



**The Commander of
Faithful Imam Ali (A.S)**

Author

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[Publisher's Word](#)

[The Rising Of The Dawn](#)

[The First Believer](#)

[Tasks After Emigration](#)

[Islamic Perspective Of Imam Ali](#)

[Ghadir Speech](#)

[Part Two : Introduction](#)

[Program Of Reformation](#)

[Policy Of Reaction](#)

[To The Kingdom Of Allah](#)

[Endnotes](#)

Publisher's Word



"...ALLAH ONLY DESIRES TO KEEP AWAY FROM YOU UNCLEANNES, O PEOPLE OF THE HOUSE,..." Holy Qur'an (33:33)

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"And We desired to bestow a favor on those who were deemed weak in the land, and to make them Imams, and to make them the heirs," Holy Qur'an (28:5)

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, Who sent His Prophet, Muhammad bin Abdullah al-Mustafa (s.a.w.), as a Mercy to the Worlds. Praise be to Allah, the Most Generous, Who also gave to mankind, the Guides, who would continue to keep us on the Straight Path after the death of the Seal of the Prophets (s.a.w.).

This idea of guidance is called Imamate, and without adherence to it, one has no hope to gain Divine Satisfaction for any of his prayers or deeds in this world, and no reward in the hereafter.

Why is Imamate so important that if we do not believe in the Guides and follow them we cannot hope for life after death? Imam Ali (a.s.) is referred to in the Holy Qur'an many times. All of these references are positive, praising, and respectful. How could it be that the final word of Allah, Almighty, praises this Imam, and yet for centuries he was cursed on the minbars of the mosques throughout the Muslim empire?

The answer to these questions can be found by any sincere researcher with an open heart who earnestly wishes to know. As for the Muslims, they have been misguided to the point that only through Allah's intervention can they throw off their useless and evil alliances and affiliations of the past which will only lead them to a place where repentance will do them no good.

May Allah, for the sake of His Prophets and Imams, bring them out of the darkness they have fallen into because of treachery, ignorance, greed, jealousy and pride.

This book, which you now hold in your hands, is such a small and weak attempt to explain the person of Amir al-Mu'minin Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) that only volumes of work could begin to do him justice. And the whole question surrounding this great man is grounded in exactly that one word "Justice".

A note of importance is the difference in the meanings of Imam and Caliph. The Imams refer exclusively to Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) and his sons Imam Hasan and Imam Hussein (a.s.) and the nine sons descended from Imam Hussein (a.s.). They were chosen by Allah, the Almighty and were not selected by the people.

Whereas the caliphs were elected to their offices in a political role. Unfortunately, Islam does not divide politics from other parts of life including religion and since the elected ones were

not always qualified to interpret the religious aspects of their rule, many deviations have occurred and continue to occur in the Muslim community. With this in mind, the position of Imam Ali (a.s.) becomes all the more esteemed as you will find in the reading of this small book.

Islamic history is probably one of the most colorful, intriguing, mysterious and brilliant records of all. As Muslims, or those who are interested in Islam, we find that to have a clear understanding of the fundamentals of the religion we must know its history. For no other religion is steeped in so many mysterious happenings that brought about innovations in the precepts taught by its Prophet (s.a.w.) and at such a rapid pace.

When studying and researching Islamic history, no name or personality is more discussed than that of Amir Al-Mu'minin Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.). So much has been said of him, in truth and in falsehood, that we can become quite confused over this one personality and the implications of the mark he left on history.

Western writers have admired him and written many words about him. Eastern writers have revered him. In some places he is erroneously worshipped. Islamic writers have tried to present a clear picture of him and the historical facts that surrounded him from his birth to his death. Much dialogue between the different sects of Islam has taken place about him. Still we have only been able to touch the "tip of the iceberg" when speaking about Imam Ali (a.s.).

At the time of the death of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), Imam Ali's (a.s.) position became one of controversy and self-imposed isolation. He was selected by Allah and nominated by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) at a place called Ghadir Khum to take up the reins of leadership after the Prophet (s.a.w.). More than 100,000 Muslims witnessed this selection and nomination and gave their allegiance to him at that time and place. Still, it was nearly 25 years before he could take his rightful position. He ruled for less than 5 years before he met martyrdom at the hands of a paid assassin. At 63 years of age his earthly light was extinguished and his heavenly light shone once again.

His singular distinction is that he was the Imam and Caliph of the Muslims. His descendants were Imams, guiding the Muslims in religious matters, but none were able to truly take the political position of Caliph during their lifetimes. When it looked as though they might become such by popular choice, they were brutally assassinated except for the last of them, Imam Mahdi (a.s.), on whom we await.

In Part Two of the Biography of Imam Ali (a.s.), in the series of biographies of the Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), we will cover the Imamate and Caliphate of Amir Al-Mu'minin Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.). His wisdom was unmatched and not overlooked during the rule of the first three caliphs

as we illustrated in Part One. As caliph, all of the finer points of his knowledge and ability came to the forefront and his rule was marked with sternness in the face of the enemy and gentleness in the face of the oppressed, kindness toward the orphans and poor, generosity toward the needy, honor toward his responsibility, and love toward his children. He was all and everything as no ruler after him could achieve.

We have implored Imam Ali (a.s.) to help us in the task of relating his story to those who do not know him at all, and to those who deny him justice. May Allah, the Most Merciful, help us all.

We bear witness that there is no god but Allah, the One, and that Muhammad bin Abdullah (s.a.w.) is His Prophet and that Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) is His Vicegerent. We ask Allah, Most Beneficent, to send our greetings to the Messenger of Allah and Amir al- Mu'minin Imam Ali bin Abi Talib.

We pray to Allah, Most High, for His assistance in this work. With Allah comes success.

PART ONE

"O Ali, you were the first among the believers to believe, you were the first among the Muslims to embrace Islam, and you are to me like Aaron to Moses."*

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.)

*Al-Muhib Al-Tabari, Dhakhair Al-'Oqba, Cairo ed , 1356 A. H , p 58, quoting Umar bin al-Khattab.

INTRODUCTION

"No one has ever suffered from his people as I have."(1)

Imam Ali (a.s.)

No great person of history has endured injustice and selfishness as much as Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) did during his lifetime and even after his departure from this world.

His life was full of feats and glory, yet injustice was poured on him and continued after his death. For a long time after his martyrdom, he was deprived of the simplest rights, such as

having his biography and unique place in history written fairly and truthfully. For many generations, after the departure of the Imam, the Islamic ummah (nation) was subjected to unprecedented deceitfulness, so that it might forget Imam Ali (a.s.) and his effective role in pioneering the Islamic movement towards greatness and glory. If they could not forget him, they were subjected to a distorted and misleading portrait of him.

It suffices to know that for decades the oratory pulpits--then the most important means of education and disseminating information in the Muslim world--were used to abusing Imam Ali (a.s.) and his unique part in history. Such perniciousness was motivated by the enemies of Islam and to avenge the idolators killed in the Battle of Badr.

Friday Prayer Sermons, for example, during the Umayyads, used to start with cursing Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) in such words which even history declined to write on its pages.(2)

This act of heresy effectively defaced the character of Imam Ali (a.s.). it devised and backed by certain forces and regimes and taken up by mercenary narrators, traditionists, court historians and the like.

Yet, despite the pervasive attempts to defy truth with fabrications and falsifications, nobody, whosoever, could prevent the reality from emerging through the clouds of conspiracy owing to the heroic nature of Islam. The duration of lies and deceit became short-lived together with the evil plot that invented then.

Thus, the groups of mercenaries, with their hired pens, who tried to twist Imam Ali's (a.s.) biography according to their own desires, interests, and mischievous aims, miscalculated their devious intentions. They were ignorant of the fact that truth cannot be concealed forever; that "the foam passes away the scum onto the banks."

Al-Balagh Foundation--with the help of Allah and within the scope of its undertaking to spread original Islamic thought; and to place the facts of its history before the Muslim ummah in order to remove the camouflage of obscurity-- presents in this book a study on the life of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) and his fundamental role in the construction of Islam and its glorious past.

The study is in three sections of two volumes. The first is a brief biography of Amir Al-Mu'minin (the Commander of the Faithful) (a.s.) during the life of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and during the era of the first three caliphs.

The second part of the study concerns itself with the period during which Imam Ali (a.s.) undertook the leadership of the Muslims. We have tried to cover his heroic and noble

attitudes in the fields of politics, administration, economics, society and issues of war and peace. The third part, published in volume two, outlines the prominent features of the personality of Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.), covering his closeness to Allah, and to the people around him, and his ideological, informative and intellectual offerings to the Islamic ummah and, in fact, the whole of mankind.

We ask Allah's direction, support, guidance and help in order to devote all our energies and true possibilities of belief to the arena of the current ideological conflict between Islamic ummah and its bitter enemies, until the great Islamic religion prevails. He is the Hearer, the Responder.

Al-Balagh Foundation

The Rising Of The Dawn

On Friday, the 13th of the blessed month of Rajab, 12 years before the ordainment of Muhammad (s.a.w) as Allah's Messenger, Fatimah bint Asad felt that she was about to give birth to her child. She came to the Sacred Ka'bah and began to circumambulate praying as she walked, "O Allah! I believe in You and in the messengers and the scriptures You have sent. I believe in what has been said by my grandfather, Abraham (a.s.) who built the Ancient House (the Ka'bah). So, for the sake of the builder of this House, and for the sake of the child in my womb, I implore You to make my labor easy "(3)

Fatimah bint Asad leaned against the wall of the Ka'bah to rest. Miraculously, the wall opened. Fatimah bin Asad entered and the wall closed behind her. 'Abbas bin 'Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet's (s.a.w.) uncle witnessed this miracle. He and his companions rushed to the gate of the Sacred House, which was locked, and tried in vain to open it. Understanding that the Divine was at work there, he and his companions ceased to interfere. The news of this incident soon spread throughout Mecca.

Imam Ali (a.s.) was born within the Ka'bah with his eyes closed and his body in humble prostration before the Almighty Allah. Fatimah stayed in the Ka'bah for three days and as the fourth day approached, she stepped out, carrying her baby in her arms. She found the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) waiting to receive the newly-born child in his anxious arms. Then the Holy Prophet recited the Adhan and Eqamah in the ears of the baby.

Imam Ali's (a.s.) birth inside the honored Ka'bah is unique in the history of the world. Neither

a prophet nor a saint was ever blessed with such an honor.(4) It is an undisputed historical fact recognised by all historians that the Holy Ka'bah is the birthplace of Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.). Glad tidings were brought to Abu Talib and his household. Upon their arrival at the Sacred House they saw Muhammad al-Mustafa (s.a.w.) there with the child in his arms.(5) He carried the baby Ali to the house of Abu Talib, where he, himself was brought up.

A great banquet was prepared, slaughtering many animals, in honor of the blessed new-born child.(6)

The party was attended by a crowd of people. They offered their congratulations, spent hours of merriment expressing their high feelings towards their chieftain, the sheikh of Al-Abtah, and towards his blessed child.

Days passed quickly as the blessed child grew up in the arms of his parents and his cousin, Muhammad (s.a.w.), who used to frequent his uncle's house, where he had formerly tasted the warmth of affection, and drank from the fountains of sincerity and loyalty during the years of his childhood and youth.

Muhammad (s.a.w.) continued to frequent his uncle's house, although he was now a married man, living with his wife, Khadijah, in their own house. He cherished Ali and surrounded him with affection and care, speaking to him tenderly, rocking his cradle or carrying him in his arms.

THE PATRONAGE OF THE MESSENGER OF' ALLAH

Six years passed after Ali's birth. The Quraish (Muhammad's tribe) suffered from an acute economic crisis which had a heavy effect on Abu Talib, who had to support a large family, as well as a host of poor people who used to come to him as a prominent figure in the community at Mecca. Could the "Chosen One" (s.a.w.) and Bani Hashim (his family) accept such a hard situation for their leader?

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) went to his uncle, Al-Abbas bin Abdul-Muttalib, the wealthiest of the Bani Hashim, and said, "O uncle! your brother, Abu Talib, sustains a large family, and the people are badly afflicted by the situation. So, let us go to him to lighten his hammad though he to be sustained by us."(7)

The proposal from Al-Mustafa (the Chosen One) (s.a.w.) was gladly accepted by his uncle, Al-Abbas, and they both hurried to Abu Talib and talked him into accepting the suggestion.

Abu Talib said, "If you let me have Aqil and Talib, I will let you do as you see fit..."(8)

Al-Abbas took Ja'far, and Muhammad (s.a.w.) took Ali (a.s.), then six years old.(9)

Having chosen Ali (a.s.), the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: "I have chosen whom Allah had chosen for me above you - Ali." (10) Thus, Ali (a.s.), from his early childhood, lived under the patronage of Muhammad (s.a.w.), grew up under his care and drank from the fountains of his affection and tenderness. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) brought him up as his Lord had taught him. He never separated from him until he joined the Almighty .

A PRODUCT OF THE PROPHETIC RAISING

Imam Ali (a.s.) referred to the vast dimensions of the education he received at the hands of his guide, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) in one of his speeches known by the title " Al-Qasi'ah" (censure):

"...you know what my relations with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) were. From the very beginning of my life, he loved me and I loved him. He took me in his lap when I was a baby and thence I was always with him. He often kept me embraced to his heart. He used to lay me next to him. We used to be so close to each other that I felt the warmth of his body and smelled the fragrance of his odor. When I was a baby, he fed me with his hands, often chewing hard bits for me. He never found me lying nor weak and wavering. From the time of his (the Prophet (s.a.w.)) infancy, Allah had appointed the greatest of His angels to always be with him, and His Arch Angel was leading him towards exemplary qualities and high moral values, and I followed him (s.a.w.) step by step as a baby camel follows its mother.

Daily he used to place before me a fresh standard of efficiency and used to order me . to follow it. Every year he used to stay in a grotto of the Hara' for some time, and nobody used to be with him but I. None could then see or hear him but I. During those days Islam was the religion of only the Prophet and his wife, Khadijah. I was the third of the trio. Nobody else in this world had accepted Islam. Even then I used to see the divine light of revelation and prophethood and smell the heavenly fragrance of prophethood."(11)

In his own words, this text reveals how Imam Ali (a.s.), during his childhood, was treated by the Messenger (s.a.w.) with care, tenderness and self-denial. The Prophet went to the extent of chewing morsels of food and putting them in Ali's mouth, holding him in his arms and treating him as though he were his own beloved son.

During his boyhood and youth, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) exerted his efforts to form Ali's

personality. He used to instruct him to do as he did, to follow his wake. Every day the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) would demonstrate a new example of high morality for Ali to follow, step by step, as is described in his speech.

Therefore, it is a mistake not to believe that Ali (a.s.) was initially and purposely chosen to come as an illustration of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) in his thought, attitudes and diverse aspects of his conduct, even in his way of walking.(12)

Imam Ali (a.s.) was so pure in spirit and straightforward in morality, according to the education he received from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), that many shadows of the hidden future were lighted before him. He says: "...When the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) received the first revelation, Satan lamented so loudly that I asked the Holy Prophet: Who is lamenting and why? He replied, 'It is Satan who has given up hopes of acquiring complete sway over human minds. In his disappointment, he is lamenting over the chance lost. Verily Ali, you also hear whatever I hear, and you see whatever I see, only you are not a prophet. But you are my wazir (minister), successor and helper, and you will always hold the truth and justice.'"(13)

The path which he walked, in the proximity of Allah, the Exalted, to obey His commands and to enact His Messenger's practice, qualified him to be a minister to prophethood--the post that is entrusted only to those who already covered a long distance towards the peak of virtue and the fear of God. It was only the prophethood's calling that separated him from the Prophet (s.a.w.). So he deserved and rightly ascended to the ministerial platform. Thus was Imam Ali (a.s.)!

UNDER THE SHADE OF REVELATION

Although Imam Ali (a.s.) lived in the custody of his father and brothers for six tender years, with a prominent role played by the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) in attendance, it became a complete task of rearing him and educating him when the responsibility fell to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) from his sixth year. As already mentioned, it was then that he moved to the Prophet's house because of the financial crisis which befell his father, Abu Talib.

Since that early age, Imam Ali (a.s.) lived with the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). It was there that he spent his teens and adolescence during which he was a close observer of all the developments that happened in the life of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.).

So, Imam Ali's (a.s.) education was not an ordinary one, nor one which a normal child receives from his father, or elder brothers. The training and instruction he received was very special and it suffices to know that he followed Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) like his shadow, even during periods of exclusive privacy inside the Hara' grotto where the mental and spiritual

developments were witnessed through which Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was passing.

Imam Ali (a.s.), remembering those momentous days, during a decisive period of his life, recalls "...Every year he used to stay in a grotto of Hira' Mountain for some time, and nobody would be with him but I..."(14) Yes, it was only Imam Ali (a.s.) who witnessed the tremendous spiritual change which had been ripening in the soul of Al-Mustafa (s.a.w.), until the blessed Divine revelation shined forward upon him.

Owing to the far-reaching extent of the spiritual and moral level to which his soul had attained, Imam Ali (a.s.) deeply felt the revolution that had taken place in the unseen world, where Satan had been defeated, after losing hope of being worshipped by hearing the final message revealed to the Seal of the Prophets (s.a.w.). He had seen the preliminary signs of prophethood personified in no one less than his tutor and guide, when the light of deliverance shone, and the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) received the first Divine Communique entrusting him with his mission for mankind:

"Read: In the name of your Lord Who created. Created man from a clot. Read: And your Lord is the Most Bounteous, Who teaches by the pen, teaches man that which he knew not."

The First Believer

Having received the first Divine Communique concerning carrying the Message, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) returned home and informed Imam Ali (a.s.) about it.(15) Imam Ali (a.s.) received him with complete certainty and belief, and so did Khadijah, his great and supportive wife. Thus, sprang the first nucleus of the society of believers on the earth.

It is particularly poignant, that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) never invited Imam Ali (a.s.) to Islam as he did others later on, because he was already a Muslim by God-granted nature. He was never polluted with the permissiveness of the Ignorant Era, and was never involved in any of its debased practices. As it is related: The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) informed Imam Ali (a.s.) of his Message and Call and he immediately believed in the truthfulness of the Final Message, and offered to receive and carry out the Messenger's orders. That was why he was given the attribute of: 'Karramallahu wajhah'. May Allah grant him honor. This is amazing in the light of the fact that Imam Ali (a.s.) was still a mere boy of ten at the time!

Imam Ali (a.s.) had been prepared, as we said, to follow the Messenger, since the Prophet (s.a.w.) himself had built his personality and character and fixed its foundations on high moral and virtues.

Nothing new is added by saying that Imam Ali (a.s.) was not taken by surprise at hearing about the Blessed Message, because, as we know, he lived under the patronage and trust of the Al-Mustafa (s.a.w.) who would worship his Lord, the Exalted, and was far removed from the misconcepts, misconducts and irrational behavior which prevailed during the pre-Islamic era, prior to the revelation of the first Sura (chapter) of the Qur'an...(16)

Imam Ali (a.s.) knew about the Messenger of Allah's (s.a.w.) worship and practices, as well as his ascendent mental and spiritual changes. He used to worship with him, follow him and do as he did, even at a tender age.

No sooner had the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) told him about the Divine call than he responded to it with all his heart and body and without being surprised. The only new departure was the practical way of applying the Message and the degree of responsibility to be shouldered, as the details of the Divine religion were revealed.

On entrusting the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) with the Divine task of carrying out his blessed call, he was told to begin with his household. Ibn Hisham, in his 'Sirah' says: "...Then the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) began relating about Allah's bounty- -the Prophethood and secretly communicating it to those of his household whom he trusted most..." (17)

Thus, he talked to Imam Ali (a.s.) and Khadijah about his Message and later on to Zaid bin Harithah. No one except these, and some others of his close household, knew about it.

Imam Ali bin Hussein (a.s.), in a speech about the Islam of his father, Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), said: "...and he believed in Allah, the Exalted, and in His Messenger. He preceded the others in Islam and in reciting prayers by a three year interval."(18)

On his early acceptance, Imam Ali (a.s.) himself said:

"...I was the third of the trio (The Prophet, Khadijah and himself). Nobody else in this world had accepted Islam. I would even see the divine light of revelation and message and smell the heavenly fragrance of prophethood..." Having passed the stage of calling his close household, the Message came to the stage of calling potential individuals whom the Prophet (s.a.w.) believed would be responsive to his call. So, a number of people embraced Islam. They were mostly the youth of Mecca, the deprived and oppressed. They met to recite the Glorious Qur'an and to obtain information about the preachings of the religion of Allah, the Exalted. At that time, it was an underground movement.

