

# MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

IN THE NAME OF GOD,  
THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN  
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# MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN (UK ED.)

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The *Message of Thaqalayn* feels responsible to present the teachings of Islam in general and the School of the Ahlul Bayt (a) in particular with complete honesty and accuracy and at the same time to emphasise the common ground that binds all Muslims together. Strengthening ties of brotherhood amongst all Muslims, whatever school of Islam they may adhere to, and establishing genuine, enduring and intimate friendship between all those who believe in God are two of the main aims and tasks of the *Message of Thaqalayn* and indeed, any responsible media.

**Editor-in-Chief**

# SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF MOURNING FOR IMAM HUSAYN (A)

## PART II: THE ROLE OF HARDSHIP AND SUFFERING IN THE SPIRITUAL PROGRESS<sup>1</sup>

MOHAMMAD ALI SHOMALI

**ABSTRACT:** In the previous part, we discussed divine plan for human salvation in general and then we focused on the role of hardship in human life and what the faithful can achieve if they forebear the hardships with patience. We also stated that God will not impose more on the faithful than they are able to endure, though He might gradually increase their capacity and their hardships accordingly, like a good teacher or trainer who gradually introduces to his students more difficult subjects. In this world, the hardships of those whom God loves may increase so that they become more detached from this world and be more attached to the spiritual life. In this part, we will study how one can spiritually gain from mourning for Imam Husayn and his sufferings.

***Point One:*** Imam Husayn was very close to Prophet Muhammad and received everything from him. It is [frequently] reported from both Shi‘a and Sunni authorities that the Holy Prophet stated, “Husayn is from me, and I am from Husayn.” Naturally, it is interpreted as, ‘Husayn is my son and my religion depends on him.’ If it were not for Imam Husayn, the religion of the Holy Prophet would not have remained - the religion in which he had devoted his life to and for

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<sup>1</sup>This Address was originally presented at the Manchester Islamic Institute in Manchester on Ashura 1429 on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2008); it is reprinted here more or less as delivered.

which he made a great deal of effort. Therefore, if it was not for Imam Husayn, Islam would have ceased to exist. Imam Husayn himself said:

If the religion of the Holy Prophet would not remain but  
by murdering me, then O' swords! Take me!

Muhammad Hanafiyyah, a soldier whom Imam Ali sent to the Battle of Siffin several times asked why the Imam did not send his other sons - Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn - to the battle. Imam Ali answered, "You are my son and they are the Prophet's." Thus, Imam Ali felt more responsible to protect the lives of the sons of Lady Fatima<sup>2</sup> more than his other son who was not from the Prophet's progeny.

Only one thing that could be more important than Imam Husayn's life was the religion of the Prophet. Thus, Husayn stated in the form of a conditional proposition, "If it is only through murdering me that the religion of the Holy Prophet could survive, then O' swords! Take me!" If protecting the religion does not hinge upon the Imam's life, then his life must be protected. But when it is a matter of protecting the religion, not only Husayn ought to be martyred, but also dozens of people like him. Not one Imam died naturally; they were all killed by poison or sword. If protecting Islam requires it, the family of the Imam was ready to be taken captive because the value of Islam is beyond everything else.

When Imam Husayn saw the Prophet in a dream on his way to Karbala, the Prophet told him, "Surely, Allah wants to see you martyred. And surely, Allah wants to see them [Imam Husayn's children and family] captive." The phrase "God wants to" refers to a fact that there was no other way except for it to happen. If Islam were to be preserved, Imam Husayn were to be ready for martyrdom and his children and family were to be ready for captivity. Of course, this does not mean that God

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<sup>2</sup> The daughter of Prophet Muhammad (s).



wanted Yazid to accomplish his heinous actions or approved of it. This dream was a sign of God's approval of Imam Husayn's decision at that time. Imam Husayn was going to Karbala anyway, but this dream along with the Prophet's hadiths confirmed that there was no other option for him.

The meaning of the Prophet's saying, "Husayn is from me and I am from Husayn" is much deeper than what is normally thought in that it demonstrates extraordinary nearness.

Once Hudhayfah - a companion of the Prophet - heard Imam Husayn (who was a child at the time) talking about his murder by the Umawid tyrants under the command of 'Umar ibn Sa'd. Hudhayfah was surprised and asked Imam Husayn if he had heard about this event from the Prophet, and the Imam said he had not. After relaying this incident to the Prophet, the Prophet replied, "My knowledge is his knowledge and his knowledge is my knowledge, because we know an event before it happens."<sup>3</sup> This was Husayn's knowledge when he was just a child.

As stated in several hadith, everything the Imams declared was received from the Prophet though there is much that can be said about how they received their knowledge from him. It was not always through conventional methods of receiving information or knowledge as we quote *hadith*; they did not receive it in the ordinary way we might assume, such as recording speech word for word which may have included mistakes. Imam Ali stated, "The Prophet opened a door of knowledge to me, after which, thousands of doors were opened..." Thus, the method of transferring knowledge was not by the usual means of speaking and writing.

<sup>3</sup> *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 44, p. 186. The original text of hadith is as follows:

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ جَرِيرِ الطَّبْرِيِّ فِي كِتَابِ دَلَائِلِ الْإِمَامَةِ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ حَدِيثَةٍ قَالَتْ سَمِعْتُ الْحُسَيْنَ بْنَ عَلِيٍّ ع يَقُولُ وَاللَّهِ لِيَجْتَمِعَنَّ عَلَيَّ قَتْلِي طُعَاهُ بَنِي أُمَيَّةَ وَ يُقَدِّمُهُمْ عَمْرُ بْنُ سَعْدٍ وَ ذَلِكَ فِي حَيَاةِ النَّبِيِّ ص فَقُلْتُ لَهُ أَنْبَأكَ بِهَذَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ فَقَالَ لَا فَقَالَ فَاتَّبَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ فَأَخْبَرْتُهُ فَقَالَ عَلِمِي عِلْمَهُ وَ عَلِمَهُ عَلِمِي لِأَنَا نَعَلَمُ بِالْكَائِنِ قَبْلَ كَيْدُونَتِهِ

**Point Two:** Thus, carefully studying Imam Husayn's life is a necessity for both his friends and foes. It is not possible to find a flaw in his life, not a single imperfection. Not only is there no negative point, but no ambiguous point in Imam Husayn's life. If we give only the facts of the event of Karbala to any person, he would not doubt consider Imam Husayn right and his enemy wrong. Sometimes there are noble men who were flawless throughout their lives, but their lives still contain ambiguity. The events in Karbala occurred in such a way that they clearly manifest Imam Husayn and his mission. This is where the statement, "Surely, Husayn is the light of guidance" holds true.

Throughout history, there have been many guides though we do not fully understand some of them, since it needs patience, endurance, and preparation. Khidr, the Prophet, was a guide, but even Moses could not benefit from him. The problem was from neither Moses nor Khidr. But Khidr was not that "light of guidance" the way Husayn was and still is. Anyone - a Christian, Hindu, or an illiterate person who does not believe in Islam or knows little of it - can understand Husayn. This is why many non-Muslims take part and spend money in ceremonies that commemorate Imam Husayn's martyrdom.

**Point Three:** Imam Husayn endured a great hardship that no one in history had or will ever endure. The hardship Imam Husayn faced was extremely severe. In *Ziyarat Ashura*, we read:

O Abu Abdullah! Unbearable is the sorrow; nerve-racking is the agony you put up with, for us and for all the (true) Muslims. The crimes committed against you also shocked and unnerved the dwellers of the heavens, one and all.

The hardships endured during the Battle of Karbala were so great it goes beyond our imagination, a hardship that cannot be perceived by our minds, a hardship so great that even after fourteen centuries it is

unforgotten. No one should think that the reason we mourn is because we are emotional and sensitive people. It was the hardship of this event that was so enormous. On one hand, the task carried out by the Imam and his companions was tremendous; on the other, the wretchedness of the enemies was so great that it is neither forgotten nor has it depreciated. No matter how much time passes after the event, nothing can have an impact on it. More than one thousand and four hundred years have passed, and within the next thousand years, nothing more severe than Imam Husayn's hardship will ever happen: "No day has ever been like your day, O Abu Abdillah!"<sup>4</sup>

**Point Four:** So why did Imam Husayn endure such a hardship? *To protect Islam.* How can we benefit from this great sacrifice? *We must share in Imam Husayn's grief and suffering.* If we can regard Imam Husayn's grief as our own, then we too can benefit in his hardship. Of course, we do not have the capacity to endure this type of hardship. If something slightly bad happens to us, we weep and wail, cry to the heavens, complain to God, and say that our supplications are of no use or ask why our requests are not granted. But one way has been prepared for us, which is possible for everyone to seek. Christians can also come and seek this way. Jews can also do so. And even non believers. Everyone can more or less benefit. When they hear what happened to Husayn and his Household, they can come and share in Imam Husayn's grief. Another part of *Ziyarat Ashura* reads:

I implore Allah to give me because of my suffering in  
you the best which might be given to an afflicted

<sup>4</sup>*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 45, p. 218. The original text of hadith from Imam Hasan is as follows:

أَنَّ الْحُسَيْنَ بْنَ عَلِيٍّ ع دَخَلَ يَوْمًا إِلَى الْحَسَنِ ع فَلَمَّا نَظَرَ إِلَيْهِ بَكَى فَقَالَ لَهُ مَا يُبْكِيكَ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ  
قَالَ أَنْكِي لِمَا يُصْنَعُ بِكَ فَقَالَ لَهُ الْحَسَنُ ع إِنَّ الَّذِي يُؤْتِي إِلَيَّ سَمٌ يُدْسُ إِلَيَّ فَأَقْتُلُ بِهِ وَ لَكِنْ لَا يَوْمَ  
كَيُومِكَ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ يَزْدَلِفُ إِلَيْكَ ثَلَاثُونَ أَلْفَ رَجُلٍ يَدْعُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ جَدْنَا مُحَمَّدٌ (ص) وَ  
يَنْتَحِلُونَ دِينَ الْإِسْلَامِ فَيَجْتَمِعُونَ عَلَيَّ قَتْلِكَ وَ سَفْكَ دَمِكَ وَ انْتِهَاكَ حُرْمَتِكَ وَ سَبِي ذَرَارِيكَ وَ نِسَابَكَ  
وَ انْتِهَابَ نَفْلِكَ فَعِنْدَهَا تَجَلُّ بِنَبِيِّ أُمَّةِ اللَّعْنَةِ وَ تُمَطَّرُ السَّمَاءُ رَمَادًا وَ دَمًا وَ يُبْكِيكَ عَلَيَّ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ  
حَتَّى الْوُحُوشِ فِي الْفَلَوَاتِ وَ الْحَيْثَانِ فِي الْبِحَارِ.

person, for the sake of your place before Him and your rightfulness and also the hardship I endured in your way.

Here the supplicant does not ask God to give him the reward for his own actions. He asks for the reward as a result of suffering. As explained before, the reward for a believer's enduring hardship is not comparable to anything else. What adds to the significance of this particular suffering is that it is not personal. This suffering is because of the loss of great friends of God in the most tragic event.

We should welcome "the hardship I endured in your way." Today we must be stricken with grief, similar to a person who has shared in Husayn's hardship. We must wear black and mourn. We must cry and weep and not just sit somewhere saying that we are very sorry about what happened. Neither must we be like those who merely hold a conference where articles are presented about the tragedy, or, God forbid, hold parties because Imam Husayn achieved his goal and became martyred. There are those who do so. But the heart of the matter is that we must be stricken with grief. The suffering of the Ahl al-Bayt must become your own suffering. We must pay attention to the fact that the more stricken we are, the closer to Imam Husayn we will be. We will be granted rewards according to how much we endure hardships. When we say, "Give me the best which might be given to an afflicted person for the sake of the hardship I endured in your way," means that we are imploring God for the best thing given to an afflicted person.

This is a way God has laid out for us. If we understand, we will gain the greatest rewards through sharing in Imam Husayn's hardship. In hadiths we read that if someone makes a hundred people to weep, or even a single person weep, he would go to heaven. Other hadiths state that if we weep we would go to heaven and furthermore, it is stated that

if at least we pretend to weep, we might go to heaven. It means that the very least we can do to show that we share in Imam Husayn's suffering is to be sad and prepared to cry. Sometimes we cannot cry. Although it is better to be able to cry, if we cannot, then we should not think that we have missed everything. Even if we have only come to the mourning session and pretended to weep, it still shows that we are stricken with grief. Of course, the more grief we feel, the higher our level will be.

If we really feel the grief and take the tragedy as our own, is it practically possible that we are not in opposition to Husayn's enemies? Be fair! If someone does to you what they did to Imam Husayn, that they killed his brothers, his nephews, his young son, and his six-month old son, and then also took his Household captive, then, can you help taking those people as your own enemies and ask God to keep them away from His mercy? Of course, you should have so much control over your emotions that you remain calm and not swear at them. But can you really say that you are truly heartbroken when tens of your family members, including the children, are brutally killed, the tents are looted and burnt and the rest of the family, mostly women and girls, are taken captive by the army of Yazid, and still not have any negative feelings for those enemies? Is this possible?

In any case, we must share in Husayn's hardship. We must be stricken with grief today. Contrary to some Christian friends believe Jesus to have suffered and finally crucified to have everyone's sins forgiven, we believe that Imam Husayn endured a great hardship, although not everyone is forgiven because of it. We must have done righteous deeds and be under Husayn's leadership in his camp. It is not possible to act sinfully like the enemies of Husayn and still hope to accompany him in the Hereafter. But if we are like Husayn, then there is hope for us. Indeed, the whole point is that your love for Husayn as a true servant of God must increase so much so that you resemble him in his conduct.

When people love and admire ordinary talented person, they subconsciously imitate his every move. How can we claim that we truly love Husayn and then act against his conduct and teachings?

**Point Five:** One of the great outcomes of sharing the suffering of Imam Husayn is that we would be able to be with him in the hereafter. Another part of *Ziyarat Ashura* reads:

I ask Him to take me to the praised position (*al-maqām al-mahmud*) which you (the Ahl al-Bayt) have before Him.

What is the Praised Position? God told His Prophet: “*And stay awake for some part of the night, beyond what is incumbent on you. It may be that your Lord will raise you to a praised position.*” (17:79)

In the Hereafter, the Prophet and his Household will enjoy the uppermost status everyone will wish to have. In *Ziyarat Ashura*, those who are heartbroken over Imam Husayn’s hardship will say, “I ask Him to take me to the praised position that you have before Him.” This is a great business, if we fully understand. If this prayer is answered we would be able to be with the Prophet and his Household in the Hereafter without having done the great services they did. It is true that we have faith, perform daily prayers, fast, and so on, but, as mentioned before, these deeds are very few considering the long journey we have ahead; however, we can see the aspiration mentioned in this ziyarat. We are told to ask God to give us the position of Great Glory which the Household will indeed have.

How can we reach that position? Through sharing in Imam Husayn’s hardship, God the Almighty will let you share with Imam Husayn in his reward without reducing his own. This is the mercy of Allah that through love, sympathy, and agreement you can share the reward for the good any person does or the suffering he undergoes without that person losing anything. In any case, by following Husayn, he will take

you where he himself is heading. That is why the Prophet described Imam Husayn as *safinat al-najat* or “The ship of salvation”. Because life’s troubles are like a vast ocean ahead of us which is full of dangers and we do not know how to swim in such an ocean, embarking on this “ship of salvation” is a necessary blessing. What do we know? What are we proud of? Sometimes we cannot even find an address in the city we live in! How can we hope to find our way in this vast ocean? It may take a lifetime of a thousand years to do this! Considering the tiny amount of good deeds we do, even if we do not commit any sins, we might need to live for thousands of years to gain something worthy enough as a provision for the journey to eternity that we have ahead of us. In mathematics, we learn that any number divided by infinity would come to approximately zero; which means that if we even live and work for hundreds of years, compared to our eternal journey, it will be nothing.

We need something to take us through this. To put our mind at ease, we need a safe and fast vehicle moving us in the right direction because we do not have thousands of years to live. With regards to this, in some sources, it has been reported from the Ahl al-Bayt: “We are all ships of salvation, but the ship of Husayn is the largest and the fastest.” All the guides in history have been like rescue ships, but this one is special. This is the rescue ship that will quickly take us to our destination. Why? Because it is driven by the power of suffering and love and does not depend solely on our deeds. Our good actions are very few. To be honest, how much are we committed to the night prayers? How much do we give charity? Let us come and share in Husayn’s hardship! Come and embark on this ship! Obviously, this ship has different levels depending on the deeds we have performed. Some people have taken the back seat, some may have taken seats in the engine room, and some people are in the most luxurious rooms of the ship. At least let us just get on the ship to be safe! Do not be like the son of Noah who told his father, “*I shall betake me (for refuge) to some mountain that will save*

*me from water*” (11:43). There is no mountain that can save the sinful from going astray! There is no mountain that can save us from hell! We have to get on that ship. May Allah give us the opportunity to experience such a pleasant life: *“Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, should he be faithful, We shall revive him with a good life and pay them their reward by the best of what they used to do”* (16:97).

May Allah enable us to get on board the ship of Husayn and place ourselves under his flag and in his camp. If we do so, we should not have to worry about anything. But we should not deceive ourselves. Do not say that it is enough to love Imam Husayn. Become like him. Seek his way and adopt his manners. Look at Imam Husayn’s regard for prayer: While the enemy did not stop the war for a moment, Imam Husayn performed the prayer on time at noon on the day of Ashura. Today we can see that even non-believers respect us when they see us performing our prayers. They even try not to make any noise. The enemies of Imam Husayn pretended to be Muslim, but they did not even respect the prayers. However, Imam Husayn did not consider this as an excuse to avoid praying on time. While Imam was praying two of his companions i.e. Sa‘eed ibn ‘Abdullah and Zuhayr ibn Qayn stood in front of Imam Husayn to guard him. They were so loyal that even though they were frequently hit by the enemies’ arrows, they did not leave the Imam alone. Neither did Imam Husayn give up praying on time. Why have we kept such distance from Imam Husayn? How will someone be able to look him in the eye on the Day of Judgment and tell him that he is his Shi‘a but that he sometimes forgot his prayers?

Let us persevere with our good deeds, board the ship, and be at ease. If we are pious and get on Imam Husayn’s ship, God willing, we will not face any harm at all, for *“Surely God’s friends shall have no fear nor shall they grieve.”* (10:62)



# AN INQUIRY INTO RELIGIOUS DISSIMULATION

AZIZAH ADIB

TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

**ABSTRACT:** Dissimulation is a practice emphasized by the Ahlul Bayt on several occasions. Dissimulation is protecting oneself or one's family or innocent people from harm by doing or avoiding something or by doing or saying something which is not recommended or permissible under normal conditions. Using Islamic sources and documents, Shi'a scholars divide dissimulation into three types: prohibited, mandatory, and permissible. In the Holy Qur'an, we can find some instances – such as the believer of the Pharaoh's people – based on which dissimulation can be regarded as permissible. There is also some evidence in Sunni traditions suggesting that dissimulation is religiously legal and rational. Among the permissible conditions whereby dissimulation can be practiced referred to in traditions by the Ahlul Bayt are a) saving the life of the believers, b) elevation of man's status and his perfection, and c) preserving Islamic unity.

## *Introduction*

Shi'ism, one of the two major Islamic sects, entails particular teachings and messages, and it is a duty upon its believers to defend them. Some of these teachings concerns the Shi'a beliefs while others are concerned with their practice.

Among these teachings is dissimulation - or *taqiyyah* - which is considered a definite and undeniable Shi'a principle. Also, in many traditions, the Imams advised the Shi'as to act upon it. Imam Baqir said, "Dissimulation is the belief of me and my forefathers; the one who

does not act upon it has no faith.”<sup>1</sup> Moreover, up until now, numerous praiseworthy articles and books have been written on it, indicating its importance.

In this article, three areas will be covered: 1) the meaning of dissimulation, 2) a probe into its traditions, and 3) responses to doubts and misconceptions cast on it.

### ***Literal meaning***

The Arabic word for dissimulation is *taqiyyah*, derived from the root ‘*wa-qa-ya*’ and ‘*wiqayah*.’ According to Raghib in his book *Mufradat*, ‘*wiqayah*’ means protecting something from harm.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, *taqiyyah* (dissimulation) literally means avoiding evil and warding it off. Its infinitive means ‘protecting’<sup>3</sup> and its gerund means ‘keeping’.<sup>4</sup> However, in traditions, it generally refers to any action that keeps man immune from the evils of others.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Technical meaning***

Both Sunni and Shi‘a scholars have given similar technical meanings for dissimulation.

According to Shaikh Mufid, Dissimulation is “hiding our inner beliefs from the opposition to avoid religious and worldly harms.”<sup>6</sup>

Shaikh Ansari defined dissimulation as follows: “Dissimulation consists of protecting oneself from harm by other person and agreeing with his words and actions; this is actually disagreeing with the truth.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> *Mufradat-ul-Qur’an*, Raghib Isfahani, p. 530.

<sup>3</sup> *Waqi‘ a-Taqiyyah ‘ind al-Madhahib wal-Firqat al-Islamiyyah*, Nasir Hashim, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> *Lisan-ul-‘Arab*, vol.15, p. 402.

<sup>5</sup> *Commentary on the Qur’anic Verses*, Qurbani Lahiji, Zayn-ul-‘Abidin, p. 211.

<sup>6</sup> *Tashih-ul-‘Itiqadat*, Shaikh Mufid, p.66.

Sunni scholar, Sarakhsi Hanafi said regarding dissimulation, “Dissimulation is to protect one’s life from danger and harm through revealing something opposed to one’s inner beliefs.”<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, according to Ibn Hajar ‘Asqalani Shafi’i, “Dissimulation means refraining from expressing one’s inner beliefs to others.”<sup>9</sup>

Shaikh Muhammad Abu Zuhreh also gave a similar definition as follows: “By dissimulation, one hides his belief to ward off harms and damages.”<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the technical definition is summed up as follows: “Dissimulation is protecting oneself from harm through doing or giving up an action or saying something impermissible under normal circumstances.”<sup>11</sup>

### ***Dissimulation: A rational principle***

Like other religious recommendations, dissimulation enjoys the required rational support; in addition to religion, common sense also decrees dissimulation. All over the world, particular security measures are taken to protect vital information. Likewise, in political, military, and economic information, some codes are used to conceal secrets and goals.

Dissimulation is also a strategy and method for protecting one’s beliefs, life, reputation, and property or those of other innocent people. In fact, it is considered a defensive measure. The right for self-defense is recognised by divine religions, human doctrines, and intellect.

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<sup>7</sup> *The Outcome of Discourse* (a research compiled in the Iranian Leader’s Office in the Affairs of Sunnis), p. 113.

<sup>8</sup> *Al-Mabsut/Sarakhsi*, 24, cited in Waqi‘-u-Taqiyyah ‘ind al-Madahib wal-Firaq al-Islamiyyah, p.179.

<sup>9</sup> *Fath-ul-Bari*, Ibn Hajar ‘Asqalani Shafi’i, p.262.

<sup>10</sup> *Al-Taqiyyah, its Definitions, Limits and Reasons*, Subhani, Ja‘far, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> *The Outcome of Discourse*, p. 113.

Thus, there is no doubt that dissimulation and concealment of one's inner beliefs is a method confirmed by the intellect as an effective rational technique and is a basis for the actions taken by wise people worldwide.

