

# History of Shi'ism: From the Advent of Islam up to the End of Minor Occultation

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This text discusses how Shi'ism has been an integral and inseparable part of Islam from the time of the Holy Prophet (sa). The text provides several resources to show how Shi'ism began with the companions of the Holy Prophet (sa) and how its legacy still stands.

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## Foreword

**In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful**

The invaluable legacy of the Household {*Ahl al-Bayt*} of the Prophet (may peace be upon them all), as preserved by their followers, is a comprehensive school of thought that embraces all branches of Islamic knowledge. This school has produced many brilliant scholars who have drawn inspiration from this rich and pure resource.

It has given many scholars to the Muslim *ummah* who, following in the footsteps of Imams of the Prophet's Household ('a), have done their best to clear up the doubts raised by various creeds and currents within and without Muslim society and to answer their questions. Throughout the past centuries, they have given well-reasoned answers and clarifications concerning these questions and doubts.

To meet the responsibilities assigned to it, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) has embarked on a defence of the sanctity of the Islamic message and its verities, often obscured by the partisans of various sects and creeds as well as by currents hostile to Islam. The Assembly follows in the footsteps of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) and the disciples of their school of thought in its readiness to confront these challenges and tries to be on the frontline in consonance with the demands of every age.

The arguments contained in the works of the scholars belonging to the School of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) are of unique significance. That is because they are based on genuine scholarship and appeal to reason, and avoid prejudice and bias. These arguments address scholars and thinkers in a manner that appeals to healthy minds and wholesome human nature.

To assist the seekers of truth, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly has endeavored to present a new phase of these arguments contained in the studies and translations of the works of contemporary Shi'ah writers and those who have embraced this sublime school of thought through divine blessing.

The Assembly is also engaged in edition and publication of the valuable works of leading Shi'ah scholars of earlier ages to assist the seekers of the truth in discovering the truths which the School of the Prophet's Household ('a) has offered to the entire world.

The Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly looks forward to benefit from the opinions of the readers and their suggestions and constructive criticism in this area.

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating the genuine Islamic teachings as preached by the Prophet Muhammad (S).

We beseech God, the Most High, to accept our humble efforts and to enable us to enhance them under the auspices of Imam al-Mahdi, His vicegerent on the earth (may Allah expedite his advent).

We express our gratitude to Hujjat al-Islam wa'l-Muslimin Shaykh Ghulam-Husayn Muharrami, the author of the present book,<sup>1</sup> and Mansoor Limba, its translator. We also thank our colleagues who have participated in producing this work, especially the staff of the Translation Office.

**Cultural Affairs Department**  
**Ahl al-Bayt ('a) World Assembly**

<sup>1</sup> Ghulam-Husayn Muharrami, *Tarikh-e Tashayyu' az Aghaz ta Payan-e Ghaybat-e Kubra* (Qum: Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute, Spring 1382 AHS (2003), 279 pp.

# Preface

In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا وَنَبِيِّنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ الطَّاهِرِينَ وَ لَعْنَةُ  
اللَّهِ عَلَى أَعْدَائِهِمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and may the blessings of Allah be upon our Master and Prophet, Muhammad, and his pure progeny, and may the curse of Allah be upon all their enemies.

## History of Shi'ism as the History of a Living School and Combatant Followers

The history of Shi'ism {*tashayyu'*} is inseparable from the history of Islam as it is the continuation of Islam of the Prophetic period under the stewardship of the successors of the Prophet of Islam (S)<sup>1</sup>—the members of his Household {*Ahl al-Bayt*} ('a).<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the origin of the term *Shi'ah*<sup>3</sup> is traceable back to the Holy Prophet (S) himself.

The initial nucleus of the Shi'ah was composed of the great and distinguished Companions {*sahabah*}<sup>4</sup> of the Prophet of Islam (S) who, as per instruction of the Prophet (S), believed in the expediency of the leadership of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) after the Prophet (S).

After the demise of the Prophet of Islam (S), the formation of {the selection in} Saqifah and the climate that emerged in the selection of the caliph, the path of Shi'ism took a different turn in history. It is because the Shi'ah insisted on the leadership of 'Ali ('a) and remained around the members of the Prophet's Household {*Ahl al-Bayt*} ('a). By enduring the difficulties and adversities, they did not abandon their ideals and beliefs. Thus, they kept their distance from government affairs, causing them to face much enmity and disfavor from the governments of the time.

Although the Shi'ah difference of view with the supporters of the *de facto* caliphate was first on the question of caliphate and succession to the Prophet (S), they also called on the Imams from the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a)—the genuine fountainhead of Islamic knowledge and learning—after the demise of the Prophet (S) for matters relating to the principles of beliefs {*'aqa'id*}, jurisprudence {*fiqh*}, *hadith*,<sup>5</sup> *tafsir* {exegesis of the Qur'an}, and other Islamic sciences. Over time, the Imams became renowned in these fields compared to the followers of the *de facto* caliphate, and the trend of their intellectual and cultural path took a different course.

This affair itself had an eminent effect on the historical and cultural trend in Shi'ism, continuously protecting it from distortion {*tahrif*} and other forms of setbacks.

In the light of adherence to the Imams from the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a), the Shi'ah actually became the repository of *Ahl al-Bayt*'s knowledge and their spiritual inheritors throughout history. The culture of Shi'ism has always been an effulgent, dynamic, prolific, and authentic culture such that even some of their opponents have acknowledged this fact.

For example, Shams ad-Din Muhammad adh-Dhahabi (born 748 AH), one of Ahl as-Sunnah's distinguished eighth century (*hijri*) scholars (known for his anti-Shi'ah sentiment) in describing the status of Aban ibn Taghlib, one of the towering pupils of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq ('a), bitterly acknowledges this fact and after accusing him of "innovation in religion" (Shi'ism), approves of and introduces him as truthful, and thus writes:

Inclination to Shi'ism among the religious, pious and honest followers, and their followers, are plenty. In case the *hadiths* they are narrating are rejected, a great portion of the Prophetic works and *hadiths* will be lost and this evil is serious enough.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, like any other *madhhab* {sect} and *maktab* {school}, the Shi'ah, throughout these historical straitened circumstances and the ups and downs that transpired, was not immune from internal splits, which brought about immense predicaments. The infiltration of the *ghulat*<sup>7</sup> into Shi'ah ranks had also exacerbated these predicaments notwithstanding the rejection of the former by the Imams ('a) of the Shi'ah.

Keeping this background in mind, one can guess what stages and pathways the Shi'ah have treaded during the past fourteen centuries in different realms and spheres.

This book, a relatively comprehensive, elegant and worthy glance at the historical trend of Shi'ism, is a product of relentless efforts and studies of the diligent researcher, Hujjat al-Islam Shaykh Ghulam-Husayn Muharrami, and has many distinguishing merits compared to other similar works—whose number is unfortunately few. Fortunately, it has now earned the kind attention of the authorities and is about to be published, after passing (with an excellent grade) as a master's thesis. We are currently awaiting other significant works from this author.

**Mahdi Pishva'i**

**Qum**

**Khordad 1380 AHS**

**Rabi' al-Awwal 1422 AH**

**May-June 2001**

1. The abbreviation, "S", stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, *sallallahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam* {may God's salutation and peace be upon him and his progeny}, which is used after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S). {Trans.}
2. The abbreviation, "'a" stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, *'alayhis-salam, 'alayhimus-salam, or 'alayhas-salam* {may peace be upon him/them/her}, which is used after the names of the prophets, angels, Imams from the Prophet's progeny, and saints ('a). {Trans.}
3. In this volume, I maintained the word "Shi'ah" to refer to both the group (single collective unit) and the individuals constituting the group (plural). {Trans.}
4. Companions {*sahabah*} refer to the Companions of the Prophet (S). In earlier times, the term was restricted to his close friends who had close contact with him. Later, the term was extended to include the believers who had seen him, even if only for a brief moment or at an early age. {Trans.}
5. Hadith (pl. *ahadith*): tradition or report, specifically the traditions of the Prophet (S) and the infallible Imams ('a), i.e. their sayings, actions and tacit approvals of others' actions, or the narrations of these. {Trans.}
6. Shams ad-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad adh-Dhahabi, *Mizan al-I'tidal* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 4.

[7](#). Ghulat (sing. ghali) are those who declare their faith in Islam but exaggerate in their beliefs about some prophets or Imams, e.g., those who believe that an Imam is an incarnation of God. This is against the fundamental Islamic belief that God does not incarnate into anyone or anything. {Trans.}

# Part 1: A cursory Glance at the References

## Lesson 1: Historical References

In this writing, I do not claim to be able to comprehensively study and analyze everything that is relevant to the history of Shi'ism. Instead, I shall try to cite the most important references and citations, and to present and analyze them concisely.

Since there have been many books on history and books about the life account of the Infallibles {*ma'sumin*}<sup>1</sup> ('a) as well as books on *hadiths* and *rijal*,<sup>2</sup> which are related to the history of Shi'ism, I have divided the references dealing with the history of Shi'ism into two: (1) special references and (2) general references, which we shall deal with in two lessons.

### Special References

In this lessons, some of the references on the history of Shi'ism have been cited. These references which have been introduced in brief are the following:

1. *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*;
2. *Ad-Darajat ar-Rafi'ah fi Tabaqat ash-Shi'ah*;
3. *A'yan ash-Shi'ah*;
4. *Tarikh ash-Shi'ah*;
5. *Shi'eh dar Tarikh*;
6. *Jihad ash-Shi'ah*; and
7. *Tarikh-e Tashayyu' dar Iran az Aghaz ta Qarn-e Haftum-e Hijri*.

### 1. Maqatil at-Talibiyyin

One of the most significant references dealing with the history of Shi'ism is the book *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*. Its author, Abu'l-Faraj 'Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Isfahani, was born in 284 AH in the city of Isfahan. He grew up in Baghdad and was educated under the guidance of scholars and learned men there. His genealogy can be traced back to the Umayyads but he is a Shi'ah {*'alawi madhhab*}.<sup>3</sup>

As indicated in its title, the book deals with the descendants of Abu Talib {*talibiyyun*} who

were killed at the hands of the oppressors and tyrants of the time, as the author thus writes:

In this book of mine, by the help and will of Allah, I shall give a summary of the reports on the murdered ones among the descendants of Abu Talib from the time of the Messenger of Allah (S) up to the moment when I started writing this book in Jumadi al-Awwal 313 AH (circa July-August 925 CE). It includes those who were killed by means of eating or drinking poison; those who escaped from the ruler of the time, hid somewhere else and died there; and those who died while languishing in prison. And in mentioning them, I observed the chronological order of their deaths and not their merits...[4](#)

This book is generally divided into two parts. The first part covers the period from the time of the Prophet (S) up to the establishment of the 'Abbasid caliphate while the other part covers the 'Abbasid period.

Although this book deals only with the life account and martyrdom of the martyrs among the descendants of Abu Talib {*al abi talib*}, including life account of the Imams ('a), martyred leaders and leading figures among the 'Alawis (descendants of 'Ali ('a)) and their own followers, a part of the history of Shi'ism can be extracted from every part of it. Of course, since this book is more relevant to Shi'ism's political history, it is less beneficial with respect to other aspects of the history of Shi'ism.

## **[2. Ad-Darajat ar-Rafi'ah fi Tabaqat ash-Shi'ah](#)**

The author of this book is Sayyid 'Ali Khan Shirazi who was born on Jumadi al-Awwal 5, 1052 AH (August 2, 1642) in the holy city of Medina where he was educated. In 1068 AH (circa 1657-8) he migrated to Hyderabad, India where he lived for 48 years. He then went to Mashhad, Iran for the *ziyarah* {visitation} of Imam ar-Rida ('a). During the reign of Shah Sultan Husayn Safawi, he went to Isfahan in 1117 AH (circa 1705-6) where he stayed for two years. Thereafter, he proceeded to Shiraz where he shouldered the religious and educational management of the city.[5](#)

The book, *Ad-Darajat ar-Rafi'ah fi Tabaqat ash-Shi'ah*, is one of the works of this high-ranking Shi'ah scholar. Although the subject of this book is a description of the condition of the Shi'ah and their history, general history of Shi'ism can also be deduced from it for two reasons. One reason is that it is a study of the conditions of the Shi'ah in the different periods and places, while the other reason is that the author himself has dealt briefly with the history of Shi'ism especially during the Umayyad period of strangulation. He thus says in the introduction:

Be aware that—may God be merciful to you— in every epoch and period the Shi'ah of the Commander of the Faithful {*Amir al-Mu'minin*} ('Ali) ('a) and other Imams ('a) from among his descendants were hiding in the nook and corner, keeping away from the attention of the rulers...[6](#)

Then, he described the beginning of repression from the time of the Umayyads up to the period of the 'Abbasids.

This book, as it is noted by the author in the introduction, has been arranged in 12 classes. That is, he has classified and then examined the Shi'ah into the following 12 classes:

(1) *As-Sahabah* {Companions of the Prophet (S)};

(2) *At-Tabi'un* {Followers};<sup>7</sup>

(3) *Al-Muhaddithun alladhi rawu 'an al-A'immah at-Tahirin* {Scholars of *Hadith* who Narrated Traditions from the Pure Imams ('a)};

(4) *'Ulama' ad-Din* {Religious Scholars};

(5) *Al-Hukama' wa'l-Mutakallimin* {Philosophers and Scholastic Theologians};

(6) *'Ulama' al-'Arabiyyah* {Scholars of Arabic Language};

(7) *As-Sadah as-Sawfiyyah* {Commoners};

(8) *Al-Muluk wa's-Salatin* {Kings and Sultans};

(9) *Al-Umara'* {Rulers};

(10) *Al-Wuzara'* {Viziers and Ministers};

(11) *Ash-Shu'ara'* {Poets}; and

(12) *An-Nisa'* {Women}.

What is available so far from this valuable reference is the first class, i.e. the Class of the Companions in complete form, part of the fourth class, and a small portion of the 11th class.

This book is considered the most significant reference on the subject of Shi'ism among the Companions and in this respect, it has also a good sense of comprehensiveness. The writer of this book was able to compile the views and opinions of the Shi'ah scholars and biographers {*rijaliyyun*} regarding the Shi'ah among the Companions, and as such, he has not much engaged in expressing his own views, opinions, analyses, and investigations.

### **3. A'yan ash-Shi'ah**

The writer of this unique book is the great Shi'ah researcher and scholar, the late Sayyid Muhsin Amin. The book, *A'yan ash-Shi'ah*, as its title indicates, is a book concerning the life account and description of the leading Shi'ah figures. This book has three introductions. The first introduction explains the author's method of writing. The introduction begins thus: "In stating our method in this book which is as follows..." and then he explains in detail in 14 parts the method of his writing.

The second introduction, meanwhile, is about the general history of Shi'ism, which is consisted of 12 discussions. The third introduction deals with the references and authorities used in the book:

**Discussion 1:** The meaning and connotation of the word *Shi'ah*; other Shi'ah terminologies; criticizing the view of the Ahl as-Sunnah writers regarding the Shi'ah sects.

**Discussion 2:** The emergence of the Shi'ah and their expansion; the Shi'ah among the Companions; Shi'ah Companions; growth of the Shi'ah.

**Discussion 3:** Points to the some of the oppressions perpetrated against the *Ahl al-Bayt*

(‘a) and their Shi’ah.

**Discussion 4:** Unjust treatment of the Shi’ah of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a).

**Discussion 5:** Incessant attacks against the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a).

**Discussion 6:** The existence of many calumnies against the Shi’ah and a summary of the Ja’fari Shi’ah Ithna ‘Ashari beliefs.

**Discussion 7:** Factors behind the spread of Shi’ism in the Muslim lands.

**Discussion 8:** The virtues of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) and their services to Islam.

**Discussion 9:** On the beliefs of the Shi’ah Imamiyyah.

**Discussion 10:** Concerning the Shi’ah ‘*ulama*’, poets, men of letters, and writers, and their works.

**Discussion 11:** Viziers and ministers, rulers, judges, and chiefs among the Shi’ah.

**Discussion 12:** Enumeration of the Shi’ah-populated cities.[8](#)

It must be beyond our responsibility to talk about the importance, reputation and value of the book, *A’yan ash-Shi’ah*, as it is an ocean of historical knowledge and information which we cannot fathom, overcome, or measure. Rather, we can benefit from it in proportion to our capability. The articulacy of writing, depth of the subjects, approach to the subjects, arrangement of the topics, logical order, and the like are among its merits.

With regard to the points of criticism that can be made against it, secondary cases may be indicated such as the following:

On the discussion of the other terms for the Shi’ah, they are mentioned very briefly and only the names such as Imamiyyah, Muta’awwalah, Qizilbash, Rafidhiyyah, Ja’fariyyah, and Khassah have been enumerated,[9](#) whereas the names applied to the Shi’ah are more than these. Only in the first century *hijri*, the labels such as ‘Alawi, Turabi, Husayni, etc. have been applied to the Shi’ah.

The other criticism that can be made with respect to this book is related to the meaning of *Shi’ah*. The Shi’ah writers of *rijal* do not regard as Shi’ah some of the people whom he counted as Shi’ah because although these people were Shi’ah in the political sense, they cannot be considered as such in the ideological sense.

That is to say that in the political disputes they took the side of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a), but in terms of belief, they did not benefit from that fountainhead {of knowledge} (*Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a)). A separate section is supposed to be allotted to this discussion, and the beginning should have stated to whom the label *Shi’ah* refers.

## **4. Tarikh ash-Shi’ah**

The book, *Tarikh ash-Shi’ah*, written by the late great ‘Allamah Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Muzaffar, is one of the important references and authorities on the history of Shi’ism. This book, reprinted many times, has been translated into Persian by Prof. Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Hujjati.

The late Muzaffar has surveyed and discussed in 82 headings the history of Shi'ism from the time of the Prophet (S) up to his own time. In general, the topics of this book can be summed up in three parts:

- (1) periods of the spread of Shi'ism,
- (2) Shi'ah-populated places, and
- (3) Shi'ah governments.

The late Muzaffar has been an able writer and erudite scholar whose pen, apart from being versatile and fluent, has the necessary power and firmness.

One of the most important merits of the book, *Tarikh ash-Shi'ah*, is its comprehensiveness as it has examined the presence of the Shi'ah in all parts of the world. This book can be one of the most important references and authorities for the researchers dealing with the history of Shi'ism in every period and epoch.

In spite of all these merits that *Tarikh ash-Shi'ah* does possess in comparison with other books, on account of its brevity, it fails to present the absolute truth except in topics such as the meaning of Shi'ah, the specific time when the label *Shi'ah* was applied to the sympathizers of the *Ahl al-Bayt ('a)*, the beginning of Shi'ism, and the spread of Shi'ism, which are related to the main discussions about Shi'ah. In these cases, he has engaged in giving a detailed account, which is appropriate to the subjects. The late Muzaffar thus says in the introduction of this book:

"I have no other aim but to let the people know that Shi'ism commenced at the time of the Receiver of Message (Muhammad al-Mustafa (S)), and the Iranians and Ibn Saba' had no hand in founding it."

The other defect of this book that can be cited is its lack of scholarly character. Due to the observance of brevity, the honorable writer has failed to quote and analyze the views of others.

Parts of this book dealing with the formation of Muslim states are supposed to be completed. For, with the passage of time, main changes and developments in the Shi'ah states under discussion have occurred and some of them have even ceased to exist, but the honorable translator of the book has not discussed some of the new states and not conducted up-to-date research. As a result, it has been translated in such a form that the sections dealing with the Shi'ah states gives an impression of antiquity.

## **5. Shi'eh dar Tarikh**

The book, *Ash-Shi'ah fi't-Tarikh {Shi'eh dar Tarikh}*, written by Muhammad Husayn Zayn 'Amili, has been translated into Persian by Muhammad Rida 'Ata'i and published by Astan-e Quds-e Radhawi (Custodianship of Imam ar-Rida's Holy Shrine). As one of the authorities on the history of the Shi'ah, this book consists of five chapters and the concluding part:

- The first chapter is about the meaning, concept, background, and a summary of the Shi'ah beliefs.
- The second chapter deals with the sects and groups that have separated from the Shi'ah.

- The third chapter covers the history after the Prophet (S) up to the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a) and an analysis of the events and occurrences during that period.
- The fourth chapter is about the position of the Shi'ah during the Umayyad and 'Abbasid caliphates.
- The fifth chapter deals with the Shi'ah disavowal {*bara'ah*} of *ghulu* {extremism} and *ghulat* {extremists}.

The book, *Shi'eh dar Tarikh*, is a good authority on the discussion of the splits within the Shi'ah, it has especially analyzed various factors behind the separation of groups and sects from the Shi'ah.

As a book on the history of Shi'ism, it does not cover all the topics and subjects dealing with the Shi'ah. This is because at times the discussion drifts away from the subject of Shi'ism, embarking on such subjects as the Khawarij (Kharijites)<sup>10</sup> and the history of caliphate, which are not so relevant to the history of Shi'ism.

## **6. Jihad ash-Shi'ah**

Another reference for the history of the Shi'ah is the book *Jihad ash-Shi'ah* (even though its main focus is the armed struggles and movements of the Shi'ah). This book is written by Dr. Samirah Mukhtar al-Laythi, university professor at the 'Ayn Shams University, Egypt. The Beirut-based Dar al-Jayl publisher has published *Jihad ash-Shi'ah* in 1396 AH (1976) with 424 pages, 16.2x22.9 cm size, and hard-bound cover.

After the introduction, this book has been arranged into 5 parts and a conclusion, and its subject is the *jihad* of the Shi'ah. It has examined and discussed the subject approximately up to the end of the 2nd century *hijri*. In other words, the author of the book, on one hand, talks about the armed struggles and movements of the Shi'ah against the 'Abbasids, states the 'Alawi uprisings and factors for their defeat, and discusses the role of the Shi'ah movements and sects in the socio-political currents and conditions of that period.

On the other hand, she has also analyzed the policy of the caliphs toward the Holy Imams ('a) and the Shi'ah. Topics on the general history of the Shi'ah have been discussed in a certain section of the first part which covers such topics as: Shi'ah in the lexicon; the concept of Shi'ah; history of the emergence of the Shi'ah; the impact of the *jihad* of Imam al-Husayn ('a) in the emergence of the Shi'ah; the Shi'ah *jihad* in Iraq; the emergence of the Kaysaniyyah sect; and the Shi'ah Imamiyyah. In discussing the emergence of the Shi'ah, she has advanced various views and opinion regarding the history of the Shi'ah.

One problem that can be cited with respect to the book is in elucidating the "political theory" of the Holy Imams ('a) whom the author has described as "the Imams of the Imamiyyah sect". As the author is not a Shi'ah, she has failed to discern and explain the foundation of the political thought of the Imams ('a). As such, she describes the basis of Imamate after Imam al-Husayn ('a) as spiritual and intellectual Imamate, regarding their method as different from that of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn ('a).<sup>11</sup>

## **7. Tarikh-e Tashayyu' dar Iran az Aghaz ta Qarn-e**

## Haftum-e Hijri

The writer of this book, Mr. Rasul Ja'fariyan, is among the valuable researchers of the Islamic Theological Center in Qum. This book is a well-researched and distinctive one in its own right, and it is one of the best writings and literary works of this author. It is also one of the most important research references on the history of Shi'ism.

This book has valuable historical information and data, which no researcher on the history of Shi'ism will be needless of. Among the merits of this book is its rich content. If it has any defect, it (only) pertains to the form and appearance. For example, its footnotes have not been printed in a standard and technical manner.

The other one is that some subjects such as critique of the references used in the book are inserted in the (main) subjects, which gives confusion to the readers. Of course, it would have been better to discuss them in a separate chapter with the same heading, or at least, they must have been mentioned in the footnotes so as to cause no disruption to the main subjects.

## Lesson 1: Summary

All history books can be good references for the research on the history of Shi'ism. Among the special references on the history of Shi'ism, however, are the following:

- *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin* - the life account of the descendants of Abu Talib {*talibiyyin*} who were murdered at the hand of the tyrants of their respective times.
- *Ad-Darajat ar-Rafi'ah fi Tabaqat ash-Shi'ah* - the history of the Shi'ah and not history of Shi'ism, but a part of the history of Shi'ism can be learned from its survey of the conditions of the Shi'ah as well as from its introduction.
- *A'yan ash-Shi'ah* - Although it is about the conditions of the Shi'ah, its second introduction is about the general history of Shi'ism.
- *Tarikh ash-Shi'ah* - "This book has surveyed the periods of the spread of Shi'ism, the Shi'ah-populated places, and Shi'ah states." {The late Muzaffar}
- *Shi'eh dar Tarikh* - "It has explained the meaning and concept of Shi'ah, the Shi'ah beliefs and its sects." {Muhammad Husayn Zayn al-'Amili}
- *Jihad ash-Shi'ah* - Examines Shi'ah uprisings till the end of the 2nd century *hijri*.
- *Tarikh-e Tashayyu' dar Iran az Aghaz ta Qarn-e Haftum-e Hijri* - This book contains precious information regarding the history of Shi'ism in Iran, which no researcher can be needless of in his research.

## Lesson 1: Questions

1. How many types do references on the history of Shi'ism have?
2. What is the subject of the book *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*?
3. Give a brief description of the book, *Ad-Darajat ar-Rafi'ah fi Tabaqat ash-Shi'ah*.

#### 4. What is the relationship between the book *A'yan ash-Shi'ah*, and the history of Shi'ism?

1. Ma'sumin: those possessing the quality of 'ismat (see n. 67 above); i.e., the Prophet, Fatimah, and the Twelve Imams. See *A Brief History of the Fourteen Infallibles* (Tehran: WOFIS), <http://www.al-islam.org/brief-history-of-fourteen-infallibles> [11]; Sayyid Murtada al-'Askari, *The Twelve Successors of the Holy Prophet (S)*, <http://www.al-islam.org/twelve> [12]. {Trans.}
2. Rijal or 'Ilm ar-Rijal: a branch of the science of hadith dealing with the biography of the hadith transmitters or reporters. {Trans.}
3. Sayyid Ahmad Saqar, "Introduction to Maqatil at-Talibiyyin", 2nd edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH, p. 5.
4. Abu'l-Faraj 'Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, 2nd edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH, p. 24.
5. Sayyid 'Ali Jan ash-Shirazi, *Ad-Darajat ar-Rafi'ah fi Tabaqat ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Wafa', n.d.), pp. 3-5.
6. Ibid., p. 5.
7. Tabi'un {'Followers' or 'Successors'} refers to the second generation of Muslims who came after the Companions, who did not know the Prophet (S) but who knew his Companions. {Trans.}
8. Sayyid Muhsin Amin, *A'yan ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar at-Ta'aruf Li'l-Matbu'at, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 18-209.
9. Ibid., pp. 20-21.
10. Khawarij (Kharijites or dissenters) were a group of quasi-holy, narrow-minded Muslims who were originally followers of Imam 'Ali ('a) and fought with him at the Battle of Siffin. Initially they supported arbitration, pushing Imam 'Ali to accept it; however, later they revolted against it arguing that because God was the only true arbitrator, Imam 'Ali and those who agreed with him in the arbitration were not just wrong they were unbelievers, hence they could have no dealings with them. On Imam 'Ali's return to Iraq from Siffin, this group split off from his army and set up camp on the banks of the Nahrawan canal where they began terrorizing the people whom they regarded as unbelievers. Imam 'Ali was at first able to talk to them and persuade some of them to cease in their hostilities, but eventually he was forced to take up arms against them. In 659 CE he attacked their army under the leadership of 'Abdullah ibn Wahhab al-Rasibi at Nahrawan almost annihilating them. Nahrawan was the third and last battle Imam 'Ali had to wage with his enemies. {Trans.}
11. Samirah Mukhtar al-Laythi, *Jihad ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar al-Jayl, 1396 AH), p. 36.

## Lesson 2: General References

After having a general survey of some of the special references on the history of Shi'ism, we shall examine the general references for this history. The general references with respect to their subjects are as follows:

1. *Tarikh-e 'Umumi* {General History};
2. *Zendeginameh-ye Imaman ('a)* {Biography of the Imams ('a)};
3. *Kitab-ha-ye Fitan va Hurub* {Books on Revolts and Wars};
4. *Kitab-ha-ye Rijal va Tabaqat* {Books on *Rijal* and Classes};
5. *Kitab-ha-ye Jughrafiya* {Books on Geography};
6. *Kitab-ha-ye Akhbar* {Books on Narrations};
7. *Kitab-ha-ye Nasab* {Books on Genealogy};
8. *Kitab-ha-ye Hadith* {Books on *Hadiths*};
9. *Kitab-ha-ye Milal va Nihal* {Books on Nations and Religions}.

## **1. General History**

In this book's survey of the history of Shi'ism, the most widely used books are those relating to the general history of the first centuries *hijri* and the history of the caliphate, such as *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, *Tarikh at-Tabari*, *Al-Kamil fi't-Tarikh*, *Al-'Abr*, *Al-Imammah wa's-Siyasah*, *Tarikh al-Khulafa'*, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* of Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, including even the analytical history research and books written by contemporary writers. Among the general history books, I have used *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi* and *Murawwij adh-Dhahab* extensively.

In these two books, historical events and occurrences have been recorded fairly impartially and without any attempt at concealing the truth. Ya'qubi has expressed in detail the oppositions of Companions of the Prophet (S) with the caliphate of Abubakr, criticizing the groupings after the demise of the Prophet (S).<sup>1</sup>

He has embarked, as far as he could, on mentioning the events relevant to the history of the Shi'ah such as the government of the Commander of the Faithful ('a),<sup>2</sup> the peace treaty of Imam al-Hasan ('a),<sup>3</sup> the martyrdom of Hujr ibn al-'Addi,<sup>4</sup> 'Amru ibn Hamq<sup>5</sup> and that of Imam al-Husayn ('a),<sup>6</sup> more or less presenting the truth of the matter.

Mas'udi is also among the historians who had no intention of concealing the truth. Although he has only dealt in passing with the event of Saqifah in the books *Murawwij adh-Dhahab* and *At-Tanbiyyah wa'l-Ashraf*, he nevertheless has mentioned the differences of the Companions and the Banu Hashim's refusal to pay allegiance to Abubakr.<sup>7</sup>

In another part of the first book, Mas'udi wrote the issue of Fadak<sup>8</sup> and discussed in detail the events that took place during the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) and the martyrdom of Imam al-Hasan ('a).<sup>9</sup>

He has mentioned the names of the Shi'ah and their tribes as well as the enemies of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) in various parts of *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*.<sup>10</sup> Also, in the years of the Holy Imams' ('a) demise, he has given a short account of their lives.<sup>11</sup> He has, in particular, detailed the uprisings of the 'Alawis during the 2nd century *hijri*.<sup>12</sup>

## **2. Biography of the Imams ('a)**

Among the books relevant to the life accounts of the Imams ('a), the book, *Al-Irshad*, by Shaykh al-Mufid and *Tadhkirah al-Khawas* by Ibn al-Jawzi occupy (special) importance. *Al-Irshad* is the first and most important available Shi'ah reference authority on the life account of the twelve Imams ('a).

In view of the fact that part of 'Ali's ('a) life overlapped that of the life of the Prophet (S), the life account and conduct {*sirah*} of the Prophet (S) has also been included in this book, especially his battles in all of which 'Ali ('a) had been present, with the exception of the Tabuk expedition. Concerning the book, it is enough to say that no researcher on the history of Shi'ism and the biography of the infallible Imams ('a) is needless of it.

The *Tadhkirah al-Khawas* of Ibn al-Jawzi occupies special importance in the sense that the biography of the Shi'ah Imams ('a) has been expressed through the language of a Hanafi and non-Shi'ah person, but no sort of negligence of the truth and concealment of the reality has taken place.

### **3. Books on Revolts and Wars**

These references deal particularly with the wars that have great importance in the historiography of Muslims. The *Waq'ah as-Siffin* of Nasr ibn Mazahim al-Munqari (born 212 AH), which deals with the event and confrontation at Siffin, can be regarded as the oldest among them.

This book contains valuable information regarding the correspondence between 'Ali ('a) and Mu'awiyah as well as the various sermons and speeches of the former. Valuable information concerning the opinion of the Companions of the Prophet (S) regarding 'Ali and the influence of Shi'ism among the different tribes can be acquired from the different parts of the book.

The book, *Al-Gharat*, written by Ibrahim Thaqafi al-Kufi (283 AH), is one of the other references written about this subject. This book is related to the events that occurred during the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful ('a), and examines the plunders and pillages committed by Mu'awiyah's agents in the realm of 'Ali's ('a) government. The conditions and situations of the Commander of the Faithful's ('a) Shi'ah can be extracted from various sections of the book.

*Al-Jamal* or *Nusrah al-Jamal* of Shaykh al-Mufid, which examines the event of the Battle of Jamal (Camel) is yet another valuable references in this regard. As it is about the Commander of the Faithful's ('a) first battle during his caliphate, this book illustrates 'Ali's ('a) station among the people of Iraq prior to his arrival there.

### **4. Books on Rijal and Classes**

*'Ilm ar-Rijal* is one of the sciences mentioned in relation to the science of *hadith*. Its utility is in the study of the chain of transmission of *hadith* through which it deals with the life account and background of the *hadith* narrators and on the rectification of the Companions of the Prophet (S).

In the Shi'ah *rijal*, apart from the Companions of the Prophet (S), the companions of the infallible Imams ('a) have also been discussed. The science of *rijal* started in the 2nd century *hijri* and continues to exist to the present, having acquired perfection with the passage of time.

Some of the most famous and reputable writings of the Ahl as-Sunnah in this context are *Al-Isti'ab fi Ma'rifah al-Ashab*, written by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr al-Qurtubi (463 AH); *Asad al-Ghabah fi Ma'rifah as-Sahabah*, authored by Ibn Athir al-Juzri (630 AH); *Tarikh Baghdad*, penned by Khatib al-Baghdadi (392-463 AH); and *Al-Isabah fi Ma'rifah as-Sahabah*, written by Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani.

Similarly, the most important Shi'ah *rijali* books are *Ikhtibar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal*, written by Shaykh at-Tusi (385-460 AH); *Rijal an-Najasi (Fihrist Asma' Musannif ash-Shi'ah)* better known as *Rijal*, *Kitab ar-Rijal*, and *Kitab al-Fihrist* of Shaykh at-Tusi (385-460 AH); *Rijal al-Burqa*, authored by Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Burqa (280 AH); *Al-Mashaykhah* of Shaykh as-Saduq (381 AH).

*Ma'alim al-'Ulama'* of Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani (488-588 AH); and *Rijal Ibn Dawud* of Taqi ad-Din Hasan ibn 'Ali ibn Dawud al-Hilli (647-707 AH). Of course, the science of *rijal*

has acquired greater perfection among the Shi'ah and has been divided into various branches.

Some books on *rijal* such as *Asad al-Ghabah*, *Fihrist Shaykh*, *Rijal an-Najashi*, and *Ma'alim al-'Ulama'* have been written in (Arabic) alphabetical order while some others such as *Rijal Shaykh* and *Rijal al-Burqa* have been arranged according to the classes of the Companions of the Prophet (S) and the Imams ('a).

There are other types of *rijal* books in which the people are surveyed according to various classifications, and the most important of them is the *Tabaqat* of Ibn Sa'd.

## **5. Books on Geography**

Some of the geography books are travelogues most of which have been written after the third century *hijri*. Since in this book the history of Shi'ism has been examined in the first three centuries *hijri*, a number of them have not been used so much, but other geography books which have presented documents are among the references used in this research.

Among them, *Mu'jam al-Buldan* has been used most on account of its comprehensiveness. The writer of the book, *Yaqt al-Hamawi*, has treated the Shi'ah with bias; mentioning the names of the great families in Kufah, he has failed to mention any of the names of the great Shi'ah scholars and families.

## **6. Books on Narrations**

What is meant by references and books on narrations {*akhbar*} is not the books on *hadith* that dealt on the lawful {*halal*} and the prohibited {*haram*}. They referred instead to history books based on the method of writing history during the period of Islam in which historical events and news have been mentioned in narrative form with the inclusion of the chain of narrators; that is, following the method of the people of *hadith* in recording and narrating historical events.

This kind of history writing has some salient features. Firstly, any set of news regarding isolated event is mentioned distinct from other events, and it is by itself complete without any link with other news and events. Secondly, literary characteristics can also be observed in it; that is, sometimes the writer makes use of poem, story and debate.

In most cases, this feature can be seen particularly in narrative works which were influenced by the form of *Ayyam al-'Arab* narrations. On account of this, some researchers have regarded the historiography of *khbar* {news, report, narration} to have originated from the *khbar* of the stories about the period prior to the advent of Islam.

Thirdly, the chain of narrators is mentioned. In reality, this method of history writing, particularly during the first two centuries *hijri*, was in most cases the way of presenting the primary sources of history. Significant corpus of the written works of the Islamic period is through this method.

Among the books on narrations {*akhbar*}, *Al-Akhbar al-Mu'affaqiyyat* of Zubayr ibn Bakkar occupies special importance. The writer of this book, Zubayr ibn Bakkar, apart from being among the descendants of Zubayr who had ancient hostility to the *Ahl al-Bayt* of the Prophet (S), had good relations with Mutawakkil, the 'Abbasid caliph, who was a staunch enemy of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) and his descendants; the teacher of his

children<sup>13</sup> and had been appointed as the judge in Mecca.<sup>14</sup> In spite of this, valuable information regarding the Companions of the Prophet's (S) protest against the caliphate of Abubakr has been recorded in this book. The narration of their poems, in particular, which contain their belief on the guardianship {*wasayah*} of 'Ali ('a), is an expression of these protests.

## **7. Books on Genealogy**

Among the books on genealogy, *Ansab al-Ashraf* of Baladhuri, which is the best reference in this regard, has been used most. On the other hand, this book can be considered as among the books on (personal) backgrounds {*ahwal*}.

This is in spite of the fact that in terms of genealogical knowledge, the book *Jumharah Ansab al-'Arab* is the most comprehensive book, which has also presented a brief explanation of the description of some individuals.

The book, *Muntaqilah at-Talibiyyin*, has examined the migration of *sadat* (sing. *sayyid*) and descendants of the Prophet (S). By utilizing its subjects, the trend of Shi'ism during the first centuries *hijri* in the Muslim lands can be examined.

## **8. Books on Hadith**

Another set of the references on the history of Shi'ism includes the books on *hadith*. *Hadith* in the Sunni usage refers to the Prophet's (S) sayings, actions and tacit approvals of others' actions, but the Shi'ah regards the infallible Imams ('a) as also attached to the Prophet (S), treating their sayings, actions and tacit approvals as proofs {*hujaj*} as well.

The *hadith* books of the Ahl as-Sunnah such as *As-Sahih* of al-Bukhari (194-256 AH), *Al-Musnad* of Ahmad ibn Hanbal (164-241 AH), and *Al-Mustadrak 'ala's-Sahihayn* of Hakim an-Nayshaburi (d. 450 AH) are good references for the study of Shi'ism among the Companions and of the rightfulness of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) which is the basis of Shi'ism.

The Shi'ah books on *hadith* such as the "four books" {*kutub al-arba'ah*}, viz. *Al-Kafi* of al-Kulayni (d. 329 AH); *Man La Yahdhuruh al-Faqih* of Shaykh as-Saduq (d. 381 AH); and *Tahdhib al-Ahkam* and *Al-Istibsar* of Shaykh at-Tusi (d. 360 AH).

And other books such as *Al-Amali*, *Ghurar al-Fawa'id* and *Durar al-Qala'id* of Sayyid Murtada (355-436 AH); *Al-Ihtijaj* of at-Tabarsi (6th century *hijri*); and the bulky encyclopedia of *hadith*, *Bihar al-Anwar* of 'Allamah Majlisi (d. 1111 AH), apart from having the merit of the books of the Ahl as-Sunnah, can be utilized, by referring to the *hadiths* of the infallible Imams ('a), in knowing about the scattering of the Shi'ah, their resident places, their social relations, and their mode of communication with the infallible Imams ('a).

## **9. Books on Nations and Religions**

One of the most important references and authorities in this regard is the book, *Al-Milal wa'n-Nihal* of Shahrastani (479-548 AH). In terms of comprehensiveness and oldness, this book is considered a good reference and as a reference authority of researchers and scholars.

This is in spite of the fact that the author has approached the subject with bias. In the beginning of the book, he has quoted the *hadith* on “73 sects” and introduced the Ahl as-Sunnah as the “saved sect”. As such, he tried his best to highlight the spread of “Shi’ah sects” so as to prove that the plentitude of the “Shi’ah sects” is a proof of the falsehood of this school of thought {*madhhab*}.

He has regarded the sects such as Mukhtariyyah, Baqiriyyah, Ja’fariyyah, Mufdhalah, Nu’maniyyah, Hishamiyyah, and Yunusiyyah as “Shi’ah” although these sects do not exist in reality. Similarly, in the book, *Khutat*, Maqrizi has said that the “Shi’ah sects” are 300 all in all, but at the time of enumerating them he failed to mention more than 20 sects.

Among the oldest and most important books on nations and religions are *Al-Maqalat wa’l-Firaq* of Ash’ari al-Qummi and *Firaq ash-Shi’ah* of Nawbakhti. Ash’ari al-Qummi and Nawbakhti are among the Shi’ah scholars who lived in the second half of the 3rd century *hijri*. The book, *Al-Maqalat wa’l-Firaq*, in terms of presenting information, is so extensive and has good comprehensiveness, but its subjects are diverse with any proper classification.

According to the views expressed by some researchers, the book, *Firaq ash-Shi’ah* of Nawbakhti is actually the same book as *Al-Maqalat wa’l-Firaq*.

## Lesson 2: Summary

General references for the history of Shi’ism are the following:

- Books on general history, which have been written in the first centuries *hijri*, and among them *Murawwij adh-Dhahab* and *Tarikh al-Ya’qubi*, occupy special importance;
- Books on the biography of the Imams (‘a) such as *Al-Irshad* of Shaykh al-Mufid;
- Books on revolts and wars such as *Waq’ah as-Siffin*;
- Books on *rijal* and classes as well as books written about (personal) backgrounds {*ahwal*};
- Books on geography such as travelogues and history of cities;
- Books on narrations which have been the same in form with the first history writing;
- Books on genealogy such as *Jumharah Ansab al-‘Arab*;
- Books on *hadith* as well as books on nations and religions.

## Lesson 2: Questions

1. Among the books on general history, which of the earlier books that have dealt more with the history of Shi’ism?
2. Briefly describe the books, *Al-Irshad* and *Tadhkirah al-Khawas*.
3. Which type of books does *Waqi’ah as-Siffin* belong to?
4. Briefly describe the books on *rijal*.

5. How many types do the books on geography have?
6. What are the salient features of the books on narrations {*akhbar*}?
7. Name two books on genealogy.
8. What is the relationship between the books on *hadith* and the history of Shi'ism?
9. What is the title of one of the most important books written on nations and religions?

1. Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi* (Qum: Mansurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 123-126.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 178-179.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 230-231.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 231-232.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 243-246.
7. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab* (Beirut: Mansurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 2, p. 316; *At-Tanbiyyah wa'l-Ashraf* (Cairo: Dar as-Sawi Li't-Tab' wa'n-Nashr wa't-Ta'lif, n.d.), p. 427.
8. *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 262.
9. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 246-266.
10. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 59, 74.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 180, 243, 313, 388.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 324-326, 358.
13. Al-Hafiz Abubakr Ahmad ibn 'Ali Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Tarikh Baghdad* (Egypt: Matba'ah as-Sa'adah, 1349 AH), vol. 8, p. 467.
14. Ibn Nadim, *Al-Fihrist* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), p. 160.

## Part 2: The Manner of Emergence of the Shi'ah

### Lesson 3: "Shi'ah" in the Lexicon and the Qur'an

The word "Shi'ah" in the lexicon is derived from the root-word **شيع** {*shaya'a*} which means escorting {*mushayi'ah*}, victory and bravery {*shuja'ah*}.<sup>1</sup> It is equally applied to the followers and supporters as it is usually applied to the followers and supporters of 'Ali ('a).<sup>2</sup> As Azhari has said, "Shi'ah refers to a group that loves the progeny {*itrah*} and descendants of the Prophet (S)."<sup>3</sup>

Ibn al-Khaldun says:

Be aware that 'Shi'ah' in the lexicon means 'followers' and 'supporters', and in the parlance of the past and present jurists {*fiqh*} and scholastic theologians {*mutakallimun*}, it is applied to the followers of 'Ali and his descendants.<sup>4</sup>

But Shahrastani limits the definitional scope of the word 'Shi'ah', saying:

'Shi'ah' is referring to those who follow 'Ali alone and believe in his Imamate {*imamah*} and caliphate {*khilafah*} to be based on revelation {*nass*}, and they say: 'Imamate shall not bypass him except {that it is done} through injustice {*zulm*}'.<sup>5</sup>

There are also many cases in the Qur'an in which "Shi'ah" connotes "followers" and "supporters" such as:

□ وَإِنَّ مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ □

**"Indeed Abraham was among his followers {*shi'ah*}"<sup>6</sup>**

and the verse,

□ فَاسْتَعَاثُ الَّذِي مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ عَلَى الَّذِي مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ □

**"The one who was from his (Moses') followers {*shi'ah*} sought his help against him who was from his enemies."<sup>7</sup>**

The word "Shi'ah" has also been mentioned in the Prophetic traditions to mean "followers and friends of 'Ali ('a)".<sup>8</sup>

"Shi'ah" in the Shi'ah references does not have more than one meaning and conception and that is belief in the succession of 'Ali ('a) and his eleven descendants in which no change has ever taken place since the demise of the Prophet (S) up to the minor occultation {*ghaybah as-sughra*}. Just as the Shi'ah of the second half of the third century *hijri* believed in all the twelve Imams ('a), the pioneering Shi'ah among the Companions of the Prophet (S) also believed in this affair because they had been informed of the names of these Imams from the Prophetic traditions.<sup>9</sup>

Although many of the Shi'ah had no access to these traditions due to the atmosphere of strangulation maintained by the tyrant rulers, what was obligatory (for them) was to recognize the Imam of their respective times. As the Holy Prophet (S) said, "He who will die without recognizing the Imam of his time dies in a state of ignorance {*jahiliyyah*}"<sup>10</sup>

As such, we can see that when Imam as-Sadiq ('a) attained martyrdom, Zurarah who was an old man sent his son, 'Ubayd, to inquire about the successor of Imam as-Sadiq ('a). But before 'Ubayd was able to return to Kufah, Zurarah, who was about to die, took hold of a copy of the Qur'an and said: "O God! Be my witness that I testify to the Imamate {*imamah*} of the one who has been designated in this Qur'an."<sup>11</sup>

Of course, with the passage of time, the meaning and concept of *Shi'ah* assumes an explicit form and its scope is determined. Thus, the infallible Imams ('a) have regarded those who are identified with the false sects and faiths as outside Shi'ah circles, as Shaykh at-Tusi narrates from Hamran ibn A'in:

I asked Imam al-Baqir ('a): "Am I really among your Shi'ah?" The Imam ('a) replied: "Yes,

you are among our Shi'ah in this world and in the hereafter, and the names of the Shi'ah and their fathers are written for us. Why, are there those who turn their back to us?" I replied: "May I be your ransom! Is it possible for somebody to be your Shi'ah and to have knowledge of your being in truth, and then to turn his back from you?" The Imam ('a) said: "Yes, O Hamran! You will not perceive them."

Hamzah az-Zayyat, who is one of the narrators of this *hadith*, thus says:

Concerning this *hadith* we made a discussion and we were not able to understand the purport of the Imam ('a). As such, I wrote a letter to Imam ar-Rida ('a) and I asked him ('a) (about this). The Imam ('a) said: "Imam as-Sadiq ('a) was referring to the Waqifiyyah (a deviant sect)." [12](#)

It is for this reason that in the parlance of the Shi'ah *rijal* writers, the title *Shi'ah* is only applied to the Shi'ah believing in the twelve Imams ('a) and in the language of the jurists {*fuqaha*}, they are sometimes described as "our companions" {*ashabuna*} or "our Imami companions" {*ashabuna al-imamiyyah*}.

And those who had inclined toward the deviant sects and drifted away from the course of Shi'ism have described with such labels as Fathi, Waqifi, Nawusi, etc. and if ever the names of some of them are mentioned in the Shi'ah books on *rijal*, the reason is that they had narrated these traditions prior to their deviation, just as the names of a number of Sunni narrators who have narrated from the infallible Imams ('a) have been mentioned in these books.

The Sunni scholars and *rijal* writers, however, have used the word *Shi'ah* in broader sense and they have applied it to all the sects that have separated from the body of Shi'ism and even to the *ghulat* as well.

In addition, they also refer to those who love and admire the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) as "Shi'ah". This is while some of these people do not have any sort of belief in the infallibility {*'ismah*} and Imamate {*imamah*} of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a), such as Sufyan ath-Thawri, a rector {*mufti*} in Iraq who issued edicts {*fatawa*} based on the *Ahl as-Sunnah*, but Ibn al-Qutaybah has enlisted him along with the Shi'ah. [13](#) Regarding ash-Shafi'i, who is the founder of one of the four Sunni schools of thought {*madhahib*}, Ibn Nadim thus says:

## كَانَ الشَّافِعِيُّ شَدِيدًا فِي التَّشْيِعِ.

"Ash-Shafi'i had extreme Shi'ism {*tashayyu'*}." [14](#)

Of course, during the second and third centuries *hijri*, besides the Shi'ah Imami, the Zaydis constituted the greatest number of Shi'ah. They were "Shi'ah" more in the political sense than in ideology because, in terms of jurisprudence {*fiqh*}, they were not followers of the Ja'fari *fiqh*; rather they were followers of the Hanafi *fiqh*. [15](#)

From the viewpoint of the ideological principles also, as narrated by Shahrastani, "For sometime, Zayd was a student of Wasil ibn 'Ata', the founder of the Mu'tazilah (Mu'tazilite) *madhhab* and has learned from him the principles of the Mu'tazilah *madhhab*."

Therefore, the Zaydis are Mu'tazilites in principles {*usul*}. It is for this reason that they used to regard as permissible {*jayiz*} the Imamate {*imamah*} of a deserving person {*mafdhul*} in the existence of the more deserving person {*afdhal*} and in that they do not disrespect the two sheikhs {*shaykhayn*} (Abubakr and 'Umar).<sup>16</sup> And in terms of beliefs, they are closer to the Ahl as-Sunnah, as Ibn al-Qutaybah thus says: "Among the *rafidhi* (Shi'ah) sects, the Zaydis have the least extremism {*ghulu*}."<sup>17</sup>

It was for this reason that the uprising of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah—one of the Zaydi leaders—was praised by some jurists {*fuqaha*} of the Ahl as-Sunnah, and as narrated by Waqidi, Abubakr ibn Sirah,<sup>18</sup> Ibn 'Ajlun,<sup>19</sup> and 'Abd Allah ibn Ja'far<sup>20</sup>—who were among the great *hadith* scholars {*muhaddithun*} of the Medina school {*maktab*} and from whom Waqidi himself has narrated *hadith*—were involved in the uprising of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah. Also, Shahrastani says: "Abu Hanifah was among the followers of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah."<sup>21</sup>

The Mu'tazilites of Basrah also agreed with the uprising of Muhammad and based on Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani's narration, "A group of the Mu'tazilites in Basrah such as Wasil ibn 'Ata' and 'Amru ibn 'Ubayd have paid allegiance to him."<sup>22</sup>

As such, the Zaydis can be regarded as Shi'ah only from the political viewpoint although they believe in the superiority of the descendants of Fatimah ('a).

### **Lesson 3: Summary**

Shi'ah, according to the lexicon, refers to the followers and supporters of 'Ali ('a). In the Shi'ah references, "Shi'ah" does not have more than one meaning and that is belief in the succession of 'Ali ('a) and his eleven descendants.

The infallible Imams used to consider those who were identified with the deviant sects as outside the circle of Shi'ism, but the Sunni scholars and *rijal* writers have used the word *Shi'ah* in broader sense and they have applied it to all the sects that have separated from the body of Shi'ism as well as to the admirers of the descendants of the Prophet (S). Of course, during the second and third centuries *hijri*, next to the Shi'ah Imami, the Zaydis had been regarded by them to have constituted the greatest number of Shi'ah.

### **Lesson 3: Questions**

1. In the lexicon, what does the word "Shi'ah" mean? Explain.
2. What is the meaning and connotation of the word "Shi'ah" in the Shi'ah references?
3. Were those who were identified with the deviant sects regarded as "Shi'ah" by the infallible Imams ('a)? Explain.
4. How the Sunni scholars have been defining the word "Shi'ah"?
5. Which of the sects is more akin to the Shi'ah in the political perspective? Why?

<sup>1</sup> For example, this poem:

والخزرجى قلبه مشيع ليس من الامر الجليل يفزع

Indeed, the Khazraji man has a brave heart and is not afraid of performing a great task.

Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi, *Tartib Kitab al-'Ayn* (Tehran: Instisharat-e Asweh, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 960.

<sup>2</sup> Firuz-Abadi, *Qamus al-Lughah* (Lithography), p. 332.

3. Abu Faydh as-Sayyid Murtada al-Husayni al-Wasiti az-Zaydi al-Hanafi, Taj al-'Arus, vol. 11, p. 257.
4. 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn al-Khaldun, Al-Muqaddimah (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1408 AH), p. 196.
5. Shahrastani, Kitab al-Milal wa'n-Nihal (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1364 AHS), vol. 1, p. 131.
6. Surah as-Saffat 37:83.
7. Surah al-Qasas 28:15.
8. We shall quote these traditions in the next chapter.
9. Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, one of the Sunni scholars, mentions the hadith on the twelve Imams, and with respect to its authenticity, he claims to have consensus of opinion as it has been narrated through various chains. Then, he embarks on interpreting the hadith quoting contradictory statements from Ahl as-Sunnah scholars and 'ulama', ultimately failing to reach a decisive conclusion. For example, Qadhi 'Iyad al-Yahsubi has said: "Perhaps, it means the twelve caliphs who were rulers during the glorified period of caliphate and grandeur of Islam, i.e. up to Walid ibn Yazid's reign." Others have said: "It refers to the twelve caliphs in truth who shall rule till the Day of Resurrection, some of whose reigns have already passed, such as the Righteous Caliphs {*khulafa' ar-rashidun*}, Imam al-Hasan, Mu'awiyah, 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr, 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, and Mahdi al-'Abbas. Two more shall come, one of whom is the Awaited Mahdi {*mahdi al-muntazar*} from the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)." Some 'ulama' have also interpreted the hadith on the twelve Imams to refer to the twelve Imams, in which after Mahdi ('a), accordingly, six shall come from the descendants of Imam al-Hasan ('a) while the other five shall come from the descendants of Imam al-Husayn ('s). As-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, 2nd edition (Cairo: Maktabah al-Qahirah, 1385 AH), pp. 20-21.
10. Al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi, 5th printing (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1363 AH), vol. 1, p. 377.
11. Shaykh at-Tusi, Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt Li Ahya' at-Turath, 1404 AH), vol. 1, p. 371.
12. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 763.
13. Ibn al-Qutaybah, Al-Ma'arif, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radhi, 1410 AH), p. 624.
14. Ibn an-Nadim, Al-Fihrist (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah Li'l-Matbu'at wa'n-Nashr, n.d.), p. 295.
15. Shahrastani, Al-Milal wa'n-Nihal (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radhi, 1364 AHS), vol. 1, p. 143.
16. Ibid., p. 138.
17. Ibn al-Qutaybah, Al-Ma'arif, p. 623.
18. Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, Maqatil at-Talibiyyin, 2nd edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radhi, 1416 AH/1374 AHS), p. 251.
19. Ibid., p. 254.
20. Ibid., p. 256.
21. Shahrastani, Al-Milal wa'n-Nihal (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radhi, 1364 AHS), vol. 1, p. 140.
22. Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, Maqatil at-Talibiyyin, p. 258.

## Lesson 4: The Origin of Shi'ism

Diverse views have been expressed with respect to the origin and beginning of Shi'ism, but in general, these views can be divided into two:

1. The writers and researchers who believe Shi'ism was created after the demise of the Prophet (S) and who themselves can be subdivided into the following subgroups:
  - a. Those who believe that Shi'ism has come into being during the day of Saqifah—that day when a group of prominent Companions explicitly said: "'Ali is the most deserving one to the office of Imamate {*imamah*} and caliphate {*khilafah*}."<sup>1</sup>
  - b. Those who regard the emergence of the Shi'ah as being related to the latter part of Uthman's caliphate, connecting the spread of the views of 'Abd Allah ibn Saba' at this period with the beginning of Shi'ism.<sup>2</sup>
  - c. Those who believe that the Shi'ah has come into being on the day of *Fitnah ad-Dar* (the day when the third caliph was murdered). Thereafter, accordingly, the followers of 'Ali ('a) who were the very Shi'ah who confronted the so-called "'Uthmanis", those who were

avenging the murder of 'Uthman. As Ibn an-Nadim thus writes:

When Talhah and Zubayr opposed 'Ali and nothing could convince them but to take revenge for the murder of 'Uthman, while 'Ali also wanted to fight them so as to establish the truth, on that day those who followed him were called "Shi'ah" and he himself thus described them: "They are my Shi'ah".<sup>3</sup>

Ibn 'Abd ar-Rabbih al-Andalusi also says: "The Shi'ah are those who regarded 'Ali as superior to 'Uthman."<sup>4</sup>

**d.** Those who believe that Shi'ism had come into existence from the coming into power, up to the martyrdom of 'Ali ('a).<sup>5</sup>

**e.** Those who link the origin of Shi'ism with the event at Karbala' and the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a).<sup>6</sup>

**2.** The researchers who are of the opinion that Shi'ism can be traced back to the period of the Messenger of Allah ('a). Apart from all the Shi'ah '*ulama*',<sup>7</sup> some of the Sunni scholars also hold such a belief, just as Muhammad Kird-'Ali—one of the distinguished Sunni '*ulama*'—says: "A number of the Companions during the time of the Holy Prophet (S) were known as Shi'ah of 'Ali."<sup>8</sup>

Keeping in view of the opinions presented so far, it can be said that the event of Saqifah, the latter part of the caliphate of 'Uthman, the Battle of Jamal (Camel), the rule of 'Ali ('a), and the events at Karbala' are phases of the events that have influenced the history of Shi'ism.

Although the existence of a person named 'Abd Allah ibn Saba' is doubtful, the formation of Shi'ism at these stages seems incorrect because studying the Prophetic traditions, we find that the term "Shi'ah", has been applied by the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad al-Mustafa (S), to the sympathizers of 'Ali ('a) before all these events, as recorded in many *hadiths*, some of which we shall cite below.

All these *hadiths* are accepted by the Ahl as-Sunnah as authentic and have been recorded in their *hadith* references. Take, for example, the *hadiths* which have been recorded by Suyuti—one of the Sunni exegetes {*mufasssirun*} of the Qur'an—from the Holy Prophet (S) on the commentary of the verse:

□ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ خَيْرُ الْبَرِيَّةِ □

**"Indeed those who have faith and do righteous deeds—it is they who are the best of creatures."<sup>9</sup>**

Among them is this *hadith* of the Prophet (S) when he said:

**والذي نفسي بيده إنَّ هذا و شيعته لهم الفائزون يوم القيامة.**

“By He in Whose hand my life is! Verily, this man (‘Ali) and his Shi‘ah shall secure deliverance on the Day of Resurrection.”[10](#)

The Holy Prophet (S) said to ‘Ali (‘a): “God has forgiven the sins of your Shi‘ah and the followers of your Shi‘ah.”[11](#)

The Prophet (S) also said to ‘Ali (‘a): “You and your Shi‘ah will meet (on the Day of Resurrection) at the Pool {*hawdh*} of Kawthar while having drunk from it and having bright faces, whereas your enemies will meet me while they are thirsty and enchained.”[12](#)

In a long *hadith* regarding the virtues of ‘Ali (‘a), the Holy Prophet (S) thus says to his daughter Fatimah (‘a): “O Fatimah! ‘Ali and his Shi‘ah are the saved ones of tomorrow.”[13](#)

Similarly, the Messenger of Allah (S) said: “O ‘Ali! Your sins as well as that of your progeny, your Shi‘ah and the followers of your Shi‘ah have been forgiven...”[14](#)

Again, the Messenger of Allah (S) said: “O ‘Ali! During the Day of Resurrection, I shall cling to God while you shall hold fast to me; your descendants shall hold fast to you; and the Shi‘ah of your descendants shall hold fast to them.”[15](#)

The Prophet (S) again said to ‘Ali (‘a): “In the hereafter, of all the people, you are the nearest one to me... and the Shi‘ah are on pulpits on light...”[16](#)

Ibn al-‘Abbas narrated that Jibra‘il (Archangel Gabriel) (‘a) gave the news that ‘Ali (‘a) and the Shi‘ah shall be brought to Paradise along with Muhammad (S).”[17](#)

Salman al-Farsi narrates that the Most Noble Messenger (S) said to ‘Ali (‘a):

O ‘Ali! Put a ring on your right hand so as to be with the nearest ones {*muqarrabin*}.” ‘Ali (‘a) asked: “Who are the nearest ones?” He (S) replied: “Jibra‘il and Mika‘il.” ‘Ali (‘a) again asked: “Which kind of ring shall I put on?” He (S) replied: “A ring whose stone is a red ‘*aqiq* because ‘*aqiq* is a testimony that one has acknowledged and accepted the divine servitude {*‘ubdiyyah*}, my prophethood {*nubuwwah*}, your guardianship {*wisayah*}, and your descendants’ Imamate {*imamah*}. Your followers are people of Paradise and the abode of your Shi‘ah is the Garden of Firdaws {*jannah al-firdaws*}.”[18](#)

The Most Noble Messenger (S) again said: “Eighty thousand from my *ummah* shall be admitted to Paradise without reckoning.” ‘Ali (‘a) asked: “Who are they?” He (S) replied: “They are your Shi‘ah and you are their Imam.”[19](#)

Anas ibn Malik thus narrates from the Holy Prophet (S):

Jibra‘il said to me: “God, the Exalted, loves ‘Ali to such a degree that is not expressed to any angel. Just as the *tasbihs* {glorifications to Allah} that are being uttered, God creates angels to seek forgiveness for the admirers and Shi‘ah of ‘Ali till the Day of Resurrection.”[20](#)

Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Ansari narrates that the Prophet (S) said: “By God Who sent me in truth as the Prophet! The angels are regularly seeking forgiveness for ‘Ali and they pity him and his Shi‘ah as a father does (with respect to his child).”[21](#)

‘Ali (‘a) himself narrates that the Prophet (S) said: “O ‘Ali! Give glad tidings to your Shi‘ah that I am {their} intercessor {*shafi’*} on the Day of Resurrection—the day when neither wealth nor child is of any benefit except my intercession {*shafa‘ah*}.”[22](#)

The Holy Prophet (S) said to 'Ali ('a): "The first four persons to enter Paradise are I, you, Hasan, and Husayn; our descendants are behind us; our spouses are behind our descendants and our Shi'ah are on our right and left sides."[23](#)

Finally, many of the Sunni *muhaddithun* and historians such as Ibn al-Jawzi, Baladhuri, Shaykh Sulayman al-Qanduzi al-Hanafi, Khwarazmi, and as-Suyuti have narrated that the Messenger of Allah (S) thus said while addressing 'Ali ('a): "Verily, this man ('Ali) and his Shi'ah shall secure deliverance on the Day of Resurrection."[24](#)

There are even recorded traditions from the Most Noble Messenger (S) about some of the Shi'ah and what is interesting here is that these have been narrated by the opponents of the Shi'ah! For example, there is a tradition about Hujr ibn 'Adi al-Kindi which has been narrated by 'A'ishah. When Mu'awiyah performed *Hajj* after killing Hujr and his companions and came to Medina, 'A'ishah said to him:

O Mu'awiyah! Where was your forbearance at the time of killing Hujr and his companions? Be aware that I heard that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: "There is a group that shall be killed in a place called Marj 'Adhra' for which Allah and the inhabitants of heaven will be filled with wrath."[25](#)

Since these *hadiths* are undeniable and have been narrated by prominent Sunni *muhaddithun*, some Sunni writers have resorted to unjust interpretation of them. For instance, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid says:

What is meant by the Shi'ah in many *hadiths* who have been given the glad tidings of Paradise are those who believe in the superiority and preeminence of 'Ali ('a) over others. For this reason, our Mu'tazilite '*ulama*' have thus written in their books and treatises, "We are truly the Shi'ah" and this statement is nearer to reality and more akin to truth.[26](#)

Also, in the book, *As-Sawa'iq al-Mahriqah fi'r-Radd 'ala Ahl al-Bid'a waz-Zindiqah*, which is a book rejecting the Shi'ah creeds and beliefs, while quoting this *hadiths*, Haythami has said:

What is meant by the Shi'ah in these *hadiths* are the Shi'ah that no longer exist. It refers to progeny and followers of 'Ali who are neither afflicted with innovation {*bid'ah*} nor curse and abuse the Companions of the Prophet (S).[27](#)

In reply to him, the late Muzaffar says:

It is strange that Ibn Hajar imagined that what is meant here by the Shi'ah are the Ahl as-Sunnah! And I do not know if the reason behind this is the similarity of "Shi'ah" and "Sunni". Or, it is because these two sects are identical. Or, it is for the reason that the Ahl as-Sunnah follow and love the family of the Prophet (S) more than the Shi'ah do![28](#)

The late Kashif al-Ghita' also says: "By applying the term "Shi'ah" to the Shi'ah of 'Ali ('a), its purport can be understood because other than this group, there is no other Shi'ah."[29](#)

The existence of the term "Shi'ah" in the *hadiths* and sayings of the Prophet (S) is clear and indisputable, and with these (unjust) interpretations, they wanted to conceal the truth but in the end they have deceived nobody but themselves. This is particularly true in view of the fact that the connotations of "Shi'ah" has been clarified during the time of the Prophet (S) and a number of the Companions were known at the time as "Shi'ah of 'Ali".[30](#)

The Companions of the Prophet (S) also referred to 'Ali's ('a) followers as "Shi'ah". Hashim

Marqal thus writes concerning a person named "Mahal ibn al-Khalifah at-Ta'i": "O Commander of the Faithful! He is among your Shi'ah."[31](#)

The Shi'ah themselves used to call one another as Shi'ah. As Shaykh al-Mufid narrates, some people came to 'Ali ('a) and said: "O Commander of the Faithful! We are among your Shi'ah." He ('a) in turn said: "The faces of my Shi'ah turn pale on account of night vigil and their eyes weak due to weeping..."[32](#)

In many instances, Hadrat[33](#) 'Ali ('a) himself, as in the abovementioned case, used to apply the word "Shi'ah" to his followers. For example, when he heard the news of martyrdom of some of his Shi'ah in Basrah at the hand of Talhah and Zubayr, he ('a) cursed the two and said: "O God! They have killed my Shi'ah. Kill them too."[34](#)

Even the opponents of 'Ali ('a) used to refer to his followers as "Shi'ah", just as what 'A'ishah, Talhah and Zubayr said during their conversation about their route from Mecca to Iraq: "We shall go to Basrah and expel the governor {*amil*} of 'Ali and kill his Shi'ah."[35](#)

In any case, the truth of Shi'ism, which is the same love and fellowship to 'Ali ('a) and to regard him as superior (to others), is related to the time of the Prophet (S). He (S) used to enjoin the people in his speeches to follow 'Ali and his family as exemplified by the event in Ghadir Khumm. As Ibn Abi'l-Hadid says: "This report {*akhbar*} has been narrated by *muhaddithun* none of whom has been accused of *rafdh* and Shi'ism {*tashayyu'*} and they have not even believed in the superiority and preeminence of 'Ali ('a) over others."[36](#)

Now, we shall quote some of these *hadiths*. Buraydah Aslami says:

The Messenger of Allah (S) said: "God, the Exalted, has ordered me to love four persons and said to me that He also loves them." They asked: "O Messenger of Allah! Tell their names." He (S) said thrice: "'Ali and then Abu Dharr, Miqdad and Salman."[37](#)

At-Tabari narrates that in the course of the Battle of Uhud, the Most Noble Messenger (S) said: "'Ali is from me and I from him."[38](#)

It has thus been narrated on the authority of Umm Salmah: "When the Messenger of Allah (S) was angry, no one could dare to speak except 'Ali."[39](#)

Sa'd ibn Abi Waqas narrated that the Most Noble Messenger (S) said: "He who loves 'Ali loves me and he who loves me loves God. Also, he who is hostile to 'Ali is hostile to me, and he who is hostile to me is hostile to God."[40](#)

Ibn al-Jawzi narrated that the Holy Prophet of Islam (S) said: "O 'Ali! You are the separator of heaven and hell. And you shall open the door of heaven and enter it without any reckoning."[41](#)

Khwarazmi narrated in *Al-Manaqib* on the authority of Ibn al-'Abbas that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

When I was brought to the heavenly ascension {*mi'raj*}, I saw that it is thus written on the gate of heaven:

لا اله الا الله، محمد رسول الله، علي حبيب الله، الحسن

# والحسين صفوة الله، فاطمة امة الله، على مبغضهم لعنة الله.

*La ilaha illallah, Muhammadan Rasulallah, 'Aliyyun Habib Allah Al-Hasan wa'l-Husayn Sifwat Allah, Fatimah Ummat Allah, 'ala mabghadhuhum la'nat Allah.*[42](#)

Zubayr ibn Bakkar—who is among the grandchildren of Zubayr and known for deviation from the Commander of the Faithful ('a)—has narrated that the Most Noble Messenger (S) said: “I enjoin anyone who believe in God and confirm my apostleship {*risalah*} to love 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and recognize his guardianship {*wilayah*}. He who loves him loves me and he who loves me loves God.”[43](#)

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid narrates on the authority of Zayd ibn al-Arqam that the Most Noble Messenger (S) said: “I shall guide you to something which if it would be known to you, you shall never go astray. Your guardian {*wali*} and Imam is 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. Acknowledge him as Jibra'il thus informed me of it.”

