

*"Peace be upon you<sup>asws</sup>, Ya Wali of Allah. Peace be upon you<sup>asws</sup>, Ya decisive argument of Allah<sup>azwj</sup>. Peace be upon you<sup>asws</sup>, ya Leader of the faithfuls, inheritor of the Messengers<sup>asws</sup>, Perspicuous sign of the Lord<sup>azwj</sup> of the world. Blessings of Allah<sup>azwj</sup> be upon you<sup>asws</sup>, and on your pure and pious progeny<sup>asws</sup> ya Mawlaa, Ya Abaa Muhammad<sup>asws</sup>, Hassan<sup>asws</sup> son of Ali<sup>asws</sup> #1*

## **The Eleventh Imam Hassan ibn Ali**

### **(al-Askari) (ASWS)**

**Zahoor/Nazool**<sup>2</sup> in Madina on the 10th of Rabi ul Sani 232 Hijri ( 6.12.846 AD). Shahadat in Samarra Iraq on 8th of Rabiul Awwal 260 Hijri (4.1.874 AD) at the age of 28 years.

Upon the Zahoor of Imam Hassan Askari<sup>asws</sup>, his father Imam Ali Naqi<sup>asws</sup> told his companions: 'I will give my son the name 'Al-Hassan<sup>asws</sup>' as per my grand father's will'. This tradition of Prophet<sup>saww</sup> was well circulated and known to the followers of Ahlul Bait<sup>asws</sup>, as some of them had previously looked for the 12th Imam amongst the descendants of Imam Hassan Al-Mujtaba<sup>asws</sup>. The 10th and 11th Imams<sup>asws</sup> were both called Al-Askari as they lived in an area of Samarra, called Askery. Another reason, for this title to be specifically for the 11th Imam<sup>asws</sup>, is due to an event that once Abbasid caliph Mutawakkil<sup>la</sup> wanted to show Imam Hassan Askari<sup>asws</sup> the strength of his army of 90,000 men and so he asked his men to fill their sacks with sand and pile all the sacks up. He then showed Imam<sup>asws</sup> this mountain of sacks. Imam asked Mutawakkil<sup>la</sup>, to look through his (Imam<sup>asws</sup>'s) index and middle fingers, where he saw an army of armed Angels. Imam<sup>asws</sup> told him that they were at his disposal but he would not use them. (An army is called Askery).

Imam Hassan Al-Askari<sup>asws</sup> was married to a Byzantine princess named Narjis<sup>asws</sup>, who was the granddaughter of a Byzantine emperor, and had a son, which was not known to general public and specifically to the Abbasid. However, Imam<sup>asws</sup> informed the 'Nazool' (Divine arrival) of his son<sup>asws</sup> to all his close friends and devout followers by sending letters along with Aqiqa sheep' (to be slaughtered by them) through his<sup>asws</sup> trustworthy slaves with strict instructions "to keep the news secret from our foes"<sup>3</sup>. Imam Hassan al Askari<sup>asws</sup>'s life from childhood to youth was spent in the house where his father Imam Ali Naqi<sup>asws</sup> was to remain under house arrest. But despite a strict and close guard on the Imam<sup>asws</sup>, he conducted his duties as Imam<sup>asws</sup> from inside the house. Imam<sup>asws</sup> taught people Qur'an and instructed his followers the true teachings of Islam as taught by the Prophet<sup>saww</sup> of Islam and his Ahlulbayt. Imam Hassan Askari<sup>asws</sup> trained many hundreds of scholars of religion and narrated thousands of traditions, including the famous explanation of holy Quran 'Tafseer-e-Imam Hassan Askari<sup>asws</sup>' which was written by two of Imam<sup>asws</sup>'s close companions.

In the early days of his<sup>asws</sup> Imamate, Al-Mu'tassam Al-'Abbasi<sup>la</sup> was the caliph. When the latter was deposed, he was succeeded by al-Muhtadi<sup>la</sup>. After his brief reign of only eleven months and one week, al-Mu'tamid<sup>la</sup> came to the throne. During their regimes, Imam Hassan al-Askari<sup>asws</sup> did not enjoy peace at all. Although the Abbasid dynasty was involved in constant complications and disorders, each and every king thought it necessary to keep the Imam<sup>asws</sup> imprisoned. The Caliphs<sup>la</sup> had always been looking for an opportunity to poison Imam<sup>asws</sup>. Also, al-Mu'tamid<sup>la</sup> was informed that many Shias believed that the eleventh Imam<sup>asws</sup>, according to traditions cited by several Shia Imam<sup>asws</sup>, will have a son who would be the promised Mahdi<sup>asws</sup>. The arrival of the Mahdi<sup>asws</sup> had been foretold in several authenticated hadiths of the Prophet<sup>saww</sup> in both Sunni and

<sup>1</sup> Ziarat Imam Hassan Askari<sup>asws</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ascending from the heavens

<sup>3</sup> Sacrifice lamb which is slaughtered as an Islamic ritual.

