

## Shia Messianism (Mahdawiyyah)

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**Original Source of Belief in Imamah and Faith in the Appearance of the Twelfth Imam (peace be upon him)**

**QUESTION:**

From which Islamic sources has the position and esteem (i'tibar) of the Imamah and leadership and faith in the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) been understood? And what effect have events and the passage of time had on the completion of this principle?

**ANSWER:**

According to a verse of Qur'an, Imamah is a station that was granted to Ibrahim al-Khalil (peace be upon him) after that great test—trial by kalimat (words)[52]. According to traditions that are consecutively narrated (mutawatir) and which both Shi'a and Sunnis have related, this station was also placed in the Ahl al-Bait of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) and they have been singled out for this great Divine grant.

On this basis it has been established that in every era an individual from this family who possesses the necessary capabilities, including knowledge and infallibility, will be responsible for the station of Imamah and leadership.

Such an individual is the proof (hujjat) of Allah, equal of the Qur'an, guide of the people, and protector of the religion and Divine law. Imamah is a principle that has been established from the time of the Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) until our time and will continue from our time until the end of the world. The point of its apparent perfection and complete flowering will be during the age of the gladdening reappearance of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) and establishment of his united just world government, during which the world will be filled with equity, justice, goodness, and blessings through the blossoming of all human potentials and evolution of thoughts and becoming apparent of terrestrial and celestial blessings.

The agenda of forming a new world community which must end in spreading justice and the sovereignty of tawhid (Divine unity) is understood from the core of Islamic teachings. The Noble Qur'an in several chapters has announced this and hundreds of prophetic traditions have related the world's adoption of Islam and the government of justice and establishment of complete security in the land after the reappearance of the promised Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return), who is from the descendents of 'Ali and Fatimah (peace be upon her) and shares the name and agnomen (kunya) of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family).

Belief in the appearance of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) with the mentioned qualities is something which has been mentioned in Islam's primary texts. According to consecutively-narrated (mutawatir) traditions, the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) has given news of this blessed event and requested his 'ummat (community) to be in wait of that consequential day.

Though the issue of appearance is deduced from the general tidings pertaining to Islam's becoming supreme in the world and truth overcoming falsehood, this does not mean that the issue of appearance is solely a concept deduced from the purport of traditions, since the text and very words of narrations point to it independently, and most of the faithful rely on these very texts that explicitly point to the appearance of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) and its signs.

Once it is known that the foundation of the existence of this belief is the general tidings and texts of traditions, it can be said that historical conditions and events that occurred after the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) had no role in its coming into existence.

This is because the origin of this idea is the era of prophecy and the traditions related to it exceed one thousand traditions, which are narrated in books traditions, commentary, and many other books. Prominent Sunni scholars have also written independent books about it, and books written more than twelve centuries ago by the greatest experts and researches of Islamic sciences clearly indicate that the person of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) gave tidings about the issue of the appearance of the Promised Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return), and his companions, the followers (tabi'in) of the companions, and after them other generations of people have narrated them.

**The Qur'an and Messianism (Mahdawiyyat)**

**QUESTION:**

Which verse of the Noble Qur'an can be cited regarding the authority (wilayat) of the twelve

Imams (peace be upon them) and the just government of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) and the supremacy of Islam over the world?

**ANSWER:**

The verses from whose purport it is understood that the twelve Imams—may Allah elevate their word—have authority and Imamah are many in number.

Among them is the verse:

“You are but a warner, and every people has a guide.”[53]

And the verse:

“My covenant reaches not the oppressors (and only that group of your descendants is worthy of this position who are pure and infallible).”[54]

and the verse:

“Thus is one who guides to the truth worthier of being followed?”[55]

These verses indicate this point since from them one understands that society is not without an Imam, the infallibility of the holder of the station of Imamah, and his being more knowledgeable than others, and this issue is among the exclusive convictional principles of the Shi’a. And from the verse:

“O’ ye who have brought faith! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you (the trustees of the Prophet).”[56]

This doctrine of the Shi’a—that the Imam and ruler must be infallible—is understood. This is because in this verse obedience to those in authority has been commanded in an absolute manner. Obedience to the Prophet, which is in all affairs, has been expressed together with obedience to those in authority in one word—the imperative verb أطيعوا, “obey!”

It is obvious that someone whom the believers have been ordered to obey absolutely in such a way must be infallible and far removed from errors and mistakes, and as it is undisputed that from among the Islamic sects only the Shi’a believe in the infallibility of the Imam.

In addition to this, commentaries and reliable traditions also indicate that the intent of the noble verse “Obey Allah...” and other verses is the twelve Imams (peace be upon them), and in these commentaries, the blessed names of these personages are also mentioned explicitly.

As for the supremacy of Islam in the world and its overcoming all religions, it is sufficient to pay attention to verses 32 and 33 of Surah at-Tawba, verse 28 of Surah al-Fath, verses 6 and 8 of Surah al-Saff, and numerous other verses. In them, the promise of appearance and true religion’s overcoming all religions has been given, a promise that will come to pass with the appearance of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return), and this is inviolable.

In regard to the appearance of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) in particular, many verses have been elucidated to refer to it, which exceed one hundred verses in all. The book *Al-Mahajja fi ma Nazala fi al-Qa’im al-Hujja* (The Final Destination Regarding What Has Been Revealed About the Twelfth Imam) has collected all of them.

Among those verses is this verse:

“Allah has promised those who have believed among you and do good deeds that He shall certainly make them rulers in the earth as He made rulers those before them and shall make firm for them their religion which He has chosen for them and shall change their fear into security; they will worship Me and associate none with Me, and whoever disbelieves after that, it is they who are the iniquitous.”[57]

and this verse:

“And we desire bestow a favor on those deemed weak in the land and make them leaders and make them inheritors.”[58]

and the verse:

“And verily We have written in the Zabur (Psalms) after the Remembrance that my righteous servants will inherit the earth.”[59]

### **Belief in the Appearance of the Mahdi and Savior and the Appearance of False Mahdis**

**QUESTION:**

Belief in the appearance of the Mahdi and savior has caused the appearance of false Mahdis throughout history, and some make this circumstance a justification for setting aside this idea. To what extent can this viewpoint be accepted?

**ANSWER:**

This viewpoint is absolutely unacceptable, or else humanity must set aside all positive viewpoints. This is because all of them have more or less been subject to misuse. All of the individuals who claimed to be God or regarded themselves the manifestation of God, united with God, or regarded God to have taken abode in them have all misused the principle of belief in Allah. This action in no way harms the issue of belief in Allah.

Similarly, all of the false prophets who claimed prophecy and misled a people do not transmit any damage to the correctness of the principle of prophecy. This issue arises in more or less every field and industry, but that incident brings no harm to that field itself.

In short, if any name or word that has a good and attractive meaning has been used for its opposite, this does not damage these values and good affairs themselves, such as if a betrayer has been called trustworthy, an oppressor called just, an ignorant person called learned, a sinner called God-fearing, or if all treacheries and oppressions have been committed in the name of well-wishing and seeking reform.

### **The Effect of Social, Economic, and Political Factors in Religious Thought**

#### **QUESTION:**

What effect have social, economic, and political factors had on religious thoughts and creeds and on belief in the appearance of the Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return)?

#### **ANSWER:**

From the viewpoint of the godless worldview, all affairs must be attributed to historical and material causes.

However, from the viewpoint of the religious worldview, the source of that which is genuine and true from among various ideas and creeds is revelation, the call of the prophets, and the inborn comprehension of humanity, which is referred to as the guidance of reason, natural disposition, revelation, and prophecy.

In the eyes of this viewpoint, all of the devious courses and harmful thoughts are the effect of material and historical causes, personal goals, and deficiency of culture of society and its upbringing. Religious creeds taken from revelation and prophecy are all genuine and actual and have a place in humanity's nature.

History, the passage of time, human knowledge, and material causes do not bring them into existence. Rather, the source of conviction about matters such as the principle of the messengership of the prophets and Imamah of the Imams (peace be upon them) and all true creeds is reason, human disposition, and revelation from Allah.

On this basis, no social, economical, or political factor has had or has an effect even in the appearance of belief in the appearance of Mahdi the Savior (may Allah hasten his return). The beginning and source of it is the narrations of the prophets, the celestial books, and the guidance, narrations, and words of the person of the Final Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), Imam Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him), and the remaining Imams (peace be upon them).

Though there have been false claims regarding being the Mahdi based on seeking rank and political aims, by analysis and recognition the original source of the appearance of these claims and the appearance of false claimants we reach the reality that an uncontested reality has been involved around which these claims and distortions have come about and been made tools by individuals.

