

## **5- IMAM BAQIR (AS): THE IMAM OF KNOWLEDGE**

This chapter reviews the historical events of the life of Imam Baqir (AS) and provides an overview of his social, scientific, and political achievements.

## **5-1-Before the Government of Valeed**

### **5-1-1-Birth**

Imam Muhammad ibn Ali (AS), also known as Baqir or Abu-Ja'far, was born on the 1st of the month of Rajab in the year 57 Hijri in Medina. He was the oldest son of Imam Sajjad (AS). His mother, Fatimah, was the daughter of Imam Hasan (AS) and was unique in piety among the children of Imam Hasan. Thus, Imam Baqir became the only Imam whose maternal and paternal grandfathers were Imams. All the following Imams from his lineage were related to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), through both Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein (AS).

### **5-1-2-Tragedy of Karbala**

Imam Baqir was about three-and-a-half years old on the day of Ashura. He was the only child of Imam Sajjad who was present in Karbala. He was among the captives who were sent to Kufa, and from there to Damascus to Yazid's palace.

Imam Baqir, who had witnessed the tragedy of Karbala and all of the atrocities inflicted upon the Ahlul-Bayt, the progeny of the Prophet, became a narrator of the tragedy. The Imam used every opportunity to narrate the story of Karbala to the Muslims and remind them of the oppression the Umayyads imposed over the Ahlul-Bayt. The famous salutation, Ziyarat Ashura, was originally narrated by him. The Imam would gather people in his house to mourn and weep for the tragedy and oppression against Imam Hossein, and would encourage the people to visit his holy tomb in Karbala.

### **5-1-3-Meeting with Jabir ibn Abdullah**

Jabir ibn Abdullah was a close companion of Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet had said to him, "O' Jabir, you will have a lengthy life and will meet someone from my progeny from the children of (Imam) Hossein whose name will be the same as my name, Muhammad." The Prophet had said that he would be called Baqir, "the one who splits open the doors of knowledge". The Prophet asked Jabir to pass his greetings to

him upon their meeting. After many years, Jabir met Imam Baqir in Medina when the Imam was young. The Imam's face reminded Jabir of the Prophet's face. Jabir passed the Prophet's greeting to the Imam and said, "You are Baqir, the one who will split open knowledge."

#### **5-1-4-With his Father, Imam Sajjad**

From his early childhood, Imam Baqir was recognized as a wise and knowledgeable figure in society. Jabir's narration about the Imam's title, Baqir, given by the Prophet, was also a reason for the people to recognize the Imam's knowledge. There are historical records that prove that the Imam responded to various questions raised by the Muslims while he was still young. The Imam was raised under the supervision of his father, Imam Sajjad. The well-known book, *al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya*, was recorded while Imam Sajjad narrated it to his sons, Imam Baqir and Zaid.

### **5-2-During the Government of Valeed**

#### **5-2-1-Valeed in Power**

Valeed was a merciless and cruel governor who ordered the poisoning and martyrdom of Imam Sajjad. In his first sermon as caliph, he told the people, "Whoever stands against me will be beheaded, and whoever keeps silent and obeys my orders, will die by a natural death." The majority of his government was spent in military campaigns and the expansion of his territories into Northern Africa, India, Central Asia, and Andalusia in Europe. The tragedy of Karbala caused separation between the religious and political leaderships within the Muslims. Thus, at that time, the caliphate was just an authoritarian monarchy that was passed down in Banu Marwan's family, who were from the Umayyads. Ironically, the Muslim's caliph had absolute power and did not hold himself accountable to anyone, even God.

#### **5-2-2-Martyrdom of Imam Sajjad<sup>47</sup>**

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<sup>47</sup> 25 Muharram, 95 AH (Imam's age: 37)

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Valeed could not tolerate Imam Sajjad's social popularity and his influence among the people. Consequently, he ordered the Imam to be poisoned. When Imam Sajjad was poisoned, he called his children near him and chose his son, Muhammad, as his successor. Imam Sajjad gave Imam Baqir a heavy chest full of holy books, scriptures, and the swords of the Prophet and Imam Ali, which were passed down from the Imams. Imam Sajjad spoke to his son, Imam Baqir, in private for some time. Amongst his last words, he emphasized the importance of kindness to people. He also told Imam Baqir what his father, Imam Hossein, had passed down to him on the day of Ashura, which was "to avoid oppressing someone who has nobody but God to defend him."