Shi'ite sources. For this reason the eleventh Imam<sup>asws</sup>, more than other Imams<sup>asws</sup>, was kept under close scrutiny by the government. In addition, the caliph<sup>l.a</sup> also decided to put an end to the Imamate in Shi'ism, once and for all, and tried to capture and martyr Imam Hassan Askari<sup>asws</sup>'s son - the Al-Mahdi<sup>asws</sup>, for the fulfilment of his devious desires, he regularly used to send his teams comprising of slaves and maids to thoroughly search Imam<sup>asws</sup>'s house.

The Abbasid<sup>l.a</sup> who came into power through winning people's sympathies, after Bani Ummiad<sup>l.a</sup>'s atrocities against Ahul-Bait<sup>asws</sup>, particularly against Imam Hussain<sup>asws</sup>, always showed superficial respect to the Masomeen<sup>asws</sup>. However, secretly they always tried to remove them, as people would recognise their<sup>asws</sup> elevated status and started gathering around them to gain knowledge and guidance. They<sup>l.a</sup>, therefore, poisoned our Imam<sup>asws</sup> (from Imam Mohammed Baqir<sup>asws</sup> to Imam Hassan Askari<sup>asws</sup>). Abbasids<sup>l.a</sup> also tried to distort the faith of Shias through hiring 'Mullahs' among Shias and asking them to find ways of removing Shia-Sunni differences. During this time, Shia population had also increased, as a result of more favourable conditions offered to them by the Abbasids as compared with the severe prosecution and killings by the Ummiad rulers. Mu'tamid<sup>l.a</sup> once declared that Imam Hassan Askari<sup>asws</sup> should be imprisoned under atrocious and merciless conditions. He<sup>asws</sup> was then handed over to a man named Nahri<sup>l.a</sup> the Jailer who sent Imam<sup>asws</sup> to the cage of wild animals and the people thought that this was the end of Imam Hassan Askari<sup>asws</sup>'s life. But when they returned to look what had happened, they all witnessed that Imam Hassan Askari<sup>asws</sup> was praying surrounded by the wild animals prostrating before Him<sup>asws</sup>.

Ahmed Bin Ishaq relates that when he heard of the **Shahadat** of the 10th Imam<sup>asws</sup> he went to Samarra and asked for the whereabouts of the 11th Imam<sup>asws</sup>. He was told that Mo'taz Billah<sup>l.a</sup> had imprisoned Imam<sup>asws</sup>. After bribing the guards, he was able to visit Imam<sup>asws</sup> one night. He described the prison as a tunnel under the Khalifa's home where there was no space to stretch ones legs or to be able to stand. Ahmed says he cried when he saw Imam<sup>asws</sup>'s condition. Food was only one glass of water and a piece of dry bread a day. In the six years of Imam<sup>asws</sup>'s Imamate several attempts were made by the Abbasid<sup>l.a</sup> to extinguish the Light of Imamate. On the 1st of Rabi-ul Awwal 260 a.h. Mo'tamad<sup>l.a</sup> arranged for Imam<sup>asws</sup> to be poisoned in prison and then sent him home. Imam<sup>asws</sup> was in great pain and difficulty for eight days. On the 8th of Rabi-ul Awwal he<sup>asws</sup> asked his son, the 12th Imam<sup>asws</sup>, to bring him some water and then leave him. Imam<sup>asws</sup> left for the better world on that day and was given 'Ghusl & Kafan' by Imam<sup>asws</sup>'s son, the 12th Imam<sup>ajfi</sup>.

After the Shahadat of the Imam<sup>asws</sup>, Abbasid<sup>l.a</sup> had the house investigated and searched for the Imam<sup>asws</sup>'s son, they continued to look for the 'Promised Al-Mehdi'<sup>asws</sup> during the next two years, without any success and finally lost hope and abandoned their search. The eleventh Imam<sup>asws</sup> was buried in his house in Samarra next to his noble father Imam Ali Naqi<sup>asws</sup> - The Al-Askari Mosque in Samarra, Iraq. The site is considered a holy shrine for the Sunnis and Shi'a's, though a bomb blast on 22 February 2006 destroyed much of the structure, and another bomb blast on 13 June 2007 destroyed the two remaining minarets of the Al-Askariya Mosque.

