



# Forbearance, Acquiescence, and Generosity

A Brief Account of the Life of Ḥadrat  
Imam Mūsā b. Ja‘far (A.S.), Ḥadrat Imam  
‘Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (A.S.), and Ḥadrat  
Imam Muḥammad al-Taḳī, Jawād al-  
A’imma (A.S.)

**Ahmad Ahmadi Birjandi**

Translated by  
**Ahmad Rezwani**

**Islamic Research Foundation**  
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## Publisher's Note

Studying the life and *sīra* of the Infallible ones (A.S.) is incumbent upon every Muslim, as their life is a full-length mirror reflecting the Islamic thought and they are considered as the symbols of the purified Prophetic Sunna. First of all, it is to be noted that both the Prophet Muḥammad (S.A.W.A.) and the Imams (A.S.) have all enjoyed Divine and human virtues and excellences. From this perspective, there is no difference between them; and if a virtue is more saliently symbolized in one of them, it is due to the circumstances and conditions that the Imam has been situated in.

In *Sūrat al-Shūrā*, (Q: 42/23), Allah (S.W.T.) says to His Apostle, ﷺ Say, “I do

not ask you any reward for it except love of [my] relatives.” Whoever performs a good deed, We shall enhance for him its goodness. Indeed Allah is All-forgiving, All-appreciative. ﴿﴾

The Islamic Research Foundation of Astan Quds Razavi is honored to undertake the promotion of the thoughts and words of the Infallible Imams (A.S.), which represent the pure Islamic intellectual thought. Accordingly, with the translation of *Chahārdah Akhtar-i Tābnāk* into English (*The Fourteen Luminaries of Islam*) and publishing it in a single volume as well as six separate volumes, this Foundation has tried to take a step, however small, toward the introduction of these luminary figures and the dissemination of Islamic and human values.

*Chahārdah Akhtar-i Tābnāk*, originally written by the late eminent researcher

Aḥmad Aḥmadī Bīrjandī (a member of the Islamic Research Foundation), is such a valuable and concise work that has managed to address a great number of seekers after perfection and has been published several times. Being decided to be published in English; however, the Persian version was assigned to the IRF Department of History of Islam to be revised and then handed over to the Translation Department to be rendered into English.

It is hoped that as a part of the above-mentioned translation, this volume may pave the way for further familiarization of the interested readers with the profound and prominent Islamic culture.

**Islamic Research  
Foundation of  
Astan Quds Razavi**

**The Ninth Infallible**  
**Ḥaḍrat Imam Mūsā b. Ja‘far (A.S.)**  
**The Seventh Imam**

The name of our seventh Imam is Mūsā and his nickname is Kāẓim; Abū al-Ḥasan and Abū Ibrāhīm are his patronymics. The Shī‘as and advocates have named him *Bāb al-Ḥawā’ij* (the gate to the fulfillment of needs). Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (A.S.) was born on Sunday, Safar 7, 128/November 8, 745 in Abwā’. His period of Imamate was simultaneous with the later part of the caliphate of the Abbasid Maṣṣū‘ and in the



period of Hādī's caliphate and thirteen years of Hārūn's caliphate, which was the most adverse time of his life.

At the age of around 21, Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (A.S.) undertook the exalted position of Imamate by the will of his father and the command of the Almighty Allah. His Imamate lasted a short while more than thirty five years, which was longer than other Imams except for the twelfth Imam, the Lord of the Time (A.S.).

### **The Appearance, Traits, and Morals of Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (A.S.)**

Imam al-Kāẓim (A.S.) was of a medium stature. His countenance was radiant and his hair black and thick.

His noble body had become emaciated due to copious worship. However, he still enjoyed a powerful spirit and a resplendent heart. According to most of the historians,

Imam al-Kāzim (A.S.) was well-known for his asceticism and devotion. In worship and assiduity, he was known as ‘Abd al-Ṣāliḥ (pious servant); in generosity and munificence, he was like his honorable ancestors. He would bring along bags of 300, 400, and 2000 *dīnars* to give out to the needy and the disabled. Imam Mūsā b. Ja‘far (A.S.) is quoted as saying, “My father (Imam al-Ṣādiq – A.S.) would constantly enjoin me to be generous and gracious.”

Despite his graciousness and generosity to others, he would always wear coarse clothes, being described as “coarse-clothed and simple-dressed”, which is another indication of his lofty soul, purity of the heart, and detachment from the deceitful gaudiness of the world.

Imam Mūsā al-Kāzim (A.S.) was very affectionate and kind toward his wife and children and the inferior. He was always

concerned with the poor and the desperate, helping them secretly or openly. Some of the poor people in Medina had recognized him, but others found out about his generosity and grandeur and realized who he was only after he was exiled to Baghdad.

Imam al-Kāzim (A.S.) was very fond of reciting the Holy Qur'ān. He would recite it with such a doleful and fine voice that people would gather around his residence to listen to his recitation tearfully and earnestly. There were some malevolent people who would curse him and his noble ancestors and say rude words to him. Encountering them with patience and tolerance, however, he would guide them and draw their attention to the moral rectitude and virtue. Some anecdotes in this respect have been historically recorded. The nickname Kāzim, meaning the one who restrains [and suppresses] his anger, is

rooted in these events. That was his treatment of those who, out of ignorance or being instigated by the enemies, committed indecent and vile actions toward him. His wise and tolerant behavior gradually made the rightfulness of the Infallible Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.) clear and evident to them. However, whenever it so happened that the word of Truth was to be expressed against a tyrant caliph or sultan, Imam Mūsā al-Kāzīm (A.S.) would say, “Speak out the Truth even if it leads to your perishing.” Truth is so highly valued that people could be sacrificed to preserve it. He was a paradigm of humbleness, as he was in his other competent traits. He would associate with poor, soothe and comfort the helpless, consider the slave and the free as equal, and would say, “We are children of Adam and created by the One God.”

Abū Ḥanīfa is quoted as saying, “I saw

him in his childhood and asked him some questions to which he gave such answers as if he had been nurtured from the fountainhead of *Wilāyat*. Imam Mūsā b. Ja‘far (A.S.) was indeed a learned and competent jurist and a skilful and authoritative orator.” Similarly Muḥammad b. Nu‘mān said, “I viewed Mūsā b. Ja‘far as a vast and fathomless ocean that was effervescing and dispersing seeds of knowledge around.”

### **Imam al-Kāzim (A.S.) in the Bastion of Teaching Truths and Struggle**

The promulgation of the Ja‘farī jurisprudence and ethics as well as exegesis and theology which had commenced since the time of Imam al-Ṣādiq (A.S.) and throughout the era of Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (A.S.), was carried on in the time of Imam Mūsā al-Kāzim (A.S.), who followed

the footsteps of his noble ancestors to make people more and more familiar with the straight line of Imamate and the truth of Ja'farī school of thought; and to hand over this glowing torch through ages to the coming generations.

