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MOHAMMAD
AL-JAWAD (AS)

The **Greatest** Blessing

FAWZI AL-SAIF

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Imam Mohammad al-Jawad (as)

The Greatest Blessing

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Introduction

After completing the book *Aalim Aal Mohammed: Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (as)* and having performed Umrah in Mecca at the beginning of Jumada al-Thani, 1443 AH, I was inspired to begin where I left off – immersed in the hadiths and stories of Imam al-Ridha (as). Accompanied by online libraries and my previous writings, lectures, and research about Imam al-Jawad (as), I wrote the first sentences of this book on the journey between Mecca, where the House of Allah lies, and Medina – on the high-speed Haramain train – intending to visit the Prophet and the infallibles of his household. Likewise, I aspire that our exploration into their life stories will revolve around the themes of monotheism and prophethood.

Today is Saturday, the 10th of Rajab, 1443 AH, coinciding with the birthday of Imam Mohammed al-Jawad (as). In the pages ahead, God willing, we will briefly overview some aspects of the Imam's life. While it is feasible to delve further into the remarkable life and biography of the Imam (as), constraints necessitate this book remain within its current limits without significant expansion. Otherwise, many topics still need to be addressed or sufficiently researched and covered. Upon seeking opinions, some believers suggested titling the book "Bab al-Murad" (The Gate of the Fulfilment of Wishes), as this name is widely recognised among the Shia of the Ahlul Bayt and is fitting for Imam al-Jawad [with "al-Jawad" being the only other title more renowned]. However, upon seeing the title bestowed upon him by his father, Imam al-Ridha (as), as "the great blessing" and the proclamation that no child with more blessings was born among our Shia, I found this title, despite its limited recognition, emanates from Aalim Aal Mohammed [the Scholar of the Prophet's Progeny], Imam al-Ridha (as), and is thus more comprehensive and complete. This recognition does not diminish the importance of the well-known name [Bab al-Murad], which holds greater recognition among the Shia of the Ahlul Bayt and their scholars and whose efficacy in realising prayers and fulfilling needs is evident.

By expanding on this *blessing*, it becomes apparent how it positively influenced the reinforcement of the beliefs of the believers and affirmed the leadership of the infallibles, beginning with his esteemed father, Imam al-Ridha (as), and extending through his progeny, from Imam al-Hadi (as) to Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf). Undoubtedly, the believers encounter circumstances similar to those witnessed during his time. As a result, his bi-

ography serves as a guiding light for believers in subsequent eras, with his blessings reaching into the era of his grandson, Imam al-Mahdi (ajtfs).

We are not implying that the blessings of figures like Imam al-Jawad (as) surpass those of the Prophet or Imam Ali (as). Rather, the magnitude of his blessings is relative when excluding exceptional individuals like the Prophet, Imam Ali (as), and other Infallibles, who should be excluded from this comparison.

In writing this book, we have focused on more engaging content for the younger generations. If the reader wishes for more detailed information, there are more comprehensive books, such as the Encyclopaedia of Imam Mohammed Al-Jawad (as) and the Musnad of Imam Al-Jawad (as), among others, listed in the sources.

I ask Allah, glorified be He, to grant us success in completing this series, in which six books have been completed so far:

- *Imam Al-Mahdi: The Awaited Justice*
- *I am Fatima and My Father is Mohammed,*
- *They are the Aiders: Khadijah and Abu Talib, Lord of Paradise: Imam Hasan ibn Ali,*
- *The Suppressor of Anger: Imam Musa ibn Jaafar,*
- *Aalim Aal Mohammed: Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (as)*

I ask Allah to encompass my parents, my family, and all those

who contributed to the success of this book in His blessings. May He grant us the intercession of this great and generous Imam. He is capable of everything.

Fawzi, son of the deceased Mohammad Taqi al-Sayf

10/7/1443 AH

Tarout - Al-Qatif

[**Note from the translator:** Please note that this is an abridged version of Sheikh Fawzi al-Sayf's book on Imam al-Jawad in Arabic]

Biographical summary of Imam AL-Jawad (as)

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- Name: Mohammad bin Ali bin Musa bin Jaafar bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib.
 - Title: al-Imam al-Jawad.
 - Kunya (Patronymic Nickname): Abu Jaafar.
 - Birth: Rajab, 195 AH.
 - Father: Ali bin Musa al-Ridha.
 - Mother: Sabika (or Khayzuran)
 - Martyrdom: Thul-Hijjah, 220 AH.
 - Position: The ninth among the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (as)

Imam Al-Jawad (as) From Birth to Martyrdom

The Tidings of his birth:

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1. Imam al-Jawad's (as) birth was foretold through numerous announcements, some reaching back to the time of Prophet Mohammed (saww) over two centuries prior.⁽¹⁾ While the birth of an individual from the Prophet's family is inherently significant, the exceptional anticipation and celebration surrounding the birth of Imam al-Jawad indicate that something extraordinary would follow.

In a narration attributed to the Prophet Mohammed (saww), a description of Imam al-Jawad (as) was "a bless-

ed, pure, virtuous, pleasing, and contented seed named Mohammed ibn Ali. He is the intercessor for his Shia and will inherit the knowledge of his grandfathers. He bears a clear sign and is an evident proof.”

In the narration from Imam Musa bin Jaafar (as), it was described that Imam al-Jawad (as) would be born to Imam al-Ridha (as) as a “trustworthy, protected, and blessed boy.”

2. It is established that the blessed birth [of Imam al-Jawad (as)] was delayed compared to the usual age of childbirth. Considering the birth year of his father, Imam Al-Ridha (as), which was in the year 148 AH, and the birth of Imam Al-Jawad (as) in the year 195 AH, it would mean that Imam al-Ridha (as) would have been forty-seven years old when Imam al-Jawad (as) was born. This has multiple implications:

It contradicts the claims of the ghulat [those who exaggerate the status of the Imams], who suggest that Allah has delegated everything to the Ahlulbayt (as), including sustenance, giving, and preventing [harm], and that they are independent in this regard!

The delayed fatherhood of Imam al-Ridha (as) indicates otherwise, highlighting that they are indeed servants of Allah subject to His commands, even though they hold an exalted status as representatives of the Prophet and Allah’s proofs to His creation. However, this does not detract from their status as honoured and revered servants, subject to Allah’s legislative and universal commands. In

fact, it showcases that despite their various trials and tests, they demonstrate patience and endurance and serve as role models for others facing challenges and trials.

This serves as a test for people to believe in and submit to the statements of their infallible Imams. While many faithfully accept their Imams' words, others doubt the Imamate and deviate as a result.

Some narrations –which align with historical accounts– suggest that Imam al-Jawad (as) was the only child born to Imam al-Ridha (as)⁽²⁾. Some factions, notably the Waqifah, exploit this information to cast doubt on the Imamate of Imam al-Ridha (as).⁽³⁾ Their argument revolves around the claim that since Imam al-Ridha (as) had no offspring before Imam al-Jawad (as), he must be infertile, and thus, they argue that an Imam cannot be deficient. As such, the Waqifah used this idea to insinuate doubt and controversy by stating that he had no male or female offspring until then!

3. Historical accounts differ regarding the birth month of Imam al-Jawad (as), and this may seem trivial, especially as historians have disagreed on the births and martyrdoms of some of the infallibles. However, this case is different, as there are some implications, primarily as some historians associate one of the proposed dates with a renowned supplication recited by Shia Muslims in the month of Rajab.⁽⁴⁾ Thus, we must discuss this matter.

Some of the Shia, including Sheikh al-Kulayni, Sheikh al-Mufid, Sheikh al-Tusi, Sheikh al-Tabari, and al-Tabrisi,

believe he was born in the blessed month of Ramadan in the year 195 AH.⁽⁵⁾ Some later scholars also agree.

Others argue that he was born in the month of Rajab, supported by a well-known supplication attributed to Sheikh al-Tusi in *Misbah al-Mujtahid*, in which the blessings upon the Imam and his son are invoked. This supplication is part of the *A'amaal* [rituals] of Rajab and states, "It is narrated from Ibn Ayash that Sheikh Abu al-Qasim al-Hussein ibn Ruh recited this supplication during the days of Rajab, after receiving it from al-Nahhiyah al-Muqadasah.⁽⁶⁾ The supplication read: Oh Allah, I ask you by the two born in Rajab, Mohammed son of Ali - the second, and his son Ali son of Mohammed, the pristine one."

Sheikh Abdul Nabi al-Kadhimi pointed this issue out: "And in *al-Kafi*, it is narrated that he - referring to Imam al-Hadi (as) - was born in Rajab." This is considered the more authentic view due to the well-known supplication mentioned earlier, found in books like *Misbah al-Mujtahid*, attributed to Sheikh al-Tusi. Due to this supplication, this viewpoint received popularity in Imami traditions, reinforcing the belief that both Imam al-Jawad (as) and Imam al-Hadi (as) were born in Rajab.⁽⁷⁾

While some scholars, such as Sheikh al-Kulayni and al-Tabarsi, have pointed to a narration in which Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf) requested intercession through them during this month, the consensus among the followers of this supplication, affirms that this is narration [they were referring to] and thus their birth was in Rajab. The earlier mentioned scholars state that the reference to Rajab in the

supplication does not indicate their actual birth month but rather a means of seeking intercession during this sacred time.

The response that some provided suggests that Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf) sought intercession through them in Rajab without them necessarily being born in that month is considered an unsatisfactory answer.

This interpretation contradicts the apparent meaning and lacks supporting evidence. The statement, "And in the narration of Ibn Ayyash, he was born in Rajab," acknowledges the linkage between the supplication and their actual birth in Rajab. Thus, the interpretation that the Imam only sought their intercession during this sacred time goes against the apparent meaning, especially since no other evidence is presented to back it.

Suppose someone argues that the narration claiming their birth in Rajab might not be authentic. In that case, we respond that there is no basis for doubting its authenticity given its widespread acceptance among the companions. Al-Kaf'ami mentions, "invalidating this narration would invalidate the supplication, and the consensus of the true sect affirms its authenticity."⁽⁸⁾

Therefore, there is no reason to question its authenticity after gaining such popularity among the followers.

To summarise:

1. The view chosen by al-Kulayni and the advocates of

the first opinion is an interpretation (fatwa) rather than a narrated account. Thus, it remains within the realm of scholarly judgment (ijtihad).

2. On the other hand, the second opinion is based on a narration transmitted by the same proponents of the first view. Moreover, even if they did not act upon it, their actions or lack thereof do not bind us to follow their opinion.
3. This narration is supported by its popularity and practical adherence among those who follow it, as evidenced by these scholars' regular recitation of the supplication and seeking intercession through Imam al-Jawad (as) and Imam al-Hadi (as).

Allamah al-Majlisi, in *al-Bihar*, quotes the response of Sheikh al-Kaf'ami, who opposed what was mentioned in the narration. Al-Majlisi states that:

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"In the margins of *al-Balad al-Amin*, Shiekh al-Kaf'ami states after mentioning the narration by the Sheikh [meaning al-Kulayni] that:

'Some of our scholars did not further inquire about this narration. They present a question and answer, by saying: "If you say that al-Jawad (as) and al-Hadi(as) were not born in the month of Rajab, how does Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf) say, 'I ask you by the ones born in Rajab?'" I say: He intended to seek intercession through them this month, not because they were born in it."

I say that what he mentions here is not correct for the follow-

ing reasons: a) because the argument relies on the invalidity of Ibn Ayyash's narration, which was mentioned by the Sheikh [meaning al-Kulayni], b) the specification of seeking intercession through them in Rajab is a preference without basis had it not been for the birth of the Imams c) if it were as they mentioned, he (ajtfs) would have said 'the two Imams' and not 'the ones born.'"⁽⁹⁾

This is the end of his commentary. May Allah have mercy on him.

Sayed Mohammed Baqir al-Abtahi al-Isfahani says: "Regarding specifying the month of his birth, there are two transmitted views. One is (reported) from al-Askari (as), stating that he was born in Ramadan. The other, attributed to Sheikh Abu al-Qasim [al-Hussein ibn Ruh] (may Allah have mercy on him), which appears in a letter from Imam al-Mahdi (ajtfs), stating that his birth [Imam al-Jawad (as)] and the birth of his son (as) are in the month of Rajab. However, al-Kulayni, al-Mufid, al-Shahid, and other historians support the first view. As you have observed, some scholars mentioned the narration of Ibn Ayyash and did not criticise it except some who claimed that the name Mohammed Ibn Ali (*the second*) was a distortion of (*the first*) . They suggest that the intended person in the name Mohammed ibn Ali was Imam al-Baqir (as). However, this contradicts the continuation of the supplication, which states: 'and his son Ali ibn Mohammed, the pristine one.' It is worth noting that there is no evidence restricting the name of al-Baqir (as) to Mohammed bin Ali (the first), so consider this."⁽¹⁰⁾

I would argue: Sayed Mohammed Baqir al-Isfahani's quote above, is a response to al-Allamah al-Tustari, who followed the

opinion that the word “al-Thani” (the second) is a distortion of the word “al-Awwal” (the first) in his book *al-Akhbar al-Dakhilah*.⁽¹¹⁾ Sayed al-Isfahani responded that he did not come across any restriction on the name of Imam al-Baqir to “Mohammed ibn Ali al-Awwal”. Additionally, it contradicts the end of the supplication, which states: “and his son Ali ibn Mohammed, the pristine one.”

We can also dismiss the argument that there is a potential weakness in the narrator, Ibn Ayyash and that he may have confused details in his later years. Due to its practical significance within the Shia community, the mentioned supplication is not affected by an individual’s confusion, especially in his last years.

The wisdom behind the issuance of the supplication by Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf) appears to be a response to the Waqifah sect’s denial of the fertility of Imam al-Ridha (as) and the birth of Imam Al-Jawad (as). This further supports the likelihood of the second opinion, which states that this blessed birth specifically took place in the month of Rajab. It is noteworthy that while the birth of Imam Ali (as) is also in Rajab, it is not explicitly mentioned in the supplication.⁽¹²⁾

Therefore, we are of the opinion that the second explanation, which suggests that his blessed birth occurred in the month of Rajab, is more likely and plausible.

4. We notice that the birth of Imam al-Jawad (as) is described as the “blessed birth” and unparalleled in blessings for Shia.⁽¹³⁾ Some phrases and wordings in the narration draw our attention and require us to take a deeper look. Do

these statements anticipating Imam al-Jawad's (as) time suggest that his time will be of goodness and blessings, as interpreted by scholars like al-Majlisi and others?⁽¹⁴⁾

Even if this were plausible, examining the historical and political context of Imam al-Jawad's (as) era, particularly during the rule of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mu'tasim and thereafter, questions the assumption that this period was an era of prosperity for the Shia, as envisioned by proponents of this interpretation. Future discussions which shed light on this matter, including the political climate during the reign of al-Mu'tasim, will reveal the contrary.

