ISLAMIC CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

ADVANCED

BOOK FOUR

Author:
HUJJATUL ISLAM WAL MUSLIMEEN
AL-HAJ SAYYID MUHAMMAD RIZVI

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LESSON 36

THE PROPHET OF ISLAM
(Muhammad al-Mustafa)

Name: **Muhammad.**
Agnomen: Abu 'l-Qasim.
Title: **Rasulu 'l-lah; Nabiu 'l-lah; Khatamu 'n-Nabiyyin.**
Father: Abdullah bin 'Abdu 'l-Muttalib.
Mother: Aminah bint Wahab.
Birth: 17th Rabiu 'l-Awwal, 1st year of 'Amu 'l-Fil at Mecca; i.e.,
53 years before the hijra.
Death: 28th Safar, 11 after hijra.

1. Birth to *Bi'that*

The last prophet of God is Muhammad al-Mustafa—upon whom be blessings and peace. He was born on 17th Rabi'u '1-Awwal, 1st Year of 'Amul Fil in Mecca amidst the family of Banu Hashim (of the tribe of Quraysh) who were considered the most honoured of the Arab families. Banu Hashim were descendants of Isma'il, the son of Prophet Ibrahim.

The Prophet's grandfather, 'Abdu 1-Muttalib, was the chief of Banu Hashim and also the guardian of the Ka'bah. His father was called 'Abdullah and his mother, Aminah bint Wahab. His father passed away a few months before his birth. At the age of six, the Prophet lost his mother as well and was placed under the care of his paternal grandfather, 'Abdul Muttalib. But his grandfather also passed away after four years; and at this time the Prophet's uncle, Abu Talib, took charge of him and became his guardian, taking him to his own house. Thus the Prophet grew up in his uncle's house and even before reaching the age of adolescence used to accompany his uncle on business journeys by caravan.

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The Prophet had not received any schooling; yet, after reaching the age of maturity he became famous for his wisdom, courtesy, trust-worthiness and truthfulness. He soon became famous as "as-sadiq al- amin" (the truthful, the trustworthy). Abu Talib used to say: "We have never heard any lies from Muhammad, nor seen him misconduct himself or make mischief. He never laughs unduly nor talks untimely."

As a result of his sagacity and trustworthiness, Khadija bint Khuwaylid, a Qurayshi lady wellknown for her wealth, appointed him as the custodian of her possessions and left in his hands the task of conducting her commercial affairs. The Prophet once journeyed to Damascus with Khadija's merchandise and as a result of the ability he displayed was able to make an outstanding profit. Before long she asked to become his wife and the Prophet accepted her proposal. After the marriage, which occurred when he was twentyfive years old, the Prophet began the life of a manager of his wife's fortunes, until the age of forty, gaining meanwhile a widespread reputation for wisdom and trustworthiness.

He refused to worship idols, as was the common religious practice of the Arabs of the Hijaz. And occasionally he would make spiritual retreats to the cave of Hira' in the mountains of the Tihamah region near Mecca, in which he prayed and discoursed secretly with God.

2. The Beginning of the Mission

At the age of forty, when he was in spiritual retreat in the cave of Hira', he was given the mission of propagating the new religion. At that moment the first five verses of surah 96 were revealed to him. (This event is known as *bi'that* — being raised to proclaim God's message.) That very day he returned to his house and on the way met his cousin, 'Ali bin Abi Talib, who after hearing the account of what had occurred declared his acceptance of the faith. After the Prophet entered the house and told his wife of the revelation, she likewise accepted Islam. Soon after, Zayd ibn

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al-Harithah (a loyal slave whom he treated like his own son) also became a convert.

The first time the Prophet invited people to accept his message, he was faced with a distressing and painful reaction. Out of necessity he was forced henceforth to propagate his message secretly for three years until he was ordered again by God to invite his very close relatives to accept the message. He organized a family feast and invited forty of his kinsmen. At the gathering, Muhammad asked if they had ever found him lying? The general response was: 'We have never found you lying.' Then he asked, "If I were to tell you that your enemies have gathered beyond. the sandhills to attack you, would you believe me?" They replied, Yes.' Then he said:

I know no man in all Arabia who can offer his kindred a more excellent thing than I now do. I offer you happiness both in this life and in the hereafter. God Almighty has commanded me to call you unto Him. Who, therefore, among you will assist me herein shall become my brother, my heir and my successor.

But this call was also fruitless and no one heeded it except 'Ali bin Abi Talib, who in any case had already accepted the faith. According to the historical documents transmitted from the Imams of Ahlu 1-bayt and the extant poems composed by Abu Talib, Abu Talib had also embraced Islam; however, because he was the sole protector of the Prophet, he hid his faith from the people in order to preserve the outward power he had with the Quraysh.

After this period, according to Divine instruction, the Prophet began to propagate his mission openly. With the beginning of open propagation the people of Mecca reacted most severely because the Islamic message —of worshipping One God and of equality among the believers without any distinction of race, colour or wealth— fared completely against the status quo. Most painful afflictions and tortures were inflicted upon the Prophet and the people who had become newly converted to Islam.

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For example, Bilal, an Ethiopian slave who had accepted Islam, was taken by his master Umayya who tied him onto the burning sand of the Arabian desert and placed a large stone on his chest with the warning that he will be left in that state until he rejects Islam. But the only sound heard from Bilal's lips was: *"Ahad! Ahad!"* (One God! One God!)

The severe treatment dealt out by the Quraysh reached such a degree that a group of about 100 Muslims, under leadership of Ja'far bin Abi Talib, left their homes and belongings, and migrated to Abyssinia. The Prophet had told them that they would find the Abyssinian king to be a just ruler. With the intention of stopping the spread of Islam, the Quraysh pursued them to Abyssinia seeking their extradition. But Ja'far eloquently presented the Muslims' case to the Abyssinian king, and the request of the Quraysh was rejected. Ja'far said:

O King! We were plunged in the depth of ignorance and barbarism; we worshipped idols, we lived in unchastity, we ate dead bodies and we spoke abominations; we disregarded every feeling of humanity and the duties of hospitality and neighbourhood; we knew no law, but of the strong — when God raised among us a man, of whose noble birth, truthfulness, honesty and purity we are aware; and he called us to the Unity of God and taught us not to associate anything with Him; he forbade us the worship of idols; and enjoined on us to speak the truth, to be faithful to our trusts, to be merciful and to regard the rights of neighbours; he forbade us to speak evil of women or to eat the sustenance of orphans; he ordered us to fly from vice and to abstain from evil; to offer prayers, to render alms, to observe the fast. We have believed in him, we have accepted his teachings and his injunction to worship God and not associate anything with Him. For this reason our people have risen against us, have persecuted us in order to make us forgo the worship of God and return to the worship of idols of stone and wood and other

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abominations. They tortured and injured us, until finding no safety among them, we have come to your country and hope you will protect us from their oppression.

Back in Mecca, economic and social boycott was imposed against the Prophet and his family. Therefore, the Prophet and his uncle, Abu Talib, along with their relatives from the Banu Hashim, took refuge for three years in the "mountain pass of Abu Talib," a fort in one of the valleys of Mecca. No one had any dealings or transactions with them and they did not dare to leave their place of refuge.

The idol-worshippers of Mecca, although at the beginning they considered inflicting all kinds of pressures and tortures such as striking and beating, insult, ridicule and defamation of the Prophet, occasionally would also show kindness and courtesy toward him in order to have him turn away from his mission. They would promise him great sums of money or leadership and the rule of the tribe. But for the Prophet their promises and their threats only resulted in the intensification of his will and determination to carry out his mission. Once, when they came to the Prophet promising him wealth and power, the Prophet told them, using metaphorical language, that if they were to put the sun in the palm of his right hand and the moon in the palm of his left hand, he would not turn away from obeying the One God or refrain from performing his mission.

3. The *Hijrah*

About the tenth year of his prophecy, when the Prophet left the "mountain pass of Abu Talib," his uncle Abu Talib, who was also his sole protector, died, as did also his devoted wife Khadijah. Henceforth there was no protection for his life nor any place of refuge.

Finally the idol-worshippers of Mecca devised a secret plan to kill the Prophet. At night they surrounded his house from all sides with the aim of forcing themselves in at the end of the night

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and cutting him to pieces while he was in bed. But God, the Exalted, informed him of the plan and commanded him to leave for Yathrib. The Prophet asked ‘Ali to sleep in his bed so that the enemy would not detect his absence; ‘Ali readily agreed to sacrifice his life for the Prophet and slept in the Prophet’s bed. Then the Prophet left the house under Divine protection, passing amidst his enemies, and taking refuge in a cave near Mecca. After three days when his enemies, having looked everywhere, gave up hope of capturing him and returned to Mecca, he left the cave and set out for Yathrib.

4. Establishing an Islamic Community

The people of Yathrib, whose leaders had already accepted the message of the Prophet and sworn allegiance to him, welcomed him with open arms and placed their lives and property at his disposal. In Yathrib, for the first time, the Prophet formed a small Islamic community and signed treaties with the Jewish tribes in and around the city as well as with the powerful Arab tribes of the region. He understood the task of propagating the Islamic message and Yathrib became famous as “Madinatu ‘r-Rasul” (the city of the Prophet).

Islam began to grow and expand from day to day. The Muslims, who in Mecca were caught in the mesh of the injustice and inequity of the Quraysh, gradually left their homes and property and migrated to Medina, revolving around the Prophet like moths around a candle. This group became known as the “immigrants” (muhajirin) in the same way that those who aided the Prophet in Yathrib gained the name of “helpers” (ansar).

The Prophet formulated the society on the basis of justice and equality among the believers. Brotherhood —not just in words but in action— was established among the muhajirin and the ansar. The social system of Islam even extended its justice and protection to the non-Muslims under its rule.

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5. Encounters on the Battlefields

Islam was advancing rapidly but at the same time the idol-worshippers of Quraysh, as well as the Jewish tribes of the Hijaz, were unrestrained in their harassment of the Muslims. With the help of the hypocrites of Medina who were among the community of Muslims, they created new misfortunes for the Muslims every day until finally the matter led to war.

Many battles took place between the Muslims and the Arab polytheists and Jews, in most of which the Muslims were victorious. There was altogether over eighty major and minor battles. In all the major conflicts such as the battles of Badr, Uhud, Khandaq, Khaybar, Hunayn, etc., the Prophet was personally present on the battle scene. Also in all the major battles and many minor ones, victory was gained especially through the efforts of ‘Ali bin Abi Talib. He was the only person who never turned away from any of these battles. In all the wars that occurred during the ten years after the migration from Mecca to Medina, less than two hundred Muslims and less than a thousand infidels were killed.

(a) The Battle of Badr:

The Meccans continued their attempt to destroy Islam. They continued to harass the Muslims who remained in Mecca and also confiscated their property and belongings. Abu Jahl, the leader of the Meccans, even sent a letter to the Prophet threatening him of the attack by the Meccans. It was in response to such aggression that Allah gave the permission to fight the unbelievers of Mecca. He said, *“Permission [for jihad] is granted to those who are being killed because they have been oppressed...those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause...”* (22:39-40)

In the **second** year of the hijra, the Prophet with about 300 ill-equipped Muslims confronted a well-equipped Meccan force of 1000 soldiers. Though outnumbered, the Muslims were able to defeat the unbelievers in their first armed encounter with the enemy.

(b) The Battle of Uhud:

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To avenge their defeat at Badr, the Meccans raised another force in the **third** year after hijra and marched towards Medina. After reaching the hills of Uhud, 4 m. outside Medina, the Prophet took up his position below the hill. The army arrayed in fighting formations. Fifty archers were posted, under the command of ‘Abdullah bin Jubayr, at a pass between the hills to guard the Muslims from any rear attack. They had strict orders not to leave their post, no matter what the outcome of the battle.

The Muslims initially defeated the Meccans. The enemy, having suffered a heavy loss, fell back in disorder and the Muslims started gathering booties.

Thinking that the fight was over, most of the fifty archers guarding the hill passage left their posts against the orders of their commander. Khalid bin Walid, a commander of the Meccan forces, seized the opportunity and led his cavalry through the mountain pass and, after killing the few remaining archers, launched a furious attack upon the Muslims from the rear.

Because of the disobedience of a small group, the victory was taken away from the Muslims. Most fled from the battlefield. A few, especially ‘Ali, stood their ground and fought till the end. The Muslims finally retreated to the security of the heights of mount Uhud. Among the 70 Muslims who died in this counter attack of the kuffar was Hamzah bin ‘Abdul Muttalib, the courageous uncle of the Prophet. He was, indeed, the Lion of God *(asdulldh).*

(c) The Battle ofKhandaq (Ahzab):

In the **fifth** year of the hijra, a Jewish tribe formed an alliance with the Meccans; and together they raised an army of 10,000 soldiers. It is known as Khandaq (i.e., ditch) because the Muslims had dug a ditch around their campsite to prevent the enemy from entering the city.

The Allied forces of the non-Muslims besieged Medina for a month. Except for a few famous soldiers, they were unable to cross

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the ditch. The Allied forces finally retreated after ‘Ali, in a one-to-one encounter, killed the most courageous of their fighters.

(d) The Bani Qurazah Battle:

The Bani Qurazah had concluded a peace agreement with the Muslims, but they violated the agreement by joining the Meccans in the Battle of Ahzab. So, after the Battle of Ahzab, the Muslims proceeded towards the Bani Qurazah who finally surrendered to the Muslims. The Prophet proposed to them to accept the arbitration of Sa’d bin Ma’z. They agreed and were dealt with by his decision: to kill the fighters and confiscate their property.

(e) The Bani Mustalaq War:

In the **sixth** year of the hijra, the tribe of Bani Mustalaq violated the rights of the Muslims. As a result, they had to face the Muslim forces at a place called Maris’a and were defeated.

(f) The Battle ofKhaybar:

A large number of Jewish tribes had settled in Khaybar forts and the surrounding area of northern Arabia. They had close ties with the Meccans and had constantly threatened the Muslims. In the seventh year of hijra, the Prophet decided to face the enemy. The Muslims marched to Khaybar, put it under siege and, finally, gained victory after ‘Ali marched forward, conquered the main fort and killed the most brave of the Jewish soldiers.

6. The Treaty of Hudaybia & the Fall of Mecca

In the **sixth** year of the hijra, the Prophet decided to go for pilgrimage to Mecca. The Meccans stopped the Muslims at a place called Hudaybia and did not allow them to enter the city. This encounter ended in a peace agreement between the Prophet and the Quraysh of Mecca. This peace agreement created a relatively safe environment for the Prophet to embark on extending the call of Islam to the tribes and people far away from Arabia.

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As a result of the activity of the Prophet and the selfless effort of the muhajirin and ansar during that period, Islam spread through the Arabian peninsula. There were also letters written to kings of other countries such as Persia, Byzantine and Abyssinia inviting them to accept Islam. During this time the Prophet lived in poverty and was proud of it. He never spent a moment of his life in vain. Rather, his time was divided into three parts: one spent for God, in worshipping and remembering Him; a part for himself and his household and domestic needs; and a part for the people. During this part of his time he was engaged in spreading and teaching Islam and its sciences, administrating to the needs of the Islamic society and removing whatever evils existed, providing for the needs of the Muslims, strengthening domestic and foreign bonds, and similar matters.

One of the conditions of the peace treaty was that the Quraysh would not harm the Muslims or any of their confederates. This condition was, however, violated by the Quraysh when they helped Bani Bakr tribe against the Khuza'a tribe—the former an ally of the Quraysh and the latter an ally of the Muslims. The Prophet asked the Quraysh to respect the treaty, break their alliance with Bani Bakr and compensate the victims of their aggression. The Quraysh refused to abide by the terms of their treaty. The Prophet, with a well-equipped and well-disciplined force of 10,000 soldiers, marched to Mecca in the **eighth** year after the *hijrah* and conquered it without much resistance.

The city which has rejected his message, plotted against his followers and conspired to assassinate him was at his mercy. Prophet Muhammad asked the Meccans: "What can you expect at my hands?" "Mercy! Generous and Noble Sire!" they replied. If he had wished, he could have made them all his slaves. But Muhammad —"mercy for the universe"— said: "I will speak to you as Joseph spoke to his brethren. I will not reproach you today; God will forgive you, for He is Merciful and Loving. Go, you are free!"

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With the fall of Mecca, the last barrier in the way of Islam had been removed. So many people and tribes of the Arabian Peninsula started accepting the message of Islam that the **ninth** year of hijrah is known as the "Year of Delegations" because of the unusual number of delegates coming to pay their homage to the Prophet at Medina.

7. The Last Pilgrimage & Death

In the **tenth** year of the hijrah, the Prophet decided to go for hajj (pilgrimage). He invited Muslims to join him and be acquainted with the hajj rituals. Over a hundred thousand Muslims joined him in the hajj. Although this was the first and the last hajj of the Prophet, it is known as *"al-Hajjajtu 'l-urida'* — the Last Pilgrimage." He seized the unprecedented gathering to remind the Muslims of many important values of Islam.

On the way back to Medina, he stopped at Ghadir Khumm and delivered a lengthy sermon in which he summarized the major teachings of Islam, informed the Muslims of his approaching death and appointed 'Ali bin Abi Talib as his successor.

After ten years of stay in Medina, the Prophet fell ill and died after a few days of illness. According to existing traditions, the last words on his lips were advice concerning slaves and women.

8. Lamartine's Homage to the Prophet

An eighteenth century French historian, Lamartine, writes the following in his *Histoire de la Turquie* (1854) about the Prophet of Islam:

> "Never has man set for himself, voluntarily or involuntarily, a more sublime, aim, since this aim was superhuman: to subvert superstitions which had been interposed between man and his Creator, to render God unto man and man unto God; to restore the rational and sacred idea of divinity amidst the

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chaos of the material and disfigured gods of idolatry, then existing...

"If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are .the true criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad?... "Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?"

* * *

This lesson has been compiled and edited by S. M. Rizvi from the difference sources including the following: *The Shi'ite Islam* by Tabataba'i. *A Brief History of the Fourteen Infallibles,* published by WOFIS, Tehran. *A Glance at the Life of the Prophet of Islam* by Par Rah-e Haq. *The Early History of Islam* by S. Safdar Husayn.

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Question Paper on Lesson 36

THE PROPHET OF ISLAM

Name: _____ *Student No.*_____

Question 1: [20 points]

Fill in the blanks from the list of words given below:

The Prophet was born in the 1st year of _____ to _____. His father _____ passed away a few months before his birth. After the passing away of his grandfather, his uncle _____ became his guardian.

The Prophet was well-known for being _____ and _____ even before the commencement of his mission at the age of _____. The first woman to accept Islam was _____ the wife of the Prophet. The first verses to be revealed on the Prophet were from chapter no_____.

During the Meccan period, some Muslims migrated to _____ under the leadership of _____. The unbelievers of Mecca used _____ as well as _____ to stop the message of Islam. They even tortured some Muslims, the most famous of them is known as _____.

The Prophet migrated to _____ which later on became famous as _____. The Muslims in Medina were generally divided into two groups as the _____ and the _____.

.

The battle in which the Muslims gained victory but then lost it was known as _____. The battle in which the Muslim had dug up a ditch is known as _____.

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Ninty-six	Bilal	Intimidation	Khadija
Amul Fil	Khandaq	Muhajirin	Medina
Abyssinia	Amina	as-Sadiq	bribe
Ja'far	Uhud	Abdullah	Yathrib
Ansar	al-Amin	Abu Talib	forty

Question 2: [15 points]

Tick the appropriate box

TRUE / FALSE

(a) The Prophet received schooling in Mecca.

.(b) Hira was the Prophet's place of retreat for worship.

(c) Abu Talib had not embraced Islam.

(d) Ja'far bin Abi Talib migrated first to Medina and then to Abyssinia.

(e) The Banu Hashim spent five years in the "mountain pass of Abu Talib".

(i) Hijrah means the commencement of the prophetic mission.

(g) "Madinatu r-Rasul" means the city of the Prophet

(h) The Jewish tribes and the hypocrites created new misfortunes for Muslims until the matter led to war.

(i) In all the wars during the Medinese period, more than ten thousand infidels were killed.

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(j) The Prophet conquered Mecca with 10,000 soldiers.

Question 3: [15 points]
Express your opinion about the statement of Ja'far bin Abi Talib to the king of Abyssinia.

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LESSON 37

THE BEST OF ALL WOMEN
(Fatimatu 'z-Zahra')

1. Birth to Hijra

Fatimatu 'z-Zahra' was born in the fifth year of the bi'that and she was the only child who survived from among the children of Khadija. Fatima's birth and the fact that only she gave the Prophet grandchildren is itself a revolutionary statement: in the pre-Islamic society, the birth of a baby girl was considered a disgrace for the family; and lineage was only recognized through male children. When the male children of the Prophet and Khadija died in infancy, some of the unbelievers of Mecca taunted the Prophet saying that he is an *"abtar*— a person who is cut off, that is, he has no progeny." In response to this taunting, Allah revealed chapter 108 of the Qur'an: "We have verily given to you (O Muhammad) plentiful [i.e., in the form of Fatima and her progeny]; therefore, pray to your Lord and offer sacrifice. Surely the one who taunts you is an *abtar."*

Fatima's life is intertwined with the emergence and growth of the Islamic movement. She was just three years old when her parents —the Prophet and Khadija— had to go with other family members to Abu Talib's castle outside Mecca when the Quraysh imposed an economic and social boycott against them. Soon after the boycott ended, at the age of five, Fatima lost her mother. She was thereafter brought up by the Prophet himself.

A famous incident from the Meccan period shows that Fatima, even in childhood, was part of her father's struggle. Once the Prophet was praying near the Ka'bah while a group of Qurayshi unbelievers were sitting and watching him. Abu Jahl, their leader, said, "Who amongst you can go and bring the intestine of a slaughtered camel and put it on Muhammad when he is in prostration?" Uqba bin Abi Mu'it complied with the suggestion of

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Abu Jahl and placed the filthy intestine of a camel on the Prophet's shoulder when he was in the state of sajdah. The Prophet remained in that position while the unbelievers laughed so much so that they fell on each other. A passerby went to the Prophet's home and informed Fatima. Fatima, though still in her childhood, came running to the Ka'bah and removed the filth from the Prophet and cursed the unbelievers on their faces.

