

10- IMAM HADI (AS): THE IMAM OF GUIDANCE

This chapter reviews the life of Imam Hadi (AS) and provides an overview of his social, scientific, and political achievements. This chapter also highlights the political circumstances which led to the Imam's exile to Samarra and the oppression and hardships that he endured during his Imamate. This period of history also coincides with the decline in the Abbasids' power as a result of the increasing influence of the Turks.

10-1-During the Government of Ma'mun

10-1-1-Birth

Imam Ali ibn Muhammad (AS), also known as Hadi or Naqi, was born on the 15th of Zu al-Hijjah, in the year 212 Hijri. He was also known as Abul-Hasan. As per family traditions of the Ahlul-Bayt, Shia Imams with the name of 'Ali' were also honored with Imam Ali's title of Abul-Hasan. Later, Imam Hadi named his son Hasan, and the title of Abul-Hasan truly manifested in the Imam. To distinguish him from Imam Kazim (AS) and Imam Reza (AS), who also had the title of Abul-Hasan, Imam Hadi was commonly referred to as "Abul-Hasan al-Thaalith" or "Abul-Hasan the Third". He was born in Surya, a village close to Medina, which was founded by Imam Kazim. He was the oldest son of Imam Javad (AS). His mother was Samaneh, who was a slave before marrying Imam Javad. She was originally from Morocco, in North-Western Africa. She was very pious and unique in character, and was constantly fasting.

10-1-2-Upbringing by Father

Due to the political circumstances that Imam Javad was living in, he had to marry Um-Fazl, the daughter of the Caliph Ma'mun. However, Imam Javad did not have any children from Um-Fazl. All of Imam Javad's children, including Imam Hadi, were born from his other wife, Samaneh. There are limited historical records about the life of Imam Hadi during his childhood. However, those available show the Imam's bravery and his special status in his father's eyes.

10-1-3-Ma'mun's Government

Ma'mun, the Abbasid Caliph, defeated his brother, Amin, in multiple battles and brought the entire Islamic territory under his control. However, his newly established government was facing a serious threat from the Alavid uprisings. Ma'mun thus decided to devise a good relationship with the Alavids and affiliate his government with them. He thought this plot would eliminate their threat and legitimize his government. He chose Imam Reza, the most well-known and respected

character from the Alavids, for this plot. He sent his troops to Medina to bring Imam Reza to Merv, and forcefully appointed the Imam as his Crown Prince. Ma'mun, with his well-planned and secret conspiracy, had intended not only to legitimize his government, but also to eliminate Shi'ism entirely by portraying the Imam as a worldly and materialistic individual, thus disgracing him in the eyes of the Muslims. However, Imam Reza made Ma'mun's conspiracy ineffective with his wise actions and behavior. The ironic positive outcome from the Imam's appointment as the Crown Prince was that, after decades of hostility against the Shia Imams, the Islamic caliph and government had to confess to the elevated rank of the Shia Imams for the first time. This outcome validated the truth of the Shia theology for Muslims all around the Islamic territory and accelerated their familiarity with the Shia theology. As a result, Imam Reza became a famous character for all of the Muslims to an extent that, in the decades that followed, the next Shia Imams from Imam Reza's lineage, including Imam Hadi, were commonly called "Ibn al-Reza" or "the Son of Reza". Ma'mun, who realized that his plots against Imam Reza had failed, poisoned the Imam with his own hands and martyred him after being the Crown Prince for only one-and-a-half years. Later, Ma'mun brought Imam Javad to Baghdad and witnessed the Imam's divine character and knowledge. He then married his daughter, Um-Fazl, to Imam Javad. However, even this political marriage could not legitimize his government for the Shias, nor stop the growth and propagation of Shi'ism.

Ma'mun was the follower of Mu'tazila theology, which derived its beliefs on Islamic principles using intellectual reasoning. The Mu'tazila theology opposed the beliefs of the people of Hadith who believed in the absolute literal meaning of the Hadith. Among various differences between these two groups of Sunni schools of thought, there was a particular subject about the creation of the Quran that took much attention in their debates. Both groups believed that God always existed. However, Mu'tazila believed that the Quran was created by God when it was revealed to the Prophet, while the people of Hadith believed the Quran existed ever since God has existed.

In the last year of Ma'mun's government, he decided to enforce Mu'tazila's belief about the creation of the Quran. He ordered his government officials, including judges, to be questioned about their belief regarding the creation of the Quran and ousted anyone who had beliefs opposing the Mu'tazila's. Ma'mun's decision caused outrage among the people of Hadith. Many were tortured and imprisoned because they held onto their belief. For example, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the founder of the Hanbali school of thought, was among those who insisted in their belief and was punished by lashes. This incident is known in history as "Mihnat al-Quran" or "Ordeal [regarding the creation] of the Quran", and was the first time in Islamic history that the people were questioned about their beliefs. Ma'mun's policy to enforce the Mu'tazila's belief about the creation of the Quran was continued by his successors, Mu'tasim and Wathiq.

Although Mu'tazila's belief about the creation of Quran was the same as the Shias, the Shia Imams asked their followers not to involve themselves in such an absurd dispute in the society. The Shia Imams knew that this endless, trivial debate will only cause hatred and division among the Muslims, thus weakening the entire Islamic society. When one of the Shias from Baghdad asked Imam Hadi in this regard, the Imam responded to him in a letter that the debate about this topic is a deviation in the religion. The Imam advised him to avoid falling into this debate, and told him that God is the only creator and everything else is His creation. The Imam then told him that the Quran is God's word and not to put any other names on it, as he would be misled.

10-2-During the Government of Mu'tasim

10-2-1-Mu'tasim in Power

Ma'mun was at war with the Romans in current day Turkey when he suddenly became sick and died¹²⁰. His body was moved back towards the Islamic territory to protect it from possible disrespect by the

¹²⁰ 8 Rajab, 218 AH (Imam's age: 5)

Romans. He was then buried in Tarsus, in current day Turkey. Prior to his death, Ma'mun had selected his brother, Mu'tasim, as his successor after himself instead of his sons. Mu'tasim was a warrior and military leader. However, he lacked literacy and could not even write a letter. Ma'mun had found his brother to be the best candidate to manage the increasing unrest within the Abbasid government. Although Ma'mun's troops favored his son, Abbas, for the caliphate, Abbas decided to respect his father's decision and paid allegiance to his uncle, Mu'tasim. Ma'mun's army then followed Abbas' example and paid allegiance to Mu'tasim as their caliph.

Upon assuming power, Mu'tasim was faced with various rebellions against his new government. His government of less than nine years was primarily spent in suppressing various uprisings within the vast kingdom of the Abbasids. At the beginning of his government, Muhammad ibn Qasim, one of the Alavids, initiated an uprising in Khorasan. His uprising was supported by thousands of people, especially the Zaidi Shias; however, it was suppressed by the Khorasan governor. Muhammad ibn Qasim was arrested, sent to Samarra before Mu'tasim, and imprisoned.

The main threat to Mu'tasim's government was from Babak Khorramdin in Azerbaijan, northwestern Iran. This uprising was an anti-Arab and anti-Islamic movement. Babak wanted to revive the historical glory of the Iranian kingdoms. He caused serious problems for the Abbasid government from the mountainous region where he was active. Ma'mun was unable to suppress Babak's uprising. However, before his death, Ma'mun had advised his brother Mu'tasim to fight Babak and suppress him. Mu'tasim followed Ma'mun's advice and sent his army to war against Babak. He arranged sophisticated military techniques against Babak and carefully oversaw military decisions from Samarra. After more than two years of continuous military operation, his army was eventually able to defeat Babak and arrest him. Babak was sent before Mu'tasim in Samarra, and was brutally killed.

