



إمام  
المؤمنين

**IMAM  
MUHAMMAD  
IBN ALI IBN  
AL-HUSSEIN** (AS)

The Splitter of **Knowledge**

**FAWZI AL-SAIF**

**2024**



# IMAM MUHAMMAD IBN ALI IBN AL-HUSSEIN (AS)

The Splitter of **Knowledge**

**By:** Fawzi al-saif

**Translated by:** Mohammed Husain al-Butaihi

**Reviewed and Verified by:** Dr.radhi Almabuk





بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



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# Preface

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1. The book in your hands, dear reader, is an abridgement of the biography of one of the fourteen infallibles in Shia Islam. Its pages constitute about 25% of the original book, which also bears the same title. With Allah's Grace and Will, the original book will be translated at a later date.
2. This book, and the other books in the same series, are aimed at the young generation of Shia Muslims who do not have a good command of the Arabic language, in which the original book was written. It therefore assumes a basic knowledge of the concepts related to the Infallible and their life, and seeks to analyze and expand on them.

We note that there are very few translated books in English on the lives of the Imams, especially for young English speakers. This is despite the importance of the topic, and it is one of the reasons that prompted this translation project.

3. Since this book and the rest of the series have been translated by multiple individuals and in different ways, it is natural that they will not all be in a consistent style. We would therefore be grateful if the reader would help us by pointing out any errors or observations they may have, so that they can be corrected in future editions.

I ask Allah Almighty to reward the reader, the author of these pages, and the translators with His recompense and blessings, and the intercession of the Infallibles, may peace and blessing be upon them.

**Fawzi Muhammad Taqi Al Saif**  
**Tarut - Qatif**  
**20/09/1445 H**

# Short Biography

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- **Name:** Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn al-Hussain Ibn Ali Ibn Abi Talib (as).
- **Kunya:** Abu Jaafar.
- **Title/Nickname:** al-Baqir (The Splitter).
- **Description:** The fifth of the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (as).
- **Mother:** Fatima, daughter of Imam al-Hassan Ibn Ali Ibn Abi Talib (as).
- **Birth:** Rajab 57 AH.
- **Martyrdom:** Poisoned by the Umayyad Ruler Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik in 114 AH.



# Imam al-Baqir: From Birth to Martyrdom

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## 1. His Birth and Mother

His blessed birth was in the month of Rajab in the year 57 AH in the holy city of Medina, nearly three years before the martyrdom of his grandfather, Imam al-Hussein (as).

His father is Imam Zain al-Abideen Ali Ibn al-Hussain Ibn Ali Ibn Abi Talib (as), whom we have previously mentioned some aspects of his holy life and affairs in another book.

His mother was Fatima, the daughter of Imam al-Hassan Ibn Ali al-Mujtaba, who is known as "Um Abdullah" (which means "Mother of Abdullah), who was her oldest son and nicknamed "al-Bahir" She was also known as "Um Al-Hassan," (Mother

of Al-Hassan). Some aspects of her life are discussed in the "Sayyid al-Abideen" book. For instance, she was the only free wife of Imam Ali Ibn al-Hussain al-Sajjad, so those who were born to her had honor from both sides. Paternally, they were descendants of al-Hussain (as), and maternally, they were descendants of al-Hassan (as), as Imam al-Baqir (as) and Abdullah al-Bahir were.

Another quality of hers is that through her, the Imams of Ahlulbayt (as), from al-Baqir to al-Mahdi, are descendants of Sayyeda Fatima (as) from both her sons (al-Hassan and al-Hussain). That makes both Imam al-Hassan and Imam al-Hussein their grandfathers. Because of this, Imam al-Baqir described himself as the first child of Ali from two descendants of Ali and the first offspring of Fatima from two lineages of Fatima.

Moreover, the narrations of the Infallibles described her with utmost reverence, as it has been narrated that Imam al-Sadiq (as) described her, "She was a righteous woman; there was no woman from the progeny of al-Hassan like her." A miracle that happened during her life is narrated by her son Abu Jaafar al-Baqir (as), who said, "A wall that my mother was sitting by began to break, and then we heard a loud thud. My mother placed her hand on the wall and said, 'No, I swear [on you] in the name of the Chosen Prophet (saww), Allah has not given you permission to fall! The wall remained hanging mid-air until she passed it safely. On her behalf, my father gave one hundred dinars for charity. If the narration of Ibn al-Athir in al-Kamil is accurate that she passed away in the year 117 AH, then that means that she passed away three years after the martyrdom

of her son al-Baqir (as) in 114 AH! She was also mentioned as of the narrators and disseminators of tradition.

## 2. Imam al-Baqir (as) in Karbala

At the age of three, Imam al-Baqir (as) embarked on a journey with his father, Imam al-Sajjad (as), from the holy city of Medina to Mecca. The trip was in response to Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah's rise to power as the successor of his father, and the subsequent request of the governor of Medina for Imam al-Hussein Ibn Ali (as) to pledge his allegiance to Yazid. However, Imam al-Hussain (as) resolutely refused to do so, and instead decided to head towards Mecca and then Iraq. It was during this journey that the Umayyad army surrounded Imam al-Hussein (as), leading to the Battle of Karbala on the tenth day of Muharram in the year 61 AH.

Imam al-Baqir (as) accompanied his father, Imam Ali al-Sajjad (as), and witnessed all the events, which he later recounted to other narrators and ascribed what he did not directly witness to his father Imam al-Sajjad (as). Hence, he became one of the most significant sources that safeguarded and recounted these events as they happened. The Imam did so to counter the Umayyad propaganda and disinformation campaigns about the event. The details of what the Imam narrated will be discussed in another section.

He (as) was one of the captives who were "taken by the enemies from one land to another, looked at by people on caravans and at resting areas along the way, examined by those near and far, noble and lowly, and not accompanied by their

men or protected by their protectors". He witnessed firsthand the undue suffering of his father Imam Zain al-Abideen (as) during this captivity.

### **3. Al-Baqir (as) in the days of the Imamate of his father al-Sajjad (as)**

Imam al-Sajjad (as) paid special attention to and took exceptional care of his son al-Baqir (as) because he was going to be the Imam after him. In our book "Sayyid al-Abideen," we mentioned that the other sons of the Imam were known for their high levels of knowledge and piety, and each was considered qualified for Imamate and leadership by the people. However, it is not up to the people to decide who should be the Imam or leader. This is a Divine command, and numerous evidence to support this claim have been provided that need not be reiterated here.

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The Imam was named "Al-Baqir" by the Messenger of Allah (saww), and according to some narrations, the name appears in the Torah. This name was then used to refer to him by the Imams of Guidance (as), to the extent that it became a distinctive and unique name for him. No one other than him was known by this name--neither in the school of the Caliphs nor the school of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). The Imam's special name and its and its intimations will be focused on in more detail.

His father Imam al-Sajjad (as) called him by this notable nickname since he was a child, as was narrated by Umar Ibn Ali Ibn al-Hussain (al-Ashraf):

He (as) would say "Call me my son al-Baqir" and "I said to my son al-Baqir (meaning Muhammad) ..." So, I asked him, "O' father, why did you name him al-Baqir?" He smiled, and I had not seen him smile before then prostrated to Allah Almighty for long, and I heard him say in his prostration, "O' Allah, praise be to You, O' my master, for what You have blessed us, the Ahl al-Bayt, with," and then continued to repeat that. Then he said, "O' son, Imamate is in his progeny until our Qaim (as) rises to fill it (the earth) with justice and equity. He is the Imam and father of Imams, the source of mercy and the place of knowledge--he splits it greatly. By Allah, he is the most similar of people to the Messenger of Allah (saww)." I asked, "How many are the Imams after him?" He said, "Seven and from them is the Mahdi who will rise with (or restore the authentic faith) the religion at the end of time".

A person taking a cursory look at the phrasing of the first line of the narration might understand that this practice was constant and continuous. He will think the same way about the second line of the narration, "I said to my son al-Baqir" (which suggests that the title is known to be for him). It is also interesting to note the phrase, "He smiled, and I had not seen him smile before," which points to the immense and deep sadness the Imam endured after the tragedy of Karbala and the martyrdom of his father, Imam Al-Hussain (as). Imam As-Sajjad was not seen laughing or smiling since the tragic events of Karbala, but the blessed birth of his son al-Baqir (as) was truly an occasion deserving of both smiling and joy as well as showing praise and thanks by prostrating to Allah Almighty.

While prostrating, Imam Zain al-Abideen (as) mentioned three qualities of his son al-Baqir; (1) that Imamate is in his progeny until the rise of the Qaim, which makes him the father of the Imams; (2) that he is the seat of knowledge; he splits it, reveals its secrets, and mines and extracts its hidden treasures; and (3) that he has the most striking resemblance to the Messenger of Allah (saww).

This narration and other similar ones addressed his Imamate and spoke of his merits and virtues. This narration was not an exception, as it was preceded and followed by many [similar] narrations. For example, the narration of his brother Al-Hussain Ibn Ali Ibn al-Hussain in which he said, "A man asked my father (as) about the Imams to which he answered by saying: They are twelve: seven will be from his progeny, then he placed his hand on the shoulder of my brother Muhammad."

From the context of the initial narration, it can be inferred that it took place close to the events of Karbala, noting the state of sadness described by the narrator when he says, "And I had not seen him smile before." This implies that the titles and qualities mentioned by Imam al-Sajjad (as) about his son, al-Baqir (as), were during his early youth, considering that the events of Karbala occurred when Imam al-Baqir (as) was at the beginning of his fourth year of age. Meanwhile, we find the same meanings mentioned therein appeared in the narrations of Imam al-Sajjad (as) in his later years, serving as his last wills and testaments.

