



And The Message of Islam Continues

The Lives of
The Twelve Imams from
The Ahle Bait
(The Custodians of The Message of Islam)

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In Memoriam

In Loving Memory of My Dear Husband

Syed Haider Hussain Shamsi was a distinguished educator whose unique intellect and example enriched the lives of those who came in contact with him. He pursued a life of moral and intellectual ideas as a teacher and mentor, and worked tirelessly to pass on the wisdom gained through his own experience to others. It was his firm belief that civilizations decline when they lose their capacity to recognize, understand, and absorb change. In this spirit, he dedicated much of his time educating Muslim youth on how to overcome the challenges of today's difficult and changing times. He continuously passed his message of how to live a meaningful life as he journeyed through his own life as a Momin and a human being.

Born in Pakistan and raised in Kenya, he received his early education in both countries. He completed his post graduate studies in England, where he was elected to the Fellowship of the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynecology in recognition of his continued academic excellence. He moved to the United States in 1977 and worked at St. Lukes Roosevelt Hospital in New York City, where he was appointed as the director of the Obstetrics and Residency Training Program. Later, he joined the faculty of Columbia University's Sloane Hospital for Women, where he trained residents and students, and worked on various outreach programs.

Haider passed away on April 21, 1999, a few months before this book was published. By Allah's grace, may his soul rest in peace.

Allaho Noorus-samawaati wal-arz, Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth.

Noorun ala noor!

Light upon light!

Yahillaahu li Noorehi man-yashaa

Allah guides whom He wishes to His Light.

Holy Qur'an (24:35)

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Preface

Imamate is an important part of the Islamic guidance system, yet many parents and teachers have observed that very little has been written on the subject in the English language. I had the good fortune of participating at young age, in the learning and teaching of the subject in the English language under the guidance of my late father, Syed Muhammad Husain Shamsi in Nairobi, Kenya. For the last twelve years, I have been involved with Sunday School teaching to the youth of the Muslim community in Englewood, New Jersey, and recently in Queens, New York. I have collected my own notes on the subject and have arranged them into the form of this book. Honoring the suggestions of my reviewers, I have maintained a *style* of simplicity and brevity without compromising the necessary facts about each of the Imams.

While extensive reference literature is available on this subject in the Arabic, the Persian and the Urdu languages, there is a dearth of translated or original works in the English language. This book was designed specifically to address this deficiency. The information has been derived from popular books of biography, history, traditions of the Prophet of Islam, as well as al-Qur'an. A classified list of references is appended at the end of this book.

The title of the book, "**And The Message of Islam Continues**", was chosen after considerable thought. This was in keeping with the spirit and the intention of the Messenger of Islam. The Message of Islam had continued to be delivered to all nations of mankind through the messengers of Allah, ending with Muhammad, the last messenger. Allah, with His Divine Justice, instituted the faculty of Imamate to perpetuate His Message and to provide His continued guidance to mankind. This is attested by Allah in the Quran.

All Muslims generally accept the institution of Imamate. However, it is important to know that this institution actually evolved through two main systems of belief based on the methodology and the interpretation of the Islamic Law (*Fiqh*). Into one of these systems belong the Shiite Muslims who follow the *Fiqh Ja'fariyya*. This *Fiqh* was formalized as a *School* by Imam Ja'far us-Sadiq (the Sixth Imam) and hence the eponym Ja'fariyya. The methodology of its teaching and practice was carried out by each one of the Twelve Imams of the Ahle Bait without any change. The life histories of these Imams are covered in this book. Sunni Muslims, who follow

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one of four of other schools of Fiqh, belong to the other system. These are the *Maliki Fiqh*, the *Hanafi Fiqh*, the *Shafi'i Fiqh* and the *Hanbali, Fiqh*, each named after its founder. The life histories, the teachings and the works of the proponents of these Schools of Fiqh will be published separately.

It is hoped that this book will be of use to teachers, students and others to learn about the lives, the mission and the sacrifices of the Twelve Imams. We welcome their comments and suggestions to help improve future works of the subject.

I thank my wife Adiba for tolerating my long hours at the computer on the weekends and late nights researching the literature for this book. I am particularly indebted to her for her critique on the contents of the text.

I thank brother Nasir Shamsi and Dr. Nazir Hasan Zaidi for their meticulous review and critique of the substance of the book. Further, I must express my gratitude to many among our youth who read the manuscript and gave me valuable suggestions on keeping the language of the text simple, brief and suitable for the young reader. I am especially thankful to Zahra Mamdani, who undertook the task of proof reading my typescript. The encouragement and support obtained from these sources sustain me in my effort to continue my search in the areas of religious knowledge and make it available to the Muslim youth.

I am grateful to my brother Syed Hadi Husain Shamsi of Sheffield, England, too and Dr. Hameed Ghilak of New York for the pictures of the mausoleums of the Imams. Brother Tajul Imam of Graphics Media, Queen, New York, designed the elegant cover of this book.

Dr. Syed Haider Husain Shamsi

Demarest, New Jersey, USA: 1998

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Introduction

Al-Qur'an is the Word of Allah, His Last Testament revealed to Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam. Muhammad was the Last Messenger and the Blessing of Allah for all mankind. The Quran contains commandments, laws and references prescribed by Allah for mankind to live a balanced and guided life on earth, and to prepare for the eternal life of fulfillment after the material death.

The Prophet of Islam lived his life in accordance with this Qur'anic code of law and interpreted this to the believers. His way of life changed the old ways, and became the new Sunna (the code of conduct) for the Muslims to emulate. The sayings and the quotes from the Prophet constitute al-Hadith (the Traditions).

Al-Islam, the Faith of all Muslims, was perfected and completed by Allah through His last Messenger. The Qur'an, very clearly and eloquently speaks about Huquq-ullah (the rights of Allah) and Huquq ul-ibad (the rights of people), and gives out details on how to regulate one's personal life, manage personal assets, conduct business with others, observe human rights in peace and war, charitable giving, helping the orphans and the widows, distribution of one's estate after death and the methodology of making the last will. It is beyond comprehension that Allah would not have given specific instructions to His Last Messenger regarding the continuation of the Message after him. However, the Divine Justice did provide a specific certificate of completion of the Faith when the Prophet made a public announcement of his successor with the Last Revelation from Allah: "This Day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen Islam as your religion" V:4.

It was that day the Prophet announced Ali to be his successor. Ali would be their Maula (lord), just as he himself had been to them. This event is recorded in all the books of Hadith and many classic writers have expounded it with details extracted from the authentic books of Hadith. Whereas most Muslim authorities agree that this event actually did take place, they disagree over its interpretation and implication. According to the Shiite interpretation, this event signified the appointment of Ali as the successor to the Prophet, as well as the Imam of the time.

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However, on the death of the Prophet, Abu Bakr was elected the first Caliph in Saqeefa Banu Sa'ada under unusual circumstances. The supporters of the election considered it to be extremely important to obtain the oath of fealty from the Madinites. Ali was busy with the burial of the Prophet and could not participate in the conference held at the Saqeefa. Since Ali knew that the Prophet had intended him (Ali) to be his (the Prophet's) successor, he refused to acknowledge Abu Bakr as the successor to the Prophet. For his refusal, Ali had to endure hostilities.

Just before his death Abu Bakr nominated Umar to be his successor, and Ali was overlooked. Likewise, before his death, Umar appointed a committee that picked Uthman as the third Caliph and Ali was ignored once again inspite of his definite superiority over others on all grounds. When Uthman was murdered and the Islamic State was in a terrible mess, people came to Ali and begged him to assume the responsibility of the Caliphate, which he did.

The tenure of Ali's rule was plagued with bloody civil wars, the causes of which began with the election of the first Caliph and the associated developments that followed. The progeny of Ali, the chain of the twelve Imams, also continued to suffer from the consequences of the same rift in the politico-religious philosophy that has divided the Muslim Ummah (the nation of believers) into the Shiite and the Sunni Muslims. This rift widened especially after the battle of Siffin.

With the passage of time, the Caliphate became a purely political and administrative position. Most caliphs in the dynasties that followed, were quite impious and unworthy of being the representatives of the Messenger of Islam. The religious guidance of the Ummah had to come from the legitimate representatives of the Prophet. This representation came from the Imams from among the Ahle Bait, the progeny of Ali and Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet of Islam.

Following the example of their patriarch Ali, the Imams of Ahle Bait did not contest the rulers of the time for their political standing, but continued to uphold the Truth, and to represent and guard the Message of Islam with their lives. For this, they had to suffer persecution, internment and martyrdom at the hands of the caliphs of the time.

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The word Imam has generally been used in different contexts. For example an Imam is one who leads a prayer in a congregation. An Imam could be a learned man of the Faith. Many renowned authors of religious books and jurists have also been called Imams. The rulers of certain Muslim states even today are known as Imams. However, the concept of Imamate as held by the Shiite Muslims has a specific meaning and significance.

According to the Shiite Muslims, there are ahadith quoted from the Prophet himself, saying that the Imam of guidance were to be from among his Ahle Bait. He had predicted their number as being no less than or greater than twelve. These Imams could neither be self-proclaimed nor elected or appointed by a popular vote. The appointment of the Imam is a divine ordinance and must be affected according to the Will of Allah. These criteria include the elements of piety and infallibility. This further means that the personality of the Imam has to be that of a Perfect Human being (Insaane Kamil).

According to the Sunni Muslims, the Imam need not belong to the Ahle Bait of the Prophet. Whereas such a person should be pious, his appointment need not come from the Prophet or Allah, and the Ummah may choose or elect any pious person to be their Imam. Here, although piety is an essential pre-requisite, the human fallibility cannot be excluded.

The twelve Imams from the Ahle Bait carry an unbroken chain of custodianship of the Message of Islam, and link themselves to the Messenger through his daughter Fatima, and her husband, Ali. They all conveyed the same uniform message to the believers, the same tradition and the same methodology in the spiritual and ritual practices of the faith. They had declined to accept the rulers of the time as U-lul Amr (the ones vested with authority by Allah).

Each one of the twelve Imams got his appointment as the successor before the preceding Imam passed away. Because of the nature of their appointment, they did not accept the caliphs of their times to be the U-lul Amr (the ones vested with authority from Allah). For this, they had to endure unrelenting persecution at the hands of the caliphs. None of them could lead a peaceful life. Eleven Imams were either slain or poisoned, the Twelfth Imam (Muhammad al-Mahdi) is in Ghaibat (hidden). For the believers, the Twelve Imams are the means of Salvation. They are the "Rope of Allah" that would lead mankind from earthly errors to heavenly piety. Allah says in al-Qur'an: "And hold fast, all together, by the Rope which

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Allah stretches out for you) and be not divided among yourselves: and remember with gratitude Allah's favor on you" III: 103.

"Nor does he (Muhammad) say (aught) of (his own) desire. It is no less than revelation sent down on him.'He was taught by one Mighty in Power." LIII: 3-5

The Prophet is quoted having said "I am leaving behind you Something, that if you take hold of it you would not be misguided after me, (that is) Thaqalayn (two precious things). One of them is higher than the other, the Book o 'Allah, which is a Rope extended from the heaven to the earth, and my kindred (Itrat), my household (AhleBait); for indeed the two of them will never separate until they return to me by the Hawd al-Kawthar (the Pond).

The famous jurist Imam ash-Shafii composed a lively poem on Islamic Unity, and expounded on the Rope of Allah thus:

When I saw the people carried off

Their departure to the sea of errors and ignorance

In the name of Allah, I boarded the Ark of Salvation

This is Ahle Bait of Mustafa., the Seal of Prophecy

And I caught hold of the Role of Allah, that is their love

As He commanded us to hold fast to the Rope".

Dedication:

This book is dedicated to my parents whose love, nurture and sacrifices shaped my personality and career.

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The First Imam: Ali ibne Abi Talib (AS)

Name: Ali

Title: al-Murtadha

Epithet: Abu al-Hasan

Father: Abu Talib bin Abd al-Muttalib

Mother: Fatima binte Asad, bin Hasbim

Date of Birth: Rajab 13, 23 BH (May 25, 600 AD)

Place of Birth: Inside the Holy Ka'ba in Makkah

Progeny from Fatima binte Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam (pbuh)

Two sons: al-Hasan and al-Husain

Two daughters: Zainab and Umm Kulthum

From Khawla binte Ja'far bin Qays al-Hanafta

One son: Muhammad

From Umm al-Banin binte Hizam bin Khalid bin Darim

Four sons: al-Abbas, Ja'far, Uthman, Abd Allah

From Umm Habib binte Rabia

One set of twins: Umar and girl Ruqayya

He had many other children from other wives

Date of Death: Ramadhan 21, 40 AH (January 27, 661 AD)

He lived to an age of 61 years

Place of Death: In the main mosque in Najaf, near Kufa in Iraq

Place of Burial: Ghouri in the town of Najaf in Iraq

LIFE OF ALI DURING THE TIMES OF THE PROPHET

The birth of Imam Ali took place under unique circumstances inside the holy Ka'ba. It is considered unique because no prophet or saint has ever been born in a holy sanctuary. Fatima binte Asad, the expectant mother of Ali was praying outside the Ka'ba when she suddenly felt the labor pains. Just then the wall of the holy sanctuary opened. As she stepped in, the wall

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closed behind her. Shortly after that she gave birth to her baby. When they came out, Muhammad took the newborn in his arms and named him Ali. The infant looked at his face and smiled.

Muhammad nurtured Ali in his childhood, and the child fully assimilated the habits and the qualities of the Prophet. When he grew up, Ali accompanied Muhammad wherever he went, and followed him like his shadow. This early association blossomed in his devout love for the Prophet whom he emulated in every manner, and assisted him in the delivery of the Message at every step. The association between the two was not accidental. Muhammad himself was born in the *Shabe Abi Talib* (the house of Abu Talib just out side Makkah) and was raised and nurtured by Ali's parents, Abu Talib and Fatima binte Asad. Abu Talib took special care of his nephew Muhammad, and protected him against all odds as long as he lived.

Ali came into focus as a young lad of about 11 years when he became known as one the first to witness Muhammad as Allah's Messenger. The other person to acknowledge the Prophetic mission of Muhammad was his wife Khadija.

Now that Muhammad was commanded by Allah to proclaim his Prophet-hood and invite his kinsmen to Islam, he asked Ali to act as his messenger. Ali called on the elders of Quraish to extend the Prophet's invitation. He and his father arranged a feast known as *dhil-Asheera*. The Prophet delivered the Message, asking them to forsake the idols and worship Allah alone. In the face of great hostilities, when he asked if any one would help him in his work, none other than Ali stood up and declared his unconditional and unfettered support of the Prophetic Mission.

The Quraish of Makkah unleashed their torment to **the** early believers, but the Prophet continued to convey the Message undaunted by the insults and the harsh treatment of the Makkans. All protected and defended the Prophet at every opportunity despite his young age. Along with handful of the early believers, Ali endured the harsh economic and social blockade of his parent's house by the arrogant Quraish when the Prophet refused to abandon his mission.

On the night of Hijra, when the enemies of the Prophet were lying in wait for him, he willingly and gratefully undertook the hazardous task of sleeping in the bed of the Prophet so that the

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Messenger of Islam would not be hurt. It helped the Prophet escape the assassins in the darkness of the night. Allah recognized this service of Ali in the Qur'an: *"And there is the type of man who gives his life to earn the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is full of kindness to (His) devotees."* 11: 207.

After the departure of the Prophet for Medina, Ali acted on behalf of the Prophet and returned to the Makkans the valuables that they had placed with the Prophet for safe keeping.

When the Prophet arrived in Medina, he initiated the foundation of a cohesive society in the form of Brotherhood in Islam. He assigned one *Muhajir* (migrant) from Makkah as a brother unto one resident *Ansar (helper)* in Medina. Since Ali was delayed in Makkah carrying out the duties entrusted to him by the Prophet, he was unable to participate in the newly formed brotherhood. On his arrival in Medina, when Ali asked the Prophet who would be his 'brother' according to the new rule, the Prophet told him: *"You and I are brothers in this world and the Hereafter. "*

The idolaters of Makkah could not bear the escape of a handful of Muslims from under their noses. They wanted to kill the Prophet as well as his followers. In the second year of *al-Hijra* (the Islamic calendar year) they came out in Badr, in the outskirts of Madina⁴ well equipped with arms, eight hundred and fifty strong on foot, and one hundred on horseback. They were almost three times larger in number than the poor³ equipped and hastily raised 'army' of just three hundred and fourteen. Muslims defenders (80 *Muhajirs* and 234 *Ansars*). Of these, only seventy were on camels and only two were on horseback! This was the first of the several confrontations the early Muslims had to face against the pagans in defense of their faith and property. The soldiery of Ali was unknown and untested until this first battle. With a resounding victory for Islam seventy of the bravest Quraish were slain and forty-five were taken prisoners of war. Ali emerged as the undisputed hero for the Muslims. He alone was responsible for almost one half of the carnage of the pagans in that battle. There was no family in Makkah that was not affected by Ali's sword in the Battle of Badr. Ali was to be looked upon as a deterrent and a formidable force in the future. He was not only the 'brother' of the new Prophet but also his fighting hand. The Prophet hardly ever

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used his sword himself. Pleased with his unparalleled bravery as well as chivalry, the Prophet declared Ali openly as *Asadullah* (the Lion of Allah), and *Yadullah* (the Hands of Allah).

The Battle of Badr had far reaching consequences for Ali. Whereas this son of Abu Talib intimidated the pagans of Makkah, some among the believers carried grudges and jealousy, even animosity against him. The nascent faith had not yet cleansed their hearts of the old bias they had carried against the man who had, with his sword, cut down their kinsmen, even their closest relatives, their fathers, uncles, sons and husbands. This hostility, which they were unable to express during the life of the Prophet, for fear of annoying Allah's Messenger, showed up immediately after his death. The history, in the years to come, was to witness how the anti-Ali faction came out of **the** hole, succeeded in isolating the 'brother of the Prophet' from the affairs of the Islamic State for 25 years. Even in his own Caliphate, the same group rose in rebellion with one pretext or another, and finally plotting to end his life with a sword. In the years that followed, the might and valor of Ali in the service of Islam was to be avenged by his adversaries in killing his sons, his grandsons and kinsmen in the battle of Karbala in an effort to get even with Ali, the Lion of Allah.

After the battle of Badr, the Prophet gave his only daughter Fatima in marriage to the virtuous Hashimite hero of Islam. Together they had two sons, Hasan and Husain, who succeeded as Imams after him, and they laid down their lives upholding and defending the values of Islam.

In later years, Ali continued to be the victorious champion of Islam while others had failed in some of the most threatening battles the Prophet had to undertake in defense of Islam, the Muslims and the nascent Islamic State that was emerging in Yathrib. As a consequence, Ali received many valedictory titles from the Prophet, and wide acclaim among the believers. Only a few of these are briefly narrated below.

The enemies of Islam did not wait long to avenge their shameful defeat at Badr. The following year, they came back at Uhud under the command of Abu Sufyan, the chief of the Makkan infidels. They laid their siege right at the outskirts of Medina with three times the force they had mustered previously at Badr. This time they were determined to exterminate Islam by killing the Prophet and his followers. Here again the Muslims were outnumbered three to one and poorly supplied. However, Ali and Hamza raged havoc in the ranks of the infidels, and Ali

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felled each of the seven standard bearers of the Makkan pagans successively. Together with the valiant believers, the enemy was routed and scattered in all directions. The battlefield resounded with the voice *"There is none victorious other than Ali and there is no equal to the sword Zulfiqar."*

Hamza was targeted by Hinda, the wife of Abu Sufyan, who had him killed by the spear of her Abyssinian slave, and she savagely mutilated his body personally.

With the apparent victory, the Muslims ignored the warning of the Prophet not to move from their appointed strategic place and ran to loot the battlefield. They were caught unaware by the spare contingent of the pagan army under Khalid bin Walid, and many perished in the act of looting, while others fled for their lives. Many of the senior companions of the Prophet used to reminisce saying that they never ran faster in their lives than in the battle of Uhod!

The Prophet was injured in the onslaught led by Khalid bin Walid. Ali hastened to the rescue and stood by to protect the Prophet. At that station, he repelled several attempts by the pagan contingent. Finally, the pagans were driven away. Fatima (the wife of Ali and the daughter of the Prophet) tended to the wounds of her father. The Prophet asked Ali why he did not flee for his life like the others had done. Ali replied that his life belonged to the Prophet, and he had no business with the others, and being a believer would not want to become a disbeliever!

In the fifth year of *al-Hijra* the arch enemy of Islam, Abu Sufyan, the Umayyad chief of the pagans of Makkah raised an army 'of about ten thousand confederates of Jewish and other tribes of the Arab idolaters and marched on to Medina. With this force, he was confident that he could wipe out Islam and its Prophet. However, the Prophet learning of the mighty force marching towards the home of the Muslims, had a ditch dug out between the city of Medina and the advancing force of the infidels. Whereas this kept back the general advance of the confederate army, a hand full of the infidels jumped across the ditch led by Amr bin Abd Wudd. They jeered and slung abuses at the Muslims and challenged them to send their best for a duel. Ali was a gallant warrior, and the Muslims were frightened of his armor clad gigantic personality. It was Ali who repeatedly asked permission of the Prophet to allow him to face the challenge. When none else dared to come out, the infidels flung further abuses and

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provocative language at the Muslims. Finally Ali was allowed to face the enemy. The Prophet prayed Allah for Ali and said: *"today total Faith has gone out to face total infidelity."*

Ali had a brisk duel with Amr and cut down the challenger with one stroke of his famous sword. Prophet declared, *"the single stroke of Ali's sword is superior to years of ibada (obedience to Allah)."* The Muslims initially watched the encounter from a distance. However, some believers got encouraged with the success of Ali and joined him to eliminate the remaining threat from the infidels who had crossed over the ditch. Ali perused Ikramah bin Abu Jahl into the ditch and killed him.

In the month of Zi-Qa'd, in the sixth year of *al-Hijra*, the Prophet undertook journey to Makkah for Hajj accompanied by about fourteen hundred unarmed Muslims. It was traditional in all of Arabia to suspend all kinds of hostilities during the months of Haj. However, the Makkans came out armed to stop the advance of the pilgrims. The Prophet made a halt at the well of *Hudaybiya*. After tense negotiations (from within his own ranks of the Muslims, and from that of the pagan Makkans) a treaty was concluded under which the Prophet had to carry out his rituals of a lesser Hajj at the very campsite, and would return the following year for a full ritual Haj. Ali represented the Muslims and wrote the contents of the Treaty of Hudaybiya.

Early in the seventh year of *al-Hijra*, the Prophet learned that the Jewish tribes in the valley of Khyber, about eighty miles north of Medina, were planning mischief against the Muslims. He decided to march to Khyber and eliminate the threat to their homes and lives. He took about 1600 believers with him but Ali was unable to go with the Muslim army at that time because of sore eyes.

The Muslims took the smaller fortresses one by one, and laid siege over the grand citadel of Khyber. Each of the repeated attempts made by the Muslims was repulsed effectively by the ferocious Jewish warriors. Even the most senior and trusted companions of the Prophet failed to break into the defenses of the citadel. By this time the Muslims were getting somewhat discouraged and demoralized. Finally, the Prophet declared, *"Tomorrow I shall hand over my flag to one who loves Allah and His Prophet, and who is beloved of the Lord and His Prophet, a fearless champion who never turns his back upon a foe; and at his hands the Lord will give victory."* Hopes ran high in the hearts of all potential commanders to earn that

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benediction. However, All arrived at the scene with sore eyes. The Prophet healed them with his saliva, and gave him the Standard of the Muslim army. He faced his first adversary in Marhab, a formidable warrior, and cut him into two with one stroke of his famous sword. This was followed with successful duels with six other Jewish warriors. He then led the Muslims to a general attack, and won the day by subduing the fort of Khyber. Some miraculous feats are reported in the books of history concerning the way Ali pulled out the gate of the fort and, first used it as a shield for himself and then threw it as a bridge over the ditch for the Muslims to cross over. The Prophet did not evict the vanquished people from their homes. The people ceded half of their property to the Muslims for submission, and in return, they were allowed to continue to cultivate the land for their subsistence. The grove of Fadak was retained by the Prophet, and gave it to his daughter Fatima for her family to use.

In the eighth year of *al-Hijra*, the pagans of Makkah violated the peace treaty signed with them two years earlier. The Prophet took ten thousand believers with him and marched to Makkah. The city was subdued without active fighting, and the archenemy of Islam had to embrace Islam along with other infidels of Makkah. Upon the conquest of Makkah, the holy Ka'ba was cleansed of hundreds of idols. The grand idol, Hubal, treated as a deity by the pagans of Makkah was fixed on a high position, beyond reach. The Prophet asked Ali to mount his shoulders to reach it and destroy it. Ali initially hesitated but complied on second command, and standing on the shoulders of the Prophet, he pulled the heavy idol from its high place and knocked it down to the floor where it crashed to pieces. The Prophet recited: *"Truth has come and falsehood being perishable, has vanished."* X'VH: 82.