Mu'tasim also went to battle with the Romans in current day Turkey.

He was able to defeat them and stabilized the region. Although Mu'tasim was able to suppress and control various uprisings of his time, the number and the extent of these uprisings showed that the time of glory for the Abbasid government had passed.

10-2-2-Martyrdom of Imam Javad¹²¹

Once Mu'tasim assumed power, he was worried about the chaos and unrest that threatened his new government. Among these threats was the long-standing threat from the Alavid uprising. He was also concerned about the popularity and social status of Imam Javad, as he was the divine leader of the growing Shia community that did not accept the legitimacy of the Abbasid government. He decided to closely monitor and control every aspect of the Imam's life and isolate him from his followers. Thus, he ordered his governor in Medina to send the Imam to Baghdad. The Imam knew that unlike his prior two trips to Iraq, he would not return back to Medina. Thus, he revealed his eldest son, Imam Hadi, as the next Imam after himself.

After about ten months from the Imam's arrival in Baghdad, Mu'tasim poisoned and martyred Imam Javad. Mu'tasim held a grand funeral ceremony for Imam Javad in Baghdad. Mu'tasim's son, Wathiq, officially prayed over the Imam's body to portray to the people that the government was innocent in the Imam's martyrdom.

Imam Hadi was aware of the exact time Imam Javad was martyred in Baghdad. He cried loudly while grieving and informed his family of his father's martyrdom. The Imam's prophecy was validated later when the news of Imam Javad's martyrdom arrived in Medina. Historical records suggest Imam Hadi's miraculous travel to Baghdad to take care of his father's funeral rites. The Imam then returned to Medina without anyone noticing his presence in Baghdad.

10-2-3-Beginning of Imammat

Imam Hadi took leadership of the Shia community as an Imam after

¹²¹ Last Day of Zu al-Qa'dah, 220 AH (Imam's age: 7)

the martyrdom of his father, Imam Javad. At that time, Imam Hadi was only two weeks short of becoming eight years old. However, his Imamat was not challenged by the Shias because of his young age. The Shias had already validated and accepted the Imamat of Imam Javad at the very young age of seven-and-a-half years old. Therefore, age was no longer an obstacle when believing in the Imamat of a young boy. Imam Hadi was the oldest son of Imam Javad, and his Imamat had been prescribed by Imam Javad on various occasions. Furthermore, before Imam Javad's martyrdom, his will of appointing Imam Hadi as his successor in the Imamat was passed to ten Shia elders by letter. These letters were effective in removing any doubts among Shia scholars and followers about the Imamat of Imam Hadi. As a result, the Shias accepted Imam Hadi as their next Imam.

At this time, Shi'ism was a well-established and growing theology with a strong scientific backbone. Ever since their establishment, the Abbasid caliphs used whatever means possible to confront and terminate Shi'ism. However, neither the extreme suppressive policy of Mansur and Haroon against Imam Sadiq and Imam Kazim, nor the conspiracies of Ma'mun, who portrayed a good relationship with Imam Reza and Imam Javad, could stop the growth and propagation of the Shia theology among the Muslims. The Shia Imams falsified the conspiracies against themselves, guided the Shias to the true Islamic teachings, and advised them on political matters. As a result, after two centuries from the demise of the holy Prophet, Shi'ism was a strong and growing theology among the other sects of Islam with many followers across the Islamic territory. Therefore, the undeniable influence of the Shias and their leader, Imam Hadi, could not be ignored by any of the Abbasid caliphs.

10-2-4-Mu'tasim and the Imam

After the martyrdom of Imam Javad, Mu'tasim was concerned about the Shias gathering around Imam Hadi as their next Imam. He asked Umar ibn Faraj, his governor in Medina, to assign the Imam's upbringing and training to a teacher trusted by the government.

Mu'tasim's intention was to train the Imam with non-Shia teachings and restrict his interactions with his followers. Umar ibn Faraj gathered a group of people from Medina that were against the Shias and inquired about such a teacher. He was then referred to Junaidi, who was well-known for his hostility to the Shias. He selected Junaidi as the Imam's private teacher, and asked him to restrict the Imam's interactions with his Shia followers.

After a while, someone asked Junaidi about the situation of the boy that he was training. Junaidi responded with surprise as to why he called the Imam a boy, and not a respected elder. He then said, "I am the master in science and literature over all others in Medina. I say something regarding the literature and think that my opinion is at its perfection and maturity. However, he completes my statement with many new scientific facts." Junaidi then said, "the people think I am his teacher, but in reality, he is my teacher." After a while, the same person met Junaidi for the second time and asked about the Imam's whereabouts. Junaidi responded that the Imam is the best person on the earth and the most virtuous person that God has ever created. He then admitted that the Imam has the entire Quran in memory, has the best voice in recitation of the Quran, and has the full knowledge of the interpretation and the true meaning of the Quran. Junaidi, who was greatly influenced by the Imam's holy character and divine knowledge, eventually became a Shia follower of the Imam.

10-2-5-Samarra: The Abbasid's New Capital

Unlike the Umayyad Caliphate, which was solely an Arab-led government, the Abbasid Caliphate provided an opportunity for the Iranians to participate in the government. The Iranians, under the leadership of Abu-Muslim, were key players in establishing the Abbasid government. Upon gaining power, the Abbasid caliphs involved the Iranians in their government. For instance, during Haroon's government, the powerful Barmaki family, including Haroon's famous minister, Yahya ibn Khalid Barmaki, were Iranians. Later, the Iranians helped Ma'mun gain power by defeating his brother, Amin. Ma'mun,

whose mother was an Iranian slave, awarded the Iranians with esteemed governmental positions and selected Merv, in Khorasan, as his capital, instead of Baghdad. As a result of the Iranian presence in power, there was struggle and jealousy between the Arab and Iranian officials during the Abbasid government.

Soon after reaching power, Mu'tasim decided to reduce the influence of the Arab and Iranian officials in his government. Mu'tasim, whose mother was a Turk, brought thousands of Turks from Central Asia to Baghdad and formed a powerful army from them. He also gave sensitive government and military positions to Turks and chose them as his elite guards. Turks became influential in Mu'tasim's government and gradually replaced the Arab and Iranian officials.

The Arab officials, who were worried about the increasing influence of the Turks in Mu'tasim's government, decided to rise against him. They gathered around Abbas, Ma'mun's son, who was a candidate for the Caliphate after his father. They encouraged Abbas to act against Mu'tasim. However, their plot was exposed and suppressed before any notable action. Mu'tasim imprisoned Abbas and banned water from reaching him, which led to his death by thirst.

The presence of thousands of Turk soldiers in Baghdad, the Capital of the Abbasids, was problematic for Mu'tasim. The Turk soldiers were treating the people of Baghdad harshly, and their presence had caused continuous clashes between the Turk soldiers and residents of Baghdad. The people of Baghdad complained to Mu'tasim about the behavior of the Turk soldiers and warned him that they would rise against him if he failed to resolve this issue. Thus, Mu'tasim decided to remove the Turk soldiers from Baghdad. He chose Samarra at the north of Baghdad as an army base for his Turk army. Samarra had better weather than Baghdad, and was conveniently connected to Baghdad through Tigris River. He then constructed a city in Samarra and made it the new Capital of the Abbasid Caliphate after Baghdad.

10-2-6-The Imam's Scientific Contribution

The Imam was the true source of divine knowledge in the society. He was referred by many to answer questions regarding various aspects of the Islamic sciences. The names of 185 individuals that narrated Hadith from the Imam is recorded in history. The Imam had also trained multiple notable scholars. These scholars had a special role in recording and preserving the Imam's narrations. They were not only scholars of Islamic knowledge, but were also unique in piety and character.

