The Infallibles: Imam al Musa al Kazim (A.S)

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Shaykh al-Mufid

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Article

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(This is) an account of the Imam who undertook (the office) (al-qa'im) after Abu Abd Allah Ja'far ibn Muhammad, peace be on them, (describing) who gave birth to him and the date of his birth. (It includes) the evidence for his Imamate, the age he reached and the period of his succession (khilafa), his death, its cause, and the place of his grave.

As we have mentioned before, the Imam after Abu Abd Allah Ja'far, peace be on him, was Abu al-Hasan Musa ibn Ja'far the righteous worshipper (of God), peace be on him, because the qualities of outstanding merit and perfection were gathered in him, because of the designation (nass) by his father of the Imamate (being) for him, and his clear indication of it being his.

His birth took place at al-Abwa' in the year 128 A.H. (745/6). He, peace be on him, died in the prison of al-Sindi ibn Shahik on the 6th of (the month of) Rajab in the year 183 A.H. (799). He was then fifty-five years of age. His mother was a slave-wife named Hamida al-Barbariyya.

The period of his succession and occupying the office of the Imamate after his father, peace be on them, was thirty-five years. His kunyas were Abu-Ibrahim, Abu al-Hasan and Abu Ali;. He is known as al-Abd al-Salah (the pious worshipper of God) and also he is described as al-Kazim (the restrained), peace be on him.

The Designation (Nass) of (Imam Musa) for the Imamate by his Father, Peace be on them

Among the shaykhs of the followers of Abu Abd Allah, peace be on him, his special group (khassa), his inner circle and the trustworthy righteous legal scholars, may God have mercy on them, who report the clear designation of the Imamate by Abu Abd Allah Ja'fars peace be on him, for his son, Abu al- Hasan Musa, peace be on him, are: al-Mufaddal ibn Umar al-Jufi, Mu'adh ibn Kathir, Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Hajjaj, al-Fayd ibn al-Mukhtar, Yaqub al-Sarraj, Sulayman ibn Khalid, Safwan al-Jammal, and others whom it would make the book too long to mention.

(That designation) is also reported by his two brothers, Ishaq and Ali, sons of Ja'far, peace be on him. They were men of merit and piety and (therefore reliable witnesses) in so far as two such men did not differ on it.

[Musa al-Sayqal reported on the authority of al-Mufaddal ibn Umar al-Jufi, may God have mercy on

him, who said:]

I (i.e. al-Mufaddal ibn Umar al-Jufi) was with Abu Abd Allah (Ja'far), peace be on him. Abu Ibrahim Musa, peace be on him, came in. He was still a boy. Abu Abd Allah Ja'far, peace be on him, said to him: "Indicate to those of your Companions whom you trust that the position of authority belongs to him Musa."

[Thubayt reported on the authority of Muadh ibn Kathir, on the authority of Abu Abd Allah Ja'far:]

I (i.e. Muadh ibn Kathir) said to (Ja'far): "I ask God, Who provided your father with you for this position, to provide you with one of your offspring for the same position before your death."

"God has done that," he answered.

"May I be your ransom, who is it?" I asked.

He indicated al-Abd al-Sarh (the pious worshipper of God) (i.e. Musa) to me. He was asleep.

"This one who is sleeping," he said. He was at that time a boy.

[Abu Ali al-Arrajani reported on the authority of Abd al Rahman ibn al Hajjaj, who said:]

I (i.e. Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Hajjaj) visited Ja'far ibn Muhammad, peace be on them, in his house. He was in such-and-such a room in his house which he used as a prayer-room. He was praying there. On his right hand was Musa ibn Ja'far, peace be on them, following his prayer.

"May God make me your ransom," I said, "you know how I have dedicated my life to you and (you know of) my service to you. Who is the master of the affair (wali al-amr) after you?"

He said: "Abd al-Rahman, Musa has put on the armour and it fitted him."

"After that, I have no further need of anything," I replied.

[Abd al-Ala reported on the authority of al-Fayd ibn al-Mukhtar, who said:]

I (i.e. al-Fayd ibn al-Mukhtar) said to Abu 'Abd Allah Ja'far, peace be on him: "Take my hand away from the fire (of Hell). Who is (the Imam) for us after you?"

Abu Ibrahim (Musa) entered - at that time he was a boy. Then (Ja'far) said: "This is your leader (sahib). Keep close to him."

[Ibn Abi Najran reported on the authority of al-Mansur ibn Hazim, who said:]

I (i.e. al-Mansur ibn Hazim) said to Abu 'Abd Allah, peace be on him: "(May I ransom you) with my father and mother. There is a great coming and going among men about (the succession). Since that is so,

who is it?”

“Since that is so,” replied Abu 'Abd Allah, peace be on him, “he is your leader.”

He tapped the right shoulder of Abu al-Hasan (Musa). He was at that time, as far as I know, about five years old. 'Abd Allah ibn Ja'far was sitting with us.

[Ibn Abi Najran reported on the authority of Isa ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn Umar ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib, on the authority of Abu Abd Allah Ja'far, peace be on him:]

I (i.e. 'Isa ibn Muhammad) asked (Ja'far): “If something happened – may God not make me see such a thing – who should I follow?”

(Ja'far) pointed to his son, Musa.

“If anything happened to Musa, who should I follow?” I asked.

“His son,” he replied.

“If anything happened to his son?”

“Then his son.”

“If something happened to him,” I went on, “and he left a big brother and a small son?”

