

# The Character and Development of Divine Guidance in Bible History

## 1. The Patriarchal Period

Many people immediately think of such things as Shi'ite, fundamentalism, fanaticism and even terrorism when they see the word Imamate. The Bible brings to mind Christian or perhaps Jewish faith. Almost everyone might wonder what connection there is between the Imamate and the Bible.

Once we understand what the Imamate and the Bible really are, the connection between the two begins to appear. The Bible is not the exclusive heritage of Christian and Jew. It is a collection of writings from the Middle East produced over many centuries. It should not be surprising that the Bible reflects traditions and practices found in any number of religions native to the area. In fact, the books of Moses are more central to Samaritanism than they are to Christianity, or even Judaism.

This study will show how the Bible has molded the concept of Imamate as later known in Islam. I shall not examine the historical development of Shi'ism and try to prove that the Imamate developed directly on the basis of the Bible. It is more realistic to think that the Bible reflects concepts current for centuries in the Middle East. These ideas have influenced both the Bible and the appearance of the Imamate. I want to point out some of these ideas as they appear in the Bible.

The concept of Imamate among Muslims relies on Bible stories and characters. There is, for example, a Muslim belief that God revealed the names of the twelve holy Imams to Adam. This, of course, does not appear directly in the story of Adam in the Bible. Nevertheless, the tree of life, the rivers of Eden, and the naming of the animals in the Bible story are all related to Muslim beliefs about the Imamate.

Before going further, we have to make clear what the Imamate is. The twelve historical figures of authority among the Shi'ites represent the Imamate. Muslims believe that the holy prophet Muhammad at the command of God conferred the authority of leadership on his cousin and son in-law Ali-ibn-Abi-Taleb. Those who believe and accept this authority are called Shiites, or partisans of Ali. Muslims, who

do not believe in this God-given government after the prophet, are called Sunnites, because they prefer to restrict themselves to the example or sunna of the prophet alone. The Imamate is God-given authority after the time of the prophet. The word Imam basically means leader.

Ali's two sons in succession, Hasan and Husayn, became Imams after him. After that, each Imam conferred the authority on one of his sons until the full number of twelve Imams was completed with Muhammad Al-Mahdi, who is believed to be still alive in occultation or hiding.

The concept of Imamate is based on the idea that there must be a *living person* who is a divine proof or demonstration of the existence of God and a vehicle of *divine guidance* or practical means for carrying out God's sovereign will. It fits into the Shiite configuration of basic faith principles. First is the unity of God, followed by belief in divine justice. Prophethood expresses the belief in verbal or written revelation. The next logical step is practical demonstration of that revelation, and this is the Imamate. Finally, the Day of judgement expresses the principle of human responsibility before God.

By now it is clear what we shall look for in the Bible. We shall look for evidence of God-given leadership authority. That authority will focus on human figures whose lives are evidence of the existence of God and who have the authority to interpret and apply the verbal revelation. Factors associated with such leadership will be the symbolic value of the number twelve and the strange experience of occultation or hiding. In summary, our examination of the Bible focuses on the following clues of the Imamate: 1. human witnesses to the unity of God; 2. figures making verdicts on legal application; 3. figures in series of twelve; and 4. occultation.

Genesis 1:26 and one or two other verses in Genesis speak of a man as the image of God. Genesis one gives dominion to the man in God's image. This is just about as close to a definition of the Islamic Imamate as we can find anywhere. This aspect of image and dominion comes clearly through to the modern mind even in the West, even among Christians. It is interesting to note that the only dominion actually defined in Genesis one has to do with the sharing of food. One area is given to humankind and one area to other creatures. Yet there is hardly a commentator in existence who recognizes the literal, textual limits of dominion. Nearly everyone jumps to the conclusion of Imamate, that the man has a true leadership role far beyond the boundaries of food.

The principle of God-given leadership is so logical to the human mind that in such circumstances it is able to jump over so many steps of logic to reach it. Nevertheless the reality of God-given leadership is extremely repugnant in human experience. Of the five principles of Islamic belief, the Imamate is the most difficult for people to grasp and adhere to. That is because people like to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In Genesis two and three the very first story about human beings is of their succumbing to the desire to decide for themselves what is right and wrong, for that is literally what eating from the tree signifies. People prefer to decide for themselves what is right and wrong rather than relying on the whole chain of divine revelation. The verbal revelation is subject to interpretation and leaves loopholes for personal decisions about right and wrong. Verbal revelation lets you talk yourself into

almost anything. Confrontation with a living authority does not.

The book of Genesis does not make an overt issue of such authority. It presents the thing as a matter of course. Noah is one of the greatest examples Muslims refer to in presenting the Imamate. Anyone who followed the verbal revelation meticulously, yet failed to enter the ark, was destroyed along with the sinners. This telling argument summarizes the Bible teaching of the Imamate.

There is, however, in the story of Noah a detail much overlooked. How did Noah determine which animals were clean and which were unclean? Up to that point the dominion of food permitted only fruits, grains and nuts for human consumption. Animals are mentioned only in terms of skins and burnt offerings.

Most Christians are unwilling to postulate a verbal revelation of divine legislation. Most people want to relegate the ten commandments to the time of Moses. Yet even if we presuppose a detailed divine legislation before the time of Noah, there are still always points of practice in determining clean and unclean that require on the spot evaluation. That on the spot evaluation is what most clearly shows Noah to be an Imam or leader by divine authority.

There is an even clearer example in the case of Abraham. Some might suggest that the distinction between clean and unclean we find with Noah, goes back only to Moses. Hardly anyone will want to maintain that lying was forbidden only from the time of Moses. When to hide the truth and when to tell all is precisely a question that verbal revelation can never cover completely. On the spot evaluation is essential. Yet we find both Abraham and Isaac telling their wives to lie about their marriage under certain circumstances. This is called *taqiyyah* in Imami practice.

The Imam may grant permission to hide the truth or even lie in order to save life. In Genesis 12:11–13 and again in 20:11 Abraham is allowed to make such a *fatwah* or verdict. He could only do this if he had God-given authority to do so.

These two great examples from the book of Genesis are details often missed by the Christian commentator and even the Jewish one. Judaism has replaced the Biblical Imamate with rabbinical method, which is epitomized in the Talmud. The question of the Imamate is precisely, as we shall see, what separated early Christianity from Judaism. At the time of Jesus, rabbinical method was taking over Judaism. Jesus represented the earlier Imami thought.

He claimed to have God-given authority which could override verdicts obtained through scholarly application of the law, and even in a sense the law itself. Nearly every confrontation between Jesus and the people of his day turned on the question of divine authority or rabbinical method. First-century messianism continued better in medieval Islam than in medieval Christianity. Still, the idea of divinely appointed authority comes through in the concept of the bishop of Rome as vicar of the 'Son of God'.

So far we have examined legal verdicts that presuppose divine authority. Let us turn to the greater issue

of bearing witness to the unity of God. This was the central theme of the experience of Abraham. There are many references in the latter part of the book of Genesis to the 'God of the fathers'. This could be interpreted in terms of a totemistic ancestor cult. There is one event in the life of Abraham that prevents such an interpretation.

That is the meeting with Melchizedek in Genesis 14: 18–24. Melchizedek was not a part of Abraham's family cult. He was economically and politically viable in himself. He worshipped God under a different name than did Abraham. Up to this point the God of Abraham is called YHWH in the book of Genesis. The God of Melchizedek is called *El-Elyon*. In verse nineteen Melchizedek recognizes Abraham as a worshiper of the same God, whom he defines as possessor of heaven and earth. Here is the idea of a universal God.

