

Part 3: The Periods of Historical Development of the Shi'ah

Lesson 9: The Periods of Historical Development of the Shi'ah

1. The Shi'ah during the Period of the First Four Caliphs

The Shi'ah during the reigns of the first three caliphs, viz. Abubakr, Umar and 'Uthman, has distinctive features which can be expressed in the following manner:

1. During the reigns of these three caliphs, the Shi'ah were subjected to many pressures with the exception of the initial days after the event of Saqifah. It can even be said that many of the Shi'ah were deprived of key positions on account of their being Shi'ah.^{[1](#)}
2. After the event of Saqifah which brought about dichotomy on the issue of leadership over the Muslims and led to the division of Muslims into two main groups, the Ahl as-Sunnah were referring to the caliphs of the time on the scientific, jurisprudential, ideological, and other problems, whereas the Shi'ah were referring to 'Ali ('a).

The Shi'ah's practice of referring to 'Ali ('a) regarding scientific issues, jurisprudence and other Islamic sciences in general, continued with the pure Imams ('a) after the martyrdom of 'Ali ('a).

The reason behind the Sunni-Shi'ah difference in jurisprudence {*fiqh*}, *hadith*, *tafsir* {exegesis of the Qur'an}, *kalam* {scholastic theology}, among others is this very fact that the reference authorities of these two groups were different and distinct from each other.

3. Just as ‘Ali (‘a) had unofficial political and military cooperation from afar with the caliphs of the time as far as protection of the lofty interests of Islam was concerned,^{[2](#)} a number of distinguished Shi‘ah among the Companions also assumed military and political positions with the consent of Imam ‘Ali (‘a). For example, Fadhl ibn al-‘Abbas—‘Ali’s (‘a) cousin and defender during the event in Saqifah—held a military position in the army of Sham and passed away in 18 AH in Palestine.^{[3](#)}

Hudhayfah and Salman became the governors of Mada’in one after the other.^{[4](#)} ‘Ammar ibn Yasir was appointed by the second caliph as the governor of Kufah after the tenure of Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas.^{[5](#)}

Hashim Mirqal, who was one of the sincere Shi‘ah of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) and was martyred in the Battle of Siffin on the side of the Imam (‘a),^{[6](#)} was one of the outstanding commanders during the periods of the three caliphs and conquered Azerbaijan in 22 AH.^{[7](#)} ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf and Hudhayfah ibn Yaman were commissioned by ‘Umar to measure the lands of Iraq.^{[8](#)}

‘Abd Allah ibn Badil ibn Waraqa’ al-Khaza’i, one of the Commander of the Faithful’s (‘a) Shi‘ah whose son was one of the first martyrs in the Battle of Jamal (Camel),^{[9](#)} was one of the military commanders and conquered Isfahan and Hamedan.^{[10](#)}

Similarly, individuals such as Jarir ibn ‘Abd Allah Bajalli^{[11](#)} and Qurzah ibn Ka’b al-Ansari^{[12](#)} who were among the Commander of the Faithful’s (‘a) distinguished men during his caliphate, held administrative and military positions during the periods of the three caliphs. Jarir conquered the territory of Kufah^{[13](#)} and became the governor of Hamedan during ‘Uthman’s reign.^{[14](#)} Qurzah ibn Ka’b al-Ansari also conquered Shahr-e Rey during the period of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab.^{[15](#)}

Manifestation of Shi‘ism during the Caliphate of ‘Ali (‘a)

Although the root of Shi‘ism can be traced back to the time of the Prophet (S), its manifestation came after ‘Uthman’s assassination and ‘Ali’s (‘a) caliphate. During this period the demarcating line became clear as ‘Ali’s (‘a) supporters and followers openly declared and expressed their Shi‘ism. Shaykh al-Mufid narrates, thus:

A group of people came to ‘Ali (‘a) and said: “O Commander of the Faithful! We are among your Shi‘ah.” The Imam (‘a) looked carefully at their faces and said: “But why can’t I see the countenances of the Shi‘ah in you?” They asked: “O Commander of the Faithful! How should countenances of the Shi‘ah be?”

He (‘a) said: “Their faces are pale from excessive acts of worship at night; their eyes are weak from weeping profusely; their backs have curvature for standing for long time in prayer; their stomachs can reach their backs for fasting a lot; and the dust of humility and lowliness has settled in them.”^{[16](#)}

Also, poems were recited during the caliphate of Imam ‘Ali (‘a) in which ‘Ali (‘a) has been described as the rightful Imam and successor, and the leader after the Prophet (S). As Qays ibn Sa’d was saying,

و عليّ إمامنا و إمام لسوانا أتى به التنزيل

'Ali is our Imam and that of others. The Qur'an has been revealed for this purpose. [17](#)

Khuzaymah ibn Thabit Dhu'sh-Shahadatayn used to say:

فديت عليّاً إمام الورى سراج البريّة مأوى التّقى

وصيّ الرّسول و زوج البتول إمام البريّة شمس الضّحى

تصدق خاتمه راکعاً فاحسن بفعل إمام الورى

ففضّله الله ربّ العباد و أنزل في شأنه هل أتى

May I be the ransom of 'Ali! He is the Imam of the people, the light of creation and the asylum of the God-conscious ones.

He is the successor {wasi} of the Prophet, the husband of Batul (Fatimah), the Imam of creation, and radiant sun.

He is the Imam of creation and gave in alms {sadaqah} his ring while he was in the state of bowing {ruku'}, and what a good deed he performed!

God, the Exalted, made him superior to others and revealed the Surah "Hal ata" about him. [18](#)

In some poems, the Imam's ('a) Shi'ah also introduced themselves to the religion of 'Ali ('a). For example, while engaged in a fight against a person named 'Amru ibn Yathribi from among the army of *Jamal* {camel} during the Battle of Jamal, 'Ammar ibn Yasir recited thus:

لا تبرح العرصة يا ابن يثربي حتى اقاتلك على دين علي نحن و بيت الله اولى بالنّبي

O Ibn Yathribi! Leave not the battlefield so that we could fight against you over the religion of 'Ali. I swear to the House of God that we are the foremost ones to the Prophet. [19](#)

Even the enemies and adversaries were using the same descriptions for the Shi'ah. For example, in a poem, proud of killing the supporters of 'Ali ('a), 'Amru ibn Yathribi says:

ان تنكروني فانا ابن يثربي قاتل علباء و هند الجملى ثم ابن صوحان على دين عليّ

If you do not know me, I am Ibn Yathribi, the killer of 'Ilba' and Hind al-Jamali.²⁰ I am also the killer of Ibn Sawhan for the crime of following the religion of 'Ali.

2. The Shi'ah during the Period of the Umayyad Caliphate

The period of the Umayyad caliphate was the most difficult time for the Shi'ah, starting from 40 AH up to 132 AH. All the Umayyad caliphs with the exception of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz were sworn enemies of the Shi'ah. Of course, after caliph Hisham the Umayyads were preoccupied with the campaign against internal revolts and the 'Abbasid movement and the past harsh treatments of Shi'ah were lessened.

The Umayyad caliphs were living in Sham, the capital of the Umayyad rule, and in most cases, the rulers adopted the policy of bloodshed with respect to the Shi'ah-populated territories, exerted pressure on the Shi'ah.

Among all the enemies, it was the Umayyad rulers who focused most on the Shi'ah relentlessly annoying and disturbing them, with 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and Hajjaj ibn Yusuf being most notorious among them.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, the well-known scholar in the Sunni world, thus writes:

The Shi'ah were being killed wherever they were. The Umayyads used to mutilate the hands and feet of individuals for being suspected as Shi'ah. Anyone who was noted for his love and attachment to the family of the Prophet would either be imprisoned, his possessions be plundered, or his house be demolished. The pressure and restrictions imposed upon the Shi'ah reached a point where the charge of friendship with 'Ali ('a) was considered as worse than the accusation of disbelief {*kufr*} and infidelity, entailing severer punishments.

In adopting this violent policy, living conditions for the people of Kufah was the worst because Kufah was the Shi'ah capital of the time.

Mu'awiyah designated Ziyad ibn Sumayyah as the ruler of Kufah and later on assigned the governorship of Basrah to him. Ziyad was once in the rank of the supporters of 'Ali and he knew them all very well. He pursued the Shi'ah and found them in whatever nook and corner they would hide. He killed them; threatened them; mutilated their hands and feet; blinded them; hung them on palm trees; and expelled them from Iraq so much so that not a single well-known Shi'ah remained in Iraq.²¹

Abu'l-Faraj 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Ali ibn al-Jawzi has said:

When a number of the Shi'ah protested against Ziyad, who was then delivering sermons from the pulpit, he ordered the mutilation of the hands and feet of eighty persons. He used to gather the people in the mosque and ask them to curse 'Ali and if anyone refused to do so, Ziyad would order that his house be

demolished.[22](#)

Ziyad, who ruled alternately for six months in Kufah and the next six months in Basrah, appointed Samurah ibn Jundab as his deputy in Basrah so that he could administer the city during his absence. During that period Samurah killed 8,000 people. Ziyad once asked him: "Are you not afraid that you might have killed one innocent person among them?" He replied: "Even if I have to kill two times that figure, I am not afraid of such a thing."[23](#)

Abu Suwar 'Adwi says: "One morning, Samurah {killed} 47 persons from among relatives, all of whom were memorizers of the Qur'an {*hufaz*}."[24](#)

Mu'awiyah, in a directive to his officials and workers, wrote that they should not accept the testimony of even one of 'Ali's ('a) Shi'ah or family members. In another directive, he thus wrote:

If two individuals would give testimony that a certain person is among the friends of 'Ali and his family, his name should be erased from the record of the public treasury {*bayt al-mal*} and his salary and stipend should be cut off.[25](#)

After subjugating Mecca and Medina, Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, the bloodthirsty and cruel Umayyad agent, was appointed as the governor of Iraq, the center of the Shi'ah gathering, in 75 AH by the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. Having covered his head and face, Hajjaj entered the mosque of Kufah *incognito*. He passed by the line of people and mounted the pulpit.

He remained silent for a long moment. Murmuring among the people started as to who he is. One person said, "He is the new ruler." The other one said, "Let us pelt him with stone." Many others said, "No, let us listen to what he will say." When the crowd silenced, he uncovered his face and uttering a few sentences, he terrified the people so much so that the small stones in the hands of those who were ready to pelt him fell on the ground spontaneously. At the beginning of his speech, he thus said:

O people of Kufah! It has been for many years that you have taken chaos, sedition {*fitnah*} and insubordination as your slogan. I can see heads similar to ripe fruits that must be separated from the body. I shall strike on your heads to such an extent that you would find the way to submission.[26](#)

Hajjaj implemented a rule of terror throughout Iraq and the eastern districts and unjustly killed many prominent figures of Kufah and pious people.

Mas'udi thus writes about the crimes of Hajjaj:

Hajjaj ruled for twenty years and the number of those who were killed during this period by the swords of his headsmen or torturers exceeded 120,000 people. This figure does not include those who were killed by Hajjaj's forces in the war against him.[27](#)

At the time of Hajjaj's death, 50,000 men and 30,000 women were languishing in his infamous prison.

Among them 11,000 were naked. Hajjaj used to imprison men and women in one cell. His prison cells were roofless. As such, the prisoners were not secure from the summer heat or the winter rain and cold.²⁸

The Shi'ah were usually victims of Hajjaj's prison, torture, persecution, and murder. The best evidence that reflects the miserable plight of the Shi'ah during the Umayyad period and the intensity of the Umayyad policy of strangulation is the complaint of the Shi'ah to Imam as-Sajjad ('a) about the oppression and tyranny perpetrated against them. The late Majlisi has narrates:

The Shi'ah came to Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) complaining about the pressure and strangulation, saying: "O son of the Messenger of Allah! We were expelled from our cities and eliminated by atrocious killing. They cursed the Commander of the Faithful ('a) in the cities as well as in the mosque of the Messenger of Allah (S), on top of his pulpit.

No one prevented it and if any of us would protest, they would say, "This is a *turabi* (i.e. Shi'ah); they would report it to the ruler, writing to him that so-and-so has said something good about Abu Turab (Imam 'Ali ('a)). The ruler would order them to beat that person, imprison him and finally kill him."²⁹

Lesson 9: Summary

After the event of Saqifah, the Shi'ah would refer to the pure Imams ('a) with respect to scientific, jurisprudential and ideological issues. Although they were cooperating with the caliphs of the time in line with the interests of Islam, most of them were deprived of administrative positions.

During the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful ('a), expression of Shi'ism was one of the distinctive features of the Shi'ah.

The period of the Umayyad rule was one of the most difficult times for the Shi'ah. All the caliphs, with the exception of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, were sworn enemies of the Shi'ah, and the Shi'ah-populated regions the bloodthirsty and cruel governors were ruling over.

Lesson 9: Questions

1. What were the distinctive features of the Shi'ah during the reign of the first three caliphs?
2. What was the salient feature of the Shi'ah during the caliphate of 'Ali ('a)?
3. What was the condition of the Shi'ah during the Umayyad rule?

¹ For example, when Abubakr initially appointed Khalid ibn Sa'id as the commander in the Battle of Sham, 'Umar said to him: "Have you forgotten Khalid's refusal to pay allegiance to you and his solidarity with the Banu Hashim? I do not think it's appropriate for him to be appointed as commander." As such, Abubakr withdrew his appointment of Khalid as the commander and appointed another person in his stead. Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, 1st edition

(Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 133.

2. For instance, we may cite the recommendation of 'Ali ('a) to Abubakr concerning the dispatch of army to Sham (Ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 133) and his instructions to 'Umar when he was consulted by the caliph about his plan for himself to go to the battle against the Byzantines. The Imam ('a) said: "If you yourself will proceed towards the enemy and clash with them and fall into some trouble, there will be no place of refuge for the Muslims other than their remote cities, nor any place they would return to. Therefore, you should send an experienced man and send with him people of good performance who are well-intentioned. If Allah grants you victory, then this is what you want. If it is otherwise, you would serve as a support for the people and a returning place for the Muslims." (Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 134) Also, when 'Umar consulted the Imam ('a) about the caliph himself partaking in the Battle of Persia, he ('a) said: "You should remain like the axis for them (Arabs), and rotate the mill (of government) with (the help of) the Arabs, and be their root. Avoid battle, because if you leave this place the Arabs will attack you from all sides and directions till the unguarded places left behind by you will become more important than those before you. If the Persians see you tomorrow they will say, "He is the root (chief) of Arabia. If we do away with him we will be in peace." In this way this will heighten their eagerness against you and their keenness to aim at you." (Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 146)

3. Ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 151.

4. 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, Murawwij adh-Dhahab (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 2, p. 323.

5. Ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 155.

6. Mas'udi, Murawwij adh-Dhahab, vol. 2, p. 401.

7. Ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 156.

8. Ibid., p. 152.

9. Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn an-Nu'man Shaykh al-Mufid, Al-Jamal, 2nd edition (Qum: Maktab al-A'lam al-Islami (Publication Center), 1416 AH), p. 342.

10. Ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 157.

11. Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir Baladhuri, Insab al-Ashraf (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1394 AH), vol. 2, p. 275.

12. 'Izz ad-Din Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad Abi'l-Kiram Ibn Athir, Asad al-Ghabah fi Ma'rifah as-Sahabah (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), vol. 4, p. 202.

13. Ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 143.

14. Abu Muhammad 'Abd Allah ibn Muslim ibn al-Qutaybah, Al-Ma'arif, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1415 AH), p. 586.

15. Ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 154.

16. Shaykh al-Mufid, Al-Irshad, trans. Muhammad Baqir Sa'idi Khurasani, 2nd edition (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-ye Islamiyyeh, 1376 AHS), pp. 227-228.

17. Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, Manaqib Al Abi Talib (Qum: Mu'assasah Intisharat-e 'Allameh, n.d.), vol. 3, p. 28.

18. Ibid., p. 6.

19. Shaykh al-Mufid, Al-Jamal, 2nd edition (Qum: Maktab al-A'lam al-Islami (Publication Center), 1416 AH), p. 346.

20. 'Ilba' and Hind al-Jamali were among the supporters and Shi'ah of 'Ali ('a).

21. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah (Cairo: Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabi, 1961), pp. 43-45.

22. Abu'l-Faraj 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Ali Ibn al-Jawzi, Al-Muntazim fi Tarikh al-Umam wa'l-Muluk, 1st edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1412 AH), vol. 5, p. 227.

23. Muhammad ibn Jarir at-Tabari, Tarikh al-Umam wa'l-Muluk (Beirut: Dar al-Qamus al-Hadith, n.d.), vol. 6, p. 132.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 1, p. 45.

26. Zubayr ibn Bakkar, Al-Akhbar al-Muwaffaqiyyat (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 99; Ja'far Shahidi, Tarikh Tahlili-ye Islam ta Payan-e Umawi {An Analytical History of Islam till the End of the Umayyad Rule} (Tehran: University Press Center, 1363 AHS), p. 184; Mahdi Pishva'i, Sireh-ye Pishvayan, 8th Edition. Qum: Mu'assaseh-ye Tahqiqati va Ta'limati-ye Imam Sadiq ('a), 1378 AHS), p. 246.

[27.](#) ‘Ali ibn Husayn ibn ‘Ali Mas‘udi, Murawwij adh-Dhahab (Beirut: Manshurat Mu‘assasah al-A‘lami Li‘l-Matbu‘at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, p. 187.

[28.](#) Ibid.

[29.](#) Muhammad Baqir (‘Allamah) Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, 2nd edition (Tehran: Al-Maktabah al-Islamiyyah, 1394 AH), vol. 46, p. 275.

Lesson 10: The Spread of Shi‘ism during the Period of Umayyad Caliphate

In spite of severe strangulation and oppression perpetrated against the Shi‘ah during the Umayyad rule, the spread of Shi‘ism continued unabated. The reason behind this was the state of oppression of the family of the Prophet (S) which prompted the people to incline emotionally toward them, causing new individuals to continuously embrace the creed of Shi‘ism.

This point was completely conspicuous during the end of the Umayyad rule. The spread of Shi‘ism during the Umayyad rule had several stages, each of which had its own salient features. The overall stages can be divided as follows:

- a) From 40 AH to 61 AH (the period of Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn (‘a));
- b) From 61 AH to approximately 110 AH (the period of Imam as-Sajjad and Imam al-Baqir (‘a)); and
- c) From 110 AH to 132 AH, i.e. till the end of the Umayyad rule (the period of Imam as-Sadiq (‘a).

The Period of Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn (‘a)

From the time of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), the Shi‘ah was gradually formed into a distinct group and the line of the Shi‘ah was obviously clear.

For this reason, in the peace treaty with Mu‘awiyah, Imam al-Hasan (‘a) stipulated the guarantee of the Shi‘ah of his father’s safety as one of the articles of the peace treaty, and nobody should protest against them.^{[1](#)} The Shi‘ah gradually trained themselves to accept that obedience to the Imam does not depend on the Imam’s actual grip on power. As such, when the people were pledging allegiance to Imam al-Hasan (‘a), he made it a condition for them to obey him both in war and in peace.

In the same manner, it was made clear that Imamate {*imamah*} is not necessarily equal to governance and that a tyrant ruler such as Mu‘awiyah cannot be the Imam, obedience to whom is obligatory. For example, in the sermon that he delivered in the mosque of Kufah after the peace treaty at the insistence and in the presence of Mu‘awiyah, Imam al-Hasan (‘a) said:

The caliph is he who practices the Book of Allah and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (S), and he who is practicing injustice cannot be the caliph. He is rather a king who controls a kingdom. He shall enjoy for a short period and after that, his joy shall be curtailed and he must be called to account.[2](#)

Among the salient features of the Shi'ah's society at this stage is the unity and solidarity among them, which resulted from the status of the Shi'ah leaders. Until Imam al-Husayn's (‘a) martyrdom, we cannot see of any split among the Shi'ah. Imams al-Hasan and al-Husayn (‘a) had a certain status in the sight of Muslims which none of the pure Imams (‘a) after them ever attained.

They were the well-established progeny of the Prophet (S). During the Battle of Siffin, when he saw that Imam al-Hasan (‘a) was enthusiastically rushing toward the battlefield, the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) said:

“Hold back this young man on my behalf, lest he causes my ruin, because I am unwilling to send these two (al-Hasan and al-Husayn) toward death, lest the descending line of the Prophet (S) is cut away by their death.”[3](#)

Imams al-Hasan and al-Husayn (‘a) also occupied a position of respect among the Companions of the Prophet (S). This fact was demonstrated in the people's pledge of allegiance to Imam al-Hasan (‘a) in which the Companions of the Prophet (S) accepted his caliphate and none protested. As such, during Imam al-Hasan's (‘a) caliphate we cannot see any problem (in terms of his legitimacy being challenged) except from Sham.

When the Imam (‘a) concluded a peace treaty and wanted to leave Kufah to return to Medina, the people wept profusely. In Medina also, his position is clear from a Qurayshi's report to Mu'awiyah. In his report to Mu'awiyah, a Qurayshi man thus wrote:

O Commander of the Faithful! Hasan performs his dawn prayer in the mosque and he remains in the state of prostration till the sun rises. Then, he inclines to one of the mosque's pillars and anyone who is in the mosque can benefit from his services and talks to him until the rising of the sun {at noon}. He performs a two-*rak'ah* prayer, stands up, goes out, asks about the condition of the wives of the Prophet (S), and then returns to his house.[4](#)

Imam al-Husayn (‘a), like his distinguished brother, occupied a highly respectable position such that even ‘Abd Allah ibn Zubayr, a staunch enemy of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a), could not deny the station of Imam Husayn (‘a). While the Imam (‘a) was still in Mecca, the people were not paying attention to Zubayr halting the progress of his campaign. Thus, he wanted the Imam (‘a) to leave Mecca as soon as possible. He said to Imam al-Husayn (‘a), hence: “If I had the same position you have in Iraq, I would have hastened to go there.”[5](#)

The station of the Imam (‘a) was such that his refusal to pay allegiance to the caliph rendered the government of Yazid to be questioned. It was for this reason that the ruling authority insisted on him

giving his pledge.

These two persons were held in such high esteem and respect among the Banu Hashim that not only could none from Banu Hashim have a leadership claim during their lifetime, but also none could even claim to be the chief of the Banu Hashim. When Imam al-Hasan (‘a) passed away on the account of the effect of poison given by Mu‘awiyah, ‘Abd Allah ibn al-‘Abbas was then in Sham. Mu‘awiyah said to him: “Ibn al-‘Abbas, Hasan died and you became the chief of the Banu Hashim.” Ibn al-‘Abbas said: “So long as Husayn is there, I am not.”⁶

Even Ibn al-‘Abbas, in spite of his intellectual and political position, being a reporter of *hadith* and exegete of the Qur’an and, according to the Sunnis, even higher in rank than Imams al-Hasan and al-Husayn (‘a), was offering services to them. It is thus narrated in the document of Ibn Abi Ziyad:

Ibn al-‘Abbas prepared the riding horses of Hasan and Husayn, keeping the stirrup until they rode. I said: “Why are you keeping stirrup for them even though you are older than them?” He said: “You fool! Don’t you know who they are? They are the sons of the Messenger of Allah. Is it not a great honor that God has granted me the opportunity to keep the stirrup for them?”⁷

The Impact of the Karbala’ Movement on the Spread of Shi’ism

After Imam al-Husayn’s (‘a) martyrdom the Shi‘ah, owing to the loss of one of their key supporters, were extremely frightened losing hope in an armed confrontation with the enemy. With the occurrence of the heart-rending event of ‘Ashura’ the Shi‘ah movement received a devastating blow within a very short period of time.

As the news of this event spread within the Muslim lands, especially in Iraq and Hijaz, intense fear prevailed in the Shi‘ah communities. This was because it became increasingly clear that Yazid is determined to stabilize his rule even to the extent of killing the son of the Prophet (S), taking as captives his women and children, and that he would not refrain from any crime in order to strengthen the pillars of his government.

The effect of this intense apprehension was most obvious in Kufah and Medina, and it multiplied with the Hirrah tragedy and the intense and merciless crackdown of the popular ‘Medina movement’ by Yazid’s forces. Severe strangulation in the Shi‘ah-populated territories of Iraq and Hijaz especially in Kufah and Medina, was rampant shattering the Shi‘ah cohesion and formation.

In describing this sorrowful condition, Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) says: “After the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (‘a), the people dispersed from around the family of the Prophet (S) except three persons, viz. Abu Khalid Kabuli, Yahya ibn Umm at-Tawil and Jabir ibn Mut‘am.”⁸

In describing this period, Mas‘udi the historian also says: “‘Ali ibn al-Husayn assumed the Imamate secretly with utmost dissimulation {*taqiyyah*} at a difficult time.”⁹

This state of affairs persisted till the end of Yazid's rule. After Yazid's death, the Shi'ah movements started and continued till the stabilization of the Umayyad rule during the caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik. This period was a good opportunity for the spread of Shi'ism.

One of the important impacts of the Karbala' movement was the delegitimization of the Umayyad rule in the public opinion. The infamy of the government reached a point where the position of caliphate was in its lowest degree and the people were no longer viewing it as a sacred institution.

The poem below addressed to Yazid's grave in Hawarin expresses this infamy:

أَيُّهَا الْقَبْرُ بِحَوَارِينَا قَدْ ضَمَنْتَ شَرَّ النَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ

O grave that is in the city of Hawarin! The worst of people is inside you.[10](#)

At that time, with the exception of the people of Sham, the Muslims—both Sunnis and Shi'ah—were opposing the Umayyad caliphate and Sunni and Shi'ah revolts were frequently happening. [11](#) Ya'qubi thus writes:

'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan wrote to his governor Hajjaj ibn Yusuf: "Do not afflict us with the shedding of the blood of the progeny of Al Abi Talib because we saw what fate the Sufyanis (descendants of Abu Sufyan) met as the result of their killing."[12](#)

Finally, the blood of Imam al-Husayn ('a) demolished the palace of the Umayyads. Muqaddasi says: "As God saw the oppression and injustice of the Umayyads against the family of the Prophet (S), He gathered an army from the different parts of that Khurasan and sent it to them at the darkness of the night."[13](#)

Meanwhile, the state of oppression of Imam al-Husayn ('a) and the martyrs in Karbala' expressed the love for the progeny of the Prophet (S) in the hearts of the people and strengthened their position as the descendants of the Prophet (S) and the true protectors of Islam.

Most of the uprisings during the Umayyad period took place in the name and for the sake of avenging their blood, and revolutions used to be formed under the slogan, "*Ya litharat al-Husayn*" {O helpers of Husayn!}. Even the uprising of a person like Ibn Ash'ath in Sistan[14](#) was formed under the name of Hasan al-Muthanna (son of Imam al-Hasan ('a)).[15](#)

For this reason, the *hadiths* regarding Imam al-Mahdi ('a) as the avenger {*muntaqam*} of the progeny of Muhammad (S) gained prominence.[16](#) The people were waiting for the avengers against the Umayyads[17](#) and due to impatience and the peak of waiting, they would sometimes conform the name "Mahdi" to the name of leaders of the movements and uprisings.[18](#)

In the meantime, the pure Imams ('a) and the progeny of the Prophet (S) kept on reviving the memory

and reminiscence of the martyrs of Karbala'. Whenever he desired to drink water, Imam as-Sajjad (‘a) would shed tears profusely when he set his sight on the water. When he was asked about the reason behind this reaction, he (‘a) said:

“How could I not cry when the water was set free for the wild animals and beasts of prey of the deserts, but it was denied to my father?” One day, a servant of the Imam (‘a) said: “Is there no end for your agony?”

The Imam (‘a) said: “Woe unto you! Ya‘qub, who on account of the disappearance of only one of his twelve sons, so cried a lot during their separation that his eyes turned blind and on account of his agony his back bent. This is while his son was alive. But I was an eyewitness to the killing of my father, brothers, uncles and 18 persons from among my relatives whose corpses were scattered on the ground. So, how could it be possible for my agony and anguish to end?”¹⁹

Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) was encouraging the poets to recite poetry as elegy to Imam al-Husayn (‘a), saying: “Whoever would keep on reciting poem about al-Husayn (‘a) and prompt the people to cry, paradise shall be incumbent upon him and his sins shall be forgiven.”²⁰

In this way, Imam al-Husayn (‘a) became the symbol of Shi‘ism. As such, in many stages of history such as the period of caliph Mutawakkil visitation {*ziyarah*} to the grave of the Imam (‘a) was forbidden.²¹

Lesson 10: Summary

From the time of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a), the Shi‘ah gradually formed into a particular group and party, and the rank of the Shi‘ah became completely distinct. Meanwhile, on account of the station of Imams al-Hasan and al-Husayn (‘a), the Shi‘ah of the time enjoyed unity and solidarity and no split was yet observed.

After the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (‘a), the Shi‘ah lost their key support and experienced intense fear and apprehension. Only a small number remained beside Imam as-Sajjad, but after the death of Yazid, this state of affairs changed. The movement of Karbala’ removed the legitimacy of the Umayyad rule and dragged the position of caliphate from its sanctity to its lowest ebb. In the meantime, the love for the progeny of the progeny of the Prophet (S) was manifested in the hearts of the people.

Lesson 10: Questions

1. What were the stages of the spread of Shi‘ism during the Umayyad period?
2. What was the salient feature of the Shi‘ah during the period of Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn (‘a)?
3. What was the impact of the Karbala’ movement on the spread of Shi‘ism?

