

THE GLOBE BEFORE AND AFTER THE ADVENT OF IMAM MAHDI, PART V¹

MOHAMMAD ALI SHOMALI

ABSTRACT: Earlier articles in this series offered an overview of the sources of both the dominant world religions and Islamic sources on the concept of the 'End of Times' - the world's state of affairs before and after the coming of Imam Mahdi to establish worldwide justice and peace. Using the Qur'an and hadith as sources to visualise the future and increase our knowledge on the advent of Imam Mahdi with the purpose of establishing a positive relationship with him and preparing for his return, the previous parts expanded on the qualities of the people of this time, including their intellectual condition, and scientific and technological advancements, and signs of the moral, cultural, and religious state of affairs before and after his return. This part further delves into the state of affairs after his return, such as the meeting the crucial needs of the people, the expansion of Islam, and establishing a culture based on the Qur'an.

Granting freedom to people

Imam Mahdi (aj) will remove the metaphorical chains that have been fastened onto human beings.

¹ This series of papers is based on parts nine and ten of a series of lectures delivered by the author in Muharram 1428/ January 2007 in London.

The Qur'an mentions this as a task of the Holy Prophet:

وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ

*...and relieves them of their burdens and the shackles
that were upon them (7:157)*

The people in the time of *jahiliyyah* were chained, and did not have the chance to live freely and honourably. Their lives were burdened under the heavy weight of ignorance, incorrect customs, and superstitions. One of the tasks of the Prophet was to relieve them of these unnecessary burdens, as all prophets were tasked with liberating the people.

Freedom in its negative sense is that one can do whatever one likes. In this sense, religion is deemed a burden on people, something that restricts freedom, and therefore it is disliked. Hence, the trend that we see today is that people desire spirituality, but not religion. They will fill their hearts with spiritual things but will avoid the restrictions of religion. The Qur'an says:

يُرِيدُ الْإِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُ

Man desires to go on living viciously. (Qur'an, 75:5)

This verse of the Qur'an suggests that man wishes to lead his life without any barriers and restrictions, and that he should be free to do whatever he wishes, without committing himself to following anything. Islam says that this is a very short-sighted view of freedom, that such people are not free, but are actually restricted within themselves; in other words, they cannot be rid of the prison they have created for themselves. If the smallest of changes occurs to their lifestyle, they will not like it and are unable to tolerate this disruption.

Such people are weak as they become easily disturbed or disappointed, and may even commit suicide easily because they feel that there is nothing worth living for.

Freedom in its truest form is the freedom that starts within a person, the freedom to resist one's temptations and desires. It gives the person the strength to do what is right. Therefore, freedom is not for one to do whatever he wishes, but it is to do what one should. If this freedom is taken away by internal or external forces then that person is not free. A person who knows what he should do and yet cannot do it, is not truly free. And a person who does what he wants and yet cannot do what he should, is also not free. Imam Ali instructed Imam Hasan:

و لا تَكُنْ عَبْدَ غَيْرِكَ و قد جَعَلَكَ اللهُ حُرّاً

Do not be a servant of anyone; God has created you free.²

This means neither any external force nor any internal force should restrict a person's true freedom.

After the advent of Imam Mahdi (aj), he will give us back this freedom and release us from the chains that have kept us unable to move and behave as we should. For example, in a beautiful hadith, of which the end of it will be shared, Abu Basir – a famous companion of Imam Baqir and Imam Sadiq – says:

لَوْ لَمْ تَسْمَعْ فِي دَهْرِكَ إِلَّا هَذَا الْحَدِيثَ لَكَفَاكَ فَضْنُهُ إِلَّا عَنْ أَهْلِهِ

² *Nahj ul-Balaghah*, Letter 31

If in your whole life you do not hear anything other than this hadith then it is sufficient. Do not disclose it to people other than whom you can trust.

In the report, Imam Sadiq says:

قَالَ أَبِي جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الْأَنْصَارِيِّ - إِنَّ لِي إِلَيْكَ حَاجَةً فَمَتَى يَخْفُفُ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَخْلُوكَ فَأَسْأَلُكَ عَنْهَا فَقَالَ لَهُ جَابِرٌ أَيُّ الْأَوْقَاتِ أَحَبُّبَتْهُ فَخَلَا بِهِ فِي بَعْضِ الْأَيَّامِ فَقَالَ لَهُ يَا جَابِرُ أَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ اللَّوْحِ الَّذِي رَأَيْتَهُ فِي يَدِ أُمِّي فَاطِمَةَ عَلَيْهَا السَّلَامُ بِنْتُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَمَا أَخْبَرْتَنِي بِهِ أُمِّي أَنَّهُ فِي ذَلِكَ اللَّوْحِ مَكْتُوبٌ فَقَالَ جَابِرٌ أَشْهَدُ بِاللَّهِ أَنِّي دَخَلْتُ عَلَى أُمِّكَ فَاطِمَةَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ فِي حَيَاةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ص فَهَيَّئْتُهَا بِوَلَادَةِ الْحُسَيْنِ وَرَأَيْتُ فِي يَدَيْهَا لَوْحًا أَخْضَرَ طَنَنْتُ أَنَّهُ مِنْ زُمُرِدٍ وَرَأَيْتُ فِيهِ كِتَابًا أبيضَ شِبْهَ لَوْنِ الشَّمْسِ فَقُلْتُ لَهَا يَا أُمِّي يَا بِنْتَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ مَا هَذَا اللَّوْحُ فَقَالَتْ هَذَا لَوْحٌ أَهْدَاهُ اللَّهُ إِلَى رَسُولِهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ فِيهِ اسْمُ أَبِي وَاسْمُ بَعْلِي وَاسْمُ ابْنِي وَاسْمُ الْأَوْصِيَاءِ مِنْ وُلْدِي وَأَعْطَانِيهِ أَبِي لِيُنَبِّشَنِي بِذَلِكَ قَالَ جَابِرٌ فَأَعْطَانِيهِ أُمُّكَ فَاطِمَةَ عَلَيْهَا السَّلَامُ فَقَرَأْتُهُ وَاسْتَنْسَخْتُهُ فَقَالَ لَهُ أَبِي فَهَلْ لَكَ يَا جَابِرُ أَنْ تَعْرِضَهُ عَلَيَّ قَالَ نَعَمْ فَمَسَى مَعَهُ أَبِي إِلَى مَنْزِلِ جَابِرٍ فَأَخْرَجَ صَحِيفَةً مِنْ رَقٍّ فَقَالَ يَا جَابِرُ انْظُرْ فِي كِتَابِكَ لِأَقْرَأَ أَنَا عَلَيْكَ فَتَظَرَ جَابِرٌ فِي نُسْخِهِ فَقَرَأَهُ أَبِي فَمَا خَالَفَ حَرْفٌ حَرْفًا فَقَالَ جَابِرٌ فَأَشْهَدُ بِاللَّهِ أَنِّي هَكَذَا رَأَيْتُهُ فِي اللَّوْحِ مَكْتُوبًا:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ هَذَا كِتَابٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ لِمُحَمَّدٍ نَبِيِّهِ وَنُورِهِ وَسَفِيرِهِ وَحِجَابِهِ وَدَلِيلِهِ تَنَزَّلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ

‘My father told Jabir ibn Abdullah Ansari: “I have a favour to ask. Whenever it is convenient for you, I wish to have a private conversation.”

‘Jabir replied: “Any time you wish, I am at your service!”

‘So one day Imam Baqir and Jabir met, and Imam Baqir said, “O Jabir, tell me about the tablet you saw in the

hands of my mother Fatima, and what my mother told you is written on that plate.”

Jabir replied: “I bear witness by God, when the Prophet was alive I went to visit Lady Fatima to congratulate her on the birth of Husayn, and I saw a green plate in her hands. I saw that it was emerald, and there was something like a white paper on it. I said to her: ‘May my mother and father be your ransom, O daughter of the Prophet of God! What is this plate?’ She said: ‘This is a tablet that God has gifted to the Prophet. In this plate is the name of my father, my husband, my sons, and the successors of the prophets from my progeny, and my father gave me this plate to be a glad tiding.’ Your mother Fatima passed the plate to me so I read and made a note of it.”

Imam Sadiq then says: ‘My father told Jabir: “Could you, O Jabir, show me what you noted down?” Jabir said: “Yes.” Then Imam Baqir and Jabir walked to the house of Jabir and Jabir showed him the note he had made. Imam Baqir then told Jabir: “You look at your notes and I, without looking, will read it for you.” And everything the Imam said – letter by letter – was in the notes that Jabir had. Jabir said: “I bear witness by God, I saw this exactly written on the plate: In the name of God, Most Kind, Most Merciful. This is a message from God to Muhammad His Prophet and light and envoy, brought down by Jibrail ...”

God then mentions Himself, monotheism (*tawhid*), and that people should only hope and trust in Him; He also mentions the prophets and that each prophet had a successor. Then it continues:

إِنِّي فَضَّلْتُكَ عَلَى الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَ فَضَّلْتُ وَصِيكَ عَلَى الْأَوْصِيَاءِ وَ أَكْرَمْتُكَ بِسِبْطِيكَ وَ سِبْطِيكَ حَسَنٍ وَ حُسَيْنٍ فَجَعَلْتُ حَسَنًا مَعْدِنَ عَلِيٍّ-بَعْدَ انْقِضَاءِ مُدَّةِ أَبِيهِ وَ جَعَلْتُ حُسَيْنًا خَازِنَ وَحْيِي وَ أَكْرَمْتُهُ بِالشَّهَادَةِ وَ خَتَمْتُ لَهُ بِالسَّعَادَةِ فَهُوَ أَفْضَلُ مَنْ اسْتَشْهَدَ وَ أَرْفَعُ الشُّهَدَاءَ دَرَجَةً

‘I have made you [i.e. Prophet Muhammad] superior to other prophets and I have made your successor superior to other successors of other prophets. I have honoured you with your grandchildren Hasan and Husayn. I made Hasan the source of my knowledge after his father, and made Husayn the treasure of my revelation and honoured him with martyrdom, and I have ended his life with felicity. He is the greatest person to be martyred and has the highest status amongst all martyrs.’