The Abbasid caliphs were always, by way of oppression and over-indulgence in pleasure seeking, intending to wipe out the Hashemites so that they would put the progeny of 'Alī (A.S.), away from the political arena, and curtail their power over the Islamic states. To achieve this malicious purpose, they encouraged and sponsored some of the Ja'farī school disciples to establish another school against the Ja'farī School. In this way, different schools of Ḥanafites, Ḥanbalites, Shafi'ites, and Malikites were founded, each with its own juristic method. The governments of the time and the ones that followed them

supported these schools in order to achieve power and considered their discrepancies to the benefits of their own ends.

Toward the end of Maṣṣūr Dawānīqī's caliphate, coinciding with the early years of the Imamate of Imam Mūsā al-Kāzīm (A.S.), “many of the rebellious Sayyids who were typically from among the scholars and the brave and pious followers of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.)'s household and were closely related with the Imams (A.S.), were killed as martyrs. These noble figures would rise up to fend off oppression and to disseminate the charter of justice and to enjoin right and forbid wrong, and would finally give their lives for the essentials of the Islamic teachings; thus awakening the sleeping souls. They would sacrifice their own souls and let their own bloodshed in the Islamic cities and towns to keep the call to prayer (*adhān*) reverberating from the

minarets of the mosques.”<sup>1</sup>

In Medina, the functionaries of Mahdī ‘Abbāsī, the son of Maṣṣūr Dawānīqī took up the same vile behavior as that of the evil dynasty of the Umayyad, and mistreated the progeny of Imam ‘Alī (A.S.) as harshly as they could. The tragic event of Fakh (a place about 7 kms from Mecca on the way to Medina) took place in the era of Hādī ‘Abbāsī. The event started when Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī b. ‘Ābid, who was an honorable descendant of Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) and a noble scholarly chief of a clan in Medina, revolted with the help of a number of the Sayyids and Shi‘as against the cruelties of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ‘Umarī, who was dominating Medina, and with utmost bravery killed many of the opponents in the land of Fakh. Eventually, the brutal enemies besieged this

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1 *Imām dar ‘Ayniyat-i Jāmi‘a*, p. 57.



brave Sayyid and murdered him and a number of his companions and captured some others. Mas'ūdī wrote, "The bodies remained in the desert were eaten up by beasts of prey."

The wickedness of the Abbasid was not restricted to this event. These cruel caliphs literally plastered hundreds of Sayyids under the walls or inside the pillars, and incarcerated hundreds of others in the dark of the dungeons or murdered them. Surprisingly enough, all these crimes and murders were perpetrated under the guise of Islam, in order to quell the riots. Imam Mūsā b. Ja'far (A.S.) was never at peace and quiet in such critical situations, witnessing and hearing all those painful scenes and widespread outrages. The holy Imam (A.S.) evidently witnessed that the tyrannical caliphs intended to ruin and wipe out the human and Islamic principles. For years he

was chased and persecuted and spent, reportedly, between four to fourteen years of his life under arrest, in exile, in prison, or in solitary confinements in Baghdad dungeons in shackles.

Without being by any means apprehensive of the despotic ruling system of Hārūn, Imam Mūsā b. Ja‘far (A.S.) would attend to the affairs of his household and those of the Sayyids who survived the genocide; and spared no time in gathering, protecting, and organizing their survivors. When the Imam (A.S.) was in Medina, Hārūn had assigned someone to spy on the movements in and out of Imam (A.S.)'s house and to keep him posted on whatever happened there. Hārūn was extremely afraid of the Imam (A.S.)'s popularity and spiritual influence. He is reported as saying about Imam Mūsā b. Ja‘far (A.S.), “I fear that he

will set up a revolt and cause bloodshed.”<sup>1</sup>  
It was quite evident that even these “holy uprisings” led by the ‘Alawī Sayyids and devoted Shī‘ites, and sometimes attended directly themselves on the front line of the uprising and gallant ventures, were called *fitna* (sedition) by the rulers who were plunged in worldly pleasures and self-indulgence. The above statement by Hārūn, on the other hand, shows that the Imam (A.S.) had never been a single moment negligent of abolishing tyranny and pulling down the despotic regime. When Mahdī ‘Abbāsī asks the Imam (A.S.), “Would you grant me security from your rebellion?”<sup>2</sup> it proves the fear that the tyrannical Abbasid

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1 *Imām dar ‘Ayniyat-i Jāmi‘a*, p. 59, (quoted from Shaykh ‘Abbās Qumī’s *Muntahī al-Āmāl*.)

2 *Wafiyāt al-A‘yān wa Inbā’ Abnā’ al-Zamān*, vol.2, p.256.

regime had of the Imam (A.S.) and his companions and Shī'ites. Actually, Imam Mūsā al-Kāzīm (A.S.)'s spiritual influence on the ruling system was to such an extent that people like 'Alī b. Yaqtīn, the chief minister of the Abbasid government, were among the advocates of Imam Mūsā b. Ja'far (A.S.) and would follow his order.

The informers of the government took words to Hārūn about 'Alī b. Yaqtīn and spoke ill behind him. The Imam (A.S.), however, enjoined him to stay on in the Hārūn ruling system by way of skillful tactics and misleading strategies such as *taqiyya* (precautionary dissimulation) which, in some case, is necessary to fend off the enemies' treachery and is a kind of secret combat, and to persevere in propagating the Faith and improving the spiritual endeavors of truth-seekers with the help of the Shī'ites and the advocates of Imam 'Alī's progeny

without letting the blood-thirsty enemy know about it.

Eventually, however, evil-speaking by Hārūn's courtiers about Imam al-Kāzīm (A.S.) worked and in a Ḥajj pilgrimage in 179/795, Hārūn learned more and more about Imam (A.S.)'s great spirituality and the respect the people showed for him. Thus, Hārūn was very perplexed in this respect. As he arrived in Medina, having visited and making a *ziyāra* of the Holy Shrine of the Prophet (S.A.W.A.), he made his decision to arrest the Imam (A.S.), namely the grandson of the Prophet (S.A.W.A.). As the owner of fabulous palaces on the banks of the Dijla and the ruler of the empire of the Islamic lands, Hārūn was so afraid of the Imam (A.S.) that when the Imam (A.S.) was supposed to be taken from Medina to Baṣra, he ordered several other camel-litters be sent along with

the Imam's litter and on the way several of them be diverted and sent other ways so that people would get confused about the real destination and exile place of the Holy Imam (A.S.), be disappointed with him, gradually get accustomed to the absence of their true leader, and be prevented from revolting and rebellion. All this indicates the regime's apprehension of the Imam (A.S.) and his faithful companions who were always under alert and ready to unsheathe their swords to help their Imam (A.S.) return to Medina. That was why the companions of his Holiness were deprived of this opportunity due to the fraudulent dispatching of camel-litters to different directions by Hārūn's men who thereby carried out his exile very cautiously and cunningly.

That was, indeed, the way Hārūn exiled the seventh Imam (A.S.) with such deceitful

and wary plots.

