



# Bedtime Stories

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## IMAM MUHAMMAD BIN ALI AL-TAQI (A.S.)

Imam Muhammad bin Ali al-Taqi (a.s.) is our ninth Imam in the line of twelve Imams. His father was Imam Ali bin Musa al-Riza (a.s.) and his mother was Sabika, a Nubian slave. She was related to Ummul Muminin Maria Qibtia, mother of Ibrahim, son of the Holy Prophet, who died in childhood.

Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) was born on 10<sup>th</sup> of Rajab in 195 *hijra* at Madina during the reign of Abbaside ruler Amin.

His famous titles were Abu Jafar and al-Taqi (a.s.). He was also known as al-Jawad.

Imam Ali al-Riza's sister said: "One day my brother requested me to stay the night because by the grace of Allah, Sabika was going to give birth to a son and he wanted me to make the necessary arrangements. I was delighted with his orders and was proud of the honour. Other

women were also present to help me with the arrangements. After midnight, the radiant son, Imam Muhammad al-Taqi was born. I took him in my lap and placed him in a basin to bathe him. The lamp which was burning near the basin, went out, but to my surprise, there was absolutely no darkness and in that spiritual light and splendour I continued the service without any interception. Meanwhile my respected brother came and I put the baby in his lap. He kissed the baby's hand and eyes, returned him to me and instructed me to stay with the baby for 3 days.

I remained there for 3 days. For the first 2 days Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) did not open his eyes. On the third day Imam (a.s.) opened his eyes and looked towards the sky and recited *kalima* (I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah). Immediately I ran to my brother and told him the whole incident. He was delighted and with a faint smile said: 'Sister, this son of mine is the symbol of Allah

on earth therefore there should be no surprise at the occurrence of a supernatural miracle.”

Before the birth of Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) the members of waqifia sect started voicing hostility and opposition against Imam Ali al-Riza (a.s.). These misguided people said in clear terms that Imam Ali al-Riza (a.s.) was (God forbid) barren and a barren man could not be an Imam.

One of the men from the waqifia sect wrote a letter to Imam Ali al-Riza (a.s.): “How will you provide an Imam when you have no son.”

Imam Ali al-Riza (a.s.) replied: “Who tells you that I will have no son? By Allah, a few days and nights will pass before Allah shall give me a male child who will distinguish the truth from falsehood.”

And when Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) was born, Imam Ali al-Riza (a.s.) happily announced to his people saying: “This saintly

and unique son has given me a sense of satisfaction and courage. And now it is confirmed that Imam can never be a barren person.” And he brought his new born son Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) and asked one of them to remove the baby’s shirt and look closely between his shoulders. He saw a ring like a seal engraved within the flesh. Then Imam said: “I too have a similar mark on the same spot and so does my father, Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.)”

Once Imam Ali al-Riza (a.s.) was travelling to Khurasan. He ordered one of his companions that if there was any difficulty, it was not necessary to write to him and ask question. You should refer to this young child who will be the Imam after me. Some of them expressed their surprise saying that it was not possible because the Imam was only 3 years old. Imam replied: “God appointed Jesus Christ as the Prophet when he was even younger than Imam Muhammad al-Taqi. So age and years do not have any effect on prophethood and *imamat*.”

This answer of Imam al-Riza sealed their lips. Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) undertook the responsibility of *imamat* at the age of 9 years.

The uncle of Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) was greatly respected among the people. Whenever he would go to the mosque, people would question him about their problems. One day while he was talking to the people, Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) entered the mosque, His elderly uncle got up from his place and kissed the Imam's hands. Imam Muhammad al-Taqi as requested his uncle to sit down. He replied: "How can I sit while you are standing." When he returned among his friends they asked him "Why you respect him that way when you are his uncle as well as older than him." He replied: "Be quiet, *imamat* is an office and a station from Allah. He did not think this old man fit and capable for the leadership but considered this child capable of it. You must all obey his commands."

