

1- IMAM ALI (AS): THE PROPHET'S UNIQUE COMPANION

This chapter is about the major historical events which occurred during the life of Imam Ali (AS) and also explores some of his undeniable characteristics.

1-1-Before Islam

1-1-1-Birth¹

Fatimah bint Asad, the mother of Imam Ali (AS), went to the Holy Ka'ba to pray when she was expecting. Miraculously, the wall of the Holy Ka'ba was cracked open for her to enter. And so, Imam Ali became the only human being to be born inside the Holy Ka'ba, the house of God.

1-1-2-Raised by the Prophet

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had a special love for the young Ali. A couple of years after Imam Ali's birth, Mecca underwent a severe drought. The Prophet brought Imam Ali to his home to help with the hardships of Imam Ali's father, Abu Talib. So, when Imam Ali was about 6 years old, the Prophet took him under his own care. Thus, Imam Ali grew up in the Prophet's shadow. Imam Ali himself stated that wherever the Prophet went, he followed him like a baby camel that follows its mother. He was also present at the time of Revelation to the Prophet in the Cave of Hira.

1-2-Beginning of Islam

1-2-1-The First Muslim Man

Imam Ali was the first male to testify to the message of the Holy Prophet. He showed his support from the day after the First Revelation.²

1-2-2-Invitation of Family to Islam

Three years following the Revelation, the Prophet was commanded by God to spread the message to his own folk. He invited his family to a banquet and proclaimed the message of Islam to them and asked them three times for their support. It was only Imam Ali who offered his

¹ 13 Rajab, 23 years before Hijri (10 years before Islam)

² 27 Rajab, 13 years before Hijri (Imam's age: 10)

support to the Prophet at every call. The Prophet responded by saying, “Ali is my brother and my successor among you.” People mocked the Prophet and Imam Ali for this announcement, since Imam Ali was just 13 years old.

1-2-3-Layl al-Mabit

The Meccans saw Islam as a threat to their interests and plotted to kill Prophet Muhammad in his sleep. God informed the Prophet of their evil plot. On the night of migration to Medina, the Prophet had Imam Ali sleep on his bed. He only trusted Imam Ali to do this dangerous task, which Imam Ali did without hesitation.

1-3-With the Prophet in Medina

1-3-1-Brotherhood with the Prophet

In Medina, the Holy Prophet created a brotherhood agreement between pairs of Muslims. He chose Imam Ali as his partner in brotherhood and said, “Ali, you are my brother in this world and the hereafter.”

1-3-2-Sadd al-Abwab (Closing of the Doors)

After building the Mosque (Masjid) of the Prophet in Medina, the Prophet built houses for his companions around the mosque. All of these houses had doors to access the mosque. By God’s order, the Prophet had all of the doors opening to the mosque closed, except his and Imam Ali’s.

1-3-3-Battle of Badr³

Imam Ali, Hamza, and Ubaidah were the three warriors who participated in the one-on-one opening fight of Badr. Imam Ali defeated his opponent, Walid. During the battle, many of the idolaters were killed solely by Imam Ali.

³ 17 Ramazan, 2 AH (Imam’s age: 25)

1-3-4-Marriage to Lady Fatimah⁴

Imam Ali got married to the daughter of the Prophet, Lady Fatimah (SA). Through this marriage, the progeny of the Prophet grew, and has continued to grow to this day. The people who called the Holy Prophet “Abtar”, or “without progeny”, saw that the lineage of the Holy Prophet continued through Lady Fatimah. This progeny is referred to as “Kauthar” or “abundance” in the Quran.

1-3-5-Battle of Uhud⁵

During the Battle of Uhud, the Muslims were initially victorious. However, the archers disobeyed the command of the Prophet and left their key positions to gather war booty. As a result, the Muslims were surrounded and defeated. After the majority of the Muslims had fled, Imam Ali bravely protected the life of the Holy Prophet. He dispersed or killed any enemy that came to attack the Prophet. Imam Ali's courage led the Prophet to say: “There is no man like Ali; There is no sword like Zulfiqar (the name of Imam Ali's sword).”