Additionally, the interpretation of blessings, as presented by Sayyid Abul-Fadhl Tabatabai, suggests that the birth of Imam al-Jawad (as) and his young Imamate, confirms belief in the prophethood of Jesus and John the Apostle [who also became messengers of Allah at a young age].⁽¹⁵⁾ Conversely, a contrasting perspective emerges. Both Imam al-Ridha (as) and Imam al-Jawad (as) referred to the Imamate of al-Jawad (as) through the prophethood of Jesus and John the Apostle. This suggests that the belief in Imam al-Jawad's (as) Imamate was already established among the people without requiring additional proof through the connection with Jesus and John the Apostle. Thus, why would Imam al-Jawad's (as) Imamate need validation when the people already accepted it? Moreover, the use of expressions like "the Shia" and "more blessed for our Shia" in these narrations is noteworthy. It implies a focus on the Shia community, emphasising the unique blessings for them, while the issue of Jesus and John the Apostle is more encompassing, extending to Muslims at large.

Likewise, it's possible to discuss what some scholars have indicated [that the meaning of "greatest blessing" is] that Imam al-Jawad (as) confirmed the idea of Imamate being a divine and heavenly matter, with no human involvement and that age doesn't play a role in its realisation, as it is a divine choice from Allah.⁽¹⁶⁾

This idea is supported by a statement attributed to Ali ibn Jaafar al-Sadiq. When some attendees criticised Ali ibn Jaafar, who was Imam al-Ridha's (as) uncle, for showing great respect to Imam al-Jawad (as) despite him being younger than some of Ali ibn Jaafar's grandchildren, he responded: "What should I do if Allah, glorified be He, saw this grey hair [referring to himself] unfitting for Imamate and considered him worthy of it?"⁽¹⁷⁾

We assert that this idea in itself is correct and can be seen as one of the effects of the Imamate of Imam al-Jawad (as), which solidified the concept of Imamate among the Shia. However, the narration [referring to the Imam (as) being the "greatest blessing"] seems to be addressing his birth in and of itself and emphasising that his birth alone, objectively, is a blessing before addressing the issue of Imamate. Indeed, Imamate has many effects, and we will highlight them later.

Our Opinion on the Great Jawadi Blessing

We believe that the primary significance lies in the fact that the birth of Imam al-Jawad (as) solidified the Imamate of his father and dispelled the suspicions raised by the Waqifah. This movement was a malicious one that almost became destructive to the Imami Shia faith. We've pointed out some aspects

of this movement in our book *Aalim Aal Mohammed*. The danger of the Waqifah ideology is that it attracted a considerable number of significant figures among the Shia, especially from the associates of Imam Musa al-Kadhim (as) and his deputies. The core idea of the Waqifah was that the Imam must be the most complete individual and, hence, cannot be lacking in any aspect. They argued that infertility and childlessness constituted a deficiency. And since Imam al-Ridha (as) had not been blessed with a child until the age of 47, they built their entire argument on this point. By undermining this notion, the faulty foundation on which their argument lay crumbles. And despite Imam al-Ridha (as) having confidently asserted that God would bless him with a child, those who opposed him continued to deny this, leading to an increasingly complex situation with the passing years.

Naturally, the tactics of the Waqifah enabled them to affect some of the Shia of the Imam, and there was no solution except for the Imam to be a father! Thus, the birth of Imam al-Jawad (as) shattered their arguments and invalidated their innovations.⁽¹⁸⁾

With his birth, that faction dissipated, and they could no longer argue. Thus, look at the blessing in this birth! There was no need for anything else. Notwithstanding this, his Imamate also exhibited aspects [of Imamate] comparable to figures like Jesus, John the Apostle, and others chosen by Allah at a young age.

However, at this stage, nothing was required except his blessed birth — no words, actions, or miracles. The birth itself nullified their claims.

And for the first time, we witness that the succeeding Imam affirms the Imamate of the preceding Imam. The norm is for the preceding Imam to declare the following Imam and affirm his Imamate through explicit statements. However, in this case, it's different. Through the blessed birth of Imam al-Jawad (as), the Imam affirmed the Imamate of his father, Imam al-Ridha (as) and undermined the allegations of the Waqifah regarding his infertility and his Imamate.

Perhaps this is why Imam al-Ridha (as) described Imam al-Jawad (as) as the greatest blessing upon the Shia of the Ahlul Bayt, stating that he is "the child that no other child is greater in blessings for our Shia than he".

Therefore, we believe that the statements of Imam al-Ridha (as) regarding this blessed child are directed toward this aspect.

5. Just as his blessed birth occurred in such a magnificent manner, his Imamate was equally significant. After its establishment and firmness, his Imamate became an unequivocal response to any questions about the Imam's young age. Consequently, the Imamate of those who succeeded him, such as his son Imam Ali al-Hadi (as), who also assumed Imamate at a young age, and his great-grandson Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf), went unquestioned despite their young age.

Notably, there hasn't been any controversy or doubt about the Imamate of any Imams who assumed leadership at a young age after Imam al-Jawad (as). If during the time of al-Jawad (as), the Waqifah and others attempted to cast doubt on his Imam-

ate, we don't find the same situation during the time of Imam Ali al-Hadi (as) or of Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf), indicating that the questioning of an Imam assuming leadership at a young age, had ceased entirely.

This is among the blessings of the Imamate of al-Jawad (as) and its establishment among the people. Many scholars have noted this meaning regarding the statement of Imam al-Ridha (as) we mentioned earlier. We believe that this matter was not achieved in a simple manner. The issue of someone assuming the leadership of the people, especially by the standards mentioned in Shia Imami sources, does not align with the Arab mentality, particularly if the one assuming this position is young.⁽¹⁹⁾ Thus, what was needed to be done to firmly establish this matter to the extent that it no longer raises questions afterwards?

We believe that these efforts were made during the time of Imams al-Ridha (as) and al-Jawad (as) to solidify this matter in both theoretical and practical dimensions.

The theoretical dimension:

It began during the time of Imam al-Ridha (as), through providing evidence that divine leadership, whether in the form of prophethood or Imamate, is not bound by the people's standards or their closeness or distance to them⁽²⁰⁾. Instead, it is Allah's choice: "And your Lord creates and chooses what He wills; not for them was the choice."⁽²¹⁾ This was illustrated by the fact that prophethood could be granted to a young child, while an elderly person may not attain it despite their worship. Allah

bestowed prophethood upon Jesus and John the Apostle while they were still children.⁽²²⁾ Solomon, too, received prophethood while he was young.⁽²³⁾

In multiple narrations, the Imam indicated that Jesus, despite being sent with a new code of conduct (Sharia) was appointed a prophet as a child. In contrast, the Imams through their Imamates, served as a continuation of the message of their grandfather, the Prophet (saww), and were not the bearers of a new code of conduct (Sharia).

During this stage, Imam al-Ridha (as) referenced the future Imamate of his son al-Jawad (as), who was still a child. When the attendees expressed surprise, he referenced similar occurrences with the prophets Jesus and John the Apostle, peace be upon them.⁽²⁴⁾

In the upcoming pages, we will delve into the analysis of young age and how it does not necessarily hinder elevated positions in knowledge, Imamate, and the like. However, it may hinder societal acceptance, a norm for people, and this does not form a basis for rejection.

The practical dimension:

Imam al-Jawad (as) demonstrated this practical aspect by practising his duties as an Imam. His first task was to elucidate the Sharia and religious knowledge, affirming that he, like his noble forefathers, inherited and undertook its delivery. He answered every question with the correct response, not exceeding the boundaries set by his fathers and ancestors. Moreover, he provided clarity to issues that created confusion by preten-

tious scholars.

This included his response to Yahya ibn Aktham, the Abbasid judge, which will be detailed in the upcoming pages.

Another illustration of this was him (as) correcting the statements of Abdullah ibn Musa Al-Kadhim when he sat at the forefront of a gathering, addressing questions, and implying he was the rightful Imam after the martyrdom of his brother Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (as). This comes despite the established belief amongst the Imami Shia that Imamate does not occur between two brothers after Hasan and Hussein. Thus, if Imam al-Ridha (as) is an Imam, his brother Abdullah cannot become an Imam after him.

Moreover, when he [Abdullah] answered questions, his responses deviated from the principles of Imami jurisprudence and aligned more closely with the jurisprudence of the other schools. His unclear and conflicting answers caused sorrow among the Shia, that is, until Imam Mohammed al-Jawad (as), the son of Imam al-Ridha (as), came forth to provide correct answers and clarify his uncle's errors. Details of this encounter and the issues discussed will be explained further in the book.

His broad knowledge of Sharia sciences made his Imamate, even at this young age, miraculous to both his Shia followers and others, resulting in all people acknowledging it. Even those who were initially surprised and accustomed to the leadership of elders eventually found reassurance in him. They realised that they were witnessing a miraculous phenomenon.

6. Imam al-Ridha (AS)'s preparing his son for Imamate

Imam al-Ridha (as) not only dispelled astonishment regarding Imam al-Jawad's (as) early Imamate but also went beyond by preparing him for the role, indicating towards him both privately and publicly and emphasising his virtues and elevated status. He even went beyond this in the manner he interacted with his son, a fact that was markedly noted by the companions.

Some, like Mohammed ibn Abi 'Ibad, who would narrate hadith from Imam al-Ridha (as), said that: "al-Ridha (as), mentioned Mohammed (al-Jawad) only using his nickname, saying, 'Abu Jaafar wrote to me,' and 'I used to write to Abu Jaafar (as),' while he was still a young child in Medina.⁽²⁵⁾ He would address him with great respect, and Abu Jaafar's letters would come back in eloquence and excellence. I heard him say, 'Abu Jaafar is my successor and caliph after me.'⁽²⁶⁾ This was the case even though he might have been five or six years old at that time!"

Al-Ridha (as) would write to Imam al-Jawad (as) about the details of some issues, advising him on the generosity he should show, following the example of his forefathers. He emphasised not complying with what some officials and agents did, which was obscuring the blessings and goodness of the infallibles from the people. In a letter that Imam al-Ridha (as) sent to al-Jawad (as), which Ahmad bin Mohammed bin Abi Nasr al-Bazanti reported having read [perhaps Imam al-Ridha (as) intentionally showed it to him], it said: "O Abu Jaafar, I have been informed that when you ride out, they escort you out through the small gate. This is from their stinginess so that no one benefits from you. So, I ask you, by my right upon you, that your entrance and exit should only be through the main gate.

When you ride out, let there be gold and silver with you, and let there be no one who asks you without being given. If any of your uncles ask you, do not give them anything less than fifty dinars, and more if you so wish. If any of your aunts ask you, do not give them less than twenty-five dinars, and more if you so wish. I want Allah to elevate you, so spend and do not fear that the One on the throne [Allah] will cease His favours from you."⁽²⁷⁾

7. Was he presented to the Qafa?

A narration reported by Sheikh al-Kulayni in *al-Kafi*⁽²⁸⁾ indicates that Imam al-Ridha (as) faced scepticism from some of his Hashemite relatives regarding the lineage of his son, Mohammed al-Jawad, and suspected his fatherhood. It suggests that he resorted to proving this through Qiyaafa and sought the testimony of the "Qa'if" and used this as evidence against those who denied that al-Jawad (as) was his son.⁽²⁹⁾

However, this cannot be accepted due to various problems in this narration, both in its chain of narration and its content, even though the narrator in *al-Kafi* is Sheikh al-Kulayni. Since it has been occasionally propagated from the pulpits and might have been used by dissenters to criticise Shi'ism, we believe that it is best to challenge this narration after quoting it.

The narrator said:

"I heard Ali ibn Jaafar narrating to al-Hasan ibn al-Hussein ibn Ali ibn al-Hussein, saying: 'By Allah, Allah granted victory to Abu al-Hasan al-Ridha (as)!' Al-Hasan said, ' Indeed, by Allah, you have succeeded. His brothers wronged him.' Ali ibn Jaafar replied: 'Indeed, by Allah, we, his relatives, also wronged him.' Al-Hasan asked him: 'By Allah, how did you all act, as I was

not present among you?' He replied: 'His brothers and we said that there had never been an Imam among us who had a dark complexion. Al-Ridha (as) responded saying: 'He is my son!'

They replied: 'But the Messenger of Allah (saw) used to employ the Qafa. So let the Qafa judge between us.' He said: 'Send for them, as I won't, and don't let them know why you have invited them; stay in your homes.'

When they came, we sat in the farm. They lined up his relatives, brothers, and sisters. They took al-Ridha (as) and dressed him in a woollen cloak and robe. They placed a scarf around his neck and said, 'Enter the farm as if you are working in it.' Then they brought Abu Jaafar (as) and said: 'Ascertain which of these individuals is this boy's father.' They said: 'His father is not present, but these are his father's uncles, and this is his paternal uncle, and this is his paternal aunt. And if his father is here, he must be the farm owner, as his feet and son's feet are the same.' When Abu al-Hasan(as) [Imam al-Ridha (as)] returned, they said: 'This is his father!'"

Our observations is as follows:

1. Regarding the chain of transmission, this narration is considered weak. al-Majlisi described its chain as unknown⁽³⁰⁾, and Sayyid al-Shahroudi gave the reasoning for this, stating that in the chain, there is Zakariya ibn Yahya ibn al-Nu'man al-Masri, who is not mentioned anywhere by the experts of narrators.⁽³¹⁾
2. Concerning the central theme of the narration, which involves resorting to the Qafa. We see that [according

to Shiekh Murtadha al-Ansari in Kitab al-Makasib] it is stated that “Qafa is prohibited.⁽³²⁾ This was narrated by the companions and found in al-Hada’iq al-Nadhira [by Sheikh Yusef al-Bahrani]. In Kifayat al-Usool [by Shiekh al-Akhound al-Khurasani], it is stated that there was no objection to the prohibition of Qafa. Further, in Muntaha al-Matlab [by Allamah al-Hilli], it stated that there is consensus on its prohibition.”

There are narrations condemning those who resort to the Qafa and accept their judgement.⁽³³⁾ In fact, Ayatollah al-Khoei declared it forbidden, stating, “How could reliance on the Qafa be legitimate when there is consensus [amongst the scholars] in its prohibition? As for what is narrated from the Prophet (saww) about relying on the Qafa, it is not established but rather prohibited.”⁽³⁴⁾

It cannot be argued that this is out of necessity, as there is no evident need to prove anything to those who doubt through such an illicit manner, especially when [this manner] is explicitly prohibited. How could people falsely claim that Imam al-Ridha (as) intended to utilise this means and normalise it in society, even though it is not permitted? Even if there were a necessity, he (as) has both seen and unseen means at his disposal that would suffice without resorting to this!

3. 1.The content of the narration itself raises various concerns as well. Thus, Ayatollah al-Khoei wholly rejected it.

The first issue with this narration is that Ali ibn Jaafar al-Sadiq is reported to have said, “Indeed, by Allah, we, his relatives, also

wronged him." This contradicts the well-known admirable conduct of Ali ibn Jaafar with his brother Musa ibn Jaafar (as), his nephew Imam al-Ridha (as), and Imam al-Jawad (as). His profound respect for the latter reached the extent where he would say, "I am his servant!"⁽³⁵⁾

The second issue is that the narration states, "They took al-Ridha (as) and dressed him in a woollen cloak and robe. They placed a scarf around his neck and said to him: 'Enter the farm as if you are working in it.'" Does this befit the position and status of the Imam, where the Imam subjects himself to such an inappropriate situation so that someone might believe or disbelieve that Imam al-Jawad (as) is his son?