In the same way, regarding belief in Allah, revelation, and prophecy itself we see that some realities exist and there is a ground for its acceptance in people's hearts, and opportunistic individuals, abusing this fact, have throughout history made claims of Godhead or prophecy.

And the issue of the Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) as well—since it was raised by the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) himself and the companions have heard and related it from him—is a reality which has been accepted by all.

For this reason it has been abused and individuals have made it means for differing objectives, most of which have been political.

If the issue of the Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) did not have reality, individuals would not have resorted to such distortion with regard to it. Thus, these abuses themselves confirm the fact that this issue has been accepted as a reality by all.

It is possible for events to guide humanity to realities, just as Ibrahim (peace be upon him), the great monotheist, taught recognition of Allah to people by use of events.

When night set, that personage saw a star. In the beginning, he said, "This is my Lord." But when the star set he said;

"I love not those that set."<sup>[60]</sup>

By making use of the incident of the rising and setting of the star, Ibrahim (peace be upon him) taught people that the star cannot be God.

After that, the moon also rises and sets, and from this incident as well he concludes that the moon, too, cannot be God.

Then, the sun rises and sets and, in the same way, he reaches the same conclusion about it.

In this way he seeks aversion to all polytheistic beliefs and guides the people to the Creator of all the world's inhabitants.

Thus, events can lead people to realities, but credal realities cannot be considered the effects of events.

Yes, it can be said that the passage of time caused a strengthening of people's belief in the family of 'Ali (peace be upon him) and deepening of Shi'a thought in their hearts. But if someone says that Shiaism and the occultation of the Imam (peace be upon him) were originated and completed by the passage of time, this is false, since many proofs, which have been pointed out in the previous discussions, belie this view.

No one can say that the traditions of the Imams (peace be upon them), all of which they have related from the tongue of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), are all forged, since all of them, in addition to consecutive narration, have external contexts with themselves. In reality, they are like the news of the martyrdom of 'Ammar, when the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) said,

"The oppressive party will kill you." [61]

No one said that after 'Ammar was martyred by Mu`awiyah and his army, this tradition was forged, i.e. the tradition is an effect of that event. This is because before this event, the companions would relate this tradition. The issue of the Imamah of the Imams (peace be upon them) is the same way, regarding which it has been related from three of them, that is 'Ali and Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn, that the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) said,

"The number of Imams is twelve, the last of whom shares my name." And it transpired exactly in this way in the external world. In this situation, none can claim that these traditions are spurious and were forged after the occurrence of these events.

### **"Mahdi" in a Special Meaning and Technical Usage**

#### **QUESTION:**

Is "Mahdi" a specific label and title referring to a particular person with particular qualities and distinctions or a general concept and title applied to everyone Allah has guided? In other words, is the Mahdi and belief in Mahdawiyyat related to person or a category?

#### **ANSWER:**

The concept of the word "Mahdi" is a general concept that is permissible to use, according to the language and common usage, for anyone that Allah has guided. With this concept, all of the prophets and legates (awsiya') are "Mahdi" (guided) and using this word for the person of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), Amir al-Mu'minin, Imam Hasan, Imam Husayn, and the remaining Imams (peace be upon them) is permissible since all of them were "Mahdi" and guided. Rather, using this word to refer to other individuals were raised and attained guidance in the school of those personages is permissible.

For example, the companions of Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) were all guided. Similarly, using the word for eminent Shi'a, or rather all Shi'a or all who have been guided to the truth and are on guidance is permissible. However, everyone knows that the purport of "Mahdi" which the Messenger (peace be upon him and his family) said was a particular label and title reserved for a specific and unusually mighty person about whose appearance the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) has given tidings and has invited his Ahl al-Bait (peace be upon them) and all the Muslims to be among those awaiting his appearance. Some of these prophetic traditions are:

"The Mahdi is from my descendants." [62]

"The Mahdi is from my family, from the descendants of Fatimah." [63]

"The Mahdi is from your descendants." [64]

"Mahdi" in the meaning of "guided", as per the various meanings of "guidance", such as "showing the way," "conveying to the desired object," and other instances is also used for non-humans, and the verse:

"He said, Our Lord is the One Gave every existent what is necessary for its creation, then guided." [65]

indicates this fact.

In spite of all this, it appears that by studying the instances in which this word has been used, the conclusion is reached that "guidance" is generally used for individuals in whom Allah's guidance has had an effect.

On this basis, it must be said:

That is, one who has received Allah's guidance is "Mahdi." In other words, guidance in the meaning of "showing the path" has been directed at him and though the special attention and tawfiq of Allah, it has born fruit in him, for which the loftiest examples are the prophets and Imams (peace be upon them).

According to reliable traditions, "Mahdi" is the title of the same promised personage of the end of time whose genealogy and qualities have even been pointed to in reliable traditions,

which cannot be applied to anyone except the twelfth Imam, the son of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (peace be upon him). The title "Mahdi" in the meaning of the receiver of Allah's guidance, reviver of Islam, one who will fill the world with equity and justice, and possessor of distinguished qualities, was first used with regard to that personage and this took place in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) himself through his person, and the Mahdi in the sense of savior and redeemer—and other synonymous words like this from Allah—are solely his titles.

And mahdawiyyat as a concept of a category is not understood from any of the narrations related from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) or Imams (peace be upon them).

### **Controversy regarding the Date of Birth of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return)**

#### **QUESTION:**

How can the controversy about the date of birth of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return), which some say corresponds to the number of the letters of the word نور ("nur," light) – 256 – while according to some traditions, it took place in the year 255 A.H., be explained. In what year did the occultation of that personage take place?

#### **ANSWER:**

Dispute about such matters does not harm the basic topic or cause an enigma.

Such disagreement exists with regard to the date of birth of most historical personalities; in fact in many cases their dates of birth and death are unknown.

The disagreement about the date of birth of Imam Sahib al-'Amr (may Allah hasten his return) is less than the disagreement existing about the date of birth of some of the Imams and the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) himself.

The reliable opinion is 255 A.H., which Fadl ibn Shaḥhan al-Nayshapuri—who is one of the major traditionists and a contemporary of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (peace be upon him) - has related, and his intermediary is a person like Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Hamza ibn Husayn ibn 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Abbas ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him).

As for the occultation of Imam Sahib al-'Amr (may Allah hasten his return):

From the very time of birth the public did not have permission to visit him in the usual manner, and his venerable father would only grant special companions and Shi'a the felicity of visiting his peerless son and **كلمة الله باقية** (Allah's remaining word). The commencement of the minor occultation, which was also the beginning of that personage's Imamah, took place on the day of martyrdom of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (peace be upon him), that is in the year 260 A.H.

A point which must be mentioned here is that the coming up of the issue of the occultation of the Imam was not unexpected for the Shi'a and believers in Imamah when it occurred, since it had been referred to before that time in many traditions, and the people knew that Imam Sahib al-'Amr (may Allah hasten his return) will have to occultations—a short occultation called "sughra" and "qusra" and a long occultation called "kubra" and "tula".

The detailed report of that has been mentioned completely in the books and usul (books of principles) of the Shi'a which were written before the birth of Imam Sahib al-Zaman (may Allah hasten his return).

### **Consensus of the Shi'a Regarding the Imamah of Imam Sahib al-Amr (may Allah hasten his return) after the Demise of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (peace be upon him)**

#### **QUESTION:**

According to what Nawbakhti has written the books of Shi'a sects, the Shi'a after Imam Hasan al-'Askari (peace be upon him) split up into fourteen sects. To what extent is this statement correct and until what time were these sects extant?

#### **ANSWER:**

As has passed, Nawbakhti writes:

The Shi'a after the demise of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (peace be upon him) were divided into fourteen sects. However, it appears that there has been some exaggeration in this view, since he and the remaining writers of books pertaining to sects have collected all the views that have been forwarded—even if held by only one person who himself did not remain firm in that opinion until the end. It may very well be that they have mentioned "sects" about which using the word "sect" or "group" would not be correct.

This is because the number of their believers, if they had more than one individual, is not known. It does not appear that they exceeded a few people. Or it is not known until what time and to what extent they were firm in their opinion; thus, they should not be counted as sects, or else the number of sects would reach the hundreds or thousands.

Shaykh Mufid and Shaykh Tusi, may Allah have mercy on them, have also forwarded this same view.

Shaykh Mufid in the second volume of *Al-Fusul al-Mukhtara*, narrating from al-Nawbakhti, mentions the names of these sects and says: None of these sects except the Shi'a exist in our time – 372 A.H.

Thus, it becomes known that these sects have not existed to an extent that they be worthy of being pointed out at all.

Of course, if an opinion is attributed to them, even if it has no clear follower, it is necessary to research it, as Shaykh Mufid and Shaykh Tusi have performed, and they have proven the falsity of the views of all of these sects except the Twelver Shi'a.

