

YOUNG READERS 2

IMAM ALI (AS)

SAKINA HASAN ASKARI



حکیر

Chapter 1

Introduction

Imam Ali (AS), excellent in every way, is our first Imam. His name means the Very High. He was created by Allah with the same light as the Prophet Muhammad(SAW) himself. He is the best example of the teachings of the Holy Quran.

At every stage in the history of Islam, the name of Ali (AS) shines. From his birth in the Kaaba to his martyrdom in the Masjid e Kufa, he lived only for Allah.

Love for Imam Ali (AS) is a sign of true faith (eeman) and enmity towards him is a sign of a hypocrite (munafiq).

Part 1

In Makkah

Chapter 2

Family Tree

The family tree of Imam Ali (AS) is the same as that of the holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW). It goes back to the Prophet Ibraheem (AS) through his son Hazrat Ismail (AS).

Both Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and Imam Ali (AS) belong to the family of Bani Hashim from the tribe of Qureish, Their grandfather was Hazrat Abdul Muttalib (AS). Who had many sons, including Hazrat Abdullah (AS) and Hazrat Abu Talib (AS). Hazrat Abdullah (AS) is the father of Prophet Muhammad SAW and Hazrat Abu Talib (AS) is Imam Ali's (AS) father.

Hazrat Abu Talib's (AS) real name is Imran. He was kind and generous, always ready to help the needy. He looked after the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as the best guardian. He was a believer and supported him in spreading the message of Islam.

Hazrat Fatima (AS) binte Asad is Imam Ali's (AS) mother. She came from the same family as the Holy Prophet. She declared her faith in Islam and looked after the Prophet with love and care.

Chapter 3

Birth in the Kaaba

Imam Ali (AS) is the only person ever to be born in the Kaaba, the house of Allah. It was Friday 13th of Rajab, thirty years after the Year of the Elephant. Hazrat Fatima binte Asad was circling the Kaaba, praying. She leaned against the wall of the Kaaba to rest. Suddenly, there was a loud crack and the corner of the Kaaba wall opened. She went inside and the wall closed behind her.

Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib, the Prophet's uncle saw this miracle. He and his companions rushed to the gate of the Sacred House, which was locked. They tried to open it but could not. The news soon spread throughout Makkah.

Imam Ali (AS) was born inside the holy Kaaba. Hazrat Fatima binte Asad stayed inside for three days. On the fourth day, she came out and Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was waiting outside. He took the baby from her arms. He kissed him and named him Ali.

The baby opened his eyes and recited verses from Allah's holy books. The Prophet said, "O Ali! You are excellent in this life and in the here after."

Chapter 4

First to Accept Islam

Imam Ali (AS) was the first to follow the Holy Prophet and accept Islam. Imam Ali(AS) says, "He took me in his lap when I was a baby and I was always with him. I followed the Prophet step by step as a baby camel follows its mother."

He was the first to offer prayers behind him. "During those days, Islam was the religion of only the Prophet and his wife Hazrat Khadija (AS)." Imam Ali (AS) says, "I was the third of the trio. Nobody else in the world had accepted Islam."

For three years, the Prophet (SAW) preached Islam in secret. Then he was asked by Allah to call his family to Islam. "Invite your relatives" (Sura Shu'ara, v204). A party was arranged. This was called the Dawat Zul Asheera. Imam Ali (AS) helped the Prophet. Nearly forty people came. They were surprised to find that although there was not much food, they all could eat as much as they wanted and there was still plenty left.

After the meal, the Prophet told them that he had been sent by Allah as a prophet for all creation. He promised that whoever was ready to help him to spread Allah's message would be his successor. Three times he asked the question, "Who is ready to help me?"

Each time it was only Imam Ali (AS) who stood up and promised to help. "O Rasool Allah, I shall assist you and shall fight against anyone who opposes you."

Then the Holy Prophet (SAW) turned to his guests and said, "O my people! This is Ali, my brother, my minister, and my successor among you. Listen to him, obey him!". The people there laughed and said "O Abu Talib! Your son would rule you." Hazrat Abu Talib (AS) replied, "If my nephew commands so, I agree"

The people of Makkah did not like Prophet Muhammad (SAW) calling people to Islam and started making life difficult for him. Imam Ali (AS) acted like a bodyguard for the Prophet. When the Makkan boys started throwing stones at the Prophet, Imam Ali (AS) used to defend him and fight against them.

Finally Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and the Muslims were forced to leave the city and live in the valley called Shob e Abu Talib. Life there was very difficult. They spent three years suffering hunger and hardship. No one would even sell food to them. When finally they were allowed to return to Makkah, they were much poorer than before. Their health had suffered too. Soon after Hazrat Abu Talib (AS) and Hazrat Khadija (AS) both died leaving the family very sad. The Prophet called it the Year of Sorrow.

Chapter 5

The Night of Hijrat

After spending ten years preaching Islam the Holy Prophet (SAW) was forced to leave Makkah, in the dark of the night. This is called Hijrat (Migration) and the Muslim calendar begins with this date (A.H.).

Allah revealed to His Prophet (SAW) of the plan against him as enemies circled his house planning to kill him the next morning. Allah ordered him to leave Makkah the very same night.

