

# IMAM JAWAD: A BLESSED NEWBORN<sup>1</sup>

MUHAMMAD NASSIR HUSAYNI ALA'I

TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

**ABSTRACT:** Imam Muhammad ibn 'Alī ibn Mūsā – also called al-Jawad ('the generous') and al-Taqi ('the pious') – was a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, the ninth of the Twelve Imams. According to historical accounts, he was the youngest of the twelve Imams, as well as the shortest-lived of them. This article is a short biography that offers a glimpse of the Imam's life – his Imamate, marriage, offspring, and his wisdom implemented in his spiritual and social life. Imam al-Jawad was known for his deep knowledge and sharpness, despite his young age, in his lectures, debates, as well as handling people's questions. He was also active in the socio-political sphere, where he a. gave permission to Shi'as to infiltrate the court, b. created strong communication networks, and c. prevented hadith distortion.

The ninth Imam was born in 195 A.H., though his birth date is not agreed upon. According to ibn 'Ayyash, it is Rajab 10<sup>th</sup>. In order to confirm his words, one can refer to the supplication received from Imam Mahdi, an excerpt of which reads as follows, "O' Allah! I ask You by two newborns in Rajab, the Second Muhammad ibn Ali, and

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<sup>1</sup> Islamic Teachings Growth Journal

his son, Ali ibn Muhammad, the Chosen one.”<sup>2</sup> Some consider his birthday to be the 15<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan; others the 19<sup>th</sup>, and yet others the 21<sup>st</sup>.<sup>3</sup>

His name is Muhammad, his epithet Abu Ja‘far, and his most famous titles Jawad and Taqi. His other titles are Mukhtar al-Muntakhab (meaning the Free, the Chosen), Murtada, Qani‘, and ‘Alim. As for why he is known as Taqi, Shaikh Saduq said it was “... because he feared God, the Almighty, so God, the Glorious, the Majestic kept him immune from Ma‘mun, who one night came to him drunk and thrust at him in such a way that he thought he had killed the Imam, but God protected the 9<sup>th</sup> Imam from his evil.”<sup>4</sup>

He was also called al-Jawad due to his unceasing generosity. In a detailed narration, he advised his son, quoting his father as saying, “...Whenever you ride a horse, have dinar and dirham with you so that if somebody asks you for money, you can give it to him...”<sup>5</sup>

He was also given the title Mukhtar because, like Prophet Jesus and Yahya ibn Zakariyya, he was chosen as an Imam [at a young age].<sup>6</sup>

His father was the 8<sup>th</sup> Imam, ‘Ali ibn Musa a-Rida, and his mother was Umm Waladi, who was also called Sabikah and Kheizaran. She was from the tribe of the Prophet’s wife, Mariyah Qibtiyyah. Out of his 25-year-old fruitful life, he was under his father’s auspices for 8 years, thus becoming Imam at the age of eight.

<sup>2</sup> Muntahal-Amal, Shyaikh Abbas Qummi, p. 937. « اللهم انى استسلك بالمولودين فى رجب محمد بن على الثانى و » «ابنه على بن محمد المنتخب

<sup>3</sup> The 14 Infallibles, Emad-zadeh, p. 1157.

<sup>4</sup> Muntahal-Amal, p. 937; Muntakhab-u-Tawarikh, Haj Muhammad Hashim Khurasani, p.961.

<sup>5</sup> Muntakhab-u-Tawarikh, p. 961.

<sup>6</sup> The 14 Infallibles, p. 1157.

As mentioned before, the issue of Imam Rida's offspring is a controversial topic in Shi'a history. A review of the time in which Imam al-Jawad was born somehow clarifies Imam al-Rida's unique situation in relation to his offspring, particularly Imam al-Jawad. In what follows, some instances are mentioned:

Imam al-Jawad has been referred to by Imam al-Rida and his followers as a greatly blessed newborn. For example, consider the following narrations:

