to the research of one modern day scholar, Quṭb Rāwandī has mentioned 40 incidents of foretellings and miracles of Imam 'Askarī ('a) in his book Kharā'ij, Sayyid Baḥrānī has mentioned 134 incidents in his book Madinat al-Mu'ājiz, Shaykh Ḥurr 'Āmūlī has mentioned

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[143] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Ibid, vol. 4, p. 425.

- Ḥajj Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī, al-Anwār al-Bahīyah, Mashhad, Ja'farī Bookstore, p. 161.
- Tatmatul Muntahā, Second Print, Tehran, Markazī Bookstore, 1333 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 299 with some differences in wording.

Since the martyrdom of Imam 'Askarī (a) was in the year 260 Hijrī and the passing of 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn Bābawīyah was in the year 329 (meaning that it took place 69 years after the martyrdom of the Imam (a)), some have considered it unlikely that such a letter was written, particularly with the choice of words used in the original excerpt. This is because during that time, 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn was a young man of 20. It may be that, even during his youth, 'Alī was so highly ranked in virtue and character, that he would have been worthy of such mention by the Imam (Tārīkh al-Ghaybat al-Sughrā, Muḥammad al-Ṣadr, First Edition, Beirut, Dār al-Ta'āruf Lilmaṭbū'āt, 1392 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 196).

136 incidents in his Ithbāt al-Hudā, and ʿAllāmah Majlisī has mentioned 81 incidents in his Biḥār al-Anwār.[144] This shows the exceptional number of the foretellings and miracles which were reported from the Imam.

It seems that the reason behind these high numbers, which are much higher than any of the other Imams (ʿa), was due to the unfavorable conditions and straitened social situation that the Eleventh Imam (ʿa) and his father (Imam Hādī (ʿa)) lived under. From the time that Imam Hādī (ʿa) was forcibly brought to Sāmarrā', he was placed under strict control and restriction. The possibility of introducing his son, Imam Ḥasan (ʿa), to the general Shia public as the succeeding Imam, did not exist, and such an action would have put his life in severe jeopardy from the ruling government. For this reason, the introduction of Imam Ḥasan ʿAskarī (ʿa) and the calling of witnesses from among them, took place during the final months of Imam Hādī's (ʿa) life.[145] This took place in such a manner, that when the time of the Imam's (ʿa) martyrdom came, many of the Shia were still not aware of the imamate of Imam Ḥasan ʿAskarī (ʿa).[146]

Another factor during the life of Imam Hādī (ʿa) wa that a group of the Shia believed in the imamate of Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, the brother of Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa). Based on their belief, this group would treat Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī with respect in front of Imam Hādī (ʿa), but Imam Hādī (ʿa) would dismiss their actions and guide them towards the imamate of his son Ḥasan (ʿa).

After the martyrdom of Imam Hādī (ʿa), a group of ignorant and treacherous individuals, such as Ibn Māhawīyah, began attempting to mislead people and deviate them from the imamate of Imam Ḥasan ʿAskarī

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[144] Ṭabsī, Shaykh Muḥammad Jawād, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-ʿAskarī (a), First Edition, Qum, Daftare Tablīghātī Islāmī, 1413 Hijrī Qamarī p. 121.

[145] Ṭabsī, Ibid, p. 217.

[146] Masʿūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīyah, Fourth Edition, Najaf, al-Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥaydarīa, 1374 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 234.

('a). These people worked in causing a level of doubt and uncertainty in a group of the Shia. As a result, some people even wished to test and examine the Imam ('a),[147] while others would engage in a series of correspondences with him.[148] These doubts and misgivings reached the point where the Imam ('a) responded to a group of the Shia with great vexation, saying: "No one from among my fathers ever encountered so much doubt and uncertainty from the Shia, in regards to the matter of the imamate..."[149]

Imam 'Askarī ('a), in order to remove these doubts and uncertainties, and at times to protect his companions from danger and raise their morale, found it necessary to remove the veils between himself and the unseen, in order to inform the people of occurrences in other parts of the world. This was a very effective way of strengthening the faith of the Shia and bringing back into the fold those who opposed him. Abū Hāshim Ja'farī, who we mentioned previously as being one of the closest companions of the Imam ('a), has said: "Whenever I would visit Imam 'Askarī ('a), I would witness a new proof and sign of his imamate."[150]

Now that the intentions of the Imam ('a) are clear in this matter, let us look at several examples of predictions which were foretold by Imam 'Askarī ('a):

1- Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Samarī, who was one of the closest companions of the Imam ('a), has narrated: "In a letter, Imam 'Askarī ('a) wrote to me: 'A test will come to pass for you, so be prepared.'

After three days, a dispute broke out amongst the Hāshimīs. I wrote to the Imam ('a) asking: 'Is this that same

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[147] Mas'ūdī, Ibid, p. 246.

[148] Mas'ūdī, Ibid, p. 238.

[149] Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Shu'bah, Tuḥaf al-'Uqūl, Second Edition, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī Lijama'at al-Mudarisīn Biqum Mushariffah, p. 487.

[150] Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā Bi'Ilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 375.

sedition you mentioned?' He replied: 'This is not that. Be careful!' A few days later, Mu'tazz was killed."[151]

2- Approximately twenty days before the murder of Mu'tazz, the Imam ('a) wrote to Isḥāq ibn Ja'far Zubayrī, saying: "Stay in your home, for an important event is going to take place." Isḥāq recounts that: "After Barīḥah was killed, I wrote to the Imam ('a), asking: 'The event that you mentioned took place, now what should I do?' The Imam ('a) replied: 'The event that I mentioned is something else.' It was not long before Mu'tazz was killed."[152]

3- Muḥammad ibn Ḥamzah Sarawī has narrated: "I wrote a letter to Imam 'Askarī ('a) through the medium of Abū Hāshim Ja'farī, one of the close companions of the Imam ('a). In the letter, I wrote the Imam ('a) asking him to pray for me so that I could become wealthy. The Imam ('a) wrote back: 'Glad tidings be upon you. God will soon make you free of want. Your uncle's son, Yaḥyā ibn Ḥamzah, has passed away and he has no inheritors. His possessions, which amount to 100,000 dirhams, will soon reach your hands.'"[153]

4- Abū Hāshim Ja'farī has narrated: "I was imprisoned. I complained to the Imam ('a) about the pressures of jail and the heaviness of the iron collar and chains. The Imam ('a wrote back to me: 'Today, you will recite your noon praye in your own home.' It was not long after that I was released from prison and I ended up performing my prayers in my own home."[154]

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[151] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 207.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Second Edition, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 298.

[152] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 340.
- Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Intishārāt 'Alāmah, vol. 4, p. 436.

[153] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 214.
- Shablanjī, Nūr al-Absār, Cairo, Maktabah Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 168.
- Ibn Ṣabbāgh Mālikī, al-Fuṣūl al-Muhimah, Old Print, p. 303.

[154] Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā Bi'Ilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah,

5- Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad narrates: "When Mohtadī, the ʿAbbāsid caliph, began to kill the Mawālī, I wrote a letter to Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa), saying: 'Thank God that the caliph has become preoccupied and does not have the opportunity of troubling you; I have heard that he was threatening you and that he has said: "I must remove them from the face of the earth."

The Imam (ʿa) responded in his own handwriting, saying: 'His lifespan will be shorter than to act upon these threats. Count onwards from today; on the sixth day, he will be killed in a state of wretchedness and dishonor.' Six days later, Mohtadī was killed in the same manner that the Imam (ʿa) had predicted."[155]

6- Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad Qalānsī has narrated: "My brother Muḥammad, whose wife was pregnant, wrote a letter to Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa), asking him to pray that his wife's pregnancy be safe from danger, and that the newborn child be a son. The Imam (ʿa) wrote in response: 'God is going to grant you a male child, and Muḥammad and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān are two good names.' His wife ended up giving birth to two sons who were twins, and they named one of them Muḥammad and the other ʿAbd al-Raḥmān."[156]

7- Muḥammad ibn ʿAyyāsh has narrated: "We were in a group of several people, and we were discussing the miracles of Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa). An individual who was a 'Naṣibī' (an enemy of the family of the Prophet) said: 'I am going to write a letter to him without ink; if he answers it, I will accept that he is on the path of truth.'

We wrote our own questions, and the Naṣibī wrote his question on a piece of paper without using ink (he traced

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p. 372.
-Masʿūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīyah, Najaf, al-Math'baatul Haydarīya, 1374 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 241.

[155] Ṭabarsī, ʿIlām al-Warā Biʿilām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, p. 372.
- Masʿūdī, Ibid, p. 262.

[156] Masʿūdī, Ibid, p. 241.

out what he was going to write without using any ink). We gathered all the letters and sent them to the Imam ('a). The Imam ('a) replied back with the answers to our questions and in response to the Naṣibī, he even wrote his name and the name of his father. When the Naṣibī saw this, he lost consciousness. When he came to, he testified to the truthfulness of the Imam ('a) and thereafter became a Shia."[157]

8- Ismā'īl ibn Muḥammad has narrated: "I sat by the door of the home of Imam 'Askarī ('a). When the Imam ('a) came out, I went forward and complained to him of my poverty; I also swore that I did not have even a single dirham left.

The Imam ('a) said: 'Do you swear, while you have hidden 200 dinars in the ground?' He then added: 'I did not say this in order that I do not give you anything'; he then turned to his servant and said: 'Give him what you have with you.' The servant gave me 100 dinars. I thanked God and turned to leave.

As I was about to leave, the Imam ('a) said to me: 'I fear that you will lose the 200 dinars at a time when you have a great need for them.' I went looking for the dinars and found them in the place where I had hidden them. I changed their location and hid them in a manner where no one was aware of their hiding place. Some time passed after this incident, when I came to need the money. I went to where I had hidden them, but I did not find anything, and this ended up costing me greatly. Later, I found out that my son had discovered the location of the money, and had taken them. I never did get them back, and the situation took place exactly as the Imam ('a) had predicted."[158]

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[157] Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Manāqib Āali Abī Ṭālib, Qum, Muṣṭafāwi Bookstore, vol. 4, p. 440.

[158] Ibn Ṣabbāgh Mālikī, al-Fuṣūl al-Muhimah, Old Print, p. 303.

- Ibn Shahr Āshūb, Ibid, p. 432.

- Shablanjī, Nūr al-Absār, Cairo, Maktabah Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 167. (with slight differences in wording)

9- An individual by the name of Ḥalabī narrates: "We had gathered in Sāmarrā', and we were waiting for Abū Muḥammad (Imam 'Askarī) to leave his house, so that we could see him from up close. It was at this time that we received a letter from the Imam ('a). In it, he had written: 'Be careful that no one greets me and that no one gestures towards me; otherwise, your lives will be in danger.'

At that time, there was a young man standing next to me, and I asked him where he was from. He replied that he was from Medina. I asked him: 'What are you doing here?' He said: 'A dispute has arisen in regards to the imamate of Abū Muḥammad, and I have come here in order to see him and hear him speak, or to see a sign from him, in order that my heart can be put at rest.' Then he revealed: 'I am from the grandchildren of Abū Dhar Ghiffari.'[159]

At this point, Imam Ḥasan ('a) came out of his home, along with his servant. When he reached us, he looked at the young man that was next to me, and said: 'Are you Ghiffārī?' The young man replied: 'Yes.' The Imam ('a) said: 'How is your mother Hamdawīya doing?' The youth replied: 'She is doing well.' After exchanging these few words, the Imam ('a) continued on his way. I turned to the young man and said: 'Had you ever seen him before?' He replied: 'No.' I then asked: 'Is this enough for you?' He said: 'Even less than this would have been enough.'"[160]

10- Ja'far ibn Muḥammad has narrated: "Imam 'Askarī ('a) was walking and we were accompanying him. I had a desire to have a child and in my heart, I said to myself: 'Oh Abā Muḥammad (Imam 'Askarī), will I come to have a child?' At that moment, Imam 'Askarī ('a) looked at me and indicated with his head that i would. Again, I said to myself: 'Will it be a son?' The Imam ('a) moved his head indicating that it would not be a boy. Some time later, God

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[159] Ghifār was the name of Abū Dhar's tribe.

[160] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Second Edition, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 269.

gave us a daughter."[161]

11- 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Zīyād has narrated: "A letter reached me from the Imam ('a) warning me that: 'A danger threatens you, do not leave your home.' During those days, I was faced with a problem which caused me a great deal of terror. I wrote a letter to the Imam ('a), asking: 'Was this the danger of which you forewarned?' The Imam replied: 'The danger that I mentioned will be worse than that.' Not long after, I became a wanted man due to Ja'far ibn Maḥmūd, and a 100,000 dirham bounty was placed on my head."[162]

7- Preparing the Shia for the Time of the 'Ghaybah'[163]

The disappearance of an Imam is, naturally, a strange and unfamiliar phenomenon. Therefore, understanding and dealing with such a situation is difficult for the followers. For this reason, the Prophet (ṣ) and the Imams ('a) gradually made the people familiar with this concept and prepared them for the time when it would take place. Since the time of the Ghaybah was moving closer, these efforts became noticeably more evident during the era of both Imam Hādī ('a) and Imam 'Askarī ('a). As we witnessed in the life of Imam Hādī ('a), the Imam would perform various actions through his representatives, and he had less direct contact with the people.

This way of doing things manifested itself even more during the time of Imam 'Askarī ('a). Although the Imam had declared the birth of Imam Mahdī ('a), he would only show him to select individuals from among the Shia. In addition, the contact of the people with the Imam ('a) was gradually reduced with the passing of each day. Even in the

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[161] Ṭabsī, Shaykh Muḥammad Jawād, Ḥayāt al-Imām al-'Askarī (a), First Edition, Qum, Daftare Tablīghāte Islāmī, 1371 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 136.

[162] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 207.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 50, p. 298.

[163] The period of time when the Imam would not be openly present in the society.

city of Sāmarrā', the Imam ('a) began to answer the questions and inquiries of the Shia through the use of letters and representatives. Through these means, he prepared the Shia for the conditions and responsibilities of the time when the Twelfth Imam would not be directly accessible to them. As we will see later on, this is the same method that the Twelfth Imam ('a) used during his minor Ghaybah, while he prepared the Shia for the period of the major Ghaybah. At the same time, some of the high ranking Shia were successful in seeing Imam Mahdī ('a). Let us take a look at one such event:

The Foretelling of Imam Mahdī's Ghaybah

Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq, one of the select companions of Imam 'Askarī ('a), narrates: "I came to visit Imam 'Askarī ('a), and I wished to ask about the Imam who would come after him. Before I could ask my question, he said: 'Oh Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq! God, from the time that he created Adam, until the Day of Resurrection, has never left, nor will he leave the earth empty of his Ḥujjah (proof). God, through the blessing of the existence of his Ḥujjah on earth, repels calamities from the people of this world, and he sends down rain, and he manifests the blessings concealed in the heart of the earth.' I asked: 'Who is the leader and Imam after you?' The Imam quickly rose and went into another room. It was not long before he returned, while carrying a boy who was about 3 years of age on his shoulders. The boy's face was luminous, much like the moon on its 14th night.