Who could he ask to sleep in his bed in his place? It had to be someone brave and someone who was ready to put his own life in danger. Imam Ali (AS) asked, "If I take your place, will your life be safe?" "Yes", replied the Holy Prophet. Hearing this Imam Ali (AS) bowed down his head in the sajdah before Allah as a sign of thanksgiving.

He lay down on the bed of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and covered himself with the Prophet's green blanket. During the night, many stones and arrows were aimed at him. Stones hit him in the back, but he did not turn in his bed. This act of bravery was praised by Allah in the Holy Quran (Sura Baqarah: v204)

In the morning, the enemies dashed into the room with daggers in their hand ready to kill Muhammad (SAW). They threw out the blanket.

They were shocked to see Ali instead of Muhammad! The whole night they had been watching how Ali (AS) slept like the Holy Prophet, with a stone for a pillow. He turned in his sleep just like the Prophet would do. No wonder they mistook him for the Prophet. They were furious and wanted to kill him. But when

they found he was ready to defend himself, they gave up the idea.

Imam Ali (AS) stayed in Makkah for three days. He returned the things back to the owners who had left them in trust with the Prophet. Then taking the ladies of the holy household, he brought them safely to join the Prophet Muhammad(SAW) in Quba, near Madina. The Prophet came forward and hugged him. They then travelled together to Madina.

Part 2

In Madina

Chapter 6

The Prophet's Brother

Imam Ali (AS) helped the Prophet throughout his life in Madina. Soon after his arrival at Madina, the Prophet (SAW) created a bond of brotherhood between the Muhajirs (refugees, who had come from Makkah) and the Ansar (the helpers, who were from Madina). Having a brother to help was a great advantage.

The Prophet (SAW) chose Ali (AS) as his own brother. He looked at the face of Ali and said, "O Ali! You are my brother in this world and the Hereafter". It was Imam Ali (AS) who resembled the great founder of Islam more than anyone else.

Imam Ali (AS) was handsome, strong and attractive. He had a smiling face and bright eyes. His voice was clear and loud.

He was good natured and kind. He liked simple food and usually had barley bread and salt. His clothes were modest, the kind that could be available to even the poor.

Chapter 7

The Perfect Marriage

Imam Ali (AS) was chosen to marry Bibi Fatima (AS), the Prophet Muhammad's only daughter. When Bibi Fatima (AS) was ready for marriage, many rich men of Madina went to the Prophet and asked for her hand but he refused them.

When Imam Ali (AS) gave his proposal, the Prophet was pleased. He asked his daughter Fatima (AS). She stayed quiet. The Prophet (SAW) said, "Her silence is her consent." The wedding was arranged. Imam Ali (AS) and Bibi Fatima (AS) were married on the 1st of Zilhij, 2 A.H.

Imam Ali (AS) sold his shield for 480 dirhams and used the money to pay for the wedding, food for the guests and for perfume. Many people of Madina came to the wedding feast. The Prophet (SAW) prayed "O Allah, Give prosperity to both of them. Give prosperity to their progeny." He gave the hand of his daughter Fatima (AS) in the hand of Ali (AS) and blessed them.

It was the most perfect marriage. They blended very well with each other. Imam Ali (AS) and Bibi Fatima (AS) led a happy and contented life. They gave everything they had to the poor and the needy, while they themselves often starved. They had two sons: Imam Hasan (AS) who was born on 15th Ramadan 3 A.H. and Imam Hussain (AS) who was born on 3rd Shaban 4 A.H. A third son Hazrat Mohsin (AS) was still a birth. Their two daughters were Bibi Zainab (AS) and Bibi Kulsoom (AS).

Bibi Fatima (AS) had a slave called Fizza to help her but they shared the work equally. If Bibi Fatima (AS) was ill, Fizza would not be allowed to work if it was her day of rest. Instead,

Imam Ali (AS) was seen grinding oats, lighting the oven, baking the bread and looking after the children.

Chapter 8

Praised in the Quran

Many many, many ayats of the Quran were sent down to praise Imam Ali (AS). One day Imam Ali (AS) was praying with the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in the Masjid-e-Nabi. A beggar came and began to ask for charity. No one answered. Imam Ali (AS) was in rukoo, while offering namaz at that time. He gave a sign to the beggar to look at his finger, on which was a ring. The beggar came forward and took Imam Ali's (AS) ring from his finger and left the place.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had not yet finished his prayers when the angel Jibraeel came with the verse, "Your Wali (Guardian) is Allah and His Messenger and those who believe, those who establish prayers and pay zakat while they are in rukoo. (Sura Maidah: v 55). This verse is known as Ayat e Wilayat.

Another ayat sent in praise of Imam Ali (AS) is known as Ayat e Najwa.

People kept coming to the Holy Prophet and talking to him one to one, taking up his time. They wanted to impress others to show how close they were to the Prophet. Allah sent an ayat (Sura Mujadila v 11) asking them to offer sadqa before approaching the Holy Prophet to speak in private. Now no one came to the Prophet except Imam Ali (AS). Ten times he gave sadqa and ten times he spoke in private.