THE FIRST AMONG THE CALLERS TO ISLAM

He, Allah, the Exalted, told His Messenger to invite other members of his tribe, Bani Hashim, so as to widen the circle of the Message: "And warn your tribe of near kindred. And lower your wing (in kindness) unto those believers who follow you. And if they disobey you, say: Lo! I am innocent of what you do." Holy Qur'an (26:214.216)

On receiving, from his Exalted Lord, the command to warn his nearest kin, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) ordered Imam Ali (a.s.) to invite them to a banquet. They came to the Prophet's house, forty in number. After dinner, the Messenger told them:

"O Bani Abd Al-Muttalib! Allah has sent me to all creation, and to you in particular. He said. 'And warn your tribe of near kindred'. So, I ask you to say two phrases, light on the tongue, heavy in the scales, by which you will master the Arabs and the Ajams (non-Arabs), the nations will follow you and by them you will enter Paradise, and will be saved from Hell: to bear witness that there is no god save Allah, and that I am the Messenger of Allah. Whoever responds to this and supports me to carry it out will be my brother, vicegerent, helper, inheritor and successor..."(19)

While Abu Lahab criticised and warned the Messenger (s.a.w.) against carrying on his mission, on the other hand, Abu Talib offered his support and said to the Messenger (s.a.w.): "GO ahead with Your errand! By God I will never stop protecting and defending you."(20) At this time, Ali bin Abi Talib, the youngest of them all, stood up and said, "O Messenger of Allah! I will back you up in this matter." The Messenger (s.a.w.) told him to sit down. But seeing nobody else responded, he stood once again and offered his readiness to serve him, but the Messenger (s.a.w.) told him again to sit down.

The Messenger repeated his words. Still nobody responded, except Imam Ali (a.s.) whose voice was raised once again in answer to the call, announcing his full support to the cause. It was his firm commitment and strong faith that broke their silence. Since, for the third time there was no response except from Imam Ali (a.s.), the Messenger (s.a.w.) turned to him and said: "Sit down. You are my brother, vicegerent, minister, inheritor, and successor after me."(21)

The group stood up to leave and somewhat sarcastically addressed Abu Talib, saying: "Congratulations on accepting the religion of your nephew who made your son commander over you!"(22)

CONFRONTING DISBELIEVERS

After tribal members refused the invitation, the Divine Mission entered a delicate stage of

confrontation. The first ones to lead the conflict were Abu Lahab and his wife, who started encountering the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and planting difficulties in his way, in an attempt to force him to change his mind and give up his blessed task. But the call of Allah, the Exalted, advanced, clearing its way through society in the Age of Ignorance. The invitation to embrace Islam moved from privacy to generality. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) stood in the Sacred House (Ka'bah in Mecca) and loudly proclaimed to the people that he was Allah's Messenger sent to them...(23)

The success of extending the invitation was to increase the number of believers, many of which were young and came from all walks of the Meccan society. The growth in numbers had a great impact on the attitude of the disbelievers, who resorted to terrorist tactics.

Each tribe, as well as every family, began a campaign to outcast believers from among their members, torturing them and trying to suppress their faith.(24) But those who were resolute and had a strong belief in the message of Truth and Guidance, pronounced by the voice of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), were resilient inside their souls and thirsty to do good and be emancipated.

The brutality of physical torture to which the believers were subject became such that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) ordered them to migrate to Habashah (Ethiopia), under the leadership of Ja'far bin Abi Talib, who was 10 years older than his brother, Imam Ali (a.s.). Ja'far's sagacity was effective in foiling the plans of Quraish who tried to instigate the King of Habashah to move against the emigrants and expel them from his country.(25)

ABU TALIB'S CONFRONTING

THE ENEMIES OF THE MESSAGE

Although the Quraish confronted the forerunners of believers with violence and oppression, they were unable to harm the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), as the leader of the movement and the carrier of the Message. They knew that Abu Talib, the Sheikh of Abtah, would not let them commit any sort of terror against the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) himself.

Abu Talib commanded very much respect and influence, not only among the Bani Hashim, but from all other Meccan tribes. He was a stalwart for the mission and stood like a high wall in the face of its enemies from the rise of its glowing dawn. The Quraish knew this very well and therefore adapted methods of discussions, bargaining and inducing: negotiating with the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), himself, about his mission and guidance, or with Abu Talib for him to give up his support. They offered wealth and power to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) to abdicate

his divine mission and at the same time, tried to talk Abu Talib over, asking him to use his influence with the Prophet to persuade him to give up his task. They even threatened him and warned him of severe conflict between him and the Quraish if he did not stop supporting Muhammad (s.a.w.).

But Abu Talib persisted in staying on the Messenger's side and in defending him, notwithstanding what great sacrifices might lie ahead of him.

ABU TALIB, WITH THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH, IN THE BLOCKADE

When all efforts failed and the Quraish despaired of getting Muhammad (s.a.w.) to forsake his mission, their leaders held an urgent meeting in "Dar Al-Nadwah" , the house of Qusay bin Kilab, where they would meet to consult about decisive events in their lives. The final result was to boycott the Bani Hashim and whoever chose to identify themselves with them. They decided to isolate them through an economic and social blockade, which meant that no one should deal with the Bani Hashim and their followers in matters of buying and selling and in marriage. This agreement bore the signatures of forty of the Quraish's chiefs.

To protect themselves against the assaults of the Quraish, the Bani Hashim, on a command from their head, Abu Talib, entered the "shi'b" of Abi Talib (a mountain pass). They were thus no longer able to enter Mecca, except in the two seasons of pilgrimage: Umrah and Hajj, during the months of Rajab and Dhulhijjah respectively. As the situation aggravated between the Bani Hashim and Quraish, Abu Talib strengthened the guard on the Shi'b, lest the Quraish might carry out a surprise offensive.

The Bani Hashim, including the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), endured this situation for three years--some say: four years--suffering a hard life of poverty and deprivation such as to bring grief and bleeding to the heart. The extent of this test was added to by the Quraish intensifying their siege to the limits, of either cutting off all provision, or doubling prices so that friends of Bani Hashim might not be able to purchase them. Thus, the Bani Hashim suffered a real famine, and it is recorded that their children's cries of hunger could be heard from a far distance.

After the elapse of these three heavy and painful years, the Messenger (s.a.w.) told his uncle, Abu Talib, that the Quraish's boycott pact, with its injustices, had been eaten up, except the phrase "In Your Name, O God!" Abu Talib hurried to the Quraish and said: "My nephew has told me that your paper has been eaten up by moths, except the name of Allah. So, if he is right, you are to spare him the evil of your decision, but if he is wrong, I will hand him over to you..."

"You are fair enough," they agreed. The paper was brought and opened. It was eaten up as he had

said. A decisive dispute followed. Then the paper was torn to pieces, the boycott cancelled and the siege lifted.(26) This miraculous defeat of the boycott had its great effect in gaining more and more supporters and sympathizers to the Message in Mecca.

Such were the sacrifices of the family of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) in the way of Allah. While Imam Ali (a.s.) was the first to answer the call to Truth and remained foremost a fighter in the Islamic front all his life, his father sacrificed even his social prestige amongst the Quraish and tasted bitter calamities to uphold the Message of Allah, the Most High. He was, in fact, the protecting shield for the Messenger (s.a.w.) and his mission, despite the fact of holding such a social position in that tribal society that all men dreamed of.

Ja'far bin Abi Talib, Imam Ali's (a.s.) brother, inaugurated his life in Islam by leading the procession of the first emigration of Muslims to Habashah. Then it was crowned by his martyrdom in the Battle of Mu'tah, when he became known as "the Flying Ja'far", the one who flies with the angels in Paradise, as the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) had proclaimed.(27)

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) loved him very much. When Ja'far returned to Madinah from Habashah--which coincided with the day of liberating Khaibar--the Messenger (s.a.w.) hugged him and kissed his forehead, saying "...I do not know with which I should be more pleased: with Ja'far's return or the conquest of Khaibar!"(28)

TO DAR AL-SALAM

The death of Abu Talib was a calamity for Islam. The severe conflict between the blessed Divine Call and ignorance and disbelief was continuing and the painful event grieved the Prophet (s.a.w.). He knew that Quraish would accelerate its campaign against his Mission, and against his person in particular.

The Quraish, which used to fear Abu Talib in his prestigious social capacity, now had less obstacles to interfere with their desires after his death. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) had lost his strong and persistent support. In the same year he also received another severe blow with the death of his loyal wife, Khadijah. He thus called that year "The Year of Sorrows."

Abu Talib's death was so important to the progress of the historical Divine Call that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: "The Quraish kept away from me until Abu Talib died."(29)

The Quraish duly did increase their attacks on the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and the early believers. So, the Messenger (s.a.w.) looked to somewhere other than Mecca, in which they might settle, and where the tree of Guidance might grow. He started his search contacting tribes and informing the people dwelling around Mecca about his cause. He visited Ta'if and spoke with the

heads of the tribes there but none of their socially distinguished chiefs responded to him. Nevertheless, he did not let despair creep into his heart. He continued offering his message to the people outside Mecca.

On the occasion of hajj he met a number of people of "Yathrib" (Madinah). He talked to them about his mission and they accepted Allah's invitation. They returned home carrying with them the Word of Allah to their people.

Twelve men of Yathrib came and swore allegiance to the Messenger (s.a.w.). They undertook to carry the Message. The Messenger (s.a.w.) sent Mas'ab bin Umair with them to teach them the laws of the religion of Allah, to educate them of His Message, and to teach them the Glorious Qur'an. He stayed with them for a year. A considerable number accepted the blessed Call and embraced Islam. During the next hajj, a large delegation of them came to Mecca, led by Mas'ab bin Umair. They joined the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), and swore to assist him if he emigrated to their town.

Allah's command came enjoining the Muslims to emigrate. So, the processions of the Muslims emigrants started to move towards their new residence, leaving behind their wealth, property and relatives.

While Islam was entering a new stage in its steady advance, the heads of the Quraish gathered in their "Dar Al-Nadwah" to consult about the Messenger (s.a.w.). They decided to collectively assassinate him. Each tribe would send one of its men to carry out the assassination at night, thus laying the blame of the proposed murder on no one tribe.

Arch Angel Gabriel (a.s.), however, disclosed to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) the intent of the plot the Quraish had planned: "And when those who disbelieve plot against you (O Muhammad) to wound you fatally, or to kill you, or to drive you forth; they plot, but Allah (also) plots, and Allah is the best of plotters."

Holy Qur'an (8:30)

DECOY FOR THE MESSENGER

Gabriel (a.s.) told the Messenger (s.a.w.) that Allah en joined that he should also emigrate to Madinah. When darkness spread, the conspirators hurried to besiege the house of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) so as to prevent his escape. Here came another role for Imam Ali (a.s.).

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) told Imam Ali (a.s.) about all that was transpiring. He asked him to sleep in his bed and cover himself with the Prophet's (s.a.w.) garment. Imam Ali (a.s.) asked if by

doing so the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) would be safe. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) confirmed that he would. Imam Ali (a.s.) without further comment agreed to act as a decoy.

Then the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) left the house, and, passing through the besiegers, he recited: "And We have set a bar before them and a bar behind them, and (thus) have covered them so that they see not." Holy Qur'an (36:9)

Indeed, none of the disbelievers saw him. At daybreak the conspirators broke into the house of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) to commit their crime. When they entered the Holy Prophet's chamber, Imam Ali (a.s.) jumped out of the bed, shouting at them: "What do you want?" "Where is Muhammad?" they asked.

"Did you appoint me to watch him?" he replied. "Didn't you say you would expel him from your town? Now he has left you..."(30)

Their plot was foiled and (they left the house in failure. It occurred to them to search for the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), and track him through the mountains and valleys. For this purpose they took Abu Karz with them. Abu Karz was an expert tracker and he managed to trace the Messenger's tracks up to a grotto at Mount Thowr. He told them that Muhammad (s.a.w.) had ended there, and, if he was not there, he must have flown away, or dived into the earth.(31)

Allah, the Exalted, had sent a spider which immediately spread its web over the entrance of the grotto. The conspirators did not think that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) could be behind flimsy threads it had woven. Thus, they were misled. Then, under the protection of the dark night, Imam Ali (a.s.) and Hind bin Abu Halah, hurried to the grotto to see the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.).(32)

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) discussed with Imam Ali (a.s.) what he should do during his emigration to Madinah. He told Imam Ali (a.s.) to stay behind in Mecca to hand the deposits of the people back to them, and then to join him in Madinah, bringing with him Fatimah al-Zahra' (a.s.) and the rest of the women of his household.

WAITING IN QUBA

After a few days walk, the convoy arrived at "Quba" where the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) called on Kulthum bin Hadm, one of the heads of Bani Amru bin Awf.(33) There he built the "Mosque of Quba," while waiting for Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.).(34) He dictated a letter asking Imam Ali (a.s.) to join him. The letter was carried by Abu Waqid al-Laithi.

Imam Ali (a.s.) had already carried out what the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) had told him to do before his emigration. He had returned the deposits which had been entrusted to the Messenger

of Allah (s.a.w.). He had the howdahs ready to carry the women, Fatimah bint Muhammad (a.s.), Fatimah bint Asad, Fatimah bint Hamzah and Fatimah bint Zubair. Thus the caravan was called the "Caravan of the Four Fatimahs."

Then he ordered some of the believers to leave the town at night, while he, the women and Abu Waqid al-Laithi, travelled boldly during the daytime.(35)

Within a few days the convoy arrived in Quba. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) received them. He embraced Imam Ali (a.s.) and wept for the pains and the hardships they had to suffer. Imam Ali (a.s.) had walked over the hot sands of the desert to reach the Holy Prophet. His feet were swollen and bloodied...then the Holy Prophet prayed for him. This produced instantaneous relief.(36)

On Friday, 16th of Rabi'i, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) left Quba for Madinah. Quba lies two miles (approx. 3.2 kms) south of Madinah. The Holy Prophet's (s.a.w.) caravan was enthusiastically received by the people in many districts through which they passed. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) arrived at a place where his mosque was afterwards built.

There, the Messenger's (s.a.w.) mount halted. The Messenger (s.a.w.) dismounted, and went with Abu Ayub Ansari (may Allah be pleased with him) as his guest. Later, he called for a mosque to be built on the spot where his camel had halted, together with rooms for his household. His room was built next to A'ishah's. (37)

Tasks After Emigration

Madinah entered a new era of its history with the arrival of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). There he erected the pillars of the realm of the Qur'an, and fortified it so as to be a lighthouse radiating the beacon of Truth to all horizons, and dispersing the dense darkness of the Age of Ignorance (Jahiliyah).

After the higrāh (emigration), the Mission transformed into a state providing much means of protection and might. This did not imply that an end had come to the enemy's menace and plots to extinguish the light of Islam however. On the contrary, the forces of ignorance, with their diverse aspects, resolved to wage war against Islam and its state. Many tribes entered the arena against Islam and the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), as they realized that their very existence was endangered by this religion and code of life. Now that Islam had organized into a state, with a

governing head and an army for defense, it was catering to its needs and carrying out its objectives. It was more a threat than ever to the idol worshippers' dominance over the lands of Arabia.

Therefore, the post emigration period placed before the Muslims wider and more important tasks such as strengthening the state and guarding it, building a society and consolidating it, repelling the enemy, spreading the message of Islam and its unique way of life.

The nature of the struggle changed from being a struggle among individuals and tribes, or the nobility and unarmed commoners who possessed nothing but their religion and faith in Allah, to an organized military conflict between forces brought together by common interests and desires, even if temporarily on the one side, and the great blossom of Islam as the danger which would destroy their very existence on the other. This military conflict exploded in an unprecedented way in history.

It suffices to know that the state, built on the Qur'an, witnessed, within the ten years that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) spent in Madinah, dozens of military operations, defensive and offensive wars, in which the Muslims made numerous sacrifices and faced all kinds of difficulties. But, at last, the existence of Arab Ignorance was overcome, and the state of Islam prevailed over the whole Arab Peninsula.

Going over the history of those crucial early years of the Final Message, we realize that the role of Imam Ali bin Abi) was unsurpassed. In all the wars Islam fought against Talib (a.s.), its enemies, Imam Ali (a.s.) was always the victor, not merely through taking part in the excursions in person, but by his sacrifices and bravery which surpassed all others. His combat skills and feats of daring were so well known that many of the enemy would not face him, knowingly, on the battlefield.

It is worthwhile to refer to some of the battles fought by the Islamic forces in those days and Imam Ali's (a.s.) specific role in each of them.

1. THE BATTLE OF BADR:

Badr lies 200 miles from Mecca and 80 miles from Madinah. It was the site of the first battle fought by the forces of the Islamic state. The Muslims were outnumbered by 3:1 by an army of Meccans led by Abu Jahl. In the winter of 2 A.H. (after higrāh) his army was proceeding toward Madinah when the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) sent out his forces of 313 to prevent bloodshed inside the city limits.

The provisions of the Muslims was scanty. Three or four men had to share one camel, taking turns riding. The standard bearer of this small courageous band was Imam Ali (a.s.).(38) There was a

single horseman-- Miqdad bin Aswad Kindi. Some of the Muslims were armed only with sticks made from palm trees.

Warfare in those days was quite different than what we know today. Before the general battle began, a number of duels were fought between the leading warriors Of each side. When the Muslims reached the fertile vale of Badr, a favorite watering place and camping ground on the caravan route, three stations northwards from Mecca, the Prophet ordered a halt, taking suitable positions near a stream of fresh water, to await the arrival of the infidel army On the next day, Friday, the 17th of Ramadhan, the enemy blowing their trupets, approached the Muslims.(39)

Three of the infidel warriors, Utbah, the father-in-law of Abu Sufyan, his brother, Shaibah, and Al-Walid came out of the ranks and arrogantly challenged the Muslims. Three Ansars of Madinah immediately stepped out to accept the challenge. The Meccans were outraged and refused to fight the Ansars saying: "We have not come all this way to cross arms with the Madinites, against whom we bear no grudge. We challenge the people of Mecca who have the courage to defy us."

Upon hearing this Imam Ali (a.s.) and Ubaidah, both cousins of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), and Hamzah, his uncle, responded to the challenge. Sir Thomas Bodley (1545-1613), the English diplomat and founder of the Bodleian Library, says: "At the taunt of the Quraishites, Ali dashed out of the Muslim ranks glittering in breastplate and helmet. He was soon followed by Ubaidah bin al-Harith, a paternal cousin of Muhammad, and Hamzah who wore an ostrich feather in his cuirass. The three companions were thus closely related to Muhammad and fulfilled the Quraish demand for Hashimite blood!"

Col. Bodley continues, "The three duels were as rapid as they were murderous. Hamzah killed Shaibah, while Ali killed Al-Walid. Ubaidah was mortally wounded, but before he fell, Ali and Hamzah were able to come to his rescue. Hamzah hurled himself at Utbah, and with a sweep of his sword cut off his head. In a few minutes three of Mecca's most important warriors had been sent to find out the truth about the hell which Muhammad had promised them!"

"Three more Meccans ventured forward from Abu Jahl's army to challenge Imam Ali (a.s.) and Hamzah. They too went down before the sword of Islam. A further three were dealt the same fate. In a moment of hesitation, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) sent his soldiers charging into a general attack."(40)

The Muslims invoked Allah to help them and give them victory over their enemy. Allah, the Exalted, responded by supplying them with angels: "When you sought aid from your Lord, so He answered you: I will assist you with a thousand of the angels following one another." Holy Qur'an (8:9)

The line of Quraish wavered and a number of their bravest and noblest fell; they took to flight ignominiously. In their haste to escape they threw away their armour and abandoned their transport animals with all their camp and equipment. The battle ended with the death of seventy of the unbelievers, almost half of them killed by Imam Ali (a.s.) alone.(41)

2. THE BATTLE OF UHUD:

Thirteen months later, the Messenger Of Allah (s.a.w.), had given the standard of the Muhajirin (the emigrants) to Imam Ali (a.s.) once again. This time at Uhud. It was the 7th of Shawwal in the year 3 A.H. Again the soldiers of Islam faced the treacherous Quraish of Mecca.