### *Types of dissimulation*

As said before, protecting one's life and belief is considered a key element in dissimulation. Naturally, the issue of self-protection is raised when one's life is threatened. However, by referring to the legitimate applications of dissimulation, we find out that in some cases one's life is in no actual danger, but in order to protect the great interests of Islam and Islamic society, concealing one's beliefs is recommended. Accordingly, dissimulation can be divided into three types: a) dissimulation out of fear, b) dissimulation for concealment, and c) dissimulation out of lenience. In what follows, each type is briefly explained:

1. *Dissimulation out of fear* is dissimulation when facing pagans and enemies of Islam through doing something in accordance with their opinions.<sup>12</sup>

As the definition indicates, the aim of this kind of dissimulation is to prevent the spiritual ability of the faithful person from being wasted and to save his life, because he may put his life at risk to reveal his inner belief. Under such a circumstance, both religion and intellect decree that one protects his life and property through dissimulation.

2. *Dissimulation for concealment* refers to safeguarding the fundamentals of Islam through hiding one's sect before the oppressive governments and the tyrants.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Shi'ism and Unity*, Professor Imani, instructional pamphlet 1384, p. 78.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

Hiding one's belief is considered a tactic used by the righteous minority to safeguard the fundamentals of Islam against tyrannical governments. This kind of dissimulation was common in the early Islam, such as the migration of the Holy Prophet to Medina and the hidden and gradual movement of Muslim migrants to Abyssinia.

3. *Dissimulation for lenience or for preserving Islamic unity* consists of mixing with Muslims brothers and sisters from other schools of Islam, good conduct in life, and attending Sunni meetings and circles to preserve Islamic unity and defend Islam.

Thus, this kind of dissimulation adopted from the Sunnah is not due to fear or apprehension; rather, it is to establish an amicable relationship among the Muslims. It is applied when one gives up doing certain Shi'i deeds and acts upon the Sunni sect to show lenience to Sunnis while there is no fear. Therefore, unifying measures of the Shi'as should not be deemed to be out of fear, because sometimes the Shi'a Imams have taken such measures; this cannot be considered to be due to their fear. For instance, Imam Ali, known for his valour, did not perform prayer with his opponents out of fear, although he overlooked inter-religious disagreements for the continued existence of the Islamic system.<sup>14</sup>

### ***The legal rulings of dissimulation***

Using the Islamic sources, Shi'a jurists divide dissimulation into three types: a) prohibited dissimulation, b) mandatory dissimulation, and c) permissible dissimulation.

#### ***A. Prohibited dissimulation***

The philosophy of dissimulation is to safeguard and elevate the truth and to preserve a correct belief. If something against this purpose is

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<sup>14</sup> *Imam Khomeini and the Convergence of the Islamic World*, Hashimi, Sayyid Muhammad Jawad, pp. 74-76.

done through dissimulation, it is not permissible to dissimulate; in fact, it is prohibited to do so. Such circumstances include the following:

**1. *When the truth is at risk:*** When covering and hiding, one's belief spreads corruption, strengthens atheism and disbelief, extends disorder, and undermines the pillars of Islam; as a result, if it misleads people, erases Islamic rituals, and violates Islamic legal rulings, it is obligatory not to dissimulate. Thus, it is a grave mistake to assume that dissimulation is allowed under such circumstances. These kinds of dissimulation are destructive and negative. Only when dissimulation is constructive, positive, in line with achieving the goal, and not in the reverse direction, it is permissible or obligatory.

**2. *It is forbidden to dissimulate in murder:*** If somebody comes under pressure to kill one or more innocent people, otherwise, his life will be at risk, he is not entitled to kill others even though he is certain that he will lose his own life if he does not listen.<sup>15</sup> In this respect, Imam Baqir said, "Dissimulation has been made legitimate to save lives; if it causes murder, it is not permissible."<sup>16</sup>

### ***B. Obligatory dissimulation***

The above-mentioned kinds of dissimulation - dissimulation out of fear, for concealment, and out of lenience for preserving Islamic unity -can be considered obligatory.<sup>17</sup>

### ***C. Permissible dissimulation***

One can dissimulate in some permissible actions if abandoning them does not cause any harm.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Dissimulation: a Shield for Deeper Struggle*, Makarim Shirazi, p.113.

<sup>16</sup> *Wasa'il-u-Shi'a*, section 31, Hadith no.1.

<sup>17</sup> *Dissimulation: a Shield for Deeper Struggle*, Makarim Shirazi, p.70.

<sup>18</sup> *A-Taqiyyah*, Shaikh Ansari, Murtida, p.14.

### *Dissimulation in the Holy Qur'an*

In the Noble Qur'an, there are some verses that recommend dissimulating:

لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللَّهِ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا أَنْ تَتَّقُوا مِنْهُمْ تُقَاةً وَيُحَذِّرْكُمْ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ

*The believers must not make friend with disbelievers instead of believers: if anyone does so, in nothing will there be help from Allah: except by avoiding them, that you may guard yourselves from them. But Allah cautions you [to remember] Him; for the final goal is to Allah. (3:28)*

This verse first warns the believers that if they select disbelievers as their guardians, their relation with God is completely broken off, but it also makes an exception to this fundamental rule, saying that there is no problem with the relation with disbelievers if it is established because of dissimulation. This is because Islam only seeks to revive the truth, and sometimes dissimulating is in the interests of Islam and its life more so than abandoning dissimulation.

In addition to the verses that explicitly permit Muslims to dissimulate in order to safeguard Islam and their beliefs, some other verses tell the story of the true followers of the previous religions and Muslims and praise them for dissimulating. They include:

#### **1. 'Ammar Yasir**

مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَكِنْ مَنْ شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ عَذَابٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

*Anyone who, after accepting faith in Allah, utters disbelief – except under compulsion, with his heart remaining firm in Faith – but such as open their heart to disbelief, on them is Wrath from Allah, and theirs will be a dreadful punishment. (16:106)*

This verse indicates that if somebody expresses disbelief forcefully, although he has no doubt about God in his heart, he is not deemed guilty and sinful. Interpreting this verse, Qurtabi said, “There is consensus among scholars that if he expresses disbelief forcefully and out of fear for his life while his heart is replete with faith, he is not to blame.”<sup>19</sup>

Although a minority of Sunni scholars relate this verse to the Meccan Muslims who were under intolerable pressure from the Qurayshites, most Sunni scholars attributed it to the great companion of Prophet Muhammad - ‘Ammar Yasir - who uttered some words opposed to his belief under the brutal torture by the Qurayshites of Mecca.<sup>20</sup>

This word by the Sunni commentator in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Qurtabi, demonstrates that dissimulation is not a Shi‘i innovation and has its roots in the Qur’an and Sunnah.

## 2. *The Believer of the Pharaoh’s People*

و قَالَ رَجُلٌ مُؤْمِنٌ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَكْتُمُ إِيمَانَهُ أَتَقْتُلُونَ رَجُلًا أَنْ يَقُولَ رَبِّيَ اللَّهُ وَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَإِنْ يَكُ كَاذِبًا فَعَلَيْهِ كَذِبُهُ وَإِنْ يَكُ صَادِقًا يُصِيبْكُمْ بَعْضُ الَّذِي يَعِدُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ كَذَّابٌ

<sup>19</sup> Ansari a-Qurtabi, Muhammad ibn Ahmad, al-Jami‘ li Ahkam al-Qur’an, vol.11, p.182.

<sup>20</sup> Tabarsi, Fadl ibn Hassan, Majma‘-ul-Bayan, vol.6, p.598; ibn Abi Hatam, ‘Abd-u-Rahman ibn Muhammad, The Great Qur’anic Commentary, vol.7, p.2304; ibn Kathir, Isma‘il ibn ‘Amru, The Great Qur’anic Commentary, vol. 4, p.520; Soyuti, Jalal-u-Din, a-Dur-ul-Manthur, vol. 4, p.132.



*A believer, a man from among the people of Pharaoh, who had concealed his faith, said: "Will you slay a man because he says, 'My Lord is Allah'? – when he has indeed come to you with Clear [Signs] from your Lord? And if he be a liar, on him is [the sin of] his lie: but, if he is telling the Truth, then will fall on you something of the [calamity] of which he warns you: truly Allah guides not the one who transgresses and lies! (40:28)*

Based on the above verse, it can be said that although the believer of the Pharaoh's people believed in the Prophet Moses, he expressed disbelief and hid his faith out of dissimulation.<sup>21</sup> The important point is that the practice of a believer who had no way but to conceal his belief due to the particular situation of his time is praised, and in this way people are taught that they should follow the example of such people in life and act like them.<sup>22</sup>

### 3. *Prophet Abraham*

فَنظَرَ نَظْرَةً فِي النُّجُومِ فَقَالَ إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ فَتَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ مُدْبِرِينَ فَرَاغَ إِلَىٰ آلِهِمْ فَقَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنْطِقُونَ فَرَاغَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَرْبًا بِالْيَمِينِ فَأَقْبَلُوا إِلَيْهِ يَرِيُونَ قَالَ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مَا تَنْجِتُونَ وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

*Then did he cast a glance at the stars. And he said, "I am indeed sick [at heart]!" So they turned away from him, and departed. Then did he turn to their gods and said, "will you not eat [of the offerings before you]? What is the matter with you that you speak not [intelligently]?" Then did he turn upon them, striking [them] with the right hand. Then came [the worshippers] with hurried steps, and faced [him]. He*

<sup>21</sup> The Qur'anic Commentary *Majma'-ul-Bayan*, Tabarsi, vol. 21, p. 251.

<sup>22</sup> The Qur'anic Commentary *al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an*, p. 254.

*said, "Worship you that which you have [yourselves] carved? But Allah has created you and your handwork!" (37:88-96)*

Prophet Abraham did not reveal his plan to break the idols to the people of city; rather, he told them he was sick. However, he was, in fact, upset at their idol-worshipping and took the golden opportunity to destroy the idols and awaken people through dissimulating and hiding his belief. That is why Imam Sadiq said, "By Allah, dissimulation is a part of the divine religion. [Out of dissimulation], Prophet Abraham said, 'I am sick,' also, [out of dissimulation], Prophet Joseph said, 'O you [in] the caravan! You are thieves, without doubt!'" (12:70) while by God, they had not stolen anything."<sup>23</sup>

### ***Dissimulation in Sunni traditions***

Although nowadays dissimulation is known as a Shi'a teaching, Sunni hadiths also imply permissibility of dissimulation and its enjoinder. This in itself gives us a reason that dissimulation is not limited to the Shi'a, but it is a religious principle that is confirmed by Islam. In what follows, several Sunni traditions are listed:

1. In *Kanz ul-'Ummal*, there is a famous hadith by the Holy Prophet known as the Hadith of *Raf'*: "In mistakes, oblivion, and actions they are forced to take, my Ummah is not to blame."<sup>24</sup>

This hadith indicates that when one is coerced into doing something, its verdict is overturned, and he is not rebuked. Hence, if in order to save his life and safeguard great interests a person one is to express something opposed to his heartfelt belief, he has committed no sin and

<sup>23</sup> *Kulayni*, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub, al-Kafi, vol. 2, p.217.

<sup>24</sup> *Kanz-ul-'Ummal*, vol. 4, p. 233, Hadith no. 1,3,7; Qurtabi Qur'anic Commentary, vol. 10, p. 181.

will face no punishment. Hence, this narration clearly indicates the permissibility and legitimacy of dissimulation.

2. Regarding dissimulation, Hasan Basri is quoted as saying: “Until the Day of Judgment, the believer is permitted to dissimulate except for murder because Allah has forbidden it.”<sup>25</sup>

3. Abdullah ibn ‘Umar quoted Prophet Muhammad as saying, “It is not proper for the believer to make himself abject.” Then the Holy Prophet was asked, “How does he do so?” He replied, “He gets involved in unbearable incidents.”<sup>26</sup>

### ***Dissimulation and its positive effects in the Infallibles’ hadiths***

In the hadiths by the Holy Imams, besides references to dissimulation in danger, we can find a number of its benefits some of which are mentioned below.

1. ***Man’s elevation to a higher status:*** Imam Sadiq quoted his father, Imam Baqir as saying, “By Allah, there is nothing on the Earth more beloved by me than dissimulation. O’ Habib! The one who dissimulates will be elevated to the higher status by Allah, and anyone who does not dissimulate will be demoted.”<sup>27</sup>

2. ***A shelter for the believers:*** According to Imam Ali, “Dissimulation is among the best *deeds* of the believers who save both themselves and their brothers in faith from sinners through it.”<sup>28</sup> Likewise, Imam Sadiq said, “Dissimulation is the shield of believer; it is a means of safeguarding him in the struggle.”<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Prophet

<sup>25</sup> *A-Taqiyyah ‘inda Ahl-ul-Bait*, Mustafa Qaisar, p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> *Waqi’ a-Taqiyyah ‘ind-al- Madhahib wal-Firaq-ul-Islamiyyah*, Hamidi, Thamih Hashim, p. 84.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Wasa’il-u- Shi’ah*, “Enjoining the Good”, section 28, Hadith no. 3.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

Muhammad said, “The believer who abandons dissimulation resembles a headless body.”<sup>30</sup>

3. ***The protector of Islamic unity:*** Hadiths on dissimulation imply that it *safeguards* Islamic unity. Imam Sadiq said in this regard, “The one who performs prayer on the first line of [Sunni] public prayer, it is as if he performed public prayer on the first line with the Messenger of Allah.”<sup>31</sup> In another hadith, he said, “Visit their [Sunnis] sick people, attend their funerals, and perform prayer in their mosques.”<sup>32</sup>

In short, we can see dissimulation is a necessity because it revives Islam and brings about Islamic unity. However, abandoning dissimulation when it is necessary causes disunity and rancor among Islamic sects; it also strengthens the enemies of Islam.

### ***Response to doubts on dissimulation***

Some have questioned dissimulation; some of these doubts will be mentioned and responded to below.

#### ***1. Dissimulation: an unjustified fear***

Dissimulation is to protect one’s own interests, to sacrifice the interests of others, and to abandon nobility and magnanimity. This is contrary to the Islamic teachings.

***Response:*** This claim that dissimulation means giving up magnanimity is contrary to the conduct of Prophet Muhammad, because his call to Islam was secret for three years.<sup>33</sup> In addition, his leaving secretly from Mecca - where he was surrounded by enemies - his hiding in a cave in Mount Thawr, his secret migration to Medina, walking during the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, section 28, Hadith no.2.

<sup>31</sup> I’tiqadat, Shaikh Saduq, p.133.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Excerpts from History of Islam, Subhani, Ja’far, p. 99.

nights and concealing himself throughout the days are all considered dissimulation.<sup>34</sup>

## 2. *Dissimulation: a factor in the spread of telling lies*

Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhab, and their followers have condemned dissimulation because it may be accompanied by lying; they have introduced it as a factor in the spread of lying.<sup>35</sup>

**Response:** Instances of dissimulation appear in both Islamic history and its rulings. If it involves lying, it is considered permissible based on the principle of prioritization. In this respect, Imam Ghazali said:

... So whatever good purpose can be achieved through telling both the truth and a lie, it is prohibited [*haram*] to tell lies for it. If achieving this purpose is only possible through lying, then it is permissible to tell lies provided that this purpose is permissible, and it is obligatory to tell lies provided that it is obligatory; for example, to save the lives of Muslims. Thus, whenever truthfulness causes a Muslim who is hiding from a tyrant to lose his life, it is definitely not permissible to tell the truth and it is obligatory to tell lies. Likewise, if the purpose – in war, making peace between two people, and solacing an oppressed one – is not achieved but through lying, it is necessary to make use of lies and lying is obligatory....<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, based on Prophet Muhammad’s saying - “It is not forbidden for a person who seeks to make peace between people to tell lies,”<sup>37</sup> - one can decree that dissimulation is permissible even though it involves lying.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, pp. 195-201.

<sup>35</sup> *Dirasah fi Minhaj fi Sunnah li Ma‘rifah Ibn Taymiyyah, ‘Aqidah wa ‘Ilman wa ‘Idalah*, Husayni Milani, Sayyid ‘Ali, pp. 170-171.

<sup>36</sup> *Ihyah al-‘Ulum, Ghazzali*, vol. 3, p. 132, (*Bayan ma rakhas fihe min al-kidhb.*)

<sup>37</sup> *Usul Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 354.

### **3. *Dissimulation: A corollary to hypocrisy***

As dissimulation is to express something or do something opposite to the heartfelt belief, it is a kind of hypocrisy, because hypocrisy means pretention contrary to belief.

**Response:** The answer to this doubt is obvious, since based on the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah, dissimulation means expressing disbelief and hiding faith or pretending to believe in falsehood and concealing the truth. This is the opposite of hypocrisy, because hypocrisy consists of expressing faith and hiding disbelief or pretending to believe in the truth and concealing falsehood.

In addition, the Qur'anic verses and Hadiths deprecate hypocrisy, while they emphasize that dissimulation is permissible and obligatory.

### **4. *Dissimulation before Muslims: an Innovation***<sup>38</sup>

It may be assumed that the permissible dissimulation is the one before the pagans, but dissimulation before Muslims is an innovation introduced by the Shi'as.

**Response:** The dissimulation considered permissible by the Shi'as is based on its criterion and advisability which are saving one's life, face, property, etc. Whenever this criterion is met, it can be decreed that dissimulation is permissible. Thus, it does not make any difference whether it is before pagans or Muslims, Sunnis or Shi'as.

As Imam Shafi'i said, "In order to save one's life, dissimulation is permitted. As it is allowable among the pagans, it is permissible among Muslims."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p.80.

<sup>39</sup> *A-Taqiyyah 'Inda Ahl-ul-Bayt*, p. 27.

### ***Conclusion***

From the above discussion, we can conclude that:

1. Dissimulation is a rational action.
2. Both Sunnis and Sh‘ias agree on legitimacy of dissimulation.
3. In Islamic hadiths, dissimulation is called the Sunnah of the divine prophets, the requisite for safeguarding faith, and a defense mechanism that preserves Islamic unity.
4. Dissimulation by no means contrasts with magnanimity, since the Prophet of Islam also dissimulated.
5. Dissimulation is not considered hypocrisy, because hypocrisy involves expressing faith and hiding disbelief, while dissimulation involves expressing disbelief and concealing faith unwillingly.
6. Whenever the religious obvious and necessary matters are tainted or murder occurs by dissimulation, it is not permissible.

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# A PROBE INTO THE PURPORT AND APPLICATION OF THE VERSE OF LOVE

RIDWANAH SIDDIQ-E ALAWI  
TRANSLATED BY JABIR CHANDOO

**ABSTRACT:** There are several verses in the Holy Qur'an in which the members of the Household of the Prophet have been praised and acclaimed by the Almighty Allah and their position in the Islamic community has, thus, been clearly introduced to the Muslims. Among such verses is 'the verse of love' (*mawaddah*). What follows is a discussion on the meaning of this verse and its application. According to the findings of this study, there are numerous narrations, from both Shi'a and the Sunni sources, that reveal the fact that the people referred to in this verse are Lady Fatima and the purified Imams from the Household of the Prophet Muhammad, and that the love of Ahl al-Bayt is a religious duty upon all Muslims.

## *Introduction*

Replete with lofty ideological, ethical, and legal guidelines, the Holy Qur'an serves as a constitutional framework for all Muslims. In addition to guiding His creatures directly through the verses of the

Qur'an, Allah has also directed them to His chosen servants and guides on the earth.

Another fact agreed upon by all Muslims is that the Holy Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, never asked for any compensation in return for the hardships and difficulties he experienced during his Prophetic mission. Yet, in verse 42:23, the Prophet is being instructed by Allah to inform the Muslims that he does not want any reward from them except that they should have love for his nearest kin.

Does this verse contradict the other verses in the Qur'an? What is the principal message intended to be conveyed by this verse? These and other similar questions shall be discussed in this paper.

### ***The Verse of Love***

*Say, 'I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for [my] relatives.'* (42:23)

### ***The occasion of revelation of the Verse of Love***

With regards to the occasion of revelation of this particular verse, a number of views have been expressed by the Shi'a and Sunni commentators of the Qur'an. However, it is crystal clear that a thorough consideration of the cases of revelation plays a decisive role in the correct understanding of a verse and in the identification of its application.

Many commentators have reported from Ibn 'Abbas on the authority of Sa'id bin Jubayr that after the migration of the Prophet to Medina and the establishment of the Islamic society, the Ansar came to see the Prophet and held talks with him concerning the administration of the newly founded Islamic state. The Ansar proposed that in case of any kind of financial need in administering the Islamic government or

running the affairs of the Islamic community, they would be more than willing to put all that they have at the disposal of the Prophet.

It was exactly at this particular moment that the Angel of Revelation, Gabriel, descended upon the Prophet revealing the following verse, “*Say, ‘I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for [my] relatives.’*” (42:23) The Prophet communicated the verse to the Muslims and thereafter said, “Today onwards you should have love for my family.”

The Ansar left the presence of the Prophet while submitting to this order of Allah and His Messenger. However, a group of hypocrites accused the Prophet, saying that this verse was not a divine revelation; rather, it was a fabrication by the Prophet with the aim of subjugating the Muslims to the rule of his family after him. Consequently, the following verse was revealed, “*Do they say, ‘He has fabricated a lie against Allah’? If so, should Allah wish He would set a seal on your heart, and Allah will efface the falsehood and confirm the truth with His words; indeed He knows well what is in the breasts.’*” (42:24)

The Holy Prophet immediately sent for them and recited this verse to them. The Ansar were disappointed with what happened and broke into tears. Thereafter, this verse was revealed: “*It is He who accepts the repentance of His servants, and excuses their misdeeds and knows what you do.*” (42:25) Again, the Prophet sent for them and gave them the glad tidings that Allah accepts the repentance of those who repent and answers their supplication.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Explanation of key words***

The key words crucial to the meaning of the Verse of Love are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup>Tabarsi, Fa’Al bin Hasan, *Majma’ al-Bayan*, vol. 9, p. 29.

## 1. Love (*mawaddah*)

Lexically the word '*mawaddah*' derives from the root verb *wadda* meaning 'to love something'.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the above meaning, Raghīb al-Isfahani also considers *wadda* to mean 'to wish'. He maintains that *wadda* is used for both meanings and, in fact, the act of 'wishing for something' involves love and liking for that thing.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Relatives (*qurba*)

Lexically, *qurba* is an infinitive verbal noun (*masdar*) which derives from *qurb* meaning 'nearness'. According to some lexicographers, *qurb* is the opposite of *bu'd*, or 'farness'. *Qurb al-shay'* means 'proximity to something', and *al-qarabah* or *al-qurba* means 'closeness to someone through blood relationship'.<sup>4</sup>

Acknowledging the meaning of the above derivatives of the word *qurb*, Raghīb al-Isfahani insists that the word is applicable to closeness in place, time, lineage, position as well as spiritual proximity.

### ***The application of 'al-qurba'***

The most important question regarding the Verse of *Mawaddah* concerns identification of *al-qurba*. The answer to this question has been the major point of difference of opinion between the Shi'a and Sunni *mufasssirun* of the Holy Qur'an. Based on numerous proofs, the Shi'ah believe that the individuals referred to by the word *al-qurba* are the members of the Household of the Prophet, the Ahl al-Bayt, the most

<sup>2</sup> Farahidi, Khalil, *Al-'Ayn*, under the entry *wadda*; Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, under the entry *wadda* and Turayhi, *Majma' al-Bahrayn*, under the entry *wadda*.