Imam Ali (AS) is the only one in history to have acted on the orders of this ayat known as the Ayat e Najwa. In the Quran, Imam Ali (AS) is called the "Naba ul Azeem" (Sura Naba: v1) which means the "Great News" that people will differ about. He is also called the Hablul Mateen which means the strong Rope of Allah in the (Sura Ale-Imran, v 103).

Imam Ali (AS) along with Bibi Fatima (AS) and their sons, Imam Hasan (AS) and Imam Hussain (AS) had joined the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) under the Kisa when the ayat e Tatheer (Sura Ahzaab, verse 33) was sent down.

The verses of the Sura Dahr were for Imam Ali (AS) and his family, where Allah praises them for their generosity as they gave their food to the poor, the orphan and the captive.

By bringing Imam Ali (AS) with him in Mubahala, the Prophet (SAW) showed everyone that he considered Ali (AS) his Nafs (Self). Watching the glowing faces of the Panjatan e Pak, the Christians decided to withdraw from the contest. They agreed to terms set out by the Prophet, who appointed Imam Ali (AS) to settle the details.

Chapter 9

Praised by the Prophet

No one in the history of Islam shares the words of praise that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) used for Imam Ali(AS). For example he said“

If all the trees were pens, if all the seas were ink, if all the jinn and men wrote them down, even then the merits of Aliibne Abu Talib (AS) could not be counted.”

“Ali and I are from the same Light”

“Ali is from me and I am from Ali.”

“Ali is the first person to believe in my Prophet hood and will be the first person to meet me on the Day of Judgement.”

“I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its door. He who wants to gain knowledge should come through the door.”

“I am the store-house of wisdom and Aliis its door.”

“Whoever wishes to see Adam in hisknowledge, Noah in his piety, Ibraheem inhis patience, Moses in his strength, and Je- sus in his worship and devotion should look at Ali ibne Abu Talib.”

“He who loves Ali loves me and he who hates Ali hates me.”

“O Ali! You are the leader in this world and the hereafter.”

“Ali is with the Truth and Truth is with Ali.”

Chapter 10

Fearless in Battle

In Madina, the Holy Prophet (SAW) was forced to defend himself in many battles. Imam Ali (AS) was the first to offer his life in jihad. In every battle he carried the alam, the banner of Islam.

He was the hero of the Battle of Badr and brought the first victory to Islam. In the battle of Uhud he saved the life of the Holy Prophet (SAW). A cry was heard from the sky, *Lafata illa Ali la saifilla Zulfiqar*. "There is no braver youth than Ali and no better sword than his Zulfiqar."

During the Battle of the Trench (Khandaq), also known as Ahzab, it was only Ali who was ready to go and face the enemy. The Prophet helped him mount his horse and said "Today total eemaan (faith) is facing total kufr (disbelief)." People saw Ali return as the victor, shouting "Allah o Akbar!" The enemy started running away. No wonder the Prophet said "One strike of Ali (AS) on the day of Khandaq is superior to all the worship of the humans and jinns till the Day of Qiyamat."

In the Battle of Khaibar, he was brilliant. When others had failed for forty days, Imam Ali (AS) was given the command. He marched to the fort and defeated the Jews easily. He broke open the door of the fort all by himself and carried the Muslim army inside. Within four hours, he hoisted the flag of Islam on the biggest fortress of Arabia. No wonder that Ali (AS) is called *Fateh e Khaibar* (Khaibar's Conqueror).

When Makkah was taken by the Prophet without a fight, it was Imam Ali (AS) who helped the Prophet (SAW) to clear the Kaaba of idols. In Hunayn when the Muslims started to run away from the battlefield, it was Imam Ali (AS) again, who saved the life of the Holy Prophet (SAW).

In the Battle of Tabuk the Prophet planned to go and left Imam Ali (AS) in Madina to protect the Holy household. Some hypocrites, who had been planning to loot the Prophet's house did not like this and started spreading false rumours about Imam Ali (AS). The Holy Prophet on hearing this said O Ali You are as Aaron was to Moses except that there is no prophet after me" Imam Ali (AS) proved to be the hero in every battle. His jihad is indeed the best example. But as Ali (AS) fought against the enemies, those who were not true Muslims were jealous of his success. They did not like him to be above them in merit. But Allah chose Ali (AS) to be the Imam. Allah wanted to provide security to His Message, to continue till the day of Qiyamat.

Chapter 11

Ghadeer e Khum

It was the last year of the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) life. It was the 18th day of the holy month of Zilhij. The Prophet (SAW) with nearly 120,000 Muslims was returning from Makkah after Hajj. They arrived at Ghadeer Khum, a place midway between Makkah and Madina. It was across roads from where people would go in different directions to return home.

Suddenly the Holy Prophet (SAW) received a message from Allah through the angel Jibraeel which he immediately conveyed to the Muslims. "O Our Messenger! Deliver what has been sent down unto you from your Lord; and if you do not, then you have not delivered His Message; and surely Allah will protect you from men."

The Prophet then asked his muezzin Bilal to call out the words of the azaan, "Hayya ala khairil amal" (Come to the best of actions). Those who had gone ahead came back. Those who were following behind came forward. When all of them were gathered, an area under two trees was swept and cleaned. The Holy Prophet (SAW) led the Zohr and Asr prayers in the hot summer sun. Everyone prayed behind him.