In summary, books of sects and schools of thought have been involved in carelessness and exaggeration in counting groups and sects.

Thus, such material in books cannot be relied upon - except in case of sects that exists even today or whose existence as a group is affirmed by reliable histories and references.

### The Twelfth Imam's Revolution

#### QUESTION:

Is the abundance the titles of the Imam of the Age because of the profusion of his personal, spiritual, and physical characteristics, or is it on account of the vastness of his reformative actions?

#### ANSWER:

It is understood from the traditions that the blessed names of the twelfth Imam (may Allah hasten his return) are: Qa'im (The Riser), Mahdi (The Guided), Gha'ib (The Absent), and Hujjat (The Proof). In addition, various traditions mention him with titles such as Hujjatullah (The Proof of Allah), Khalifatullah (Caliph of Allah), and al-Qa'im (The Riser). The reason for the abundance of his titles is the same two factors mentioned above. Of course, out of these titles, some are more well known than others.

It is possible that conditions in a particular time cause people to pay greater attention to one of these titles or qualities or that a particular aspect of the issue be discussed more, and consequently speakers, writers, and poets give more attention to that title or aspect. This is similar to the "most beautiful names" (al-asma' al-husna) of Allah, in which individual circumstances or prevailing conditions cause people to give more attention to one of those names and call Him by it, such as "Al-Shafi" (The Healer), "Al-Salam" (The Security), "Al-Hafiz" (The Protector), or "Al-Raziq" (The Sustainer). And this is not to mean that the remaining "most beautiful names" do not have a reason for being attributed to Allah.

Thus, each of the names and titles of the Imam of the Time (may Allah hasten his return) refer to one of his qualities or actions, and most of them have been mentioned in traditions that broach the actual issue of the twelfth Imam and his reappearance. That is, that personage was well known by these names and titles years before he himself or his father were even born.

Regarding the fact that the twelfth Imam is the same as the Mahdi and the Mahdi is no different from the twelfth Imam, eminent Sunni scholars agree with the Shi'a. For this very reason individuals like Abu Dawud - author of the book *Sunan* (prophetic character) - have narrated traditions of the twelve Imams, and among his titles, his being promised by the prophets and his personal excellencies and genealogy are referred to.

### The title "Al-Qa'im" (The Riser)

#### QUESTION:

As everyone knows, one of the titles of the Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) is "Al-Qa'im" (The Riser). A tradition has been related regarding the reason for his being given this title that requires contemplation, since it apparently indicates that this title was given because that personage will reappear after death. Yet we have over approximately one thousand traditions regarding that personage, his occultation, and long life, in view of which that tradition cannot be relied upon. However, if some clarifications about its narrators, text, and meaning can be given, it would be useful.

#### ANSWER:

The great scholar Shaykh al-Tusi narrates an unreliable tradition that apparently indicates that the "Qa'im" was given this title because he will arise after death. Shaykh al-Tusi has provided a bit of explanation about this tradition, but before we enter this topic, we consider it necessary to mention the basics of Imamah in Shiaism, which verses of the Noble Qur'an, traditions, and rational proofs affirm. These principles are as follows:

1. Imamah is a Divine covenant, and individuals—who are worthy of bearing it—are specified and appointed by Allah, and this Divine selection and appointment is announced to the people by the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family).
2. The most important conditions of the Imam are sinlessness and being more knowledgeable than all other people, such that all be in need of his knowledge, guidance,

and direction, which he be free of need of all, as has been related about Khalil ibn Ahmad that he said about the Imamah of Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him):

"The dependence of all others on him and his independence from all others are proof that he is the Imam of all." [66]

3. The earth will never be without a Divine Proof and Imam, and whoever dies without having recognized the Imam of his time dies the death of ignorance.

4. The Imams, as per the text of mutawatir traditions from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), are twelve personages.

5. They are twelve and all are from the Ahl al-Bait (peace be upon them) of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), and according to the meaning of the mutawatir traditions of Thaqalayn (The Two Weighty Things), they are equals of the Qur'an and shall never part from the Qur'an.

6. The Imams possess all of the religious and administrative stations except prophethood, which was sealed with the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his family). And as Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) has said in Nahj al-Balagha, they are قوام الله, or the Divine Guardians [67] over the creation, and on the basis of another tradition, they are the ship of salvation.

"None shall enter Paradise except one who recognizes them and whom they recognize, and none shall enter Hell except one who denies them; they are the ships of salvation and refuge of the ummat from deviation and discord." [68]

7. The name, qualities, and order of the Imamah of the Imams (peace be upon them) was specified by the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), and in addition, each Imam specified the following Imam.

These are among the important foundations of belief in the principle of Imamah, and for every Muslim who believes in the unseen world and in Allah, messengership, and the messengership of the Seal of the Prophets (peace be upon him and his family), the criterion of truth of these fundamentals is a rational proof, Qur'anic verse, or definite and mutawatir tradition. And most of these fundamentals can be proven by all three means.

The fact that Imamah is a Divine covenant and Allah specifies it has been argued by rational and Qur'anic proofs and the consecutively-narrated sunnat. 'Allamah Hilli has established one thousand proofs of this issue in Alfain, and in fact this issue has its roots in the unity of Allah, and like the principle of Divine Unity, it comprises unity of rulership and authority over creation:

"His is the command and rule, He is the King and the Ruler and the One in authority, He is the one who is cognizant of the interests of His servants. Commanding and Forbidding is for none save Him."

In the issue of the necessity of sinlessness and being the most knowledgeable as well, abundant rational, Qur'anic, and narrational proofs exist, among which is this verse:

"Then is one who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed, or one who does not find guidance except by being guided?" [69]

The late 'Allamah has also established one thousand proofs about the issue of the necessity of sinlessness.

Regarding the principle that the earth shall not remain without a Proof and Imam, in addition to verses such as:

"And every people has a guide." [70]

"And certainly we conveyed them the verses of Qur'an continuously." [71]

"The day when We will call every people with their leader." [72]

Mutawatir traditions are also found, among which is the well-known tradition of Kumail ibn Ziyad from Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) which has been mentioned in Nahj al-Balagha and all other books of Zaydi and Twelver Shi'a and even in the reliable books of the Sunnis, such as Tadhkirat ul-Huffaz. From this it is known that all are agreed that the earth will never be empty of a Proof; of course, it makes no difference whether the Proof is apparent or hidden.

And in Sawa'iq and other books of the Sunnis, a discourse has been related from Imam Zain al-'Abidin (peace be upon him) in which it has been explicitly mentioned that the world is not without an Imam from the Ahl al-Bait (peace be upon them).

These principles have even been explicated in the supplications of the Imams from Ahl al-Bait (peace be upon them). In this regard, we will suffice with only a portion of the supplication of the day of 'Arafah from Imam Zain al-'Abidin (peace be upon him). That personage says:

"Allah! You have supported your religion in every age with an Imam whom You established as a standard for Your servants and a beacon in Your lands, after You linked his covenant with Yours and made him the means of Your pleasure, made obligatory his obedience and

cautioned against his disobedience, commanded to execute his commands and shun what he forbids and that none should precede him nor stay back from him. Thus he is the guard of those seeking refuge and the recourse of the believers, handle of those who grasp (guidance) and the glory of the inhabitants of the universe.”[73]

Anyone who looks carefully at this portion of the supplication will both come to recognize the Shi'a viewpoint regarding the principle of Imamah and will also understand that this station and these affairs were established for the Imam from the beginning and no one has added anything to them.

As for the issue that “Whoever dies without recognizing the Imam of his time dies the death of ignorance,” this is also a principle which reliable traditions have conveyed explicitly. The reliable traditions of *Thaqalain* (the two weighty things), *Safina* (the ship of salvation), and *Aman* (safety) all indicate this point.

And it has been explicitly mentioned in *mutawatir* traditions that the Imams are twelve personages, all of whom are from the *Ahl al-Bait* of the Prophet, and eleven of them are from the progeny of 'Ali and Fatimah (peace be upon them), the first of them being Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him), and after him Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba (peace be upon him), followed by the Prince of Martyrs Imam Husayn (peace be upon him), and after him nine people from his progeny, of whom the ninth—who is the twelfth Imam—is Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return).

Thus, since these principles have been established with firm proofs, eminent scholars such as Shaykh al-Tusi, Shaykh al-Mufid, Ibn Babawayh, 'Allamah Majlisi (Allah's mercy upon them all) have refuted by relying on these principles the statement of anyone who, previous to their time or subsequent to it, has said something to the contrary or given attention to a rare and unaccepted tradition. This is because the buttress of the proofs of these principles is reliable to an extent that it can even be claimed that after the principle of Divine unity and prophecy, no principle is so reliable.

