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الإمام المهدي

HOW THE
INFALLIBLES
SPOKE OF
THE MAHDI (AJFS)

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2024

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How the Infallibles Spoke of The Mahdi_(ajfs)

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How the Infallibles Spoke of The Mahdi(ajfs)

⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾The narrations discussing Imam Mahdi are very plentiful, having reached tawatur in different categories of hadith. This abundance and variety underscore the significant position which the belief in Imam Mahdi holds within Islamic thought, transcending sectarian divisions and emphasizing a unifying eschatological figure anticipated by Muslims across different schools of thought. Some researchers have mentioned a number of narrations without fully encompassing all of them; among those who mentioned some of them is the grand marja Shaykh Lotfollah Safi in his book Muntakhab al-Athar, where he mentioned 1300 narrations about the Imam of our time (AF) from the sources of the school of the caliphs and the sources of the Shia of Ahl al-Bayt (AS).

The scholar Najm al-Din al-Askari mentioned in his book about the Mahdi (AF) approximately 400 narrations from the works of the non-Shia school. This collection of narrations clarifies important matters in the issue of Imam Mahdi (AF):

1. The belief in the Mahdi is not a belief restricted to the Imami Shia or the general Shia; rather, it is an Islamic belief that all Muslims believe in.
2. These narrations have reached such a level of mass transmission and abundance that it is impossible to conspire in lying; the narrations were narrated by Imamis, Sunnis, Madinis, Makkis, Kufis, Baghdadis, Mu'tazilis, Ash'aris, Ahl al-Hadith and others from scholars of the first and second centuries and later centuries.
3. Additionally, the diversity of the narrations' contents and the abundance of their meanings are notable, as some narrations speak about the lineage of Imam Mahdi, others about his personal attributes, some about his occultation, some about the days of his reappearance, some about the map of the days of conquest, some about his enemies, and some about his supporters, their attributes and their numbers.

This great diversity provides full confirmation that this issue is not a transient or partial matter. We are not aware of any subject within Islamic thought other than monotheism that has this amount of narrations and attention regarding it, and that has been approached from various angles and perspectives. What increases its importance is that these narrations came in

the main and fundamental sources in the non-Shia school: like Musnad Ahmad, Sunan Abi Dawud, Ibn Majah, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i, Bayhaqi Tabarani, Darqutni and others who documented the hadith of the Mahdi.

We would like to point out aspects of it:

What came in Sunan Abi Dawud⁽³⁾ and Ibn Majah⁽⁴⁾ and Mustadrak al-Hakim is a narration from Umm al-Mu'minin Umm Salama from the Prophet (SA): "The Mahdi is from my lineage, from the children of Fatimah."

This indication is important as the Prophet (SA) blocked the way for those who claimed Mahdism from other than the progeny of Fatimah, and also to refute what the Abbasids claimed in a narration they fabricated on the tongue of the Prophet (SA), that the Mahdi is from the progeny of his uncle Abbas. In light of this, Abu Ja'far al-Mansur, whose name was Abdullah, tried to name his son Muhammad al-Mahdi, fitting the incorrect narrations that mentioned "The Mahdi's name is my name, and his father's name is my father's name" to match with the son of al-Mansur as being the Mahdi.

The previous Prophetic hadith cuts off this claim, which matched in its title; however, his biography - i.e., the son of al-Mansur - and his beginnings were different, in addition to affirming the text that he cannot be from the pure Mahdis. It states in a hadith from Imam Amir al-Mu'minin (AS) from the Prophet (SA) in Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal:⁽⁵⁾ "The Mahdi is from us, Ahl al-Bayt; Allah will rectify him in one night," meaning Allah will manage his affair and arrange it in one night.

A hadith from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri from the Prophet (SA) states: "The Mahdi has a broad forehead and a high nose, he will fill the earth with equity and justice as it was filled with oppression and tyranny."

This is some of what has been mentioned in the narrations of the school of the caliphs.

As for what has been mentioned in the sources of Ahl al-Bayt from narrations, it is very numerous, and Shaykh al-Saduq mentioned in his book *Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni'mah* more than 140 narrations about the Prophet (SA) and the Infallibles after him, addressing the belief in the Mahdi as the twelfth Imam from the progeny of the Prophet, and touched upon some of his attributes, issues of his occultation, people's stances from it, and other topics related to him (AS) directly, and the narrations that addressed him indirectly in other chapters of the book are multiples of this number. We narrate a hadith from each Infallible from what is mentioned in that book:

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1. It is narrated from the Prophet (SA): "If there remains not but a day in the world, that day would be prolonged until a man from my progeny emerges, his name is my name, and his epithet is my epithet, he will fill the earth with equity and justice as it was filled with oppression and tyranny."⁽⁶⁾

Here in the hadith it is noted that the matter is inevitable and does not accept doubt and skepticism to the extent that if the end of the world is imagined, and only an hour remains from it, that hour after its extension would be the field of his reappearance, and spreading justice through his hands, and

that this man is not just any man but is (from my progeny), which is very important because anyone could bear the name of the Messenger of Allah and his epithet but not everyone can be from the progeny of the Messenger of Allah. So, this hadith by its nature negates all claimants of Mahdism who were not known from the progeny of the Prophet, and his progeny would only be in the children of Fatimah al-Zahra (SA).

2. A hadith from Amir al-Mu'minin (AS) states: "For the absent one from us, there is an absence, its duration is long, as if I see the Shia roaming like the livestock in his absence, seeking pasture but not finding it. Alas, whoever remains steadfast among them on his religion and his heart does not harden due to the length of the absence, then he is with me in my rank on the Day of Resurrection."⁽⁷⁾

Notice the phrase: 'they roam like the livestock (cattle) in his absence seeking pasture but do not find it.' It is a metaphor for a state of seeking the truth that is inherent in humans to recognize their leadership and search for it. Their relationship with their leader and their need for him is as necessary as food is for the living being and the cattle. This hadith emphasizes the fundamental issue of Mahdism, its existence, its long absence, and the stance of the believers.

This confirms what the Imamis believe, that the Mahdi was born Hasan al-Askari then he will have a long absence; thus, it does not apply to those born at the end of times, as the scholars of the non-Shia school believe.

The absence only applies to someone who was present then disappeared for some reason or another, but someone who was not originally present and then appears cannot be said to have been absent, for the absence in time is a branch of presence in a previous time.

The long absence that accompanies confusion among some people does not align with the theory presented by the school of the non-Shia about the Imam Mahdi being born at the end of times from the Ahl al-Bayt. This hadith talks about a long duration of absence and about a state of questioning and searching for divine leadership. About the state of the Shia at that time, a part of them hardens their heart due to the length of the absence and due to doubts and being away from their leadership, they abandon this leadership, whereas another part remains steadfast in their heart and continues on that until they meet their Lord.

3. The Tablet of Fatimah al-Zahra: From Abu Ja'far al-Baqir (AS) from Jabir ibn Abdullah al-Ansari, who said, "I entered upon Fatimah, peace be upon her, and in front of her was a tablet in which were the names of the Executors of Will (Awsiya'). I counted twelve names, the last of them is al-Qa'im, three of them are Muhammad and four of them are Ali, blessings of Allah be upon them."⁽⁸⁾

This hadith is distinguished by characteristics including that the number of Executors of Will is specified by 12 names; thus, it serves as a detailed explanation for what was summarized in the hadith of the Prophet: "The Imams after me are twelve, and they are from Quraysh." It also clarifies seven of their names

and that the last of them is al-Qa'im, al-Mahdi. Moreover, it adds a characteristic that Jabir ibn Abdullah is accepted by both parties with the highest degrees of reliability and status.

4. A hadith by Imam al-Hasan addressing his companions states: "Do you not know that there is none of us but has a pledge on his neck for the tyrant of his time except for the Qa'im who will have the Spirit of Allah, Jesus son of Mary, pray behind him, for Allah, exalted be He, will conceal his birth and hide his person so that no one will have a pledge on his neck when he emerges; the ninth from the progeny of my brother al-Husayn, son of the lady of the slave women, may Allah prolong his life in his absence, then He reveal him by His power in the form of a young man under forty years."

This hadith contains many important characteristics: it is a justification for the absence and that is not to be subject to an illegitimate ruler, and this is a feature not afforded to any of the infallible Imams from his ancestors. Also, it specifies more than two hundred years before his birth that he is the ninth from the progeny of his brother al-Husayn. Thus, the circle has narrowed because this description does not apply to the progeny of Fatimah from the progeny of al-Hasan al-Mujtaba. We notice that the circle 'from Quraysh' has narrowed to 'the progeny of the Prophet' and 'the progeny of the Prophet and they are the sons of Fatimah' has narrowed to specifically 'the sons of al-Husayn;' even these are not all included, but specifically 'the ninth' from the progeny of al-Husayn and this only applies to Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Askari, peace be upon them.

Also, what was generalized by some of them as in the Sahihain from the statement that the Prophet generalized the indication by saying, "How will you be when the son of Mary descends among you and your Imam is from you," so it is specified that he prays behind the Qa'im, and that he disappears after he was present. The issue of age is not difficult as Allah will prolong his age in his absence and then reveal him by His power.

5. A hadith by Imam al-Husayn (AS) states: "In the ninth of my progeny is a tradition from Yusuf and a tradition from Moses son of Imran,⁽⁹⁾ peace be upon them, and he is our Qa'im. Allah, blessed and exalted be He, will rectify his affair in one night."

The emphasis in this hadith is that the Imam is the ninth of his progeny - and we have previously pointed to the aspect of emphasis on the title 'the ninth' - and in him are two traditions from the traditions of the prophets. To clarify, he does not monopolize these characteristics and it should not be rejected or denied for there are precedents in the lives of the prophets, and whether these traditions are interpreted by the concealment of the birth from the tyrant of their times, by the absence from the people geographically for a period (as in the case of Prophet Moses), an absence in terms of recognition as is the case in Prophet Yusuf, or otherwise.

6. What clarifies some of those traditions that the awaited Mahdi shares traditions with the prophets is the hadith conveyed by Sa'id ibn Jubayr from Imam Zayn al-Abidin Ali ibn al-Husayn explaining those traditions about him from the prophets: "In the Qa'im from us are traditions from the prophets: a tradition from our

father Adam, a tradition from Noah, a tradition from Abraham, a tradition from Moses, a tradition from Jesus, a tradition from Job, and a tradition from Muhammad, blessings of Allah be upon them. So as from Adam and Noah then it is a long life, from Abraham it is the concealment of birth and seclusion from the people, from Moses it is the fear and the absence, from Jesus it is the disagreement of people about him, from Job it is the relief after the trial, and as for from Muhammad (SA) then it is the emergence with the sword."

The hadith is clear in its meanings.

7. Abu Ja'far al-Baqir (AS) states: "The Qa'im from us is supported by awe and aided with victory; the earth folds for him and the treasures appear for him; his dominion reaches the east and the west and Allah, exalted be He, will manifest His religion over all religions even if the polytheists dislike it. There will not remain in the earth a ruin but it has been inhabited and the Spirit of Allah, Jesus son of Mary, descends and prays behind him."⁽¹⁰⁾

Imam Abu Ja'far (AS) clarified some of Imam Mahdi's characteristics, that he is 'from us' and not from others! He is supported by strength like his grandfather the Messenger of Allah, so he does not need to use firepower after fear will have destroyed the wills of his enemies and their psychological decision centers. He is supported by his Lord with victory; thus, there is no reason for anyone to question how he will conquer these nuclear and atomic weapons! The earth folds for him, whether that refers to the speed in movement and transfer or it

is the actual folding! As long as he is supported by the dominion of Allah, exalted be He, the treasures appear for him as if they are in a state of harmony with the will of the Mahdi of their Lord. The Imam benefits from all those material and spiritual forces and, furthermore, he benefits from divine subjugation in that he does not leave in the earth a ruin, but that he has inhabited it! Moreover, this does not specialize in the world of Muslims in the known religious classification, but rather the Messiah (and in his survival is evidence of the possibility and occurrence of the survival of the human for thousands of years) descends to the earth to witness this divine victory and prays behind the Mahdi.

8. As for the hadiths of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq in the affairs of Imam Mahdi, then Shaykh al-Saduq reported in the same book and chapters 57 hadiths; we choose from them what relates to the titular absence and Imam al-Sadiq (AS) likening Imam Mahdi to Yusuf in his absence although he was dealing with people and living among them. This hadith explains what came in other narrations from the expression of absence and that he has two absences, one short and the other long, and that he is absent from his Shia and from the people: After Imam informed Sudayr al-Sayrafi that in the Qa'im is a tradition from Yusuf which is the absence, he turned to him explaining what is meant by the absence, "The brothers of Yusuf were tribes, sons of prophets; they traded Yusuf and bought him while they were his brothers and he was their brother, so they did not recognize him until he said to them 'I am Yusuf.' So what denies this nation that Allah, exalted be

He, does with His proof in a time from times as He did with Yusuf?" ⁽¹¹⁾

Note that Imam al-Sadiq, who was poisoned in the year 148 AH, narrated this hadith almost a century before the birth of the Proof; nevertheless, he prepares from that time and provides the necessary culture for those who will be in his time and after his time. It is clearly evident that Prophet Yusuf was absent from his family and remained alive despite the conspiracy against him, in which he was hidden in the well so it would be his death, but Allah preserved him in it. It is likewise with the Mahdi, as Imam al-Sadiq asks in his interrogative style: Why does this nation deny this resemblance between the trustee of the seal of the prophets and the Prophet of Allah Yusuf? The brothers of Yusuf did not recognize him by his personality when he was hidden from them despite their dealings with him.

Imam al-Sadiq concludes by that and confirms: Why does this nation deny that the owner of the affair is also among the people, sits with them and trades with them, attends with them in Hajj seasons, and perhaps his shoulder is by your shoulder but you do not recognize him as the Imam. Therefore, Imam al-Sadiq is the one who formulated the idea of the titular absence for Imam Mahdi and that it was not a geographical disappearance.

9. As for Imam Musa bin Ja'far al-Kadhim (AS), he pointed to what the school of the caliphs and their followers will say, that although Mahdi is a true belief, he was not born and will be born at the end of times. Indeed, in this statement is a direct or indirect denial of him being the ninth from the progeny of al-Husayn. Imam

al-Kadhim (AS) pointed in this hadith to those who will adopt this erroneous statement, for he said about Imam Mahdi (AS): "The owner of this matter is about whom the people say: 'He has not been born yet!'"

- 10.** It appears from the narration⁽¹²⁾ that conveys the incident of Imam al-Rida (AS) listening to the poem of Di'bil (Schools of Verses), that the belief in the Mahdi and that he is from the Ahl Muhammad, was widespread and common among the people, and the Imam endorsed what Di'bil composed in his poem and added to it further details. In the narration from Di'bil bin Ali al-Khuza'i, he said: "I recited to my master al-Rida Ali ibn Musa (AS) my poem which begins with:

Schools of verses emptied from recitation and a revelation,
residence desolated of its courts...

When I reached this point in my poem:

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1. The emergence of an Imam is no doubt inevitable;
2. He stands in the name of Allah and the blessings;
3. He distinguishes among us every truth and falsehood,
4. And rewards for the bounties and the calamities!
5. al-Rida (AS) cried severely, then he raised his head to me and said to me: 'O Khuza'i, the Holy Spirit spoke on your tongue with these two verses, so do you know who this Imam is and when he will rise?' I said: 'No, my master, except that I heard of the emergence of an Imam from you who purifies the earth from corruption

and fills it with justice as it was filled with tyranny.' He said: 'O Di'bil, the Imam after me is Muhammad my son, and after Muhammad his son Ali, and after Ali his son al-Hasan, and after al-Hasan his son the Proof, the Awaited Qa'im in his absence, the obeyed in his reappearance. If there remains not but a day in the world, Allah, exalted be He, would prolong that day until he emerges and fills the earth with justice as it was filled with tyranny. As for (when), then informing about the time, my father told me, from his father from their fathers (AS) that the Prophet (SA) was asked: 'O Messenger of Allah, when will the Qa'im from your progeny emerge?' He said (SA): "Its likeness is like the Hour which 'none except Him shall manifest it at its time. It will weigh heavy on the heavens and the earth. It will not overtake you but suddenly.'"⁽¹³⁾

6. Imam Muhammad bin Ali al-Jawad (AS), as transmitted by Sayyid Abdul Azim al-Hasani, said: "Indeed the Qa'im from us is the Mahdi who must be awaited in his absence, and obeyed in his reappearance, and he is the third of my sons. By the one who sent Muhammad (SA) with prophecy and distinguished us with the Imamate, indeed if there remains not but a day in the world, Allah would prolong that day until he emerges in it and fills the earth with equity and justice as it was filled with injustice and oppression, and indeed Allah, blessed and exalted be He, will rectify for him his affair in one night, just as He rectified the affair of His prophet Moses (AS) when he went to light a fire for his family and returned while he is a messenger and

prophet." Then he said (AS), "The best of our Shia's deeds is awaiting for the relief!"

In this hadith is additional detail that he is the third from the progeny of Imam al-Jawad (AS); furthermore, the emphasis is that Allah will rectify the Imam's affair and arrange matters for his uprising and reform, within the logic of the divine command, so He rectifies all that in one night!"

It is exactly what happened to the Prophet of Allah Moses, when he went to light a fire for warmth, but returned with prophecy and the message. The hadith specifies the most important responsibilities of the believers by the Ahl al-Bayt, which are awaiting for the relief and not to despair because of the dominance of the oppressors and deviation.

7. The conditions of surveillance and tracking by the Abbasids intensified on Imam Ali al-Hadi (AS) and his Shia and they began searching for Imam Mahdi, considering that his birth had only one intermediary left (his father al-Askari (AS)). The Abbasids became mad in searching and investigating the awaited newborn, and the days reminded of the biography of Pharaoh in the search for the Prophet of Allah Moses; thus, the Imams were between two hazards: the necessity of informing about him so that people know the proof of Allah upon them and the hazard of fear from the surveillance of the Abbasids finding him at his birth, knowing his place, and killing him. Therefore, for this purpose a directive was issued by the Imams not to mention his name, to obscure it, and to talk about him by epithet. In this context Abu Hashim Dawud al-Ja'fari

says: I heard Abu al-Hasan, the owner of al-Askar (AS) saying: "The successor after me is my son al-Hasan, so how will you be with the successor after the successor?" I said: 'And why, may I be your ransom?' He said: "Because you will not see his person and it is not permissible for you to mention him by his name." I said: 'So how do we mention him?' He said: "Say: The Proof from the Family of Muhammad (SA)."⁽¹⁴⁾

Imam al-Hasan bin Ali al-Askari, the father of the Proof, the Mahdi (AS), does not suffice in talking about his characteristics alone, although they identify the person to the people, but he introduces them to him by his real existence after he was born. In this way he invalidates the claim of those who allege that he will be born at the end of times, so there is no effect after witnessing. Ahmad bin Ishaq bin Sa'd al-Ash'ari said: "I entered upon Abu Muhammad al-Hasan bin Ali (AS) and I wanted to ask him about the successor after him, so he started saying to me": "O Ahmad bin Ishaq, indeed Allah, blessed and exalted be He, has not left the earth since He created Adam (AS)—and will not leave it until the Hour rises—without a proof of Allah over His creation. By him He repels calamity from the inhabitants of the earth, by him He sends down rain, and by him He brings out the blessings of the earth." So I said to him: "O son of the Messenger of Allah, then who is the Imam and the Caliph after you?" So he (AS) rose quickly and entered the house, then came out and on his shoulder was a boy of about three years whose face was like the moon on the night of the full moon, and said: "O Ahmad bin Ishaq, were it not for your honor with Allah, exalted be He, and upon His proofs I would not have shown you my this son; indeed he is named after the Messenger of

Allah (SA) and his epithet, the one who will fill the earth with equity and justice as it was filled with tyranny and oppression."⁽¹⁵⁾

The Imamate of the Mahdi and his Personal Life

Umm Salama narrates from the Messenger of Allah (SA) that he said: "The Mahdi is true and he is from the progeny of Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad."

This leads us to talk about the personal life of the Imam, trying to know more with certainty, that among the established principles among all Muslims is the necessity of knowing the Imam of their time, relying on what was transmitted from the Prophet (SA), "Whoever dies and does not know the Imam of his time dies a death of ignorance." We mentioned elsewhere the significance of knowing the Imam of the Time and we add here another aspect which is that we, the Imamiyyah, believe that the reward of deeds is multiplied according to knowledge. For instance, if you and I perform two equal deeds in terms of reappearance, but one of us has more knowledge than the other, or clearer insight, then based on that he will receive more reward. The scholars have concluded this based on the narrations that stipulate effects of a deed and different rewards; sometimes it says that whoever does good for him is a thousand good deeds and another says another thousand good deeds, so they said this is related to matters including the increase of knowledge in the second and its decrease in the first. Likewise, belief in the Imamate of the Imam is necessary and obligatory on Muslims, but the reward for that differs according to the

difference in their knowledge about him. Consequently, these pages aim to increase our knowledge of the Imam of our time.

His Noble Birth

The core of the disagreement between the two schools in the world of

Muslims, the school of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) and the school of the caliphs, is summarized in whether Imam Mahdi is born and therefore exists now, as the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt state. Or will he be born and come at the end of time as the rest of the Muslims state other than the followers of Ahl al-Bayt?

As for the rest of the issues, it can be said that there is agreement about them, such as that he is from the progeny of the Prophet (SA) from the children of Fatimah and that Allah rectifies the earth by him.

The Shia of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) list a number of elements as proof regarding the noble birth of the Imam; among them are the following:

1. They emphasise that Imam Mahdi's father informed about his birth; a father informing about the birth of his son is an intellectual and Islamic way among people to establish the sonship of an individual to another and the fatherhood of an individual to another. Thus, if a person wants to prove the birth of his son and his lineage from him, it suffices to inform and testify about it, and thus with absence of impediments his birth and lineage are proven.