The Quraish, led by Abu Sufyan, advanced in the form of a crescent and the right wing of their cavalry was led by Khalid bin Walid, a notorious warrior. Abu Amru, a Meccan champion, stepping forward with his fifty archers, showered arrows towards the Muslims who retaliated promptly. Thus the fight began. The Meccan archers withdrew and their standard bearer, Talha bin Abi Talha, coming forth, challenged the Muslims. Imam Ali (a.s.) stepped forward and struck off one of his legs. He fell and another champion hoisted the standard. He was killed by Hamzah. A third now took the standard and was slain by Imam Ali (a.s.) Thus nine or ten standard bearers fell, one after the other, by Imam Ali's (a.s.) sword alone.

It is narrated by many authorities that when Imam Ali (a.s.) struck off the leg Talha, as he fell to the ground his lower garment became loosened and fell off. Instead of finishing him off, Imam Ali (a.s.) turned away from him and the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) questioned him about his behavior he said that the man was nude and entreated for the sake of Allah to spare his life.(42)

Imam Ali (a.s.) and Hamzah, the champions of Badr, unsparingly dealing out death, worked havoc among the enemy. Hamza, however, while duelling with Saba bin Abd-al-Uzzah, a Meccan champion, was treacherously speared from behind by Wahshi, an Ethiopian slave, who lurked behind a rock for this very purpose, having been promised his freedom by Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan. She was present at the battle and looking for revenge for the death of her father and brother slain by Imam Ali and Hamzah in the battle of Badr.

Imam Ali (a.s.) and two other Muslim champions charged the enemy. The force of the charge broke the enemy's ranks, they wavered and Imam Ali (a.s.) and his aides gained the enemy camp. The Meccans turned and fled, leaving their camp to the Muslims who at once proceeded to appropriate it.

It appeared victory was on the Muslims' side. But the warriors whom the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) had ordered to cover them from the back at Mount Uhud, seeing defeat of the disbelievers and urged by their greed, left their posts to get their portion of the booty. This gave a

golden opportunity to Khalid bin Walid, to mount an attack on the Muslims' rear. The situation turned against the Muslims and in favor of the disbelievers. The Muslims lost many of their best. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) himself was wounded in the face. A rumor began that the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.) had been killed.

The Muslims were checked. They found themselves surrounded by the Meccans, fearing the death of their leader, confused and off-guard. Discipline could not be restored. Some were saying that Muhammad would not have been killed had he been a true Prophet, others were talking about seeking pardon from Abu Sufyan and taking refuge with him. The following verses were revealed about these 'Muslims':

"And Muhammad is no more than a Prophet; the Prophets have already passed away before him; if then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels? And whoever turns back upon his heels, he will by no means do harm to Allah in the least; and Allah will reward the grateful." Holy Qur'an (3: 143)

"O you who believe! if you obey those who disbelieve, they will turn you back upon your heels, so you will turn back losers." Holy Qur'an (3:148)

"Remember when you ran off precipitately on the heights and looked not back any of you, while the Prophet was calling you from the rear! So He has inflicted on you with anguish after anguish, that you might not grieve at what you lose, nor at what befell you; and Allah is Aware of what you do." Holy Qur'an (3:152)

These verses refer to the behavior and conduct of the majority of the Muslims at the battle of Uhud. An enquiry into the details as to who is Who in Islam with reference to the reports about the conduct of the companions in the several defensive battles fought to save Islam and the Muslims, would disclose as to the legitimacy of the claim to companionship of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) of many of those who later on, with selfish motives managed to become the leaders of the Muslims and consequently misled them also in religious matters.(43) Of course, many true believers resolved to fight for their sincere belief even though their beloved prophet might be dead. Their thirst for martyrdom was quenched.

Now the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) was deserted by his main force, only Imam Ali (a.s.), Abu Dajjanah and Sahl bin Hunaif surrounded the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) to defend him from attack by the forces of Abu Sufyan. Imam Ali (a.s.) was fighting hard to save the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and Islam. His gallantry was such that he was praised by Arch Angel Gabriel (a.s.) whose voice was heard saying:

"There is no (victorious) youth save Ali! There is no sword (weapon of success) except the

'Dhulfiqar'! (the sword of Imam Ali (a.s.)) (44)

Imam Ali (a.s.) received sixteen wounds in this battle, four of which were so serious that he was falling down from his horse. On each occasion a beautiful youth took hold of him, lifted him up to his saddle and soothed him by saying: "Go on fighting, O hero! Allah and His Prophet appreciate your services." This was none other than Gabriel the Evangel (a.s.), who praised Imam Ali (a.s.) to the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.) for his zeal and ardent devotion to him at the time when all others had deserted him. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) told Gabriel (a.s.):

"No wonder! Ali comes from me and I myself come from him." Whereupon Gabriel (a.s.) remarked that he also came from both of them. (All were created from the same Light.)(45)

On finding out that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) was only wounded and not killed, the Muslims began to rally around him. The Meccans, having no courage to rout them, contented themselves with the honor of snatching back the victory from the Muhammad (s.a.w.); and left the field after mangling and mutilating the bodies of the Muslims. Halting at Rowha, 8 miles from Uhud, Abu Sufyan felt uneasy at the utter fruitlessness of his campaign having taken the biggest loss of men, and began to contemplate a raid on Madinah. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), suspecting some treachery, resolved on immediate action and pursued them the next morning as far as Hamra al-Asad. He was informed that the Meccans, receiving intelligence of his advance, had already taken their road homeward.

3. THE BATTLE OF AHZAB (THE ALLIES):

Again in the month of Shawwal, two years later in 5 A.H., another great war was on the rise. The Jews allied themselves with the unbelievers of Mecca led by Abu Sufyan, the Bedouin tribes of Ghatafan, Solaim, Bani Qais and Bani Asad as well as the Jews of Kaibar to destroy Islam and its Prophet in a final escapade.

This battle is historical in its nature and an example of the excellent defensive capabilities of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). it is known also as the Battle of Khandaq (ditch or trench) because of the innovative strategy of digging a trench fifteen feet wide and as deep along the undefended north-west edge of the city. The enemy soon approached and were struck dumb with astonishment. This mode of defence was unknown to the Arabs, and they were at a loss to understand how to overcome this obstacle so they laid siege.

Madinah was besieged by 10,000 idolators (46) from diverse clans. Banu Quraidah severed their peace agreement with the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and joined the ranks of the unbelievers. Thus, the balance of forces changed in favor of the enemy. The Muslims were deeply frightened. The Qur'an describes them saying:

"When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes turned dull and the hearts rose up to the throats, and you began to think diverse thoughts concerning Allah." Holy Qur'an (33:10)

More than a fortnight elapsed, when a party of the besiegers' horsemen found the narrowest and weakest guarded part of the ditch. Amru bin Abd Wid, Nawfal bin Abdullah and Dzarar bin Al-Khattab, led by Ikrimah bin Abu Jahl, spurring their horses leaped forward towards the Muslims and challenged them to single combat.

Amru bin Abd Wid, on horseback, strolled conceitedly on the other side of the trench, taunting the Muslims and taking pride in his heroic deeds. He, then, shouted: "Is there anyone among you who will challenge me in a single combat?" Imam Ali (a.s.) asked the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) to permit him to accept the challenge, but the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: "Sit down. It is Amru."

Abd Wid repeated his challenge debasing the Muslims and mocking them, saying: "Where is your Paradise to which you allege to go if you were killed? So, why don't you send me a man accepting my challenge?" As none of the Muslims showed willingness to accept his challenge, Imam Ali (a.s.) repeated his request: "I am for him, O Messenger of Allah!" The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) again declined saying:

"Sit down, it is Amru!" Imam Ali (a.s.) showed little respect for Amru and others like him, and said, "What if he is Amru!". At this stage the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) agreed to let him go. He gave Ali (a.s.) his own sword, Dhulfiqar, dressed him with his own armor, and put his own turban on his head, and then he said,

"O Lord! this is my brother and cousin. So, my Lord, do not let me alone. You are the best of inheritors!"(47) Ali went to the battle-field and talked to Amru, saying:

"you had made a promise to God that no man of the Quraish would give you two courses without you choosing one of them." "Indeed," replied Amru, "What is that""

"I summon you to Allah, His Messenger and to Islam," Imam Ali (a.s.) said.

"I have no need of that," he answered.

"Then I summon you to fight, said Imam Ali (a.s.).

"Go back," he told him, "There was great friendship between me and your father, and I do not

like to kill you." "But, by Allah, I like to kill you."

Amru became angry and darted at Imam Ali (a.s.), who faced him boldly, as usual, and killed him. The voice of Imam Ali (a.s.) was heard heralding "Allahu Akbar" (Allah is the Greatest!) which indicated victory.(48)

When Imam Ali (a.s.) returned from the battlefield, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) received him and said:

"The fighting of Ali bin Abi Talib with Amru bin Abd Wid is greater in measure than the actions of my people until the Day of Resurrection."(49) After the killing of Amru bin Abd Wid, Imam Ali (a.s.) had the gap in the trench which Amru had breached blocked, and took his post at that point(50) with the intention of confronting anyone who might try to cross the trench. Otherwise, the army of the disbelievers, with their thousands, would have invaded Madinah and beaten the Muslims.

Thus, Imam Ali's (a.s.) heroism in the Battle of Ahzab was the most decisive factor in victory for the Muslims, and in defeating the army of the disbelievers. The death of Amru struck terror in the hearts of the enemy and they began to abandon the fight group by group. Soon Abu Sufyan, as well, had to retreat.

The crushing defeat suffered by the unbelievers in the Battle of Ahzab at the hands of Imam Ali (a.s.) so shattered their power and pride that they never afterwards thought of advancing towards Medinah with any sinister design. This battle also showed them beyond doubt that with a selfless supporter, and a dauntless warrior like Imam Ali (a.s.) to protect the Holy Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.) and his Mission, Islam had come to stay.(51)

Following the Battle of Ahzab, several minor wars took place in which the reputation of Imam Ali (a.s.) gained great notoriety and fear in the hearts of anyone who opposed him. Many great warriors would refuse to face him on the battlefield and sometimes Imam Ali (a.s.) in order to put an end to a battle would disguise himself or move stealthily at night so that the enemy would not recognise him. The battles of Banu Quraidah, Banu Mustalaeq and Fadak are some of these.

4. THE BATTLE OF KHAIBAR:

Khaibar is situated about 100 miles to the north east of Medinah, and means, literally, a fortified place. The Jews of Khaibar constituted a serious threat to the Muslims. The Jews who had lost their fights against the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) had slowly and imperceptibly collected in the vicinity of this fort and had begun to incite their brethren to wage war against the Muslims.

The valley surrounding Khaibar was considered as one of the most fertile of the desert oases and

its great gardens of date palms were most jealously guarded by the various Jewish tribes whose territory it was. The Jews of Khaibar were considered the bravest warriors, and they posed a most powerful challenge to the supremacy of Islam. The valley of Khaibar was studded with fortresses strongly situated on rocky hillocks, which numbered about ten. Many of these strongholds were considered impregnable.(52)

The Jews, counting on their large numbers and upon their valor as well as their strongholds, resolved to resist. When the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) heard of this he set out with 1,400 Muslims to face them. The Jews, about 10,000 strong, all armored, collected themselves in their forts. But, when besieged in any of their citadels, they could not resist very long and eventually evacuated it after one or two sorties. The Muslims advanced fighting and subduing the forts until the last one appeared to be invulnerable.

The Jews rallied around their chief, the king of their nation, Kinanah bin Al-Rab. He lived in this strongly fortified citadel of Khaibar named Al-Qamus, built on a steep rock and considered totally unapproachable. Three times the Muslim army returned unsuccessful from this fort. Ultimately, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) made his famous announcement which marks one of the most brilliant additions in the laurels of Imam Ali (a.s.).

Realising that the Muslim leaders present there were unable to subdue this last fort which occupied the key position for the Jews, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), pointing to the banner of the Muslim army, announced:

"Tomorrow I shall hand over this banner to a man who attacks relentlessly and never flees away; he loves Allah and His Prophet and Allah and His Prophet love him, and he would not return until Allah grants him victory."(53)

This announcement kindled a desire in the heart of every Muslim present to be the man who was "beloved of God and His Prophet." The most covetous for this unique honor was Sa'd bin Waqqas and Umar bin Khattab. No one thought of Imam Ali (a.s.), the cousin and Vicegerent of the Prophet. The hero of all previous wars was suffering badly from sore eyes and could not see anything.

Imam Ali (a.s.), who had been left behind in Medinah because of his illness, could not remain there and despite his loss of sight, left for Khaibar reaching there just on the eve of this great day.

The longed for morning dawned, but the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) appeared not to take notice of anyone. When he broke the silence he asked for Imam Ali (a.s.) and all, in one voice, answered that he was at a considerable distance and was suffering badly from sore eyes so that he was utterly unable to see. The Prophet commanded them to bring Imam Ali (a.s.) to him. On being

informed of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) call, Imam Ali (a.s.) presented himself to the Prophet (s.a.w.) led by Selma bin Akwas he himself could not see his way.

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), taking Imam Ali's (a.s.) head into his lap, applied the saliva of his mouth to his eyes and prayed for his recovery. Instantaneously, his eyes became so clear as if he had never suffered from the disease. It is said that throughout his life he never had any more trouble with his eyes again.

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) handed over the banner to Imam Ali (a.s.), armed him with Dhulfiqar, and thus designated him as the man whom Allah and His Prophet loved. He directed him to lead the assault and to fight until the Jews submitted. Imam Ali (a.s.) with his force scrambled up the stony rock in front of the fortress and planted the banner over its top resolving never to recede until the citadel was taken.

The Jews sallied forth to drive down the assailants. A Jewish priest asked Imam Ali (a.s.) his name which he gave as Ali bin Abi Talib or Haidar (the name his mother gave him). The priest, hearing the name, warned his men that the assailant would not withdraw without capturing the citadel. However, Harith, a Jewish champion, who had vigorously repulsed the previous attacks, stepped forward and killed several of the Muslims. Imam Ali (a.s.) advanced and killed Harith in hand to hand combat. The brother of Harith was a gigantic man with a huge form. He was unequalled in valor among the Jews. To revenge the death of his brother he came out covered from his neck to his waist with a double coat of mail wearing a helmet for protection against the stroke of a scimitar. He had a huge gird on both his sides and brandished a big spear with tripleforked sharp pointed heads.

Stepping forward from the Jewish lines he challenged his adversaries to single combat.

"I am Marhab," he cried, "as all Khaibar knows, the greatest warrior in the world." None among the Muslims would dare to go forward to confront him. Imam Ali (a.s.) himself advanced wearing a scarlet vest covered with a breastplate of steel saying: "I am he whom his mother named Haidar, a lion of the wilderness; I weigh my foes in a gigantic balance." Imam Ali's words were not meaningless. He knew, through inspiration, that Marhab had lately dreamt of a rugged lion tearing him to pieces; so he reminded Marhab of the dream.

The words had their effect. As they closed in on each other, Marhab made a thrust at Imam Ali (a.s.) with his three-pronged lance. Imam Ali (a.s.) warded off the strike and before Marhab could recover, he dealt him a blow with Dhulfiqar which divided his buckler, passed through his helmet right down to his chest severing him in half. He fell lifeless to the ground and the winner announced his victory in his usual manner of shouting, "Allahu Akbar".

The Muslims rushed forward in a body, seven of the Jews' most distinguished warriors fell by Imam Ali's (a.s.) sword. The Jews retreated into the citadel with the Muslims hotly in pursuit. In the heat of the battle, a Jew dealt a blow on Imam Ali's (a.s.) arm knocking down his shield which another Jew ran away with. Imam Ali (a.s.), being enraged, performed superhuman feats of prowess, he jumped over a trench, approached the iron gate of the fortress, wrenched it off its hinges and used it as a buckler for the remainder of the battle.

Abu Rafe, one of those who stormed the fort with Imam Ali (a.s.), testified that after the war he examined the gate and tried with seven other persons to turn it over but the attempt failed. The citadel was captured and the victory was decisive. The Jews lost 93 men, while only 19 Muslims were martyred throughout the campaign.

According to Suyuti in "Tarikh al-Khulafa", Imam Ali (a.s.) held the gate in one hand, making his companions stand on the flat gate, went on placing them across the ditch by a movement of his hand. Suyuti adds that later the gate could not be moved by 80 persons! (54) After the victory, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) received Imam Ali (a.s.) with a warm embrace and a kiss on the brow. He said:

"Ali, had I not been afraid that the Muslims would start regarding you as the Christians regard Jesus, I would have said things about you which would have made the Muslims venerate you and to consider the dust of your feet as something worth venerating; but it will suffice to say that you are from me and I am from you; you will inherit me and I will inherit you; you are to me what Aaron was to Moses; you will fight for my causes, you will be nearest to me on the Day of Judgement; you will be next to me at the Fountain of Kawthar; enmity against you is enmity against me; a war against you is a war against me; your friendship is my friendship; to be at peace with you is to be at peace with me; your flesh is my flesh; your blood is my blood; who obeys you obeys me; truth is on your tongue, in your heart and in your mind. You have as much faith in Allah as I have. You are a door to me. As per the order of Allah, I give you these tidings that your friends will be rewarded in Heaven and your enemies are doomed for Hell."(55)

The terms of surrender of the Jews of Khaibar have been recorded as such: The inhabitants were free to leave the country after giving up their whole property to the victors, each one taking a camel load of food stuffs with him. Concealment of valuables was deemed an infraction of the conditions and the violator was subject to capital punishment. People preferring to live in the country might occupy and reside in the houses possessed by them and might also cultivate the land they occupied; but no immovable property was to be owned by them, they being treated as tenants bound to cede half of their products to the conqueror who could put them in exile at his will and pleasure.

5. IN THE BATTLE OF HUNAIN:

It seems that the month of Shawwal was the month for wars. Again in this month in the year 8 A.H. the Battle of Hunain took place. The tribes of Banu Hawazin and Banu Thaqeef who lived outside of Mecca had remained outside of the growing state of Islam. They began mobilising their forces to attack the Muslims and had collected an army of 20,000. The Muslims marched out to meet them with 12,000 forces. The unbelievers hid themselves in the hilly area of Hunain between Ta'if and Mecca and the Muslims reached there in the early morning when the unbelievers gave them a surprise attack from their hiding places.

The Muslims, taken unprepared lost all courage and great confusion followed in their ranks. They began to run away. Nobody remained with the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) except Imam Ali (a.s.),⁽⁵⁶⁾ Al Abbas and some of Ahlul-Bait (the close relatives of the Messenger (s.a.w.)). Their steadfastness brought victory after the Muslims were urged on by their example to return to the battlefield.

These are a few examples of the heroic and miraculous achievements of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) recorded before the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), his leader, in the most critical moments of the early days of Islam.⁽⁵⁷⁾

Imam Ali (a.s.) took part in all the wars faced by the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) except the Battle of Tabuk⁽⁵⁸⁾, where he did not participate in obedience to the Messenger's (s.a.w.) order. In all these wars he played the largest role, not counting those which he had led himself. Any researcher looking into the life of Imam Ali (a.s.), especially concerning his battles, will be spell-bound at his unrivalled bravery and the beneficial sacrifices he made. Yet heroism, as a mere attribute, was not the most prominent characteristic of his leading example for the sake of Allah (Jihad), though it was strategically employed and remains a feature of Imam Ali's (a.s.) personality. The most important aspect of his heroism was concerning his faithfulness to Allah and his sacrifice for Him.

Ali's faith in Allah was the only motive behind his great episodes of heroism which the history of Islam has recorded in its most illuminated pages, the like of which it has not been reproduced about anyone else.

Many of the elite Arab rulers, not to speak of the ordinary people, have at times shown, in many military situations, weakness and defeat, yet as far as Imam Ali (a.s.) is concerned, history records nothing on his account but resistance and triumph in all circumstances regardless of whether others remained to help him or deserted him at any stage of the battle. This is a fact which can be explained only through the merits which Imam Ali (a.s.) had been endowed with: true faith, seeking Allah's help and depending on Him, serving Him alone, and being indifferent to anything except Him, big or small. Further, Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) enjoyed superior valor and

resolution and was fearless and sublime.

Islamic Perspective Of Imam Ali

No one in Islam has ever received such praise and esteem as Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) received in the Islamic message, which asks its followers not only to evaluate and endear him, but also to adhere to his example and follow in his footsteps.

The Glorious Qur'an, the noble traditions and factual history contain texts and narratives which speak volumes of Imam Ali's (a.s.) merits and applaud him. The compliments are like medals which decorate his chest to distinguish him; or they are in the form of rules and commands obliging the Muslims to follow his course and guidance.

