

The Final Hope

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قالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ص):

لَا يَذْهَبُ الدُّنْيَا حَتَّىٰ يَلِيْ أُمَّتِي رَجُلٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِيْ يُقَالُ لَهُ الْمَهْدِيُّ

The Messenger of Allāh says,

“The world will not come to an end until a man from my household (Ahl al-Bayt), who will be called Mahdi, emerges to manage the affairs of my nation.”

Bihār al-Anwār, v. 51, p. 75, hadith 28.

The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

From the beginning of history to the present day, the blessed presence of the Remainder of Allah (may our souls be at his ransom) continues the movement of the prophets and the divine invitations. This truth is alluded to in the Supplication of Nudbah, where it states, (may Allah hasten his appearance)

«فَبَعْضُ أَسْكَنَتْهُ جَنَّتَكَ».

“And You housed some [of them] in Paradise.”

It refers to Adam.

Then in the following parts we read,

«إِلَى أَنْ اَنْتَهَى الْأَمْرُ».

“Until the matter [of prophecy] leads to him.”

Which refers to the Last Prophet. Then the issue of the succession of his Household is raised until it reaches the Imam of the Age. All of them form a related sequence in human history. This means the great prophetic movement and the divine invitations through the prophets have never stopped at any point. Man has needed prophets and divine invitations and inviters. This requirement has remained up to this day, and the more time passes, the closer man gets to the teachings of the prophets.

Editorial

The belief in a global savior originates from the divine nature of mankind. Instinctively, all people seek peace and tranquility, and detest oppression and injustice. This need has always existed among nations, and all true religions contain a promise about the arrival of a Savior in their holy books.

The belief in the emergence of a reformer is not nascent; rather, it has existed since ancient times and is regarded as a fundamental principle throughout human history. All the previous great prophets, at the end of their lives, used to promise their Ummah the coming of the next divine leader to assure them that this chain would never be broken and they would not be left without a divine guide. The prophets and their successors always reminded people that this series of divinely sent individuals would continue until the universal Reformer appears, who would implement all of Allah's laws on the earth and make it a place full of comfort and relief.

This belief, however, arouses hope in the hearts of people, encourages them to remain steadfast, and inspires them always to wait for a better future. They remain eager for this divine promise to be fulfilled, try to make themselves and their society ready to assist him when he comes, and design and create a better lifestyle for themselves.

Though all the religious texts regarding the Savior do not match exactly, this at least proves that such a belief is common among all nations. There are different types of belief in the last reformer among religions. In one place, the Savior is merely introduced as a social reformer; in another, he is regarded as a man who will seek only the spiritual salvation of human beings; and in the third, as someone who will undertake both purposes. On the other hand, the Promised One is sometimes said to be ethnocentric and sometimes to save the whole world.

The Shia believe that the Promised Savior is none other than the man called Mahdi, who is their Twelfth Imam and from the progeny of the Prophet. His mission is universal, and he will intend to correct both the material and spiritual aspects of people's lives.

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Imam Mahdi in the Quran

Surah al-Ra‘d, verse 29

Allah in Surah al-Ra‘d, verse 29 says,

﴿الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ طُوبِي لَهُمْ وَخُسْنُ مَأْبٍ﴾

"Those who believe and do good deeds, theirs will be a blissful life and an excellent home for return".

An explanatory narration:

«عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍ قَالَ قَالَ الصَّادِقُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: «طُوبَى لِمَنْ تَمَسَّكَ بِأَمْرِنَا فِي عَيْنَةٍ قَائِمِنَا فَلَمْ يَرْغُبْ قَلْبُهُ بَعْدَ الْهِدَايَةِ» فَقُلْتُ لَهُ مُجْعَلْتُ فِدَاكَ وَمَا طُوبَى قَالَ: «شَجَرَةٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ أَصْنَلُهَا فِي دَارِ عَلَيٍّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ وَلَيْسَ مِنْ مُؤْمِنٍ إِلَّا وَفِي دَارِهِ عُصْنَى مِنْ أَعْصَانِهَا وَذَلِكَ قَوْلُ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ طُوبَى لَهُمْ وَخُسْنُ مَأْبٍ»¹

Abū Basīr narrates from Imam al-Sādiq (the Shia’s sixth Imam) to have said, "There will be a blissful life for one who follows us when our Upriser (Imam al-Mahdi) is hidden and one whose heart does not deviate after being guided."

Here the narrator adds, I asked the Imam, "May I be your ransom! What do you mean by the blissful life?" The Imam replied, "This blessing refers to a tree that is in heaven and its root is at the house of Ali bin Abī Tālib and there will be no believer, but there will be a branch of this tree in his house. This is the meaning of the words of Allah the Great saying, ‘*Those who believe and do good deeds...*’"²

1 Bihār al-Anwār, Vol. 52, p. 123, hadith 6.

2 Bihār al-Anwār, Vol. 52, p. 123, hadith 6.

Points for consideration:

1. **The duties of people at the time of Occultation:** The aforementioned narration delineates a fundamental soteriological doctrine within Shi'i tradition: those who affirm resolute belief in the Imam and exhibit steadfast firmness in their commitment shall attain a blissful life and an excellent home for return. In light of the referenced Qur'anic verse, the narration further clarifies that the bestowal of such blessings is predicated upon the dual foundations of authentic faith in Allah and the consistent performance of righteous deeds. Moreover, genuine faith in Allah and the embodiment of righteousness are attainable primarily through profound knowledge of the Imam and the faithful application of his guidance in one's lived experience. Consequently, the aspiration to these promised blessings necessitates unqualified obedience to the Imam of one's epoch, thereby establishing such allegiance as an essential requisite for divine grace and eschatological reward.
2. **The preeminent righteous action is to closely follow the Imam:** The performance of righteous actions constitutes an indispensable obligation for believers within the Shi'i theological framework, serving as a manifest expression of faith and a means of spiritual elevation. The acquisition of knowledge concerning these actions and duties, along with their effective implementation in daily life, may be pursued through diverse avenues, including recourse to the dictates of human intellect ('aql) and direct engagement with the Qur'an. Nevertheless, among these sources, one stands paramount: the conscientious adherence to and enactment of the guidelines proffered by the Imam. This primacy derives from the Imam's unparalleled epistemic authority—he who most profoundly comprehends the imperatives of intellect, possesses the deepest insight into the authentic meanings of the Qur'an, and holds the most comprehensive knowledge of the additional requisites for human flourishing in both material and spiritual domains. Indeed, fidelity to the Imam functions as the foundational wellspring from which all virtuous actions emanate, rendering it the quintessential conduit for the realization of moral and devotional excellence.
- 3.

Ulama's Speech

Ayatollah Nāseri states:

"If an individual aspires to draw nearer to the Master of the Age (Imam Mahdi, may Allah hasten his appearance), to forge a profound spiritual connection with him, and to derive greater benefit from his divine effulgence, the prescribed path—as counseled by eminent scholars—is the systematic removal of inner veils through the purification of moral vices. Each unethical trait constitutes a dense barrier impeding spiritual advancement. Consequently, the seeker must prioritize the rectification of character and sincere repentance for past transgressions. This entails a resolute commitment to eschew sin henceforth, to abstain from opposing Divine Truth, and to refrain from succumbing to Satanic impulses.

Having made this determination, the individual should rigorously observe the five daily prayers at their prescribed times, followed by the Tasbih of Lady Fatimah³ after each. Furthermore, one ought to recite Dua al-'Ahd each morning, maintain a state of wudu' as consistently as possible, perform one hundred Istighfar daily—in accordance with traditional emphasis—and recite at least fifty verses of the Qur'an each day.

Prior to sleep, it is highly recommended to renew wudu' and recite selected short chapters from the Qur'an; this practice proves exceptionally efficacious in dismantling or attenuating inner veils, thereby facilitating greater receptivity to the divine radiance of Imam Mahdi. Another salutary discipline is to seek constant recourse to the Imam across all dimensions of life, invoking his remembrance without lapse. It is imperative never to neglect calling upon him with the invocation 'O Ibn al-Hassan' (one of the titles of Imam Mahdi), for the cosmic order rests upon the shoulders of the Remainder of Allah—may our souls be sacrificed for him."