The Imam ('a) said: 'Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq, if you were not highly regarded before God and the Imams ('a), I would not have shown you my son. He is of the same name and title of the Prophet of God (ṣ). He will fill the earth with justice and equity, just as it had been filled with injustice and tyranny. He will be to this nation similar to Khidr and Dhul Qarnain (in regards to the length of his

disappearance); he will have an absence where many will fall into doubt. Only the people whom God has kept firmly on the belief of his imamate, and has given the grace of praying for his hastened rise and reappearance, will find safety from deviation..."[164]

A Light No One Can Deny

In spite of all the animosity that the 'Abbāsid government held towards the Imam ('a), his spiritual excellence and perfection would force them to show their respect towards him and to publicly praise him from time to time. 'Ubaydullah ibn Khāqān was one of the important government officials of the 'Abbāsid government. His son Aḥmad was in charge of managing the real estate and land property of Qum, and he was entrusted with the collection of the taxes of that city. He was also considered to be a Naṣibī, one who hated the Ahl al-Bayt ('a).

Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad Ash'arī and Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā have narrated that one day, in one of Aḥmad's gatherings, a discussion came about in regards to the Alawīs and their beliefs. Aḥmad said: "In Sāmarrā, I have seen no one like Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad (Imam 'Askarī) in terms of his gravity, modesty, nobility, virtue, and greatness from amongst his family and among all of the Hāshimīs. His family holds him in precedence over their elders and chiefs. He also holds this same position in the eyes of the military commanders, the viziers, and the people as a whole. I remember that one day I was with my father, when the doorman brought news that Abū Muḥammad, Ibn al-Riḍā[165] (Imam Ḥasan 'Askarī) wants to enter. My father, with a loud voice, said: 'Allow him to enter.' I became

[164] Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn, 1405 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 2, p. 384 (Bāb 38).

[165] After Imam Riḍā, in the society of that day and also in the Abbasid government, the succeeding Imams (meaning Imam Jawād (a), Imam Hādī (a), and Imam 'Askarī (a)) were all called Ibn al-Riḍā out of respect.

amazed that the doorman had mentioned him with respect and had used his agnomen in the presence of my father. This was because no one was called by his agnomen in front of my father besides the caliph, his successor, and those whom the caliph had ordered to be called by their agnomens."[166]

"At that point, a tan complexioned man, who possessed good stature and a pleasant face... (who was) youthful, and who manifested great dignity and majesty, entered. When my father saw him, he stood up and took several steps forward to greet him. I do not ever remember my father respecting any one of the Hāshimīs or the military commanders in such a manner. My father then put his hand over his neck and kissed his face and chest. He then took his hand and sat him in his own place of prayer, where he had been sitting. He then sat in front of him and began to talk with him. During the course of his speech, he would use the phrase 'may I be sacrificed for you.' I was completely amazed at what I was seeing.

Suddenly, the doorman came and said that Muwafaq 'Abbāsī (the brother of the caliph) had arrived and wanted to enter. It was customary that when Muwafaq arrived, the doormen and his select military commanders would come inside before him and form two columns from the entrance of the palace all the way up to the meeting room of my father, and they would remain in these two columns until Muwafaq had entered and walked through the assembly.

My father had all of his attention focused upon Abū Muḥammad (Imam 'Askarī) and was speaking with him, when he suddenly noticed the elite slaves of Muwafaq. At this time, he said: 'May I be sacrificed for you, you may leave if you are so inclined.' He then ordered for his doormen to escort him outside of the two lines, so that Muwafaq would not see him. At that point, Abū

[166] Amongst the Arabs, it was customary to call the people by their agnomen as a form of respect and honor.

Muḥammad stood up to leave, and my father also stood up (out of respect). My father then put his hand over Abū Muḥammad's shoulders and said goodbye to him; it was then that Abū Muḥammad left.

At seeing this whole incident unfold, I said to the doormen and the slaves of my father: 'That was incredible! Who was this individual that you called by his agnomen in front of my father and my father acted in such a way towards him?' They said: 'He is one of the Alawīs, by the name of Ḥasan ibn 'Alī, and he is famously known as Ibn al-Riḍā.' My surprise deepened, and during the course of that entire day, I was constantly thinking of my father's behavior with that man; I was occupied with these thoughts until nightfall.

It was my father's habit that, after the night prayer, he would sit down and study the important reports, which were necessary to bring to the caliph's attention. After he had prayed and taken his seat, I came and sat down in front of him. No one else was by him. He asked: 'Aḥmad, do you need something?' I said: 'Yes father, if you give me permission, I will tell you.' He said: 'You have permission. I said: 'Father, who was the man that I saw this morning, whom you treated with such humility and respect? When you were speaking with him, you kept saying to him, "May I be sacrificed for you," and you considered yourself, your father, and your mother to be worth sacrificing for him.' He said: 'My son, he is the Imam of the Rāfiḍīs,[167] Ḥasan ibn 'Alī, famously known as Ibn al-Riḍā.'

Then he became silent for a time. I, too, remained silent. After some time, he said: 'My son, if the caliphate leaves the hands of the 'Abbāsids, no one is worthy of it amongst the Hāshimīs but he. This is due to his virtue, modesty, asceticism, worship, high character, and worthiness; his father was also a great and virtuous man.'

[167] The enemies of the Shia call them Rāfiḍīs as a taunt.

When I heard these words, my worry increased even more, and my anger also increased towards my father. This matter became my greatest worry and grief, and I spent my time inquiring and investigating in regards to Ibn al-Riḍā. Everyone whom I asked, from the Hāshimīs, the heads of the military, writers, judges, jurisprudents, and other individuals, all considered him to be the pinnacle of greatness, and they all mentioned only good things about him and considered him superior over their own family members and elders. In this way, he became a towering figure in my eyes, for I did not see any friend or foe, but that they spoke well of him and praised him..."[168]

The Martyrdom of Imam ʿAskarī

Muʿtamid ʿAbbāsī was in constant fear of the spiritual influence of Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) over the people and their love and respect for him. As time went on, he noticed that the Imam's (ʿa) influence was growing day by day. He also noticed that imprisonment and the other restrictions which he had placed upon him were yielding the opposite of the intended results. Therefore, he decided to resort to the old method which tyrants have always used in dealing with their opponents; he decided to poison the Imam (ʿa) and kill him.

The famous Shia scholar, Shaykh Ṭabarsī, has written: "Many of our scholars have mentioned that Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) was killed by means of poison, and he died as a martyr. This was the same way that his father, grandfather, and in fact, all of the Imams before him had died. It is well known that none of the Imams (ʿa) died a natural death."[169] Kafʿamī, the famous Shia scholar, has narrated: "Muʿtamid

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[168] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 338.
- Fattāl Nayshābūrī, Rawḍat al-Wāʿiẓīn, First Edition, Beirut, Muʿassat al-ʿAlamī Lil Maṭbūʿāt, 1406 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 273-275.
- Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā Biʿllām al-Hūdā, Third Edition, Tehran, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, p. 376-377.

[169] 'Iʿlām al-Warā, Third Edition, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, p. 367.

poisoned him,"[170] and Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Rustam, who was one of the Shia scholars of the fourth century, believes that: "Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) reached the rank of martyrdom through being poisoned."[171]

One piece of evidence that the Imam (ʿa) reached martyrdom through the ʿAbbāsid government, is found in the unusual effort and actions of Muʿtamid ʿAbbāsī during the days when the Imam had been poisoned. These elaborate efforts by Muʿtamid were designed to show the people that the Imam (ʿa) had died a natural death and had not been poisoned.

Ibn Ṣabbāgh Malikī, one of the scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah, has narrated from ʿUbaydullah ibn Khāqān (one of the government officials of the ʿAbbāsids) that: "...When Abū Muḥammad Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ʿAskarī (ʿa) passed away, Muʿtamid's behavior changed, and this surprised us, since we did not think that he would act in such a way, seeing that he was the caliph and possessed great power. When Abū Muḥammad (Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa)) became ill, five of the select officials of the caliph, who were all government jurisprudents, were sent to his house. Muʿtamid ordered them to stay in Abū Muḥammad's home and report back on whatever took place; he also sent a group to attend to him as nurses. Likewise, he ordered Qāḍī ibn Bakhtīyār to select ten trustworthy individuals and send them to the house of Abū Muḥammad. These individuals were to go see the Imam (ʿa) every morning and evening and take note of his state. Two or three days later, they reported back to the caliph that Abū Muḥammad's condition had worsened, and that it was unlikely that he would get better.

The caliph ordered that they remain at the house day

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[170] Ḥajj Shaykh ʿAbbās Qummī, al-Anwār al-Bahīyah, Mashhad, Jaʿfarī Bookstore, p. 162.

[171] Dalā'īl al-Imāmah, Najaf, Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1383 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 223.

and night, and they continuously remained at that great man's home, until he passed away several days later. When news of his passing spread, the city of Sāmarrā' began to reach a state of commotion. Crying and wailing could be heard throughout the city, and the bazaar and individual shops were closed in mourning. The Hāshimīs, government officials, military commanders, judges, poets, witnesses, and the rest of the people all came out in droves in order to participate in the funeral procession. On that day, Sāmarrā' looked and felt like a scene from the Day of Judgment.

After the body was prepared for burial, the caliph sent his brother, 'Īsā ibn Mutawakil, to perform the funeral prayer over it. When they placed the body on the ground for prayer, 'Īsā went close to it and opened up the face covering. He showed the face to the Alawīs, the 'Abbāsids, judges, and writers and said: 'This is Abū Muḥammad 'Askarī who died a natural death, and these servants of the caliph also bear witness.' Then he covered the face of the Imam and prayed over him; he then ordered that they take the body for burial..."[172] Naturally, this prayer was more of a ceremonial prayer and it was designed to help cover up the fact that the Imam ('a) had been killed by the Abbasids. Among Shia scholars, it is famously known that Imam Mahdī ('a) privately prayed over the body of his father, Imam 'Askarī ('a).[173]

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[172] Al-Fuṣūl al-Muhhimah, Old Edition, p. 307-308. This incident has been narrated by the late Shaykh Mufīd in his Irshād, by Fattāl Nayshābūrī in his Rawḍat al-Wā'īẓīn, by Ṭabarsī in his 'I'lām al-Warā, and by 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī; all of them narrated it from Aḥmad the son of 'Ubaydullah ibn Khāqān. This report shows what sort of a position the Imam (a) held in that society and why the Abbasid government was so fearful of him. It also makes clear as to how far the caliph was willing to go, in order to conceal the fact that the Imam (a) had been poisoned.

[173] Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Qum, Mu'assese al-Nashr al-Islāmī, Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn Biqum al-Musharifah, 1405 Hijrī Qamarī, Bāb 43, p. 475.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Second Edition, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 332-333.

The Futile Efforts of Ja'far Kadhāb (Ja'far the Liar)

Abū al-'Adyān has narrated: "I was one of the workers of Imam 'Askarī ('a) and I would deliver the Imam's ('a) letters to various cities. When he became ill (the same illness of which he would later pass away), I came to visit him. The Imam ('a) wrote some letters and said: 'You will take these to Madaen, and you will not be in Sāmarrā' for 15 days. On the 15th day, when you enter the city, you will hear wailing coming from my house and (see that) they have put my body in the place for the ceremonial washing.'

I said: 'Oh my master, if such a thing happens, then who will be the next Imam?' He said: 'Whoever prays over my body is the Qā'im after me.' I asked him for another sign. He said: 'Whoever is the one who gives news of what is in the money belt is the Imam after me.' The greatness and gravity of the Imam ('a) prevented me from asking what he meant by what was in the belt.'

I took the Imam's ('a) letters to Madaen and received their answers. On the 15th day, I entered Sāmarrā' and I saw that the situation was exactly as the Imam ('a) had described, and the sound of wailing was coming from the home of the Imam ('a). I also saw his brother, Ja'far (Kadhāb), sitting next to the home of the Imam ('a); a group of the Shia had gathered around him and they were giving him their condolences, and congratulating him on his succession to the imamate.

I was taken aback at this sight and said to myself: 'If Ja'far is the Imam, then the situation of the imamate has changed, for I have seen with my own eyes Ja'far drinking wine, gambling, and playing the tar and tambourine. I also went forward and gave him my condolences on the passing of his brother, and congratulated him on his imamate, but he did not ask me anything. Then 'Aqīd, a worker in the Imam's home, came outside and said to Ja'far: 'They have shrouded the body of your brother; come and pray over it.' Ja'far entered the house. The Shia were around him, and

Sammān[174] and Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī (who is popularly known as Salamah) were in front of them.

When we entered the courtyard of the home, they had shrouded the body of Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) and placed it on a bier. Jaʿfar went forward so that he could perform the funeral prayers. As he was about to start the prayer, unexpectedly, a dark-haired and tan-complexioned child came forward and took hold of Jaʿfar's clothing. He pulled him aside and said: 'Uncle, move aside; I must pray over my father.' Jaʿfar moved aside but his face showed the signs of his anger. The child prayed over the body of the Imam (ʿa), and they buried the Imam (ʿa) in his home, next to the grave of his father, Imam Hādī (ʿa).

Then, the child turned towards me and said: 'Oh man from Baṣrah, give me the reply of the letters that you have with you.' I told him in regards to the letters and I said to myself: 'These were two of the signs (praying over the body and inquiring of the letters), now all that remains is the sign of the money belt.' Then I went towards Jaʿfar and noticed that he was complaining over what had taken place. Ḥājiz Washā', who was present at that time, asked Jaʿfar: 'Who was that child?' He wished to condemn Jaʿfar, who had made false claims towards the imamate, by means of this question. Jaʿfar said: 'By God, I had never seen him before and I do not know who he is!'

At that point, we were sitting down, when a group of people from Qum arrived and asked about Imam Ḥasan ʿAskarī (ʿa). When they found out that he had passed away, they asked: 'Who is the Imam's (ʿa) successor?' The people who were present indicated that Jaʿfar was the successor. They gave their greetings to Jaʿfar, condoled him, and congratulated him. Then they said: 'We have brought some letters and some money. Tell us which individuals have

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[174] This individual is ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd ʿAmrī, one of the close companions of Imam ʿAskarī (a). Due to his occupation of selling oil, he was known as Sammān, the oil seller.

written the letters and what amount the money is.' Ja'far became agitated at this question, rose up, and while he was brushing the dust off of his clothing, said: 'These people expect us to have knowledge of the unseen.' At that moment, a servant came out of the house and said: 'The letters are from such and such individuals, and in the purse there are one thousand dinars, out of which, ten are gold plated.' The representatives of Qum handed over the letters and the purse, and said to the servant: 'Whomever has sent you to take the money belt is the Imam...'"[175]

A Fruitless Undertaking

Mu'tamid 'Abbāsī assumed that he had reached his goal through the killing of Imam 'Askarī ('a), and that no other danger threatened his government. Still, in order to be 100 percent certain that the Imam ('a) had not left a successor. he decided to investigate matters further. He encharged number of his agents to enter the house of the Imam ('a and search all of his belongings. Afterwards they were to stamp and seal them.

In addition, because he had heard that Imam 'Askarī ('a) had a child, he ordered that a group of midwives examine the wives and female servants of the Imam ('a). If they were to find anything indicating a pregnancy, they were to report back immediately. It has been narrated that one of the midwives became suspicious towards one of the female servants of the Imam ('a). As a result, the caliph ordered that the servant be placed under watch, and Naḥrīr, one of the special government agents of the caliph, alongside a group of women, were to keep watch over her. They were to see whether the suspicion had been well founded or not.[176] That female servant was kept under

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[175] Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Qum, Mu'assasah al-Nashr al-Islāmī, Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn Biqum al-Musharafa, 1405 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 475.