<sup>3</sup> Raghīb al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, translation by Dr. Khosrawi, under the root verb *wadda*.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, under the entry *qaruba*.

distinct of them being ‘Ali, Fatima, Hasan, Husayn and the rest of the nine Divinely guided leaders from the progeny of Husayn.<sup>5</sup>

On the contrary, Sunni commentators present numerous interpretations that contradict the Shi‘a view, as will be mentioned shortly in our discussion.

In his book *Nahj al-Haqq*, ‘Allamah al-Hilli ranks the verse of *mawaddah* as the fourth verse from the Qur’an which establishes the divine authority (*imamate*) of Imam ‘Ali bin Abi Talib. Expounding on this verse, he relates a report from Ibn ‘Abbas who said, “When the verse of *mawwadah* was revealed, the Prophet was asked, ‘Who are these people whose love has become incumbent upon us?’ He replied, ‘Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn.’” Thereafter, ‘Allamah al-Hilli states that the obligation to love someone necessitates the obligation of obeying him.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Shi‘a narrations on the Verse of Mawaddah***

Shi‘a scholars have cited numerous traditions from both Shi‘a and Sunni sources that attest that the Verse of *Mawaddah* was revealed in relation to the Ahl al-Bayt.<sup>7</sup> Based on the Shi‘a sources, these traditions can be classified into three categories:

#### ***1. Ahl al-Bayt as the Instance of the Verse of Mawaddah***

Imam al-Sajjad was once asked about the Verse of *Mawaddah* to which he replied, “It refers to our proximity – the Ahl al-Bayt - to the Prophet.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See: Shaykh Tusi, Muhammad bin Hasan, *Al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur’an*, vol. 9, p. 158; and Tabarsi, Fazl bin Hasan, *Majma‘ al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur’an*, vol. 9, p. 48.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Allamah Hilli, Hasan bin Yusuf, *Nahj al-Haqq wa Kashf al-Sidq*, p. 175.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Allamah Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihar al-Anwar*. An approximate of 32 narrations have been mentioned.

<sup>8</sup> *Furat al-Kufi*, Abu al-Qasim Furat bin Ibrahim, p. 392.

## 2. *The People of the Cloak as the case of application of the Verse of Mawaddah*

Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq says in this regard, “This verse was revealed concerning us the Ahl al-Bayt – the People of the Cloak.”<sup>9</sup>

## 3. *The 12 Imams as the Case of Application of the Verse of Mawaddah*

In other narrations, all the twelve Imams from the Ahl al-Bayt have been considered as the case of application of this verse as it has appeared in a tradition from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir.<sup>10</sup>

It is noteworthy that the above narrations are compatible with each other and do not contradict one another. The first category of narrations generally identifies the Ahl al-Bayt as those referred to by the word *al-qurba*. The second and the third categories specify, in particular, the twelve holy Imams together with Lady Fatima as the individuals meant by the holy verse.

### *Sunni narrations on the Verse of Mawaddah*

Numerous narrations have been recorded in the Sunni works of *tafsir* and *hadith* concerning the verse, as well as the individuals intended by the word *al-qurba*, such that thorough attention to them would clarify any doubt regarding the meaning of the verse.

In his annotations on the book *Ihqaq al-Haqq*, the late Ayatullah Mar‘ashi Najafi names forty-six renowned Sunni scholars who have reported in their works the narrations concerning the verse through different chains of narration.

<sup>9</sup> Hakim al-Haskani, ‘Abdullah bin Ahmad, *Shawahid al-Tanzil*, vol. 2, p. 213.

<sup>10</sup> Abu Ja‘far Muhammad al-Baqir is reported to have said regarding the verse ‘Say, I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for [my] relatives’: “They are the [twelve] Imams.” Al-Kulayni, Muhammad bin Ya‘qub, *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 413.



In his book *Shawahid al-Tanzil*, the well-known Sunni scholar Abu al-Qasim Hakim al-Hasakani records 22 traditions regarding the verse, most of which identify the Ahl al-Bayt as the case of application of this verse, and in some of them ‘Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn have particularly been regarded as the instances (*masadiq*) of the verse.<sup>11</sup>

Hereunder, we shall cite a number of narrations from the Shi‘a and Sunni sources which clearly indicate that the people referred to by the word *al-qurba* are the Ahl al-Bayt:

1. Ahmad ibn Hanbal reports from Ibn ‘Abbas through an uninterrupted chain of narration: “When the verse ‘*Say, I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for [my] relatives*’ was revealed, the companions of the Prophet asked, ‘O the Messenger of Allah! Who are your relatives whose love has become incumbent upon us?’ He answered, ‘Ali, Fatima, and their two sons.’ He repeated this three times.”<sup>12</sup>

It is evident from this narration that the fact that *al-qurba* refers to the relatives of the Holy Prophet was known to all Muslims during that time or, at least to some of them, and as a result, their query was regarding the identification of these individuals.

Furthermore, given that the Prophet identified only four individuals from his relatives as those intended by the verse implies that, beside these four individuals, none of his other family members during his time are included in the verse; for in other than this case the Prophet would have certainly mentioned them.

2. Expounding on the verse, Jalal al-Din Suyuti in his famous work *Al-Durr al-Manthur* reports from Ibn ‘Abbas that the Prophet said

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<sup>11</sup> Hakim al-Hasakani, ‘Abdullah bin Ahmad, *Shawahid al-Tanzil*, vol. 2, pp. 189-196.

<sup>12</sup> Qurtubi, Muhammad bin Ahmad Ansari, *Ihqaq al-Haqq*, vol. 3, p. 2.

regarding this verse, “You should observe my right in relation to my household and have love for them because of me.”<sup>13</sup>

3. In his commentary of the Qur’an, Ibn Jarir al-Tabari reports from Sa‘id bin Jubayr, and based on another chain of narration from ‘Umar bin Shu‘ayb, that the people meant in this verse are the relatives of the Prophet.<sup>14</sup>

4. Hakim al-Hasakani, the famous Sunni scholar of *tafsir* and *hadith*, narrates in his book *Shawahid al-Tanzil* from Abu Amamah al-Bahili that, “The Prophet of Allah said, ‘The Almighty Allah created the prophets from different trees, but he created me and ‘Ali from one tree. I am the root of that tree while ‘Ali is the branch of it; Fatima is the source of growth of that tree whereas Hasan and Husayn are its fruit and our followers (*shi‘ah*) are its leaves. If a person were to worship Allah between the [hills of] Safa and Marwa for a thousand years, and thereafter for a thousand years, and again for a thousand years after that ... but does not have our love [in his heart], Allah shall put him into the Fire on his face.’ Thereafter, the Prophet recited this verse: “*Say, I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for [my] relatives.*”<sup>15</sup>

### ***The purport of the Verse of Mawaddah***

After elucidating the key words in the verse and identifying the individuals referred to by it, we shall now discuss the purport and meaning of the verse.

Despite the fact that we made use of the Sunni narrations for the identification of the individuals intended by the verse, the Sunni interpretation of the verse still differs from that of the Shi‘a.

<sup>13</sup> Suyuti, Jalal al-Din, *Al-Durr al-Manthur fi Tafsir al-Ma‘thur*, vol. 6, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Tabari, Muhammad bin Jarir, *Jami‘ al-Bayan ‘an Ta‘wil al-Qur’an*, vol. 25, pp. 16-17.

<sup>15</sup> Hakim al-Hasakani, *Shawahid al-Tanzil*, vol. 2, p. 203.

We shall first discuss the Sunni point of view on the verse and thereafter we will present the correct interpretation of it.

### ***1. The Sunni point of view***

Regarding the verse, at least two views can be traced among the Sunni commentators:

***The first view:*** The Messenger of Allah had blood relations with the Quraysh as he was also related to a number of other tribes through marriage. He had womb relation with the tribe of Bani al-Najjar in Madina and was also related to the tribe of Banu Sa'd through his foster mother.

Thus, the meaning of the verse is this: 'If you are not ready to recognise my right of prophethood, then at least observe my right of kinship to you and do not hurt me due to my family relationship with different tribes.'

A close look at this view shows that such a meaning does not go along with the context of the verse; for the reward is asked of those who have already acknowledged his apostleship, and in that case there is no room for such an interpretation. If they have already been respecting him as the Messenger of Allah, then there was no need for them to hold him in esteem due to his kinship to them, since the respect that stems from accepting that his apostleship is superior to all other forms of respect.

As a matter of fact, this interpretation needs to be considered as a serious mistake committed by some commentators of the Qur'an, since it completely alters the meaning of the verse.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Makarim Shirazi, Nasir, *Tafsir i Namunah*, vol. 20, p. 408.

**The second view:** According to this view, the reward for conveying the divine message is to have love for all those things which lead one to divine proximity. In other words, the meaning of the verse is: ‘You should show your love to me by performing good deeds so that you may attain closeness to Allah.’<sup>17</sup>

This exposition also does not seem to be compatible with the apparent meaning of the verse; for in this case the verse would mean: ‘That what is required of you is to have love for the obedience of Allah’, whereas, in reality, it should say ‘What is required of you is the obedience of Allah’, and not the love of His obedience.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. *The Shi‘a point of view*

A close look at the verse clearly shows that Allah has specified love for the nearest kin as the reward of the apostleship of the Prophet Muhammad. Thorough consideration of the context of the verse and the narrations in this regard also lead us to the fact that love for the relatives of the Holy Prophet is a religious obligation on every Muslim, as it is evident from a narration of Imam Muhammad Baqir in which he says about the verse, “Love for the members of the household of the Prophet (*Ahl al-Bayt*) is indeed a divine obligation on the people in honour of Muhammad.”<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, still a closer scrutiny of the verse reveals the fact that the love for the *Ahl al-Bayt* is a means that leads one to the acknowledgement of the divine leadership of the infallible Imams from the progeny of the Prophet as well as a backing for the accomplishment of the Prophetic mission.

The following explanation would help clarify the above conclusion:

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<sup>17</sup> Sullami, Muhammad bin Husayn, *Haqa’iq al-Tafsir*, vol. 1, p. 53.

<sup>18</sup> Makarim Shirazi, Nasir, *Tafsir-i Namunah*, vol. 20, p. 407.

<sup>19</sup> Barqi, Ahmad bin Muhammad Khalid, *Al-Mahasin*, vol. 1, p. 144.

A number of prophets have been quoted in the Qur'an as saying, "I do not ask you any reward for it; my reward lies only with the Lord of all the worlds."<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, the Qur'an quotes different assertions from the Prophet of Islam on the issue of asking for reward. It says on one occasion, "Say, 'Whatever reward I may have asked you is for your own good. My [true] reward lies only with Allah, and He is witness to all things.'<sup>21</sup>

In another verse, the Prophet is quoted to have said, "Say, 'I do not ask you any reward for it, except that anyone who wishes should take the way to his Lord.'<sup>22</sup>

Yet at another place it says, "Say, 'I do not ask you any reward for it, and I am no impostor.'<sup>23</sup>

If the above three verses are considered against the verse, then the following conclusion is derived: First, Prophet declines any kind of compensation; second he wants the reward only from a person who wishes to take the way to his Lord; third, he asserts that whatever reward he has asked of us is for our own benefit. And in the Verse of *Mawaddah*, the Prophet proclaims love for his relatives as the reward for his Prophetic mission.

In other words, the message of the Prophet to all Muslims is that he has asked them a reward whose benefit does not return to him; rather, it is entirely for their own good. It is something that would pave for them the way to Allah (swt). And it is obvious that the continuance of the path to reach Allah (swt) would only be conceivable if the torch lit by the Holy Prophet continues to burn after him under the custodian of his

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<sup>20</sup> Qur'an, Shu'ara (26):109, 127, 145, 164 and 180.

<sup>21</sup> Qur'an, Saba' (34):47.

<sup>22</sup> Qur'an, Furqan (25):57.

<sup>23</sup> Qur'an, Sad (38):86.

infallible successors and the divinely guided leaders who have all been from his holy progeny. This reality perfectly justifies this Prophetic instruction to have love and affection for his relatives.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Response to some doubts***

It has been established up until here that according to the verse, the love for the Household of the Prophet - who are none but the infallible Imams from his progeny - is a religious obligation upon all Muslims. Below are some responses to doubts have been raised concerning the verse.

#### ***Doubt 1: The revelation of the Verse of Mawaddah in Mecca***

Some Sunni commentators of the Qur'an reject the idea that the verse was revealed regarding the Ahl al-Bayt based on the argument that the Chapter *Consultation (Surat al-Shura)* was revealed in Mecca. They argue that this chapter was revealed during the Meccan period of the Prophetic mission wherein the marriage between 'Ali and Fatima had not yet taken place and, therefore, Hasan and Husayn were not yet born. As a result, this verse could not have revealed in relation to these four individuals.<sup>25</sup>

***Response:*** Many commentators of the Qur'an have affirmed that although *Surat al-Shura* was revealed in Mecca, the verse and the three verses after it were revealed in Medina.<sup>26</sup> They have, moreover, reported from Ibn 'Abbas and Qutadah who said, "This is a Meccan *surah* except for the four verses which were revealed in Medina, the

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<sup>24</sup> Makarim Shirazi, Nasir, *Tafsir i Namunah*, vol. 20, pp. 409-410.

<sup>25</sup> Àbidi, Khuda Husayn, *Tafsir i Tatbiqi i Àyah i Mawaddat*, p. 167.

<sup>26</sup> See: Zamakhshari, Mahmud, *Al-Kashshaf*, v.4, p.208; Qurtubi, Muhammad bin Ahmad, *Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an*, vol. 16, p. 1; Maraghi, Ahmad bin Mustafa, *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, vol. 25, p. 13 and Makarim Shirazi, Nasir, *Tafsir i Namunah*, vol. 20, pp. 423-424.

first one being “*Say, I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for [my] relatives ...*”<sup>27</sup>

***Doubt 2: Asking for reward controverts the norm of the Prophets***

Asking for compensation by the Prophet stands in sharp contrast with the practice of the past prophets like Nuh, Hud, and Salih who openly declared, “*I do not ask you any reward for it; my reward lies only with the Lord of all the worlds.*”<sup>28</sup>

Now, since our Prophet is the best among all the prophets, it befits him more not to ask for any reward.

***Response:*** No prophet asked for any reward in return for his prophetic mission. The Prophet himself declined financial offer a couple of times from the infidels of Mecca during the early stages of his Prophetic mission as he also refused a similar offer from the Ansar after his migration to Medina.

It therefore becomes clear that the nature of the reward that the Prophet asked from the people was different to the one turned down by all the prophets in history, including our Holy Prophet Muhammad. The reward rejected by all prophets was the material and worldly form of reward, whereas the reward asked by our Prophet was spiritual in nature and for the good of the people themselves as indicated by the Qur’an, “*Say, ‘Whatever reward I may have asked you is for your own good....*” (34:47)

***Doubt 3: Asking for reward gives rise to accusations against the Prophet***

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<sup>27</sup> Maybudi, Ahmad, *Kashf al-Asrar*, vol. 9, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Qur’an, Shu’ara (26):109.

Asking for reward from the people makes the Prophet subject to accusations, as asking for reward in return for fulfilling a duty is not acceptable from an ordinary person, let alone the Prophet of Islam.

**Response:** Firstly, had the reward been a material and financial one which is normally given to somebody in return for accomplishing a task, then such an accusation could have been in place. However, the reward mentioned in the verse in return for the Prophetic mission eventually culminates in directing the people towards the Ahlul Bayt in matters related to religion and guidance, and in this case, the good of it does *in no way* return to the Prophet or the Ahlul Bayt, rather it is in the interest of the people themselves.

Based on the above explanation the Prophet would, therefore, be free from such accusations.

Furthermore, the addressees of the Verse of *Mawaddah* are believers who supposedly believe in the infallibility of the Prophet; thus, such accusations from them would be out of the question.

Secondly, if we assume that the Prophet could be subjected to such an accusation on the issue of asking for reward, how would we respond then in the case of such other Islamic tenets as *khums*, *anfal*, and the necessity of obedience to the Prophet which are - either completely or partially - specific to the Prophet himself?

Moreover, what other justification could be found for those narrations, from both Shi'a and Sunni sources, which apply the verse to the Ahlul Bayt?<sup>29</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The following points are concluded from the above discussion:

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<sup>29</sup> Tabataba'i, Muhammad Husayn, *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, vol. 18, pp. 67-68.



1. The Verse of *Mawaddah* is among the contentious verses of the Qur'an between the Shi'a and Sunni exegetes (*mufasssirun*).
2. According to this verse, the Prophet decreed love for his relatives as the reward for his apostleship.
3. According to numerous Shi'a and Sunni narrations, the individuals referred to by this verse are the twelve Shi'a Imams.
4. The Prophet did not ask for any reward for himself. Such a reward was in the interest of the people themselves; due to the affinity of the love of Ahlul Bayt, the Muslims would become acquainted with the genuine teachings of Islam and attain spiritual perfection.

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# FATIMA ZAHRA IN THE WORDS OF THE INFALLIBLES

ZAHRA IKHWAN SARRAF<sup>1</sup> AND SAYYID MURTADA  
HUSSAYNI SHAH TURAB<sup>2</sup>  
TRANSLATED BY ASMA SULTAN

**ABSTRACT:** Muslims have always had high regard for Lady Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, the wife of Imam Ali, the mother of all the Imams, and the most exemplary woman in Islam. Despite many efforts made to introduce this unique woman to the people of the world, more work is to be done. This article introduces some of the facets of her status and personality by relying on the words of the Prophet, the Imams, and Lady Fatima herself. Some of her merits include her being a leader of all women who was infallible, an angel in the form of a human, and an intercessor on the Day of Judgment. She was privileged with having spoken to the angels and her pleasure and displeasure was God's pleasure and displeasure. Moreover, heaven is given as a reward to those who send their peace on her.

## *Introduction*

Understanding the personality of Fatima al-Zahra is a source of better understanding the teachings of Islam and the events before and after the demise of the Prophet, and benefiting from this great role model. In this regard, many Islamic writers and thinkers recount various aspects of Lady Fatima's personality. In doing so, they refer to the words of the

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<sup>2</sup> Post-graduate student of Islamic History

Ahlul Bayt who knew her better than anyone else. The narrations used in this article are those accepted by both Shi'a and Sunni scholars.

### ***1) Fatima al-Zahra in the words of Prophet Muhammad***

Certainly no one knows Lady Fatima better than her father, Prophet Muhammad.

#### *1.1 Fatima the leader of the Muslim women*

The Prophet of Islam - the leader of the Islamic Nation (*Ummah*) - when describing Fatima al-Zahra says, "Fatima is the leader of the women of this nation."<sup>3</sup>

With these words, the Prophet is introducing Fatima as the best, most perfect, most exemplary Muslim woman.

#### *1.2 Fatima - the perfect human being*

The Prophet said, "Many men have reached perfection, but from among all women only four women have [reached perfection]; no other woman apart from these four will reach this status. Those four women are: Asiya<sup>4</sup>, Maryam<sup>5</sup>, Khadijah<sup>6</sup> and Fatima."<sup>7 8</sup>

In other words, the Prophet presents these four women as the best and highest moral and practical examples for women in all ages - from the past until the future - whom all women should follow.

#### *1.3 Fatima – an angel in the form of a human*

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<sup>3</sup> Husayni Firoozabadi, 1393 (A.H.), vol. 3, p. 137.

<sup>4</sup> The daughter of Muzahim and wife of the Pharoah

<sup>5</sup> The daughter of Imran

<sup>6</sup> The daughter of Khuwaylid

<sup>7</sup> The daughter of Muhammad

<sup>8</sup> Tha'labi, 1422 (A.H.), vol. 9, p. 353.

The Prophet, who knows the realities of this world and the next better than anyone else, while addressing Asma bint ‘Umayy, said, “Asma! Surely Fatima is an angel who has been created in the mould of a human being.”<sup>9</sup>

In another place he said, “My daughter Fatima is an angel in the face of human beings.”<sup>10</sup>

This expression of the Prophet is one of the best expressions present about the personality of Lady Fatima. It reveals her infallibility and purity from sins and impurities since an angel is the manifestation of beauty, pleasantness, tenderness, and purity. From another angle, she is the symbol of infallibility and virtue because of her heavenly existence.

#### *1.4 Fatima – fragranced with the scent of Heaven*

The Seal of the Prophets repeatedly mentioned, “Whenever I would yearn for Heaven, I would breathe in the scent of Fatima.<sup>11</sup> And whenever he desired the fragrance of Heaven, he would kiss Fatima.”<sup>12</sup>

#### *1.5 Fatima is the height of goodness and virtue*

The Prophet used to praise the personality of Lady Fatima by saying, “If goodness and virtue was in the form of a person, surely that person would be Fatima; in fact, Fatima would be better than that person, for definitely my daughter Fatima is the best of creation in terms of descent, honour, and nobility.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibne Magazili, 1424 (A.H.), p. 296, hadith no. 416 / Tabari, 1413 (A.H.), p. 148.

<sup>10</sup> Qandoozi, 1418 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 218/ Ibne Hakim Shami, 1420 (A.H.), p. 456/ Amini Najafi, 1416 (A.H.), p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> Tabari, 1413 (A.H.), p. 148.

<sup>12</sup> Amini Najafi, 1416 (A.H.), vol. 3, p. 33.

<sup>13</sup> Ibne Ahmad Makki, 1418 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 100, hadith no. 24/ Juwaini Khurasani, 1400 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 68.

These words of the prophet show the boundless perfection of Lady Fatima.

### *1.6 Fatima – the bright star of guidance*

The Prophet once said to his companions, “Look for the sun; when the sun is hidden in the night, look for the moon. When the moon is hidden, search for Venus, the evening star; and when that, too, is hidden, look for the two bright stars in the Ursa Minor.”<sup>14</sup>

“His companions asked him, ‘O Prophet of God. Who is the sun?’ He replied, ‘I am the sun.’ They asked, ‘Who is the moon?’ He replied, ‘Ali.’ The companions asked, ‘Who is Venus?’ The Prophet replied, ‘Fatima.’ They asked, ‘Who are the two stars of the Ursa Minor?’ He answered, ‘Hasan and Husayn.’”<sup>15</sup>

With this, the Prophet clearly showed the path of guidance to the Islamic Ummah. He compared himself as being the bright sun of guidance, Ali as the glowing moon that a person must turn to and benefit from its light when the sun is hidden, and compared Lady Zahra and the Hassanain to the bright stars of guidance towards God.

### *1.7 Fatima – A part of the Prophet*

A great number of narrations with similar content have been narrated from the Prophet where he says, “Fatima is a part of me; whoever hurts her has hurt me, and whoever pleases her has pleased me.”<sup>16</sup>

These narrations show the extent of the emotional connection between the Prophet and Fatima al-Zahra. They also portray Fatima’s absolute

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<sup>14</sup> A constellation in the northern sky, also known as the Little Bear

<sup>15</sup> Juwaini Khurasani, 1400 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 17, hadith no. 361/ Haksani, 1393 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 59, hadith no. 91.