Hārūn first had Imam Mūsā al-Kāzīm (A.S.) shackled and taken to Baṣra and wrote to ʿĪsā b. Jaʿfar b. Maṣūūr, governor of Baṣra, to incarcerate the Imam (A.S.) for one year and then at the end of this period kill him. ʿĪsā refused to do so. Hārūn transferred the Holy Imam (A.S.) to Baghdad surrendered him to Faḍl b. Rabīʿ. For a while, Imam Mūsā al-Kāzīm (A.S.) was in Faḍl's prison, where he spent his time worshipping and praying to Allah Almighty. Hārūn also ordered Faḍl to murder the Imam (A.S.), but he too declined.

Anyhow, the Imam (A.S.) was for years transferred from one prison to another. In dark prisons and dreadful dungeons, the honorable Imam (A.S.) would be engaged in supplication and pray to his real Beloved (Allah) and was thankful to Allah Almighty

for having granted him this chance of Divine worship in solitary.

Finally, the honorable Imam (A.S.) was poisoned to death by a tyrant called Sindī b. Shāhak by the order of Hārūn at the age of 55 in 183/799. Surprisingly, being well aware of the high personality of Imam Mūsā b. Ja‘far (A.S.) and his popularity among people, Hārūn tried after Imam (A.S.)'s martyrdom to convince people that he had died a natural death and not poisoned; however, the truth never remained veiled.

His sacred body was laid to rest in the Quraysh cemetery near Baghdad. Since that time, his resting place gained grandeur and magnificence and appealed to people of all classes; the city of Kāzimayn was built up there and began to develop and flourish



afterwards.<sup>1</sup>

### **Wives and Children of Imam Mūsā b. Ja‘far (A.S.)**

The number of Imam Mūsā b. Ja‘far (A.S.)'s wives is not clear. Most of them were from among the captive retainers who were bought by the Imam (A.S.) and either freed or married to him. His first wife was Tuktam, also known as Ḥamīda and Najma, who was a pious, God-fearing, chaste, and honorable woman and was the mother of the eighth Imam, ‘Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (A.S.).

The children of Imam Mūsā b. Ja‘far (A.S.) are reported to have been 37, including 19 sons and 18 daughters, the eldest of whom was Imam ‘Alī b. Mūsā al-

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1 *Majmū‘a-yi Zindigī-yi Chahārdah Ma‘šūm ‘Alayhim al-Salām*, p. 145.

Riḍā (A.S.), the spiritual heir and successor to his honorable father.

Among his other sons are:

Aḥmad b. Mūsā (Shāh Chirāgh) who is buried in Shiraz;

Muḥammad b. Mūsā who is also buried in Shiraz;

Hamzat b. Mūsā whose mausoleum is in Rey, near Tehran.

Among his daughters is *Ḥaḍrat* Fāṭima Ma‘ṣūma, who is buried in Qum where her magnificent mausoleum is a cynosure to the devotees of *Wilāyat*. The Imam (A.S.)’s other children (who are known as *Ṣādāt-i Mūsawī*) were all the torch-bearers of knowledge and piety of their time, whose resting places have been dispersed all over Iran and other Islamic lands. May their pure souls rest in peace!

## **Traits and Dispositions of Imam Mūsā b.**

### **Ja'far (A.S.)**

Imam Mūsā b. Ja'far (A.S.) was incarcerated for speaking the truth and because of his piety and people's love for him. He was imprisoned for his virtuousness and his superiority over Hārūn al-Rashīd in all traits and dispositions and spiritual virtues. Shaykh al-Mufīd has said about him, "He was the most devoted, knowledgeable, generous, and honorable man of his time and would make earnest supplications and submissive prayers to the Exalted Allah." He used to repeat the following very much, "O Allah! Grant me comfort when death comes to me and bestow forgiveness on me when You summon me on the judgment Day." Imam Mūsā b. Ja'far (A.S.) would most often attend to the poor people's problems. At night, he would put money and some dates and flour in a container and deliver it to the

poor without being known by them. He was the best qualified memorizer of the Qur'ān and its most melodious reciter; when he recited the Qur'ān, his voice would stir a pleasant melancholy in the hearts, and cause the listeners to weep. He was named Zayn al-Mujtahidīn (the ornament of the legal experts) by the Medinans. The day they were informed of their Imam's exile to Iraq, they broke into tears and wailing. It was just then that the poor and needy of Medina found out who had been calling on their houses to offer them comfort and relief day and night.

#### **Some Sayings of Imam Mūsā b. Ja'far (A.S.)**

1. Try to divide your day and night into four parts: one part for worship to Allah, another for earning a living, the third part for associating with brothers in faith, whom you trust and those who can remind you of your slips and are benevolent to you, and

the last part for engaging in harmless entertainment and legitimate pleasures, in light of which you can carry out your duties in the other three parts quite efficiently.

2. Never be apprehensive of your poverty, and never think of a long life, for anyone who deems himself poor or concerns himself with poverty in future is in fact exercising parsimony, and whoever thinks of a long life, he will become covetous. Enjoy lawful pleasures and whatever that will not disgrace you and is not considered extravagance, and take advantage of all this in performing your religious duties, for, whoever gives up his world for his faith or leaves his faith in favor of his world is not a true follower of ours.

3. Beware of Allah's wrath and speak the truth intrepidly, even if it leads to your destruction. However, you should know that the truth is not destructive, rather, it is

liberating. Always beware of falsehood even if your liberation is in it; though there is never any salvation in falsehood, it will eventually be destructive.

4. Honor a scholar for his knowledge and avoid debating with him, and look down on an ignorant for his ignorance; however do not reject him, instead, draw him near and teach him knowledge.

**The Tenth Infallible**  
**Ḥaḍrat Imam ‘Alī b. Mūsā**  
**al-Riḍā (A.S.)**  
**The Eighth Imam**

The tenth Infallible and the eighth Imam of the Shī‘a, Imam ‘Alī b. Mūsā, was named as al-Riḍā (A.S.).

Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) was born on Dhu'l-Qa‘da 11, 148/December 29, 765 in Medina. His honorable mother was Tuktam who was also called Najmah.

When the seventh Imam (A.S.) was martyred in Baghdad prison, ‘Alī b. Mūsā

al-Riḍā (A.S.) took over the Imamate and leadership of the Muslims as well as the guardianship and promulgation of the Islamic *Ma'ārif* and truth at the age of 35 by Allah's command and his noble ancestors' appointment.

At the beginning of his Imamate, Imam Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (A.S.) was contemporary with Hārūn al-Rashīd and later on with his son, Amīn, and finally with Ma'mūn.

The holy Imam's residence was in Medina, wherefrom his holiness later on left for Iraq and Iran.

The Imamate of his holiness lasted 20 years, of which the first 10 years coincided with the caliphate of Hārūn, the next 5 years with that of Amīn and the last part with the caliphate of Ma'mūn in Khurāsān. His Martyrdom is recorded to have happened in 203/818, indicating that he



lived to the age of 55.

After Hārūn's death, a severe conflict erupted between his two sons, Amīn and Ma'mūn, eventually leading to bloody fighting. Amīn was killed and an apparent peace was established. This way, Ma'mūn could take over the rule and dominate over the Islamic lands.