- In al-Kafi by Kulayni, San'ani said, "I was in the presence of Imam al-Rida when his little son, Abu Ja'far, was brought in. The 8<sup>th</sup> Imam said, 'A no more blessed baby than this son has been born for the Shi'as.'"<sup>7</sup>
- In another narration, two other Shi'as named ibn Asbat and 'Ibad ibn Isma'il said, "We were in the presence of the 8<sup>th</sup> Imam when Abu Ja'far was brought in. We asked, 'Is this that blessed baby?' He replied, 'Yes, he is the very blessed baby in Islam, more blessed than any baby.'"<sup>8</sup>
- According to Kulayni in his book, *al-Kafi*, there is a narration in which Abu Yahya San'ani reported, "In Mecca I went to Imam al-Rida and saw him peeling a banana and giving it to his son. I asked him 'Is this the very blessed newborn?' He said, 'Yes, Yahya! In Islam there is no more blessed baby for the Shi'as than him.'"<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Usul al-Kafi, Kulayni, p. 321. «هذا المولود الذي لم يولد مولود اعظم بركة على شيعتنا منه»

<sup>8</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar, Allamah Majlisi, vol. 5, p. 20. «نعم، هذا الولود الذي لم يولد في الاسلام اعظم بركة من»

<sup>9</sup> Furu' al-Kafi, vol.6, p. 361. «نعم يا يحيى، هذا المولود الذي لم يولد في الاسلام مثله مولود اعظم بركة على شيعتنا منه»

It has to be noted that the emphasis on blessedness of Imam Jawad's birth does not mean that he was more blessed than other Imams. Rather, according to the existing evidence, these hadiths seem to mean his birth occurred under some circumstances that brought along special blessings for the Shi'as. In other words, the time of Imam al-Rida was very special and unprecedented for two reasons:

1. The Waqifi beliefs on Imamate<sup>10</sup>: Waqifah is the generic name of some Shi'a sects as opposed to "Qat'iyah" which denies Imam Musa al-Kadhim's demise and believed in his eternal Imamate [without his having any successor]. They believe Imam Musa al-Kadhim was not martyred but was rather hidden until a promised day when he will reappear. In fact, they know him as the Ummah's 'Mahdi', humankind's saviour. A prominent figure of this group is Abul-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad Ta'i Kufi, known as Tahiri, who was a Waqifi jurist and Shaykh contemporary with the 7<sup>th</sup> Imam. Although he was considered trustworthy in hadith and jurisprudence, he exercised prejudice by defending the Waqifi sect and denying Shi'a beliefs. He also wrote about 30 books in support of the Waqifi sect.<sup>11</sup>

Another figure of this sect at that time, Muhammad ibn Bashir, was a client from Bani Asad. He was a man of trick and magic and was considered a Waqifi.<sup>12</sup>

Through their numerous followers and considerable publicity, they created such an atmosphere that they denied the Imamate of Imam al-

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<sup>10</sup> The history of Shi'ism and Islamic Sects until the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, Muhammad Jawad Mashkur, p.150.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p.166.

Rida, and their adverse publicity against him was effective. When Imam al-Jawad was born, some denied his birth. Of course, the Waqifis had some specific beliefs about God that are beyond the constraints of this paper.

2. Imam al-Rida did not have a child until the age of 47. His son's delayed birth caused doubt in his Imamate. This doubt resulted from Waqifi beliefs and Imam Rida's age, and this doubt led to an unfavourable atmosphere. According to Husayn ibn Bashshar, ibn Qiyama, who was Waqifi, wrote in a letter to Imam al-Rida, "How can you be an Imam while not having any child?" The Imam patiently replied, "How do you know I will not have a child? By God, very soon He will grant me a son who will distinguish between the truth and the falsehood"<sup>13</sup>

In another narration, ibn Qiyamah Wasiti said, "I went to Imam Ali ibn Musa and told him, 'Can there be two Imams at the same time?' He said, "No, unless one of them does not act as an Imam – such as Imam al-Husayn – who was silent in the lifetime of Imam al-Hasan." I told him, "Is there any Imam contemporary with you but not acting as an Imam to succeed you?' At that time Abu Ja'far had not been born yet. He told me, "By God, I will have a son who will support and confirm the Truth, the people of Truth, and will eradicate Falsehood and its people.' One year later, Abu Ja'far was born."<sup>14</sup>

Negative publicity against the Prophet's household was so considerable that even after Imam Jawad's birth, there was still an oppressive atmosphere to the extent that a group of Imam al-Ridha's

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<sup>13</sup> Usul al-Kafi, vol.1, p. 320.