The table then mentions Imam Zayn al-Abidin and Imam Baqir, and all the Imams, each with some of their characteristics, until it reaches Imam Hasan al-Askari, about whom it says:

أُخْرِجُ مِنْهُ الدَّاعِيَ إِلَى سَبِيلِي وَ الْخَازِنَ لِعِلْمِي الْحَسَنَ وَ أَجْمَلُ ذَلِكَ بِابْنِهِ مُحَمَّدٍ رَحْمَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ عَلَيْهِ كَمَالُ مُوسَى وَ بَهَاءُ عَيْسَى وَ صَبْرُ أَيُّوبَ فَيُنَادِلُ أَوْلِيَاءِي فِي زَمَانِهِ ... فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَ يُجْرَفُونَ وَ يَكُونُونَ خَائِفِينَ مَرْعُوبِينَ وَ جَلِيلِينَ ... تُصْبَعُ الْأَرْضُ بِدِمَائِهِمْ وَ يَنْشُو الْوَيْلُ ... أَوْلِيَاكَ أَوْلِيَاءِي حَقًّا بِهِمْ أَدْفَعُ كُلَّ فِتْنَتِهِ عَمِيَاءَ حُنْدِيسٍ وَ بِهِمْ أَكْشِفُ الزَّلَازِلَ وَ أَدْفَعُ الْأَصَارَ وَ الْأَعْغَالَ أَوْلِيَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَ رَحْمَةٌ وَ أَوْلِيَاكَ هُمْ الْمُتَهْتَدُونَ

I appoint the one who invites people towards my path, and he has knowledge from me and that is Hasan, and I complete after him this chain of successors with his son M H M D, a mercy to all the worlds. He has the perfection of Moses and the awe of Isa and patience of

Ayyub, and in his time [of *imamah*] my special friends will be made humble, will be killed, burned, fearful, their blood will paint the earth, and they will suffer a great deal. They are truly my true friends. With them I will remove all calamities and *fitnah* ... with them I will remove earthquakes, and with them I will remove all the chains and burdens and locks that have locked up the people [i.e. people will be liberated]. Upon them shall be salutations and mercy of God, and they are the ones who have been able to find the right path.³

In this short message, God mentions:

1. People will finally be released and liberated. In our thoughts and speech with others regarding Imam Mahdi (aj), we must stress the aspect that he will be a liberator and will set humanity free.
2. Similar to the title given to the Holy Prophet, Imam Mahdi (aj) will be a mercy for all the worlds. Regarding the word *alamin*, this word is normally translated as 'worlds', but actually it does not mean just this, otherwise the Arabic word for worlds is *awalim*. *Alamin* is a plural and refers to the inhabitants of the worlds that can think and have knowledge i.e. jinns, humans, angels, and other creatures of which we do not have knowledge. However, the term does not include non-thinking beings.

Unfortunately some people try to frighten non-Muslims about Imam Mahdi (aj), and make a frightening picture of him to such an extent that people become psychologically prepared to oppose and resist him. What we should do is convey the message that he is a liberator

³ *Al-Kāfi*, Vol. 1, Page 527-8

and a mercy, and this is for all people and all thinking beings. Imam Mahdi (aj) is something that all people should be keenly awaiting, including non-Muslims. In fact, many Muslims will oppose him. During the Holy Prophet's time, the assumption may have been that Jews and Christians will join him, but in fact pagans like Ammar and Abu Dharr benefitted the most, and were the best followers. In short, Imam Mahdi (aj) will be welcomed by anyone who is truly seeking the truth.

Meeting the psychological, emotional and spiritual needs of people

Hadiths also mention that Imam Mahdi will not only establish justice in that there would be no financial and economic problems, but that his justice will be so far-reaching that it will meet the psychological, emotional, and spiritual needs, even of animals and birds. We infer this from the hadith that mentioned 'the inhabitants of the earth and sky will be pleased with him'⁴, which we take to mean all inhabitants, human and non-human. This could be because there is no pollution, and that resources are in abundance. The Prophet has said:

يرضي بخلافته أهل الأرض و أهل السماء، و الطير في الجو

The inhabitants of the earth, the sky and the birds in the air will be pleased with his leadership.⁵

In another hadith we see the following:

ياوى الى المهدي امته كما تاوى النحل الى يعسوبها

⁴ Bihar ul-Anwar, Vol. 51, Page 74: يرضي عنه ساكن السماء و ساكن الارض

⁵ Bihar ul-Anwar, Vol. 51, Page 91

People will be so willing and eager to be with their Imam in that time, it can be likened to a bee that wants to meet its queen.⁶

People will try to do their best for Imam Mahdi (aj) and will try to be with him.

Progress for the religion of Islam

After the advent of Imam Mahdi (aj), Islam will be expanded as the true religion of God. The Qur'an predicts this:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظَاهِرَهُ عَلَىٰ الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ

It is He who has sent His Apostle with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it prevail over all religions, though the polytheists should be averse.
(9:33)

This raises a number of questions, such as:

- Will all the people become Muslims at that time?
- Will Islam be the major and superior religion whilst other religions also exist?
- Does this mean Islam in general, i.e. the religion of submission that was taught by other prophets such as Ibrahim and Ya'qub who both according to the Qur'an said were Muslim (submissive to God)?

In a hadith from Prophet Muhammad, we read:

⁶ *Muntakhab ul-Athar*, Page 478

لَيَدْخُلَنَّ هَذَا الدِّينُ عَلَى مَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ

Surely this religion will penetrate everything that the night can penetrate.⁷

During the night, everywhere is dark. Even if one closes the curtains and the door, the darkness is there. It cannot be shut out. At the end of time, the religion of God will penetrate all aspects and corners of life. This means that everything will be regulated according to the true religion of God.

This phenomenon has never happened. During the time of the Prophet, such a wide-ranging penetration of Islamic way of life was not achieved, as the world was not ready for it. But during the time of Imam Mahdi (aj), Islam will prevail. And by Islam, we mean the true religion of God, which is the true essence of all the other religions, in that God is one, and there will be a commitment to this belief. Imam Sadiq says:

إِذَا قَامَ الْقَائِمُ دَعَا النَّاسَ إِلَى الْإِسْلَامِ جَدِيداً وَ هَدَاهُمْ إِلَى أَمْرٍ قَدْ دُتِّرَ فَصَلَّ
عَنْهُ الْجُمْهُورُ

When our Qa'im will appear, he will invite people to Islam anew. And he will guide them to a matter that has not been maintained, something that the majority of the people would have lost it.⁸

Imam Mahdi will bring a sound and fresh presentation of Islam again. However, this does not mean that pure Islam did not exist before that.

⁷ *Muntakhab ul-Athar*, Page 212

⁸ *Al-Irshad*, Shaykh Mufid, Vol. 2, Page 383

There will be true Muslims, although the majority would have deviated from true Islam.

Regarding the condition of religion in the end of time, the Qur'an says:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَىٰ الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ
الْمُشْرِكُونَ

It is He who has sent His Apostle with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it prevail over all religions, though the polytheists should be averse.
(9:33)

This verse shows that religion of the truth will overcome all other religions (or philosophies or ways of life) that have not been sent by God, or are so much distorted that cannot guide people properly, because they have become religion of falsehood. And this will happen even if the pagans and polytheists dislike it and are not happy.

When referring to the Qur'anic commentaries such as *Tafsir Nemuneh*, there is a discussion between scholars about this verse, and whether it means Islam has a power in itself such as the power of reasoning and rationality, and because this complies with the innate nature of human beings this power makes Islam stronger than any other religion or could it be something more? Could it be that Islam has a power in its essence?

We accept the first opinion, as it is a great religion with great teachings. But the verse does indeed seem to suggest more, i.e. that the true religion and the doctrine of *tawhid* and devotion to God will prevail over any other kind of religion or atheism that people may adhere to. Ayatullah Makarim in his work *Tafsir Nemuneh* prefers

the second interpretation, and says the verse refers to the time of Imam Mahdi (aj). He quotes some very clear hadiths to support this argument:

1. From Imam Sadiq:

و الله ما نزل تاويلها بعد و لا ينزل تاويلها حتى يخرج القائم فاذا خرج القائم لم يبق كافر بالله

By God this [Islam prevailing over other religions] will not be actualised before Mahdi comes. So when the Qa'im will stand, there will be no person who disbelieves in God.⁹

2. From Imam Baqir, narrated by Tabarsi in *Majma al-Bayan*:

ان ذلك يكون عند خروج المهدي من آل محمد فلا يبقى أحد إلا أقر بمحمد

This will be at the time of Mahdi and there will be no one [on earth] but that he will declare the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad.

From the first hadith we can understand that there will remain no hostility towards God. The second hadith indicates that all people will declare the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad. Some hadiths suggest that people will be Muslim in the general sense, such as the followers of Prophet Musa and Prophet Jesus, who would remain in their own religions and would not necessarily follow Islam in its narrower sense.

⁹ *Al-Mahajjat ul-Bayda*, Fayd Kashani, Page 86

3. From Imam al-Sadiq:

لم يبق اهل دين حتى يظهر الاسلام و يعترفوا بالايان

There will not remain any follower of religion except that they declare Islam, and admit their faith in God.¹⁰

Then the Imam referred to this verse:

Do they, then, seek a religion other than God's, while to Him submits whoever there is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him they will be brought back? (3:83)

Imam al-Sadiq further explained that Imam al-Mahdi will judge according to the judgement of Dawood and Prophet Muhammad. Then the earth will reveal its treasures and all the blessings will appear; there will remain no place where one can spend their charity, and there will be no school of thought except that it has a chance to reign so that when our time comes they will not be able to say: "Had we had the chance to rule we also would have done that". Then the Imam referred to the verse:

وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

And the outcome will be in favour of the Godwary.
(7:128)

4. Several hadiths say that when Imam Mahdi will come, he will remove all the heresies. To stop heresies is very difficult; even Imam Ali could not stop them completely.¹¹

¹⁰ Bihar ul-Anwar, Vol. 52, Page 338

In another place, Imam Ali again narrates that he left a matter by which he felt his army may become divided. These two incidents show that a person as principled as Imam Ali, who would never compromise values, is willing to leave matters be when he sees something that may fracture the *Ummah*.

Regarding a similar matter, when Prophet Musa returned to his people after his conversation with God, and after he was revealed the tablets, he saw that people were worshipping the cow of Samiri. When he questioned his brother Harun as to why this was happening and why he did not stop them from worshipping the cow, Harun replied that he was worried that his intervention might cause division in the community.¹² Therefore, he decided to wait for Musa to return and make the decision by himself. Hence, even in the face of a massive crime such as idol worship, he had to wait due to the fear of division and disunity.

Islamic unity is therefore very important and needs to be considered as one of the top priorities and above many other values. And we are very much in need of this in this age.