After narrating this *hadith*, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid thus says:

If they would say, “This is an explicit proof for (Imam 'Ali's) Imamate {*imamah*},” how will then the Mu'tazilites solve this problem? In reply, we say: It is possible that the Prophet means that 'Ali is their Imam in religious edicts {*fatawa*} and laws {*ahkam*} and not in caliphate {*khilafah*}.

Similarly, what we quoted in the explanation of the statements of the great and leading Mu'tazilite figures of Baghdad can be the answer, the gist of which is as follows: The Imamate and caliphate belonged to 'Ali with the condition that he would show inclination to it and fight others for it. As he relinquished it to somebody and kept silent, we do accept the guardianship {*wilayah*} of the other person and believe in the legitimacy of his caliphate.

As the Commander of the Faithful did not raise any opposition against the three caliphs, did not unsheathe his sword and call on the people against the three, it follows then that he has approved their caliphates. It is based on this that we do accept them and believe in their purity, goodness and righteousness. If he would have waged war against them and called on the people to fight them, we would then believe in their transgression, deviation and misguidance.[44](#)

## **Lesson 4: Summary**

Some writers regard Shi'ism to have emerged on the day of Saqifah while others regard the same to be on the latter part of 'Uthman ibn al-'Affan's caliphate. The third group believe that Shi'ism came into being after the murder of 'Uthman while the fourth group say that it has come into existence after the martyrdom of 'Ali ('a). The fifth group is of the opinion that Shi'ism originated after the event in Karbala'.

Apart from the Shi'ah '*ulama*' as a whole, some Sunni scholars such as Muhammad Kird-'Ali maintain that the root of emergence of Shi'ism is during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah (S) and it was the Prophet (S) who first applied the term “Shi'ah” to the comrades of 'Ali ('a).

A number of Companions of the Prophet (S) were also known during that time as “Shi‘ah of ‘Ali (‘a)”.

In addition to this, Shi‘ism is the same love and fellowship to ‘Ali (‘a) to which the Prophet (S) had enjoined his Companions on many occasions.

## **Lesson 4: Questions**

1. How many views have been expressed regarding the emergence of Shi‘ism? Explain.
2. Who was the first person to apply the name “Shi‘ah” to the comrades of ‘Ali (‘a)?
3. Write two *hadiths* from the Messenger of Allah (S) regarding the Shi‘ah.
4. What has Ibn Abi‘l-Hadid said regarding the *hadiths* pertaining to the Shi‘ah?
5. What is Ibn Hajar al-Haythami’s opinion with regard to the *hadiths* relating to the Shi‘ah?
6. What is the truth of Shi‘ism?
7. Write the opinion of Ibn Abi‘l-Hadid concerning the *hadith* narrated by Zayd ibn al-Arqam.

1. Ya‘qubi said: “A number of distinguished Companions refused to pay allegiance to Abubakr saying, ‘‘Ali is the most deserving one in the office of caliphate’.” *Tarikh al-Ya‘qubi* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 124.
2. Samirah Mukhtar al-Laythi, *Jihad ash-Shi‘ah* (Beirut: Dar al-Jayl, 1396 AH), p. 25.
3. Ibn an-Nadim, *Al-Fihrist* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma‘rifah, n.d.), p. 249.
4. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Abd ar-Rabbih al-Andalusi, *Al-‘Aqd al-Farid* (Beirut: Dar Ihya’ at-Turath al-‘Arabi, 1409 AH), vol. 2, p. 230.
5. Abu Mansur ‘Abd al-Qadir ibn Tahir ibn Muhammad al-Baghdadi, *Al-Firaq bayn al-Firaq* (Cairo: n.p., 1397 AH), p. 134.
6. Samirah Mukhtar al-Laythi, *Jihad ash-Shi‘ah*, p. 35, quoting Bernard Lewis, *Usul al-Isma‘iliyyah {The Principles of Isma‘iliyyah}*, p. 84.
7. Ja‘far Kashif al-Ghita’, *Difa‘ az Haqqaniyyat-e Shi‘eh {In Defense of the Truthfulness of the Shi‘ah}*, trans. Ghulam-Hasan Muharrami, 1st edition (n.p.: Mu‘minin, 1378 AHS), p. 48; Muhammad Husayn Zayn ‘Amili, *Ash-Shi‘ah fi‘t-Tarikh*, trans. Muhammad-Rida ‘Ata‘i, 2nd edition (Mashhad: Bunyad-e Pazhuhesh-ha-ye Islami-ye Astan-e Quds-e Radhawi, 1375 AHS), 34.
8. Muhammad Kird-‘Ali, *Khatat ash-Sham*, 3rd edition (Damascus: Maktabah an-Nuri, 1403 AH/1983), vol. 6, p. 245.
9. Surah al-Bayyinah 98:7.
10. Jalal ad-Din as-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr al-Manthur fi‘t-Tafsir bi‘l-Ma‘thur* (Qum: Manshurat Maktabah Ayatullah al-‘Uzma al-Mar‘ashi an-Najafi, 1404 AH) vol. 6, p. 379.
11. Ibn Hajar al-Haythami al-Makki, *Sawa‘iq al-Muhriqah*, 2nd edition (Cairo: Maktabah al-Qahirah, 1385 AH), p. 232.
12. *Ibid.*; Nur ad-Din ‘Ali ibn Abibakr al-Haythami, *Majma‘ az-Zawa‘id* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr Li‘t-Taba‘ah wa’n-Nashr wa‘t-Tawzi‘, 1414 AH), vol. 9, p. 177.
13. Akhtab Khwarazm, *Al-Manaqib* (Najaf: Manshurat al-Matba‘ah al-Haydariyyah, 1385 AH), p. 206.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 209; Shaykh Sulayman al-Qanduzi al-Hanafi, *Yanabi‘ al-Mawaddah*, 1st edition (Beirut: Manshurat Mu‘assasah al-A‘lami Li‘l-Matbu‘at, 1418 AH), vol. 1, p. 302.
15. Akhtab Khwarazm, *Al-Manaqib*, p. 210.
16. *Ibid.*, vol. 188, p. 158.
17. *Ibid.*, chap. 19, *hadith* 329, p. 322.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 234.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
20. Shaykh Sulayman al-Qanduzi al-Hanafi, *Yanabi‘ al-Mawaddah*, p. 301.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*, p. 302.
23. Nur ad-Din ‘Ali ibn Abibakr al-Haythami, *Majma‘ az-Zawa‘id*, p. 178.
24. Ibn al-Jawzi, *Tadhkirah al-Khawas* (Najaf: Manshurat al-Matba‘ah al-Haydariyyah, 1383 AH), p. 54; Ahmad ibn

Yahya ibn Jabir Baladhuri, *Insab al-Ashraf*, researched by Muhammad Baqir Mahmudi (Beirut: Ma'assasah al-A'jami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1349 AH), vol. 2, p. 182; Shaykh Sulayman al-Qanduzi al-Hanafi, *Yanabi' al-Mawaddah*, 1st edition (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'jami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1418 AH), vol. 1, p. 301; Akhtab Khwarazm, *Al-Manaqib* (Najaf: Manshurat al-Matba'ah al-Haydariyyah, 1385 AH), p. 206; Jalal ad-Din as-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr al-Manthur fi't-Tafsir bi'l-Ma'thur* (Qum: Manshurat Maktabah Ayatullah al-'Uzma al-Mar'ashi an-Najafi, 1404 AH) vol. 6, p. 379.

25. Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 231.
26. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), vol. 20, p. 226.
27. Ahmad Ibn Hajar Haythami al-Makki, *As-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah fi'r-Radd 'ala Ahl al-Bid'a waz-Zindiqah* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Qahirah, 1384 AH), p. 232.
28. Muhammad Husayn Muzaffar, *Tarikh ash-Shi'ah* (Qum: Manshurat Maktabah Basirati, n.d.), p. 5.
29. Ja'far Kashif al-Ghita', *Difa' az Haqqaniyyat-e Shi'eh* {In Defense of the Truthfulness of the Shi'ah}, trans. Ghulam-Hasan Muharrami, 1st edition (n.p.: Mu'minin, 1378 AHS), pp. 48-49.
30. Sa'd ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ash'ari thus says in this regard: "The first sect is the Shi'ah and it is the sect of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) which had been called the "Shi'ah of 'Ali" during the time of the Holy Prophet (S) and after the demise of the Prophet (S) they were known to have belief in his Imamate. Among them are Miqdad ibn Aswad al-Kindi, Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr, and 'Ammar. They used to prefer obedience to him to any other thing and they used to follow him. There were also others whose inclination is harmonious with that of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and they were the first group from this ummah to be called "Shi'ah"; for, Shi'ah as an appellation is an old one such as the Shi'ah of Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), 'Isa (Jesus), and other prophets." *Al-Maqalat wa'l-Firaq*, 2nd edition (Tehran: Markaz-e Intisharat-e 'Ilmi va Farhangi, 1360 AHS), p. 3.
31. Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn an-Nu'man (Shaykh al-Mufid), *Al-Jamal*, 2nd edition (Qum: Maktab al-'Ulum al-Islami (Central Publication), 1416 AH), p. 243.
32. Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn an-Nu'man (Shaykh al-Mufid), *Al-Irshad*, trans. Muhammad Baqir Sa'idi Khusasani, 2nd edition (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-ye Islamiyyeh, 1376 AHS), p. 228.
33. Hadrat: The Arabic word Hadrat is used as a respectful form of address. {Trans.}
34. Shaykh al-Mufid, *Al-Jamal*, p. 285.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
36. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 349.
37. Ibn Hajar al-Haythami al-Makki, *Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah*, 2nd edition (Cairo: Maktabah al-Qahirah, 1385 AH), p. 122.
38. *Tarikh at-Tabari*, 3rd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1408 AH), vol. 2, p. 65.
39. Ibn Hajar al-Haythami al-Makki, *Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah*, p. 123.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Sabt ibn al-Jawzi, *Tadhkirah al-Khawass* (Najaf: Manshurat al-Matba'ah al-Haydariyyah, 1383 AH), p. 209.
42. Akhtab Khwarazm, *Al-Manaqib* (Najaf: Manshurat al-Matba'ah al-Haydariyyah, 1385 AH), p. 214.
43. Zubayr ibn Bakkar, *Al-Akhbar al-Muwaffaqiyyat*, researched by Dr. Sami Makki al-'Ani (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 312.
44. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, 1st edition (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1378), vol. 3, p. 98.

## Lesson 5: The Other Terms for the "Shi'ah"

After the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a) and with the spread of Shi'ism, in addition to the name "Shi'ah", other appellations such as 'Alawi, Imamah, Husayniyyah, 'Ithna 'Ashari, Khassah, Ja'fari, Turabi, and Rafidhi were gradually applied to the friends of the family of the Prophet (S). Although the *Ahl al-Bayt's* ('a) adherents as a whole were called "Shi'ah" as usual, these appellations and titles were also applied to the Shi'ah on various occasions.

Sometimes, the enemies also used to give certain titles to the Shi'ah with the aim of belittling and degrading them. During the time of Mu'awiyah, for example, the Banu Umayyah and the people of Sham<sup>1</sup> used the epithet "Abu Turab" {literally, "Father of the Earth/Soil"} for 'Ali ('a) among all his epithets and sobriquets and they used to call his

Shi'ah as "Turabis".

After the Battle of Siffin and the rule of 'Ali ('a), whenever Mu'awiyah wanted to dispatch 'Abd Allah ibn Hadhrami to Basrah, he would give instructions regarding the tribes but concerning the tribe of Rabi'ah, he said: "Leave alone the Rabi'ah as all of them are *turabis*." <sup>2</sup> According to Mas'udi, Abu Mikhnaf had a book entitled, *Akhbar at-Turabiyyin*, from which he has narrated the event of 'Ayn al-Warad. <sup>3</sup>

The enemies of the Shi'ah used to apply to them the label, "Rafidhi" and in most cases, whenever they liked to accuse somebody of abandoning religion, they would brand him a *rafidhi*, just as ash-Shafi'i says:

**إِنْ كَانَ رَفِضًا حَبَّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ فَلْيَشْهَدْ التُّقْلَانَ أَنِّي رَافِضِي**

*If loving the progeny {al} of Muhammad is rafdh, the two worlds (of mankind and jinn) shall therefore be the witness that I am indeed a rafidhi.* <sup>4</sup>

It has been recorded in history that after the uprising of Zayd ibn 'Ali, the Shi'ah were then called *Rafidhi*. Shahrastani thus says:

When the Shi'ah of Kufah learned from Zayd ibn 'Ali that he does not declare disavowal against the two sheikhs {*shaykhayn*} (Abubakr and 'Umar) and regard as permissible the Imamate of a deserving one {*mafdhul*} in the existence of the most deserving one {*afdhal*}, they abandoned him. Therefore, they were then identified as *Rafidhi* because *rafdh* means "abandonment". <sup>5</sup>

Regarding the label, 'Alawi, Sayyid Muhsin Amin says:

After the murder of 'Uthman and the confrontation between Mu'awiyah and 'Ali ('a), the supporters and followers of Mu'awiyah were called "'Uthmanis" as they used to love 'Uthman and be inimical to 'Ali ('a). In addition to "Shi'ah", the followers of 'Ali ('a) were also called "'Alawis", and this practice persisted till the end of the Umayyad rule. During the 'Abbasid period, the labels "Uthmani" and "'Alawi" were abrogated and only "Shi'ah" and "Sunni" were used. <sup>6</sup>

"Imamis" was another term applied to the Shi'ah usually in contradistinction to the Zaydis. As Ibn al-Khaldun writes,

Some Shi'ah believe in explicit traditions substantiating the proposition that Imamate {*imamah*} is solely in the person of 'Ali and after it will also be transferred to his descendants. They are Imamiyyah with aversion toward the two sheikhs {*shaykhayn*} (Abubakr and 'Umar) for not considering 'Ali as superior and not paying allegiance to him. They do not accept the Imamate of Abubakr and 'Umar. Other Shi'ah believe that God did not appoint a specific person but described the characteristics of the Imam which conform to the personality of 'Ali and the people were at fault in not recognizing this. They do not abuse the two sheikhs and they are Zaydis. <sup>7</sup>

Keeping in view of the surviving poems from the supporters and companions of Imam al-Husayn ('a), it can be discerned that after his martyrdom, his Shi'ah and supporters were

also called “Husaynis”. In many of their poems they introduced themselves as “Husaynis” or “of the religion of Husayn”.<sup>8</sup>

In this regard, Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih thus says: “Among the *rafidhis* are the Husayniyyah and they are companions of Ibrahim al-Ashtar who used to roam around the alleys of Kufah shouting: “*Ya litharat al-Husayn!*” They were called Husayniyyah.”<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, the term “Qat’iyyah” {lit. “Decisiveness”} was applied to the Shi’ah after the martyrdom of Imam Musa al-Kazim (‘a) in contradistinction to the Waqifiyyah.

That is to say that they were certain and decisive with respect to the martyrdom of Imam al-Kazim (‘a) and believed in the Imamate of Imam ar-Rida (‘a) and the Imams after him, whereas the Waqifiyyah were not convinced of the death of Imam al-Kazim (‘a).<sup>10</sup>

Nowadays, the label “Ja’fariyyah” is applied to the Shi’ah more on account of jurisprudence in contradistinction to the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence {*madhahib*}. The reason for this term is that the Shi’ah jurisprudence took form more through Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (‘a) compared to all the Imams (‘a) and most traditions on our jurisprudence are narrated by him (‘a).

Nonetheless, keeping in view a poem we have from Sayyid Humayri, it can be understood that only on account of jurisprudence during Imam as-Sadiq’s (‘a) period the term “Ja’fari” was applied to the Shi’ah, but this term has also been applied to them in terms of principles of religion {*usul*} in contradistinction to other sects. The poem of Humayri is as follows:

## تجفرت باسم الله و الله أكبر

*In the Name of Allah, I became a Ja’fari, and Allah is the great.*<sup>11</sup>

By becoming a Ja’fari, Sayyid Humayri is referring to the correct course of the Shi’ah Imamiyyah in contradistinction to the Kaysaniyyah.

## **The Status of ‘Ali (‘a) among the Companions {sahabah}**

The Commander of the Faithful ‘Ali (‘a) occupied a special position among the Companions of the Prophet (S). Mas’udi says:

In terms of all the virtues and merits that the Companions of the Prophet (S) possessed, such as precedence in Islam; *hijrah* {emigration}; helping the Prophet; kinship with him; contentment {*qina’ah*}; sacrifice {*ithar*}; knowledge of the Book of Allah; *jihad*; piety {*wara’*}; asceticism {*zuhd*}; judgment {*qadha’*}; jurisprudence {*fiqh*}; etc., ‘Ali (‘a) had abundant share and perfect delight.

This is apart from the fact that some of the virtues are possessed by him alone such as brotherhood {*ukhuwwah*} of the Prophet and statements of the Prophet such as: “You are to me as Harun (Aaron) is to Musa (Moses),” “Of whomsoever I am master {*mawla*}, ‘Ali is also his master. O God! Befriend him who befriends him and be inimical to him who is

inimical to him”; and also the supplication of the Prophet for him; when Anas brought a cooked bird to the Prophet (S), he said: “O God! Let the most beloved creature (after him) come in so as to partake with me.” Then, ‘Ali (‘a) came in and partook with the Prophet. This is while the other Companions did not possess those virtues.[12](#)

Among the Banu Hashim, ‘Ali (‘a) was also the nearest person to the Prophet (S). He grew up in the house of the Prophet (S) and under his training.[13](#) He (‘a) slept in the Prophet’s (S) bed during the night of *hijrah*, returned to their respective owners the possessions entrusted to the Prophet (S) and joined the Prophet (S) in Medina.[14](#)

The most important of all is ‘Ali’s (‘a) position in Islam. The Most Noble Messenger (S) determined this position at the very beginning of the Prophetic mission.

When the Prophet received instruction from God to invite his kith and kin, it was only ‘Ali in the assembly who was ready to assist and accompany the Holy Prophet (‘a). Then, in that very assembly, the Most Noble Messenger (S) announced before the elders among his relatives that ‘Ali is the executor of his will {*wasi*}, minister {*wazir*}, caliph {*khalif*}, and successor notwithstanding the fact that he was the youngest among those who were present.[15](#)

The Holy Prophet (S) informed his Companions on several occasions of the status and position of ‘Ali (‘a), admonishing them to recognize his position. The Holy Prophet (S) was watchful of his their attitude toward ‘Ali (‘a) particularly after the spread of Islam when many individuals with diverse motives joined the ranks of Muslims. This is especially true with respect to the Quraysh whose envy toward the Banu Hashim had amplified by then. Ibn Shahr Ashub thus narrates on the authority of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab:

I used to annoy ‘Ali, the Prophet (S) once came to me and said: “You are annoying me, O ‘Umar!” I said: “I seek refuge in God from annoying the Messenger of Allah!” He said: “You are annoying ‘Ali and he who annoys him annoys me”.

Mus‘ab ibn Sa‘d has narrated from his father, Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqas, that: “I and another person were in the mosque and we were abusing ‘Ali. Infuriated, the Prophet came to us and said: ‘Why do you annoy me? He who annoys ‘Ali annoys me’.”[16](#)

Haythami has narrated:

Buraydah al-Aslami, who is one of those who had gone to Yemen under the commandship of ‘Ali, says: “I went back to Medina earlier than the army. The people asked me: ‘What news?’ I said: ‘There is news. God made the Muslims victorious.’ They asked: ‘Why did you come earlier (than the army contingent)?’ I said: ‘‘Ali has allocated a bondswoman from the *khums* for himself. I have come to inform the Prophet of it...’

When the Prophet was informed of it, he was annoyed and said: ‘Why are some people belittling ‘Ali? Anyone who finds fault with ‘Ali finds fault with me. Anyone who would separate from ‘Ali has separated from me. ‘Ali is from me and I from him. He has been created out of my essence and I from the essence of Ibrahim (Abraham) though I am superior to Ibrahim... O Buraydah! Don’t you know that ‘Ali deserves more than one bondswoman? He is your guardian {*wali*} after me.[17](#)

Ibn Shahr Ashub also narrates a similar *hadith* from Sunni *muhaddithun* such as Tirmidhi, Abu Na‘im, al-Bukhari, and Musalli.[18](#)

As such, 'Ali ('a) had earned special respect among the Companions. Again, Ibn Shahr Ashub has thus narrated from Anas ibn Malik:

During the period of the Holy Prophet (S) whenever we wanted to know if a certain person is a bastard or not, we would know it from the spite of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. After the Battle of Khaybar, every man would hug his child and go. If ever he would see 'Ali along the way, he would point to 'Ali with his hand to the child and ask him: "Do you like this man?" If the child would say, "Yes," he would kiss his child and if the child would say, "No," he would put the child on the ground and say, "Go to your mother!" 'Ubadah ibn Samit also says: "We used to test our children with the love for 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. If we found out that one of them does not like him, we would know that he will never be an upright person."<sup>19</sup>

During the latter years of the Prophet's (S) life, the issue of 'Ali's ('a) position was more publicized so much so that the title *wasi* {executor of one's will} became one of his widely known titles, which was accepted by both his friends and foes especially after the Holy Prophet (S) said to 'Ali ('a) before going to the Tabuk expedition:

**أنت منِّي بمنزلة هارون من موسى إلا أنه لانيبيّ بعدي.**

"You are to me as Harun (Aaron) is to Musa (Moses) with the only difference that there shall be no prophet after me."<sup>20</sup>

In the course of the Farewell Pilgrimage {*Hajj al-Wida'*} in Mina and in 'Arafah also, the Holy Prophet (S) informed the people in several speeches about twelve persons shall be his successors and all of whom are from Banu Hashim.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, on the return from Mecca in Ghadir Khumm, he (S) received instruction from God to announce the succession of 'Ali ('a) to all the Muslims. He ordered the Muslims to halt and mounting a pulpit made out of the camel saddles he delivered a long speech. He then said:

**من كنت مولاه فهذا عليّ مولاه اللهمّ وال من والاه و عاد من عاداه وانصر من نصره واخذل من خذله.**

Of whosoever I am Master {*mawla*}, then 'Ali is also his Master {*mawla*}. O Allah! Be Thou a Friend of him who is a friend of him ('Ali), and be Thou an Enemy of him who is his enemy. Help him whoever helps him, and forsake him whoever forsakes him.

Then, he asked the people to pay allegiance to 'Ali ('a). 'Allamah al-Amini has given a comprehensive explanation of this subject in the first volume of the book, *Al-Ghadir*.

In this manner, the Messenger of Allah (S) asserted his successor's identity to the people. Thus, the public was of the opinion that after 'Ali ('a) would succeed (as the leader of Muslims) the Prophet (S) after his demise. In this regard, Zubayr ibn Bakkar says: "All the *Muhajirun*<sup>22</sup> and the *Ansar*<sup>23</sup> had no doubt that 'Ali will be the caliph and master of the affairs after the Messenger of Allah (S)."<sup>24</sup>

This subject is so clear in the poems that have been recorded from the time of Saqifah and these poems bespeak of a smaller degree of distortion that has ever happened in poetry. 'Utbah ibn Abi Lahab recited this poem after the event of Saqifah and Abubakr's inauguration:

ما كنت أحسب أن الأمر منصرف عن هاشم ثم منها عن أبي  
حسن

أليس أوّل من صلّى لقبلكم و أعلم الناس بالقرآن و السنن

و أقرب الناس عهداً بالنبى و من جبرئيل عون له في الغسل و  
الكفن

ما فيه ما فيهم لا يمترون به و ليس في القوم ما فيه من  
الحسن

ماذا الذي ردهم عنه فنعلمه ها أن ذاغبناً من أعظم الغبن

*I was not imagining that the caliphate affair would be withdrawn from the Banu Hashim and much less to Abu'l-Hasan ('Ali).*

*Is he not the first person to pray facing your qiblah and of the people the most knowledgeable of the Qur'an and the Sunnah?*

*He is the last person to look at the face of the Prophet; Jibra'il (Archangel Gabriel) was his aid in bathing and enshrouding him (the Prophet).*

*They do not think about what he has and what they have; whereas within the community {qawm} there is nobody who possesses his points of goodness.*

*What is it that made them withdraw from him? Say that this loss of ours is the gravest of all losses!*

After 'Utbah's recitation of this poem, 'Ali ('a) asked him not to recite it again and said: "For us the safety of religion is more important than anything else."<sup>25</sup>

Ibn Abi 'Abrah Qurshi has also said:

شكراً لمن هو باثناء قيق ذهب اللجاج و بويع الصديق

كنا نقول لها على و الرضا عمر و أولاهم بذاك عتيق

*Thanks to Him Who is worthy to be praised! The dispute was no more and the allegiance was paid to Sadiq (Abubakr).*

*We were saying: "Ali is the owner of caliphate; we were also pleased with 'Umar; but the best of them in this case is the old {'atiq} (Abubakr)!"<sup>26</sup>*

During the course of the dispute between the *Ansar* and Quraysh that had surfaced on the event of Saqifah, 'Amru ibn al-'As has spoken against the *Ansar*. In reply to him, Nu'man ibn al-'Ajlani—one of the poets of the *Ansar*—has recited a poem in which 'Ali's ('a) right has been emphasized:

فقل لقريش نحن أصحاب مكة و يوم حنين و الفوارس في بدر

و قلت حرام نصب سعد و نصبكم عتيق بن عثمان حلال أبا بكر

و أهل أبوبكر لها خير قائم و أن علياً كان أخلق بالأمر

و كان هوانا في عليٍّ و أنه لأهل لها يا عمر و من حيث لا تدري

فذلك بعون الله يدعو إلى الهدى ينهى عن الفحشاء و البغي و

## التكر

### وصي النبي المصطفى و ابن عمه و قاتل فرسان الضلالة و الكفر

*Say to the Quraysh: "We are the army of (the Conquest of) Mecca and the Battle of Hunayn, and the cavalry of Badr!"*

*You said that appointment of Sa'd to the caliphate is unlawful {haram}, but your appointment, 'Atiq ibn 'Uthman, of Abubakr is lawful {halal}.*

*{And you said:} Abubakr is the man of this task and can perform it well, but 'Ali was the most deserving of people to the caliphate.*

*We were on 'Ali's side and he was the man for this job, but you do not understand, O 'Amru!*

*This man ('Ali), by the help of Allah, calls (us) toward guidance, and forbids perversion, oppression and evil.*

*He is the executor of will {wasi} of al-Mustafa the Prophet, his cousin, and the killer of the champions of disbelief {kufr} and misguidance {dhalalah}.[27](#)*

*With the aim of thanking Fadhl ibn al-'Abbas who, under 'Ali's ('a) order, had defended the Ansar, Hassan ibn Thabit has recited this poem:*

**جزى الله عنا و الجزاء بكفه أبا حسن عنا و من كان كابي حسن**

**سبقت قريشاً بالذي أنت أهل هفصدرك مشروح و قلبك  
ممتحن**

**حفظت رسول الله فينا و عهده إليك و من أولى به منك من و  
من**

# ألست أخاه في الهدى و وصيّهو أعلم منهم بالكتاب و بالسّنن

*May God give good reward to Abu'l-Hasan for us as the reward is in his hand. Who, by the way, is like Abu'l-Hasan?*

*Concerning which you were a member, you were ahead of the Quraysh. Your breast is expansive and your heart tested (pure and sincere).*

*You preserved what the Messenger of Allah instructed regarding us. Except you, who could be foremost for him, and who could be?*

*Are you not his brother {akh} in guidance and the executor of his will {wasi}, and among them, the most knowledgeable of the Book and the Sunnah?[28](#)*

Initially, Abu Sufyan opposed the institution of (Abubakr's) as caliphate and defended the Commander of the Faithful ('a). Apart from the speeches he delivered in this regard, he also composed the following poem:

بني هاشم لا تطمعوا الناس فيكم و لا سيّما تيم بن مرّه أو  
عدي

فما الأمر إلا فيكم و إليكم و ليس لها إلا أبو حسن عليّ

*O Bani Hashim! Do not allow others to get involve in your affair especially Taym ibn Murrah or 'Adi.[29](#)*

*The affair of caliphate belongs to you alone and it is only Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali who is its man.[30](#)*

Finally, on that very day of Ghadir Khumm, the Prophet's poet, Hassan ibn Thabit, asked the Messenger of Allah's (S) permission to narrate the event of Ghadir in poetry, and thus recites:

يناديهم يوم الغدير نبيهم بخمّ و اسمع بالرسول مناديا

وقد جاء جبرئيل عن أمر ربّه بانك معصوم فلاتك وانيا

و بلغهم ما أنزل الله ربهم إليك و لا تخش هناك الأعدايا

و قام به اذ ذاك رافع كفه بكف عليّ معن الصوت عاليا

فقال فمن مولاكم و نبيكم؟ فقالوا و لم يبدأ هناك التّعاميا

إلهك مولانا و أنت نبينا و لم تلق منا في الولاية عاصيا

فقال له: قم يا عليّ فإنني رضيتك من بعدي إماماً و هاديا

فمن كنت مولاة فهذا وليه فكونوا له اتباع صدق مواليا

هناك دعا: اللهمّ وال وليه وكن للذي عادى علياً معاديا

فيا ربّ انصر ناصريه لنصرهم إمام هدى كالبدري جلوا الدياجيا

*Their Prophet calls on them on the day of Ghadir Khumm; now, listen to the call of the Prophet:*

*Jibra'il brought a message from God that "You are under the protection of God; so, do not be dejected."*

*Convey what has been revealed by Allah, their Lord, and here do not be afraid of the enemies.*

*He raises 'Ali along with him; while he raises the hand of 'Ali along with his hand, he announces in a loud voice.*

Then he said to the people: “Who is your Master {*mawla*} and your guardian {*wali*}? Then, without showing inattention, they said:

“Your Lord is our Master {*mawla*} and you are our guardian {*wali*}, and no one among us today disobeys you.”

Then he said: “Stand up O ‘Ali! For, I am indeed well pleased that you are the Imam and guide after me.”

{He then said:} “Therefore, of whomsoever I am master, ‘Ali is his master also. May you be their true supporters!”

He then prayed, saying: “O Allah! Be Thou a Friend of those who are his {‘Ali’s} friends, and be Thou an Enemy of those who are his enemies.

So, O Lord! Help his supporters as they help the Imam of guidance who is like the moon during a dark night”[31](#)

As is evident from this poem, in transcribing the Prophet of Islam’s (S) speeches about ‘Ali (‘a), Hassan has called him Imam, guardian {*wali*} and guide {*hadi*}, which clearly stipulates the leadership and headship of the *ummah*.

Yes, the masses of Muslims did not imagine that after the Holy Prophet’s (S) demise, somebody would contest ‘Ali (‘a) on the issue of caliphate and succession to the Prophet (S). As Mu‘awiyah has written in reply to the letter of Muhammad ibn Abubakr,

We and your father during the period of the Messenger of Allah (S) used to consider obedience to the son of Abu Talib as expedient for us and his virtues were not concealed to us. After the demise of the Prophet (S), your father and ‘Umar were the first persons to trample upon his position and called on the people to pay allegiance to them.[32](#)

This is why those who were not around Medina during the last months of the Prophet’s (S) life and were uninformed of the conspiracies—such as Khalid ibn Sa‘id and Abu Sufyan—were vehemently agitated when they returned to Medina, after the demise of the Prophet (S), to see Abubakr sitting in the Prophet’s (S) lieu introducing himself as the Prophet’s (S) caliph.[33](#) Even Abu Sufyan—when he returned from a journey and saw the situation as such—came to ‘Abbas ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib and ‘Ali (‘a) and asked them to revolt in order to get their rights but they refused.[34](#) Of course, Abu Sufyan has no intention in these moves.

In conclusion, although most of the Prophet’s (S) Companions recognized the caliphate of Abubakr officially, they did not forget ‘Ali (‘a) as being the most deserving {*afdhal*}. Whenever he was in the mosque, no one except him would issue edict {*fatwa*} on religious issues as they used to regard him as “the leading judge of the *ummah*” {*aqdhi’l-ummah*} as stipulated by the Most Noble Messenger (S).[35](#)

‘Umar used to say: “May God forbid that day when a problem would arise and Abu’l-Hasan is not present.”[36](#) As he used to say to the Companions of the Prophet (S): “Whenever ‘Ali is in the mosque, no one except him has the right to issue any religious edict.”[37](#)

Although after the demise of the Prophet (S), ‘Ali (‘a) was not able to acquire political power, his virtues and distinctions were narrated by the same Companions of the Prophet (S). Ibn Haythami—who is one of the staunch Sunni ‘*ulama*’—regarded the number of

narrators of the *hadith* about Ghadir as 30 persons from among the Companions,<sup>38</sup> but Ibn Shahr Ashub has counted 80 narrators of the *hadith* on Ghadir from among the Companions.<sup>39</sup>

Meanwhile, the late 'Allamah Amini has counted the following 110 narrators of the *hadith* on Ghadir from among the Companions:

Abu Hurayrah; Abu Layla al-Ansari; Abu Zaynab al-Ansari; Abu Fudhalah al-Ansari; Abu Qudamah al-Ansari; Abu 'Umra ibn 'Amru ibn Muhsin al-Ansari; Abu'l-Haytham ibn Tayyihan; Abu Rafi'; Abu Dha'ib; Abubakr ibn Abi Quhafah; Usamah ibn Zayd; Uba ibn Ka'b; As'ad ibn Zurarah al-Ansari; Asma' bint 'Umays; Umm Salmah; Umm Hani; Abu Hamzah Anas ibn Malik al-Ansari; Bara' ibn 'Azib; Zubaydah Aslami; Abu Sa'id Thabit ibn Wadi'ah al-Ansari; Jabir ibn Sumayrah; Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari; Jublah ibn 'Amru al-Ansari; Jabir ibn Mut'am al-Qurshi; Jarir ibn 'Abd Allah Bajli; Abu Dharr Jundab ibn Junadah;

Abu Junaydah al-Ansari; Hubbah ibn Jawin 'Arni; Habashi ibn Junadah as-Saluli; Habib ibn Badil ibn Warqa' Khaza'i; Hudhayfah ibn Asid Ghaffari; Abu Ayyub Khalid ibn Zayd al-Ansari; Khalid ibn Walid al-Makhzumi; Khuzaymah ibn Thabit; Abu Sharih Khuwaylid ibn 'Amru Khaza'i; Rafa'ah ibn 'Abd al-Mundhir al-Ansari; Zubayr ibn 'Awwam; Zayd ibn al-Arqam; Zayd ibn Thabit; Zayd ibn Yazid al-Ansari; Zayd ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari; Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas; Sa'd ibn Junadah; Salmah ibn 'Amru ibn Aku'; Samrah ibn Jundab; Sahl ibn Hanif; Sahl ibn Sa'd al-Ansari; Sadi ibn 'Ajlan; Damirah al-Asadi; Talhah ibn 'Ubayd Allah;

'Amir ibn 'Amir; 'Amir ibn Layla; 'Amir ibn Layla al-Ghaffari; 'Amir ibn Wathilah; 'A'ishah bint Abibakr; 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib; 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Ansari; 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf al-Qurshi; 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Ya'mur ad-Dayla; 'Abd Allah ibn Abi 'Abd al-Athar al-Makhzumi; 'Abd Allah ibn Badil; 'Abd Allah ibn Bashir; 'Abd Allah ibn Thabit al-Ansari; 'Abd Allah ibn Ja'far al-Hashimi; 'Abd Allah ibn Huntab al-Qurshi; 'Abd Allah ibn Rabi'ah; 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas; 'Abd Allah ibn Abi 'Awf; 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar; 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud; 'Abd Allah ibn Yamil; 'Uthman ibn 'Affan;

'Ubayd ibn 'Azib al-Ansari; Abu Tarif 'Adi ibn Hatam; 'Atiyyah ibn Basar; 'Uqbah ibn 'Amir; 'Ali ibn Abi Talib; 'Ammar ibn Yasir; 'Umarah al-Khazraji; 'Amru ibn al-'As; 'Amru ibn Murrah Jahni; Fatimah bint Rasul Allah (S); Fatimah bint Hamzah; 'Umar ibn Abi Salmah; 'Umran ibn Hasin al-Khaza'i; 'Amru ibn Humq al-Khaza'i; 'Amru ibn Sharahil; Qays ibn Thabit al-Ansari;

Qays ibn Sa'd al-Ansari; Ka'b ibn 'Ujrah al-Ansari; Malik ibn Huwayrath al-Laythi; Miqdad ibn 'Amru; Najiyah ibn 'Amru; al-Khaza'i' Abu Burzah Fadhlah ibn 'Utbah Aslami; Nu'man ibn 'Ajlan al-Ansari; Hashim Marqal; Wahshi ibn Harb; Wahhab ibn Hamzah; Abu Juhayfah; Wahhab ibn 'Abd Allah; and Yu'la ibn Murrah.<sup>40</sup>

Among the narrators of the *hadith* on Ghadir, individuals who had hostile relationship with 'Ali ('a)—such as Abubakr, 'Umar 'Uthman, Talhah, 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf, Zayd ibn Thabit, Usamah ibn Zayd, Hassan ibn Thabit, Khalid ibn Walid, and 'A'ishah—can also be noticed. Even those Companions who sometimes disagreed with him defended him against his enemies.

For example, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas—who was among those who voted in favor of 'Uthman and against 'Ali ('a) at the 6-man council after the death of 'Umar, and did not extend cooperation with 'Ali ('a) during his caliphate and preferred neutrality—in his conversation with Mu'awiyah, thus said to Mu'awiyah:

“You fought and waged war with a person who was more deserving than you to the caliphate.” Mu’awiyah asked: “Why?” He replied: “One reason is that the Messenger of Allah (S) said concerning: ‘Of whosoever I am Master {*mawla*}, then ‘Ali is also his Master {*mawla*}. O Allah! Be Thou a Friend to him who is a friend of him (‘Ali), and be Thou an Enemy to him who is his enemy,’ and other reasons are his virtues and merits.”[41](#)

Similarly, ‘Abd Allah, the son of ‘Amru ibn al-‘As, along with his father was in the army of Mu’awiyah. When ‘Ammar ibn Yasir was killed and his head was brought before Mu’awiyah, two persons were in dispute as each of them was claiming to have killed ‘Ammar. ‘Abd Allah said:

“It is better for one of you to relinquish his right to the other because I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) say: “‘Ammar shall be killed by a tyrant group’.” Mu’awiyah was annoyed and said: “So, what is he doing here?!” ‘Abd Allah replied: “Since the Messenger of Allah (S) ordered me to obey my father, I am here with you, but I will not fight.”[42](#)

The presence of ‘Ammar in the ranks of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) whose killers had been described by the Messenger of Allah (S) as a tyrant group during that chaotic period was a clear testimony to the truthfulness of ‘Ali (‘a) so much so that even the son of ‘Amru ibn al-‘As admitted it.

## Lesson 5: Summary

After the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful ‘Ali (‘a), other names have also been given to the Shi’ah. Contemptuous labels such as *Rafidhi* and *Turabi* were used by the enemies of the Shi’ah with the aim of debasing them. Some other labels such as ‘Alawi, Imami, Husayniyyah, ‘Ithna ‘Ashari, Khassah, and Ja’fari were applied to them as well.

‘Ali (‘a) had a distinguished position among the Companions of the Prophet (S) as well as being the nearest one to the Prophet (S) among the Banu Hashim. He grew up in the Prophet’s (S) house, and most important of all, the Most Noble Messenger (S) had appointed him as his minister {*wazir*} and successor {*khalifah*} and the masses of people were aware of it.

## Lesson 5: Questions

1. Briefly list the terms used to refer to the Shi’ah.
2. What labels did the enemies of the Shi’ah address them with?
3. Why were the Shi’ah called ‘Alawi or Ja’fari?
4. What is the statement of Mas’udi regarding ‘Ali’s (‘a) position?
5. How many narrators are there for the *hadith* on Ghadir from among the Companions of the Prophet (‘a)?
6. The poems that were recited on the event of Saqifah bespeak of which subject?
7. What was the position of the Companions of the Prophet (S) vis-à-vis abusing ‘Ali (‘a)?

[1](#). Sham or Shamat: up until five centuries ago, included Syria of today, Lebanon and parts of Jordan and Palestine. It was then the capital of the Umayyad caliphate. {Trans.}

2. Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir Baladhuri, *Insab al-Ashraf*, researched by Muhammad Baqir Mahmudi (Beirut: Ma'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1394 AH), vol. 2, p. 423.
3. 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab* (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, p. 110.
4. Haythami al-Makki, *As-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah*, p. 123; Sayyid Muhsin Amin, *A'yan ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar at-Ta'aruf Li'l-Matbu'at, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 21.
5. Shahrastani. *Kitab al-Milal wa'n-Nihal* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1364 AHS), vol. 1, p. 139.
6. Sayyid Muhsin Amin, *A'yan ash-Shi'ah*, vol. 1, p. 19.
7. 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1408 AH), p. 197.
8. Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani. *Manaqib Al Abi Talib* (Qum: Mu'assasah Intisharat-e 'Allameh, n.d.), vol. 4, p. 102.
9. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, Ahmad ibn Muhammad. *Al-'Aqd al-Farid*. Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1409 AH
10. Shahrastani. *Kitab al-Milal wa'n-Nihal*, p. 150.
11. 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab* (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, p. 92.
12. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 446.
13. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 41.
14. 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, p. 294.
15. Muhammad Hadi Yusufi Gharawi, *Mawsu'ah at-Tarikh Islami*, 1st edition (Qum: Majma' al-Fikr al-Islami, 1417 AH), vol. 1, p. 410.
16. Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, *Manaqib Al Abi Talib*, vol. 3, p. 211. {Trans.}
17. Hafiz Nur ad-Din 'Ali ibn Abibakr Haythami, *Majma' az-Zawa'id* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr Li't-Tiba'ah wa'n-Nashr wa't-Tawzi', 1414 AH), vol. 9, p. 173.
18. Ibn Shahr Ashub, *Manaqib Al Abi Talib*, pp. 211-212.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
20. *Tarikh at-Tabari*, vol. 2, pp. 62-63; *Tarikh al-Kamil*, vol. 2, pp. 40-41; *Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal*, vol. 1, p. 111; *Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 13, pp. 210-212.
21. Sayyid Ja'far Murtada al-Amili, *Al-Ghadir wa'l-Mu'aridhun*, 3rd edition (Beirut: Dar as-Sirah, 1418 AH), pp. 62-66.
22. Muhajrun (lit. "Emigrants"): The Meccan Muslims who accompanied the Prophet (S) in his hijrah {emigration} to Medina. {Trans.}
23. Ansar (lit. "Helpers"): The Muslims of Medina who invited the Prophet (S) and Muslims of Mecca to migrate (hijrah) to Medina. {Trans.}
24. Zubayr ibn Bakkar. *Al-Akhbar al-Muwaffaqiyyat* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 580.
25. Zubayr ibn Bakkar. *Al-Akhbar al-Muwaffaqiyyat*, p. 581.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 580.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 592.
28. Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub Ibn Wadhah, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 128.
29. Taym is the tribe to which Abubakr belongs while 'Adi is the tribe of 'Umar.
30. *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 126.
31. 'Abd al-Husayn Amini, *Al-Ghadir fi'l-Kitab wa's-Sunnah wa'l-Adab* (Tehran: Dar al-Kitab al-Islamiyyah, 1366 AHS), vol. 1, p. 11; vol. 2, p. 39.  
See also Khwarazmi al-Maliki, *Al-Manaqib*, p. 80; Sibt ibn Jawzi al-Hanafi, *Tadhkirah Khawas al-Ummah*, p. 20; Ganji Shafi'i, *Kifayah at-Talib*, p. 170; and others. {Trans.}
32. Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir Baladhuri, *Insab al-Ashraf* (Beirut: Ma'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1394 AH), vol. 2, p. 396.
33. *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 126.
34. 'Izz ad-Din Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad Abi'l-Kiram Ibn Athir, *Asad al-Ghabah fi Ma'rifah as-Sahabah* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), vol. 3, p. 12; *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 126.
35. Baladhuri, *Insab al-Ashraf*, vol. 2, p. 97.
36. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1378 AH), vol. 1, p. 18.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Qahirah, 1385 AH), p. 122.
39. *Manaqib Al Abi Talib* (Qum: Mu'assaseh-ye Intisharat-e 'Allameh, n.d.), vol. 3, pp. 25-26.
40. 'Abd al-Husayn Amini, *Al-Ghadir fi'l-Kitab wa's-Sunnah wa'l-Adab*, vol. 1, pp. 14-16.
41. Baladhuri, *Insab al-Ashraf*, vol. 2, p. 109; *Akhtab Khwarazm, Al-Manaqib* (Najaf: Manshurat al-Matba'ah al-Haydariyyah, 1385 AH), pp. 59-60.
42. Baladhuri, *Insab al-Ashraf*, vol. 2, p. 312-313.

# Lesson 6: The Role of the Quraysh in the Event of Saqifah

In spite of the event in Ghadir Khumm and the efforts of the Prophet (S) for the succession of 'Ali ('a), the gathering in Saqifah took place. The command of God was not executed and the family of the Prophet (S) was confined at home. In this event, the role of the Quraysh must be pointed out. It is because the Quraysh were the people who wanted and succeeded in trampling upon the right of the Prophet's (S) progeny.

On many occasions, the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a) emphasizes the acts of oppression and injustice of the Quraysh and their endeavors in gaining access to the caliphate.<sup>1</sup> In one of his correspondence with Mu'awiyah, Imam al-Hasan ('a) also described in detail the role of the Quraysh in the Saqifah event, saying:

After the demise of the Prophet (S), the Quraysh considered themselves as the tribe and the most nearest to him, and with this proof, they sidetracked the other Arabs and took hold of the affair of caliphate. When we, the *Ahl al-Bayt* of Muhammad (S), advanced the proposition to them, they did not behave justly with us and they deprived us of our right.<sup>2</sup>

Imam al-Baqir ('a) thus also says to one of his companions:

What should we say about the oppression and injustice of the Quraysh against us, and our Shi'ah and supporters? The Messenger of Allah (S) passed away while the people were asked, "Who are the most preeminent of people?" Yet, the Quraysh turned away from us to such an extent that they changed the course of caliphate. They utilized our argument against the *Ansar* and assumed the caliphate one after the other. When it was returned to us, they broke their oath of allegiance and waged war against us...<sup>3</sup>

Yes, the Quraysh had behaved this way since long time ago, so much so that the people knew they would take possession of the caliphate. For this reason, the *Ansar* rushed to the Saqifah so as to prevent the Quraysh from obtaining power because they were a monopolistic people.

## **The Reasons behind the Quraysh's Enmity toward the Family of the Prophet (S)**

Now, this question is posed: Why did the Quraysh have enmity toward the family of the Prophet (S)? Did they not owe their religion and the worldly life to this family? Was it not through the blessings of this family that they had attained salvation from perdition? In answering these questions, we shall indicate some points:

### **1. The Quraysh's Ambition for Leadership**

During the period of *jahiliyyah* {pre-Islamic ignorance} the Quraysh had an excellent position among the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula. In this regard, Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani says: "The Arab tribes used to consider the Quraysh as superior in everything except poetry."<sup>4</sup> This status was attained through two means:

## a. Economic Clout

From the time of Hashim, the great grandfather of the Prophet (S), Quraysh had already started trading with neighboring lands such as Yemen, Sham, Palestine, Iraq, and Abyssinia. The Quraysh nobles had amassed legendary wealth under the aegis of this trade.<sup>5</sup> God, the Exalted, described this commerce as the source of the Quraysh's welfare and comfort, saying:

□ لِإِيلَافِ قُرَيْشٍ \* إِيلَافِهِمْ رِحْلَةَ الشِّتَاءِ وَالصَّيْفِ \* فَلْيَعْبُدُوا رَبَّ  
هَذَا الْبَيْتِ \* الَّذِي أَطْعَمَهُمْ مِنْ جُوعٍ وَآمَنَهُمْ مِنْ خَوْفٍ □

***"{In gratitude} for solidarity among Quraysh, their solidarity during winter and summer journeys, let them worship the Lord of this House, who has fed them {and saved them} from hunger, and secured them from fear."***<sup>6</sup>

## b. Spiritual Position

Due to the existence of the *Ka'bah*, the pilgrimage site of the Arab tribes in their territory, the Quraysh occupied a special spiritual position among the Arabs. Especially after the event of the Companions of the Elephant and the defeat of Abrahah<sup>7</sup> the honor of the Quraysh, the custodians of the *Ka'bah*, was further enhanced and this event turned to be in their favor.

They called themselves as *Al Allah* {Family of Allah}, *Jiran Allah* {Neighbors of Allah} and *Sakkan Haram Allah* {Residents of the House of Allah} and in doing so, they consolidated their religious position.<sup>8</sup>

As such, on account of sense of power, the Quraysh were inclined to exclusivity and they tried to prove their superiority. Since Mecca was a sort of capital for the Arabs, owing to the presence of the *Ka'bah*, and most of the denizens of the Arabian Peninsula used to come and go there, the Quraysh imposed their customs and traditions to those who came to Mecca.

One example regards the garment used when circumambulating the *Ka'bah* {*tawaf*}, which the pilgrims were required to purchase from them.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, whenever they sensed, during the advent of the Most Noble Messenger (S), that teachings of Islam are not compatible with their sense of exclusivity and superiority, they refrained from accepting the teachings vehemently opposing these precepts with all their might and utilizing all their power to annihilate Islam.

But the will of God was something else, and in the end, He made His prophet (S) prevail over them. From the 8th year after *hijrah*, a number of the Quraysh nobles went to Medina and joined the ranks of Muslims, but they did not desist from their hostility.

For instance, Hakam ibn Abi'l-'As used to ridicule the Prophet (S) and on account of which the Messenger of Allah (S) exiled him to Ta'if.<sup>10</sup> As the Quraysh were not able to confront the Prophet (S), they conceived a new plot and that was to confront his successor.

Time and again, 'Umar said to 'Abbas: "The Arabs did not want prophethood {*nubuwwah*} and caliphate {*khilafah*} to be confined to the Banu Hashim."[11](#)

The Quraysh also said:

If anyone from the Banu Hashim took the reign of caliphate, caliphate will never slip out of this family and it will never be relinquished to us. But if a non-member of the Banu Hashim assumed it, it will move around us and be assigned to all of us.[12](#)

The people at that time were also aware of this mentality of the Quraysh. As narrated by Bara' ibn 'Azib, "I was sympathetic toward the Banu Hashim. When the Holy Prophet (S) passed away, I was afraid that the Quraysh was thinking of taking the caliphate out of the Banu Hashim and I was at a loss to understand."[13](#)

The Quraysh's approval of the caliphate of Abubakr and 'Umar was motivated by their own benefits. For, at the time of his death, Abubakr said a number of Quraysh who have come to his support: "I know that each of you imagines that the caliphate shall belong to him, but I chose the best among you."[14](#)

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid says: "Quraysh was displeased by the prolongation of the caliphate of 'Umar, and 'Umar was aware of this issue and he was not permitting them to go out of Medina."[15](#)

## **2. Tribal Rivalry and Envy**

One of the dire spin-offs of the tribal structure was intense struggle among the tribes, and God, the Exalted, points to this issue in some *surahs* of the Qur'an such as *Surah at-Takathur*[16](#) and *Surah as-Saba'*.[17](#)

Since the period of *jahiliyyah*, there had been a power struggle between the Banu Hashim and the rest of Quraysh tribes. On the event of digging the Zamzam well by 'Abd al-Muttalib, the entire Quraysh tribes rallied together against the Banu Hashim and they were not ready to allow the honor of digging the Zamzam well to go to 'Abd al-Muttalib alone.[18](#) Therefore, Abu Jahl used to say:

We used to compete with the Banu Hashim over the possession of nobility. They fed people; we fed them too. They gave riding animals to people; we also gave. They gave money; we also gave. It was to such an extent that we closely competed with each other, and we became like two racing horses. Then, they said: "There emerged from among us a prophet who receives revelation from heaven." Now, how could we compete with him? By God! We shall never believe in him or recognize him.[19](#)

Umayyah ibn Abi's-Salt, one of the nobles and great men of Ta'if and one of the *Hunafa*,[20](#) did not embrace Islam for the same reason. For many years, he had been waiting for the promised prophet to come. But he had been waiting as such so as to acquire this position himself. After becoming aware of the beginning of the Prophet's (S) mission, he refrained from following him identifying the reason for this as shame of the women of Thaqif, saying: "For a long time, I was telling them: 'I shall be the promised prophet.' Now, how could I bear for them to see me following a youngster of Banu 'Abd al-Manaf (referring to the Prophet (S))?"[21](#)

Yet, despite their will and envy, God lead His Prophet (S) to triumph crushing their pomp. After the 8th year *hijrah*, when most Quraysh nobles had emigrated to Medina, their

irritation and envy toward the family of the Prophet (S) were mostly the result of instigation of these “new Muslims”.

Ibn Sa’d has narrated thus:

One of the *Muhajirun* said many times to ‘Abbas ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib: “Your father ‘Abd al-Muttalib and Ghaytalah, Banu Sahn’s female fortune-teller, were both in the fire. Finally, ‘Abbas was infuriated and slapped him. As a result, his nose bled. That person came to the Prophet (S) and made a complaint against ‘Abbas. The Messenger of Allah (S) asked his uncle ‘Abbas to explain and ‘Abbas complied. Thereafter, the Prophet (S) said to that man: “Why are you annoying ‘Abbas?”<sup>22</sup>

Due to his special position, ‘Ali (‘a) was the most envied by them. Imam al-Baqir (‘a) says: “Whenever the Holy Prophet (S) mentioned the virtues of ‘Ali (‘a) or recited a verse of the Qur’an which was revealed concerning him, some of those who were in the assembly would stand up and leave.”<sup>23</sup>

As such, the Holy Prophet (S) has been reported many times to have said: “He who is envious of ‘Ali is envious of me and he who is envious of me is an infidel {*kafir*}.”<sup>24</sup>

Even during the time of the Prophet (S), some would even express their envy and would actively annoy and disturb ‘Ali (‘a). Along this line, Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas has thus narrated: “Another person and I were in the mosque and we were abusing ‘Ali. While furious, the Prophet came to us and said: ‘Why do you annoy me? He who annoys ‘Ali annoys me’.”<sup>25</sup>

### **3. The Quraysh’s Enmity toward ‘Ali (‘a)**

Finally, the most important reason for depriving ‘Ali (‘a) was Quraysh’s opposition and enmity toward him as they had suffered heavy losses from him, for, in battles during the time of the Prophet (‘a), ‘Ali (‘a) had killed their unbelieving fathers, brothers and relatives. As Ya’qubi writes concerning the events on the initial days of the caliphate of ‘Ali (‘a):

All the people paid allegiance to him except three persons from among the Quraysh: Marwan ibn al-Hakam, Sa’id ibn al-‘As and Walid ibn ‘Uqbah. On their behalf, Walid said to Commander of the Faithful (‘a): “You have inflicted a blow to all of us. You slaughtered my father after (the Battle of) Badr. You killed the father of Sa’id in the battle and as Marwan’s father returned to Medina,<sup>26</sup> you complained to ‘Uthman.”<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, during ‘Ali’s (‘a) caliphate ‘Ubayd Allah ibn ‘Umar requested Imam al-Hasan (‘a) to visit him and he has appointment with him. When Imam al-Hasan (‘a) paid him a visit he said: “Your father has inflicted a blow to the first and last person of Quraysh and the people are hostile to him. Help me to depose of him and let you come in his stead.”<sup>28</sup>

When Ibn al-‘Abbas was asked why the Quraysh are hostile to ‘Ali (‘a), he said: “It is because ‘Ali sent the first among them to the fire {of hell} (by killing them in battles while in a state of unbelief {*kufr*}) and put to shame the last among them.”<sup>29</sup>

The rivals of ‘Ali (‘a) also kindled the fire of this displeasure of Quraysh toward him thus taking advantage of it. For instance, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab said to Sa’d ibn al-‘As: “You are staring at me in such a manner as if I killed your father, but I did not. It is ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib who has killed him!”<sup>30</sup>

After receiving a fatal blow at Ibn al-Muljim’s hand, ‘Ali (‘a) himself pointed out the

magnitude of Quraysh's enmity toward him in a poetical line:

تكم قريش تمنای لتقتلني فلا و ربك ما فازوا و ما ظفروا

"The Quraysh wished to kill me, but they did not succeed to do so."<sup>31</sup>

## Lesson 6: Summary

The role of the Quraysh in the event of Saqifah cannot be overlooked. It is because the Quraysh were the only people who could appropriate from themselves the right of the Prophet's (S) progeny. On many occasions, the Commander of the Faithful ('a) points to the wrongdoings he experienced from Quraysh. Quraysh's enmity toward the family of the Prophet (S) was motivated by the following:

1. Quraysh's ambition for leadership which prompted them to refuse to accept his invitation as such an acceptance was inconsistent with their leadership.
2. The existence of rivalry between Banu Hashim and the rest of Quraysh tribes and the latter's envy toward the former.
3. Quraysh's enmity toward 'Ali ('a) for inflicting major blows to them.

## Lesson 6: Questions

1. What was the role of the Quraysh in the event of Saqifah?
2. What were the reasons behind Quraysh's enmity toward the family of the Prophet (S)?
3. Explain the tribal rivalry and envy.
4. What was the nature of Quraysh's enmity toward 'Ali ('a)?

1. For instance, in Sermon 170 of Nahj al-Balaghah, Imam 'Ali ('a) says: "O my Allah! I seek Thy succor against the Quraysh and those who are assisting them, because they are denying me (the rights of) kinship, have lowered my high position, and are united in opposing me in the matter (of the caliphate) which is my right, and then they said, "Know that the rightful thing is that you have it and also that you may leave it." Nahj al-Balaghah (Faydh al-Islam), p. 555. Similarly, in his reply to the letter of his brother 'Aqil, Imam 'Ali ('a) says: "Do not take to heart the behavior of Quraysh. To talk about their skepticism, their enmity of Islam, their revolt against the cause of Allah and their desire to bring harm to me are a waste of time. They now are as much bent upon doing me injustice and fighting against me, as they were unanimously against the Holy Prophet (S). May Allah punish them for their sins! They have not even paid any consideration to the relationship that existed between them and me. They have deprived me of the estate of my mother's son." Ibid., Letter 36, p. 974.
2. Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, Maqatil at-Talibiyyin (Qum: Mansurat ash-Sharif ar-Radhi, 1416 AH), p. 65.
3. Kitab Salim ibn Qays al-'Amiri (Beirut: Mansurat Dar al-Funun, 1400 AH), p. 108; As-Sayyid 'Ali Khan ash-Shirazi, Ad-Darajat ar-Rafi'ah fi Tabaqat ash-Shi'ah (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Wafa', n.d.), p. 5.
4. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, Al-Aghani (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 74.
5. Mahdi Pishva'i, Tarikh-e Islam az Jahiliyyat ta Hajjah al-Wida' (1) (Arak: Islamic Azad University (Arak Branch), n.d.), pp. 50-51.
6. Surah al-Quraysh 106:1-4.
7. See Surah al-Fil 105 and its commentary. {Trans.}
8. Mahdi Pishva'i, Tarikh-e Islam az Jahiliyyat ta Hajjah al-Wida' (1), p. 52.
9. Muhammad Ibn Sa'd, At-Tabaqat al-Kubra (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1405 AH) vol. 1, p. 72.

10. 'Izz ad-Din Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad Abi'l-Kiram Ibn Athir, *Asad al-Ghabah fi Ma'rifah as-Sahabah* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 34.
11. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1378 AH), vol. 1, p. 194.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 51.
14. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 310.
15. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 159.
16. Surah at-Takathur 102:1-2:  
 □ رِيَالِيَا {and vainglory} دَرِيَاكُ {even} اَلْمَقَابِرِ □ “Rivalry {and vainglory} distracted you until you visited {even} the graves.”
17. Surah as-Saba' 34:35-37:  
 □ وَقَالُوا نَحْنُ اَكْثَرُ اَمْوَالًا وَاَوْلَادًا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِيْنَ \* فُلْ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ وَلَكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ \* وَمَا اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا اَوْلَادُكُمْ بِالَّتِيْ تُقَرَّبُكُمْ عِنْدَنَا زُلْفَىٰ اِلَّا مَنْ اٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا □  
 □ “And they say, ‘We have greater wealth and more children, and we will not be punished!’ Say, ‘Indeed my Lord expands the provision for whomever He wishes and He tightens it, but most people do not know.’ It is not your wealth, nor your children, that will bring you close to Us in nearness, except those who have faith and act righteously.”
18. Ibn Hashim, *As-Sirah an-Nabawiyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 143-144.
19. Ibid.
20. Hunafa (sing. Hanif): those Arabs during the period of pre-Islamic ignorance {jahiliyyah} who were not worshipping idols. {Trans.}
21. Abu Muhammad 'Abd Allah ibn Muslim ibn al-Qutaybah, *Al-Ma'arif*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Rida, 1415 AH), 60; Mahdi Pishva'i, *Tarikh-e Islam az Jahiliyyat ta Hajjah al-Wida'* (Arak: Islamic Azad University (Arak Branch), n.d.), p. 88.
22. Muhammad Ibn Sa'd, *At-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, vol. 4, p. 24.
23. Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, *Manaqib Al Abi Talib* (Qum: Mu'assasah Intisharat-e 'Allameh, n.d.), vol. 3, p. 214.
24. Ibid., pp. 213-214.
25. Ibid., p. 211.
26. Due to certain grave offenses, Marwan's father, Hakam ibn al-'As, was among the people of Banu Umayyah who were banished from Medina at the Prophet's (S) orders. During the 'Uthman's caliphate, a relative of his, he was allowed to return to Medina and rally around him. For details, see inter alia *Mustadrak al-Hakim*, vol. 4, p. 481; *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, vol. 16, p. 197; *Tafsir al-Fa'iq Zamakhshari*, vol. 2, p. 352; *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 4, p. 159; *Tafsir al-Kabir*, vol. 7, p. 491; *Asad al-Ghabah of Ibn Athir*, vol. 2, p. 34, *An-Nihayah of Ibn Athir* (Egypt), vol. 3, p. 23; *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 2, p. 55; *Tafsir Nayshaburi on the marginal note of Tabari*, vol. 26, p. 13, *Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah*, p. 108. {Trans.}
27. Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 178.
28. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 1, p. 498.
29. Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, *Manaqib Al Abi Talib*, vol. 3, p. 220.
30. Muhammad Ibn Sa'd, *At-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, vol. 5, p. 31.
31. Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, *Manaqib Al Abi Talib*, vol. 3, p. 312.

## Lesson 7: The Silence of the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a)

Now, let us examine why after the event of Saqifah and the commencement of Abubakr's rule, 'Ali ('a) did not insist on claiming his indisputable right, and why after obtaining certainty on the ineffectiveness of some months of arguments and proofs, he did not resort to armed struggle.

In view of the fact that a number of the Prophet's (S) great Companions were his staunch supporters and that the common Muslims had also no opposition to him, it can be said in general that the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a) took into account the interest of Islam and the Muslims and preferred to keep silent. As he ('a) says in his *Khutbah ash-Shaqshaqiyyah*,

فَسَدَلْتُ دُونَهَا تَوْبًا، وَطَوَيْتُ عَنْهَا كَشْحًا ، وَطَلَفْتُ أُرْتِي بَيْنَ  
 أَنْ أُصُولَ يَدِ جَدَّاءَ ، أَوْ أَصِيرَ عَلَى طَخِيَةِ عَمِيَاءَ، يَهْرَمُ فِيهَا  
 الْكَبِيرُ، وَيَشْيِبُ فِيهَا الصَّغِيرُ، وَيَكْدَحُ فِيهَا مُؤْمِنٌ حَتَّى يَلْقَى رَبَّهُ.  
 قَرَأَيْتُ أَنَّ الصَّبْرَ عَلَى هَاتَا أَحَجَى ، فَصَبَرْتُ وَفِي الْعَيْنِ قَدَى،  
 وَفِي الْحَلْقِ شَجَا ، أَرَى تُرَاثِي نَهْبًا.