When Imam Sajjad was on his deathbed, someone visited him and asked him about whom he should refer to after him. The Imam told him to refer to his son, Muhammad. The person inquired if Muhammad was chosen due to his age. Imam Sajjad responded, "Imamat is not by age but is appointed by God." Imam Sajjad said, "I have found Imam Baqir's name as the successor of Imamat in the holy scripture that has been passed down to me from the Prophet."

When Imam Sajjad was martyred, Imam Baqir took care of his funeral arrangements and buried him in the Baqi' cemetery next to his uncle, Imam Hasan (AS). The fact that Imam Baqir took on this responsibility was also another sign of his Imamat, since only an Imam can perform the funeral rituals of another Imam.

### **5-2-3-Banu Marwan and Degradation of Islam**

Yazid ibn Muawiyah's public indulgence in sinful behavior made it a custom for the upcoming Banu Marwan caliphs to also openly indulge in those behaviors, which in turn legitimized them for the public. Furthermore, years of civil unrest, battles, cruel governors, and elimination of Islamic scholars had taken away any motivation for religious practices. Religion was no longer a priority for the people. It became publicly common, even in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, to have open concerts by female singers, where many came to womanize.

### **5-2-4-The Imam: Representative of True Islam**

Imam Baqir was the only source of true Islamic teachings in society. He embodied these teachings through his behavior and interactions with the people. The Imam used to pray 150 units of prayer on a daily basis. He was in constant remembrance of God and would recite, “La-Ilaha-Ilal-lah”, meaning “There is no God but Allah” even while walking or interacting with the people. The Imam’s tears in prayer and his long prostrations had been witnessed by the people in the Prophet’s Mosque in Medina, and next to the Ka’ba during the Hajj season. The Imam would continue to shed tears humbly despite his social status. The Imam also used to encourage his children to stay awake between dawn and sunrise to recite the Quran or other prayers. Whenever the Imam wanted to pray for a great blessing from God, he would gather his family, make his request to God, and ask his family to respond by saying, “Amin.”

Once, a Christian called Imam Baqir, “Baqara”, which means “cow” in Arabic. He continued by insulting the Imam’s mother. The Imam treated him with patience and responded to him politely by saying, “If your statement is right, may God forgive my mother and if you are wrong, may God forgive you.” The Imam’s demeanor and greatness had such an impact on that person that he chose to convert to Islam.

The Imam was always interested in providing guidance to all the Muslims. Sa’ad was an Umayyad who came to the Imam, crying and denouncing his family for their injustices to the Ahlul-Bayt. The Imam accepted him and said, “You are from us if you have the correct beliefs.” The Imam referred to the Prophet Ibrahim’s statement in the Quran [14:36], “Everyone who follows me is from me.” The Imam then advised him to seek piety and provided him with guidance. The Imam’s statements are available in a collection known as *Risala Sa’ad al-Khayr*.

The Imam’s generosity was renowned among the people, though his lifestyle was ordinary. No needy person would return from the Imam without a reward. The Imam was an elder in the family of the Prophet, and was the oldest among the children of Imam Hossein, so he had to

financially support his relatives, who were struggling with their living expenses because they were deprived of their rights by the government. Furthermore, the Imam had to financially support some of his students who came to Medina to attend his classes and were in need. The Imam made particular emphasis for charity donation on Fridays, stating that it has a double reward, as Friday holds a special importance over the other days of the week.

### **5-3-During the Government of Sulayman**

#### **5-3-1-Sulayman ibn Abdul-Malik in Power<sup>48</sup>**

After a year into the Imamate of Imam Baqir, Valeed passed away and his brother, Sulayman ibn Abdul-Malik, assumed power. Valeed had wanted to nominate his son as his successor, but passed away before implementing his decision. Sulayman inherited the power of an expanded Islamic territory from Andalusia in Europe and Northern Africa, to Central Asia and India. Sulayman was a corrupt pleasure-seeker who kept himself busy with womanizing and other sinful behaviors. He and his governors were very cruel to the people, and oppressed them by collecting high taxes. The short government of Sulayman, about 3 years, and his engagement in opposing Valeed's governors, who were initially against his nomination for government, provided an opportunity for the Imam to spread his knowledge with more freedom.

