



BED TIME STORIES

Imam Ali bin Husayn
Zayn Al Abidin
Imam Muhammad Bin Ali al Baqir

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IMAM ALI BIN HUSAYN ZAYN AL-ABIDIN (A.S.)

Our fourth Imam, Ali bin Husayn al-Abidin (a.s.) was born in Madina on 5th Shaban of 38 hijra. His father was Imam Husayn (a.s.), our third imam and his mother was Shah Zanan who was the daughter of the king of Iran, Yazdigard bin Shaharyar bin Khusro. But she was famous in his history and known by the name of Shahr Banoo.

He was brought up under the loving care and guidance of three Imams - his grandfather, Imam Ali (a.s.), his uncle Imam Hasan (a.s.), and his father Imam Husayn (a.s.).

In those days members of the Holy Prophet's household were subjected to great hardship. The corrupt ruler Muawiya had started a movement to smear the names of those sacred personalities. They were publicly abused from pulpits and people were rewarded for bringing false testimony against them. Their followers

were tortured in every possible way. Many were thrown into prison. Seeing this right from the days of his childhood, our fourth Imam developed a hatred towards wrong and injustice. He wanted to preserve and protect the lofty principles of Islam at all costs.

He was the most meritorious or the best (*afzal*) of Allah's creatures. He was the best in knowledge (*ilm*) and practice (*amal*). Because of his qualities and lineage he was the most suited man during his period to be the Imam.

The black stone of Kabah, Hajr al-Aswad bore witness that Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) was the true Imam of his time. His position was also confirmed by many sayings of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) in which he has named his 12 successors.

When Imam Husayn (a.s.) left Madina for Karbala in 61 hijra with his family, Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) was 22 years old. As he had a raging fever he could not participate in the jihad

on 10th Muharram i.e. Ashura. Maybe this was Allah's way to save the life of our fourth Imam, as all other male members of the family were martyred that day. Only Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) and his younger son, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) survived.

His office of Imamate began in the midst of great calamities. The first decree (order) issued by him was on the eve of Ashura i.e. Sham-i- Ghariban, when the tents of the ladies were set on fire by their enemies, and Sayyida Zaynab (s.a.) asked him whether they should remain in the tents or come out in the open and save their lives. The Imam told them to save themselves. From that moment onwards Imam Ali bin Husyan (a.s.) went through unimaginable hardships - both physical and mental. He was chained with manacles on his neck, hands and feet. He was made to run barefoot on the burning sand. He was whipped. He was not given food, water or medicines in spite of his fever. Yet he never complained. He continued to thank Allah. So we call him *sayyid*

as-sajidin (leader of those who prostrate before Allah). His devotion to Allah and prayers - one thousand *rakaats* of *salat* every day - earned him title of *zayn al-abidin* (Glory of the worshippers).

Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) and Sayyida Zaynab (s.a.) had the important task of telling the people that Yazid was an unjust ruler who had ordered the murder of Imam Husayn (a.s.) the Holy Prophet's grandson. The battle of Karbala, victory of truth over falsehood, because of the courage of Imam Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) and Sayyida Zaynab (s.a.). Till today we remember the great sacrifice of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and weep for his misery even though more than 1400 years have passed.

In heavy chains Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) and the honourable ladies of the family were taken to Kufa and then Damascus, which was the capital of Sham (Syria). There they were taken to the court to stand before the wicked king and his companions to answer questions. The Imam

spoke bravely exposing Yazid's crimes. He told who he was as Yazid had told the people that they were a family of rebels.