¹¹ When Imam Ali became the ruler, he sent Imam al-Hasan to Kufa – an important strategic location both as the capital and where the army was situated, and was the city most loyal to him – to announce some important messages. And once Imam Hasan made the announcements, lots of noise was created. The message was that in the month of Ramadan there will be no tarawih prayers, and anyone who wishes to perform this recommended prayer must do so individually and not in congregation. Imam Hasan went back and was asked by Imam Ali about the noise. Imam Hasan replied that the people were shouting ‘Wa sunnata Umara!’ (‘Lamentations upon losing the sunnah of Umar!’). Imam Ali advised that the situation should be left as it is.

¹² The Qur'an, 20:94

Imam Mahdi will not need to compromise on any values, because in that time people will be prepared, as they will possess understanding and knowledge. Rather, he will be able to stop all the heresies. Imam Baqir says:

لا يترك بدعة الا ازالها و لا سنه الا احياها

Mahdi will stop all the heresies and will revive all the *Sunnah* that has been forgotten.¹³

God says in a hadith to Prophet Muhammad:

بِهِ أَطَهَّرُ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ أَعْدَائِي وَ أَوْرِثُهَا أَوْلِيَائِي وَ بِهِ أَجْعَلُ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
بِي السُّفْلَى وَ كَلِمَتِي الْعُلْيَا

With Mahdi I will clean My earth from My enemies, and I will make the position of the people who disbelieve in Me the lowest, and those who believe in Me the highest.¹⁴

Establishment of a culture based on the Qur'an

After his reappearance, Imam Mahdi (aj) will establish a Qur'anic culture. A hadith states:

اذا قام القائم ضرب فساطيط لمن يعلم الناس القرآن على ما انزل الله

When Mahdi will rise, he will set up tents for the people who teach Qur'an. But the way they will teach the Qur'an is the way God revealed it [i.e. with an accurate interpretation in the way that Prophet Muhammad taught it].¹⁵

¹³ *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 339.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 18, p. 342.

¹⁵ *Kashf ul-Ghummah*, Vol. 2, Page 466

The mention of tents in this hadith seems to suggest that the Imam will not wait for any buildings to be set up, but will commence with the teaching and interpretation of the Qur'an immediately, even from tents.

We mentioned previously the hadith from Imam Ali in which he says:

و يرمى بالتفسير في مسامعهم

In the end of time, the interpretation of the Qur'an will be projected into the ears of the people.

This hadith could suggest that wherever they are and wherever they live, the Qur'an will come to the people. Perhaps we see this today with the numerous television channels that teach and recite the Qur'an. In another hadith from Imam Sadiq we learn:

It is as if I see the Shi'a, they have the Qur'an in their hands and they teach it to other people.

From this we can infer that the followers of the Ahlul Bayt should be the first to be equipped with Qur'anic knowledge. For a long time, the Shi'as have been criticised for not paying enough attention to some aspects of the Qur'an, and did not have many who had memorised the Qur'an (*huffadh*), but this is very much changing. Today we have many memorizers of the Qur'an, and generally in the top three of the international competitions of Qur'anic recitation, we have followers of the Ahlul Bayt.

A clear sign of a Muslim is to be committed and to be a companion of the Qur'an. At times, we take it for granted. If a day should arrive in which, God forbid, we do not have the Qur'an or anything that we can say is definitely from God, then we may appreciate how valuable

the Qur'an is. Indeed, it is the only thing about which we can say with certainty that from beginning to end is entirely from God.

In history, people have spent much time and money in search for the true revelation; for example, some have done so in attempting to prove the authenticity of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which can still not be proven to be definite revelation. However, Muslims have the Qur'an in every house but we fail to realise how important it is. I sometimes feel that if someone were told to do a lengthy worship for a year, after which they would receive one page of the original Qur'an that was first written, then I think he would do it. It seems that it is human nature to acquire things while not using them. At times we strive for things, say a book, and we place it on the shelf only to never actually read it. People will ensure they record lectures, but then they do not listen to them. This can be compared to the verses of *Surat al-Jumu'ah*, which describe the people of the Torah who had the book but were not practicing it:

*The example of those who were charged with the Torah,
then failed to carry it, is that of an ass carrying books.
Evil is the example of the people who deny God's signs,
and God does not guide the wrongdoing lot. (62:5)*

Imam Mahdi (aj) will strive for the teachings of the Qur'an to become available everywhere.

Conclusion:

Whilst there are different interpretations, it might be possible to suggest this: When Imam Mahdi (aj) reappears there will be a gradual process. He starts to defend and protect Islam from the attacks of enemies that

do not allow Islam to be practiced. He will enable the true followers to practice Islam without any fear, as the Qur'an says:

God has promised those of you who have faith and do righteous deeds that He will surely make them successors in the earth, just as He made those who were before them successors, and He will surely establish for them their religion which He has approved for them, and that He will surely change their state to security after their fear, while they worship Me, not ascribing any partners to Me.
(24:55)

The first thing, therefore, that will happen is that believers will be able to talk and express themselves freely, and practice Islam properly, and true Islam will be shown to other people. As people are shown true Islam, and they also see this in Imam Mahdi (aj), they will gradually become interested in submitting themselves to God, the One. This is expected to happen first among monotheistic communities, especially when Imam Mahdi (aj) discusses with them from their own teachings and books. Furthermore, the Jews and Christians will see Jesus with him, which will further bring unity and cohesion. And those with no faith will also see the benefit of it, in that it is not making people backward and not stunting development, and nor is it causing any suffering or deprivation, and thereafter they too will be interested in embracing faith and submitting themselves to God.

THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD: OF THE COMMAND OF MY LORD

TAWUS RAJA

ABSTRACT: This article will discuss what is meant by the term *rūḥ* (spirit) in the Qur'an. It will show that there is a consistent interpretation that is applicable to all of the verses where this term has appeared. The Spirit is a creation of God that does not have a material, temporal or gradual origination. It is a means of spiritual support that is also not material, temporal or gradual.

The existence of spirit (*rūḥ*) was among the teachings of Prophet Muḥammad as it is frequently mentioned in the Qur'an. This raises a question, as it did at the time of revelation, about the nature and reality of the spirit (17:85). Qur'anic verses on the spirit can be classified into five main categories: (1) Gabriel as a spirit; (2) the human spirit; (3) the spirit of divine revelation and support; (4) Jesus as spirit; and (5) the spirit in the Hereafter. By investigating each of these sets of verses, we can deduce a comprehensive interpretation that is applicable to all Qur'anic usages of the word *spirit*.

Verses about Gabriel

In the Qur'an, the Spirit of Sanctity (*Rūḥ al-Qudus*, often translated as the Holy Spirit and the Trustworthy Spirit or *al-rūḥ al-amīn*) both

refer to Gabriel. This can be deduced by comparing the following verses:

Say, the Holy Spirit has brought it down duly from your Lord (16:102); This is indeed [a Book] sent down by the Lord of all the worlds, brought down by the Trustworthy Spirit upon your heart so that you may be one of the warners, (26:192-194)

Say, 'Whoever is an enemy of Gabriel [should know that] it is he who has brought it down on your heart with the will of Allah' (2:97)

Gabriel is a trustworthy messenger responsible for descending the Qur'an upon the heart of the Prophet Muhammad (81:19-21). The Qur'an also included Prophet Jesus as one who was supported and strengthened by the Spirit of Sanctity (*Rūḥ al-Qudus*, 2:87, 2:253, 5:110). Given the above verses, the term *Rūḥ al-Qudus* in these verses can best be interpreted as Gabriel as well.

Verses about the Creation of Adam

The story of Adam's creation – which marks the creation of humankind – can provide some insight to the meaning of *spirit* in the Qur'an:

When your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed I am about to create a human being out of clay. So when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down in prostration before him (38:71-72; also in 15:28-29).

What is *My spirit* in these verses? The answer can be deduced from another verse that describes the creation of Adam: "*He created him*

from dust, then said to him, 'Be,' and he was" (3:59). Matching the two accounts with one another, it becomes clear that "*breathed into him of My spirit*" is the same as "*said to him, 'Be,' and he was*". In other words, the creation of Adam from *clay or dust* refers to the creation of his body, while *breathing into him of His spirit* refers to the attachment of spirit to this body. The first one is a material and temporal creation, while the second one is immaterial and timeless. The dichotomy between the two aspects of mankind's creation can clearly be seen in verse 23:14, where, after talking about the different stages of the embryonic development, it says: "*Then We produced him as [yet] another creature*", meaning a creation of another nature. It can also be seen in verses 32:7-9.

What can be inferred from these verses is that spirit is an immaterial and timeless reality. This is confirmed by the verse: "*They question you concerning the Spirit. Say, 'The Spirit is of the command of my Lord'*" (17:85) and *the command of my Lord* has been defined elsewhere as: "*His command, when He wills something, is to say to it 'Be,' and it is*" (36:82).

Now we can have a consistent sense of spirit that is applicable to all of these verses: it is a direct, immaterial and non-gradual effusion by God, as opposed to His material and gradual creatures.

Verses about Revelation and Spiritual Support

The Qur'an says, "*He sends down the angels with the Spirit of His command to whomever He wishes of His servants: 'Warn [the people] that there is no god except Me; so be wary of Me'*" (16:2). Given the verses discussed above, there is a clear connection between "*the Spirit*" and "*His command*". In other words, *of His command* is an

interpretation and explanation of what is meant by *the Spirit*. It is effectively and concisely saying that the Spirit is a matter of God's command (17:85); it is of an immaterial and timeless nature just as His command is to say to something 'Be' and it is (36:82).

The same applies to the verse: "*He casts the Spirit of His command upon whomever of His servants that He wishes, that he may warn [people] of the Day of Encounter*" (40:15). The verb 'casts' (*yulqi*) could also be a subtle reference to the non-gradual nature of the Spirit and His command. And so it goes with the verse: "*Thus have We revealed to you the Spirit of Our command. You did not know what the Book is, nor what is faith*" (42:52).

A question that remains is: What does it mean that the angels descend *with* the Spirit (16:2, 97:4)? These two verses show that the angels are accompanied by the Spirit when they bring down revelation (16:2) or when they descend by every decree and command of God on the Night of Ordainment: "*In it the angels and the Spirit descend, by the leave of their Lord, by every command*" (97:4). Given the above discussions, it can be said that the descent or accompaniment of the Spirit applies to cases where there is a direct and non-gradual effusion by God – whether in the form of revelation of verses or the decrees of the universe.