[176] Kulaynī, Ūṣūl al-Kāfī, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 505. - Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Second Edition, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī

watch for a period of two years, but she did not deliver a child and so the report was found to have been false.[177]

At this point, Mu'tamid decided to do certain things in order to show the public that Imam 'Askarī ('a) had not had any children; through these means, he wanted to make the Shias hopeless of a successor to the Imam ('a). For this reason, the caliph ended up ordering that the inheritance of the Imam ('a) be divided between his mother and brother (Ja'far), which would signify that there was no other heir.[178] In spite of this, the Shia still believed that the Imam ('a) had a child, and they also believed that this child had taken on the responsibilities of the imamate.[179] This belief was fueled by the fact that a number of them had seen the son of the Imam ('a) themselves; many examples of this are found in the books of history.

In spite of these efforts by the caliph, the pressure and careful watch continued over the family of the Imam, in order to discover the whereabouts of the Twelfth Imam ('a). This continued until the revolt of Ya'qūb ibn Layth Ṣafārī in Khurāsān, and the sudden death of 'Ubaydullah ibn Yaḥyā ibn Khāqān, as well as the disturbance and sedition of Sāḥib al-Zanj in Baṣrah. These events forced the 'Abbāsids to gather all of their forces against the rebels, and they were not able to continue their harassment of the family of the Imam.[180]

Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 329.

[177] Kulaynī, Ibid, p. 505.

- Majlisī, Ibid, p. 329.

[178] Kulaynī, Ibid, p. 505.

- Majlisī, Ibid, p. 329.

[179] 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 199.

- Fattāl Nayshābūrī, Rawḍat al-Wā'iẓīn, First Edition, Beirut, Mu'assasat al-A'lamī Lilmaṭbū'āt, 1406 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 276.

[180] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Third Edition, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1395 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 50, p. 331.

- Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Rustam Ṭabarī, Third Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 224.

- Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn, 1405 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 475.

The Twelfth Imam

Imam al-Mahdī

A Brief Look at the Life of Imam Mahdī

The Twelfth leader, Imam Ḥujjah ibn al-Ḥasan al-Mahdī, was born on the 15th of the month of Sha'bān, in the year 255 Hijrī, in the city of Sāmarrā'.[181] He has the same name and agnomen (Abū al-Qāsim) as the Prophet of Islam (ṣ).[182] The Imams ('a) have refrained from mentioning his primary name,[183] but the titles of the Imam ('a) include: al-Ḥujjah, al-Qā'im, Khalf Ṣāliḥ, Ṣāḥib al-Zamān,[184] and Baqīyatallah.[185] Yet the most famous of these is that of the Mahdī ('a).[186] His father was the Eleventh leader of the Shia, Imam Ḥasan 'Askarī ('a), and his mother was the honorable lady Narjīs,[187] who has also been mentioned by the names of Rayḥānah, Sūsan, and Ṣaqīl.[188] The degree of

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[181] Shaykh Mufīd, al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 346.
- Fattāl Nayshābūrī, Rawḍat al-Wā'iẓīn, First Edition, Beirut, Mu'assat al-'Alamī Lil Maṭbū'āt, 1406 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 272.

[182] Shaykh Mufīd, Ibid, p. 346.

[183] Ṣadūq, Ibid, p. 648.
- Kulaynī, Ibid, p. 332.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1393 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 51, p. 31-34. A question remains as to whether the lack of mentioning the main name of the Imam (a) was due to political reasons specific to the time of the minor disappearance or whether his name was not mentioned out of respect until the time arrives for his reappearance and revolution. There are differences of opinion in this matter among the Shia scholars. (Refer to: Ḥajj Mīrzā Ḥusayn Ṭabarsī Nuri, al-Najm al-Ṭāqib, Tehran, Intishārate 'Ilmīye al-Islāmīya, Bāb 2, p. 48 and 49).

[184] Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 418.
- Ibn Ṣabbāgh, Ibid, p. 310.

[185] Mas'ūdī, Ithbāt al-Waṣīyah, Fourth Edition, Najaf, al-Maṭba'at Haydarīya, 1374 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 248.

[186] Ibn Ṣabbāgh, Ibid, p. 310.

[187] Shaykh Mufīd, Ibid, p. 346; Ṣadūq, Ibid, p. 432; Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 418.

[188] Ṣadūq, Ibid, p. 432; also refer to: Rawḍat al-Wā'iẓīn, p. 292.
Some contemporary researchers have considered it possible that her name was Narjis, and the other names, except for Ṣaqīl, were given to her by Ḥākīmah, the daughter of Imam Jawād (a) (some traditions mention that she had been the slave of

the virtue and spirituality of the lady Narjīs Khātūn was considered to be so high, that Ḥakimah, the daughter of Imam Hādī ('a), who was herself a very lofty individual, considered her as being the master from among her family, and considered herself the servant of the lady Narjis.[189]

Imam Mahdī ('a) has two distinct periods of Ghaybah: one of these periods, called Ghaybat al-Sughrā, was short in duration, while the latter period, which is longer and still ongoing, is known as the Ghaybat al-Kubrā. The first period began from the time of his birth until the era of the 'Select Representatives,' while the second began from the end of the first, and will continue until the time of his reappearance and revolution.[190]

The Birth of Imam Mahdī According to the Ahl al-Sunnah

The belief in the coming of a savior is not exclusive to only the Shia; it is a belief founded upon numerous traditions from the Holy Prophet (ṣ), and, as such, the scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah have also accepted this matter. Differences do exist and these lie primarily in the fact that the Ahl al-Sunnah reject the birth of Imam Mahdī ('a) and say: "The individual whom the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) has spoken of, who will revolt after a period of disappearance, has not yet been born and will be born in the future."[191] In spite of this, a considerable number of Sunni historians and narrators have mentioned the birth of the Imam ('a) in their texts and consider it to be a historical fact. Some researchers have recorded over 100

Ḥākimah). The people of that time would call their slaves by a variety of names... and Narjīs, Rayḥānah, and Sūsan are all the names of flowers.

[189] Fattāl Nayshābūrī, Ibid, p. 283.
- Ṣadūq, Ibid, p. 427.
- Majlisī, Ibid, vol. 51, p. 12.

[190] Shaykh Mufīd, Ibid, p. 346.

[191] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kītāb al-'Arabīya, 1960 A.D., vol. 7, p. 94, and vol. 10, p. 96.

such individuals.[192]

Seeing Imam Mahdī

As mentioned previously in some detail, the ʿAbbāsid government desired very greatly to find the son of Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa) and kill him. In order to achieve their aims, the government watched the Imam (ʿa) and his family, and placed them under very tight restrictions. Therefore, the birth of Imam Mahdī (ʿa) took place in great secrecy, through a very systematic and meticulously planned program, and it was also hidden from the people, including even many of the Shia.

The most well documented report on this subject comes from Ḥakīmah, the aunt of Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa), who personally witnessed the birth of Imam Mahdī (ʿa). However, it must be kept in mind that the secrecy surrounding Imam Mahdī (ʿa) does not mean that no one saw him during the first five or six years of his life, when his father was still alive. As we mentioned previously, certain select individuals from among the Shia were able to meet the Imam (ʿa) during various occasions. This was allowed in order that they could find certainty in the birth and existence of the Twelfth Imam (ʿa), and in due time inform the rest of the Shia about it.

Our scholars have mentioned these meetings in some detail,[193] and out of these many meetings, the most

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[192] Faqīh Īmānī, Mahdī, Mahdī Muntaẓar in the Nahj al-Balāghah, Iṣfihān, The Public Library of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a), p. 23 and 39.

A number of these sources, which clearly mention the birth of Imam Mahdī (a) are listed below:

- Ibn Ḥajar Haytamī, al-Ṣawāʿiq al-Muḥriqah, Second Edition, Cairo, 1375 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 208.
- Shabrāwī, al-'Itiḥāf Biḥubb al-'Ashrāf, Second Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, 1363 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 179.
- Muḥammad Amīn Baghdādī Suwaydī, Sabā'ik al-Dhahab Fī Maʿrifat Qabā'il al-ʿArab, Beirut Dār Ṣaʿab, p. 78.

[193] Ṣadūq, Ibid, p. 434-478.

- Shaykh Mufīd, Ibid, p. 350 and 351.
- Shaykh Sulaymān Qandūzī, Yanābīʿ al-Muwaddah, Beirut, Mu'assasat al-ʿAlamī Lilmaṭbūʿāt, vol. 3, p. 123-125.

important seems to be one in which forty individuals met with the Twelfth Imam ('a). The account of this meeting is given by Ḥasan ibn Ayūb ibn Nūḥ,[194] who has narrated: "We went to Imam 'Askarī's ('a) home in order to ask about the next Imam. In that gathering, there were forty people present. 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd 'Amrī, who would become one of the future representatives of Imam Mahdī ('a), stood up and asked: 'I wish to ask you of a matter in which you are more knowledgeable than I.'

The Imam ('a) asked him to sit down. 'Uthmān became distressed and wanted to leave the gathering. The Imam ('a) said: 'No one should leave this gathering.' No one left, and some time passed. Then, the Imam ('a) called 'Uthmān, and 'Uthmān stood up. Imam 'Askarī ('a) said: 'Do you wish for me to tell you the reason you have come here?' Everyone replied in unison: 'Yes please.' He then said: 'You have come here in order to ask about the Ḥujjah and the Imam who will come after me.' At this point, a young boy entered the gathering who was radiant, much like the moon, and who was the closest of the people in appearance to Imam 'Askarī ('a). The Imam ('a) indicated towards him and said: 'This is your Imam after me, and my successor amongst you. Obey his commands, and do not differ after me, for if you do, you will be destroyed and your religion will be corrupted...'"[195]

The Political and Social Reasons for the Ghaybah

There is no doubt that the leadership of divinely appointed leaders exists for the purpose of guiding people towards human perfection. It also goes without saying, that this is only possible when the people have the proper preparation and foundation to benefit from this divine guidance. If such groundwork does not exist amongst the

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[194] As was mentioned in the life history of Imam Hādī (a), Ayūb ibn Nūḥ was one of the representatives of the Imam.

[195] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 204.

people, the mere existence of these divine leaders among them will not have much effect.

Unfortunately, the pressures and restrictions that were brought to bear on the Imams ('a), and in particular on Imam Jawād ('a) and the Imams that came after him, showed that a favorable atmosphere did not exist in the society. The time was not yet right for the people to fully benefit from the guidance and leadership of the Imams. Due to this environment, divine wisdom dictated that the Twelfth Imam ('a) should disappear from the direct view of the society, until the time came that the society would be ready for his reappearance.

It must also be mentioned that while the lack of readiness by the people can be considered to be the main reason, not all of the reasons for the disappearance are necessarily known to us. In the traditions on the disappearance of the Imam ('a), there are three main points which are considered foundational. Let us take a look at each of these points:

A- A Test for the People

One of the established ways of God is his examinatior and testing of his servants, in order to see who is truly faithful and sincere. Life is filled with a multitude of various tests, and through these tests, it becomes clear who obeys God through times of hardship, and who does not. In addition, these tests become the means of forging various religious attributes and characteristics that manifest themselves and allow individuals to reach a higher level of perfection.

Due to the Ghaybah of Imam Mahdī ('a), the people are placed under an examination and test. The people who do not possess firmly established faith, will have this inner reality manifested externally, by means of this examination. Those who possess strong faith, due to awaiting the reappearance and experiencing various hardships and

struggles, will become more experienced and capable, and this will allow them to be more worthy of receiving higher levels of divine reward.

Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far ('a) has said: "At the time that my fifth descendent disappears, be careful of your religion. May it not be that someone takes you away from your religion. He will, of necessity, have a disappearance in such a manner that a group from the faithful will turn back from their beliefs. God will test his servants through means of this disappearance."[196]

From the words of the Imams ('a), it is narrated that the examination that will arise from the disappearance of the Imam ('a) will be one of the hardest of the divine examinations.[197] This difficulty will be experienced from two different angles:

1- The actual period of the disappearance will be so long in duration that many of the people will become afflicted with doubts and uncertainties. Others will develop doubts about the birth of the Imam ('a) and others in regards to the length of his lifespan. Only people who are sincere and of deep understanding will remain faithful to their beliefs in the imamate of Imam Mahdī ('a). The Prophet of Islam (ṣ), during the course of a long tradition, has said: "The Mahdī ('a) will disappear from the view of the Shia and his followers, and except for those whom God has made their hearts worthy in terms of faith, the people will not remain steadfast in their faith in his imamate."[198]

2- The hardships, difficulties, and unfavorable occurrences that will take place during the period of the Ghaybah will transform the people in such a way that protecting one's faith and being steadfast in one's religion will become something of extreme difficulty and the faith of the people

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[196] Shaykh Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 204; Nu'mānī, al-Ghaybah, Tehran, Maktabah Ṣadūq, p. 154.
[197] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 203-207; Ṣāfī, Ibid, Bāb 47, p. 314 and 315.
[198] Ṣāfī, Ibid, Section 1, Bāb 8, p. 101, Ḥadīth 4.

will be placed in great peril.[199]

B- The Protection of the Life of the Imam

God, through the Ghaybah, has protected the life of the Twelfth Imam ('a). If the Imam ('a) was openly visible to the people from the beginning of his life, then it is very clear that he would have been killed, as we have mentioned in previous pages. If he were to have reappeared later, during a similarly unfavorable time, he would also have been killed, and therefore been unable to perform his divinely appointed mission. Zurārah, one of the companions of Imam Ṣādiq ('a), has narrated: "Imam Ṣādiq ('a) said: 'The awaited Imam ('a) will be hidden from the eyes for a period of time before the time of his rising.' When Zurārah asked why, the Imam ('a) said: 'He will be afraid for his life.'"[200]

C- Freedom from Pledging to the Oppressors

The Twelfth Imam ('a) has not, nor will he ever, officially recognize any government, even out of a sense of 'Taqīyah.' In accordance to his duties, he is going to establish God's government in its totality, without the use of any veils, fear of the oppressors, or other considerations. Therefore, there is no room for any pledges or oaths.

Ḥasan ibn Faḍāl has narrated: "The Eighth Imam ('a) said: 'It is as if I see my Shia at the time of the death of my third descendent (Imam Ḥasan 'Askarī), searching everywhere for their Imam ('a), but not finding him.' I asked: 'Why will he disappear?' The Imam ('a) said: 'In order that when he rises with the sword, he will have no one's pledge upon his shoulders.'"[201]

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[199] Ayatollah Ṣāfī, Luṭfullāh, Navīd Amno Amān, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, p. 177 and 178.

[200] Kulaynī, Ibid, vol. 1, p. 337; Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 202; Ṣadūq, Ibid, p. 481; Ṣāfī, Muntakhab al-'Athar, Section 2, Bāb 28, p. 269; Nu'mānī, Ibid, p. 166.

[201] Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Bāb 44, p. 480, Ḥadīth 4; Majlisī, Ibid, vol. 51, p. 152; Ṣāfī,

The Minor and Major Ghaybah

As mentioned previously, the Ghaybah of Imam Mahdī ('a) can be divided into two distinct periods: the minor Ghaybah and the major Ghaybah.

The minor Ghaybah began from the year 260 Hijrī (the year of Imam 'Askarī's martyrdom) and continued until the year 329 Hijrī (the year when the last select representative of Imam Mahdī passed away)— this period was sixty nine years in duration.[202] During the period of the minor Ghaybah, the connection of the Shia with the Imam ('a) was not completely broken, and they had contact with him, albeit in a limited way.