<sup>14</sup> ibid., p.321.

relatives, naturally due to their jealousy and malice, became so rude that they claimed Imam al-Jawad not to have been Imam Ali ibn Musa's son.

They could level their unfair and anti-Islam accusations at Imam al-Jawad and implement their plots only through this dissembling doubt that the son did not resemble the father. They used Imam Jawad's dark complexion as an excuse, saying, "There has been no swarthy Imam yet!" Imam al-Ridha replied, "He is my son."

They said, "Prophet Muhammad judged through physiognomy, so those who are expert in it should judge between you and us."

Inevitably, the 8<sup>th</sup> Imam said, "You can summon them, but I would not agree to do so."

They did so, and the outcome was in Imam al-Ridha's favour. Detailed information on this issue can be found in the relevant books.<sup>15</sup>

The era during Imam al-Jawad was different than that of the previous Imams, given the spread of Waqifi beliefs. This undermined the beliefs of those who had weak faith. Naturally, the birth of Imam al-Jawad could remove doubts, defeat enemies, fulfill the promises, and raise the banner of the truth while some were waiting for it to crash. Thus, Imam al-Jawad's birth was a blessing.

The birth of Imam al-Jawad and his Imamate at a young age paved the way for Imam al-Hadi's Imamate. When Imam al-Hadi became an Imam in his childhood, people accepted it more easily given Imam al-

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 322, 323.

Jawad's Imamate was at a young age. Thus, the birth of Imam al-Jawad was blessed for both his father and his son.

### ***Imamate at a young age***

The birth of Imam al-Jawad both surprised the Shi'as, as well as caused others weaker in faith to cause sedition as a result of their doubt in his Imamate at an early age. This can be addressed from two angles:

1. Imamate at a young age is not considered a wonder. If God wills, He can perfect a person's wisdom before maturity and even in the cradle for preparation for heavy responsibilities to come. At least for Muslims, who consider the Quran a heavenly book, this is not a new issue. In addition, there are historical instances of early intellectual maturity.

The Qur'an offers two, namely Prophet Yahya and Prophet Jesus. As mentioned in the Qur'an, God commanded Yahya, "*Take hold of the Book with might.*"<sup>16</sup> God also said, "*...and We gave him Wisdom when a child.*"<sup>17</sup> Likewise, in this very chapter, God stipulated that Prophet Jesus talked to people in the cradle, and God made him a prophet then. The prophethood of Yahya and Jesus in their childhood is by far more surprising than Imamate of Imam Jawad.

We read in Shi'a hadiths:

According to a companion of Imam al-Rida and Imam al-Jawad, namely Ali ibn Asbat, "I saw Imam Muhammad Taqi coming to me. I was looking at him from head to toe so as to describe him to the

<sup>16</sup> Maryam: 12. يَا يَحْيَىٰ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ

<sup>17</sup> Maryam: 12. وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا

Egyptian Shi'as. Meanwhile, he sat down and said, 'O Ali! God has made hujjat (proof) about Imamate similar to hujjat about prophethood, saying, 'We have granted him prophethood at a very young age, and we bestowed prophethood on him when he grew up and reached the age of 40.' Thus, one (i.e. Yahya) might be granted wisdom at a very young age, and one (i.e. Prophet Joseph) may be granted wisdom at the age of 40.'"<sup>18</sup> There are also other narrations by the Infallibles on this topic.<sup>19</sup>

2. As a result of seditions (*fitna*), those who had weak faith were disposed to slips. Although a) it is considered possible through God's will, b) Imam al-Rida had announced the Imamate of the young Imam al-Jawad, and c) the Shi'as had been given the rational and intellectual proofs of this issue, those weak in faith continued to doubt his Imamate.