<sup>16</sup> Muslim Ibne al Hajjaj Qushayri, 1419 (A.H.), p. 993, hadith no. 2449/ Bukhari, 1423 (A.H.), p. 684, hadith no. 3767/ Tirmidhi, 1421 (A.H.), p. 1006, hadith no. 3876/ Suyuti, 1408 (A.H.), p. 45/ Ibne Hajar Asqalani, 1415 (A.H.), vol. 8, p. 265.



obedience to divine commands, and sincerity and steadfastness in servitude to God and His Prophet, that she took no steps outside the line of truth, such that her happiness and pleasure was the happiness and pleasure of the Prophet and her pain was the pain of the Prophet. It is for this reason that the Prophet addressed her as "a part of me" and announced her pain to be his and her pleasure to be his.

### *1.8 Fatima – A reason for the Prophet’s happiness*

The Prophet has said, “Fatima is the joy and happiness of my heart. Her sons are the fruit of my heart, her husband is the light of my eyes, and the Imams from the progeny of her son are the trustees of my God and the rope that connects God and His creatures. Whoever holds on to them will be saved and whoever goes against them has gone astray.”<sup>17</sup>

The words of the Prophet indicate that looking at Fatima, sitting with her and her very existence are a source of happiness and joy for the Prophet. This hadith is also used as a commentary to the Hadith of Thaqaalayn.<sup>18</sup>

### *1.9 Friendship and enmity with Fatima is friendship and enmity with the Prophet*

In numerous places the Prophet has pointed to the true status of Lady Fatima and, addressing Fatima, her husband Ali and their sons Hasan and Husayn as said, “I am the enemy of anyone who is your enemy and the friend anyone who is your friend with.”<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, friendship with Fatima, her husband, and children means friendship with the Prophet, and enmity with them is enmity with him.

<sup>17</sup> Ibne Ahmad Makki, 1418 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 99, hadith no. 21.

<sup>18</sup> Hadith of “the two weighty things” that is, the Qur’an and the Ahlul Bayt.

<sup>19</sup> Tirmzi, 1421 (A.H.), page 1007, hadith no. 3879/ Ibne Ahmad Makki, 1418 (A.H.) vol. 1, p. 101, hadith no. 26/ Ibne Haja Asqalani, 1415 (A.H.), vol. 8, p. 266/ Ibne Athir Juzri, 1419 (A.H.), vol. 6, p. 228.

### *1.10 Fatima – A unique existence*

Fatima has such a high status that she is unparalleled in this world, as the Prophet has mentioned, “If it wasn’t for Ali there would be no [compatible] partner for Fatima.”<sup>20</sup>

### *1.11 Fatima's pleasure and displeasure is God's pleasure and displeasure*

The Prophet repeatedly said, “Surely God is angered whenever Fatima is angry, and is pleased when Fatima is pleased.”<sup>21</sup>

Imam Ali has narrated another narration that the Prophet - addressing Fatima - said: “Surely God is angered when you are angry and is pleased when you are pleased.”<sup>22</sup>

Lady Fatima has reached such a status of servitude and obedience in that she is angered and pleased only for God’s sake, and not as a result of personal desires.

## **2) *Fatima Zahra in the words of the Imams***

From among the writers and speakers who have described her, the Imams have a prominent and greater role in our recognition of her qualities because they are her progeny and can introduce her better than anyone. In truth, if they and their eloquent words in describing her personality and status were not present, our information and recognition today regarding the Lady would be very limited.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibne Ahmad Makki, 1418 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 107, hadith no. 38/ Juwayni Khurasani, 1400 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 68.

<sup>21</sup> Juwayni, 1400 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 46, hadith no. 378/ Haakim Neyshapoori, 1406 (A.H.), vol. 3, page 153/ Arbali, 1401 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 93.

<sup>22</sup> Ibne Magazeli, 1424 (A.H.), p. 285, hadith no. 401, Haakim Neyshapoori, 1406 (A.H.), vol. 10, p. 116/ Qandoozi 1418 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 204/ Tabari, 1413 (A.H.), p. 146/ Ibne Hajar Asqalani, 1415 (A.H.), vol. 8, p. 266/ Ibne Athir Juzri, 1419 (A.H.), vol. 6, p. 227/ Ibne Jozi, 1401 (A.H.), p. 279.

Below are some sayings of the Imams in this regard:

### *2.1 Fatima's understanding and knowledge of the Prophet*

Imam Baqir has narrated, "Some war booty had reached Imam Ali and he gifted it to Fatima. She went to the bazaar and bought two silver bracelets and a curtain. When she returned home, she put on the bracelets and hung the curtains.

The Prophet was travelling at this time, and when he returned he went to the mosque, since it was his usual habit when he returned from a trip to go to Imam Ali's house from the mosque to visit Fatima. Fatima, who had heard that her father had returned, hurried enthusiastically and happily to welcome her father; but as soon as the Prophet saw the silver bracelets on her hand and the curtains at the door, he returned.

Fatima's eyes filled with tears; she said, "My father has never reacted in this way with me." She removed the curtain from the entrance, took off the bracelets, and called Hasan and Husayn. She then sent bracelets and the curtain with them and said, "Go to my father and give him my salaam."

The young Hasan and Husayn went to the Prophet and gave their mother's greetings, including the parcel she had given them. The Prophet hugged and kissed both of them and sat them on his knee. After that, he asked that the bracelets be broken and have the pieces distributed among the shelterless and poor Muhajirs (the companions of Saffah). He also gave the curtains to those who had no clothes. He then said, "May God have mercy on Fatima and clothe her with Heavenly clothes in return for this curtain and reward her with Heavenly ornaments in reward for these two bracelets."<sup>23</sup>

### *2.2 Fatima's knowledge*

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<sup>23</sup> Majlisi, 1421 (A.H.), vol. 18, pp. 64-65.

Imam Baqir once narrated that Imam Ali came to Fatima while being upset. When Fatima asked why, he replied:

The Prophet of God asked us a question we couldn't answer. The question was "What is a woman?" We replied, "Something private that has been clothed." He then asked, "When is a woman closest to her Lord?" And then we had no answer. Fatima replied, "Go back to the Prophet and tell him that a woman is closest to her Lord when she remains at home." Imam Ali returned to the Prophet and related the answer to him. The Prophet asked, "O Ali! Who told you this answer?" Imam Ali explained all that had passed between him and Fatima. After hearing the words of Ali, the Prophet said, "What she said is true; surely Fatima is a part of me."<sup>24</sup>

Considering the social conditions of early Islam and the related verses, we can conclude from Lady Fatima's saying - that a woman staying in her house is closest to her Lord - refers to staying away from revealing herself to, and unnecessarily interacting with, non-mahrams. This means that she is to refrain from a) leaving the house without reason, b) revealing the parts of her body that must be covered (or beautifying herself), and c) engaging in unnecessary and immoral conversations with non-mahrams.

### *2.3 Lady Fatima implements the best of hijab*

Imam Sajjad narrates, "Once a blind man sought permission from Fatima to enter her house, and when he entered, Fatima hid herself from his sight. The Prophet, who was present and a witness to this scene, said: 'Fatima, why did you hide yourself from him when he can't see you?' She replied, 'O Prophet of God, although he cannot see me, I can see him and my scent will reach him.' The Prophet praised her and said, 'I bear witness that you are a part of me.'<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibne Magazeli, 1424 (A.H.), p. 304, hadith no. 430.

<sup>25</sup> Ibne Hakim Shami, 1420 (A.H.), p. 457.

A similar incident has also been narrated from Imam Ali.<sup>26</sup> In another hadith, Imam Ali asked Fatima, “Who are the best of women?” The noble and pious Lady replied, “When she does not see (non-mahram) men and (non-mahram) men do not see her.”<sup>27</sup>

In the incident with the blind man, Lady Fatima indicates two things: 1) Hijab, chastity, and piety is not limited to keeping oneself away from the sight of non-mahrams, but also not looking at non-mahrams - or controlling our sight from looking at them - is considered a prerequisite to hijab, and 2) smelling the scent and perfume of a person by a non-mahram can also excite the emotions and desires and can cause one to fall into sin.

#### *2.4 The Prophet's love for Fatima*

The Prophet’s high regard for Lady Fatima as that of a woman who was held with high esteem is seen in Imam Baqir’s narration: “Whenever the Prophet decided to travel, he would bid farewell to his family members first; in the end, he would say goodbye to Fatima. The last person he would meet before travelling was Fatima and the first person whose house he would visit upon his return was Fatima.”<sup>28</sup>

#### *2.5 Lady Fatima – one of those who cried the most*

Imam Sadiq said, “There are five people who are *"bakkā'ūn"* (those who cried a lot): Adam, Ya‘qub, Yusuf, Fatima, and Ali, son of Husayn.”<sup>29</sup>

Imam al-Sadiq said that Fatima cried so much after the death of the Prophet that some of the people of Medina were bothered by the sound of her wailing. They would say to her, “You have vexed us by your

<sup>26</sup> Ibne Magazeli, 1424 (A.H.), pp. 303-304, hadith no. 429.

<sup>27</sup> Ibne Ahmad Makki, 1418 (a.h.), vol. 1, p. 103, hadith 29.

<sup>28</sup> Majlisi, 1421 (A.H.), vol. 18, p. 64.

<sup>29</sup> Ayyashi, 1421 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 358, no. 2133/61.

constant tears.” After that, Fatima would go and cry for long periods besides the grave of the martyrs until she would calm down and eventually return home.<sup>30</sup>

This constant crying of Fatima in the few months after the death of the Prophet, apart from the political messages it portrayed, exposed her great love for the Prophet.

### *2.6 Lady Fatima is pure of all evil*

It has been narrated by Imam Sadiq, “Fatima has nine heavenly names: *Fatima, Siddiqah, Mubarakah, Taherah, Zakiyyah, Raaziyah, Marziyyah, Muhaddathah, and Zahra*. He then asked, “Do you know what the name ‘Fatima’ means? It means, ‘She is separated from all evil.’”<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, Fatima was given this name because she is pure of all things evil and indecent and is the epitome of all things good and beautiful.

### *2.7 Lady Fatima is a star for the inhabitants of the skies*

Imam Sadiq was asked, “Why was Fatima given the name ‘Zahra’? He replied, “Because when she would stand in the place of prayer (*mihrah*), her light would shine upon the inhabitants of the skies just as the stars shine upon the inhabitants of the Earth.”<sup>32</sup>

### *2.8 Lady Fatima is the leader of the women of the world*

Mufaddal ibn ‘Umar says, “I asked Imam Sadiq to explain these words of the Prophet where he says, ‘Fatima is the leader of the women of the

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<sup>30</sup> Arbali, 1401 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 498.

<sup>31</sup> Shaykh Saduq, 1408 (A.H.), p. 212, section 142, hadith no. 3/ Shaykh Saduq 1410 (A.H.), p. 474/ Majlisi, 1421 (A.H.), vol. 18, p. 13/ Arbali, 1401 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 89/ Tabari, 1413 (A.H.), pp. 79-80, Ibne Hakim Shami, 1420 (A.H.), p. 445.

<sup>32</sup> Shaykh Saduq, 1361 (A.H.), p. 64, section 28, hadith no. 15/ Same, 1408 (A.H.), vol. 1, pp. 143 and 215, hadith no. 3/ Tabari, 1413 (A.H.), p. 149/ Majlisi, 1421 (A.H.), vol. 18, p. 15.

world.’ Is she the leader of the women of her time?” Imam Sadiq replied, “It was Maryam who was the leader of the women of her time; Fatima is the leader of *all* women, from the beginning until the end.”<sup>33</sup>

### 2.9 Lady Fatima spoke to angels

Imam Sadiq said, “Fatima was given the name ‘*Muhaddatha*’ because the angels would descend to the Earth and converse with her, just as they would converse with Lady Maryam, the daughter of Imran. They would say to her, ‘O Fatima! Surely God has chosen and purified you and favoured you over the women of the world. O Fatima! Perform *qunoot*<sup>34</sup> and prostration (*sajdah*) for your Lord and genuflect (*rukū*’) with the ones who perform genuflection.’ One night Fatima asked them, ‘Isn’t Maryam - the daughter of Imran - the one who has been favoured above the women of the world?’ They said, ‘Surely, Maryam is the leader of the women of her own time, and God Almighty has chosen you as the leader of all the women of all times.’”<sup>35</sup>

### 2.10 Lady Fatima's love for others in her prayers

Imam Hasan narrates, “I saw my mother in the prayer site (*mihrāb*) on Friday night when she continuously performed genuflection and prostration until the sun rose. I heard her praying for the believing men and women; she would mention their names and sincerely prayed for them, but asked nothing for herself. I said to her, ‘My dear mother! Why don't you pray for yourself as you pray for others? She replied, ‘My son, we must first pray for our neighbours (i.e. others) and then for ourselves.’”<sup>36</sup>

### 2.11 Lady Fatima – a person like no other

<sup>33</sup> Tabari, 1413 (A.H.), p. 149.

<sup>34</sup> Literally means "the act of standing": special supplications made in prayers while in the standing position.

<sup>35</sup> Same, p. 80/ Ibne Hakim Shami, 1420 (A.H.), p. 456.

<sup>36</sup> Shaykh Saduq, 1408 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 215, section 145, hadith no. 1/ Arbali, 1401 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 94/ Tabari, 1413 (A.H.), p. 152/ Majlisi, 1421 (A.H.), vol. 18, p. 63.

When describing his honourable mother Lady Fatima, Imam Sadiq said, “If Imam Ali had not married her, there would be no match for her on this Earth until the Day of Judgement.”<sup>37</sup>

The eighth Imam also narrates that after the wedding of Ali and Fatima, God said to his Prophet, “If I had not created Ali there would be no match for your daughter on this earth.”<sup>38</sup>

### *2.12 Lady Fatima as a wife*

Imam Baqir narrates, “Fatima made a commitment to Ali that she would perform the duties in the house, such as kneading and baking the bread, as well as sweeping the house. One day Ali asked Fatima, ‘Do you have any food in the house?’ She replied, ‘We don’t, I swear by the one who made your right great. It is three days that we do not have any food in the house from which I can give you.’ Ali said, ‘Why didn’t you let me know?’ She answered, ‘The Prophet of God forbade me to ask anything of you. The Prophet had said, ‘Do not ask anything of your cousin. If he brings something for you accept it, otherwise do not ask.’”<sup>39</sup>

From this narration we can understand a few important points about Lady Fatima as a wife:

1. Dividing the duties of the married life with her husband Ali and undertaking the duties inside their house.
2. Knowing the rights of her husband, and her own duties to him, as seen in her statement, “I swear by the one who made your right great.”

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<sup>37</sup> Shaykh Saduq, 1408 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 212, section 142, hadith no. 3 / Arbali, 1401 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 89 / Tabari 1413 (A.H.), pp. 79-80/ Ibne Hakim Shami, 1420 (A.H.), p. 445.

<sup>38</sup> Ataridi, 1413 (A.H.), vol. 1, p. 141, hadith no. 177.

<sup>39</sup> Ayyashi, 1421 (A.H.), vol. 1, pp. 303-304, hadith no. 681/42.



3. Her forbearance with her husband in the financial affairs of her home, even to the point of bearing some difficulties.

### *2.13 Lady Fatima's diligence in housework*

Imam Ali told a member of Bani Sa'd, "Should I enlighten you about myself and Fatima – the daughter of the Prophet of God, the dearest part of his family to him and my wife? She ground so much wheat with her hands that they blistered, brought so much water in the *mashk* (leather bottles used to carry water at that time) that the marks of the bottle remained on her back, worked in the house and swept the floor so much that her clothes became worn out, and lit so much fire in the furnace until she became ill."<sup>40</sup>

### *2.14 Lady Fatima – the truthful, the martyred*

Imam Kazim has said, "Surely, Fatima is *Siddiqah* (the most truthful) and *Shahidah* (the martyred).<sup>41</sup> The title *Siddiqah* is given due to honesty and truthfulness in her actions, words, and beliefs; moreover, she was in fact martyred.

## **3) *Fatima in the words of Fatima***

Though describing Lady Fatima's persona is no simple task, it is possible to deduce some aspects of her personality and merits from her own words.

### *3.1 Heaven is the reward of one who sends peace and blessings to Lady Fatima*

A narrator says, "I once visited Fatima and said 'salam' to her. She replied to it and then said, 'During his lifetime, my father said to me,

<sup>40</sup> Shaykh Saduq, 1408 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 65, section 88, hadith no. 1/ Ibne Jozi, 1401 (A.H.), p. 280/ Majlisi, 1421 (A.H.), vol. 18, p. 63.

<sup>41</sup> Majlisi, 1363 (A.H.), vol. 5, p. 315, hadith no. 2.

‘Whoever sends peace and greets us in three days, Heaven is his reward.’ The narrator asked, ‘Is this limited to the lifetime of you and Prophet or does it also apply after you and he have passed away?’ She replied, ‘It does not make a difference whether it is during our lifetime or after our death.’<sup>42</sup>

### 3.2 Lady Fatima is pleased with what pleases God

When Imam Ali came to the Prophet to ask for Fatima's hand in marriage, the Prophet consulted Fatima and said, “My daughter Fatima! Your cousin Ali has asked for your hand in marriage; what is your opinion? She replied, ‘My pleasure is in whatever God and His Prophet are pleased with.’<sup>43</sup>

### 3.3 Lady Fatima's contentment

She said to her husband Ali, “I feel ashamed to ask you for something that you cannot do.”<sup>44</sup>

### 3.4 Lady Fatima's attachments in this world

Lady Fatima has said, “I love three things in this world: To spend in the way of God, recitation of the book of God, and gazing at the face of my father, the Prophet of God.”<sup>45</sup>

### 3.5 Lady Fatima's excellence in the words of the Prophet

Lady Fatima narrates: “When the verse from the chapter *Light* (Nur 63) was revealed – ‘*Make not the calling of the messenger among you as your calling one of another*’<sup>46</sup> - I was afraid to address the Prophet of

<sup>42</sup> Ibne Magazeli, 1424 (A.H.), p. 292, hadith no. 410.

<sup>43</sup> Mar'ashi Najafi, 1417 (A.H.), vol. 23, p. 477.

<sup>44</sup> Shustari, 1391 (A.H.), vol. 10, p. 323/ Qandoozi Hanafi, 1418 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 236.

<sup>45</sup> Shaykh al Islami, 1419 (A.H.), p. 161, hadith no. 93.

<sup>46</sup> لَا تَجْعَلُوا دُعَاءَ الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَاءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا

God as "father." The Prophet turned away from me and said, 'My daughter, this verse is not for you or your family or progeny. You are from me and I am from you. This verse is for the selfish and arrogant oppressors from among the Quraysh. You address me as father, because this is more beloved to me and it pleases God.'<sup>47</sup>

### *3.6 Lady Fatima: A member of the household of the Prophet*

Fatima narrates, "One day I went to visit the Prophet of God and he spread a cloth for me to sit on. After a while Hasan came and he also had him sit on that cloth. Husayn came as well and he too sat. Then Ali joined the group. After this, the Prophet held another piece of cloth over their heads and said, 'O God! These are the members of my household and I am from them. My Lord! Be pleased with them as I am pleased with them.'<sup>48</sup>

### *3.7 Lady Fatima: An intercessor of the Day of Judgement*

Regarding her intercession, Lady Fatima says, "I will intercede for the sinners from among the ummah of my father when I am raised on the Day of Judgement."<sup>49</sup>

## ***Conclusion***

This paper offered a description of Lady Fatima by the Prophet, the Imams, and herself. The Prophet introduces Fatima as the leader of the women of the world; she is one of the few perfect women in this world, an angel in the form of a human being perfumed with the scent of Heaven. If virtue had a face it would be in the form of Fatima and indeed, even greater than that person. She is the bright star of guidance and a part of the Prophet; she is his joy, her children the apple of his

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<sup>47</sup> Ibne Magazeli, 1424 (A.H.), pp. 292-293, hadith no. 411/ Ibne Hakim Shami, 1420 (A.H.), p. 462.

<sup>48</sup> Qandoozi, 1418 (A.H.), vol. 2, p. 305.

<sup>49</sup> Shustari, 1391 (A.H.), vol. 10, page 367.

heart, and her husband - Ali - the light of his eyes. Friendship and enmity with Fatima is friendship and enmity with the God and the Prophet and her pleasure and displeasure is God and the Prophet's pleasure and displeasure.

The Imams too have spoken of her deep understanding of the Prophet as well as her great wisdom and knowledge. She was the dearest person to Prophet; and she too loved him greatly. They have also referred to her as someone who has implemented the best modest dress (*hijab*). She was pure of all evils, and when she stood in prayer, her light would shine upon the inhabitants of the skies. She is the leader of the women of the world and showed her immense love for others, especially during her prayers. She was modest in front of her husband Ali and diligent when performing her household duties.

She describes herself as someone whose pleasure is that of God's, as someone who loves the Prophet greatly, is a part of his household, is an intercessor on the Day of Judgement and loves three things from this world: spending in the path of God, reciting the book of God (Qur'an) and gazing at the face of the Prophet. The Prophet and Imams deeply comprehended Lady Fatima for her noble qualities and roles as a daughter, wife, and mother; indeed, she was the ideal Muslim woman as she served the most perfect example for all.

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# THE SPECIAL DEPUTIES OF IMAM MAHDI (AS)

BY ZAHRA RA'ISI

TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

**ABSTRACT:** Little is found in early Shi'a sources regarding the special deputies of Imam Mahdi during the Minor Occultation. While in various Shi'a sources various people are referred to as envoys of Imam Mahdi, his four prominent deputies are 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri, Muhammad ibn 'Uthman, Husayn ibn Ruh Nowbakhti, and Ali ibn Muhammad Samari. 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri, who was an agent (*wakil*) of Imam Hadi and Imam Hasan 'Askari, was his first deputy in the Minor Occultation, and his deputyship can be corroborated in many ways. After him, Muhammad ibn 'Uthman was chosen by the Imam as his second deputy. Husayn ibn Ruh Nowbakhti, an influential figure of his time, served as the Imam's third deputy for about 21 years. Finally, 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri was the last deputy, who in the Imam's famous letter to him declared the start of the Major Occultation.

## *Statement of the Problem*

The inception of Imam Mahdi's Occultation in 260 A.H. is considered a new chapter of the relation between the Imam and Ummah. The Shi'a community, which for years was accustomed to the direct relation with the Imam, now was to adjust itself with the new state of affairs. Hence, those who could not understand the situation abandoned the Shi'a school of thought. By plan of Allah, the Wise, the Prudent, at first the connection of people with the vicegerent of God was not severed completely. For this reason, the Shi'a name it *The Minor Occultation*,

during which people were in contact with the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam through his deputies.

Generally, the issues of his Minor Occultation are seldom discussed. They include the issue of deputies of Imam Mahdi in that period of time. Its significance is revealed when we consider that first, many claimed to be Imam Mahdi's deputy during that era; secondly, there is no consensus in Shi'a sources regarding the definite number of his deputies. Nevertheless, among the Shi'a it is well-known that the following four people were his deputies: 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri, Muhammad ibn 'Uthman, Husayn ibn Ruh Nowbakhti, and Ali ibn Muhammad Samari.

This paper briefly offers the biographies of the above-mentioned deputies as well as the reasons for their deputyship.

### ***The First Deputy: 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri***

The first special deputy of Imam Mahdi was 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri, who was also the representative of the two previous Imams and trusted by them.