³ This is a special dhikr consisting of thirty-four times Allāhu akbar (الله أكْبَرْ), thirty-three times alhamdu lillāh (الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ), and thirty-three times subhāna –lāh (سُبْحَانَ اللهِ).

General Deputies of Imam Mahdi

Thiqat al-Islam Kulaynī (d. 328 A.H. / 940 A.D. or 329 / 941)

Thiqat al-Islam Muhammad bin Ya'qub bin Ishaq al-Kulayni, popularly known as Shaykh al-Kulayni, is one of the most prominent Shiite scholars and jurists, as well as the foremost narrator and compiler of hadiths in the first half of the fourth century AH, during the era of Imam Mahdi's minor occultation. He was the first Islamic scholar to be titled "Thiqat al-Islam" (the Trustworthy of Islam).⁴ He met some hadith transmitters who directly had directly heard hadiths from Imam Hādī and Imam 'Askarī. He is also claimed to have greatly benefited from Imam Mahdi's divine knowledge by interacting with him through the Imam's special deputies. He was a contemporary of four special deputies who were the link between the Shia and the Imam throughout the entire period of the Minor Occultation. So, he had a great benefit through interacting with the Imam's special deputies. For this reason, he holds a highly exalted status among the scholars of the successive generations. It is surprising to see that even Sunni Muslims considered him to be a great scholar; and his orders and writings were much respected even in the courts of their judges.

He was of Iranian origin from the village of Kulayn located thirty-seven kilometers from Rey - an important city at that time, which today lies in the southern suburbs of Tehran (the capital of Iran); hence, he is also called Rāzī because of his ascription to the city of Rey.

In spite of some ambiguities about the exact time of the birth of Kulaynī, many biographers consider it certain that he was born, before or shortly after the birth of Imam Mahdi, around 255 A.H. / 869 A.D. It is mentioned that his birth had already taken place by start of the Imamate of the 11th Imam, which lasted from 254 A.H to 260 A.H. In other words, He belonged to the era of the Minor Occultation of Imam Mahdi. 'Allāmah Bahr al-'Ulūm considered it possible that Kulaynī lived at the final months of the life of Imam Hasan al-'Askarī.⁵ Ayatollah Khūī believed that his birth was after the martyrdom of Imam al-'Askari.⁶

His Great State

Many of the members of Kulaynī's family were among religious scholars. His father, Ya'qūb bin Ishāq, was among the scholars of his time. Also, among great Shi'a scholars, Abu al-Hasan Ali bin

4 Rayḥānat al-Adab, by Mudarris Tabrīzī, vol. 5, p. 79; Al-Kulaynī Wa al-Kāfī, by Ghaffār, pp. 264-267.

5 Al-Fawā'id al-Rijālīyyah, by Bahr al-'Ulūm, vol. 3, p. 336.

6 Mu'jam Rijāl al-Hadīth, by Khūī, vol. 19, p. 58.

Muhammad was Kulaynī's uncle, and Muhammad bin 'Aqīl al-Kulaynī, Ahmad bin Muhammad, and Muhammad bin Ahmad were all relatives of Sheikh Kulaynī.

Thiqat al-Islam al-Kulaynī received his early religious education in his native town and went to Rey for further education, where he received his formal education and mastered Islamic sciences. Within a short time, he acquired fame as an eminent scholar and received students from far and near. Beside continuing his education and studies, and learning about the thoughts of other religions in Rey, where was the center for the meeting of Islam'iī, Hanafī, Shāfi'ī and Imamī ideas and thoughts, Kulaynī decided to compile Shiite Hadiths. He learned Hadith studies under Abu al-Hasan Muhammad bin Asadī al-Kūfī, who lived in Rey.⁷ He also transmitted from a number of scholars in Ray, including his maternal uncle Ali bin Muhammad bin Ibrāhim Kulyanī al-Rāzī, who is credited with *Kitāb Aḵhbār al-Qā'īm*. He then moved to Qom to perfect his Hadith studies. His arrival in Qom coincided with the political and religious rule of virtuous and pious men who were considered famous narrators of their time, such as Ahmad bin Muhammad bin 'Isā and Ali bin Ibrāhīm Qummī. He must have lived for a time in Qom, since many of his authorities were leading Qomī scholars. Among them were 'Abd-Allāh bin Ja'far Himyarī, Ahmad bin Idrīs Ash'arī, Ali bin Ibrāhim bin Hāshim, Dāwūd bin Kura (or Kuza), Muhammad bin Hasan al-Saffār and Sa'd bin 'Abd-Allāh Ash'arī.

Kulaynī met Hadith scholars who had heard hadiths directly from Imam Hādī and Imam 'Askarī, and benefitted from great teachers. In fact, he is counted among the *Muhaddithīn* (the narrators of hadiths) of a special class of those who traveled in order to collect hadiths and meet the persons considered to be the authority on Hadith. He met a great many scholars, jurisprudents, and authorities of hadith in the second half of the third century Hegira in Rey, Qom, Baghdād, Kūfa, and other Islamic lands far and wide, which are obscure to us today, and compiled what knowledge they had preserved, derived benefit from it, and obtained their permission and authorization to narrate from them, which was also very valuable to a magnanimous man like him.

Though the duration of Kulaynī's trip is not known, he finally traveled to Baghdad and lived there for twenty years until he passed away. There, he was engaged in teaching and pursuing academic works. In Baghdađ, he lived in the *Darb al-Silsilah* near the *Bāb al-Kufa*, in the southwestern part of the old city.⁸ He was therefore also known as *Silsilah*. There, he became the head of the religious

7 Al-Kulaynī Wa al-Kāfī, by Ghaffār, p. 179.

8 Al-Rijāl, by Sheikh al-Tūsī, vol.4, p. 310.

and legal scholars of the Twelver Shia during the time when al-Muqtadir (the eighteenth Caliph of the Abbasids) was Caliph.

It is safe to say that Sheikh Kulaynī was the most influential and famous thinker of his time. Although he was living in the period of Imam Mahdi's special deputies, who were great Shi'ite jurists and narrators, and the Shias recognized them as the chosen individuals by the Imam, Kulaynī was the most famous high-ranking figure to whom Shias and Sunnis paid reverence. All the biographical works have praised him for his truthfulness in speech and correct conduct, and totally encompassing knowledge of Hadiths, to the extent that they have written that both Shi'ites and Sunnis used to refer to him to obtain religious verdicts.

With regard to his fame, Shi'a and Sunni scholars referred to his rulings in Jurisprudence (Fiqh), so that he was the first person to be known as *Thiqat al-Islam* (the trustworthy of Islam), and also he was acknowledged as the *Mujaddid* (the renewer) in the third century of the Islamic Hijrī calendar.

There is a narration from the Prophet to have said,

«إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْعَثُ لِهَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ عَلَىٰ رَأْسِ كُلِّ مائَةٍ سَنَةٍ مَنْ يُجَدِّدُ لَهَا دِينَهَا». ^٩

“Allah will raise for this community at the end of every one hundred years the one who will renovate its religion for them.”

Sunni scholars have conducted studies to determine who have been the *Mujaddids* in the Shia school during past centuries. Ibn Athīr, in his book *Jāmi' al-'Usūl*, quotes the abovementioned narration and lists the names of those regarded as *Mujaddidūn* among the Shia. According to him, in the first century, Muhammad bin Ali, Imam Bāqir (the fifth Imam of Shia); in the beginning of the second century, Ali bin Mūsā al-Rizā (the eighth Imam of Shia); and in the beginning of the third century, al-Kulaynī are the three Revivors of Shia¹⁰

Also, Sheikh Abbās al-Qummī, in his book *al-Kunā Wa al-Alqāb*, lists Kulaynī as the *Mujaddid* of the third century AH.

In the view of great Shia personalities

9 Al-Sunan, by Abī Dawūd, vol. 4, p. 178.

10 Mawsūah Tabaqāt al-Fuqahā, by Imam Ṣādiq Institute, vol. 4, p. 478.

In describing Kulaynī, Sheikh Tūsi (d. 460 A.H) mentions in his precious book Al-Rijāl, “*Muhammad bin Ya'qūb al-Kulayni with the cognomen of Abu Ja'far al-A'war, was a great scholar especially in Hadith. He has some written works mentioned in al-Kāfi.*”¹¹ Elsewhere, he mentioned Kulayni as Thiqah (reliable) and knowledgeable in narrations.¹² In his book, Al-Fihrist, Tūsi mentions Al-Kāfi and a few other books of Kulaynī, and then recounts the chain of his narrations to them from his masters: Sheikh Mufid, Husayn bin 'Ubayd-Allah Ghazāirī, Sayyid Murtzā, and Ahmad bin 'Abdūn.