It was the same year of *al-Hijra* when the Prophet sent Ali to Yemen as his envoy to replace Khalid bin Walid. Khalid had earlier been sent to Yemen to collect the obligatory taxes. He ransacked the place and caused havoc amongst the southern tribes with loss of life and dignity, in his pre Islamic ruthless style. The news of this event caused much grief to the Prophet. Khalid was recalled and rebuked for his conduct. To compensate the families of the victims, the Prophet dispatched Ali to Yemen with money. On arrival there, he distributed the compensation according to the needs of each family. There was still some

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money left which was also given away to the needy. The people were impressed by this true soldier of Islam and admired him for his generosity, kindness, piety and knowledge.

By virtue of the verse in Qur'an, Ayae tat-heer..... And Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye Members of the Family, and to make you pure and spotless." XXXIII: 33, the Prophet included Ali as a member of his family (Ahle Bait). It is reported in numerous ahadith that the Prophet laid his woolen blanket over himself, his daughter Fatima, her husband Ali, and her sons Hasan and Husain, and said, "O Allah., these are my AhleBait."

The following year, the Christians of Najran came to Medina to see and to verify the Truth of the Prophet of the Muslims. They remained adamantly opposed to all arguments, or to accept evidence from the scriptures. In the end, they opted to go out in the open *for Mubahela* (a method employed in **the** olden times to invoke the curse of Truth over Falsehood).

Allah revealed in al-Quran: "The similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him Be, and he was. The Truth (comes) from Allah alone; so be not of those who doubt. If anyone disputes in this matter with thee, now after (full) knowledge hath come to thee, say: come! Let us gather together our sons, and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves: then let us earnestly pray and invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie!" III: 59-61. Ali accompanied the Prophet with Fatima and their two sons, Hasan and Husain (the five infallible members of the Ahle_Bait of the Prophet) at the Mubahela representing the men, the women and the children of all Muslims to face the Christian challengers from Najran for the test of the Truth. Seeing **the** Prophet and his Ahle Bait, their faces glowing with the light of **the** Truth, the Christians withdrew from Mubahela and returned home, not converted as Muslims, but in peace with the Muslims and the Islamic State.

In the same year, *Sura Tauba* was revealed to the Prophet. He sent Abu Bakr to Makkah to deliver it to the pilgrims. But soon, the Archangel Gabriel reappeared with instructions that the Message must be delivered by the Prophet himself or one of his family. The Prophet hastened to dispatched Ali on his personal camel. Ali caught up with Abu Bakr, took charge of the important Divine Proclamation and arrived in Makkah. He proclaimed in the name of Allah the early verses of the *Sura Tauba*, stating that the city of Makkah would, from then on, be a

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sanctuary for all Muslims, and forbidding all idolaters and polytheists to enter the Holy Precinct, and forbidding the carrying of idols in the Sanctuary.

In the tenth year of *al-Hijra*, the Prophet of Islam arrived in Makkah *for Hajj* with thousands of his followers. Ali was in Yemen at that time. He also arrived in Makkah in time to participate in the Haj, personally conducted by the Prophet. This was one of the most important events in the history of early Islam, and every Muslim wanted to perform Hajj with the Prophet. After completion of the Hajj, and on the way back to Medina, the Prophet of Islam was ordained by Allah to carry out the last duty of his Prophetic Mission thus: "*O Apostle! Proclaim the (Message) which hath been sent to thee from thy Lord. If thou didst not, thou wouldst have not fulfilled and proclaimed His Mission. And Allah will defend thee from men (who mean mischief. For Allah guideth not those who reject Faith.*" V: 70

He made a stop at the well called *Ghadire Khumm* and gathered all those who could be recalled. A makeshift pulpit was erected and the Prophet addressed the congregation: "*It seems as if I would soon be summoned to go to Allah and I have responded to it I entrust you with two very precious and grand things, one of which is greater than the other: the Book of Allah and my Ahle Bait. Take heed of the way you treat these two trusts, because the Qur'an and the Ahle Bait will never separate until they return to me by the Hawd al-Kawthar (the pond).*" He then said: "*Allah is my master and I am the master of every believer.*" Then he took the hand of Ali and raising his arm high above his shoulders for all to see, and said: "*Ali will be the maula (master) of whoever deems me his (maula) master. O Allah! Place within Your own vilayah whoever accepts the vilayah of Ali and be the enemy of whoever shows animosity to him.*" All those who attended the congregation under the hot mid-afternoon sun congratulated Ali on the honor that had just been bestowed upon him by the Will of Allah. This event has been recorded in both Shiite and Sunni books.

It was at this place and occasion when the last revelation of the Qur'an was delivered to the Prophet: "... This day have those who rejected Faith given up hope of your religion: yet fear them not but fear me. This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion." V:4. This completed the Book of Allah as well as the long and onerous task of the Prophet.

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Soon after his return to Medina the Prophet became ill and passed away. However, while the members of the *Ahle*_Bait were busy making arrangements for **the** burial of the Prophet, the senior companions hurried to a heated conference that was being held at *Saqueefa Banu Saadato* to determine the successor to the Prophet. At the conclusion of the meeting, Abu Bakr was elected as the first Caliph.

ALI IS THE IMAM OF GUIDANCE

Allah says in Qur'an that there is no compulsion in Faith. However Allah favored Man with guidance and intelligence so that he may choose what he wishes to believe and to set his own course for the conduct of his life. In the end, those who choose virtuous conduct will enjoy the everlasting bounty of Allah in the gardens of Paradise, while those who follow evil ways will have to endure the everlasting wrath of Allah in the doom of Hell.

Allah has ordained: "O ye who believe! Obey Allah, obey the Apostle and those charged with authority among You. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer to Allah and His Apostle, if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day: that is best, and most suitable for final determination." IV:59.

To obey Allah, there is the Word of Allah: the Book, *al-Qur'an*.

To obey the Prophet, there is the word of the Prophet: al-Hadith. Allah authenticates the word of the Prophet: "Nor does he say (aught) of(his own) desire. It is no less than revelation sent down to him. He was taught by one Mighty in Power." LIII:3-5.

To obey those charged with authority are by Allah's Will. The Qur'an says: "And We made them leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command, and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and regular charity; and they constantly served Us (and Us only)." XXI: 73.

Allah has further clarified His ordinance: "...fight ye the chiefs of Unfaith: for their oaths are nothing to them..."IX:12. "And We made them (but) leaders inviting to the Fire; and on the Day

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of Judgment no help shall they find "XX'VIII: 41. "But those who were blind in this world will be blind in the Hereafter and most astray from the Path. " XVII:72.

It is Allah's grace that He gave mankind the will to choose their path, including the choice of a leader (Imam) for guidance.- For making such a choice, Allah warns in the Qur'an: *"One day We shall call together all human beings with their (respective) Imams: those who are given their records in their right hand will read it (with pleasure), and they will not be dealt with unjustly in the least."* XVII: 7 1.

To the believers, the Prophet warned, "Choose your Imams wisely, for those who died without recognizing the Imam of their Time died the death of the Times before the Truth came to them."

The Prophet spared no effort to illustrate to the believers that Ali was the Imam of Guidance after him. Ali was nurtured by the Prophet from the very beginning of his life. By his own words, Ali lived his life like **the** shadow of the Prophet, *"like a baby camel follows its mother!"* He protected the person of the *Messenger of Allah* on numerous occasions and defended the *Message of Islam* from its very inception. His gallant feats of soldiery were exemplary to the believers and a source of encouragement and have remained unmatched throughout history. It is beyond the scope of this book or even this chapter on the First Imam to describe all the events, the circumstances or the *ahadith* quoted from the Prophet about him. Only a few of the major events of his life have been described above along with the relevant *ahadith* of the Prophet. A few other important *ahadith* are given below to highlight the life of the Patriarch of the Imams of Ahle Bait during the life of the Prophet of Islam. For details and for research, the reader is referred to the sources listed in the Bibliography.

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THE PROPHET'S AHADITH ON IMAM ALI

On Relationship of Imam Ali with the Prophet (pbuh)

"I am to you like Musa (Moses) was to Harun (Aaron) except that there shall be no prophet after me".

"O Allah! Befriend those who befriend Ali, be enemy to those who exhibit animosity towards Ali."

"O Ali! You are the foremost among the believers. You are the wisest and the most faithful in honoring a pledge. You are the best in giving justice. You are the kindest of the Muslim ummah. You are the most patient in adversity. You are my right arm. You will wash my body, and you will give me burial ' On the Day of Judgment, you will carry the banner of Islam, and you will drive away the unworthy from Hawdhe Kawthar (the Pond)." "Whoever parts company with Ali parts company with me; whoever parts company with me parts company with Allah."

On the Person of Ali: "..... that looking at the face of Ali is an act of devotion" andthat zikre Ali (elaborating the deeds and acts of Ali) is devotion."

"The fist (measure) of Ali and my fist are equal."

On Knowledge: "I am the City of all Knowledge, and Ali is the gate (door) of that City. Whoever wishes to enter that city should come through its gate."

On Judgment: "Ali is the best of judges among you."

On Faith: "Ali is total Faith..."

On Truth: "Ali is with the Truth, and the Truth is with Ali."

On Bravery: "Ali is the fearless Lion of Allah."

"Ali is the Hand of Allah."

"Ali is always victorious. He never turns his back to the enemy."

On Piety: "Ali is the Imam (leader) of the pious,"

"No one ever acquired such excellence as Ali. He leads his friends to the Right Path, and prevents them from going astray."

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During the life of the Prophet himself, many of his companions also attested to the knowledge, valor, judgments, generosity, piety and faith of Ali; and to his unparalleled greatness.

LIFE OF ALI DURING THE TIMES OF THE FIRST THREE CALIPHS

On the death of the Prophet, the people of Medina were concerned that if they remained passive, the government of their city would pass over to *the Muhajirs*. Likewise, the *Muhajirs* had no intention of relinquishing the government over to the *Ansar* of Medina. The most prominent companions of the Prophet hurried to join a heated conference on the matter. For Ali, the primary obligation was to bury the Prophet after his death, and there was nothing in the world that would have distracted him from carrying out his mission. He was confident that the public declaration made by the Prophet about him was sufficient reassurance for his rights of succession.

At the meeting, Abu Bakr was elected the first Caliph and Umar led the congregation 'in Medina the next day to obtain fealty for the new Caliph. All felt betrayed and refused to give his endorsement to the process of election by which Abu Bakr became the first successor to the Prophet of Islam. As a result of this incidence, bitterness and unpleasantness ensued. However, All did not raise arms to obtain his rights by force. In fact, there were many in Medina at that time who wanted him to do so. He only wished for Islam to remain a unified force, and showed no wish to divide the young nation by a civil war of succession. Within six months of the death of the Prophet, his beloved daughter Fatima also passed away leaving her husband and her family in deep grief.

Just before his death, Abu Bakr named Umar as his successor. Thus Ali was deprived of his rights to become the caliph a second time. He protested against the method but again refrained from using force to assert his right to the caliphate. Despite his bitterness on the issue of Caliphate, Ali did not refrain from providing advice to the caliphs whenever he was consulted in the matters of the State or of jurisprudence. When Umar was fatally wounded by Abu Lulu the dissatisfied Persian slave, he set up an elaborate electoral council of six most eligible candidates for succession which also included Ali. However, the mechanism effectively eliminated Ali, and Uthman became the third caliph.

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By this time, the boundaries of the Muslim' rule had extended to far off lands. It had been many years that Ali was not seen participating actively in matters of the State, and had retreated into a quiet life in the coastal town of Yanbu, located in the north west of Medina. By now, the numbers of new Muslims from far off lands had exceeded those in the Arab lands. However, the reign of Uthman quickly became controversial because of his policy of promoting Umayyads to key positions throughout the empire. Many of the previous governors, who were among the respected companions of the Prophet, were replaced by the new Umayyad nominees. Most of these new officials of Uthman were neither pious nor knowledgeable in matters of religion. They were arrogant and their behavior was brutal to many companions of the Prophet who had settled in the new provinces. Complaints sent to the Caliph produced no response, as they were filtered by his personal secretary (and son-in-law) Marwan bin Hakam. This aroused wide spread dissention among the Madinan Muslims as well as the new Muslims in the peripheral provinces. Many deputations sent to meet with the Caliph returned without any change of personnel or policies.

Ultimately an angry mob of Muslims marched onto the Caliph's palace and assassinated him. The mob had consisted of a huge representation from the provinces as well as many prominent companions of the Prophet from Medina who had opposed the policies of Uthman. For several days there was chaos in Medina. At this point people came to Ali and unanimously elected him their Caliph. All had to accept the trust, knowing full well that the task of governing the nation at that time was a formidable one. He told the people that he would strictly follow the Quran and the Prophet in his government, and there would be some who would not like it. However, many companions who were aware of the impeccable character of Ali, were confident that he would bring justice to the people.

No sooner did the new Caliph take office, the Umayyad camp in the north under Mu'awiya bin Abu Sufyan began a systematic revolt against him and demanded revenge for the blood of Uthman (who was also from the Umayyad clan). His excuse for the rebellion was that the new Caliph did nothing to punish the killers of Uthman.

In Medina, several sympathizers of the slain Caliph also echoed the Umayyad uproar. Ironically, the Prophet's wife Ayesha binte Abu Bakr, who was among the foremost to

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protest against Uthman's policies, now wanted to avenge his murder. Whereas it is true that Ali was not pleased with the policies of Uthman, he did not form public demonstrations and never took part in any agitation or mob protest that ultimately led to Uthman's assassination.

Two of the candidates for caliphate in the electoral council designed by Umar before his death, Talha and al-Zubayr (the former a cousin and the other a brother-in-law of Ayesha), still considered themselves to be active candidates for the high position. The appointment of Ali to the Caliphate by popular vote was not acceptable to them. They also instigated the rising against the new Caliph for their own motives.

LIFE OF IMAM ALI AS A CALIPH

On becoming the Caliph of the Islamic State, Ali had a stony five years long career. The rising against the new Caliph had a catchy slogan: 'to avenge the murder of Uthman'. In this rising Talha and Zubayr enlisted the support of Aycsha, who by her own admission in later years, was 'gravely misled by the mischief mongers'. Mu'awiya who had been a governor of the provinces of Palestine and Syria for nearly twenty five years, had enjoyed virtual autonomy during the rule of the preceding three caliphs. Taking advantage of the situation, he refused to accept Ali as the Caliph. In fact, he wanted to have the seat of Caliphate for himself Mu'awiya fuelled the revolt by the three leaders in Medina, and they marched on to the province of Basrah and took it after a bloody massacre.

THE BATTLE OF JAMAL (CAMEL)

Ali invited the instigators of the revolt to avert the civil war, avoid the inevitable killing of more Muslims on either side, and to resolve the dispute through negotiation. As the three leaders had gained victory at one front, they were confident of continued success at other fronts as well. Ali had to draw his sword when his ambassador with an invitation for peace was killed by the order from one of the revolting three leaders. This started the disgraceful Battle of the Camel. This was the first time that Muslims drew their swords against each other in battle. There were companions of the Prophet on both sides. People had forgotten the Prophet's famous saying, *"Ali is with the Truth, and the Truth is with Ali."*

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However, at the open confrontation, Imam Ali was victorious. Although Zubayr had withdrawn from the battle, he was assassinated on his way back to Medina. Talha bled to death from an arrow shot at him by the Umayyad Marwan, who was a soldier in their army. At the end of the battle, Ayesha was escorted back to Medina with great respect.

THE BATTLE OF SIFFEEN

After dealing with the revolt headed by Ayesha, Ali invited Mu'awiya to come under the direct rule of the Caliph. Having enjoyed virtual autonomy and power for over two decades, Mu'awiya declined to abide by the Caliph's advice. He gathered his army of regular soldiers and declared war against the Caliph. This important event took place at Siffeen.

The army of the Caliph consisted of believers who joined forces with him as volunteers. They fought with vigor and faith but the confrontation turned out to be a long drawn out one. When Mu'awiya saw that his defeat was inevitable, he resorted to a clever trick. He ordered his army to hoist copies of the Qur'an atop their spears and cry out aloud to stop the war in the name of Allah and turn to the Qur'an to resolve their differences.

EMERGENCE OF THE KHARJITES

The soldiers of the Caliph fell to the clever ploy by Mu'awiya and asked Ali to resolve this matter through arbitration. Whereas Mu'awiya got the arbitrar of his choice, the Caliph had to accede to the choice by the majority of his soldiers. By a deceitful maneuver during arbitration, the representative of Mu'awiya gained advantage over the Caliph's camp. This sent a wave of dissent in his army and caused a large portion of them to abandon allegiance to him. In fact, they took up the position of open confrontation and took up arms against him. This group of deserters is known as the *Khawarij* (the Khadites).

THE BATTLE OF NAHRAWAN

With an eloquent lecture to the dissenting soldiers, Ali was able to convince a large section of them to abandon their hostility and open confrontation against him. A remaining force of about four thousand soldiers persisted in their resolve to fight him. A bloody battle ensued at Nahrawan, and all but a handful of them perished. At a later date they regrouped and had a second attempt against the Caliph, but lost with massive bloodshed. Despite such grave

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losses, the Kharjite movement persisted and could not be totally wiped out. The survivors retreated to the mountains to brew further mischief.

THE SEQUELAE OF SIFFEEN AND NAHRAWAN

After the battle of Nahrawan, Ali invited his army to head for Syria to subdue the rebel governor Mu'awiya for his deceit. The soldiers asked Ali to return to Kufa briefly so that they could visit their families and refurbish their supplies. Having returned to Kufa, the army of volunteers simply disappeared. Thus, the righteous Caliph was unable to regroup a substantial force to bring the revolting governor of Syria under the rule of the Caliphate.

Mu'awiya took this opportunity and started a systematic scheme to weaken the hold of the Caliph over the provinces. He invaded and took the western province of Egypt. Muhammad bin Abu Bakr, the governor of the province was captured on his way between Medina and Egypt and was killed.

Mu'awiya sent his army on a wild rampage in Hijaz, and all the way down to the province of Yemen, leaving in their wake indiscriminate looting and burning of property. He sent down swarms of his army contingents to the province of Basra and weakened their allegiance to the Caliph. As part of his demeaning propaganda against Ali, he introduced an ignoble practice of cursing Ali on the pulpit in the Friday congregational prayers, held throughout the territory controlled by him.

The Caliph addressed his subjects during the congregational prayers and at other occasions and appraised them of the deeds of the rebel governor. He tried to awaken their conscience and induce in them the spirit of individual dignity and self-respect. He advised them that if they remained placid, they would be the next on the rampage of Mu'awiya. The untiring efforts of the Righteous Caliph in his eloquent sermons again roused his followers to regroup, and a respectable army gathered for the defense of the province of Iraq.

THE MARTYRDOM OF IMAM ALI

Imam Ali had many enemies from his first battle against the *Kuffar* (non-believers) during the early days of Islam down to the recurring conflicts against the charlestons who declined to accept his Caliphate, including Mu'awiya bin Abu Sufyan, the rebellious governor of Syria. The

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new faction of the *Khawarij* in his own caliphate were his new enemies, who wanted to have him killed. Abd ar-Rehman ibne Mulji@ a previously unknown *Kharji* hid in the mosque over night during the month of Ramadhan. He struck the Imam on the head with a poison-dipped sword while he was prostrate in his prayers. The Imam suffered from the poisonous deep cut wound for three days and died at home surrounded by his grief-stricken family.

Before he died, he called his elder son Hasan to his bedside and appointed him to be the Imam after him. On his deathbed, Imam Ali gave his last advice to his children as well as Muslims, which is summarized here: -Keep piety your foremost goal in life.

- Be organized, and always be prepared to further the cause of Islam.

- Do not forget the orphans among you.

- Remember your neighbors at all times.

- Make al-Qur'an your guide.

- Maintain prayers as your foremost discipline in life because this is the strongest pillar of your faith.

- Give freely in the name of Allah, including your lives when needed to defend Islam.

- Remain united, and protect each other from sin, because if you fail to do so, others will become your overlords.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE LIFE OF IMAM ALI

Upon the death of the third caliph, Imam Ali became the Caliph of a vast nation of new Muslims who had not been introduced to the *Ahle* Bait and who had poor knowledge of the feats of Imam Ali or the teachings of the Prophet. However, among the companions of the Prophet, the towering personality of Imam Ali dwarfed them all. This provoked feelings of jealousy among those who saw the opportunity slip away from their hands for the high position. Consequently the Caliphate of Imam Ali suffered a series of betrayals by many friends, companions and even Ayesha binte Abu Bakr, a wife of the Prophet. He was frustrated when he had to draw his sword against the Muslims who had previously protected and defended against the infidels. Many were confused when they saw the close companions of the Prophet come out in open confrontation in bloody battle. It was among these unsure and

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skeptic people that the Khaji faction emerged. It was these people who failed him in his efforts to subdue Mu'awiya bin Abu Sufyan, the ambitious rebel governor of Syria. When this group of people rebelled against the Imam, it further compounded the problem of dissention, dissatisfaction and division among the Muslims already spearheaded by Mu'awiya.

There were others in the Imam's army who expected large gratuities from him for their services, as practiced in the preceding era. The Imam did not give in to favoritism or nepotism, and considered the public treasury to be a sacred trust that could not be violated by using it to win loyalty or services. Many of them became dissatisfied and left the Imam when he refused to meet their expectations. Even in the battlefields, he had forbidden his soldiers to loot or strip the fallen in the opposite camp.

Imam Ali had planned major reforms for the state since it had fallen into general abuse towards the end of the rule of the third caliph. These were delayed due to the civil disorder he had to deal with. There was only a brief period of relative peace in his province after the battle of Nahrawan in which he could institute his reforms. They illustrate his great foresight, wisdom and organization. It is not within the scope of this book to discuss or describe them here. For this, the reader may refer to *Najul-Balagha*, a collection of the Imam's Sermons, letters and sayings.

The sermons and lectures of the Imam are highly eloquent and full of knowledge and wisdom. The style in which he delivered them reminded people of the times of the Holy Prophet. The people attended the congregational prayers led by him and sat to savor the sermons he gave for their spiritual as well as worldly improvement.

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NAHJUL-BALAGHA

Peak of Eloquence

The book named Nahjul-Balagha was compiled and named as such by Abul Hasan Syed Muhammad Razi, generally known as Syed Sharif al-Razi (359-406AH).

He was a brilliant student of the great jurist AbuAbd Allah Sheikh Mufid. Before his death, he had produced forty other works of reference on al-Qur'an and Hadith. However his masterpiece remains the compilation of the book Nahjul-Balagha.

Syed al-Razi had come across the sayings, sermons and letters of Imam Ali scattered in various books of theology, history, biography, literature and the commentaries of al-Qur'an and Hadith. He found references made to a considerable collection of materials by the first century scholars that had been lost due to the turmoils of the time. He went back into the written materials available to him and with painstaking meticulousness, selected the spoken word of Imam Ali. He searched and obtained the authentic collections for his book. He could only classify these materials into sermons, letters and sayings of Imam Ali. Since the reference material came to his attention at different times, the extracted materials had no chronological sequence. He died five years after the completion of his book. It is probable that if he had lived longer, he would have re-edited his collection into chronological order or according to content or topic. It is clear that he considered the work sacred and devoted many years of his life to complete it. No sooner had it gotten published, than it became the center for interpretations and commentaries by many authorities of his time. Commentaries on the book have continued to be published right through the ages, and most of these works are currently available in many languages, including English.

The book Nahjul-Balagha, as compiled by Syed al-Razi contains a collection of 245 sermons, 75 letters and 210 sayings of Imam Ali. Apparently there were many more of these sermons and letters that were not available to Syed al-Razi at the time. It was Sheikh Muhammad Abdoh (d. 1323 AH), a *mufti* (jurist) in Egypt, who got the Nahjul-Balagha published and thus acquainted the centers of learning in Egypt and Beirut with the wealth of knowledge contained in this

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book. The reader is urged to obtain a copy of the book for himself and benefit from the wisdom and knowledge of Imam Ali.

THE DEWAN (COLLECTED POETRY) OF IMAM ALI

The eloquence of Imam Ali was exemplary among his peers and has remained unmatched to this day. His normal sermons used have a poetical rhyme in them. In fact the origin of the art and science of grammar in Arabic is ascribed to him. The poetical word of Imam Ali has been quoted in many classic works, and a *Dewan* is ascribed to him. Only two of his poetical works are quoted below:

(i) "Where hearts contain despair

And the spacious breast is stifled by what is within it,
And cares make their abode and repose,
And sorrows anchor in their habitations,
And no way is seen for dispelling of distress,
And the stratagem of the cunning availeth not;
There shall come to thee in thy despair a helper,
When the answerer of prayer who is nigh, shall bring
For all sorrows when they have reached their term,
There is linked to them an approaching joy."

