

The Fourteen Infallibles

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Holy Prophet [P.B.U.H. & H. P]

LINEAGE

Mohammad (P.B.U.H.) is the son of ABDILLAH son of ABDIL MUTTALIB.

His mother is AMINAH daughter of WAHAB. He was born in the year of Elephant (570 A.C.) in the holy city of Mecca. He immigrated to YATHRIB (Al-Medina Al-MUNAWARA) where he passed away ten years later (10th year of HIJRA).

YEAR OF THE ELEPHANT

The holy QUR'AN refers to this event in the following verses:

{Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with the fellows of the elephant? Did not He make their guile go astray? And He let loose upon them birds in flocks hurling against them stones of baked clay, and He made them like straw eaten up}. [The Elephant: 1-5]. Fifty-two years before the immigration to YATHRIB, a Christian army led by ABRAHA AL-ASHRAM left Yemen to invade holy Mecca and destroy the Sacred House, the KA'ABA. ABRAHA and his generals were riding elephants in order to scare the Arabs who were not familiar with such animals. The army wiped out whoever tried to fight it.

With the help of a treacherous man, ABI RIGHAL, ABRAHA found the route leading to Mecca, reaching the city's outskirts at night. He camped there in order to launch the attack in the morning.

The people of Mecca had no army to fight the enemy back, so they took refuge in the mountainous area outside the city in order to escape the enemy's atrocities. They prayed to Allah to safeguard His Sacred House, the first House of Worship set up on earth. The holy QUR'AN says: {Surely the first House appointed for men is one at BEKA (Mecca), blessed and a guidance for all people}. [AL-'IMRAN: 96].

In the next morning, the army set out to destroy the holy KA'ABA. Riding on his elephant, ABRAHA was bewildered when the elephant refused to move one step towards the holy city. They tried hard to make it move but in vain. The elephant would move in all directions except Mecca. Suddenly, flocks of birds carrying in their beaks small stones attacked the enemy's army. Confusion and fear spread among the troops who tried to run away. The stones killed and injured whoever they reached. Many of them died and many ran away to escape the deadly stones. The holy city was spared the attack.

This important event marks the year when Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) was born. It is called the Year of the Elephant.

Mohammed's (P.B.U.H.) mother, AMINAH BINT WAHAB, was of a noble family of good reputation, a family of purity and chastity. His father was the beloved son of ABDIL MUTTALIB who was the head of the QURAYSHI tribe. He enjoyed a sublime status and the respect of his people. ABDULLAH died few months before the birth of his son, the Messenger of Allah; hence, he (P.B.U.H.) remained in the custody of his grandfather. Newly-born it was an Arab custom to hire wet-nurses for their

babies and send them to grow up in the country's open air so that they would enjoy a healthy life.

HALIMATU AL-AS'DIYYA agreed to have the orphan, Mohammed. He stayed with her till he was four years old. She brought him back to his mother who died two years later. When he was eight years old, his grandfather died; so, his uncle ABU TALIB took him in his custody and was eager to protect him. ABU TALIB was a merchant, and the people of Mecca used to make business journeys to the north: BILAD AL-SHAM (Greater Syria), and to the south to Yemen. The holy QUR'AN refers to these journeys in the following verses:

{For the protection of QURAYSH, their protection during their trading caravans in the winter and in the summer. So let them worship the Lord of this House Who feeds them against hunger and gives them security against fear}. [QURAYSH: 1-4].

Mohammed (P.B.U.H.), the young boy, accompanied his uncle during one of his journeys to AL-SHAM. When Mohammed twenty years old, he was well-known for his truthfulness and uprightness, hence he was called AL-SADIQ, AL-AMIN. KHADIJAH daughter of KHUWAYLID was of the noble and wealthy ladies of Mecca. She was also one of his relatives. When she heard about his uprightness, she entrusted him with her trade business. He excelled in the commercial experience and trading rules. KHADIJAH was impressed by his good morals and self-dignity. She married him and gave him full authority over her wealth and business.

With such potentials of will and youth, besides the wife's wealth, he took the side of the oppressed and helped the poor and the needy. His wife gave birth to six children, two boys: AL-QASIM and ABDILLAH, and four girls: RUQAYYA, ZAINAB, UMMU KULTHUM and FATEMA (as). The two sons died soon after birth prior to his Divine mission. He was patient and endured their death as being Allah's will and was pleased with His decision. He (P.B.U.H.) earned the people's great respect. They used to seek his help to solve their problems. They entrusted him with their trusts. They never heard him lie or cheat. The holy QUR'AN refers to his morals thus:

{And most surely you conform (yourself) to sublime morality}. [AL-QALAM: 4].

The people of that era used to worship idols made of stones, wood, or even dates (which they ate when they got hungry), but he (P.B.U.H.) worshipped none but the One God, "Allah Almighty", following in the footsteps of his great grandfather Prophet Abraham (as), father of all monotheists. Prior to his prophetic mission, Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) used to spend most of his time in the cave of HIRA on top of a mountain in north Mecca. He used to go there secretly and spend the whole month of Ramadan every year in prayer and worship of Allah.

THE DIVINE MISSION

On the 27th of RAJAB (lunar Calendar) (610 A.C), he was as usual in the cave lost in deep prayer and contemplation when the arch-angel JIBRIEL (Gabriel) appeared to him and ordered him to read. Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) was illiterate; he could neither read nor write. He was amazed at the order and said, "I cannot read". The angel repeated the order and he

(P.B.U.H.) again expressed his inability to read. At the third order to read, the Prophet felt heavy pressure and could actually read what the arch-angel ordered him to read. The first chapter of the holy QUR'AN (according to the order of revelation) was revealed to him. That chapter says:

{Read in the Name of your Lord Who created (everything)' He created Man from a clot. Read, and your Lord is most honorable, Who taught (to write) with the pen; taught man he knew not...} [AL-ALAQ: 1-5].

Through that revelation, Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) was chosen as a Prophet at the age of forty. He was ordered to guide the idolaters and the infidels to the right path, to change the dark era of ignorance and infidelity into an era of knowledge and birth light of faith. The holy QUR'AN says:

{And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds}. [ANBIYA: 107]. The Messenger of Allah left the cave and hurried back to his home where he told his wife about the event. She immediately believed in his Divine mission. He was a bit confused but she encouraged him and was the first woman who swore allegiance to him. His cousin, Ali son of ABI TALIB, then ten years old, was the first male who believed in his mission. Ali, since an early age (when four years old), grew up in Mohammed's house because of hardship that befell his father ABI TALIB.

"WARN THE NEAREST KIN"

Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) used to perform prayer with Ali (as) on his right and KHADIJAH behind them. One day, ABU TALIB saw the three of them performing their prayers. He ordered his other son JA'FER to stand on the left of his cousin and perform the prayers. The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) stepped forward and led the first congregational prayers in Islam.

For three years, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) invited people to Islam secretly. Then the QUR'ANIC VERSE: {And warn your nearest kin}, was revealed. He (P.B.U.H.), therefore, invited more than forty of his relatives to have lunch in his house. After they had eaten, he praised Allah then addressed the attendants saying, "O' sons of ABDIL MUTTALIB! By Allah, I know of no Arab youth who offers his folk better than I offer you. I offer you the good of this life and that of the one. Allah has ordered me to call you to His worship. Who among you supports me and thus becomes my brother, minister, and successor?"

No one answered him except Ali who was still a teenager. Ali stood up and said. "I do support you, O Messenger of Allah!". The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) repeated his question again and again, yet still no one answered him except Ali (as). Very few of the people of Mecca embraced Islam during the first three years of the underground mission.

CONFRONTING POLYTHEISM

During those days, people from far places came to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage, a ritual performed since Prophet IBRAHIM'S (as) era, when he was ordered by Allah to call people to perform it. The holy QUR'AN says,

{And proclaim among men the pilgrimage; they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every remote place}. [Pilgrimage: 27]. Those pilgrims used to bring with them different stuff needed by the people of Mecca, so the city was a commercial center besides being a place

of worship. The greatest concern of the wealthy people of Mecca was to increase their wealth. Indecency, immorality, killing the female infants, plundering the orphan's property, eating dead cattle, and giving false testimony spread throughout the city of Mecca.

The Prophet (P.B.U.H), through his call to Islam, ordered them to give up those bad practices. He ordered them to enjoin good and forbid evil. He wanted them to be kind to the orphans, to the widows, to the relatives, and to the neighbors.

He (P.B.U.H.) used to sit among the pilgrims who came from different places and to them. He advised them to give up the worship of idols which the infidels made out of stone or wood and which were fixed on the roof of the KA'ABA or inside it. he explained to them how those idols were powerless objects that could do them neither good nor harm. He invited them to worship only Allah Who is the Creator of everything and everyone. The arrogant of Mecca wondered: "What will happen if those people listen to Mohammed and give up the worship of the idols? Surely they will no longer come to Mecca, and we will suffer the loss".

Seeing Islam spreading among different tribes, the QURAYSHI leaders decided to speak to ABI TALIB, the Prophet's uncle, who was head of the HASHIMI family and the protector of the Prophet himself. They said to him: "O ABA TALIB! Your nephew Mohammed has degraded our gods, mocked our dreams, and ridiculed our beliefs.... He accuses our forefathers of deviation. Now, we are ready to give him whatever he wants to make him give up his call to the new religion. If you cannot stop him, we can see to it".

ABU TALIB said to them, "I will talk to him and see what he says". ABU TALIB conveyed QURAYSH'S message to Mohammed (P.B.U.H) who said, "By Allah, O uncle! If they put the sun at my right and the moon at my left to give up this matter, I would not give it up till Allah makes it manifest or I die for its sake". When ABU TALIB heard the Prophet's words, he warmly embraced him and said, "I swear by Allah, I will protect you and will not abandon you. Go on in your affair till you achieve victory".

The QURAYSHI leaders saw the failure of their efforts, so they resorted to tricks. They said to ABI TALIB: "Mohammed has caused divisions in our community, knocked our idols and encouraged our slaves to revolt against us. We cannot understand his behavior nor know his aim. If he is poor, we can make him rich. If he wants kingship, we can make him our king. We are ready to obey him on condition he stops this affair and leaves us mind our own business'.

On hearing them say such things, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said to his uncle, "O uncle! I want nothing from these people. I only want them to believe in Allah the One, the Almighty. They should give up the worship of these useless idols which do not do them any good". The QURAYSHIS heard him and became more vexed. They decided to increase their atrocities against the Muslims. They demonstrated more hostility through torturing the Prophet's followers Even the Prophet's uncle, ABU LAHAB, became a deadly enemy of the messenger of Allah. Along with his wife, ABU LAHAB would block the Prophet's road, stone and even curse him. He used

to ridicule and slander him in public; he even accused him of insanity and madness. Yet the infidels could not achieve their aim of stopping the spread of Islam. They often thought of killing the Prophet but were afraid of his uncles ABI TALIB and HAMZA, the bravest among them.

THE FIRST MUSLIM MARTYRS

The idolaters were careful not to harm some of the Muslims because they were afraid of their famous tribes, but most early Muslims were from among the poor and the oppressed slaves, hence their suffering was the greatest. One of them was BILAL IBN RABAH the ABYSSINIAN, one of the black people. His master threw him on the burning stones under the hot sun of Mecca. A large stone was fixed on his chest, and he was for many hours suffering from thirst and hunger. They ordered him to reject Mohammed's religion but he only kept repeating: "One God! One God!". They tied him with a rope and dragged him along the stony alleys of Mecca. BILAL was a true believer, hence torture could not change him; rather, it increased his faith in Allah.

Other oppressed Muslims were the family of YASSIR, his wife SUMAYYAH, and their son AMMAR. They had none to defend them, hence they suffered torture every day till YASSIR and his wife was blessed with martyrdom. AMMAR endured all torture and watched his parents pass away under torture. He never changed his belief but was forced to utter some words against Islam to spare himself death. Allah the Almighty excused him as in the QUR'ANIC verse: {... Not he who is compelled while his heart is at rest on account of faith...} [The Bee: 106]. The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) painfully watched his followers being tortured. He was very sad. He prayed to Allah to help them through patience.

THE BAN

When the infidels of Mecca found that their plots to end the call to Islam were in vain, and that the new religion spread and gained new followers, they resorted to a mean plot. They imposed an economic and social ban on the Muslims. They wrote a document of four items as following:

- 1- No one was to sell to or buy from the Muslims
- 2- The enemies of Mohammed must be supported.
- 3- No one was to marry from the Muslims or be married to them.
- 4- Any kind of contact with Muslims was forbidden.

The document was fixed on the KA'BA'S gate for all to see.

It became quite impossible for the Muslims to live in Mecca. ABU TALIB suggested to his nephew that the HASHIMI family should take refuge in a valley near Mecca called SHI'B ABI TALIB. He held a meeting of the family members and said to them, "Mohammed will move to the SHI'B. Everyone of you is to protect him and support him to the end". The embargo lasted three years which were the most difficult for the Muslims. They could scarcely find someone to sell them food. Each one of them could not find even a date to eat but had to share it with another person. Ali (as) and his brothers used to bring some food secretly from Mecca. During the sacred months, the young men of the HASHIMIS could find some food and buy it. The QURAYSHI arrogant encouraged the sellers to increase the

prices so that the Muslims could not find enough food to eat. ABU LAHAB used to shout in the market, "O people! Increase the prices! Don't allow the Muslims to buy what they need!"

What hardship it was! It was then the same as it is today when the arrogant forces, the enemies of Islam and Muslims, who always impose similar economic sanctions against the Muslim countries which refuse to bow to them. Every time there are people who take the opportunity and raise the prices of their stuff, such people are not considered believers at even if they call themselves Muslims.

Three years of that embargo could not affect the Muslims' morale, hence the embargo was in vain. Some QURAYSHI leaders regretted their people's stance, and little by little the ban came to an end. The Muslims were no longer afraid of going back to their homes in Mecca. Moreover, there was the Divine help. An earth-worm ate all the document except the part where the name of Allah was mentioned. When the people saw what had happened to the document, they were sure that Allah was displeased with them. Many of them became Muslims.

THE IMMIGRATION

A short time after the lifting of the embargo, the Prophet's uncle ABU TALIB died along with the Prophet's wife Lady KHADIJAH. The Prophet suffered a great loss since both were his main supporters. QURAYSH increased its pressure on the Muslims and on the Prophet himself. He advised his followers to immigrate to ABYSSINIA. He said to them, "There is a king there who does not do injustice to others".

A group of Muslims led by JA'FER, the Prophet's cousin, left Mecca for ABYSSINIA (Ethiopia).

QURAYSH conspired secretly to assassinate the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) on a certain night. He was informed of the conspiracy by Allah. He told Ali of his intention to immigrate to Medina since QURAYSH was planning to kill him. He asked Ali to sleep in his bed and be ready to meet the plotters. Ali slept in the Prophet's bed while the infidels besieged the house that night. The Prophet managed to leave the house unnoticed. When they attacked his bed, they were stunned to see Ali in his place. They became angry at their failure. The holy QUR'AN refers to that incident in the following verse:

{And when those who disbelieved devised plans against you, that they might confine you or slay you or drive you away, and they devised plans, and Allah, too, had devised plans, and Allah is the best of planners}. [ANFAL: 30]. The Prophet's immigration to YATHRIB (later called AL-MEDINA AL-MUNAWARA) was of a major impact on and importance for the Muslims. That year marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. The people of AL-MEDINA rejoiced at the arrival of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.). They welcomed him outside the city at a place called THANIYYAT AL-WIDA.

He immediately ordered the Muslims to build a mosque as a center from which to carry out Islamic activity and a symbol of their unity. With the help of each other, they managed to build it within a short time. Every day, the Muslims met at the mosque to perform the daily prayers and to listen to the Prophet's instructions and guidelines. The second thing he achieved was

creating brotherly ties between each Muslim and another. They no longer felt the hostility that led to quarrels. They became one solid community, full of awareness, watchful of their enemies, the enemies of Islam. They formed committees for different activities such as: to learn and teach the QUR'ANIC verses, to enjoin good and forbid evil. Some talked to people about Islam, some learned the religious instructions, and others cooperated in different activities.

THE BATTLE OF BADR

Following the immigration, Islam achieved power and spread widely. In the second year of HIJRA (immigration), the Muslims' army defeated the infidel army of QURAYSH at the battle of BADR. The Muslims achieved a major success and gained more followers and friends. QURAYSH'S feeling of danger increased. They mobilized their forces and attacked the Muslims but could not achieve victory in most of their attacks. Allah supported the Muslims who achieved victory through their sacrifices. Little by little, QURAYSH'S morale weakened, and the infidels no longer attacked the Muslims.

AL-HUDAYBIA PEACE TREATY

On the sixth year of HIJRA, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) decided to perform a minor pilgrimage, accompanied by his followers, to the holy House of Allah in Mecca. They set out and reached a place not very far from Mecca called AL-HUDAYBIA. When QURAYSH heard of his decision, they sent an envoy to discuss the matter with him. After some negotiating, both sides agreed to sign a peace treaty which stated a ten-year truce during which the Muslims had the right to perform the pilgrimage. They agreed to return and perform the minor pilgrimage (UMRA) in the following year. The treaty included other statements that gave the Muslims the right to befriend the Arab tribes and to call them to Islam. The peace treaty was to the benefit of the Muslims as QURAYSH was no longer to bother them, hence it gave them the chance to spread Islam throughout the Arab peninsula and to other countries as well. The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) wrote letter to the kings and rulers of those countries.

He called them to Islam and to the worship of Allah. He addressed the king of Persia, who was an arrogant snob. When that king received the Prophet's letter, he was so angry that he did not even bother to read it. He did not expect someone to dare to write him first. He dismissed the envoy from his court and made up his mind to kill the Messenger of Allah as soon as he could. However, Allah was aware of his intention and arranged for his end. Soon after that, he was murdered by his own son. The Prophet's letters addressed the rulers of Rome, Egypt, and other countries. Some gave polite answers and some were rude. Negus, the ABYSSINIAN ruler, along with his polite answer sent the Prophet special presents which his son carried. Many people became Muslims and friends or followers of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.).

A year after the AL-HUDAYBIA treaty, the Prophet ordered the Muslims to get ready for the pilgrimage to Mecca. According to the treaty, QURAYSH had no right to stop them but ordered the people of Mecca to

leave the city and stay outside during the Muslims' three-day stay. The Prophet, together with 2,000 of his followers, performed the minor pilgrimage (UMRA). They went round the holy KA'BA and glorified Allah the Almighty. They stood in rows around it and performed their prayers. The rituals had a great impact on the people of Mecca who watched the Muslims. Some even expressed their wish to embrace Islam. The QURAYSHI leaders were angry and insisted that the Muslims should not stay more than three days. Some of the Muslims wanted to stay but the Prophet ordered them to leave according to the treaty's conditions.

The Muslims achieved a real victory when they uttered publicly in Mecca: "There is no god but Allah!" Only a few years ago, it was impossible for them to do so.

The Invasion Of Mecca

In the 8th year of HIJRA, war started between the Muslims and the Roman army, hence the battle of MU'TA. The Muslims were defeated and had to retreat. When QURAYSH heard of that defeat, their sick mentality motivated them to violate the peace treaty. They thought the Muslims were no longer strong, and that it would be easy to defeat them. They attacked an Arab tribe that was an ally of the Muslims. They killed some of its members and captured others. Those who managed to escape informed the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) who was greatly vexed at the violation of the treaty. He promised to teach the idolaters a lesson in morals.

QURAYSH was worried and tried to make up for its wrong deed. The QURAYSHIS sent their envoy to the Prophet to apologize, but their efforts were in vain.

When time was suitable for the Prophet's (P.B.U.H.) plans, he mobilized his forces and ordered the people to keep their intention secret so that no news of the invasion would reach QURAYSH.

It was an important mission: to achieve victory and to deprive the enemy of its weapons. Many would embrace Islam as soon as they were aware of its sublime teachings. It was necessary to achieve that without shedding any blood.

On the 10th of the month of Ramadan of that year, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) ordered his army to set out towards Mecca. They reached a place near it and set up their camp. They were ordered to burn fires near their tents. ABU SUFYAN and some of his companions saw the fires and were stunned at the many burning spots. He was at a loss as to what to do when the Prophet's uncle AL-ABBAS came by and saw him. He said to him, "Are you amazed at these fires? It is Mohammed's Army waiting to enter Mecca in the morning. No one can stop it".

ABU SUFYAN trembled in fear on hearing those words. He said to AL-ABBAS, "Take me to the Prophet, please". AL-ABBAS took him to the Prophet's tent and he had no other choice but to profess his faith in Allah and to pretend to become a Muslim only out of fear of the Muslims' army. The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) considered ABA SUFYAN'S "conversion" to Islam as a benefit to avoid the shedding of blood. He allowed him to announce in Mecca, on behalf of the Prophet, that whoever entered the sacred Mosque, or his (Prophet's) own house, or ABI SUFYAN'S house and closed his door, would be safe.

ABU SUFYAN returned to Mecca and told the people about the Muslims' army which was impossible for anyone to fight. He conveyed to them the words of the Prophet regarding their safety. The people took refuge in their homes and closed their doors. They heard the Muslims shout: "ALLAHU AKBAR!" "Allah is the Greatest!".

They entered the holy city of Mecca with the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) riding his white mule, surrounded by Muslims from every side. They went round the KA'BA as in HAJJ rituals. The people of Mecca watched and little by little left their homes and gathered near the sacred House. They saw the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) and Imam Ali (as) break the idols and crush them into pieces. All the images were removed and smashed. The Prophet then stood

near the KA'BA'S gate. He praised Allah and recited some QUR'ANIC verses, then he addressed the people of Mecca. He said: "What do you expect me to do to you now?" In a feeble voice, choked with tears, they said, "As a brother and son of noble brother would do".

They confessed how cruel they were to him and how badly they had treated him. However, they hoped for his forgiveness and kindness. He (P.B.U.H.) said, "You treated me badly, accused me of lies and insanity. You chased me out of my home town and house. You waged wars against me..." The infidels and the idolaters were overwhelmed by fear and could not utter a word. They believed it was the due time for the Prophet to seek revenge against them, and that they would suffer the same torture the early Muslims had suffered at their hands. However, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) never thought of revenge nor of torture. He alone was looking up to a promising future for Islam and the Muslims.

He added, "Regarding myself, I shall forget the past and forgive you. Go now, you are all free". None of the infidels expected to hear the big news and sense such kindness. They were now assured of their safety. Most of them embraced Islam immediately. The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) stayed in holy Mecca for a few days to arrange its affairs. He appointed one of the believers to administer the community. He then left the holy city with his followers, returning to AL-MEDINA.

CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE MUSLIMS AND THE ROMANS

Following Mecca's invasion, Islam became a major force to reckon with; oppression came to an end. Islam spread throughout the country, and the Muslims achieved victory in many battles such as HUNAIN and Yemen. The worst tyrants of those days were the rulers of Persia and Rome, the greatest two states with the mightiest armies in the world. The Romans, only few years before then, had achieved victory over the Persians, hence they considered themselves more powerful and more mighty. Suddenly, they had now to face a challenging force: that of Islam.

The arrogant usually fear the revolutionary movements, specially the ideological ones; hence, the Romans decided to end the newly born Muslim force. The Muslims got the news of the mighty Roman army of 40,000 fighters heading towards their borders. Some of the Arab tribes of the distant borders joined forces with them.

The Muslims received such news while they were suffering from a shortage in food and had not yet harvested their crops. However, the worshippers of Allah, the true believers, knew that the defense of Islam had a priority over all other matters. The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) ordered them to prepare themselves to fight the Romans. Few days later, some 30,000 Muslims made their approach towards the war front. Some could not find the necessary weapons and, hence, could not join the Prophet in this expedition of TABUK. The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) left Ali (as) behind in the city to protect it against sudden plots of the hypocrites. He (P.B.U.H.) said to him, "You are to me as HAROUN (Aaron) was to MUSA (Moses), only no Prophet shall come after me".

Suffering the hardship of the journey, the Muslims' army reached TABUK to find out that none of the Roman soldiers were there: they were scared to death and withdrew inside the country in order to avoid being defeated by the Muslim army. The Muslim spent a few days in TABUK where the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) signed friendly treaties with some of the dwellers of that area. Then the Muslim army made its way back to AL-MEDINA where news of their victory was ahead of them, and people gathered to welcome them back.

The news of the fleeing Romans spread at large and the Arab tribes felt no more fear of the arrogant enemies. The Muslim army became a major force in support of all oppressed people. The suffering cries of AMMAR son of YASSIR, under torture, the moaning of BILAL the ABYSSINIAN on the burning sands of the desert outside Mecca, the shedding of HAMZA'S blood (the Prophet's uncle) and the blood of other hundreds of martyrs did not go in vain. All became a fruitful tree for humanity. They enjoyed the rewards of safety and were freed from slavery. Their pure blood injected new blood in the veins of the Muslim heroes.

THE FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE AND THE IMPORTANT MESSAGE

On the 10th year of HIJRA, Allah ordered His Messenger to make his last pilgrimage and proclaim it to all the Muslims. The Muslims heard of the intended pilgrimage of the holy Prophet and joined him from all over their countries. They were more than a hundred thousands who performed the rituals according to Allah's instructions. When the rituals were over, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) was ordered by Allah to convey to them a very important message. The following QUR'ANIC verse was revealed in this regard:

{O Prophet! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord, and if you do not do it, then you have not delivered His message at all, and Allah will protect you from the people; surely Allah does not guide the unbelieving people}. [AL-MAIDAH: 67].

He (P.B.U.H.) ordered the Muslims to gather at a place called 'GHADIR KUHUM". Those who were ahead returned, and those who were behind joined the gathering. A pulpit of animals' saddles was prepared and a sunshade of palm-leaves was fixed on it. the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) got up the pulpit and addressed the big gathering of tens of thousands of Muslims. He said: "... I have been called upon (to leave this world) and will soon comply. Allah has ordered me to deliver to you this message: I am leaving among you two precious trustees. One is the Book of Allah, the holy QUR'AN. The other is my household (AHL AL-BAYT). The two will never separate...." Then he added, "Am I not your master?" They all answered, "Yes, you are!" He then took Ali's hand and raised it up for all to see and said, "To whomsoever I am the master, Ali is his master. O Allah! Be the friend to Ali's friends and the enemy of Ali's enemies".

All the Muslims heard the message and came to congratulate Ali and to swear the oath of allegiance to him as a successor to the Prophet (P.B.U.H.).

However, many forgot (or pretended to forget) that declaration and went astray. They were deviated by satanic motivations.

THE CRUCIAL HOURS

Shortly after returning to AL-MEDINA, the Messenger of Allah fell sick. His greatest concern during his illness was the affairs of the Muslims. He continued preaching to the Muslims, telling them what their religious duties were. Yet some of them were thinking of their own personal gains and were heedless of the Prophet's advice. The Prophet was saddened by their indifference to and negligence of his words. A very small number of faithful followers of Islam, besides his cousin Ali and his daughter FATIMA, sat crying near his bed while the others were waiting for his demise in order to achieve their own goal of dominating the Muslims' affairs and proclaiming their leadership. They were the same men who only a few weeks ago had congratulated Ali (as) at GHADIR KHUM and swore allegiance to him as their leader. They managed to convince the simple-minded Muslims who quickly forgot the Prophet's words and advice.

They even attacked the house of the Prophet's daughter with the intention to burn it to the ground and caused her a wound in order to force her husband Ali (as) to submit to their domination. They imposed a house arrest on him for many years, thus they paved the way for MU'AWIYAH and his infidel son YAZID to seize the Muslims' leadership.

During his sickness, sadness and worries wrapped the city of the messenger of Allah, AL-MEDINA AL-MUNAWARA. The people prayed to Allah for the recovery of their Prophet (P.B.U.H.), but it was Allah's will for him to pass away on the 28th of SAFAR (Lunar Calendar), while his holy head leaned motionless on Ali's chest.

Ali (as) prepared the holy body for funeral and burial the following day.

Centuries later, we still listen to his words and obey them: "... I am leaving among you two precious trustees. One is the Book of Allah, the holy QUR'AN. The other is my household (AHL AL-BAYT). The two will never separate from one another..." We pray to Allah to guide us and to help us observe the Prophet's will and follow in the footsteps of his righteous companions and be followers of His Messenger and his household, his AHL AL-BAYT, peace and blessing of Allah be on them. Praise is due to Allah the Lord of the Worlds.

A SPECIAL NOTE

I- The reader will come across words such as:

- a. ABU, ABA and ABI.
- b. ABDULLAH , ABDALLAH , ABDILLAH.

The change of the vowel is related to grammar rule regarding subjective or objective case of noun. II- P.B.U.H and A.S.

The letters stand for words: Peace be upon him and ALAIHI, ALAIHA, ALAIHUM AL-SALAM: Peace on him, her, them. III- BINT means daughter of ... IBN means son of

IMAM ALI (A.S.)

LINEAGE

IMAM ALI (A.S), the son of ABI TALIB, was born on the 13th of RAJAB (Lunar Calendar) 23 years prior to the prophet's immigration to YATHRIB, inside the holy KA'ABA in holy Mecca. His mother was FATIMA BINT ASAD of the HASHIMI family. He enjoyed martyrdom on the 21st of the month of Ramadan in the mosque of KUFA (Iraq) and was buried in holy NAJAF, in the year 40 of HIJRA.

THE MOSQUE:

ALLAH'S SACRED HOUSE

It is the first place set up for the worship of Allah in the holy city of Mecca. People from many far places make their journeys towards it to pray to Allah and seek His blessing. Has anyone ever heard of a child born in this sacred House? {... This is Allah's grace, He gives it to whom He pleases, and Allah is Ample- giving} [MAIDA: 54]. Yes, it was Allah's grace bestowed on one born in His Sacred House.

