

Imam Hasan (A.S.), the Second Holy Imam

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Birth & Early Life .1

Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba —upon whom be peace— was the second Imam. He and his brother Husayn were the two sons of Amir al-mu'minin 'Alī and Lady Fātimah, the daughter of the Prophet. He was born in the year 3 A.H. in Medina . The Prophet came to 'Alī's home, congratulated the new parents and named the child, on Allāh's order, as "Hasan".

He shared in the life of the Prophet for over seven years, growing up during that time under his loving care. The Prophet used to carry him over his shoulder and say: "O Allāh! I love him, so You also love him." Many other sayings of the Prophet have been recorded by historians —both

Shi'a and Sunni— about Hasan and Husayn:

"Whoever loves Hasan and Husayn, he also loves me; whoever hates these two, he also hates me."

"Hasan and Husayn are the chiefs of the youths of Paradise ."

"These two children of mine are Imams (leaders) no matter whether they rise up (against a tyrant) or make peace." Hasan and Husayn, in spite of their young age, were blessed with such a high level of spiritual purity that the Prophet would ask them to witness some of the treaties and documents issued by him. Wāqidi narrates that when the Prophet wrote a treaty for the tribe of Thaqif, Khālid bin Sa'd wrote the treaty whereas Hasan and Husayn have been named as witnesses to that treaty. Similarly, when the Prophet did mubāhala with the Christians of Najran, Hasan and Husayn were among those whom he asked to accompany him.

The verse of purity, as mentioned in earlier lessons, also included Hasan and Husayn. Many times the Prophet had said, "Hasan and Husayn are my children." Because of these same words 'Alī would say to his other children, "You are my children, and Hasan and Husayn are the children of the Prophet."

2. With 'Alī Amiru 'l-Mu'minīn

After the death of the Prophet which was no more than three, or according to some, six months earlier than the death of lady Fātimah, Hasan was placed directly under the care of his noble father.

He was part of all the struggles and trials that his father went through during the rule of the first three caliphs. For example, when Abu Dharr al-Ghifārī, the famous companion of the

Prophet, was to be sent into exile on orders of the third caliph, people had been forbidden from bidding him farewell. The only persons who dared to come to the city's gate to bid farewell were 'Ali, Hasan and Husayn (may peace be upon them all). This was also a way of protesting against the unjust decision of the third caliph against Abu Dharr.

In 36 A.H., Imam Hasan accompanied his father to Basra , where the Battle of Jamal took place. Before reaching Basra , Hasan was deputized by his father to go to Kufa, with 'Ammar bin Yasar, to raise additional forces for the Imam's army. With his articulate and moving sermons, he exposed the falsehood of opponents at Basra , gathered a considerable number of people and joined his father in the Battle of Jamal.

In the Battle of Siffin also, Hasan was alongside his noble father till the very end. Mu'awiyah sent 'Ubaydullah bin 'Umar to try and incite Hasan by saying: "Stop supporting your father, and we will make you the caliph because the Quraysh do not like your father who is responsible for killing many of their elders but they are prepared to accept you as their leader." Imam Hasan replied: "The Quraysh wanted to destroy Islam, whereas my father killed their elders for Allah and for Islam. This is the basis of why they hate my father!"

When the outcome of the arbitration in Siffin became obvious, Imam Hasan made a speech and said: "These two persons were chosen so that they may put the Qur'an before their personal whims but they acted in the wrong manner; therefore, they do not deserve to be considered as arbiters..."

3. The Imamate of Hasan bin 'Ali

After the death of his father, through Divine command and according to the will of his father, Hasan became Imam.

At dawn on the night of 'Ali's death, Imam Hasan addressed the people in which he said: "...There has died tonight a man who was the first among the early (Muslims) in good actions. Nor did any later (Muslim) attain his level in good actions. He used to fight alongside the Apostle of God, may Allah bless him and his family, and protect him with his own life. The Apostle of God used to send him forward with his standard while Gabriel supported him on his right and Michael supported him on his left. He would not return until God brought victory through his hands..."

"He has left behind him no gold and silver except seven hundred dirhams of his stipend, with which he was intending to buy a servant for his family." Then tears overcame him and he wept and the people wept with him. Then he continued: "I am the (grand)son of the one who brought the good news. I am the (grand)son of the warner. I am the (grand)son of the man who, with

God's permission, summoned the people to God. I am the (grand)son of the light which shone out to the world. I am of the House, from whom God has kept away abomination and whom God has purified thoroughly. I am of the House for whom God had required love in his Book..."

Then he sat down.

'Abdullah ibn al-'Abbās arose in front of him and said, "People, this is the son of your Prophet, the testamentary trustee (wasi) of your Imam. So pledge allegiance to him." The people answered him saying: "No one is more loved by us nor has anyone more right to succession."

Then they rushed forward to pledge allegiance to Imam Hasan as the successor of Amiru 'l-mu'minin. He also occupied the outward function of caliphate for about six months, during

which time he administered the affairs of the Muslims.