During this time, certain individuals, who will be named in the coming pages, were in contact with Imam Mahdī ('a) as his select representatives. Through them, the Shia would forward various questions and issues, and receive their answers. In some cases, they were even able to meet the Imam ('a) in person. Therefore, it can be said that the Imam ('a) was present in the society in certain ways, while not being present in the society in other ways.

This period can be considered as a time when the Shia were being prepared for the era of the Major Ghaybah. During the Major Ghaybah, even this limited contact was going to be broken and the Shia would be duty bound to seek the solutions to their questions and problems from the general representatives of the Imam ('a), namely the

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Muntakhab al-'Athar, Section 2, Bāb 25, p. 268, Ḥadīth 3.

[202] The late Shaykh Mufīd has considered the beginning of the period of the minor Ghaybah to have begun from the birth of Imam Mahdī (a) (255 Hijrī). (Al-'Irshād, p. 346). If this is the case, then the period of the minor Ghaybah was 75 years in duration. Shaykh Mufīd has counted this period as such, due to the fact that Imam Mahdī (a) was not present amongst the people from the time of his birth and did not have much contact with them; therefore, this period can be counted as having been part of the Ghaybah.

It is based on similar deliberations that other researchers, such as: Ṭabarsī, Sayyid Muḥsin Amīn, and Ayatollah Sayyid al-Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ṣadr have also considered the period of the minor Ghaybah to have begun from the Imam's (a) birth (I'lām al-Warā, p. 444; A'yān al-Shī'ah, Beirut, Dār al-Ta'aruf Lilmaṭbū'āt, vol. 2, p. 46; al-Mahdī, Beirut, Dār Zahrā', 1398 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 181).

Mujtahids who are fully versed in Islamic law.

If the major Ghaybah was to have taken place suddenly and unexpectedly, then it is very possible that it would have caused many people to deviate. Through the medium of the minor Ghaybah, the people were gradually prepared for what was to take place, until the time came for the major Ghaybah. In addition, the connection of the select representatives to the Imam ('a) and also the visitation of certain Shias with Imam Mahdī ('a) helped to further solidify and establish the matter of the birth and existence of the Imam ('a).[203] With the ending of the minor Ghaybah, the period of the major Ghaybah began and it has continued until today, and will continue until the time that God gives permission for the rise and revolution of the Imam.

Moreover, the two part Ghaybah of Imam Mahdī ('a) was prophesized by previous Imams ('a), years before his birth. From that time onward, these traditions have been narrated and recorded in various books of tradition. Let us take a look at several of these traditions below:

1- Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) has said: "Our hidden (Imam) will have two periods of absence, one of which will be longer than the other. During his period of absence, only those people who possess persistent certainty and complete insight will remain faithful to their belief in his imamate."[204]

2- Imam Bāqir ('a) has said: "The Qā'im Imam will have two (periods) of absence; in one of them it will be said that he has died..."[205]

3- Abū Baṣīr has said: "I said to Imam Ṣādiq ('a) that Imam Bāqir ('a) had narrated: 'The Qā'im of the family of

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[203] Ṣadr , Sayyid al-Ṣadr al-Dīn, Al-Mahdī (a), Beirut, Dār Zahrā', 1398 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 183.
- The Twelfth Leader- Imam Zamān (a), Mu'asseseye Dar Rāhe Ḥaq, p. 38.

[204] Shaykh Sulaymān Qandūzī, Yanābī' al-Muwaddah, Beirut, Mu'assasat al-'Alamī Lilmaṭbū'āt, vol. 3, Bāb 71, p. 82.

[205] Nu'mānī, Ibid, p. 173.

Muḥammad will have two periods of absence; one of them will be longer than the other.' Imam Ṣādiq ('a) said: 'Yes, it is so...'"[206]

4- Imam Ṣādiq ('a) has said: "The Qā'im Imam ('a) shall have two periods of absence: one of them short in duration and the other, long..."[207]

Select Representatives[208]

During the period of his minor Ghaybah, Imam Mahdī ('a) had four select representatives. These four individuals had been companions of the previous Imams ('a), and they were considered as learned and worthy scholars. They are famously known as the 'Four Deputies.' They are listed in chronological order as follows:

1- Abū 'Amr 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd 'Amrī
2- Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd 'Amrī
3- Abū al-Qāsim Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ Nawbakhtī
4- Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Samarī

It should also be mentioned that Imam Mahdī ('a) did have other representatives who were located in various regions besides these four. These other representatives were located in cities such as: Baghdad, Kūfah, Ahwāz, Ḥamidān, Qum, Ray, Azarbaijan, and Nayshābūr... These representatives were either in contact with the Imam ('a) through the four main representatives[209] (who were situated at the highest level of the hierarchy) and had various

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[206] Nu'mānī, Ibid, p. 173.

[207] Nu'mānī, Ibid, p. 170. Also refer to: Muntakhab al-'Athar, Section 2, Bāb 26, p. 251-253.

[208] During that time period, instead of the words deputy or representative, the words ambassador were more widely in use.

[209] According to Shaykh Ṭūsī, there were approximately ten individuals in Baghdad who were engaged as representatives by Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān (al-Ghaybah, p. 225).

Tawqīʿ[210] issued for them,[211] or, as some researchers have thought possible, the representation of these four was general in nature, while other individuals possessed representation in specific matters.[212] These representatives included individuals such as: Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar Asadī, Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq Ashʿarī Qummī, Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad Ḥamidānī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥamzah ibn Ilyas,[213] Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Mahzīyār,[214] Ḥājiz ibn Yazīd, Muḥammad ibn Ṣālīḥ,[215] Abū Hāshim Dāwūd ibn Qāsim Jaʿfarī, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Bilāl, ʿUmar Ahwāzī, and Abū Muḥammad Wajnāʾī.[216]

1- Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd ʿAmrī

ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd belonged to the Banī Asad tribe, and since he lived in the city of Sāmarrāʾ, he was also known as ʿAskarī. Amongst the gatherings of the Shia, he was known as Sammān, the oil seller. The reason behind this name was that ʿUthmān would engage in certain secret activities, such as collecting money from the Shia related to the Imam (ʿa), which he would then deliver under the cover of selling oil. He would conceal the money he had collected in the containers of oil and then deliver them to the Imam (ʿa), thereby bypassing government suspicion and scrutiny.[217] In the society, ʿUthmān was regarded with respect and trust by the Shia masses.[218] It is worth mentioning that ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd had previously been a representative and trusted

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[210] The term Tawqīʿ, in the lexicon of the Shia scholars, is taken to mean the letters and instructions that were issued from the Imam (a) to the Shia, during the time of the minor Ghaybah.

[211] Ṣadr, Al-Mahdī (a), p. 189.

[212] Amīn, Sayyid Muḥsin, Aʿyān al-Shīʿah, vol. 2, p. 48.

[213] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, p. 257 and 258.

[214] Kulaynī, Ūṣūl al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 518, Ḥadīth 5.

[215] Kulaynī, Ibid, p. 521, Ḥadīth 14 and 15.

[216] Ṭabarsī, ʾIlām al-Warā, p. 444.

[217] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, Tehran, Maktabah Naynawā al-Ḥadīthah, p. 214.

[218] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 216.

companion of Imam Hādī ('a) and Imam 'Askarī ('a). Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq, who was himself one of the famous personalities of the Shia, has narrated: "One day I went to see Imam Hādī ('a) and said: 'I am sometimes away and sometimes here in the city, but even when I am present, I am not always able to visit you. Whose words should I accept and whose commands should I obey?'

The Imam ('a) said: 'Abū 'Amr ('Uthmān ibn Sa'īd 'Amrī) is an individual who is reliable and trusted by me; whatever he says to you, he is saying on my behalf, and whatever he sends to you, he has sent on my behalf.'"

Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq has also narrated: "After the passing of Imam Hādī ('a), I went to visit Imam 'Askarī ('a), and I repeated the same question. The Imam ('a), just like his father, said: 'Abū 'Amr was considered reliable and trustworthy by the previous Imam, and he is also considered trustworthy by me, both during my life, as well as after my death. Whatever he tells you, he is telling you on my behalf, and whatever he sends to you, he is sending to you on my behalf.'"[219]

After the passing of Imam 'Askarī ('a), the rites of the Ghusl, Kafan, and burial of the Imam ('a) were apparently performed by 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd.[220] One day in the midst of a gathering of the Shia, an incident took place whereby he collected an amount of money from a group of the Yemenī Shias, in accordance with Imam 'Askarī's ('a) instructions and as his representative. In response to what the people mentioned about the growing respect and confidence of the Imam ('a) in 'Uthmān, he ('a) said: "Witness that 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd is my representative, and his son Muḥammad, will also be the representative of my son Mahdī ('a)."[221]

Similarly, as we mentioned in the earlier part of this

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[219] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, p. 215.

[220] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 216.

[221] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 216.

section, when the visit of the forty individuals with Imam Mahdī ('a) came to an end, the Imam ('a) addressed the people who were present, saying: "Whatever 'Uthmān (Ibn Sa'īd) says, accept it from him; be obedient to his commands and accept his words, (for) he is the representative of your Imam ('a) and the judgment is with him."[222] The date of 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd's passing is not clear. Some scholars have mentioned that he passed away sometime between the years 260 and 267 Hijrī, while others have mentioned the year 280 Hijrī.[223]

2- Muhammad ibn 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd 'Amrī

Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān was, much like his father, a learned scholar who was known for his piety, justice, and magnanimity. He was accepted and trusted by the Shia,[224] and was also one of the trustworthy companions of Imam 'Askarī ('a). He was, in fact, so trusted by the Imam ('a), that in the response to a question by Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq, asking whom he should refer to, he replied: "'Amrī ('Uthmān ibn Sa'īd) and his son; both are reliable and trusted by me. Whatever they send to you, they have sent it on my behalf, and whatever they say to you, they have said it on my behalf. Hear their words and follow them, for these two individuals are subject to my trust...."[225]

After the passing of 'Uthmān, a Tawqī' was issued from Imam Mahdī ('a) to Muḥammad, giving his condolences for the passing of his father and announcing his position as the next deputy.[226] 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far Ḥimyarī has narrated: "When 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd passed away, a letter arrived with the same handwriting that the Imam ('a)

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[222] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 217.

[223] Doctor Ḥusayn, Jāsim, The Political History of the Ghaybah of the Twelfth Imam, translated by Doctor Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Ayatollāhī, First Print, Tehran, Mu'assasaye Intishārāte Amīr Kabīr, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 155 and 156.

[224] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 221.

[225] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 219.

[226] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 219-220.

would previously write to us in, appointing Abū Ja'far (Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd) to the position of his father."[227] Similarly, the Imam ('a) wrote the following in a Tawqī' that he created in response to the questions of Isḥāq ibn Ya'qūb: "May God be satisfied and pleased with 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd, and his father... He is trusted by me, and his writing (can be considered) as my writing."[228]

Abū Ja'far had also compiled some books on jurisprudence, and after his passing, these came into the possession of Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ, the third representative of the Imam ('a). According to some researchers, however, the book came into the possession of the fourth representative, Abū al-Ḥasan Samarī.[229]

Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān was the Imam's ('a) representative for a period of forty years. During this time, he organized and managed local and regional representatives, and was, as a whole, occupied with managing the overall affairs of the Shia. Numerous Tawqī's were issued by the Imam ('a) during his time and they were passed on to others through him. He passed away in the year 304 or 305 Hijrī.[230] An interesting historical note is that Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān, foretold the date of his own death, and he passed away exactly on the date that he had mentioned.[231]

3- Abū al-Qāsim Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ Nawbakhtī

During the last days of the life of Abū Ja'far, a group of the Shia notables went to visit him. He said: "After I have

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[227] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 220; Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 51, p. 349.

[228] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 220.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 51, p. 350.
- Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā, Third Edition, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, p. 452.
- 'Alī ibn 'Īsā 'Irbilī, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 322.

[229] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, p. 221.

[230] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, p. 223.

[231] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, p. 222; Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 51, p. 351.

passed away, in accordance to the Imam's order, Abū al-Qāsim Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ Nawbakhtī will be my successor and his representative. Refer to him and trust him in your affairs."[232] Indeed, Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ was one of the close assistants of the second representative, and ʿAmrī had worked from past times to stabilize and strengthen the position of his representation. He would refer the Shias to him for the collection of their dues, and he was a liaison between ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd and the Shia.[233]

Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ had compiled a book on Shia jurisprudence by the name of Al-Ta'dīb, and he had this book sent to the jurisprudents of Qum in order to see their opinion in regards to it. After some research and review, the jurisprudents wrote in response: "Except for one issue, it is all in accordance to the rulings of the Shia jurisprudents."[234] Some of his contemporaries praised him for his intelligence and insight, and said: "According to both the opinion of friend and foe, Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ is one of the most learned people of this age."[235] During the rule of Muqtadīr, the ʿAbbāsid caliph, Nawbakhtī was imprisoned for a period of five years, before finally being freed in 317 Hijrī.[236] After 21 years of representing the Imam (ʿa), he passed away in the year 326 Hijrī.[237]

4- Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Muhammad Samarī

In accordance with the command of the Twelfth Imam (ʿa),[238] and with the testament of Nawbakhtī and his introduction, ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Samarī was selected to the position of the fourth representative of the Imam (ʿa),

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[232] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 226 and 227; Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 51, p. 355.

[233] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 224, 225, and 227.

[234] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 240.

[235] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 51, p. 356. Also refer to: Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 236.

[236] Doctor Ḥusayn, Jāsim, The Political History of the Ghaybah of the Twelfth Imam, First Print, Tehran, Amīr Kabīr Publications, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 199.

[237] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 238.

[238] Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 445.

and became responsible for managing the overall affairs of the Shia.[239] Samarī happened to be one of the companions of Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa).[240] Until the year 329 Hijrī when he passed away, he was entrusted with the representation of Imam Mahdī (ʿa). A few days before his death, a Tawqīʿ was issued by the Imam (ʿa) to him, saying:

"In the name of God, the Gracious, the Merciful. Oh ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Samarī, may God bestow upon your brothers a great reward in the grief of your passing. You will pass away in six days. Set your affairs in order and do not appoint anyone as your successor. The time of the complete Ghaybah has arrived, and I will not reappear except with the permission of God, the exalted, and my reappearance will be after a lengthy period of time, when the hearts have become hard and the earth has become filled with oppression. Some from among my Shia will claim to have seen me (in the sense that they are my representatives). Be aware that whoever makes such a claim before the departure of the 'Sufyānī' and the 'voice from the sky,'[241] is a liar, and no movement or power is possible without God..."[242]

Six days after the Tawqīʿ was issued, Abū al-Ḥasan Samarī passed away.[243] Before his passing, he was asked: "Who is the representative after you?" He replied: "I do not have the permission to introduce anyone."[244] With the passing of Abū al-Ḥasan Samarī, a new era began in the

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[239] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 242.

[240] Ṣadr, Ibid, p. 412.

[241] As mentioned in the section on the signs of the 'Reappearance', the rise of an individual by the name of Sufyānī and a voice from the sky are two of the signs signaling the reappearance of the Imam (a).

[242] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, p. 242 and 243.
-Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 51, p. 361.

[243] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 243.

[244] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 424.

history of the Shia, which is known as the era of the major Ghaybah. In the coming pages we will go into further detail about this era.