THE FAVOURED CHILD

FATIMA, the daughter of ASAD IBN ABDI MUNAF, was a righteous woman who believed in Allah. She was the wife of ABI TALIB, the uncle of Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H). She was the only woman who gave birth to her baby at such a Sacred House of Allah. She gave birth to her son in the holy mosque set up by Prophet IBRAHIM (AS) many thousands of years ago. The holy QUR'AN says, {And We enjoined IBRAHIM and ISMAEL, saying: Purify My House for those who visit (it) and those who abide (in it) for devotion, and for those who bow down, and for those who prostrate}. [The Cow: 125].

The holy mosque of KA'ABA is the most sacred place in the world. It was a clear Divine sign of Allah's will for a child to be born in the holy House. A child was, indeed, born in that place. The parents were very happy at his birth. They called him Ali. The name signifies highness and sublime office in conformity with the sacred place where this unique childbirth took place. At the very first moment of his birth, his mother FATIMA BINT ASAD realized his unique status. Similarly, her relatives and family members predicted such a high office. He was a healthy, quiet, active, and dynamic baby. His mother sometimes used to call him "HAYDER", (this name is attributed to a lion). He grew up as brave as a lion, nothing could frighten him. He was polite and loving. He treated his parents kindly and was ready to help whoever needed some help. Everyone loved him for his good qualities.

It was the Divine will to expose one of the Muslim heroes. Since his early childhood, he grew up in the house of the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H). The story of his childhood caused all people to wonder: He was born in the most sacred house of and was raised by the best of Allah's creatures: Mohammed son of ABDILLAH.

In those days, the people of Mecca worshipped idols and bowed to the stone and wooden objects which could do them neither good nor harm. They

used to drink wines and gamble. Since childhood, Ali never turned to those idols nor bowed to them. He never took to bad deeds since he was in the company of the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H) who taught him every good quality. He would listen to him, comprehend his words, and act accordingly. Ali was not yet 10 years old when Allah the Almighty chose Mohammed to dewier the Divine mission of Islam. Ali was the first male to believe in his prophet-hood and to support him in his struggle.

The bounties of Allah bestowed on him since his birth in the Sacred House, then his stay at the Prophet's house, then his being a pioneer in believing in the religion of Islam. He was chosen for a special role; to become one of Allah's signs. {Surely Allah has chosen him in preference over you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and in physique, and Allah grants His kingdom to whomsoever He pleases, and Allah's is Ample-giving, knowing} [The Cow: 247]. Ali (as) was of a medium height, rather stout, full of energy and activity that was to the benefit of Islam, and in support of the Messenger of Allah. Some idolaters used to slander the Prophet (P.B.U.H) who tried to avoid them, while Ali was always ready to confront them. He was ready to punish whoever tried to hurt the Prophet.

AND WARN YOUR NEAREST KIN

The Prophet (P.B.U.H) was ordered by Allah to warn his relatives and to invite them to Islam he, therefore, invited them to his house and said to them, "Allah has sent me to you to convey to you His message. You should give up the worship of idols. You should worship Allah the One God, the Lord of the world. Who among you supports me in my mission and thus be my Minster and successor?" No one answered him except Ali (as) who was then a teenager. He stood up and said, "I do believe in your message, and I do support you, O Messenger of Allah!"

It became common knowledge that Ali would be his minister and successor. The event spread among all people and became another of Allah's favors bestowed on Ali (as).

{And among men is he who sells himself to seek the pleasure of Allah, and Allah is Affectionate to the servants}. [The Cow: 207]. When the Messenger of Allah decided to immigrate from Mecca to YATHRIB (AL-MEDINA AL-MUNAWRAH) at the order of Allah, he (P.B.U.H) informed Ali (as) of his intention. It was a dangerous night; the armed QURAYSHIS surrounded the Prophet's house and decided to assassinate him at dawn. Ali slept in the Prophet's bed and was not afraid of exposing himself to the dangerous attack. The Prophet (P.B.U.H) managed to leave the house safely.

The previously quoted QURANIC verse refers to this great sacrifice of Ali for the sake of Allah. It was again a Divine favor bestowed on him. {And We made of them Imams to guide by Our command when they were patient, and they were certain of Our communications}. [AL-SAJDA: 24]. At the order of Allah the Almighty, the Prophet (P.B.U.H) performed the marriage of his daughter FATIMA to Ali who the most pious of all, next only to the Messenger of Allah.

Ali was endowed with a sound knowledge and great talents. Fatima was most pious and obedient to Allah. Both were of unique example that should

be followed. Through marriage, they gave birth to the purified Imams whose names and qualities were revealed to the Prophet (P.B.U.H). This is how Allah rewards His righteous servants. Allah the Almighty gave IBRAHIM the good news of a son and a grandson, although IBRAHIM was then very old. {Then We helped those who believed against their enemy, and they became the uppermost}. [AL-SAFF: 14].

Following the Prophet's immigration to YATHRIB (AL-MEDINA AL-MUNAWARAH), the infidels waged wars against the Muslims, and many battles took place. Some Muslims were afraid of fighting those battles, and some would flee the battlefield at the crucial moments. Only Ali was always ready to help. He created fear in the heart of the enemy. His bravery and might helped achieve victory for the Muslims in many battles and helped in the spread of Islam. He managed to defeat the enemies one after the other. For instance, in the battle of the Trench (or AL-AHZAB), AMRO IBN WIDD, the most brave of the QURAYSHIS, managed to cross the Trench that the Muslims had dug round the city to halt the enemy's advance. He challenged the Muslims and called them to fight him. No one dared come out to fight him except Ali. It was a crucial moment. The infidels' greatest goal was to confront and destroy the Muslims. The enemy surrounded them from all sides. Ali came forward and faced AMR. With one stroke of his sword, he killed him and achieved a great victory for the Muslims and a great defeat for the infidels. Similarly, during the battles of BADR, UHUD, KHAIBAR, and HUNAIN, Ali was always nearby to achieve victory, destroying the enemy of Islam.

Regarding Ali's role in the battle of the Trench, the Prophet used to say, "Ali's stroke in that battle was better than the worship of all mankind".

THE HYPOCRITES

The hypocrites in AL-MEDINA were more dangerous than the enemy: they lived among the Muslims and expressed belief in their tongues. But they secretly conspired against the Muslims. They even spied for the enemy. During the battle of TABUK, the Prophet (P.B.U.H) put Ali in charge of AL-Medina to protect it against the plots of the hypocrites. The hypocrites, who were vexed by the Prophet's decision, spread the rumor that the Prophet was displeased with Ali and no longer desired his presence near him in the battles.

Ali heard the rumor and felt very sad. He followed the Prophet (P.B.U.H) who was few miles away and expressed his wish to accompany him. He also informed him of the hypocrite's rumor. The Prophet said to him, "O Ali! Do not listen to such rumors. Are you not pleased to be to me as HAROUN was to MUSA when he appointed him in his place? You are to me as was HAROUN to MUSA". ALI felt at ease when he heard the Prophet's words, and people perceived the high status of Imam Ali as a representative of the Messenger of Allah and his successor.

THE CHRISTIAN DELEGATION

On the 24 of DHIL-HIJJA (Lunar Calendar), the 10th year of HIJRA, a Christian delegation of 60 prominent bishops and priests came to AL-Medina to challenge the Prophet (P.B.U.H) and to put his prophet-hood to

test. They entered the Prophet 's Mosque. Fourteen of them were of high office, dressed in splendid attire, carrying their crosses. They tolled their bells and performed their prayers. The Muslims were angry but the Prophet calmed them and said, "Leave them now, we shall have a talk with them later".

The Prophet invited them to embrace Islam. He ordered them to give up the worship of the cross, not to eat pork, and to consider Jesus as a Prophet, not as a deity. When they asked him who the father of Jesus was, he recited to them this QURANIC verse: {Surely the likeness of ISA (Jesus) is with Allah as the likeness of Adam: He created him from dust then said to him: Be! And he was. This is the truth from your Lord, so do not be (one) of those who dispute (about it)}. [AL-IMRAN: 59].

But the Christian delegation insisted on calling Jesus a deity, so the Prophet was ordered by Allah to challenge them, through prayer, to invoke a curse on the liars. The QURANIC verse 61, chapter AL-IMRAN, was then revealed. The delegation asked for time to discuss the matter. When they were alone, their chief said, "If Mohammed comes with the noble persons of his tribe, then he is not a Prophet, and we can challenge him. If he comes with his nearest and dearest, then we had better not challenge him because he is a real Prophet; otherwise, if we challenge him, nothing will remain from Christianity".

The holy QURAN says, {But whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of the knowledge, say, "Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, and our souls (nearest and dearest) and your souls (nearest and dearest), then let us humbly pray and so lay the curse of Allah on the liars}. [AL-IMRAN: 61].

The next morning, while the Christians were waiting, they were stunned to see the Prophet (P.B.U.H) leading his household. He came carrying AL-HUSAIN and holding AL-HASAN'S hand (his grandsons). Fatima (daughter, mother, and wife) followed her father the Prophet, and her husband Ali followed her, carrying the banner of Islam. Ali was the soul nearest and dearest to the Prophet (P.B.U.H). The members of the delegation were afraid of praying, and they were ready to pay the JIZIA (Non-Muslims' tax) and thus have the right to keep their own beliefs. They promised not to conspire against the Muslims.

Through that QURANIC verse (AL-IMRAN:61), all Muslims and non-Muslims became aware of Ali's and his family's sublime office. His two sons according to the book of Allah (AL-IMRAN: 61) are the sons of the Prophet (P.B.U.H), and Ali in this very verse is the Prophet's soul. Such a fact is the greatest favor of Allah bestowed Ali (as) whom Allah the Almighty designated for a sublime role. {And when We made the House a pilgrimage for people and a (place of) security, and (said): Appoint for yourselves a place of prayer on the standing place of IBRAHIM. And We enjoined to IBRAHIM and ISMAEL saying: Purify My House for those who go round it and for those who abide in it and for those who bow and prostrate}. [The Cow: 125].

Islam achieved a complete victory when holy Mecca was invaded in the 8th year of HIJRAH. The holy Prophet ordered Ali to climb on his shoulder

and remove all the idols that were placed on its rooftop. All the idols were thrown down and crushed into pieces. It was not an easy task to break down the idols which the Arab tribes worshipped. But Ali was not afraid of breaking all of them. Just as he had destroyed their brave men with his sword, he destroyed the idols they used to worship. It was another favor of Allah bestowed on him to accomplish such a task.

One day the Messenger of Allah said to him, "O Ali! No one knows you more than I do, and no one knows me more than you do". The Prophet (P.B.U.H) was quite aware of Ali's sublime status and his important future role as a truthful successor and protector of Islam and the Book of Allah. He would do his best to teach the Muslims the holy QURAN and its interpretation. He would be the head of the believers of the Muslim community. The infallible Imams would be from his progeny. He (P.B.U.H) was sure that Islamic science and knowledge would spread through Ali and his successors. He used to say, "Ali is always with the Truth, and the Truth is always with Ali. Ali is the best listener who comprehends what he hears".

The Prophet was sure of Ali's sublime role because Allah the Almighty had informed him of it, hence he became his best teacher. He kept him near him to teach him all that he knew. He taught him the QURANIC sciences and ordered him to keep a record of those sciences in a book. Ali had that book, a precious treasure kept by his sons and grandsons, the blessed Imams (peace be upon them all). {O Apostle! Deliver that which has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do not, then you have not delivered His message (at all), and Allah will protect you from the people}. [AL-MAIDAH: 67].

It became necessary for the Messenger of Allah, to inform the people of Ali's sublime office. When the above mentioned verse was revealed to him, he was on his way back from his last pilgrimage to holy Mecca in the 10th year of HIJRAH. He was then accompanied by more than 120,000 pilgrims from different Islamic places.

Although he (P.B.U.H) performed his mission during the period of 23 years, this QURANIC verse (AL-MAIDAH: 67) refers in particular to a certain message; it was: to appoint his successor, and that it equaled all his efforts in calling people to Islam during all those long years in holy Mecca and Medina. Hence, he immediately stopped the caravans of pilgrims at a place a few miles away from Mecca. He then ordered those who were ahead to come back to the place of gathering which is known as "GHADIR [SWAMP] KHUM", and those who were behind to join the others.

A pulpit with a sunshade was set up for him. He got up the pulpit and addressed the attendants. He said, in his long and important sermon, "Am I not the master of every believer?" They all said, "Yes, your are". He then took Ali's hand and raised it up for all to see Ali and declared him as his successor in authority. He said, "To whomsoever I am the master, Ali is his master. O Lord! Befriend Ali's friends, and be the enemy of his enemies. O Lord! Help whoever helps him, and defeat whoever confronts him. O Lord! Keep the truth at his side wherever he turns".

All the believers then came and congratulated Ali (as). The first to do so was UMAR IBN AL-KHATAB who said to Ali, "Rejoice, O son of ABI

TALIB! You have become my master (guardian) and the master of every believing man and woman".

It was a major event witnessed by tens of thousands of pilgrims who performed the HAJJ that year. In fact, Ali (as) was one of Allah's clear signs, some of Allah's treasure spared for the sake of Islam, and for the benefit of Muslims. He comes next to the Messenger of Allah. The infallible Imams are chosen from his and Fatima's offspring.

There are many QURANIC verses that refer to those who are worthy of Islamic leadership. Some of them refer to the pioneers who embraced Islam, and surely Ali (as) was the first. Other verses refer to those who struggle bravely and who do not flee the battle field; those who love to struggle for the sake of Allah more than they love their wives, children, and wealth. Everyone knew that Ali was at the head of such opponents of the enemies of Allah. He was the most pious, the most brave and the nearest to the Messenger of Allah. They were all sure that he was qualified for the Muslims' leadership after the Prophet (P.B.U.H).

The Messenger of Allah informed all the Muslims of Ali's sublime qualities and status, so that nobody would doubt it. the holy QURAN says: {... Such is the grace of Allah; He gives it to whomsoever He please, and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace}. [The Iron: 21]. In fact, the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H) and Ali (as) are the greatest bounties bestowed by Allah on His creatures. Had people been aware of such bounties, they would have enjoyed Allah's full bounties and blessings, and He would have helped them to enjoy every kind of knowledge and true civilization. The holy QURAN says,

{Had they kept to the (right) path, we would have certainly given them to drink of abundant water}. [Jinn: 16]. The Muslims today are in a dire need for such a sublime example in order to follow his footsteps and act accordingly. Ali was a pioneer in accepting Islam. Prejudice and fanaticism of the era of ignorance did not tarnish him. He wholeheartedly loved Islam and struggled day and night for its sake. He suffered from the infidels' harms and was ready to die in the Prophet's bed in order to save the Messenger of Allah from the infidels' plot. He participated in all the Muslim battles and was the most brave. He feared no human being and was firm in his belief in the Almighty, the One and only Lord of the World. He used to say, "If the unseen is uncovered to me, my certain belief (in Allah) will not increase (it is quite perfect)".

Being such a unique figure in faith and bravery, Imam Ali raised his children AL-HASAN, AL-HUSAIN, and ZAINAB, besides his companions: MALIK AL-ASHTAR and MAYTHAM AL-TAMMAR, to be embodiments of his school of thought, the most perfect school whose headmaster was born in the Sacred House of Allah and who enjoyed martyrdom in the sanctuary of a mosque while he was performing his prayers at the early dawn.

His school is the school of struggle in words and in deeds for the sake of the truth and justice, for the sake of Islam, and for the sake of Allah. It is the school of the winners in this life and in the hereafter.

Did the murderer ABDUL RAHAMN IBN MALJIM AL-MURADI, the KHARIJITE, think that he had put an end to Imam Ali's life when he struck him with his poisonous sword on 19th of Ramadan, 40th year of HIJRA?

Surely not! The great ones live through their ideas and conduct, though their bodies perish. Imam Ali is still amid us in his teachings and in his faith. It is our responsibility to follow his example. Surely we are to be called to account on the Day of Judgment. The holy QUR'AN says, {And stop them, for they shall be questioned} [SAFFAT: 24].

Prophet Mohammad's Daughter :Fatima Al-Zahra (AS)

LINEAGE

Fatima is the daughter of the Messenger of Allah, Mohammed (P.B.U.H). her mother is KHADIJAH BINT KHUWAYLID. Fatima was born eight years prior to the immigration (HIJRA) of the Prophet to YATHRIB (AL-MEDINA), on the 20th of JAMADI AL-THANI (Lunar Calendar) in the holy city of Mecca. She died in AL-Medina on the 3rd of JAMADI AL-THANI, eleven years after the HIJRA and was buried there. Fatima (as) is remembered by the believers as a symbol of purity, chastity, and virtue. The oppressed one remembers how she suffered oppression and injustices, hence he tolerates his suffering and hardship.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ إنا أعطيناك الكوثر * فصل لربك وانحر * إن شانئك هو الأبتر

Righteous wives recall her life as a wife of Ali (as) and consider her as a role model of the righteous wife.

Mothers remember her sublime statue as a mother of the infallible Imams, thus they follow in her footsteps in raising their children. Fathers remember how she grew up in the lap of the Messenger of Allah, the Prophet (P.B.U.H), who prepared her for the highest status of a believing woman.

A WOMAN OF VIRTUE

Prior to telling Fatima's story, her mother, Lady KHADIJAH, should first be mentioned. Lady KHADIJAH was one of the wealthiest women in holy Mecca. Many prominent figures desired to marry her for her wealth, but she rejected all those who proposed to her. She surprised them by her choice to marry Mohammed the son of ABDILLAH, the truthful young man who was not at all among the rich, though he belonged to the best family among the QURAYSHIS.

Men and women of Mecca criticized her for such a choice but she paid no attention to them and did not change her mind. In fact, she was quite a wise lady who chose the best life's partner, though most people could not comprehend that fact. KHADIJAH was a woman of talent and brilliant intellect. No wonder she raised such a sublime daughter like Fatima (as).

THE SECLUSION

KHADIJAH and Mohammed led for many years a happy and peaceful life till he was chosen to be a Prophet entrusted with the Divine mission of Islam. Lady KHADIJAH was the first woman to believe in him, and she supported him with all her might and means. The arrogant and the idolaters of Mecca demonstrated their hostility towards Mohammed, causing him a great deal of hardship. A social and economic ban was imposed on Mohammed and his followers. The good wife endured the hardships for the sake of Allah and His religion, Islam. She comforted her husband and shared his concerns. She all her affairs.

THE BLESSED BIRTH OF FATIMA

New signs seemed to bring the good tiding of relief when KHADIJAH was pregnant with a new baby who stirred in her womb. At the due hour of childbirth, and when the pain of labor intensified, QURAYSHI midwives refused to give her a hand and help her deliver her child. Allah's miracles happen quite often. During the time of her difficulty, suddenly the room was lit with a bright light. Four bright women appeared near her. They sat near her and gently spoke to her. They said to her, "Fear not ! we are guests sent by Allah". She felt at ease, so she relaxed. Quietly she gave birth to a female baby: Fatima, with the help of the four ladies who were: SARAH, PROPHET IBRAHIM'S wife, ASIA, the righteous wife of Pharaoh, MARYAM (Mary), the mother of Prophet Jesus, and KALTHAM sister of Prophet MUSA (Moses) (peace be on them all). However, there are some people who wonder at such miracles and are heedless of Allah's might.

Before Fatima, KHADIJAH had given birth to three other daughters. They were: RUQAYYAH, UMM KULTHUM, and ZAINAB. ZAINAB was married to her maternal cousin AL-RABEE' IBN AL-AAS. The other two were married to the two sons of ABI LAHAB who became a deadly enemy of the Prophet and ordered his sons UTBAH and UTAYBAH to divorce their wives. UTHMAN married both of them, one after the death of the other. Neither one of them gave birth to any children.

The only daughter who lived in the house of the Prophet was Fatima (as) who was of a uniquely sublime personality. She resembled her father in features and in high morals.

When the days of hardship were over, following the Prophet's immigration to YATHRIB, many prominent figures sought Fatima's hand in marriage but were all rejected. All the suitors hoped to enjoy the sublime status of being near the Messenger of Allah through marrying Fatima. But Fatima was Ali's dear cousin. None deserved being her husband except Ali (as), the Prophet's first supporter and the brave defender of Islam. It was Allah's will that none should marry her except Ali (as).

When the Prophet's two sons died while still children, the arrogant of Mecca degraded the Prophet (P.B.U.H), claiming that he would have no progeny. Allah refuted their claim. The QUR'ANIC chapter AL-KAWTHAR was revealed; in it the Almighty says, {Surely, We have given you AL-KAWTHAR (abundance in offspring), so pray to your Lord and make a sacrifice. Surely he that hates you is the one cut off}. [AL-KAWTHAR: 1-3].

THE BLESSED MARRIAGE

One day the Prophet's companions were at the Prophet's Mosque. They talked about the Prophet's only daughter, Fatima. ABU BAKR, one of them, said, "Many prominent figures from the immigrants (AL-MUHAJIREEN) and the Muslim's of AL-MEDINA (AL-ANSAR) have sought Fatima's hand, but the Messenger of Allah has not approved the proposal of any. However, Ali has not proposed to her yet. I think if he proposes, the Messenger of Allah will accept him". SA'AD IBN MU'ATH, the chief of AL-WAS, a tribe of the ANSAR, said, "Let us see Ali and encourage him to seek her hand. Perhaps we may thus do a good deed".

They left the Mosque looking for Ali. They found him in the city's outskirts watering an orchard for one of the ANSAR landowners. They greeted him, then ABU BAKR said, "Brother Ali, you are one of the best people. You enjoy every quality that pleases Allah and His Messenger. It is time for you to have a wife. Why don't you propose to the Prophet's daughter, Fatima? The daughter of the Messenger of Allah may be yours. We have all proposed to her and have been rejected. It seems Allah and His Messenger want Fatima to marry you".

On hearing those words, Ali felt great longing to get nearer to the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H) through marrying Fatima. But alas! He did not have enough money to give her a dowry. However, he was encouraged by them. He put his trust in Allah and made his way towards the Prophet's house. He expressed his great wish to marry Fatima. The Prophet (P.B.U.H) rejoiced on hearing Ali's proposal and said, "O Ali! Many men have already proposed to her before you. When I told her of their proposals, she turned away in disapproval. Now, you wait while I tell her of yours.

The Prophet entered her room and said to her, "O Fatima! Here is Ali son of ABI TALIB. You know his blood relation to you and his great struggle for the sake of Islam. I have prayed to my Lord to send you the best of His creatures and the one He loves most to be your husband. Ali has made a proposal to marry you. What do you say?" Fatima did not turn away; she silently expressed her approval. The Prophet glorified Allah and conveyed to Ali her approval of his marriage proposal.

FATIMA'S DOWRY: A SHIELD

The Prophet (P.B.U.H) came to Ali and happily said to him, "Ali! Do you have anything for a dowry?!" Ali said, "May my parents be sacrificed for you! By Allah, you know my own (financial) situation. I have nothing except my sword, shield, and camel". The Prophet (P.B.U.H) said, "You cannot do without your sword with which you fight the enemies of Allah. You need your camel to water your date palms and to transport your daily food. You ride it in your trips. But I accept the shield as a dowry for your marriage. Go sell it and come back with its price".

Ali (as) sold the shield for 480 DIRHAMS and came back with the money which he gave to the Prophet (P.B.U.H) It was the dowry for the most noble and honorable lady, the best among all creatures past and present.

The Prophet (P.B.U.H) divided the money into three parts. A third was for the new home's furniture. Another third was for perfumes and other necessary thing for the bride, and the last third was kept with UMM SALAMA (the Prophet's wife) to spend on the wedding day. He then gave some money to AMMAR IBN YASIR and SALMAN AL-FARISI and to other companions. He said to them, "Buy for my daughter what is necessary for a new home". They bought the necessary items which were: A gown for 7 DIRHAMS, a head scarf for four DIRHAMS, a bedcover made in KHAIBAR, a wooden bed, two mattresses of wool and fiber, four food dishes made in AL-TAIF, a wool curtain, a mat, a flour hand-mill, two bowls, a water-skin, a milk pot, a water pot, a copper container, and other such items.

They brought them to the Prophet (P.B.U.H) who checked them and was satisfied with the new home's furnishing. He said. "May Allah bless this household!". Some QURAYSHI men said to the Prophet, "You have married your daughter to a poor man". He said, "By Allah, I have not! it was Allah Who has ordered me to marry her to Ali. My Lord had informed me of this marriage on the night of my ascendancy to heaven".

THE WEDDING DAY

A month later, Fatima was still in her father's house as Ali everyday kept praying with the Prophet at his mosque then going home. He did not discuss the issue of his marriage again. One day, UMMU AYMAN and her other women asked Ali if he wanted them to talk to the Prophet regarding his marriage. Ali rejoiced at their suggestion, so they went to the Prophet and said, "O Messenger of Allah! Had Fatima's mother been alive, she would have rejoiced at her daughter's wedding. Now Ali wants his wife, so let the couple enjoy their life together. We will celebrate the occasion".

He (P.B.U.H) said, "Why has Ali mentioned this to me yet?" they said, "He is shy". He said, "Send Ali to me". When Ali came, he sat silently, feeling shy. The Prophet said to him, "Do you want to wed?" Ali said, "Yes, I do love to". The Prophet said, "You will have your wife with my pleasure".

The Prophet (P.B.U.H) asked UMMU SALAMA to prepare Fatima's bedroom, and other women to embellish the bride. Someone prepared her wedding dress, her perfumes, her make-up and her hair style. Dinner was prepared. A sheep was cooked and the Prophet himself helped in preparing the desserts of dates and butter. Ali went to the mosque and invited all the attendants. He said to them, "O people! You are all invited to dinner at the Prophet's house on behalf of Fatima daughter of Mohammed (P.B.U.H)".

they were more than 300 persons (exceeding the number of the fighters in the battle of BADR which had taken place few days earlier). They all had their dinner then left the house. The Prophet asked the HASHIMI women to accompany Fatima to her husband's house. He asked them to glorify Allah and chant decent chants. He (P.B.U.H) himself helped Fatima get on his own white mule and asked SALMAN AL-FARISI to hold the rein and lead the animal. HAMZA (the Prophet's uncle), JA'FER and AQIL raising their unsheathed swords up as was the custom then. The Prophet's wives and other Muslim women walked chanting lyrics and poetry. Everyone praised the bride in poems as gifts to her.

They reached Ali's house and the men shouted: "ALLAHU AKBAR!" Allah is the Greatest!" They shook Ali's hand, congratulated him, then left. The Prophet (P.B.U.H) called Ali and took Fatima's hand and put it in his (Ali's) hand. He said, "Allah blesses the daughter of the Messenger of Allah. O Lord! Bless them and overwhelm them with Your bliss! O Lord! I place them and their progeny under Your protection from the cursed Satan". The Prophet's companions gave their presents to the bride and the bridegroom. It was the blessing of Allah as in the QUR'ANIC verse: {.... That is the grace of Allah, He gives it to whomsoever He pleases, and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace}. [Iron: 21].

MARRIAGE LIFE

Ali and Fatima enjoyed their life of happiness in their simple house. The Prophet (P.B.U.H) used to visit them now and then on various occasions. He would talk to them about the virtues of patience and uprightness. One day he (P.B.U.H) said to Fatima (as), "Allah has chosen two men from among the people of the world. One is your father and the other is your husband".

Fatima was a righteous wife, hence she was not annoyed when her husband was often away, fighting for the sake of Allah. She would always prepare his weapons and other needed items for him. She would encourage him to always be for every believing wife! She was quite aware of her husband's sublime status as well as sacred status in Allah's sight, so she respected him as a woman respects and obeys her religious leader, her Imam. Ali was the dearest person to the Messenger of Allah. He was his brother (in religion), successor, and trustee. Ali respected her, too, and considered her sublime status, not only for her being his wife, but also for being the one dearest to the Messenger of Allah. She was part of him (P.B.U.H), of the same brightness, patience, and modesty, and she was the head of all women of the world. She was chosen by Allah for such an honor. The holy QUR'AN says:

{Surely Allah chose Adam and Noah and the descendants of IBRAHIM and the descendants of 'IMRAN above all nations. Offspring, one from the other, and Allah is Hearing, Knowing}. [AALI-'IMRAN: 33-34] Poverty never disturbed her life. She carried out the house work, grinding wheat and barley, cooking and baking bread. She was a unique model for believing women.

She was also quite aware of her duty towards the struggle for the sake of Allah. During the battle of UHUD, when her father was wounded, she was near him, addressing his wounds and comforting him. During the time of hardship, she was a woman of deeds, not a woman of tears.

THE REWARD FOR THE MESSAGE

In the 3rd year of HIJRAH, Fatima gave birth to her first son. The Prophet (P.B.U.H) called him AL-HASAN. A year later she gave birth to her second son, AL-HUSAIN (Junior HASAN).

The Prophet (P.B.U.H) greatly rejoiced at the birth of his two grandsons. He actually considered them a reward for his struggle and hardship in inviting people to Islam. He used to embrace the two children and say, "These HASAN and HUSAIN are my two sons; they are the two fragrant flowers, the heads of the youth of Paradise".

THE PURIFIED HOUSEHOLD

When the QUR'ANIC verse 33 (chapter AL-AHZAB) was revealed, the Prophet (P.B.U.H) was in the house of his wife UMMU SALAMA. The verse reads: {Allah Surely desires to keep all uncleanness away from you, O people of the House, and purify you with a (thorough) purification}. [AL-AHZAB: 33]. He (P.B.U.H) asked his wife to give him the YEMENI covering sheet (AL-KISA AL-YEMANI). He called Ali, Fatima, AL-HASAN and AL-HUSAIN to him and covered them, along with himself, with that sheet then said,

"O Lord! These are my household, my nearest and dearest. They are part of me; whatever hurts them hurts me, whatever saddens them saddens me. I am on war against whoever is on war against them. I am at peace with whoever is at peace with them. I am the enemy of their enemy and the friend of their friend. They are part of me and I am part of them. O Lord! Bless them with Your bliss, Your mercy, Your forgiveness, and Your pleasure. Purify them with a thorough purification". In fact, they led a righteous life free from all sins and errors. Their attributes were and are Allah's signs to all mankind, though most people are not aware of this fact.

