

Chapter 1: The Great Baby

Before we speak about the birth of the pure Imam Abu' Muhammad, peace be on him, and the affairs accompanied it, we will mention his brilliant, exalted lineage, which is related to Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, who is the source of flow, bestowal, good, and mercy to mankind. So which lineage is more exalted and greater than that of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, who is one of the fruit of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, and one of his brilliant branches. The following is an outline about his noble origin.

His Father

As for the father of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, he is Imam Musa' al-Ka'zim b. Imam Ja'far al-Sa'diq b. Imam Muhammad al-Ba'qir b. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin b. Imam al-Husayn b. Imam 'Ali b. Abu' Ta'lib, peace be on them.

In the world of lineage, there is no lineage more exalted or purer than this lineage. It is certain that the pure Imams are the successors of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, and his testamentary trustees (of authority). In the chapters that follow, we will mention an outline about his father Imam Musa', peace be on him.

His Mother

As for the mother of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, she was endowed with all qualities of honor and virtue, through which the Muslim woman becomes exalted, such as chastity, purity, and great soul. She is among the glorious women in Islam. His mother was a slave-wife, and this quality does not decrease her position, for Islam has made piety and good deeds as a measure to differentiate men from each other, and everything other than this measure is not important.

The narrators have reported many narrations about how Imam al-Ka'zim married this glorious lady. The following are some of them:

1. She was among the noble non-Arabs and was the retainer of Mrs. Hamida, the mother of Imam

Musa', peace be on him. She was among the meritorious women in her intellect, her religion, and her honoring her mistress, Hamida. She did not sit before her in order to honor and magnify her. So Hamida said to her son Imam Musa': "My little son, surely Takktum is a slave-girl. I have never seen a slave-girl better than her. I have no doubt that Allah will manifest her children. I have granted her to you and advise you to treat her kindly.¹"

2. Hisha'm b. Ahmed has reported: "Abu' al-Hasan the First (Musa' al-Ka'zim) said to me: 'Did you know that one of the people from al-Maghrib has come?' 'No,' I replied. 'Indeed,' he, peace be on him, said, 'a man from the people of al-Maghrib has come to Medina. So come with us.' He rode off and I rode with him until we came to the man. There he was, a man of al-Maghrib. He had with him slave-girls. 'Show us your wares,' I told him. He showed us nine good slave-girls. However, all the time Abu' al-Hasan was saying: 'I have no need of those.' Then he told him: 'Show us something else.' 'I have nothing except a sick slave-girl,' he replied. 'what is (wrong) with you (not) to offer her (for sale) he (Abu' al-Hasan) said. The man refused and went away. On the next day he (Abu' al-Hasan Musa'), peace be on him, sent for me and told me: 'Ask him how much is the maximum he wants for her? Whatever he says, tell him that you will take her.' I went to the man and he said to me: 'I would not take less than such-and-such a sum. 'I will take her,' I said. 'She is yours,' he replied, 'but tell me about the man who was with you, yesterday.' 'He was a man from the Banu' Ha'shim,' I told him. 'Which Banu' Ha'shim?' he asked. 'From among their chiefs,' I answered, 'I do not have more (information) than this. 'I want more than (this sum of money),' he demanded. 'I have nothing more than this,' I explained. Then he said: 'I will tell you that when I bought her from a remote area of al-Maghrib, a woman from *Ahl al-kita'b* (the people of the Book, i.e. Jews and Christians) met me and asked me who this maidservant was whom I had with me. I told her that I had bought her for myself but she said it was not appropriate that she should be with the like of me. It is fitting that this slave-girl should be with the best person on earth, for she will soon give birth to a son such as has not been born in the east or the west.' I took her to Abu' al-Hasan (Musa'). It was not long afterwards that she gave birth to 'Ali (al-Ridha').²"

3. It was reported that Imam al-Ka'zim, peace be on him, said to his companions: "By Allah, I have bought this slave-girl according to Allah's command and inspiration." He was asked about this statement and he replied: "While I was sleeping my grandfather and my father came to me, and there was with them a piece of silk cloth. They spread the piece, and suddenly there was a shirt in which was the picture of this slave-girl. Then they said: 'Musa', from this slave-girl you will have the best of the people of the earth after you.' Then my father ordered me: 'If a baby-boy is born for you, name him 'Ali.' Then he said: 'Allah, the Great and Almighty, will manifest justice and mercy through him. Blessed is he who believes in him, and woe unto him who shows enmity toward him and denies him!'³"

These are some of the narrations which have been reported about how Imam Musa' al-Ka'zim, peace be on him, married this noble lady. He showed sincere love for her, and she enjoyed admiration and respect in his house.