After the death of Khadija and Abu Talib, life became most constrained and difficult for the Prophet and his followers in Mecca. When the Quraysh planned to kill the Prophet, he left Mecca and migrated to Medina, and thus began a new era in the history of Islam.

'Ali bin Abi Talib had been left behind by the Prophet to mislead the enemies, to return the property of others entrusted to the Prophet, and also to bring the remaining members of the Prophet's immediate family to Medina. After accomplishing the tasks given to him, 'Ali started the journey towards Medina with three Fatimas: Fatima bint Asad ('Ali's mother), Fatima bint Zubayr ibn 'Abdul Muttalib (aunt of Ali and the Prophet), and Fatimatu 'z-Zahra'.

The Prophet, who had left Mecca earlier, waited for 'Ali and his family at Quba on the outskirts of Medina. When Abu Bakr suggested that they enter the city of Medina, the Prophet refused to do so until his cousin and his beloved daughter reached him in Quba. And, indeed, the Prophet entered Medina only after those closest to him in family ties as well as in spiritual affiliation had joined him from Mecca!

2. Father & Daughter

After Khadija's death, the Prophet used to pay special attention to his daughter Fatima. Whenever he went on a journey, the last person to whom he would bade farewell was Fatima; and when he returned to Medina, the first person whom he would meet

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would be Fatima. Every day before going to bed, the Prophet would kiss the cheeks of his daughter and say a prayer for her.

When the verse *"Do not call the Prophet like the way you call one another"(24:63)* was revealed, even Fatima, like everyone else, started to address him as "O the Messenger of Allah" instead of saying "O Father!" After hearing Fatima calling him in this very formal manner, the Prophet said, "O Fatima, this verse does not apply to you or your children...You should still call me 'O Father' because it brightens my heart and pleases Allah."

3. Marriage to 'Ali

Many proposals came for Fatima to the Prophet but he always rejected them saying that he was waiting for the divine commandment. Finally, 'Ali bin Abi Talib approached the Prophet for Fatima's hand in marriage. The Prophet went inside the house and asked Fatima about 'Ali's proposal. Fatima just bowed her head in modesty. According to Umm Salama, the Prophet's wife, "The face of Fatima bloomed with joy and her silence was so suggestive that the Prophet stood up saying *'Allahu Akbar,* Fatima's silence is her acceptance."

The Prophet asked 'Ali about the *mahr* (dowry; marriage gift given by the groom to the bride). 'Ali said he just had three things from the possessions of this world: a sword, a shield and a camel which he used for watering the farms. The Prophet said that you need your sword for jihad and your camel for your livelihood, so go and sell the shield. 'Ali sold the shield for about 500 dirhams and gave the money to the Prophet as *mahr.* The Prophet used a portion of the *mahr* to buy *jahiz* (the household necessities given to the bride by her family).

The *jahiz* of the Mistress of the Women consisted of the following: 1. a shirt, 2. a large veil, 3. a black plush cloak, 4. a bed, 5. two mattresses, one filled with wool and another with palm tree fiber, 6. four cushions stuffed with good smelling leaves, 7. a

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curtain made of wool, 8. a mat, 9. a few jugs and bowls, 10. waterbag made of leather, and a few other simple items.

This is how simple the marriage of ‘Ali and Fatima was! It should serve as a lesson for those who think that one must have “all” before making the decision of marriage!

4. Fatima’s Status in the Qur’an & the Sunnah

Our Lady Fatimatu ‘z-Zahra’ (a.s.) stands on the highest pedestal of spiritual ranks. She is an integral part of many verses in the Qur’an. The most important of those verses are the following:

1. The verse of purity: This is the verse in which Allah says: *“Verily Allah intends to keep off from you, O Ahlu ‘l-bayt, all kinds of abomination, and to purify you (spiritually) a thorough purification.”* (33:33) In spite of all the differences among the Muslims about those on whom this verse can be applied, no one has ever disputed the fact that Fatimatu ‘z-Zahra’ is part of it. She has been kept away from all abomination and impurities, thus rendering her an infallible and sinless person by the will of Allah, *subhanahu wa ta’ala.*

2. Fatimatu ‘z-Zahra, ‘Ali, Hasan, Husayn and, their servant, Fizza, fasted for three days. At sunset on the first day, a beggar came to the door; next day, an orphan came to the door; and on the third day, a captive came to the door all asking for food. On all three days ‘Ali gave away his food —which consisted of one loaf of bread only— and others also followed his example even though they had nothing left for themselves. Allah was so much pleased with the selflessness and sincerity of Fatima and her family that He revealed Chapter 76 of the Qur’an highly praising them. *“And they give away food, out of love for Him, to the poor, the orphan and the captive; saying ‘We feed you only for God’s sake, we do not expect from you any recompense nor gratitude!”’* (76:8-9) After describing their reward in the paradise, Allah says: *“Verily, this is*

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unto you a recompense, and your endeavour is appreciated." (76:22)

This verse, in reality, is Allah's good tiding that Fatima and her family will surely have an honourable place in Paradise.

3. In the ninth year of the hijrah when the Christian scholars and leaders from Yemen came to see the Prophet, they refused to agree with his logical arguments against Jesus being the "Son of God". Then Allah ordered (3:54) the Prophet to challenge the Christians for malediction[1] and to bring themselves, their women and their children as partners in this event.

The Prophet of Islam, on his side, took 'Ali (as representing "yourselves"), Hasan and Husayn (as representing "your children"), and Fatimatu 'z-Zahra' (as representing "your women"). Not that there were no other women in Medina; no, there were many: his wives, relatives and women of his companions. But he just selected Fatimatu 'z-Zahra' because she alone was sufficient to stand by the Messenger of Allah in praying against the Christians.

* * *

There are many sayings from the Prophet about Fatimatu 'z-Zahra. For instance, he said, "The best women of Paradise are Khadija bint Khuwaylid, Fatima bint Muhammad, Maryam bint 'Imran and Asiya bint Muzahim the wife of Fir'awn." (al-Hakim in *Mustadrak 'ala 's-Sahihayn.)* 'Aisha, the wife of the Prophet, narrates another hadith that once the Prophet welcomed Fatima and told her a secret which she disclosed only after the Prophet's death. In that statement, the Prophet said to Fatima: "...Do not you like to be the mistress of all the ladies of Paradise or the mistress of all the lady believers?" (al-Bukhari in his *Sahih.)* There a third very famous saying of the Prophet about Fatima which has also been

[1] An event in which both parties pray to God for sending His curse upon the liars.

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quoted by al-Bukhari in his *Sahih:* "Verily Fatima is a part of me; whosoever makes her angry, makes me angry."

These remarks cannot be seen just in the context of "father-daughter" relationship; it throws light on the spiritual status of Fatima. After all, the Prophet *"does not talk from his own accord; [whatever he says is] nothing except a revelation which is revealed to him."* (53:3-4)

5. After the Prophet

One of the darkest pages of Muslim history consists of the events which took place after the Prophet's death. These events directly affected our Lady Fatimatu 'z-Zahra (a.s.).

When Abu Bakr was installed as the caliph, members of the Prophet's family and some companions refrained from pledging allegiance to him.

This small group sought refuge with 'Ali inside his home. The supporter of the caliph, led by Umar ibn Khattab, forcefully entered the house of 'Ali and brought the men out to the mosque where they were compelled to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr. In the process of forcing the door open, they broke the door which fell upon Fatimatu 'z-Zahra, injuring her severely and causing the loss of her unborn baby.

Fadak was a property in northern Arabia which the Prophet had gifted to Fatimatu 'z-Zahra. But after his death, the caliphate establishment confiscated the property of Fadak. When Fatima complained against this injustice, the caliph quoted an alleged saying of the Prophet that, "We the prophets do not leave anything as inheritance [for our children); whatever we leave behind is charity." Fatima challenged the validity of this so-called hadith by reciting verses from the Qur'an in which Allah describes how the children of past prophets inherited their fathers! However, political expediency took precedence over truth and honesty. This was the

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first attack on the rights of women in Islam, and Fatimatu ‘z-Zahra was the first Muslim woman to stand up for her rights.

Fatima also stood by ‘Ali in defending his right for the caliphate. ‘Ali used to take her at night to the houses of the Ansar where she would address the women in support for ‘Ali’s right to the caliphate.

The physical hurt of the door falling upon her and the loss of her unborn baby combined with the emotional pain of ‘Ali’s deprivation and the confiscation of Fadak took its toll on Fatimatu ‘z-Zahra — she left this world at the age of 18.

‘Ali, who had just lost the Prophet three months ago, also lost his faithful wife. These were the loneliest days for ‘Ali bin Abi Talib. Hasan, Husayn, Zaynab and Umm Kulthum lost their loving and caring mother. And the Muslim world lost the best of all women.

* * *

This lesson *has* been written by Sayyid M. Rizvi.
Sources used for this lesson are: 1. *Bdnu-e Banuiuan* of Dar Rah-e Haq. 2. *Sahih al-Bukhari.* 3. *Fatimatu ‘z-Zahra’* of S. M. Kazim al-Qazwini.

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Question Paper on Lesson 37
THE BEST OF ALL WOMEN

*Name:*_____ *Student No.*_____

Question 1: [20 points]

Fill in the blanks from the list of words given below:

Fatimatu 'z-Zahra' was born in the_____ year of the _____. At the age of ___ she lost her mother and thereafter was raised by the Prophet. The Prophet waited for Fatima(s) and 'Ali at _____.

The *mahr* of Fatima was _____ dirhams and the *jahiz* was simple. Fatima is the undisputed embodiment of the verse of _____. In verse_____, Allah has informed us about the honourable place of Fatima and her family in Paradise. In the words of the Prophet, "Verily Fatima is a part of me; whosoever makes her _____, makes me angry.

The property gifted by the Prophet to Fatima and confiscated by the caliphate is known as ____. She died at the age of _____.

Fidak	fifth	500	angry	five
Purity	18	76:22	Quba	bi'that

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Question 2: [15 points]

Tick the appropriate box:

TRUE / FALSE

(a) *Abtar* means one who has no progeny.

(b) Fatima is one of the five best women of Paradise mentioned by the Prophet.

(c) Husayn was the eldest child of Fatima.

(d) The order of malediction is mentioned in 3:54.

(e) Whatever the prophets leave behind is charity.

Question 3: [15 points]

Explain in your own words as to what aspects of Fatimatu 'z-Zahra's life can be an example and model for the Muslim women of our time.

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LESSON 38

THE FIRST IMAM
('Ali bin Abi Talib)

Name:	***'Ali.***
Agnomen:	***Abu 'l-Hasan; Abu Turab.***
Title:	***Amiru 'l-Mu'minin; al-Murtaza; Haydar.***
Father:	***Abu Talib bin 'Abdu 'l-Muttalib.***
Mother:	***Fatimah bint Asad***
Birth:	***13 Rajab 30th year of 'Amu 'l-Fil, i.e., 23 years before hijrah.***
Death:	***21 Ramadhan 40 years after hijrah in Kufah, Iraq.***

1. Birth to Bi'that

Amiru 1-Mu'minin[2] 'Ali —upon whom be peace— was born in the holy Ka'bah. 'Abbas bin 'Abdu '1-Muttalib and others were sitting by the Ka'bah when they saw Fatima bint Asad come to the Ka'bah and prayed to God to make her pregnancy easy for her. No sooner had she finished the prayer when the wall of the Ka'bah split by a solemn miracle and Fatima entered inside the Ka'bah and the split area of the wall returned to its normal position. 'Abbas and others flocked to the door of the Ka'bah and tried to open it but in vain. They realized that this was an act of miraculous nature and so they left the door alone.

After three days, Fatima bint Asad emerged from the Ka'bah carrying the infant 'Ali in her arms. This was ten years before the commencement of the prophetic mission *(bi'that).*

For the first six years, 'Ali was raised by his father Abu Talib who also was guardian of the Prophet of Islam. When he was six years

[2] *"Amir al-mu 'minin"* is a famous title of the first Imam, and it means "leader of the believers".

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old, a famine occurred in and around Mecca. The Prophet and his other uncles decided to help Abu Talib by sharing the burden of raising the latter's sons. 'Ali was requested by the Prophet to leave his father's house and come to the house of his cousin. There he was placed directly under the guardianship and custody of the Holy Prophet.

'Ali describes the time of childhood he spent with the Prophet in the following words: "Certainly, you know my position of close kinship and special relationship with the Prophet of Allah—peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his descendants. When I was only a child he took charge of me. He used to press me to his chest and lay me beside him in his bed, bring his body close to mine and make me smell his smell. He used to chew [the food] and then feed me with it. He found no lie in my speaking, nor weakness in any act. From the time of his weaning, Allah had put a mighty angel with him to take him along the path of high character and good behaviour through day and night, while I used to follow him like a young camel following in the footprints of its mother."[3]

2. *Bi'that* to Hijrat

A few years later, when the Prophet was endowed with the Divine gift of prophecy and for the first time received the Divine revelation in the cave of Hira', after Khadijah, 'Ali was the first to declare his faith in the Prophet's mission. In the same sermon quoted above, 'Ali said, "Every year he used to go in seclusion to the hill of Hira', where I saw him but no one else saw him. In those days Islam did not exist in any house except that of the Prophet of Allah and Khadijah, while I was the third after these two. I used to see and watch the effulgence of divine revelation and message, and breathed the scent of prophethood."

For the first three years of the mission, Prophet Muhammad had not been ordered to invite people to his message openly. When

[3] Nahju M-Balagha, sermon 191.

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finally the order came, first the Prophet was asked to invite his relatives. In that gathering, the Prophet said that the first person to support his call would be his brother *(akhi),* inheritor *(wasiyi)* and vicegerent *(khalifati).* The only person to rise from his place and accept the call was ‘Ali and the Prophet accepted his declaration of support and faith. Therefore ‘Ali was the first man in Islam to accept the faith and is the first among the followers of the Prophet to have never worshipped other than the One God.

‘Ali was always in the company of the Prophet until the Prophet migrated from Mecca to Medina. On the night of the migration to Medina *(hijrah)* when infidels had surrounded the house of the Prophet and were determined to invade the house at the end of the night and cut him to pieces while he was in bed, ‘Ali slept in place of the Prophet while the Prophet left the house and set out for Medina. This sacrifice on the part of ‘Ali was so much appreciated by Allah that He revealed the following verse in his praise: *“And there is one among the people who sells (i.e., sacrifice) his life to seek the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is kind to people.”* (2:207) When the infidels entered the house and found ‘Ali in the Prophet’s place, they asked “Where has Muhammad gone?” ‘Ali replied, “Who said that I was in charge to look after Muhammad?!” The Prophet had safely left the house and was on his way to Medina.

After the departure of the Prophet, according to the Prophet’s wish, ‘Ali gave back to the people the trusts and charges that they had left with the Prophet. Then he went to Medina with his mother, the daughter of the Prophet, and two other women.

3. Hijrat to the Prophet’s Death

In Medina also ‘Ali was constantly in the company of the prophet in private and in public. The Prophet gave Fatima, his beloved daughter from Khadijah, to ‘Ali as his wife in the 2nd year of the Hijrah.

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When the Prophet was creating bonds of brotherhood among the Muslims of Medina and the Muslims who had migrated to Medina, he selected ‘Ali as his own brother. He said, “O ‘Ali, you are my brother in this world as well as the hereafter.”

‘Ali was present in all the wars in which the Prophet participated, except the battle of Tabuk when he was ordered to stay in Medina in place of the Prophet. He did not retreat in any battle nor did he turn his face away from any enemy. He never disobeyed the Prophet, so that the Prophet said, “‘Ali is never separated from the Truth nor the Truth from ‘Ali.”

The courage of ‘Ali was proverbial. In all the wars in which he participated during the lifetime of the Prophet, and also afterward, he never displayed fear or anxiety. Although in many battles such as those of Uhud, Hunayn, Khaybar and Khandaq the aides to the Prophet and the Muslim army trembled in fear or dispersed and fled, he never turned his back to the enemy. Never did a warrior or soldier engage ‘Ali in battle and come out of it alive. Yet, with full chivalry he would never slay a weak enemy nor pursue those who fled. He would not engage in surprise attacks or in turning streams of water upon the enemy.

In the Battle of Khandaq, the Muslims had dug a ditch around their encampment. A very brave and famous Arab warrior, ‘Amr bin Ubayd, jumped over the ditch with his horse and challenged the Muslims for combat with him. His courage and bravery was so well-known that no one among the Muslims dared to answer his challenge. The only person who readily agreed to face ‘Amr was ‘Ali bin Abi Talib. When ‘Ali was going to face ‘Amr, the Prophet said, “Today the total faith *iman)* is going to face the total disbelief *(kufr).”* ‘Ali defeated ‘Amr, and all other brave warriors of the enemy retreated.

In the Battle of Khaybar, the Muslim army attacked the fortresses of the Jews for many days but was not successful.

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Finally the Prophet declared that, "Tomorrow I will give the flag (i.e., the command) to one who will be steadfast in his position and not retreat until Allah blesses him with victory. Allah and the Messenger are his friends and he is their friend." 'Ali, who had been in Medina because of eye ailment, joined the army on the next day and the Prophet gave the command to him. 'Ali marched to the fort of Khaybar and first defeated the bravest of all Jewish soldiers, Marhab, and then conquered the fort. It has been definitively established historically that while moving to conquer the fort, 'Ali reached the ring of the door and with sudden motion tore off the door and cast it away.

Also on the day when Mecca was conquered the Prophet ordered the idols to be broken. The idol "Hubal" was the largest idol in Mecca, a giant stone statue placed on the top of the Ka'bah. Following the command of the prophet, 'Ali placed his feet on the Prophet's shoulders, climbed to the top of the Ka'bah, pulled "Hubal from its place and cast it down.

While returning from the last pilgrimage, the Prophet openly and clearly introduced Imam 'Ali at Ghadir Khumm to thousands of Muslims who had accompanied him to hajj and declared that: "Whosoever's master am I, this 'Ali is also his master." He repeatedly said, "I am leaving two things behind and as long as you hold fast to them, you will never go astray: the Book of Allah (the Qur'an) and my Ahlu '1-bayt (the Family)."

A few months after returning from hajj, the Prophet —peace and blessing of Allah be upon him— passed away from this world on 28th Safar, 11 A.H.

4. The Three Caliphs

On the day of the death of the Prophet, 'Ali was thirty-three years old. Although he was foremost in religious virtues and the most outstanding among the companions of the Prophet, he was pushed aside from the caliphate on the claim that he was too young

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and that he had many enemies among the people because of the blood of the polytheists he had spilled in the wars fought alongside the Prophet.

Therefore ‘Ali was almost completely cut off from public affairs . He retreated to his house where he began to train competent individuals in the Divine sciences. It should also be mentioned that he never let an opportunity pass by in which he expressed his opinion about his right to the caliphate. On the other hand, his concern for the wellbeing of the Muslim ummah did not allow him to deprive the caliphs of his guidance whenever the opportunity arose. For example, there are countless judicial cases which were solved by Imam ‘Ali during the caliphate of ‘Umar bin Khattab—many were cases in which ‘Umar said, “If it hadn’t been for ‘Ali, ‘Umar would have perished.”

In this way ‘Ali passed the twentyfour years of the caliphate of Abu Bakr (d. 13 A.H.), ‘Umar (d. 23 A.H.) and OJthman (d. 35) who came to power after the Prophet. When the third caliph was killed in a public revolt because of his unjust policies, people gave their allegiance to ‘Ali and he was chosen as caliph.

5. Caliphate to Death

During his caliphate of nearly four years and nine months (35 AH to 40 AH), ‘Ali followed the way of the Prophet and gave his caliphate the form of a spiritual movement and renewal and began many different types of reforms. He forced the resignation of all the incompetent political elements who had a hand in directing affairs and began a major transformation of a “revolutionary” nature. Naturally, these reforms were against the interests of certain parties that had become used to the privileges during the previous caliphates and sought their own benefit. As a result, a group of the companions (foremost among whom were Talhah and Zubayr, who also gained the support of ‘Aishah, and especially Mu’awiyah) made a pretext of the death of the third caliph to raise their heads in opposition and began to revolt and rebel against ‘Ali.

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In order to quell the civil strife and sedition, ‘Ali fought a war near Basra against Talhah and Zubayr in which ‘Aishah, “the mother of the believers” was also involved. Actually this battle is known in history as the “Battle of the Camel after the camel on which ‘Aishah was riding.

Imam ‘Ali fought another war against Mu’awiyah bin Abi Sufyan on the border of Iraq and Syria which lasted for a year and a half and is famous as the “Battle of Sifiin.” He also fought against the Khawarij[4] at Nahrawan, in a battle known as the “Battle of Nahrawan.”

Therefore, most of the days of ‘Ali’s caliphate were spent in overcoming internal opposition. And so it is a sign of ‘Ali’s excellence that in spite of such great problems during his short caliphate, he has left behind a vast and rich legacy in form of sayings, letters, circulars and decisions on the political system of Islam.

Finally, in the morning of the 19th of Ramadhan in the year 40 A.H., while praying in the mosque of Kufa, he was wounded by one of the Khawarij and died as a martyr during the night of the 21st.

* * *

6. The Personality of ‘Ali

According to the testimony of friend and foe alike, ‘Ali had no shortcomings from the point of view of human perfection. And in the Islamic virtues he was a perfect example of the upbringing and training given by the Prophet. The discussion that has taken place concerning his personality and the books written on this

[4] The Khawarij, literally those who stand outside, refers to a group who opposed both ‘Ali and Mu’awiyah after the Battle of Siffin and later formed an extremist group that disobeyed established authority and was adamantly opposed to both the Sunnis and the Shi’ites.

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subject by Shi'ites, Sunnis and members of other religious bodies, are hardly equaled in the case of any other personality in history.