- [1.](#) Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, *Manaqib Al Abi Talib* (Qum: Mu'assasah Intisharat-e 'Allameh, n.d.), vol. 4, p. 33.
- [2.](#) 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 82.
- [3.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 167, p. 660.
- [4.](#) Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabir Baladhuri, *Insab al-Ashraf* (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'jami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1394 AH), vol. 3, p. 21.
- [5.](#) Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Andalusi, *Al-'Aqd al-Farid* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1409 AH), vol. 4, p. 366.
- [6.](#) 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab* (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'jami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, p. 9.
- [7.](#) Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, *Manaqib Al Abi Talib*, vol. 3, p. 400.
- [8.](#) Abi Ja'far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn 'Ali (Shaykh) at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi) (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt at-Turath, 1404 AH), vol. 1, p. 338.
- [9.](#) *Ithbat al-Wasiyyah*, 4th edition (Najaf: Al-Matba'ah al-Haydariyyah, 1373 AH), p. 167.
- [10.](#) Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 65.
- [11.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 81-99.
- [12.](#) Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 304.
- [13.](#) Muqaddasi, *Ahsan at-Ta'asim fi Ma'rifah al-Aqalim*, trans. Dr. 'Ali Naqi Manzawi (n.p.: Shirkat-e Mu'allifan va Mutarjiman-e Iran, n.d.), vol. 2, pp. 426-427.
- [14.](#) 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Ash'ath was appointed ruler of Sistan by Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. Sistan was considered the border separating the Muslims from the Hindus and the Muslims there clashed with the Hindu rulers. On account of his enmity toward 'Abd ar-Rahman, Hajjaj conceived of a plot to eliminate him. As he was informed of this plot, 'Abd ar-Rahman revolted against him in 82 AH. Since the masses of people were disgustful of Hajjaj, many of the inhabitants of Basrah and Kufah joined him. A great number of the Qur'an reciters {qaris} of Kufah and Shi'ah were among those who staged the uprising. In this manner, he left Sistan about for Iraq. His objective was to depose Hajjaj and then to depose 'Abd al-Malik from the caliphate as well. He defeated the armies of Hajjaj and advanced as far as Kufah. As the danger he was posing turned serious, 'Abd al-Malik dispatched a large contingent of army from Sham to assist Hajjaj. The armies of Sham subdued Ibn Ash'ath in a place called Dayr al-Jamajam seven farshangs (42 kilometers) away from Kufah. He fled toward India and took refuge with one of the rulers there. But he was finally killed by the agents of Hajjaj. Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 148; Shahab ad-Din Abi 'Abd Allah Yaqut Hamwi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, 1st edition (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1417 AH), vol. 4, p. 338.
- [15.](#) Ibn 'Anbah, *'Umdah at-Talib fi Insab Al Abi Talib* (Qum: Intisharat ar-Rida, n.d.), p. 100.
- [16.](#) Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, p. 216.
- [17.](#) Ya'qubi thus narrates: In reply to the complaints of a person named 'Amir ibn Wailah whose stipend was cut off by the government, 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz during his reign said: "It has been reported to me that you have unsheathed your sword, sharpened your spear, and prepared your bow and arrow, and that you are waiting for the advent of Imam al-Qa'im. Keep waiting so that once he appeared, he would release your stipend." Ya'qubi, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 307.
- [18.](#) Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, p. 210.
- [19.](#) Muhammad Baqir ('Allamah) Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar* (Tehran: Al-Maktabah al-Islamiyyah, 1394 AH), vol. 46, p. 275.
- [20.](#) Shaykh at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi), vol. 2, p. 574.
- [21.](#) Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir at-Tabari, *Tarikh at-Tabari*, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1408 AH), vol. 5, p. 312.

Lesson 11: The Period of Imam as-Sajjad (‘a)

The period of Imam as-Sajjad (‘a) can be divided into two stages:

The first stage covers the events after the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (‘a), the destabilization of the Umayyad rule and finally the end of rule of the Sufyanis (descendants of Abu Sufyan) and the succession to power of the Marwanis (descendants of Marwan ibn al-Hakam), the internal struggle among the Umayyads and their entanglement with the uprisings and revolts up to the stabilization of the rule of the Marwanis. The second stage covers the time of governorship of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf and the defeat of ‘Abd Allah ibn Zubayr¹ in Mecca up to the commencement of the ‘Abbasid movement, which is also related to the initial period of the Imamate {*imamah*} of Imam al-Baqir (‘a).

After the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (‘a), the Umayyads were, on the one hand, entangled with the uprisings of the people of Iraq and Hijaz, and experiencing internal struggle on the other. The government of Yazid did not last long. Yazid died in 64 AH after three years of rule.²

After Yazid, his son Mu‘awiyah II came to power. He ruled for not more than 40 years when he stepped down from the office of the caliphate and died soon after.³ With his death the internal squabble among the Umayyads began. Mas‘udi describes the event after the death of Mu‘awiyah II which indicates the intense greed and rivalry among the Umayyads over the leadership, as thus:

Mu‘awiyah {II} died at the age of 22 and was buried in Damascus. With the burning ambition of becoming the next caliph, Walid ibn ‘Utbah ibn Abi Sufyan came to the front to lead the prayer for the corpse of Mu‘awiyah {II}, but even before finishing the prayer he received a fatal blow and was killed. Then, ‘Uthman ibn ‘Utbah ibn Abi Sufyan led the prayer for him, but he was also not approved by them to assume the office of the caliphate. So, he was forced to go to Mecca and join Ibn Zubayr.⁴

Three years had not yet passed when the rule of the Sufyanis came to an end. Many of the people throughout the Muslim lands including a number of the Umayyad chiefs and governors such as ‘Ahaq ibn Qays and Nu‘man ibn Bashir had inclined toward Ibn Zubayr. It was at this time when Ibn Zubayr drove the resident Umayyads out from Medina including Marwan.

The Umayyads proceeded toward Sham and since there was no caliph in Damascus, the Umayyads elected Marwan for the caliphate, followed by Khalid ibn Yazid and after him ‘Amru ibn Sa‘id as his successor. After sometime, Marwan removed Khalid ibn Yazid and appointed his son ‘Abd al-Malik as his successor. For this reason, Khalid’s mother who was married to Marwan poisoned Marwan killing him. ‘Abd al-Malik also removed ‘Amru ibn Sa‘id on his way and appointed his son instead as his heir apparent.⁵

Meanwhile, the Umayyads were gripped by revolts and uprisings. These upheavals can be divided into

two distinct types: One type was the uprisings without Shi'ah underpinning. The Hirrah uprising and the revolt of Ibn Zubayr belonged to this type. The essence of Ibn Zubayr's revolt is obvious because the leader of the revolt, 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr was a staunch enemy of the progeny of the Prophet (S).

He nursed this grudge in his heart owing to the defeat he and others, including his father, suffered in the Battle of Jamal (Camel) and the ensuing events. His brother Mus'ab, however, had Shi'ah inclination and married the daughter of Imam al-Husayn ('a), Sakinah.⁶ As such, his campaign gained momentum in Iraq and the Shi'ah of Iraq joined with him in the resistance against the Umayyads. After Mukhtar Ibrahim al-Ashtar was in his company and was killed beside him.

The Hirrah uprising had also no Shi'ah underpinning⁷ and Imam as-Sajjad ('a) had no hand in it. When Muslim ibn 'Uqbah was asking the allegiance of the people in Medina, compelling them to pay allegiance, like slaves, to the Umayyad caliph (Yazid), he accorded him due respect to Imam as-Sajjad ('a) and did not complain against the Imam ('a) (for not expressing allegiance).⁸

The other uprisings had Shi'ah underpinning.

The Shi'ah Uprisings

The uprising of the *tawwabun* {the repentant ones} and that of Mukhtar were Shi'ah uprisings. The base of these two uprisings was Iraq, Kufah in particular, and the constituent forces were Shi'ah of the Commander of the Faithful ('a). In the army of Mukhtar, non-Arab Shi'ah could also be amply noticed.

There is no doubt about the essence of the uprising of the *tawwabun*. This uprising was based upon correct motives and yearning for martyrdom, and it had no objective other than avenging the blood of Imam al-Husayn ('a) and wiping off their sin for not assisting the Imam ('a) by being killed in the way of fighting against his murderers.

After leaving Kufah, the *tawwabun* proceeded toward Karbala', rushing toward the grave of Imam Husayn ('a) for *ziyarah* and at the beginning of their movement, they thus said:

O God! We did not assist the son of the Prophet (S). Forgive our past sins and accept our repentance {*tawbah*}. Shower mercy {*rahmah*} upon the soul of Husayn ('a) and his righteous and martyred votaries. We bear witness that we believe in the things for which Husayn ('a) was killed. O God! If You would not forgive our sins and reckon us under the scale of mercy and clemency, we will be doomed to perdition and wretchedness.⁹

After the arrival of Muslim ibn 'Aqil in Kufah Mukhtar was collaborating with him. But because of this collaboration, he was apprehended and imprisoned by 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. After the event of 'Ashura' he was freed through the mediation and petition of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar, his brother-in-law (his sister's husband).

He arrived in Kufah in 64 AH and after the *tawwabun* movement, he started his movement and by using the slogan, “*Ya litharat al-Husayn*” {O helpers of Husayn!} he was able to gather the Shi‘ah, the non-Arabs in particular, around him. With these forces, he succeeded in punishing the murderers of Imam al-Husayn (‘a) for what they had done, such that in one day he was able to kill 280 of these criminals and destroy the houses of those who escaped such as that of Muhammad ibn Ash‘ath, and on the contrary, he mended Hujr ibn ‘Addi’s house, a loyal supporter of ‘Ali (‘a), which was destroyed by Mu‘awiyah. [10](#)

Contradictory views have been expressed about Mukhtar. Some have regarded him as a true Shi‘ah while others have said that he was a liar. Ibn Dawud thus says about Mukhtar in his book on *rijal*:

Mukhtar is son of Abu ‘Abid ath-Thaqafi. Some Shi‘ah ‘*ulama*’ have accused him of Kaysaniyyah and in this regard, they have cited Imam as-Sajjad’s (‘a) refusal of his gift. But this cannot be a reason for rejecting him because Imam al-Baqir (‘a) thus said about him: “Do not speak ill of Mukhtar because he killed our murderers, did not allow our spilled blood to be disregarded, gave our daughters in marriage, and at the time of difficulty he distributed properties among us.

When Abu’l-Hakam, son of Mukhtar, came to Imam al-Baqir (‘a), the Imam (‘a) showed him a great deal of respect. Abu’l-Hakam asked about his father, saying: “The people are talking about my father, but your view, whatever it is, is the criterion.” At that moment the Imam (‘a) praised Mukhtar and prayed for God to have mercy on him, saying: “Glory be to Allah! My father said that the affection of my mother was from the property that Mukhtar sent to my father.”

And the Imam (‘a) said many times: “May God have mercy upon your father! He did not allow for our right to be trampled. He killed our murderers and did not permit our blood to be disregarded.”

Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) also said: “In our family there was a woman who did not comb and apply henna to her hair until Mukhtar sent the heads of the murderers of al-Husayn (‘a).”

It has been narrated that when Mukhtar sent the head of the accursed ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad to Imam as-Sajjad (‘a), the Imam (‘a) prostrated and made benevolent prayer for Mukhtar. [11](#)

Meanwhile, the reports that have been transmitted to reproach Mukhtar are fabrications of the enemies.

With regard to the charge of Kaysaniyyah against Mukhtar and his alleged role in the creation of the Kaysaniyyah sect, while defending Mukhtar and rejecting this accusation against him, Ayatullah al-Khu‘i thus writes:

Some Sunni ‘*ulama*’ associate Mukhtar with the Kaysaniyyah sect and this is definitely a false statement because Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah never claimed Imamate {*imamah*} for himself for Mukhtar to call on the people to recognize his Imamate.

Mukhtar was killed prior to Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah’s demise and the Kaysaniyyah sect came into being after Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah’s death. But as to the fact that they regard Mukhtar as “Kaysan”

(it is not because he was following the Kaysaniyyah sect), granting that this label is appropriate for him, its origin is traceable to the same questionable report from the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) who is alleged to have said: “O Kays! O Kays!” Thus, he was called, “Kaysan”. [12](#)

Stabilization of the Rule of Marwan’s Descendants

As mentioned earlier, the second phase of Imam as-Sajjad’s (‘a) period was the stabilization of the rule of the Marwanis (descendants of Marwan ibn al-Hakam). After the killing of ‘Abd Allah ibn Zubayr in 73 AH, [13](#) the clan of Marwan stabilized its own rule, and on this path, they took advantage of the existence of notorious headsman such as Hajjaj ibn Yusuf.

Hajjaj would not spare from committing any crime in the way of eliminating an enemy. He even targeted the *Ka’bah* destroying it by a shower of catapulted fire stones. He would kill the opponents of the Umayyads, Shi’ah or non-Shi’ah, wherever he would find them. The uprising of Ibn Ash’ath against him in 80 AH gained nothing, [14](#) and Hajjaj’s despotism engulfed the whole of Hijaz and Iraq until 95 AH. [15](#)

Imam as-Sajjad lived during that period, conveying the Islamic and Shi’ah knowledge and teachings through supplications. During that period, the Shi’ah were either fugitives, languishing in prison, killed at the hands of Hajjaj, or exercising extreme dissimulation {*taqiyyah*} by hiding their true faith. As such, the people had no courage to approach Imam as-Sajjad (‘a) and his close supporters were very few.

The late Majlisi thus narrates: “Hajjaj ibn Yusuf killed Sa’id ibn Jubayr because of his contacts with Imam as-Sajjad (‘a).” [16](#) Of course, during that time, on account of the pressures exerted against the Shi’ah, they migrated to the various parts of the Muslim lands and became the agents of the spread of Shi’ism. During the same period, some Shi’ah in Kufah migrated to territories surrounding Qum, stayed there and contributed to the spread of Shi’ism in that place. [17](#)

The initial period of Imam al-Baqir’s (‘a) Imamate also coincided with the persistent dominance of the Umayyad rule. During at time, Hisham ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, an authoritative and despotic caliph, summoned Imam al-Baqir (‘a) along with his son, Imam as-Sadiq (‘a), to Sham.

He did not neglect to annoy and vex them. [18](#) During his reign, Zayd ibn ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn staged an uprising and was martyred. Although the restraints and pressures exerted on the Shi’ah were somehow mitigated during the caliphate of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, the period of caliphate was, nevertheless, short. After two odd years of rule, he passed away in a suspicious manner.

Of course the Umayyads were not able to extinguish the light of truth through pressure and restriction, and failed to erase the virtues and excellence of the Commander of the Faithful ‘Ali (‘a) from the people’s memory, and that was the will of God. Ibn Abi’l-Hadid thus says in this regard:

If God, the Exalted, had not endowed leadership to this man (‘Ali), even a single *hadith* concerning his virtues and excellences would not have been narrated because the Marwanis were so harsh in relation

to the narrators of his virtues. [19](#)

Lesson 11: Summary

Imam as-Sajjad's ('a) period can be divided into two stages. The first stage covered the instability of the Umayyad rule, the downfall of the Sufyanis (descendants of Abu Sufyan) and the ascendance to power of the Marwanis (descendants of Marwan ibn al-Hakam). The second stage covered the stabilization of the rule of the Marwanis.

During the first stage, the Umayyads were grappling with the Shi'ah and non-Shi'ah uprisings in Hijaz and Iraq.

The second stage began with the murder of 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr in 73 AH in which the Umayyads made use of the existence of notorious headsmen such as Hajjaj ibn Yusuf in a bid to stabilize their grip.

Lesson 11: Questions

1. How many stages can Imam as-Sajjad's ('a) period be divided into?
2. How many types of uprisings were there during Imam as-Sajjad's ('a) period?
3. Describe the period of strangulation and stabilization of the Marwanis' rule.

1. The rule of 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr in Mecca—from the time of his refusal to pay allegiance to Yazid and his call to the people to rally behind him up to 72 AH when he was killed at the hand of Hajjaj's army—lasted for 12 years. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih mentions it in the book, *Al-'Aqd al-Farid*, as the disturbance of Ibn Zubayr.