The third issue is what Sayyid al-Shahrudi⁽³⁶⁾ pointed out in Ayatollah Khoei's reports, where it mentions that when they (the Qafa) came, they said, "These are his father's uncles, this is his paternal uncle, and this is his aunt." The apparent meaning is that the aunt had her face uncovered. Reflect on this, as it is not suitable for the women of the Ahlul Bayt, even if we were to consider the permissibility of unveiling the face or exposing hands to others.

The fourth issue arises from the fact that the uncles of al-Jawad (as) hold a position much higher than entertaining the notion that they could mistake him and be compelled to confront the Imam. If they perceived the Imam solely as a knowledgeable scholar of legal rulings, comparable to an adept jurist, then his skin colour should not be a factor. However, if they recognised Imamate as a divine position bestowed by Allah upon those with the highest knowledge – the elite of creation after the Prophet (saww), distinguished by unparalleled moral

virtues and beauty of character – then their denial of al-Ridha's (as) statement that al-Jawad (as) is his son, and their subsequent resorting to Qafa, is contradictory.⁽³⁷⁾

Fifthly, the claim that “there had never been an Imam among us who had a dark complexion” is problematic. If they believed in the Imamate of al-Ridha (as suggested by their saying, “There had never been an Imam among us with a dark complexion”), then his statement should have sufficed for them. Otherwise, their comments are accusing him of having an illegitimate son and slandering his wife with adultery, and we seek refuge in Allah from that. Thus, how could they be believers in the Imam and the Imamate? And if they didn't believe in Imamate, then how could they say, “There had never been an Imam among us”?

Furthermore, this idea is inaccurate historically. Many authors have noted that some Imams had dark complexions, and the Hashemites were known to have dark skin.⁽³⁸⁾ As for the Imams, it has been reported that Imam Ali (as)⁽³⁹⁾, Imam Mohammed al-Baqir (as)⁽⁴⁰⁾, Imam Jaafar al-Sadiq (as), Imam Musa al-Kadhim (as)⁽⁴¹⁾, and even Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (as) were described as having dark skin. Thus, how then could they say, “There was no Imam among us with a dark complexion”?⁽⁴²⁾

8. In a quick overview of the previous pages, it can be said that Imam al-Jawad (as) was born in the year 195 AH after long anticipation from both his father, Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (as) and his followers, who firmly believed in the truthfulness of the statements made by Imam al-Ridha (as) which stated that God would bless him with a child, and this child be a blessing greater than any other for the

Shia community. The explanation and definition of this blessing have been discussed in the previous pages.

When the light of al-Jawad (as) shone onto the world, Imam al-Ridha (as) showered him with care and attention, in preparation for his assumption of the role of Imamate.⁽⁴³⁾ He consistently informed his companions and Shia that al-Jawad (as) would lead the community after him, explicitly passing on the mantle. This guidance persisted for approximately five years, until the year 201 AH, when Imam al-Ridha (as) was forced to travel to Tus by the Abbasid ruler al-Ma'mun against his will [this point was discussed in our previous book].⁽⁴⁴⁾

Thus, he left his son al-Jawad (as), who at the time was six, in Medina and corresponded with him through letters. Despite al-Jawad (as) being a child, Imam al-Ridha (as) expressed profound respect and honour for him in these writings [which included him calling him by his kunya, Abu Jaafar], sharing them with his followers along with the responses he received.

This period of communication and guidance laid the foundation for al-Jawad's (as) future role as the Imam, and Imam al-Ridha (as) emphasised the significance of his leadership to his companions and Shia.

Imam al-Ridha (as) was martyred in 203 AH, and at the age of just over eight, Imam al-Jawad (as) succeeded him. This succession was explicitly stated in al-Ridha's (as) communications, will, and frequent statements made in Medina and Khorasan. Further, through direct communication with his knowledgeable companions, Shi'a, and others, Imam al-Ridha (as) communicated that his son will be the Imam.⁽⁴⁵⁾

There are various narrations and indications supporting this, some of which have been mentioned earlier and some of which we will detail now.

In one narration, Safwan ibn Yahya asked Imam al-Ridha (as) before he departed for Khorasan, expressing uncertainty about seeing him again and stating: "' May we not see your day [meaning, the day of your passing]. If it [your passing] were to happen, who would succeed you?' Imam al-Ridha pointed towards Abu Jaafar (Imam al-Jawad (as)), who was a toddler, indicating that he would be the one to follow. I further asked, 'May I be sacrificed to you, this child who is only three?' He said, 'And what is the harm in this? Indeed, Jesus was already a Prophet [of God] when he was a three-year-old.'"⁽⁴⁶⁾

This story took place in Medina. Similarly, someone asked the Imam (as) in Ahwaz, and he responded. In a narration from Jaafar ibn Mohammed al-Nawfali, he said: "I met al-Ridha (as) while he was near a bridge in Urbiq.⁽⁴⁷⁾ I greeted him, then sat down, and said, 'May I be sacrificed for you, there are people claiming that your father is still alive?' He replied, 'They lie; may Allah curse them.' I continued, 'What do you command me?' He said, 'Follow my son Mohammed after me.'"⁽⁴⁸⁾

Similarly, in Khorasan, Mohammed ibn Abi 'Ibad reports⁽⁴⁹⁾: "Imam al-Ridha (as), mentioned Mohammed (al-Jawad) only by his kunya, saying, 'Abu Jaafar wrote to me,' and 'I used to write to Abu Jaafar (as),' while he was still a young child in Medina. He would address him with great respect, and Abu Jaafar's letters would come back in eloquence and excellence. I heard him say that 'Abu Jaafar is my successor and caliph after me.'"⁽⁵⁰⁾

9. Naturally, his Imamate at such a young age – as he was only nine years old – would result in questions and challenges regarding his leadership, as this had not been witnessed before in the history of the infallible Imams.

Therefore, individuals like Mohammed ibn Jamhur al-Qummi, Hasan ibn Rashid, Ali ibn Mudrak, Ali ibn Mahzyar, and many others from various regions came to Medina to inquire about the successor after al-Ridha (as). The response they received was that the successor was in Sariya, a village established by Musa ibn Jaafar al-Kadhim (as), about three miles from Medina. When they arrived and entered the palace, they found many people sitting there and joined the crowd. Soon after, Abdullah ibn Musa (al-Kadhim), who was an elderly man, came out, and the people said, "This is our leader." The jurists [amongst the crowd] commented, "We have narrations from Abu Jaafar and Abu Abdullah (Imams al-Baqir (as) and al-Sadiq (as)) that Imamate does not take place between two brothers after al-Hasan (as) and al-Hussein (as), and thus this man is not our leader."⁽⁵¹⁾

After further discussion in the gathering, it became apparent to those present that the information provided by Abdullah ibn Musa, the uncle of Imam al-Jawad (as) – who attempted to claim the Imamate – lacked substance and did not align with the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt (as). Instead, what Mohammed al-Jawad (as) responded with was consistent with what they had heard and known from his forefathers. This became the second evidence for his Imamate among them, after following his father's directives and examining his [meaning al-Jawad's (as)] statements and responses.

Just as there was a gathering of Shia in Sariya in Medina, a similar meeting took place in Baghdad in Barka Zalzal, a town near Karkh, at the house of Abdul Rahman bin al-Hajjaj. This gathering included prominent companions of Imam al-Kadhim (as) and Imam al-Ridha (as). In this gathering, the attendees discussed the plight of Shias and their leadership after the martyrdom of Imam al-Ridha (as). Among the attendees were Yunis bin Abdul Rahman, Abdul Rahman bin al-Hajjaj (the host), al-Rayan bin al-Salt, Safwan bin Yahya, and Mohammed bin Hakim. The attendees debated issues, including addressing Imam al-Jawad's age (as), questioning how people would accept his young age, given their expectations from the previous Imams, especially given the position, authority, and infallibility associated with the Imamate.

The consensus was to turn towards Medina, especially since it was getting close to the Hajj season [assuming that the martyrdom of the Imam took place in Safar and that this meeting took place before al-Ma'mun summoned Imam al-Jawad in the year 204 AH].

Al-Tabari [the Shia Ithna Asheri scholar] reported this event in *Dalail al-Imamah* in a slightly different narrative:

"When al-Ridha (as) passed away in the year 202, and Abu Jaafar (Imam al-Jawad (as)) was around six years old, and people across various regions disagreed, al-Rayan ibn al-Salt, Safwan ibn Yahya, Mohammed ibn Hakim, Abdul Rahman ibn al-Hajjaj, Yunis ibn Abdul Rahman, and a group of prominent individuals gathered in the house of Abdul Rahman ibn al-Hajjaj in Barka Zalzal. They wept and expressed grief over the calamity. Yunis said to them, 'Stop weeping. Who will be re-

sponsible for issuing fatwas on matters of faith until this young boy [referring to Abu Jaafar] grows up.' He [The Imam (as)] was around six years old. Then Yunis said, 'Who is with me in this?'

Then al-Rayan ibn al-Salt stood up and placed his hand on Yunis' mouth, and repeatedly slapped his face and hit his head. He said to Yunis, 'O son of the adulteress, if this matter is from Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, then a two-day-old can be like a hundred-year-old. But if it is not from Allah, even if a person were to live to be five thousand years, he would not achieve what the masters (as) [the Imams] achieve, nor even compare to part of it. How is this something to be questioned?' The assembly quickly turned against Yunis, scolding him!"

Is this narrative valid?

Regardless of its chain of transmission, and whether we consider it mursal [a narration whose chain of narration or part of the narration does not reach the Imam directly] as seen by Ayatollah Khomeini, or even if we say that it is part of a previously authenticated narrative, this chain is incomplete due to its weakness involving more than one narrator. Thus, there are several observations on this narrative:

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1. Regarding historical facts, it incorrectly states that Imam al-Ridha's martyrdom occurred in 202 AH, while it took place in 203 AH. Consequently, the narrator made an error in stating the age of Imam Al-Jawad (as), claiming he was six years old, whereas, according to the narration of al-Wasiti, he was nine years old at that time.⁽⁵²⁾ This contradicts the precise historical

details about the birth of Imam al-Jawad (as) and the martyrdom of his father, al-Ridha (as).

2. Yunis ibn Abd al-Rahman⁽⁵³⁾ holds a revered position, surpassing those present, including Rayan ibn al-Salt, in both esteem and knowledge of Imamate. Given this, it seems implausible that he would be unaware that divinely chosen Imamate is not necessarily tied to age. Ayatollah Khomeini dismissed this narration as a “known falsehood, as Yunis ibn Abdulrahman is a prominent figure trusted by the Shia. Thus, if he were to have said this amongst a gathering of Shia scholars, this ‘doubt’ would have become known to all,”⁽⁵⁴⁾ especially among the Waqifah who were seeking opportunities to undermine Imamate.
3. We also fail to comprehend al-Rayan ibn al-Salt’s stance based on this text, where he explicitly accused Yunis of being ‘the son of the adulteress,’ which is a severe slander warranting punishment.⁽⁵⁵⁾ We find it hard to believe that such language would come from al-Rayan, considering his esteemed status, especially when directed at Yunis, who also holds great stature.

In any case, the way was paved for the Imamate of Imam al-Jawad (as), although not as smoothly as his ancestors. Like his father, al-Ridha’s struggle with the Waqifah, Imam Al-Jawad (as) also faced challenges and scepticism from them and others.

Approximately a year after the martyrdom of Imam al-Ridha (as), in Safar 204 AH, al-Ma’mun, the Abbasid caliph moved

his caliphate back to Baghdad from Khurasan and summoned Imam Al-Jawad (as) to Baghdad.

During this period, al-Ma'mun was attempting to quell his angered Abbasid family, mainly due to his involvement in the death of his brother, al-Amin, whom the family favoured. Ethnic tensions compounded the situation, with al-Amin's court primarily consisting of Arabs, while al-Ma'mun garnered support from Persians. Adding to the complexity, al-Amin's mother was of Arab origin, whereas al-Ma'mun's was Persian. Al-Ma'mun's announcement of Imam al-Ridha (as) being his crown prince further fuelled resentment, as it signalled a potential power shift to the Hashemite Alawi family – the Abbasid's historical rivals – unless they reconsidered their positions.

After the martyrdom of Imam al-Ridha (as), al-Ma'mun persisted in his strategic approach by bringing Imam al-Jawad (as) closer to him with the aim of achieving multiple objectives. This mirrored his previous actions with Imam al-Ridha, as detailed in our book on Imam al-Ridha (as).⁽⁵⁶⁾

It is assumed that al-Ma'mun summoned Imam al-Jawad (as) in the same year that he moved the capital of his caliphate back to Baghdad in 204 AH.

The Abbasid family, who were staunch supporters of al-Ma'mun's brother, al-Amin, seized every opportunity to confront al-Ma'mun, seeking to weaken him or extract additional concessions, as al-Amin promised them. Thus, they vehemently opposed the approach of bringing Imam al-Jawad (as) closer, stating that they couldn't believe that just when his father, al-Ridha's situation was finally resolved [with his martyrdom (as)],

they were being confronted with his son, Mohammed al-Jawad (as).⁽⁵⁷⁾

On the other hand, al-Ma'mun benefited from aligning with the Imams to exert pressure on dissenting Abbasids. It was as if he was saying to them, "If you don't align with me, I will bring your enemies closer and empower them in the caliphate!" He used a similar tactic when marrying one of his daughters to Imam al-Ridha (as) and appointing him as his crown prince until poisoning him. He repeated the act with Imam al-Jawad (as) when he married his other daughter, Um al-Fadhl (Zainab), to Imam al-Jawad (as). It is narrated that this marriage took place during the Imam's forced trip to Baghdad.

The Abbasids opposed al-Ma'mun's move to bring Imam Mohammed al-Jawad (as) closer to him, echoing their previous resistance to his father al-Ridha's (as) appointment as crown prince. However, their apprehension significantly escalated this time due to the heightened fear of the caliphate transferring to the Alawi household. Upon arriving in Baghdad as a ten year old boy in 204 AH, they pointed to Imam al-Jawad's (as) young age, arguing that his age qualified him only as a child. They asserted that he should wait, mature, undergo religious studies, and then be considered for any substantial role.

Seeking to prove his "incompetence and unsuitability", they requested Yahya ibn Aktham, the then chief judge, to test his knowledge in a gathering. This was done to demonstrate to al-Ma'mun and the other statesmen the soundness of their position and provide them with a justification to advocate for the removal of the Imam (as) from such a prominent position.

It's believed that al-Ma'mun was aware of the scholarly capabilities of Imam al-Jawad (as), which were akin to those of his forefathers. In fact, many Abbasid caliphs inwardly recognised the superiority of the Ahlul Bayt in knowledge compared to other scholars.

However, al-Ma'mun, it seems, was indifferent to who prevailed in the debate; he stood to benefit whether Yahya ibn Aktham or Imam al-Jawad (as) emerged victorious.