#### **5-3-2-Emergence of the False Theological Beliefs**

Due to multiple factors, the time of Imam Baqir coincided with the appearance of various theological beliefs among the Muslims. After a long period of civil unrest following the tragedy of Karbala, Banu Marwan's government became stable. The Islamic scholars finally had a chance to become involved in education rather than political disputes. Various Islamic scholars and jurists with different opinions

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<sup>48</sup> 96 AH (Imam's age: 38)

about Islamic laws emerged. Schools and educational facilities were established in the big cities, and the educated people were more accepting of intellectual and theological thoughts, as opposed to before. Furthermore, due to military campaigns and the expansion of the Islamic territory, Muslims were exposed to various theological beliefs from the other civilizations, and had to find persuasive answers for the questions raised by the new Muslims or the followers of other faiths. However, there was turmoil among the Muslims about the true Islamic teachings of the Prophet, due to a gap of about a century from the Prophet's demise. In addition, all of the people who had witnessed the Prophet and could testify to his teachings had also passed away by this time. The ban on the Prophet's narrations, which had taken effect shortly after his demise, worsened the situation. Thus, the Muslims were split in the theological beliefs that were even contradictory to each other.

Khawarij was one of the false theologies which led people to believe that a person who has committed a major sin is an unbeliever and was ousted from the religion. They regarded Imam Ali and some of the other caliphs as unbelievers, and were in continuous dispute with the government. On the contrary, Morje'e was a group that believed one should not condemn the actions of any person, alive or deceased, and should leave all judgements to God for the hereafter. This indifference was clearly against the teachings of the Prophet, and his command to enjoin the good and forbid the evil. This theology was strongly supported by Banu Marwan's government, since their injustice and oppression were not held accountable. Jabriyah was another theological belief at the time. They believed that everything occurs according to God's will and people should accept this enforced reality, and should not object to it. As a consequence of this theology, no one was allowed to object to the government's actions. On the contrary, there was another group called Qadariyah which had considered full freedom for human actions.

The Imam strongly confronted these false theologies and demonstrated

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the reality for the Muslims. Many of the Imam's debates with the leaders of these theological groups are narrated in history. The Imam argued with the Khawarij's leaders about their opinions, and falsified their argument that Imam Ali was an unbeliever since he had accepted negotiation with Muawiyah after the Battle of Siffin. The Imam used logical arguments, citing the Holy Quran and the Prophet's traditions to negate their arguments. The Imam also rebutted the theology of Morje'e in his debates by describing characteristics of true Islamic faith. The Imam argued with Jabriyah and Qadariyah that God's blessings are greater than the fact that He would force mankind to commit sins and then punish them for what they did. On the other hand, God is stronger than making an intention and not being able to fulfill it. The Imam expressed his moderate opinion and said that the space between these two extreme opinions is far greater than the space between the heavens and the Earth. The Imam also confronted the Ghulat, or the people who would exaggerate the status of the Ahlul-Bayt and would regard them at the level of God. The Imam publicly rejected and cursed their leaders for giving incorrect attributes to the Ahlul-Bayt. The Imam also challenged the thoughts of the Israelites that had entered and blended with the Islamic beliefs, as they portrayed a distorted and corrupt image of the Biblical and Quranic Prophets.

The Imam's engagement in education and interaction with the people in society did not stop him from working hard to earn sustenance. He used to work on a farm along with his laborers. He would not leave an overbearing task for his workers, unless he would himself be involved in completing the task. Once, a leader of the religious ascetics saw the Imam working on the farm during a very hot time of the day, sweating and looking exhausted. He told the Imam to stop working for the sake of this world, as death might overcome him. The Imam responded, "If my death comes at this time, it has met me at the best time since I am obeying God and am working to suffice myself from you and others." He then said, "I should rather be afraid if death meets me while I am disobeying God." The Imam's response was an example of his practical efforts to show true Islamic teachings to the people and guide those



who had found the Islamic practice in isolating themselves from this world.

## **5-4-During the Government of Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz**

### **5-4-1-Umar in Power<sup>49</sup>**

When Sulayman was on his deathbed, he made a sudden decision to nominate his cousin, Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz, to take his position instead of his brother, Yazid, and appointed his brother as the successor to his cousin. Umar had a fair ruling strategy compared to the other Umayyad governors. He had a special respect for the scholars and was interested in receiving their advice. His short government of around 2.5 years was a relief for the people who had suffered from the Umayyads.

### **5-4-2-The Imam's Invitation to Damascus**

Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz had respect for the Imam and was interested in seeking his advice. The Imam advised and guided him for the benefit of the Muslims. However, the Imam never endorsed his government nor any other Umayyad's. When Umar came to power, he sent an invitation for the Imam to come and meet him. The Imam accepted his invitation and went to Damascus. Umar provided the Imam with hospitality and sought his advice. The Imam recommended him to seek piety and to consider the elderly Muslims as his own father, the middle-aged Muslims as his own brothers, and the young Muslims as his own children. The Imam recommended that he practice kindness and mercy for his children, forgiveness for his brother, and good deeds for his father. The Imam asked him to be persistent in doing good deeds. Umar was surprised by the Imam's comprehensive advice and said, "You have given me instructions that, if implemented with God's help, would have eternal benefit for me."