Najāshī (d. 450 A.H.), the Shi'a scholar in his Rijāl writes, “*In his time, he (Kulaynī) was the head of Shia in Rey and the most reliable among them in Hadiths and recording them. He compiled his great book named al-Kāfi in 20 years.*”¹³

Sayyid bin Tāwūs (d. 664 A.H.) says, “*The authenticity and trustworthiness of Kulaynī in narrating Hadith is certain to all of our scholars.*”¹⁴

Other Shia scholars such as, Ibn Shahrāshūb,¹⁵ 'Allāmah al-Hillī,¹⁶ Ibn Dāwūd al-Hillī¹⁷ al-Tafrishī,¹⁸ al-Ardabīlī¹⁹ and Sayyid Abu al-Qāsim Khūī²⁰ have also approved Sheikh Tūsi, Najāshī, and Ibn Tāwūs' statements.²¹

According to Muhammad Taqī Majlisī (the father of 'Allāmah Majlisī), “*Kulaynī is unique among all our scholars, and those who have narrated from him, and also his book Al-Kāfi; and his other advantages indicate that he had special divine approvals from Almighty Allah.*”²² Also, 'Allāmah Majlisī, in his book- Mirāt al-'Uqūl says, “*Kulaynī was accepted by different groups of all ages, and was praised by Shia and Sunni.*”²³

In the views of Sunni scholars

11 Al-Rijāl, by Tūsī, p. 429.

12 Al-Fihrist, by Tūsī, p. 120.

13 Al-Rijāl, by Najāshī, p. 377.

14 Uṣūl al-Kāfi, the introduction, p. 106.

15 Ma 'ālim al-'Ulamā, by Ibn Shahrāshūb, p. 134.

16 Khulāsat al-Aqwāl, by Hillī, p. 245.

17 Al-Rijāl, by Ibn Dāwūd, p. 187.

18 Naqd al-Rijāl, by Tafrishī, vol. 4, p. 352.

19 Jāmi' al-Ruwāt, by Ardabīlī, vol. 2, p. 218.

20 Mu 'jam al-Rijāl al-Hadīth, by Khūī, vol. 19, p. 54.

21 Kashf al-Mahajjah, by Ibn Tāwūs, p. 159.

22 Sharh Mashīkhah Man Lā Yahzur, p. 267.

23 Mirāt al-'Uqūl, by Majlisī, vol. 1, p. 3.

Ibn Athīr, the Sunni historian counts Kulaynī among great Twelver Shia scholars²⁴, and as mentioned before, and believes that Kulaynī is the revivor of Shia in the third century A.H.²⁵

Zahabī mentioned Kulaynī as a great sheikh of Shia, and a Twleve Shia scholar who has several written works.²⁶

Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī says that Kulaynī is among Shia Jurisprudents and authors.²⁷

Ibn 'Asākir has described him to enjoy great merits in his book.²⁸

Apart from these, other popular Sunni scholars especially historians have mentioned Kulaynī as a great scholar and famous jurist, and one of the former Shiite leaders.

His Masters

In Rey, Qom, Baghdad, Kufah, and other places where some of their names are not clear to us today, Kulaynī met many great scholars, jurists and narrators; and he had taken benefits and obtained very valuable permits from those great men. In the books of Rijāl (the science of the narrators and figures), up to fifty teachers of Kulaynī have been mentioned who educated and taught him as well as narrating Hadiths for him. His most influential teacher was Ali bin Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, the author of *Tafsīr Qummī* who has been mentioned in the chain of transmitters of more than 7068 Hadiths in *al-Kāfi*.²⁹ His other famous teachers are:

- Muhammad bin Yahyā al-Ash'arī;
- Ahmad bin Idrīs al-Qummī;
- Ahmad bin 'Abd Allah bin Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Khālid al-Barqī;
- Ahmad bin Muhammad bin 'Isā al-Ash'arī;
- 'Abd Allah bin ja'far al-Himyarī;
- Hasan bin Fazl bin Yazīd al-Yamānī;
- Ahmad bin Mehrān;
- Muhammad bin Hasan al-Ta'ī;
- 'Ali bin al-Husayn bin Musā bin Bābawayh al-Qummī;
- Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Saffār;

24 Al-Kāmil Fī al-Tārīkh, by Ibn Athīr, vol. 8, p. 364.

25 Rawzāt al-Jannāt Fī Ahwāl al-'Ulamā Wa al-Sādāt, by Bihbahānī, p. 525.

26 Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā, by Zahabī, vol. 15, p. 280.

27 Lisān al-Mīzān, by Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, vol. 5, p. 433

28 Tārīkh Madīna Dimashq, by Ibn 'Asākir, vol. 56, p. 297.

29 Mu'jam Rijāl al-Hadīth, by Khūī, vol. 19, p. 59.

- Muhammad bin Yahyā al-'Attar;
- Qāsim bin 'Alā;
- Ibn 'Uqdah.

Students and Transmitters of Hadiths

There are some great Shia scholars among the students of Sheikh Kulaynī, and those who transmitted Hadiths from him. Some of these jurists and narrators who were famous among our scholars in the first half and middle of the fourth century A.H. in Iran and Iraq are the masters in many famous scholars of the second half of the fourth century A.H. Among the students of Thiqat al-Islam Kulaynī we can refer to:

- Ibn Abī Rāfi' al-Saymārī;
- Ibn Qulawayh al-Qummī;
- Hārūn bin Mūsā bin Ahmad al-Tallā'ukbarī;
- Ahmad bin Muhammad al-Zurārī;
- Muhammad bin 'Ali Mājīlawayh al-Qummī;
- Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad bin Ibrāhīm bin Ja'far;
- Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Quzā'a al-Safwānī.

His works

Sheikh Tūsī and Najāshī, two well-known specialists in Rijāl, have considered the following books as the writings of Sheikh Kulaynī:

- Kitāb al-Rijal;
- Al-Radd 'Ala al-Qarāmitah (Refutation of the Carmatians);
- Rasā'il al-Aimmah (Letters of the infallible Imams of Shia);
- Al-Zīyy Wa al-Tajammul;
- Al-Dawājin Wa l-Rawājin;
- Al-Wasāil;
- Fazl al-Quran (The superiority of Quran);
- Kitāb Mā qīla fī al-Aimmah Min al-Shi'r (an anthology of poetry about the Imams);
- Kitāb Ta'bīr al-Ruyā (The book of interpretation of dreams);

- Al-Kāfi.³⁰

Sadly, at present, all of these mentioned works are non-existent except *al-Kāfi*.

Al-Kāfi

Although Kulaynī has several works and writings, his greatest contribution is the book *al-Kāfi*, which is the first of the four Shiite canonical books of Hadith: (*Al-Kāfi*, *Man lā Yahzuruhu al-Faqīh*, *Tahdhīb al-Ahkām*, and *Istibsār*).

The book *al-Kāfi* is a collection of the traditions taught by the Prophet and the infallible Imams of Shia, and handed down to the Muslim Community by the disciples of the Imams.

The name *al-Kāfi* means “that which is sufficient,” that is, the book was intended to be a comprehensive collection of *Imamī-Shia* traditions. It is claimed that it took Kulaynī twenty years to complete this book. The book is a collection of 16,199 hadiths, comprised mostly of authentic narrations that contain acceptable chains of transmitters.

In his introduction, Kulaynī maintains that it is incumbent upon the believer to perform religious duties on the basis of knowledge, certainty, and understanding. Without these, one will remain in a state of doubt and will not be eligible for reward. This knowledge is to be found in traditions on the authority of the Imams.

Kulaynī describes his aim as providing a book of such traditions that would include all branches of religious knowledge and would serve as a guide to the believers. This is explained by Sheikh Kulaynī in his introduction to the work, “...*You wanted to have a book which would be sufficient (for your religious needs), including all kinds of knowledge of religion, which would be adequate for the student, and to which the teacher might refer. Thus, it could be used by anyone who wanted knowledge of religion and of legal practice according to the sound traditions from the truthful ones (the Imams) ...*”³¹

Al-Kāfi is indeed considered a very full and comprehensive work, divided into three sections: *al-Usūl*, *al-Furū'* and *al-Rawzah*. The *Usūl* gives traditions concerning the main principles of religion and the principles on which religious law is based. The *Furū'* concerns the traditions which elaborate the details of religious law, while the *Rawzah* is a collection of traditions outlining various points of religious interest and includes some of the letters and speeches of the Imams.