FATIMA'S DISPLEASURE

The Prophet's great regard for Fatima was not due to her being his own daughter. Blood relation was not the criterion for him to evaluate the members of his family. Rather, it was on account of her great piety and awareness of Allah the Almighty. She enjoyed most of the Prophet's attributes. Allah Almighty confirmed the purified Fatima to be the mother of the infallible Imams. The Prophet often referred to her sublime status. As mentioned in SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, he (P.B.U.H) once said, "Fatima is part of me. Whoever makes her angry, makes me angry too". He once addressed her saying, "O Fatima! Allah is pleased at your pleasure and displeased at your displeasure".

THE FATHER'S DEMISE

Fatima's happy days came to an end when her father, the Messenger of Allah, fell sick and soon passed away to be near his Lord. Fatima's difficult days, the days of suffering, started when everything changed at her father's demise. A few of the companions appointed ABA BAKR as the caliph, and most people followed suit and swore the oath of allegiance to him. Ali (as) felt the Muslims' need for unity and for their firm stand against their enemies, so he made no demand of his right and preferred to remain silent.

Muslims have always been in need of unity against their enemies, and Islam will always be in need of it till the Day of Judgment.

However, Fatima (as) considered it her duty to warn the people of the grave wrong they were doing. She made her way to her father's mosque where the Muslims gathered around the new caliph. She publicly made it clear that Ali (as) had the right to the caliphate more than anyone else. She warned the Muslims of the great calamity if divisions settled among them instead of unity. The future would bring great evils if they kept silent and did not support the truth. She referred to her right to the FADAK property which belonged to her father and his household and never to the common people. The Prophet's daughter surely could not and would not claim ownership of something if it were not hers. How strange it was to tarnish her with such an accusation! Fatima is one of the five purified people according to the above quoted QUR'ANIC verse 33 of Chapter AL-AHZAB! There are other QUR'ANIC verses that laud her sublime status. However, many people were heedless of that fact.

FATIMA'S EARLY DEATH

Due to such hardships, Fatima felt sick and resorted to silence and seclusion. Women from the MUHAJIREEN and the ANSAR visited her during her sickness to wish her well. They asked her how she was feeling. She thanked Allah and praised Him, invoked peace and blessing of Allah on her father, then said, "By Allah! I now fully resent your world and detest your men.... Evil, indeed, is that which their souls have sent forward before them; Allah's wrath is on them, and in the torment shall they abide.... Why were they hostile to ABI AL-HASAN? By Allah they hated his unbiased sword for the sake of Allah.... Surely they are the mischief-makers, though they are unaware of it".

{Is He then Who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed, or is he who himself does not go aright unless he is guided? What, then, is the matter with you?! How do you judge?} [YUNIS: 35].

When the women conveyed to their men Fatima's words, their chiefs went to her to apologize. They said to her, "O Mistress of all women! Had your husband mentioned the affair to us, we would not have sworn the oath of allegiance to anyone else". Fatima (as) said, "Go away! You have no excuse after having been warned, and there is no order following your shortcomings".

THE LAST MESSAGE

Fatima's health deteriorated; she became quite aware of her imminent death. She said to her husband, "Dear cousin, I am informed of my death. Within few hours, I will join my father. I would like you to listen to my will". He said to her, "Make your will, dear daughter of the Messenger of Allah"! How difficult it is for me to miss you.... By Allah! My sorrows at the death of the Prophet are now renewed. Say what you want; you will find me trustworthy of fulfilling your orders; I will prefer your orders to mine". She said, "... Bury me at night, and remove all traces of my grave. Don't allow those who did injustice to me to attend my funeral. "Dear cousin, if you marry, then assign one day and night for your wife, and one day and night for my children. Be kind to them, and do not let them suffer as orphans do. How quickly they had missed their grandfather, and how soon will they miss their mother!

"Woe unto the people who hate them and who kill them!" She (as) then had a bath and put on a clean dress, stretched her body on her bed and closed her eyes forever. She died smiling at the near reunion with her father.

Her death was real loss to Imam Ali to whom she had been a righteous wife, a life partner that lets him as she was in the prime of her youth. Her will was her last message: a clear lesson for those who ponder. She chose to be buried secretly so that those who did her wrong could not participate in her funeral or pray near her grave. With such a procedure, she made a record of her name as being one of the oppressed; thus, she recorded the injustice from which she suffered for all time to come.

When the people of AL-Medina heard about her death, they hurried to her house to perform the funeral prayers and walk behind her coffin. They were very sad when they heard that she had already been buried. Ali and very few of his companions performed the funeral prayers for her sacred body. Thus did the story of the Messenger's only daughter come to its

conclusion. It is the story of Fatima who gave birth to AL-HASAN, AL-HUSAIN and ZAINAB AL-KUBRA.

It is the story of the wife who strived for her husband's rights. It is the story of the Prophet's daughter who was a copy of him in virtue and greatness. Fatima is the mother of all righteous people.

Whoever loves the Messenger of Allah loves Fatima.

Whoever hates him, hates her.

Fatima is purified by Allah the Almighty.

Peace and blessing of Allah be on FATIMA AL-ZAHRA.

Imam Al-Hasan (A.S.)

LINEAGE

AL-HASAN is the son of Ali son of ABI TALIB the son of ABDIL MUTTALIB. His mother is Fatima the daughter of Mohammed the son of ABDILLAH, the son of ABDIL MUTTALIB (peace be upon them all). He was born on the 15th of the month of Ramadan, in the 3rd year of HIJRAH (immigration of the Prophet (P.B.U.H) from holy Mecca to YATHRIB (AL-Medina AL-MUNAWARA), and enjoyed martyrdom on the 28th of SAFAR (Lunar Calendar) in the 50th year of HIJRAH, in Al-Medina and was buried in AL-BAQIE (a suburb of Al-Medina).

THE ERA OF IGNORANCE VIS-?-VIS ISLAM

The pre-Islamic era was stamped with ignorance and oppression. The most oppressive people were also the most arrogant and the most deceiving. Such people enjoyed a complete control over others and were respected by others who only wished to avoid their injustice.

The most oppressive family of the era of ignorance was the Umayyad family of ABI SUFYAN. MU'AWIYAH, his brother YAZID, ABU JAHAL, ABU LAHAB, and their likes controlled the affairs in holy Mecca and throughout the Arabian Peninsula. As soon as Islam spread its bright light, the arrogant ones' injustice came to an end. Good morals replaced bad ones, the humble common people regained their dignity, and human rights were achieved. The arrogant ones no longer had a say in the affairs. It was the advent of the new religion of Islam, and the era of the holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) and the righteous among his companions.

As the party of Allah achieved victory against the idolaters and infidels, the arrogant ones such as ABU SUFYAN and his likes had no other way but to articulate acceptance of Islam and the leadership of Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H). This took place in the 8th year of HIJRAH (more than twenty years after the beginning of the message), following the invasion of Mecca. However, those arrogant ones were never true in their belief in Allah and His Messenger, hence they harbored hidden hostilities towards the Prophet and his household, peace be upon them all.

THE INFIDELS AND THE HYPOCRITES

Following the demise of the Messenger of Allah, ABU SUFYAN and his infidel party conspired secretly against Islam. Their infidelity was still in hide, while their great concern was to halt the achievement of political and financial power by AHLUL BAYT (the Prophet's household). They strove to keep such power within their own control. Through plots, they achieved their goal, hence MU'AWIYAH IBN (son of) ABI SUFYAN proclaimed his domination over the country of AL-SHAM (greater Syria: Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon plus today's Syria). He accumulated a great wealth and forced his authority on the Muslim world.

Following the assassination of the third Caliph, OTHMAN IBN 'AFFAN, people swore allegiance to the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law Ali (as), father of AL-HASAN and AL-HUSAIN. As soon as Ali (as) became the Muslims' Caliph, the hypocrites and the deviated openly unveiled their

hostility towards Ali (as) and waged wars against him. Thus, within a short period of time during his caliphate, he had to fight in the Battle of the Camel, the Battle of SIFFIN and the Battle of AL-NAHRAWAN.

It was the irony of fate to see the "followers of the camel" siding with "the followers of ABI SUFYAN" along with the misled KHARIJITES. The enemies of Islam and those of AHLUL BAYT mobilized their forces and raised their swords in the face Imam Ali (as). During the course of those events, three deviated men conspired under the claim of sparing the Muslims the perils of the deteriorated situation which they thought was the result of the confrontation of three dangerous men: MU'AWIYAH, AMRO IBN AL-'AS and Imam Ali (as). They thought that they would reform the Muslim community if they killed all three of them at one and the same time. The result of their sick mentality was the martyrdom of Imam Ali (as), the pious and just caliph, while the other two survived.

IMAM AL-HASAN'S RULE

At such situations, when MU'AWIYAH'S mercenaries were in control of the Muslims' affairs, IMAM AL-HASAN'S (as) became the Muslims' Caliph. He had to face the worst officials the majority of whom belonged to the Umayyad clan. They had been in office since Othman's rule when they devoured the Muslims' wealth just as cattle devour Spring's fresh buds.

Imam AL-HASAN'S Caliphate covered large areas of the Muslim world including: Persia, KHURASAN, Yemen, HIJAZ, KUFA and BASRA (Iraq). Although the people of those countries had sworn allegiance to the Imam (as), the area suffered unrest as a result of MU'AWIYAH'S conspiracy. They knew that MU'AWIYAH was personally making preparations to fight him, so he sent his envoys to the governors of the region to get ready to fight back. He (as) also sent a letter to MU'AWIYAH to warn and to advise him through reasonable facts relevant to the Imam's right to the caliphate. He confirmed his concern about the Muslims' unity and the safety of Islam, demanding an end to fights and quarrels. He wanted him to be wise enough to accept his advice and to avoid divisions that would lead the Muslim community to destruction. He informed him of his decision to fight him if he did not comply.

THE FINAL JUDGMENT IS WITH ALLAH

MU'AWIYAH, whose concern was only to achieve power and seize the caliphate, lent a deaf ear to Imam AL-HASAN'S letter. MU'AWIYAH was ready to commit every crime in order to be the leader. He sent his spies and got in touch with the Imam's army leaders. He bribed some leaders and promised others with high offices if they abandoned their Imam and joined him. Many accepted the bribes and joined the enemy's camp in broad daylight. Others conspired even to lay their hand on their legitimate Imam and hand him over to MU'AWIYAH. Thus, they violated their vows of allegiance and betrayed their sublime leader. MU'AWIYAH, the cunning fox, advised them to stay in office till the battle time, then to leave their Imam alone to face his defeat.

Within few months of secret plots, MU'AWIYAH managed to have most of the tribes' chiefs on his side. Those tribes' chiefs knew that Imam AL-

HASAN'S rule would be similar to his father's, hence they expected no gains from him, while MU'AWIYAH was flooding them with gifts, they preferred this world to the hereafter and sold their religion for this life's pleasures.

THE AGGRESSOR ARMY

The army of MU'AWIYAH made its way towards KUFA, the then capital of Imam AL-HASAN'S (as). The Imam, in turn, encouraged his army to fight, but his efforts were in vain. Only a few were ready to obey him. The majority were in groups of different opinions. This made it difficult for him to unite them or to fight the enemy. IMAM AL-HASAN entrusted his cousin UBAYD-ALLAH IBN ABBAS, with the leadership of his army. Everyone knew him as one of the first QURAYSHIS to swear allegiance to Imam AL-HASAN. He was very highly respected and obeyed. Moreover, he greatly hated MU'AWIYAH whose mercenaries killed both of his children.

UBAYD-ALLAH'S army numbered 12,000 as IMAM AL-HASAN led another army towards Al-Medina (Iraq) and camped there. He planned to defeat the large army of MU'AWIYAH. MU'AWIYAH was still suffering from his bitter defeat at the Battle of SIFFIN when Ali's brave men were about to defeat MU'AWIYAH who escaped through a trick. MU'AWIYAH, therefore, decided to apply more tricks to avoid the war. He secretly contacted UBAYD-ALLAH and offered him a million DIRHAMS if he refrained from fighting him. MU'AWIYAH was ready to pay him half a million at KUFA and the other half later only if he joined his camp.

UBAYD-ALLAH was at a loss few days. He knew that very few tribes came to help IMAM AL-HASAN while many of them joined MU'AWIYAH'S camp. He was sure of MU'AWIYAH'S victory, so why should he hesitate? The offer was quite tempting, hence he made his shameful decision to accept it. At mid-night, along with a few of his men, he made his way to MU'AWIYAH'S camp. He made his choice and sold the religion of Allah, the Messenger of Allah, and his Imam, for such a petty price.

The people gathered at dawn to pray at the mosque. They waited for UBAYD-ALLAH to it in its fight against the enemy. They waited and waited only in vain! UBAYD-ALLAH did not attend the prayers, and the secret was made public! They heard someone from the enemy's camp calling: "O people! Go home! UBAYD-ALLAH and his men are in MU'AWIYAH'S camp! They have chosen reconciliation! There is no good in brothers fighting each other!" UBAYD-ALLAH was the second important man after the Imam himself in leading the army, hence his treason was a major blow. He was a religious scholar; therefore, many were fooled by his call for peace, so they deserted the army.

A group of the Imam's supporters realized the trick and tried to bring the others back, but they failed in their attempt. Only a few decided to die in defense of the religion and for the sake of the truth. They informed the Imam of their readiness to help. The cowards and the deserters even spread the rumor that MU'AWIYAH had achieved victory against the Imam's army, hence the others found it a good excuse to return to their homes in KUFA.

That was the story repeated with Imam AL-HASAN (AS): the KHARIJITES had by then found an excuse to give up the fight and even assassinate their own Imam Ali (as).

Could such people be Muslims or claim to defend Islam while they helped the enemies of Islam achieve their devilish goals? Throughout history, hypocrites play the same role. They are not sincere in their faith, so they turn away rather than face death. The real believers are always firm in conviction and ready to die for the sake of their religion.

THE HARD DECISION

The Imam (as) had to either to fight and sacrifice the very few good believers with him or yield to a compromising reconciliation and endure the painful outcome. The Imam followed his father's footsteps when, 25 years ago, he rejected the hateful quarrel and tolerated the situation of being deprived of his right. The Imam through reconciliation could spare his righteous companions from a useless death. He accepted re-conciliation on special honorable conditions.

It was a bitter experience for the IMAM who was ready to fight since he was never afraid of death. But he was quite sure that his dear family would sacrifice first to defend him. His companions were ready to die before him. However, their death would not change the situation. Most people were misled and knew nothing about the real situation between the infidel MU'AWIYAH and IMAM AL-HASAN (AS), the Muslims' legitimate caliph. MU'AWIYAH managed to fool the people and claim to be the defender of Islam. People believed him because his real infidelity was hidden. They did not know that his only concern was to achieve power for his own clan under the cover of Islam. Had IMAM AL-HASAN been killed that day, no one would have come to know the truth. It would have been senseless bloodshed. Even such bloodshed of the infallible Imam would not have awakened the community from its coma.

Due to such a crucial situation, IMAM AL-HASAN (as) agreed to reconcile. Thus, the confrontation was postponed till the day when the true face of MU'AWIYAH would be exposed and people would know the truth and fight for it.

Many of the Imam's followers were vexed at the outcome, and some were even rude, except IMAM AL-HUSAIN (AS) who approved of his brother's decision. In fact, many are heedless of the fact that objection to the Imam's or Prophet's decisions is objection to the QUR'ANIC instructions which confirm the infallibility of these figures. Hence, their decisions should always be accepted, in wars and in peace. Rejection of the Imams' decision means rejection of the Prophet's (P.B.U.H) decision. A Prophetic tradition says: "AL-HASAN and AL-HUSAIN are leaders of the believers, whether they are in office or not".

However, it is the people's nature to make hasty conclusions without a deep insight or sound thinking. On achieving victory, MU'AWIYAH went to KUFA, the residence of IMAM AL-HASAN (as) and his followers. He got on the pulpit of its grand mosque and started slandering IMAM ALI'S companions and degrading the tribes' chiefs. He betrayed them and violated the covenants he had previously made to them. He called them names, thus

disgracing them in public. Those who betrayed the Imam could not even enjoy the least gratitude from MU'AWIYAH.

In the wake of those events, IMAM AL-HASAN (AS) and his household made their way towards Al-Medina where they settled while the Umayyad clan dominated Al-Kufa. On the pulpit of IMAM ALI (AS), ZIYAD IBN ABIHI (a bastard) and later his son ruled the country. Those who sought excuses to justify their stance regarding IMAM ALI'S rule and later rejected his pious son's rule bowed their heads in front of MU'AWIYAH'S bloody swords. They at last came to know- thought too late- the important advice of the legitimate Imams. They perceived the great calamity that befell them. They regretted their own actions but such regret was of no use.

Those who, during five years of Imam Ali's rule and a few months of IMAM AL-HASAN'S, disobeyed the infallible Imams for trifle reasons or excuses, no longer offended MU'AWIYAH'S agents who had a free hand to do whatever they desire. None of them uttered a word of objection. No figures such as TALHA and AL-ZUBAYR raised the banner of confrontation. Not a single KHARIJITE made a show of sedition or disobedience. The hypocrites had their golden opportunity to play their role.

At the dark era of history, Ali's companions and followers were the only ones who confronted the tyrannical rule and were blessed with martyrdom. As for those on his pay list, they crept on their bellies and praised the unjust rulers. They never forgot to slander Imam Ali (as) in order to please the tyrants. How wonderful it is to confront the tyrants of history, yet it is impossible to oppose the One worshipped by all!

VIOLATION OF THE COVENANT

When MU'AWIYAH'S end came near, he feared the caliphate might be entrusted to IMAM AL-HASAN (AS), thus all his efforts of many years might go in vain, and the Prophet's household might return right back to the Muslims' caliphate. To MU'AWIYAH, that would be the greatest calamity, so he decided to poison IMAM AL-HASAN and get rid of him. With the help of the Imam's wife, he achieved his aim. Through this crime, MU'AWIYAH accomplished most of his devilish plan. The enemies of Allah and of His Messenger such as MARWAN IBN AL-HAKAM and his likes rejoiced and shamelessly threw their arrows at his holy coffin at the Imam's funeral.

MU'AWIYAH proceeded with his plan. He vested authority on his notorious son YAZID, the wine-drinker, the doer of evil, and the indecent infidel. MU'AWIYAH first made the people of AL-SHAM swear the oath of allegiance to his son, then he went to holy Mecca and to Al-Medina and achieved his goal without the least resistance; thus, the Umayyad clan survived in power. There was none like TALHA or AL-ZUBAYR to raise the banner of war. History repeats itself and people hesitate in time of need to support the truth. This hesitation encourages the tyrants to increase their oppression and aggression.

So was it when Imam Ali (as) tried to lead the people to the right path. Likewise, IMAM AL-HASAN (as) did his best to lead them to the right path. However, it is only Allah's will that helps one go along the right path.

The holy QUR'AN says: {Surely you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He pleases, and He best knows the followers of the right path}. [AL-QASAS: 56]. The Imam was quite aware of the Prophet's mission which was: to convey the Message of Allah to the people and to keep on preaching and advising them, whether they accept it or not; it makes no difference. Similarly, the Imam's task was to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet and to safeguard the religion of Allah: Islam.

IMAM AL-HASAN (AS) tried his best to show the truth to all people and make them aware of being misled by the false claims of rulers and by leaders who articulated Islamic beliefs while remaining infidels, enemies of the religion. The Imam (as) taught his followers to be patient and to tolerate injustice when it is for the sake of Allah. Through, he nurtured the seeds of revolution through the heroic role of his brother IMAM AL-HUSAIN. IMAM AL-HASAN'S achievement was part of IMAM AL-HUSAIN'S revolution. Thus, the Prophetic tradition regarding both of them is a clear evidence of their roles. The said tradition says:

"AL-HASAN and AL-HUSAIN are two Imams (leaders) whether they are in office or not"

AL-IMAM AL-HUSAIN (A.S.)

LINEAGE

AL-IMAM AL-HUSAIN (AS) is the younger son of IMAM ALI IBN ABI TALIB (AS). His mother is FATIMA AL-ZAHRA, daughter of Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon them all. He was born on the 3rd of SHA'BAN (Lunar Calendar) in the 4th year of HIJRAH, in Al-Medina AL-MUNAWARA. He enjoyed martyrdom on the 10th of MUHARRAM, in the year 61 of HIJRA in KERBALA (Iraq) and was buried there.

THE BLESSED BABY

On the 3rd of SHA'BAN, the 4th year of HIJRAH, Fatima gave birth to her second blessed baby.

ASMA, one of Fatima's attendants, wrapped the newly born baby with a clean white cloth and carried him to his grandfather, the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H), who took him in his arms and kissed him warmly. He embraced him and uttered in his ears: "There is no god but Allah. Allah is the Greatest. Prayer is up". He called him HUSAIN, kept him long in his arms, looked sadly at him, touched his limbs then burst in tears. Being surprised at the prophet's sudden sadness, ASMA said, "May my parents be your sacrifice, what has caused your crying?"

Still his eyes full of tears, he said, "I am crying for this - my son". She could not comprehend what he said, so she asked him, "He has just been born!" He (P.B.U.H) said, "The aggressive party will kill him. They are deprived of my intercession". He handed her the baby and said, "Do not tell Fatima this. She is still in birth labor". While AL-HUSAIN was growing up, the Prophet (P.B.U.H) often looked after him and was really concerned. He was already informed by Allah of what his grandson would suffer. AL-HUSAIN was chosen by Allah to keep the bright torch of Islam spreading its light against infidelity and hypocrisy. It is one of Allah's bounties bestowed on His Messenger's offspring, though the hypocrites do not perceive.

DEMISE OF THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH

We are quite aware of the unjust people's reaction to the demise of Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H). they were careless of the Prophet's last will, though they had often heard every word of it and had known its significance. At his demise, they forgot every word and betrayed the Prophet's holy household. They entrusted the Muslims' affairs to the enemies of Islam, thus preferring blindness to clear insight and darkness to the bright Divine light. The holy QUR'AN says: {And as to THAMUD, We showed them the right way, but they preferred blindness to guidance}. [FUSSILAT: 17].

Had they obeyed Allah's order, they would have enjoyed His bounties and achieved a great might and knowledge. They disobeyed Him, so they suffered loss and were unjust to their own selves. Due to their blindness and utter ignorance and violation of their covenants, Imam HUSAIN (as) enjoyed martyrdom while MUAWIA and his clan assumed the caliphate along with an aggressive policy against all the righteous believers. Many

suffered imprisonment, torture, and even death through poison or other means.

IMAM HUSAIN (AS) VIS-?-VIS INFIDEL YAZID

During IMAM AL-HASAN'S life, IMAM HUSAIN respected his brother's peace treaty (with MUAWIA) and did not confront the ruling clique. However, MUAWIA not only violated every item of the said treaty, but he also entrusted the caliphate to his infidel son YAZID to succeed him after his death. The cursed son ordered the governor of Al-Medina AL-WALID to summon IMAM HUSAIN and force him to swear the oath of allegiance to YAZID'S authority. At midnight, the governor summoned the Prophet's grandson and said to him, "May Allah rewards you! At the death of MUAWIA, there are no members left of the Prophet's household (AHL AL BAYT) except you. You are quite aware of your sublime office among the Muslims. You must be the first to swear allegiance to the new caliph, YAZID, and be a good example for others. You are then son of the daughter of the Prophet (P.B.U.H) of all Muslims. You must strive for their welfare".

IMAM HUSAIN (AS) listened carefully and was deep in thoughts. He knew that everything had come to its end with YAZID'S evil intentions. He (as) did not rebel against MUAWIA only to conform to his brothers' stance. Could he be silent now that MUAWIA was dead and YAZID is the caliph? Could he keep silent at YAZID'S infidelity, immorality and deviation, thus to demonstrate acceptance of his evils? IMAM HUSAIN was sure that all the Muslims were watching his actions vis-à-vis YAZID. If he ever agreed to YAZID'S leadership, it meant that he accepted all his (YAZID'S) indecency. He was quite aware of the crucial situation, so he said to AL-WALID, "I am not of those who vow behind walls (secretly). If you call the people tomorrow to make their vows, you can call us as well".

AL-WALID IBN UTBA IBN ABI SUFFIAN was a peaceful man, so he agreed to the Imam's suggestion and postponed the affair until the next morning. However, the infidel MARWAN IBN AL-HAKAM, who was present there and then, said to AL-WALID, "If you let him go now without taking his vow, you will never have the chance to get it again. Keep him in prison and kill him if he does not swear the oath of allegiance". IMAM AL-HUSAIN (AS) shouted at him, "You son of the ... are you going to kill me?! By Allah, you are a mean liar".

IMAM HUSAIN then turned to AL-WALID and said, "O governor! I am the Prophet's grandson, the core of the religion of Islam, the sacred landing of angels and the source of Mercy. Allah stated (His creation) with us and sealed it with us. YAZID is a transgressor, a wine-addict, a killer of the innocent and an open defier of Allah's instructions. A man of my qualities does not swear the oath of allegiance to one of his like. Tomorrow morning, we will meet and see to it".

TOWARDS HOLY MECCA

That night, IMAM HUSAIN (as) decided to leave Al-Medina for holy Mecca. He immediately set out in the company of his family and relatives. They made the journey amid the risk of being chased by YAZID'A mercenaries. The people of Al-Medina were indifferent regarding the

situation. They offered no support or protection to the Prophet's grandson. They took refuge in their homes for fear of YAZID'S oppression. IMAM HUSAIN'S caravan reached Mecca, the holy city of Allah, which is supposed to be the most secure place since old ages. Arabs used to respect the land of Allah, hence refugees were never killed in the holy place. Wars and quarrels were also avoided in that town. IMAM HUSAIN did not stay long in the holy town because YAZID'S mercenaries came under the cover of pilgrimage to kill him and then claim that he killed in a dispute over personal matters by someone.

IMAM HUSAIN stayed for a while in holy Mecca. He warned the pilgrims of the dangerous impact on Islam as a result of YAZID coming to power. On the 8th of DHIL HIJJA, he performed the HAJJ rituals in haste and left Mecca without any delay. He said to his half-brother Mohammed IBN AL-HANAFIYYA, "If I stayed, YAZID'S mercenaries would assassinate me and my blood would be shed in vain.

KUFA, CENTER OF ACTIVITY

The hen city of KUFA was a heavily inhabited area whose people enjoyed Imam Ali's rule for a few years. They were familiar with his justice and sublime morals. The KUFIAANS were religious people, supporters of the Prophet's household while other towns' people knew nothing of Islam except through the deviated rulers and court theologians' instructions. They were indifferent regarding whoever ruled them be it HUSAIN (AS) or MUAWIA, be it HUSAIN (AS) or the infidel YAZID.

Due to such a situation, and receiving thousands of letters from the people of KUFA in support of his cause, IMAM HUSAIN (AS) sent his cousin MUSLIM BIN AQIL to KUFA to mobilize his supporters and prepare them to fight as they had promised in their letters since MUAWIA'S lifetime. Now that MUAWIA was dead, the Imam made his march towards AL-KUFA to accept the people's allegiance and announce his Islamic caliphate. YAZID felt the danger of mobilizing the people of KUFA by Imam HUSSAIN'S envoy, so he appointed IBN ZIAD, a cruel man, the son of an indecent woman called MARJANA, as the governor of KUFA. He was a stone-hearted man of a cunning talent. He inherited hostility of the Prophet's household from his father, besides his indecent upbringing. The people of AL-KUFA planned to kill IBN ZIAD who was invited to the house of one of the city nobles. It was decided that Muslim IBN AQIL should come out suddenly and attack him with his sword. Muslim did not agree to that plan. He did not want his supporters to be the party that started the war.

IBN ZIAD left the house and ordered his mercenaries to chase and arrest Muslim and all his supporters. Some were arrested and some were killed. HANI IBN URWA, who hosted Muslim IBN AQIL in his house, was killed and later Muslim himself was martyred. The city gates were locked and no one was allowed to leave the town to inform IMAM HUSAIN of the actual situation in AL-KUFA or of the martyrdom of the Imam's cousin, Muslim IBN AQIL.

LEAVING MECCA FOR KUFA

IMAM HUSAIN was still in Mecca, waiting for news from his envoy in KUFA. Before getting any news, he performed the HAJJ rituals and decided to leave the holy city. Prominent figures in Mecca tried to make him change his mind and stay with them. They said to him, "You are quite aware of the people of AL-KUFA. They had refrained from supporting your father and your brother after him. They will as well refrain from supporting you. They are of no firm faith. They may articulate readiness to support you, but they will soon raise their swords in your face. Do not leave the holy city'. IMAM HUSAIN (AS) did not change his mind, insisting on performing his Divine mission: To die for the sake of Allah and the Truth. He performed the rituals of HAJJ (pilgrimage) in haste without staying to the end of the HAJJ season.

Thus, YAZID mercenaries did not have the chance to shed his holy blood in the holy city. He set out towards Iraq along with his nearest and dearest family members accompanied by righteous followers. He had no news from his envoy, as previously mentioned, due to IBN ZIAD'S strict control over KUFA along with other measures he undertook. He put spies along the roads to inform him of IMAM HUSAIN'S approach.

LAND OF THE TRAGIC EVENT: KERBALA

IMAM HUSAIN'S caravan approached AL-KUFA but IBN ZIAD mercenaries, led by AL-HUR IBN AL-RIAHI, halted his approach and forced him to camp at a barren sandy area called KERBALA. When the Imam (as) heard of its name, he went in deep thought then said, "This is the land of tragic hardship. This is our landing, and here is the place where our blood will be shed". He (as) ordered the caravan to set up the tents. On hearing about IMAM HUSAIN camping near AL-KUFA, IBN ZIAD gathered the KUFANS in the grand mosque then addressed the attendants. He praised the "qualities" of the infidel YAZID and his order to increase their salaries if they joined YAZID'S army to fight IMAM HUSAIN.