(ii) "Men lust for the world and plot for it,

Yet its clearness is mingled for them with impurities.
They do not give thou of it thy portion
According to thy wisdom when it is distributed!
But men have their allotted shares according to their destinies,
How many there are of the wise and sagacious unprospered!
While a fool has gained his wealth by errors,
If it could be acquired by force and rapine,
Falcons would sweep off with the subsistence of sparrows!

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GNOSIS OF ALLAH ACCORDING TO IMAM ALI

(iii) "I know Allah by Allah, and I know that which is not Allah by the Light of Allah."

"I have seen the Face of Allah, for if I had not seen it, I could not worship Him!"

"The height of gnosis is His confirmation."

"The height of confirmation is *Tawhid* (Oneness)."

"The height of *Tawhid* is the acknowledgement of the supremacy of Allah in all matters."

"He is beyond all attributes."

"No particular attribute can give an idea of His exact nature."

"He is not bound by anything; all things are bound by Him."

"He is infinite, limitless, boundless, beyond Time, beyond Space, beyond imagination."

"Time does not affected Him."

"He existed when there was nothing."

"He will exist for ever."

"His existence is not subject to the laws of birth or death."

"He is manifest in everything, but He is distinct from everything."

"He is not the cause of anything; everything is because of Him."

"He is unique."

"He has no partner."

"He is The Creator."

"He creates as He destroys."

"All things are subject to His command."

"He orders a thing to be and it is."

(iv) Man is a wave in the boundless sea of Allah.

"As long as man's vision is clouded by ignorance and sensuality he will consider himself a separate entity, different from Allah.

"But when the veil between him and Allah is lifted, he will then know what he is"

(v) While living in the world do not renounce it, yet have no undue attachment to it. Detachment from it (*zuhd*) means attaining Allah.

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IMAM ALI, THE ORIGINATOR OF SUFISM (MYSTICISM)

Imam Ali is acclaimed as the *Father of Sufism*, and the *Prince of Saints*. Most Sufi orders claim their descent from Imam Ali and emulate him in his philosophy, gnosis and worship of Allah. Imam Ali held that men should be virtuous, as virtues purify the soul; and it is only the purified soul that can be the recipient of spiritual enlightenment. This is the doctrine of *Inner Light*, which sits in the core of the *Sufi thought*.

IMAM ALI, THE ORIGINATOR OF FIQH (ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE)

In the years prior to his own rule, Imam Ali was consulted by the preceding Caliphs in matters of Islamic law and judgment. It is said that even his archenemy Mu'awiya acknowledged his superiority in knowledge, and had consulted him on an unusual case of inheritance that he was unable to solve.

During his own rule, Imam Ali used to address the Muslims after the congregational prayers, and expounded on the Word of Allah, and elaborated its meanings and implications with the *Hadith and Sunna* of the Prophet. He spoke on the purity of Faith and the Fidelity in the ritual practices of religion, on Worship and Submission to Allah, on Charity and Alms giving, on the Conduct of one's individual life and one's interaction with the Society at large. With his letters to his governors, he gave specific instructions on how to deal with the Muslim and the non-Muslim subjects under their charge. All aspects of human fallibility were under his direct vision, and he explained to his subjects how to deal with them. Thus, in the light of Qur'an and *Hadith*, as well as his own illustrious conduct of life, he laid down the foundations of *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence). The reader is once again referred to larger biographical works on the Imam for details.

IMAM ALI ON KNOWLEDGE

- (vi) Knowledge is better than (worldly) wealth because: -"Knowledge is the legacy of the Prophets; wealth is the legacy of the pharaohs."

"Knowledge induces humanity in Prophets to say, 'O Allah! We worship Thee and are Thine servants; while wealth induces the pharaohs and the nimrods to claim godhead for themselves."

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"You have to guard your wealth, but knowledge guards you."

"When knowledge is distributed it increases, but when wealth is distributed it decreases."

"A man of wealth has many enemies, but a man of knowledge has many friends. "

"A man of knowledge has a wider outlook and is apt to be generous, but a man of wealth is apt to be mean and miserly."

"Knowledge gains in depth and dimension with lapse of time, but wealth in the forms of hoarded coins and currency become rusty and lose its value."

"You can keep an account of wealth because it's limited but you cannot keep an account of knowledge because it is boundless."

"Knowledge illuminates the mind, but wealth is apt to darken it."

(vii) The highest purpose of knowledge is the awakening of latent spiritual faculties whereby one is enabled to discover his true and inner self.

(viii) Any form of knowledge which failed to show the *infinite reality in* man was useless, because it could not fill that vacuum of which the aching soul of every individual was so pathetically conscious."

Selected Sayings of Imam Ali

(ix) You are ordained to recognize the Imam and obey.

- Anyone who has four attributes will not be deprived of their (four) effects:

- One who prays to Allah and implores to Him, will not be deprived of the granting of his prayers;

- One who repents for his thoughts and deeds will not be refused acceptance of the repentance;

-One who has atoned for his sins, will not be debarred from salvation;

-One who thanks Allah for His blessings and bounties, will not be denied, for their thanks increase them.

The truth of this is attested by al-Quran:

(x) As far as prayers are concerned, Allah says, "Pray thee to me and I shall accept thy prayers."

(xi) About repentance He says, "whoever has done a bad deed or has persuaded himself to sin, and then repents and asks for His forgiveness, he will find Allah most Forgiving and Merciful"

(xii) About being thankful He says, "If you are thankful for what you are given then I shall increase My Bounties and Blessings."

(xiii) About atonement of sins He says, "Allah accepts the atonement of those who have committed a vice without realizing its enormity and then atone for it. Allah accepts such atonements, He is Wise and omniscient."

(xiv) Half of the success in life is to acquire friends and sympathizers.

(xv) This world is not a place of permanent abode. It is a passage, a road on which you are passing. There are two kinds of people: -those who have sold their souls for eternal damnation; and those who have bought their souls and freed them from damnation.

(xvi) Minds get tired like bodies. When you feel that your mind is tired, then invigorate it

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with advice.

6. Obstinacy and stubbornness will not let you arrive at the correct decision.

7. In this world man is a target to the arrow of death, an easy prey of calamities and adversities:

- Here every morsel and every draught is liable to choke one;
- Here one never receives a favor until he loses another instead;
- Here every additional day in one's life is a day reduced from the total span of his existence;
- When death is the natural outcome of life how then can one expect immortality!

8. No wealth has more usefulness than intelligence and wisdom.,

- I. No solitude is more horrible than people avoiding you on account of your vanity and conceit or when you think you are above everybody to confide and consult.
- II. No eminence is more exalting than pity.
- III. No companion can prove more useful than politeness.
- IV. No heritage is better than culture.
- V. No leader is superior to Divine Guidance.
- VI. No deal is more profitable than good deeds.
- VII. No profit is greater than heavenly reward.
- VIII. No abstinence is better than refraining from indulging in doubts (about religion).
- IX. No virtue is better than refraining from prohibited deeds.
- X. No knowledge is superior to deep thinking and prudence.
- XI. No worship or prayers are more sacred than fulfillment of obligations and duties.
- XII. No religious faith is loftier than feeling ashamed to do wrong and bearing calamities patiently.
- XIII. No eminence is greater than humility.
- XIV. No exaltation or grandeur is superior to learning and knowledge.
- XV. Nothing is more respectable than forgiveness and forbearance.
- XVI. No support and defense is stronger than consultation and counsel.

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- XVII. Anyone who loves us (Able Bait) must be ready to accept a life of austerity.
- XVIII. Best deed of a great man is to forgive and forget.



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The Second Imam: Hasan ibne Ali (AS)

Name: Hasan

Title: al-Mujtaba

Epithet: Abu Muhammad

Father: Ali ibne Abi Talib (as)

Mother: Fatima binte Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam (pbuh)

Date of Birth: Ramadan 15, 3 AH (March 1, 625 AD)

Place of Birth: Medina

Progeny:

From Umm Bashir binte Abu Masud al-Khazraji:

One son: Zaid

Two daughters: Umm al-Hasan, Umm al-Husain

From Khawla binte Fazari:

One son: Hasan al-Muthanna

From Umm Is-haq binte Talha bin UbaidAllah al-Taimi

Two sons: al-Husain, Talha

One daughter: Fatima

He had many other children from other wives

Date of Death: Safar 28, 50 AH (March 6, 670 AD)

He lived to an age of 45 years

Place of Death: Medina

Place of Burial: Jannatul Baqi

LIFE OF HASAN (as) DURING

THE TIMES OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

The Holy Prophet was very happy when he heard the news of the birth of his grandson. He came to the house of Ali and his beloved daughter Fatima and named the child Hasan. He had

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the good fortune to be loved and nurtured personally by the Messenger of Islam for seven years before his death. He often carried his grand child on his shoulders.

As a youth, he witnessed the conflict between kufr (paganism, polytheism) and Islam. He saw his father, Imam Ali being victorious and playing the key role in many important battles with the non-believers. This was also the glorious time of Islam with the inception of the Muslim community in Medina under the Holy Prophet himself, and the rapid expansion of the message of Islam throughout the Arabian Peninsula.

Hasan was one of the five members of the Ahle Bait. It was in 9 AH when the Prophet of Islam took him along as one of the five who went out to face the challenge of the grand cardinals of Najran on the occasion of *Mubahala*, and witnessed the triumph of the Truth over Falsehood.

LIFE OF HASAN DURING THE TIMES OF IMAM ALI

As a growing youth, Hasan saw the active role of his father, Imam Ali, in the battlefield defending Islam, as a preacher to a vast congregation of believers on the occasion of Haj, and as a missionary of Islam to Yemen. After the death of his grandfather, the Prophet, he saw his father having retreated to a passive role in the matters of the state during the period of the first three caliphs. However, whenever he saw it necessary, Imam Ali never refrained from giving his opinion to the caliph of the time on matters of the practice of faith. He had also seen that the caliphs, in turn, respected Imam Ali for his overall knowledge, and consulted him on many occasions as the need arose.

When the third caliph was murdered by a mob of agitated demonstrators in his palace in Mad'mah, and Imam Ali was elected to lead the Muslim nation, Imam Hasan took active part in assisting his father in many ways. He went to Kufa and successfully raised the first army of believers against the dissenting Muslims. He participated actively in the battlefields of Basra, Siffeen and Nahrawan alongside his father, and demonstrated his skills as a soldier and as a leader.

Before he died, Imam Ali appointed Hasan to lead the nation of believers and to be their Imam after him. The people also chose him to be their Caliph.

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THE LIFE OF IMAM HASAN AS A CALIPH

Imam Hasan assumed the responsibility of the Caliphate after the martyrdom of his father, and the people of Kufa gave him the pledge of fealty. He addressed a large congregation of believers in the mosque and reminded them of the stand his father had taken in upholding the Truth, and that he would not change his course of conduct in any other way. He also reminded them of the deceitful way in which they were deprived of their victory over Mu'awiya, the defiant governor of Syria. He strongly urged them to search their hearts if they wished to achieve a stable and pious way of life under his rule.

Mu'awiya continued his unrelenting efforts to weaken the position of Imam Hasan from the seat of Caliphate. The Imam wrote him a letter inviting him for peace, and to join him in furthering the cause of a unified Islamic State. This called for Mu'awiya to accept Imam Hasan as the legitimate successor of the Caliphate. Mu'awiya had previously declined this in a similar communication from Imam Ali, and had carried arms against him.

Imam Hasan called up his forces from his pledged supporters. However, the army he could gather consisted of people with disparate motives. Although there were some true believers in the army, many others had joined in for the sake of war spoils and with divided loyalties. Thus, even some Kharjites had joined the army, not for the love of the Imam but, in the event of victory, for their own design of eliminating Mu'awiya from the Caliphate. There were others who had come, not because they believed in fighting for the cause of the Truth but because their tribal leaders had urged them to do so.

However, just before the impending war, Mu'awiya was able to break the strength of the Imams army by paying off some and diverting others away from him, and spread the rumors that the Imam had agreed to stop the war to save bloodshed of Muslims on either side. These rumors had their desired effect. The *Kharjis* saw a failure of their own goal through the forces of the Imam, so they turned against him. He received a bad slash on his thigh, and was quickly taken away by his supporters for care and tending. His army dispersed to escape a general massacre by Mu'awiya's forces.

The leaders of several tribes wrote to Mu'awiya for his clemency towards them in exchange for surrendering Imam Hasan to him. Mu'awiya sent all these letters to the Imam and offered him

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safe passage to Medina under all the conditions he chose for himself. To this end, he sent Imam Hasan a blank page with his stamps in the bottom of the page. Then Mu'awiya wrote, "In this page, whose bottom I have stamped, stipulate whatever you want, for that will be for you." The Imam, in his desire to avoid bloodshed and to uphold the unity of the Muslim *Ummah*, saw the advantage in accepting Mu'awiya's offer. He was well aware of the ploy of Mu'awiya during the days of his father, and he had seen his tactics during the Battle of Siffeen. He had seen Mu'awiya's devious means during his confrontation with him, and had seen the rift and loss of life of the Muslims on both sides. The apparent truce was a safe way out from the bitter confrontation. The Imam accepted peace in order to preserve the integrity of Islam. He wrote on the page provided by Mu'awiya all the conditions that suited him, his family and towards his role as the Imam of believers. It is unfortunate that this page is not valuable to us. However, the conditions laid down by the Imam have been mentioned in several authoritative works of history and biography.

THE PEACE TREATY

- (xvii) "Handing over authority to Mu'awiya provided that he should act according to the Book of Allah, the *Sunnah* of His Apostle, and the *Sira* (the conduct of life) of the righteous Caliphs."
- (xviii) "The authority should be for al-Hasan after him (Mu'awiya). If an accident happened to him (al-Hasan), the authority should be for his brother al-Husain. Mu'awiya has no right to entrust anybody (else) to it."
- (xix) "He (Mu'awiya) should abandon cursing the Commander of the faithful (Ali) as well as the practice of using personal prayer (*Qunut*) against him (al-Hasan) in *Salat* (the prescribed ritual prayers), and that he should not mention the name of Ali except in good manner." 4 "He (Mu'awiya) should keep excluded what is in the treasury of Kufa, that is five million (dirhams). So, handing over the authority does not include it (the sum of this money). Mu'awiya should send al-Hasan one million dirham per year, he should prefer banu Hashim in giving and gifts to banu Abd ash-Shams, and should divide one million (dirham) among the sons of those who were killed helping

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- the Commander of the faithful (Ali) in the Battle of the Camel and the Battle of Siffin and should spend that from the taxes of Dar Abjard."
- (xx) "The people should be safe wherever they are in the earth of Allah; in Sham (Syria), Iraq, Hijaz, Yemen, etc. He should give security to the black and the red alike. He (Mu'awiya) should bear their slips, should not follow some of them for the bygone, nor should he punish the Iraqis for hostility."
- (xxi) "The companions of Ali should be given security wherever they are; that he (Mu'awiya) should not expose them to any evil; that they should be given security over their lives, their properties and women and children; and that he should give them their rights."
- (xxii) "He (Mu'awiya) should not seek a calamity secretly or openly for al-Hasan or his brother al-Husain, nor for anyone from the progeny of Ahle Bait of the Apostle of Allah, nor should he frighten them in any country or territories."

Many historians have related that the text of this Peace Treaty was conveyed to Mu'awiya who read this in his court, and made a covenant with Allah to fulfill the conditions stipulated by Imam Hasan. It was not long after this event that Mu'awiya went back from his part of the covenant with Allah and put the Peace Treaty aside. He took pleasure in demeaning the Imam just as he had been doing to his father. The Imam decided to leave Kufa and return to Medina.

Marwan bin al-Hakam, who was the personal secretary to the third caliph, and had fought against Imam Ali during the Battle of Camel, was now the governor of Medina under Mu'awiya. He took personal pleasure in discharging Mu'awiya's wishes to slur the reputation of the Imam and his father. Needless to say that the Imam's life in Medina after the treaty of peace was not peaceful at all. In addition to the relentless taunts and abuse slung at him by Mu'awiya, the Imam had to endure the anger of his supporters for having relinquished the Caliphate to the lifelong enemy of himself and that of his father before him. They had failed to appreciate that Imam Hasan had given up his right in the larger interests of Islam, and to avoid further bloodshed of the Muslims. The Imam continued to deal with the abuse with patience and forbearance, and continued to uphold the Truth.

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THE MARTYRDOM OF IMAM HASAN

Mu'awiya was successful in deceitfully gaining the absolute power he had aspired for. He was not interested in the functions of preaching piety or theology. He was interested in expanding his sphere of influence in the territories already conquered by the Muslims, and was actively engaged in further conquests to the north and north west of Syria. In utter violation of the terms of the Treaty with the Imam, Mu'awiya decided to name his son Yazid to succeed him after his death. He knew that Yazid lacked all qualifications to be a caliph for the Muslims and to represent the Holy Prophet of Islam. He also knew that the Imam, being a true representative of the Prophet, would oppose the nomination of his son. Consequently, he decided to eliminate the opposition.

Mu'awiya solicited the services of Marwan bin Hakam, a son-in-law of the third Caliph, who was the governor of Medina at that time. With a promise for a reward, Marwan approached one of the wives of the Imam, Ju'da binte al-Ash'ath bin Qais to poison the Imam. He was successful, and the Imam died as a result of this plot.

Before he died Imam Hasan, in accordance with the Will of Allah, named his brother, Husain to be the next Imam. He expressed his wish to his brother to bury his body near to the grave of his grandfather, the Prophet of Islam. This caused an armed opposition by the governor of Medina. Under a shower of arrows, *the jenazh* (funeral procession) of Imam Hasan had to withdraw and be diverted to Jannatul-Baqi', the general graveyard of Medina, where he was buried.

REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE OF IMAM HASAN

Imam Hasan lived a life of piety mirroring the teachings of the Quran and the Sunna of the Prophet. The ten years he spent in Medina under the oppressive rule of Mu'awiya and his appointed governors, only revealed his tolerance and forbearance towards the abuse. Some followers felt that the Imam should have retaliated against Mu'awiya when he ignored the terms and conditions of the Treaty, oppressed them slung verbal abuses at them. But the Imam only pointed to the conduct of his father before him, who had endured similar

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circumstances without armed retaliation. He told his followers that he did not retaliate against the oppressor because the abuses that were being thrown at him were against his person and not against Islam.

THE TABLE OF IMAM HASAN

From the time of the assassination of the third caliph and the events surrounding Imam Ali's rule, the Ahle Bait had again come into focus. Many dignitaries and new Muslims from far off places sought audience with the Imam in Medina. They came to learn interpretations of the Quran, the teachings of Islam, and expounded the *seera* (the conduct of personal life) of the Prophet of Islam.

Imam Hasan adopted a unique method of teaching and preaching Islam. Even during the life of Imam Ali, the Table of Hasan was well known. Now with the increased visibility, the number of attendants had increased many folds. To accommodate them, he used to lay an extensive table for all his guests. While at the table, and with ample food in front of them the people sat down in peace and relative comfort to eat and listen. Thus, they were able to benefit from his teachings, and he was able to answer their questions.

The Third Imam: Husain ibne Ali (AS)

Name: Husain (as)

Title: Syed ush-Shohada'

Epithet: Abu Abdillah

Father: Ali ibne Abi Talib

Mother: Fatima binte Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam

Date of Birth: Sha'ban 3rd, 4th. AH (January 8, 626 AD)

Place of Birth: Medina

Progeny:

From Shahar Bano binte Khusroe Yazdigard III

One son: Ali (Abu Muhammad)

From Layla binte Abu Murra bin Urwa bin Masu

One son: Ali (Akbar)

From Rabab binte Imrual-Qays bin Adi

One son: Abd Allah (Ali Asghar)

One daughter: Sukayna

From Umm Ishaq binte Talha bin UbaydAllah Taimi

One daughter: Fatima Sughra

From a wife from the tribe of Qudhaa

One son: Ja'far

Date of Death: Muharram 10, 61 AH (October 10, 680 AD)

He lived to an age of 54 years

Place of Death: Karbala

Place of Burial: Karbala

THE LIFE OF HUSAIN

DURING THE TIMES OF THE PROPHET

The birth of second grandchild made the Prophet very happy. He came to the house of Imam Ali and his beloved daughter Fatima and named the newborn Husain.

It is quoted by many narrators that the Prophet often used to carry his two grandsons on his shoulders. When people remarked on how much he loved his grandsons, he used to say, "Hasan and Husain are the two princes of the youth of paradise." People also quote from him as praying to Allah by saying "O Allah, befriend those who befriend them and be the foe to whoever designs to hurt them."

Regarding Imam Husain, it is quoted from him saying, "Husain is from me and I am from Husain." It can only be inferred that this was the utterance of no ordinary man, out of love with the progeny of his daughter, but that of the Prophet of Islam about whom Allah says "Nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed..... 111:3.

For about six years, his grandfather, the Prophet of Islam, nurtured Husain just as his father had done before him. He was one of the five included in the Qur'anic verse of Tat-heer. He was the youngest of the representatives the Prophet of Islam took with him at the Mubahala with the Christians of Najran. The significance of this nurture and representation must not be underestimated. When the time came, he laid down his life and the lives of his family members, as well as his friends to defend the Message of Islam.

THE LIFE OF HUSAIN

DURING THE TIMES OF IMAM ALI AND IMAM HASAN

After the death of his grandfather, Imam Husain grew up during the times of the first four caliphs and saw the way his father, Imam Ali, conducted his affairs. When he was elected the Caliph to succeed Uthman, Husain actively participated in all assignments given to him by his father, whether in the mosque or in the battlefield.

Imam Husain manifested the acme of obedience towards Imam Hasan during his brief caliphate, and helped him actively on whatever was required of him. He concurred with him in

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the matter of the truce with Mu'awiya. He never raised his voice in the presence of Imam Hasan, and would not interject him when he was preaching or was replying to questions.

When Imam Hasan was dying from poison, given to him according to Mu'awiya's plot, he called his brother Husain to his bedside and passed the leadership of the faithful to him. Mu'awiya, who had taken his Treaty with Imam Hasan lightly, and had ignored it, made another violation, and a fateful one which was to change forever the course of Muslim history, Muslim Ummah in the future. In total disregard of his explicit understanding with Imam Hasan that he (Mu'awiya) was not to appoint his successor, he decided arbitrarily to appoint his son Yazid to succeed him as the ruler of the Muslim world. Yazid was known for his open display of a vicious life. Even though some of his courtiers had cautioned Mu'awiya against it, he started the campaign to recruit fealty for his son Yazid from all tribal chiefs and the prominent companions of the Prophet who were alive at the time. The Hashimite clan, led by Imam Husain refused to give their pledge of fealty to Yazid.

Mu'awiya lived for ten more years after the martyrdom of Imam Hasan, but the Hashimite clan was not forced into submission or subjugation. However, the verbal abuse and other tactics used to reduce their influence continued. Imam Husain continued his mission of peace and religious education to all those who sought it from him.

THE CONFRONTATION WITH YAZID BIN MU'AWIYA AND THE TRAGEDY OF KARBALA

Yazid had been raised in a life of luxury, and the principles or the practices of Islam were remote to him. He had seen the success in his father's cunning maneuvers against Imam Ali, and witnessed the insults slung at the Imam and the Ahle Bait of the Prophet in the Friday congregational prayers. He must have been made aware of Imam Ali's contributions towards establishing the Islamic State under the Prophet of Islam, and during which his pagan ancestors perished under the sweep of Imam Ali's sword. History has accounted that eighteen of the clan of Umayyah were slain in the Battle of Badr. Thus Yazid could harbor no love for Imam Ali or his progeny. Now that he himself controlled the vast Islamic empire, and that he himself wielded absolute power, he had the best opportunity of avenging the blood of his ancestors.

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As soon as he assumed the reins of the empire, Yazid decided to either obtain the pledge of unconditional submission from the Imam or to have him executed. His father had warned him about the steadfast nature of the Imam. It was not possible for the Imam to accept the wicked ruler as his religious leader; and he was also aware that Yazid would have him killed for this. In fact, Yazid had given specific orders to his cousin, Walid bin Uqba bin Abu Sufyan, the governor of Medina that if the Imam did not submit to his orders, he should be killed and his head be sent to him (Yazid) for confirmation.

The Imam did not wish to be killed by a political plot in Medina. He decided to leave the relative comfort of his home in Medina and marched towards Makkah on Rajab 28,60AH. He carefully selected those who would accompany him in his fateful journey.