After the death of Mu'awiyah, when the governor of Medina asked Ibn Zubayr to give allegiance to Yazid, he went to Mecca simultaneous with the departure of Imam al-Husayn ('a) so as to refuse giving his allegiance to Yazid. In Mecca, the people were not paying much attention to him. As such, it was not in Imam al-Husayn's ('a) favor to stay in Mecca. He therefore used to say to the Imam ('a): "If I were you, being invited by them, I would have gone to Iraq."

After the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a), he hoisted the banner of opposition to Yazid. As such, in 62 AH Yazid dispatched Muslim ibn 'Uqbah along with an army to repress the uprising of the people of Medina and 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr (in Mecca) first to Medina and then to Mecca. But after the event of Hirrah, Muslim died on his way to Mecca. Hasin ibn Numayr, his successor, arrived in Mecca with the army of Sham and in 64 AH they showered Mecca with catapulted stones of fire burning the clothe covering the Ka'bah.

During the course of the battle, however, the news of Yazid's death was reported in Mecca weakening the fighting spirit of the Sham army. Hasin advised Ibn Zubayr to pay allegiance to him, bring him to Sham and install him in the seat of power. Ibn declined this offer. After the death of Yazid, all the Muslim lands, with the exception of Jordan, paid allegiance to Ibn Zubayr as the caliph and recognized his government (in Mecca).

Yet, the Umayyads on the side of Marwan installed him as the caliphate. He in turn removed all those who opposed him in Sham along his way to power and after him, his son 'Abd al-Malik became the caliph. After defeating Mus'ab ibn Zubayr, 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr's brother, 'Abd al-Malik dispatched Hajjaj ibn Yusuf from Iraq to Mecca in order to repress 'Abd Allah.

For sometime, Hajjaj besieged Mecca, put catapults on top of Mount Abu Qubays, and destroyed the city of Mecca and the Ka'bah by showering catapulted stones. In this battle the supporters of 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr abandoned him, but 'Abd Allah resisted until he was finally killed. In this manner the work of 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr came to an end after 12 years. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Andalusi, *Al-'Aqd al-Farid* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1409 AH), vol. 4, p. 366; 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab* (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, pp. 78-96; Sayyid Ja'far Shahidi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye Islam ta Payan-e Umayyad* {An Analytical History of Islam till the End of the Umayyad Rule}, 6th edition (Tehran: Markaz-e Nashr-e Daneshgahi, 1365 AHS), p. 183.

2. Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 252.

3. Ibid., p. 256.

4. Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, pp. 85-86.

5. Ibid.

6. Abu Muhammad 'Abd Allah ibn Muslim ibn al-Qutaybah, *Al-Ma'arif*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1415 AH), p. 214.

7. The Hirrah uprising took place in 62 AH. Mas'udi identified the reason and source of it as the displeasure of the people toward the pervert practices of Yazid and the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a). In Medina which was the residential center of the relatives of the Prophet (S), the Companions and the Followers {tabi'un}, the people were agitated. The governor of Medina, 'Uthman ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Sufyan, who was a recklessly immature young man, sent a group of the prominent men of Medina in representation of the people of the city to Damascus in order for them to personally meet Yazid and receive his blessing so that upon their return to Medina, they can encourage the people to submit to his rule.

Pursuant to this design, 'Uthman sent off to Damascus a delegation of the leading figures of Medina in which 'Abd Allah ibn Hanzalah Ghasil al-Mala'ikah was also a part. Since he had no Islamic training or any policy of maintaining proper decorum, Yazid, without any inhibition, kept on his acts of perversion and debaucheries in front of them, though he gave them an extravagant reception and granted each of them previous gifts and robes of honor with the hope that they would praise him on their return to Medina. All these measures, however, had an opposite effect.

Upon their return to Medina, they announced in front of the people that they had been in the presence of a person who has no religion, drinks wine, plays on the tar and tambourine, plays with dogs, and engages in drinking spree overnight, while his musicians and lady singers are doing coquetry in his assemblage. Addressing the people of Medina, the members of the delegation said: "Now, bear witness that we deposed him (Yazid) from the office of the caliphate."

'Abd Allah ibn Hanzalah said: "I had been in the presence of a person against whom I will wage war with the support of these sons that I have, even if no one assists me. He gave me presents and gifts, and accorded me due respect, but I accepted his presents and gifts only for the intention of spending it in the campaign against him."

Following this trend, the people of Medina paid allegiance to 'Abd Allah ibn Hanzalah, and expelled from the city the governor of Medina and all the Umayyads residing there.

Having received this news, Yazid dispatched to Medina Muslim ibn 'Uqbah, who was a well-experienced man and among the stalwarts of the Umayyads, along with a large contingent of army. Yazid instructed him, thus: "Give them three days of respite. If they do not surrender, wage war against them. Once you emerge victorious, plunder whatever possession they have for three days and leave the same at the disposal of the soldiers."

The army of Sham attacked Medina and a bloody war between the two parties ensued. Finally, the people of Medina were defeated and the leaders of the movement were killed. Muslim issued the order of massacring the people of the city for three days. The army of Sham committed crimes which the pen is ashamed to describe. Because of these crimes, Muslim earned the labeled "musrif" {squanderer}. After the end of killing and pillage, Muslim obtained the allegiance of the people as slaves for Yazid. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Andalusi, *Al-'Aqd al-Farid*, vol. 4, p. 362; Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 250; Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 82; 'Izz ad-Din Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad

Abi'l-Kiram ibn Athir, *Al-Kamil fi't-Tarikh* (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1402 AH), vol. 4, pp. 102–103, 255–256.

[8.](#) Ahmad ibn Dawud Abu Hanifah ad-Daynuri, *Akhbar at-Tuwal* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Rida, n.d.), p. 266.

[9.](#) Ibn Athir, *Al-Kamil fi't-Tarikh*, vol. 4, pp. 158–186.

[10.](#) Akhtab Khwarazmi. *Maqtal al-Husayn* (Qum: Manshurat al-Mufid, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 202.

[11.](#) Rijal ibn Dawud (Qum: Manshurat ar-Radhi, n.d.), p. 277.

[12.](#) Sayyid Abu'l-Qasim al-Khu'i, *Mu'jam Rijal al-Hadith* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), vol. 18, pp. 102–103.

[13.](#) Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 267.

[14.](#) In 80 AH Hajjaj appointed 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Ash'ath as the governor of Sistan and Zabulistan, though the former was nursing a grudge against the latter. Hajjaj instructed Ibn Ash'ath to expel Ratbil who has assaulted Sistan.

'Abd ar-Rahman went there, dispatched an army to repress the aggressors, and restored peace and order to Sistan. After that, since Hajjaj was tired of him, Hajjaj ordered him again to face another enemy. Ibn Ash'ath and his soldiers interpreted it as a form of conspiracy of Hujjaj for them to be killed at the hand of the enemies. So, they defied Hajjaj and went toward Iraq instead. In Khuzistan a confrontation ensued between them and Hajjaj's army.

The army of Hajjaj was initially defeated and thus, 'Abd ar-Rahman was able to arrive in Iraq occupying Kufah. Many of the chiefs of Basrah also cooperated with him. Hajjaj sought the assistance of 'Abd al-Malik (the then Umayyad caliph based in Damascus). A legion of soldiers from Sham was dispatched to him, and with the arrival of this force, Hajjaj went back into the battle. In this fierce fighting, which later became to be known as the "Dayr al-Jumajum Event", the people of Kufah and Basrah, including Qur'an reciters {qaris}, assisted 'Abd ar-Rahman on account of their enmity toward Hajjaj.

The contingent of the son of 'Abd ar-Rahman was so large that 'Abd al-Malik, clearly worried, sent a message to the Iraqis expressing his willingness to remove Hajjaj if that is what they were demanding. The people of Iraq, however, did not accept the compromise announcing the dismissal of 'Abd al-Malik from the office of caliphate. In this manner, he declared war against them, deceiving a group of Ibn Ash'ath's army chiefs.

One night he launched a surprise assault against Ibn Ash'ath's army disintegrating them. As such, Ibn Ash'ath was forced to flee and seek asylum in Ratbil. Later Ratbil killed him, owing to gifts and promises made to him by Hajjaj, sending his head to Hajjaj. Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, pp. 148–149; Shahidi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye Islam ta Payan-e Umawi {An Analytical History of Islam till the End of the Umayyad Rule}*, pp. 185–186.

[15.](#) Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 187.

[16.](#) Abi Ja'far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn 'Ali (Shaykh) at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi) (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt at-Turath, 1404 AH), vol. 1, p. 335.

[17.](#) Shahab ad-Din Abi 'Abd Allah Yaqut Hamwi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, 1st edition (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1417 AH), vol. 7, p. 88.

[18.](#) Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Rustam at-Tabari, *Dala'il al-Imamah* (Najaf: Manshurat al-Matbu'at al-Haydariyyah, 1383 AH), p. 105.

[19.](#) Muhammad 'Abduh, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* (Cairo: Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, n.d.), vol. 4, p. 73.

Lesson 12: The Beginning of the 'Abbasid

Campaign and Its Effect upon the Spread of Shi'ism

The campaign of the 'Abbasids started in 111 AH. [1](#) On the one hand, it contributed to the spread of Shi'ism in the various territories of the Muslim world, and on the other, the acts of strangulation of the Umayyads were lessened. As a result, the Shi'ah were able to have a relative breathing space. During this period, the infallible Imams (‘a) laid down the Shi'ah juristic and scholastic foundations and Shi'ism entered a new stage.

In general, during the Umayyad period there was no split between the descendants of 'Ali (‘a) and the descendants of 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib and there was no quarrel between them. In this regard Sayyid Muhsin Amin says: "The descendants of 'Ali (‘a) and the descendants of 'Abbas during the Umayyad rule were treading the same path. The people who assisted them believing them to be more qualified to the caliphate than the Umayyads were known as the Shi'ah of Muhammad's (S) progeny.

During this period, there was no difference in religious opinion between the descendants of 'Ali (‘a) and that of 'Abbas. But when the 'Abbasids came to power, Satan hatched the seed of discord between them and the descendants of 'Ali (‘a), and they perpetrated numerous acts of oppression against the descendants of 'Ali (‘a). [2](#) For this reason, the 'Abbasid campaigners were calling the people to please the progeny of Muhammad (S) while recounting the states of oppression the Prophet's (S) progeny were enduring. Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani says:

After the killing of Walid ibn Yazid and the emergence of differences among the Marwanis (descendants of Marwan ibn al-Hakam), Banu Hashim's campaigners and propagandists went to various places, and the first thing they were expressing was the merits of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and his descendants. They said to the people: "How could the Umayyads afford to kill and displace the descendants of 'Ali?" [3](#)

As a result, during this period Shi'ism remarkably spread. Even the *hadiths* related to Hadrat al-Mahdi (‘a) spread rapidly among the people of various regions. Khurasan was the main sphere of activity of the 'Abbasid campaigners. For this reason, the Shi'ah numbers there increased rapidly to such an extent that, as narrated by Ya'qubi,

After the martyrdom of Zayd (ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn) in 121 AH, the Shi'ah in Khurasan were agitated and stirred up. The Shi'ah publicized their belief. Many of the 'Abbasid campaigners used to approach them and recount the crimes committed by the Umayyads against the progeny of the Prophet (S). This subject and news was imparted to people in every city in Khurasan by 'Abbasid campaigners who went there and dreams and aspirations in this regard were seen and books were taught. [4](#)

Mas'udi also narrates a subject which expresses the spread and prevalence of Shi'ism in Khurasan. He

thus writes: “In 125 AH when Yahya ibn Zayd was killed in Juzjan, the people named all the male infants born in that year were named Yahya.”[5](#)

The influence of the ‘Abbasids in Khurasan was greater as Abu’l-Faraj thus says while stating the profile of ‘Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib:

The Khurasani Shi‘ah thought that ‘Abd Allah was his father Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah’s heir and that he was the Imam, and appointed Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn al-‘Abbas as his successor, and that the successor of Muhammad, Ibrahim, was the Imam from whom the Imamate extends to the ‘Abbasids through inheritance.[6](#)

As such, the bulk of the ‘Abbasid army was constituted by the Khurasanis. In this regard, Muqaddasi says:

As God saw the oppression and injustice of the Umayyads against the family of the Prophet (S), He gathered an army from the different parts of that Khurasan and sent it to them at the darkness of the night. During the advent of the Mahdi there is more expectation from the people of Khurasan.[7](#)

Given this, the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) of the Prophet (S) had occupied a distinct position among the people such that after the victory of the ‘Abbasids, a person named Sharik ibn Shaykh al-Mahdi in Bukhara staged an uprising because of the ‘Abbasids’ acts of injustice against the progeny of the Prophet (S), saying: “We did not pay allegiance to them for us to commit oppression, shed the blood of people unjustly and commit acts against the truth.” He was repressed and killed by Abu Muslim.[8](#)

Shi‘ism during the Period of Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq **(‘a)**

The second period of the Imamate of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a) and the initial period of Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq’s (‘a) Imamate coincide with the ‘Abbasid campaigns and ‘Alawi uprisings such as that of Zayd ibn ‘Ali, Yahya ibn Zayd, and ‘Abd Allah ibn Mu‘awiyah—one of the grandchildren of Ja‘far ibn Abi Talib at-Tayyar[9](#)—and the emergence of Abu Muslim al-Khurasani as the deputy of the ‘Abbasid campaigners in Khurasan in inciting the people against the Umayyads.[10](#)

Meanwhile, the Umayyads had internal factional disputes and problems among their supporters because there was a serious clash between the Mudhiris and Yamanis among the Umayyad supporters in their respective spheres of influence.[11](#) These revolts and entanglements made the Umayyads negligent of the Shi‘ah.

As such, the Shi‘ah were able to enjoy a relative breathing space; relaxation from the state of intense dissimulation {*taqiyyah*}; reorganize themselves; and reestablish contacts with their leaders.

It was at this period when the people turned toward Imam al-Baqir (‘a) to benefit from the blessings of

which they had been deprived for many years. The Imam (‘a) rose up in order to keep alive the school {*maktab*} of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a). He (‘a) engaged in guiding and enlightening people conducting teaching sessions in Medina and Masjid an-Nabi in particular. He served as the reference authority for people, solving their scientific and juristic problems, as such his view served as proof for them. Qays ibn Rabi‘ narrates that he asked Abu Ishaq about wiping {*masa*} of slippers (during the performance of ablution {*wudhu*}) and Abu Ishaq said:

Like other people, I used to wipe my slippers (in ablution) until such time that I met a man from the Banu Hashim whose equal I have never met before. I asked him about the case of wiping the slippers (in ablution). He prohibited me from doing it, saying: “The Commander of the Faithful did not do it.” From then on, I stopped doing it.

Qays ibn Rabi‘ also says: “After hearing this statement, I also stopped wiping my slippers (in ablution).”

A certain man from among the *Khawarij* (Kharijites) came to Imam al-Baqir (‘a). While addressing the Imam (‘a), he said: “O Abu Ja‘far! What do you worship?” The Imam (‘a) said: “God.” The man asked: “Can you see Him?” The Imam (‘a) replied: “Yes, but the vision cannot witness Him while hearts with the truth of faith can see Him. He cannot be discerned through analogy {*qiyas*}. He cannot be perceived through the senses. He is not like human beings...” The Kharijite man left the Imam (‘a) while saying: “God knows well to whom He shall entrust His message {*risalah*}.”