This method is not special to Muslims but is the method of the rational in every place, especially in those past times that were not based on registration in administrations and signing in registers! With what is less than that, they knew that so-and-so is the son of his father if he was born in his house and his father informed about him, even if by holding an 'aqiqah on the basis that a son was born to him. Hence, people deal with him after that on this basis, unless he has an opponent to this informing. The narrations have transmitted that Imam Hasan al-Askari (AS) repeatedly informed in a deliberate process more than forty people in an incident unprecedented in the life of the Infallible Imams (AS) and distributed from the meat in his 'aqiqah what we have not witnessed in the birth of any one of the Imams (AS) before him.⁽¹⁶⁾ It is said that he distributed ten thousand pounds of meat and the same of bread to the people,⁽¹⁷⁾ and in some narrations it was 300 'aqiqahs! Whoever received those 'aqiqahs knew that they were because of the birth of a son to Imam al-Askari, for it was narrated by Abdullah bin Ja'far al-Himyari from Muhammad bin Ibrahim al-Kufi that Abu Muhammad (al-Hasan al-Askari) sent a slaughtered sheep to some of those he named for me and said: "This is from the 'aqiqah of my son Muhammad."⁽¹⁸⁾

2. Among those elements in proving the noble birth of Imam Mahdi (AS) is the mention of the scholars of lineages about him. Given that the genealogy knowledge in those times was equivalent to modern civil and personal status institutions, as contemporary states have departments and institutions concerned with establishing and documenting family lineages and issuing documents based on that, the role of

genealogists targeted this purpose. They recorded in their books that so-and-so had such number of males and females born to him, and unless contradicted by another testimony or the knowledge of another genealogist, his lineage to his father would be established with it. Genealogists from ancient times, including some Hashemites, recorded that Imam al-Askari (AS) had a son named Muhammad, and some genealogists, not from the Shia of Ahl al-Bayt, added the phrase "whom the Shia claim to be the Mahdi." Likewise, historians mentioned his birth with this title.⁽¹⁹⁾

3. Thirdly, they rely on a doctrinal issue, which is that if Imam Mahdi was not born, it would necessitate the falsehood of dozens of authentic hadiths reported from the Prophet (SA) and the Infallible Imams (AS) while the falsehood of these hadiths is impossible. Explanation: There are approximately 80 hadiths from the Prophet (SA), Amir al-Mu'minin and his Infallible sons (AS) stating that the Mahdi is the ninth descendant of Husayn. This title "the ninth from the progeny of Husayn" can only apply to a son of Imam Hasan al-Askari because the first son of Husayn is Ali al-Sajjad, the second Muhammad al-Baqir, the third Ja'far al-Sadiq, the fourth Musa al-Kadhim, the fifth Ali al-Rida, the sixth Muhammad al-Jawad, the seventh Ali al-Hadi, the eighth Hasan al-Askari, and the ninth the Mahdi (AF). If we assume he was not born as followers of the school of the caliphs suggest, and they say he will come in the last era, he cannot

be the ninth but could be number one thousand or two thousand... It has been proven in the narratives that he is identified as the ninth from the progeny of Husayn. Also, from their claim, it necessitates that the Hadith of Thaqaalayn, which is established among Muslims, deviates from its meaning, as it affirmed that there are two weighty things, the progeny and the Book, and they will not separate until they return to the Prophet (SA) at the Pool. If they were not to separate in existence, imagining the existence of the Book without any of the progeny, which is the Imam, means separation. If we believed that the Imam was not born and, therefore, non-existent, it means that separation has occurred, which contradicts the Prophet's hadith that they will not separate until the Day of Judgment!

4. What Shaykh al-Saduq, may God exalt his status, mentions in reasoning: Clarification: We have hadiths related to the affairs of the Mahdi stating that he will be born, he will disappear, doubts will arise among people in his time, he will have two occultations, and some of his relatives will try to take his place and control his father's inheritance, etc. These hadiths existed about two hundred years or more before the birth of the Mahdi and were recorded by narrators from the Imams (AS) and they cannot be mere speculation then to exactly match reality, leaving no option but to be truthful reports from the Infallibles by way of revelation.⁽²⁰⁾

The Imamate of Imam Mahdi:

The Imamate of Imam Mahdi posed a problem for the Shia by their opponents; the essence is: How can you accept the Imamate of a person who assumed that position at the age of six? This is while you have scholars, thinkers, and philosophers, etc. The Imamiyyah provided several answers:

Firstly, with a theoretical response, which happened during the days of Imam Muhammad al-Jawad (AS). The issue of young age was first raised during the days of Imam al-Jawad, when he assumed the Imamate at the age of between 7-8 years! Even within the Shia, it was questioned how someone of this age could be an Imam? The matter was addressed on two levels, theoretical and practical. On one hand, it was said to the questioners and skeptics that the matter of imamate, like prophethood, is that the appointment comes from Allah the Almighty, and in prophethood, Allah gave the scripture to Jesus and John as children.⁽²¹⁾ Jesus' prophethood was a new beginning and, in the eyes of people, no doubt more significant than imamate, which is an extension of prophethood! Practically, it was proven during the days of Imam al-Jawad (AS) that the Imam is not desired for his length and breadth, but for his knowledge and understanding, and his superiority in them. We are not in a wrestling ring that requires a strong and muscular physique, but what is desired is "Imams guiding by Our command." This aim was achieved and so the field was tested.

The leading scholars⁽²²⁾ of their time tested (examined) Imam al-Jawad, and the leading scholar was overwhelmed and in

deep water due to the questions of the Imam. "So the truth came out, and what they had wrought was reduced to naught. Thereat they were vanquished, and they retreated, humiliated."⁽²³⁾ The era between the martyrdom of Imam al-Jawad and the Imamate of the Mahdi does not exceed 35 years! We believe that for this reason Imam Ali al-Rida said about his son, Imam al-Jawad: "No one greater than him in blessing was born to our Shia" and in another text "The greatest blessing on Islam," meaning that the existence of Imam al-Jawad, his knowledge, his imamate, and his competence all established the Imamate of his son Imam Ali al-Hadi, who would assume the Imamate at the age of nine and would later establish the Imamate of the Mahdi (AF). Thus, the issue was practically and emotionally resolved!

Secondly, the biological age and the intellectual age; a person has two ages: a biological age and an intellectual age.

The biological age is this apparent age that changes over time, starting as a child with limited perceptions and knowledge, gradually becoming a youth acquiring new knowledge and sciences, and as he observes and contemplates what is around him, his intellect grows until he reaches his prime, as the Qur'an states, at forty years. Then he gradually declines in muscular, intellectual, and perceptive powers, reaching the lowest age so as not to know after having knowledge⁽²⁴⁾ from a perceptual standpoint, needing someone to take care of the simplest matters physically! This biological age is experienced by the majority of humans, but there is an intellectual age for a person that may be linked to his biological age and go through the same previously mentioned stages; or it may not be linked,

meaning that someone's biological age could be five years but their intellectual age is fifty years, and another might have a biological age of forty years but an intellectual age of four years. Not all humans are always bound by their intellectual age to their biological age, and the evidence for this is the existence of prodigies and rare individuals among humans.

It is mentioned that the youngest prodigy in modern times, named Adam Kirby from Britain, was able to spell more than a hundred of the most complex words in the English language at the age of two, which cannot be explained within the equations of biological age, as those at that age barely pronounce the basic words!

Those tracking this prodigy's condition say that by the age of three, he began reading and speaking French fluently, and by three-and-a-half he was reading Shakespeare and raising issues in expression and composition! Similarly, those who wrote about the life of the well-known musician Mozart said he was three years old when he began playing his first musical pieces, and by the age of four his father toured Europe with him as he composed and played music! In the Muslim world we found many individuals, some of whom memorized the entire Qur'an with the ten recitations, and some of them read it along with its translation in English and French, without it being known that they studied any of them! These examples are just approximations to demonstrate Allah's manifestation in His power and placing some of His greatness in some of His servants, to go beyond the usual and natural among people, and to prove to them in person "that Allah has power over all things."⁽²⁵⁾ If this prodigy can be an ordinary person or even

someone who will devote it to music, how can it be impossible for a prophet and an Imam prepared by their Lord to guide humanity to His path?

Would people accept a prodigious teacher, ahead of his age by decades, but young (a ten-year-old) in teaching at the university, or would they reject him on the grounds that he is not of age and not physically imposing? We conclude from the above that the criterion for following and obedience is not age, whether young or old, although it is customary for a prophet or an Imam to be of a usual age; the prophet is usually sent at the age of forty. However, this is not an absolute rule as we have seen the opposite in John and Jesus, and we explained that the biological age is not the measure; rather, it is the intellectual age.

There is a third question mentioned by some opponents: How can Imamate, according to your Shia belief, coexist with occultation? Since Imamate is one of the fundamental issues for the Shia, the Imam for them is a guide and leader, an extension after the prophet! How does this align with a person who is absent, with whom you do not connect, nor does he connect with you, who does not benefit you nor harm you? How do you reconcile these two matters? As for the Mahdi, he is absent, and the absent does not act, does not do, does not play a role, and you believe that Imamate, like prophethood, is foundational, and after prophethood, the Imam has the authority to accept and reject... How does this fit with his occultation?

The answer to this is by clarifying matters:

1. The first matter: distinguishing between divine Imamate and visible action, which are two different things. This truth was expressed by Khwaja⁽²⁶⁾ Nasir al-Din Tusi,⁽²⁷⁾ where he stated in his book *Tajrid al-I'tiqad*⁽²⁸⁾ regarding the Imamate and the external action of the Imam, "The existence of the Imam is a grace and his action is another grace."⁽²⁹⁾

In clearer terms, appointing the Imam is a divine grace, and his visible leadership and action are another grace that may be combined or separate. Imam Ali (AS) was an Imam after the Prophet until he was martyred, although his visible action was for a period of five years out of approximately thirty years. However, that did not harm his Imamate in any way. Yes, the people's deprivation of his action in the first period before his apparent caliphate was deprivation from God's grace reaching them, but the responsibility for that was not with the Imam but with the people. Therefore, the meaning of the continuation of the words of Khwaja "and its absence is from us" is that the absence of grace is due to us, not God or the Imam.

Consequently, the matter is the same regarding Imam Mahdi (AS); his existence and Imamate is a divine grace, while his direct and visible action is another grace, and the absence of this action is due to the people!

2. Who says he does not act, and he does not do; who says his blessings and grace do not reach those who follow and support him? The Imam does not present you with a report of what he does every day, but he is present and observing! The correct idea is that his occultation (AS) is not the absence of a person but the

absence of a title. That is, he is present and witnesses the season, meaning the Hajj, as the narrations indicate; so you may be in Hajj and he is beside you in the tawaf, your shoulder touching his, but you do not know that the one whose shoulder touches yours is God's proof on earth! Moreover, he follows the affairs of the believers and works in relieving their distress as much as Allah enables him, and this is what some narrations about him (AS) confirm, "We are not neglectful of your care, nor are we forgetful of your mention, and if it were not so, distress would descend upon you and enemies would swallow you."⁽³⁰⁾ How does that happen? We do not know! Is this the only thing we do not know? It should not be necessary for us to know... What we need to know about him (AS) is "And I am a security for the people of the earth as the stars are a security for the people of the sky," and the believer's duty after believing in that "So close the door of questioning about what does not concern you, and do not take upon yourselves the knowledge you have been spared, and increase in supplication for the hastening of the relief, for that is your relief."⁽³¹⁾ We believe that if it were not for God's care for these believers through His guardian and their Imam, the calamities would have overwhelmed them; how not when they have been the target of their enemies' attacks on all levels for hundreds of years! Yet, God Almighty defends them. What was established for the master of this family and the master of creation, Muhammad the Chosen "But Allah will not punish

them while you are in their midst"⁽³²⁾ is established for his heir, his extension, and his namesake, the proof of God on creation, Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Askari (AF).

3. We see the results and the effects, but we do not see the premises and the causes; we do not see how the calamity was averted! It should not be necessary for us to undertake that, but it suffices to see that other factions have gone with the wind and became a thing of the past unlike this faction, although they were not exposed to a tenth of the attacks faced by the Shia of Ahl al-Bayt, while the Shia of the Family of Muhammad continue to grow in quantity and quality, in giving and blessing. Indeed, we do not understand a clear reason for that other than God's protection of them through their master and Imam, the Mahdi.

What is his personal, day-to-day life like?

Does he have children? Does he have a wife or wives? Where and how does he live? There are three opinions:

The first opinion is famous among most scholars of the Imamiyyah, which is that it has not been established that Imam Mahdi has a wife or children.

Although marriage is recommended and it is a Sunnah of the Prophet (SA), if this recommended act is opposed by a more important matter, then that recommendation loses its effectiveness. In our case here, the nature of the Imam's life (AS) require a secretive life, immediate movement, and instability in place, which contradict marriage. Therefore, marriage is no

longer sought. Furthermore, this is not unprecedented as it was in the lives of the prophets and messengers, for Prophet Yahya bin Zakariya (AS) is described in the Qur'an as a master and celibate,⁽³³⁾ and so was Jesus Christ son of Mary, peace be upon them, for he did not marry until God raised him to Himself. Perhaps the reason for that is related to his lifestyle and his wandering on earth conveying God's message. If he does not have a wife, it is natural that he does not have children, and this is the famous opinion among the Imamiyyah.

The second opinion is that he is married without offspring. This is what the martyr Sayyid Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr held after he affirmed that the theory of the person's absence contradicts the possibility of being married "So his remaining throughout his occultation or in the vast majority of it without marriage, is essential for his preservation and safety until the day of his promised reappearance, making it obligatory upon him,"⁽³⁴⁾ but "the person's absence" in the Mahdi is not complete. Based on the second theory, "the concealment of the title," it is difficult for him to establish marriage in its true form, as we said, due to the lack of the specific trustworthy woman as required.

Nevertheless, his marriage in his capacity as an ordinary individual in society, or with his second personality, is possible and among the easiest matters, such that the wife does not learn of his true identity throughout her life..."⁽³⁵⁾ Sadr completed his previous idea saying, "And if his marriage is possible, it is possible to say that it has been realized, and that Imam Mahdi (AS) is indeed married in his major occultation. Because it applies the confirmed Sunnah in Islam and the many commands for marriage and the great encouragement for it and the prohibition of abandoning it, and the Mahdi is the most

worthy of following the Islamic Sunnah. Especially if we say that the infallible does not abandon the recommended nor does he perform the disliked as much as possible, and we commit to the infallibility of the Mahdi as is correct. It becomes necessary that he is married, after we have reached the possibility of his marriage and its non-contradiction with his concealment.”

As for offspring and children, he presents “evidence for the absolute absence of offspring. And it is: The existence of offspring is usually

accompanied by revealing his matter and becoming known.”⁽³⁶⁾

He concludes that “What is deduced from the general rules is that it is presumed that Imam Mahdi (AS) is married without offspring; not for a deficiency in him nor in his wife, but because God Almighty willed it that way.”

The third opinion of some scholars concludes that the Imam has a wife and children, and they live in a distant place called the Green Island, which consists of several cities. However, the late Sayyid Ja’far al-Amili and other scholars refuted the idea of the Green Island thoroughly and stated that it is not valid. Therefore, neither the basis is correct nor the construction upon it. It is important to note that even if we built on the existence of a wife and children for the Imam, which is not the view of the famous scholars among the Imamiyyah, it does not benefit some claimants of Mahdism for contact with the Mahdi considering themselves as his children or the like. We will discuss false Mahdist movements later, but to attract people and garner their support, some people may claim that they are from the children of Imam Mahdi or something similar. This

idea does not benefit them, for even if it were proven that he has children, it does not prove that so-and-so claimant is one of his children, as everyone who claims something must provide evidence for it. It is like proving that there is money in the bank, so a person claims it is his!

Knowing the Awaited Imam (AF)

Umm Salama reported that the Prophet (SA) said, "The Mahdi is from my progeny, from the children of Fatimah."⁽³⁷⁾ There is no doubt that knowing the leader and the Imam is necessary for the follower and the one being led. Knowing him personally helps to know his characteristics, whether he is an Imam of guidance and a true leader or an Imam of misguidance? The follower is then more likely to comply with his commands and increase his affiliation to the Imam; for this reason, we find some recommended supplications⁽³⁸⁾ in the time of occultation where the servant asks his Lord to acquaint him with his Imam, for if he does not know him he would go astray from his religion. We will present in these pages, albeit briefly, something related to the definition of Imam Mahdi (AF) in his name, his kunya (honorific name), and his titles.

The name: what a person or thing is known and identified by; it is the mark that specifies him. Naming individuals and objects is necessary in social life; imagine if the members of contemporary society had no names, then how could they be talked about and discussed? Thus is the case in economic transactions; if there were no names for people, how could one be identified as the seller and another as the buyer? No doubt, it would be difficult in social, political, and even cultural life; how

could historical events be recognized if not for the names of those involved? It is true that in today's time one's photograph might be used for identification, but if it were useful, it would just be in some times, places, and situations, unlike the name that is useful in all or most of them.

As for the kunya it is said: what marks the person, other than the name and the title, from what begins with Abu (father of), Ibn (son of), Akh (brother of), Ukh (sister of), Umm (mother of), or Bint (daughter of) e.g., Abu Abd Allah (father of Abd Allah), Ibn Rasul Allah (son of the Messenger of Allah), Bint Fulan (daughter of Fulan), or Umm Fulan (mother of Fulan). It is used with the name and the title, or without them, to dignify the owner's status so that his name is not mentioned alone and it is for the noblest of people. It has been reported from (Jar Allah Zamakhshari)⁽³⁹⁾ that there are no kunyas outside the Arab culture! This denial is generally valid; for example, in Western countries, there are no kunyas like Abu John or Umm Jacqueline. Nevertheless, the absolute denial seems to be subject to reconsideration, for in the Persian language there are structures that convey the same meaning as the kunya in the Arabic language, like "Zadeh" (meaning son) and "Pur" (also with the same meaning) For example, Muhammad Zadeh means son of Muhammad, and Shah Pur means son of the king; similar is the case in the Turkish language where they have "Oglu" (meaning son), so Davut Oglu means son of David, and so on... The matter needs more follow up and investigation.

As for the title: it is what the person is called after his first name for praise or dispraise. Fulan (so-and-so), the scholar or the doctor, and these titles imply praise; on the contrary, one may be given unfavorable titles like Fulan the lame, which is prohibited. "And do not insult one another by nicknames." As

for legal rulings, it is recommended to choose a suitable and good name for the newborn, as it is recommended to give him a good kunya, and so is the case if one wants to call someone by his title; he should be called by the title he likes and is good.

If the believers practiced this behavior among themselves and taught it to their children, bad practices such as insulting by titles and giving bad names and kunyas to them would disappear. We find this in the biography of the Infallibles with their children, for the Prophet (SA) gave his grandson Husayn (AS) a kunya when he was young, as narrated. He sometimes addressed him as Abu Abd Allah.

Imam Ali al-Rida (AS) used to address his son Muhammad al-Jawad (AS) as Abu Ja'far even though he was under seven years at that time. Among the Islamic etiquettes is to not address the present by his bare name, but rather by his kunya or title. So, you would say to him, for example, O Abu Ali, do so... Or O believer! Or O doctor! In relation to Imam Mahdi (AF), it has been narrated from the Prophet (SA), "His name is my name" and in some narrations, "His kunya is my kunya." Although the Prophet (SA) had multiple names, his clear and well-known name is Muhammad (SA), and it is the same name as Imam Mahdi (AF).

Research on mentioning Imam Mahdi by his explicit name:

1. It is inferred from a significant number of narrations that mentioning Imam Mahdi by his explicit name "Muhammad" or "Muhammad bin al-Hasan" was prohibited and not allowed at least for a period of time.

The matter was not limited to the narrations, but this ruling was the prevailing opinion in the history of Shi'ite jurisprudence from the time of the Minor Occultation until the days of Khwaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (d. 672 AH). In his time, Khwaja al-Tusi wrote a treatise⁽⁴⁰⁾ in which he studied those narrations and concluded that this prohibition and ban had a limited temporal context. It was the 'circumstance of concealment' in the time of the Minor Occultation and the beginnings of the Major Occultation, where there was a threat of pursuit by the unjust authorities of Imam Mahdi (AF) to follow his traces and news. Therefore, it was natural that a directive was issued to prohibit dealing with his formal and clear name. This ban was similar to the wilayati (governance-related) rulings issued by the Prophet (SA) in his time for a specific issue.

According to scholars, there are different types of narrations and rulings. Some fall under the banner "The halal of Muhammad is halal forever until the Day of Judgment, and his haram is haram forever until the Day of Judgment; nothing else will come, nor will anything else arrive."⁽⁴¹⁾ On the other hand, there are rulings and narrations that came to regulate matters with specific times, places, and people, like what the Prophet (SA) did regarding the prohibition of domestic donkeys. It is known among Muslims that the Prophet (SA) forbade eating these donkeys in Khaybar, even overturning some pots they intended to cook those donkeys in.

While the jurists of the school of the caliphs have committed to the prohibition of eating the meat of domestic donkeys to

this day,⁽⁴²⁾ the jurists of the Imamiyyah have not adhered to the prohibition; rather, they said it is permissible with dislike, the reason being what was transmitted from the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt that that prohibition was a wilayti (governance-related) ruling for a specific situation, which is that "the domestic donkeys in Khaybar were the people's means of transport"⁽⁴³⁾ for moving and carrying spoils. So, the Prophet (SA) forbade their slaughter.

Khawaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi benefited from this idea in division and distinction between the commands and prohibitions of the Infallibles, and said that the prohibition of specifying the name of Imam Mahdi is of this kind and that it was tied to a specific time, and that time has passed. Thus, the prevailing opinion among the Imamiyyah now is the permissibility of naming by the explicit name and the complete reference to the Imam (AS).

The other matter regarding the name of Imam Mahdi is that it has been narrated in some sources of the school of caliphs that the name of the Mahdi is "Muhammad bin Abdullah" or that the Prophet (SA) said, "His name is my name and his father's name is my father's." Some opponents of the Imamiyyah hold onto those narrations to say that 'the Mahdi of the Shia' is different from 'the Mahdi of the Sunnah,' for the latter's father's name is Abdullah, and the former's father's name is Hasan!