This also clarifies how God has described His support for genuine believers: "*He has written faith into their hearts and strengthened them with a spirit from Him*" (58:22). Being strengthened by a spirit refers to a spiritual support and an immaterial effusion. The strengthening of Prophet Jesus by *Rūḥ al-Qudus* also refers to the same form of spiritual and immaterial support. Simply putting it, the

Spirit is a force that is different from natural forces and the means of this world. Perhaps Gabriel is called the Spirit of Sanctity and the Trustworthy Spirit because he has a particular share of this reality. His descent to this world, whether to strengthen Prophet Jesus or bring revelation to Prophet Muḥammad, is also accompanied by the Spirit – or even united with it – and it is especially marked by sanctity and trustworthiness.

Perhaps it can be said that the angels are manifestations of the spirit. It is the same reality at a lower plane of existence (*tanazzul*). The same can be said about the human spirit. In other words, spirit is a single reality that has different instances in different levels of beings and planes of existence. It is one existential reality that sometimes may take different forms.¹

Verses about Prophet Jesus

About the conception of Prophet Jesus, God says that it was done through Our Spirit blowing into Mary: “*We sent to her Our Spirit [That is, Gabriel] and he became incarnate for her as a well-proportioned human*” (19:17). ‘Our Spirit’ here has been most commonly interpreted as Gabriel.² If so, then consistency requires that Gabriel is the Spirit that was the means of blowing into Mary’s womb: “*We breathed into it of Our spirit*” (21:91, 66:12).

Not only was Jesus conceived by the means of God’s Spirit and strengthened by it later on, but he was a spirit himself: “*The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only an apostle of Allah, and His Word that*

¹ Shujā’ī, *Maqālāt*, 1/17-19.

² Qummī, 2/49. Samarqandī, *Baḥr al-‘Ulūm*, 2/371. Tha‘labī, 6/209. Ṭabarī, 16/46. Ṭabrisī, 6/784. Šāfi, 3/276.

He cast toward Mary and a spirit from Him” (4:171). It is interesting that the same term ‘cast’ (alqā) has been used here as in verse 40:15 (quoted above), again alluding to the non-gradual nature of the Spirit. God’s word (kalimah, or qawl in 16:40) refers to the self-same word of ‘Be’ (kun), which is a way of referring to an immaterial and non-gradual creation: “All Our word to a thing, when We will it, is to say to it ‘Be!’ and it is” (16:40). Hence, Jesus is God’s word and spirit in the sense that his creation was not through natural means and a temporal process. His creation was a matter of God’s command, just like Adam’s: “Indeed the case of Jesus with Allah is like the case of Adam: He created him from dust, then said to him, ‘Be,’ and he was” (3:59).

Therefore, it could be said that when the Qur’an says “*We sent to her Our Spirit*” (19:17) it is referring to the descent of an immaterial and timeless reality, which is of the nature of God’s command. The same can be said about the blowing of spirit into Mary’s womb. Hence, *Our Spirit* in these verses refers to the same reality as the other verses, and Gabriel’s role here was apparently that he was a carrier of this reality.

Verses about the Resurrection

Finally, there are two verses that talk about the angels and the Spirit in the context of the Hereafter: “*The angels and the Spirit ascend to Him in a day whose span is fifty thousand years*” (70:4); “*On the day when the Spirit and the angels stand arrayed. None shall speak except whom the All-beneficent permits and who says what is right*” (78:38). The above discussion of the angels being accompanied by the Spirit should clarify what is meant here. “*He directs the command from the heaven to the earth*” (32:5), meaning that the affairs of this world of

nature descend from the immaterial and timeless realm. God conducts this direction of affairs through His angels (79:5), who are accompanied by the Spirit (97:4). Just as the angels and the Spirit are means of descending and executing God's command in this world during its life, they will gather and ascend the affairs of this world toward Him upon its termination: "*Then it ascends toward Him in a day whose span is a thousand years by your reckoning*" (32:5). So again the Spirit describes God's immaterial and timeless command, but this time its ascent from this realm, not its descent to it.

A Review of Narrations

1. Imam al-Şādiq said, "The Spirit is an angel greater than Gabriel and Michael. It was with the Messenger of God and after him it has been with the Imams." In some narrations, he added, "It supports them. Not everything that is sought is found."³

Notes:

- a. Apparently what is meant by 'angel' in narrations like this is not a member of the same species, but a creation that is immaterial and transcendent *like* the angels. In other words, 'it is an angel' means 'it is an immaterial being.'
- b. There are also many early exegetes that have interpreted the Spirit as an angel that is greater than [other] angels in creation.⁴
- c. The last part of the hadith suggests that the accompaniment and support of the Spirit is a blessing and grace from God that "*He grants to whomever He wishes*" (3:73, 5:54, 57:21, 57:29, 62:4). In other words, it

³ Qummi, 2/279. 'Ayyāshī, 2/317, ḥ 161. Şaffār, *Başā'ir al-Darajāt*, 1/455-457 and 1/461-462. Kāfi, 1/273 and 1/682-683.

⁴ Tabarī, 30/15.

cannot be acquired, just as the positions of prophethood or Imamate also cannot be acquired.

d. It should be noted that the Qur'an explicitly says that "*the angels and the Spirit descend*" in the Night of Ordainment (*Laylat al-Qadr*) "*by the leave of their Lord, with every command*" (97:4), and there are many hadiths saying that they descend upon the heart of the Infallible of the time.⁵ Yet, the above hadith suggests that the Spirit is always with the Infallibles. Therefore, the accompaniment of the Spirit with the Infallibles must have different degrees or forms, and a higher degree or a special form of it occurs on the Night of Ordainment.

2. It is narrated from Imam's al-Bāqir and al-Şādiq: "The Spirit is one of God's creatures that has sight, power and support. He places it in the heart of His messengers and the believers."⁶

3. Once Imam al-Şādiq was asked, "Is it not that the Spirit (*al-rūh*) is Gabriel?" He replied, 'No. The Spirit is a creature that is greater than Gabriel. Gabriel is one of the angels but the Spirit is greater than the angels. Is it not that God says: '*In it the angels and the Spirit descend*'" (97:4).⁷

Note: The Imam has drawn on this verse to show that the separate mention of the Spirit next to the angels indicates that the Spirit is not one of the angels; otherwise the verse would have simply said 'angels' and that would have included the Spirit as one of them. Similarly, in some supplications that are recommended to be read every day and night in the Month of Ramaḍān, one sends blessings upon a list of

⁵ Qummī, 2/431. Şaffār, *Başā'ir al-Darajāt*, 1/220ff. Kāfi, 1/249ff.

⁶ 'Ayyāshī, 2/316, ḥ 160.

⁷ Barqī, 2/315. Kāfi, 1/386-387.

holy beings including prophets, angels and saints. The list distinctly mentions Gabriel, *Rūḥ al-Qudus* (the Spirit of Sanctity or the Holy Spirit) and *al-Rūḥ al-Amīn* (the Trustworthy Spirit), which shows that they are distinct beings.⁸

4. Once Zurārah asked Imam al-Bāqir about the verse, “*They question you concerning the Spirit. Say, ‘The Spirit is of the command of my Lord’*” (17:85). The Imam said, “It is a one of God’s creatures, and He adds to the creation whatever He wishes [35:1].”⁹

5. Once either Imam al-Bāqir or Imam al-Ṣādiq was asked about the Spirit in verse 17:85. He replied, “It is the spirit that is in the animals and people.” The inquirer asked, “And what is that?” He answered, “It is from the spiritual world (*al-malakūt*), from divine power (*al-qudrah*).”¹⁰

6. In one of his supplications Imam al-Sajjād asks God to bless Michael and Gabriel, and then he asks God to bless “the spirit who is over the angels of the veils; and the spirit who is of Thy command.”¹¹

Notes:

a. This shows that there is more than one spirit, with different charges.

b. Overall, this supplication confirms the idea that there is much similarity between the spirit and the angels – both being immaterial beings that direct the affairs of the universe by God’s command.

⁸ Tahdhīb, 3/121. Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Iqbāl al-A‘māl*, 1/98 and 1/217.

⁹ ‘Ayyāshī, 2/317, ḥ 159.

¹⁰ ‘Ayyāshī, 2/317, ḥ 163.

¹¹ Ṣaḥīfa, Supplication 4, translated by William Chittick.

7. It has been narrated that the Prophet used to say in his bowing and prostration, “Glorified and Sacrosanct is the Lord of the angels and the Spirit.”¹²

8. Wahab ibn Munabbih said, “The Spirit is an angel that has ten thousand wings. The distance between each of its two wings is the distance between east and west. It has a thousand faces. Each face has a thousand tongues, a thousand pair of lips and a thousand pair of eyes which glorify the All-Mighty God.”¹³

Note:

a. Wahab ibn Munabbih is not a trustworthy narrator.

b. Overall, this description shows the immense creation and the special makeup of the Spirit compared to the other angels, although its authenticity must be verified.

9. Imam al-Ṣādiq said, “Indeed the spirit of a believer is more connected to God’s spirit than the sunray’s connection to the sun.”¹⁴

Note: This narration relates to the Qur’anic verses that say that God blew of His spirit in Adam (15:29, 32:9, 38:72). It shows that although all human spirits are connected to God, belief can strengthen this tie.

Summary

To summarise: 1. The Spirit is a special creation of God whose creation is immaterial and non-gradual, like the angels. 2. It supports

¹² Suyūṭī, 6/309.

¹³ Suyūṭī, 6/309.

¹⁴ Kāfi, 2/166, ḥ 4.

and strengthens the angels in their direction of affairs of universe, and in their bringing of revelation to the prophets. 3. It is a means of spiritual support and strength for the prophets and believers. 4. Its ascent to God and standing before Him on the Day of Resurrection refer to the end of God's command with regard to this universe.

IMAM JAWAD: A BLESSED NEWBORN¹

MUHAMMAD NASSIR HUSAYNI ALA'I

TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

ABSTRACT: Imam Muhammad ibn 'Alī ibn Mūsā – also called al-Jawad ('the generous') and al-Taqi ('the pious') – was a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, the ninth of the Twelve Imams. According to historical accounts, he was the youngest of the twelve Imams, as well as the shortest-lived of them. This article is a short biography that offers a glimpse of the Imam's life – his Imamate, marriage, offspring, and his wisdom implemented in his spiritual and social life. Imam al-Jawad was known for his deep knowledge and sharpness, despite his young age, in his lectures, debates, as well as handling people's questions. He was also active in the socio-political sphere, where he a. gave permission to Shi'as to infiltrate the court, b. created strong communication networks, and c. prevented hadith distortion.