Then a pulpit was made with camel saddles. The Holy Prophet (SAW) gave a long sermon, in which he said: "I am leaving among you two most important things, to be obeyed: the Quran and my Ahle-bait. They will not separate from each other till they reach me on the Fountain of Kausar". For more than an hour he spoke to the people. He asked if he had delivered the message of Allah. "Yes! Yes!" they replied. He asked if he had more authority over them than themselves.

He asked if he was the master having complete claim on them. "Yes! Yes!", they replied again. Then he asked Ali (AS) to

come up. He held Ali (AS) in both his hands, raised him high, so much that all the men and women saw him clearly.

He then said *Mun kunto Maula fa haza Ali un Maula. Of whom so ever I am the Master, Ali too is his Master.*" He raised his hands in prayer:"

O Allah! Be a friend to Ali's friends and an enemy to his enemies, help those who help him and betray those who betray him." Allah sent the angel Jibreel again. Then the Prophet (SAW) recited the ayat: "On this day, I have perfected for you, your religion, and have completed my favour on you, and have chosen for you Islam, as religion"

The Holy Prophet (SAW) then came down the pulpit, did *sajda e shukr* to thank Allah. A tent was put up for Imam Ali (AS) where people congratulated him as "Ameer ul Momineen" (The Commander of the Faithful). Everyone came to give their hands in bayat to the Imam and promised to obey him as their Maula (Master).

Believing in a Maula is a blessing and the day when the Maula was declared, the blessings were completed, made perfect. The day was declared as Eid. People were asked to convey the message to those who were not present there, so that everyone knew that Imam Ali (AS) was the successor of the Prophet. The news quickly spread everywhere.

A man called Haris ibn Numan heard the message of Ghadeer and angrily came to see the Holy Prophet (SAW). He said: "You say "Ali is the Master of whom I am Master". Is this order from you or from Allah?" The Holy Prophet said: "By Allah who is the only God! This is from Allah, the mighty and glorious."

On hearing this, Haris turned back and said: "O Allah! If what Muhammad says is correct, then fling on us a stone from the sky" He had not yet reached his camel when Allah a stone struck him on his head and left him dead.

Haris was punished by Allah himself in the same manner as King Abraha had been punished when he had come to destroy the Kaaba.

Chapter 12

The Saddest Year

The 11 A.H. was the saddest year of Imam Ali's life. He lost two of his best companions: the Holy Prophet (SAW) who he loved like a father and his dear wife, Bibi Fatima (AS).

The Prophet (SAW) after his return from Hajj was ill. He fainted. His daughter and members of his family started weeping. When he woke up, he told his companions who had gathered around him, "Bring pen, ink and paper so that I may write a will for you that will keep you on the straight path."

Some of his companions wanted to, but Umar ibn al-Khattab stopped them, saying that the Prophet (SAW) was confused and that the Holy Quran was enough for them. People started to argue loudly. The Prophet of Allah was annoyed and asked them to go away and leave him alone. It was the 27th of Safar, 11. A. H.

Then the Prophet (SAW) called Imam Ali (AS) and said: "Ali! After me, when hardships face you, then do not lose patience. When you find people running after worldly gains then you busy yourself in the way of Truth and Allah." The Prophet's condition got worse.

Imam Ali (AS) says "During the last moments of the Holy Prophet his head was resting on my shoulder and his last words were "Salat, Salat" (prayers, prayers). When the Prophet (SAW) died, his head was on my chest, and his last breath blew over my palms and I passed it over my face."

Imam Ali (AS) gave Prophet Muhammad (SAW) the funeral bath. He could hear the angels weeping till the body was buried in the grave. First Imam Ali (AS) offered the prayers for his dead body alone and then Muslims in groups came and offered the prayers without any leader (Imam).

While Imam Ali (AS) was busy with the burial of the Prophet, some people gathered at a place called Saqifa, and decided that Abu Bakr should be the First Caliph. Imam Ali (AS) was asked to agree to this decision. He refused.

Later Bibi Fatima (AS) was refused her right to her property in Fadak.

Though Imam Ali (AS) had decided to confine himself to his house yet his house was burnt down. His beloved wife, Bibi Fatima (AS), was hurt. The baby she was carrying was still-born. The house was full of smoke and the children were frightened. When Imam Ali (AS) was attending to his wife and children, he was tied with a rope and dragged from the house.

Bibi Fatima (AS), after the attack on her, because ill, very ill. She could hardly wait without help. Details of the last day of her short life are sad. She called Imam Ali to her side, and said: "Ali, my dear husband! My troubles will shortly be over and I shall meet my father. I am sorry to part with you.... Let my death not dishearten you, you have to serve Islam and humanity for a long time to come. Promise me Ali!"

Chapter 13

A Quiet Life

After the death of the Prophet SAW and Bibi Fatima (AS), Imam Ali (AS) led a very simple and secluded life. Some ask why the Imam did not fight openly for his rights when they were denied. It was because he loved Islam as much as the Holy Prophet (SAW) had loved it. He could not, therefore for the sake of worldly power put Islam in danger. He chose to be patient. This was the jihad enafs of the Imam.