I put a curtain against the caliphate and kept myself detached from it. Then I began to think whether I should assault or endure calmly the blinding darkness of tribulations wherein the grown-up are made feeble and the young grow old and the true believer acts under strain till he meets Allah (on his death). I found that endurance thereon was wiser. So I adopted patience although there was pricking in the eye and suffocation (of mortification) in the throat. I watched the plundering of my inheritance...<sup>1</sup>

Of course, keeping ‘Ali’s (‘a) speech in view, other secondary factors concerning his silence can be pointed out.

## 1. The Discord among Muslims

The Commander of the Faithful (‘a) says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَّا قَبَضَ نَبِيَّهُ اسْتَأْتَرَتْ عَلَيْنَا قُرَيْشٌ بِالْأَمْرِ وَدَفَعْنَا عَنْ  
 حَقِّ نَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِهِ مِنَ النَّاسِ كَافَّةً قَرَأَيْتُ أَنَّ الصَّبْرَ عَلَى ذَلِكَ  
 أَفْضَلُ مِنْ تَفْرِيقِ كَلِمَةِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَ سَفْكَ دِمَائِهِمْ وَ النَّاسُ  
 حَدِيثُ عَهْدٍ بِالْإِسْلَامِ وَالَّذِينَ يُمَخَّضُ مَخْضَ الْوَطْبِ، يُفْسِدُهُ أَدْنَى  
 وَهْنٍ وَ يَعْكسه أَقْلٌ خُلْفٍ.

When God took the soul of His Prophet, the Quraysh self-centeredly considered themselves superior to us and deprived us—who were the most deserving for the leadership of the *ummah*—of our own rights. But I saw that patience and forbearance with respect to this affair is better than the dissension of Muslims and shedding of their blood. It is because the people then had newly embraced Islam and the religion was like a goatskin full of milk which has frothed and the least sluggishness and negligence would spoil it and the most trivial difference would turn it upside down.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The Danger Posed by the Apostates {murtaddin}

After the demise of the Prophet (S), a large number of the Arab tribes that had accepted Islam during the last years of the Prophet’s (S) life turned back from the religion and became apostate, and this danger always seriously threatened Medina. As such, in order not to weaken the government in Medina in front of them, ‘Ali (‘a) was forced to keep silent.

'Ali ('a) says:

قَوَالِهِ مَا كَانَ يُلْقَى فِي رُوعِي، وَلَا يَخْطُرُ بِنَالِي، أَنْ الْعَرَبَ  
تُزْعِجُ هَذَا الْأَمْرَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ عَنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ، وَلَا  
أَنْهُمْ مَنَحُوهُ عَنِّي مِنْ بَعْدِهِ فَمَا رَاعَنِي إِلَّا انْتِيَالُ النَّاسِ عَلَيَّ  
فُلَانَ يُبَايِعُونَهُ، فَأَمْسَكْتُ يَدِي حَتَّى رَأَيْتُ رَاجِعَةَ النَّاسِ قَدْ  
رَجَعَتْ عَنِ الْإِسْلَامِ، يَدْعُونَ إِلَى مَحْقِ دِينِ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ  
وَآلِهِ فَخَشِيتُ إِنْ لَمْ أَنْصُرِ الْإِسْلَامَ وَآهْلَهُ أَنْ أَرَى فِيهِ تَلْمَازًا أَوْ  
هَدْمًا، تَكُونُ الْمُصِيبَةُ بِهِ عَلَيَّ أَكْبَرًا مِنْ قُوَّةِ وَلَايَتِكُمْ الَّتِي إِنَّمَا  
هِيَ مَتَاعٌ أَيَّامٍ وَقَلِيلٍ، يَزُولُ مِنْهَا مَا كَانَ، كَمَا يَزُولُ السَّرَابُ، أَوْ  
كَمَا يَتَفَشَّعُ السَّحَابُ، فَتَهَضَّتْ فِي تِلْكَ الْأَحْدَاثِ حَتَّى انزَاحَ  
الْبَاطِلُ وَزَهَقَ وَاطْمَأَنَّ الدِّينُ وَتَنَهَّنَا.

I swear by Allah that at that juncture it could not even be imagined that the Arabs would snatch the seat of the caliphate from the family and descendants of the Holy Prophet (S) and that they would be swearing the oath of allegiance for the caliphate to a different person. At every stage, I kept myself aloof from that struggle of supremacy and power-politics till I found the heretics had openly taken to heresy and schism and were trying to undermine and ruin the religion preached by our Holy Prophet (S).

I felt afraid that, even after seeing and recognizing the evil, if I did not stand up to help Islam and the Muslims it would be a worse calamity to me than my losing authority and power over you, which was only a transient and short-lived affair. Therefore, when I stood up amidst the sweeping surge of innovations and schism the dark clouds of heresy dispersed, falsehood and schism were crushed and the religion was saved.<sup>3</sup>

Imam al-Hasan ('a) also writes in a letter to Mu'awiyah: "Since we were afraid that the hypocrites and the other Arab parties could render a blow to Islam, we ignored our right."<sup>4</sup>

Even a number of those in whose heart faith had not entered, as testified by the Qur'an, and had accepted Islam out of compulsion, as demanded by their inner hypocrisy, they did not accept the guardianship {*wilayah*} of the Commander of the Faithful ('a). They even complained about this guardianship during the Prophet's (S) lifetime. On the commentary of the Qur'anic verse, "An asker asked for a punishment bound to befall,"<sup>5</sup> Tabarsi has thus narrated from Imam as-Sadiq ('a):

After the event of Ghadir Khumm, a nomadic Arab by the name of Nu'man ibn al-Harith al-Fihri came to the Prophet (S) and said: "You commanded us to testify that there is no deity but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah. You ordered us to perform *jihad*, fast, pray, and pay *zakah* and we obeyed. But you are not satisfied with all this and you raised your cousin by your hand and imposed him upon us as our master by saying "Ali is the master {*mawla*} of whom I am *mawla*."

Is this imposition from Allah or from you?" The Messenger of Allah (S) said: "By Allah who is the only deity! This is from Allah, the Mighty and the Glorious." On hearing this reply Nu'man ibn al-Harith turned back and proceeded toward his she-camel saying: "O Allah! If what Muhammad said is correct then fling on us a stone from the sky and subject us to severe pain and torture." He had not reached his she-camel when Allah flung at him a stone which struck him on his head, penetrated his body and left him dead. It was on this occasion that Allah, the Exalted, caused to descend this verse.[6](#)

In the event of Saqifah, these people were also siding with the Quraysh. As narrated by Abu Mikhnaf, a number of nomadic Arabs, who had to the vicinity of Medina for transactions and were present in Medina during the demise of the Prophet (S), had actual physical role in urging the people to pay allegiance to Abubakr.[7](#)

### **3. The Safety of the Progeny of the Prophet (S)**

The original inheritors of the Prophet (S) and the upright adherents of the religion are the members of the Prophet's (S) family. They were the partner of the Qur'an, the second previous legacy of the Prophet (S) and the interpreters of the religious laws, and they showed to the people the pristine and genuine Islam after the Prophet's (S) demise. Their extinction would be an irreparable loss. The Commander of the Faithful said:

**فَتَنظَرْتُ فَإِذَا لَيْسَ لِي مُعِينٌ إِلَّا أَهْلُ بَيْتِي فَصَنَنْتُ بِهِمْ عَنِ  
الْمَوْتِ.**

"Then, I looked and found that there is no supporter for me except my family {*ahla bayti*}, so I refrained from thrusting them unto death."[8](#)

### **The Concrete Political Formation of the Shi'ah after the Event of Saqifah**

Although 'Ali ('a) distanced himself from the political scene with the formation of Saqifah, the Shi'ah in the form of a particular group with a particular political orientation was formed after the event in Saqifah and were collectively or individually defending the truthfulness of 'Ali ('a).

They first gathered in Fatimah's ('a) house and refused to pay allegiance (to Abubakr) as they faced the onslaught of the Saqifah architects.[9](#) But since 'Ali ('a) was not pleased to act violently against them for the sake of the preservation of Islam, he challenged them to a debate and argumentation. Bara' ibn 'Azib thus narrates:

I missed the cases regarding Saqifah. As I went to the Mosque of the Prophet (S) {*Masjid an-Nabi*}, I saw Miqdad, 'Ubadah ibn Samit, Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr, Hudhayfah, and Abu'l-Haytham ibn Tayyiham were talking about the event that took place after the demise of the Prophet (S). He went together to the house of Ubayy ibn Ka'b who said that his view is the same with whatever Hudhayfah would say.[10](#)

Finally, on that Friday, the Shi'ah of 'Ali ('a) went to the Prophet's (S) Mosque to debate

with and condemn Abubakr. In this regard, Tabarsi thus narrates:

Aban ibn Taghlib asks Imam as-Sadiq ('a): "May I be your ransom! When Abubakr sat in the place of the Messenger of Allah (S), was there anyone who protested?" The Imam ('a) said: "Yes; there were twelve persons from among the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar* such as Khalid ibn Sa'id; Salman al-Farsi; Abu Dharr; Miqdad; 'Ammar; Buraydah Aslami; Abu'l-Haytham ibn Tayyihan; Sahl ibn Hanif; 'Uthman ibn Hanif; Khuzaymah ibn Thabit Dhu'sh-Shahadatayn; Ubayy ibn Ka'b; and Abu Ayyub al-Ansari.

They gathered in a certain place and discussed together the event in Saqifah and were thinking of a solution. Some said: "We shall go to the mosque and let Abubakr come down from the pulpit. Some others did not agree with this idea, considering it unadvisable. They then came to 'Ali ('a) and said: "We will go and pull Abubakr down from the pulpit."

The Imam ('a) said: "They are many. Once you go ahead with this and act violently, they will come and say: "You pay allegiance otherwise we shall kill you." Instead, you have to go to him and tell him what you have heard from the Messenger of Allah (S) and this is all of the proof. They came to the mosque and the first person among them who spoke was Khalid ibn Sa'id al-Umawi, saying: "O Abubakr! You are aware that after the Battle of Banu Nadhir, the Holy Prophet (S) said: 'You have to know and keep my will. After me, 'Ali shall be my caliph and successor among you. My Lord has thus ordered me'." After him, Salman stood up and made his famous statement in Persian language: "*Kardid, nakardid.*"<sup>11</sup>

After their argumentation, Abubakr descended from the pulpit, went to his house and did not go out for three days until such time that Khalid ibn Walid, Salim Mawla Abu Hudhayfah and Mu'adh ibn Jabal along with many others went to Abubakr's house and gave him will power. 'Umar went along with this group to the mosque entrance and said: "O Shi'ah and supporters of 'Ali! Be aware that if you would utter these words again, I will behead you."<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, a number of those Shi'ah from among the Companions who, at the time of the Prophet's (S) demise, were on a mission outside Medina, such as Khalid ibn Sa'id and his two brothers, Aban and 'Amru, protested against Abubakr after their return from their place of mission. As a sign of protest, all the three brothers did not continue their function which was collection of *zakah*, saying: "We shall not work for someone else after the Prophet (S)."<sup>13</sup>

In addressing 'Ali ('a), Khalid ibn Sa'id said: "Come forward so that I could pay my allegiance to you as you are the most deserving person in the position of Muhammad (S)."<sup>14</sup>

Throughout the 25 years of the three caliphs' rule, The Shi'ah from among the Companions were always introducing 'Ali ('a) as the caliph and commander of the faithful in truth. 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud used to say, "Based on the injunction of the Qur'an, there are four caliphs, viz. Adam (Adam), Dawud (David), Harun (Aaron), and 'Ali."<sup>15</sup>

Hudhayfah also used to say: "Anyone who wants to witness the Commander of the Faithful in truth shall meet 'Ali."<sup>16</sup>

Harith ibn Khazraj, the standard-bearer of the *Ansar* in the battles of the Prophet (S), used to narrate that the Holy Prophet (S) said to 'Ali ('a): "The inhabitants of the heavens have called you 'Commander of the Faithful' {*Amir al-Mu'minin*}'."<sup>17</sup>

Ya'qubi writes:

After the six-man council proposed by 'Umar and the selection of 'Uthman, some were showing inclination toward 'Ali and speaking against 'Uthman. A certain person thus narrates: "I entered the Mosque of the Prophet {*Masjid an-Nabi*}. I saw a man sitting on his two knees so impatiently as if he was shouldering the entire world, and while being taken by them, he was addressing the people: 'How surprising the Quraysh are!

They took out the caliphate from the family of the Prophet while among this family was the first believer, cousin of the Messenger of Allah, the most learned and knowledgeable of people about the religion of God, and most insightful of people to the right course and the Straight Path {*Sirat al-Mustaqim*}. They took the caliphate from the Imam of guidance, the guided {*mahdi*}, pure {*tahir*} and chaste {*naqi*}, and their objective was not for the reformation of the *ummah* and religiosity. They rather preferred the world to the hereafter'."

The narrator says: "I approached and asked him: 'May Allah be merciful to you! Who are you? And who is the person you are talking about?' He said: 'I am Miqdad ibn 'Amru and that person (I am referring to) is 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.' I said: 'You stage an uprising and I will help you.' Miqdad said: 'My son, this work cannot be done by just one or two persons'."<sup>18</sup>

During the caliphate of 'Uthman, Abu Dharr al-Ghaffari also used to stand by the door of the Mosque of the Prophet (S) and say:

Anyone who knows me has recognized me and anyone who does not know me should then know that I am Jundab ibn Junadah, Abu Dharr al-Ghaffari... Muhammad (S) is the inheritor of the knowledge of Adam (Adam) ('a) and all virtues of the prophets ('a), and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) is the successor of Muhammad (S) and the inheritor of his knowledge.

O confounded and wandering *ummah* after the Prophet (S)! Be aware that if you would have made superior the person who had been made superior by God and have fixed the *wilayah* {guardianship} on the family of your Prophet, blessings from above and below will be bestowed on you and every matter you would want the information about which will be obtained from them from the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet. But now, you did something else, you would see the consequences of what you have done.<sup>19</sup>

Yes, the group of the first Shi'ah and its formation had been initiated by the great Companions of the Prophet (S), and through these same Shi'ah from the Companions that Shi'ism was transferred to the next generation of the *Tabi'un* {Followers}. And it was the result of their efforts that at the end of the rule of 'Uthman, from the political perspective, the ground for 'Ali's ('a) caliphate was paved.

## **Lesson 7: Summary**

1. Hadrat 'Ali ('a) overlooked his right and kept silent for the sake and interest of Islam. Keeping in view his statements in this regard, the following factors can be identified:

- a. The discord among Muslims;
- b. The danger posed by the apostates {*murtaddin*}; and
- c. The safety of the progeny of the Prophet ('a).

2. After the event of Saqifah, Shi'ah was formed as a special group with a particular political orientation, and they individually and collectively defended the truthfulness of 'Ali ('a).

They gathered in the house of Fatimah ('a), interpolated Abubakr in the mosque, and for the period of 25 years, they used to persistently introduce 'Ali ('a) as the rightful caliph to the people.

## **Lesson 7: Questions**

1. List the reasons for the silence of the Commander of the Faithful ('a).

2. After the event of Saqifah, at what stage were the Shi'ah in?

1. Najh al-Balaghah (Faydh al-Islam), Sermon 3 {Khutbah ash-Shaqshaqiyyah}.
2. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 1, p. 308.
3. Najh al-Balaghah (Faydh al-Islam), Letter 62.
4. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, Maqatil at-Talibiyin (Qum: Mansurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 65.
5. Surah al-Ma'arij 70:1.
6. Abi 'Ali al-Fadhl ibn al-Hasan Tabarsi, Majma' al-Bayan, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah Li't-Tiba'ah wa'n-Nashr, 1408 AH), vol. 10, p. 530.
7. Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn an-Nu'man Mufid, Al-Jamal, 2nd edition (Qum: Maktab al-A'lam al-Islami (Central Publication), 1416 AH), pp. 118-119.
8. Najh al-Balaghah (Faydh al-Islam), Sermon 26.
9. Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, 1st edition (Qum: Mansurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 126.
10. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 2, p. 51.
11. Kardid, nakardid: Literally, "You did; you didn't." That is, "You determined the caliphate but you did not do the right thing."
12. Abi Mansur Ahmad ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib Tabarsi, Al-Ihtijaj (Tehran: Intisharat-e Usweh, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 186-200.
13. 'Izz ad-Din Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad Abi'l-Kiram Ibn Athir, Asad al-Ghabah fi Ma'rifah as-Sahabah (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 83.
14. Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub Ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, 1st edition (Beirut: Mansurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1413 AH), vol. 2, p. 11.
15. Regarding Adam (Adam) ('a), God, the Exalted, says: "Indeed I am going to set a viceroy on earth" Surah al-Baqarah 2:30. Concerning Dawud (David) ('a), God, the Exalted, states: "Indeed We have made you a vicegerent on the earth" Surah Sad 38:26. With regard to Harun (Aaron) ('a), God, the Exalted, says through the tongue of Musa (Moses) ('a): "Be my successor among my people" Surah al-A'raf 7:142. As regards 'Ali ('a), God, the Exalted, says: "Allah has promised those of you who have faith and do righteous deeds that He will surely make them successors in the earth, just as He made those who were before them successors" Surah an-Nur 24:55. Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, Manaqib Al Abi Talib (Beirut: Dar al-Adhwa', 1405 AH), vol. 3, pp. 77-78.
16. Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir Baladhuri, Insab al-Ashraf (Beirut: Ma'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1394 AH), vol. 3, p. 115.
17. Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, Manaqib Al Abi Talib (Qum: Mu'assasah Intisharat-e 'Allameh, n.d.), vol. 3, p. 54.
18. Ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 57.
19. Ibid., p. 67.

## **Lesson 8: The Shi'ah among the Companions {sahabah}**

We said earlier that the first person to call the followers of 'Ali ('a) as "Shi'ah" was the

receiver of the divine revelation, Muhammad al-Mustafa (S). During the time of the Holy Prophet (S) a number of his Companions were known as “Shi’ah of ‘Ali”. In *Khatat ash-Sham*, Muhammad Kird ‘Ali thus writes:

During the period of the Holy Prophet (S), a number of the great Companions was known for their fellowship and friendship with ‘Ali such as Salman al-Farsi who used to say: “We pledged allegiance to the Messenger of Allah (S) that we would be the well-wishers of Muslims and that we follow and befriend ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib”; and Abu Sa’id al-Khudri who used to say: “We were ordered five things, of which the people acted upon the four but have abandoned one of them.”

He was asked: “What are the four?” He replied: “Prayer, *zakat*, fasting in the month of Ramadan, and *Hajj*” He was again asked: “What is the thing that the people abandoned?” He replied: “The *wilayah* {mastership} of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib.”

The person asked: “Is this also obligatory like the others?” {Among the Shi’ah were} also Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari, ‘Ammar ibn Yasir, Khadiqah ibn Yaman, Khuzaymah ibn Thabit Dhu’sh-Shahadatayn, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, Khalid ibn Sa’id, and Qays ibn Sa’d.[1](#)

Regarding the pioneering Shi’ah, Ibn Abi’l-Hadid also says, thus:

The talk on the superiority of ‘Ali is an old subject in which a great number of the Companions and Followers {*tabi’un*} believed. Among the Companions were ‘Ammar; Miqdad; Abu Dharr; Salman; Jabir; Ubayy ibn Ka’b; Hudhayfah; Buraydah; Abu Ayyub; Sahl ibn Hunayf; ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf; Abu’l-Haytham ibn Tayyihan; Khuzaymah ibn Thabit; Abu’t-Tufayl ‘Amir ibn Wathilah; ‘Abbas ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib; and all members of the Banu Hashim and Banu Muttalib. At the beginning, Zubayr also believed in ‘Ali’s superiority. They were a few from among the Banu Umayyah such as Khalid ibn Sa’id and later on, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz.[2](#)

In *Ad-Darajat ar-Rafi’ah fi Tabaqat ash-Shi’ah*, Sayyid ‘Ali Khan ash-Shirazi has allotted a certain part to the Shi’ah among the Companions. He has first mentioned the members of the Banu Hashim and then the other Shi’ah among the Companions. In the first section which is related to the Shi’ah Companions among the members of the Banu Hashim, it is thus stated:

Abu Talib; ‘Abbas ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib; ‘Abd Allah ibn al-‘Abbas; Fadhl ibn al-‘Abbas; ‘Ubayd Allah ibn al-‘Abbas; Qithm ibn al-‘Abbas; ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn al-‘Abbas; Tamam ibn al-‘Abbas; ‘Aqil ibn Abi Talib; Abu Sufyan ibn Harith ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib; Nawfal ibn Harith ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib; ‘Abd Allah ibn Zubayr ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib;

‘Abd Allah ibn Ja’far; ‘Awn ibn Ja’far; Muhammad ibn Ja’far; Rabi’ah ibn Harith ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib; Tufayl ibn Harith ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib; Mughayrah ibn Nawfal ibn Harith ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib; ‘Abbas ibn ‘Utbah ibn Abi Lahab; ‘Abd al-Muttalib ibn Rabi’ah ibn Harith ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib; and Ja’far ibn Abi Sufyan ibn Harith ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib.[3](#)

In the second section (the non-Banu Hashim Shi’ah among the Companions), Sayyid ‘Ali Khan has thus recorded:

‘Amr ibn Abi Salmah; Salman al-Farsi; Miqdad ibn Aswad; Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari; ‘Ammar ibn Yasir; Hudhayfah ibn Yaman; Khuzaymah ibn Thabit; Abu Ayyub al-Ansari; Abu’l-Haytham Malik ibn Tayyihan; Ubayy ibn Ka’b; Sa’d ibn ‘Ubadah; Qays ibn Sa’d; Sa’d ibn Sa’d ibn

'Ubadah; Abu Qutadah al-Ansari; 'Udayy ibn Hatam; 'Ubadah ibn Samit; Bilal ibn Rubah; Abu'l-Humara'; Abu Rafi'; Hashim ibn 'Utbah ibn Abi Waqqas;

'Uthman ibn Hunayf; Sahl ibn Hunayf; Hakim ibn Jablah al-'Adwi; Khalid ibn Sa'id ibn al-'As; Walid ibn Jabir ibn Talim at-Ta'i; Sa'd ibn Malik ibn Sinan; Bara' ibn Malik al-Ansari; Ibn Hasib Aslami; Ka'b ibn 'Amru al-Ansari; Rafa'ah ibn Rafi' al-Ansari; Malik ibn Rabi'ah Sa'idi; 'Uqbah ibn 'Umar ibn Tha'labah al-Ansari; Hind ibn Abi Halah at-Tamimi;

Ju'dah ibn Hubayrah; Abu 'Umrah al-Ansari; Mas'ud ibn al-Aws; Nadhlah ibn 'Ubayd; Abu Burzah Aslami; Mardas ibn Malik Aslami; Musur ibn Shidad Fahri; 'Abd Allah ibn Budayl al-Khaza'i; Hujr ibn 'Adi al-Kindi; 'Amru ibn al-Humq al-Khaza'i; Usamah ibn Zayd; Abu Layla al-Ansari; Zayd ibn al-Arqam; and Bara ibn 'Azib Awsi.<sup>4</sup>

The author of *Rijal al-Burqa* has also mentioned the Shi'ah and supporters of 'Ali ('a) among the Companions of the Prophet (S) in a certain part of his book, thus:

Salman, Miqdad, Abu Dharr, and 'Ammar, and after these four persons, Abu Layla, Shabir, Abu 'Umrah al-Ansari, and Abu Sinan al-Ansari, and after these four persons, Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari; Abu Sa'id al-Ansari whose name is Sa'd ibn Malik al-Khazraji; Abu Ayyub al-Ansari al-Khazraji; Ubayy ibn Ka'b al-Ansari;

Abu Burzah Aslami al-Khaza'i whose name is Nadhlah ibn 'Ubayd Allah; Zayd ibn al-Arqam al-Ansari; Buraydah ibn Hasib Aslami; 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Qays whose epithet Safinah Rakib Asad; 'Abd Allah ibn Salam; 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib; 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas; 'Abd Allah ibn Ja'far; Mughayrah ibn Nawfal ibn Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib; Hudhayfah al-Yaman who is included among the *Ansar*; Usamah ibn Zayd; Anas ibn Malik; Abu'l-Humra'; Bara' ibn 'Azib al-Ansari; and 'Arafah Azdi.<sup>5</sup>

A number of the Shi'ah '*ulama*' and *rijali* scholars believes that the Shi'ah among the Companions were more than this number. For example, Shaykh al-Mufid regards all the Companions who have pledged allegiance to 'Ali ('a) in Medina especially those Companions who accompanied him in the battles as among the Shi'ah and those who believed in his Imamate {*imamah*}. In the Battle of Jamal (Camel), one thousand five hundred Companions were present.<sup>6</sup>

It is thus recorded in *Rijal Kashi*:

Among the pioneering Companions who traversed the path of truth and believed in the Imamate of the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a) are the following: Abu'l-Haytham ibn Tayyihan; Abu Ayyub; Khuzaymah ibn Thabit; Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah; Zayd ibn al-Arqam; Abu Sa'id Sahl ibn Hunayf; Bara' ibn Malik; 'Uthman ibn Hunayf; 'Ubadah ibn Samit, and after them are Qays ibn Sa'd; 'Udayy ibn Hatam; 'Amru ibn Hamq; 'Umran ibn Hasin; Buraydah Aslami; and others who are described as "*basharun kathir*" {many people}.<sup>7</sup>

In the marginal note of *Rijal Kashi* on the definition and explanation of the term "*basarun kathir*", the late Mirdamad says: "It means many people from among the prominent Companions and leading Followers {*tabi'un*}."<sup>8</sup>

Sayyid Muhsin Amin has also said:

Be aware that many of the Companions believed in the Imamate of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) to count them is not possible for us to do and the narrators of traditions have consensus of opinion that most of the Companions accompanied and sided with the

Commander of the Faithful ('a) in the battles.[9](#)

In one of his letters to Mu'awiyah, Muhammad ibn Abubakr identifies the presence of the Companions of the Prophet (S) at the side of 'Ali ('a) as one of the signs of his rightfulness.[10](#)

Muhammad ibn Abi Hudhayfah, a loyal supporter of 'Ali ('a) who was a maternal cousin of Mu'awiyah, and owing to his friendship with 'Ali ('a), languished in the prison cell of Mu'awiyah and finally died there, thus addressed Mu'awiyah in one of their conversation:

From the moment I have known you, whether during the pre-Islamic period of ignorance {*yawm al-jahiliyyah*} or during the advent of Islam, you have never changed and Islam has not been added to you. And one of the manifestations of this fact is that you are condemning me for loving 'Ali notwithstanding the fact that all the ascetics and devoted worshippers of the *Muhajirun* and *Ansar* are in his company while in your company are perverts and hypocrites.[11](#)

Of course, not all of those who were enlisted in the army of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) can be considered Shi'ah. But since he ('a) was the official caliph, they accompanied him ('a). This statement can be said to be correct with respect to the other people, for the Companions who accompanied him ('a) were always assisting the Imam ('a) in proving his rightfulness. As Salim ibn al-Qays has narrated,

The Commander of the Faithful mounted the pulpit in Siffin and everyone including the *Muhajirun* and *Ansar* enlisted in the army gathered around the pulpit. The Imam praised and glorified Allah and then said: "O people! My virtues and merits are more than that which can be counted. It is enough to say that when the Messenger of Allah (S) was asked about the verse, "*And the Foremost Ones are the foremost ones: they are the ones brought near {to Allah}*",[12](#) he (S) said: 'God has revealed this verse about the prophets and their successors {*awsiya'*}.

I am superior to all prophets and messengers and my successor {*wasi*} 'Ali ibn Abi Talib is the foremost among the successors'." At that moment, seventy persons from among the Companions who participated in the Battle of Badr, most of whom were from the *Ansar*, stood up and testified that they have heard the same thing from the Messenger of Allah (S).[13](#)

## **Lesson 8: Summary**

The pioneering Shi'ah were prominent Companions of the Prophet (S). Muhammad Kird-'Ali in *Khatat ash-Sham* has recorded that a number of the Companions were known as the "Shi'ah of 'Ali" during the lifetime of the Prophet (S).

Sayyid 'Ali Khan ash-Shirazi in *Ad-Darajat ar-Rafi'ah fi Tabaqat ash-Shi'ah* has examined the Shi'ah among the Companions in two sections: the Shi'ah Companions from among the Banu Hashim, and the Shi'ah Companions who were not members of the Banu Hashim.

The writer of *Rijal al-Burqa* has also allotted a certain part of his book to the supporters of 'Ali ('a) from among the Companions of the Prophet (S).

In *Al-Jamal*, Shaykh al-Mufid regards all the Companions who accompanied and sided with 'Ali ('a) in the battles as Shi'ah.

In *Rijal Kashi*, after enumerating the Shi'ah from among the Companions, Shaykh at-Tusi thus says: "A large number believed in the Imamate of 'Ali ('a)."

The supporters of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) also used to point out to Mu'awiyah the presence of the Companions of the Prophet ('a) on the side of 'Ali ('a) as one of the indications of his righteousness.

## **Lesson 8: Questions**

1. Explain something about the Shi'ah among the Companions.
2. How many of the Companions were present on the side of 'Ali ('a) at the Battle of Jamal (Camel)?

1. Muhammad Kird 'Ali, *Khatat ash-Sham*, 3rd edition (Damascus: Maktabah an-Nuri, 1403 AH/1983), vol. 6, p. 245.
2. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1378 AH), vol. 2, pp. 221-222.
3. Sayyid 'Ali Khan ash-Shirazi, *Ad-Darajat ar-Rafi'ah fi Tabaqat ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Wafa', n.d.), pp. 41-197.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 197-455.
5. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid Burqa, *Rijal al-Burqa* (n.p.: Mu'assasah al-Qayyum, n.d.), pp. 31-39.
6. Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn an-Nu'man Shaykh al-Mufid, *Al-Jamal*, 2nd edition (Qum: Maktab al-A'lam al-Islami (Publication Center), 1416 AH), pp. 109-110.
7. Abi Ja'far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn 'Ali Shaykh at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi) (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt at-Turath, 1404 AH), vol. 1, pp. 181-188.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
9. Sayyid Muhsin Amin, *A'yan ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar at-Ta'aruf Li'l-Matbu'at, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 24.
10. Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir Baladhuri, *Insab al-Ashraf* (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lam Li'l-Matbu'at, 1394 AH), vol. 2, p. 395.
11. Shaykh at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi), p. 278.
12. Surah al-Waqi'ah 56:10-11.
13. Salim ibn Qays al-'Amiri (Beirut: Manshur Dar al-Funun Li't-Taba'ah wa'n-Nashr wa't-Tawzi', 1400 AH), p. 186; Abi Mansur Ahmad ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib at-Tabarsi (*Al-Ihtijaj*. Tehran: Intisharat-e Usweh, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 472.

## **Part 3: The Periods of Historical Development of the Shi'ah**

### **Lesson 9: The Periods of Historical Development of the Shi'ah**

#### **1. The Shi'ah during the Period of the First Four Caliphs**

The Shi'ah during the reigns of the first three caliphs, viz. Abubakr, Umar and 'Uthman, has distinctive features which can be expressed in the following manner:

1. During the reigns of these three caliphs, the Shi'ah were subjected to many pressures with the exception of the initial days after the event of Saqifah. It can even be said that many of the Shi'ah were deprived of key positions on account of their being Shi'ah.[1](#)

2. After the event of Saqifah which brought about dichotomy on the issue of leadership over the Muslims and led to the division of Muslims into two main groups, the Ahl as-Sunnah were referring to the caliphs of the time on the scientific, jurisprudential, ideological, and other problems, whereas the Shi'ah were referring to 'Ali ('a).

The Shi'ah's practice of referring to 'Ali ('a) regarding scientific issues, jurisprudence and other Islamic sciences in general, continued with the pure Imams ('a) after the martyrdom of 'Ali ('a).

The reason behind the Sunni-Shi'ah difference in jurisprudence {*fiqh*}, *hadith*, *tafsir* {exegesis of the Qur'an}, *kalam* {scholastic theology}, among others is this very fact that the reference authorities of these two groups were different and distinct from each other.

3. Just as 'Ali ('a) had unofficial political and military cooperation from afar with the caliphs of the time as far as protection of the lofty interests of Islam was concerned,[2](#) a number of distinguished Shi'ah among the Companions also assumed military and political positions with the consent of Imam 'Ali ('a). For example, Fadhl ibn al-'Abbas—'Ali's ('a) cousin and defender during the event in Saqifah—held a military position in the army of Sham and passed away in 18 AH in Palestine.[3](#)

Hudhayfah and Salman became the governors of Mada'in one after the other.[4](#) 'Ammar ibn Yasir was appointed by the second caliph as the governor of Kufah after the tenure of Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas.[5](#)

Hashim Mirqal, who was one of the sincere Shi'ah of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) and was martyred in the Battle of Siffin on the side of the Imam ('a),[6](#) was one of the outstanding commanders during the periods of the three caliphs and conquered Azerbaijan in 22 AH.[7](#) 'Uthman ibn Hunayf and Hudhayfah ibn Yaman were commissioned by 'Umar to measure the lands of Iraq.[8](#)

'Abd Allah ibn Badil ibn Waraqa' al-Khaza'i, one of the Commander of the Faithful's ('a) Shi'ah whose son was one of the first martyrs in the Battle of Jamal (Camel),[9](#) was one of the military commanders and conquered Isfahan and Hamedan.[10](#)

Similarly, individuals such as Jarir ibn 'Abd Allah Bajalli[11](#) and Qurzah ibn Ka'b al-Ansari[12](#) who were among the Commander of the Faithful's ('a) distinguished men during his caliphate, held administrative and military positions during the periods of the three caliphs. Jarir conquered the territory of Kufah[13](#) and became the governor of Hamedan during 'Uthman's reign.[14](#) Qurzah ibn Ka'b al-Ansari also conquered Shahr-e Rey during the period of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab.[15](#)

## **Manifestation of Shi'ism during the Caliphate of 'Ali ('a)**

Although the root of Shi'ism can be traced back to the time of the Prophet (S), its manifestation came after 'Uthman's assassination and 'Ali's ('a) caliphate. During this period the demarcating line became clear as 'Ali's ('a) supporters and followers openly declared and expressed their Shi'ism. Shaykh al-Mufid narrates, thus:

A group of people came to 'Ali ('a) and said: "O Commander of the Faithful! We are among your Shi'ah." The Imam ('a) looked carefully at their faces and said: "But why can't I see the countenances of the Shi'ah in you?" They asked: "O Commander of the Faithful! How should countenances of the Shi'ah be?"

He ('a) said: "Their faces are pale from excessive acts of worship at night; their eyes are weak from weeping profusely; their backs have curvature for standing for long time in prayer; their stomachs can reach their backs for fasting a lot; and the dust of humility and lowliness has settled in them."<sup>16</sup>

Also, poems were recited during the caliphate of Imam 'Ali ('a) in which 'Ali ('a) has been described as the rightful Imam and successor, and the leader after the Prophet (S). As Qays ibn Sa'd was saying,

## و عليّ إمامنا و إمام لسوانا أتى به التنزيل

*'Ali is our Imam and that of others. The Qur'an has been revealed for this purpose.*<sup>17</sup>

Khuzaymah ibn Thabit Dhu'sh-Shahadatayn used to say:

## فديت عليّاً إمام الورى سراج البرية مأوى التقي

## وصي الرسول و زوج البتول إمام البرية شمس الضحى

## تصدق خاتمه راعياً فاحسن بفعل إمام الورى

## ففضله الله ربّ العباد و أنزل في شأنه هل أتى

*May I be the ransom of 'Ali! He is the Imam of the people, the light of creation and the asylum of the God-conscious ones.*

*He is the successor {wasi} of the Prophet, the husband of Batul (Fatimah), the Imam of creation, and radiant sun.*

*He is the Imam of creation and gave in alms {sadaqah} his ring while he was in the state of*

bowing {ruku'}, and what a good deed he performed!

God, the Exalted, made him superior to others and revealed the Surah "Hal ata" about him.<sup>18</sup>

In some poems, the Imam's ('a) Shi'ah also introduced themselves to the religion of 'Ali ('a). For example, while engaged in a fight against a person named 'Amru ibn Yathribi from among the army of *Jamal* {camel} during the Battle of Jamal, 'Ammar ibn Yasir recited thus:

لا تبرح العرصة يا ابن يثربي حتى اقاتلك على دين علي نحن و  
بيت الله اولى بالنبي

*O Ibn Yathribi! Leave not the battlefield so that we could fight against you over the religion of 'Ali. I swear to the House of God that we are the foremost ones to the Prophet.*<sup>19</sup>

Even the enemies and adversaries were using the same descriptions for the Shi'ah. For example, in a poem, proud of killing the supporters of 'Ali ('a), 'Amru ibn Yathribi says:

ان تنكروني فانا ابن يثربي قاتل علباء و هند الجملى ثم ابن  
صوحان على دين علي

*If you do not know me, I am Ibn Yathribi, the killer of 'Ilba' and Hind al-Jamali.*<sup>20</sup> *I am also the killer of Ibn Sawhan for the crime of following the religion of 'Ali.*

## 2. The Shi'ah during the Period of the Umayyad Caliphate

The period of the Umayyad caliphate was the most difficult time for the Shi'ah, starting from 40 AH up to 132 AH. All the Umayyad caliphs with the exception of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz were sworn enemies of the Shi'ah. Of course, after caliph Hisham the Umayyads were preoccupied with the campaign against internal revolts and the 'Abbasid movement and the past harsh treatments of Shi'ah were lessened.

The Umayyad caliphs were living in Sham, the capital of the Umayyad rule, and in most cases, the rulers adopted the policy of bloodshed with respect to the Shi'ah-populated territories, exerted pressure on the Shi'ah.

Among all the enemies, it was the Umayyad rulers who focused most on the Shi'ah relentlessly annoying and disturbing them, with 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and Hajjaj ibn Yusuf being most notorious among them.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, the well-known scholar in the Sunni world, thus writes:

The Shi'ah were being killed wherever they were. The Umayyads used to mutilate the

hands and feet of individuals for being suspected as Shi'ah. Anyone who was noted for his love and attachment to the family of the Prophet would either be imprisoned, his possessions be plundered, or his house be demolished. The pressure and restrictions imposed upon the Shi'ah reached a point where the charge of friendship with 'Ali ('a) was considered as worse than the accusation of disbelief {*kufr*} and infidelity, entailing severer punishments.

In adopting this violent policy, living conditions for the people of Kufah was the worst because Kufah was the Shi'ah capital of the time.

Mu'awiyah designated Ziyad ibn Sumayyah as the ruler of Kufah and later on assigned the governorship of Basrah to him. Ziyad was once in the rank of the supporters of 'Ali and he knew them all very well. He pursued the Shi'ah and found them in whatever nook and corner they would hide. He killed them; threatened them; mutilated their hands and feet; blinded them; hung them on palm trees; and expelled them from Iraq so much so that not a single well-known Shi'ah remained in Iraq.[21](#)

Abu'l-Faraj 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Ali ibn al-Jawzi has said:

When a number of the Shi'ah protested against Ziyad, who was then delivering sermons from the pulpit, he ordered the mutilation of the hands and feet of eighty persons. He used to gather the people in the mosque and ask them to curse 'Ali and if anyone refused to do so, Ziyad would order that his house be demolished.[22](#)

Ziyad, who ruled alternately for six months in Kufah and the next six months in Basrah, appointed Samurah ibn Jundab as his deputy in Basrah so that he could administer the city during his absence. During that period Samurah killed 8,000 people. Ziyad once asked him: "Are you not afraid that you might have killed one innocent person among them?" He replied: "Even if I have to kill two times that figure, I am not afraid of such a thing."[23](#)

Abu Suwar 'Adwi says: "One morning, Samurah {killed} 47 persons from among relatives, all of whom were memorizers of the Qur'an {*hufaz*}."[24](#)

Mu'awiyah, in a directive to his officials and workers, wrote that they should not accept the testimony of even one of 'Ali's ('a) Shi'ah or family members. In another directive, he thus wrote:

If two individuals would give testimony that a certain person is among the friends of 'Ali and his family, his name should be erased from the record of the public treasury {*bayt al-mal*} and his salary and stipend should be cut off.[25](#)

After subjugating Mecca and Medina, Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, the bloodthirsty and cruel Umayyad agent, was appointed as the governor of Iraq, the center of the Shi'ah gathering, in 75 AH by the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. Having covered his head and face, Hajjaj entered the mosque of Kufah *incognito*. He passed by the line of people and mounted the pulpit.

He remained silent for a long moment. Murmuring among the people started as to who he is. One person said, "He is the new ruler." The other one said, "Let us pelt him with stone." Many others said, "No, let us listen to what he will say." When the crowd silenced, he uncovered his face and uttering a few sentences, he terrified the people so much so that the small stones in the hands of those who were ready to pelt him fell on the ground

spontaneously. At the beginning of his speech, he thus said:

O people of Kufah! It has been for many years that you have taken chaos, sedition {*fitnah*} and insubordination as your slogan. I can see heads similar to ripe fruits that must be separated from the body. I shall strike on your heads to such an extent that you would find the way to submission.[26](#)

Hajjaj implemented a rule of terror throughout Iraq and the eastern districts and unjustly killed many prominent figures of Kufah and pious people.

Mas'udi thus writes about the crimes of Hajjaj:

Hajjaj ruled for twenty years and the number of those who were killed during this period by the swords of his headsmen or torturers exceeded 120,000 people. This figure does not include those who were killed by Hajjaj's forces in the war against him.[27](#)

At the time of Hajjaj's death, 50,000 men and 30,000 women were languishing in his infamous prison. Among them 11,000 were naked. Hajjaj used to imprison men and women in one cell. His prison cells were roofless. As such, the prisoners were not secure from the summer heat or the winter rain and cold.[28](#)

The Shi'ah were usually victims of Hajjaj's prison, torture, persecution, and murder. The best evidence that reflects the miserable plight of the Shi'ah during the Umayyad period and the intensity of the Umayyad policy of strangulation is the complaint of the Shi'ah to Imam as-Sajjad ('a) about the oppression and tyranny perpetrated against them. The late Majlisi has narrates:

The Shi'ah came to Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) complaining about the pressure and strangulation, saying: "O son of the Messenger of Allah! We were expelled from our cities and eliminated by atrocious killing. They cursed the Commander of the Faithful ('a) in the cities as well as in the mosque of the Messenger of Allah (S), on top of his pulpit.

No one prevented it and if any of us would protest, they would say, "This is a *turabi* (i.e. Shi'ah); they would report it to the ruler, writing to him that so-and-so has said something good about Abu Turab (Imam 'Ali ('a)). The ruler would order them to beat that person, imprison him and finally kill him."[29](#)

## **Lesson 9: Summary**

After the event of Saqifah, the Shi'ah would refer to the pure Imams ('a) with respect to scientific, jurisprudential and ideological issues. Although they were cooperating with the caliphs of the time in line with the interests of Islam, most of them were deprived of administrative positions.

During the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful ('a), expression of Shi'ism was one of the distinctive features of the Shi'ah.

The period of the Umayyad rule was one of the most difficult times for the Shi'ah. All the caliphs, with the exception of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, were sworn enemies of the Shi'ah, and the Shi'ah-populated regions the bloodthirsty and cruel governors were ruling over.

## Lesson 9: Questions

1. What were the distinctive features of the Shi'ah during the reign of the first three caliphs?
2. What was the salient feature of the Shi'ah during the caliphate of 'Ali ('a)?
3. What was the condition of the Shi'ah during the Umayyad rule?

[1.](#) For example, when Abubakr initially appointed Khalid ibn Sa'id as the commander in the Battle of Sham, 'Umar said to him: "Have you forgotten Khalid's refusal to pay allegiance to you and his solidarity with the Banu Hashim? I do not think it's appropriate for him to be appointed as commander." As such, Abubakr withdrew his appointment of Khalid as the commander and appointed another person in his stead. Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 133.

[2.](#) For instance, we may cite the recommendation of 'Ali ('a) to Abubakr concerning the dispatch of army to Sham (Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 133) and his instructions to 'Umar when he was consulted by the caliph about his plan for himself to go to the battle against the Byzantines. The Imam ('a) said: "If you yourself will proceed towards the enemy and clash with them and fall into some trouble, there will be no place of refuge for the Muslims other than their remote cities, nor any place they would return to. Therefore, you should send an experienced man and send with him people of good performance who are well-intentioned. If Allah grants you victory, then this is what you want. If it is otherwise, you would serve as a support for the people and a returning place for the Muslims." (*Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon 134) Also, when 'Umar consulted the Imam ('a) about the caliph himself partaking in the Battle of Persia, he ('a) said: "You should remain like the axis for them (Arabs), and rotate the mill (of government) with (the help of) the Arabs, and be their root. Avoid battle, because if you leave this place the Arabs will attack you from all sides and directions till the unguarded places left behind by you will become more important than those before you. If the Persians see you tomorrow they will say, "He is the root (chief) of Arabia. If we do away with him we will be in peace." In this way this will heighten their eagerness against you and their keenness to aim at you." (*Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon 146)

[3.](#) Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 151.

[4.](#) 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab* (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 2, p. 323.

[5.](#) Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 155.

[6.](#) Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 2, p. 401.

[7.](#) Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 156.

[8.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 152.

[9.](#) Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn an-Nu'man Shaykh al-Mufid, *Al-Jamal*, 2nd edition (Qum: Maktab al-A'lam al-Islami (Publication Center), 1416 AH), p. 342.

[10.](#) Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 157.

[11.](#) Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir Baladhuri, *Insab al-Ashraf* (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1394 AH), vol. 2, p. 275.

[12.](#) 'Izz ad-Din Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad Abi'l-Kiram Ibn Athir, *Asad al-Ghabah fi Ma'rifah as-Sahabah* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), vol. 4, p. 202.

[13.](#) Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 143.

[14.](#) Abu Muhammad 'Abd Allah ibn Muslim ibn al-Qutaybah, *Al-Ma'arif*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1415 AH), p. 586.

[15.](#) Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 154.

[16.](#) Shaykh al-Mufid, *Al-Irshad*, trans. Muhammad Baqir Sa'idi Khurasani, 2nd edition (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-ye Islamiyyeh, 1376 AHS), pp. 227-228.

[17.](#) Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, *Manaqib Al Abi Talib* (Qum: Mu'assasah Intisharat-e 'Allameh, n.d.), vol. 3, p. 28.

[18.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[19.](#) Shaykh al-Mufid, *Al-Jamal*, 2nd edition (Qum: Maktab al-A'lam al-Islami (Publication Center), 1416 AH), p. 346.

[20.](#) 'Ilba' and Hind al-Jamali were among the supporters and Shi'ah of 'Ali ('a).

[21.](#) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* (Cairo: Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabi, 1961), pp. 43-45.

[22.](#) Abu'l-Faraj 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Ali Ibn al-Jawzi, *Al-Muntazim fi Tarikh al-Umam wa'l-Muluk*, 1st edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1412 AH), vol. 5, p. 227.

[23.](#) Muhammad ibn Jarir at-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Umam wa'l-Muluk* (Beirut: Dar al-Qamus al-Hadith, n.d.), vol. 6, p. 132.

[24.](#) *Ibid.*

[25.](#) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 1, p. 45.

- [26.](#) Zubayr ibn Bakkar, Al-Akhbar al-Muwaffaqiyyat (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 99; Ja'far Shahidi, Tarikh Tahlili-ye Islam ta Payan-e Umawi {An Analytical History of Islam till the End of the Umayyad Rule} (Tehran: University Press Center, 1363 AHS), p. 184; Mahdi Pishva'i, Sireh-ye Pishvayan, 8th Edition. Qum: Mu'assaseh-ye Tahqiqati va Ta'limati-ye Imam Sadiq ('a), 1378 AHS), p. 246.
- [27.](#) 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, Murawwij adh-Dhahab (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, p. 187.
- [28.](#) Ibid.
- [29.](#) Muhammad Baqir ('Allamah) Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, 2nd edition (Tehran: Al-Maktabah al-Islamiyyah, 1394 AH), vol. 46, p. 275.

## Lesson 10: The Spread of Shi'ism during the Period of Umayyad Caliphate

In spite of severe strangulation and oppression perpetrated against the Shi'ah during the Umayyad rule, the spread of Shi'ism continued unabated. The reason behind this was the state of oppression of the family of the Prophet (S) which prompted the people to incline emotionally toward them, causing new individuals to continuously embrace the creed of Shi'ism.

This point was completely conspicuous during the end of the Umayyad rule. The spread of Shi'ism during the Umayyad rule had several stages, each of which had its own salient features. The overall stages can be divided as follows:

- a) From 40 AH to 61 AH (the period of Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn ('a));
- b) From 61 AH to approximately 110 AH (the period of Imam as-Sajjad and Imam al-Baqir ('a)); and
- c) From 110 AH to 132 AH, i.e. till the end of the Umayyad rule (the period of Imam as-Sadiq ('a)).

### The Period of Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn ('a)

From the time of the Commander of the Faithful ('a), the Shi'ah was gradually formed into a distinct group and the line of the Shi'ah was obviously clear.

For this reason, in the peace treaty with Mu'awiyah, Imam al-Hasan ('a) stipulated the guarantee of the Shi'ah of his father's safety as one of the articles of the peace treaty, and nobody should protest against them.<sup>1</sup> The Shi'ah gradually trained themselves to accept that obedience to the Imam does not depend on the Imam's actual grip on power. As such, when the people were pledging allegiance to Imam al-Hasan ('a), he made it a condition for them to obey him both in war and in peace.

In the same manner, it was made clear that Imamate {*imamah*} is not necessarily equal to governance and that a tyrant ruler such as Mu'awiyah cannot be the Imam, obedience to whom is obligatory. For example, in the sermon that he delivered in the mosque of Kufah after the peace treaty at the insistence and in the presence of Mu'awiyah, Imam al-Hasan ('a) said:

The caliph is he who practices the Book of Allah and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (S), and he who is practicing injustice cannot be the caliph. He is rather a king who controls a kingdom. He shall enjoy for a short period and after that, his joy shall be curtailed and he must be called to account.<sup>2</sup>

Among the salient features of the Shi'ah's society at this stage is the unity and solidarity among them, which resulted from the status of the Shi'ah leaders. Until Imam al-Husayn's ('a) martyrdom, we cannot see of any split among the Shi'ah. Imams al-Hasan and al-Husayn ('a) had a certain status in the sight of Muslims which none of the pure Imams ('a) after them ever attained.

They were the well-established progeny of the Prophet (S). During the Battle of Siffin, when he saw that Imam al-Hasan ('a) was enthusiastically rushing toward the battlefield, the Commander of the Faithful ('a) said:

"Hold back this young man on my behalf, lest he causes my ruin, because I am unwilling to send these two (al-Hasan and al-Husayn) toward death, lest the descending line of the Prophet (S) is cut away by their death."<sup>3</sup>

Imams al-Hasan and al-Husayn ('a) also occupied a position of respect among the Companions of the Prophet (S). This fact was demonstrated in the people's pledge of allegiance to Imam al-Hasan ('a) in which the Companions of the Prophet (S) accepted his caliphate and none protested. As such, during Imam al-Hasan's ('a) caliphate we cannot see any problem (in terms of his legitimacy being challenged) except from Sham.

When the Imam ('a) concluded a peace treaty and wanted to leave Kufah to return to Medina, the people wept profusely. In Medina also, his position is clear from a Qurayshi's report to Mu'awiyah. In his report to Mu'awiyah, a Qurayshi man thus wrote:

O Commander of the Faithful! Hasan performs his dawn prayer in the mosque and he remains in the state of prostration till the sun rises. Then, he inclines to one of the mosque's pillars and anyone who is in the mosque can benefit from his services and talks to him until the rising of the sun {at noon}. He performs a two-*rak'ah* prayer, stands up, goes out, asks about the condition of the wives of the Prophet (S), and then returns to his house.<sup>4</sup>

Imam al-Husayn ('a), like his distinguished brother, occupied a highly respectable position such that even 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr, a staunch enemy of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a), could not deny the station of Imam Husayn ('a). While the Imam ('a) was still in Mecca, the people were not paying attention to Zubayr halting the progress of his campaign. Thus, he wanted the Imam ('a) to leave Mecca as soon as possible. He said to Imam al-Husayn ('a), hence: "If I had the same position you have in Iraq, I would have hastened to go there."<sup>5</sup>

The station of the Imam ('a) was such that his refusal to pay allegiance to the caliph rendered the government of Yazid to be questioned. It was for this reason that the ruling authority insisted on him giving his pledge.

These two persons were held in such high esteem and respect among the Banu Hashim that not only could none from Banu Hashim have a leadership claim during their lifetime, but also none could even claim to be the chief of the Banu Hashim. When Imam al-Hasan ('a) passed away on the account of the effect of poison given by Mu'awiyah, 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas was then in Sham. Mu'awiyah said to him: "Ibn al-'Abbas, Hasan died and you

became the chief of the Banu Hashim." Ibn al-'Abbas said: "So long as Husayn is there, I am not."<sup>6</sup>

Even Ibn al-'Abbas, in spite of his intellectual and political position, being a reporter of *hadith* and exegete of the Qur'an and, according to the Sunnis, even higher in rank than Imams al-Hasan and al-Husayn ('a), was offering services to them. It is thus narrated in the document of Ibn Abi Ziyad:

Ibn al-'Abbas prepared the riding horses of Hasan and Husayn, keeping the stirrup until they rode. I said: "Why are you keeping stirrup for them even though you are older than them?" He said: "You fool! Don't you know who they are? They are the sons of the Messenger of Allah. Is it not a great honor that God has granted me the opportunity to keep the stirrup for them?"<sup>7</sup>

## **The Impact of the Karbala' Movement on the Spread of Shi'ism**

After Imam al-Husayn's ('a) martyrdom the Shi'ah, owing to the loss of one of their key supporters, were extremely frightened losing hope in an armed confrontation with the enemy. With the occurrence of the heart-rending event of 'Ashura' the Shi'ah movement received a devastating blow within a very short period of time.

As the news of this event spread within the Muslim lands, especially in Iraq and Hijaz, intense fear prevailed in the Shi'ah communities. This was because it became increasingly clear that Yazid is determined to stabilize his rule even to the extent of killing the son of the Prophet (S), taking as captives his women and children, and that he would not refrain from any crime in order to strengthen the pillars of his government.

The effect of this intense apprehension was most obvious in Kufah and Medina, and it multiplied with the Hirrah tragedy and the intense and merciless crackdown of the popular 'Medina movement' by Yazid's forces. Severe strangulation in the Shi'ah-populated territories of Iraq and Hijaz especially in Kufah and Medina, was rampant shattering the Shi'ah cohesion and formation.

In describing this sorrowful condition, Imam as-Sadiq ('a) says: "After the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a), the people dispersed from around the family of the Prophet (S) except three persons, viz. Abu Khalid Kabuli, Yahya ibn Umm at-Tawil and Jabir ibn Mut'am."<sup>8</sup>

In describing this period, Mas'udi the historian also says: "'Ali ibn al-Husayn assumed the Imamate secretly with utmost dissimulation {*taqiyyah*} at a difficult time."<sup>9</sup>

This state of affairs persisted till the end of Yazid's rule. After Yazid's death, the Shi'ah movements started and continued till the stabilization of the Umayyad rule during the caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik. This period was a good opportunity for the spread of Shi'ism.

One of the important impacts of the Karbala' movement was the delegitimization of the Umayyad rule in the public opinion. The infamy of the government reached a point where the position of caliphate was in its lowest degree and the people were no longer viewing it as a sacred institution.

The poem below addressed to Yazid's grave in Hawarin expresses this infamy:

## أيها القبر بحوارينا قد ضمنت شر الناس أجمعينا

*O grave that is in the city of Hawarin! The worst of people is inside you.*[10](#)

At that time, with the exception of the people of Sham, the Muslims—both Sunnis and Shi'ah—were opposing the Umayyad caliphate and Sunni and Shi'ah revolts were frequently happening.[11](#) Ya'qubi thus writes:

'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan wrote to his governor Hajjaj ibn Yusuf: "Do not afflict us with the shedding of the blood of the progeny of Al Abi Talib because we saw what fate the Sufyanis (descendants of Abu Sufyan) met as the result of their killing."[12](#)

Finally, the blood of Imam al-Husayn ('a) demolished the palace of the Umayyads. Muqaddasi says: "As God saw the oppression and injustice of the Umayyads against the family of the Prophet (S), He gathered an army from the different parts of that Khurasan and sent it to them at the darkness of the night."[13](#)

Meanwhile, the state of oppression of Imam al-Husayn ('a) and the martyrs in Karbala' expressed the love for the progeny of the Prophet (S) in the hearts of the people and strengthened their position as the descendants of the Prophet (S) and the true protectors of Islam.

Most of the uprisings during the Umayyad period took place in the name and for the sake of avenging their blood, and revolutions used to be formed under the slogan, "*Ya litharat al-Husayn*" {O helpers of Husayn!}. Even the uprising of a person like Ibn Ash'ath in Sistan[14](#) was formed under the name of Hasan al-Muthanna (son of Imam al-Hasan ('a)).[15](#)

For this reason, the *hadiths* regarding Imam al-Mahdi ('a) as the avenger {*muntaqam*} of the progeny of Muhammad (S) gained prominence.[16](#) The people were waiting for the avengers against the Umayyads[17](#) and due to impatience and the peak of waiting, they would sometimes conform the name "Mahdi" to the name of leaders of the movements and uprisings.[18](#)

In the meantime, the pure Imams ('a) and the progeny of the Prophet (S) kept on reviving the memory and reminiscence of the martyrs of Karbala'. Whenever he desired to drink water, Imam as-Sajjad ('a) would shed tears profusely when he set his sight on the water. When he was asked about the reason behind this reaction, he ('a) said:

"How could I not cry when the water was set free for the wild animals and beasts of prey of the deserts, but it was denied to my father?" One day, a servant of the Imam ('a) said: "Is there no end for your agony?"

The Imam ('a) said: "Woe unto you! Ya'qub, who on account of the disappearance of only one of his twelve sons, so cried a lot during their separation that his eyes turned blind and on account of his agony his back bent. This is while his son was alive. But I was an eyewitness to the killing of my father, brothers, uncles and 18 persons from among my relatives whose corpses were scattered on the ground. So, how could it be possible for my agony and anguish to end?"[19](#)

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) was encouraging the poets to recite poetry as elegy to Imam al-Husayn

(‘a), saying: “Whoever would keep on reciting poem about al-Husayn (‘a) and prompt the people to cry, paradise shall be incumbent upon him and his sins shall be forgiven.”<sup>20</sup>

In this way, Imam al-Husayn (‘a) became the symbol of Shi’ism. As such, in many stages of history such as the period of caliph Mutawakkil visitation {*ziyarah*} to the grave of the Imam (‘a) was forbidden.<sup>21</sup>

## **Lesson 10: Summary**

From the time of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), the Shi’ah gradually formed into a particular group and party, and the rank of the Shi’ah became completely distinct. Meanwhile, on account of the station of Imams al-Hasan and al-Husayn (‘a), the Shi’ah of the time enjoyed unity and solidarity and no split was yet observed.

After the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (‘a), the Shi’ah lost their key support and experienced intense fear and apprehension. Only a small number remained beside Imam as-Sajjad, but after the death of Yazid, this state of affairs changed. The movement of Karbala’ removed the legitimacy of the Umayyad rule and dragged the position of caliphate from its sanctity to its lowest ebb. In the meantime, the love for the progeny of the progeny of the Prophet (S) was manifested in the hearts of the people.

## **Lesson 10: Questions**

1. What were the stages of the spread of Shi’ism during the Umayyad period?
2. What was the salient feature of the Shi’ah during the period of Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn (‘a)?
3. What was the impact of the Karbala’ movement on the spread of Shi’ism?

<sup>1.</sup> Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, *Manaqib Al Abi Talib* (Qum: Mu’assasah Intisharat-e ‘Allameh, n.d.), vol. 4, p. 33.

<sup>2.</sup> ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu’l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 82.

<sup>3.</sup> *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon 167, p. 660.

<sup>4.</sup> Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir Baladhuri, *Insab al-Ashraf* (Beirut: Manshurat Mu’assasah al-A’lami Li’l-Matbu’at, 1394 AH), vol. 3, p. 21.

<sup>5.</sup> Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Abd Rabbih al-Andalusi, *Al-‘Aqd al-Farid* (Beirut: Dar Ihya’ at-Turath al-‘Arabi, 1409 AH), vol. 4, p. 366.

<sup>6.</sup> ‘Ali ibn Husayn ibn ‘Ali Mas’udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab* (Beirut: Manshurat Mu’assasah al-A’lami Li’l-Matbu’at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, p. 9.

<sup>7.</sup> Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, *Manaqib Al Abi Talib*, vol. 3, p. 400.

<sup>8.</sup> Abi Ja’far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali (Shaykh) at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma’rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi) (Qum: Mu’assasah Al al-Bayt at-Turath, 1404 AH), vol. 1, p. 338.

<sup>9.</sup> *Ithbat al-Wasiyyah*, 4th edition (Najaf: Al-Matba’ah al-Haydariyyah, 1373 AH), p. 167.

<sup>10.</sup> Mas’udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 65.

<sup>11.</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81-99.

<sup>12.</sup> Ahmad ibn Abi Ya’qub ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya’qubi*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 304.

<sup>13.</sup> Muqaddasi, *Ahsan at-Taqasim fi Ma’rifah al-Aqalim*, trans. Dr. ‘Ali Naqi Manzawi (n.p.: Shirkat-e Mu’allifan va Mutarjiman-e Iran, n.d.), vol. 2, pp. 426-427.

<sup>14.</sup> ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Ash’ath was appointed ruler of Sistan by Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. Sistan was considered the border separating the Muslims from the Hindus and the Muslims there clashed with the Hindu rulers. On account of his enmity toward ‘Abd ar-Rahman, Hajjaj conceived of a plot to eliminate him. As he was informed of this plot, ‘Abd ar-Rahman revolted against him in 82 AH. Since the masses of people were disgusted with Hajjaj, many of the inhabitants of Basrah and Kufah joined him. A great number of the Qur’an reciters {*qaris*}

of Kufah and Shi'ah were among those who staged the uprising. In this manner, he left Sistan bound for Iraq. His objective was to depose Hajjaj and then to depose 'Abd al-Malik from the caliphate as well. He defeated the armies of Hajjaj and advanced as far as Kufah. As the danger he was posing turned serious, 'Abd al-Malik dispatched a large contingent of army from Sham to assist Hajjaj. The armies of Sham subdued Ibn Ash'ath in a place called Dayr al-Jamajam seven farshangs (42 kilometers) away from Kufah. He fled toward India and took refuge with one of the rulers there. But he was finally killed by the agents of Hajjaj. Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 148; Shahab ad-Din Abi 'Abd Allah Yaqt Hamwi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, 1st edition (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1417 AH), vol. 4, p. 338.

15. Ibn 'Anbah, *'Umdah at-Talib fi Insab Al Abi Talib* (Qum: Intisharat ar-Rida, n.d.), p. 100.

16. Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, p. 216.

17. Ya'qubi thus narrates: In reply to the complaints of a person named 'Amir ibn Wailah whose stipend was cut off by the government, 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz during his reign said: "It has been reported to me that you have unsheathed your sword, sharpened your spear, and prepared your bow and arrow, and that you are waiting for the advent of Imam al-Qa'im. Keep waiting so that once he appeared, he would release your stipend." Ya'qubi, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 307.

18. Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, p. 210.

19. Muhammad Baqir ('Allamah) Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar* (Tehran: Al-Maktabah al-Islamiyyah, 1394 AH), vol. 46, p. 275.

20. Shaykh at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi), vol. 2, p. 574.

21. Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir at-Tabari, *Tarikh at-Tabari*, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1408 AH), vol. 5, p. 312.

## Lesson 11: The Period of Imam as-Sajjad ('a)

The period of Imam as-Sajjad ('a) can be divided into two stages:

The first stage covers the events after the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a), the destabilization of the Umayyad rule and finally the end of rule of the Sufyanis (descendants of Abu Sufyan) and the succession to power of the Marwanis (descendants of Marwan ibn al-Hakam), the internal struggle among the Umayyads and their entanglement with the uprisings and revolts up to the stabilization of the rule of the Marwanis. The second stage covers the time of governorship of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf and the defeat of 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr<sup>1</sup> in Mecca up to the commencement of the 'Abbasid movement, which is also related to the initial period of the Imamate {*imamah*} of Imam al-Baqir ('a).

After the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a), the Umayyads were, on the one hand, entangled with the uprisings of the people of Iraq and Hijaz, and experiencing internal struggle on the other. The government of Yazid did not last long. Yazid died in 64 AH after three years of rule.<sup>2</sup>

After Yazid, his son Mu'awiyah II came to power. He ruled for not more than 40 years when he stepped down from the office of the caliphate and died soon after.<sup>3</sup> With his death the internal squabble among the Umayyads began. Mas'udi describes the event after the death of Mu'awiyah II which indicates the intense greed and rivalry among the Umayyads over the leadership, as thus:

Mu'awiyah {II} died at the age of 22 and was buried in Damascus. With the burning ambition of becoming the next caliph, Walid ibn 'Utbah ibn Abi Sufyan came to the front to lead the prayer for the corpse of Mu'awiyah {II}, but even before finishing the prayer he received a fatal blow and was killed. Then, 'Uthman ibn 'Utbah ibn Abi Sufyan led the

prayer for him, but he was also not approved by them to assume the office of the caliphate. So, he was forced to go to Mecca and join Ibn Zubayr.<sup>4</sup>

Three years had not yet passed when the rule of the Sufyanis came to an end. Many of the people throughout the Muslim lands including a number of the Umayyad chiefs and governors such as Ḍahaq ibn Qays and Nu'man ibn Bashir had inclined toward Ibn Zubayr. It was at this time when Ibn Zubayr drove the resident Umayyads out from Medina including Marwan.

The Umayyads proceeded toward Sham and since there was no caliph in Damascus, the Umayyads elected Marwan for the caliphate, followed by Khalid ibn Yazid and after him 'Amru ibn Sa'id as his successor. After sometime, Marwan removed Khalid ibn Yazid and appointed his son 'Abd al-Malik as his successor. For this reason, Khalid's mother who was married to Marwan poisoned Marwan killing him. 'Abd al-Malik also removed 'Amru ibn Sa'id on his way and appointed his son instead as his heir apparent.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, the Umayyads were gripped by revolts and uprisings. These upheavals can be divided into two distinct types: One type was the uprisings without Shi'ah underpinning. The Hirrah uprising and the revolt of Ibn Zubayr belonged to this type. The essence of Ibn Zubayr's revolt is obvious because the leader of the revolt, 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr was a staunch enemy of the progeny of the Prophet (S).

He nursed this grudge in his heart owing to the defeat he and others, including his father, suffered in the Battle of Jamal (Camel) and the ensuing events. His brother Mus'ab, however, had Shi'ah inclination and married the daughter of Imam al-Husayn ('a), Sakinah.<sup>6</sup> As such, his campaign gained momentum in Iraq and the Shi'ah of Iraq joined with him in the resistance against the Umayyads. After Mukhtar Ibrahim al-Ashtar was in his company and was killed beside him.

