

The Birth

At dawn, on the 15th Sha'ban 255 A.H., the rays of the illuminating world shone with a powerful shaft of light into a human form which became the source of existence for the universe.

Yes, finally the Divine Promise was fulfilled and Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) was born in spite of the efforts of those who denied him.

It is one of history's miracles that the Umayyids 'Abbasides and other opponents of this Holy Imam attempted to extinguish this divine light but met with complete failure.

The cruel and tyrannical caliphs of the Bani 'Abbas had heard that the Twelfth Imam of the Shi'ites would establish a just Government and would rule over the east and west of the world, and would destroy the foundations of injustice. Therefore, to counter this event, they tortured and shed the blood of the Shi'ites as much as they could. The conditions of the martyred Shi'ites can be referred in the books on this subject.

In the year 235 A. H., Mutawakkil, the 'Abbasid caliph, ordered the Tenth Imam Muhammad al-Hadi (a.s.) and his family to be shifted from Medina to Samarra', his seat of government, so that he could keep a close watch on the Imam of the Shi'ites.

Similarly, Mu'tamid, the 'Abbasid caliph, the Pharaoh of the time, was afraid of the son of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.). He formed a group of detectives and midwives who had the mission of frequently searching through the houses of the 'Alawiyyin, and especially the house of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.), so that if a newly-born child were found, he could be killed immediately.

The search to find and kill Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) was intensified when Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) left this world for the eternal one. This is because everyone knew that on that day the command of Divine Leadership (Imamate) was to be entrusted to the Twelfth Imam, and the universe would come under his authority.

Shaykh Saduq, the eminent scholar of the Shi'ite world, writes in *Kamalu 'd-din*:

"When the holy body of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) was buried and the people went away, the caliph and his comrades started their efforts to search for his growing son and inspected the houses carefully."

Shaykh Mufid, a distinguished Shi'ite scholar, also wrote in *Irshad*:

"When Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) passed away, the caliph of that time, pursued his son because the Shi'ite Imamiyyah's belief was famous and was spread about that the Shi'ites were awaiting His Eminence."

Mu'tadid one of the tyrant 'Abbasid caliphs who ruled from 279 to 289 A H., decided all at once to destroy the entire family of al, Askari when he heard that more than twenty years had passed since the birth of the son of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s) and that he was still living in spite of the attempts of the preceding caliph to kill him.

One of Mu'tadid's officers said:

"Mu'tadid has ordered me and two other persons, each of us to mount a horse and to proceed to Samarra' in full speed without even stopping for prayer. He gave us the address of (Imam) al- Askari and instructed us to enter his house without his permission and to bring him the head of whoever we find there."

As a matter of fact, they were unaware that the same power which had protected the Imam from the former caliphs would give him protection from his evil, because:

Allah disdains (nothing) save that He shall perfect His light, however much the disbelievers are averse. (Qur'an, 9:32)

Indeed what an immature thought and foolish act it was! If the Divine Will bears on some matter, can a person revolt against it and combat it? Is it possible that definite Divine Promises may not be compiled with? Or is it possible that the reins of oppressive imposters who fight against the Divine decree will not cut?

Is it not more amazing that Peerless, Almighty Allah has shown His power many times before, so that after that all men should know that if He wishes to give His chosen servant government and sovereignty and to destroy in fidelity and irreligiousness through him, then there is no one who can disrupt His rule?

Fortunately, this sensational story is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. Pharaoh, the great emperor of Egypt, who had great power and pride, claimed the divinity for himself. He determined to kill all the youths and boy children of Bani Isra'il as a result of what he had heard about a son being born who would destroy his empire and divinity.

He shed the blood of innocents, and banished many persons to unknown regions; but see how Almighty Allah restored His Prophet and how the Divine Will worked to protect the life of Musa (Moses – a.s.) and

destroy Pharaoh:

And We revealed to the mother of Musa, saying, "Give him suck; and if you fear for him, launch him on the river. and fear not, nor grieve; for We will return him to you and make him one of the Messengers." And took him up Pharaoh's people, that he might be to them an enemy and a (cause of their) grief (for) verily Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts were sinners. . . So We did restore him to his mother that her age might be refreshed and that she might not grieve, and that she might know that the promise of Allah is (always) true, but most of them know not.