For instance, it is narrated from Al-Zuhri that he said, "I visited Ali ibn al-Hussain (as) during the illness which caused his death ..." until he said, "Then his son Muhammad came in

to see him and spoke to him at length in private, and I heard him say to him 'Make sure to have good character.' I said: 'O' son of the Messenger of Allah, the matter [of returning to Allah] is inevitable, and it occurred to me that he had foretold his own death, so to whom shall we turn after you?' He said: 'O' Abu Abdullah, to this son of mine,' and he pointed to his son Muhammad, 'for he is my successor, my heir, the keeper of my knowledge, the source of knowledge and the Splitter of Knowledge.' I said: 'O' son of the Messenger of Allah, what does "the Splitter of knowledge" mean?' He said: 'To him my true followers will resort, and he will split knowledge among them.' He then sent Muhammad, his son, on an errand to the market. When Muhammad returned, I said: 'O' son of the Messenger of Allah, why did you not give your will to your oldest son?' He said, 'O Abu Abdullah, Imamate is not about being younger or older, this is what the Messenger of Allah (saww) entrusted to us, and this is what we found written in the [Preserved] Tablet and the Scroll.'"

It is worth pointing out that the exclusive title of the Imam, "the Splitter of Knowledge," was used in the above narration. It also highlighted the fact that he "will split knowledge."

#### **4. The Splitter (al-Baqir): a Title that defines a work plan**

We mentioned in our book about Imam al-Hassan al-Mujtaba and Sayyid al-Jannah (Master of Paradise) that the titles of the Infallibles (as), especially those mentioned in the words of their fathers about them, are not merely words of praise and laudatory expressions. Instead, they point, among

other things, to the roles undertaken by the titled infallible and sometimes define their work plan. Whether as a noun “al-Baqir (the Splitter)” or as an explanation of the act “he splits knowledge,” the title is clearly of the second type.

It is noteworthy that the narration comes from the realm of revelation, as it came from the Chosen Prophet (saww) and then from his progeny. This title is widely used among Muslims to refer specifically to him (as). It was even mentioned by those who were considered part of the opposing line to the Shias and Ahl al-Bayt, like al-Jahidh (died 255 AH), who said the following about the Imam, “He is known as al-Baqir--the Splitter of Knowledge, a title given to him by the Messenger of Allah (saww), before his birth, and he gave glad-tidings of his birth and promised Jabir Ibn Abdullah to meet him saying: ‘You will see him as a child, and when you do, convey my greetings to him.’ Jabir lived to see him and told him what the prophet asked him to do.”

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Moreover, the same meaning was noted by al-Esfarayeni (died 429 AH), who said, “Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn Hussain was known as al-Baqir, and to whom Jabir Ibn Abdullah al-Ansari conveyed the greetings of the Messenger of Allah (saww)”.

Narrations from Ahl al-Bayt and the Imamiyyah sources related to the Imam Al-Baqir’s title are abundant, and will be discussed in the context of the relationship between Imam al-Baqir (as) and Jabir Ibn Abdullah al-Ansari.

The meaning of “al-Baqir” and its verb “yabqur” is “to split open, unveil, and reveal what is hidden.” Al-Nawawi (died 676 AH) said about the Imam, “Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn al-Hussain

ibn Ali Ibn Abi Talib (as), known as al-Baqir because he split knowledge, meaning he split it open, uncovered its basis, and became well-versed in it." Before him, Ibn al-Athir (died 606 AH) said, "He is Abu Jaafar Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn al-Hussain Ibn Ali Ibn Abi Talib, known as al-Baqir ... He was called al-Baqir because he was well-versed in knowledge, meaning he understood it extensively." Ibn al-Attar (died 724 AH) attributed this to al-Waqidi (died 207 AH), saying: "As for Abu Jaafar Muhammad Ibn Ali: He is Qarashi, Hashimi, Madani, a distinguished tabi'ie, known as al-Baqir. Al-Waqidi said: He was named so because he delved and split knowledge and discerned its root, meaning he split it open and unveiled it, and he was (as) the best [descendant] of Muhammad on the face of the earth during his time."

## 5. Imam al-Baqir (as) and Jabir al-Ansari

One of the famous narrations in both Islamic schools of thought is the narration that the respected companion Jabir Ibn Abdullah al-Ansari met Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as) during his father's lifetime, Imam al-Sajjad (as). Jabir al-Ansari conveyed to Imam al-Baqir the greetings of the Messenger of Allah (saww) and described him as one who splits knowledge. Although these narrations vary between detailed accounts and abridged ones, and do not have the same phrasing, they do concur in and acknowledge the following:

- A. That Jabir met Muhammad Ibn Ali al-Baqir (as) and noticed the qualities of the Prophet in him. In fact, after he recognized him through these qualities, he asked the Imam about his name.

- B.** That Jabir delivered the greetings of the Prophet (saww) to him as the Prophet (saww) foretold that Jabir would live long to meet his grandson from the progeny of Al-Hussain (as), and that his grandson's name would be Muhammad, and he would split knowledge greatly. The Prophet asked Jabir to deliver his greeting of peace to him, which Jabir dutifully conveyed to the Imam.
- C.** That after this incident, Imam al-Baqir (as) would regularly visit Jabir at his home and, as understood by the general people, would sit and listen to him as he narrated sayings of the prophet. However, according to Shia sources, they would study together, meaning the Imam would confirm Jabir's knowledge, like in the case of the narration stating that the names of the Imams are inscribed onto a Divine Tablet. In fact, some narrations suggest that Jabir was the Imam's student and he acquired a great deal of knowledge from him.
- D.** That Jabir did not live long after this incident, and it was a sign from the Prophet (saww) that he would depart this world afterwards.

Some narrations provide specific details related to the title (nickname) of Imam Al-Baqir. For example.

- Some mention that "al-Baqir" designation is mentioned in the Torah, while other narrations do not have this detail.
- Some mention in detail how Jabir greeted al-Baqir (as); that he bent down to the Imam's feet kissing them, or that he said, "come near", and he did, then he said, "Go far,"

and he did, confirming the qualities of the Prophet in him, while other narrations do not contain these details.

- Some mention the detail that Jabir Ibn Abdullah was yearning to meet al-Baqir (as) so that he could fulfil the request of the Messenger of Allah (saww). He would sit in the mosque or other places and say, "O' Baqir, O' Baqir", and some people thought that he had become senile because of this. These narrations also mention that he would not live long after this meeting, while others do not have these details.

### **Lessons from Imam al-Baqir's visit to Jabir al-Ansari:**

It was mentioned in the chapter dedicated to Jabir Ibn Abdullah al-Ansari in the Companions of Prophet Muhammad book that there were many benefits gained from the frequent visits of Imam al-Baqir (as) during the life of his father al-Sajjad (as) to Jabir's home; among them are:

- The great respect for Jabir's status as a companion of the Messenger of Allah (saww) refutes the Umayyad propaganda that was perpetuated afterwards, which accused the followers of Ahl al-Bayt of harboring hostile animosity towards the companions! Here is the son of their Imam, honoring Jabir, showing great respect for his status, and visiting him in his home. This also highlights the distinction between the Prophet's companions, and the fact that they are not all regarded equally.

Furthermore, it calls attention to the great status of Jabir Al-Ansari as an individual since he was among those who faithfully and steadfastly accompanied the Messenger of Allah (saww),

continued on the same path with the prophet's successor, the Commander of the Faithful (as), and remained loyal and unswerving in his adherence to the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (as).

- Moreover, visiting Jabir and listening to him allows a group of people, the followers of the school of the Caliphs, to view the narrations and sayings of Imam al-Baqir (as) as connected narrations from the Messenger of Allah and not disconnected in their chains of narration, through Jabir, from whom Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as) would, seemingly, narrate.

It can not be overstated that the essence of the message that Jabir conveyed along with the greetings of peace of the Messenger of Allah (saww) is this: that Muhammad Ibn Ali (as) is the Splitter of the knowledge of the first and last generations of mankind. Therefore, he does not need the narrations of Jabir al-Ansari or anyone else, but this connection and frequent visits were beneficial.

## 6. Imam al-Baqir and Islamic Currency:

Readers of the official history books that recorded the biographies of the Caliphs, they invariably find that being the first to mint distinct coins for Muslims was the major achievement of the Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan. Before his era, Muslims used Roman-minted currency. The mention of this supposed "achievement" is not uncommon. History is written by the victors; they fashion it to their liking, and distort the reality of events that happened. Perhaps this is one reason why people do not have much faith in this written history and, thus,

are not impacted by it. Nonetheless, these books continue to gleefully tout that Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan, heeding the advice of Khalid ibn Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, took this step to liberate Islamic currency from foreign control.

The historical progression of this event is thoroughly discussed in detail in the author's book, *Sayyid al-Abideen*. The focus of this elaboration centers on Al-Kisa'ie narration which is mentioned in Ibrahim Ibn Muhammad al-Beyhaqi's book *al-Mahasin wa al-Masawi'i*. Al-Kisa'ie said:

While visiting al-Rashid one day while he was sitting in his court, I saw a big pile of bags full of money that were torn open, which Al-Rashid ordered to be distributed among his close servants. In his hand was a dirham with a clear inscription, which he was looking at very closely. He conversed with me regularly about the inscription on the coins, and asked me, "Do you know who first ordered these inscriptions on gold and silver?" I answered, "My master, it is Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan." Then he would ask, "What was the reason for that?" to which I said, "I do not know, except that he was the first to order these inscriptions."