The answer to above: we believe that the narrations that came with "and his father's name is my father's" are a product of the Abbasid period, specifically the time of al-Mansur al-Abbasid. During this time the conflict between the Abbasids and the Alawites, especially the descendants of Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba, was at its peak, and among the descendants of

Hasan bin Ali was a prominent and important figure known as 'al-Nafs al-Zakiyya.' His name was Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Hasan, and it became widespread among a section of these people that this is the one the Prophet (SA) spoke of because the Prophet considers the Mahdi to be from the progeny of Fatimah and he is from the progeny of Fatimah, since he is from the sons of Hasan. The Prophet says, "His name is my name and his name matches it and his father's name is Abdullah," and so is the name of the Prophet's father; thus, these are the signs of the Mahdi and they apply to him. Hence, it was natural for the supporters of the sons of Hasan to spread this idea to attract followers.

Without a doubt, this was an effective weapon in mobilizing and rallying supporters for Banu al-Hasan, and specifically for Nafs al-Zakiyya. In contrast, the Abbasids wanted to use the same weapon. al-Mansur al-Abbasi, whose real name was Abdullah and was nicknamed Abu Ja'far, had a son whom he named Muhammad and titled al- Mahdi, thus becoming Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Mahdi, also fitting the description "his name is my name and his father's name is my father's name!" They tried to spread among their followers and supporters that this was the one mentioned in the narrations, as a

counteraction against their enemies, Banu al-Hasan!

It was as if during this Abbasid period both opposing sides agreed on promoting the idea "his father's name is my father's name" and each benefited from it according to their interpretation, although researchers believe it was not present in the origins of these hadiths, and that the collection of narrations about the Mahdi does not apply to either of them.

The Abbasid Mahdi is not from the descendants of Fatimah, not from

“my Ahl al-Bayt,” not “from the descendants of Husayn,” and not “the ninth.”

Similarly, Nafs al-Zakiyya, although he was from the descendants of Fatimah, from “my Ahl al-Bayt,” and “from the descendants of both Hasan and Husayn,” he was not “the ninth from the descendants of Husayn,” and his end in murder and martyrdom indicated that he was not the awaited Mahdi.

Regarding the Imam’s kunyas: As for what is related about the Imam’s kunyas, he (AS) has a kunya mentioned in the narrations which is ‘Abu al-Qasim,’ the kunya of the Messenger of Allah (SA), as it is reported from him that he said, “his name is my name, and his kunya is my kunya,” and in a narration from Imam al-Askari (AS), “the Imam after me is named after the Messenger of Allah and his kunya.” Among his kunyas is also Ibn al-Hasan.⁽⁴⁴⁾

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When it is said that he is ‘Abu al-Qasim,’ it does not necessarily mean that he has an eldest son by this name, as we have mentioned earlier that the kunya is recommended even for a young, unmarried son, and its desirability is not linked to actually having a son.

Among his popular and widespread kunyas, there is nothing in the heritage of the Infallibles that confirms the kunya ‘Abu Salih.’ This kunya is very widespread, especially in the Persian popular culture where he is invoked and called by this kunya a lot.

It is also reported to be widespread among the people of the deserts and rural areas from the Shia of Ahl al-Bayt; however, its source is not known!

Nonetheless, the hadith scholar Noori Tabarsi, may God have mercy on him, transmitted a narration in his book *The Piercing Star* that might imply this kunya for the Imam, saying that if you are in the desert and have lost your way, turn to your right and say, "O Salih" or "O Abu Salih!" In terms of its chain of narration it is not considered reliable, and in terms of its indication and meaning there is no evidence that "Salih" or "Abu Salih" refers to Imam Mahdi (AF), especially since it was during the time of Imam al-Sadiq (AS). Thus, it is neither considered reliable in terms of its chain of narration, nor clear in its indication. Of course, if one turns to the Imam with their heart and calls him by this kunya, there is no problem in that, for kunyas and names are merely ways to evoke meaning; thus, if the meaning is present in the mind there is no objection to that. Yet, as abovementioned, its transmission from the Infallible is not established.

The titles of the Imam (AS): some researchers have mentioned that they exceed 180 titles, which refer to his qualities of perfection and attributes.

This might not seem strange because a person's titles refer to their qualities, and the more diverse these qualities are, the more numerous the titles.

For example, when scholars mention the names of Allah, they cannot count them, are they a thousand, a million, or more? They are countless and immeasurable. What is found

in a single supplication, Dua al-Jawshan al-Kabir,⁽⁴⁵⁾ reaches a thousand names and attributes, although it does not exhaust all the names, attributes, and titles, for no one can exhaust them as they are the unlimited qualities of perfection of Allah, the Exalted and Majestic. Therefore, having 180 titles for Imam Mahdi (AF) is not something surprising or strange, and among these titles, the most well-known are:

al-Mahdi (The Guided):

This title is found in the hadiths of the Messenger of Allah (SA) from Allah, the Exalted. Perhaps someone might say, "Isn't the title al-Hadi (the Guide) stronger and more significant than al-Mahdi, since in that term he is the doer of guidance, whereas here he is the recipient of guidance? So, apparently, al-Hadi is stronger than al-Mahdi."

The answer: al-Mahdi has been interpreted in the narrations of Imam al-Sadiq to mean "he was guided to a matter hidden from creation," and, undoubtedly, this matter must be of utmost importance; otherwise, there are many things hidden from creation! In other narrations it is said, "he is guided to the original scriptures of Abraham, the Gospel of Jesus, and the Torah of Moses" as they were revealed to the messengers themselves.

This meaning is consistent with the previous one, as these books in their original form as revealed to the messengers are hidden from creation.

al-Qa'im (The Riser):

This title is also narrated from the Infallibles (AS) either because he stands with the truth, as mentioned in some narrations,⁽⁴⁶⁾ or because he rises after his mention has died.

"After his mention has died" is a situation we see today, for you see the Islamic world now does not live with the anxiety of Imam Mahdi, does not know him, nor awaits for him. If you exclude a section of the Shia of Ahl al-Bayt who are attached to him (AS) and who are yearning for his reappearance and live in anticipation, the picture would be completely bleak!

If this is the state of the Islamic world, what do you think about the rest of the world? The mention of the Imam is not alive in today's world, but rather a dormant memory, so he "rises" after "his mention has died."

Is it obligatory to stand when the Qa'im is mentioned?

There is a practice among the Shia community where they stand up⁽⁴⁷⁾ when the title "al-Qa'im" is mentioned alongside the name of Mahdi. There is no doubt that this is not obligatory from a jurisprudential perspective, though it is considered good as it expresses respect and declares allegiance and obedience to the extent of standing for his noble name or title.

Is there a narration from the Infallibles?

It is narrated from the descendant of the hadith scholar al-Jazairy, who died after the year (1120 H), in a book he wrote about the death of Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Rida (AS): "When

Di'bil al-Khuza'i recited his poem to Imam al-Rida and reached the verse

The emergence of an Imam is inevitable, He rises in the name of Allah and blessings.

The Imam (AS) stood up and placed his hand on his head,⁽⁴⁸⁾ so this incident became the basis for the view that this practice is recommended.

Of course, since this book and the author are very late (we are only separated from him by three centuries), his report is not considered reliable; especially since it is not mentioned in another source. Furthermore, if this practice is regarded as one of the manifestations of respecting and venerating the Infallible, it falls under the general principles that encourage venerating and magnifying him. Yet, it is not obligatory.

al-Hujjah⁽⁴⁹⁾ (The Proof):

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It is one of his most famous titles (AS) and its relevance is clear as its meaning, for all the Infallibles (AS) are proofs (hujjah) of Allah on His creation. God argues with them against His servants.

Sahib al-Zaman (Master of the Age):

This title was used by his father, Imam Hasan al-Askari, when bidding him farewell in the last days of his life, as narrated by Shaykh al-Tusi in his book al-Ghayba: "Rejoice, my son, for you are the Master of the Age, and you are the Mahdi, and you are the Proof (Hujjah) of Allah on His earth, and you are my son

and my successor, and I have given birth to you, and you are Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS)."⁽⁵⁰⁾

Sahib al-Ghayba (The Master of Occultation):

This title is mentioned in more than one narration from Imam al-Rida (AS) that he is "the ostracized, the exiled, the afflicted by his father and grandfather, the Master of Occultation," and similar to it when he said: "Whoever abandons taqiyya (precautionary dissimulation) before the emergence of our Qa'im is not from us." It was said to him: "Who is the Qa'im among you, Ahl al-Bayt?" He said: "The fourth from my descendants, the son of the master of the slave women. Allah will purify the earth through him from all injustice and sanctify it from all oppression, and he is the one about whom people doubt his birth and he is the Master of Occultation⁽⁵¹⁾ before his emergence."

Baqiyat Allah (The Remnant of Allah):

This is also one of his titles, as narrated in the narration from Imam Muhammad ibn Ali al-Baqir (AS): "The first thing he will utter is this verse 'What remains of Allah's provision is better for you, should you be faithful.'⁽⁵²⁾ Then he will say: 'I am the Remnant of Allah on His earth, His Caliph, and His Proof over you,' so no Muslim greets him except by saying: 'Peace be upon you, O Remnant of Allah on His earth.'⁽⁵³⁾

The Minor Occultation of the Mahdi and the Four Deputies

Narrations about the two occultations of Imam Mahdi (AF) include: “The Qa’im will have two occultations: one short and the other long.”⁽⁵⁴⁾

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For the owner of this affair, there are two occultations: one from which he returns to his family, and the other in which it is said: “He has perished, in which valley did he go?”

These pages discuss the period of the Minor Occultation and provide a brief introduction to the Four Deputies of Imam Mahdi (AF) during that period.

Since the discussion is within the Imami Shia circle, there is no need to prove the birth of Imam al-Hujjah and its occurrence during the time of his father Hasan ibn Ali al-Askari (AS), nor to prove his existence and his being alive; assuming that this is established among the Imamiyyah and that it has been conclusively proven in its relevant discussions in theology and the biography of the Imam (AS).⁽⁵⁵⁾ We will discuss these two issues: the Minor Occultation and the Deputies of the Imam (AF). Here, we mention the following points:

1. The Absence of the Person or the Occultation of the Title

The Imamiyyah believe that the Twelfth⁽⁵⁶⁾ Imam from the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Askari, became hidden from sight on the 8th of Rabi' al-Awwal in the year 260 AH, the same day his father Hasan ibn Ali al-Askari (AS) passed away, and the same day his father's agent and his own agent, Uthman ibn Sa'id al-Amri, officially and clearly took over the representation between him and his followers and the special deputyship on his behalf. This occultation continued until the middle of Sha'ban in the year 329 AH, which is less than seventy years, marking the period of the Minor Occultation.

Regarding the narrations from the Infallibles (AS) Shaykh al-Mufid, Muhammad bin al-Nu'man (d. 413 AH), wrote four treatises on the occultation. He was succeeded by his student, al-Sharif al-Murtada, Ali bin al-Husayn al-Musawi (d. 436 AH), who wrote *al-Muqni' fi al-Ghayba*, followed by Shaykh al-Ta'ifah, Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Tusi (d. 460 AH), who authored the well-known book *al-Ghayba*. Among the most beautiful books recently published on the affairs of Imam Mahdi's occultation

is the Encyclopedia of Imam Mahdi by the late martyr Sayyid Muhammad Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr (d. 1999) in four volumes: The History of the Minor Occultation, The History of the Major Occultation, The History After the Reappearance, and The Promised Day.

When we talk about the occultation of the Imam, it does not mean physical disappearance, such that he goes down, as claimed, into a cellar and hides there! Imam al-Sadiq (AS) stated: "The Qa'im will have two periods of occultation; in one of them, he attends gatherings, seeing people without being seen by them." In another narration from Mufaddal bin Umar, he heard Abu Abdullah (AS) say: "The master of this affair will have two occultations: one from which he will return to his family, and another where it will be said, 'He is lost, in which valley did he go?' I asked, 'What should we do in such a situation?' He replied, 'If someone claims it, ask him about things only he would know the answers to.'"

Some say that he is in a garden and does not leave it, but what is understood from the narrations is that it is an occultation of the title, even with the presence of the person; meaning that the person might be among people, they see him and he sees them and interacts with them, but they are not aware of his identity and do not recognize his truth. This is not specific to Imam Mahdi (AF), but has occurred with other prophets, successors, and saints.

For example, Prophet Abraham (AS) lived in the house of his uncle, the maker of idols, and despite the soldiers of Nimrod seeing him coming and going, they did not know that he was the champion of monotheism who would destroy their idols!

Although the initial period of his mother's pregnancy with him, his nursing, and his youth was a period of geographic and physical occultation, as he was hidden from the eyes of the authorities.⁽⁵⁷⁾

Clearer than the case of Prophet Abraham is the case of Prophet Moses, as he was raised in the palace of the Pharaoh of his time, coming and going every day, and, undoubtedly, if he had known his identity, what his soul contained, and his future days, he would have killed him immediately! Despite being with his enemy in one place, seeing him and conversing with him, his title was absent from Pharaoh until he declared his message, asked him to send the Children of Israel with him, and not to oppress them! Here, Pharaoh gathered all his history with Moses and said, astonished: "He said: 'Did we not rear you⁽⁵⁸⁾ as a child among us, and did you not stay with us for years of your life?'"

The title occultation in the story of Prophet Joseph was realized even for his brothers who kept visiting him, dealing with him, and meeting him, thinking they were before the 'Vizier of Egypt and its Prime Minister,' while in reality they were dealing with their brother and their father's son, whom they had thrown into a well to die until Allah permitted him to reveal his true identity and emerge from the alternative title to his original personality. "They said, 'Are you really Joseph?!' He said, 'I am Joseph, and this is my brother. Certainly Allah has shown us favour. Indeed if one is Godwary and patient Allah does not waste the reward of the virtuous.'"⁽⁵⁹⁾

The Sunnah of occultation found in the Mahdi includes the Sunnah of occultation.

In fact, we find aspects of voluntary occultation and disconnection from people in the lives of the later Imams (the father of the Mahdi, Imam Hasan al-Askari, and his grandfather Imam Ali al-Hadi) and it might have been to accustom their followers to operate within the general guidelines for a temporary period and not to rely continuously on returning to the present Imam.

2. The Occultation and the Justifications for Abbasid Violence

Historically, the justifications for this occultation include the peak of Abbasid violence against the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) and the fear for the life of Imam Mahdi from extermination and termination by his ruling enemies.

Perhaps the measures that the observing eye cannot miss are the ages of the previous Imams compared to the Imam (AS) and the reason for their martyrdom. If we compare between Imam Husayn (AS) or his son al-Sajjad (AS), or even like Imam al-Sadiq (AS), we find that their ages range between fifty-eight and sixty-two although they were killed under different circumstances by their rulers. However, when we come to the last part of the list of the Infallibles (AS), we will find that Imam Muhammad al-Jawad was poisoned at the age of 26 and Imam Hasan al-Askari at the age of 28!! This indicates a high level of authoritarian violence, such that it does not tolerate a peaceful personality known for not having an overt political opposition, let alone military, like the mentioned Imams!! Those rulers were not satisfied with surveillance, nor with social isolation, nor with imprisonment for some of the Imams, but they reached the point of ending the lives of the Imams by poisoning them.

Therefore, it is believed that if Imam Mahdi had followed the path of his fathers in appearing publicly and openly handling affairs, his end would have been as theirs! From here, occultation and non-appearance became a necessary and essential matter.

3. The Occultation Does Not Mean the Absence of Role and Action

The title occultation we talked about does not equal the absence of role!! Imam Mahdi (AF) spent about seventy years in the Minor Occultation, during which he carried out the duties of Imamate, though behind a veil and without direct appearance.

The concept of indirect, veiled management is more understandable today than ever, as giant companies, major intelligence agencies, and political and military movements around the world are managed by non-visible leaders and are moved through absent administrations. Indeed, it requires a socially advanced environment that does not link the acceptance of a person and the strength of their management to their public appearance! In the situation we are in, the Shia community has been accustomed since the days of Imam Ali al-Hadi to a leadership that might disappear for some time, be absent or be made absent, and the Imams (AS) practiced at that time through their agents what would happen in the future during the Minor and even the Major Occultation of Imam Mahdi.

Nothing changed for the Shia of Ahl al-Bayt, even the ink used to write the answers in the time of Imam al-Askari was also used to write answers for the people in the time of Imam

al-Hujjah, the Mahdi, so that no kind of doubt or hesitation remains.

4. The Occultation and Appearance to Some of the Saints

Imam Mahdi (AF) was keen during the Minor Occultation to eliminate every outlet of doubt and hesitation in his matter, as he would appear to some of his companions at times and places he chose, reveal his identity to them, and perhaps inform them of the reason for his visit to them or his reception of them. For example, al-Hurr al-Amili⁽⁶⁰⁾ narrated with his chain of narration from Isa ibn Muhammad al-Jawhari in a narration that he went for Hajj and fell ill, craving fish and dates, and he heard that the Master of the Time (AF) appeared in Basra, so he went there and after praying the 'Isha prayer, a servant told him to enter.

He entered the place and found a table set for him; he was seated at it and was told, "Your master orders you to eat what you craved during your illness." So, he looked and found hot boiling fish, dates, and milk. He thought to himself, "Ill and fish and dates and milk?"

Then he was called, "O Isa, do you doubt our matter or do you know better what benefits and harms you?"

So, he ate from all of them and every time he lifted his hand he could not see its place in it, and he found it the most delicious thing he had tasted in the world. He ate a lot until he felt shy, then he was called, "Do not be shy, O Isa, for it is from the food of Paradise." He ate until he said, "Enough!" Then he was called, "Come to me," so he thought to himself, "Did I not

wash my hand?" Then he was called, "Was what you ate dirty?" So, he smelled his hand, and it was more fragrant than musk and camphor, so he approached him and light appeared that obscured his vision.

He was terrified until he thought his mind was confused, then he was told, "O Isa! You would not have seen me if it were not for the deniers who say: 'Where is he? And when was he? And where was he born? And who saw him? And what came out to you from him? And by what did he inform you? And what miracle came to you?' Indeed, by Allah, they have dismissed the Commander of the Faithful despite what they narrated and preferred others over him, and they plotted against him and killed him, and so did they do with my fathers, peace be upon them, and they did not believe them, and they attributed them to magicians and soothsayers and servants of the jinn until it was clear."

Until he said, "O Isa, inform our allies of what you saw, and beware of informing our enemies lest you be deprived." I said, "O my master, pray for my steadfastness." He said to me, "If Allah had not made you steadfast, you would not have seen me, so go about your need rightly guided." So, I left, praising Allah more and thanking Him.

Thus it was during the days of his minor and first occultation, and much like that in the second and Major Occultation. The Imam does not confine himself to specific individuals, but he is present in the lives of believers, observing, monitoring, and moving, as narrated by Shaykh al-Saduq in Kamal al-Din with a reliable chain of narration from Muhammad ibn Uthman al-Amri, the second deputy of Imam Mahdi (AS) who said, "By

Allah, the owner of this affair attends the season every year, sees the people and knows them, and they see him but do not know him.”

The second matter: The time of the Minor Occultation coincided with the completion of the organization of the hadith heritage related to legislation and beliefs in the school of Ahl al-Bayt, with the publication of al-Kafi by Thiqat al-Islam al-Kulayni (d. 329 AH).⁽⁶¹⁾

With a quick glance and to highlight the importance of this matter, it is noted that one of the distinctive features of the school of Ahl al-Bayt is that they never stopped writing down and recording hadith from the days of the Prophet Muhammad (SA) and this continued during the time of the Infallibles (AS), unlike the school of the caliphs whose scholars transmitted hadiths indicating a stop to writing the prophetic hadith and limiting to the Qur'an, and this became an official, sovereign decision not to be disobeyed until the time of the Umayyad caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, nearly a century after the Prophet's migration.

There was guidance from the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt after him to write down the hadith and keep the narrations because they would need them later. As a result, thousands of hadiths were gathered by the companions and their students, some of which were known as the Four Hundred Usul (principles), and these hadiths filled a significant gap in the field of texts relied upon by jurists in deduction and argumentation.

However, they were scattered geographically according to the residences and livelihoods of their owners, and also

scattered according to their titles, as the interests of each narrator and compiler do not necessarily match the interests of others among the narrators. Therefore, collecting these narrations from their sources and organizing them into the fundamental sections (principles of beliefs, jurisprudential branches, ethics, and exhortations) was a very important task.⁽⁶²⁾ We do not say that this was arranged by the Imam (AS) necessarily, but we are talking about the temporal coincidence and the accomplishment of this work during the time of his Minor Occultation.

The third matter: The establishment of the special deputyship system during the Minor Occultation, which is a development of the agency

system that was prevalent in the times of the previous Imams to the Twelfth Imam. The agency system for the present Imam has certain characteristics. This system of deputyship (special deputyship) is a precursor to the general deputyship system that would later become one of the main components of the Shia entity and would be organized into what is known as religious *marja'iyya* (in the specific sense among the Imamis). One of the differences between the special deputyship during the Minor Occultation and the general deputyship during the Major Occultation is that the deputies of the Imam in the Minor Occultation were appointed by him by name, and therefore, no one is allowed to compete with them or vie for the general duties of the Shia without their permission and in their presence, regardless of their scholarly or social rank.⁽⁶³⁾

This contrasts with the general deputyship during the Major Occultation, where those who possess the general titles

specified by the narrations are among those to whom reference is made, as there is no appointment by name, but rather by characteristic and title, such as

“narrators of our hadith,” “the jurists,” with the qualities of “protecting oneself, preserving one’s religion, and opposing one’s desires.”