The ninth Imam was born in 195 A.H., though his birth date is not agreed upon. According to ibn 'Ayyash, it is Rajab 10th. In order to confirm his words, one can refer to the supplication received from Imam Mahdi, an excerpt of which reads as follows, "O' Allah! I ask You by two newborns in Rajab, the Second Muhammad ibn Ali, and

¹ Islamic Teachings Growth Journal

his son, Ali ibn Muhammad, the Chosen one.”² Some consider his birthday to be the 15th of Ramadan; others the 19th, and yet others the 21st.³

His name is Muhammad, his epithet Abu Ja‘far, and his most famous titles Jawad and Taqi. His other titles are Mukhtar al-Muntakhab (meaning the Free, the Chosen), Murtada, Qani‘, and ‘Alim. As for why he is known as Taqi, Shaikh Saduq said it was “... because he feared God, the Almighty, so God, the Glorious, the Majestic kept him immune from Ma‘mun, who one night came to him drunk and thrust at him in such a way that he thought he had killed the Imam, but God protected the 9th Imam from his evil.”⁴

He was also called al-Jawad due to his unceasing generosity. In a detailed narration, he advised his son, quoting his father as saying, “...Whenever you ride a horse, have dinar and dirham with you so that if somebody asks you for money, you can give it to him...”⁵

He was also given the title Mukhtar because, like Prophet Jesus and Yahya ibn Zakariyya, he was chosen as an Imam [at a young age].⁶

His father was the 8th Imam, ‘Ali ibn Musa a-Rida, and his mother was Umm Waladi, who was also called Sabikah and Kheizaran. She was from the tribe of the Prophet’s wife, Mariyah Qibtiyyah. Out of his 25-year-old fruitful life, he was under his father’s auspices for 8 years, thus becoming Imam at the age of eight.

² Muntahal-Amal, Shyaikh Abbas Qummi, p. 937. اللهم انى استسلك بالمولودين فى رجب محمد بن على الثانى و «ابنه على بن محمد المنتخب»

³ The 14 Infallibles, Emad-zadeh, p. 1157.

⁴ Muntahal-Amal, p. 937; Muntakhab-u-Tawarikh, Haj Muhammad Hashim Khurasani, p.961.

⁵ Muntakhab-u-Tawarikh, p. 961.

⁶ The 14 Infallibles, p. 1157.

As mentioned before, the issue of Imam Rida's offspring is a controversial topic in Shi'a history. A review of the time in which Imam al-Jawad was born somehow clarifies Imam al-Rida's unique situation in relation to his offspring, particularly Imam al-Jawad. In what follows, some instances are mentioned:

Imam al-Jawad has been referred to by Imam al-Rida and his followers as a greatly blessed newborn. For example, consider the following narrations:

- In al-Kafi by Kulayni, San'ani said, "I was in the presence of Imam al-Rida when his little son, Abu Ja'far, was brought in. The 8th Imam said, 'A no more blessed baby than this son has been born for the Shi'as.'"⁷
- In another narration, two other Shi'as named ibn Asbat and 'Ibad ibn Isma'il said, "We were in the presence of the 8th Imam when Abu Ja'far was brought in. We asked, 'Is this that blessed baby?' He replied, 'Yes, he is the very blessed baby in Islam, more blessed than any baby.'"⁸
- According to Kulayni in his book, *al-Kafi*, there is a narration in which Abu Yahya San'ani reported, "In Mecca I went to Imam al-Rida and saw him peeling a banana and giving it to his son. I asked him 'Is this the very blessed newborn?' He said, 'Yes, Yahya! In Islam there is no more blessed baby for the Shi'as than him.'"⁹

⁷ Usul al-Kafi, Kulayni, p. 321. «هذا المولود الذي لم يولد مولود اعظم بركة على شيعتنا منه»

⁸ Bihar-ul-Anwar, Allamah Majlisi, vol. 5, p. 20. «نعم، هذا الولود الذي لم يولد في الاسلام اعظم بركة من»

⁹ Furu' al-Kafi, vol.6, p. 361. «نعم يا يحيى، هذا المولود الذي لم يولد في الاسلام مثله مولود اعظم بركة على شيعتنا منه»

It has to be noted that the emphasis on blessedness of Imam Jawad's birth does not mean that he was more blessed than other Imams. Rather, according to the existing evidence, these hadiths seem to mean his birth occurred under some circumstances that brought along special blessings for the Shi'as. In other words, the time of Imam al-Rida was very special and unprecedented for two reasons:

1. The Waqifi beliefs on Imamate¹⁰: Waqifah is the generic name of some Shi'a sects as opposed to "Qat'iyah" which denies Imam Musa al-Kadhim's demise and believed in his eternal Imamate [without his having any successor]. They believe Imam Musa al-Kadhim was not martyred but was rather hidden until a promised day when he will reappear. In fact, they know him as the Ummah's 'Mahdi', humankind's saviour. A prominent figure of this group is Abul-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad Ta'i Kufi, known as Tahiri, who was a Waqifi jurist and Shaykh contemporary with the 7th Imam. Although he was considered trustworthy in hadith and jurisprudence, he exercised prejudice by defending the Waqifi sect and denying Shi'a beliefs. He also wrote about 30 books in support of the Waqifi sect.¹¹

Another figure of this sect at that time, Muhammad ibn Bashir, was a client from Bani Asad. He was a man of trick and magic and was considered a Waqifi.¹²

Through their numerous followers and considerable publicity, they created such an atmosphere that they denied the Imamate of Imam al-

¹⁰ The history of Shi'ism and Islamic Sects until the 4th Century, Muhammad Jawad Mashkur, p.150.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 149.

¹² *ibid.*, p.166.

Rida, and their adverse publicity against him was effective. When Imam al-Jawad was born, some denied his birth. Of course, the Waqifis had some specific beliefs about God that are beyond the constraints of this paper.

2. Imam al-Rida did not have a child until the age of 47. His son's delayed birth caused doubt in his Imamate. This doubt resulted from Waqifi beliefs and Imam Rida's age, and this doubt led to an unfavourable atmosphere. According to Husayn ibn Bashshar, ibn Qiyama, who was Waqifi, wrote in a letter to Imam al-Rida, "How can you be an Imam while not having any child?" The Imam patiently replied, "How do you know I will not have a child? By God, very soon He will grant me a son who will distinguish between the truth and the falsehood"¹³

In another narration, ibn Qiyamah Wasiti said, "I went to Imam Ali ibn Musa and told him, 'Can there be two Imams at the same time?' He said, "No, unless one of them does not act as an Imam – such as Imam al-Husayn – who was silent in the lifetime of Imam al-Hasan." I told him, "Is there any Imam contemporary with you but not acting as an Imam to succeed you?' At that time Abu Ja'far had not been born yet. He told me, "By God, I will have a son who will support and confirm the Truth, the people of Truth, and will eradicate Falsehood and its people.' One year later, Abu Ja'far was born."¹⁴

Negative publicity against the Prophet's household was so considerable that even after Imam Jawad's birth, there was still an oppressive atmosphere to the extent that a group of Imam al-Ridha's

¹³ Usul al-Kafi, vol.1, p. 320.

¹⁴ ibid., p.321.

relatives, naturally due to their jealousy and malice, became so rude that they claimed Imam al-Jawad not to have been Imam Ali ibn Musa's son.

They could level their unfair and anti-Islam accusations at Imam al-Jawad and implement their plots only through this dissembling doubt that the son did not resemble the father. They used Imam Jawad's dark complexion as an excuse, saying, "There has been no swarthy Imam yet!" Imam al-Ridha replied, "He is my son."

They said, "Prophet Muhammad judged through physiognomy, so those who are expert in it should judge between you and us."

Inevitably, the 8th Imam said, "You can summon them, but I would not agree to do so."

They did so, and the outcome was in Imam al-Ridha's favour. Detailed information on this issue can be found in the relevant books.¹⁵

The era during Imam al-Jawad was different than that of the previous Imams, given the spread of Waqifi beliefs. This undermined the beliefs of those who had weak faith. Naturally, the birth of Imam al-Jawad could remove doubts, defeat enemies, fulfill the promises, and raise the banner of the truth while some were waiting for it to crash. Thus, Imam al-Jawad's birth was a blessing.

The birth of Imam al-Jawad and his Imamate at a young age paved the way for Imam al-Hadi's Imamate. When Imam al-Hadi became an Imam in his childhood, people accepted it more easily given Imam al-

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 322, 323.

Jawad's Imamate was at a young age. Thus, the birth of Imam al-Jawad was blessed for both his father and his son.

Imamate at a young age

The birth of Imam al-Jawad both surprised the Shi'as, as well as caused others weaker in faith to cause sedition as a result of their doubt in his Imamate at an early age. This can be addressed from two angles:

1. Imamate at a young age is not considered a wonder. If God wills, He can perfect a person's wisdom before maturity and even in the cradle for preparation for heavy responsibilities to come. At least for Muslims, who consider the Quran a heavenly book, this is not a new issue. In addition, there are historical instances of early intellectual maturity.

The Qur'an offers two, namely Prophet Yahya and Prophet Jesus. As mentioned in the Qur'an, God commanded Yahya, "*Take hold of the Book with might.*"¹⁶ God also said, "*...and We gave him Wisdom when a child.*"¹⁷ Likewise, in this very chapter, God stipulated that Prophet Jesus talked to people in the cradle, and God made him a prophet then. The prophethood of Yahya and Jesus in their childhood is by far more surprising than Imamate of Imam Jawad.

We read in Shi'a hadiths:

According to a companion of Imam al-Rida and Imam al-Jawad, namely Ali ibn Asbat, "I saw Imam Muhammad Taqi coming to me. I was looking at him from head to toe so as to describe him to the

¹⁶ Maryam: 12. يَا يَحْيَىٰ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ

¹⁷ Maryam: 12. وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا

Egyptian Shi'as. Meanwhile, he sat down and said, 'O Ali! God has made hujjat (proof) about Imamate similar to hujjat about prophethood, saying, 'We have granted him prophethood at a very young age, and we bestowed prophethood on him when he grew up and reached the age of 40.' Thus, one (i.e. Yahya) might be granted wisdom at a very young age, and one (i.e. Prophet Joseph) may be granted wisdom at the age of 40.'"¹⁸ There are also other narrations by the Infallibles on this topic.¹⁹

2. As a result of seditions (*fitna*), those who had weak faith were disposed to slips. Although a) it is considered possible through God's will, b) Imam al-Rida had announced the Imamate of the young Imam al-Jawad, and c) the Shi'as had been given the rational and intellectual proofs of this issue, those weak in faith continued to doubt his Imamate.