### **5-4-3-Umar's Actions**

During his short government, Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz performed a series

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<sup>49</sup> Safar, 99 AH (Imam's age: 41)

of unprecedented actions that were beneficial to the people and the Ahlul-Bayt. He confiscated unlawful wealth that was taken by the Umayyads, and returned it to the Bayt al-Mal (public treasury). When collecting taxes, he was lenient and showed kindness to both Muslims and non-Muslims. He also asked his governor in Medina to distribute considerable funds among the children of Imam Ali (AS) and Lady Fatimah (SA), as they had been stripped from their rights for a long period of time. He also returned the Land of Fadak to Imam Baqir and stopped the cursing of Imam Ali from the pulpits. He also removed the ban from narrating the Prophet's traditions.

Once, Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz visited Medina and Imam Baqir went to meet him. In their conversations, the Imam advised him about the short duration of this world and the importance of preparation for the hereafter. The Imam told him that this world is like one of the markets, where some leave it with deeds that benefit them, while others leave it with deeds that harm them. The Imam then advised him to look after deeds that would please God in the hereafter and stop deeds that would displease him. The Imam also advised him to help the oppressed people and return their rights. Umar adhered to the Imam's words. He wrote a letter and returned the Land of Fadak to the Imam. Fadak was a precious land that had fruitful gardens with palm trees, and was gifted to Lady Fatimah by her father, the Holy Prophet. Fadak was confiscated by the first caliph after the Prophet's demise, and had never been returned to the children of Lady Fatimah since.

Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz also stopped the cursing of Imam Ali from the pulpits all across the Islamic territory. This horrible tradition had been initiated by Muawiyah due to his hostility towards Imam Ali and the Ahlul-Bayt. Muawiyah aggressively propagated this tradition after seizing the caliphate following the peace treaty with Imam Hasan. This unfortunate custom was continued by the other Umayyads after Muawiyah until the time of Umar, for about 60 years. It is said that either Umar's father or his childhood teacher was his guide in realizing the elevated status of Imam Ali.

Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz also removed the ban of narrating the traditions of the Prophet. This ban was placed by the first caliph shortly after the Prophet's demise, with the justification that it would divide the Muslims and that the Quran was sufficient. This strict ban continued to be enforced by the second and the third caliphs, and the Umayyad rulers until the time of Umar. Umar, who feared the loss of the Prophet's traditions with the passing of time, ordered the collection of the narrations.

#### **5-4-4-The Imam: Source of Divine Knowledge**

As a result of the narration ban, for approximately 90 years after the Prophet's demise, Muslims did not know much about the true Islam the Prophet practiced. Over this long period, many forged narrations were propagated among the Muslims by the rulers for their own political interests. As a consequence, authentic narrations from the Prophet were mixed with forged narrations. It was very hard, even for Islamic scholars to distinguish among them. For example, in the years later, Bukhari collected 600,000 narrations and only authenticated around 7,000 of them. These narrations were published in his book, Sahih al-Bukhari. Similarly, Abu-Dawud selected around 5,000 narrations that he felt were authentic in his Sunan book among a total of 500,000 collected narrations. Both books are regarded as core narration books among the Sunni schools of thought.

In this situation, everyone recognized the Imam's divine knowledge. The Imam had the most freedom for scientific activities and spreading his knowledge during Umar's government. He used this opportunity to establish himself as the main source for true Islamic teachings in society. His life was full of puzzling questions raised by the people to test his knowledge, and his answers to these questions would prove his knowledge. He also availed every opportunity to debate with various so-called Islamic scholars who were falsely interpreting the Quran or fabricating narrations. The Imam would use Quranic evidence and intellectual justifications to overcome them.

The Imam was the most authentic narrator of the traditions of the

Prophet and the best interpreter of the Holy Quran. The Imam narrated authentic narrations from the Prophet and his forefathers. He had mentioned his forefathers as the chain of reference for his narrations from the Prophet. There are thousands of narrations cited from Imam Baqir, which is the second highest number among the Shia Imams after his son, Imam Sadiq (AS). He also presented the correct interpretation of the Holy Quran for the Muslims who used to have different opinions about its interpretation. He used to encourage the Muslims to ask for a reference to the Quran for every part of his speech. There is a commentary of the Holy Quran known as ‘Abu Jarud’, which is attributed to the Imam.