Her Name

As for the name of this pure lady, the narrators have differed over it. The following are some of their opinions about it:

1. Takktum, many historians think that her name is Takktum. Concerning this name the poet composed the following lines when he praised Imam ('Ali al-Ridha'), peace be on him: 'Ali, the magnified, is the best of the men in soul, father, family, and grandfathers. Takktum has brought him to us for knowledge and clemency. He will be the eighth Imam who will deliver the proof of Allah.⁴

This is an Arabic name with which ladies from among the Arab women were called, and concerning it the poet says:

The two imaginations circled and increased in malady the imagination of Takna' and the imagination of Takktum .⁵

2. Al-Khayzara'n.⁶

3. Arwa'.⁷

4. Najjma.⁸

These are some of the views which have been mentioned about her name. Confirming the most correct one of these names is not useful for readers.

Her Reverential Fear

This pure lady was among the worshipful women. She devoted herself to the acts of obedience to Allah, for she followed the behavior of her husband, Imam al-Ka'zim, peace be on him, the Imam of the Allah-fearing and those who turn to Allah, the Most High, in repentance. Among the qualities of her worship is that when she gave birth to Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, she said: "Help me with (finding) a wet nurse." She was asked: "Has your milk decreased?" "I do not want to tell a lie," she replied, "the milk has not decreased, but I want to perform a part of my prayers and glorification."⁹ Have you seen how this angelic lady adored Allah and devoted herself to Him. She asked (the people) to help her with finding a wet nurse for her baby lest it should divert her from performing her prayers and glorification.

When Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, was born, the earth shined; waves of delight and happiness spread through the Household of the Prophet, May Allah bless him and his Household. As for Imam al-Ka'zim, he received with more delight the news of the birth of his blessed baby, so he hurried to his wife and congratulated her on her baby, saying: "I congratulate you, Najjma. It is a mark of nobility for you from your Lord!"

Imam al-Ka'zim took his blessed baby, folded it with a white piece of cloth, and performed the religious rites for it. He said the *adha'n* in its right ear, said the *iqa'ma* in its left ear, called for sweet water and

rubbed its lower jaw with it, and then he returned it to its mother and said to her: “Take it, for it is the rest (*baqiyat*) of Allah on His earth. [10](#)”

The first picture which the Prophet’s grandson (Imam al-Ridha’, peace be on him) saw in the world of existence was that of his father, the Imam of the Allah-fearing and leader of the monotheists; and the first voice which he heard was:

“Allah is Great!”

“There is no god but Allah!”

These brilliant words are the secret of existence and song of the Allah-fearing.

Imam al-Ka’zim, peace be on him, named his blessed baby with the name of his grandfather Imam ‘Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, that he might get blessing seek good omen in this name, which stood for the greatest personality created in the world of Islam and had all good qualities of the world.

His Nicknames

Imam al-Ridha’, peace be on him, was given a group of noble nicknames. Each nickname represented one of his noble qualities. The following are some of them:

1. Al-Ridha’

The historians and narrators have differed over the person who gave this exalted nick-name to the Imam, peace be on him, to the extent that it has prevailed him and become a name through which he is recognized. The following are some of the statements:

A. Al-Ma’mu’n

A group of the historians has maintained that it was al-Ma’mu’n who gave him this nick-name to him [11](#), for he was satisfied with him and appointed him as his successor. [12](#) Imam al-Jawa’d, peace be on him, refuted this statement before a group of his companions, saying: “Verily Allah, the Blessed and Most High, named him al-Ridha’, for he was the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, the Great, in His heaven, of His Messenger, and of the Imams, the blessings of Allah be upon them, after him.”

Al-Bizanti asked him: “Weren’t all your past forefathers, peace be on them, the pleasure of Allah (*Ridha’* al-Allah), the Exalted, the Great, of His Messenger, and of the Imams after him?”

“Yes,” replied Imam al-Jawa’d.

“Why has only your father been named al-Ridha’?” al-Bizanti asked.