Ali ibn Mahziar was one of the Imam's notable companions, who also served as his representative in Ahvaz, Iran. He was a great scholar of Islamic law. He authored 33 books on various topics in Islamic law and belief. Fazl ibn Shazan was another great companion of Imam Hadi. He was a master in various Islamic literature, such as the Islamic law and *Ilm al-Kalam*. *Ilm al-Kalam* is the study of Islamic doctrine that involves defending Islamic principles against skeptics. He had authored dozens of books on various topics, such as defending the Shia belief and falsifying the claims of various sects and theologies. Abd al-Azim al-Hasani was another notable companion of Imam Hadi who was from the descendants of Imam Hasan (AS). He met Imam Hadi and presented his Islamic beliefs to the Imam. He asked the Imam to confirm or correct his beliefs. The Imam then listened to him and approved his beliefs. He was an Islamic scholar, and Imam Hadi referred his Shia followers who were living close to Abd al-Azim al-Hasani to ask their questions directly from him.

The Imam, like his forefathers, confronted the false theological beliefs of his time and guided his followers to the true Islamic teachings. Once, the Imam and his companions were in the Mosque of the Prophet when a group of Sufis (or Islamic mystics) entered the Mosque. The Imam referred to them as the allies of the devils and the destroyers of Islam. The Imam, in his speech to his companions, falsified the Sufis' beliefs and warned his companions of any interactions with them.

The Imam also strongly confronted the Ghulat, who would exaggerate the status of Imam Hadi and the other Shia Imams. The Ghulat would regard the Imams at the level of God. They were active in Shia centers

in Iraq and Iran, and would often falsely introduce themselves as the Imam's representatives. The Imam openly rejected and cursed the Ghulat's leaders for giving wrong attributes to the Ahlul-Bayt and himself. In the letters to his representatives and followers, the Imam frequently cursed the Ghulat and warned them against being influenced by the Ghulat's false beliefs. After insisting on their false belief and continuing to misguide the Shias from their true beliefs, the Imam, on rare occasions, allowed his companions to physically confront the Ghulat's leaders.

Many supplications have been narrated from Imam Hadi and remain today. As a result, Imam Hadi has been also titled as 'the second Imam Sajjad'. Imam Hadi has provided supplications about the status of the Shia Imams, which are recommended for recitation when visiting their holy tombs. Once, Imam Hadi visited the holy tomb of Imam Ali (AS) in Najaf on the day of Eid al-Ghadir. The Imam recited a long supplication as a eulogy for his forefather, Imam Ali, which became known as "Ziyarat Ghadiriyah". In this supplication, Imam Hadi honored Imam Ali's sacrifices in the way of God. The Imam reviewed many of Imam Ali's virtues in relation to Quranic verses, narrations from the Prophet, and historical facts.

Once, one of the Imam's companions asked him for a supplication that he could recite whenever he visited any of the Shia Imams' tombs. The Imam taught him the long supplication of "Jami'ah Kabirah". In this supplication, the Imam provided a comprehensive and unique description of the Shia Imams and described their elevated and divine status as determined by God. The high contents of the supplication of "Jami'ah Kabirah" could not be told by the previous Shia Imams to their followers, as they were not yet prepared for it. However, after more than two centuries from the Imamatus of ten holy Imams, and close to the occultation of the 12th Imam, the Shias were now ready for this special supplication. The Shias had continuously observed the divine character and knowledge of the previous Shia Imams and had witnessed many miracles from them, such as the Imamatus of Imam Javad and

Imam Hadi at a very young age. Furthermore, the activities of the Ghulat, who would regard the Shia Imams at the level of God, was another obstacle for the Shia Imams to talk about their elevated status in public. In the supplication of “Jami’ah Kabirah”, the Imam drew a distinguishing line between the true status of the Shia Imams as determined by God and the false words of the Ghulat. The Imam defined a boundary where any other descriptions of the Shia Imams beyond that would be wrong and associated with the Ghulat. The supplication of “Jami’ah Kabirah” is a strong historical document in studying the Shia Imams.

Due to the intense surveillance on the Imam’s life, especially when the Imam relocated to Samarra, the Capital of the government, there were times when his Shia followers and representatives were unable to meet him freely. Therefore, the interactions of the Imam with his followers were often through the exchange of letters. The content of dozens of the Imam’s letters is recorded in history. In these letters, the Imam would provide his followers with guidance and answers to their Islamic questions. For example, the Imam responded to a letter from the people of Ahvaz, who had asked him about “Jabr and Tafviz”, or “Predestination and Delegation”. The Imam, in this long letter, rejected both beliefs of predestination and delegation, and stated the correct belief, which lies between these two extreme beliefs.

10-3-During the Government of Wathiq

10-3-1-Wathiq in Power

After Mu’tasim, his son, Wathiq, who was his successor, assumed power¹²². He was an expert in immodest poetry and music. He followed Ma’mun and Mu’tasim’s policy regarding the creation of the Quran and prosecuted anyone who was against his belief. This was to such an extent that, on one occasion, the Romans agreed to free a few thousand of their Muslim hostages in exchange for their own hostages. Wathiq

¹²² Rabi’ al-Awwal, 227 AH (Imam’s age: 14)

agreed to deal with the Romans, however, he asked his agents to first question each Muslim hostage about his belief about the creation of the Quran and only release those who shared his opinion. However, he gave up his enforcement towards the end of his short government of less than six years. He also followed his father's policy of appointing Turks to sensitive governmental and military positions. Thus, the Turk's power increased during Wathiq's government to the extent that they selected the caliph after him.

10-3-2-Wathiq and the Imam

Wathiq followed Ma'mun's policy towards the Alavids and treated them respectfully. He was referred to as "Ma'mun the Second", or "Junior Ma'mun", as he portrayed to have a good relationship with the Alavids. He did not enforce any major restriction on the young Imam. At the time of Wathiq, the tribe of Bani Sulaim invaded Medina and rebelled in the city. Wathiq sent his Turk army to Medina to suppress this rebellion. When his troops were in Medina, the Imam saw them on the streets. The Imam called out to one of the Turk soldiers in Turkish. The Turk soldier got off from his horse, respectfully approached the Imam, and inquired if he was a prophet. He said that the Imam had called him by his childhood name, which he was known by in his hometown, and no one else knew about it. Although the Turks were new in the Abbasid government, they gradually became familiar with the Imam's divine character and became respectful towards him.

10-4-During the Government of Mutawakkil

10-4-1-Mutawakkil in Power

Wathiq's death marked the end of the Abbasid Caliphate's first period¹²³. During this period, the Abbasid caliphs had sole power in governing their vast kingdom. They brutally suppressed any uprising against their government, and the caliph would rule by direct order.

¹²³ 24 Zu al-Hijjah, 232 AH (Imam's age: 20)

However, during the second period of the Abbasid Caliphate, the Turks became very influential and powerful in the government. The Turk leaders became so powerful that they could even kill and substitute the caliph. The Abbasid caliphs were a hostage in the hands of the Turk leaders, and could not make any important decisions without their approval. The lack of central power led to various riots against the Abbasids and their government became weak and unstable. As a result, their governors would rule their territory as an autonomous state.