Imam al-Riza (a.s.) had to face opposition

by the waqifia sect about Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.). At the same time he also had to face great hardships due to the attitudes of his own relatives.

These relatives realised that the birth of Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) frustrated their hopes of many years that after the death of Imam al-Riza (a.s.) they would inherit all the properties and estate which belonged to him. They alleged that since Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) did not resemble Imam Ali al-Riza (a.s.) in complexion, it could be assumed that certainly Imam Ali al-Riza (a.s.) had proclaimed Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) as a son mainly for the right of inheritance, otherwise there was no reality in the matter.

When Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) was four years old, some of the relatives went to the uncle of Imam Ali al-Riza (a.s.) saying that in their progeny, no Imam was of dark complexion. He tried to reason with them but they did not agree. They said that this

case should be presented to physiognomists (person who can judge character from face and form). Everybody agreed. They fixed a date and invited some physiognomists and collected all the *sayyids* at an appointed place.

All the uncles and brothers of Imam al-Riza (a.s.) were made to stand in a row. Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) was also with them while Imam Ali al-Riza (a.s.) was sent to work in the garden, dressed in ordinary clothes of a labourer with a pick axe on his shoulder to misguide the physiognomists. The physiognomists were told to identify the father of the child from among the people. They looked at the whole party as well as Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) and declared that no one amongst them was the father of the child. Then they glanced around and said that the gait of the man who was working in the garden greatly resembled that of the child. Just then Imam Ali al-Riza (a.s.) came out of the garden. The physiognomists immediately caught hold of his hands and declared that



he was undoubtedly the father of the child. Every body accepted him as the Imam and guide selected by the command of Allah.

Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) always remained with his revered father Imam Ali al-Riza (a.s.) and benefited from his tender patronage and guidance for a brief period of five years. He took on the responsibilities of *imamat* at very early age.

Once Mamun was proceeding with a group of men. Some children were playing in the street and Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) was standing on the side watching them play. As soon as they saw Mamun and his army, all the children ran away except Imam Muhammad al-Taqi. Mamun came close and asked “O son why did you not run away as the other children?” He replied: “The path is not so narrow and I have not committed any crime that I should fear you and run away. Mamun, I had a good impression about you that you would not harm anybody without any reason.”

Mamun was surprised at his boldness and inquired his name. He said: "I am Muhammad son of Ali al-Riza." Mamun recognised him and went on with his men.

Mamun was highly impressed by the perfect answer of Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) and the fact that he was the son of Imam Ali al-Riza (a.s.) increased his admiration even more. He took Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) to his royal palace and extended great honour and respect to him. Imam Taqi (a.s.) began to live in the royal palace of Baghdad. Mamun saw great merit in him despite his young age, because of his achievement in the field of philosophy and literature and his intellectual maturity which none of the scholars of that time could equal.

At that time the court of Mamun had a galaxy of learned scholars. He was very fond of listening to the scholarly debates. With the induction of Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) in the court these scholarly sessions increased greatly. Mamun made it a routine to sit beside

Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) and depute any one from amongst his scholars to ask questions in various branches of learning from the Holy Quran for their own benefit or to test the Imam's knowledge. The scholars asked many questions and Imam gave them very clear answers which increased the knowledge of Mamun as well as his scholars.

When the Abbasides saw Mamun's attitude towards Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) they started feeling jealous. They were even more shocked when they heard that Mamun was thinking of marrying his daughter Ummul Fazal to Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.). They went to Mamun and said: "We are all against you in this plan. We are afraid that you will take away the power from us which Allah has given us. You know what is between us and these people. We do not know what advantage you expect from this marriage. Change your decision and don't lower our prestige by showing devotion to *Sayyids*."

But Mamun said: “Do you not recognize him? How do you ask me not to select the best of the Lord’s creation and the wisest of all the people to be my son-in-law? Why don’t you test his knowledge. If he answers all your questions then you will have to agree with my decision and if he cannot, then I will agree with yours.” Thus they agreed.

