

IMAM ALJAWWAD [A.S]

امام الجواد (ع)

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand that Imam al-Jawād (as) is our ninth Imam
- Learn some basic biographical facts about the Imam:
- Be introduced to the Imam's attribute of generosity
- Discuss generosity as a quality of the Ahlul Bayt
- Discuss the benefits of generosity including

Imam al-Jawād (as)

Imam al-Jawād (as) is the ninth divinely appointed Imam and successor of the Holy Prophet (saw). In this lesson, we will take a brief look at the life of Imam al-Jawād (as), focusing on some of the outstanding details of the Imam's life, such as becoming an Imam at a very young age, and the reason for his exemplary title of 'the generous one'.

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 3

IMAM AL-JAWĀD (AS)

Imam Muḥammad al-Jawād (as), also commonly known with the title of al-Taqi (the God-Conscious one), is the son of our 8th holy Imam, Imam 'Ali ibn Mūsā al-Reḍā (as). The respected mother of Imam al-Jawād (as) was a very pious woman from North Africa. She was known by several names, one of which was Sawsan. Imam al-Jawād (as) was born in Medina on the 10th of Rajab 195 A.H. (April 8, 811 A.D.)

THE YOUNG IMAM

Imam al-Jawād (as) spent only the first five years of his life with his father. As a matter of fact, he was born many years after Imam al-Reḍā's marriage. Prior to his birth, Imam al-Reḍā's enemies used to taunt the Imam (as) for not having a son to succeed him despite the fact that the Imam (as) had told them that Allah (SWT) would soon grant him a son.

The Imam's friends and followers on the other hand, were worried that there was no one that will succeed him yet. The Imam assured them, too, that Allah would soon grant him a son who would be the next Imam.

The birth of Imam al-Jawād (as), therefore, was received with anger and disappointment by Imam al-Reḍā's enemies and with relief and happiness by the Imam's friends.

Because his mother was a Nubian and because the colour of his skin was dark, Imam al-Jawād (as) was called 'Aswad' (The Black one) by the enemies of Imam al-Reḍā (as). However, to others he was known as "al-Taqi" (the God-Conscious one) and "al-Jawād" (The Generous one).

He was the first among the Imams from the House of the Prophet to have been separated from his father at a very young age. At the time of the martyrdom of Imam al-Reḍā (as), Imam al-Jawād (as) was only nine years old.

It was very important, therefore, that Imam al-Reḍā (as) should make his followers ready to accept Imam al-Jawād (as) as their next Imam, despite the fact that he was only a child by their standards.

One such instance of Imam al-Jawād (as) being introduced to the community by his father was this: when Ṣafwan ibn Yaḥyā asked Imam al-Reḍā (as) regarding his successor. The Imam named his son Muḥammad al-Jawād (a.s). Ṣafwan expressed his surprise saying: "But he is just a child, only three years old." The Imam replied that this should not really matter for hadn't Prophet Jesus (as) given testimony of his mission when he was less than three years old?

Imam al-Reḍā (as) was referring to the blessed event mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, when the new-born baby Jesus (as) told the people that surrounded, and were blaming, his blessed mother Mary (as):

"Verily, I am a slave of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a Prophet. And He has made me blessed wheresoever I be, and has enjoined on me prayer and charity as long as I live."ⁱ

In other words, Prophet Jesus (as) began his mission when he was younger in age than Imam Muḥammad al-Jawād (as). Prophet Yaḥyā (as) similarly was chosen for his mission by God when he was a young boy.

GENEROSITY

One of the outstanding characteristics of Imam al-Jawād (as) was his generosity. We all somewhat know what generosity is.

For example, if a boy at school buys a really tasty chocolate bar during lunchtime at school, and gives one half to another boy whom he knows doesn't usually get pocket money from his parents because they are not so well-off, we would call the first boy's action an act of generosity.

Can you think of other acts of generosity?

So basically, being generous involves giving away things that belong to us (which in fact, really belong to Allah) to others, who might be in need of them.

The Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَعْطَىٰ وَاتَّقَىٰ
وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَىٰ فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ
لِلْيُسْرَىٰ

"Then as for him who gives away and guards (against evil), and accepts the best, We will facilitate for him the easy end"ⁱⁱ

Also, the Holy Prophet (saw) has said:

لَا يَصْلُحُ دِينُكُمْ إِلَّا السَّخَاءُ وَحُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ

"Nothing shall ensure the welfare (and interests) of your religion except generosity and good disposition."ⁱⁱⁱ

THE AHLUL BAYT OF GENEROSITY

Generosity is one of the ethics of the Prophets and the Ahlul Bayt.

As we mentioned earlier, Imam al-Jawād (as) was given this title, which means: 'The Generous One'. His generosity knew no bounds. He was there for the needy as well as for anyone else who sought for his help. It is said that whenever he went out of his home he made sure that he had with him enough money as to enable him to meet the demands of those who went to him for help.

Following his father's advice, he would give to his relatives no less than 50 Dirhams at one time. Like his great-grandparents, he used to visit the needy in the darkness of the night and meet their demands without them knowing who had helped them.

For those whom the Imam (as) could not reach in person, he would meet their needs by sending other people to help them.

Those who visited Medina or Baghdad (depending upon where the Imam (as) was at that time, and who did not have a place to stay, would go to Imam's house.

On one such occasion a visitor paid the Imam (as) a visit late at night.

The Imam (as) welcomed him and asked him if he was hungry. The visitor replied that he was, indeed, hungry but he didn't wish to have any food as this would inconvenience the Imam (a.s).

The Imam's (a.s) reply was:

"No one sleeps hungry in my house."

The Imam (as) then awakened his maid requesting her to make dough for bread while he would himself heat the stove. The maid volunteered to do both the jobs herself but the Imam (as) insisted on making fire in the stove arguing that he too wanted to earn reward from Allah (SWT) for serving the guest.

Noticing the Imam's sincerity, the visitor burst into tears. He then said "How unfortunate it is that the world does not recognise and value such a personality as this one."

The Holy Prophet (saw) has said:

"Those close to Allah are inherently generous."

Hence, in order to acquire this attribute, we should try hard to be generous towards relatives, friends and anyone who is in need, so that we may gain the pleasure of Allah (SWT).

It is better that a person's generosity is associated with a thing that is dear to him - food, clothes, money, our belongings etc. - and that no obligation is placed upon the person towards whom generosity has been shown. We should get used to thinking of ourselves as trustees, whose responsibility is to pass on Allah's things to deserving and needy individuals. As such, we should stay away from greediness and refrain from withholding the God's trusts.

THE BENEFITS OF BEING GENEROUS

There are many benefits of being generous. Here, we will only mention a few:

1. Builds good relations with people:

When someone is generous with you- for example, when a boy at school shares his lunch money with you because you lost your money that day- you will naturally like this person more for helping you out in the time of need. Imagine if we all continuously try to help each other out, how many good relations would that build between all of us?

2. Allows people to help one another:

Imagine how much better this world would be if we were all very generous people. Do you think hunger and poverty would still exist for example?

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3. God will be generous to me:

Imam 'Ali (as) has said:

"Stinginess is the cause of destitution (complete poverty)..."^{iv}

Generosity, which is the opposite of stinginess, leads to God being generous to us even more than He already is. This is because if one is stingy, it causes poverty, but if one is generous, the God's extra generosity will be shown to this person.

BRIEF SAYINGS OF THE IMAM (AS)

"Humbleness is treating the people the way you like to be treated."

"If all people chose a path to walk on, I would go to the path of the one who sincerely worships only: God."

Review Questions

Q1. Imam al-Jawād (as) was also known as:

- Sayyidul Sājidīn (the leader of those who prostrate)
- Al-Taqi (the God-Conscious one)
- Imam Taqi (The Kind One)

Q1. Who else was chosen by God for a Divine mission while very young in age:

- Prophet Moses
- Prophet Noah
- Prophet Jesus

Q3. What does it mean to be generous?

- To be satisfied by the Will of God
- To give away from your belongings to needy people, for the sake of God
- To make a lot of money while still being a good Muslim

ⁱ Holy Quran: 9: 27

ⁱⁱ Surat al-Layl: Ayah 5-7

ⁱⁱⁱ Jami' al-Sa'adat, vol. 1, pg. 308

^{iv} Mishkatul Anwar- Chapter on Generosity

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