The significant Turkish influence in the Abbasid government manifested itself right after Wathiq's death. Wathiq had not selected anyone as his successor. Thus, the political and military officials were divided upon selecting the next caliph. The Abbasid royal family, and some other politicians, supported Wathiq's son for the Caliphate. The Turks supported Mutawakkil, one of Mu'tasim's sons and Wathiq's brother. The Turks were committed to keeping the Abbasid Caliphate in Mu'tasim's lineage, as he was the one who initially gave them power in the government. The Turks had an upper hand in the dispute for selecting the next caliph, and thus chose Mutawakkil.

At this time, the Sunni sects of Islam were divided in their reasonings about the Islamic principles such as God's attributes. One group followed Mu'tazila's theology, and the other followed the people of Hadith. Mu'tazila was based on intellectual reasoning and was opposing the people of Hadith, who would take the literal meaning of the Hadith. Ma'mun followed Mu'tazila's theology and supported its propagation. After Ma'mun, Mu'tasim and Wathiq also followed and supported Mu'tazila's theology. However, Mutawakkil banned Mu'tazila's theology and supported the people of Hadith, due to his hatred and hostility against Shia theology. This was due to the fact that, in reasoning the Islamic principles, Mu'tazila had closer beliefs to Shia theology than the people of Hadith. Mutawakkil's prosecution against the followers of Mu'tazila put an end to this theology. As a result, he took the side of the people of Hadith in the creation of the Quran and stopped inquiring about the people's beliefs in this regard.

10-4-2-Migration to Samarra¹²⁴

Upon gaining power, Mutawakkil became concerned about the popularity and the social status of Imam Hadi among the Muslims. The Imam was also the political and religious leader of the well-established and large Shia community. Furthermore, every so often, Mutawakkil would receive criticisms against the Imam from his officials who wanted to trigger him into action. One of these officials was Abdullah ibn Muhammad, his governor in Medina. He sent a letter to Mutawakkil and informed him about the Shias who had believed in the Imamate of Imam Hadi, and also wrongfully placed accusations upon the Imam. Imam Hadi, who was aware of Abdullah's communication, sent a letter to Mutawakkil to falsify Abdullah's accusation and reminded Mutawakkil of Abdullah's wrongdoings against himself. However, the Imam's letter could not change Mutawakkil's intentions. Thus, Mutawakkil, who was one of the most hostile Abbasid caliphs toward the Shias, decided to take action against the Imam. He decided to exile the Imam to his Capital in Samarra. By this decision, Mutawakkil could separate the Imam from his followers and also closely oversee his activities. He would also ensure that the Imam could not rise up against the Abbasids' injustices. Furthermore, the Imam was accessible to him in case he decided to eliminate him at any time.

Mutawakkil's decision to exile Imam Hadi to his Capital in Samarra was not an unprecedented conspiracy against a Shia Imam. His plot was consistent with the conspiracies of the previous Abbasid caliphs against the Shia Imams since their establishment. For example, Saffah, the first Abbasid Caliph, exiled Imam Sadiq to his Capital in Heerah, a city near Kufa, for about two years. His successor, Mansur, forcefully brought Imam Sadiq to his Capital in Baghdad on a few occasions and finally ordered his martyrdom. Later, Haroon imprisoned Imam Kazim in Baghdad and martyred him. Ma'mun also moved Imam Reza to his Capital in Merv and selected him as his Crown Prince. He then martyred

¹²⁴ 234 AH (Imam's age: 21)

Imam Reza after a short period of just about one-and-a-half years. After Ma'mun, his successor, Mu'tasim, also moved Imam Javad to his Capital in Baghdad, and after a short period of about 10 months, martyred the Imam. The long-standing hostilities and conspiracies of the Abbasid caliphs against the Shia Imams were due to the fact that the Shia Imams never endorsed the legitimacy of any of the Abbasid caliphs. The Shia Imams had social status and were respected by the Muslim community for their divine knowledge, spirituality, and being the Prophet's descendants. They were also the leaders of the Shia community, who regarded the Abbasids as an oppressive and illegitimate government.

To implement his plot, Mutawakkil sent an army of 300 soldiers to Medina to escort the Imam to Samarra. He also gave the army commander, Yahya ibn Harthamah, an invitation letter for the Imam. In this letter, Mutawakkil expressed his respect and honor for the Imam to deceive the public that he did not have bad intentions against the Imam. Mutawakkil informed the Imam about his decision to replace the governor of Medina due to his hostilities against the Imam. He also invited the Imam and his family to Samarra and expressed his willingness to meet him. The Imam did not want to leave Medina, but Mutawakkil had left him no choice. He had officially invited the Imam to Samarra and had sent his army for the Imam's journey. If the Imam were to resist his relocation to Samarra, Mutawakkil would regard it as a confirmation of all of the complaints against the Imam and would use this as an excuse to increase his harassment toward the Imam.

Unlike Imam Reza (AS), who had taken a series of unprecedented actions before leaving Medina towards Merv, there are no historical records of such actions by Imam Hadi before he left Medina. This was due to the fact that Ma'mun had portrayed himself to be a fair and just ruler, and Imam Reza had to make it clear for the people that Ma'mun's invitation to Merv was a conspiracy against him. However, Mutawakkil's hostilities against the Shias were well known. Thus, the people of Medina were worried about Mutawakkil's conspiracies against Imam Hadi.

The people of Medina were saddened when they found out about the intention of Mutawakkil's army to move the Imam from Medina to Samarra. An unprecedented grief and sorrow dominated the city. The people of Medina loved and respected the Imam. The Imam was always among the people and treated them well. He would never forget the city's needy and would aid them. He was constantly seen in the Mosque of the Prophet, worshipping God. The people's reaction caused Yahya ibn Harthamah to talk to them and calm them down. He assured them that Mutawakkil did not have bad intentions against the Imam.

Although Mutawakkil had sent an invitation letter to respectfully invite the Imam to Samarra, he was looking for any excuse to eliminate him and somehow justify this action to the public. Thus, his army commander, Yahya ibn Harthamah, searched the Imam's entire house in hopes of finding any evidence against him. However, he only found the Quran and some other books in his search. He found the Imam's lifestyle to be very simple, even though he was the leader of the Shia community and had many followers.

After three days, the Imam and his family left Medina towards Samarra, escorted by Mutawakkil's army. The Imam's divine character influenced many who interacted with him during this journey. Ironically, one of those who was greatly influenced by the Imam was Yahya ibn Harthamah, the army commander. After witnessing the Imam's greatness and miracles, Yahya became a Shia follower of the Imam. Before leaving Medina, the Imam asked tailors to prepare raincoats and thick clothing and covers for himself and his family. The Imam's action caused Yahya to question the Imam's qualification for the leadership of the Shias. He thought that the Imam did not know much about traveling through the hot deserts between Hijaz and Iraq, particularly during the summer. One day during the trip, the Imam wore the raincoat and prepared his horse for the downpour. The Imam's actions on such a hot summer day in the middle of the desert caused laughter among the army soldiers. They assumed that the Imam did not know anything about the climate. Shortly after, a strong storm hit the caravan where

rain and hail poured down on the caravan. The storm was so severe that it resulted in the death of 80 of the 300 soldiers. However, the Imam and his family were safe due to the Imam's forecast and preparation for the storm. After witnessing this incident, Yahya came to the Imam and accepted his Imamate.

After passing through the deserts of Hijaz and Iraq, the Imam's caravan arrived in the vicinity of Baghdad. The governor of Baghdad knew about his people's enthusiasm to welcome and meet the Imam. To avoid any contact between the Imam and the people, he ordered for the caravan's arrival in the city to be in the darkness of the night.