This was a big occasion in Mamun’s court. There were many great scholars. They asked questions and Imam replied to all of them their answers. Every body was impressed by Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.). But when Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) asked some questions they hung their heads in shame and said: “We don’t know’ the answers.”

Then Mamun rose and announced with pleasure his decision to marry his daughter Ummul Fazal to Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) in the same assembly. Imam Muhammad al-Taqi read his own *nikah* and fixed *dowry* of 500 dirhams.

Mamun had a political motive for arranging this marriage. By sending his daughter to the house of Imam he hoped to keep a watch over him and remain aware of his activities and his daughter could spy on him.

He hoped that his daughter would bear a son who would be appointed Imam. He was particularly keen for this to happen because he had heard from previous leaders that the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam who would be the founder of global government would be a descendant of this very Imam. But the daughter of Mamun did not bear any child from Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.).

During his stay in Baghdad, being the son-in-law of the powerful Caliph and the husband of a wealthy princess, he never exhibited any pride nor took undue advantage of his close relationship with the Caliph. The simplicity of his character and his kind attitude remained totally unaffected. He resided in an ordinary house, wore simple dress and ate barley bread with salt.

During his entire stay in Baghdad, he never stayed in the royal palace. Although Ummul Fazal persuaded him to live with her, he never agreed. He used to visit the palace occasionally to meet Ummul Fazal.

Unfortunately the married life of Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) with Ummul Fazal was not happy and peaceful. Because of her wealth and status she behaved arrogantly. And when Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) married the pious and modest lady Sumana (descendant of Ammar Yasir), Ummul Fazal became even more jealous and angry as she felt that her father's plan had failed. She cried a lot and after midnight she went to Mamun who was lying in a state of intense intoxication. When she complained to him he got up in a fury and took an open sword and went to Imam's house alongwith his servant and Ummul Fazal. He attacked the sleeping Imam with his sword and slashed him into two pieces. The servants believed that the Imam was dead.

In the morning one of Mamun's servant told him about the night's incident. Now that Mamun was sober he asked his servant to see the Imam (a.s.). When the servant reached Imam's chamber he was astonished to see the Imam praying and there was no scratch on his body. He immediately went to Mamun and told him that the Imam was alive. Mamun came to Imam and apologised and asked about this miracle. Imam showed him an amulet (*tawiz*) and said: "This is called *Hirz Jawwad*. It saves the wearer from all calamities except death. It was given by my grandmother Sayyida Fatimah Zahra." Mamun once again apologised and in response to all this Imam asked Mamun not to drink in future and Mamun took a solemn pledge never to drink in future.

This incident shows that Ummul Fazal was never a source of solace and comfort for her husband and she always tortured and tormented the holy Imam.

After the severe action of Mamun against Imam

Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) he decided to return to Madina. Imam (a.s.) lived in Baghdad for about 8 years. During this period the Imam (a.s.) did not take part in any other activities except religious teachings and guidance. His door was open at all times to the seekers of truth and spiritual guidance. He always advised believers to seek knowledge because knowledge is a light which Allah casts into the hearts of whomsoever He wills. Knowledge is the most precious of treasures and the most beautiful adornment. It is easy to carry and delightful in its merits.

While travelling from Baghdad to Madina when the holy Imam reached Kufa, it was sunset so the Imam and his companions broke their journey and they entered the mosque for prayers. There was a plum tree in the courtyard of the mosque which did not bear fruit. Imam prayed in the mosque and when all the people came out in the courtyard they found the plum tree laden with delicious fruit. They were astonished by the miracle which took place



before their eyes and the courtyard echoed with *salawat*. They ate the fruits and found them seedless and very sweet.

Once on a Eid day Ismail bin Abbas went to the Imam and complained to him about not having enough means of livelihood. The Holy Imam raised his prayer mat and brought out from the dust a piece of gold. The dust with the blessings of his hand had turn into gold.

He gave the nuggets of gold to Ismail bin Abbas who took it to the market, sold it and fulfilled his needs.