The Main Duties and Activities of the Select Representatives

The selection of these four deputies by the Twelfth Imam (ʿa) was in reality a continuation and expansion of the system of representatives established by the earlier Imams. This system was established by the Ninth Imam (ʿa), and later expanded upon during the time of Imam Hādī (ʿa) and Imam ʿAskarī (ʿa), and it reached its peak during the time of Imam Mahdī (ʿa). The main duties and activities of these select representatives can summarized as follows:

A- Keeping the Name and Location of the Imam a Secret

The possibility of seeing Imam Mahdī (ʿa) was present for his representatives, as well as certain individuals from among the Shia during the time of the minor Ghaybah. Thus, from time to time, certain visitations and meeting would take place.[245] In spite of this, due to the politic situation of the time, each of the four representatives wa duty bound to conceal the name and location of the Imam (ʿa) from the public. If such a thing was not done, the life of the Imam (ʿa) would have been put in danger from the government of that time. This policy of concealment was shaped and guided directly by the Imam (ʿa) himself.

One day, a Tawqīʿ was issued to Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān (the second representative), stating: "For those who ask in regards to my name, they should know that if they are silent, heaven awaits them, and if they say anything, then hell awaits them. For if they become aware

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[245] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 222 and 246.

- Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī Lijamāʿat al-Mudarisīn, 1405 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 44.

of my name, they will disclose it, and if they become aware of my location, they will reveal it."[246] This was while the Imam ('a) was not asked about anything related to this matter.

Similarly, one day 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far Ḥamīrī and Aḥmad ibn Isḥāq Ash'arī, who were both notable Shia personalities and close companions of the Imams, visited 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd and asked him: "Have you seen the successor of Imam 'Askarī ('a)?" He answered in the affirmative. They then asked the name of the Imam ('a). He refrained from telling them the Imam's ('a) name and said:

"It is unlawful for you to ask about this matter, and I am not telling you this on my own behalf, for I do not have the authority to make the lawful, unlawful and the unlawful, lawful; this is by his (the Imam's) own order. The 'Abbāsid government believes that Imam 'Askarī ('a) passed away without leaving a child, and for this reason, they divided his inheritance among people who were not his inheritors (such as Ja'far Kadhāb and the mother of Imam 'Askarī). This issue was met with the silence of the Imam ('a). At this point, nobody dares to establish relations with his family or to ask them anything. And if the name of the Imam ('a) is revealed, he will be pursued. Be cautious, keep God in mind, and refrain from these discussions."[247]

During the time of Abū al-Qāsim Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ's representation, it was asked from Abū Sahl Nawbakhtī, one of the notables of the Shia, how he had not been selected to this position as a deputy, while Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ had? He answered with the following: "Those who selected him to this position know best. My job is debating with the enemies and the opponents. If I knew the location of the Imam ('a) like Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ, and I was perhaps placed under pressure, I would disclose it; but if the Imam ('a) was hidden under the very cloak of Abū al-Qāsim, he would

[246] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 222.

[247] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 146 and 219.

never disclose it, even if he was being cut into pieces."[248]

B- Organizing the Representatives

During the era of the minor Ghaybah, the local representatives of the Imam ('a) each had their own jurisdiction and spheres of activity, and they were positioned in various areas where the Shia were found in large numbers. During the time of the Tenth and Eleventh Imams, although these representatives would normally contact the Imam ('a) through a main representative, the possibility of direct contact with the Imam ('a) did exist. During the time of the minor Ghaybah, this possibility of direct contact for the local representatives was cut off completely, and these representatives[249] were limited solely to the supervision of the Imam's ('a) select representatives. Under the supervision of these representatives, they fulfilled various duties, such as collecting the monetary dues of the Shia, as well as collecting letters and questions. These were all then delivered to the Imam ('a) by way of the select representatives. During the time of Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān, there were 10 individuals in Baghdad alone, who were working under his leadership.[250]

When the people gave their monetary dues to the select representatives, they would not receive receipts, but they would demand receipts when they turned over money to local or regional representatives. According to a narration of Shaykh Ṭūsī, towards the end of the life of Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān, an individual would give his monetary dues to Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ and seek a receipt from him in return. Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ complained of this matter, and so Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān instructed that a receipt should

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[248] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, p. 240.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, vol. 51, p. 359.

[249] The Late Ṭabarsī has compiled an interesting index of this group of representatives. (I'lām al-Warā, p. 454).

[250] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 225.

not be sought from him and further added: "Whatever reaches the hands of Abū al-Qāsim, has reached my hands."[251]

C- Collecting and Distributing Wealth

The select representatives, during each of their respective periods, would directly or indirectly (through the local representatives) collect the monetary dues related to the Imam ('a) and deliver them in any way possible to him. In certain cases where the Imam ('a) had instructed, they would spend or distribute this wealth themselves.

During the time of Imam 'Askarī's ('a) martyrdom, a group of Shias from Qum and other regions of Iran entered Sāmarrā' and became aware that the Imam ('a) had passed away. This group had brought an amount of money from the Shias of their region, in order that they could deliver this to the Imam ('a). When they asked about the successor of Imam 'Askarī ('a), some people referred them to Ja'far (Kadhāb), the Imam's brother. According to the prevailing custom, they asked Ja'far to describe the specifics of the money and wealth they had brought with them. This method was meant to ascertain whether he possessed the knowledge of the Imams ('a). When Ja'far was unable to answer, they refrained from turning over the wealth, and without knowing what else to do, they decided to leave Sāmarrā' and return to their country.

When they reached the outskirts of Sāmarrā', a secret messenger of Imam Mahdī ('a) arrived and guided them towards a meeting with the Imam ('a). The Imam ('a) then told them the exact specifics of the wealth they had in their possession, and so they turned this wealth over to him. The Imam ('a) then added: "After this, do not bring anything to Sāmarrā'. I will specify an individual in Baghdad and you will give him the wealth and a Tawqī' will be issued by

[251] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 225 and 226.

him."[252] It was after this that the Imam ('a) designated 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd as his select representative and he began his duties in the city of Baghdad.

D- Answering Jurisprudential and Ideological Questions

The sphere of the activities of the four representatives was not limited only to the things mentioned above. Their activities also included answering the jurisprudential and religious questions of the Shia, as well as resolving various issues that their opponents would raise, in order to weaken the intellectual and ideological integrity of the Shia. The select representatives would perform these duties in the best manner possible, with the knowledge and training that they had received from the Imam ('a). A passing glance at the history of these four great ambassadors of the Imam ('a) shows us various facets into their various struggles and successes.

Using a variety of means, these representatives would combat and neutralize the whispers of doubt in regards to the existence of the Imam ('a). In some cases, they would reveal certain instances of their secret meetings with him,[253] and at other times, a Tawqī' would be issued from the Imam ('a) to help them in this affair.[254]

Moreover, they would deliver the jurisprudential and religious questions of the Shia to the Imam ('a), and bring his replies back to the people. One example of this is a Tawqī' issued through Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān, which responded to the various questions of Isḥāq ibn Ya'qūb.[255] Likewise, there is another example of a detailed Tawqī' issued in response to the questions of the representative of

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[252] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 225, and 226.

[253] Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn, 1405 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 440-441.

[254] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 176-177.

[255] Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 452-453.

the people of Qum, Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far Ḥamīrī.[256]

In addition, there were certain times when the select representatives would hold debates with their opponents, soundly defeating them. Throughout the course of these debates, they would emphasize the fact that they had learned their answers from Imam Mahdī ('a), and it was not from themselves. In one debate, Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ extensively answered the doubt of an individual in regards to the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn ('a). On the day after this debate, Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ said to one of the Shias who had assumed that the answer to that particular question had been from himself: "If I were to fall from the skies and become food for the animals, or if a strong wind was to throw me to some far off region, this would be better in my opinion, than if I was to give my own personal opinions on the religion of God. The matter that you heard yesterday was heard from the 'Ḥujjah of God.'"[257]

Likewise, there was an instance when some questions were asked from one of the leading theologians of the time. These questions were regarding the cause of Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far's ('a) martyrdom, and whether the infallible leaders were killed with the sword or through the use of poison, and also the secret of the superiority of Fāṭimah ('a) over the other daughters of the Prophet (ṣ). Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ gave some very clear and definitive answers to these questions, resulting in the admiration of the scholar who had first asked them. The scholar said: "I have never heard an answer on this matter, better or more concise."[258]

E- Struggles against the False Claimants

Included among the activities of the four deputies was fighting the Ghulāt (extremists), as well as the false

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[256] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 229-236.

[257] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 198-199.

[258] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 238-239.

claimants to the office of the deputyship. As explained in the chapter on the life of Imam Hādī (ʿa), a group of deviated and position-seeking individuals crafted some ideas about the divinity of the Imams (ʿa), and through this, they were able to claim certain positions for themselves and collect wealth from the people in the name of the Imam (ʿa). This issue hurt the reputation of the Shia and caused problems for the Imams (ʿa).

During the time of the minor Ghaybah, in addition to these issues, certain individuals appeared who claimed that they were the select representatives and ambassadors of the Imam (ʿa). They began to take possession of money that was the trust of the Imam (ʿa) and they would issue deviant opinions in religious and jurisprudential matters. It was here that the select representatives, under the guidance of the Imam (ʿa), stood up against them, and sometimes a Tawqī was issued from the Imam (ʿa) condemning and rejecting them. Among these people were Abū Muḥammad Sharīʿī, Muḥammad ibn Naṣīr Numayrī, Aḥmad ibn Hilāl Karkhī, Abū Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Bilāl, Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr Ḥallaj, and Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Shalmaqānī.[259]

Shalmaqānī was at one point considered a Shia jurisprudent, and he had even compiled a book by the name of Taklīf. Later, he became inclined towards extremism and deviation, and began to speak words of disbelief. For example, he emphasized a belief in the transmigration of souls, saying: "The soul of the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) is in the body of Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān (the second representative), and the soul of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (ʿa) is in the body of Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ (the third representative), and the soul of Fāṭimah (ʿa) is in the body of Umm Kulthūm, the daughter of Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān.

[259] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 244.

Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ spoke against this ideology as a type of disbelief and atheism, and likened it to the Christian views on Prophet Jesus (ʿa). Through his words and actions, Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ caused Shalmaqānī to be disgraced and ostracized amongst his people. When Shalmaqānī refused to desist, a Tawqīʿ being issued through Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ in Dhī al-Ḥijjah of the year 312 Hijrī, cursing him and declaring him an apostate. As a result, he was killed in the year 323 Hijrī.[260]

The Major Ghaybah

With the passing of the fourth select representative of Imam Mahdī (ʿa), the era of the minor Ghaybah came to end and the era of the major Ghaybah began. During this period, the scholars who possess the necessary qualifications are considered as the general representatives of the Imam (ʿa). As mentioned before, the select representation took place when the Imam (ʿa) would specifically announce someone by name as his representative. On the other hand, a general representation takes place when the Imam (ʿa) has defined the conditions and overall characteristics of his representative, and then through time, whoever comes to possess these qualifications and standards will be known as his representative. Through these means, these individuals would be considered as the authority (Marja) of the Shia in religious and worldly affairs.

The Infallible Imams (ʿa), and in particular, Imam Mahdī (ʿa), have narrated numerous traditions defining these qualifications, and they have charged the Muslims, during the era of the major Ghaybah, to refer to the

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[260] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 248-254; Also refer to: Doctor Ḥusayn, Jāsim, The Political History of the Ghaybah of the Twelfth Imam, translated by Doctor Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Ayatollāhī, First Print, Tehran, Mu'assase Intishārāt Amīr Kabīr, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 200-205.

- Masʿūdī has mentioned his death as having taken place in 322 Hijrī (Tanbīyah wa al-'Ishrāf, Cairo, Dār al-Ṣāwī Lil Ṭab, p. 343.)

'possessors of these qualifications' and act upon their orders. Let us take a look at a few of these traditions:

1- 'Umar ibn Ḥanẓalah has narrated: "I asked Imam Ṣādiq ('a) that if a dispute breaks out between two individuals from among the Shia based on an issue of inheritance or a loan, and they refer to the government and (state) judges, is this act permissible? The Imam ('a) said: 'Whoever refers to them in a matter of Ḥaq and Bāṭil has in reality referred to the Tāghūt, and whatever he gets due to their ruling, he has received in an unlawful manner, however much it may have been his right, for he has received it based on a ruling of the Tāghūt[261] whom God has commanded for them to not accept and to reject, for he says: Their (real) wish is to resort together for judgment (in their disputes) to the evil one, though they were ordered to reject him.' [262]

I then asked: 'Then what must they do?' He said: 'They must look and see which individual amongst you narrates our traditions, issues opinions in the matter of our Ḥalāl and Ḥarām and has mastered it, and has comprehende our rules and regulations. They must accept him as the judge, for I have appointed him as a judge over you. If ḥ. judges based upon our rules and someone does not accept this from him, then they have considered the rule of God as being insignificant and they have rejected us. Whoever rejects us, has (in reality) rejected God and this is the station of associating (others) with God, the Almighty...'"[263]

This order of Imam Ṣādiq ('a) is in reality a general ruling, and it includes all jurisprudents who possess the necessary qualifications. When the Imam ('a) is not willing to leave even a personal dispute to the judgment of the

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[261] The Tāghūt is an individual who rules contrary to the truth and who is not worthy of the position of rule from a religious perspective.

[262] Surah Nisā', Verse 60.

[263] Kulaynī, Ūṣūl al-Kāfī, Tehran, Maktabah al-Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 67, Ḥadīth 10.

- Shaykh Hurr 'Āmūlī, Wasā'il al-Shī'ah, Beirut, Dār Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, vol. 18, Bāb 11, p. 99.

Tāghūt's government, then it is certain that he is not willing to leave the rest of the affairs of the Muslims under the control of the oppressors either, and that he has entrusted the management of the affairs of the Muslims to the just Shia jurisprudents.

2- Isḥāq ibn Yaʿqūb has narrated: "I requested Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān (the second representative of Imam Mahdī (ʿa)) to forward my letter to the Imam (ʿa). In that letter, I had asked in regards to a difficult issue which I had. The Imam (ʿa) responded to the letter in his own handwriting. Among my questions was one where I asked who we should refer to during the time of the Ghaybah, when any issue arises. The Imam (ʿa) responded to this question in the following manner: 'And on the issues which will arise, refer to the narrators of our traditions. They are my proof over you, and I am the proof of God (over you).'"[264] Although Isḥāq ibn Yaʿqūb had asked about his particular responsibility, the Imam (ʿa) answered him in a comprehensive manner and defined the responsibilities of all the Shia.

Imam Mahdī through Shia Sources

Numerous traditions have been narrated from the Prophet (ṣ) and each of the Imams (ʿa) in regards to the birth, Ghaybah, reappearance, global revolution, as well as other details about Imam Mahdī (ʿa). Years before his birth, many of the characteristics and particularities of Imam Mahdī (ʿa) were foretold; these foretellings include- that he will be from the descendants of the Prophet, he will be of the descendants of Fāṭimah, he will be from the lineage of Imam Ḥusayn, and that he will fill the earth with justice through his global revolution. There are only a few subjects

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[264] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 177.
- Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 452.
- Shaykh Hurr ʿĀmūlī, Ibid, vol. 18, p. 101, The Book of Judgement, The Section On The Characteristics of a Judge, Bāb 11, Ḥadīth 9.

which have so many related traditions as this one.

First, let us look at the number of traditions narrated from the Imams (ʿa) about Imam Mahdī (ʿa), and then we will review the books written by the scholars in regards to him. Afterwards, we will look at the traditions narrated from the Prophet of Islam (ṣ), through the books of tradition (Ṣiḥaḥ) of the Ahl al-Sunnah, as well as other books written about Imam Mahdī (ʿa) by Sunni scholars.