### ***'Uthman ibn Sa'id: The representative of Imam Hadi and Imam Hasan al-'Askari***

In this regard, there are a number of narrations, some of which are as follows. Some hadith narrators reported from Harun ibn Musa Tal'ukbari, who through his own chain of narrators quoted Ahmad ibn Ishaq Qumi as saying:

One day I went to Ali ibn Muhammad al-Hadi and told him: 'I am not always here, and whenever I am here, sometimes I cannot come to you and ask my religious and legal questions. Whom should I obey?' The holy

Imam answered, ‘This Abu ‘Amr (‘Uthman ibn Sa‘id ‘Amri) is a reliable and trustworthy person. I trust him, and whatever he tells and gives you is from me.’ After martyrdom of Imam Hadi, once I went to his son, Imam Hasan al-Askari, and asked him the same question. The 11<sup>th</sup> Imam repeated the answer of Imam Hadi, saying, “Abu ‘Amr was trusted by the previous Imam and is trusted by me now and after my death, also whatever he tells and gives you is from me.’ This word of the 11<sup>th</sup> Imam spread among Shi‘as and ‘Uthman ibn Sa‘id was always respected by them.’<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, Ahmad ibn Ishaq Qummi quoted Imam Hadi as saying, “Amri and his son are trusted by me, so whatever he gives and tells you is from me. Listen to them and obey them.”<sup>2</sup>

### *The reasons for his being a deputy of Imam Mahdi*

After the martyrdom of Imam Hasan al-‘Askari, ‘Uthman ibn Sa‘id ‘Amri assumed the responsibility of performing the ritual bathing of the body of Imam, enshrouding and burying him. Afterwards, he became the deputy of Imam Mahdi. He moved from Samarra to Baghdad, and settled in the district of Karkh, where the Shi‘as lived. Until his death, he ran the office of deputyship there. Like his routine in the time of Imam Hadi and Imam Hasan al-‘Askari, he delivered the letters and religious taxes the Shi‘as gave to the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam.<sup>3</sup>

The reasons for ‘Uthman ibn Sa‘id’s being deputy of Imam Mahdi are as follows:

A. After the martyrdom of Imam Hasan ‘Askari , a group of the Shi’s from Qum and other parts of Iran brought some religious taxes to Imam

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<sup>1</sup> The History of Occultation, p. 287

<sup>2</sup> Shaykh Tusi, al-Ghaybah, p. 360

<sup>3</sup> The History of Occultation, p. 289

Hasan al-‘Askari in Samarra. When they reached there, they were told of the martyrdom of the 11<sup>th</sup> Imam, and some people introduced Ja‘far as the successor of the holy Imam. Ja‘far asked them for the money, but the Qummis made this request contingent on his answering some questions. He could not reply to them, so they took the money and left. Outside Samarra, a secret messenger guided them to Imam Mahdi. He told them about each and every feature and sign of the money, and they gave it to him. Then the holy Imam told them, “Do not bring your money to Samarra anymore. From now on, give it to my deputy and representative in Baghdad, ‘Uthman ibn Sa‘id.”

B. The letters of Imam Mahdi were delivered to the ordinary and elite Shi‘as via ‘Uthman ibn Sa‘id and his son, Muhammad. These letters include the Imam’s orders and prohibitions and his answers to the Shi‘as’ questions. The handwritings used in the letters exactly resembled the one used in the letters of Imam Hasan ‘Askari, and Shi‘as agreed on the justice of both ‘Uthman ibn Sa‘id and his son.<sup>4</sup>

### *Several letters of Imam Mahdi to ‘Uthman ibn Sa‘id ‘Amri*

1. After the demise of ‘Uthman ibn Sa‘id’s father, Imam Mahdi issued a letter about his death; this letter included some sections. One part of it reads as follows, “We belong to Allah, and to Him is our return. We are submissive to His orders and content with His decree. Your father lived in salvation and left this world well.”<sup>5</sup>

2. When some Shi‘as quarrelled about the successor of Imam Hasan ‘Askari, a letter was issued by Imam Mahdi to ‘Uthman ibn Sa‘id as follows:

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

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<sup>4</sup> Shaikh Tusi, al-Ghaibah, pp.290 & 363.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.361.

May Allah protect you from seditions, grant you certitude, and keep you immune from a bad end. I received the news of your doubts about the issue and your puzzlement at your leaders. I was sad with regards to this issue for your own sake, and not for my own because I am right and do not need others.<sup>6</sup>

### *The date of demise of ‘Uthman ibn Sa‘id ‘Amri<sup>7</sup>*

Although ‘Uthman ibn Sa‘id played a vital role in Shi‘ism, the date of his demise was not specified. In this regard, Hashim Ma‘ruf Hasani wrote, “The deputyship of ‘Uthman ibn Sa‘id lasted until 265 A.H.” However, he did not cite any reference for his word.

According to some, ‘Uthman ibn Sa‘id passed away sometime between the martyrdom of Imam Hasan ‘Askari and 267 A.H., because it was in the time of Muhammad ibn ‘Uthman, the son of Uthman ibn Sa‘id, that the false pretender to the deputyship, Ahmad ibn Hilal, opposed him and did not accept his deputyship. Ahmad ibn Hilal died in 267 A.H. Thus, Uthman ibn Sa‘id must have passed away before Hilal’s death.

As for the burial place of ‘Uthman ibn Sa‘id, Shaikh Tusi wrote:

I saw his burial place where Abu Nasr Hibatullah Mahmud mentioned. A building that included the prayer niche of a mosque has been constructed on it. We went there and paid a visit to his grave easily. From 408 A.H., when I came to Baghdad, to 430 A.H., it was in this condition. However, Abu Mansur Muhammad ibn Faraj destroyed the building, made the grave exposed and put a box on it. Then, there was a roof over the grave, and everybody could enter the structure and visit it. All

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<sup>6</sup> Abbas Rasikhi, *The Envoy of the Imam (a.s.)*, p. 71.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

people in the neighborhood who were all Sunni tried to be blessed by visiting his grave, saying, 'He was a righteous man.' Sometimes, they say, 'He was a descendant of Imam Husayn's wet nurse,'" but they do not know the truth. The grave has been in the same condition up to now; that is, 447 A.H.'<sup>8</sup>

***The second deputy: Muhammad ibn 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri***

The second special deputy of Imam Mahdi was Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri. After his father's death, he succeeded him and was appointed as the representative and deputy of Imam Mahdi.

Like his father, he was a genius of his time. He was also of great piety, God-wariness, and moral virtues. His epithet was Abu Ja'far, and he was also called 'Amri, 'Askari, and Zayyat.<sup>9</sup> In his lifetime, he offered many services to Shi'ism, such as writing books on Islamic Jurisprudence, and gathering the material of his books from the teachings of Imam Hasan 'Askari, Imam Mahdi, and his own father, whose source was these holy Imams, too. Based on his will, this book was handed on to the third deputy of the Imam, Husayn ibn Ruh Nowbakhti.

Among his other services was struggling against and defeating the false pretenders to the deputyship. Muhammad ibn 'Uthman was the special deputy of Imam Mahdi for about 40 years, and false claims to deputyship were rampant then. Under the guidance of Imam Mahdi and his letters, Muhammad ibn 'Uthman could struggle against and defeat them.

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<sup>8</sup> Shaikh Tusi, al-Ghaibah, p. 358.

<sup>9</sup> Somebody who sells oil is called Dhiyat. It was Muhammad ibn 'Uthman's job.

Like other deputies, his other works included addressing people's problems, answering their legal problems, and delivering people's letters to the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam and getting his responses to them.

### ***The reasons for Muhammad ibn 'Uthman's being deputy of Imam Mahdi***

In addition to being pious and trustworthy, Muhammad ibn 'Uthman had a good record, being at the service of the Prophet's Household and an active member of the representation network during his father's lifetime. The reasons for his deputyship include the following:

1. As mentioned before, in a letter, Imam Hasan 'Askari introduced him and his father as reliable people and trusted by himself.<sup>10</sup>
2. In addition to considering Muhammad ibn 'Uthman reliable, Imam Hasan 'Askari referred to his being representative of his son, Imam Mahdi, "Bear witness that 'Uthman ibn Sa'id 'Amri is my representative, and his son, Muhammad is representative of my son, Mahdi."<sup>11</sup>
3. He gave people some letters from Imam Mahdi. These letters were in the uniform handwriting and with the same characteristics as the previous ones. Thus, the agents or representatives could find out about his truthfulness and connection with Imam Mahdi.
4. Sometimes he prepared the ground for some agents or representatives' visiting with Imam Mahdi, and the holy Imam always told them, "Muhammad 'Uthman is my deputy."<sup>12</sup>

### ***Some extraordinary acts of Imam Mahdi's second deputy***

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<sup>10</sup> 'Amri and his son are reliable.'

<sup>11</sup> The Textbook of Occultation, p.27.

<sup>12</sup> Shaikh Tusi, al-Ghaibah, p. 362.

Imam Mahdi's second deputy, Muhammad ibn 'Uthman, is said to have performed many extraordinary acts. For example, Abi Nasr Hibatullah ibn Muhammad is quoted as saying, "Once there was some money with my father from people of Qum and its suburbs. He was going to deliver it to the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam. When my father met Abi Ja'far (the second deputy) and gave him the money, he told my father, 'There is still some money left with you.' My father thought but could not recall any other money. So he said, 'I have delivered all money with me, and there is nothing left.' But Abi Ja'far told him where money was. When my father followed it up he could find the money. Then, he gave it to Abi Ja'far. This was very strange, because nobody knew of that money."

***The third deputy: Abul-Qasim Husayn ibn Ruh Nowbakhti***

The third special deputy of Imam Mahdi was Husayn ibn Ruh Nowbakhti. He worked as an agent for the second deputy and in the last few years of his deputyship, Muhammad ibn 'Uthman appointed him as the head of network of the agents, and he acted as an intermediary between the second deputy and other agents. Husayn ibn Ruh enjoyed a high social status among the Shi'as in Baghdad. Even high-ranking government officials were considerably under his sway and respected him. Also, the government was not sensitive to him.

In the lifetime of Muhammad ibn 'Uthman, Husayn ibn Ruh was chosen as his successor and the third deputy by Imam Mahdi. Muhammad ibn 'Uthman introduced him to the Shi'a elites and the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam's agents.

***Reasons for Husayn ibn Ruh Nowbakhti's being deputy of Imam Mahdi***

1. According to Muhammad ibn 'Uthman's daughter, Umm Kulthum: For many years, Husayn ibn Ruh was the agent of Muhammad ibn 'Uthman and in charge of his lands. Husayn ibn Ruh used to transmit my fathers's



secret messages to the Shi'i leaders and was my father's close companion. Hence, the Shi'a took Husayn ibn Ruh to their hearts since they knew he was a close companion of my father. In the lifetime of my father, the arrangements for his deputyship were made. Then, on orders of Imam Mahdi, my father introduced him as his successor. There was no disagreement and doubt about his deputyship, and I know no Shi'a who is doubtful about his deputyship.<sup>13</sup>

2. Another reason for his deputyship is the letters sent to him by Imam Mahdi on various topics, including legal issues and answers to the Shi'as questions, as well as letters in which the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam condemned some of those who went astray, such as Shalmaghani.

3. Still another reason is that in the start of Husayn ibn Ruh's deputyship, the servant of Muhammad ibn 'Uthman took some belongings of Abu Ja'far such as his cane, key, and casket to Husayn ibn Ruh, and told him, "Abu Ja'far told me to deliver these to you after his burial. This casket contains the signets and seals of the holy Imams."

Finally, Husayn ibn Ruh, who – for about 20 years – was the deputy of Imam Mahdi from 305 A.H. to 326 A.H., passed away on Sha'ban 18<sup>th</sup> 326 A.H. His body was buried in Baghdad in Shurjah Bazaar, and his tomb attracts the Shi'a who seek blessings when they visit it.<sup>14</sup>

#### ***The fourth deputy: Abul-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad Samuri***

The fourth and last special deputy of Imam Mahdi was Abul-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad Samuri. After the demise of Husayn ibn Ruh, he was appointed as the deputy by Imam Mahdi. As of Sha'ban 18<sup>th</sup> 328 A.H., he assumed this responsibility.

Ali ibn Muhammad Samuri was from a devout Shi'a family, and was renowned for offering valuable services in the representation

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<sup>13</sup> Shaykh Tusi, al-Ghaibah, p. 372.

<sup>14</sup> Allameh Majlisi, Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 51, p.358.

organization of the Infallible Imams. Due to his good previous record, reliability, and trustworthiness, he faced no problem in his being accepted as deputy by the Shi'as and agents of the representation network. Representatives and elite Shi'as recognized him as the true deputy of Imam Mahdi, and they gave the religious taxes to him to be delivered to the Imam. Abul-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad Samuri did not have much opportunity for his activities. Due to both his short period of deputyship and special political situation, he could not take considerable measures. And if he managed to do so, because of his dissimulating and taking precautions, few of his measures have been passed on to future generations. What stands out in the period of his deputyship is the last letter sent to him by Imam Mahdi.

### ***The last letter from Imam Mahdi***

Imam Mahdi issued his last letter to Ali ibn Muhammad Samuri six days before his demise. In this letter, the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam predicted the time of his demise and told him not to appoint any other deputy as his successor, because with his death the Minor Occultation would end and the Major Occultation would begin. The letter reads as follows:

*In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*

O' Ali ibn Muhamad Samuri! May Allah give you and your companions high rewards! You will die within six days. So prepare yourself, and do not appoint anybody as your successor, since the second occultation has started. Thus, my reappearance will not be realized but with permission of Allah, and after people become heartless and merciless and the earth is replete with oppression. Also, some Shi'a will claim they have seen me. Whoever claims this before the appearance of Sufyani and the cry from the sky is a slanderous liar.

There is neither might nor strength but in Allah, the High, the Great.<sup>15</sup>

Shaykh Saduq quoted Abu Muhammad, Hasan ibn Ahmad Maktab as saying:

In the year when Ali ibn Muhamad Samuri passed away, we were in Baghdad, and went to him some days before his demise. He showed us this last letter of Imam Mahdi. We made a copy of it and left him. The predicted day came; we went to Samuri and found him on his deathbed. On the verge of his death, he was asked, "Who is your guardian (*wasiyy*)?" He answered, "The divine providence will happen by His will." He then passed away.<sup>16</sup>

### *Analysis of the Imam's letter*

1. Foretelling the day of the last deputy's demise by Imam Mahdi shows that this letter was really from the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam.
2. This letter states the time of the end of the Minor Occultation and the start of Major Occultation.
3. The reappearance of Imam Mahdi is with Allah, and we do not know when it will happen.
4. The letter tells us of two indications of Imam Mahdi's reappearance: the appearance of Sufyani and the cry from the sky.<sup>17</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The special deputies of Imam Mahdi lived fruitfully in a time when the Shi'a suffered extreme hardship. Above all, the absence of the Infallible

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<sup>15</sup> Shaykh Saduq, *Kamal-u-Din*, p. 516.

<sup>16</sup> *The History of Occultation*, p. 300.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 301.

Imam occurred for the first time. On the other hand, Sunnis and followers of the deviant schools of thought took advantage of the absence of an Imam; they leveled false unfair accusations against the Shi'as, questioned their beliefs, and considered them misled. However, it was the special deputies who under the guidance of Imam Mahdi overcame the difficulties, saved the Shi'as from confusion and disunity, and kept them in the clear path of truth. They were among the most pious, clever, and shrewd people of their time; and due to earning Allah's satisfaction, they were risen to the high rank of deputyship.

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# A GLIMPSE AT THE MAJOR SHI‘A SEMINARIES PART I

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TRANSLATED BY FATEMEH SOLTANMOHAMMADI

ABSTRACT: The previous articles in this series touched upon the subjects of fiqh and usul of fiqh - with a glance into its history and sources - as well as Hadith studies, Qur’anic sciences, the Science of Exegesis, and the Science of Ethics. The next few parts give a glimpse into the historical origins of some of the most important religious seminaries in the Shi‘a world. Islamic seminaries are the most affective institution in propagating the teachings of the Qur’an and the Ahlul Bayt, and have moreover triggered a unique culture in the scientific, social, and even political spheres. One significant role of seminaries was the rise of knowledgeable and pious Shi‘a scholars who pursued *ijtihad* with the use of the Qur’an, sunna, and reason to respond to legislative needs and guide the Muslim community with their contemporary issues. This part focuses primarily on the Islamic seminaries of Basra, Baghdad, and Najaf. The Seminary of Basra was known for its major role in the Science of Narration (*‘Ilm-e Hadith*); the Seminary of Baghdad was recognized as the center of scholarly discussions as well as bringing about new advancements in principles of jurisprudence, theology, deductive reasoning (*istidlal*) and independent reasoning (*ijtihad*); and the Seminary of Najaf was one of the most important institutions of academics and *ijtihad* in the history of Shi‘a academia.

## ***Introduction***

Throughout Shi'ā history, Islamic seminaries have been the most stable and affective societal institutions. Three issues, that is, learning, developing and publishing authentic Islamic teachings that have been manifested through the Holy Book and the teachings of the Holy Prophet of Islam (s) and his rightful successors requires the establishment of an organized and systematic institution that pursues these goals. In pursuit of these goals and in response to this calling from the Almighty God "...*But why should not there go forth a group from each of their sections to become learned in religion, and to warn their people when they return to them,...* (9:122)," a group of people have been steadfast against all hardships and have washed their hands of all worldly and materialistic affairs in the quest for gaining religious knowledge and spreading it. Initially they made great efforts to collect the sayings of the Infallibles, and with the formation of study circles, they pondered and reflected on them to gain access to - and comprehend - the underlying secrets of the Divine Book. Eventually, they taught and published their works as a form of invitation to the faith and through this, the first seminaries were established in various geographical locations.

In the Arabic language '*hawzah*' means 'area', 'complex,' and 'central location', and in a more specific terminology amongst the Shi'ā, it refers to a center similar to a university for pursuing Islamic education, or for learning Islamic sciences. Having access to valuable teachings from the Prophet and his family, a unique culture has been left behind in the scientific, social, and even political fields.<sup>1</sup>

During the time of the infallible Imams and specifically during the time of Imam Baqir and Imam Sadiq, the first Islamic seminaries and study circles were organized under the supervision of the holy Imams. Over a

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<sup>1</sup> *Shi'ā Encyclopedia*, under Bahaoddin Khorramshahi and others, vol. 6, p. 549.

thousand students from the Shi'a school of thought and other sects participated in the classes held by the two Imams. Soon afterwards, each student became prominent in various sciences, such as transmitted knowledge (*'ulum naqli*), intellectual knowledge (*'ulum aqli*), and natural sciences (*'ulum tabi'i*). With the inception of the twelfth Imam's occultation, that which held the highest priority was gathering narrations and protecting the legacy that was left behind by the Infallible Imams for those seeking the pure teaching of Islam. For this reason, the study of prophetic narrations held a great value. Shi'a scholars traveled to various regions, and after hearing narrations from their original sources, they presented authentic collections of narration, the most significant of them being *The Four Books of the Shi'a*.

At the beginning of the major occultation, the twelfth Imam's priority was to assign a vicegerent with the three characteristics of being scholarly, righteous, and holding the guardianship of the Imams as his model. This brought a very critical and heavy responsibility to the attention of Shi'a scholars and seminaries; it led them to pursue *ijtihad* with the use of key religious sources - the Qur'an, Sunna, and reason - to respond to legislative (*shar'i*) needs and to guide the community (*ummah*) with the existing issues of their time. The rise of great scholars, who were prominent in their level knowledge and God-consciousness (*taqwa*), was an important operation of the seminaries during the time of occultation and throughout their history.

Now after the passing of almost fourteen centuries from the beginning of constructing the first seminaries, there currently exists various active institutions all over the Shi'a world. Throughout history, with the training of open-minded individuals who are aware of their time and have a broad and expanded understanding of the pure gnostic knowledge of the family of the Prophet, they have been able to satisfy the religious and scientific needs of the followers of Islam. They have also been able to introduce the Shi'a faith to the world as an authentic viewpoint in Islam and as one of the sects that holds remarkable views

in various religious sciences such as jurisprudence (*fiqh*), philosophy (*falsafah*), theology (*kalam*), and exegesis (*tafsir*).

This section expounds on some of the most prominent Shi‘a seminaries most influential in the growth of the Shi‘a sect and in the training of the greatest Shi‘a scholars. Although citing the number of active scholar-training seminaries during the course of history is beyond the constraints of this paper, only some of the most well-known and influential of them will be mentioned. We refer those who are interested to research in this area to more comprehensive works.<sup>2</sup>

### ***1. Islamic Seminary of Basra***

The Islamic seminary of Basra is one of the oldest publication centers of Shi‘a theology in Iraq and is cited as the major seminary in the science of Prophetic Narration (*Ilm-e Hadith*).

Basra is a city in Iraq built after the conquest of the Hira region during the Islamic era in the year 15 A.H. Up until the year 36 A.H. - the time when the Battle of the Camel took place - the people of this city were mainly Uthmani. However, after the Battle of the Camel and Imam Ali’s victory in that war, the Imam appointed Ibn Abbas as the Governor of Basra and Abu al-Aswad al-Du’ali as the city judge. Due to the hard work of these two well-known figures of virtue and courtesy, and the people of Basra became more acquainted with the biography of Imam Ali that they started to lean towards Shi‘ism. Ibn Abbas would spend all day at the main masjid teaching the Holy Qur’an, Islamic Jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and Islamic commandments (*ahkam*), and when he would leave Basra to see Imam Ali and to take part in the battles of the Imam, he would assign Abu al-Aswad al-Du’ali as his deputy in Basra.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Kabari, Sayyed Ali Reza, Shi‘a Seminaries across the World.

<sup>3</sup> Encyclopedia of Shi‘a, vol. 6, p. 346-344.



After the martyrdom of Imam Ali, the devotion of the people of Basra to the Imams continued; they were eager to understand the presence of the Imams and convey their narrations. This devotion was a desire beyond explanation. It led the people to gather many companions (*sahabi*) and narrators (*muhaddith*) which then formed into the seminaries and centers for publishing narrations from the Prophet and the infallible Imams. It was the formation of these institutes that led narrators from other cities to travel to Basra to hear narrations from the Prophet through his companions, and through this they created an educational atmosphere in the city.<sup>4 5</sup> The growth flow in Basra leaned towards the Shi'a sect in such a way that taking into consideration the number of narrators during the time of Imam Baqir, one could claim that during the second century Hijri calendar, Basra became a Shi'a-populated city.<sup>6</sup>

After the major occultation of the twelfth Imam, Basra continued to be the center where narrators gathered and where the devotees of the Infallibles traveled to and settled in pursuit of learning the Ahlul Bayt's message.

The Islamic seminary of Basra's outstanding status in the science of narration, its geographical location of being situated on the route to Mecca, and the path the pilgrims take to The Sacred House (Bayt al-Haram)<sup>7</sup> was a great opportunity for Islamic scholars to enter the city and assist with issues regarding science and narration. Moreover, books related to great Shi'a scholars refer to numerous scholars who resided

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<sup>4</sup> For example, we can refer to Bukhari, the author of one of the six books of Sunni Islam, where in his memoir it mentions he would travel to various regions for long periods of time in search of narrations. On one of his trips he went to Basra, where during his fifteen-day stay he recorded over fifteen thousand narrations. Ibn Abi Ya'li, *Layers of Hanbalis*, vol. 1, p. 276.