After the death of Mamun, Mutasim Billah took charge. Again Ummul Fazal started complaining about the Imam to her uncle Mutasim Billah. And he was compelled to take some action against the Imam and had to force Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) to leave Madina.

One day a thief was produced before the Caliph who ordered that his hand should be chopped

off. The Caliph asked Ibn Dawud for his valued opinion. Ibn Dawud said that his hand should be cut from the elbow. The Caliph wanted the reason, and Dawud gave him one but the Caliph was not fully satisfied. So the case was referred to Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.). The Imam (a.s.) said only the fingers should be cut as he will need to place palms in *sajdah* and they agreed.

Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) was martyred in Baghdad on 23<sup>rd</sup> in the month of Dhilqad in 220 *hijra*, at the age of twenty five by a poisoned drink which was sent by Mutasim Billah. He spent the rest of the day and night in great agony. Next morning his blessed soul departed for the heavenly abode. He is buried in the cemetery of Quraysh behind his grandfather Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) in “Kazmayn Sharifyan”

Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) had four children, 2 daughters and 2 sons.

Imam Ali al Naqi (a.s.).

Musa

Fatima and Imama

## IMAM ALI BIN MUHAMMAD AL-NAQI (A.S.)

Imam Ali bin Muhammad al-Naqi (a.s.) is our tenth Imam among the twelve Imams of the Ahlul Bayt. The Imam was born on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Dhil Hijjah in 212 *hijra* (828 A.D.). His father was Imam Muhammad bin Ali al-Taqi (a.s.) and Sumana was his mother. His title was Abul Hasan, Naqi (pure), Nasih (counselor), Hadi (guide) and Faqih (jurist) are his other titles.

Imam Ali al-Naqi (a.s.) succeeded his father Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (a.s.) to *imamat* in his childhood when he was about seven years old. He reigned in spiritual knowledge and peerless wisdom even in his childhood. To his house people came to seek guidance and when the great Ubaydullah al-Junaydi, one of the greatest literates of Iraq was chosen to be his teacher, Junaydi said: "People presume that I am his teacher but in reality I am his pupil."

Whenever wise people in those times were confused about any political, social, religious and legal decisions they came to Imam Ali al-Naqi (a.s.) who always gave them solutions for their problems with proof from the Holy Quran.

Mutawakkil was an arrogant caliph in those days and feared that the Imam would revolt against his wrongly taken throne. So in order to scare the Imam, he took him near a hill named “tall al-mikhlah” under which he displayed his grand army of 90 thousand soldiers attired in full battle readiness. They made an impressionable spectacle. Then Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) asked if they would want to view his army, they agreed jestingly. When they turned around they saw the whole space between sky and earth filled with soldiers in full battle attire. The caliph fainted, and when he awoke, the Imam calmly reassured him that his mission was only for the hereafter and his army would never revolt against him for worldly gains.

Yunus an engraver was given a precious stone for carving by Musa bin Baga. While he was carving, the stone broke. He went to the Imam and said that Musa bin Baga would kill him if he comes to know about the broken stone.

The Imam asked him to wait and see what Musa would say and not to worry as only good would come. The engraver returned and told the Imam that it was Musa who was worried as both his maidens were fighting over it and he wanted Yunus to divide it into two to which Yunus replied he would see if he could do it. The Imam smiled and told him it was a good answer.

Once the Imam told his friend, Abu Hisham: “Allah has given you faith to keep you safe from hellfire, then He gave you strength to worship Him, then He gave you contentment so that you may not lose your honour.”

Whatever his virtues and vices, during his rule and the first 6 years of Mutawakkil’s rule, i.e. nearly 16 years, the Holy Imam continued

to preach as vicegerent of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) in peace and tranquillity. Later mischief makers like Abdullah bin Hakim wrote to Mutawakkil that the Holy Imam was very rich. When the Holy Imam told the truth, Mutawakkil used it to his political advantage and dismissed Hakim and invited the Imam to come to Samarra. He knew if he declined then he would be arrested. Before starting the journey from Madina he went for a farewell visit to the tomb of his grandfather, the Holy Prophet.