30 *Rijāl*, by Ṭūsī, p. 429; *Rijāl*, by Najāshī, p. 377.

31 *Al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, pp. 6-8.

One of the principal features of this book, *al-Kāfī*, is that the traditions are presented systematically in chapters according to their subject matter. This is a system which Islamic scholars had begun to use in the second half of the second century and in the third century of the Islamic era.

Since the book *al-Kāfī* is regarded as one of the four major works of Shi'i traditions, this has led to a considerable number of commentaries being written about it by later writers. Beginning in the Safavid period, numerous commentaries, abridgements, glosses, studies, and Persian translations were written on the *Kāfī*.³²

Arguably, one of the most useful and comprehensive commentaries on the *Kāfī* is the *Mir'āt al-'Uqūl fī Sharḥ Akhbār Āl al-Rasūl* by 'Allāmah Majlisī. Majlisī had several manuscripts of the *Kāfī* at his disposal. He began working on the *Mir'āt al-'Uqūl* in or before 1076 AH / 1665-66 AD, and had almost brought it to completion by the time of his death.³³ 'Allāmah Majlisī elucidates the various traditions of *al-Kāfī* and also classifies them as: *Sahih* (sound Hadith), *Hasan* (acceptable Hadith), *Muwaththaq* (genuine Hadith), *Qawī* (strong Hadith), or *Za'īf* (weak ones).

Another well-known commentary on the *Kāfī* is the *Rawāshih al-Samāwiyyah fī Sharh al-Ahādīth al-Imāmiyah* by Muhammad-Bāqir Dāmād (d. 1040 AH / 1630-31 AD), which covers only a fraction of the text.³⁴

Also, the *Sharh Usūl al-Kāfī* by Mullā Sadr-al-Dīn (Mullā Sadrā) Shīrāzī (d. 1050 A.H. / 1640-41 A.D.) is regarded as an intellectually approached vision to describe the hadiths of the book. The author commented on them from his own point of view which is based on an agreement between the intellect and religion. However, from among the 34 parts of *al-Kāfī*, he only managed to comment on a few of them.

Another detailed and fully informative commentary of *al-Kāfī* belongs to Muhammad Sālih Māzandarānī (d. 1080 A.H. / 1669 A.D. or 1081 / 1670) which shed light to many subtle points of the book's narrations.

In addition, Khalīl bin Ghāzī Qazwīnī (d. 1089 A.H. / 1678 A.D.) wrote the *Shāfi fī Sharh al-Kāfī*, a commentary on the *Usul* and the *Kitāb al-Tahārah* of the *Furū'* as well as a Persian commentary on both the *Usul* and *Furū'* entitled *al-Shāfi fī Sharh al-Kāfī*.³⁵

32 *Al-Zarīah Ilā Taṣānīf al-Shī'a*, vol. 6, pp. 180-84 & vol. 13, pp. 95-100 & vol. 14, pp. 26-28 .

33 *Ibid*, vol. 20, pp. 279-80.

34 *Ibid*, vol. 11, p. 257.

35 *Ibid*, vol. 15, pp. 4-5.

His demise

Finally, after a sincere religious, scientific, and cultural attempt, Thiqat al-Islam Kulaynī passed away in Baghdad in 328 or 329 A.H. (939 or 940 A.D.). Sheikh al-Tūsī, in his *Fehrest* (p. 166), gives Kulaynī's death-date as 328 A.H. / 939-40 A.D.; also, in his *Rijāl* (pp. 495-96), which is a later work (and therefore perhaps more reliable), the date provided is Sha'bān 329 A.H. / May 941 A.D., and this is also the year noted by Najāshī. The last special deputy of Imam Mahdi (Ali bin Muhammad al-Samurī) died in this year as well. This year also marked the beginning of the Major Occultation of Imam Mahdi. Kulaynī's age when he died is calculated to be about 80 years. The funeral prayer was led by Abū Qirāt Muhammad bin Ja'far, and Kulaynī was buried in the cemetery of Bāb al-Kūfa located in eastern Baghdad. This is the same district where he used to live. His grave exists there even today and is located in the eastern part of the Tigris River, next to the old Baghdad Bridge.

Praying for Imam Mahdi

An introduction

Human beings need to rely on a strong supporter to strengthen their will and relieve their discomfort. Prayer is one of the main keys to fulfilling this need and illuminating the light of hope in them. By praying, human beings become more attentive to their spiritual needs and more worthy of achieving Allah's grace. In fact, prayer is a symbol of worship, submission, and servitude. In addition, just as all forms of worship have a special divine effect in exalting the soul, prayer has its own effect as well. This is why Imam Sādiq states,

«إِنَّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ مَنْزَلَةً لَا تُتَّلِّ إِلَّا بِمَسْأَلَةٍ».^{٣٦}

"With Allah, there is a [spiritual] position that no one can reach without request (and praying)."

Psychiatrists have also found that prayer and worship, as well as having a strong faith in religion, alleviate the anxiety, worry, feverish excitement, and fear that cause more than half of people's discomfort.

Undoubtedly, the request in one's prayer should not be issued from the tongue only; rather, one's whole being needs to be involved. The tongue's role in this regard is to represent all the particles of human existence and translate its deep demands. In this way, through prayer, the heart and the soul become closer to Allah.

This point is described in one of Imam Ali's noble sayings as he states,

«لَا يَقْبِلُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ دُعَاءَ قَلْبَ لَاهُ».^{٣٧}

"Allah does not answer the prayer of man who is unwary (and his tongue speaks without vigilance and attention)."

In short, prayer is a kind of self-awareness and a tool for awakening one's heart and mind, as well as an esoteric connection with Allah, Who is the source of all goodness and grace.

Another fact about praying is that if someone prays for another, his prayer is more likely to be answered. Imam Bāqir says in a hadith,

«أَسْرَعُ الدُّعَاءِ نُجُحًا لِلإِجَابَةِ دُعَاءُ الْأَخِيَّ بِظَهْرِ الْغَيْبِ يَبْدُأُ بِالدُّعَاءِ لِأَخِيهِ فَيَقُولُ لَهُ مَلَكٌ مُوَكَّلٌ بِهِ آمِينٌ وَ لَكَ مِثْلًا».^{٣٨}

"The fastest prayer to be answered is the prayer of a [religious] brother for his brother in his absence. As soon as he starts praying for his brother, an angel assigned to him says, "Amen. May you receive twice as much!"

Undoubtedly, Imam Mahdi is the best example of someone who should be prayed for. If one realizes the importance of the Imam's advent and, with full awareness, asks Allah to hasten his appearance, his prayer will indeed have a special place. In Islamic culture, one of the characteristics of a waiting person is that he should constantly remember the Imam of the Age and pray for his

36 Kāfi, vol. 2, p. 466, hadith 3.

37 Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 90, p. 314, hadith 19.

38 Kāfi, vol. 2, p. 507, hadith 4.

health, his coming, and his success in what he decides to do. In this way, we can become subject to many merits that are promised to a true Muslim during the absence of the Imam. One of these merits is mentioned in Imam Ali's words as he states,

«الْمُنْتَظَرُ لِأَمْرِنَا كَالْمُتَشَحِّطٌ بِدَمِهِ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ». ٣٩

"The one who is waiting for our matter (the appearance of Imam Mahdi) is like the one who is covered with his blood in the way of Allah (in Islamic battlefield)."

It means that a true expectant does not merely expect; rather, he does things that are in line with this expectation, and heartfelt praying for the Imam is one of those things that one should do.

When we see such meaningful narrations, we are surprised and ask ourselves, "How can the reward of a waiting person be equal to the effort of a warrior who has shed his blood for the sake of Islam?!" But we must know that prayer helps man to be prepared and get away from neglectfulness. This readiness and attention give a special value to the prayer. If we interpret "expectation" as making other people prepared for the advent of the Imam, the expectation will be equivalent to jihad, or even gain a wider meaning. The scope of this jihad starts from within the waiting person, in that he firstly fights with his carnal and Satanic desires—which we call the greatest jihad—and, for the next step, when the man has amended himself, he will be able to reform his society; the exact thing that a warrior does to save his religious brothers, even if it ends in his martyrdom.