The Special Deputies: Imam al-Hujjah (AS) appointed four special deputies during the period of the Minor Occultation (less than seventy years), and they were in this order:

1. Uthman ibn Sa’id al-Amri (d. around 265 AH)

Uthman, sometimes nicknamed al-Samman and al-Zayyat, was an agent for several Imams, serving as an agent for Imam Ali al-Hadi, then for his son Hasan al-Askari, and finally, for about five years, for Imam al-Hujjah, peace be upon them. His reliability and that of his son, the second deputy, were attested to in their narrations, peace be upon them. Ahmad ibn Ishaq, from Abu al-Hasan, meaning Imam al-Hadi (AS) said: I asked him, “Whom should I deal with, from whom should I take, and whose word should I accept?” He said, “al-Amri is my trusted one, so whatever he delivers to you on my behalf, he is indeed delivering, and whatever he says to you on my behalf, he is indeed saying, so listen to him and obey, for he is the trusted, reliable one.” Also from Ahmad ibn Ishaq, that he asked Abu Muhammad (AS) meaning Imam al-Akari, about something similar, “al-Amri and his son are two trusted ones, so whatever they deliver to you, they are delivering on my behalf, and whatever they say to you, they are saying on my behalf,

so listen to them and obey them, for they are they are the two trusted, reliable ones.”

2. Muhammad ibn Uthman ibn Sa'id al-Amri

Also known as Abu Amr (d. 304 AH), he is the second deputy, considered to have the most significant impact on managing the affairs of the Shia of the Ahl al-Bayt during the Minor Occultation because his deputyship and representation of Imam al-Hujjah lasted about forty years (from after his father's death around 265 AH to his death in 304 AH). From his father's time he was in the presence of the Imams and trusted by them, thus his commendation and validation from the days of his father during the time of Imam Hasan al-Askari (AS) are evident in the previous narration narrated by Ahmad ibn Ishaq.

It is a great blessing to be a family holding the honor of special deputyship for the Imam, and along with his father to be two of the four deputies. Furthermore, they had the most significant and longest periods (about 45 years of the Minor Occultation), plus what preceded it during the time of Imam Ali al-Hadi and Imam Hasan al-Askari. This honored deputy expanded his preaching and guidance work and managing the affairs of the Shia to the extent that he had ten agents in Baghdad alone. Among them was someone who later became a special deputy for Imam Mahdi, Husayn ibn Ruh; also among them were those at the level of possessing the qualities of an agent and deputy to a degree less than ibn Ruh. He and the likes of him were highly cautious in faith and ascetic in the world.^{(64), (65)}

3. Husayn ibn Ruh al-Nawbakhti (d. 326 AH)

The second deputy informed about his deputyship for Imam al-Hujjah (AS) repeatedly and on different occasions, including what was informed by Abu Abdullah Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Mada'ini, who used to bring the funds to the second deputy and was ordered to give them to Husayn ibn Ruh, so he hesitated in that until he returned to Shaykh Abu Ja'far who said to him angrily: "Get up, may God forgive you, for I have established Abu al-Qasim Husayn ibn Ruh in my place and appointed him to my position." 'I said: "By the order of the Imam?" He said: "Get up, may God forgive you, as I tell you," So I had no choice but to hasten.'

During the last hours of his life, the second deputy called his agents in Baghdad and the major Shia figures, and while they were gathered around his bed, Ja'far ibn Ahmad ibn Matil, who many agents expected to be the third deputy, asked him: "If something happens to you by God's decree, then who holds the matter after you?" He told them: "This is Abu al-Qasim Husayn ibn Ruh ibn Abi Bahr al-Nawbakhti, standing in my place and the messenger between you and the owner of the affair (AS) and the agent for him and the trustworthy, reliable one; so refer to him in your matters and rely on him in your important tasks for I was ordered so and I have conveyed."

It appears from the overall narrations mentioned about him that he was extremely wise in managing the conflict with the Abbasid rulers and with the opponents of the Ahl al-Bayt, who were at an unusual level of extremism at that time, so it was necessary to use taqiyya (dissimulation) in its best forms, which Husayn ibn Ruh mastered.

Although he was the messenger of the Imam (AS) and through him the letters came to the Imam and his answers to his companions, he was highly regarded by the official religious scholars, and he would enter upon ten of them. Nine of them opposed him and one was skeptical, but after listening to his speech they would leave nine of them supporting him and one still skeptical!

Additionally, he had a strong will in keeping confidential his information about Imam al-Hujjah and his location, although he would meet him and knew his location. This quality was mentioned by Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti, an advanced scholar among the Shia and a contemporary of Husayn, in response to someone who asked about the secret of choosing Husayn over Abu Sahl. Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti was asked, "How did this matter come to Shaykh Abu al-Qasim Husayn ibn Ruh instead of you?" He replied: "They are more knowledgeable and did not choose him, but I am a man who meets opponents and debates them, and if I knew his location as Abu al-Qasim knew and if the argument pressured me, perhaps I would have disclosed his location. However, even if the Hujjah was under Abu al-Qasim's cloak and he was clipped with pincers, he would not reveal the Imam."⁶⁶ His deputyship lasted from 304-326 AH, and it is said that it included a period during which he was imprisoned for about three years.

5. Ali ibn Muhammad al-Samri (d. 329 AH)

His deputyship was short (3 years) and was more like a transitional phase to the Major Occultation, so nothing exceptional happened, especially since the caliphate was in Samarra and he was in Baghdad. However, it was a preparation

for the Major Occultation where people would deal with the jurists and mujtahids, and after three years, he received news six days before his death through a signature from the Imam (AS): "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, O Ali ibn Muhammad al-Samri, may God magnify your reward among your brothers, for you will die in six days. So, gather your affairs and do not appoint anyone to stand in your place after your death, for the second occultation has occurred, and there is no appearance except after God's permission, Glorified and Exalted be He, and that will be after a long time and the hardening of hearts, and the earth being filled with injustice. My Shia will come to those who claim to have seen me, beware, for whoever claims to have seen me before the emergence of the Sufyani and the cry, he is a liar, a fabricator, and there is no power nor strength except with God, the High, the Great."

The Role of Imam Mahdi in the Major Occultation

In order for this article to be fruitful, it is necessary to identify the target audience to whom it is directed, as it is unnatural, for example, to direct this speech to a non-Muslim who does not believe in the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad, let alone the Imamate of the Imams, and to discuss with him the role of the last Imam. Similarly, it is unnatural to address this speech to someone who is not affiliated with the school of the Ahl al-Bayt, as they do not believe in the existence and life of Imam Mahdi, and to discuss with them his role in this life!

We are speaking to the Twelver Imami who believes in the Imamate of Imam Mahdi (AF), all his affairs, that he was born in the year 250 AH, and that he is alive but absent in his capacity

from directly interacting with people. It is assumed that the evidence for these beliefs has been established.

Terms:

The term "occultation of Imam Mahdi" will be repeated in this article, so it is beneficial to clarify it:

The "occultation of Imam Mahdi": does not mean a geographical or physical absence, meaning that no one can see him because he is hiding, for example, or because his body is in a special state. What is meant is the absence of his title and the concealment of his status, so a person may be present among a group of people but they do not know his status, role, and level, which is similar to what was mentioned that God concealed three things in three: ...and concealed His wali (saint) among His servants... Therefore, hardly anyone knows this person as being one of God's awliya (saints) even though they may live among them. It was previously stated that Imam Mahdi (AS) attends the Hajj season, sees them and they do not see him,⁽⁶⁷⁾ knows them and they do not know him. The analogy is with the story of Prophet Joseph, where he knew people and they did not know him; even his brothers did not know him though they were directly dealing with him after he became the Vizier of Egypt.

The Major Occultation: the period of disappearance (in the previous sense) that begins from the year 329 AH and continues today.

The Role: encompasses the voluntary action of the Imam and the outcome that results from his existence, even if it is not by his choice but by divine action.

Preliminaries: It appears that this question was raised at a very early stage, reaching about two centuries before the birth of the Imam, as there is a narration from Prophet Muhammad (SA) in the form of a question about the benefit of the Imam's existence during his occultation.

In contemplating the narrative and its nuances, we can glean the idea that discussions about the Imam and the details of his case were present among Muslims or some of them. This was not in the origin of his Imamate or the possibility of occultation, but rather in the details thereof. In this narrative and others, which are numerous, scholars who wrote about occultation have addressed a response to some of those who claimed among the later generations that the Mahdist doctrine is a reaction to the difficult circumstances experienced by the Shiites in their various times. They needed a "hope" to lift them out of those circumstances, even if it was not real. The idea of the Mahdi and his persona was such a hope.

Indeed, considering that the narrations about the Mahdi were stated in the era of the Prophet (SA), Amir al-Mu'minin, and the Hasanain (AS), there is no meaning to the discussion that it is a reaction to events in later times! Or that the Shiites, in the wake of pressing political situations, "invented" the idea of the Mahdi, his birth, and his occultation!

What will be discussed assumes that it addresses issues from within the doctrinal system of the Imami Shiites, with the same evidence presented therein and, therefore, will benefit from the general principles that have been discussed and proven in their theology, as well as from the transmitted evidence within their methodology. As a result, it may not be useful for those who

do not believe in this system or do not validate this method of reasoning. After these introductions, we say that narrations have been reported asking about the benefit of Imam Mahdi during his occultation. The question itself implies the origin of Imam Mahdi and then his occultation, meaning that he is born and alive, yet absent; not that he will be born at the end of times as the school of the caliphs suggests... It requires the acceptance of these matters and their completeness. The Prophet (SA) was asked about how to benefit from Imam Mahdi (AS) during his occultation. He said, "Yes, by He who sent me with prophecy, indeed they are enlightened by his light and benefit from his guardianship in his occultation as people benefit from the sun even if it is covered by clouds."⁽⁶⁸⁾

It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (AS), "And the earth has not been devoid since God created Adam of a divine proof, either apparent and well-known or absent and hidden, and it will not be devoid of a divine proof in it until the Hour rises, and if not for that, God would not be worshipped. Solomon said, "So, I said to al-Sadiq (AS), 'How do people benefit from the hidden, concealed proof?' He said, 'As they benefit from the sun when it is covered by clouds.'"

It was narrated from his holiness to Isaac son of Jacob through Muhammad son of Uthman: "As for the way of benefiting from me in my occultation, it is like benefiting from the sun when it is hidden from sight by clouds; indeed I am a security for the people of the earth as the stars are a security for the people of the sky."

In the last statement, it is noted that there is a prohibition on seeking to know the hidden reasons behind the occultation,

but why? Perhaps this is due to the lack of benefit in searching for those reasons, because the matter of belief in the divine leaders is not linked to knowing the details of their apparent or hidden roles. For instance, is it necessary to know what Khidr, as known among Muslims, is doing while he is alive for us to believe in him? If the Qur'an had not transferred some of the stories with Moses, we would have no way to know what he does. These stories for us are considered past matters, and as for his present and actual matters we know nothing about them.

These three narrations show a single direction, which is to liken the benefit of Imam Mahdi being absent to the benefit of the sun when it is covered and obscured by clouds. It is as if these narrations want to emphasise that there is no link between the occultation and the absence of role: it is possible for a person to be visibly in front of people and yet his personality and title are absent. Nevertheless, he practices his role with full efficiency; the Qur'an gives us an example with Prophet Joseph son of Jacob (AS), for he managed a country the size of Egypt, managed an economy as vast as its economy, and was the second man after its king. Yet, he was known neither to the king, nor even to his brothers who came "and they entered upon him, and he recognized them, but they denied him!" This is in the past.

As for the contemporary world, it has become clear to every contemplator that the idea that occultation (especially the titular one) does not prevent a person from performing his various roles, for the idea of a hidden government in the world now is clearer than in the past. For example, intelligence

agencies, global organizations, the deep state, and even the major companies are managed behind computer buttons by people most of the employees in the same companies do not know, let alone others! The example mentioned in the three narrations, which are issued in different ages extending to about two- and-a-half centuries, is the representation by the sun when it is obscured by clouds.

If not for the proof, the earth would sink:

It is inferred from many narrations that there is a link between the existence of divine proofs and the stability and righteousness of the earth and its not collapsing. This idea has become a given among the Imamis to the extent that it is cited and not argued upon; many narrations from the Infallibles have been reported in this regard.

Does it mean the legislative corruption of the people of the earth or the existential corruption?

Scholars have differed in their view of the content of these narrations, whether it refers to legislative corruption or existential corruption. Legislative corruption refers to the imbalance of law and order, and the distance of people from the law of God Almighty; whereas existential corruption refers to the idea that the existence and survival of the universe are linked to the existence of the divine proof (and at this time it is the owner of the era, the twelfth Imam Muhammad son of Hasan). Thus, God Almighty has made a link between the survival of the earth and the existence of the prophet or the Imam.

Regarding the first meaning, legislative corruption, it is narrated in al-Kafi with a reliable chain of transmission from

Abu Abdullah (AS), (the narrator) he said, I heard him saying):
 “The earth does not remain except with an Imam in it, so if the believers add something he returns it to them and if they decrease something he completes it for them.”

Clearly, the purpose of the existence of the Imam (AS) is to return the believers from adding to the religion and to complete it for them if they decrease from it!

Furthermore, what was narrated in the same chapter with a reliable chain of transmission from one of them, peace be upon them, he said: “God did not leave the earth without a scholar, and if not for that, the truth would not be known from the falsehood.”

From that chapter, the tenth narration has a chain of transmission in which is Muhammad son of al-Fudayl;⁽⁶⁹⁾ I said to Abu Abdullah (AS): ‘Does the earth remain without an Imam?’ He said: “If the earth remained without an Imam, it would sink.” The scholar al-Mazandarani, the commentator of al-Kafi, adopted that the meaning of sink is that it would have sunk into the water and disappeared, and perhaps it is a metaphor for the destruction of humans and their extinction. However, the commentator Mirza Abu al-Hasan al-Sha’rani said, “Sayyid al-Murtada, may God have mercy on him, in al-Shafi denied that the doctrine of the Imamis is the disappearance of the earth and its destruction existentially, but if their saying “If not for the proof, the earth would sink” was proven to be issued from the infallible Imam, then the intended is sedition, destruction, and the loss of people by the disappearance of security and happiness because the absence of the just Imam either means

the absence of a ruler at all and its corruption is apparent, or the presence of an oppressor or ignorant and it is the same."⁽⁷⁰⁾

The second saying is that the intended is existential corruption; for example, just as earthquakes, volcanoes, or floods end with the destruction of parts of the earth. Likewise, the absence of the divine proof also leads to this result.

From what was narrated by al-Kulayni with a chain of transmission in which is Muhammad son of al-Fudayl and it was previously mentioned from Abu al-Hasan al-Rida (AS) that he answered, "I said to him: 'Does the earth remain without an Imam?' He said: 'No.' I said: 'For we narrate from Abu Abdullah (AS) that it does not remain without an Imam unless God Almighty is angry with the people of the earth or with the servants.' He said: 'No, it does not remain then it would sink.'"

Imam al-Rida (AS) denied in this narration the meaning that came to the questioner's mind, that the earth can remain while its people are subject to God Almighty's wrath, and it is the first meaning we mentioned (legislative corruption, and loss from the guidance and rulings) and clarified that it does not remain at all!

The twelfth narration from the same chapter states with an incomplete chain of transmission from Abu Ja'far (AS): "If the Imam was lifted from the earth for a moment, it would sway with its people as the sea sways with its people."

The scholar al-Mazandarani commented on the saying in this narration, "It would sway with its people as the sea sways with its people." The sea sways, its waves disturbed, and so do the people sway. He likened the disturbance of the earth and

its people to the wave of the sea and its people. Metaphorically, "its people" meant its disappearance and the disappearance of its people because the mentioned disturbance entails it.

He said in another place specifically about Imam Mahdi (AF): "He is alive, existing by Whose existence the heavens stand, and if not for his existence, the earth would sink with its people in an instant."⁽⁷¹⁾

Among the contemporaries, the late Shaykh Montazeri expressed the idea that the purpose of appointing the Imam is not only limited to managing the political affairs in the society, the outward preservation of the religion, and explaining the rulings of the Sharia, but in addition to that he is a means of divine grace and bounty and the ultimate causal reason in the system of creation. As stated in the hadith that if the Imam ceased to exist, the earth would sink with its people, and the previous narration referred to that by saying: "and I am a security for the people of the earth," and al-Tusi said: "His existence is grace," meaning that his very existence is divine grace upon the servants. Furthermore, according to the many factual incidents transmitted in the reliable books, Imam al-Hujjah appears in disguise and comes to help his companions and supporters in times of hardship and difficulty.⁽⁷²⁾

As the late Sayyid Ja'far Murtada al-Amili also stated: It has also become clear that the existence of the infallible Imam in every era and time is a definite and necessary matter even if he is absent and hidden, because this Imam (AS) preserves and cares for many locations and places in this universe made for humans, which would have been destroyed without his preservation and care for them. If it were not for him, the earth

would have sunk with its people, as reported in the reliable narrations. Hence, we understand the secret that the narrations mentioned: "If the earth remained without an Imam" or "If the Imam was lifted from the earth even for an hour, it would sink with its people." Thus, the meaning of the narration that says, "As for the way people benefit from me in my occultation, it is like the sun when it is covered from sight by clouds"⁽⁷³⁾ becomes clear.

Those against this viewpoint can say in response with astonishment and denial of the link between the existence of the prophet or the Imam and the stability of the earth: that our ignorance of how that is does not mean its non-existence, for we do not know the roles of angels in this universe and how they act in nature, although the Qur'an affirmed that and the narrations. Therefore, the opinion of Muslims is that they have been charged with various and multiple roles in it... and the verses mentioned in Surah al-Dhariyat explain this: "So those who divide provisions."

Indeed, there are causes in the universe about which we do not know their reality, like gravity, the property of adhesion in things, and the reality of water which gives everything life (and is not found in other liquids despite their fluidity). So, if something from them was demolished, the universe would be demolished. It is similar with the soul; we do not know what it is, if it exits the body life ends. We do not know the reality about them nor the link, but we know its effects. So, it is like the sun when it is covered by clouds. It is noteworthy that in all the narrations asking about the benefit and utility of Imam Mahdi during his occultation the same simile was used, that his benefit is like

the benefit of the sun even if it is covered and obscured by clouds. There are several aspects to this simile, some of which are: The sun is the center of the solar system, and in terms of the planets rotating around it and their relation to the sun, the existence of clouds may prevent some light from some parts of the earth, but it definitely does not affect the relationship of the planets with the sun and the centrality of the sun in relation to them. Similar is the case with the occultation of the Imam (AS); while it may affect what people need for direct contact such as judicial issues and the like, it does not affect the rest of his roles, especially his blessed existence as a means of divine grace and the existential stability of the earth, according to the second opinion. Even according to the relationship with the earth, there are many effects of the sunrise on the earth and its people, some of which are affected by the cloud covering the sun, like lighting and illumination, and some of which are not affected.

The Proof of God for Creation:

God's law in His creation decreed that He sends them the proofs for their guidance to the path of dignified life and success in bliss in the Hereafter, and to be the complete proof of God Almighty on creation if they deviated from obeying Him, "apostles, as bearers of good news and warners, so that mankind may not have any argument against Allah, after the [sending of the] apostles; and Allah is all-mighty, all-wise."⁽⁷⁴⁾ The narrations have expressed that in many texts, as the theologians have established their rational proofs on that.⁽⁷⁵⁾

In the supplication of al-Nudba, the believers repeat “and so that none should claim, saying, ‘If only You had sent to us a warning messenger and established for us a guiding person, we should have followed Your signs before that we met humiliation and disgrace!’”

If thus is the case, then what is the advantage of other times over our time as they had divine proofs but we do not?

Indeed, the narrations have stated that necessity requires that there be an existing proof, either apparent and well-known or absent and hidden.

Similarly, it is one of the certainties among Muslims that “whoever dies without knowing the Imam of his time dies a death of ignorance,” and it is not any Imam but the Imam of the time. Does it mean to specify the majority so that we pass five times the Islamic period without a well-known Imam for the people? Therefore, it is necessary that the narrations indicate that the Thaqaalayn will not separate and that in every generation there are upright ones from the Ahl al-Bayt (People of the House), like what was mentioned that the stars are security for the people of the sky and my family is security for the people of the earth.

Is all this specific to before the year 250 AH? Even the question of the occultation mentioned in the narrations by the narrators is based on this foundation, for Sulayman al-A'mash narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (AS): “The earth has not been devoid since God created Adam as a proof for God in it, apparent and well-known or absent and hidden, and it will not be devoid until the Hour rises of a proof for God in it, and if not

for that then God would not be worshipped." Sulayman said, "I said to al-Sadiq, 'How do people benefit from the hidden, concealed proof?' He said (AS), "As they benefit from the sun when it is covered by clouds."

The Presentation of Deeds to the Imam:

The following was narrated from the way of the Imamiyyah what Shaykh al-Tabarsi said in *Majma' al-Bayan* regarding the interpretation of the following verse: "Then Allah will see your deeds and His Messenger and the believers, and you will be returned to the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed..." He meant by the vision here the knowledge which is the recognition and, therefore, counted it to one effect i.e., God Almighty knows that so He rewards you for it and His messenger sees it i.e., he knows it and testifies for you with that before God Almighty and the believers see it, and it was stated that by the believers he meant the martyrs. It was said: He meant by them the angels who are the keepers who write the deeds and our companions narrated that the deeds of the nation are presented to the Prophet (SA) every Monday and Thursday; hence, he recognizes them and likewise they are presented to the Imams of guidance, peace be upon them, so they recognize them and "they are the ones meant by His saying and the believers."

In his narrational research, Sayyid al-Tabataba'i in *al-Mizan* transmitted from *Basa'ir al-Darajat* with his chain of transmission from Muhammad ibn Muslim from Abu Ja'far (AS), he said: "I asked about the deeds, are they presented to the Messenger of God (SA) and his family?" He said: "There is

no doubt about it." He said: "Do you see God's saying, 'And say, Go on working: Allah will see your conduct, and His Apostle and the faithful [as well]'"⁽⁷⁶⁾ So he said: "God has witnesses in His creation."

I say: In its meaning, there are numerous narrations found in the collections of the Shiites about the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS); in most of them "the believers" in the verses are the Imams, and its application to what we have presented from the interpretation is obvious.

Within this framework, the Imamiyyah believe that their deeds are presented to the Imam of their time, who is the proof in this era, Imam Mahdi (AF).