The Abbasid caliphs were very antagonistic toward 'Alī (A.S.)'s household, i.e. the 'Alawī Sādāt. Frequent uprisings by the 'Alawī Sādāt would sporadically threaten the ruling system. Although the noble Imams (A.S.) and the real successors of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.) would not go along with these uprisings, but the caliphs who had spread out and cherished an aristocratic and hedonistic way of life, were weakened and alarmed by these uprisings. Followers of the pure Imams (A.S.) who were rapidly increasing in number detested

the aristocratic ruling system of the Abbasids and held obeisance to the Infallible Imams (A.S.) as obligatory. The injustice and tyranny by Hārūn and other Abbasid caliphs had also caused the Iranians to acquire a very deep and hearty liking for ‘Alī (A.S.)’s household. Among the Abbasid’s atrocities was that Hārūn had given his governor, Ḥumaid b. Qaḥṭaba, full authority to assassinate the Shī‘as and the followers of ‘Alī (A.S.)’s household wherever he might find them. This ruthless and bestial governor brutally beheaded sixty innocent and respectful Shī‘as in the prison overnight and dropped their bodies down into a well.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, the same governor incarcerated

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1 *Yādbūd-i Hashtumān Imām-i Shī‘ayān Imām Riḍā ‘Alayh al-Salām*, p. 17 (Quoted from *‘Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*, vol. 1, p. 108.).

‘Abd Allāh Aḩḩas, Imam al-Riḩā (A.S.)’s brother, in the time of Hārūn and ordered his son, Yaḩyā, to be given a hundred lashes every day although apparently he was granted a respite. And finally, they had Yaḩyā, grandson of Imam Mūsa b. Ja‘far (A.S.), starved to death and buried his body under the foundation of a building.<sup>1</sup> These atrocities made people more disgusted with the Abbasid caliphate.

Although at first it was supposed that the Abbasids were attempting to promulgate Islam and love of and friendship with ‘Alī (A.S.)’s progeny who were their cousins and kin, but gradually and in practice it so happened that the simplicity of the life of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.) and the early caliphs, equality, brotherhood, justice, and belief in piety and virtue and the Day of

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1 Ibid.

Judgment began to be forgotten and ignored among the Abbasids as it did among the Umayyads before them. As a result, the pagan beliefs and aristocracy were revived under the guise of pretension as Muslims. Consequently, the noble Imams (A.S.), who followed in the footsteps of the Holy Apostle (S.A.W.A.) and their pure ancestors and who were in all instances the advocates of Justice and truth and actualization of the Islamic ideals in the society, were actually living under torture and persecution and under the surveillance of spies and tyrannical rulers of the pretentious Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs. Having piety, knowledge and virtue was considered sinful for our great leaders who were greatly envied and hated by the Abbasid caliphs.

## **Why was Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) Invited to Khurāsān?**

When Amīn was defeated and killed – with the help of Ma'mūn's Persian advocates – the way was paved for his rule. In the era of Hārūn, Ma'mūn who was supposed to accede to the throne after his brother Amīn, had already been appointed as the governor of Khurāsān. When Amīn was driven out of the scene of caliphate, Ma'mūn occupied the vacant seat and transferred the center of caliphate from Baghdad to Merv.

In order to add scholarly grandeur and status to his court and on the other hand, reduce voices of dissent from the advocates of 'Alī (A.S.)'s household and compensate the atrocities he had committed in the past, Ma'mūn decided to invite Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) to Merv upon consultation with his close companions, especially Faḍl b. Sahl, a

smart man who managed the state and military affairs. Ma'mūn asked Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) importunately to go to Merv from Medina. He had in mind, by this invitation, to reinforce the pillars of his rule and perhaps to discourage the Imam (A.S.)'s position by drawing him to the core of the ruling system. Ma'mūn, himself a learned and clever man, was more than anybody else aware of Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.)'s vast field of knowledge and piety and virtue. Faḍl b. Sahl, too, knew about the spiritual power of the the Imam (A.S.) and was well-aware that the intuition, purity, and sincerity of the descendant of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.) had so widely spread around that people were spiritually prepared to welcome his leadership wholeheartedly.

Having decided to invite the Holy Imam (A.S.), Ma'mūn dispatched Rajā' b. Abī Dhahhāk along with some trusted courtiers

to Medina to persuade Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) to travel to Khurāsān. At first, Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) did not give his consent to their invitation, letting people infer what secret and covert plans the ruling system was harboring by inviting him. Finally, upon much insistence from Ma'mūn, Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) agreed to leave for Khurāsān through Mecca and Iraq. Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) said a heartrending and distressful farewell to the illuminated tomb of his noble ancestor, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.), all members of his family, and even his cherished only-child and successor Imam Muḥammad al-Taḳī al-Jawād (A.S.).

The luxurious camel-litters and the retinue provided by the ruling system together with the entourage consisting of the governor and the nobles of Medina accompanied the Holy Imam (A.S.) with utmost grandeur and splendor to Baṣra.

How was it possible for Ma'mūn, who had decided on killing his brother Amīn and bringing his head to the capital to hold a festival for rewarding a bounty to the one who would manage to murder the latter, to renounce caliphate and turn it over to 'Alī (A.S.)'s household?! It was unbelievable. However, everything he apparently did in honor and as homage to Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) was a means to boost his own power and glory in caliphate that was actually the plans and plots carried out by the order from his cunning vizier, Faḍl b. Sahl.

At last, the eighth Imam (A.S.), traveling through Baṣra, Khurramshar, Ahwaz, Arak, Qum, Rey, and Neyshabur arrived in Merv on Shawwal 10, 201/May 1, 817.

People of all these cities enthusiastically welcomed and appreciated visiting the only descendant of the Holy Apostle (S.A.W.A.) and took advantage of this opportunity to



seek Imam (A.S.)'s assistance in solving their religious and worldly problems.

***Ḥadīth Silsilat al-Dhahab* (Golden Chain)<sup>1</sup>  
in Neyshabur**

People of Neyshabur were eagerly looking forward to seeing Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.). At his arrival they asked him to stay on for a while longer so they could better see the charming and dignified countenance of the Prophet (S.A.W.A.)'s grandson. Having dressed quite simply, the holy Imam (A.S.) stood before the people. Upon seeing the Imam (A.S.), those people let out a cheerful chanting. When Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) began to speak, two of the *ḥadīth* memorizers named Abūdhār'a and

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1 A tradition whose narrators are all Infallible Imams (A.S.), relating one after another from the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.).

Muḥammad b. Aslam bade people to keep silent, and restated the graceful and elegant words of the holy Imam (A.S.) loudly enough for all to hear. Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) expressed a *ḥadīth* regarding the unity and oneness of the Exalted Allah as follows, “The statement *Lā illāha illa Allah* is My strong fortress, whoever says it will enter this fortress, and if he enters it, he will be safeguarded from the punishment of the Judgment Day.” And then, when his retinue were about to set off, he looked out of the camel litter. People found out that the Imam (A.S.) intended to say something. Once again silence prevailed, and then Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) concluded the above *ḥadīth* by the following words:

“But yet on some conditions, and I am one of the conditions”.

By this Divine *Ḥadīth*,<sup>1</sup> the holy Imam (A.S.) intended to state three points:

Firstly, by naming his ancestors who had each quoted the *ḥadīth* from the previous ones back to the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.) who had himself heard it through the trusted Gabriel from the Exalted Lord, he could remind people of his honorable ancestors who were all Shī'ite Imams and rightful Caliphs of the true path.