In science and knowledge, 'Ali was the most learned of the companions of the Prophet, and of Muslims in general. In his learned discourses he was the first in Islam to open the door for logical demonstration and proof and to discuss the "divine sciences" or metaphysics *(ma'arif-i ilahiyah).* He spoke concerning the esoteric aspect of the Qur'an and devised Arabic grammar in order to preserve the Qur'an's form of expression. He was the most eloquent Arab in speech. The Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said, "I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate."

'Ali was also without equal in religious asceticism and the worship of God. In answer to some who had complained of 'Ali's anger toward them, the Prophet said, "Do not reproach 'Ali for he is in a state of Divine ecstasy and bewilderment." Abu Darda', a companion of the Prophet, one day saw the body of 'Ali in one of the palm plantations of Medina lying on the ground as stiff as wood. He went to 'Ali's house to inform his noble wife, the daughter of the Prophet, and to express his condolences. The daughter of the Prophet said, "My cousin ('Ali) has not died. Rather, in fear of God he has fainted. This condition overcomes him often."

There are many stories told of 'Ali's kindness to the lowly, compassion for the needy and the poor, and generosity and munificence towards those in misery and poverty. 'Ali spent all that he earned to help the poor and the needy, and himself lived in the strictest and simple manner. 'Ali loved agriculture and spent much of his time digging wells, planting trees and cultivating fields. But all the fields that he cultivated or wells that he built he gave in endowment *(waqf)* to the poor. His endowments, known as the "alms of 'Ali," had the noteworthy income of twenty-four thousand gold dinars towards the end of his life.

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Mas'udi, the famous historian of third Islamic century, writes:

"If the glorious name of being the first Muslim, a comrade of the Prophet in exile, his faithful companion in the struggle for faith, his intimate associate in life, and his kinsman;

"if a true knowledge of the spirit of his teachings and of the Book;

"if self-abnegation and practice of justice;

"if honesty, purity, and love of truth; if a knowledge of law and science,

"constitute a claim to pre-eminence, then all must regard 'Ali as the foremost Muslim. We shall search in vain to find, either among his predecessors (save one) or among his successors, those attributes."

7. 'Ali's Last Words

When Ibn Muljim, the Kharijite, wounded Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), the Imam gathered his family members and made a will to his sons Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn as a general advice for them and also for his followers. Some excerpts from that will is presented here:

I advise you (both) and all my children and members of my family and everyone whom my writing reaches, to fear Allah, to keep your affairs in order, and to maintain good relations among yourselves for I have heard your grandfather (the Prophet) saying, "Improvement of mutual differences is better than general prayers and fastings."

Fear Allah and keep Allah in view in the matter of orphans. So do not allow them to starve and they should not be ruined in your presence.

Fear Allah and keep Allah in view in the matter of your neighbours, because they were the subject of the Prophet's advice. He went on advising in their favour till we thought he would allow them a share in inheritance.

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Fear Allah and keep Allah in view in the matter of the Qur'an. No one should excel you in acting upon it.

Fear Allah and keep Allah in view in the matter of prayer, because it is the pillar of your religion.

Fear Allah and keep Allah in view in the matter of your Lord's House (Ka'bah). Do not forsake it so long as you live, because if it is abandoned you will not be spared.

Fear Allah and keep Allah in view in the matter of jihad with the help of your property, lives and tongues in the way of Allah.

You should maintain respect for kinship and spending for others.

Avoid turning away from one another and severing mutual relations.

Do not give up bidding for good and forbidding from evil lest the mischievous gain positions over you, and then if you will pray, the prayers will not be granted.[5]

This lesson has been compiled by Sayyid M. Rizvi by using the following sources.

1. *Shi'a Islam'* of Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i.
2. *A Brief History of the Fourteen Infallibles* published by WOFIS, Tehran.

[5] *Nahju 'l-Balaghah,* will # 47.

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Question Paper on Lesson 38
THE FIRST IMAM

*Name:*_____ *Student No.*_____

Question 1: **[20 points]**

Fill in the blanks from the list of words given below:

'Ali bin Abi Talib was born in the —— to _____. From the age of _____, he lived with the Prophet. In the gathering of his relatives, the Prophet declared 'Ali as his _____, _____ and _____. On the night of _____, 'Ali slept in the Prophet's bed.

In the event of brotherhood in Medina, the Prophet said, "O 'Ali you are my brother in this _____as well as in the ——————." In the battle of Khandaq, 'Ali slew a very brave Arab warrior known as _____; and he also killed the famous Jewish warrior, ————————, in Khaybar.

'Umar ibn Khattab used to say that "If it hadn't been for 'Ali, 'Umar would have _____." 'Ali was chosen by the people as a caliph after the murder of _____ because of his ———— policies.

'Ali had to fight _____ and _____ in the Battle of the Camel. The battle against Mu'awiya was known as _————- Those against whom 'Ali fought in the Battle of Nahrawan were known as the_____.

The Prophet said, "I am the city of _____ and 'Ali is its _____."

Khawarij	'Uthman	'Amr	migration	gate	six
Talha	Ka'abah	world	perished	Zubayr	
Knowledge	brother	hereafter	Marhab	unjust	

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Inheritor successor Siffin Fatima bint Asad

Question 2: [15 points]

Tick the appropriate box:

TRUE / FALSE

(a) At the birth of ‘Ali, Fatima bint Asad stayed inside the Ka’bah for three days.
(b) *Wasiyi* means “my inheritor”.
(c) The Prophet gained many supporters when he invited his relatives and spoke to them at his home.
(d) ‘Ali participated in all battles except Tabuk.

(e) ‘Ali married Fatima in the third year after hijrah.

(f) The Prophet said, “Today the total *iman* is going to face the total *kufr* in the Battle of Khandaq.
(g) Verse 2:207 was revealed when ‘Ali slew Marhab.
(h) “Hubal was toppled by ‘Ali from top of the Ka’bah.
(i) The first three caliphs ruled for 30 years.
(j) ‘Ali (a.s.) was wounded in the Masjid of Kufa.

Question 3: [15 points]

Explain in your own words the loss Muslims suffered because Imam ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) was not allowed to lead the ummah for 24 years after the death of the Prophet (s.a.w.).

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LESSON 39

THE SECOND IMAM
(Hasan bin 'Ali)

1. Birth & Early Life

Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba —upon whom be peace— was the second Imam. He and his brother Husayn were the two sons of Amir al-mu'minin 'Ali and Lady Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet. He was born in the year 3 A.H. in Medina. The Prophet came to 'Ali's home, congratulated the new parents and named the child, on Allah's order, as "Hasan".

He shared in the life of the Prophet for over seven years, growing up during that time under his loving care. The Prophet used to carry him over his shoulder and say: "O Allah! I love him, so You also love him." Many other sayings of the Prophet have been recorded by historians — both Shi'a and Sunni— about Hasan and Husayn:

- "Whoever loves Hasan and Husayn, he also loves me; whoever hates these two, he also hates me."
- "Hasan and Husayn are the chiefs of the youths of Paradise."
- "These two children of mine are Imams'(leaders) no matter whether they rise up (against a tyrant) or make peace."

Hasan and Husayn, in spite of their young age, were blessed with such a high level of spiritual purity that the Prophet would ask them to witness some of the treaties and documents issued by him. Waqidi narrates that when the Prophet wrote a treaty for the tribe of Thaqif, Khalid bin Sa'id wrote the treaty whereas Hasan and Husayn have been named as witnesses to that treaty. Similarly, when the Prophet did mubahala with the Christians of Najran,

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Hasan and Husayn were among those whom he asked to accompany him.

The verse of purity, as mentioned in earlier lessons, also included Hasan and Husayn.

Many times the Prophet had said, "Hasan and Husayn are my children." Because of these same words 'Ali would say to his other children, "You are my children, and Hasan and Husayn are the children of the Prophet."

2. With 'Ali Amiru '1-Mu'minin

After the death of the Prophet which was no more than three, or according to some, six months earlier than the death of lady Fatimah, Hasan was placed directly under the care of his noble father.

He was part of all the struggles and trials that his father went through during the rule of the first three caliphs. For example, when Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, the famous companion of the Prophet, was to be sent into exile on orders of the third caliph, people had been forbidden from bidding him farewell. The only persons who dared to come to the city's gate to bid farewell were 'Ali, Hasan and Husayn (may peace be upon them all). This was also a way of protesting against the unjust decision of the third caliph against Abu Dharr.

In 36 A.H., Imam Hasan accompanied his father to Basra, where the Battle of Jamal took place. Before reaching Basra, Hasan was deputized by his father to go to Kufa, with 'Ammar bin Yasir, to raise additional forces for the Imam's army. With his articulate and moving sermons, he exposed the falsehood of opponents at Basra, gathered a considerable number of people and joined his father in the Battle of Jamal.

In the Battle of Siffin also, Hasan was alongside his noble father till the very end. Mu'awiyah sent 'Ubaydullah bin 'Umar to

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try and incite Hasan by saying: “Stop supporting your father, and we will make you the caliph because the Quraysh do not like your father who is responsible for killing many of their elders but they are prepared to accept you as their leader.” Imam Hasan replied: “The Quraysh wanted to destroy Islam, whereas my father killed their elders for Allah and for Islam. This is the basis of why they hate my father!”

When the outcome of the arbitration in Siffin became obvious, Imam Hasan made a speech and said: “These two persons were chosen so that they may put the Qur’an before their personal whims but they acted in the wrong manner; therefore, they do not deserve to be considered as arbiters...”

3. The Imamate of Hasan bin ‘Ali

After the death of his father, through Divine command and according to the will of his father, Hasan became Imam.

At dawn on the night of ‘Ali’s death, Imam Hasan addressed the people in which he said: “...There has died tonight a man who was the first among the early (Muslims) in good actions. Nor did any later (Muslim) attain his level in good actions. He used to fight alongside the Apostle of God, may Allah bless him and his family, and protect him with his own life. The Apostle of God used to send him forward with his standard while Gabriel supported him on his right and Michael supported him on his left. He would not return until God brought victory through his hands...

“He has left behind him no gold and silver except seven hundred dirhams of his stipend, with which he was intending to buy a servant for his family.” Then tears overcame him and he wept and the people wept with him. Then he continued:

“I am the (grand)son of the one who brought the good news. I am the (grand)son of the warner. I am the (grand)son of the man who, with God’s permission, summoned the people to God. I am the (grand)son of the light which shone out to the world. I am of

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the House, from whom God has kept away abomination and whom God has purified thoroughly. I am of the House for whom God had required love in his Book...” Then he sat down.

‘Abdullah ibn al-’Abbas arose in front of him and said, “People, this is the son of your Prophet, the testamentary trustee *(wasi)* of your Imam. So pledge allegiance to him.” The people answered him saying: “No one is more loved by us nor has anyone more right to succession.” Then they rushed forward to pledge allegiance to Imam Hasan as the successor of Amiru 1-mu’minin. He also occupied the outward function of caliphate for about six months, during which time he administered the affairs of the Muslims.

During that time Mu’awiyah, a bitter enemy of ‘Ali and his family, and had fought for years with the ambition of capturing the caliphate, first on the pretext of avenging the death of the third caliph and finally with an open claim to the caliphate, he sent spies into Iraq, the seat of Imam Hasan’s caliphate, to incite rebellion and opposition.

After the spies of Mu’awiyah were captured and punished, Imam Hasan wrote him “...It is surprising that after the Prophet’s death, the Quraysh fought for the caliphate and considered themselves as superior to other Arabs because they were from the tribe of the Prophet. The Arabs accepted their argument.

“But then the Quraysh [based on same line of thought] refused to accept our superiority and shunned us aside although we were more closely related to the Prophet than they. We adopted forbearance so that the enemies and hypocrites do not destroy Islam.

“And today we are amazed by your claim to the caliphate even though you do not deserve it in the least; neither you have any religious superiority nor any good record in the past. You are a

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product of the group that fought against the Prophet and the son of the worst enemy of the Prophet among the Quraysh...” The Imam ended the letter with an advice for Mu’awiyah to accept the decision of the Muslim community and pledge allegiance to him.

Mu’awiyah replied: “...You and my situation is similar to your family and Abu Bakr’s situation. Abu Bakr occupied the caliphate on the pretext of having more experience than your father. Similarly, I find myself to be more experienced than you...”

Mu’awiyah not only refused to recognize Imam Hasan, he also marched with his army into Iraq. War ensued during which Mu’awiyah gradually subverted the generals and commanders of Imam Hasan’s army with large sums of money and deceiving promises until the army rebelled against Imam Hasan. One should realize that not all the people in the Imam’s army were Shi’as; they belonged to various groups: the Khawarij came because they also opposed Mu’awiyah; the opportunists who came for material gain if Imam Hasan succeeded; those who just followed their tribal leaders and owed loyalty to them and not the Imam.

The Imam was, finally, forced to make peace and to yield the caliphate to Mu’awiyah provided:

1. The caliphate would again return to Imam Hasan after Mu’awiyah’s death.
2. The Imam’s household and partisans would be protected in every way.
3. The practice of cursing Imam ‘Ali (peace be upon him) in Friday prayers will be discontinued.
4. Imam Hasan would not address Mu’awiyah as “amiru ‘1-mu’minin — leader of the believers.”
5. Mu’awiyah will rule on the basis of the Qur’an and the sunnah.
6. Mu’awiyah would distribute one million dirhams from the revenue of Dara among the children who became orphans during the battles of Jamal and Siffin.

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In this way Mu'awiyah captured the caliphate and entered Iraq. In a public speech he officially made null and void all the peace conditions, and in every way possible placed the severest pressure upon the members of the Ahlul Bayt of the Prophet and the Shi'as. During all the ten years of his imamate, Imam Hasan lived in conditions of extreme hardship and under persecution, with no security even in his own house.

4. His Noble Character

In human perfection Imam Hasan was reminiscent of his father and a perfect example of his noble grandfather. In fact, as long as the Prophet was alive, he and his brother were always in the company of the Prophet who even sometimes would carry them on his shoulders. Both Sunni and Shi'ite sources have transmitted this saying of the Holy Prophet concerning Hasan and Husayn: "These two children of mine are Imams whether they stand up or sit down" (allusion to whether they occupy the external function of caliphate or not). Also there are many traditions of the Holy Prophet and 'Ali concerning the fact that Imam Hasan would gain the function of imamate after his noble father.

Imam Hasan was well-known for spiritual wayfaring; he had also gone for pilgrimage 25 times by walking all the way from Medina to Mecca.

The Imam was also known for his generosity. On hearing a man praying by the Ka'bah to Allah for relieving him of a 10,000 dirham debt, the Imam went home, returned with that money and gave it to that person. Three times in his life, the Imam divided his entire property and possessions and gave away onehalf in charity.

5. His Death

In the year 50 A.H. Imam Hasan bin 'Ali (may peace be upon them) was poisoned and martyred by one of his own wives who, as has been accounted by historians, had been motivated by Mu'awiyah. The latter did not want the caliphate to return back to

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'Ali's family; he wanted to remove all the obstacles from the way of his own son, Yazid to inherit the kingdom. The Umayyids, against all the high principles of Islam and humanity, forcefully and violently barred the Banu Hashim from burying Imam Hasan next to his grandfather's grave. He was finally buried in Jannatu 1-Baqi'.

Imam Hasan's patience and forbearance is even acknowledged by his enemies. Marwan bin Hakam, Mu'awiyah's governor in Medina who always persecuted the Imam, participated in the latter's funeral. Imam Husayn said, "While my brother was alive, you tried your best to oppose him and fight against him; and now you are showing up in his funeral!" Marwan said, "Whatever I did, I did to a person whose forbearance was stronger than this mountain" while pointing towards a mountain outside Medina.

* * *

This lesson has been compiled by Sayyid M. Rizvi by using the following sources.

1. *Shi'a Islam'* of Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i.
2. *A Brief History of the Fourteen Infallibles* published by WOFIS, Tehran.
3. *Pishway-e Dawwum: Hazrat Imam Hasan (a.s.)* by Dar Rah-e Haq, Qum.

The main sources have been extensively edited in order to fit the requirements of our course. Also, for the sake of brevity, we have not included the references quoted by our sources. Those who are interested to know the sources, may refer to item # 1 and # 3 mentioned above.

Question Paper on Lesson 39
THE SECOND IMAM

*Name:*_____ *Student No.*_____

Question 1: [20 points]

Fill in the blanks from the list of words given below:

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Imam Hasan bin ‘Ali was born in _____ A.H. in _____. For over_____ years, he shared in the life of the Prophet who used to say: “Hasan and Husayn are the _____ of the ———— of Paradise.”

Hasan was deputized by his father to go to ——— with —— to raise additional _____ for the Battle of———.

Mu’awiyah succeeded in _____ the army of Imam Hasan because not all the people in the Imam’s army were ————; they belonged to various groups like the ————, the _____, and people with loyalty to their _____ leaders.

Imam Hasan denied the religious legitimacy to Mu’awiyah’s status by refusing to address him as _____. The imamate of Imam Hasan did not depend on political power as attested by the saying of the Prophet concerning him and his brother that: “These two children of mine are Imams whether they _____ or ———.

Mu’awiyah motivated one of the Imam’s ———— to _____ him in order to pave the way for _____ to inherit the kingdom.

Khawarij	Yazid	‘Ammar	forces	subverting
Shi’as	opportunists	3	sit	down
tribal				
poison	Medina	youths	seven	
chiefs				
jamal	stand up	Kufa	wives	amiru’1-muminin

Question 2: [15 points]

Tick the appropriate box:

TRUE / FALSE

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(a) Hasan & Husayn were witnesses to the Prophet's treaty with the tribe of Thaqif

(b) Abu Dharr al-Ghifari was sent into exile on order of Mu'awiyah.

(c) Hasan was sent by his father to Medina for raising additional forces for the Battle of Jamal.

(d) The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Hasan and Husayn are my children."

(e) 'Abdullah ibn al-'Abbas was the first to invite people to pledge allegiance to Imam Hasan.

(f) Mu'awiyah honestly adhered to the peacetreaty.

(g) Imam Hasan had done 15 hajj by walking all the way from Medina to Mecca.

(h) Imam Hasan is buried next to the grave of his grandfather.

(i) Marwan testified to the great forbearance of Imam Hasan (a.s.).

(j) Jannatu '1-Baqi is a graveyard in Medina.

Question 3: [15 points]

Summarize the analysis that Imam Hasan (a.s.) has done in his letter to Mu'awyah for the events of Saqifa in which the caliphate was snatched away from the Ahlul Bayt.

LESSON 4O

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THE THIRD IMAM
(Husayn bin 'Ali)

Name:	***Husayn.***
Agnomen:	***Abu 'Abdillah.***
Title:	***Sayyidu 'sh-Shuhada.***
Father:	***Abu Talib bin 'Abdu 'l-Muttalib.***
Mother:	***Fatimah, daughter of the Prophet.***
Birth:	***3 Sha'ban 4 A.H. in Medina.***
Death:	***10 Muharram 61 A.H. in Karbala, Iraq.***

1. Birth & Early Life

Imam Husayn (Sayyidu 'sh-Shuhada', "the lord among martyrs"), the second child of 'Ali and Fatimah, was born in the year 4 A.H.; and after the martyrdom of his brother, Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba, became Imam through Divine command and his brother's will.

Imam Husayn was always with his brother during the life of the Prophet and Imam 'Ali; he shared in the most important events of that era. He stood by his brother during the difficult times of the latter's imamat. His own imamat was for a period of ten years, all but the last six months coinciding with the caliphate of Mu'awiyah.

2. Mu'awiyah's Rule

Imam Husayn lived under the most difficult outward conditions of suppression and persecution. This was due to the fact that, first of all, religious laws and regulations had lost much of their weight and credit, and the edicts of the Umayyad government had gained complete authority and power. Secondly, Mu'awiyah and his aides made use of every possible means to put aside and move out of the way the Ahlul Bayt of the Prophet and the Shi'ah, and thus obliterate the name of 'Ali and his family. And above all, Mu'awiyah wanted to strengthen the basis of the caliphate of his

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son, Yazid, who because of his lack of principles and scruples was opposed by a large group of Muslims. Therefore, in order to quell all opposition, Mu'awiyah had undertaken newer and more severe measures. By force and necessity Imam Husayn had to endure these days and to tolerate every kind of mental and spiritual agony and affliction from Mu'awiyah and his aides—until in the middle of the year 60 A.H. Mu'awiyah died and his son Yazid took his place.

3. Yazid's demand for *Bay'ah*

Paying allegiance *(bay'ah)* was an old Arab practice which was carried out in important matters such as that of kingship and governorship. Those who were ruled, and especially the well known among them, would give their hand in allegiance, agreement and obedience to their king or prince and in this way would show their support for his actions. Disagreement after allegiance was considered as disgrace and dishonor for the people and, like breaking an agreement after having signed it officially, it was considered as a definite crime. Following the example of the Holy Prophet, people believed that allegiance, when given by free will and not through force, carried authority and weight.

Mu'awiyah had asked the wellknown among the people to give their allegiance to Yazid, but had not imposed this request upon Imam Husayn. He had especially told Yazid in his last will that if Husayn refused to pay allegiance he should pass over it in silence and overlook the matter, for he had understood correctly the disastrous consequences which would follow if the issue were to be pressed. But because of his egoism and recklessness, Yazid neglected his father's advice and immediately after the death of his father ordered the governor of Medina either to force a pledge of allegiance from Imam Husayn or send his head to Damascus.

After the governor of Medina informed Imam Husayn of this demand, the Imam refused to accept the demand and overnight started with his family toward Mecca. He sought refuge in the

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sanctuary of God which in Islam is the official place of refuge and security. This event occurred toward the end of the month of Rajab and the beginning of Sha'ban of 60 A.H. For nearly four months Imam Husayn stayed in Mecca in refuge.

This news spread throughout the Islamic world. On the one hand many people who were tired of the inequities of Mu'awiyah's rule and even more dissatisfied when Yazid became caliph, corresponded with Imam Husayn and expressed their sympathy for him. On the other hand a flood of letters began to flow, especially from Iraq and particularly the city of Kufa, inviting the Imam to go to Iraq and accept the leadership of the populace there with the aim of beginning an uprising to overcome injustice and inequity. Naturally such a situation was dangerous for Yazid.