He said, "I will tell you. Textiles were owned by the Romans, and most of the people of Egypt were Christian, meaning they followed the religion of the King – the King of Rome. They were sewn in Roman and had on them inscriptions depicting the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This continued on throughout the early years of Islam until Abd al-Malik became the ruler. One day, he noticed the Roman inscription on a textile piece that he came across. He looked very closely at the inscriptions and ordered them to be translated into Arabic. He was not happy

to learn the Arabic translation of the inscriptions. He exclaimed: 'How intolerable it is for religion and Islam that the inscriptions on textiles which are carried in sacks, and clothes that are made in Egypt, as well as other goods like curtains that are made in this vast area with great wealth and many people in the cities and land to have polytheistic phrases written on it!'

Marwan immediately sent a letter to Abd al-Aziz Ibn Marwan, who was his governor of Egypt, to change the written inscriptions on clothes, textiles, curtains, and other goods. He asked him to have the textile makers to begin sewing the phrase of monotheism [Allah witnesses that there is no God except Him] on them instead. That design of textiles has continued unchanged to this day. He then ordered all of his governors in the cities to ban the use of the Roman-designed textiles and to punish severely anyone who used them after the ban took effect.

When he changed the textiles to have monotheistic patterns and they were taken to the land of Rome, the news spread and reached their king, who immediately asked that the Arabic inscription be translated into Arabic. He was very furious to learn the meaning of the Arabic inscription. Then he wrote the following letter to Abd al-Malik, 'The manufacturing of textiles is in Egypt, and everything crafted there is for Rome. The textiles were inscribed with Roman patterns until you changed it. So, if the Caliphs before you [who did not change it] did what was right, then what you did was wrong. And if what you did was right, then what he [the Caliph before you] did was wrong. So, choose from those two descriptions whichever you please and like. I have sent you a gift that is worthy of you. Please undo the new inscriptions and go back to using the original Roman

inscription on everything that was sewn. I thank you for doing that, and you can order the valuable gift to be accepted.'

When Abd al-Malik read the letter, he sent back the envoy without a reply to the King's letter but with the King's gift which he refused to accept. The envoy took the gift back to the king and told him Marwan did not send a reply to his letter. The king sent the envoy back to Marwan with a more valuable gift and a letter to Marwan which read, 'I assumed you found my gift to be unbefitting and small, and that is why you did not reply to my letter. So, I decided to increase your gift in the hope that you would fulfil the request I made in my first letter.'" Abd al-Malik read the letter and neither sent a reply to the letter nor accepted the gift. So, the king of Rome wrote to him again requesting answers to his letters by saying, 'You dismissed my letters and gift and did not address my need. Initially, I assumed that you found my gift to be invaluable and unfitting, so I increased it, and yet still refused it. I increased the value of the gift a third time, and I swear by Christ that you will either order the textiles to be made as they were or I will order for the Dinars and Dirhams to be minted, and you know that none are minted except those minted in my land.' Dirhams and Dinars had not yet been minted in Islamic lands at that time. The king of Rome continued, 'Insults to your Prophet will be inscribed on the coins that when you read, your forehead will sweat profusely (out of embarrassment). Therefore, I would like for you to accept my gift and order the textiles to be inscribed as they were. That will be an appreciated gift to me, and for which you obtain and deserve my friendship, and we can continue the current [good] relationship between me and you.'

When Abd al-Malik read the letter, he became furious and doleful. He lamented, 'I am indeed the worst child to be born in Islam because of what I have brought on the Messenger of Allah (saww) of insult from this infidel that will not go away with the passage of time and cannot be easily erased from the kingdom of the Arabs.' During that time, all business transactions were conducted using the Dinars and Dirhams minted by the Romans. This prompted Marwan to gather the people seeking their advice on how to deal with the Roman king's threat. Marwan did not find any of the opinions shared by the people suitable and worthy of pursuing. Then Ruh ibn Zamba'a said to him, 'You know the right opinion and way out of this matter but you choose to overlook and ignore it.' He said, 'Woe to you, who can I seek?' He said, 'Al-Baqir from the Household of the Prophet (saww)!' He said, 'You are right; it seems that I have no opinion but his.'

He wrote the following to his governor in Medina: 'Summon Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn al-Hussain to me respectfully and courteously, and give him two hundred thousand Dirhams for his furnishings and disburse three-hundred thousand for his expenses. Be sure to attend to all that he and those with him need during their journey. Make sure that the envoy stays with him until he reaches me.' When the message reached the Imam, he said to Marwan, 'Do not worry, for this is an easy matter for two reasons. First, Allah Almighty will not let the King of Rome carry out his threat regarding the Messenger of Allah (saww). The second point is that there is a way out [of this conundrum].'

Marwan asked what the way out was, 'What is it?' The Imam answered, 'Call on the craftsmen to mint dirhams and dinars with the inscription of Surah al-Tawheed on the front, and the mention of the Messenger of Allah (saww) on the other side. Also, be sure to inscribe the date and place of minting of the Dirhams and Dinars.

Abd al-Malik heeded the Imam's advice, and Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn al-Hussain told him to mint the coins across all Islamic lands, and order people to start using them immediately. Old coins will be voided and should be returned to the Mint to be used for minting the new Islamic coins. Announce that people who violate this order will be put to death."

In the previous book in this series, it was mentioned that the person who had the most substantial role in the minting of Islamic coins was Imam al-Sajjad (as). As the chief of Bani Hashim and leader of the Prophetic family, Imam As-Sajjad was the one who had the authority to deal with this challenge. At the time of this event, Imam al-Baqir (as) was still young (he was in his twenties) and was the silent Imam. What was mentioned in some narrations [like the one above found] in Al-Mahasin, which stated that al-Baqir (as) was the one who was invited or who travelled to Damascus, is either a misunderstanding or misprint. It is likely that the person who travelled [to Damascus] was Imam al-Baqir (as) while the planning was done by Imam al-Sajjad (as). This is what several researchers concluded.

Whatever the case may be, the Ahl al-Bayt (as) were instrumental in addressing the challenge effectively and successfully. Through them, Allah saved the Islamic nation from collapse, despite the fact that they were removed from

their rightful positions of leadership and Imamate, and even persecuted, distressed, and killed!

Imam al-Baqir (as) –whether he was completely and actively involved in the case, as understood in the narration of Al-Mahasin wa Al-Masawi and accepted by many modern authors, or he was the person who implemented the plans of his father, Imam al-Sajjad (as)– did a monumental favor for Islam and Muslims by facing and overcoming the Roman king’s threat.

## 7. Imam al-Baqir and the rulers of his time

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as) lived through the reigns of six Umayyad rulers, starting with Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan (we excluded Yazid ibn Mu’awiyah and Marwan Ibn al-Hakam due to his young age during their reigns). At the time of Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan (67-86 AH), the Imam (as) noble age was between ten and nineteen years; during the reign of al-Waleed Ibn Abd al-Malik (86-96 AH) the Imam was between nineteen and twenty-nine years; during Suleiman Ibn Abd al-Malik (96-99 AH) his age (as) was from twenty-nine to thirty-two years; and it was at that time that his active/practical Imamate began after the martyrdom of his father Ali Ibn al-Hussain al-Sajjad (as) in the year 95 AH.

During the time of his practical Imamate, he lived through the reign of Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz Ibn Marwan (99-101 AH), and his age was from 42 to 45. Then came the reign of Yazid Ibn Abd al-Malik (101-105 AH), and finally he lived through some of the reigns of Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik, which began in the year 105

AH, until he (as) was martyred at the age of 57 by the orders of Hisham in the year 114 AH. This will be explained further.

There is no historical mention of any relation between Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan and Imam al-Baqir (as), except in the matter of minting currency and the crisis that nearly destroyed the economy in the land of the Muslims. The crisis was overcome through the wisdom of Imam al-Sajjad's plan (as) and execution of Imam al-Baqir (as). This was briefly mentioned in the previous pages and explained in detail in the author's book about Imam al-Sajjad, "Sayyid al-Abideen."

As stated previously, Imam al-Baqir resolved this issue and travelled to Damascus around the year 76 AH, which is when he (as) was about nineteen years old.

Again, no historical record is found regarding any relation between Abd al-Malik and the Imam (as) except for when Marwan sought the Imam's counsel regarding the minting issue. Other than that, the Imam lived in the shadow of his father al-Sajjad (as) at that time, meaning he was like a silent Imam.

There are also some history books that focused on the life of Imam Baqir that narrate a story in which Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan wrote to the governor of Medina after receiving a tip from Zaid Ibn al-Hassan Ibn Ali to "Summon Muhammad Ibn Ali in shackles." He told Zaid, "If I give you the responsibility of killing him, will you do it?" He said, "Yes."

Upon receiving the letter, the governor wrote back to Abd al-Malik, "This letter is not an objection against you O' commander of the faithful, nor do I oppose your orders, but I saw that I should out of sincerity to you and sympathy for

you to confirm the order contained in your letter Regarding the man you want [to kill], there is surely no one on the face of the earth today more virtuous, ascetic, and pious than him. When he recites the [Quran] in his prayers, the birds and animals gather in wonder.” It can be assumed that this story is being narrated based on a misperception.” The sole reference comes from al-Qutb al-Rawandi’s account in Al-Khara’ij which reflects a misunderstanding of the event. As previously mentioned, the Imam lived through different rulers’ times, and his presence during Abd al-Malik’s reign coincided with his father’s lifetime.

The truth is that this incident could not have occurred during Abd al-Malik’s reign, and if it did occur, it would have been during the reign of his son Hisham, as will be explained later.

Interestingly, there is another narration that recounts the same story; however, this time, the narration takes place during the reign of al-Waleed Ibn Abd al-Malik, and that it took place between the same Zaid Ibn al-Hassan but with Abi Hashim ibn Muhammad Ibn al-Hanafiyyah over the charities of the Commander of the Faithful (as).