Upon arrival of the Imam's group in Makkah, Sa'id bin As, the governor of Makkah vacated his seat and rushed to Medina to send first hand information to Yazid. Yazid appointed Umar bin Sad as governor of Makkah, again with the same specific orders against the Imam.

Yazid had realized that it was extremely difficult to have the Imam assassinated in Medina or Makkah, and that it would be relatively easy to carry out his wicked plot elsewhere. Twelve thousand letters were sent to the Imam, inviting him to come to Kufa and establish the righteous rule of true Islam. Some of these letters were signed by the respected companions of the Prophet. Imam Husain was duty bound to respond to the call from the faithful.

The Imam sent his cousin Muslim bin Aqeel to Kufa to size up the apparent support for him. Muslim hurried to Medina to pack for his long trip to Kufa, and took with him two of his young sons, Muhammad and Ibrahim aged 7 and 8 year respectively. As Muslim arrived in Kufa, he was greeted by thousands of apparent supporters. He sent a letter to the Imam saying that indeed there was a large enough support and that **the** people wanted the Imam to come and lead them on the path of Righteousness.

Yazid was waiting for his plan to mature. He sent Ubaidullah bin Ziyad to take charge from Nu'man bin Bashir, kill Muslim and send his head to him Damascus.

In the large mosque of Kufa, Muslim led the prayers with a huge number of apparent supporters. When Muslim turned to face the congregation at the end of his prayers, he found just a handful of believers staying behind him. Alas! It was too late to inform the Imam of the

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treachery of the Kufans. Muslim was unable to fight his way out of Kufa and was killed. This was followed by the slaughter of both of his young sons.

The Imam was in Makkah for about four months. He found that he could not perform his Hajj with safety. Yazid had sent his men disguised as pilgrims, with orders to kill Imam Husain. He decided that he would not have his blood spilled in the Holy Sanctuary. He only performed the Umrah instead of the full rituals of Hajj, and started his fateful march towards Kufa. His long supplication in Arafat is the epitome of the sincerity in prayers and exhibition of devout faith in the Will of Allah.

Umar bin Sa'd knew the price of failure. His counter part in Medina had failed to kill the Imam or to prevent him from leaving. He sent Yahya bin Sa'id to stop the Imam from leaving Makkah. However, he was unable to stall or stop the Imam who continued his journey towards his destination.

While he was well on his way, he learnt of the martyrdom of his cousin Muslim bin Aqeel. At that point, there was no turning back for the Imam. He decided to continue his march to face his destiny. On the way, he was intercepted by the army of Hurr, which forced the Imam's caravan away from Kufa on to a different direction, till it arrived in Karbala, a dreaded waterless desert.

It was in this wilderness that the small caravan of the righteous Imam was deprived of their basic necessities of food and water in the desert heat, and of their right to a safe passage out of the oppressive regime of Yazid. They were denied access to any support from their well wishers, and were instead encircled by a massive army of professional soldiers and were ruthlessly killed in the desert of Karbala on Muharram 10, 61 AH. In this massacre, eighteen Hashimites lost their lives. They were sons and grandsons of Ali, Ja'fari Tayyar and Aqeel, from the progeny of Abu Talib, the protecting guardian of the Prophet of Islam.

After the bloody battle, the martyrs were beheaded and their bodies were run over by the mounted soldiers. The tents were put to flame and the belongings of the survivors were looted. The survivors were first led to Kufa and then onwards to Damascus via a less frequented route, lest there be reprisals from the believers for the massacre of the family of the Prophet.

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Despite the extreme odds the Imam had faced in this confrontation, his strategy did not let this event emerge in the history as merely quelling of an insurgence from a dissident group against the power of the ruler of the time. Instead, he laid down his life and the lives of his family and friends as sacrificial offerings whose blood was spilled on the hot desert sand for no political ambition.

The survivors after the blood bath consisted of Ali ibn al-Husain, the sick young son of Imam Husain, who was unable to go out in the battle-field, but now had to assume the role of leadership, bound in shackles and hand-tied; Zainab binte Ali, the sister of the Imam; the widowed ladies and a bunch of children. The courageous captives could neither be silenced by the force of the army nor by the pain of the massacre of their loved ones they had just witnessed. They continued to introduce themselves at every stop made by the caravan, and in the court of Yazid the tyrant in Damascus. Whereas some members of this little 'army' of the righteous had fought in the battlefield with sermons and sword, the captives continued their mission by eloquent sermons to the masses who gathered along the route. This not only told people on what had happened to the family of the Prophet, but also served to rekindle life of faith in the dead conscience of the Muslims of the time.

Whereas the kingdom of the tyrant is long gone, the candles of Faith left burning by the Imam and his companions enlighten the conscience of Islam each time this story is told and retold. The annual commemoration of this event with energy and commitment by the devout believers that has survived through centuries despite the forces of oppression, is nothing less than a miracle. The believers continue to take out processions to demonstrate against tyranny, injustice and oppression against the bearer of the Truth. They congregate in gathering places and retell the painful story of the struggle between vice and virtue. They deny themselves comfort, food and water to relive the pain and suffering of their beloved Imam, his innocent family and his companions.

CHRONOLOGY OF IMPORTANT EVENTS

Rajab, 60 AH

Mu'awiya bin Abu Sufyan died at the age of 75 years. Yazid wrote to the governor of Medina, Walid bin Uqba to obtain the oath of fealty from Imam Husain. The Imam refused to relinquish his religious obligation to those who were steadfast in their practice of the Truth, and did not submit to the demands of Yazid.

Rajab 28,60 AH

The Imam gathered his select group of family and friends and left Medina for Makkah.

Sha'ban 3,60 AH

The Imam arrived at Makkah. Sa'id bin As vacated his seat in Makkah, and arriving at Medina, reported the popularity of the Imam among the Makkans. Yazid appointed Umar bin Sa'id as governor of Makkah and gave the same orders to him regarding the Imam. Imam Husain stayed in Makkah for approximately four months. It was here that the Imam received some twelve thousand letters petitioning him to come to Kufa and take charge of their religious needs.

Bound by his obligation to uphold the Truth and to serve Islam, the Imam had to respond to this apparently massive appeal by the people. He dispatched his beloved cousin Muslim bin Aqeel to Kufa to reassure the petitioners that he was prepared to come and live among them as they had wished. Thousands of Kufans apparently rallied behind Muslim. Encouraged by such response, Muslim wrote a letter to the Imam and appraised him of the situation in Kufa.

As the dates for Haj neared, Yazid sent Umar bin Sa'id with thirty Khawarij assassins and three hundred additional trained Syrian soldiers disguised as pilgrims to kill the Imam during the Hajj.

Zil Haj 8,60 AH

The Imam received the letter written by Muslim calling him to come to Kufa. Realizing the gravity of the plot to assassinate him in Makkah during Hajj, the Imam performed Umrah (the lesser Hajj) and left for Kufa.

Zil Hajj 9,60 AH

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Muslim bin Aqeel and his two young sons were killed and beheaded in Kula. The Imam learnt of the martyrdom of Muslim and his children when he had already covered his journey half way to Kula.

Muharram 1, 61 AH

The caravan of the Imam saw the crescent of Muharrum at the caravan stop known as Sharaf, at the out-skirts of Kufa. Hurr bin Riyahi, with his detachment of over one thousand soldiers stopped the Imam and diverted him towards the wilderness of Karbala.

Muharram 2

The Imam pitched his tents near the bank of Euphrates River. Now that he had fulfilled his obligation to the petitioners and, having written replies to as many of the letters as he could, he called upon them to come forward to fulfill their obligation towards him. On order from his commander-in-chief, Hur had the Imam remove his tents away from the waters of the Euphrates River.

Muharram 3

Umar bin Sa'id arrived with an army of twenty two thousand soldiers. Habib ibne Mazaahir was able to recruit ninety committed believers from the tribe of Bani Asad to come out 'in support of the Imam, but Ibne Ziad sent an army of four hundred soldiers to prevent them from reinforcing the Imam.

Muharram 4

Ibne Ziad addressed a large congregation of worshippers in Kufa and urged all those who had pledged fealty to Yazid, to come out and join his forces to eliminate the (little) army of the Imam.

Shimr came out, and he was despatched with an army of thousand strong. Ibne Rikab was sent out with two thousand men; Ibne Numair was given an army of four thousand soldiers. Ibne Rabina was given three thousand men; and Ibne Kharsha' two thousand armed soldiers.

Muharram 5

Sha'bath was despatched to Karbala with additional four thousand men. Urwah bin Qais was sent to join the others with four thousand soldiers. Ibne Anas was armed with ten thousand

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soldiers, Muhammad bin al-Ash'ath had one thousand men and Abdallah bin Hasein was given one thousand soldiers.

Muharram 6

Yazid's forces were further augmented with ten thousand soldiers under Khuli bin Yazid Asbahi; three thousand men under Ka'b bin Hurr; one thousand men under Hujaj bin Hurr. Additional men and supplies were sent over to support the enormous gathering of forces against the tiny caravan of the Imam. Ibne Ziad wrote to Umar bin Sa'd that he had been given enough supplies and man power to carry out his assignment, and that he must not delay or fail in it.

Muharram 7

Umar bin Hujaj was posted with four hundred of the best soldiers to guard the banks of river Euphrates. Additional forces were deployed to support the men under Umar bin Hujaj, four thousand soldiers were sent under Hajar and one thousand soldiers under Sha'bath bin Rabei. Having thus secured their positions around the riverbanks, the opponents of the Imam started off with verbal provocations.

Muharram 8

Water supply in the camp of the Imam was totally depleted. Abbas bin Ali, brother of the Imam, along with some companions was sent to get some water. He was successful in this mission. It was at this mission that he became known as "Saqqā-e Haram" (the Water Bearer of the family).

Next morning the Imam made a formal plea for water for the thirsty children in the camp, but his plea was denied. The Imam ordered that a trench be dug between the camp and the enemy and for digging a well for water. The companions of the Imam attempted to dig a well for water, but in vain.

Muharram 9

Imam Husain, accompanied by Abbas, again appealed to Ibne Sa'd for water but it was turned down. Both returned to the camp without water. Abbas and other strong members of the camp dug four other wells for water and saw water at the last attempt. However, before the thirsty children could have a sip, the enemy swarmed in and refilled the wells with the excavated dirt. A fifth attempt was foiled with brutal force.

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The Imam went out again, re-introduced himself with details about himself, his illustrious parents and his noble grandfather, the Holy Prophet of Islam, and asked the so called 'Muslims' in the opposite camp to allow him to obtain water for his companions on humanitarian grounds. His convincing address melted many hearts and there was some stir in the ranks. Shimr warned Umar bin Sa'd that if he wavered in carrying out the orders to kill Imam Husain without delay or compromise, he would be relieved of the charge.

With the final orders from Ibne Ziad on the ultimate fate of the Imam, Shimr offered Abbas and All Akbar safe passage out of Karbala, but these gallant soldiers of Truth refused to forsake the flag-bearer of Righteousness. Just prior to dusk, Shimr instigated an attack on the camp of the Imam. However, upon the request of the Imam, Abbas was able to win a reprieve from Ibne Sa'd on their final onslaught till the next morning.

The Eve of Muharram 10

The Imam addressed his friends and family and clarified his position to all of them. He told them that since the enemy wanted his head for refusal to accept Yazid as his superior, all others could leave the camp and save their lives. His devotees were deeply saddened at this address and reassured him that they had absolutely no doubt that they were on the right path, and there was nothing in the world that would make them forsake him at that hour.

Burair Hamdani could not bear the painful cries of the thirsty children. He went out with some companions to obtain water. The Imam sent Abbas for help. After a bloody fight in which some of the valuable companions lost their lives, they were able to return with only one bag full of water.

On reaching the camp, over twenty children rushed with their little cups for water. Unfortunately, this precious bag of water fell to the ground and its contents spilled on the desert sand. No one could get their thirst quenched. After that event, the Imam ordered everyone to return to their respective tents and spend the remaining night in prayers, glorifying Allah and the Holy Prophet.

Muharram 10: Morning

At daybreak, the army of Ibne Sa'd got organized to run down the Imam's camp. The Imam got up from his prayers and hurriedly organized his ranks. He ordered to light up the ditch he had

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prepared earlier, and ordered Abbas to try yet another time to dig a well for water. A well was dug but there was no water in it.

The army encircled the camp of the Imam. The Imam and his companions tried to avert war and requested safe passage out of Yazid's dominion but the bloodthirsty enemy would listen to none of it. Hurr who had enough time to reflect over his conduct, became perplexed. His conscience rebuked him for having forced the Imam to follow the desert route to Karbala instead of Kufa. He came to realize the just stand of the Imam, and walked away from the ranks along with his son, and joined the Imam's camp.

Hurr was well received by the Imam. He asked for his forgiveness, and for his permission to go and sacrifice his life in defense of the Imam and his cause. The Imam not only excused him but also expressed his helplessness to even offer a cup of water to his guest.

Ibne Sa'd shot his first arrow over the Imam's camp, which was then followed by a rain of arrows by his army. Hurr and his son were amongst the first to lay their lives in Karbala defending the Truth.

At the initiation of the battle some of the Imam's companions fought with such an energy and valor that Ibne Sad realized that it would cost him a lot of lives and time before he could carry out his ultimate goal of killing Imam Husain. He ordered his best marksmen to use their skills to eliminate his opponents in Imam Husain's camp. This strategy paid him off by shooting down about fifty percent of the Imam's supporters.

The Imam came out with about thirty-two of his surviving force and fought the enemy with great bravery on all fronts. Ibne Sa'd again ordered his marksmen to do their precision shooting that reduced the Imam's ranks to only a handful of men who were injured and were unmounted.

Muharram 10: Mid-day

Imam Husain and his remaining companions gathered to offer their Zuhr prayers. Two of the companions shielding the Imam died receiving arrows and spears on their bodies. As the prayer finished, another companion received his martyrdom. After the last of his companions had received their martyrdom, Imam Hussain was left with only the members of his family.

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Abbas was killed at the bank of the river attempting to secure water for the remaining family and children. Imam Husain's son Ali Akbar was killed in battle. The Imam took his infant son Ali Asghar, only six months old, to the battlefield to show his enemies that the infants are innocent by all laws of humanity and that they should give water lest the child died of water deprivation. The throat of the infant was pinned down over the Imam's shoulder with an arrow from Hurmala, the best marksman from Ibne Sa'd's army. .

At the end, the Imam came out to fight a lonely but brave battle, cutting down many in the process. He himself received many wounds, and innumerable arrows pierced his body. As he fell down from the back of his horse, he bowed down in sajdah (prostration to Allah) and reached out to the Almighty, seeking His Grace and praying for accepting his service. Shimr slaughtered the Imam, and separated his head from his body. The headless body of the Imam and other martyrs was then run over by the mounted soldiers before returning to their ranks.

Muharram 10: Evening

The army now over-ran the camp and snatched every belonging the bereaved women and children had. The tents were put to flame, women were beaten and children teased and slapped. It is said that later in the evening, Hurr's widow brought food and water to the smoldering encampment of widows and beleaguered children.

Muharram 11

The survivors were marched towards Kufa, women on camels without seats and the only adult male survivor, Ali Zain al-Abideen afoot, hand tied and in shackles. The captives were kept in jail in Kufa for a few days and then carried to Damascus via a less frequented route.

Rabi-ul Awwal 16, 61 AH

The caravan of the survivors of the Imam's army arrived in Damascus. The duration their captivity in Damascus is uncertain. By some accounts, it was for of about one year, after which they were then sent back to Medina via Kufa.

Safar 20, 62 AH

The captives came back to Karbala with reminiscence of the fateful events of the previous year.

Rabi-ul Awwal 8, 62 AH

The caravan of the survivors returned to Medina.

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ZAINAB BINTE ALI, THE SISTER OF IMAM HUSAIN

Zainab binte Ali holds a very high place in the history of Islam, with special reference to the bloody massacre of the Ahle Bait of the Prophet in Karbala and its aftermath. The success of Imam Husain's mission as well as the education of the masses is owed to her. Her pains as the bereaved mother of her own martyred sons, as the aunt to her slain nephews and to the sufferings of her little nieces, as sister of the martyred Imam, and her own individual personality as a woman, emerged with amazing force and courage in the face of the worst calamity any family could have ever faced. Because of the significant role she had played, it is pertinent to include a brief biography of this beacon of Faith here.

Zainab was born in Medina on Sha'ban 1, 6 AH. Her mother was none other than Fatima, the beloved daughter of Prophet Muhammad. Her father was Ali, the gallant champion of Islam and the first Imam after the Prophet. At about the time of her birth, her father was actively serving the Prophet in the defense of Islam against its archenemy, the Umayyad Abu Sufyan. She was too small to comprehend the significance of her father's involvement or its far-reaching consequences years later in her life. However, it was her good fortune to receive the nurture from her grandfather, the holy Prophet for the first five years of her life. The Prophet died in 11 AH, and soon after that she lost the affections of her mother forever. She grew up under the supervision of her father, Imam Ali. She was very attached to her father and closely emulated him in his character and conduct. Although both of her brothers, Hasan and Husain were older to her, she was the eldest daughter of Imam Ali. She had learnt to assist her mother at an early age, and had to assume the management of the household after her death.

She was married to her cousin Abdullah bin Ja'far-e Tayyar when she was only eleven years of age. However, she continued to live with her father for several years before joining her husband. She had no luxury item in her home, and like her father, she lived an extremely simple and disciplined life. She never missed her prayers, and worshiped Allah with great devotion.

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She was renowned for her knowledge and was sought after by her female peers for the teachings and the practice of Islam as well as for the interpretations of the meanings of al-Qur'an.

She moved to Kufa with her husband when Imam Ali made that city the seat of his caliphate. She was about 36 years of age when her father was martyred in the main mosque of Kufa. During this span of her life, she had witnessed many significant changes in the land and people of Arabia.

The death of her grandfather, the great leader and the Prophet of Islam occurred when she was at the impressionable age of five years. She saw the grief this had brought to her parents, and especially to her mother. The death of her mother within a few months must have brought a revolution in her tender life. She must have witnessed the grief this event had brought to her father. The inevitable shift of leadership had brought a clear shift of popularity by the people from the house of the Prophet to that of the house of the new Caliph. This change must have made her very sad.

She must have seen the fervor in connection with the expansion of Islam to far off lands and the activity that must have generated in Medina during the reign of the Second Caliph. As she grew up, she must have observed and pondered why her father was kept away from participating in the Caliphate, and also why he had chosen not to use force to establish his rights. When the controversy occurred over the conduct of the Third Caliph, she was of mature age, and saw how the senior companions of the Prophet got involved with the plot and the assassination of the Caliph. This was a time of crisis for Islam. The danger to the integrity of Islam this time was not from any outside force, but it was from amidst its own core. The Ummah remembered Ali again. The same Ali, who had been the foremost soldier of Islam, the savior and the defender of the Faith from its very inception. He was elected to the Caliphate by a popular vote. However, within days of his election, these very supporters started to brew opposition to the new caliph, leading to a series of bloody confrontations among the Muslims. Mu'awiya, son of Abu Sufyan, the governor of Syria and Palestine, took the opportunity to fuel the sparks of dissent and became the major opponent of the Caliphate of her father. She saw the battles where "Muslims" led by senior and respectable companions of the Prophet drew

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swords against the Righteous Caliph. It was a time of immense confusion for the people, and a sad time for her father who had spent his youth serving the Prophet against the infidel towards establishing the very Islamic Community that he now had to fight against. The people became confused and divided.

Mu'awiya, with his long-standing government, regular army and financial resources, spared no effort to baffle the stability of Imam Ali's caliphate. He sent raids in the Yaman, Hijaz and Basra. He slung abuses at the Caliph from the pulpit, and had this carried out in the Friday prayers throughout his provinces. He did not stop his negative propaganda against the members of the Ahle Bait even after the martyrdom of Imam Ali.

Zainab saw the government of Imam Hasan fizzle away under pressure from Mu'awiya, and knew the circumstances under which he had to hand over the charge of the Caliphate to Mu'awiya. Mu'awiya betrayed the terms of the truce. In the document of truce, Imam Hasan had stipulated that the government of the Caliphate was being transferred to Mu'awiya for his lifetime only, and that he would not appoint his successor to the Caliphate. This truce lasted for about ten years. But when the time came, Mu'awiya had Imam Hasan martyred with poison and appointed his own son Yazid to succeed him. Soon afterwards he died.

Coming of Yazid to power brought a relentless pressure to Imam Husain to accept Yazid as the representative of the Prophet of Islam, or lose his life for refusal to do so. The governor of Medina had specific orders to obtain unconditional submission from the Imam or have him killed. Knowing the character and the conduct of Yazid, the Imam could not comply. She knew why Imam Husain just could not submit to the demands of Yazid. The entire back ground to these developments was known to Zainab. Her brother was the Imam of the time, and had the vested responsibility to protect and defend the spirit of the Truth. He decided to quit Medina. Zainab accompanied her brother on this fateful journey. She saw how carefully the Imam selected members of his clan who would accompany him. They represented the progeny of Aqeel, Ja'far and Ali, all from the progeny of Abu Talib.

She accompanied her brother to Makkah, and then onward to Karbala. By now, she had aged to 57 years, and had been amidst many grave changes in the behavior of the Ummah. She dearly loved her brother and was constantly in consort with him on all his decisions and

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moves. She was convinced that the little caravan of the Imam had come out to uphold the Truth at any cost. On Muharram 10, 61 AH she sacrificed two of her youngest sons in defense of the Truth and assisted her brother mount his horse when he finally left and faced his martyrdom. She witnessed the deaths of the companions of the Imam followed by the members of his own clan.

The leadership that Zainab exhibited did not begin on the eve of Muharram 11, but throughout the journey as well as during the encampment in the desert of Karbala. However, when all the adult males had laid down their lives at the altar of Truth, except Imam Ali Abid, who was ill with fever, the manifest leadership of the widows and children became the responsibility of Zainab. The heat of the desert, three days of total thirst for man and beast, the scenes of death and terror, and torching of their tents towards the evening complicated the duties of leadership of Zainab.

The Imam had given his supreme sacrifice and was there no more. The detached heads from the bodies of the martyrs had been hoisted atop spears. All belongings of the survivors had been -snatched, including the hijabs (body wraps) from the ladies. Hands tied behind their backs, on bareback camels, the survivors were taken through the streets of Kufa, where Zainab had been before under different circumstances, when her father was alive, and her brothers were by her side. These circumstances would be enough for any self-respecting lady to cry out or faint. Zainab, with all her background and the most recent wounds of grief and suffering displayed great courage and fortitude. She addressed the killers of her loved ones in the manner that befitted them. When the caravan was marched through the streets of Kufa, she told the story of Karbala to the excited mob that had gathered to see them.

The masses were oblivious to the events of Karbala. Among the mob there were people who were loyal to the cause of the Truth. The oratory of Zainab pierced their hearts and stiffed their egos. The governor of Kufa and his supporters did not realize that a woman captive of Karbala would represent the martyred Imam Husain and his companions with such boldness, and would make their ill deeds known to people wherever the caravan was taken.

Zainab had both courage and strength in her apparent weakness. The captors had shown no mercy at the bereaved women and children in Kufa or during their journey to Damascus. It was

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the energy of Zainab that kept their will to live strong and to endure the hardships thrust at them.

The captives of Imam Husain's camp were taken to Damascus through a less frequented northern route. Many children could not withstand the perpetual fatigue and grief, and succumbed en-route to Damascus. As the survivors of the Imam's camp made stops at various settlements along the route, the simple and uninformed people brought food and clothing for the captives out of sympathy. Zainab took the opportunity of telling the people that they were the family of the Prophet and how Yazid had subjected them to such a tyrannical treatment. She repeated the story of the martyrs and preached to them the nature of the conflict as well as the Truth.

The superb Jihad of Zainab in the court of Yazid brought alive the Jihad of Imam Husain. The entire experience of her life long observations was now translated into the address she gave in the court of Yazid, and is appended in the section that follows below. It was through this oratory that the courtiers of Yazid got their education about what had transpired in Karbala. The apparent victory of the tyrant was converted to his shameful loss. The captives remained in the Syrian prisons for about one year. Some children died during this captivity.

When the tyrant decided to release the captives, Zainab asked for a large open space where she could accommodate people who wished to come to them for homage and condolence. This, in effect was the first formal majlis (the commemorative gathering) whose tradition was thus initiated by Zainab, the sister of Imam Husain. On their way back to Medina, the caravan of the captives came via Karbala. Zainab again took the opportunity to tell the story of the gruesome massacre of the family of the Prophet undertaken by Yazid and his captains.