The stay of Imam Husayn in Mecca continued until the season for pilgrimage when Muslims from all over the world poured in groups into Mecca in order to perform the rites of the hajj. The Imam discovered that some of the followers of Yazid had entered Mecca as pilgrims with the mission to kill the Imam during the rites of hajj with the arms they carried under their special pilgrimage dress *(ihram).*

The Imam shortened the pilgrimage rites and decided to leave. Amidst the vast crowd of people he stood up and in a short speech announced that he was setting out for Iraq. In this short speech he also declared that he would be martyred and asked Muslims to help him in attaining the goal he had in view and to offer their lives in the path of God. On the next day he set out with his family and a group of his companions for Iraq.

Imam Husayn was determined not to give his allegiance to Yazid and knew full well that he would be killed. He was aware that his death was inevitable in the face of the awesome military power of the Umayyads, supported as it was by corruption in certain sectors, spiritual decline, and lack of will power among the

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people, especially in Iraq. Some of the outstanding people of Mecca stood in the way of Imam Husayn and warned him of the danger of the move he was making. But he answered that he refused to pay allegiance and give his approval to a government of injustice and tyranny. He added that he knew that wherever he turned or went he would be killed. He would leave in order to preserve the respect for the house of God and not allow this respect to be destroyed by having his blood spilled there.

4. Towards Karbala

While on the way to Kufa and still a few days' journey away from the city, he received news that the agent of Yazid in Kufa had put to death the representative of the Imam in that city and also one of the Imam's determined supporters who was a wellknown man in Kufa. After their death, their feet had been tied and they had been dragged through the streets. The city and its surroundings were placed under strict observation and countless soldiers of the enemy were awaiting him. There was no way open to him but to march ahead and to face death. It was here that the Imam expressed his definitive determination to go ahead and be martyred; and so he continued on his journey.

Approximately seventy kilometers from Kufa, in a desert named Karbala, the Imam and his entourage were surrounded by the army of Yazid. For eight days they stayed in this spot during which the circle narrowed and the number of the enemy's army increased. Finally the Imam, with his household and a small number of companions were encircled by an army of thirty thousand soldiers. During these days the Imam fortified his position and made a final selection of his companions. At night he called his companions and during a short speech stated that there was nothing ahead but death and martyrdom. He added that since the enemy was concerned only with his person he would free them from all obligations so that anyone who wished could escape in the darkness of the night and save his life. Then he ordered the light to be turned out and most of those who had joined him for their own

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advantage, dispersed. Only a handful of those who loved the truth and the Banu Hashim remained.

Once again the Imam assembled those who were left and put them to a test. He addressed his companions and Hashimite relatives, saying again that the enemy was concerned only with his person. Each could benefit from the darkness of the night and escape the danger. But this time the faithful companions of the Imam answered each in his own way that they would not deviate for a moment from the path of truth of which the Imam was the leader and would never leave him alone. They said they would defend his household to the last drop of their blood and as long as they could carry a sword.

On the ninth day of the month the last challenge to choose between "allegiance or war" was made by the enemy to the Imam. The Imam asked for a delay in order to worship overnight and became determined to enter battle on the next day.

On the tenth day of Muharram of the year 61/680 the Imam lined up before the enemy with his small band of followers, less than ninety persons consisting of his companions, thirty some members of the army of the enemy that joined him during the night and day of war, and his Hashimite family of children, brothers, nephews, and cousins. That day they fought from morning until their final breath, and the Imam, the young Hashimites and the companions were all martyred. Among those killed were two children of Imam Hasan, who were only thirteen and eleven years old; and a five-year-old child and a suckling baby of Imam Husayn.

The army of the enemy, after ending the war, plundered the family of the Imam and burned his tents. They decapitated the bodies of the martyrs, denuded them and left them on the ground without burial. Then they moved the members of the family, all of whom were helpless women and girls, along the heads of the martyrs, to Kufa. Among the prisoners there were three male

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members: a twenty-two year old son of Imam Husayn who was very ill and unable to move, namely ‘Ali bin Husayn, the fourth Imam; his four year old son, Muhammad ibn ‘Ali, who became the fifth Imam. The enemy took the prisoners to Kufa and from there to Damascus before Yazid.

5. The Consequences of Karbala

The event of Karbala, the capture of the women and children of the Ahlu 1-bayt of the Prophet, their being taken as prisoners from town to town and the speeches made by the daughter of ‘Ali, Zaynab, and the fourth Imam who were among the prisoners, disgraced the Umayyads. Such abuse of the family of the Prophet annulled the propaganda which Mu’awiyah had carried out for years. The matter reached such proportions that Yazid was compelled to publicly disown and condemn the actions of his agents. The event of Karbala was a major factor in the overthrow of Ummayad rule although its effect was delayed. It also strengthened the roots of Shi’ism. Among its immediate results were the revolts and rebellions combined with bloody wars which continued for twelve years. Among those who were instrumental in the death of the Imam not one was able to escape revenge and punishment.

Anyone who studies closely the history of the life of Imam Husayn and Yazid and the conditions that prevailed at that time, and analyzes this chapter of Islamic history, will have no doubt that in those circumstances there was no choice before Imam Husayn but to be killed. Swearing allegiance to Yazid would have meant publicly showing contempt for Islam, something which was not possible for the Imam, for Yazid not only showed no respect for Islam and its injunctions but also made a public demonstration of impudently, treading under foot its basis and its laws. Those before him, even if they opposed religious injunctions, always did so in the guise of religion, and at least formally respected religion. They took pride in being companions of the Holy Prophet and the other religious figures in whom people believed. From this it can

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be concluded that the claim of some interpreters of these events is false when they say that the two brothers, Hasan and Husayn, had two different tastes and that one chose the way of peace and the other the way of war, so that one brother made peace with Mu'awiyah although he had an army of forty thousand while the other went to war against Yazid with an army of less than a hundred persons. For we see that this same Imam Husayn, who refused to pay allegiance to Yazid for one day, lived for ten years under the rule of Mu'awiyah, in the same manner as his brother who also had endured for ten years under Mu'awiyah, without opposing him.

It must be said in truth that if Imam Hasan or Imam Husayn had fought Mu'awiyah they would have been killed without there being the least benefit for Islam. Their deaths would have had no effect before the righteous-appearing policy of Mu'awiyah, a competent politician who emphasized his being a companion of the Holy Prophet, the "scribe of the revelation," and "uncle of the faithful" and who used every stratagem possible to preserve a religious guise for his rule. Moreover, with his ability to set the stage to accomplish his desires he could have had them killed by their own people and then assumed a state of mourning and sought to revenge their blood, just as he sought to give the impression that he was avenging the killing of the third caliph.

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This lesson has been adopted with changes from 'allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i, *Shi'a Islam*, Qum. For references, see the original source.

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Question Paper on Lesson 40
THE THIRD IMAM

Name: _____ Student No._____

Question 1: [20 points]

Tick the appropriate box:

TRUE / FALSE

(a) All but the last six months of Imam Husayn's imamat coincided with the caliphate of Mu'awiyah.

(b) *Sayyidu 'sh-Shuhada'* means the lord of the martyrs.

(c) Yazid came to power in the middle of 61 A.H.

(d) The people of Cairo invited Imam Husayn to go to Egypt.

(e) Imam Husayn was fully aware that he would be killed if he did not pledge allegiance to Yazid.

(f) The event of Karbala was a major factor in the overthrow of the Umayyad rule.

(g) Hasan and Husayn had two different tastes because one chose peace and the other war.

(h) Yazidi forces respected the sanctity of the Ka'bah.

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(i) Imam Hasan's two children, aged 13 and 11, were martyred in Karbala.

(j) The capture of the women and children of Ahlul Bayt did not annul the Umayyad propaganda.

Question 2: [10 points]

What is bay'ah; and what are its implications?

Question 3: [20 points]

Why did Imam Husayn choose to fight Yazid whereas Imam Hasan decided to make peace with Mu'awiyah?

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LESSON 41

THE FOURTH IMAM
'Ali ibn al-Husayn

1. Birth & Early Life

Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn was the son of the third Imam and his wife, the queen among women, the daughter of Yazdigird the last Sasanid king of Iran. He was known as "Zaynu 'l-'Abidin — the prince of the worshippers" and "Sajjad — the one who prostrates most".

Imam Zaynu 'l-'Abidin was two years old when his grandfather was martyred. In his early teens, he witnessed the situation in which his uncle Imam Hasan lived.

2. Karbala & His Imamat

In his late teens and early twenties, he also observed the suppression and persecution under which his father lived during the reign of Mu'awiyah. As you have already read in the last lesson, Imam Zaynu 1-'Abidin was the only son of Imam Husayn to survive, for his other two brothers 'Ali Akbar and 'Ali Asghar who was a suckling baby were martyred during the event of Karbala. The Imam had also accompanied his father on the journey that terminated fatally in Karbala, but because of severe illness and the inability to carry arms or participate in fighting he was prevented from taking part in the holy war and being martyred.

The Yazidi forces had taken the womenfolk of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) as captives to Kufa and from there to Damascus with the intent of humiliating the holy family and also presenting them as an example for any potential opposition to Yazid's rule. But Allah had planned it otherwise: the journey of the captives turned, instead, into an opportunity for the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) to present their innocence to the people, convey the message of Husayn and

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enlighten the masses about the atrocities of the Yazidi regime. The caravan of the captives from Ahlul Bayt exposed the true face of Yazid and his establishment. The most important role played in this awakening of the masses was by Zaynab bint ‘Ali, Husayn’s sister, and Imam Zaynu l-’Abidin.

The speeches of the holy Imam in the city of Kufa, in the court of Ibn Ziyad (the governor of Kufa), in Damascus and in the court of Yazid himself are excellent examples of how Imam Zaynu l-’Abidin was able to gain victory for Husayn and expose the tyranny of Yazid. And all this was done while he was a prisoner!

Here we shall just present a part from the speech given by Imam Zaynu l-’Abidin in the court of Yazid in response to a speech by a speaker of the establishment who had tried to create hatred in the minds and hearts of the audience against Imam ‘Ali bin Abi Talib and his family. The Imam went on the pulpit shackled in chains and introduced himself as follows:

“...Those who know me, they know me...And those who do not know, then listen:

I am the son of Mecca and Mina; I am the son of zamzam and Safa; I am the son of the noble one who placed the black stone in the Ka’bah;

I am the son of the one who put on the ihram and did tawaf; I am the son of the one who was taken from Masjidul Haram to Masjidul Aqsa [in mi’raj]; I am the son of one on whom Allah sent revelations;

I am the son of Husayn who was killed in Karbala; I am the son of Muhammad al-Mustafa; I am the son of Fatimah az-Zahra’; I am the son of Khadija al-Kubra;

I am the son of the one who was killed and left in a pool of his own blood; I am the son of the one who was left without a shroud and without burial; I am the son of the one who was killed thirsty...”

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He soon turned the tide against Yazid; the entire audience started to cry in sympathy for the Imam and his family. It was such speeches that forced Yazid to publicly disown the actions of his own men.

After spending a period in imprisonment, the Imam and the womenfolk of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) were sent with honour to Medina because Yazid wanted to conciliate public opinion.

3. Jihad by Knowledge

The fourth Imam, upon returning to Medina, retired from public life completely and spent his time in worship and in educating his loyal followers. He was in contact with the elite among the Shiltes such as Abu Hamzah Thumali, Abu Khalid Kabuli and the like. The elite disseminated among the Shi'ah the religious sciences they learned from the Imam. The number of such students of Imam reached to 170. In this way Shi'ism spread considerably and showed its effects during the imamate of the fifth Imam.

The high status of knowledge and piety of the companions of Imam Zaynu l-'Abidin can be seen from one example of Said bin Jubayr. Said was arrested by Hajjaj bin Yusuf ath-Thaqafi, the governor of the Umayyads in Iraq and a bitter enemy of Imam 'Ali and the Shi'as. When Said was brought to Hajjaj, an interesting conversation took place and we present part of it below:

Hajjajj: "What is your belief about Abu Bakr and 'Umar—are they in Paradise or Hell?" (Hajjajj was looking for an excuse to kill Said.)

Said: "If and when I go to Paradise and see the people over there, then I will be able to say who is there; and if I go to Hell, only then I will know who is over there."

Hajjajj: "What is your belief about the caliphs?"

Said: "I am not responsible for them."

Hajjajj: "Whom do you like the most among the caliphs?"

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Said: "The one with whom God is most pleased."
Hajjajj: "With whom is God most pleased?"
Said: "God knows best."
Hajjajj: "How should I kill you."

Sa'id: "Kill me in whatever way you like, because, by God, you will be treated in the same way on the day of judgment."

Hajjajj finally ordered the executioner to kill Sa'id. May Allah bless his soul and elevate his ranks among the martyrs.

Among the works of the fourth Imam is a book called *as-Sahifah as-Sajjadiyah.* It consists of fifty-seven prayers concerning the most sublime Divine sciences and is known as "The Psalm of the Ahlul Bayt." Another famous work of the Imam is *Risalatu 'l-Huquq* (the Charter of Rights) on socio-ethical rights in fifty different cases. Fortunately, both these works are available in English also.

4. Attitude of the Rulers

Although Imam Zaynu 'l-'Abidin refrained from any political activity and dedicated his life to further the knowledge of his followers in religious and spiritual matters, the caliphs were always uneasy with him and kept a close watch on his movements and on those who visited him.

The knowledge and character par excellence of the Imam attracted people of all kinds towards him. This was the main reason that created jealousy in the hearts of the rulers who thought that this attraction to the Imam had the potential of turning a political tide against their establishment. One incident in the life of the Imam clearly shows the hold he had on the hearts and minds of the common people:

Once, Hisham, son of caliph 'Abdu '1-Malik, entered the Masjidul Haram in Mecca with his entourage for doing *tawaf* of the Ka'bah. There were many people doing the *tawaf,* but nobody

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gave any importance to Hisham or gave room for him to get close to the Black Stone. While he was waiting on the perimeter for the crowd to become less so that he may go and kiss the Black Stone, he noticed a sudden movement among the people who starting making way for a person who had just entered the mosque. That person went straight to the Black Stone and kissed it. It was none other than Imam Zaynu 'l-'Abidin (a.s.).

Hisham knew him; but, out of jealousy, he asked his entourage: "Who is this?" Farazdaq, the famous and powerful poet of the time, was standing close by. When he heard Hisham's question filled with jealousy and contempt, he could not control himself and extemporaneously started to recite a poem in praise of the Imam. That piece of poetry is of such high eloquence and clarity that even the modern anthologies of Arabic literature include it in their collections. It is a long poem, but we shall just present a few lines:

He is the one whose footsteps are known to the holy land, the Ka'bah knows him, so does the sanctuary and the land beyond.
He is the best of all Allah's servants;
he is the pious, the pure, and the knowledgeable.
The father of this person is the chosen Ahmad[6]*,*
may Allah shower blessings on him for ever.
If the Black Stone would know who is kissing it,
it would fall upon his footsteps and kiss the ground.
When the Quraysh see him, they say,
"With his character, nobility reached perfection."
Your statement "Who is this?" does not diminish him,
the Arabs and others know him whom you refuse to recognise.
His mother is Fatimah, if you do not know him!

[6] Ahmad is one of the names of the Prophet. In Arabic, it is common to call his grandfather as "his father'.

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And with his grandfather ended the prophethood.

This one incident clearly shows the attitude of the caliphs towards our Imam. And, therefore, it is not surprising that ‘Abdu ‘1-Malik ordered him to be arrested, chained and sent from Medina to Damascus and then again returned to Medina.

It was during the reign of Hisham that the holy Imam was poisoned by Walid ibn ‘Abdu 1-Malik and died in 95 AH/712 CE after thirty-five years of imamate.

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This lesson has been written and compiled by Sayyid M. Rizvi by using the following sources.

1. *Shi’a Islam’* of Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba’i.
2. *Pishway-e Chaharum: Hazrat Imam Sajjad (a.s.)* by Dar Rah-e Haq, Qum.

The main sources have been extensively edited in order to fit the requirements of our course. Also, for the sake of brevity, we have not included the references quoted by our sources. Those who are interested to know the sources may refer mentioned above.

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Question Paper on Lesson 41
THE FOURTH IMAM

Name: _____ *Student No.*_____

Question 1: [20 points]

Tick the appropriate box:

TRUE / FALSE

(a) The fourth Imam's mother was a princess of the Sasanid royal family.

(b) Imam Zaynu 'l-'Abidin did jihad in Karbala.

(c) Hajjaj was a companion of the fourth Imam.

(d) *Nahju 'l-Balaghah* is one of the works of Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn.

(e) *Risalatu 'l-Huquq* deals with socio-ethical rights in fifty different cases.

(f) Farazdaq was a famous and powerful poet.

(g) Walid bin 'Abdu 'l-Malik became jealous and said "Who is this?" regarding the Imam.

(h) Imam Zaynu 'l-'Abidin was born in Medina and also died in Medina.

(i) The holy Imam was taken to Damascus only once.

(j) The fourth Imam had 701 students.

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Question 2: [20 points]

Explain in your own words the role of Imam Zaynu ‘l-‘Abidin in awakening the masses against Yazid and in conveying the message of Imam Husayn to the people.

Question 3: [10 points]

Write your own feelings about Farazdaq and the circumstances under which he extemporaneously composed the poem about the holy Imam.

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LESSON 42

THE FIFTH IMAM
Muhammad ibn 'Ali

Name: Muhammad
Agnomen: Abu Ja'far
Title: Al-Baqir
Father: Ali ibn al-Husayn bin 'Ali
Mother: Fatimah daughter of Hasan bin 'Ali
Births: 1st Rajab, 57 A.H. in Medina
Death: 7 Dhu 'l-Hijjah 114 A.H. in Medina

1. Birth & Early Life

Imam Muhammad bin 'Ali's lineage is unique in the sense that he is the only Imam who was connected to Fatimatu 'z-Zahra' through his father as well as his mother: his father was son of Imam Husayn bin 'Ali, and his mother was daughter of Imam Hasan bin 'Ali Hence he was known as "Ibnu 1-Khayaratayn — the son of two virtues". He was also known as "al-Baqir — the digger [of the knowledge of the prophets]".

The first years of his life were blessed with the presence of his grandfather Imam Husayn bin 'Ali. He was four years old when the massacre of Karbala took place; and the childhood memories of that tragic event stayed with him forever. He witnessed the thirty-four years of his father's imamate and his contribution in furthering the education of the Muslims in general and the Shi'as in particular.

2. Continuation of Jihad by Knowledge

During the imamate of the fifth Imam, as a result of the injustice of the Umayyads, revolts and wars broke out in some parts of the Islamic world every day. Moreover, there were disputes within the Umayyad family itself which kept the government occupied and, to a certain extent, the Ahlu 1-Bayt of

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the Prophet were left alone. From the other side, the tragedy of Karbala and the oppression suffered by the Ahlu 1-Bayt, of which the fourth Imam was the most noteworthy embodiment, had attracted many Muslims to the Imams.

These factors combined to make it possible for people and especially the Shi'as to go in great numbers to Medina and to come into the presence of the fifth Imam. Possibilities for disseminating truth about Islam and the sciences of the Ahlu 1-Bayt, which had never existed for the Imams before him, were presented to the fifth Imam. The proof of this fact is the innumerable traditions recounted from the fifth Imam and the large number of illustrious men of science and Shi'a scholars who were trained by him in different Islamic sciences. These names are listed in books of biographies of famous men in Islam.

'Abdullah bin 'Ata' al-Makki testifies that, "I have never seen students who are much older than their teacher in age as I have seen in the audience of Imam Muhammad bin 'Ali. Hakam bin Utayba, with all his reputation and prestige, used to sit at his pulpit like a child sitting in front of his tutor."

'Abdullah, son of the second caliph 'Umar, was a highly respected scholar for the early Sunni Muslims. During the days of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.), someone asked 'Abdullah a question which he was unable to answer. "Ask that young man," said 'Abdullah pointing towards the Imam, "and also narrate to me his answer to your question." When the person came back to 'Abdullah bin 'Umar with the answer, the latter said, "They belong to a family whose knowledge comes from God."

3. Some Distinguished Companions of the Imam

Aban bin Taghlib had the opportunity of seeking knowledge from the fourth, fifth and sixth Imams. He was an expert in commentary of the Qur'an *(tafsir)* and *hadith.* Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) asked him to sit in Masjidu 'n-Nabi and give *fatwa*

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to the people "because I like to see people like you among my Shi'ahs."

Zurarah bin A'yan was a student of the fifth and sixth Imams. He is counted as one of the six most prominent companions of these two Imams. His greatest contribution is in spreading the ahadith of these two Imams among the Shi'ahs.

Kumayt Asadi was a very powerful poet of the later Umayyid period. He used his talents in the defence of Shi'ism and the Imams of Ahlu 1-Bayt, and against the rulers of the Umayyads. He was always on the "most wanted" list of the rulers.

Once during hajj, Kumayt recited poems for Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.). The Imam became so pleased that he raised ten thousand *dirhams* from the Banu Hashim family to reward Kumayt. Kumayt refused to accept the money, saying: "By God! I did not say the poem for this money; if you must reward me, then please give me one of your own shirts." He wanted to have that shirt with him in the grave for intercession in the hereafter.

Muhammad bin Muslim, an expert in Shi'a laws, was a prominent student of both the fifth and the sixth Imam. He was a resident of Kufa, but went to Medina and stayed for four years studying with the Imams. Once 'Abdullah bin Abi Ya'fur asked Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.), "Sometimes I have questions which I cannot answer and I cannot reach you at all times. What should I do?" The Imam said, "Why do not you ask Muhammad bin Muslim?"

4. Attitude of the Rulers

The Umayyid rulers during the imamate of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) were the following: 1. Walid bin 'Abdu 1-Malik; 2. Sulayman bin 'Abdu 1-Malik; 3. 'Umar ibn 'Abdu 'l-Aziz; 4. Yazid bin 'Abdu 1-Malik; 5. Hisham bin 'Abdu 1-Malik.