Secondly, to remind people of monotheism and theology, which are the cornerstones of all beliefs and contentions to avert them from getting duped by illegitimate rulers, *ṭāghūts*, and the tyrannical bullies.

Thirdly, real and non-idolatrous monotheism and theology free from

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1 *Ḥadīth Qudsī*: a ḥadīth revealed to the sacred heart of the Prophet from Divinity.

hypocrisy requires and accompanies the *Wilāyat* of Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.), and that unless a just leadership is not set up in the Muslims' community, the idols and pseudo-idols and the illegitimate rulers will not allow Divine Unity turn in the right path.

Historically, it is recorded that when writing down this *ḥadīth*, the eager people were so prepared that they had in their disposal 24 thousand pen-holders to be used in writing the precious words of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.)'s descendent.<sup>1</sup>

### **In Merv**

When Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) and his retinue approached Merv, Ma'mūn and Faḍl b. Saḥl accompanied by a large number of courtiers and state dignitaries marched

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1 *Muntahī al-Āmāl*, p. 40 (Section on the biographical account of Imam al-Riḍā – A.S.).

toward his arrival direction for several kilometers to welcome him. A few days later, Ma'mūn told the Imam (A.S.) what he had in mind, i.e. to hand over his caliphate to Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.), having in mind to kill two birds with one stone: both to put an end to the revolt of the 'Alawīs against the government or scale it down, and to mar the Holy Imam's (A.S.) spiritual and pious image by bringing him in the ruling system which had always been criticized and protested by Imam 'Alī (A.S.)'s progeny who always regarded the functionaries of the state as corrupt and impure. He also planned to melt down the religious solidarity of the 'Alawīs and the Imam 'Alī (A.S.)'s Shī'ites, so that the caliphate would no longer be endangered. Then Ma'mūn and his cronies could carry on the ruling with a free mind.

However, contrary to what Ma'mūn and

Faḍl b. Sahl and the flattering worldly-minded people expected, Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) refused to accept this offer.

The Holy Imam (A.S.) was well-aware of the Abbasid's corrupt and disorderly ruling system; of the lavish and extravagant largesse which had started since half a century back in the aristocratic Abbasid governance being given away as hush money to certain people; of deviation of the governance from the right path under the guise of Islam and religiousness; and of handing over the crucial Islamic and ruling affairs to corrupt gold-hoarders and hypocrite individuals. How could have a friend of Allah and Infallible Imam tolerated such an unruly and chaotic situation?

The Imam (A.S.) would take over the governance only when he can cut a tyrant's hands off an oppressed person and when he can help the wronged person take back his

usurped rights, otherwise he would give up governance and caliphate.

### **Crown Princeship**

When Ma'mūn got disappointed of the Imam (A.S.)'s acceptance of the caliphate, he plotted another scheme with the help of his counselors to make him justify his good and evil deeds as righteous with the implied consent of the Imam (A.S.) and thereby deceive the people. What should he do? He had better ask the Imam (A.S.) to accept his crown princeship and, of course, to take over the affairs of Muslims when Ma'mūn dies. The Imam (A.S.), however, did not consent to this proposal, either. What should be done? Upon much insistence, Ma'mūn forced the Imam (A.S.) to accept the crown princeship. Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) perforce consented under the condition that he would not interfere in installing or

expelling officials and in other state affairs and would leave such kinds of tasks to the relevant authorities and statesmen.

On Ramadan 9, 201/March 31, 817, Ma'mūn penned a writing in his own handwriting introducing Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) as a manifestation of purity, piety, learnedness, and chastity; and then added that all Muslims must swear their allegiance first to Amīr al-Mu'minīn (Ma'mūn), and then to 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (A.S.).

Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) wrote the following on the back of the Ma'mūn's writing, "Praise be to the Lord of the worlds who will do as He wishes to do and there is nobody to avert His decree and commandment. He is aware of the treacheries of the eyes and the secrets hidden in the chests; and Allah's blessing be on Muḥammad (S.A.W.A.) who is His last of the Messengers and his progeny who are



the virtuous and the noble.”

Then on Ramadan 10, 201/April 1, 817, all civil and military dignitaries swore allegiance to the Holy Imam (A.S.). From this time on it was ordered that the black colored garment which was a token of the Abbasids to be transformed into the green one, a token of ‘Alī (A.S.)'s progeny and the ‘Alawī Sādāt.

### **The Consequence of Transferring Caliphate and its Tendency toward the ‘Alawīs**

The jealous and the world adorers in different parts of the Islamic Empire whose hands were stained with the innocents' blood and who enjoyed well-to-do and luxurious lives were discontent with such a transfer. They knew well that Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) would not tolerate tyranny and oppression for even a single moment. This ‘Alī [b. Mūsā al-Riḍā] (A.S.) is the son of

the same 'Alī (A.S.) who did not value the worldly matters and the caliphate, and if he accepted to rule, it was because he regarded it as a means for restoring and carrying out justice, serving the society and the oppressed people, and nothing else.

Therefore, this decisive and invincible method could not satisfy the lovers of worldly gaudiness and the servile flatterers. Ma'mūn, his vizier and cronies tried from the very beginning to misrepresent the acceptance of crown princship by Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) as a weak point and convince people that he was infatuated with worldly issues and the superfluous attractions. Far from it! How this way of thinking was far from the sublime goal of the Holy Imam (A.S.).

Anyhow, the sun of truthfulness would not remain under clouds: Imam 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (A.S.)'s simplicity and

immaculate behavior as well as his vast field of knowledge and scholarship began to gain more and more popularity, and soon his righteousness and comprehensive learnedness were known to all. Debate sessions held in the presence of Ma'mūn and others like the well-known court jurist, Yaḥyā b. Aktham, who boasted of being knowledgeable and well-informed, lighted up the reality of *Wilāyat* and Imamate. Throughout these debates, everybody, even the leaders of other religions, found out about the extent of the Imam (A.S.)'s omniscience and insight and realized that they had no power of speech and self-expression against the Prophet (S.A.W.A.)'s descendants. That was why they had no choice but to surrender to the Imam (A.S.). Perforce, the enemy's plots to mar the Holy Imam (A.S.)'s status were not only abortive, but they also gave way to a reverse effect.

As an educated and a knowledgeable man, Ma'mūn was well-aware of Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.)'s spiritual and scholarly elevated position, but suppressed his inner feelings and views and pretended to be caring and friendly toward the Imam (A.S.).

On the 'Īd al-Fiṭr, 202 A H, Ma'mūn implored Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) to lead the congregational prayer. At first, he refused it, so that Ma'mūn and his cronies as well as the people might know that he could not and wouldn't act as a puppet doing what the state intended him to do. Besides, the Imam (A.S.) would not like to be a performer of the ostensible formalities of religion, knowing that the building [of religion] was tottering to its foundation. Ma'mūn, his courtiers, and other people insisted on the Imam (A.S.) to lead the prayer, to which he finally consented on the condition that, "I would lead 'Īd al-Fiṭr

prayer but only with the same tradition that my ancestor, the Apostle of Allah (S.A.W.A.) performed it in his own time.” People were very anxious to see that the way of the Prophet (S.A.W.A.) would substitute the superfluous ceremony of the court. Ma'mūn ordered all courtiers to wear their finest attires, ride on ornamented and gold-bridled horses with all pomp and circumstances to accompany the Imam (A.S.) to participate in 'Īd al-Fiṭr prayer.

Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.), however, performed ablution, wore a simple white cotton shirt, put on a white turban, letting its two ends from over his chest down his shoulder, just in the way his noble ancestor did. He perfumed himself, fastened the tail of his shirt to his waist, and set off bare-footed. When he reached the open land he called out with a loud voice, “*Allāhu Akbar! Allāhu Akbar!* (Allah is the Greatest).”

When people heard the Imam (A.S.)'s voice, they began to chant *Allāhu Akbar* altogether in a magnificent way, to the extent that the military officials and the civilian nobles as well as the courtiers were so influenced by the Imam (A.S.)'s spiritual attraction that they dismounted from their horses, took off their boots and followed the Imam (A.S.) bare-footed. The number of the crowd mounted minute by minute. The Imam (A.S.)'s heavenly voice and others' reverberated in the open air. The congregation was flooding toward the desert [gathering place for saying prayer]. The situation had turned unusual. The news was reported to Ma'mūn. He got perplexed, thinking if he let Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) go on to the desert as such and then deliver his eloquent and important sermons, his fiery words would definitely be accepted wholeheartedly by people and this will tremble

the pillars of his governance. Something should be done; for it is probable that the Imam (A.S.)'s influential words would lead to a revolution in the ruling system. Thus, in the middle of the way, Ma'mūn sent a message to the holy Imam (A.S.) stating that performing prayers in such a situation would make trouble for him. The Imam (A.S.) returned from the middle of the way and someone else was appointed to lead the Fiṭr prayer in his place. God knows how this interference by Ma'mūn had added to people's cynicism toward his monarchy and exposed the true nature of his ruling system.

### **The Last Intrigues and Deceptions**

Some who saw Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.)'s just and scholarly manners detrimental to their worldly benefits, began to plot intrigues to annihilate both Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) and Ma'mūn as well as Faḍl b. Sahl. First, they

Killed Faḍl in the well-known public bath of Sarakhs. In order to exonerate himself from this murder, Ma'mun mobilized his forces to look for and arrest the murderers of Faḍl b. Sahl and even offered an award for their arrest. Nevertheless, eliminating Faḍl b. Sahl from the political arena was a source of hope for the Abbasids, but it was not sufficient. Thus, Ma'mūn sought to assassinate Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.), so he poisoned and martyred the noble Imam (A.S.) whom he had himself invited to Khurāsān.

Surprisingly enough, Ma'mūn and his caliphate system tried to show the Imam (A.S.)'s martyrdom as natural death. He pretended to be extremely sorrowful of that heart-rending event, and that was actually due to his great fear of the followers of the Holy Imam (A.S.) and the descendants of 'Alī (A.S.).



### **Burial Place of Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.)**

We know that Hārūn al-Rashīd fell sick in a trip toward the end of his life to Khurāsān in order to suppress the popular rebellion there, and died after a little while and was buried in a garden belonging to Ḥumaid b. Qaḥṭaba.

When Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) was martyred with the fatal poison that Ma'mūn gave him, the latter had his Holiness buried next to his father, Hārūn. In the time, Ḥumaid's garden was located in a place called Sanābād, where after the martyrdom of Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) was re-named Mashhad al-Riḍā and later on was called simply Mashhad. Since the time of burial (in 203/818.), his holy tomb turned into a place for manifestation of favors and bounties and divine blessings, as well as a pilgrimage place for the Shī'ites and the devoted and

faithful people. Gradually, it so happened that the grandeur and magnificence of the Holy Threshold overshadowed all other manifestations.

### **Works Relating Imam ‘Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (A.S.)'s Traditions**

As mentioned before, on many occasions Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) held debates and arguments with the leaders of other religions such as Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians, and even naturalists and materialists. Luckily, those debates and arguments are handed down to us in reliable volumes under the title, *Al-Iḥtijājāt* (Argumentations).

His precious traditions (*aḥādīth*), and wise sayings which were recorded in *‘Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* by Shaykh Ṣadūq in the fourth century (A.H.), *‘Ilal al-Sharāyī‘*, *Tuḥaf al-‘Uqūl* and other reliable books are

at present available and illuminating the world of Islam and Shi'ism.

**Some Sayings of Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.):**

1. Man's friend is his intellect while ignorance is his enemy.

2. Expressing friendship to people is a half of intellect.

3. Those who are bestowed with a bounty must be open-handed and liberal to the members of their own family.

4. Imam al-Riḍā (A.S.) was asked about trust (in Allah); he answered such a trust is that you fear none but Allah.

5. Your helping out the weak is better than giving alms.

6. It is worthwhile that people provide the required facilities for their families and behave in such a way that the members of their families would not wish death for them.

7. Try to divide your night and day into four sections: one for worship and communion with Allah; one for earning livelihood; one for association with trustworthy friends who remind you of your deficiencies and who are sincere in their friendship; and one for resting and enjoying legitimate and healthy recreations, as desirable utilization of this section will enable you to carry out the other three sections.

8. Make utmost endeavor in satisfying the needs of the faithful, making them happy, and removing their distress; and know that apart from performing the religious obligations, nothing is better in the sight of the Exalted Allah than making the faithful people happy.

9. Do good to every good and bad person; if someone is worthy of that good, much the better, if he or she is not, it is you

who are worthy of doing good.

10. No piety is more useful than to abstain from unlawful things and to avoid hurting the believers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Durar al-Kalām.*

**The Eleventh Infallible**  
**Ḥaḍrat Imam Muḥammad al-Taḳī**  
**Jawād al-A'imma (A.S.)**  
**The Ninth Imam**

Imam al-Jawād (A.S.), the ninth Imam of the Shī'ites, was born in Medina in 195/811. His name is Muḥammad, also known as Jawād and Taḳī.

His other nicknames are Raḍī and Muttaḳī, but Taḳī is the most popular of all.

His noble mother was called Sabīka or Khayzarān, both of which have been recorded in his biographies. When his

father died, Imam Muḥammad al-Taḳī (A.S.) was about eight years old.

After the heartrending martyrdom of Imam ‘Alī al-Riḍā (A.S) which took place late in the month of Safar, 203/September, 818, the office of Imamate was transferred to his honorable son Imam Jawād al-A’imma (A.S.).

The Abbasid Ma’mūn, who like other Abbasid caliphs was fearful of the Infallible Imam (A.S.)'s spiritual popularity and innate influence as well as the spread of his virtues among the people, tried to take the son of Imam al-Riḍā (A.S) under his own special care.