In the beginning, Imam Ali (AS) spent his days compiling the verses of the Holy Quran as they were revealed to the Holy Prophet (SAW) of Allah.

Imam Ali (AS) always guided the people and helped them. A dua which the Imam has taught us is called Dua e Mashloul. One dark and cold night, Imam Ali (AS) and his son Imam Hussain (AS) with a few other people were doing the tawaf of Kaaba. Suddenly they heard a desperate cry. Imam Ali (AS) sent his son to find out who it was. Imam Hussain (AS) found a paralytic man, who he brought to his father.

The man said "My name is Manazil ibn Lahaq. As a youth I was very sinful and spent my time in wrong doing. My father tried to stop me but I would not listen. I used to hit him. Once when he did not give me money I asked for, I hit him really hard, twisted his arm and snatched it away. My father was so shocked and hurt that he came to the Kaaba and cursed me. That very moment I suffered a stroke and lost the ability to walk.

My father returned home. I pleaded with my father to pray at the Kaaba again to ask Allah to restore me back to health. He agreed to my request in his love for me. But as we were coming back here, he fell from his camel and died. Now,

people taunt me and I am very sad. Imam Ali (AS) wrote a dua for him and told him "Read this dua with wudu tonight. Allah will accept your prayer. Come and see me tomorrow" The next morning Manazil came to see the Imam. He had the dua in his hand. He kept saying "By Allah this dua has ism e azam, (Allah's great names) Last night I repeatedly read this dua by the Kaaba, raising my hands. Then I went to sleep. I saw the Holy Prophet SAW who rubbed his hand over my body, saying "Take good care of the ism e azam". I woke up and was amazed to see that I was healed." This dua can be read to cure any illness.

In spite of the denial of his rights, whenever Imam Ali (AS) was consulted by the caliphs, he did not refuse, and like a true Muslim, he offered his sincere advice. The second Caliph, Umar, often used to say "If it were not for Ali, I would have been ruined".

The Muslims had no calendar of their own. Sometimes the year of the Elephant (Abraha's attack on Kaaba) was considered as the beginning, at other times the Battle of Fajjar (a battle between Arab clans). When Umar asked Imam Ali (AS), he advised that the Muslim era should begin with the Hijrat, (the Prophet's Migration from Makkah to Madina). This was adopted and we have Islamic dates as A. H. (After Hijrat)

Sometimes his good advice was not acted upon. There was a large library at Alexandria in Egypt. It contained thousands of books on many different subjects. When Egypt was conquered, orders were issued to burn them. When Imam Ali (AS) heard this, he tried to stop them. He told them, "These books are treasures of knowledge and they do not contradict the Holy Quran. Knowledge is an asset for human beings and a birthright of man. It should not be destroyed." But they did not listen to Imam Ali's advice and burnt the books.

For nearly twenty five years his rights were denied as Abu Bakr, and then Umar and then Usman became the leaders in Madina. In one of his sermons Imam Ali (AS) says that although they knew his position was like the axis in a handmill, so important that without him, things would not work properly, they ignored it. The result was that people went off the Right Path, away from the true teachings of Islam, as taught by the Prophet.

Chapter 14

As the Caliph

In 34 A.H., after the death of Usman, nearly 25 years after the Prophet's death, the people realised, "We know no fitter man to be the leader than Ali." They gathered at his house with such eagerness that they were pushing and crushing each other.

Imam Ali (AS) says "At that moment, nothing took me by surprise, but the crowd of people rushing to me. It advanced towards me from every side like the mane of the hyena, so much so that Hasan (AS) and Hussain (AS) were getting crushed and both the ends of my shoulder garment were torn. They collected around me like a herd of sheep and goats."

Before Imam Ali (AS) took charge of the State, the condition of the country was in a hopeless condition. The common people had been kept ignorant about the true teachings of Islam; away from religion and piety.

But the people did not realise that Imam Ali (AS) would make them follow the path laid down by the Holy Prophet (SAW). The task had not been easy then. Now after 25 years it was even more difficult.

Imam Ali's rule was truly Islamic and his every action followed Allah's command. He wanted to establish the truth and destroy falsehood.

Imam Ali (AS) had to fight three battles to establish order as Caliph. The first war was the Battle of Jamal, near Basra, in 36 A. H. It was so called because Ayesha, one of the wives of the Prophet and leader of the opposing army came to the battlefield riding a camel. Muslims fought each other for the first time. Talha and Zubayr, who had been the companions of the

Prophet broke their oath with Imam Ali (AS) and joined her.
They were defeated by the Imam.

Chapter 15

In Kufa

Imam Ali (AS) moved to Kufa in Iraq and made it his capital city. The holy Ahlebait moved to Kufa with him. Kufa was a more central place from where he could be in touch with the different parts of the Muslim state. The Imam lived not in a grand palace but a simple house right near the Masjid. We can still see this house when we go forziarat.

After the battle of Jamal, Moaviya, who was the governor in Syria, feared that Imam Ali (AS) would remove him from his post. He gathered troops to fight against Imam Ali (AS) who was forced to march towards Syria to face Moaviya's forces at a place called Siffeen.