IMAM ZAYN AL-ABIDIN'S SERMON (KHUTBA) IN YAZID'S COURT

“O people! Those of you who already know me, recognize me. But I shall introduce myself to those who do not know me. I am the son of Husayn ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib. I am the son of Fatimah Zahra. I am the son of the great personality who was the Warner, the giver of tidings for heaven, the fountain of light, the master of Makka and Mina, the real ruler of Yasrab and Bat-ha, the chief of Safa and Marwa. I am the son of Allah's Prophet, with whom angels offered prayers. I am the son of him on whom the Holy Quran was revealed, who is the master of heaven and hell. I am the son of the one whose sacred head was slaughtered brutally while he was in *sajdah* before his Lord - who was kept hungry and thirsty for three days. I am the son of the one upon whom angels cry. O people! Allah wants

us to guide you. He has given us knowledge, bravery, patience, love of Himself and His Prophet. These qualities have given us a lofty position. O people! You had deceived my father after inviting him to guide you. You killed him. How will you face the Prophet on the day of judgement ?”

Upon hearing this the people started crying, Yazid feared rebellion. He ordered the *mu-wazin* to announce *azan* in order to quiet the Imam. Upon hearing the lines *ashhadu anna muhammadur rasulallah* i.e. “I bear witness that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah.” the Imam asked, “O Yazid, tell me if Muhammad was your grandfather or mine?”

At this Yazid was shaken and feared that the people would rebel. He therefore had sent the Imam and his family in a dark prison.

Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) told the people whose son and grandson he was wherever he went. In Syria, an old man stopped the caravan

of the captives and said, “Praise be to Allah who killed you and made the governor victorious over you.”

Imam said, “O Shaykh, do you recite the Quran?”

“Sure”, he replied,.

“Then, “said Imam, ‘Did you read, *Say: I ask nothing in return but love for my relatives and give to the near of kin his due.*”

“Yes,” said the man.

The Imam then asked him about a few more verses which were revealed in praise of the Ahlul Bayt. “But why do you ask me?” the man asked, “These ayats concern the Holy Prophet’s household.”

“By Allah!” replied the Imam “We are the near of kin (household) of the Holy Prophet mentioned in the Quran.”

The old man immediately regretted what he had said, cursed Yazid and asked pardon from Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.).

SAHIFA AL-KAMILAH

After his return to Madina the Imam spent his life preaching the Quran and explaining Islam. The collection of his duas is called *Sahifa al-Kamilah*. It contains praises for Allah, and His angels. It also contains prayers for people who are in trouble. The Imam had a unique way of asking for Allah's help. This book is a great spiritual guide for the Muslims.

CHARACTER

Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) was a very gentle, soft-spoken and forgiving person. He could never bear to see people in pain. In the darkness of the night he would go and deliver food to the poor without disclosing his identity. People only came to know this after his death. He freed many slaves and never let any beggar go empty-handed from his door. He was very kind to animals too.

Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) was very God-fearing. When performing *wuzu*, he would turn pale, in fear of Allah.

Once he prayed humbly in prostration near the black stone (*hajr al-aswad*) in Kabah:

“Your insignificant servant is at Your courtyard;
Your miserable servant is at Your courtyard;
Yom poor servant is at Your courtyard; Your
beggar is at Your courtyard;”

He performed *hajj* several times, but he always went to Makkah on foot. He did not want to go to Allah’s house on horse-back or by camel.

MARTYRDOM

Though Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) led a secluded life in Madina, the rulers were afraid of his popularity and feared that this would cause the people to rebel against them.

They therefore wanted to get rid of him. So, at the orders of Walid bin Abdul Malik, Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) was poisoned. He died on 25th Muharram 95 *hijra* at the age of 57. He was buried in Madina in Jannatul Baqi near his uncle Imam Hasan (a.s.).

Enemies of the Imams did not leave them in peace even after their death Their graves were demolished recently.¹

IMAM'S CHILDREN

Imam Ali bin Husayn Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) had 15 children. The eldest, Muhammad better known as Abu Jafar al-Baqir is the next Imam He was born to Umm Abd Allah, daughter of Imam Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib. The other children, from different wives were:

2. Abd Allah
3. Al-Hasan
4. Al-Husayn
5. Zayd
6. Umar
7. Al-Husayn (al-Asghar) the younger
8. Abd al-Rahman
9. Sulayman
10. Ali
He was the youngest of Imam's children.
11. Khadija

1 Webmaster's note: The Demolition occurred in year 1344/1926.

12. Muhammad (the younger)
13. Fatima
14. Aliyya
15. Umm Kulthum

IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (A.S.)