Not only did lay Shi'as doubt his Imamate; several Shi'a scholars were also stunned. Muhammad ibn Jarir Tabari wrote, "When Imam al-Jawad was six years old or so, and Ma'mun killed his father, the Shi'as became perplexed. People disagreed on his Imamate, and considered him too young for this position. The Shi'as showed astonishment in other cities as well."²⁰ He also said, "Some Shi'a chiefs held a meeting after Imam al-Rida's martyrdom and discussed the Imamate of Imam al-Jawad. One participant, Yunus ibn Abdu-Rahman, said, 'We should not cry; instead we should see who is to assume Imamate until this

¹⁸ Tuhaf-ul-'Uqul, p.1, p. 382.

¹⁹ 'Alam-ul-Wara, p. 346; Kashf-ul-Gham, vol.2, p. 351.

²⁰ Dalayil-ul-A'immah, p. 204.

little boy grows up. Who should we refer to in order to find answers to our religious questions?”

On the other hand, Ishaq ibn Isma‘il posed ten questions to Imam al-Jawad in a letter to evaluate him and confirm his Imamate.²¹

Of course, it is acceptable to search for the Imam, but it is unlikely for a true Shi‘a to doubt the concept of a very young Imam guiding the Ummah.

From the companions’ reaction to the Imam, and his levelheadedness in responding to them, a training-related point can be observed. A trainer knows that until the trainee does not heartily give in to an issue, he will not accept it. That is why the Imams left no stone unturned in encouraging their followers and mobilising them through raising their awareness. They forgivingly responded to the people’s doubt. Qur’anic stories such as that of Prophet Moses and Khizr also points out this issue. Seditions (*fitna*) are ambiguous events, and if a person does not approach them insightfully, he or she cannot remain unaffected.

Academic aspects of the Imam

Like his holy fathers, Imam al-Jawad occasionally took part in academic meetings and debates and answered the audience’s questions, while also bringing his opponents to a standstill. This was important from two perspectives:

1. It astonished some that Imam al-Jawad became an Imam at a young age. Some asked him outlandish questions to evaluate him and check

²¹ *ibid.*, pp. 205, 204.

his qualifications. Even the Caliph participated in this manoeuver and made the Imam face scholars who aimed either to evaluate or defeat him; notwithstanding, the Imam responded to all appropriately.

2. Measuring the issues against the human intellect was a concept emphasised by I'tizaliyyin. The intellect was their yardstick for everything. Abbasid caliphs also supported this doctrine, and such issues were usually raised in the court. Even the Qur'anic verses were evaluated on this basis. This paved the way for the increased scientific debates in the time of Imam al-Jawad.

In the historical and hadith books, there are numerous debates referred to in this regard. The following presents an excerpt of his one of his debates at the age of 9 with Yahya ibn Aktham quoted in *Tuhaf-ul-'Uqul*:

When Ma'mun wanted to arrange his daughter's marriage to Imam al-Jawad, his men objected to this decision, but Ma'mun insisted and finally made the Imam face Yahya ibn Aktham in a gathering. Yahya asked the Imam, "What is the legal ruling on a man who hunted an animal when he was muhrim (i.e., dressed in a pilgrim state)?"

The Imam asked, "Outside the Haram (i.e., in Mecca) or in it? Did he know the legal ruling or not? Did he kill it on purpose or by mistake? Was he a slave or a free man? Was he a juvenile or an adult? Was it his first time doing so or not? Was the animal a bird or not? A chick or a hen? Has the hunter insisted on his act or has he repented? Did he do so at night in its nest or evidently

during the day? Was he muhrim in the Greater Hajj or the Lesser Hajj (i.e., 'Umrah)?" Yahya and the audience were stunned, and Ma'mun recited the marriage contract between the Imam and his daughter. Then he asked the Imam to issue a legal ruling on each question he had posed, and the Imam did so.

Ma'mun suggested that Yahya ibn Aktham raise a more challenging question to the Imam. Yahya asked, "A man committed fornication with a woman; can he marry her?"

The Imam answered, "He must wait to know if she is pregnant by him or somebody else, because since she had an affair with him, she might have had one with others as well. Once he makes sure that she is not pregnant, it is halal to marry her."

Yahya was speechless, and the Imam al-Jawad asked him, "How come there is a man to whom a woman is haram in the morning and halal in the late morning? Again she is haram to him at noon and halal in the afternoon? Once more she is haram to him in the late afternoon and halal in the evening? Again haram at midnight and halal at dawn? In the morning, she is haram to him and finally at noon halal?"

Yahya and other jurists could not think of any answer.

Ma'mun said, "O' Abu-Ja'far! Please answer these questions yourself."

The Imam said, “He is a man who looks at a non-mahram slave-girl, then buys her, and she becomes mahram to him, then he frees her and she becomes haram to her. Afterwards, he marries her, and she becomes halal to him again. Then, he did *zihar* (tells her: you are like my mother and haram to me; this is a kind of divorce), as a result, she becomes haram to him again. He pays expiation, and she becomes halal. Then he divorces her, and she becomes haram. He then returns to (i.e., remarries) her, and she becomes halal. He goes out of religion and she becomes haram. He repents and returns to Islam and she becomes halal under the very previous marriage, much like what the Prophet had done and confirmed his daughter’s marriage to abul-’As ibn Rabi’ after he became Muslim.²²

Generative Wilayah

Generative Wilayah refers to an authority through which one can influence things and know about the hidden. As regards Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Musa’s creational wilayah, there are many historical accounts, one of which is briefly presented below:

Ali ibn Khalid said: I heard a man was arrested in Sham and transferred to Samarra. I built rapport with the prison guards and met the prisoner, asking him what happened. He said, “One night while worshipping God in Ra’s-ul-Husayn, a man told me to stand up. Shortly after, I found myself in Kufa

²² Tuhaf-ul-’Uqul, pp. 332-335.

Mosque where we both prayed. Then I found myself in Masjid-a-Nabi, and we prayed there, too. Afterwards, we were doing Tawaf in Masjid-ul-Haram. Suddenly, I found myself in my prayer place. Next year, the very person who had been hidden came to me and took me to the same abovementioned places again. When he took me back to my worshipping place, I asked him by God to introduce himself. He said, 'I am Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Musa.' Mu'tasim's vizier was informed of this event and had me arrested and taken to Iraq." I wrote his story to Muhammad ibn 'Abd-ul-Malik and he responded, 'Tell him to ask the one who has taken him to Kufa, etc. overnight to save him from prison.' The next day I was about to inform him of this response and enjoin him to be patient when I saw prison guards searching for him. They told me that he was missing. I found out that Imam al-Jawad had set him free. I was a Zaidi, but then turned to Imamiyyah.²³

His marriage to Ma'mun's daughter

Despite the fact that Ma'mun concealed his role in the martyrdom of Imam al-Rida, his involvement was soon disclosed. Moreover, in order to protect the court, Ma'mun selected Imam al-Rida as his crown prince and coerced him to accept this position.

The Abbasids were displeased with Ma'mun's decision, and after Imam al-Rida's martyrdom, they were relieved that the Alawids could not infiltrate into the court. However, due to Ma'mun's key role in the Imam's martyrdom, and Shi'as' awareness of it, Ma'mun found

²³ Madinah al-Mu'ajiz Ahlul Bayt, vol. 4, p. 305.

his court in danger. Despite the Abbasids' disapproval, he arranged the marriage of his daughter, Umm-ul-Fadl to Imam al-Jawad. So he summoned the Imam to Baghdad and attempted to win his trust. Finally, in a gathering in which Yahya ibn Aktham and the Abbasids were present, he had the Imam marry his daughter. Both parties' reasons for acceptances of this marriage are as follows:

A) Ma'mun's reasons:

1. Watching the Imam through his daughter, thus allowing for close surveillance.
2. Marring the Imam's reputation by having him attend frivolous gatherings in the court.
3. Preventing from the Alawids' uprisings against the court.
4. Building a familial relationship with the Imam through his daughter (although this never occurred).

B) The Imam's reasons:

1. Prevention from his own martyrdom. Ma'mun's coercion left him no choice.
2. Preventing the Alawids and Shi'as' oppression; thus protecting Shi'ism.

This marriage changed some of the Shi'as' opinion about the Imam. While the following story somehow indicates the Imam's generative wilayah, it reveals some of his companions' false ideas about him. Qutb Rawandi quoted Husayn Makkari as saying, "While Imam al-Jawad was living in Baghdad wealthily, I went there, thinking now that he lived prosperously and dignified by Ma'mun, and that he

would not return to Medina. The Imam read my mind, lowered and then raised his head while he turned yellow, and said, "O Husayn! I prefer barley bread with half-ground salt in the city of Prophet Muhammad to this situation."²⁴

That is why Imam al-Hadi did not remain in Baghdad and returned to Medina with his wife, Umm-ul-Fadl, and lived in Medina until 220 A.H.

Imam al-Jawad's offspring

There are various historical narrations on the Imam's offspring; the most well-known are as follows:

1. Imam al-Jawad had four sons – Abul-Hasan Ali al-Hadi, Abu Ahmad Musa Mubarqa', Abu Ahmad Husayn and Abu Musa Imran – and four daughters: Fatimah, Khadijah, Umm-e Kulthoom and Hakimah.²⁵ According to this narration, Imam al-Jawad did not have any child from Ma'mun's daughter, Umm-ul-Fadl; his descendants can be traced back to Imam al-Hadi and Musa Mubarqa'.
2. In addition to the above-mentioned children, Imam al-Jawad had three other daughters named Zainab, Umm-e Ahmad, and Maymunah.²⁶
3. His offspring are: Ali, who succeeded him in Imamate, Musa, Fatimah and Imamah. Accordingly, he did not have any son other than Ali and Musa.²⁷

²⁴ al-Khara'ij wa al-Hara'ij, vol.4, p. 383.

²⁵ Muntahal-Amal, p. 967.

²⁶ ibid., p. 967.

²⁷ al-Irshad, Shaikh Mufid, p. 295 2.

Some argue, Fatimah or Imamah, whom are mentioned in *Irshad* are Hakimah's names, with Hakimah as her title.²⁸

4. Imam al-Jawad's offspring are Ali, Musa, Hakimah, Khadijah and Umm-e Kulthoom.²⁹

His only permanent wife was Umm-ul-Fadl, from whom he did not have any child.³⁰ The above-mentioned offspring were born to his other wives.