Otherwise, they would suffer punishment and he would deprive them of all their rights in life. They would put at risk their families, their properties, and their own selves if they refrained from fighting the Prophet's grandson. With such threats and temptations, many stupid and simpleminded citizens joined the aggressive army. They chose the party of falsehood, the party of Satan, against the party of the Truth, the party of Allah.

THE LAST NIGHT: THE 10TH OF MUHARRAM

During that night, darkness wrapped the whole area. IMAM HUSSAIN (AS) gathered his followers and relatives, praised Allah the Almighty then said, "Surely I know not of better and sincere followers than you are to me. May Allah reward you with His best rewards. I believe tomorrow is our day to meet those enemies. Now you are all in relief of your allegiance to me. Night is dark, so take it as a cover and go home. The enemies want only me. If they get me, they will be satisfied with their catch".

The holy Imam made it clear to them that whoever stayed with him would surely be killed. He encouraged them to leave in the darkness to spare them the feeling of shame as they retreated, if they preferred to withdraw. But as soon as he had finished his words, the righteous relatives and

followers made their brave decision clear to him. At the head of the speakers was his half-brother AL-ABBAS who said, "Why should we leave you? Is it to survive at your own expense? We pray to Allah never to let us see such a day". Then others spoke, all preferring death to life for his sake. The brave followers such as HABIB IBN MUDHAHIR, Muslim IBN USAJA, ZUHAIR IBN AL-QIN and the others welcomed death in his defense and said, "Praise is due to Allah Who has honored us in being at your side, fighting your enemy and dying in your presence".

They were overwhelmed with Divine tranquility and were most truthful, most sincere. On that dark night, in the camp of the holy Imam, nothing could be heard but the utterance of glorification of Allah and the praising His will. All were ready to enjoy martyrdom, eager to meet death.

IMAM HUSSAIN now and then talked with them and filled their hearts with true faith. They all longed to meet their Lord, hence they tuned to Him for forgiveness. They murmured: "Our Lord! Surely we have heard a preacher calling to faith saying: 'believe in your Lord', so we did believe. Our Lord! Forgive, therefore, our faults and pardon our wrong deeds, and make us die with the righteous. Our Lord accept the sacrifice of Your purified servants (the Prophet's household, the AHL AL BAYT), and let people hear our call, and turn towards us; You are all-Knowing, all-Hearing". On the other side of the field, in the enemy's camp, IBN SA'AD'S troops enjoyed eating and drinking just as cattle enjoy their food. Songs and music could be heard. They were sure of their victory against the handful strugglers in IMAM HUSAIN'S camp, hence they rejoiced at their victory before hand.

ASHURA

At sunrise on the day of ASHURA (the 10th of MUHARRAM), the year 61 of HIJRA, the small army in defense of the Truth faced the big army in defense of falsehood. UMAR IBN SA'AD, the enemy army's leader, gave his orders to start the fight and immediately arrows were thrown at IMAM HUSAIN'S camp. Moreover, the court theologian in AL-MEDINA issued his religious verdict justifying the big crime against the Prophet's grandson (peace be upon both). The deviated jurist said, "AL-HUSAIN has left his land and involved himself in politics, thus causing dispute and division among the Muslims. He should be killed with the Muslims' sword to rid Islam of him".

What a horrible statement it was! What a heinous crime it was! To justify the murdering of the sublime figure along with the most righteous believers if the pretext of his involvement in politics! It was the ugliest crime of the self-claimed Muslim theologians.

The bodies of the righteous martyrs were torn under the hooves of the horses at IBN SA'AD'S orders. Could it be involvement in politics or malicious hatred towards Allah, the Messenger of Allah and his household? It was mere hostility towards Allah, His Prophet, His religion, and His Book. The battle was over, and everyone resorted to rest in his own home except the Prophet's household: Women and Children along with the young sick Imam, who were all captives in chains, were transported from one place to another. While the name of Allah and of His Messenger echoed on top of

minarets in calls for daily prayers, the sublime figures of the Prophet's household suffered every kind of oppression and persecution. Could not those so-called Muslims read the QURANIC verses in favor of the Prophet's household? The holy QURAN says:

{Say (Oh, Mohammed): I ask you no recompense at all save love for my relatives...} [AL-SHURA: 23].

SA'AD'S troops were not satisfied with their dirty performance against the martyrs' holy bodies, so they put the Imam's dearest and nearest women and children in chains and led them to the city of KUFA which once was Imam Ali's residence during his caliphate. All the city's inhabitants knew Imam Ali's noble daughter Lady ZAINAB, daughter of the sublime Lady Fatima AL-ZAHRA, the Prophet's only daughter. They had often seen her in her father's house while their women visited her and attended her meetings and listened to her talks.

Now they saw her at the head of the arrested women and children. The KUFIAN women and men felt a great shame. Stifled in tears, they cursed IBN SA'AD and IBN ZIAD. Could that be enough? Could they be forgiven for turning away from the Imam's call for help? Could their men, who sent the martyred Imam letters calling him to their country to lead them along the right path, then withdrew their help, be ever forgiven? Lady ZAINAB ordered them to stop crying and in a speech exposed their shameful deeds. Her words were lashes inflicted on their backs. Could her words awaken the sleeping masses and revive in them the fading awareness?

History tells us that her words were the most effective, next to the sublime martyr's blood that brought YAZID'S tyrannical rule to an end.

THE CAPTIVES IN DAMASCUS

The captives were brought from AL-KUFA (Iraq) to Damascus (Syria) which was celebrating YAZID'S so-called victory against his enemy, the Prophet's grandson.

The mercenaries who carried the martyrs' head on their lances were ordered to bring Imam HUSAIN'S holy head on a tray to the infidel YAZID IBN MUAWIA (the curse of Allah is on YAZID and on his father MUAWIA). History tells us that at the orders of an Israeli prostitute named SALOMI, the head of Prophet YAHYA son of Prophet ZAKARRIA was brought on a tray to the infidel ruler of the idolaters.

YAZID rejoiced on seeing the holy head and in false pride of the era of ignorance expressed his rejoice through lines of poetry, Would that my seniors of BADR (the battle when the infidels were defeated) were here, To laugh, rejoice and to say:

Hail, YAZID, cease not killing, proceed! The HASHIMI plaything of kingship is over, No revelation, nor news from heaven has ever come; never. In Damascus, IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (IMAM ALI son of IMAM HUSAIN who was spared the massacre through Divine care) had the chance to speak to the people who stood on both sides of the roads. He discloses to them the actual facts and cleared away their wrong illusions. The infidel YAZID tried to mislead the people through spreading rumors that the captives were only KHARIJITES, enemies of Islam. Now IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN refuted YAZID'S claims and told the people that he, his

martyred father and brothers, and his family were Prophet Mohammed's offspring. He said to the crowd, "...if there is someone who knows me, it is alright, but if others do not know me, then I will inform them who I am. I am the son of Mohammed AL-MUSTAFA (the chosen Prophet), I am the son of ALI AL-MURTADHA (Allah is pleased with him), I am the son of FATIMA AL-ZAHRA, the head of all women, I am the son of the one wrapped in blood, slain in KERBALA.

IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN went on making clear to the attendants his actual status till everyone who heard him started crying and cursing YAZID. The people of Damascus were stunned at the actual truth. Could those captives be the Prophet's dearest and nearest? What a heinous crime YAZID had committed! What a big lie he had spread!

On knowing the truth, a great unrest spread in the city, a revolution was about to start and shake YAZID'S firm control of AL-SHAM. He immediately ordered the departure of the captives to Al-Medina, and the martyrs' heads to be buried. The people were ordered never to utter IMAM HUSAIN'S name if they wanted to avoid imprisonment and killing.

THE MONUMENT OF MARTYRDOM

The first one to pay homage to IMAM HUSAIN'S grave was the righteous companion of Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H), JABIR IBN ABDILLAH AL-ANSARI. He visited the holy grave few days after the battle of KERBALAL. He shed hot tears near the grave. His tears scattered throughout the ages and brought countless lovers to the martyred IMAM (AS). Since then, visitors have never stopped visiting the holy shrine of IMAM HUSAIN (AS) nor shedding hot tears on the events that took place that ASHURA. They, wherever they, are curse the infidel YAZID and his likes of infidel rulers, enemies of Islam. With the passage of years, the holy shrine has become the center of freedom lovers who swear to tread the same road of the sublime martyrs, IMAM AL-HUSAIN and his family and followers.

They swear to keep his revolution alive so that future generations may keep on struggling against all oppressors and aggressive rulers. For such an important reason, the UMMAYYADS and after them the ABASSAIDS tried to prevent people from visiting KERBALA and renewing the tragic event. However, their desperate attempts were in vain. The holy shrine has become a bright landmark. On that piece of land a house for the worship of Allah is set up. The bright torch of martyrdom had become an ever-burning light illuminating the road for those who wish to walk on the right-path.

IMAM HUSAIN'S martyrdom teaches us many lessons:

" The bloodshed of the defeated small group has achieved victory against all tyrants.

" The small party achieved victory against the big party though following principles and high morals.

" Imam HUSAIN (as) is a school of thought from which lovers of freedom learn how to rebel against the arrogant and the tyrants.

" Imam HUSAIN comes at the head of all strugglers of the world who strive to achieve justice and dignity and equality for mankind.

It is a unique revolution in the lengthy human history.

Imam Zain Al-Abidin (A.S.)

LINEAGE

IMAM ALI son of IMAM HUSAIN son of IMAM ALI IBN ABI TALIB (peace be upon them all) was born on the 15th of JAMADI AL-AWWAL in the year 36 of HIJRA in Al-Medina AL-MUNAWARA. His mother's name was SHAHRBANO. He was blessed with martyrdom on the 25th of MUHARRAM in the year 95 of HIJRA in Al-Medina and was buried at AL-BAQIE cemetery. The Imam's mother, SHAHRBANO, was the daughter of a Persian emperor. There is nothing strange in that. History tells us that Prophet ISMAEL'S mother was an Egyptian maid in the court of Pharaoh. It is one sign of Allah's might that nations meet each other just as oceans meet each other and pearls are produced. Pharaoh's wife was a righteous woman through her belief in Allah the Almighty while Prophet NUH'S son an infidel through his bad deeds. The daughter of a noble Persian enjoyed faith in Allah and a Roman emperor's daughter became the mother of the 12th IMAM MEHDI who is still in occultation.

However, the hypocrites are not real believers in Allah, hence they have criteria other than piety and good deeds that bring one nearer to Allah the Exalted.

THE ISLAMIC ETHICS

When Persia was invaded by Muslims, the captives were brought to the city of the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) in HIJAZ. Having looked at them, the caliph ordered their distribution on the victorious army leaders, as was the custom then. The caliph's order had a different impact on both sides: the captives and the victorious leaders. The former were sad while the latter rejoiced. The daughters and grandchildren of the Persian emperor YAZDAJERD stood humbly watching the distribution of the captives. They wondered what the future held for them. They sadly remembered their big hopes which until recently filled their hearts when they enjoyed a luxurious life of power and might. They wondered how matters could come to such an end! Could they blame their army leaders or their own forefathers? Had the big Persian, the ruler, KHOSROW (PARVIZ), or CHOSROES II who died in 628 of the Christian calendar, not torn the Messenger of Allah's letter calling him to Islam, would the result have been different? They had no answers to their inquiries. They could not comprehend Allah's word:

{Thus We requited them because they disbelieved, and We do not requite any but the ungrateful}. [SABA: 17]. While the caliph was looking at the captives, a young man approached him and said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) say: 'The noble and honorable ones of their people should be respected. Their status should be considered'. These captives are of high status. As Muslims, we are not supposed to leave them in captivity. For my part, I set my own share free, seeking the pleasure of Allah and His Messenger". The man was none but IMAM ALI IBN ABI TALIB (as) whose words were appreciated by all. Immediately the other believers, AL-ANSAR and AL-MUHAJREEN, followed his footsteps and set free theirs.

Peace and blessing of Allah be upon His Messenger who honored SAFANA daughter of HATIM AL-TAYEE, the man who was very famous

for his generosity in the pre-Islamic era, though she was not yet Muslim. He set her free in regard due to her honorable status. In pursuit of the sublime morals of the holy Prophet, his truthful and trustworthy cousin ALI (AS) put Islamic ethics to practice.

Ali's action had a good impact on the Persian captives who felt at ease and no more worried about their future. They became sure of Islamic justice and tolerance. Undoubtedly, Islamic instructions and teachings do not discriminate between Arabs and non-Arabs, or between white and black. All are equal in rights and should enjoy the caliph's protection and care, since he is supposed to be the best man after the Messenger of Allah. They felt special love for Ali (as).

A DIVINE FAVOUR

Soon after this event, SHAHRBANO daughter of YAZDAJERD was chosen a wife for IMAM AL-HUSAIN (AS), the younger son of IMAM ALI (AS). She gave birth to a son who was named ALI AL-ASGHAR (Ali the Junior), known also as ZAIN AL-ABDIN (the best of the worshippers) due to his great piety and chastity. He is the fourth Imam from the Prophet's lineage. Some historians do not know the exact story of SHAHRBANO as it has been related. IMAM HUSAIN (AS) had another son called ALI AL-AKBAR (Ali the Senior) who greatly resembled the holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) and who was blessed with martyrdom at the battle of KERBALA on the 10th of MUHARRAM the year 61 of HIJRA.

IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS) resembled his grandfather IMAM ALI (AS) in bravery, patience and piety along with his sound knowledge and brilliant talent. Narrators say that when he accompanied his father on their way to KERBALA, he was full of determination and prowess. When the battle started, everyone had a sword and a shield. ZAIN AL-ABIDIN'S shield was a bit longer for him and reached his knees, He immediately bent the extra length then broke it out to have the shield fit. The attendants were surprised at his strength and praised his strength. Yet he could not make use of his bravery on the day of the battle. He suffered a fever that threw him in bed. It was Allah's will that he should be sick at that apex of the fight, hence he was spared martyrdom at that age in order to survive and play his role in keeping the Prophet's progeny safe, despite the tyrants' decision to end all of IMAM HUSAIN'S offspring.

It was Allah's will that protected him and kept him alive while all other males were blessed with martyrdom at the battle of KERBALA. They left a bright record in the Islamic history though their struggle against oppression while their enemies are cursed throughout history. At the end of that tragic event, women and children were chained then taken to KUFA accompanied by IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN.

FACING THE INFIDEL IBN ZIAD

At the city of KUFA, the infidel IBN ZIAD made a show of arrogance and merry-making. His mercenaries surrounded him, so he could insult the captives as much as he could, using malicious words against them.

No one dared utter a word for fear of his cruelty. When he saw IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN, he said, "Who are you?" The Imam (as) answered, "I

am Ali son of AL-HUSAIN". The tyrant said, "Has not Allah killed Ali son of AL-HUSAIN?" The Imam said, "I had a brother called Ali; the people killed him". IBN ZIAD said, "Surely, Allah had killed him". The Imam said, "Allah takes the souls at death". IBN ZIAD was vexed because the Imam refuted his claims. He shouted, "dare you answer me?" He ordered his mercenaries to kill him, but his Aunt Lady ZAINAB protected him with her arms and said, "By Allah! I will not let him go. Kill me before you kill him. Are not you satisfied with the blood you have shed of my men?" IBN ZIAD could not kill a woman, hence the Imam's life was spared.

FACING THE TYRANT YAZID

The captives, members of the prophet's family, were taken to AL-SHAM (Syria) where people were told that those captives were outlaws who stirred sedition, and that it was necessary to punish them.

Damascus, at the order of the cursed YAZID, was decorated to celebrate his so-called victory. The captives entered Damascus and were brought to YAZID'S court. The nobles and the officials were all in their best attire sitting on both sides of the tyrant who rejoiced at seeing the martyrs' severed heads. He recited some poetry to express his happiness at the martyrdom of the prophet's family. He turned to ZAIN AL-ABIDIN and said, "Your father had denied my blood relation and ignored my right to authority, hence Allah had done this to him". The Imam (as) recited the following QURANIC verse:

{No evil befalls on the earth nor in your own souls but it is in a book before We bring it into existence; surely that is easy for Allah. So that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor be exultant at what He has given you, and Allah does not love any arrogant boaster} [AL-HADID: 22-23].

YAZID ordered one of his mercenaries to ascend the pulpit and degrade Imam Ali and his two sons, AL-HASAN and AL-HUSAIN (peace be upon them). The man did so and insulted the righteous Imams. IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN said to him, "Woe to you, O speaker! You have bought the pleasure of the creature for the displeasure of the Creator, so get your seat in the Fire".

Then he turned to the people and said, "O people! If you know me, then it is all right, if you do not know me, then I will inform you of my lineage: I am the son of Mohammed AL-MUSTAFA (the one chosen by Allah), I am the son of ALI AL-MURTADHA (the one favored by Allah), I am the son...." He continued mentioning the sublime status of his grandfathers: Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) and Imam Ali (as), of his martyred father AL-HUSAIN (as). Then he related the tragic event of KERBALA which caused the attendants to burst in tears. YAZID feared the reaction, so he ordered someone to call to the prayers in order to disrupt the Imam's disclosure of the truth. When the caller to the prayers said, "Allah is the Greatest", the Imam confirmed: "None is greater than Allah". When the caller said, "I bear witness there is no god but Allah", the Imam said, "My flesh, my skin, my blood and my hair all bear witness to it". when the caller said, "I bear witness Mohammed is he Messenger of Allah", the Imam turned to YAZID and said, "This Mohammed, is he your grandfather or my

grandfather? If you say: He is my grandfather, then you lie and disbelieve. If you say: He is your grandfather, then why have you killed his offspring?"

YAZID was at a loss of words. He blamed IBN ZIAD for the heinous crime, but none believed him. Finally he had to get rid of the captives and send them back to Al-Medina to avoid more exposure of the truth.

TOWARDS AL-MEDINA

The captives were released, and the Imam ordered the caravan to first make their way to KERBALA to pay homage to the martyrs' graves. They stopped there and shed hot tears on the sacred spot of martyrdom. Since then and throughout the years, the area has become a fortress of worship that relates the heroic roles of its figures who confronted injustice and oppression. Then the caravan made its way towards the city of the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.). All its inhabitants, young and old, women and men, came out to meet the bereaved members of the Prophet's family.

They cried bitterly and shed hot tears on hearing the details of the tragedy. They blamed themselves and expressed regret for their negative stance. They crowded round the Imam to offer condolence and prayed to Allah to forgive them. The Imam (as) stood up and addressed them saying, "Praise is due to Allah the Lord of the worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful, the Master of the Day of Judgment, the Creator of all creatures. O people! Allah, Whom do I praise, has tried us with grave calamities. Islam has been grossly damaged. Imam HUSAIN (father of Imam ZAIN AL-ABIDIN) has been killed. His severed holy head has been raised on lances and paraded to people, carried from town to town. His women and children have been made captive. It is a tragedy of no like. O people! We have become homeless chased for no guilt nor sin, for no damage done to Islam by us. By Allah, had the Prophet approached them to fight as he had advised them to treat us well, they would not have exceeded in hostility. We are from Allah, and to Him shall we return. To Him we complain our hardship; He is Mighty in revenge on the unjust".

His words stirred great sadness in the masses that filled the place with crying and wailing. They sensed the great damage inflicted on Islam and were ready to rebel and revenge.

SEVERAL UPRISINGS

The tragedy of KERBALA was a big shock that awakened heedless people and stirred their abated feelings, hence several uprisings erupted against the infidel rulers. One year only after the battle of KERBALA, a revolution exploded in the city of the Messenger of Allah. The people attacked the Umayyad agents and followers. They repealed their allegiance to YAZID and chased his governor out. When YAZID heard of the revolution, he sent a big army led by MUSLIM IBN UQBA to invade Al-Medina. Several hundreds of innocent people were killed at a battle called AL-HARRA. The troops had a free hand to commit all crimes for three days. They plundered properties, destroyed homes, and raped chaste women. Finally, the people of Al-Medina gave in to the aggressive army and swear the oath fed to be YAZID'S slaves. They paid a high price for their indifference when IMAM HUSAIN called for help.

Another uprising started in HIJAZ. It was led by ABDILLAH IBN AL-ZUBAIR, the deadly enemy of the Prophet's family. He waited long to have the opportunity to assume power. The martyrdom of Imam HUSAIN provided him with such an opportunity. Under the cover of revenge for Imam HUSAIN'S blood, he declared his revolution. He never thought of AHLUL BAYT was quite clear.

On seeing revolts start here and there, IBN AL-ZUBAIR was encouraged to fight YAZID. He formed an army and started a battle near holy Mecca. Many people were killed and the holy KA'BA was thrown with fire balls by YAZID'S men. Before the battle was over, YAZID was killed and his men withdrew, in the wake of hearing the news. IBN AL-ZUBAIR enjoyed authority for a while until he was killed by AL-HAJJAJ during ABDUL MALIK IBN MARWAN'S regime.

One of the many revolts that started due to the battle of KERBALA was one very well-known as "The repentant uprising" (THAWRAT AL-TAWWABIN). It started in AL-KUFA in the year 65 of HIJRA, and extended to include AL-BASRA and Al-Median (Iraq), and was labeled: THAWRAT AL-TAWWABIN, after the name of a groups of KUFIAANS who expressed their great repentance at their holding back in IMAM HUSAIN'S struggle against infidel YAZID, though they had previously sent him letters to come to KUFA and enjoy their support. They declared their sincere repentance and were led by SULAIMAN IBN AL-SURD AL-KHUZAE'. It is said that their number mounted to 16,000. the repentant left AL-KUFA and headed towards IMAM HUSAIN'S holy gravesite.

They put on their shrouds and swore never to return to their homes until they effected revenge against the killers. They tried to make up for their shortcoming in the battle of KERBALA by killing the Imam's enemies or being themselves martyred. They raised their voices calling revenge for Imam HUSAIN'S blood. Their shouts spread everywhere. When they reached the holy grave, they cried day and night then made their way towards the Syrian territory. They continued reciting the following QURANIC verse: {... therefore turn to your Creator (repentant), so kill yourselves, that is the best for you with your Creator, so He turned to you, surely He is the Oft-returning, the Merciful}. [The Cow: 54].

They met IBN ZIAD'S army on the way and were about to defeat him had no help reached him on time. They continued fighting until they were all killed. Thus they passed away as models of repentance and penitence; thus they left behind for the following generation to inherit the essence of revolution against all oppressors and tyrants of the world. In the wake of YAZID'S death, uprisings increased against the Umayyad rule. AL-MUKHTAR IBN UBAID AL-THAQAFI'S revolt started also in KUFA in the year 66 of HIJRA.

AL-MUKHTAR called the KUFIAANS to avenge the shedding of the Imam's blood, and many people responded to his call. He put his hand on the official treasure and distributed the money on those who joined him. He controlled the affairs in KUFA and tried to enhance his office through writing to IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (as) in Medina. He asked for the Imam's support and offered him allegiance. The Imam did not response

because he was aware of AL-MUKHTAR'S personal interests. On receiving no answer from the Imam, he wrote to Mohammed son of Imam Ali (as), nicknamed IBN AL-HANAFIYYA (after his mother's name). AL-MUKHTAR spread the rumor that IBN AL-HANAFIYYA was the one entrusted with the Divine bliss and was AL-QAIM (AL-MEHDI) from the Prophet's offspring. He also claimed the support of IBN AL-HANAFIYYA; hence some people believed his lies and a new religions sect, AL-KESANIYYA, came into existence.

THE MIGHTY REVENGE

Anyway, AL-MUKHTAR chased the killers of IMAM HUSAIN (as) and those who participated in fight against him, especially their leaders such as IBN SA'AD, IBN ZIAD, and their likes. He spared none of them and revenged in similar manner of their own practice against IMAM HUSAIN and his companions. He was a deadly enemy of the Umayyads. Finally, he caught IBN ZIAD and beheaded him. He sent his head along with the head of IBN SA'AD, some presents, and a maid to IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS).

On seeing the two heads, the IMAM (AS) threw himself on the ground in prostration, thanking Allah the Almighty. He said, "Praise is due to Allah who achieved for me revenge on my enemies. May Allah best reward AL-MUKHTAR". He (as) accepted the presents and married the maid who gave birth to his son: ZAID IBN ALI. ZAID grew up a firm struggler for the sake of Allah's religion. He led a revolt against the Umayyads' rule and was blessed with martyrdom. Thus, he conveyed the message of his righteous forefathers and struggled until he was killed for the sake of Allah.

IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN PERSONAL QUALITIES

The Imam (as) resembled his two grandfathers: the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) and Imam Ali (as), in morals and ethics. He was of sound religious knowledge of QURANIC sciences. He was generous, pious and of sublime demeanor. It is related that he was one day in the presence of the Umayyad caliph UMAR IBN ABDIL AZIZ. When he left, the caliph asked the attendants, "Who is the most honorable of all creatures?" some of the flatterers said, "Your Excellency, you are". The caliph said, "No I am not. it is he who has just left".

This incident indicated his sublime status and the respect he enjoyed among the people. Another indication of his sublime morals and forgiveness is linked to MARWAN IBN AL-HAKAM, the deadly enemy of AHLUL BAYT, peace be upon them. AL-HAKAM was the one who advised Al-Medina's governor to kill IMAM HUSAIN when the Imam refused to swear the oath of allegiance to infidel YAZID. AL-HAKAM was also among those who fought Imam Ali (as) in the battle of the camel and in SIFFIN. Yet, none could spare AL-HAKAM'S family from the citizens' wrath and revenge except Imam ZAIN AL-ABIDIN. That was on the day when the inhabitants of Al-Medina rebelled against the Umayyad domination. The IMAM (AS) provided AL-HAKAM'S women and children a safe haven with his own family.

Such high morals are confined to those infallible figures chosen by Allah the Almighty. IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN'S qualities were not different from his grandfather's. the Messenger of Allah pardoned the infidels and the hypocrites after the invasion of Mecca. He (P.B.U.H.) set free all those who were supposed to be punished for their crimes against the early Muslims and the Prophet himself.

Similarly, Imam Ali (as) pardoned MARWAN IBN AL-HAKAM who participated in the battle of the camel. He set him free, though he could have punished him as a criminal of war. He let him go though he was sure that MARWAN would join MUAWIA'S camp and fight him in SIFFIN, as he actually did. Surely such is the HASHIMI generosity and forgiveness. His other outstanding characteristic was his unique generosity. Many needy families lived on his personal help. He used to carry food to them, under disguise, so they never knew his real identity until he was blessed with martyrdom and no longer came to assist them. They said, "We missed the secret alms at the demise of Ali son of AL-HUSAIN, ZAIN AL-ABIDIN, peace be on him".

AL-SAHIFA AL-SAJJADIYYA AND RISALT AL-HUQOOQ

His profound knowledge was extremely deep. Although he was not allowed to hold meetings to address attendants in mosque in order to guide them to the right path, he resorted to other means. He conveyed his message through DU'A and glorification of Allah. He left on record more than sixty supplications (DU'A) compiled in AL-SAHIFA AL-SAJJADIYYA, related later by his two sons, IMAM AL-BAQIR and ZAIN IBN ALI, along with other trustworthy followers.

Up to the present day, the believers recite those supplications and glorifications. They are full of Islamic ethics and morals that bring the believers nearer to Allah the Almighty. He (as) also recorded for his followers long pages telling them their duties and rights towards each other in 50 items known as RISALT AL-HUQOOQ. The items include all kinds of relations and duties towards: brothers, neighbors, friends, spouses, rulers, and so on. In addition, many sagacious statements are related to him (as).

There is no wonder at such abundant knowledge, since he (as) is the fourth of the infallible purified Imams who are inheritors of Prophetic sciences and Divine knowledge. They are bright torches that lead mankind to the right path.

Imam Mohammad Al-Baqir (A.S.)

LINEAGE

IMAM MOHAMMED AL-BAQIR son of Ali son of AL-HUSAIN (peace be upon all of them) was born on the first of RAJAB (Lunar Calendar) in the year 56 of HIJRA in Al-Medina Al-MUNAWARA. His mother was Fatima daughter of IMAM AL-HASAN (A.S.). he was blessed with martyrdom on the 7th of DHIL-HIJJA, in the year 114 of HIJRA, and was buried at AL-BAQIE in Al-Medina.

THE BLESSED OFFSPRING

IMAM AL-HASAN (AS) had a daughter named Fatima, after her grandmother Lady Fatima, the only daughter of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.). she was pious, pure and chaste, and she grew up in the house of virtue and Islamic ethics. She learned Islamic knowledge and QURANIC sciences at the house of Prophet-hood.

IMAM AL-HASAN (as) wanted his niece Fatima II to marry his son Ali II. They led a pious life of chastity. She gave birth to a son named Mohammed, nicknamed AL-BAQIR, with bright talents and vast knowledge. Prophetic narrations indicate which identified him as having vast knowledge, even prior to his blessed birth. That was Divine knowledge revealed to him (P.B.U.H.). AL-BAQIR resembled his grandfather, the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) to a great extent.

CHILDHOOD AND THE TRAGIC EVENTS

When IMAM HUSAIN (AS) made his way towards Iraq and camped at a place named KERBALA, he was accompanied by his women and sons, including ALI ZAIN AL-ABIDIN and his wife Fatima and tier son: Mohammed AL-BAQIR who was only four years old. Thus the little child witnessed the tragic events of the battle of KERBALA. He witnessed the tragic martyrdom of his grandfather IMAM HUSAIN (AS) and of other relatives and followers who fell one after the other in the battlefield and covered the area with their noble blood. He also underwent captivity along with his parents and relatives when they were taken to KUFA and later to AL-SHAM (Greater Syria). He saw the holy head of his grandfather and other martyrs' heads carried on lances. He saw the people of AL-SHAM celebrate the occasion and YAZID'S hostility towards AHLUL BAYT (as).

He saw everything and heard every word; thus, he perceived through his childhood the tragic events, while he started learning Islamic sciences at the hands of his father IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS).

