

Fatema Kahil

Grade 11

The Glow Of Embers

As the last of the fire withered away, there remained, in a pile of gray ashes, a lonely branch, fractured, and charred a death black. From beneath the burnt bark, volcanic rivers flickered and flashed, like midnight lightning in the horizon, quiet and menacing. Swiftly, the axeman crashed his axe through the branch, bifurcating it. An explosion of embers erupted and swirled into the moonless night sky revealing the mysteries of the dark. In an era of great ignorance and obscurity, there existed an axeman, a man who through great modesty and intelligence, ruptured and split open knowledge, scattering enlightenment on the pious and on those who sought to respond to the request of the exalted. It is he who spread understanding and light on the population, just as the fragments of embers lit the night sky and revealed the unseen. A man whose name meant to rupture and split, Imam Muhammad Al Baqir (as) the fifth Imam of twelve, was acclaimed for his vast knowledge and leadership expertise in all matters. It is only through his educated footsteps that we are able to erase society's ills today, just as he was able to do so many years before.

After the death of the father of Imam Muhammad Al Baqir (as), the fourth Imam, the caliphs of Damascus were extremely engrossed with their conquests of foreign lands. Therefore, they did not direct their attention towards the population of Madina, nor did they expect a revolt from the people because they had instilled limitations on the freedoms of the inhabitants through the use of fear and paranoia. The caliphs of Damascus created and instilled such a fear-filled

environment by making it extremely perilous and hazardous for an individual to repeat the teachings and virtues of Ahlul Bayt. Those who spoke in the name of Ahlul Bayt assumed a great risk and at times were threatened to be slain by the domineering rulers. Because of such widespread fear of attack by authorities, the Islamic population began to loosen on their beliefs and values. Dangerous new ideologies and contradicting stories were abundant. This in turn led to a great lack of recognition of Imamah. Islam began to appear as if it were a religion of pessimists and extremists, the very two types of people that Imam Baqir (as) has claimed have no share in his community. Through these ills of society, Imam Muhammad Al Baqir (as) was faced with multiple issues.

Imam Muhammad Al Baqir (as) was faced with large problems, which couldn't easily be solved. Imam Baqir (as) was aware that directly confronting people with radically different ideological differences at once was impossible. The reason was that those differences were caused by cultural incursions, enemy-motivated self-desires, and most importantly, the lack of proper comprehension of Islam. Imam Muhammad Al Baqir (as), however, was conscious of the fact that ideological dissimilarities, which existed at the time, would continue to exist through all future generations. Thus he recognized that direct confrontation would not aid in producing a longtime resolution. Also, due to the widespread of ignorance and rejection of Imamah, Imam Muhammad Al Baqir (as) was unable to declare his divine right to caliphate. Imam Al Baqir (as) was aware that the best way to undo or manipulate people's skewed ideologies was through education. It was then that Imam Muhammad Al Baqir (as) established an educational institution that was dedicated in the production of knowledgeable students. These students, and himself, would deliver on the guidelines of Islam for generations to come. Through the opening and

running of a school, the pandemic of ideological diseases became short-lived, or perhaps even healed from ailments that Islam would have potentially suffered from in the future.

Imam Muhammad Al Baqir (as) taught a vast array of subjects in his school. However, his chief focus was on ideology. Imam Al Baqir (as) directed the majority of his attention on the three areas where incongruities and distortions were most likely to appear: Monotheism, Jurisprudence, and Imamat.

Monotheism is the belief that there is one and only one God. In Islam, there is Allah and only Allah. In fact, one of the most important posts of the religion of Islam is monotheism, or the belief in one and only one God. Tawhid, when translated from Arabic into English is: ‘There is no God but Allah’. At the time, the belief in only one God was withering. However, through the opening of Imam Al Baqir’s (as) school, the idea of monotheism was strengthened.

Jurisprudence, the second main focus in the school of Al Baqir (as), was discussed greatly at the time because multiple schools opened claiming to teach the correct jurisprudence. However, they all taught according to different guidelines. Imam Muhammad Al Baqir opened one credible school, which taught the true and correct methods of jurisprudence according to correct Islamic law.

The third branch which Imam Muhammad Al Baqir (as) concentrated on was that regarding Imamat. He taught that not understanding the true position of Imamat is not having any knowledge of your Imam. The Doctrine on Imamat states: “Everyone who is obedient to Allah, the Great and Almighty, in worship but does not have an Imam (appointed) by Allah, his deeds are unacceptable, and he is astray and bewildered. Allah detests his deeds. Such a person is like a sheep that has strayed away from its flock and its in which he exerts effort, shepherd, and which runs in this and that direction the whole day. When the night descends on it, it sees some flock of

sheep with a shepherd, it goes towards it and is deceived, it passes that night with that flock and in their resting place. When the shepherd herds the flock. That sheep refuses to recognize the flock and the shepherd; it runs in bewilderment seeking its shepherd and its flock. Then it sees another flock of sheep with its shepherd. Again the sheep turns toward it and is deceived by the second flock. The shepherd shouts: 'join your shepherd and your flock. You are lost from, and bewildered over your shepherd and your flock'. So the sheep runs away in tears, bewilderment, and loss, having no shepherd to guide it to a pasture or back to its own place. Being like this, a wolf takes advantage of its being lost and eats it." (www.imamreza.net)