Not only did lay Shi'as doubt his Imamate; several Shi'a scholars were also stunned. Muhammad ibn Jarir Tabari wrote, "When Imam al-Jawad was six years old or so, and Ma'mun killed his father, the Shi'as became perplexed. People disagreed on his Imamate, and considered him too young for this position. The Shi'as showed astonishment in other cities as well."<sup>20</sup> He also said, "Some Shi'a chiefs held a meeting after Imam al-Rida's martyrdom and discussed the Imamate of Imam al-Jawad. One participant, Yunus ibn Abdu-Rahman, said, 'We should not cry; instead we should see who is to assume Imamate until this

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<sup>18</sup> Tuhaf-ul-'Uqul, p.1, p. 382.

<sup>19</sup> 'Alam-ul-Wara, p. 346; Kashf-ul-Gham, vol.2, p. 351.

<sup>20</sup> Dalyil-ul-A'immah, p. 204.

little boy grows up. Who should we refer to in order to find answers to our religious questions?”

On the other hand, Ishaq ibn Isma‘il posed ten questions to Imam al-Jawad in a letter to evaluate him and confirm his Imamate.<sup>21</sup>

Of course, it is acceptable to search for the Imam, but it is unlikely for a true Shi‘a to doubt the concept of a very young Imam guiding the Ummah.

From the companions’ reaction to the Imam, and his levelheadedness in responding to them, a training-related point can be observed. A trainer knows that until the trainee does not heartily give in to an issue, he will not accept it. That is why the Imams left no stone unturned in encouraging their followers and mobilising them through raising their awareness. They forgivingly responded to the people’s doubt. Qur’anic stories such as that of Prophet Moses and Khizr also points out this issue. Seditious (*fitna*) are ambiguous events, and if a person does not approach them insightfully, he or she cannot remain unaffected.

### ***Academic aspects of the Imam***

Like his holy fathers, Imam al-Jawad occasionally took part in academic meetings and debates and answered the audience’s questions, while also bringing his opponents to a standstill. This was important from two perspectives:

1. It astonished some that Imam al-Jawad became an Imam at a young age. Some asked him outlandish questions to evaluate him and check

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 205, 204.

his qualifications. Even the Caliph participated in this manoeuvre and made the Imam face scholars who aimed either to evaluate or defeat him; notwithstanding, the Imam responded to all appropriately.

2. Measuring the issues against the human intellect was a concept emphasised by I'tizaliyyin. The intellect was their yardstick for everything. Abbasid caliphs also supported this doctrine, and such issues were usually raised in the court. Even the Qur'anic verses were evaluated on this basis. This paved the way for the increased scientific debates in the time of Imam al-Jawad.

In the historical and hadith books, there are numerous debates referred to in this regard. The following presents an excerpt of his one of his debates at the age of 9 with Yahya ibn Aktham quoted in *Tuhaf-ul-'Uqul*:

When Ma'mun wanted to arrange his daughter's marriage to Imam al-Jawad, his men objected to this decision, but Ma'mun insisted and finally made the Imam face Yahya ibn Aktham in a gathering. Yahya asked the Imam, "What is the legal ruling on a man who hunted an animal when he was muhram (i.e., dressed in a pilgrim state)?"

The Imam asked, "Outside the Haram (i.e., in Mecca) or in it? Did he know the legal ruling or not? Did he kill it on purpose or by mistake? Was he a slave or a free man? Was he a juvenile or an adult? Was it his first time doing so or not? Was the animal a bird or not? A chick or a hen? Has the hunter insisted on his act or has he repented? Did he do so at night in its nest or evidently

during the day? Was he muhrim in the Greater Hajj or the Lesser Hajj (i.e., 'Umrah)?" Yahya and the audience were stunned, and Ma'mun recited the marriage contract between the Imam and his daughter. Then he asked the Imam to issue a legal ruling on each question he had posed, and the Imam did so.

Ma'mun suggested that Yahya ibn Aktham raise a more challenging question to the Imam. Yahya asked, "A man committed fornication with a woman; can he marry her?"

The Imam answered, "He must wait to know if she is pregnant by him or somebody else, because since she had an affair with him, she might have had one with others as well. Once he makes sure that she is not pregnant, it is halal to marry her."