Of the "medals" which Imam Ali (a.s.) received from Allah, the Exalted, and the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) we can mention the following: 1. "...Allah's wish is only to remove uncleanness far from you, O Folk of the Household; and cleanse you with a thorough cleansing." Holy Qur'an (33:33)

Commentators on this verse say it refers specifically to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Hussain (a.s.), when the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) demanded a cloak and covered them all with it. When this verse was revealed, Um Salamah, the Messenger's wife asked: "Am I among your household?"

"No," the Messenger replied, "but you are all right."(59)

2. "And whoever disputes with you concerning him, after the knowledge which has come unto you, say (unto them): Come! We will summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves, then we will pray humbly (to our Lord) and (solemnly) invoke the curse of Allah upon those who lie." Holy Qur'an (3:61)

Islamic commentators of all sects confirm that this verse was revealed when the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), accompanied Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Hussain (a.s.), went to meet the Christians of Najran for "Mubalah" (Malediction). When the Christians saw him coming with his household, they were afraid of the consequences and excused themselves for not going through with the "Mubalah" , and agreed to pay tribute in submission to his authority.(60)

3. "And (they) feed with food the needy wretch, the orphan and the prisoner, for love of Him, (saying): We feed you, for the sake of Allah only. We wish for no reward nor thanks from you. We fear from our Lord a day of frowning and of fate. Therefore Allah has warded off from them the evil of that day, and has made them find brightness and joy." Holy Qur'an (76:8-11)

Commentators unanimously agree that this verse was revealed in favor of Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Hussain (a.s.), when Hasan and Husain (a.s.) were ill, and Ali, Fatimah (a.s.) and Fiddah (their maid) had vowed to Allah to fast for three days if the two boys recovered from their illness. They did recover, and the Household (a.s.) fasted.

At sunset on the first day, a beggar knocked at their door, and they gave him what they had of barley-bread. On the second day an orphan knocked at the door and asked for food, and they fed him. On their third day of fasting, a war-prisoner came to them, and they gave him their food. Thus, the Household (a.s.) fasted for three days without tasting anything except water. Hence the revelation of these generous verses glorifies them, extols their deed, and singles them out as examplers for the others to follow.(61)

4. "Count you the slaking of a pilgrim's thirst and tendance of the inviolable place of worship as (equal to the worth of him) who believes in Allah and the Last Day, and strives in the way of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah. Allah guides not wrongdoing folk." Holy Qur'an (9:19)

This verse was revealed when Talhah bin Shaibah boasted to Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib, saying: "I have more authority on the House (Ka'bah) because I am more authorized as I am responsible for giving out water to the pilgrims." At that moment Imam Ali (a.s.) passed by them and asked them: "What are you boasting about?" They told him. He said, "I was given as a child what none of you were given."

"What was that?" they asked him.

He replied, "I was the first to pray in Islam, and I am the Fighter (for the sake of Allah)."

Hence the revelation of the said verse was in praise of what Imam Ali (a.s.) was proud of (62)

Apart from this high appreciation of Imam Ali (a.s.) on the part of the Glorious Qur'an, the honorable traditions speak further in this respect: 1. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said:

"I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate."(63) 2. The Prophet (s.a.w.) also said, addressing Imam Ali (a.s.):

"You are to me as Aaron was to Moses, only there is no prophet after me."(64)

3. And again addressing Imam Ali (a.s.):

"Only believers will love you and only hypocrites will hate you!"(65) 4. On the day of fraternization between Muhajirin (the emigrants) and Ansars (the inhabitants of Medinah who supported the Muhajirin). The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said to Imam Ali (a.s.):

"You are my brother and I am your brother. If anybody asks you, tell him: I am the servant of Allah and the brother of His Messenger. No one would claim this after you but a liar."(66) These were some of the texts which praised Imam Ali (a.s.). For more such texts look up Fada'il Khamsah min "al-Sihah al-Sittah", "Yanabi' al-Mawaddah", Ahmad bin Hanbal's "Musnad", and "Dala'il al-Sidiq", the chapter titled "Fadha'il Amir al- Mu'minin wa Imamatihi", and other references.

IMAM ALI'S MERITS:

As to the texts which impose loyalty to Imam Ali (a.s.) as the Imam and leader of the Muslims, we may quote the following: "Only Allah is your Wali and His Prophet and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay the poor-rate while they bow." Holy Qur'an (5:55)

Interpreters of the Qur'an say that this verse was revealed specifically about Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), (67) confirming the compulsion of adhering to him as an Imam, an ideological authority and a social and political leader of the nation. It was revealed when Imam Ali (a.s.) took off his ring from his finger, while kneeling in his prayer, and gave it to the poor, in charity. The verse was revealed on this very occasion, and it confirmed the leadership of Imam Ali (a.s.).

Ghadir Speech

This was the speech which the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) addressed to the Muslims at a place called "Ghadir Khum", on his return from his last pilgrimage to Mecca, in which Barra' bin Azib says: "We came with the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), in the year of his last pilgrimage, to a place on the road, where he summoned the people to "collective prayer", and took Ali's hand and addressing the people, said:

Am I not more appropriate for authority over you than yourselves?" "Yes," they answered.

"Am I not more appropriate for authority over every believer than himself?" "Yes," they replied:

"Then, this (holding high Ali's hand) has authority over whom I have authority. O Allah, befriend whoever befriends him!"(68) Or, according to the wording of Ahmad bin Hanbal, the Messenger

of Allah (s.a.w.) said, "Whosoever I have authority over, Ali has also authority over him. O Allah! befriend whoever befriends him and be hostile to whoever is hostile to him."(69)

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said:

"Ali is with the truth, and the truth is with Ali. They will never separate until they join me at the Pool (Kawthar) in the hereafter."(70) In another narrative, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), addressing Ammar bin Yasir, said: "...And if all the people went through a valley, and Ali went through another, go through the valley through which Ali went, disregarding all other people."(71)

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) also specified:

"Every prophet has a vicegerent and inheritor..."(72) These are a few of the many confirmed and authentic Islamic texts attested to by all Muslims.(73)

THE CALIPHS' PERIOD

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) passed away with his head on the lap of Imam Ali (a.s.).(74) He departed to his Lord, the Most High, while still worried about the future of the Mission and the nation. This had been shown at his visiting the graves of the believers in Baqi', at the beginning of his fatal illness, when he said, "O inhabitants of the graves! Rejoice at what you are in, unlike what the people are in. Trials are coming like the dark parts of the night, their first following their last...."(75)

He continuously used to stress the necessity of adherence to 'Al-Thaqalain' (The Scripture and his pure progeny).(76) In the last hour of his life he asked for an inkpot and a sheet to write on it to the nation what would protect them from going astray after him.(77) These and others were signs of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) being worried about the future of the Islamic progress, despite having taken care to fortify the nation against falling into trials.

No sooner had the soul of the Messenger (s.a.w.) sublimated out of his pure body, and had Imam Ali (a.s.) and the housefolk started to prepare for the funeral, than the Ansars and some of the Muhajirin held a meeting in "Saqifah bani Sa'idah" to appoint a successor to lead the Muslims after the Prophet (s.a.w.)

After sharp and long arguments, under a climate of tension, anxiety, violence and dispute, Umar bin Al-Khattab hastened to give the pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr (78) as the Caliph after the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), and demanded from those present to do as he did. Imam Ali (a.s.) knew nothing about what was going on, but the news broke to his ears from the noise made by the people leaving the meeting at Al-Saqifah on their way to the Prophet's Mosque.

Imam Ali (a.s.) and the housefolk were still busy in funeral arrangements for the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), whose pure body remained three days (79) so that the Muslims could pay their last respects to him before his burial. As the Imam (a.s.) was not convinced by what had happened, and was firmly believing in his own right to Caliphate, he withdrew from the society and kept away from the people and their affairs for six months, during which his voice could not be heard in the so-called "Apostasy Wars" nor elsewhere.(80)

Then certain grave incidents happened endangering Islam and threatening its very existence, such as the appearance of fake prophets after the passing away of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). There were many of them in the Arab Peninsula, such as: Musailamah al-Kaddab (the liar), Talhah bin Khuwailid al-Affak (the falsifier), Sijah bint al-Harth Addajjalah (the impostor) and others. Their appearance was a real threat to the Islamic State. At the same time, the hypocrites became stronger and their power grew in Medinah. The Romans and the Persians were also laying ambush for the Muslims.(81)

Furthermore, diverse political groups began to appear in the Islamic society as a result of the Saqifah allegiance. Imam Ali (a.s.), in dealing with the caliphate, was in accordance to the interests of Islam, to protect it and its unity against being torn to pieces and lost, and to realize the high Islamic objectives for which he had fought.

In a letter, Imam Ali (a.s.) recalls these times in this respect:

"...at every stage I kept myself aloof of the struggle for supremacy and power-politics. Still I found heretics had openly taken to heresy and schism and were trying to undermine and ruin the religion preached by our Holy Prophet (s.a.w.). I felt afraid that even after seeing and recognizing the evil, if I did not stand up to help Islam and Muslims it would be a worse calamity to me than losing authority and power over you, which is only transient and temporary. Therefore, when I stand up amidst the pressing swarm of innovations and schisms, the dark clouds of heresy dispersed, falsehood and factionalism were crushed and the religion was saved.(82)

But Imam Ali's (a.s.) voice was heard only when he was consulted and his opinion was sought. He tried, in this respect, to direct Islamic life in accordance with the teachings of the Message of Allah, the Most High, in legislative, executive and judicial fields.

Consequently, a historian studying the life of Imam Ali (a.s.) quickly meets hundreds of situations and events-during the caliphates of Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman--which no one but Imam Ali (a.s.) could manage and settle according to the teachings of Islam.

The three caliphs had but to consult Imam Ali (a.s.) whenever affairs in their hands became

confused. Thus, you would see him acting as a guide correcting Islamic rule in an instance, or as a judge giving his verdict in another case, or as a leader, directing the ruler to where the high Islamic ideals could be realized on the other occasions. His missionary role was tangible from the very details of his conduct during the rule of the caliphs before him.

A. THE CALIPHATE OF ABU BAKR:

1. Abu Bakr once thought to attack the Romans. On consulting with a number of the companions, they hesitated, giving no decisive guidance. But on consulting with Imam Ali (a.s.), he told him positively: "If you do, you will be victorious."

Abu Bakr was pleased with this, and said to him: "May you receive good tidings!" He then ordered the expedition under the leadership of Khalid bin Sa'id.(83)

2. At another time, Abu Bakr wanted to punish a wine-drinker. The man had said: "I drank it without knowing that it is prohibited."

Abu Bakr sent somebody to ask Imam Ali (a.s.) what to do. Amir al-Mu'minin Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

"Let the man be taken by two trustworthy Muslims amongst the Muhajirin and the Ansars, asking if anyone of them had recited to him the "prohibition verse" or if anyone had told him about it on the authority of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). If the two men testify that they did, then, punish him. If not, then ask him to repent and let him go."

The caliph did so, and finding out that the man was truthful, he released him.(84) 3. Muhammad al-Munkadir narrates that Khalid bin al-Walid wrote to the caliph Abu Bakr that he had found a man in some Arab quarters who was having sexual intercourse with another man. Abu Bakr summoned a number of the companions of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), among them Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), who had then the most decisive word.

He said:

"This is a crime committed by no nation except one, that was the people of Lot. You know how Allah treated them. I see that this man should be burnt by fire." Abu Bakr wrote to bin al-Walid to do so.(85)

4. An Archbishop of the Christians, together with a hundred of his people, put some questions to Abu Bakr. The Caliph sent for Imam Ali (a.s.) to come and answer all the questions of the Bishop. Below is one example: The Imam (a.s.) ordered some wood to be brought before him. He made a fire. When it was kindled, he asked the Bishop:

"Tell me where is the face of this fire?"

The Bishop said: "It has a face from every side of it."

Imam Ali (a.s.) said: "This fire, which is man-made, no one knows where its face is, and its creator does not resemble it: 'Unto Allah belongs the East and West and whichever you turn, there is Allah's countenance.' Nothing is hidden from our Lord?"(86)

5. The Emperor of the Romans sent an envoy to Abu Bakr asking him about a man who never hoped to go to Paradise, never feared the Fire, never feared Allah, never prayed, never prostrated, who eats carrion and blood, gives testimony to what he has never seen, likes evil and hates the truth. Abu Bakr informed Imam Ali (a.s.). He said in his reply:

"This man is a good servant of Allah. He never hopes for Paradise and never fears the Fire, but fears Allah. He never fears His injustice, but fears His justice. He neither bows nor prostrates in performing prayer on a dead body intended for burial. He eats locusts, fish and liver. He likes wealth and children: "...your possessions and your children are a test..." He testifies to the existence of Paradise and the Fire, neither of which he has ever seen, and he hates death, which is a truth."(87)

These were some examples of his role in the historical advance of Islam during the rule of Abu Bakr.

B. THE CALIPHATE OF UMAR BIN AL-KHATAB:

1. When Umar bin al-Khattab wanted to invade the Roman Empire, he consulted with the Imam (a.s.). Imam Ali (a.s.) advised him not to lead the army himself. He told him:

"...appoint an experienced officer to take charge of the invasion and place under him such soldiers who can face hardship, obey orders, and who have experience in war. If Allah grants them victory you will achieve your aim. If they are defeated you will be there at the center to protect and help the Muslims state."(88)

2. Once Baitul Mal (the Public treasury) received a lot of money from Bahrain. Umar divided it among the Muslims, yet there remained some surplus. Umar called the Muhajirin and the Ansars and asked them what he should do with the surplus. They said:

"O Amir al-Mu'minin, we have kept you too busy with our affairs to let you attend to your family, trade and your own affairs, so you may take it." Umar turned to Imam Ali (a.s.) and asked him.

"What do you say?"

"They did tell you," he replied. "You tell me," said the caliph.

The Imam (a.s.) said, "Why should you take the doubtful and leave the certain?" Then he told him about a similar situation in the life of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.).

At the end, he told him to distribute the surplus among the poor: "I advise you not to take any of this surplus for yourself, but to give it out to the poor."

Umar said: "You are right, by Allah!"(89)

3. Ibn Abbas was quoted to have said: "I heard Umar bin al-Khattab say: 'I will not leave this wealth inside the Ka'bah-. I will take it out and spend it in the way of Allah and in the way of good. Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) was there, hearing. Umar asked him, 'What do you say, by Allah? If you encourage me I will do it.'"

Imam Ali (a.s.) said, "How could you give it to us, whereas its owner is a man who would come at 'the end of time'?" Thus, Umar was convinced that the jewelery of the Ka'bah should not be touched.(90) 4. Abu Ubaidah bin Jarrah and Burrah bin Ruman al-Kalbi wrote to Umar: "People are taking to drinking wine in Al-Sham. We have (so far) punished forty, but we do not think this will do.

Umar consulted the people.

Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

"My opinion is to punish them with the penalty prescribed for falsehood, eighty lashes. Because if a man drank wine he would rave, and if he raved he would spread falsehood. So, Umar used the advice in Medinah and wrote to Abu Ubaidah, who used it in al-Sham, too."(91)

5. It is narrated that Umar bin al-Khattab one night caught a man and woman indulging in adultery. In the morning he said to the people: "If an Imam saw a man and a woman indulging in adultery and he punished them as prescribed, what would you say?" They said: "you are the Imam."

But Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) said to him: "You have no right to do so, otherwise you yourself will be punished. Allah is not satisfied in this affair with less than four witnesses."

Umar ignored the matter for a longtime, then he asked them once again about it. They answered him with their former answer, and Imam Ali (a.s.) repeated his same reply. Umar acted according to Imam Ali's (a.s.) judgement.(92)

6. On the authority of Ibn Sirin, Umar bin al-Khattab asked the people: "How many wives may a slave have?" Then he turned to Imam Ali (a.s.) and said, "I am addressing the man with the Ma'afiri (a cloak he wore)."

The Imam (a.s.) replied: "Two".(93)

7. After the conquest of al-Sham by the Muslims, Abu Ubaidah bin al-Jarrah gathered the Muslims and consulted them about marching on to Bait al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) or to Qisariyah. Ma'adh bin Jabal told him to write to Amir al- Mu'minin Umar about it. When Umar read the letter, he consulted the Muslims about it. Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

"Tell your man to descend with his army to Bait al Maqdis. After conquering it, he may go towards Qisariya, as it will be conquered after Bait al-Maqdis, if Allah wills.

This is what we had been told by the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.)."

Umar said: "Right was al-Mustafa (the Chosen one) (s.a.w.) and right you are, O Abul Hasan." Then he wrote to Abu Ubaidah to act as Imam Ali (a.s.) had advised.(94)

8. After the Muslims's victory over the Persians during Umar's rule, Umar consulted with the companions of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) about the Kufa region. Some of them said: "Let us divide it among ourselves." He, then, consulted Imam Ali (a.s.) in the matter. Imam Ali (a.s.) told him:

"If you divide it today there will remain nothing for those who will come after us. So let them cultivate it for their benefit, and in this way it will be for us and for those who will come after us."

Umar said to Imam Ali (a.s.): "May Allah make you successful...this is the (right) opinion."(95) 9-Tabari in his 'History', quotes Sa'id bin Musayab as having said:

"Umar bin Khattab gathered the people and asked them: 'With which day should we start the date?' Imam Ali (a.s.) said: "From the day when the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) emigrated from the land of idolators (Mecca)." Umar acted accordingly, and historians started to date the events accordingly, too.(96)

These were some features of the missionary role of the Imam Ali (a.s.) during the caliphate of

Umar bin Khattab.

C. THE CALIPHATE OF UTHMAN BIN AFFAN:

1. An old man married a virgin girl. She became pregnant, but the old man claimed that he had not had intercourse with her. Uthman asked the woman:

"Did the old man deflower you?"

"No," she replied.

So he ordered the prescribed punishment be administered on her. Imam Ali (a.s.) interposed saying:

"A woman has two orifices for the menstrual flow, and the orifice for urine. Perhaps the old man was close enough to her that his semen managed to flow into her menstrual orifice, and thus became pregnant."

The old man admitted, saying: "I used to discharge semen on her vulva, but without reaching the point of taking her virginity." Imam Ali said:

"The pregnancy is because of him, and the child is his. I see that he should be punished for denying it."(97) 2. On the authority of Malik's 'Muwatta' , quoting Ba'jah bin Badr Juhani, who said that a woman was brought before Uthman because she had given birth to a child only after six months of pregnancy. He was about to order her to be stoned, but Imam Ali (a.s.) told him:

"If she argued with you according to the Book of Allah, she would win. Allah, the Most High, says: "...and the bearing of him and the weaning of him is thirty months..." and He says: "Mothers shall suckle their children for two whole years, (that is) for those who wish to complete the suckling." So, two years are the suckling period and six months are the pregnancy period."

Uthman said: "Let her go."(98)

SUMMARY

These were a few examples of the great responsibility that Imam Ali (a.s.) had to understand during the Caliphs' periods. He was urged to do this by his loyalty to the Prophet's mission, to keep Islamic unity and to protect the advancement of Islam against deviation.

The second caliph recognised the importance of what Imam Ali (a.s.) did in this respect. Several

times he praised Imam Ali's (a.s.) favors and singled out their importance in the advance of the Caliphate. He once said to him, "I take refuge in Allah from having to live in a community where you are not there, O Abul- Hasan!"(99)

Part Two : Introduction

In this part of our study of the life of Amir Al-Mu'minin Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) we shall concentrate on looking at a more delicate period of his role after the death of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). This is the period of his Caliphate, undertaking the nation's direct leadership in diverse aspects of Islamic life.

This time is distinguished by events of utmost importance, especially in the fields of thought, society and politics, as we shall see. Islamic history, within the five years of Imam Ali's (a.s.) rule over the Muslims, witnessed two kinds of events: The first concerns those high values which he registered in the records of history of humanity. The values which distinguished the virtuous policy adopted by him in administering Allah's great laws and regulations, in their complete forms, with no falsifications, no intemperance, and no false-resolutions, in all aspects of life.

The second concerns the political reactions of some people which have also been recorded by Islamic history. In this section, you will read a chapter about Amir Al-Mu'minin (a.s.) striving to bring back the organs of the state to their real responsibilities of protecting the Message of Allah, the Exalted, of establishing its limitations in life, and of offering whatever advice and directives which lead to a man's happiness by building his personality and fortifying it.

You will also learn of Imam Ali's (a.s.) role in confronting the Nakithun (those who broke their allegiances to him), the Qasitun (those who deviated), and the Mariqun (those who missed the truth of the religion).