It is worth mentioning here, that, although the respective times of all the Imams (ʿa) had their own particularities, and that the Imams (ʿa) were naturally focused on the critical issues of their day, in spite of these issues, the subject of Imam Mahdī (ʿa) was something which they all spoke about. In various times and places, the Imams (ʿa) would speak about Imam Mahdī (ʿa), and there are numerous traditions from each of them on this subject. For example, there are:

1- 51 traditions from Imam ʿAlī
2- 5 traditions from Imam Ḥasan
3- 14 traditions from Imam Ḥusayn
4- 11 traditions from Imam Zayn al-ʿAbidīn
5- 63 traditions from Imam Bāqir
6- 124 traditions from Imam Ṣādiq
7- 6 traditions from Imam Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar
8- 19 traditions from Imam Riḍā
9- 6 traditions from Imam Jawād
10- 6 traditions from Imam Hādī
11- 22 traditions from Imam Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī[265]

Let us take a look at a few of these traditions in greater detail:

A- Amīr al-Mu'minīn (ʿa) has narrated that: "The Prophet of Islam (ṣ) said- 'The world will not come to an end until

[265] Amīnī, Ibrāhīm, The One Who Will Administer Justice Throughout The World, Fourth Print, Qum, Dār al-Fikr Publications, 1352 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 74-82. These numbers have been obtained through narrations from the book Muntakhab al-'Athar; with further research, the number of traditions will naturally be more.

a man from the lineage of Ḥusayn (ʿa) takes control of the affairs of my nation and fills the world with justice, just as it had been filled with oppression.'"[266]

In addition, the Nahj al-Balāghah is filled with the words of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) on this subject.[267] For example, he is quoted as saying: "The world is much like an unruly camel that does not allow anyone to drink its milk (and goes towards its own child instead). After this unruliness, it will then incline towards us.[268] God has said: 'And we desired to show favor to those who were abased in the land, and to make them imams, and to make them the heirs.'"[269]
B- Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (ʿa) has said: "If there is only one day left in the existence of this earth, God will lengthen that day in order that a man from my lineage will revolt and fill the world with justice and equity, much like it had been filled with oppression and tyranny. I heard the Prophet of God (ṣ) saying this."[270]
C- Imam Jawād (ʿa) is quoted as saying to ʿAbdul ʿAẓīm Ḥasanī: "Our Qā'im is the Mahdī Muntaẓar (ʿa), who must be awaited during the time of his Ghaybah and must be obeyed during the time of his reappearance. He will be my third descendent. I swear by the Lord who appointed Muḥammad to prophethood and who made the imamate particular to our family, that if there is only one day left in the life of this world, God will lengthen that day in duration until the Mahdī reappears and fills the earth with justice and equity, just as it had been filled with oppression and tyranny before. God will accomplish his work in one night, much like he accomplished the work of Mūsā, the

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[266] Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Rustam Ṭabarī, Dalā'il al-'Imāmah, Third Edition, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, p. 240.

[267] Refer to: Mahdī Faqīh Īmānī, Mahdī Muntaẓar in the Nahj al-Balāghah, Iṣfihān, The Amīr al-Mu'minīn Public Library.

[268] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Cairo, Dār Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1960 A.D., vol. 19, p. 29, Wisdom 205.

[269] Surah Qaṣaṣ, Verse 6.

[270] Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn, 1405 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 318.

'Kalīmallah': He went to bring a firebrand for his wife, but he returned with the rank of prophethood." Imam Jawād ('a) then added: "The most superior action of our Shia is the awaiting of his reappearance and revolution."[271]

Books Compiled about Imam Mahdī before His Birth

The matter of the Ghaybah and revolution of Imam Mahdī ('a) is such a definitive and proven matter in Islam that numerous books were compiled on this subject long before his birth ever took place. For example, the book al-Mashīkhah was written 100 years before the major Ghaybah took place, and it narrated many traditions regarding the Ghaybah of Imam Mahdī ('a).[272] The late Ṭabarsī has written: "The Shia narrators of tradition, during the time of Imam Bāqir ('a) and Imam Ṣādiq ('a), compiled traditions on the Ghaybah in book format."[273]

Similarly, some of the companions of the Imams ('a) have written books on Imam Mahdī ('a) and his revolution. These include individuals such as: Ibrāhīm ibn Ṣāliḥ Anmāṭī[274] (a companion of Imam Bāqir), Ḥasan ib Muḥammad ibn Samā'ah[275] (a companion of Imam Mūs ibn Ja'far), Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn Jumhūr[276] (a companion of Imam Riḍā), 'Alī ibn Mahzīyār[277] (a companion of Imam Jawād), and Faḍl ibn Shadhān

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[271] Ṣadūq, Ibid, vol. 2, p. 377.
- Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1393 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 51, p. 156.

[272] Ṭabarsī, 'Ilām al-Warā, Third Edition, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, p. 443-444.

[273] Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 443.

[274] Shaykh Ṭūsī, al-Fihrīst, Mashhad, Danishkadeye Ilāhīyāt wa Ma'ārife Islāmī, 1351 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 14, Number 19.
- Najjāshī, Fihrīst Asmā' Muṣanfī al-Shī'ah, Qum, Maktabah al-Dāwarī, p. 11.
- Ibn Dāwūd, Rijāl, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, p. 32, Number 23.

[275] Najjāshī, Ibid, p. 29.
- Ṭūsī, Fihrist, p. 98, Number 205.

[276] Ṭūsī, Ibid, p. 284, Number 617.

[277] Najjāshī, Ibid, p. 178.

Nayshābūrī[278] (a student of Imam Riḍā, Imam Jawād, and Imam Hādī).[279]

Imam Mahdī through Sunni Sources

As mentioned previously, the belief in the existence, disappearance, and subsequent reappearance of Imam Mahdī ('a) is not something particular to the Shia sect— it has deep roots in the Sunni sect as well. Famous Sunni narrators have narrated many traditions on the Mahdī ('a) from the companions and the Tabi'īn.[280] The books of the four schools (Ḥanafī, Shāfi'ī, Mālikī, and Ḥanbalī) are full of such traditions.

Based on the research of some of their great scholars, the narrators of the Ahl al-Sunnah have cited traditions on Imam Mahdī ('a) from 33 different individuals from among the companions of the Prophet.[281] In addition, 106 of the preeminent individuals from among their scholars have narrated traditions on the reappearance of Imam Mahdī ('a) in their books,[282] and 32 of these scholars have written independent texts on the subject of Imam Mahdī ('a).[283]

The Musnad of Aḥmad Ḥanbal (d. 241 Hijrī) and Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī (d. 256 Hijrī) are examples of such books. They were compiled by famous scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah before the birth of Imam Mahdī ('a), and they contain

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[278] Najjāshī, Ibid, p. 17.
- Ayatollah Ṣāfī, Muntakhab al-'Athar, Tehran, The Center For Book Publications, 1373 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 466 and 467.

[279] It should be mentioned that Ibrāhīm Anmāṭī and Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Samā'ah were of the Wāqifī sect and their aim in writing such books was to prove their own views. In any case, this shows that belief in the Ghaybah was definitive and established. (Doctor Ḥusayn Jāsim, The Political History of the Ghaybah of the Twelfth Imam, translated by Doctor Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Ayatollāhī, First Print, Tehran, Mu'assase Intishārāt Amīr Kabīr, 1367 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 21 and 22).

[280] The companions of the companions.

[281] Ṣāfī, Luṭfullāh, Navīde Amno Amān, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, p. 91 and 92.

[282] Ṣāfī, Ibid, p. 92-95.

[283] Ṣāfī, Ibid, p. 95-99.

numerous traditions on this matter.[284] From among the traditions narrated by Aḥmad Ḥanbal is one which states: "The Prophet of Islam (ṣ) said: 'If there is no more than one day left in the existence of the earth, then God will certainly select on that day, an individual from us, the family (meaning the family of the Prophet), and he will fill the earth with justice and equity, just as it had been filled with oppression.'"[285]

The prophetic traditions related to Imam Mahdī ('a) and his characteristics and signs are so numerous in the old books of the Ahl al-Sunnah that the scholars of tradition have considered the narrations related to Imam Mahdī ('a) as being 'Mutawātir' in their authenticity. Based on some cursory research, it appears that at least 17 of the famous Sunni scholars have considered the traditions on Imam Mahdī ('a) in their own books to be Mutawātir.[286] 'Allāmah Shawkānī has written a book proving the Tawātur nature of these traditions.[287]

It is also worth mentioning as an example some of the words of these notable Sunni scholars:

1- Shawkānī, after narrating traditions related to Imam Mahdī ('a), has stated: "All of the traditions which we have mentioned are considered Tawātur, and this is a fact not hidden to the experts... What has been mentioned in this regard should be sufficient to those with even the least amount of faith and fairness..."[288]

2- The Ḥāfiẓ[289] Abū 'Abdullah Ganjī Shāfi'ī (died 658 Hijrī

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[284] Refer to: Ṣaḥīḥ Būkhārī, First Edition, with commentary and research by Shaykh Qāsim Shammā'ī Rifā'ī, Beirut, Dār al-Qalam, 1407 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 4, Bāb 945, p. 633; Masnad Aḥmad Ḥanbal, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, vol. 1, p. 84, 99, and 448, and vol. 3, p. 27 and 37.

[285] Masnad Aḥmad Ḥanbal, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, vol. 1, p. 99.

[286] Ṣāfī, Ibid, p. 90-91.

[287] Ṣāfī, Ibid, p. 91.

[288] Narrated from Ghāyat al-Ma'mūl Fī Sharḥ al-Tāj al-Jāmi' Lil'uṣūl, compiled by Shaykh Manṣūr 'Alī Nāṣif, in the footnotes of al-Tāj, Second Edition, Cairo, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, vol. 5, p. 327.

[289] A 'Ḥafīẓ' is an individual who has gained proficiency in the traditions of the

Qamarī) has narrated in his book al-Bayān Fī 'Akhbār Ṣāḥib al-Zamān that: "The narrations relating to the Mahdī, due to the large number of narrators (Rāwī), has reached the status of Tawatur."[290]

3- The famous Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar ʿAsqalānī Shāfiʿī (d. 852 Hijrī Qamari) has mentioned in his book Fatḥ al-Bārī (a commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ Būkhārī) that: "Mutawātir traditions exist regarding the Mahdī, who is of this community (Ummah), and Jesus (ʿa), who will descend from the heavens and pray behind him."[291]

4- Mu'mīn Shablanjī has written: "Mutawātir traditions have reached us showing that the Mahdī (ʿa) is from this household, and that he will fill the earth with justice and equity."[292]

5- Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣabbān has written: "Mutawātir traditions have been narrated from the Prophet (ṣ) in regards to the Mahdī's revolt, and that he will be from the family of the Prophet, and that he will fill the earth with justice and equity..."[293]

6- Shaykh Manṣūr ʿAlī Nāṣif, one of the famous contemporary scholars of Al-Azhar Seminary, and the author of the book al-Tāj al-Jamiʿ Lil Ūṣūl,[294] has written: "Among past and present scholars, it is known with certainty, that at the end of time, a man by the name of Mahdī (ʿa), from the family of the Prophet, will appear. He will dominate over all the Islamic countries and the Muslims will become his followers; he will act with justice

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Prophet (s), and knows of the points of agreement and differences between various sources and reports. In addition, he knows the biographies of the narrators... (Mudīr Shānechī, Ibid, vol. 2, p. 22).

[290] Muntakhab al-'Athar, p. 5, footnotes.

[291] Fatḥ al-Bārī Bisharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Būkhārī, Beirut, Dār al-Maʿrifah, vol. 6, p. 493-494.

[292] Nūr al-Absār, Cairo, Maktabah Mashhad al-Ḥusaynī, p. 171.

[293] Asʿāf al-Rāghibīn, in the footnotes section of Nūr al-'Abṣār, p. 140.

[294] This book, as mentioned in its introduction, was compiled in order to gather all the authentic traditions from the 'Five Ṣaḥīḥs', which are five of the most important books of tradition of the Ahl al-Sunnah, into one collection. It has been published in five volumes. The author of this text has also written a commentary on the aforementioned text, by the name of Ghāyat al-Ma'mūl.

amongst them, and strengthen the religion. Then the Dajjāl shall appear. Jesus ('a) will descend from the heavens and kill the Dajjāl, or he will participate in the killing of the Dajjāl alongside the Mahdī ('a)."

Traditions about the Mahdī ('a) have also been narrated by a group of the companions of the Prophet. Famous narrators such as: Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, Ṭabrānī, Abū Ya'lā, Bazzāz, Imam Aḥmad Ḥanbal, and Hākim Nayshābūrī have all narrated these traditions in their own books.[295] Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, one of the well-known researchers of the Ahl al-Sunnah, has written the following on this subject: "All the Islamic sects ideologically agree that the life of this earth and the duty of human beings in obeying the divine rules and regulations will not come to an end until the rise of the Mahdī ('a)."[296]

The Statement of Rābiṭat al-'Ālim al-Islāmī

In addition to all this, there is also the official statement of Rābiṭat al-'Ālim al-'Islāmī, one of the most well-known institutions of the Wahhābī sect, located in the city of Mecca. One of the reasons behind the importance of this statement is that it shows how the most extreme group in opposition to the Shia, the Wahhābīs, also accept this belief. Not only have they accepted it, but they have also seriously defended it and consider it as being one of the established and definitive beliefs of Islam. In addition, this center is active on a worldwide scale.

In the year 1976, an individual by the name of Abū Muḥammad from Kenya, asked a question in regards to the appearance of the Mahdī ('a) from the Rābiṭat al-Ālim al-Islāmī organization. The reply ended up coming from the

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[295] Al-Tāj al-Jāmi' Lil Uṣūl, Cairo, Second Edition, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, vol. 5, p. 310.

[296] Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Cairo, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīa, 1960 A.D., vol. 10, p. 96.

head of the center, who mentioned that Ibn Taymīyah, the ideological founder of the Wahhābī sect, accepted the traditions in regards to the Mahdī (ʿa). He also sent the man a short treatise, which five of the famous scholars of the Ḥijāz had prepared. In the treatise, after mentioning the name of Imam Mahdī and the area of his appearance (Mecca), the following was written: "...When corruption appears in the world and disbelief and oppression spread, God will fill the earth with justice and equity through means of him (the Mahdī), much like it had been filled with oppression and tyranny.

He is the last of the twelve just rulers, whom the Prophet (ṣ) has given news of and who has been mentioned in the six authentic books. Many of the companions of the Prophet (ṣ) have narrated such traditions from him. These include individuals such as: ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (ʿa), Ṭalḥah ibn ʿUbaydullah, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf, ʿAbdullah ibn ʿAbbās, ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir, ʿAbdullah ibn Masʿūd, Abū Saʿīd Khudrī, Thawbān, Qurah ibn Āyās Mazanī, ʿAbdullah ibn Ḥārith, Abū Hurayrah, Hudhayfah ibn Yamān, Jābir ibn ʿAbdullah, Abū Amamah, Jābir ibn Mājid, ʿAbdullah ibn ʿUmar, Anas ibn Mālik, ʿUmrān ibn Ḥaṣīn, and Umm Salamah."

Then he adds: "There are many traditions narrated by the Prophet (ṣ), as well as the testimony of the companions, which hold the weight of traditions, and these are narrated in a great number of notable Islamic books and Islamic texts. These include Sunans like Abī Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, Ibn ʿUmar al-Dānī; Masānīds like Aḥmad, Abī Yaʿlā, Bazzāz; Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥākim; Maʿājims like Ṭabrānī, Rawayānī, Dār al-Quṭnī, and Abū Naʿīm in the book Akhbār al-Mahdī; as well as historical works by Khatīb Baghdādī in his History of Baghdad, Ibn ʿAsākir in his History of Damasacus, and others."