In the beginning, Imam Ali (AS) tried to bring about peace. But Moaviya was proud

and wanted impossible conditions. Imam Ali (AS) offered to end the quarrel by personal combat, but Moaviya declined the challenge.

In spite of this, Imam Ali (AS) sent orders to his commanders giving details about Jihad. He said: Never begin a war yourself. Never be first to attack your enemy. Repulse attacks boldly and bravely. Never kill those who run away. Never kill the wounded. Never take to loot and arson. Never hurt a woman or children. Never hurt the old or weak.

This battle started on the 1st Safar 38A.H. and lasted for more than two months. Thousands were killed. Ammar e Yasir and Owais e Qarani, both famous pious companions were killed. People recalled that the Holy Prophet (SAW) had said to Ammar that he would be killed by rebels.

The rebels were defeated in three battles and Moaviya was ready to flee from the field, when a trick saved him from

destruction. He made his soldiers tear the Holy Quran into pages, tie them to lances and raise them up.

Moaviya was also able to bribe some of the soldiers in Imam Ali's army. They created trouble and forced other soldiers to stop fighting. They gathered around the Imam Ali (AS) and insisted that he stop fighting. Imam Ali (AS) knew that it was a trick and tried to make his soldiers realize this. But the soldiers refused to listen. A treaty was signed between the two sides.

The third battle that the Imam had to fight was the Battle of Nahrwan in 38A.H. A group of men, who had fought along side the Imam Ali (AS) in Siffeen, now broke away and would not listen to him. They were called the Kharijee. They moved away from Koofa and gathered in a place called Nahrwan in 38 A.H. They fought against the Imam but were defeated. Only nine of the more than 2,000 Kharijees survived.

In spite of the battles he had to fight, Imam Ali (AS) brought important reforms to improve the condition of the people.

He set up a unit for educating the people. They were taught many subjects which included Arabic Grammar, Reading the Quran, Hadees, Mathematics, Engineering and Astronomy.

Another important reform that Imam Ali (AS) introduced was to reorganise the Treasury Accounts. In the previous years, money that should have been shared out among the people was taken by the rulers and their families. Now, Imam Ali (AS) made sure that money collected was shared equally among all the people. Negro-slaves would stand in line with the Arab Sheikhs and get an equal share.

Imam Ali (AS) had a very soft corner in his noble heart for the poor, the disabled, the aged and the orphans. He wrote to his governor, Malik Ashtar, "I want to warn you about the poor. Fear Allah about your attitude towards them. Remember that their welfare is the State's first duty. "

Once he saw a slave girl weeping. He found out that she had bought some dates but they were not good, so her master asked her to return them. The shopkeeper would not take them back. She was afraid of going back to her master. She did not know what to do. Imam Ali (AS) went with her to the shopkeeper and told him to take the dates back. He did not listen at first. Then someone told him "This is Ali (AS) the Caliph." The shopkeeper quickly apologised and was ready to give back the

money. The master of the slave girl too came running to say sorry for the trouble that he had caused. Imam Ali (AS) told them "You have no mercy for those in your power. Have you a right to expect mercy from your Lord?"

When once containers of figs and honey arrived from Iran, he gathered orphans and distributed them. The children enjoyed eating the honey and started licking their fingers.

The Imam smiled. Imam Ali (AS) was always ready to help those in need and would do it without telling them who he was. One day when he was passing through a street in Kufa where he ruled, he saw a woman carrying a leather bag of water. He took the bag from her and carried it to her house. She told him she was a widow who had no one to care for her children. He then looked after her children and hugged them with love. He continued to play with them while she cooked.

A neighbour walked in, who recognised the Imam. The widow was very moved to find that the person who had been helping them was Ali ibn Abu Talib, the Caliph.

To make travel easy for the people a road was constructed between Makkah and Koofah with milestones on the route. Gardens were planted and given to poor Muslims. Masjids were constructed by the Imam at Khandaq (Masjid Fath) and at the grave of Hazrat Hamza (AS) in Uhad. He also built a masjid at the Meeqat, near Madina. Pilgrims still use (Masjid Shajrah) at the very place as they travel for Hajj every year.

For the general welfare of people, Imam Ali (AS) dug wells, especially for those going for the Hajj. The well at the Meeqat near Madina still bears the name Birr e Ali (The well of Ali AS).

Chapter 16

Ali's Knowledge

Imam Ali's (AS) sermons in Nahjul Balagha, show us how brilliant and eloquent he was in so many different areas of knowledge. His sayings show us his wisdom. His letters give us an idea of how he dealt with friends and enemies.

Imam Ali (AS) was an expert in language. He taught men the rules of Arabic grammar. He was a true master of the Arabic language. Once, someone asked him to give a speech without using letters which have dots. This was a very hard task because in the Arabic alphabet as many as 16 out of the 29 letters of the alphabet are written with dots. But Imam Ali (AS) was able to do it straight away.

He even gave a sermon without using the letter alif, a letter that occurs most often. Imam Ali (AS) once said to the people, "Salooni, Salooni, qabla tafqidooni", "Ask me, ask me, whatever you wish, before you lose me. I know even more about the paths in the sky than those on the earth."