The home coming for Zainab was very different from that of her departure, when she was surrounded by brothers, nephews and sons. Now they were no more. Grief, fatigue and suffering had made her so weak and haggard that many were unable to recognize her. The family and residents of Medina came out to meet the survivors of Karbala. They all shared the grief with each other and attempted to lower their burden of sorrow and suffering. However, for Zainab, life without the loved ones was worth nothing. She could never stop crying over the calamity of the family and lived approximately eighty days after her return visit to

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Karbala. There is controversy over the date of her death, and was most likely on Zilhaj 16, 62 AH.

ZAINAB'S ADDRESS IN THE COURT OF YAZID

In the Name of the Beneficent and Merciful.

All praises to Allah, the Creator of the entire universe.

And salutations to the Prophet and his Ahle-Bait:

Allah has revealed in His Book: "Evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the communications of Allah and used to mock them.

O Yazid: Having wrought such ill deeds and ill treatment to us, the family of the Prophet, you think- that you have managed to reduce our status, and thus have enhanced your own, and you feel that you have achieved the ultimate success in this life?

You think that the span of your rule and the wealth and power you weald was of your own making? Just wait a while, for the Judgment of Allah isn't far. Just hear this: "And let not those who disbelieve think that our granting them respite is better for their souls; we grant them respite only that they may add to their sins; and they shall have a disgraceful chastisement. "

O You the progeny of those who were set free by us: Is this justice? Is this the way you would repay us? Your own slaves and maids have their hijabs on, and we have been deprived this? And we have been carried from dwelling to dwelling in such a demeaning condition?

O Yazid: You are responsible for the way we have been treated all the way to your court. None of your captains had any mercy on women or children who had lost their loved ones in the heat of the desert at their hands and by your orders.

O You the offspring of the one who chewed up the liver of the m@, how could you be merciful? Yeah, with the hate in your heart for the family of the Prophet, how could you show mercy on the captive survivors of the bloody massacre?

O Yazid: What you are saying and what you are doing to the lips and teeth of the head of the martyr was the very place Prophet himself had kissed often. You are calling upon your elders to witness how you have avenged them today. You are forgetting that they were infidels and had asked for their own ends. Beware that you have taken the same path, and your own end would

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not be any different from theirs. When you join them you will regret what you had been uttering or what you had done. But alas, that would be too late.

O Yazid: Verily you have ruined your own conduct forever. You win face Allah and the Prophet and will be accountable for the blood of the progeny of the Prophet. Allah has revealed in His Book: "And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead, nay, they are alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord." The Day of Judgment isn't far. Those who facilitated you to this position are also accountable for these sins towards the Faith and the faithful.

O Yazid: This certainly is circumstantial that I am here and have to address you in my present predicament. Yeah, I cannot stop the tears in my eyes and pain in my heart. Those who were the chosen of Allah you have slain for no sin but for fulfillment of your passion for revenge. You are worse than your elders. They had refused to accept the path of righteousness and had come out to fight the Messenger of Islam but you are supposedly on the Path but have chosen a perilous reversal from it.

Remember: What conduct you have adopted has a bitter end. There is Mercy in the way of Allah. We only look towards Him for favors, and only trust Him for salvation.

O Yazid: You may carry out all that you have a desire for and fulfill all your wishes. Beware: Our teachings and philosophy shall prevail, because we are the flag carriers of the Truth. You cannot diminish our status or popularity.

You are the loser. You will not only lose today but are a loser for all times. Your days are numbered, and you will face the doom alone with all your friends and supporters. Have you read Qur'an, and did you come across this ayat? If you haven't, then hear this: "And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah? These shall be brought before their Lord, and the witnesses shall say: These are they who lied against their Lord. Now surely the curse of Allah is on the unjust."

All praises are to the Supreme One, the Creator of the entire universe, the One who gave us the illustrious ancestors before, and loved ones now who laid down their lives in His way. For us, as mentioned in the Book, the Grace of Allah-suffices: "Those to whom the people said: Surely men have gathered against you, therefore fear them; but this increased their faith, and they said: Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector.

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REFLECTIONS FROM THE LIFE OF IMAM HUSAIN

The Imam had witnessed the life and the conduct of his father and his elder brother, the two preceding Imams, and was now the third in the series himself. He had participated actively in the field to fight against falsehood under Imam Ali, and by peaceful means under Imam Hasan. During his own time, he had to take drastic steps in the form of martyrdom to preserve the dignity of the Faith and the Truth. He, for all times, settled who the rightful custodians of Islam were and who the usurpers were. He, more than amply, paid back the Umayyad clan with the precious Hashimite blood from the progeny of Ali ibne Abi Talib, the champion of Islam the victor of all battles led by the Prophet against the infidel clans of Quraish and other tribes of the Arabs. After Karbala, no ruler in Islam could ever claim to be the spiritual Imam of the Muslim Ummah.

Imam Husain set the criteria of faith, piety and sacrifice for all times. He made the struggle for human dignity as top priority against forces of tyranny and oppression. With the blood of his sacrifice, he gave life to Islam. He re-introduced the spirit of true Islam into the Muslims of his time as well as for all times to come.

While he was in Medina, he lived a life of piety and remained totally involved with the lives of people around him. He answered their questions, interpreted the meanings of Qur'an and educated them in their daily lives.

Once a man said to the Imam that being a fallible human, he was unable to avoid sin. He wanted the Imam to guide him so that he could be reformed. The Imam said to him, "A person would commit sin if he could: avoid benefiting from the benevolence of Allah, escape from the Kingdom of Allah, or from His Grasp, go to a place where Allah cannot see him, control his death and destiny, and avoid the inferno of hell on the Day of Judgment!"

Once he told his followers, "Consider this life as your total wealth. As you spend it, this wealth continues to diminish. You should ponder on what you have acquired as you spend this wealth. So be alert. Do not lose it in any further transaction!"

Once he said, "People are grossly indulged in the worldly matters, and only pay lip service to matters of faith. When faced with the test of their faith, the adherents to the Truth are but a few."

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The Fourth Imam: Ali ibne al-Husain (AS)

Name: Ali
Title: Zain al-Abideen
Epithet: Abu Muhammad
Father: Husain bin Ali
Mother: Shabar Bano binte Yazdigard III
Date of Birth: Jamadiul Awwal, 37 AH (January 6, 659 AD)
Place of Birth: Medina
Progeny:

From Umm Abd Allah binte al-Hasan

One: Muhammad (al-Baqir)

He had many other children from other wives

Date of Death: Muharram 25, 95 AH (October 20, 713 AD)

He lived to an age of 54 years

Place of Death: Medina

Place of Burial: Jannatul-Baqi'

THE LIFE OF ALI IBN AL-HUSAIN FROM BIRTH TO THE TRAGEDY OF KARBALA

Imam Ali Zain al-Abideen was only two years of age when his grandfather, Imam Ali (the First Imam) was killed during prayers in the month of Ramadan in the main mosque of Najaf (near Kufa). He was a youth of fourteen years when he saw the life and the painful death of his uncle Imam Hasan (the Second Imam). He was about twenty-three years of age when he accompanied his father, Imam Husain (the Third Imam) and witnessed the events of the tragedy of Karbala. Before he finally left his camp, Imam Husain came to the bedside of his sick son Ali, and bestowed the onerous duty of Imamate on him.

Imam Ali ibn al-Husain survived the massacre only because he was physically unable to go out to the battlefield due to his sickness. However, on the next day after **the** blood bath of his family and friends, he was hand tied and put in shackles, and marched on foot from the

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battlefield, first to Kula and then to Damascus. On this journey of painful suffering, his aunt Zainab binte Ali ibne Abi Talib, the sister of Imam Husain and other surviving widows and children, accompanied him.

After Karbala, he lived for another thirty-four years under the tyrannical rule of several Marwanid caliphs who took personal gratification in inflicting abuse and torture to him and his followers.

THE JOURNEY OF THE CAPTIVES OF KARBALA

The hand-tied captives were not tongue-tied. Despite the recent inflections of the loss of loved ones in the battlefield, lack of recuperation from the torturous thirst and starvation of women and children, the rag tag caravan manifested tremendous courage by defying their physical difficulties and continuing to preach the truth to the on-lookers who had gathered to line up the caravan route.

The apparent victors were pleased with their achievement of the decimation of the Imam's camp. During their passage through the streets and bazaars of Kufa, the eloquent speeches made by the captive sister of Imam Husain, and his son Imam Ali Zain al-Abideen told their painful story to the onlookers who had come to line up the caravan route. When they learned and realized who the captives were, they cried out aloud and openly rebuked the killers of the family of the Prophet of Islam. From then on, the caravan was led to Damascus via an unfrequented route to prevent possible reprisals.

The retelling of the story by the captives continued every inch of the way to the palace of Yazid. This rendered an extremely valuable service to the cause of Imam Husain and made the victors look aggressors thirsty for the blood of the Imam and his family. They were then thrown in prison for a period of over one-year. Many children and the weak succumbed to fatigue and grief throughout the caravan route as well as within the prison.

RETURN OF THE CAPTIVES TO MEDINA

When the caravan of the survivors arrived in Medina, the family and friends of the Imam met and told the events of the previous year to each other. Some devotees were so overwhelmed with grief that they took a trip to Damascus in 63 AH to protest against Yazid and his deeds. This infuriated the tyrant caliph. He unleashed his Syrian army on to Medina under a

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most ruthless Umayyad commander named Muslim bin Uqba. There was a bloody battle at Harrah al-Waqim, a small town just north of Medina. Thousands of Madinan Muslims perished along with many learned and respectable elders. After the battle the soldiers ravaged the city for three full days, burning property, and looting freely homes and businesses. They drank without any inhibition and thronged the streets throwing obscenities on the surviving residents. Horrible was the havoc the Syrians played on life and limb and chaste womanhood. It is said that when they departed, they left many families and the city in utter ruins.

After the sack of Medina, Muslim bin Uqba proceeded to Makkah to subdue and arrest the separatist Abd Allah bin Zubayr. However, on the way Muslim died near the town of Jaffa, and the command passed over to Haseen bin Numayr al-Sakooni. Approaching Makkah, they occupied the surrounding hills, and laid siege to the city for sixty-four days. They threw projectiles of fire and rock on the city causing ruinous damage to the holy sanctuary. It was at this time that the news of the death of Yazid was received and the siege of Makkah was lifted. The tyrant Umayyad captain withdrew to Damascus. This gave the much-needed reprieve to the self-proclaimed caliph of Makkah, Abd Allah bin Zubayr. He started to rebuild the holy mosque and to repair the damages caused by the Umayyad army.

There was not even a single day in the life of the Imam after Karbala that he was seen without tears in his eyes. He used to pray to Allah with such intensity and devotion that he earned the names of Syed u's-Sajad, al-Abid and Zain al-Abideen.

THE LIFE OF IMAM ZAIN AL-ABIDEEN DURING OTHER UMAYYAD CALIPHS OF HIS TIME

The tragedy of Karbala brought a wave of turmoil in the heartland of the Muslim world as well as to the house of Abu Sufyan.

After the death of Yazid bin Muawiyah in 64 AH, the succession to the throne came to his son Muawiyah bin Yazid. However, he declined it. He considered the Caliphate to have been usurped by his family, and refused to have anything to do with it. For forty days, he did not leave his quarters in the palace. It is said that he died there with the cause of death unknown. Marwan bin Hakam, who had been managing the government during this period of

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lull, declared himself the next caliph. However, the caliphate of Marwan was only short lived. He died in the year 65 AH and his son Abd al-Malik became the Caliph.

After Karbala, there was a faction of the believers who felt penitent over their betrayal of Imam Husain, and having the Umayyads butcher the innocent members of his family. This is known as the *Tawwabun* movement. They mustered a force of 16,000 strong under Sulayman bin Surad and marched towards Syria. The Umayyad force met them at Ain ul-Wada on the Euphrates. The Tawwabun charged with desperate passion, but perished at the hands of the superior Syrian army. Only a few returned to tell the story of the disaster.

There were others who were confused over why Imam Ali Zain al Abideen was not taking up arms against the tyranny of the Umayyads. They converged towards Muhammad-e-Hanafia, the pious uncle of the Imam and wanted him to lead them against the tyrants. However, the question over the rightful successor to Imamate was settled in favor of Imam Ali Zain al Abideen the two met for Haj in Makkah. The separatists were not satisfied as the Imam refused to take up arms against the ruler or to participate in any political ambition.

The death of Yazid did bring a new wave of revolution in the province of Hijaz. Abd Allah bin Zubayr became more active in Makkah in pursuit of his campaign for a separatist movement which he had started in 64 AH. He was able to gather support for his claim from Hijaz, as well as the provinces of Iraq and Yemen. After establishing his rule in these provinces, he started his own campaign of revenge against the friends and the family of Imam Ali on account of the disposition of his father who had joined the army of Ayesha in the battle of The Carnel. The veterans like the pious Muhammad Hanafia and Ibne Abbas, among others, were arrested for execution. However, they were salvaged by the short rule of Mukhtar that had just been established in Kufa in 64 AH.

After the disaster of Ain ul-Wada, the Kufans rose again under Mukhtar bin Abu Ubaid al-Thaqafi. They sacked the governor of Abd Allah bin Zubayr and installed Mukhtar as their caliph. Mukhtar approached Imam Ali Zain al-Abideen to endorse his political venture against the Umayyad tyrants, and to lead his followers. The Imam declined his invitation. However, Mukhtar then turned to Muhammad-e-Hanafia and was able to enlist him to be his patron. Thereafter, in the year 66 AH, in a series of successful battles, his forces rounded up

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the captains of the Umayyad army who were responsible for the massacre of Karbala and the sack of the holy cities of Medina and Makkah, and had them beheaded for their despicable crimes.

In 67 AH, Abd Allah bin Zubayr regained control of the province of Iraq and sent his own brother Mus'ab bin Zubayr against Mukhtar. The city of Kufa was besieged and taken. Mukhtar was defeated and killed in battle.

When Abd al-Malik became the caliph, Abd Allah bin Zubayr was fairly established in Hijaz and Iraq. He decided to reclaim Hijaz and Iraq under the Umayyad rule. He chose Hujaj bin Yusuf as his right hand commander and despatched him to Iraq to subdue the rebel provinces. To this end, the caliph and his governor together earned for themselves the title of the most cruel and tyrannical rulers in the history of Islam. Hujaj achieved his goals by a whole sale massacre of all those who claimed any connection with Imam Ali or his progeny. The holy city of Makkah was ransacked once again, and slaughtered the separatist Abd Allah bin Zubayr in Makkah in 73 AH. His head was hung over the main road leading in and out of the city. Most Aliyyids and their followers ran for their lives and escaped to the relative safety of lands on the outer periphery of the kingdom. With the elimination of Mukhtar in Iraq, and Abd Allah in Hijaz, the entire Muslim world once again came under the rule of a single Umayyad Caliph. New conquests started at the Far West and Far East of the Caliphate, and the Caliph was able to attend to the consolidation of the internal affairs as well.

However, in the same vein as his predecessors regarding the Hashimite clan, the Caliph Abd al-Malik also kept a watchful eye on the Imam and his family. He used to call the Imam periodically to his court in Damascus. When Abd'al-Malik died in 86 AH, his son Walid succeeded him to the throne.

Walid was also a tyrant in his own ways. For the next ten years of his rule, he maintained the tradition of his predecessors and did not spare the Imam from his abuse. When he decreed that the Prophet's mosque at Medina be enlarged the contiguous grounds were obtained by evicting the Hashimites from their homes without compensation.

The few devout believers that survived the relentless persecution of the rulers of the time were grieved at the amount of abuse thrown at the Imam. Once some one taunted the Imam while

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he was heading to Makkah for Hajj, and said, "You have chosen the relative ease of the Haj in favor of the difficulty of Jihad." The Imam replied, "Only if I had true believers behind me, I would change my Hajj to Jihad."

Despite the difficult times faced by the Imam he continued his service to Islam and to all those who sought from him the interpretation of al-Qu'ran or the Sunnah of the Prophet. He managed to convey the lessons of the belief and the practice of Islam by a unique medium. He did this through prayers and supplications. These have been collected in the form of a book popularly known as SAHIFAHAS-SAJJADIYYA. An elegant English translation of this book is now available.

THE MARTYRDOM OF IMAM ALI IBN AL-HUSAIN

Even the very existence of the pious Imam was considered a threat by the rulers of his time. Hisham, a brother of Abd al-Malik, poisoned the Imam who died in Medina in the year 95 AH, at the age of 57 years. He was buried in the graveyard of Jannat ul-Baqic. Before his death, the Imam called his son Muhammad and entrusted the responsibility of the Imamate to him.

Although his son Muhammad al-Baqir fulfilled the needs of the believers by carrying out the functions of his assignment with spectacular brilliance, the painful death of his father left a void in the lives of his companions. People remembered the Imam for his, forbearance, piety, patience, and knowledge, and for the sufferings he had to endure throughout his life.

His aunt Zainab, the sister of Imam Husain, shared the life and suffering of the Imam. Together they had turned the tide of aggression into a lasting lesson for humanity. Whereas Imam Husain had laid down his own life along with that of his beloved family and friends in the desert of Karbala, Imam Ali ibn al-Husain and his aunt Zainab binte Ali ibne Abi Talib completed the vital mission of disseminating the Truth to the ignorant and confused nation of the Muslims and their rulers.

AS-SAHIFAHAS-SAJJAIYYA

The Book of as-Saijad

Imam Zain ul-Abideen is also known as-Sajad. Both names denote to his constant prostration in prayers. This book has another popular name *as-Sahifah al-Kamila as-Sajjadia* (The Complete

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or Perfect Book of as-Sajad). The book contains fifty-four supplications (and fourteen addenda), and fifteen *munajat* (whispered prayers). Many supplications were handed down from the Imam and carried by oral tradition from generation to generation. These were collected in later times by researchers and added to the written works. They are called the Second Sahifa, through to the Fifth Sahifa. Only the authoritative chain of traditions was used for the addenda in' the subsequent Sahifas. The first addenda were appended to the Sahifa by *ash-Shaheed al-Awwal* (the first martyr) Shams ud-Din Muhammad ibne Makki (d. 786 AH). The fifteen *munajat* were appended by Allama Muhammad Baqir Majlisi (d.1110 AH). The Sahifa was updated with addenda by various authorities in the same era as Allama Majlisi.

In Islam, supplications have a pivotal role in all forms of prayers. The supplicant first offers his prayer to Allah, and then spreads his hands to seek His bounty and benevolence. The supplications have the several names of Allah describing His various qualities. The supplicant glorifies Allah and begs for His forgiveness and mercy. It elevates the humble human from his prayer mat to the ethereal heights of spirituality.

Imam Ali ibn al-Husain used this method to reach out to his followers and preach them on the Oneness of Allah and His role as the Creator of all things. He focused on the role of man in the universe and his duties to Allah and his fellow human beings. He gives lessons on obedience to Allah and to fine human behavior in society.

Many devotees of Ahle Bait used to attend *majalis* (*religious* gatherings) held by the Imam. Much of the collection of his lectures quotations and teachings are owed to these devotees who learnt them by heart, or wrote them down for safe keeping and for future reference.

RISALE-E HUQOOQ

The Testament of Rights

One extremely valuable treatise has been passed down to the devotees of Ahle Bait directly from Imam Zain al-Abideen. This epistle describes the rights of man in society. It accounts for over fifty circumstances by which the believer is obligated to observe the rights of others. To mention just a few, it starts with:

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- the rights of man toward Allah,
- the rights of prayers,
- the rights of self and the rights of the parts of one's own body.

It goes on to enlist:

- The rights of women towards men,
- the rights of men toward women.

It reminds one towards:

- The rights of children to their parents and elders,
- the rights of parents and elders to their children.

Further:

- The rights of students towards their teachers,
- the rights of the teachers towards their students.

Further:

- The rights of neighbors,
- the rights of friends
- the rights of adversaries and foes!

It is evident that this epistle contains such wealth of ethical conduct that if followed, it would make any ordinary human being into a saint. Even if one does not aspire to become a saint, it would certainly foster tolerance and harmony with the self and the society.

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The Fifth Imam: Muhammad ibne Ali (AS)

Name: Muhammad

Title: al-Baqir

Epithet: Abu Ja'far

Father: Ali bin Husain

Mother: Fatima daughter of Imam Hasan

Date of Birth: Rajab 1, 57 AH (December 16, 676 AD)

Place of Birth: Medina

Progeny:

From Umm Farwa binte Qassim bin Muhammad bin Abu Bakr:

Two sons: Ja'far, Abd Allah

He had other children from other wives

Date of Death: Zilhaj 7, 114 AH (January 28, 733 AD)

He live to an age of 57 years

Place of Death: Medina

Place of Burial: Jannatul-Baqi

THE LIFE AND THE TIMES OF IMAM MUHAMMAD BAQIR

Imam Muhammad (Baqir) had the blessings and the nurture of his grandfather, Imam Husain. He witnessed the tragedy of Karbala at the tender age of about three and a half years. He had sustained the thirst of three days when the Umayyad army had cut off the water supply to the camp of Imam Husain in Karbala. He was among the survivors of the massacre, and had endured the toilsome journey from Karbala to Damascus, followed by the year of captivation in the Umayyad prison along with his father and other members of the Able Bait.

In Medina he lived a life of peace and piety, and remained under the patronage of his father Imam Ali Zain al-Abideen for thirty-four years. Imam Baqir grew under the care of his father and was appointed Imam by him before his martyrdom by poisoning in 95 AH by the Caliph Walid bin Abd al-Malik.

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The reign of the Umayyad Caliph Walid bin Abd al-Malik ended at his death in 96 AH, and was succeeded by his brother Salaaming bin Abd alMalik. However, the rule of Sulayman lasted for only three years until 99 AH.

Umar bin Abd al-Aziz became the next ruler of the Muslim world. He was the only just ruler the people saw in a long chain of Umayyad tyrants. He is popularly known as Umar, the pious. It was during his reign that the long standing claim of the fertile groves of Faddak, originally launched by Fatima binte Muhammad was finally recognized by a ruler of the land, and was returned to the family of the rightful claimants. It was also by his orders that the ignoble tradition of throwing abuses on Imam Ali during the congregational prayers (started by Muawiyah bin Abu Sufyan) was finally discontinued.

The rule of Umar bin Abd al-Aziz was also short- lived and lasted for only two years. He was succeeded by Yazid bin Abd al-Malik who ruled the land between the years 101 AH and 105 AH. After him, a relatively longer reign of Hisham bin Abd al-Malik followed from the year 105 AH to 125 AH. The Umayyad rulers came and went, and did what pleased them, but the Imam continued his services to the believers and to the faith of Islam. He gathered a sizeable galaxy of students and learned disciples who took his message to the far comers of the Muslim world. The jurist Abu Hanifa attended the school of learning under the Imam in Medina before returning to Iraq. Abu Hanifa left Medina with a tremendous respect and acclaim to the Imam's knowledge of the Wan and the Sunnah. The Imam disagreed with Abu Hanifa on his method of resolving issues of *Shatiyah* (canonic law) by *Raai* (individual personal logic) or *Qiyas* (speculative derivation).

Hishain bin Abd al-Malik could not see the growing popularity of the Imam and had him martyred with poison in the year 114 AH. The Imam appointed his son Ja'far to take charge of the duties of the Imamate to serve the faith and the faithful.

By the time of his martyrdom, he had spent twenty years of his life as the Imam of his time. A wealth of quotes and interpretations were collected by his followers.

REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE OF IMAM MUHAMMAD BAQIR

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Imam Baqir was a complete reflection of the life of his father in sincerity, piety, knowledge and worship. His superlative conduct is considered to be the criterion for these fine qualities in the human being.

The greatest of the learned are dwarfed by the grandeur of his wisdom and knowledge. He earned the title of al-Baqir as a result of the depth of his knowledge.

He is well known for his depth of knowledge and for the vastness of his quotes and interpretations of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This material was collected by his students and companions and is available for guidance today.

Abu Hanifa, a famous jurist of his time and an Imam to a large sector of the Sunni Muslims, was a student of Imam Baqir. He acknowledged the superior knowledge of the Imam on the Qur'an and the Sunna.

THE INSTITUTION OF MAJALIS

The majalis (religious gatherings specifically intended to educate masses about the mission of Imam Husain) are the tradition of Zainab binte Ali who held her first *majalis* while the captives were still in Damascus. Although they were continued by Imam Ali Zain al-Abideen during his times, Imam Muhammad Baqir formalized them into an institution of learning. Since then they have served as a unique method of propagating the Truth to the masses throughout the ages.

As the followers and the devotees of Ahle Bait visited the Imam they enquired about the tragedy which the members of Ahle Bait had to sustain. The Imam took the opportunity to retell the causes of the conflict, the events of the suffering, and in the process, was able to teach and preach Islam to them. Since the people came already receptive to listen and to learn the Imam was able to spread the Message of Islam with ease and continuity. This institution of *majalis* has evolved with time, and has continued to be an effective vehicle for the dissemination of the teachings of the school of the *Ahle* Bait.