Although Mutawakkil was a clear enemy of the Imam, his governmental and military officials had special status and respect for the Imam. For example, the governor of Baghdad met Yahya ibn Harthamah and reminded him about Mutawakkil's animosity towards the Imam. He warned Yahya to avoid saying even a single word against the Imam to Mutawakkil, as he would certainly kill the Imam. He then continued by saying that if Mutawakkil killed the Imam, the Prophet would be your enemy in the hereafter. Yahya then swore by God that he did not observe anything from the Imam that could be used as an excuse for Mutawakkil, and all of the Imam's actions were righteous and correct. The caravan then continued its journey and arrived in Samarra. Before meeting Mutawakkil, Yahya met Wasif, one of the influential Turk leaders in the government. Similar to the governor of Baghdad, Wasif also warned Yahya of saying anything against the Imam to Mutawakkil. Wasif then threatened Yahya if he were to incite Mutawakkil against the Imam.

Although Mutawakkil had officially invited the Imam to Samarra, he wanted to humiliate and instill fear in the Imam before their first meeting. Thus, he ordered the Imam and his family to be sheltered in a place similar to where the needy and homeless were sheltered. Despite the exhaustion from the long journey, the Imam spent the night in such an inferior place and did not ask Mutawakkil for any favors. On the following day, the Imam moved to his house in Samarra.

Mutawakkil's primary motivation in moving the Imam to Samarra was to closely oversee the Imam's activities and interactions with his followers and representatives. Thus, the Imam's life was under intense surveillance by the government. Both Imam Hadi and his son, Imam Hasan Askari, were given the title of "Askari", which means "army". This title referred to the Imam's residence in the city of Samarra, which was originally built to accommodate Mu'tasim's Turkish army. The city was then developed and became a capital for the Abbasids. As a result, many moved to this city for living and business, and the city grew to multiple neighborhoods. The Imam's title of "Askari" also referred to the name of the city's neighborhood where the Imam lived, which was within the army base and governmental offices. Therefore, the Imam's activities were intensely monitored by the government, and his interactions with his representatives and the people were significantly limited.

10-4-3-Mutawakkil and the Imam

Mutawakkil was the most hostile caliph against the Imam and his Shias during the Imamate of Imam Hadi. Due to his animosity toward Imam Ali, Mutawakkil named two of his sons Talha and Zubayr, after two of the Prophet's companions who had later led the battle of Jamal against Imam Ali. Mutawakkil was not intimidated to express his feelings about Imam Ali. He would ridicule Imam Ali (AS) and curse Lady Fatimah (SA) in his private gatherings. This was an unprecedented action among the other Abbasid caliphs, as they would show pride for being the relatives of the Prophet and would portray to have respect for Imam Ali and Lady Fatimah. For instance, when Imam Ali's hidden grave was first revealed to the public during the time of Haroon, the Abbasid Caliph who imprisoned and martyred Imam Kazim, he ordered the construction of a building on the gravesite of Imam Ali. Mutawakkil also banned the Shias from visiting the holy shrines of Imam Ali and Imam Hossein, and ordered the destruction of Imam Hossein's holy shrine twice. He also imposed excessive economical pressure on the Shias and the Alavids. This pressure was to such an extent that the

female Alavids in Medina had to wear old and torn clothes. They even lacked an appropriate cover to put on for their prayers. Consequently, they passed along and shared the appropriate cover amongst one another, and took turns for the prayer. Mutawakkil ruled for about 15 years and had the longest duration of the caliphate among the other caliphs who ruled during the Imamate of Imam Hadi. Therefore, the Imam endured many calamities from Mutawakkil, and the Shias were under excessive pressure from him.

Once, a wound appeared on Mutawakkil's body. The physicians could not treat the wound, and it gradually became life-threatening. Mutawakkil's minister, Fath ibn Khaqan, suggested someone be sent to Imam Hadi for guidance. Mutawakkil accepted, and sent a messenger to the Imam. Although Mutawakkil was a clear enemy of the Imam, the Imam did not withhold his divine knowledge from him, which shows the Imam's greatness. The Imam then gave instructions that were effective in curing the wound. Mutawakkil's mother then sent a pocket of sealed gold coins to the Imam to show appreciation to him. Shortly after recovery from his illness, someone spoke ill of the Imam to Mutawakkil. He accused the Imam of receiving and storing a large amount of wealth and weapons from his followers in order to initiate an uprising. Although Mutawakkil had just observed the Imam's greatness in recovering from his serious illness, he immediately sent his special doorkeeper to inspect the Imam's house in the middle of the night. Mutawakkil's doorkeeper used a ladder and climbed on the roof of the Imam's house, but could not find a way to come down because of darkness of the night. Suddenly, the Imam called him by name and brought him a candle to help him get down. He observed the Imam in simple clothing and realized that the Imam was awake and worshipping God. He then inspected the Imam's entire house and found only a sword and a sealed pocket of gold coins, which he brought to Mutawakkil. Mutawakkil, who saw his mother's name on the seal of the pocket containing the gold coins, questioned his mother and discovered her gift to the Imam. He then asked his doorkeeper to return the Imam's belongings to him along with another pocket of gold coins from

himself. He also asked him to apologize to the Imam. When the doorkeeper came to the Imam and apologized, the Imam responded by simply reciting the following verse of Quran [26:227] “And, the unjust will soon know how terrible their end will be.”

Despite Mutawakkil’s hostilities against Imam Hadi and his Shia followers, Shi’ism was a well-established and a growing theology with many followers across the Islamic territory. This was to the extent that the Shias could attain critical governmental positions. One influential character was Ibn Sekkit, a scholar in Arabic literature. He became the chosen teacher for Mutawakkil’s sons, Mu’tazz and Mu’ayyad. This role was very critical, as this teacher would shape the thoughts of the next possible caliph, and could greatly influence his beliefs and ruling strategies. Once, Mutawakkil asked Ibn Sekkit if his two sons, Mu’tazz and Mu’ayyad, were better to him than Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein. Ibn Sekkit, who was known to be a silent person, broke his silence and responded fearlessly. He said, “even Qanbar, the slave of Imam Ali, is dearer to me than your two sons”. Upon hearing this response, Mutawakkil became furious and ordered Ibn Sekkit be brutally killed¹²⁵.

Mutawakkil was aware of the Imam’s social status and his influence on the hearts of the people, including his own personnel in the palace. He decided to humiliate the Imam in the presence of his personnel. He ordered his doorkeepers not to open the curtains of the palace when the Imam wanted to enter to meet him. When the Imam came to the palace, miraculously a wind blew and opened the curtain for him. Upon hearing the news of this incident, Mutawakkil ordered his doorkeepers to follow his previous order when the Imam wanted to exit the palace after their meeting. Incredibly, the same miracle happened, and a pleasant wind blew in the opposite direction to open the curtains for the Imam. When Mutawakkil heard about this incident, he worried about the spread of this news among the people, which could garner even more respect for the Imam. Thus, he ordered his doorkeepers to

¹²⁵ 244 AH (Imam’s age: 31)

always open the curtains for the Imam as before.

On various occasions, Mutawakkil and his affiliated scholars challenged the Imam's knowledge by asking him complex questions about Islamic teachings and history. Mutawakkil's intention was to degrade the Imam's reputation in the eyes of the Muslims as the one who holds divine knowledge. However, the Imam responded with complete and convincing answers every time.

When Mutawakkil lost hope in directly damaging the Imam's social status, he decided to pursue his bad intentions through the Imam's close family members. He invited the Imam's brother, Musa, to Samarra to tempt him with intoxication and sinful gatherings that Mutawakkil and the Abbasid royal family regularly held. When Musa arrived in Samarra, the Imam welcomed his brother¹²⁶. The Imam informed him of Mutawakkil's bad intentions and asked him to avoid him. However, Musa did not listen. The Imam then prayed to God to have Mutawakkil's plot be unsuccessful. As a result, every time Musa went to meet Mutawakkil, he was rejected, as Mutawakkil was either occupied or unavailable and thus their meeting never took place.