The Imam had knowledge given by Allah of the past, present and future. Once he was passing through the ruins of the Arc of Ctesiphon. He described in detail of each of the buildings and the life there as it used to be lived centuries earlier, much to the amazement of his companions.

He took his close companion Kumail outside the city of Kufa and told him that one day there would be tall buildings with a sign of Shaitan called "Antina" on them.

He also taught him the dua of Prophet Khizr. This dua has now become famous as dua e Kumail. It is read on the night of the 15th Shaban. It is a wonderful dua, where the Imam has taught us how to ask for forgiveness for sins. It is read on

Thursday evenings. Imam Ali (AS) has taught us many duas which are in a collection called Sahifa e Alawiya.

To his companion, Meesum he showed the very date palm where one day he would have to suffer for his love of Ali.

Chapter 17

Martyrdom

In 40 A.H. the life of this great Imam came to a sudden and tragic end. On the night before the 19th of Ramazan, he had iftar with his daughter Umme Kulsoom(AS). He ate very little, only some bread and salt. He spent the night reciting the Qur-an. Sometimes, he looked up at the sky and said:"What my beloved Prophet (SAW)has told me istrue and quite near." When Umme Kulsoom asked him why he looked uneasy, he said "Soon I will be inthe presence of Allah".

As he left for the masjid in the early hours of the morning, the geese started cackling and flapping their wings. Someone wanted to move them aside butthe Imam said "Leave them alone. Very soon the sound of crying will follow louder than their cackling".

When he reached the masjid e Kufa, he looked at the rising dawn and said, "O dawn, has there been a day in Ali'slife when you appeared to find him asleep?" He gave the azan and his voice was heard throughout Kufa. He woke up people, who were sleeping in the masjid. Among them was Ibn Muljim who hid a sword in his cloak and an evil plot in his mind.

People gathered to pray and the Imam started to lead the namaz e fajr. Ibn Muljim stood in the line of prayer. Was he going to pray?No, he was going to murder the symbol of true prayer, Imam Ali (AS). He struck his poisoned sword upon Imam Ali's head. As the Imam fell, he said:"Fuzto wa Rabbal Kaaba" 'I have gained victory, by the Lord of the Kaaba!

'Imam Ali (AS) had always prayed for martyrdom. He smiled. How could anyone ask for a better way to die? In sajda before Allah, while fasting, during Ramadan, the month of Allah.

The walls and doors of the masjid shook. A black wind blew. "Ali Murtaza has been martyred!" cried Jibraeel. People cried out: "Oh enemy of Allah, what have you done? You have killed the best of all people."

Ibn Muljim started to run away. No one was attending the prayers. Imam Ali (AS) asked his son Imam Hasan (AS) to lead the prayers. Ibn Muljim was caught and brought before Imam Ali (AS), who was on the prayer carpet that was now soaked in blood. He knew the blow would kill him. But when Ibn Muljim was brought before him, he saw that the rope was tight around his killer was piercing into his flesh. Imam Ali (AS) turned towards the Muslims and said: "You should not be so cruel with your fellow-beings, loosen his ropes, don't you see that they are cutting his flesh and he is in agony?"

They brought Ali (AS) some milk, but he did not drink it. Instead he offered it to Ibn Muljim. He then said to his son Imam Hasan (AS): "My son, this man has given your father only one stroke of the sword. After me, you have the choice either to set him free or punish him. If you decide to punish him, give him only one blow whether it kills him or not."

The wound on the Imam's head was bandaged and he was taken home. People started to weep and followed him. As they came close to the Imam's house, he asked that all the people leave. He knew that his daughters, especially Bibi Zainab (AS) and Bibi Kulsoom (AS) would be at the door. He did not wish anyone to hear them cry.

The Imam spent the nights of 19th and 20th of Ramazan in great pain. From time to time Imam Ali (AS) fell into a coma, and whenever he opened his eyes, he gave them his last words of advice.

"I advise you to fear Allah, and not to run after the world, even if it may run after you. Speak the truth and act for Allah's reward. Be an enemy of the oppressor, and be a helper of the oppressed." Imam Ali (AS) reminded people to follow the teachings of the Holy Prophet and the Quran.

His children would not leave his side. He gave all of them in the care of his son Hasan (AS), who would be the next Imam. He called his son Abbas and reminded him to be always ready to defend Hussain (AS). He kissed his daughters Zainab

and Kulsoom (AS) on their arms. He knew that they would be bound with ropes in Karbala.

As the night of the 21st of Ramadan moved towards the dawn, he died. Imam Ali (AS) who used to spend all night in prayer was now silent forever. Ali (AS) the brother of the Prophet, his Khalifa and successor was no more. Ali (AS) the one who supported the widows and the orphans was no more. Ali (AS), the first Imam of the Shia had been martyred. The Ahle Bait mourned. The Shias were sad and wept. The widows and orphans cried.

Imam Hasan (AS), our second Imam gave him the funeral bath. Imam Husain (AS) helped him. They covered his body in a white cloth and together with their 18 brothers they carried him to Najaf where Imam Hasan (AS) led the prayer and then buried him. Parasa ibn Sa'han, one of his Shia, put his hand on the grave of the Imam and said: I plead with Allah to bless us that we tread his foot prints, act on his example, be friends of his friends and enemies of his enemies."