The initial debate unfolded when Yahya ibn Aktham queried Imam Mohammed al-Jawad (as) on the permissibility of hunting prey during the month of Muharram. The Imam responded by meticulously dissecting the question into approximately twenty branches.

Following this debate, Imam al-Jawad (as) was married to Zainab, the daughter of al-Ma'mun, also known as Um al-Fadhl. Historians have documented the marriage sermon delivered by Imam al-Jawad (as), and after its conclusion, al-Ma'mun approved the marital contract, entrusting the Imam (as) with the responsibility of marrying his daughter. The Imam (as), in turn, gave his consent.

It is also possible that during this period, the second debate session was held, in which the Imam (as) demonstrated the invalidity and questionable nature of some traditions attributed to the Prophet Mohammed (saww). These attributed traditions sought to highlight the virtues of figures and symbols from the other schools of thought. The Imam (as) meticulously and calmly discussed these traditions, which tended to cause tension and issues by their nature.

In this debate, Yahya ibn Aktham posed the following questions to him in the presence of many scholars:

1. "O son of the Messenger of Allah, what do you say about the narration that Gabriel descended upon the Prophet and said, 'O Mohammed, indeed Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, sends His greetings to you, and He says to you: Ask Abu Bakr if he is pleased with Me, for I am pleased with him.'?"
2. Further, it has been narrated that the likeness of Abu Bakr and Umar on the earth is like the likeness of Gabriel and Michael; peace be upon them in the heavens.
3. It has also been narrated that they are the leaders of the elders of the people of Paradise. What is your opinion on this?
4. There is a narration that Umar ibn al-Khattab is the lamp of the people of Paradise. How do you comment on this?
5. It has been reported that tranquillity speaks through the tongue of Umar. What is your perspective on this?
6. There is a narration where the Prophet (saww) said, 'If I were not sent, Umar would have been sent.' What are your thoughts on this?
7. Additionally, it is narrated that the Prophet (saww) said, 'Revelation has never been withheld from me, except that I thought it descended upon the family of al-Khattab.' How do you interpret this statement?

8. It is reported that the Prophet (saww) said, 'If punishment were to descend, none would have been saved from it except Umar.' What is your understanding of this saying?"

We do not know whether these questions were agreed in advance between Yahya ibn Aktham, the judge, and al-Ma'mun or whether they were not. Nonetheless, these questions were obviously a potential minefield. If the Imam agreed with their content, even out of *taqiyah*, it would be spread everywhere that the Imam of the Shia and the leader of the Hashemite clan affirmed them and validated their content.

And if he opposed them sharply or criticised their narrators or content aggressively, this would provide an easy way to incite people against him and rally them to stand against him. He would be accused of insulting the "Caliph of the Prophet [Abu Bakr], and his friend, the Farooq [Omar]"; making it easier to socially discredit him or, in some extreme cases, even justify his killing. However, the Imam's calm and scholarly responses dismantled the Ibn Aktham's web of questions, nullifying his intended goals.

Subsequent to these debates and following al-Ma'mun's marriage arrangement with his daughter, it appears that Imam al-Jawad (as) did not consummate the marriage. The marriage also seems to have not been conducted out of his complete willingness, but rather as a response to al-Ma'mun's request. He did not want to appear to be contradicting the caliph nor refusing to enter a family relationship with him. It remains unclear whether Um al-Fadhil, the daughter of al-Ma'mun, wanted the marriage with the Imam or not. Later events, however, suggest

that she may not have been interested. Moreover, the affluent and often frivolous environment she was accustomed to likely did not align with the environment of Imam al-Jawad (as).

10. After these events, Imam al-Jawad (as) returned to Medina without his wife, the daughter of al-Ma'mun. She would have to wait for several years until she was brought to him in Baghdad.

From the end of the year 204 AH or perhaps 205 AH, after his return from Baghdad to Medina, until the year 214 AH, Medina would become the centre of the Imam's scholarly and preaching activities.

During the life of Imam al-Jawad (as), he had many encounters and faced varied reactions towards his leadership. Some outright opposed his Imamate, others sought guidance, and some continued to be uncertain. The Imam (as) dealt with each group according to their circumstances and intentions. We will address people's attitudes regarding his leadership in the coming chapters.

Due to his continuous residence in Medina and the widespread acceptance of Shia beliefs among the followers of Ahlul Bayt across the Islamic world, it became necessary to adopt a different style of correspondence to address various questions received from outside the city. These inquiries often came from pilgrims and visitors who came to perform Hajj and Umrah and pay respects at the Prophet's grave in Medina. This practice mirrors what we observed in the life of Imam al-Ridha (as). For more details, one can refer to *Masu'at Makatib al-A'imma*.⁽⁵⁸⁾ In the case of Imam al-Jawad, there are records of more than 60 di-

verse correspondences and letters, including those addressed to his representatives, responses to individuals mentioned by name, letters to his father al-Ridha (as), and communications to his son al-Hadi (as).⁽⁵⁹⁾ These writings cover various subjects, reflecting the Imam's intellectual depth and versatility.

Some scholars have entertained doubts that these correspondences could be construed as manipulation for *taqiya* (concealment) and cannot be used as evidence of his views. However, the prevailing opinion asserts their legitimacy and draws similarities between written communications and verbal responses, arguing that if *taqiya* were to be exercised whether in verbal or written communications, specific evidence and justifications would be required. Thus, renowned scholars consistently rely on the correspondences as evidence after ensuring that there is no evidence of anything that warrants action by *taqiya*.

What do we generally benefit from these correspondences?

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These correspondences provide valuable insights into the widespread acceptance of Shi'ism in different parts of the Islamic world. In fact, some rulers and officials may have been Shia, even though the infallibles did not explicitly guide them in that direction, as was done in the case of Ibn Yaqtin and some of his colleagues. Nonetheless, many gave allegiance to the Imams (as). In one case narrated by Sheikh al-Kulayni, a man from Afghanistan sought the Imam's intercession with a local governor in his area, and the Imam granted him that intercession.⁽⁶⁰⁾

Additionally, gifts and delegations from Shia communities in

places like Tarsus (in the Levant), arrived to Khayran al-Kadhim, who served as an agent for the Imam in Baghdad. Khayran then directed these gifts to the Imam (as).

As for Qom, Ahvaz, and the mountainous regions, it is evident that Shi'ism had spread there, as indicated by the presence of his representatives there. This is in addition to cities like Baghdad, Kufa, Basra, Hamadan, and Rey.

As such, it was necessary for the Imam (as) to adopt the system of representation (*wikala*), and his representatives and deputies became widespread throughout the Islamic lands.

His representatives and deputies across the world:

Despite having provided a brief overview of some of his (as) companions in our book *Rijal Hawl Ahlul Bayt, Vol. 2* and alluded to their roles, as well as in *The System of Religious Administration among Imami Shiites*, which covers the roles and actions of agents, we will also mention some of the representatives and deputies of here.

Amongst them was Ibrahim bin Mohammed al-Hamdani, who was entrusted with the Hamadan territory after the death of Yahya ibn (Abi) Imran al-Hamdani.⁽⁶¹⁾ Imam Al-Jawad (as) wrote a letter to Ibrahim and instructed him not to open it until after Yahya's death. The letter remained with him for two or more years until Yahya died. At that point, Ibrahim opened the letter, and to his surprise, the Imam (as) instructed him to assume the position of Yahya and carry out the same responsibilities.

The Imam informed all the agents to obey his orders and not

oppose him. The Imam also praised him in all his letters.⁽⁶²⁾

Among them was also Khayran al-Khadim, who appears to have been his representative in Baghdad. Gifts were sent to him from Tarsus in the Levant, and he sent a letter to Imam al-Jawad (as) seeking his guidance.

Another notable representative is Zakariya ibn Adam al-Qumi, who served as the Imam's representative in Qom and its outskirts. He held a high status, and the Imam (as) frequently mentioned him and expressed his sadness after he passed away on various occasions.

Abu Talib al-Qumi narrates, "I visited Abu Jaafar the second [meaning Imam al-Jawad (as)] in the latter part of his life, and I heard him say, 'May Allah reward Safwan ibn Yahya, Mohammed ibn Sinan, Zakariya ibn Adam, and Sa'd ibn Sa'd, as they have been loyal to me.' Zakariya ibn Adam was one of those appointed by him. The Imam (as) also said, 'I have remembered Allah's will in the deceased man [meaning Zakariya's death]. May Allah, the Exalted, have mercy on him — on the day he was born, on the day he died, and on the day he will be resurrected. He lived his days acknowledging the truth, patient and steadfast, accountable to what is due to Allah and His Messenger (saww). May Allah have mercy on him. He remained unwavering and steadfast. May Allah grant him reward of his intentions, recompense for his efforts.'" ⁽⁶³⁾

11. Did Al-Ma'mun pass by him while he was playing in the street?

Ibn Shahr Ashub (d. 588 AH) conveyed in *al-Manaqib* – and it seems he was the first to mention it, as we haven't found it in

any book before him, and those who came after attributed it to him and relied on him for it – a narration indicating a meeting between the Imam (as) with al-Ma'mun in Baghdad. According to the narration, Imam al-Jawad (as) was among some boys in the street, but when al-Ma'mun passed by, the other boys ran away, while Imam al-Jawad (as) remained. When al-Ma'mun returned from hunting, he found them still there. Then al-Ma'mun posed some questions for Imam al-Jawad (as), who answered them in a manner that astonished al-Ma'mun!

The text that Ibn Shahr Ashub conveyed is as follows:

“One day, al-Ma'mun passed by the son of al-Ridha (as) while he was with some young children. When the children saw al-Ma'mun in his procession, they ran away for fear of him, except Imam al-Jawad (as). When al-Ma'mun saw him, he stopped and said, ‘Why did you not run away?’ Imam al-Jawad (as) replied, ‘I am not guilty for me to be afraid of you, nor is the path narrow so that I should make way for you.’ Al-Ma'mun asked: ‘Who are you?’ He said, ‘Mohammed bin Ali bin Musa bin Jaafar bin Mohammed bin Ali bin Al-Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib (as).’ So al-Ma'mun replied, ‘What knowledge do you possess?’ He said, ‘Ask me about the news of the heavens.’ After bidding him farewell, al-Ma'mun continued with his falcon for hunting. When he moved away from him, the falcon began flapping its wings. [Al-Ma'mun] looked to his right and left but did not see any prey. The falcon continued to flap his wings, so al-Ma'mun let him fly. The falcon soared, disappearing into the horizon and away from his sight for a while. Afterwards, it returned to him carrying a small green snake, so he took the snake, placed its snake in the bait house and said to his companions, ‘I was

close to killing that boy today.' Then he returned, and the son of al-Ridha (as) was among the group of young boys and said: 'What knowledge of the heavens do you possess?' So, he (as) said, "Yes, O Commander of the Faithful. My father narrated to me from his forefathers, from the Prophet, from Gabriel, from Allah, that He (swt) said, 'Between the heaven and the air is a tumultuous sea which contains green snakes with spotted bellies. Kings hunt these snakes with their fierce falcons so that scholars could be tested with them.' So, al-Ma'mun said, 'You have spoken the truth, and so did your forefathers, and so did your grandfather, and so did your Lord.' Then he mounted the boy on the horse and married him to Umm al-Fadhli."⁽⁶⁴⁾

Ibn Talha al-Shafi'i (d. 652) narrated this incident in his book, *Matalib al-Sa'ool*,⁽⁶⁵⁾ which was written approximately 64 years after Ibn Shahr Ashub. However, he made modifications, changes, and additions to the narrative. As for the changes, he changed the following section: "He asked him about the affairs of the heavens, and the Imam narrated to him from his forefathers, from Gabriel, from the Lord of the Worlds. The existence of the tumultuous sea between the sky and the air, in which there are green snakes." All of this was summarised by him saying, "So Allah inspired him to say: O Commander of the Faithful, indeed Allah, the Almighty, created by His will, in the sea of His power, small fish that kings and caliphs hunt with falcons to test the lineage of the people of Prophethood."

In terms of additions, the narration [of Ibn Talha] mentions that this interaction took place in Baghdad when the Imam was eleven years old. Ibn Sabagh al-Maliki narrated this story from Ibn Talha al-Shafi'i in his book *al-Fusool al-Muhimma*,⁽⁶⁶⁾ how-

ever, in his narration, he changed the age of the Imam to 9 years old.

Following this period, this incident spread widely in the writings of both Shia⁽⁶⁷⁾ and Sunni scholars, appearing in numerous books discussing the life and virtues of Imam al-Jawad (as). Each author presented this story with a different variation, addition, or omission to reflect their individual worldview.⁽⁶⁸⁾

Some objections have been made on the different retellings, and Sheikh al-Korani⁽⁶⁹⁾ has pointed to some of them, although he did not see that these objections lead to a clear answer.

The first objection is what Sheikh al-Korani indicates in his book *al-Imam Mohammed Al-Jawad* by saying, "These narrations are mursal [a narration whose chain is interrupted], and because it is so, we must look into it. However, it does not require a response."

And we say this is true if the issue was only this! However, if it even contradicts historical or doctrinal facts, then there is no objection to entirely rejecting it.

Notably, the incident has no chain of transmission (sanad) through the Imami (Shi'a) path or any other path! Regardless of the degree of reliability of that chain.

The second objection that al-Korani states is that this narration "is countered by the fact that it implies that al-Ma'mun did not know Imam al-Jawad (as), despite [historically] knowing him well. In fact, al-Ma'mun stated that his daughter was to be wed to al-Jawad during the Imam's childhood and during the life of Imam al-Ridha (as). He then brought the Imam (as) to

Baghdad and challenged the Abbasids with him while organising a historical marriage ceremony.” To this, I say that this is a valid and plausible objection.

The third point he mentions is that this narration “is countered by stating that the Imam (as) was playing with boys, yet an infallible does not play or engage in frivolous activities.”

I believe that this is considered a well-established fact in the Imami tradition.⁽⁷⁰⁾ Imam al-Jawad (as) himself was displeased with Ali ibn Hassan al-Wasiti, who stated, “I brought with me some playthings for boys, made of silver, and I said, that I will present these to my master Abu Jaafar’. When the people dispersed from him after he answered everyone’s questions, he stood up and went to a watering place. I followed him, and I met him near a resting area. I said, ‘I seek permission for me to enter O Abu Jaafar’. I then entered and greeted him, and he returned the greeting with a disapproving look on his face. He did not instruct me to sit. I approached him and emptied what was in my pocket before him. He gave me an angry glance, then gestured with his right and left hands and said, ‘Did Allah create me for this, to play?’ So, I asked for his forgiveness, and he pardoned me.”

It is remarkable that he [Sheikh al-Korani], may Allah protect him, did not see such a doctrinal deviation concerning Imam-ate as sufficient to outright refute this narration.

Efforts by some to correct the details of the incident by proposing that the Imam (as) was not playing but waiting on the road, expecting to meet al-Ma’mun, do not resolve the narrative’s issues.⁽⁷¹⁾ This stance fails to address al-Ma’mun’s sup-

posed lack of awareness of the Imam (as) and does not address the fact that the Imam was in Baghdad only after being summoned by al-Ma'mun. Thus, why would the Imam (as) need to wait for a chance encounter on the road when al-Ma'mun goes out for hunting?