Yahya was speechless, and the Imam al-Jawad asked him, "How come there is a man to whom a woman is haram in the morning and halal in the late morning? Again she is haram to him at noon and halal in the afternoon? Once more she is haram to him in the late afternoon and halal in the evening? Again haram at midnight and halal at dawn? In the morning, she is haram to him and finally at noon halal?"

Yahya and other jurists could not think of any answer.

Ma'mun said, "O' Abu-Ja'far! Please answer these questions yourself."

The Imam said, “He is a man who looks at a non-mahram slave-girl, then buys her, and she becomes mahram to him, then he frees her and she becomes haram to her. Afterwards, he marries her, and she becomes halal to him again. Then, he did *zihar* (tells her: you are like my mother and haram to me; this is a kind of divorce), as a result, she becomes haram to him again. He pays expiation, and she becomes halal. Then he divorces her, and she becomes haram. He then returns to (i.e., remarries) her, and she becomes halal. He goes out of religion and she becomes haram. He repents and returns to Islam and she becomes halal under the very previous marriage, much like what the Prophet had done and confirmed his daughter’s marriage to abul-’As ibn Rabi’ after he became Muslim.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Generative Wilayah***

Generative Wilayah refers to an authority through which one can influence things and know about the hidden. As regards Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Musa’s creational wilayah, there are many historical accounts, one of which is briefly presented below:

Ali ibn Khalid said: I heard a man was arrested in Sham and transferred to Samarra. I built rapport with the prison guards and met the prisoner, asking him what happened. He said, “One night while worshipping God in Ra’s-ul-Husayn, a man told me to stand up. Shortly after, I found myself in Kufa

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<sup>22</sup> Tuhaf-ul-’Uqul, pp. 332-335.

Mosque where we both prayed. Then I found myself in Masjid-a-Nabi, and we prayed there, too. Afterwards, we were doing Tawaf in Masjid-ul-Haram. Suddenly, I found myself in my prayer place. Next year, the very person who had been hidden came to me and took me to the same abovementioned places again. When he took me back to my worshipping place, I asked him by God to introduce himself. He said, 'I am Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Musa.' Mu'tasim's vizier was informed of this event and had me arrested and taken to Iraq." I wrote his story to Muhammad ibn 'Abd-ul-Malik and he responded, 'Tell him to ask the one who has taken him to Kufa, etc. overnight to save him from prison.' The next day I was about to inform him of this response and enjoin him to be patient when I saw prison guards searching for him. They told me that he was missing. I found out that Imam al-Jawad had set him free. I was a Zaidi, but then turned to Imamiyyah.<sup>23</sup>

### ***His marriage to Ma'mun's daughter***

Despite the fact that Ma'mun concealed his role in the martyrdom of Imam al-Rida, his involvement was soon disclosed. Moreover, in order to protect the court, Ma'mun selected Imam al-Rida as his crown prince and coerced him to accept this position.

The Abbasids were displeased with Ma'mun's decision, and after Imam al-Rida's martyrdom, they were relieved that the Alawids could not infiltrate into the court. However, due to Ma'mun's key role in the Imam's martyrdom, and Shi'as' awareness of it, Ma'mun found

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<sup>23</sup> Madinah al-Mu'ajiz Ahlul Bayt, vol. 4, p. 305.

his court in danger. Despite the Abbasids' disapproval, he arranged the marriage of his daughter, Umm-ul-Fadl to Imam al-Jawad. So he summoned the Imam to Baghdad and attempted to win his trust. Finally, in a gathering in which Yahya ibn Aktham and the Abbasids were present, he had the Imam marry his daughter. Both parties' reasons for acceptances of this marriage are as follows:

A) Ma'mun's reasons:

1. Watching the Imam through his daughter, thus allowing for close surveillance.
2. Marring the Imam's reputation by having him attend frivolous gatherings in the court.
3. Preventing from the Alawids' uprisings against the court.
4. Building a familial relationship with the Imam through his daughter (although this never occurred).

B) The Imam's reasons:

1. Prevention from his own martyrdom. Ma'mun's coercion left him no choice.
2. Preventing the Alawids and Shi'as' oppression; thus protecting Shi'ism.