As the sons of Imam Ali (AS) returned to Kufa, they passed through a ruined city. They heard a desperate cry. When they looked, they found a leper who moaned "O my friend, why have you not come to see me for the last three days? I have been waiting for you."

Imam Hasan (AS) and Imam Hussain (AS) approached him "who are you waiting for! He replied" I don't even know his name. But he had the same fragrance as you. He would come every day to see me. He would wash my wounds and feed me with his own hands. Whenever I asked him his name he would reply "O my brother, this is a poor man sitting by another poor man." Hearing this, they understood that this sick old man was talking about their father Ali (AS) who used to help him without telling him that he was the caliph, the ruler. They told him "O my brother, your friend was none other than Ali who was killed in the masjid e Kufa as he prayed fajr. We have just buried him in Najaf." The sons of Imam Ali (AS) took the man to their father's grave.

May Allah give us all the opportunity to see the mazar of our holy Imam and convey our salams personally. We mourn the death of this wondrous man. We curse his murderer in

disgust. We pray that we become more like Imam Ali (AS) every day. In our hearts we still cry out: Imam Ali (AS), don't go!

Chapter 18

Shias of Ali

Shia means follower, someone who follows and supports Imam Ali (AS) and the Ahlebait. All the sincere followers of the Prophet Muhammad SAW were Shia and believed in the Imamate of Ali (AS). They loved the Ahlebait and obeyed the laws of Islam. They were very pious and always truthful. Among these were Abuzar, Huzaifa, Salman, Ammar Yasir, Hujr ibn Adi, Miqdad, Meesum, Jabir ibn Abdullah, Abu Ayub Ansari and Bilal. There was Malik e Ashtar, Sasa ibn Sauhan and Kumail. They did not give up their support even when they had to suffer hardship and cruelty.

We should be thankful to Allah that we are among the Shia of Ali (AS). To be accepted by our Imam as his Shia, it is not enough just to say we are Shia. We must try to be like the Shias that the Imams have described: Shias have these qualities:

They fear Allah and obey Him.

They praise Allah very much.

They perform salat and fast.

They obey their parents.

They take care of the neighbours, the needy and the orphans.

They speak the truth.

They recite the Quran.

They do not backbite and speak well of others.

They keep their promises.

Chapter 19

Sayings of Ali

Trust Allah in your affairs.

Be first to greet others.

Donate for a good cause.

Associate with good people.

Respect your guest. Make haste in doing good.

Delay in taking revenge.

Forgive while in power.

Fulfil your promises.

Don't be proud. Thank Allah for His blessings.

Chapter 20

Salaam to our Imam

Salam on you o Ameerul momineen
Salam on you o Ali ibn Abu Talib
Salam on you o true friend of Allah
Salam on you o leader of guidance
Salam on you o symbol of piety
Salam o father of Hasan and Hussain
Salam o the first of twelve Imams
Salam o gate of Allah's wisdom
Mercy and blessings of Allah be on you.

Imam Ali (AS) has many titles. How many of them can you find in the word search?

ALI (The High) MAULA (Master)
IMAMULMUTAQEEN (Leader of the Pious)
WALIULLAH (Allah's Authority)
AMEERULMOMINEEN (Master of the Believers)
ZAUJEBATool (Batool's husband)
HAIDER (Lion)
MAZHARULAJAIB (One who shows Wonders)
ASAD (Lion)
WAJHULLAH (Face of Allah)
ABULHASAN (Father of Hasan)
MURTUZA (The Chosen One)
ABUTURAB (Father of the Earth)
AINULLAH (The Eye of Allah)
BABULILM (Gate of Knowledge)
MUSHKILKOSHA (Solver of Difficulties)

Chapter 21

Glossary

Ayat: verse of the Quran

AS: Alaihis Salam (Salams on him)

Ahlebait: the People of the Holy Household, Muhammad, Ali, Fatima, Hasan Husain and his progeny.

Alam: Banner or flag of Islam

Birr e Ali: A well dug by Imam Ali (AS) for people going for Hajj from Madina.

Dua: Prayer taught by the Prophet and Imams.

Dawat zul Asheera: the first invitation to Islam given by Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

Eeman: complete faith in Islam Ghadeer e Khum: The day when the message of Islam was made perfect when Imam Ali (AS) was declared Maula.

Hadees: Words spoken by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

Hijrat: the journey of the Holy Prophet (SAW) from Makka to Madina

Jihad: Struggle for the Truth

Kaaba: the house of Allah, towards which all Muslims turn when they pray.

Kufr: Denying what is the Truth

Maula: Master, one who must be obeyed.

Nahjul Balagha: (Peak of Eloquence) A collection of sermons letters and sayings of Imam Ali (AS)

Quran: the book of Allah sent through the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

Sura: Chapter of the Quran

Sahifa e Alawiya: A book containing duas taught by Imam Ali (AS)

SAW: Sallalaho alaihi wa salam (Peace beon him)

Salooni: Words meaning ask whatever you want to Imam Ali (AS) was ready to answer

Zulfiqar: Sword of Imam Ali (AS) sent by Allah

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*"Wisdom is the lost property of the Believer,
let him claim it wherever he finds it"*

Imam Ali (as)