Imam Muhammad bin Ali al-Baqir (a.s.) is our fifth Imam in the line of the twelve Imams of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.).

On the first day of the lunar month of Rajab, in 57 *hijra* there was joy and delight at the birth of Imam Muhammad bin Ali (a.s.) in the house of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). His father is Imam Ali bin Husayn al-Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) and his mother, Fatimah, was the daughter of Imam Hasan (a.s.). She was commonly known as Umm Abdullah. She was praised by Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) as being a faithful woman the like of whom was not found in the family of Imam Hasan (a.s.). In this way Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) is the paternal grandson of Imam Husayn and the maternal grandson of Imam Hasan (a.s.).

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) lived more than three years under the care of his grandfather Imam Husayn (a.s.) As a child he

witnessed the tragedy of Karbala during which Imam Husayn, most of his family and his followers were killed. Throughout the years of his father's *imamat* he was tutored in the essence of the divine message. During that period, he learned Islamic doctrine and the knowledge of the prophets.

According to the writers of Imam's biography he was mid-statured; he had soft features and curly brown hair. He was a soft-spoken unpretentious person. His colour was wheatish. He was truthful in speech and faithful in honouring his promises. His manners were extremely refined. He had very little material possessions but just like his forefathers he was very generous.

He was brought up in the fold of Islam. Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.), his father, educated him and prepared him in such a way that he would be able to shoulder the responsibility of the office of the *imamat* in accordance with the divine will.

So Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) was the best in lineage, thought and morals which qualified him to be the ideological and social authority after his father.

The Arabic word *baqir* is derived from the root word *baqara* which means “to dig” or “to expose.” The Imam came to be known as *baqir* because he dug deep into the field of knowledge and brought out such hidden treasures of Islamic laws that were not commonly known to the ordinary scholars.

According to a narration from a well known companion of the Holy Prophet Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari the appellation *al-baqir* was chosen by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) himself for our fifth Imam. Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari says that one day the Holy Prophet said to him: “O Jabir, I am sure you will live till you meet a son of mine in the line of Husayn whose name will be Muhammad and he will be commonly known as *baqir* because he would dig deep into the branches of religious science. So, when you meet him convey my *salam* to him.”

One day Jabir met Imam Muhammad al-Baqir in a street of Madina. He asked: "O boy, who are you?" The boy replied: "I am Muhammad bin Ali bin Husayn bin Ali bin Abi Talib." Jabir said, "O boy turn your face towards me." The Imam did so. Then he asked him to turn his face the other way. The Imam did as he was asked. Thereupon Jabir exclaimed: "I swear by the Lord of the holy Kabah, these are the features described by the Holy Prophet." Addressing the Imam Jabir said: "Son! The Holy Prophet conveyed *salam* to you." The Imam said: "Be my *salam* on the Holy Prophet as long as the sky and the earth remain in existence and on you too, as you have conveyed his *salam* to me." Jabir said, "O Baqir you are really *baqir* since you are the person who has discovered knowledge."

The prophetic testimony is enough evidence of the high position of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.), who was the sage of his age. The period in which Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.)

lived was one of the richest period of Islamic history. During that period scholars, narrators, interpreters and students of various Islamic sciences found in Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) a direct source for the Prophet's *sunnah*.

STATUS OF THE IMAM

The exalted position in thought and action of the Imam combined with the leadership qualifications he possessed as a direct outcome of the carefully planned education given to him by Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) his father, made his friend and foe alike agree that he was no ordinary person, but one who enjoyed a unique status among the people. The following statements concerning the Imam were made by various prominent Muslim personalities belonging to different schools of thought.