The fourth objection is that the context of the incident, as per Ibn Shahr Ashub's account and Ibn Talha's statement, indicates that the incident took place in Baghdad. However, Imam al-Jawad (as) did not come to Baghdad until after his father's martyrdom and his assumption of the Imamate. He was brought by Ma'mun. Does it make sense, given this context, for him to be in the street with the children? Whether he was playing with them or watching them, as some have attempted to portray the incident? Moreover, various narrations impose different timelines, suggesting that al-Ma'mun went hunting and returned, and the children, along with Imam al-Jawad, were still playing in the street. Considering the time it takes to go hunting and return, how plausible is it that the children and the Imam, either standing or playing, are still in the street?

Attempts to rectify the situation⁽⁷²⁾ by suggesting that the incident might have occurred in Medina because the young Imam al-Jawad did not reside in Baghdad are also unsuccessful. This is because no historical record indicates that al-Ma'mun had gone to Medina for hunting and met Imam al-Jawad (as) during that period.

The fifth point of contention lies in the description given by al-Ma'mun to Imam al-Jawad (as) in the mentioned narration. Initially, Ma'mun does not recognise him, only inquiring about his name. Then, suddenly, he exclaims that the boy's death is

imminent. Subsequently, he proceeds to ask the Imam (as) about the affairs of the heavens. When the Imam (as) informs al-Ma'mun about the existence of the tumultuous sea between the sky and the air, containing green snakes with spotted backs, al-Ma'mun accepts this information without questioning or seeking further evidence. In this narrative, it seems as if al-Ma'mun is portrayed as someone from the Imamiyya who unquestioningly accepts what their Imam says without a shred of doubt!

The sixth point of contention revolves around the omission of the mention of the tumultuous sea in the narration by the esteemed scholar Sheikh Abbas al-Qummi, may Allah have mercy on him. Although it is initially present in Ibn Shahr Ashub's narration, the Sheikh, in his approach, diverges from this methodology despite his typical adherence to the accounts of historical narrators [as he had akhbari leanings]. Thus, it remains perplexing why he chose to disregard the "tumultuous sea" in Ibn Shahr Ashub's narrative and replace it with information found in the other school's sources. It is possible, and Allah knows best, that he did not believe in the tumultuous sea mentioned in the narration.

The attempt by Sheikh al-Korani, may Allah protect him, to interpret what Ibn Shahr Ashub narrated by saying, "As for the hunting of the falcon for fish, whether alive or dead, from the air, there is an explanation. The explanation is that some storms can carry water and fish from the sea and throw it hundreds of kilometres away. I have read this in historical sources, and they have filmed it in our time," is not entirely convincing either. This is because the narration does not speak of the presence of fish

in the air or on land; rather, it emphasises the existence of a sea with green snakes. The only narration that mentions fish is the one by Ibn Talha. Otherwise, Ibn Shahr Ashub's narration does not mention fish.

Perhaps Sheikh al-Korani noticed that defending the mentioned narration is challenging. Thus, he suggested that the narrator might not have mastered narrating the incident accurately or may have exaggerated the retelling. He said, "It could be that al-Ma'mun asked Imam al-Jawad (as) about a strange incident that happened to him during hunting. The Imam (as) then informed him about the possibility of seawater and fish being in the sky at times. It could thus be considered a *Karama* (spiritual gift) for the Imam that he knew exactly what happened to al-Ma'mun and explained it to him. However, the narrator did not master narrating the incident, or he added to it."

However, we believe that the flaws (or rather, the gaps) in this narration are more numerous and challenging than to patch it up adequately!

All this explanation is given despite the fact that the first part of the incident is narrated in a different manner in the Sunni school of thought.⁽⁷³⁾ Interestingly, in another narrated account, Caliph Umar passed by playing children, and they ran away in fear, except for Abdullah bin Zubair. When Umar asked him about the reason for not fleeing like the others, he replied that the road was not narrow and that he had committed no wrongdoing.

Is it then not strange that the same incident with the same dialogue appears in two different contexts within the span of

approximately 190 years? Therefore, I ask, which of them influenced the other?

Attitudes toward the Imamate of al-Jawad (as)

It should be noted that the divine succession of Imamate to Imam Mohammed al-Jawad, following his father Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (as), is very unique. It marked the first instance in the history of Imamate – spanning from the time after the demise of Prophet Mohammed (saww) until the year 203 AH (roughly two centuries) — where an Imam took on the position of Imamate at the remarkably young age of eight, during his initial assumption of the Imamate!

This situation led to varied stances among people and authorities regarding the acceptance and belief in his Imamate.

Regarding the Abbasid authority, they not only refused to acknowledge Imam al-Jawad's (as) Imamate but also denied the Imamate of his forefathers despite recognising the scholarly virtues⁽⁷⁴⁾ of the preceding Imams and their social leadership among the Bani Hashim and the Shia community. Their interaction with them was limited to acknowledging their roles as scholars and social leaders to that extent.

However, even within these boundaries, the Abbasid authority did not concede the right to Imam al-Jawad (as). Except for al-Ma'mun, whose stance will be elaborated shortly, the core leadership of the Abbasid household refused to recognise the scholarly prowess of Imam al-Jawad (as). Instead, they viewed him as any other child who should undergo education and study under the guidance of senior scholars until reaching maturity before he could be treated on par with other schol-

ars. Consequently, they protested when al-Ma'mun sought to marry his daughter to Imam al-Jawad (as), arguing that he was too young and needed to mature.⁽⁷⁵⁾ When al-Ma'mun rejected their criticism, they resorted to "testing" the Imam (as) through the well-known story involving Yahya ibn Aktham.

Even though the Imam (as) surpassed Yahya ibn Aktham in answering his questions and left Yahya unable to respond to his inquiries, this was not sufficient for them to acknowledge the Imam. How could they, when they had not accepted his father, Imam al-Ridha (as), despite the manifestation of his virtues and miracles over a long period of time?

The reason for this - perhaps - is what al-Ma'mun himself expressed - if the attribution of the statement to him is accurate. He told them, "You are the cause of it; had you treated them [the Ahlul Bayt] justly, it would have been more appropriate for you. As for what those before me did, they were cutting familial ties."⁽⁷⁶⁾

However, what perplexes some is al-Ma'mun's stance towards the Imam. On the one hand, he engages in scholarly discourse about Shi'ism, debates with the other school's scholars on the merits of Ali ibn Abi Talib (as), saying that he is the best after the Prophet (saww)⁽⁷⁷⁾, and acknowledges, theoretically, the unique attributes that Allah has granted to the Ahlul Bayt.⁽⁷⁸⁾ On the other hand, we find him ordering the poisoning of Imam al-Ridha (as).⁽⁷⁹⁾ Had it not been for Imam al-Ridha (as) informing him that his (al-Ma'mun's) death and the death of Imam al-Jawad (as) were close and simultaneous - likening it to the distance between two fingers - he might have even expedited the assassination of Imam al-Jawad (as).

Sheikh al-Korani expands on this matter in his book *Imam Mohammed al-Jawad* as follows:

1. Al-Mamun's behaviour falls within the political conflict within the Abbasid family, and thus, al-Ma'mun uses it as a political tool to pressure them, conveying the message that if they don't unite around him, the caliphate will slip away from their grasp.
2. From an intellectual perspective, Sheikh al-Korani believes that al-Ma'mun was inclined towards establishing an Abbasid regime with an Alawite Shi'ite ideology. He sees that al-Mamun took practical steps in this direction, such as writing a proclamation disassociating from Muawiyah. However, al-Ma'mun refrained from publicly declaring it, fearing public resentment. This proclamation remained hidden until it was revealed by the Abbasid ruler al-Mu'tasim.
3. Ultimately, al-Ma'mun's stance can be summarised as being theoretically Shia while practically acting as an adversary to the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt and their followers.⁽⁸⁰⁾

The worst stance was that of al-Mu'tasim, the Abbasid ruler who succeeded his brother al-Ma'mun in the caliphate. Driven by inherent ignorance and disdain for scholarly knowledge⁽⁸¹⁾ – as will be further discussed in the biography of Imam Ali al-Hadi (as), who lived through this period most extensively – Imam al-Jawad's superior knowledge held no significance for him. Additionally, al-Mu'tasim's military upbringing, as noted by historians, shaped his perspective, and thus, he lacked

any form of diplomacy or cordial mannerism in his interaction with Imam al-Jawad (as). Given his classification of the Imam (as) as one of his “enemies” and rivals for his rule and family, al-Mu’tasim adopted extreme positions towards the Imam (as) that ultimately led to his assassination.

As for the ministers of the state and its institutions, they were inclined towards the ruler or caliph, exhibiting varying degrees of leniency or strictness in their alignment with the ruler.

As for the general Muslim population outside the Shia community, there seems to be minimal interest in the case of Imam al-Jawad’s (as) succession and assumption of Imamate at such a young age.

This is apart from some scholars and jurists associated with the state, who, being part of its agenda, naturally have positions that may be influenced by their official roles. Therefore, some of them, whether willingly or not, engaged in attempts to pose challenging questions to the Imam (as), possibly as a means of testing him.

As for the general population, they were detached from this issue early on, following the Umayyad’s normalisation of the notion that the Imam and the ruler are synonymous, regardless of individual capabilities and qualifications. In this view, the Imam is the one who holds religious authority, while the ruler, or Wali al-Amr, is the political authority. And even if there are disagreements among multiple contenders, the caliph and Wali al-Amr are seen as the decisive victor who settles the dispute and delivers the Friday sermon!

Therefore, they did not inquire about the signs, qualifica-

tions, or capabilities of the Imam (as), especially since all of this can be manufactured through media, Friday sermons, and the like.

Hence, and God knows best, individuals among the public did not see themselves as greatly concerned with searching for the true imam or his signs. Their imam is well-known – the one who has political authority!

Regarding the Shia of the Ahlul Bayt (as), we can observe the following stances:

Firstly, the stance of the believers in the Imamate of al-Jawad (as), who relied on the premise that Imamate is divine and akin to Prophethood; thus, it is not necessarily subject to human contestation. Just as it is possible for God to send a prophet at a young age, it is also conceivable for Imams to assume their role at a similar age. What may seem unlikely at first glance is merely due to the lack of familiarity, not because it is inherently impossible or prohibited. This lack of familiarity can be overcome with the initial occurrence, whether it pertains to the first Prophet or the first Imam. As it becomes a recurring pattern, any reservations or apprehensions would gradually dissipate, especially considering the affirmation of previous Imams that such a situation would indeed occur and serve as a test for the people.

This stance is notably exemplified by Ali ibn Jaafar al-Sadiq,⁽⁸²⁾ who, despite his esteemed knowledge, noble lineage, and prominent position among the Shia, openly acknowledged and affirmed the Imamate of Imam al-Jawad (as) and submitted to him. This is remarkable, given that Imam al-Jawad (as) was ap-

proximately 47 years younger than Ali ibn Jaafar and he was the uncle of his father, Imam al-Ridha (as).⁽⁸³⁾ In a narration by Mohammed bin Hasan bin Ammar, he states:

“I was with Ali ibn Jaafar ibn Mohammed in Medina, and I had stayed with him for two years, writing down what has been heard from his brother, al-Kadhim (as). One day, Abu Jaafar Mohammed ibn Ali al-Ridha (as) entered the Prophet’s Mosque, and Ali ibn Jaafar stood up barefoot and without a cloak and kissed his hand and his forehead. Abu Jaafar said to him, ‘O uncle, sit down, may Allah have mercy on you.’ Ali ibn Jaafar replied, ‘O my master, how can I sit while you are standing!’ When Ali ibn Jaafar returned to his gathering, his companions criticised him, saying, ‘You are his uncle, and yet you treat him in this manner?!’ Ali ibn Jaafar responded, ‘Silence! If Allah, the Almighty’ and he seized his beard, ‘saw this grey beard unfitting and saw this young man and placed him in the position that he is in, who am I to deny his superiority? We seek refuge in Allah from what you are saying. Rather, I am his servant!’⁽⁸⁴⁾

This was not an isolated incident, as it occurred amongst others as well. It was indeed striking that a person in his mid-fifties, with all his virtue and prestige, would kiss the hand of a nine-year-old boy and even put on his shoes, as mentioned in other narrations. It is likely that he deliberately did this to demonstrate the elevated position and greatness of Imam al-Jawad (as) in the eyes of all Shia.

It appears that the acceptance and belief in the Imamate of al-Jawad (as) was widespread among the Shia community. Although some might not express it as explicitly as the scholar Ali ibn Jaafar al-Sadiq, as mentioned earlier, the eventual recogni-

tion of the Imam (as) after a short period following his father al-Ridha's (as) martyrdom indicates this reality. Additionally, the fact that his father's most significant companions were his companions and narrators underscores this point.⁽⁸⁵⁾ This, of course, excludes the Waqifah, who will be mentioned.

Secondly, those who denied or attempted to conceal his Imamate.

There was a minority known as the Waqifah who insisted on not acknowledging and believing in the Imamate of Imam al-Ridha (as). Since the textual evidence for al-Jawad's appointment comes from his father al-Ridha (as), and since they did not believe in him, they naturally dismissed the Imamate of Imam al-Jawad (as) as well.

Fairness required that they reconsider their claims if their doubts could be dismissed. Instead, they insisted that Imam al-Ridha (as), due to not having offspring, was infertile, and therefore, he could not be an Imam because an Imam should not have any deficiency!

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The fair course would have been for them to reconsider this position in light of the birth of Imam al-Jawad (as) and repent for their assertions. However, they "placed their fingers in their ears, covered themselves with their garments, persisted in arrogance, and obstinately clung to their position."⁽⁸⁶⁾

This is in addition to the knowledge that emerged from Imam al-Jawad (as), which was comparable to his infallible forefathers!

Moreover, some of the Waqifah who acknowledged the

Imamate of Ahmad bin Musa, the brother of Imam al-Ridha (as), should have reverted to the Imam al-Ridha after Ahmad bin Musa himself, along with his mother Um Ahmad, returned to the house of Imam al-Ridha (as) and declared that he, along with all those who had pledged allegiance to him, were in allegiance to his brother, al-Ridha (as). However, despite this, the Waqifah did not follow their supposed leader's actions.

Thirdly, we may find among these two groups another group. This group included some individuals who had moments of hesitation, questioning, or contemplation regarding the Imamate of Imam al-Jawad (as), but they soon settled in their belief after seeing certainty, and some may say that they can be excused. Certain preconceptions, such as questioning how God can grant Imamate to a child or how can such a child attain divine knowledge, might have led some to hesitate in embracing Imamate. However, with some reflection, consideration, observing the divine knowledge attributed to him, and witnessing practical miracles, they came to realise "that it is the truth from your Lord so that they may believe in it, and their hearts may be humbled to it."⁽⁸⁷⁾

Among this group were individuals like Ibn Asbat and others, as narrated in some accounts.⁽⁸⁸⁾

Perhaps some of these individuals were contemplating how to convince people of his Imamate and how they would accept it. Anxiety might have overwhelmed them from this perspective. It's possible that some of them expressed these concerns to someone, and it was misconstrued as disbelief in the Imamate. We believe that the narration about a meeting in the town of Barka Zalzal in Baghdad among some companions of Imam

al-Ridha and the attributed words of Yunis ibn Abd al-Rahman expressing doubt about the actual Imamate of Imam al-Jawad fall within this context. However, we have previously expressed scepticism about the authenticity of this narration, both in terms of its chain of transmission and its content.