During Mutawakkil's reign, a woman claimed to be Lady Zainab, the daughter of Imam Ali and Lady Fatimah. Mutawakkil asked her how it was possible that after such a long time she was still alive. She responded that the Holy Prophet had prayed for her to become young every 40 years. Mutawakkil gathered the elders of Banu Hashim and talked to them about her claim. They informed Mutawakkil that Lady Zainab had passed away around two centuries ago, and even presented the time of her demise. However, Mutawakkil found their response inadequate to falsify her claim. The elders then asked Mutawakkil to inquire Imam Hadi regarding this issue, which he accepted. Imam Hadi came before Mutawakkil and was informed of the situation. The Imam responded that the bodies of the children of Lady Fatimah are forbidden for wild animals. The Imam then asked Mutawakkil to put

¹²⁶ 244 AH (Imam's age: 31)

her in front of wild animals to verify if she was in fact a child of Lady Fatimah. Upon hearing the Imam's reasoning, she started to argue about the Imam's intention to kill her rather than logically falsifying her claim. Mutawakkil then challenged the Imam to verify his words with his own action. The Imam accepted this challenge and expressed his willingness to go among the wild animals to prove his words. Mutawakkil was hoping that the wild animals would kill the Imam and peacefully remove the threat of the Imam from his government. Mutawakkil's agents brought a ladder, and the Imam went down to the lions' pit and sat among them. The lions came to the Imam quietly, and the Imam pet their heads. The Imam then pointed to a corner of the cage, and they all followed the Imam's order. Upon seeing this miracle, Mutawakkil's minister urged him to remove the Imam from the pit before the news of the Imam's miracle spread amongst the public. Mutawakkil asked the Imam to exit the pit. He then asked the woman to go inside the pit if she was sincere in her claim. She refused and confessed that she was pretending to be Lady Zainab due to her poverty.

On another occasion, some people reported to Mutawakkil that the Imam had received weapons and wealth from his followers, and had hid them inside his house. Mutawakkil sent his soldiers to inspect the Imam's house without notice. He wanted to find any excuse to give to the public to justify killing the Imam. His soldiers invaded and searched the Imam's entire house. They found the Imam wearing simple clothing and sitting on a simple mat while reciting verses from the Quran. The soldiers brought the Imam before Mutawakkil, who was intoxicated as usual. Mutawakkil offered wine to the Imam, which he strongly refused. The Imam told Mutawakkil that his body and blood have never been contaminated with wine. Mutawakkil then asked the Imam to instead recite an exciting poem for him. The Imam responded that he rarely recites poetry. However, Mutawakkil insisted the Imam recite poetry for him. The Imam then recited a strong poem affiliated with his forefather, Imam Ali. The Imam's poetry was about the status of the arrogant rulers in their tombs, when their bodies would be eaten by

worms, and their wealth and power would not help them. The Imam's poetry influenced the audience, including Mutawakkil, so much that he began crying and his face became wet. He then ordered to remove all of the wine and returned the Imam to his house respectfully.

Mutawakkil harassed the Imam in various ways. He would summon the Imam to his presence at any time of the day or night. He would also send his agents to search the Imam's entire house at any time, including the middle of the night. Nothing could stop Mutawakkil from persecuting and harassing the Imam. On one occasion, he even imprisoned the Imam. To further intimidate the Imam during his imprisonment, a grave was also dug in the Imam's cell. However, through the Imam's resistance, Mutawakkil eventually freed him. This incident was not the only time that the Imam was imprisoned by Mutawakkil. Historical records show that the Imam was imprisoned on at least one other occasion by Mutawakkil.

Mutawakkil's harassment against Imam Hadi continued until his very last day in power. Mutawakkil decided to insult and humiliate the Imam during the observation of Eid al-Fitr, which is an auspicious day for the Muslims¹²⁷. Mutawakkil asked his minister to have the Imam walk on foot in front of him while he could ride on a horse and watch the Imam. His minister warned him that this action could disgrace Mutawakkil, as the people would regard it as a clear act of insult and harassment against the Imam. However, Mutawakkil insisted on his desire to insult the Imam. His minister instead suggested ordering all of the elders and government officials to accompany the Imam, so as to deceive the public that his action was not specifically targeting the Imam. Mutawakkil accepted his suggestion and organized a parade in which the Imam, and all of the elders and government officials, marched in front of him and his minister, Fath ibn Khaqan, on foot. The Imam was forced to walk a long distance on that hot summer day. As a result, the Imam was exhausted. When the Imam returned, his head and face were

¹²⁷ 1 Shawwal, 247 AH (Imam's age: 34)

completely soaked in his sweat. At this time, someone met with the Imam and told him that Mutawakkil's actions were specifically to harass the Imam. The Imam responded that he was more honored than the camel of Prophet Salih in the eyes of God. The Imam then recited the following verse from the Quran regarding the story of Prophet Salih [11:65]:” But they killed her (the camel). So, he (Salih) said: Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days. This is a promise that will not be belied.” Similar to Prophet Salih, who promised God’s wrath for his people upon killing his miraculous camel, the Imam also made a prophecy that Mutawakkil will be killed in three days. The Imam also prayed to God to curse Mutawakkil by reciting a supplication that became known as “the Prayer of the Oppressed Upon the Oppressor”. As the Imam had predicted, Mutawakkil was murdered in three days.

10-4-4-Demolition of Karbala

Due to his animosity against the Shias, Mutawakkil could not tolerate them gathering around the holy shrine of Imam Hossein. Imam Hossein has been a symbol of liberty and resistance against oppression throughout history. His holy shrine was a base for the Shias to be reminded about the tragedy of Karbala to gain strength and motivation to stand against oppression. Thus, Mutawakkil destroyed the shrine of Imam Hossein twice during his government. On the first occasion, he sent his army to ruin and plow the holy shrine and the surrounding structures, disperse the pilgrims, and ban any pilgrimage¹²⁸. However, he could not stop the people from visiting the holy shrine of Imam Hossein. The people told Mutawakkil’s army that even if they kill them all, they would still not be able to stop the rest of the Shias from gathering at Imam Hossein’s shrine. When Mutawakkil was informed about the people’s message, he ordered his army to leave Karbala. After this incident, the people continued to visit Karbala. This was to an extent that, on special religious occasions, a large market was set up to fulfill the needs of the pilgrims. Consequently, Mutawakkil ordered the

¹²⁸ 237 AH (Imam’s age: 24)

destruction of the holy tomb of Imam Hossein for the second time¹²⁹. This time, Mutawakkil gave orders to plow and flood the holy tomb to remove any sign of it. This latter incident occurred after around 10 years from the first incident and coincided with the last year of Mutawakkil's caliphate.

Like his forefathers, the Imam would highly recommend his followers to visit the holy shrine of Imam Hossein and not allow the memory of Imam Hossein to be forgotten. On one occasion, the Imam became sick and asked his companion to pay one of his Shias on the Imam's behalf to travel to Karbala and pray for his recovery. The Imam's companion asked him why he did not pray for himself, as he was an infallible Imam like Imam Hossein, and his prayer would certainly be fulfilled by God. He continued by emphasizing that Imam Hadi was the best living creation of God and had a higher status than the structure of a shrine. The Imam responded that the Holy Prophet had a higher status than Ka'ba and Hajar al-Aswad, however, he would rotate around the Ka'ba and would pay respect to Hajar al-Aswad. The Imam then told his companion that God has designated some holy sites where he likes to be worshiped. The Imam then continued by saying that he favored prayer for his recovery at those holy sites, and the shrine of Imam Hossein was indeed among those sites.