Abraham in verse twenty-two refers to his own God by the name YHWH, to which he adds significantly, the term of Melchizedek, *El Elyon*. In so doing Abraham establishes himself as divine proof. This is the best example in the book of Genesis of witness to the one, universal God. The whole book, as we shall see later, nevertheless focuses on the issue of the unity of God.

Thus far we have looked at examples of two Imami criteria in the book of Genesis. Two criteria remain, 'twelve' symbolism and occultation. It so happens that the first example of Bible occultation occurs in the book of Genesis. In Genesis 5:24 we read that 'Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him'. The two figures in the Hebrew Scriptures, Enoch and Elijah, are known in Islamic tradition as Idris and Ilyas or together under the epithet *Khidr*, the evergreen one. Occultation as an alternative to death is specifically related to Imami experience in the Bible.

The final point is 'twelve' symbolism. This is obvious in the book of Genesis for the sons of Jacob. Christians will perhaps remember that Ishmael also had twelve sons. The twelve sons of Ishmael are the point of departure for 'twelve' symbolism. All other series of twelve that come after them are dependent on them. The long description of the births of the sons of Jacob and the significance of their names are an attempt at imitating the list of Ishmael's sons, whose names are also significant. Strangely enough, the Bible does not carry through consistently on giving the names of the twelve sons of Jacob wider significance. The meanings of these names relate to the story of their own lives and not to a greater, spiritual truth.

Liberal researchers will find another difficulty with the names of the tribes. There are in fact thirteen tribes rather than twelve. The Bible uses two means to resolve this. The first is by dropping a name, that is Levi. The other is by relegating two names, Ephraim and Manasseh, back to an original father, Joseph. Because Ishmael had twelve sons whose names had spiritual significance, Jacob had to have twelve sons too. Because the Ishmaelites were divided into twelve tribes, the Israelites had to have twelve tribes too. They skewed reality to make it work, and by so doing reaffirmed the significance of the number twelve in connection with God-given authority.

Here are the Bible texts for each version of the twelve tribes of Israel. One group contains the names Levi and Joseph: Genesis 35:23–26; 49:3–28; Deuteronomy 27:12–13; 1 Chronicles 2:1–2; Ezekiel 48:30–34; Revelation 7:5–8. The other group contains instead the names Ephraim and Manasseh: Numbers 1:5–16; 19–44; 2:1–34; 7; 10:14–28; 13:4–15; 34:17–29. All thirteen tribes are mentioned in Numbers 26:5–62.

The Islamic Imams have reigns somewhat like a line of kings. That is, the term of an Imamate runs from the death of the preceding Imam. The book of Genesis runs through twenty-one generations of patriarchs from Adam to the sons of Jacob. The fact that there were twenty-one generations obscures the fact that there are precisely twelve periods of the Imamate from Adam to Jacob. A table of birth and death dates for the first twenty generations will show this.

I do not mean to imply anything about the historical accuracy of these dates. I merely point out that, as they are presented in the book of Genesis (chapter five and following), they express twelve succeeding periods of Imamates running from expressed death date to expressed death date. The symbolic number twelve is thus embedded in the Genesis story.

The list of names in the first column goes from father to son with the exception of Ishmael and Isaac, who are both sons of Abraham. A number of interesting issues appear from the death dates. The first six generations are clear. These are Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, and Jared. Each succeeding generation outlives the earlier and there is no break in the Imamate. The problem with the seventh generation is interesting. It is interesting first of all because the number seven is also a sacred number. This appears already in Genesis four which focuses on Lamech, the seventh generation. It appears even earlier in the seven days of the creation story. The seventh Shiite Imam is the one giving most problems as well. The majority accept twelve Imams including Musa al-Kadhim as the seventh. The Ismailis retain his elder brother, who died before his father, as the seventh and final Imam. The problem with Enoch in the seventh generation is that he was occulted during the Imamate of Seth, nearly five hundred years before he might have been eligible for the Imamate himself.

The Imamate passes on to Methuselah, the eighth generation and the seventh Imam. Since he outlives his son, the Imamate passes to his grandson Noah in 1656, the year of the Flood. So in the first ten generations there are only eight Imami reigns. Another interesting fact is that the lifetimes overlap to the extent that Adam, who died in 930, could have been personally known to Lamech, who was born in 874. Noah is the first generation not to have the possibility of having known Adam. Noah was born in the second Imamate, that of Seth.

A new and interesting problem arises after Noah. Noah had an immense choice in successors. According to the text, Noah in fact outlived Peleg, his great-great-great-grandson, and even Nahor, the great-grandson of Peleg and grandfather of Abraham. When Noah died, Abraham was 58 years old. The other aspect of the problem is that the direct following of generations in the Imami reigns would pass over Abraham.

In 2006 Shem would normally become Imam. Since Shem died in 2158, the oldest living in line would be Eber, who died in 2187, after the death of both Abraham and Ishmael. The Imamate should then have gone to Ishmael's oldest son. The reason for the inclusion of such an extensive story of Abraham in the book of Genesis must partially at least be in explanation of why the Imamate went to Isaac instead of Nebajoth, the eldest son of Ishmael.

We are thus faced with alternate and perhaps rival lines of the Imamate after Noah. In one we have Noah, Shem, Eber, and Nebajoth. In the other line we postulate that Noah overrode the other generations and chose Abraham as his successor. This would explain why Abraham acts as an Imam. It would also explain the rivalry between Ishmael and Isaac, if such in fact actually existed. In that case Isaac may have taken the Imamate after the death of Ishmael. The line would thus be Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, a total of twelve Imams in all. The rivalry would thus be between the Shem–Eber line on one hand and the Abraham–Ishmael on the other.

The call of Abraham could very well fit into a rivalry between Abraham and Shem. The flight into Palestine made the dual reign possible. It in turn provided a good reason for Abraham to leave his own country. The dialogue between Abraham and God could very well fit into God's answer to Abraham's prayer that Ishmael be considered in the Imamate after him. God's emphasis of Isaac could very well be prophetic of the reconciliation between the two lines if Eber chose the docile Isaac over Ishmael's line. Isaac was after all married to a woman from a family which would presumably have followed Shem and Eber. The whole problem arose because of the many generations covered by the Imamate of Noah, and the fact even that some generations died before Noah himself.

The rivalry between Jacob and Esau also has Imami ramifications. Of course Esau as the elder had pretensions to the Imamate. Their reconciliation took place before Jacob actually stepped into the Imamate. In Genesis 28:9 we find that Esau married the sister of Nebajoth, who also had pretensions to the Imamate. This was in the backlash that took place when Esau noticed that Isaac intended to give the Imamate to Jacob even though he had sought the blessing through deceit. The connection of Esau with the Ishmaelite line might indicate that Rebecca represented the earlier Mesopotamian claims. Rebecca would thus be expected to prefer an Ishmaelite to Isaac as her husband. The intricate marriage consultation in Genesis twenty-four may be in view of convincing the family of Rebecca that Isaac was the valid Imam rather than Nebajoth. So the claims of Ishmael and Abraham may have been the root of the contention between Jacob and Esau. Esau would have fallen back on the original loyalty of his mother's family in order to gain status.

A final point remains unmentioned in Genesis. That is the matter of Nebajoth and Kedar, the second son of Ishmael. There is little evidence that Nebajoth or Kedar ever contended for the Imamate. Other portions of the Hebrew Scriptures, however, suggest that the Ishmaelite line may have continued through Kedar as well. Kedar and not Nebajoth is the forebear of the prophet Muhammad.