He suffered from the tyranny of the Umayyad rulers as he was contemporary to YAZID'S regime and those of ABDUL MALIK IBN MARWAN and his two sons (AL-WALID and HISHAM). He also witnessed the aggressive policy of one of their most cruel governors: AL-HAJJAJ IBN YUSUF, a wild beast, who imposed a house arrest on the Imam's noble father while all other people enjoyed their freedom of speech and could say and write whatever they wanted. He, AL-HAJJAJ, deprived the holy Imams of their freedom and warned whoever came in contact with them. Hence, people could not benefit from his father's religious sciences,

nor could they convey their religious inquiries to him for only one reason: His being the grandson of Ali son of ABI TALIB and son of IMAM HUSAIN.

However, there were many who were brave enough to get in touch with the Imam and enjoy his company. One of those brave men was JABIR IBN ABDILLAH AL-ANSARI, the only surviving companion of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) until then. Eh was quite old and conveyed a message from the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) to IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS).

JABIR used to sit at the Prophet's mosque and utter the words: BAQIR AL-ILM (cutting through abundant knowledge). The people of Al-Medina were amazed on hearing him utter those words often and thought that he was delirious. He would then swear to them that he was quite sane and was uttering only what he had heard from the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.). he (P.B.U.H.) one day said to JABIR, "O JABIR! You will live until you see a son born from my offspring. His name is my name, his features are my features. He will enjoy abundant knowledge, he is: BAQIR AL-ILM". Thus he explained to them his insistence on uttering his nickname.

One day, when JABIR was walking along the alleys of Al-Medina, he saw a boy whom he stopped and asked, "What is your name, O young boy?" the boy said, "My name is Mohammed son of Ali son of AL-HUSAIN". JABIR kissed his head and said, "May my parents be your sacrifice! Your grandfather the Messenger of Allah sends you his greeting". The boy in turn sent his greeting to the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) and hurried home to tell his father of that incident. On hearing it, IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN ordered his son to stay at home, for fear of the aggressive rulers who had put the Imam and his family under their surveillance. He knew that they would harm him if they knew of his future Imamate.

JABIR used to meet AL-BAQIR and discuss religious matters with him. He realized that the Prophetic sciences were entrusted to him. One day he said to him, "O son! You will solve different problems and answer all inquiries. O son of Ali son of AL-HUSAIN son of Ali son of ABI TALIB! You are among those who enjoy Divine sciences at an early age". Then he recited the following QURANIC verse: {O YAHYA! Take hold of the Book with strength, and We granted him wisdom while still a child}. [MARIAM: 12]. Nearly 100 years after HIJRA passed when IMAM ZIAN AL-ABIDIN died. He entrusted the Imamate to his son Mohammed AL-BAQIR who was then 40 years old.

THE ERA OF IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS)

During IMAM AL-BAQIR'S Imamate, two of ABDUL MALIK'S sons, AL-WALID and SULAIMAN, ruled successively. Then UMAR IBN ABDIL AZIZ assumed power, then ABDUL MALIK'S other two sons, YAZID and HISHAM.

Whoever of those rulers visited Al-Medina, he would visit IMAM AL-BAQIR due to his religious status among the Muslim. They would also invite him to Damascus. They wanted to keep him away from Al-Medina where they feared the people might be influenced by him, especially when the Umayyad domination was getting weak throughout the vast Islamic world. Such a situation gave the Imam a better chance to act, and it lessened

the pressure on him, hence people could visit him and listen to his lessons and sermons. He used to hold meetings every morning when different branches of sciences were taught and religious education was conducted. Sciences during his time made a big progress hence the era was labeled "golden". A great number of Prophetic narrations are related by him.

His was also the era of Islamic awareness. Fifty years following the battle of KERBALA were enough for people to realize that the UMAYYAD who ruled under the cover of Islam were not at all real Muslims. Those great men (IMAM HUSAIN (AS) and his followers) who scarified their lives for the sake of Islamic awareness taught the others clear lessons. Hence the Muslim believers raised the banner of revolution against injustice, corruption and deviation. Revolts started in many places. KERBALA'S bright torch of martyrdom illuminated the road for them.

Many ALAWIS declared revolution but they failed. Even the revolution led by Zaid Ibn Ali, Imam Al-Baqir's brother, did not achieve success when his followers abandoned him. With a few of his supporters, he fought bravely but was finally defeated due to the enemy's great number. He was a pious, God-fearing worshipper, and very brave. Imam Al-Baqir (AS) and his family were greatly saddened by his tragic defeat, thus he was blessed with martyrdom.

Yet Imam Al-Baqir (AS) witnessed not only the UMAYYAD tyranny but the ABBASIDE one as well. Just as the UMAYYAD exploited religion to achieve their goal, the ABBASIDES raised the banner of devotion to AHLUL BAYT and struggled under the slogans of revenge for AHLUL BAYT'S martyrs, while they actually sought to achieve their own goal of authority and leadership. Hence, Abu Muslim Al-Khurasani, Abu Salama, and Abu Al-Abbas Al-Saffah became combatant strugglers.

THE SHORT RULE OF JUSTICE

When Umar Ibn Abdil Aziz became caliph, he tried to make up for the damage inflicted on the Prophet's household by the preceding rulers. At the order of cursed Muawia, the prayer leaders were ordered to curse the leader of all believers: Ali (as) from the mosques' pulpits. Umar Ibn Abdil Aziz immediately ordered them to stop the cursing, although he could not remove the black disgrace from the UMAYYAD history. He also ordered the return of the FADAK property to AHLUL BAYT after they were deprived of it for many decades. FADAK was Fatima's own property given to her by her father as a gift. The right procedure taken by Umar Ibn Abdil Aziz exposed the great injustice done to AHLUL BAYT by the oppressive rulers. He also ordered the recording of Prophetic narrations, something which was banned for a hundred years.

Ibn Abdil Aziz's rule did not last long (nearly two years). Soon after him, Hisham Ibn Abdil Malik seized power and increased pressure on the Prophet's family. This motivated Ja'fer, the eldest son of Imam Al-Baqir (AS), to stand during the pilgrimage season, when thousands of men and women gathered in the sacred house, and introduce his father and himself to the pilgrims. He said, "Praise is due to Allah who entrusted Mohammed with Prophet-hood and honored us through him. We are the

elite of Allah's creatures and the best of His worshippers. Lucky is he who follows us; miserable is he who opposes and hates us".

HISHAM'S brother MASLAMA was among the pilgrims and who heard those words. He saw how the pilgrims were influenced and how they crowded around JA'FER and his father (peace be on both), confirming their sublime status. MASLAMA felt a bitter hatred and conveyed to his brother the whole incident. HISHAM was vexed at the young man who dared speak to the people and call them to follow him and his father. He wondered: How dare JA'FER and his father declare their right to the caliphate? How could they ignore the UMAYYAD domination?

He ordered his governor in Al-Medina to send IMAM AL-BAQIR and his son to Damascus which was then the seat of the Islamic government. It was a beautiful big city with huge buildings and grand mosques.

IMAM AL-BAQIR and his son had no option except to set out to Damascus. When they reached it, they were kept waiting for three days before being called to HISHAM'S court. In fact, HISHAM intended to humiliate them in front of his mercenaries and court attendants. On the fourth day, he invited them to his court which was decorated at its best, surrounded with beautiful gardens. Guards stood in two rows on both sides. They were dressed splendidly, showing angry faces. The army leaders, dignitaries and UMAYYAD prominent figures stood with bows and arrows aiming at a certain target set up especially for that purpose.

IMAM AL-BAQIR entered and saluted the attendants without addressing HISHAM with the title of "leader of the believers". This had a serious impact on HISHAM and on the attendants who were unable to utter a word. IMAM AL-SADIQ later related the event. He said, "... When we entered, my father in front and I behind him; HISHAM shouted: 'O Mohammed! Take the bow and the arrow and shoot with the seniors of your folks'".

"My father said, 'I am too old to do it; see if you excuse me!' "HISHAM shouted: 'I swear by Him Who honored us through His religion and His Prophet (P.B.U.H); you are not excused!'

"The tyrant thought the IMAM would fail in aiming at the target and thus would be degraded in front of the mob of the country. He pointed to someone to hand the Imam a bow and an arrow. The Imam took the bow, fixed the arrow and when it exactly in the heart of the target. He took a second arrow and threw it cutting the first one in half. He took another arrow and another one.... Until he used nine of them without missing the target "HISHAM was confused and shouted: 'O father of JA'FER! You are the best shooter of all Arabs and non-Arabs, yet you claim you are too old for it!' "HISHAM regretted his hasty praise and gazed on the ground, leaving the Imam still standing. The Imam became angry and, as it was his habit, lifted his head up and looked at the sky. When HISHAM saw anger on the face of the Imam, he stood up, went to him, took him in his arms and seated him on his right side. Then he said to him, 'O Mohammed! QURAYSH will still rule the Arabs and non-Arabs as long as it has men like you! By Allah the Gracious, it is well done! How did you learn it? when? Who aught you this? Can JA'FER shoot arrows as well as you can?'

"IMAM AL-BAQIR (as) said, 'We inherit perfection!'

"The tyrant was red with anger. He said, 'What?! Are not we sons of ABDI MANAF, of the same lineage?' "The IMAM (AS) refuted his claims. He said, 'We are all the sons of ABDI MANAF, but Allah has entrusted only us with His perfect knowledge and Divine secrets".

"HISHAM said, 'Has not Allah sent Mohammed from the offspring of ABDI MANAF to all people, to the White, the Black, and the Yellow?! How can you inherit what is not yours? Does not Allah say: {Surely We inherit the earth and all those on it?} how could you inherit this knowledge while you are no Prophets, and there is no Prophet after Mohammed (P.B.U.H)?"

"The Imam said, 'We have got it through Allah's words: {Don't move your tongue with it to make haste of it} [AL-QIYAMA: 16]. What he did not tell others he told us according to the order of Allah. That is why IMAM ALI (AS) said, 'the Messenger of Allah taught me a thousand doors leading to knowledge, each door leading to a thousand other doors'. The holy Prophet entrusted him only with that knowledge and it has been our inheritance rather than others of our folks".

"HISHAM was shocked and did not know what to say. He said, 'What is your need?' "The Imam said, 'I have left my family, wife, and children behind. They surely mess me". "HISHAM said, 'May Allah spare them missing you; go back to them and set out today".

THE IMAM DEBATES A BISHOP

While IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) was in Damascus, he one day met some Christians who were on their way to meet one of their learned scholars during a religious celebration. The Imam accompanied them. The Christians lived peacefully among the Muslims and practiced their rituals according to their beliefs. IMAM AL-BAQIR attended that meeting and sat with the others. The Christian bishop looked at him. Since he did not know him, he asked him, "Are you one of us or one of the blessed nation?"

The Imam (as) said, "One of the blessed nation"

The Bishop said, "are you one of its scholars or of its ignorant ones?"

the Imam said, "I am not of its ignorant ones".

The Bishop said, "You claim you go (after death) to Paradise where you eat and drink but no defecate".

The Imam said, "Yes". The Bishop said, "Prove it to me". The Imam said, "The fetus in its mother's womb eats from her food, drinks from her drink, but does not defecate". The Bishop was stunned at the answer and said, "You claimed you were not of its scholars".

The Imam said, "I said, 'I am not of its ignorant ones". The debate continued for a long time until the Bishop was defeated. He became angry and said to his followers, "By Allah! I will not talk with you or see you for twelve months".

He thought they had purposely brought the Imam with them to defeat him in the debate. The above mentioned story spread throughout Damascus and the people became aware of the Imam's sound knowledge at all levels. When HISHAM heard of it, he made up his mind to annoy the Imam, so he sent his mercenaries to the towns along the route of YATHRIB (Al-Medina) to spread a lie claiming that the son of Ali son of AL-HUSAIN had joined a

Christian monastery and had accepted Christianity. Thus, the people were ordered not to talk to his caravan nor to host them, nor to sell them food or drink. The people were even ordered to close their town gates in their faces.

The Imam's caravan left Damascus for YATHRIB. They reached one of the towns on their way. They were very tired and thirsty. They dismounted from their animals near that town to get some food and water then to continue their journey. They found the town gates locked and the people's doors closed. People usually act according to their rulers' whims.

The travelers were short of water, and the doors were closed; so, what could they do? The Imam (as) stood on a big rock and spoke to them gently and patiently, but they lent him a deaf ear, insisting on their stance. He then raised his voice and recited some QURANIC verses warning them of Allah's wrath just as Prophet SHUAIB had warned his people. He recited to them the following QURANIC verses:

{And to MADIAN (We sent) their brother SHUAIB. He said: 'O my people, serve Allah, you have no god other than Him; clear proof indeed has come to you from your Lord, therefore give full measure and weight and do not diminish to men their things, and do not make mischief in the land after its reform; this is better for you if you are believers}. [A'RAF: 85]

Then the Imam addressed the people of the town saying, 'O people of the unjust town! What remains with Allah is better for you! I am what remains'. As soon as he uttered those words, one of their old men shouted at his folk, saying, "O people! By Allah, this is SHUAIB'S invocation. Fear Allah and open your doors for this holy man. If you do not, you will suffer Allah's wrath. I am a mere adviser to you, so listen to me". On hearing the wise man's warning, the people were afraid and realized their big sin of opposing their Prophet's grandson in order to please the oppressive ruler: HISHAM. They opened the doors and hosted the caravan and asked the Imam to forgive them. Surely in every person there is some feeling of pure faith that can be awakened in due time.

THE IMAM'S ACTIVE LIFE

The era of IMAM AL-BAQIR was the most crucial in Islamic history and the most important. During his time, various Islamic sects came into existence and political parties confronted each other. Strong return to norms of the era of Ignorance spread among the people. People started boasting of their forefathers' lineage, hence the tribal prejudice was stirred and conflicts appeared. The Umayyads encouraged such norms. A life of luxury, indecent practices, and unlawful accumulation of wealth could be noticed throughout the Islamic world.

The Imam tried his best to put things right and spare the people the deviated life. He set up centers for preaching and guidance in order to keep religion free from distortion. He also confronted the deviated sects through care for AHLUL BAYT'S School of Thought that was set up by his grandfather ALI IBN ABI TALIB (AS) and his grandsons, the purified Imams. Great numbers of religious scholars attended his school and benefited from his religious knowledge and QURANIC sciences.

He spent his life struggling for the sake of Allah. He confronted the anti-Islamic trends and the oppressive rulers. At the age of 58, a sinful hand of

the Umayyad enemy poisoned him. The Umayyads feared his sublime morals, great piety, and graceful status that attracted who shed their blood for the sake of Islam. Thus he added to the bright pages of Islamic mission another bright page. He enhanced the community with elements of awareness and progress that brought about flourishing civilization.

Imam Ja'fer Al-Sadiq (A.S.)

LINEAGE

Nicknamed AL-SADIQ (The Truthful), IMAM JA'FER son of IMAM Mohammed was born in Al-Medina on the 17th of RABI AL-AWAL in the year 83 of HIJRA. His mother was Fatima daughter of AL-QASIM son of Mohammed son of ABI BAKR. He was blessed with martyrdom in Al-Medina on the 25th of SHAWAL in the year 148 of HIJRA and was buried at AL-BAQIE' cemetery in AL-MEDINA AL-MUNAWARA.

EVENTS PRIOR TO HIS IMAMATE

Twenty three years after the tragic battle of KERBALA, a son was born in the family of the Prophet (P.B.U.H). he was the son of Mohammed AL-BAQIR son of ALI IBN AL-HUSAIN, the only survivor in the Prophet's family following the tragic battle of KERBALA. Hence, AL-SADIQ'S grandfather is IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN (AS).

JA'FER AL-SADIQ enjoyed the company of his grandfather besides that of his parents till he was thirteen years old, when the noble grandfather was blessed with martyrdom after years of a life of piety and good deeds. JA'FER was raised in a house of piety and righteousness, so he enjoyed sublime morals and was nicknamed "AL-SADIQ", one who always tells the truth, thus he came to be known as JA'FER AL-SADIQ.

During those days, ABDUL MALIK IBN MARWAN ruled the Muslim world. His deputy in Al-Medina was a stonehearted man called AL-HAJJAJ IBN YOUSUF who subjected the followers of Imam Ali (as) to a severe torture. He threw most of them, without having committed any guilt, in prison and treated them with utmost cruelty. He put IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN'S house under surveillance and warned people of getting in touch with him, while the enemies of Islam and of the Prophet's family enjoyed freedom.

At the death of ABDIL MALIK, his son AL-WALID assumed power. He was more oppressive than his father towards the members of AHLUL BAYT, peace be upon them. This infidel ruler demonstrated his disbelief in public and even mocked Islamic values and ethics. However, his rule did not last long. He died and UMAR IBN ABDIL AZIZ succeeded him.

IMAM AL-SADIQ (AS) by then was no longer a young man while his father IMAM AL-BAQIR enjoyed the Imamate of the Muslim believers. During the rule of ABDIL AZIZ, the Prophet's family members were treated much better than in previous years. They were spared harassment, and IMAM AL-BAQIR enjoyed his freedom. He could hold meetings, sit among the people and teach them Islamic instructions and QURANIC sciences besides other branches of knowledge. IBN ABDIL AZIZ'S rule also did not last long. Following his death, HISHAM IBN ABDIL MALIK assumed power. HISHAM was a cruel and tough man who openly demonstrated his hatred towards the Prophet's offspring. IMAM AL-BAQIR suffered from his cruelty to some extent, though less than he suffered during the era of other rulers.

It is related that HISHAM one day summoned IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) and asked him to tell him of his need which he promised he would meet.

The only request the Imam made was to let him return to Al-Medina so that he would be able to carry on his lessons in Islamic sciences. HISHAM agreed, and the Imam returned to the mosque of his grandfather, the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H). he carried on his mission, giving religious lessons to his students who were ever-increasing in number, whether old or young. Thus, the Prophet's family enjoyed the respect of all Muslims. IMAM AL-BAQIR possessed sound and deep knowledge which his students learned and spread in different cities and towns. They spread the Imam's instructions throughout all towns and villages and conveyed his religious verdicts which became widely known everywhere.

HISHAM'S mercenaries felt the great danger that the Imam's lessons endangered the authority of the rulers through exposing facts that were previously hidden. Yet the mercenaries could do nothing to stop the Imam's lessons or halt the people's new awareness. The Umayyad control of the affairs of the Muslims was getting weaker and weaker, and people everywhere confronted the oppressive rulers and rejected their injustice. Hence, IMAM AL-BAQIR managed to proceed with his lessons while his students kept increasing in number throughout the Muslim world.

AHLUL BAYT UNIVERSITY

IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) passed away in the year 114 of HIJRA after he had entrusted his son JA'FER AL-SADIQ (AS) with the Imamate. HISHAM IBN ABDIL MALIK was more worried because AL-SADIQ (AS) carried on his father's lessons more actively and vividly, since he was a young man, only 31 year old, full of energy and strength. AL-SADIQ'S great concern was the school of thought of AHLUL BAYT which was established by the leader of the believers, IMAM ALI IBN ABI TALIB (AS), and which survived through his sons and grandsons, especially IMAM AL-SADIQ'S father, IMAM AL-BAQIR (as). The university established by Imam AL-BAQIR (AS) encompassed branches of different sciences. It played a great role in safeguarding the Islamic teachings from deviation and distortion. It was, in fact, behind the spread of Islam's genuine teachings.

HISHAM died in the year 125 of HIJRA, and the Umayyad government was deteriorating. Two groups were formed to confront the oppressive regime and assume authority. One of them was led by IMAM AL-HASAN'S sons. The other was led by some of the offspring of AL-ABBAS (the Prophet's uncle). The second group raised the banner of revenge of the martyrs' blood and professed devotion to the Prophet's family. This happened while IMAM AL-SADIQ was quite occupied with spreading knowledge and different sciences through meetings and daily lessons attended by all those who strove to get the caliphate out of the Umayyad dynasty. Figures such as ABO AL-ABBAS AL-SAFFAH, AL-MANSOUR, and others used to attend his lessons and make a show of their love and devotion to the Prophet's offspring.

IMAM AL-SADIQ FACES THE PARTIES

At the midst of such events, each group (party) tried to approach IMAM AL-SADIQ (AS) and solicit his leadership so that it would achieve success. The group following IMAM AL-HASAN'S grandson could not enjoy full

growth to achieve victory, while the other group was more anxious for power and managed to enjoy support of the majority of people who were actually suffering from the injustice of the ruling clique. The people regarded AL-ABBAS'S party as the real movement that could save them from injustice. Moreover, BANU AL-ABBAS raised slogans of revenge for the martyrs of the Prophet's family and of calls to set al prisoners in the UMAYYAD prisons free. They claimed they would hand over the leadership (the caliphate) to its owners: the Prophet's offspring.

Two influential figures joined AL-ABBAS'S party. They were; ABU Muslim AL-KHURASANI and ABU SALAMA AL-KHALLA. Both men were active in confronting the UMAYYAD domination and in supporting BANI AL-ABBAS'S party. They had a major impact on the events. But soon they discovered that BANI AL-ABBASS were not different from BANI UMAYYAD. Their claims of revenge for the martyrs' blood and devotion to the Prophet's progeny were all lies behind which their lust for power was hidden.

Hence, ABU Muslim and ABU SALAM wrote a letter to IMAM AL-SADIQ (AS) in which they offered him leadership of the movement against the UMAYYAD rule. They swore the oath of allegiance to his caliphate. On getting the letter, the Imam burnt it in front of his attendants. It was his clear answer in rejecting the offer because he knew that their struggle was for personal interests more than for the Muslims' welfare. Due to his refusal, they joined the ABASSI group on condition that they would enjoy ministry offices. Finally, in the wake of a big battle, MARWAN IBN AL-HAKAM, the last UMAYYAD caliph, was killed and ABU AL-ABASS AL-SAFFAH assumed leadership. He was a blood-thirsty person; he was very cruel and not any different from the preceding rulers. ABU SALAM became his minister whose end came at the hand of his friend ABI Muslim AL-KHURASANI.

At first AL-SAFFAH claimed to be a supporter of AHLUL BAYT'S rights and pretended to seek revenge for the martyrs of the battle of KERBALA, hence he treated AL-SADIQ (AS) gently just for a short while.

THE RIGHT TO ONE FIFTH (KHUMS): A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO INDEPENDENCE

During those days, the official theologians (court ULEMA-FUQAHA) used to get their salaries from the state treasury. Hence, they accompanied the rulers whether in mosques or in the state offices to justify their practices and to please them. They were the supporters of the oppressive rulers because they were on their pay list.

The people used to pay to the state one-fifth of their earning as ZAKAT (religions duty/poor rate) and the non-Muslims used to pay JIZYA (non-Muslim protection tax) since they lived peacefully in the Muslims' land and enjoyed their rights under the protection of the Muslims. The state used such revenues to pay its officials, employees, and court theologians.

IMAM AL-SADIQ and his companions kept themselves far from such groups that strove for material gains. The Imam considered the ruler as a usurper of the caliphate, hence it is always unlawful to deal with tyrants and

usurpers. IMAM AL-SADIQ'S companions, especially those who were beyond the state's watch, used to pay the one-fifth and other religious taxes to IMAM AL-SADIQ (AS) to spend it according to religious legislations. Hence, members of the Prophet's progeny throughout history have been independent of the state's financial support and have had no links with unjust rulers' apparatus.

The ABASSI ruler AL-SAFFAH realized that he had no power over IMAM AL-SADIQ (AS). He also realized that the Imam's management of religious revenues, the one-fifth (KHUMS), the poor-rate (ZAKAT), and the non-Muslim tax (JIZYA), was quite different from the caliphs' management and bribed theologians. The ABASSI ruler was often vexed because the Imam (as) was beyond his control. Sometimes he would summon him to his court in AL-ANBAR (near KUFA) to admonish him openly, showing his hostility towards him (as). Sometimes he would try other means to bring him under his control or to earn his pleasure. However, he dared not hurt him, since AL-SAJJAH assumed the caliphate under the cover of devotion to the Imam and to his blessed forefathers. In the year 136 of HIJRA, AL-SAFFAH AL-ABASSI died and his brother AL-MANSOUR seized power.

AL-SADIQ VIS-?-VIS AL-MANSOUR

Due to his outward posture, AL-MANSOUR enjoyed a good reputation among the people who were easily fooled. It was quite natural since AL-MANSOUR confronted the Umayyad tyrants for many years. Moreover, he helped the followers of Imam Ali (as) jailed by the Umayyads. He often voiced his call for revenge for the martyrs of Kerbala. In fact, he achieved power only through such means.

IMAM AL-SADIQ (AS) was quite aware of AL-MANSOUR'S real nature. The latter often attended the Imam's meetings and discussed various issues, asking him many questions and getting their answers. Hence, the Imam was quite aware of the ABASSI tyrant's intentions. At first, AL-MANSOUR behaved quite well regarding IMAM AL-SADIQ (AS). He would often call him to his presence and ask his sons to sit near him and learn from him. His aim was to attract him and thus have him under his control, a tool in his hand just as the other theologians were. He wanted him to be a cover behind which he could hide his evil intentions and ambitions.

The Imam (as) was quite aware of AL-MANSOUR'S game, hence he disappointed him and mocked his devilish dreams he did not respond to his attempts, thus he did not fall in his traps. On the contrary, the Imam made his ideas and instructions clear to all his companions. He referred to AL-MANSOUR and his likes as usurpers of the caliphate, and that it was unlawful (HARAM) to deal with them. Dealing with unjust rulers always brings about Allah's wrath.

On the other hand, the Imam warned his followers to be vigilant of the court's theologians and never to deal with them. He also warned his followers to avoid open disputes to avoid their mischief. He used to tell his followers: "Be silent supporters of our cause". When AL-MANSOUR failed in getting to the Imam's companions, he started bothering them. He scattered their supporters in order to hinder their attendance of the Imam's lessons and

meetings. Moreover, he often summoned the Imam to blame him for his stances, to warn him, and even to threaten him because of such stances.

From all his heart he often wished to kill him with both his hands but could not do it! Hence, he directed all his hatred towards the Imam's followers who were often jailed and brutally tortured to confess the names of other followers. As a result of the oppressive policy, the followers of Imam AL-SADIQ were arrested, tortured, killed, and secretly buried in mass graves throughout the city of AL-ANBAR. Yet his greatest concern lingered: to get rid of IMAM AL-SADIQ (AS) himself. But the Divine care kept the Imam safe despite all devilish plots.

It is related that once AL-MANSOUR made up his mind to end the Imam's life. He swore by Allah to kill him, hence he summoned him at midnight. He said, "May Allah kill me if I do not kill him". When the Imam entered AL-MANSOUR'S room, he saluted him, but AL-MANSOUR did not return the salutation. He was exploding in anger and said, "O JA'FER! You incite people against me. You encourage them to revolt against me". The Imam calmly said, "I do not! The source of your information is the enemies of the Prophet's family".

He proved to him the wrong claims and managed to convince him in the discussion. AL-MANSOUR'S anger vanished and he said, "I think that you are truthful". He ordered his agents to take the Imam back home and to treat him with all respect and honor. It is said that the Imam (as) was summoned eight times by AL-MANSOUR with the letter's intention to kill him, but on seeing him, he could not achieve his objective and would order him sent back home with respect and dignity.

The reason behind AL-MANSOUR'S behavior was not a sudden feeling of mercy. Mercy could not find its way to his heart. He himself, with his own hands, had cut the body of his minister ABI Muslim AL-KHURASANI into many pieces at that same place. He shed the blood of several hundred innocent and pious believers. In fact, fear only stopped him from the fulfillment of his devilish intention. Whenever he met the Imam, he felt great fear on seeing his sublime figure and had no way but to show respect and justify his anger through accusing backbiters and liars. He would even testify to the Imam's truthfulness.

It is related that AL-MANSOUR used to say, "Whenever I intended to kill him, the face of the Messenger of Allah appeared in front of me, so I was scared to death, unable event to move my hand".

IMAM AL-SADIQ'S SCHOOL OF THOUGHT THROUGHOUT THE MUSLIM WORLD

IMAM AL-SADIQ (AS) carried on his teaching lessons in every circle, and his students increased in number and spread throughout the Muslim world. They spread his teachings wherever they went. His students studied various scientific fields. Each was assigned a special task or activity. Some of his students sat at mosques to teach people the religious legislation, verdicts, and what is lawful or unlawful. Some taught the interpretation of the holy QURAN and answered inquiries related to various issues. Some confronted the universe and its Almighty Creator. They learned about the

righteous deeds, about monotheism, resurrection, Imamate, and the leadership of the community.

The followers of the imam spread under the guise of tradesmen to escape the tyrants' mercenaries.

AL-MANSOUR, in turn, was active in confronting Imam AL-SADIQ'S schools by applying tough methods whenever he could. He used to let his mercenaries infiltrate the Imam's lesson circles in order to spread false narrations and wrong sayings on his behalf. They praised the rulers of AL-ABASS'S offspring and called the people to obey them. Moreover, the ABASSI caliph appointed many theologians on his pay list and ordered them to set up different schools of thought to oppose IMAM JA'FER AL-SADIQ'S School of Thought (the FA'FERI SCHOOL) and spread wrong information and false narrations. Thus, AL-MANSOUR helped many schools of thought to start. It was quite easy for him to do it since he could quickly find theologians ready to receive their salaries from him and act according to his own orders which were: to confront the Imam's school and refute his verdicts.

Yet the Imam's school stemmed from the very school of Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) and Imam Ali (as), so the Imam's knowledge proved to be quite perfect and authentic, and such knowledge could not be refuted or falsified! Naturally, sun rays cannot be hidden behind a cripple. It is worth mentioning that IMAM AL-SADIQ (AS) himself confronted the deviated trends and held meetings to conduct debates to refute the false narrations and the deviated theologians' distorted information. He had dialogues with the heretics and infidels, and through sound reasoning and clear proofs, he led his opponents to give in and to admit his sound opinions.