This marriage changed some of the Shi'as' opinion about the Imam. While the following story somehow indicates the Imam's generative wilayah, it reveals some of his companions' false ideas about him. Qutb Rawandi quoted Husayn Makkari as saying, "While Imam al-Jawad was living in Baghdad wealthily, I went there, thinking now that he lived prosperously and dignified by Ma'mun, and that he

would not return to Medina. The Imam read my mind, lowered and then raised his head while he turned yellow, and said, “O Husayn! I prefer barley bread with half-ground salt in the city of Prophet Muhammad to this situation.”<sup>24</sup>

That is why Imam al-Hadi did not remain in Baghdad and returned to Medina with his wife, Umm-ul-Fadl, and lived in Medina until 220 A.H.

### ***Imam al-Jawad's offspring***

There are various historical narrations on the Imam's offspring; the most well-known are as follows:

1. Imam al-Jawad had four sons – Abul-Hasan Ali al-Hadi, Abu Ahmad Musa Mubarqa', Abu Ahmad Husayn and Abu Musa Imran – and four daughters: Fatimah, Khadijah, Umm-e Kulthoom and Hakimah.<sup>25</sup> According to this narration, Imam al-Jawad did not have any child from Ma'mun's daughter, Umm-ul-Fadl; his descendants can be traced back to Imam al-Hadi and Musa Mubarqa'.
2. In addition to the above-mentioned children, Imam al-Jawad had three other daughters named Zainab, Umm-e Ahmad, and Maymunah.<sup>26</sup>
3. His offspring are: Ali, who succeeded him in Imamate, Musa, Fatimah and Imamah. Accordingly, he did not have any son other than Ali and Musa.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> al-Khara'ij wa al-Hara'ij, vol.4, p. 383.

<sup>25</sup> Muntahal-Amal, p. 967.

<sup>26</sup> ibid., p. 967.

<sup>27</sup> al-Irshad, Shaikh Mufid, p. 295 2.

Some argue, Fatimah or Imamah, whom are mentioned in *Irshad* are Hakimah's names, with Hakimah as her title.<sup>28</sup>

4. Imam al-Jawad's offspring are Ali, Musa, Hakimah, Khadijah and Umm-e Kulthoom.<sup>29</sup>

His only permanent wife was Umm-ul-Fadl, from whom he did not have any child.<sup>30</sup> The above-mentioned offspring were born to his other wives.

### ***Imam al-Jawad's political measures***

To maintain and strengthen the position of the Shi'a and create a constant link with his followers, Imam al-Jawad took the following political measures:

1. Giving permission to Shi'as to have government posts.

Some who entered the court and rose high in rank are: Muhammad ibn Isma'il ibn Bazi', Ahmad ibn Hamzah Qummi, Nuh ibn Durraj (the judge in Baghdad and Kufa), Husayn ibn Abdullah Neyshaburi (the governor of Sistan and Bast), and Hakam ibn 'Ulya Asadi (the governor of Bahrain).

In one account of Imam al-Jawad's political measures to protect the Shi'as and their financial resources: A Shi'a from Bast and Sistan wrote a letter to the Imam complaining to him about high taxation imposed on him by Husayn ibn Abdullah Neyshaburi, the Sistan governor. In reply, the Imam wrote a letter to the governor, requesting him not to be strict with this Shi'a, and instead reduce his

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<sup>28</sup> Muntakhab-u-Tawarikh, p.665.

<sup>29</sup> Manaqib Ale Abi-Talib, vol. 4, p. 380.

<sup>30</sup> ibid., p. 380.

tax. In response, not only did the governor reduce his tax, but he also permanently exempted him from paying it.<sup>31</sup>

## 2. Creating communication networks

As the Shi'as were under heavy pressure from the government, the 9<sup>th</sup> Imam thought of an idea, and through selecting his wakils (agents), created a strong network. These agents both prevented dispersion and disunity of the Shi'as and their beliefs, and conveyed the Imam's message quickly and accurately to them. Through their convergent policies, they also protected the religious taxes from being wasted by having it given to ineligible people. Through this network, the Imam also helped the Shi'as, and avoiding direct communication with Shi'as, he protected their lives.