Also, there is no mention of any incident or occurrence that attest that Imam al-Baqir (as) assumed an active role during the reign of al-Waleed Ibn Abd al-Malik. This may be due to what we have previously mentioned about Imam al-Baqir (as) being a part of his father’s plan during his life; therefore, his only role was to follow his father’s role.

So is the case in the reign of Suleiman Ibn Abd al-Malik, which lasted for three years, some of which was before the

Imamate of the Imam (as). Afterwards, the reign of the Umayyad Caliph Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz Ibn Marwan began.

Circumstances changed during the rise of Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz to power. He gathered scholars and jurists around him and asked for and listened to their advice. This was both during his governance over Medina (87-93 AH) and during his reign of Caliphate (99-101 AH), which was during the time of the Imamate of al-Baqir (as).

Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz listened to the advice of Imam al-Baqir (as) when he came to him. The caliph announced his willingness to recompense for the the injustices [of those before him]. During this period, Fadak, the gift of the Prophet (saww) to Fatima (as), was returned with the efforts of Imam al-Baqir (as).

Hisham Ibn Ma'ath narrates:

I accompanied Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz when he entered Medina, and his secretary called, "Whoever has an injustice [that was done to him] or he was wronged, let him come to this door." So, Muhammad Ibn Ali, meaning al-Baqir, came. So, his (Umar's) servant, Muzaham, came to the caliph and told him that, "Muhammad Ibn Ali is at the door." Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz said, "Let him in O' Muzaham." When the Imam entered, Umar was wiping his eyes from tears.

Muhammad Ibn Ali said to him, "What makes you cry O' Umar?" Hisham (the narrator) said, "He is crying because of so-and-so, O' son of the Messenger of Allah." Muhammad Ibn Ali said, "O' Umar, this world is like a marketplace. Some people have left it with what benefits them, and others left it with what harms them. Many have been affected by the same

harms that we deal with until death came unto them, and they were taken and left this world worthy of blame. Why did they not prepare for the afterlife? Why did they not seek protection from what they hate [meaning punishment]? The ones who do not thank them [meaning their progeny] divided what they gathered [of wealth], and they were taken to the One who does not excuse them.

By Allah, we must look at the acts that they had done, and we envied them for doing, and follow them [meaning the good actions], and look at the acts that they had done, and we feared them for doing them, and stopped doing them [meaning the bad actions]. Fear Allah and place two things in your heart: Look at who [actions] you would love to be with you when you stand before your Lord and increase them, and look at who you would dislike to be with you when you stand before your Lord and seek to change them. Do not go after a crop that rotted for those before you, hoping it will not [rot] you. Fear Allah Almighty O' Umar, open the gates and ease the veil [between you and the people], help the oppressed, and forbid the oppressor." Then he said, "Whoever has three qualities, his faith in Allah would be completed." Umar fell to his knees and cried, "What are they, O' Household of Prophethood?" He said, "Yes, O' Umar, [they are that] when a person is pleased, his pleasure does not take him into falsehood. When he is angry, his anger does not take him out of the truth. When he has power, he does not take what is not his!" So Umar called for an inkwell and papyrus and wrote, "In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. Fadak is what Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz gives to Muhammad Ibn Ali to recompense for the injustice."

In fact, in another order that sought to correct the actions of his predecessors, Umar increased Fadak's profits and ordered them to be distributed among the progeny of Fatima (as). It was narrated that "Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz remembered Fadak, so he wrote to Abu Bakr, the governor of Medina, to take six thousand dinars and add it to the four thousand dinar profits of Fadak, then distribute them among the progeny of Fatima (as) of Bani Hashim, as Fadak was for the Prophet (saww) alone, "no horses or camels were spurred for it."

Further, the manners of the governors of Medina in dealing with Imam al-Baqir (as) mirrored those of the Caliphs in Damascus.

As for the reign of Yazid Ibn Abd al-Malik, there is no mention of him (meaning Yazid) in these matters! Why would there be, when all his hopes and wishes in life were his maid Habbabah. He had neither purpose nor ambition except to meet her. He justified his pursuit of pleasure by using the testimonies of those who falsely claimed that Caliphs are not judged nor punished for their actions! This put an end to any good ideas or intentions he had even if they were theoretical!

In reality, the most difficult time for the Imam (as) was during the reign of Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik, which began in 105 AH. The Imam (as) lived for nine years during Hisham's reign until he was martyred by the orders of this ruler in 114 AH. The Imam also lived through the time of Ibrahim Ibn Hisham al-Makhzumi who was the governor of Medina. Like his father before him, he mistreated and maligned Ahl al-Bayt (as).

This relationship between them ranges from:

- Hisham posing what he believed were too difficult questions for the Imam (as) to answer. This tactic, if it worked, would make the Imam look as lacking knowledge and show the caliph as more knowledgeable than he is. By doing this, Hisham sought to invalidate the distinguishing quality of the Ahl al-Bayt which justifies their Imamate. That quality, which no one else can claim, is having thorough knowledge of the Quran and the Prophet.

Some of these questions were devised by some of Hisham's companions and the jurists of the Sultans, and of course, such jurists were capable of asking difficult questions.

It would have been different if the questions were truly raised for the sake of learning or opening the closed gates of knowledge and revealing the unknown, which Imam Al-Baqir (as) was certainly capable of. He was capable of splitting the core of knowledge and bringing forth its depths! It would have been a different case if the sultans and jurists raised their questions in order to learn the truth of Ahl al-Bayt. Had they done it for that purpose, they would have had the opportunity to increase their knowledge and understanding.

- Bringing Imam al-Baqir (as) to Damascus for no reason but to expose him to undue fatigue and distress! The Imam could either respond every time he was summoned and travel a long distance and endure undue hardships of the journey. The other choice is for the Imam to not comply with the Caliph's request and have his refusal be construed by the caliph as an oppositional political

stand against the Caliph. Such opposition has its untold repercussions.

In many cases, summoning and bringing the Imam to Damascus was not necessary, as whatever reason he was summoned for could have been addressed through other means. Whatever question or questions the caliph wanted to ask the Imam could have been sent in a letter to the Imam to answer. Based on numerous narrations, the caliph summoned the Imam to the Levant more than once.

As for the supposed difficult questions, it is mentioned that in the Holy city of Mecca, "Hisham performed Hajj, and he entered the Holy Mosque leaning on his servant Salim, while Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn al-Hussain (as) was sitting in the mosque. Salim said, 'O' commander of the faithful, this is Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn al-Hussain!' Hisham said, 'The one with whom the people of Iraq are enamored by?' He said, 'Yes.'

Hisham said, 'Go and tell him that the commander of the faithful has this question for you: what do the people eat and drink while waiting to be judged on the Day of Resurrection?'

Abu Jaafar (as) said, 'The people are resurrected in a pure land, much like a clean loaf of bread, on which streams flow. They will eat and drink from it until judgment is complete.'

Hisham thought that he defeated him. So, he said, 'Allah is Great! Go to him and tell him [how could it be so when] they are too overwhelmed [by the fear of judgement] to eat or drink on that day!'

Abu Jaafar (as) said, 'They are even more overwhelmed in the hellfire. Nonetheless, the Holy Quran tells us that the dwellers of the hellfire will say: "send down to us some water or any provision that Allah has given you.'" The Imam's answer was enough to silence Hisham and to put him in his place.

A similar dialogue occurred between him and Nafi', the servant of Abdullah Ibn Umar Ibn al-Khattab. It is narrated that while Hisham was performing Hajj, Nafi' saw Abu Jaafar (as) sitting near the Ka'aba with people gathered around him. So, he asked, "O' commander of the faithful, who is that man around whom the people are gathered?" He answered, "Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn al-Hussain." Nafi' said, "I will go to him and ask him questions that no one can answer except a Prophet or the successor of a Prophet!" The caliph urged him to do so by saying: "Go to him, perhaps you can embarrass him." So Nafi' went to where the Imam was sitting and made his way through the people who gathered around him until he reached Abu Jaafar. He said, "O' Muhammad Ibn Ali, I have read the Torah, Gospel, Psalms, and Quran, and know what is permissible and forbidden in them. So, I will ask you some questions that cannot be answered except by a Prophet, a Prophet's successor, or a Prophet's son!"

Imam Abu Jaafar looked at him and said, "Ask as you please." Nafi' asked, "Tell me, how many years are between Isa and Muhammad?" The Imam answered by saying, "Should I answer you with your saying or mine?" Nafi' said, "With both." The Imam said, "I say the gap between them is 500 years, and you say it is 600 years." Nafi' said, "So tell me about the saying of Allah Almighty [And ask those of Our messengers We sent

before you 'Did We appoint gods apart from the All-Merciful to be worshipped?']. Who did Muhammad ask if there were 500 years between him and Isa?"

Imam Abu Jaafar (as) recited the verse, "[Glory be to the One Who took His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose surroundings We have blessed, so that We may show him some of Our signs]. One of the signs that He showed Muhammad when He took him by night to the Farthest Mosque is that He called upon all the Prophets and Messengers, the first and last, then ordered Jibra'il to recite Athan and Iqamah to call them [to prayer] and he said in his Athan 'hayya ala khair al-amal (hurry towards the best of deeds)'. Then Muhammad stepped forward and lead the congregation prayer. When he finished, Allah Almighty revealed [And ask those of Our messengers We sent before you 'Did We appoint gods apart from the All-Merciful to be worshipped?']."

A third example, and there are many examples, is what was narrated by Imam al-Sadiq (as). Once Imam al-Baqir (as) was brought to Damascus along with his son Imam Jaafar al-Sadiq, and then Abu Abdullah (as) said:

Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik sent an envoy to my father (as) to bring him to Damascus. When he arrived, Hisham said to him, "O' Abu Jaafar, I summoned you to ask you a question that I cannot ask anyone about but you. Further, only one man is supposed to know it."