The scholars such as ‘Amru ibn ‘Ubayd, Tawus al-Yamani, Hasan al-Basri, and Nafi‘ Mawla ibn ‘Umar used to refer to the Imam (‘a) for solving scientific and juristic problems and issues. [12](#)

When the Imam (‘a) would arrive in Mecca, people would rush to ask him questions on matters pertaining to the lawful {*halal*} and the prohibited {*haram*}, considering the chance of asking the Imam (‘a) a boon and a means of acquiring more knowledge. Imam al-Baqir’s (‘a) teaching sessions were attended not only by students but also the scholars of the time. [13](#) When Hisham ibn ‘Abd al-Malik arrived in Mecca for *Hajj*, he witnessed these teaching sessions that were an opportunity for him.

He sent someone to ask the Imam (‘a) on his behalf as to what the people will be eating on the Day of Judgment {*mahshar*}. In reply the Imam (‘a) said: “On the Day of Judgment there are trees whose fruits shall be eaten by the people and rivers whose water the people shall drink so as to feel easiness for the Reckoning.” Hisham again sent that person to ask the Imam (‘a), hence: “Shall the people have time to eat and drink?” The Imam (‘a) said: “Even in hell there shall be opportunity to eat and drink, and the dwellers of hell shall also ask for water and other graces of God.”

Zurarah (ibn A‘yan) says:

I, along with Imam al-Baqir (‘a), was sitting beside the *Ka‘bah*, while the Imam (‘a) was facing the *Ka‘bah*. The Imam (‘a) said: “Looking at the *Ka‘bah* is indeed an act of worship.” Then a certain man (from Bajilah) came and said: “Ka‘b al-Ahbar used to say: ‘The *Ka‘bah* prostrates to the Temple of Jerusalem everyday.’” The Imam (‘a) said to the man: “What do you think about what Ka‘b was saying?”

The man answered: “Ka‘b was telling the truth.” The Imam (‘a) was annoyed and retorted, saying: “No, you have lied and Ka‘b has lied.”[14](#)

Great ‘*ulama*’, jurists {*fuqaha*} and *hadith* scholars {*muhaddithun*} were trained under the blessed feet of the Imam (‘a), such as Zurarah ibn A‘yan about whom Imam as–Sadiq (‘a) said: “If it were not for Zurarah, there was a probability for the *hadiths* of my father to be lost forever.”[15](#)

Muhammad ibn Muslim heard thirty thousand *hadiths* from Imam al–Baqir (‘a).[16](#) Another scholar who learned from the Imam (‘a) was Abu Basir about whom Imam as–Sadiq (‘a) said: “Had it not been for them, the works of prophethood {*nubuwwah*} will be terminated and be antiquated.”[17](#)

Other prominent figures such as Yazid ibn Mu‘awiyah al–‘Ajali, Jabir ibn Yazid, Hamran ibn A‘yan, and Hisham ibn Salim were among those who were trained in the school {*maktab*} of the Imam (‘a).

In addition to the Shi‘ah scholars, many of the Sunni ‘*ulama*’ have also studied under the Imam (‘a) and narrated *hadiths* on the authority of the Imam (‘a). As Sabt ibn al–Jawzi says, “(Imam) Ja‘far used to narrate *hadiths* of the Prophet (S) from his father.” As such, a number of the Followers {*tabi‘un*} such as ‘Ata’ ibn Abi Rubah, Sufyan ath–Thawri, Malik ibn Anas (founder of the Maliki school of thought {*madhhab*}), Shu‘bah, and Abu Ayyub Sijistani have narrated *hadiths* from the Imam (‘a).[18](#)

Furthermore, thousands of learned men in jurisprudence and *hadith* attained progress in the Imam’s (‘a) school and his *hadiths* were spread far and wide so much so that Jabir al–Ju‘fi, who was a great *muhaddith*, has narrated seventy thousand *hadiths* on the authority of the Imam (‘a).[19](#) This state of affairs continued until Imam al–Baqir (‘a) attained martyrdom on Dhu’l–Hijjah 7, 114 AH.[20](#)

The University of Imam as–Sadiq (‘a)

In view of the then prevailing conducive political atmosphere, Imam Ja‘far as–Sadiq (‘a) pursued his father’s scientific movement and established a large university and center of learning whose horizon reached far and wide. Shaykh al–Mufid says:

The knowledge of the Imam (‘a) has been so widely narrated that it became proverbial to various many and its fame spread to every nook and corner. None of the progeny of the Prophet (S) match him (in this regard) whose knowledge and learning have been so widely transmitted.[21](#)

Amir ‘Ali thus writes about the Imam (‘a):

Those philosophical discussions and debates in all the Islamic centers became widespread and the guidance and instructions given in this regard were made possible only by the university that has been established in Medina under the supervision of Hadrat Sadiq, a great grandchild of Hadrat ‘Ali. He has been one of the great ‘*ulama*’ with precise views, a deep understanding, and well–versed in all the branches of knowledge of the time. In reality, it is he who is the founder of the rational academy in Islam.[22](#)

As such, those who were lovers of knowledge {*‘ilm*} and thirsty for the Muhammadan (S) gnosis {*ma‘rifah*} rushed from different parts of the then Muslim world to that heroic Imam (‘a) in multitude, and benefited from his abundant spring of knowledge and wisdom. Sayyid Ilahil says: “In Kufah, Basrah, Wasit, and Hijaz, people of every tribe sent their children to Ja‘far ibn Muhammad. Many of the Arabs and Persians, the people of Qum in particular, came to him.”[23](#)

In his *Al-Mu‘tabar*, the late Muhaqqiq (al-Hilli) thus writes:

During the period of Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) various branches of knowledge that were transmitted from him astonished the great thinkers. A group of about four thousand *rijali* scholars have narrated *hadiths* from him, and by his teachings a great number of people in the various sciences attained mastery to such an extent that his answers to their questions were compiled in four hundred books {*musannafat*}, which were called “*Usul*”.[24](#)

In his book, *Dhikra*, Shahid al-Awwal also says: “Four thousand people from Iraq, Hijaz, Khurasan, and Sham put into writing the answers of Abu ‘Abd Allah Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) to the questions.”[25](#)

In this manner, the seekers and lovers of knowledge and learning used to benefit from the Imam (‘a). Outstanding scholars in various branches of the revealed {*naqli*} and rational {*‘aqli*} sciences of the day such as Hisham ibn Hakam, Muhammad ibn Muslim, Aban ibn Taghlib, Hisham ibn Salim, Mu‘min Taq, Mufadhdhal ibn ‘Umar, Jabir ibn Hayyan, etc. were trained under the blessing of his presence.

Their compilations which are known as the *Usul Arba‘ami‘ah*, are the basis of the four Shi‘ah books on *hadith*, viz. *Al-Kafi*, *Man La Yahdharah al-Faqih*, *At-Tahdhib*, and *Al-Istibsar*.

The disciples of Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) were not all Shi‘ah as most of the Sunni scholars of the day have also studied under his guidance. Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, a Sunni author, thus writes in this regard: “The leading figures (in jurisprudence and *hadith*) such as Yahya ibn Sa‘d, Ibn Jarir, Malik, Sufyan ath-Thawri, Sufyan ibn ‘Uyaynah, Abu Hanifah, Sha‘bi, and Ayyub Sijistani have narrated *hadiths* on his authority.”[26](#)

Abu Hanifah, the founder of the Hanafi school of thought, has said:

I used to go to Ja‘far ibn Muhammad for sometime. I used to see him in one of the three conditions: either he was praying, in the state of fasting, or reading the Qur’an. I never saw him narrating the *hadith* without performing ablution.[27](#) The one superior to Ja‘far ibn Muhammad in knowledge, devotion and piety has not been seen by any eye, heard by any ear, or perceived by any heart.[28](#)

The Imam’s (‘a) teaching sessions were attended by those who later founded schools of jurisprudence attending as philosophers, as well as students of philosophy from far and wide. After learning the sciences from their Imam (‘a), they would return to their homelands and conduct teaching sessions of their own.

The Muslims used to gather around them and they in turn impart the teachings of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a)

propagating Shi'ism. When Aban ibn Taghlib would come to Masjid an-Nabi, the people would reserve for him the pillar against which the Prophet (S) used to lean, and he would narrate *hadiths* to them. Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) used to say to him: “Sit in the mosque of Medina and issue religious edicts to the people as I like persons like you to be seen among my Shi‘ah.”

Aban was the first person to have written something on the sciences of the Qur’an {*‘ulum al-Qur’an*} and he was also so well-versed in *hadith* that he used to sit in Masjid an-Nabi and the people would come and ask him. Through his various styles of speaking, he would answer them and impart the *hadiths* of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) to them.[29](#)

In *Mizan al-I’tidal*, adh-Dhahabi thus says regarding him: “If the *hadith* of individuals such as Aban who are accused of being Shi‘ah is rejected, a great part of the Prophetic works would have perished.”[30](#)

Abu Khalid al-Kabuli says: “I saw Abu Ja‘far Mu‘min Taq sitting in Masjid an-Nabi while the people of Medina gathered around him and posed their questions on jurisprudence {*masa’il*} to him and he would answer them.”[31](#)

Shi‘ism during that period was so spread that some people, in a bid to acquire social standing among the people, resorted to fabricating *hadiths* from the Imams (‘a) to draw people’s attention by interpreting the traditions in their own favor.

For example, Imam as-Sadiq (‘a)—in reply to one of his companions named Faydh ibn Mukhtar who asked about the reason behind the contradiction in *hadiths*—thus says: “These people are not seeking the pleasure of Allah in narrating the *hadiths* and expressing our views. They are rather seeking the world and each of them is aspiring to be leader.”[32](#)

Lesson 12: Summary

The ‘Abbasid campaign started in 111 AH. During that time, there was no division between the descendants of ‘Ali {*‘Alawi*} and the descendants of ‘Abbas ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib {*‘Abbasi*}. The Umayyads were busy repressing the ‘Abbasid uprisings as a result of which Shi‘ism spread remarkably.

Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) in this opportune time trained their disciples establishing the Jafari University, and many jurists {*fuqaha*} and scholastic theologians {*mutakallimun*} benefited from these two personages. Shaykh al-Mufid regards the number of the disciples of Imam as-Sadiq to be four thousand.

Lesson 12: Questions

1. What was the impact of the ‘Abbasid campaign upon the spread of Shi‘ism?
2. What was the trend of Shi‘ism during the period of Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq (‘a)?

3. How did Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) take advantage of the then existing opportune time?

- [1.](#) Ahmad ibn Abi Ya‘qub ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya‘qubi, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 319.
- [2.](#) Sayyid Muhsin Amin, A‘yan ash-Shi‘ah (Beirut: Dar at-Ta‘aruf Li‘l-Matbu‘at, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 19.
- [3.](#) ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu‘l-Faraj al-Isfahani, Maqatil at-Talibiyyin (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 207.
- [4.](#) Ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya‘qubi, vol. 2, p. 326.
- [5.](#) ‘Ali ibn Husayn ibn ‘Ali Mas‘udi, Murawwij adh-Dhahab (Beirut: Manshurat Mu‘assasah al-A‘lami Li‘l-Matbu‘at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, p. 236.
- [6.](#) Abu‘l-Faraj al-Isfahani, Maqatil at-Talibiyyin, p. 133.
- [7.](#) Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Ahmad Muqaddasi, Ahsan at-Ta‘asim fi Ma‘rifah al-Aqalim, trans. Dr. ‘Ali Naqi Manzawi (n.p.: Shirkat-e Mu‘allifan va Mutarjiman-e Iran, 1361 AHS), vol. 2, pp. 426–427.
- [8.](#) Ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya‘qubi, vol. 2, p. 345.
- [9.](#) Abu‘l-Faraj al-Isfahani, Maqatil at-Talibiyyin, vol. 2, p. 345.
- [10.](#) Ibn Wadhih, Tarikh al-Ya‘qubi, vol. 2, p. 332.
- [11.](#) Ibid., p. 333.
- [12.](#) Asad Haydar, Al-Imam as-Sadiq wa‘l-Madhahib al-Arba‘ah, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah, 1390 AH), vol. 1, pp. 452–453.
- [13.](#) ‘Allamah Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, 2nd edition (Tehran: Al-Maktabah al-Islamiyyah, 1394 AH), vol. 46, p. 355.
- [14.](#) Ibid.
- [15.](#) Abi Ja‘far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali (Shaykh) at-Tusi, Ikhtiyar Ma‘rifah ar-Rijal (Rijal Kashi) (Qum: Mu‘assasah Al al-Bayt at-Turath, 1404 AH), vol. 1, p. 345.
- [16.](#) Ibid., p. 386.
- [17.](#) Ibid., p. 398.
- [18.](#) Sabt ibn al-Jawzi, Tadhkirah al-Khawass (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radhi, 1376 AHS/1418 AH), p. 311.
- [19.](#) Muhammad Husayn Muzaffar, Tarikh ash-Shi‘ah. Qum: Manshurat Maktabah Basirati, n.d.
- [20.](#) Abi Ja‘far Muhammad ibn Ya‘qub ibn Ishaq Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1363 AHS), vol. 1, p. 472.
- [21.](#) Shaykh Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn an-Nu‘man al-Mufid, Al-Irshad, trans. Muhammad Baqir Sa‘idi Khurasani, 2nd edition (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-ye Islamiyyeh, 1376 AHS), p. 525.
- [22.](#) Amir ‘Ali, Tarikh-e Gharb va Islam {History of the West and Islam}, trans. Fakhr Da‘i Gilani, 3rd edition. Tehran: Intisharat-e Ganjineh, 1366 AHS), p. 213.
- [23.](#) Asad Haydar, Al-Imam as-Sadiq wa‘l-Madhahib al-Arba‘ah, 3rd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah, 1403 AH).
- [24.](#) Abu‘l-Qasim Ja‘far ibn al-Hasan ibn Yahya ibn Sa‘id Muhaqqiq al-Hilli, Al-Mu‘tabar (Lithography), pp. 4–5.
- [25.](#) Muhammad ibn Makki Shahid al-Awwal, Dhikra (Lithography), p. 6.
- [26.](#) Ahmad Ibn Hajar Haythami al-Makki, As-Sawa‘iq al-Mahriqah fi‘r-Radd ‘ala Ahl al-Bid‘a waz-Zindiqah, 2nd edition (Cairo: Maktabah al-Qahirah, 1385 AH), p. 201.
- [27.](#) Shahab ad-Din ibn ‘Ali Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani, Tahdhib at-Tahdhib, 1st edition (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1404 AH), vol. 1, p. 88.
- [28.](#) Asad Haydar, Al-Imam as-Sadiq wa‘l-Madhahib al-Arba‘ah, vol. 1, p. 53.
- [29.](#) Ibid., vol. 1, p. 55.
- [30.](#) Shams ad-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad adh-Dhahabi, Mizan al-I‘tidal (Beirut: Dar al-Ma‘rifah, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 4.
- [31.](#) Shaykh at-Tusi, Ikhtiyar Ma‘rifah ar-Rijal (Rijal Kashi), vol. 2, p. 581.
- [32.](#) Ibid., vol. 1, p. 347.