The Hirrah uprising had also no Shi'ah underpinning<sup>7</sup> and Imam as-Sajjad ('a) had no hand in it. When Muslim ibn 'Uqbah was asking the allegiance of the people in Medina, compelling them to pay allegiance, like slaves, to the Umayyad caliph (Yazid), he accorded him due respect to Imam as-Sajjad ('a) and did not complain against the Imam ('a) (for not expressing allegiance).<sup>8</sup>

The other uprisings had Shi'ah underpinning.

## [The Shi'ah Uprisings](#)

The uprising of the *tawwabun* {the repentant ones} and that of Mukhtar were Shi'ah uprisings. The base of these two uprisings was Iraq, Kufah in particular, and the constituent forces were Shi'ah of the Commander of the Faithful ('a). In the army of Mukhtar, non-Arab Shi'ah could also be amply noticed.

There is no doubt about the essence of the uprising of the *tawwabun*. This uprising was based upon correct motives and yearning for martyrdom, and it had no objective other than avenging the blood of Imam al-Husayn ('a) and wiping off their sin for not assisting the Imam ('a) by being killed in the way of fighting against his murderers.

After leaving Kufah, the *tawwabun* proceeded toward Karbala', rushing toward the grave of Imam Husayn ('a) for *ziyarah* and at the beginning of their movement, they thus said:

O God! We did not assist the son of the Prophet (S). Forgive our past sins and accept our repentance {*tawbah*}. Shower mercy {*rahmah*} upon the soul of Husayn ('a) and his righteous and martyred votaries. We bear witness that we believe in the things for which Husayn ('a) was killed. O God! If You would not forgive our sins and reckon us under the scale of mercy and clemency, we will be doomed to perdition and wretchedness.<sup>9</sup>

After the arrival of Muslim ibn 'Aqil in Kufah Mukhtar was collaborating with him. But because of this collaboration, he was apprehended and imprisoned by 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. After the event of 'Ashura' he was freed through the mediation and petition of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar, his brother-in-law (his sister's husband).

He arrived in Kufah in 64 AH and after the *tawwabun* movement, he started his movement and by using the slogan, "*Ya litharat al-Husayn*" {O helpers of Husayn!} he was able to gather the Shi'ah, the non-Arabs in particular, around him. With these forces, he succeeded in punishing the murderers of Imam al-Husayn ('a) for what they had done, such that in one day he was able to kill 280 of these criminals and destroy the houses of those who escaped such as that of Muhammad ibn Ash'ath, and on the contrary, he mended Hujr ibn 'Addi's house, a loyal supporter of 'Ali ('a), which was destroyed by Mu'awiyah.<sup>10</sup>

Contradictory views have been expressed about Mukhtar. Some have regarded him as a true Shi'ah while others have said that he was a liar. Ibn Dawud thus says about Mukhtar in his book on *rijal*:

Mukhtar is son of Abu 'Abid ath-Thaqafi. Some Shi'ah '*ulama*' have accused him of Kaysaniyyah and in this regard, they have cited Imam as-Sajjad's ('a) refusal of his gift. But this cannot be a reason for rejecting him because Imam al-Baqir ('a) thus said about him: "Do not speak ill of Mukhtar because he killed our murderers, did not allow our spilled blood to be disregarded, gave our daughters in marriage, and at the time of difficulty he distributed properties among us."

When Abu'l-Hakam, son of Mukhtar, came to Imam al-Baqir ('a), the Imam ('a) showed him a great deal of respect. Abu'l-Hakam asked about his father, saying: "The people are talking about my father, but your view, whatever it is, is the criterion." At that moment the Imam ('a) praised Mukhtar and prayed for God to have mercy on him, saying: "Glory be to Allah! My father said that the affection of my mother was from the property that Mukhtar sent to my father."

And the Imam ('a) said many times: "May God have mercy upon your father! He did not allow for our right to be trampled. He killed our murderers and did not permit our blood to be disregarded."

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) also said: "In our family there was a woman who did not comb and apply henna to her hair until Mukhtar sent the heads of the murderers of al-Husayn ('a)."

It has been narrated that when Mukhtar sent the head of the accursed 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad to Imam as-Sajjad ('a), the Imam ('a) prostrated and made benevolent prayer for Mukhtar.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, the reports that have been transmitted to reproach Mukhtar are fabrications of the enemies.

With regard to the charge of Kaysaniyyah against Mukhtar and his alleged role in the

creation of the Kaysaniyyah sect, while defending Mukhtar and rejecting this accusation against him, Ayatullah al-Khu'i thus writes:

Some Sunni '*ulama*' associate Mukhtar with the Kaysaniyyah sect and this is definitely a false statement because Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah never claimed Imamate {*imamah*} for himself for Mukhtar to call on the people to recognize his Imamate.

Mukhtar was killed prior to Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah's demise and the Kaysaniyyah sect came into being after Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah's death. But as to the fact that they regard Mukhtar as "Kaysan" (it is not because he was following the Kaysaniyyah sect), granting that this label is appropriate for him, its origin is traceable to the same questionable report from the Commander of the Faithful ('a) who is alleged to have said: "O Kays! O Kays!" Thus, he was called, "Kaysan".<sup>12</sup>

## **Stabilization of the Rule of Marwan's Descendants**

As mentioned earlier, the second phase of Imam as-Sajjad's ('a) period was the stabilization of the rule of the Marwanis (descendants of Marwan ibn al-Hakam). After the killing of 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr in 73 AH,<sup>13</sup> the clan of Marwan stabilized its own rule, and on this path, they took advantage of the existence of notorious headsmen such as Hajjaj ibn Yusuf.

Hajjaj would not spare from committing any crime in the way of eliminating an enemy. He even targeted the *Ka'bah* destroying it by a shower of catapulted fire stones. He would kill the opponents of the Umayyads, Shi'ah or non-Shi'ah, wherever he would find them. The uprising of Ibn Ash'ath against him in 80 AH gained nothing,<sup>14</sup> and Hajjaj's despotism engulfed the whole of Hijaz and Iraq until 95 AH.<sup>15</sup>

Imam as-Sajjad lived during that period, conveying the Islamic and Shi'ah knowledge and teachings through supplications. During that period, the Shi'ah were either fugitives, languishing in prison, killed at the hands of Hajjaj, or exercising extreme dissimulation {*taqiyyah*} by hiding their true faith. As such, the people had no courage to approach Imam as-Sajjad ('a) and his close supporters were very few.

The late Majlisi thus narrates: "Hajjaj ibn Yusuf killed Sa'id ibn Jubayr because of his contacts with Imam as-Sajjad ('a)."<sup>16</sup> Of course, during that time, on account of the pressures exerted against the Shi'ah, they migrated to the various parts of the Muslim lands and became the agents of the spread of Shi'ism. During the same period, some Shi'ah in Kufah migrated to territories surrounding Qum, stayed there and contributed to the spread of Shi'ism in that place.<sup>17</sup>

The initial period of Imam al-Baqir's ('a) Imamate also coincided with the persistent dominance of the Umayyad rule. During at time, Hisham ibn 'Abd al-Malik, an authoritative and despotic caliph, summoned Imam al-Baqir ('a) along with his son, Imam as-Sadiq ('a), to Sham.

He did not neglect to annoy and vex them.<sup>18</sup> During his reign, Zayd ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn staged an uprising and was martyred. Although the restraints and pressures exerted on the Shi'ah were somehow mitigated during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, the period of caliphate was, nevertheless, short. After two odd years of rule, he passed away in a suspicious manner.

Of course the Umayyads were not able to extinguish the light of truth through pressure and

restriction, and failed to erase the virtues and excellence of the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a) from the people's memory, and that was the will of God. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid thus says in this regard:

If God, the Exalted, had not endowed leadership to this man ('Ali), even a single *hadith* concerning his virtues and excellences would not have been narrated because the Marwanis were so harsh in relation to the narrators of his virtues.[19](#)

## Lesson 11: Summary

Imam as-Sajjad's ('a) period can be divided into two stages. The first stage covered the instability of the Umayyad rule, the downfall of the Sufyanis (descendants of Abu Sufyan) and the ascendance to power of the Marwanis (descendants of Marwan ibn al-Hakam). The second stage covered the stabilization of the rule of the Marwanis.

During the first stage, the Umayyads were grappling with the Shi'ah and non-Shi'ah uprisings in Hijaz and Iraq.

The second stage began with the murder of 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr in 73 AH in which the Umayyads made use of the existence of notorious headsmen such as Hajjaj ibn Yusuf in a bid to stabilize their grip.

## Lesson 11: Questions

1. How many stages can Imam as-Sajjad's ('a) period be divided into?
2. How many types of uprisings were there during Imam as-Sajjad's ('a) period?
3. Describe the period of strangulation and stabilization of the Marwanis' rule.

[1.](#) The rule of 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr in Mecca—from the time of his refusal to pay allegiance to Yazid and his call to the people to rally behind him up to 72 AH when he was killed at the hand of Hajjaj's army—lasted for 12 years. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih mentions it in the book, *Al-'Aqd al-Farid*, as the disturbance of Ibn Zubayr. After the death of Mu'awiyah, when the governor of Medina asked Ibn Zubayr to give allegiance to Yazid, he went to Mecca simultaneous with the departure of Imam al-Husayn ('a) so as to refuse giving his allegiance to Yazid. In Mecca, the people were not paying much attention to him. As such, it was not in Imam al-Husayn's ('a) favor to stay in Mecca. He therefore used to say to the Imam ('a): "If I were you, being invited by them, I would have gone to Iraq." After the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a), he hoisted the banner of opposition to Yazid. As such, in 62 AH Yazid dispatched Muslim ibn 'Uqbah along with an army to repress the uprising of the people of Medina and 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr (in Mecca) first to Medina and then to Mecca. But after the event of Hirrah, Muslim died on his way to Mecca. Hasin ibn Numayr, his successor, arrived in Mecca with the army of Sham and in 64 AH they showered Mecca with catapulted stones of fire burning the clothe covering the Ka'bah. During the course of the battle, however, the news of Yazid's death was reported in Mecca weakening the fighting spirit of the Sham army. Hasin advised Ibn Zubayr to pay allegiance to him, bring him to Sham and install him in the seat of power. Ibn declined this offer. After the death of Yazid, all the Muslim lands, with the exception of Jordan, paid allegiance to Ibn Zubayr as the caliph and recognized his government (in Mecca). Yet, the Umayyads on the side of Marwan installed him as the caliphate. He in turn removed all those who opposed him in Sham along his way to power and after him, his son 'Abd al-Malik became the caliph. After defeating Mus'ab ibn Zubayr, 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr's brother, 'Abd al-Malik dispatched Hajjaj ibn Yusuf from Iraq to Mecca in order to repress 'Abd Allah. For sometime, Hajjaj besieged Mecca, put catapults on top of Mount Abu Qubays, and destroyed the city of Mecca and the Ka'bah by showering catapulted stones. In this battle the supporters of 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr abandoned him, but 'Abd Allah resisted until he was finally killed. In this manner the work of 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr came to an end after 12 years. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Andalusi, *Al-'Aqd al-Farid* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1409 AH), vol. 4, p. 366; 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab* (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-'Alami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, pp. 78-96; Sayyid Ja'far Shahidi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye Islam ta Payan-e Umawi* {An Analytical History of Islam till the End of the Umayyad Rule}, 6th

edition (Tehran: Markaz-e Nashr-e Daneshgahi, 1365 AHS), p. 183.

2. Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 252.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 256.

4. Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, pp. 85-86.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Abu Muhammad 'Abd Allah ibn Muslim ibn al-Qutaybah, *Al-Ma'arif*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1415 AH), p. 214.

7. The Hirrah uprising took place in 62 AH. Mas'udi identified the reason and source of it as the displeasure of the people toward the pervert practices of Yazid and the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a). In Medina which was the residential center of the relatives of the Prophet (S), the Companions and the Followers {tabi'un}, the people were agitated. The governor of Medina, 'Uthman ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Sufyan, who was a recklessly immature young man, sent a group of the prominent men of Medina in representation of the people of the city to Damascus in order for them to personally meet Yazid and receive his blessing so that upon their return to Medina, they can encourage the people to submit to his rule. Pursuant to this design, 'Uthman sent off to Damascus a delegation of the leading figures of Medina in which 'Abd Allah ibn Hanzalah Ghasil al-Mala'ikah was also a part. Since he had no Islamic training or any policy of maintaining proper decorum, Yazid, without any inhibition, kept on his acts of perversion and debaucheries in front of them, though he gave them an extravagant reception and granted each of them previous gifts and robes of honor with the hope that they would praise him on their return to Medina. All these measures, however, had an opposite effect. Upon their return to Medina, they announced in front of the people that they had been in the presence of a person who has no religion, drinks wine, plays on the tar and tambourine, plays with dogs, and engages in drinking spree overnight, while his musicians and lady singers are doing coquetry in his assemblage. Addressing the people of Medina, the members of the delegation said: "Now, bear witness that we deposed him (Yazid) from the office of the caliphate." 'Abd Allah ibn Hanzalah said: "I had been in the presence of a person against whom I will wage war with the support of these sons that I have, even if no one assists me. He gave me presents and gifts, and accorded me due respect, but I accepted his presents and gifts only for the intention of spending it in the campaign against him." Following this trend, the people of Medina paid allegiance to 'Abd Allah ibn Hanzalah, and expelled from the city the governor of Medina and all the Umayyads residing there. Having received this news, Yazid dispatched to Medina Muslim ibn 'Uqbah, who was a well-experienced man and among the stalwarts of the Umayyads, along with a large contingent of army. Yazid instructed him, thus: "Give them three days of respite. If they do not surrender, wage war against them. Once you emerge victorious, plunder whatever possession they have for three days and leave the same at the disposal of the soldiers." The army of Sham attacked Medina and a bloody war between the two parties ensued. Finally, the people of Medina were defeated and the leaders of the movement were killed. Muslim issued the order of massacring the people of the city for three days. The army of Sham committed crimes which the pen is ashamed to describe. Because of these crimes, Muslim earned the labeled "musrif" {squanderer}. After the end of killing and pillage, Muslim obtained the allegiance of the people as slaves for Yazid. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Andalusi, *Al-'Aqd al-Farid*, vol. 4, p. 362; Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 250; Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 82; 'Izz ad-Din Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad Abi'l-Kiram ibn Athir, *Al-Kamil fi't-Tarikh* (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1402 AH), vol. 4, pp. 102-103, 255-256.

8. Ahmad ibn Dawud Abu Hanifah ad-Daynuri, *Akhbar at-Tuwal* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Rida, n.d.), p. 266.

9. Ibn Athir, *Al-Kamil fi't-Tarikh*, vol. 4, pp. 158-186.

10. Akhtab Khwarazmi, *Maqatal al-Husayn* (Qum: Manshurat al-Mufid, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 202.

11. Rijal ibn Dawud (Qum: Manshurat ar-Radhi, n.d.), p. 277.

12. Sayyid Abu'l-Qasim al-Khu'i, *Mu'jam Rijal al-Hadith* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), vol. 18, pp. 102-103.

13. Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 267.

14. In 80 AH Hajjaj appointed 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Ash'ath as the governor of Sistan and Zabulistan, though the former was nursing a grudge against the latter. Hajjaj instructed Ibn Ash'ath to expel Ratbil who has assaulted Sistan. 'Abd ar-Rahman went there, dispatched an army to repress the aggressors, and restored peace and order to Sistan. After that, since Hajjaj was tired of him, Hajjaj ordered him again to face another enemy. Ibn Ash'ath and his soldiers interpreted it as a form of conspiracy of Hujjaj for them to be killed at the hand of the enemies. So, they defied Hajjaj and went toward Iraq instead. In Khuzistan a confrontation ensued between them and Hajjaj's army. The army of Hajjaj was initially defeated and thus, 'Abd ar-Rahman was able to arrive in Iraq occupying Kufah. Many of the chiefs of Basrah also cooperated with him. Hajjaj sought the assistance of 'Abd al-Malik (the then Umayyad caliph based in Damascus). A legion of soldiers from Sham was dispatched to him, and with the arrival of this force, Hajjaj went back into the battle. In this fierce fighting, which later became to be known as the "Dayr al-Jumajum Event", the people of Kufah and Basrah, including Qur'an reciters {qaris}, assisted 'Abd ar-Rahman on account of their enmity toward Hajjaj. The contingent of the son of 'Abd ar-Rahman was so large that 'Abd al-Malik, clearly worried, sent a message to the Iraqis expressing his willingness to remove Hajjaj if that is what they were demanding. The people of Iraq, however, did not accept the compromise

announcing the dismissal of 'Abd al-Malik from the office of caliphate. In this manner, he declared war against them, deceiving a group of Ibn Ash'ath's army chiefs. One night he launched a surprise assault against Ibn Ash'ath's army disintegrating them. As such, Ibn Ash'ath was forced to flee and seek asylum in Ratbil. Later Ratbil killed him, owing to gifts and promises made to him by Hajjaj, sending his head to Hajjaj. Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, pp. 148-149; Shahidi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye Islam ta Payan-e Umawi {An Analytical History of Islam till the End of the Umayyad Rule}*, pp. 185-186.

15. Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 187.

16. Abi Ja'far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn 'Ali (Shaykh) at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal (Rijal Kashi)* (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt at-Turath, 1404 AH), vol. 1, p. 335.

17. Shahab ad-Din Abi 'Abd Allah Yaqut Hamwi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, 1st edition (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1417 AH), vol. 7, p. 88.

18. Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Rustam at-Tabari, *Dala'il al-Imamah* (Najaf: Manshurat al-Matbu'at al-Haydariyyah, 1383 AH), p. 105.

19. Muhammad 'Abduh, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* (Cairo: Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, n.d.), vol. 4, p. 73.

## Lesson 12: The Beginning of the 'Abbasid Campaign and Its Effect upon the Spread of Shi'ism

The campaign of the 'Abbasids started in 111 AH.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, it contributed to the spread of Shi'ism in the various territories of the Muslim world, and on the other, the acts of strangulation of the Umayyads were lessened. As a result, the Shi'ah were able to have a relative breathing space.

During this period, the infallible Imams ('a) laid down the Shi'ah juristic and scholastic foundations and Shi'ism entered a new stage.

In general, during the Umayyad period there was no split between the descendants of 'Ali ('a) and the descendants of 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib and there was no quarrel between them. In this regard Sayyid Muhsin Amin says: "The descendants of 'Ali ('a) and the descendants of 'Abbas during the Umayyad rule were treading the same path. The people who assisted them believing them to be more qualified to the caliphate than the Umayyads were known as the Shi'ah of Muhammad's (S) progeny.

During this period, there was no difference in religious opinion between the descendants of 'Ali ('a) and that of 'Abbas. But when the 'Abbasids came to power, Satan hatched the seed of discord between them and the descendants of 'Ali ('a), and they perpetrated numerous acts of oppression against the descendants of 'Ali ('a).<sup>2</sup> For this reason, the 'Abbasid campaigners were calling the people to please the progeny of Muhammad (S) while recounting the states of oppression the Prophet's (S) progeny were enduring. Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani says:

After the killing of Walid ibn Yazid and the emergence of differences among the Marwanis (descendants of Marwan ibn al-Hakam), Banu Hashim's campaigners and propagandists went to various places, and the first thing they were expressing was the merits of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and his descendants. They said to the people: "How could the Umayyads afford to kill and displace the descendants of 'Ali?"<sup>3</sup>

As a result, during this period Shi'ism remarkably spread. Even the *hadiths* related to Hadrat al-Mahdi ('a) spread rapidly among the people of various regions. Khurasan was the

main sphere of activity of the 'Abbasid campaigners. For this reason, the Shi'ah numbers there increased rapidly to such an extent that, as narrated by Ya'qubi,

After the martyrdom of Zayd (ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn) in 121 AH, the Shi'ah in Khurasan were agitated and stirred up. The Shi'ah publicized their belief. Many of the 'Abbasid campaigners used to approach them and recount the crimes committed by the Umayyads against the progeny of the Prophet (S). This subject and news was imparted to people in every city in Khurasan by 'Abbasid campaigners who went there and dreams and aspirations in this regard were seen and books were taught.<sup>4</sup>

Mas'udi also narrates a subject which expresses the spread and prevalence of Shi'ism in Khurasan. He thus writes: "In 125 AH when Yahya ibn Zayd was killed in Juzjan, the people named all the male infants born in that year were named Yahya."<sup>5</sup>

The influence of the 'Abbasids in Khurasan was greater as Abu'l-Faraj thus says while stating the profile of 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib:

The Khurasani Shi'ah thought that 'Abd Allah was his father Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah's heir and that he was the Imam, and appointed Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas as his successor, and that the successor of Muhammad, Ibrahim, was the Imam from whom the Imamate extends to the 'Abbasids through inheritance.<sup>6</sup>

As such, the bulk of the 'Abbasid army was constituted by the Khurasanis. In this regard, Muqaddasi says:

As God saw the oppression and injustice of the Umayyads against the family of the Prophet (S), He gathered an army from the different parts of that Khurasan and sent it to them at the darkness of the night. During the advent of the Mahdi there is more expectation from the people of Khurasan.<sup>7</sup>

Given this, the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) of the Prophet (S) had occupied a distinct position among the people such that after the victory of the 'Abbasids, a person named Sharik ibn Shaykh al-Mahdi in Bukhara staged an uprising because of the 'Abbasids' acts of injustice against the progeny of the Prophet (S), saying: "We did not pay allegiance to them for us to commit oppression, shed the blood of people unjustly and commit acts against the truth." He was repressed and killed by Abu Muslim.<sup>8</sup>

## **Shi'ism during the Period of Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq ('a)**

The second period of the Imamate of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a) and the initial period of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq's ('a) Imamate coincide with the 'Abbasid campaigns and 'Alawi uprisings such as that of Zayd ibn 'Ali, Yahya ibn Zayd, and 'Abd Allah ibn Mu'awiyah—one of the grandchildren of Ja'far ibn Abi Talib at-Tayyar<sup>9</sup>—and the emergence of Abu Muslim al-Khurasani as the deputy of the 'Abbasid campaigners in Khurasan in inciting the people against the Umayyads.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, the Umayyads had internal factional disputes and problems among their supporters because there was a serious clash between the Mudhiris and Yamanis among the Umayyad supporters in their respective spheres of influence.<sup>11</sup> These revolts and entanglements made the Umayyads negligent of the Shi'ah.

As such, the Shi'ah were able to enjoy a relative breathing space; relaxation from the state of intense dissimulation *{taqiyyah}*; reorganize themselves; and reestablish contacts with their leaders.

It was at this period when the people turned toward Imam al-Baqir ('a) to benefit from the blessings of which they had been deprived for many years. The Imam ('a) rose up in order to keep alive the school *{maktab}* of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a). He ('a) engaged in guiding and enlightening people conducting teaching sessions in Medina and Masjid an-Nabi in particular. He served as the reference authority for people, solving their scientific and juristic problems, as such his view served as proof for them. Qays ibn Rabi' narrates that he asked Abu Ishaq about wiping *{masa'}* of slippers (during the performance of ablution *{wudhu'}*) and Abu Ishaq said:

Like other people, I used to wipe my slippers (in ablution) until such time that I met a man from the Banu Hashim whose equal I have never met before. I asked him about the case of wiping the slippers (in ablution). He prohibited me from doing it, saying: "The Commander of the Faithful did not do it." From then on, I stopped doing it.

Qays ibn Rabi' also says: "After hearing this statement, I also stopped wiping my slippers (in ablution)."

A certain man from among the *Khawarij* (Kharijites) came to Imam al-Baqir ('a). While addressing the Imam ('a), he said: "O Abu Ja'far! What do you worship?" The Imam ('a) said: "God." The man asked: "Can you see Him?" The Imam ('a) replied: "Yes, but the vision cannot witness Him while hearts with the truth of faith can see Him. He cannot be discerned through analogy *{qiyas}*. He cannot be perceived through the senses. He is not like human beings..." The Kharijite man left the Imam ('a) while saying: "God knows well to whom He shall entrust His message *{risalah}*."

The scholars such as 'Amru ibn 'Ubayd, Tawus al-Yamani, Hasan al-Basri, and Nafi' Mawla ibn 'Umar used to refer to the Imam ('a) for solving scientific and juristic problems and issues.<sup>12</sup>

When the Imam ('a) would arrive in Mecca, people would rush to ask him questions on matters pertaining to the lawful *{halal}* and the prohibited *{haram}*, considering the chance of asking the Imam ('a) a boon and a means of acquiring more knowledge. Imam al-Baqir's ('a) teaching sessions were attended not only by students but also the scholars of the time.<sup>13</sup> When Hisham ibn 'Abd al-Malik arrived in Mecca for *Hajj*, he witnessed these teaching sessions that were an opportunity for him.

He sent someone to ask the Imam ('a) on his behalf as to what the people will be eating on the Day of Judgment *{mahshar}*. In reply the Imam ('a) said: "On the Day of Judgment there are trees whose fruits shall be eaten by the people and rivers whose water the people shall drink so as to feel easiness for the Reckoning." Hisham again sent that person to ask the Imam ('a), hence: "Shall the people have time to eat and drink?" The Imam ('a) said: "Even in hell there shall be opportunity to eat and drink, and the dwellers of hell shall also ask for water and other graces of God."

Zurarah (ibn A'yan) says:

I, along with Imam al-Baqir ('a), was sitting beside the *Ka'bah*, while the Imam ('a) was facing the *Ka'bah*. The Imam ('a) said: "Looking at the *Ka'bah* is indeed an act of worship." Then a certain man (from Bajilah) came and said: "Ka'b al-Ahbar used to say: 'The *Ka'bah*

prostrates to the Temple of Jerusalem everyday’.” The Imam (‘a) said to the man: “What do you think about what Ka‘b was saying?” The man answered: “Ka‘b was telling the truth.” The Imam (‘a) was annoyed and retorted, saying: “No, you have lied and Ka‘b has lied.”[14](#)

Great ‘*ulama*’, jurists {*fuqaha*} and *hadith* scholars {*muhaddithun*} were trained under the blessed feet of the Imam (‘a), such as Zurarah ibn A‘yan about whom Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said: “If it were not for Zurarah, there was a probability for the *hadiths* of my father to be lost forever.”[15](#)

Muhammad ibn Muslim heard thirty thousand *hadiths* from Imam al-Baqir (‘a).[16](#) Another scholar who learned from the Imam (‘a) was Abu Basir about whom Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said: “Had it not been for them, the works of prophethood {*nubuwwah*} will be terminated and be antiquated.”[17](#)

Other prominent figures such as Yazid ibn Mu‘awiyah al-‘Ajali, Jabir ibn Yazid, Hamran ibn A‘yan, and Hisham ibn Salim were among those who were trained in the school {*maktab*} of the Imam (‘a).

In addition to the Shi‘ah scholars, many of the Sunni ‘*ulama*’ have also studied under the Imam (‘a) and narrated *hadiths* on the authority of the Imam (‘a). As Sabt ibn al-Jawzi says, “(Imam) Ja‘far used to narrate *hadiths* of the Prophet (S) from his father.” As such, a number of the Followers {*tabi‘un*} such as ‘Ata’ ibn Abi Rubah, Sufyan ath-Thawri, Malik ibn Anas (founder of the Maliki school of thought {*madhhab*}), Shu‘bah, and Abu Ayyub Sijistani have narrated *hadiths* from the Imam (‘a).[18](#)

Furthermore, thousands of learned men in jurisprudence and *hadith* attained progress in the Imam’s (‘a) school and his *hadiths* were spread far and wide so much so that Jabir al-Ju‘fi, who was a great *muhaddith*, has narrated seventy thousand *hadiths* on the authority of the Imam (‘a).[19](#) This state of affairs continued until Imam al-Baqir (‘a) attained martyrdom on Dhu‘l-Hijjah 7, 114 AH.[20](#)

## **The University of Imam as-Sadiq (‘a)**

In view of the then prevailing conducive political atmosphere, Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq (‘a) pursued his father’s scientific movement and established a large university and center of learning whose horizon reached far and wide. Shaykh al-Mufid says:

The knowledge of the Imam (‘a) has been so widely narrated that it became proverbial to various many and its fame spread to every nook and corner. None of the progeny of the Prophet (S) match him (in this regard) whose knowledge and learning have been so widely transmitted.[21](#)

Amir ‘Ali thus writes about the Imam (‘a):

Those philosophical discussions and debates in all the Islamic centers became widespread and the guidance and instructions given in this regard were made possible only by the university that has been established in Medina under the supervision of Hadrat Sadiq, a great grandchild of Hadrat ‘Ali. He has been one of the great ‘*ulama*’ with precise views, a deep understanding, and well-versed in all the branches of knowledge of the time. In reality, it is he who is the founder of the rational academy in Islam.[22](#)

As such, those who were lovers of knowledge {*‘ilm*} and thirsty for the Muhammadan (S) gnosis {*ma‘rifah*} rushed from different parts of the then Muslim world to that heroic Imam

(‘a) in multitude, and benefited from his abundant spring of knowledge and wisdom. Sayyid Ilahil says: “In Kufah, Basrah, Wasit, and Hijaz, people of every tribe sent their children to Ja’far ibn Muhammad. Many of the Arabs and Persians, the people of Qum in particular, came to him.”[23](#)

In his *Al-Mu’tabar*, the late Muhaqqiq (al-Hilli) thus writes:

During the period of Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) various branches of knowledge that were transmitted from him astonished the great thinkers. A group of about four thousand *rijali* scholars have narrated *hadiths* from him, and by his teachings a great number of people in the various sciences attained mastery to such an extent that his answers to their questions were compiled in four hundred books {*musannafat*}, which were called “*Usul*”.[24](#)

In his book, *Dhikra*, Shahid al-Awwal also says: “Four thousand people from Iraq, Hijaz, Khurasan, and Sham put into writing the answers of Abu ‘Abd Allah Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) to the questions.”[25](#)

In this manner, the seekers and lovers of knowledge and learning used to benefit from the Imam (‘a). Outstanding scholars in various branches of the revealed {*naqli*} and rational {*‘aqli*} sciences of the day such as Hisham ibn Hakam, Muhammad ibn Muslim, Aban ibn Taghlib, Hisham ibn Salim, Mu’min Taq, Mufadhhal ibn ‘Umar, Jabir ibn Hayyan, etc. were trained under the blessing of his presence.

Their compilations which are known as the *Usul Arba’ami’ah*, are the basis of the four Shi’ah books on *hadith*, viz. *Al-Kafi*, *Man La Yahdharah al-Faqih*, *At-Tahdhib*, and *Al-Istibsar*.

The disciples of Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) were not all Shi’ah as most of the Sunni scholars of the day have also studied under his guidance. Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, a Sunni author, thus writes in this regard: “The leading figures (in jurisprudence and *hadith*) such as Yahya ibn Sa’d, Ibn Jarir, Malik, Sufyan ath-Thawri, Sufyan ibn ‘Uyaynah, Abu Hanifah, Sha’bi, and Ayyub Sijistani have narrated *hadiths* on his authority.”[26](#)

Abu Hanifah, the founder of the Hanafi school of thought, has said:

I used to go to Ja’far ibn Muhammad for sometime. I used to see him in one of the three conditions: either he was praying, in the state of fasting, or reading the Qur’an. I never saw him narrating the *hadith* without performing ablution.[27](#) The one superior to Ja’far ibn Muhammad in knowledge, devotion and piety has not been seen by any eye, heard by any ear, or perceived by any heart.[28](#)

The Imam’s (‘a) teaching sessions were attended by those who later founded schools of jurisprudence attending as philosophers, as well as students of philosophy from far and wide. After learning the sciences from their Imam (‘a), they would return to their homelands and conduct teaching sessions of their own.

The Muslims used to gather around them and they in turn impart the teachings of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) propagating Shi’ism. When Aban ibn Taghlib would come to Masjid an-Nabi, the people would reserve for him the pillar against which the Prophet (S) used to lean, and he would narrate *hadiths* to them. Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) used to say to him: “Sit in the mosque of Medina and issue religious edicts to the people as I like persons like you to be seen among my Shi’ah.”

Aban was the first person to have written something on the sciences of the Qur’an {*‘ulum al-Qur’an*} and he was also so well-versed in *hadith* that he used to sit in Masjid an-Nabi

and the people would come and ask him. Through his various styles of speaking, he would answer them and impart the *hadiths* of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) to them.<sup>29</sup>

In *Mizan al-I'tidal*, adh-Dhahabi thus says regarding him: "If the *hadith* of individuals such as Aban who are accused of being Shi'ah is rejected, a great part of the Prophetic works would have perished."<sup>30</sup>

Abu Khalid al-Kabuli says: "I saw Abu Ja'far Mu'min Taq sitting in Masjid an-Nabi while the people of Medina gathered around him and posed their questions on jurisprudence {*masa'il*} to him and he would answer them."<sup>31</sup>

Shi'ism during that period was so spread that some people, in a bid to acquire social standing among the people, resorted to fabricating *hadiths* from the Imams ('a) to draw people's attention by interpreting the traditions in their own favor.

For example, Imam as-Sadiq ('a)—in reply to one of his companions named Faydh ibn Mukhtar who asked about the reason behind the contradiction in *hadiths*—thus says: "These people are not seeking the pleasure of Allah in narrating the *hadiths* and expressing our views. They are rather seeking the world and each of them is aspiring to be leader."<sup>32</sup>

## Lesson 12: Summary

The 'Abbasid campaign started in 111 AH. During that time, there was no division between the descendants of 'Ali {'*Alawi*} and the descendants of 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib {'*Abbasi*}. The Umayyads were busy repressing the 'Abbasid uprisings as a result of which Shi'ism spread remarkably.

Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq ('a) in this opportune time trained their disciples establishing the Jafari University, and many jurists {*fuqaha*} and scholastic theologians {*mutakallimun*} benefited from these two personages. Shaykh al-Mufid regards the number of the disciples of Imam as-Sadiq to be four thousand.

## Lesson 12: Questions

1. What was the impact of the 'Abbasid campaign upon the spread of Shi'ism?
2. What was the trend of Shi'ism during the period of Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq ('a)?
3. How did Imam as-Sadiq ('a) take advantage of the then existing opportune time?

<sup>1.</sup> Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 319.

<sup>2.</sup> Sayyid Muhsin Amin, *A'yan ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar at-Ta'aruf Li'l-Matbu'at, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 19.

<sup>3.</sup> 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 207.

<sup>4.</sup> Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 326.

<sup>5.</sup> 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab* (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, p. 236.

<sup>6.</sup> Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, p. 133.

<sup>7.</sup> Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Ahmad Muqaddasi, *Ahsan at-Taqasim fi Ma'rifah al-Aqalim*, trans. Dr. 'Ali Naqi Manzawi (n.p.: Shirkat-e Mu'allifan va Mutarjiman-e Iran, 1361 AHS), vol. 2, pp. 426-427.

<sup>8.</sup> Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 345.

<sup>9.</sup> Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, vol. 2, p. 345.

- [10.](#) Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 332.
- [11.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 333.
- [12.](#) Asad Haydar, *Al-Imam as-Sadiq wa'l-Madhahib al-Arba'ah*, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1390 AH), vol. 1, pp. 452-453.
- [13.](#) 'Allamah Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, 2nd edition (Tehran: Al-Maktabah al-Islamiyyah, 1394 AH), vol. 46, p. 355.
- [14.](#) *Ibid.*
- [15.](#) Abi Ja'far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn 'Ali (Shaykh) at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal (Rijal Kashi)* (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt at-Turath, 1404 AH), vol. 1, p. 345.
- [16.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 386.
- [17.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 398.
- [18.](#) Sabt ibn al-Jawzi, *Tadhkirah al-Khawas* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radhi, 1376 AHS/1418 AH), p. 311.
- [19.](#) Muhammad Husayn Muzaffar, *Tarikh ash-Shi'ah*. Qum: Manshurat Maktabah Basirati, n.d.
- [20.](#) Abi Ja'far Muhammad ibn Ya'qub ibn Ishaq Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1363 AHS), vol. 1, p. 472.
- [21.](#) Shaykh Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn an-Nu'man al-Mufid, *Al-Irshad*, trans. Muhammad Baqir Sa'idi Khurasani, 2nd edition (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-ye Islamiyyeh, 1376 AHS), p. 525.
- [22.](#) Amir 'Ali, *Tarikh-e Gharb va Islam {History of the West and Islam}*, trans. Fakhr Da'i Gilani, 3rd edition. Tehran: Intisharat-e Ganjineh, 1366 AHS), p. 213.
- [23.](#) Asad Haydar, *Al-Imam as-Sadiq wa'l-Madhahib al-Arba'ah*, 3rd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1403 AH).
- [24.](#) Abu'l-Qasim Ja'far ibn al-Hasan ibn Yahya ibn Sa'id Muhaqqiq al-Hilli, *Al-Mu'tabar* (Lithography), pp. 4-5.
- [25.](#) Muhammad ibn Makki Shahid al-Awwal, *Dhikra* (Lithography), p. 6.
- [26.](#) Ahmad Ibn Hajar Haythami al-Makki, *As-Sawa'iq al-Mahriqah fi'r-Radd 'ala Ahl al-Bid'a waz-Zindiqah*, 2nd edition (Cairo: Maktabah al-Qahirah, 1385 AH), p. 201.
- [27.](#) Shahab ad-Din ibn 'Ali Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, *Tahdhib at-Tahdhib*, 1st edition (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1404 AH), vol. 1, p. 88.
- [28.](#) Asad Haydar, *Al-Imam as-Sadiq wa'l-Madhahib al-Arba'ah*, vol. 1, p. 53.
- [29.](#) *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 55.
- [30.](#) Shams ad-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad adh-Dhahabi, *Mizan al-I'tidal* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 4.
- [31.](#) Shaykh at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal (Rijal Kashi)*, vol. 2, p. 581.
- [32.](#) *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 347.

## Lesson 13: The Shi'ah during the Period of 'Abbasid Caliphate

Shi'ism from the beginning of the 'Abbasid period (132 AH) up to the end of the minor occultation {*ghaybah as-sughra*} (329 AH) was a longer period compared to the Umayyad period. The Shi'ah were scattered in the furthest points of the vast Muslim land. For example, a complaint was lodged to (the 'Abbasid caliph) Harun (ar-Rashid) against Imam Musa al-Kazim ('a) for receiving *khums*<sup>1</sup> from east and west.<sup>2</sup>

When Imam 'Ali ibn ar-Ridha ('a) arrived in Nayshabur, two *hadith* keepers named Abu Zar'ah ar-Razi and Muhammad ibn Aslam at-Tusi came to the Imam ('a) along with innumerable groups of knowledge seekers and requested that he face them. The Imam ('a) faced them, in the presence of various classes of people, to narrate the *silsilah adh-dhahab hadith*. This *hadith* was recorded in 20 thousand books by different writers.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, Imam ar-Ridha ('a), in reply to (the 'Abbasid caliph) Ma'mun who had many expectations from him after his (forced) acceptance of the heir-apparency, said: "...This affair (heir-apparency) has never added favor to me. When I was in Medina, amputation of the thief's hand was used to be implemented in the east and west."<sup>4</sup>

Also, the admission of the Sunni jurist {*fuqih*}, Ibn Abi Dawud, who was himself a stern enemy and adversary of the Shi'ah, is significant. Following the 'Abbasid caliph Mu'tasim

preference of Imam al-Jawad ('a) view to that of the Sunni jurists regarding the amputation of the thief's hand, Ibn Abi Dawud privately reminded the caliph that in the presence of the courtiers, governors, ministers, and scribes he preferred the view of a person whose Imamate is acknowledged by half of the *ummah* to the view of all '*ulama*' of his assembly.<sup>5</sup> Shi'ism had even penetrated the ranks of the governors and dignitaries of the 'Abbasid rule. As Yahya ibn Harthamah narrates,

The 'Abbasid caliph Mutawakkil dispatched me to summon Imam al-Hadi ('a) to Medina. When I arrived along with the Imam in Baghdad, I went to Ishaq ibn Ibrahim at-Tahiri, the governor of Baghdad. He said to me: "O Yahya! This man is the son of the Messenger of Allah (S). You also know Mutawakkil. If you would incite Mutawakkil to kill him, it is tantamount to declaring enmity with the Messenger of Allah (S)." I said: "I did not see anything in him but goodness." Then, I proceeded to Samarra. When I arrived there, I went first to Wasif Turki.<sup>6</sup> He also said to me: "If even a single strand of hair is taken from this man, I shall call you to account."<sup>7</sup>

In the first volume of his book, Sayyid Muhsin Amin has identified as Shi'ah a number of 'Abbasid statesmen such as Abu Salmah Khalal,<sup>8</sup> the first vizier of the 'Abbasid caliphate who was called the Vizier of the Prophet's Progeny {*wazir al Muhammad*}; Abu Bukhayr Asadi al-Basri, one of the prominent governors and emirs during the time of (the 'Abbasid caliph) Mansur; Muhammad ibn Ash'ath, the vizier of Harun ar-Rashid, about whom there is a story during the detention of Imam al-Kazim ('a) which demonstrates his being a Shi'ah; 'Ali ibn Yaqtayn, one of the viziers of Harun; Ya'qub ibn Dawud, the vizier of the 'Abbasid caliph Mahdi; and Tahir ibn Husayn Khaza'i, the governor of Khurasan on behalf of Ma'mun and conqueror of Baghdad on account of which Hasan ibn Sahl did not dispatch him to the Battle of Abi's-Saraya.<sup>9</sup>

Among the Shi'ah judges were Sharik ibn 'Abd Allah an-Nakha'i, the judge of Kufah, and Waqidi, the renowned historian, who was a judge during the time of Ma'mun.<sup>10</sup>

Shi'ism was so widespread even in the 'Abbasid spheres of influence that it was considered a threat for them. For example, during the burial procession for Imam al-Kazim ('a) Sulayman ibn Mansur, Harun's uncle, participated in the procession barefooted in a bid to tone down the wrath of the Shi'ah who formed an impressive assembly.<sup>11</sup> Also, when Imam al-Jawad ('a) attained martyrdom and they wanted to bury him secretly, the Shi'ah were informed of it. Armed with swords, twelve thousand of them went out and buried the Imam with due respect and dignity.<sup>12</sup>

During the martyrdom of Imam al-Hadi ('a) there was also a large number of the Shi'ah and the extent of their weeping and wailing was such that the 'Abbasids were forced to bury him within the confine of his house.<sup>13</sup>

After the period of Imam ar-Ridha ('a), the 'Abbasid caliphs were so meticulous in respectfully treating the pure Imams ('a) so as not to face the wrath of the Shi'ah. As such, during the reign of Harun, Imam ar-Ridha ('a) enjoyed relative freedom and he was able to attend to the scientific and cultural activities of the Shi'ah, to even declare openly his Imamate and desist from practicing dissimulation {*taqiyyah*}, to discuss and converse with the followers of other schools and religions, and convince some of them. As Ash'ari al-Qummi narrates, "During the time of Imam al-Kazim and Imam ar-Ridha ('a) a number of Sunni and Zaydi divines embraced Shi'ism and recognized the Imamate of these two Imams."<sup>14</sup>

Some of the 'Abbasid caliphs had strived to monitor the pure Imams ('a) with the aim of

controlling them. When the Imams ('a) were asked to move from Medina, the caliphs had tried their best not to allow the Imams ('a) to pass by the Shi'ah-populated regions. Along this line, pursuant to Ma'mun's order, they brought Imam ar-Ridha ('a) to Marv through the Basrah-Ahwaz-Fars route and not through the Shi'ah-concentrated Kufah-Jabal-Qum route.[15](#)

As narrated by Ya'qubi, when Imam al-Hadi ('a) was brought to Samarra at the order of the 'Abbasid caliph Mutawakkil, the 'Abbasids who accompanied the Imam made a sojourn so to pass Baghdad by night to get to Samarra because as they arrived near Baghdad, they learned that a large group of people was waiting to meet the Imam.[16](#)

Since the Shi'ah were mostly scattered across different regions and far-flung places during the 'Abbasid period, the pure Imams ('a) founded the proxy institutions of representation, appointing respective deputies and proxies in the different regions and cities to serve as a means of communication between them and the Shi'ah.

This affair commenced at the time of Imam as-Sadiq ('a). When the caliph's apparatus gained a firmer grip over the pure Imams ('a) making Shi'ah's access to the Imam of their time more problematic, the institution of proxy and the role of the Imam's deputies gained more prominence.

It is thus recorded in the book, *Tarikh-e 'Asr-e Ghaybat* {History of the Minor Occultation}: "The most important of all is the enhancement and spread of the covert institution of deputyship—an institution which was founded during the time of Imam as-Sadiq ('a) and further developed during the time of 'Askariyyin."[17](#)

In this regard, Professor Pishva'i thus writes:

The critical conditions of the Shi'ah Imams during the 'Abbasid period prompted them to look for a new means of establishing and maintaining their contact with their followers. This new means was nothing but the communication network of representation and the Imam's appointment of deputies and trustees in the various regions.

The main function of this institution was the collection of *khums*, *zakat* {alms-rate}, *nadhr* {vow endowments}, and gifts {*hadaya*} from the various regions through the deputies and remitting the same to the Imam as well as for the Imam to reply to the ideological and juristic questions and issues of the Shi'ah and their political justification through the Imam's deputies. This institution had pivotal role in advancing the objectives of the Imams.[18](#)

The places where the infallible Imams ('a) had deputies and proxies are Kufah, Basrah, Baghdad, Qum, Wasit, Ahwaz, Hamedan, Sistan, Bast, Rey, Hijaz, Yemen, Egypt, and Mada'in.[19](#)

Shi'ism during the 4th century AH was spread from the east to the west of the Muslim world and was at the peak of its spread and growth as it had never experienced before such a magnitude of growth. The list of the Shi'ah-populated cities of the Muslim lands during that century presented by Muqaddasi points to this fact. Thus, we shall cite the facts from his book. Somewhere in his book, he says that many of the judges in Yemen, coast of Mecca and Sahar are Mu'tazilites and Shi'ah.[20](#)

Accordingly, Shi'ism is so widespread in the Arabian Peninsula.[21](#) Regarding the inhabitants of Basrah, it is stated that "Most of the inhabitants of Basrah are Qadiri, Shi'ah, Mu'tazilites, and then Hanbalis."[22](#) During that century, the people of Kufah, with the exception of

Kinasah, have been Shi'ah.<sup>23</sup> There are also a few Shi'ah in the Musul district.<sup>24</sup>

The people of Nablus, Quds and most of Oman are Shi'ah.<sup>25</sup> The people of the upper village of Fustat and that of Sandfa are Shi'ah.<sup>26</sup> In the region along the Indus river the people of the city of Multan are Shi'ah, and this fact is evident in their *adhan* and *iqamah*.<sup>27</sup> In Ahwaz the conflict between the Sunnis and Shi'ah would lead to war.<sup>28</sup>

By pointing to the rule of the Buyids and that of the Fatimids in Egypt, Maqrizi also writes: The *rafidhi* (Shi'ah) *madhhab* {school of thought} spread in Morocco, Sham, Diyar Bakr, Kufah, Basrah, Baghdad, the entire Iraq, Khurasan, Transoxiana,<sup>29</sup> as well as Hijaz, Yemen and Bahrain, and there were conflicts between them (Shi'ah) and Sunnis as a result of which those who were killed were countless.<sup>30</sup>

During that century, there was a large number of Shi'ah even in Baghdad, the capital of the 'Abbasid caliphate to such an extent that they could openly perform their mourning ceremony on the day of 'Ashura. As Ibn al-Kathir says, "The Sunnis did not have the courage to stop this ceremony on account of the large number of the Shi'ah and the support of the Buyid government for them."<sup>31</sup>

During that time, the ground for the struggle of the Shi'ah was paved to some extent as many Muslim territories were under Shi'ah rulers. In the north of Iran, Gilan and Mazandaran, the 'Alawis of Tabaristan were ruling. In Egypt the Fatimids, in Yemen the Zaydis, in the north of Iraq and Syria the Hamdanis, and in Iran and Iraq the Buyids were in the helms of power.

Of course, during the periods of some 'Abbasid caliphs such as Mahdi, Amin, Ma'mun, Mu'tasim, Wathiq, and Muntasir, the Shi'ah had relative freedom of movement. At least, during the time of these caliphs the past repressions were mitigated. As narrated by Ya'qubi, the 'Abbasid caliph Mahdi had released Shi'ah and Talibis (descendants of Abu Talib).<sup>32</sup>

The government of Amin unconsciously relaxed its suppression of and hostilities toward the Shi'ah, for a five-year period, mostly because of Amin's pleasure-seeking and his war with his brother Ma'mun. The 'Abbasid caliphs Ma'mun, Mu'tasim, Wathiq, and Mu'tadhad had Shi'i tendency, but Mutawakkil was one of the sternest enemies of the Prophet's descendants and their Shi'ah. Although the Shi'ah were out of control during his reign, he used to prohibit nevertheless the visitation to the tomb of Imam al-Husayn ('a).<sup>33</sup>

Ibn Athir says:

Mutawakkil used to regard as his enemies the caliphs preceding him such as Ma'mun, Mu'tasim and Wathiq who used to express affection to 'Ali and his descendants. Persons such as 'Ali ibn Juhm (a poet from Sham), 'Umar ibn Faraj, Abu Samt—one of the descendants of Marwan ibn Abi Hafsah and sympathizers of the Umayyads—and 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn Dawud Hashimi who were regarded as Nasibis and enemies of 'Ali ('a), were his boom companions and associates.<sup>34</sup>

During that period the Nasibi nonreligious poets had earned courage reciting poems against the descendants of the Prophet (S) in order to get closer to the (political) establishment of Mutawakkil. But Mutawakkil's successor, Muntasir, adopted a contrary policy and gave freedom of action to the Shi'ah, renovated the tomb of Imam al-Husayn ('a) and removed the prohibition on visiting it.<sup>35</sup> Hence, Bahtari, a poet during his period has thus said:

# إِنَّ عَلِيًّا لَأَوْلَىٰ بَكُمْ وَأَزْكَىٰ يَدَا عُنُكُم مِّنْ عَمَرَ

Verily, 'Ali compared to 'Umar is nearer to you and he is purer.[36](#)

## 'Abbasids Control over the Shi'ah Leaders

Up to 329 AH the 'Abbasid rule in general experienced two periods: ascendancy of Iranian viziers and officials, and prevalence of the Turkish army. Although during the period of the Turks the caliphate's apparatus was weak and most of the times the 'Abbasid caliphs were tools in the hands of the Turkish commanders, the government's general policy was anti-Shi'ism.

Owing to the great quantitative increase of the Shi'ah during the 'Abbasid period, the policy of the 'Abbasid caliphs was to exert control over the Shi'ah leaders although the caliphs differed in terms of treatment of the Shi'ah. Some of them such as Mansur, Hadi, Rashid, and Mutawakkil were despotic, cruel and bloodthirsty. Others such as Mahdi, Ma'mun and Wathiq did not have the stringency of their respective predecessors, and during their caliphate the Shi'ah had relative breathing space.

When Caliph Mansur sensed the danger posed by Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah and his brother Ibrahim, he apprehended and imprisoned his father, brothers and uncles.[37](#) Mansur summoned Imam as-Sadiq ('a) to his court many times with the intention of killing the Imam ('a) but the will of God was other than that.[38](#)

The 'Abbasid caliphs tried their best to remove the Shi'ah leaders who were their rivals. Mansur even gave money and dispatched to Medina a certain Ibn al-Muhajir so as to go to 'Abd Allah ibn al-Hasan, Imam as-Sadiq ('a) and a number of other 'Alawis, and to say to them that the sum of money comes from the Shi'ah of Khurasan, remit the same and take a receipt. Imam as-Sadiq ('a) reminded him that the Imam knows that he was sent by Mansur and asked him to relay to Mansur, thus: "The 'Alawis have been recently relieved from the rule of the Marwanis and they are needy. Do not deceive and dupe them."[39](#)

Asad Haydar says: "In order to have a pretext in eliminating Imam as-Sadiq ('a), Mansur resorted to various means; he wrote letters to the Imam by using the names of the latter's Shi'ah and sent goods to the Imam under the names of his Shi'ah. Yet, Mansur did not succeed in any of these ways."[40](#)

When Mansur heard the news of the martyrdom of Imam as-Sadiq ('a), he wrote a letter to the governor of Medina, Muhammad ibn Sulayman: "In case Ja'far ibn Muhammad designated a certain person as the implementers of his will {*wasiyy*}, arrest him and cut off his head." In reply to the caliph's letter, the governor of Medina thus wrote: "Ja'far ibn Muhammad designated these five persons as the executors of his will: Abu Ja'far Mansur, Muhammad ibn Sulayman, 'Abd Allah, Musa, and Hamidah." Then Mansur said: "They cannot be killed."[41](#)

Caliph Mahdi did not have his father's callousness toward the 'Alawis and Shi'ah. Ya'qubi narrates: "As soon as Mahdi assumed the caliphate, he ordered for the release of the imprisoned 'Alawis."[42](#)

As such, no 'Alawi uprising took place during his reign. Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani has

mentioned only two persons who died during the period of Mahdi; one of them was 'Ali ibn al-'Abbas while the other was 'Isa ibn az-Zayd who transpired clandestinely and who used to live in hiding from the time of Mansur.[43](#)

During the reign of Caliph Hadi, intense pressure was exerted on the 'Alawis and Shi'ah figures. As Ya'qubi writes, Hadi persisted on treating the Shi'ah and Talibis harshly, terrifying them extremely. He curtailed the right granted to them by Mahdi and wrote to the governors and rulers of the regions and cities to pursue and arrest the Talibis.[44](#)

In protest to the caliph's wrongdoings, Husayn ibn 'Ali, who was a descendant of al-Husayn (Shahid Fakh), staged an uprising. In that battle apart from Husayn a large number of the 'Alawis were killed.[45](#) This battle brought severe pressure to Imam al-Kazim ('a). Caliph Hadi threatened the Imam and thus said: "By God! Husayn (Shahid Fakh) staged an uprising against me at the order of Musa ibn Ja'far and he has followed him. It is because nobody could be the Imam and leader of this family except Musa ibn Ja'far. May God kill me if I let him live."[46](#)

Yet, the caliph failed to execute this threat due to the arrival of the time of his demise. During the second century *hijri*, Harun ar-Rashid was considered the most cruel caliph toward the 'Alawis and Shi'ah leaders after Mansur. Harun was despotic in relation to the 'Alawis and treated them cruelly.

He mercilessly killed Yahya ibn 'Abd Allah, Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah's brother, inside the prison after granting him amnesty. Similarly, there is a story recorded in '*Uyun Akhbar ar-Rida* that illustrates the extent of Harun ar-Rashid's cruelty. Hamid ibn Quhtabah at-Ta'i at-Tusi narrates:

One night Harun summoned me and ordered me, thus: "Take this sword and carry out this slave's order." The slave took me in front of a certain house whose door was closed. He opened the door. There were three rooms and a well in that house. He opened the first room and asked twenty *sayyids* (or *sadat*) (descendants of the Prophet (S)) who had long and woven hair to go out. Young and old could be seen among them. He tied this group with chains and manacles. Harun's slave then said to me: "The order of the Commander of the Faithful is for you to kill them."

They are from among the offspring of 'Ali ('a) and Fatimah ('a). I killed one after the other and the slave threw the corpses with heads to the well. Then I opened the second door. In that room there were twenty other people from the offspring of 'Ali and Fatimah. I did to them what I had done to the previous twenty persons.

Thereafter, the slave opened the third room in which there were twenty other *sayyids*. They also met the fate of the previous forty persons through me. Only an old man was left who looked at me and said: "O sinister man! May God annihilate you! On the Day of Judgment, what excuse do you have in front of our forefather, the Messenger of Allah (S)?" At that moment, my hands trembled. The slave looked at me furiously and threatened me. I killed the old man and the slave threw his corpse into the well.[47](#)

Finally, though acknowledging the station of the Imam, Harun ar-Rashid arrested and imprisoned Imam al-Kazim ('a) and in the end martyred him through poisoning.[48](#)

After the martyrdom of Imam al-Kazim ('a) Harun ar-Rashid dispatched to Medina one of his

commanders named Juludi so as to assault the houses of the descendants of Abu Talib, plunder the clothes of women and leave only one dress for every woman. Imam ar-Ridha ('a) stood in front of the door and ordered the women to take their clothes.<sup>49</sup>

Ma'mun being the most clever of the 'Abbasid caliphs devised a new method of controlling the Shi'ah leaders and Imams and that was to monitor the pure Imams ('a). It was precisely one of the main motives of Ma'mun in superficially designating Imam ar-Ridha ('a) as his heir-apparent. In the same token, Ma'mun adopted this policy in a different form in dealing with Imam al-Jawad ('a).

He gave his daughter in marriage to the Imam so that he could monitor the Imam's activities in Medina. The caliphs after Ma'mun adopted the same method and compelled the infallible Imams ('a) to live in the capital of the caliphate. Even the tenth and eleventh Imams ('a) became known as *'Askariyyin* {soldiers} for living in Samarra which was a military city.

## **Lesson 13: Summary**

Shi'ism spread more during the 'Abbasid period than during the 'Umayyad period. During that period, the Shi'ah were spread in both the east and west of the vast Muslim territory. During that time, Shi'ism had found its way among the statesmen, judges and military commanders. Even in Baghdad which was the capital of the 'Abbasid caliphate and influence, the Shi'ah, on account of their great numbers, were deemed a serious threat to the 'Abbasids.

It was for this reason that the caliphs tried their best to monitor and control the Shi'ah Imams. As such, from the time of Imam ar-Ridha ('a) onwards they compelled the pure Imams ('a) to live at the caliphate's capital.

On account of the scattering of the Shi'ah in the various lands during this period, the pure Imams ('a) utilized the institution of deputyship {*wikalah*}.

Finally, Shi'ism reached the height of its growth and spread during the fourth century. It was during this period when the Zaydi and Isma'ili states of the Buyids and Hamdanis were set up.

Of course, the 'Abbasid caliphs differed from one another in their treatment of the Shi'ah. Mansur, Harun and Mutawakkil were among the most cruel caliphs in dealing with the Shi'ah.

## **Lesson 13: Questions**

1. How was the spread of Shi'ism during the 'Abbasid period? And what role did the institution of deputyship {*wikalah*} play?
2. Briefly describe Shi'ism during the fourth century.
3. Did the 'Abbasid caliphs differ from one another in dealing with the Shi'ah?
4. What was the policy of the 'Abbasid caliphs in controlling the Shi'ah?

<sup>1</sup> Khums: literally means one-fifth. According to the Shi'ah school of jurisprudence {fiqh}, this one-fifth tax is

obligatorily levied on every adult Muslim who is financially secure and has surplus in his income out of annual savings, net commercial profits, and all movable and immovable properties which are not commensurable with the needs and social standing of the person. Khums is divided into two equal parts: the Share of the Imam {sahm al-Imam} and the Share of the Sayyids/Sadat (descendants of the Prophet) {sahm as-Sadat}. Accordingly, the Share of the Imam is to be paid to the living Imam, and in the period of Occultation, to the most learned living mujtahid who is the giver's marja' at-taqlid {Source of Emulation}. The other half of the khums, the Share of the Sayyids/Sadat, is to be given to needy pious Sayyids who lack the resources for one's year respectable living in consonance with their various statuses. For more information, see Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, *Khums: An Islamic Tax*, <http://www.al-islam.org/beliefs/practices/khums.html> [13]. {Trans.}

2. Shaykh al-Mufid, *Al-Irshad*, trans. Muhammad Baqir Sa'idi Khurasani, 2nd edition (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-ye Islamiyyeh, 1376 AHS) p. 581.
3. Shaykh as-Saduq, *'Uyun Akhbar ar-Rida*, (Qum: n.p., 1377 AH), vol. 2, p. 135.
4. 'Allamah Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, 2nd edition (Tehran: Al-Maktabah al-Islamiyyah, 1358 AH), vol. 49, p. 155.
5. *Ibid.*, vol. 50, p. 6.
6. Wasif Turki: one of the Turkish commanders.
7. 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, 1st edition (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 4, p. 183.
8. Of course, some authorities are of the opinion that if the evidence proving Abu Salmah as a Shi'ah is a letter addressed to Imam as-Sadiq ('a) regarding the proposal on caliphate, it is seemingly not a sufficient proof as they have considered it a (mere) political move. See Mahdi Pishva'i, *Sireh-ye Pishvayan*, 8th edition (Qum: Mu'assasah-ye Tahqiqati va Ta'limati-ye Imam Sadiq ('a), 1378 AHS), p. 378.
9. Sayyid Muhsin Amin, *A'yan ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar at-Ta'aruf Li'l-Matbu'at, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 191.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 192-193. Of course, Waqidi's being a Shi'ah is a matter of dispute among the scholars.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
12. Asad Haydar, *Al-Imam as-Sadiq wa'l-Madhahib al-Arba'ah*, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1390 AH), vol. 1, p. 226.
13. Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 484.
14. Sa'd ibn 'Abd Allah al-Qummi Ash'ari, *Al-Maqalat wa'l-Firaq*, 2nd edition (Tehran: Markaz-e Intisharat-e 'Ilmi va Farhangi, 1360 AHS) p. 94.
15. See *Sireh-ye Pishvayan*, p. 478.
16. *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 503.
17. Sayyid Majid Pur Aqa'i, *Tarikh-e 'Asr-e Ghaybat* (Qum: Markaz-e Jahani-ye 'Ulum-e Islami, n.d.), p. 84.
18. *Sireh-ye Pishvayan*, p. 573.
19. See *Rijal-e Najjashi* (Qum: Daftar-e Nashr-e Farhang-e Islami, 1404 AH), pp. 344, 797-800, 825, 847.
20. Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Ahmad Muqaddasi, *Ahsan at-Taqa'im fi Ma'rifah al-Aqalim*, trans. Dr. 'Ali Naqi Manzawi (n.p.: Shirkat-e Mu'allifan va Mutarjiman-e Iran, 1361 AHS), vol. 1, p. 136.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 174.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 200.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 286.
27. *Ibid.*, vol. 2. p. 707.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 623.
29. Transoxiana {mawara'u'n-nahr (beyond the (Oxus) river)}: roughly corresponding to present-day Uzbekistan. {Trans.}
30. Taqi ad-Din Abi al-'Abbas Ahmad ibn 'Ali Maqrizi, *Al-Mawa'iz wa'l-I'tibar bi Dhikr al-Khutut wa'l-Athar* (famous as *Al-Khutat al-Maqriziyah*), 1st edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1418 AH), vol. 4, p. 191.
31. *Al-Bidayah wa'n-Nihayah* (Beirut, 1966), vol. 11, p. 243.
32. *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 404.
33. Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Rustam at-Tabari, *Tarikh at-Tabari*, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1408 AH), vol. 5, p. 312.
34. Ibn Athir, *Al-Kamil fi't-Tarikh* (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1402 AH), vol. 7, p. 56.
35. *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 4, p. 147.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 324.
38. Ibn al-Jawzi narrates: When Mansur arrived in Medina from Mecca, he said to Rabi' Hajab, "Summon Ja'far ibn Muhammad. May God kill me if I failed to kill him." Rabi' used to delay summoning the Imam. Finally, with Mansur's insistence, Rabi' summoned the Imam. When the Imam was present, he slowly moved his frankincense. He then went near Mansur and greeted him. Mansur said: "O enemy of God! May you be annihilated! Do you want to cause disorder within my jurisdiction? ...May God kill me if I would not kill you!" Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "Prophet Sulayman (Solomon) reigned yet he was grateful {to God}. Ayyub (Job)

experienced affliction yet he remained patient. Yusuf (Joseph) was oppressed yet he granted forgiveness. You are their successor, and it is more appropriate for you to emulate them.”

Mansur looked down and looked up again and said: “You are one of our nearest of kin.” So he embraced the Imam (‘a), let him (‘a) sit beside him and engaged in a conversation with him (‘a). He then said: “Bring right now the gifts and garment for Ja‘far ibn Muhammad and let him go.”

When the Imam (‘a) left, Rabi‘ followed him and said: “I have been defending you for three days, acting moderately and reservedly. When you were presented to him, I saw that you were silently uttering something, and Mansur failed to harm you. As I am working with the ruler, I need that supplication. How I wish you would teach it to me.

The Imam said: “Say:

اللَّهُمَّ احْرُسْنِي بِعَيْنِكَ الَّتِي لَا تَنَامُ وَ اكْبِنِي بِكَتِفِكَ الَّتِي لَا يُرَامُ أَوْ بِيضَامٍ وَ اعْفِرْ لِي بِقُدْرَتِكَ عَلَيَّ وَ لَا أَهْلِكَ اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ أَكْبَرُ وَ أَجَلُّ مِمَّنْ أَخَافُ وَ أَحْذَرُ. اللَّهُمَّ يَكْ أَدْفَعْ فِي تَحْرِهِ وَ اسْتَعِيدْ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّهِ. “O God! Protect me by Your eye that does not sleep and through the power that is free from affliction, protect me from perdition; for You are the source of my hope. O God! You have bestowed abundant blessings to me for which I failed to express gratitude. Yet, You did not deprive me of those blessings and in many cases You have afflicted me with calamities to which I showed little patience. You deliver me. O God! I seek protection in Your support and power of protection from his mischief and I seek refuge in You from his mischief.”

Tadhkirah al-Khawas (Najaf al-Ashraf: Mansurat al-Matba‘ah al-Haydariyyah wa Maktabha, 1383 AH), p. 344.

[39.](#) Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, Manaqib Al Abi Talib (Qum: Mu‘assasah Intisharat-e ‘Allameh, n.d.), vol. 4, p. 220.

[40.](#) Al-Imam as-Sadiq wa‘l-Madhahib al-Arba‘ah, 3rd edition (1403 AH), vol. 1, p. 46.

[41.](#) Abi ‘Ali al-Fadhl ibn al-Hasan Tabarsi, l‘lam al-Wara bi A‘lam al-Huda (Qum: Mu‘assasah Al al-Bayt Li Ahya‘ at-Turath, 1417 AH), vol. 2, p. 13.

[42.](#) Tarikh al-Ya‘qubi, vol. 2, p. 394.

[43.](#) ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu‘l-Faraj al-Isfahani, Maqatil at-Talibiyyin (Qum: Mansurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), pp. 342-361.

[44.](#) Tarikh al-Ya‘qubi, p. 404.

[45.](#) Maqatil at-Talibiyyin, p. 366.

[46.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 48, p. 151.

[47.](#) ‘Uyun Akhbar ar-Rida (Qum: Dar al-‘Ilm, 1377 AH), p. 109.

[48.](#) l‘lam al-Wara bi A‘lam al-Huda, vol. 2, p. 34.

[49.](#) A‘yan ash-Shi‘ah, p. 29.