Thus, his students managed to compile four hundred books recording the Imam's statements and explanations. They categorized those books then produced out of them four volumes which contain his sciences in addition to books on geography, biology, medicine, chemistry... etc. His books are available even today.

HIS MARTYRDOM

AL-MANSOUR was told one day, "Praise is due to Allah, O caliph! You have gotten rid of all your enemies!" He said, "Not at all. I cannot feel at rest as long as JA'FER son of Mohammed is alive".

Soon after this devilish hint, the mercenaries killed sixty-five year old IMAM AL-SADIQ who was blessed with martyrdom by poisoning. When AL-MANSOUR heard of the Imam's martyrdom, he shed false tears, crocodile tears, then said, "We are from Allah, and to Him shall we return". He immediately wrote a letter to his agent in Al-medina Mohammed IBN SULAYMAN. He said in his letter, "If JA'FER IBN MUHAMMED has entrusted (the Imamate) to someone in particular in his will, then get that person and behead him at once".

The tyrant thought that he could thus put an end to the Imamate of AHL AL-BAYT. However, the infallible Imam was aware of such a risk, so he entrusted the Imamate to his son MUSA son of JA'FER in front of his faithful companions. Then he wrote a will in which he entrusted authority to

five persons: AL-MANSOUR himself, SULAYMAN the agent in Al-Medina, ABDILLAH IBN AL-AFTAH son of JA'FER, MUSA son of JA'FER, and HAMIDA, his wife. Al-Medina's ruler was at a loss; he did not know what to do. He wrote a letter to AL-MANSOUR and informed him of the said will. AL-MANSOUR again failed in his aim since it was impossible to behead those mentioned in the will.

The Imam (as) was quite clever, blessed with a deep insight that protected his successor in the office of the Imamate. IMAM AL-SADIQ was blessed with martyrdom in the year 148 of HIJRA and was buried at AL-BAQIE cemetery near his father, grandfather, and grandmother Fatima AL-ZAHRA, and his uncle AL-HASAN, peace and blessing of Allah be upon them all.

The Imam (as) witnessed big events at a crucial junction of the Islamic history. His era formed a major turn in the drive of Islamic life, stamped with his holy name, hence it is known as "the era of IMAM JA'FER AL-SADIQ". It was an age when different concepts were mixed and contradictions of opinions spread. The people were in serious need to differentiate between what is good and what is bad. IMAM AL-SADIQ (AS) was the best to sort out the odds and separate the truth from falsehood. Up to our time, his teachings are still the bright torch leading to the right path.

Imam Musa Al-Kadhim (A.S.)

LINEAGE

IMAM MUSA son of Imam JA'FER AL-SADIQ (AS) was born in AL-ABWA (a district between Mecca and Medina) on the 7th of SAFAR in the year 128 of HIJRA. His mother, HAMEEDA, was of Berber's (North African) lineage. He was blessed with martyrdom on 25th of RAJAB in the year 183 of HIJRA in KADHIMIA (Iraq) and was buried there.

THE ERA OF THE PRECEDING IMAMS: AL-BAQIR AND AL-SADIQ (A.S)

During the life of IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS), a current of awareness started in the Muslim community coinciding with the deteriorated situation of the Umayyad rule which grew weaker year after year. Now and then, rebellious groups confronted injustice and oppression of the Umayyad rule and reminded the people of the Alawis' suffering in their prisons. They called the people to seek revenge for the martyrs of Kerbala and of such battles.. As a result, the Umayyad rulers came to realize the great risk facing their authority, hence they had to show less hostility towards Ahlul Bayt (AS). They stopped killing and torturing their opponents in public.

During this period, IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS) was giving his lessons in Al-Medina and its surrounding villages. His lessons were comprised of: Islamic beliefs and legislations, and Quranic interpretation along with explanation of the Prophetic Tradition. Following the demise of IMAM AL-BAQIR (AS), revolts against the Umayyad rule increased in number and spread everywhere. People turned towards the Prophet's family in their devotion and support.

IMAM AL-SADIQ (AS) pursued his forefathers' footsteps and demonstrated a genuine concern for their school of thought. That school became so large that it was called Ahlul Bayt's University. Students from all over the Muslim world joined that School to acquire religious instructions and legislations besides other sciences. It was quite necessary for those concerned to attend that School of IMAM AL-SADIQ to get the authentic narrations which were not recorded for nearly one century at the order of the preceding caliphs. Recording such narrations started only ten years prior to IMAM AL-SADIQ'S Imamate. Nearly 4,000 students attended IMAM AL-SADIQ lessons during the 30 years of this authority. Among those students were leaders of different movements and parties. Even opponents and supporters of different groups attended his lessons. The Umayyads could do nothing to confront the attraction to his lessons.

In the year 132 of HIJRA, the Umayyad reign of terror came to an end and the Abassi clan seized power through their chief Abi Al-Abbas Al-Saffah (the blood-shedder), then his brother Abi Ja'fer Al-Mansour, his successor. Al-Mansour was among the attendants of IMAM AL-SADIQ'S lessons. He often listened to his sermons and sayings, hence he was quite aware of his method of spreading the Islamic instructions.

Prior to their rise to power, AL-SAFFAH and his brother, along with YAQUB IBN DAWOOD, ABU Muslim AL-KHURASANI, and ABU SALAMA AL-KHALLAL, prominent figures of the time and deadly enemies of the Umayyads, demonstrated great pain at the injustice inflicted on the Alawis. They expressed a great anger at the bloodshed in Kerbala. However, as soon as they assumed power, little by little they exposed their true face and showed their wicked intentions and ambitions. They openly expressed their hostility towards the Prophet's family members and filled their prisons with them, even put most of them to death. At that time, Imam AL-SADIQ'S name enjoyed a high reputation throughout the Muslim world.

As previously mentioned, AL-MANSOUR was quite aware of the Imam's influence, his sublime virtue, and his sound knowledge. He himself listened to the Imam's lessons and saw how numerous his students were, hence he decided to stop those lessons by all means.

At first he kept his intention secret but soon made it public and started chasing the Imam's students and followers. He (AL-MANSOUR) even appointed a killer as a governor in Al-Medina and ordered him to put the Imam under severe house arrest and to continue bothering him. The governor was Mohammed IBN SULAIMAN who could not achieve his goal.

THE UNIQUE TESTAMENT

In the year 148 of Hijra, Imam AL-SADIQ was blessed with martyrdom: he was poisoned by AL-MANSOUR'S mercenaries. When AL-MANSOUR heard of the Imam's demise, he ordered his governor in Al-Medina to search for the Imam's will and know who his successor in Imamate was, to arrest him, and to immediately put him to death. The governor searched the house for it. He found it and read it. The Imam had entrusted authority to five persons: AL-MANSOUR (the caliph) himself, Mohammed IBN SULAIMANA (Al-Medina governor), ABDILLAH AL-AFTAH (son of the late Imam), MUSA (his other son), and to his (the late Imam's) wife, HAMEEDA.

When the governor read the will, he was at a loss as to what to do. He informed AL-MANSOUR of its contents and waited for his instructions. AL-MANSOUR, too, was now at a loss and was stunned at the Imam's sharp intellect and far insight. He knew that the late Imam was aware of his evil intentions; this is why he resorted to that procedure. He found it impossible to kill those mentioned in the will.

MUSA AL-KADHIM'S IMAMATE

MUSA AL-KADHIM (AS) became the Imam while the common people considered AL-MANSOUR as the Muslims leader and caliph, successor of the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H). AL-MANSOUR'S agents spread everywhere and imposed a strict surveillance on the people in order to know the name of the new Imam who would succeed AL-SADIQ (AS). They arrested everyone whom they suspected and subjected him to severe torture.

Following the demise of Imam AL-SADIQ (AS), AL-MANSOUR devised plans to extinguish the torch of Shi'ism (the following of Ahlul

BAYTS' School of Thought), hence he created many Islamic sects and used the court theologians to achieve his goals. He flooded them with wealth and ordered them to start different Schools of Thought vis-à-vis IMAM AL-SADIQ'S School. They were provided with official facilities while his (AL-MANSOUR'S) assistants encouraged people to join those Schools. The era of AL-MANSOUR'S reign was the most damaging in the Islamic history and the most bitter. He managed to create more than one hundred religious sects.

IMAM AL-KADHIM enjoyed his father's care for twenty years and was quite aware of AL-MANSOUR'S hostile stance towards the Prophet's family. Hence, his name as a new Imam was kept secret, unknown to the rulers. Very few of his close following knew him but never mentioned his name to avoid AL-MANSOUR'S spies. They received his instructions and guidelines with a great difficulty. It was quite risky to convey his instructions to his supporters who were at a loss regarding whom to contact for religious information. One of those followers was HISHAM IBN SALIM whose following story indicates the difficulty in reaching the Imam.

THE STORY OF HISHAM IBN SALIM

HISHAM says, "Following the demise of IMAM JA'FER AL-SADIQ (AS), I and Mohammed IBN AL-NU'MAN SAHIB AL-TAAQ were in Al-Medina. People crowded around ABDILLAH AL-AFTAH, son of late IMAM JA'FER. The people considered him the authority after his father. We went to him and asked him some questions about alms-giving (ZAKAT). He could not answer us, thus we knew that he was not of sound religious knowledge while the infallible Imam should be aware of all matters and could answer all questions. We left his house not knowing where to go. Not knowing where to go, we noticed an old man whom we did not know signaling to me to follow him. I feared he might be one of AL-MANSOUR'S spies looking for information to see whom the people would contact after JA'FER (AS) in order to put an end to them. I said to my comrade: 'Stay away! The man is signaling to me'.

"He kept away and I followed the old man. I kept walking with him, thinking that I was approaching death on my feet. He brought me to the door of IMAM MUSA AL-KADHIM and left me alone. A servant was at the door. He said, 'Come in, may Allah bless you'. There, I saw IMAM MUSA AL-KADHIM. I said to him, 'Your father has passed away, whom are we to follow now?' He said, 'Allah will guide you to your intention'. I said, 'May I be your sacrifice, your brother claims he is the Imam after his father'. He said, 'My brother does not want people to worship Allah'. I said, 'Who is in authority after your father?' He said, 'By the will of Allah, you will be guided to him'. I said, 'Are you the Imam?' He said, 'I do not say it'. "I said to myself, 'It is not the proper question'. Then I said to him: 'Do you have an Imam?' He said, 'No'. I immediately felt a strange kind of fear and respect for him. I said, 'Shall I ask you as I used to ask your father?' He said, 'Make a choice and do not broadcast. If you do it, then it is sure death'.

"I asked him various questions and found him an ocean of knowledge. I said to him, 'Your followers are at a loss. They do not know you. Shall I call them?' He said, 'Call the wise ones only and make them swear to keep it

secret, otherwise it is slaying'. This Imam pointed to his neck as he uttered the word: 'Slaying'.

"When I left I met my comrade who asked me, 'What have you gotten?' I said, 'Guidance!' and related to him the affair". The Imam's name spread and most of his father's followers got in touch with him to ask him about various religious matters despite the strict official watch imposed on him along with the caliph's order of preventing him from giving lessons. Very few were somehow able to get in touch with him under various excuses. They would get the necessary information, write it down, then deliver it carefully to other people.

His followers used to write his narrations under different names such as: the righteous man, the scholar, that man... In order to avoid troubles, they would write the opinions of the contemporary theologians and insert the Imam's verdict between the lines. Thus, they managed to escape the caliph's spies and avoid harassment.

IMAM AL-KADHIM'S COMPANIONS

At such crucial situations, the Imam's instructions were disseminated by his faithful followers. There were 300 of those followers who wrote books and letters related to him and handed down those books to the following generations. Among the 300 of them, six were accepted as the most truthful and authentic. They were: YUNIS IBN ABDIL RAHMAN, SAFWAN IBN YAHYA, Mohammed IBN UMARI, AHMAD IBN Mohammed, ABDILLAH IBN AL-MUGHIRA and AL-HASAN IBN MAHBOUB.

Those six were considered the nearest to him and the most accepted. They spent their life confronting the tyrants of the day. They achieved the task of conveying the authentic narration and QURANIC sciences to future generations. YUNIS IBN ABDIL RAHMAN was a pious scholar. People compared him with SALMAN the Persian. He spent his life writing books and recording narrations. He was of the near followers. Most of the time, he was chased by the rulers' agents and spies. Mohammed IBN UMARI was one of the prominent figures of the day and of the Imam's close companions. He of the day and of the Imam's close companions. He conveyed most of the Imam's narration and sayings. When harassment against him intensified and he was under heavy chasing by AL-RASHID'S mercenaries, he hid his books under the ground. He was arrested and tortured but he was firm and never confessed any name of the Imam's followers. When he was set free, he got his books out just to find them all ruined, worn-out.

At this time, IMAM AL-KADHIM was blessed with martyrdom and IBN UMARI re-wrote whatever he could remember of the Imam's narrations and sayings. His narrations are considered authentic.

This brief glance at the life of these righteous men indicates the hardship they suffered for the sake of Islam, and the great efforts they made to keep Islamic instructions safe from the deviation of the corrupted rulers and anti-Islamic sects.

SAFWAN IBN MIHRAN'S STORY

The story of another important supporter of the Imam (as), namely SAFWAN IBN MIHRAN is worth mentioning here. He is also known as

"AL-JAMMAL" who should not be confused with another previously mentioned SAFWAN AL-JAMMAL (his full name is: SAFWAN IBN YAHAY AL-JAMMAL). SAFWAN AL-JAMMAL was a rich man who owned many camels that were used to transport people during the HAJJ season from Baghdad to Mecca and back. The ABASSI caliph HAROUN AL-RASHID used to hire those camels for that purpose.

One day, SAFWAN visited IMAM AL-KADHIM (AS) who said to him, "Oh, SAFWAN! Everything is nice about you except one thing". SAFWAN was amazed; he said, "May I be your sacrifice, what is it?!"

The Imam (as) said, "You hire your camels to this man (HAROUN AL-RASHID)" SAFWAN said, "By Allah, I hire the camels neither for fun nor for hunting. I hire them for this special route (Baghdad-Mecca), and I send my men, I do not keep him company".

The Imam said, "Do you get money from them (HAROUN and his men)?" SAFWAN said, "Yes, I do". The Imam said, "Do you love to see them survive till you get your camels back?" SAFWAN said, "Yes".

The Imam said, "Whoever loves to see them survive is one of them and thus abides in hell". Immediately SAFWAN left him. He went and sold his camels to avoid hiring them to HAROUN AL-RASHID. AL-RASHID was vexed when he heard about that but did not show it due to SAFWAN'S good reputation among people. He only blamed him for that.

IMAM AL-KADHIM AND THE RULERS OF THE TIME

IMAM AL-KADHIM (AS) was contemporary of the following ABASSI rulers: AL-MANSOUR, AL-MEHDI, AL-HADI, and HAROUN AL-RASHID. He spent ten years of his Imamate during AL-MANSOUR'S caliphate. Those years were the most hard of his life and the darkest in Islamic history. AL-MANSOUR used to arrest the Imam's followers in groups, torture them, kill them, then bury them secretly in their prisons. Following AL-MANSOUR'S death, the prisons were opened and the buried bones of the prisoners were discovered. Only then did the people come to know the great injustice that took place at those fearful prisons.

At the death of AL-MANSOUR, his stupid son AL-MEHDI AL-ABASSI assumed power. He was a playboy who publicly expressed his hostility towards the Prophet's family. However, he was not as oppressive as his father was. Hence, things improved in general.

AL-MEHDI AL-ABASSI tried once to annoy IMAM AL-KADHIM. He summoned him to Baghdad and threw him in prison. Soon after a horrible nightmare, he set him free and sent him respectfully back to Al-Medina. During his short regime, AL-MEHDI often met him at his palace. One day, a dialogue related to FADAK (the property which the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) gave to his daughter Fatima and she was deprived of it after his demise).

AL-MEHDI AL-ABASSI said to IMAM AL-KADHIM that he was ready to give him back FADAK. The Imam refused to take it unless it was given back within its full borders. The ABASSI ruler asked him, "What are its borders?" the Imam said, "If I mention its borders, you will not give it back to me". The caliph insisted on knowing its borders, so the Imam said, "The first border is in Eden in the south". AL-MEHDI'S face changed color. The Imam said, "The second border is SAMARKAND to the east". AL-

MEHDI frowned. The Imam said, "The third border is to the west of Africa". AL-MEHDI indignantly said, "And what is the fourth?" the Imam said, "Armenia and the Black Sea". AL-MEHDI said, "You left nothing for us. Come, have my place (on the throne)"

The Imam said, "I told you that you would not give it back to me if I mentioned its borders". This dialogue indicates that the Imam (as) wanted to show the ABASSI ruler that all the Muslim world was usurped by the ABASSI rulers and by the Umayyads before them. It was not the matter of a small piece of land, but the whole Muslim countries. AL-MEHDI AL-ABASSI did not rule long. His son AL-HADI, whose personality was weak, succeeded him in office. His rule also came to an end soon. HAROUN AL-RASHID became the caliph after him.

THE STORY OF ALI IBN YAQTIN

HAROUN AL-RASHID was the most powerful and the strongest ABASSI ruler. Since the very beginning of his rule he applied pressure on the ALAWIS, arresting, torturing, and killing many of them. This motivated the Imam (as) to advise his followers to go underground to avoid AL-RASHID'S mercenaries. This helped them spread the Islamic teachings throughout the Muslim world. They even managed to have jobs in the state offices and even in AL-RASHID'S palace. It helped them give a hand to the oppressed and needy Muslims.

ALI IBN YAQTIN was one of the influential figures. From the very beginning, he was an enemy of the Umayyad authority and incited people to rebel against it. Through his activity, he became acquainted with AL-SAFFAH and AL-MANSOUR, the two ABASSI rulers. Hence, strong friendship linked him to the two caliphs, and he was entrusted with high jobs. He was pious, generous, and always ready to help the needy. AL-MANSOUR appointed him chief of the caliph's court.

YAQTIN had a son called Ali who like his father: one of the best followers of IMAM AL-KADHIM (AS). He used to meet him secretly. At the death of his father, the son took his office. During AL-RASHID'S regime, he became his minister. AL-RASHID knew nothing about ALI IBN YAQTIN'S devotion to IMAM AL-KADHIM. ALI used to secretly pay the Imam the fifth of his wealth (KHUMS) along with the poor-rate (ZAKAT). He often thought of leaving his office, but the Imam advised him to stay in order to help those believers who needed some help. One day, AL-RASHID offered him a very splendid garment knitted with gold threads usually worn by kings. It was called AL-DDARA'A. As soon as he got it he handed it over to the Imam with the one-fifth of his earnings and the poor-rate. The Imam took the money but returned the garment. He wrote him saying, "Keep it, and do not give it to anyone. You will have an affair related to it one day",

ALI IBN YAQTIN was sad because the Imam returned it. He sprinkled perfume on it and kept it in a safe case then sealed the case. Some time later, Ali was angry with his servant who was aware of Ali's devotion to IMAM AL-KADHIM (AS). The servant immediately went to AL-RASHID and said to him, "ALI IBN YAQTIN believes in AL-KADHIM'S Imamate and

pays him the one-fifth and the poor-rate. He even gave him the garment you presented to him".

AL-RASHID was very angry and said, "I will investigate the matter. If it is true, I will put him to death". He at once sent for him and said, "What have you done with the garment I offered you?" IBN YAQTIN said, "I have perfumed in a sealed case". AL-RASHID said, "Bring it now".

IBN YAQTIN ordered one of his servants to bring it to him, telling him where he could find it. the servant came back with the sealed case which he put it in front of AL-RASHID who opened it and found the garment in it. he was no longer angry and said, "Put it back in its place and go away well-guided. I will not believe whoever speaks behind your back". He then ordered the servant to be whipped one thousand stroke after which he died.

ALI IBN YAQTIN then realized why IMAM AL-KADHIM had returned the garment and advised him to keep it. such and other incidents led AL-RASHID to realize the important status of IMAM AL-KADHIM. He decided to get rid of him, so he sought the advice of his minister KAHLID AL-BARMAKI, the deadly enemy of IMAM AL-KADHIM (AS). AL-BARMAKI knew well that the Imam's nephew, ALI IBN ISMAEL, envied his uncle. He advised AL-RASHID to call him, offer him presents, then ask him about his uncle's activity. The nephew said, "I left my uncle in Al-Medina. He is the best condition with so much wealth and so many men. It seems that there are two caliphs: one is in Iraq and one is in HIJAZ".

The caliph understood the nephew's hint, hence he decided to get rid of Imam. He ordered him arrested and imprisoned in Basra. The governor of Basra was ISA IBN JA'FER. He treated the Imam quite well when he saw his great piety and adoration. When AL-RASHID knew of the good treatment, he ordered the Imam transferred to another prison, so the Imam was jailed in AL-FADHIL IBN AL-RABI'S prison. He stayed long in that prison. AL-RABI felt the grace of the Imam, hence he treated him with great respect. He moved him to a good house where he was given the best food and was allowed to meet some of his followers. Sometimes, he was allowed to leave the house and make some rounds in the city of Baghdad, then return. AL-RASHID was scared to death of the Imam's good reputation and feared that people might follow him. He ordered his imprisonment in AL-SINDI IBN SHAHIK'S prison and ordered IBN SHAHIK to treat Imam with cruelty.

With chains in feet and his hands, IMAM AL-KADHIM (AS) stayed long in that prison. Then AL-RASHID sent his minister YAHYA AL-BARMAKI to tell the Imam that AL-RASHID had sworn to set him free if he apologized to him. AL-RASHID intended to humiliate him and expose his weakness in front of the people to prove that he himself was the caliph of the Muslims.

The Imam knew his intention, so he said to AL-BARMAKI, "I and HAROUN will son separate. He will achieve his objective". The Imam spent 20 years of his life in AL-RASHID'S prisons.

Finally, IBN SHAHIK was ordered to give him poisoned dates. As soon as he ate them, the Imam was blessed with martyrdom. The court theologians and doctors claimed that his death was due to some kind of

natural sickness and for no other reason. However, the people had different opinions. They were quite aware of the reason behind his death. They knew who was behind it.

Nowadays, the Imam's shrine in KADHIMAIN, Baghdad, Iraq, is a landmark testifying to the crimes committed by HAROUN AL-RASHID and his likes. Such crimes cannot be hidden no matter how long they may be kept secret, nor can they extinguish the torch of Islam. The Almighty says, {They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths and Allah will not consent save to perfect His light, though the unbelievers are averse}. [AL-TAWBA: 32].

Imam Ali Al-Ridha (A.S.)

LINEAGE

ALI is the son of Imam MUSA AL-KADHIM (AS). His mother is UMM AL-BANIN. He was born on the 11th of DHIL QIDAH in the year 148 of HIJRA in Al-Medina Al-MUNAWARA. He was blessed with martyrdom on the 29 of SAFAR of the year 203 of HIJRA in TOOS (Iran) and was buried MASHHAD.

AL-KADHIM, AL-RIDHA (PEACE BE UPON BOTH) AND HAROUN AL-RASHID

It is quite easy for us today to speak about HAROUN AL-RASHID and discuss his life. It was quite difficult to do so during the life of this ABASSI ruler. To merely mention his name was enough to stir great fear and leave the people scared to death. He was notorious for his cruelty, brutality, and oppression. He ruled the vast Islamic world that stretched from India in the east to Atlantic Ocean in the west. He considered himself the Muslims' caliph but was quite aware, deep inside, that the caliphate was never his legitimate right. He knew that such right was confined to a special person who exceeded all the people of his time in knowledge, piety, and righteousness. He knew that the caliphate was Imam MUSA AL-KADHIM'S own right. Hence, he bitterly hated him and was hostile to his ALAWI family. Finally, he imprisoned him and for twenty years, moving him from one jail to another, till he was able to give him poisoned food. He got rid of him and swore to behead whoever among the ALAWIS claimed the Imamate after MUSA AL-KADHIM (AS). He intended to uproot the Imamate but Allah Almighty will not consent save to keep it, though the infidels are averse.

IMAM AL-KADHIM entrusted his son IMAM ALI with the Imamate. As soon as AL-KADHIM (AS) was blessed with martyrdom, ALI AL-RIDHA announced his Imamate to all people. He was not afraid of HAROUN or other tyrants. He made it clear publicly without hesitation. He was sure of Allah's help. His followers were concerned about his safety. One of them, Mohammed IBN SINAN, said to him, "O ABA AL-HASAN! You have declared your authority, succeeding your father, while AL-RASHID'S sword is still wet with his blood".

The IMAM (AS) said, "I have done it, motivated by the Messenger of Allah's stance when the Almighty ordered him (P.B.U.H.) to warn his nearest kin, and proclaim his call in public. The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) then said, 'Were ABU JAHL to take one hair from my head, then I would not be a Prophet'. Now I say to you: 'If HAROUN took one hair from my head, then I would not be an Imam'".

The BARMAKIS were the group that continuously incited the rulers against IMAM AL-RIDHA. They had plotted against his father IMAM AL-KADHIM through the Imam' nephew ALI IBN ISMAEL who openly envied his uncle. They started their plots against his son, IMAM AL-RIDHA (AS). YAHYA AL-BARMAKI said to AL-RASHID one day, "You

can see it now. ALI IBN MUSA has succeeded his father and claimed the Imamate. You have sworn to kill whoever claims Imamate after him".

AL-RASHID said angrily, "Has it not been enough what we have already done to his father?! Do you want me to kill them all?" Those words of AL-RASHID indicated the atrocities which he had committed against IMAM AL-KADHIM (AS). However, that did not halt his attempt to get rid of AL-RIDHA (as). He often tried but failed because Allah's will protected the Imam (as) who one day said in reference to AL-RASHID'S attempts, "By Allah, he cannot do anything to me which I hate. This is clear from words reached me from my grandfather the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.)". Allah, the Manager of all affairs, provided IMAM AL-RIDHA with protection against AL-RASHID'S oppression, just as He protected the Prophet's offspring: IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDIN survived the battle of KERBALA and assumed his role in the Imamate.

HAROUN AL-RASHID died after having entrusted caliphate to his son AL-AMIN and, after him, to his other son AL-MAMOUN.

AL-AMIN spent his life in fun and frolic. He neglected the affairs of the large Muslim world. He also betrayed his brother AL-MAMOUN by depriving him of his right to the caliphate according to AL-RASHID'S will. He entrusted it to his young son MUSA whom he named as the successor. This division between the two brothers stirred wars among the two brothers' followers and supporters. At last, AL-AMIN was killed and AL-MAMOUN became the caliph. The division in the ABASSI clan led the authority to cease watching IMAM AL-RIDHA (AS). This gave him time to carry out his mission quietly and spread the Islamic tenants. The bloody wars between both brothers motivated the Muslims to ponder and to have second thoughts. They realized that both brothers were not qualified to be the Muslims' leaders. Again the people turned to the ALAWIS to assume their role. Moreover, the ABBASIS themselves were angry with AL-MAMOUN who killed his own brother.

IMAM AL-RIDHA (AS) AND AL-MAMOUN

AL-MAMOUN chose the city of MARO (MERV) to be his capital in order to express his gratitude to the KHURASANIS who helped him achieve power. A year after his ascendance to authority, upheavals spread throughout the country and revolts led by the ALAWIS erupted everywhere in holy Mecca, Al-Medina, Yemen, Basra and KUFA. AL-MAMOUN found himself surrounded by dangers from all sides. He realized the critical situation and found that the best way for him was to make a show of his desire to hand the caliphate over to IMAM AL-RIDHA (AS), thus he would please the ALAWIS who led the revolts against his rule and curb the upheavals. He was sure of the Imam's rejection, but his minister, AL-FADHIL IBN SAHL, encouraged him to write to the Imam. AL-MAMOUN wrote to the Imam (as) and summoned him to KHURASAN where he met him in MARO.

The Imam (as) gave various reasons to be spared the visit, but AL-MAMOUN insisted again and again till the Imam had no choice except to go. The Imam knew that the tyrant's son was never devoted to the son of

Imam MUSA AL-KADHIM. He had to go because AL-MAMOUN would not leave him alone.

A JOURNEY OF RETURN

IMAM AL-RIDHA (AS) accompanied AL-MAMOUN'S envoys who surrounded him and showed a great deal of respect for him. Some of Al-Medina's dignitaries joined the caravan that made its way towards KHURASAN. At the order of the ruler (AL-MAMOUN), the caravan was to avoid cities such as QUM where the Imam's followers and devotees were great in number. However, people heard of his coming and all of them came out to welcome the grandson of the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.).

They crowded at both sides of the road and glorified Allah the Almighty. They were all anxious to have a look at his sublime person. The Imam noticed that AL-MAMOUN'S men tried to separate him from the people, so, he tried his best to address the people whenever he could. When the caravan reached NISAPOUR, its people came out to meet him. They had never dreamed of attaining such a blessing: to enjoy seeing the grandson of the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.). their dream had come true, hence, every man and woman left his/her home to welcome him.

It was a big event of love and devotion to the Prophet's household, peace be upon them all.

The city theologians and nobles were eager to have the chance to listen to him speak. But the people's excitement and devotion gave them no chance. They begged the people to be quiet; they obeyed, and the Imam put his head out of the pavilion which was on the back of his camel. They saw his bright face and were again excited. He signaled to them to keep silent. They held their breath and listened to every word he uttered. The Imam had to tell them everything but he still had to be careful. He had to be brief. He said, "My father MUSA AL-KADHIM told me that his father JA'FER AL-SADIQ, his father AL-BAQIR, his father ALI ZAIN AL-ABIDIN, his father AL-HUSAIN the martyr of KERBALA, his father ALI IBN ABI TALIB said, 'My beloved one, the joy of my eyes, the Messenger of Allah, said that the angel JIBRAEL heard Allah the Almighty say: The utterance of LA ILAHA ILLA Allah! (There is no god but the One God) is My fortress. Whoever enters My fortress is spared My wrath and chastisement'".

Thousands of narrators recorded many other prophetic narrations through infallible Imams (as). Those narrations are the source of great wisdom and piety.