It is important to note that during that time Shia's were given jobs and status in the Abbasid<sup>l.a</sup> government and as they became prosperous, their allegiance to Imam<sup>asws</sup> became weaker and weaker, as a consequence, they started following the Abbasid<sup>l.a</sup> appointed Shia-Mullah. One of such examples is that of Ibne Hilal who regularly used to interfere in the Divine commands and tried to divert people from seeking guidance from the 11<sup>th</sup> Imam<sup>asws</sup>. Due to his large number of Hajj and narration of traditions, he was highly respected by a large number of Shia. Imam<sup>asws</sup> informed them on several occasions but they remained doubtful about Imam<sup>asws</sup>' letters and kept on insisting and defending Ibne-Hilal's innocence and pious status. In a letter 'Touqi' Imam<sup>asws</sup> asked for Allah<sup>azwj</sup>'s curse on Ibne Hilal and on all those who would refuse to curse him, see Appendix.

The other important responsibility of Imam Hassan Askari<sup>asws</sup>, had been to prepare Shias for the 'minor Occultation' of his son, Imam Mehdi<sup>ajfi</sup> which was met through appointing his representatives

who would receive written instructions from Imam Hassan Askari<sup>asws</sup> and communicate with the followers of Ahlul Bait<sup>asws</sup>, an environment they would face during the minor Occultation (Ghaibat-e-Sughra) which immediately took place after the martyred of Imam Hassan Askari<sup>asws</sup>.

## Appendix

Ali bin Mohammed bin Qateaba narrates from Ahmed bin Ibrahim Maraghi that a letter from Imam Hassan Askari<sup>asws</sup> came to Qasim bin Alla in which Imam<sup>asws</sup> had written 'laan' (curses) on Ahmed bin Hilal: In the letter Imam<sup>asws</sup> told his followers to be aware of the fake and pretentious Mullah.

Ahmed bin Hilal was well known for his acts of worship and he had performed 54 Hajj, including 20 on foot. The narrators of traditions, as far as from Iraq, would used to visit him and write down traditions from him. People were surprised to see the comments of Imam<sup>asws</sup> regarding Ahmed bin Hilal and asked Qasim bin Alla to reconfirm the 'Khabar' (news) by contacting again Imam<sup>asws</sup>.

He sent a letter and Imam<sup>asws</sup>'s reply came: 'I have already informed you about this fake and corrupt Mullah, Ahmed bin Hilal, I know him for long time, Allah<sup>azwj</sup> may neither bless him nor pardon him, nor relieve him from His<sup>azwj</sup> wrath. He interferes in our matters without our permission and consent, through making use of his own opinion (Ijtihad). However, we<sup>asws</sup> tolerated him to a certain extent until a time when through our prayers his life was terminated by Allah<sup>azwj</sup>.

And Allah<sup>azwj</sup> may not forgive him, I<sup>asws</sup> have already warned a group of our followers against him, during his life time, so that they should also inform to our other devout followers and friends that we<sup>asws</sup> denounce Ibn-e-Hilal and present our disapproval against him in the Court of Allah<sup>azwj</sup>. We also send curses on those who refuse to send curses on Ibn-e-Hilal.

Now, what I<sup>asws</sup> have told you about this callous (muloon) inform it, not only to Ishaq and his family but also to all those who enquire about Ibn-e-Hilal, regardless of their origin, either coming from his own city or belonging to far places. Also tell to all those whom you find worth of receiving the (khabr) news. Our followers should not suspect those devout correspondents, who are considered to be reliable by ourselves<sup>asws</sup>. We<sup>asws</sup> disclose our secrets to them so that they may communicate our<sup>asws</sup> teachings to our followers. InshaAllah I will further elaborate on this at another occasion.

Abu Hamid says, a group still denied the writing of Imam<sup>asws</sup> and found it hard to believe (as Ibn-e-Hilal had a impressive portfolio of Ibada/worship) and insisted on getting further clarification from Imam<sup>asws</sup> and they directly contacting Imam<sup>asws</sup>.

Imam<sup>asws</sup> replied, that a person should be thankful to Allah<sup>azwj</sup> who is saved from going astray by Allah<sup>azwj</sup>, after initially shown the guidance; and has been instead of temporary blessing 'Naimat' (Wilayat/Eemaan) is blessed with the permanent Wilayat. You people already know what happened to 'Dahaqan' (may Allah<sup>azwj</sup> curse him), after remain in close proximity and serving sincerely, Allah<sup>azwj</sup>, due to his devious acts took away his 'Eemaan' and dragged him into the darkness of 'Kufr' (disbelief), without giving him any further opportunity and immediately targeted him with His<sup>azwj</sup> wrath.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 9, pp. 320 (Urdu)