

9- IMAM JAVAD (AS): THE IMAM OF GENEROSITY

This chapter reviews the life of Imam Javad (AS) and provides an overview of his social, scientific, and political achievements. It also highlights the unique aspect of the Imamate of Imam Javad, which was that his Imamate was at a very young age.

9-1-During the Government of Amin

9-1-1-Birth

Imam Muhammad ibn Ali (AS), also known as Javad or Taqi, was born on the 15th of Ramazan in the year 195 Hijri in Medina. He was given the title of Abu-Ja'far by his father Imam Reza (AS), which was originally the title of Imam Baqir (AS). To distinguish him from Imam Baqir, he would also be called Abu-Ja'far al-Thani, or "The Second Abu-Ja'far". He was the only child of Imam Reza. His mother was Lady Sabikeh who, before marrying Imam Reza, was a slave. Similar to Najmeh Khatoon, the mother of Imam Reza, Lady Sabikeh was also originally from an area in Africa that is between modern day Egypt and Sudan. She belonged to the same tribe as Maria al-Qibtiyya, the Prophet's wife and the mother of Ibrahim, who passed away in early childhood during the life of the Prophet. To purge bad memories from the period of her captivity, Imam Reza also called her by the name of Khayzuran. She was unique in piety among the other women of her time. She had such great status that, years earlier, before Imam Kazim's imprisonment, Imam Kazim had asked someone to pass his greetings to her.

9-1-2-Difficulties of Late Fatherhood

Imam Javad was born when his father Imam Reza was 46-years old, when 12 years had passed from the start of Imam Reza's Imamat. During these 12 years, many doubted if Imam Reza was the true Imam of the time, as he did not have a son to inherit the Imamat. Among the skeptics were the Vaghefi Shias, who did not believe in the Imamat of Imam Reza, and were looking for any excuse to challenge his Imamat. Imam Reza was patient with the accusations against him. He would confidently respond with a prophecy that God will certainly bless him with a son who will inherit the Imamat after him.

Even after Imam Reza's prophecy became a reality and Imam Javad was born, the accusations against him did not stop. Some doubted and spread rumors that Imam Javad was not really Imam Reza's son. This

went so far that even some of the Imam's close relatives were also influenced by the rumors. They came to the Imam and questioned Imam Javad's darker complexion, which was rare in the family. They asked the Imam to allow them to bring some experts who could confirm that Imam Reza was the biological father of Imam Javad, by matching their faces and body gestures. Due to their insistence, the Imam finally agreed. The experts came and verified that Imam Reza was indeed Imam Javad's biological father.

9-1-3-Honorable Childhood

The Imam Javad's birth brought great joy to Imam Reza and his family. This was not only because Imam Reza had become a father at an old age, but also because it verified his Imamat. The Shia community gained trust and confidence in their belief in the Imamat of Imam Reza, as he now had a son to become his successor. Imam Reza described Imam Javad as a newborn more auspicious and blessed for the Shias than any other newborns. The Imam would stand by Imam Javad's cradle and speak to him in private for a long time. When Imam Reza was asked about their conversation, he responded that he was giving his son the benefits of his knowledge.

Imam Reza had frequently introduced Imam Javad as his successor in the Imamat, to his companions and representatives, despite Imam Javad's very young age. Once, one of Imam Reza's companions asked him whom he should refer to after the Imam. Imam Reza revealed Imam Javad as his successor. The companion reacted with surprise at Imam Javad's very young age, who was just 3 years old. Imam Reza responded that age is not a limitation for the Imamat. Imam Reza then continued with the example of Prophet Jesus from the Quran, who began his Prophethood as a newborn.

Imam Reza had special honor and respect for his only child, Imam Javad. He would always call Imam Javad by his title of Abu-Ja'far instead of his original name Muhammad, which in Arab culture, shows respect. Also, when Imam Reza travelled to Merv, he would address Imam Javad with his title of Abu-Ja'far in his letters.

Imam Javad was also very attached to his beloved father. Before Imam Reza was taken to Merv, he had taken Imam Javad to Mecca for pilgrimage. The Imam, at such a young age, had realized that his father was performing his farewell prayers around the Ka'ba as if it were his last visit. Imam Javad was extremely saddened and did not move from his place until Imam Reza asked him to do so.

9-2-During the Government of Ma'mun

9-2-1-Ma'mun in Power

After multiple battles that took place over a course of more than two years, Ma'mun was finally able to defeat and kill¹¹⁰ his brother Amin. With Amin's death, Ma'mun officially became the only Abbasid Caliph. Instead of returning to the original Abbasid capital of Baghdad, Ma'mun decided to stay in Merv, present day Mary in Turkmenistan, and made it the capital of his government. However, his government was unstable, and various uprisings and riots threatened his power. The main threat to his government was led by the Alavids, who viewed the Abbasids as an illegitimate government from its very beginning. The term Alavids refers to the children of Imam Ali (AS), which also include the Prophet's descendants from his daughter, Lady Fatimah (SA). The Alavid uprisings were initiated in Kufa by one of the descendants of Imam Hasan (AS), known as Ibn Tabataba. The uprising in Kufa quickly spread to other cities including Mecca, Medina, Yemen, Basrah, Madain, and Ahvaz, and became a serious threat for Ma'mun's newly established government. After around ten challenging months, Ma'mun was finally able to defeat these widespread uprisings.