During this part of his life, Imam Amir Al-Mu'minin Ali (a.s.), erected monuments of social justice, which he personified in actual social reality by his humane practices in strict adherence to the laws of Allah, the Most High. We invoke Allah, the Exalted, to help our Islamic nation in their practical life through complete adherence to the Book of Allah and the traditions of His generous Messenger (s.a.w.) as had been incarnated in Imam Ali Abi Talib (a.s.).

THE IMAM AND THE CALIPH

After the death of Uthman bin Affan, the nation unanimously turned to Imam Ali (a.s.) and gave him the pledge of allegiance as caliph. They were overwhelmed with a wave of affection towards him. However, Imam Ali (a.s.) rejected them saying: "Let me alone, and go in search of someone else.."(100)

Imam Ali (a.s.) refused to be a captive of emotions, as it was probable that the hatred of some people against Uthman was responsible for kindling similar feelings towards him, as well as aggravating the trend against him. Imam Ali (a.s.) wanted voluntary acceptance of his Imamate. Furthermore, Imam Ali (a.s.) was not of those who could be induced by post and position and thus, be responsive to the people as soon as they rushed to him. The whole caliphate did not have the worth of the wing of a mosquito to him. Actually the entire earthy world, in his sight, equalled not more than "a goat's sneeze," as he put it. Leadership is worthless if it does enable one to establish right and abolish wrong.

Therefore, he did not respond, at first, to the pressure of the people. He wanted to subject them to a test to make sure that they had the capacity to receive his programs and take to his plans, should he accept the rule.

So, despite the fact that the sacred capital, the "Illuminated Madinah" insisted on choosing him and expressed its persistence in actual demonstrations and crowded gatherings, so much so that the desire became unanimous, he was not pressed to accept hastily. At last, finding the people still persisting in pledging their allegiance to him, he accepted the caliphate on certain conditions, which had to be wholeheartedly agreed to. Spelling out what he needed in his mission, he demanded:

"...Remember that if I accept your caliphate I shall make you follow the religion according to my own rulings and judgements. I shall not accept suggestions from anyone, nor will I bother about the discontentment and anger of dissatisfied persons..."(101)

The whole nation responded by hurrying to announce their submission to his conditions, extending their hands, and pledging their allegiance and obedience to him. So, Imam Ali (a.s.) agreed to face fully his responsibilities of leading the Islamic nation, thought and practice. The first task was to remove all forms of deviation which had grown into Islamic life, and to bring the nation back to the original Divine course. To attain this he had to act according to a strict and comprehensive program, and to have others to act correctly in implementing it. It was a task

where his government had many problems to confront, especially in political and economic fields:

1. Political Field:

Imam Ali (a.s.) defined the attributes of governors and government officials whom Islam recommends to manage the affairs of the Islamic nation. These definitions were clearly set out in his communiqué which he issued:

"...O people! you must understand and realize that so far as the protection of properties, rights and honor of the Muslim world, the propagation and preservation of Muslim laws and guardianship of Muslim finances are concerned, an ignorant person, a miser, a tyrant, a man who accepts bribes or one who has forsaken the principles of equity and justice should not be entrusted with the ruling of a Muslim state.

"A miserly person will covet the wealth of those he rules; an ignorant one will misguide them; a tyrant will oppress and tyrannize them; one who is not afraid of rapidly changing times and policies will, to the detriment of the cause of Islam, keep on forming unholy alliances with one nation after the other; a corrupt ruler, who is open to bribery, will violate rights, and will not dispense justice, and the one who has given up the traditions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) will be responsible for the destruction of Islamic ideals and doctrine."(102)

Under this clear and objective determination of the attributes of the officials acceptable to Islam, Amir Al-Mu'minin Imam Ali (a.s.) began to dismiss some of the governors from their posts in different parts of the Islamic state. Had he compromised, as some wanted him to do, subsequent Muslim generations would not have recognized the true picture of the Islamic religion for which Allah had sent His great Messenger (s.a.w.).

2. Economic Field:

Simultaneously with reforming the political system, Imam Ali (a.s.) started to revolutionize the economy of the state. No sooner had he begun his rule, than he cancelled the method of distributing wealth which had formerly been followed. He replaced the discriminate way of distributing money by a system based on equity as practiced by the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.).

So, all forms of discrimination in dividing the money among the people, was cancelled by the Imam (a.s.) stressing that fearing Allah, priority in embracing Islam, fighting for the sake of Islam, or companionship with the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), were not matters which gave their owners any sort of distinction in this world. Reward from Allah would be theirs in the Hereafter. Whoever had priority in these attributes, would receive his reward from Allah. But, here in this world, all people are equal in their financial rights in respect to the law and in their duties. His ideas about

justice are stated in one of his speeches:

"...Any man from the Muhajirin and the Ansar, who had kept company with the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), seeing that he had priority over the others just because of that, should remember that the reward of this merit would be awarded him by Allah in the Hereafter...

"Any one who responds to Allah and to His Messenger, believes in our religion, embraces it, prays with his face towards Ka'bah, deserves the rights of Islam and accepts its limits. So you are servants of Allah, and money is Allah's. It is to be distributed among you equally, with no one having any distinction over the other, as the pious ones will tomorrow have the best of rewards and highest results. Allah did not ordain any reward for the pious in this world. What Allah has is much better for the righteous..."(103)

In this way Imam Ali (a.s.) incarnated the concept of equity, giving allowances to all persons who enjoy the right of being Muslim citizens, without any discrimination on any grounds.

These are some of the features of the reformative process led by Amir Al-Mu'minin Imam Ali (a.s.) in different fields of Islamic life-- financial, administrative and governmental.

Program Of Reformation

Imam Ali (a.s.) laid his general plan of reformation, with most of his attention given to reforming the administration, economy and government as we said.

Through this immense undertaking, Amir Al-Mu'minin (a.s.) pioneered a new course, the nation attained many great achievements in the interests of the people and their progress in general. Below we refer to some of these achievements. First: He established a system of governors and officials qualified to administer the rudder of Islamic life. They were individuals ideal in their spiritual, intellectual and committal standards, like Uthman bin Hanif, Muhammad bin Abi Bakr and Malik Al-Ashtar.

Although those individuals were excellent examples of men, at the highest level of fitness, thought, action and ability in administration and leadership, Imam Ali (a.s.) furnished them with guiding advice and instructive plans, helping them with the practical aspects of ruling and in their relations with different sectors of the people whom they were to govern.

He enjoined his governors to advise the servants of Allah, spreading justice among them, treating them with leniency and kindness, brushing aside all aspects of haughtiness that high positions may create in man, steering influential people from affecting social life contrary to the course of

Islamic justice, and offering pieces of advice required to spread justice and establish truth among the people.

His advice was clearly laid out as in the following examples:

"Treat them with respect. Be kind and considerate to them...Meet them with a smiling face. Be fair, just and impartial in your dealings so that even influential persons may not dare take advantage of your leniency, and the uninfluential and poor may not be disappointed in your justice and dealings. Remember that Allah, the Exalted, is going to take account of your sins, major and minor, O creatures Of Allah, from the path of Islamic justice, influencing his judgements, or sins, it will be because of your being unjust, and if He forgives you, it will be because of His great mercy and compassion..."(104)

"Treat people pleasantly and kindly, welcome them to your audience and company, do not be harsh in issuing and enforcing your orders, do not lose your temper, because this weakness is always a good opening for Satan to find its way into your mind. Always keep this in mind that the thing which takes you nearer to Allah will carry you away from Hell, and the thing which drives you away from Allah will drive you towards Hell."(105)

These extracts of Imam Ali's (a.s.) instructions were to be followed by his governors in their practical life also.

It goes without saying that Imam Ali (a.s.), despite his insistent keenness on selecting the most efficient and God fearing persons, was also keen on knowing their methods of treating people while in their posts. For this purpose he engaged a system of supervisors, through whose eyes he could see how loyal and obedient they were in carrying out the principles of Islamic justice. Whoever made a mistake or faltered, Imam Ali (a.s.) would quickly set his conduct right, by correcting and educating offenders or by threatening or even deposing those responsible. Here is part of his procedure in this respect:

Uthman bin Hanif, his governor of Basra, once accepted an invitation from a rich man in Basra. When Imam Ali (a.s.) heard of this, he was afraid that such affairs might distract his governor and divert him from the path of Islamic justice, influencing his judgements, or encourage him to be tyrannical in his treatment of the people. He wrote to him:

"O Ibn Hanif! I have received information that a person of Basra invited you to a dinner and you immediately accepted the invitation, and very sumptuous meals were served there. The finest varieties of viands were placed before you on large plates and you enjoyed them. I am sorry to hear the news. I never expected that you would accept the invitation of a person who invites big officers and rich people, and from whose doors poor persons and hungry paupers are rudely

turned away. Look carefully into the things which you eat. If there is even a shadow of doubt of their being obtained unlawfully then throw them away. Only eat such things about which you are perfectly certain that they are obtained in an honest, lawful and virtuous way.

"You must know, bin Hanif, that for everyone who follows a religion, there is a leader and a guide from whom the follower learns the canons of that religion and the ways of leading a pious life. Now look to your Imam and leader. In this world he has satisfied himself, and is content with, two old, torn and coarse garments and two loaves of bread. I know that is too hard a life for you to adopt, but at least try to help me with piety, strife, chasteness and unerringness..."(106)

He wrote to Masqala Al-Shaibani, the governor of Ardskir Kharra:

"..I have received certain information about you. If you had actually done it, then you have verily displeased Allah, and have disobeyed your Imam. I am given to understand that you are lavishly distributing state treasury- which has been gathered by Muslims' spears and horses, and for which their blood has been shed--among the bedouins of your own clan.

"I swear by Allah, Who split the seed and creates the soul, that if this accusation against you proves correct, then you will verily humiliate yourself in my eyes and will verily be light to me in weight. So, do not belittle the right of Allah, and do not mend your world by ruining your religion, or you will be one of those who have the most losing deeds..." (107)

He also wrote to one of his agents:

"Information about you has come to my knowledge. If you have done it, then you have angered your Lord, disobeyed your Imam, and disgraced your honesty. It has come to me that you have taken possession of land, seized what is under your feet, and eaten what is in your hand. So, immediately send me your account, and be ware that the Lord's reckoning is far more severe than any of man's."(108) As Imam Ali (a.s.) used to make plans for governors and give them his guiding advice, he acted likewise to assist his army officers, pointing out signs to them on their way, and what they had to do when facing the enemy.

Imam Ali (a.s.) also used to tell them not to be tyrannical, not to start any war, not to lose their temper, and to remain patient. At the beginning they should always take the defensive. When the enemy transgresses, then they will have to stop the aggression. If, then, Allah granted them victory, they were not to be taken by the ecstasy of triumph over the enemy and chase their soldiers running away from the battlefield without weapons to defend themselves with. They could not kill the wounded, nor insult the women, even if they were so.

Here are some of his instructions to his officers:

"Do not take the initiative to begin the battle; let them begin it, because by the favor of Allah you are on the side of truth and justice. Leave them until they begin their hostilities, and then you are at liberty to start fighting. Their keenness to begin a battle will be another proof of your sincere belief in the orders of Allah. If Allah favors you with your success and their defeat, then do not kill the deserter, do not finish the wounded, do not excite the women by injuring them, even when they insult your women and curse your commanders..."(109)

"...My duty towards you is not to keep from you any secret except those of war, not to hide from you any affair except in judgement, not to delay any of your rights later than its due, and not to cut it below its prescribed limit. You will, to me, be equal in the truth. If I achieve this, Allah will bestow His blessings upon you, and you will have to obey me, not to recoil from the call, not to fall back from righteousness, and to wade through difficulties to reach the truth..."(110)

Owing to the importance of the tax-collecting system in the Islamic state, general rights in private property form an important factor in Islamic economy. The right of the community to private possession provides a large source of helping the Islamic state to meet its great expenditures in social, military and other fields of general life.

Because of this importance, Imam Ali (a.s.) showed great interest, not in collecting as much money as possible, but having the system follow the Islamic course of justice, which the Imam (a.s.) idealized in the life of the people. He was extremely anxious to educate tax-collectors to strictly adhere to justness, virtue, nobility, and to respect their responsibility. Their duty, to the Imam, was not just to levy money for the sake of money.

They had to adhere to the right in fairly treating the people and implementing the justness of Islam to those whom they encountered. They were not to cause anger among the people, not to maltreat them, not to beat anyone for a Dirham, for example, and they might not trespass on the property of any Muslim or non-Muslim who enjoys being subject of the Islamic State. They might also not sell a man's clothes or his animals in order to levy taxes. None of the collectors had the right to reproach anyone, nor to levy more than was allowed. They might not look down at people but had to greet them with kindness and to treat them with leniency. Here is another example of his teachings in this respect:

"Treat tax-payers with equity and justice, and consider their wishes with patience and kindness, because you are the treasurer of the authority. Do not force anyone to forsake his requirements and go without his necessities. In collecting taxes do not sell their winter and summer clothing, their slave or such of their animals which are of service to them. Do not resort to whipping for a Dirham, and do not touch their property, be they Muslims or non-Muslims..."(111)

"Do not give up fearing Allah alone Who has no partner. Do not frighten any Muslim, and do not go past him with reluctance. Do not take from him more than what is due to Allah from his property. When you reach their quarter stay at their water-place, and do not get near their houses. Then go to them with dignity and prestige till you come among them, then wish them peace, and refrain not from paying them compliments. Then say: O servants of Allah! I have been sent to you by the Caliph to collect from you the dues of Allah; so, are there any of Allah's dues in your property which you may pay to His Caliph?"(112)

Second: Incarnating the Islamic plan of social justice in its most explicit picture and most minute details. Imam Ali (a.s.) took the most reformative steps in order to implement the most complete illustration of social justice according to detailed Islamic concepts.

The Islamic society, with all its sectors, had witnessed the foremost justice during the days of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). Hereunder, are some examples of that radiant historical experience of the Islamic nation:

A. Clemency in Attendance

Diverse sectors of the nation witnessed different sorts of attendance to their affairs, in being treated with kindness and care and ensuring equality among all the subjects of the Islamic state. This is personified in the following extracts: "The wealth is Allah's, and it is to be equally distributed among you, with no priority to anyone of you." "...By Allah, I will verily be fair with the wronged against the one who wronged him. I will certainly drag the wrong-doer by his 'nose ring' until I bring him to the source of the truth, even if he is reluctant."(113)

Furthermore, the nation, as a whole, led by Amir Al Mu'minin (a.s.), witnessed full examples of administering its affairs and caring for its welfare, in realizing its strength and happiness.

Here are some of these examples: Hakam is quoted to have said:

"I saw Ali when water-skins full of honey were brought to him. He summoned the orphans and said to them: 'Taste and lick,' as much as I wished I were an orphan. Then he distributed them among the people. One water-skin remains. He ordered it to be distributed among those present in the mosque (114)

Harun bin Antara citing Zadan, says:

"I was once accompanying Qanbar, Ali's servant. He came to Ali and said to him: 'Come, O Amir Al-Mu'minin, come with me, I have a thing hidden for you.' 'What is it, boy?' Ali asked. 'Come with me,' answered he. Ali went home with him. There we found a sack with cups full of gold and

silver. Re said: 'O Amir Al- Mu'minin, I know you would leave nothing unless you distribute it, so I kept this for you.' 'Woe to you!' said Ali, 'You wanted to bring a great fire into my house!' Then he drew his sword and cut the sack into pieces and the gold scattered on the earth. Re called to the people and told them to distribute it among themselves in portions. Then he went to the public treasury and distributed what was therein, until there remained only some needles and sticks. Re said, 'Let these be distributed, too,'..."(115)

Hakam further said: "Ali divided the pomegranates among the people, and the share of their mosque was seven pomegranates. So he said: 'O people, we receive things which seem plenty to look at, but we find them little after distribution. We have distributed everything we received.' He also received plates of silver. He broken them in pieces and distributed them among us."

Ali bin Rabi'a says: "bin Al-Tayah came to Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) and said to him: 'O Amir Al-Mu'minin, the treasury is full of the 'Yellow and White' [gold and silver].' Allah is greater!" Ali said and stood up leaning on bin Al-Taih's hand. He entered the treasury, then the people were called in, and he gave out whatever was there, while saying: "O White and Yellow, seduce other than me!' As there remained nothing in it, he ordered it to be sprinkled with water, then he performed two Rak'ahs of prayer."

Owing to his anxious attempts to remove the heaviness of poverty and injustice from the people, he kept rigidly to his program throughout his caliphate as described in the following extracts:

"...If I had so wanted I could have very easily found ways and means to provide for myself the purest and clearest honey, the best variety of wheat and the finest silk clothes. But my desire can never overcome me, nor can greediness persuade me to select the choicest victuals, when in Hijaz and Yemen there may be people who have no hope of obtaining a loaf of bread and who have never satisfied their hunger, nor can I sleep with a heavy stomach when around me there are people with hungry stomachs and thirsty livers! Am I to be content with being addressed as Amir Al- Mu'minin without sharing with them the calamities of life, or setting for them an example of bearing up bereavements of living?"(116)

B. Strict Supervision of the Market

Imam Ali (a.s.) was keen on seeing economic justice dominating all aspects of life. For this purpose he laid a plan to monitor the market in respect to buying, selling and the quality of the goods offered for sale, so as to prevent shortfalls, price fluctuations and cheating. Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.) said:

"Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) used to pass through, one by one, the markets of Kufa every morning with his two-tailed whip on his shoulder. It was called "Al-Sabibah". He used to stop at each market

and call out:

'O merchants! Offer the best, receive the blessing of being easy, get nearer to the buyers, adorn yourselves with patience, refrain from lying and swearing, be away from wrong doing, be fair with those wronged, keep away from usury, give full measure and full weight, in justice, belittle not peoples' goods, and make not mischief to cause corruption in the earth'..."(117)

Abu Al-Nawwar says: "I saw Imam Ali (a.s.) stop at a tailor's and tell him: 'O tailor! strengthen the string, take care of the seams, make the stitches short. As I heard the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) say: 'The treacherous tailor is brought, on the Day of Resurrection, with a shirt and a cloak of his bad tailoring so that he is disgraced before all witnesses.' Then he said to the tailor: 'O tailor, beware of the remnants and leftovers, as the owner of the dress has more right to them'..."(118)

In these ways Imam Ali (a.s.) incarnated the Islamic plan of social justice in the best possible way. He treated the people with kindness and love, living with their hopes and pains until they reaped the most wonderful fruits of justice in their history as it was in the days of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.).

C. Self-Denial

Imam Ali (a.s.) adopted the policy of self-denial for the sake of the nation, by way of true forsaking of whatever covetous people greedily look for such as wealth, pleasures and delights of life.

Amir Al-Mu'minin (a.s.) lived in a modest house similar to those in which the poor lived. He used to, both before and during his caliphate, eat the barley which his wife or he himself used to grind. He wore the coarsest and the plainest of clothes. His unchangeable principle in this was: "...Your Imam is content, in this world, with two coarse old garments and two loaves of bread...I swear by Allah that, from this world of yours, I have neither amassed gold, nor have I gathered wealth; nor have I changed these coarse and old garments for new ones, nor have I owned of this land even a span (of the hand), nor have I taken from it more than sustaining food. It is [your world], in my eye, lower and more trivial than a bitter gallnut."(119)

We may also observe this policy of the Imam (a.s.) towards himself through the following incidences:

Harun bin Antara records that his father said, "I entered Al-Khawarnaq where I saw Ali bin Abi Talib wearing worn-out velvet in the winter season. I said: 'O Amir Al-Mu'minin! Allah has granted you and your family a share in this wealth, and yet you do this to yourself!'

He said: 'By Allah I would not lessen your dues. This is the same velvet which I brought with me

from Madinah."(120) One day Asim bin Ziyad [justifying his indifference to worldly pleasures] addressed the Imam (a.s.) and said: "Look at your own dress how coarse it is, and to your own food how meagre it is!" Imam Ali (a.s.) replied him:

"Woe to you! I am not like you. Allah has made it incumbent upon just Imams to keep themselves on the level of the poorest of men, so that they may not feel too deeply the pains of poverty."(121)

Suwaid bin Ghafalah recalls: "One day I called upon Imam Ali (a.s.) at his house. There I saw nothing except an old mat on which he was sitting. I said: O Amir Al-Mu'minin, you are the King of the Muslims, and you control the public treasury, yet you receive your guests in a house which has only this mat!

He said: 'O Suwaid, why should a house be furnished in this transient world when we have to move to the permanent house to which we have moved our belongings and to which we are moving presently?'"(122).