1-3-6-Battle of Khandaq⁶

During the Battle of Khandaq, the Muslims strategically dug trenches against the enemy. Although the trenches created a barrier, six of the enemy warriors managed to cross over. Among those who crossed over was Amr bin Abdewad, a fierce warrior famous in the entire Hijaz for his strength and power. He dared the Muslims to come fight him. Only Imam Ali accepted the challenge and defeated him. The Imam's sacrifice was so significant that the Holy Prophet said, “Ali's strike in the Battle of Khandaq is higher than the worship of the worlds.”

1-3-7-Battle of Khaybar⁷

In the Battle of Khaybar, the Muslims were able to conquer all but one

⁴ 1 Zu al-Hijjah, 2 AH (Imam's age: 25)

⁵ 7 Shawwal, 3 AH (Imam's age: 26)

⁶ Shawwal, 5 AH (Imam's age: 28)

⁷ Safar, 7 AH (Imam's age: 29)

of the forts of the Jews. The Holy Prophet then selected Imam Ali as the commander of the army, and the Imam defeated the well-known and fearsome warrior outside the fort, and eventually opened the giant door leading inside the fort.

1-3-8-Conquest of Mecca⁸

After the Muslims had conquered Mecca, the Prophet ordered to cleanse the Holy Ka'ba of the idols. Mounting on the shoulders of the Holy Prophet, Imam Ali helped him destroy the idols.

1-3-9-Battle of Tabuk⁹

Imam Ali had accompanied the Holy Prophet in all the battles except for the Battle of Tabuk, in which the Holy Prophet commanded Imam Ali to be his successor in his absence. This was because the Holy Prophet knew that in his absence, the hypocrites would revolt. During this incident, the hypocrites spread rumors that the relationship between the Imam and the Prophet had weakened. The Imam rushed to reach the Prophet and informed him of the situation. The Holy Prophet said to him, "You are to me like Haroon was to Musa, except that there is no Prophet after me."

1-3-10-The Messenger of Revelation¹⁰

By the order of God, Imam Ali was appointed to deliver the verses for suppression of idol worship during the Hajj season to all of the Arab tribes.

1-3-11-Mubahilah (Cursing of the Untruthful)¹¹

After discussing Christian beliefs with the Holy Prophet, the Christians of Najran refused to accept Islam but were willing to do Mubahilah (cursing of the untruthful). To the surprise of the Christians, the Holy

⁸ Ramazan, 8 AH (Imam's age: 31)

⁹ Rajab/Shab'an, 9 AH (Imam's age: 32)

¹⁰ Zu al-Hijjah, 9 AH (Imam's age: 32)

¹¹ 24 Zu al-Hijjah, 9 AH (Imam's age: 32)

1- Imam Ali (AS): The Prophet's Unique Companion

Prophet did not bring an army or his companions. Instead, he brought his family, Imam Ali, Lady Fatimah, Imam Hasan, and Imam Hossein. After seeing them, the Christians were discouraged from Mubahilah. It was then, when the verse of Mubahilah [3:61] was revealed, calling Imam Ali the life of the Holy Prophet.

1-3-12-Ghadir Khum¹²

In the last year of the Holy Prophet's life, while he was returning from Hajj, the Prophet ordered the Muslims to stop at a place called Ghadir Khum. He ordered the Muslims who had traveled ahead to return, and waited for the Muslims who were behind to catch up. The Holy Prophet then recited a sermon to thousands of Muslims. In the sermon, the Holy Prophet held and raised Imam Ali's hand and said, "To whomever I am a master and a leader, this Ali is his master and leader." The Holy Prophet also asked the audience to pass this message to those who were absent.

1-4-During the Three Caliphs

1-4-1-Forceful Allegiance

After the Prophet's demise, while Imam Ali and his family were mourning him and were occupied with the burial ceremony, a group of Muslims gathered at a place called Saqifah and selected the first caliph. Imam Ali refused to pay allegiance to this caliph. Due to his refusal, they attacked his house and forcefully got his allegiance.

1-4-2-Martyrdom of Lady Fatimah¹³

Lady Fatimah was martyred only 75 or 95 days after the demise of the Holy Prophet. In the attack on her house, Lady Fatimah was fatally injured, which caused the miscarriage of her baby, and eventually she passed away. For the sake of the Muslim nation, Imam Ali kept silent throughout all of these calamities.