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With the exception of **'Umar** ibn 'Abdu 'l-'Aziz, all the rulers were as cruel and corrupt as their predecessors. **Walid** appointed people (like Hajjaj bin Yusuf ath-Thaqafi) to the various positions in the Muslim empire who had no regard for Islamic values and were guilty of torturing and oppressing those who did not accept their views. **Sulayman** was comparatively less of a tyrant not out of kindness and a sense of responsibility but because he was deeply absorbed in the pleasures and excessively luxirious lifestyle at the expense of the public treasury!

'Umar ibn 'Abdu 'l-'Aziz's short reign of two years was the best period in the Umayyid history. He tried to establish justice and equality, and put an end to quite a few abhorrent practices started by Mu'awiyah: e.g., the practice of cursing Amiru 1-Mu'minin 'Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) in the Friday *khutbas.*

Then **Yazid** bin 'Abdu 1-Malik came to power who is considered to be morally the most corrupt of all the Umayyad rulers. He was obsessed with music and dance, and would invite musicians and dancers from all over to his court in Damascus and reward them heftily. It was during his reign that pleasure pursuit, chess, playing cards and other such games became common ways of entertainment among the Arabs.

Hisham bin 'Abdu 1-Malik was a mean and cruel person. He was insecure about his own position among the people, and was very jealous of the popularity and respect accorded by the people to the descendants of Imam 'Ali (a.s.). It was during his reign that Zayd bin 'Ali (son of the fourth Imam) started an uprising against the Umayyads which, unfortunately, ended in defeat in which Zayd was killed very cruelly.

5. Final Days & Death

During one of the hajj rituals, the Imam gave a speech exholting the rights of his family and himself. This was reported to Hisham who was also in Mecca at that time. On his return to Syria,

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Hisham ordered Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) and his son, Ja'far, to be brought to Damascus. Hisham tried to intimidate and humiliate the Imam but did not succeed. After some time, he was forced to let the holy Imam go back to Medina where he was always under surveillance by the regime's spies and informers. Finally, in the year 114 A.H., the Imam was poisoned by the Umayyad agents and died on 7th Dhu 1-Hijja, and was buried beside his father in the Jannatu 1-Baqi' graveyard.

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1. *Shi'a Islam*[3] of Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i.
2. *Pishway-e Panjum: Hazrat Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.)* by Dar Rah-e Haq.
3. *Zindagani-e Imaman be Zaban-e Sadeh* by Ayaullah Ja'far Subhani.

The main sources have been extensively edited in order to fit the requirements of our course. Also, for the sake of brevity, we have not included the references quoted by our sources. Those who are interested to know the sources may refer to the aforementioned sources.

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Question Paper on Lesson 42
THE FIFTH IMAM

Name: _____ *Student No.*_____

Question 1: [10 points]

Tick the appropriate box:

	TRUE	**FALSE**
(a) "Al-Baqir" as the title of the fifth Imam means the digger of knowledge of the prophets.		
(b) Umayyad weakness provided an opportunity for spreading the teachings of the Ahlu 'l-Bayt.		
(c) Kumayt Asadi was an expert in Shi'a laws.		
(d) Both parents of the fifth Imam were from Imam 'Ali and Bibi Fatimah.		
(e) Walid bin 'Abdu 'l-Malik was the most just of all the Umayyid rulers.		
(f) Pleasure pursuit and chess became common among Arabs during the reign of Yazid bin 'Abdu 'l-Malik.		
(g) Imam Muhammad al-Baqir was buried in the Jannatu 'l-Baqi' graveyard.		
(h) The fifth Imam died in the year 141 A.H.		
(i) Zurarah bin A'yan greatly contributed in spreading the ahadith of the Imams among the Shi'as.		

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(j) Imam al-Baqir was 4 years old in Karbala.

Question 2: [20 points]
List the factors which brought about the circumstances in which the fifth Imam could disseminate the teachings of Islam to the people.

Question 3: [20 points)
Mu'awiyah came to power in 661 C.E. and 'Umar bin 'Abdu 'l-Aziz came to power in 717 C.E. For almost half a century, Amiru 1-Mu'minin 'Ali (a.s.) was cursed in the Friday khutbas by the imams of jum'a on the government's payroll.

In your assessment, how much would this have tarnished the good name of Imam 'Ali (a.s.) in the minds of that generation?

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LESSON 43

THE SIXTH IMAM
Ja'far bin Muhammad

Name:	***Ja'far.***
Agnomen:	***Abu 'Abdillah.***
Title:	***As-Sadiq.***
Father:	***Muhammad bin 'Ali.***
Mother:	***Umm Farwah.***
Birth:	***17th Rabi I, 83 A.H. in Medina.***
Death:	***25th Shawwal 148 A.H. in Medina.***

1. Birth & Early Days

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, son of the fifth Imam, was born in 83 A.H./702 C.E. After the death of his father in 114 A.H., he became Imam by Divine Command and decree of the Imam who came before him.

2. His Imamate: Continuation of Scholarly Jihad

During the 34 years of imamate of as-Sadiq (a.s.) greater possibilities and a more favorable climate existed for him to propagate religious teachings. This came about as a result of revolts in Islamic lands, especially the uprising of the Muswaddah to overthrow the Umayyad caliphate, and the bloody wars which finally led to the fall and extinction of the Umayyads. The greater opportunities for Shi'ite teachings were also a result of the favourable ground the fifth Imam had prepared during the twenty years of his imamate through the propagation of the true teachings of Islam and the sciences of the Ahlu 1-Bayt of the Prophet.

Imam as-Sadiq took advantage of the occasion to propagate the religious sciences until the very end of his imamate, which coincided with the end of the Umayyad and beginning of the Abbasid caliphates. He instructed many scholars in different fields

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of the intellectual and transmitted sciences, such as Zurarah, Muhammad ibn Muslim, Mu'min at-Taq, Hisham ibn Hakam, Aban ibn Taghlib, Hisham ibn Salim, Hurayz, Hisham Kaibi Nassabah, and Jabir ibn Hayyan, the alchemist. Even some important Sunni scholars such as Sufyan Thawri, Abu Hanifa (the founder of the Hanafi school of law), Qadi Sukuni, Qadi Abu 1-Bakhtari and others, had the honor of being his students. It is said that his classes and sessions of instruction produced four thousand scholars of hadith and other sciences. Refering to the two years that he spent as a student of Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.), Abu Hanifa used to say: "If it had not been for those two years, Nu'man[7] would have perished."

The number of traditions preserved from the fifth and sixth Imams is more than all the hadith that have been recorded from the Prophet and the other ten Imams combined. That is why the Shi'a school of laws in Islam is known as "Ja'fari".

3. Students & Companions

Hamran bin A'yan: Some of the students of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) had reached such heights of excellence that they earned the complete trust of their teacher. Once a Syrian (who those days were usually against the Ahlu '1-Bayt because of the Umayyad propaganda) entered the gathering of the Imam.

Upon inquiring the purpose of his visit, he said, "I have been told whatever the people ask you, you have an answer for that. So I have come to debate with you."

Imam (a.s.): "On what issue would you like to debate with me?"

Syrian: "About the Qur'an."

[7] Nu'man was the first name of Imam Abu Hanifa.

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Imam pointed towards Hamran bin A'yan and said, "Go and debate with him."

Syrian: "I have come to challenge you and debate with you, not with him."

Imam (a.s.): "Defeating Hamram would be like defeating me!"

So the Syrian went to Hamran and had a debate with him about the Qur'an. Hamran answered all questions satisfactorily until the Syrian ran out of them. He finally conceded his own defeat.

Mufazzal bin 'Umar: He is well known for a treatise which the Imam dictated for him on the subject of *tawhid.* Here we will just mention one incident which shows that Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq was also actively working for peace and social harmony among his followers.

One day Mufazzal saw that two Shi'as were arguing and fighting with one another on the division of the estate of their relative. Mufazzal took both of them home and after discussion, resolved their conflict. In bringing about the resolution he had to add four hundred dirhams from himself. As the two Shi'as were leaving, Mufazzal said, "You should know that the money I have used to resolve your conflict is not my own money; it belongs to Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) who had given it to me with the instruction that whenever I see conflict among his followers, I should try to maintain peace among them by using that money."

4. Rulers & their Attitude

Imam as-Sadiq's imamate coincided with the rule of the last five Umayyad rulers (Hisham bin 'Abdu 1-Malik, Walid bin Yazid, Yazid bin Walid, Ibrahim bin Walid, and Marwan al-Himar) and the first two 'Abbasid caliphs (Abu 'l-'Abbas Saffah and Mansur Dawaniqi).

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As mentioned in the previous lesson, the Muslim people were gradually turning away from the Umayyads. The anti-Umayyad sentiment which had started with the massacre of Karbala, finally led to the fall of the Umayyads in 132 A.H. However, those who were leading the revolt in the name of Ahlu 1-Bayt could not resist the temptation of power, and seized the seat of caliphate for themselves. These were the descendants of ‘Abbas bin ‘Abdul Muttalib, the uncle of the Prophet. Hence the next dynasty to rule the Muslim world was known as Banu ‘Abbas or the ‘Abbasids.

* * *

Hisham, the Umayyad caliph, had ordered the sixth Imam to be arrested and brought to Damascus. The later Umayyad rulers were not strong enough to harass the Imam.

The Imam was then arrested by Saffah, the first ‘Abbasid caliph and brought to Iraq. After some time, he was allowed to return to Medina. The reign of Mansur, the second ‘Abbasid caliph, was even worse for the Shi’as. He ordered such torture and merciless killing of many of the descendants of the Prophet who were Shi’ite that his actions even surpassed the cruelty and heedlessness of the Umayyads. At his order they were arrested in groups, some thrown into deep and dark prisons, and tortured until they died, while others were beheaded or buried alive or placed at the base of or between walls of buildings, and walls were constructed over them.

Once Mansur wrote to Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) asking him why he did not visit him like other dignitaries. The Imam wrote in reply: “Neither do we possess any worldly treasure for which we may fear you, nor do you possess any spiritual virtue for which we may seek your favour. So why should we come to you?” Mansur replied, “Then come for admonishing us.” The Imam replied,

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"Those who seek this world will never admonish you, and those who seek the hereafter will never come to you."

5. Last Days & Death

Finally, Mansur had Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) arrested and brought to Samarrah (Iraq) where he had the Imam kept under supervision, was in every way harsh and discourteous to him, and several times thought of killing him. Eventually the Imam was allowed to return to Medina where he spent the rest of his life under severe restrictions placed upon him by the Abbasid ruler, until he was poisoned and martyred through the intrigue of Mansur.

Upon hearing the news of the Imam's martyrdom, Mansur wrote to the governor of Medina instructing him to go to the house of the Imam on the pretext of expressing his condolences to the family, to ask for the Imam's will and testament and read it. Whoever was chosen by the Imam as his inheritor and successor should be beheaded on the spot. Of course, the aim of Mansur was to put an end to the whole question of the imamate and to Shi'ite aspirations. When the governor of Medina, following orders, read the last will and testament, he saw that the Imam had chosen five people rather than one to administer his last will and testament: the caliph himself, the governor of Medina, 'Abdullah Aftah, the Imam's older son, Musa, his younger son, and Hamidah, his wife. In this way the plot of Mansur failed.

Abu Basir, a close companion of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.), went to the Imam's house for expressing condolences on the death of the Imam. Umm Hamidah, the wife of the Imam, said, "O Abu Basir, if you had been at the Imam's side when he died, you would have been surprised. In his last moments, the Imam opened his eyes and asked that all family members come close to his bed. When everyone had gathered around him, he said, 'Verily, the person who considers the salat as a trivial issue, he will not deserve our intercession."

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2. *Hshway-e Shishum: Hazrat Imam Ja'far-e Sadiq (a.s.)* by Dar Rah-e Haq,

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Question Paper on Lesson 43
THE SIXTH IMAM

Name: _____ *Student No.*_____

Question 1: [20 points]

Tick the appropriate box:

TRUE / FALSE

(a) The imamate of Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) was for thirty four years.

(b) The holy Imam's imamate began in 141 A.H.

(c) Abu Hanifa studied under Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq for two years.

(d) 'Umar bin 'Abdu 'l-'Aziz, the most just of the Umayyads ruled during the imamate of the sixth Imam.

(e) Mufazzal used four thousand dirhams to resolve the dispute between two Shi'as.

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(f) Marwan al-Himar, the last Umayyad ruler, arrested the sixth Imam and brought him to Damascus.

(g) Abu Hanifa said, "If it had not been for those two years Nu'man would have perished."

(h) "Ja'fari" is the name for the Shi'a school of Islamic laws.

(i) The 'Abbasid rulers, being cousins of the Prophet's family, were kind and courteous towards them.

(j) The Umayyads were overthrown in the name of the Ahlu 'l-Bayt and the massacre of Karbala.

Question 2: [20 points]

Explain why you think that the 'Abbasid rulers, even though they came to power in the name of the Ahlu 1-Bayt, were always suspicious of the prominent figures of the Prophet's family.

Question 3: [10 points]

Write your own impressions about the answer which Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) wrote to Mansur explaining why he does not visit the king.

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LESSON 44

THE SEVENTH IMAM
Musa ibn Ja'far

Name:	***Musa.***
Agnomen:	***Abu 'l-Hasan.***
Title:	***Al-Kazim.***
Father:	***Ja'far bin Muhammad.***
Mother:	***Hamidah Khatun.***
Birth:	***7th Safar 128 A.H. in Abwa.***
Death:	***25th Rajab 183 A.H. in Baghdad.***

1. Birth

Imam Musa al-Kazim, the son of the sixth Imam, was born in 128 A.H. in Abwa', a village between Medina and Mecca while his parents were on their way to perform the pilgrimage at Mecca.

2. Political Circumstance of His Imamate

Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) became the Imam at the age of twenty through Divine Command and the decree of his forefathers. His imamate, however, began under a very difficult political atmosphere.

The first ten years coincided with **Mansur** who, as already mentioned in the previous lesson, had given orders to his governor in Medina to behead the heir of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.). His plot failed because Imam as-Sadiq, predicting this move of Mansur, had written the last will in a way that confused the enemies but guided the seekers of truth to his rightful successor.

The Imam had written five names: the names of the caliph and his governor in Medina were just to confuse the enemy. It was obvious that Hamidah, being a woman, cannot be an imam. So we are left with two possible successors to Imam as-Sadiq: 'Abdullah

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Aftah, the older son, and Musa al-Kazim, his younger son. If ‘Abdullah, the older son, was capable of inheriting the father’s status, there was no need to mention the younger son’s name! This will, besides other proofs, clearly guided the Shi’as towards their new Imam.

Obviously with such a beginning, it was not possible for the Imam to openly assume the role of leadership. His contacts with the Shi’as were very much restricted. Some relief came when Mansur died in 158 A.H. and was succeeded by his son, **Mahdi,** who adopted a lenient policy towards the Shi’as and the Ahlu ‘1-Bayt. During this time, the Imam’s fame in knowledge and piety spread far and wide. This fame prompted Mahdi to order his officers to arrest Imam Musa al-Kazim and bring him to Baghdad. But soon the Imam was released and sent back to Medina. Now the Imam started meeting his followers more openly and continued the scholarly jihad of his forefathers.

In 169 A.H., Mahdi died and was succeeded by **Hadi.** Hadi, unlike his father, had no respect for people’s views, and openly persecuted the Shi’as and the Ahlu 1-Bayt. Morally he was a very corrupt person. It was during his short reign that Husayn bin ‘Ali organized an uprising against Hadi which ended in an armed confrontation in Fakh. Unfortunately, Husayn and all his companions were killed.

Hadi died in 170 A.H. and was succeeded by **Harun** ar-Rashid. Harun, in spite of all the fame that he has in advancing sciences and knowledge, was a very tyrannical ruler—especially when it involved the Shi’as and the Ahlu 1-Bayt. He exiled all the descendants of Imam ‘Ali in Baghdad to Medina; he used to give hefty rewards to the poets who composed verses against the Shi’a Imams; he even made it difficult for the people to visit the grave of Imam Husayn (a.s.) at Karbala.

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Under such circumstances, Imam Musa al-Kazim strongly urged his followers to refrain from working or cooperating with tyrant rulers and governments. One interesting example is of Safwan bin Mihran al-Jammal. Once when Safwan came to visit him, the Imam said:

"You are a good person except for one thing."

Safwan: "What is it, O Imam?"

Imam: ''You have rented out your camels to Harun."

Safwan: "O Imam, I have rented them out to him for his journey to Mecca for hajj; and I have not personally gone for taking care of the animals, my employees are going with his caravan."

Imam: "Don't you have this wish in your heart that may Harun come back alive from this journey so that you may get back your camels and their rental?"

Safwan: "Yes, O Imam."

Imam: "O Safwan, one who wishes the tyrants to live longer will be counted as one of them!"

There are, however, some cases where Imam Musa al-Kazim allowed a selected few (like 'Ali bin Yaqtin) to work for Harun's government only with the condition that they would use their positions to help their fellow Shi'as.

3. His Companions

In spite of the difficult political atmosphere the Imam had trained great companions in knowledge as well as in piety.

Ibn Abi 'Umayr: Anyone familiar with the Shi'i hadith literature would testify that Ibn Abi 'Umary is the source of

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countless ahadith on Islamic laws. Just because he was a student of Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.), he suffered at the hand of the oppressive regimes of the 'Abbasids. Once he was arrested and asked to reveal the names of all the prominent Shi'as of Iraq. He refused even though he had to suffer a hundred lashes after which he was hanged between two trees. According to Shaykh Mufid, Ibn Abu 'Umary was put in prison for seventeen years just because he was a follower of the Ahlu 1-Bayt.

'Ali bin Yaqtin belonged to a prominent Shi'a family in Kufa. After the 'Abbasid revolution, Harun ar-Rashid offered him the position of minister in his government. He approached Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) who told him to accept it but refrain from ever confiscating the money or property of the Shi'as. So 'Ali bin Yaqtin, to show his loyalty to the government, would confiscate the money of the Shi'as but would then secretly return it to them.

Once Imam al-Kazim (a.s.) told 'Ali bin Yaqtin: "You promise me one thing; and I guarantee you three things: you won't be killed, neither face poverty nor suffer imprisonment."

'Ali: "What do I have to promise you?"

Imam (a.s.): "Promise me that whenever a follower of ours comes to you, you would honour him and not turn him away."

4. Death in Prison

During Harun's reign, Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) lived in very difficult times, in hiding, until finally Harun went on the hajj and in Medina had the Imam arrested while praying in the Mosque of the Prophet. He was chained and imprisoned, then taken from Medina to Basra and made a prisoner in the house of Isa bin Ja'far, the governor of that city. Isa was so much impressed by the Imam's personality that he requested Harun to relieve him of this responsibility. Imam al-Kazim (a.s.) was moved from Basra to

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Baghdad where for years he was transferred from one prison to another.

During his imprisonment in Baghdad, he was taken to meet Harun from time to time. In one such meeting, an interesting conversation took place. We will reproduce just a section from that conversation:

Harun: "Why do you allow the people to address you by words like 'O son of the Prophet' while you are in reality sons of 'Ali? People are mostly known by their paternal lineage; whereas your are related to the Prophet through your grandmother [i.e., Fatimah]."

Imam (a.s.): "If the Prophet becomes alive and comes to you, and asks for the hand of your daughter in marriage — would you accept his proposal?"

Harun: "Praise be to Allah! Why not? That would be the greatest privilege for me over all the Arabs and non-Arabs!"

Imam (a.s.): "The Prophet would never ask for my daughter's hand; nor would I accept his proposal."

Harun: "Why?"

Imam (a.s.): "Because the Prophet is my direct ancestor (even though from my grandmother's side); but he is not your ancestor."

The Imam was saying that all the descendants of Fatimah would be considered the children of the Prophet, and; therefore, it would be unlawful for the Prophet to marry any one of them. Whereas the 'Abbasids descended from the Prophet's uncle 'Abbas, so they are not directly related to him; the Prophet, if he wished, could marry the descendants of his uncle. This difference shows that the Imams of Ahlu 1-Bayt had full right to be addressed as "the son of the Prophet".

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Finally he died in Baghdad in the prison of Sindi ibn Shahak through poisoning and was buried in the cemetery of the Quraysh which is now located in the city of Kazimayn.

***

This lesson has been written and compiled by Sayyid M. Rizvi by using the following sources.

1. *Shi'a Islam'* of Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i.
2. *Pishway-e Haftum: Hazrat Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.)* by Dar Rah-e Haq.

The main sources have been extensively edited in order to fit the requirements of our course. Also, for the sake of brevity, we have not included the references quoted by our sources. Those who are interested to know the sources may refer mentioned above.

Question Paper on Lesson 44
THE SEVENTH IMAM

*Name:*_____ *Student No.*_____

Question 1: [10 points]

Tick the appropriate box:

TRUE / FALSE

(a) The seventh Imam's imamate started during the reign of Abu 'l-'Abbas Saffah.

(b) Imam al-Kazim's imamate coincided with the reign of Mansur, Mahdi, Hadi, and Harun.

(c) Safwan bin Mihran was in the business of renting out horses and camels.

(d) Ibn Abi 'Umary was a minister in the government of Harun ar-Rashid.

(e) Harun had Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) arrested in the Masjidu 1-Haram in Mecca.

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(f) Hadi adopted a lenient policy towards the Shi'as.

(g) Harun exiled the descendants of Imam 'Ali from Baghdad to Medina.

(h) 'Isa bin Ja'far was Harun's governor in Kufa.

(i) Imam al-Kazim is buried in Kazimayn

(j) Imam al-Kazim died in the prison of Sindi ibn Shahak.

Question 2: [20 points]
Explain in your own words the will of Imam as-Sadiq which confused the enemies but also guided the Shi'as to Imam al-Kazim

Question 3: [20 points]
In the light of Imam al-Kazim's life, explain under what conditions one is allowed to work with unjust governments/rulers.