Lesson 13: The Shi'ah during the Period of 'Abbasid Caliphate

Shi'ism from the beginning of the 'Abbasid period (132 AH) up to the end of the minor occultation {*ghaybah as-sughra*} (329 AH) was a longer period compared to the Umayyad period. The Shi'ah were scattered in the furthest points of the vast Muslim land. For example, a complaint was lodged to (the 'Abbasid caliph) Harun (ar-Rashid) against Imam Musa al-Kazim ('a) for receiving *khums*¹ from east and west.²

When Imam 'Ali ibn ar-Ridha ('a) arrived in Nayshabur, two *hadith* keepers named Abu Zar'ah ar-Razi and Muhammad ibn Aslam at-Tusi came to the Imam ('a) along with innumerable groups of knowledge seekers and requested that he face them. The Imam ('a) faced them, in the presence of various classes of people, to narrate the *silsilah adh-dhahab hadith*. This *hadith* was recorded in 20 thousand books by different writers.³

Similarly, Imam ar-Ridha ('a), in reply to (the 'Abbasid caliph) Ma'mun who had many expectations from him after his (forced) acceptance of the heir-apparency, said: "...This affair (heir-apparency) has never added favor to me. When I was in Medina, amputation of the thief's hand was used to be implemented in the east and west."⁴

Also, the admission of the Sunni jurist {*fuqih*}, Ibn Abi Dawud, who was himself a stern enemy and adversary of the Shi'ah, is significant. Following the 'Abbasid caliph Mu'tasim preference of Imam al-Jawad ('a) view to that of the Sunni jurists regarding the amputation of the thief's hand, Ibn Abi Dawud privately reminded the caliph that in the presence of the courtiers, governors, ministers, and scribes he preferred the view of a person whose Imamate is acknowledged by half of the *ummah* to the view of all '*ulama*' of his assembly.⁵ Shi'ism had even penetrated the ranks of the governors and dignitaries of the 'Abbasid rule. As Yahya ibn Harthamah narrates,

The 'Abbasid caliph Mutawakkil dispatched me to summon Imam al-Hadi ('a) to Medina. When I arrived along with the Imam in Baghdad, I went to Ishaq ibn Ibrahim at-Tahiri, the governor of Baghdad. He said to me: "O Yahya! This man is the son of the Messenger of Allah (S). You also know Mutawakkil. If you would incite Mutawakkil to kill him, it is tantamount to declaring enmity with the Messenger of Allah (S)." I said: "I did not see anything in him but goodness." Then, I proceeded to Samarra. When I arrived there, I went first to Wasif Turki.⁶ He also said to me: "If even a single strand of hair is taken from this man, I shall call you to account."⁷

In the first volume of his book, Sayyid Muhsin Amin has identified as Shi'ah a number of 'Abbasid statesmen such as Abu Salmah Khalal,⁸ the first vizier of the 'Abbasid caliphate who was called the Vizier of the Prophet's Progeny {*wazir al Muhammad*}; Abu Bukhayr Asadi al-Basri, one of the prominent governors and emirs during the time of (the 'Abbasid caliph) Mansur; Muhammad ibn Ash'ath,

the vizier of Harun ar-Rashid, about whom there is a story during the detention of Imam al-Kazim (‘a) which demonstrates his being a Shi‘ah; ‘Ali ibn Yaqtayn, one of the viziers of Harun; Ya‘qub ibn Dawud, the vizier of the ‘Abbasid caliph Mahdi; and Tahir ibn Husayn Khaza‘i, the governor of Khurasan on behalf of Ma‘mun and conqueror of Baghdad on account of which Hasan ibn Sahl did not dispatch him to the Battle of Abi’s-Saraya.[9](#)

Among the Shi‘ah judges were Sharik ibn ‘Abd Allah an-Nakha‘i, the judge of Kufah, and Waqidi, the renowned historian, who was a judge during the time of Ma‘mun.[10](#)

Shi‘ism was so widespread even in the ‘Abbasid spheres of influence that it was considered a threat for them. For example, during the burial procession for Imam al-Kazim (‘a) Sulayman ibn Mansur, Harun’s uncle, participated in the procession barefooted in a bid to tone down the wrath of the Shi‘ah who formed an impressive assembly.[11](#) Also, when Imam al-Jawad (‘a) attained martyrdom and they wanted to bury him secretly, the Shi‘ah were informed of it. Armed with swords, twelve thousand of them went out and buried the Imam with due respect and dignity.[12](#)

During the martyrdom of Imam al-Hadi (‘a) there was also a large number of the Shi‘ah and the extent of their weeping and wailing was such that the ‘Abbasids were forced to bury him within the confine of his house.[13](#)

After the period of Imam ar-Ridha (‘a), the ‘Abbasid caliphs were so meticulous in respectfully treating the pure Imams (‘a) so as not to face the wrath of the Shi‘ah. As such, during the reign of Harun, Imam ar-Ridha (‘a) enjoyed relative freedom and he was able to attend to the scientific and cultural activities of the Shi‘ah, to even declare openly his Imamate and desist from practicing dissimulation *{taqiyyah}*, to discuss and converse with the followers of other schools and religions, and convince some of them. As Ash‘ari al-Qummi narrates, “During the time of Imam al-Kazim and Imam ar-Ridha (‘a) a number of Sunni and Zaydi divines embraced Shi‘ism and recognized the Imamate of these two Imams.”[14](#)

Some of the ‘Abbasid caliphs had strived to monitor the pure Imams (‘a) with the aim of controlling them. When the Imams (‘a) were asked to move from Medina, the caliphs had tried their best not to allow the Imams (‘a) to pass by the Shi‘ah-populated regions. Along this line, pursuant to Ma‘mun’s order, they brought Imam ar-Ridha (‘a) to Marv through the Basrah-Ahwaz-Fars route and not through the Shi‘ah-concentrated Kufah-Jabal-Qum route.[15](#)

As narrated by Ya‘qubi, when Imam al-Hadi (‘a) was brought to Samarra at the order of the ‘Abbasid caliph Mutawakkil, the ‘Abbasids who accompanied the Imam made a sojourn so to pass Baghdad by night to get to Samarra because as they arrived near Baghdad, they learned that a large group of people was waiting to meet the Imam.[16](#)

Since the Shi‘ah were mostly scattered across different regions and far-flung places during the ‘Abbasid period, the pure Imams (‘a) founded the proxy institutions of representation, appointing respective deputies and proxies in the different regions and cities to serve as a means of communication between

them and the Shi'ah.

This affair commenced at the time of Imam as-Sadiq ('a). When the caliph's apparatus gained a firmer grip over the pure Imams ('a) making Shi'ah's access to the Imam of their time more problematic, the institution of proxy and the role of the Imam's deputies gained more prominence.

It is thus recorded in the book, *Tarikh-e 'Asr-e Ghaybat* {History of the Minor Occultation}: "The most important of all is the enhancement and spread of the covert institution of deputyship—an institution which was founded during the time of Imam as-Sadiq ('a) and further developed during the time of 'Askariyyin."¹⁷

In this regard, Professor Pishva'i thus writes:

The critical conditions of the Shi'ah Imams during the 'Abbasid period prompted them to look for a new means of establishing and maintaining their contact with their followers. This new means was nothing but the communication network of representation and the Imam's appointment of deputies and trustees in the various regions.

The main function of this institution was the collection of *khums*, *zakat* {alms-rate}, *nadhr* {vow endowments}, and gifts {*hadaya*} from the various regions through the deputies and remitting the same to the Imam as well as for the Imam to reply to the ideological and juristic questions and issues of the Shi'ah and their political justification through the Imam's deputies. This institution had pivotal role in advancing the objectives of the Imams.¹⁸

The places where the infallible Imams ('a) had deputies and proxies are Kufah, Basrah, Baghdad, Qum, Wasit, Ahwaz, Hamedan, Sistan, Bast, Rey, Hijaz, Yemen, Egypt, and Mada'in.¹⁹

Shi'ism during the 4th century AH was spread from the east to the west of the Muslim world and was at the peak of its spread and growth as it had never experienced before such a magnitude of growth. The list of the Shi'ah-populated cities of the Muslim lands during that century presented by Muqaddasi points to this fact. Thus, we shall cite the facts from his book. Somewhere in his book, he says that many of the judges in Yemen, coast of Mecca and Sahar are Mu'tazilites and Shi'ah.²⁰

Accordingly, Shi'ism is so widespread in the Arabian Peninsula.²¹ Regarding the inhabitants of Basrah, it is stated that "Most of the inhabitants of Basrah are Qadiri, Shi'ah, Mu'tazilites, and then Hanbalis."²² During that century, the people of Kufah, with the exception of Kinasah, have been Shi'ah.²³ There are also a few Shi'ah in the Musul district.²⁴

The people of Nablus, Quds and most of Oman are Shi'ah.²⁵ The people of the upper village of Fustat and that of Sandfa are Shi'ah.²⁶ In the region along the Indus river the people of the city of Multan are Shi'ah, and this fact is evident in their *adhan* and *iqamah*.²⁷ In Ahwaz the conflict between the Sunnis and Shi'ah would lead to war.²⁸

By pointing to the rule of the Buyids and that of the Fatimids in Egypt, Maqrizi also writes: The *rafidhi* (Shi'ah) *madhhab* {school of thought} spread in Morocco, Sham, Diyar Bakr, Kufah, Basrah, Baghdad, the entire Iraq, Khurasan, Transoxiana,²⁹ as well as Hijaz, Yemen and Bahrain, and there were conflicts between them (Shi'ah) and Sunnis as a result of which those who were killed were countless.³⁰

During that century, there was a large number of Shi'ah even in Baghdad, the capital of the 'Abbasid caliphate to such an extent that they could openly perform their mourning ceremony on the day of 'Ashura. As Ibn al-Kathir says, "The Sunnis did not have the courage to stop this ceremony on account of the large number of the Shi'ah and the support of the Buyid government for them."³¹

During that time, the ground for the struggle of the Shi'ah was paved to some extent as many Muslim territories were under Shi'ah rulers. In the north of Iran, Gilan and Mazandaran, the 'Alawis of Tabaristan were ruling. In Egypt the Fatimids, in Yemen the Zaydis, in the north of Iraq and Syria the Hamdanis, and in Iran and Iraq the Buyids were in the helms of power.

Of course, during the periods of some 'Abbasid caliphs such as Mahdi, Amin, Ma'mun, Mu'tasim, Wathiq, and Muntasir, the Shi'ah had relative freedom of movement. At least, during the time of these caliphs the past repressions were mitigated. As narrated by Ya'qubi, the 'Abbasid caliph Mahdi had released Shi'ah and Talibis (descendants of Abu Talib).³²

The government of Amin unconsciously relaxed its suppression of and hostilities toward the Shi'ah, for a five-year period, mostly because of Amin's pleasure-seeking and his war with his brother Ma'mun. The 'Abbasid caliphs Ma'mun, Mu'tasim, Wathiq, and Mu'tadhad had Shi'i tendency, but Mutawakkil was one of the sternest enemies of the Prophet's descendants and their Shi'ah. Although the Shi'ah were out of control during his reign, he used to prohibit nevertheless the visitation to the tomb of Imam al-Husayn ('a).³³

Ibn Athir says:

Mutawakkil used to regard as his enemies the caliphs preceding him such as Ma'mun, Mu'tasim and Wathiq who used to express affection to 'Ali and his descendants. Persons such as 'Ali ibn Juhm (a poet from Sham), 'Umar ibn Faraj, Abu Samt—one of the descendants of Marwan ibn Abi Hafsah and sympathizers of the Umayyads—and 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn Dawud Hashimi who were regarded as Nasibis and enemies of 'Ali ('a), were his boom companions and associates.³⁴

During that period the Nasibi nonreligious poets had earned courage reciting poems against the descendants of the Prophet (S) in order to get closer to the (political) establishment of Mutawakkil. But Mutawakkil's successor, Muntasir, adopted a contrary policy and gave freedom of action to the Shi'ah, renovated the tomb of Imam al-Husayn ('a) and removed the prohibition on visiting it.³⁵ Hence, Bahtari, a poet during his period has thus said:

إِنَّ عَلِيًّا لَّأَوْلَىٰ بَكُمْ وَأَزْكَىٰ يَدَا عَنْكُمْ مِنْ عُمَرَ

Verily, 'Ali compared to 'Umar is nearer to you and he is purer.^{[36](#)}

'Abbasids Control over the Shi'ah Leaders

Up to 329 AH the 'Abbasid rule in general experienced two periods: ascendancy of Iranian viziers and officials, and prevalence of the Turkish army. Although during the period of the Turks the caliphate's apparatus was weak and most of the times the 'Abbasid caliphs were tools in the hands of the Turkish commanders, the government's general policy was anti-Shi'ism.

Owing to the great quantitative increase of the Shi'ah during the 'Abbasid period, the policy of the 'Abbasid caliphs was to exert control over the Shi'ah leaders although the caliphs differed in terms of treatment of the Shi'ah. Some of them such as Mansur, Hadi, Rashid, and Mutawakkil were despotic, cruel and bloodthirsty. Others such as Mahdi, Ma'mun and Wathiq did not have the stringency of their respective predecessors, and during their caliphate the Shi'ah had relative breathing space.

When Caliph Mansur sensed the danger posed by Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah and his brother Ibrahim, he apprehended and imprisoned his father, brothers and uncles.^{[37](#)} Mansur summoned Imam as-Sadiq ('a) to his court many times with the intention of killing the Imam ('a) but the will of God was other than that.^{[38](#)}

The 'Abbasid caliphs tried their best to remove the Shi'ah leaders who were their rivals. Mansur even gave money and dispatched to Medina a certain Ibn al-Muhajir so as to go to 'Abd Allah ibn al-Hasan, Imam as-Sadiq ('a) and a number of other 'Alawis, and to say to them that the sum of money comes from the Shi'ah of Khurasan, remit the same and take a receipt. Imam as-Sadiq ('a) reminded him that the Imam knows that he was sent by Mansur and asked him to relay to Mansur, thus: "The 'Alawis have been recently relived from the rule of the Marwanis and they are needy. Do not deceive and dupe them."^{[39](#)}

Asad Haydar says: "In order to have a pretext in eliminating Imam as-Sadiq ('a), Mansur resorted to various means; he wrote letters to the Imam by using the names of the latter's Shi'ah and sent goods to the Imam under the names of his Shi'ah. Yet, Mansur did not succeed in any of these ways."^{[40](#)}

When Mansur heard the news of the martyrdom of Imam as-Sadiq ('a), he wrote a letter to the governor of Medina, Muhammad ibn Sulayman: "In case Ja'far ibn Muhammad designated a certain person as the implementers of his will {*was'iyy*}, arrest him and cut off his head." In reply to the caliph's letter, the governor of Medina thus wrote: "Ja'far ibn Muhammad designated these five persons as the executors of his will: Abu Ja'far Mansur, Muhammad ibn Sulayman, 'Abd Allah, Musa, and Hamidah." Then Mansur said: "They cannot be killed."^{[41](#)}

Caliph Mahdi did not have his father's callousness toward the 'Alawis and Shi'ah. Ya'qubi narrates: "As soon as Mahdi assumed the caliphate, he ordered for the release of the imprisoned 'Alawis."[42](#)

As such, no 'Alawi uprising took place during his reign. Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani has mentioned only two persons who died during the period of Mahdi; one of them was 'Ali ibn al-'Abbas while the other was 'Isa ibn az-Zayd who transpired clandestinely and who used to live in hiding from the time of Mansur.[43](#)

During the reign of Caliph Hadi, intense pressure was exerted on the 'Alawis and Shi'ah figures. As Ya'qubi writes,

Hadi persisted on treating the Shi'ah and Talibis harshly, terrifying them extremely. He curtailed the right granted to them by Mahdi and wrote to the governors and rulers of the regions and cities to pursue and arrest the Talibis.[44](#)

In protest to the caliph's wrongdoings, Husayn ibn 'Ali, who was a descendant of al-Husayn (Shahid Fakh), staged an uprising. In that battle apart from Husayn a large number of the 'Alawis were killed.[45](#) This battle brought severe pressure to Imam al-Kazim ('a). Caliph Hadi threatened the Imam and thus said: "By God! Husayn (Shahid Fakh) staged an uprising against me at the order of Musa ibn Ja'far and he has followed him. It is because nobody could be the Imam and leader of this family except Musa ibn Ja'far. May God kill me if I let him live."[46](#)

Yet, the caliph failed to execute this threat due to the arrival of the time of his demise. During the second century *hijri*, Harun ar-Rashid was considered the most cruel caliph toward the 'Alawis and Shi'ah leaders after Mansur. Harun was despotic in relation to the 'Alawis and treated them cruelly.