For the journey he took several bags of cotton quilts, coats and warm cloaks. People were surprised that in the mid of summer why he was carrying winter provisions.

Yahya, the commander of the contingent sent by Mutawakkil to bring the Imam from Madina to Samarra, and the narrator of this event, says that his bodyguard was a Sunni and his secretary was a Shia. They usually had heated arguments about the truthfulness of their respective faiths.

The bodyguard asked: “Your *khalilfa*, Imam Ali ibn abi Talib, said that there is no place on earth where there are no graves or the dead had not been buried. Tell me, is that true?” The Shia replied that it was true.

The bodyguard then asked: “If you believe this saying is right, tell me where do you find graves in this wilderness where even the birds and animals are not seen, let alone human beings. How then can the truth of your righteous Imam’s saying be established?” All those present started making fun much to the embarrassment of the Shia who remained silent. In a flash, small specks of clouds started appearing on the sky and there was a stir in the air. By evening dark and thick clouds gathered and strong winds were blowing. As night fell there was rain and heavy snowfall. Yahya sat huddled in the corner of the tent shivering since he had no warm clothes. After midnight somebody called at the door of the tent. He opened the flap and found a servant of Imam Ali al-Naqi (a.s.) standing with two bundles.

He told him his master had sent these warm clothes for him and his secretary. He expressed his sincere gratitude for this act of kindness. When he opened the bundle he found therein one quilt, one cloak and a warm coat. Then he was convinced of the *imamate* of Imam Ali al-Naqi from the depth of his heart and proclaimed instantly: “O descendant of the Holy Prophet, you are the true vicegerent. Truly at the time of departure I had considered the warm clothes unnecessary, but I did not know what you in your eternal wisdom knew. No doubt your knowledge and wisdom stand unparalleled in the whole world.”

When morning came Yahya went out and found to his astonishment that half of his contingent had perished, and among the dead was the sunni bodyguard who had questioned the knowledge of Imam Ali (a.s.). Having witnessed this massive toll of mortality he rushed to Imam Ali al-Naqi who was reciting the holy Quran. After he finished his recitation he addressed him and said: “Yahya go forth and



arrange the burial of your dead companions and be convinced that Allah almighty will fill the face of the earth in this way. Nothing can happen contrary to the words uttered by my illustrious ancestor. Imam Ali, the commander of the faithfuls.”

After this incident many people became the followers of the true faith.

When Yahya informed Mutawakkil about the arrival of the Imam at Samarra, his response was very cold.

He instructed Yahya to lodge the Imam at Khawan al-Salik, a desolate place far from the city which was specifically reserved for the very poor, destitute and vagrant people.

Imam Ali al-Naqi (a.s.) without the slightest hesitation or complaint, cheerfully entered the desolate building, reciting the holy Quran: “We abide by the decree decided for us by Allah and submit to His command.”

When Salih heard of the arrival of the holy Imam and where he was lodged, he was highly perturbed and went to meet the Imam. After the exchange of greetings Salih said: “O Son of the Holy Prophet! Why have you come here in response to Mutawakkil’s letter?”

After 3 days Mutawakkil put the Imam under the custody of Zarraqi, who was a cruel army officer.

After a few days Zarraqi also become a sympathetic devotee and well-wisher of the Imam.

From that time onwards he showed leniency and benevolence towards Imam Ali al-Naqi (a.s.), providing him all amenities for his comfort and convenience.

Mutawakkil soon came to know about Zarraqi’s behaviour and removed the holy Imam from his custody and put him under the strict custody of Sa-id.

The attitude of Sa'id towards Imam Ali al-Naqi (a.s.) was very harsh. The holy Imam remained under his custody for eight long years, suffering various types of persecutions but this sacred group of people, the Ahlul Bayt, are endowed with exceptional powers of endurance and forbearance. They abided by the will of Allah and submitted to His commands.