Selected Sayings

1. The best combination is knowledge with forbearance.
2. Three things are counted the best of deeds in the world and hereafter:
 - (i) forgiveness over someone's cruel behavior;

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- (ii) kindness to someone who has broken relations with you;
 - (iii) tolerance to someone's foolish behavior.
3. One who does listen to the call of his conscience cannot benefit from advice from others.
 4. There are many who say, "may Allah see the down fall of your enemies," although Allah may Himself be that person's enemy!
 5. To seek help from the newly made rich is like retrieving a coin from the snake's mouth: that there is need for it but not without danger!
 6. There is vast wealth in four things:
 - I. keeping your deprivation a secret to yourself,
 - II. giving charity without announcing it;
 - III. not making your pain apparent to others;
 - IV. not making your troubles public.
 7. The best of public behavior is to sit at a lower level than your status, wish well to one you see ahead of you, and not indulge in wasteful arguments even when you know you are right.
 8. Modesty and Faith are two intertwined jewels. If you lose one, the other goes with it.
 9. Keep away from laziness and impatience. A lazy person cannot deliver the dues of others, and the impatient person lacks the elements of forbearance.
 10. To give *sadaqa* (a form of charity) in the morning is to protect you from the mischief of *shaitan* (devil).

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The Sixth Imam: Ja'far ibne Muhammad (AS)

Name: Ja'far

Title: As-Saadiq

Epithet: Abu Abdullah

Father: Muhammad bin Ali

Mother: Umme Farwah

Date of Birth: Rabi-ul Awwal 17,83 AH (April 20,702 AD)

Place of Birth: Medina

Progeny:

From Fatima daughter of Husain bin Imam Ali Zain al Abideen:

Two sons: Ismail, Abd Allah

One daughter: Umme Farwa

From Umm Walad

Three sons: Musa, Is'haq, Muhammad

From other wives

Two sons: Abbas, Ali

Two daughters: Asma', Fatima

Date of Death: Rajab 15, 148 AH (December 14, 765 AD)

He lived to an age of 63 years

Place of Death: Medina

Place of Burial: Jannatul-Baqi

THE LIFE AND THE TIMES OF IMAM JA'FAR AS-SAADIQ (as)

Imam Ja'far As-Saadiq was born in 83 AH during the reign of the Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik bin Marwan. He was only three years of age when Walid bin Abd al-Malik succeeded to the caliphate after his father. The Imam had the good fortune of spending the first twelve years of his life with his grandfather, Imam Ali Zain al-Abideen. He then spent the next eighteen years

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of his life with his father, Imam Muhammad Baqir. He was thirty-one years of age when his father was also martyred with poison by Hisham bin Abd al-Malik in 114 AH. Thus, the Imam had seen the reign of five Umayyad caliphs before he was appointed Imam by his father before his death. The relatively long rule of Hisham lasted for about twenty years. He was a contemporary of the Imam for twelve of these years.

Hisham had kept up the pressure on the Alids and their followers just like his father had done during his reign. Hisham had appointed the ruthless Khalid bin Abd Allah Qisri as the governor of Iraq and other southern provinces. Together, the caliph and his governor eclipsed the tyranny of Hujaj bin Yusuf and his master, the caliph Abd al-Malik bin Marwan.

During the hey days of the Umayyad dynasty, the caliphs found the members of the Alid clans as easy targets for diverting the public attention from their failure and decadence. The Alids were taunted and insulted, and provoked to such an extent that they would come out to defend their honor and integrity. This provided the tyrants sufficient excuse to put them to sword.

Zaid bin Imam Ali Zain al-Abideen was one such martyr who was subjected to such a fate. He could not withstand the insults thrown at him by the governor of Hisham. In 121 AH, he came out with a small force of loyalists for the cause of the Truth, and fought bravely to his death in 122 AH. His head was hoisted on the spear and his body was hung on the cross for full four years. It was then taken down, only to be put to the flames.

In 125 AH, Imam Jafar as-Sadiq witnessed an exact repeat of Zaid bin Ali's fate meet his son Yahya bin Zaid at the hands of the Umayyad ruler Walid II bin Yazid II bin Abd-al Malik. His decapitated body was also hung on the cross until taken down by Abu Muslim of Khorasan (after he helped the Abbasids to end the yoke of the Umayyad rule). The supporters of Yahya were hunted down and ruthlessly massacred in their homes or **other** hideouts. The survivors and their sympathizers were relentlessly pursued out of Hijaz.

The rule of Walid II lasted only a year followed by Yazid III bin Walid I bin Abd al-Malik. This rule lasted for even lesser period of only six months. His brother Ibrahim succeeded him to the caliphate, only to be toppled from his seat in just two months. In 127 AH, Marwan II followed

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as the last caliph in the Marwanid dynasty, and ruled a shrinking empire for about five and a half years.

Notwithstanding the continued oppression of the Hashimites under the Umayyads, Abd Allah bin Muawiyah (a grandson of Jifar bin Abu Talib) rose to claim the cause of his clan in 127 AH. He met the same fate as that of his other clan members just a few years earlier.

By this time, the end of the tyrannical rule of the Umayyads was in sight. A secret Hashimite movement was under way in Palestine under Ibrahim Imam, brother of Abd Allah (Saffah) bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Abd Allah bin Abbas (an uncle of the Prophet). Their manifesto was to avenge the blood of Imam Husain and to liquidate the Umayyads. However, their bidden and real aim was to take over the caliphate for themselves with the help of the Aliyyids. With this ploy and the popular slogan, Ibrahim Imam was able to muster support from the oppressed Shiites. Abu Muslim who had just established an independent principality in Khorasan under the Aliyyid flag, marched on to Iraq with a massive force of seventy thousand strong, and ended the yoke of the Umayyads rule in Iraq in 129 AH. In a pre-arranged banquet in Damascus, the Umayyad princes and their heirs were arrested, and suffocated to death by encasing them in leather sacs.

Somehow one prince, named Abd ar-Rehman escaped the doom of the family and made his way to the distant dominion of Spain, in the Far West. Here he gathered support from the long settled Syrian veteran soldiers and founded a new Umayyad dynasty.

Imam Jafar as-Saadiq thus saw the rule of the last five caliphs of the Umayyad dynasty, and the sufferings of his kinsmen perpetrated by them. He saw the reign of the first two caliphs of the new Abbasid dynasty, and the start of a new era of persecution of the Aliyyids and their followers. The atrocities unleashed by the Abbasids to their very supporters (the Aliyyids), turned out to be worst than those caused by their predecessors, the Umayyads.

The new dynasty of the Abbasids began to strengthen its establishment. The oppressed had assisted 'in getting rid of the yoke of one tyrant system only to exchange for a new one. Abu Muslim was useful to the new regime in the mopping up operation against the remaining resistance from the Umayyad loyalists. Fearing from his success and increasing popularity, the new caliph sent him on one such mission and had him assassinated in the field. In 132 AH,

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Muhammad (Saffah), brother of Ibrahim Imam became the Caliph of the consolidated Abbasid empire that stretched from Morocco in the West to Afghanistan in the East.

Muhammad Saffah died in 136 AH at the age of 32 years, and was succeeded by his brother Abd Allah al-Mansoor (Dwaneeqi). His rule lasted for about 21 years. Historians have written a great deal about his astute management of the empire. However, he was a ruthless ruler who would order killing of another human being without remorse. He was nicknamed Dwaneeqi because of his extreme miserly nature. He had sworn to eradicate all Aliyyids from his dominions. He targeted the Aliyyids with insults, provocation and deprivation. And, whenever they arose in arms to defend their honor or their families, they were ruthlessly slaughtered and beheaded: The survivors were thrown into dingy jails, to rot and to die there. Thus, the fate of the respected elder, Abd Allah Mahadh, and his son Muhammad (Nafse Zakk-iyah), along with many others from the progeny of Imam Hasan, was not much different from that of Zaid bin Ali and his son Yahya from the progeny of Imam Husa'm.

The jealous caliph could not tolerate the respect and popularity enjoyed by the Imam in Medina. He very much wanted to subject the Imam to the same treatment as suffered by other members of his clansmen. The Imam refused to take to armed retaliation. The caliph resorted to have him summoned to his court in the presence of dignitaries and scholars from other lands without prior warning in order to slight him in public. But he failed in his schemes due to the wit of the Imam's knowledge, his popularity, and his purity.

Finally, the Caliph managed to have his way, and had the Imam poisoned. He succumbed to the fatal dose of poison and died in 148 AH. Before he breathed his last breath, he appointed his son Musa to lead the *Ummah* after him.

It is important to point out at this stage that Ismail, the older son of the Imam had died during the life of the Imam and was buried in the graveyard of Jannat ul-Baqi. Muhammad bin Ismail had hoped that people would accept his father as the successor to Imam Jafar as-Saadiq, and thus he would inherit the honor of being the next Imam. But the position of Imamate is not a matter of inheritance but that of a divine appointment, as the custodians of the Message of Islam. There was a small faction of the followers who did regard Ismail to be their Imam. And thus Muhammad bin Ismail did obtain the honor he had aspired for among his separatist

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faction. However, he had only a short life, and his lineage continued until Ubayd Allah bin Muhammad bin Abd Allah bin Muhammad bin Ismail proclaimed himself as the awaited Mahdi. Ubayd Allah made his way to Morocco and laid the foundation of the Fatimid dynasty in a newly built city named *Mahdiya*. Later, they moved to Egypt and ruled there for many years. The present-day Ismailia sect thus follows a descendant from an offshoot of the Fatimids of Egypt.

Selected Sayings:

11. If someone comes to a fellow Muslim seeking his help, and he gives it to him, then No Muslim is like someone who is doing jihad in the name of Allah.
12. Allah says that people are like His family. He who treats them well, has earned His nearness.
13. I found wisdom in four things:
 - (xxiii) get to know your Creator;
 - (xxiv) get to know what the Creator has provided you with;
 - (xxv) get to know what the Creator expects of you and holds you responsible for;
 - (xxvi) get to know what things would throw you out of the circle of the believers.
14. There are four things in the conduct of the prophets of Allah:
 - (xxvii) good deeds;
 - (xxviii) giving away in charity;
 - (xxix) forbearance in times of trouble;
 - (xxx) deliver the rights of the believers to them.
15. A believer is afraid of two things:
 - (xxxi) the previous sins, not knowing how Allah would account these;
 - (xxxii) the remaining life, not knowing what sins he might commit before his time is up.

He would not end the night without fearing what the mom has in stock for him, and does not end his day without fearing if he was able to accrue deeds that would please Allah.

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Nothing will avail him to things done straight except his fear for Allah.

16. *No momin* can reach the heights of fulfillment, of his faith unless he has mastered three of the following:

- (xxxiii) understanding and vision in faith;
- (xxxiv) a middle-of-the-road type of conduct;
- (xxxv) forbearance during times of trouble.

17. People cannot get away from three things:

- (xxxvi) a jurist who is pious and learned;
- (xxxvii) a ruler who is caring, and who could be obeyed;
- (xxxviii) a physician who is able to heal and is reliable.

18. We are ourselves the roots of all good. All good deeds sprout from these branches. They are:

Belief in the Oneness of Allah, fasting, dispelling anger, to forgive and to forget, benevolence towards the poor, giving the right to the neighbors, to recognize and to respect others for their achievements, all count as good deeds.

Our enemies are the root cause of all sins. All evil deeds and trouble sprout from these branches. They are:

Lies, miserly behavior, back-biting, meanness, usury, usurpation of the rights of the orphans, exceeding the limits imposed by Allah, committing any sinful act hidden or openly, rape or adultery, all of these count as sinful deeds.

19. Three types of men can be recognized under these conditions:

- (i) anger of the kind and tolerant person;
- (ii) battle for a brave and fearless person;
- (iii) the time of need for a friend or a brother.

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20. When this world becomes generous towards someone, it adds the good deed of others into his account; but when it turns against him, then his good deeds are added onto someone else's account.

21. It is best to sleep less at night, and talk less during the day.

22. When troubles mount on top of troubles, then the days of the troubles are numbered.

REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE OF IMAM JA'FAR AS-SADIQ

Imam Baqir appointed his son as-Saadiq Imam after him. He lived through most of the Marwanid Umayyad rule and witnessed their downfall. He also endured the rule of the first two caliphs of the new Abbasid dynasty. The decaying dynasty of the Umayyads and the political turmoil generated by the Hashimite movement of the Abbasids had created a vacuum of theological learning. However, the Imam continued to teach large numbers of students in Medina, and his followers continued to benefit from him in their search for the knowledge of the school of Ahle Bait during those difficult times.

Imam Ja'far as-Saadiq is known for the reporting of authentic *ahadith* of the Prophet as passed on to him through his father and forefathers. His truthfulness and sincerity earned him the title of as-Saadiq.

Upon his death, his contemporary fuqaha (plural of the word *faqih*: leading jurists of Islam) expressed their feelings thus:

Imam Abu Hanifa said, "Ja'far as-Saadiq was the greatest scholar of Islamic theology and jurisprudence. "

Imam Malik said, "My eyes have not seen a more learned, pious, and Godfearing man than Imam Ja'far as-Saadiq."

The Imam is renowned by the vast number of his students and disciples, some of whom had become revered as Imams among many of the Sunni sects. His students collected volumes of quotes from him including invaluable interpretations of the Quran and the Sunnah. These works are available today for reference and guidance. One of his greatest disciple was Jabir

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ibne Hayyan whose name is well known in history for his prolific writings and works on the physical sciences and on al-chemy.

FIQH JAFARIYYA

The Ja'fariyya School of Islamic Jurisprudence

The laws by which Allah wanted human society to be governed, were sent down by Him through revelations in the Book, al-Qur'an. The medium of its conveyance was through His Messenger, the Prophet of Islam. The Prophet lived a simple life amongst a simple people and demonstrated to them how to deal with other people and how to live a life of piety and harmony with fellow men and nature.

Before his death, the Prophet of Islam had told the Muslims that he was leaving among them two most valued things to which they must remain attached, if they wished not to go astray. One of them is the holy Quran, and the other is his Ahle Bait. Clearly those who profess that the Quran suffices them, have failed to recognize the advice of the Prophet.

When Islam had spread to far off places as also the Muslims across other regions and cultures, the need for expanded meanings of al-Quran and the interpretation of Sunnah became imperative. Often false quotes ascribed to the Prophet were coined to offer explanations when no examples were found in the classic Sunnah. The political caliphate had diverted the Muslims away from the Ahle Bait, and were themselves incapable of providing the necessary solutions to complicated questions on the faith and the practice of Islam. The period of decay of the Umayyad dynasty, and the coming of the Abbasids was particularly a difficult time in this regard. This was also the time when several jurists became active among the Sunni Musl'uns to fill the gap. Some of them wrote books of reference on Islamic Law.

Two major schools emerged simultaneously, one in Iraq under Abu Hanifa, popularly known as *Ahle Raai* and the other in Hijaz under Malik bin Anas, known as the Classical School, or the *Ahle Hadith*. However, the proponents and the supporters of these two schools used *Raai* (individual and personal logic) and *Qiyas* (speculative derivation) whenever relevant Hadith was either unavailable or was weak, based on *island or twatur* (authenticity

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or continuity of reporting all the way to the Prophet). This methodology called for the use of speculative logic and personal opinion to arrive at a *fatwa* (verdict on questions of Islamic Law) on a particular question. This meant that people could interpret the laws of Allah according to their logic or opinion. However, the laws of Allah are beyond the scope of the human interpolation. Man must use his intelligence to find ways and means to obey the ordinances of Allah and not to find the ways and means of going around them!

Imam Ja'far as-Saadiq offered such an enormous variety of answers to all kinds of complicated questions in Islamic Law based on *Ahadith* and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet that he categorically rejected the methodology of *Raai and Qiyas in Fiqh*.

It is important that *Fiqh Ja'fariyya* should not be confused to authorship of Imam Ja'far as-Saadiq. It is essentially based on the *Ahadith and Sunnah* of the Prophet and the jurisprudence that had been passed down to the believers through oral tradition by the Imams of Ahle Bait. The eponym *Fiqh Ja'fariyya* (or the alternative name '*Fiqh Itrat*') is applied simply to identify it from other methods of jurisprudence evolved by other *fuqaha* (jurists of Islamic Law). Thousands of students attended and learnt Fiqh from the Imam. Much of his teaching was committed to writing and was gathered by his students. Four of the major compilations of the Imam's teachings have been extracted from the older literature:

- (i) Kafi: by Muhanunad Ya'qub Kulni.
- (ii) Man la Yahdhr al-Faqih: by Muhammad Ali Baabwaih.
- (iii) Tahzib, and Istibsar: by Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Tusi.
- (iv) Kitab al-Irshad: by Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Nieman al-Baghdadi.

RISALA E TAWHEED MUFADHAL

The Epistle on the Unity of Allah

The cornerstone of Islam is *Tawheed*, the belief of the Oneness of Allah. Once a companion of the Imam, called Mufadhal, requested him to expounded on the subject of Tawheed as he was faced with a contest with a group of atheists. The Imam delivered the answer to his question in four sittings. As he spoke, Mufadhal went on writing it down, resulting in the Risala. This is popularly known as the *Risalah-e Tawheed Mufadhal*.

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It is inscribed as a separate chapter in the mammoth works of Allama Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi.

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The Seventh Imam: Musa ibne Ja'far (AS)

Name: Musa

Title: al-Kazim

Epithet: Abu Ibrahim

Father: Ja'far ibne Muhammad

Mother: Hamida Khatoon

Date of Birth: Safar 7th. 128 AH (October 28, 746 AD)

Place of Birth: Abwa near Medina

Progeny:

From Umma hat Awlad

Four sons: Ali, Ibrahim, Abbas, Qassim

He had many other children from other wives

Date of Death: Rajah 25, '183 AH (September 1, 799 AD)

He lived to an age of 53 years

Place of Death: Baghdad

Place of Burial: Kazimain, near Baghdad



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THE LIFE AND TIMES OF IMAM MUSA AL-KAZIM

Imam Musa Al-Kazim was born during the waning glow of the Umayyad dynasty. He was only three years of age when the Abbasids established themselves in a new dynasty. Before his death, Imam Ja'far asSaadiq appointed his son Musa as the next Imam. Musa took up the responsibility of the Imamate at the age of twenty years, and carried it out through a troubled period of thirty-five years. He endured about ten years of the remaining rule of the Abbasid caliph al-Mansoor Dwaneeqi, about ten years of the caliph al-Mahdi, about one year of al-Hadi and the initial thirteen years of the caliph Haroon ar-Rashid.

The caliphs kept their stern watch over the Aliyyids and their followers for their refusal to accept the caliphs as their religious leaders in addition to being their kings. Whereas during the Umayyad dynasty, the Aliyyid and their followers had gone underground to safe guard their survival, they were no longer hidden from the Abbasids. In fact, the Abbasids had achieved their success with assistance from the Aliyyids and their Shiite followers. The caliphs knew the strength of the Shiites, and took every opportunity to keep them under check in the empire. They did not grant the Imams any immunity against this policy.

Imam Musa Kazim spent fourteen years of his life in the darkness of several of the Abbasid jails of Basra and Baghdad, interspersed with only brief periods of reprieve in his native Medina. Because of the harmless nature of the Imam who spent his time either in payers or preaching other interns, many of the jail wardens were unable to carry out the caliph's orders to kill the Imam while under in captivity.

As regards the conduct of the leaders of the Muslims, the Abbasid caliphs were no better than their Umayyad predecessors. The reign of Haroon ar-Rashid is regarded in history as the golden era of the Abbasid dynasty regarding learning, trade and stability, but for the Imam and his followers, the same era was that of darkness and gloom.

During the brief periods of reprieve that the Imam had from his internships in the jails, he used to be called back to Baghdad from Medina to the court of the caliphs for debates that were in fact intended to slight his personality. The scope of this book makes it impossible to describe

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these debates here, but suffice it to say that the caliphs were unsuccessful in their attempts due to the vast knowledge and the wit of the Imam.

Haroon ar-Rashid became increasingly impatient, and became determined either to have unconditional submission from the Imam, or have him killed. As the Imam could not submit to the demands of the caliph, he was ultimately given poisoned dates in the jail in 183 AH. As a result, the Imam died while he was still tied in chains and shackles. To further show his spite, the caliph ordered the body of the Imam be left on the main bridge leading in and out of Baghdad for all to see. This was intended to show to the people that the caliph wielded absolute power, and that the Alkyds were just ordinary human beings. However, some devotees took the body of the Imam away and buried it in Kazmain, near Baghdad.

At his last summons to Baghdad, the Imam knew that his time had come, and that he would never return to Medina alive. He was so certain that the caliph would have him lollod in that trip that he wrote a will appointing his son Ali to succeed him after his death. In order to make his decision reach wide circulation among his followers, the Imam wrote his will in the presence of seventeen of his chosen companions, and had it witnessed by sixty others. This is an example of extreme foresight and caution the Imam had exercised in order to prevent confusion among his friends and foes alike.

REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE AND CONDUCT OF IMAM MUSA BIN JA'FAR

While surrounded by wealth of the new Abbasid regime, the Imam spent a life of simplicity and piety. In his personality, he manifested a living example of tolerance and forbearance. Even when he was intemed in jails, he never missed his devout worship of Allah. Many of his supplications were recorded by his devotees and are available to the supplicant today.

There were many instances from his daily life that illustrated his nature and popularity among the people of Hijaz. The poor and needy of Medina badly missed the Imam. Among many other things he did, he used to get involved with the people in their daily lives, and help fulfill their needs in the matter of Faith and in the ritual practice of Islam. People particularly

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remembered the little pouches of money he used to hand out to those who asked for monetary assistance or to those whom he felt to be in need.

Many of the letters he wrote to his followers and companions contained a world of wisdom and advice, which can still guide the seekers of the Truth. He addressed his sons when giving general advice towards an ideal conduct in life. There is a large collection of his sayings which, if followed today, would mold any human being into a picture of virtue.

The contents of his replies to complicated questions and the debates held in the court of the caliphs further provides glimpses of the wisdom and sagacity of Imam Musa bin Ja'far. He used a sweet and poetical language in his conversation, and his written word had a haunting rhyme in it.

Selected Sayings:

1. The status of your understanding can be judged from four things:

- (xxxix) Recognition of the Beneficent Allah;
- (xl) Recognition of the your benefactor;
- (xli) Recognition of what is expected of you;
- (xlii) Recognition of the things that would throw you out of your faith.

2. Try and divide your time into four portions:

- (xlili) One portion for prayers and supplications;
- (xliv) One portion for livelihood;
- (xlv) One portion for social activities between friends and family;
- (xlvi) One portion for the permissible indulgences while you maintain control over your other portions.

3. When good deeds seem to be large in number, consider them to be not enough; but when bad deeds seem to be just a few, consider them far too many. Bad deeds, even if trivial, tend to accumulate fast.

4. If one who was born poor acquires wealth and plenty, it would tend to make him arrogant and headstrong.

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5. It is not that people throw abuses at the one who rises high by ill begotten means, but that he would also see his downfall.
6. The pain and suffering of tyranny is felt worst by the one who has been targeted for it.
7. The one who invalidates three things with three others has wasted his gift of intelligence:
 - (xlvii) one who has extended his expectations but does not ponder on the ways and means for himself,
 - (xlviii) one who loses sagacity by wile talk;
 - (xlix) one who loses his salvation by uncontrolled lust.

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The Eighth Imam: Ali ibne Musa (AS)

Name: Ali

Title: Ar-Reza

Epithet: Abu al-Hasan

Father: Musa ibne Ja'far

Mother: Najma (Tuktam, Tah'l

Date of Birth: Zil Qa'd 11, 148 AH (December 29, 765 AD)

Place of Birth: Medina

Progeny:

From Umme Habiba binte Mamoon ar-Rashid

None

From: Sabika Nubia

One son: Muhammad

Date of Death: Safar 17, 203 AH (August 24, 818 AD)

He lived to an age of 53 years

Place of Death: Mashed (Tus)

Place of Burial: Mashed

THE LIFE AND THE TIMES OF IMAM ALI BIN MUSA

Ali bin Musa was born during the reign of the Abbasid caliph alMansoor Dwaneeqi. He was only two weeks of age when his grandfather, Imam Ja'far as-Saadiq was martyred. He was thirty-five years of age when his father was martyred by the caliph Haroon ar-Rashid. He had witnessed the treatment his father had received at the hands of the caliphs for refusing to accept them as his leaders.

The first encounter of the new Imam with the powers of the caliph came swiftly and like lightening. With the false accusation of an armed rising by an uncle of the Imam Muhammad bin Jafar, the caliph Haroon ar-Rashid despatched his captain Issa Jaludi with an army to sack Hijaz and to liquidate the house of the Alkays. The havoc they rendered to the people and their

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property in Medina dwarfed the deeds of the Syrian army sent by Yazid bin Muawiyah after the massacre of Karbala over a hundred years earlier. The Imam stood firmly in front of the dwellings of his clan, and handed the invaders all they had, except the clothing on their bodies at the time. The ruthless general and his soldiers departed with a large booty obtained from the homes of the innocent Muslims.

