

Chapter 15: To The Shelter Garden

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, became old and weak. This is because he exhausted himself by hard worship and obedience to Allah. The historians unanimously agreed that the Imam passed most his lifetime fasting by day and standing in prayer by night. Meanwhile, he remembered the tragedy of Karbala’. When he looked at his aunts and his sisters, he remembered their escape from one tent to another, and the caller of the people called out: “Burn the houses of the wrongdoers!” These memories saddened him very much and affected his body.

Anyhow, as we intend to end this book, it is necessary for us to speak about the last stage of the lifetime of the Imam, peace be on him, and the events which accompanied it.

The Imam is given Poison to drink

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin enjoyed great popularity. The people spoke with admiration about his knowledge, his jurisprudence, and his acts of worship. The assemblies admired his patience and all his other qualities. The Imam occupied the hearts and feelings of the people. Hence blessed was he who saw him, met him, and listened to his words. This situation frightened the Umayyads, especially as it concerns al-Walid b. ‘Abd al-Malik, who was the most spiteful toward the Imam. Al-Zuhri reported on the authority of al-Walid b. ‘Abd al-Malik, who said: “I cannot have a rest as long as ‘Ali b. al-Husayn is in this world!¹”

When al-Walid became king, he decided to assassinate the Imam. He sent poison to his governor of Medina, and ordered him to mix the poison (with liquid) and give it to the Imam to drink.² The poison reacted on the Imam’s body, and he suffered severe pain. The Imam remained on the bed of illness for some days. He complained to Allah of this and asked Him for forgiveness and good pleasure. The people crowded to visit him, and he, peace be on him, praised and lauded Allah for providing him with martyrdom at the hand of the most wicked creature.

His Designation of al-Baqir for the Imamate

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, entrusted the Imamate to his son al-Baqir, peace be on him, who was the pioneer of the cultural, scientific movement in Islam. Al-Zuhri said: “I visited ‘Ali b. al-Husayn and asked him: If Allah’s inevitable command comes, whom shall we follow after you?”

The Imam gently looked at him and replied: “(Follow) this son of mine (pointing to his son Muhammad al-Baqir), for he is my testamentary trustee, my inheritor, the box of my knowledge, the origin of knowledge, and the one who will split knowledge open.”

“Why have you not appointed your most obedient son as your testamentary trustee?” asked al-Zuhri.

Al-Zuhri did not understand the affair of the Imamate. He thought that it was based on the tribal customs.

“O Aba ‘Abd Allah, the Imamate is not based on oldness and youngness. In this manner, Allah’s Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, entrusted (the Imamate) to us, and in this manner we have found it in the tablet (lawh) and the parchment (sahifa),” answered the Imam.

Demanding more information, al-Zuhri asked: “O Son of Allah’s Apostle, did your Prophet appoint you as testamentary trustees after him?”

“We have found twelve names in the parchment and the tablet. Their Imamate, the names of their fathers, and of their mothers have been written in the tablet,” replied the Imam, “and seven testamentary trustees will come out of the loins of my son Muhammad. Al-Mahdi will be one of them.”³ Some Shi‘ites visited the Imam, and he nominated his son Muhammad al-Baqir before them, and ordered them to follow him. Then he gave him a document and a box in which were the inheritances of the prophets, the weapon and books of Allah’s Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family.⁴

His Commandments to his Son al-Baqir

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, peace be on him, entrusted his commandments to his son Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, peace be on him. The following is some of his commandments to him:

1. He commanded him (to take care of) his she-camel. He said to him: “I performed the hajj on this she-camel of mine twenty times, yet I did not whip it. When it dies, bury it. Let not the beasts eat its meat, for Allah’s Messengers, may Allah bless him and his family, said: ‘If a camel stops seven times at ‘Arafa, Allah will place it among the favors of the Garden, and bless its offspring.’⁵” Imam al-Baqir carried out these commandments of his father.