Mutawakkil appointed Fatah bin Khiaqan his new prime minister. Although Fatah was a shia he was given complete authority over the affairs of the royal court, revenue, judiciary, army and treasury departments.

However, when the plan for the expansion of the capital city of Samarra came up for approval, Fatah bin Khaqan suggested to Mutawakkil that all desolate and uninhabited areas of the city be allotted to the dignitaries of the court and the rich people to construct buildings thereon according to their own choice at their own expenses. Mutawakkil found this suggestion very advantageous, gave his consent and ordered its early implementation.

Under this settlement scheme he also allotted a plot of land to Imam Ali al-Naqi (a.s.) but to be on the safe side he received the cost of the land from the Imam and kept the receipt with himself. Fatah thought it was probable that Mutawakkil would cancel the allotment to the Imam if it was a royal gift, but it would be easier to get the caliph's approval by producing the receipt of the amount paid by the Imam towards the cost of the plot.

Things happened just as anticipated by Fatah. Mutawakkil did make an enquiry on finding the name of the Imam on the list of allottees of the state land but when Fatah produced the receipt of payment, did not pursue the matter further.

Fatah made a legal sale deed in the name of Imam Ali al-Naqi (a.s.) and handed it over to the holy Imam.

Imam Ali al-Naqi (a.s.) had lost all hopes of returning to Madina ever since he had arrived in Samarra. He had no permanent residence,

Now he had been granted permission to live independently.

Mutawakkil still insisted that although the Imam would be living independently with his family his activities would still be monitored by Sa-id.

The holy Imam accepted these conditions with patience and fortitude.

Just a few days after Imam Ali al-Naqi (a.s.) moved into his new house, his neighbour, a rich and influential court official, Umar bin al-Khuzayb, started pestering the Imam to renounce his title to the plot. Imam Ali al-Naqi (a.s.) paid no heed to the unjust demands of his neighbour.

Within three or four days Mutawakkil received reports about the serious fraud made by Umar bin al-Khuzayb in the taxes collected from the Syrian territory. So Mutawakkil sentenced him to execution on the stocks. Showing

complete disregard for Umar's wealth and power of which he was so proud. The men of the royal constabulary affixed his hands and feet on the stocks and threw him out in the sizzling heat of the desert sun where he died a death of disgrace and humiliation.

Mutawakkil received false reports that the Imam was helping his opponents. He posted four of his ruthless Turkish slaves at the entrance door and directed them to kill the Imam as soon as he came in. Alongwith the messenger of Mutawakkil the Imam entered the court and reciting a prayer went near Mutawakkil, who received the Imam very politely, cursed the messenger for bringing the Imam without his order, and asked him to return to his house. When the Imam was coming in, at the door, the Turkish slaves threw down their swords and fell at his feet.

When questioned the slaves told Mutawakkil that a superhuman man with a naked sword in his hand was with the Imam.

There was an arena known as “the abode of the beasts” in his palace where he kept wild lions, tigers and leopards. Mutawakkil invited the Imam to come as a royal quest in the arena to watch “man fights beast” game. As soon as the Imam came he was forcibly pushed into the arena. The hungry wild beasts surrounded him. moved around him and fell on their knees to show reverence. The Imam laid his prayer mat on the ground and prayed *salat*. Mutawakkil did not know what to say or do.

In the court, once, a woman told Mutawakkil that she was a *sayyida*. Nobody knew how to verify her claim. The Imam told Mutawakkil to ask her to go near a beast. If she was a real *sayyida* the beast would not kill and eat the flesh and blood of the descendant of the Holy Prophet. The imposter woman panicked and confessed her falsehood. Then on the suggestion of a few courtiers Mutawakkil let off three wild beasts at the Imam, but they sniffed his robe and fell on their knees. When the courtiers asked Mutawakkil to test his own progeny, he said: “Do you want to kill me?”

After a few days a boil with full of pus appeared on his buttock. He was in great pain.

