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Lesson 25: The Eighth Imam And The Tenth Infallible Figure, Imam Ridha

The eighth infallible Imam, Ridha ('a) was born on Dhu'l-Qa'dah 11, 148 in Medina. His father was Imam Kazim and his mother was Najmah, who was one of the most prominent women of that era. He assumed leadership in 183 at the age of 36.

Concurrent with the rule of the 'Abbasi ruler, Ma'mun, and at his insistence, the Imam immigrated to Khurasan and agreed to function as his deputy. In Khurasan, he conducted debates with the scholars of other religions and all of them conceded his greatness and bowed to his knowledge and learning.

A person from Balkh says, "Once I was with Imam Ridha. He ordered to unroll the cloth for food. All the servants, even the black slaves sat at the same cloth and shared the meal with Imam. I told Imam, "It would have been better, if you did not share the meal with them." He said, "Hold it! (what is the difference between us and them) we share one God and descend from the same parents and everyone's recompense will be in proportion to his good deeds."^{[1](#)}

Whenever he sat to eat food, he had already given away part of all the dishes to the poor and then started eating. At night, he slept very little and stayed up from evening to dawn.

He fasted very often and never neglected the three days of fasting every month, that is, the first and the last Thursday of the month and the Wednesday of the middle. He went to the households of the needy, in the darkness of nights and attended to them.^{[2](#)}

He was poisoned to death by Ma'mun, who was afraid of peoples' attention to him, on the last day of Safar of 203 and was buried in the city of Mashhad. Currently, his shrine is the hub of the Shi'ahs of the world.

Some Remarks by the Imam

God's devotion is not merely marked by the frequency of prayers and fasting but true devotion consists in man's contemplation and reflection upon the religious rules to realize his duties under any circumstances and to be industrious in their fulfillment.^{[3](#)}

Cleanliness and sanitation are the manners of the divine prophets.^{[4](#)}

Dependence on God means that man is not afraid of anything but God, the Exalted.^{[5](#)}

Helping the disabled and the feeble is better than charity in the cause of God.^{[6](#)}

^{[1](#)}. Al-Anwar al-Bahiyah, p. 106.

^{[2](#)}. 'Uyun Akhbar ar- Ridha, vol.2, p. 184.

^{[3](#)}. Tuhaf al-'Uqul, p. 442.

^{[4](#)}. Ibid, p. 442.

^{[5](#)}. Ibid, p. 445.

^{[6](#)}. Ibid, p. 446.

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