“His son; it is always thus,” he answered.

[Al-Fadl reported on the authority of Tahir ibn Muhammad on the authority of Abu 'Abd Allah Ja'far, peace be on him:]'

I (i.e. Tahir ibn Muhammad) saw (Ja'far) blaming his son, 'Abd Allah, and warning him. He was saying: “What stops you from being like your brother? By God, I see the light in (Musa's) face.”

“Why is that?” asked 'Abd Allah. “Is not my father and his father one and the same? Is not my origin and his origin one and the same?”

“He is from my soul and you are my son,” replied Abu 'Abd Allah Ja'far, peace be on him.

[Muhammad ibn Sinan reported on the authority of Ya'qub al- Sarraj), who said:]

I (i.e. Yaqub al-Sarraj) visited Abu 'Abd Allah Ja’far, peace be on him. He was standing by the head of Abu al-Hasan, Musa, peace be on him, who was in the cradle. He began to play with him for a long time. I sat down until he had finished. Then I stood up before him. He told me: “Approach your master (mawla) and greet him.”

I went near him and greeted him and he replied to me eloquently. Then he told me*: “Go and change the name of your daughter which you gave her yesterday. For it is a name which God dislikes.”

A daughter had been born to me and I had named her al-Humayra'.

“Pay attention to the command which he gave you,” Abu Abd Allah Ja’far, peace be on him, told me. So I changed her name.

[Ibn Miskan reported on the authority of Sulayman ibn Khalid, who said:]

One day Abu Abd Allah Ja’far, peace be on him, called for Abu al-Hasan Musa while we were with him. He told us: “It is your duty (to follow) this man after me. By God, he is your leader after me.”

[Al-Washsha' reported on the authority of Ali ibn al-Husayn, on the authority of Safwan al-Jammal, who said:]”

I (i.e. Safwan; al-Jammal) asked Abu Abd Allah Ja’far, peace be on him, about the leader of this affair (sahib al-amr) (after him). He said: “The leader of this affair is one who does not fool and play.”

Abu al-Hasan Musa, peace be on him, approached. He was still small. He had a calf (destined) for Mecca and was saying to it:

“Prostrate yourself to your Lord.”

Abu Abd Allah Ja’far, peace be on him, took him by the hand and embraced him saying: “May I ransom with my father and mother (you) who do not fool and play.”

[Yaqub ibn Ja’far al-Jufi reported: Ishaq ibn Ja’far al-Sadiq, peace be on him, told us:]

One day I (i.e. Ishaq) was with my father (Ja’far) when Ali ibn Umar ibn 'Ali asked him: May I be your ransom, to whom shall we and the people turn after you?”

He answered: ' “To the owner of two yellow clothes and two locks of hair. He who is coming out of the door to you.”

We did not wait long before two (little) hands appeared pulling the two doors so that they opened. In before us came Abu Ibrahim Musa, peace be on him. He was still a boy and was wearing two yellow garments.

[Muhammad ibn al-Walid reported: I heard Ali ibn Ja’far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq, peace be on them, say:]

I (i.e. 'Ali ibn Ja’far) heard my father, Ja’far ibn Muhammad, peace be on them, say to a group of his close associates and followers:

“Treat my son, Musa, peace be on him, with kindness. He is the most meritorious (afdal) of my children and the one who will succeed after me. He is the one who will undertake (qa'im) my position. He is God's proof (hujja) to all His creatures after me.”

Ali ibn Ja’far remained firmly loyal to his brother Musa, peace be on him, devoted to him, and enthusiastic in taking the outlines of religion from him. He has a famous (book) Masa'il (questions) in which he relates the answers he heard from (Musa), peace be on him.

The reports of what we have mentioned are too numerous to be explained and described fully.

An Extract of the Proofs, Signs, Indications and Miracles which Abu al-Hasan Musa (presented)

[Abu al-Qasim Ja’far ibn Muhammad ibn Qulawayh informed me, on the authority of Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni, on the authority of Muhammad ibn Yahya, on the authority of Ahmad ibnMuhammad ibn Isa, on the authority of Abu Yahya al- Wasiti, on the authority of Hisham ibn Salim, who said:]

I (i.e. Hisham ibn Salim) and Muhammad ibn Numan (known as) Sahib al-Taq were in Medina after the death of Abu Abd Allah, peace be on him. The people had agreed that Abd Allah ibn Ja’far was the leader of the affair (sahib al-amr) after his father. We went to visit him and the people were with him. We questioned him about how much poor-tax (zakat) had to be paid.

“Five dirhams on two hundred dirhams,” he answered.

“How much on a hundred dirhams?” we asked.

“Two and a half dirhams,” he answered.

“By God, you are declaring the doctrine of the Murji'a,” we said.

“By God,” he retorted, “I do not know the doctrine of the Murji'a.”

We, Abu Ja’far al-Ahwal (i.e. Muhammad ibn Numan) and myself, left, wandering without knowing where to go. We sat in one of the lanes in Medina weeping. We did not know where we should go or to whom we should turn. We spoke about (joining) the Murji'ites, the Qadarites, the Mu`tazilites, and the Zaydites.

We were in this situation when I saw a venerable man whom I did not know. He indicated to me with his hand. I was afraid that he was one of the spies of (the Abbasid caliph) Abu Ja’far al-Mansur. There were spies in Medina for him (to find out) who the people agreed on to succeed Ja’far. Then that man (i.e. the Imam) would be captured and executed. I was afraid that that man was one of them.