When all royal physicians failed to cure it, his mother requested the Imam to have pity on her son. The Imam asked her to apply goat's dung mixed with rose water on the boil. Gradually the infection disappeared.

Mutawakkil sent a search party at midnight to the Imam's house to recover money and weapons he might have collected to use against him. The search party went up to the roof. The Imam lit some candles, hanged a ladder, and asked the men to come down. They searched the house, found nothing except a bag of money sent to him by Mutawakkil's mother, in gratitude, still sealed.

The Imam gave that bag of money to the commander of the search party to return it to Mutawakkil.

Once the Imam was invited by Mutawakkil to



attend the royal court on a special occasion. The Imam came. Mutawakkil gave him a glass of wine. The Imam refused, of course. Then he asked the Imam to sing a song. The Imam again turned down his request. Then he asked him to recite poetry. The Imam told him he was not a poet. Badly cornered he requested the Imam to recite any poetry. The Imam recited the following verses written by Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.):

*Where are the precious dresses and robes of the dead kings?*

*Where are their bejewelled and golden crowns?*

*Where is the beauty and glamour of the faces which had always remained behind veils?*

*One day they had to leave their thrones, and were laid beneath the earth.*

*Their luxurious lives and temporal wealth were all turned to dust and woeful grief.*

*Although the grand palaces and castles still stand; They have absolutely no permission to visit them.*

The whole audience was spellbound and moved to tears.

In 237 *Hijra*, Mutawakkil issued an ordinance prohibiting visits to the holy shrines of Najaf Ashraf and Karbala Mu-alla. Then he gave orders to pull down the holy shrines, to dig out the graves, to plough the land. He also issued orders to persecute Shias and eliminate them. He plundered their homes, confiscated their lands and killed thousand of them.

When ten thousand soldiers reached Karbala, all Shias, living there, unitedly and bravely defended and sacrificed their lives to protect the holy shrines. This barbaric slaughter gave birth to a widespread uncontrollable movement and Mutawakkil called back his army. In 250 *hijra*, after killing a large number of Shias he decided again to pull down the sacred tomb of Imam Husayn and sent a large contingent of his best officers to carry out the devastation of the holy shrine. The officers saw spiritual miracles at Karbala and could not do what they wanted. The second batch of officers sent by Mutawakkil, when reached Karbala, could not find any trace of the sacred grave of Imam

Husayn. Utterly dejected they returned to Samarra. Mutawakkil sent them back to Karbala to dig up the whole place and start cultivation. There they met a group of men, a luminous glow encircling them, who shot volleys of arrow's at them. They again returned to Samarra, without doing a little bit harm to the grave of Imam Husayn.

Mutawakkil's last gimmic was his march, sitting on his royal throne, on the streets of Samarra under the merciless hot sun and all the scholars and officials walking on foot behind him in a procession. The Imam was also there.

To the man walking beside him he said:  
"He planned this march just to humiliate me, but my position is like the she-camel of Salih."

It was a prediction of Mutawakkil's demise. As those who had slain the she-camel had died after 3 days. Mutawakkil was also killed by his son Muntasir after 3 days.

Muntasir, and after him, Mustayin had left the Imam alone, He had some peaceful days in their reign; but Mutazz was a typical enemy of the holy Ahlul Bayt. He poisoned the Imam. The Imam died on 3<sup>rd</sup> Rajab, 254 *hijra* in Samarra. His son and successor, Imam Hasan bin Ali al-Askari performed his burial rites and buried him in Samarra.

Amongst the children he left behind was Imam Hasan al-Askari, Husayn, Muhammad, Jafar and a daughter, A-isha.

## **THE HOLY QURAN SAYS**

Verily, verily Allah intends but to keep off from you (every kind of) uncleanness, O you Ahlul Bayt (the people of the house), and purify you (with) a thorough purification.

## **THE HOLY PROPHET SAID**

My Ahlul Bayt are like the ark of Nuh. Whoever comes on it is saved, whoever stays back is drowned.

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