Imam Ali (a.s.) went to the market to sell his sword in order to buy an apron at a time when he was Amir Al-Mu'minin, the leader of the Islamic nation, to whom is levied money from all parts of the Islamic world. In this respect Abu Raja' says:

"Imam Ali (a.s.) brought his sword to the market and called: 'Who buys this from me? By Allah Who has Ali's soul in His hand, I would not have sold it had I got the value of an apron!' I said to him: 'I will sell you an apron on credit until you receive your due,' and I gave him an apron on credit. When he received his due he paid me the value of the apron."(123)

Imam Ali (a.s.) took nothing from the public treasury, so that when he leaves a town he leaves it with only what he had brought with him from Madinah--his saddled camel and his servant. Bakr bin Isa says: "Imam Ali (a.s.) used to say: 'O people of Kufa, if I left your town with more than my camel, saddle and servant, then I would be a traitor.'"

His expenditure used to be sent to him from his proceeds in Yanbu' in Madinah, which he spent to feed the people with bread and meat, while he ate the bread soaked in fat.

He was very keen on following the example of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) in his justness and abstinence. In this respect Aqaba bin Alqama says: "I called on Imam Ali (a.s.) one day. I saw him eating dry bread and sour milk whose sourness hurt me. I exclaimed, 'O Amir Al-Mu'minin, do you eat this?' 'O Abul Janub,' he replied, 'the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) used to eat drier than this and wear coarser than this (pointing to his dress), so, if I do not do what he used to do, I am afraid I will not be able to catch up with him.'"(124)

Abdullah bin Husain bin Hasan (a.s.) says: "Imam Ali (a.s.), during the days of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), emancipated 1,000 slaves out of his working wages and the sweat of his forehead. He became caliph, and wealth came to him, yet dates remained his dessert, and coarse cloth was his dress."(125)

Umar bin Qais, on the authority of Sufyan Al-Thawri, says: "Imam Ali (a.s.) was seen wearing a patchy garment on and was reproached for that. He said: "This causes the heart to submit, and the faithful to follow."(126)

His deep abstinence and self-denial for the sake of Allah are quite explicit in his words: "...Look at me. I have patched my dress so often that I feel ashamed to hand it over for anymore patches. Somebody suggested to me to throw it away, but I told him, 'Be gone! do not try to tempt me, because those who bear hardships in this life will pass happy days in the Hereafter.'"(127)

These were some of Imam Ali's (a.s.) ways which he set as examples for the faithful to follow. They represent aspects of Islamic justice personified in Imam Ali (a.s.), living among the people and exemplifying the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.).

D. Equalizing His Family With Others

The standards which Imam Ali (a.s.) applied to his family and relatives were very close to those which he applied to himself, only less severe. They were based on equalizing them with other citizens in their rights and duties. Yet, what they bore for the sake of protecting the Message and its progress was much more than the rights they received.

Imam Ali (a.s.) was keen on treating his relatives, in respect to their rights, as if they were ordinary people. He never gave them more than their dues, and never distinguished them with privileges. He treated them as to educate and train them to follow his wake and at times, showed severity with some of his relatives so that they might take to the line he drew for them.

A Muslim of the Hana narrates:

"When Imam Ali (a.s.) finished with 'The Owners of the Camel' [the Battle of Basrah], he returned to Kufa, entered Beit al-Mal [the public treasury] and said: 'O wealth tempt someone else.' Then he divided it among us. A daughter of Hasan or Husain (a.s.) came in and picked up some of it. The Imam (a.s.) ran after her, opened her fist, and took it out. We said: 'O Amir Al-Mu'minin, she has a right to it.' He said, 'When her father takes his due, let him give her whatever he likes.'"(128)

Harun bin Sa'id narrates: "Abdullah bin Ja'far bin Abi Talib said to Imam Ali (a.s.): 'O Amir Al-

Mu'minin, will you have them give me some help or expenditure, as, by Allah, I have nothing to spend, unless I sell my beast on which I ride!' The Imam said. 'No, by Allah! I can find nothing for you except that you may order your uncle [Imam Ali (a.s.) himself] to steal and give it to you'..."(129)

One day Aqil bin Abi Talib, who was blind, came to his brother, Imam Ali (a.s.) asking for a Sa' [measure equal to four times the quantity of corn that fills two hands of a man of moderate size] of wheat, more than his due from Beit al-Mal, and he kept repeating his demand. Imam Ali (a.s.) wanted to give him a good lesson: so he heated a piece of iron on the fire, then brought it near him. Aqil recoiled in fear. Imam Ali (a.s.) then said to him, "O Aqil, you groan from a piece of iron heated by a creature for his sport, whereas you are dragging me towards a fire kindled by the Almighty for his wrath! You moan from fear of being hurt, so why shouldn't I moan from the kindled Fire?"(130)

Abu Sadiq, quoting Imam Ali (a.s.), said: "He married Layla. She hung some curtains for him, but he pulled them down, saying: 'It suffices Ali's folk what they have [to answer for].'"(131) Hasan bin Salih bin Hay said: "It came to me that Imam Ali (a.s.) married a woman who arranged a decorated room for him. But he refused to enter it."(132)

Kilab bin Ali Al-Amiri said: "When Imam Ali (a.s.) married my aunt, she was sent to him riding on an ass with a velvet covering and a basket hanging behind."(133)

Such examples of how Imam Ali (a.s.) used to treat his family and relatives show he never neglected any of the rights of the Muslims for the interests of his own folk. He, actually, tried to teach them how to ascend to his level of self-denial and abstinence in the way of Allah, and for the sake of the Muslim community.

His method was quite explicit. There was no vagueness and he was unaffected by any sort of emotion or compromise. He said; "By Allah I prefer to pass a sleepless night on prickly thorns, or be dragged in fetters, rather than meet my Lord and His Messenger on the Day of Resurrection as one who had wronged some of His servants, or who had usurped some treasures. Why should I wrong others for the benefit of a self which shortly decays and lies, for a long period, in the grave?"(134)

This way of life adopted by Imam Ali (a.s.) represents a further aspect of the general social justice which he was very keen on embodying in the living practice of the life of the people.

Policy Of Reaction

Owing to the distinguished men of the Quraish being used to enjoying a whole array of privileges and advantages, it was hard for them to accept Imam Ali's (a.s.) policy of equality of rights as Allah enjoined. Al-Zubair bin Awam and Talha bin Ubaidullah disapproved of this policy of Imam Ali (a.s.), as it deviated from what so far had been customary. Imam Ali (a.s.) asked them: "That is it that you so disapprove of in me that you seek other than me?"

They said: "you made our share of allowance the same as the others; you made us equal to those who are not like us regarding the booty bestowed upon us by Allah through our swords and spears, and which we charged our horses and men, upon which our mission was established, and which we took by force from those who reluctantly look at Islam."(135)

The Imam (a.s.) replied to them: "You complain of such minor affairs, and neglect major things [done for you]. Can you tell me of an instance of my depriving you of your rights or of a single thing that was your due, but I withheld it from you, or of a single case brought before me for judgement but I failed to give a just decision, or of a situation in which I gave an incorrect decree?"

"By Allah I never craved for the caliphate or authority. All of you invited me to accept it, and when I accepted, I looked into the Book of Allah and to what we had been ordered to do, and I followed it, as well as the traditions of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), and I exemplified it. In following those I never needed your opinion, nor the opinion of anybody else. Nor was there a judgement which I knew not so as to need your consultation or other Muslims. Had there been such a need I would have turned not away from you or from the others.

"As to what you say about equal distribution of wealth, I should say it is not my opinion which I follow, nor is it a desire of mine to control. It is what I and you found the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) doing. There, too, I needed no help from you, since Allah had already ordained its dividends.

Therefore, neither you nor anyone else are justified in blaming me for this. May Allah guide our hearts and yours to the truth and grant us patience. May Allah have mercy upon him who, when he sees the truth, helps it to spread, who, when he sees inequity, rejects it, and who rightly backs his companion."(136)

In this way, concepts and starting points were diverse. Imam Ali (a.s.) started from what Allah, the Exalted, and His Messenger (s.a.w.) enjoin, whereas his opponents start from what their own

interests revealed to them. So huge was the difference between aiming at carrying out the teachings of the Message and caring for the interests of the whole nation, and the materialistic position which sees only private interests.

Mu'awiyah's Attitude:

No sooner had the news spread of Imam Ali's acceptance of the caliphate and of his undertaking the task of leading the nation, than Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan, filled with fear, announced his opposition. Mu'awiyah had received a letter from bin Al-As, telling him about the situation in the capital of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.): From Amr bin Al-As to Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan. Do whatever you want to, as Ali bin Abi Talib has peeled off you whatever you have, like a branch peeled of its bark."(137)

At the same time Imam Ali (a.s.) wrote to Mu'awiyah summoning him. But Mu'awiyah neither went to him nor replied to his letter.(138) Three months after Uthman's murder, and Imam Ali's caliphate began, Mu'awiyah raised the claim of avenging Uthman's blood to use as a pretext to rebel against his Imam.

He started with hanging Uthman's bloody shirt and a few hairs of his beard, with dried blood on them in the Damascus Mosque. He began to incite the people of Al-Sham to rise and take Uthman's revenge from his murderers. He sent an envoy to the Imam, who arrived in Madinah and started wandering through its lanes, showing the people a sealed letter with the words "From Mu'awiyah to Ali". Such unbecoming behavior by the envoy provoked the people's surprise, revealing that the sender did not bear any feeling of respect for the Imam.

When Imam Ali (a.s.) opened the letter, he found it blank with nothing written in it. He asked the envoy about the matter. The envoy demanded to be spared if he told the truth. Assured of his safety, he said: "I left behind me people who say: We would not be contented except by revenge." Imam Ali (a.s.) asked: "Whom from?"

The man replied: "The people say: From Ali's neck. I have left 60,000 old men weeping under Uthman's shirt, spread for them on the pulpit of Damascus Mosque, with the fingers of his wife, Na'ilah, hung on it." Imam Ali (a.s.) said: "Do they want Uthman's blood from me [Do they accuse me of his murder]? Allah knows I am innocent of Uthman's blood..."(139) He then ordered the envoy to leave, secured in his passage. Afterwards, Imam Ali (a.s.) began gathering his army to counter plans laid by Mu'awiyah in al-Sham.

Background of Avenging Uthman:

Before going any further, it is perhaps better to establish whether the parties in Al-Sham and

Basrah were truthful in their demand of avenging the third caliph. This question, which imposes itself on both the writer and the reader, can be answered by referring to the attitudes of those parties during the period of the revolt which led to the murder of Uthman.

Mu'awiyah knew the details of what was happening against the caliph in Madinah. The caliph, himself, was sieged by the people and asked for Mu'awiyah's help who actually did not help him, but sent an army instead, headed by Yazid bin Asad al-Qasri, whom he ordered: "When you reach Dhi Khushub--a region outside Madinah--stay there and do not leave it. Do not say that the present see what the absent cannot see. It is I who am present, and it is you who are absent."(140)

Al-Qasri stayed where Mu'awiyah had told him. When Uthman was killed, Mu'awiyah summoned the army back to al-Sham.

This shows Mu'awiyah's attitude towards Uthman bin Affan during the latter's rule. So, his brandishing of the banner of avenging the murder of the caliph was but a means merely to stir up the sympathy of the people and to muster supporters. His real motive lay in his disapproval of Imam Ali's (a.s.) reformative policy which injured the interests of the social elite in one way or the other, particularly the wealth, power and authority that Mu'awiyah had gained during the reign of Uthman and his own desire for the caliphate.

On the other hand, Imam Ali (a.s.) announced his attitude toward the caliph's murder, saying:

"...By Allah, the murderers of Uthman would not have escaped if Allah had not willed it, as when He wills something, He will attain it."(141) His attitude further set out his position through a letter he sent to Mu'awiyah, in which he said:

"...You have said so much about the murderers of Caliph Uthman. Join the people in what they did [allegiance]. I, then, shall pass my judgement according to the tenets of the Book of Allah. But what you want now is but a trick..."(142)

The Imam's Attitude During the Crisis

To give further insight, it is necessary to mention, Imam Ali's (a.s.) attitude during the crisis to which the Caliphate had been subjected in Uthman's days. When the people revolted against Caliph Uthman, Imam Ali (a.s.) tried to convince him of the necessity of reform and there were discussions between them in this respect. Imam Ali (a.s.), among other things, told him:

"...I beseech you in the name of Allah not to let yourself be the murdered leader, because it is said that in this nation a leader will be killed, opening the door of bloodshed until the Day of

Resurrection. He will cast doubts on their affairs, mislead them into trial so that they will not be able to distinguish between right and wrong, and, blame each other for these calamities. They will find themselves engulfed by sorrows and sufferings. So, fairly an old and experienced man as you are, do not become a pack animal to Marwan who drags you to where he likes."(143)

Uthman then requested: " Ask these people to give me time so that I may compensate them and undo the wrong done to them."(144) Thereupon Imam Ali (a.s.) said: "There can be no postponement for what is going on here in Madinah. As to the other places, the time for your orders to reach there will be grace enough."(145)

The caliph said: "Yes, but get me three day's...grace for what is here."

Imam Ali (a.s.) went out to the people and told them about the Caliph's promise, and wrote an agreement between them and the Caliph, and had it attested to by a number of noteables of the Muhajirin and the Ansar.(146)

But, as the Caliph could not keep his word, the situation deteriorated once again. It became even more aggravated when Egyptian Mujahidin laid their hands on a letter sent by Uthman to his agent in Egypt, ordering him to punish the leaders of the Egyptian revolutionaries by putting them to death, and to punish the discontented by putting them behind bars.(147)

The Caliph was, therefore, besieged by both the discontented and those who coveted the caliphate. They even prevented drinking water from reaching him.

Then he sought the help of Imam Ali (a.s.), who hurried to his rescue. Pushing Talha and the others aside, he brought him water to drink.(148) The siege lasted for forty days. One day the people asked Imam Ali (a.s.) to let them perform their prayers behind him as their Imam. He refused. Talha took over the lead.

These are some aspects of the attitude of Imam Ali (a.s.) toward Uthman. Yet, his noble positions in defending the Caliph did not mean that Imam Ali (a.s.) was pleased with the Caliph's financial and administrative policies.(149) Rather, he thought that Uthman's murder would endanger the nation, since it would result in tearing the Islamic ranks into pieces by the enemies of the Muslims. Which has actually happened!

THE BATTLE OF BASRA

Talha and Al-Zubair were at the head of those who disapproved of Uthman's policy. In fact, they were also at the head of the people who gave the oath of allegiance to Imam Ali (a.s.) after the death of Uthman. Yet they were not happy with the reformative movement led by Imam Ali (a.s.)

in Islamic life. They started preparations for rebellion against the Imam (a.s.) and stirred the Muslims against him. The result was a calamity that caused the nation grave losses.

Imam Ali (a.s.) exerted great effort to avoid the conflict. Nothing was spared in offering his advice to them and he placed on their shoulders full responsibility of the war if it broke out.

He said to them:

"...you, Talha and you, Zubair, you know that I did not want the people until they wanted me, and I did not accept their allegiance till they forced me to, and you were at the head of those who hurried to pledge allegiance to me. You did not accept that by force, nor for a present purpose. O Zubair, you, champion of the Quraish; and you, Talha, the leader of the Muhajirin, it would have been easier for you both to prevent it before joining it than to avoid it after giving your allegiance. It is Banu Uthman who may avenge him, whereas you are two men of the Muhajirin, You have brought your mother Ummul Mu'minin, A'ishah, the wife of the Prophet (s.a.w.) out of her house, whereas Allah had commanded her not to leave it."(150)

In Basra, Imam Ali (a.s.) continued to give his advice to prevent bloodshed, He even sent envoys to the Nakithun [those who broke their allegiance] inviting them to peace and reconciliation.

He also met Al-Zubair and reminded him of certain incidents which had happened to them during the life of the Prophet (s.a.w.), He asked him: "What caused you to do this, O Zubair?" "To avenge Uthman," replied Zubair.

Imam Ali (a.s.) said: "If you are to be fair with yourself, it is you and your companions who killed him. I beseech you, O Zubair, do you not remember the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) asking you: 'O Zubair, do you love Ali?' and you replied: 'Why?' He then said to you: 'Verily you will not? Isn't he my cousin. injustly go against him?'"

"O yes, this did happen," replied Zubair.

Imam Ali (a.s.) then said: "I beseech you to remember the day when the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) returned from Banu Awf, and you were accompanying him, and he was holding your hand. I received him and greeted him. He smiled at me and I smiled at him. You said: 'Ali bin Abi Talib never gives up his pride.' He (s.a.w.) said to you: 'Slow down, Zubair! Ali is not proud. Verily you will one day unfairly rise against him.'"

"O yes," replied Al-Zubair, "but I forgot it. Now that you have reminded me, I would give it up."(151) Consequently, Zubair decided to retire from public life. But his son, Abdullah, accused him of cowardice for doing so. Thus, the situation exploded and war was waged between the two

camps.

His Humanistic Attitude:

Imam Ali (a.s.), nevertheless, kept his patience, tolerance and high humane spirit. He, thus addressed his army--after all his efforts to amend the situation were unsuccessful when war broke out--asking them to adorn themselves with the high morals which Allah, the Exalted, commanded them to do while in war:

"O people, I adjure you by Allah that you may not kill the one who turns his back on the battlefield; you may not finish one wounded; you may not deem captivity lawful; and you may not seize weapons nor property."(152) Through this, he announced the Islamic regulations to be practiced against the rebels. Then he invoked his Lord, the Most High, taking refuge in Him against the trial caused by the Nakithun, declaring it to be rejected by him before Allah, the Great and Most High.

Raising his hands high in invocation, he said: "O Allah! Talha and Al-Zubair have willingly shaken hands with me. Then they openly waged war against me. O Allah! Spare me their evil by whatever means or way that You will.(153) The fight ended with a crushing victory achieved by the Imam's army. Imam Ali (a.s.) proclaimed a general amnesty to all those who fought against him:

"...No injured one may be killed; no one fleeing may be chased, and no deserter may be stabbed. Whoever drops his weapon is safe, and whoever closes his door is secure. No seizure of women and property may be regarded lawful. Whatever utensils [the enemy] brought to the war may be seized, but whatever else is for their heirs. No slave leaving the camp may be pursued. Whatever there is of animals and weapons is yours. You may not have the mother of a child--the maid who gave birth to a male or female. Heritage is to be according to the law of Allah. Any woman whose husband is killed may wait for four months and ten days, [before marrying again]."

Somebody asked him: "Their blood is lawful to us but not their women [to marry]. How is that?"

Imam Ali (a.s.) replied: "That is the way with the Muslims."(154)

But some of his soldiers wished to get more booty than those defined by the Imam (a.s.). A man stood up and said: "O Amir Al-Mu'minin, by Allah you did not divide equitably, nor did you act justly among the subjects!"

Imam Ali (a.s.) asked him: "Oh, how?" The man replied: "Because you distributed what was in the camp, but you left out the wealth, women and children." Imam Ali (a.s.), then began to explain the philosophy of his humane attitude:

"O brother of Bakr [tribe], you are a man of weak thinking. Do you not know that we do not accuse the young of the crime committed by the old? These people had their properties before separation, and they married as adults, and they were born in a natural way. So, you may only have what there is in their camp. As to what is in their houses is for the heritage of their children. If anyone of them transgressed against us, we would take him for his crime. But if he refrained, we would not burden him with someone else's guilt.

"O brother of Bakr, I judged in this respect, as the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) did in respect to the people of Mecca. He distributed what was in the camp and touched nothing else. I followed in his wake.

"O brother of Bakr, do you not know that what is on the battlefield is lawful, but what is in the distribution (emigration) land is not lawful except according to a right."(155)

These are some of the unique humane acts following the command of Allah and in accordance with His laws, which Amir al-Mu'minin Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) applied in dealing with his defeated opponents. In his attitude you will find no trace of emotion, hastiness or vengeance. It was this attitude from which Imam Ali (a.s.) embodied the rules of Allah, and no one could embody the laws of Allah among the people better than Imam Ali (a.s.).

Imam Ali (a.s.) continued his humane measures in respect to the Nakithun, at the same time showing the noblest and the truest of feelings towards those deceived. He tried his best to mend the crack and divisions by unifying the ummah and preserving its dignity.

THE BATTLE OF SIFFIN

After victory in the Battle of Basra, Imam Ali (a.s.) returned, with his army to Kufa to reinforce his troops, and then to go on to Al-Sham to liquidate the opposition led by Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan.