“Go aside,” I said to al-Ahwal, “I am afraid for myself. You be careful. He only wants me. He does not

want you. Leave me, for you will lead (him) to yourself."

(Al-Ahwal) went some distance away from me and I went over to the venerable man. That was because I thought that I would not be able to escape from him. As I followed him, I was certain of my own death until he brought me to the door of Abu al-Hasan Musa, peace be on him. Then he left me and went away. There was a servant at the door. He said to me: "Come in, may God have mercy on you."

I went in. There was Abu al-Hasan Musa, peace be on him. He spoke to me before (I could speak): "To me, to me; not to the Murji'ites, nor to the Qadarites, nor to the Mutazilites, nor to the Zaydites."

"May I be your ransom," I replied, "your father has gone."

"Yes," he answered.

"He has left through death," I said.

"Yes," he retorted.

"Then who is in charge of the people after him?" I asked.

"If God wills, He will guide you to that man," he answered.

"May I be your ransom," I said, "your brother Abd Allah claims that he is the Imam after his father."

"Abd Allah intends that God should not be worshipped (properly)," he declared.

"May I be your ransom, who is in charge of us after him?" I asked (again).

"If God wills, He will guide you to that man," he repeated.

"May I be your ransom, are you him?" I questioned.

"I am not saying that," he replied.

I thought to myself that I had not used the correct method of questioning. So I said to him: "May I be your ransom, do you have an Imam over you?"

"No," he replied. Something came to me which only God knew with regard to honouring and showing respect (to Musa). So I said to him: "May I be your ransom, may I question you like I used to question your father?"

"Question," he said. "You will be informed but do not spread (the answer) around. For if you do spread it around, then slaughter will take place."

I questioned him. Indeed he was like a sea (of knowledge) which could not be exhausted. I said to him:

“May I be your ransom, the Shia of your father is lost (without a leader). May I put this matter to them and summon them (to follow) you? For you have taken (a promise of) secrecy from me.”

“Tell those of them whose righteousness you are familiar with,” he said, “but take (a promise of) secrecy from them. For if it gets spread around, there will be slaughter,” and he pointed to his neck with his hand.

I left him and met Abu Ja’far al-Ahwal.

“What happened to you?” he asked.

“Guidance,' I said and I told him the story.

Then we met Zurara and Abu Basir. They went to him, listened to his words and questioned him. They asserted his Imamate. We met wave after wave of the people. Everyone who went to him, declared (his Imamate) except for the group of Ammar al-Sabati. Abd Allah persisted in his claim but only a few of the people came to him.

[Abu al-Qasim Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn Qulawayh informed me on the authority of Muhammad ibn Yaqub on the authority of 'Ali ibn Ibrahim on the authority of al- Wafiqi who said:]

I (al-Wafiqi) had an uncle called al-Hasan ibn Abd Allah. He was an ascetic and one of the most pious people of his time. The authorities were wary of him because of his earnestness and his vigour towards religion. Sometimes he would approach the authorities concerning enjoining the good and forbidding the evil because of something which had angered him. They accepted that because of his righteousness. The state of affairs continued until one day he went into the mosque. There was Abu al-Hasan Musa, peace be on him. He beckoned to him and (my uncle) went to him.

(Musa) said to him: “Abu Ali, nothing is more pleasing to me and gives me greater joy than the way you behave. Despite that, you do not have true knowledge (marifa). Seek for true knowledge.”

“May I be your ransom,” he said to him, what is true knowledge?”

“Go so that you may learn,” he told him. “Seek out traditions.”

“From whom?” he asked.

“From the jurists of Medina,” he answered, “and then bring the additions to me.”

He went and wrote down (what he learnt). Then he came and read to him. However (Musa) invalidated all of it. He told him: “Go and learn.”

The man was concerned about (his own attitude to) his religion. He continued to search for Abu al-Hasan until he went to (visit) an estate of his. On the road he met him. He said to him: “May I be your

ransom, I have sought for you (by begging) God. Guide me to what is necessary for me to know."

Then Abu al-Hasan, peace be on him, informed him about the authority and rights of the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, and what it was necessary for him to know. (He told him of) the authority of al-Hasan, al- Husayn, Ali ibn al-Husayn, Muhammad b Ali and Ja'far ibn Muhammad. Then he was silent.

(Al-Hasan) said to him: "May I be your ransom, who is the Imam today?"

"If I tell you," he answered, "will you come close to me?"

"Yes," he replied.

"I am he," he said.

"Is there anything by which this could be proved?" he asked.

"Go to that tree," he said - and he pointed towards one of the trees of Umm Ghaylan, "and tell it that Musa ibn Ja'far tells you to draw near."

[He reported:] I went to it and I saw it furrow through the ground until it stopped in front of him. Then he indicated to it to go back and it went back.

He went up to him and cleaved to silence and worship. No one ever saw him talking after that.

[Ahmad ibn Mihran reported on the authority of Muhammad ibn Ali, on the authority of Abu Basir, who said:]

I (i.e. Abu Basir) said to Abu al-Hasan Musa ibn Ja'far, peace be on them: "May I be your ransom, by what is the Imam known?"

"By special characteristics,' he answered. "The first of them is something by which preference has been given him by his father and an indication (has been made) by his (father) that he should be proof (hujja) (to the world). When he is asked (anything), he can answer it. If (a person) holds back from speaking to him, he may begin (the conversation) by telling him what will happen tomorrow and speaking to each person in his own tongue."