### **5-4-5-Umar’s Death<sup>50</sup>**

Despite Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz’s fair character and his valued actions, the Imam did not endorse him or any other Umayyad caliph. The Imam viewed them as the usurpers of the position that belonged to him as the true successor of the Prophet. On the night when Umar passed away in Syria, the Imam was far away from him in Medina. The Imam said, “Someone has passed away tonight whom the residents of the earth cry for, yet the angels in heaven curse.” It is said that the Umayyads who were against Umar’s ruling strategy poisoned and eliminated him.

## **5-5-During the Government of Yazid II**

### **5-5-1-Yazid II in Power**

After Umar, Yazid ibn Abdul-Malik, or Yazid II, assumed power. Yazid II ruled for approximately four years. Initially, he continued Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz’s ruling strategies for a short period. However, the Umayyads convinced him to change his ruling approach. They brought him 40 witnesses from the elders who testified that there will be no trial for the caliphs in the hereafter. Thus, Yazid reverted the ruling strategy of Umar, and followed the footsteps of the other Umayyads. He

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<sup>50</sup> 25 Rajab, 101 AH (Imam’s age: 44)

pressured the people by forcefully collecting high taxes, a practice that was in place prior to Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz.

Yazid ibn Abdul-Malik, similar to Yazid ibn Muawiyah, drank alcohol, womanized, and indulged in other sinful behaviors. He had a wine pool to swim in while womanizing. He had two slave mistresses who had overpowered his mind through their love. One day, he was spending time with one of his mistresses and she coincidentally died by choking. Yazid didn't leave her body for three days, and his grief for her passing led to his death a few days later.

### **5-5-2-The Imam: Splitter of Knowledge**

Imam Baqir continued his father, Imam Sajjad's efforts, to interpret the true Islamic teachings. The Imam was known as Baqir, which means the splitter of knowledge, and was given this title by the Prophet. The Prophet knew that the Imam would reveal and expand the secrets of the Islamic sciences and had great respect for him. Today, the Imam is also known as the founder of Fiqh, or "Islamic jurisprudence" in the Shia school of thought. Fiqh is the knowledge about Islamic laws according to the Quran and the teachings and practices of the Prophet. The Imam not only responded to the thousands of Fiqh questions raised by Muslims during his life, but also established the principles that are used in Fiqh to derive the Islamic laws, known as the Usul al-Fiqh. These principles are still used by scholars to interpret Islamic laws for newly emerged questions. Furthermore, there are many narrations available from the Imam on other Islamic sciences, such as the interpretation of the Quran, traditions of the Prophet, ethics, history, judicial affairs, medicine, and Ilm al-Kalam, which is about defending the principles of the Islamic faith against skeptics.

The Imam established an Islamic university to benefit hundreds of students who were interested in learning Islamic studies. The names of more than 460 of the Imam's students are recorded in history. No one would visit Medina without attending the Imam's lectures to benefit from his knowledge. Many of the Islamic scholars would sit by the Imam humbly to learn from his knowledge, similar to a child sitting in

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the presence of an honorable teacher. Many of the people who had benefited from the Imam's knowledge were non-Shias, such as Abu-Hanifa, the founder of the Hanafi school of thought.

Many students came from all over the Islamic territory to Medina to benefit from the Imam's knowledge, especially from Kufa, in Iraq, and Khorasan, in Iran. These students then travelled all over the Islamic territory. They played a key role in propagating the Islamic teachings and familiarizing the Muslims with the Imam. As a result, Khorasan provided the grounds for the followers of the Ahlul-Bayt after Kufa. It became the center for the emergence of the Abbasid uprising and the destruction of the Umayyads in the upcoming years.

Imam Baqir also had a few notable companions who greatly contributed in recording and spreading the Imam's knowledge. Muhammad ibn Muslim is one of those who recorded 30,000 narrations from the Imam, and was known as one of the most knowledgeable scholars among the Shias. Zurarah ibn A'ayan was another notable companion and more than 1,200 narrations from Imam Baqir are narrated by him in the Fiqh books. Aban ibn Taqlib was a scholar whom the Imam had asked to sit in the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina and answer the people's questions regarding Islamic laws. With this, the Imam began to connect with people through his representatives. This strategy was further developed by the next Imams and became an effective method to propagate Shi'ism. Jabir ibn Yazid al-Ju'fi is another scholar who had recorded 70,000 secret narrations from Imam Baqir. He was instructed by the Imam to hide these narrations from the people. When he complained to the Imam that the knowledge in his chest burdened him, the Imam recommended that he go to a desert, dig a hole, and talk to the hole about his narrations.