The benefits of praying for Imam Mahdi

Before discussing the benefits of praying for Imam Mahdi, we must point out that the Imam, as a divine man chosen by Allah, does not need our prayers. However, because there are many advantages in praying for him, we are advised to do so. In the following, we refer to some of the benefits of praying for the Imam,

1- Being passionate about the Imam

Our prayer demonstrates our love and affection for Imam Mahdi and proves that we are not neglectful of him. Although loving Imam Mahdi and all the Infallibles is a part of our faith and a

39 Kamāl al-Dīn, vol. 2, p. 645, hadith 6.

condition for our good deeds to be accepted by Allah, at the same time praying for the Imam of the Age increases this love in our hearts, strengthens our faith, and removes the obstacles in our material and spiritual affairs. The Imam himself has inspired us to pray for him by saying,

«أكثروا الدُّعاءً بِتَعْجِيلِ الْفَرَجِ فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ فَرَجُوكُمْ». ٤٠

"Pray a lot for the appearance to take place sooner since indeed it leads to your relief."

2. Renewing the covenant with the Imam

Prayer is regarded as renewing a covenant with the Imam, and the content of the covenant is religiosity—focusing on acting in accordance with the codes of our Sharia, a heartfelt decision to obey the command of the Imam, and assisting him with our lives and property. Renewing allegiance to the Imam is so important that it is recommended to be done after each of the five obligatory prayers, either every day or at least every Friday. It is also very useful and effective to recite the supplications related to the Imam every day after the morning prayer. These supplications are regarded as *Ta'qībāt* (pursuits following the Morning Prayer).

3. Enlivening the remembrance of the Imam

Certainly, praying or reciting these supplications and seeking recourse to the Infallibles during the absence of the Imam is better than praying at the time of the Imam's advent. This prayer keeps the remembrance of the absent Imam alive in the hearts of the waiting people and helps them not to become neglectful of him. Remembering the Imam revives the values of the religion and moral principles in the hearts, whereas neglecting him is one of the main factors in the decrease of divine and human values in Islamic societies. Continually praying for the Imam during his disappearance is a kind of clinging to the divine rope of Allah, which in turn leads to the completion of faith.

40 Kamāl al-Dīn, vol. 2, p. 485, hadith 4.

4. Creating harmony between our deeds and the wishes of the imam

A person who is mindful of the worries of his Imam certainly does not allow himself to annoy him by committing sins or acting contrary to the Imam's will. As a result, praying leads man to gain the satisfaction of the Imam, which is inseparable from receiving the pleasure of Allah.

5. Causing the Imam to pray for the prayer

Another benefit of praying is that, in return, the Imam will also pray for the one who prays. The Imam, who is the best example of Allah's vast mercy, never remains inattentive to those who show their love and interest in him. In addition, if the Imam prays for someone, his prayer will certainly be answered by Allah. The benefit of the Imam's prayer for man will appear in man's material and spiritual life, both in this world and on the Day of Resurrection.

6. Hastening to the Advent of the Imam

One of the most important examples of praying for the Imam is to ask Allah to hasten his advent. According to the narrations, it seems that the time of the Imam's advent is not fixed and may change. It is highly probable that the time of the appearance is conditioned by the seriousness and diligence of the Imam's followers and their readiness, and that a solemn prayer made with full attention and purposefulness may have a great effect in shortening the time of the Imam's appearance.

7. Having impact on the Imam's health

The last point is that, although according to the divine promise the Imam will remain alive until he raises the banner of monotheism and justice throughout the whole world, he is a human being like others and it is natural that he is exposed to physical problems, natural unpleasant events, and diseases, and suffers from many kinds of worries. Our prayers for his health are undoubtedly effective. For this reason, we are recommended to pray for him by reciting the following supplication.,

«اللَّهُمَّ فَصَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَجِّلْ لِوَلِيِّكَ الْفَرَجَ وَالْعَافِيَةَ وَالنَّصْرَ». ^{٤١}

"O Allah! Send you blessing to Muhammad and the household of Muhammad and hasten for your Agent relief, health, and assistance."

Regarding the benefits of praying for the Imam, there is a book called *Mikyāl al-Makārim* written by Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Taqī Mūsavī Isfahānī (1348 AH / 1964 AD), which is one of the valuable Shiite books. In this book, the author sufficiently expresses the impressive results of praying for the Imam and elaborates on many related issues. He also relates many narrations and points to many reasons.

In a segment of this book we read,

"Those aspects and characteristics of the Imam that lead us to pray for him are matters that, if one of them is found in someone, it requires us to pray for him according to the intellect or the law of religion or at least in agreement with human nature (that even exists in animals that pay attention to their species), while all those matters are gathered in the holy existence of the Imam."⁴²

Some famous prayers for Imam Mahdi

Although some of the authentic Islamic Mahdavi prayers are recommended to be recited at certain special times or places, certainly, whenever anyone remembers the Imam and feels a heartfelt connection with him, he can recite the sentences included in these prayers.

These prayers, which have been received in the form of supplications, can be recited whenever someone wishes to speak devotionally to his Imam, to be spiritually connected to him, to renew his allegiance to him, to ask Allah to hasten the Imam's appearance, and to seek distance for the Imam from any sort of hardship.

Here are some of the famous prayers that enjoy greater emphasis on being recited:

41 *Misbāh al-Mutihajjid*, vol. 1, p. 58.

42 *Mikyāl al-Makārim*, vol. 1, Chapter 5.

1- The Prayer of 'Ahd (the Covenant).

This prayer is narrated from Imam Sādiq and involves renewing allegiance to Imam Mahdi. It is one of the prayers that is greatly emphasized to be recited during the time of the Imam's absence. It is said that whoever recites this prayer for forty mornings will be one of the helpers of the Imam. This prayer includes a special greeting to the Imam from the reciter, as well as on behalf of all believing men and women in the East and the West of the world—those on the land or on the sea—and from all parents on behalf of their children. Then the reciter renews the covenant and allegiance with the Imam and declares the permanence of this covenant until the Day of Judgment.

In a segment of this prayer, the reciter asks Allah to hasten the appearance of the Imam by saying,

«... اللَّهُمَّ أَرِنِي الطَّلْعَةَ الرَّشِيدَةَ وَالْغُرْةَ الْحَمِيدَةَ وَأَكْحُلْ نَاظِرِي بِنَظَرِهِ مِنِي إِلَيْهِ وَعَجِّلْ فَرَجَهُ وَسَهِلْ مَخْرَجَهُ...».⁴³

"... *O Allah! Show me the face of that perfect man who is full of light and is praised, enlighten my eyes by my looking at him, make his appearance soon, and make his coming easy (and effortless) ...*"

2- A supplication to be recited after each obligatory prayer,

«... اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّ رَسُولَكَ الصَّادِقَ الْمُصَدِّقَ صَلَواتُكَ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ قَالَ: إِنَّكَ قُلْتَ: مَا تَرَدَّدْتُ فِي شَيْءٍ أَنَا فَاعِلُهُ كَتَرَدْدِي فِي قَبْضِ رُوحِ عَبْدِي الْمُؤْمِنِ يَكْرَهُ الْمَوْتَ وَأَكْرَهُ مُسَائِتَهُ اللَّهُمَّ فَصَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَجِّلْ لِوَلِيَّكَ الْفَرَجَ وَالْعَافِيَةَ وَالنَّصْرَ وَلَا تَسُوْنِي فِي نَفْسِي وَلَا فِي أَحَدٍ مِنْ أَحِبَّنِي».⁴⁴

"... *O Allah! Send blessing to Muhammad and the household of Muhammad. O Allah! Indeed, Your messenger who is truthful and approved (by You) to whom and his household be sent Your blessings, said that You have stated, 'I do not doubt in anything I do, such as My doubt in taking the soul of My believing servant, since he is reluctant to die and I do not like to upset him. (but he has to die and I will satisfy him)' O Allah! Send blessing to Muhammad and the household of Muhammad and hasten to the appearance, good health, and assistance of Your agent (Imam Mahdi) and do not give badness to me nor to my friends.*"

43 Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 83, p. 285, hadith 47: Mafātīh al-Jinān.