10-4-5-Network of Representatives

To meet the needs of the growing Shia community, Imam Sadiq had established a network organization of his trusted companions as his representatives in various cities across the Islamic territory. This organization was further developed during the Imamate of the next Imams, and became an effective way of communication between the Shias and their Imam. Imam Hadi took leadership of this organization, effectively during his Imamate. Due to the expansion of Shi'ism at this time, Imam Hadi divided the territory where this hidden organization was active into four geographical regions. The first region covered

¹²⁹ 247 AH (Imam's age: 34)

Baghdad, Madain, and Kufa, in Iraq. The second region covered Basrah and Ahvaz. The third region spanned Hamedan and Qom, in Iran. The fourth region covered Hijaz, Yemen, and Egypt. The Imam had appointed one representative for each of these regions. Each of them would further manage the local representatives of that region. These representatives were responsible for answering questions about Islamic laws and principles, transferring the letters between the Imam and his Shias, and resolving any division between the Shias to keep the Shia community united. They were also collecting the Islamic dues (Zakat) and transferring it to the Imam, or spending it on cases prescribed by the Imam. The names of 14 of the Imam's representatives are recorded in history. The Imam's leadership led to the expansion of the Shia community and prepared them for the occultation, during which they would not have direct access to their Imam.

During the time when the Imam's life at the Abbasid Capital was under intense surveillance by the government, the Imam could not always be the center for managing this hidden organization. Historical records suggest that the Imam had appointed his loyal companion, Uthman ibn Saeed al-Amri, to secretly manage the affairs of this organization from Samarra during the last 10 years of the Imam's life. Many of the communications between the Imam and his followers were through letters. Dozens of these letters are recorded in history and remain until today.

Mutawakkil had particularly focused on revealing the members of this hidden organization to prosecute them. He arrested Muhammad ibn Faraj, one of the Imam's representatives in Egypt, and imprisoned him for eight years. Ali ibn Ja'far was another representative of the Imam, who was imprisoned for years. When his imprisonment lengthened, he contacted the Imam and asked for the Imam's prayers for his release. The Imam responded that he will pray for him. Upon the Imam's prayer, Mutawakkil became sick the following day. After three days, Mutawakkil's illness worsened, and he feared for his life. He then ordered the release of the prisoners, including Ali ibn Ja'far. After his

release, Ali ibn Ja'far relocated to Mecca by the Imam's orders to save him from further prosecution. Ayub ibn Nooh was another representative of the Imam. He sent a letter to the Imam and complained to him about the injustice he received from Kufa's judge. The Imam replied by informing him of relief in two months. After two months, the judge was replaced, and the Imam's prediction for good news became a reality.

10-4-6-Mutawakkil's Assassination¹³⁰

Mutawakkil followed Haroon's tradition of appointing his successors after himself. He appointed three of his sons as his successors and gave each one a portion of the Abbasid territory. He appointed his oldest son, Muntasir, as his primary successor. He then appointed his two other sons, Mu'tazz and Mu'ayyad, as Muntasir's successors. However, he later decided to replace Muntasir with Mu'tazz, as a sign of love for Mu'tazz's mother. Muntasir did not accept giving up his position. As a result, his relationship with his father deteriorated.

Unlike his father, Muntasir, who may have been influenced by the royal teacher, Ibn Sekkit, had positive opinions about the Ahlul-Bayt. He had heard his father cursing Lady Fatimah in his presence and became upset with him. Once, Muntasir came to his father, Mutawakkil, while he was intoxicated and enjoying a performance where someone was acting and ridiculing Imam Ali. Muntasir objected to his father holding an insulting performance about Imam Ali, and reminded him that they all belonged to the Prophet's clan of Banu Hashim. Mutawakkil responded harshly to his son and insulted him using shameful words. This insult triggered Muntasir to act against his father. He conspired with a group of Turk leaders to kill his father. The Turks were motivated for this plan, as they feared losing their influence in the government due to Mutawakkil's prior decisions to reduce their power. Subsequently, one night Muntasir came to his father with a group of armed Turks. They killed Mutawakkil and his minister, Fath ibn Khaqan. This incident shows the significant

¹³⁰ 4 Shawwal, 247 AH (Imam's age: 34)

amount of power that the Turks had in the Abbasid government, to the extent that they could kill and replace the Caliph. As a result, the next Abbasid caliphs were practically powerless compared to the Turks.

10-5-During the Government of Muntasir

10-5-1-Muntasir in Power

After Mutawakkil's assassination, his oldest son, Muntasir, who was also his primary successor, assumed power. He had plotted the murder of his father with the aid of the Turks. Therefore, he could not rule as an independent caliph, and had to accept their significant power in his government. Soon after becoming the Caliph, the Turks forced Muntasir to remove his brothers, Mu'tazz and Mu'ayyad, from his successorship. The Turks were afraid that Muntasir's brothers might assume power in the future and take revenge for the blood of their father, Mutawakkil. Muntasir followed their instructions and removed his brothers from his successorship.

As time passed, Muntasir became worried about the Turk's power and capacity to make decisions in his government. He called them "the Caliph Killer" to express his frustration with them. The Turks soon realized his threat to their power and decided to assassinate him. They bribed Muntasir's physician to implement their plot. Once, Muntasir became sick and his physician prescribed wet cupping. The physician then used poisonous tool which led to Muntasir's death¹³¹. He died after a short government of just six months.

10-5-2-Muntasir and the Imam

There is no historical evidence of any relationship between Muntasir and the Imam during his brief government of six months. However, it can be inferred that Muntasir's Caliphate was one of the calmest periods during Imam Hadi's Imamatus. Muntasir, unlike his father, adopted a good relationship with the Alavids and the Shias. He replaced the

¹³¹ 5 Rabi' al-Thani, 248 AH (Imam's age: 35)

governor of Medina, who was very hostile with the Alavids, and advised his new governor to treat the Alavids well. He also removed the ban on the pilgrims to visit the holy shrines of Imam Hossein and other Shia Imams, and ordered the reconstruction of Imam Hossein's shrine.

10-6-During the Government of Musta'in

10-6-1-Musta'in in Power

After Muntasir, the Turk leaders held a consul to choose the next caliph. They did not want the Caliphate to reach Muntasir's brother, Mu'tazz, who had been appointed as Muntasir's successor by their father, Mutawakkil. The Turks had forced Muntasir to remove Mu'tazz from his successorship, as they feared his potential revenge for Mutawakkil's assassination. However, the Turks still wanted to keep the Abbasid Caliphate in Mu'tasim's lineage, as he was the one who had given them power in the Abbasid government. Thus, they chose Musta'in, one of Mu'tasim's grandsons and Muntasir's cousin, for the Caliphate¹³².

At this time, Musta'in was just a caliph by title, and the real power lay in the hands of the Turk leaders. At the beginning of Musta'in's Caliphate, the people in Samarra rebelled against his selection as the Caliph by the Turks. They protested the ever-increasing influence of the Turks in power. However, their rebellion was quickly suppressed by the Turks.