Furthermore, it may be supported by what was narrated in the interpretations of the Sunnis in explaining this verse:

Mujahid said: This is a threat, meaning from God Almighty to those who contradict His commands that their deeds will be presented to Him, Exalted and Blessed be He, and to the Messenger, and to the believers. Inevitably this will happen on the Day of Resurrection, as He said: "That day you will be presented [before your Lord]: none of your secrets will remain hidden."⁽⁷⁷⁾

Also, He said: "On the day when the secrets are examined"⁽⁷⁸⁾ and He said: "And what is [concealed] in the breasts is divulged."⁽⁷⁹⁾

It may appear to people in this world, as Imam Ahmad said: Narrated to us by Hasan bin Musa, narrated to us by Ibn Lahi'ah, narrated to us by Darraj, from Abu al-Haytham, from Abu Sa'id,

from the Messenger of Allah (SA) that he said: "If one of you works in a solid rock that has no door or window, God will bring out his work for the people to be what it may."

Moreover, it was narrated that the deeds of the living are presented to the dead among the relatives and tribes in Barzakh, as Abu Dawood al-Tayalisi said: Narrated to us by al-Salt bin Dinar, from al-Hasan, from Jabir ibn Abdullah that he said: The Messenger of Allah (SA) said: "Indeed, your deeds are presented to your relatives and tribes in their graves, so if it was good they rejoice in it, and if it was otherwise, they say: 'O Allah, inspire them to act in obedience to You.'"

Imam Ahmad said: Informed us by Abd al-Razzaq, from Sufyan, from someone who heard Anas saying: The Prophet (SA) said: "Indeed, your deeds are presented to your relatives and tribes among the dead, so if it was good they rejoice in it, and if it was otherwise, they say: 'O Allah, do not cause them to die until You guide them as You guided us.'"⁽⁸⁰⁾

The point of support is that if God Almighty informs the general believers while they are in their graves about the deeds of their relatives who are alive in this world, although there is no clear effect from this presentation, then the presentation (of their deeds) to the Prophet (SA), while he is in his grave and is closer to the people than they are to themselves, is more deserving of being presented than to the relatives. Likewise is the case of the presentation (of their deeds) to the living, present Imam, who is the Imam of the era.

I say: Thus, it is strange that they accept that the deeds of people are presented to their relatives when they are dead in

Barzakh, while they marvel that they are presented to the Imam of the servants when he is alive and well!!

Shaykh al-Kulayni has devoted a chapter titled "The presentation of deeds to the Prophet and the Imams," in it he included a number of narrations in this field. Among them, with a reliable chain of transmission from Sama'ah, from Abu Abdullah (AS) is that he said, I heard him saying, "What is wrong with you that you sadden the Messenger of God (SA)?" So, a man said, "How do we sadden him?" He said, "Do you not know that your deeds are presented to him, so if he sees in them disobedience, it saddens him. Thus, do not sadden the Messenger of God and make him happy."

From it, in the authentic narration of Ya'qub he said: I asked Abu

Abdullah (AS) about God's saying Almighty: "And say, 'Go on working: Allah will see your conduct, and His Apostle and the faithful [as well].'" He said: "They are the Imams."

From it, is from Abdullah ibn Aban al-Zayyat, who was esteemed by al-Rida (AS). He said: I said to al-Rida (AS): "Pray to God for me and for my family." So, he said: "Am I not doing so? By God, indeed your deeds are presented to me every day and night." He said: I was amazed by that, so he said to me: "Do you not read the book of God Almighty: 'And say, 'Go on working: Allah will see your conduct, and His Apostle and the faithful [as well].'" He said: "It is by God, Ali bin Abi Talib (AS)."

There is no doubt that the educational effect of this idea is great, to the extent that people greatly love their allegiance to the Prophet and the Imam. If it is linked to the fact that the

Prophet is monitoring, and the Imam is looking at the deeds of these people, then the possibility of their religious and ethical commitment would be greatest.

Moreover, it has been narrated in traditions that the deeds of people are presented to the Imam on the night of Qadr, and perhaps this aspect is related to one of the actions of the night of Qadr being the supplication through the Fourteen Infallibles (AS) to God for the acceptance of deeds.

Witnessing over Creation, and Looking into the Conditions of the Nation:

It is clear that for the divine proofs is the position of witnessing over people, for they are the certain measure from "so that you [people] may be witnesses over mankind," and they have the position of guidance and directing to the truth, and it has been previously mentioned that the titular absence does not prevent from performing these roles and others. On the contrary, if it was a geographical and physical absence, and a complete absence from the society and the people, then it indeed affects.

Since we have explained that the occultation for the Imam is of the first type and as the second envoy for the Imam said, "By God, the owner of this matter attends the season every year, he sees people and recognizes them, and they see him and do not recognize him," but it was reported from many ways that cannot be enumerated:

It was narrated by Abu Na'im al-Ansari al-Zaydi that in the year 293 AH, after his circumambulation around the Kaaba al-

Musharrafah, he sat in a circle of believers to the right of the Kaaba. While they were sitting, Imam al-Mahdi (AS) came out to them wearing two ihrams and holding sandals in his hand; when they saw him they all stood up in awe of him. He greeted them and sat among them, then he turned right and left and then he said: "Do you know what Abu Abdullah (AS) used to say in the supplication of insistence? He used to say: "O Allah, I ask You by Your name by which the heaven stands and by it the earth stands..." to the end of what he mentioned."⁽⁸¹⁾

It was reported from Ubayd bin Zurarah from Abu Abdullah (AS) that he said, "Let the people miss their Imam, he attends the season and sees them but they do not see him."⁽⁸²⁾

The letter issued by Imam Mahdi (AF) to Shaykh al-Mufid Muhammad ibn al-Nu'man⁽⁸³⁾ became famous in the compositions of the Imamis and it contains phrases indicating the Imam's care for his Shia during his occultation, as transmitted by the hadith scholar al-Nuri al-Tabarsi in the conclusion of al-Mustadrak. He said, "In the year 410 Shaykh al-Mufid, may his soul be sanctified, received a book from his holiness in the remaining days of Safar. The one who delivered it mentioned that he carried it from a source connected to the Hijaz. This is a copy of the title: To the correct Shaykh and the guided master, Shaykh al-Mufid Abi Abdullah Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Nu'man, may God prolong his honor, from the repository of the covenant taken on the servants. This is the copy of what is in the book: In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. As for what comes after, peace be upon you, O the loyal ally in religion, specifically chosen by us with certainty, for we praise to you God who there is no deity but

Him, and we ask Him to send blessings on our master, our lord, and our prophet Muhammad and his pure family, and to let you know—may God prolong your success in supporting the truth, and grant you a generous reward for speaking the truth about us—that we have been permitted to honor you by writing and to assign you what you convey on our behalf to our followers before you, may God honor them with His obedience, and suffice them with His care and His protection. So, stand, may God support you with His help on what we mention, against His enemies who have apostatized from His religion, and act in conveying it to whom you trust in what we outline if God wills. Although we are staying in our distant place from the dwellings of the oppressors, according to what God showed us of the righteousness for us and our believing Shia, as long as the state of the world is for the corrupt; then we encompass knowledge of your news and nothing of your news is hidden from us and knowledge of the harm that has befallen you, although many of you have inclined to what the righteous predecessors were far from and they threw away the covenant taken from them as if they do not know. Indeed, we are not neglectful of taking care of you, nor forgetting your remembrance, and if not for that the calamity would have descended upon you and the enemies would have overwhelmed you... to the end of what was mentioned in that letter.⁽⁸⁴⁾

Does Imam al-Hujjah Intervene in Personal Matters?

In recent times some objections have been raised, casting doubt on whether Imam Mahdi (AF) intervenes in individual

cases of distress, such as the healing of some incurable diseases or guiding some strangers and the lost, etc.. The criticism is that attributing this role to the Imam implies that he is a charitable institution.

On the contrary, the truth is that we have admitted that he has supervision, witnessing, and intervention in the earth and that he is not blocked from influencing; however, we do not know about the way of the Imam's intervention in general issues because there is no way to know that and whoever claims that must prove it. Thus, there is no way to know how he repelled harm and calamity from his Shia in certain places.

What happens is that in personal issues some people are helped, rescued, and taken out of the distress they fell into, and they later narrate their stories and cases; perhaps the Imam himself is the direct actor for this work or someone is delegated by him... When the narrators are reliable in their transmission, the ruling regarding what they mention from their stories is that the rest of the issues that are proven by the transmission are reliable for them; its matter is much easier than what the reliable are accepted in, like the Sharia rulings.

Therefore, we believe that there is no need to mock this topic and to deal with it as if it is a joke or a jest! Likewise, there is no meaning to weakening the matter also, and diminishing its value, for rescuing a believer (individual), for example, from a terminal illness, or returning him to his homeland, or freeing him from the prison of a tyrant, or driving away a predatory animal is not a matter of little value!! No one said that this is the only role of the Imam, but what we know from numerous cases are these personal matters; as for general matters like repelling

wars, rescuing societies, or supporting the true doctrine in this place or that... There is no way to know it!

Our responsibility in the era of the Owner of the Era [may God hasten his reappearance]

There are two narrations about awaiting for relief; one of them is from the Prophet (SA): "The best of my nation's deeds is awaiting for relief"⁽⁸⁵⁾ and the other is from Amir al-Mu'minin (AS): "The best of deeds is awaiting for relief."⁽⁸⁶⁾

Here the question arises that if "awaiting for relief" was the best of deeds, what relief is this and what awaiting?

"Awaiting for relief" sometimes is looked at as a generic name and other times as a known name for a specific relief.

It may be said that since the narration was stated by the Prophet (SA) and Amir al-Mu'minin (AS), and they are very early on the issue of awaiting for the specific relief associated with Imam Mahdi, then from that it appears that it has generality, meaning that the best of deeds is for a person to be awaiting for God's relief in everything. Therefore, if the person looks at a political situation in crisis and fears that matters will worsen in a worse manner, and the earth tightens with its spaciousness... it is said to him, 'Await for God's relief! And do not despair of God's mercy! And do not despair!' Also, on a personal level, if you are in a severe financial situation and the future in front of you is unknown, then do not submit to the factors of negativity but await for the relief from God Almighty! Be optimistic that help and victory will come to you! Think well of God Almighty! It is likewise in matters of your health, etc... and all other matters.

The best of deeds is awaiting for God's relief and facilitation in different matters. This is all on a personal and individual level.

However, the greatest interpretation of that is when the relief is on the level of humanity, on the heels of the coming of the Qa'im of the family of Muhammad (AF); thus, if the person in his personal needs, his health, his trade, his education, his children, or his family is ordered to await for the good and to anticipate the relief, then he is in a matter related to the future of humanity as a whole; its liberation from the control of the tyrants of money, power, and politics, and the dominance of God's justice on His earth, human perfection in the path of humanity, and lifting the oppression from the oppressed and persecuted, the flesh of whose thin bodies the chains of prisons have eaten!

This is the true relief in its completeness and comprehensiveness, which is supposed to be celebrated by the creatures starting from the earth, that after it shone with his appearance by the light of its Lord, it brought out its burdens and blessings for him.

What does awaiting mean and what are the responsibilities of the awaiter?

Since the owner of the interpretation of al-Amthal has dealt with this concept in detail and illuminatingly, we will transfer his statement to complete the benefit for the reader, as he said under the title Concept of Awaiting!

The "awaiting" is usually applied to someone who is in an uncomfortable state and seeks to find a better situation.

For example, the patient awaits for recovery from his illness, or the father awaits for his son's return from travel; both the patient and the father are anxious, one from his illness and the other from his son's absence, so they await for the better situation and strive for that as much as they can.

Likewise is the case, for example, of the trader who suffers from the market crisis and awaits for economic activity. So, these two cases i.e., the feeling of crisis and striving towards the better, are from awaiting.

Based on that, the issue of awaiting for the government of truth and justice, i.e., the government of Mahdi (AF) and the emergence of the global reformer, is actually composed of two elements: an element of negation, and an element of affirmation, so the element of negation is the feeling of the strangeness of the situation suffered by the awaiter, and the element of affirmation is the demand for the better situation! If these two elements settle in the soul of the human, then they will be the cause of two types of actions and these two types are:

5. Abandoning all forms of cooperation with the causes of oppression and corruption; rather, he must resist them. This is from one side.
6. Building personality, self-movement, and preparing physical, spiritual, material, and moral readiness for the emergence of that global human government, from another side.

If we look closely, we find that these two types of actions are a reason for awareness, consciousness, and self-construction.

In regards to the essential concept of awaiting, we understand well the meaning of the narrations mentioned in the reward of the awaiters and the outcome of their affair, and then we know why the narrations named the awaiters rightly as if they were with the Qa'im (AF) under his tent, or that they are under his banner, or that they are like those who fight in the way of God before him like the martyrs before him, or like those covered in their blood, etc.

Isn't it that these expressions refer to the different stages and degrees of jihad in the way of truth and justice, which correspond to the amount of readiness and degree of awaiting of people?

Nevertheless, the measure of sacrifice and its standard is not at one level if we wanted to weigh the sacrifice of the mujahideen, in the way of God and "...their degrees and the effects of their sacrifices, so also the awaiting."⁽⁸⁷⁾

I say: For this, there is no wonder that the Infallibles (AS) considered awaiting for relief a part of relief and a side of it, for Muhammad ibn al-Fudayl asked Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Rida (AS), he said: "I asked him about some of the relief," he said: "Isn't awaiting for relief part of the relief? Indeed, God Almighty says: 'So await; indeed, I am with you among those who await.'"⁽⁸⁸⁾ Rather, it is in the narration of Imam Zayn al-Abidin (AS) as "one of the greatest reliefs."⁽⁸⁹⁾

The specific awaiting associated with Imam al-Hujjah is hope and at the same time an objection to the existing reality, as it is a sense of the

Imam's supervision over the obligated awaiter.

Therefore, it (awaiting the relief) carries a number of responsibilities for the believer, which we will mention briefly.

1. The responsibility of knowledge

Knowing the Imam is part of our basic religious beliefs. Indeed, one of the big problems in the Muslim world today is how do deal with the well-known hadith among all Muslim sects from the Messenger of Allah (SA) and his family, "Whoever dies without knowing the Imam of his time dies a death of ignorance,"⁽⁹⁰⁾ or "Whoever dies and there is not in his neck a pledge of allegiance to an Imam dies a death of ignorance?" Of course, this hadith and the like cannot be applied correctly except on the basis of the understanding of the Imami school, for they know an Imam from God Almighty, designated by Him and in him are the criteria of Imamate in its great form. Thus, they pledge allegiance to him and profess loyalty to him. Of course, the issue of his life and his occultation for this long period remains, and it is supposed that the scholars have provided the proofs for it in theology!

As for the non-Imamis and the narrations established by them, what do they do?! It is not meant for any Muslim to have in their neck a pledge of allegiance to any Imam and leader of any kind, for this is achieving the achieved, as there is no person who is not a follower unless he is a follower, but it is meant to be an Imam from God Almighty, and the person is ordered to follow him and obey him with complete obedience, by the requirement of "Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those of authority among you." Therefore, is the true Imam the political ruler or the religious scholar? Furthermore, which of them is the holder of the pledge, and in cases of turmoil and

conflict between rulers and governors, what do they do? Do they remain loyal to the deposed ruler or pledge allegiance to the one who deposes?!

Knowing the Imam and the leader is indeed a religious necessity before being a worldly need! Perhaps for this reason, when Zurrarah was told by Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (AS) about the time of occultation, he informed him what should be done and said, Pray with this supplication:

O Allah, make me know Yourself, for if You do not make me know Yourself, I would not know Your prophet,

O Allah, make me know Your prophet, for if You do not make me know Your prophet, I would not know Your proof,

O Allah, make me know Your proof, for if You do not make me know Your proof, I would go astray from my religion.⁽⁹¹⁾

The accuracy of the sequence and the close connection between knowing God, the Prophet, and the Imam is noted.

If the problem among non-Imamis lies in the basic diagnosis and the main title, it also exists to some degree in diagnosing the truthful from the false. We mentioned something about this when discussing the false Mahdist claims and how to uncover the lies within them. For Imamis, the original path is clear: Imam Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Mahdi is the master of the age and the ninth Mahdi from the progeny of Fatimah, born in the time of his father al-Askari and remaining alive by the will of his Lord.

However, the problem arises when impostors claim to be him (the gate to the Mahdi, his son, his agent, and sometimes even claim to be the Mahdi himself!), which can confuse some people. They need to pray to their Lord, "O Lord, make me recognize Your proof."

2. The responsibility of establishing and documenting the relationship with Imam Mahdi (AF)

One of the dilemmas in people's lives is dealing with an Imam who is not physically present. This is the fundamental dilemma in human interaction with the unseen, as humans naturally gravitate towards what is tangible and present, interacting with it through their senses. This is what sociologists mention in response to the question:

Despite an innate nature guiding humans to the existence of a Creator, they still turn to creating idols and worshipping them, even though they made them themselves! They answered that dealing with tangible and external objects is easier and quicker than dealing with abstract concepts and the unseen.

Similarly, dealing with a present Imam and leader who is in front of their eyes is easier than dealing with an absent Imam. This is undoubtedly one of the tests of faith for believers. To pass this test safely, one must strengthen their connection and relationship with their Imam to overcome the negative elements of absence.

In addition, our constant reminder, which was explained in another topic, about the meaning of the occultation of Imam Mahdi. Perhaps for this reason, a set of programs has been developed that can compensate for this physical distance by

strengthening the psychological relationship and emotional connection through supplications and visits, such as the supplication of Nudba, which is recommended to be recited on Fridays and holidays.

One might wonder whether this supplication has a reliable source or not. Some researchers believe there are several ways to strengthen such

a supplication:

- A.** The first way is that some prominent figures of the sect have relied on it in theological and jurisprudential reasoning, arguing based on a text in creed and jurisprudence about a doctrinal principle or a legal ruling requires that the evidence be considered reliable in the eyes of the one reasoning, as the requirements and conditions in evidence for jurisprudence and creeds are more demanding than those for supplications and sermons, as we mentioned in explaining the supplication of Nudba.
- B.** The second way is that it was narrated or some of its sections were narrated by individuals considered strict in matters of narration, such as Sayyid Ali ibn Tawus,⁽⁹²⁾ who was the first to deviate from the ancient method of authenticating hadiths and adopted a new approach that was later further developed by his student, Allama Hilli, considering any narration that includes a weak or unknown narrator as weak and unreliable.

As long as the person who included it in his book adopted this methodology, it must be that he considered the supplication's

chain of narration, and had he not found it reliable, he would not have included it in his book, especially since he is the founder of this method known as the quadrature of hadiths.

C. The third way is that some prominent figures of the sect have explicitly stated that it has a reliable chain of narration, including Allama Majlisi, an expert in the hadiths of the Infallibles (AS). He said in his book *Zad al-Ma'ad*: "As for the supplication of *Nudba*, which contains true beliefs and lamentation over his occultation (AF), it is narrated with a reliable chain of narration from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (AS) as its recitation is recommended on the four holidays: Friday, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, and Eid al-Ghadir, and it begins: 'Praise be to Allah, there is no god but He, and to Him belongs all praise, Lord of the worlds, and may Allah bless Muhammad, His Prophet, and his family, and grant them peace. O Allah, to You belongs praise for what has occurred by Your decree concerning Your allies.'⁽⁹³⁾

D. The fourth way is that the construction of the supplication in its meanings and words indicates that it originates from the infallible source, and its contents are found in other narrations, starting with the history of the prophets and their missions, their key attributes and roles, and then concluding with our Prophet Mustafa Muhammad (SA). It highlights the noble deeds he performed.

After that, the supplication mentions the event that occurred after the death of the Messenger of Allah (SA), when the

Qurayshi party turned against the authority of the Commander of the Faithful, despite the Imam's great status and high rank demonstrated by the reliable prophetic hadiths. After explaining that this coup was the beginning of injustices and the gateway to sorrows for the family of Muhammad (with killings, captivities, and exiles), the supplication finally laments the difficulty of reaching Imam Mahdi (AF), ignites a flame of hope, and refuses to succumb to the darkness of despair by embodying the caller's stance on the Mahdist reappearance and the messianic victory: "Do we see you while you lead the assembly, having filled the earth with justice and inflicted punishment and humiliation on your enemies..."

Nonetheless, it is not just this supplication, but there are many supplications and visits that ensure strengthening the relationship with the Imam (AS) including the well-known supplication of the Covenant (Du'a 'Ahd), which is recommended for the believer to recite every day after the Fajr prayer, and the timing has its implications, in addition to the expressions and contents of the supplication, for those who wish to contemplate them.

"O Allah, I renew to him this morning of my day and for as long as I live a covenant, pledge, and allegiance to him in my neck that I will not turn away from it nor will I deviate from it ever."⁽⁹⁴⁾

Allama Majlisi added, "It has been narrated with a reliable chain of narration from Imam al-Sadiq (AS) that whoever reads this covenant for forty mornings will be among the supporters of the Hujjah (AF)."

3. Striving to achieve the society envisioned by the Master of the Age (AF).

Awaiting for relief does not mean passively ceasing to fulfil the responsibilities of reform, but rather preparing for the arrival of the Master of Relief. One who awaits for a guest should not stand idly by the roadside, hand on cheek, but should prepare the house for his arrival and arrange matters of hospitality so that everything is ready when he comes. If he neglects this and is satisfied with just looking down the street to see his guest, he is subject to blame and reproach, attributed to neglecting his guest's affairs.

The farmer awaiting for rain in two months, for example, should not merely observe the passing of nights and days as someone awaiting for rain but must prepare his land, plough it, organize its irrigation, and then sow the appropriate seeds so that when the awaited rain falls on his land, "it quivers and swells and grows [plants] of every delightful kind."

The true awaiter is the one who works to prepare the ground for the Imam al-Hujjah and makes preparations to welcome this great and noble awaited one. The believer strives to build a society described by God in His book as "a solid structure" based on obedience to God, His Prophet, and his family. One should ask oneself whether they have contributed to aligning the different ranks or whether they have added new rifts and cracks to the existing ones.