Imam al-Jawad during the time of al-Mu'tasim al-Abbasi

With the death of Abdullah bin Harun, known as al-Ma'mun al-Abbasi, in the year 218 AH while on his way to Tarsus in northern Sham due to a fever, his brother Mohammed bin Harun, known as al-Mu'tasim Al-Abbasi, took over. This marked the beginning of a new phase of severity and cruelty towards the Shia of the Ahlul Bayt, and particularly towards Imam al-Jawad (as).

Despite Al-Ma'mun's determination to secure his reign, evident in his removal of obstacles, including the killing of his brother al-Amin and Imam al-Ridha (as), when compared to his brother Al-Mu'tasim, al-Ma'mun is considered to be the lesser of two evils.

Al-Ma'mun was known for his intelligence, love for knowledge, and proficiency in debates and discussions. He evaluated individuals based on their scholarly standing and, in theory, acknowledged that the truth was with the family of Mohammed. However, in practice, he placed kingship and governance above everything else. While he theoretically admired the knowledge and capabilities of the Imams, his practical approach was limited to respect and admiration.

As for al-Mu'tasim, many negative qualities were attributed to him, so let us see what historians have said about him:

We have mentioned in previous pages how al-Mu'tasim despised attending scholarly gatherings and classes to the extent that he envied his colleague who had passed away and was relieved from attending such sessions.

Even when the state continued the isolationist approach initiated by al-Ma'mun, who was convinced of its merits, when al-Mu'tasim came to power,⁽⁸⁹⁾ dialogues were replaced by whips, imprisonment, and even death for those who disagreed with his beliefs. Ironically, he himself might not have comprehended the meanings behind those disagreements, especially as he was influenced by some rigid scholars, including Ahmad ibn Abi Du'ad.

While the period of Imam al-Jawad's life under al-Ma'mun lasted for about 15 years, during which there was clear incitement against the Imam from the Abbasid household, and particularly from al-Ma'mun's daughter, Um al-Fadhl – as evidenced by her conflicting relationship with her husband, Imam al-Jawad, al-Ma'mun did not adopt a harsh stance against the Imam.

However, we find that al-Mu'tasim, who was raised in a tough and militaristic environment⁽⁹⁰⁾ and who surrounded himself with a special Turkic militia for his protection, couldn't tolerate the presence of Imam al-Jawad for even two years. When al-Mu'tasim assumed the caliphate in 218 AH, he took the drastic step of poisoning the Imam in 220 AH in collaboration with his niece, Um al-Fadhl.

Thus, the Imam (as) was martyred in the prime of his life, at the peak of strength and youth, at the age of 25.

References

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- (1) In *Oyoon Akhbar al-Ridha* by Mohammed bin Ali bin Babawayh (Sheikh al-Saduq), Imam Hussein (as) narrates that his grandfather, the Messenger of Allah, delivered glad tidings regarding the Imams and enumerating their names until he reached Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (as). The narration highlights the virtue of Imam al-Ridha and then states, "Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, placed in his lineage a blessed, pure, virtuous, pleasing, and contented seed, named Mohammed ibn Ali. He is the intercessor for his Shia and will inherit the knowledge of his grandfathers. He bears a clear sign and is evident proof. Upon his birth, he declares, 'There is no god but Allah, Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah,' and in his supplication, he says, 'O You who have no equal or likeness, You are Allah, there is no god but You, and there is no creator except for You. You cause the creatures to perish, and You remain. You pardon those who disobey You, and in forgiveness is Your satisfaction.'"

His grandfather, Musa ibn Jaafar (as), also foretold his birth as is mentioned in *al-Kafi* (volume 1, page 363), which is narrated by Yazid ibn Salit al-Zaydi, who said, "I met Abu Ibrahim (as), while we were intending to perform Umrah. He said to me, 'O

Yazid when you pass by this place and meet him, give him the glad tidings that a trustworthy, protected, and blessed boy will be born to him. He will inform you that you have met me, so tell him that the young girl from whom this boy will be born is from the household of Marya, the wife of the Messenger of Allah (saww), the mother of Ibrahim. If you can convey my greetings to her, then do so.”

His father, Imam al-Ridha (as), also received the good news, as mentioned in the compilation of reliable hadiths by Sheikh Mohammed Asif al-Muhsini titled *Al-Mu’jam al-Ahadith al-Mu’tabarah* (volume 2, page 271) and is narrated through Abdul Rahman ibn Abi Najran who said “Imam al-Ridha (as) said “I bear witness by Allah that the days and nights will not pass until Allah grants me a son.” Abdul Rahman ibn Abi Najran later adds, “We counted the months from the time he uttered this statement, and within less than a year, Allah blessed him with a child, Abu Jaafar (as).”

- (2) Al-Mas’udi (d. 346) briefly mentions this in *Ithbat al-Wasiyya* (page 217) and Hussain ibn Abdul Wahab (who lived in the fifth century) elaborates on this text in *Ayoun al-Mo’jazat* (page 112). The detailed narration states: “I was granted only one son, and he will inherit from me.’ When Abu Jaafar (as), was born, al-Ridha (as), said to his companions: ‘A child resembling Musa ibn Imran, who split the sea, has been born to me, and like Jesus, son of Mary, who was born to a sanctified mother, [she] was created pure and purified.”

Similarly, al-Mas’udi reported in the same source (page 219), from Hanan ibn Sudeir, who said: “I asked al-Ridha (as): ‘Will there be an Imam without descendants?’ He replied: ‘Only one will be born to me, but Allah will create from him numerous offspring.” This is also mentioned by al-Arbili (d. 693) in *Kashf al-Ghummah* (volume 3, page 95). For this reason, al-Mufid (d. 413) said in *al-Irshad* (volume 2, page 271) “He did not leave any offspring known to us except his son, the Imam (as).” Abu Ali al-Tabrisi (d. 548) also stated in *I’lām al-Warā bi-A’lām al-Hudā* (volume 2, page 86) “al-Ridha (as), had only one son, Abu Jaafar Mohammed ibn Ali al-Jawad (as), and no others.” This is also confirmed by Ibn Shahrashub (d. 588) in *al-Manaqib* (volume 4, page 367) “His only son was Imam Mohammed (as).”

- (3) [Translators note: the Waqifah is an sect that believed that Imam Musa al-Kadhim (as) did not die and that he was in fact the Mahdi, and had went into occultation. This sect did not believe in the Imamat of Imam Ali al-Ridha (as) or the subsequent Imams.]
- (4) The seventh month in the Islamic lunar calendar holds significant importance, especially among the followers of the Ahlul Bayt. It marks the beginning of the sacred months, and fasting during this month is highly recommended, with some choosing to observe a complete fast. Performing Umrah in this month is considered more virtuous than in other months, including the month of Ramadan.
- (5) Sheikh Mohammed Taqi al-Tustari, in his work *Resalat fi Tawarikh al-Nabi wal-Aal* (volume 1, page 17), cites from them, stating: "al-Kulayni, al-Mufid, and al-Sheikh in *Al-Tahdhib*, al-Mas'udi in *Al-Ithbat*, Ibn al-Khashab, and others agree that the birth of Imam al-Jawad (as), is in the month of Ramadan."
- (6) [Translators Note: al-Nahhiyah al-Muqadasah translates to: "the Holy Side" which was a nickname given by the Shia to the later Imams, especially Imam al-Mahdi, to avoid suspicion by the Abbasid rulers. In this case, Shiekh Abu al-Qasim received this dua from Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf)]. The
- (7) From here, the evidence for the birth of Imam al-Jawad (as) in the month of Rajab begins, although the original indication was towards the birth of his son, Imam al-Hadi (as).
- (8) al-Kadhim, Sheikh Abdul Nabi. *Takmilat al-Rijal*. Volume 2, page 745.
- (9) al-Majlisi, al-Mawla Mohammed Baqir. *Bihar al-Anwar*. Volume 50, page 16.
- (10) This appears to be from the commentary of Sayyid Mohammed Baqir al-Muwahhid al-Abtahi al-Isfahani, who compiled the volume on Imam al-Jawad in *Mawsuat al-Awalim* (Volume 1, page 24) by Sheikh Abdullah al-Bahrani.
- (11) al-Tustari, Sheikh Mohammed Taqi. *Al-Akhbar al-Dakhilah*. Volume 1 page 253.
- (12) The late Sheikh al-Tabrizi, in his work *Sirat al-Najah* (volume 10 page 412) mentions this, in response to a question about the rea-

son for not mentioning the birth of Imam Ali in a specific supplication. Sheikh Al-Tabrizi stated: "The birth of Amir al-Mu'mineen Ali (as), on the thirteenth day of Rajab is a well-known fact among the majority of Muslims and, in general, the Shia. Perhaps the emphasis on mentioning the birth of the Imams al-Jawad and al-Hadi (as) in this supplication is a response to the sects who deviated from the truth and denied their Imamate. The intention behind the visitation is to affirm their Imamate."

- (13) al-Kulayni, Mohammed ibn Ya'qub. Al-Kafi (Dar al-Hadith). Volume 2, page 102. Sheikh al-Mufid. Al-Irshad. Volume 2, page 279.

Both sources mention an incident reported by Abu Yahya al-San'ani. He said, "I was with Abu al-Hasan al-Ridha (as) when his son, Abu Jaafar, was brought to him while still a child. Al-Ridha (as) said, 'This newborn, who was not born like any other newborn, brings greater blessings to our Shia.'"

The apparent meaning is that Imam al-Jawad (as) became renowned with this title, signifying him as the "blessed newborn". This is indicated by the statement of the previous Imam referring to him as "this blessed newborn," suggesting a previous covenant or declaration about a blessed newborn and confirming that he is indeed the one. Further clarity is provided by various narrations reported by multiple individuals in different places. It suggests that Imam (as) deliberately informed his companions in various locations, emphasizing the blessed nature of this newborn. An example is what is mentioned in Bihar al-Anwar (volume 50, page 22) narrated by al-Kharrazi with its chain to:

Ali ibn Asbat and Ubad ibn Isma'il who said "I was with Imam al-Ridha (as) at Mina, when Abu Ja'far (Imam al-Jawad) (as), was brought to him. We inquired, 'Is this the blessed newborn?' Imam Ali al-Ridha (as), confirmed, saying, "Yes, this is the newborn whose birth in Islam has no equal in blessing."

In another narration found in al-Kafi (volume 6, page 361), it is reported by several companions from Sahl ibn Ziyad, from Ali ibn Asbat, from Yahya al-San'ani that said "I entered upon Ali ibn al-Hasan al-Ridha (as) while in Mecca, and he was peeling a banana and feeding Abu Jaafar. So, I said to him, 'May I be sacrificed for you, is this the blessed newborn?' He said, 'Yes, O Yahya, this is the newborn whose birth in Islam has no equal in blessings for our Shia.'"

So, in these narrations and others, you see that the Imam (as) was talking to his companions about the “promised” blessed birth, which they have previously inquired about. Then they refer to Imam al-Jawad (as), asking if this was indeed the blessed child he had previously spoken about.

Yes, it is reported in al-Kafi that Imam Jaafar al-Sadiq (as) indicated to his son Musa al-Kadhim (as) that “no one born has greater blessings upon our Shia than him.” However, it’s important to note that this narration is considered a single instance, and its narration chain is weak, as indicated by Allama al-Majlisi in Miraat al-Uqool. There might have been confusion or a mix-up in the names of the father and the son in the chain. Allah knows best.

- (14) al-Majlisi, Mohammed Baqir. Miraat al-Uqool fi Sharh Akhbar aal al-Rasoul. Volume 3, page 380.

“The specific attribution of “no one born has greater blessings upon our Shia than him” to Imam al-Jawad (as) could be due to the immense blessings for the welfare of the Shia during his time or because of the abundance of his generosity and kindness. Alternatively, this exclusivity might be an additional feature in comparison to others who are not Imams.”

- (15) Abu al-Fadl al-Tabatabai, in his research on jurisprudence (dated 9/7/1441 AH), which is available on the website of the School of Jurisprudence (<https://ar.lib.eshia.ir/>), discusses the various aspects of blessings associated with the birth of Imam al-Jawad (as). He highlights these blessings as one of the effects stemming from the birth of Imam al-Jawad (as), including its impact on affirming the Imamate of Imam al-Ridha (as), which we will discuss shortly. Additionally, he addresses the effect of these blessings on affirming the Imamate of Imam al-Mahdi (as) despite his young age.
- (16) The judge, Sheikh Mohammed Kanaan, in a video published on YouTube.
- (17) al-Kulayni. al-Kafi. Volume 1, page 370.

“Ali ibn Jaafar said, ‘If Allah, the Almighty’ and he seized his beard, ‘saw this grey beard unfitting and saw this young man and placed him in the position that he is in, who am I to deny his

superiority?

- (18) al-Kulayni. al-Kafi. Volume 1, page 369.

“In a hadith narrated from Imam al-Ridha (as) he says ‘By Allah, Allah will make from me that which establishes the truth and its people and eradicates falsehood and its people.’ After a year, Abu Ja’far (Imam al-Jawad) (as), was born.”

- (19) Arab society – particularly before Islam, which brought with it distinguishing features and new qualities – attached significant importance to age. Age was perceived as directly linked to knowledge and wisdom. This is evident in various instances in Arab and Muslim history where people opposed the leadership of an individual solely due to their young age. This is explicitly seen in their resistance to Prophet Mohammed’s (saww) appointment of Osama bin Zaid as a military leader. Additionally, it is evident in their reluctance to accept Imam Ali’s (as) leadership after the Prophet, using justifications that included his young age and the advanced age of others.

- (20) “And they exclaimed, ‘If only this Quran was revealed to a great man from one of the two cities’ [31] Is it they who distribute your Lord’s mercy? We alone have distributed their very livelihood among them in this worldly life and raised some of them in rank above... [32]” [The Holy Quran, Az-Zukhruf, verses 31-32]

- (21) “Your Lord creates and chooses what He wills. Not for them was the choice. Glorified is Allah, and Exalted above what they associate.” [The Holy Quran, al-Qasas, verse 68]

- (22) “So she pointed to him. They said, ‘How can we speak to one who is in the cradle a child’ [29] [Jesus] said, “Indeed, I am the servant of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet.

[The Holy Quran, Maryam, verses 29-30]

“[Allah] said, ‘O John, take the Scripture with determination.’ And We gave him judgment [while yet] a boy.” [The Holy Quran, Maryam, verse 12]

- (23) Abu al-Fida, Imad al-Deen Ismail (d. 732 hijri). Al-Mukhtasar fi

Akhbar al-Bashar. Volume 1, page 35.