44 Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 83, p. 7, hadith 7.

3- In dawn, after the morning prayer,

One is recommended to pray for the Imam. It is narrated to say after the Morning Prayer one hundred times before saying anything,

«يَا رَبِّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَجِّلْ فَرْجَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَأَعْتِقْ رَقْبَتِي مِنَ النَّارِ».٤٥

"O my Lord! Send blessing to Muhammad and the progeny of Muhammad and hasten to the relief of the household of Muhammad (by letting the time of Advent take place soon) and save me from the fire of the Hell."

4- One should recite when he is performing Qunūt in his daily prayer,

«... اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَشْكُو إِلَيْكَ فَقْدَ نَبِيِّنَا وَغَيْبَةَ إِمَامِنَا وَقَلَّةَ عَدَدِنَا وَكَثْرَةَ أَعْدَادِنَا وَتَظَاهُرُ الْأَعْدَاءِ عَلَيْنَا وَوُقُوعُ الْفِتْنَةِ بِنَا فَفَرِّجْ ذَلِكَ

اللَّهُمَّ بَعْدُ تُظْهِرُهُ وَإِمَامٌ حَقٌّ نَعْرِفُهُ إِلَهُ الْحَقِّ أَمِينٌ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ».٤٦

"... O Allah! Indeed, we complain to you about the absence of our Prophet, the absence of our Imam, the low number of our (believing) people, the abundance of our adversaries, their joining hands against us, and rising of misgiving among us. So, O Allah! Give us relief about these with justice You will reveal and by the true Imam that we know. "Amen O the Master of all people."

5- A supplication that is advised to be recited at the night before Friday,

«اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَجِّلْ فَرْجَهُمْ وَأَهْلِكْ عَدُوِّهِمْ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَالآخِرِينَ».٤٧

"O Allah! Send blessing to Muhammad and the progeny of Muhammad and hasten to their relief and destroy all their enemies of Jinn and human beings, those of the first generation and those of the later."

45 Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 83, p. 43, hadith 54.

46 Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 82, p. 207, hadith 24.

47 Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 86, p. 289, hadith 3.

The Auspicious Occasion of the 9th of Rabi' al-Awwal

The ninth day of Rabi' al-Awwal (*corresponding to October 16th, 2021*) holds profound significance in Shi'i religious observance, marking the inauguration of the Imamate and divine guardianship of the Promised Mahdi, the sole Savior of humanity. This position was assumed following the martyrdom of his esteemed father, Imam Hassan Askari, at a young age on the morning of the 8th of Rabi' al-Awwal. Consequently, the Awaited Mahdi commenced his Imamate on that very day, a mission that persists through the current period of Occultation until Allah decrees his universal manifestation to the world.

Historical Context of Imamate Succession

All prophets and Imams initiated their missions on divinely appointed days, during which they summoned humanity to Allah and the prophetic tradition. Imam Mahdi, as the final Imam, possesses such a day. His distinction lies in his status as the living Imam and ultimate Divine Proof (Hujjah); thus, commemorating the onset of his Imamate expresses our recognition and sacred duty toward His Holiness.

Analogous to Ghadir Khumm—wherein the Prophet designated Imam Ali as his successor, an event warranting perpetual veneration to uphold the institution of Imamate—the commencement of each Imam's guardianship merits similar respect. The martyrdom of one Imam officially inaugurates the Imamate of his successor, necessitating simultaneous mourning for the departed and rejoicing for the new appointee.

Historical records indicate that it was customary, upon the martyrdom or demise of an Imam or caliph, to offer condolences to the successor while extending congratulations for his leadership or caliphate. For instance, following Imam Hassan Askari's martyrdom, some individuals approached Ja'far, the Imam's brother, with condolences and congratulations, erroneously assuming his succession. In reality, Imam Mahdi was the rightful Imam; however, due to grave threats to his life and oppressive Abbasid policies, his Imamate was not publicly proclaimed and remained concealed. For these security reasons, Imam Mahdi refrained from public appearances. Preceding Imams faced varying challenges in their eras. During Imam Kāzim's time, Harun al-Rashid ordered the execution of anyone designated by Imam Sādiq as successor, prompting Imam

Sādiq to nominate seven individuals, including Harun himself. Under Umayyad and Abbasid rule, similar customs of condolences and congratulations prevailed upon a caliph's death.

Distinctive Significance of Imam Mahdi's Imamate

Unlike prior Imams, whose Imamate anniversaries were not publicly celebrated in subsequent years, Imam Mahdi's case is unique: he remains alive, and we reside under his divine guardianship, conferring exceptional importance upon this occasion.

Commemoration serves to heighten attentiveness to him, preserve the doctrine of Imamate during the Age of Occultation, and intensify anticipation for his advent.

In the contemporary context, where adversaries of the Ahl al-Bayt challenge Imam Mahdi's existence and question Mahdism, observing this day reinforces this foundational Islamic belief among the faithful and those awaiting his manifestation. It may also prompt inquiry among those unfamiliar with Imamate, facilitating greater understanding of its reality.

Eschatological and Social Implications

The 9th of Rabi' al-Awwal heralds a just global order and the emergence of an ideal spiritual society. The divine archetype of a righteous polity—articulated across religious traditions—entered its operative phase on this day. Occultation does not imply disconnection; the Imam resides among humanity, overseeing affairs imperceptibly. This day may initiate humanity's preparation for his advent, warranting utmost veneration.

This occasion embodies thanksgiving for Allah's supreme blessing. Programs of gratitude in mosques and gatherings are fitting. Aligning our thanksgiving with Imam Mahdi's Imamate commencement, enriched by educational initiatives, would deepen knowledge of this exalted figure.

To adhere to religious precepts amid emerging complexities, continual knowledge acquisition and authoritative guidance are essential. Imamate perpetuates the Prophet's mission; the Imam guides humanity. In the era of the Imam of the Age, he alone assumes this role, demanding particular reverence for his Imamate day.

Imam Mahdi uniquely bears responsibility for realizing divine ideals globally and purifying the world from corruption—the culmination of prophetic and Imamic endeavors. Thus, his Imamate's inception merits distinctive joyous celebration.

Certain scholars designate this day as **Eid Allah al-Akbar** (the Greatest Eid of Allah) or the “Second Ghadir.” As companions pledged allegiance to Imam Ali at Ghadir Khumm, we renew allegiance to the living, present Imam Mahdi on this day, affirming devotion and loyalty.

Finally, grounded in two Qur'anic verses, Mahdism maintains an intrinsic connection to Ghadir. Allah says in a verse that most of the commentators have interpreted it to point to the time of the Advent of Imam Mahdi,

﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءامَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَحْلِفُهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَحْلَفُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَ لَهُمْ دِينُهُمُ الَّذِي أرْتَضَى لَهُمْ...﴾⁴⁸

“Allah has promised those of you who have faith and do righteous deeds that He will surely make them successors in the earth, just as He made those who were before them successors, and He will surely establish for them their religion which He has pleased for them...”

Of course, although, as the aforementioned verses indicate, the dominion of the righteous has manifested on earth at various historical junctures, the consummate and universal exemplar of this divine promise will be realized during the global Imamate of Imam Mahdi. This eschatological fulfillment represents the culmination of the Qur'anic vision of just governance, wherein righteousness prevails comprehensively and permanently, transcending the temporal and limited instances observed in prior eras.

The second verse is the verse of Ghadir, in which Allah declares,

﴿...الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيَتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامُ دِينًا...﴾⁴⁹

“...This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have pleased for you Islam as religion...”

Putting these two verses together, we realize that the very religion which Allah has approved and perfected on the day of Ghadir Eid will be implemented in its most complete and exemplary form through the agency of Imam Mahdi. This convergence underscores a profound and intrinsic connection between the doctrine of Mahdism and the event of Ghadir. Consequently, according value to the 9th of Rabi' al-Awwal and articulating its theological and historical significance aligns

48 The Quran, 24:55.

49 The Quran, 5:3.

directly with emphasizing the centrality of the Prophet's succession (caliphate). The matter of prophetic succession held such paramount importance in the divine order that Allah addressed the Prophet directly, stating,

﴿...وَ إِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رَسُولَنَا...﴾⁵⁰

“...If you do not do that (to not introduce Imam Ali as your successor) then you have not delivered your Mission of prophethood...”