9-2-2-Ma'mun's Plot for Imam Reza

Although Ma'mun was able to defeat the widespread Alavid uprisings, he could not put an end to the long years of conflict between the Alavids and the Abbasids. Thus, Ma'mun, who is known as the most

¹¹⁰ Rabi' al-Awwal, 198 AH (Imam's age: 2)

strategic caliph among the other Abbasid Caliphs, decided to find an innovative solution to deal with the potential threat of the Alavids. He decided to associate the Alavids with his government. He chose Imam Reza for his plot, who was the most well-known character among the Alavids. Imam Reza was famous among the Muslims for his divine knowledge, due to years of scientific work and contributions in Medina. Imam Reza was also the spiritual leader and the Imam for Shia Muslims.

To implement his plot, Ma'mun sent invitations and insisted that the Imam travel to Merv and meet him. The Imam rejected all of Ma'mun's invitations, but could not change his decision. Finally, Ma'mun sent military delegates to Medina to bring the Imam to Merv. Imam Reza realized that Ma'mun would not stop, and was finally forced to travel to Merv along with Ma'mun's delegates¹¹¹.

Before leaving Medina, Imam Reza held the hand of his beloved five-year old son, Imam Javad, and visited the tomb of the Holy Prophet. He sought the Prophet's protection for his son. Imam Reza then asked his companions and representatives to obey Imam Javad, and revealed him as his successor to the Imamat.

9-2-3-Imam Reza in Merv

After Imam Reza was brought to Merv¹¹², Ma'mun finally informed the Imam about his real intentions. Over a course of about two months, there were multiple discussions between Ma'mun and the Imam about having the Imam take a role in the government. The Imam rejected all of Ma'mun's offers. Eventually, Ma'mun lost his patience and threatened to kill the Imam. It was then that the Imam accepted Ma'mun's offer to be the Crown Prince, with certain conditions¹¹³. The Imam emphasized that his role would only be to observe governmental affairs from a distance and serve strictly as a consultant. With these conditions, the Imam prohibited Ma'mun from making any

¹¹¹ Travel began at 25 Zu al-Qa'dah, 200 AH (Imam's age: 5)

¹¹² Arrival in Merv at 10 Jumada al-Thani, 201 AH (Imam's age: 5)

¹¹³ 7 Ramazan, 201 AH (Imam's age: 5)

governmental decision using the Imam's name or influence on the hearts of the people.

Part of Ma'mun's plot in bringing Imam Reza to Merv was to isolate him from the people and his Shia followers. Thus, Ma'mun put the Imam's life under intense surveillance. A year after the Imam's arrival in Merv, Ma'mun proposed that his daughter, Um-Habib, marry Imam Reza, and insisted that the Imam marry her. Through this marriage, Ma'mun was able to monitor all aspects of the Imam's private life. Furthermore, Ma'mun, who knew that Imam Reza already had a beloved son, decided to promise his other daughter, Um-Fazl, to Imam Javad while both Imam Javad and Um-Fazl were very young. He made this decision in Imam Javad's absence, whom he had never even met.

When Imam Reza was in Merv, he missed his beloved son and communicated with him through letters. In one letter, Imam Reza advised Imam Javad to use the main entrance of his house, despite the opinion of his caretakers. They wanted Imam Javad to use the other door of the house to avoid any contact between him and the needy, who would wait in front of the main entrance of the Imam's house in hopes of receiving charity. In the letter, Imam Reza also specified a minimum amount of charity for Imam Javad in his donations. With this advice, Imam Reza wanted the title of 'Javad', which means generous, to shine in his son's character. Thus, Imam Javad was well known for his generosity even before his Imamat.

9-2-4-Martyrdom of Imam Reza¹¹⁴

As time passed, Ma'mun realized that his plots against Imam Reza were ineffective. Also, the situation in Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasids, was unstable and out of control. The Abbasid royal family was outraged by Ma'mun's decision to appoint Imam Reza as his Crown Prince. They could not tolerate seeing the future of the Abbasid government fall into the Alavid lineage. They selected Ibrahim ibn Mahdi, one of their family members, as their chosen caliph and they all paid allegiance to him.

¹¹⁴ Last day of Safar, 203 AH (Imam's age: 7)

Thus, Ma'mun decided to personally move to Baghdad to handle the instability in the city. He knew that the Abbasids would never approve Imam Reza as his Crown Prince. Ma'mun believed that the Abbasids would still accept him as their caliph if he could eliminate their objection by killing Imam Reza.

Ma'mun wanted to prepare a favorable environment in Baghdad ahead of his arrival. Therefore, he decided to eliminate Imam Reza as soon as possible. On their way to Baghdad, Ma'mun and his army stopped by his father, Haroon's tomb, which was in a garden near the city of Tus in Khorasan. Here, Ma'mun called the Imam to his presence and poisoned him. Thus, Imam Reza became the only Shia Imam directly poisoned by the hand of a Muslim caliph. He was martyred after being Ma'mun's Crown Prince for only about a year and half.

When Imam Reza was on his deathbed, Ma'mun came to visit him. He told the Imam that he did not know which tragedy was harder for him, losing the Imam or the people's accusations that he was responsible for the Imam's condition. The Imam ignored Ma'mun's words. He only opened his eyes and told Ma'mun to treat his son Imam Javad well. The Imam warned him with a prophecy, that both of them would die in a short period from each other.