Then he said: "Abu Muhammad (i.e. Abu- Basir) I will give you a sign before you rise to go."

I did not wait long before a man from the people of Khurasan entered. The Khurasani spoke to him in Arabic and Abu al-Hasan, peace be on him, answered him in Persian.

"By God, what prevented me speaking to you in Persian was that I thought you were not fluent in it," the Khurasani said to him.

“Praise be to God,” he replied, “if I was not fluent enough to reply to you, I would not have the merit over you, by which I am entitled to the Imamate.”

Then he said: “Abu Muhammad, no speech of the people is hidden from the Imam, nor the language of birds, nor the speech of anything which has a soul.”

Abd Allah ibn Idris reported on the authority of Ibn Sinan, who said:]

One day al-Rashid sent some robes to Ali ibn Yaqtin to honour him. Among their number was a black woollen cloak adorned with gold like the robes of kings. Ali ibn Yaqtin dispatched those robes to Musa ibn Ja’far, peace be on them.

Among their number he (also) sent that cloak. He added some money which he had already prepared specifically for him as the fifth of his money (khums – tax for the Imams) which he was going to pay him. When that reached Abu-al- Hasan Musa, peace be on him, he accepted the money and the robes but returned the cloak by the hand of the messenger to Ali ibn Yaqtin. He wrote to him: “Keep it and do not let it leave your hands. For an event will occur to you because of it when you will have the need of it with him (al-Rashid).”

Ali ibn Yaqtin was suspicious about it being returned to him and did not understand the reason for that. Some time later, Ali ibn Yaqtin changed (his attitude) towards a servant who had a special position with him and he left his service. The servant knew about Ali ibn Yaqtin's inclination towards Abu al-Hasan Musa, peace be on him.

He was acquainted with the money, garments and other things (Ali) had sent to (Musa) on every occasion. He (went and) informed on him to al-Rashid. He told (al-Rashid) that (Ali) maintained the Imamate of Musa ibn Ja’far and paid him a fifth of his money each year, and also that he had given him the cloak with which the Commander of the faithful (al-Rashid) had honoured him at such-and-such a time Al-Rashid burned with anger and was furious. He declared: “I will expose this situation. If the matter is as you say, his life will be destroyed.”

He immediately sent for Ali ibn Yaqtin to be brought. When he appeared before him, he said: “What have you done with the cloak which I bestowed upon you?”

“Commander of the faithful,” (Ali) replied, “I still have it in a sealed chest and there I keep perfume with it. In the mornings I open it and look at it to gain blessings from it. I kiss it and then put it back in its place. Every night I do the same thing.”

“Bring it, immediately,” he ordered.

“Yes, Commander of the faithful,” he answered. He summoned one of his servants and told him: “Go to such-and-such a room in my house. Take the key for it from my custodian and open it. Open such-and-such a box and bring me the sealed chest which is in it.”

It was not long before the servant returned with the chest still sealed. He put it before al-Rashid and told him to break the seal and open it. When he opened it, he saw the cloak in it folded and laid out in perfume.

Al-Rashid's anger became pacified and he said to `Ali ibn Yaqtin: "Return it to its place and go away righteously. I will never disbelieve you again on the word of an informer."

He ordered a magnificent gift to be sent after him and he had the informer flogged with a thousand lashes. After he had been flogged about a hundred lashes, he died.

[Muhammad ibn Ismail reported on the authority of Muhammad ibn al-Fadl, who said:]

The tradition concerning rubbing the two feet (mash al-rijlayn) in the ritual ablution (wudu') was a subject of dispute among our companions – whether (it should be done) from the toes to the ankles or from the ankles to the toes. Ali ibn Yaqtin wrote to Abu al-Hasan Musa, peace be on him: "May I be your ransom, our companions are in dispute over rubbing the feet. If you would think fit to write to me in your own handwriting what my practice should be with regard to it, I would carry it out, God, the Exalted, willing."

Abu al-Hasan Musa, peace be on him, wrote back to him: "I have understood what you have mentioned about the dispute concerning ritual ablution. What I order you to do with regard to that is: you should rinse your mouth three times; you should sniff water into your nostrils three times; you should wash your face three times; you should rub between the interstices of the hair of your beard; you should wash your arms from the finger to the elbows; you should rub the whole of your head and the outside and inside of your ears; you should wash your feet up to the ankles three times. Do not transgress that for anything else."

When the letter came to Ali ibn Yaqtin, he was surprised at the details he had given in it which were different from what the group had agreed upon. He said: "My master (mawla) knows better what he has said and I will obey his command."

He used to practise it in his ablution and was in conflict with the practice of all the Shi'a out of submission to the command of Abu al-Hasan, peace be on him.

Information was given to al-Rashid against 'Ali ibn Yaqtin and he was accused of being a Rafidite, who is opposed to (al-Rashid). Al- Rashid said to one of his close associates: "Much talk is coming to me about 'Ali ibn Yaqtin, and the suspicion of him being in opposition to me and being of Rafidite leanings. Yet I cannot see any deficiency in his service to me. I have examined him several times and have not been able to find any suspicious thing about him. I would like to examine his (position) without him being aware of it and thus being able to guard himself against me."

He was told: "Commander of the faithful, the Rafidites oppose the general view (jamaa) with regard to ritual ablution and reduce its form. They do not accept washing the feet. Therefore examine him-without

his knowledge – on his practice in ritual ablution."

"Yes," he replied, "this method will reveal his views."