As a result, we are likewise obliged to accord due attention to the doctrine of Succession (khilāfah) on both the day of Ghadir and the day marking the Imamate of the Last Successor—Imam Mahdi. Of course, our emphasis lies not merely in outward celebration but in the profound renewal of allegiance (bay'ah) to the Imam of the Time. In particular, this occasion demands clear elucidation of humanity's enduring need for the Infallible Imam and, reciprocally, the expectations the Imam holds for his followers in this era of Occultation.

The ninth of Rabi' al-Awwal provides an opportune moment to reaffirm the fundamental principle that the earth shall never be devoid of Allah's Proof (Hujjah). Moreover, the inhabitants of the earth attain true security and guidance solely through the presence of this Divine Proof, whose existence safeguards cosmic order and spiritual equilibrium.

Imam Sādiq narrates from Imam Ali, who is reported to have said,

«وَ اعْلَمُوا أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ لَا تَحْلُو مِنْ حُجَّةٍ لِلَّهِ وَ لِكِنَّ اللَّهَ سَيُعْنِي حَلْقَهُ مِنْهَا بِظُلْمِهِمْ وَ جَوْرِهِمْ وَ إِسْرَافِهِمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ؛ وَ لَوْ حَلَّتِ الْأَرْضُ سَاعَةً وَاحِدَةً مِنْ حُجَّةٍ لِلَّهِ لَسَاقَتْ بِأَهْلِهِ...»⁵¹

“...Know that indeed the earth cannot be void of a Divine Authority but Allah will not, later on, let His creatures see him because of their oppression, cruelty, and committing sins. If the earth becomes void of a Divine Authority even for one moment, it collapses with all its inhabitants...”

On this day, the religious scholars should try to improve people's knowledge about the Imam since it is related from the Prophet to have said,

«مَنْ مَاتَ وَ لَمْ يَعْرِفْ إِمَامَهُ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلَةً»⁵²

“The one who dies while he did not recognize the Imam of his age his death is like those who died at the Age of Ignorance.”

50 The Quran, 5:67.

51 Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 51, p. 112, Hadith 8.

52 Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 25, p. 158, Hadith 30.

In the contemporary era of the Imam's Occultation (ghaybah), one of the paramount obligations incumbent upon the faithful is to acknowledge that every facet of human existence—encompassing social, economic, cultural, and broader Mahdist dimensions—falls within the scope of willful acceptance of the wilāyah (guardianship) of Imam Mahdi. This recognition entails viewing all spheres of life as governed by his living authority, thereby integrating personal and communal conduct with the enduring principles of Imamate.

Shi'i communities have traditionally observed ceremonies on the 9th of Rabi' al-Awwal to proclaim, even after more than a millennium, the unbroken presence of their Imam. Is this not sufficient cause for profound joy—a day that awakens awareness of the uninterrupted continuity of Imamate since the Prophet's demise, and reminds us that cultivating adequate ma'rifah (knowledge) of our Imam revitalizes the heart with spiritual vitality and renewed eschatological hope?

A suggestion

If we designate the period from the 9th of Rabi' al-Awwal—the inauguration of Imam Mahdi's Imamate—to the 17th of this month, the birth anniversary of the Holy Prophet, as the "Decade of Imamate and Prophethood," we would have undertaken a profoundly significant initiative, thereby optimizing the spiritual opportunities afforded by these consecutive occasions. On this day, scholars bear three pivotal responsibilities:

First, they must endeavor to enhance societal ma'rifah (knowledge and recognition) of the Imam, fostering deeper theological and historical awareness.

Second, they should cultivate greater emotional and spiritual affinity toward the Imam, encouraging the faithful to habituate themselves to maintaining an intimate heartfelt connection with him, engaging in inner dialogue, and seeking his intercession in both material and spiritual afflictions.

Third, they ought to elucidate the specific duties and obligations incumbent upon believers during the Age of Occultation (ghaybah).

From one perspective, the 9th of Rabi' al-Awwal may hold even greater significance than mid-Sha'ban—the birth anniversary of Imam Mahdi. While Sha'ban is undeniably sacred, it is in Rabi' al-Awwal that the Imam assumed stewardship of the "ship of Imamate," symbolizing the vessel of

salvation and security for all humanity, thereby conferring upon this day a distinctive eschatological and soteriological primacy.

The need to strengthen knowledge and insight when facing doubts

In the contemporary era in which we live—an age characterized by pervasive doubt and misconception—the deliberate propagation of skepticism by certain organizations has become a primary endeavor. The proliferation of such doubts significantly intensifies the responsibility of Islamic scholars ('ulamā'), who are tasked with refuting these challenges through the most articulate, persuasive, and empirically grounded methodologies. The efficacy and expansion of these doubts stem largely from deficiencies in people's religious knowledge (ma'rifah) and spiritual insight (basīrah). Conversely, individuals endowed with robust faith and comprehensive knowledge remain steadfast, analogous to how, during an earthquake, structurally frail buildings collapse while those erected on solid foundations endure unscathed.

May Allah hasten the appearance (faraj) of our Imam and grant us the grace to be among his sincere and devoted companions.

Question and Answer

Why Is the Presence of an Imam Necessary in Every Era?

One of the foundational principles governing the cosmic order is that Almighty Allah, in His infinite wisdom, confers every blessing and grace upon His creation exclusively through an intermediary (wāsitah). This principle, while possessing robust philosophical underpinnings—here left unelaborated—stands as an established axiom in Islamic cosmology, corroborated by numerous observable phenomena.

For instance, when humanity requires illumination, Allah provides light through the medium of the sun, despite His omnipotence to manifest it instantaneously without any intermediary. In this paradigm, the sun functions as the mediatory conduit between creation and divine grace. Similarly, when an individual experiences hunger or thirst, Allah fulfills these needs by creating food and water as instruments of sustenance. Thus, the sun, nourishment, and water exemplify intermediaries through which Allah's blessings reach us. Indeed, every material necessity conceivable—from the most trivial to the most profound, such as shelter or the birth of offspring—necessitates an intermediary for its realization.

This same principle extends seamlessly to the spiritual and immaterial dimensions of existence. For example, if one seeks joy or contentment, it is attained indirectly—through immersion in nature, beholding a sublime vista, or the resolution of a pressing affliction. Every conceivable grace, whether tangible or intangible, requires an intermediary to bridge the divine bestowal and human reception. In the spiritual realm, however, these intermediaries remain veiled, owing to their connection with the world of the unseen ('ālam al-ghayb), which lies beyond ordinary human perception.

The primary nexus in this intricate chain of intermediation culminates in the supreme intermediary: Allah's caliph (khalīfat Allāh) upon earth. In our present era, this role is embodied by Imam Mahdi. Every blessing—material or spiritual—reaches creation through his exalted presence and majestic authority. The infallible Imams have elucidated this profound truth in their narrations as follows,

«وَلَوْ لَا ذَلِكَ لَسَاقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِأَهْلِهَا»⁵³

“If Allah’s caliph did not exist, the earth would swallow up its inhabitants.”

⁵³ Ihtijāj, vol. 2, p. 48; Bīhār al-Anwār, vol. 60, p. 213.

Therefore, if the *intermediary* were to be removed, the earth would collapse and swallow all that exists, and nothing whatsoever would remain in the universe. This indicates that the material world, in and of itself, possesses no intrinsic worth or independent significance. Rather, its value is described as *الدُّنْيَا* contingent and derivative, as Allah states in the Holy Quran, where the transient and of limited importance in comparison to the ultimate and enduring reality of the

Hereafter

«وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهُوَ لَعْبٌ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهُ الْحَيَاةُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ»⁵⁴

“The life of this world is nothing but diversion and play, but the abode of the hereafter is indeed life.”

Just as in this transient and intrinsically worthless world Allah bestows His grace (*fazl*) and blessings (*ni‘am*) upon humanity through an intermediary, He, with even greater emphasis, confers His spiritual and more significant blessings in the same manner. Consequently, all aspects of human existence—from breathing and blinking to thinking and the reception of ideas—are dependent upon the existence of this intermediary.