During the last hours of Imam Reza's life, his companion, Abasalt Heravi, saw a young boy inside the Imam's residence. He asked the boy how he had entered the house, as he had closed all of the entrance doors because Imam Reza was sick and could not meet anyone. The boy responded that the Almighty, who had brought him from Medina to Tus in just a moment, had gotten him into the house through the closed door. Abasalt asked him who he was, and the boy responded that he was his Imam, Muhammad ibn Ali (Imam Javad). He said that he was there to meet and bid farewell to his lonely and poisoned father. When Imam Reza saw his seven-and-a-half-year-old son, he got up and hugged him. They talked in private for a while, until the Imam's soul ascended to the heavens. Imam Javad then performed his father's rituals alone. He washed and prayed over the Imam's body, and then

disappeared without anyone else noticing his presence.

9-2-5-Beginning of Imam

After the martyrdom of Imam Reza, Imam Javad publicly declared his Imamate in Medina. He came to the Mosque of the Prophet, stepped on the Prophet's pulpit, and addressed the people. He introduced himself and told the people that he is the one with divine knowledge.

In the beginning of Imam Javad's Imamate, there was great confusion among the Shias about his eligibility for the Imamate. Undoubtedly, Imam Reza had only one child to inherit the Imamate from him. However, it was difficult for some Shias to accept the Imamate of a seven-and-a-half-year-old boy who was much younger than the Islamic pubertal age of 15. This confusion caused some divisions among the Shia community. Some referred to the Vaghefis or Zaidis, and some others sought their Imam from among the brothers of Imam Reza. Furthermore, those who were against Shia theology found a great opportunity to mock the Shia belief in the Imamate of a young boy.

The confusion in recognizing the Imam of the time was not limited to ordinary Shia followers, but also included some Shia elders who doubted the Imamate of Imam Javad. When the news of Imam Reza's martyrdom reached Baghdad, the Shia elders and scholars held a meeting in their house to discuss the next Imam. In this meeting, one of the elders suggested taking care of Imam Javad until he aged and could take leadership of the Shia community. His suggestion received a strong reaction by another elder, who responded that if the Imamate is granted by God to even a one-day old child, his knowledge is superior than an old scholar's; and if it is not granted by God, then even a thousand-year-old person would have the same knowledge as an ordinary person. This latter opinion was approved by the other Shia elders. However, they decided to visit Medina and personally investigate the true Imam of the time.

After a few months, the Hajj season arrived. The Shias, particularly about eighty of their elders and scholars, stopped by Medina during

their travel to perform Hajj. In their gathering in Medina, Abdullah, one of the brothers of Imam Reza, came and someone from the audience told them to ask him questions as their Imam. However, some of the scholars challenged his Imamat. They told the others that we have received narrations from Imam Baqir (AS) and Imam Sadiq (AS) that it is impossible for two brothers to become an Imam, except in the case of Imam Hasan (AS) and Imam Hossein (AS). Ever since the time of Imam Baqir, the Shias knew that the Imam of the time must have divine knowledge, and that they could verify his Imamat with their questions. Hence, they decided to verify Abdullah's knowledge by asking him some questions. However, he was not able to respond. His answers caused great disappointment to the audience, and they decided to leave the meeting. They said amongst themselves that they wished Imam Reza's son was older so that they were needless of someone like Abdullah.

At this time, Imam Javad entered the gathering. He addressed his uncle, Abdullah, and warned him about how difficult his situation would be in the hereafter in front of God. Imam Javad told him that God will question him about his ruling (Fatwa) over something that he did not have knowledge about, while someone more knowledgeable (than him) was present among the Muslims. The audience then repeated their questions, and Imam Javad provided them with correct and convincing answers according to the teachings of the Prophet and the previous Imams. The Imam's answers delighted and satisfied the audience. During their stay in Medina, the Shias asked many questions from Imam Javad. The number of questions that they asked were estimated to be in the thousands. For many of the questions, the Imam provided short answers or responded in advance, even before the question had completed. This in itself was a miracle and validated the fact that the Imam held the knowledge of the unseen.

Once the Shias verified Imam Javad's divine knowledge, they began to have faith in his Imamat. They did not have any doubt that the Imam's knowledge was given to him directly by God, and the Imam could not

have obtained his knowledge through education due to his very young age. Thus, many Shias who had been attracted to the other sects such as the Vaghefis also returned to accept Imam Javad's Imamatus. Thus, the majority of Imam Reza's Shia followers also followed Imam Javad as their next Imam. However, out of curiosity, they frequently questioned Imam Javad about his Imamatus at such a young age. The Imam would respond in various ways. Once, the Imam told them about the story of Prophet Solomon, about when his father, Prophet David, appointed him as his successor while he was just a young boy. The elders and the scholars of the Israelites initially rejected this decision, but God provided them with a miracle to prove His selection for them. On another occasion, the Imam told them that God has repeated in the Imamatus what he had chosen for the Prophethood in the past. The Imam then reminded them about the Prophethood of Prophet John at a young age by referring to the following verse of the Quran [19:12] "We granted him (John) wisdom while yet a child". Prophet Jesus is another example who announced his prophethood as a newborn, as mentioned in the following verse of the Quran [19:30] "He (Jesus) said: Verily I am God's servant. He has granted me the Book and has made me a Prophet." On another occasion, the Imam clarified that the invitation to God is not dependent on the age of he who invites. He referred to the following verse of the Quran [12:108]: "Say, This is my way; I invite to God, based on clear knowledge—I and whoever follows me". The Imam then reminded them about Imam Ali as the first male to follow Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in his invitation to God while he was just nine years old.