He left it for a while. Then when 'Ali was away at his house doing some work, he came at the time for prayer. 'Ali ibn Yaqtin was alone in one of the rooms of the house in order to perform his ablution and prayer. Al-Rashid stood behind the wall where he could see 'Ali ibn Yaqtin without him seeing him. He ('Ali) called for water for the ablution. He rinsed his mouth out three times; he sniffed water into his nostrils three times; he washed his face three times; he rubbed between the interstices of his beard; he washed his arms to the elbows three times; he rubbed his head and his ears; and he washed his feet three times.

Al-Rashid watched him. When he saw him do that, he could not contain himself from looking down on him from a position where ('Ali) could see him and calling to him: "Ali ibn Yaqtin, those who claim that you are one of the Rafidites are liars."

Thus ('Alis) situation with (al-Rashid) was restored. A letter came to him from Abu al-Hasan, peace be on him: "Beginning from now 'Ali ibn Yaqtin, you will perform the ablution as God ordered it. Wash your face once as is mandatory and another time (as a voluntary act) within the ablution; similarly wash your arms from the elbows and rub the front of your head and the outer part of your feet with the remnants of the dampness from the ablutionary water (on your hands). What was feared for you has now been removed. Greetings."

[Ali ibn Abi Hamza al-Batayini reported:]

One day Abu al-Hasan Musa; peace be on him, left Medina for one of his estates outside the town. I (i.e. Ali ibn Abi Hamza) accompanied him. He, peace be on him, was riding on a mule and I was on a donkey of mine. As we were going along one of the paths, a lion blocked our way. I stared at it in terror but Abu al-Hasan, peace be on him, went forward without worrying about it.

I saw the lion become subdued and mutter before Abu al-Hasan, peace be on him. Abu al-Hasan, peace be on him, stood as if he was listening to the muttering. The lion put its paw on the saddle of his mule. My soul trembled at that and I was absolutely terrified. Then the lion turned away to the side of the road. Abu al-Hasan turned his face toward the qibla (direction of Mecca) and began to pray. He moved his lips in such a way that I could not understand him. Then he indicated to the lion with his hand that it should go. The lion muttered for a long time and Abu al-Hasan said: "Amen, amen."

The lion went away until it disappeared from our sight. Abu al Hasan, peace be on him, went straight on and I followed him. When we were far from the place, I came up to him and said: "May I be your ransom, what was that business of the lion? By God, I was frightened for you and surprised at its attitude towards you."

“He came out to complain of the difficulty his lioness was having in giving birth,” Abu al-Hasan, peace be on him, told me. “He asked me to ask God to make it easier for her and I did that for him. He asked whether (I knew) in my heart if she would bear a male and I told him that. Then he told me: “Go in the protection of God. God will never impose on you, nor on your offspring, nor on any of your Shia, any trouble from wild beasts.' I said: Amen.”

Reports of this kind are numerous. What we have set out of them is sufficient according to the scheme which has been set out, through the grace of God, the Exalted.

A Sample of his Virtues, Outstanding Qualities and Merits by which he was distinguished from others

Abu al-Hasan Musa, peace be on him, was the most religious of the men of his time, the most knowledgeable in law, the most generous and the noblest in spirit.

It is reported that he used to pray superogatory prayers throughout the night so that he would make them extend until the morning-prayer, then continue them until the sun rose. He would remain prostrating himself before God without raising his head from prayer and praising God until the sun came near to descending (from its midday zenith). Frequently when he used to pray he would say:

O God, I ask of you ease at death and forgiveness on the Day of Reckoning.

He would repeat that. Another of his prayers, peace be on him was:

How great is sin to You. Therefore let forgiveness seem good to You.

He used to weep so much out of fear of God that his beard would be wet with tears. He was the kindest of men to his family and his kin. He used to search out the poor of Medina during the night and take them a basket, in which was money, flour and dates. He would bring that to them without them knowing in any way that it was from him.

[Al-Sharif Abu- Muhammad al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Yahya informed me: My grandfather Yahya ibn al-Hasan ibn Ja'far told us: Isma'il ibn Yaqub told us: Muhammad ibn Abd Allah al-Bakri told us.]

I (i.e Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah) came to Medina to ask for repayment of a debt and it made me weary. I said (to myself): “If I had gone to Abu al-Hasan Musa , peace be on him, and complained to him.”So I went to him at Naqma at his estate. He came out to me. With him was a servant carrying a basket in which there was some chopped-up meat. He had no one else with him. He ate and I ate with him.

Then he asked me what I wanted. So I told him my story. He went inside and it was only a short time before he came out to me. He told his servant to go and then he stretched out his hand towards me. He gave me a purse in which was three hundred dinars. Then he arose and turned away. I mounted my animal and went away.

[Al-shar-if Abu Muhammad al-Hassan ibn Muhammad on the authority of his grandfather (Yahya ibn al-Hasan), on the authority of another of his colleagues and teachers, (who said:)]

A man from the family of Umar ibn al-Khattab was in Medina trying to harm Abu al-Hasan Masa, peace be on him. Whenever he saw (Abu al-Hasan) he would curse him and curse `Ali, peace be on him. One day some of those who used to attend his gatherings said to him: “Let us kill this sinner.”

He forbade them from (doing) that most firmly and rebuked them severely.

He asked about the descendant of Umar and was told that he had a farm on the outskirts of Medina. He rode out to him and found him at his farm. As he entered the farm with his donkey, the descendant of

Umar cried out: “Do not tread on my sown land.”