Kedar especially appears again and again. They are both praised most highly: Isaiah 42: 11; 60:7. Kedar

is faithful to God even when Israel has completely forsaken the faith. Jeremiah 2:10. Finally, Kedar will be a witness against Tyre in the Day of Judgement. Ezekiel 27:21.

The Imami concern clarifies the Genesis narratives. The marriage of Isaac is a case in point. One of the longer chapters in the Bible, Genesis 24, is reserved to describe the event. Why is the marriage of Isaac so important? The reason is that it joins and reconciles the two rival Imami lines. Every detail of Eliezer's journey confirms this. Point after point is made to convince the family of Rebecca that the marriage is the will of God. No other family in Genesis required such proofs. There was something at stake far beyond a mere marriage. It was the Imamate.

The lifetime disagreement between Rebecca and Isaac confirms this. But the story of Jacob reveals a new aspect. The Imamate has already been separated from an automatic descent through the eldest son. Now the moral aspect of the Imamate appears in the history of the lives of Jacob's sons. The elder sons fail to exhibit Imami character. Simeon and Levi break a sworn agreement. Judah messes up his family life and has a son with his son's wife. Reuben sleeps with his father's wife. Whether or not we accept the historicity of these stories, their purpose is to show that these men, although the elder brothers, were inferior to Joseph. Joseph's morality is tested and shown to be perfect. The Imamate is based not only on lineage, but on moral perfection.

The family of Jacob finally gives a reason why Noah might have overlooked Shem and made Abraham his successor in the Imamate. The family of Laban, which presumably represented the Imamates of Shem and Eber, was polytheistic. Laban was the brother of Rebecca and the father of Leah and Rachel, Jacob's wives. This polytheism is evident in Rachel's stealing of the images (Genesis 31:32). The text shows clearly that polytheism was kept secret from Jacob, which in turn shows that Jacob was adamantly monotheistic.

The polytheism of Laban may well have begun very early on, even during the time of Shem. Polytheism would have been a very good reason for Noah choosing Abraham, the monotheist, as his Imami heir. The holy Qur'an in fact gives this as the reason. Abraham's flight from Mesopotamia was the direct result of the conflict between faith in one God and polytheism.

In summary, the twenty generations mentioned in Genesis represent twelve Imami periods. The stories that follow seem to center on rival Imami claims. These rival claims appear in the case of Abraham and Ishmael, but seem to be reconciled in Isaac because of his position in the lineage, his docility, and his marriage to Rebecca. Moral perfection replaces the role of lineage in the Imami concern in the story of Jacob's sons.

We have outlined the essentials of what can be gleaned from the book of Genesis in reference to the Imamate using a scholarly methodology that is acceptable in Western circles. This is not to say that the details of possible rivalry are demonstrated with any certainty. At this point, however, I shall turn to a Hurufi methodology. I shall examine the meaning of the names of Ishmael's sons. Then I shall step

further into the methodology and faith of the past by examining a text from a Hurufi point of view.

In order, the names mean as follows: *Ishmael* = *God* hears, *Nebajoth* brought forth, fruitfulness; *Kedar* = ash coloured, dark; *Adbeel* = disciplined of God; *Mibsam* = fragrant; *Mishma* = hearing; *Dumah* = *silence*; *Massa* = burden, tribute; *Hadar* = *majesty*; *Tema* = *sunburnt*; *Jetur* = encircled, enclosed; *Naphish* = *breathed*, refreshed; *Kedema* precedence, help. The faith of the patriarchs is defined in contrast to the faith of Cain's civilization in Genesis 4:26 as calling on the name of the Lord, or *dhikr* as it is known in Islamic practice. This most primitive religious practice gives rise to the name Ishmael, God hears (our calling on his name). God's hearing our call results in a twelve-step spiritual development.

The first step is fruitfulness, the immediate stimulation of the spiritual practice. This soon subsides into the real work of *dhikr*. The first symbol of this is darkness, then discipline. After this trial the soul is rewarded with more substantial progress in fragrance. Fragrance is followed by the experiences of hearing and silence, tribute and majesty. The second cycle of discipline finds a symbol in the sunburnt arid seclusion. This is followed by the second reward in refreshment and help. These four alternating cycles of discipline and reward correspond to the mystical four gates and the four elements, earth, water, fire and air.

There is an Islamic story about Adam. When Adam ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, his skin became discolored. Then God gave him the names of the twelve holy Imams. After reciting these for some time, his skin regained its natural color. The Bible refers to this discoloration as nakedness.

The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represent two different ways of achieving a verdict. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents the desire to be able to distinguish right from wrong for oneself. Such independence is the root of all false religions ancient and modern. The tree of life represents reliance on divine authority and setting aside one's own ideas of right and wrong. The tree of life represents the Imamate or divinely established authority.

In Genesis 2:9 the tree of life is mentioned for the first time. It is called *'eets hakhayyim* in the original Hebrew. The phrase 'tree of life' in Hebrew contains seven letters. These seven letters are remarkable from a Hurufi point of view. They are in order: *'ayin*, *tsade*, *he*, *khet*, *yod*, and *mem*. The *yod* is repeated, so there are seven letters in all, the number of perfection.

Although there are twelve Imams, there are only six names, three of which are used more than once. Four of the Imams are named Ali, two are named Hasan, and three are named Muhammad. The names Husayn, Ja'far and Musa are each used once. The letter that begins the names Hasan and Husayn does not occur in Hebrew. In Hebrew *he* and *khet* are used instead. So the two letters *he* and *khet* can account for the initial letters of Hasan and Husayn. The name Ali begins with *'ayan*. The names Musa and Muhammad begin with *mem*.

There is only one name left, Ja'far. The cognate letter in Hebrew for the initial of this name is *gimel*,



which does not occur in this phrase. Ja'far, however, is commonly known by the epithet Sadiq. The word Sadiq, truthful, begins with *tsade* in Hebrew. A Shiite will immediately see the significance of this name being the hidden one, since this particular Imam is of strategic importance in the historical development of Imami practice. So the initials of the names of the twelve holy Imams are hidden in the phrase 'tree of life'.

The initials of these six names spell out the words 'tree of life.' The order is not chronological, however. The first word 'tree' is made up of the initials of Ali and Sadiq. Ali is the first Imam and Sadiq the central Imam in regard to practice. The second word, 'life', begins with the letters of Hasan and Husayn, who represent the two sides of righteous life, reconciliation and revolt against oppression. The seventh and final letter, *mem*, is the initial of both Muhammad and Musa. Musa is the seventh Imam. Muhammad is the name of the last Imam. So the positions of the letters are logical. When the initials of the names of the twelve holy Imams are set out in a sense logical rather than chronological pattern, they spell the Hebrew words 'tree of life'.

Two letters remain unmentioned. These are the two *yod* in the middle of the word 'life'. Two *yod* are used in Hebrew as the abbreviation for the name of God.

The tree of life appears throughout the Bible as a symbol of the Imamate. It is the introductory figure of the *Zabur* or Book of Psalms. Psalm one describes the perfect man, the one who puts into practice the verbal revelation. Verse three refers to him as the tree of life, the tree whose leaves do not wither.

The Imamate appears in Jesus' sermon on the mount. Jesus refers to the prophet to follow after him as the tree of life. Jesus offers the fruit of this tree as evidence that he is a true prophet.

'Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit.' Matthew 7:15-17. Revelation 22:2 tells us how many fruits there are on the tree of life. 'In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits.' So we find that the prophet to come after Jesus is known by the twelve fruits which he produced, the twelve holy Imams.