Despite their significant power, the Turk leaders were not always united. During Musta'in's government, one of the Turk leaders was killed as a result of a power struggle amongst themselves. To save himself from the conspiracy of the Turks, Musta'in secretly moved to Baghdad with some of the Turk leaders who were supporting him¹³³. However, Musta'in's action of moving his government to Baghdad caused an outrageous reaction by the Turks in Samarra, and they united against

¹³² Rabi' al-Thani, 248 AH (Imam's age: 35)

¹³³ 25 Muharram, 251 AH (Imam's age: 38)

him. They decided to choose Mu'tazz, one of Mutawakkil's sons, for the Caliphate. Mu'tazz was originally Muntasir's successor. The Turks released Mu'tazz from prison and paid allegiance to him as the new Caliph. They then sent their troops towards Baghdad for war against Musta'in's troops and supporters. Over a period of around 10 months, there were multiple battles between the two sides, which finally ended in Mu'tazz's victory. Musta'in resigned¹³⁴ from the Caliphate and was exiled to Wasit, a city in the area between Kufa and Basrah, in Iraq. However, after several months, Mu'tazz sent his agent to kill Musta'in in exile¹³⁵.

10-7-During the Government of Mu'tazz

10-7-1-Mu'tazz in Power

Mu'tazz became a Caliph at the young age of just 19, and was the youngest Abbasid Caliph by then. He, like his predecessors, had gained power by the aid and decision of the Turks, and thus had to blindly follow their orders in the government. The Turks had ordered his brother, Muntasir, to remove Mu'tazz from his successorship, as they feared his potential revenge from the Turks for their role in his father, Mutawakkil's, assassination. However, later, when the Turks disagreed with Musta'in, they freed Mu'tazz from prison and selected him as the new Caliph. Mu'tazz had a caliphate of about three-and-a-half years and was finally tortured, killed, and replaced by the Turks. During his government, he feared for his power and struggled to stabilize it. He killed his brother and successor, Mu'ayyad, as he feared his conspiracy against his power.

10-7-2-Demise of Syed Muhammad¹³⁶

Muhammad was the oldest son of Imam Hadi. He was very pious and had a great character. Many of the Shias thought that he would be the

¹³⁴ 11 Zu al-Hijjah, 251 AH (Imam's age: 38)

¹³⁵ 3 Shawwal, 252 AH (Imam's age: 39)

¹³⁶ 29 Jumada al-Thani, 252 AH (Imam's age: 39)

next Imam after Imam Hadi, as in the past the Imamate was commonly inherited by the oldest son. However, around two years before the martyrdom of Imam Hadi, his son Muhammad passed away while he was travelling. He became sick and passed away close to the city of Balad, between Samarra and Baghdad. His demise brought great sorrow and grief to his father and his younger brother, Imam Askari. Thus, at Imam Hadi's time of martyrdom, Imam Askari was his oldest living son.

10-7-3-Martyrdom

Upon gaining power, Mu'tazz followed his father, Mutawakkil's policy, in dealing with the Alavids. He treated the Alavids harshly. He could not tolerate Imam Hadi's holy character, and feared his social popularity as a threat to his government. Thus, after only two years into his Caliphate, he ordered the poisoning and martyrdom of Imam Hadi.

Imam Hadi's soul ascended on the 3rd of Rajab, in the year 254 Hijri, in Samarra, at the age of 41. He was martyred after living in Samarra for about 20 years. Imam Hadi's oldest living son, Imam Askari, took care of his father's funeral rites, including washing and praying over his body.

When the news of the Imam's martyrdom spread in the city, crowds of people came to the Imam's house to express their sorrow to his family and participate in his burial. The top government and military officials, including members of the Abbasid royal family, were also among those who came to the Imam's house and expressed their sorrow to Imam Hadi's son, Imam Askari. The people then took the Imam's body to the streets of Samarra, and a large funeral procession was held for the Imam. Historical records show Imam Askari's exhaustion during the funeral due to the pressure of the crowds and high temperature of that day. Although Imam Askari had already prayed on his father's body, an official prayer was led by the Caliph's brother. The Imam's body was returned to his house for burial, and was buried within the site where he used to pray.

10-8-Conclusion

The Imamate of Imam Hadi coincides with the caliphate of six Abbasid caliphs due to instability caused by the increasing power of the Turks. His Imamate began upon the martyrdom of his father, Imam Javad, during Mu'tasim's government. Imam Hadi became an Imam at the very young age of almost eight years old. However, his Imamate was not questioned or challenged by the Shias due to his age, as they had already validated the Imamate of Imam Javad at the very young age of seven-and-a-half years old. After Imam Javad's martyrdom, Mu'tasim decided to appoint a hostile teacher for the young Imam in hopes of reshaping his beliefs. However, the teacher was influenced by the Imam's divine knowledge and character, and eventually became the Imam's Shia follower. The Imamate of Imam Hadi continued into the Caliphate of Wathiq, who followed Ma'mun's policy of portraying a good relationship with the Alavids and the Imam.

However, when Mutawakkil assumed power, he used his entire authority to confront and harass the Imam. Mutawakkil's 15-year long Caliphate was the hardest period during Imam Hadi's Imamate, as Mutawakkil had the most hatred toward the Shias and the Ahlul Bayt. Mutawakkil was a clear enemy of the Shias, and would not hesitate to even ridicule or curse Imam Ali and Lady Fatimah in his private gatherings. He relocated Imam Hadi to his Capital in Samarra to isolate and oversee the Imam's activities. Mutawakkil harassed the Imam in various ways. He would summon the Imam to his presence at various times of the day or night. He would send his agents to search the Imam's entire house at any time, including the middle of the night. He imprisoned the Imam on at least two occasions. Mutawakkil's harassment against Imam Hadi continued until his very last day in power.

After Mutawakkil's murder, his oldest son, Muntasir, assumed power. Muntasir opposed his father's policy against the Alavids and the Shias. His short government was one of the calmest periods during the Imamate of Imam Hadi. The last period of Imam Hadi's Imamate began

with the murder of Mutawakkil and coincided with the time when the Turks had sole power in the Abbasid government. The Turks eliminated Muntasir and replaced him with Musta'in after a short government of just six months. They later replaced Musta'in with Mu'tazz after about three years. Mu'tazz, who could not tolerate Imam Hadi's holy character and feared his social popularity, poisoned and martyred the Imam. There are no historical records of any relationship between the Imam and the Abbasid Caliphs Muntasir, Musta'in, and Mu'tazz, which could be attributed to the living conditions of the Imam in Samarra.

The long Imamatus of Imam Hadi of around 33 years is a transition to the time when the Shias would not have direct access to their Imam. Imam Hadi lived around 13 years of his Imamatus in Medina, where he relatively had more freedom to guide his followers and benefit them with his knowledge. However, when the Imam was forcefully relocated to Samarra, his interaction with his followers and companions was significantly limited. This was because the Imam's life and interactions were under intense surveillance by the government at the Abbasid Capital. The hardest time for the Imam in Samarra was during the government of Mutawakkil.

The Imam, during his Imamatus, manifested the true meaning of his title, Hadi, which means "the one who guides". The Imam used every opportunity of his time to guide the Muslims, especially his Shia followers, to the true Islamic teachings. After more than two centuries from the demise of the Prophet, the Shias had deeper and more challenging questions about their beliefs. The Imam responded in person, or in writing, to many questions regarding the Islamic teachings and law. The Imam also trained many scholars who had a great role in propagating Shia theology. The Imam expanded the network organization of his representatives across the Islamic territory as an effective method of communication between the Shias and their Imam. The Imam's effort brought this organization to a unique state where it could continue its activity independently without the Imam's direct

involvement. The Imam highlighted the role of the scholars among the Shias as his representatives. The Imam's intention was to prepare the Shias for the upcoming time of occultation, during which they would not have direct access to their Imam, and would need to refer to the scholars for guidance in their Islamic affairs.

IMAM HADI (AS):

**The people are with their wealth in this world
and with their deeds in the hereafter.**