“Because both his opposing enemies and obedient supporters were pleased with him, while this did not happen to any of his fathers, so only he was called al-Ridha’ [13](#)”

B. Imam Musa

Some narrators believe that it was Imam Musa al-Ka’zim, peace be on him, who gave this nick-name to his son. Sulayma’n b. Hafs reported: “Imam Mu’sa b. Ja’far named his son ‘Ali al-Ridha’. He would say: ‘Summon to me my son al-Ridha.’ I asked him: ‘To my son belongs pleasure (*al-Ridha*).’ He answered: ‘My son is al-Ridha.’ When he addressed him, he said: ‘O Abu” al-Hasan.’ [14](#)” These are some statements about giving him this noble nick-name. Ahmed al-Bizanti gave the reason for giving this nick-name to him, saying: “He was given the nick-name of al-Ridha’ because he is the good pleasure of Allah, the Most Exalted, in His heaven, the pleasure of His Messenger, and of the Imams after him on His earth. [15](#)”

2. Al-Sa’bir

2. Al-Sa’bir [16](#)

He was given the nick-name of *al-Sa’bir* (the patient) because he was patient toward the troubles and misfortunes caused to him by his opponents and enemies.

3. Al-Zaki

3. Al-Zaki [17](#)

Imam ‘Ali b. Musa’ al-Ridha’, peace be on him, was pure, noble, and honorable.

4. Al-Wafi

4. Al-Wafi [18](#)

As for loyalty, it was one of the Imam’s qualities, for he was loyal to his community and homeland.

5. Sira’jj Allah

5. Sira’jj Allah [19](#)

The Imam was the *Sira’jj* of Allah (the Lamp of Allah). He guided the misled and the perplexed (to the right path).

6. Qurrat ‘Ayn al-Mu’minin

6. Qurrat ‘Ayn al-Mu’minin [20](#)

Among his noble nick-names is *Qurrat ‘Ayn al-Mu’minin* (the delight of the eye of the believers), for he was their ornament, their pride, their cave, and their stronghold.

7. Makkyadat al-Mulhidin

7. Makkyadat al-Mulhidin [21](#)

He was given the nick-name of *Makkyadat al-Mulhidin* (the stratagem of the unbelievers), for nullified their vague errors and refuted their imaginations. This was through his debates which were held in the ‘Abba’sid palace, and with which he established the originality of Islamic principles and values.

8. Al-Siddiq

8. Al-Siddiq [22](#)

He was given the nick-name of *Al-Siddiq* (the very truthful one), for he was like Yu’suf (Joseph), who ruled Egypt. He led Islamic world and had an absolute leadership over it.

9. Al-Fa’dil

9. Al-Fa’dil [23](#)

He was given the nick-name of *al-Fa’dil* or the most meritorious one, for he was the most meritorious and perfect of all the people of his time. These are some of the noble nick-names which were given to him; they display his exalted character and great importance.

His Kunya

The Imams of the Household (of the Prophet), peace be on them, would give *kunya* to their children when young, and this is an example of Islamic education aiming at improving personality and making child feel that he or she has position with his family. Imam al-Ridha’, peace be on him, was given the following *kunyas*:

1. Abu’ al-Hasan

His father Imam Musa’ al-Ka’zim, peace be on him, gave him this *kunya*.[24](#) He, peace be on him, said to ‘Ali b. Yaqtin: “O ‘Ali, this son of mine – and he pointed to Imam al-Ridha’ – is the master of my children, and I have given him my *kunya*.[25](#)” Imam al-Ridha’ was given the *kunya* of Abu’ al-Hasan. As this *kunya* was common between them, Imam al-Ka’zim was called: Abu’ al-Hasan the past, and Imam al-Ridha’ was called Abu’ al-Hasan the second, that the people might distinguish between the two *kunyas*.

2. Abu' Bakr

This *kunya* was rare. He was not known for it, but rarely. Abu' al-Salt al-Harawi narrated: "One day al-Ma'mu'n asked me a question, and I answered: 'Concerning the question, Abu' Bakr (i.e. al-Ridha') said such-and-such. So al-Ma'mu'n asked me: 'Which Abu' Bakr—our Abu' Bakr or Abu' Bakr of the populace (*'amma*)?' 'Our Abu' Bakr,' I replied."

'Isa' said: "I asked Ibn al-Salt: 'Who is your Abu' Bakr?' 'Ali b. Musa', he answered, 'he was given this *kunya*.'²⁶"

The Year of his Birth

The historians have differed over the year in which Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, was born as well as they have differed over the month in which he was born. The following are some of their statements in this regard:

1. He was born in the year 147 A. H.²⁷
2. He was born in the year 148 A. H.²⁸ This year is famous with the narrators.
3. He was born in the year 150 A. H.²⁹
4. He was born in the year 151 A. H.³⁰
5. He was born in the year 153 A. H.³¹ It was the year in which his grandfather al-Sa'diq died.³²

These are some statements about the year of his birth. The historians have also differed over the month in which he was born. The following are some of their statements:

1. He was born on Thursday or the night of Thursday, the eleventh of (the month of) Rabi' al-Awwal.³³
2. He was born on Thursday³⁴, the 11th of (the month of) Dhi al-Qi'da.³⁵
3. He was born on the 7th of (the month of) Shawwa'l. It was said (that he was born on) the 8th of it, and it was said on the 6th of it.³⁶

These are some of the statements which the historians and the narrators have mentioned.