The story of the Patriarchs in the Bible is largely the story of divine proof and divine guidance. As we dig under the surface of these stories, we find more and more details which suggest that a fundamental concern of these people was the Imami progression. This concern translated itself into the keeping of genealogies, the transmission of stories about early divine guidance, and the gathering of evidence of authority as conflicting claims arose. Without the concern for Imami authority, the story of Abraham might not have been preserved.

## 2. The Judges

We have seen some aspects of the lives of the Patriarchs that do not immediately meet the eye. An example of this is the fact that according to the Bible, Noah's death is dated in the fifty–eighth year of Abraham. Some readers of Genesis might be quite surprised by that fact. The reason for this is that the book of Genesis has an entirely different purpose as it now stands. It was not originally written to portray a concern with the Imamate. Although that concern appears to be of prime importance in the stories themselves and probably in their early survival, the book of Genesis is put together in another way.

Perhaps the best way of illustrating this is with the way the symbolic numbers are used in Genesis. The deepest level of Genesis focuses on the number twelve. This is the number of sons of Jacob and Ishmael, and the number of successive generations of the Patriarchs. The second level is seven. Some liberal scholars suggest that the seven–day creation story is a late addition. The number seven is important in the Flood story as well. Jacob served seven years for his wives. Genesis four focuses on the seventh generation in the line of Cain, and Genesis five on the seventh generation in the line of Seth. The surface structure of the book of Genesis superimposes a different symbolic number. That is the number ten.

Since seven and twelve are numbers having to do with the Imamate, we can conclude that the Imamate is a consideration embedded in the stories of Genesis themselves. The number ten does not relate to the Imamate. Its most direct relationship is with the decalogue or ten commandments. The ten commandments are the heart of the books of Moses. The book of Genesis in its present form is arranged in the Mosaic tradition and not the patriarchal tradition. It is edited as an introduction to the ten commandments following along in the next book of Moses, the book of Exodus.

The number ten is superimposed by the Mosaic tradition upon the stories of the book of Genesis. We find this especially in two areas. The first and most obvious is the division of genealogies by tens. The first genealogy of ten is in Genesis five.

The second one is in Genesis 11:10–26. The second area in which the number ten is superimposed on the book of Genesis is structural. The book is divided into ten very uneven sections with an introduction. Each section begins with the words `these are the generations of... or *toldot*. The whole book is thus structured in ten separate narratives, all but the first of which are named for the principal character. These ten section divisions are found in Genesis 2:4, 5:2, 6:9, 10:1, 11:10, 11:27, 25:12, 25:19, 36:1, and 37:2.

The ten sections of Genesis are not chosen haphazardly. They are clearly of two genres. There are five genealogies and five narratives. An examination of these might give an idea of what the Mosaic tradition is all about. The book of Genesis can then be set in the context of the whole. Although it is fortuitous that the books of Moses are divided into five books, the logical development of the message can still be seen to advance roughly in terms of this division. There is a specific, central message of each book.

The structure of the creation story in Genesis 1:1–2:3 is an obvious attempt at giving the Sabbath a cosmic foundation. But even more fundamental in the story is the message that all existing things are created by one God. This one, universal God is the central theme of Genesis. With awesome clarity, Genesis four shows the failure of civilization to deal with so basic a problem as fratricide. Lamech's despairing lament is followed by the austere comment: 'Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.' Genesis 4:26. The first verse of Genesis five sets God above the passing generations of men. The central theme of the Flood story is a God who can and will judge the whole world.

We have already seen how Abraham rose above cultural and national divisions to affirm the unity of God. The story of Abraham is reported with such detail partly because it strikes so directly to the heart of polytheism. The basis of polytheism is the functional division of gods. Ancient man in the Middle East believed that every place was governed by the god of that place. Piety was defined as recognizing whatever gods reigned in the place you were.

When Abraham went from Mesopotamia to Palestine, piety required that he leave the gods of his fathers and serve the gods of the land. This was an unquestioned and unquestionable mindset. The story of Abraham must have seemed like the wildest science fiction even three thousand years ago. The mind to invent it would have been admired for incredible imagination. But more important was the unequalled daring, not to mention impiety, of a man who travelled about and worshipped only one God. This is far more startling than the modern rise of atheism. It is the central issue of the book of Genesis that must have struck the ancient audience more than anything else. The fact that we hardly notice it today only shows how different we are from ancient peoples.

The unity of God in the book of Genesis is the central theme. This central theme of Genesis becomes the axiomatic point of departure in the book of Exodus. When God appears to Moses in the burning bush, the fact of God's unity is already established. Another issue appears, the issue of justice for the oppressed. Moses goes to Pharaoh with the message of God, 'Let my people go'. The structure of the book of Exodus is in two parts, divided at the giving of the ten commandments in chapter twenty. The ten commandments are the heart of the book. The Decalogue defines divine justice. The story of deliverance from oppression is followed by the legislation of justice.

The second half of the book of Exodus looks back on the justice of God in another way. It centers on the building of the sanctuary, 'that I may dwell among them'. The last half of the book seems to be dealing with the other side of the coin of divine justice. The other side of the coin is not mercy, although this is an issue throughout the book. It is divine consistency. It is the fact that God can be trusted to be consistent. This is perhaps best brought out in the middle of the sanctuary story when God told Moses He would destroy the people for the sin of worshipping the golden calf. It is Moses who shows mercy. God gives evidence of extraordinary consistency. The whole book of Exodus is an amazing treatise on the justice of God.

The book of Leviticus is a book of ordinances and legislation. The whole book is summed up in Leviticus

10:10, 'That ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean.' The emphasis is on verbal revelation of the will of God, the central role of a prophet.

The last book of Moses, called Deuteronomy, is made up almost entirely of Moses' farewell speech. Time and again Moses sets forth obedience to God and disobedience. He draws a contrast between success and failure, punishment and reward. The focus is on blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. The book comes to a climax in the Song of Moses in chapter thirty-two.

Much of the song is couched in the words of God, who finally says, 'See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live forever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgement; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.' The central issue of the book of Deuteronomy is divine judgement.

The books of Moses, the Torah or Taurat, develop this grand theme. The unity of God logically leads to the realization that God is just. God's consistency logically leads to the verbal revelation of God's will. The revelation of God's will logically comes to the Day of judgement, the realization of human responsibility before God. But the fourth book remains unmentioned. This is the book of Numbers, the book of the Imamate. The central theme of the book of Numbers is the Imamate.

Almost every passage in the book of Numbers fits into one of two themes: the first theme is the assignment of people to specific roles. The second is the description of Moses' defense of the role of leadership. Both of these themes are overtly Imami. The idea that God has assigned certain human beings to a specific leadership role is not far from the idea that God has assigned every human being, in fact, all created things, to a specific place in creation. Of course Moses' defense of the role of leadership is a defense and reaffirmation in every case of the Imamate itself.

With the possible exception of Numbers five, nine and ten, the first part of the book fits into the first theme, the assignment of people to specific roles. The first defense of the Imamate in Numbers begins in chapter eleven and culminates in chapter twelve. The rebellion comes from Moses' own brother and sister. Miriam voices the revolt in the following words, 'Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?' Numbers 12:2. Miriam understood the role of the prophet very well. The prophet is one through whom God speaks to the people. She failed to grasp the importance of the Imamate. In this she was like many people today, who recognize the prophet, but not the Imam. She felt that she and Aaron should have equal leadership with Moses because God also spoke through them. They recognized that Moses enjoyed a position of leadership that they did not participate in, but they did not understand that this leadership of Moses was God-given and sacred. The punishment of Miriam was a clear affirmation of the Imami principle and the specific role of Moses in filling it at that time.