In view of all this, no Shi'a scholar has held that the rising of the Qa'im (may Allah hasten his return) will occur after his death. And if anyone has brought up baseless possibilities, taking into account the points mentioned and since they are completely against objective realities, they must not be given any attention, since they have no scientific value.

After this preface and explanation of this point, the life and long occultation of the Imam has been established on the basis of these principles. There remains no room for this tradition that says the Qa'im (may Allah hasten his return) will rise after death, since this notion would result in the severing of the thread of Imamah, the earth's remaining without the existence of a sinless Imam, and the refutation of many traditions which indicate the life and long occultation of that personage.

Aside from all of these objections, the above-mentioned tradition's chain of narrators is not reliable, and none of the 'Ulama' or Fuqaha' (jurists) has relied on such traditions in even a single secondary issue. This is because one of the narrators is Musa ibn Sa'dan al-Hannat, whom scholars of *rijal* (the science of the study of narrators) have described as weak and whose narration they consider unreliable. He has narrated this tradition from 'Abdullah ibn Qasim, whom they have titled “The Ever-Lying Hero.” He in turn narrates from Abu Sa'id al-Khurasani, and if we don't consider his existence unknown according to reference books of *rijal*, then his position—in terms of being truthful or dishonest—is unclear.

Now, contemplate; how can this tradition—whose narrator is the champion of fabrication—be relied upon in opposition to those firm fundamentals and hundreds of reliable traditions?

As for the reason for employing the title “Al-Qa'im” for the Imam of the Age (may Allah hasten his return):

“Al-Qa'im” means “the one who rises.” The Imam shall rise against political conditions and religious and social deviations and fill the world with justice and equity after it had become filled with injustice and oppression. Additionally, the issue of rising with the sword and armed struggle is also understood from that title.

Nevertheless, since “rising” has weak and strong degrees, it can be understood from traditions that all of the Imams were *قائم بالامر* “Qa'im bi 'l-amr” (upholders of the affair), and it is proper and befitting to employ this title for all of them, in accordance with the positions they had. But since the rising of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) is a world uprising that subsumes all social, individual, political, and economical conditions of humanity and brings to fruition Allah's promises to His prophets and the prophets' prophecies to their people, this title is used without qualification for that personage. Thus, anytime they say “al-Qa'im” and their is not context that another one of the Imams is intended, Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) is understood from that.

In a tradition that Shaykh Saduq narrates in the book *Kamal al-Din* from Imam Muhammad



at-Taqi (peace be upon him), the ninth Imam, it has come:

“The Imam after me is my son ‘Ali - Imam ‘Ali al-Naqi (peace be upon him) - whose command is my command, whose speech is my speech, and obedience to whom is obedience to me. And the Imamah after him has been placed in his son Hasan - Imam Hasan al-‘Askari (peace be upon him). His command is his father’s command, his word is his father’s word, and obedience to him is obedience to his father.

The narrator says, After that the Imam fell silent.

I asked, O’ son of the Messenger of Allah, then who is the Imam after Hasan (peace be upon him)?

The Imam at first wept to a great extent and then said, After Hasan, his son is the Establisher of Truth, the Awaited

I said, O’ son of the Messenger, why has that personage been named “Qa’im” (The Riser)?

The Imam replied, because after his name and remembrance is forgotten and most of the believers in his Imamah turn back from their creed, he shall rise.

I said, Why has he been named “Muntazar” (The Awaited)?

He replied, because he has an occultation with a very long duration, such true believers will wait for his advent and appearance, but people of doubt and uncertainty will deny and rejecters will ridicule him. Those who specify a time for it will become many and those who are hasty during that occultation will be destroyed, but the Muslims—those who submit—will achieve salvation.”[74]

‘Allamah Majlisi has said, the meaning of “death” that has come in that weak tradition is that that personage will arise after his name and memory has been forgotten.

And Shaykh Mufid relates a tradition from Imam as-Sadiq (peace be upon him) in al-‘Irshad in which he says, "سمي القائم لقيامه بالحق" “He was named the ‘Qa’im’ because he shall arise with truth.”[75]

And from some narrations another reason that is understood is that the Imam was given this title by Allah because, in the worlds before this world, he used to stand and pray.

Regarding the entitling of that personage with the title “Al-Mahdi” as well, appropriate reasons have been mentioned. Of course, it is not the case that “Al-Qa’im” is the original title and “Al-Mahdi” is a secondary title. Both are titles and the usage of each name has a separate reason. Rather, it can be said that since the concept of the “Mahdi” is “the one whom Allah has guided” (من هداه الله), according to rank, a person must be “Qa’im” whom Allah has guided.

That is, the “Qa’im” must be “one whom Allah has guided,” but it is not necessary that “one whom Allah has guided” must always be “Qa’im.” However, the actions, reforms, movement, uprising, and stand that will take place by the Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return), such as establishment of a world government, are dependent on rising and the becoming actualized of the title “Qa’im.”

These titles are not classified into primary and secondary, and all have been heard from the blessed tongues of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) and pure Imams (peace be upon them); nor do they have “old” and “new.” Each has its own particular concept and each has been used with attention to a particular aspect. In texts, sometimes all of these titles are mentioned, sometimes one, and another time one title is mentioned before another. In any case, application of these titles is on the basis of essential and actualized titles, all of which that personage possesses.

## Two Types of Occultation

### QUESTION:

According to the content of existing traditions, the occultation of the Imam of the Age (may Allah hasten his return) has occurred in two forms. During the first occultation, communication with him was possible through his representatives and agents, but with the ending of this period and the beginning of the second occultation, which is the complete occultation, the period of the responsibility of the agents and particular representatives also ended.

The question is whether referring to these two occultation as the “minor” (صغرى) and “major” (كبرى) was prevalent from the beginning or whether it became prevalent in later times, like the Safawi period.

### ANSWER:

Discussion regarding issues like this should not be a verbal discussion. Whether a person calls the first occultation, which was shorter, the minor occultation (كبرى) or the shorter occultation (قصرى), or the second occultation, which has a long duration, the major occultation (كبرى) or the longer occultation (طولى) or refers to them by any other word, the fact and reality of the matter is not changed. In any case, these two occultations have occurred.

The issue is that principle of the occultation having two forms was explicitly stated in the *usul* (early hadith collections) and other books of hadith even before its occurrence. Nu'mani and others who lived before the termination of the minor occultation have narrated it, and this fact is proof that the two forms of occultation were put forth.

During the period of the minor occultation, though the position of the Shi'a was sensitive, no one can claim that all these traditions related from the Imams (peace be upon them) in books like the *Ghaybat* of al-Fadl ibn Sha'han and Nu'mani and Kamal al-Din of Saduq are all falsified and were written after the occurrence of the occultation.

We see that the Shi'a of the various cities and regions would refer to the *nawwab* (representatives); they did not do such for no reason. Signs and evidences were definitely present that indicated that they were in contact with the Imam. Otherwise, it is impossible that individuals like 'Ali ibn Babawayh, with that intellectual position and eminence of thought, would pursue contact with the Imam (peace be upon him) through the *nawwab* without their link being as clear for him as daylight. This event itself indicates that they had clear evidence of the truth of the representatives.

The other issue is that though Abu Ja'far al-'Amrawi - 'Uthman ibn Sa'id—and the remaining representatives were a means of Shi'a unity and their agency was completely accepted in all Shi'a circles and regions, especially a city like Qum, this unity was because of belief in the Imamah of the twelfth Imam. This issue brought about the spiritual influence of the representatives, not that they became a cause of Shi'a unity without taking in view the issue of Imamah.

The unity and consensus of the Shi'a about believing in the Imamah of the twelfth Imam was the cause of their unity in following the Imam's (peace be upon them) representatives.

Just as today belief in the Imamah of that personage is a cause of the spiritual influence in believers' hearts of the 'Ulama' and Fuqaha' (scholars and jurists) as general representatives of that personage.

During the minor occultation, specification of the representatives took place directly by the person of the Imam (peace be upon him), and the fact that we see eminent scholars lowering their heads in submission before the representatives is proof that this selection was by the person of the Imam (peace be upon him) on the basis of the representatives' worthiness. And the submission of all classes and political and scholarly personalities is proof that original leadership during the period of the minor occultation was with the person of the Imam (peace be upon him).

It was as a result of the existence of persuasive evidence and proofs that scholarly men of the Shi'a and personalities like Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti and Ibn Matil, and Hasan ibn Janahasibi and other eminent Shi'a believed in the righteousness of the representatives.