Leaving NISAPOUR, the caravan approached MARO where AL-MAMOUN was to welcome the Imam in great celebration. He hosted him in a splendid palace, surrounding him with respect and honor.

The people felt happy about the Imam's arrival. They thought the hateful past would never appear again and that warring was over. They thought that AL-MAMOUN was ready to give the caliphate to its owner who had come to him. They thought that a good future was ahead of them. Alas! They were quite wrong. IMAM AL-RIDHA knew that AL-MAMOUN was not serious in his offer. He just made a show of compromise for a hidden purpose.

Not only AL-MAMOUN, but also his agents and followers were concerned about their own social status and high positions with the

government. Hence, the Imam (as) refused AL-MAMOUN'S offer of the caliphate. Immediately, AL-MAMOUN offered the Imam the office of crown prince, that is, to succeed him in the caliphate. He did not make the offer out of love for the Imam (as) but only to legitimize his authority and silence the opposition. Again the Imam refused the offer but AL-MAMOUN insisted saying, "You receive my offer in what I hate, though you are safe from my harm. I swear by Allah, either you accept the office or I put you to death".

The Imam (as) was quite aware of the situation. When he made his farewell visit to the shrine of his grandfather, the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.), he cried saying, "I am leaving your neighborhood to die in a strange country". He made his journey from Al-Medina to KHURASAN under duress; he had no choice.

Finally he accepted the office but on certain conditions. He said to AL-MAMOUN, "I accept it on the condition that I neither appoint anyone in office nor dismiss anyone. I nullify no tradition and keep away from all affairs except for consultation".

AL-MAMOUN agreed and the covenant was made in front of all ministers, the army leaders, the noblemen, and a crowd of the common people. AL-MAMOUN distributed gifts and poets recited their poetry in praise of the event. On that occasion, AL-MAMOUN issued the state currency with the name of AL-RIDHA (as) on one face. The mosques' leaders thus would start their sermons praising AL-MAMOUN and IMAM AL-RIDHA in their DU'A (supplication). In KHURASAN, the Imam held meetings attended by scholars, doctors, theologians and others who were all amazed at his profound knowledge.

AL-MAMOUN used to attend those meetings which filled him with envy, though he claimed to encourage scientific research and knowledge. The Imam (as) often noticed the disappointment of AL-MAMOUN during his lessons. Hence, he tried to make his talks brief and to end the meetings as soon as possible. He under the cover of being at his service. He often appealed to Allah saying, "O Lord! If my relief is through death, then hasten with it".

THE CONGREGATION PRAYERS AT EID AL-FITR

During the first year of the imam's appointment as the crown prince, he was ordered by AL-MAMOUN to lead the congregational prayers of the religious ritual on the first day of SHAWAL celebrating the achievement of fasting during the month of Ramadan. The occasion is EID AL-FITR which all Muslims enjoy. IMAM AL-RIDHA wrote him saying, "You are aware of the condition we made when I accepted this office. Now do spare me this duty of leading the prayers".

AL-MAMOUN insisted saying, "I want the people to feel at ease on seeing you and know your distinction". The Imam (as) agreed on condition that he would perform it similarly to the performance of the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) and Ali (as). AL-MAMOUN agreed saying, "Do it as you please". AL-MAMOUN ordered his officials, army leaders, and other people to go early and wait at the Imam's door to accompany him to the mosque for the prayers.

On that early morning, people gathered along the roads and on their homes' rooftops to watch the holy Imam on his way to the prayers service. The troops, the army leaders, and the noblemen were all in their best attire, on back of their horses, waiting for the Imam to come out. The imam (as) had a bath, put on his clothes with a white headgear made of cotton. He wrapped his head with it and left one end on his chest and the other between his shoulders. He used some perfume then said to his companions, "Do as I do".

He came out bare-footed, with his garment's sleeves up and his head towards the heavens as he shouted: ALLAHU AKBAR! Allah is the Greatest". People echoed his words. When the officials saw him walk, they alighted from their horses and walked behind him bare-footed in splendid grace. The Imam glorified Allah and people glorified Him after him. Glorifications could be heard everywhere and all people left their homes and crowded along the road sides. It was an event like no other in the town's history.

In fact, on seeing him, they remembered the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.), his grandfather. They were taken by the grace that overwhelmed him. He walked humbly performing a religious ritual in the presence of Allah the Almighty. However, AL-MAMOUN wanted him to attend prayers in a royal procession amid decoration and grandeur and thus be exploited by the rulers after seeing their power and dreadful status.

Yet, the Imam was not to make such a show of the religious celebration, a Divine ritual of spiritual sacredness. Submission to Allah only should be demonstrated and all should glorify Allah and worship Him and only Him. There was a big difference between AL-MAMOUN'S intention behind the Imam's prayers and the Imam's performance thereof. AL-MAMOUN had no other way but to halt the performance of such prayers. He immediately sent to IMAM AL-RIDHA a message saying, "We have asked you more than necessary and caused you trouble, O son of the Messenger of Allah! So, rest and someone else will lead the prayers".

The Imam was relieved of the duty. He went back home. On that occasion, AL-MAMOUN saw how wholeheartedly the people responded to the Imam, how they were greatly attracted to him. He felt a bitter envy and remembered how his father, AL-RASHID, had treated AL-RIDHA'S father, IMAM AL-KADHIM. He saw how AL-RASHID respected him while AL-MAMOUN at that time did not know the Imam. He asked his father later about him. He said to him, "Who is that man whom you have greatly honored? You stood up for him and seated him next to you".

AL-RASHID said, "He is the Imam of all Muslims, the Divine sign for people, His caliph on earth". AL-MAMOUN said, "Are not you with such qualifications?" AL-RASHID said, "I am the people's caliph by force and oppression. MUSA IBN JA'FER (IMAM AL-KADHIM[AS]) is the actual leader through his kinship to the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.). He has the full right of being in this office more than I am". AL-MAMOUN said, "If it is his own right, then step aside and let him have it". AL-RASHID said, "Kingship is barren. By Allah, if you become my rival in its regard, I will take your life away".

AL-MAMOUN remembered that conversation which still rang in his ears: "By Allah, if you become my rival...., I will take your life away". He wondered: How could he allow that man to have the people's support and great devotion? They yearned to see him, and he was greatly honored. Why should he give it up to him? Had not he killed his own brother for the sake of this kingship? He remembered all that and made up his mind to get rid of that concern and put himself at ease. He would get rid of the Imam by all means. It did take him long to achieve his goal. IMAM AL-RIDHA spent less than two years as a crown prince before he was blessed with martyrdom through poisoned grapes.

AL-MAMOUN was accused of the murder, but he denied it and made a show of his sadness. The Imam was blessed with martyrdom in the year 203 of HIJRA in TOOS and was buried in MASHHAD, KHURASAN. He was heard saying, "Whoever visits me in my residence will be in my company in Paradise". Peace and blessing of Allah be upon him.

Imam Mohammad Al-Jawad(A.S.)

LINEAGE

MOHAMMED is son of IMAM ALI AL-RIDHA. He was born in Al-Medina on the 10th of RAJAB of the year 195 of HIJRA. His mother was called KHAIZARAN. He was blessed with martyrdom on the 6th of THIL-HIJA of the HIJRI year 220 in KADHIMAIN (Baghdad) and was buried there.

THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

On a warm day, when the sun's rays spread gently over the alleys of the city of Baghdad and wrapped the wide plains surrounding it, the ABBASI caliph AL-MA'MOUN, accompanied by his entourage, went out hunting. They were on their horsed treading along with their dogs and eagles heading towards the plains outside.

Baghdad was then a big city surrounded by vineyards, fruit orchards and date palms. Gardens full of flowers were all round with green fields. The caliph's procession passed through the capital's streets at a great speed, causing terror among the people. In one of the streets, some children were playing, running here and there. When they saw the ruler's procession, they ran away in all directions. Former unjust rulers such as AL-RASHID, AL-MA'MOUN, HISHAM, and AL-HAJJAJ had left a horrible image of terror and cruelty in the hearts of all people.

All the children ran away except one who stood up paying no attention to the procession of the ruler AL-MA'MOUN who was surprised. He ordered someone to bring him the child. He asked him, "Why have not you run away as the others have?" The child said, "Why should I run away?! I have done nothing wrong. The street is wide enough for you to pass".

AL-MA'MOUN was surprised at the child's courage, so he asked him who he was. The child said, "I am Mohammed son of Ali son of MUSA son of JA'FER son of Mohammed son of Ali son of AL-HUSAIN son of ALI BIN ABI TALIB, peace be on them".

AL-MA'MOUN said, "How much is your knowledge?"

AL-MA'MOUN asked a child about his knowledge which could not be acquired except through learning for many years. Why did he ask him? Surely because AL-MA'MOUN knew that child was the son of IMAM AL-RIDHA. He was a branch of the blessed tree of AHLUL BAYT (AS) who inherited all science and Divine knowledge. It was quite natural to ask him.

The child said, "Ask me about heavens' news and I will answer you".

AL-MA'MOUN left him and proceeded towards the far plains, drowned in deep thoughts of that boy. He could not hunt but very little. He sent his eagle to catch a prey. The bird flew high and disappeared for an hour. It came back with a snake in its paws. It threw the snake in front of AL-MA'MOUN who ordered his servants to keep it in a box. He said to his companions, "The boy's end is near at my hand today". On his way back, AL-MA'MOUN met the same children; AL-RIDHA'S son was among them. AL-MA'MOUN approached him and said, in continuation of his previous question, "What news of heaven do you know?" The child said, "My father told me, through his forefathers, through the Prophet (P.B.U.H.), through

the angel JIBRAEL, that Allah says, 'Between the heaven and the earth there is dust (smoke gases) that causes waves. There are snakes of green bellies with spotted backs. Kings hunt the snakes with their eagles to test the scholars''.

AL-MA'MOUN said, "You, your father, your grandfather and your Lord are truthful (i.e. they tell only the truth)". That was the first encounter between AL-MA'MOUN and Imam Mohammed AL-JAWAD (AS). Other encounters followed, and AL-MA'MOUN acquired more and more information about the Imam's qualifications. He made up his mind to give him his daughter in marriage.

THE ABBASI CLAN OBJECTS

Through marrying his daughter to IMAM AL-JAWAD, AL-MA'MOUN aimed at pleasing the noble ALAWIS and thus erasing the memory of the sudden death of IMAM AL-RIDHA and putting it out of their minds. He wanted to establish friendly relations with them. On the other hand, he wanted to have the young Imam near him, under his spies' watch, and to be informed of all his actions and connections. It was AL-MA'MOUN'S same method which he had applied when dealing with IMAM AL-RIDHA (AS).

When the ABBASIS heard of the affair, they were greatly annoyed, and they exaggerated their feelings. They feared AL-JAWAD just as they had feared his father lest he should become crown prince and thus deprive them of the opportunity to inherit the caliphate.

They came to AL-MA'MOUN and said, "By Allah, we want you to discard the idea of such a marriage. We fear lest we should be deprived of our kingship and might. You know our past and present feelings regarding the progeny of Ali. You remember how the early (three) caliphs treated them. We were scared when you favored AL-RIDHA with the office of crown prince until Allah spared us the important part of the affair. By Allah, do not bring back what had caused us to be greatly concerned. Do not marry your daughter to AL-RIDHA'S son and find someone else of our household to marry her to".

AL-MA'MOUN said, "Whatever happened between Ali's progeny and you was due to your own stance. Had you been fair to them, they would have taken your side. The early caliphs' stance towards them was unfair. They betrayed the blood relation. I will not do that. I have chosen Mohammed son of AL-RIDHA to marry my daughter because he is the best of all in knowledge, though he is still young. I will demonstrate his knowledge to you, and everyone of you will see that I am right".

They said, "He is too young; he is not versed in religious sciences. He does not know what is lawful and what is unlawful. How can you marry your daughter to him? Give him time to acquire religious sciences and legislation, then do as you please". AL-MA'MOUN said, "Woe unto you! I am better aware of his knowledge than you are. He is the best of all in religious sciences. If you want, test him. If he fails, I will accept your suggestion".

The said, "We agree, so let us test him. Qualified scholars will ask him about religious legislation. If he gives the right answers, we will agree to your suggestion. If he does not, the matter is over". AL-MA'MOUN agreed,

and a day was fixed for that test. They chose the chief theologian YAHYA IBN AKTHAM to raise the religious inquiries to him to answer. The inquiries should be quite difficult. They promised the theologian a good present if he defeated the young IMAM AL-JAWAD.

MEETING FOR A TEST

On the special day appointed by AL-MA'MOUN, the Imam (as), the ABBASI chiefs, the state officials, and other people met. Each sat according to his status. AL-MA'MOUN sat next to IMAM AL-JAWAD.

It is worth mentioning that such aristocratic meetings held by the ABBASIS now and then were no more than for fun and entertainment. They were not held in conformity with Islamic ethics that demand neither class discrimination nor social differences. The Islamic meetings held by AHLUL BAYT (AS) were to discuss Islamic sciences and religious verdicts. They were not held for debates and contentment through words as well as poetry in praise of the ruler of the time.

IMAM AL-JAWAD (AS) was forced to attend such meetings. He was not considered a guest or a participant, but he had no way to avoid having to attend. Anyway, IMAM AL-JAWAD (as) sat near AL-MA'MOUN on a decorated sofa, just as Prophet YOUSUF used to sit next to the Pharaoh of Egypt as we are told in the QUR'ANIC which teach us many lessons and expose factors behind historic events throughout the ages. While Prophet YOUSUF assisted the Pharaoh in the state affairs, we see later another Prophet: MUSA (AS) confronting and defeating another Pharaoh. Yet people are heedless of such historical events and cannot perceive their implication. The holy QUR'AN says, {Certainly in YOUSUF and his brothers there are signs for the inquirers}. [YOUSUF: 7].

The attendants sat silently, anxious to see the IMAM, the newcomer to Baghdad. They had never seen him before and were not aware of his religious knowledge as he was still under age. They wondered how he could hold firm in front of the chief theologian. Could the Prophet's grandson answer the scholar's questions? The chief theologian YAHYA IBN AKTHAM broke the silence by asking AL-MA'MOUN, "Will the caliph allow me to ask AL-RIDHA'S son a question?" AL-MA'MOUN said, "you had better ask him permission". IBN AKTHAM turned to IMAM AL-JAWAD and said, "May I be your sacrifice, do you allow me to ask you a question?"

The young Imam said, "Ask if you wish".

IBN AKTHAM said, "What is the atonement for the sin of one who hunts while still in the pilgrimage attire (IHRAM)?"

The young Imam said, "This is not a clear question. It lacks details: Was the hunting outside the sanctified area or inside it? Was the hunter aware of his sin or was he ignorant? Did he kill purposely or by mistake? Was he a bondsman or a free one? Is it his first sin or not? Was the hunted a bird or something else? Was it a small animal or a big one? Is he sorry or hot? Does he insist on it? Did he kill it secretly at night or openly in daylight? Was he performing the major pilgrimage or the minor one (UMRA)? Without such details, you cannot have a clear answer". IBN AKTHAM was at a loss for words. For the first time, he seemed unable to give an answer. He hesitated

and uttered unclear words. The attendants became aware of his poor knowledge.

Till that day, he knew no more than one ruling relevant to hunting during the sacred months, along with one verdict. Now he was taken by so much detail for such a brief question.

Not only IBN AL-AKTHAM, but also all the attendants were amazed at the Imam's knowledge. They realized that he was endowed with profound knowledge despite his young age. He gave them a lesson in religious verdicts. They understood that verdicts differ according to those details. AL-MA'MOUN wanted IMAM AL-JAWAD to ask IBN AKTHAM a question and he did, but IBN AKTHAM could not know the answer. He said, "By Allah, I do not know the answer. If you want, let us benefit from your knowledge in giving the answer". The Imam answered that question.

Following that meeting, AL-MA'MOUN said to his household, "Woe unto you! Do you not know that the members of that house (the Prophet's household) alone, out of all creatures, are entrusted with such a Divine favor? Being young does not mean they are of less knowledge. Do you not know that the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) started his message by calling to Islam the leader of the believers Ali son of ABI TALIB who then was only ten years old? He accepted him at such an early age while he accepted no other one of his age. Allah has entrusted them with profound sciences; they are all offspring, one from the other. What the first of them enjoyed of Divine favor the last of them will also enjoy". They said, "You are right, O Caliph of the Muslims!"

A POLITICAL MARRIAGE

AL-MA'MOUN rejoiced at his successful plan to earn the approval of his family of marrying his daughter off to IMAM AL-JAWAD. He turned to IMAM AL-JAWAD and said, "O relic of the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.)! I know your high status and qualifications, hence I have chosen you to marry my daughter UMM AL-FADHIL. Despite someone's disapproval, I do want you to agree". IMAM AL-JAWAD was aware of AL-MA'MOUN'S intention and aim behind that marriage. It was only a political marriage to achieve AL-MA'MOUN'S goals: to please the ALAWIS and to have him near him under close watch. He felt annoyed, but it was difficult for him to reject that marriage in Baghdad and in the presence of the high officials of the government. Such a rejection would be considered a serious insult to the caliph, one of unknown consequences.

The Imam accepted the marriage on the condition that he would pay a dowry of no more than 500 DIRHAMS, the same as was that of his grandmother Fatima AL-ZAHRA.

On that occasion, AL-MA'MOUN ordered a splendid celebration with all grandeur and luxury. The servants and the entourage were ordered to put on their best to welcome the guests and to distribute gifts. Food tables were set with the most delicious types of food for all people to eat. IMAM AL-JAWAD concealed his annoyance at that marriage relationship which was a burden imposed on him. He felt AL-MA'MOUN'S domination over him and wished he could have stayed in Al-Medina. He was aware of the man who killed his father in cold blood and now had become his father-in-law. He

would surely proceed with his devilish plots to uproot the Imamate which posed a major risk to his authority and future.

IMAM AL-JAWAD knew all of that, but he had no other choice except to be patient and to turn to Allah in his affairs.

When the couple grew up and got married, they spent some years in Baghdad. AL-MA'MOUN tried to make IMAM AL-JAWAD attend the ABBASI meetings, but he failed. The Imam tried to avoid those meetings, and if by chance he attended one, he would use it as an opportunity to advise the attendants and to refute the deviated ideas and the wrong trends of the era which despite troubles was generally peaceful. The Imam dedicated his time to reforming the Muslim community.

One year before AL-MA'MOUN'S death, IMAM AL-JAWAD and his wife left Baghdad for holy Mecca to perform the HAJJ ritual. From Mecca they went to Al-Medina where they stayed till AL-MA'MOUN'S death. AL-MAUTASIM, who assumed power after AL-MA'MOUN, was more oppressive than his brother. He spent most of his time drinking, hunting and having fun. He, however, feared IMAM AL-JAWAD'S influence on people and the great respect and good reputation the Imam enjoyed. He, therefore, summoned him to Baghdad to place him under strict surveillance, plotting against him. The Imam (as) left in Al-Medina his son ALI AL-HADI whom he entrusted with the Imamate after his demise.

He went to Iraq while the caliph AL-MU'TASIM, with the help of the Imam's nephew JA'FER son of AL-MA'MOUN and YA'QUB IBN DAQOOD, the chief theologian at the palace, and other agents, plotted to get rid of him.

IBN DAWOOD hated the Imam because he considered him a challenge to his authority among the people and a threat to AL-MU'TASIM'S leadership. Often in debates, the Imam defeated IBN DAWOOD through logic and the truth. Once a thief was brought to AL-MU'TASIM'S court and the theologians were asked to give their verdicts of punishment. IBN DAWOOD said that the hand should be cut off to the wrist. Most of the theologians approved of the verdict. Some said it should be cut off as far as the elbow. AL-MU'TASIM asked IMAM AL-JAWAD about his opinion. The Imam said that only the fingers should be cut off and the palm should be kept to help one perform the prayers and other deeds.

AL-MU'TASIM accepted that verdict and ignored the verdicts of the other theologians. This caused IBN DAWOOD'S great unrest, since it was the first time that his verdict was ignored.

IBN DAWOOD looked for an opportunity to instigate AL-MU'TASIM against the Imam. He reminded him of the ALAWIS' danger to his leadership. He also reminded him of the preceding ABBASI rulers' treatment of the Prophet's household and that he should follow in their footsteps. AL-MU'TASIM made up his mind to put an end to him, so he gave him poisoned food and cowardly used the Imam's wife UMM AL-FADHIL who was angry with her husband because he preferred his other wife. The Imam was blessed with martyrdom on the 6th of THIL-HIJJA, in the year 220 of HIJRA. He was in the prime of his age. He was buried in

KADHIMAIN near his grandfather IMAM AL-KADHIM, peace be on both of them.

THE GOOD LEGACY

His life was an image of his forefathers' life: pure and righteous. He performed his mission of disseminating Islamic instructions despite all difficulties and hardships. He had many followers and dozens of narrators who recorded his narrations. Most of his sayings are adages and preaching. One day, one of his followers said to him, "O Master! I wish you were the awaited savior of the Prophet's progeny so you could achieve justice in the world as it is full of oppression".

He (as) said, "Everyone of us performs his mission and carries out Allah's orders in guiding mankind towards the right path. "The awaited savior who will purify the world and spread justice is of hidden birth and will go into occultation. "This world will be at his service, and every hardship will be easy for him. His followers are the same in number as those of the combatants of the battle of BADR: 313 men from all over the world. Allah Almighty says,

{And We desired to bestow a favor upon those who were weak in the land and to make them the Imams, and to make them the heirs}. [AL-QASAS: 5]. "When this number of supporters follow him, Allah will manifest him to the people. Ten thousand of the best believers will help him kill the enemies of Allah".

Some of his sayings and adages are:

- 1- Perfect dignity of one is to give up that which is of no use.
- 2- One's good moral is never to meet someone with what someone hates.

Imam Ali Al-Hadi (A.S.)

LINEAGE

ALI is the son of IMAM Mohammed AL-JAWAD; his mother is called SAMANA. He was born on the 15th THIL HIJJA in the year 214 A.H. in SARIYA (a suburb of Al-Medina), and he was blessed with martyrdom on the 3rd of RAJAB of the HIJRI year 254 in SAMARRA where he was buried.

SARIYA: THE BLESSED FARM

The holy QUR'AN states, {And say: Work, so Allah will see your work and (so will) His Apostle and the believers...}. [AL-TAWBA: 105].

The above cited QUR'ANIC verse was a torch for the guiding Imams (as) as they strove to guide the community on the right path. They acted according to the Divine order and taught the people to do likewise in order to enjoy the pleasure of Allah and of His Messenger. They confirmed the virtue of cultivating and farming the land and the value of work linked with the earth's produce. They themselves (as) worked the land and planted different trees; thus, they were a good example for other people to benefit from the fertile land. IMAM AL-KADHIM'S farm was an evidence to this fact.

He started a farm in SARIYA, near Al-Medina AL-MUHAWARA. The successive Imams after him carried on the task. His grandson IMAM AL-JAWAD loved it very much and spent most of his time as a worker, a farmer, and an instructor. He built a house for his second wife SAMANA (daughter of AMMAR IBN YASIR) where she settled. Through his efforts, the area became a village where the Imam's followers and supporters could meet him and listen to his wise guidance. It was on that farm that his son ALI AL-HADI (as) was born. He enjoyed a peaceful childhood under his parents' care and among the working farmers. He enjoyed the beauty of nature and pondered on the greatness of the Creator. However, those quiet days did not last long, for the ABBASI ruler AL-MU'TASIM summoned his father to Baghdad. Leaving his wife and his son behind, IMAM AL-JAWAD headed towards Iraq where he was blessed with martyrdom and was buried in KADHIMAIN (Baghdad) near his grandfather IMAM AL-KADHIM (peace be upon all of them); thus did his link with the village and his family come to an end.

Prior to his journey, he entrusted the Imamate to his son ALI AL-HADI who was then six years old.

THE IMAMATE

The ABBASI caliph AL-MU'TASIM ordered one of his trusted agents to tutor IMAM AL-HADI in order to brainwash him with regard to AHLUL BAYT'S trend and to lead him towards the ABBASI line. The tutor tried to teach him obedience to the ABBASI rulers and to recognize their legitimacy to the caliphate, but he was confronted by the young Imam's bright talent and profound knowledge which he had inherited from the Prophet's progeny. Despite all his efforts to teach the Imam according to the ABBASI instruction, the tutor was stunned when one day he asked the Imam to repeat

what he had taught him. The Imam said, "Do ask me about the QUR'ANIC verses so that I may recite them to you by heart". Perhaps that tutor forgotten the Prophetic narration that says:

"I am leaving among you two precious (weighty) objects. If you hold firm to both of them, you will not go astray. They are: The Book of Allah (the holy QUR'AN) and my offspring. The two will never separate (from each other) till they meet me at the pool (of AL-KAWTHAR)". The tutor forgot or seemed to have forgotten that the Prophet's offspring enjoyed the prophetic sciences and perceived the religious instructions thoroughly as well as the legislation relevant to every day's life.

Despite the strict watch and harassment, the Imam (as) performed the duties of his Imamate quietly. When he was twenty years old, he was quite famous among the Muslim masses. Everyone tried to contact him for religious information or to solve life's problems.

A BIG OVEN

The ABBASI caliph AL-MUTASIM died, and HAROUN son of Mohammed, known as AL-WATHIQ, succeeded him in office. AL-WATHIQ was a playboy, careless of his official duties, hence his minister AL-ZIAT had a free hand to act according to his own whims. He was a cruel man who opened the prisons' doors widely for the caliph's opponents. He tortured and killed many detainees. In one prison he built a big oven and supplied it with torture equipment in order to put an end to the opponents. Even the caliph's brother AL-MUTAWAKKIL was one of AL-ZIAT'S victims. He suffered all types of torture at his hands due to the enmity between the two brothers and their pursuit for authority.

After six years of rule, AL-WATHIQ died and his brother AL-MUTAWAKKIL assumed the caliphate. The latter started his regime by seeking revenge against his brother's minister AL-ZIAT. He threw him in the very oven which he himself had built. Hence, whoever sows evil will harvest evil.

HATRED TOWARDS THE DEAD AND THE LIVING

As soon as AL-MUTAWAKKIL took hold of the affairs, he demonstrated hostility towards the Prophet's progeny (as). He was greatly hostile towards them and exceeded the preceding rulers in his hatred. He ordered the demolition of Imam HUSAIN'S shrine in KERBALA and flooded the area with water in order to remove all traces of the holy shrine. He killed many of its visitors, the devotees of the martyred Imam. He knew that such visits incited people to revolt against unjust and oppressive rulers.

Despite all hardship and oppression, the sacred shrine was traced out and is still visited by thousands of devotees from all over the world, throughout the year. The holy QUR'AN says, {They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, and Allah will not consent save to perfect His light, though the infidels are averse thereto}. [AL-TAWBA: 32]. Many poets composed poetry denouncing AL-MUTAWAKKIL'S crimes against the Prophet's progeny (as). One of those poets says: By Allah, it was an unjust crime of the UMAYYYADS: To murder the Prophet's grandson,

The son of Fatima. Yet his father's kin (the ABBASIS) had it done:

A similar crime: demolishing his shrine.

It was a pity; not to have a hand in that killing.

Thus, they chased his bones in their dwelling.

The ABBASI injustice was not different from that of the Umayyads regarding the Prophet's offspring who suffered torture and death and were chased by both dynasties. The Abbasids surpassed the Umayyads in their hostility towards Ahlul Bayt, hence the Imam's shrines were demolished while the living Imams suffered hardship at their hands despite the blood relation and the Abbasid claim of devotion to them.

Al-Mutawakkil was informed of the Imam's popularity among the masses. This caused him to be greatly concerned. It enraged him to see people gather around Imam Al-Hadi with such devotion and respect. Yet he could not find an excuse to put an end to him or even to accuse him of some guilt. He employed the old means of the previous rulers. He summoned the Imam to Baghdad on the pretext of liking to see him close to him. He wrote a letter full of flattery and hypocrisy. It said, "... the caliph longs to see you. If you visit him and settle with your family near him, it will be done for your ease and comfort... you are free to leave whenever you wish. Seek Allah's guidance and come to see the caliph who offers you the highest office and considers you in better status than all of his sons and near ones.... Peace and blessings of Allah be upon you".

Al-Mutawakkil ordered one of his men, Yahya Ibn Harthama, to carry his letter to the Imam. He also ordered him to search the Imam's house as he was informed of the Imam gathering weapons and money in order to revolt against him.

When Ibn Harthama entered Al-Medina, the people sensed his evil intention. They were concerned about the Imam's safety because they were aware of Al-Mutawakkil's hostility towards the Prophet's offspring. However, Ibn Harthama put them at ease by saying that he was not ordered to cause him any harm, only to search his house. He searched the house and found nothing except a copy of the holy Qur'an and some books of religious sciences. The Imam was aware of Al-Mutawakkil's evil intentions and was not deceived by his hypocritical letter. He knew how much Al-Mutawakkil hated Ali (as) and his offspring and whoever was related to him. He knew that he would not be spared to lead a peaceful life in his grandfather's town and had no other choice but to make his way towards Baghdad in the company of Al-Mutawakkil's men.

THE WAY TO SAMARRA

Ibn Harthama relates the following: "While we were on our way towards Baghdad, the sky was clear blue and the sun was shining. Imam Al-Hadi put on a garment to protect himself from the rain. Within a few minutes, clouds gathered; it became dark, and heavy rain came down". The Imam (as) said to Ibn Harthama, "I know that you were surprised on seeing me putting on the rain garment. You thought that I might know what you do not. It is not like that. I grew up in the open country and I know the winds that are followed by rain. When I got up in the morning, I smelled the wind and expected rain, as you have seen".

The Prophet's household are Allah's chosen people from among all creatures. They are His true worshippers who are blessed by His favors as signs to all mankind. They are obedient to His orders and devotees of His religion. Throughout their lives, they openly struggled against injustice and tyranny. Their sacrifice for Allah's sake is a clear evidence of their sublime status. Peace and blessing of Allah be upon them all.