## Lesson 14: The Reasons behind the Burgeoning of the Shi‘ah during the Period of ‘Abbasid Caliphate

Shi‘ism experienced ever-increasing expansion during the period of the ‘Abbasid caliphate. This fact had some reasons and factors, some of which are the following:

### 1. The Hashimis and ‘Alawis during the Period of Umayyad Caliphate

During the Umayyad period, the Hashimis—including both the ‘Abbasids and the ‘Alawis—were united, and from the time of Hashim when the ‘Abbasid campaigns started and coordination with the uprising of Zayd and his son, Yahya, they commenced their tasks based on Shi‘ism. As Abu‘l-Faraj al-Isfahani says:

When Walid ibn Yazid, the Umayyad caliph, was killed, and there was disagreement among the Marwanis, the Hashimite propagators and campaigners went to the districts (rural areas) and the first thing they expressed was the superiority of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib and his

progeny as well as their being oppressed.

The 'Abbasid caliph Mansur was one of the first narrators of the *hadith* on Ghadir.<sup>1</sup> As such, when some of the 'Abbasid forces saw that 'Abbasid policy turned against the 'Alawis, they did not accept it and opposed the 'Abbasids. For example, Abu Salmah Khalal, who was a leading campaigner of the 'Abbasids in Iraq,<sup>2</sup> was killed by the 'Abbasids on account of his inclination toward the 'Alawis.<sup>3</sup>

Although this person was not a Shi'ah ideologically, his inclination toward the progeny of the Prophet (S) cannot be denied especially that he belonged to the tribe of Hamdan and was a resident of Kufah.<sup>4</sup>

Among the Qahtani tribes, the tribe of Hamdan was preeminent in terms of inclination toward Shi'ism. As such, Sayyid Muhsin Amin has considered him (Abu Salmah) one of the Shi'ah viziers.<sup>5</sup> Even the 'Abbasids themselves did not refrain initially from expressing love toward the progeny of the Prophet (S):

When the head of Marwan ibn Muhammad, the last Umayyad caliph, was brought in front of Abu'l-'Abbas as-Safah, he performed a long prostration. He then rose up and said: "Praise be to God who made us victorious over you. Now, I do not worry when I shall die because on behalf of Husayn, his brothers and companions, I killed two hundred Umayyads. On behalf of my cousin, Zayd ibn 'Ali, I burned the bones of Hashim. On behalf of my brother, Ibrahim, I killed Marwan.<sup>6</sup>

After the stabilization of the 'Abbasid rule, on the one hand a gap emerged between them, and the progeny of the Prophet (S) and their Shi'ah on the other. From the time of the 'Abbasid caliph Mansur, the 'Abbasids adopted the attitude and policy of the Umayyads toward the progeny of the Prophet (S). In fact, they exceeded the Umayyads in their enmity toward the Prophet's progeny.

## **2. The End of the Umayyad Caliphate and the Succession to Power of the 'Abbasids**

The end of the Umayyad period, the ascension to power of the 'Abbasids, and the disputes and conflicts between them were a good opportunity for Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq ('a) to propagate the fundamentals of Shi'ism considerably and to a great extent. This was especially true in the case of Imam as-Sadiq ('a) who trained students in different fields and sciences.

Many outstanding scholars such as Hashim ibn al-Hakam, Muhammad ibn Muslim, Aban ibn Taghlib, Hisham ibn Salim, Mu'min Taq, Mufadhhal ibn 'Umar, Jabir ibn Hayyan, and others were trained by the Imam. According to Shaykh al-Mufid, their companions all together totaled four thousand approximately in number.<sup>7</sup>

They used to come to Imam as-Sadiq ('a) from the different parts of the vast Muslim territory, bringing bounty and removing their doubts and skepticism. The Imam's students were scattered across various cities and regions and it is natural that they played an important role in the spread of Shi'ism to the various regions that they reached.

### **3. The Migration of the 'Alawis**

One of the most important factors involved in the spread of Shi'ism during the 'Abbasid period was the migration and scattering of the *sadat* and 'Alawis across the different parts of the Muslim territories. Most of them had no faith other than Shi'ism. Although some of them had Zaydi inclination so much so that, according to some sources, some of the *sadat* were even Nasibis,<sup>8</sup> it can certainly be stated that most of the *sadat* had been Shi'ah, their suffering at the hands of anti-Shi'ah governments clearly substantiate this contention.

The *sadat* were scattered in many regions of the Muslim territories stretching from Transoxiana and India to Africa. Although these migrations had started during the time of Hajjaj (ibn Yusuf), they were accelerated during the 'Abbasid period owing to the uprisings of the 'Alawis that mostly ended in failure. The north of Iran and the difficult to reach regions of Gilan and Mazandaran as well as the mountainous places and far-flung lands of Khurasan were considered secure places for the 'Alawis.

For the first time, during the time of Harun ar-Rashid, Yahya ibn 'Abd Allah al-Hasani went to Mazandaran which was then called Tabaristan. Although he held power and flourished in his work, through his vizier Fadhl ibn Yahya who brought a letter, Harun was able to convince him to conclude a peace treaty.<sup>9</sup> Many 'Alawis settled there after him and Shi'ism spread there day by day.

The people there embraced Islam through the 'Alawis so much so that during the second half of the third century AH, the 'Alawi rule in Tabaristan was established by Hasan ibn Zayd al-'Alawi. At the time, it is regarded as a conducive place for the *sadat* just as Ibn Asfandiyar says,

...At the time, so many 'Alawi and Hashimite *sadat* from Hijaz, suburbs of Sham, and Iraq went to him. Verily, he had so much authority there that whenever he would ride, three hundred 'Alawis armed with swords were around him.<sup>10</sup>

When Imam ar-Ridha ('a) was appointed by Ma'mun as his heir-apparent, the brothers and relatives of the Imam went to Iran. As Mar'ashi writes:

Because of the rumor of the heir-apparency spread by Ma'mun about the Imam ('a), many *sadat* came here (Iran) and the Imam had twenty one brothers. This group of the Imam's brothers and {their} sons consisting of Hasani and Husayni *sadat* arrived in the villages of Rey (old Tehran) and Iraq.

And as they heard of the treachery Ma'mun committed against Hadhrat Ridha, they took refuge in the mountainous Daylamistan and Tabaristan. Some of them were martyred and their tombs and shrines are famous and since the people of Mazandaran were directly Shi'ah when they embraced Islam and believed in the goodness of the descendants of the Prophet (S), *sadat* were held in high esteem there.<sup>11</sup>

After the failure of the uprising of Shahid Fakh, Husayn ibn 'Ali al-Hasani during the time of 'Abbasid caliph Hadi, Idris ibn 'Abd Allah, brother of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah went to Africa. The people there rallied around him and he set up the rule of the Idrisis in Maghrib. Although he was poisoned soon after that by 'Abbasid agents, his sons ruled there for a period of about one century.<sup>12</sup>

As such, the *sadat* became familiar with the mentioned settlement. It was for this reason that the 'Abbasid caliph, Mutawakkil, wrote a letter to the governor of Egypt asking him to

expel the 'Alawi *sadat* with the payment of 30 dinars for every male and 15 dinars for every female. They were transferred to Iraq and from there they were sent to Medina.<sup>13</sup>

Muntasir also wrote the following to the governor of Egypt: "No 'Alawi could own property; he could not ride on horse; he could not move away from the capital; and he could not have more than one attendant."<sup>14</sup>

'Alawis could easily occupy a distinguished status among the people to such an extent that they could assume an air of dignity vis-à-vis the ruling authority. As Mas'udi narrates, "Around 270 AH, one of the Talibis named Ahmad ibn 'Abd Allah staged an uprising in the Sa'id region of Egypt. But he was finally defeated and killed by Ahmad ibn Tulun."<sup>15</sup>

In this manner, the 'Alawis were considered to have constituted the most important challenge for the 'Abbasid caliphate. In 284 AH the 'Abbasid caliph Mu'tadhad decided to issue an order for Mu'awiyah to be cursed on the pulpits. In this regard, he wrote an order but his vizier warned him of the public commotion. Mu'tadhad said: "I will brandish my sword in their midst." The vizier replied:

Then, what shall we do with the Talibis who are present everywhere, and with whom the people are sympathetic on account of love for the progeny of the Prophet (S)? This order of yours will praise and accept them, and as the people will hear it, they will tend to be more sympathetic with them (the Talibis).<sup>16</sup>

The 'Alawis were respected by the people in every region they were residing. It was for this reason that after their deaths, the people used to build mausoleums and shrines on their graves as they used to gather around them ('Alawis) during their lifetime. When Muhammad ibn Qasim al-'Alawi went to Khurasan during the caliphate of Mu'tasim, about four thousand people gathered around him after only a short period and housed him inside a very formidable stronghold.<sup>17</sup>

On one hand, the 'Alawis were generally good and pious people while the transgression of the Umayyad and 'Abbasid rulers were known to the people. On the other hand, the oppression experienced by the 'Alawis made them occupy a special place in people's hearts. As Mas'udi has narrated, "During the year when Yahya ibn Zayd was martyred, every baby that was born in Khurasan was named either Yahya or Zayd."<sup>18</sup>

## **The Reasons behind the Emigration of the Sadat**

Three factors can be identified with respect to the migration and scattering of the *sadat* in the different parts of the Muslim territories: (a) the defeat of the 'Alawi uprisings; (b) the pressure exerted by the agents of the government; and (c) the existence of good opportunities for migration.

### **a. The Defeat of the 'Alawi Uprisings**

As a result of the defeat of the uprisings staged by the 'Alawis, they could not stay in Iraq and Hijaz which were accessible to the capital of the caliphate, and they were forced to go to far-flung places and thus save their lives. As Mas'udi says about the scattering of the brothers of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah,

The brothers and children of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah were spread across diverse lands and called on the people to accept his leadership. His son, 'Ali ibn Muhammad, went

to Egypt where he was killed. His other son, 'Abd Allah went to Khurasan where he was imprisoned and later died in prison. His third son, Hasan, went to Yemen where he was also put behind bars and died there. His brother, Musa, went to Mesopotamia. His brother, Yahya, went to Rey and then proceeded to Tabaristan. Another brother of his, Idris, went to Maghrib and the people rallied behind him...[19](#)

### **b. Pressure Exerted by Governments Agents**

In the regions of Hijaz and Iraq which were near the capital, the 'Alawis were constantly under pressure exerted by government agents. As narrated by Mas'udi, Muhammad ibn Qasim al-'Alawi's travel from Kufah to Khurasan prompted the pressure exerted by the agents of the 'Abbasid caliph Mu'tasim.[20](#)

### **c. Existence of Favorable Circumstances**

Another factor for the migration of the 'Alawis was the existence of pleasant opportunities and their good social standing in the regions such as Qum and Tabaristan.

## **Lesson 14: Summary**

The reasons and factors behind the spread of Shi'ism during the 'Abbasid period are as follows:

1. The Hashimis—including both the 'Abbasids and the 'Alawis—were united up to the period of Mansur and the first thing expressed by the 'Abbasid campaigners was the superiority of 'Ali ('a).
2. During the time of the bloody confrontations between the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids, it was a good opportunity for Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq ('a) to undertake considerable activities in propagate the fundamentals of Shi'ism.
3. One of the most important factors for the spread of Shi'ism was the migration of *sadat* and 'Alawis and their scattering across diverse parts of Muslim territories. The *sadat* were spread in most parts of the Muslim territories extending from Transoxiana and India to Africa.

The people of Tabaristan were among those who embraced Islam through the Husayni *sadat* and were Shi'ah from the very beginning.

### **Lesson 14: Questions**

1. Enumerate the factors for the increase in the Shi'ah numbers during the 'Abbasid period.
2. What is the impact of the migration of the 'Alawis upon the spread of Shi'ism?
3. What were the reasons behind the migration of the 'Alawis?

[1.](#) 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin* (Qum: Mansurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 207.

[2.](#) Khatib Baghdadi, *Tarikh Baghdad*, 1st edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1417 AH), vol. 12, p. 340.

[3.](#) After the death of Ibrahim Imam, Abu Salmah Khalal who was a leading campaigner in Iraq and later became a vizier of Safah turned against the 'Abbasids. Thus, he wrote letters to the three prominent figures of the 'Alawis: Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq ('a), 'Abd Allah ibn Hasan ibn Hasan ibn 'Ali ('a), and 'Amr ibn al-Ashraf ibn Zayd al-'Abidin and entrusted these letters to one of his friends with this instruction: "Go first to Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq ('a) and should he accept it, then give the other two letters. And if he does not accept, you

meet ‘Abd Allah Mahdh, and if does not accept too, you have to approach ‘Amr. The messenger of Abu Salmah first went to Imam Ja’far ibn Muhammad (‘a) and gave the letter of Abu Salmah to the Imam. Hadhrat Sadiq (‘a) said: “What is our business with Abu Salmah who is a follower {shi’ah} of others?” The messenger replied: “Kindly read the letter.” Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) asked his attendant to give him a lamp. The Imam then placed the letter just above the lamp and it burned! The messenger asked: “Will you not give a reply?” The Imam retorted: “The reply for it is what you saw!” Thereafter, the messenger of Abu Salmah went to ‘Abd Allah ibn Hasan and handed to him the letter. As soon as ‘Abd Allah finished reading the letter, he kissed it and immediately went to Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) and said: “This letter received through one of our Shi’ah from Khurasan is from Abu Salmah who is inviting us to the caliphate. The Imam said to ‘Abd Allah: “Since when have the people of Khurasan become your Shi’ah? Have you sent Abu Muslim to them? Do you know any of them? You don’t know them and they don’t know you, how did they become your Shi’ah?” ‘Abd Allah said: “Your statement indicates your opinion regarding this matter!” The Imam said: “God knows that I regard it incumbent upon myself to wish well for every Muslim; how could it be that I would not do so toward you? O ‘Abd Allah! Keep aloof from these false ambitions, and you should know that this state will remain in the hands of the ‘Abbasids and that a similar letter has been sent to me. Being displeased, ‘Abd Allah left Imam as-Sadiq (‘a). ‘Amr ibn Zayd al-‘Abidin also acted negatively toward the letter of Abu Salmah. He refused to accept it and said: “I do not know the sender of the letter to whom I should reply.” See Ibn Taqtaqa, *Al-Fakhri* (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1368 AH), p. 154; ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn Mas’udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab* (Beirut: Manshurat Mu’assasah al-‘Alami Li’l-Matbu’at, 1411 AH), vol. 4, p. 280.

4. Sayyid Muhsin Amin, *A’yan ash-Shi’ah* (Beirut: Dar at-Ta’aruf Li’l-Matbu’at, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 190.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 4, pp. 283-284.
7. Shaykh al-Mufid, *Al-Irshad*, trans. Muhammad Baqir Sa’idi Khurasani (n.p.: Kitabfurushi-ye Islamiyyeh, 1367 AHS), p. 525.
8. Ibn ‘Anbah, *‘Umdah at-Talib* (Najaf: Matba’ah al-Haydariyyah, 1961), pp. 71, 200, 253.
9. *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, pp. 389-395.
10. Mar’ashi, *Tarikh Tabaristan wa Rawayan* (Tehran: Nashr-e Kostareh, 1363 AHS), p. 290.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 277-278.
12. *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, pp. 406, 409.
13. Adam Mitch (?), *Tamaddun-e Islami dar Qarn-e Chaharum-e Hijri {Islamic Civilization in the Fourth Century Hijri}*, trans. ‘Ali Rida Dhakawati Qaragzeli (Tehran: Mu’assaseh-ye Intisharat-e Amir Kabir, 1364 AHS), p. 83, citing Kandi, *Al-Walah wa’l-Qadhah*, p. 198.
14. *Ibid.*, quoting from *Al-Walah wa’l-Qadhah*, pp. 203-204.
15. *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 4, p. 326.
16. Abu Ja’far Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Rustam at-Tabari, *Tarikh at-Tabari*, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1408 AH), vol. 5, p. 620-625.
17. *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 4, p. 60.
18. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 236.
19. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 326.
20. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 60.

## Part 4: The Shi’ah and ‘Alawi Uprisings

### Lesson 15: The Shi’ah and ‘Alawi Uprisings during the Period of Umayyad Caliphate

The Shi’ah uprisings and armed confrontations commence at Karbala’ and the ‘Ashura’ movement, but we shall not touch on the topic of Karbala’ for the meantime.

After the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (‘a) in the 60s AH, two Shi’ah uprisings—that of the *Tawwabun* and Mukhtar—took place whose leaders were not ‘Alawis but rather common

pious Shi'ah. (We discussed them at length earlier.)

As these two uprisings were staged by Shi'ah, they boasted a completely Shi'i nature. There is no difference of opinion concerning the leaders of the *Tawwabun* that they were from among the companions of the Prophet ('a) and Shi'ah of the Commander of the Faithful ('a).<sup>1</sup> We have also stated in detail the view of leading Shi'ah figures and *rijal* scholars who unanimously believed in his good intention and the authentic narrations identified the slander against him coined by his opponents.

With respect to the impact of the movements in the spread of Shi'ism, it must be said that the *Tawwabun* movement was short-lived and as such, it had no opportunity to propagate Shi'ism though it was important in terms of the qualitative spread of the Shi'ah faith, deepening the love for the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) in the hearts making the Shi'ah more devoted and firm in their beliefs.

The uprising of Mukhtar, however, was effective in the spread of Shi'ism and Mukhtar was able to add non-Arabs in the ranks of the Shi'ah as it was not like that earlier.<sup>2</sup> Since that time, Shi'ism spread in the eastern part of the Muslim territories, and we could see its peak in the movement of the black-wearing ones and the 'Abbasids.

The chain of 'Alawi uprisings which took place during the latter part of the Umayyad rule had a sort of relationship with the movement of the 'Abbasids because Banu Hashim—including both the 'Alawis and the 'Abbasids—were united during the period of the Umayyad caliphate and there was no conflict between them. In fact, the first two 'Abbasid caliphs, Safah and Mansur, had earlier paid allegiance to Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah who was one of the descendants of Imam al-Hasan ('a).

After the victory of the 'Abbasids, however, the same Muhammad along with a number of his family members was killed by the 'Abbasid caliph Mansur. Throughout the second century AH, the 'Alawi uprisings were related to one another more on the basis of the Zaydi ideology though the 'Abbasids capitalized greatly on the uprising of Zayd. As Amir 'Ali, one of the contemporary historians, says in this regard:

The death of Zayd strengthened the 'Abbasid campaigners and confirmed the campaigns in full swing at the time for the caliphate of the descendants of 'Abbas. That barrier of probable competition was removed from their way and it turned well suitable with the trend of the events related to Abu Muslim such that it was built for the overthrow of the Umayyads.<sup>3</sup>

## **a. The Uprising of Zayd**

Zayd, the noble son of Imam as-Sajjad ('a) and brother of Imam al-Baqir ('a) rose up and staged an uprising against the cruelties of the Umayyad caliph Hashim and his agents. Zayd who went to Damascus to complain against Yusuf ibn 'Amru, the then governor of Iraq, was belittled and reproached by Hashim, and upon his return from Sham, he was surrounded by the Shi'ah in Kufah, urging him to rise up against the Umayyads. But because of the wound he suffered at the heat of his fight, his uprising did not succeed and he himself attained martyrdom.<sup>4</sup>

Regarding the personality and uprising of Zayd, various narrations have been transmitted with a group of narrators who reproach him. The Shi'ah scholars and authorities, however, are of the opinion that Zayd was a noble and meritorious man and strong evidence fails to

prove his deviation. Shaykh al-Mufid has this to say concerning him:

Many of the Shi'ah regard him as Imam and the reason for this is that Zayd rose up and called on the people for the pleasure of Muhammad's progeny. The people thought that he was referring to himself though it was not the case because he knew that his brother, Imam al-Baqir ('a), was the rightful Imam and the Imam also introduced to him the Imamate {*imamah*} of his son, Imam as-Sadiq ('a).<sup>5</sup>

After reporting the narrations related to Zayd, 'Allamah Majlisi also writes, thus: Be it known that the reports concerning the status of Zayd are varied and contradictory but there are more reports expressing his dignity, grandeur and merit and that he had no incorrect assertions and most of the Shi'ah '*ulama*' have praised him. Therefore, it is appropriate for us to regard him positively and avoid reproaching him.<sup>6</sup>

Ayatullah al-Khu'i thus says about Zayd: "The narrations praising Zayd and indicating his dignity and grandeur and that he rose up to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil are much benefited while the narrations vilifying him are weak {*dha'if*}."<sup>7</sup>

Ample proof and evidence bear witness to the fact that Zayd's uprising had the secret permission and tacit approval of Imam as-Sadiq ('a). One of these proofs was the statement of Imam ar-Ridha ('a) in response to Ma'mun, when the Imam said:

My father Musa ibn Ja'far narrated that he heard his father Ja'far ibn Muhammad to have said: "...Zayd consulted me about his uprising and I said to him, 'My dear uncle, if you like to be that person who shall be hung in Kinasah,<sup>8</sup> then that is your way'." When Zayd left Ja'far ibn Muhammad, Ja'far said: "Woe to him who will hear the call of Zayd but will not respond to it."<sup>9</sup>

Yes, Zayd was a true Shi'ah and one of those who believed in the Imamate of Imam as-Sadiq ('a). As he used to say,

In every period, one person from among us, *Ahl al-Bayt*, is the proof {*hujjah*} of God and the proof at our time is my nephew, Ja'far ibn Muhammad. He who follows him shall never be misled and he who opposes him shall never be guided.<sup>10</sup>

Concerning the fact that Zayd was not regarding himself the Imam and not calling the people toward himself, Imam as-Sadiq ('a) says: May God have mercy upon my uncle Zayd. If he only emerged victorious, he would remain faithful (to his promise). My uncle Zayd was calling the people toward the leadership of the person chosen from among the progeny of Muhammad and I am that person.<sup>11</sup>

In particular, Imam as-Sadiq ('a) assumed the guardianship of the family of Zayd after his martyrdom,<sup>12</sup> and he used to attend to the families of those who were martyred alongside Zayd and once distributed one thousand dinars among them.<sup>13</sup>

It can be said, therefore, that Zayd's uprising, like that of the *Tawwabun* and Mukhtar, was completely Shi'i and justifiable; that it was against oppression and for the purpose of enjoining that which is good and forbidding that which is evil; and that his method was separate from that of the Zaydi sect.

## **[b. The Uprising of Yahya ibn Zayd](#)**

After Zayd's martyrdom in 121 AH, his son Yahya continued his father's struggle. He went to Khurasan through Mada'in and remained in disguise for sometime in the city of Balkh until he was arrested by Nasr ibn Sayyar.

He was imprisoned for sometime until he was able to escape after the death of the Umayyad caliph Hashim, and many people from among the Shi'ah of Khurasan gathered around him. He headed toward Nayshabur and engaged in a battle with its governor, 'Umar ibn Zurarah al-Qasri and defeated him. But, at last, in 125 AH at Jawzjan, he was wounded in the forehead and was killed at the battle arena while his forces dispersed.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast to Zayd's uprising, his son Yahya's uprising was tainted by Zaydism. This fact can be discerned from the dialogue that took place between him and Mutawakkil ibn Harun, one of the companions of Imam as-Sadiq ('a), in which he somehow expressed his belief in the Imamate of his father while regarding himself as his father's successor. In addition to other requisites, he considered fighting by sword as a requisite of Imamate.<sup>15</sup>

It is at this point that the Zaydi sect takes form and its way becomes separate from that of the Shi'ah Imamiyyah and Ithna Ash'ari. The followers of the Zaydi sect do not even refer to the infallible Imams ('a) on juristic questions {*masa'il al-fiqhiyyah*}.

## **Lesson 15: Summary**

The uprisings of the Shi'ah begun with the movement of 'Ashura'. The uprisings of the *Tawwabun* and that of Mukhtar were obviously staged to take vengeance for the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a). None of the leaders of these two uprisings was an 'Alawi. Rather, they were distinguished Shi'ah and they had a great impact on the spread of Shi'ism.

The uprising of Zayd ibn 'Ali was against the cruelties of Hashim, the tyrant Umayyad caliph. Zayd was a noble and meritorious person, and he rose up in order to enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong. Imam as-Sadiq ('a) has validated him.

Yahya ibn Zayd went to Khurasan after the martyrdom of his father and rose up there against the Umayyads, but he, like his father, was wounded in the battle and died. The uprising of Yahya, in contrast to that of his father, was completely Zaydi in nature.

## **Lesson 15: Questions**

1. When did the Shi'ah uprisings commence?
2. What motivated the uprising of Zayd?
3. How did the uprising of Yahya differ with that of Zayd?

1. See Dr. Sayyid Husayn Ja'fari, *Tashayyu' dar Masir-e Tarikh*, trans. Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Ayatullahi, 9th edition (Tehran: Daftar-e Nashr-e Farhang-e Islami, 1378 AHS), pp. 268-273.
2. Rasul Ja'fariyan, *Tarikh-e Tashuyyu' dar Iran az Aghaz ta Qarn-e Hashtum-e Hijri*, 5th edition (Qum: Shirkat-e Chap wa Nashr-e Sazman-e Tablighat-e Islami, 1377 AHS), p. 76.
3. Amir 'Ali, *Tarikh-e Gharb va Islam {History of the West and Islam}*, trans. Fakhr Da'i Gilani, 3rd edition (Tehran: Intisharat-e Ganjineh, 1366 AHS), pp. 162-163.
4. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab* (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lamy Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, pp. 228, 230.
5. Shaykh al-Mufid, *Al-Irshad*, trans. Muhammad Baqir Sa'idi Khurasani (n.p.: Kitabfurushi-ye Islamiyyeh, 1367 AHS), p. 520.

6. Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, 2nd edition (Tehran: Al-Maktabah al-Islamiyyah, 1394 AH), vol. 46, p. 205.
7. Sayyid Abu'l-Qasim al-Khu'i, Mu'jam Rijal al-Hadith (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), pp. 102-103.
8. Kinasah had been one of the places in Kufah. See Yaqut ibn 'Abd Allah, Mu'jam al-Buldan, 1st edition (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1417 AH), vol. 4, p. 153.
9. Shaykh as-Saduq, 'Uyun Akhbar ar-Rida, 1st edition (Beirut: Ma'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1404 AH), vol. 1, p. 225, section {bab} 25, hadith 1.
10. Shaykh as-Saduq, Al-Amali (Qum: Al-Matba'ah, 1373 AH), p. 325.
11. Shaykh at-Tusi, Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal (Rijal Kashi), researched by Sayyid Mahdi Raja'i (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt at-Turath, 1404 AH), p. 2 and see Mahdi Pishva'i, Sireh-ye Pishvayan, 8th edition (Qum: Mu'assaseh-ye Tahqiqati va Ta'limati-ye Imam Sadiq ('a), 1378 AHS), pp. 407-409.
12. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, Maqatil at-Talibiyyin (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 331.
13. Al-Irshad, p. 345.
14. Ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, pp. 326-327, 332.
15. Mutawakkil ibn Harun says: "I paid a visit to Yahya ibn Zayd when he went to Khurasan after his father was killed. I greeted him and he asked where I come from and I replied that I come from Hajj pilgrimage. Then he asked about the condition of his relatives and cousins in Medina and he particularly asked about the condition of Ja'far ibn Muhammad ('a). I also told him about the condition of the Imam and his lamentation for his (Yahya's) father Zayd. He then said: 'My uncle, Muhammad ibn 'Ali prevented my father from waging war against the Umayyads and relayed to him the would-be end of my father's plan. Did you pay a visit to my cousin, Ja'far ibn Muhammad?' 'Yes,' I retorted. He asked, 'Did you hear him telling something about my activity?' 'Yes,' I responded. He said, 'What did he say about me? Please inform me.' I said: 'May I be your ransom! I do not like to tell you that which I have heard from him.' He said, 'Are you frightening me with death? You tell whatever you have heard.' I said: 'I heard the Imam saying that you shall be killed and be hung in the same manner that your father was killed and hanged.' So, the color of his face changed and said: 'Yamhu'llah ma yasha' wa yuthabbit wa 'inda umm al-kitab. O Mutawakkil! God, the Exalted, confirmed His religion through us and gave us knowledge and sword, and we possess both of them. But our cousins possess knowledge only.' I said: 'May I be your ransom! The people incline more toward your cousin Ja'far than you.' He said: 'My uncle, Muhammad ibn 'Ali and his son, Ja'far, are calling the people toward life while we call them toward death.' I said: 'O son of the Messenger of Allah! Who is more knowledgeable, you or he?' He lowered his head for sometime and then raised it, saying: 'All of us have knowledge. The only difference is that that which we know is also known to them and that which they know is not known to us.' He then asked me: 'Have you recorded something from my cousin?' 'Yes,' I replied. He said: 'Show (them) to me.' I showed to him some of the hadiths of Imam as-Sadiq to him and some of the supplications in Sahifah as-Sajjadiyyah..." Sahifah al-Kamilah as-Sajjadiyyah, trans. 'Ali-Naqi Faydh al-Islam (n.p.: Intisharat-e Faydh Islam, n.d.), pp. 9-12.

## Lesson 16: The Shi'ah and 'Alawi Uprisings during the Period of 'Abbasid Caliphate

The uprisings during the period of the 'Abbasid caliphate up to the first half of the fourth century AH can be divided into two—the well-organized and programmed Zaydiyyah uprisings and the earlier unplanned and sporadic uprisings.

### The Uprisings of the Zaydis

The Zaydis who constituted a large portion of the Shi'ah population during the first, second and three centuries AH and regarded the right to caliphate and Imamate as belonging to the descendants of Fatimah ('a) and the 'Abbasids as usurpers, staged well-organized, cohesive and preplanned uprisings some of which had led to the establishment of

governments in places such as Tabaristan, Maghrib and Yemen.

The Zaydis regarded Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah and Ibrahim as among the Zaydi Imams because Yahya ibn Zayd had designated them as his successors. It is here that close relationship emerged between the Zaydis and the descendants of Zayd, on the one hand, and the offspring of Imam al-Hasan ('a), the so-called Banu al-Hasan, on the other.

Ibrahim ibn 'Abd Allah, who was his brother's successor, Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah and hoisted the banner of revolution against the 'Abbasids in Basrah, introduced another son of Zayd, 'Isa, as his successor. 'Isa fled after the assassination of Ibrahim and died in secrecy during the caliphate of the 'Abbasid caliph Mahdi.<sup>1</sup>

After the death of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah and Ibrahim, the Zaydis failed to agree on the leadership of a particular person and they were always looking for a brave and pugnacious Imam from the descendants of Fatimah ('a) who could lead them. But until 301 AH they were not able to agree on the identity of the Imam until such time that Hasan ibn 'Ali al-Hasani, known as Atrush, staged an uprising in Khurasan in that year, went to the regions of Gilan and Mazandaran, and succeeded in settling the task of the Zaydis.<sup>2</sup>

It is for this reason that the 'Abbasids were harsh against the Zaydis and were trying to eliminate the individuals who were capable of leading them, particularly the descendants of Zayd among them. To this end, the 'Abbasids hired spies and set up rewards for the capture of such individuals.<sup>3</sup> For instance, when 'Isa ibn Zayd passed away secretly, Harun arrested and imprisoned his son, Ahmad ibn 'Isa merely on the basis of suspicion.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, the distinguished men among the Banu al-Hasan who were regarded as leaders of uprisings did not follow the Zaydi way and modus operandi and were not much attached to Zaydiyyah fundamental beliefs. For this reason, when conditions during battles became unfavorable and defeat seemed probable, the Zaydis would abandon their leaders in the battle arena and ending their uprisings in failure (similar to what happened to Yahya ibn 'Abd Allah).

Idris, Yahya's brother, was the only one among them who was able to achieve relative victory<sup>5</sup> and that was because he fled to Africa which was far from the 'Abbasids' reach. He campaigned against the Abbasids there and succeeded in forming a government.<sup>6</sup>

Among the leaders of the uprisings who did not accept the fundamentals of the Zaydi belief and follow the way and method of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) was Yahya ibn 'Abd Allah, brother of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah, who went to Khurasan after Muhammad's defeat and from there he headed toward the land of Daylam— present day Gilan and Mazandaran—but the ruler there, who was not a Muslim yet, wanted to arrest Yahya and turn him over to the agents of Harun on account of his threats.

At the time, Yahya was compelled to seek the protection of Fadhl Barmaki, Harun's vizier. Fadhl also offered him protection, but instead of protection and security, he was imprisoned in Baghdad until his death.<sup>7</sup> He was one of the students trained by Imam as-Sadiq ('a) and whenever narrating a *hadith* from the Imam, he would say: "My dear Ja'far ibn Muhammad thus said..."<sup>8</sup>

Finally, since he was following the way and method of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) in terms of jurisprudence {*fiqh*}, the Zaydis opposed him and distanced themselves from him. So, he was forced to surrender himself to Fadhl ibn Yahya, Harun's vizier.<sup>9</sup>

## **The Uprising of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah**

The zenith of the 'Alawi uprising was during the second century AH. One of the most noted of these uprisings was during the time of the 'Abbasid caliph Mansur which was led by Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah. His activity had started prior to the victory of the 'Abbasids and with the exception of Imam as-Sadiq ('a), the Banu Hashim generally pledged allegiance to him.

Even the Sunni scholars and jurists such as Abu Hanifah, Muhammad ibn 'Ajlun, the jurist of Medina, Abu Bakr ibn Abi Sabrah, 'Abd Allah ibn Ja'far, Hashim ibn 'Urwah, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar, Wasil ibn 'Ata', 'Amru ibn 'Ubayd, among others swore allegiance to him, attributing to him the transmitted Prophetic sayings about the uprising of al-Mahdi ('a).[10](#)

But his uprising during the period of the 'Abbasids was defeated because it was launched prematurely. In Basrah his brother Ibrahim's uprising also ended in failure due to the treachery of the Zaydis, but his brothers were scattered and this state of affairs continued up to the time of Harun. Idris ibn 'Abd Allah fled to Maghrib and he was accepted there by the people.

Yet, he was in the end poisoned by the agents of Harun. After him, his followers installed his young child to replace him naming him "Idris ath-Thani". For sometime, the government of the Idrisis flourished in North Africa. Yahya, another one of Muhammad's brother, went to Tabaristan after his death.

Yet another one of Muhammad's brother named Musa ibn 'Abd Allah fled to the north of Iraq and Mesopotamia. Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah's sons, named 'Ali, 'Abd Allah and Hasan, went to Egypt, India and Yemen, respectively, and were for some time the source of concern for the 'Abbasid caliphate.[11](#)

## **The Uprising of Ibn Tabataba'i al-Hasani**

After the death of Harun and the conflict over the issue of succession between his two sons, Amin and Ma'mun, the Shi'ah taking advantage of this opportunity staged more uprisings with the uprisings of the 'Alawis reaching their climax at this time. During that period, the whole of Iraq (with the exception of Baghdad), Hijaz, Yemen, and south of Iran were detached from the 'Abbasid control owing to the existence of competent military commanders such as Abu's-Saraya on the side of the 'Alawis.[12](#)

The army of Abu's-Saraya shattered every contingent they encountered and overrun every city they visited. It is said that in the battle fought by Abu's-Saraya two hundred thousand soldiers of the 'Abbasid caliph were killed although the interval between the day of the uprising and the day when he was beheaded was not more than 10 months.

Even in Basrah which was the demographic concentration of the Uthmanis, the 'Alawis earned support such that Zayd an-Nar staged an uprising in the mentioned city. In Mecca and the districts of Hijaz, Muhammad ibn Ja'far known as Dibaj who was called "*Amir al-Mu'minin*" {Commander of the Faithful} staged an uprising. In Yemen Ibrahim ibn Musa ibn Ja'far revolted against the 'Abbasid caliph.

Muhammad ibn Sulayman ibn Dawud ibn Hasan rose up in Medina. In Wasit where most of the people inclined toward the 'Uthmanis, there was the uprising of Ja'far ibn Zayd ibn 'Ali

as well as that of Husayn ibn Ibrahim ibn Hasan ibn 'Ali.

In Mada'in Muhammad ibn Isma'il ibn Muhammad launched a rebellion. In sum, there was no place (in the Muslim territories) where the 'Alawis by their own initiatives or at the request of the people did not revolt against the 'Abbasids. It went to the extent that the people of Mesopotamia and Sham, who were known for having cooperation with the Umayyads and the descendants of Marwan, gathered around Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-'Alawi, the intimate friend of Abu's-Saraya, and in a letter to him they wrote that they have been waiting for his envoy to deliver his message.[13](#)

## **The Uprising of Hasan ibn Zayd**

In the year 250 AH during the caliphate of Musta'in, an 'Abbasid caliph, Hasan ibn Zayd, who was formerly residing in Rey, went to the districts of Tabaristan, called on the people to seek the pleasure of Prophet Muhammad's ('a) progeny, took control of the regions in Tabaristan and Jurjan after a series of skirmishes,[14](#) and founded the government of the 'Alawis in Tabaristan which lasted up to 345 AH.[15](#)

Throughout his two decades of rule, Hasan ibn Zayd overran the regions of Rey, Zanjan and Qazwin many times. During the same year of his uprising, he dispatched one of the 'Alawis named Muhammad ibn Ja'far to Rey who after sometime was captured by the Tahiris.[16](#) In 251 AH he sent Husayn Ahmad al-'Alawi who rose up in Qazwin and expelled the agents of the Tahiris.[17](#)

Similarly, Hasan ibn Zayd's brother, Husayn ibn Zayd overran the regions of Larijan and Qasran, north of present day Tehran, and earned the allegiance of the people there for his brother.[18](#) As Tabari says regarding the events in 50 AH, "In addition to the government in Tabaristan, the government of the region of Rey extending roughly as far as Hamedan was under the control of Hasan ibn Zayd."[19](#)

As such, in addition to the northern regions of Iran which were near the sphere of influence of Hasan ibn Zayd and in which uprisings took place in his name, the 'Alawis in Iraq,[20](#) Sham[21](#) and Egypt[22](#) found courage too, gathering the people around them and staging uprisings, until such time that in 270 AH Hasan ibn Zayd passed away.

After his death his brother, Muhammad ibn Zayd succeeded him and ruled Saman until 287 AH. Finally, in that year (287 AH) he attained martyrdom in a battle between him and Muhammad ibn Harun, a Samanide commander.[23](#)

In 287 AH, after the martyrdom of Muhammad ibn Zayd, Nasir Kabir know as Atrush in the region of Gilan and Daylam rose up in the midst of the people, calling them to Islam and ruled there for 14 years[24](#) until such time that he went to Tabaristan in 301 AH and took control of government there.[25](#)

## **The Uprising of Yahya ibn al-Husayn**

In 288 AH Yahya ibn Husayn al-'Alawi, known as "*Al-Hadi ila'l-Haqq*" {The Guide toward the Truth}, staged an uprising in Hijaz and the Zaydis gathered around him. On the same year he entered San'a with the cooperation of Yemeni tribes, and was addressed as the Zaydi Imam.

Although he had skirmishes with Yemeni tribes, in the end he was able to take control of

the region and establish a government. Yet, in 298 AH he died from poisoning. He had been remembered as one of the greatest Zaydi figures. In terms of knowledge and learning, he also had an excellent station. As such, the Zaydi sect in Yemen became known with his name: "Hadawiyyah".<sup>26</sup>

His sons were Zaydi Imams and rulers of Yemen.<sup>27</sup> The leadership and rule of Zaydiyyah in Yemen continued through the children and grandchildren of "Al-Hadi ila'l-Haqq" until 1382 AH when Arab republicanism in Yemen was established.

## **Lesson 16: Summary**

The Zaydis during the first three centuries AH constituted a large number of the Shi'ah, and they staged regional uprisings which led to the formation of governments.

The leadership of the Zaydis was transferred from the line of Yahya ibn Zayd to the grandchildren of Imam al-Hasan ('a). As such, they were always leading the uprisings in spite of the fact that they did not believe in the Zaydi fundamental beliefs.

One of the highlights of the 'Alawi uprisings took place during the time of the 'Abbasid caliph Mansur and was led by Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah. The second one was during the time of Ma'mun when on account of the existence of military commanders such as Abu's-Saraya, the 'Alawis attained success after success. The third one was after 250 AH when the 'Alawis of Tabaristan were able to set up a government, with which other 'Alawis found courage to stage uprisings in various regions.

## **Lesson 16: Questions**

1. Describe the Zaydi uprisings.
2. What is the basis of the uprising of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah?
3. When did the uprising of Ibn Tabataba'i take place?
4. In what year did the uprising of the 'Alawis of Tabaristan happen?

<sup>1.</sup> 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin* (Qum: Mansurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 345.

<sup>2.</sup> 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab* (Beirut: Mansurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 4, pp. 393, 394; Shahrastani, *Kitab al-Milal wa'n-Nihal* (Qum: Mansurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1364 AHS), vol. 1, p. 139.

<sup>3.</sup> For example, after receiving the news of Ahmad ibn 'Isa's escape from prison, Harun (ar-Rashid) commissioned a certain person named Ibn Kurdiyyah to go to the districts of Kufah and Basrah, to feign Shi'ism, and distribute money among the Shi'ah and Zaydis so as to become informed of Ahmad ibn 'Isa's hiding place. He was able to identify this hiding place through much effort and distribution of large amounts of money, but in the end, Ahmad was not arrested. *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, pp. 492, 496.

<sup>4.</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5.</sup> Idris ibn 'Abd Allah, brother of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah, participated in the uprising of Husayn ibn 'Ali al-Hasani Shahid Fakh which took place during the time of the 'Abbasid caliph Hadi. After Husayn's defeat, he went to Egypt disguised among Hajj pilgrims (on their way back home) and from there he proceeded toward Maghrib. In Maghrib people gathered around him, and thus he acquired power and set up a government, but a certain person poisoned him at the order of the 'Abbasid caliph Harun. Thereafter, people named his small child "Idris". When Idris II grew up, he ruled there and the Idrisi rule in Maghrib lasted for about one century. *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 326.

<sup>6.</sup> *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, pp. 406-408.

<sup>7.</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 393.

8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., pp. 392-393.
10. Ibid., pp. 251, 254-255, 347.
11. Murawwij adh-Dhahab, vol. 3, p. 326.
12. Ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 445.
13. Maqatil at-Talibiyin, pp. 435-436.
14. Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Rustam Tabari, Tarikh at-Tabari, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1408 AH), vol. 5, p. 364.
15. Jalal ad-Din 'Abd ar-Rahman Suyuti, Tarikh al-Khulafa' (Qum: Intisharat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1411 AH), p. 525.
16. Tarikh at-Tabari, vol. 5, p. 365.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., pp. 36, 395, 430.
21. Murawwij adh-Dhahab, p. 327.
22. Ibid., p. 326.
23. Maqatil at-Talibiyin, p. 542.
24. Murawwij adh-Dhahab, p. 283.
25. Ibid., p. 327.
26. See 'Ali Rabbani Gulpaygani, Firq va Madhahib-e Kalami, 1st edition (Qum: Markaz-e Jahani-ye 'Ulum-e Islami, 1377 AHS), vol. 1, p. 134.
27. Tarikh al-Khulafa', p. 525.

## Lesson 17: Sporadic Uprisings

Most of these uprisings were staged without prior organization and based on individual decisions against the tyranny of caliphs and rulers toward the Shi'ah and 'Alawis. Mostly reactionary and intransigent in nature, the most important of these uprisings were the following:

### [a. The Uprising of Shahid Fakh](#)

It was Husayn ibn 'Ali al-Hasani (known as Shahid Fakh) who revolted during the caliphate of the 'Abbasid caliph Hadi. His uprising was against the extreme cruelties of the caliph of the time vis-à-vis the Shi'ah and 'Alawis. Narrates Ya'qubi, "The 'Abbasid caliph Musa al-Hadi was pursuing the Talibis. He seriously threatened them, curtailing their stipends and grants, and wrote to {the rulers of} the different regions and districts to be harsh toward the Talibis."<sup>1</sup>

'Abbasid caliph Hadi had also appointed as ruler of Medina a person from among the descendants of 'Umar who was very harsh against the Talibis, interrogating them daily. It was in protest of these cruelties that Husayn ibn 'Ali al-Hasani rose up and ordered the recital of "*hayya 'ala khayri'l-'amal*" {"Come to the best of deeds"} in the *adhan* {call to prayer} in Medina, asking the people to give their allegiance on the basis of the Book of God and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (S), and called on them to the leadership of the chosen one from the progeny of Prophet Muhammad (S).

His policy was agreed upon by Imam al-Kazim ('a) though the Imam said that he will be killed.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, the Zaydis kept aloof from him and he along with less than 500 men stood against the 'Abbasid army under the command of Sulayman ibn Abi Ja'far, and in the end, he and a number of his companions attained martyrdom in a place between Mecca and Medina called "Fakh".<sup>3</sup>

Imam ar-Ridha ('a) said, "besides Karbala' there was no tragedy more severe and tragic than {the tragedy in} Fakh."<sup>4</sup>

In general, 'Alawis leaders, with the exception of Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah Nafs az-Zakiyyah, did not possess popularity. The Imami Shi'ah and companions of the pure Imams ('a), with the exception of only a few, did not participate in those uprisings.

## **b. The Uprising of Muhammad ibn al-Qasim**

Muhammad ibn al-Qasim's revolt had taken place in 219 AH. He was a descendant of Imam as-Sajjad ('a), a resident of Kufah, and had been regarded as one of the ascetic, devoted and pious 'Alawis and *sadat*. The reason behind his uprising was the pressure exerted by Mu'tasim against him and as such, he was compelled to leave Kufah for Khurasan. As Mas'udi says,

In this year, that is, 219 AH, Mu'tasim threatened Muhammad ibn al-Qasim. He was truly ascetic and pious and when Mu'tasim threatened him, he went to Khurasan. He stayed in the cities of Khurasan such as Marv, Sarkhis, Taleqan, and Nasa.<sup>5</sup>

As narrated by Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, a population of around forty thousand men gathered around him. In spite of this, his uprising did not succeed and this huge population deserted him and in the end, he was arrested by the Tahiris, sent to Samarra and imprisoned.<sup>6</sup> Of course, he was freed by the Shi'ah and his followers, but after that there was no news of him and he passed away secretly.<sup>7</sup>

## **c. The Uprising of Yahya ibn 'Umar at-Talibi**

Yahya ibn 'Umar at-Talibi, a descendant of Ja'far ibn Abi Talib at-Tayyar, enjoyed an unprecedented position among the people of Kufah on account of his asceticism and piety. Because of the cruelty and belittlement of the 'Abbasid caliph Mutawakkil and the Turkish soldiers against him, he was forced to rise up in Kufah against them and when he was taking control of the helm of affairs, he implemented justice and equity. As such, he earned extraordinary popularity in Kufah, but his uprising was thwarted by Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Tahir. The people were in commotion when they were mourning for him.<sup>8</sup> As Mas'udi says, "People from near and far recited elegies for him, and the young and old cried for him."<sup>9</sup>

And as narrated by Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, in terms of elegy, none of the 'Alawis who had attained martyrdom during the 'Abbasid period equaled him in the number of poems recited for him.<sup>10</sup>

## **Factors behind the Failure of the Uprisings**

Two factors behind the failure of these uprisings can be identified: weakness in leadership and lack of coordination and cohesion of the forces. In most cases, the leaders of these movements had no proper plan or program and their activity was not based on the correct Islamic standards. As such, most of these revolts were not endorsed by the infallible Imams ('a).

If ever some other uprisings whose leaders were competent figures ended in failure, it was because their plan and program were such that their defeat was predictable. Therefore, if

the infallible Imam of the time would openly endorse them, in case of the failure of the uprising, the basis of Shi'ism and Imamate and the principal nucleus of the Shi'ah forces will be in jeopardy.

On the other hand, the forces of the uprisings generally lacked coordination and cohesion. Although there were sincere and true Shi'ah among them who remained faithful to the objective up to the point of death, most of these people did not believe in their objective, or they did not agree with the leaders of the 'Alawis, and most of them abandoned their commander and leader at the scene of the battle. In this regard, 'Allamah Ja'far Murtadha writes:

The reason behind these failures is nothing except that the Zaydi uprisings were political movements par excellence, and their only peculiarity was that they were campaigning to follow anyone from among the descendants of the Prophet (S) who would brandish his sword against the government, and they lack the intellectual purity and ideologically strong beliefs emanating from the profundity of the soul and depth of conscience.

These (uprisings) were based on such a stupid feeling and shallow cultural awareness which are not even an amalgamation of emotion with reasoning and conscience that could constitute a firm foundation of commitment and mission. On account of this, these (uprisings) were sucked down into the whirlpool (of breakdown) and many lives were wasted along their path. Rather, contrary to the factors of defeat which stem from within the revolutionary forces, relying on such an emotional and intellectual force is like the thirty one's reliance on a mirage.

And it is exactly this point that clearly shows how a people would seriously and decisively encounter events and when the water was already turning the wheels of mill and the time for harvest nigh, they would incline toward "peaceful" and "quiet" life.[11](#)

## **Lesson 17: Summary**

The sporadic uprisings were mostly without any prior planning, and were undertaken with one individual's decision. They were usually staged as a form of reaction to the cruelties of the tyrant caliphs and rulers. Among these uprising was that of Husayn ibn 'Ali al-Hasani known as Shahid Fakh which was against the extreme harshness and cruelties of the 'Abbasid caliph Hadi.

On account of the pressure exerted on him by the 'Abbasid caliph Mu'tasim, Muhammad ibn al-Qasim who was one of the ascetic and pious 'Alawis, was compelled to go to Khurasan and stage an uprising there.

The revolt of Yahya ibn 'Umar at-Talibi was also the results of the tyranny of the agents of the 'Abbasid caliph Mutawakkil.

And as to why most of the uprisings of the 'Alawis ended in failure, one must seek the reasons behind this in the weakness of leadership and the lack of cohesion of the forces.

## **Lesson 17: Questions**

1. Briefly describe the sporadic uprisings.
2. What are the reasons behind the failures of these uprisings?

1. Ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 404.
2. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, Maqatil at-Talibiyin (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 372.
3. Ibid., pp. 380-381.
4. Sayyid Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman Kiya'i-Gilani, Siraj al-Ansab (Qum: Manshurat Maktabah Ayatullah al-'Uzma al-Mar'ashi an-Najafi, 1409 AH), p. 66.
5. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Mas'udi, Murawwij adh-Dhahab (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 4, p. 60.
6. Maqatil at-Talibiyin, pp. 464-467.
7. Murawwij adh-Dhahab, vol. 4, p. 60.
8. Ibid., p. 160.
9. Ibid.
10. Maqatil at-Talibiyin, p. 511.
11. Sayyid Ja'far Murtada al-Amili, Zindigani-ye Siyasi-ye Imam Jawad ('a), trans. Sayyid Muhammad Husayni, 8th edition (Qum: Islamic Publications Office affiliated to the Society of Teachers of the Islamic Seminary in Qum, 1375 AHS), p. 19.

## Part 5: The Geographical Expansion of Shi'ism

### Lesson 18: The Geographical Expansion of Shi'ism

It is certain that the first center of Shi'ism had been the city of Medina and the pioneering Shi'ah among the companions {*sahabah*} of the Prophet (S) lived in that city. During the reign of the first three caliphs, the Shi'ah *sahabah* were scattered in the different cities and regions, with some of them holding political and military positions.

In this regard, 'Allamah Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah writes:

The Shi'ah *sahabah* played a pivotal role in the propagation and spread of Shi'ism. Wherever they went, they were calling on the people toward Shi'ism within the framework of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and through patience and fortitude, and on account of their companionship with the Prophet (S), they were held in high esteem and regard by the people, and their speech had tremendous impact.<sup>1</sup>

Even the place like Jabal 'Amil (in present day Lebanon) which was part of Sham, Mu'awiyah's sphere of influence, would become one of the most important centers of Shi'ism by the grace of the presence of the great companion of the Prophet (S), Abu Dharr (al-Ghiffari).<sup>2</sup>

During the latter part of the caliphate of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, many Shi'ah were living in the Muslim territories such that the name of 'Ali ('a) was always mentioned for caliphate. For this reason, 'Uthman used to send requests to 'Ali ('a) during rebel gatherings in Madina, asking him to stay out of Medina for sometime and to go to his farm in Yanbu' with the hope that the rebels would be motivated less.<sup>3</sup>

There were many Shi'ah in Iraq especially during the time of 'Uthman. For example, when

the Shi'ah of Basrah—in spite of the fact that the city was under the occupation and influenced by the *Jamal* {camel} Army propaganda—heard the news that the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a) along with *Muhajirun* and *Ansar* was heading toward them, three thousand men only from the tribe of Rabi'ah joined the Imam in Dhiqar.<sup>4</sup> Their decision to join 'Ali ('a) was ideologically motivated, regarding the Imam as the caliph appointed by the Prophet (S) just as Baladhuri has this to say: “Among the Shi'ah of 'Ali were those from the tribe of Rabi'ah.”<sup>5</sup>

After 'Ali ('a) himself took control of the helm of government and went to Iraq, there was an extraordinary impact upon the spread of Shi'ism in the region. Similarly, the rulers and governors of the Imam, most of whom were appointed from among the Shi'ah, had remarkable contribution in the spread of Shi'ism in other places. As Sayyid Muhsin Amin says, “Wherever the trustees of 'Ali ('a) went, the people there would become Shi'ah.”<sup>6</sup>

Of course, during that period, in addition to Sham which was totally under the influence of the Umayyads, other regions, such as Basrah and north of Iraq, also had inclinations toward 'Uthman. The people in those places were inclined toward 'Uthman<sup>7</sup> on account of the settlement of 'Uthman's relatives there, and this inclination in the north of Iraq continued till the end of the second century AH.

Mecca also had anti-Hashimi and anti-'Alawi tendencies since the Age of Ignorance {*yamw al-jahiliyyah*}. Similarly, both during the Age of Ignorance and the Islamic period, Ta'if was the same as Mecca. The other tribes of Quraysh were always competing with Banu Hashim and not willing to accept the leadership of Banu Hashim, and this is one of the reasons for Quraysh's opposition to the Holy Prophet (S). The people of Ta'if, too, like that of Mecca, rejected the Prophet's (S) invitation although they submitted after Islam's acquisition of power.

From the time of Hajjaj, Shi'ism was extended beyond the realm of Iraq and Hijaz. During that period, as a result of the extreme pressure and harshness of Hajjaj, Shi'ah went out of Iraq and settled in other Muslim territories. Especially in the eastern part of the Muslim lands at the end of the first century AH, the Shi'ah centers in Iran were gradually formed. In Khurasan, the 'Abbasids took advantage of the people's love for the descendants of the Prophet (S) and through the slogan, “the appointed one from among the progeny of Prophet Muhammad (S),” they gathered the people around themselves and utilized them in the struggle against the Umayyads.

The scattering of the Shi'ah during the 'Abbasid period was very obvious. In the east, in addition to Iran, the Shi'ah went to Central Asia, India and the Caucasus, among others, and with the collapse of the Umayyad dynasty, the Shi'ah were also able to exert influence in the west, especially in Africa where a Shi'ah government of the Idrisis was established during the second century AH. Although their government was a Zaydi one, it can be regarded as a ground for the efforts of the Shi'ah. Of course, their contact with the capital (Baghdad) and Medina had been less due to the existence of the Aghlabi government in Egypt which was formed to counter them.<sup>8</sup>

In this manner, Shi'ism during the second century AH was spread in both the eastern and western parts of the Muslim world, and in addition to Khuzestan, the mountainous region {*jabal*} (the regions around the Zagros mountain ranges) and central Iran, Shi'ism was also spread in far-flung regions such as Central Asia, present day Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Maghrib (Morocco), India, and Tabaristan.<sup>9</sup>

## **Lesson 18: Summary**

The first center of Shi'ism is Medina and the pioneering Shi'ah used to live in this city. During the period of the first three caliphs, the Shi'ah *sahabah* (companions of the Prophet (S)) was scattered in the different cities and regions and calling people toward Shi'ism on the basis of the Qur'an. The transfer of 'Ali ('a) to Iraq had a tremendous impact on Shi'ism in Iraq.

From the time of Hajjaj, Shi'ism was extended beyond the realm of Iraq and Hijaz. During the 'Abbasid period, the Shi'ah in the east, in addition to Iran, also found their way into Central Asia, India, and the Caucasus, and in the west also, with the establishment of the Idrisi government in Maghrib, a fertile ground was paved for the influence of Shi'ism.

The Shi'ah-populated regions during the first century AH were confined to Hijaz and Iraq. Owing to the residence of the pure Imams ('a) and Banu Hashim there, Medina was the first city where the Shi'ah gathered together.

The second Shi'ah-concentrated region next to Medina was Yemen because the people embraced Islam through 'Ali's ('a) hand.

## **Lesson 18: Questions**

1. Where was the first center of Shi'ism? Whom is the initial spread of Shi'ism associated to?
2. Which regions were Shi'ah-populated during the first century AH?
3. What was the reason behind the inclination of the Yemenis toward Shi'ism?

1. Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah, *Ash-Shi'ah fi'l-Mizan* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1413 AH), pp. 26-28.
2. Sayyid Muhsin Amin, *A'yan ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar at-Ta'aruf Li'l-Matbu'at, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 25.
3. *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Faydh al-Islam, Sermon 235.
4. Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir Baladhuri, *Insab al-Ashraf*, researched by Muhammad Baqir Mahmudi (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1394 AH), vol. 2, p. 237.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *A'yan ash-Shi'ah*, vol. 1, p. 25.
7. Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 178.
8. Amir 'Ali, *Tarikh-e Gharb va Islam {History of the West and Islam}*, trans. Fakhr Da'i Gilani, 3rd edition (Tehran: Intisharat-e Ganjineh, 1366 AHS), pp. 241, 245; 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 408.
9. Among the companions of the pure Imams ('a), we can find people from cities and regions such as Halab, Egypt, Mada'in, Qazwin, Rey, Kashan, Armenia, Sabat, Isfahan, Hamedan, Samarqand, and Kabul. Rijal Najashi (Qum: Islamic Publications Office affiliated to the Society of Teachers of the Islamic Seminary in Qum, n.d.), pp. 8-9, 66, 130, 161, 208, 233, 236, 290, 344, 367; Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, *Ma'alim al-'Ulama'* (Najaf: Manshurat al-Matba'ah al-Haydariyyah, 1380 AH), p. 31.

## **Lesson 19: The Demographic Concentration of the Shi'ah**

As stated earlier, during the first three centuries AH, the Shi'ah were scattered across and living in many parts of the Muslim lands. Yet, the demographic concentration and center of the Shi'ah were in certain regions, which during the first century AH were places such as Medina, Yemen, Kufah, Basrah, Mada'in, and Jabal 'Amil.

During the second century AH, in addition to these regions, places such as Qum, Khurasan, Tabaristan, Baghdad, Jabal, and Africa became among the regions where the Shi'ah were demographically concentrated. Now we shall explain these regions one by one.

## **The Shi'ah-Populated Places during the First Century Hijri**

During the first century AH, Shi'ah-populated places were confined to Hijaz, Yemen and Iraq. The residents of these regions were Arabs and considered to be the pioneering Muslims. Shi'ism in Hijaz and Yemen was traceable back to the period of the Holy Prophet (S). Iraq which was conquered after the demise of the Prophet (S) also became the residence place of Yemeni tribes and the government of Hadhrat 'Ali ('a) accelerated the spread of Shi'ism in that place.<sup>1</sup>

### **a. Medina**

The name of Medina {Madinah} was "Yathrib" before the *hijrah* and the people there consisted of two Yemeni tribes, the Aws and Khazraj, re-named "*Ansar*" after the advent of Islam (after the *hijrah* to be exact), and three Jewish tribes, namely the Banu Qaynuqa', Banu Nadhir and Banu Quraydhah. When the Noble Messenger (S) migrated there, its name was changed into "*Madinah an-Nabi*" {the City of the Prophet} and on account of the constant mention of the word "*Madinah*" {Medina} it was called as such.

Medina was the political capital of the first three caliphs (Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman), and Quraysh who were the staunchest adversaries of the Prophet's Household {*ahl al-bayt*} lived there. Despite this, the *Ansar* still constituted the majority of the inhabitants of Medina who were always sympathetic to the descendants of the Prophet (S) and during the political squabbles, they took *Ahl al-Bayt's* ('a) the side. The distinguished Shi'ah *sahabah* living in the mentioned city were constantly telling the truth to the people. Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari, a great companion of the Prophet (S), while leaning on his staff, used to roam around the alleys of Medina and say,

'Ali is the best of people. Whoever would not accept him will become an infidel {*kafir*}. O the assembly of *Ansar*! Train your children to love 'Ali. Anyone of them who does not accept this love, then you have to ask his mother concerning the fetus.<sup>2</sup>

The same Jabir used to sit in Masjid an-Nabi and say, "O *Baqir al-'Ulum* {He who cleaves asunder all knowledge}! Where are you?" The people were saying, "Jabir, you are talking nonsense." Jabir would reply, "No, I am not talking nonsense. In fact, the Messenger of Allah (S) said to me: 'After me, you shall meet a person from among my descendants whose name will be the same as mine and whose facial appearance will be the same as mine. He shall open to the people tens of knowledge'."<sup>3</sup>

When he met Imam al-Baqir ('a) for the first time, he visited the Imam twice everyday.<sup>4</sup> Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari used to stand by the door of Masjid an-Nabi and say,

Anyone who recognizes me has recognized me, and he who does not recognize should know that I am Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari, Jundab ibn Junadah... Muhammad is the heir of the knowledge of Adam (Adam) and all the virtues of the prophets, and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib is the executor of will {*wasi*} of Muhammad and heir of his knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, most members of Banu Hashim lived in that city and were held in high esteem. The infallible Imams ('a) lived in the same city and people benefited from their teachings. In particular, the study circles of Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq ('a) extended to as far as Masjid an-Nabi.

Narrates Abu Hamzah ath-Thumali:

I was sitting in the Masjid an-Nabi when a man approached and greeted me, and asked about Abu Ja'far (Imam al-Baqir ('a)). I asked, "What is your business (with him)?" He replied, "I listed down forty questions I wanted to ask Abu Ja'far." He hardly finished his statement when Imam al-Baqir ('a) entered the mosque. A number of people from Khurasan gathered around him and asked the Imam about the rituals of *Hajj*.<sup>6</sup>

Some of the students of these two personages such as Aban ibn Tughlab also gave lessons in Masjid an-Nabi. Whenever Aban would enter the Masjid an-Nabi, he would sit at the place of the Prophet (S), give lessons to the people, and narrate *hadiths* to them. Imam as-Sadiq ('a) used to tell him, "Sit at the Mosque of Medina and give edicts {*fatawa*} to the people because I want persons like you to be seen among my Shi'ah."<sup>7</sup>

## **b. Yemen**

Prior to the conquest of Iraq and the founding of Kufah, Shi'ah were living in Yemen. Next to Medina, Yemen was the second place where the Shi'ah of 'Ali ('a) were located after the demise of the Prophet (S) because the people there embraced Islam through 'Ali ('a). Writes Ibn Shahr Ashub, thus:

The Noble Messenger (S) dispatched Khalid ibn Walid to Yemen to invite the people there to Islam and it so happened that Bara' ibn 'Azib was also included in the forces of Khalid. Khalid stayed there for six months but he was not able to convince a single person to become Muslim. The Messenger of Allah (S) was not happy about this state of affairs and recalled Khalid, and instead the Prophet (S) sent the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a).

When the Imam arrived there, he performed the dawn {*subh*} prayer and read to the people of Yemen the letter of the Prophet (S). All members of the tribe of Hamdan became Muslim in one day and after Hamdan the rest of the tribes in Yemen embraced Islam. When this news was relayed to the Holy Prophet (S), he performed prostration of gratitude {*sujud shukr*}.<sup>8</sup>

The first house where 'Ali ('a) stayed while in Yemen was the house of a woman called Umm Sa'ad Barzakhiyyah where the Imam gave Qur'an lessons. The said house was converted into a mosque later and it was named as "Masjid 'Ali".

Particularly at the last moments of the Prophet (S), people from the different tribes of Yemen went to Medina to meet the Prophet (S), and in their conversation the Prophet (S) introduced to them 'Ali ('a) as his successor<sup>9</sup> and thus, this fact remained in their memory.<sup>10</sup> And after the demise of the Prophet (S), they did not officially recognize the government in Medina and refrain from remitting their *zakat* to Abu Bakr, the caliph of the time.<sup>11</sup> As stated in one of their poems,

# أَطَعْنَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا دَامَ وَسَطْنَا فِي قَوْمٍ مَا شَأْنِي وَ شَأْنُ أَبِي بَكْرٍ؟

## أَيُورِثُهَا بَكْرًا إِذَا كَانَ بَعْدَهُ فَتْلِكَ لِعَمْرِ اللَّهِ قَاصِمَةَ الظُّهْرِ

*When the Messenger of Allah was in our midst, we obeyed him.*

*O people! Where are we and where is Abu Bakr?*

*If Abu Bakr had a son named Bakr, shall he inherit the caliphate after him?!*

*I swear to my soul! This is backbreaking.*[12](#)

During the caliphate of 'Ali ('a), in addition to the hundreds of thousands of Yemenis who were residing in Iraq<sup>13</sup> and thousands of whom were considered part of the Imam's army, most of the people of Yemen were also Shi'ah. The 'Uthmanis and sympathizers of the Umayyads living there were very small in number and the evidence of it is the treatment of Busr ibn Artat, as per instruction of Mu'awiyah, toward them.<sup>14</sup>

While Busr was with the people of the regions sympathetic to the Quraysh and the Umayyads, he did nothing. For example, he passed by Mecca and Ta'if, he did nothing against these two cities.<sup>15</sup> But when he arrived in the cities of Yemen such as Arhab, San'a and Hadhramawt, he engaged in mass murder. In San'a he beheaded a hundred Iranian nobles. He had no mercy toward the representatives of Ma'rab who had come to conquer Oman as he killed them all. When he arrived in Hadhramawt, he said: "I want to slaughter one fourth of the people of this city."<sup>16</sup>

In Jayshan in particular, which according to Ya'qubi, all its inhabitants were Shi'ah, Busr committed widespread massacre.<sup>17</sup> Ibn Abi'l-Hadid had estimated the number of those killed by Busr to have exceeded thirty thousand people most of whom were Yemenis.<sup>18</sup> This shows that the population of the Shi'ah at the time had been considerable. At any rate, following the devastation made by Busr in Yemen, Hadhrat Amir ('a) sent Jariyah ibn Qudamah (as-Sa'di) and Busr fled from Yemen. The people of Yemen and the Shi'ah there then killed 'Uthmanis and sympathizers of the Umayyads wherever they found them.<sup>19</sup>

After the martyrdom of 'Ali ('a), Yemen still remained a place where the Shi'ah were demographically concentrated, and when Imam al-Husayn ('a) was setting off from Mecca to Kufah, Ibn 'Abbas suggested to the Imam not to go to Iraq, but to proceed instead to Yemen "where there are Shi'ah of your father."<sup>20</sup>

It must be noted that with the beginning of victories and expansion of the Muslim domain, Yemen (and the Arabian Peninsula in general) had reached its geographical limit and played a secondary role in the political and military matters. Although the two cities of Mecca and Medina had some social impact on account of their religious standing, Yemen, which during the time of the Prophet (S) was considered one of the most important parts of the Islamic domain, was located approximately in one corner of the Muslim territories and their southern tip after the victories of the Muslims in the neighboring countries. In view of this, the spirit of Shi'ism was dominant there.