Similarly, after the demise of the fourth representative—'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Samarri - also the issue that the period of occultation and the particular representation has ended was accepted by all. And if any claimed to be a representative, they repudiated him on the basis of this very principle, and in passing it can be said that one of the important wisdoms of the shorter occultation was to make the Shi'a familiar with the issue of occultation and preparing the ground for the period of the long occultation, so the Shi'a can continue his life during a long period without the apparent presence of the Imam and successfully complete this major Divine test.

### **The Miraculous Birth of the Imam of the Age (may Allah hasten his return)**

#### **QUESTION:**

Miracles and supernatural events are related with regard to the birth of the twelfth Imam. To what extent are these miracles reliable and how can they be proven? And why have some historians not related them?

#### **ANSWER:**

1. Historians have written and recorded the actual birth of Imam Mahdi the Twelfth Imam, son of Imam al-'Askari (peace be upon him), like all other historical events.
2. Regarding some of the miracles that occurred during that personage's birth or that of all other prophets and trustees (*awsiyah*), if prevalent historical sources do not provide anything, this is considered a defect of the sources mentioned, since the same historians in many instances have pointed to some historical aspects which were not so important. This lack of attention by a writer of history to some aspects of an issue sometimes originates from credal prejudice. But this action, whatever its proof may be, does not harm the relations of other people's statements that took place based on reliable sources.

The history of the prophets is *akandeh* of miracles, and the birth and growth of most prophets was not normal. For example, the creation of Adam, birth of Ibrahim (peace be upon him), birth of Ishaq and Musa and Yahya and 'Isa and his speaking from the cradle are

all among abnormal events.

All of these are a chain of historical events, though such-and-such historian may not have related them. The details of the birth of the Imam of the Age (may Allah hasten his return), which is among the uncontested historical events, are similar. Its not being narrated by historians who were either biased or intended to be brief or intended other things does not harm the issue itself.

That which the Shi'a attribute to the Imams is similar to the issues that have been said about Ibrahim, Ishaq, Isma'il, Musa, 'Isa, Yahya, and so on, all of which, of course, also have a reliable chain of narration.

The events related to the birth of the Twelfth Imam are more reliable, from the point of view of chain of narration and source, than most historical events that one sees.

### **Philosophy of the Delay of Reappearance with the Presence of Conditions**

#### **QUESTION:**

Throughout history, we sometimes come across conditions and opportunities in which it is assumed the requisites for reappearance are present, for example, the people's receptiveness to religion, self-sacrifice in the path of Islam, giving their lives, and martyrdom for it was to such an extent or with such fervor and commotion that it appears that rather than 313 people, thousands of people are ready to sacrifice their lives under the command of the Imam (peace be upon him). With the existence of these conditions, what is the secret of the delay of the reappearance?

#### **ANSWER:**

Regarding the presence of the conditions for the reappearance of the Imam of the Age (may Allah hasten his return):

First, no one can claim to know with certainty, that is, say that all the conditions are fulfilled, since this claim itself requires knowledge of all the conditions, since it is possible that the traditions have not comprised an exposition of all of the conditions.

Second, assuming that the conditions are limited to those instances that have come in the traditions, as Shaykh al-Saduq has said, in reality one can still not be sure that those particular 313 companions and the remaining conditions are present.

This is because if all of the conditions and circumstances apparently indicate the presence of the requisites of reappearance, without denying, for example, the existence of pure individuals who can be counted among the 313 companions of the Imam (peace be upon him), we also cannot claim that all of the individuals are like Salman, Abu Dhar, Miqdad, Rashid Hijri, and the people of Karbala'.

In the present situation, with all the claims that are put forward in our society for returning to and aspiring at Islam, which are certainly a matter of pride, we still see that many bring the Divine laws under question in a large number of political, economical, and social issues. This is to such an extent that they regard some religious commandments that are not exclusive to a particular time or place as being restricted to the Prophet's (peace be upon him and his family) time and on this pretext free themselves from responsibility. With the existence of such individuals and events, how can we say that the conditions for reappearance are ready, let alone asking about the reason for its delay?

On this basis, in this issue it is appropriate for us to submit to the command and will of Allah, the All-Knowing, and not forgo the merit of waiting for the reappearance. And as was indicated in the tradition of 'Ali ibn Mahziyar, we should attribute the concealment of the Imam (peace be upon him) to our own actions and always keep the memory of that personage alive in our hearts and try to bring about the requisites of his appearance ever more by reforming our own actions.

### **The Length of the Occultation and Difficult and Formidable Trials**

#### **QUESTION:**

According to what is well known, during the occultation of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return), which will be very lengthy, difficult trials will occur such that a person will be a believer in the morning but a disbeliever in the evening. Are these types of trials in the time near the reappearance or will such trials occur throughout the period of occultation?

#### **ANSWER:**

According to Islamic principles, the world is a place of tests and trials and people are in a state of being tried during everything that happens to them. During youth and old age, whether wealthy or in need, in health and illness, when in power, when in leadership, they are always in a state of trial; it makes no difference whether the Imam (peace be upon him) is present or in occultation.

The Qur'an says in this regard:

"Have the people presumed they would be released upon saying, 'We believe,' without being

tested?”[76]


As we know, during the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) himself, while all of the programs and incidents were a test, sometimes, severe trials would occur, in which none but a few were able to fulfill their obligation. For example, in battle, aside from individuals like ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) and Abu Dujana and a few others, none were able to stand firm in jihad and defense of Islam and the Prophet. This is because during severe trials, only a limited number of people have the ability to stand firm; many an individual would flee out of fear. It has been related that in on the battles ‘Uthman fled from the battlefield and returned after three days. Or after the Prophet’s (peace be upon him and his family) demise, such a severe trial came to pass that not more than three or seven people were able to successfully perform their duty and remain firm on the line that the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) had specified. Afterwards as well, such trials continued and shall continue, so that, in the words of the Qur’an:

“...so that Allah separates the impure from the pure.”[77]

These trials have wisdom and many benefits, among which is that the disposition of the people of the world and society become ready for that dignified reappearance in which the resolute and steadfast believers will be separated from the remaining people. Preserving one’s faith during the period of the Imam’s (peace be upon him) occultation is possible by enduring very severe difficulties. Without doubt, millions of people leave this school of trials with pride and heads held high, that is through patience and forbearance and perseverance in difficulties, they succeed in preserving their religion, faith, and honor.

According to the content of some traditions, during this period protecting one’s religion will become more difficult than holding fire in the palm of one’s hand, and oppression, injustice, corruption, and perversion will become prevalent. Values will be regarded as being against values, and things opposed to values will be regarded as values. Sins will be considered a matter of pride and accomplishment. One’s friends will encourage and induce him to sin and reproach him for not cooperating with oppressors, sinners, and corrupt people.

Women will enter into work exclusive to men. Many wars and natural afflictions will come about. In a tradition of Jabir ibn Abdullah al-Ansari regarding the commentary of the verse:

“(O you who believe  Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority amongst you (the legatees of the Messenger).”[78]

It has come that the Noble Messenger (peace be upon him and his family) gives news about his khulafa’ and successors from Imam ‘Ali (peace be upon him) until Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return), names them one after one and gives tidings to the people about the conquering of the East and West of the world at the blessed hands of Imam al-Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return), and says, inter alia:

“He is the one who will be concealed from his Shi’a and friends such a concealment that none shall remain firm in belief in his Imamah except one whose heart Allah has tested for faith.”[79]

And Amir al-Mu’minin has also informed about these difficulties and tribulations in Nahj al-Balagha. In one instance, he says;

“How lengthy is this adversity, and how distant is this hope!”[80]

It has even been related, in another tradition, that:

“Verily the Master of this Affair has a such a concealment that one who grips firmly to his religion during it is like one who picks thorns with his hands.”[81]

Therefore, as can be understood from the traditions, the entire period of concealment is a period of trial and examination; of course, the types of those trials are different in the different times and places. The believer during this period must show perseverance in abiding by the commandments of religion and struggling to elevate the word of Islam and honor of the Muslims and to repel the influence and cultural and political domination of foreigners. He must be in combat and jihad with all negative and unhelpful circumstances and conditions and be hopeful of the victory of Islam and the Muslims and the succor of Allah. He must not lose hold of himself in face of the power and strength of the disbelievers or become inclined towards their improper behavior. And at the same time he must have certainty that the promises of Allah and the Prophet of Allah are true and that eventually Islam will be victorious and conquer the world, as a result of which justice and equity shall fill the world.

### **The Principle of Grace and the Imamah of the Concealed Imam**

#### **QUESTION:**

Has the “principle of grace” been derived from the traditions and narrations of the Ahl al-Bait (peace be upon them) or has it entered Shi’a kalam (theology) through the contact of the Shi’a with the Mu’tazila? And what is the method of applying this principle with the

existence of the concealed Imam?