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LESSON 45

THE EIGHTH IMAM
'Ali ibn Musa

1. Birth

Imam 'Ali ar-Rida was the son of the seventh Imam and according to well-known accounts was born in 148/765 and died in 203/817.

2. Political Circumstances of His Imamate

Imam ar-Rida (a.s.) became the Imam at the age of thirtyflve, through Divine Command and the decree of his forefathers. The period of his imamate coincided with the caliphate of Harun and then his sons Amin and Ma'mun.

Harun had appointed Amin as his successor with the condition that the latter would name his brother, Ma'mun, as his successor. But after the death of Harun in 194, Amin named his own son, Musa, as his successor. This became a cause of conflict between the brothers which led to bloody wars and finally the assasination of Amin in 198, after which Ma'mun became caliph. Imam ar-Rida took advantage of this chaotic situation and continued the tradition of his forefathers in educating and teaching his companions and followers.

Until that day the policy of the.'Abbasid caliphate toward the Shi'ites had been increasingly harsh and cruel. Every once in a while one of the supporters of 'Ali would revolt, causing bloody wars and rebellions which were of great difficulty and consequence for the caliphate.

The Shiite Imams would not cooperate with those who carried out these rebellions and would not interfere with their affairs. The Shi'ites of that day, who comprised a considerable

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population, continued to consider the Imams as their religious leaders to whom obedience was obligatory and believed in them as the real caliphs of the Holy Prophet. They considered the caliphate to be far from the sacred authority of their Imams, for the caliphate had come to seem more like the courts of the Persian kings and Roman emperors, and was being run by a group of people more interested in worldly rule than in the strict application of religious principles. The continuation of such a situation was dangerous for the structure of the caliphate and was a serious threat to it.

Ma'mun thought of finding a new solution for these difficulties which the seventy-year old policy of his 'Abbasid predecessors had not been able to solve. To accomplish this end he adopted some pro-Shi'ite policies:

- he openly used to say that Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib was better suited for caliphate than Abu Bakr or 'Umar ibn Khattab.
- he openly used to curse Mu'awiya bin Abi Sufyan.
- he gave Fadak back to the descendants of 'Ali and Fatima.
- he chose Imam 'Ali ar-Rida as his successor, hoping in this way to overcome two difficulties: first of all to prevent the descendants of the Prophet from rebelling against the government since ,they would be involved in the government themselves, and secondly, to cause the people to lose their spiritual belief and inner attachment to the Imams. This would be accomplished by having the Imams become engrossed in worldly matters and politics itself, which had always been considered by the Shi'ites to be evil and impure. In this way their religious organization would crumble and they would no longer present any danger to the caliphate. Obviously, after accomplishing these ends, the removal of the Imam would present no difficulties to the 'Abbasids.

3. Imam ar-Rida's Historical Journey to Marw

In order to have his last decision put into effect, Ma'mun asked Imam ar-Rida to come to Marw from Medina. This was the

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longest journey undertaken by any of the Shi'a Imams: from Medina (north-west of Arabia) to Marw (in Turkmenistan, north of the Afghan border). The Imam passed through southern Iraq, into sourthern Persia on to the famous city of Neshapur and further north into Turkmenistan.

This journey itself availed an opportunity for the Muslim populace to see the Shi'a Imam (a descendant of the Holy Prophet) in person and hear his words of wisdom. While the Imam was about to leave Nishapur, the scholars of the city took hold of his camel's reign and insisted upon him to narrate from his forefathers: The Imam obliged as follows:

My father, Musa bin Ja'far, narrated to me from his father, Ja'far bin Muhammad, who narrated from his father, Muhammad bin 'Ali, who narrated from his father, 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, who narrated from his father, al-Husayn bin 'Ali, who narrated from his father, 'Ali bin Abi Talib, who said, I heard the Prophet (s.a.w.) saying, "I heard Jibrail saying, The Almighty Allah said,

"I surely am the God besides whom there is no god, so worship Me. Whoever comes with the testimony of *tawhid* sincerely, he has surely entered My castle; and whoever enters My castle, he shall be protected from My chastisement."

Then the Imam added that this salvation is guaranteed "with its conditions; and I am one of its conditions." That is, together with *tawhid,* one must also believe in other fundamentals of Islam like *nubuwwa* and *imamat* in order to gain salvation in the hereafter. Because of its excellent chain of narrators, this hadith is known as *"hadith silsilatu 'dh-dhabab* — hadith with the golden chain [of narrators]."

4. Ma'mun's Decision & Its Consequences

Finally Imam ar-Rida arrived at Marw. Ma'mun offered him first the caliphate and then the succession to the caliphate. The

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Imam made his apologies and turned down the proposal, but he was finally compelled to accept the successorship—the Imam accepted the successorship with the condition that he would not interfere in governmental affairs or in the appointment or dismissal of government agents.

This event occurred in 200/814. But soon Ma'mun realized that he had committed an error, for there was a rapid spread of Shi'ism, a growth in the attachment of the populace to the Imam, and an astounding reception was given to the Imam by the people and even by the army and govenment agents.

For example, once just a few days before an 'idd, Ma'mun asked Imam ar-Rida to lead the 'idd prayer. The Imam refused at first, but then Ma'mun insisted. Finally, the Imam accepted but on the condition that he would lead the prayer the way the Prophet used to do. On the day of 'idd, all the high ranking officials of Ma'mun came to the Imam's house and waited for him outside. There were also many common people waiting for the Imam as well. The holy Imam came out of the house, barefooted, and started walking calmly with a walking stick in one hand. The officials stepped down from their horses and started walking behind the Imam. After every few steps he would stop and look towards the sky and say *"Allahu Akbar."* The official entourage and the masses followed the Imam in what he was doing. Soon the entire city of Marw was ringing with the sound of *"Allahu Akbar.* Ma'mun was informed by his spies that if this procession continues to the prayer area, the masses could easily turn against the 'Abbasids and in favour of the Ahlul Bayt. Ma'mun immediately sent an emissary with the message to the Imam that by insisting that you lead the prayer, we have put you in difficulty so please return to your residence and the 'idd prayer will be led by the regular imam. The Imam ordered that his shoes and horse be brought, he got on it and returned home. This episode made it clear for the people that Ma'mun was not sincere in his show of respect towards Imam ar-Rida: he would respect him as long as that did not endanger his own caliphate.

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Unlike other caliphs, Ma'mun displayed great interest in having works on the intellectual sciences translated into Arabic. He organised gatherings in which scholars of different religions and sects assembled and carried out scientific and scholarly debates. Imam 'Ali ar-Rida also participated in these assemblies and joined in the discussions with scholars of other religions. Many of these debates are recorded in the collections of Shi'ite hadiths. These debates also gave a high profile to the Imam's status in knowledge to the extent that people started making comments that 'Ali ar-Rida is more deserving of the caliphate than Ma'mun.

Concerned with the spread of Shi'ism and the popularity of Imam ar-Rida, Ma'mun sought to find a remedy for this difficulty — he had the Imam poisoned and martyred. After his death the Imam was buried in the city of Tus in Iran, which is now called Mashhad.

5. Words of Wisdom

Some one asked Imam ar-Rida, "Where is God?"

The Imam: "This is an invalid question because God created space; He cannot be limited to a place or recognized by the senses; He is unlike everything."

"When did God come to exist?"

The Imam: "Tell me when He did not exist, so that I can tell when he came to exist!"

"What is the proof that the world was created?"

The Imam: "It did not exist, and then came to being. You know that the world did not create itself."

"Can you describe God for us?"

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The Imam: "Whoever describes God by attributes of other things is mistaken and misguided. I will describe God the way He has described Himself without forming any shape or image in my mind:

"He is not perceived by the [five] senses.

"He cannot be compared to people.

"He is wellknown without resemblance to anything.

"He is not unjust in His judgements..."

* * *

"What is *iman* (faith) and what is *islam* (submission)?"

The Imam: *"Iman* is superior to *islam*; *taqwa* (constant consciousness of God) is superior to faith; conviction is superior to *taqwa...*"

"What is conviction?"

The Imam: "Putting your trust in God, and submitting yourself to His command and wish, and being pleased with His decree, and leaving the final decision to Him."

"Why did the people turn away from 'Ali and accept others as caliphs while they knew of his exemplary services to Islam and his high status in the eyes of the Prophet?"

The Imam: "Since 'Ali had killed many of their fathers, uncles, brothers and relatives who had come to fight against Islam; and this created the feeling of animosity in their hearts against 'Ali and, consequently, they did not like that 'Ali should become their leader. They did not harbour such feelings against the other [caliphs] since they did not hold the same [high] position with the Prophet as that of 'Ali neither did they rank equal to him in defending Islam in *jihad.* This is the reason why people turned away from 'Ali and accepted others."

* * *

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This lesson has been written and compiled by Sayyid M. Rizvi by using the following sources.

1. *Shi'a Islam'* of Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i.
2. *Pishway-e Hastum: Hazrat 'Ali ar-Riza (a.s.)* by Dar Rah-e Haq, Qum.

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Question Paper on Lesson 45
THE EIGHT IMAM

Name: _____ *Student No.*_____

Question 1: [10 points]

Tick the appropriate box:

TRUE / FALSE

(a) The eighth Imam's imamate started in 194 A.H.

(b) Imam ar-Rida's imamate coincided with the reigns of Harun, Amin and Ma'mun.

(c) Violation of the conditions of successorship led to a civil war between Amin and Ma'mun, and the eventual death of the former.

(d) Imam ar-Rida's journey from Medina to Marw was the longest journey undertaken by any Shi'a Imam.

(e) Imam ar-Rida narrated the hadith silsilatu 'dh-dhahab in the city of Marw.

(f) Harun ar-Rashid organized scholarly debates in Marw.

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(g) "Many people turned away from Imam 'Ali because he had killed many of their relatives in the battles between Muslims and non-Muslims."

(h) Imam ar-Rida was riding a horse on his way to the 'idd prayer.

(i) Ma'mun was concerned with revolts by the Shi'as.

(j) Ma'mun was sincere in making the Imam his heir.

Question 2: [20 points]
Describe the pro-Shi'ite policies adopted by Ma'mun ar-Rashid.

Question 3: [20 points]
Describe the impact of Imam 'Ali ar-Rida's journey from Medina to Marw.

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LESSON 46

THE NINTH IMAM
Muhammad bin 'Ali

Name:	***Muhammad bin 'Ali.***
Agnomen:	***Abu Ja'far; Ibnu 'r-Rida.***
Title:	***At-Taqi; al-Jawad.***
Father:	***'Ali ar-Rida.***
Mother:	***Sabika, also known as Khayzaran***
Birth:	***10th Rajab, 195 A.H. in Medina.***
Death:	***29th Dhu 'l-Qa'dah, 220 A.H. in Kazimayn.***

1. Birth & Imamate in Childhood

Imam Muhammad at-Taqi was born in 195/809 in Medina. The news of his birth caused extraordinary joy among the Shi'as of that time. Imam ar-Rida was childless till the age of forty, and some Shi'as were concerned about the continuation of imamate: who would succeed Imam ar-Rida? So the birth of the ninth Imam brought about a mood of festivity among the Shi'as of Ahlul Bayt.

Imam 'AH ar-Rida died in 203 A.H.; and Muhammad at-Taqi became the Imam at the age of eight. The age of the Imam caused a concern in the minds of some elder members of the Shi'a community because no Imam had reached the position of imamate at this young age. Mu'alla bin Muhammad narrates that after the death of Imam ar-Rida, he saw Imam at-Taqi and closely observed his physical size and age in order to report it to others. At that moment, Imam at-Taqi said, "O Mu'alla, Allah has argued about imamat just as he argued about nubuwwat when He said, 'And We gave prophethood to him [i.e., Yahya] when he was still a child."

After the death of Imam ar-Rida, a group of eighty scholars from Baghdad and other places came to Mecca for hajj. On the way, they stopped at Medina and met Imam at-Taqi. They were particularly interested in meeting the young Imam and wanted to

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satisfy themselves about his capabilities. The meeting went on for a long time with the visitors asking him questions and the Imam replying in a convincing and satisfying manner. All left fully convinced that he truly was the Imam appointed by Allah, *subhanahu wa ta'ala,* and endowed with knowledge.

Ishaq was one of the eighty persons in that meeting. He narrates his impression as follows: I had written ten questions in a letter for the Imam and had decided that if he answers my questions, then I will ask him to pray for me that the child that my wife is carrying be a male child. The meeting, however, went on for a long time so I decided to present my letter to him the next day. But as I was about to leave, the Imam called me and said, "O Ishaq! Allah has accepted my prayer; therefore, name your son 'Ahmad'." The answer to his prayer without even stating it to the Imam fully convinced Ishaq that Muhammad at-Taqi, inspite of his young age, was the Imam!

2. Ma'mun & Imam at-Taqi (a.s.)

Caliph Ma'mun ar-Rashid, in pursuing the same policies as mentioned in the previous lesson, asked that Imam Muhammad at-Taqi (a.s.) be brought from Medina to Baghdad. This journey took place in 204 A.H., a year after the death of the eighth Imam.

When Ma'mun met the young Imam, he was impressed with the latter's knowledge; and he proposed to marry his daughter Ummul Fazl to the Imam. When the elders of the 'Abbasid clan learned of this decision, they tried to change Ma'mun's views: they reminded him of dangers in promoting the decendants of 'Ali, and the possible loss of power. Realizing that their words had no effect on Ma'mun, they finally said, "Although you are impressed by this child; but he is still a child. Wait till he grows up and gets educated, then you may marry your daughter to him."

Ma'mun: "Woe unto you! I know this child better than you; he comes from a family which is bestowed with knowledge by

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God. His ancestors were never in need of knowledge and character from others. If you wish, you may examine him."

The elders of the 'Abbasid agreed to examine him. They approached Yahya bin Aktham, the chief judge (qazi) of the 'Abbasid court, and asked him to prepare some difficult questions which the Imam would not be able to answer.

At an appointed time, the meeting between Imam Muhammad at-Taqi (a.s.) and Yahya bin Aktham took place in the presence of Ma'mun and the elders of the 'Abbasid clan.

After the formalities, Yahya asked: "What is your view about a person who hunts while he is in the *ihram?" (Ihram* means pilgrim's garment; a person in *ihram* is not allowed to hunt.)

Imam at-Taqi: "This question has many facets:

"Was the person outside the boundary of the holy territory or inside?

"Did he know that it was forbidden to hunt while in ihram or he did not?

"Did he do it intentionally or was it an accident?

"Was he a free man or a slave?

"Was he minor or an adult?

"Was this his first hunting in the state of ihram or a second time?

"Was the hunted creature a bird or something else?
"Was it big or small?

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"Was the person sorry that he committed the offence or was he careless about such issues?

"Was it in the night or during the day?

"Was he in the state of ihram for the minor pilgrimage or for the major pilgrimage?"

Yahya bin Aktham was dumbfounded by this thorough analysis of the question by the ten year old Imam Muhammad at-Taqi! He could not even utter a word, and the audience clearly saw the signs of defeat on his face!

Ma'mun broke the silence by saying, "Praise be to Allah who proved me right in my estimation of this young man." Then he faced the elders of the 'Abbasids and rebuked them: "Now do you realize what I was saying?" .Then he proposed the marriage of his daughter to the Imam, and the Imam accepted it. The young Imam also recited the *khutba* (sermon) before the actual marriage which has become a common *khutba* in the Shi'a marriage ceremonies. The khutba is as follows:

"All praise is due to Allah, in recognition of His blessings. [I declare that) there is no god but Allah, in sincere belief in His oneness. And may Allah send His blessings upon Muhammad, the leader of His creatures, and upon the chosen one of his family.

"It is Allah's grace upon the people that He has made them free from the forbidden [means of fulfilling sexual urge] by the permissible [institution of marriage]. He, the Exalted, said: 'And marry the single among you (those who are good ones from among your slaves and maids)—if they are poor, Allah will make them free from need from His grace; Allah, indeed, is Generous, All-Knowing.'"

After the marriage ceremony, when only a few people had remained in the gathering, Ma'mun requested the Imam to provide

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the answer for the various situations that he had derived from Yahya's single question. The holy Imam gave -a detailed answer to all those situations.

Then Ma'mun proposed that now the Imam should ask a question to Yahya bin Aktham. The latter replied, "If I know the answer, I will reply; otherwise, I will learn from you."

Imam Muhammad at-Taqi (a.s.) asked: "Can you describe the situation in which a man looked at a woman at dawn while it was forbidden *(haram)* for him to do so; but then at sunrise, it was permissible *(halal)* for him to look at her? Then at noon hour, it became haram for him to look at that woman; but in the afternoon, it became permissible for him to look at her? Then at sunset, it became haram for him to look at that woman; but at night, it became halal for him to look at her? Then at midnight, it became haram for him to look at her; but at dawn, it became halal for him to do so?"

Yahya bin Aktham said, "By Allah! I do not know the answer to this question. We would, however, benefit from your answer."

The Imam explained the answer as follows:

"At dawn, the woman was the slave of someone else; however, by sunrise, the man had already bought her for himself and so it became halal for him to look at her.

"At noon, he made her free, and so she became haram for him; but by afternoon, he had married her, so she became halal for him.

"At sunset, he did *zihar*[8] by which one's wife becomes haram for a person; but by night time he paid the penalty for *zihar,* and so she became halal for him again.

[8] When the husband says to his wife, "You are to me like the back of my mother," it is not permissible for him to have sexual relationship with his wife

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"At midnight, he divorced her; but by next morning, he revoked his divorce, and so she became halal for him."

Thus the ten year old Imam, from the descendants of 'Ali and Fatimah, proved to the caliph and his entourage that God had endowed them with the knowledge to guide the Muslim *ummah* as the Prophet had truly said, "Do not try to teach them, because they are- not in need of your teaching."

* * *

One must remember that Ma'mun was a very shrewd politician. This marriage between his daughter and Imam Muhammad at-Taqi (a.s.) should not be taken as proof that he was a Shi'a. As mentioned in the previous lesson, these actions were all politically motivated by Ma'mun to calm the opposition of the Shi'a masses. Other motives for the marriage can be described as follows:

- By having his daughter as Imam's wife, Ma'mun was guaranteed a continuous flow of information about the Imam's activities.
- By becoming the son-in-law of Ma'mun at this young age, the caliph hoped that the personality of the Imam would be tarnished with worldly luxuries and entertainment of the establishment, and thus lose the respect in the eyes of his Shi'as.
- By this marriage, prove to the Shi'a masses that he respects the Ahlul Bayt, and thus neutralize their opposition to his rule.
- Ma'mun was hoping that if Imam at-Taqi gets a child through his daughter, he can claim to be the grandfather of a child from the descendants of Imam 'Ali and Fatimah (a.s.). But Allah,

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until he atones by fasting for two successive months, or if that is not possible, then feeding sixty poor people, littering such a statement is known as zihar.

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subhanahu wa ta'ala, did not fulfill this hope because none of the children of the Imam were born from Ma'mun's daughter!

Imam Muhammad at-Taqi (a.s.) did not stay for long in Baghdad. He insisted on returning to Medina with his wife, the daughter of Ma'mun.

His return to Medina where he stayed till the year 220 A.H. foiled the plans of Ma'mun ar-Rashid.

3. Mu'tasim's Rule

Ma'mun ar-Rashid died in the year 218 A.H. He was succeeded by his brother, Mu'tasim billah. In the year 220, Mu'tasim ordered that Imam Muhammad at-Taqi be brought from Medina to Baghdad.

One day a person came to the court of Mu'tasim and confessed that he had committed theft and would like to be punished so that he could be free from the guilt and punishment in the hereafter. The Qur'an says that the punishment for theft (with some conditions) is cutting off the thief's *yad. Yad* means: hand, forearm and elbow. So the caliph called all the prominent religious scholars, including Imam Muhammad at-Taqi (a.s.), and asked: "From where should the *yad* of the thief be cut?" (The Qur'an is asking for the definition of "yad".)

Ibn Abi Da'ud, the chief judge, said, "From the wrist."

Mu'tasim: "What is your proof for that?"

Ibn Abi Da'ud: "The word *'yad'* has been used in the verse of tayammum —so *wipe your faces and your hands(5:5)*— for the hand."

Some scholars agreed with Ibn Abi Da'ud but others disagreed and said: "Cut the thief's *yad* from the elbow."

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Mu'tasim: "What is your proof?"

The scholars: "The word *'yad'* has been used in the verse of wudhu — *wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows(5:5)*— for the fore-arm."

Then Mu'tasim turned towards Imam Muhammad at-Taqi (a.s.) and asked his opinion. The Imam first declined to give his view because he was aware of the court's politics. But when Mu'tasim insisted, the Imam finally said, "All these gentlemen are mistaken because only the [four] fingers have to be cut."

Mu'tasim: "What is your proof?"

The Imam (a.s.): "The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said that sajdah is done on seven parts of the body: forehead, palms, knees and two big toes [of the feet). If a thief's hand or forearm is cut, then it would not be possible for him to do the sajdah whereas Allah has said, 'And verily the *masajid* [the body parts on which sajdah is done] belong to Allah...;' and what belongs to Allah should not be cut."

The caliph liked the answer of the Imam and ordered that the four fingers of the thief be cut.

This extraordinary event, in the public's view at Mu'tasim's court, proved the superiority of the Imams of Ahlu '1-Bayt. It, however, also created an extreme feeling of jealousy and hatred in the heart of Ibn Abi Da'ud.

On finding an appropriate moment, Ibn Abi Da'ud cautioned the caliph against inadvertantly promoting Imam Muhammad at-Taqi (a.s.) by publicly following his view and rejecting those of the other scholars. He filled the caliph's ears to the extent that the caliph started looking at the Imam as a threat to his own caliphate.

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During the last days of Dhul Qa'dah 220 A.M., the Imam was poisoned by his wife, the niece of Mu'tasim, and he died as a martyr. His body was buried next to his grandfather's grave in the Qurayshi cemetary in Baghdad which is now known as Kadhimayn.

* * *

This lesson has been written and compiled by Sayyid M. Rizvi by using the following sources.