“When David reached the age of seventy, he passed away, and before his death, he appointed his son Solomon as his successor and instructed him to oversee the construction of the Holy House. After David’s death, Solomon became the king at the age of twelve, and Allah granted him wisdom and sovereignty beyond what had been given to anyone else, as mentioned in the Book of Allah.

I say: A narration in al-Kafi (volume 1, page 431), states that a narrator asks the Imam, “I said, ‘They say that you are young!’ He said, ‘Allah had revealed to David that Solomon should be his successor, even though he was a young shepherd. When the people of Israel and their scholars questioned this choice, Allah instructed David to take two staffs, one belonging to those who questioned this and the other to Solomon. Place them in a house and seal them. Go to them the next day, and whoever’s staff has blossomed would be the appointed successor. When David informed them of this, they agreed and submitted to the divine choice.”

- (24) In al-Kafi, (volume 1, page 370), it should be noted that this conversation takes place in Khurasan; al-Khayrani, narrated from his father saying, “I was standing by Abu al-Hasan (as) in Khurasan, and someone said to him ‘If something were to happen, who would be next?’ He said, ‘To Abu Jaafar, my son.’ It’s as if the person who asked the question expressed doubt or concern regarding the age of Abu Jaafar. So, Imam al-Ridha (as) said, ‘God Almighty sent Jesus, son of Mary, as a prophet, and revealed with him a new code of law at an age younger than that of Abu Jaafar (as).”

Similarly, al-Hurr al-Amili in Ithbat al-Hudat (volume 4, page 384), narrates from Ahmed ibn Mohammed bin Abi Nassar that “I entered upon Ali Abu al-Hasan al-Ridha (as), along with Safwan bin Yahya, and Abu Jaafar (as) was standing. He was around three years old. I said to him ‘May I be sacrificed to you, if – God forbid – something was to happen [to you] who would be your successor?’ He said, ‘my son here’ and he pointed to him [Imam al-Jawad (as)]. So we said ‘At this age?’ He said, ‘Yes, at this age. God appointed Jesus son of Mary when he was only two.”

- (25) Giving a nickname (kunya) to a child at a young age is mustahab, and it should be noted that the father, Imam al-Ridha (as), gave the young Imam al-Jawad (as) a kunya and addressed him by it from a young age as a sign of appreciation and respect.”
- (26) al-Amili, al-Hurr. Ithbat al-Huda bi'l-Nusus wa'l-Mu'jizat. Volume 4, page 384.
- (27) Sheikh al-Saduq. Oyoon Akhbar al-Ridha. Volume 1, page 11.
- (28) al-Kulayni. Al-Kafi. Volume 1, page 370.

“It is narrated from Ali bin Ibrahim, from his father, and Ali bin Mohammed al-Qasani altogether, from Zakariya bin Yahya bin al-Nu'man al-Sairafi, who said, 'I heard Ali bin Jaafar narrating to al-Hasan bin al-Husayn bin Ali bin al-Husayn saying..”

- (29) al-Zabede Murtada. Taj al-Uroos. volume 2, page 3, “Qiyafa is the practice of following the traces of individuals and distinguishing them, by recognizing the resemblance of a man to his brother and father.”

[Translators note: Qafa/Qiyaafa was the practice of “observing” an individual's face, body and actions in order to ascertain their lineage or parentage. A person skilled in this practice was known as a Qa'if. The closest equivalent of this in English is “physiognomy”, or “the practice of assessing a person's character from their outer appearance”. People who practice this are known as physiognomy experts.]

- (30) Allamah al-Majlisi. Miraat al-Uqool fi Sharh Akhbar Aal al-Rasool. Volume 3, page 382.
- (31) al-Shahroudi, Sayyid Ali al-Hashimi, Muhadharat fi al-Fiqh al-Ja'fari. Page 401.
- (32) al-Ansari, Sheikh Murtadha. Al-Makasib. Volume 2, page 7.
- (33) al-Amili, al-Hurr. Wasail al-Shia. Volume 11, page 371.

“In a narration from Mohammed ibn Qais, narrated from Abi Jaafar (as) who said, 'Amir al-Momineen, Imam Ali (as) used to say: “We do not take the word of a fortune teller, a qa'if or a thief.””

In a narration from Imam al-Sadiq (as), from his fathers,

Prophet Mohammed (saww) in a hadith on the forbidden acts said "He forbade seeking the services of fortune-tellers.' He further added: 'anyone who seeks their services and believes in them has rejected the message revealed by Allah to Mohammed and his family.'"

(34) al-Shahrudi, Sayyid Ali al-Hashimi. *Muhadharat fi al-Fiqh al-Ja'fari*. page 402

(35) al-Kulayni. *Al-Kafi*. Volume 1, page 370.

"Mohammed bin Hasan bin Ammar said, "I was with Ali ibn Jaafar ibn Mohammed in Medina, and I had stayed with him for two years, writing down what has been heard from his brother, al-Kadhim (as). One day, Abu Jaafar Mohammed ibn Ali al-Ridha (as) entered the Prophet's Mosque, and Ali ibn Jaafar stood up barefoot and without a cloak and kissed his hand and his forehead. Abu Jaafar said to him, 'O uncle, sit down, may Allah have mercy on you.' Ali ibn Jaafar replied, 'O my master, how can I sit while you are standing!' When Ali ibn Jaafar returned to his gathering, his companions criticised him, saying, 'You are his uncle, and yet you treat him in this manner?!' Ali ibn Jaafar responded, 'Silence! If Allah, the Almighty' and he seized his beard, 'saw this grey beard unfitting and saw this young man and placed him in the position that he is in, who am I to deny his superiority? We seek refuge in Allah from what you are saying. Rather, I am his servant!'"

(36) al-Shahrudi, Sayyid Ali al-Hashimi. *Muhadharat fi al-Fiqh al-Ja'fari*. Page 402.

(37) Ibid

(38) This is a reference to al-Jahiz statement in his letter *Fakhr al-Sudan Ala al-Bidan* (The Pride of Browns over the Whites). In this letter, al-Jahiz says, "They said, 'the appearance of the ten sons of Abdul Muttalib were black and burly.' Amar ibn al-Tufayl looked at them while circumambulating the Kaaba and remarked that they looked like camels moving gracefully. Then he said, 'With these individuals, nobility is preserved.'

Further, Abdullah ibn Abbas was dark-skinned and strong. The descendants of Abu Talib, who are the noblest of people, were black and adlam (extremely dark-skinned)."

Excerpt from al-Jahiz's *Al-Rasa'il* (volume 1, page 209) edited by Abdul Salam Harun.

- (39) al-Isfahani, Abu al-Faraj. *Maqatil al-Talibiyyin*. Page 23.

"Ali (as) was dark and well-built and was closer to being short."

(40) Committee for Compilation at the International Assembly of the Ahlul Bayt (as). *A'lam al-Hidaya*. Volume 7, page 45.

"Some of those who lived with him described him as 'he was of moderate stature and had a dark complexion.'"

- (41) Found in *A'lam al-Hidaya* (volume 9, page 28) quoting from *Jawharat al-Kalam*, who described him as "having a moderate stature and a dark complexion, inheriting these traits from his father." This is also mentioned in *Al-Fusul al-Muhimma* by Ibn al-Sabagh al-Maliki and in *Akhbar al-Duwal*.
- (42) al-Shakiri, Hussein. *Mawsu'at al-Mustafa wal-Itrah*. Volume 13, page 30.

"What is agreed upon is that his grandfather [meaning al-Jawad's grandfather], Imam al-Kadhim (as), had a very dark complexion. It said that he had 'a dark complexion and thin physique.' His father, Imam al-Ridha (as), also had a dark complexion and moderate stature. If this was the description of his forefathers, how do you think he would look?! Further, do not forget the description of his grandfathers, al-Sadiq (as), who also had dark skin and curly hair; Imam al-Baqir, who had a dark complexion and a moderate stature; and Imam Al-Sajjad, who was dark-skinned, short, and slender. He became increasingly thin as he aged."

- (43) al-Mas'udi, Ali bin al-Hussein. *Ithbat al-Wasiyya*. Page 217.

"When Abu Jaafar (as) was born, Imam al-Ridha (as) said to his companions, "A child resembling Musa ibn Imran, who split the sea, has been born to me, and like Jesus, son of Mary, who was born to a sanctified, pure and purified mother, he is also pure and purified at birth.' Al-Ridha (as) continues, 'he will be killed unjustly, causing the inhabitants of heaven to weep for him, God's wrath would be incurred upon his enemies and oppressors. He [his killer] will not linger but for a short while until Allah brings him to his painful punishment and severe retribution.' Addition-

ally, Imam al-Ridha (as) used to console the infant in his cradle during the night.”

(44) al-Sayf, Fawzi. Aalim Aal-Mohammed: Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha.

(45) al-Mufid, al-Irshad. Volume 2, page 274.

“Those who narrated the text from Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Ridha (as) regarding the Imamate of al-Jawad (as) include: Ali ibn Jaafar ibn Mohammed al-Sadiq, Safwan ibn Yahya, Ma’mar ibn Khalad, al-Hussein ibn Bashar, Ibn Abi Nasr al-Bazanti, Ibn Qiyama al-Wasiti, al-Hasan ibn al-Jahm, Abu Yahya al-San’ani, al-Khayrani, Yahya ibn Habib al-Riyan, and many others.”

(46) al-Amili, al-Hurr. Ithbat al-Hudat bil Nusus wal Mu’jizat. Volume 4, page 381.

(47) a town in southern Iran, near modern-day Ramhormoz, Ahvaz, Iran. This encounter seems to have taken place during the Imam’s move from Medina to Khorasan along this route.

(48) al-Amili, al-Hurr. Ithbat al-Hudat bil Nusus wal Mu’jizat. Volume 4, page 383.

(49) Who used to write to Imam al-Ridha (as). Al-Fadhl ibn Sahl included him in his entourage in Tous.

(50) al-Amili, al-Hurr. Ithbat al-Hudat bil Nusus wal Mu’jizat. Volume 4, page 384.

(51) Ibn Shahr Ashub. Manaqib Aal Abi Talib. Volume 3, page 489.

(52) al-Kulayni. Al-Kafi. Volume 1, page 432.

“Ali bin Hasan said to Imam Abu Jaafar (as) ‘My master, some people deny your qualification due to your young age.’ The Imam responded, ‘Do they deny what Allah, the Almighty said? Allah has said to His Prophet (saww): “Say, ‘This is my way; I invite to Allah with insight, I and those who follow me.”’ By Allah, none followed him except Ali (as) at the age of nine, and I am also nine years old.”

(53) al-Khoei, Abulqasim. Mu’jam Rijal al-Hadith. Volume 21, page 210.

“In the biography of Yunis, there is a saying from al-Najashi who said, ‘Yunis bin Abd al-Rahman, was a servant of Ali bin Yaqtin

bin Musa, who was the servant of Bani Asad, [his kunya was] Abu Mohammed: '[Yunis] was one of our early companions, he had an esteemed position, born in the days of Hisham bin Abd al-Malik. He witnessed Jaafar bin Mohammed (as) between Safa and Marwah but did not narrate from him. He narrated from Abu al-Hasan Musa al-Kadhim (as), and al-Ridha (as). Al-Ridha (as) used to refer to him for his knowledge and understanding. He was one of those who were offered a considerable amount of money to support the Waqifah, but he refused to take it and remained steadfast on the truth.

After quoting narrations praising Yunis, such as those mentioned by al-Kashi, like the narration from Abdul Aziz bin al-Muhtadi, who said: "I asked al-Ridha (as) and said, 'I do not see you all the time, so who should I take the religious matters from?' He replied: 'Take from Yunis bin Abd al-Rahman.'"

And from another group who said, "al-Ridha (as) guaranteed paradise for Yunis three times."

In a narration from Ahmad bin Abi Khalaf, he says, "I was sick, and Abu Jaafar (as) came to visit me during my illness. There was a book next to me titled 'A Day and A Night'; he started flipping through its pages from the beginning to the end, saying, 'May Allah have mercy on Yunis, may Allah have mercy on Yunis, may Allah have mercy on Yunis.'"

After that, al-Khoei responded to and refuted the narrations that criticized [Yunis].

For those who seek detailed information about Yunis' life, you can refer to our book *Rijal Hawl Ahlul Bayt* (Volume 2).

- (54) al-Khoei, Abulqasim. *Mu'jam Rijal al-Hadith*. Volume 21, page 226.
- (55) Moreover, in this context, Hussein ibn Abdul Wahab narrated this report in *Ayoun al-Moajazat* (page 109) without involving any defamation from al-Rayan, towards Yunis bin Abdul Rahman. This was also conveyed by Sheikh Ali al-Korani in his book *Al-Imam Mohammed al-Jawad (as)* (page 55).
- (56) Refer to our detailed book, *Aalim Aal Mohammed: Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (as)* for a comprehensive review of this matter.

(57) al-Mufid. Al-Irshad. Volume 2, page 281.

“Narrated from al-Rayyan bin Shabeeb (Who was the brother of Maarida, the mother of al-Mutasim, and the wife of Harun al-Rashid. He was an eyewitness from within the Abbasid household. At the same time, he was a companion of Imam al-Ridha (as) and al-Jawad (as)) who said: “When al-Ma’mun wanted to marry his daughter, Um al-Fadhli, to Abu Jaafar Mohammed ibn Ali (as), the news reached the Abbasids. He was harsh towards them, and they belittled him. They feared that a situation like what had happened with Imam al-Ridha (as) would take place [that he would be made crown prince]. They engaged in debate, and those close to him met with him to discuss.

They pleaded with Al-Ma’mun, saying, “We beseech you, O Commander of the Faithful, to reconsider the decision you have made regarding the marriage of the son of al-Ridha. We fear that this matter, which Allah has bestowed upon us, might be taken away from us, and the honour that we have been granted may be stripped away. You know well the historical and recent relations between us and these people [meaning the Ahlul Bayt]. You know what the previous rightly guided caliphs did in expelling and marginalizing them. We were bewildered by what you did with al-Ridha until God protected us from the consequences of your actions. We ask you by Allah not to bring back this stress that has been finally lifted from us. Please reconsider and turn away from the son of al-Ridha and seek from among your household members who are more suitable for this instead of him.”

(58) al-Salihi al-Najafabadi, Sheikh Abdullah. Mawsu’at Makatib al-A’imma

(59) al-Korani, Sheikh Ali. Imam Mohammed al-Jawad (as). Page 292.

(60) al-Salihi al-Najafabadi, Sheikh Abdullah. Mawsu’at Makatib al-A’imma. Volume 1, Page 314.

He has conveyed this hadith from al-Kulayni’s al-Kafi.

The narration states, that a man from the Bani Hanifa tribe in Bost and Sijistan (in present-day Afghanistan) said, “I accompanied Abu Jaafar (as) during the year he performed Hajj in the first year of al-Mu’tasim’s caliphate. While we were together at the table, and there were some of Sultan’s deputies present, I said to

him, 'Our governor – may I be sacrificed to you – is a man who loves you, the Ahlul Bayt. I owe tax to his treasury. If you see fit – may Allah, make me your ransom – could you write a letter to him expressing kindness towards me?'