**ANSWER:**

Since the Shi'a have many proofs regarding the principle of Imamah aside from the principle of grace, with the existence of those proofs, if the principle of grace is relied upon, it is for the purpose of supporting the proofs.

As for the contact of the Shi'a with the Mu'tazila, who are sometimes referred to as the adliyya (Equitists) as opposed to the Asha'ira, it should be known that though the Mu'tazila, a sect that splintered off from the Asha'ira and came into being after the Shi'a, were in agreement with the Shi'a over some beliefs and theological issues, this is not proof of their affecting the Shi'a school. Rather, it is instead proof of their being affected by Shi'a beliefs, since the Asha'ira are a sect that came into being later on. Moreover, as was mentioned, all of the Shi'a beliefs are taken from reason, the Glorious Qur'an, and traditions of the Ahl al-Bait (peace be upon them). The principle of grace is also from the Shi'a themselves and is derived from those very sources and origin.

It is in a tradition that Jabir asked the Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) about the benefit of the existence of a concealed Imam and the way of deriving benefit from his existence during the concealment. The Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) said in reply,

"Yes, by the One who sent me with the prophecy! Verily they benefit from him and seek light from the illumination of his wilayah (authority) during his concealment just as people benefit from the sun though it has been covered by clouds." [82]

To negate in entirety that the existence of a concealed Imam is lutf (grace) is not proper for a rational person who is unaware of unseen affairs. After the Imamah itself and his concealment are established, certainty of the existence of grace and presence of a benefit in his existence is necessary, since if the appointment of an Imam who has been commanded to go into concealment does not entail grace, it is futile and vain; and Allah is far above vain and futile actions. Therefore, the appointment of a concealed Imam by Allah certainly entails lutf (grace).

Granted, if we wish to establish both the necessity of appointment of an Imam and the Imamah of a concealed person through the principle of grace, the objection arises that it must first be known that the concealed Imam entails grace. Otherwise, without knowledge of its being grace, his Imamah will not be established. However, we establish the necessity of appointment of an Imam through the principle of grace and the Imamah of the concealed Imam through other firm proofs, and by joining these two proofs to the fact that Allah does not do anything in vain, it is established that the Imamah of the concealed Imam entails grace. The statement of al-Muhaqqiq al-Tusi, who says;

is based on the principle that the existence of the Imam is grace absolutely, whether manifest or hidden. And this is a principle that has been established in accordance with the speech of Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him), who says:

The Divine proofs and signs are protected by the existence of the Imam, whether he be present or concealed.

It is worthy of mention that if the objection of the absence of grace with regard to the concealed Imam be valid, it is also applicable to an Imam who is not concealed, yet who is not able to act freely in affairs. His Imamah will be without grace for the same reason that the Imamah of the concealed Imam is regarded as being without grace. However, this objection has not been made with regard to the manifest Imam who is not able to freely act in the affairs and tasks pertaining to Imamah. Similarly, it has not been made regarding a prophet who, due to circumstances, is unable to guide others or whose guidance is not effective, or a prophet whose mission was general, but opponents and adversaries prevented his message from reaching the entire public, and it has not been denied that his prophecy entails grace.

It is possible to establish a rational proof of the Imamah of the concealed Imam (peace be upon him) with the exposition that appointment and specification of the Imam by Allah is grace, and grace is obligatory upon Allah. Therefore, Allah has appointed someone to Imamah after Imam Hasan al-'Askari (peace be upon him), and that person will not be other than his son, since the incapacity and invalidity of the other claimants to Imamah has been established and at present, no one has such a claim. Thus, either Allah has withheld grace to His servants during the period of concealment, which is opposed to Divine wisdom, or He has appointed an Imam out of grace, in which case the Imam is none other than the twelfth Imam.

**The Issue of Bada' (Alteration in the Divine Will) and the Tradition of Abu Hamza**

**QUESTION:**

A tradition has been narrated by Abu Hamza Thumali from Imam Al-Baqir (peace be upon him) according to which Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) said that relief will come after the 70th year after Hijra, but because of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) the affair was delayed until the year 140 after Hijra. Then, because the Shi'a did not protect the secret, Allah once again delayed the affair such that He did not place any time for it in the knowledge of the Imams.

Please explain the commentary of this tradition along with the many other traditions that indicate that the promised relief shall occur after long periods and following great events and happenings. And doesn't the occurrence of bada', which is understood from this tradition, cause the presumption that something became known for Allah—we seek refuge with Allah—after it had been unknown? In any case, what is the correct explanation?

**ANSWER:**

**First:** This tradition has objections in its chain of narrators, since according to books of rijal, Abu Hamza al-Thumali did not belong to the fourth generation of narrators; his demise occurred in the year 150 A.H. Hasan ibn Mahbub, who according to the chain of narrators narrated this tradition from Abu Hamza, is from the sixth generation, and passed away at the age of 75 years in the year 224 A.H. Thus, Hasan ibn Mahbub was not more than one year old when Abu Hamza passed away. In such a case it is absolutely not possible for him to narrate from Abu Hamza, and without doubt another individual was an intermediary between him and Abu Hamza. However, since it is not known who that person is, we cannot regard this tradition as reliable; moreover, a tradition narrated by only one person cannot be an authority in doctrinal principles, let alone when its chain of narrators is also unknown.

**Second:** With the existence of many reliable traditions that all explicitly indicate that the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) and the just government of the righteous shall not come to pass that quickly and that one must await magnificent changes and grave events over very long periods before his reappearance, how can a forged tradition with only one chain of narrators be relied upon in the face of all those traditions? Moreover, many sermons and traditions have been related from Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) in which both the length of the period during which one must await the reappearance and the great events and severe trials of the believers have been referred to. With the existence of this, how is it possible to say that a singly-narrated, forged traditions that says that the Imam specified the time of reappearance as the year 70 A.H. is reliable.

In addition, alteration in Divine decrees is a conceivable matter, though this does not mean that Allah the Exalted is unaware of affairs in the beginning and then acquires knowledge of them. Such a belief is invalid according to the Shi'a, since all Shi'a believe Allah to be free and far removed from ignorance coming to know about something after its being concealed. Bada', in the conception which the Shi'a believe in, is a Qur'anic and Islamic principle, and an important part of the issues of theology and similarly the issues of prophecy are based on it.

Among the verses related to bada' are;

“Were the inhabitants of the cities to believe and adopt piety, We would open them blessings from the sky and the earth; yet they denied (the truth), so We requited them what they had earned.”[83]

“Corruption has manifested in the land and in the sea on account of what the hands of the people have earned.”[84]

“Your Lord has said, Call on Me that I may answer you.”[85]

“Seek forgiveness from your Lord, since He is Ever-Forgiving; He constantly sends rain upon you from the sky.”[86]

“We covenanted Musa thirty nights, then completed them with ten (nights more).”[87]

“So why did not one of the cities believe that its belief might benefit it except the people of Yunus; when they believed we remove from them the debasing punishment in this world and cause them to enjoy until a specified time.”[88]

“Verily, if you be grateful, I shall increase you (in blessings).”[89]

“Whoever adopts piety with regard to Allah, He creates for him an escape (from difficulty) and grants him sustenance whence he does not expect.”[90]

“That is because Allah does not change any blessing He had granted unto a people until they change what is in themselves.”[91]

The bada' that the Shi'a believe in, along with belief in the absolute knowledge and power of Allah, is a concept that is understood from such verses. For example, in them it is said that gratitude causes blessings from Allah to increase; Allah delivers a pious person from hardships by virtue of piety (taqwa) and sustains him from an unexpected source; He fulfills needs through prayer; on account of repentance and faith, He distances people from punishment; and because of misuse of blessings, He removes them from people.

Of course, abundant traditions that have been narrated by Shi'a and Sunnis and similarly manifold stories which have been related in original Islamic sources indicate this point. In fact, if bada' were not to exist, many religious concepts, such as prayer, reliance on Allah, repentance, charity, kindness towards relatives, gratitude, seeking forgiveness, admonition, granting tidings, and threatening, will be impossible to explain. Bada' means belief in the effect of these affairs in the life of a person.

Whether we are able to explain bada' in view of Allah's absolute knowledge and cognizance of all affairs or are unable to understand its secret and reality, in any case we must believe in the issue of bada' in accordance with the content of manifold verses of Qur'an and mutawatir traditions.