(28:7- 13)

Yes, Allah will protect His Proof (*Hujjah*) and will fulfil His promises and glad tidings because His decision is based on its execution, although most people do not know it.

Would Allah wish to save the life of Prophet Musa (a.s.), who was only a messenger to a certain nation and tribe, and yield the Imam of the Age (*Imam az-Zaman*) into the hands of Mu'tamid and Mu'tadid?

Would Allah protect the life of Musa (a.s.) while he was in the middle of the roaring waves of a river, and give no security to the Imam of the Age who was in the house of his father, Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.)?

Would the Sustaining Allah of the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham – a.s.) (Whose story is mentioned in the Qur'an) protect Ibrahim (a.s.) in the middle of the flaming fire, but allow the Last Pearl of the Prophet's progeny to be a victim of the lust and anger of the 'Abbasid caliphs?

Really, how do false thinkers and feebleminded people judge?

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At dawn, on the middle day of Sha'ban in the year 255 A.H., Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) beheld the heavenly, shining face of his son who was to fulfil all Divine promises and glad tidings.

Not more than three days had passed after his birth when the Eleventh Imam took the holy child to his companions and told them:

"After me this will be your master of authority and my successor, and he is the Support, (*al-Qa'im*) for whose appearance all people will wait; when the earth is full of injustice and tyranny, he will fill it with peace and justice."

At the time of his son's birth, the Eleventh Imam told some of his companions:

"Oppressors were plotting to kill me so that my son would not be born, but now see how great is the power of the All-powerful."

Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) , ordered ten thousand pounds (10,000 lbs.) of bread and meat to be distributed among the Banu Hashim to mark the happy and auspicious birthday. 'Uthman ibn Sa'id was charged with this important work which he undertook in the best way.

From the very beginning; Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) hide his son from strangers.

Read carefully these words of Shaykh Mufid, part of which was quoted above.

"Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) prepared a true Government for his fruitful son. He kept secret the birth of his son and other related matters, because His Eminence was living in a difficult time when the caliphs were intensively searching for his son and were keeping a close eye on the affairs of Imam al-'Askari. This is because the Shi'ite Imamiyyah belief about the Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) had become so current that they were waiting for His Eminence. Hence, Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.) did not show his son, and, therefore, the enemies could not recognize Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) after the demise of His Eminence (father)."

Although the affairs of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) were unknown to his enemies and opponents, the sincere Shi'ites gathered the news of this important event.

Some of them were informed by Imam al-'Askari (a.s.) through a letter. One of the sincere Shi'ites, Ahmad ibn Is'haq, received a letter from the Imam written in his own handwriting, saying:

"A son is born to me. Therefore, keep secret the news of it from people and inform only his near relatives and particular friends."

Some of the Shi'ites used to pay private visits to Imam al-'Askari (a.s.) who would take them into the presence of the Twelfth Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.) who would guide them. Abu 'Umari and Ahwazi reported:

"Abu Muhammad (Imam Hasan al-'Askari -a.s.) showed me his son (the Twelfth Imam) and told me, 'This is your Master (sahib).'"

Some other Shi'ites used to visit Imam al-'Askari (a.s.) in a group, and if the Imam trusted in them that they would faithfully keep their visit secret, he would show them his beloved son.

Mu'awiyah ibn Hakim, Muhammad ibn Ayyub and Muhammad ibn 'Uthman 'Umari have narrated that:

"We were forty persons who gathered at the house of Imam Hasan, then His Eminence showed us his son and said to us, 'This is your Imam and my successor. You should obey him after me and should not oppose him lest you perish.'"

Anyhow, from the time of the birth of the Twelfth "moon" till his Imamate, the Shi'ites used to go to the

Eleventh Imam and congratulate him.

Hasan ibn Hasan al-'Alawi said:

"I went to see Imam Hasan (al-'Askari) in Samarra' and congratulated him on the birth of his son."

And 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas al-'Alawi also said:

"I visited Imam al-'Askari (a.s.) in Samarra' and congratulate him on the birth of his son."

Yes, in this manner was the Imam of the Age (*Imam az-Zaman*) born and kept hidden from the reach of strangers. On some occasions only were virtuous Shi'ites allowed to see him, until the year 260 A H., when the Eleventh Imam expired, and by Divine decree the office of Divine Leadership (Imamate) was vested in the Master of the Authority (*Sahibu 'lAmr*).

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