Do they strive to lift the believers' stumbling blocks, or do they deepen the pits they have fallen into? Do they cover the faults and conceal the flaws if they hear them about a believer,

or do they rush to spread indecency about him and spread hatred around him?

Some expressions mentioned in the epics after the reappearance need to be re-explained and understood and should not always be viewed through mystical and miraculous eyes, as long as they can be attributed to natural and customary equations.

For example, what was mentioned that “when our Qa’im rises, he will place his hand on the heads of the servants, thereby gathering their intellects and perfecting their dreams” may not be within the purely mystical framework, but perhaps it will be the result of programs broadcast by the Imam (AS) and his guidance, transforming people by virtue of these programs into individuals at an advanced level of scientific perfection and knowledge. Therefore, in this there is no doubt an incitement to move towards acquiring knowledge and enhancing intellectual abilities, indicating that the Imam (AS) seeks to achieve this goal.

What should not be preoccupied with or believed: As there are responsibilities that must be worked on, as mentioned earlier, there are also matters that are considered distractions for people, even though they should not be preoccupied with them and waste time and effort on them, i.e. Searching for a vision of the Imam or his orders? We notice that many are searching for the possibility of seeing the Imam Mahdi (AS) and some have a perception that they have seen the Imam once or several times. We do not want to deny the claim of so-and-so or so-and-so seeing the Imam (AS) as God may bestow upon some of them the grace “to see the bright reappearance and

the commendable forehead,” but clearly this is not available to all people! However, what is available to all people, if not preferable and more important, is knowing his vision and idea about social reform and religious commitment to his orders, which are the same as the Sharia of his pure ancestors, peace be upon them all. If seeing “the form of the Imam” and direct meeting with him is not facilitated for all people, then applying the wills of the Imam and his orders is possible and facilitated for all people if they wish.

You may be faced with disbelief or skepticism when you talk about seeing the Imam, but no one will oppose you if you implement what Imam al-Hujjah and his fathers emphasized, such as congregational prayer, for example! Your realization of it and your commitment to it undoubtedly align with the will of the Imam al-Hujjah and gladden his heart, and he is pleased with that. Narratives of the epics? We also believe that excessive preoccupation with applying the events that occur in the narrations found in our religious heritage is not what should be done. This is if those narrations are authentic in terms of chains of narration and have reached us through a correct chain, which is difficult to verify! We have seen from a practical perspective that some scholars, driven by religious zeal and complete confidence in what events happen are sequential preludes to the appearance of the truth and the relief of the Imam (AS) may have undesirable effects. We may refer to them in another place. That is because what is found in the narrations is not extremely precise, but there is room for them to apply to multiple events with different dates and characters.

Some of these events may apply to the Abbasid caliphate in its second or last period. Yet, they can also apply to events happening in our actual time! Moreover, they can apply to events that will occur in the future! What matters should not be believed? For instance, some cite narrations that support the idea that when Imam al-Hujjah emerges, he will unsheathe the sword and not sheathe it, killing, shedding blood until it flows to the knees, even cutting open the bellies of pregnant women... Scholars say that upon reviewing the chains of narration of those narrations, we consider them unreliable, as they generally end with two individuals, both of whom are rejected narrators: Muhammad bin Ali al-Kufi and Ali bin Abi Hamza al-Bata'ini. Even if some of them have complete chains of narration, their texts cannot be accepted if they conclude that the Imam, God forbid, carries out those acts contrary to justice and fairness, while the purpose of his coming is to deny injustice and enforce justice!

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Some of them even state that he proceeds with slaughter, not following the manner of the Messenger of Allah! Conversely, there are authentic and acceptable narrations⁽⁹⁵⁾ in terms of chain and content that indicate that his manner is that of the Messenger of Allah and his grandfather, the Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon them, and if he unsheathes the sword, it is against those who confront and oppose his reform movement.

The false Mahdist claims

"Say, "Has Allah permitted you [to do so], or do you invent [something] about Allah?"⁽⁹⁶⁾

It was narrated from al-Mufaddal bin Umar that he said: I heard Abu Abdullah (AS) say, "For the master of this matter, there are two occultations: he returns in one of them to his family, and in the other, it is said: 'In which valley did he perish?'" I said: 'What should we do when that happens?' He said: "If a claimant claims, ask him about those great matters that only someone like him can answer."⁽⁹⁷⁾

These pages address the common features in the false Mahdist claims and how the faithful can recognize their falsehood. We present two important introductions for this:

1. The first: The belief in Imam Mahdi (AF) with his attributes, "that he is from the Ahl al-Bayt of the Messenger of Allah (SA) and that he is reserved for humanity to fill the earth with justice and equity," is a matter of consensus among Muslims; if not all of them, then most of them. True, there is a difference in some details between the two main schools among Muslims, the Imami school of the Ahl al-Bayt and the school of the caliphs. This difference lies in whether he was born, is alive and existing, and his survival is according to divine will, as the Imamis believe, or whether he has not yet been born and God will arrange his affair whenever He wills, and he will be born at the end of times, so he is not existing now. Nevertheless, the basic belief in him in the aforementioned is undisputed.
2. The second: Many false claims adopting the idea of Mahdism have emerged in the Islamic world, beginning from the early Islamic centuries, i.e., from the second Hijri century, and these claims continued

to later and contemporary times, historically speaking. Geographically, these claims varied in many places, stretching from the Hejaz of the Arabian Peninsula to the Maghreb, passing through Iraq, Egypt, the Levant, Sudan, and South Africa. Perhaps some might think that these claims are evidence of the unrealistic belief in the Mahdi; on the contrary, no great idea or high belief exists without some liars claiming it, even the belief in God the Creator was claimed by Nimrod and Pharaoh,⁽⁹⁸⁾ and false prophets made claims. So, do those false claims justify disbelieving in God or the prophets and messengers? Instead, we find that these false claims are proof of the authenticity of the original claim and that these impostors exploit what is anchored in people's minds and hearts from the peaceful beliefs, presenting counterfeit examples of them.

This indicates that the belief in the matter of the Mahdi is a firm and decisive belief, common among Muslims in different periods of their history, and this is due to what they took from their Imams in religion and their scholars in creed generation after generation! Yes, some liars and those with personal interests might exploit this firm belief and present themselves as representatives of this belief! Historically, it is difficult for a researcher to count all the false claims in the Mahdist issue due to their abundance and because some of them were limited in scope and did not receive much acceptance, so the claim died in its geographical area, making it impossible to track the movement of its proponents; in addition to the lack of importance in doing so, since the commonalities between

these false claims are many, reducing the need to review “all” these claims.

Therefore, we will limit ourselves to mentioning some of them and what the faithful should do when they occur. Perhaps one of the earliest claims in the Mahdist topic was during the time of Imam al-Sadiq (AS). Interestingly, both opposing and hostile parties were attributed to the awaited Mahdi; on one hand, Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Hasan al-Muthanna bin Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba claimed to be the Mahdi, benefiting from the narrations that he is from Fatimah’s progeny and from the Prophet’s lineage, and he fits Muhammad’s description since his grandfather is Hasan al-Mujtaba, his name is Muhammad and his father’s name is Abdullah (which is found in the non-Imami version unlike the Imami narrations, where there is no mention that his father’s name is like the Prophet’s father’s name).

Within this context, the Hasanids, especially Muhammad’s father Abdullah, campaigned for him to rise in rebellion against the Abbasids who “stole” the efforts and sacrifices of the Alawis against the Umayyads, starting from Imam Husayn’s uprising (AS) and benefited from the slogan that attracted people, which is the call to “the pleasure of the family of Muhammad.” Muhammad’s father sought to hold a conference before the fall of the Umayyad state to pledge allegiance to his son Muhammad as Imam and ruler, but the Abbasids managed to hijack the movement and change its course to become Abbasid, and thus Abu al-Abbas al-Saffah became the caliph, followed by Abu Ja’far al-Mansur! Muhammad bin Abdullah, known as al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, had strengths, such as being Qurayshi,

from the Prophet's lineage, commanding good and forbidding evil, which are the Mahdi's attributes, but the attribute of being the ninth from Imam Husayn's progeny does not apply to him, neither from Imam Husayn's progeny nor the ninth! This led Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq to inform the gathered Hashemites (from both their Abbasid and Alawi branches) that if Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya's purpose was to act against evil, there would be no harm, but if he acted on the basis that he is the Mahdi whom God will make victorious over his enemies, this would not be correct. The result was Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya's uprising, which Abu Ja'far al-Mansur, the Abbasid, confronted in a well-known battle near the city of the Messenger of Allah (SA), ending in the killing of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and a significant number of his followers

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Interestingly, Abu Ja'far al-Mansur (Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Abdullah bin al-Abbas) himself attempted to cast his son in the role of the Mahdi, so he named his eldest son Muhammad and gave him the title "al-Mahdi." Mansur himself was named Abdullah, so he possessed the name: Muhammad bin Abdullah. According to what is found in the narrations of the school of the caliphs, the Mahdi's name is the name of the Messenger of Allah, and his father's name is the name of the Messenger's father, making him Muhammad bin Abdullah, and he gave him the title "al-Mahdi," and he is from Quraysh!! This forgery was an attempt to deceive people into believing that this is the awaited, anticipated Mahdi.

Indeed, he succeeded his father al-Mansur and ruled for ten years, during which he became the epitome of tyranny, power, and bloodlust! Another failed attempt was when some agents

of Imam Musa bin Ja'far al-Kadhim (AS) established a new sect, the Waqifites. These agents coveted the wealth that had accumulated with them during the Imam's imprisonment, and, therefore, after the martyrdom of Imam al-Kadhim, they claimed that he did not die and that he is the promised Qa'im who has disappeared from the people. Thus, they said that no one succeeds him and they "stopped" at him, not acknowledging the Imamate of his son Ali bin Musa al-Rida (AS).

However, this claim died in its infancy, as the leading agents of Imam al-Kadhim exposed its leaders and revealed that their intentions were purely worldly, and what they said was merely a deception to the general public. Imam Ali al-Rida's (AS) opposition to them and his assumption of the Imamate responsibilities were the final bullet that ended their existence in the Shia community. This occurred in the Islamic East in the first and second centuries. As for the Islamic West, historians mention Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Tumart (died around 524 AH), who initially emerged on the basis of commanding good and forbidding evil (practically) and, if the attribution of ideas to his book and the book's attribution to him are correct, he compiled a number of ideas, especially in doctrinal issues from different methodologies. While he was known for his Ash'arite inclination and opposition to the exclusive dominance of the Maliki school in religious practice in the Maghreb, he was attributed to the Mu'tazilite approach regarding the attributes of God Almighty.

He was also attributed to ideas closer to the Twelver Imami school, as reported in his book *A'azz Ma Yutlab* (The Most Noble of What is Sought), stating: "The establishment of truth

in the world is only possible by the necessity of believing in the Imamate in every era until the Day of Judgment... and the Imam can only be infallible to demolish falsehood because falsehood cannot demolish itself... and believing in the Mahdi is obligatory, and whoever doubts him is a disbeliever, and he is infallible in what he calls to from the truth, and he does not oppose, resist, defend, contradict, dispute, or argue, and he is unique in his time, truthful in his speech, and he will cut down tyrants and charlatans, and he will conquer the world, east and west, and fill it with justice as it was filled with injustice, and his command will remain until the Day of Judgment."⁽⁹⁹⁾ Clearly, the necessity of believing in the Imamate in every era equates to the Earth never being devoid of a proof, as the Imamis believe, and the belief that the Imam must be infallible to demolish falsehood since falsehood cannot demolish itself! Thus, the statement that it is necessary to believe in the Mahdi, his infallibility, his reappearance, and his victory. It is written by scholars studying his life that he "began calling to the Mahdi and arousing people's interest in him until his followers recognized the Mahdi's virtue, claimed it for himself, and said: 'I am the infallible Mahdi, I am the best of people in knowing God and His Messenger,' and changed his Berber lineage to the lineage of Hasan bin Ali, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, and, therefore, it is obligatory to follow him in all his actions, accept his religious and worldly judgments, and delegate all matters to him."

Through his mobilization of followers, he managed to establish a state after defeating the Almoravids, lasting about 148 years.

This is one of the movements whose proponents claimed Mahdism, and even though Ibn Tumart may have approached some correct ideas regarding the matters of Imamate and infallibility, as we mentioned earlier, his claim to Mahdism and what was said about his infallibility is a false claim with no validity. The Imams "are from Quraysh", "from the descendants of Husayn," and "the Mahdi among them is the ninth from the progeny of Husayn (AS)." However, the people's following and support for him and their accompanying of his movement indicate that the belief in the Mahdi and the people's anticipation for him are deeply rooted in the consciousness of Muslims in the west of the Islamic world, just as it is in its east. Sudan witnessed the appearance of Muhammad al-Mahdi bin Abdullah al-Sudani (d. 1302), known for Sufism and greatly influenced by Sufi and mystical figures, as reported, spending time in Sufi retreats. He was sensitive to religious violations and deviations, as they said, until he met a person who would later be his successor, Abdullah al-Ta'aishi, who told him that he saw in a dream that the Prophet (SA) indicated that Muhammad is the Mahdi (note: reliance on visions and dreams is a common element among false Mahdist claims) and that he is the one through whom the Earth will be rectified! Muhammad bin Abdullah (the Mahdi) believed what was said about him and began acting accordingly.

Since a person, when thinking about a matter and being concerned with it, becomes present in their conscious and subconscious, his dreams about this increased. What strengthened the call of "the Sudanese Mahdi" was, on one hand, his adherence to asceticism and strict compliance with religious rulings, and on the other hand, his attribution to Imam

Hasan bin Ali bin Abi Talib from one aspect. In this sense, he convinced people through his personal behavior and, on the other hand, by fitting some descriptions of the Mahdi, such as being from the Prophet's progeny and Fatimah's children (since he is a descendant of Hasan bin Ali), and he explicitly claimed to be the Mahdi, stating that he meets with the divine presence and similar claims. Some writers report this based on documents and letters of that call, stating: "The Prophet informed me that I am the awaited Mahdi and repeatedly made me sit on his chair in the presence of the caliphs, poles, al-Khidr, a group of saints, both deceased and some of the poor who are not taken into account, and he entrusted me with his sword, supported me with the ten noble angels, and decreed that Azrael always accompany me, being in front of my army in the battlefield and behind me otherwise, and that al-Khidr always accompany me, with the Master of Existence and his four caliphs, the four poles, and sixty thousand saints from the deceased in front of us."⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

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He militarily confronted the Egyptian-Turkish army, which controlled

Sudan at the time, then clashed with the British army, and after about 15 years of declaring his movement and Mahdism, he died and was succeeded by Abdullah al-Ta'aishi, who had informed him that he saw

the Prophet indicating him as the Mahdi! In the Hejaz, at the beginning of the fifteenth Hijri century, the world witnessed a distinguished event linked to a Mahdist claim, where about 200 individuals, as reported, from the Salafi group al-Muhtasibah, led by Juhayman al-Otaibi, entered the Grand Mosque in Mecca,

declared their control over it with arms that they brought in coffins under the pretext of needing prayers for the deceased, and it was said that Juhayman presented his sister's husband, Muhammad bin Abdullah al-Qahtani, as the Mahdi mentioned in the narrations, and that many had seen visions and dreams supporting this meaning and that the signs of the Hour had arrived, and immorality was rampant. After confrontations with the Saudi government, al-Qahtani was first eliminated, which, as some analysts⁽¹⁰¹⁾ say, had the greatest impact on weakening his group, as it was supposed that the Mahdi would remain alive and achieve victory while he exists to establish justice.

As for Iraq, one of the scholars researching the Mahdist issue stated that he noticed the emergence of seven false Mahdist movements within twenty years!! This means an average of a false movement every three years! Perhaps the most dangerous was what was called at the time "Army of Heaven," which attempted in 2007 to militarily attack the city of Najaf amid the chaos in Iraq, intending to occupy the shrine of Imam Ali (AS) and eliminate the religious authority, claiming that the religious authority, as they allege, is against Imam Mahdi!

However, their early exposure and the security forces' surprise attack on a farm where they made a camp ended their endeavor and concluded their events. They were followed by what is ongoing and continuing until now, with one of the individuals claiming to be the son of the Mahdi at times, or one of the twelve Mahdis after Imam Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Askari, or, that he is the Yemeni who prepares the way for the Mahdi!! They have a special new narration every day that they promote according to the listener's need! Once again, the

common and constant weapon among these false movements is dreams and visions, to be the only evidence of what they believe and command people to believe about them.

Perhaps the state of despair experienced by a portion of Muslims, who only see tragedies and bloodshed in Muslim lands, backwardness, and injustice inflicted upon them, to the extent that television screens might as well bleed to accurately depict what is happening on the Islamic scene, contributes to the emergence of these movements and some people's belief in them.

Here, with the intensification of conditions, some look forward to a glimmer of relief and a loophole of hope to change this reality that neither benefits the human's religion nor his worldly life. So, if they hear about someone raising a banner and promising salvation, they rush to him like a drowning person clutching at every straw and relying on any board! At the same time, the claimants of these movements, either due to the ignorance of some and their good faith in themselves or the cunning of others who know their falsehood, exploit this despair and the readiness of these despairing people to do anything to change the nation's condition, religion, and world, thus gaining followers and attracting supporters, with each of them inviting others to this movement! These claimants often target the weak in knowledge and the low in learning, trying to cut people off from their religious references and thinkers who have spent their lives spreading knowledge, so you find that a common point among these movements is often creating a rift between people and their religious references to the extent

that they propagate that the worst enemies of the Mahdi are the references and religious seminaries!!

Nevertheless, these scholars' main concern is achieving the demands and topics related to the culture of awaiting and the conditions of Imam Mahdi (AS). Indeed, perhaps some claimants of Mahdism are deceived in themselves, thinking well of their characteristics, seeing that what they do, for example, is fighting evil and corruption, which is part of Imam Mahdi's work. Also, they see if some titles apply to them, such as truthfully or falsely attributing themselves to the prophetic progeny, or to Quraysh. Furthermore, they convince through their dreams and visions that this person is indicated as the Mahdi! Similarly, they believe (the deception) about themselves!

How do we uncover the falsehood of these movements?

There are standards that can reveal the falsehood of this movement or that, and we refer to some of them.

1. The stance of the leaders of these movements and their followers towards knowledge:

When we talk within the Shia circle, we notice that there is a vast scholarly heritage produced by the noble minds of our scholars and recorded by their pens over more than a thousand years, if we calculate the period from the time of Shaykh al-Mufid, may God have mercy on him (d. 413 AH), to our contemporary days.

Observers of this history will find great efforts that have matured, developing sophisticated and accurate methods in jurisprudential reasoning and comparison, in the interpretation of the Qur'an with its different approaches, in the science of jurisprudential principles and its rules, in the science of narration (biographical evaluation), besides the various sciences of hadith, in addition to being well-versed in the narrations about the Prophet and his infallible family. If someone comes and dominates the existing knowledge and surpasses what is established, this is the first sign of a healthy journey. This is because we believe that Imam Mahdi comes to complete and perfect what is lacking in knowledge and adds to it a tremendous increase,⁽¹⁰²⁾ making what humanity has achieved in the journey of knowledge compared to what will be during his era like comparing a swimming pool to the ocean. We have seen that one of the embarrassing signs for some claimants of Mahdism is that they do not master significant religious knowledge, so one of the first things they do is try to convince people that these sciences are sciences of misguidance. The science of jurisprudential principles, according to them, is ignorance, the science of narration is invalid, and reasoning is incorrect, and that is because it is easy to expose their "illiteracy" in these sciences. Moreover, as we mentioned, in addition to distancing from the scientific and rational condition, they add another practice, which is relying on dreams and istikhara (divination) to decide on the correctness of the methods of these movements' proponents and joining them, ignoring deliberately that if this door were opened at the level of beliefs, it would be a significant problem. If a Christian came to Muslim lands and asked them to perform istikhara to join

Christianity and leave Islam if the istikhara turned out positive, and to leave that if it came out negative, would that be correct?! If 100 people among them performed istikhara, and it turned out positive for 30, he would be winning in any case.

What we are in is of this kind, as some of these movements ask the person to think about the matter, and if they see someone in their dream (wearing a green turban, in their forties, and surrounded by a halo of light...) informing him about the Mahdi, this is a sign of their claim's correctness. Here, they design a path in the subconscious and design a tableau to be stored quietly when he falls asleep, where his mind was occupied with it, so he comes the next day convinced of what they said! If he does not see anything or sees something contrary to that, they ask him to perform istikhara (prayer for guidance) about joining them. Indeed, he performs istikhara, and they are in profit and will not lose anything because the probability of istikhara being positive is equal to the probability of it being negative. If it turns out positive, they gain a new member, and if it is negative, they lose nothing! We have mentioned elsewhere that what is constant in istikhara is related to permissible actions that are not associated with a mandatory ruling (obligation or prohibition), but even the preferable in some aspects, so it is not permissible for a person to perform istikhara on whether to pray, believe in God, commit a sin, follow someone claiming to be the Mahdi, belong to a certain group, or to leave Islam!

Rather, he should use his intellect and within the legal standards, if belonging to it is in accordance with the guidance of the religion and beliefs, then it is obligatory; otherwise, it is forbidden!

Their stance towards religious authority:

The Imamiyyah believe that the religious authority is the guardian of the boundaries of the believing community, and the scholars are the guardians on the fronts of the doctrine, protecting its beliefs and jurisprudence. This is one of the greatest strengths of this doctrine and sect, and they will be the first supporters of Imam Mahdi upon his reappearance, as it will crown their efforts until it reaches its perfection.