This is because sometimes, though all the factors and preliminaries for the occurrence of something are present, other factors strip them of their effect and as a result prevent that thing from occurring. In such a case, the existence of those factors, their continuation, and the factors that strip them of their effect are all preserved in the Umm al-Kitab by Divine decree in accordance with the order and arrangement He has specified. Those affairs are also linked to people's actions by choice, they occur through the will of Allah and His decree. That is, neither compulsion (jabr) is involved, nor delegation (tafwid); rather it is a reality between the two:

“Neither compulsion (jabr) nor delegation (tafwid), but a matter between the two ideas.”[92]

As an example, Allah has decreed that fire should burn or that every created being should develop in its particular course, and if an obstacle comes about, that thing will not exist. Of course, it should be kept in mind that in matters pertaining to matter, if an obstacle to their coming about blocks the causes of an event, this is not called bada'. Only in instances when things like charity, kindness to family, and prayer influence the occurrence or nonoccurrence of an affair such that humanity considers its existence or non-existence definite from the point of view of apparent causes and then the opposite occurs, that is called bada'.

This is though apparently this instance does not have much difference from the previous instance except that the object of effacement and affirmation in the first issue was observable matters and able to be perceived by most or all people, but in the second issue it is non-observable matters; thus, most individuals are unable to perceive it. The second type indicates the existence and influence of the unseen world and the existence of Allah more than the first, though all affairs are from Him.

In summary, the concept of bada' is the same concept that is well understood from this verse of Qur'an in which Allah the Exalted refutes the false belief of the Jews:

“And the Jews said, Allah's hand is fettered, may their hands be fettered and they be cursed on account of what they said. Rather His hands are outspread; He bestows howsoever He wishes.”[93]

Thus bada' in its correct meaning is the negation of this erroneous belief of the Jews, who say that Allah's hand is fettered from acting in affairs. In other words, bada' means that Allah's hands are extended and His absolute power is unlimited, without this having any conflict with His absolute knowledge.

In other words, the reality of bada', with its correct meaning such that it is compatible with Allah's absolute knowledge, in accordance with His freedom from all forms of ignorance, and opposed to the erroneous view of the Jews and all other deniers of the issue of bada' who view Allah's power as limited, must be explained thus: According to Divine decree, everything has particular effects, and things take place in accordance with those effects in conformance to Divine Will.

In other words, it is a Divine decree that, for example, fire should burn, but the realization of this characteristic—its occurrence—is pursuant to Divine Will. In addition, there are a number of unseen causes, such as reliance on Allah, charity, and prayer—which are not common material affairs—all of which have a peculiar effect. In the stage of action, whichever of those material or non-material causes—apparent or unseen—is stronger will be effective in the occurrence of affairs, and its entailed result will come about. For example, in many cases, in spite of the existence of barriers, kindness to relatives, which has been decreed as a factor in lengthening one's life overcomes all other factors and as a result a person's life is lengthened. Thus, it has come in a tradition:

“Kindness to relatives lengthens the life and repels the difficulties of death”[94]

The summary of the reality of bada' is that causes and factors are not limited to material causes. Rather, in addition to material causes, there are also non-material causes in accordance with Divine decree.

On this basis, one must have faith both in unseen causes and in Divine Will and that:

“Every day He is in a state [of glory]”[95]

and the continuance of His acting in sustaining, curing, guiding, and so forth. Without Allah's will, nothing can produce an effect, though we are unable to fathom the details of these Divine matters and their connection to one another.

It is possible that the meaning of "effacement" in bada' is the effacement of these decrees by other decrees, such as the effacement of the effect of illness and being cured by medicine or prayer, which takes place by the will of Allah. The decree and effect of the illness is also by Divine will, just as we see that in material and apparent causes and effects a particular factor prevented a person from falling into the ocean or from a high place or prevented the occurrence of an accident or collision. And sometimes this change is effaced or affirmed by the influence of unseen causes.

Perhaps the meaning is that decrees are not definite; it is only through the will of Allah that these decrees are effaced or affirmed, and without that no decree comes to fruition. And the meaning of:

"And with Him is the 'Mother of the Book'[96]

is that all relations and decrees are in the "Mother of the Book," or that whatever takes place does not take place in contradiction to it, and everything is in the "Mother of the Book."

In any case, bada' has an intelligible and logical meaning and it can't be said to mean the uncovering of a matter hidden from or unknown by Allah. The purpose of explaining bada' in terms of each of the mentioned explanations is so that by understanding these realities people's attention to Allah increase and so that they do not forget Him in any circumstances or rely only on apparent and ordinary means in their affairs. And even when those means are present they should still consider themselves in need of Allah's attention, and when those means are not present, they should not become hopeless; Allah may very well bring about that matter through other means.

In short, unlike the Jews, he should not consider Allah's hands to be tied, and should believe in the great truth of Divine unity that:

"Say: O' Allah, Master of the Kingdom, You grant the kingdom to whomsoever You please and remove it from whomsoever You please; You make mighty whomsoever You please and debase whomsoever You please. All good lies in Your hand; verily You have power over all things."[97]

As a matter of principle, without such a conviction, the development of humanity and their traveling the worlds of cognizance and true advancement and ascension to celestial positions is not possible. This is a reality that also has a basis in human nature, and even if he denies the issue of bada' with his tongue, he admits it with his conscience. Thus, in situations of danger, he supplicates to Allah to repel them and takes recourse to His most beautiful names, like the Sustainer, the Healer, the Sufficient, the Protector, all of which make sense through belief in bada'.

And as Allah says in the Qur'an:

"Say: Do you think that if Allah's punishment come to you or the Hour (of Resurrection) come, that you will call upon other than Allah, if you be truthful; rather Him alone will you call."[98]

Based on this importance which belief in bada' has in worshipping Allah and paying attention to Him, it has come in Shi'a traditions that:

"Allah has not been worshipped by anything like belief in bada'"[99]

In summary, the issue of bada', no matter how it is explained, does not contradict Allah's absolute knowledge. That is, just as He is "All-Knowing," He is also "All-Powerful."

Two objections have been raised regarding the issue of bada'.

#### First Objection:

The first objection is from the believers in predetermination, who say that when Allah has knowledge with respect to something, it is impossible for His knowledge to be in disagreement with the thing that is known. Thus, the meaning of "Every day He is in a state of glory" is that every day and every instant whatever Allah's knowledge is associated to occurs; He creates and sustains and withholds. All actions are from Him, and nothing occurs that is outside the range of His knowledge. In fact, outside the limits of His knowledge, no action is possible. Similarly, it is obligatory for all events to which His knowledge is associated to take place, since for such actions not to take place entails His being ignorant, while The Divine Essence is pure of all forms of ignorance, defect, and fault. From this they raise the objection of Allah—as well as His creation—being compelled.

Of course, this objection is rejected by referring to one's reason, since every individual clearly and unambiguously sees himself as free in his actions. In reality, this is a form of objection with respect to obvious matters, just like if someone doubts whether fire burns or makes hot.

Another answer to this objection is that first of all, it doesn't disprove the issue of bada' even



if it is valid, since if one believes in predetermination and denies free will, effacement and affirmation, which are among Allah's actions, will in the end occur either by compellation or free will, like all other actions.

In other words, a person who believes in predetermination cannot negate effacement and affirmation with this objection; he can only say that the occurrence of effacement and affirmation, which are both Divine actions, is necessary and certain.

Second, the correct answer to the objection itself is that effacement and affirmation are both uncompelled Divine actions, and like all other Divine actions take place through free will; and "Allah's knowledge of their occurrence through free will" cannot negate their being uncompelled. Otherwise, it would entail knowledge influencing the thing that is known, which is impossible. Similarly, with regard to the actions of people, Allah has knowledge that they will occur through free will. Such knowledge does not negate the person's free will. It appears that the sage Muhaqqiq al-Tusi refers to this answer when he says (in the form of a poetical couplet) in answer to Khayyam:

To term the timeless Divine knowledge the cause of disobedience

Is, among those possessed of reason, out of extreme ignorance

That is, knowledge of the performance of actions by individuals possessing free will does not contradict the uncompelled nature of those actions.

#### Second Objection:

How can the prophecies of the Prophets and Divine friends regarding unseen future events, especially the prophecies of the Noble Messenger (peace be upon him and his family) and the pure Imams (peace be upon them) be explained and justified if bada' is possible with regard to them? That is, how have they given information with certainty about so many future events without taking into account the possibility of bada' with respect to those prophecies?

**ANSWER:** The possibility of occurrence of bada' and its occurrence in some instances does not mean that it occurs in all instances. Thus, the prophecies of those personages, whose knowledge was grounded in Allah's knowledge and teaching and inspiration, indicates that bada' will not occur, and is not in contradiction with the possibility of bada'.

The objection may also be worded in a different way: according to some traditions, in some instances the reports of the prophets and Imams (peace be upon them) did not come to pass, and the reason for that has been mentioned as bada' or other factors. And this entails having informed about something that is untrue and being accused of lying, and causes a weakening of the position of prophecy and vicgerency.