It is by Allah then, that whoever awakens in a community, which lacks an Imam who is manifest and just, as well as appointed by Allah, awakens astray and lost. If a person were to die in the condition of being astray and lost, that individual would have died a life of disbelief and hypocrisy. It should be known that Imams who are unjust, as well as their followers, have been barred from Islam. Because they are misguided, they misguide as well. The deeds, which they act upon, dissolve just as salt does in warm water. Contrary to their belief, they have no power whatsoever over what they have earned in their life. Through the Doctrine of Imam, presented by Imam Al Baqir (as), it became clear that an Imam is necessary in the lives of Muslims.

In today's post 9/11 societies, Muslims in particular face a tremendous amount of social stress. Unawareness about the religion of Islam is widespread, just as it was in the time of Imam Al Baqir (as). Ignorance concerning the religion of Islam is not only found in the outsider, rather it is also discovered in many Muslims. The rights of Muslims in superpower countries appear to be decreasing quickly. A single mistake at the airport can cause a Muslim to be fully searched and held up, or under some circumstances, arrested and jailed. The United States government now possesses a warrant allowing the complete search of a citizen's private property without the

consent of the citizen. Yet, a solution has not been established formally as of present time. However, this conflict appears simple enough if today's Muslim society walks in the footsteps of Imam Baqir (as). From the actions of our Imam (as), we discover that there exists a very uncomplicated resolution to minimize or eliminate ignorance in regards to the Islamic religion. Ignorance towards the Islamic faith can be simply reduced through educating ourselves first, and then others, just as Imam Muhammad Al Baqir (as) did.

We, as Muslim individuals, should constantly be increasing our knowledge about our faith, and at the same time, we should teach others about Islam as well. We do not necessarily have to educate others by reading to them from an Islamic book, rather if we engage in actions recommended by Allah, we show them the true face of Islam. For example, paying visits to a neighbor to say hello, offering a helping hand to those in need, donating food and items to charities, and having a calm and reserved manor, can all help in diminishing ignorance. Local mosques can meet up with local churches for youth meetings, board meetings, workshops, and much more. Through our kind doings, others may begin to recognize that the true Islam is not as what it is portrayed in the media. Such actions will only increase and encourage the acceptance of Islam and Muslims. It is only through trouble, labor, and services to the Islamic religion that a difference can be made. As Imam Muhammad Al Baqir (as) once said, "Our followers are of three kinds: those who follow us but depends on others, those who are like glass, involved in their own reflections, but the best are those who are like gold, the more they suffer the more they shine."

Imam Muhammad Al Baqir (as) was the perfect example of a true Muslim. Allah blessed the Imam (as) with gardens and fields in abundance and large quantities. Imam Baqir (as) always visited his gardens and fields like a humble farmer. He shared the work equally with the

cultivators as well as the workers. He also took food to them, and talked to them. Imam Baqir (as) had close working relations with his servants because of his Islamic treatment with them. He was able to fulfill all the needs of his workers to such an extent that he was known as one of the most generous men of his era. So it is through good deeds, actions, and beliefs, following the trail of our Imam (as) so that we can make the world a better place.

Imam Muhammad Al Baqir (as) posed a great threat to the enemy by spreading and expanding intellectual awareness in his society, because through his actions, Islam grew. Here it is proven that there is no weapon more powerful than the mind, and here it is proven that there is no voice louder than the pen. Fight with your mind, and fight with your pen, because what ultimately decimates the enemy is an ideological war, the same war Imam Muhammad Al Baqir (as) waged against the tyrannical superpowers of his age. Our society can no longer remain bewildered and lost, and our society cannot die a death of disbelief and hypocrisy. Our society needs an Imam, and it will not obtain one until the same message left again and again from each Imam is incorporated into our lives and virtues. It should be understood that the rights of Imamah cannot be restored until we become an Ummah. The problem is cradled in our hands. If we want our Imam (atfs) to return, we must work for his return. We must come to realize that as long as we are waiting for him (as), he is most definitely waiting for us. First, he is waiting for us to develop into what he desires us to be. Unless our society readily learns to stand against coercion and tyranny of our era as Imam Muhammad Al Baqir (as) did in his time, be assured we will not be equipped to stand by our Imam's side upon his return, because the opponent will be the same. So even after the golden embers disperse and descend to the floor, we shall not allow them to extinguish, we shall guard them and help them to remain pieces of the fire of knowledge, and it is only then that they will glow for eternity.

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