Abdullah bin Ale al-Makki is reported to have said, "Never have I seen scholars so limited in knowledge in the presence of a scholar other than Muhammad bin Ali al-Baqir."

Ibn al-Imad al-Hanbali said, “Abu Jafar Muhammad al-Baqir was one of the *fuqaha* (scholars of Islamic jurisprudence) of Madina. He was given the title of *al-baqir* because he ripped open knowledge, knew its fine subtleties and expanded it.”

Muhammad bin Talha al-Shafi-i is reported to have said that, “Muhammad bin Ali al-Baqir was the one who cut through knowledge, collected and disseminated it. He raised it many degrees, outwitted others in exploring it, imbibed it and decorated it with gems of thought. His heart was serene, his good deeds ever-growing, his soul chaste and his morals noble. He would fill his time with deeds in obedience to Allah. His piety was unshakably firm. One could clearly see in him the signs of closeness to Allah and the purity of the divine choice. Virtues hastened to him and good qualities were honoured by him.”

When our fourth Imam, Ali bin Husayn Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.) fell mortally ill he gathered his

sons Muhammad, Hasan, Abdullah, Zayd and Husayn around him and delivered his last will saying: “O Muhammad bin Ali al-Baqir! I have made you my successor. Whosoever claims *imamat* other than you, Allah will punish him on the day of judgement, by encircling his neck with a collar of fire.”

Following are some texts about his way of worship and his spiritual life which help us to realize the depth of the relationship between Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) and the Almighty Allah.

1. His son Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) is reported to have said, “My father used to praise Allah much. When I walked with him, he would remember Allah; when I ate with him, he would remember Allah. Even when talking to people he would remember Allah. I heard him always praising Allah and repeating “There is no god but Allah.” He would gather us together and asked us to praise Allah till sunrise. Whoever could read the Quran, my father would order him

to recite it, and would ask those who could not recite the Holy Quran to praise Allah.

2. Aflah, his servant said, “I went to perform *hajj* with Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.). Upon entering the mosque, he looked at the house of Allah and started weeping aloud till all could hear him. “May my father and mother be your ransom.” I said to him, “people are looking at you, could you please lower your voice a little.” “May Allah have mercy on you”, he explained “why should I not cry? Maybe Allah favours me with his mercy, and I may win His pleasure on the day of judgement.” Then he circumambulated the holy house. Near the *maqam-e Ibrahim* (a stone bearing the footprints of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.)) he went down in prostration. When he raised his head, the place where he had touched his forehead to the ground was wet with his tears.”
3. Before going to bed he would say, “In the

name of Allah, My Lord, I have submitted myself to You, turned my face towards You, and to You I entrust myself. I have put my trust in You out of my fear from You and my desire to win Your satisfaction. There is no escape, neither there is refuge in anyone except You. I believe in Your book which You revealed, and in Your Messenger whom You sent.”

Then he would recite *tasbih al-Zahra* which is the recitation of:

Allahu Akbar [Allah is Great] 34 times

Alhamdulillah [Praise be to Allah] 33 times

Subhanallah [Glory be to Allah] 33 times

La illaha illallah [There is no god save Allah] Once

The selected texts reveal a soul infused with the love of Allah, and the seeking of His nearness, feeling His hovering mercy every where, always praying to Allah with all his soul, heart and senses. Such a state of spirituality can be achieved hardly by anyone. Only the saints can feel the closeness of Allah in such an intimate way.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) so close to Allah, the exalted that the hereafter and the meeting with Allah were his only concern. He would tell his followers “The life to come (the hereafter) is the true life. This world is only a sport and past-time. The faithful should never rely on this earthly life. Those who seek the pleasures of worldly life are unaware and ignorant. But the seekers of hereafter are active, lead a simple life and are well-versed in religious and worldly knowledge. They have an aim in their lives and are never tired of praising Allah. The pious are in fact the truly rich. A little from this world satisfies them. Their burden is light. If one forgets to do good they remind him of it and if one does some good deeds they help that person-in doing so. They look at the straight path and seek the love of Allah.”