During that time Mu'awiyah, a bitter enemy of 'Alī and his family, and had fought for years with the ambition of capturing the caliphate, first on the pretext of avenging the death of the third caliph and finally with an open claim to the caliphate, he sent spies into Iraq, the seat of Imam

Hasan's caliphate, to incite rebellion and opposition.

After the spies of Mu'awiyah were captured and punished, Imam Hasan wrote him "...It is surprising that after the Prophet's death, the Quraysh fought for the caliphate and considered themselves as superior to other Arabs because they were from the tribe of the Prophet. The

Arabs accepted their argument.

"But then the Quraysh [based on same line of thought] refused to accept our superiority and shunned us aside although we were more closely related to the Prophet than they. We adopted

forbearance so that the enemies and hypocrites do not destroy Islam.

"And today we are amazed by your claim to the caliphate even though you do not deserve it in the least; neither you have any religious superiority nor any good record in the past. You are a product of the group that fought against the Prophet and the son of the worst enemy of the Prophet among the Quraysh..." The Imam ended the letter with an advice for Mu'awiyah to

accept the decision of the Muslim community and pledge allegiance to him.

Mu'awiyah replied: "...You and my situation is similar to your family and Abu Bakr's situation. Abu Bakr occupied the caliphate on the pretext of having more experience than your father.

Similarly, I find myself to be more experienced than you..."

Mu'awiyah not only refused to recognize Imam Hasan, he also marched with his army into Iraq. War ensued during which Mu'awiyah gradually subverted the generals and commanders of Imam Hasan's army with large sums of money and deceiving promises until the army rebelled against Imam Hasan. One should realize that not all the people in the Imam's army were Shi'as; they belonged to various groups: the Khawarij came because they also opposed

Mu'awiyah; the opportunists who came for material gain if Imam Hasan succeeded; those who just followed their tribal leaders and owed loyalty to them and not the Imam.

The Imam was, finally, forced to make peace and to yield the caliphate to Mu'awiyah provided:

1. The caliphate would again return to Imam Hasan after Mu'awiyah's death.
2. The Imam's household and partisans would be protected in every way.
3. The practice of cursing Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) in Friday prayers will be discontinued.
4. Imam Hasan would not address Mu'awiyah as "amru 'l-mu'minin — leader of the believers."
5. Mu'awiyah will rule on the basis of the Qur'an and the sunnah.
6. Mu'awiyah would distribute one million dirhams from the revenue of Dara among the children who became orphans during the battles of Jamal and Siffin.

In this way Mu'awiyah captured the caliphate and entered Iraq . In a public speech he officially made null and void all the peace conditions, and in every way possible placed the severest pressure upon the members of the Ahlul Bayt of the Prophet and the Shi'as. During all the ten years of his imamate, Imam Hasan lived in conditions of extreme hardship and under persecution, with no security even in his own house.

4. His Noble Character

In human perfection Imam Hasan was reminiscent of his father and a perfect example of his noble grandfather. In fact, as long as the Prophet was alive, he and his brother were always in the company of the Prophet who even sometimes would carry them on his shoulders. Both Sunni and Shi'ite sources have transmitted this saying of the Holy Prophet concerning Hasan and Husayn: "These two children of mine are Imams whether they stand up or sit down" (allusion to whether they occupy the external function of caliphate or not). Also there are many traditions of the Holy Prophet and 'Ali concerning the fact that Imam Hasan would gain the function of imamate after his noble father.

Imam Hasan was well-known for spiritual wayfaring; he had also gone for pilgrimage 25 times by walking all the way from Medina to Mecca .

The Imam was also known for his generosity. On hearing a man praying by the Ka'bah to Allah for relieving him of a 10,000 dirham debt, the Imam went home, returned with that money and gave it to that person. Three times in his life, the Imam divided his entire property and possessions and gave away onehalf in charity.

5. His Death

In the year 50 A.H. Imam Hasan bin 'Ali (may peace be upon them) was poisoned and

martyred by one of his own wives who, as has been accounted by historians, had been motivated by Mu'awiyah. The latter did not want the caliphate to return back to 'Ali's family; he wanted to remove all the obstacles from the way of his own son, Yazid to inherit the kingdom. The Umayyids, against all the high principles of Islam and humanity, forcefully and violently barred the Banu Hashim from burying Imam Hasan next to his grandfather's grave. He was finally buried in Jannatu 'l-Baqi'.

Imam Hasan's patience and forbearance is even acknowledged by his enemies. Marwan bin Hakam, Mu'awiyah's governor in Medina who always persecuted the Imam, participated in the latter's funeral. Imam Husayn said, "While my brother was alive, you tried your best to oppose him and fight against him; and now you are showing up in his funeral!" Marwan said, "Whatever I did, I did to a person whose forbearance was stronger than this mountain" while pointing . towards a mountain outside Medina