If a group claims Mahdism and opposes the Shia religious authority, there is no doubt that it is suspicious as it goes against the aforementioned rule. It is interesting that all these movements claiming falsehood in Mahdism within the Shia community have built their entity, organized their culture, and founded their basis upon opposing the sincere religious authority and worked on separating people from it! Even some of its extreme versions like "Jund al-Samaa" as they called themselves, planned to kill religious scholars first!! Then target scholars and jurists in the Hawza in Najaf secondly! You might wonder, dear reader, what benefit does Imam Mahdi (AF) get from killing the religious figures who have bent their backs, weakened their powers, and spent their lives refining his ancestors' narrations and guiding people to the landmarks of their religion? Ask him about the great matters that only someone like him can answer: Since this position is coveted by many on both religious and worldly levels, there have been many false claims, and because evidence and proof are necessary, among the evidence is what Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (AS) referred to when asked, "If that happens and a claimant claims, what should we do?" He said, "Ask him about the great matters that

only someone like him can answer!" These great matters can be interpreted in two ways: The complex scientific issues that do not come from the gates of ordinary acquired knowledge, for what comes through ordinary acquired knowledge can be attained by anyone with more education and learning! Thus, asking about ordinary jurisprudential matters can be answered through learning, and so on, for medical issues, etc. However, there are matters that clearly indicate that the one asked and answers is connected to God Almighty, such as what Jesus son of Mary said, "And I inform you about what you eat and what you store in your houses. Indeed, in that is a sign for you if you are believers."⁽¹⁰³⁾

2. In practical matters that cannot be achieved by anyone other than those connected to God Almighty, or those supported by His strength:

For example, it is an open challenge to these movements if they are told, "We want you, who claim to be the Mahdi, to make something happen in a certain place."

These are the conditions of Muslims in front of you everywhere, choose a place from them and say that I will make a qualitative change in it, and these are the followers of Ahl al-Bayt and their suffering in various places of the world; tell us about the justice you will spread among them! About the corruption you will eradicate from them! You claim to be the Mahdi, but he will fill the earth with justice. We don't want you to fill the entire earth, we want you to spread justice in just one country of your choice! Of course, these claimants will do nothing even if they stayed for hundreds of years because they are a lie and do not connect with their Creator, and their condition is like any

ordinary believer who does not claim something bigger than his personality or beyond his energy and strength, while these claimants claim bigger things! Some of these liars have been claiming their Mahdism or being doors to the Imam for twenty years and have not provided a single proof or evidence for that. Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti was a significant and eloquent figure among the Shia, as transmitted by Shaykh al-Tusi, when he mocked al-Hallaj upon his claim of agency for the Lord of the Age, thereby providing a program for objection and discovering the liar: "When God Almighty wanted to expose al-Hallaj's matter and reveal his scandal and disgrace him, it happened that al-Hallaj sent for Abu Sahl Ismail bin Ali al-Nawbakhti, thinking Abu Sahl was like others weak in this matter due to his extreme ignorance. He thought he could trick him and lure him so that he could deceive (him) and boast of his submission over others, thus establishing what he aimed for from the trick and spectacle on the weak, considering Abu Sahl's reputation among people and his place in knowledge and literature among them. So, he wrote to him in his correspondence: 'I am the agent of the Lord of the Age (AS) [and with this firstly he would lure the ignorant then rise from him to others] and I was ordered to correspond with you and show what you want from support for you to strengthen yourself, and do not doubt this matter.' Abu Sahl, may God be pleased with him, sent to him saying: 'I ask you a simple matter that is light on you alongside what appeared on your hands (!) from signs and proofs, which is that I am a man who loves concubines and long for them (!!), and I have several of them and I enjoy them, and old age distances me from them [and makes them dislike me] and I need to dye my beard every Friday, and I bear great hardship

from it to cover that from them, otherwise my matter would be exposed to them, turning closeness into distance and union into separation, and I want you to relieve me from dyeing and save me its trouble, and make my beard black, for I am at your disposal, and turning to you, and saying your say, and calling to your method, with the insight I have and the assistance you have.' When al-Hallaj heard his words and answer, he knew that he had made a mistake in corresponding to him and was ignorant in coming out to him with his method, and he stopped from him and did not reply to him, nor did he send a messenger to him. Consequently, Abu Sahl, may God be pleased with him, made him a tale and a laughingstock and mocked him in front of everyone, and made his matter known to the young and the old, and this act was the cause for exposing his matter and alienating the group."⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

Important issues in the Mahdist issue:

The issue of Imam Mahdi (AF) is of utmost importance for the Muslim for the following reasons:

1. It is a doctrinal issue, and people deal with doctrinal issues with utmost importance because a person's belief determines his destiny in life and in the hereafter. What brings the importance of doctrinal issues in worldly life closer is that you see the dialogue between religions usually deals with doctrinal issues rather than jurisprudential or historical issues; rarely do Muslims discuss with Christians the prohibition of pork meat or the prohibition of drinking alcohol, but the discussion is in doctrinal issues like refuting the Trinity in Christian belief. Even within the same

religious framework doctrinal issues receive the most attention; so you see the discussion, for example, among Muslims in matters of belief like the issues of Imamate and Caliphate more than they discuss jurisprudential issues like shortening and completing prayers and the time in prayer.

2. It is not only an Islamic issue, but a universal issue that goes beyond the boundaries of the Islamic religion and its followers. From Sunnis and Shia to Jews and Christians,⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ they all believe in the Mahdi within the idea of the Savior. Even those familiar with Zoroastrian culture talk about texts in their book referring to a reformer who comes in the end times, and so is the case as narrated regarding Buddhists.
3. It entails action in life and a methodology. Not all doctrinal issues are of this kind; for example, if we assume the issue of the embodiment of a person's deeds that he did in the world on the Day of Resurrection and whether they become embodied or not, or that their reward is present? Although it is an issue of disagreement among scholars, arising from whether the verse "They will find present whatever they had done, and your Lord does not wrong anyone"⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ means "what they did" are the deeds themselves, i.e., they come embodied in three dimensions as they say, or does it mean their reward, their merit, or their punishment?

Whether it is this opinion or that, it clearly does not change the course of a person in life; however, the issue of Imam Mahdi

is different! For whoever does not believe in the first place that there is an Imam, a guide, and a successor to the Messenger of God (SA) differs in his course from one who believes in the Mahdi and that God will support him and reveal him.

Even those who believe that the Mahdi has not been born and will be born in the end times, as is the case with the majority of the school of the caliphs, differ from those who say that he was born, is in occultation, appointed general deputies in his major occultation with certain specifications, people must follow them, and it is obligatory to emulate one of them... Undoubtedly this differs in its course from that.

Therefore, the issue of the Mahdi and belief in it is one of the beliefs that entails action and determines a course, so no one can say that this issue has become obsolete! There is no need to bring it up and search for it anew as it is a present question because whoever dies

without knowing the Imam of his time dies a death of ignorance.

Belief in the Mahdi and wrong ideas:

As believing in the Mahdi and his affairs is an important issue, it is important to purify this belief from impurities and practices that do not match it and belief in it.

1. Among the wrong ideas: Taking belief in the Mahdi as an alternative to work and movement for reform. This idea is wrong on several degrees; for a group of people believes that matters since they do not get

fixed except in the time of Imam al-Hujjah, there is no need to move in any way in reform because matters do not get fixed except by the Imam! In fact, some of them (advance) a step forward saying that according to what was narrated from narrations, every flag before the time of the Mahdi is a flag of misguidance... So, every reform work, or movement towards building the Muslim community, then that is covered by those narrations, and the narrations classified it as a flag of misguidance! By this narration, which says it is a flag of misguidance.

This wrong idea entails a wrong practice and turns awaiting into a passive matter, ineffective in spreading goodness and establishing justice and solving the believers' problems; imagine what the situation would be if all the followers of Imam Mahdi and the believers in them paralyzed their energies from doing what is in the interest of the community!

There is no doubt that every flag erected in opposition to the flag of Imam Mahdi and in parallel to it is considered a flag of misguidance "So what is there after the truth except error?"⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ As for if it was not within this framework, and was not the manufacture of a methodology in opposition to the Imam's methodology, but is an extension of his movement and shading by his directions and recommendations, then what makes it a flag of misguidance? If those who carry out these activities and works are among those who believe in Imam Mahdi, believe in his reappearance, follow the scholars whom he appointed by general designation, and ordered to refer to, they are not covered by those narrations and do not enter into them.

2. Overfocusing on the signs of the reappearance: From the ideas that may entail a wrong practice is overfocusing in talking about the signs of the reappearance⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ of Imam al-Hujjah (AF). There is no doubt that there are signs and premonitions indicating the time of the reappearance of the Imam (AS) and coming out and believing in them constitutes a part of the culture of awaiting and believing in the Mahdi, but we notice that there is exaggeration and drowning by some groups of believers in this matter and its monitoring and expectation. For about four decades there have been many books, articles, words, and lectures, all revolving within this orbit, and it is strange that this happens in both Muslim sects. In the school of the caliphs, there is much talk about the signs and the major signs of the Hour, including the reappearance of the Mahdi, the rise of the Antichrist, and the sinking, and among the Shia specialized books were written on this and some of them determined the time of the exit, even if approximately, so no event happens except that it finds what suits it from the narrations of the calamities. So, if ISIS appeared there is what suits it, and the narrations of the Sufyani are invoked and applied to the leaders of ISIS... If what was called the Arab Spring happened, then "the Arabs have removed their crisis!" If one of the leaders dies, then "who guarantees me the death of so-and-so I guarantee him the Qa'im." Within this trend, books were issued like The Green Island and The Statement of the Imams; in this second one its author considered that one of the

signs of the reappearance is that the last reference in Najaf is Sayyid al-Khoei and after him, there will not be a jurist emulated by others!! Therefore, it is clear that the events that occurred after the death of the late Sayyid al-Khoei have falsified this news!⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

Here we must point out that there is no evidence that applying this narration by this scholar to the event we witness is correct; as long as the narrations are devoid of precise dates and detailed names, it is possible for someone to come five hundred years ago and interpret those narrations according to the events that occurred in his time, especially since some of them refer to the state of the Abbasids, for example! Moreover, it is possible for someone to come after him a thousand years later, interpret those narrations, and apply them to contemporary events for him! What makes my interpretation more worthy than his interpretation or his interpretation more worthy than mine?

Then, one of the problems of these interpretations is that they will end in some ways to timing the exit of the Imam, which is in the circle of prohibition. It is established among the Shia that the exact timing,⁽¹¹⁰⁾ even approximately, is prohibited and undesirable.

Moreover, one of the dangers of applying events to the signs of the reappearance is the fear of skepticism creeping into the essence of the Mahdist issue when those signs or their interpretation fail, so if it is said that the world will not die until he hands over the flag to the Mahdi, or that so-and-so from the sayings of those who report this way!

Perhaps the belief spreads among some followers and youth in the error of these words to the error of the essence of the Mahdist issue, and that perhaps the issues of occultation, infallibility, and reappearance are all this kind. There is no doubt that this poses a great danger to people's belief!

Among the dangers of those interpretations is the fear of paving the way for people of desires and whims and climbers to benefit from this opportunity. For it is in the interest of people of whims and owners of false calls to preoccupy people with these signs and interpret them as if we are in their time; so, these people claim that they are from the characters of that time, so this claims to be the Yemeni, and that insists that he is the Hasani, and so on! In light of the presence of frustration and the accumulation of problems, groups of people may believe in these people as we find in our present era in some Shia communities.

One of the researchers in the affairs of false Mahdist claims says: During twenty years, nine false movements emerged in Iraq, meaning that on average, every two years a false movement emerges, with its men, ideas, and attracts a part of the people!

For this reason, we say that we do not see an interest in drowning in this matter, and we adhere to what was narrated about them: "O Fudayl, know your Imam, for if you knew your Imam, it would not harm you if this matter proceeded or was delayed, and whoever knew his Imam then died before this matter arises, he would be as if he was sitting in his army, rather as if he was sitting under his flag."⁽¹¹¹⁾ "And whoever dies while knowing his Imam, it would not harm him if this matter

proceeded or was delayed and whoever died while knowing his Imam, would be as if he is with the Qa'im in his tent," as in a narration from Imam Abu Ja'far al-Baqir (AS).

We have addressed in another place some of the false movements from claimants of Mahdism and explained the way of salvation from them, so let it be reviewed.

Imam Al-Mahdi, an Awaited Justice and Present Responsibility

Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Yahya al-Attar told us: Sa'd bin Abdullah told us, from Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Isa, from Usman bin Isa al-Kalabi, from Khalid bin Najih, from Zurara bin A'yan who said: I heard Abu Abdullah (AS) saying: "Indeed, for the Qa'im is an occultation before he arises." I said to him: And why? He said: "He fears," and gestured with his hand to his abdomen. Then he said: "O Zurara, and he is the awaited one, and he is the one whom people doubt in his birth, some of them say, 'he is a fetus,' some of them say, 'he is absent,' some of them say, 'he was not born,' and some of them say, 'he was born two years before his father's death.' Allah, blessed and exalted be He, loves to test the Shia, so at that time the false ones doubt.

Zurara said: So I said, "May I be sacrificed for you, if I reach that time, what should I do?" He said: O Zurara, if you reach that time, then keep reciting this dua:

"O Allah, make me recognize You, for if You do not make me recognize You, I will not recognize Your Prophet, O Allah, make me recognize Your Messenger, for if You do not make me recognize Your Messenger, I will not recognize Your proof, O Allah, make me recognize Your proof, for if You do not make me recognize Your proof, I will stray from my religion."⁽¹¹²⁾

This dua is of great importance, for its emphasis on it, as it is narrated with multiple chains, and as Imam al-Sadiq (AS) taught Zurara what to do if he witnessed the time of occultation. al-Amri, the second envoy of Imam al-Hujjah, also taught some of his companions from the Shia of the Imam (AS).

The dua relates to its content as it focuses on doctrinal knowledge of Allah, the Exalted, the Prophet, and the Imam, and it precedes ranks over other knowledges. For if we assume that knowledge of language and interpretation is important because it depends on the knowledge of the intentions of the Qur'anic verses; however, in terms of its rank and importance, it does not rise to the knowledge of the Imam or the knowledge of the Prophet, let alone the knowledge of Allah, for this is its rank, the rank of the foundations. The road map, the compass, and this is its rank, the rank of branches and details of knowledge.

If we assumed that a person did not know Allah, or knew Him incompletely, then it would not benefit him much to learn a jurisprudential issue, and so if he learned the interpretation of the Qur'an or its recitation but did not recognize the Noble

Prophet (SA), then that would not be beneficial or intercessory for him, and so is the case in our Imami belief, knowing the infallible Imam (AS).

Within this framework, we found the narrations of the Prophet (SA) about the issues of knowing the Imamate reached a large number among the Imamiyah and reached a reasonable extent that constitutes scientific evidence for others who pondered and contemplated.

The issue of Imam Mahdi (AF) is one of these issues, for the essence of the Mahdist issue is the existence of a divine savior who comes in the last time to change the condition of the world and establish justice and lift oppression and purify the earth; this matter is agreed upon by the heavenly religions, even though their opinions differ about the saviors in them.

In the Islamic case: This divine savior is named Mahdi and he is from the progeny of Prophet Muhammad (SA) and this is one of the matters agreed upon among Muslims except for those who deviated from them and are not considered for breaking the consensus, but for contradicting the numerous explicit narrations. One of them wrote a book a while ago that after the Prophet, the best of creation, there is no Mahdi to await for, so he was received with ridicule from the Salafi school to which this author belongs according to the assumption before all Muslims, why? Because the narrations that speak that the Mahdist issue is an Islamic issue and that the existing narrations in it are authentic, were authenticated by their major early and late scholars, so when someone comes and says:

There is no Mahdi to await for, it would be a breach of consensus and a rejection of the many narrations, and no attention is paid to him. Yes, there is disagreement between a group of followers of the school of the caliphs and the Imamiyyah about whether the Imam Mahdi, the promised one who is from the progeny of the Prophet and who prepares the earth and spreads justice in it and removes oppression and corruption, was born in the previous time or is born a sufficient time before his reappearance? The dispute is here, and it appears that the first to doubt the birth of Imam Mahdi (AF) was Muhammad bin Ali bin Hazm al-Dhahiri⁽¹¹³⁾ who died in the year 456 AH, nearly two hundred years, two centuries, from the actual birth of the Imam according to the Shia opinion, and during this period, no one doubted this matter, but the authors before Ibn Hazm dealt with the issue as established and many of them authored books about his birth like: *Matlub al-Su'ul* by Muhammad bin Talha al-Shafi'i, *al-Bayan* by al-Kanji al-Shafi'i, *al-Fusul al-Muhimma* by Ibn al-Sabbagh al-Maliki... Others in their different chronological stages explicitly stated that Hasan bin Ali al-Askari (AS) had a son named Muhammad and nicknamed al-Mahdi and he is the one mentioned in the narrations about the Messenger of God (SA).

Ibn Hazm al-Dhahiri, who is sometimes nicknamed the Umayyad or the Amawi⁽¹¹⁴⁾ due to his great-grandfather being among the mawali of Yazid bin Abi Sufyan, the brother of Muawiyah bin Abi Sufyan, the governor over Sham appointed by the second caliph. He founded a madhhab called the Dhahiri madhhab, mentioned in his book (*al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwa' wa al-Nihal*) that the Imamiyah go to that

Muhammad al-Mahdi bin Hasan al-Askari, who was never born, they say he was born to Hasan al-Askari and he is the Mahdi for them.

Of course, denying the existence of the Mahdi and his birth frees these people from consequential doctrinal issues, so they must believe in him if they acknowledge his existence! Since the narrations about him are clearer than the sun and more evident than yesterday, perhaps some of these people saw that the best way to escape from this dilemma is to deny his existence, meaning that although it is a fixed doctrine, he is not present or born!

Is the Mahdist doctrine a product of political deprivation?

One of the preachers from the school of the caliphs added to the denial and said in one of the local newspapers that what pushed the Shia to believe in the Mahdi were two factors:

3. That the Shia were living political deprivation in most of their periods, and their Imams were isolated from managing life, so this matter affected them psychologically and made them look forward to a savior and rescuer who changes these conditions; therefore, the idea of the Mahdi was the best way for them. It is thus like a reaction to the dire political situation and social isolation, so they create for themselves this consolation that the future is with them and that they will win.
4. He said that a part of the people desire total and immediate change and, therefore, do not work with the normal natural laws, but they want someone to come

and press a button like this so the situation completely changes to righteousness and justice. Hence, the desire of these people for immediate change made them believe in the idea of the Mahdi.

The Answer:

As for the response to the first part of his statement: if the emergence of beliefs is a result of psychological states in humans, then this argument can be extended to the belief in God, agreeing with materialists and Marxists...

Psychological need can indeed create an idea or belief for one or two individuals, but to suggest it becomes a universal mindset among all believers in God—that they created a deity out of fear from natural forces and established a worship practice around it—is unreasonable!

Similarly, regarding Imam Mahdi, throughout different historical periods, the Shia of Ahl al-Bayt, including geniuses, scholars, jurists, and meticulous researchers, some of the greatest Islamic philosophers were among them. Did all these individuals experience political frustration and thus concoct the Mahdi issue?

None of these scholars, jurists, or philosophers stopped to question or consider that the issue was merely a negative psychological reaction to adverse conditions, creating this belief! Did none of these brilliant and thorough thinkers pay attention to what this preacher highlighted?

Assuming, for argument's sake, that this view is valid during times of political deprivation and frustration, what about periods of control and governance?

In this era, and indeed in previous eras when they governed and became heads of states, they remained committed to the cause of Imam Mahdi. Perhaps the presence of the Mahdist issue even intensified during such periods, like the Safavid dynasty era!

The Shia of Ahl al-Bayt have ruled large or small areas of the Islamic world at various historical times, some extending for centuries. If one were to review Islamic history,⁽¹¹⁵⁾ they would find the Buyid dynasty, the Idrisids, the Hamdanids, the Fatimids, among others, leading up to the Safavid state. Why didn't these rulers abandon belief in Imam Mahdi if it was merely a product of political disillusionment?

Regarding the second part of his statement that the Shia seek immediate, total change without following natural laws, wanting a button press to change the world... this is far from reality and untrue.

Those who speak of the Mahdist revival talk about sincere work and a long movement based on the idea that good only spreads where evil has, filling the earth with justice as it was filled with oppression. The spread of oppression involved tyrants of politics, finance, corrupt ideas, and misleading media. In contrast, with clean and conscious media, wealth serving noble goals rather than whims, and society's leaders being the pious, knowledgeable, and righteous instead of the corrupt, the earth will be filled with justice and goodness.

Reviewing literature⁽¹¹⁶⁾ on the Day of Reappearance and narrations about the Mahdist movement shows no trace of the instant change that preacher claimed would occur after Imam Mahdi's reappearance. Instead, there are preparations, military conflicts, and fierce resistance against paths of misguidance, utilizing science and technology advancements. The knowledge available during the Mahdi's time will be much greater than what is available to people, and no one has claimed that change would be immediate at the push of a button.

Therefore, the claim that Shia belief in the Mahdist doctrine stems from political deprivation or a desire for instant change has no scientific basis. Moreover, we question his approach to addressing the issue of Imam Mahdi. Knowing this preacher belongs to the Salafi school of thought, we ask: If your approach is narrative-based, what do you do with the numerous consistent reports from the Prophet Muhammad about the necessity of belief in this matter? The belief in his birth and existence has been substantiated by Shia with evidence,⁽¹¹⁷⁾ which you may accept or reject. Yet, attributing Shia belief in Imam Mahdi to feelings of political frustration or similar sentiments to explain Shia faith is not valid!

Mahdism between Continuity and Probability Calculation:

Here we refer to another method⁽¹¹⁸⁾ mentioned by Shaykh Muhammad

Baqir al-Irawani, a prominent student of the martyr Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, which is probability calculation.

Martyr Sadr's theory called probability calculation and gathering of clues, discussed in his book *The Logical Foundations of Induction*, and applied by his student al-Irawani to research the issue of Imam Mahdi using reasoning. Briefly, he states that to prove historical issues, we can follow two paths: continuity and probability calculation. With continuity, assuming there are consistent reports on an issue, it is not correct to debate the authenticity of each report, because such debate is only valid if there is no continuity and certainty. Hence, we do not discuss the authenticity of each report when there is continuity

Considering the numerous reports about Mahdi from both Sunni and Shia sources, acknowledging continuity is unavoidable. Even if the specifics of these reports vary, the common core among them is certain.