His Characteristics

Many historians said that Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, was brown or deep brown.³⁷ It was said that he was white and had a medium height,³⁸ and that he was like his grandfather Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family.³⁹ As he was like his grandfather in his characteristics, he was similar to him in his noble moral traits, which distinguished him from the other prophets.

His Solemnity

As for the solemnity of Imam Abu' Muhammad (al-Ridha'); faces were humbled in fear of it, for it was similar to that of the prophets and the testament of trustees (of authority) whom Allah clothed in His light. All those who saw him respected him. An example of his solemnity was that when he sat with the people or rode off with them, none was able to raise his voice because of his great solemnity.⁴⁰ The reporters have said: "When he (i.e. Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him) came to al-Ma'mu'n, the chamberlains and the servants hurried to raise the curtain for him. When they heard that al-Ma'mu'n wanted to pledge allegiance to him, they said to each other that if he (the Imam) came, they would not honor or magnify him as they would do.

The Imam came as usual, and his solemnity moved them, so they honored him as they would do. Then they blamed one another and swore (by Allah) that if he returned they would not honor him. When the Imam, peace be on him, came on the following day, they stood for him and greeted him, but they did not raise the curtain for him, so a wind came and raised it for him. When he wanted to leave, the wind also raised the curtain for him. As a result they said to each other: 'Surely this man is of great importance, and Allah takes care of him, so return to your serving him.'⁴¹

The Imams of the Household (of the Prophet), peace be on them, had importance and standing with Allah, the Most High, for it was He who supported and directed them to correctness, as He did toward His prophets and His messengers.

The Inscription of his Ring

As for the inscription and words engraved in ring, they more likely represent one's inclinations and desires. The following (words) were engraved in the ring of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him:

Wali Allah (the Friend of Allah).⁴²

He had another ring in which it was engraved:

Al-'Izzah Lilla'h (Might belongs to Allah).⁴³

These inscriptions represent the Imam's great devotion to Allah, the Most Exalted, and his clinging to Him.

His Childhood

Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, grew up in the greatest and most exalted house in Islam. It was the house of the Imamate and center of revelation. *The house which Allah permitted to be exalted and in which His name may be remembered.* Imam al-Ridha' grew up in this noble house dominated by high

Islamic education. For wherein the young respected and honored the old, and the old felt compassion for the young; noble moral traits spread; nothing was heard except reciting the Book of Allah; and nothing was done except good deeds and what brought man near to his Lord.

Educationists have maintained that house is among the most important factors which form person and build his character. If love, friendship, exalted habits, good customs, and sweet words dominate house, child will grow up soundly, be far from complexity and double personality. If house is corrupt and is full of hatred and detest, child will be complex and corrupt.

As for the house where Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, grew up, it was the most exalted one in the world of Islam, for it was the center of virtue and noble moral traits; it brought up the best of mankind and the Imams of truth and justice in Islam. In addition to house, environment plays an important role in bringing up person. As for the environment in which Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, grew up, it included the best men and scholars who studied under his father Imam Musa' b. Ja'far, peace be on him.

All intellectual factors and means of exalted education were available for Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, so he grew up within this educational frame just as his great fathers (the treasures of Islam) did.

His Behavior

As for the behavior of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, it was a wonderful example of his fathers, who dined their souls and freed them from every inclination which had no relation with truth and reality.

The behavior of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, is distinguished by showing steadfastness toward the truth and rejecting falsehood. He ordered al-Ma'mu'n, the 'Abba'sid Caliph, to fear Allah and blamed him for his behavior which opposed the reality of religion. However, al-Ma'mu'n became displeased with the Imam and committed the most horrible crime when he assassinated him, peace be on him. We will explain this matter in the chapters that follow.

The Imam's behavior toward his household and his brothers is another example of his showing steadfastness toward the truth. The Imam turned away from those who deviated from Allah's laws. He swore (by Allah) that he would not speak with his brother Zayd until he met Allah, the Most High. That was when Zayd committed something contrary to Allah's law.

As for his behavior toward his children, it is distinguished by his showing marvelous, educational manners toward them, especially toward his son Imam al-Jawa'd, peace be on him. He did not call him with his name; rather he addressed him with his *kunya*. He said: "Abu' Ja'far (al-Jawa'd) wrote to me, and I wrote to Abu' Ja'far.⁴⁴" He called him with his *kunya* because he wanted to honor and magnify him.