My father said, "The commander of faithful may ask me about whatever he pleases, and if I know, I will answer him, and if I do not, I will say I do not know and will be honest." Hisham

said, "Tell me about the night in which Ali Ibn Abi Talib was killed. How did those who were not present in the city [in Kufa] know? What was his sign among the people? Did others learn a lesson from his killing?" So, my father said, "On the night in which Ali (as) was killed, under each stone that is turned or lifted, blood surged beneath it until sunrise. It was a night similar to that in which Harun, the brother of Musa (as) was lost, the night Yusha' Ibn Nun was killed, the night Isa Ibn Maryam (as) was lifted, and the night al-Hussein (as) was killed. Hisham's face was filled with rage. He became pale [of shock], and he nearly killed my father. So my father said to him, "O' commander of the faithful, it is an obligation on the people to obey their Imam and be honest to him in advice. I only answered the commander of faithful because I knew that it is my obligation to obey him. So let the commander of faithful think well of me."

So Hisham said to him, "Promise me on the Covenant of Allah and His Affirmation that you will not inform others of this narration as long as you live" and my father agreed, and Hisham was pleased. Then Hisham said, "Return to your family if you please."

Some authors mentioned that Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik had signs and symptoms of a mentally ill person. They mention that he was stingy, like his father! For instance, they say that he refused to give ten dinars as a gift or reward to a worker of his who had taken such good care of his land that its harvest was bountiful and profits were high! One of them says, "Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik made the Hajj pilgrimage in the year 106. He came to Kufa and from there left for Hajj. Yazid Ibn al-Mur said, 'I was among his workers, and he did not give money to any of us."

They also describe Hisham as an envious person. He displayed this characteristic of envy in his relationship with Imam Zain al-Abideen (as) by pretending not to know his name--which he definitely knew. This encounter happened when he saw the people making way for the Imam (as) during Tawaf while he, being the caliph's brother, had tried very hard but no one would make way for him. The story is well-known. He even ordered al-Farazdaq to be thrown in jail for reciting his famous Meemiyah poem in praise of the Imam.

Hisham was envious of people who were physically healthy! It is mentioned that "when Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik performed Hajj, he came to Medina and Salim Ibn Abdullah ibn Umar came to visit him. When Salim left, Hisham said, 'I have not seen a seventy-year-old with a well-built body like him! When Salim reached his home, he had a fever and said, 'This cross-eyed (meaning Hisham) cast a spell on me with his envious eyes.' Hisham did not leave Medina before praying on his body [meaning Salim passed away]." In a more detailed account that others narrate, "Salim Ibn Abdullah came to him, and he liked his body build. So, he asked him, 'What do you eat?' Salim said, 'Bread and oil!' He said, 'What if you do not crave it?' He said, 'I ferment it until I crave it.' Hisham cast a spell on Salim with his envious eyes, which lead to Salim's illness and death. Hisham attended his funeral, and the people flocked to it in great numbers. So Hisham saw them and said, 'The people of Medina are many.' Then, a group of them went on a journey, and not a single one of them returned. After these events, the people of Medina considered Hisham as a bad omen, as he envied their jurist and the people of their city."

Let us now focus on the details of the difficult journey in which Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as) and his son Jaafar al-Sadiq (as) were brought to Damascus.

There are many narrations recounting the details of this summon, but they may all be related to the same journey, which followed Hisham's journey to Hajj and Medina or from more than one journey.

Historians narrate that Hisham performed Hajj twice, once during the reign of his brother al-Waleed, during which the aforementioned incident between him and Imam al-Sajjad (as) took place. The second time was in 106 AH during his caliphate. In this journey, there were dialogues between him, his jurists, and the Imam in Mecca. Imam al-Baqir (as) was heard saying, "Praise be to Allah who sent Muhammad with truth as a prophet and honoured us with him. So, we are the best to Allah among his creation and the best of his servants. So, the joyful one is he who follows us, and the unfortunate one is he who disobeys us. There are people who say they follow us when, in reality, they follow our enemies and their associates and companions. Such people have not heard the words of our Lord, nor have they followed them."

Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

Maslama Ibn Abd al-Malik informed his brother about what Imam Al-baqir said, but he did not disturb us until he returned to Damascus, and we returned to Medina. He then sent a letter to his governor in Medina to summon my father and me, so we were taken to Damascus to see him.

We were not allowed to meet with him (Hisham) until three days after our arrival to Damascus. On the fourth day, we were given the permission to go in. He was sitting on the daybed of governance, and his soldiers and entourage were all standing and armed. The Burjas (archery target) was placed before him, and the elders of his people were shooting [at it]. When my father and I entered the area he was in, he sat us close to him, and we sat for a little while. Then he said to my father, "O' Abu Jaafar, why don't you shoot the target with the elders of your people!" He sought to embarrass my father, believing he was incapable and could not shoot the target because of his age, which he would consider as a triumph over my father.

So, my father said, "I am old, so if you see it best, pardon me."

But he did not accept my father's plea, and said, "No, I swear by He who honoured us with his religion and Prophet, you will shoot." Then he signalled to an Umayyad elder to bring a bow to my father. My father took the bow from him and took an arrow, and then held the arrow to the bow and shot, hitting the center of the target, which stayed firmly planted on it. Then he shot the second arrow, which broke through the first and continued until he shot nine arrows, each hitting inside the other.

Overcome by both awe and disdain, Hisham could not help but say, "You did great, O' Abu Jaafar. Indeed, you are the best archer among Arabs and non-Arabs. You claimed that you have become old, but did not stop you!"

Hisham regretted calling the Imam by his Kunya since he was so arrogant that he did not address anyone with their Kunya during his reign. Shortly after, Hisham looked down for

a while seemingly thinking about to what to do with my father who was standing with his face toward Hisham. Meanwhile, I was standing behind my father. After standing for a long time, my father became angry, all the while looking up toward the sky in anger that showed on his face. Hisham noticed that in my father, so he said, "Get up O' Muhammad," so my father got up to the daybed, and so did I. When he got close to Hisham, Hisham got up and hugged him, then sat him to his right, and hugged me and sat me to the right of my father. Then he looked at my father and said, "O' Muhammad, Quraysh will continue to be superior to all Arabs and non-Arabs as long as someone like you is among them! May Allah accept your actions (used to express amazement in actions). Who taught you this good archery? How long did it take you to learn it?" My father said, "I knew that the people of Medina used it, so I used it when I was young, and then I left it. When the commander of faithful wanted me to shoot, it came back to me."

He said, "I have never seen archery like this in my life! I did not think that anyone on earth could shoot this good. How well is Jaafar's shooting to yours?"

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He said, "We inherit perfection, completeness, and religion as Allah Almighty revealed to His Prophet, saying [Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen Islam as your religion]. So, this earth is never without someone who completes His religion, and this is but a sign that others cannot reach."

When he heard this, [the pupil of] his right eye went up, making him cross-eyed, and his face became red. These were the features he made when he became angry. He looked down

for some time, then looked up to my father and said, "Are we not all the progeny of Abd Manaf? Our lineage and yours are the same?"

My father said, "We are so, but Allah Almighty granted us his hidden secrets and pure knowledge that he did not give anyone else!"

He said, "Did Allah not send Muhammad from the progeny of Abd Manaf to all of mankind, white, black, and red? So, from whom did you inherit that which no one else has when Allah sent Muhammad to all of mankind? And, how did you inherit this knowledge when there is no Prophet after Muhammad, and you are not Prophets?"

My father said, "From the saying of the Almighty [Do not rush your tongue with it (revelation) to hurry on with it]. What he revealed was to all of mankind, and what he did not rush his tongue with, Allah ordered him to give to us and not others. For this, he would tell it to his brother Ali and not anyone else from his companions. When Allah revealed the Quranic verse [and that attentive ears may grasp it], the Messenger of Allah said to Ali while sitting with his companions, 'I asked Allah that he make it your ears O' Ali.' For this, Ali (as) said in Kufa, 'The Messenger of Allah taught me one thousand doors of knowledge; every door opens a thousand doors.' The Messenger of Allah gave it to us from His hidden knowledge. Allah gave to the prophet, and we, and not anyone else from our people, received it and inherited it from the prophet."

## 8. Imam al-Baqir and the Journeys to Damascus

Damascus was the political capital of the Umayyad state. The Umayyads established their power there since their first governor, Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan, was appointed during the reign of Umar Ibn al-Khattab. The political influence of Damascus was further enhanced with the arrival of his brother Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan, who was appointed by Uthman Ibn Affan. Muawiya seemed to see Damascus as an “endowment” to the Umayyads. It became the state’s official capital when Muawiya seized the Caliphate through his over-twenty-year reign. Later, during the internal conflicts among the Umayyads and the conflicts they had with their rivals, whoever controlled Damascus held the greatest center of power.

After the end of the rule of the Sufyanids in Damascus, the Marwanids continued the Ummayyad’s tradition of taking Damascus as their capital city and center of power. Damascus had the command center that monitored and managed war operations, and served as the base from which the caliphs wielded control over the various regions that came under their control. If the caliph wished for someone to be summoned, that person would be summoned or brought in a respectful manner or in a humiliating method where the summoned person would be tied be in chains and shackles. Travelling the long distance from Medina to Damascus was exceedingly difficult under all circumstances. I have not found the specific number of these journeys in historical texts, but through the narrations and their implications, it can be inferred that Imam al-Baqir (as) traveled on three journeys from Medina to Damascus and back.