9-2-6-Ma'mun's Plot for Imam Javad

After the martyrdom of Imam Reza, Ma'mun and his troops returned to the Abbasid capital of Baghdad and were able to bring the city under their control¹¹⁵. Ma'mun also changed the color of his outfit from green to black, which represented the Abbasids. With this decision, Ma'mun

¹¹⁵ 16 Safar, 204 AH (Imam's age: 8)

wanted the Abbasid's trust and loyalty, and to assure them that the Caliphate would stay in their family. Previously, when Ma'mun had selected Imam Reza as his Crown Prince, he had asked his governmental officials to wear green outfits to entice the Alavid's support.

Although Ma'mun had concealed his direct role in Imam Reza's poisoning and martyrdom, he was held responsible by the public as soon as the Imam was poisoned. When the Imam was on his deathbed, Ma'mun came to visit him. He told the Imam that he did not know which tragedy is harder for him, losing the Imam or the people's accusation that he was responsible for the Imam's condition. To portray his innocence, Ma'mun showed great sorrow and grief immediately after Imam Reza's martyrdom and during his burial. However, it became apparent to the people, especially for the Shias, that Ma'mun was in fact the one who had martyred the Imam. Ma'mun had brought Imam Reza to Merv and appointed him as his Crown Prince to peacefully remove the threat of the Alavid uprisings against his government. He was now afraid that his role in Imam Reza's martyrdom might trigger the Alavids into initiating military action against him. Thus, he decided to find a peaceful solution for this problem. He wanted to portray to the public that he still held as good a relationship with the Alavids as before.

Thus, about a year after the martyrdom of Imam Reza, Ma'mun decided to pursue his initial plan of marrying his daughter, Um-Fazl, to Imam Javad. He had promised Um-Fazl to Imam Javad around two years earlier in Merv during Imam Javad's absence. By this time, the Shias had verified Imam Javad's divine knowledge and had accepted his Imamat. Thus, Ma'mun knew that Imam Javad had the same status in the eyes of the Shias as his father, Imam Reza. The elevated status of Imam Reza had led Ma'mun to select the Imam as his Crown Prince. This political marriage was a peaceful sign to portray to the people that the two families, the Alavids and the Abbasids, were united and had strong ties. Ma'mun had thought that this marriage could have multiple other

benefits for him as well. He could closely monitor the Imam's activities, especially his communications with the Shia leaders and representatives. Also, the young Imam would be affiliated with the Abbasid royal family, and he would be prone to sinful behavior that they would indulge in. In such a situation, the Imam's holy character would be damaged in the eyes of the Muslims, particularly his Shia followers.

9-2-7-The Imam in Baghdad

To implement his decision, Ma'mun sent a letter to Imam Javad in Medina and invited him to Baghdad. Prior to his meeting with Ma'mun, the Imam coincidentally encountered Ma'mun in the streets of Baghdad while Ma'mun was going hunting with his troops. The people in the streets ran in fear of Ma'mun's troops. However, Imam Javad, as young as he was, remained in the street unafraid of Ma'mun's troops. The Imam's calmness attracted Ma'mun's attention. He approached the Imam and asked him why he did not run away like the others. The Imam responded: "O' Caliph, the road is not narrow which would require me to open it up for you. I have also not committed any guilt or mistake to run away from you; and I don't think that you would prosecute anyone without a guilt." Ma'mun was shocked by the Imam's confidence and wise response, and asked for his name. The Imam introduced himself and this was the first time that Ma'mun met the Imam.

After a short conversation, Ma'mun left to go hunting. On his way back to the palace, he met the Imam again. He asked the Imam if he knew what he had hunted today. The Imam then told Ma'mun about his special hunt, proving to him that he held divine knowledge like his father Imam Reza. Ma'mun then brought the Imam to his palace with respect. Now, he was even more determined to pursue his plan to marry his daughter, Um-Fazl, to the Imam.

9-2-8-The Imam's Islamic Marriage

The Abbasid royal family became worried when they heard about Ma'mun's decision to marry his daughter to Imam Javad. They feared that Ma'mun would eventually choose Imam Javad as his Crown Prince,

similar to how he chose Imam Javad's father, Imam Reza, in the past. They did not want to lose their power and influence in the future government. They came to Ma'mun to object and tried to convince him to revert his decision. In their discussion, they told Ma'mun that Imam Javad was still a child and lacked knowledge and maturity for marriage. They asked Ma'mun to wait at least until Imam Javad grew up and learned Islamic teachings. Ma'mun responded that Imam Javad belongs to a family whose knowledge is given by God. Ma'mun knew this, as he had tested Imam Reza's knowledge in Merv by setting up multiple debates between him and the top scholars of the time. He had also witnessed Imam Javad's divine knowledge when he had met him for the first time on the streets of Baghdad. However, he allowed the Abbasids to set up a scientific debate to test Imam Javad's knowledge and verify his claim.

The Abbasid royal family accepted Ma'mun's challenge. They asked Yahya ibn Aktham, the chief justice of Baghdad, to debate with Imam Javad. They promised him a great reward if he could overcome Imam Javad in the debate. Ma'mun held a grand event where the people, the top scholars, and officials attended. In this event, Yahya asked for Ma'mun's permission to begin the debate. He then asked the Imam about the Islamic ruling for someone who has hunted while he is in the state of Ihram or in Hajj garment. The Imam responded by asking him to specify the conditions under which the hunting had taken place, as this influenced the ruling. The Imam asked him if the hunting had happened intentionally or by mistake, whether the person knew the relevant Islamic law or not, whether the location of the hunt was inside the holy site or not, whether the person was free or a slave, whether the hunt had happened at night or during the day, and whether the person was performing Hajj or Umrah. The Imam mentioned 11 different conditions that would influence the ruling. Yahya became greatly shocked by the young Imam's response and could not continue debating with the Imam, as he did not know that this single question could have various answers depending on the relevant conditions. Furthermore, the Imam's response demonstrated his full knowledge

about all aspects of the Islamic law regarding this question.