## 3. Prevention of hadith distortion

In his lifetime, the Imam tried to use his position to protect his ancestor's rich heritage. Although this action seemed to be cultural, the example below reveals the issues of government and wilayah—the important political issues in Islam.

On the surface, the Imam wanted to prevent attributing forged hadiths to the Prophet, but in fact, he proved the superiority of Imam 'Ali ibn Abi-Talib. In his debates with the Imam, Yahya ibn Aktham asked some questions. For example, Yahya asked the Imam, "It is narrated that Arch-angel Gabriel told the Prophet, quoting God as saying, 'I am content with Abu Bakr; ask him whether he is content with me, too.'" Imam al-Jawad answered, "This is not consistent with

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<sup>31</sup> Furu' al-Kafi, vol. 5, pp.111, 112.

God's book because God is closer to man than his jugular vein and knows about his secrets, so He knows about what is in Abu-Bakr's heart. Whatever hadith you see, compare it with God's book. If it is in accordance with the Quran, accept it." Yahya also asked, "It is narrated that the Prophet said, 'If I were not appointed as the prophet, Umar would be.'" The Imam said, "God's book is our accurate reference. God said, *'And remember We took from the prophets their covenant: As [We did] from you: from Noah...'*<sup>32</sup> According to this verse, in the pre-time, God made a covenant with other prophets to accept the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad. Besides, no prophet has associated anybody with God, so how come Umar, who had been a polytheist for a long time, could be a prophet?"

The above questions and answers have been recorded in detail in hadith collections. It seems that these questions were asked for political reasons and the Imam was aware of this, of course.

### ***Imam Jawad's martyrdom***

There is disagreement among historians on how the Imam was martyred. Mu'tasim, who came to power after Ma'mun in 218 A.H., intended to kill him. Some believe because Mu'tasim had accepted the Imam's idea on the legal punishment of theft, and the main judge came to him and complained about Imam al-Jawad. The story is as follows:

Once the issue of legal punishment of theft was raised in a gathering. A jurist said, "Considering the verse on tayammum,<sup>33</sup> the thief's hand

<sup>32</sup> وَأَذْأَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنْكَ وَأَمْرٌ لِنُوحٍ و... Ahzab: 7

<sup>33</sup> ablution with dust or sand

should be cut from the wrist.” The other referred to the verse on wudu (ablution) and issued the fatwa (Islamic ruling) that his hand should be cut from the elbow.” Imam al-Jawad referred to the verse “*And the places of worship are for Allah [alone]: So invoke not any one along with Allah*”<sup>34</sup> as well as the Prophet’s saying that there are seven places of prostration in prayer and concluded that his fingers should be cut. Mu’tasim accepted this verdict.

After the complaint from the main judge (ibn Abi-Mu’ad) to Mu’tasim, the latter ordered a scribe of viziers to invite the Imam to his house. Despite the Imam’s initial refusal, he finally accepted the invitation. There he ate the poisonous meal and was martyred.<sup>35</sup>

Another group of historians considered Umm-ul-Fadl as the co-conspirator in the Imam’s martyrdom, carrying out her brother Mu’tasim’s orders. When Umm-ul-Fadl made the Imam eat the poisonous grapes, she burst into tears. Imam al-Jawad cursed her, praying that she would come down with a disease that would make her an indigent beggar; a prayer which came true. Umm-ul-Fadl spent all her money on her disease, though it did not work, and she turned to begging. The reason for her measure was her jealousy of Imam al-Hadi’s mother because Umm-ul-Fadl was infertile.<sup>36</sup>

Imam Jawad was martyred at the age of 25. Hadiths reported from him do not amount to 300. He also had few students and close companions, portraying the violent oppression and suppression

<sup>34</sup> وَأَنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا. Jinn: 18.

<sup>35</sup> Tafsir Ayyaahi, vol.1, p. 325.

<sup>36</sup> Muntakhab-u-Tawarikh, p. 663.

during in his time. He left this world on the last day of Dhi al-Qa'dah 320 A.H., leaving the Shi'a world grieved at his loss.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Manaqib, vol.4, p. 379.