<sup>5</sup> *Shi'a Seminaries across the World*, p. 203.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 203.

<sup>7</sup> Hakim Mulla Sadra Shirazi, passed away in the city of Basra in the year 1050 when traveling bare foot on a trip to hajj for the seventh time. Mokhtari, Reza, *Visage of Scholars (Simayeh Farzanehgan)*, p. 164.

in this city from the fourth to the eighth century Hijri.<sup>8</sup> Some of the great narrators of the fourth century are: Abdul Aziz bin Yahya bin Saeed Basari, Muhammad bin Ibrahim Ishaq, Sharif Abu Talib Mudhaffar Basari, and Muhammad bin Omaro bin Ali Basari, all of whom were teachers (*mashayekh*) of Shaykh Saduq in which he narrated hadith from. This movement continued in the next few centuries, although they did experience periods where the Islamic seminaries of Basra experienced relative declines in the branch of narration.

As a witness to this matter, we can look at Aghabozorg Tehrani's report. He was a narrator residing in Basra from the fourth to the eighth century Hijri. In the fifth century, he reports nine Shi'a students in Basra, where their numbers drop to five people in the sixth century and in the seventh century it falls once again to three people. In the eighth century he only reports two Shi'a students, and in the ninth century he does not mention any Shi'a scholar at all. However, in the tenth century he introduces an individual named Muhammad Tulani; in the eleventh century the number of scholars in this city reaches six people, which it seems to have relocated to Basra from other seminaries, such as Ahsa; and in the twelfth century Hijri, he recounts five Shi'a scholars, where some moved from Bahrain to Basra.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. *The Islamic Seminary of Baghdad*

The city of Baghdad - which was the center of caliphate during the rule of the Abbasids - was the most important center of gathering and interchange amongst the dominant sects of Islam; it was also the center where debates and the exchange of ideas amongst their great scholars in various topics - primarily in issues regarding theology - took place. The presence of the Shi'a Imams in Baghdad and in Iraq, after Imam Sadiq, became a means for Shia scholars, jurists, theologians, and narrators to

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<sup>8</sup> Tehrani, Aghabozorg, *al-Shia 'Alam Tabaqat*, vol. 5, p. 83.

<sup>9</sup> Shi'a Seminaries across the World, p. 205.

learn and train under the supervision of the infallible Imams. They later were able to debate with other religious scholars and use the intellectual environment of the city to defend the true Shi'a beliefs in various theological issues and to promote pure knowledge of the Ahl-ul-Bayt and the Prophet. The extent of academic work carried out by the Imamah scholars was to such an extent that some researchers have recounted the number of students of Imam Kadhim and his narrators in Baghdad to reach over six hundred people.<sup>10</sup>

After the passing of the era of the Imams' presence and the approach of the minor occultation of Imam Mahdi, the city of Baghdad experienced a new dynamic time period, and that was due to the presence of The Four Deputies of the Imam, namely Uthman ibn Sa'id al-Asadi, Abu Jafar Muhammad ibn Uthman, Abul Qasim Husayn ibn Ruh al-Nawbakhti, and Abul Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad al-Samarri. With the use of religious dissimulation (*taqiyya*) and through direct guidance and instructions from the Imam, these pious and well-known scholars sought to protect the Shi'a entity and become the intellectual leader of the Shi'a people. By responding to the religious misconceptions and receiving religious taxes, they turned Baghdad into the biggest Shi'a center in the world.

Another period of academic growth of the city of Baghdad and the Islamic seminaries was simultaneous with the major occultation of the twelfth Imam. Some of the important events of this period were the political upheavals and the coming to power of the Shi'a Buyids (*Al-e Buye*)<sup>11</sup> in Iran and Iraq; with proving the grounds for theological discussions, it created change in the prevailing atmosphere upon the Shi'a seminaries after the time of Imam Askari, which were engaged in gathering narrations and were rigorous in reaching a surface level

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<sup>10</sup> Atardi, Azizullah, *Musnad of Imam al-Kadhim*, vol. 3, p. 569.

<sup>11</sup> *Al-e Buye*, Iranian Shi'a dynasty, attributed to Abushoja' who between the years 322-448 Qamari ruled a large part of Iran, Iraq, and the peninsula until the northern borders of Damascus. Sajjadi, Sadiq, "Al-e Buye", *Islamic Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, article 377.

understanding. It also provided the means for theological discussion revolving around ideological issues to be prepared for in the Islamic seminaries of Baghdad. It was in such an atmosphere that great Shi'ā personalities such as Shaykh Mufid, Sayyid Radi, and Sharif Murtadha with reviving the intellect as a source in the acquisition of Islamic teachings, on one hand were to guide the Ja'fari Jurisprudence towards comparative and demonstrative jurisprudence (*fiqh istidlali*) and *ijtihad*; on the other hand, with addressing intellectual issues, they revised the Shi'ā theological viewpoint in regards to ideological topics under scrutiny at the time. In what follows, we will consider the biographies of two great scholars of the seminary of Baghdad, namely Shaykh Mufid and Sayyid Murtadha.

*Shaykh Mufid* (336-413 A.H.) was one of the great scholars and prominent theologians of the fourth and fifth century Hijri. He taught renowned scholars such as Sayyid Murtadha, Sayyid Radi, and Shaykh Tusi. Ibn Imad Hanbali, a renowned Islamic historian, in regards to the events that took place in 413 A.H., writes:

During these years Mufid passed away. He was one of the great Shi'ā scholars who published many books and writings. He was also a leader of the people...<sup>12</sup> Likewise, Ibn Abi Tayy states in *The History of Shi'ā*, "Mufid was the greatest amongst the well-known Shi'ā scholars and is their representative. He was wise in the fields of theology, jurisprudence, and mentoring debates and during the Buyid Dynasty he would debate the supporters of various vocations and beliefs with a certain aura of dignity and grandeur; he also assisted the less fortunate on multiple occasions. His humility and reverence was great, his prayers and fasts numerous; he wore clean and pleasant clothes; well-known people

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<sup>12</sup> Ibn 'Imad Hanbali, *Shadhrat al-Dhahab fi Akhbar man Dhahaba*, vol. 2, pp. 199-200.

such as Azad-ud-Daulah Dilami - the governing authority of the Buyids - would visit Shaykh Mufid on numerous occasions. He lived for 76 years and wrote over two hundred books and dissertations (*risalah*). In the month of Ramadhan, year 413 A.H., he passed away and eighty thousand people participated in his funeral.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to bringing new advancements in principles of jurisprudence (*usul*) and theology, Shaykh Mufid also expanded in the area of jurisprudence and gave rise to deductive reasoning (*istidlal*) and *ijtihad* and with not being satisfied with just the external meaning of narrations. He benefited from thinking freely and having a systematic understanding and logical interpretation of the narrations. In the field of political jurisprudence (*fiqh-e siyasi*), through writing books and academic debates, Shaykh Mufid clarified the status of leadership (*imamah*) in political philosophy in Islam and the idea that the Shi'a Imams and their deputies must be the ones responsible for governing and leading the Islamic society. The books *Awa'il al-Maqalat* and *Tashih I'tiqadat al-Imamiyyah* in the science of theology, *al-Muqni'yah* in the field of jurisprudence, and the books *al-Irshad*, *Fusul al-Mukhtarah*, and *al-Amali* are amongst some of his works.

Abul Ghasem Ali bin Husayn Musawi, popularly known as, *Sayyid Murtadha* and entitled as, 'Allam al-Huda,' was another great Shi'a scholar of the Islamic seminaries in Baghdad, who was Shaykh Mufid's<sup>14</sup> student and Shaykh Tusi's teacher. He was born in Rajab in

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn Abu al-Hadid, in his description of the Peak of Eloquence (*Nahjul Balagha*), he quotes from Sayyid Abdul Karim bin Tawoos Fakhra Musawi, that one night in his sleep, Shaykh Mufid sees Hadhrat Zahra (as) who brought her two sons, Imam Hasan (as) and Imam Husayn (as), and said to teach them the science of jurisprudence (*ilm-e fiqh*) and Islamic commandments (*ahkam*). They day after, as usual, Shaykh Mufid was busy teaching at Buratha Mosque when he noticed a woman enter the mosque with the utmost dignity, holding the hand of two children. She came up to him and said, "I am Tahir Dhu al-Manaqib's wife and these two children (Sayyid Radi and Sayyid Murtadha) are my sons. I have come to you so that you may teach them the science of jurisprudence and Islamic

355 A.H. in Karkh area of Baghdad. Sayyid Murtadha's financial capabilities enabled him to arrange the seminarians' financial conditions while spending all of his time in lectures, discussions, and composing. He set a certain monthly wage for every student in accordance with his academic activities and research, and set all the interests of a village that was under his management to provide paper for the scholars; he did so with an inalienable religious endowment (*waqf*).

Sayyid Murtadha had a unique accomplishment in the science of narration and rational sciences and in jurisprudence, principles of jurisprudence, theology, narration and exegesis, literature, poetry, and terminology. He owned written works, which include *al-Masa'el al-Naseriyah* in jurisprudence, *al-Dhuri'ah fi Usul al-Fiqh*, *al-Shafi fi al-Imamah*, *al-Mukhalas fi Usul al-Deen*, and *al-Dhakhirah fi Ilm al-Kalam wa al-Intesar fi ma Anfardat bihi al-Imamiyah*.

Another key action Sayyid Murtadha took to provide for the academic needs of those who travelled to Baghdad from various parts of the world and joined his seminary, was that he dedicated a part of his house that he was residing in for the students' classes and discussion circles, popularly known as, "*Dar al-Ilm*." He also left his personal library, which had over eighty thousand books that were bought with his personal funding, at the disposal of the seminarians.

### ***The Islamic Seminary of Baghdad and The Four Books of the Shi'a***

Amongst the feasible blessings of the Islamic seminaries of Baghdad was its role in writing and creating the *Four Books of the Shi'a*, namely: *Kitab al-Kafi*, *Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, *Tahdhib al-Ahkam*,

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commandments. And it was through this means that Shaykh Mufid enthusiastically accepted to teach and educate them, till those two brothers became the greatest minds and the most famous scholars of their time. Ibn Abu al-Hadid, *Description of the Peak of Eloquence*, vol. 1, p. 41.

and *al-Istibsar*. All of them replaced the valuable series, *Usul al-Arba'ma'ah*<sup>15</sup> in gathering narrations from the Infallibles and it overcame the scholars' and mujtahids' need in methods of deducing Islamic commandments.

The collection *al-Kafi* was the deceased Muhammad bin Ya'qub Kulayni Razi's<sup>16</sup> work, published in Baghdad after twenty years of research, examination, and traveling to various Shi'a populated cities while gathering authentic narrations. The late Kulayni who spent his earlier years in his birthplace - in the suburbs of Rey - initially moved to Qum to seek Islamic knowledge. Afterwards, he travelled to the seminaries of Nishabur, Kufa, and Baghdad. Throughout these trips, along with meeting well-known Shi'a narrators and great narrators of the infallible imams, he gathered parts of the chapter of jurisprudence and narration. After migrating to Baghdad, he properly organized his work and wrote the collection, *al-Kafi*. *al-Kafi* is composed of two volumes: *Usul al-Kafi* (theology), five volumes of *Furu al-Kafi* (jurisprudence), and one volume of *Rawdat al-Kafi* (various topics). In total, it comprises 16,199 narrations which are from the Prophet) and the infallible Imams.

The second book from *The Four Books of the Shi'a* is *Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, written as result of the efforts of the renowned scholar, Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Ali bin Babiwayh Qummi,<sup>17</sup> also known as Shaykh Saduq. Shaykh Saduq, who had a history of travelling and a residing at the seminary in Rey, Nishabur, Khorasan, and Bukhara, entered the Islamic seminary of Baghdad in 355 A.H. where he taught and trained the students. Shaykh Mufid is of those who participated in his lecture sessions. After some time, he traveled to

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<sup>15</sup> *Usul al-Arba'ma'ah* is a series of 400 works which has been written by the companions of the infallibles in various fields such as, belief (*itiqad*), jurisprudence, exegesis, ethics and other. After the time of presence of the Imams, the authors of the Four Books started recording them in their books.

<sup>16</sup> Died 329 A.H.

<sup>17</sup> Died 381 A.H.

Balkh, and there through the request of one of Imam Kadhīm's children, he wrote a book on jurisprudence that clarified the religious duties (*shar'i*) of the Muslims in regards to jurisprudence and various religious laws. Similar to Rāzi's book on medicine, *Man la Yahduruhu al-Tabib*, he named his book on jurisprudence *Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih*.<sup>18</sup> This book comprises 5,963 valuable narrations from the Imams. Even though - according to Shaykh Saduq's own statement - he essentially quoted the writers opinions and rulings,<sup>19</sup> considering the credibility of the narrations, it is one the most reliable books of narration and has been used as a source by scholars and *mujtahids* all throughout the history of Islamic jurisprudence.<sup>20</sup>

*Tahdhib al-Ahkam* and *al-Istibsar* are the third and fourth books from the Four Books of Shi'a and have been written by Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Hasan bin Ali Tusi<sup>21</sup> predominantly known as Shaykh Tusi. Shaykh Tusi migrated from Toos to Iraq in the year 408 A.H. when he was 23 years old. He participated in Shaykh Mufid's classes in Baghdad and after a short period of time reached the level of *ijtihad* and in that young age published the book *Tahdhib al-Ahkam* which was an explanation to Shaykh Mufid's book on jurisprudence. The book *Tahdhib* is comprised of 13,590 narrations which are presented in 23 jurisprudential books and 393 chapters.

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<sup>18</sup> Shaykh Saduq, *Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, vol. 1, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> In the introduction to *Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, Shaykh Saduq writes: "I set my goal in writing this book, to narrate those set of sayings that I am certain of their authenticity in being from the infallibles (as) and to be able to give a ruling and judgment on them and I believe these narrations and this deed will act as evidence between me and my Almighty God." Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Sayyid Bahr al-Ulum writes the following in regards to the book *Man la Yahduruhu al-Faqih*: "This book is one of the four books which based on its authenticity and popularity is excellent and distinguished and some of the great scholars prefer its narrations over the other four books. Some of the reasons why this work is preferred over others is because Shaykh Saduq was a *hafiz* and a recorder and that this work came after Shaykh Kulayni's book." Bahr al-Ulum, Sayyid Mahdi, al-Fawaed al-Rijaliyyah, Muktabaya al-Alamin al-Tusi wa Bahr al-Ulum, vol. 3, p.299-300.

<sup>21</sup> 385-460 A.H.



Shaykh Tusi's second famous work is *al-Istibsar*, which was issued after *Tahdhib al-Ahkam*. In composing this book, he made use of the two biggest libraries at the time in Baghdad, meaning Sayyid Razi's library and Abu Nasr Shabur's library. In the introduction of *Tahdhib*, he mentioned the presence of resentment and the existing differences in the Shi'a narrations that triggered outrage from opposing parties; since he believed that resolving differences was crucial, he introduced this issue using a practical approach in *al-Istibsar*.<sup>22</sup> It was through this that *al-Istibsar* became the first book of narrations that dealt with resolving differences in narrations.

In the mid-fifth century Hijri, the most unfortunate, bitter, and regrettable event in the history of Baghdadi seminaries occurred which resulted in the closing of the seminary. Tuqrul Bayk Saljuqi's attack on Baghdad and the seizing of the city in the year 447 A.H. led to not only the genocide of the Shi'a people, but also the burning of the biggest libraries in Baghdad such as the libraries of Sayyid Muradha, Shaykh Tusi, Abu Nasr Shabur, Bahaud Dawla Dilami's vizier which in 381 A.H. in the Shi'a populated area of Karkh was built as The House of Wisdom (*Bayt al-Hikmah*). Afterwards, the great scholars of Baghdad, including Shaykh Tusi, moved to neighboring cities.

### 3. *Islamic Seminary of Najaf*

The seminary of Najaf is by far one of the most important institutions of academics and *ijtihad* in the history of academia and Shi'a culture and has played an undeniable role in leading political change in various historical turns throughout Shi'a history. For a long period of time, this seminary was amongst the most important Shi'a seminaries and because of its extensive history and the presence of well-known scholars, and it continued to be the center of focus and assembly of great scholars and virtuous figures.

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<sup>22</sup> Tusi, Muhammad bin Hasan, *Tahdhib al-Ahkam*, vol. 1, p. 2-3.

According to historical reports, the basis for founding the seminary of Najaf was Shaykh al-Taifah Shaykh Tusi who relocated from the city of Baghdad in the year 448 A.H. to this city after the attack of the Saljuqs. Ibn Juzi writes in regards to the attacks made on Shaykh Tusi's house in Baghdad that a group of the Ahulul Sunnah attacked Abu Ja'far Tusi's house in Karkh and burnt his books, notebooks, his pulpit used when teaching, and other belongings.<sup>23</sup>

Even though this city was the residence of several Shi'a scholars and narrators before Shaykh Tusi's relocation to Najaf, it was with his arrival and the constitution of the Islamic seminary that Najaf became the center of Shi'a jurisprudence and an institute for educating and training great Shi'a scholars. It became a focal point where seminarians and researchers in Islamic sciences turned to, and under the supervision of Shaykh Tusi, were able to train and teach students various religious sciences such as jurisprudence and theology.

After 12 years of his fruitful presence in Najaf, Shaykh al-Tusi passed away in Najaf in 460 A.H.. After him, the leadership of Shi'a and the management of the seminaries which he had founded were passed on to his son, Shaykh Abu Ali Tusi, and afterwards to his grandson Abu Nasr Muhammad bin Abi Ali al-Hasan bin Abi Ja'far Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Tusi.

### ***The Time of Recession***

The seminary of Najaf experienced a recession and relative decline from the sixth until the ninth century Hijra. Some of its reasons could be related to the expansion of the Islamic seminary of Karbala and Hillah. The academic activities and group study circles executed by great scholars such as Ahmad bin Ali Najashi, Abi Hamza Tusi, Sayyid Fakhar Musawi Haeri, Ali bin Tawus, Shams-ud Din Muhammad bin

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<sup>23</sup> R.K. Faqih, Ali Asqar, Al-e Buyah, First Shia Dynasty, p. 472.

Makki, (Shahid Awwal) and ibn Khazin Haeri in the seminary of Karbala were important in training students in religious studies. On another hand, with the spread of the House of Knowledge (*buyut 'ilmiyyah*) of Aal Idris, Aal Shaykh Waram, Aal Fahad, Aal Tawus in the city of Hillah, the Islamic seminaries of Najaf became increasingly marginalized.

### ***Flourishing Once Again***

The recession period of the Islamic seminary of Najaf continued until the ninth century Hijri. During this time, with the appearance of great figures such as Fadhil Miqdad<sup>24</sup> and Muqaddas Ardebili<sup>25</sup> it was rejuvenated and those who sought Islamic knowledge from other areas turned to this city. The features of this time period include the spread of the science of jurisprudence, comparative and demonstrative jurisprudence, and composing valuable books like *Ma'alim al-Din* a work of Hasan bin Zaid al-Din.<sup>26</sup> In this period along with jurisprudence and principles of jurisprudence, sciences like logic, Verses of Legislature (*Ayat al-Ahkam*), exegesis, theology, and biographical evaluation (*rijal*) started to spread and as a result, treasurable books were written in the fields.<sup>27</sup>

The eleventh century Hijri can be viewed as the new era in the history of seminaries in Najaf. The growth and activities of scholars that were present in Najaf and were under the radar were theological discussion and the method of *ijtihad*, which were of the most pronounced features of the Najaf seminaries. This continued until the migration of Waheed Behbahani from Iran to Iraq in the twelfth century and created a certain academic excitement in the seminary of Najaf. Of the renowned figures of this time is Sayyid Muhammad Mahdi Bahrul-Ulum,<sup>28</sup> a student of

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<sup>24</sup> Date of death: 826 A.H.

<sup>25</sup> Date of death: 993 A.H.

<sup>26</sup> Shaykh Thani's son

<sup>27</sup> Islamic Shi'a Seminaries, p. 290.

<sup>28</sup> 1155/1154-1212 A.H.

Waheed Behbahani and a splendid figure in the Shi‘a world who had an extensive amount of knowledge and had travelled the different stages of a peripatetic journey towards God (*sayr wa sulook*); he was indeed respected amongst the Shi‘a scholars of that time.

### ***Graduates of the Islamic Seminary of Najaf***

Because of its historical background, its unique academic dynamic, and the presence of sessions run by the most well-known and sought after scholars, the seminaries of Najaf were fostered by great scholars throughout history, all of whom have shined in Shi‘a academia and *ijtihad*. Indeed, they have been the source of blessing in terms of the expanding of the Shi‘a seminaries in different areas. Through studying the biographies and profiles of the founders of Shi‘a seminaries in various areas, as well as the socially and politically influential personalities in Shi‘a history, it is clear that participating in the Najaf seminaries and making use of its academic and spiritual merits is a common factor amongst its participants. In what follows are a few spiritual and knowledgeable personalities whom were present in this seminary:

- Ibn Idris Hilli, the founder and leader of the Islamic seminary of Hillah;
- Mirza Shirazi, who issued boycotting the use of tobacco and the leader of the Islamic seminary of Samarra;
- Hajj Muhammad Ibrahim Kalbasi and Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Shafti the two leaders of the Islamic seminary of Isfahan;
- Hajj Shaykh Abdul Karim Haeri Yazdi, founder of the Islamic seminary of Qum,
- Mowla Ahmad bin Muhammad Ardebili, known as “Muqaddas Ardebili”, a well-known scholar in the Shia world;
- Shaykh Ja’far Kashif al-Ghita’, leader and great Shi‘a authority (*marja’*);

- Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Najafi, great jurist (*faqih*) and author of *Jawahir al-Kalam*;
- Shaykh A'adham Murtadha Ansari, the undisputable scholar in jurisprudence and the principles of jurisprudence;
- Mulla Muhammad Kadhim Khorasani, author of *Kifayat al-Usul*;
- Hajj Husayn Burujerdi, leader of the Islamic seminary of Qum,
- Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai, author of the Quranic exegesis *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*; and
- Allamah Sayyid Sharafiddin Amuli, author of *al-Muraja'at*.

### ***Jurisprudence in the Najaf Seminary***<sup>29</sup>

Jurisprudence was amongst the sciences taught in Najaf and from its inception, the subject of focus amongst students via Shaykh Tusi. Until recent years, it was called the Science of Jurisprudence. Like other sciences, the science of jurisprudence underwent the process of development. After putting behind its introductory stages of narrated jurisprudence, it reached its highest level of accuracy – comparative and demonstrative jurisprudence – as well as the use of rules of deduction (*istinbat*) for extracting religious laws from firsthand sources. Although the Najaf seminary undertook periods of excellence in recounting and reporting, as well as periods of decline in the science of jurisprudence, comparative and demonstrative jurisprudence, and *ijtihad*, after the decline with the presence of *usuli* scholars, it returned to its previous station in comparative jurisprudence<sup>30</sup> and the science of jurisprudence. The seminary was able to present the great and well-known scholars of the Shi'a world.

We owe the turning point in comparative jurisprudence and *ijtihad* in the Najaf seminaries to the hard work of the prominent scholar Shaykh Ansari.<sup>31</sup> With his innovative outlook in the principles of *ijtihad*, he

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<sup>29</sup> The book Shi'a Seminaries across the World was used extensively in writing this part.