Ma'mun, who witnessed Yahya's inability to continue debating with the Imam, told the Abbasids that they have now realized what he had told them before about the Imam's knowledge. He then told the Imam that he had selected him as his son-in-law, and asked the Imam to recite the Islamic marriage contract. The Imam accepted this political marriage, as it was enforced by the Muslim Caliph, and his refusal could have negative consequences for himself and the Shia community. The Imam set the mahriyeh (dower) of Um-Fazl equal to the amount of mahriyeh of his great grandmother, Lady Fatimah (SA), in her marriage to Imam Ali (AS). After reciting the marriage contract, Ma'mun held a ceremony, distributed gifts among the audience, and arranged a feast for the people.

At the end of the ceremony, the people dispersed, and only the close officials of the government stayed in the palace. Ma'mun asked the Imam to provide the answer to the question raised by Yahya ibn Aktham regarding hunting. The Imam then explained the Islamic law about all various conditions under which the hunt might have occurred. He provided answers for each condition that he had presented to Yahya. The Imam's response resulted in Ma'mun's applause and admiration.

Ma'mun then suggested to the Imam to ask Yahya ibn Aktham a question in return. The Imam asked Yahya how a man and a woman could be Islamically unlawful to each other early in the morning, and then lawful before the noon, then become unlawful to each other at noon, and then lawful in the afternoon, then become unlawful to each other at sunset, and then lawful in the evening, then become unlawful at midnight, and then lawful at dawn. Yahya swore by God that he did not know the answer, and asked the Imam to shed light. The Imam then provided him with a comprehensive answer. Ma'mun then asked the Abbasid royal family if they could provide such a concise answer to either of the questions raised by the Imam or Yahya. They then admitted to having limited knowledge, and that Ma'mun knew better

about the status of Imam Javad than they did. Ma'mun then ended the meeting by highly praising the Imam.

9-2-9-The Imam's Stay in Baghdad

The Imam was the leader of the Shia community. He used every opportunity to defend the principles of the Shia belief. During the Imam's brief stay in Baghdad, Yahya ibn Aktham, who had been defeated in his previous debate with the Imam, tried to challenge him with a critical question about the Shia belief against the first and the second caliphs. He asked the Imam's opinion about a fabricated narration stating that angel Gabriel came to the Prophet and told him that God says that He is pleased with the first caliph, and asked the Prophet to ask the first caliph if he is also pleased with God. The Imam responded that the Prophet told the Muslims in his last Hajj that many will attribute lies to him after his death. The Prophet advised the Muslims to validate any narration attributed to him with the Quran and his tradition. The Imam then told Yahya that this narration was not valid as it was against the Quran by referring to the following verse [50:16]: "Surely We have created man, and We know the promptings of his heart, and We are nearer to him than even his jugular vein." The Imam questioned how it was possible that God did not know the first caliph's opinion about Himself and needed to ask the Prophet.

Yahya did not give up and asked the Imam's opinion about another narration attributed to the Prophet, which states that the first and the second caliphs on the earth are like the angels Gabriel and Michael in heaven. The Imam responded that the angels Gabriel and Michael were never infidels, nor ever disobeyed God by committing even a single sin. The Imam then challenged this unequal comparison and said that the first and the second caliphs were infidels before converting to Islam and spent most of their lives in infidelity to God.

Yahya then asked the Imam's opinion about another narration attributed to the Prophet, which states that the first and the second caliphs are the leaders of the elders in paradise. The Imam responded that all of the people in paradise will be young, and no elderly person

will be found. The Imam then said that this narration was fabricated by the Umayyads to belittle the Prophet's narration that Imam Hasan and Imam Hossein are the leaders of the youth in paradise.

Yahya continued and stated another fabricated narration in which the Prophet had said, "If I was not selected for the Prophethood, indeed the second caliph would have been selected instead." The Imam rejected this false narration by referring to the following verse of the Quran [33:7]: "Recall, (O' Prophet), that We received a pledge from the prophets, and from you, and from Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, and Jesus son of Mary. We received from them a solemn pledge." The Imam then said that God had taken a pledge from the Prophets for their prophethood, so how could he change his covenant? He questioned Yahya that none of the prophets became an infidel for even a single moment in their life, so how it could be possible for God to select someone as his prophet who had spent the majority of his life in infidelity?

Yahya continued and stated yet another fabricated narration, where the Prophet had said that if God sends His punishment, no one would be spared other than the second caliph. The Imam rejected this narration by referring to the following verse of the Quran [8:33]: "But God would not punish them while you (the Prophet) are amongst them; and God would not punish them as long as they seek forgiveness." The Imam then denied the authenticity of this narration. This debate came to an end with the Imam achieving his goals without sparking any controversy on this sensitive subject.

After a short stay in Baghdad and his marriage to Um-Fazl, the Imam returned to Medina alone. Imam Javad and Um-Fazl were both too young to live with each other, and their marriage was only limited to recitation of the Islamic marriage contract.