IBN HARTHAMA continues to say the following: "When we reached Baghdad ('DAR AL-SALAM', the abode of peace), the people came out to welcome the Imam. At the head was the governor of Baghdad, ISHAQ IBN IBRAHIM AL-TAHIRI. He said to me, 'O YAHYA! This man is the Prophet's grandson. You know that AL-MUTAWAKKIL hates him! If you incite AL-MUTAWAKKIL to kill him, then the Messenger of Allah will call you to account for it'. I said, 'By Allah, I saw nothing wrong in his deeds'. When we reached SAMARRA, I met WASIF AL-TURKI, a high government official, who said to me, 'If one hair of this man is fallen, only I will be called upon to account for it'. I was surprised at how similar their opinions were. When I met AL-MUTAWAKKIL, he asked me about him. I told him of his good conduct, piety and God-fearing attitude. I told him that I found no weapons in his house, only a copy of the holy QUR'AN and books of knowledge. I also told him how the people of Al-Medina were concerned about his safety and how I swore to them that no evil was intended for him".

AL-MUTAWAKKIL honored the Imam and hosted him in a special house. However, it is related that, on reaching SAMARRA, the Imam (as) was kept for one night at a humble inn for the homeless. Then AL-MUTAWAKKIL met him the second day and gave him a house to live in.

HIS STAY IN SAMARRA

During the Imam's stay in SAMARRA, AL-MUTAWAKKIL made a show of respect to him. He bestowed on him generously, but also put him under strict surveillance. Most of his followers contacted him through letters. AL-MUTAWAKKIL often summoned him to meet him just as he dispatched his mercenaries to search his house in order to look for weapons and money. The Imam sometimes would help them search his house. One of AL-MUTAWAKKIL'S agents named AL-BATTHANI greatly hated the Imam and incited AL-MUTAWAKKIL against him.

Instigated by AL-BATTHANI, AL-MUTAWAKKIL called his special guard SA'ID and his men climbed up a ladder to the roof, but it was dark and they could not find the way down, so the Imam shouted at them saying, "O SA'ID! Wait till someone brings you a candle!" They gave him a candle, so they all came down. They saw the Imam in his garment and headgear standing for the prayers. He said to them, "You have the rooms; go and search". They searched the house and, as usual, found neither weapons nor money save some books. They apologized to him for being ordered to search the house, but he only said to them, "The unjust will surely be punished".

One night, the imam was called upon to attend the caliph's court meeting. The caliph was sitting with a cup of wine in his hand. He asked the Imam to sit near him, then he offered him the cup to drink. The Imam refused. The

caliph did not insist but asked the imam to recite some poetry for him. He again refused, but the caliph this time insisted, so the Imam recited few lines of poetry which portrayed a clear image of the tyrants' life, the life of those who enjoy every luxury and who have men ready to serve them, then suddenly they leave everything and settle in graves where they become foodstuff for each earth worms.

The poetic versed say:
The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things.
There is no armor against the fate:
Death lays its icy hands on kings.
Scepter and crown
Must tumble down,
And in the earth be equally made
To the laborer's scythe and spade.
No fortress on the mountain peak
Could save the kings from the jaws of death
Their pomp and power proved too weak,
The cold earth asks them in contempt:
"Wither is thy robe, crown, and throne?!"
"Did cruel Death thy beauty exempt?!"
"Did it respect thy royal blood and bone?!" The grave replies
With sorrowful sighs:

"Those beautiful forms "Are but food for the worms!" This poem clearly highlights the fact that no matter how long one lives, or however rich he may be, he is surely one day to die and leave everything behind. He takes nothing with him except his deeds, whether good or bad. He will be called upon to account for them. It was clear that the Imam wanted to advise the caliph and to halt his sins and indifference regarding his religious duties and responsibilities. AL-MUTAWAKKIL did not expect to hear that kind of poetry; he was shocked, and he cried bitterly. He ordered the servants to clear the table from wine then apologized to the Imam and bade him farewell.

AL-MUTAWAKKIL intended to humiliate the Imam in front of his attendants. He offered him wine although he knew that wine is forbidden in Islam and is a sin as heinous as idol worship. When the Imam refused, he wanted him to recite poetry in praise of the caliph as poets usually do. But the Imam was not such a flatterer. He slapped the caliph with the actual image of the tyrants' life and their dreadful end. This caused AL-MUTAWAKKIL to cry then give up drinking - though for a while - and then apologized to the sublime Imam (as).

THE IMAM'S ACHIEVEMENTS

IMAM AL-HADI (AS) dedicated all his time to serve the religion of Islam through spreading its sublime principles and commandments. He would attend meetings in order to refute the deviated trends of the time and to explain every religious issue quietly and clearly through reason and logic. He received letters from all over the Muslim world and accepted the religious revenues to be spent according to religious instructions for the

welfare of the Muslim community. He bravely confronted the extremists and the deviated. He exposed their deviation and declared them on the wrong path. All the Infallible Imams confronted such deviated trends.

Once he said to someone who exaggerated in praising him, "Too much praise (flattery) stirs doubt and suspicion. If you favor your brother in religion, do not flatter him. Do him good in action and in intention". Following are some of his sayings:

1- He who obeys the Creator won't be bothered by the creatures' displeasure.

2- He who is aware of the Creator's clear sign is not bothered by life's hardship.

3- Whoever is true in love and advise to you, you should obey him.

4- Whoever lacks self-respect should be avoided in order to escape his evil.

5- One who is pleased with himself will have many who will be displeased with him.

6- To the patient person, calamity is of one impact. To the impatient one, it is of a double impact.

7- Ignorance and misery are two of the worst manners.

8- Covetousness is bad quality.

9- Mocking is the fools' joke and the ignorant's career.

JA'FER THE LIAR

IMAM AL-HADI had four sons and one daughter. The eldest of his sons was IMAM HASAN AL-ASKARI (AS). All his sons, except JA'FER, were of great piety and righteousness. JA'FER the liar was notorious for his bad conduct. He used to lie and spread false news, hence he was called "JA'FER the liar". He was not different from Prophet Noah's son who was drowned for his sins. As a result of his lies, people turned away from him, so he suffered negligence of any other factor. Lineage of good tree is useless if the branch suffers a defect.

HIS MARTYRDOM

As previously mentioned, IMAM AL-HADI lived with his parents in Al-Medina till he was six years old when his father IMAM AL-JAWAD passed away. He stayed in Al-Medina till he was 20 years old. That was during AL-MU'TASIM'S reign. AL-MUTAWAKKIL summoned him to SAMARRA where he stayed till AL-MUTAWAKKIL was killed at the hands of his own son.

AL-MUNTASIR, AL-MUSTA'IN, and AL-MU'TAZZ ruled successively for seven years which was a peaceful period for the Imam who did not suffer harassment like the one he had to endure during AL-MUTAWAKKIL'S reign. Yet he was deprived of his right to return to Al-Medina, his grandfather's town, which he greatly longed to see and preferred over any other place. That meant that he was in exile and under house arrest. The peace which he enjoyed for a while was not due to the rulers' good nature but to their weak authority. The caliphs became weak and mere tools in the hands of their Turkish officers and others. The latter were the actual rulers, giving orders of all kinds. They could appoint someone in office and

rob the other of his right. They would do that according to their whims and desires. They would even kill a caliph and appoint another one. They once toppled AL-MUTA'IN and put AL-MU'TAZZ in his place.

IMAM AL-HADI was blessed with martyrdom during the caliphate of AL-MU'TAZZ. It is said that AL-MU'TAZZ poisoned his food and, as usual, claimed that the Imam had died a natural death. On hearing of his death, a great number of the HASHIMIS and the ABBASIS gathered at his house. AL-MU'TAZZ'S men attended his funeral. His son, IMAM HASAN AL-ASKARI, performed the funeral prayers. He was buried in his own home in SAMARRA (Iraq) in the year 254 of HIJRA. We love AHLUL BAYT and respect them and consider them unique examples to be followed. This is due to their great piety, righteousness and sound faith. Allah Almighty has purified them; He says so in the following verse of the holy QUR'AN: {Allah only desires to keep away uncleanness from you, O people of the House, and to purify you with a (thorough) purification}. [AL-AHZAB: 33].

Imam Hasan Al-Askari (A.S.)

LINEAGE

IMAM HASAN AL-ASKARI, son of IMAM ALI AL-HADI, was born in Al-Medina AL-MUNAWARA on the 8th of RABI' AL-THANI, in the year 232 of HIJRA. His mother's name was HUDIATHA. He was blessed with martyrdom on the 8th of RABI' AL-AWAL in the year 260 of HIJRA in SAMRRA (Iraq) and was buried there.

THE TWO PRECIOS OBJECTS

In his farewell pilgrimage, in the 10th year of HIJRA, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) addressed the pilgrims, whose number exceeded one hundred thousand, saying "O people! I have been called upon (to leave this world), and I am going to respond. I am leaving among you two precious objects: The Book of Allah (the holy QUR'AN) and my Household, my offspring. The Almighty has told me that they will never separate (from each other) till they meet me at the pool (of AL-KAWTHAR). See how you treat them after my demise".

In those words did the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) inform the pilgrims of his near departure from this world to meet his Lord. He reminded them, prior to his demise, that he was leaving behind him, among the Muslims, two heavy (in importance) objects: the holy QUR'AN whose versed link us with Allah the Almighty. If we perceive the verses and adhere to the QUR'ANIC instructions, we may be saved. It is like a safety cord extending between heaven and earth. The other important object he (P.B.U.H.) referred to was his own household who enjoy the same special Divine status as that of the Book of Allah. The devotees of the household of the Messenger of Allah, who obey the religious instructions and adhere to the Book of Allah, are the saved party according to the Prophetic narration that says, "My UMMA (Muslim community) will divide into 73 parties of which only one is saved". He (P.B.U.H.) on one occasion covered his household: ALI, FATIMA, AL-HASAN and AL-HUSAIN, with a YEMENI cloth (AL-KISA AL-YEMANI) and said: "O Lord! These are my household! Purify them with a thorough purification".

The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) appealed to Allah to keep them away from all uncleanness of sins or disobedience to Allah or any unholy actions. Thus, Allah revealed verse 33 of chapter AL-AHZAB which says:

{Allah only desires to keep away (all) uncleanness from you, O people of the House (AHL AL-BAYT), and purify you with a thorough purification}. It confirmed the sublime status of the holy family. Again, in his farewell pilgrimage, at a place called GHADIR KHUM, he (P.B.U.H.) addressed the pilgrims. In a lengthy sermon, He (P.B.U.H.) referred to Ali's sublime status and recommended him for the highest office in the community: Leadership. He took Ali's hand and raised it up for all to see then said, "Of whomsoever I am the master (WALI), this (Ali) is his master. O Lord! Keep the truth on his side wherever he turns!"

These prophetic narrations, besides many others, indicate the Divine status of the Infallible Imams who guide mankind to the right path. The narrations confirm their lineage as the offspring of Ali and Fatima, peace be

upon them all. Even their names are confirmed in prophetic narrations. We are informed of their names and attributes. They are Twelve Imams of whom Ali (as) is the first and the last is his grandson IMAM AL-MAHDI, the awaited IMAM in occultation.

These narrations tell us clearly who the authoritative in the Muslim community are. They confirm their virtue and sublime status. They are infallible, clear of all wrongdoings or sins according to QUR'ANIC verses and prophetic narrations. We are ordered to obey them and adhere to their instructions so that we may enjoy a good life here and in the hereafter. It is worth mentioning that QUR'ANIC verse 67 of chapter AL-MAIDA was revealed during the farewell pilgrimage. It is relevant to Imam Ali's leadership and, thus, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) conveyed the message in full on that occasion. The verse says:

{O Prophet! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord, and if you do not, then you have not delivered His message (at all), and Allah protects you from the people; surely Allah will not guide the unbelieving people}. [AL-MAIDAH: 67].

LOVE FOR THE PROPHET'S HOUSEHOLD

The holy QUR'AN says,

{... Say (O Mohammed!): I demand not of you any recompense for it save love for my relatives...}. [AL-SHURA: 23]. The holy Prophet did not stay long after his farewell pilgrimage. For all his struggle for the sake of mankind's welfare and guidance to the right path, he asked nothing but that we love his household. For such a mighty task, he (P.B.U.H.) asked nothing but that we be fair and kind to his offspring! Imagine! But alas! The Muslim community betrayed its Prophet (P.B.U.H.) and denied his offspring all their rights, rendering them the most oppressed in the community. They were all treated with cruelty and ingratitude. All his recommendations were discarded, all his narrations were forgotten. Islamic leadership was entrusted to others, not to them. Hence, the enemies of Islam dominated the Muslim world. Since that early age of Islam, the community has been suffering deviation, and the sublime instructions of Islam have been neglected.

Islam would have come to an end had it not been for the important roles played by the Infallible Imams who sacrificed their lives for the sake of Islam and for the safety of its injunctions. At the time when IMAM ALI AL-HADI (AS) had passed away, his son HASAN AL-ASKARI succeeded him as the Imam

IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI (AS)

He was born in Al-Medina AL-MUNAWARA on the 8th of RABI AL-THANI, in the year 232 of HIJRA. When he was two years old, he accompanied his father IMAM AL-HADI when he was summoned to Iraq by orders from the ABBASI ruler AL-MUTAWAKIL. They both settled in SAMARRA in a house surrounded by the army camps. They were under strict surveillance by the military (called in Arabic 'ASKAR), hence they were nicknamed AL'ASKARAIN. At the age of 20, his father passed away. The son, HASAN AL-'ASKARI, performed the funeral prayers for his father and buried him. He then declared his Imamate to the people. The

ABBASI ruler AL-MU'TAZZ dared not harm him although he waited for the opportunity to get rid of him. However, AL-MU'TAZZ died when a number of influential Turks rebelled against him and killed him in the year 254 of HIJRA.

Prior to his death, AL-MU'TAZZ called his guard SA'ID and ordered him to arrange the transferring of IMAM AL-'ASKARI from SAMARRA to KUFA and to get rid of him on the way secretly. When the Imam's followers knew of the plot, they were very much concerned especially since the said transfer was being carried out at AL-MU'TAZZ'S orders; that was surely devilish. However, the Imam left for them a letter putting them at ease. He told them that by Allah's will, they would be relieved of all concerns. Three days later, AL-MU'TAZZ was killed by the Turks along with his agent SA'ID. The ABBASI ruler AL-MUHTADI succeeded him. AL-MUHTADI tried to rule with justice along the lines of the early RASHIDI caliphs (the first four caliphs who ruled following the Prophet's demise).

Despite his good deeds, he never concealed his hostility towards the Imam (as). He chased his followers, jailing and killing them. He even prevented the imam's followers from visiting their Imam (as). However, he did not rule long. He was killed one year later by the same Turks who put his brother AL-MU'TAMID in his place then killed him soon thereafter.

AL-MU'TAMID was a moderate ruler who was more concerned about the state affairs than anything else; hence, he did not care for the Imam who was relieved of the ABBASI spies and agents. During his rule, the 12th Imam, the awaited MEHDI, was born on the 15th of SHA'BAN of the HIJRI year 255. his mother MERJIS was of royal Roman descent. Although the ruler's agents knew of his birth, it was the Divine care that kept him safe despite their plots.

IMAM AL-'ASKARI'S ERA

IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI was the target of the ABBASI injustice and tyranny. Despite the rulers' pressure on him and their harassment, the number of his followers increased after they had witnessed miracles at his hands. They were in two groups: One group greatly loved him and the other was greatly afraid of him. He could expose their good or evil intentions. If someone resorted to him for some special need, he (as) would meet his need before he mentioned it to him. Those who intended to do him evil were at once known to him. He would tell them of their evil intention and leave them in great fear. Among such men of evil intentions was one called ALI IBN UTTAMISH. When his intention was disclosed, he became a righteous man and sought the Imam's forgiveness. He witnessed the Imam's great insight.

However, the rulers managed to keep the people away from him through pressure on his followers. Hence, they resorted to letters as means of communication in order to obtain his instructions and narrations and disseminate them. Thus, they could defeat the heretics and the deviated. Muslims in groups came to QUM and NISAPOUR to get in touch with the theologians and listen to the Imam's instructions and teachings. They all longed to see him.

IMAM HASAN AL-'ASKARI had a bad brother called JA'FER whom the rulers favored, using him against the Imam and his followers. He spied on his brother and conveyed information to the agents. The aggressive rulers were waiting for the birth of the Imam's son, the awaited IMAM AL-MEHDI (as). The Imam was careful to keep that birth a secret. His brother, too, intended to keep it a secret in order to achieve his aim and devilish plans.

MARTYRDOM

IMAM AL-'ASKARI'S authority did not last more than six years. The agents of the ABBASI ruler AL-MU'TAMID poisoned his food, hence he feel ill. AL-MU'TAMID sent few doctors and prominent figures to tend to him day and night. He tried to clear himself of the accusation of being behind poisoning the Imam's food.

The Imam suffered sickness for eight days then passed away in the year 260 of HIJRA. As usual, the doctors issued a statement about his death, claiming it due to natural causes. They also declared that he had left no children, hence people offered their condolences to his brother JA'FER. When the holy body was ready for the funeral ceremony and those present stood up for prayers, JA'FER was about to start the prayers when a child took hold of his garment and said, "O uncle! Step back; I am to lead the prayers for my father's body". JA'FER was stunned; he became angry but had no choice except to obey. The child led the prayers and the Imam was buried next to his father in SAMARRA.

Their shrines are now monuments and sacred places where people pay homage to earn Allah's blessings and to appeal to Him to keep them firm on the right path of AHL AL-BAYT, peace be upon them. As soon as the burial was over, the awaited Imam disappeared unnoticed. Everyone knew that he was the awaited Imam, the 12th Imams, the owner of the time (SAHIB AL-ZAMAN) who will make his presence known to all the people on a certain day. We appeal to Allah to help us be among his supporters and followers.

FOLLOWING ARE SOME OF HIS SAYINGS:

1- "The best one among people is he who is aware of his brothers' rights, the best in performance of those rights, and the most favored by Allah".

2- "Whoever is humble to his brothers in religion, he is considered by Allah among the truthful, the true followers of ALI IBN ABI TALIB".

3- Once he said to his followers, "Fear Allah, speak the truth, carry the trusts to whoever trusts you, be he righteous or mischievous. Perform your prayers with long prostrations and be good to your neighbors. Such is the mission of Allah's Messenger".

4- He (as) also said, "Worship is not plenty of prayers or plenty of fasting, but in pondering on the Divine Affair".

5- "Woe unto one who is with two faces and two tongues, who praises his brother - in religion - in his presence and degrades him in his absence (through backbiting)!"

6- "Anger is the key to every evil".

7- "The malicious person is the one with the least amount of ease of mind"

8- "The most pious is he who shuns what is unlawful".

9- "Whoever sows good will harvest pleasure. Whoever sows evil will harvest regret".

10- "The fool's heart is in his mouth. The mouth of the wise person is in his heart".

11- "Two qualities are of the utmost best: Belief in Allah and doing good to your brethren in religion".

There are many other wise sayings and good pieces of advice related about him. He used to explain to the Muslims every good quality and every good conduct. He was one of the purified members of the Prophet's household who led the best drive in life, who were clear in their actions and words. Thus, they became the guiding torches to the right path.

They were true believers calling to the worship of Allah only, the Only Truth (AL-HAQQ). They kept Islam safe and clear of distortion or deviation. We appeal to Allah to guide us to follow in their footsteps in this life and enjoy His pleasure and rewards in this as well as in the life to come.

The Awaited Imam: Mohammad Al-Mehdi (A.S.)

LINEAGE

Mohammed AL-MEHDI is the son of HASAN AL-'ASKARI (as). He was born on the 15th of SHA'BAN in the year 255 of HIJRA in SAMARRA. His mother, of Roman lineage, was NARJIS. He went in minor occultation for 69 years. He is still his major occultation.

PROPHETIC HERALD

In the last year of his life, the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) made his way to holy Mecca to perform the pilgrimage. He was accompanied by tens of thousands of Muslims. They learned how to perform the pilgrimage through his guidance. In Mina, he addressed them, raising many issues. He advised them to love and to be fair to each other, and to always unite against the enemies of Islam. He made a reference to his successors by saying, "Twelve Imams will succeed me; they are all from QURAYSH".

On another occasion, he (P.B.U.H.) said, "The Imams after me are twelve. All is the first of them and AL-QAIM BI AL-HAQQ (AL-MEHDI) is the last". On yet another occasion, he (P.B.U.H.) said, "AL-MEHDI is from my household... he will effect equality and justice on this earth when oppression and injustice become the norm of the day".

He (P.B.U.H.) also declared that AL-MEHDI would be from the offspring of Fatima (his purified daughter) and Ali (as), especially the offspring of Fatima's son, AL-HUSAIN (as). He put his hand on his grandson (AL-HUSAIN) and said, "The MEHDI of this UMMA (community - nation) is from his offspring". Peace and blessing of Allah be on all of them.

The good news spread among the Muslims and was a source of great concern to them as was clearly conveyed by the Messenger of Allah Almighty. It clearly and frankly indicated the Truth, naming the community leaders. It was kept in the believers' hearts and recorded in their books of Prophetic traditions for future generations. Thus, all Muslims, whether SUNNIS or SHI'ITES, agree that the awaited Imam is the savior, the promised leader chosen by Allah Almighty to set up Allah's religion on earth despite the infidels' plots. The awaited Imam was born of a Roman mother who was called NARJIS. She was the daughter of one of the Roman kings. Her mother's lineage is traced back to SHIMOUN (SHEMON) AL-SAFA, one of the disciples of Jesus (as).

NARJIS was taken prisoner in the wake of a battle between the Muslims and the Romans which took place in the city of AMURIA. The Muslims achieved victory, and a great number of prisoners were taken to Baghdad.

It was the norm of the day to see prisoners of war sold at slave-markets in order to secure their daily bread and accommodation. They were usually treated well according to the QURANIC orders and Prophetic Narrations.

IMAM AL-HADI (AS) sent someone, a slave trader called BISHR, to Baghdad to buy a young Roman girl and bring her to him in SAMARRA. He bought her and brought her to the Imam (as) who told her the good news of her giving birth to a blessed son: "The Awaited MEHDI who will fill the earth with justice and equality, clearing it of all injustice and oppression".

NARJIS rejoiced at the good news and lived in the Imam's house peacefully. She was a pious and righteous woman. Her pregnancy was concealed even from the women near her. It was Allah's will that she should be the mother of the wonderful son who will leave all at a loss except the true believers who believe in his grandfather's message and his forefathers' mission of Imamate. Peace and blessings of Allah be on all of them.

The holy QUR'AN says,

{And we desire to bestow a favor upon those who were deemed weak in the land and to make them Imams, and to make them heirs}. [AL-QASAS: 5].

THE 15TH OF SHA'BAN

At the night of the 15th of SHA'BAN, in the year 255 of HIJRA, IMAM AL-ASKARI asked his aunt HAKIMA to tend to his wife and never to leave her because she was to give birth to the awaited Imam on that blessed night.

The blessed infant was born enjoying the concern and care of the Divine will. He was called Mohammed AL-MEHDI in conformity with a prophetic narration which says: "This world will not come to an end until a man from my household and of my name achieves authority in my community". In language, the word "AL-MEHDI" signifies piety, righteousness and guidance on the Right Path. Thus, AL-MEHDI has become the title of the 12th Imam who will fight the oppressors and the tyrants. He will achieve justice and equality in the world in place of prevailing oppression and injustice.

THE MINOR OCCULTATION AND THE MAJOR ONE

IMAM HASAN AL-ASKARI was poisoned. He passed away in the year 260 of HIJRA. The awaited Imam, his son, was then five years old and well-known only to the very close followers and special supporters of his father (as). His father was concerted about his safety, so he protected him by keeping his blessed birth as a secret. Hence, the ABASSIDE agents who tried hard to get hold of him and to kill him failed in their attempts. They were, however, informed of his existence by his uncle JA'FER the Liar. The ABASSIDES declared that IMAM AL-ASKARI died leaving no children. They were looking everywhere for the 12th Imam. They made such a lie in order to make use of the bad uncle who received condolences at the funeral. When he was about to lead the funeral's prayer, and as soon as he uttered the words: "ALLAHO AKBAR!" (Allah is the Greatest), a small child of brown skin approached him and said, "Step backward, Uncle! Let me lead the prayers of my father's funeral".

JA'FER was stunned. He turned pale, but he had no other choice except to obey. He stepped backward and let his nephew lead the prayers. As soon as finished, he left without being caught or noticed. JA'FER, the deviated son of the late Imam (as), suffered a great defeat. IMAM AL-HADI sued to warn his followers saying, "Keep away from my son JA'FER. He is to me the same as the son of Noah was to his father. The holy QUR'AN says:

{And Noah cried out to his Lord: Lord! Surely my son is of my family, and Your promise is surely true, and You are the most just of the judges. Said He: O Noah! Surely he is not your family; surely he is (the doer of)

other than good deeds...}. [HUD: 45-46]. As previously mentioned, IMAM AL-MEHDI did not let himself be seen except by the special and very close followers of his father. He went into occultation twice. The first time was the minor occultation which lasted for 69 years. He used to contact his followers through his special deputies. They received his instructions and delivered them to his followers all over the world. They received his answers to their letters of inquiries, collected the religious taxed, the KHUMS (one-fifth), the ZAKAT, and the SADAQAT (alms) and carried them to him to be distributed according to Islam's religious instructions. His deputies during the minor occultation were:

- 1- UTHMAN IBN SA'EED
- 2- Mohammed IBN UTHMAN IBN SA'EED
- 3- AL-HASAN IBN RAWH
- 4- ALI IBN Mohammed

They were called: "The Imam's ministers". When the fourth deputy died, no one succeeded him, and the Imam went into major occultation from that day till our time. This occultation will continue till Allah Almighty decides when he should come out to assume his role.

The aim behind the minor occultation was to train the believers and prepare them for his major occultation. They were trained to accept someone in place of the Imam himself. The practice started during his father's time and his grandfather's. Both Imams (as) resorted to that method as a preliminary step to be applied during AL-MEHDI'S occultation. People became used to those deputies and accepted their role as means to get to the Imam in his minor occultation. The first deputy stayed in office for five years, the second for 40 years, the third for twenty-one years and the fourth for three years. With the death of the fourth deputy, the major occultation started.

The reason of the major occultation is the Divine will. IMAM AL-SADIQ (AS) was asked once about its reason. He said, "This affair cannot be disclosed except when he himself reappears. It is the same issue involving MUSA (Moses) and the righteous man, AL-KHIDHIR, who explained the matter to the Prophet later. It is one of Allah's secrets, an affair unknown to mankind" We are also to accept Allah's will and act accordingly.

The second Imam, namely IMAM AL-HASAN (AS), said the following to some of his followers who blamed him for coming to peaceful terms with MUAWIA IBN ABI SUFIAN: "Each one of us will suffer submission to the tyrant of his day except AL-QAIM (the 12th Imam). Allah will conceal his birth and keep him in occultation, so he does not have to swear allegiance to anyone at all. He is the 9th of my brother's offspring. Allah will prolong his age then make him manifest in the image of a young man of 40 years. Allah is Powerful, Almighty".

Of course, Allah can do everything. In the holy QUR'AN, we are told that Noah preached to his people for almost one thousand years, and that Prophet Jesus is still alive. History tells us that the righteous man LUQMAN lived 500 years, QAIS IBN SA EEDA for 700 years, and UMAR IBN ABI RABI'A for 400 years. One naturally asks, "During this major occultation,

who is to tackle the Muslim's affairs? It is quite important for the Muslims to have some legal and religious leadership".

The holy QUR'AN says, {O, you who believe! Obey Allah and the Prophet and those in authority among you...}. [AL-NISA: 59]. During the occultation of the 12th Imam, the Muslims should turn to the righteous theologians regarding matters relevant to the affairs of their every day life. AL-QAIM was asked by the Muslims about who they should follow during his major occultation. He said to them: "Whoever among the theologians is chaste, careful about his religion, safeguarding himself against following his own desires, obedient to his Lord, the common people can follow him".

THE HOUSE'S BASEMENT

During the early years of his life, IMAM AL-MEHDI lived in his father's house. He would often hide in the house's basement to escape the spies' watch. Such basements are found in most homes in Iraq. They are used during the summer to avoid the great heat of the day. Whenever AL-MEHDI was pursued or his house was surrounded, he would with the help of Divine care leave the house safely. He would often attend the religious meetings of his supporters and his followers in order to solve their problems. He was known only to the few of their elite and to the community of the faithful.

At the onset of his major occultation, he left his father's house in SAMARRA to live among the people without being known. He performs the pilgrimage and other religious rituals. All this is achieved through the Divine plan and for the benefit of the Muslim community. It is the Divine secret that cannot be perceived.

The malicious enemies exploit the believers' visits to the two shrines of IMAM AL-HADI and IMAM AL-'ASKARI (as) and falsely claim that IMAM AL-MEHDI had entered the basement and had been there for all these long years. This is a big lie. AL-MEHDI, through the Divine help, lives among the people, and Allah will manifest his mission whenever He desires, permitting him to play his role of removing all injustices suffered by the oppressed people and achieving justice and equality everywhere and for everyone. The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) indicated his important role through the Divine revelation. The holy QUR'AN says,

{Your companion (the Prophet) does not err, nor does he go astray. Nor does he speak out of (his own personal desire). It is naught but revelation revealed}. [AL-NAJM: 2-4].

It is the duty of all Muslims to get ready for to support him in due time. This can be achieved through strict adherence to the faith of his grandfather, Mohammed (P.B.U.H.), and observance of Islamic instructions. We should enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil. We should reject injustice and unjust people. Thus can we be soldiers of the Truth, Justice and Faith. We appeal to Allah Almighty to bring about his reappearance soon, and to consider us among his followers and supporters. Allah is All-Knowing All-Hearing. Praise is due only to Him.

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