Yet Abu al-Hasan, peace be on him, continued to tread on it with his donkey until he reached him. He dismounted and sat with him. He greeted him with a smile and laughed at him.

“How much have you paid to sow your land?” he asked.

“One hundred dinars," (the other man) answered.

“How much do you hope to acquire from it?”

“I do not know the unknown,” was the reply.

“I only asked you about what you hope it would bring you,” retorted (Abu al-Hasan).

“I hope that it will bring me two hundred dinars," he answered. Abu al-Hasan took out a purse in which was three hundred dinars and said: “This is (the price) of what you have sown in its present condition (i.e. what you have spent to sow it and what you hope to gain from it.) May God provide you with what you hope for from it.”

The descendant of Umar kissed his head and asked him to forgive his (former) hasty words about him. Abu al-Hasan, peace be on him, smiled at him and went away.

In the evening he went to the mosque and found that descendant of 'Umar sitting there. When the latter saw him, he called out: “God knows best where to put his (prophetic) mission.”

His companions jumped (in surprise) towards him and said to him: “What is the story (behind what you say), for you used to speak quite differently from this.”

“You have heard what I have said now,” he replied and began to speak on behalf of Abu al-Hasan, peace be on him. They opposed him and he opposed them.

When Abu-al-Hasan returned to his house, he said to those who attended his gatherings and who had

asked about killing the descendant of 'Umar: “Which was better what you wanted or what I wanted? I put right his attitude to the extent which you have now become acquainted with. I was sufficient for the evil that was in him.”

A group of the traditionists (ahl al-'ilm) mention that Abu al-Hasan, peace be on him, always used to travel with two hundred to three hundred dinars to give away. The purses of Musa, peace be on him, were proverbial.

[Ibn Ammar and other narrators record:]

When al-Rashid set out to go on the pilgrimage and was approaching Medina, the leading men among the inhabitants met him. Musa ibn Ja'far, peace be on them, came out to (al-Rashid's group) on a mule.

“What ! Is this the animal on which you will meet the Commander of the faithful” al-Rabi' asked him. “If you were seeking (something) on it, you would not obtain it and if you were being sought (while you were) on it, you would not escape.”

“It is beneath the vanity of horses and above the lowliness of asses and the best of matters are those which are moderate,” he replied.

When Harun al-Rashid entered Medina, he went to pay a visitation to (the tomb of) the Prophet, may God bless him and his family. The people went with him. Al-Rashid went forward to the tomb of the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family, and said:

“Greetings to you, Apostle of God! Greetings to you, cousin.” He was seeking to show his proud position over the others by that. But then Abu al-Hasan, peace be on him, went forward to the tomb and said: “Greetings to you, Apostle of God! Greetings to you, father.” (The expression on) al-Rashid's face changed and the anger in it became transparently obvious.

[Abu Zayd reported: 'Abd al-Hamid told me:]

Muhammad ibn al-Hasan asked Abu al-Hasan Musa, peace be on him, about attending al-Rashid while they were in Mecca.

“Is it permitted of the person consecrated as a pilgrim (muhrim) to be shaded (from the sun) by his camel train?” (Muhammad ibn al-Hasan) asked him.

“It is not permitted for him if there is any choice available for him,” Musa, peace be on him, told him.

“Is it permitted for him to walk in the (natural) shade by choice?” Muhammad ibn al-Hasan asked.

“Yes,” replied Musa.

Muhammad ibn al-Hasan laughed at that. Abu al-Hasan Musa, peace be on him, said: “Does the sunna

of the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, surprise you and are you scoffing at it? The Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family, took advantage of the (natural) shade during his state of ritual consecration (ihram) and walked in the (natural) shade while he was consecrated for the pilgrimage (muhrim). The laws of God, Muhammad, are not subject to analogy. Anyone who makes analogies of some of them on the basis of others, has strayed from the straight path."

Muhammad ibn al-Hasan was silent and did not ask any more questions.

The people have reported traditions on the authority of Abu al-Hasan Musa, peace be on him, and they have become very numerous; for, as we have said before, he was the most knowledgeable in the law during his time, and the most versed in the Book of God, the best of them in voice for recitation of the Qur'an. Whenever he recited, those who were listening to his recitation, would become sad and weep.

The people in Medina named him "the ornament of those who spend nights in prayer" (mutahajjidin). He was also called al-Kazim (the one who holds back) because of his restraint of anger and the patience (which he showed) in the face of the acts of the oppressors right up until the time he died, murdered in their prison and bonds.

Report about the Reason for him Being Killed and a Sample of the Accounts about that

The reason for al-Rashid detaining Abu al-Hasan Musa, peace be on him, imprisoning him and killing him is (contained in what is mentioned in the following tradition).

[Ahmad ibn Ubayd Allah ibn 'Ammar reported on the authority of 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Nawfah on the authority of his father; and Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Sa'd (reported); and Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Yahya: on the authority of their teachers, who said:]'

The reason for the arrest of Musa ibn Ja'far, peace be on them, was that al- Rashid had put his son in the care of Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn al-Ash'ath and Yahya. ibn Khalid ibn Barmak was jealous of that. He said (to himself): "If the caliphate passes on to (the son), my dominion and that of my son will be destroyed."

Therefore he deceived Ja'far ibn Muhammad - and the latter used to maintain the belief in the Imamate - so that he managed to gain access to him and establish friendly relations with him. His visits to his house were frequent and he became acquainted with his affairs, which he would report back to al-Rashid and he used to add to these reports that which would make (al-Rashid) feel hatred towards him.