The Imam would give money clothes and presents to any needy person he would come across. He never got tired of helping his brethren, those who came from distant places

to see him, and those who hoped he would help them. He would receive people at his house.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir always told his followers: “What is the best deed of life, if it is not helping brothers and acquaintances. You can know the depth of the love your brother feels in his heart, for you by examining the love you have for him in your own heart.” Never was he heard saying: “Beggar may Allah bless you”, or “Take this O, beggar!” His brothers in Islam who called on him never felt bored in his presence.

One may not appreciated the Imam’s generosity in the way it should be appreciated without knowing that the Imam was not well-off. According to his son, Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.), had the least amount of money at his disposal compared with the rest of the members of his family, but his financial burden was the heaviest. Though his financial resources were limited he tried his best to help the needy in whatever way he could. He tried

to lessen the burden and the pains caused to the followers of Ahlul Bayt by the unjust rulers.

How great is the slogan which he raised, quoting his great grandfather, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) “Three acts are the hardest. Consoling one’s brother with one’s money, being fair with people, especially with matters related to one’s interest, and praising Allah in times of prosperity as well as adversity.”

He took great pains to instruct his followers in the norms of good conduct. Following are some of his concepts in this respect:

“Three of the noblest deeds of this life and hereafter are: forgive those who has wronged you, keep up your relation with those who have cut them off; and show tolerance towards the narrow-minded fanatics .”

Once a Christian abused him and called him “a cow”.

“I am *baqir*”, said the Imam.

“You are the son of a cook” said the man. The Imam replied: “Yes, that is her profession.”

The Christian persisted, “You are the son of a black woman, the foul mouthed.”

The Imam replied, “If you have said the truth may Allah forgive her, but if you have lied, may Allah forgive you.”

On hearing this the Christian realized the greatness of the man he was insulting. He immediately regretted what he had said and embraced Islam.

HIS THOUGHTS

Due to his special education and upbringing, he achieved the highest levels in all mental and physical activities. In thought and in practice, he was the true bearer of the divine message.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir’s all round superiority over other scholars of his time in all the fields held him in high esteem and admiration.

Abdullah bin Umar bin al-Khattab was asked about something to which he could not answer.

He advised the questioner to ask Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) about it. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) was quite young at that time. He also told that person to let him know what was the Imam's reply. When the man asked the Imam the question, the Imam replied immediately. The man then returned to Abdullah with the answer: "That came from a household well versed in knowledge," commented Abdullah.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) said, "Beware of laziness and boredom, for they are the key to every evil. Should you get lazy you will not do what you are obliged to do and should you get bored you will not have the perseverance (steadfastness) to do what you are obliged to do." He also said, "There is nothing more lovable to Allah than to be implored."

"There is nothing better than supplication to ward off evil. The greatest punishable evil act is injustice."

The meaning of *shiite* is explained by Imam

Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) in the following words:

“Our *shiahs* are those who guard themselves against evil and obey Allah. They are known for their modesty, submission to Allah, giving back trusts to their owners, remember Allah all the times. They are kind to their parents, keep fasts and do not miss their prayers. They help their neighbours, the needy, the poor and the orphans. They always speak the truth, recite the holy Quran and avoid evil talk. They are those whom their people put their trust in.”

One of his most excellent advice was given to the famous Umayyad rulers, Ummar bin Abdul Aziz. It reads, “I recommend you to take the Muslim youths for sons, the middle aged for brothers, and the old ones for fathers. So, have mercy on your son, help your brother and be kind to your father. Should you do a favour go on doing it.”

The Imam’s reputation as a religious authority was so wide spread that people flocked to meet

him from far flung areas. Top intellectuals and leaders of the Islamic schools of thought came to learn from him.