Imam Ali (a.s.) started his march with his army heading for Al-Sham. But the enemy received news about his move, and decided to meet the Islamic advance- on the way. The two armies confronted one another near the Euphrates River. Imam Ali (a.s.) resumed his efforts to set things right through peaceful ways. He sent a three-member delegation to Mu'awiyah asking him to fear Allah, preserve the unity of the Muslim ranks and join the unanimity of the nation:

"Go to this man and call him to Allah, to obedience and to unanimity. Probably Allah may guide him, and the ranks of the nation may come together."(156)

The delegation met the head of the opposition and told him about the intentions of the Imam

(a.s.), presented him the way of Allah and warned him against the consequences of his misdeeds. But Mu'awiyah stuck to his position, saying: "Go away, I have no reply except the sword."(157)

Mu'awiyah's defiant position nevertheless did not affect Imam Ali's (a.s.) tolerance and patience, nor did it cause him to be hasty in starting an attack as he wanted to prevent bloodshed and to preserve the lives of the nation.

This humanistic attitude adhered to by the Imam (a.s.) only increased the obstinacy of the opposition, and they tried to block Imam Ali's (a.s.) army from getting access to the waters of the river. They moved troops to strategic positions along the banks of the river to stop the Imam's army from reaching it.

Although water was vital for the army, Imam Ali (a.s.) did not lose his patience. He sent a message to Mu'awiyah telling him: "We came here for something other than water. Had we got to it before you, we would not have forbidden it to you." Mu'awiyah's reply was: "By God, not even a drop till you die of thirst!"(158)

This compelled Imam Ali (a.s.) to resort to force to get water for his army, as the only alternative left before him. Consequently, he moved a division of soldiers to break the blockade and Mu'awiyah's army received a crushing defeat. The river came under the control of the Imam's army, yet, he allowed Mu'awiyah's army access to the river whenever they liked. In doing so he incarnated one of the fundamental moralities of Islam in this respect.

How great and noble a warrior Imam Ali (a.s.) was, and what a big heart he had!

As the Imam (a.s.) was greatly concerned about preventing the shedding of Muslim blood, guarding dissension and avoiding disunity, he challenged Mu'awiyah to fight him in single combat, where the winner would be regarded as the leader of the nation: "O Mu'awiyah! What should the people kill each other for? Come, fight me and leave the people alone. The victor will have the rule."(159)

Mu'awiyah, fearing defeat, resorted to start the battle with all his forces. The tactics of Imam Ali (a.s.) were not to lose his self-control, and trying to keep the fight within the range of individual combat.(160)

But his attempts at limiting the conflict could not repair the damage of Mu'awiyah, and full scale war broke out that lasted two weeks.

Just when there appeared signs of victory in favor of Imam Ali's side, the enemy, realizing that they were on the verge of defeat, resorted to stave off their inevitable fate and raised copies of

the Holy Qur'an on top of their spears and swords [denoting that they were Muslims and ready to accept the judgement of the Qur'an]. This proved to be a deceitful trick to essentially change the general trend of the battle, as the raising of the Qur'an by Mu'awiyah's soldiers had an effective impact on the Imam's camp and presently, many groups of his army came to him demanding a halt to the fighting. There was much gossip and thousands indicated they wanted an amnesty.

Imam Ali (a.s.) immediately knew it was a trick, and tried to explain its purpose to the people, telling them it was only meant to stop victory coming. But many were fooled by the move and did not lend a responsive ear to the Imam's repeated calls to come to their senses. Some of them even used a threatening tone with the Imam (a.s.).(161)

At last it was decided to send Ash'ath bin Qais to Mu'awiyah to ask him what he meant by raising the Qur'an. The enemy sent Mu'awiyah's demand for an arbitrated settlement.

This only brought about Act Two of the tragedy as one of the mob chose Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari to represent the camp of Imam Ali (a.s.), while Mu'awiyah chose bin Al-As, The Imam (a.s.) did not accept the selection of Al-Ash'ari for such an errand, as Al-Ash'ari had argued against Imam Ali (a.s.) being a caliph after Uthman (162) --sharing the opinion of some others who kept away from the Imam (a.s.). Instead he used to encourage the people not to support Imam Ali (a.s.), which had forced the Imam to depose him from his post as governor of Kufa.(163)

Imam Ali (a.s.) preferred Abdullah bin Abbas to be the representative of his camp in the arbitration, but was pressed by the mob's insistence on their choice of Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari. The Imam (a.s.) told them about his weak-mindedness, in addition to his ideological trends and attitude toward the Imam's government.

"You disobeyed me at the beginning [referring to their demand to stop the fight and accept arbitration], so, do not disobey me now. I do not see that you should appoint Abu Musa to arbitrate. He is too feeble-minded to be able to face Amr and his tricks."(164) However, they refused to listen.

The development of events suggest they did not happen unintentionally. The raising of the Qur'an was no coincidence and its timing meant there was coordination between Mu'awiyah and his agents inside the Imam's army, with whom he must have had close connections. No sooner had the Qur'an been raised, than those agents in Imam Ali's (a.s.) army responded by raising their voices demanding a cease-fire, playing on people's tiredness of fighting and desire for peace. Then they imposed arbitration on him, as well as choosing their own representative.

It is impossible not to think that that rebellious movement within the Imam's army, as described by the historians, was a plot preplanned by Mu'awiyah.

The result of the arbitration, needless to say, and as Imam Ali (a.s.) had predicted, was in favor of Mu'awiyah, with the resulting situation gradually moving to his interest.

THE BATTLE OF NAHRAWAN

After the arbitration incident, Imam Ali (a.s.) returned with his army to Kufa. There he, surprisingly, heard that a group of his army, numbering some 4,000 had announced their rebellion against him. They refused to enter the town with him and went onto "Haroura" where they took their positions.

It may be noted that the majority of those who rose against Imam Ali (a.s.) were the very same group which forced him to accept arbitration in the Siffin Battle.(165)

This group justified its uprising against the Imam Ali (a.s.) by saying: "No authority except Allah's," and "We do not accept to have men rule in the religion of Allah. Allah had sentenced Mu'awiyah and his followers to death, unless they accept our judgement against them. It had been a slip and a sin on our part to accept the two arbitrators. We hereby repented to our Lord and set back. You too, [O Ali], do as we did, or else we shall repudiate you."(166)

Imam Ali (a.s.) explained to them that Islamic ethics demand that when one gives one's word one should keep it. He had given his word for a one-year truce as agreed between the two camps. He said to them: "Woe to you! Do you want me to break my word after having given consent and pledge? Do you not know that Allah says: 'Fulfill the covenant of Allah when you have covenanted, and break not your oaths after the assertion of them, and you have made Allah surety over you. Lo! Allah knows what you do.'"(167)

The opposition, however, disregarded Imam Ali's (a.s.) directions and stuck to their stance. The danger aggravated even more when further discontented people joined them. They started overtly accusing all those who followed Imam Ali (a.s.), and indeed the Imam (a.s.) himself, of polytheism, and deemed the shedding of their blood as lawful.

Imam Ali (a.s.) initially did not intend to encounter them, so as to grant them a chance to consider seriously what they were doing and possibly to come back to the right path so that he could completely devote himself to resuming the fight against the rebels in Al-Sham. The arbitration had failed after the second meeting between the arbitors, as Amr bin Al-As had tricked Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari.

However, a real internal danger to the Imam's government began to form. The dissenters started to kill innocent people and threaten security. They even killed the respected companion of the

Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), Abdullah bin Khabab and ripped open his wife's stomach, though she was pregnant and about to deliver her child. They also killed women of the Tay tribe.

On hearing these developments, Amir Al Mu'minin (a.s.) sent Al-Harith bin Murra Al-Abdi to them on a fact-finding mission, but they killed him, too.(168)

Hearing this, the Imam (a.s.) returned from Al-Anbar-where he was massing his troops for a second combat with Mu'awiyah in Al-Sham. When he and his troops neared their place, he again tried whatever he could to amend the situation without shedding blood. To this end, he requested them to hand over to him the killers of Abdullah bin Khabab, Al-Harith Al-Abdi and others, in which case he would leave them alone. They answered: "We all killed them." Imam Ali (a.s.) then sent the notable companion of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), Qais bin Sa'd, to advise them and warn them against their foolish attitude. He asked them to give up the unlawful belief that they had the right to shed the blood of Muslims and accuse them of infidelity.(169)

The Imam (a.s.) continued his rational argument and humane attitude. He sent to them Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, who, after finishing his advice to them, raised his voice, saying:

"Whoever is not guilty of murder and joins this banner will be safe. Whoever goes to Kufa, or to Mada'in, will be safe. No one of you is wanted, except those who killed our brothers."(170)

This appeal largely succeeded and they began to leave, until their numbers fell from twelve thousand to only four thousand.

But those who remained attacked the Imam's army. Imam Ali (a.s.) had ordered his men not to start the fight unless they were set upon. So, when the "Khawarij" began the conflict, the army of Imam Ali (a.s.) surrounded them and the banner of truth was victorious.

This was the Battle of Nahrawan, which exterminated the movement of those whom the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) had formerly described as "al-Mariqun". According to Abu Sa'id al-Khidri: "I heard the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) saying: 'There will rise from this nation a group who will dart from the religion as an arrow darts from a bow.'"(171)

To The Kingdom Of Allah

Having ended the resistance of the Mariqun, Imam Ali (a.s.) turned to resuming the fight against the Qasitun in al-Sham, with arbitration having failed in the second meeting.

He proclaimed mobilization for his army, and declared war against the opposition led by Mu'awiyah. This was announced by him in a speech delivered in Kufa, his capital of the Islamic state, where the people were invited for Jihad (fight in the way of Allah): "Jihad! Jihad! O creatures of Allah!" He declared: "Beware, that I am mobilizing the army today. Whoever desires to go forward to Allah, let him come forth!"(172)

Then Imam Ali (a.s.) started distributing banners to his leaders, Husain, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari and Qais bin Sa'id. Yet, as he was engaged in mobilizing his forces in order to put an end to the opposition movement led by Mu'awiyah, there was another mean conspiracy being covertly planned, this time to assassinate him.

A group of his enemies held a meeting in Mecca to deliberate evil intentions, which were to end with the most horrific consequences. The gravest decision was to murder Amir al-Mu'minin, and the task was assigned to the willful criminal Abdul- Rahman bin Muljam al-Muradi. It was a most critical period in the history of Islam and the Muslims, and at a time when the nation was looking forward to a decisive victory over the destructive elements of disunity led by Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan, that the sinful hand of al- Muradi was extended to Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.). He swept down with a sword on his head while the Imam was prostrating during dawn prayers at the honorable mosque of Kufa on the 19th of the month of Ramadan of the year 40 A.H.

They assassinated Imam Ali (a.s.) at his finest time--the hour of standing before Allah, the Exalted, during a prayer of submission, in the best of days, while fasting during the month of Ramadan; during the most glorious Islamic duties, while preparing to wage jihad, and in the highest and most pure divine places, the Mosque of Kufa.

May joy be to Amir al-Mu'minin Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) and a blessed afterlife!

The crime of assassinating Imam Ali (a.s.) remains one of the most cruel, brutal and hideous, because it was not committed against one man, but against the whole rational Islamic leadership. By assassinating Imam Ali (a.s.), they actually aimed at assassinating the message, the history, the culture and the nation of Muslims embodied in the person of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.). In doing so, the Islamic nation lost its guide of progress, and at the most wonderful opportunity in its life after the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.).

Imam Ali (a.s.) suffered from his wound for three days, during which he entrusted his son, Imam Hasan (a.s.) with the Imamate of guiding the nation ideologically and socially. During those three days, as during all his life, he never ceased remembering Allah, praising Him, and accepting Him

and His ordinance.

Likewise, he continued giving pieces of advice and directions leading to good, pointing to the right, defining the way to guidance, explaining the course for deliverance, calling for the observance of Allah's ordinances, and warning against following one's ill desires and set-backs from not carrying our the divine message. The following is one piece of advice offered to his sons, Imams Hasan and Hussain (a.s.), as well as to his people, the nation and coming generations:

"I advise you to fear Allah, and not to run after (the pleasure of) the world, even if it may run after you. Do not be sorry for anything from it which you have been denied. Say the truth and act for (Allah's) reward. Be an enemy of the oppressor, and be a helper of the oppressed.

"I advise you, my children, my household and all those who may receive my message, to fear Allah, to arrange your affairs well, to maintain good relations among yourselves, for I have heard your grandfather (s.a.w.) saying: 'Good relations are better than prayer and fasting in general.'
"(Fear) Allah when handling matters of orphans. Do not let them starve, nor allow them to be lost as long as you are there.

"(Fear) Allah in respect to your neighbors, for they were the truest of your Prophet (s.a.w.). He went on asking us to take care of them, so much that we thought he would make them heirs (of our heritage).

"(Fear) Allah in respect to the Qur'an, (take care that) no one may excel you in following its tenets.

"(Fear) Allah in respect to prayer, as it is the pillar of your religion.

"(Fear) Allah in respect to your Lord's House (Ka'bahh), do not forsake it so long as you live, because if you do you will not be looked upon with respect.

"(Fear) Allah in respect to jihad, fight with your wealth, your lives and your tongues, in the way of Allah.

"Have mutual liaison and give-and-take. Beware of turning your faces from, and of renouncing, one another. Do not abandon bidding good and forbidding evil, lest vicious people may overrule you, and then in such a case, your invocations will not be responded to (by Allah)." Then he said: "O, Banu Abdul Muttalib, certainly I do not want you to wade through the blood of the Muslims, crying: "Amir al-Mu'minin was murdered. You certainly kill for me no one but my killer.

"Wait till I die by this stroke of him (bin Muljam), then strike a single stroke against him, and do not disfigure his body, for I had heard the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) saying: 'Avoid mayhem even

with a rabid dog'."(173)

Such was the heroic end of this great man! The loss to the Mission and the nation was the gravest after the loss of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). By the death of Imam Ali (a.s.) the nation lost:

A heroism that had become the song of the time;
A courageous history that has never dreamt of its like;
A wisdom no one can fathom, save Allah;
A purity, the like of which was only in the prophets;
An abstinence from the pleasures of life that could be attained only by the nearest to Allah; An eloquence such as to be the echo of Book; and A jurisprudence, and a thorough knowledge of the laws of religion, that made him the 'gateway of the city' of the Prophet's knowledge, and the authority to whom the Islamic nation referred in all its affairs.

Peace be upon Amir al-Mu'minin the day he was born, the day he was martyred on his alter, and the day he shall be raised alive.

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

Endnotes

1. Al-Baladhiri, *Ansab Al-Ashraf*, vol. 2, p. 177.
2. Look up *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* by Ibn Abi al-Hadid, vol. 4, p. 561.
3. Al-Arbili, *Kashf Al-Ghummah*, vol. 1, chapter on Imam Ali (a.s).
4. *A Brief History of the Fourteen Infallibles*, World Organization for Islamic Services, (Tehran: 1984), pp. 51.52.
5. Ibn al-Sabbagh al-Maliki, *al-Fusul al-Muhimmah fi Ma'rifat al-A'immah*, Ch. 1, p. 13.
6. *Al-Bihar*, vol. 35, p. 18.
7. Ibn al-Sabbagh, *al-Fusul al-Muhimmah*, Ch. 1, p. 14. Ibn Abi al-Hadid. *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, p.151.
8. *Sirat bin Hisham*, chapter on Ali bin Abi Talib, the first male who accepted Islam, p. 284; *Bihar*

al-Anwar, vol. 35, p. 44; Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 1, p.15.

9. Khalid Muhammad Khalid, Fi Rihab Ali, 2nd ed., Dar al-Andalus, Beirut, p.46. Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 1, p. 15.

10. Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 1, p.15, quoting al-Baladiri and al-Isfahani.

11. Nahj al-Balaghah, Subhi al-Salih (ed.), 1967 p. 300.

12. Abd al-Fattah Abd al-Maqsud, Ali bin Abi Talib, vol. 1, p.39.

13. Nahj al-Balaghah, p.301.

14. Ibid.

15. In Addition to books on history which state that Imam Ali (a.s.) was the first believer there are several traditions from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) which mention this fact. Vide: al-Mustadrak, vol. 3. p. 136. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi in his History, vol. 2, p. 81. Al-Manaqib by al-Khuwarzami, Hilyat al-Awliya', vol. 1, p. 16; Al-Sirah al-Halabiyah, vol. 1, p.285; Sirat Zaini Dahlan, commenting on al- Halabiyah, vol. 1, p. 188, all quoted from al-Ghadir, 3rd ed., (Beirut: 1967), vol. 3, pp. 222-242.

16. See our book, Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, Part One.

17 , Mustafa Al-Saqqa & Group (ed.), 1936, vol. 1, p.259.

18. Al-Kafi, al-Rawdah, vol. 8 about Imam Ali's (a.s.) Islam. Other traditions on this subject are narrated by al-Nisa'i; Ibn Maja, al-Hakim; al-Tabari in his History, and in al-Riyad al-Nadira, vol. 2, p. 158, in Siffin by Nasr bin Muzahim, p. 100, and others Look up al-Ghadir, vol. 3, pp. 221-240. These narrators say seven years. This does not contradict the formerly stated three years, since he preceded the others in his acceptance of Islam by three years, and he preceded them in believing in it and in his worship with the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), by some further years, to which he referred in his speech al-Qasi'ah.

19. This tradition is quoted by: Ibn Ishaq; Ibn Jarir; Ibn Abi Hatam; Ibn Mardawiyah; Abu Na'im; al-Baihaqi in his Sunan, and Dala'il: Al-Tha'labi and al- Tabari in their interpretation of the Sura of Al-Shu'ara', in their large Qur'anic commentary, quoted by al-Tabari in Tarikh al-Sirah al-Halabiyah, vol. 1, p. 381; al-Tahawi, Adhia' al-Maqdisi in his al-Mukhtar; Ahmad bin Hanbal, vol. 1" p. 111, 159; al-Khasa'is by al-Nisa'i, p. 6; Kanz al-Ummal, vol. 6. Tradition No. 6008; al-Irshad by al-Mufid, and many others, all quoting the tradition in almost similar words, quoted from Al-Muraja'at by

Sharaf al-Din, p. 124.

20. Ibn Al-Athir, al-Kamil, vol. 2, p.24; Bihar al-Anwar by Shaikh al-Majlisi, vol. 18, p. 164; Fiqh al-Sirah by Shaikh Muhammad al-Ghazali, pp. 102-103.

21. This hadith is also narrated by al-Baihaqi in his Sunan and by al Thalabi in Tafsir al-Kabir, commenting on Sura al-Shu'ara'; and al-Tabari in his Tarikh, vol. 2, p. 217; Ibn al-Athir in his Kamil, vol. 2, p. 22, al-Sirah al-Halabiyah, vol. 1, p.381; Ibn Hanbal in his Musnad, vol. 1, pp. 11-159; al-Nisa'i in his Khasa'ism, p.6; Kanz al-Ummal, vol. 6, Hadith No. 6008.

22. Ibid.

23. See our book, Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, Part One.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 19, chapter Entering the Shi'b; Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqat, vol. 1, pp. 173, 192; Ibn Hisham, Sirah, vol. 1, pp. 399-404; Ibn Qutaibah, Oyun al- Akhbar, vol. 2, p. 151; Ibn Kathir, History, vol. 3, pp. 84, 96-97; Al-Sirah al- Halabiyah, vol. I, pp. 357-367,. Ibn al-Athir, al-Kamil, vol. 2, p. 36, quoted from al-Ghadir, vol. 7 pp. 363-366.

27. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 21, chapter Ghazwat Mu'tah. Ibn Sa'd, al Tabaqat, vol. 4" p. 23. Usd al-Ghabah, vol. 1, p.287. Ibn Abi al-Hadid, vol. 3. p. 407 al- Bidayah wa al-Nihayah. vol. 4, p. 256. al-Isti'ab, vol. 1, p. 81, quoted from Maqatil al-Talibiyin by Abul Faraj al-Isfahani, chapter The Death of Ja'far bin Abi Talib, 2nd ed , 1970, p. 10 ff.

28. Ibid.

29. Tarikh al-Tabari, vol. 2, p. 222; Tarikh bin Asakir, vol. 1, p. 284; Mustadrak al-Hakim, vol. 2, p. 622. Tarikh bin Kathir, vol. 3, p. 122, quoted from al-Ghadir, vol. 7, p.376. Kashf al-Ghummah fi Ma'rifat al-A'immah, vol. 1, p. 16, and others.