Then he adds: "Some of the Islamic scholars have compiled independent texts on this subject. These include:

Abū Na'īm's book Akhbār al-Mahdī, Ibn Ḥajar Haytamī's Al-Qawl al-Mukhtasar Fī 'Alāmāt al-Mahdī al-Muntaẓar, Shawkānī's al-Tawḍīḥ Fī Tawātur Mā Jā Fī Muntaẓar Wa Dajjāl Wa al-Masīḥ, Idrīs 'Arāqī Maghribī's al-Mahdī, Abū al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Mu'mīn Maghribī's al-Wahm al-Maknūn Fī al-Radd 'Alā ibn Khaldūn. The last individual, who wrote a detailed discourse on this matter, is the head of the Islamic University of Medina, who published these articles in several volumes of the university's journal.[297]

A number of great Islamic scholars, past and present, have explained in their writings that the traditions on the Mahdī ('a) are Tawātur in authenticity and they cannot be rejected. Among such scholars are: Sakhāwī in his book Fatḥ al-Mughīth, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Safāwīnī in his Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah, Abū al-Ḥasan Abrī in his Manāqib al-Shāfi'ī, Ibn Taymīyah in his fatwas, Suyūṭī in his al-Ḥāwī, and so on..."

At the end of the statement, they have added: "It is only Ibn Khaldūn who has sought to criticize the traditions regarding the Mahdī ('a), through the use of fabricated and weak traditions. These traditions say that the Mahdī ('a) is no one other than Jesus ('a). Established Islamic scholars have refuted his words. Among these scholars is Ibn 'Abd al-Mu'mīn, who has written a book refuting him; this book was published about thirty years ago and can be found all over the world.

The narrators of tradition have classified the traditions about the Mahdī ('a) as being Ṣaḥīḥ or Ḥasan, and the entirety of the collection is undoubtedly Mutawātir, as well as Ṣaḥīḥ. Therefore, the belief in the appearance of the Mahdī ('a) is obligatory upon all Muslims, including the Ahl al-Sunnah; only a very small group of ignorant individuals have rejected this belief.

Thus says the head of the Islamic Fiqh Organization,

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[297] We will narrate some of the pages of this journal in the coming pages.

Muḥammad Muntaṣir Kanānī."[298]

Who is the Mahdī's Father?

It is necessary to mention here that in some of the Sunni sources, the father of the Mahdī ('a) has been introduced as being 'Abdullah.[299] This is in spite of the fact that there are numerous traditions, both in Shia and Sunni sources, which introduce the name of his father as being Ḥasan. The source of this difference is found in certain traditions of the Ahl al-Sunnah, where the Prophet (ṣ) is narrated as saying: "His name is (the same as) my name, and the name of his father, is the name of my father."[300] Historical evidence shows that the last part of this sentence, "the name of his father, is the name of my father," was added either on purpose or by accident by the narrator, whereas the Prophet (ṣ) only said: "His name is (the same as) my name."

Ḥāfiẓ Ganjī Shāfi'ī has said in this regard: "Tirmidhī[301] has narrated this tradition, but the last sentence is not a part of it."[302] In addition, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal has narrated this tradition in several places in his Masnad, but the last part of it is nowhere to be found.[303] Ganjī has further added: "In the majority of the traditions which the narrators of tradition of the Ahl al-Sunnah have narrated on this matter, the last part of the sentence does not appear. This section only appears in traditions that an individual by the name of Zā'idah narrated from 'Āṣim, and since Zā'idah added things to the traditions from himself, his

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[298] The full Arabic text of this statement can be found in the book: Mahdī, the Great Revolutionary, from page 151 to 155.

[299] These sources were used in the statement we previously discussed.

[300] Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, vol. 4, p. 106, Kitāb al-Fitan wa al-Malāḥim, The Book of Mahdī (a), Ḥadīth 4282.
- Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-Khūlafā, Baghdad, Maktabah al-Muthannā, p. 272.

[301] Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā ibn Sūrah' Tirmidhī died in the year 279 Hijrī; he is the author of one of the famous 'Six Books of Tradition' of the Ahl al-Sunnah.

[302] Sunan Tirmidhī, Beirut, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, vol. 4, p. 505, Bāb 52 (Mā Jā Fī al-Mahdī), Ḥadīth 2230 and 2231.

[303] Refer to: Masnad Aḥmad Ḥanbal, vol. 1, p. 448.

narrations have no credibility whatsoever."

Further evidence of this can be found in the fact that the narrator of this tradition is an individual by the name of ʿĀsim, and Ḥāfiẓ Abū Naʿīm, in his book Manāqib al-Mahdī, has narrated 31 narrators of this tradition, who all narrated through Zā'idah, and in none of these traditions is the last part of the sentence found. This section is only found in the narrations of Zā'idah, and naturally, when placed alongside these other traditions, is completely devoid of any credibility.[304]

Ibn Khaldūn[305] and the Traditions on the Mahdī

As we have seen, the majority of the Sunni scholars are of the same opinion that the traditions on the Mahdī (ʿa) are reliable and authentic. Still, a few individuals from this group have rejected or doubted the veracity of these traditions. Among these individuals is Ibn Khaldūn, who has said the following on this matter: "Among all the Muslims, past and present, it has been famously known that during the end of time, a man from the family of the Prophet will appear, establish the religion, and manifes justice and equity. The Muslims will follow him and he wi rule over all of the Muslim countries. This individual i named the Mahdī, and the appearance of the Dajjāl and other events are precursors to the Day of Judgment, which will follow his revolution. Jesus (ʿa) will also descend and kill the Dajjāl, or he will assist in the killing of the Dajjāl, and Jesus (ʿa) will pray behind him (the Mahdī)...

A group of the experts of tradition, such as: Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, Bazzāz, Ibn Mājah, Hākim, Ṭabrānī, and Abū

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[304] Ṣāfī, Muntakhab al-'Athar, Tehran, The Center For Book Publications, 1373 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 231-235.

- Mūsū'at al-'Imām al-Mahdī (a), Iṣfihān, Maktabah Imam Amīr al-Mu'minīn al-'Āmmah, vol. 1, p. 13-16. In this situation, there are other possibilities which we have not narrated for the sake of brevity.

[305] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn Maghribī. Born 732 Hijrī and died 808 Hijrī.

Ya'lā have quoted traditions regarding the Mahdī ('a) in their books. These traditions are narrated by companions such as: 'Alī ('a), Ibn 'Abbās, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Ṭalḥah, 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd, Abū Hurayrah, Anas, Abū Sa'īd Khudrī, Umm Ḥabībah, Umm Salamah, Thawbān, Qurrat ibn 'Iyās, 'Alī Hilālī, and 'Abdullah ibn Ḥārith. In spite of this, the rejecters of these traditions have disputed the veracity of their chains of narration. Ibn Khaldūn has then listed a number of traditions and researched their narrators, and has considered them as being unreliable and unauthentic. He has then added: "This is the collection of traditions narrated about the Mahdī and his rise at the end of time. None of these are reliable except a precious few."[306]

What we mentioned above was a brief summary of Ibn Khaldūn's opinion on the traditions on the Mahdī ('a). Expert scholars, from both the Shia and Sunni, have refuted his words with clear reasoning and logic, and have considered his position as one without foundation.[307] Here, we will narrate one of these refutations in the words of Shaykh Abū al-Muḥsin 'Ibād, the head of the Medina University. During a conference called 'Aqīdat Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Athar Fī Mahdī al-Muntaẓar, which aimed to refute the opinion of Ibn Khaldūn, he said the following: "A- If an individual, who is an expert in tradition, expressed doubt and skepticism about the traditions on the Mahdī ('a), then in that case his opinion would be worthwhile and the traditions would be suspect. On the other hand, if an individual who is not an expert claimed such a thing, then his opinion would, naturally, not hold much value. Shaykh Aḥmad Shākir has said the following in regards to Ibn Khaldūn's knowledge of traditions: 'Ibn Khaldūn has gone after something in which he possesses

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[306] Muqadamah, p. 322.

[307] Dād Gostare Jahān, p. 30-49.
- Mahdī Inqilābīye Buzurg, p. 159-165.
- Muntakhab al-'Athar, p. 5 and 6, Footnotes.

no knowledge thereof; he has entered a field where he is wholly unqualified. In the section that he has dedicated to the topic of the Mahdī ('a), he has expressed some strange doubts and skepticisms, and he has become entangled in certain manifest errors.'

B- In the beginning of the section about the Mahdī ('a), he has acknowledged: 'In both past and present times, it has been well-known among the Muslims that, at the end of time, a man from the family of the Prophet will appear...'

Ibn Khaldūn acknowledges that the whole of the Muslim nation, past as well as present, have believed in the revolution of the Mahdī ('a) and that it is a very well-known matter. If this is the case, then was it not proper for Ibn Khaldūn to also have accepted this matter like the rest of the Muslims? Isn't going against such an established belief, a form of stubborn and blind deviation? Is it possible that all of the Muslims have made a mistake and that only Ibn Khaldūn has grasped the truth in this matter?

At its essence, this is not a jurisprudential matter, but rather a narrated matter. Therefore, it is not correct for an individual to simply reject such a thing without solid proof from the Holy Quran and the traditions.

C- Before engaging in his criticism of these traditions, Ibn Khaldūn says the following: 'Now we will bring forward the traditions that have been narrated on this subject matter.'[308] After narrating these traditions, he says: 'This is the collection of narrations that the scholars of tradition have mentioned in regards to the Mahdī ('a) and his revolution at the end of time.' In another place, he mentions: 'We have listed here all of the traditions to the best of our abilities, which the narrators of tradition have mentioned in regards to the Mahdī ('a).'[309]

Although Ibn Khaldūn mentions this, he in fact leaves many traditions on the Mahdī ('a) unnarrated. This is

[308] p. 311.

[309] p. 327.

made very clear by referring to the book al-'Urf al-Wardī Fī 'Akhbār al-Mahdī, compiled by Suyūṭī. Similarly, he was inattentive in mentioning the traditions with authentic chains of narration in the book al-Manār al-Munīf, which was compiled by Ibn Qayyim.

D- Ibn Khaldūn has narrated a number of these traditions, and due to certain individuals in the chain of narrators, he has raised certain doubts. This is while both Būkhārī and Muslim, or at least one of them, has used these same individuals and narrated traditions from them in their own texts. In addition, other scholars have raised no issues with these individuals either.

E- Ibn Khaldūn has acknowledged that a small number of the traditions in regards to the Mahdī ('a) have perfect chains of narration, which cannot be doubted by any means. Therefore, this small number of traditions should be considered as solid proof of the matter, and the rest of the traditions should be considered as corroborators of that first group."[310]

Awaiting the Mahdī and the Issue of False Claimants

A look at Islamic history shows us that from the very beginning, certain position-seeking individuals have made claims to the position of the Mahdī, while in other cases, a group of the common people have come to believe that a certain individual was the promised Mahdī, without that person making any such claims. These things show that the matter of the Mahdī ('a), and the belief in a hidden savior, has been an established matter among the Muslims and one which has been accepted by all of them from the very beginning of Islam.

Since some of the false claimants possessed the name of

[310] The detailed words of Shaykh Abū al-Muḥsin 'Ibād can be found in the magazine al-Jāmi'ah' al-Islāmīya, Printed in Medina in Dhī al-Qaddah, in the year 1388 Hijrī Qamarī, Number 3, First Edition. We have narrated this from Mūsū'at al-Imām al-Mahdī, vol. 1.

Mahdī or other similar signs, they took advantage of these similarities and announced themselves as being the Mahdī. In some cases, these individuals did not lay claim to the position themselves, but other people, due to their ignorance or the severity of pressure and oppression that they faced from the ruling government, rushed to judgment and pronounced someone as being the Mahdī, without waiting to identify all of the necessary signs.

For example, a group of the Muslims mistakenly thought that Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafīyah was the Mahdī because his name and title were the same as the Prophet (ṣ). This group believed that he had not died and had instead gone into hiding, and would later reappear and rule over the world.[311] Similarly, a group from the Ismā'īlī sect believed that Ismā'īl, the son of Imam Ṣādiq ('a), had not actually died, but that his death had been announced due to divine expediency. They further believed that he was the 'Promised Qā'im,' and that he would revolt and rule over the world.[312]

An individual by the name of Muḥammad, better known as Nafsu Zakīyah, the son of 'Abdullah ibn Ḥasar revolted during the time of Manṣūr Dawānīqī. Due to hi name, his father made the claim that he was the promised Mahdī. By making this claim, his father gathered many supporters for his cause.[313] With the revolt of Nafsu Zakīya, Muḥammad ibn 'Ajalān, one of the jurisprudents and devout Muslims of Medina, joined him. When Muḥammad was defeated and killed, Ja'far ibn Sulaymān, the governor of Medina, summoned Ibn 'Ajalān and said to him: "Why did you revolt with that liar?" He then ordered that his hands be cut off as punishment.

The jurisprudents and nobles of Medina, who were

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[311] Nawbakhtī, Firaq al-Shī'ah, Najaf, al-Maṭba'at Haydarīya, 1355 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 27. - Shahrīstānī, Al-Milal wa al-Niḥal, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Rāḍī, vol. 1, p. 132.

[312] Nawbakhtī, Ibid, p. 67-68.

[313] Ibn Ṭaqṭaqā, al-Fakhrī, Beirut, Dār Sadir, 1386 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 165-166.

present, requested that Ja'far ibn Sulaymān pardon Ibn 'Ajalān. They said: "Oh leader, Muḥammad ibn Ajalan is a jurisprudent and a faithful man of Medina. This matter confused him and he thought that Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullah was the promised Mahdī that has been mentioned in the traditions."[314]

A similar situation also took place for 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far, one of the famous scholars and narrators of tradition in Medina. When he was summoned, he responded to the governor by saying: "I cooperated with Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullah because I had certainty that he was the promised Mahdī mentioned in our traditions. While he was alive, I had no doubt at all in this matter, but when he was killed, I realized that he was not the Mahdī, and after this, I will never be deceived by anyone ever again."[315]

In addition, Manṣūr, whose name was 'Abdullah, and the name of his son was Muḥammad, gave the title of Mahdī to his son and began to claim that his son was the promised Mahdī, and not Nafsu Zakīya.[316] Similarly, other sects believed that some of the previous Imams ('a) were the Mahdī. For example, the Nāwawasīyah believed that Imam Ṣādiq ('a) was the Mahdī, and that he was alive but hidden (even though many years had passed since his death).[317] The Wāqifīya sect had this belief in regards to Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far ('a).[318] In addition, they believed that he would not die until he had prevailed over both the East and West, and filled the earth with justice and equity, much like it had been filled with injustice and oppression.[319] There were other groups that came after the martyrdom of Imam

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[314] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Maqātil al-Ṭālibīīn, Najaf, al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīa, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 193.

[315] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Ibid, p. 195.

[316] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfihānī, Ibid, p. 162.

[317] Shahrīstānī, Ibid, vol. 1, p. 148.

[318] Shahrīstānī, Ibid, p. 150.

[319] Nawbakhtī, Ibid, p. 80 and 83.