In addition, the prophet or vicegerent who makes the prophecy either knows about the occurrence of bada' or doesn't know about it. In the first case, it is obvious that announcing with certainty the occurrence of an event that will not occur even though the announcer knows that it will not occur constitutes a lie. And the position of the prophets is far removed from that.

In the second case as well, announcing with certainty the occurrence of an event that may or may not occur because of the possibility of bada', if not a lie, does not much benefit the position of prophecy or Imamah.

**ANSWER:** First, according to reliable traditions, the knowledge and awareness of unseen matters that Allah grants to the prophet or his successor and commands him to announce belongs to the definite affairs in which there is no bada'. For example, the Prophet's (peace be upon him and his family) prophecy about 'Ammar being killed at the hands of the rebellious party, about the martyrdom of Amir al-Mu'minin and Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) and the remaining tragedies to befall the Ahl al-Bait (peace be upon them), or about Fatimah (peace be upon her) being the first of the Ahl al-Bait to meet him, all are definite matters not subject to bada'. The same is true about the prophecy that Islam shall subdue the world, that Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return) will appear at the end of time and the explanation of his qualities and characteristics, and tens of other undeniable prophecies. Similarly, the reports about the unseen given by Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him), much of which the Ahl al-Sunnat have also narrated, and the reports of the remaining Imams (peace be upon them) about unseen affairs are not subject to bada', or more correctly, bada' will not take place in these matters, or else those personages would not have given information about them.

The traditions which mention the existence of bada' in their reports of the unseen are either very rare or contain a weak chain of narration, or else their indication of such a point is incomplete. Take for example the same tradition of Abu Hamzah which was discussed earlier.

If there is a sahih (sound) tradition in this regard, it is the tradition of Amr ibn Hamq from Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) which says, I had the honor of coming to the

presence of Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) when he had been struck with the fatal blow; he (peace be upon him) said, O' Amr, I shall part from you... until the year 70, calamities will take place; he repeated this statement thrice.

I said, O' Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him), you said that calamities will occur until the year 70; is there deliverance after that year?

He said, Yes, Amr. After every trial there is deliverance and ease.

“Allah effaces whatsoever He pleases and affirms, and with Him is the Mother of the Book.”[100]

This tradition does not prophesy the appearance and uprising of the Imam of the Time (may Allah hasten his return); rather it gives information about a Divine custom,

“Verily with difficulty is ease.”[101]

At the same time, it mentions the point that this deliverance will come to be in the case that bada' does not occur. In reality, the Imam, by reciting the verse “Allah effaces whatsoever He pleases and affirms, and with Him is the Mother of the Book” wanted to say that this matter is not definite; it may very well be that bada' will occur and prevent it from occurring.

### **Belief in the Return (Raj'ah) with respect to Belief in the Mahdi (may Allah hasten his return)**

#### **QUESTION:**

According to many traditions, at the end of time a number of the deceased Imams (peace be upon them) as well as others will return to this world. Is belief in the concealment of the twelfth Imam (may Allah hasten his return) and his reappearance in accordance with belief in the return (raj'ah)? In other words, does the belief in concealment and reappearance include the return and all other events that will occur before the Day of Judgment, or is it an independent belief separate from the return?

#### **ANSWER:**

Belief in the appearance of the Mahdi and Savior from the Ahl al-Bait and progeny of Fatimah (peace be upon her) is a widespread and collective belief of the Muslims and is not exclusive to the Shi'a. Though the Shi'a also specify his identity in terms of lineage and characteristics, the belief itself is universal, and its tidings have been given in previous religions in the Tawrat and Zabur as well. And according to the principles of the Twelver Shi'a school, without belief in it, one's faith is incomplete, and the acceptance of one's actions is dependent on accepting it. One who dies without believing in this issue or who does not recognize the twelfth Imam (may our souls be his ransom) as the Imam has died the death of ignorance according to the judgment of the prophetic tradition:

“Whoever dies without recognizing the Imam of his time dies the death of the Age of Ignorance.”[102]

This belief, in terms of influence and importance, is at this level.

Belief in the return as well, though it is rooted in the Qur'an and traditions, is not such that the issue of concealment and reappearance not be explainable without it.

Thus, the principle of Imamah and the issue of the Mahdi has been discussed in books even without mention of the issue of the return.

Still, it must be mentioned that the issue of raj'ah and the return of the deceased itself is an Islamic issue and its occurrence in previous times is confirmed on the basis of numerous verses of the Qur'an. When this is the case, since it has had a parallel in the past, the possibility of its reoccurrence at the end of time cannot be denied.

When the return of the deceased has occurred in past ummah (communities), according to well-known tradition famous among the Ahl al-Sunnat, they must consider it possible in this ummah as well:

“Verily you will follow the path of those before you...”[103]

Thus, the denial of its possibility in this ummah by non-Shias is incorrect according to the meaning of this tradition.

In the end, while overlooking the verses that mention the occurrence of raj'ah in previous ummahs, for the sake of blessings and grace we mention one verse that bears witness to its occurrence in this Nation:

“And (remember) the day when We shall gather from every community a group of those who gave the lie to Our signs, so they will meet one another.”[104]

This verse indicates a day when from every ummat a group of people will be gathered who gave the lie to the Divine signs, which naturally is a day other than the Day of Judgment.

And there is no might nor power save with Allah

And our final assertion is that all

praise is for Allah the Lord of the Worlds.

#### **Notes:**

[52] Surah al-Baqara (2), Verse 124: “When his Lord tried Ibrahim by words, then he

completed them.”

[53] Surah Ra'd (13), Verse 7

[54] Surah Baqarah (2), Verse 124

[55] Surah Yunus (10), Verse 35

[56] Surah an-Nisa' (4), Verse 59

[57] Surah Nur (24), Verse 55

[58] Surah Qasas (28), Verse 5

[59] Surah al-Anbiya' (21), Verse 105

[60] Surah Ana'm (6), Verse 75

[61] Bihar al-Anwar, Volume 18, Page 123

[62] Bihar al-Anwar, Volume 36, Page 309, hadith 148

[63] Bihar al-Anwar, Volume 51, Page 102

[64] Bihar al-Anwar, Volume 51, Page 78

[65] Surah Taha (20), Verse 50

[66] Mu'jam Rijal al-hadith, Volume 7, Page 76 and Tanfih al-Maqal, Volume 1, Page 403

[67] Nahj al-Balagha, Subhi al-Salih, Speech 152, Part 7

[68] Bihar al-Anwar, Volume 6, Page 233

[69] Surah Yunus (10), Verse 35

[70] Surah Ra'd (13), Verse 7

[71] Surah Qasas (28), Verse 51

[72] Surah Isra' (17), Verse 71

[73] Sahifah Sajjadiyah, Supplication 47

[74] Kamal ad-Din, Volume 2, Page 378, Section 36, hadith 3. See also, Ma'ani al-Akhbar

[75] Irshad of Shaykh Mufid, Page 364

[76] Surah 'Ankabut (29), Verse 2

[77] Surah Anfal (8), Verse 37

[78] Surah an-Nisa' (4), Verse 59

[79] A'lam al-Wara, Page 397

[80] Nahj al-Balagha, Subhi as-Salih, Speech 187, Part 4

[81] Bihar al-Anwar, Volume 52, Page 111, hadith 21.

[82] al-Zam al-Nasib, Volume 1, Page 429

[83] Surah A'araf (7), Verse 96

[84] Surah Rum (30), Verse 41

[85] Surah Ghafir (40), Verse 60

[86] Surah Nuh (71), Verse 10, 11

[87] Surah A'raf (7), Verse 142

[88] Surah Yunus (10), Verse 98

[89] Surah Ibrahim (14), Verse 7

[90] Surah Talaq (65), Verse 2, 3

[91] Surah Anfal (8), Verse 53

[92] Bihar al-Anwar, Volume 4, Page 197

[93] Surah Ma'idah (5), Verse 64

[94] Bihar al-Anwar, Volume 77, Page 172

[95] Surah al-Rahman (55), Verse 29

[96] Surah Ra'd (13), Verse 39

[97] Surah Ali-Imran (3), Verse 26

[98] Surah Anam (6), Verse 40

[99] Bihar al-Anwar, Volume 4, Page 107, hadith 19

[100] Surah Ra'd (13), Verse 39 [Tafsir al-'Ayashi, Volume 2, Page 217, hadith 68]

[101] Surah Inshirah (94), Verse 6

[102] Bihar al-Anwar, Volume 8, Page 368

[103] Bihar al-Anwar, Volume 21, Page 257

[104] Surah Naml (27), Verse 83