During the uprising of Abu's-Saraya at the end of the second century, Ibrahim ibn Musa entered there without encountering any local resistance and occupied it.[21](#) And in the end, the Zaydi sect prevailed in Yemen. Even now, many of its residents are Zaydis.[22](#)

### **c. Kufah**

Kufah is a city that had been founded after the advent of Islam by the Muslims there. The ancient city of Hirah near Kufah was always ruled by the Lakhmiyan.[23](#)

In 17 AH Sa'ad ibn Abi Waqqas, the commander of the Iranian front, founded this city at the order of the second caliph ('Umar) and thereafter, eighty of the *sahabah* resided there.[24](#) At the beginning, the city of Kufah was more of a military camp and accommodation for the forces of the eastern front. Most of its inhabitants were Muslim *mujahidun* who were mostly from the Qahtani and Yemeni tribes. For this reason, Kufah always had the Qahtani and Yemeni atmosphere.[25](#)

Among the companions of the Prophet (S), *Ansar* with Yemeni root were residing there mostly. The Khazraj, one of the two tribes of *Ansar*, had a particular district there. Yaqut Hamawi says, "During the time of Ziyad (ibn 'Ubayd Allah), most of the houses made of bricks were houses of (the tribes of) Khazraj and Murad.[26](#)

Of course, a number of non-Arabs and Iranians were also living in Kufah who, during the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful ('a), were busy trading in the Kufah market.[27](#) It was the same non-Arabs who constituted most of the force during Mukhtar's uprising.[28](#)

Concerning the merit of Kufah, there are many pertinent *hadiths* transmitted, one of which is from 'Ali ('a) when he said:

What a good city Kufah is! The soil there loves us and we love it also. On the Day of Resurrection, seventy thousand people whose faces are like the moon in radiance shall be raised at the outside of Kufah (the cemetery of Kufah which was located outside the city). Kufah is our city and the place and residence of our Shi'ah.

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) says, "O God! Be inimical to him who shall be inimical to Kufah."[29](#)

The record of Shi'ism in Kufah is traceable to the time even prior to the transfer of 'Ali ('a) there. The two factors that can be identified for this is first, the residence of the Yemeni tribes there, most of whom, as we have said earlier, were sympathetic to the descendants of the Prophet (S), and the other one is the existence of distinguished Shi'ah *sahabah* such as 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud and 'Ammar Yasir.

'Ammar was sent by 'Umar there as governor and Ibn Mas'ud as Qur'an teacher. For many years, Ibn Mas'ud was busy teaching jurisprudence {*fiqh*} and the Qur'an to the people there.[30](#)

We can observe the impact of the teachings of these distinguished men at the beginning of the caliphate of 'Ali ('a). The sermon of Malik al-Ashtar when the people pledged their allegiance to the Imam shows the spirit of Shi'ism among the people, when Malik says:

O people! This successor of the successors and heir to the knowledge of the prophets... is a person to whose faith the Book of Allah gives testimony and the Prophet to his being a dweller of paradise. He is the one the virtues about whom are perfected; with regard to his precedence in knowledge and merit, the latter ones and the pioneering ones have not cast

doubt.[31](#)

When 'Ali ('a) dispatched his son Hasan ('a) and 'Ammar to ask the assistance of the people of Kufah in the battle against the *Nakithun* {those who broke their allegiance} (in the Battle of *Jamal* {Camel}), nine thousand men joined the ranks of the Imam even despite a person like Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, the ruler there, who prevented people from assisting the Commander of the Faithful ('a).[32](#)

With 'Ali's ('a) migration to Kufah, this city had become the most important Shi'ah-populated city up to the end of the third century AH. Dr. Sayyid Husayn Ja'fari thus says in this regard:

Since the time when 'Ali ('a) transferred to Kufah in 36 AH and even earlier than that, this city had become the main center of the movements, inspirations, hopes, and at times, coordinated struggles of the Shi'ah. Inside and around Kufah, tumultuous events that construct the early history of Shi'ism took place.

The events such as the preparation of the forces of 'Ali ('a) for the battles of Jamal and Siffin; the appointment and stepping down from caliphate of Hasan ibn 'Ali ('a); the uprising of Hujr ibn 'Uday al-Kindi; the killing of Husayn ('a) and his votaries; and the *Tawwabun* movement and the uprising of Mukhtar are among these events. Given this, Kufah is the place of hopelessness, deprivations, and even treachery and failure in the attainment of goals of the Shi'ah on the part of those who do not want to see the descendants of 'Ali in the stewardship of the Muslim society.[33](#)

Although the killers of Imam al-Husayn were Kufans,[34](#) the distinguished Shi'ah at the time were languishing in the prison of Ibn Ziyad.[35](#) Besides, with the martyrdom of Muslim and Hani, the Shi'ah were left without commander against a tough enemy such as Ibn Ziyad and had no match for his power. After the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a), however, the Shi'ah came to their senses and launched the *Tawwabun* movement and the uprising of Mukhtar.

Kufah had been known for friendship and love of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) and enmity toward the Umayyads. Even Mus'ab ibn az-Zubayr feigned love for the descendants of the Prophet (S) in order to win the hearts of the Kufans. As such, he married a daughter of Imam al-Husayn ('a).[36](#) By the end of the first century AH, although there were then new Shi'ah-populated centers, Kufah was still considered the most important Shi'ah-populated city.

While advising his supporters during the initial stage of the uprising against the Umayyads, for example, Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas, the leader of the 'Abbasid uprising, said: "But (the people of) Kufah and its districts are Shi'ah of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib."[37](#)

During the second and third centuries AH, the uprisings of some Talibis also took place in Kufah. Notwithstanding the existence of an important city such as Baghdad during the 'Abbasid period, Kufah did not lose its political importance and the most noted uprising of the 'Alawis during the second half of the second century AH, i.e. the uprising of Ibn Tabataba under the military commandship of Abu's-Saraya was staged in the same city.[38](#)

As such, the Umayyads monitored Kufah closely and bloodthirsty individuals such as Ziyad, Ibn Ziyad and Hajjaj would be designated to rule there. The rulers there were always supposed to be inimical to the 'Alawis, and in the event that a ruler like Khalid ibn 'Abd Allah al-Qasri had little compassion for the Shi'ah, he would immediately be dismissed and

even be imprisoned.[39](#)

Apart from its political aspect, Kufah was also regarded as the most important Shi'ah-populated city in terms of knowledge and the Shi'ah culture was dominant there. The majority of students of the pure Imams ('a) were Shi'ah of this city. Great Shi'ah clans were living in Kufah. They offered remarkable services to the Shi'ah culture. For example, from the time of Imam as-Sajjad ('a) up to the minor occultation {*ghaybah as-sughra*} men of the House of A'yan were among the companions of the pure Imams ('a).

Sixty prominent scholars of *hadith* {*muhaddithun*} emerged from this clan. It had stalwarts such as Zurarah ibn A'yan, Hamran ibn A'yan, Bakir ibn A'yan, Hamzah ibn Hamran, Muhammad ibn Hamran, and 'Ubayd ibn Zurarah—the same 'Ubayd who went to Medina as the representative of the people of Kufah after the demise of Imam as-Sadiq ('a) to dispel any skepticism regarding the matter of Imamate, before going back to Kufah.[40](#)

The House of Abi Shu'bah was another great Shi'ah clan in Kufah whose forefather, Abu Shu'bah, had narrated *hadith* from Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn ('a). Najashi claims that all of those narrations are reliable.[41](#)

Similarly, the House of Nahik is also one of the great Shi'ah clans in Kufah from which 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad and 'Abd ar-Rahman Samari belong.[42](#)

In the mosques of Kufah, particularly in its central mosque, *hadiths* of the pure Imams ('a) used to be taught there. Hasan ibn 'Ali Washsha', a companion of Imam ar-Ridha ('a), says: "I saw in Masjid Kufah nine hundred people who were transmitting *hadiths* from Imam as-Sadiq ('a)."[43](#)

#### **[d. Basrah](#)**

Basrah is a city founded by the Muslims in 17 AH simultaneous with the founding of Kufah.[44](#) Although the people of Basrah were known for inclination toward 'Uthman for supporting A'ishah, Talhah and Zubayr, at the same time that the *Jamal* {Camel} Army was in Basrah, the Shi'ah there fought against it and a large number of them attained martyrdom. As narrated by Shaykh al-Mufid, from (the tribe of) 'Abd al-Qays alone, five hundred of the Shi'ah of 'Ali ('a) were martyred.[45](#)

According to Baladhuri, three thousand men from among the Shi'ah of the tribe of Rabi'ah joined the ranks of the Imam at Dhiqar.[46](#) After the Battle of Jamal, notwithstanding the atmosphere of inclination to 'Uthman in Basrah, many Shi'ah were still living there. As such, when Mu'awiyah dispatched Ibn Hadhrami to create unrest there, he informed him that some people in Basrah are Shi'ah and advised him to avoid some tribes such as that of Rabi'ah notwithstanding the great number of the 'Uthmanis, and if 'Ali ('a) would not send off any force from Kufah, by means of unrests he would take control of Basrah through the 'Uthmanis.[47](#)

During the event of Karbala', Imam al-Husayn ('a) also wrote a letter to some distinguished men of Basrah. Among them, Yazid ibn Mas'ud Nahshali accepted the invitation of the Imam, responded positively to him, gathered the tribes of Banu Tamim, Banu Sa'ad and Banu Hanzalah, and called on them to assist Imam al-Husayn ('a). He then wrote a letter to the Imam, informing him of these tribes' readiness. But when they were already to join the ranks of the Imam, they heard the news of his martyrdom.[48](#)

During the uprising of the *Tawwabun*, as narrated by Mas'udi, a number of the Shi'ah of

Basrah together with the Shi'ah of Mada'in had also joined the army of the *Tawwabun*. Of course, when they arrived at the scene, the battle was over.[49](#)

During the Umayyad period, the Shi'ah of Basrah experienced sufferings at the hands of cruel and bloodthirsty rulers such as Ziyad and Samarah ibn Jundab. Ziyad came to Basrah in 45 AH and delivered the *Batra'*[50](#) Sermon saying:

I swear to God that I shall call to account the guardian for the fault of the guarded one; the resident for the crime of the traveler; and the healthy one for the sin of the sick one to such an extent that when one of you would see another, he will say that his own Sa'ad is the proof that Sa'id is guilty. From then on, beware lest somebody went out at night as I will shed his blood... Keep your tongues and hands away from me so as for you to remain safe from my tongue and hands.[51](#)

Later on, Kufah also became under the governorship and administration of Ziyad, and he would stay for six months in Kufah and the next six months in Basrah. Every time he was in Kufah, he would designate Samarah ibn Jundab to administer Basrah on his behalf. Samarah was an atrocious man and never desisted from shedding blood. During the absence of Ziyad, he butchered eight thousand people.[52](#)

With the passage of time, the spirit of Shi'ism in Basrah became stronger so much so that during the beginning of the 'Abbasid rule, the second 'Alawi uprising—the uprising of Ibrahim, brother of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah—took place there.[53](#)

#### **[e. Mada'in](#)**

In contrast to Kufah and Basrah, Mada'in is a city which has been existing even prior to the advent of Islam and conquered by Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas in 16 AH during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. It is said that Anushirawan founded this city and its Persian name was Tisfun which was considered one of the capitals of the Sassanid Empire. *Taq-e Kisra*[54](#) was also located there.

For the reason that it was composed of seven large places each of which was as large as a city, the Arabs called it "Mada'in" which is the plural form of "*madinah*" {city} (its other plural form being "*mudun*"). Of course, by founding new cities such as Kufah, Basrah, Wasit, Baghdad, and Samarra, this city was gradually abandoned.[55](#)

Mada'in had been one of the Shi'ah-populated cities during the first, second and third centuries AH, and the reason behind it was the rule of distinguished Shi'ah *sahabah* such as Salman al-Farsi and Hudhayfah ibn Yaman there. And as such, the people of Mada'in, from the beginning, had accepted Islam through the hands of Shi'ah *sahabah*. In the uprising of the *Tawwabun*, names of Shi'ah from Mada'in can be noticed. Mas'udi says:

After the martyrdom of Sulayman ibn Sard Khaza'i and Musayyab ibn Najbah Fazari 'Abd Allah ibn Sa'd ibn Nufayl assumed the commandership of the *Tawwabun*. Given this, the Shi'ah of Basrah and Mada'in, who were approximately five hundred people and whose commanders were Muthanna ibn Mukharramah and Sa'd ibn Hudhayfah, quickly came to the front and personally tried to join the *Tawwabun* but they failed.[56](#)

Shi'ism had always been dominant in this city. In this regard, Yaqut Hamawi says, "Most of the people of Mada'in are Shi'ah Imamiyyah."[57](#)

#### **[f. Jabal 'Amil](#)**

Jabal 'Amil was another Shi'ah-populated region during the first century AH. Shi'ism of the people of this place started when Abu Dharr was exiled by 'Uthman ibn al-'Affan to Sham. The late Sayyid Muhsin Amin says,

Mu'awiyah also banished Abu Dharr to the villages of Jabal 'Amil. Abu Dharr engaged in guiding the people. Thus, the people there became Shi'ah. In the villages of Sarfand and Mays of Jabal 'Amil, there are two mosques named "Abu Dharr Masjid". Even during the time of the Commander of the Faithful ('a), {the inhabitants of} a certain village called "As'ar" were Shi'ah.<sup>58</sup>

With regard to Shi'ism there, the late Muzaffar had also said: "The origin of Shi'ism in Jabal 'Amil is traceable to the call of the *mujahid* {struggler} in the path of Allah, Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari."<sup>59</sup> Kird-'Ali also says that the record of Shi'ism in Damascus, Jabal 'Amil and north of Lebanon can be traced back to the first century AH.<sup>60</sup>

## **Lesson 19: Summary**

The root of Shi'ism in Kufah is traceable even prior to the transfer of 'Ali ('a) because most of the residents there belonged to Yemeni tribes most of whom were Shi'ah. Besides, distinguished Shi'ah *sahabah* lived there.

With the transfer of 'Ali ('a) to this city toward the end of the third century AH, Kufah became the most important Shi'ah-dominated city. As such, during the second and third centuries AH, the uprisings of a number of Talibis were launched there, and the Shi'ah culture was always dominant there.

Notwithstanding the spirit of inclination toward 'Uthman in the city of Basrah, there were also Shi'ah of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) such as the tribe of Rabi'ah living there and they fought against the Companions of the Camel (forces of Talhah, Zubayr and 'A'ishah). With the passage of time, the influence of Shi'ism in the city of Basrah became stronger.

On account of the rule there of great Shi'ah *sahabah* such as Salman al-Farsi and Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman, Mada'in was considered one of the Shi'ah-populated cities.

With the banishment of Abu Dharr to Sham, the seed of Shi'ism was planted in the region of Jabal 'Amil.

## **Lesson 19: Questions**

1. How did Kufah become a Shi'ah-dominated city?
2. Were there Shi'ah living in Basrah?
3. The root of Shi'ism in Jabal 'Amil can be traced back to which period?

1. See Sayyid Ja'far Shahidi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye Islam ta Payan-e Umawi* {An Analytical History of Islam till the End of the Umayyad Rule}, 6th edition (Tehran: Markaz-e Nashr-e Daneshgahi, 1365 AHS), vol. 2, pp. 137-138.
2. Shaykh at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi), researched by Sayyid Mahdi Raja'i (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt at-Turath, 1404 AH), vol. 1, p. 237.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 218.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
5. Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 171.

6. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 46, p. 357.

7. Abu'l-'Abbas Ahmad ibn 'Ali ibn Ahmad ibn al-'Abbas Najashi, Fihrist Asma' Musanfa ash-Shi'ah (Rijal Najashi) (Qum: Islamic Publications Office affiliated to the Society of Teachers of the Islamic Seminary in Qum, 1407 AH), p. 10.

8. Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, Manaqib Al Abi Talib (Qum: Mu'assasah Intisharat-e 'Allameh, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 129.

9. Muhammad Husayn Muzaffar, Tarikh ash-Shi'ah (Qum: Manshurat Maktabah Basirati, n.d.), p. 122.

10. Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ansari narrates: "A number of the various tribes of Yemen came to the Holy Prophet (S). The Messenger of Allah (S) said: 'There shall be a softhearted people with strong faith Mansur (one of the companions of Imam al-Mahdi ('a)) along with seventy thousand from whom shall rise up to help my successor and the successor of my executor of will {wasi} even while their swords carried (diagonally across the body) with the staple of palm-tree!' They asked: 'O Messenger of Allah! Who is the executor of your will?' He retorted: 'It is he to whom God, the Exalted, ordered (the people) to hold fast when He said, "Hold fast to the rope of Allah and be not divided among yourselves" (Surah Al 'Imran 3:103).' They asked: 'O Messenger of Allah! Tell us what this 'rope' {habl} is.' He said: 'This rope is exactly the statement of God when He says, "...save (where they grasp) a rope from Allah and a rope from men" (Surah Al 'Imran 3:112). The rope from Allah is the Qur'an while the rope from men is the executor of my will!' They asked: 'O Messenger of Allah! Who is the executor of your will?' He answered: 'It is he about whom God, the Exalted, says, "Lest any soul should say, 'Alas, my grief that I was unmindful of Allah'" (Surah az-Zumar 39:56).' They inquired: 'What is this command of God?' He responded: 'He is the executor of my will and the guide of the people toward me after I depart!' They said: 'O Messenger of Allah! By He who has sent you down in truth! Point him to us as we are indeed eager to see and know him!' He said: 'God has appointed him for the faithful. If you would look at him with the vision of the heart, you shall know that he is indeed the wasi {executor of will} just in the same manner that you recognized your Prophet. Thus, go and check within the ranks of the people in the mosque. Anyone who shall draw your hearts toward him is the wasi; for, God, the Exalted, says: "So incline some hearts of men that they may yearn toward them" (Surah Ibrahim 14:37).' As such, Abu 'Amir Ash'ari from the tribe of Ash'ariyyin, Abu 'Izzah Khawlani from among the Khawlaniyan, Uthman ibn Qays from Banu Qays, Gharyah Dawsy from the tribe of Daws, and Lahiq ibn 'Alafah rose up and they checked the ranks of the people in the mosque. They took 'Ali ('a) by the hand and presented him to the Holy Prophet (S) and said: 'O Messenger of Allah! This is the person who drew our hearts toward him and inclined toward him.' The Holy Prophet (S) said: 'All praise is due to Allah! You recognized the executor of will of the Prophet even before seeing him.' So, the Yemenis wept and said: 'O Messenger of Allah! We looked at the people, but our hearts did not get calm with them; when we saw him our hearts experienced tranquility as if we have seen our respective fathers.'" Muhammad Husayn Muzaffar, Tarikh ash-Shi'ah (Qum: Manshurat Maktabah Basirati, n.d.), pp. 124-125.

11. Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 132.

12. Shahab ad-Din Abi 'Abd Allah Yaqut Hamawi, Mu'jam al-Buldan, 1st edition (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1417 AH), vol. 3, p. 158.

13. Ibid., vol. 7, p. 161.

14. Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 197.

15. Ibid.

16. Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Thaqafi Kufi, Al-Gharat, trans. Muhammad Baqir Kamare'i (n.p.: Farhang-e Islam, n.d.), pp. 325, 331.

17. Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 199.

18. 'Abd al-Hamid ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1961), vol. 2, p. 17.

19. Al-Gharat, p. 333.

20. Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir Baladhuri, Insab al-Ashraf, researched by Muhammad Baqir Mahmudi (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'jami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1394 AH), vol. 3, p. 161.

21. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, Maqatil at-Talibiyyin (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 435.

22. Tarikh ash-Shi'ah, p. 132.

23. Mu'jam al-Buldan, p. 162.

24. Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 150.

25. Mu'jam al-Buldan, p. 161.

26. Ibid.

27. Insab al-Ashraf, vol. 2, p. 126.

28. Rasul Ja'fariyan, Tarikh-e Tashuyyu' dar Iran az Aghaz ta Qarn-e Hashtum-e Hijri, 5th edition (Qum: Shirkat-e Chap wa Nashr-e Sazman-e Tablighat-e Islami, 1377 AHS), p. 71.

29. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 3, p. 198.

30. 'Izz ad-Din Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad Abi'l-Kiram Ibn Athir, Asad al-Ghabah fi Ma'rifah as-Sahabah (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), vol. 3, p. 258.

31. Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 189.

32. Insab al-Ashraf, vol. 2, p. 262.

- [33.](#) Sayyid Husayn Ja'fari, Tashayyu' dar Masir-e Tarikh, trans. Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Ayatullahi, 9th edition (Tehran: Daftar-e Nashr-e Farhang-e Islami, 1378 AHS), p. 125..
- [34.](#) 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, Murawwij adh-Dhahab, 1st edition (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, p. 73.
- [35.](#) Tarikh ash-Shi'ah, p. 67.
- [36.](#) Abu Muhammad 'Abd Allah ibn Muslim ibn al-Qutaybah, Al-Ma'arif, researched by Tharwah 'Akkashah, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1415 AH), p. 214.
- [37.](#) Fakhri has narrated that Muhammad ibn 'Ali said to his supporters and campaigners: "But there are Shi'ah of 'Ali ibn Talib in Kufah and its districts. The people of Basrah gave their loyalty to an 'Uthmani group, but the people of Mesopotamia were not yet Muslims then. The people of Sham would not recognize anyone except the descendants of Abu Sufyan and not obey anyone except Marwan. But the people of Mecca and Medina were more on following the line of Abu Bakr and 'Umar. Therefore, it should not be forgotten that from among the people of Khurasan there were many individuals who were active, pure-hearted and had peace of mind. They were neither inclined to this group nor that group, and neither did they adhere to the different sects nor attach to peity. Ibn Tabataba, Al-Fukhara fi Adab as-Saltaniyyah (Egypt), p. 104.
- [38.](#) Maqatil at-Talibiyin, pp. 424-431.
- [39.](#) Insab al-Ashraf, vol. 3, p. 233.
- [40.](#) Abu Ghalib Zurari, Risalah fi Al A'yan (Isfahan: Matba'ah Rabbani, n.d.), pp. 2-18.
- [41.](#) Fihrist Asma' Musanfa ash-Shi'ah (Rijal Najashi), p. 230.
- [42.](#) Ibid., p. 232.
- [43.](#) Ibid., p. 39-40.
- [44.](#) Mu'jam al-Buldan, vol. 2, p. 340.
- [45.](#) Shaykh al-Mufid, Al-Jamal, 2nd edition (Qum: Maktab al-A'lam al-Islami (Publication Center), 1416 AH), p. 279.
- [46.](#) Insab al-Ashraf, vol. 2, p. 237.
- [47.](#) Al-Gharat, p. 166.
- [48.](#) Sayyid Muhsin Amin, A'yan ash-Shi'ah (Beirut: Dar at-Ta'aruf Li'l-Matbu'at, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 590.
- [49.](#) Murawwij adh-Dhahab, vol. 3, p. 109.
- [50.](#) Batra' is the feminine form of abtar which means 'defective' and 'incomplete'. According to the hadith, every statement which does not begin with the name of Allah is called abtar {defective and incomplete}. Since Ziyad began to deliver the said sermon without invoking the name of Allah, it became known thereafter as batra'.
- [51.](#) Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye Islam ta Payan-e Umawi, p. 156.
- [52.](#) Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Rustam Tabari, Tarikh al-Umam wa'l-Muluk (Beirut: Dar al-Qamus al-Hadith, n.d.), vol. 6, p. 132.
- [53.](#) Maqatil at-Talibiyin, p. 292.
- [54.](#) T̄iq-q-e Kisra: the most famous construction that the Sassanid kings built and it is rumored that this palace was built by Khosroe I and still others believe that it was one among other palaces built by Shahpur, the first Sassanid king. {Trans.}
- [55.](#) Mu'jam al-Buldan, vol. 7, pp. 221-222; Murawwij adh-Dhahab, vol. 1, p. 267.
- [56.](#) Murawwij adh-Dhahab, vol. 3, p. 109.
- [57.](#) Mu'jam al-Buldan, vol. 7, pp. 222.
- [58.](#) A'yan ash-Shi'ah, vol. 1, p. 25.
- [59.](#) Tarikh ash-Shi'ah, p. 149.
- [60.](#) Kird-'Ali, Muhammad. Khatat ash-Sham, 3rd edition (Damascus: Maktabah an-Nuri, 1403 AH/1983), vol. 6, p. 246.

## Lesson 20: The Shi'ah-Populated Places during the Second Century Hijri

At the beginning of the second century AH, Shi'ism extended beyond the frontiers of the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq as it encompassed the entire Muslim domain. In view of the scattering of the Shi'ah and 'Alawis in the Muslim territories, this matter can be discerned. From the time of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, the migration of the Shi'ah and 'Alawis to the other regions had begun.

These migrations were further expedited during the second century AH with the beginning of the propaganda and movements by the 'Alawis. After the failure of the uprising of Zayd in Kufah, his son Yahya along with a number of his supporters went to Khurasan.<sup>1</sup> After him, the uprising of 'Abd Allah ibn Mu'awiyah, a descendant of Ja'far ibn Abi Talib at-Tayyar, covered the regions such as Hamedan, Qum, Rey, Qirmis, Isfahan, and Fars, and 'Abd Allah himself lived in Isfahan.

Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani says, "The notables of Banu Hashim went to him and he designated each of them to rule over a district. Even Mansur and Safah (who later became the first two 'Abbasid caliphs) had connivance with him and this continued till the time of Marwan Himar and the emergence of Abu Muslim."<sup>2</sup>

During the 'Abbasid period, the 'Alawi movements always emerged, one definite consequence of which was the scattering of the 'Alawis in the different regions. For example, after the uprising of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah during the reign of Mansur and his defeat, the descendants of Imam al-Hasan ('a) were scattered in the different places. In this regard, Mas'udi thus says:

The brothers of Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah (Nafs az-Zakiyyah) were scattered in the different places. His son, 'Ali ibn Muhammad, went to Egypt where he was killed later. His other son, 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad, went to Khurasan and from there proceeded to Sind where he was killed. His third son, Hasan ibn Muhammad went to Yemen where he was put behind bars and passed away while in prison. His (Nafs az-Zakiyyah's) brother, Musa, went to Mesopotamia.

Another brother of Nafs az-Zakiyyah, Yahya, went to Rey and from there he proceeded to Tabaristan. Another brother of his, Idris, went to Maghrib. Yet another brother, Ibrahim, went to Basrah where he formed an army composed of men from Ahwaz, Fars among other cities, but his uprising ended in failure.<sup>3</sup>

Although most of them were pursued by the 'Abbasid agents and were unable to remain in one place and were later killed, their impact remained. Sometimes, their children lived in those places. For example, 'Abd Allah, son of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah, as narrated by Mas'udi, was not able to remain in Khurasan and thus, he went to Sind.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the author of the book, *Muntaqilah at-Talibiyyin*, narrates that the son of 'Abd Allah, Ibrahim, remained in Khurasan and had two sons named Qasim and Muhammad.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, there was a group in Transoxiana which was tracing itself back to Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah.<sup>6</sup>

Now, we shall survey the condition of the cities and regions in which the Shi'ah lived in large number during the second century AH.

## **a. Khurasan**

At the beginning of the second century AH, the movement of the campaigners of Banu Hashim<sup>7</sup> commenced in Khurasan and many people there embraced Shi'ism. Ya'qubi narrates,

When Zayd was martyred, the Shi'ah in Khurasan were in great commotion and expressed their faith in Shi'ism. The preachers were openly stating the atrocity and tyranny of the Umayyads against the descendants of the Prophet (S).<sup>8</sup>

It remained so until such time that Yahya ibn Zayd went to Khurasan and lived there in disguise for sometime. And when he rose up, many people gathered around him.<sup>9</sup> Mas'udi narrates, "On the year when Yahya was killed, every infant that was born in Khurasan was named Yahya."<sup>10</sup>

Of course, due to the presence of Zaydis and 'Abbasid campaigners, Shi'ism of the people of Khurasan had more Zaydi and Kaysani color. This is particularly true in view of the fact that in the beginning, the 'Abbasids laid the foundation of their legitimacy upon the succession of Muhammad ibn 'Ali to Abu Hashim, son of Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah. As Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani writes in describing 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah:

He is the same person whom the Shi'ah of Khurasan were thinking to be the heir of his father whom they thought was the Imam. His heir in turn was Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas while Muhammad ibn 'Ali designated Ibrahim as his successor. In this manner, succession among the Abbasids was institutionalized.<sup>11</sup>

The Khurasanis had always been supporters of the 'Abbasids, and when the dichotomy between the 'Alawis and 'Abbasids occurred, they sided with the latter. For example, during the battle against Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah most of the 'Abbasid soldiers were Persian-speaking Khurasanis.

Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani narrates:

When Khudhayr Zubayri, one of the commanders of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah, was coming to the battlefield from Medina, the Khurasanis were saying in Persian, "*Khudhayr amad; Khudhayr amad*" {Khudhayr came; Khudhayr came}.<sup>12</sup>

## **b. Qum**

Qum has been one of the most important Shi'ah-populated cities since the second century AH. This city, apart from being founded after the advent of Islam, has been founded by the Shi'ah and Shi'ah resided in and populated it from the very beginning. It is Shi'ah Imamiyyah that has always been there without experiencing any deviation. Not only have *Sinyan* ever lived there but also the *Ghulat* did not find their way there, and even if they had, the people would have rejected them.<sup>13</sup> Many of the people there used to come to the pure Imams ('a) to learn from these great personages, always maintaining contact with their Imams.

In 82 AH when the revolt of Ibn Ash'ath against Hajjaj was crushed and he fled to Kabul,<sup>14</sup> a number of his soldiers were also Shi'ah such as 'Abd Allah, Ahwas, Na'im, 'Abd ar-Rahman, and Ishaq, sons of Sa'd ibn Malik ibn 'Amir al-Ash'ari, who went to the districts of Qum after the defeat of Ash'ath. There were seven villages there one of which was known as "Kamandan". After these brothers' stay in this village, their kith and kin joined them and resided in all the seven villages. Gradually, these seven villages merged together and they all become "Kamandan". Kamandan was Arabized and shortened into "Qum".<sup>15</sup>

From then on, Qum has become one of the most important concentration centers of the Shi'ah, and the 'Alawis in particular, who arrived and resided there from everywhere.<sup>16</sup> At the end of the second century AH, the arrival of Lady Fatimah al-Ma'sumah (Imam ar-Ridha's ('a) sister) is considered the turning point in the history of this city, bringing about ample blessings to it.

## **c. Baghdad**

Baghdad was founded during the second century *hijri*, 145 AH in particular, by Mansur, the second 'Abbasid caliph, and soon became one of the demographic concentration centers of the Shi'ah.<sup>17</sup>

This fact was unambiguously proved in Imam al-Kazim ('a) burial procession. The huge number of attendants seriously alarmed the 'Abbasids so much so that Sulayman ibn Mansur, Harun ar-Rashid's uncle, participated in it barefooted just to appease the people.<sup>18</sup>

Baghdad was founded in Iraq and most of the people of Iraq were Shi'ah. Although Baghdad at the beginning was a military and political city, with the passage of time the intellectual center of the Muslim world was also transferred there and Shi'ah of the neighboring cities such as Kufah, Basrah, Mada'in among others took residence there and very quickly constituting a large population. After the minor occultation {*ghaybah as-sughrah*}, Baghdad became the intellectual and religious center for the Shi'ah who flourished there by virtue of the Shi'ah government of Al Buyah (Buyeds), until such time that Shaykh at-Tusi transferred the Shi'ah center to Najaf.

## **The Shi'ah-Populated Places during the Third Century Hijri**

The geographical expansion of Shi'ism in the third century AH can be discussed and studied in two ways; the first is through the formation of the Shi'ah states in the Muslim territories. In 250 AH the 'Alawis in Tabaristan formed a government.<sup>19</sup>

During the latter part of the third century AH, descendants of Imam al-Husayn ('a) set up a Zaydi government in Yemen. In 296 AH the Fatimid state was established in the north of Africa.<sup>20</sup> These governments were not based on Shi'ah Imamiyyah fundamentals, but their existence showed the extent of Shi'ism and indicated the fertile ground for its acceptance in the Muslim territories—an opportunity which had been utilized by the Isma'ilis and Zaydis.

The second way is through the list of regions where the pure Imams ('a) designated proxies. The institution of deputyship {*wikalah*} had been founded since the time of Imam as-Sadiq ('a), and during the time of Imam al-Hadi and Imam al-'Askari ('a) the activity of this institution had reached its climax. The regions where the Imams' ('a) deputies were dispatched included Ahwaz, Hamedan, Sistan, Bust, Rey, Basrah, Wasit, Baghdad, Egypt, Yemen, Hijaz, and Mada'in.<sup>21</sup>

Of course, Kufah, Qum, Samarra, and Nayshabur were considered as the most important Shi'ah-dominated cities till the end of the third century AH, and the Shi'ah jurisprudence based on the traditions of the pure Imams ('a) was taught there. After the third century, nevertheless, Kufah declined in importance being gradually replaced by Baghdad, and with the arrival of the Al Buyah and the presence of distinguished figures such as Shaykh al-Mufid, Sayyid Murtadha, Sayyid Radhi, and Shaykh at-Tusi, the religious seminary in Baghdad flourished.

Regarding the Shi'ah influence in Baghdad during the fourth century AH, Adam Mitch (?) thus writes:

But in Baghdad which was the capital of Islam in its true sense and where the waves of all intellectual currents were strong, all schools of thought had followers. Of all these schools of thought, two were the strongest and most uncompromising—Hanbali and Shi'ah.

The followers of Shi'ism were particularly concentrated around the market of Karakh and only at the end of the fourth, this direction to the major bridge in Bab at-Taqa was also populated. In places west of Dajlah, especially Bab al-Basrah, Hashimis ('Abbasid *sadat*) constituted a strong community with intense enmity toward the Shi'ah.

Yaqut thus writes: "The residents of the district of Bab al-Basrah, between Karakh and Qiblah, were all Hanbali Sunnis, and those on the left and western parts of Karakh were also Sunnis. But the people of Karakh were entirely Shi'ah and no Sunni could be found among them."

...As recorded by historians, the first time the Shi'ah of Baghdad gathered in Baratha Masjid in 313 AH, it was reported to the caliph that a group is gathering there to collectively curse the caliphs.

The caliph ordered for it to be besieged on Friday at the time of congregational prayer, and thirty worshippers were arrested and searched. Baked clays {*muhr*} with the name of the Imam engraved therein were found on them... In 321 AH, 'Ali ibn Yalbakh, the Turkish commander, ordered for the cursing of Mu'awiyah and Yazid on the pulpits.

The public made a hullabaloo, and Barbahari, the leading Hanbali, and his supporters were identified as the ones responsible for the unrests. On account of the seditions and attitudes of the Hanbalis toward the people in 323 AH, it was ordered that two Hanbalis should not be seen together anywhere in Baghdad, and the 'Abbasid caliph Radhi issued an order in which the offenses to be committed by the Hanbalis and their corresponding punishments were indicated.<sup>22</sup>

## **Lesson 20: Summary**

During the 'Abbasid period, the 'Alawi movements constantly emerged, a definite consequence of which was the diaspora of the 'Alawis in the different regions. As such, during the second century AH, Shi'ism transcended beyond the frontiers of the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq.

The journey of the 'Abbasid campaigners to Khurasan began at the beginning of the second century AH, where many people initially embraced Shi'ism though Shi'ism with more Kaysani influence.

Since the second century AH, Qum has become one of the most important Shi'ah-dominated cities. This city was founded by the Shi'ah and Shi'ism there has always been Ithna 'Ash'ari Imamiyyah. Although Baghdad was the capital of the 'Abbasid caliphate, by the transfer of Shi'ah from the neighboring cities such as Kufah, Basrah and Mada'in, it became one of the demographic concentration centers of the Shi'ah.

During the third century AH, Shi'ism was extended in many regions in the Muslim territories. This fact is clearly illustrated from the list of the regions where the pure Imams ('a) had their representatives. It was for this reason that the Shi'ah governments in Tabaristan, Yemen and Africa were set up.

Up to the end of the third century AH, Kufah, Qum, Samarra, and Nayshabur were regarded as the most important Shi'ah-populated cities.

## **Lesson 20: Questions**

1. Name the regions populated by the Shi'ah during the second century AH.
2. In what periods did Shi'ism in Khurasan start?
3. Which type of Shi'ism has been in Qum?
4. How did Baghdad become one of the Shi'ah-populated cities?

1. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 146.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
3. 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, 1st edition (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, p. 326.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Abu Isma'il ibn Nasir ibn Tabataba, *Muntaqilah at-Talibiyyin*, trans. Muhammad Rida 'Ata'i, 1st edition (Mashhad: Intisharat-e Astan-e Quds-e Radhawi, 1372 AHS), p. 207.
6. *Ibid.*
7. It must be noted that the term, "Banu Hashim" or "Hashimiyan" at the time also included the 'Abbasids as they were also grandchildren of Hashim.
8. Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 171.
9. *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, p. 149.
10. *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, p. 336.
11. *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, p. 123.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
13. Rijal ibn Dawud (Qum: Manshurat ar-Radhi, n.d.), pp. 240, 270.
14. *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 149.
15. Shahab ad-Din Abi 'Abd Allah Yaqut Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, 1st edition (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1417 AH), vol. 7, p. 88.
16. *Muntaqilah at-Talibiyyin*, pp. 333-339.
17. *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, vol. 2, p. 361.
18. Sayyid Muhsin Amin, *A'yan ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar at-Ta'aruf Li'l-Matbu'at, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 29.
19. Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Rustam Tabari, *Tarikh at-Tabari*, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1408 AH), vol. 5, p. 365.
20. Jalal ad-Din 'Abd ar-Rahman Suyuti, *Tarikh al-Khulafa'* (Qum: Intisharat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1411 AH), p. 524.
21. See Sayyid Majid Pur Aqa'i, *Tarikh-e 'Asr-e Ghaybat* (Qum: Markaz-e Jahani-ye 'Ulum-e Islami, n.d.), p. 19.
22. Adam Mitch, *Tamaddun-e Islami dar Qarn-e Chaharum-e Hijri {Islamic Civilization in the Fourth Century Hijri}*, trans. 'Ali Rida Dhakawati Qaragzeli (Tehran: Mu'assaseh-ye Intisharat-e Amir Kabir, 1364 AHS), pp. 85-86.

## **Lesson 21: Shi'ism among the Different Tribes**

Basically, 'Ali ('a) had more Shi'ah and sympathizers from the 'Adnanis from among the Qahtani tribes, and Shi'ism among the Qahtanis had enormously expanded. The main Shi'ah who constituted the historians and soldiers of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) were Arab tribes from the south (Yemen) and Qahtanis. For instance, the Imam ('a) thus said in Rajzi, one of the battle arenas in Siffin:

# أنا الغلام القرشي المؤمن الماجد الأبيض ليث كالشطن

## يرضى به السادة من اهل اليمن من ساكني نجد و من اهل عدن

*I am a Qurayshi youth—trustworthy, great, pure, and like a lion—with whom the distinguished men of the people of Yemen from among the residents of Najd and ‘Aden are pleased.*<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, after the demise of the Prophet of Islam (S), most of ‘Ali’s (‘a) supporters among the companions of the Prophet (S) were *Ansar* who were Qahtani in origin, and constituted most of those who accompanied ‘Ali (‘a) from Medina up to the Battle of Jamal.<sup>2</sup> In the same vein, when Imam al-Husayn (‘a) set off toward Kufah, ‘Abd Allah ibn al-‘Abbas said to him:

If the people of Iraq like you and want to assist you, you write to them, “The enemy shall expel you from your city. Then, you come here.” Instead, you move toward Yemen where there are mountains, strongholds and forts that Iraq does not have. Yemen is a vast land and your father have Shi’ah there. You go there and then send your preachers to the neighboring places to invite the people to come to you.

The companions of Imam al-Husayn (‘a), with the exception of Banu Hashim and some Ghaffaris, also belonged to Yemeni tribes.<sup>3</sup> As Mas‘udi has said, “From among the companions of the Prophet (S), only four persons attained martyrdom at the lap of the Prophet (S) and these four were from the *Ansar*.”<sup>4</sup>

The descent of the *Ansar* to Yemeni tribes is also obvious.

In contrast, the chiefs and nobles of Quraysh were hostile to ‘Ali (‘a) and his descendants (just as they were hostile to the Prophet (S)), while the sympathizers of the Imam (‘a) among them were few. Even the tribes that had close relations with the Quraysh, such as the tribe of Thaqif and the people of Ta‘if who were supporters of Mu‘awiyah during and after the Battle of Siffin, had always been in the ranks of those who opposed ‘Ali (‘a).

For example, when Mu‘awiyah dispatched Busr ibn Artat to pillage the cities of Hijaz and Yemen, as Busr was approaching Ta‘if, Mughayrah ibn Shu‘bah went to welcome him, saying: “May God give you pleasant reward! I heard the news of your harshness toward the enemies and benevolence toward the friends.” Busr said, “O Mughayrah! I want to put pressure on the people of Ta‘if so as for them to pledge allegiance to the Commander of the Faithful Mu‘awiyah.” Mughayrah said, “O Busr! Why do you want to do to your friends what you did to your enemies? Do not do it lest everybody turned into your enemy.”<sup>5</sup>

There were also very few besides the Banu Hashim from among the Quraysh, such as Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr and Hashim Mirqal, who were on the Commander of the Faithful’s (‘a) side although from among the clans of Quraysh and opponents of ‘Ali (‘a), there were also some who accompanied him. For instance, Khalid ibn Walid was one of the Commander

of the Faithful's ('a) adversaries, but his son, Muhajir ibn Khalid was among the soldiers of the Imam in the Battle of Siffin. Another case is that of 'Abd Allah ibn Abi Hudhayfah, Mu'awiyah's maternal cousin, who was one of the sincere Shi'ah of 'Ali ('a), and in the end attained martyrdom at the hands of Mu'awiyah's agents.

'Ali ('a) had followers and supporters from among all the Yemeni tribes such as the tribes of Kindih, Naka', Azd, Juhaynah, Himir, Bujaylah, Khath'am, Khuza'ah, Hadhramut, Mudhahaj, Ash'ar, Tay, Sadus, Hamdan, and Rabi'ah.<sup>6</sup> But among them, the two tribes of Hamdan and Rabi'ah were leading.

The Hamdanis who embraced Islam during the time of the Prophet (S), through 'Ali's ('a) efforts, had always been sympathetic to him, and were considered as among the Imam's sincere Shi'ah. Mas'udi says, "During the Battle of Siffin, not a single person from among them was in the army of Mu'awiyah."<sup>7</sup>

Regarding Hamdan, 'Ali has said:

**ولو كنت بواباً على باب الجنة لقلت لِحَمْدانِ ادخلوا بسلام**

*If I were the gatekeeper of paradise, I shall say to the tribe of Hamdan, "Enter in peace!"<sup>8</sup>*

Mu'awiyah held a great grudge against the Hamdanis. One day during the Battle of Siffin, he went to the battle arena and recited this poem:

**لا عيش الا فلق الهام من ارحب و يشكر شمام**

**قوم هم اعداء اهل الشام كم من كريم بطل همام**

**وكم قتيل و جريح دام كذاك حرب السادة الكرام**

*I shall not live unless I rip the heads of those of (the clans of) Arhab, Yashkar and Shabam (from the tribe of Hamdan).*

*They are people who are enemies of the people of Sham. So many of them are great, heroic and brave men.*

*So many they have killed, injured and handicapped. Yes, such is the battle of the gallant noblemen.*

Then, by reciting this epic verse:

## اللهم رب الحلّ والحرام لا تجعل الملك لاهل الشام

*O Lord of hall and haram! Do not bestow the rule to the people of Sham,*

Sa'id ibn Qays Hamdani attacked Mu'awiyah while holding forward his spear, and Mu'awiyah fled from him toward the center of the army of Sham. And he sent Dhu'l-Kala' (one of the commanders of Sham) to confront Sa'd ibn Qays and the ensuing combat lasted till night. In the end, the people of Sham accepted defeat and fled. At this juncture, the Commander of the Faithful ('a) recited this poem to encourage the Hamdanis:

**فوارس من حمدان ليسوا بعزل غداة الوغى من شاكر و شبام**

**يقودهم حامى الحقيقة ماجد سعيد بن قيس و الكريم محام**

**جزى الله همدان الجنان فانهم سهام العدى في كل يوم حمام**

*Horsemen of Hamdan from (the tribes of) Shakir and Shabam do not slacken in the morning battle.*

*The advocate of truth and great man, Sa'id ibn Qays, leads them. The kind people themselves shall also be protected.*

*May Allah grant the reward of paradise for (the tribe of) Hamdan as they are all arrows to the hearts of the enemies during battles.*[9](#)

As such, we can see poems composed by the army of Sham against Hamdan especially during the Battle of Siffin. For instance, 'Amr ibn al-'As addressed the tribe of Hamdan on one of the days of the Battle of Siffin, saying:

**الموت يغشاه من القوم الانف يوم لهمدان و يوم للصدف**

**و في سدوس نحوه ما ينخرف نضربها بالسيف حتى ينصرف**

## و لتميم مثلها او يعترف

*It shall receive death from this tribe; one day, Hamdan is victorious while another day it is just a shell.*

*The tribe of Sadus is also like them; as if it is not becoming old, but we shall strike them with the sword so as to restore the condition.*

*We shall treat (the tribe of) Tamim in the same manner, unless they confess submission.<sup>10</sup>*

A number of women of the tribe of Hamdan had also incited the supporters and soldiers of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) during the Battle of Siffin against Mu'awiyah. Among these women were Sawdah Hamdaniyyah and Zurqa' Hamdaniyyah, daughters of 'Addi ibn Qays.<sup>11</sup> Sawdah addressed his father saying:

**شعر كفعل ابيك يابن عمارة يوم الطعان و ملتقى الاقران**

**وانصر علياً و الحسين و رهطه واقصد لهند و ابنها بهوان**

**ان الإمام اخا النبي محمد علم الهدى و منارة الإيمان**

**فقد الجيوش و سره امام لوائه قدماً بأبيض صارم و سنان530**

Given this, Mu'awiyah nursed a grudge against them. And after the martyrdom of 'Ali ('a) they were summoned to Sham. They were asked to explain about their poems and they were reproached.<sup>12</sup>

The second Yemeni tribe which had many Shi'ah of 'Ali ('a) among its members was the tribe of Rabi'ah. For example, in enumerating the Shi'ah of 'Ali ('a) Burqa has allocated a certain part to the companions of 'Ali ('a) from the tribe of Rabi'ah while allocating the rest of the Yemeni Shi'ah in another part.<sup>13</sup>

When 'Ali ('a) heard that a number of the tribe of Rabi'ah in Basrah attained martyrdom at the hands of the army of 'A'ishah, he said:

**يا لهف نفسي على ربيعة ربيعة السّماعة المطيعة**

*I pity the Rabi'ah, the obedient and submissive Rabi'ah!*[14](#)

Mas'udi also says, “‘Ali (‘a) had many talks about Rabi’ah and eulogies to them because they were his helpers and supporters as well as his pillar among pillars.” Among ‘Ali’s (‘a) statements about Rabi’ah is the poem below which he recited during the Battle of Siffin:

لمن راية سوداء يخفق ظلها إذا قيل قدمها حزين تقدماً

فيورها في الصف حتى يعلها حياض المنايا تقطر الموت و  
الدمّ

جزى الله قوماً قاتلوا في لقائه لدى الموت قدماً ما اعروا كرمًا

واطيب أخباراً و اكرم شيمَةً اذا كان اصوات الرجال تغمغما

ربيعة أعنى إنهم أهل نجدة و بأس إذا لاقوا، خميساً عرمرما

*The one who has the black banner and it is hoisted—once it is said to him to bring forward the banner,*

*He will then join the ranks so as to bring forth the spears for death and blood drop from them.*

*May Allah bestow reward to the community that fought in the battle, welcomed death, and never opposed goodness.*

*They are the most well-dressed and beautiful-faced of people, when the voices of men at the battlefield are winded together.*

*I am referring to (the tribe of) Rabi’ah. When confronting a huge army, they are brave and powerful.*[15](#)

It was one of the chiefs of Rabi’ah, Jamil ibn Ka’b Tha’labi who was considered one of the Shi’ah and supporters of ‘Ali (‘a). When he was captured by Mu’awiyah, the latter told him: “Which blessing is greater than this that God made us prevailed over a man who within an hour killed a large number of our supporters!”[16](#)

Shaqiq ibn Thawr Sudusi also said during the Battle of Siffin while addressing the tribe of

Rabi'ah: "O group of Rabi'ah! Once 'Ali is killed, there will be no excuse for even a single person from you to remain alive."<sup>17</sup> Also, after the death of Yazid, the people of Kufah expelled the Umayyad governor from their city and wanted to install somebody in his stead.

Some people suggested 'Amr ibn Sa'd to be the *amir*. Mas'udi narrates that at that moment, the women of Hamdan, Kahlan, *Ansar*, Rabi'ah, and Nakha' entered the central mosque. While weeping for Imam al-Husayn ('a), they were saying: "Is it not enough that 'Amr ibn Sa'd killed Husayn and now he wants also to be our *amir*?"

With this statement, they made the people weep and persuaded them to abandon 'Amr ibn Sa'd.<sup>18</sup>

## **Lesson 21: Summary**

Most of the supporters and Shi'ah of the Commander of the Faithful were from the Qahtani and Yemeni tribes.

Among the companions of the Prophet (S), most of 'Ali's ('a) sympathizers were from among the *Ansar* who had Yemeni origin.

Imam al-Husayn's ('a) main supporters were from among the Yemeni tribes, with the exception of the Banu Hashim and some Ghaffari men.

In contrast, the chiefs and nobles of Quraysh were inimical to 'Ali ('a), and his descendants and supporters among them were very few.

Among the Yemeni tribes, the two tribes of Hamdan and Rabi'ah were leading in Shi'ism.

## **Lesson 21: Questions**

1. Name the tribes in which Shi'ism was more dominant.
2. Among the Yemeni tribes, which tribes are leading compared to the rest in Shi'ism?

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, *Manaqib Al Abi Talib* (Qum: Mu'assasah Intisharat-e 'Allameh, n.d.), vol. 3, p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir Baladhuri, *Insab al-Ashraf*, researched by Muhammad Baqir Mahmudi (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'jami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1394 AH), vol. 3, p. 161.

<sup>3</sup> Kalbi, *Jumhurah an-Nasab* (Beirut: 'Alam al-Kutub, n.d.), p. 88.

<sup>4</sup> 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, 1st edition (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'jami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> See Sayyid Ja'far Shahidi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye Islam ta Payan-e Umawi* {An Analytical History of Islam till the End of the Umayyad Rule}, 6th edition (Tehran: Markaz-e Nashr-e Daneshgahi, 1363 AHS), p. 137.

<sup>6</sup> Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid Burqa, *Rijal al-Burqa* (n.p.: Mu'assasah al-Qayyum, n.d.), pp. 37-40; 'Abd al-Hamid ibn Abi'l-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* (Cairo: Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabi, 1961), vol. 3, p. 193.

<sup>7</sup> *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 99.

<sup>8</sup> *Insab al-Ashraf*, vol. 2, p. 322.

<sup>9</sup> *Manaqib Al Abi Talib*, vol. 3, pp. 170-171.

<sup>10</sup> *Insab al-Ashraf*, vol. 2, p. 323.

<sup>11</sup> Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Andalusi, *Al-'Aqd al-Farid* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1409 AH), vol. 1, pp. 335-337.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335.

<sup>13</sup> Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid Burqa, *Rijal al-Burqa* (n.p.: Mu'assasah al-Qayyum, n.d.), p. 37.

<sup>14</sup> Zubayr ibn Bakkar, *Al-Akhbar al-Muwaffaqiyyat*, researched by Dr. Sami Makki al-'Ani (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 159.

<sup>15</sup> *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 59.

[16.](#) Ibid., p. 60.

[17.](#) Insab al-Ashraf, vol. 2, p. 306.

[18.](#) Murawwij adh-Dhahab, pp. 98-99.

## Part 6: The Rifts within Shi'ism

### Lesson 22: The Rifts within Shi'ism

There were major rifts within Shi'ism during the first and second centuries AH, and at the end of the second century remarkable splits among the Shi'ah had emerged. As such, members of the different nations and religions, in dealing with Waqifiyyah, have called the Shi'ah Imamiyyah who believed in the Imamate of Imam ar-Ridha ('a) as Qat'iyyah and Ithna 'Ashariyyah for believing in Imam ar-Ridha ('a) and the Imams after him up to the Imam of the Time ('a).[1](#)

Of course, during the first century AH up to 61 AH (i.e. up to the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a)) these splits had not occurred within Shi'ism, although Shahrastani regards the Ghulat Saba'iyyah sect that emerged during the time of Hadhrat Amir ('a) as Shi'ah.[2](#)

This is while there is doubt concerning the existence of a person named 'Abd Allah ibn Saba'.[3](#) At any rate, according to *Rijal Kashi*, there had been some *Ghalis* during the time of 'Ali ('a) who were asked by him to repent, and since they had not repented, he ordered for their execution.[4](#)

Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn ('a) had excellent positions in the sight of Muslims and have been considered as progeny of the Prophet (S). Apart from the Shi'ah, other Muslims also regard them worthy of the caliphate. As such, there was no doubt concerning the matter of the Imamate and no rift whatsoever had ever occurred during the lifetime of these two personages. After Imam al-Husayn's ('a) martyrdom, we witness rifts within Shi'ism, and some of those sects that split from mainstream Shi'ism are the following:

- **Kaysaniyyah:** They believe in the Imamate of Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah.
- **Zaydiyyah:** They believe in the Imamate of Zayd ibn 'Ali.
- **Nawusiyyah:** They believe in the occultation {*ghaybah*} of Imam as-Sadiq ('a) and in his being the Mahdi.
- **Fathiyyah:** They believe in the Imamate of 'Abd Allah ibn Aftah, son of Imam as-Sadiq ('a).
- **Samtiyyah:** They believe in the Imamate of Muhammad Dibaj, another son of Imam as-Sadiq ('a).
- **Isma'iliyyah:** They believe in the Imamate of Isma'il, yet another son of Imam as-Sadiq ('a).
- **Tafiyyah:** They believe that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) entrusted the Imamate to Musa ibn Taffi.

- **Aqmasiyyah:** They believe that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) entrusted the Imamate to Musa ibn 'Umran al-Aqmas.
- **Yarma'iyah:** They believe that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) entrusted the Imamate to Yarma' ibn Musa.
- **Tamimiyyah:** They believe that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) entrusted the Imamate to 'Abd Allah ibn Sa'd at-Tamimi.
- **Ju'diyyah:** They believe that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) entrusted the Imamate to a person named Abu Ju'dah.
- **Ya'qubiyyah:** They reject the Imamate of Musa ibn Ja'far ('a), saying that Imamate could be entrusted to other than the sons of Imam as-Sadiq ('a), and their leading figure is a person named Abu Ya'qub.
- **Mamturah:** They suspend their judgment concerning Imam al-Kazim ('a), saying that they are not sure if the Imam really passed away or not.[5](#)
- **Waqifiyyah:** They believe that Imam al-Kazim ('a) did not die and that he shall remain alive till the Day of Resurrection ('a).[6](#)

Of course, some of these sects had also split into smaller sects. For example, Kaysaniyyah has two groups regarding the Imamate of Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah:

Some believed that Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah was the Imam after Imam al-Husayn ('a) while another group was of the opinion that he was supposed to be the Imam after his father, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a), and after ascribing the Imamate to pass to his son, Abu Hashim after him, they were again divided into some groups:

A group believed that Abu Hashim had entrusted the Imamate to Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-'Abbasi. The second group maintained that Abu Hashim had entrusted the Imamate to his brother, 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah. The third group opined that Abu Hashim had entrusted the Imamate to his nephew, Hasan ibn 'Ali. The fourth group held that Abu Hashim had entrusted the Imamate to 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amru al-Kindi.[7](#)

Zaydiyyah is also divided into three main groups:

**Jarudiyyah:**[8](#) They believe that after the Holy Prophet ('a), 'Ali ('a) was the one worthy of the caliphate but the Prophet ('a) introduced him to the people for the caliphate only by descriptions and not by name, and that due to the people's failure to recognize him correctly, they chose Abu Bakr and for doing so, the people became infidels {*kuffar*}.

**Sulaymaniyyah:**[9](#) They believe that Imamate is determined through consultation {*shura*} and that the Imamate of 'a deserving one' {*mafdhul*} while 'the most deserving one' {*afdhal*} is present is permissible. It is by means of this notion that they are proving the legitimacy of the caliphate of Abu Bakr and 'Umar and that the *ummah* erred in not choosing 'the most deserving one' (viz., 'Ali ('a)) but their error does not reach the level of transgression {*fisq*}. Also, they declare 'Uthman as an infidel {*kafir*}.

**Batriyyah:**[10](#) Their beliefs are similar to that of Sulaymaniyyah with the only difference that they suspend their judgment concerning 'Uthman.[11](#)

Isma'iliyyah is also divided into three groups:

One group is of the opinion that the Imam after Imam as-Sadiq ('a) is Isma'il who did not die as he is alive and the promised Mahdi.

The second group believes that Isma'il died and the Imamate transferred to his son, Muhammad, who is in occultation {*ghaybah*} and shall appear and fill the world with justice and equity.

The third group, like the second one, believes in the Imamate of Muhammad ibn Isma'il with the only difference that Muhammad died and the Imamate has remained in his offspring.[12](#)

Of course, most of these sects did not last long, and they could hardly be called "sects". Rather, they were groups that faded away with the death of their respective leaders, and they had no appearance in the sociopolitical scenes. Among these sects, Kaysaniyyah, Zaydiyyah and Isma'iliyyah emerged and remained in the first, second and third centuries AH. Of course, although during the second century AH and after the martyrdom of Imam as-Sadiq ('a) the Isma'ili sect was separated from the body of Shi'ism, it had no appearance up to the middle of the third century AH, and in a sense, their Imams were in hiding.[13](#)

During the first century AH, next to the Shi'ah Imamiyyah and prior to the emergence of Zaydiyyah, Kaysaniyyah had been the most influential Shi'ah sect. Kaysaniyyah emerged and made its appearance in the uprising of Mukhtar. Although we do not regard Mukhtar himself as a Kaysani, many of his forces were adhering to Kaysaniyyah.[14](#)

This sect struggled politically until the end of the first century AH, and Abu Hashim, 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah, who was the leader of this sect, had for the first time used the terms "*da'i*" {propagator} and "*hujjat*" {proof} for his preachers. Later on, these terms were used by other groups such as the 'Abbasids, Zaydis and Isma'ilis. He was also the one who founded the "office of propagation" which was later imitated by the 'Abbasids.[15](#)

When the Umayyad caliph Sulayman ibn 'Abd al-Malik felt threatened by Abu Hashim, he invited him to Sham and poisoned him. When Abu Hashim realized that that was his end, he went to Hamimah, the living place of his 'Abbasid cousins, declared Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-'Abbasi as his successor, and introduced to his successor his preachers and forces.[16](#) From then on, the Banu 'Abbas assumed the leadership of the followers of Kaysaniyyah and focused their activities in Khurasan. As Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani says,

The people of Khurasan believed that Abu Hashim was the successor of his father and that his father inherited the right of succession {*wasayah*} from his father (viz., 'Ali ('a)). He in turn appointed Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-'Abbasi as his successor and who, in turn, designated his own son, Ibrahim, as the Imam. In this manner, they were proving the right of succession of Banu 'Abbas.[17](#)

Even Shahrastani believes that Abu Muslim al-Khurasani had been a Kaysani at the beginning but after the triumph of the 'Abbasids, they established their legitimacy based on the alleged right of succession of their forefather, 'Abbas, from the Messenger of Allah (S) himself.

In retrospect, the sociopolitical appearance of the Kaysanis can be found in the uprising of

'Abd Allah ibn Mu'awiyah, a descendant of Ja'far ibn Abi Talib at-Tayyar. As Shahrastani says,

A number of the Kaysanis believed in the right of succession of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amru al-Kindi and when they found him committing treachery and making lies, they believed in the Imamate of 'Abd Allah ibn Mu'awiyah ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Ja'far at-Tayyar... There was a serious difference over the issue of Imamate between the companions of 'Abd Allah ibn Mu'awiyah and the companions and followers of Muhammad ibn 'Ali.[18](#)

Besides the Kaysaniyyah, the second sect that was active in the sociopolitical scene, was the Zaydiyyah, which emerged after the uprising of Zayd and the most politicized Shi'ah sect. Of all the Shi'ah sects, it is the closest to the principles of Ahl as-Sunnah. For example, in addition to acknowledging the caliphate of Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman, Batriyyah Zaydiyyah was not also considering Talhah, Zubayr and 'A'ishah as infidels.[19](#)

For this reason, many of the Sunni jurists {*fuqaha*} used to approve the uprising of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah who was a Zaydi.[20](#) Mas'ar ibn Kudam, a leading Murjite {*murja'ah*} figure, had written to Ibrahim, brother of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah, to come to Kufah.[21](#) Abu Hanifah, the Imam of the Hanifi school of thought {*madhhab*} participated in Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah's uprising, encouraging the people to support the leader of the uprising.[22](#)

Regarding the Zaydiyyah Batriyyah sect, Sa'd ibn 'Abd Allah Ash'ari al-Qummi thus says, "They mix together the guardianship {*wilayah*} of Abu Bakr and 'Umar."[23](#) In particular, regarding the roots of religion {*usul ad-din*}, they follow Mu'tazilism {*mu'tazilah*} and concerning the branches of religion {*furu' ad-din*}, they follow Abu Hanifah while some follow Shafi'i.[24](#)

The Zaydi school of thought, that is Shi'ism in a general sense, does not differ much from the Sunni beliefs. It is for this reason that in some Zaydi uprisings, such as that of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah and his brother Ibrahim, a number of the Sunni '*ulama*' and prominent figures had participated. Similarly, the Shi'ah who had participated in the Zaydi uprisings were probably of the opinion that the 'Alawi leaders of the uprisings were designated by the infallible Imams and perhaps the scattering of Shi'ah and their being away from the Imam of the time were the reasons behind it. In the end, only the Zaydis had remained with their leaders. For example, as narrated by Mas'udi, Ibrahim ibn 'Abd Allah, Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah's brother, had fought in the end with only four hundred Zaydis on his side who were all killed.[25](#)

The third sect which had presence and been active in the sociopolitical scenes is the Isma'ili sect. This sect separated from the body of Shi'ism during the second half of the second century AH. Yet, until the end of the third century AH, they did not have much public appearance and their leaders remained in hiding until 296 AH, i.e. the year of appearance of 'Abd Allah al-Mahdi, the first Fatimid caliph in North Africa. For this reason, the evolutionary phases of this sect remained completely unknown. Nawbakhti who lived during the third century AH used to link their initial activities with the *Ghulat* and followers of Abi'l-Khattab.[26](#)

Their beliefs have also remained in the halo of ambiguity. In this regard, Mas'udi thus writes:

The scholastic theologians {*mutakallimun*} of the various sects—Shi'ah, Mu'tazilah,

Murja'ah, and Khawarij—have written about the sect and reputation of the objections against it... But none of them has expressed opposition against the doctrines of the Qaramatah (Isma'ili) sect. There are also those who have written against them such as Qudamah ibn Yazid an-Nu'mani, Ibn 'Abdak al-Jurjani, Abi'l-Hasan Zakariyya al-Jurjani, Abi 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn ar-Razzaq at-Ta'i al-Kufi, and Abu Ja'far al-Kalabi. Each of them had described the creeds of the people of falsehood. Yet, others have not discussed those matters. Besides, the followers of this sect disregarded the claims of these writers, not confirming them.[27](#)

This is the reason why the followers of this sect have been referred to by diverse names in the different regions. In this regard, Khwajah Nizam al-Mulk has thus written: They had been called by different names in every city and every province; "Isma'ili" in Halab and Egypt; "Saba'i" in Qum, Kashan, Tabaristan, and Sabzewar; "Qarmati" in Baghdad and Mesopotamia; "Khalafi" in Rey; and in Isfahan...[28](#)

Prior to the establishment of the Fatimid state, the Isma'ilis were less engaged in political struggles, and instead focused on drawing people's attention toward them, propagation, training and education. As such, we are witnesses to the travel of the Isma'ili leaders, such as Muhammad ibn Isma'il, 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad, Ahmad ibn 'Abd Allah, and Husayn ibn Ahmad, to the regions such as Rey, Nahavand, Damavand, Syria, Jabal Qandahar, Nayshabur, Daylam, Yemen, Hamedan, Istanbul, and Azerbaijan where they dispatched their preachers and propagators.[29](#)

It was by considering these grounds that the Qarmatis {*qarmatiyan*} designated "Isma'iliyyah" for themselves. Given such an expansion, they used to try their best for the 'Abbasid not to be able to extinguish the fire of their sedition.[30](#)

In 296 AH the Fatimid state, based on the Isma'ili sect, was established in North Africa and a vast part of the Muslim territories was detached from the 'Abbasid sphere of influence.

## **Lesson 22: Summary**

The most prominent Shi'ah sects emerged during the first and second centuries AH, and notable rifts within Shi'ism had occurred after the end of the second century AH. As such, in contrast to Waqifiyyah, the Shi'ah Imami who believed in the Imamate of Imam ar-Ridha ('a) were called Qati'ah and Ithna 'Ashariyyah.

No rift within Shi'ism occurred during the time of Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn ('a) on account of their towering station.

Most sects mentioned in the books about nations and religions could hardly be called "sects". Rather, they were groups that eventually faded away with the death of their respective leaders and founders.

But the sects that have appeared in the sociopolitical scenes are the Kaysaniyyah, Zaydiyyah and Isma'iliyyah.

## **Lesson 22: Questions**

1. From which period up to which period did sects emerge within Shi'ism?
2. Name the sects that had a presence in the sociopolitical scenes?

3. In terms of the roots {*usul*} and branches {*furu'*} of religion, which way and method does the Zaydiyyah sect follow?