Numbers thirteen tells the story of the twelve spies. Moses sent a representative from each tribe to view the land of Canaan. All spies brought back a good report of the land, but only Caleb and Joshua were ready to enter it. The others were afraid of the inhabitants. They instigated a rebellion against Moses. Again Moses had to come to the defense of his divinely appointed leadership. This story also lays the groundwork for Moses' successor in the Imamate, who turned out to be Joshua.

Chapter fifteen is legislative, but leads into chapter sixteen. A new attack on the Imamate comes in the rebellion of Korah. This was a rebellion of princes in the congregation. They set themselves not only against the Mosaic Imamate but the Aaronic priesthood. Again God takes the initiative and affirms the divine authority of Moses' leadership by destroying the rebels.

Chapter eighteen returns to the first theme along with legislation. Chapter twenty returns to the defense of the Imamate in the event of the water from the rock in Meribah. This chapter draws a clear distinction between the prerogatives of the Imam and the prerogatives reserved for God Himself. As such it forms a logical sequence to the development of the Imamate.

The confirmation of the Imamate continues in chapter twenty-one. The episode of the fiery serpents inspires the people to recognize their sin both against God on one hand, and against His appointed leader on the other. 'We have spoken against the Lord, and against thee.'

The episode of Balaam is a sort of interlude in the Imami development of the book of Numbers. It has its place, however, because the blessings Balaam is forced to pronounce over Israel have Imami force. They culminate in the great prophecy, 'Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion.' Numbers 24: 19.

Numbers twenty-six returns to the first theme. But in chapter twenty-seven the Imamate is affirmed in a surprising and delightful way. The daughters of Zelophehad sue for inheritance. This situation illustrates most strikingly how verbal legislation cannot be enough. There must be an on the spot evaluation in order for justice to come about.

The women receive their inheritance because Imami intervention was able to supersede the law.

Following this event, it seems that Moses himself realized more than ever the necessity of the continuing Imamate. Numbers 27: 16-17 contains the great Imami prayer of Moses. 'Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd.'

Numbers 27: 18-23 describes Moses' appointing of Joshua as his successor in the position of leadership. Joshua's leadership is described in the Biblical book of Joshua. After that the leadership role passed down through a series of people called judges. These are given along with some of their exploits in the book of judges. The interesting thing about the book of Judges is the fact that there are twelve of them.

The writer of the book seemed to think that a series of twelve such functionaries was the only appropriate one. He could have construed the judges to be fifteen, since Joshua preceded them and they were followed apparently by Eli and Samuel. The twelve figures of the book of judges are Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson.

At this point we have seen how the books of Moses or Taurat include the Imamate as the fourth in a series of five great themes. We have seen how the fourth book of Moses, the book of Numbers, centers on the Imamate throughout, defining it and defending it. Finally, we have seen how the role of leadership was passed on from Moses to others, first Joshua and then the twelve judges described in the book of judges.

We can now pass on to examine some Imami actions among these people. These will be authoritative applications of the law. In the patriarchal series we found the witness of the one, universal God, the distinction between clean and unclean, and the practice of *taqiyyah* or concealing the truth to save life. These Imami actions are found among the Mosaic figures to be sure. But with Moses there is a new kind of Imami action.

Already in the experience of Noah the need arose for a means of reducing violence. There was no legal verdict, and the result was the Flood and the introduction of the Imami role of deliverer in its most primitive form. With Moses, the Imami role of deliverer is fully developed. After the Flood new legislation provided for the execution of murderers. The purpose of this was to prevent murder. The legislation itself, however, seems in conflict with the commandment of the decalogue 'Thou shalt not kill'. In any particular case, only an Imami verdict can tell us when the execution of a murderer can legally take place.

Probably one of the most often pondered questions of the Bible is the problem of violent warfare. Many a man has spent his life looking for a way of reconciling violent warfare with the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill'. Many solutions have been offered, but few of them satisfy. Many Jewish commentators suggest that the commandment means 'Thou shalt not murder'.

Such readers mean that other killing does not break the commandment. Few Christians are satisfied with that. Generally Christians see the practice of the Hebrew Scriptures as primitive and an advance in the grace and mercy of the Gospel. Besides being parochial, such an explanation ignores the true depth of the Hebrew Scriptures on one hand, and their real emphasis on grace and mercy on the other.

Perhaps the straightest way of coming to the answer is by understanding that God is not bound by His own commandments. The commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' is addressed not to God, but to people. At the command of God, God's representative on earth, the Imam or divinely appointed leader of any given time, may either kill or command to kill without breaking the commandment. The absolute commandment is 'Thou shalt not kill'. If, however, circumstances warrant it, God Himself can override the commandment.

When this type of Imami action began with Moses, almost every execution or war was carried out directly through the intervention of God Himself. Examples of this are the drowning of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea, and the deaths of Nadab and Abihu. Nevertheless, action by the congregation or even individuals can be found. In Leviticus 24: 14 the congregation stones a blasphemer, and in Numbers 25:8 Phinehas kills an Israelite and the woman who had seduced him into idolatry.

Of course the principle is clear. All legislation is at the point in the chain of revelation just preceding the Imamate. An ordinary individual does not have the right to apply the legislation to practice. He must approach it through the Imamate or divinely appointed leader. There is not a conflict between law and Imamate. We do not have the right to judge either of them, for there is no standard for such judgement. Rather, revelation comes to us in a chain, first of all, the law, and secondly, the Imamate, through which the law applies in our practice.

Here is an illustration. We read the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill'. In a particular situation the reigning Imam tells certain people to kill certain others. If we do not understand the Imami principle, we will wonder why the divinely appointed leader is inconsistent with the commandment.

If we understand the Imami principle, we understand that the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' is part of the verbal revelation on which the Imam makes his verdict. But there are many other verbal legislations which we might overlook that also contribute. Finally, the Imam's direct assessment of the particular situation is crucial as well. When the Imam puts all of these together, his verdict is the consistent and relevant sum of divine revelation.

The same principle holds true with all verbal commandments. The commandment 'Thou shalt not kill' is the one that especially becomes visible in the Mosaic series. Nothing is more typical of the period of Joshua than warfare and violence. The name Joshua means 'God delivers'. He is the prototype successor of Moses.

All twelve Imami figures in the book of judges are of the same type. They are *deliverers*. Their main function is to kill as many enemies of the worshipers of God as possible. This is not inconsistent with the chain of Biblical revelation nor with the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill'.

In the area of Imami verdicts, the Bible sets forth the ones most central to practical needs. If we approach the verbal divine revelation for ourselves, we can often draw valid conclusions on what behavior is required. But sometimes in practice the matter of what is clean and unclean, as with Noah, requires an on the spot evaluation.

The verbal legislation does not cover the details of everything that is right or wrong. Without divine leadership, we would now and then run into trouble knowing what to do. Next comes, with Abraham and Isaac, the issue of *taqiyyah*. Without Imami guidance we would be forced to reveal everything we know in every situation, or else take it upon ourselves to make legislative application. These two doubtful areas are the basic ones. Imami leadership makes verdicts on the details of legislation (what is right and

wrong) and on the application of legislation (what principle is appropriate to a specific situation). The matter of violent warfare falls into the latter class.

I fully realize that people unaccustomed to the concept of divine leadership will have difficulty grasping these principles. They will still have problems with Abraham and Isaac and struggle with the idea that they told their wives to lie. They will still have problems with violent warfare in the Bible.

I shall approach this difficulty in two steps. First, we must realize that our verdicts on what is right and wrong are not the criteria. We may think that violent warfare is always wrong, but we do not have the right to that opinion unless we reject Biblical authority. The tragedy of Saul reveals this clearly: 1 Samuel 15. The phrase 'to obey is better than sacrifice' has become proverbial.