- There are two views on the journey that Imam al-Baqir (as) had to make to resolve the currency crisis, which was discussed previously. The first and most common opinion is that Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan had sent a letter to his governor in Medina to prepare Imam al-Baqir (as) and asked him to come to Damascus to consult with for solutions to the currency crisis. The second and more credible account is that Imam Zain al-Abideen (as) took charge of the matter and sent his son al-Baqir (as) to directly handle its resolution in Damascus in cooperation with the caliphate. This was his first journey to Damascus, during which he was treated with dignity and respect because the Caliph desperately needed the Imam's counsel on finding a way out of the predicament he was facing.
  
- As was mentioned before, this journey took place after Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik travelled to Hajj as a ruler in 106 AH. Imam All-Baqir (as) spoke to the people about the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) and implored the people to follow them. Hisham's paternal brother, Maslama Ibn Abd al-Malik, told him about the public speech the Imam's gave. When Hisham returned to Damascus, he summoned Imam al-Baqir. The Imam travelled with his son Imam al-Sadiq (as) to Damascus. In this journey, Hisham attempted to humiliate the Imam (as) by first making the Imam wait for three days before seeing him. The second occasion occurred when Hisham compelled the Imam to take part in the archery activity, despite the Imam's reluctance to do so. Hisham, however, did not let the Imam off the hook as he was intent on embarrassing

the Imam by showing that the Imam did not know how to use the bow and arrow. With Allah's blessings and help, the Imam demonstrated unparalleled and dazzling archery skills in front of all the people.

The Imam seized the opportunity to tell Hisham and those present that the Imams inherited perfection, a quality that Allah grants to whosoever seeks to complete his faith!

This journey was fraught with hostile maltreatment from beginning to end. The summon was provoked by Maslama, and the primary motive for the journey was to punish the Imam. Despite the arduous journey the Imam endured from Medina to Damascus, he was held up for several days before he was allowed to meet with the caliph. The inhospitable treatment was reflected in the meeting as well, as Hisham was intent on demeaning and ridiculing the Imam. The dialogue between them and the Imam's emphasis on the special status and position of Ahl al-Bayt that is superior to that of the people of Quraysh further infuriated Hisham.

It may be that during this journey and while waiting and being held up for days, the Imam seized the opportunity to hold dialogues with both the Christian monk—who appeared at specific times of the year--and Christians and even some Muslims who sought guidance from the Imam. This incident, too, was a time for the Imam to demonstrate his splitting of knowledge prowess, and to make manifest the knowledge of Ahl al-Bayt that was deliberately hidden from them. A portion of this incident was narrated from Abi Baseer, in which he said:

Abu Jaafar (as) said, "I was in Damascus heading to one of the Umayyad kings when I saw a group of people walking near me to whom I said, 'Where are you going?' They replied, 'To a scholar of ours, the likes of whom we have never seen. He informs us of what is beneficial for our affairs.' So, I followed them until they entered a great tower filled with many people. Before long, an old man leaning on two others came out. His eyebrows had fallen over his eyes, but he tied them back so his eyes were visible. He looked at me and said, 'Are you from us or from the blessed nation (meaning Muslims)?' I said, 'From the blessed nation.' He asked, 'From their scholars or from their ignorant ones?' I replied, 'Neither from its scholars nor from its ignorant ones.' He said, 'You claim that you will go to paradise where you will eat and drink and not produce waste.' I said, 'Yes!' He said, 'Then bring proof of this!' I replied, 'The fetus eats and drinks in its mother's womb and does not produce waste.' He said, 'Did you not say that you were not one of their scholars?' he exclaimed, 'And I said, "nor from its ignorant ones."'

He said, 'Tell me about a time that is neither of the day nor of the night?'

I said, 'This time is from dawn until sunrise; we do not count it as part of our night or our day!'

He looked at me in amazement and said, 'Did you not say that you were not one of their scholars?' Then he said, 'By Allah, I will ask you a question that will puzzle you like a bull mired in mud; tell me about two men who were born at the same hour and died at the same hour, one of whom lived for one hundred and fifty years and the other lived for fifty years?' I said, 'May your mother be deprived of you (used to express the ignorance

of the addressed person). They are Uzair and Azra. One lived for fifty years, then Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then revived him and asked him, "How long have you been here?" He said, "A day or part of a day." The other lived for one hundred and fifty years, then they both died.'

The Christian angrily said, 'By Allah, I will not utter a single word to any of you, nor will you see my face for twelve months because you brought him to me.'

Perhaps this is the same journey about which some details were mentioned that suggest that Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik was disrespectful to the Imam, as narrated by al-Kulayni in al-Kafi and Ibn Shahrashub in al-Manaqib. In summary, these accounts indicate that when Abu Jaafar was brought to Damascus to [see] Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik, and he reached his door, Hisham told his companions, "When I stop insulting Muhammad Ibn Ali, you should insult him." Then he ordered that Abu Jaafar be allowed in. Abu Jaafar greeted them with "peace be upon you all", raising his hand, addressing them all with the greeting, then sat down; Hisham became even more furious that the Imam did not greet him [specifically] as caliph and sat down without permission. He said, "O' Muhammad Ibn Ali, [you and] your people (the Ahl al-Bayt) are always breaking the unity of the Muslims, calling to themselves, and claiming foolishly and ignorantly that you are the Imams ..." Then he proceeded to insult the Imam.

When Hisham stopped hurling his abusive remarks, the people, as commanded by the caliph, started offending the Imam. When the people stopped, the Imam stood up and said, "O' people, what good is what you are doing and for what

purpose? Indeed, it is through us that Allah guided the first one of you, and through us, He will seal your last. If you have a hastened rule, we have a delayed rule, and after our rule, there will be no rule because we are the people of the eventuality (aa'qibah), and Allah Almighty says [and the (best) eventuality is for the righteous]." Following this, the Imam was ordered to be thrown in jail. In prison, the Imam spoke and his words and demeanor evoked the prisoners' love and compassion for him. The prison chief guard went to Hisham and informed him of the situation, which prompted Hisham to take the Imam and those with him back to Medina. Hisham also ordered that markets [along the way] to be closed so the Imam and his companions would have no access to food and drink.

- The journey in which the Imam (as) was brought to the caliph in order to ask him about the night in which the Commander of the Faithful Ali (as) was killed and what happened in it. What is strange about this is that Hisham knew and believed that whoever answers the question must be a Prophet or a Prophet's successor. This knowledge did not positively affect Hisham's faith as the Imam (as) commented. That a tyrant stubbornly swerves from the path of truth is understandable as there are other similar incidents throughout history. About the hardened hearts, Allah Almighty says in the Qu'ran, "Indeed, in that is a reminder for whoever possesses a heart or cares to listen and witness, So woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of Allah." No reliable historical record is available to confirm whether this journey was the second or third. Also, there is no precise record of the year in which it took place.

## 9. His martyrdom in poison

In the year 114 AH, Imam Muhammad ibn Ali al-Baqir (as) was martyred by poisoning via a plot hatched by the Umayyad ruler Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik, and executed, as some have mentioned, by Ibrahim Ibn al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik. There are two opinions regarding how the Imam was poisoned; one of them states that he was poisoned after sitting and coming in contact with a poison-filled saddle.

There are several points related to this issue that are worth noting:

- The idea that the Imam was poisoned and did not die a natural death is supported by the fact that assassination by poisoning was a widely-used method during the Umayyad rule. This method was chosen instead of the sword because it is done within the confines of prison thereby avoiding the potential of a public backlash. Those who opposed the ruler (or whom the ruler perceived as opposition) were eliminated, even if they were sons or brothers, regardless of they were relatives or not. The rulers mobilized physicians, often Christians and sometimes Indians, who were knowledgeable about the properties of substances and poisons that are suitable for such purposes. Poison ingredients were imported from Byzantine lands. This practice is discussed in detail in one of the books in this series.
- It is evident that the Umayyad ruler Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik, given his psychologically troubled personality (stemming from his feelings of inferiority due to being

cross-eyed, envious towards those who were better than him, and his constant hostility toward the Ahl al-Bayt, especially Imam al-Baqir, considered Imam al-Baqir (as) not just a political rival but a political foe. Hence, he attempted to humiliate and demean the Imam. These efforts failed as did his attempts to assail the Imam's knowledge by posing questions that he and his jurists thought would stump the Imam. The opposite effects happened leading to an increased prominence of Imam al-Baqir among the people. Realizing the futility of his schemes, Hisham finally resorted to assassinate the Imam. Nothing was easier than poisoning, which was previously used in similar situations by his brothers, Suleiman and al-Waleed!

- Another point that supports and confirms what was previously mentioned is how long the Imams (as) lived; they were mostly in the middle age range group when they were martyred except for Imam al-Baqir and Imam al-Sadiq (as). It is narrated by Imam Jaafar al-Sadiq (as) that his father, Muhammad al-Baqir (as), said, "Ali was killed when he was fifty-eight years old; Ali ibn al-Hussain died at the age of fifty-eight; and today, I am fifty-eight years old." Perhaps Imam al-Baqir, stating their ages up to that point, suggests that their departure from this world was not natural. Otherwise, there is no need to mention that they died before the age of sixty. They were not known to be afflicted with an illness that lead to death, nor did their lifestyles were the type that lead to death at middle age. Hence, the Imam intended to imply that the lives of the Imams were "cut short." Thus, this narration

corroborates this narration: "None of us (the Ahl al-Bayt) dies except by the sword or poison."

- It is unlikely that Ibrahim ibn al-Waleed ibn Abd al-Malik (Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik's nephew) had a direct and major role in poisoning the Imam during the reign of his uncle Hisham as he was not yet an influential figure, especially in the Holy city of Medina. In fact, historical accounts suggest that he exhibited weak and irresolute personality during the seventy days he fought for the position of caliphate and to get the people to pledge allegiance to him. If this how spineless he was before he became caliph, one can imagine how timid and faint-hearted he was after he became the caliph!