## 5-6-During the Government of Hisham

### 5-6-1-Hisham ibn Abdul-Malik in Power<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> 105 AH (Imam's age: 48)

After Yazid, his brother, Hisham, assumed power. He ruled for around 20 years and was the last powerful ruler of the Umayyads before their destruction. He was very picky and would personally supervise work-related affairs. He was very stingy, jealous, cruel, and heartless. He was the one who began hating Imam Sajjad ever since he saw the people respecting the Imam, while being indifferent to him near the Ka'ba during the Hajj season. His hatred and conspiracy encouraged his brother, Valeed, to order the poisoning and martyrdom of Imam Sajjad.

### **5-6-2-Hisham in Hajj**

Imam Baqir used Hajj as an opportunity to introduce himself to the Muslims as the true source of the Islamic teachings. During the Hajj season, the Imam was surrounded by the crowds of pilgrims from all over the Islamic territory who were interested in finding convincing answers to their questions. The Imam was once seen sitting by the Ka'ba, and he did not leave his position until he responded to 1,000 of their Islamic Fiqh questions.

One year, Hisham went to Mecca for Hajj<sup>52</sup> and saw the Muslims gather around Imam Baqir in large crowds to ask him their questions. Hisham was also informed by his brother that Imam Baqir's son, Imam Sadiq has delivered a powerful speech for the pilgrims about the honor and divine status of the Shia Imams. Hisham decided to humiliate Imam Baqir. He sent one scholar to ask the Imam some difficult questions, but the Imam was able to respond to all of the questions. The scholar returned to Hisham, admitting the Imam's knowledge. Hisham was very angry with the outcome, but he decided not to confront the Imam during Hajj. However, right after Hajj, he summoned the Imam and his son, Imam Sadiq, to his palace in Damascus to intimidate them.

### **5-6-3-The Imam Summoned to Damascus**

When Imam Baqir arrived in Damascus, Hisham did not allow him to enter his palace for three days. On the fourth day, he accepted the Imam

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<sup>52</sup> Zu al-Hijjah, 106 AH (Imam's age: 49)

into his palace, where he had arranged for an archery exercise to humiliate the Imam. Hisham had assumed that the Imam was only a scholar and would not have any military skill. He insisted that the Imam participate in archery, but the Imam showed hesitance. The Imam finally accepted the challenge and shot an arrow which landed exactly on the target. He continued his archery and shot nine arrows in such a manner that each arrow landed on the tail of the previous arrow. Hisham was shocked by the Imam's skill and performance, and confessed that the Imam was the best archer he had ever witnessed.

Hisham later met the Imam and angrily asked him, "How is it that you are chosen by God for His knowledge while we are all from the same Arab origin?" The Imam responded that Prophet only chose Imam Ali for sharing his secrets by referring to this verse of the Quran [75:16], "Do not move your tongue too quickly to recite the Quran." and God revealed this verse for describing Imam Ali's status [69:12], "And that receptive ears might remember it." The Imam said that the Prophet taught 1,000 doors of knowledge to Imam Ali, and each door had 1,000 doors within it. The Imam said that this knowledge is passed down solely to us from Imam Ali. Hisham asked, "How did (Imam) Ali know the knowledge of the unknown while God has kept it solely for Himself?" The Imam responded by saying that God has revealed a book to His Prophet that contains the knowledge of the past and everything that will happen until the Day of judgment by referring to these verses of the Quran [16:89], "We have revealed to you the Book, as an explanation of all things, and guidance, and mercy, and good news for those who submit" and [36:12], "We have tallied all things in a clear record" and [6:38], "We neglected nothing in the Scripture." Hisham was unable to respond to the Imam's Quranic justifications, and eventually allowed the Imam to return to Medina.