1. *Shi'a Islam'* of Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i.
2. Pis*hway-e Nahum: Hazrat Imam Muhammad al-Jawad (a.s.)* by Dar Rah-e Haq, Qum.

The main sources have been extensively edited in order to fit the requirements of our course. Also, for the sake of brevity, we have not included the references quoted by our sources. Those who are interested to know the sources may refer to those mentioned above.

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Question Paper on Lesson 46
THE NINTH IMAM

Name: _____ *Student No.*_____

Question 1: [10 points]

Tick the appropriate box:

	TRUE	**FALSE**
(a) Imam Muhammad at-Taqi was born in 195A.H.		
(b) Imam at-Taqi became the Imam at age of ten.		
(c) The Shi'as were very happy with the birth of Imam at-Taqi; but some became concerned when his imamate began at the age of eight.		
(d) One hundred and eighty scholars came from Baghdad to meet their young Imam.		
(e) Ishaq's prayer for a son was accepted before he even asked the Imam to pray.		
(f) Imam at-Taqi was taken to Baghdad in 204 A.H.		
(g) Ibn Abi Da'ud was the judge who prepared the question on hunting in the state of ihram.		
(h) None of the Imam's children were born from Ma'mun's daughter.		
(i) The Imam was buried next to his grandfather in Kazimayn.		

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(j) Imam at-Taqi returned to Medina in 220 A.H.

Question 2: [20 points]

Give two examples from the Qur'an which prove that young age or being a child is not an impediment in the Divine representatives.

Question 3: [10 points]

Describe the motives of Ma'mun in giving the hand of his daughter to Imam Muhammad at-Taqi (a.s.).

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LESSON 47

THE TENTH IMAM
'Ali ibn Muhammad

Name:	***'Ali bin Muhammad.***
Agnomen:	***Abul Hasan ath-Thalith.***
Title:	***An-Naqi; al-Hadi.***
Father:	***Muhammad at-Taqi.***
Mother:	***Samana.***
Birth:	***15th dhil Hijja, 212 A.H. in Sarya, near Medina.***
Death:	***3rd Rajab 254 A.H. in Samarra, Iraq.***

1. Birth & Early Years

Imam 'Ali an-Naqi (also known as al-Hadi), was the son of the ninth Imam. He was born on 15th Dhil Hijja in 212/827 in Sarya, outside Medina. At the age of eight in 220, he became the Imam. After having seen his father's example, the Shi'a community had no more problems in accepting such a young Imam.

2. Rulers of the Time

The thirtythree years of imamate of Imam 'Ali an-Naqi coincided with the caliphate of the following six caliphs Mu'tasim bin Harun, Wathiq bin Mu'tasim, Mutawakkil bin Mu'tasim, Muntasir bin Mutawakkil, Musta'in, and Mu'tazz bin Mutawakkil.

Wathiq bin Mu'tasim had a very promiscuous lifestyle, and had no time to harass the Shi'as and the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt. During his caliphate, a large number of the descendants of Imam 'Ali (a.s.) had settled in Samarra, the 'Abbasid capital. But the peaceful days for the 'Alids and the Imam did not last long. After Wathiq, his brother **Mutawakkil,** came to power. Mutawakkil was the most cruel of all the 'Abbasid caliphs; he is comparable to Yazid bin Mu'awiyah of the Umayyads.

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Mutawakkil, on the one hand, started promoting the Shafi'i *madhhab* in order to distract the masses away from the Ahlul Bayt. And, on the other hand, he intensified harassment of the Shi'as. He had such hatred for the Ahlul Bayt that in 236 A.H. he ordered the grave of Imam Husayn (a.s.) be leveled to the ground, and that the surrounding area be transformed into farmlands so that no trace of the grave be left. This all was done to stop the Shi'as from visiting *(ziyarat)* the graves of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and the other martyrs of Karbala. But when Allah wishes to protect His "light" no human can do anything about it!

The attempt to erase all traces of Imam Husayn's grave angered many Muslims; people starting writing anti-'Abbasid slogans on the walls. Opposition poets also expressed their feelings on this issue. A famous poem against Mutawakkil is given below:

By Allah, if the Umayyids unjustly killed
Husayn, son of the Prophet's daughter,
his cousins[9] *have committed a similar crime*
for I swear that Husayn's grave has been erased.
It seems that they regret for not participating
in the massacre, so they now go after the grave!

Mutawakkil enjoyed torturing the followers of the Ahlul Bayt; even the persons appointed by him as governor in Medina and Mecca were instructed to prevent people from being kind and courteous towards the Ahlul Bayt. In 234 A.H., Mutawakkil ordered Imam 'Ali an-Naqi (a.s.) to be brought from Medina to Samarra where he was placed in a house next to the caliph's garrison. The Imam lived under constant surveillance until Mutawakkil was murdered by his own troops at the instigation of his own son, Muntasir.

[9] That is. the 'Abbasids who desend from 'Abbas, the Prophet's uncle.

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Muntasir bin Mutawakkil reversed the policies of his father towards the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.); he was kind and generous to them; he returned the property of Fadak to the descendants of Imams Hasan and Husayn (a.s.). Unfortunately his caliphate did not last for more than six months when he died in 248 A.H.

Musta'in came to power after Muntasir and continued the oppressive policies of his ancestors. But soon his own Turkish troops rebelled against him and pledged allegiance to Mu'tazz bin Mutawakkil whom they rescued from prison. Finally, Musta'in was killed and **Mu'tazz** become the caliph.

It was during the reign of Mu'tazz bin Mutawakkil that Imam 'Ali an-Naqi was martyred by poisoning.

3. Two Companions of the Imam

One of the most distinguished of all the companions of Imam 'Ali an-Naqi was **'Abdul 'Azim al-Hasani** (a descendant of Imam Hasan) whose grave outside the city of Tehran has become a famous place for visitation *(ziyarat).* 'Abdul 'Azim had met and heard ahadith from the companions of the sixth, seventh and eight Imams; and he himself has narrated many ahadith from the ninth and tenth Imams.

Abu Hammad Razi narrates that once Imam 'Ali an-Naqi (a.s.) told him that "whenever you have religious problems, go to 'Abdul 'Azim and also convey my salaams to him."

Once 'Abdul 'Azim al-Hasani came to Imam 'Ali an-Naqi (a.s.) and said, "O son of the Prophet! I would like to describe my faith to you so that if you agree with it then I will stay firm upon it till the last moment of my life." When the Imam gave his approval, 'Abdul 'Azim described his faith as follows:

"I believe that God is One; there is nothing like Him; He is free from *ibtal* (i.e., saying that He is 'nothing') and *tashbih* (i.e.,

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comparing Him to a created thing). Allah has no body or figure; neither is He substance nor form; intead, He is the creator of body and figure, and of substance and form. He is the creator and sustainer of everything.

"I believe that Muhammad (s.a.w.) is a servant and prophet of God, and His last Messenger. There will be no prophet, shari'ah or religion after him till the day of judgement.

"I believe that the Imam and successor of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was 'Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), and after him Hasan, then Husayn, 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, Muhammad bin 'Ali, Ja'far bin Muhammad, Musa bin Ja'far, 'Ali bin Musa, Muhammad bin 'Ali, and then you are my master."

Imam 'Ali an-Naqi (a.s.) then said, "After me, my son Hasan, will be the Imam. How do you think the people will react in regard to Hasan's son [i.e., the Mahdi]?"

'Abdul 'Azim: "O my master! How will he [i.e., Hasan's son] be?"

Imam an-Naqi (a.s.): "He will not be seen; and mentioning his name is not permissible until he rises and fills the earth with justice just as it would be filled with injustice and tyranny."

'Abdul 'Azim then continued: "I testify that their [i.e., Imams] friend is God's friend; and their enemy is God's enemy; obeying them is obedience to God; and disobeying them is disobeying God.

"I believe in the mi'raj, the questioning in the grave, paradise, hell, the path *(sirat),* the scale—all these are truth. I believe that the day of judgement is sure to come without any doubt, and that God will resurrect the dead people.

"I believe that my religious obligations after *wilayah* (love and obedience to the Imams) are prayers, alms-giving, fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca, jihad, bidding good and forbidding evil."

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Imam ‘Ali an-Naqi (a.s.) said, “O Abul Qasim! By Allah, this is the same religion that Allah has chosen for His servants! So remain firm on it; and may Allah keep you steadfast on this truth.”

Musa bin ‘Abdullah an-Nakha’i was another learned companion of the Imam. Once he went to the Imam and requested him for a comprehensive ziyarat he could use to recite whenever he visits the graves of any of the Imams of Ahlul Bayt. This ziyarat became famous as Ziyarat-e Jami’a whose selected parts are presented below:

“...May peace be upon you O the People of the house of prophethood, the source of messengership, the people on whom angels descend and where revelation used to come down; the family which is the source of mercy, custodians of knowledge, peaks of forbearance, foundations of generosity, leaders of nations, masters of blessings, the cream of pious people, pillars of kindness, leaders of people...doors of iman, trustees of the Merciful God, family of prophets and messengers, and descendants of the best of those chosen by the Lord of the Universe...

“May peace be upon the Imams of guidance, lamps in the darkness, signs of piety, those who possess wisdom and intelligence, the refuge for people, the heirs of prophets, the best of examples...the proofs of God upon the people of this world and the hereafter...

“I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, He has no partner just as Allah has declared it Himself and so have the angels and the knowledgeable among His servants. There is no god but He, the Powerful, the Wise. I bear witness that Muhammad is His chosen servant and a messenger with whom He is pleased, and whom He has sent with guidance and the religion of truth so that He may give victory to it over all religions even if the polytheists dislike it.

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"I bear witness that you are the rightly-guided leaders, the infallibles, the respected ones, those who are closest to Allah, the pious, the truthful, the chosen ones; those who are obedient to Allah, who are firm in His command, who act according to His wish, who have attained His respect. Allah has chosen you by His knowledge, and He has chosen you for His [knowledge of the] unseen and His secret...

"One who turns away from you has gone out of religion; one who stays with you reaches the religion; and one who lowers you from your status is lost. The truth is with you, in you, from you, towards you—you are its owners and custodians...One who loves you, loves Allah; one who hates you, hates Allah; one who seeks refuge with you has sought refuge with Allah...

"O Allah! If I could find any intercessors closer to You than Muhammad and his good progeny, the pious Imams, I would have made them my intercessors. [But there is no one closer to you than Muhammad and his family.] So by the right that You have given to them over Yourself, I pray to You to include me among those who truly know them and their rights, among those on whom You have showered mercy through their intercession. You are indeed the most merciful of all. And may Allah send His blessings upon Muhammad and his pure progeny. Indeed Allah is sufficient for us and He is the best of agents."

***

This lesson has been written and compiled by Sayyid M. Rizvi by using the following sources.

1. Shi'a *Islam'* of Allaxnah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i.
2. *Pishway-e Dahum: Hazrat Imam 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Hadi (a.s.)* by Par Rah-e Haq. Qum.

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Question Paper on Lesson 47
THE TENTH IMAM

Name: _____ Student No._____

Question 1: [10 points]

Tick the appropriate box:

TRUE / FALSE

(a) Imam ‘Ali an-Naqi was born in 212 A.H.

(b) Imam an-Naqi’s imamate coincided with the reign of six Umayyid caliphs.

(c) Mutawakkil was the “Yazid” of the ‘Abbasids.

(d) Mutawakkil attempted to level the grave of Imam Husayn (a.s.) to the ground in 236 A.H.

(e) Muntasir’s peaceful reign lasted for six years.

(f) The later ‘Abbasid caliphs were at the mercy of their Turkish troops.

(g) ‘Abdul ‘Azim al-Hasani was not a reliable narrator of hadith.

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(h) Imam ‘Ali an-Naqi taught the ziyarat-e jami‘a to Musa bin ‘Abdullah an-Nakha‘i.

(i) The Imam was poisoned during the reign of Mu‘tazz bin Mutawakkil.

(j) Imam an-Naqi is buried in Kazimayn.

Question 2: [20 points]
In his conversation with ‘Abdul ‘Azim, Imam ‘Ali an-Naqi (a.s.) talked about the ghaybat of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.). Explain in your own words the significance of this talk on the issue of Mahdism in Islam.

Question 3: [20 points]
List at least five qualities of the Imams of Ahlul Bayt mentioned in the Ziyarat-e Jami’a.

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LESSON 48

THE ELEVENTH IMAM
Hasan bin 'Ali

Name:	**Hasan bin 'Ali.**
Agnomen:	**Abu Muhammad.**
Title:	**Al-'Askari.**
Father:	**'Ali an-Naqi.**
Mother:	**Hudaytha (also known as Susan).**
Birth:	**10th Rabi II, 232 A.H. in Samarra, Iraq.**
Death:	**8th Rabi I, 260 A.H. in Samara Iraq.**

1. Birth & Early Years

Imam Hasan al-'Askari was born in the year 232 A.H. in Samarra, Iraq during the tenth Imam's stay in that city. "Al-'Askari" is from *al-'askar* which means "the army". Our eleventh Imam is known as al-'Askari because he lived in al-'Askar neighbourhood which was the military garrison of the Turkish troops of the 'Abbasids.

His imamate began at the age of twentytwo, and continued for just six years when he was poisoned in 260 A.H.

2. Political Circumstances of His Imamate

The short period of Imam al-'Askari's imamate coincided with the caliphate of Mu'tazz, Muhtadi and Mu'tamid.

Mu'tazz is the same caliph during whose reign Imam 'Ali an-Naqi was martyred. More than seventy members of the Hashimites were arrested on his orders and brought from Hijaz to Samarra. The Shi'as were truly suffering under the tyranny of Mu'tazz; but soon he was deposed from his caliphate by the Turkish troops.

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Muhtadi assumed the pretence of a pious caliph, forbade the presence of female singers in the court and even fixed a time to hear the grievances of the people. But when it came to the Shi'as and their Imam, he was no different from the other rulers. Imam Hasan al-'Askari was even imprisoned for a short while during Muhtadi's caliphate. But even Muhtadi's rule was ended by the Turkish troops who rebelled against him and killed him.

Mu'tamid led a promiscuous lifestyle and left the management of the state to his brother Muwaffaq. After the death of Muwaffaq, the control of the state came into the hands of his son, Mu'tazid who succeeded his uncle, Mu'tamid, in the year 279 A.H.

Mu'tamid's reign was full of civil strife and tyranny; thousands of people were killed, especially the descendants of Imam 'Ali (a.s.) whose bodies were mutilated. Imam Hasan al-'Askari was put in the prison of Nahrir who used to mistreat the Imam in whatever way he could.

3. The Miracle of Rain

Once there was a severe famine in Samarra. Mu'tamid ordered the people to organize a salat known as *salatu 'l-istisqa'* (the prayer for rain). For three days, people went outside the city to take part in the *istisqa'* prayer but there was no sign of any rain. On the fourth day, the Christian high priest went to the desert and prayed for rain; and lo! heavy rain started to fall. The same thing was repeated the next day.

The Muslims were surprised; doubts started occuring in their minds about the truth of Islam vis-a-vis Christianity. Mu'tamid realized the danger and ordered that Imam Hasan al-'Askari be brought from the prison. After explaining his problem, the caliph asked the Shi'a Imam to rescue Islam!

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The Imam said, “Ask the Christian priests and monks to go to the desert tomorrow on Tuesday.”

Caliph: “Enough rain has come; so why should we ask them to go to the desert tomorrow?”

The Imam: “So that I may dispell the doubt by the will of God.”

The caliph issued the order. The priests and the monks gathered in the desert, and the Imam and Muslims also were present there. The Christians lifted their hands in prayer for rain; the sky became cloudy and rain started to fall.

“ Imam al-’Askari pointed at one of the monks and ordered the soldiers to take whatever they found in his hand. They discovered that the monk was holding a piece of human bone in his hand. The Imam placed that bone in a piece of cloth and covered it. Then he asked the priests and the monks to pray again. But this time there was no sign of any cloud or rain!

Everyone was surprised at this turn of events. The caliph asked the Imam: “What bone is this?”

The Imam (a.s.): “This is a bone of one of the prophets of God which they have taken from his grave; and one of the miracles of a prophet’s bone is that whenever it is exposed from the grave, it will start to rain.”

The caliph’s people examined the bone and found that what our Imam was saying was the truth. Thus, a descendant of ‘Ali and Fatima, rescued the *ummah* of his grandfather from the enemies of Islam!

4. Ishaq al-Kindi & the Qur’an

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Ishaq al-Kindi was a famous philosopher known for materialistic views about the world and religion. Once he started writing a book in which he intended to show the contradictions in the holy Qur'an.

One day, some students of his came to visit Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.). The Imam: "Isn't there anyone among you who can stop your teacher from such a useless task?"

The student: "We are his students; how can we stop him from what he is doing?"

The Imam: "Are you prepared to convey to him the argument that I would teach you?"

The students: "Yes, of course."

The Imam: "Be courteous towards him and gain his confidence. Then tell him that you have a question about his work. When he permits you to ask the question, say: If the Writer of the Qur'an comes to you; is there a possibility that what He intends by His words was different from what you have understood?"

"He [i.e., Ishaq Kindi] will obviously say, Yes, it is quite possible.' Then you should say, With that possibility in mind, how can you be sure that what you have understood from the Qur'an is really the intent of the Qur'an? Isn't it possible that the Writer of the Qur'an means something different from what you have understood?"

Having learnt this argument from the Imam, the students went to al-Kindi. At the right moment, one of the students presented the argument they had learnt from Imam al-'Askari (a.s.). Ishaq al-Kindi asked the student to repeat the question. After thinking for a while, al-Kindi replied, "What you say is quite possible."

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Ishaq al-Kindi knew the intellectual level of his students. So he asked,

"How did this idea come to you?"

The student: "It just came to my mind, and so I asked you."
Al-Kindi: "You are incapable to get such ideas; now, tell me the truth where did you get this idea?"

The student: "Abu Muhammad (al-'Askari) has taught us this." Al-Kindi: "Now you have uttered the truth. Such ideas cannot emerge from anywhere but that family!" Then al-Kindi got rid of whatever he had written on the contradictions in the Qur'an.

5. Imam's Letter to Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi

'Ali bin Husayn bin Babawayh al-Qummi, the father of the famous scholar Shaykh Saduq, was a prominent scholar of his time. Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) sent a letter which is enough to show his honour and dignity in the eyes of the Ahlul Bayt. After the preliminary text about praising Allah and the Prophet, the Imam wrote:

"...O respected and reliable Shaykh, and O faqih (jurist) of my followers, Abul Hasan 'Ali bin Husayn al-Qummi, may Allah bless you with what He pleases and may He bring forth worthy sons from you.

"I advise you to fear [displeasing] Allah, to establish prayer and pay alms—because the prayer of one who does not pay alms is not accepted. I advise you to forgive the mistakes of others and control your anger, and to be kind and generous to your relatives, and to be helpful and concerned for your brethren, and to be patient in response to the deeds of the ignorant people.

"[I advise you] to be learned in religion, steadfast in your work, familiar with the Qur'an, and to acquire the noble character,

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bid the good and forbid the evil. Allah, the Almighty, says: There is no use in much of your whispering except [in case of] one who recommends [others) to give charity or do good deeds or make peace between people.'

"Refrain from all bad deeds; and be diligent about the night vigil prayer *(namaz-e shab/salatul layl)* because the Prophet (s.a.w.) recommended it to 'Ali (a.s.) and said, 'O 'Ali, be diligent about the salatul layl; be diligent about the salatul layl; be diligent about the salatul layl. Whoever considers salatul layl as worthless is not one of us.'

"Therefore, follow my advice, and advise my Shi'as what I have advised you with. You should have forebearance and be patient; verily the Prophet said, The best deed of my Ummah is waiting for the deliverance.' Our Shi'as will constantly be sad and anxious until my son [Imam al-Mahdi] makes his appearance, the one about whom the Prophet had given good tidings that he will fill the earth with justice and equality just as it would be filled with injustice and tyranny.

"So O my trustworthy Shaykh, Abul Hasan, be patient, and advise my Shi'as to be patient because surely the earth belongs to Allah and He will make his virtuous servants its masters—the final victory will be for the God-fearing people!

"May peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you and upon my Shi'as. Indeed, Allah is sufficient for us and He is the best of agents, the best Master and the best Helper."

6. Words of Wisdom

Abu Hashim al-Ja'fari narrates that once a person asked Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) the following question:

"Why does a woman get half of the share of a man in inheritance?" The question is about a son and a daughter inheriting

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from their father or mother: the son gets twice the share of the daughter.

The Imam: "Because jihad and maintenance of the family is not among the responsibilities of a woman. Even payment of the monetary compensation in case of an accidental homocide is upon the male members of the murderer, not the female members."

When he heard this answer, Abu Hashim said to himself: 'I have heard that Ibn Abil 'Awja' asked the same question from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq and he received the same answer.'

Imam Hasan al-'Askari looked at Abu Hashim and said, "Yes! The question of Ibn Abil 'Awja' was the same; and when the question is same, our answer is also the same...The first and the last of us [i.e., Imams of Ahlul Bayt] are equal in knowledge and position; of course, the Messenger of God and 'Ali, the Leader of the Faithfuls, have their own privileged status."

* * *

"I advise you to be moderate and refrain from extravagance."

* * *

"To be humble means to greet whoever you pass by, and to sit wherever you find room [without waiting for the seat of your 'status']." He also said, "Humility is a blessing of which no one will be envious."

* * *

"One who admonishes his brother in private has decorated him; and one who admonishes him in public has disgraced him."

* * *

"The best self-discipline is to refrain [from doing to others] what you would dislike from others."

* * *

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"Beauty of the face is an apparent beauty, and beauty of intelligence is a hidden beauty."

* * *

"All evil has been placed in a house whose key is lying."

* * *

"Generosity has a limit; when one exceeds it, it becomes extravagance."

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This lesson has been written and compiled by Sayyid M. Rizvi by using the following source: *Pishway-e Yazdahurn: Hazrat Imam Hasan 'Askari (a.s.)* by Dar Rah-e Haq, Qum.