To prevent bloody conflict between his two sons Muhammad al-Amin and Mamoon ar-Rashid after him, the caliph Haroon ar-Rashid divided his empire between them. Al-Amin (from an Arab mother) was given the West with the Arab provinces, and Mamoon (from a Persian mother) the East with all of the non-Arab provinces. Due to his sickness, Haroon ar-Rashid retired from his throne and died in 193 AH at the age of forty-five years. He was buried in the city of Meshed. However, the two princes wasted no time in waging war on each other in order to grab the share of the other. The tussle between the divided caliphate went on for about five years till the year 198 AH. Finally, Al-Amin got killed in a battle and the original expanse of the empire was again unified under Mamoon. Although Mamoon was victorious in his confrontation with his brother, he had made the Arabs very upset at their defeat and the death of al-Amin at his hands.

Mamoon knew that the people of Hijaz, and the Shiites elsewhere had already received a heinous treatment from his father. The memory of the events was still quite fresh in their minds. As a result of these events, the Shiites had become rebellious. There were many uprisings among them in various provinces led by prominent Alkyds. Mamoon took an unusual step to redress these ill feelings of his subjects. In the year 201 AH, he called the Imam to Merv (in Khorasan) from Medina and declared him as his successor, and minted coins in the Imam's name. To further enhance his apparent goodwill among the Alkyds and the Shiites, he gave his daughter, Umm-e Habiba, in marriage to the Imam in 202 AH. The caliph had took wise steps to produce the desired effects. He managed to win the confidence of the Shiites and stabilize his rule.

Mamoon invited learned individuals to participate in religious and multicultural debates in his court. This afforded Imam Ali ar-Reza great opportunity to expound the vastness of his knowledge in these large gatherings. It also increased his visibility and the popularity of the

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Imam which had previously been denied to all his ancestors. He was now able to preach the Truth about the Faith of Islam according to teachings of the Ahle Bait. The Abbasids in Baghdad were already very unhappy at having an Aliyyid among them as a declared successor to the caliph. The growing popularity of the Imam in the eastern provinces naturally posed a grave threat to the rule of the dynasty. They decided to name a new Abbasid caliph to replace Mamoon. They started to rally behind Ibrahim bin Mahdi bin Mansoor as their new caliph.

Mamoon had to make a hasty move back to Iraq from Khorasan to quell the dangerous developments in Baghdad. It was this time when the Imam was given poisoned grapes that caused his death. Before his death, Imam Ali ar-Reza advised his followers that his only son Muhanunad (Jawad) would be the next Imam, even though he was at a young age of only eight years. After his death, the body of the Imam was buried in Meshed close to the gravesite of his tormentor, Haroon ar-Rashid.

REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE OF IMAM ALI AR-REZA

The Imam had to face an unusual strategy posed by his appointment to the heirship. He had to accept the offer to go to the palace, otherwise the Imam would have to bear the blame of keeping aloof from involvement in governing the people when he was given the opportunity to do so.

His interaction with the literary circles of the Caliph caused a vast variety of written and oral traditions to be gathered from the Imam which later became available to the later generations to benefit from. They consist of his sermons, his debates and contests, his replies to complicated questions posed in the court of the caliph, his letters to his companions and family, as well as his writings and poetry. Much of the collected material is related to the meanings and the interpretations of the Qur'an. Some of it is related to Islamic law, some to the general knowledge of the heavens and the earth, and some to the Medicine of the Imam.

He produced many learned students from many lands in the empire. The Imam was fully conversant with many languages and fluently communicated with people from other lands in their mother tongues. When his students returned to their homes, they spread the Imams message far and wide. It became evident that the vast knowledge exhibited by the Imam was

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not obtained from any known school or university of the time. His school and his university was located in the "City of the Prophetic Knowledge" whose gateway was through none other than his own ancestor, Imam Ali bin Abi Talib.

The Imam perpetuated the tradition of the ritual majalis that had been initiated by his ancestors to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain. He used to sponsor these majalis and patronized them. He considered this to be a great opportunity to reach out to the sensitive souls of the people and propagate every aspect of the true teachings of Islam. Since the people who attended these majalis had come to listen, the Imam used their receptiveness to its greatest advantage. He dispelled many misconceptions about the Faith. He collected many misquotes from the Prophet as well as those attributed to the preceding Imams. He personally was able to demonstrate the true methodology of the daily ritual practices of the Faith. He taught people how to pray and how to supplicate.

The members of the Abbasid clan had not suddenly developed love for the Alkayds. In fact, their spite had multiplied many-fold by the position the Imam had been placed by Mamoon. His life and conduct was under the stern scrutiny by his opponents. Under the watchful eye of his enemies, the Imam demonstrated the excellence of his personal way of life despite the imposing royal protocol. He never spoke harshly to any one, be it a slave or a master. He only smiled gently on amusing situations and was never seen in bursts of laughter. He was never seen to cut in a conversation.

Selected Sayings:

- (I) One who compares Allah with one of His creations, is a polytheist. One who relates to Allah with something he has been forbidden to do, is a kafir (a non-believer).
- (ii) Knowledge, forbearance and less talk are the qualities of a pious practitioner of the Faith.
- (iii) Man's best friend is intelligence, and ignorance is his enemy.
- (liii) The believer is closer to Allah when he throws himself down in prostration before Him.
- (liv) One who gives in the name of Allah, earns His nearness, His rewards and away from an abode in hell. The miser is distant from people and Allah, but closer to an abode

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in hell.

- (lv) Charitable giving is like a tree planted in paradise and whose branches are in the world. One who gives charity clings to the branches and is carried to the fulfillment of the ultimate prize of paradise.
- (lvi) A Momin is that person who derives pleasure when he does a good deed, and repents with sincerity when he commits an error. A Muslim is that person from whose hands and tongue the other Muslims do not get hurt.
- (lvii) Belief has four components:
 - (lviii) Dependence on Allah;
 - (lix) Acceptance of the Acts of Allah;
 - (lx) Submission to His Will;
 - (lxi) Reliance on Allah's help in his deeds.

9. One who is not thankful to his provider in this world, cannot be thankful to Allah.

10. Allah has ordained three sets of duties to be performed together:

- (lxii) Pay the poor tax as you offer prayers;
- (lxiii) Thank your parents as you thank Allah;
- (lxiv) Fear Allah and do good to your own kin.

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The Ninth Imam: Muhammad ibne Ali (AS)

Name: Muhammad

Title: at-Taqi (also Jawad)

Epithet: Abu Ja'far

Father: Ali ibne Musa

Mother: Khaizran (also Sabikah Nubia)

Date of Birth: Rajab 10, 195 AH (April 8, 81 1 AD)

Place of Birth: Medina

Progeny:

From Umm ul-Fadhl binte Mamoon ar-Rashid

None

From Summana Khatoon

Two sons: Ali, Musa

Two daughters: Fatirna, Amama

Date of Death: Zi Qa'd 29, 220AH (November 25, 835AD)

He lived for only 24 years

Place of Death: Kazimain

Place of Burial: Kazimain

THE TIMES AND LIFE OF IMAM MUHAMMAD TAQI

Muhammad (Taqi) was only about five years of age when his father was called away from Medina by the Caliph Mamoon ar-Rashid, never to return home alive. He was only eight years of age when he received the sad news of the martyrdom of his father at the hands of the Caliph.

Although, by having Imam Ali ar-Reza killed, Mamoon was able to win back the confidence of his Abbasid kinsmen, he lost his trust among the followers of the Imam. He succeeded to play his cards again, and summoned the young Imam Muhammad Taqi to Baghdad but he did not see the youth for a long period of time.

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The Imam's first contact with the Caliph:

Once, on his way to a hunting trip, Marnoon passed through that part of the city where the young Imam was staying. He saw some children playing in the street with his peers. When they saw the callph's entourage, all but the Imam ran away. The caliph approached the Imam and asked Imam why he was not one of those who had run away from there. The Imam was cool in his demeanor. He said that the street was wide, and that he was not making it any narrower; and that he had not committed any crime for which he would be afraid; and that he believed that the Caliph would take the path of justice and not harm an innocent bystander.

The reply impressed the Caliph. He asked the Imam who he was. When the Imam told him who he was, the Caliph felt ashamed. He suddenly remembered having sent for him but not having granted him audience for such a long time.

The Imam's Second contact with the Caliph:

On his way back from the hunting trip, the Caliph hid a fish in his hands and asked the Imam what he was carrying. The Imam said that his hawk flew in the skies, but found his prey in the waters. He had a fish in his hand and was now testing the Imam for his knowledge. The Caliph was dumb founded at both these encounters with the Imam and took him along with him to his palace.

He declared his intentions to his kinsmen that he was so impressed with the child. He decided to give his daughter Unnne Fadhl in marriage to him. They were unhappy at the possibility of repetition of the story of his father Imam Ali ar-Reza. Mammon said that the youth was no ordinary person and that they all had already seen his courage, knowledge and mannerism which was no match with any one of them. In order to obtain an upper hand over Mamoon's decision, they proposed that a contest be held with the chief Kadhi Yahya bin Aktham.

The Imam's Contest with the Chief Kadhi of Baghdad:

In the contest, Yahya bin Aktharn asked the Imam on the penalty for man who hunted while in ahram, (the state of purity, also applied to a body wrap of white cloth used by the pilgrims). The Imam said that his question was incomplete and that he should complete it before the correct answer could be given. Yahya requested that the Imam complete the question for him. The Imam asked:

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- (lxv) Was the hunting done within the holy precinct or outside it?
- (lxvi) Was the hunter aware of the religious law concerning the hunt?
- (lxvii) Was the hunting done with intention or was it an accident?
- (lxviii) Was the hunter a free man or a slave?
- (lxix) Was the hunter of age or was he under-age in the religious law?
- (lxx) Was the hunting done for the first time or was a repeated act?
- (lxxi) Was the prey a bird or was it some other animal?
- (lxxii) Was the prey young of age or was it of an age allowed for hunting?
- (lxxiii) Was the hunter repentant on his act or was he defiant?
- (lxxiv) Was the hunting done at night or was it an act of the day?
- (lxxv) Was the ahram for Haj or was it for Umra?

The Imam then further elaborated the significance of these circumstances concerning the question to qualify for an appropriate answer! They all were flabbergasted at the details offered by the Imam, and accepted his completion of the question, followed by his answer. Mamoon was very pleased to see his own arrogant kinsmen being beaten in the contest.

Mamoon then asked the Imam to pose his question. Even before the Imam could pose his question, Yahya apologized. He said that he would try to answer Imam's question, but if he could not find an answer, he would have to ask the Imam to answer it himself.

The Imam asked, on what four conditions would one woman be legal and illegal for marriage for the same individual. Neither Yahya nor anyone else in the audience had any answer to this question. The Imam then detailed the four conditions concerning his question and made the puzzle seem easy to solve:

- (lxxvi) The woman was a slave-girl of another man, so it was illegal for this man. When he paid her price to her master, she became legal for him;
- (lxxvii) When he freed her she was no longer legal for him. However he got married to her, and thus she became legal for him.
- (lxxviii) He reckoned her like his mother, making her illegal for him again, but on paying the

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penalty for such an act, she became legal for him again.

(lxxix) He then divorced her, making her illegal for him, but before saying the third talaq, they made up again, making her legal again.

They acknowledged the uncommon depth of the Imam's knowledge, and agreed on Mamoon's decision to give his daughter in marriage to the Imam. Mamoon offered the Imam to stay in Baghdad and be declared his successor, but the Imam declined to have anything to do with the heirship to the Caliphate, or on staying in the palace in Baghdad. He requested the Caliph to allow him to return home to Medina. Mamoon did not force the Imam to stay, and allowed him to leave with his wife.

Umme Fadhl was a princess. She had lived a life of luxury. She had no concept of what her life style would be in Medina with material deprivation compared with the luxury of her father's palace. She was miserable and made it no secret to the Imam. She wrote letters to her father complaining bitterly about her predicament, but he took no action.

Furthemiore, there was no progeny issued from this relationship. When the Imam manied Sumana Khatoon, the jealousy of Umme Fadhl reached its heights, but her father still did nothing.

Mamoon died in 218 AH, and his brother Mu'tasim Billah succeeded to the throne. Umme Fadhl started writing letters to her uncle, the new caliph in Baghdad to get her back to Baghdad. Since the Abbasids were no friends of the Alkyds, and with the constant complaints of Umme Fadhl, the Imam was summoned to Baghdad and put in jail. Finally, he was given poison in jail and killed in 220 AH at the young age of only twenty-five years.

The Imam appointed his son Ali Hadi to follow him as the next Imam before he left for his second and last trip to Baghdad. Ali Hadi was also only eight years of age when he was appointed to the position of leadership of Islam.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE LIFE OF IMAM MUHAMMAD TAQI

The Imam was deprived the patronage of his father at a tender age of five, and when he learnt of his martyrdom he was only eight years of age. He was the youngest Imam who was also

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killed at the youngest age compared with the others. He was only twenty-five years when he was killed by poisoning.

As detailed above, the Imam, at a very young age demonstrated unusual courage, knowledge and presence of mind in the circle of his aristocratic adversaries in the court of Maroon ar-Rashid. In addition to the constant pressures from the government, he had a considerable trouble at home from his wife, the Abbasid princess. Despite these difficulties, the Imam made his lasting impression with examples of exceptional tolerance, superior conduct, and advice to his followers and many sagacious sayings.

Selected Quotes:

1. Bolster your conduct with forbearance, be content during deprivation, refrain from lust, and antagonize temptation. Remember that you are neither far nor hidden from your Lord.
2. Refrain from friendship of the mischievous, for his likeness is that of a sharp dagger: beautiful to behold but deadly in action.
3. Do not show animosity to someone until you have assessed his relationship with the Lord, for if the person is good, the Lord will not hand him over to you; and if he is bad, then suffice it for him that you do not be his enemy.
4. Make early an amendment of a matter before it deteriorates, for then you would repent. Beware, lest years add to your life and your heart hardens.
5. Do not pretend to be a friend of the Lord in the open while you have doubts about Him in your heart.
6. Be thankful to the Lord for what He has granted you, lest you desire for something that would drag you towards temptation.
7. Do not delay in repentance, for the delay in doing so is equivalent to defiance.

Offering excuses to justify a bad deed would make you lose fear of the Lord and invoke His anger.

Selected Sayings:

1. Dependence on the Gracious Lord is the true value in all the precious things and in all heights of achievement.
2. The respect of a believer is in his independence from others.

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3. All believers need three things:

- (i) Help from the Lord;
- (ii) Awakened conscience;
- (iii) Ability to listen to good advice given by others.

4. Obedience and remembrance of the Lord from the depths of your heart is superior to the toils of rituals.

5. How can that (thing) go waste whose guarantor is the Lord, and how can that (person) escape who is sought by the Lord. One who sells himself to other (deity) than the Lord, the Lord relinquishes that to his chosen deity.

6. One who falls for his desires, fulfills the alms of his sworn enemy (Satan), and cannot escape from wrongdoing.

7. One who takes an action without prior knowledge, could do more damage than good.

8. The tyranny of the rulers forestalls their downfall.

9. When the hour (i.e. death) comes, the environs tend to shrink.

10. There is no additional danger in the anger of the tyrant.

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The Tenth Imam: Ali ibne Muhammad (AS)

Name: Ali

Title: an-Naqi (also al-Hadi)

Epithet: Abul Hasan

Father: Imam Muhanunad Taqi

Mother: Sumana Khatoon

Date of Birth: Zilhaj 15, 212 AH (September 27, 827 AD)

Place of Birth: Surba, near Medina

Progeny:

From Saleel: Four sons: Hasan, Husain, Muhammad, Jafar

One daughter: Aliya

Date of Death: Jamadi-ul Akhar 26, 254 AH (June 28, 868 AD)

He lived to an age of 41 years

Place of Death: Samrah

Place of Burial: Samrah

THE TIMES AND THE LIFE OF IMAM ALI NAQI

Imam Ali (Naqi) was bom in 212 AH during the reign of Caliph Mwnoon ar-Rashid who was responsible for the death of the Imam's grandfather, Imam Ali ar-Reza. Mamoon died in 218 AH and his brother Mue'tasim Billah became the caliph. He was responsible for the.death of the Imam's father, Imam Muhammad Taqi. Mue'tasim then became busy with the construction of the new capital Samrah, and in quelling a rebellion by his nephew, Abbas bin Mamoon in Baghdad. He ruled the Islamic state till 227 AH. Like his predecessors, commanded the Ummah to obey him as their religious leader.

After the death of Mu'tasim, his son Wathiq Billah became the Caliph, and ruled for only five years till 232 AH. He was followed by his son Mutwakil who ruled for a period of fifteen years till 247 AH. This was one of the worst periods of suffering and oppression the members of Able Bait and their followers had to endure.

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Mutwakil was a suspicious and ill-tempered ruler. He drank alcohol much more freely than any of his other Abbasid ancestors. He surpassed the tyrannical rule of the Umayyad duo, Hujaj bin Yusuf and his master Abd alMalik bin Marwan. Thousands of innocent devotees of Ahle Bait were actively sought out from their homes and killed by all kinds of atrocities.

He had forbidden the devotees of the Ahle Bait from visiting the shrines of Imam Husain and other Imams and martyrs. He had imposed the penalty of amputation of one limb each time a devotee made such a trip. He was amazed to note that there were people who paid the stiff penalty more than once to make the ziyara. Notwithstanding his failure to deter the pilgrims from making the devotional trips, he decided to demolish the shrines.

To his further amazement his attempts to demolish the shrines or to flood them with water from diverted canals also failed. The water would not rise high enough to flood the area. Anyway, these schemes of the cruel caliph failed on two occasions. But he was not about to give up his determination to eliminate the Alkyds and their influence for all times.

In 234 AH. Mutwakil appointed Abd Allah bin Muhammad as governor of Medina, with specific instructions to purge and to disperse the Alkyds from their homes. The Imam wrote a letter of complaints to the Caliph about the undue pressures imposed on his household by the new governor. This gave the Caliph the excuse to have the Imam move from Medina to Samrah, with an escort of three hundred mounted soldiers. The army was not sent there to protect the Imam but to have him arrested, and to prevent any possible reprisals by his devotees.

The Imam was brought to Samrah in 236 AH, and was housed in the notorious garrison precinct of the city, which was well protected with guards posted on the entrance. While the Imam was in Medina, the Caliph was not able to assess the popularity of the Imam among his followers. As the people became aware of the whereabouts of the Imam they started to come to him for advice and for the interpretations of the Quran. To prevent the people from seeking him, the Caliph kept moving the Imam's residence from house arrest to the formal prison, and from the prison to a corner of his own palace, and back again to house arrest at some other location. He had to move the Imam from the formal prison to house arrest since the prison guards became influenced by the Imam's piety and preaching, and became his devotees. And, he had to move him away from house arrest because of the stream of devotees the Imam used

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to attract. While the Imam was under house arrest, the Caliph would send police to search his residence at odd times under the slightest excuse, looking for any munitions against his authority. He never found clues against the Imam in all of his random searches. Thus, the Imam was kept in virtual house arrest for a period of over twenty years during most of the period of Mutwakil's rule as well as the rule of his successors.

During this period of time, Mutwakil changed his faith from the Mu'tazill to the Shafii school. He appointed two muftis in the two major mosques and had them instructed to get people involved in the fruitless discussions over the question of predestination, and Qadha and Qadr. People got tangled up in the discussions designed by the Caliph.

Decadence in the state was making people feel uneasy. The Caliph's own son Muntansir Billah, who had turned forty-two, got ambitious. He decided to capture the caliphate for himself. With the help of some Turkish defectors, he had his father assassinated and gained access to the throne. People paid fealty to him and prayed behind him as their spiritual leader. However, his was a short life span, and he died within six months. He was succeeded by his brother Musta'in (248 AH).

By the same token, the Alkyds were getting restless at the unending tyranny of Mutwakil's reign. In 250 AH, two leaders of prominence, one from the lineage of Zaid bin Ali in Kufa and the other from Zaid bin Hasan in Tabaristan rose to carve out a zone of peace for their clans and the Shiites. However, despite the apparent internal disruption in the Abbasid Caliphate, the Turkish army was still loyal and strong. These, and several other uprisings in the empire were successfully crushed.

A civil war broke out in the capital city in 252 AH. With the help of the Turkish generals, Mu'tazz had his own brother Musta'in assassinated and became the Caliph. However, the vast nation was in turmoil and Mu'tazz felt insecure. He considered Imam Ali Naqi, being the leader of the Alkyds, to be a possible living threat to his stability. In 254 AH, he got the Imam killed by poison in his own home. His body was laid to rest in the same house where he had died.

When Imam Ali Naqi left Medina, he knew that he would not be allowed to return to his ancestral home. Although his son Hasan was only four years of age at that time, he had declared that after his death, his son Hasan would succeed him as the next Imam.

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REFLECRIONS FROM THE LIFE OF IMAM ALI NAQI

Having been deprived of the patronage of his father at a young age, some well wishing devotees thought that it might be appropriate to appoint a tutor for the youth. Umar bin Farrah sent Obayd Allah Jonaidi for this purpose. After a while he was asked on the progress of youth. Jonaidi said that if it were asstuned that he was teaching the youth something, then they should know that the youth had taught him things he never knew. When Mutwakil brought him to Samrah, he was only twenty-four years of age.

The Imam witnessed the waning glow of the Abbasid Caliphate when the seat of government revolved under several rapidly changing caliphs. He refrained from the temptation of an easy win of the Caliphate for himself If he had done so, it would have shown his political ambition, and would have ruined the generations of sacrifices made by his ancestors to continue upholding the values of Truth and justice. Ahle Bait were never thirsty for political gains. They had lived and died for the cause and the values of Islam.

Although the Imam had a very limited exposure to his followers, he left some renowned students who expounded his word to others for many years later. Despite their contemptuous behavior towards the Imam, he was called upon by the Caliph to answer complicated questions on the meanings and the interpretations of the Qur'an and on the Islamic law. He had stood up in defense of Islam on many occasions in the Caliph's court. Many of his quotes were collected by his devotees for reference in later times. Likewise, people had also collected many of his supplications.

Selected Quotes:

23. Once he told his devotees, "Take good care of gifts of the Lord and thank Him for having given them to you. Remember that the self always turn, towards gratification, and defied deterrents. Seek to subdue its desire for vain things."
24. He told his companion Fateh bin Yazid Jarjani, "Strive to obey Allah in all His commandments, turn to the life of the Prophet and seek Allah's help to follow it, and seek those in whom He vested the authority to interpret the Qur'an and the Islamic law."

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25. He told his companions, "Remember that day when you separate from your loved ones for ever, when no physician can keep you back, and no friend can benefit you."

26. He told Caliph al-Mutwakil:

- "Do not expect devout obedience from someone whom you had treated with contempt.

- Do not expect loyalty from one who you had betrayed.

- Do not expect good advice from one whom you had treated with mistrust. His feelings for you are not any better than yours for him."

Selected Sayings:

1. One who is pleased with his self, has more of those who would not be pleased with him.
2. The one, who is contented, has only one problem to face, but the one who bemoans, has many more problems.
3. Backbiting is the humor of the idiot, and the art of the ignorant.
4. Keeping awake enhances the sweetness of sleep, just as hunger enhances the taste of food.
5. The world is with wealth but the hereafter only with deeds.
6. Avoid jealousy, for it reveals your action, but none of your opponents.
7. The worst affliction is ill manners.
8. Ignorance and meanness are worst conduct.
9. The world is like a market where one group benefits while the other loses.
10. Keeping bad company shows your own flaw.
11. Morhic beauty is only of the exterior, but wisdom is beauty of the interior.
12. One who seeks fast motion is slave of his desires, the idiot is slave of his tongue.

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The lives of the Twelve Imams from The Ahle Bait

The Eleventh Imam: Hasan ibne Ali (AS)

Name: Hasan

Title: al-Askari

Epithet: Abu Muhammad

Father: Ali bin Muhammad

Mother: Saleel

Date of Birth: Rabi-ul Akhir 8, 232 AH (December 3, 846 AD)

Place of Birth: Medina

Progeny:

From Nargis Khatoon

One son: Muhammad al-Mahdi

Date of Death: Rabi-ul Awwal 8, 260 AH (January 1, 874)

He lived for only 28 years

Place of Death: Samarah

Place of Burial: Samarah

THE TIMES AND LIFE OF IMAM HASAN AL-ASKARI

Imam Hasan (Al-Askari) was born in Medina in 232 AH, during the reign of the Abbasid caliph Wathiq. When Mutwakil had his father moved from Medina to Samarah in 236 AH, he was only four years of age. He suffered deprivation of the patronage of his father, Imam Ali Naqi, owing to the long spells of house arrests and formal prisons. He was only twenty-two years of age at the martyrdom of his father in 254 AH. He took up the responsibilities of Imamate according to the declaration that his father had made in Medina eighteen years earlier.