After the martyrdom of Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.), Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) carried the torch of the *imamat*. About two-third of the term of Imam's *imamat* witnessed a period of struggle with the cunning tyrant rulers. It covered the period from the closing years of the rule of Walid bin Abdul Malik till the early years of Hisham bin Abdul Malik. The rulers who came before Hisham led a life of luxury and sin and struggled with each other for power. Umar bin Abdul Aziz who came after them led an honest life and adopted an open policy and was known to be a just ruler.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) benefited from the political situation and worked harder to complete the great educational project started by his father. A lot of people from different parts of the Muslim world and of different educational backgrounds used to visit him to seek education at the highest level.

It is through our fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) that the Muslims came to know about the life history of our Prophet (s.a.w.w.). He also wrote about the wars of the Holy Prophet. Through him the Muslims learned the rites of *hajj* which he related from the Messenger of Allah. Both scholars and common men reported traditions from him. People learnt much, through him, of the basic tenets of Islam. His disciple Muhammad bin Muslim says: "I put thirty thousand question to him."

The Imam was always trying to communicate his thoughts to his followers. In his school he gave lectures to his followers or those seeking knowledge. Sometimes he would hold seminars, to make known his thoughts.

In mass meetings such as the *hajj* at Makka. His sayings, speeches and conversations conveyed his thoughts.

CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE MARTYRDOM OF IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (A.S.)

When Umar bin Abdul Aziz became the caliph a great change was brought about to the advantage of Islam. He ruled for only two years, but during his short rule he was on the whole just and fair with the Ahlul Bayt.

After him Yazid bin Abdul Malik took over. He was a very evil man. He was too busy with his worldly pleasures to block the Islamic reform march led by Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.). His successor Hisham bin Abdul Malik was an ill-mannered miserly person who hated non-Arab Muslims. Hisham fought against the Islamic movement. He revived the bloody days of Yazid and Hajjaj. Ahlul Bayt could not stand by idly and see what was happening. Zayd bin Ali, a brother of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) led an uprising against the tyrants. Zayd bin Ali attained martyrdom, along with all his followers at Kufa in Iraq. Hisham ordered

his body be crucified, burnt and its ashes be scattered in the river Eupharates. But Umayyad tyranny did not stop at killing Zayd and his companions. The next target was the Islamic movement led by Imam al-Baqir (a.s.) and his disciples.

Jabir bin Yazid al-Jufi was the best among the students of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.). Hisham decided to get rid of him. The Imam ordered Jabir to pretend madness as it was the only way to escape death.

A few days later Hisham ordered his governor in Kufa to kill Jabir al-Jufi and send his head to Damascus. When the governor asked about Jabir he was told that Jabir was a man of knowledge and virtue, but had gone mad.

Having heard that the governor changed his mind saying “There is no point in killing a mad man.”

Hisham believed that the source of Islamic

awareness was Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.). So he made up his mind to arrest the Imam and deport him from Madina.

Syed Ibn Ta-us relates from Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.): “Me and my father, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir were brought to Damascus when we returned to Madina from Makka after performing *hajj*. When we were taken to Hisham’s palace, he was sitting on his royal throne while his body guards stood in front of him in two rows. A target had been set up. On our reaching near him he said to my father: “You also shot arrows with the elders of my people.” My father said, “I have grown old and now I cannot shoot arrows. It would be better if you could excuse me.” Hisham said, “By the right of Allah who has honoured us with His religion and His Prophet I will not excuse you.” Then he beckoned to one of the senior persons of Bani Umayyah to hand over his bow and arrows to my father. He took the bow and arrows from that man and putting one arrow in the bow shot it exactly in the midst of the

target. Then he took the second arrow and shot it again striking in the midst of the target so that the second arrow struck against the first one. Then he took out the third arrow and shot it on the second arrow cutting it into two. He went on shooting arrows one after the other upto the ninth one and every arrow my father shot struck the heart of Hisham as the colour of his accursed face was constantly changing, so much so that at the ninth arrow he lost his patience and said, “O Abu Jafar you have shot very well. Surely you are the best archer in the whole of Arab and Ajam (non-Arabs). Why then did you say that you could not shoot?”