To this end, Ma’mūn married her daughter Umm al-Faḍl off to Imam al-Jawād (A.S.) so that he might have someone watch him from inside his own house. Pains and offences that Imam al-Jawād (A.S.) has suffered from this domestic agent are all

recorded in the history.<sup>1</sup>

Among the methods Ma'mūn applied against Imam 'Alī al-Riḍā (A.S) was holding debate sessions. Ma'mūn and later Mu'taṣim 'Abbāsī wanted – to their false supposition- to force him thereby into tight corners. They applied the same method to his son, Imam al-Jawād (A.S.), too, especially at the beginning of his Imamate, when he was too young. Ma'mūn would not realize that *Wilāyat* and Imamate which are Divine blessings, are not dependent upon young or old age.

Anyhow, although at an early age and in his short life, Imam al-Jawād (A.S.) entered scholarly debates in a period when different Islamic and non-Islamic sects were thriving, great scientists were there, sciences and arts had developed in other nations, and many

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<sup>1</sup> *Imām dar 'Ayniyat-i Jāmi'a*, p. 76.



books had been translated and published in Arabic. With the Divine gift of Imamate, which had originated from his absolute *Wilāyat* and Divine revelation, he promulgated Islamic precepts like his noble father and ancestors, teaching and guiding Muslims and undertaking to answering various questions. As an example, one of his debates is related as follows:

In his *Tafsīr*, ‘Ayyāshī quotes Dharqān who was a companion and friend of Ahmad b. Abī Du’ād as saying, “One day his friend (Ibn Abī Du’ād) returned from the court of the Abbasid Mu’tasim and looked very distressed and troubled. I asked him why he was so upset that day. He replied, ‘Something shameful and belittling happened to us in the presence of the caliph and Abī Ja’far (A.S.), son of ‘Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (A.S).’ I asked how come? He replied, ‘A thief was brought to the caliph and his

theft was evident and he had confessed the stealing. The caliph asked how the penal law (*ḥadd*) would be carried out. A number of jurists were present. The Caliph ordered other jurists to be present too. He also sent for Muhammad b. ‘Alī al-Riḍā.”

The caliph asked, “How should the Islamic *ḥadd* be carried out?”

I said, “The hand must be cut off at the wrist.”

The caliph said, “For what reason?”

I said, “Because a hand includes fingers as well as a palm which extends to the wrist; and it is read in the verse about *tayammum*; ﴿And wipe a part of your faces and your hands with it [clean ground]﴾. (Al-Qur’ān, 5, 6)” Many of the jurists present in the court confirmed my view.

A group of scholars stated, “A hand must be cut off at the elbow.”

The caliph asked, “For what reason?”

They said, “Because of the verse about *wuḍū* in the Qur’ān which reads, ﴿... and your hands up to the elbows﴾ (Al-Qur’ān, 5: 6). And this verse indicates that a thief’s hands must be cut off at the elbow.”

Another group asserted that the arm should be cut off at the shoulder because an arm has all these parts.

As dispute erupted, the caliph faced Imam Muḥammad b. ‘Alī (A.S.) and said, “O Abī Ja‘far! What do you say on this issue?”

The Holy Imam said, “Your scholars talked in this regard, spare me from further talk.”

The caliph replied, “I swear you to God that you too should express your opinion.”

Imam al-Jawād (A.S.) said, “Now that you are swearing me, I will answer you. What was expressed by the Sunnī scholars about theft penalty is flawed. The proper

Islamic penalty is that the fingers of a hand, except the thumb, must be cut off.”

The Caliph asked, “Why?”

The Holy Imam (A.S.) replied, “Because the Apostle of Allah (S.A.W.A.) has said that prostration (*sujūd*) should be made with seven parts of the body, namely, forehead, the palms of the hands, both knees, and the tips of the toes; so if the hand is cut off either at the wrist or elbow or from shoulder, then there will remain no limb for prostration before Almighty Allah, and it is mentioned in the Qur’ān as follows, ﴿The places of prostration belong to Allah ...﴾ (Al-Qur’ān, 72: 18); therefore no one should cut them off.”

Mu‘taṣim got very delighted at this logical and Divine precept. He approved it and commanded the amputation of the thief’s fingers to be carried out according to Imam al-Jawād (A.S.)’s precept.”

Dharqān goes on to say, “Ibn Abī Du’ād was intensely upset as to why his opinion had been rejected in the presence of the caliph.” Three days later, he went to Mu’taṣim and said, “O Amīr al-Mu’minīn! I have come here to admonish you, and I do this as a token of gratitude for your favors on me.” “What is it?” Asked Mu’taṣim.

Ibn Abī Du’ād said, “When you hold a meeting consisting of the jurists and scholars to bring up a question or two, all the civil and military nobles are present, and even the retainers and doormen and guards witness the meeting and the debates being carried out in your presence. As they see that your great scholars’ opinions are worthless vis-à-vis those of Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Jawād, little by little people will get attracted to him and the caliphate will slip from your dynasty to the household of ‘Alī (A.S.), which will tremble the foundations

of your power and glory.”

This slanderous and spiteful admonition left its impact on Mu‘taṣim, who since then had been seeking to extinguish this glazing torch and block up this overflowing fountain of science and piety.<sup>1</sup>

Before Mu‘taṣim, Ma’mūn too had applied the same procedure to Imam al-Jawād (A.S.), as at the beginning of Imam al-Jawād (A.S.)'s Imamate, Ma’mūn proceeded again to hold debate sessions and among other things he asked Yaḥyā b. Aktham, the grand Judge in his court, to propound some questions to the Imam (A.S.) hoping he would be able to mar the Imam (A.S.)'s reputation and status. It was of no avail, however, and the Imam left behind all these sessions with pride and

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1 *Majmū‘a-yi Zindigī-yi Chahārdah Ma‘šūm ‘Alayhim al-Salām*, p. 511.

confidence.

Once, as a compromise between Yaḥyā b. Aktham and Ma'mūn, a meeting was convoked and Imam al-Jawād (A.S.) and all nobles and scholars were called in to witness what questions Aktham was going to ask the Holy Imam (A.S.) and how he would manage to answer them. Upon arrival the Imam (A.S.) was respectfully welcomed by Ma'mūn. The latter asked Yaḥyā to raise whatever questions he wanted to ask. Yaḥyā, an elderly man, upon permission from Ma'mūn and Imam al-Jawād (A.S.), turned his face to the Imam (A.S.) and inquired, "Do you permit me to ask you a question on jurisprudence?" The Imam (A.S.) replied, "Ask whatever you wish".

Yaḥyā b. Aktham asked, "What do you say about a *muḥrim* (one who is in his/her pilgrim's garb) who kills a game"?

Imam al-Jawād (A.S.) said, “Did the *muḥrim* kill the game in the Holy Precinct or out of it? Was he discerning or ignorant? Was this killing willful or unintentional? Was he a slave or a master? Was he a boy or an adult? Was it the first time or not? Was the game bird or not? Was the *muḥrim* insisting – after killing the game – or regretful? Did he kill the game at night when it was in its nest or in daylight and openly? Was the *muḥrim* intending to perform the Ḥajj or the ‘Umra?”