God took the kingdom away from Saul, because he had pity on the enemy and did not kill them all as God commanded. God gave the kingdom to someone who would obey and kill those whom God said to kill. This is the Bible thought. Whether or not we like it, that fact is inescapable. In order to understand divine leadership we have to get used to the idea that a command of God is valid whether we like it or not.

The second step towards comprehension is to realize that our perception of reality is limited. Conflict between the verbal revelation and the practical application arises in our own minds through ignorance of both which legislation is applicable and what the whole situation is. Seeing a part of the whole, we draw conclusions different from those of the divine leader.

Rather than accusing Abraham or Isaac of fostering falsehood, we should understand that the fault is in our own ignorance. When we perceive the divine guide as inconsistent, he is in fact carrying out the will of God. To do as we think he should do would be disobedience. When Saul saved the enemy king alive, he was disobeying the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill'. He was taking the commandment out of its revelatory and practical context. To misapply it is to disobey it.

The problem of violent warfare or even violent acts is perfectly resolved in the Imamate. The pacific principle in practice, however, prevails. Only warfare or violent acts commanded by the reigning divine leader are valid. Since governments on earth today do not even make the pretense of a claim to divine guidance, participation in their armies and warfare is forbidden. One may fight only at the command of a Moses or a David.

Seen from this point of view, the exploits of Samson can be enjoyed and applauded for the mighty feats of honor which they are. This need not, does not detract from our consistent application of the Imami principle, which prevents us from participating in warfare or violence. On the other hand, according to Biblical principles, if the true divine leader of today mediated a command from God to kill, we would have the duty of endeavoring to obey it.



### 3. The Kings

We have seen how the concept of the Imamate has developed in the Bible. The basic ideas appear from the beginning. These are the witness of the one, universal God; the practical, authoritative application of verbal legislation; the experience in some cases of occultation; and the tendency to find series of twelve.

The patriarchal period presents Noah as an Imam in the deliverer role. The problem was violence and the solution was legislation to deter the murderer by the death sentence. The Imami role in salvation came into its own with Moses and the judges who followed. Violent warfare became more and more a part of an Imam's task as a deliverer.

This extraordinary role continued with the kings. The kings, however, introduced a different emphasis. Without neglecting deliverance through warfare, they made verdicts on day-to-day issues. The continuing, routine influence of the Imamate took its place alongside its extraordinary role. The Imamate took on an ever-increasing content and importance.

As we move away from the patriarchal period, there are fewer and fewer figures who combine the roles of prophet and Imam as did Abraham and Moses. Nevertheless, the prophetic role of the first kingly Imam, David, is important. The only king after David who was a prophet as well as an Imam was his son Solomon. Jesus also combined the two roles. But most of the kingly Imams found themselves working side by side with prophets. This of course lent a unique character to the Imamate of this period.

Judaism and Christianity have done the world a disservice in separating the faith of Jesus from the history of the prophets and kings. The Gospel presents Jesus as the son of David, thus tying this Imami line into one. The message of Jesus differed from rabbinical Judaism precisely on the question of the Imamate. The Imamate was conservative and represented the older faith. Rabbinicism was something new, the product of lost Jewish national independence. Jesus and John represented the old faith of prophets and kings. To separate them from that history is to concede the claims of rabbinicism.

The occultation events during this long period are our first concern. There are two of them. The first is the occultation of Elijah, described in 2 Kings 2. Elijah appeared in consultation with Jesus in the transfiguration, described in Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; and Luke 9:28-36. Elijah, like Enoch before him, was a prophet rather than an Imam. Occultation of an Imam had to wait for Jesus, who was the second case of occultation in this period.

We have seen that the symbolic number twelve begins with the number of the sons of Ishmael. The number of the tribes of Israel and the number of judges are manipulated to follow the symbolic pattern. The number twelve is embedded in the twenty-one generations listed in Genesis.

In the same way the sacred number twelve is embedded in the list of kings of Judah, the line of David. If we take the whole list from the books of Kings and Chronicles we find the following twenty-one kings.

The kings are each evaluated in the Scriptures as either good or wicked kings. I have marked the good kings with a plus sign (+). David+, Solomon+, Rehoboam+, Abijah+, Asa+, Jehoshaphat+, Jehoram, Ahaziah, Jehoash+, Amaziah+, Uzziah+, Jotham+, Ahaz, Hezekiah+, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah+, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah. There are twelve good or Imami kings.

A host of prophets confront the twenty-one kings. Some of them left writings which have not survived. More than twelve of them left writings in the Hebrew Scriptures. Nevertheless, the books are arranged in the Hebrew Scriptures in such a way that twelve short prophetic books are grouped together. They are called the twelve minor prophets. These are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. The other prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel are gathered separately. So the compilers of the Scriptures recognized a need for arranging in a series of twelve.

The book of Psalms or Zabur also shows a concern for the number twelve. The Psalms are gathered from earlier collections. Each collection shows a concern for number symbolism in the number of Psalms included. The Psalms are divided into five books, like the books of Moses. The first originally contained forty Psalms. The second originally contained thirty, the first two books totaling seventy. The whole collection contains one hundred and fifty Psalms, one Psalm in the first book divided into two (Psalms nine and ten) and one in the second book (Psalms 42 and 43), thus bringing the total up to one hundred and fifty.

There are eleven Psalms with twelve verses each, although several Psalms of thirteen verses might fit into the series. There are eleven Psalms for the sons of Korah, although Psalm 43 seems to have been detached from Psalm 42, thus making an undesignated twelfth. Finally there are clearly twelve Psalms of Asaph.

The text of the Psalms is mostly written in the first person, I, and is addressed to either God or people, sometimes the congregation and sometimes wicked people. This is the speech of the Psalmist. There are only a few places in the Psalms where God speaks directly. These are Psalm 15:2-5; 46:10(11); 50:5-23; 75:2-8; 81:6-16; 82:2-7; 89:19-37 and 95:9-11. Only one of these eight passages is from the Psalms of David, Psalm 15. Psalm 46 is a Psalm of Korah. Psalm 89 is of Ethan the Ezrahite. All of the rest but the last are Psalms of Asaph. Most of the speech of God is contained in the series of twelve, the Psalms of Asaph.

The Psalms of Asaph are Psalms 50 and 73-83. Since at least Psalms 79 and 80 appear to be later than the others, these Psalms are not in chronological order of composition. Their order relates to their symbolic place in the series of twelve. We have already seen how the names of the sons of Ishmael form a logical pattern of spiritual development. The series of twelve at some point began to show specific symbolic meanings for each numbered slot from one to twelve. This is full-blown in the Psalms of Asaph.

Psalm 50 represents God in judgement, giving His words to the righteous and to the wicked. It introduces God as high and mighty. Psalm 73 presents God as good. Psalm 74 presents the most difficult situation, one in which it seems that God has forsaken and the righteous fall prey to enemy attacks. Psalm 73 focuses on praise to God. Psalm 76 returns to God's judgement with expressions such as breaking and cutting off. Psalm 77 focuses on the word 'remember', and emphasizes constancy in trusting in God. Psalm 78 points to the law of God as finished and established. It makes a parable of the experience of Israel in their forgetting God and falling into disaster. God came to their aid when they repented.

Psalm 79 is a prayer when the temple of God was invaded by the heathen. The petition is for revenge of the blood of martyrs and sighing of the prisoner. Psalm 80 is in a similar situation, but focuses on restoration of prosperity. It emphasizes trust in God. Psalm 81 deals with the issue of idolatry. Psalm 82 touches on justice for the poor and oppressed. It contains the mystical expressions of entrance into union with God.