One day (Yahya ibn Khalid) asked some of those he trusted: "Would you discover for me a member of the family of Abu Talib who is not in comfortable circumstances, and then he would let me know what I need?"

He was directed towards 'Ali ibn Ismail ibn Ja'far ibn Muhammad. Yahya ibn Khalid took him some money. Musa, peace be on him, was friendly with `Ali ibn Isma'il ibn Ja'far ibn Muhammad and he used to bring him gifts and treat him well.

Yahya ibn Khalid sent to ('Ali ibn Ismail) requesting him to visit al-Rashid and drawing his attention to the kind treatment which he had given him. So he decided to do that. Musa, peace be on him, was concerned and summoned Ali.

"Where are you going, cousin?" he asked.

"Baghdad," was the reply.

"Why are you doing that?" he enquired.

"I am in debt and I am poor," he answered.

"I will pay your debt and act for you and carry out (what you need)," Musa, peace be on him, told him.

He did not pay attention to that and began to set about (preparations for his) departure. Abu al-Hasan, peace be on him, asked him to come and said to him: "Are you leaving?"

"Yes," he replied, "I must do that."

"Look, cousin," he said to him, "fear God and do not give away any confidences against my children."

He ordered him to be given three hundred dinars and four thousand dirhams. (When he stood up in front of him, Abu al-Hasan Musa, peace be on him, spoke to those who were present: "By God, he will strive against my blood and he will confide against my children."

"May God make us your ransom," they said to him, "did you know this from his state when you were giving him gifts and being generous to him?"

"Yes," he said, "my father told me on the authority of his ancestors, on the authority of the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family, that when kin cut themselves away, then they should be brought back, for if they cut themselves away, God will cut them off. I wanted to bring him back after he had cut himself off from me for if he cuts me off, God will cut him off.)

'Ali ibn Ismail set out until he reached Yahya ibn Khalid. He gave him news of Musa ibn Ja'far, peace be on him, and (Yahya ibn Khalid) reported to al-Rashid and added additional material to it. Then he took him to al-Rashid. The latter asked him about his uncle and he gave information against him to (al-Rashid).

He told him that money was being brought to him from east and west and that he had bought an estate named al-Yasir for thirty thousand dinars. Its (former) owner had said when he had brought him the

money: “I will not accept this kind of currency. I will only accept such-and-such a kind of currency.” Then he ordered that money be brought and then he gave thirty thousand dinars of the currency whose coinage he had asked for.

Al-Rashid listened to that from him and then ordered him to be given two hundred thousand dirhams, with which he sought to make a living in one of the areas. He chose one of the provinces of the east.

His messengers were sent to bring the money and he waited there for its arrival. One day he went into the toilet, when he was suffering from dysentery and as a result of it the whole of his stomach came out. He fell down. They tried to put it back but they could not. He was aware of his situation when the money was brought to him while he was in the pangs of death. He said: “What can I do with it? I am about to die.”

That year al-Rashid went on the pilgrimage. He began it at Medina and there he had Abu al-Hasan Musa, peace be on him, arrested. It is reported that when he came to Medina, Musa, peace be on him, received him with a group of the nobles. They had gone out to meet him and then Abu al-Hasan, peace be on him, had gone on to the mosque as was his custom.

Al-Rashid waited until night and then went to the tomb of the Apostle of God, may God bless him and his family. He said: “Apostle of God, I apologise to you for something I want to do. I want to imprison Musa ibn Ja'far because he is intending to bring division into your community and to cause the shedding of its blood.”

Then he ordered him to be taken from the mosque and brought before him. He had him put in chains and called for two awnings to be brought He had (Abu al-Hasan) put in one of them on a mule and he had the other awning put on another mule. The two mules left his house carrying the two awnings which were closed. With each one went cavalry. The cavalry divided and some of them went with one of the two awnings on the road to Basra and the other on the road to Kufa.

Al-Rashid only did that in order to confuse the people about what had happened to Abu al-Hasan, peace be on him. He ordered the men who were with the awning in which was Abu al-Hasan to hand him over to 'Isa ibn Ja’far ibn al-Mansur, who was governor of Basra at that time.

He was handed over to him and he kept him in detention with him for a year. (Then al-Rashid wrote to him demanding (Abu al-Hasan's) blood. 'Isa ibn Ja'far summoned some of his close associates and trusted colleagues and sought their advice about what al-Rashid had written to him. They advised him to hold back from doing that and to ask to be excused from it. 'Isa ibn Ja'far wrote to al -Rashid saying:

The affair of Musa ibn Ja’far and his stay under my detention has been going on for a long time. I have become well-acquainted with his situation. I have set spies on him throughout this period and I have not found him (do anything except) open his mouth in worship. I set someone to listen to what he said in his prayers. He has never prayed against you or against me. He has never mentioned us with malice. He

does not pray for himself except for forgiveness and mercy. Either you send someone whom I can hand him over to or I will let him free. I am troubled at detaining him.

It is reported that one of the spies of 'Isa ibn Ja'far reported to him that frequently he used to hear him say in his prayers while he was detained:

O God, You know that I used to ask you to give me free time to worship You. O God, you have done that. To You be praise.