During the life of his father, he endured the reign of terror under Mutwakil followed by the chain of several caliphs until the martyrdom of his father. There was much oppression and persecution of the Alkays during those years, and the Imam had to remain in hiding. He used to communicate with his followers only through his most reliable representatives. During the next

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five and a half years, he saw the caliphate change hands twice. Muhtadi succeeded the Caliph Mutazz in 255 AH, followed by the Caliph Mu'tarnid in 256 AH.

Just as Umar bin Abd al-Aziz was the only benevolent caliph from the Umayyad dynasty, Muhtadi was perhaps the only caliph in the chain of the Abbasids who could also be called benevolent. However, the rule of Muhtadi last for less than one year, and the Imam saw a brief period of reprieve during his reign. Notwithstanding the urgency to have an heir, the Imam married Nargis Khatoon. There was a general air of uneasiness about this. A rumor was circulating that the awaited Mahdi would be born from this union. The Imam was twenty four years of age at that time.

The rule of tyranny returned with the Caliph Mu'tamid. He was a stonehearted ruler who took pleasure in having people beheaded for trivial faults. He had the Imam placed in a formal prison under strict isolation. He had instructed the wardens to inflict torture to the Imam. However, when they went to carry out the Caliph's orders, they found the Imam either in prayers or reading the Quran. He rotated several prison wardens with the intention to inflict harm to the Imam, but failed in his ill-planned schemes. Most of these wardens became followers and devotees of the Imam.

Despite the difficulties imposed upon the Imam, he continued to receive deputations from his devotees from far and wide, and he continued to serve the followers with the true values of Islam through the meanings and interpretations of the Qur'an and his personal conduct of life. Many senior and older followers of the Imam attended his sittings and clarified many questions about the Quran and the Hadith. Seeing that there would be a continued need for correct interpretation of the Qur'an, he took up the project of writing, a comprehensive commentary of the Qur'an before he passed away.

The Caliph finally prevailed and had the Imam martyred with poison in the year 260 AH. He sent a team of his trusted physicians to ensure the condition of the Imam and to certify his death before his burial. Having thus completed the assignment as ordered by the Caliph, the body of the Imam was laid to rest in the same house where he had died. He was buried in the same room where his father had died and was buried.

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Contrary to the previously established tradition, the Imam did not announce the name or the identity of his successor, although there was some evidence that he had left a four-year-old heir to the Imamate. As expected, there was considerable doubt and confusion among the followers regarding the continuation of the series of Imamate after the death of the Eleventh Imam. The Aliyyids were in revolt in the empire at the time, and some were claiming to be the Awaited One, the Twelfth Imam contacted his followers through his safirs for their guidance.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE LIFE OF IMAM HASAN AL-ASKARI

The Imam obtained his title of al-Askari because of his residence in the garrison precinct of the Samarah. He was able to communicate with people in their mother-tongues as he was fluent in several languages that were spoken in the empire at the time.

The Imam participated in many debates and contests held by the Caliph in an attempt to slight his dignity. But instead, the Imam shone like full moon in the dark night of ignorance.

Despite the short span of his life that was available to his followers, he left many, respected students who continued to write and carry out researches in the path of the Truth.

Selected Quotes:

13. He told his followers:

- Be obedient to Allah, keep adherence to the practice of your Faith, never tell lies, keep the trust of someone who has placed it with you, keep good relations with your neighbors, prolong your *sajdah* in prayers.
- Life is but a short span and the end comes suddenly. One who plants the seedling of good, would reap an enormous harvest of reward. One who plants a seedling of mischief, would reap the fruit of bitterness, shame and regret.
- Being Thankful to Allah brings rewards of His great benevolence.

14. He told one of his companions:

- Trust in Allah and keep steadfast in your prayers.
- Never refrain from paying the poor dues, lest your prayers go waste.

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- Repent for your sins.
- Do not give in to anger.
- Be charitable towards your brethren, in plenty and in deprivation.
- Show forbearance to peoples' ignorance.
- Ponder on ordinances of Faith.
- Forever remain within the circle of the Qur'an.
- Guide others to the Truth when you have found it.

Selected Sayings:

15. Do not indulge in unnecessary discussion with people lest you lose your respect. Do not indulge in too much humor with people lest they pick up courage to slight you.
16. It is among good manners to wish well to someone who passes you by. When in a communal gathering, do not look for a high place for yourself
17. It is ill manners to express happiness to someone who is grieved by some event.
18. That person is most cautious who pauses at place of suspicion. That person is most reliable who fulfills his commitments. That person is most pious who exercises avoidance of all forbidden things. That person is performing the hardest *Jihad* who is committed to avoid sin.
19. The provisions that are a promise from the Lord, are rewards earned by fulfilling the duties of obedience.
20. One who renders advice to a fellow *momin* on his fault away from the public eye, has decorated him; but one who does so in the open, has in fact stripped him.
21. Everything has a limit, you would harm yourself if you exceed it.
22. One who has built relation with the Allah, loves solitude.
23. Do not choose a method of respect to someone by which his feelings would be hurt.
24. It is no less than a miracle to teach an idiot or to break the habit of an addict.

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The Commentary on Holy Qur'an By Imam Hasan Askari

As the grip of the rulers tightened and degree of suppression of the Imams increased, it became harder and harder for the followers to gain access to him to obtain direct guidance. Since most of the questions asked used to be on the interpretation and expounding the meanings of the Book of Allah, the Imam found it necessary to have this material committed to his pen. This was collected in the form of a book known as the "*Tafseer-e Askari*."

The book that is available today is incomplete, as it does not cover the Qur'an in its entirety. It is possible that several sections of it were lost or destroyed due to many turmoil the world of Islam had endured with time. It is possible that the Imam had only a limited time to have such a mammoth task completed before his martyrdom. It is also possible that he had given lectures and interpretations to some of the learned students and entrusted them to complete the task after him, and in turn they were also eliminated by the tyrants of the time. However, what is available today, reveals the enormity of the rich language and the depths of the meanings extracted from the verses of the Qur'an. Besides a book of learning, it is a beautiful piece of literature attributed to the eleventh pillar of the Ahle Bait for the devotees to relish and to benefit from.

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The lives of the Twelve Imams from The Ahle Bait

The Twelfth Imam: Muhammad al-Mahdi (AS)

Name: Muhammad
Title: al-Mahdi (also al-Hujat, al-Qaim)
Epithet: Abul Qasim
Father: Hasan bin Ali
Mother: Nargis Khatoon
Date of Birth: Sha'ban 15, 255 AH (July 29, 869 AD)
Place of Birth: Samarah
Ghaibat us-Sughra: Rabi-ul Awwal 8, 260 AH
Ghaibat ul-Kubra: Shawwal 10, 238 AH

THE TIMES AND LIFE OF IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-MAHDI (as)

The Birth of Imam Mahdi(as):

The intention of the Abbasid caliphs was to prevent the conception and birth of the awaited Mahdi from the union of Imam Hasan Askari (as) with Nargis Khatoon. This was based on the several traditions circulating among the early days of Islam as well as the fact that he would be the last in the chain of the twelve representatives of the Prophet. Further, it was believed that with the coming of the Mahdi, the tyrants will run for refuge, and the oppressed would be liberated. As demonstrated by Allah in several places in the Qur'an, His divine Will can never be superseded. Nargis was able to conceal her state of gravidity, and when the birth occurred, none other than Hakeema, daughter of Imam Muhammad Taqi (as), attended it.

The child was kept effectively hidden from the searching eyes of the tyrants. Although the news had leaked out about the birth of a son to Imam Hasan Askari (as), no one could find clues to prove it. In fact, the Caliph ordered that the estate of the Imam be kept under trust for two years to see if any of the bond women of the Imam would file a claim for heir ship for her offspring. When he was satisfied that there was no apparent heir to the Imam, he gave up the search and closed the case. This is probably the reason why many historians deny the very existence of a son born to the eleventh Imam.

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Only the most trusted devotees of Imam Hasan al-Askari (as) knew of the birth and occultation. Scholars and researchers of theology have obtained evidence of the existence of a "Mahdi" from sources such as the Qur'an, ahadith of the Prophet quoted through respected companions as well as quotes from Imams of the Ahle Bait.

THE OCCULTATION OF THE TWELFTH IMAM

There is evidence in the literature about the time and the types of the occultation of the Twelfth Imam including the controversies surrounding this subject. This occultation occurred in two phases as detailed below:

Ghaibat us-Sughra (The Lesser Occultation):

This was a period of seventy years between 260 AH and 329 AH. The Imam was not available to his followers in person, but carried out his mission of guidance through four of his most trusted emissaries. During this period, the actual personal contact with Mm was kept to an extremely limited number. However, the followers of Ahle Bait and his devotees kept constant communication with him for guidance. They wrote letters to him, and he sent back written replies to them.

Ghaibat al-Kubra (the Greater Occultation):

At his deathbed in 329 AH, the last emissary of the Imam read the contents of his last letter to him. In it he said that the Imam had ordained not to appoint any new emissary to follow him because the Imam was going into the period of his greater occultation. He said that the period of his greater occultation would be as long a period of time as Willed by Allah. From then on, there would cease to be any physical contact with him until the time Allah would ordain his re-appearance. Throughout the ages, there would be others making false claims to be the Awaited One, but beware of the falsehood, and seek the Truth that had already been revealed. The Twelfth Imam (as) warned the believers to remain steadfast and not succumb to the false claims by others to be the Awaited Imam (as). He also warned that there would be considerable doubt among the misguided regarding the very belief of his occultation. The

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author considers this to be beyond the scope of this book to indulge in further discussion on the subject here because of its length as well as the attended controversies.

THE TRADITION OF WRITING LETTERS TO IMAM-E ZAMAN (as)

Up to the end of the lesser occultation, the followers and the devotees used to communicate with the Twelfth Imam (as) through his safer (emissary). However, from the time of the death of his last safir, the tradition of written communications with the Imam has continued to this day, and there are believers who testify that they still get replies from him in some unusual ways.

GUIDANCE FROM IMAM AL-MAHDI (as)

25. The Imam considers them his rightly guided brothers who fight in way of Allah and serve Islam.
26. The Imam remains in touch with his followers, but whatever he does has to be with Allah's permission.
27. The Imam keeps away from the tyrant and is near to his devotee.
28. The ills of the Ummah result from the hypocrites and those who profess only to lip service. They are the ones who have forsaken the Kingdom of Allah, and abandoned the Path of Righteousness.
29. The Imam keeps his watch over the Ummah, for if he did not do so, the tyranny would have overtaken it and wiped it out of existence.
30. Dissimulation is useful for self-preservation, but should not be a deterrent for the preservation and propagation of the Faith.
31. The rulers of Iraq would be the cause of faithlessness and limitation of the provisions of Allah.
32. Only with the grace of Allah, the tyranny would end in Iraq and bring peace and plenty to the believers.

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33. The difficulties for performing Hajj would be eliminated, and the Imam would provide assistance and guidance for it.

34. It is incumbent on the believers to obey the ordinances of Islam to gain nearness and pleasure of the Imam.

Some of these ordinances are:

- Performance of the ritual obligations,
- Adherence to acts of the Faith,
- Act to prevent defamation of the Faith,
- Be truthful by word and action,
- not to evade one's commitment,
- not to sell one's conscience, and prevent a split in the unity,
- harm not one's benefactor, and
- always remember that we are accountable for all our deeds.

THE RETURN OF THE TWELETH IMAM AL-MAHDI (as)

THE TRUE CLAIM:

From the early days of Islam, there had been in circulation, a popular belief that al-Mahdi (as) (the rightly guided Imam) will make his appearance, (a Second Coming), towards the end of the era of human life on earth and will fill the world with justice. Although there is no specific reference in al-Qur'an on the word Mahdi (guided), there are many references to "imam of guidance" who would lead the believers to their salvation. This belief is further authenticated with ahadith quoted from the Prophet. He is reported to have said, "If no more than one day remained (on earth), Allah would lengthen it until He sent a man of mine (my Ahle Bait) whose name will be like mine, and whose father's name will be like my father's name." There are numerous traditions that form the basis this belief. This Mahdi is to be identified as the Qaim al-Muhammad, the Tweylh Imam from the Ahle Bait. He is presently in his Ghaibat ul-Kubra and is the awaited one. He will make his appearance only when it is Willed by Allah.

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It is quoted from the Sixth Imam (Ja'far as-Sadiq (as)) that the awaited Mahdi (as) will make his appearance in the holy mosque in Makkah on a Saturday between Rukn and Maqaam. This date will coincide with the tenth of Muharram. He will then move to Kufa and send his forces to other directions to spread the Truth. He will uphold justice and Islam would be the preferred religion of all human beings on earth. He will lead the Ummah toward the path of piety and purity.

As to when the Mahdi (as) will make his appearance, it is said that a tyrant called Dajal (one who does everything in contrariety) would be ruling the world with tyranny, terror and injustice. Isa (Jesus), the son of Mary, will also have made his appearance, and together with the Mahdi (as), the Dajal will be defeated and killed. The Mahdi will be the Imam of the congregation. Isa will pray behind the Mahdi.

THE PRETENDERS AND FALSE CLAIMANTS:

Muslim history is full of claimants who have called themselves the Mahdi in practically all Muslim lands from the west to the east. In al-maghrib (the Muslim west), the claimants took to military insurgences against decadent regimes, and against external (non-Muslim) colonial aggression. In this regard, the middle of the nineteenth century AD was a particularly stressful time for the Muslim Ummah. Several European countries were actively competing against each other in acquiring foreign lands as well as aggressive missionary efforts. Many Muslim countries had become their targets, which caused several brave, as well as painful episodes of history pertaining to this era. There was an uprising unsuccessful against the British in India (1847 AD), however there was no Mahdiist claim attached to this effort. An unsuccessful Mahdiist uprising took place in Somalia against the Italian and British encroachment. A Mahdiist claimant was executed in Egypt when he rose against the Turko-Egyptian regime who, for their own political survival, were flirting with the West and causing the Muslim Ummah to an unworthy exposure. Similar risings occurred in Tunisia (1860 AD), Morocco and West Africa against the French encroachments, but they also met their careers by execution.

A powerful and prolonged jihad was carried out by Sayyid al-Mahdi al-Sanusi in central Sahara against the Italians in the Libyan territory, and against the French in the Chad territory. He was the second head of the Sanusi tarika (1859-1902 AD). Although he never claimed to be the

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awaited Mahdi, people believed that he was. Ultimately, his son Sayyid Idris bin alMahdi was installed as the first king of independent Libya in 1951.

Some of the historical events cited below, manifest the same reaction of the Ummah towards pressure for survival, and looking for the awaited Mahdi for salvation. Most of these movements failed because they did not meet the criteria set forth in the ahadith quoted from the Prophet. Consequently their effects were short-lived. Only a few of them have survived to this day. It is beyond the scope of this book to name them all or to describe the circumstances in which they laid their claims. Some of these movements were considered heretic, and their followers were severely persecuted. The proponents of these movements founded new sects, and are described briefly here.

The Fatimid Dynasty, and of the Ismailia Sect

Ubaid Allah Muhammad, claiming to be from the chain of hidden Imams descending from Muhammad bin Ismail bin of Imam Ja'far as-Saadiq migrated from Yemen, and made his way to the far west in Morocco. There he declared himself to be the awaited Mahdi. He laid the foundations of the Fatimid dynasty initially in Morocco, but then moved to Egypt. He was the first Fatimid caliph (934-946 AD). There were a total of fourteen caliphs in this dynasty.

The Ismailia evolved their own theology, which is totally different from that of the mainstream Islarn, both from the Shiite and the Sunni point of view.

About fifty years before the final demise of the dynasty, Nizar was nominated by the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustansir as his successor. However, after the death of al-Mustansir, Nizar was ousted by the powerful vizier alAfdhal in favor of al-Musta'li. This led to a revolt by Nizar (1043 AD) that was crushed, but led to serious consequences for the dynasty. Nizar teamed up with Hasan bin Sabah, who had founded the dreaded movement called Fida e'yyen (the assassins), with their head quarters in the Far East (Central Asia.) The progeny of Nizar did not give up their aims for the high post of the caliphate, but their rebellions were also unsuccessful.

At the end of the rule of al-Abid (1160-1171), the Fatimid rule ended, and with that the hopes of the Nizari princes. The present Agha Khan traces his direct lineage to Nizar, the ousted prince of the Fatimids, and continues to use the title Prince (the political leader), as well as the Imam (the spiritual leader) of his adherents.

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The Muwahids of Morocco

Muhammad bin Abdallah bin Tumart was a native of Sus, Morocco. He was born in the village of Ijlis, in the tribe of Hargha. As a young man, he decided to learn religion, and journeyed to Baghdad for it. By the time he completed his studies, he had become an acknowledged master and a teacher. On his way back, he preached to the locals at each of his stops, and attracted followers. Abd al-Mu'min was one such adherent, who later, played a key role on overthrowing the rule of al-Muravids and replacing it with the al-Muwahids.

Ibne Tumart proceeded westward to Fez where the Maliki fuqaha (jurists of the Maliki School) resisted his teaching. They asked the governor for a debate with him, at which they lost. Threatened by his success, they prevailed on the governor and had him exiled from Fez. He moved on to the city of Marakah, but again met with resistance from the jurists in the court of the al-Muravid ruler. With a threat of death or life imprisonment, he finally decided to migrate back to his home district of Sus, and settled among the Masmuda people in Timnal. He taught religion to the people and grew strong as a leader. He then declared himself to be the awaited Mahdi, and launched his assault on the regime of the al-Muravids under the leadership of Abd al-Mu'min. Their first attempt was unsuccessful, with heavy loss of life, but Abd al-Mu'min escaped. After the death of Ibne Tumart (1130 AD), Abd al-Mu'min led successful raids and finally vanquished the al-Muravids.

The Mahdawi Sect:

Syed Muhanunad Mahdi (1443-1505 AD) of Jawnpur, India, proclaimed himself to be the awaited Mahdi, and attracted some adherents in Ahmadabad, Gujrat. He was forced to leave India, and found home in north western Afghanistan. Upon his death, he was buried there. His followers claimed that he could do miracles including the ability to heal the sick and raise the dead. They were actively persecuted by sultan Muzaffar II of Gujrat (1511-1526AD), and many were put to death. They continued to be pursued after by Aurangzeb when he was the governor of Ahmadabad (1645 AD). As a result, they began the practice of takiyya (dissimulation). The number of surviving adherents of this sect is uncertain. However, in India, they are found in small groups in Bombay, Deccan, and Uttar Pradesh. In Pakistan, they are found in the province of Sindh where they are known as Zilais.

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The Babi Sect:

The concept of 'the Bab', (the gateway) to knowledge of the Divine Truth (the Hidden Imam: al-Mahdi), was originated by Ahmad al-Ahsai in Iran. He claimed to be under special guidance from the Imam, and gathered followers. He then evolved a totally separate set of beliefs and ritual practices. He exalted the Twelve Imams and their role in creation beyond the claims of the mainstream Shiites, to the point of polytheism. His successor, Syed Karim Reshti (d. 1843 AD) claimed that the Hidden Imam was guiding him through his dreams. This deviant belief was regarded with suspicion by the ruling authorities. After the death of Syed Karim, his followers took another leader known as Mirza Ali Muhammad of Shiraz (1820-1850 AD). Mirza Ali Muhammad had become disenchanted with the fanaticism of the mullahs (clergy) and was already preaching his revolutionary ideas in public. He was thus perfectly suited to be the successor to Syed Karim.

By the year 1844 AD, a popular belief was circulating that the reappearance of the Twelfth Imam was imminent. Mirza Ali Muhammad claimed that he was the Bab and in 1848 AD, he declared himself to be the awaited Mahdi. Soon afterwards, he declared himself the revealer of a new religion, and laid down a totally new set of rules of belief and the practice of their faith. He further expanded his role into prophethood and beyond. He also predicted a "promised one" who would follow him and fulfill his teachings.

The authorities arrested him and sequestered him in the fortress of Maku in Azerbaijan. He was finally transferred to Tabriz where he was condemned and executed by bullets of a Christian firing squad.

The followers of the Bab are known as the Babi or the Ahle Bayan (the followers of Bayan, the writings of the Bab). After attempts by three Babis to assassinate Shah Nasir ud-Din, the king of Iran (1852 AD), their sect was banned and actively persecuted as heretics. At that time, authorities also arrested and interned Mirza Husain Ali Nuri, a young convert to the Babi doctrine. His half brother Mirza Yaha, at age thirty years, was recognized by Babis as the successor to the Bab and called him Subhe Azal (the Eternal Dawn).

To escape persecution⁴ Mirza Yahya left Iran and moved to Baghdad. He maintained the pure form of the teachings of his master. His followers are known as the Azali Babis. However, the

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Turkish government took him from Baghdad and detained him in Famagusta (Cyprus). Only a few members of this sect have survived.

The Bahai Sect:

Mirza Husain Ali Nuri (c. 1817-1892 AD) was -imprisoned in Tehran and later exiled. He came to settle in Baghdad in 1852 AD. In 1863 AD he declared that he was the man yuzhiruhu-llah, (the one whom Allah shall manifest) predicted by the Bab. During the few months that followed, he modified the Babi faith to give it a more universal appeal, and thus laid the foundation of a new religion named after his epithet Baha Ullah (die Splendor of Allah). He was imprisoned initially in Adrianople in 1863 AD, and later moved to Acre in 1868 AD where he died in 1892 AD.

The followers of his doctrines are known as the Bahais and are spread throughout the world. Besides the Middle East, the Bahai doctrine has found acceptance in Europe and Americas.

The Ahmadiya Sect:

This was originated by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, district Gurdaspur, Punjab, British India, (1843-1908 AD). In the year 1900 AD, they got themselves registered with the Imperial Indian government as a separate modern Muslim Sect.

Reacting to the challenges of the West and zealous efforts of the Christian missionaries in British India, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad first declared himself to be a mujaddid (a renewer of the faith) in 1882 AD. Soon afterwards started claiming to be the awaited Mahdi as well as the promised Messiah (Second Coming of Jesus Christ). He even claimed to be the buniz (re-appearance) of Prophet Muhammad, and the avtar (die returning) of Lord Krishna of the Hindus. He claimed to receive Divine Revelations, and the ability to perform miracles. In 1889 AD, he announced that he had received orders from Allah to start accepting bayat (fealty) from his believers.

Not unexpectedly, there was uproar over these claims by the Christians, Muslims and Hindus of India. This led to fatwas (Muslim juristic decrees), debates, contests as well as a few law suites against these claims. However Mirza Ghulam Ahmad continued his office till his retirement

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due to old age. Thus, until his death in 1908 AD, his affairs were run by the Sadr Anjuman Ahmadiya. He was succeeded by Khalifa Nur ud-Din.

After the partition of British India (1947 AD), many adherents of this sect migrated to Pakistan and built their headquarters in Rabwa. They have spread to many Muslim countries and elsewhere in the world by their active propaganda and missionary efforts.

The sect split into two groups. The Qadiani faction considers Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a Nabi (prophet) and the Lahori Party who consider him only as a mujaddid (the renewer of the faith).

ABOUT THE BOOK

The Message of Islam was conveyed to Man by Muhammad, the last Prophet of Allah. The essence of the Message is none other than guidance and rules governing self discipline and ethical conduct, to foster harmony in society. Since there would be no prophet after Muhammad, it demands of Divine Justice to provide continued guidance for the time beyond the last Messenger. Whereas Qur'an, the Word of Allah, and Hadith the word of the Messenger are preserved and available to Man, there remains the need for their interpretation and application for the ever changing needs of a dynamic society. The institution of Imamate fulfills this need.

The introduction to present title, "**And The Message of Isalm Continues**" addresses Allah's Mercy by providing mankind with the Imams of Guidance. The narratives of the lives of the twelve Imams from the Ahle Bait of the Prophet illustrate the constant tussle between vice and virtue. They upheld the principles of the Truth.

Whereas the Muslim Ummah is divided over the question of successor ship to the Prophet, there is a general agreement over the path of piety and righteousness pursued by the Imams of Ahle Bait. The focus of this book has been to narrate the history of the lives of the Imams of Ahle Bait and not to elaborate on the issues of Caliphate in Islam. That is another topic altogether, and must be addressed separately. It is hoped that this book will provide the reader with an initial introduction to the subject of Imamate in Islam, and foster an understanding and a desire towards further reading.

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