Yaḥyā was extremely amazed and perplexed, not knowing how to answer. He cast his head down shamefully. The courtiers exchanged glances. Being greatly disturbed, Ma’mūn addressed the Abbasids and those present who were all in total silence, “Did you see what he did? Did you get to know Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. ‘Alī



al-Riḍā?”<sup>1</sup>

Then he changed the topic to disperse the amazement of the audience.

Imam al-Jawād (A.S.)'s position, however, got more deeply rooted following these debates.

During his 7 years of Imamate, Imam al-Jawād (A.S.) dealt with dissemination and instruction of the truths of Islam, and had eminent disciples and companions, each being a pinnacle of the Islamic culture and scholarship. Some of them are as follows:

Ibn Abī ‘Umayr Baghdādī, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Sanān Zāhirī, Aḥmad b. Abī Naṣr Bizanṭī Kūfī, Abū Tammām Ḥabīb Aws Ṭā’ī, the well-known Shī‘ite poet Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Mahziyār Ahwāzī, and Faḍl

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<sup>1</sup> *Majmū‘a-yi Zindigī-yi Chahārdah Ma‘šūm ‘Alayhim al-Salām*, p. 511. For the Imam’s answers, see the same source p. 505.

b. Shādhān Neyshābūrī who all lived in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

Like their Holy Imam (A.S.) who was continually kept under surveillance, they too were somehow persecuted and annoyed. Faḍl b. Shādhān was expelled from Neyshabur by ‘Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir who then searched through the content of his books. When he was informed about the topics of the books which were on monotheism and the like, he was not convinced, and insisted to further know about his political views, as well.

The poet, Abū Tammām was not an exception in this respect, either. The Amīrs who were themselves among writers and poets refused to hear his poems or have a copy of them, though he was the best poet of his time and well-known in the Islamic and Arabic history of literature. When his poems were read to them unprecedentedly,

they would enjoy and praise them, but as soon as they found out that the poems belonged to Abū Tammām, that is, the Shī'ite poet who was faithful to Imam al-Jawād (A.S.) and an advocate of his school, they would order the poems to be torn up. Ibn Abī 'Umayr, the most reliable scholar, also was extremely annoyed, incarcerated, and flagellated in the eras of Hārūn and Mu'mūn. His books, which were the Major sources in science of religion, were taken away from him and destroyed, and so on.<sup>1</sup> This was the way the despotic ruling system of the Abbasids treated advocates of scholarship and virtue, and how tyrannical it was!

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1 *Imām dar 'Ayniyat-i Jāmi'a*, from page 77 on (with slight changes).

### **Martyrdom of Imam al-Jawād (A.S.)**

This newly blossomed flower of *Wilāyat* and infallibility, though living but a short while, would refresh the souls with his fragrant aura. The intellectual works and traditions narrated from Imam al-Jawād (A.S.), as well as the problems answered and the wise sayings left behind by His Holiness will forever remain as ornaments to the leaves of history of Islam. He lived 25 years, of which 17 years were spent in his Imamate.

The Abbasid Mu'tasim invited Imam al-Jawād (A.S.) to go to Baghdad from Medina. Imam al-Jawād (A.S.) arrived in Baghdad in Muḥarram, 220/January, 835. Mu'tasim connived with his niece Umm al-Faḍl, i.e., Imam al-Jawād (A.S.)'s wife, and Ja'far son of Ma'mūn, to murder the Holy Imam (A.S.).

As mentioned before, this connivance

was a result of the ominous thought that the caliphate was likely to be transferred from the Abbasids to the 'Alawīs. That was why they began to spur Umm al-Faḍl, telling her that she was the daughter and niece of caliphs and respecting her was obligatory in every aspect; and that her husband, Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Jawād (A.S.), preferred his son 'Alī al-Hādī's mother to her.

They both kept coaxing Umm al-Faḍl to the extent that, as is the case with barren women, she was instigated by jealousy and got annoyed with his honorable young husband and finally surrendered to Mu'taṣim and his brother's plot. Then the two criminals inserted fatal poison in some grapes and sent them to the Imam (A.S.)'s house for Umm al-Faḍl, the disgraced woman, to feed them to his husband. She placed the dish of grapes before Imam al-Jawād (A.S.), and began to commend them,

persuading and insisting the Imam (A.S.) to eat from the grapes. Imam al-Jawād (A.S.) had some. In a short while he felt the effect of poison inside him and an intense pain took him over. The disgraced woman got repented and began to cry as she saw her young husband in that agonizing state, though her repentance was of no avail.

Imam al-Jawād (A.S.) asked her, “Why are you crying? Now that you are killing me, your crying is of no use. Know that in these few days of your worldly life, the Almighty Allah will inflict such ailment on you and you will find yourself in such a state that you will not be able to relieve yourself from.”

There are some other reports on how Imam al-Jawād (A.S.) was poisoned.<sup>1</sup>

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1 *Majmū‘a-yi Zindigī-yi Chahārdah Ma‘šūm ‘Alayhim al-Salām*, p. 520.

### **Imam al-Jawād (A.S.)'s Wives and Children**

Imam al-Jawād (A.S.)'s wife was Umm al-Faḍl, daughter of Ma'mūn. She did not bear him any children. Imam Muḥammad al-Taḳī (A.S.) had another spouse who was an *umm walad* named Samāna Maghribiyya. His children are reported to have been four sons and four daughters as follows:

1. Ḥaḍrat Abū al-Ḥasan Imam 'Alī al-Naḳī (Hādī) (A.S.)
2. Abū Aḥmad Mūsā Mubarqa'
3. Abū Aḥmad Ḥusayn
4. Abū Mūsā 'Imrān
5. Fāṭima
6. Khadīja
7. Umm Kulthum
8. Hakīma

Like his ancestress Fāṭimat al-Zahrā (A.S.), Imam al-Jawād (A.S.) lived a short life which was replete with sufferings and oppressions. The malevolent prevented this

blazing torch from shining on. The ninth Imam (A.S.) left the transient world for the Eternal one late in the month of Dhu'l Qa'da, 220/October, 835. His sacred tomb is in Kāẓimayn (or Kāẓimiyya), Iraq, at the rear of the radiant tomb of his grandfather Imam Mūsā b. Ja'far (A.S.), which is a pilgrimage center for the Shī'ite and lovers of the Infallible Imams (A.S.).

**Some Sayings of Imam al-Jawād (A.S.):**

- 1 .Trust in the Almighty Allah is the cost to every valuable thing, and a ladder to any lofty height.
2. Believers' honor is in their independence from others.
3. Beware of being Allah's lover and friend in public and His enemy in private.
4. Whoever does favor to a brother in Faith, will be granted an abode in the Paradise [in return].



5. How would a person be ruined and wasted when Allah has accepted his devotion? How may anyone be salvaged when broken away from Allah and joined others? The one who acts in an unscholarly way (i.e., through the way of ignorance and naivety) will cause devastation rather than improvement.

6. Beware of friendship with ignorant and evil people, for they are like unsheathed swords, which look beautiful but produce ugly results.

7. Being the traitors' trustee suffices someone to show his fraudulence and roguery.

8. A believer is in need of three virtues: success from Allah, a self-preacher who constantly admonishes him from within, and access to advisers who would help him to attain guidance.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Muntahī al-Āmāl*.