Al-Rashid directed that he should be handed over by 'Isa ibn Ja'far and taken to Baghdad. There he was handed over to al-Fadl ibn al-Rabi'. He remained with him a long time. Then al-Rashid wanted him to carry out some matter in (Abu al-Hasan's) affair and he refused. So he wrote to him to hand over to al-Fadl ibn Yahya. He received him from the former. (He put him in one of the rooms of one of his houses and set a watch over him. He. peace be on him. was occupied in worship; he used to keep the whole night alive with formal prayer, recitation of the Qur'an, personal prayer and effort. He would fast most days. His face never turned away from the mehrab (which showed the direction of prayer towards Mecca.)

Al-Fadl ibn Yahya made him comfortable and treated him with honour. That was communicated to al-Rashid while he was at al-Raqqa. He wrote to him denouncing him for making Musa, peace be on him, comfortable and ordering him to kill him. He held back from doing that and would not carry it out. At that al-Rashid became very angry. He summoned Masrur, the servant, and told him: "Go by the messenger-service (barid) immediately to Baghdad. Then go directly to Musa ibn Ja'far. If you find him in comfort and ease, then deliver this letter to al-Abbas ibn Muhammad and order him to submit to what is in it."

He handed another letter to him for al-Sindi ibn Shahik, ordering him in it to obey al-'Abbas ibn Muhammad. Masrur set out and arrived at the house of al- Fadl ibn Yahya without anyone knowing what he wanted. Then he went to Musa, peace be on him, and found him as al-Rashid had been informed. He went directly to al-'Abbas ibn Muhammad and al-Sindi ibn Shahik. He delivered the two letters to them.

The people did not wait long before the messenger went running to al-Fadl ibn Yahya. He rode back with him. He went along perplexed and shocked until he reached al-'Abbas ibn Muhammad. Al-'Abbas called for whips and two small platforms (aqabayn) to be brought.

Then he ordered al-Fadl to be stripped. Al-Sindi flogged (al-Fadl) in front of (al-'Abbas). (Al-Fadl) left with his colour changed completely from what it had been when he entered. He began to greet the people to right and to left.

Masrur wrote to al-Rashid with the news and the latter ordered that Musa, peace be on him, should be handed over to al-Sindi ibn Shahik. Al-Rashid had a large assembly. He said: "People, al-Fadl ibn Yahya has disobeyed me and opposed (giving) the obedience due to me. You have seen me curse him

so you curse him."

The people cursed him from every side until the room and the building shook with the (sound of) cursing him.

The news reached Yahya ibn Khalid. He rode to al-Rashid and entered by another door from that which the people used so that he came to him from behind without him being aware. Then he said:

"Commander of the faithful, look at me." Al-Rashid heard him with great fear, he said: "Al-Fadl is only a young man and I will take care of him for you in the way you would wish."

(Al-Rashid's) face brightened and he went forward to the people saying: "Al- Fadl disobeyed me in something and I have protected myself against him. Now he has repented and returned to obeying me. Therefore now take him as a friend."

"We are the friends of those you befriend and the enemies of those whom you are against," they answered. "We have made him our friend."

Yahya ibn Khalid departed on the messenger-service and reached Baghdad. There the people were disturbed and spreading disquieting rumours. He gave the impression that he had come to improve the administration of the Sawad and to look into the affairs of the tax-collectors. He occupied himself with some of those matters for a few days. Then he summoned al-Sindi ibn Shahik and gave him his instructions with regard to (Musa). (He carried out his instructions.

What he commissioned al-Sindi to do was to kill him, peace be on him, with poison which he put in the food he brought him. It is said that he put it in dates. (Musa) ate some of them and then felt the effect of the poison. He remained for three days in a fever from it and died on the third day.

When Musa died, al-Sindi ibn Shahik brought the jurists and notable men of Baghdad in (to see) him. Among them were al-Haytham ibn Ali and others. They saw that there was no mark of any wound on him, nor (any evidence) of strangulation. (Al-Sindi) made them give testimony that he had died normally. They testified to that. He was taken out and he was put on the bridge at Baghdad. Then an announcement was made: "This man Musa ibn Ja'far, peace be on him, has died. So come and look at him"

The people began to come and look into (Musa's) face while he was dead. For a group had claimed during the life of Musa that he was the awaited Imam (al- Muntazar) who would continue to undertake the Imamate for the rest of time (al-qa'im). They made his imprisonment the period of absence (al-ghayba) which had been reported concerning the last Imam (al-qai'im). Yatya ibn Khalid ordered it to be announced at his death: "This is Musa ibn Ja'far whom the Rafidites claim is the last Imam (al-qa'im) who will not die. So (come and) look at him."

The people saw that he was dead. Then he was carried away and buried in the cemetery of Quraysh at

the Tin Gate. This cemetery had been used for Banu Hashim and the nobles of the people for a long time.

It is reported that when he was about to die, he asked al-Sindi ibn Shahik to bring him his retainer (mawla) from Medina who was staying at the house of al-Abbas ibn Muhammad at the cane-market (mashra at al-qasb). The latter should wash and shroud his body. (Al-Sindi) did that.

Al-Sindi (later) reported:

I (i.e. al-Sindi) asked him to permit me to shroud him but he refused. He said: "I am a member of the House (of the Prophet). The giving of dowries for our women, the performing of pilgrimages on behalf of those of us who have not made the pilgrimage, and the shrouding of our dead can only be performed by one of our retainers (mawlas) who is pure. I already have my shroud and I want the washing and preparation (of my body) to be carried out by my retainer so-and-so."

That was done for him.

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