He mercilessly killed Yahya ibn 'Abd Allah, Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah's brother, inside the prison after granting him amnesty. Similarly, there is a story recorded in *'Uyun Akhbar ar-Rida* that illustrates the extent of Harun ar-Rashid's cruelty. Hamid ibn Quhtabah at-Ta'i at-Tusi narrates:

One night Harun summoned me and ordered me, thus: "Take this sword and carry out this slave's order." The slave took me in front of a certain house whose door was closed. He opened the door. There were three rooms and a well in that house. He opened the first room and asked twenty *sayyids* (or *sadat*) (descendants of the Prophet (S)) who had long and woven hair to go out. Young and old could be seen among them. He tied this group with chains and manacles. Harun's slave then said to me: "The order of the Commander of the Faithful is for you to kill them."

They are from among the offspring of 'Ali ('a) and Fatimah ('a). I killed one after the other and the slave threw the corpses with heads to the well. Then I opened the second door. In that room there were twenty other people from the offspring of 'Ali and Fatimah. I did to them what I had done to the previous twenty persons.

Thereafter, the slave opened the third room in which there were twenty other *sayyids*. They also met the fate of the previous forty persons through me. Only an old man was left who looked at me and said: "O

sinister man! May God annihilate you! On the Day of Judgment, what excuse do you have in front of our forefather, the Messenger of Allah (S)?” At that moment, my hands trembled. The slave looked at me furiously and threatened me. I killed the old man and the slave threw his corpse into the well.[47](#)

Finally, though acknowledging the station of the Imam, Harun ar-Rashid arrested and imprisoned Imam al-Kazim (‘a) and in the end martyred him through poisoning.[48](#)

After the martyrdom of Imam al-Kazim (‘a) Harun ar-Rashid dispatched to Medina one of his commanders named Juludi so as to assault the houses of the descendants of Abu Talib, plunder the clothes of women and leave only one dress for every woman. Imam ar-Ridha (‘a) stood in front of the door and ordered the women to take their clothes.[49](#)

Ma’mun being the most clever of the ‘Abbasid caliphs devised a new method of controlling the Shi’ah leaders and Imams and that was to monitor the pure Imams (‘a). It was precisely one of the main motives of Ma’mun in superficially designating Imam ar-Ridha (‘a) as his heir-apparent. In the same token, Ma’mun adopted this policy in a different form in dealing with Imam al-Jawad (‘a).

He gave his daughter in marriage to the Imam so that he could monitor the Imam’s activities in Medina. The caliphs after Ma’mun adopted the same method and compelled the infallible Imams (‘a) to live in the capital of the caliphate. Even the tenth and eleventh Imams (‘a) became known as *‘Askariyyin* {soldiers} for living in Samarra which was a military city.

Lesson 13: Summary

Shi’ism spread more during the ‘Abbasid period than during the ‘Umayyad period. During that period, the Shi’ah were spread in both the east and west of the vast Muslim territory. During that time, Shi’ism had found its way among the statesmen, judges and military commanders. Even in Baghdad which was the capital of the ‘Abbasid caliphate and influence, the Shi’ah, on account of their great numbers, were deemed a serious threat to the ‘Abbasids.

It was for this reason that the caliphs tried their best to monitor and control the Shi’ah Imams. As such, from the time of Imam ar-Ridha (‘a) onwards they compelled the pure Imams (‘a) to live at the caliphate’s capital.

On account of the scattering of the Shi’ah in the various lands during this period, the pure Imams (‘a) utilized the institution of deputyship {*wikalah*}.

Finally, Shi’ism reached the height of its growth and spread during the fourth century. It was during this period when the Zaydi and Isma’ili states of the Buyids and Hamdanis were set up.

Of course, the ‘Abbasid caliphs differed from one another in their treatment of the Shi’ah. Mansur, Harun and Mutawakkil were among the most cruel caliphs in dealing with the Shi’ah.

Lesson 13: Questions

1. How was the spread of Shi'ism during the 'Abbasid period? And what role did the institution of deputyship {*wikalah*} play?
2. Briefly describe Shi'ism during the fourth century.
3. Did the 'Abbasid caliphs differ from one another in dealing with the Shi'ah?
4. What was the policy of the 'Abbasid caliphs in controlling the Shi'ah?

1. Khums: literally means one-fifth. According to the Shi'ah school of jurisprudence {*fiqh*}, this one-fifth tax is obligatorily levied on every adult Muslim who is financially secure and has surplus in his income out of annual savings, net commercial profits, and all movable and immovable properties which are not commensurable with the needs and social standing of the person.

Khums is divided into two equal parts: the Share of the Imam {*sahm al-Imam*} and the Share of the Sayyids/Sadat (descendants of the Prophet) {*sahm as-Sadat*}. Accordingly, the Share of the Imam is to be paid to the living Imam, and in the period of Occultation, to the most learned living mujtahid who is the giver's marja' at-taqlid {Source of Emulation}.

The other half of the khums, the Share of the Sayyids/Sadat, is to be given to needy pious Sayyids who lack the resources for one's year respectable living in consonance with their various statuses. For more information, see Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, Khums: An Islamic Tax, <http://www.al-islam.org/beliefs/practices/khums.html> [1]. {Trans.}

2. Shaykh al-Mufid, *Al-Irshad*, trans. Muhammad Baqir Sa'idi Khurasani, 2nd edition (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-ye Islamiyyeh, 1376 AHS) p. 581.

3. Shaykh as-Saduq, *'Uyun Akhbar ar-Rida*, (Qum: n.p., 1377 AH), vol. 2, p. 135.

4. 'Allamah Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, 2nd edition (Tehran: Al-Maktabah al-Islamiyyah, 1358 AH), vol. 49, p. 155.

5. *Ibid.*, vol. 50, p. 6.

6. Wasif Turki: one of the Turkish commanders.

7. 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, 1st edition (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 4, p. 183.

8. Of course, some authorities are of the opinion that if the evidence proving Abu Salmah as a Shi'ah is a letter addressed to Imam as-Sadiq ('a) regarding the proposal on caliphate, it is seemingly not a sufficient proof as they have considered it a (mere) political move. See Mahdi Pishva'i, *Sireh-ye Pishvayan*, 8th edition (Qum: Mu'assaseh-ye Tahqiqati va Ta'limati-ye Imam Sadiq ('a), 1378 AHS), p. 378.

9. Sayyid Muhsin Amin, *A'yan ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar at-Ta'aruf Li'l-Matbu'at, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 191.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 192–193. Of course, Waqidi's being a Shi'ah is a matter of dispute among the scholars.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

12. Asad Haydar, *Al-Imam as-Sadiq wa'l-Madhahib al-Arba'ah*, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1390 AH), vol. 1, p. 226.

13. Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 484.

14. Sa'd ibn 'Abd Allah al-Qummi Ash'ari, *Al-Maqalat wa'l-Firaq*, 2nd edition (Tehran: Markaz-e Intisharat-e 'Ilmi va Farhangi, 1360 AHS) p. 94.

15. See *Sireh-ye Pishvayan*, p. 478.

16. *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 503.

17. Sayyid Majid Pur Aqa'i, *Tarikh-e 'Asr-e Ghaybat* (Qum: Markaz-e Jahani-ye 'Ulum-e Islami, n.d.), p. 84.

- [18.](#) Sireh-ye Pishvayan, p. 573.
 - [19.](#) See Rijal-e Najjashi (Qum: Daftar-e Nashr-e Farhang-e Islami, 1404 AH), pp. 344, 797–800, 825, 847.
 - [20.](#) Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Ahmad Muqaddasi, Ahsan at-Ta’asim fi Ma’rifah al-Aqalim, trans. Dr. ‘Ali Naqi Manzawi (n.p.: Shirkat-e Mu’allifan va Mutarjiman-e Iran, 1361 AHS), vol. 1, p. 136.
 - [21.](#) Ibid., p. 144.
 - [22.](#) Ibid., p. 175.
 - [23.](#) Ibid., p. 174.
 - [24.](#) Ibid., p. 200.
 - [25.](#) Ibid., p. 220.
 - [26.](#) Ibid., p. 286.
 - [27.](#) Ibid., vol. 2, p. 707.
 - [28.](#) Ibid., p. 623.
 - [29.](#) Transoxiana {mawara’u’n-nahr (beyond the (Oxus) river)}: roughly corresponding to present-day Uzbekistan. {Trans.}
 - [30.](#) Taqi ad-Din Abi al-‘Abbas Ahmad ibn ‘Ali Maqrizi, Al-Mawa’iz wa’l-I’tibar bi Dhikr al-Khutut wa’l-Athar (famous as Al-Khutut al-Maqriziyyah), 1st edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1418 AH), vol. 4, p. 191.
 - [31.](#) Al-Bidayah wa’n-Nihayah (Beirut, 1966), vol. 11, p. 243.
 - [32.](#) Tarikh al-Ya’qubi, vol. 2, p. 404.
 - [33.](#) Abu Ja’far Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Rustam at-Tabari, Tarikh at-Tabari, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1408 AH), vol. 5, p. 312.
 - [34.](#) Ibn Athir, Al-Kamil fi’t-Tarikh (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1402 AH), vol. 7, p. 56.
 - [35.](#) Murawwij adh-Dhahab, vol. 4, p. 147.
 - [36.](#) Ibid.
 - [37.](#) Ibid., vol. 3, p. 324.
 - [38.](#) Ibn al-Jawzi narrates: When Mansur arrived in Medina from Mecca, he said to Rabi’ Hajab, “Summon Ja’far ibn Muhammad. May God kill me if I failed to kill him.” Rabi’ used to delay summoning the Imam. Finally, with Mansur’s insistence, Rabi’ summoned the Imam. When the Imam was present, he slowly moved his frankincense. He then went near Mansur and greeted him. Mansur said: “O enemy of God! May you be annihilated! Do you want to cause disorder within my jurisdiction? ...May God kill me if I would not kill you!”
- Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said: “Prophet Sulayman (Solomon) reigned yet he was grateful {to God}. Ayyub (Job) experienced affliction yet he remained patient. Yusuf (Joseph) was oppressed yet he granted forgiveness. You are their successor, and it is more appropriate for you to emulate them.”
- Mansur looked down and looked up again and said: “You are one of our nearest of kin.” So he embraced the Imam (‘a), let him (‘a) sit beside him and engaged in a conversation with him (‘a). He then said: “Bring right now the gifts and garment for Ja’far ibn Muhammad and let him go.”
- When the Imam (‘a) left, Rabi’ followed him and said: “I have been defending you for three days, acting moderately and reservedly. When you were presented to him, I saw that you were silently uttering something, and Mansur failed to harm you. As I am working with the ruler, I need that supplication. How I wish you would teach it to me.
- The Imam said: “Say:
- اللَّهُمَّ احْرُسْنِي بِعَيْنِكَ الَّتِي لَا تَنَامُ وَ اكْنُفْنِي بِكَتِفِكَ الَّذِي لَا يَرَامُ أَوْ يُضَامُ وَ اغْفِرْ لِي بِقُدْرَتِكَ عَلَيَّ وَ لَا أَهْلِكَ
وَ أَنْتَ رَجَائِي. اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ أَكْبَرُ وَ أَجَلُ مِمَّنْ أَخَافُ وَ أَحْذَرُ. اللَّهُمَّ بِكَ أَدْفَعُ فِي نَحْرِهِ وَ أَسْتَعِيدُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّهِ
- “O God! Protect me by Your eye that does not sleep and through the power that is free from affliction, protect me from perdition; for You are the source of my hope. O God! You have bestowed abundant blessings to me for which I failed to express gratitude. Yet, You did not deprive me of those blessings and in many cases You have afflicted me with calamities to which I showed little patience. You deliver me. O God! I seek protection in Your support and power of protection from his mischief and I seek refuge in You from his mischief.”
- Tadhkirah al-Khawas (Najaf al-Ashraf: Manshurat al-Matba’ah al-Haydariyyah wa Maktabha, 1383 AH), p. 344.
- [39.](#) Ibn Shahr Ashub Mazandarani, Manaqib Al Abi Talib (Qum: Mu’assasah Intisharat-e ‘Allameh, n.d.), vol. 4, p. 220.

- [40.](#) Al-Imam as-Sadiq wa'l-Madhahib al-Arba'ah, 3rd edition (1403 AH), vol. 1, p. 46.
- [41.](#) Abi 'Ali al-Fadhli ibn al-Hasan Tabarsi, l'Ilam al-Wara bi A'lam al-Huda (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt Li Ahya' at-Turath, 1417 AH), vol. 2, p. 13.
- [42.](#) Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 394.
- [43.](#) 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, Maqatil at-Talibiyyin (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), pp. 342-361.
- [44.](#) Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, p. 404.
- [45.](#) Maqatil at-Talibiyyin, p. 366.
- [46.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 48, p. 151.
- [47.](#) 'Uyun Akhbar ar-Rida (Qum: Dar al-'Ilm, 1377 AH), p. 109.
- [48.](#) l'Ilam al-Wara bi A'lam al-Huda, vol. 2, p. 34.
- [49.](#) A'yan ash-Shi'ah, p. 29.

Lesson 14: The Reasons behind the Burgeoning of the Shi'ah during the Period of 'Abbasid Caliphate

Shi'ism experienced ever-increasing expansion during the period of the 'Abbasid caliphate. This fact had some reasons and factors, some of which are the following:

1. The Hashimis and 'Alawis during the Period of Umayyad Caliphate

During the Umayyad period, the Hashimis—including both the 'Abbasids and the 'Alawis—were united, and from the time of Hashim when the 'Abbasid campaigns started and coordination with the uprising of Zayd and his son, Yahya, they commenced their tasks based on Shi'ism. As Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani says:

When Walid ibn Yazid, the Umayyad caliph, was killed, and there was disagreement among the Marwanis, the Hashimite propagators and campaigners went to the districts (rural areas) and the first thing they expressed was the superiority of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and his progeny as well as their being oppressed.