Nonetheless, Ibn Shahrashub mentions that Ibrahim had a leading role in poisoning the Imam (as) and attributes that to Ibn Babawayh. But in this account, he mentions some unsubstantiated details that contradict known historical facts. He mentions in al-Manaqib that during the years of the Imamate of Imam al-Baqir (as), "He witnessed the reigns of al-Waleed Ibn Yazid, Suleiman, Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz, Yazid Ibn Abd al-Malik, Hisham his brother, al-Waleed Ibn Yazid, Ibrahim his brother, and he passed away at the beginning of Ibrahim's reign. Abu Jaafar ibn Babawayh said: Ibrahim Ibn al-Waleed Ibn Yazid poisoned him." But this is not true, as we have concluded, and many have concluded, that the martyrdom of the Imam (as) was in 114 AH, during the reign of Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik, which ended in 125 AH. Since the year 118 AH is the latest estimate given for his martyrdom. , the Imam did not witness

the reigns of al-Waleed, Yazid, or Ibrahim, as they assumed power in 127 AH for a short period.

Regardless of whether Ibn Shahrashub or Ibn Babawayh narrated the account, the year in which the Imam (as) was martyred does not align with what they mentioned. Additionally, Ibrahim Ibn al-Waleed was not an important and strong figure before and during his 70-day caliphate. Therefore, the crime of poisoning of the Imam was perpetrated by none other than Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik, who was in power until the year 125 AH.

- Like the previous claim that was refuted and rejected, it is equally hard to accept that the Imam was poisoned during the reign of Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan using a poisoned saddle, which when the Imam sat on the poison seeped into his body, causing his death. Al-Qutb al-Rawandi (died 573 AH) mentioned in a narration that Zaid Ibn al-Hassan al-Mujtaba conspired against Imam al-Baqir (as) for several reasons, including his desire to have the authority over the charities of the Commander of the Faithful (as), and his efforts to pit Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan against the Imam! However, his attempt failed to achieve its goal. Rather, Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan returned Zaid to Medina in shackles and sent a letter to Imam al-Baqir (as) to discipline him! But Zaid managed to poison a saddle and asked al-Baqir to sit on it. When he did, he got off [the saddle] swollen!

This narration, which supposedly came from Imam al-Sadiq (as), has too many flaws to count: To start with, it lacks a chain of narration, and is known in Arabic as mursal. No one is known

to have mentioned this narration before al-Qutb died in 573 AH. In Ibn Hamza al-Tusi's book, who died in 560 AH, noted at the beginning of this narration in his book al-Thaqib fi al-Manaqib but did not include the end of the narration where the poisoned saddle is mentioned.

Another flaw in the narration is that it contradicts established historical details. For instance, this incident is said to have taken place during the reign of Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan, and the truth is that Abd Al-Malik died in the year 86 AH, ten years before the martyrdom of Imam al-Sajjad (as), Imam al-Baqir's (as) father. At the end of the narration, the narrator also mentioned that Zaid Ibn al-Hassan, after the incident of the poisoned saddle, "lived only a few days after him and was then afflicted with a disease that affected his mobility causing him to stumble and fall and was not able to perform prayers to the time of his death." The truth is that he died in the year 120 AH when he was ninety years old, or according to some, at the age of one hundred! So how can it be reconciled that Abd al-Malik died in 86 AH and that the Imam was martyred in 114 AH, and Zaid died in 120 AH? How could it be that he "lived only a few days" after the Imam?

Allamah Shaykh Mohammed Sanqour researched the different aspects of this narration in depth and concluded that it was dubious and baseless. He concluded, as Ayatollah Sayyid al-Khoei (ra) concluded that this narration is fake and fabricated!

Among the points highlighted in the research and deemed as flaws is that the narration clearly states that Zaid is the planner, organizer, executor, and direct perpetrator of the

murder of the Imam (as). If this indeed took place, then this constitutes a serious charge leveled against Zaid. To confirm that the scheme and its execution are the work of Zaid requires clear and conclusive evidence, and not a weak account based on questionable chain of narrations. If the account is, it would have been widely spread and circulated in the gatherings of the Hashemites and among the Ahl al-Bayt. Despite all of his shortcomings, Zaid would not have committed such a crime. Also, such a crime could not have been concealed from the public. If it were to be in the interest of the progeny of al-Hassan to hide it, it would not have been for the rest of Bani Hashim! If it was hidden: how was it kept hidden, and why is the answer not found in their narrations and sayings?

If all the ways to disseminate the narration are at hand, and there is nothing to stop it from spreading, why do we not find any mention of the "poisoned saddle" anywhere else. The only source is this single mursal narration? The above points posit unassailable arguments that refute the false construal of the the narration.

I heard an audio recording of Ayatollah Sayyid al-Madadi (ha) on the anniversary of Imam al-Baqir's martyrdom (as) in which he mentioned that there are different ways of administering poisons; some are given orally while others are known as contact poisons and take effect by seeping through the skin. Contact poisons are thought to be more potent and more fatal. He also mentioned that one type of the contact poisons is known as "the poison of al-Halahil." Perhaps he is suggesting that the Imam was poisoned this way.

What Ayatollah Sayyid al-Madadi (ha Sayyid al-Madadi (ha) shared helps expel the initial skepticism that one may have when he first hears about the Imam being assassinated with a poisoned saddle. That is, Ayatollah Sayyid al-Madadi offers a perspective that makes one entertain the possibility that the narration may be true. However, as explained before, there are no additional sources that can be used to verify the trueness and fidelity of this narration.

- Based on the aforementioned points, it can be reasonably concluded that the Imam (as) died after being poisoned during the reign of Umayyad ruler Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik in the year 114 AH. As was mentioned before, assassination by poisoning a drink or food was a common method used by the Umayyads. In the absence of authoritative and convincing evidence, it is not easy to ascertain the specific details of the assassination, including who the perpetrator was. Clear-cut details of assassinations are often shrouded in in the highest levels of secrecy . If details of the assassination plan are revealed before it is carried out, it would not be successful. Similarly, if the plot is revealed after it is over, it is likely to have unpredictable social reactions that the ruling authorities would not like or be able to handle! Families of assassination victims are likely to disclose some details if there is no fear of any punitive consequences to them and their relatives. This explains why many historians and authors confirm that the Imam (as) was poisoned, and point the finger at either Ibrahim Ibn al-Waleed or Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik, and no one else, for the assassination crime.

Muhammad Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (the Imami scholar) mentioned that “the cause of the Imam’s death was that Ibrahim Ibn al-Waleed poisoned him.” I say: We accept the idea that he was poisoned but are not sure, as will be explained earlier, that Ibrahim was responsible for it.

Shaykh al-Saduq (died 381 AH) said, “Al-Baqir, Muhammad Ibn Ali (as), was poisoned by Ibrahim Ibn al-Waleed, and the poison killed him.” Ibn Shahrashub mentioned his opinion in *Manaqib Aal Abi Talib*.

Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (died 974 AH) said the following after mentioning Imam al-Baqir (as): “He passed away in the year 117 AH, at the age of 58, poisoned like his father.”

Shaykh al-Baha’ie al-Amili (died 1031 AH) said, “He (as) was killed following the orders of Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik by Ibrahim Ibn al-Waleed ibn Yazid Ibn Abd al-Malik.”

### **How did the Imam Split Knowledge?**

Nearly all researchers agree that the environment in which the Holy Quran was revealed and where the sayings of the Messenger of Allah (s) were spoken is beyond our ability to discern. The Divine message was conveyed to the people by the Prophet which radically transformed society and delivered the people from the depths of ignorance to the peaks of enlightenment. This, however, refers to general guidance. When it comes to understanding the detailed aspects of the religion—such as faith, rulings, lifestyle, and behavior—additional guides were needed to safeguard and lead the people. The guide’s role was to clarify the overall message of the Quran and to explain the foundations of faith. This was the role of the Imams

of Guidance (as), led by the Master of the Faithful Ali Ibn Abi Talib, who was the gate to the Prophetic City of Knowledge. The Chosen Prophet (saww) proclaimed this many times; that he is arguably the most knowledgeable and superior of all. But the winds of politics did not blow as the believers wished, and the Commander of the Faithful (as) was forcefully and deliberately kept away from a position to which he was most qualified. This also blocked a great amount of his guidance and knowledge from reaching the general public. He would refer to that in his saying, "If the cushion [of governance] was folded for me, I would rule to the people of the Torah according to their Torah, to the people of the Gospel with according to their Gospel, and to the people of the Furqan (Quran) in accordance with their Furqan, so that every one of them says 'Ali judged with what Allah Almighty revealed.'" Additionally, the lack of knowledge among some members of the public helped to prevent his knowledge from reaching the people. The Imam (as) referred to this by saying, "I have hidden knowledge that if I disclose, you will start trembling like ropes in deep wells."

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The caliphs themselves were forced to seek some guidance from him, and the Imam (as) did not hesitate to do so in order to protect the laws of the Chosen Prophet and to benefit the Muslims with real religious rulings. One of the caliphs spoke of his need for the Imam's knowledge and guidance by saying, "May Allah not keep me [alive to witness] a problem in which Abu al-Hassan is not available to help me solve it." There are similar sayings.

But all this was but a speck of what the Islamic nation needed to learn from him.

After the reign of the first caliphs ended and after his martyrdom (as), the Umayyads intentionally put out of sight and suppressed anything that intimately connected the people to the Commander of the Faithful (as). If mentioning him favorably and narrating his virtues were punishable by the government, one can imagine the enormity of the penalty that would be inflicted on those who call to his path and spread his knowledge!