9-2-10-The Imam's Divine Character

The Imam was the only source of true Islam, and his piety and divine character was observed by all those who interacted with him. The Imam

had multiple elevated titles, such as Javad, which means “generous”, and Taqi, which means “pious”. There are also some prayers and supplications narrated from the Imam. Among them is a special prayer recommended to be recited on the first day of the lunar month for guaranteeing health during the upcoming month. Also, there is a supplication from the Imam specific for the month of Ramazan. Another well-known supplication narrated from the Imam is known as “Herz-e-Javad”, which is recommended to be carried as an amulet, for protection.

9-2-11-The Imam’s Scientific Contribution

The Imam was the true source of divine knowledge in Islamic society. He was referred to by many to answer questions regarding various aspects of Islamic sciences. The names of 193 individuals who had narrated Hadith from the Imam are still available. The Imam had also trained multiple notable scholars. These scholars had a special role in preserving and spreading the Imam’s narrations. They were not only scholars in the Islamic knowledge, but were also unique in piety and character.

Ali ibn Mahziar was one of the Imam’s notable companions who was also his representative in Ahvaz. He was a great scholar of Islamic law. He authored 33 books on various topics in Islamic law and belief. Multiple letters of communication between him and the Imam are recorded in history. These letters show his special status and respect in the eyes of Imam Javad. The Imam frequently expressed his satisfaction and approval for Ali ibn Mahziar and prayed for him. Fazl ibn Shazan was another great companion of Imam Javad. He was a master in various Islamic fields, such as the Islamic law and Ilm al-Kalam, which is the study of Islamic doctrine for 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 other sects and theologies. Abd al-Azim al-Hasani, who was from the descendants of Imam Hasan, was another notable companion of Imam Javad. A few of the Imam’s companions were also among the eighteen companions

of “As-haab-e-Ejma”, or “the Companions of the Consensus”, whose narrations are currently regarded in the seminaries with the highest level of trust. Safwan ibn Yahya was one of the companions of “As-haab-e-Ejma” who authored around 30 books, 11 of which have survived until today. He had narrated hundreds of Hadiths from the Shia Imams, including Imam Javad.

Ma'mun had realized that Imam Javad belonged to a family that was blessed with divine knowledge. He had tested Imam Reza's knowledge in Merv by holding multiple debate sessions between him and the top Islamic and non-Islamic scholars of the time. Ma'mun had realized that he could not defeat Imam Reza in any scientific debate. Instead, the news of the Imam's victory in the debates had spread across the Islamic territory and had led to even more popularity and respect for the Imam. Ma'mun also verified Imam Javad's knowledge in his first meeting with him on the streets of Baghdad. He later witnessed the Imam's knowledge in responding to the questions raised by Yahya ibn Aktham, the chief justice of Baghdad. Thus, Ma'mun did not attempt to challenge Imam Javad's knowledge in public debates, unlike what he did to Imam Reza in the past. Instead, he had to find a way to distract the Muslims from the Imam and his divine knowledge. He had established a good relationship with the neighboring countries as a policy to overcome the internal problems in his government, such as the war with Amin and the Alavid uprisings. Thus, he ordered the extensive translation of foreign literature, such as Greek philosophy, into Arabic. He then spread the translations among the Muslims in the hopes of distracting them from the Imam's knowledge.

9-2-12-The Imam's Wedding Ceremony¹¹⁶

Although Imam Javad was the son-in-law of the Caliph, he was completely indifferent to this material world. After reciting the marriage contract to Um-Fazl, the Imam did not stay long in Baghdad, and returned to Medina alone. He continued his role in Medina as the divine

¹¹⁶ 215 AH (Imam's age: 19)

Shia leader. While in Medina, before his official wedding ceremony to Um-Fazl in Iraq, the Imam married a slave girl named Samaneh. The Imam's marriage to a slave was a practical lesson in the equality of the people in the eyes of the Imam, as he regarded the Caliph's daughter and a slave with equal esteem. It was also a clear message that his marriage to Um-Fazl was in fact a political marriage due to the circumstances that the Imam was living in.

After around 11 years from the time of the marriage contract to Um-Fazl, the Imam was brought to Baghdad for his official wedding ceremony. At this time, Imam Javad's oldest son, Imam Hadi, had been born to his wife Samaneh in Medina, and was two years old. Prior to the Imam's arrival in Baghdad, Ma'mun had already left Baghdad towards current day Turkey, to personally manage the instability in that region. The Imam was then taken to Ma'mun. The Imam met Ma'mun at Tikrit, a city in northern Iraq, and his wedding ceremony to Um-Fazl was officially held there.

Ma'mun would always portray that he was proud of the Imam and treated him respectfully. However, on multiple occasions, he attempted to force the Imam into sinful behavior that he and the other Abbasid royal family members would indulge in. His intention was to defame the Imam and his infallibility in the eyes of the Muslims. During the Imam's wedding ceremony, Ma'mun prepared beautiful slave girls with precious jewels in their hands and sent them towards the Imam to accompany him when he was walking towards the stage. However, the Imam was completely indifferent to them.

On another occasion, a singer told Ma'mun that he could influence the Imam's heart towards sin and fulfill Ma'mun's ill intentions. He approached the Imam, sat in front of him and started singing with his musical instrument. The people gathered around the singer to enjoy his performance. However, the Imam looked at the singer and loudly addressed him: "O' long bearded one, fear God!" Suddenly, his hand froze, the instrument fell, and he could not continue his performance.