When the Imam left Hisham's palace, he saw a crowd of Christians who were waiting to meet their most knowledgeable leader. Their leader would appear once a year to answer their questions. The Imam went among them as well. When the Christian leader saw the Imam and



realized that he was a Muslim, he decided to humiliate the Imam by asking him a challenging question. He asked the Imam how he could prove that the people in heaven eat and drink without any need to discharge. The Imam said, "The proof is a baby who is in a mother's womb and eats without any discharge." The Christian leader realized the Imam is a knowledgeable Muslim and asked him another question, "How would you prove that the fruits in heaven don't decrease upon use?" The Imam replied, "The proof is similar to a candle flame that can light hundreds of other candles, yet its own light does not decrease." The leader was shocked and asked the Imam another question, "When is the time which is neither a part of the day nor the night?" The Imam said, "This is the time between dawn and sunrise." The leader then raised his voice and swore that the Imam would not be able to respond to his last question. He asked, "Who are the two who were born together and died together on the same day while one lived for 50 years and the other for 150?" The Imam said, "They are the Prophet Ezra (Uzair) and his twin brother. Ezra passed by a ruined town and asked God how He could bring them back to life after their death. God took his life for 100 years to show him His power. He died with his brother at the same time while he had lived for 100 years less than his brother." The Christian leader felt humiliated and left the crowd, promising not to appear in front of them ever again. The news of the Imam's debate with the Christian leader spread quickly in Damascus. Hisham feared people gathering around the Imam in the heart of his government, so he sent a messenger to the Imam, asking him to leave the city immediately.

Hisham sent a messenger to Madyan, a city between Damascus and Medina, which was historically the city of Prophet Shuaib (Jethro). Hisham introduced Imam Baqir and his son, Imam Sadiq, as unbelievers who had converted to Christianity and warned the people to avoid any greeting or trade with them. Hisham's goal was for the Imam to perish by hunger during the long desert travel between Damascus and Medina. When the Imam arrived at Madyan, the people did not open the city doors to the Imam and used abusive language

toward him. The Imam talked to them, but they did not listen. Imam Baqir then went to a mountain overlooking the city, and recited the verses in the Quran that describe the story of Prophet Shuaib. The Imam continued his recitation until the verse [11:86], “What is left by God is best for you, if you are believers. And I am not a guardian over you.” The Imam then said, ‘I swear by God we are who God has left for you.’ A strong wind blew and took the Imam’s words to the city for everyone to hear. An old man screamed that the Imam is standing on a place that Prophet Shuaib would stand to invite the people of Madyan, and he warned the people to allow the Imam into the city before God’s punishment arrived. The people became frightened and opened the doors of the city to trade with the Imam. The Imam then safely returned to Medina after having confronted Hisham, defeating all of his conspiracies.

### **5-6-4-Peaceful Confrontation**

Hisham hated Imam Baqir and his Shia followers. The Imam was under the most pressure during Hisham’s government. Hisham asked his governors to increase the pressure on the Shias and deprive them of their rights. He also banned the people of Iraq, who were the largest Shia community, from meeting the Imam freely in Medina. He ordered his governor in Kufa to kill Komait, a poet who had recited poetry to praise the status of Imam Baqir and the Ahlul-Bayt. Komait escaped from Kufa to save his life, but eventually had to recite poetry praising Hisham and his son to seek Hisham’s forgiveness. Hisham had also ordered the killing of Jabir ibn Yazid al-Ju’fi, one of the Imam’s notable companions. However, by the Imam’s secret message to Jabir, Jabir pretended to be insane and saved his life. The Imam had advised his followers to distance themselves from the Umayyads, and not to accept any governmental position.

Imam Baqir did not endorse any request from his followers for an uprising against the injustices of the Umayyads. Once, a Kufan man told the Imam that he has many loyal Shia followers in Kufa. The Imam replied by doubting their sincerity to him. He said that if 313 loyal

companions gather around an Imam, equaling the number of the Prophet's companions in the Battle of Badr, it is obligatory upon an Imam to rise up against the injustice of the government. In one incident, the Imam's brother, Zaid, wanted to initiate an uprising against the Umayyads. The Imam convinced him to change his mind by reminding him of the disloyal nature of the Kufans. Around seven years after the martyrdom of Imam Baqir, Zaid initiated an uprising against Hisham. Although Kufans had paid allegiance to support Zaid in secrecy, when Zaid initiated his uprising, only a fraction of them stayed loyal to him. Zaid fought bravely with his loyal army and was eventually martyred. This historical event supports Imam Baqir's wise decision to keep himself away from an uprising to save himself as the only source of guidance in that society during his time.

#### **5-6-5-The Abbasid's Hidden Activities**

The Abbasids, who were the children of the Prophet's uncle, Abbas, had started their hidden political activities against the Umayyads. They increased these hidden activities during the government of Hisham by sending delegates to Khorasan to take allegiance for the Prophet's family from the people on behalf of the government. This shows the public interest and respect that was present for the Ahlul-Bayt in the Islamic territory, including Khorasan. In the later years, the Abbasids took advantage of the people's love for the Ahlul-Bayt in order to replace the Umayyads with their own.