After this experience Hisham was ashamed and decided to kill Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.). He made Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) sit next to him and asked Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.), “Please tell me who taught you to shoot arrows and how long did it take you to learn shooting arrows.” Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) replied, “You know that this art is common

among the people of Madina. When I was a child I used to shoot arrows sometimes. But then I gave it up. Since, today you insisted and swore in the name of Allah I took up the bow.” Hisham said, “I have never seen such markmanship. Is your son Jafar an expert in it too.” The Imam replied, “We of the house of the Holy Prophet inherit one after the other the knowledge of every thing, be it divine or worldly. We inherit the perfection and completion of religion as the Holy Quran says: *This day, I have perfected for you your religion and have completed my favour on you and have chosen for you Islam (as your) religion.*” [Ma-idah : 3]

On hearing all this Hisham’s face became red with anger and envy. For some time he bent his head in silence. Thereafter raising his head, he said to Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.): “Is not the relationship of ours and yours who are both sons of Abd al-Munaf one and the same?” The Imam replied, “It is so. But Allah has honoured one with His knowledge and

secrets and has not done so with the other.” Hisham said, “It is not a fact that Allah sent Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) from the line of Abd al-Munaf as prophet for the entire creation, be it white, black or red? As such how has this inheritance be confined to you? The Holy Prophet has been sent for whole mankind, and Allah says in the Quran: *And for Allah is the inheritance of the heavens and the earth.* Thus on what account is the inheritance of knowledge a speciality for you while there is no prophet after Muhammad and you people are not prophets?”

To this Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) replied, “Allah gave that honour in this way that He revealed to His Prophet and commanded the Prophet to reveal it to no one other than his chosen successors. The Prophet disclosed the knowledge only to his brother, Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), and kept it concealed from his other companions. That is why Ali (a.s.) has said ‘The Holy Prophet transmitted to me a thousand chapters of knowledge from each of which a

thousand further chapters shoot up.' Again, Ali too specially acquainted one member of his house with those secrets. In this way these secrets came to us through inheritance."

At this moment Hisham said: "Ali asserted that he had knowledge of the unknown, although the fact is that Allah has not made anyone a partner in the knowledge of the 'unknown'. How then did he make such an assertion." Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) replied, "Allah gave a book to the Holy Prophet and in that book he has described all that has happened and shall happen upto the day of judgement. In that book Allah says: We have revealed to you the book describing everything by way of guidance and exhortation for the pious. He has also said: We have encompassed everything in the apparent Imam. It is also mentioned in the holy book: And We have not left out anything in the book. Thus Allah revealed all secrets and the unknown to the Holy Prophet and he revealed it to Ali whatever Allah revealed to him."

Hisham bent his head. After a while he got furious and said: "O Muhammad! You are still stirring up hatred among Muslims, calling people to follow you and claiming to be the Imam." Then he began severely scolding him. When Hisham ended his scolding the men present there spoke impolitely to the Imam. They had been instructed to do so before the Imam entered the palace. When they finally fell silent, the Imam rose to his feet and said, "O people, do you know what you are doing and where you are led to? With us Allah guided the first among you, and with us He shall seal the fate of the last of you. If you have a kingdom now, we shall have one later on. There shall be no kingdom after ours, for we are the blessed people who will win lasting happiness. As Allah the Almighty and Exalted, says, And happy shall be the lot of the righteous."