He said to me, 'I do not know him.'

I said, 'May I be sacrificed for you, it is as I said, the governor loves the Ahlul Bayt. A letter from you could help me in his court.'

He took the parchment and wrote, 'In the name of Allah, the most gracious and merciful, the person who carries my correspondence conveys a commendable opinion about you. Indeed, your wealth is the good acts that you have carried out. Therefore, be kind to your brothers, and know that Allah, the Almighty, will question you about the weight of an atom and a mustard seed.'

He [the narrator] says: "When I arrived in Sijistan, the news reached Hussein ibn Abdullah al-Naysaburi, who was the governor. He came to me on the outskirts of the city, and I handed him the letter. He kissed it and placed it over his eyes, then he asked, 'What do you need?'

I replied, 'I owe tax to your treasury.'

He ordered to exempt me from the tax, saying, 'You don't have to pay the tax as long as I am in office.' Then he inquired about my family's situation, and upon learning their financial condition, he instructed provisions and extra assistance for both me and my family. I never paid the tax during his tenure, as long as he was alive, and he never severed ties with me until his death."

- (61) al-Ardabili, Allamah Mohammed Ali. Jami' al-Ruwat. Volume 1, page 47.

Al-Ardabili says about him, "Ibrahim ibn Mohammed al-Hamdani was a companion of Imam al-Ridha, Imam al-Jawad, and Imam al-Hadi (as). He served as the representative (wakil) of the Holy Side and performed the pilgrimage forty times, as mentioned in the summary. His authentication is found in al-Kishi's rijal from Ahmad ibn Ishaq. His authority and dignified position was discussed in a signed statement from Ali ibn Mohammed, from Mohammed ibn Ahmad, from Umar ibn Ali ibn Umar ibn Yazid, from Ibrahim ibn Mohammed al-Hamdani.

I say: It is derived from some of his correspondences that the environment that he lived in was not favourable, and thus he was concerned about finding suitable matches for his daughters due to the hostile atmosphere. He wrote to Imam Abu Jaafar (as) regarding marriage, and in response, the Imam's letter came in his handwriting, stating: 'The Messenger of Allah (saww) said: "When someone with pleasing character and religion comes to you for marriage, then marry them, 'except if you do not do so, it will be a trial on the earth and great corruption.'"

He narrated, and many narrations have been transmitted from him in various topics."

- (62) al-Tusi. *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifat al-Rijal*. (Abridgment of *Rijal al-Kishi* by Shiekh al-Tusi) Volume 2, page 453.

"Ibrahim ibn Mohammed al-Hamdani reported that Imam al-Jawad wrote to him: 'May Allah accept your giving and be pleased with them and make them with us in this world and the Hereafter. I have sent to you a certain amount in dinars and in clothing. May Allah bless it for you and bless all that He has bestowed upon you. I have written to al-Nadhar, instructing him to cease harming you and going against you. I have informed him of your position with me. I have also written to Ayyub, instructing him likewise. I have written a letter to our supporters in Hamdan, instructing them to obey you and follow your authority, with no representative [for me] other than you.'"

- (63) Attaridi, Shiekh Azizullah. *Musnad al-Imam al-Jawad (as)*. Page 137.

- (64) Ibn Shahr Ashub, *Manaqib Aal Abi Talib*.. Volume 4, page 388.

- (65) al-Shafi'i, Ibn Talha. *Mataalib al-Sa'ul fi Manaqib Aal al-Rasool*. Page 468.

- (66) Ibn al-Sabbagh, Ali ibn Mohammed Ahmad al-Maliki. *Al-Fusul al-Muhimma fi Ma'rifat al-A'imma*. Volume 2, page 361.

- (67) These references mention the narration:

- al-Arbali, Ali ibn Abi al-Fath (died 693 AH). *Kashf al-Ghummah fi Ma'rifat al-A'imma*. Volume 3, page 135.
- al-Haytami, Ahmad ibn Hajar (died 974 AH). *Al-Sawa'iq al-*

Muhriqah fi al-Radd 'ala Ahl al-Bid'ah wal-Zanadiqah.

- al-Majlisi, Allama (died 1111 AH). Bihar al-Anwar.
- al-Jaza'iri, Sayyid Ni'matullah (died 1112 AH). Hilyat al-Abrar fi Manaqib al-A'imma al-Athar. Volume 2, page 444.
- Others who came later also included the narration.

(68) The peculiar thing is that the scholar Sheikh Abbas al-Qumi, who mentions this hadith in Muntaha al-Amal fi Tawarikh al-Nabi wal-Aal (volume 2, page 528), omitted the last part of the incident as narrated by Ibn Shahr Ashub. He presented it in the same way as reported by Ibn Talha al-Shafi'i, stating that "Allah, the Exalted, inspired him to say: 'Indeed, Allah, the Exalted, created by his will, in the sea of his power, held in the air by the artistry of His wisdom, small fish that the falcons of the caliphs catch to test the lineage of the Prophet's household.'"

(69) al-Korani, Sheikh Ali. Imam Mohammed al-Jawad (as). Page 121

(70) For this reason, some scholars have rejected certain narrations due to their inclusion of play attributed to the Imam (as). Let us note what Sheikh Mohammed Taqi al-Tustari mentioned in Al-Akhbar al-Dakhila (volume 1, page 103) in response to one of the narrations. He stated that a "narration included Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf) playing, despite one of the signs of the Imam is that he does not engage in play. In a hadith narrated by Safwan al-Jammal, he asked Imam al-Sadiq (as) about Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf), and the Imam replied: 'He does not play or engage in amusement.' Additionally, Abu al-Hasan Musa al-Kadhim (as) came forward when he was young, carrying a young Meccan lamb, saying to it, 'Prostrate to your Lord.' Abu Abdullah (Imam al-Sadiq (as)) took him, embraced him, and said, '[May] my father and mother [be sacrificed to], he who does not play or engage in amusement.'

In an authentic narration attributed to Muawiya ibn Wahb, it is mentioned that he asked Imam al-Sadiq (as) about the signs of Imamate, and the Imam replied: "Purity at birth, good lineage, and not engaging in play or amusement."

In Ithbat al-Wasiyya by al-Mas'udi and Dalail al-Imamah by al-Tabari, a narration indicates a group going to Imam al-Jawad

(as) after the death of his father to test him. Amongst the group was Ali ibn Hassan al-Wasiti, who carried with him silver-crafted items to present them as gifts to the Imam due to his young age, it is mentioned that al-Wasiti said: "He (Imam al-Jawad) looked at me angrily, then threw them to the right and left, saying: 'Did Allah create us for this?' I apologized, and he forgave me. He stood up, entered [another room], and I left with those items..."

(71) This text [from <https://arabic.tebyan.net>] suggests that Imam Abu Jaafar (as) seized the opportunity of al-Ma'mun's passage near their homes to stand outside, where children were playing in the street, which led to their meeting.

(72) al-Korani, Sheikh Ali. Imam Mohammed al-Jawad (as). Page 121

(73) References include:

- al-Tawhidi, Abu Hayyan (d. 313 AH). Al-Basa'ir wa al-Dhakha'ir. Volume 4, page 71.
- al-Abi, Abu Sa'id Mansur ibn al-Hussein (d. 421). Nathr al-Durr fi al-Muhadarat. Volume 5, page 227.
- al-Zamakhshari (d. 538). Rabi' al-Abrar wa Nusus al-Akhar. Volume 2, page 47.
- Ibn Hamdun (d. 562). Tadhkirat al-Hamduniya. Volume 7, page 219.
- al-Tustari, Sheikh Mohammed Taqi. Al-Awail. Page 370 [quoted from "al-Aghani"]

(74) The Abbasid caliph al-Mansur sought help from Abu Hanifa to pose challenging questions that Imam Jaafar al-Sadiq (as) may struggle to answer. However, the result was in favour of Imam Jaafar (as), who demonstrated that he was the most knowledgeable among the people due to his understanding of their differences. This incident was reported by Al-Mazzi in Tuhaf al-'Uqul (volume 5, page 79) and al-Dhahabi in Siyar Aa'lam al-Nubala (volume 9, page 543).

Al-Mansur's son, the Abbasid Mahdi, also attempted to challenge Imam Musa al-Kadhim (as), when he brought Abu Yusuf to debate the Imam. However, the Imam adeptly responded, causing Abu Yusuf, who was brought to engage in the debate,

to admit defeat.

Similarly, al-Ma'mun tested Imam Ali al-Ridha (as) in a large conference, where the Imam effectively addressed questions from adherents of various faiths. Here, Imam al-Jawad repeats the scene familiar from his forefathers, showcasing the intellectual strength of the Ahlul Bayt (as).

- (75) The Abbasids said to al-Ma'mun, expressing their objection: "Even if you find some merit in this young boy, he is a boy without knowledge or jurisprudence. Give him time to mature and acquire religious knowledge. Then, take whatever action you see fit afterwards."
- (76) [Translators note: the Abbasids and the progeny of Imam Ali (as) are related since al-Abbas, the forefather of the Abbasids, was the Prophet (saww) and Imam Ali's (as) uncle].
- (77) The debate took place between al-Ma'mun and the scholars of the Abbasid court, led by Ishaq ibn Ibrahim, along with forty jurists and scholars. This is narrated by Sayyid al-Marashi in his book *Sharh Ihqaq al-Haqq* (volume 3, page 28) with detailed references to the unique contract regarding the excellence of Imam Ali (as), after the Prophet (saww). Al-Ma'mun said, "Verily, the Commander of the Faithful [himself] testifies to Allah that Ali ibn Abi Talib is the best of Allah's creation after His Messenger (saww) and he is the most deserving for leadership." Ishaq responded, "O Commander of the Faithful, there are those among us who are not familiar with what the Commander of the Faithful [al-Ma'mun] mentioned about Ali. The Commander of the Faithful has invited us to a debate." Al-Ma'mun said, "O Ishaq, choose whether I should ask you, or if you wish to ask," Ishaq replied, "I seized the opportunity and said, 'Rather, I ask you, O Commander of the Faithful.'" Al-Ma'mun said, "Ask." Ishaq continued, "From where did the Commander of the Faithful say that Ali ibn Abi Talib is the best of people after the Messenger of Allah and the most deserving of them for the caliphate after him?" Al-Ma'mun responded, "O Ishaq, inform me; by what criteria are people distinguished so that it can be said that someone is better than another?" Ishaq said, "By righteous deeds." Al-Ma'mun affirmed, "Indeed, you have spoken the truth,." During the remaining of the debate, Imam Ali's (as) excellence over others was established.

- (78) al-Mufid in Al-Irshad (volume 2, page 287) and Ibn Shahrashub in Al-Manaqib (volume 3, page 488) narrated that al-Ma'mun said, "How dare you? I know him more than you do. The people of this household [meaning the Ahlul Bayt] have their knowledge, provisions, and inspiration from Allah. So, if you wish, test him."
- (79) al-Sayf, Fawzi. Aalim Aal Mohammed: Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha.
- (80) al-Korani, Sheikh Ali. Imam Mohammed al-Jawad (as). Page 115.
- (81) Ibn Kathir. Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya. Hajar edition. Volume 14, page 284.

"He (referring to the future caliph al-Mu'tasim) was illiterate, and the reason for that was that he used to go to the scribes accompanied by a young boy. When the boy died, al-Mu'tasim's father, Harun al-Rashid, asked him, 'What happened to your boy?' He replied, 'He died and found relief from learning.' Al-Rashid then said to him, 'Do you dislike learning so much that you consider death a relief from it? By Allah, do not go to the scribes after this, my son.' So, they left him, and he remained illiterate; some even say his writing remained weak."

- (82) al-Khoei, Abulqasim. Mu'jam Rijal al-Hadith. Volume 12, page 315.

"Sheikh al-Tusi said, 'Ali ibn Jaafar, the brother of Musa ibn Jaafar ibn Mohammed ibn Ali ibn al-Hussein ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib, peace be upon them all, is of high esteem and trustworthy. He authored a book on rituals and a book compiling questions that he asked his brother Imam Musa al-Kadhim (as).' Sheikh al-Mufid said: 'He was virtuous and pious, beyond doubt, in matters upon which there is no disagreement.'

His nephew, al-Hussein ibn Musa ibn Jaafar, narrated: 'I was with my father, Abu Jaafar (as) in Medina, and Ali ibn Jaafar was also with him. An Arab from the people of Medina was present and asked me, "Who is this young man?" and pointed to Abu Jaafar (as). I said, "This is the heir of the Messenger of Allah (saww)." The Bedouin exclaimed, "Subhan Allah! The Messenger of Allah passed away two hundred and some years ago, and this man is young. How can he be the heir of the Messenger of Allah?" Ali ibn Jaafar explained to him how Imam al-Jawad (as) became the

heir of the Prophet.”

- (83) Ali ibn Jaafar al-Sadiq was born in 148 AH, while Imam al-Jawad (as) was born in 195 AH.
- (84) al-Kulayni. Al-Kafi. Volume 1, page 321.
- (85) Among them are Dawood bin al-Qasim (Abu Hashim) al-Ja'fari, Ayyub bin Nuh bin Daraaj, al-Hasan and al-Husain, the sons of Saeed al-Ahwazi, al-Husain bin Abdullah al-Nisaburi, the governor of Sijistan, and al-Rayyan bin Shubeib, Zakariya bin Adam al-Qumi, Saad bin Saad al-Ash'ari, Safwan bin Yahya al-Bajali, Abdul Aziz bin al-Muhtadi al-Qumi, Abdul Azim al-Hasani, Abdul Rahman bin Abi Najran, Abdullah bin al-Salt, Amr bin Saeed al-Sabati, Mohammed bin Khalid al-Barqi, Mohammed bin al-Faraj Al-Rakhji, Muawiya bin Hakeem, and Ibn al-Sakit, Yaqub bin Ishaq, and others.
- (86) [The Holy Quran, Nuh, verse 7]
- (87) [The Holy Quran, al-Hajj, verse 54]
- (88) al-Kulayni. Al-Kafi. Volume 1, page 432.

“It is narrated from Ali bin Asbat who said: ‘I saw Abu Jaafar (Imam al-Baqir (as)) coming to me, so I examined him, looking at his head and his feet to describe his appearance to our companions in Egypt. While I was doing that, he sat down. Then he said, ‘O Ali, indeed, Allah has established evidence for Imamate similar to the evidence He established for Prophethood.’ He recited, ‘And We gave him judgment [while yet] a boy.’ (Maryam: 12) and ‘And when he attained his maturity.’ (Al-Qasas: 14) ‘And reached forty years of age.’ (Al-Ahqaf: 15). Then he said ‘So, it is possible for wisdom to be given to a boy, and it is possible for it to be given to a person at the age of forty.’”

- (89) Perhaps we may take a closer look at his biography when discussing the life of Imam Ali al-Hadi (as), considering his relatively long contemporaneity.
- (90) They said about him: “When he was angry, he did not care about killing or what he did.” (As mentioned in Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya. Volume 14, page 286.)