With this political marriage, the Imam became affiliated to the Abbasid

royal family and was required to meet them. Even with this affiliation, his lifestyle was quite simple and his interaction with the people was as usual. The Imam showed his detachment from this material world in his everyday practice. Once, one of the Imam's companions saw the Imam in the palace and thought to himself that the Imam would never want to leave the palace and return to Medina. At this time, the Imam addressed him and told him that a simple meal made of bread and salt near the Prophet's tomb is more pleasant for him than what he sees here in the palace.

After the wedding, the Imam stayed in Baghdad for several months until the upcoming Hajj season¹¹⁷. He then left Baghdad with Um-Fazl towards Mecca to perform Hajj. After performing Hajj, they returned to Medina and stayed there for the rest of Ma'mun's government for about two-and-a-half years.

9-2-13-The Imam's Leadership

To meet the needs of the growing Shia community, Imam Sadiq had established a networking organization of his trusted companions as his representatives in various cities around the Islamic territory. This organization was further developed during the Imamate of Imam Kazim and Imam Reza and became an effective way of communication between the Shias and their Imam. Imam Javad took leadership of this organization effectively during his Imamate. The Imam had selected representatives in various cities including Kufa, Baghdad, Basrah, Wasit (a city in the region between Kufa and Basrah), Qom, Ahvaz, Rey, Hamedan, and Bost, a city in Sistan. Historical records also indicate the expansion of Shi'ism into Egypt at this time. The names of 13 of the Imam's representatives are recorded in history. Many of the communications between the Imam and his representatives were in the form of letters. The Imam would respond to their questions and provide them with advice in these letters. Dozens of the Imam's letters are recorded in history. The Imam's leadership led to the expansion of

¹¹⁷ Hajj of 215 AH (Imam's age: 20)

the Shia community to an extent that they could even reach top governmental positions. For instance, the governors of Bahrain and Bost were from the Shia followers of the Imam. Reaching these positions was an opportunity for them to secretly benefit the Shia community and save their wealth and lives from the persecution of the Abbasid government.

Although the Imam had married Ma'mun's daughter, his affiliation with the government did not legitimize the Abbasid Caliphate in the eyes of the Muslims, particularly the Shias. During the Imamate of Imam Javad, the people of Qom, the main center of the Shias in Iran, rose up against Ma'mun's government two or three times. Their uprisings were suppressed by the government at every attempt. As a result, many were killed, and the city endured serious damage.

9-3-During the Government of Mu'tasim

9-3-1-Mu'tasim in Power

Ma'mun was at war with the Romans in current day Turkey when he suddenly became sick and died¹¹⁸. His body was taken back towards the Islamic territory to protect it from possible disrespect or revenge by the 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 instead of his sons. Mu'tasim was a warrior and an army leader. However, he lacked literacy to the point that he could not even write a letter. Ma'mun had found his brother as the best candidate to manage the ever-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 and paid allegiance to Mu'tasim as the Caliph.

9-3-2-Summon to Baghdad

¹¹⁸ 8 Rajab, 218 AH (Imam's age: 22)

Once Mu'tasim assumed power, he was worried about the chaos and unrest threatening his new government. Among them was the long-standing threat of the Alavid uprisings. He was also concerned about the popularity and social status of Imam Javad. The Imam was the divine leader of the growing Shia community, which refused to 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. As a result, the Imam left Medina with his wife, Um-Fazl, towards Baghdad¹¹⁹. The Imam knew that he would not return to Medina again unlike his prior two trips to Baghdad. Thus, he revealed his oldest son, Imam Hadi, as the next Imam to his companions.

Mu'tasim pretended to be respectful to the Imam during his stay in Baghdad. However, he was carefully monitoring the Imam's life. After around ten months from the Imam's arrival in Baghdad, an incident triggered Mu'tasim to expedite his plot against the Imam, and martyred him.

A thief was brought to Mu'tasim's presence and confessed to his theft. Mu'tasim decided to implement Islamic law and cut off one of his hands. However, he did not know how much of his hand he should order to be cut off, as a long time had passed since the last time this law had been applied to thieves. He then prepared an official meeting and invited Islamic scholars, including Imam Javad, to his presence and asked for their opinion. In this meeting, Ahmad ibn Abi Du'ad, who was the chief justice of Baghdad, determined the cutting limit to be at the wrist by referring to the Quranic verse that describes performing tayammum (or sand ablution) on hands. This opinion was supported by some of the scholars. However, some other scholars determined the cutting limit to be at the elbow by referring to the Quranic verse about performing ablution where the hands are washed at the elbows.

¹¹⁹ Imam's arrival in Baghdad: 28 Muharram, 220 AH (Imam's age: 24)

Mu'tasim then turned to the Imam and asked for his opinion. The Imam, who was fully aware of the threats and conspiracies against himself, refused to answer and told Mu'tasim that the other opinions were enough for him. However, Mu'tasim swore that he will not let the Imam go unless he got his opinion. When the Imam was forced to express his opinion, he told Mu'tasim that all of the provided answers were wrong. The Imam then determined the cutting limit to be at the fingers and emphasized that the palm of the hand should not be cut. Mu'tasim asked for the reasoning on this ruling. The Imam responded that the Prophet had determined seven body parts, including both palms, which must be placed on the earth during prostration to God. The Imam then said that these seven body parts belong to God, and if the thief's hand was cut from the wrist or the elbow, he would not be able to properly prostrate to God. To strengthen his point, the Imam provided Quranic evidence for his claim as the other scholars had done. He referred to the following verse of the Quran [72:18]: "And the places of prostrations are for God, so do not invoke anyone along with God." The word 'masjid' in Arabic, which is commonly translated to mosque in English, in its essence means the place of prostration. Mu'tasim liked the Imam's opinion and ordered the thief's fingers to be cut according to the Imam's opinion. This meeting finished and Ahmad ibn Abi Du'ad was ashamed of his defeat in front of the young Imam. He later said he wished he had died before attending this meeting.