The other method is probability calculation, creating incremental certainty as the probabilities of contradiction decrease. For example, if someone was sick and someone reported their recovery, it gives us, say, 30% certainty, leaving 70% in doubt. If we know they stopped taking medicine, it raises the probability of recovery to 70%, leaving 30% doubt.

Seeing a group congratulating them on their recovery raises the certainty to 90%, reducing the opposing probability to 10%.

Seeing them go to work the next day further increases the agreement percentage and decreases the opposing probability until we are certain of their recovery. In the historical case of Imam Mahdi, we observe narrations from Prophet Muhammad, stating Mahdi is from the lineage of Imam Husayn and the Quraysh. Doubts about one narration or the clarity of another

might exist, but collectively, they give us a 30% probability. Then, seeing, for example, 200 narrations from various Imams with different expressions and details raises our certainty. The Abbasid rulers' anticipation of the Mahdi, appointing monitors and searching Imam al-Askari's house, adds new probabilities to our certainty and reduces doubt. Seeing Imam al-Askari feeding food and showing it to 40 of his close companions, and Imam Mahdi's own letters and appointments of ambassadors, aligning with the Imamate's tradition, forms complete certainty that Imam Mahdi was indeed born.

This is for those who do not follow the narrative method and rely on it. Remaining is his statement on awaiting: that Shia, by awaiting for the end-times Mahdi, have suspended Jihad, legal penalties, and Friday prayers, doing nothing but await.

Our response is with a question: everyone awaits for the sun to rise tomorrow, but does that mean they stay in the dark at night and not arrange their affairs? Certainly, one lights their house to live tonight in light and accomplish tasks, not accepting to say, "Since the sun will rise tomorrow, I'll stay in the dark now and do nothing." The Shia of Ahl al-Bayt are like this; they await but also live their normal lives, performing their duties as best they can based on this belief.

Friday prayers are not suspended among them, but are subject to jurisprudential opinion since Shia jurists have not closed the door to ijtihad, and what is obligatory today may not necessarily be so tomorrow under different circumstances or juristic reasoning. Shia jurisprudence is not set in concrete; it changes as mentioned above.

At times, the prevailing opinion among their jurists was that Friday prayers are conditioned on the presence of an infallible Imam, some seeing the condition of having the authority and the ability to enforce commands. As there was no reappearance or authority, it was not obligatory, while at other times, the opinion differed.

In this era, what refutes the argument is the now prevalent opinion among Shia that Friday prayer is optionally obligatory between it and Dhuhr prayer, with Friday being preferable if its conditions are met, without insisting on the condition of the infallible Imam's presence, nor even the condition of authority. Hence, Friday prayers are held in most, if not all, Shia areas.

Regarding his mention that Shia have suspended Jihad due to the idea of awaiting, we recall the saying, "She accused me of her ailment and absolved herself"⁽¹¹⁹⁾ and ask the speaker: Who has conducted proper Jihad in the nation at this time? Who has honored the faces of the mujahideen against the Israeli enemy other than those who attack the enemy shouting, "O Mahdi!?" Who has done this other than the Shia of Ahl al-Bayt? Regarding legal penalties: they too are subject to jurisprudential opinion, stating that the Sharia penalty must be executed by a legitimate ruler and a jurist with authority, and in places where Ahl al-Bayt's jurists had authority, they executed Sharia rulings as much as they could according to the evidence and did not stop from ordering the obligatory and abstaining from the prohibited, nor did they stop social, political, and intellectual movement.

They believe in what was transmitted from the Prophet Muhammad: "The best of deeds is awaiting for relief." A person

satisfied with the existing corrupt situation does not await for anything because they are content. However, those in harmony with the current corruption and tyranny do not await for anything.

Those who await are those who object and refuse the existing reality, who say it is possible for things to be better, and humans can move to a better stage, and people should work for it and have hope. The Shia are not those who live in frustration; on the contrary, they resist frustration and ignite the candle of hope.

They believe that no matter how bad things get, and problems become more violent, if only one day remained in the world, God would prolong that day until the Mahdi from the family of Muhammad emerges!

Here is the factory of hope, action, and rejection of corrupt ideas, and here is the refusal to accept what the corrupt oppressors and major powers institutionalize. We do not accept this... but we await for a better situation to be realized by the Mahdi of the end times, may God hasten his relief, and make us among his supporters and aides.

We await for him, counting the days, not in passive awaiting but actively engaging in our duties, preparing for his reappearance, moving according to his will and satisfaction. We believe he watches over us, witnesses us, monitors us, having a presence in these societies. This meaning moves a person towards virtue, piety, spreading justice and fairness. We await that day when Imam al-Baqir (AS) says: "As if I see him standing between the Rukn and Maqam, calling out to people, 'Indeed, my grandfather Husayn (AS) was killed unjustly, indeed my grandfather Husayn (AS) was crushed oppressively.'"

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Endnotes

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- 1 The scholar al-Shawkani stated in his book (al-Tawdih fi Tawatur Ma Ja'a fi al-Muntadhar wal- Dajjal wal-Masih), The hadith that have been gathered regarding the Mahdi, which it was possible to locate, include fifty hadiths encompassing authentic, good, and weak but compensable ones. They are, without doubt or suspicion, considered mutawatir (widely narrated to the extent that their authenticity is unquestioned). Indeed, the description of tawatur applies even to those less numerous than these, according to all the precise terminologies established in the principles. This has been transmitted from al-Shawkani's book by more than one author. Indeed, the concept of tawatur has been relayed from a number of prominent figures in the school of the caliphs, as in the book al-Mahdi al-Muntadhar by Abdullah bin al-Siddiq al-Hasani al-Idrisi.
 - 2 The author of the previously mentioned book, al-Mahdi al-Muntadhar, listed thirty Companions from whom the hadiths about the Mahdi were transmitted, p12
 - 3 v2 p3505
 - 4 v2 p1358
 - 5 Musnad Ahmad v1 p84

- 6 v1 p315
- 7 v1 p33
- 8 Kamal al-Din v1 p341, p344
- 9 In the collection of reports: Regarding the Qa'im there are traditions from Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Job, and Muhammad—namely, from seven of the prophets, peace be upon them. Indeed, there are also traditions from the allies of God other than the prophets, such as Dhul-Qarnayn and al-Khidr.
- 10 Kamal al-Din v1 p359
- 11 al-Kafi v1 p337, with an authentic chain of narration from Ali ibn Ibrahim, from Muhammad ibn al-Husayn, from Ibn Abi Najran, from Fudalah ibn Ayyub, from Sudayr al-Sayrafi
- 12 Kamal al-Din p401
- 13 al-A'raf verse 187
- 14 Kamal al-Din p409
- 15 Kamal al-Din p412
- 16 It is mentioned regarding Imam Musa ibn Ja'far al-Kadhim that he held a feast for one of his children and fed the people of Medina for three days with "Faloodeh" (wheat kernels mixed with honey) in bowls in the mosques and alleys... as in al-Kafi v6 p281
- 17 In Kamal al-Din v1 p459, from Abu Ja'far al-Amri (Muhammad bin Uthman), he said: When the Sayyid (al-Mahdi) (AS) was born Abu Muhammad (his father, Hasan al-Askari) (AS) said: "Send for Abu Amr (Uthman bin Sa'id al-Amri)." So, he was sent for, came to him, and was told: "Purchase ten thousand pounds of bread and ten thousand pounds of meat and distribute them."
- 18 Ibid, 460
- 19 Ibn al-Athir al-Jazari (d. 630 AH) stated in his book (al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh) regarding the events of the year 260 AH: "In this year, Abu Muhammad al-Alawi al-Askari passed away, who is one of the Twelve Imams according to the Imamiyyah doctrine, and he is the father of Muhammad, whom they believe to be the Awaited One." Similarly, Ibn Khallikan (d. 681 AH) said in his book Wafayat al-A'yan: "Abu al-Qasim Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Askari bin Ali al-Hadi bin Muhammad al-Jawad, mentioned before him, is

- the twelfth of the Twelve Imams according to the belief of the Imamiyyah, known as al-Hujjah (The Proof)."
- 20 Kamal al-Din v1 p19 highlights the Imams' foretelling of the occultation, detailed in texts over two centuries before it occurred. This prophecy, extensively documented in foundational Shia texts, underscores the followers' deep awareness of future events, now realized in the occultation.
 - 21 Surah Maryam verse 12 shows Allah granting Yahya wisdom in youth. Verses 29-30 narrate about Jesus, still a child, affirming his prophethood and divine mission, underscoring the miraculous nature of their callings.
 - 22 The famous debate between the judge Yahya ibn Aktham and Imam al-Jawad.
 - 23 al-A'raf verses 118-119
 - 24 The blessed Verse 5 from Surah al-Hajj succinctly states: "Then We bring you forth as infants, then [We rear you] so that you may come of age. [Then] there are some of you who are taken away, and there are some of you who are relegated to the nethermost age, such that he knows nothing after [having possessed] some knowledge."
 - 25 al-Talaq verse 12
 - 26 Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (d. 672 AH) was a preeminent scholar in rational sciences, astronomy, and mathematics, who established a significant observatory in Maragha and founded a vast library with around 400,000 volumes from Islamic world libraries, safeguarding Muslim heritage. He wrote extensively, notably *Tajrid al-Kalam*, a key work in theology analyzed by scholars from various schools and produced numerous works in rational and mathematical sciences.
 - 27 Nasir al-Din al-Tusi was unjustly accused by sectarians of collaborating with the Mongols against the Abbasid Caliphate, a claim refuted by historical research. Dr. Saad al-Ghamdi's book clarifies these misconceptions, attributing them to sectarian bias rather than historical facts.
 - 28 Further insights into al-Tusi's contributions and life are available in "Figures from the Imamiyyah," *Tajrid al-I'tiqad* v1 p221
 - 29 al-Allama al-Hilli suggests in *Kashf al-Murad* that the mere existence of an Imam safeguards religious laws, serving as divine grace.
 - 30 In *al-Ihtijaj* v1 p497, *al-lawa* refers to hardship and difficulty in living conditions, while *ishtalam* means to uproot or eradicate completely.

- 31** Kamal al-Din p485
- 32** al-Anfal verse 33
- 33** Alay Imran verse 39
- 34** Tarikh al-Ghayba v2 p62
- 35** Ibid.
- 36** v2 p62
- 37** Ibid.
- 38** This supplication, found in Kamal al-Din (v1 p342) seeks divine assistance in recognizing God, His Messenger, and His proof (Hujjah), highlighting the importance of this recognition for maintaining true faith.
- 39** al-Zamakhshari (d. 538 AH) was a distinguished Islamic scholar and Mu'tazilite, known for his Qur'anic commentary al-Kashshaf and critiques of Sufism, from al-A'lam by al-Zirikli.
- 40** Ta'reeb Muntaha al-Amal v2 p707
- 41** al-Kafi v1 p58
- 42** Ibn Qudamah al-Maqdisi states in al-Mughni that the majority of scholars consider domestic donkeys to be prohibited for consumption. He mentions that Ahmad reported fifteen of the Prophet Muhammad's companions disapproved of it.
- 43** al-Kafi v6 p246
- 44** Bihar al-Anwar v51 p33
- 45** Mafatih al-Jinan
- 46** Kamal al-Din v1 p378
- 47** A verse by Sayyid Haydar al-Hilli is used in Husayni events to signal participants to stand.
- 48** Amini's al-Ghadir v1 p361
- 49** Hujjah denotes clear guidance or God's argument against humans.
- 50** al-Ghayba v1 p273
- 51** Jami' Ahadith v14 p506
- 52** Hud verse 86

- 53 Kamal al-Din v1 p331
- 54 al-Kafi v1 p340
- 55 This belief and its justification are not recent developments, but have been mentioned by scholars in their writings, particularly with the onset of the Major Occultation. Shaykh al-Kulayni, who died in 329 AH and lived during the Major Occultation, dedicated two sections in al-Kafi specifically to narrations about the occultation and related matters, including 31 hadiths.
- 56 Key texts on Imam Mahdi's occultation include works by scholars like Shaykh al-Mufid and al-Tusi, and a notable recent contribution is Sayyid Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr's four-volume Encyclopedia of Imam Mahdi.
- 57 According to Ibn al-Jawzi's Tarikh, astrologers warned Nimrod of a boy named Ibrahim who would challenge their beliefs and destroy idols. Unaware of Ibrahim's mother's pregnancy, Nimrod ordered all newborn boys killed. Ibrahim's mother secretly gave birth to him in a cave, where she left him. She found that Allah provided for him by enabling him to suck his thumb for sustenance.
- 58 Shu'ara verse 18
- 59 Yusuf verse 90
- 60 Ithbat al-Hidaya v5 p329
- 61 al-Kafi by Thiqaq al-Islam Muhammad ibn Ya'qub is a foundational text for Imami jurists and theologians, compiling around 16,000 hadiths—about four times the size of Sahih al-Bukhari. It is divided into three main parts: "Usul," covering knowledge, ignorance, monotheism, God's attributes, and understanding Him; discussions on Hujjah, including narrations about the divine proofs, their characteristics, knowledge, and texts on the Twelve Imams and their histories; and "Furu," focusing on jurisprudential chapters of worship and transactions. Another section, "Rawdat," contains sermons, wills, and moral advices aimed at self-purification.
- 62 To explore this system, its characteristics, and the deputies of the Imams, refer to our book: The System of Religious Administration in Shia Imami Thought.
- 63 At al-Amri's deathbed, Abu Ja'far nominated Abu al-Qasim al-Husayn ibn Ruh as his successor, a direct appointment contrasting with the Major Occultation's criteria-based leadership. In the Major Occultation, roles are assigned based on qualifications like jurisprudence and personal piety,

marking a shift from specific nominations to attribute-based selections for guidance.

- 64** 'I rose from his head, took Abu al-Qasim by the hand, seated him in my place, and moved to his feet.' Refer to Kamal al-Din v1 p503
- 65** Kitab al-Ghayba by al-Tusi, Abu al-Qasim Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn Qulawayh al-Qummi reported that the scholars believed if anyone were to succeed Abu Ja'far (Muhammad ibn Uthman), it would be Ja'far ibn Ahmad ibn Muttayl or his father, given their close association and frequent presence in his home. Abu Ja'far, in his last days, would only eat food prepared in the home of Ja'far ibn Ahmad ibn Muttayl due to a certain incident, and this food was what he consumed. Our companions had no doubt that if a significant event occurred, the will would specifically be for him because of this close relationship. However, when the choice fell upon Abu al-Qasim (al-Husayn ibn Ruh), they accepted without dispute, supporting him as they had Abu Ja'far, with Ja'far ibn Ahmad ibn Muttayl remaining a part of Abu al-Qasim's circle until his death, reflecting his continued influence and respect within the community.
- 66** Tusi's al-Ghayba v1 p391
- 67** al-Kafi v1 p327
- 68** Kamal al-Din v1 p207
- 69** Ibn Kathir al-Azdi is a subject of discussion; he was considered weak by the Shaykh, who mentioned in the lexicon that he is among the men referenced in Kamil al-Ziyarat.
- 70** Sharh al-Kafi v5 p126
- 71** Sharh al-Kafi v1 p302
- 72** The book From the Beginning to the Return p170
- 73** Backgrounds of the Tragedy of al-Zahra v1 p215
- 74** al-Nisa verse 165
- 75** In al-Kafi, Abu Ja'far (AS) emphasizes that since Adam's time, Allah has always appointed an Imam on earth as His proof and guidance for people, asserting the earth cannot be without such an Imam. He further states that even if only two men were left on earth, one would be this divine proof, highlighting the essential role of the Imam in preventing corruption and maintaining the earth's stability.

- 76 al-Tawba verse 105
- 77 al-Haqqa verse 18
- 78 al-Tariq verse 9
- 79 al-Adiyat verse 10
- 80 Tafsir ibn Kathir v2 p401
- 81 Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni'mah 470
- 82 al-Kafi v1 p338
- 83 al-Zirikli profiles in al-A'lam v7 p21
- 84 Khatimat al-Mustadrak v3 p225
- 85 Kamal al-Din v1 p671
- 86 Bihar al-Anwar v75 p208
- 87 al-Amthal Shaykh Makarem Shirazi v6 p24
- 88 Bihar al-Anwar v52 p128
- 89 Kamal al-Din v1 p348
- 90 In al-Kafi v1 p377 Imam al-Sadiq emphasizes the necessity of allegiance to an Imam, paralleled by similar teachings in Sahih Muslim v6 p22 and al-Mu'jam al-Awsat, highlighting the importance of this allegiance, with variations in expression across sources.
- 91 Shaykh al-Saduq in Kamal al-Din v1 p342
- 92 Abu al-Qasim Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja'far ibn Tawus al-Hasani (d. 664 AH) was a revered figure, known for his sanctity and miracles, and served as a teacher to Allama al-Hilli. He stood out for the consensus on his miraculous deeds across scholars of different schools, a distinction not shared with others before or after him. Reports suggest he had encounters with Imam al-Hujjah (AS). He authored several influential and published works.
- 93 Zad al-Ma'ad v1 p303, al-Alami Beirut 1423
- 94 In Zad al-Ma'ad v1 p302, also described by Allama Majlisi as having a reliable chain al-Hajj p5
- 95 We will detail elsewhere the narrations stating that he follows the path of his grandfather, those saying he does not follow the Prophet's path, the third indicating he follows David's approach in judgment, among others.

- 96** Yunus verse 59
- 97** Ghaybat al-Nu'mani v1 p157
- 98** The first claimed "I revive and cause death," while the second claimed "I am your grand lord."
- 99** The Samarra'i; Dr. Abdul Hamid: The Almohad State, page 182, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya
- 100** In an article, the author references "Publications on Mahdism," researched by Muhammad Ibrahim Abu Salim, Dar al-Jeel, Beirut, 197
- 101** The BBC website published an investigation featuring interviews with some of those who are still alive or those close to them
- 102** Bihar al-Anwar v52 p336, it is narrated that Imam al-Sadiq mentioned knowledge will greatly increase during the Mahdi's time, revealing twenty-five previously unknown letters of knowledge to complement the two known ones, for a total of twenty-seven letters. Additionally, Imam al-Baqir is cited as stating the Mahdi will enhance people's intellects and morals, indicating a profound transformation in human understanding and ethical conduct.
- 103** Alay Imran verse 49
- 104** Tusi's al-Ghayba v1 p423
- 105** Some authors argue that the belief in the Mahdi, common to many religions, suggests it might be an adopted concept in Twelver Shia Islam, overlooking the extensive hadiths supporting the Mahdi's prophecy. Critics like Ibn Khaldun, who doubted these hadiths' authenticity, have been rebutted for their lack of expertise in hadith studies. Shaykh Ahmad Shaker, in particular, criticized Ibn Khaldun for his lack of knowledge and misinterpretation of hadith criticism principles, highlighting the consensus on the Mahdi's significance in Islamic eschatology.
- 106** al-Kahf verse 49
- 107** al-Yunus verse 32
- 108** The signs of the appearance (of the Mahdi) are signals mentioned in the narrations of the Imams, divided into definitive and non-definitive signs. Shaykh al-Saduq in Kamal al-Din p678, relays from Imam al-Sadiq: before the Qa'im's rise, five definitive signs will occur: al-Yamani, al-Sufyani, the cry from the sky, the killing of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, and the sinking in al-

- Bayda. This narration is among the most significant in this topic, but its chain of transmission includes Umar bin Hanzala, who is debated among scholars regarding his reliability.
- 109** For more details, one can refer to the critical book on the mentioned subject authored by the late Sayyid Ja'far Murtada al-Amili titled *Bayan al-A'imma wa Khutbat al-Bayan fi al-Mizan*. The discussed statement is cited from him on p34.
- 110** In *al-Kafi* it is documented that both Imams al-Baqir and al-Sadiq strongly refuted the idea of predicting the exact time for the awaited event, emphasizing that those who try to predict it are mistaken, and advising patience and submission for salvation.
- 111** *al-Kafi* v1 p371 by Imam al-Sadiq & al-Baqir
- 112** al-Saduq mentions in *Kamal al-Din* v1 p342 and other places, with various chains of narration, that the origin of the hadith is from Imam al-Sadiq discussing the occultation of Imam Mahdi with his companions and defining their duties during that period. In another section, v1 p512, he recounts part of a long supplication from the second emissary of Imam al-Hujjah, Muhammad bin Uthman al-Amri.
- 113** Ibn Hazm of Cordoba (d. 456 AH) was a noted hadith scholar exiled due to opposition, dying in Andalusia. Known for *al-Fisal* and *al-Muhalla*, his legacy is likened to "the tongue of Ibn Hazm and the sword of al-Hajjaj are brothers."
- 114** His grandfather, Yazid, was a freedman of Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan ibn Harb al-Umayyad, the brother of Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, as mentioned by al-Dhahabi in *Siyaar A'laam an-Nubalaa* v13 p373
- 115** The fourth to fifth centuries are considered the era of Shia states in the Islamic world. For more details, one can refer to the book *Shia States in History* by the late scholar Shaykh Muhammad Jawad Mughniyah.
- 116** For more details, one can refer to the book *After the Appearance* by the late martyr Sayyid Muhammad Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr.
- 117** We mentioned it in another topic, summarizing some points: Based on a collection of narrations, it is determined that the Mahdi is from Quraysh, from Banu Hashim, a descendant of Husayn, and the ninth from them. This logically concludes that he must have indeed been born; otherwise, it is impossible for him to be the ninth after thousands of years! Additionally, the requirement of the conjunction between the Qur'an and the Ahl al-

Bayt, that they will not separate until they return to the Pond (Hawd), implies that an infallible Imam from the Ahl al-Bayt must exist at all times. If our era were devoid of such an Imam, they would have separated, thus it is necessary for him to exist and be alive. This is in addition to the testimonies of genealogists, those knowledgeable about it, and historians who have affirmed his birth to his father al-Askari, among other evidence presented.

- 118** In an article titled Imam Mahdi between Continuity and Probability Calculation.
- 119** It is used to describe someone who criticizes another for a flaw that they themselves possess, as mentioned in *Majma' al-Amthal* by Abu al-Fadl al-Maydani, v1 p268