Psalm 83 speaks of a time when the heathen have taken control and the word of God is hidden in silence. Yet even this silence is a witness of the one true God. The Psalm contains the prayer that God will rise up and fill the earth with justice. Thus each slot in the series of twelve has its particular symbolism, and some of them are clearly contrastive and easy to identify.

The final series of twelve that we shall examine among the kings is the series of twelve disciples of Jesus. Jesus himself combined the roles of prophet and Imam. Still, his ministry focused heavily on the Imamate. This was the issue he particularly had to face as Judaism apostatized and left the earlier Biblical faith, substituting it with rabbinical method.

He should have emphasized the Imamate in any case, since he was the culmination of the Davidic line, to whom all of the messianic promises of David pointed. His twelve disciples were a symbolic series emphasizing his claims to be the divinely appointed leader and guide for humankind, the savior to whom the savior judges pointed, and the messiah king of whom the early kings were shadows, types and figures.

We have now seen how the experience of occultation ultimately joins the Imamate in the ascension of Jesus. We have mentioned the extensive blossoming of the symbolism of twelve during this period. It remains to examine the Imami action as revealed in this period. We shall investigate the characteristics that were added to the Imamate in the experiences of the Imami kings.

The Imamate during the period of judges and even Moses was characterized by low loyalty. The authority of Moses was constantly questioned. This factor gave rise to the emphasis in the book of Numbers which affirms the Imamate time and again. The twelve judges inspired loyalty mainly in times of crisis. Otherwise, people tended to 'do what was right in their own eyes'.

The kingly Imamate is different. David inspired a love and loyalty completely unknown to Moses. The

books of Samuel and Chronicles are filled with stories of testimonials to David. His people loved him. His soldiers adored him and risked their lives, even to get him a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem. The concept of personal loyalty became so important that Jesus finally makes it the central issue. The Greek Scriptures seem even to set it above obedience. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

Before examining Imami features among the kings, let us recapitulate those features as they have arisen from the text. Among the patriarchs the Imamate appears in a series of twelve. The witness to the existence of the one true God is its outstanding feature. Authoritative application of law to specific cases is evident. The authority to distinguish between clean and unclean and to give a verdict on taqiyya or concealment appears. The outstanding question resolved among the patriarchs is the question of the transmission of the Imamate. The factor of moral capacity takes precedence over mechanical genealogical inheritance.

The aspect of the Imam as a deliverer, rudimentary in the story of Noah, appears full-fledged with Moses and the judges. This period emphasizes the factor of divine appointment and neglects genealogical preference completely. Rather than the mere unity of God, the Imamate witnesses to the justice of God in a wide variety of ways.

With the kings, a new area of emphasis appears. Without neglecting the sporadic aspect of deliverance, the kingly Imams take on a day-to-day role in governing. Their application of the law is constant. With the kings the series of twelves continues. With the kings the experience of occultation is finally joined to the Imamate in the ascension of Jesus. The kings establish an aspect of the Imamate which was weak and difficult to maintain under Moses and the judges, the aspect of personal loyalty. Personal loyalty is the unique feature to look for among the kings.

The first model of Imami loyalty appears in the life of David, who before receiving the Imamate himself, continued to give his loyalty to the preceding king. This king, Saul, was divinely appointed and anointed, but lost his kingdom through disobedience to the command of God to kill the enemies of truth. The kingdom and Imamate were taken from him and given to David. What is fascinating is the degree of loyalty David showed Saul during the interim period, during the period between the time God told Saul he would lose the kingdom and the time he actually did. David's loyalty to Saul is the greatest testimony for Imami loyalty.

We have already noted how Imami loyalty characterizes the reign of David. This is in contrast to the experience of Moses, who hardly ever inspired true loyalty and had to resolve many a conflict arising because of its lack. David's loyalty to the 'anointed of the Lord' is especially in evidence in the following texts.

In 1 Samuel 15, Saul disobeys the command of God and Samuel the prophet tells him that he will lose the kingdom. In 1 Samuel 16, Samuel anoints David. In 1 Samuel 17, David begins the deliverer aspect

of his Imamate, which excites the jealousy of Saul. He tries to kill David several times. David's loyalty to Saul and faithfulness in the initiation of his Imami duties appear in 1 Samuel 18:14-16. 'David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him. Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.'

When the attempts on David's life failed, Saul tried to destroy him through intrigue. He induced David to marry his daughter, although David tried hard to avoid it. This became prophetic of later attempts by usurper rulers to destroy Imams through such marriages. Finally the daughter of Saul helps David escape.

Time and time again David refuses to take Saul's life when the opportunity arises. Every time he explains this by saying that he will not touch the Lord's anointed. This attitude on the part of David is neither patience nor temerity. He is consciously affirming personal loyalty as a central issue of the Imamate. By so doing he in fact establishes his own position.

The lengths to which David went to establish the Imami loyalty, although they seem extreme, were in fact insufficient as history shows. The fall of the kingdom all but destroyed the Imamate. The Imamate as a part of the chain of establishing the will of God was supplanted by rabbinicism. Kingship at the time of Jesus was a purely political institution. That is why Jesus' claims ran afoul of Roman politics. Both those who accepted him and those who rejected him misunderstood the Imami implications of his mission. He told his listeners to 'take up the cross' and follow. They had no inkling of what 'following' meant. The same is true today. Christianity places the emphasis on the cosmic sacrifice on the cross and forgets what it means to follow.

Judaism erred in favor of the law, and thus drew the condemnation of Paul. Christianity has erred in favor of sacrifice, and has thus drawn the condemnation of Islam. Where is the Bible message of Noah, Moses, David and Jesus, the call to follow the divine representative? We must look for it outside the Jewish and Christian establishments. We must find it outside established Islam. Establishment itself is its negation.

Our investigation of basics in the Biblical text has already suggested to us that by merely keeping the law we cannot please God. Knowledge of the law and perfect adherence to it cannot preserve one from formality, hypocrisy, pride and the egotistical attitude which attempts to buy God off. Paul is the most eloquent writer in the Bible on this wretched state of affairs. He says in Romans 7:18, 'I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.' Paul's answer to the dilemma is quite simply attachment to Christ. He continues in Romans 8:1, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' For Paul, loyalty to Jesus who appears as the Messiah and divine guide in the flesh is the 'how to perform' which humanity craves.

It is quite a different thing to perform the injunctions of the law out of fear, pride or conformity to a group than to be so attached to the divinely appointed guide that every thought and act is subjected to love and loyalty to him. There is all the difference between day and night. It is this difference that Paul so eloquently tries to get across. To perform one's prayers because of the letter of the commandment is of no avail. But to perform them out of love to the divine guide is entrance into true life.

The strange thing is that the difference may not be apparent. The outward actions may very well be the same. There is no way to judge another, no way in fact to judge oneself. That is why the constant return in love to the divine guide is essential. The confidence of Paul in this salvation, however, is finally reflected in his words, 'I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creatures, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Romans 8:38-39.

Paul recognizes the basic practices of faith. Prayer: 1 Timothy 5:17; Romans 12:12; 1 Corinthians 7:5; Ephesians 6:18. Fasting: 1 Corinthians 7:5; Acts 14:23. Alms: Acts 24:17. Pilgrimage: Acts 24:17-18.

Paul is clear on the basic principles of faith.

1) There is only one God. 'Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.' Romans 3:30.

2) That one true God is perfectly just. 'To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.' Romans 3:26.

3) The knowledge of sin comes through the revealed Scriptures. 'Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.' Romans 3:20.