The main source has been extensively edited in order to fit the requirements of our course. Also, for the sake of brevity, we have not included the references quoted by our sources. Those who are interested to know the sources may refer to the source mentioned above.

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Question Paper on Lesson 48
THE ELEVENTH IMAM

Name: _____ *Student No.*_____

Question 1: [20 points]

Tick the appropriate box:

TRUE / FALSE

(a) Imam Hasan al-'Askari was born in Baghdad.

(b) "Al-'Askari" is the Imam's title because he was born in Samarra. ,

(c) Mu'tazz, Muhtadi and Mu'tamid were caliphs during the imamate of the eleventh Imam.

(d) Mu'tazz forbade the presence of female singers in the court as a pretence of being pious.

(e) Mu'tamid's reign was full of civil strife and tyranny.

(f) 'Ali bin Husayn bin Babawayh was the father of Shaykh al-Mufid.

(g) In inheriting from the parent, the daughter gets half of the share of a son.

(h) Mu'tamid asked Imam al-'Askari for help in disclosing the monk's deceit.

(i) Al-Kindi was writing a book to challenge the Nahju 1-Balagha.

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(j) Ibn Abil ‘Awja’ was a companion of Imam al-’Askari.

Question 2: [15 points]
Describe and comment on the method used by Imam Hasan al-‘askari (a.s.) to prevent Ishaq al-Kind from writing the response to the Qur’an.

Question 3: [15 points]
Describe the Imam’s miracle of rain in your own words.

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LESSON 49

THE TWELFTH IMAM
Muhammad al-Mahdi

1. Birth & Early Life

Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (a.s.) was born on 15th Sha'ban 255 A.H. (868 CE) in Samarra to Narjis, the wife of the eleventh Imam. Lady Narjis's lineage goes back to Sham'un, one of the disciples of Prophet 'Isa (a.s.); and she was highly respected by Hakima, the sister of Imam an-Naqi and leader of the Hashimite ladies.

Since the reports about the anticipated birth of Mahdi, the Messiah who will put an end to injustice and tyranny was widespread, the 'Abbasids were closely watching the family of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). The situation was not unlike the days prior to the birth of Prophet Musa (a.s.) when Pharoah had ordered that the male children of the Israelites be killed. Just as Musa's birth was concealed from the public by Allah's power, Muhammad al-Mahdi's birth was also concealed from the public.

For five years, Imam al-Mahdi lived under the loving care of his father. He was seen only by some family members and a few selected companions of his father. This was all done to protect him from the 'Abbasid agents. Some of thoseWho had seen the Imam during this period are mentioned below:

1. Lady Hakima, aunt of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.).
2. Nasim, the servant of Imam al-'Askari.
3. Muhammad bin 'Uthman al-'Amri.
4. Husayn bin al-Hasan al-'Alawi.

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5. Ja'far bin Muhammad bin Malik and his group.
6. Ahmad bin Ishaq.

Here we shall only narrate the event in which Ahmad bin Ishaq saw Imam al-Mahdi. Ahmad, a prominent Shi'a of the time, once visited Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) and wanted to ask him about his successor. Before Ahmad asked his question, the Imam said, "O Ahmad! From the day He created Adam, Allah has not left the earth without a representative *(hujjat),* nor will He leave it without a representative till the day of judgement. It is because of the *hujjat* that Allah averts the chastisement from the people, sends down the rain and brings forth the blessings from the earth."

Ahmad: "O son of the Prophet! Who is the successor and the Imam after you?"

Imam Hasan al-'Askari immediately went inside the house and returned with a three year old child in his hands, and said, "O Ahmad bin Ishaq, if you were not honourable in the sight of Allah and His representatives, I would not have shown this son of mine to you. His name and agnomen is the same as that of the Prophet; he is the one who will fill the earth with justice and equality just as it would be filled with injustice and tyranny.

"O Ahmad, his example is that of Khizr and Dhul Qarnayn [who are believed by Muslims to be still living]. By Allah, he will go into Occultation in such a manner that none will gain salvation except the one whom Allah blesses with the belief in his imamate..."

2. The Imamat & *Ghaybat*

After the martyrdom of Imam Hasan al-'Askari in 260 A.H., the imamate of Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (may Allah hasten his appearance) began. *His* imamate is divided into two parts: 1. The first 69 years which is known as the period of *"al-Ghaybatu. l-s-Sughra* — the Minor Occultation". 2. The period after 329 A.H.

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which is known as *"al-Ghaybatu 'l-Kubra* — the Major Occultation"

The imamate of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) began with Occultation *(ghaybat)* which has continued till the present time. However, during the first 69 years, the Shi'as could get in touch with the Imam only through his specially appointed agents; whereas after 329 A.H., no such agents were appointed. To explain the difference in the intensity of the Occultation, the first period is described as "minor, lesser, *sughra* or *qasira"* whereas the second period is described as "major, greater, *kubra* or *tawila."*

If the Occultation had taken its "major" form from day one, the Shi'a community could not have adjusted to the situation easily; there would have been great chaos and confusion. The gradual intensification in the Occultation made the Shi'as used to the idea of not dealing with the Imam directly.[10]

3. The *Ghaybat Sughra*

During the Ghaybat Sughra, Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) had appointed four special agents, one after another, as a link between himself and his Shi'as. Of course, there were other agents also but with limited jurisdiction or limited duties.

The four special agents were as follows:
1. 'Uthman bin Said al-'Amri, known as Abu Amr.
2. Muhammad bin 'Uthman bin Sa'id, known as Abu Ja'far.
3. Husayn bin Rawh an-Nawbakhti, known as Abul Qasim.
4. 'Ali bin Muhammad Samary, known as Abul Hasan.

'Uthman bin Sa'id was also a prominent companion and agent of Imam 'Ali an-Naqi (a.s.) and Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.). He was resident of Samarra. In order to hide his link and

[10] For this explanation of the shorter and longer Occultation, see the introduction by Sayyid S. Akhtar Rizvi to Ibn Shadhan, *The Return of al-Mahdi.*

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work with Imam Hasan al-'Askari from government informers, 'Uthman bin Sa'id changed his profession—he became a vendor selling cooking oil on a cart. When the government's surveillance on the Imam's house made it almost impossible for the Shi'as to visit him freely, 'Uthman would put the letters and religious dues from the Shi'as in the oil containers and take them to the Imam's house under the pretext of delivering cooking oil!

Ahmad bin Ishaq narrates that Imam al-'Askari (a.s.) told him that 'Uthman bin Sa'id was "trustworthy, and reliable in the eyes of the past Imam as well as myself in my life as well as after my death. Whatever he says to you is from me, and whatever he brings to you is from me."

Wheti 'Uthman bin Said died, Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) wrote a letter of condolence to his son, Muhammad bin 'Uthman, as follows: "We belong to Allah, and to Him we shall return. Your father lived a graceful life and died as an honourable man. May Allah shower His mercy on him and join him with his Masters. He was diligent in his work for the Masters, and worked hard in what pleased the Almighty and the Imams. May Allah shower His grace on him and forgive his faults."

Muhammad bin 'Uthman was the second special agent of the period of Minor Occultation. 'Abdullah bin Ja'far al-Himyari says that when 'Uthman died, we received a letter from the Imam, in the same handwriting that we recognized from his previous communications, stating that Muhammad bin 'Uthman was appointed in the place of his late father as the new special agent of the Imam.

'Abdullah bin Ja'far once asked Muhammad bin 'Uthman, "Have you seen the Master of Affairs (Sahib al-Amr)?" He answered, "Yes; my last meeting with him was by the holy House of Allah (i.e., Ka'ba) where I heard him praying, 'O Allah! Fulfill for me what You have promised me.'..."

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Muhammad bin ‘Uthman also said that Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) is present every year at the hajj ceremonies; he sees the people and recognizes them, they also see him but do not recognize him.

Kusayn bin Rawh was the third special agent of the Imam. He was greatly respected by all Muslims; he closely worked with ‘Uthman bin Sa’id.

A few days before his death, Muhammad bin Uthman had introduced Husayn bin Rawh to the elders of the Shi’a community as the next special agent of the Imam. Ja’far bin Ahmad al-Qummi was the closest of all companions to Muhammad bin ‘Uthman, and many Shi’as thought that he might succeed Muhammad as the next special agent. At the time of Muhammad’s death, Ja’far was sitting by the head of his bed while Husayn bin Rawh was sitting by his feet. (In that cultural context, sitting by the head was a more honourable position.) Muhammad bin ‘Uthman turned his face towards Ja’far and said, “I have been ordered to hand over the affairs to Abul Qasim Husayn bin Rawh.” When Ja’far heard this, he stood up, went to Husayn, took hold of his hand and made him sit by the head of the bed while he himself sat at the feet of Muhammad.

In a letter dated 6th Shawwal 305, Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) wrote about Husayn bin Rawh: “We know him; may Allah acquaint him with all that is good for him, and may He help him. We are aware of his letter and have confidence and trust in him. He has a position in our eyes which pleases him; and may Allah add to His blessings upon him for He is indeed the Master and has power over everything. All praise is for Allah who has no partner, and blessings and peace of Allah upon His messenger, Muhammad, and his progeny.”

When Abu Sahl an-Nawbakhti, a prominent Shi’a theologian of the time, was asked as to why he was superceded by Husayn bin

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Rawh in attaining the position of the special agency of the Imam, he replied: "They (i.e., the Imams) know better as to whom should represent them. I am a person who debates against the opponent with temperment. If I had been the special deputy of the Imam and had been aware of Imam's whereabouts —just as Husayn bin Rawh is aware of it— I might have disclosed it in the heat of debate [if cornered to disclose the Imam's whereabouts]. But Abul Qasim [Husayn bin Rawh] is such that if the Imam was hiding under his robes, he would not lift it' even if he is cut into pieces by sharp knives."

Husayn bin Rawh served in this position for 21 years till his death in 326 A.H. in Baghdad.

'Ali bin Muhammad as-Samary became the fourth special deputy of the Imam. His deputyship was comparatively short. He died in 329 A.H. Before his death, when some prominent Shi'as asked about the next special deputy, he replied, "I have not been ordered to appoint anyone after me."

Six days before the death of as-Samary, he received the following letter from Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.):

"O 'Ali bin Muhammad as-Samary. May Allah reward your brethren in observing grief for you. You shall leave this world after six days.

Finalize your affairs and do not appoint anyone as your successor.

Indeed, the Major Occultation has begun. There will be no appearance for me until Allah the Almighty commands me; and that will be after a long time, after the hearts have hardened and the world is filled with injustice.

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Shortly, some persons will claim to have seen me [and claim the status of special deputyship]. Beware that whoever makes such a claim before the appearance of Sufyani and the Sayha is a liar and a fraud. And there is no power and strength except with Allah, the High, the Great."

4. The *Ghaybat Kubra*

Unlike the Ghaybat Sughra where the Shi'as could communicate with their Imam through the special deputies, in the Ghaybat Kubra, there is no special deputy. The Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) will appear from the Occultation whenever Allah allows him to do so in order to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, and to eradicate injustice and tyranny once and for all.

During the Ghaybat Kubra, those Shi'as who do not have the expertise to derive the laws from the Qur'an and the *sunna* of the Infallibles, should follow the guidance provided by those who are experts. A person known as Ishaq bin 'Ammar asked in a letter to Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) about the guidance during the Ghaybat Kubra. The holy Imam wrote: "And as for the newly occurring circumstances [which have not been mentioned in the Qur'an and *sunna],* refer to those who narrate our ahadith for they are my hujjat upon you as I am Allah's hujjat upon them." (To refresh your memory, see the lesson on *Ijtihad, Taqlid & Ihtiyat.)*

5. Appearance of al-Mahdi

As mentioned above, even Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) himself is waiting for Allah's permission for his appearance. This means that no one knows the time of the appearance of the Imam. We have clear ahadith stating that those who speak about the time when the Imam will make his appearance are to be declared as liars. In the letter mentioned earlier, Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) wrote, "As for the appearance of deliverance [by me], it's mentioning is with Almighty Allah and those who fix the time are liars."

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However, there are many ahadith which describe the signs before the appearance of Imam al-Mahdi. Some of these signs are as follows:

1. Injustice, tyranny, and sinful acts will become very common all over the world.

2. Appearance of Sufyani and the destruction of his army. Sufyani has been described as a Syrian by the name of 'Uthman bin 'Anbasa from the descendants of Yazid bin Mu'awiyah.

3. An uprising will take place by a Hasani sayyid in Iran. He will form a just Islamic government and call people towards Islam. He will be in Kufa when the news of Imam al-Mahdi's appearance in Mecca will spread world-wide. The Hasani sayyid will come to Mecca and pledge allegiance to Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.).

4. Soon after the appearance of Imam al-Mahdi in Mecca, a heavenly sound will be heard all over the world which will introduce Imam al-Mahdi to all people.

5. Descent of Prophet 'Isa (a.s.) from heaven to the city of Damascus. He will pray behind Imam al-Mahdi.

* * *

After a very long Occultation, on Allah's command, Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) will make his appearance known at the Holy Mosque in Mecca and start his mission of establishing the Kingdom of God on the earth.

Three hundred and thirteen people will pledge allegiance to him, and then he will move towards Medina. From Medina, al-Mahdi will proceed to Kufa, Iraq. After that Prophet 'Isa will descend in Damascus and join Imam al-Mahdi.

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The headquarters of Imam al-Mahdi will be Kufa from where he will rule over the whole world. During the Imam's reign, the blessings of Allah will be abundant; there will be no poverty; peace and security will be the rule of the day.

O Allah, send your blessings upon Muhammad & his progeny.

O Allah, be the Master, the Guardian, the Guide and the Eye for your vicegerent, the Hujjat, son ofHasan al-'Askari, at this hour, and at every hour until You establish him on the earth for a long time.

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This lesson has been written and compiled by Sayyid M. Rizvi by using the *Pishway-e\ Duwazdahum: Hazrat Imam Hujjat ibn al-Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.)* by Dar Rah-e Haq, Qum.

The main source has been extensively edited in order to fit the requirements of our course. Also, for the sake of brevity, we have not included the references quoted by our source.

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Question Paper on Lesson 49
THE TWELFTH IMAM

Name: _____ *Student No.* _____

Question 1: [20 points]

Tick the appropriate box:

	TRUE	**FALSE**
(a) Imam al-Mahdi was born on 15 Sha'ban 260 AH.		
(b) Lady Hakima was the aunt of Imam Hasan al-'Askari.		
(c) Ghaybat Sughra was for 96 years.		
(d) Husayn bin Rawh was the 1st special agent of Imam al-Mahdi.		
(e) The Imam informed 'Ali as-Samary of his death six days before his actual death.		
(f) People thought that Ja'far bin Ahmad would become the 3rd special agent of Imam al-Mahdi.		
(g) "Qasira" means lesser or shorter.		

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(h) Sufyani will'appear after the coming of Prophet Isa.

(i) A Hasani sayyid will appear in Karbala.

(j) Prophet Isa will descend in Mecca.

Question 2: [10 points]
Why was the birth of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) concealed from the people?

Question 3: [20 points]
Why did the total occultation not start from day one of the imamate of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.)?

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LESSON 5O

Guidance in Occultation & the Message of Shi'ism

1. Importance of Belief in al-Mahdi

The Occultation of the Imam is a time of trial for the believers. But belief in Imam al-Mahdi is very essential for salvation. Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) said, "I see that after me differences will appear among you concerning the Imam after me. Whoso accepts the Imams after the Prophet of God but denies my son is like the person who accepts all the prophets but denies the prophethood of Muhammad, the Prophet of God, upon whom be peace and blessing. And whoso denies [Muhammad] the Prophet of God is like one who has denied all the prophets of God, for to obey the last of us is like obeying the first and to deny the last of us is like denying the first. But beware! Verily for my son there is an occultation during which all people will fall into doubt except those whom Allah protects."

2. The Question of Long Life

The opponents of the Shi'ism protest that according to the beliefs of this school the Hidden Imam should by now be nearly twelve centuries old, whereas this is impossible for any human being.

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In answer it must be said that the protest is based only on the unlikelihood of such an occurrence, not its impossibility. Of course such a long lifetime or a life of a longer period is unlikely. But those who study the hadiths of the Holy Prophet and the Imams will see that they refer to this life as one possessing miraculous qualities. Miracles are certainly not impossible nor can they be negated through scientific arguments. It can never be proved that the causes and agents that are functioning in the world are solely those that we see and know and that other causes which we do not know or whose effects and actions we have not seen nor understood do not exist. It is in this way possible that in one or several members of mankind there can be operating certain causes and agents which bestow upon them a very long life of a thousand or several thousand years. Medicine has not even lost hope of discovering a way to achieve very long life spans. In any case such protests from "peoples of the Book" such as Jews, Christians and Muslims are most strange for they accept the miracles of the prophets of God according to their own sacred scriptures.

3. The Spiritual Guidance of al-Mahdi

The opponents of Shi'ism also protest that, although Shi'ism considers the Imam necessary in order to expound the injunctions and verities of religion and to guide the people, the occultation of the Imam is the negation of this very purpose, for an Imam in occultation who cannot be reached by mankind cannot be in any way beneficial or effective. The opponents say that if God wills to bring forth an Imam to reform mankind He is able to create him at the necessary moment and does not need to create him thousands of years earlier.

In answer it must be said that such people have not really understood the meaning of the Imam, for the duty of the Imam is not only the formal explanation of the religious sciences and exoteric guidance of the people. In the same way that he has the duty of guiding men outwardly, the Imam also bears the function of *wilayat* and the esoteric guidance of men. It is he who directs

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man's spiritual life and orients the inner aspect of human action toward God. Clearly, his physical presence or absence has no effect in this matter. The Imam watches over men inwardly and is in communion with the soul and spirit of men even if he be hidden from their physical eyes. His existence is always necessary even if the time has not as yet arrived for his outward appearance and the universal reconstruction that he is to bring about.

4. The Spiritual Message of Shi'ism

The message of Shi'ism to the world can be summarized in one sentence: "To know God." Or in other words, it is to instruct man to follow the path of Divine revelation and the knowledge of God in order to gain felicity and salvation. And this message is contained in the very phrase with which the Holy Prophet commenced his prophetic mission when he said, "Oh men! Know God in His Oneness (and acknowledge Him) so that you will gain salvation."

As a summary explanation of this message we will add that man is attached by nature to many goals in this worldly life and to material pleasures. He loves tasty food and drink, fashionable dress, attractive palaces and surroundings, a beautiful and pleasing wife, sincere friends and great wealth. And in another direction he is attracted to political power, position, reputation, the extension of his rule and dominion and the destruction of anything that is opposed to his wishes.

But in his inner and primordial, God-given nature man understands that all these are means created for man, but man is not created for these things. These things should be subservient to man and follow him and not vice versa. To consider the stomach and the region below it as a final end of life is the logic of cattle and sheep. To tear up, cut and destory others is the logic of the tiger, the wolf and the fox.

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The logic inherent in human existence is the attainment of wisdom and nothing else. This logic based upon wisdom (with the power which it possesses to discern between reality and the unreal), guides us toward the truth and not toward things our emotions demand or toward passions, selfishness and egoism. This logic considers man as a part of the totality of creation without any separate independence or the possibility of a rebellious self-centeredness. In contrast to the current belief that man is the master of creation and tames rebellious nature and conquers it to force it to obey his wishes and desires, we find that in reality man himself is an instrument in the hand of Universal Nature and is ruled and commanded by it.

This logic based upon wisdom invites man to concentrate more closely upon the apprehension he has of the existence of this world until it becomes clear to him that the world of existence and all that is in it does not issue from itself but rather from an Infinite Source. He will then know that all this beauty and ugliness, all these creatures of the earth and the heavens, which appear outwardly as independent realities, gain reality only through another Reality and are manifested only in Its Light, not by themselves and through themselves. In the same way that the "realities" as well as the power and grandeur of yesterday have no greater value than tales and legends of today, so are the "realities" of today no more as "reality" tomorrow.

In the last analysis, everything in itself is no more than a tale and a dream. Only God is Reality in the absolute sense, the One Who does not perish. Under the protection of His Being, everything gains existence and becomes manifested through the Light of His Essence.

If man becomes endowed with such vision and power of apprehension, then the tent of his separative existence will fall down before his eyes like a bubble on the surface of water. He will see with his eyes that the world and all that is in it depend upon an

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Infinite Being who possesses life, power, knowledge and every perfection to an infinite degree. Man and every other being in the world are like so many windows which display according to their capacity the world of eternity which transcends them and lies beyond them.

It is at this moment that man takes from himself and all creatures the quality of independence and primacy and returns these qualities to their Owner. He detaches himself from all things to attach himself solely to the One God. Before His Majesty and Grandeur he does nothing but bow in humility. Only then does he become guided and directed by God so that whatever he knows he knows in God. Through Divine guidance he becomes adorned with moral and spiritual virtue and pure actions which are the same as Islam itself, the submission to God, the religion that is in the primordial nature of things.

This is the highest degree of human perfection and the station of the perfect man (the Universal Man; *insan-e kamil),* namely the Imam who has reached this rank through Divine grace. Furthermore, those who have reached this station through the practice of spiritual methods, with the different ranks and stations that they possess, are the true followers of the Imam. Thus it becomes clear that the knowledge of God and of the Imam are inseparable in the same way that the knowledge of God is inextricably connected to the knowledge of oneself. For he who knows his own symbolic existence has already come to know the true existence which belongs solely to God who is independent and without need of anything whatsoever.

* * *

This lesson is entirely based on *Shi'a Islam* of Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabataba'i.

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Question Paper on Lesson 50
GUIDANCE IN OCCULTATION
& THE MESSAGE OF SHI'ISM

*Name:*_____ *Student No.*_____

Question 1: [20 points]
Give two examples from the past prophets who lived and/or are still living for relatively longer than normal lifespan during our time.

Question 2: [10 points]
What system of guidance did the Imams devise for guiding their followers on the *formal* explanation of religious matters during the time of Occultation?

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Question 3: [20 points]
Briefly describe in one paragraph the spiritual message of Shi'ism.

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