However, during the era of the occultation of Imam Mahdi, the Imam is concealed from public view, and as a result, the function of this intermediary is diminished. Accordingly, the divine grace of Allah does not reach humanity in the same comprehensive and manifest way as it does during the Imam’s presence. This reality may be illustrated through a clear analogy: the sun that illuminates the earth directly is undoubtedly more effective than sunlight that reaches it from behind clouds or through blurred glass.

For this reason, believers are instructed to recite the Faraj Supplication (*Du‘ā’ al-Faraj*), since both personal relief and collective salvation are intrinsically tied to the advent (*zuhūr*) of Imam Mahdi. This relief encompasses both the Imam and humanity as a whole. On the one hand, it enables the Imam to fully implement Allah’s commands; on the other, it liberates human society from grief, oppression, and disorder. Therefore, believers are encouraged to recite the Faraj Supplication regularly and to pray for their Imam, for through this act both the Imam and the community become beneficiaries of divine grace.

⁵⁴ The Quran, 29:64

Teenager Corner

The Unforgettable Rain

A strong wind danced through the purple curtains of Zahra's room. A cold breeze filled the air. Zahra hurried to the window and closed it. She looked outside. The sun was hidden behind dark clouds, and yellow and orange leaves were spinning wildly in the sky.

She whispered to herself,

“What a strong wind... I must remember to wear my beanie when I go out.”

But as she stared at the angry clouds, her heart sank.

“What if we can't go today at all?” she thought.

Suddenly, her mother's voice broke the silence.

“Zahra, dear!”

Zahra took a deep breath and went to the kitchen. Her mother was making coffee.

“Don't forget to water the flowers before we leave,” her mother said gently.

Zahra nodded and asked, “When will Daddy come home?”

“He'll be here soon,” her mother replied with a smile.

Zahra looked worried. “The sky is cloudy... can we still go today?”

“I don't know,” her mother said. “We'll see what your father decides.”

Zahra walked out of the kitchen sadly. Just then, the doorbell rang.

“Daddy is here!” she shouted happily.

She ran to the door and hugged her father tightly. He smiled and asked about her day.

With a shy but excited smile, Zahra asked, “Daddy, when are we going?”

Seeing her excitement, her father gently patted her head and said,

“Let me rest for a short while, then we'll go. Don't worry, my dear.”

Zahra's heart filled with joy.

“Then I'll water the flowers and get ready!” she said cheerfully.

She carefully watered the flowers she had planted herself. Then she went to her room, put on her clothes and her beanie, and smiled at herself in the mirror.

“Today is finally the day,” she whispered.

Soon, they were on their way to the book fair. Zahra talked the whole way about the books she wanted to buy. The fair was held in a large library near their home. The colorful stalls and shelves full of books filled Zahra with excitement. Her father bought every book she wished for.

After several happy hours, they left the fair, tired but joyful.

“Daddy,” Zahra said, “today was the best day of my life. Thank you.”

Her father smiled and said, “I’m glad you’re happy.”

As they stepped outside, rain suddenly began to pour.

“What should we do now?” Zahra asked anxiously.

Her father looked at the sky and said, “There’s no taxi. We must hurry home.”

Without hesitation, he took off his coat, placed it over Zahra’s head, lifted her heavy backpack, and held her hand. Together, they ran through the rain.

When they reached home, Zahra saw that her father was completely soaked. Water dripped from his hair and clothes. Her heart filled with gratitude. She kissed his hand and said softly, “You’re all wet, Daddy... but because of you, only my shoes are wet.”

That night, as Zahra lay in bed, she thought about the moment her father covered her with his coat.

A warm smile appeared on her face.

“My daddy is truly kind and selfless,” she whispered, and soon fell asleep.

Conclusion: What Does Imam Mahdi Love?

Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) loves **kind and selfless fathers** - fathers who protect their children, who sacrifice their own comfort for others, and who teach love and responsibility through their actions.

And Imam Mahdi also loves **children and teenagers** who:

- appreciate kindness,
- learn gratitude and compassion,
- and wish to grow into caring and responsible people.

Imam Mahdi loves hearts that choose kindness and selflessness

Hearty Words

Rain is never a repetition.

Every time it falls,
it arrives as something new,
gentle, and deeply lovable.
Each drop carries a different story,
each moment of rain awakens the heart in a new way.
And you, for me are like the rain.
You never grow old in the soul,
never become ordinary in longing.
Every time your name is remembered, hope falls again upon the dry land of the heart.
In the long nights of waiting,
your remembrance is a mercy,
your absence a cloud heavy with promise,
and your appearance is the rain for which the earth prays.
You are not repeated,
just as rain is never repeated.
You are awaited,
you are loved,
you are the rain of hearts.

Every morning, I wake with the thought of your eyes,
eyes that feel as though they are watching me from beyond time, filling the silence of my heart
with meaning.
Then, I gently swallow the ache of life, the unspoken sorrow, the heaviness that comes with
waiting, and I learn to keep standing, because hope still breathes.
Peace be upon the light of your gaze - a light that calms the restless soul, guides the lost heart, and
reminds me that even in absence, I am not alone.

My Master... When I let my heart wander toward the moments of union with you, and imagine the sweetness of meeting you face to face, a light rises within me—a hope that one day my soul may taste that joy.

When I reflect on those who are near you, the companions who breathe in your presence, I think of the honor they carry, the lessons they receive, and the way their spirits are lifted by simply being close.

And when I imagine the drink you pour for them—not of this world, but the wine of pure oneness, the nectar of faith that fills their hearts with clarity and peace, I feel my own heart tremble. It is as if, from the pain of distance, my chest might break in two, longing to be seated in that circle of truth, to be warmed by the fire of your nearness.

Without you, the city is a dark sea... Its waves crash with no rhythm, and the horizon feels endless, a place where even hope seems drowned.

The seagulls, after a thousand landings, still return with empty wings, searching for a shore that never answers.

The whales have surrendered on the sand, their songs silenced, their vast hearts broken against the edge of the world.

And from the giant ship, only a lonely sail remains, fluttering like a memory of journeys never finished.

So, I call to you: Come—because we are longing for a calm ocean, a place where storms rest, where hearts can breathe again, and the waters carry us gently toward peace.

Turn your mind

The Rights of Others

The rights of people are not only about stealing money. They are not only about fraud or corruption.

Taking away someone's peace of mind, hurting the purity of their heart and eyes, breaking the trust and love between husband and wife, turning warm homes into cold places, and chasing selfish desires that lead to broken families and divorce—all of these are also violations of people's rights. When we dress or act in ways that tempt others on the streets, when we cause hearts to stumble and homes to lose their warmth, we carry a responsibility on our shoulders. This too is a debt we owe to people.

A Lesson from Karbala

On the night of Ashura, Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) told his companions: "Whoever owes a debt to people, whoever has violated their rights, should not stay with us—go back."

This shows us how serious it is. Even standing beside the Imam was not allowed if someone carried the burden of people's rights.

A Reminder for Us

We must be careful. If we ignore these rights, if we hurt others in ways we think are small, we may lose our connection with our own Imam of the time. And what greater loss could there be than being separated from him?

A Final Word

God may forgive many mistakes, but He never forgives the violation of people's rights. Only the people themselves can forgive what was taken from them.

So let us protect our hearts, our actions, and our relationships, so that we never lose the bond with our Imam, and so that our lives remain full of light, trust, and peace.

One day, a wise teacher spoke to his students: "Tomorrow, each of you should bring a bag. Inside it, place one onion for every person you dislike, for every heart you carry resentment against." The next day, the students returned, each with their bag of onions. The teacher said: "Wherever you go, carry this bag with you."

Days passed. The students grew tired. They came back complaining: "The onions have rotted! Their smell is unbearable, and they make us suffer."

The teacher smiled and gave them a lesson: “This is exactly what happens when you keep hatred in your heart. Resentment rots inside you, it poisons your soul, and in the end, it hurts you more than anyone else.”

Hatred does not destroy your enemy—it destroys your own peace. It makes your heart heavy, your spirit restless, and your life full of bitterness.

The Deeper Reminder

Just as rotten onions separate you from joy, resentment and injustice separate you from your Imam. Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him) is the light of purity and love. If our hearts are filled with anger, envy, or the rights of others we have ignored, we cannot walk beside him.

To stay connected to our Imam, we must keep our hearts clean, forgive others, protect their rights, and let love and kindness be the fragrance we carry.

Only then will our hearts be ready for his presence, and only then will we truly belong to his companions.