1. Shahrastani, *Kitab al-Milal wa'n-Nihal* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1364 AHS), vol. 1, p. 150.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
3. See Sayyid Murtadha al-'Askari, 'Abd Allah ibn Saba' wa Asatir Ukhra, 6th edition (1413 AH/1993), vol. 2, pp. 328-375.  
Its abridged English version is Sayyid Murtadha al-'Askari, 'Abdullah ibn Saba' and Other Myths, trans. M.J. Muqaddas (Tehran: World Organization for Islamic Services, 1984). {Trans.}
4. Shaykh at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi), researched by Sayyid Mahdi Raja'i (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt at-Turath, 1404 AH), vol. 1, p. 325.
5. Maytham ibn 'Ali ibn Maytham al-Bahrani, *An-Najah fi'l-Qiyamah fi Tahqiq al-Imamah*, 1st edition (Qum: Majma' al-Fikr al-Islami, 1417 AH), pp. 172-174.
6. *Kitab al-Milal wa'n-Nihal*, p. 150.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 131-135.
8. They were the companions of Ziyad ibn Abi Ziyad, better known as Abi'l-Jarud. Hence, their group was called "Jarudiyyah".
9. Their leader was a person named Sulayman ibn Jarir. Thus, their group was known as "Sulaymaniyyah".
10. Their leader was a person named Kaythar an-Nawi Abtar. So, their group was labeled as "Batriyyah".
11. *Kitab al-Milal wa'n-Nihal*, pp. 140-142.
12. Muhammad Karim Khurasani, *Tarikh va 'Aqa'id-e Ferqeh-ye Aqakhaniyyeh*, abridged and compiled by Husayn Husayni (Qum: Nashr al-Huda, 1377 AHS), pp. 2-3.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
14. 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, 1st edition (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, p. 91.
15. Dr. Samirah Mukhtar al-Laythi, *Jihad ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar al-Jayl, 1396 AH), p. 87.
16. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 124; Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Andalusi, *Al-'Aqd al-Farid* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1409 AH), vol. 4, p. 438.
17. *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, p. 123.
18. *Kitab al-Milal wa'n-Nihal*, p. 135.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
20. *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, p. 247.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 314.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Sa'd ibn 'Abd Allah al-Qummi Ash'ari, *Al-Maqalat wa'l-Firaq*, 2nd edition (Tehran: Markaz-e Intisharat-e 'Ilmi va Farhangi, 1360 AHS) p. 10.
24. *Kitab al-Milal wa'n-Nihal*, vol. 1, p. 143.
25. *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 326.
26. Abi Muhammad al-Hasan ibn Musa Nawbakhti, *Firq ash-Shi'ah* (Najaf: Al-Matba'ah al-Haydariyyah, 1936), p. 71.
27. 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *At-Tanbiyyah wa'l-Ashraf* (Cairo: Dar as-Sawi Li't-Tab' wa'n-Nashr wa't-Ta'lif, n.d.), p. 341.
28. *Siyasatnameh* (Tehran: Intisharat-e 'Ilmi va Farhangi, 1364 AHS), p. 311.
29. See Rasul Ja'fariyan, *Tarikh-e Tashuyyu' dar Iran az Aghaz ta Qarn-e Hashtum-e Hijri*, 5th edition (Qum: Shirkat-e Chap wa Nashr-e Sazman-e Tablighat-e Islami, 1377 AHS), pp. 207-209.
30. *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 4, p. 297.

## Lesson 23: Factors behind the Rifts within Shi'ism

The blessed names of the twelve Imams ('a) have been recorded in the Prophetic traditions and Shi'ah had learned of their names before personally seeing them. As Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah, a devoted companion of the Prophet (S) narrates: When the verse,

***“O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you,”***<sup>1</sup>

was revealed, I asked: “O Messenger of Allah! We know Allah and His Apostle and we do obey them, but who are ‘those vested with authority’ {*uli’l-amr*} obedience to whom has been mentioned by God alongside the obedience to Himself and obedience to you?”

He said: “‘Those vested with authority’ are my successors and the leaders after me. The first of whom is ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib; after him, Hasan and then Husayn; after him, ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn; and after him is Muhammad ibn ‘Ali who is known in the Torah {*tawrat*} as “Baqir” {he who cleaves something asunder} and you shall see him. Once you meet him, extend my salutations to him.

After him is as-Sadiq, Ja‘far ibn Muhammad, and then Musa ibn Ja‘far followed by ‘Ali ibn Musa; after him is Muhammad ibn ‘Ali; after him is ‘Ali ibn Muhammad and then Hasan ibn ‘Ali, and after him is his son who shall have the same name and epithet as mine. It is he who shall conquer the east and west of the world. He shall be hidden from the visible ones—a long occultation on account of which the people will doubt his Imamate except those whose hearts shall be endowed with untainted faith by God...<sup>2</sup>

The same Jabir used to sit at the Masjid an-Nabi and say: “O Baqir al-‘Ilm {he who cleaves knowledge asunder}! Where are you?” People who heard him would say: “Jabir, you are talking nonsense.” He would reply, “I am not talking nonsense. Rather, the Holy Prophet (S) has informed me that “You shall meet a man from my descendants whose name and physical appearance is like that of mine who will cleave knowledge asunder.”<sup>3</sup>

The infallible Imams (‘a) also used to prove their rightfulness by showing manifest miracles and wonders. In spite of this, a series of reasons and factors caused some Shi‘ah to commit error concerning the matter (of Imamate) and a number of them deviated from the straight path. These factors can be stated as follows:

## **1. Repression**

After 40 AH intense persecution and repression of the descendants of the Prophet (‘a) and their followers prevailed. This suppression hindered some Shi‘ah from establishing a link with their Imams to have enough acquaintanceship with them.

During the second half of the first century, in particular after 72 AH and the defeat of ‘Abd Allah ibn Zubayr who was anti-Shi‘ah, Hajjaj ibn Yusuf ruled over Iraq and Hijaz for twenty years, brutally suppressed, killed and imprisoned the Shi‘ah, expelling them from Iraq and Hijaz.<sup>4</sup>

Imam as-Sajjad (‘a) was exercising dissimulation {*taqiyyah*} and he could express the Shi‘ah teachings only within the framework of supplication {*du‘a*}. The Kaysaniyyah sect emerged during that time.

Although Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) enjoyed relative freedom and were able to propagate the Shi‘ah fundamentals and teachings, when the ‘Abbasid caliph assumed power, he focused his attention on the Shi‘ah. And when he heard the news of the martyrdom of Imam as-Sadiq (‘a), he wrote a letter to his governor in Medina instructing him to identify and behead the successor of Imam as-Sadiq (‘a).

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) designated five persons as his "successors"—Abu Ja'far al-Mansur, Muhammad ibn Sulayman, 'Abd Allah, Musa, and Hamidah.<sup>5</sup> Imam al-Kazim ('a) languished in prison for a long time.

Initially, the 'Abbasid caliph Musa al-Hadi imprisoned the Imam and released him after sometime. Harun arrested the Imam four times and prevented the Shi'ah from visiting him.<sup>6</sup> The Shi'ah remained in limbo and without a guardian paving the way for Isma'iliyyah and Fathiyyah preachers. At the time, the Shi'ah had nobody to clarify their doubts. The 'Abbasid rule's control and surveillance over Imam al-Kazim's ('a) activities were such that even 'Ali ibn Isma'il, the Imam's nephew, was relaying information regarding him.<sup>7</sup>

Yes, most of the Shi'ah at the time were not sure whether Imam al-Kazim ('a) was alive or not. As Yahya ibn Khalid Barmaki used to say, I uprooted the religion of the *rafidhis* {dissidents} (pejoratively referring to the Shi'ah) because they were thinking that religion without the Imam will not survive and remain alive, while today they do not know whether their Imam is alive or not."<sup>8</sup>

During the moment of Imam al-Kazim's ('a) martyrdom, none of the Shi'ah were present on the scene. This matter seems to be the reason why the Waqifiyyah would deny the death of the Imam though financial issues contributed more to the emergence of this sect.

Yes, the infallible Imams ('a) were under constant 'Abbasid surveillance. They even coerced Imam al-Hadi and Imam al-'Askari ('a) to live in the military city of Samarra so as to keep them under constant surveillance. After the martyrdom of Imam al-'Askari ('a), the 'Abbasids imprisoned his spouses and bondwomen with the aim of identifying the Imam's successor (the Master of the Age, Imam al-Mahdi ('a)). Even Ja'far ibn 'Ali, known as Ja'far al-Kadhhab (Ja'far the Liar) used to act against his brother Imam al-'Askari ('a). As such, the *Ghulat* doctrines were spread through Nasiriyyah founded by Muhammad ibn Nasir Fihri. A number of them gathered around Ja'far and then he started claiming for the Imamate.<sup>9</sup>

## [2. Taqiyyah {Dissimulation}](#)

*Taqiyyah* {dissimulation} means expression of what is contrary to the truth when there is fear for the life of a Muslim. It is adopted in following previous laws and the law of Islam as dictated by both the text and reason.

For example, 'the believer among the family of Pharaoh' {*mu'min al fir'awn*} kept his faith in secret out of fear of Pharaoh and his men. Among the companions of the Messenger of Allah (S), 'Ammar also exercised *taqiyyah* on account of torture and persecution perpetuated against him by the polytheists {*mushrikun*} (of Mecca). When he was crying (for repentance) beside the Prophet (S) for doing so, the Prophet (S) said to him: "You have to do the same if they torture you again."<sup>10</sup>

Since the Shi'ah have always been few in numbers, they practiced *taqiyyah* in a bid to survive and save their lives. This method was responsible for the preservation of the school of Shi'ism. As Dr. Samirah Mukhtar al-Laythi writes, Among the contributory factors for the perpetuation of the Shi'ah movement are *taqiyyah* and the clandestine propagation, which gave opportunity to the nascent Shi'ah movement to advance away from the attention of the 'Abbasid caliphs and their governors.<sup>11</sup>

But on the other hand, *taqiyyah* has been one of the causes of rifts within Shi'ism because

the Shi'ah used to conceal their beliefs out of fear of the tyrants of the day. Even the Imams ('a) used to do so. On account of the atmosphere of strangulation, the infallible Imams ('a) somehow refrained from explicitly declaring their Imamate. This matter is indicated clearly in a dialogue between Imam ar-Ridha ('a) and some followers of Waqifiyyah:

'Ali ibn Abi Hamzah who was a Waqifi asked Imam ar-Ridha ('a): "What happened to your father?" The Imam replied: "He passed away." Ibn Abi Hamzah said: "Whom did he appoint as the successor after him?" The Imam answered: "It is me." He said: "So, are you the Imam ought to be obeyed?"

The Imam responded: "Yes." Ibn Siraj and Ibn Makari (two other Waqifis) inquired: "Has your father determined it for you?" Imam ar-Ridha ('a): "Woe to you! There is no need for me to say, 'He has designated me.' Do you like me to go to Baghdad and say to Harun, 'I am the Imam ought to be obeyed'? By God! I do not have such a duty."

Ibn Abi Hamzah said: "You expressed something which had never been expressed by any of your forefathers." The Imam said: "By God! My best grandfather, namely, the Prophet, expressed it when the verse was revealed and God commanded him to convey the message to his nearest of kin."[12](#)

During the time of Imam al-Baqir ('a), a number of the Shi'ah abandoned their belief in his Imamate, on account of his exercise of *taqiyyah* in dealing with some issues, and embraced Zaydiyyah Batriyyah.[13](#)

Meanwhile, some people who could not grasp the expediency of *taqiyyah* accused the pure Imams ('a) of error for not explicitly expressing their Imamate. They were in a sense radical and extremist. This motive had far-reaching contribution in the emergence of Zaydiyyah.

As such, when the pressure and repression were lessened and there were some opportunity for the pure Imams ('a) to prove their Imamate, sprouting of Shi'ah groups were minimal. During the time of Imam as-Sadiq ('a) when there was good opportunity and the Imam had freedom of action due to the conflicts between the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids, we witnessed the least number of rifts that take place, but after his martyrdom when the pressure and persecution of the 'Abbasid caliph Mansur prevailed, the Nawusiyyah, Isma'iliyyah, Khatabiyyah, Qaramatah, Samtiyyah, and Fathiyyah sects emerged.[14](#)

During the time of Imam ar-Rida ('a), the condition was again favorable and even during the caliphate of Harun, the Imam enjoyed relative freedom of action. At the time, a number of the leading figures of Waqifiyyah such as 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Hajjaj, Rifa'ah ibn Musa, Yunus ibn Ya'qub, Jamil ibn Dibaj, Hamad ibn 'Isa, and others abandoned their faith and believed in the Imamate of Imam ar-Ridha ('a).

Similarly, after the martyrdom of the Imam, notwithstanding the young age of Imam al-Jawad ('a), less rifts within Shi'ism took place due to the efforts of Imam ar-Ridha ('a) in introducing his son as his successor.

### **3. Ambition for Leadership**

Whenever repression was prevalent and the pure Imams ('a) were practicing *taqiyyah* for the preservation of the foundation of Shi'ism and protecting the lives of the Shi'ah, opportunist and power-greedy individuals within the ranks of the Shi'ah, though without much belief in religion, used to take advantage of this condition. For example, in reply to

one of his companions who asked about the contradiction of *hadiths*, Imam as-Sadiq ('a) said: "There are those who want to possess the world and acquire leadership by means of personally interpreting {*ta'wil*} our *hadiths*." [15](#)

For this reason, during the second century AH and after the spread of Shi'ism as well as after the martyrdom of Imam as-Sadiq, Imam al-Kazim and Imam al-'Askari ('a), such opportunist and leadership-greedy individuals multiplied in the midst of the Shi'ah and founded different sects for financial and political motives. After Imam al-Baqir ('a) Mughayrah ibn Sa'id claimed that he is the Imam and he has been designated by Imam as-Sajjad and Imam al-Baqir ('a). Hence, his supporters were called followers of Mughayriyyah.

After the martyrdom of Imam as-Sadiq ('a) the Nawusiyyah and Khatabiyyah sects came into existence whose founders used to utilize the names of Imam as-Sadiq ('a) and his son Isma'il in a bid to draw the people's attention toward themselves. Ibn Nawus was the founder of Nawusiyyah; his followers denied Imam as-Sadiq's ('a) death and pointed to him as the Mahdi. The followers of Khatabiyyah rejected the death of Isma'il, Imam as-Sadiq's ('a) son, and introduced their leader as the Imam after these two personages. [16](#)

The peak of financial motives in founding a certain sect was after the martyrdom of Imam al-Kazim ('a). Yunus who was one of the companions of Imam al-Kazim ('a) narrated that when Abu'l-Hasan Imam al-Kazim ('a) passed away, each of his deputies acquired abundant possessions and wealth. As such, they suspended their judgment concerning the Imam and denied his death. For example, Ziyad Qanadi had a deposit of seventy thousand dinars while 'Ali ibn Hamzah had three thousand dinars. Yunus thus wrote:

When I saw that condition and the truth became clear to me and also, I learned of the issue of Imamate of Hadhrat Ridha ('a), I started relaying the truths and inviting the people toward the Imam. Those two persons pursued me, asking: "Why are you calling on the people toward the Imamate of Ridha? If your motive is to acquire money, we shall make you rich" and they offered ten thousand dinars to me but I refused. They became angry with me and expressed enmity and hostility toward me. [17](#)

Sa'd ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ash'ari also says:

After the martyrdom of Imam al-Kazim ('a), the followers of Hasmawiyyah sect believed that Imam al-Kazim ('a) did not die and was never imprisoned rather he was in occultation and he is the Mahdi. Their leader was Muhammad ibn Bashir who claimed that the seventh Imam appointed him as the successor; that rings and all things that the people need in the affairs of the religion and the world had been granted to him; that all prerogatives had been given to him; and that he assumed the position of the Imam.

Then, he was allegedly the Imam after Imam al-Kazim ('a) and at the time that this Muhammad ibn Bashir was about to die he designated his son, Sami' ibn Muhammad, as his successor, alleging that obedience to him is obligatory till the appearance of al-Kazim ('a). He also urged people to give to Sami' ibn Muhammad whatever they want to offer in the way of God. These people were labeled as "*mamturah*". [18](#)

## **4. The Existence of Mentally Weak Individuals**

There were coward individuals among the Shi'ah who, when they would see a miracle from the Imam of their time, their intellect could not digest it and they would start expressing extreme beliefs notwithstanding the fact that the pure Imams ('a) themselves used to strongly combat such beliefs. As narrated in *Rijal Kashi*, seventy black-skinned persons

residing in Basrah expressed extreme beliefs about 'Ali ('a) after the Battle of Jamal.[19](#)

Opportunist and leadership-greedy elements also exploited the spirit of these people, misguiding them and letting them do things for their own benefit. For example, Abi'l-Khattab founded the Khattabiyyah sect, introduced Imam as-Sadiq ('a) in the position of prophethood, allegedly bestowed on him by God, and claimed himself to be the Imam and successor of Imam as-Sadiq ('a).[20](#)

Also, during the minor occultation {*ghaybah as-sughrāh*} of the Imam of the Time ('a), Ibn Nasir initially introduced himself as the 'door' (medium) {*bab*} and deputy {*wakil*} of the Imam in explaining the religions laws and collecting the religious funds. Later on, he started claiming prophethood and finally went to the extent of claiming divinity.[21](#) His followers also accepted him as such. As a matter of fact, it was on account of such a mentality of his followers that he made such claims. In essence, extremist sects were founded under such grounds.

## **The Infallible Imams' ('a) Campaign against Extreme Views**

One of the potent dangers that threatened the Shi'ah throughout history is the issue of the extremists {*ghalis*} and the attribution of their views to the Shi'ah. The state of affairs is such that the adversaries and enemies of the Shi'ah have always accused them of committing extremism and fanaticism with respect to their Imams.

At this juncture, we shall not engage in talking about the different extremist {*ghullah*} sects, discussing their views and beliefs. Of course, it must be noted that the most salient feature and point of convergence of all the extremist sects is their extremism with respect to the right of the Imams by blasphemously elevating their station to the station of divinity.

The existence of the extremists {*ghullat*} among the Muslims is caused more by external factors than internal ones. Through direct and face-to-face confrontations and encounters, the enemies of Islam were not able to strike a blow to Islam while Islam enlightened their lands and defeated its enemies. As such, they decided to strike a blow to Islam from within. So, they targeted the principal principles of Islam.

The political establishments were also not disinterested in encouraging, or at least tolerating, such individuals to emerge from among the Shi'ah and followers of the *Ahl al-Bayt* of the Prophet (S) so as to attribute these individuals' views to the Shi'ah, and in so doing, the followers of the *Ahl al-Bayt* could be presented as extremists and outside the community of Muslims.

Although this trend had started since the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) and a number of mentally weak elements held extreme views regarding him (who were executed for not recanting their deviant views),[22](#) 'Abd Allah ibn Saba' is a fictitious and imaginary figure. The first person to have mentioned him is Tabari the historian. He, in turn, has taken the account of this Ibn Saba' from Sayf ibn 'Umar, whose being known as a liar has been unanimously agreed upon by the scholars of *rijal*.[23](#)

The pure Imams ('a) had always faced this problem and strongly combated it, constantly cursing the extremists and informing the people of the danger posed by these extremists. The Imams ('a) used to order the Shi'ah not to socialize with them nor establish relationship

with them.<sup>24</sup> Imam as-Sadiq ('a) had mentioned the names of a number of chief extremists {ghalis} such as Mughayrah ibn Sa'id, Bayan, Sa'id Nahdi, Harith Shami, 'Abd Allah ibn Harith, Hamzah ibn 'Ammar Barbari, and Abu'l-Khattab, and cursed them.<sup>25</sup>

As the effect of the pure Imams' ('a) curse, they suffered from pain and torment and were killed under terrible conditions. As Imam ar-Ridha ('a) says, Banan used to tell lies about Imam as-Sajjad ('a); God made him taste the sharpness of the sword. Mughayrah ibn Sa'id used to tell lies about Imam al-Baqir ('a) and he also tasted the sharpness of the sword. Muhammad ibn Bashir used to lie about Abu'l-Hasan al-Kazim ('a) and God, the Exalted, also made him perish via the sword. Abu'l-Khattab used to lie about Abu 'Abd Allah Imam as-Sadiq ('a) and he was also killed via the sword. And the one telling lies about me is Muhammad ibn Furat.<sup>26</sup>

The period of Imam Hasan al-'Askari had been one of the periods when the trend of extremism {ghullah} gained optimal momentum. It is for this reason that the Imam had cursed individuals such as Qasim Yaqtini, 'Ali ibn Haskah Qummi, Ibn Baba Qummi Fihri, Muhammad ibn Nasir Numayri, and Fars ibn Hatam Qazwini who were considered among the chiefs and leaders of extremism.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, in Shi'ah-populated regions such as Qum there had always been an anti-extremism {ghullah} atmosphere and the extremists were not permitted to reside there. For this reason, in describing the personal characters of Husayn ibn 'Abd Allah Muharrar, Ibn Dawud has said: "It is reported that he always expelled from the city of Qum those who were accused of extremism."<sup>28</sup>

As narrated by Ibn Hajm, Abu'l-Hasan Muhammad ibn Ahmad, a son of Imam al-Kazim ('a) who, during the third century AH, lived in Azerbaijan where he was held in high esteem, was so strict against the preachers of extremist sects that they provided the means for his murder and they persuaded Mufallah Ghulam ibn Abi's-Saj, the governor of Azerbaijan, to kill him.<sup>29</sup>

## **Lesson 23: Summary**

Although the blessed names of the twelve Imams ('a) are recorded in the Prophetic traditions and the Shi'ah were familiar with their names prior to meeting them, a series of reasons and factors caused some Shi'ah to commit error with respect to the matter (Imamate) and to deviate from the straight path. Among these factors are the following:

1. Repression: After 40 AH when the Umayyads assumed power, repression of the Shi'ah community was the order of the day. The same state of affairs prevailed during the 'Abbasid period, and this condition caused the Shi'ah not to be able to acquire the necessary knowledge about their Imams.
2. *Taqiyyah* {dissimulation}: *Taqiyyah* contributed to the preservation of the Shi'ah school. Yet, it has also been one of the factors for the emergence of rifts within Shi'ism because the pure Imams ('a) used to avoid explicitly declaring their Imamate.
3. Ambition for leadership and love of the world: There were always opportunist individuals in the ranks of the Shi'ah who used to take advantage of the atmosphere of strangulation prevalent in the Shi'ah community and create sects to advance their personal interests.
4. The existence of mentally weak individuals: There were mentally weak individuals among

the Shi'ah whose minds could not properly grasp the miracles that they witnessed from the Imams and would start to hold extreme views.

The issue of extremism {*ghullah*} was one of the most serious dangers that had threatened the Shi'ah. The pure Imams ('a) always confronted this matter, intensely informing the people of its peril.

## **Lesson 23: Questions**

1. What were the reasons behind the rifts within Shi'ism?

2. How did the Imams ('a) combat extremist trends?

1. Surah an-Nisa' 4:59.

2. Mahdi Pishva'i, *Shakhsiyyat-ha-ye Islami-ye Shi'eh*, 1st edition (Qum: Intisharat-e Tawhid, 1359 AHS), p. 63 as quoted from *Tafsir Safi*, vol. 1, p. 366; *Kamal ad-Din wa Tamam an-Ni'mah* with Persian translation (Tehran), vol. 1, p. 365.

3. Shaykh at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi), researched by Sayyid Mahdi Raja'i (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt at-Turath, 1404 AH), vol. 1, p. 218.

4. Muhammad Husayn Zayn 'Amili, *Ash-Shi'ah fi't-Tarikh*, trans. Muhammad-Rida 'Ata'i, 2nd edition (Mashhad: Bunyad-e Pazhuhesh-ha-ye Islami-ye Astan-e Quds-e Radhawi, 1375 AHS), p. 120.

5. Abi 'Ali al-Fadhl ibn al-Hasan Tabarsi, *l'Ilam al-Wara bi A'lam al-Huda* (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt Li Ihya' at-Turath, 1417 AH), vol. 2, p. 13.

6. Muhammad Husayn Muzaffar, *Tarikh ash-Shi'ah* (Qum: Manshurat Maktabah Basirati, n.d.), p. 47.

7. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyin* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 414.

8. *Ash-Shi'ah fi't-Tarikh*, p. 123.

9. Shaykh at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi), researched by Sayyid Mahdi Raja'i (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt at-Turath, 1404 AH), vol. 1, p. 325.

10. Sayyid Muhsin Amin, *A'yan ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar at-Ta'aruf Li'l-Matbu'at, n.d.), p. 199.

11. Dr. Samirah Mukhtar al-Laythi, *Jihad ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar al-Jayl, 1396 AH), p. 394.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 763.

13. Sa'd ibn 'Abd Allah al-Qummi Ash'ari, *Al-Maqalat wa'l-Firaq*, 2nd edition (Tehran: Markaz-e Intisharat-e 'Ilmi va Farhangi, 1360 AHS), p. 75.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

15. *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi), vol. 1, p. 374.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

17. *Ash-Shi'ah fi't-Tarikh*, p. 123 as quoted from Shaykh at-Tusi, *Al-Ghaybah*, p. 46.

18. *Al-Maqalat wa'l-Firaq*, p. 91.

19. When the Commander of the Faithful ('a) was relieved of the Battle of the Jamal, seventy black-skinned persons residing in Basrah came to the Imam and talked to him in their vernacular. 'Ali ('a) talked to them in their vernacular, too. Hence, they started expressing extreme views about the Imam. 'Ali ('a) told them, "I am a servant of God and His creature."

They did not believe and even insisted that the Imam is equal to God. So, the Imam asked them to repent to God for holding such a deviant view, but they violently refused to repent. As such, they had been executed.

*Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi), vol. 1, p. 325.

20. Shahristani, *Kitab al-Milal wa'n-Nihal* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1364 AHS), vol. 1, p. 160.

21. *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi), vol. 2, p. 805.

22. *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi), vol. 1, p. 325.

23. See Sayyid Murtadha al-'Askari, 'Abd Allah ibn Saba' wa Asatir Ukhra, 6th edition (1413 AH/1993), vol. 2, pp. 328-375.

Its abridged English version is Sayyid Murtadha al-'Askari, 'Abdullah ibn Saba' and Other Myths, trans. M.J. Muqaddas (Tehran: World Organization for Islamic Services, 1984). {Trans.}

24. *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi), vol. 2, p. 586.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 577.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 591.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 805.

28. *Rijal ibn Dawud* (Qum: Manshurat ar-Radhi, n.d.), p. 240.

29. Abu Muhammad 'Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Sa'id ibn Hazm al-Andalusi, *Jumhazah Insab al-'Arab*, 1st edition (Beirut: n.p., 1403 AH), p. 63.

# Part 7: The Intellectual Legacy of the Shi'ah

## Lesson 24: The Intellectual Legacy of the Shi'ah

The importance of writing and compilation in the sacred laws of Islam is proverbial to all and sundry. For, one of the most significant ways of transferring knowledge and learning is through writing. The Arab society, prior to the advent of Islam had acquired the least benefit from this blessing, and only very few were able to read and write.<sup>1</sup>

But the need to record and put into writing the verses of the Qur'an for learning and teaching were only felt immediately after the Prophetic mission and the receipt of revelations. As Ibn Hisham has narrated:

Before 'Umar ibn al-Khattab became Muslim, his sister, Fatimah bint al-Khattab and her husband Sa'id ibn Zayd had become Muslims and covertly and away from the attention of 'Umar, Khabbab ibn Irt was teaching them *Surah Ta Ha* on a writing parchment which was called *sahifah*.<sup>2</sup>

In Medina, the Noble Messenger (S) had selected a group of Muslims who were able to put into writing the divine revelation. The Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a), in addition to being the regular scribe of the revelation, the Holy Prophet (S) constantly explained to him the definitive verses {*muhkamat*} and allegorical verses {*mutashabihat*}<sup>3</sup> as well as the abrogator {*nasukh*} and abrogated {*mansukh*} verses.

'Ali ('a) had also written a book entitled, "*Sahifah al-Jami'ah*" as dictated by the Messenger of Allah (S), which encompassed the lawful {*halal*} and the unlawful {*haram*}, obligatory {*wajib*} and recommended {*mustahab*} acts, as well as laws and that which the people need in this world and in their life in the hereafter.<sup>4</sup> Two other books—one entitled "*Sahifah*" about penalties {*diyyat*} and another book entitled "*Fara'idh*"—have also been attributed to the Imam.<sup>5</sup>

Other companions of the Holy Prophet (S) also compiled collections of his sayings and traditions, which they called "*sahifah*". Abu Hurayrah has been narrated by Bukhari to have said:

Of all the companions of the Prophet, I have the most number of narrating the Prophet's *hadiths* with the exception of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amru because he used to write whatever he would hear from the Prophet while I was not writing them.<sup>6</sup>

After the demise of the Prophet (S), however, the second caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab prohibited the writing of *hadith*.<sup>7</sup> This state of affairs persisted until such time that 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz during the latter part of the first century AH annulled this prohibition and he wrote to Abu Bakr ibn Hazm to record in writing the *hadiths* of the Messenger of Allah (S).<sup>8</sup>

This task was not realized until the end of the first half of the second century AH because according to Ghazzali, the first writers of books on *hadith* among the Ahl as-Sunnah were Ibn Jarir, Mu'ammarr ibn Rashid, Malik ibn Anas, and Sufyan ath-Thawri<sup>9</sup> who were related to the second half of the second century AH and the years of their demise were 150, 152, 179, and 161 AH respectively.

Yet, this process was never suspended among the Shi'ah, and great Shi'ah among the companions of the Prophet (S) such as Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari and Abu Rafi' al-Qibti made the pioneering steps in the field of writing and composition. Ibn Shahr Ashub says,

Ghazzali believes that the first book written in the Muslim world is the book of Ibn Jarir on the works and types of exegeses {*tafasir*} narrated from Mujahid and 'Ata' in Mecca. Next to his book is the book of Mu'ammarr ibn Rashid San'ani in Yemen; then, the book *Muwatta'* of Malik ibn Anas in Medina; followed by the book *Jami'ah* of Sufyan ath-Thawri. This is not correct, however, for the first book in the Muslim world is written by the Commander of the Faithful ('a) who compiled the Qur'an. Next to him, Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari, Asbagh ibn Nubatah, and 'Abd Allah ibn Abi Rafi' had also made steps in writing and composition. And after them, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) composed the *Sahifah al-Kamilah*.<sup>10</sup>

Ibn Nadim also regard the first account of writing among the Shi'ah as related to the first century AH.<sup>11</sup> In view of the Shi'ah's lead in writing, composition and compiling the Prophetic works, Dhahabi in describing the status of Aban ibn Taghlib thus says: "If the reliability of persons such as Aban is not accepted because of his inclination to Shi'ism, so many of the Prophetic works and *hadiths* will perish."<sup>12</sup>

As such, the jurists and *hadith* scholars {*muhaddithun*} of the Ahl as-Sunnah, particularly the founders of the four schools of thought {*madhahib*}, in addition to utilizing intermediaries to Imam as-Sadiq ('a), had also learned from the Shi'ah *muhaddithun* and received *hadiths* from them.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, regarding the number of books written by Shi'ah during the first three centuries AH, the author of *Wasa'il ash-Shi'ah* has said:

"The scholars and *muhaddithun* during the period of the pure Imams ('a), from the time of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) up to the time of Imam Hasan al-'Askari ('a), have written six thousand and six hundred books."<sup>14</sup>

The Shi'ah during those periods made remarkable accomplishments in the various fields of knowledge of the day such as literature, lexicography, poetry, sciences of the Qur'an {*'ulum al-qur'an*}, exegesis {*tafsir*}, *hadith*, principles of jurisprudence {*usul al-fiqh*}, scholastic theology {*'ilm al-kalam* or simply *kalam*}, history, life conduct of the Prophet (S) {*sirah*}, *rijal*, and ethics.

They have made many writings and literary works while leading in most fields. Abu'l-Aswad Daw'ili, a Shi'ah poet, was the founder of the science of Arabic syntax {*nahw*}.<sup>15</sup> He was the first to put the dots in the copies of the Qur'an.<sup>16</sup> The first book on lexicography among the Muslims is *Kitab al-'Ayn* written by Khalil ibn Ahmad<sup>17</sup> who has been one of the Shi'ah scholars.<sup>18</sup>

In the field of the life conduct {*sirah*} and battles {*maghazi*} of the Prophet (S), the first book was written by Ibn Ishaq who, according to Ibn Hajr, was a Shi'ah.<sup>19</sup>

After undertaking this cursory glance, we shall now explain a bit about the sciences of *hadith*, jurisprudence and scholastic theology that the Shi'ah school has a particular disposition, keeping into account its fundamentals and principles in these fields.

## Hadith

Next to the Qur'an, the *hadith* or the *sunnah* which is the second source of Islamic jurisprudence, means the saying, action and tacit approval of the Infallibles ('a). The Ahl as-Sunnah confine the *hadith* to only the saying, action and tacit approval of the Prophet (S). The Shi'ah, however, regard the saying, action and tacit approval of the infallible Imams ('a) as proof {*hujjah*} and part of the corpus of *hadith*.<sup>20</sup>

Now, we shall survey the works on *hadith* during the period of the presence of the Imams ('a) in four categories, which consist of four phases:

### First Category

Based on the opinion of Najashi, the first category of the Shi'ah *hadith* recorders were Abu Rafi' al-Qibti, 'Ali ibn Abi Rafi', Rabi'ah ibn Sumi', Sulaym ibn Qays Hilali, Asbagh ibn Nabatah Majashi'i, and 'Abd Allah ibn Hurr Ju'fi.<sup>21</sup> They were among the companions of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn ('a).

### Second Category

According to some scholars, there were twelve persons who had written books and treatises among the companions of Imam as-Sajjad and Imam al-Baqir ('a).<sup>22</sup> One may mention Aban ibn Taghlib among them. He occupied a special station in the eyes of the pure Imams ('a) so much so that Imam al-Baqir ('a) said to him: "In the mosque of Medina you give religious edicts {*fatawa*} to the people as I want individuals like you to be seen among my Shi'ah."<sup>23</sup>

Najashi says, "Aban ibn Taghlib, may Allah be pleased with him, was one of the forerunners in the various fields of knowledge such as the Qur'an, jurisprudence, *hadith*, literature, lexicography, and syntax." Aban has written about these fields such as his *Tafsir*, *Gharib al-Qur'an* and *Kitab al-Fadha'il*.<sup>24</sup>

The same is true regarding Abu Hamzah ath-Thumali about whom Imam as-Sadiq ('a) has said: "Abu Hamzah was like Salman (al-Farsi) of my time."<sup>25</sup> Among his books and treatises are *Kitab an-Nawadir*, *Kitab az-Zuhd* and *Tafsir al-Qur'an*.<sup>26</sup>

### Third Category

The time of Imam as-Sadiq ('a) was a period of scientific progress and advancement in the Muslim society while the Shi'ah had enjoyed relative freedom. According to Shaykh al-Mufid, the number of students of Imam as-Sadiq ('a) was approximately four thousands.<sup>27</sup>

Hasan ibn 'Ali Washa', a companion of Imam ar-Ridha ('a) says that he has seen nine hundred people in Masjid Kufah who have all been narrating *hadiths* from Imam as-Sadiq ('a).<sup>28</sup> So, out of the Imam's replies to the questions posed to him, four hundred books have been written<sup>29</sup> all of which have been known as *Al-Asl* {The Principle or Essence}.

There have also been other books, apart from the ones mentioned, in various fields and sciences written by the companions and students of Imam as-Sadiq ('a).

## Fourth Category

During this period which was after the time of Imam as-Sadiq ('a), many books on *hadith* have been written. For example, Husayn ibn Sa'id al-Kufi, a companion of Imam ar-Ridha ('a), has written thirty books on *hadith*.[30](#)

Muhammad ibn Abi 'Umayr, another companion of Imam ar-Ridha ('a), has written ninety four books while Safwan ibn Bajli, a companion of both Imam ar-Ridha and Imam al-Jawad ('a), have authored thirty books most of which have the titular appellation of *Jami'* {collection, compendium or anthology}. The latter compilers of *hadith* such as Thiqat al-Islam al-Kulayni, Shaykh as-Saduq and Shaykh at-Tusi have benefited from those books in writing their own collections.

## Lesson 24: Summary

The importance of writing in the sacred laws of Islam is proverbial to all and sundry. With the receipt of the divine revelation, the need for recording it in writing was felt, and a number of scribes of the revelation were known.

The Commander of the Faithful ('a) and a number of other companions of the Prophet (S) had compiled some collections of the *hadiths* of the Prophet (S) which were known together as *Sahifah*.

Among the Ahl as-Sunnah, the first books on *hadith* have been related to the second half of the second century AH because the second caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab had prohibited the writing of *hadith*. This prohibition among the Shi'ah, however, did not prevail, and the first writers among the companions of the Prophet (S) were Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari and Abu Rafi' al-Qibti.

Shi'ah up to the time of Imam Hasan al-'Askari ('a) had written six thousand and six hundred books.

We shall survey the works on *hadith* written by the Shi'ah during the whole period of the presence of the pure Imams ('a) in four categories that consist of four phases.

**First category:** Companions of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn ('a).

**Second category:** Companions of Imam as-Sajjad and Imam al-Baqir ('a).

**Third category:** Companions of Imam as-Sadiq ('a).

**Fourth category:** Companions of Imam al-Kazim, Imam ar-Ridha, Imam al-Jawad, Imam al-Hadi, and Imam Hasan al-'Askari ('a).

## Lesson 24: Questions

1. How was the writing of the Qur'an during the time of the Prophet (S)?

2. Were the companions of the Prophet (S) keeping written records of his *hadiths*?
3. Which period were the first writers of the books on *hadith* among the Ahl as-Sunnah related to?
4. Who were the pioneers in writing among the Shi'ah?
5. What is the number of the books written by the Shi'ah up to the time of Imam Hasan al-'Askari ('a)?
6. The first category of the Shi'ah scholars of *hadith* {*muhaddithun*} was the companions of which of the infallible Imams ('a)?
7. How was the writing of *hadith* during the time of Imam as-Sadiq ('a)?
8. The books on *hadith* collectively known as *Jami'* {collection, compendium or anthology} were related to which period?

1. 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn al-Khaldun, *Al-Muqaddimah* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1408 AH), p. 417.

2. Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Malik ibn Hisham, *As-Sirah an-Nabawiyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 344.

3. Surah Al 'Imran 3:7: "It is He who has sent down to you the Book. Parts of it are definitive verses, which are the mother of the Book, while others are metaphorical."

4. Abu'l-'Abbas Ahmad ibn 'Ali ibn Ahmad ibn al-'Abbas Najashi, *Fihrist Asma' Musanfa ash-Shi'ah* (Rijal Najashi) (Qum: Islamic Publications Office affiliated to the Society of Teachers of the Islamic Seminary in Qum, 1407 AH), p. 360; Abi 'Ali al-Fadhl ibn al-Hasan Tabarsi, *I'lam al-Wara bi A'lam al-Huda* (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt Li Ihya' at-Turath, 1417 AH), vol. 1, p. 536.

5. Shaykh at-Tusi, *Tahdhib al-Ahkam* (n.p: Maktabah as-Saduq, 1376 AHS/1418 AH), vol. 1, pp. 338, 342.

6. *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr Li't-Taba'ah wa'n-Nashr wa't-Tawzi', n.d.), vol. 1, p. 36.

7. Asad Haydar, *Al-Imam as-Sadiq wa'l-Madhahib al-Arba'ah*, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1390 AH), vol. 1, p. 544.

8. *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, p. 36.

9. Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, *Ma'alim al-'Ulama'* (Najaf: Manshurat al-Matba'ah al-Haydariyyah, 1380 AH), p. 2.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Ibn Nadim. *Al-Fihrist* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah Li't-Taba'ah wa'n-Nashar, n.d.), p. 307.

12. Shams ad-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad Dhahabi, *Mizan al-I'tidal* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr Li't-Taba'ah wa'n-Nashr wa't-Tawzi', n.d.), vol. 1, p. 4.

13. 'Abd al-Hamid ibn Abi'l-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, researched by Muhammad Abu'l-Fadhl Ibrahim (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1378 AH), vol. 1, p. 18.

14. Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Wasa'il ash-Shi'ah*, 6th edition (Tehran: Maktabah al-Islamiyyah, 1403 AH), vol. 20, p. 49.

15. *Al-Fihrist*, p. 61.

16. Bastani, *Da'irah al-Ma'arif* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 788.

17. *Al-Fihrist*, p. 63.

18. Muhammad ibn 'Ali Ardebili al-Gharawi al-Ha'iri, *Jami' ar-Ruwah* (Qum: Manshurat Maktabah Ayatullah al-'Uzma al-Mar'ashi an-Najafi, 1403 AH), vol. 1, p. 298.

19. Shahab ad-Din ibn 'Ali ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, *Tahrir Taqrib at-Tahdhib*, 1st edition (Beirut: Mu'assasah ar-Risalah, 1417 AH/1997), vol. 3, pp. 211-212.

20. Shaykh Zayn ad-Din Shahid ath-Thani, *Dhikra ash-Shi'ah fi Ahkam ash-Shari'ah*, lithography, p. 4; *Ar-Ri'ayah fi 'Ilm ad-Dirayah*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat Maktabah Ayatullah al-'Uzma al-Mar'ashi an-Najafi, 1408 AH), pp. 50, 52.

21. *Fihrist Asma' Musanfa ash-Shi'ah* (Rijal Najashi), pp. 4-9.

22. These twelve persons were Bard al-Askaf, Thabit ibn Abi Safiyyah Abu Hamzah ath-Thumali, Thabit ibn Hormuz, Bassam ibn 'Abd Allah Sayrafi, Muhammad ibn Qays Bajli, Hujr ibn Za'idah Hadhrami, Zakariyya ibn 'Abd Allah Fiyadh, Abu Juham al-Kufi, Husayn ibn Thawir, 'Abd al-Mu'min ibn Qasim al-Ansari, 'Abd al-Ghaffar ibn Qasim al-Ansari, and Aban ibn Taghlib. See 'Abd ar-Rahim Rabbani Shirazi, *Muqaddamah Wasa'il ash-Shi'ah*, 6th edition (Tehran: Maktabah Islamiyyah, 1403 AH), p. 5.

23. *Fihrist Asma' Musanfa ash-Shi'ah* (Rijal Najashi), p. 10.

24. Ibid., p. 11.

25. Ibid., p. 115.

26. Ma'alim al-'Ulama', p. 30.

27. Shaykh al-Mufid, Al-Irshad, trans. Muhammad Baqir Sa'idi Khurasani, 2nd edition (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-ye Islamiyyeh, 1376 AHS), p. 525.

28. Fihrist Asma' Musanfa ash-Shi'ah (Rijal Najashi), pp. 39-40.

29. Abi 'Ali al-Fadhl ibn al-Hasan Tabarsi, I'lam al-Wara bi A'lam al-Huda (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt Li Ihya' at-Turath, 1417 AH), vol. 1, p. 535.

30. Ma'alim al-'Ulama', p. 40.

## Lesson 25: The Science of Jurisprudence

The totality of man's actions, which is his relationship with God and fellow men, is in need of rules that embrace the science of jurisprudence. The laws of Islam have a divine origin emanating from the will of God. Of course, the will of God is never dependent upon contract and consent. It is rather based on intrinsic and true felicity and adversity. The Noble Messenger (S) is the messenger of God and his decree is the decree of God:

□ وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ لَهْوَىٰ إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ □

***“Nor doth he speak of (his own) desire. It is naught save an inspiration that is inspired.”<sup>1</sup>***

And it is based on the verse, ***“Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you”<sup>2</sup>*** that obedience to ‘those vested with authority’ {*uli'l-amr*}—the true successors of the Prophet (S)—has been placed along with obedience to God and the Messenger (S). The statements of the infallible Imams ('a) are nothing but an inspiration from God, and like the statements of the Prophet (S), obedience to them is obligatory.

### **The State of Jurisprudence during the Period of the Companions and the Followers {tabi'un}**

But after the demise of the Prophet (S) when the true path of Islam was changed and people were kept away from the rightful successors of the Prophet (S), they refer to the companions {*sahabah*} of the Prophet (S) concerning religious issues and problems. Of course, a number of the *sahabah* were forerunners in this matter. As Ibn Sa'd says, during the caliphate of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf, Mu'adh ibn Jabal, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, and Zayd ibn Thabit issued religious edicts {*fatawa*}.<sup>3</sup>

The pure Imams ('a) and a number of the Shi'ah among the *sahabah* such as 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas and Abu Sa'id al-Khudri were also recognized generally by the Ahl as-Sunnah as jurists and well-informed of the laws of Islam, and were referred by them.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, during that period, the Shi'ah used to refer to the infallible Imams ('a) and leaders of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) in matters of jurisprudence and Islamic teachings in general.

So, jurisprudence and *ijtihad*<sup>5</sup>, as they are applied today, were not existent then. But after the end of the period of the *sahabah*, on account of the emergence of new issues in jurisprudence, a number of the Followers {*tabi'un*} (the generation succeeding the *sahabah*) had engaged in matters of jurisprudence {*fiqh*} and the term *faqih* {jurist or jurisprudent} was applied to them. Among them were the “seven jurists” of Medina.<sup>6</sup>

## **The State of Jurisprudence among the Shi'ah**

The state of jurisprudence among the Shi'ah was different owing to the presence of the infallible Imams ('a) and *ijtihad*, then discussed among the Ahl as-Sunnah, was not developed among the Shi'ah.

It can be said in general that the Shi'ah jurisprudence during the periods of the presence of the infallible Imams ('a) up to the end of the minor occultation {*ghaybah as-sughra*} has been at the period of settlement and preparation for *ijtihad*.<sup>7</sup> With the presence of the infallible Imams ('a), keeping open the door of knowledge and accessibility of the textual sources, the need for *ijtihad*, which largely depends on intellectual bases, had not been much felt then.

Shi'ah jurisprudence on the basis of *ijtihad* was first founded by Ibn Abi 'Aqil 'Ummani (died in the first part of the fourth century AH), a contemporary of al-Kulayni. After him, Muhammad ibn Junayd Askafi (died mid-fourth century AH) continued his way and fortified the edifices of *ijtihad* and juristic deduction {*istinbat*}.

They are known as the “*Qadimayn*” {the two seniors}. Shaykh al-Mufid (died 413 AH) and Sayyid Murtadha 'Alam al-Huda (died 436 AH) also followed the path of *ijtihad* until it was the turn of Shaykh at-Tusi (460 AH). The Shi'ah jurisprudence attained a glorious stage through this great man. Apart from writing reliable books on *hadith*, *At-Tahdhib* and *Al-Istibsar*, he also strived to collect books on jurisprudence and *ijtihad*, authoring such books on jurisprudence as *An-Nihayah*, *Mabsut* and *Khilaf*.

Of course, it does not mean that *ijtihad* and jurisprudence had never been discussed during the presence of the pure Imams ('a). As a matter of fact, some people had no direct access to the pure Imams ('a) due to location and peculiar conditions.

So, in this regard, the pure Imams ('a) presented to the people the criteria by which to identify the jurists to whom they could refer in case of necessity, dealing in a sense with the preliminary *ijtihad* as well as answering the inquiries of people. For example, it is stated in the *Maqbulah* of 'Umar ibn Hanzalah that he asked Imam as-Sadiq ('a) about two persons from among the Shi'ah who were in conflict over religious issues such as liability and debt {*dayn*} and inheritance {*mirath*}.

The Imam said, “They have to look for a person who could narrate our *hadiths*, give opinion about what we declared lawful {*halal*} and unlawful {*haram*}, and know our decrees {*ahkam*} for I declare such a person as the judge and arbiter for you.”<sup>8</sup>

Sometimes also the pure Imams ('a) would appoint certain persons to whom the Shi'ah refer in matters of jurisprudence and religious laws. For instance, according to Shaykh at-Tusi, 'Ali ibn Musayyab said to Imam ar-Ridha ('a): “There is a long way and I cannot come to you whenever I want. From whom should I ask about your religious decrees?”

The Imam replied: “{You may ask} from Zakariyya ibn Adam as he is trustworthy in

{matters of} religion and the world.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Imam al-Baqir (‘a) commanded Aban ibn Taghlib to sit in the mosque and issue religious edicts {*fatawa*} for the people.<sup>10</sup>

## [The Beginning of Ijtihad](#)

During the period of the pure Imams (‘a), they used to teach their students the principles of jurisprudence {*usul al-fiqh*} and the rules of deducing them. For this reason, books attributed to the infallible Imams (‘a) have been written by Shi‘ah scholars; for example, the book *Usul Al ar-Rasul* written by Hashim Khwansari; *Usul Asliyyah* authored by Sayyid ‘Abd Allah ibn Muhammad-Ridha Husayn; and the book *Fusul al-Muhimmah* on the principles of the Imams (‘a) penned by Muhammad ibn al-Hasan Hurr al-‘Amili.<sup>11</sup>

In the books on *rijal*, some of the great companions of the pure Imams (‘a) have been described as jurists {*fuqaha*}. For example, Najashi thus says about Fadhl ibn Shadhan: “...He was one of our reliable companions among the jurists {*fuqaha*} and scholastic theologians {*mutakallimun*}.”<sup>12</sup>

## [The Jurists among the Companions of the Imams \(‘a\)](#)

Shaykh at-Tusi has introduced eighteen persons from among the companions of Imam al-Baqir, Imam as-Sadiq, Imam al-Kazim, and Imam ar-Ridha (‘a) as the Imams’ jurist-companions, describing them as “jurists among the companions of Abu Ja‘far (‘a),” “jurists among the companions of Abu ‘Abd Allah (‘a),” and “jurists among the companions of Abu Ibrahim and Abu’l-Hasan ar-Ridha (‘a).”

In continuation, Shaykh at-Tusi has added that the Shi‘ah have consensus of opinion regarding the authenticity of their narrations and acknowledge their expertise in jurisprudence among the companions of the pure Imams (‘a). He then introduced them in three categories.

**First category:** The jurists among the companions of Imam al-Baqir (‘a) such as Zurarah known as Kharbud, Barid, Abu Basir Asadi, Fadhil ibn Yasar, and Muhammad ibn Muslim at-Ta‘ifi, among whom Zurarah was the most learned. The six were also considered among the companions of Imam as-Sadiq (‘a).

**Second category:** The jurists among the companions of Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) such as Jamil ibn Darraj, ‘Abd Allah ibn Maskan, ‘Abd Allah ibn Bakir, Hammad ibn ‘Isa, and Hammad ibn ‘Uthman.

**Third category:** The jurists among the companions of Imam al-Kazim and Imam ar-Ridha (‘a) such as Yunus ibn ‘Abd ar-Rahman, Safwan ibn Yahya, Biya‘ as-Sabiri Muhammad ibn Abi ‘Umayr, ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Mughayrah, Hasan ibn Mahbub, and Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Nasr.<sup>13</sup>

In the section about the reports {*akhbar*} of the Shi‘ah jurists and their written books, Ibn Nadim has also mentioned a number of the jurists among the companions of the pure Imams (‘a), saying: “They are sheikhs who have narrated *fiqh* from the Imams.” He has then mentioned them, viz. Salih ibn Abu’l-Aswad, ‘Ali ibn Ghurrab, Abu Yahya Layth Muradi, Zurayq ibn Zubayr, Abu Salmah al-Basri, Isma‘il ibn Ziyad, Abu Ahmad ‘Umar ibn ar-Radhi‘, Dawud ibn Farqad, ‘Ali ibn Ri‘ab,

‘Ali ibn Ibrahim Mu‘alli, Hisham ibn Salim, Muhammad ibn Hasan al-‘Attar, ‘Abd al-Mu‘min

ibn Qasim al-Ansari, Sayf ibn 'Umayrah Nakha'i, Ibrahim ibn 'Umar San'ani, 'Abd Allah ibn Maymun, Qadah, Rabi' ibn Madrak, 'Umar ibn Abi Ziyad Abzari, Zaykar ibn Yahya Wasiti, Abu Khalid ibn 'Amru ibn Khalid Wasiti,

Hariz ibn 'Abd Allah Azadi Sijistani, 'Abd Allah Halabi, Zakariyya Mu'min, Thabit Darari, Mathna ibn Asad Khayyat, 'Umar ibn Adhinah, 'Ammar ibn Mu'awiyah Dahni 'Abdi Kufi, Mu'awiyah ibn 'Ammar Dahani, and Hasan ibn Mahbub Sarad, for each of whom one book has been mentioned.<sup>14</sup>

## **Lesson 25: Summary**

The totality of actions of man is in need of rules which embrace the science of jurisprudence.

After the Holy Prophet (S) when the people were kept away from the rightful successors, they referred to the companions {*sahabah*} of the Prophet (S).

By the end of the period of the *sahabah*, a number of jurists {*fuqaha*} emerged from among the Ahl as-Sunnah.

But the condition of jurisprudence {*fiqh*} among the Shi'ah was different because the Infallibles ('a) were present and the need for *ijtihad* was not so much felt. Jurisprudence during these periods was at the stage of preparation for *ijtihad*. In fact, jurisprudence based on *ijtihad* was first discussed at the time of Ibn Abi 'Aqil 'Ummani during the fourth century AH.

Of course, during the periods of the Imams ('a) a sort of *ijtihad* was also discussed. At times, the pure Imams ('a) would teach the way and method of *ijtihad* to their companions. For this reason, books on the principles of jurisprudence {*usul al-fiqh*} attributed to those personages were written.

Shaykh at-Tusi has introduced eighteen persons from among the companions of Imam al-Baqir, Imam as-Sadiq, Imam al-Kazim, and Imam ar-Ridha ('a) as "jurists among the companions of the Imams ('a)".

## **Lesson 25: Questions**

1. What was the condition of jurisprudence during the period of the *sahabah*, and who did the Shi'ah refer to in matters of jurisprudence?
2. What was the condition of jurisprudence among the Shi'ah during the presence of the Infallible Imams ('a)?
3. How has the initiation of jurisprudence taken place among the Shi'ah?
4. How many were the jurists {*fuqaha*} among the companions of the pure Imams ('a)?

<sup>1</sup> Surah al-Najm 53:3-4.

<sup>2</sup> Surah an-Nisa' 4:59.

<sup>3</sup> Muhammad ibn Sa'd, At-Tabaqat al-Kubra (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1410 AH), vol. 2, p. 267.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 279, 285.

<sup>5</sup> Ijtihad: juristic derivation of laws applicable to new conditions on the basis of the general principles laid down in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. {Trans.}

6. Ibn Sa'd has said: "Those who were referred to by the people in Medina and whose statements were trusted by the people were Sa'id ibn Musayyab, Abu Bakr ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman, 'Urwah ibn Zubayr, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Utbah, Qasim ibn Muhammad, Kharijah ibn Zayd, and Sulayman ibn Sayyar. Ibid., p. 23.
7. Ayatullah Ibrahim Jannati believes that the Shi'ah jurisprudence from the advent of Islam up to the present has passed through eight periods: First period: the period of the emergence of the elements of ijtihad starting from the migration {hijrah} of the Prophet (S) to Medina up to 11 AH. Second period: the period of contrivance and preparation for the application of ijtihad starting from the demise of the Prophet (S) up to the end of the minor occultation {ghaybah as-sughra}. Third period: the period of conceiving the fundamental rules and common elements of ijtihad beginning with the time of Ibn Abi 'Aqil (died 329 AH) up to the time of Shaykh at-Tusi (died 460 AH). Fourth period: the period of application of the common elements of ijtihad in the textual sources commencing from the time of Shaykh at-Tusi up to the time of Nawadah Aw Ibn Idris (died 598 AH). Fifth period: The period of expansion of the argument concerning issues on ijtihad starting from the time of Ibn Idris up to the time of Wahid Behbahani (died 1205 AH). Sixth period: The evolutionary period of ijtihad beginning with the time of Wahid Bahbahani up to the time of Shaykh al-Ansari (died 1281 AH). Seventh period: The period of profound thinking in matters of ijtihad commencing from the time of Shaykh al-Ansari up to the time of Imam Khomeini. Eighth period: The period of general application of ijtihad with modern methodology started by Imam Khomeini. Ayatullah Ibrahim Jannati, *Idwar-e Ijtihad*, 1st edition (Tehran: Sazman-e Intisharat-e Kayhan, 1372 AHS), starting from chapter 2.
8. Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Wasail ash-Shi'ah*, 6th edition (Tehran: Maktabah al-Islamiyyah, 1403 AH), vol. 18, p. 99, kitab al-qadha', abwab sifat al-qadhi, bab 11, hadith 1.
9. Shaykh at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi), researched by Sayyid Mahdi Raja'i (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt at-Turath, 1404 AH), vol. 2, p. 857.
10. Abu'l-'Abbas Ahmad ibn 'Ali ibn Ahmad ibn al-'Abbas Najashi, *Fihrist Asma' Musanfa ash-Shi'ah* (Rijal Najashi) (Qum: Islamic Publications Office affiliated to the Society of Teachers of the Islamic Seminary in Qum, 1407 AH), p. 10.
11. Sayyid Hasan Sadr, *Ta'sis ash-Shi'ah Li 'Ulum al-Islam* (Tehran: Manshurat al-A'lami, n.d.), p. 310.
12. *Fihrist Asma' Musanfa ash-Shi'ah* (Rijal Najashi), p. 307.
13. *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi), vol. 2, pp. 376, 507, 830.
14. Ibn Nadim, *Al-Fihrist* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah Li't-Taba'ah wa'n-Nashr, n.d.), p. 308.

## Lesson 26: The Science of Scholastic Theology {‘ilm al-kalam}

The science of scholastic theology {‘ilm al-kalam} is the science about the totality of doctrines that every Muslim must believe. In other words, it is the science that deals with the discussion and study of the principles of religion {usul ad-din}.

The first difference in the principles of religion over the issue of Imamate {imamah} emerged immediately after the demise of the Holy Prophet (S). Shahrastani says, "The most significant difference in Islam is the difference over the Imamate, and over none of the other principles of religion was swords unsheathed."<sup>1</sup>

Nawbakhti also says:

The Messenger of Allah (S) passed away in Rabi' al-Awwal<sup>2</sup> ten years after the migration {hijrah} at the age of 63 and with 23 years of apostolic mission... At the time, the ummah of Islam was divided into three groups: A group was called "Shi'ah" which was composed of the followers {shi'ah} of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) from which all the Shi'ah subgroups separated. The second group claiming leadership and rule were the "Ansar" and the third group was inclined toward Abu Bakr ibn Abi Quhafah, saying: "The Holy Prophet (S) did not specified a certain person as the successor, and left the decision for it to the ummah."<sup>3</sup>

As such, there have always been discussions and debates between the Shi'ah and other Muslims over the issue of Imamate.

Yet, the difference on other principles and fundamentals of the religion emerged during the latter part of the first century and early second century AH.

As Shahrastani says:

Difference on the principles emerged during the last days of the *sahabah* such as Ma'bad Jahanni, Ghilan Damishqi and Yunus Aswari regarding predestination {*qadr*}, the relationship of good {*khayr*} and evil {*sharr*} to predestination. Wasil ibn 'Ata', a student of Hasan al-Basri and 'Amru ibn 'Ubayd, had added things to the questions of predestination.<sup>4</sup>

Among the scholastic {*kalami*} sects during those periods were the Wa'idiyyah, Khawarij, Murji'ah, and Jabariyyah.

Of course, the scholastic discussion had reached its optimal point when Wasil ibn 'Ata' separated from the assembly of Hasan al-Basri and founded the Mu'tazilah sect.<sup>5</sup> In this manner, the Mu'tazilah school, based mainly on rational deductions, was against the Ahl al-Hadith which was called "Hashawiyyah".

It was so until such time that at the end of the third century AH, Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari separated from the Mu'tazilah school and engaged in defending the Ahl al-Hadith school of thought within rational frameworks, and his school became known later as the Ash'ari school.<sup>6</sup> After that, the Mu'tazilah made no progress, and kept on withdrawing in face of the Ahl al-Hadith so much so that now, the official scholastic theology of the Ahl as-Sunnah is the Ash'ari scholasticism.

The Shi'ah scholastic theology is the oldest of all Muslim scholastic schools. 'Ali ('a), the first infallible Imam acknowledged by the Shi'ah has discussed the questions on beliefs such as monotheism {*tawhid*}, predestination and freewill, and Attributes of God, and this kind of discussions has been recorded in *Nahj al-Balaghah* in the language of the Imam himself.

The scholastic discussions about Imamate among the Shi'ah, however, commenced immediately after the demise of the Holy Prophet (S) in defending the right of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) (over the issue of Imamate and caliphate). As narrated by Shaykh as-Saduq, the first to defend the right of 'Ali ('a) vis-à-vis the architects of Saqifah were twelve persons from among the great companions of the Prophet (S).

Few days after the event of Saqifah, they debated with Abu Bakr at the Mosque of the Prophet (S) and cornered him.<sup>7</sup> After them, a person such as Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari had also not remained silent vis-à-vis the usurpers of the right of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) to such an extent that 'Uthman ibn al-'Affan was finally convinced to banish him to Sham and Raddhah.

'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas, the Prophet's ('a) cousin, a student of 'Ali ('a), exegete {*mufassir*} of the Qur'an, scholar, and an outstanding Hashimite statesman, was one of the defenders of the Shi'ah school and always championing the rightfulness of 'Ali ('a) to such an extent that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab found fault with him for always saying, "Our right has been usurped."

Ibn al-'Abbas became blind in his old age and one day he heard some people in a certain place uttering abusive language against the Commander of the Faithful ('a). He said to his son 'Ali: "Hold my hand and take me there." When he was near them, he addressed them, saying: "Which of you was abusing God?!" They replied, "None." He asked, "Which is you was abusing the Prophet?" "None," they answered.

He inquired, "Which of you was abusing 'Ali?" This time they responded, "All of us." He said, "Bear witness that I heard the Messenger of Allah (S) saying: "He who abuses 'Ali abuses me, and he who abuses me abuses God, and he who abuses God shall be thrown in an inverted position by God to the hellfire." He then returned and while walking, he asked his son, "How do you see them?" His son recited this poem:

نظروا اليك باعين محمّره نظر التيوس الى سفار الجازر

*They are looking at you with a 'reddish look' like the gaze of the animal to be slaughtered to the lancet of the slaughterer.*

Ibn al-'Abbas said, "You continue." His son said:

خزر الحواجب ناكسي اذقانهم نظر الدليل إلى العزيز القادر

*They were humiliated and disgraced; they are looking at you like that of the subject to his master.*

Ibn al-'Abbas said, "You continue!" His son answered, "I can say nothing more." Ibn al-'Abbas himself recited this poem:

## احياؤهم خزي على أمواتهم و الميتون فضيحة للغابر

*Their living ones are the source of abjectness for their dead ones while their dead ones were the source of disgrace for their ancestors.*<sup>8</sup>

Among the companions of the Commander of the Faithful ('a), prominent figures such as Sa'sa'ah ibn Sawhan, Maytham at-Tammar, Kumayl ibn Ziyad, Awis Qarni, Salim ibn Qays, Harith Hamdani, and Asbagh ibn Nabatah also engaged in defending the right of 'Ali ('a), debating with the enemies of the Imam in this regard.

Meanwhile, concerning the first person among the Shi'ah to have written a book about scholastic theology, Ibn Nadim and Ibn Shahr Ashub regard Isma'il ibn Maytham at-Tammar to be the first author on Shi'ah scholastic theology as he has written the books *Al-Imamah* and *Al-Istihqaq* on this subject.<sup>9</sup> The late Sayyid Hasan Sadr, however, considers 'Isa ibn Rawdhah as the first Shi'ah writer on scholastic theology.<sup>10</sup> Of course, the oldest existing book on Shi'ah *kalam* is the book *Al-Aydhah* of Fadhl ibn Shadhan an-Nayshaburi (died 260 AH) who was among the companions of Imam al-Hadi and Imam al-'Askari ('a).

During the period of Imam as-Sadiq ('a), this science, like other sciences, also flourished tremendously and a number of his students such as Hisham ibn Hakam, Hisham ibn Salim, Mu'min Taq, Fadhal ibn Hasan, and Jabir ibn Yazid Ju'fi, among others, excelled in this field writing many books and treatises in this regard. They had discussions and debates with the scholars of other schools.

Fadhl ibn Shadhan an-Nayshaburi has been among the most outstanding Shi'ah scholastic

theologians {*mutakallimun*}. He met Imam ar-Ridha, Imam al-Jawad and Imam al-Hadi ('a), and has written many book on the subjects of *kalam*, beliefs and deviant schools of thought.<sup>11</sup>

Hasan ibn Nawbakhti (died 310 AH) was one of the Shi'ah *mutakallimun* and among his books is *Firq ash-Shi'ah*.<sup>12</sup>

## **Lesson 26: Summary**

Scholastic theology {*kalam*} deals with the discussion about the principles of religion {*usul ad-din*}. The first difference in religion was over the question of Imamate {*imamah*} which emerged immediately after the demise of the Prophet (S) and the event of Saqifah. But the difference on other principles and fundamentals is related to the end of the first century AH.

Scholastic {*kalami*} discussions reached their optimal point after the founding of the Mu'tazilah school of thought.

The Shi'ah *kalam* is the oldest Muslim scholastic school because the scholastic discussions about the Imamate started immediately after the demise of the Prophet (S) on account of defending the rightfulness of 'Ali ('a).

The first book on *kalam* among the Shi'ah was written by 'Isa ibn Rawdhah while the oldest existing book on *kalam* is *Al-Aydhah* of Fadhl ibn Shadhan.

The Shi'ah *kalam* flourished much during the period of Imam as-Sadiq ('a) and some of his companions excelled in it.

## **Lesson 26: Questions**

1. The first difference among the Muslim has been over which principle?
2. When did the scholastic discussions among the Shi'ah commence?
3. The first Shi'ah book on *kalam* has been written by whom?

<sup>1</sup> Shahrastani, Kitab al-Milal wa'n-Nihal (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1364 AHS), vol. 1, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> What is more popular is that the Messenger of Allah (S) passed away on the 27th of the lunar month of Safar.

<sup>3</sup> Nawbakhti, Abi Muhammad al-Hasan ibn Musa. *Firq ash-Shi'ah*. Najaf: Al-Matba'ah al-Haydariyyah, 1355 AH/1936.

<sup>4</sup> Kitab al-Milal wa'n-Nihal, p. 35.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 500.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 85-86.

<sup>7</sup> Shaykh as-Saduq, Al-Khisal (Qum: Manshurat Jami'ah al-Mudarrisin fi al-Hawzah al-'Ilmiyyah, 1403 AH), pp. 461-465.

<sup>8</sup> Sayyid 'Ali Khan ash-Shirazi, Ad-Darajat ar-Rafi'ah fi Tabaqat ash-Shi'ah (Qum: Manshurat Maktabah Basirati, n.d.), p. 127.

<sup>9</sup> Ibn Nadim, Al-Fihrist (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah Li't-Taba'ah wa'n-Nashr, n.d.), p. 249; Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, Ma'alim al-'Ulama' (Najaf: Manshurat al-Matba'ah al-Haydariyyah, 1380 AH/1961), p. 62.

<sup>10</sup> Sayyid Hasan Sadr, Ta'sis ash-Shi'ah Li 'Ulum al-Islam (Tehran: Manshurat al-A'lami, n.d.), p. 350.

<sup>11</sup> Abu'l-'Abbas Ahmad ibn 'Ali ibn Ahmad ibn al-'Abbas Najashi, Fihrist Asma' Musanfa ash-Shi'ah (Rijal Najashi) (Qum: Islamic Publications Office affiliated to the Society of Teachers of the Islamic Seminary in Qum, 1407 AH), p. 306.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

# Part 8: The Role of the Shi'ah Poets in the Spread of Shi'ism

## Lesson 27: The Shi'ah Poets and the Station of Poetry

During the past periods, poetry occupied a special station, and in addition to its literary and aesthetic dimensions, it had been considered the most important instrument of propaganda, playing the role of today's mass media such as printed matters, radio and television.