Ḥasan ʿAskarī (ʿa), who denied his death and said: "He is alive and hidden; he is the very same Qā'im Imam."[320]

These are all examples which show that the belief in the Mahdī (ʿa) was one which was long established from the time of the Prophet (ṣ) onwards. The Muslim community has always been awaiting an individual who would rise up and fight against oppression and injustice. He would then create a just government and raise his flag over the entire world. It is also clear that false claimants to this position cannot be the grounds for rejecting the essential validity of the concept. Throughout history, there has not been any shortage of false claimants to the rank of prophethood or other divinely inspired positions. In spite of this, no one can say that due to these false claimants, God does not exist or that he did not send any divine prophets!

The Government of the Mahdī in the Verses of the Quran

The Holy Quran has discussed the matter of the reappearance and revolution of Imam Mahdī (ʿa) without going into its specific details and particulars. It has also spoken of the complete victory of the pious and the formation of a just and global government. Commentators of the Quran, through the use of traditions and other Islamic sources, have attributed these verses to the Mahdī (ʿa) and to his reappearance and revolution. For the sake of brevity, let us look at three verses of the Quran that the scholars have identified with this subject, and which are the clearest in their relevance:[321]

1- "Before this, we wrote in the Psalms, after the message (given to Moses): My servants, the righteous, shall inherit the earth." [322]

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[320] Nawbakhtī, Ibid, p. 96.

[321] Ḥākīmī, Muḥammad Riḍā, Khurshide Maghrib, Tehran, Daftare Nashr Farhange Islāmī, 1360 Hijrī Shamshi, p. 140-151.

[322] Surah Anbīyā', Verse 105.

In the explanation of the meaning of this verse, it is worth mentioning that the word Dhikr essentially means anything which causes remembrance. Yet in this specific verse, it has been attributed to the divine book of Prophet Moses ('a), the Torah, and has the contextual meaning of being introduced before the Zabūr (Psalms).

According to another commentary, the word Dhikr is a reference to the Holy Quran, for the Quran itself, in another verse, has mentioned: "Verily this is no less than a message to (all) the worlds." [323] The meaning of the term 'Min Ba'd' here also takes on the meaning of 'in addition to'. Therefore, the verse takes on this meaning: We, in addition to the Quran, have written in the Zabūr that in the end, my pious servants shall inherit the earth.[324] The late Shaykh Mufīd, in the beginning of the chapter on Imam Mahdī ('a), has referenced this verse, as well as the verse which follows it.[325] In the commentary on this verse from Imam Bāqir ('a), it has been narrated that he said: "The pious servants mentioned here are the companions of the Mahdī ('a) at the end of time."[326]

The late Ṭabarsī, the prominent commentator of the Quran, after narrating the above mentioned tradition, has said: "The traditions which the Shia and the Sunni have narrated from the Prophet (ṣ) have the following meaning: 'If only one day is left from the existence of the earth, God will make that day of such duration, until he appoints a pious man from my descendants, and he will fill the earth with justice and equity, just as it had been filled with oppression and inequity.'"[327] The Quran's foretelling of the just government of the worthy servants of God on this

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[323] Surah Takwīr, Verse 27

[324] Ayatollah Makārim, Nāṣir, Mahdī Inqilabiye Buzurg, Second Print, Qum, Maṭbū'ātī Hadaf, p. 121-122.

[325] Al-'Irshād, Qum, Maktabah Baṣīratī, p. 346.

[326] Ṭabarsī, Majma' al-Bayān, Tehran, Shirkat al-Ma'ārif al-Islāmīya, 1379 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 7, p. 66.

[327] Ṭabarsī, Ibid, p. 67.

earth in the books of the Torah and Injīl (New Testament), show that this issue is of such importance that it has also been mentioned in the divine books of previous successive prophets.

Another interesting point is that this matter has also been mentioned in the Psalms of David, which is today a part of the Old Testament. This book is said to contain a collection of the supplications of Prophet David ('a). For example, in Psalms 37, we find the following: "...For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." Likewise, in the same Psalms, we read: "...The blessed shall inherit the earth, but the cursed shall be uprooted."[328]

2- "And we desired to show favor to those who were abased in the land, and to make them imams, and to make them the heirs." [329]

As mentioned in a previous section, Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a) is seen foretelling the turning of the people towards the family of the Prophet while reciting this verse.[330]

In another historical incident, Muḥammad ibn Ja'far, who was one of the Alawīs, revolted against the 'Abbāsid government during the time of Ma'mūn. He has mentioned: "One day, I spoke to Mālik ibn Anas in regards to the difficulties and pressures that we were facing. He said: 'Be patient until the meaning of the verse: (And we desired to show favor to those...) becomes manifest.'"[331]

3- "Allah has promised to those among you who believe and

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[328] The Tawrāh (Torah), translated to Farsi by William Kilen Qisīs Iksī through the British Fine Bible Society, London Print, 1856 A.D., p. 1030.

[329] Surah Qaṣaṣ, Verse 6.

[330] Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, vol. 19, p. 29, Wisdom 205.

[331] Abū al-Faraj, Ibid, p. 359.

work righteous deeds, that He will of a surety, grant them in the land inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion - the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change (their state), after the fear in which they (lived), to one of security and peace: 'They will worship Me (alone) and not associate aught with Me...'"

The late Ṭabarsī has said in regards to the commentary on this verse: It has been narrated from the family of the Prophet that this verse has been revealed about the Mahdī ('a) from the family of Muḥammad. 'Ayyāshī has narrated from Imam 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a) that he read this verse and said: "I swear by God that they are our Shias... God will enact this by their right, through the hands of a man who is from us, and he is the Mahdī ('a) of this community (Ummah). He is the same individual whom the Prophet (ṣ) has said the following in regards to: 'If there is only one day left in the life of this earth, God will make that day long enough in duration, so that a man from my family can become the ruler of the world. His name is (the same as) my name (Muḥammad); he will fill the earth with justice and equity, just as it had been filled with oppression and inequity.' Ṭabarsī has further added: 'This same meaning has also been narrated by Imam Bāqir ('a) and Imam Ṣādiq ('a).'"[332]

The Purpose behind the Imam's Existence during the Era of the Ghaybah

Now that our discussion on Imam Mahdī ('a) has reached this junction, it would be appropriate that we answer one of the most common questions that is asked in regards to him. The question is: What is the purpose and benefit behind the existence of the Imam ('a) during the period of the Ghaybah? The life of the Imam ('a) in the era

[332] Majma' al-Bayān, vol. 7, p. 152.

of the Ghaybah is a private life and not a social life as a recognizable, physically present leader. Therefore, what sort of a social effect does the life of such an individual have on the society, and how do the people benefit from his existence?

Here, we must pay attention to the fact that the Imam's Ghaybah does not mean that he is completely invisible and cut off from the society. On the contrary, he lives a very natural life, albeit with a very long lifespan. The Imam ('a) lives amongst the people and has an effect on the society; he simply goes about his life as an unrecognized individual. There is a great deal of difference between being unrecognized and of having no effect in a society.[333] Imam Ṣādiq ('a) has said: "The people will lose their Imam ('a). He will be present in the Ḥajj pilgrimage and he will see the people, but they will not see him."[334]

The Hidden Sun

In regards to the question that was asked, it must be mentioned that this is not a new question, nor is it one which has only been asked during modern times. Through Islamic traditions, we see that this question was asked from even before the birth of Imam Mahdī ('a). Whenever the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) or the Imams spoke of the Mahdī and his long Ghaybah from the people, the people would ask them such questions and they would answer them. For example:

1- The Prophet (ṣ) gave the following answer in response to a question of whether the Shia, during the time of the Ghaybah, would benefit from the existence of the Imam ('a): "Yes, I swear by the Lord who appointed me to the position of prophethood, that they (the people) will benefit from him during his period of Ghaybah and will profit

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[333] Ayatollah Makārim, Nāṣir, Mahdī Inqilabīye Buzurg, Second Print, Qum, Maṭbū'ātī Hadaf, p. 250.

[334] Kulaynī, Ūṣūl al-Kāfī, Tehran, Maktabah al-Ṣadūq, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 338.

from the light of his 'Wīlāyah' (guardianship), in the same way that they benefit from the sun when it is hidden behind the clouds."[335]

2- Imam Ṣādiq ('a) has said: "From the day that God created Adam ('a) until the Day of Judgment, the earth was never and will never be devoid of the Ḥujjah (the proof); be he manifest, or concealed. [So know], that were it not for his Ḥujjah, God would not be worshiped."

The narrator asked: "How will the people benefit from their hidden Imam?" The Imam ('a) said: "In the same way that they benefit from the sun when it is hidden behind the clouds."[336]

3- Imam Mahdī ('a) has also personally emphasized this point. In a Tawqī'[337] that he issued in response to the questions of Isḥāq ibn Ya'qūb, and which was given to Isḥāq through Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān, he wrote the following: "The benefit of the people from me is like their benefit from the sun, when it becomes hidden behind the clouds."[338]

In the explanation of this comparison, we must keep in mind that the sun gives us two forms of light: The first is a direct and manifest form of light, and the second is an indirect form of light. In the first form of light giving, the rays of the sun are clearly visible and manifest, while in the second form, the clouds act as a sort of opaque filter and diffuse the rays of the sun. In both of these types of light giving, the rays of the sun play an integral role in all forms of life on this earth; indeed it can be said that life itself depends on the sun, whether in its direct or indirect form.

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[335] Majlisī, Biḥār al-'Anwār, Tehran, al-Maktabah al-Islāmīya, 1393 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 52, p. 93 and vol. 36, p. 250.

[336] Majlisī, Ibid, p. 92.

[337] A letter which includes instructions and guidance.

[338] Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, p. 177.

- Majlisī, Ibid, p. 92.

- 'Irbilī, 'Alī ibn 'Īsā, Kashf al-Ghammah, Tabriz, Maktabah Banī Hāshimī, 1381 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 3, p. 322.

The spiritual rays caused by the existence of the Imam ('a), whether directly visible or indirect, have powerful effects on human society. At this juncture, let us take a deeper look at this issue:

1- The Existence of This World

According to numerous traditions on the matter of the imamate, and based on reasons presented by the scholars, the Islamic worldview presents the Imam ('a) as being, in essence, the life of this world, and that the very existence of this world has a dependence on him. The Imam ('a) is seen as the focal point in the existence of the world, and a connection between this world and the Creator. From this perspective, the Imam's ('a) concealment or manifestation does not make a difference in relation to his status and position. In line with this worldview, if the Imam ('a) was not present in this world, then the very state of existence would collapse. Imam Ṣādiq ('a) is quoted as having said: "If the earth remains without the presence of an Imam, it will consume its inhabitants."[339]

The Fourth Imam ('a) has said: "It is under the auspices of our existence that God prevents the sky from coming down, except with his permission. It is under the auspices of our existence that God prevents the earth from shaking and taking away the peace of its inhabitants. It is through our medium that God sends down the rain and spreads his mercy and brings out the blessings of the earth. And if an individual from amongst us was not present on this earth, the earth would consume its inhabitants."[340]

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[339] Kulaynī, Ibid, vol. 1, p. 179. Also refer to: Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, Qum, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī Lijamā'at al-Mudarisīn, 1405 Hijrī Qamarī, vol. 1, p. 201-210.

[340] Ṣadūq, Āmāli, Qum, Maṭba'at al-Ḥikmah, p. 112.
- Majlisī, p. 35.
- Ṣadūq, Kamālidīn, p. 207, Bāb 21, Ḥadīth 22.

۲- Guarding the Religion of God

Amīr al-Mu'minin ('a), during the course of one of his sermons on the necessity of the existence of divine leaders during all periods of time, mentioned the following: "God is such that he will never allow the earth to remain empty of one who will rise with proof and reasoning, be he manifest and visible or hidden and fearful, in order that the clear divine reasons and evidence will not be lost and forgotten..."[341]

It is clear that, with the passing of time and the mixing of personal opinions and ideas into religious issues, as well as the expansion of the power of the corrupt, the very fabric of any divine religion will gradually be transformed for the worst, and in time, be utterly destroyed. In order for the original nature of the divine religion to be protected, and in order that it be safeguarded from various distortions, alterations, and superstitions, there is a very clear need for an infallible divine leader to watch over and guide the people. For example, we find that in any important organization, there is always a fireproof safe present, in order to protect all the essential documents of that organization from various dangers, such as fire or theft. The heart and spirit of the Imam ('a) act in a similar manner, and it functions as a fireproof safe for the essential realities of Islam. Through his existence, the religion is able to grow in a safe and guided manner and is safeguarded from distortion and alteration.[342]

Ibn Ḥajar 'Asqalānī, in his commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ Būkhārī, has narrated a tradition which speaks of Prophet Jesus ('a) descending to the earth during the time of the reappearance of Imam Mahdī ('a) and how he will follow

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[341] Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Cairo, Dār al-Aḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīya, 1960 A.D., vol. 18, Wisdom 143, p. 347.
- Al-Manāqib, Akhtab Khawārizmī, Najaf, al-Maṭba'at al-Ḥaydarīa, 1385 Hijrī Qamarī, p. 264.

[342] Ayatollah Makārim, Nāṣir, Mahdī Inqilabiye Buzurg, Second Print, Qum, Maṭbū'ātī Hadaf, p. 257-259.

the Imam ('a). He has written: "Prophet Jesus ('a), during the end of time and near the Day of Resurrection, will follow a man from this community (ummah) and he will pray behind him. This is evidence of the validity of the perspective held by Islamic thinkers, which is that the earth will never remain empty of the existence of a Ḥujjah, who, through clear reasoning and proof, will revolt for the sake of God."[343]

3- Hope

In the field of battle, the flag of one's army is a potent psychological symbol and it gives great strength for soldiers to see their flag flying high. Similarly, the opposing side understands that if they can capture the flag, they have dealt a potent blow to their enemies. In the same way, the existence of the commander of an army in his center of command gives morale to his soldiers, regardless of if they can see him directly or not. What is important to them is the fact that they know that he is there. His existence causes the soldiers to fight longer and harder towards victory.

On the other hand, if news of the death of the commander spreads throughout the army, then that one mighty and invincible army will suddenly lose its fighting spirit. The head of an army (or of any organization, for that matter) is the cause for the order, calmness, and action of his organization, while news of his death causes the complete reversal of this situation. The Shia, in accordance with their beliefs about their living Imam ('a), do not see themselves as being alone; the psychological effects of this belief in keeping alive the light of hope in the people's hearts, and of pushing people towards self preparation for the great world revolution is very clear and easy to understand.[344]

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[343] Fatḥ al-Bārī Bisharḥi Ṣaḥīḥ Būkhārī, Beirut, Dār al-Ma'rifah, vol. 6, p. 494.

[344] Ayatollah Makārim, Ibid, p. 255 and 256.

Professor Henry Corbin, the teacher of philosophy in the Sorbonne University of France has mentioned the following: "In my opinion, the Shia sect is the only sect that has retained the connection of divine guidance between God and his creation for all of time; they have retained this connection in a lasting and established fashion. Judaism has taken prophethood, which is a connection between God and human beings, and ended it with the Prophet Moses. They have not acknowledged the prophethood of Jesus or Muḥammad and therefore cut off the aforementioned connection. Similarly, the Christians have stopped with Jesus. From amongst the Muslims, the Sunnis have also stopped with Muḥammad (ṣ), and by stopping at his prophethood, they have not considered the potential of any existing link between the Creator and the creation. It is only the Shia sect which considers prophethood as ending with Muḥammad (ṣ), but the issue of 'Guardianship,' which is that ever-guiding and perfecting connection, as continuing after the Prophet (ṣ) and existing for all of time."