¹. 'Iyu'n Akhba'r al-Ridha', vol. 1, pp. 14-15.

2. Ibid., pp. 17–18. Usul al-Ka'fi, vol. 1, p. 487. Kashf al-Ghumma, vol. 3, p. 102.
3. Yousif b. Ha'tam al-Sha'fi'i, al-Durr al-Nazim fi Mana'qib al-A'imma.
4. 'Iyu'n Akhba'r al-Ridha', vol. 1, p. 15. In this book it has been mentioned that some people have ascribed this poetry to the uncle of Abu' Ibra'him b. al-'Abba's.
5. A'ya'n al-Shi'a, 4/Q2/80.
6. Tadhkirat al-Khawa's, p. 361. Bhar al-Ansa'b, p. 28. Al-Majlisi, Biha'r al-Anwa'r, vol. 12, p. 2.
7. Al-Shaykha'ni al-Qa'diri, al-Sira't al-Sawi, p. 169 (photographed). Nu'r al-Abbsa'r, p. 138.
8. Al-Mufid, al-Irsha'd, p. 342.
9. 'Iyu'n Akhba'r al-Ridha', vol. 1. A'ya'n al-Shi'a, 4/Q2/80.
10. Kashf al-Ghumma, vol. 3, p. 88. 'Iyu'n Akhba'r al-Ridha', vol. 1, p. 18.
11. Abu' al-Fida', Ta'rikh, vol. 2, p. 24. Ibn al-Athir, Ta'rikh, vol. 5, p. 183.
12. Al-Majlisi, Biha'r al-Anwa'r, vol. 12, p. 4.
13. 'Ilal al-Shara'i'. A'la'm al-Wara. Al-Majlisi, Biha'r al-Anwa'r, vol. 12, p. 2.
14. Al-Majlisi, Biha'r al-Anwa'r, vol. 12, p. 3.
15. Ibid.
16. Jawharat al-Kala'm fi Madh al-Sa'da al-A'la'm, p. 143.
17. Al-Sira't al-Sawi, p. 199.
18. Tadhkirat al-Khawa's, p. 361. Al-Durr al-Nazim, p. 210.
19. Al-Durr al-Nazim, p. 210.
20. Ibid.
21. Al-Majlisi, Biha'r al-Anwa'r, vol. 12, p. 4.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., p. 3.
25. Ibid.
26. Maqa'til al-Ta'libiyyin, p. 561.
27. Nu'r al-Abbsa'r, p. 138.
28. Gha'iyat al-Ikhtisa'r, p. 148. Bahr al-Ansa'b, p. 28. Usul al-Ka'fi, vol. 1, p. 486. Al-Mufid, al-Irsha'd, p. 341. Al-Durr al-Maslu'k (photographed), p. 139. Akhba'r al-Diwal, p. 114. Jawharat al-Kala'm, p. 143. Al-Kaf'ami, Musba'h. Roudat al-Wa'izin. Mir'a't al-Jina'n, vol. 2, p. 11.
29. Al-Mujaddidu'n fi al-Islam, p. 87.
30. Sir al-Silsila al-'Alawiya, p. 38.
31. Al-Durr al-Nazim, p. 153. Kashf al-Ghumma. Da'irat Ma'a'rif al-Qarn al-'Ishrin, vol. 6, p. 665.
32. A'ya'n al-Shi'a 4/Q2/77–78. (It has been mentioned) in al-Irsha'd that he was born five years after the death of his grandfather Imam al-Sa'diq, peace be on him. An account similar to this has been mentioned in al-Durr al-Nazim, p. 210.
33. Kashf al-Ghumma, vol. 3, p. 87.
34. Al-Durr al-Maslu'k, p. 139.
35. A'ya'n al-Shi'a 4/Q2/77.
36. Mir'a't al-Jina'n, vol. 2, p. 12.
37. Akhba'r al-Diwal.
38. Al-Shaykha'ni al-Qa'diri, al-Sira't al-Sawi fi Mana'qib Al al-Nabi, p. 199.
39. Al-Durr al-Nazim, p. 210.
40. Haya't al-Imam al-Jawa'd.
41. Akhba'r al-Diwal, p. 114. Jawhart al-Kala'm, p. 145. Al-Itha'f bi Hub al-Ashraf, p. 58.
42. Al-Durr al-Maslu'k, p. 139. Al-Majlisi, Biha'r al-Anwa'r, vol. 12, p. 4.
43. Al-Durr al-Nazim, p. 210.
44. Mu'jam Riya'l al-Hadith, vol. 14, p. 283.

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