Imam al-Jawad's political measures

To maintain and strengthen the position of the Shi'a and create a constant link with his followers, Imam al-Jawad took the following political measures:

1. Giving permission to Shi'as to have government posts.

Some who entered the court and rose high in rank are: Muhammad ibn Isma'il ibn Bazi', Ahmad ibn Hamzah Qummi, Nuh ibn Durraj (the judge in Baghdad and Kufa), Husayn ibn Abdullah Neyshaburi (the governor of Sistan and Bast), and Hakam ibn 'Ulya Asadi (the governor of Bahrain).

In one account of Imam al-Jawad's political measures to protect the Shi'as and their financial resources: A Shi'a from Bast and Sistan wrote a letter to the Imam complaining to him about high taxation imposed on him by Husayn ibn Abdullah Neyshaburi, the Sistan governor. In reply, the Imam wrote a letter to the governor, requesting him not to be strict with this Shi'a, and instead reduce his

²⁸ Muntakhab-u-Tawarikh, p.665.

²⁹ Manaqib Ale Abi-Talib, vol. 4, p. 380.

³⁰ ibid., p. 380.

tax. In response, not only did the governor reduce his tax, but he also permanently exempted him from paying it.³¹

2. Creating communication networks

As the Shi'as were under heavy pressure from the government, the 9th Imam thought of an idea, and through selecting his wakils (agents), created a strong network. These agents both prevented dispersion and disunity of the Shi'as and their beliefs, and conveyed the Imam's message quickly and accurately to them. Through their convergent policies, they also protected the religious taxes from being wasted by having it given to ineligible people. Through this network, the Imam also helped the Shi'as, and avoiding direct communication with Shi'as, he protected their lives.

3. Prevention of hadith distortion

In his lifetime, the Imam tried to use his position to protect his ancestor's rich heritage. Although this action seemed to be cultural, the example below reveals the issues of government and wilayah—the important political issues in Islam.

On the surface, the Imam wanted to prevent attributing forged hadiths to the Prophet, but in fact, he proved the superiority of Imam 'Ali ibn Abi-Talib. In his debates with the Imam, Yahya ibn Aktham asked some questions. For example, Yahya asked the Imam, "It is narrated that Arch-angel Gabriel told the Prophet, quoting God as saying, 'I am content with Abu Bakr; ask him whether he is content with me, too.'" Imam al-Jawad answered, "This is not consistent with

³¹ Furu' al-Kafi, vol. 5, pp.111, 112.

God's book because God is closer to man than his jugular vein and knows about his secrets, so He knows about what is in Abu-Bakr's heart. Whatever hadith you see, compare it with God's book. If it is in accordance with the Quran, accept it." Yahya also asked, "It is narrated that the Prophet said, 'If I were not appointed as the prophet, Umar would be.'" The Imam said, "God's book is our accurate reference. God said, *'And remember We took from the prophets their covenant: As [We did] from you: from Noah...'*³² According to this verse, in the pre-time, God made a covenant with other prophets to accept the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad. Besides, no prophet has associated anybody with God, so how come Umar, who had been a polytheist for a long time, could be a prophet?"

The above questions and answers have been recorded in detail in hadith collections. It seems that these questions were asked for political reasons and the Imam was aware of this, of course.

Imam Jawad's martyrdom

There is disagreement among historians on how the Imam was martyred. Mu'tasim, who came to power after Ma'mun in 218 A.H., intended to kill him. Some believe because Mu'tasim had accepted the Imam's idea on the legal punishment of theft, and the main judge came to him and complained about Imam al-Jawad. The story is as follows:

Once the issue of legal punishment of theft was raised in a gathering. A jurist said, "Considering the verse on tayammum,³³ the thief's hand

³² وَأَذْأَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنْكَ وَمِنْ نُوحٍ وَ... Ahzab: 7

³³ ablution with dust or sand

should be cut from the wrist.” The other referred to the verse on wudu (ablution) and issued the fatwa (Islamic ruling) that his hand should be cut from the elbow.” Imam al-Jawad referred to the verse “*And the places of worship are for Allah [alone]: So invoke not any one along with Allah*”³⁴ as well as the Prophet’s saying that there are seven places of prostration in prayer and concluded that his fingers should be cut. Mu‘tasim accepted this verdict.

After the complaint from the main judge (ibn Abi-Mu‘ad) to Mu‘tasim, the latter ordered a scribe of viziers to invite the Imam to his house. Despite the Imam’s initial refusal, he finally accepted the invitation. There he ate the poisonous meal and was martyred.³⁵

Another group of historians considered Umm-ul-Fadl as the co-conspirator in the Imam’s martyrdom, carrying out her brother Mu‘tasim’s orders. When Umm-ul-Fadl made the Imam eat the poisonous grapes, she burst into tears. Imam al-Jawad cursed her, praying that she would come down with a disease that would make her an indigent beggar; a prayer which came true. Umm-ul-Fadl spent all her money on her disease, though it did not work, and she turned to begging. The reason for her measure was her jealousy of Imam al-Hadi’s mother because Umm-ul-Fadl was infertile.³⁶

Imam Jawad was martyred at the age of 25. Hadiths reported from him do not amount to 300. He also had few students and close companions, portraying the violent oppression and suppression

³⁴ وَأَنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا. Jinn: 18.

³⁵ Tafsir Ayyaahi, vol.1, p. 325.

³⁶ Muntakhab-u-Tawarikh, p. 663.

during in his time. He left this world on the last day of Dhi al-Qa'dah 320 A.H., leaving the Shi'a world grieved at his loss.³⁷

³⁷ Manaqib, vol.4, p. 379.

COURTESY TO GOD: EXEMPLARY METHODS OF THE ARCH-PROPHETS

ALI HOSSEIN-ZADEH¹

TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

ABSTRACT: This article examines the method of the five Arch-Prophets (Ulul Azm), namely Prophet Noah, Prophet Abraham, Prophet Moses, Prophet Jesus, and Prophet Muhammad, communicating with God through remembrance (*dhikr*), supplication (*dua*), and prayer (*salat*). Through defining the term ‘model’ and offering a glimpse into the character traits of these exemplary personalities, the author seeks to analyse the form of address of each of these prophets so as to offer a model for readers to follow.

Introduction

An effective method of training is to present a model to – and set an example for – others. The roles of prophets in propagation of – and call to – religion went beyond merely conveying God’s message to the people. According to Qur’anic verses, the prophets did not focus only on conveyance of the message; rather, in line with their call, they made the best efforts to modify people’s behaviour. When propagating, Prophet Noah did not consider his duty fulfilled merely by conveying God’s message to people. After tolerating all sufferings

¹ Assistant Professor at Kashan University.

inflicted on him without any effect on his people, he asked God for a solution: he requested God for a method by which his call could impress his people. He told God: “*O my Lord! They have disobeyed me, but they follow [men] whose wealth and children give them no increase but only Loss,*” (Nuh: 21). “*O my Lord! What should I do so that my call impresses them, no sin is committed in society, and idols are not worshiped? They have already misled many...*” (Nuh: 24). “*O my Lord! Leave not of the Unbelievers, a single one on earth! For, if You leave [any of] them, they will but mislead Your devotees, and they will breed none but wicked ungrateful ones*” (Nuh: 26-27). Moreover, all other Arch-Prophets also called for a change in their people. According to Ayatullah Mutahhari:

Some may ask, “Why does the Qur’an consider the Islamic call so difficult?” Not all messages are difficult to deliver, so each one should be examined. At one level, deliverance of the message is limited to the senses, and this kind of deliverance is easy. However, is the duty of the prophets who have manifest deliverance (*balāghun mubin*) limited to having people hear their messages? Not at all. Instead, more important than imparting information to the senses (i.e., through people’s hearing and sight), there is imparting knowledge on people’s reason and intellect; the message should be delivered in a way that it permeates one’s intellect. The door of intellect is closed, and it accepts no message but through reasoning and argumentation, or in the Qur’anic wording, wisdom. Now is it sufficient to impart information to the intellect and reason? No, this is the first phase. Besides intellect, the Divine message should

penetrate people's *hearts*. That is, it should enter the depth of humankind's souls and control all their emotions, that is, their entire being. Hence, it is only the prophets who can guide people to the path of truth. In sum, in addition to the deliverance of the Divine message to people's intellect, prophets embarked on a greater task, namely delivering it to their hearts.²

In this type of deliverance, something more than warning and giving glad tidings is needed. The verse "...and We did not send you except as a bearer of good news and as a warner" (Israa, 105) means that you are not responsible for people's evil deeds. Thus, some Qur'anic commentators' analysis³ that "This verse means 'We have sent you only to give glad tidings to the believers and warn the disbelievers, so do not grieve over the disbelievers' not embracing the Islamic faith'"⁴ is incorrect.

Imparting the message to the depth of the people's hearts so that its effects are manifested in their actions is one of the main aims of delivering message through providence of role models. Role models play an important role in shaping desirable behaviour because people want to practically be exposed to acceptable behaviours to internalize it and actualize their tendencies towards good conduct.

The Word 'Model'

The word 'model' means pattern, example, role model, the followed one, epitome, and exemplar.⁵ Among the above meanings, role model

² Mutahhari, Murtada. *An Investigation into Prophet Mhammad's Condcut*. p.188.

³ Ibn Kathir. *Ibn Kathir Qur'anic Commentary*.vol.5, p.160.

⁴ Tabataba'i, Muhammad Hussain. *al-Mizan Qur'anic Commentary*. Translated by Musavi, Muhammad Baqir. vol. 15, p. 381.

⁵ Dehkhoda, Ali Akbar. *Persian-to-Persian Dictionary*. vol. 2, p. 2779.

and the followed one are specific to human beings. Both refer to a person who is qualified in terms of his characteristics to be an exemplar for others. Although the word 'model' is not specific to the exemplary man and includes other exemplary creatures, considering the fact that in psychology and education the word 'model' is used for the exemplary man, the word 'model' is used in this article, albeit in its specific meaning, namely 'role model.'

The psychological terminologies 'modelling', 'observation learning', and 'social learning' are related to the training method discussed in this article. 'Modelling' is a kind of behavioural therapy used to change a person's conduct through perceptual learning and making it possible for him to imitate someone else. Likewise, 'modelling' has been defined as "the method of choosing some specific behaviour for imitation from among visible physical and verbal behavioural models." Observation learning"⁶ is also referred to as a relatively continuous change mostly resulting from observing others' behaviour.⁷

Considering the important role of observation and modelling, the social learning theory was developed. a theory based on observation and imitation of observed behaviours.