Hisham then ordered that both Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) be put in prison. All the prisoners would gather around him and

listen to him eagerly. The jailer went to Hisham and told him what was going on. At this Hisham quickly deported them to Madina. Before them he sent messengers to proceed quickly to every town on the way to Madina to tell the people of those places that the sons of the magician Abu Turab Muhammad bin Ali and Jafar bin Muhammad have become Christians. Therefore any one who sells anything to them or salutes them or shakes hand with them, his blood would be lawful to be shed. Accordingly when the Imams reached the gates of a city they found it closed. They told the Imams that they would not open the gate till their animals and they themselves died due to starvation and hunger. When Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) noticed that they would not open the gates in any way he alighted from his camel. He climbed the mountain and facing the town placed his fingers on his ears and recited those verses from the Holy Quran in which Allah describes the story of prophet Shuayb (a.s.). How he was sent to the people of Madain, but they disobeyed him and later

were subjected to severe retribution because of disobeying prophet Shuayb (a.s.). He recited the verses upto the words where Allah says: “Whatever is left to you by Allah is for you if you are the true believers.” Then he said, “By Allah we are the *baqiyyatullah*.” (Those left over on earth by Allah.)

Thereupon Allah raised dark wind which took Imam’s voice to all the young and the old of that city. On hearing the Imam voice they all went on their roofs to have a look at the Imams. An old man from the people of Madain spoke with a loud voice. He said, “O people of Madain fear Allah. This man is standing at the same place where Prophet Shuayb stood when he cursed his people. I swear by Allah if you do not open the gates for him you will meet the same fate as the people of that time.” The people on hearing this started trembling with fear and not only opened the gates for the Imams but also gave food to all of them. When Hisham came to know about this incidence he ordered that the old man to be brought to Syria and

then killed. But before he reached Syria by the mercy of Allah death overtook him. Then Hisham wrote to his governor in Madina to kill Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) by poison. But before his orders could be carried out, Hisham himself met his death and reached the lowest portion of the hell.

The Imam was given a lethal poison by Ibrahim bin Walid bin Abdul Malik bin Marwan at the behest of Hisham. He died in the year 114 A.H [732 A.D.] at the age of fifty seven.

One day Imam Muhammad Baqir as sent for Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) and said, "Call some men from the people of Madina." Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) says, when I called them Imam said: "O Jafar, when I depart for the eternal world, you give me the funeral bath and shroud me with three pieces of cloth." Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) continues: "When people went out, I said to my father, 'Father whatever you have said I shall carry it out but what was the need for the people to stand witness.' The

Imam said, ‘O my son! I wanted the men to be witness so that they should know that you are my successor as Imam and they should not dispute with you in the matter of *imamat*.’ Then I said, ‘O my revered father today I find you better than on any other day and find no ailment in you.’ The Imam said, ‘O my son perhaps you did not hear that my father, Ali bin Husayn, called me and said, ‘O Muhammad be quick and come to us as we are waiting for you.’”

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) relates: “During the night of my father’s death, I went to him to speak to him but he signaled me to be quite. It seemed that he was talking to someone whom I did not see at all. He then said to me, ‘O my worthy son, I am leaving this world tonight for the everlasting place. My father, Ali bin Husayn has given me the good tidings for meeting Allah.”

He departed to meet his Lord patiently and seeking Allah’s pleasure and reward. He is buried in Jannatul Baqi at Madina by the side

of his father Imam Ali bin Husayn Zayn al-Abidin (a.s.).

Peace be upon him on the day he was born, on the day he died and on the day he shall be raised to life.

All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the world.

CHILDREN

The Imam (a.s.) had seven children from different wives.

1. Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.)
2. Abd Allah
3. Ibrahim
4. Ubayd Allah
5. Ali
6. Zaynab
7. Umme Salma

THE HOLY QURAN SAYS

Verily, verily Allah intends but to keep off from you (every kind of) uncleanness, O you Ahlul Bayt (the people of the house), and purify you (with) a thorough purification.

THE HOLY PROPHET SAID

My Ahlul Bayt are like the ark of Nuh. Whoever comes on it is saved, whoever stays back is drowned.

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