The Umayyad ruler Muawiyah Ibn Abi Sufyan exposed the state's approach [to the knowledge of Ali (as)] in his infamous dialogue with Abdullah Ibn Abbas, when he disallowed him from interpreting the Quran according to what his master Ali Ibn Abi Talib (as) taught him. In addition to barring the Imam from leading the people, they did their utmost to impede his teachings and guidance to reach the people. In fact, they made every effort to obstruct him from becoming a symbol of Islam and from being pursued as the gate to the Prophet's City of Knowledge.

The authorities continued to withhold anything related to him from the people to the extent that his identity would be obscured when narrating anything he said by using phrases such as, "It was narrated to us from Abu Zainab!"<sup>5</sup> The situation during the lives of Imam Al-Hassan and Al-Hussain (as) was not any better than that of their father's, the Commander of the Faithful.

Circumstances changed to a certain degree afterwards, and the role of Imam Zain al-Abidden (as) in bringing about some of this change is discussed in the book, Master of Worshippers in this series. In the book, it is mentioned that Imam Ali Ibn al-

Hussain al-Sajjad was able, through various measures, to revive the path of the Ahl al-Bayt after a long period of deliberate blockout and suppression by previous Umayyad rulers. Hence, the path of Imam Ali (AS) with the blessed efforts of Imam al-Sajjad, came back strongly and spread widely among the people.

The active leadership role of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as) began from this point, in the life of his father (as), meaning after the year 95 AH until his martyrdom in 114 AH. He began by reviving the virtues, excellence, and knowledge of his grandfather, the Commander of the Faithful (as). This topic will be examined in detail in the chapter that focuses on “Imam al-Baqir and the Book of Ali”] and set right the traditions that the jurists of the time claimed to be of the Messenger of Allah (saww). Imam al-Baqir (as) pinpointed the flaws in the narrations that were attributed to the Prophet (saww), and revised and corrected all the distortions and falsifications that were embedded in them. This point is elaborated later in the book. I read a statement from Allamah al-Korani in the introduction of his book about Imam al-Baqir (as) in which he answered the question, “Why did his grandfather, the Messenger of Allah (saww), give him the title ‘Splitter of Knowledge’ when he does not speak out of his own desire or opinion?” He answered by saying, “I found that he (as) revised and corrected the opinions and false ideas and knowledge of [Islamic] nation’s authorities and exposed them one after the other. The Imam described the so-called scholars as evil-intentioned people who prevented others from knowing and following the true path of Allah! He also said that the scholars intentionally took a drop of the vast and rich river of the Messenger of Allah which he passed down to his

progeny." He added, "He worked to banish the culture of the caliphs, which was based on opinions and stories of the People of the Book and replace it with the authentic Islamic culture, which is based on the knowledge of the Prophet."

"Baqir Al-Ilm" – the one who splits knowledge as the Messenger of Allah (saww), described him, saying that it is his title that was mentioned in the Torah. He will open the gates to the knowledge of Ahl al-Bayt for whoever seeks it. This calls for a detailed explanation and is provided in the following points:

1. It is important to take note of the linguistic meaning and uniqueness of the Imam's title. "Baqr" means to split something and take out what is inside it. The term is also used to describe a lion who splits the stomach of his prey and takes out its insides or a bull when it ploughs the ground and brings out the dirt that is beneath it. It also refers to "expanding," as explained in Lisan al-Arab by Ibn Mandhur, "'Tabaqur' means to expand on knowledge and wealth. Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn al-Hussain Ibn Ali (ra) was called al-Baqir because he split knowledge, revealed its roots, and extracted its branches thereby expanding and deepening knowledge. The origin of 'Baqr' is to split, open, and expand. Therefore, the verb 'baqartu' means to open and expand something."

This title was so unique to Imam Muhammad ibn Ali Ibn al-Hussain that it has become a distinctive and exclusive title to him. Thus, when the title "al-Baqir" is mentioned, no one else besides him comes to mind. When many titles are mentioned, more than one person comes to mind, regardless of whether

or not everyone is worthy of these titles, but we do not find anyone with this title except Imam Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn al-Hussain (as).

The fact that some choose not to acknowledge that the Prophet gave this special title to the Imam does not matter as it is customary for them to dismiss such virtues. It is curious that this title was known to refer to the Imam centuries before those who doubted and dismissed it, and that Muslim scholars continued to use it long after them.

2. His (as) splitting and broadening knowledge characteristic clearly appears in numerous traditions narrated by him and transmitted by narrators of hadith. It would take volumes to enumerate these narrations.

It is noteworthy that there is a huge gap between what was said by the Imam and what was retained. Thus, what has reached us is a small portion of the Imam's knowledge. In other words, the traditions that we have received are much less than the traditions that he delivered during his life because much of his knowledge was not written down or preserved for different reasons. Also, some of what was written was either damaged or destroyed.

1. When looking at the number of narrators who took their knowledge from the Imam and narrated from him, the extent of how far and wide Imam al-Baqir (as) spread knowledge becomes clear. Shaykh al-Atareidi traced the names of those who narrated from him and found them to be 652 narrators, and Shaykh al-Qarashi put their at 482 narrators.

We can understand this big number of narrations when we learn that there were some narrators who narrated thousands of the Imam's traditions.

Those who narrated from him who were not followers of the school of the Ahl al-Bayt includes the following among a long list of narrators: Muhammad Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, Amr Ibn Dinar, Abu Ishaq al-Hamdani, Wahb Ibn Manbah, Wasil [Ibn Ataa], Hashim Ibn Hashim Ibn Utbah Ibn Abi Waqqas, Hashim Ibn Urwah Ibn al-Zubair, Aslam [Servant of Umar], Ibrahim Ibn Adham, Ishaq Ibn Rashid, Ishaq Ibn Yasar, Iyas Ibn Salamah Ibn al-Akwaa, al-Hakam Ibn Utayba, Abu Hanifa al-Numan bin Thabit, Habib Ibn Qais Ibn Dinar, Dawud Ibn Dinar Ibn Athafir, Rabeea Ibn Abi Abd al-Rahman Farukh al-Teymi, Sufyan Ibn Uyaynah, Sharik Ibn Abdullah Ibn Abi Nimr, Muhammad Ibn Ishaq, Mansour Ibn al-Mu'tamir, al-Awza'i, Abu Ishaq al-Sabee'i, Layth Ibn Abi Saleem, Hajjaj Ibn Arttaah, al-Amash, Mukhawwal Ibn Rashid, al-Qassim Ibn al-Fadhl al-Huddani, Harb Ibn Sareej, Muhammad Ibn al-Munkadir.

## 2. The variety of subjects and his many narrators:

The official stance of the school of the caliphs was characterized by prohibiting the transmission of narrations from the Messenger of Allah (s) or writing down his sayings. This official policy lasted till the end of the first Hijri century when the Umayyad caliph Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz (died 101 AH) lifted this ban. By comparison, the main stance of the school of the Ahl al-Bayt was to encourage the people to narrate and write down the sayings of the Prophet. Hence, we should not be surprised to find that the nine books of the

school of the caliphs only contain 244 narrations from Imam al-Baqir (as)! In fact, in the words of al-Thahabi, he [the Imam (as)] "did not narrate a large number of Hadiths." One must ask the obvious question: how is it possible that the Imam "did not narrate a large number of Hadiths" when the Prophet (s) described him as the one who would split and spread knowledge? Even if we were to assume, as some of them claimed, that the narrations that the Prophet gave him that title/nickname were weak, there is no doubt that the Imam, and no one else, was well known by this title. Didn't occur to any of them to ask: How did he split knowledge, open it, and expand it but did not narrate a large number of Hadiths?

How can the title befit the Imam al-Baqir (as) if al-Thahabi claimed that, "His knowledge of the Quran was not as great as that of Ibn Kathir and his likes, that his jurisprudence prowess was not as notable as that of Abi al-Zanad and Rabia, and that his memorization of Hadith was not at the level of Qatada and Ibn Shihab?"

The researcher Ahmed al-Qadhi al-Golpeyghani compiled 187 different questions about a variety of fields that were asked by scholars, narrators, and common Muslims regarding Imam al-Baqir (as) in his book Questions of the People and Answers of Imam al-Baqir (as).

Some of the questions were about the existence of Allah, His Oneness, names, and attributes. Others were about the creation of mankind and the beginning of human history. Some were about religion, the prophets of Allah Almighty,

and the Chosen Prophet (s). Some were about Imamate, its importance, and the people's need for an Imam, as well as the virtues of the Infallibles (as). Other questions were about his merits, knowledge, and expertise. Still others were about Imam al-Mahdi; his birth, the days and circumstances of his disappearance, the signs of the reappearance, and his eventual rise and movement at the end of time when he will attain victory for the religion of Allah.

They also asked questions about death, purgatory (barzakh), the return on the Day of Resurrection, the various scenes that will occur on that day, Judgment Day, and other related topics. Other questions dealt with the explanation and interpretation of Qu'ranic verses and its various fields. Other questions were about morality—good and bad manners, faith, disbelief, polytheism, and their various degrees.

The book also includes questions related to health, medicine, and physical well-being, as well as other matters of nature and historical accounts.

It is noticeable that these subjects were posed in the form of questions to the Imam. They were not all of what was said or spread by him (as). This shows that the people, both his proponents and opponents, knew that he was the one who was capable of answering these questions. It is not normal for a person to consult a doctor about a jurisprudence-related issue, nor to seek a jurist's opinion about an related to architecture. The fact that these people sought the Imam's guidance about issues across myriad fields, clearly reflects their confidence in the Imam's competence to answer their questions fully and correctly.

Moreover, questions usually are raised about particular aspects of a speaker's knowledge or area of expertise that is known to the people. A lecturer may give an hour-long presentation about, say, ten major ideas that comprise hundreds of details, then in the question-answer period, only a few questions are asked!

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