The 'Abbasid caliph Mansur was one of the first narrators of the *hadith* on Ghadir.^{[1](#)} As such, when some of the 'Abbasid forces saw that 'Abbasid policy turned against the 'Alawis, they did not accept it and opposed the 'Abbasids. For example, Abu Salmah Khalal, who was a leading campaigner of the 'Abbasids in Iraq,^{[2](#)} was killed by the 'Abbasids on account of his inclination toward the 'Alawis.^{[3](#)}

Although this person was not a Shi'ah ideologically, his inclination toward the progeny of the Prophet (S) cannot be denied especially that he belonged to the tribe of Hamdan and was a resident of Kufah.[4](#)

Among the Qahtani tribes, the tribe of Hamdan was preeminent in terms of inclination toward Shi'ism. As such, Sayyid Muhsin Amin has considered him (Abu Salmah) one of the Shi'ah viziers.[5](#) Even the 'Abbasids themselves did not refrain initially from expressing love toward the progeny of the Prophet (S):

When the head of Marwan ibn Muhammad, the last Umayyad caliph, was brought in front of Abu'l-'Abbas as-Safah, he performed a long prostration. He then rose up and said: "Praise be to God who made us victorious over you. Now, I do not worry when I shall die because on behalf of Husayn, his brothers and companions, I killed two hundred Umayyads. On behalf of my cousin, Zayd ibn 'Ali, I burned the bones of Hashim. On behalf of my brother, Ibrahim, I killed Marwan."[6](#)

After the stabilization of the 'Abbasid rule, on the one hand a gap emerged between them, and the progeny of the Prophet (S) and their Shi'ah on the other. From the time of the 'Abbasid caliph Mansur, the 'Abbasids adopted the attitude and policy of the Umayyads toward the progeny of the Prophet (S). In fact, they exceeded the Umayyads in their enmity toward the Prophet's progeny.

2. The End of the Umayyad Caliphate and the Succession to Power of the 'Abbasids

The end of the Umayyad period, the ascension to power of the 'Abbasids, and the disputes and conflicts between them were a good opportunity for Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq ('a) to propagate the fundamentals of Shi'ism considerably and to a great extent. This was especially true in the case of Imam as-Sadiq ('a) who trained students in different fields and sciences.

Many outstanding scholars such as Hashim ibn al-Hakam, Muhammad ibn Muslim, Aban ibn Taghlib, Hisham ibn Salim, Mu'min Taq, Mufadhthal ibn 'Umar, Jabir ibn Hayyan, and others were trained by the Imam. According to Shaykh al-Mufid, their companions all together totaled four thousand approximately in number.[7](#)

They used to come to Imam as-Sadiq ('a) from the different parts of the vast Muslim territory, bringing bounty and removing their doubts and skepticism. The Imam's students were scattered across various cities and regions and it is natural that they played an important role in the spread of Shi'ism to the various regions that they reached.

3. The Migration of the 'Alawis

One of the most important factors involved in the spread of Shi'ism during the 'Abbasid period was the migration and scattering of the *sadat* and 'Alawis across the different parts of the Muslim territories. Most of them had no faith other than Shi'ism. Although some of them had Zaydi inclination so much so that,

according to some sources, some of the *sadat* were even Nasibis,⁸ it can certainly be stated that most of the *sadat* had been Shi'ah, their suffering at the hands of anti-Shi'ah governments clearly substantiate this contention.

The *sadat* were scattered in many regions of the Muslim territories stretching from Transoxiana and India to Africa. Although these migrations had started during the time of Hajjaj (ibn Yusuf), they were accelerated during the 'Abbasid period owing to the uprisings of the 'Alawis that mostly ended in failure. The north of Iran and the difficult to reach regions of Gilan and Mazandaran as well as the mountainous places and far-flung lands of Khurasan were considered secure places for the 'Alawis.

For the first time, during the time of Harun ar-Rashid, Yahya ibn 'Abd Allah al-Hasani went to Mazandaran which was then called Tabaristan. Although he held power and flourished in his work, through his vizier Fadhl ibn Yahya who brought a letter, Harun was able to convince him to conclude a peace treaty.⁹ Many 'Alawis settled there after him and Shi'ism spread there day by day.

The people there embraced Islam through the 'Alawis so much so that during the second half of the third century AH, the 'Alawi rule in Tabaristan was established by Hasan ibn Zayd al-'Alawi. At the time, it is regarded as a conducive place for the *sadat* just as Ibn Asfandiyar says,

...At the time, so many 'Alawi and Hashimite *sadat* from Hijaz, suburbs of Sham, and Iraq went to him. Verily, he had so much authority there that whenever he would ride, three hundred 'Alawis armed with swords were around him.¹⁰

When Imam ar-Ridha ('a) was appointed by Ma'mun as his heir-apparent, the brothers and relatives of the Imam went to Iran. As Mar'ashi writes:

Because of the rumor of the heir-apparency spread by Ma'mun about the Imam ('a), many *sadat* came here (Iran) and the Imam had twenty one brothers. This group of the Imam's brothers and {their} sons consisting of Hasani and Husayni *sadat* arrived in the villages of Rey (old Tehran) and Iraq.

And as they heard of the treachery Ma'mun committed against Hadhrat Ridha, they took refuge in the mountainous Daylamistan and Tabaristan. Some of them were martyred and their tombs and shrines are famous and since the people of Mazandaran were directly Shi'ah when they embraced Islam and believed in the goodness of the descendants of the Prophet (S), *sadat* were held in high esteem there.¹¹

After the failure of the uprising of Shahid Fakh, Husayn ibn 'Ali al-Hasani during the time of 'Abbasid caliph Hadi, Idris ibn 'Abd Allah, brother of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah went to Africa. The people there rallied around him and he set up the rule of the Idrisis in Maghrib. Although he was poisoned soon after that by 'Abbasid agents, his sons ruled there for a period of about one century.¹²

As such, the *sadat* became familiar with the mentioned settlement. It was for this reason that the 'Abbasid caliph, Mutawakkil, wrote a letter to the governor of Egypt asking him to expel the 'Alawi *sadat* with the payment of 30 dinars for every male and 15 dinars for every female. They were transferred to

Iraq and from there they were sent to Medina.^{[13](#)}

Muntasir also wrote the following to the governor of Egypt: “No ‘Alawi could own property; he could not ride on horse; he could not move away from the capital; and he could not have more than one attendant.”^{[14](#)}

‘Alawis could easily occupy a distinguished status among the people to such an extent that they could assume an air of dignity vis-à-vis the ruling authority. As Mas‘udi narrates, “Around 270 AH, one of the Talibis named Ahmad ibn ‘Abd Allah staged an uprising in the Sa‘id region of Egypt. But he was finally defeated and killed by Ahmad ibn Tulun.”^{[15](#)}

In this manner, the ‘Alawis were considered to have constituted the most important challenge for the ‘Abbasid caliphate. In 284 AH the ‘Abbasid caliph Mu‘tadhad decided to issue an order for Mu‘awiyah to be cursed on the pulpits. In this regard, he wrote an order but his vizier warned him of the public commotion. Mu‘tadhad said: “I will brandish my sword in their midst.” The vizier replied:

Then, what shall we do with the Talibis who are present everywhere, and with whom the people are sympathetic on account of love for the progeny of the Prophet (S)? This order of yours will praise and accept them, and as the people will hear it, they will tend to be more sympathetic with them (the Talibis).^{[16](#)}

The ‘Alawis were respected by the people in every region they were residing. It was for this reason that after their deaths, the people used to build mausoleums and shrines on their graves as they used to gather around them (‘Alawis) during their lifetime. When Muhammad ibn Qasim al-‘Alawi went to Khurasan during the caliphate of Mu‘tasim, about four thousand people gathered around him after only a short period and housed him inside a very formidable stronghold.^{[17](#)}

On one hand, the ‘Alawis were generally good and pious people while the transgression of the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid rulers were known to the people. On the other hand, the oppression experienced by the ‘Alawis made them occupy a special place in people’s hearts. As Mas‘udi has narrated, “During the year when Yahya ibn Zayd was martyred, every baby that was born in Khurasan was named either Yahya or Zayd.”^{[18](#)}

The Reasons behind the Emigration of the Sadat

Three factors can be identified with respect to the migration and scattering of the *sadat* in the different parts of the Muslim territories: (a) the defeat of the ‘Alawi uprisings; (b) the pressure exerted by the agents of the government; and (c) the existence of good opportunities for migration.

a. The Defeat of the ‘Alawi Uprisings

As a result of the defeat of the uprisings staged by the ‘Alawis, they could not stay in Iraq and Hijaz

which were accessible to the capital of the caliphate, and they were forced to go to far-flung places and thus save their lives. As Mas'udi says about the scattering of the brothers of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah,

The brothers and children of Muhammad Nafs az-Zakiyyah were spread across diverse lands and called on the people to accept his leadership. His son, 'Ali ibn Muhammad, went to Egypt where he was killed. His other son, 'Abd Allah went to Khurasan where he was imprisoned and later died in prison. His third son, Hasan, went to Yemen where he was also put behind bars and died there. His brother, Musa, went to Mesopotamia. His brother, Yahya, went to Rey and then proceeded to Tabaristan. Another brother of his, Idris, went to Maghrib and the people rallied behind him... [19](#)

b. Pressure Exerted by Governments Agents

In the regions of Hijaz and Iraq which were near the capital, the 'Alawis were constantly under pressure exerted by government agents. As narrated by Mas'udi, Muhammad ibn Qasim al-'Alawi's travel from Kufah to Khurasan prompted the pressure exerted by the agents of the 'Abbasid caliph Mu'tasim. [20](#)

c. Existence of Favorable Circumstances

Another factor for the migration of the 'Alawis was the existence of pleasant opportunities and their good social standing in the regions such as Qum and Tabaristan.

Lesson 14: Summary

The reasons and factors behind the spread of Shi'ism during the 'Abbasid period are as follows:

1. The Hashimis—including both the 'Abbasids and the 'Alawis—were united up to the period of Mansur and the first thing expressed by the 'Abbasid campaigners was the superiority of 'Ali ('a).
2. During the time of the bloody confrontations between the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids, it was a good opportunity for Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq ('a) to undertake considerable activities in propagate the fundamentals of Shi'ism.
3. One of the most important factors for the spread of Shi'ism was the migration of *sadat* and 'Alawis and their scattering across diverse parts of Muslim territories. The *sadat* were spread in most parts of the Muslim territories extending from Transoxiana and India to Africa.
The people of Tabaristan were among those who embraced Islam through the Husayni *sadat* and were Shi'ah from the very beginning.

Lesson 14: Questions

1. Enumerate the factors for the increase in the Shi'ah numbers during the 'Abbasid period.

2. What is the impact of the migration of the 'Alawis upon the spread of Shi'ism?

3. What were the reasons behind the migration of the 'Alawis?

1. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1416 AH), p. 207.
2. Khatib Baghdadi, *Tarikh Baghdad*, 1st edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1417 AH), vol. 12, p. 340.
3. After the death of Ibrahim Imam, Abu Salmah Khalal who was a leading campaigner in Iraq and later became a vizier of Safah turned against the 'Abbasids. Thus, he wrote letters to the three prominent figures of the 'Alawis: Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq ('a), 'Abd Allah ibn Hasan ibn Hasan ibn 'Ali ('a), and 'Amr ibn al-Ashraf ibn Zayd al-'Abidin and entrusted these letters to one of his friends with this instruction: "Go first to Ja'far ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq ('a) and should he accept it, then give the other two letters. And if he does not accept, you meet 'Abd Allah Mahdh, and if does not accept too, you have to approach 'Amr.

The messenger of Abu Salmah first went to Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad ('a) and gave the letter of Abu Salmah to the Imam. Hadhrat Sadiq ('a) said: "What is our business with Abu Salmah who is a follower {shi'ah} of others?" The messenger replied: "Kindly read the letter." Imam as-Sadiq ('a) asked his attendant to give him a lamp. The Imam then placed the letter just above the lamp and it burned! The messenger asked: "Will you not give a reply?" The Imam retorted: "The reply for it is what you saw!"

Thereafter, the messenger of Abu Salmah went to 'Abd Allah ibn Hasan and handed to him the letter. As soon as 'Abd Allah finished reading the letter, he kissed it and immediately went to Imam as-Sadiq ('a) and said: "This letter received through one of our Shi'ah from Khurasan is from Abu Salmah who is inviting us to the caliphate. The Imam said to 'Abd Allah: "Since when have the people of Khurasan become your Shi'ah? Have you sent Abu Muslim to them? Do you know any of them? You don't know them and they don't know you, how did they become your Shi'ah?"

'Abd Allah said: "Your statement indicates your opinion regarding this matter!" The Imam said: "God knows that I regard it incumbent upon myself to wish well for every Muslim; how could it be that I would not do so toward you? O 'Abd Allah! Keep aloof from these false ambitions, and you should know that this state will remain in the hands of the 'Abbasids and that a similar letter has been sent to me. Being displeased, 'Abd Allah left Imam as-Sadiq ('a).

'Amr ibn Zayd al-'Abidin also acted negatively toward the letter of Abu Salmah. He refused to accept it and said: "I do not know the sender of the letter to whom I should reply."

See Ibn Taqtaqa, *Al-Fakhri* (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1368 AH), p. 154; 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab* (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 4, p. 280.

4. Sayyid Muhsin Amin, *A'yan ash-Shi'ah* (Beirut: Dar at-Ta'aruf Li'l-Matbu'at, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 190.
5. Ibid.
6. *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 4, pp. 283-284.
7. Shaykh al-Mufid, *Al-Irshad*, trans. Muhammad Baqir Sa'idi Khurasani (n.p.: Kitabfurushi-ye Islamiyyeh, 1367 AHS), p. 525.
8. Ibn 'Anbah, *'Umdah at-Talib* (Najaf: Matba'ah al-Haydariyyah, 1961), pp. 71, 200, 253.
9. *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, pp. 389-395.
10. Mar'ashi, *Tarikh Tabaristan wa Rawayan* (Tehran: Nashr-e Kostareh, 1363 AHS), p. 290.
11. Ibid., pp. 277-278.
12. *Maqatil at-Talibiyyin*, pp. 406, 409.
13. Adam Mitch (?), *Tamaddun-e Islami dar Qarn-e Chaharum-e Hijri* {Islamic Civilization in the Fourth Century Hijri}, trans. 'Ali Rida Dhakawati Qaragzeli (Tehran: Mu'assaseh-ye Intisharat-e Amir Kabir, 1364 AHS), p. 83, citing Kandi, *Al-Walah wa'l-Qadhah*, p. 198.
14. Ibid., quoting from *Al-Walah wa'l-Qadhah*, pp. 203-204.

[15.](#) Murawwij adh-Dhahab, vol. 4, p. 326.

[16.](#) Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Rustam at-Tabari, Tarikh at-Tabari, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1408 AH), vol. 5, p. 620-625.

[17.](#) Murawwij adh-Dhahab, vol. 4, p. 60.

[18.](#) Ibid., vol. 3, p. 236.

[19.](#) Ibid., vol. 3, p. 326.

[20.](#) Ibid., vol. 4, p. 60.

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