¹² 18 Zu al-Hijjah, 10 AH (Imam's age: 33)

¹³ 13 Jumada al-Awwal/3 Jumada al-Thani, 11 AH (Imam's age: 33)

1-4-3-Contributions

Imam Ali made many contributions to the Islamic society during the governance of the three caliphs. He interpreted the Quran and trained Islamic scholars. He also helped the poor by digging wells and planting date trees, dedicating them to the needy.

At times, the caliphs even referred to the Imam for his wisdom in political decisions and his answers to newly emerged religious and judicial questions in the expanding Islamic society.

1-4-4-The End of the Third Caliph

When the third caliph's house was surrounded by Muslims objecting his corrupt government, the Imam was against the murder of the third caliph and sent his sons to protect the caliph's house. He even personally brought water for the thirsty people in the caliph's house.

1-5-Caliphate

1-5-1-Democratic Selection¹⁴

After the murder of the third caliph, there was great civil unrest and disorder. The Muslims crowded around the house of Imam Ali and insisted he accept the government and become caliph. Imam Ali was the only caliph that was democratically elected by the people.

1-5-2-Battle of Jamal (Camel)¹⁵

Imam Ali ruled with justice, and treated the people of the society as equals, regardless of their fame or position. Two of the Prophet's companions, Talha and Zubayr, demanded governorship of some provinces, but were refused by the Imam. With the encouragement of Aisha, one of the Prophet's wives, they prepared an army against Imam Ali. Imam Ali defeated them in the Battle of Jamal and respectfully returned Aisha to her home.

¹⁴ 19 Zu al-Hijjah, 35 AH (Imam's age: 58)

¹⁵ 10 Jumada al-Awwal, 36 AH (Imam's age: 58)

1-5-3-Battle of Siffin¹⁶

Muawiyah refused to submit the governorship of Shaam to Imam Ali. He falsely accused the Imam of being the murderer of the third caliph and prepared an army to avenge his death. In the last stage of the Battle of Siffin, close to the Imam's victory, Muawiyah ordered his army to hoist Qurans on their spears, saying that the Quran should settle the matter. The Imam's troops refused to continue fighting and threatened the Imam to death if he did not call for a ceasefire.

1-5-4-Battle of Nahrawan¹⁷

The Khawarij, the people who had threatened the Imam in the Battle of Siffin to accept the negotiation with Muawiyah, soon realized their mistake and regretted their decision. They blamed Imam Ali and accused him of being a false leader. They had caused tensions and unrest among the Muslims. The Imam talked to them on several occasions and convinced many of them, but not all of them accepted. Eventually, he went to the Battle of Nahrawan against the remaining Khawarij.

1-5-5-Martyrdom¹⁸

Only ten of the Khawarij survived from the Battle of Nahrawan. Ibn Muljim was one of them, and he martyred Imam Ali in the mosque while the Imam was leading the morning prayer. After being struck with the poisoned sword, the Imam said, "By the Lord of the Ka'ba, I have succeeded." In his will, the Imam instructed to take revenge on ibn Muljim with only one strike. Imam Ali was born in the house of God and was martyred in the house of God.

1-6-Conclusion

¹⁶ 1 Safar, 37 AH (Imam's age: 59)

¹⁷ 9 Safar, 38 AH (Imam's age: 60)

¹⁸ 21 Ramazan, 40 AH (Imam's age: 63)

It is impossible to present the greatness of Imam Ali in just a few pages by simply referring to the major historical events of his life. Imam Ali has numerous undeniable characteristics that undoubtedly make him the Prophet's unique companion. Every single moment in Imam Ali's life, from his miraculous birth inside the Ka'ba, his upbringing by the Prophet before Islam, his companionship with the Prophet during his prophethood, to his endless efforts in establishing justice and guiding the Muslims, are all reflections of his divine and holy character. Even his enemies could not resist admiring him. His great personality gives honor and dignity to his Shia followers who proudly follow him as their first Imam.

IMAM ALI (AS):

**“O’ People, I fear two things more than anything for
you: following your whims and distant wishes.
Following whims and desires keeps one away from the
righteous path and following distant wishes causes one
to forget the hereafter.”**