During the pre-Islamic period of ignorance {*yawm al-jahiliyyah*}, this fact was conspicuously prevalent among the Arabs because they used to give ample importance to eloquence, fluency and beauty of speech. For this reason, one of the significant forms of the miracle of the Qur'an is its eloquence and fluency; hence, poetry occupied a special place among the Arabs.

As Ya'qubi says in this regard:

The Arab people used to regard poetry as equal to knowledge and wisdom. If in a certain tribe a sagacious and ingenious poet emerged, his presence at the annual trade fairs and the *Hajj* ceremony and its assemblies would be provided so as for him to recite his poetry and be heard by other tribes and clans, and thus, his tribe would be proud of his poetry.

The Arab tribes used to refer to poetry in all their works. They would also express enmity through poetry; give example through poetry; give honor to one another through poetry; find fault with one another through poetry; and extol and eulogize one another through it.<sup>1</sup>

After the event of Saqifah and the overt formation of Shi'ism, Arabic poetry maintained its station and the Shi'ah made use of it in propagating their viewpoint regarding Imamate and guardianship {*wilayah*}. Poets who were upholding the *wilayah* on the rightfulness of the Shi'ah school whose foundation was the rightfulness of the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a) over the caliphate recited poems and had pivotal role in the spread and propagation of Shi'ism. Notwithstanding his anti-Shi'ah tendency, Zubayr ibn Bakkar has mentioned some of these poems. Among these were the poems of 'Utbah ibn Abi Lahab which run as follows:

ما كنت احسب أن الأمر منصرف عن هاشم ثم منها عن أبي  
حسن!

أليس أولى من صلى لقبلكم و أعلم الناس بالقرآن و السنن؟

## و أقرب الناس عهداً بالنبي ومن جبريل عون له في الغسل و الكفن؟

### ما فيه و ما فيهم لا يمترون به و ليس في القوم ما فيه من الحسن

### ماذا الذي ردهم عنه فنعلمه ها ان ذاغبنا من اعظم الغبن

*I did not imagine that they would take away the matter of caliphate from the Banu Hashim and among whom from Abu'l-Hasan ('Ali)!*

*Is he not the first person to pray toward your qiblah and the most learned of people about the Qur'an and the Sunnah?*

*Was he not the last person to see the Prophet? And has he not been assistant of Jibra'il in bathing (for the dead) and enshrouding the Prophet?*

*Why do you not think about the difference between you and 'Ali? Among the people, no one possesses his good qualities.*

*What has been the reason behind their deviation from him? Make him aware of this fact as this loss is the greatest of losses.<sup>2</sup>*

The pure Imams ('a), who were also aware of the utility and influence of poetry, used to satisfactorily appreciate and honor Shi'ah poets. One day, Kumayt Asadi came to Imam al-Baqir ('a) and recited his elegy until he reached this couplet:

### و قتل بالطف غودر منهم بين غوعاء أمّة و طغام

*And the killed one among them in the land of Taf has been abjectly and miserably abandoned by people.*

Imam al-Baqir ('a) wept and said: "O Kumayt! If we only had wealth we shall give it to you. Yet, I will tell you whatever the Messenger of Allah ('a) said to Hassan ibn Thabit: 'So long as you defend us *Ahl al-Bayt*, you are confirmed by the Holy Spirit {*ruh al-qudus*}'."<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, Imam as-Sadiq ('a) used to say: "O assembly of the Shi'ah! Teach the poems of 'Abdi<sup>4</sup> to your children as he is with the religion of God."<sup>5</sup>

For this reason, the truth-speaking Shi'ah poets were held in high esteem and regard by the Shi'ah and devotees of the Prophet's (S) descendants. As Ibn al-Mu'tazil has narrated, "The people of Qum used to make it incumbent upon themselves to allocate fifty thousand dirhams for Da'bal Khaza'i, a Shi'ah poet."<sup>6</sup>

As such, the Shi'ah poets were always subjected to persecution and harassment by the Umayyad and 'Abbasid rulers. Due to the poems he has recited in praise of Banu Hashim and the pains experienced by the progeny of the Prophet (S), Kumayt ibn Zayd al-Asadi fell prey to the bigotry of the Umayyads and was imprisoned.<sup>7</sup> Because of poems he had recited in acknowledging Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah,<sup>8</sup> Sadif ibn Maymun<sup>9</sup> earned the tirade of the 'Abbasid caliph Mansur and by the caliph's order, 'Abd as-Samad ibn 'Ali, the then governor of Medina, buried Sadif alive.<sup>10</sup>

Ibrahim ibn Hurmah was also one of the silver-tongued Shi'ah poets who composed beautiful poems in praise of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a). When he entered the court of the 'Abbasid caliph Mansur, Mansur spoke to him harshly and said: "After this, if you would recite poems which we do not accept, I will kill you."<sup>11</sup>

Nonetheless, the self-sacrificing poets such as Du'bal paid less attention to these threats. Du'bal used to say, "For fifty years, I have been carrying a gallows but I cannot find anyone who would hang me in it."<sup>12</sup>

## **The Shi'ah Poets Till the End of Minor Occultation**

As indicated earlier, from the very first few days after the event of Saqifah, there were those among the truth-speaking poets who defended the school of Shi'ism through their eloquent tongues.

During the rule of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) and at the Battle of Jamal and the Battle of Siffin, apart from the poets of Iraq who were among the followers of 'Ali ('a), many of the companions of the Prophet (S) such as 'Ammar ibn Yasir, Khuzaymah ibn Thabit, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas, and others recited poetry in defending the right of the Commander of the Faithful ('a).

During the Umayyad period, some poets had also kept their attachment to the progeny of the Prophet (S). During the Umayyad period compared to the 'Abbasid period, however, there were fewer poets who were present on the scene because during that period an extreme atmosphere of strangulation was prevalent in the Shi'ah community.

As Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani says, "The preceding poets of the Umayyad period recited fewer poems in lamentation for Imam al-Husayn ('a)."<sup>13</sup> When Kumayt al-Asadi recited the poetry in praise of Banu Hashim {*hashimiyyat*}, 'Abd Allah ibn Mu'awiyah who was one of the descendants of Ja'far ibn Abi Talib at-Tayyar addressed the Banu Hashim, saying: "O Banu Hashim! At the time when the people refrained from expressing your superiority, this Kumayt recited poetry for you and risked his life vis-à-vis the Umayyads." The same poetry was the cause of the trouble that Kumayt endured.<sup>14</sup>

Prior to him, Farazdaq was also sent to the Umayyad prison because of his eulogy to Imam as-Sajjad ('a).<sup>15</sup>

During the 'Abbasid period, sensitivity toward the truth-speaking poets was also strong, but since the Shi'ah community had expanded then, less control was exerted against them compared to that of the Umayyad period. When the 'Abbasids gradually became weak, more poets were present on the scene for defending the school of Shi'ism. As Dr. Shawki Dayf says, "During the second 'Abbasid period, more Shi'ah poems were recited, and the Shi'ah poets during that period were of two groups: 'Alawi poets and non-'Alawi poets."<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, scholars and notables such as Ibn Shahr Ashub, 'Ali Khan Shirazi and the late 'Allamah Amini have written about the numbers of Shi'ah poets. Yet, the most comprehensive work in this regard is by Sayyid Muhsin Amin who has counted the number of Shi'ah poets according to their year of death up to 329 AH, i.e. the end of the minor occultation {*ghaybah as-sughra*}.<sup>17</sup>

## **The Leading Shi'ah Poets**

In every period, some renowned and famous Shi'ah poets were the vanguards of Shi'ah poetry and thawed themselves in the guardianship {*wilayah*} of and love for the progeny of the Prophet (S). Among these poets were Kumayt ibn Zayd al-Asadi, Kuthayyir 'Azzah, Farazdaq and Sayyid Humayri during the Umayyad period. As Ibn 'Abd Rabbih says, "Kumayt and Kuthayyir were among the staunch and extreme Shi'ah."<sup>18</sup>

The son of Kumayt, Mustahil, says: "At the time of death, the last time that he opened his eyes, Kumayt said three times, '*Allahumma al Muhammad*'."<sup>19</sup> Ibn Mu'taz has said: "Sayyid Humayri expressed in poetry all the famous virtues of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a)."<sup>20</sup>

Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani also says, "The poems of Sayyid Humayri are mostly in praise of Banu Hashim and reproach to their enemies. Two thousand three hundred odes in praise of Banu Hashim have been reported from him."<sup>21</sup> For this reason, Sayyid Humayri occupied a lofty station among the Shi'ah and there was a special seat for him in Masjid al-Kufah.<sup>22</sup>

During the first 'Abbasid period, the two great silver-tongued and eloquent Shi'ah poets were Mansur Namri and Da'bal al-Khaza'i. Harun ar-Rashid issued Namri's execution order but he was not found when still alive.<sup>23</sup>

Dr. Mustafa Shak'ah says regarding Da'bal:

Da'bal used to praise the Household of the Prophet (S) describing them in his poems in such a manner that as if they were part of his family. He used to harass the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids, and if they would intimidate him, he would say, "For fifty years, I have been carrying a gallows but I cannot find anyone who would hang me in it."<sup>24</sup>

Concerning this, Dr. Shawqi Dayf thus says:

During the second 'Abbasid period,<sup>25</sup> Shi'ah poems had been much recited some of which had been recited by 'Alawi poets while others had been recited by other Shi'ah poets. Among the most prominent 'Alawi poets during that period were Muhammad ibn Salih al-'Alawi al-Hummani and Muhammad ibn 'Ali from among the descendants of 'Abbas ibn 'Ali. During the reign of Mutawakkil, this Muhammad ibn 'Ali used to take pride in his forefathers and reflect the Shi'ah views in his poems.<sup>26</sup>

## **Lesson 27: Summary**

Poetry in the past occupied a special place and apart from its literary dimension, it had been considered the most significant means of propaganda.

After the event in Saqifah, the Shi'ah made use of poetry in spreading their viewpoint concerning the Imamate, and the poets played a key role in strengthening and spreading Shi'ism.

The pure Imams ('a) who were completely aware of the use and influence of poetry appreciated and acknowledged the Shi'ah poets satisfactorily. Meanwhile, on account of the

impact of their words, the Shi'ah poets had always been subjected to persecution and harassment by the hostile Umayyad and 'Abbasid rulers.

During the rule of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) and in the Battle of Jamal and the Battle of Siffin, apart from Iraqis, many of the companions of the Prophet (S) had also recited poems in defense of the right of 'Ali ('a). On account of the intense atmosphere of strangulation during the Umayyad period, however, less number of poets had kept on expressing their attachment to the progeny of the Prophet (S).

During the first 'Abbasid period, the same condition was prevalent, but during the second period, more Shi'ah poets were present on the scene due to the weakening of the caliphate. The most comprehensive work on the number of the Shi'ah poets has been done by the late Sayyid Muhsin Amin.

## **Lesson 27: Questions**

1. What was the station of poetry among the Arabs?
2. After the event of Saqifah, what service did the Shi'ah poets offer?
3. How was the pure Imams' ('a) treatment of the Shi'ah poets?
4. How did the hostile Umayyad and 'Abbasid rulers deal with the Shi'ah poets?
5. Which of the scholars has performed the best computation of the number of Shi'ah poets?
6. Who were the leading Shi'ah poets during the Umayyad period?
7. Who were the leading Shi'ah poets during the first and second 'Abbasid periods?

1. Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 1, p. 262.

2. Zubayr ibn Bakkar, *Al-Akhbar al-Muwaffaqiyyat* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 581.

3. 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, 1st edition (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-'Alami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, p. 254.

4. 'Abdi was among the companions of Imam as-Sadiq ('a) and has been mentioned in *Rijal Kashi* as Sufyan ibn Mus'ab with the epithet of Abu Muhammad. Shaykh at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (*Rijal Kashi*) (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt Li Ihya' at-Turath, 1404 AH), vol. 2, p. 704. Ibn Shahr Ashub has mentioned Sufyan ibn Mus'ab in the category of "muqtasad" poets while erroneously mentioned as 'Ali ibn Hammad 'Abdi in the category of "mujahir" poets. Ibn Shahr Ashub *Mazandarani*, *Ma'alim al-'Ulama'* (Najaf: Manshurat al-Matba'ah al-Haydariyyah, 1380 AH/1961), pp. 147, 151.

5. *Ma'alim al-'Ulama'*, p. 147.

6. Dr. Shawqi Dayf, *Tarikh al-Adab al-'Arabi al-'Asr al-'Abbas al-Awwal* (Egypt: Dar al-Ma'arif, n.d.), p. 321.

7. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Al-Aghani* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), vol. 17, pp. 1-8.

8. Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah was one of the grandchildren of Imam al-Hasan ('a) and his father was 'Abd Allah ibn al-Hasan Muthanna. During the concluding part of the Umayyad rule, the Banu Hashim pledged allegiance to him though Imam as-Sadiq ('a) had then believed that his work would lead to nowhere. After the 'Abbasids' ascension to the office of caliphate, Nafs az-Zakiyyah staged an uprising during the reign of the second 'Abbasid caliph Mansur, but he was defeated by the 'Abbasid forces and was killed.

9. Sadif ibn Maymun was one of the attendants of Imam as-Sajjad ('a) and Ibn Shahr Ashub has mentioned him in the category of "mudqasid" poets of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). Through his poems, it was also he who urged Saffah, the first 'Abbasid caliph, to kill the surviving Umayyads. Sayyid Muhsin Amin, *A'yan ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar at-Ta'aruf Li'l-Matbu'at, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 169.

10. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Andalusi, *Al-'Aqd al-Farid* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1409 AH), vol. 5, pp. 72-73.

11. Asad Haydar, *Al-Imam as-Sadiq wa'l-Madhahib al-Arba'ah*, 3rd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1403 AH), vol. 1, p. 452.

12. Dr. Mustafa Ash-Shak'ah, *Al-Adab fi Mawkib al-Hadharah al-Islamiyyah*, Kitab ash-Shu'ara 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnaniyyah, n.d.), pp. 162-163.
13. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 121.
14. Al-Aghani, vol. 17, pp. 1-8.
15. Qutb ad-Din Rawandi, *Al-Khara'ij wa'l-Jara'ih*, 1st edition (Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Mahdi, 1409 AH), vol. 1, p. 267.
16. Shawki Dayf, *Tarikh al-Adab al-'Arabi al-'Asr al-'Abbas ath-Thani* (Egypt: Dar al-Ma'arif, n.d.), p. 386.
17. The Shi'ah poets according to the computation of the late Sayyid Muhsin Amin are as follows: The Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a); Fatimah az-Zahra bint Rasulullah ('a); Fadhl ibn al-'Abbas (died 12 or 15 AH); Rabi'ah ibn Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib (died 23 AH); 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib (died 32 AH); Hasan ibn 'Ali ('a); Husayn ibn 'Ali ('a); 'Abd Allah ibn Abi Sufyan ibn Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib (martyrdom 61 AH); 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas (died 68 AH); Umm Hakim bint 'Abd al-Muttalib (died 1st century AH); Arwa bin 'Abd al-Muttalib. Among the non-Banu Hashim and companions of the Prophet (S): Nabi'ah Ju'di Qays ibn 'Abd Allah (died 1st century AH); Abu'l-Haytham ibn Tayyahan al-Ansari (martyrdom 37 AH); Khuzaymah ibn Thabit Dhu'sh-Shahadatayn (martyrdom 37 AH); 'Ammar ibn Yasir (martyrdom 37 AH); 'Abd Allah ibn Badil ibn Waraqa' al-Khaza'i (martyrdom 37 AH); Kharim ibn Fatik al-Asadi (died 1st century AH); Sa'sa'ah ibn Sawhan al-'Abdi (died 1st century AH); Labid ibn Rabi'ah al-'Amiri (died 41 AH); Ka'b ibn Zuhayr al-Aslami (died 45 AH); Hujr ibn 'Udayy al-Kindi (martyrdom 51 AH); Ka'b ibn Malik al-Ansari (1st century AH); Qays ibn Sa'd al-Ansari (died 60 AH); Mundhir ibn Jarud 'Abdi (died 61 or 62 AH); Sulayman ibn Sard al-Khaza'i (martyrdom 65 AH); Ahnaf ibn Qays at-Tamimi (died 67 or 68 AH); 'Uday ibn Hatam at-Ta'i (died 68 AH); Abu't-Tufayl 'Amir ibn Wathilah Kanani (died 100 AH). Among the Followers {tabi'un} (the generation after the sahabah), Followers of the Followers {tabi'un at-tabi'un} and the succeeding generations: Hashim Mirqal (martyrdom 37 AH); Malik al-Ashtar (martyrdom 38 or 39 AH); Thabit ibn 'Ajlan al-Ansari (1st century or 50 AH); Najashi Qays ibn 'Amru Harithi (one of the Iraqi poets in the Battle of Siffin); Qays ibn Fahdan al-Kindi (died 51 AH); Sharik ibn Harith A'war (died 60 AH); Sa'yah ibn 'Aridh (died 1st century AH); Jarir ibn 'Abd Allah Bajli (died 1st century AH); Rabbab bint Imra'i al-Qays, wife of Imam al-Husayn ('a) (died 62 AH); Umm al-Banin Fatimah Kalabiyyah, wife of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) (died 1st century AH); 'Ubayd Allah ibn Hurr Ju'fi (died 1st century AH); Muthanna ibn Mukharramah 'Abdi (died 1st century AH); Abu Dahbal Jamhi (died 1st century AH); Abu'l-Aswad ad-Da'uli (died 69 AH); 'Uqbah ibn 'Amru as-Sahami; 'Abd Allah ibn 'Awf ibn Ahmar; Musayyab ibn Najbah al-Fazari (martyrdom 65 AH); 'Abd Allah ibn Sa'd ibn Nufayl (martyrdom 65 AH); 'Abd Allah ibn Khadhal at-Ta'i (died 1st century AH); 'Abd Allah ibn Wal at-Tamimi (martyrdom 65 AH); Rafa'ah ibn Shadad Bajli (martyrdom 66 AH); A'sha Hamdan (died 1st century AH); Ibrahim al-Ashtar (martyrdom 66 AH); Ayman ibn Kharim al-Asadi (died 90 AH); Fadhl ibn al-'Abbas ibn 'Uqbah ibn Abi Lahab (died 90 AH); Abu'r-Ramih al-Khaza'i (died 100 AH); Khalid ibn Ma'dan at-Ta'i (died 103 AH); Kuthayyir 'Azzah (105 AH); Farazdaq Hammam ibn Ghalib at-Tamimi (died 110 AH); Sufyan ibn Mus'ab 'Abdi (120 AH); Zayd ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ('a) (martyrdom 122 AH); Sulayman ibn Qutaybah 'Adawi (died 126 AH); Kumayt ibn Zayd al-Asadi (died 126 AH); Mustahil ibn Kumayt (died 2nd century AH); Yahya ibn Ya'mar (died 127 AH); Fadhl ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn al-'Abbas ibn Rabi'ah ibn Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib (died 129 AH); Malik ibn A'yan Jahni (died mid-2nd century AH); Ward ibn Zayd, brother of Kumayt (died 140 AH); Qadhi 'Abd Allah ibn Shabramah al-Kufi (died 144 AH); Ibrahim ibn Hasan (killed in Bakhmara 145 AH); Musa ibn 'Abd Allah (died 2nd century AH); Sadif ibn Maymun (died 147 AH); Muhammad ibn Ghalib ibn Hudhayl al-Kufi (died 2nd century AH); Zurarah ibn A'yan (died 150 AH); Ibrahim ibn Hurmah (died 150 AH); 'Abd Allah ibn Mu'awiyah, a descendant of Ja'far at-Tayyar (died 2nd century AH); Abu Hurayrah 'Ajli (died 2nd century AH); Abu Hurayrah al-Abar (died 2nd century AH); Qudamah Sa'di; Ja'far ibn 'Affan at-Ta'i (died 150 AH); Abu Ja'far Mu'min Taq (died 2nd century AH); Sharik ibn 'Abd Allah Nakha'i (died 2nd century AH); 'Ali ibn Hamzah Nahawi Kasa'i (died 189 AH); Mansur Numri (died 2nd century AH); Mu'adh ibn Muslim Hara' (died 188 AH); 'Abd Allah ibn Ghalib al-Asadi (died late 2nd century AH); Muslim ibn Walid al-Ansari (died at the end of 2nd century AH); Abu Nu'as Mutawallid (died 198 AH); Sayyid Humayri (died 199 AH); 'Ali ibn 'Abd Allah Khawafi (died 3rd century AH); 'Abd Allah 'Ali Marani (died 3rd century AH); 'Abd Allah ibn Ayyub Huraybi (died 3rd century AH); Mashi' Ma'i (died 3rd century AH); Qasim ibn Yusuf Katib (died 3rd century AH); Ashja' ibn 'Amru Salmi (died 210 AH); Muhammad ibn Wahib Humayri (died 3rd century AH); Abu Dalf 'Ajli (died 255 AH); Abu Talib al-Qummi (died 3rd century AH); Abu Tammam Habib ibn Aws at-Ta'i (died 3rd century AH); Dik al-Jinn (died 236 AH); Ibrahim ibn al-'Abbas as-Sawli (died 234 AH); Ibn Sakit Ya'qub ibn Ishaq (died 244 AH); Abu Muhammad 'Abd Allah ibn 'Ammar Barqi (died 245 AH); Da'bal ibn 'Ali al-Khaza'i (died 246 AH); Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Khaza'i, cousin of Da'bal (died 3rd century AH); 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad al-Khaza'i (died 3rd century AH); Husayn ibn Da'bal al-Khaza'i (died 3rd century AH); Musa ibn 'Abd al-Malik (died 246 AH); Ahmad ibn Khalad Ashrawi (died 3rd century AH); Ahmad ibn Ibrahim (died 3rd century AH); Bakr ibn Muhammad an-Nahawi (died 248 AH); Ahmad ibn 'Umran Akhfash an-Nahawi (died 250 AH); Abu 'Ali Husayn ibn Dahak (died 250 AH); Muhammad ibn Isma'il Sumayri (died 255 AH); Fadhl ibn Muhammad (mid-3rd century AH); Hummani 'Ali ibn Muhammad (died 260 AH); Dawud ibn Qasim Ja'fari (died 261 AH); Ibn Rumi 'Ali ibn al-'Abbas (died 283 AH); Bahtari Walid ibn 'Ubayd at-Ta'i (died 284 AH); Sharif Muhammad ibn Salih (died 3rd century AH); Nasr ibn Nasir Halwani (died 3rd century AH); 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Mansur ibn Bassam (died 302 AH); Ahmad ibn 'Ubayd Allah (died 314 AH); Khubz-Arzi Basri Nasr ibn Ahmad (died 317 AH); Khabbaz al-Baldi Muhammad ibn

Ahmad (died 4th century AH); Ahmad ibn 'Alawiyyah al-Isfahani (died 320 AH); Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Hasan Darid (died 321 AH); Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Ibrahim Tabataba'i al-Hasani (died 322 AH); Muhammad ibn Muzid Bushanji (died 325 AH); Mufajja' Basri Muhammad ibn Ahmad (died or martyred 327 AH); 'Ali ibn al-'Abbas Nawbakhti (died 329 AH). See A'yan ash-Shi'ah, vol. 1, pp. 166-172.

18. Al-'Aqd al-Farid, vol. 5, p. 290.

19. Al-Aghani, vol. 17, p. 40.

20. 'Allamah Amini, Al-Ghadir fi'l-Kitab wa's-Sunnah wa'l-Adab (Tehran: Dar al-Kitab al-Islamiyyah, 1366 AHS), vol. 1, p. 242.

21. Ibid., p. 241.

22. Al-'Aqd al-Farid, vol. 4, p. 320.

23. Al-Imam as-Sadiq wa'l-Madhahib al-Arba'ah, vol. 1, p. 254, as quoted in Zahra'l-Adab, vol. 3, p. 70.

24. Al-Adab fi Mawqib al-Hadharah al-Islamiyyah, Kitab ash-Shu'ara 1, pp. 162-163.

25. The second 'Abbasid period refers to the beginning of the third century AH starting from the time of Mu'tasim with the entrance of the Turks in the 'Abbasid court.

26. Tarikh al-Adab al-'Arabi al-'Asr al-'Abbas ath-Thani, p. 386.

## Lesson 28: The Subjects of the Poems of the Shi'ah Poets

The Shi'ah poets have recited poetry in various arenas and diverse themes, which may be classified into the following:

### 1. Argumentation against the Usurpers of the Ahl al-Bayt's ('a) Rights

The Shi'ah poets and orators, believing in the guardianship {*wilayah*} of 'Ali ('a) and his progeny, spoke out immediately after the event of Saqifah and the oppression against 'Ali ('a), defending the right of the Imam and trying to describe the course the Holy Prophet (S) specified with respect to the Imamate and guardianship through the language of poetry. In this regard, it was known that Kumayt al-Asadi was the first to open the gate of argumentation for the Shi'ah poets.

'Allamah Amini attributes this fact to Jahiz and then continues thus:

Long before the fetus of Kumayt was to be formed, a number of the great *sahabah* and *tabi'un* such as Khuzaymah ibn Thabit Dhu'sh-Shahadatayn, 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas, Fadhl ibn al-'Abbas, 'Ammar ibn Yasir, Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari, Qays ibn Sa'd al-Ansari, Rabi'ah ibn Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, 'Abd Allah ibn Abi Sufyan ibn Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, Zafar ibn Zayd ibn Hudhayfah, Najashi ibn Harith ibn Ka'b, Jarir ibn 'Abd Allah Bajli, and 'Abd Allah ibn Janbal had defended the right of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) through their poems.<sup>1</sup>

Among the first persons to have recited poetry in defence of 'Ali ('a) was 'Abd Allah ibn Abi Sufyan ibn Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib. Shaykh al-Mufid says, "When the Prophet (S) passed away, 'Abd Allah ibn Abi Sufyan was not in Medina. When he arrived in Medina, I saw that the people had pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr. As such, he stood at the middle of the mosque and recited this poem:

ما كنت احسب أن الأمر منصرف عن هاشم ثم منها عن أبي  
حسن!

أليس اولى من صلى لقبلكم و أعلم الناس بالقرآن و السنن؟

*I did not imagine that they would take away the matter of caliphate from the Banu Hashim and among whom from Abu'l-Hasan ('Ali)!*

*Is he not the first person to pray toward your qiblah and the most learned of people about the Qur'an and the Sunnah?<sup>2</sup>*

Similarly, a number of other Hashimite poets from among the *sahabah* and *tabi'un* had also recited poetry in defence of the right of 'Ali ('a). For instance, while reciting poetry Fadhl ibn al-'Abbas has thus said:

الا ان خير الناس بعد محمد وصي النبي المصطفى عند ذي  
الذكر

و اول من صلى و صنوبيه و اول من اردى الغواة لدى بدر

*Be aware that the best of people after Muhammad in the sight of God is the successor of Prophet al-Mustafa (S).*

*He is the first performer of prayer, the brother of the Prophet, and the first person to drive away the tyrants in (the Battle of) Badr.<sup>3</sup>*

Mughayrah ibn Nawfal ibn Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib addressed the supporters of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) during the Battle of Siffin and poetically said:

فيكم وصي رسول الله قائدكم و صهره و كتاب الله قد نشرنا

*Among you is the successor of the Messenger of Allah (S)—your commander—and his son-in-law, and the Book of Allah is scattered.<sup>4</sup>*

Fadhl ibn al-'Abbas ibn 'Utbah ibn Abi Lahab has been one of the famous poets at the end of the first century AH. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih has narrated: "When Walid ibn 'Abd al-Malik was circumambulating {*tawaf*} the *Ka'bah*, Fadhl ibn al-'Abbas was reciting this poem while

getting water from the well of Zamzam:

يأيها السائل عن عليّ تسأل عن بدر لنا بدريّ

مُرَدِّدٍ في المجد ابطحي سائلةٍ غره مضيّ

*O he who is asking from 'Ali! You are asking from the moon of Banu Hashim and the one present at the Battle of Badr.*

*Are you doubtful in praising the greatness of the 'abtahi' man, or asking about his precedence in Islam?*[5](#)

Among the first persons to have recited poetry in defending the right of the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a) was a woman named Umm Mastah ibn Athathah. Historians have narrated, thus:

After Abu Bakr and 'Umar treated 'Ali harshly to acquire his allegiance by force, Umm Mastah came to the mosque, stood in front of the grave of the Prophet and recited this poem:

قد كان بعدك انباء هنيئةً لو كنت شاهداً لم تكثر الخطب

انا فقدناك فقد الأرض و ابلها فاختل قومك فاشهدهم و لا  
تغب

*After you, an event and differences have occurred that would never happen if you were present.*

*We lost you just as the soil would lose water. Your community is going astray. Be witness and neglect not.*[6](#)

Among the poets who used to engage in argumentation and defend the right of 'Ali ('a) was the great Arab poet and man of letter, Abu'l-Aswad Daw'ili who lived in Basrah at the place of the tribe of Banu Qashir that were sympathetic to 'Uthman ibn 'Affan. None of them could surpass Abu'l-Aswad in speech. So, they instead persecuted and harassed him, throwing stones at his house every night. He gave this reply to them:

يقول الأزدلون بنوقشير طوال الدهر لا تنسى علياً!

فقلت لهم و كيف يكون تركي من الأعمال مفروضاً عليّ؟

أحب محمداً حباً شديداً و عباساً و حمزة و الوصياً

بني عم النبي و اقربيه أحب الناس كلهم إلينا

فان يك حُبهم رشداً اصبه و لست بمخطيء ان كان غياً

هم اهل النصيحة غير شك و اهل مودتي ما دمت حياً

رايت الله خالق كل شى هداهم واجتبي منهم نبياً

و لم يخصص بها احداً سواهم هنيئاً ما اصطفاه لهم مرئياً

*The vile people such as Banu Qashir say, "With the passage of time, why have you not forgotten 'Ali?"*

*I said to them, "How could I abandon deeds that are incumbent upon me?"*

*I love Muhammad so much, and 'Abbas, Hamzah and the successor {wasi} (i.e. 'Ali) as well.*

*The cousins and nearest of kin of the Prophet are the most beloved of people for me.*

*If love for them is guidance, I have attained it then, and if this love is useless, then I have lost nothing.*

*Undoubtedly, they are the people of admonition and my beloved ones so long as I live.*

*I regard God as the Creator of everything. He has guided them and appointed the Prophet from among them.*

*Except them, nobody is worthy of it. May this God's choice of them be pleasant!<sup>7</sup>*

This continued until finally, at the end of the Umayyad rule, great and famous poets such as Kumayt al-Asadi, Kuthayyir 'Azzah and Sayyid Humayri who thawed themselves in the guardianship {wilayah}, have recited more poems in defense of 'Ali's ('a) right.

## 2. The Shi'ah Poets' Confrontation with the Umayyad and 'Abbasid Poets

The second subject about which Shi'ah poets have recited poetry is the poems they have composed to counter the Umayyad and 'Abbasid poets. After 35 AH when 'Uthman ibn al-'Affan was murdered, the Umayyads used to utilize the weapon of poetry to attain their wicked objectives and incite people against the Commander of the Faithful ('a).

Among those who had recited poetry against the Imam was Walid ibn 'Uqbah, maternal brother of 'Uthman, who has been described by the Qur'an as *fasiq* {transgressor}.<sup>8</sup> He had accused Banu Hashim, the head of which was 'Ali ('a), of killing 'Uthman, saying:

**بنی هاشم ردوا سلاح ابن اختکم و لا تنهبوه لا تحل نهائیه**

**بنی هاشم کیف الهوادة بیننا و عند علی درعه و نجائیه**

**بنی هاشم کیف التودد منکم ودم ابن اروی فیکم و حرائیه**

*O Banu Hashim! Return the weapon of your maternal cousin and do not usurp his property as his property is not lawful for you.*

*O Banu Hashim! How could harmony be established between you and us while the chain mail and camels of 'Uthman are with 'Ali?*

*O Banu Hashim! How could I accept your friendship while the spears of Ibn Arwa ('Uthman) are with you?<sup>9</sup>*

Then, 'Abd Allah ibn Abi Sufyan ibn Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib answered him, saying thus poetically:

**فلاتسألونا سیفکم ان سیفکم اضع و القاه لدی الروع صاحبه**

**و شبهته کسری و قد کان مثله شبیهاً بکسری هدیة و ضرائیه**

منا عليُّ الخير صاحب خيبر و صاحب بدر يوم سالت كتائبه

و كان ولي الأمر بعد محمد عليّ و في كل المواطن صاحبه

وصي النبي المصطفى و ابن عمه وأول من صلى و من لان  
جانبه

*You may not get your sword from us because when its owner was frightened, he threw it and it was lost.*

*You likened him to Khosroe, and in fact he was like him. And his horses and properties were like that of his (Khosroe).*

*'Ali, the good, is from us; the victor of Khaybar and Badr when the hostile army came.*

*'Ali is the one vested with authority after Muhammad and the companion of the Prophet in all the wars.*

*He is the successor of Prophet al-Mustafa and his cousin. He is the first person to perform prayer and the one who is so well-mannered.<sup>10</sup>*

Walid ibn 'Uqbah composed his next poem against the Commander of the Faithful ('a) when he wrote a letter to his brother, 'Umarah ibn 'Uqbah who was then living in Kufah, inciting him to be inimical to the Imam, saying thus:

ان يك ظنّي في عمارة صادقاً ينم و لا يطلب بذحل و لا وتر

يبيت و اوتار ابن عفان عنده مٌخيمَةً بين الخورنق و القصر

تمشى رخيّ البال متشزر القوى كانك لم تسمع بقتل ابي عمر

الا إنّ خير الناس بعد ثلاثة قتل النجيبى الذي جاء من مصر

*If my guess is ever correct about 'Umarah, he is sleeping and does not take revenge!  
He is sleeping comfortably while the murderers of 'Uthman are near him encamping  
between the Khawarnaq {magnificent building} and the Palace!  
He is walking with a peace of mind and sound body, as if he has not heard of the killing of  
Abu 'Amru ('Uthman).  
Be aware that the best of people after the three persons<sup>11</sup> is the one who has been killed  
by the 'tajibi' who came from Egypt.<sup>12</sup>*

Then, Fadhl ibn al-'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib replied to him reciting thus:

**أطلب ثاراً لست منه و لاله و مالابن ذكران الصفوري و الوتر**

**كما افتخرت بنت الحمار بأمها و تنسى ابها إذا تسامى او  
لوالفخر**

**الا ان خير الناس بعد نبهم وصي النبي المصطفى عند ذي  
الذكر**

**و اول من صلى و صفونبيّه و اول من اردى الغواة لدى بدر**

*Are you taking revenge for a person who has no relationship with you? Ibn Dhakran Safuri is one thing while taking revenge for 'Uthman is another.*

*You can still remember that you were suffering from poverty, he forgot the father of his donkey while taking pride in the mother of his horse.*

*Be aware that the best of people after the Prophet in the sight of God is the successor of Prophet Mustafa.*

*He is the first to have performed the prayer, the brother of the Prophet, and the first person to have driven away the oppressive contingent in (the Battle of) Badr.<sup>13</sup>*

Sometime during the Battle of Jamal when the supporters of the Umayyads and the so-called 'Uthmanis were reciting *rajaz*-metered<sup>14</sup> verses in affirming their movement and inciting their supporters, the companions of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) were also answering them in return. Among these persons were 'Ammar ibn Yasir and Malik al-Ashtar. For example, some members of the tribe of Banu Ḍabbah who had surrounded the camel of 'A'ishah would take the reins of camel and would be killed. The last person to have taken the bridle of camel said, thus:

# نحن بنو ضبة أصحاب الجمل نعى ابن عقان باطراف الاسل

## رُدُّوا علينا شيخنا ثم بجل

*We are the Banu Dabbah, supporters of (the Army of) Jamal, and are taking 'Uthman's revenge with our spears.*

*Return to us our sheikh in safety.*[15](#)

Malik al-Ashtar rushed to confront him and said, thus:

## كيف نرُدُّ نعثلاً و قد قخل سارت به أم المنايا و رَحَل

*How could we return Na'thal ('Uthman) while he is enshrouded, swords having penetrated his body, and is dead?!*

Then, Malik al-Ashtar gave a strike to him and killed him.[16](#)

During the Battle of Siffin, due to the prolongation of the battle, in addition to military combat and confrontation, there was also confrontation in poetry in its broadest sense between the two belligerent armies. Nasr ibn Muzahim has mentioned great poets such as Malik al-Ashtar, Khuzaymah ibn Thabit, Fadhl ibn al-'Abbas, Qays ibn Sa'd 'Udayy ibn Hatam, 'Amru ibn Hamq al-Khaza'i, Hujr ibn 'Udayy al-Kindi, Nu'man ibn 'Ajlal al-Ansari, Muhammad ibn Abi Sabrah Qurayshi, Mughayrah ibn Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, Jundab ibn Zuhayr, Abu Zubayd at-Ta'i, Ahmar (an Iraqi poet), Abu Habbah ibn Ghuzayyah al-Ansari, and others who had recited poetry in countering the poets of the people of Sham. The Commander of the Faithful ('a) himself had been giving replies to individuals such as 'Amr ibn al-'As.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid thus says: "Najashi was one of the Iraqi poets in (the Battle of) Siffin who had been ordered by 'Ali to confront the poets of the people of Sham such as Ka'b ibn Ju'ayl and others."[17](#)

## **Lesson 28: Summary**

The Shi'ah poets had recited poetry in various arenas:

1. Argumentation: After the event of Saqifah, the truth-speaking Shi'ah poets spoke out in defense of the Commander of the Faithful's ('a) right, among whom were the leading orators of the Banu Hashim such as 'Abd Allah ibn Abi Sufyan ibn Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib and Mughayrah ibn Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib.

2. Confronting the Umayyad and 'Abbasid poets: After 'Uthman's murder in 35 AH, the Umayyads used to recite poetry against the Commander of the Faithful ('a). From then on,

the Shi'ah poets responded through poetry.

For example, during the Battle of Siffin there was also a battle of poetry between the two warring parties.

## **Lesson 28: Questions**

1. What does 'Allamah Amini say about the argumentation of the Shi'ah poets?
2. Since when did the Shi'ah poets' confrontation with the poets affiliated to the enemies of the Shi'ah start?

1. 'Allamah Amini, *Al-Ghadir fi'l-Kitab wa's-Sunnah wa'l-Adab* (Tehran: Dar al-Kitab al-Islamiyyah, 1366 AHS), vol. 1, p. 191.
2. Shaykh al-Mufid, *Al-Jamal*, 2nd edition (Qum: Maktab al-A'lam al-Islami (Publication Center), 1416 AH), p. 118. The identity of the one who recited this poem is a source of disagreement among historians and writers. Shaykh al-Mufid has attributed this poem to 'Abd Allah ibn Abi Sufyan ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib. In *Al-Isabah*, Ibn Hajar has regarded Fadhl ibn al-'Abbas ibn 'Utbah ibn Abi Lahab as the one who recited it. In the book *Al-Manaqib*, Muwayyid ad-Din Khwarazmi has identified 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet's (S) uncle, as the composer of this poem. In the book *Al-Majalis*, Sharif ar-Radhi has attributed it to Rabi'ah ibn Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib. Qadhi Baydhwai, in his exegeses {tafsir} of the Qur'an, has considered it belonging to Hassan ibn Thabit. Zubayr ibn Bakkar has said, "One of the children of Abu Lahab had recited this poem." Finally, Qadhi Nur Allah has rejected the view of Ibn Hajar, saying that the one who recited must be prior to the event of Saqifah and he could not be Fadhl ibn al-'Abbas ibn 'Utbah because he was born later. So, the one who recited it bore the name of Fadhl; hence, Fadhl ibn 'Utbah ibn Abi Lahab. Sayyid 'Ali Khan ash-Shirazi, *Ad-Darajat ar-Rafi'ah fi Tabaqat ash-Shi'ah* (Qum: Mansurat Maktabah Basirati, n.d.), p. 193. At any rate, this difference in opinion has no contrary effect on our discussion because it is obvious that the one who recited it had been one of the Shi'ah.
3. *Ad-Darajat ar-Rafi'ah fi Tabaqat ash-Shi'ah*, p. 143.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
5. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Andalusi, *Al-'Aqd al-Farid* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1409 AH), vol. 5, p. 75.
6. 'Abd al-Hamid ibn Abi'l-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* (Cairo: Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabi, 1961), vol. 6, p. 43.
7. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Al-Aghani* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), vol. 12, p. 321.
8. Surah 32:18: "Is he then who is a believer like he who is a transgressor {fasiq}? They are not equal." For the commentary of this verse, see the following Sunni references: Al-Qurtubi, *Tafsir* (Cairo, 1947), vol. 14, p. 105; At-Tabari, *Tafsir Jami' al-Bayan*, under commentary for this verse; Al-Wahidi, *Asbab an-Nuzul* (Dar ad-Diyan Li't-Turath edition), p. 291. {Trans.}
9. *Ad-Darajat ar-Rafi'ah fi Tabaqat ash-Shi'ah*, p. 188.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
11. It alludes to the Prophet (S), Abu Bakr and 'Umar. {Trans.}
12. *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 2, p. 114.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Rajaz: name of several meters, two of which are the most important. {Trans.}
15. *Al-Jamal*, p. 118.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 4, p. 87.

## **Lesson 29: Elegy-Recitation**

Another important arena about which the Shi'ah poets have recited poetry and delivered speeches extensively is the commemoration of the tragedy experienced by the descendants of the Prophet (S) and elegy-recitation for the martyrs among them. This arena came into being after the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a) in 61 AH. In this regard, two parts may be discussed and examined:

## Elegies for Imam al-Husayn ('a) and the Other Martyrs in Karbala'

From the beginning of Islam, no tragedy more serious and painful than the event of Karbala' has happened in the history of Islam, and after the lapse of one thousand and four hundred years, it still has the greatest impact upon the hearts of the devotees of the Prophet's ('a) descendents. Since then, anyone who has the love of the Prophet's (S) *Ahl al-Bayt* and talent in composing poetry has recited poetry in this regard.

The pioneering poems pertaining to the event of Karbala' have been recited from the end of the first century AH and the commencement of the Umayyad decline. As Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani says:

Many of the latter poets have recited poetry in mourning for Imam al-Husayn ('a) about which we do not tend to complain as we are fond of long speech. Yet, on account of the harshness of the Umayyad's atmosphere of strangulation, the earlier poets during the Umayyad period have recited fewer elegies about the tribulation of Imam al-Husayn ('a).<sup>1</sup>

For example, 'Ubayd Allah ibn Hurr was chased by 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad for reciting elegy for Imam al-Husayn ('a) and was forced to flee.<sup>2</sup> Of course, many poems have been composed during the first century AH about the tribulation of the Doyen of the Martyrs ('a) though they are lesser in number compared to the quantity of poems that have been recited since the second century AH.

The bereaved women of Banu Hashim were among the pioneering people who have recited elegies in lamentation of their lost loved ones. When the news of the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a) reached Medina, Zaynab bint 'Aqil came out wailing amidst the women of Banu Hashim while reciting the following poem:

**ماذا تقولون إذ قال النبي لكم ماذا فعلتم و انتم آخر الامم**

**بعترتي و باهلي بعد مُفْتَقِدِي نصف اسارى و نصف ضُرِّ جُوا  
بدم**

**ما كان هذا جزائي إذ نصحت لكم أن تخلفوني بشرّ في ذوى  
رَجْمِي**

*What shall you say in reply to the Prophet when he will ask from you, "O the latter ones of the ummah! What have you done?"*

*"{What did you do} with my descendants and Household after I passed away? Half of them were taken as captives while the other half was weltered in blood."  
"It was not my reward for my admonition to you that you would do the worst treatment to my nearest of kin."<sup>3</sup>*

Among the most heartrending elegies ever recited for the martyrs of Karbala' are the elegies of Umm al-Banin, the mother of Hadhrat Abu'l-Fadhli. Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani has narrated that Umm al-Banin was holding the hand of 'Ubayd Allah, son of Hadhrat al-'Abbas and going to the Baqi' Cemetery while the people of Medina were gathering around her and weeping because of her elegies. Even an enemy such as Marwan ibn al-Hakam used to weep with of her elegies.<sup>4</sup> Umm al-Banin was thus saying:

**يا من رأى العباس كر على جماهير النقد**

**وورائه من أبناء حيدر كل ليث ذي ليد**

**انبئت أن ابني اصيب براسه مقطوع يد**

**ويل على شبلى اما ل براسه ضرب العمد**

**لوكان سيفك في يد يك لمادنا منك احد**

*I wished I saw (with my own eyes) how 'Abbas was assaulting the groups of vile people!  
Behind him were the sons of Haydar (Imam 'Ali ('a)) standing like lions.  
I have been informed that his hands have been amputated while his head has received a blow.  
Woe to my son whose head has received a strong blow!  
If your sword were in your hand, no one could have ever come near you.<sup>5</sup>*

When the caravan of the captives of Karbala' was heading toward Medina and arrived near the city, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) dispatched Bashir ibn Jadhlam to Medina ahead of them, and Bashir informed the people of their arrival in the city through this poem:

يا اهل يثرب لامقام لكم بها قتل الحسين فادمعى مدرار

الجسم منه بكربلاء مضجج و الرأس منه على القنائة يدار

*O people of Yathrib! No more opportunity for you to stay there. Husayn was killed; shed your tears.*

*His corpse has been weltering in blood in Karbala' and his head is placed on top of spear.<sup>6</sup>*

Khalid ibn Ma'dan, 'Uqbah ibn 'Amru, Abu'r-Ramih al-Khaza'i, Sulayman ibn Quttah al-'Adawi, 'Awf ibn 'Abd Allah Ahmar al-Azdi, and 'Ubayd Allah ibn Hurr were among the elegists of the first century AH who have recited poetry about the tribulation of Imam al-Husayn ('a). It has been narrated that when Khalid ibn Ma'dan saw in Sham the Imam's head on top of the spear, he recited this poem:

جاؤا برأسك يا ابن بنت محمد مترملاً بدمائه ترميلاً

و كأنما بك يا ابن بنت محمد قتلوا جهاراً عامدين رسولاً

قتلوك عطشاً و لم يترقبوا في قتلك التنزيل و التأويلاً

و يكبرون بان قتلت و أنما قتلوا بك التكبير و التهليلاً

*O son of the daughter of Muhammad! They have made your head weltering in blood. O son of the daughter of Muhammad! By overtly killing you, as if they wanted to take revenge from the Prophet!*

*They have killed you while thirsty and they have not observed the interpretation and injunction of the Qur'an about killing.*

*And that they have killed you, they are uttering "Allahu akbar" {Allah is the greatest} while uttering "Allahu akbar," they have also killed your companions!<sup>7</sup>*

Among the first poets to have recited poetry in lamentation for Imam al-Husayn ('a) is 'Ubayd Allah ibn Hurr whose ode starts with the following couplet:

## يقول امر غادر اي غادر ألاكنت قاتلت الشهيد بن فاطمه

*The treacherous chief, son of a traitor asks {me}: “Did you not fight against the martyr, the son of Fatimah?”*

When Ibn Ziyad heard this poem, he chased ‘Ubayd Allah who immediately rode on a horse and escaped, thus saving his life.<sup>8</sup>

Sulayman ibn Quttah al-‘Adawi has been one of the most prominent elegists for the tribulation of Imam al-Husayn (‘a). The following poem is attributed to him:

مررتُ على أبيات آل محمد فلم أرها كعهدها يوم حُلتِ

و كانوا رجاءً ثم صاروا رزيةً و قد عظمت تلك الرزايا و جَلَّت

ألم تر أن الشمس اضحت مريضة لفقد حسين و البلاد  
اقشعرت

و قد اعولت تبكي السماء لفقدة و انجمها ناحت عليه و صلَّت

*I roamed around the house of Muhammad’s progeny and I saw them not fully occupied as before.*

*They were the House of hope and later became the House of tribulation—grave and serious tribulations.*

*Can you not see that due to the loss of Husayn the sun turned lackluster and the cities melancholic?!*

*Can you not see that owing to the loss of Husayn the sky has wept and wailed and its stars lamented and invoked salutations?<sup>9</sup>*

But after the end of the first century AH when the repression of the Umayyad rulers diminished because of their confrontation with the ‘Abbasid movement and other revolts and were finally defeated by the ‘Abbasids, the pure Imams (‘a) revived the recitation of elegies for Imam al-Husayn (‘a) and great poets such as Kumayt al-Asadi, Sayyid Humayri, Sufyan ibn Mus‘ab ‘Abdi, Mansur Namri, and Da‘bal al-Khaza‘i used to recite poetry in their presence for the tribulation of Imam al-Husayn (‘a). As Sufyan ibn Mus‘ab ‘Abdi narrates:

I visited Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) and the Imam said to his attendant, “Tell Umm Farwah to come and listen to what happened to his (great) grandfather.” Umm Farwah came and sat behind a curtain. Then, Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said to me: “You recite.” I started reciting an elegy which commences with this couplet:

## فرو جودي بدمعك المسكوب

*O Umm Farwah! Render tears to your eyes.*

At this point, Umm Farwah and other ladies burst into tears.[10](#)

Abu’l-Faraj al-Isfahani also narrates from Isma’il at-Tamimi, thus:

I was with Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) when Sayyid Hamayri asked for permission and entered. The Imam asked the members of his household to sit behind a curtain. He then asked Sayyid Humayri to recite poetry in lamentation for Imam al-Husayn (‘a). Sayyid recited this poem:

## امرر على جدث الحسين فقل لاعظمة الزكية

يا اعظماً لازلت من وظفا و ساكبة رويّة

فاذا مررت بقبره فاطل به وقف المطيّة

و ابك المطهّر للمطهّر و المطهرة النقية

كبكاء معوله اتت يوماً لواحدھا المنية

*You pass by the grave of Husayn and tell to his pure bones:*

*“O bones! Be always sound and glutted.”*

*As you pass by his grave, make a long stopover as the camels do.*

*Let the pure {mutahhar} Imam weep for the pure Husayn.*

*Your cry must be like the cry and lamentation of the mother of a dead son.*

The narrator says, "I saw the tears of the Imam fall on his cheek and weeping reigned in the house."[11](#)

Sometimes also others such as Fadhil Rasan and Abu Harun Makfuf would recite the poems of Sayyid Humayri in lamentation for Imam al-Husayn ('a) near Imam as-Sadiq ('a) and make the Imam cry. As reported by Ibn Qawlawayyah, Imam as-Sadiq ('a) asked one of his companions named Abu 'Ammar to recite for him the poems of 'Abdi in lamentation for Imam al-Husayn ('a).[12](#)

Poet such as Da'bal al-Khaza'i who recited many poems in lamentation for Imam al-Husayn ('a) also engaged in reciting elegies near Imam ar-Ridha ('a) for his great grandfather.[13](#)

## **Elegies for the Other Martyrs among the Descendants of the Prophet (S)**

--As a deeply touched Shi'ah poet is witnessing the scene of martyrdom of Muslim ibn 'Aqil and Hani ibn 'Urwah, he recites this poem and this poem is thereafter recited by many:

**إذا كنت لا تدريين ما الموت فانظري إلى هاني في السوق و  
ابن عقيل**

**إلى بطل قد هشمَّ السيف وجهه و آخر يهوي في طمار قتيل**

**اصابهما أمر الأمير فأصبحا أحاديث من يسعى بكل سبيل**

**ايترك أسماء المهاج أمنأ و قد طلبته مذحج بدحول**

*If you do not know what is meant by death, look at Ibn 'Aqil and Hani at the market. His (Ibn 'Aqil's) face was heroically cut into pieces by swords while the other one (Hani) was thrown from the top (of palace) and was killed.*

*By the order of the emir, this happened to them on this day and the news about them was relayed by the travelers.*

*You can see a corpse whose color has been changed by death and every part of which has been weltering in blood.*

*Will the names of Mahayij be in safety? This is while the tribe of Madhhaj is about to be punished.[14](#)*

While reciting a long elegy in lamentation for the martyrs of the *Tawabun* {the Penitents}, a certain poet named A'sha Hamdan thus says:

**توجه من دون ثنية سائراً إلى ابن زياد في الجموع الكتائب**

**فياخير جيش للعراق و اهله سقيتم روايا كل اسحم ساكب**

*From that direction, soldiers rushed toward Ibn Ziyad.  
O the best of Iraqi army! You filled every gutter for rainwater.*[15](#)

The Shi'ah poets also used to recite poetry in mourning for Zayd ibn 'Ali, his son Yahya, and the descendants of Imam al-Hasan ('a) who staged uprisings during the 'Abbasid period and attained martyrdom.

The poets such 'Ali ibn 'Abd Allah al-Khawafi, Mashi' Madani, Ashja' ibn 'Amru Salmi, and Abu Talib al-Qummi have also recited poetry in mourning for Imam ar-Ridha ('a).[16](#)

But after Imam al-Husayn ('a), among the murdered descendants of Abu Talib, the greatest number of elegies has been recited in mourning for Yahya ibn 'Umar at-Talibi. He staged an uprising in 248 AH and was killed by Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Tahir.[17](#) Mas'udi says, "People from near and far recited elegies for him while young and old wept for him."[18](#)

Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani says, "Of all the descendants of Abu Talib killed during the 'Abbasid period, I do not find anyone about whom poems and elegies have been recited as much as what has been done to Yahya ibn 'Umar at-Talibi."[19](#)

## **The Virtues and Merits of the Descendants of the Prophet (S)**

Since the second century AH, the Shi'ah poets used to recite poetry more about the virtues and merits of the Commander of the Faithful ('a), and in this manner, engaging in the information drive and spread of the school of Shi'ism whose basic foundation is the succession and Imamate of 'Ali ('a). The great poets such as Kumayt al-Asadi, Humayri, Sufyan ibn Mus'ab 'Abdi, and Da'bal al-Khaza'i were forerunners in this affair.

Sayyid Humayri spent his time expressing the merits of the Commander of the Faithful, and he was one of the prominent preachers of the school of *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) during his time. As narrated by Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, he recited two thousand three hundred odes in praise of Banu Hashim, while none of his poems has been devoid of praise for Banu Hashim and reproach for their enemies.

Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani has also said that in Kufah, Sayyid Humayri used to go to the house of Sulayman ibn Mihran known as A'mash from whom he would learn about and write the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a), and thereafter, he would express them in poetry.

Ibn Mu'taz says:

Sayyid Humayri has transformed into poetry all the virtues of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) and he would easily become tired sitting at any assembly where the progeny of Muhammad was not pleasantly mentioned. For example, someone has thus narrated: "We were sitting beside 'Amru ibn 'Ala' when Sayyid Humayri came. And we were then busy talking about common affairs such as farming and date palms. Sayyid stood up as he wanted to go. When we asked for the reason why he wanted to leave, he gave this reply to us:

**إِنِّي لَأَكْرَهُ أَنْ أَطِيلَ بِمَجْلِسٍ لَا ذَكَرَ فِيهِ لِفَضْلِ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ**

**لَا ذَكَرَ فِيهِ لِأَحْمَدَ وَوَصِيهِ وَبَنِيهِ ذَلِكَ مَجْلِسٌ نَظْفٌ رَدِي**

**أَنْ الَّذِي يَنْسَاهُمْ فِي مَجْلِسٍ حَتَّى يَفَارِقَهُ لَغَيْرِ مَسَدَدٍ**

*I abhor sitting at an assembly in which none of the virtues of the progeny of Muhammad is ever mentioned.*

*Any assembly in which there is no mention of Ahmad, his successor and his offspring is a worthless assembly.*

*Anyone who shall not mention them in the assembly shall leave that assembly without gaining any benefit.<sup>20</sup>*

Similarly, one day, one of the chiefs of Kufah gave a horse and a gift to Sayyid Humayri. He mounted the horse and took the gift, and went to the working place of Kufah. He then addressed the Shi'ah, saying: "O Kufans! If anyone could mention any of the virtues of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib about which I have not expressed in poetry yet, I shall give this horse and gift to him."

People from every direction would mention each of the superiorities of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) and in return he would recite the poem he composed about it. Finally, someone said:

One day, 'Ali ('a) wanted to wear his shoes and go out. He had already worn one pair of his shoes when an eagle came, picked up the other pair of shoes and brought it up. But it suddenly abandoned as a black snake went out of the shoe and entered into a ground hole. 'Ali ('a) then wore the other pair of his shoes.

At this point, Sayyid Humayri thought for sometime and then said, "I have not composed a poem about it so far." As such, he gave the horse and the gift to the man, and recited the following poem:

الا يا قوم للعجب العجب لخبّ ابى الحسن و للحباب

عدو من عداة الجن و غدّ بعيد في المراد من صواب

اتى خفاً له انساب فيه لينهش رجله منه بناب

لينهش خير من ركب المطايا أمير المؤمنين أباتراب

فخر من السّما له عقاب من العقبان او شبه العقاب

و دوفع عن ابى حسن علي نقيع سمّاه بعد انسياب

*Be aware O people that there is a miracle in the shoe of Abu'l-Hasan.*

*One of the hostile jinns among the imprudent and strayed from the path*

*Hid in the shoe of 'Ali himself so as to bite him with its fangs—*

*So as to bite the one who rides on four-footed animals—the Commander of the Faithful, Abu Turab.*

*At that moment, one of the eagles of the sky or a bird that looks like an eagle descended upon his head.*

*In this manner, its (the hostile jinn's) venom and wickedness were warded off.<sup>21</sup>*

Sufyan ibn Mus'ab 'Abdi is among the poets who have spent their time in mentioning the merits of the Commander of the Faithful ('a). 'Allamah Amini says, thus: "I never found any poem of his that was in praise of other than the progeny of Muhammad (S)."

He used to learn the *hadiths* about the merits and virtues of the progeny of the Prophet (S) from Imam as-Sadiq ('a) and immediately composed pertinent poems.<sup>22</sup> For this reason, Ibn Shahr Ashub narrates that Imam as-Sadiq ('a) says, "O assembly of the Shi'ah! Teach the poetry of 'Abdi to your children as he is with the religion of God."

**[The Demerits of the Enemies of the Prophet's \(S\)](#)**

## **Descendants**

One of the ways of fighting the enemies is propaganda war, which is tremendously rampant today through the mass media. In the past, the demerits of the enemies in the context of poetry also had a very significant propaganda impact.

In defending the school of Shi'ism, the Shi'ah poets used to also deal with the demerits of the enemies of *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a). At any opportune time, they could destroy an enemy and break his back through some couplets. Persons such as Mu'awiyah, Walid ibn 'Uqbah and 'Amr ibn al-'As who were enemies of God and the Messenger (S) have been dispraised many times by the poets of Banu Hashim, and the supporters and poets of the Commander of the Faithful ('a).

Without revealing his name and thus be pursued by the Umayyads, a certain poet has soothed the hearts of the Shi'ah by dispraising Yazid after his death by saying, thus:

**يا أَيُّهَا الْقَبْرُ بِحَوَارِينَا ضَمَمْتَ شَرَّ النَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَا**

*O grave which is in "hawarin"! The worst of all people is in your bosom.*[23](#)

One of the best satires about the Umayyads is a poem which has been recited by Kumayt ibn Zayd al-Asadi concerning them:

**فَقُلْ لِبَنِي أُمِّيَّةٍ حَيْثُ حَلُّوا وَإِنْ خِفْتَ الْمَهْنَدُ وَالْقَطِيعَا**

**أَجَاعَ اللَّهُ مِنْ أَشْبَعْتُمُوهُ وَأَشْبَعُ مِنْ بَجُورِكُمْ أَجِيعَا**

**بِمَرْضِيِّ السِّيَاسَةِ هَاشِمِيٍّ يَكُونُ حَيًّا لَأُمَّتِهِ رَبِيعَا**

*Tell the Umayyads wherever they are, if you are afraid of sword and scourge.  
May God make him hungry he who has satiated you and satiate him he who has remained hungry because of your tyranny.  
With the pleasant Hashimi policy, there shall be the spring of life for the ummah.*[24](#)

Dr. Shawqi Dayf says: "The Shi'ah in Iraq, Khurasan and Hijaz used to transmit to one another the poems of Kumayt. For this reason, the Umayyads and their governor in Iraq, Yusuf ibn 'Umar ath-Thaqafi, felt seriously threatened by Kumayt."[25](#)

Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani has thus said about Kumayt:

Kumayt al-Asadi, the great Shi'ah poet during the Umayyad period of repression would not hesitate to reply in whatever form to the poets inimical to 'Ali ('a), affiliated to the Umayyads and were reciting poetry against the descendants of the Prophet (S). For example, a certain poet named Hakim ibn al-'Abbas al-Kalbi who was considered one of the Qahtanis had dispraised 'Ali ('a). Kumayt seriously assaulted him and in his poems he placed Hakim vis-à-vis the notables of Quraysh and 'Adnanis. In this way, Kumayt dispraised and defeated him.[26](#)

Sometimes also, without divulging their names, poets used to reply to the court poets, dispraising and crushing them. For example, Sa'id ibn Hamid who was one of the enemies of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) and the descendants of the Prophet (S) during the rule of Musta'in had been humiliated by the Shi'ah poets on various occasions.

On the same period, a certain poet named 'Ali ibn Jahm who had been one of the Nasibis and enemies of the Commander of the Faithful ('a) has been dispraised by the Shi'ah poet, 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ja'far al-'Alawi. He had rejected the genealogy of 'Ali ibn Jahm, regarding him connected to Samah ibn Lawi.

In dispraising Ibn Ziyad, Abu'l-Aswad Da'uli has said:

**اقول و ذاك من جَزَع و وَجِدِ ازال الله ملك بني زياد**

**و ابعدهم بما غدروا و خانوا كما بَعَدَتْ ثمود و قوم عاد**

*Out of agony and anguish I am saying that may God destroy the dominion of the offspring of Ziyad!*

*And cause them to perish for their deceit and treason just as the people of Thamud and Ad have been ruined![27](#)*

Sayyid Humayri has humiliated one of the 'Abbasid judges who had dismissed his testimony on account of his faith in Shi'ism, and he has said:

**ابوك ابن سارق عنز النبي و انت ابن بنت أبي جحدر**

**و نحن على رغمك الرافضون لاهل الضلالة و المنكر**

*Your father steals the sheep of the Prophet while you are maternal grandchild of Abu*

*Jahdar!*

*And notwithstanding your whim, we shall abandon the people of misguidance and deviation.*[28](#)

Abu Nu‘amah Daqiqi al-Kufi, one of the poets during the third century AH, had dispraised the notables of the ‘Abbasid rule, attributing to them the commission of abominable acts until such time that he had been killed by one of the ‘Abbasid Turkish commanders named Mufallah.[29](#)

## **Lesson 29: Summary**

3. One of the most important areas about which the Shi‘ah poets have recited poetry was the elegy-recitation for the martyrs of the progeny of the Prophet (S). This area can be divided into two parts:

a. Elegies for Imam al-Husayn

The first persons to have recited poetry in mourning for the martyrs of Karbala’ were the bereaved women of the Banu Hashim.

Among them was Lady Umm al-Banin, the mother of Hadhrat Abu’l-Fadhl. He used to recite elegies for her sons at the Baqi’ Cemetery while the people of Medina gathered around her and wept. Due to the Umayyad policy of repression, the elegists of the martyrs of Karbala’ were lesser in number during the Umayyad period compared to that of the ‘Abbasid period except during the time of Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) when the condition was conducive for the Imam to revive the elegy for Imam al-Husayn (‘a).

b. Elegies for the martyrs among the descendants of the Prophet (S)

The descendants of the Prophet (S) were oppressed and have always been killed by the tyrants. Poets used to recite poems in lamentation for them. Next to the martyrs of Karbala’, among the offspring of Abu Talib, the most number of poems has been recited in mourning for Yahya ibn ‘Umar at-Talibi.

4. The merits and virtues of the descendants of the Prophet (S)

The poets such as Farazdaq, Kumayt, Sayyid Humayri, and Da‘bal al-Khaza‘i used to recite poetry to express the virtues of the descendants of the Prophet (S).

5. Dispraising the enemies of the descendants of the Prophet (S)

Shi‘ah poets used to engage in dispraising the enemies of *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) in defending the school of Shi‘ism.

## **Lesson 29: Questions**

1. When did the recitation of elegies start?

2. Who were the poets who recited poetry regarding the event of Karbala’?

3. After the end of the first century AH, how did the elegies for Imam al-Husayn (‘a) flourish?

4. Next to Imam al-Husayn (‘a), about whom among the murdered offspring of Abu Talib were so many elegies recited?

## 5. How did the Shi'ah poets benefit from the use of dispraising?

1. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH/1374 AHS), p. 121.
2. Abu Mikhnaf, *Maqatal al-Husayn 'Alayhi's-Salam*, researched by Hasan Ghaffari, 2nd edition (Qum: n.p., 1364 AH), p. 245.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 227-228.
4. *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, p. 90.
5. *Maqatal al-Husayn 'Alayhi's-Salam*, p. 181.
6. 'Ali ibn Musa ibn Tawus, *Al-Luhuf 'ala Qatli at-Tufuf*, trans. Muhammad Tahir Dezfuli, 1st edition (Qum: Mu'assaseh-ye Farhang va Intisharati-ye Ansari, 1378 AHS), p. 284.
7. Sayyid Muhsin Amin, *A'yan ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar at-Ta'aruf Li'l-Matbu'at, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 6023.
8. *Maqatal al-Husayn 'Alayhi's-Salam*, p. 245.
9. *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, p. 121.
10. 'Abd al-Husayn Amini, *Al-Ghadir fi'l-Kitab wa's-Sunnah wa'l-Adab* (Tehran: Dar al-Kitab al-Islamiyyah, 1366 AHS), vol. 2, pp. 294-295.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 295.
13. 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, 1st edition (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, p. 327; Rijal ibn Dawud (Qum: Manshurat ar-Radhi, n.d.), p. 92.
14. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 71.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
16. *A'yan ash-Shi'ah*, p. 170.
17. *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 4, pp. 159-160.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
19. *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, p. 511.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 242.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 441-442.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 295.
23. *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 65.
24. Abi 'Uthman 'Amru ibn Bahr Jahiz, *Al-Bayan wa't-Tabyin*, 1st edition (Cairo: Matba'ah Lajnah at-Ta'lif wa't-Tarjamah wa'n-Nashr, 1367 AH/1948), vol. 3, p. 365.
25. Dr. Shawqi Dayf, *Ash-Shi'r wa Tawaba'ah ash-Sha'biyyah 'ala Murr al-Ma'sur* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, n.d.), p. 36.
26. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Al-Aghani* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), vol. 17, p. 36.
27. *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 81.
28. *Al-Ghadir fi'l-Kitab wa's-Sunnah wa'l-Adab*, p. 256.
29. Dr. Shawqi Dayf, *Tarikh al-Adab al-'Arabi al-'Asr al-'Abbas ath-Thani* (Egypt: Dar al-Ma'arif, n.d.), p. 388.

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