2. The Imam gave to his son this commandment, which displays the brilliant sides of the qualities of the members of the House (ahl al-Bayt), peace be on them. He said to him: “O my little son, I will command

you with what my father commanded me when death was close to him. He said to me: ‘O my little son, beware of wronging him who finds no helper against you except Allah.’⁶”

3. He commanded him to wash and shroud him⁷ and to undertake all his other affairs until he buried him in his final resting place.

To the Shelter Garden

The state of the Imam became worse. His illness became intense. The Imam suffered exhausting pain, for the poison reacted on all the parts of his body. He told his family that he would move to Paradise at night. He fainted three times. When he came to consciousness, he recited Surat al-Fatiha, and Surat Inna Fatahna. Then he, peace be on him, said: “Praise belongs to Allah, Who has made good to us His promise and made us inherit the land; we may abide in the garden where we please; so goodly is the reward of the workers.”⁸”

Then the Imam’s great soul went to its Creator, as the souls of the prophets and the messengers did. Allah’s angels, favors and greetings surrounded it with magnification and admiration.

This great soul met its Creator after it had illuminated the horizons of this world with knowledge, worship, and freedom from all inclinations of caprice.

His Preparation for Burial

Imam Abu’ Ja‘far al-Baqir undertook the preparation of the corpse of his father. He washed his pure body. The people saw the places of his prostration, which were like the knees of camels, out of his abundant prostration (in prayer) for Allah, the Exalted. They also saw his shoulders, which were like the knees of camels. Then they asked al-Baqir about this, and he replied: “He would put food into his bag, carried it on his shoulders, and divided the food among the poor and the deprived.”⁹ When al-Baqir had finished washing the corpse of his body, he shrouded it, and prayed over it with the written prayers.

Escorting him to his Final Resting Place

Great escorting was held for the Imam. Medina (Yathrib) had never witness such escorting before. This is because the righteous and the sinful escorted him. The masses surrounded the great coffin. They wept and lamented for the Imam in humbleness. They felt a heavy loss, for they lost immense good, and unique spirituality. When the Imam died, the tongues kept silent, and the intellects became perplexed. Hence the people of Medina crowded all around the Holy Corpse. Blessed was he who carried it. It is worth mentioning that Sa‘id b. al-Musayyab, one of the seven jurists in Medina, did not succeed in escorting the Imam and praying over him. Hushrum, the retainer of Ashja‘, blamed Sa‘id for this, and he answered: “To say two ruk‘as in the Mosque is more beloved to me than to prayer over this righteous man in the Righteous House.”¹⁰ This excuse is weak, for escorting the Imam, who delivered the

guidance of the prophets, is the best and most beloved act of obedience to Allah, the Exalted.

At his Final Resting Place

In the middle of a halo of exclaiming Allah is great and praising Him, the people brought the Holy Corpse to al-Gharqad Cemetery. They dug a grave for him beside the grave of his pure uncle, Imam al-Hasan, the master of the youths of Paradise, and the plant of sweet basil of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family. Then Imam al-Baqir, peace be on him, buried his father in his final resting place. With him he buried knowledge, kindness, reverential fear, spirituality of the prophets and of the Allah-fearing. After Imam al-Baqir had finished burying his father, the people hurried to him to condole him. The Imam, his brothers, and the other Hashimites, thanked them for their condolences.

- [1.](#) Hayat al-Imam Mohammed al-Baqir, vol. 1, p. 51.
- [2.](#) Al-Ithaf bi Hub al-Ashraf, p. 52. Al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa, p. 53.
- [3.](#) Al-Khazzaz, Kifayat al-Athar. Ithbat al-Hudat, vol. 5, p. 264.
- [4.](#) Basa'ir al-Darajat, p. 146. Ithbat al-Hudat, vol. 5, p. 268.
- [5.](#) Al-Barqi, Mahasin, vol. 2, p. 635.
- [6.](#) Al-Amali, p. 161. Al-Khisal, p. 185.
- [7.](#) Al-Kharaijj, p. 20.
- [8.](#) Roudat al-Kafi.
- [9.](#) Hayat al-Imam Mohammed al-Baqir, vol. 1, p. 54.
- [10.](#) Al-Kashi, Rijal, p. 76.

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