<sup>30</sup> The method deriving legal laws

<sup>31</sup> Born 1214 A.H. in Dezful; died 1281 A.H. in Najaf

made great changes in the science of jurisprudence; and with reviving principles of jurisprudence and its foundation, he was able to use it for deducing various branches and religious laws. Through this method, he brought Shi'ā laws to a whole new stage. From amongst his works are two books, *Fara'id al-Usul* (known as Articles in the Science of Jurisprudence) and *Makasib* (a legal manual of Islamic Commercial Law) which have been taught in the seminaries for years. Ansari's his intellectual ideas in Shi'ā law were then developed by his outstanding students, some of whom were Mirza Shirazi, Mirza Rushti, Ayatullah Kuh Kamari, and Akhund Khorasani. With introducing debatable topics in reasoning in the creation of new rules of fiqh and placing them in a new and innovated framework, Akhund Khorasani wrote *Kafayatul al-Usul*, which is used until this day as a seminary textbook.

The evolution and development of the science of jurisprudence after Akhund Khorasani continued through great intellectuals such as Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Isfahani, Ayatollah Agha Diya al-Din Iraqi and with Allamah Na'eni's insightful thinking and scrutiny, the depth of topics and content related to reasoning in new *fiqh* rules (*usuli*) increased and its status in Shi'ā *ijtihad* and jurisprudence showed itself more than ever.

The composition of two very valuable books, with comprehensiveness regarding religious jurisprudential matter was another remarkable service of the Najaf Seminaries. One is *Urwa al-Wuthqa* by Ayatullah Sayyid Kadhim Yazdi<sup>32</sup> and the other *Wasilah al-Nijat* by Ayatullah Sayyid al-Hasan Isfahani.<sup>33</sup> With 3,260 jurisprudential issues, *Urwa al-Wuthqa* became a reference book in jurisprudence. Prominent jurists used its methods in writing legal books, and its fundamental legal topics are discussed in advanced jurisprudential studies (*dars-e kharij-e fiqh*) to such a point that today many commentaries and interpretations

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<sup>32</sup> 1247-1338 A.H.

<sup>33</sup> 1277-1365 A.H.

have been written on it. Moreover, *Wasilah al-Nijat*, which contained most of the Islamic legal issues necessary for Muslims at the time, because of the skillful text it became the foundation of many jurisprudential books afterwards and many of the collections of juridical edicts (*risalah*) are written as a form of commentary on it.

Currently, the Islamic seminaries of Najaf continue to shine and have introduced judicial personalities and supreme legal authorities (*maraji'*) such as Ayatullah Sayyid Muhsin Hakim,<sup>34</sup> Ayatullah Sayyid Abul Ghasim Khoei,<sup>35</sup> and Ayatullah Sayyid Ali Sistani.<sup>36</sup>

### ***Philosophy in the Seminary of Najaf***

The appearance of philosophy and the spread of philosophical ideology in the Islamic seminaries of Najaf - and Iraq in general - are due to the migration of great scholars from Iran. This was structured around Islamic philosophy from long before. Khajah Nasr al-Din Tusi's<sup>37</sup> trips to Baghdad between the years 662 to 672 A.H. and his meetings with Iraqi scholars set the grounds where intellectual ideas were spread in Iraq.<sup>38</sup> However, the widespread familiarization of the Najaf seminaries with philosophy was the migration of Akhund Mulla Husayngholi Hamedani to the holy Shi'a sites of Iraq, and his studies and instructions in the seminary of Karbala and Najaf. He himself benefited

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<sup>34</sup> 1264-1390 A.H.

<sup>35</sup> 1317-1413 A.H.

<sup>36</sup> Born 1349 A.H.

<sup>37</sup> 598-672 A.H.

<sup>38</sup> Allamah Hilli was one of Khajah Nasr al-Din Tusi's students who participated in his philosophy classes and in return Khajah would participate in his jurisprudence classes. When getting his certification (*ijazah*) he says the following about his teacher to ibn Zuhra: Khajah Nasr al-Din Tusi was the most superior scholar of our time and had many compilations in intellectual and traditional sciences. He was the most noble of the people we have the honor of knowing, make God brighten his shrine. In his presence I read *al-Hayat*, *Shafa-e ibn Sina*, and *tazkirehee dar hayat*, which were that great scholars written works. Then after he parted this world and may God bless his soul. Murtazavipour, Akbar, *The Biography of Iranian and World Mathematicians*.

from Mulla Hadi Sabzevari's<sup>39</sup> classes in the seminary and made his own students familiar with Islamic philosophy, in which he found his perfect form in Mulla Sadra's *Transcendent Theosophy* (***al-Hikmah al-Muta'liyah***). He also promoted transmitted knowledge (*ulum naqli*) alongside intellectual knowledge (*ulum aqli*) and made efforts to spread it within the seminaries. Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi, Sayyid Abd al-Husayn Lari, and Sayyid Ahmad Karbalaei have all been trained in the Najaf seminary.

Other philosophy teachers in Najaf include Agha Mirza Muhammad Baqir Istahbanati, Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Gharuri Isfahani, Agha Shaykh Ali Muhammad Najaf Abadi, Agha Sayyid Husayn Badkoobei, Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai, and Shaykh Murtadha Taleqani, Allamah Muhammad Taqi Ja'fari's teacher.

The next part of this series continues with information on the Islamic Seminary of Hillah – including its revival of *ijtihad* and its prominent scholars – and the Kadhimayn Seminary.

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<sup>39</sup> Of the most popular hakims and philosophers of the thirteenth century and of the commentators of Mull Sadra Shirazi's written works and idea and his most important work meaning his book *Mandhumah* is a summary of the book *Asfar* written Mulla Sadra.



# QUR'ANIC THEMES IN MINUTES

BY MUHSEN QARA'ATI  
TRANSLATED BY HOWRAA SAFIEDDINE

**ABSTRACT:** This article presents excerpts from Muhsen Qara'ati's *Qur'anic Themes in Minutes*,<sup>1</sup> a concise version of his renowned and award-winning *Tafsir Noor* – a 12-volume exegesis of the Qur'an. *Qur'anic Themes in Minutes* is a compilation of 200 subjects for readers to familiarize themselves with short-and-sweet subjects pertaining to morality in the Qur'an. The following topics were specially selected, some of which include subjects on sincerity (*ikhlaas*) and its signs; factors of peacefulness, anxiety, deviation; the hearts of the believer and unbeliever; arrogance and the arrogant; and humbleness.

## *What is Sincerity (Ikhlaas)?*

Sincerity (*ikhlaas*) is that which is done one hundred percent for God to the extent that if one percent or even less than that is for other than Him, his worship is either void or there is a problem with it. We are insincere if:

- We choose a place for prayer for other than God; for instance, if we intentionally stand in a place in order to be seen by others or so cameras can display us.

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<sup>1</sup> Qara'ati, Muhsen. *Qur'anic Themes in Minutes*. Tehran: Farhangi Darsha'i az Qur'an Institute, 1390.

- We choose to worship at a specific time for other than God. For instance, we pray at the prescribed time to attract people's attention.
- If our form and countenance in prayer is for other than God. For example, slanting our necks downwards and changing our voices with a goal other than for the pleasure of God. In all these cases, prayer is void. We have also sinned for showing off.

In other words, ikhlaas is when we do not take our carnal desires, false deities, political inclinations, and other desires into consideration. Rather, our motive should be one thing: to obey God's commands and perform our duty.

Certainly, attaining ikhlaas is not possible without God's help. Verse 32 of the chapter *Luqman*, states:

*When waves cover them like awnings, they invoke Allah, putting exclusive faith in Him. But when He delivers them towards land, [only] some of them remain unswerving. And no one will impugn Our signs except an ungrateful traitor.*

### ***Becoming Sincere (Ikhlās)***

In order to be sincere we must:

1. *Consider God's knowledge and power.* If we know that all glories, strengths, and provisions are in His hands, we will never go toward other than Him to gain honor, strength, and provision.

If we take note of the fact that all beings are created according to God's will and through it, everything will perish, and if we know that He is

the cause, while at the same time He can stop any cause He chooses,<sup>2</sup> we would not intercede to other than Him.

Hundreds of verses and stories in the Qur'an have invited people to God so that people might abandon other than Him and sincerely move toward Him.

2. *Take note of the blessings of ikhlās.* A person with ikhlās has only one goal: God's satisfaction. Someone whose goal is solely for God's satisfaction pays no attention to people's praises, is not afraid of rebukes, does not fear loneliness, does not retreat in his path, is never regretful, does not become preoccupied because of people's ridicule, does not despair, and has nothing to do with the most or least when traversing the right path.

The Qur'an says sincere warriors are not afraid of killing God's enemy or becoming martyred in God's way. Imam Husayn, in the threshold of his travel to Karbala, said, "We shall go to Karbala. Whether we become martyred or victorious, the goal is to fulfill our duty."

3. *Take into consideration God's grace.* Another approach that brings us closer to ikhlās is remembering God's favours. We should not forget that we did not exist. The embryo was created from earth and food and was positioned in the dark womb of the mother. It passed the stages of growth one after the other and came into this world in the form of a complete human being. During that time, it did not know anything – it had only one faculty which was suckling its mother's milk - a complete nourishment that supplies all of the body's needs. What's more, it comes along with the mother's love - a mother who was at its service 24 hours a day. Why should we sell ourselves to others who neither have any right over us nor have been kind to us?

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<sup>2</sup> He caused a dry tree to produce fresh dates for Lady Mariam and transformed fire to a garden for Ibrahim

4. *Take God's will into consideration.* If we know that the hearts of the people are in God's hands and He is the 'Turner of hearts,' we will perform our deeds only for Him, and when we are in need of the people's protection, we ask God to protect us.

In the hot deserts of Hijaz, Prophet Abraham raised the base of the Kaa'ba and asked God to incline the hearts of the people toward his offspring. Thousands of years have passed and every year millions of passionate people, filled with excitement, circumambulate around the house.

How many of us burden ourselves in order to satisfy the people though they still do not like us or remain unimpressed; and how many of us who, without expectations from people, entrust our hearts to God and sincerely perform our duties and while simultaneously have a great and special dignity in the eyes of the people? Therefore, the goal must be to please God and to ask Him to help us attain the people's pleasure.

5. *Take note of the remaining of deeds.* Deeds that are done for God persist and remain. And if the deed is not for God, the date of its utilization will end sooner or later. The Qur'an says, "That which is with you will be spent but what is with Allah shall last."<sup>3</sup> And no reasonable person prefers lasting forever over mortality.

### ***The signs of a sincere believer***

*And most of them do not believe in Allah without ascribing partners to Him. (Yusuf, 106)*

1. In charity: He does not expect reward or thanks from anyone: "We do not want any reward from you nor any thanks."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Nahl*, 96

<sup>4</sup> *Insan*, 9

2. In worship: He does not worship anyone besides God: *“And not associate anyone with the worship of his Lord.”*<sup>5</sup>

3. In propagating: He does not want reward from anyone other than God: *“My reward lies only with Allah.”*<sup>6</sup>

4. In marriage: He is not afraid of poverty and gets married trusting God's promise: *“If they are poor, Allah will enrich them out of His grace.”*<sup>7</sup>

5. In meeting people: He puts everything aside except for God's pleasure: *“Say, ‘Allah!’ Then leave them.”*<sup>8</sup>

6. While encountering the enemy in war: He does not fear anyone but God: *“And fear no one except Allah.”*<sup>9</sup>

7. In kindness and love: He loves no one as much as Him: *“A more ardent love for Allah.”*<sup>10</sup>

8. In business and trade: He is not negligent in remembering God: *“...men whom neither trading nor bargaining distracts from the remembrance of Allah.”*<sup>11</sup>

### ***Humbleness***

*Do not turn your cheek disdainfully from the people,  
and do not walk exultantly on the earth. Indeed Allah  
does not like any swaggering braggart. (Luqman, 18)*

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<sup>5</sup> *Kahf*, 110

<sup>6</sup> *Hud*, 29

<sup>7</sup> *Nur*, 32

<sup>8</sup> *An'am*, 91

<sup>9</sup> *Ahzab*, 39

<sup>10</sup> *Baqarah*, 165

<sup>11</sup> *Nur*, 37

In this verse, Luqman says to his son, “*Do not walk exultantly on the earth.*” And in surah *Furqan*, humbleness is the first sign of the good servants of God: “*The servants of the All-beneficent are those who walk humbly on the earth.*”<sup>12</sup>

One of the secrets to prayer, in which we place the highest point of our body on soil - every day at least 34 times in 17 rak’as of obligatory prayer - is staying away from arrogance and vanity, and being humble towards God.

Even though it is necessary for all of mankind to be humble, it is further necessary towards parents, teachers, and faithful Muslims. Humbleness toward faithful Muslims is one of the distinguishing signs of the people of faith: “[*who will be] humble towards the faithful.*”<sup>13</sup>

Unlike the demands of the arrogant who wanted to distance the poor from the Prophets, the people of faith would say, “*But I will not drive away those who have faith.*”<sup>14</sup>

Why does a weak and impotent man who was created from earth and sperm and who will be nothing more than a corpse in the near future behave arrogantly?

Is not his limited knowledge vulnerable due to forgetfulness?

Is not his beauty, strength, fame, and wealth likely to wane?

Has he not seen illness, poverty, and death in society?

Are not his strengths perishable?

Then why does he behave arrogantly? The Qur’an says, “*Do not walk exultantly on the earth. Indeed you will neither pierce the earth, nor reach the mountains in height.*”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Furqan*, 63

<sup>13</sup> *Ma’idah*, 54

<sup>14</sup> *Hud*, 29.

<sup>15</sup> *Isra’*, 37.

### ***Examples of the humbleness of the special friends of God***

1. The Prophet would sit in a manner in which he did not have any privileges over others, and those who would enter the assembly (*majlis*) and not recognize the Prophet would ask, "Which one of you is the Messenger of God?"<sup>16</sup>
2. While on a trip, when it was time to prepare food, each person undertook a job. The Prophet also undertook a job and said, "I will take responsibility for collecting wood."<sup>17</sup>
3. Just as the Prophet saw that there was no carpet for some to sit on, he gave his cloak for them to sit on.<sup>18</sup>
4. Wearing plain clothing, riding a bare donkey, milking, sitting with and befriending the slaves, greeting children, patching shoes and clothes, accepting the peoples invitations, sweeping the house, giving a helping hand to all people, and not taking food lightly are of the conduct and lifestyle (*sira*) of the Prophet.<sup>19</sup>
5. Some of the Shi'a wanted to evacuate the public bath for Imam Sadiq. The Imam did not allow them and said, "There is no need; the life of a believer is simpler than these formalities."<sup>20</sup>
6. No matter how much the people insisted that Imam Ridha's table be separate from the servants, the Imam would not accept.<sup>21</sup>
7. A man in a public bathroom did not recognize Imam Rida and wanted help with washing the back of his shoulder and back. Without introducing himself, the Imam, with utmost dignity, accepted his

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<sup>16</sup> *Bihar*, vol. 47, p. 47.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 16, p. 235.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 16, p. 155 and vol. 73, p. 208.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 47, p. 47.

<sup>21</sup> *Kudak, Falsafi*, vol. 2, p. 457.

request. When the man recognized the Imam, he began to apologize and the Imam comforted him.<sup>22</sup>

Accepting other people's suggestions and criticisms and sitting somewhere lower than one's own status are among the signs of humbleness and humility.

### ***Factors of serenity and assurance***

*...those who have faith, and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah.' Look! The hearts find rest in Allah's remembrance! (Ra'd, 28)*

There are many influences for attaining assurance and serenity, though awareness and knowledge stand at the head of them all and have a particular affect.

- Someone who knows that an atom's weight of his deeds is accounted for ("*...an atom's weight of good will see it*")<sup>23</sup> is confident in his works and efforts.
- Someone who knows that he is created through God's mercy and grace ("*...except those on whom your Lord has mercy – and that is why He created them*")<sup>24</sup> is hopeful.
- Someone who knows that God is in ambush of the oppressors ("*Indeed your Lord is in ambush*")<sup>25</sup> is tranquil.
- Someone who knows that God is All-wise and All-knowing and has not created anything in vain ("*All-knowing, All-wise*") is optimistic.

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<sup>22</sup> Bihar, vol. 49, p. 99.

<sup>23</sup> Zalzalah, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Hud, 119.

<sup>25</sup> Fajr, 14.



- Someone who knows that his path is clear and his future is better than the past (*“While the Hereafter is better and more lasting”*)<sup>26</sup> has assurance in his heart.
- Someone who knows that his Imam and leader is a pure being chosen by God and is infallible from any error (*“I am making you the Imam of mankind”*)<sup>27</sup> is at peace.
- Someone who knows that his good deed is rewarded 10 to 700 times, rather, infinitely more while with his bad deed, only one error will be taken into account, is contented. (*“The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is that of a grain which grows seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains.”*)<sup>28</sup>
- Someone who knows that God loves the virtuous (*“Indeed Allah loves the virtuous”*)<sup>29</sup> becomes confident with his good deeds.
- Someone who knows his good deeds are revealed and his ugly deeds remain hidden (*“O you who reveal beauty and conceal ugly things”*)<sup>30</sup> is happy.

### ***Factors of anxiety and worry***

One of the most prevalent illnesses in the present century is anxiety and depression. Many reasons for these illnesses – which include symptoms such as isolationism, excessive introversion, feeling inferior, and feeling worthless – have been mentioned, such as:

- A person becomes depressed because he does not see everything according to his aspirations, whereas we should not stop and give

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<sup>26</sup> A'la, 17

<sup>27</sup> Baqarah, 124

<sup>28</sup> Baqarah, 261

<sup>29</sup> Baqarah, 195

<sup>30</sup> From a well-known supplication

up altogether merely because we have not arrived at everything we want.

- A depressed person thinks to himself why no one likes him while this is not possible; he even considers God and Angel Gabriel as enemies. Therefore, one should not expect everyone to like him.
- A depressed person assumes everyone is bad, while it is not so and God answered the Angels who had this illusion.
- A depressed person assumes that everything unpleasant is external, while bitterness primarily comes as a result of one's own behaviour and conduct.
- A person with anxiety is worried from the beginning in his endeavours and feels afraid and alone. In order to eliminate this state, Imam Ali says, "When you fear something involve yourself in it, because fearing anything is greater than that thing itself."<sup>31</sup>
- A person with anxiety is worried about his future. This can be cured by having trust in God and perseverance.
- Because he has become disappointed with some undertakings, he is worried that maybe he will suffer this fate in all his affairs.
- Because he relies on people and unstable powers, with their precariousness, he becomes insecure and restless.
- In short, matters such as the failure to appreciate peoples' efforts, sin, fear, hasty judgments, aberrant expectations and misconceptions are all reasons for many depressions and anxieties. By remembering God and his strength, forgiveness, and kindness, this emotional state can be transformed into tranquillity and happiness.

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<sup>31</sup> *Bihar*, vol. 71, p. 362.

***Elements of deviation***

*On the day that He will muster them and those whom they worship besides Allah, He will say, 'Was it you who led astray these servants of Mine, or did they themselves stray from the way?' (Furqan, 17)*

The factors which cause misdirection and deviation have been introduced in the Qur'an in the following manner:

1. A bad friend: *"Certainly he led me astray."*<sup>32</sup>
2. Desire: *"And do not follow desire, or it will lead you astray from the way of Allah."*<sup>33</sup>
3. Deviated scholars: *"[They] write the Book with their hands and then say, 'This is from Allah.'"*<sup>34</sup>
4. Misguided leaders: *"Pharaoh led his people astray."*<sup>35</sup>
5. Satan: *"Indeed he is an enemy, manifestly misguiding."*<sup>36</sup>
6. The misdirection of the majority: *"If you obey most of those on the earth, they will lead you astray from the way of Allah."*<sup>37</sup>
7. Misguided parents: *"We found our fathers...and we are indeed following in their footsteps."*<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Furqan*, 29

<sup>33</sup> *Sad*, 26

<sup>34</sup> *Baqarah*, 79

<sup>35</sup> *Ta Ha*, 79

<sup>36</sup> *Qasas*, 15

<sup>37</sup> *An'am*, 116

<sup>38</sup> *Zukhruj*, 23

***The hearts of the believer and the unbeliever***

*(Musa) said, 'My Lord! Open my breast for me. Make my affair easy for me. Remove the hitch from my tongue,<sup>39</sup> [so that] they may understand my discourse.'*  
(Ta Ha, 25-28)

The heart of a believer and unbeliever can be described as follows:

The Heart of the Believer	The Heart of the Unbeliever
<b>Life:</b> <i>Is he who was lifeless, then We gave him life.<sup>40</sup></i>	<b>Sick:</b> <i>There is a sickness in their hearts.<sup>41</sup></i>
<b>Healing:</b> <i>And heal the hearts of a faithful folk.<sup>42</sup></i>	<b>Ruthless:</b> <i>(We) made their hearts hard.<sup>43</sup></i>
<b>Purity:</b> <i>Whose hearts Allah has tested.<sup>44</sup></i>	<b>Rejection:</b> <i>Allah made their hearts swerve.<sup>45</sup></i>
<b>Tolerance:</b> <i>'My Lord! Open my breast for me.'<sup>46</sup></i>	<b>Sealed:</b> <i>The ones on whose hearts Allah has set a seal.<sup>47</sup></i>
<b>Guidance:</b> <i>Whoever has faith in Allah, He guides his heart.<sup>48</sup></i>	<b>Dark:</b> <i>Their hearts have been sullied.<sup>49</sup></i>

<sup>39</sup> That is, 'Grant me clarity of speech.'

<sup>40</sup> An'am, 122

<sup>41</sup> Baqarah, 10

<sup>42</sup> Tawbah, 14

<sup>43</sup> Ma'idah, 13

<sup>44</sup> Hujurat, 3

<sup>45</sup> Saff, 5

<sup>46</sup> Ta Ha, 25

<sup>47</sup> Nahl, 108

<sup>48</sup> Taghabun, 11

<b>Faith:</b> <i>He has written faith into their hearts.</i> <sup>50</sup>	<b>Veil:</b> <i>We have cast veils on their faces.</i> <sup>51</sup>
<b>Composure:</b> <i>Composure into the hearts of the faithful.</i> <sup>52</sup>	<b>Locked:</b> <i>Or are there locks on the hearts?</i> <sup>53</sup>
<b>Kindness:</b> <i>And united their hearts.</i> <sup>54</sup>	<b>Hard-heartedness:</b> <i>Allah has set a seal on their hearts.</i> <sup>55</sup>
<b>Certainty of the heart:</b> <i>The hearts find rest in Allah's remembrance.</i> <sup>56</sup>	<b>Return and lack of understanding:</b> <i>Allah has turned aside their hearts.</i> <sup>57</sup>

***Arrogance and the arrogant***

*He [Pharaoh] and his hosts acted arrogantly in the land unduly, and thought they would not be brought back to Us. (Qasas, 39)*

Throughout history there have been proud and arrogant people who thought of themselves as the axis and center of everything. In this chapter, Pharaoh says, “*I do not know of any god that you may have other than me.*”<sup>58</sup> And when the magicians believed in Musa, Pharaoh said, “*Do you profess faith in Him before I may permit you?*”<sup>59</sup> Pharaoh expects that without his permission, no one should believe in

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<sup>49</sup> *Mutaffifin*, 14

<sup>50</sup> *Mujadalah*, 22

<sup>51</sup> *Kahf*, 57

<sup>52</sup> *Fath*, 4

<sup>53</sup> *Muhammad*, 14

<sup>54</sup> *Anfal*, 63

<sup>55</sup> *Baqarah*, 7

<sup>56</sup> *Ra'd*, 28

<sup>57</sup> *Tawbah*, 127

<sup>58</sup> *Qasas*, 38

<sup>59</sup> *A'raf*, 123

anything. Today there are ‘pharaohs’ and superpowers who also want to consider themselves the axis of world politics and economics.