30. Tafsir Sura al-Anfal, verse 30, al-Mizan, Muhammad Hussein Tabatab'i, Part 9, p. 80.

31. Ibid.

32. A'yan al-Shi'ah. 3rd ed., vol. 3, p. 155.

33. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 9: al-Kulaini, al-Kafi Al-Rawda, Tehran ed. vol. 8, p.339.
34. Ibn Al-Sabbagh, al-Fusul al-Muhimmah. chapter on His Bravery p.28.
35. A'yan al-Shi'ah, 3rd ed., vol. 3, p. 155
36. Ali. The Magnificent. p. 17
- 37 A'yan al-Shi'ah. 3rd ed.. vol. 3. p 155
38. Ahmad bin Yahya al-Baladhiri, Ansab al-Ashraf; 1st ed. Beirut. Vol. 2, pp. 91, 94; Mustadrak al-Sahihain, vol. 3, p. 111. Ibn Sa'd. Al-Tabaqat" vol. 3, p. 15.
39. Ali, The Magnificent, pp. 26-27
40. Ibid., pp. 27-28.
41. Muhammed Sadiq al-Sadr, Hayat Amir al-Mu'minun, 2nd ed. 1972, p.230.
42. Ali, The Magnificent, pp. 28-29.
43. commentary on Holy Qur'an 3:120 by S.V Mir Ahmed Ali, M. S. B.O.L.. B.T., Tahrike Tarsil Qur'an Inc., (New York: 1988), p 344
44. Ibid.. and Ali, The Magnificent, p. 32
45. Madarij al-Nubowah. Ma'arij al-Nubowah.
46. For more detail, please see our book, Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, part 2.
- 47 Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah. Ahmad Zaini Dahlan. vol. 2, pp. 6-7. 'Ghazwat Khandaq'.
48. Ibid.
49. Mustadrak al-Sahihain, vol. 3, p 32 on the authority of Sufyan Al. Thawri, narrated by al-Khatib al-Baghdadi in, The History of Baghdad. Vol. 3. p. 19. quoting al-Fadha'il al-Khamsah. vol. I.
50. Biography of Hadrat Ali (a.s), Light. Knowledge. Truth Peer Mahomed Ebrahim Trust, (Karachi: 1975). pp. 21.24

51. Ali. The Magnificent, p 49.

52. Dahlan, al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah" vol. 2, pp. 6-7 Al-Mufid, al-Irshad, chapter 'The Battle of the Trench', p.58.

53. Ali, The Magnificent, pp. 49-54.

54. Gibbon, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. V, p.365.

55. Ansab al-Ashraf, vol. 2, pp. 93-94, on the authority of Abu Hurairah and Ibn Abbas, in similar wordings; al-Nisa'i, Khasa'is Ali bin Abi Talib. 1st ed., (Beirut: 1975), p. 9ff; al-Isabah, al-Isti'ab, Hilyat al-Awlya', and in Muslim's Sahih, in similar wordings.

56. Sayid Muhsin al-Amin, Sirat al-Rasul, quoted from al-Sirah al. Halabiyah; Ibn Qutaibah. al-Ma'arif; al-Tabataba'i, Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. 10, interpretation of verse 25 of the Sura Bara'at (Taubah); al-Bahth al-Riwa'i; al-Mufid, al-Irshad, Ghazwat Hunain, p.81.

57 Look up Abdul Fattah Abdul Maqsud. al-Imam Ali, Sayid Muhsin al-Amin, A'yan Al-Shi'ah, vol. 3; al-Mufid. al-Irshad, Sirat bin Hisham: Ibn al-Sabbagh al- Maliki, al-Fusul al-Muhimmah.

58. Look up Ansab al-Ashraf by al-Baladhiri, 1st ed.. 1947, vol. 2, p 92; Mustadrak al-Sahihain, vol. 3, p. 111; Ibn Sa'd, al-Tabaqat, vol. 3, p. 10; Ibn Hijr, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 3, p. 475. Look up Fada'il al. Khamsah" vol. 2, p. 309 for more references.

59. Look up Sahih Muslim, the Book about The Merits of the Companions; al- Hakim, Mustadrak al-Sahihain, vol. 3, p. 147 Sunan al Baihaqi, vol. 2, p 149; al- Suyuti. Al-Dur al-Manthur in the interpretation of the said verse: Sahih al-Tirmidhi, vol. 2, p.209; Ibn Hijr, Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, vol. 2. p.297 and others, in addition to 'Fada'il al-Khamsah min al-Sihah al-Sittah'. vol. 1, p. 224ff.

60. Sahih Al-Tirmidi, vol. 2, p.300; Ahmad bin Hanbal, al-Musnad, vol. 1, p. 185; al-Suyuti, Al-Dur al-Manthur in the interpretation of al Mubahalalah verse; Al- Zamakhshari, al-Kashshaf, al-Fakhr al-Razi, The Big Tafsir and others, quoted from 'Fada'il al-Khamsah min al-Sihah al-Sittah' p. 244 ff.

61. Look up Al-Zamakhshari's al-Kashshaf, vol. 2; al-Wahidi's Asbab Al-Nuzul; Al-Tabarasi's Majma' al-Bayan in the interpretation of the Sura Al-Dahr; al-Hafid Muh. bin Jarir Al-Tahari's al-Kifayah; Ibn Abd Rabbah's al-Iqd al-Farid, vol. 3, pp. 42-47; al-Hakim Al-Naishaburi's Manaqib Fatimah (a.s.) as stated in al- Kifayah; al-Tha'labi's Tafsir al-Kashf wal Bayan; al-Alusi's Ruh al-Ma'ani; al- Tabari's al-Riyad al-Nadirah, vol. 2, p. 207, quoted from al-Amini's al-Ghadir, vol. 3, pp. 107-111.

62. Tafsir al-Tabari, quoting Anas. vol. 10, p. 59; al-Wahidi's Asbab al. Nuzul, p. 182; al-Qurtubi's

Tafsir, vol. 8, p.91; al-Razi's Tafsir vol. 4, p. 422; al-Khazin's Tafsir vol. 2, p. 221; Abul Barakat al-Nasfi's. Vol. 2. p 221; al-Suyuti's al-Dur al-Manthur. Vol. 3. p. 218: and others. with some difference in details and wordings

63. Mustadrak al-Sahihain. vol. 3, p. 126; Manaqib by Ibn Hanbal and Jami' al- Sihah by Abu Isa al-Tirmidhi; Kanz al-Ummal, vol. 6, p 401; Usd al-Ghabah, vol. 4, p.22; al-Khatib al-Bahgdadi in his History, vol. 4. p. 348, quoted from Fad'il al-Khamsah min al-Sihah al-Sittah. vol. 2,P 250 ff.

64. Ahmad bin Hanbal's Musnad. vol. 1, p. 174; Abu Dawud's Musnad, vol. 2, p. 28; al-Bukhari, chapter The Battle of Tabuk; Muslim. Al-Tirmidhi and others. quoted from al-Muraja'at pp. 133-136.

65. Sahih al-Tirmidhi. vol. 2, p.299; Ahmad bin Hanbal's Musnad, vol. 6. p 292; al-Nisa'i and Mustadrak al-Sahihain. Vol. 3, p. 129, and others. Look up Fada'il al-Khamsah min al-Sihah al-Sittah. Vol. 2. p 207 and others.

66. Ibn Maja, Sahih; al-Tirmidhi, Sahih, vol. 2, p. 299; Al-Nisa'i, al Khasa'is, pp. 3-18; Mustadrak al-Sahihain, vol. 3, p. 14; Ahmad bin Hanbal, al-Musnad, vol. 1, p. 159 and others, with slight difference in wordings.

67. Tafsir al-Baidawi; al-Tabrasi's Majma' al-Bayan. Abu Ishaq Al-Tha'labi's Tafsir; al-Tabari's Tafsir, vol. 6, p. 165; al-Wahidi's Asbab al-Nuzul, p. 148; al- Khazin's Tafsir, vol. 1, p. 496; al-Razi's Tafsir, vol. 3, p. 431; Abul-Barakat al- Nasfi, vol. 1, p.496; al-Naishaburi's Tafsir, vol. 3, p. 431; Abul-Barakat al-Nasfi, vol. 1, p. 496; al-Naishaburi's Tafsir, vol. 3, p. 461: Ibn Hajar's al-Sawa'iq, p. 25, and others, quoted from A'yan Al-Shi'ah, vol. 3, pp. 130-134, and Khulafa. al- Rasul al-Ithna Ashar, p. 103 ff.

68. The wordings are quoted from Ibn Maja's Sahih, p. 12.

69. Ibn Hanbal's Musnad, vol. 4, p.281, says that this was narrated by 30 of the Messenger's Companions. It is also stated by An-Nisa'i in his Khasa'is Ali bin Abi Talib, on diverse authorities; as did Al-Tirmidhi and Al-Tabarani, quoting Zaid bin Arqam and al-Fakhr Al-Razi, in interpreting the verse: "O Messenger! make known what has been revealed to you from your Lord;..." and Kanz al-Ummal, vol. 1, p.48; and Mustadrak al-Sahihain and others, quoted from al-Amini's al Ghadir, vol, 1,

70. Al-Bahgdadi's History, vol. 14, p, 321: al-Haithami's Majma' vol. 7 p.235; Kanz al-Ummal, vol. 6, p, 157; al-Razi's Tafsir. vol. 1" p. 111: and others, quoted from Ali and Vicegerency. p. 113.

71 Ibid., vol. 13, p. 186; al-Haithami's Majma. vol. 7 p.236, Kanz al Ummal, vol. 6, p 155

72 Sulaiman al-Hanafi Yanabi. al-Mawaddah: Al-dhahabi. Mizan al. l'tidal: al- Suyuti, al-La'ali; al-Dailami. Kunuz al-Daqa'iq; Ahmad bin Hanbal, al-Manaqib; Kanz al-Ummal. vol 6. p. 154; al-Tabarani. Al-Mu'jam al-Kabir; al-Muhib al- Tabari, Al-Dhaka'ir and others as stated by Najm al-Din al-'Askari in Ali and Vicegerency, p. 194.

73. For further reference look up: Yanabi al-Mawaddah by al-Shaikh al-Qanduzi al-Hanafi; al-Fusul al-Muhimmah by Ibn al-Sabbagh al-Maliki; Fadha'il al- Khamsah min al-Sihah al-Sittah by al-Firoozabadi; Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal; al- Shaikh Najm al-din al-Askari, and others.

74. Al-Khawarzmi, al-Manaqib, quoting A'ishah; Ahmad bin Hanbal al Musnad, vol. 2, p. 300; al-Muhib al-Tabari, Dhakha'ir al-Uqba, p. 73; Ali and Vicegerency, p.206.

75. Quoted by al-Nisa'i, Abu Dawud, Ibn Maja and Ahmad bin Hanbal in his Musnad.

76. Quoted by al-Tirmidhi under No. 874 of Kanz al-Ummal, vol. 1, p. 44; Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 5, pp. 182-189; al-Hakim, al-Mustadrak, vol. 3, p. 148 and others.

77 Quoted by al-Bukhari, vol. 1, p. 21, Muslim, Sahih, vol. 3, p. 259; Ahmad bin Hanbal, al-Musnad, vol. 1 and others

78 See Sahih Bukhari, vol. 4, p. 194 and also Saqifah by Shaikh Muhammad Ridha al-Mudafar

79. Ibn Kathir's History, vol. 5, p. 271; Abul Fida's History, vol. 1, p.152. quoted from al-Ghadir, vol. 7 p 75.

80. Al-Saqifah, 4th ed., (Beirut: 1973), p.160.

81. Al-Sayid Sharaf al-din, al-Muraja'at, p 302

82. Extracted from a letter to the Egyptians, which he sent with Malik al-Ashtar his governor appointed to that province Look up Nahj al-Balaghah, Letter No. 62.

83 Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol 2, p. 111, quoting Ali wal Khulafa' by al-Askari, p 62

84 Manaqib Aal Abi Talib, vol 2, p 178 Bihar al-Anwar. vol 40. quoting al-Kafi.

85 Kanz al-Ummal, vol 3, p. 99, quoted from Ali wal Khulafa' p 63

86. Ali wal Khulafa', p. 60, quoting al-Tasturi and Al-Najaf al-Ashraf, Qadha' Amir al-Mu'minin, 1st

ed. 1369 A. H , p. 66.

87 Manaqib Aal Abi Talib, vol. 2, p. 180.

88. Nahj al-Balaghah, Dr. Subhi al-Salih (ed.), p. 192.

89. Najm Al-Din al-Askar, Ali wal Khulafa', p. 83, quoting Ahmad bin Hanbal's al-Musnad, vol. 1, p. 94, Kanz al-Ummal, vol. 4, p. 39, and others.

90. Kanz al-Ummal, vol 7, p. 147 al-Bukhari's Sahih, 191727, and others, quoted from Ali wal Khulafa' p. 87

91. Al-Baihaqi's Sunan, al-Tabri's History, Kanz al-Ummal, vol. 3, p. 101, Al- Zarqani's Sharh al-Muwatta' vol. 4, p. 25, and others.

92. Kanz al-Ummal, vol. 3, p.96; al-Futuhah al-Islamiyah, vol. 2, p.482, quoted from Ali wal Khulafa' p. 98.

93 Manaqib Aal Abi Talib, vol. 2, p 191; Ali wal Khulafa' p. 102.

94. Ali wal Khulafa', p. 133, quoting Ibn al-Hujjah al-Hamawi al Hanafi's Thamarat al-Awraq of the Lectures, 1368 A H. ed., vol. 2, p 15

95 Ali wal Khulafa', p 239 ,

96 Tarikh al-Tabari, vol 2, p.250. Tarikh al-Yaqoubi; Kanz al-Ummal, Mastadrak al-Hakim; al-Kamil by Ibn al-Atheer Quoting from Ali wal Khulafa' p 240.

97 Manaqib Aal Abi Talib, vol. 2, p. 192, and Muh bin Ali al-Qummi's Aja'ib Ahkam Amir al-Mu'minin, p.43.

98. Al-Manaqib, p. 192; Ibn Kathir'sTafsir,vol.4, P 57 and al-Baihaqi's Sunan, vol. 7, p. 442.

99. Al-Suyuti's al-Dur al-Manthur, vol. 3, p. 144; Ibn al-Jawzi's Sirat Umar, p. 106; Dahlan's al-Futuhah al-Islamiyah, vol. 2, p. 486, and others, quoting Ali wal Khulafa'; Ibn Shahrashub's Manaqib Aal Abi Talib, vol. 2; al Ghadir, vol. 6-7 and Aja'ib Ahkam Amir al-Mu'minin by the respected Qur'anic commentator, Muhammad bin Ibrahim al Qummi

100. Nahj al-Balaghah, Dr. Subhi al-Salih (ed.), p. 136.

101. Ibid.
102. Ibid. Sermon No. 131.
103. Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah by Muhammad Abdoh, vol. 1, p.269.
104. From his instructions to Muhammad bin Abi Bakr on appointing him as governor of Egypt, Nahj al-Balaghah, Letter No. 27.
105. His instructions to Abdullah bin Abbas, his representative in Basra, Nahj al- Balaghah , Letter No. 76.
106. Nahj al-Balaghah, al-Salih (ed.), Letter No. 45, p.416.
- 107 Ibid., p.415.
108. Ibid., p. 412.
109. Ibid., Letter No. 14, p. 373.
110. Ibid., Letter No. 50, p.424.
111. Ibid., Letter No 51.
112. Ibid., Letter No. 25.
113. George Cherdaq, Rawa'i Nahj al-Balaghah, p. 163.
114. Al-Baladhiri, Ansab al-Ashraf, vol. 2, p. 136.
115. Muhammad Abul Fadhl Ibrahim, Sharh al-Nahj, 1378 A.H. ed., vol. 2, pp. 198, 199.
116. Nahjal-Balaghah, Letter No. 45, p.418.
- 117 Look up Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 41, p. 104; Amaal al-Saduq, Tadhkirat al- Khawas, p. 134; al-Baladhiri, Ansab al-Ashraf, vol. 2, p. 129, with little difference in wordings.
118. Sibt bin al-Jawzi, Tadhkirat al-Khawas, p. 125.
119. Nahj al-Balaghah, Letter No. 45.

120. Sibt bin al-Jawzi, Tadhkirat al-Khawwas, p 121; al-Aqqad, Ab qariyat al- Imam, Beirut, 1g67 ed., p. 16.
121. Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon No 209.
122. Tadhkirat al-Khawwas, p. 68.
123. Nahj al-Balaghah, Sharh bin Abi al-Hadid, vol. 2, p. 200.
124. Ibid., p.201.
125. Ibid., p. 202.
126. Tadhkiratul Khawwas, p. 121.
- 127 Ibid., p. 125.
128. Ansab al-Ashraf, vol. 2, p. 132.
129. Nahj al-Balaghah, Sharh bin Abi al-Hadid, vol. 2, p.200.
130. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 40, Ch. 98; Manaqib Aal Abi Talib, vol. 1.
131. Ibid.
132. Ibid., the same page.
133. Ibid.
134. Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 224.
135. Dr. Muhammad Ahmad Khalafallah, Ali bin Abi Talib, Nadrah As-riyah Jadidah, p.32. ,
136. Nahj al-Balaghah, Dr. Subhi al-Salih (ed.), 1st ed., (Beirut: 1967), Sermon No. 205.
- 137 Al-Imam Ali Wa Fadha'iluh, Dar Maktabat al-Hayat, Beirut, p. 175.
138. Ibn al-Sabbagh al-Maliki, al-Fusul al-Muhimmah, p.50. Look up the text of the Imam's letter No. 75. Bab al-Kutub, p. 464.

139. Al-Fusul al-Muhimmah, p. 51.
140. Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 16, p. 154; commenting on the Imam's letter No. 37
141. Al-Fusul al-Muhimmah, p. 51.
142. Sharih Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 3, p.75.
143. Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 164, p.235.
144. Ibid.
145. Ibid.
146. Al-Tabari, Ibn al-Athir and others, citing the sayings of A'ishah, p 98.
- 147 The Tabri, Ansab al-Ashraf, Ibn al-Athir, bin Qutaibah's al-Ma'arif and others, quoted from the same reference, p. 99.
148. Al-Tabari's History Ansab al-Ashraf quoted from the same reference, p. 113.
149. Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 9 pp. 5-6.
150. Al-Fusul al-Muhimmah p. 55.
151. Ibn al-Sabbagh al-Maliki al-Fusul al-Muhimmah fi Ma'rifat al A'immah, p.63. Sibte bin al-Jawzi, Tadhkirat al-Khawass, p. 77 Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Sharh Nahjal- Balaghah vol. 2 p.167.
152. Al-Fusul al-Muhimmah, p. 62; Sibte bin al-Jawzi's al-Tadhkira.
153. Ibid.
154. Ahadith Urn al-Mu'minin A'ishah part In p. 181, quoted from al Ya'qubi and Kanz al-Ummal.
155. Ibid., p. 182.
156. Ibn al-Sabbagh al-Maliki, al-Fusul al-Muhimmah p. 70.

157 Ibid., p.71.

158. Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al Arabia, 1959, vol. 1, p.23.

159. Al-Fusul al-Muhimmah and Ibn al-Jawzi's Al-Tadhkira.

160. Ibid.

161. Sibt bin al-Jawzin Tadhkirat al-Khawasn p. 103.

162. Ibid., and al-Fusul al-Muhimmah, p.78.

163. Tadhkirat al-Khawasn, p. 74.

164. Ibid., p.79.

165. Julius Filhausen, al-Shi'ah and al-Khawarij, translated by Abdul-Rahman Badawi, (Kuwait: 1976), p 32. ,

166. Nasr bin Muzahim, Waqi'at Siffin, p.517.

167 The Quran 16:91 Look up Nasr bin Muzahim, Waqi'at Siffin, p. 517.

168. Al-Fusul al-Muhimmah, p. 91.

169. Ibid., p. 92.

170. A'yan Al-Shi'ah vol. 3n p. 20n quoting Al-Tabari and al-Fusul al Muhimmah, p. 93.

171. Sahih al-Bukhari quoted from al-Fusul al-Muhimmah p. 94; al Baladhiri Ansab al-Ashraf vol. 2, p. 376, quoting Imam Ali (a.s.) in different wordings; al- Nisa'i Khasa'is p. 71.

172. Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon No 182.

173. Nahj al-Balaghah, Will No. 47, p. 412.