After three days, Ahmad ibn Abi Du'ad came to Mu'tasim and advised him that his action of accepting the Imam's opinion over that of other scholars was not a wise decision for his government. He told Mu'tasim that the Imam's followers see the Imam deserving of the Caliphate and regard Mu'tasim as the one who has occupied his position. He said that the news of this official meeting has already spread in society and was strong evidence for the Imam's followers for their belief in him. This conversation triggered Mu'tasim to expedite his plot to martyr the Imam. Shortly after this incident, the Imam was poisoned and martyred.

9-3-3-Martyrdom

To implement his plot, Mu'tasim ordered one of his trusted ministers to invite the Imam to his house and offer him a poisonous meal. The Imam initially rejected this invitation, however, the minister insisted and said that he wanted the Imam to bless his house with his presence. He also told the Imam that another minister wanted to meet the Imam during this event. Due to the excessive insistence, the Imam accepted his invitation. After eating a small portion of the meal, the Imam found himself poisoned and suddenly left the minister's house. When the minister insisted the Imam stay longer, the Imam responded that it would be better for the minister if the Imam left his house immediately. Due to the hidden nature of the plot for the Imam's martyrdom, his wife, Um-Fazl, was also regarded as a suspect. She had a good motive since she did not have any children from Imam Javad, and was jealous of the Imam's other wife, who was the mother of his children. Also, she was from the Abbasid royal family and could have been tempted by her uncle Mu'tasim.

The Imam was martyred within a day of his poisoning, which shows the potency of the poison. He was martyred on the last day of Zu al-Qa'dah, in the year 220 Hijri, in Baghdad. He was martyred around ten months after his arrival in Baghdad by Mu'tasim's order. Imam Javad was martyred at the age of only 25. He was the youngest Shia Imam at the time of martyrdom. Historical records suggest Imam Hadi's miraculous travel from Medina to Baghdad to take care of his father's rituals. He then secretly returned to Medina.

A large burial was held for the Imam, as he was affiliated with the Abbasid royal family. Additionally, Mu'tasim wanted to portray to the people, particularly the Shias, that he was innocent in the Imam's death. A huge crowd of the Muslims attended the Imam's burial. Wathiq, Mu'tasim's son, officially led the prayer over the Imam's body. The crowd carried the Imam's corpse towards one of the city's graveyards that belonged to the tribe of Quraysh, and respectfully buried the Imam next to the tomb of his grandfather, Imam Kazim (AS).

9-4-Conclusion

The Imamate of Imam Javad began with the martyrdom of his father, Imam Reza, when he was just seven-and-a-half years old. He was the only child of Imam Reza, and the only heir to inherit the Imamate in the eyes of the Shias. However, the Shias did not fully accept his Imamate until they validated his knowledge by asking him many questions. The Imamate of Imam Javad continued for about 17 years until his martyrdom. The majority of his Imamate, about 15 years, coincided with the government of Ma'mun. Ma'mun had portrayed a good relationship with the Alavids. He had selected Imam Reza as his Crown Prince, and later wed his daughter, Um-Habib, to him. Ma'mun, who knew that Imam Reza had a beloved son, decided to also promise his other daughter, Um-Fazl, to Imam Javad. He did this without the Imam's presence in Merv while he was still a child. About two years later, he invited Imam Javad to Baghdad and witnessed the Imam's divine character and knowledge. He then Islamically married his daughter to the Imam while the Imam was just eight or nine years old. Imam Javad returned to Medina alone, and after about 11 years, came back to Iraq for his official wedding ceremony to Um-Fazl. After a stay in Baghdad for several months, the Imam then returned to Medina with Um-Fazl and stayed there for the rest of Ma'mun's government. Imam Javad's Imamate continued for about two years into Mu'tasim's government. Mu'tasim, who was worried about the social status of the Imam, brought him to Baghdad. After a short stay of about ten months, he martyred the Imam.

The unique aspect of Imam Javad's Imamate was its start at a very young age. Two centuries after the Prophet's demise, and after the Imamate of eight holy Imams among the Shia community, it was now time for the Shias to fully realize the elevated status of their Imams. The acceptance of the Imamate of a seven-and-a-half-year-old boy, who was far younger than the Islamic pubertal age of fifteen, was a practical lesson for the Shias to recognize that the Imamate is a position determined by God. Once the Shias verified the Imamate of Imam Javad, they became proud

and regarded his young age as proof of their theology and verification of the divine teachings they had received from the previous Imams. Thus, they did not later object to the Imamatus of Imam Hadi and Imam Mahdi, who also became Imams at a very young age.

Imam Javad was the first Shia Imam to assume Imamatus in his childhood. At the age of twenty-five, he was also the youngest Shia Imam to be martyred. He is known as Javad, which means “Generous”. He is also known as “Baab al-Murad” or “The Gate of Wishes”. Many Muslims visit his holy shrine in Baghdad and ask God to bless them for the sake of the Imam with ease in sustenance and relief in their financial hardships. Also, the youth who visit his holy shrine feel especially connected with their young Imam.

IMAM JAVAD (AS):

One will not regret his decision if he follows these three steps:

- **Avoiding hastiness**
- **Consulting with others in the matter**
- **Trusting in God after making the decision**