- Sometimes, in order to show their power, the arrogant destroy or favour a person, group, or country. One such example is Nemrud who said to Prophet Abraham, *“I [too] give life and bring death”*<sup>60</sup> The life and death of these people is in my hands. I kill whom I want and free whomever I want.
- At times the arrogant draw glamour and material manifestations to the people, just as Pharaoh would say, *“Does not the kingdom of Egypt belong to me and these rivers that run at my feet?”*<sup>61</sup>
- Sometimes the arrogant force people into submission through intimidation. Pharaoh said to the magicians who believed in Musa, *“Surely I will cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides.”*<sup>62</sup>
- Every so often, the arrogant attract the naïve through schemes and showing off. Korah<sup>63</sup> would walk in the alleys and markets in a way that the materialistic people would sigh and say, *“We wish we had like what Korah has been given!”*<sup>64</sup>
- Sometimes the arrogant want to buy intelligence and ideas through bribery. Pharaoh said to the magicians, *“If you dishonor Musa, I will give you a great reward and will make you among those nearest to me.”*<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Baqarah*, 258

<sup>61</sup> *Zukhruf*, 51

<sup>62</sup> *A'raf*, 124

<sup>63</sup> *Qaroon*

<sup>64</sup> *Qasas*, 79

<sup>65</sup> *A'raf*, 114

- At times the arrogant make the hearts unstable and insecure with their travels. The Qur'an says, "*Never be misled by the bustle of the faithless in the towns.*"<sup>66</sup>
- Sometimes the arrogant wage a psychological war by humiliating others and call give uncalled for proportions with the supporters of prophets and call them hooligans.<sup>67</sup>
- Sometimes the arrogant try to draw the attention of people to themselves by creating tall buildings. Pharaoh said to his vizier Haman, "*Build me a tower so that I may reach the routes...and take a look at the God of Moses.*"<sup>68</sup>

How alive the Qur'an truly is in how it paints a picture of the arrogant peoples' temperament and indecent behavior that can be applied to our time.

### ***Faith tainted with polytheism***

1. They desire honor from others: "*Do they seek honor with them?*"<sup>69</sup>
2. In conduct: They combine good conduct with bad: "*...having mixed up righteous conduct with other that was evil.*"<sup>70</sup>
3. In encountering others, he has group prejudice: "*Each party exulting in what it had.*"<sup>71</sup>
4. In worship, he is heedless and insincere: "*...those who are heedless of their prayers, those who show off.*"<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Al 'Imran, 196

<sup>67</sup> Shu'ara, 111

<sup>68</sup> Ghafir, 36

<sup>69</sup> Nisa, 139

<sup>70</sup> Tawba, 102

<sup>71</sup> Mu'minoon, 53

<sup>72</sup> Ma'un, 5-6

5. In war and battle, he is afraid of the people: “...were afraid of people as if fearing Allah.”<sup>73</sup>
6. In trade and worldly affairs, greediness and excessiveness occupies him: “Rivalry [and vainglory] distracted you.”<sup>74</sup>
7. In choosing between religion and the temporal world, they take the temporal world and abandon the Prophet: “When they sight a deal or a diversion, they scatter off towards it and leave you standing!”<sup>75</sup>

### ***Repentance in the Qur’an***

*...barring those who repent, believe, and act righteously. Such will enter paradise, and they will not be wronged in the least. (Maryam, 60)*

Usually, following the verses that deal with punishment, the Qur’an brings forth the sentence ‘*except such as repent*’ or ‘*excepting those who repent,*’ indicating that the path to reform is never closed to anyone.

- Repentance is obligatory as it is God’s command: “*Repent to Allah.*”<sup>76</sup>
- The acceptance of true repentance is definite because one cannot believe that we repent by His command while He does not accept it: “*It is He who accepts the repentance of His servants*<sup>77</sup> - *He is the All-clement, the All-merciful.*”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Nisa, 77

<sup>74</sup> Takathur, 1

<sup>75</sup> Jumu’ah, 11

<sup>76</sup> Tahrim, 8

<sup>77</sup> Shura, 25

<sup>78</sup> Baqarah, 37



- God not only accepts repentance; he also likes those who repent a great deal: “*Allah loves the penitent.*”<sup>79</sup>
- Repentance must be coupled with good conduct and compensation of sins: “*Repents and acts righteously,*”<sup>80</sup> “*...repents after that and reforms,*”<sup>81</sup> “*...repent, make amends, and clarify.*”<sup>82</sup>
- Repentance is the code to salvation: “*Repent...so that you may be felicitous.*”<sup>83</sup>
- Repentance is a means for turning bad deeds into good deeds: “*...excepting those who repent, attain faith, and act righteously. For such, Allah will replace their misdeeds with good deeds.*”<sup>84</sup>
- Repentance is the reason for rainfall: “*Turn to Him penitently: He will send copious rains for you from the sky.*”<sup>85</sup>
- Repentance is the reason for favorable sustenance: “*Turn to Him penitently. He will provide you with a good provision.*”<sup>86</sup>
- Repentance is not accepted at a time when one sees the effects of death and punishment: “*When death approaches any of them, he says, ‘I repent now.’*”<sup>87</sup>
- In addition to accepting repentance, God also has a particular grace:
  - He is the All-clement, the All-merciful.*<sup>88</sup>
  - Repents after that and reforms.*<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *Baqarah*, 222

<sup>80</sup> *Furqan*, 71

<sup>81</sup> *An'am*, 54

<sup>82</sup> *Baqarah*, 160

<sup>83</sup> *Nur*, 31

<sup>84</sup> *Furqan*, 70

<sup>85</sup> *Hud*, 52

<sup>86</sup> *Hud*, 3

<sup>87</sup> *Nisa'*, 18

<sup>88</sup> *Baqarah*, 37

*-Then He turned clemently to them –indeed He is most kind and merciful to them.<sup>90</sup>*

*-Barring those who repent, believe, and act righteously.*

*-Such will enter paradise.<sup>91</sup>*

*-Then turn to Him penitently. My Lord is indeed all-merciful, all-affectionate.<sup>92</sup>*

In these verses, God's mercy, clemency, and affection have been mentioned alongside repentance.

The Qur'an considers one who leaves repentance as oppression:

*-And whoever is not penitent – such are the wrongdoers.<sup>93</sup>*

*-...and then do not repent, for them there is the punishment of the hell.<sup>94</sup>*

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<sup>89</sup> *An'am*, 54

<sup>90</sup> *Tawbah*, 117.

<sup>91</sup> *Maryam*, 60

<sup>92</sup> *Hud*, 90

<sup>93</sup> *Hujurat*, 11

<sup>94</sup> *Buruj*, 10

# IMAMAH AND WILAYAH, PART VI<sup>1</sup>

MOHAMMAD ALI SHOMALI

**ABSTRACT:** A leader who draws people nearer to righteousness is a grace of God. Imamate in Shi'i Islam considers it necessary to have a guide who will lead the Muslim society after the Prophet's death to present true Islam. This guide is appointed by God; he possesses qualities of piety, knowledge, wisdom, and infallibility. While Part IV of this series verified that the Shi'a understanding of Imamate is compatible with the Qur'an, Part V studied the group of verses that refer to the profound concept of *witness*, including his roles and merits, and that it is none other than Imam Ali who possessed those qualities. This part offers the authentic hadiths that refer to the legitimacy of Imam Ali's leadership, namely the Hadith of *Manzilah*, Hadith of *Dār*, Hadith of *Tayr*, Hadith of *Wilāya*, Hadith of *Ghadir*, Hadith of *Safīnah*, and the Hadith of the Stars.

## ***Part III: Hadiths referring to Imam Ali's Leadership***

There are many hadiths that refer to the authenticity of Imam Ali's Imamate. Citing all hadiths is beyond the constraints of this paper. We restrict ourselves to the well-known hadiths that are *mutawātir* - successive narrations conveyed by a considerable amount of narrators through multiple chains that its authenticity is unquestionable - such as Hadith of *Manzilah*, Hadith of *Dār*, Hadith of *Tayr*, Hadith of *Wilāya*, Hadith of *Ghadir*, Hadith of *Safīnah*, and the Hadith of the Stars.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on lecture 13 of a series of lectures delivered by Dr Mohammad Ali Shomali in summer 2004 in Qum.

### ***The Tradition of Rank (Hadith ul-Manzilah)***

The Prophet's strongest declaration of Imam Ali's successorship was revealed in the Tradition of Rank.<sup>2</sup>

The Prophet went for the Battle of Tabuk, a military expedition he led against the Romans during the later years of his life. As the Muslim soldiers prepared themselves for war, the Prophet asked Ali to remain in Medina and take charge of the city during his absence. This saddened Ali since he was eager to have been given an opportunity to go for jihad. He approached the Prophet and said, "O Prophet, you want me to be responsible for the women and children in the city?" The Prophet replied, "Aren't you pleased to be in relation to me like Aaron in relation to Musa, except that there is no prophet after me?"

Prophet Aaron held the following positions (except for prophethood) in relation to Prophet Moses:

#### ***A vicegerent of Prophet Moses:***

*We appointed for Moses thirty nights, and completed (the period) with ten (more): thus was completed the term (of communion) with his Lord, forty nights. And Moses had charged his brother Aaron (before he went up): "Act for me amongst my people: Do right, and follow not the way of those who do mischief. (7:142)*

#### ***A minister:***

*And give me a Minister from my family, Aaron, my brother (20:29-30)*

#### ***An assistant:***

*Add to my strength through him (20:31)*

#### ***A partner:***

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<sup>2</sup> Sahih Bukhari, vol. 6, p. 3; Sahih Muslim; also mentioned in Dua al-Nudbah

*And make him share my task (20:32)*

Thus, Imam Ali also holds the positions of being a vicegerent, minister, assistant, and partner to Prophet Muhammad with the exclusion of being a prophet.

To reiterate, when Prophet Muhammad sent for Imam Ali to convey the chapter *The Immunity* to the polytheists and unbelievers, he said, “I was asked by Allah that someone from myself must declare this.”

Thus, Imam Ali was “from” (*minhu*) the Prophet. Similarly, Prophet Aaron was “from”<sup>3</sup> Prophet Moses.

Although Prophet Aaron died before Prophet Moses, he was his brother’s successor when Prophet Moses left for 40 days to receive the tablets. During his lifetime, he was the closest person to Prophet Moses and the only one eligible enough to be his successor.<sup>4</sup>

### ***The Tradition of the House (Hadith al-Dār)***

The Prophet began his call to Islam individually; he did not publicly invite people to embrace it the first three years of its revelation. Afterwards, verse 214 from the chapter *The Poets (al-Shua’ra)* was revealed, instructing the Prophet to warn his close relatives: “*And admonish thy nearest kinsmen.*” To prepare for this first public invitation to Islam for the family of the Prophet, Imam Ali was asked to prepare a meal and invite all his relatives. During the event and before the Prophet was able to deliver the message, his uncle Abu Lahab repeatedly poked fun at him by calling him a magician to prevent the Prophet from delivering the message. Nonetheless, the Prophet said:

O sons of Abdul Muttalib! I have brought you something that guarantees your goodness in this world and in the hereafter. My Lord has asked me to invite you to believe in

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<sup>3</sup> 20:29

<sup>4</sup> Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan ibn Majid, and Sirah by Ibn Hisham.

this. Who among you is prepared to assist me to be my brother, successor, and caliph?

All kept silent. It was only Imam Ali, the youngest one among them, who said, “O Prophet of Allah. I am your assistant. I am your partner. I am the one who will assist you.” The Prophet placed his hand on Imam Ali’s neck to show that what he is going to say exclusively refers to Imam Ali. The Prophet said, “This is my brother, my successor, and my caliph. Listen to him and obey him.” And this is narrated by generations of Sunni scholars.

Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jareer Tabari both in his tafsir and in his book of history, Razi in his tafsir, Abu Na‘im Isfahani, Bayhaqi, and many other people – the author of Kanzul ‘Ummal, all have narrated hadith al-Dār. some of our ‘ulama have written independent essays and books on just this hadith. Just on a single hadith you have some essays or books. So this is an established thing.

### ***The Tradition of the Roasted Bird (Hadith al-Tayr)***

This hadith is about the Prophet and his prayer to Allah to share his ready-to-eat meal - gifted by an Ansari woman - with most beloved person to Him. Different versions of this hadith, with a similar theme yet different phrasings, have been combined for an accurate understanding to draw a conclusion regarding the event.

The original hadith:

A woman gifted the Prophet two ready-to-eat fried birds. Before eating, the Prophet raised his palms and implored, “O Allah! Of your whole creation, send the person who is dearest to you and to me so that he may share this roasted bird with me. This person is the most beloved by Allah and His Messenger and he will be the master and leader and wali after the Prophet.” Imam Ali then came in and shared the meal with the Prophet.

A version that includes ambiguous information:

One of the Ansar women gifted two fried birds to the Prophet. When he received them, he prayed, “My Lord, bring the one who is the most beloved people by You and me.” - ‘He raised his voice.’ The Prophet asked, ‘Who is the one raising his voice?’ Anas replied, ‘Ali.’<sup>5</sup>

The hadith ends at this point. It is unclear as to who raised his voice, and up until this point, there is no mention of Imam Ali. Readers or listeners may think it was the Prophet who raised his voice, but because he asked, ‘Who is this man?’ it could not have been the Prophet. Anas then said, ‘It’s Ali.’ Additional details are located in other Sunni sources.

Versions in which either the companions of the Prophet competed with one another as to whom will be chosen to share the meal, or those present desired the person to be chosen from his or her relative or group.

In the full hadith, when Anas heard the Prophet’s prayer, he wanted a person from his own people to be chosen, preferably Sa’d ibn ‘Ubādah. Thus, Anas prevented Imam Ali from entering, his reason being that the Prophet was busy. The Prophet then prayed a second time, and again, Imam Ali was stopped. The third time, Imam Ali raised his voice, and when the Prophet heard, he told Anas to let him in.

Another version reads:

...As soon as the Prophet received the meal and raised his hands in prayer, someone knocked on his door. Anas said, ‘I informed Ali that the Prophet was busy and will not accept visitors at the moment.’ The Prophet continued to pray, and when Imam Ali went twice to knock, Anas prevented him. When Imam Ali came once more, this time knocking harder, the Prophet heard it, and asked Anas as

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<sup>5</sup> Musnad of Imam ibn Hanbal

to who it was. When Anas informed him, the Prophet invited Ali to enter, and told him, 'I asked Allah three times to send me someone who is most beloved by him and most beloved by me to eat with me.' Imam Ali said that he, too, came three times although Anas asked him to return. When the Prophet asked Anas as to why he refused Ali, Anas said, 'I wanted someone from my own people to respond to your prayer.'<sup>6</sup>

Abu Ya'la has two versions of this hadith. The first one reads:

After the Prophet prayed, Aisha invoked Allah to choose her father as the first to knock on the door and share the meal with the Prophet. Hafsa, the daughter of the second caliph, also besought Allah to nominate her father. And Anas desired it to be Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah. Anas then says, 'After we prayed, we heard someone knocking at the door, and it was Ali. I told him the Prophet is busy, and so Ali left. When I heard another knock, I realized it was Ali again, and he was giving his salam. This time, the Prophet heard Ali's voice and said to me, 'Check to see who is knocking at the door.' When I said it was Ali, the Prophet asked to let him enter.

The second one reports that when Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman walked in one after the other the Prophet sent all of them back. When Ali came afterwards, the Prophet let him in.<sup>7</sup>

When considering the abovementioned hadiths, it leaves no doubt that Ali was the most beloved by Allah and the Prophet. Regardless of who was available in the hadith, the one most adored to the Prophet who entered his room to share his meal was none other than Ali.

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted by Haytham, author of *Majmaul Zawa'id*.

<sup>7</sup> In *Khasa'is* by al-Nisa'i, the hadith is the same, although there are important differences in details. Again, Anas narrated that when the Prophet prayed actually Abu Bakr came. Abu Bakr went in first and afterwards Umar yet the Prophet asked each to turn back. Then Ali came and the Prophet let him in.



Anas was not pleased to know that Ali was chosen to enter and eat with the Prophet and attempted to prevent him from being given this privilege. It is worth mentioning that Anas not only displayed his grudge against Imam Ali in Hadith al-Tayr, but in other historical events as well. Although Anas was a close servant to the Prophet, when Imam Ali asked him to bear witness about the Hadith of Ghadir, Anas refused to act as a witness to which he earned Imam Ali's curse. He later suffered from skin disease as a result.

### ***The Tradition of Wilayah***

The Prophet's hadith of Wilayah is reported by many Sunnis in various hadith books, including the Sihah. The most relevant phrase in it is: "You are the master, the leader, of all the believers after me." This is significant because the notion of leadership (*wilayah*) – 'You are the master' – is declared.

It is unclear as to why, when, and where this hadith was conveyed since the story behind it has not been given. However, other hadiths give additional details to understand the picture. For example, some hadiths read, "The Prophet said, 'Ali is from me, and I am from Ali; and Ali is the master of all believers after me.' This demonstrates Ali's authority and leadership (*wilaya*) after the Prophet.

In a more detailed version of the event, in preparation for a war, the Prophet sent an army that was divided into two groups and led by two commanders: Imam Ali and Khalid ibn Walid, although if a real battle began, Ali was to lead the entire army. The actual battle was launched, and Imam Ali was the leader. After the Muslim army gained their victory, Imam Ali distributed the booty among the soldiers and took one-fifth (*khums*) to be given to the Prophet, half for the Prophet's offspring, half for conditions in which the Prophet found it appropriate to offer.

When Imam Ali took something as his portion of booty, four men who were unacquainted with Imam Ali's character suspected him of covetousness. Angered by his action, they head to Medina to inform the Prophet. When they arrived, the Prophet ignored the first three men. When the fourth person spoke of Ali's action, the Prophet's face showed anger, and he said:

What do you want from Ali? Ali is from me, and I am from Ali. And after me, Ali is the master of all believers. And you have come to complain about him?<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the Prophet's description of Ali being from him and he from Ali, and Imam Ali as the master of all believers was triggered during an event. This clearly shows that Ali was the one to be chosen by the Prophet according to the will of Allah.

### ***The Tradition of Ghadir***

According to a survey by Allameh Amini, 110 companions of the Prophet have narrated the Tradition of Ghadir.<sup>9</sup> And among those who have followed the companions of the Prophet, 89 second-generation companions, the Tabi'een - those who have visited the companions of the Prophet, and not the Prophet himself - had the opportunity to hear this news and transfer it to the next generation.

3500 Sunni narrators of hadith and historians have reported the Hadith of Ghadir, and though its interpretation is disputed, its authenticity is irrefutable. Some Sunni scholars have argued that *wali* here does not mean master or leader; rather it merely refers to 'friend' although it is still significant why they Prophet asked thousands of Muslims to gather and announce to them that Ali is your friend. Does this not mean that

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<sup>8</sup> Kanzul Ummal, vol. 11, p. 608 and Sunan of Tirmidhi

<sup>9</sup> See M. A. Shomali, "Imamate and Wilayah," Part IV in Message of Thaqaalayn, Spring 2012, vol. 13, no. 12.

everyone had to love him and not fight him? Did they act as the Prophet had asked? Did they befriend Ali and love him?

### *The Tradition of Safinah*

In a well-known hadith narrated by both Shi'a and Sunni Muslims, the Prophet Muhammad has likened his household to the ship or ark (*safinah*) of Prophet Noah:

Surely the likeness of my Ahl al-Bayt is similar to Noah's Ark; whoever boards it will attain salvation and whoever remains behind is drowned.

Another version reads:

We serve as the ark of salvation. Whoever holds fast to this ark will reach salvation and whoever deviates from it will be cast into perdition. Whoever wants God to grant him something should resort to the Ahl al-Bayt.<sup>10</sup>

The Prophets, Imams, and spiritual scholars instruct people to heed to their spiritual life i.e., the life of guidance and faith. This hadith is in harmony with Hadith al-Thaqalayn since the Ahlul Bayt are the ones to be followed and obeyed after the Prophet. Thus, according to the Hadith ul-Safina, whoever refuses to appeal to the Ahlul Bayt is spiritually destroyed as it is hopeless to be alive without following a leader that gives a person guidance and direction.

Though this hadith is more so about the Ahlul Bayt than Imam Ali, it includes Imam Ali and can be used to show and support that he was qualified and eligible to be the successor to the Prophet.

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<sup>10</sup> Sunni references: *Fadha'il al-Sahaba*, by Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, vol. 2, p. 671, Tradition #1145, *Dhakha'ir al-Uqba*, by Muhibbuddin al-Tabari, p.14, *Manaqib Ahmad*, and many more such as *al-Tabarani*, etc., *al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah*, by Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, Ch. 11, section 1, p. 234, *Musnad*, Abu Ya'ala, on the authority of Salama Ibn Awka' in which the wording is: "The stars are amnesty for the inhabitants of the heavens, and my Ahlul Bayt are the amnesty for my Ummah." Also in *Mustadrak* of Hakim, vol. 3 p. 351; *Al-Sawa'iq ul Muhrika* p. 91; *Yanabee'ul Mawadi*, *Tareekhul Khulafa'*, and *al-Khasasul Kubra*.

Thus, for one to be saved during difficulties, he or she must refer to the Ahlul Bayt. When the Prophet is unavailable and the Muslims need guidance, we are to refer to them. The actual person among the Ahlul Bayt prepared to act as a leader was Ali. Additionally, during that time Lady Fatima asked people to follow him to achieve guidance and salvation.

### *The Ahlul Bayt are likened to the Stars*

Prophet Muhammad said:

The stars help prevent the inhabitants of the earth from being drowned, and my Ahlul Bayt are the protectors of my community against disputes (in religious matters). Therefore, whichever groups among the Arabs opposes my Ahlul Bayt shall be split up by dissensions and will become (a party of) Satan.

This hadith holds the same idea mentioned in the Hadith of Safina - that the only way to be saved when facing a tribulation or controversy is to refer to the Ahlul Bayt for guidance. The stars are unfailingly accurate in guiding any traveler to his or her destination; two people disagreeing on which path to take cannot be trusted for guidance. When Muslims divide themselves into different sects, we must refer to the Ahlul Bayt since they hold a higher intellectual and spiritual position than we do. Their level of belief and knowledge greatly surpasses ours. Had they been at our level, we could then hold that they have their views and we have ours. And as said in the hadith, if a tribe of Arabs disagrees with the Prophet's household, they will split and eventually become Satan's advocates.

Thus, Imamate is a high position. It is based on reason that an Imam must be appointed by Allah. In this series, it was first studied in general; afterwards, based on the verses of the Qur'an and various authentic traditions, we verified that Imam Ali was the one who was truly appointed to be the Prophet's successor.