#### **5-6-6-Martyrdom**

Although Imam Baqir was pursuing a peaceful confrontation with the government, Hisham had hatred towards the Imam. Hisham feared the Imam's social popularity as the most knowledgeable person in society. The events that occurred during the Imam's visit to Damascus also influenced Hisham's decision to martyr the Imam. These events included the Imam's archery skills, his debate with Hisham leading to Hisham's humiliation, and his debate with the Christian leader, which spread the Imam's name among the Syrians. Thus, Ibrahim ibn Valeed, Hisham's nephew and the governor of Medina, poisoned the Imam by

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Hisham's orders. There is historical evidence suggesting that the Imam might have been poisoned multiple times by the Umayyad rulers, but God had saved him.

As a result of the poisoning, the Imam became very sick. He informed everyone that he would not make it to the following day. When the Imam was on his deathbed, he made a will to his son, Imam Sadiq, to spend a part of his wealth to hold a mourning service in Mina during Hajj season for 10 years, to remind people about the oppression against him from the government. Imam Baqir also asked Imam Sadiq to bring some of the elders of Medina as witnesses for his will. In his will, he asked Imam Sadiq to take care of his burial and requested him to follow some specific instructions for his shroud and grave. Later, Imam Sadiq asked his father about the reason for having witnesses for such simple requests, to which Imam Baqir replied that he wanted to avoid any doubt after him, and have the people realize that Imam Sadiq was his rightful successor and the next Imam.

Imam Baqir's soul ascended, and he passed away on the 7th of Zu al-Hijjah, in the year 114 Hijri, at the age of 57. Imam Sadiq took care of his father's funeral and was followed by crowds of grieving Muslims. Imam Baqir was buried at the cemetery of Baqir' next to the graves of his father, Imam Sajjad (AS), and his great uncle, Imam Hasan (AS).

### **5-7-Conclusion**

The Imamate of Imam Baqir was at the beginning of the second Islamic century. After a long political unrest that occurred following the tragedy of Karbala, power was finally stable in Banu Marwan's family, who were from the Umayyads. At that time, the Islamic society was under the influence of various false theological beliefs, and each one had its own set of followers. Islamic scholars had different opinions on Islamic laws and beliefs due to their different interpretations of the Quran and the Prophet's teachings. This was also impacted by the ban on narrations from the Prophet that was in place right after his demise, which discontinued the true teachings of the Prophet for the new generations

of the Muslims.

Imam Baqir, in almost 20 years of his Imamatus, split the doors of Islamic knowledge and sciences from their divine source for the Muslims who were eager to learn it. The Imam provided the Muslims with authentic narrations from his forefathers and the Holy Prophet. He familiarized them with the correct interpretation of the Holy Quran and challenged the false beliefs that had spread through Islamic society. The Imam used every opportunity to connect the Muslims with true Islamic teachings, and revitalized them in society. The Imam had a better situation in the first half of his Imamatus to spread his knowledge, due to the short-lived rulings of governors who did not find time to confront the Imam. However, during the second half of his Imamatus, when Hisham established his government, Hisham put pressure on the Imam and his activities.

The time of Imam Baqir was different as compared to the time of Imam Sajjad. Imam Sajjad did not even have 20 followers within the entire cities of Mecca and Medina. Imam Baqir was instead surrounded by crowds of people who were interested to know more about true Islam. He created an Islamic university in Medina, where many students from all over the Islamic territory attended. These students later travelled through the Islamic territory, and introduced the people to the teachings of the Imam. This led to public awareness about the Ahlul-Bayt, which was one of the main reasons for the destruction of the Umayyads in the upcoming years.

At the time of Imam Baqir, the people recognized the unlimited divine knowledge of an Imam. From then on, the Imams became the source of knowledge to address people's questions. The Imam's Shia followers learned Islamic laws regarding various aspects of their practices directly from the Imam's teachings, and they spread this knowledge to the other Muslims; whereas before they had to refer to other Muslims with their inquiries. Imam Baqir provided an environment for his son, Imam Sadiq, to continue and expand his scientific work to a much greater extent by training thousands of students. As a result, Imam Baqir and

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Imam Sadiq have the largest number of narrations among all of the 12 Shia Imams, which are in the thousands, and are preserved for us until today. Therefore, the Shia school of thought would not have the scientific and cultural backbone without the efforts of these two Imams.

**IMAM BAQIR (AS):**

**“A scholar whose knowledge benefits the people is better than the worship of 70,000 worshippers.”**