4) Recognizing that the verbal revelation is not enough to bring humankind in obedience to God, Paul preaches the message of a divine guide through faith in whom his hearers may find true life. 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' Romans 5:1-2.

5) That one true God shall judge the world. 'In that day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.' Romans 2:16.

The main message of the New Testament is to establish Jesus Christ in the role of Imami leadership in the face of and in contrast to the growing and developing role of rabbinical method in Judaism in the first century AD. That is the import of Paul's proclamation of faith in Christ and his opposition to Jewish law or the rabbinical method of establishing verdicts of right and wrong.

## 4. The Twelve Holy Imams

There are in fact recent Imami phenomena in Christian Protestantism. Two examples are found in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and a Seventh-day Church of God group. The organization by a council of twelve reveals an awareness, however dim, of Biblical Imami principles. Sadly, the imposition of such an organization does not guarantee divine authority. It merely imitates it. We must find the true continuity of Biblical Imami authority within a few centuries after Jesus. A gap of nearly two thousand years is not acceptable.

Muhammad appeared as a prophet of God at the right time. As did all prophets, he condemned idolatry and polytheism. His mission in terms of the Imamate was timely. First of all, he warned the Jews for their rejection of the claims of Jesus. He condemned them for rejecting the Imamate. Secondly, and this was the most timely of all, he attacked the Christian corruption of the Imamate.

Although the Imamate was already misunderstood by many Christians in the first century, the replacement of the Imamate by the doctrine of the trinity and Episcopal authority did not become complete until shortly before the coming of Muhammad. Muhammad condemned the Christians' paradoxical rejection of Jesus' Imami role and their raising him to the status of God.

When Muhammad appointed his cousin and son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Taleb as his Imami successor, he inaugurated a line of twelve authoritative figures. All of these claimed Imami authority. It is our purpose at this point to summarize the Biblical aspects of the Imamate which are reproduced among these twelve divine proofs.

The following characteristics arise from the Bible account. The Imam is first of all a witness to the unity of God and its clearest exponent. He applies the law of God authoritatively to situations not clearly covered by the verbal revelation. Such situations include the difficult areas of purity but may extend to other applications of the law, even to the case of verdicts on concealment or *taqiyya*.

The factor of diplomacy is balanced by the factor of deliverance. At times the Imam is called upon to lead people out of oppression into freedom. The Imamate is related to series of twelve. The experience of occultation, at first only tenuously related to the Imamate, appears full-fledged in the Imami experience of Jesus. With David the necessity of continued and strong loyalty to the Imam appears. The Biblical Imamate is summed up as living proof of divine guidance.

An examination of the lives and teachings of the twelve holy Imams from Imam Ali to Muhammad al-Mahdi reveals a remarkable correspondence between the Bible teaching and the Imami fulfillment. The Bible carefully and consistently develops the theme which appears in the twelve holy Imams. The Bible asserts itself not only as the foundation for the Imamate, a grand source for the development of Imami principles, but as a prophetic witness of the final flowering of the institution in the descendants of Muhammad.

The prophetic character of the Bible Imamate appears vividly in the symbolism of the series of twelve. Each slot or position in the series has its own character. The first slot is obviously a commencement. The second is conciliatory. The third is martyrdom. The fourth is praise. The fifth is clarity of distinction. The sixth is codification. The seventh is loyalty. The eighth is betrayal of promises from the world. The ninth to the twelfth progress from imprisonment and secrets to occultation.

The most easily identifiable of these are the third and fourth slots, martyrdom and praise. As we examine the Biblical series of twelve, we note that very often these two aspects occur at the expected points. The names of the sons of Ishmael are the normative point of departure. The name of the third son is 'Adbeel', disciplined of God, and the name of the fourth is 'Mibsam', fragrance.

These two names give a rough equivalent to the third and fourth slots we have already seen. Levi and Judah are the third and fourth sons of Jacob. Levi with his brother Simeon took part in the slaughter of the Shechemites and was therefore scattered in Israel. His descendants became the priests, those who engaged in sacrifice. The figure of Levi eminently represents martyrdom in sacrifice. The name 'Judah' means praise.

The names of the third and fourth judges are Shamgar and Deborah. The only thing we know about Shamgar is that he slew six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad (judges 3:31). His one act fits perfectly into the slot of martyrdom and sacrifice. The story of Deborah in the book of judges is the only one to contain a hymn of praise to God (judges 5).

The third and fourth good kings are Rehoboam and Abijah. Although these two are not actually called good, since they permitted evil things in the kingdom, still they opposed the idolatry of Jeroboam and remained faithful to God. Rehoboam is the one who lost the kingdom of Israel, thus representing martyrdom and sacrifice. His loss of the temple treasure to Shishak the Pharaoh is also representative. Abijah's war experience with Israel contrasts with Rehoboam and represents the power of praise. He was victorious over Israel without the use of arms. The priests blew trumpets and the people shouted, and God worked for them without their engaging in battle. (2 Chronicles 13:1415).

The third and fourth in the series of minor prophets are Amos and Obadiah. All of the prophets in this series are similar in predicting woe and judgements and finally restoration. It is thus difficult to place them in characteristic slots without doing violence to their true character.

Psalms 74 and 75 are the third and fourth of the twelve Psalms of Asaph. Psalm 74 begins with the words 'O God, why hast thou cast us off forever?' It is like a study of the Karbala massacre itself and is one of the most clearly prophetic passages of the Bible. Psalm 75 begins with the words 'Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks'. A comparison with the supplications of Imam Zainul Abideen shows a remarkable similarity between the themes of this Psalm and the Imam's work. As such, this Psalm also forms a remarkable prophecy of the coming fourth Imam.

The clearest prophetic expressions of the Imamate in the Bible are thus truly the names of the sons of



Ishmael and the twelve Psalms of Asaph, which fit all twelve slots perfectly.

The twelve apostles of Jesus are slightly problematic. They are not a series of twelve successive figures, and as such are more like the sons of Ishmael and Jacob than like the judges or kings. Nor do they clearly fit into the slots of twelve. The Gospel of John gives Peter and Philip the third and fourth place chronologically.

The martyrdom of Peter is striking, but the martyrdom of James takes precedence in being the first. Nor does the theme of praise necessarily attach itself to Philip. The apostles of Jesus, like the minor prophets, are relevant to the Imamate mainly because they appear as twelve. They do not have an Imami role of their own, although they are among the greatest witnesses to the Imamate. They are the ones who answer and affirm Jesus' Imami call 'Follow me'.

The actual Imamate seems to have been conferred on James by Jesus, for we find James taking a leadership role in the church at Jerusalem after the occultation of Jesus. The successors of James fled from Jerusalem into Arabia in AD 70 where they kept the faith in obscurity until the coming of the prophet Muhammad. There may well have been twelve of them in all over this period of a little over five hundred years. From the Imamate of James beginning in AD 31 to the birth of Muhammad in AD 570 is 539 years. An average of about forty-four years is not at all unrealistic for this quiet period. But we do not know their names. We only have the prophecy that when faith is gone from Israel, a remnant shall always exist in Kedar (Isaiah 21: 16–17; 42: 11–12).

In sum, the principle of the Imamate is a central issue of the Bible. From beginning to end there have been authoritative figures which the text assumes to have been sent from God. Love, loyalty and obedience are seen in the text to be their due. The second point of our list of Islamic distinctions is amply illustrated from the Bible. Only the Islamic doctrine of Imami infallibility is left somewhat undeveloped before the emergence of Jesus as a God-sent figure. As a whole, divinely appointed leadership as it appears in the Bible corresponds amazingly closely to the Islamic Imamate. No institution in established Christianity so closely parallels it.

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