In the discussion of 'model' in the Qur'an, behaviour, attitudes, and motivations are to be changed or improved. On the other hand, models should be followed correctly and with understanding; men are warned against blind and uninformed imitation. According to what mentioned above, exemplary modelling in the Qur'an can be defined as follows: presenting the desirable behaviour through recounting the

⁶ Shu'ari Nejjhad, Ali Akbar. *Behavioral Sciences Dictionary*. p.244.

⁷ *ibid.* p.263.

story of the people in the past so as to invite people to practically realize their talents. Role models linked to divinity attract others' attention to themselves because of their exceptional talents, striking personality, and praiseworthy character. People automatically follow them due to their eminence in terms of human perfection and moral virtues.

In educational sciences, a very common term is 'behavioural model' or 'behavioural pattern'.⁸ The pattern can refer to a) various plans including training, social, economic or political, or b) it is the objective and real-world examples of a practical, social, economic, moral, or religious plan. In social sciences, 'pattern' means model, type, and norm, and it is formed in a social group to be used as a guideline for social behaviours.⁹

From a functional, psycho-social perspective, patterns are life styles that originate from culture. People naturally deal with those patterns, and their actions conform to them. When human beings are trained in and absorbed into a culture, they acquire a collection of habits and reactions which make them conform to the general pattern of group behaviours.¹⁰ Following an example, imitating, and training are closely linked concepts; all have an important position in psychology. Following an example is the prerequisite for imitation, and imitation is a mechanism through which one can be trained.

Seeking or admiring heroes is a psychological characteristic in human nature. Humankind always seeks a lost one and searches for a glorious hero and a praiseworthy leader. Henry Mason said, "Hero-

⁸ 'Abbasi Muqaddam, Mustafa. *The Role of Role models in Islamic Propagation and Training*. p.17.

⁹ See Piro, Allen. *Social Science Dictionary*. Translated by Sarokhani, Baqir.

¹⁰ Shu'ari Nejhad, Ali Akbar. *Behavioral Sciences Dictionary*. p.245.

worship is basically considered a genuine psychological manifestation that stands out in man's disposition and nature."¹¹ The hero is a distinguished person who – in the eyes of the one seeking and searching for him – enjoys special characteristics of an eminent and likable person who deserves to be imitated and followed. Privilege, peculiarity, perfection, adequacy, and competence of the hero may be manifested in one respect or various ones. The role model is a crucial factor in rectification or corruption of every society. Believers have always regarded the Prophet as the perfect embodiment of the Divine doctrine. In addition, they learned lesson from all prophets, who were considered heroes of all arenas, and people followed their examples.

Glancing at the Qur'an, we can find various role models. Prophet Joseph is the epitome of resisting lusts; Prophet Abraham is the embodiment of belief in the Unity of God; Prophet Noah is an example of resistance and persistence; Prophet Jacob is the epitome of patience and tolerance; Prophet Ismail is the example of sacrifice; and Prophet Muhammad is a role model for everyone.

Muhammad Qutb said, "The most practical and successful means of training is to train others by showing them a functional, live example. The example is presented to people so that everybody follows it, depending on his capacity and talent. In Islam, providing an example is the most important method of training."¹² Although the area of education and training includes various elements, all of which could set an example, no element can set or ruin an example like a trainer and a teacher. In terms of behaviour, theoretical, and practical

¹¹ Mason, Pavel Henry et al. *Child Development and Growth*. Translated by Mahshid Yasayi. p.188.

¹² Qutb, Muhammad. *Islamic Method of Training*. p.251.

guidelines, teachers, educators, and guidance counsellors can form students' behaviours and thoughts by setting an example. If teachers and trainers knew that the philosophy of desirable training and education which do not rely merely on scientific and theoretical studies, they would understand that moral values are as precious, if not more precious, than sciences. In fact, no society can continue its social life other than by identifying general human principles and examples that form moral habits, and requires itself to chime with those habits.¹³

Imam Sadiq said, "Invite people [to Islam] by your actions, not your tongues."¹⁴ All movements, gestures, and even words of the teacher or the propagator – when he performs his duty – greatly influence children and adolescents. God said in the verse 2 of the chapter *Saff*, "O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do?" Sayings must conform to actions for actions to have any effect. That is why training through modelling is more important than any other training. Through setting a practical example, a proper atmosphere replete with understanding should be created in society. Otherwise, when young people see sayings diverge from actions, they quickly become displeased with authorities, and separate from them. As a result, not only do they ignore exemplars that authorities try to support, but also their inclination to the opposite pole is automatically accelerated. This indicates that modelling is an effective method of influencing others. If great people only pay lip service to virtues without putting them into practice, the mainstream culture shaping

¹³ Le Bon, Gustave. *The Spirit of Training*. p.339.

¹⁴ Qummi, Abbas, *Safinah-al-Bihar*.vol.2, p.278.

people's thought and behaviour will be merely paying lip service to virtues as well.

We now turn to training through modelling as examined in the Arch-Prophets' courtesy to God in the Qur'an. Courtesy is an admirable and desirable quality every believer – by his nature and taste – considers worthy to have.

1. The Courtesy of Prophet Noah

A polite manner of Prophet Noah when talking to his people was his courtesy in praising God, and this is an instance of practical propagation. It is not only as valuable as propagation in words, but also more effective than that.¹⁵ God recounts the conversations between Prophet Noah and his people as follows:

They said, 'O Noah, you have disputed with us already, and you have disputed with us exceedingly. Now bring us what you threaten us with should you be truthful. He said, 'Allah will indeed bring it on you if He wishes, and you cannot thwart [Him]. My exhorting will not benefit you, much as I may seek to exhort you, if Allah desires to consign you to perversity. He is your Lord, and to Him you shall be brought back.' (Hud, 32-34).

In the above conversation, in response to those who thought Prophet Noah would bring punishment on them and those who invited him to do so to render him incapable in public, he denied that punishment was in his hands and instead attributed them to His Lord. By leaving the issue to the Divine Providence, saying “انشأالله – if He pleases” and considering God great by saying “*and you will not be able to frustrate*

¹⁵ Tabataba'i, Muhammad Hussain. *al-Mizan Qur'anic Commentary*.vol.6, p.420.

[Him]”, he perfected his courtesy before God. Prophet Noah talked of God using the word “Allah” and not using the phrase “my Lord” here because the word “Allah” refers to the One to Whom all beauty and majesty lead to. He informed them that God is the pivot around which everything turns. He not only negated his own power and proved God’s power but also added that if God did not will, his advice would not profit them. In addition, by saying “*He is your Lord, and to Him shall you return,*” he brought a reason for this negation.¹⁶ By showing absolute poverty of the servants and creatures of God, he proved to his addressees that he was the example of dependence on God in all his plans. Through his behaviour, he also explained this sentence, “*you are they who stand in need of Allah*” (Fatir, 15).

Among other polite manners of Prophet Noah in the story of his son in which God spoke of in the Qur’an, “*And Nuh cried out to his Lord and said: My Lord! Surely my son is of my family, and your promise is surely true, and you are the most just of the judges*” (Hud, 45).

His politeness in the above statement lies in that he told what was in his mind but never asked for something that might not be in his interests. It seems that Prophet Noah prayed that his son would be saved from drowning, but by pondering on the verses of this story, we discover that it actually connotes something different from what it denotes. On the one hand, God had ordered him to have his family and believers board the ship and had promised them their rescue. God had also excluded those who would be surely punished including his wife from boarding, but his son disobeyed the father by boarding the ship. It is not certain that he disbelieved in his father’s call and

¹⁶ *ibid.*, vol.6, p.420.

rejected it. Thus, he might be one of those who were possibly saved. On the other hand, the revelation had been sent down on Prophet Noah, and the definite verdict had been given: “*And make the ark before Our eyes and [according to] Our revelation, and do not speak to Me in respect of those who are unjust; surely they shall be drowned*” (Hud, 37). Now the question is: “Does ‘*those who are unjust*’ refer to the ones who disbelieved in Prophet Noah’s call or generally to all oppressors?” This is an open question. It seems that this ambiguity made Prophet Noah doubt his son, and it was because of this doubt that Prophet Noah did not dare to ask for the rescue of his son decisively; rather, he requested it irresolutely because he knew some factors regarding his son’s destiny.

One of the etiquettes of servitude is that God’s servant does not go beyond his knowledge by asking his Lord for the things that may be evil or good because he or she knows it is an issue beyond his knowledge. Prophet Noah only mentioned what he knew and believed in. He only talked of the Divine promise and did not add to it. Due to this etiquette, God kept him immune from any wrong-doing at that moment, and the Lord had interpreted His word “your family” which meant “righteous family members,” and not any relative; that is, ‘and your son is not virtuous’.

When Prophet Noah heard the reply of God, the Beneficent, he repented politely, in complete gratitude to God for disciplining him before he made his request, and said, “*I seek refuge in You from asking You that of which I have no knowledge,*” (Hud, 47).

This manner of Prophet Noah shows that under all circumstances, people should seek refuge to God. Prophet Noah finished his words as follows, “*My Lord! Forgive me and my parents, and whoever enters*

my house in faith, and the faithful men and women, and do not increase the wrongdoers in anything except ruin." (Nuh, 28). This is Prophet Noah's courtesy to God: he did not disregard his parents and those who believed in him and asked the good of this world and the hereafter for them. So why did Prophet Noah first pray for himself, saying, "*My Lord! Forgive me*"? Does not such a request imply some selfishness and discourtesy? In response, Prophet Noah prayed for himself first because prayer for the leader is equal to praying for the people."¹⁷ Thus, this order of prayers was planned and deliberate. He modelled prayer with specific phrasings.

2. The Courtesy of Prophet Abraham

Among the acts of courtesy which Prophet Abraham performed before God, the Almighty, is what God referred to as follows: Prophet Abraham said, "*They are indeed hateful to me, but the Lord of all the worlds,*" (Shu'ara', 77). Then, describing God's attributes, he added:

who created me, it is He who guides me, and provides me with food and drink, and when I get sick, it is He who cures me; who will make me die, then He will bring me to life, and who, I hope, will forgive me my iniquities on the Day of Retribution.' (Shu'ara', 78-82).

In the above words, Prophet Abraham first praised God magnificently according to courtesy which servitude to Him necessitates. This is the first detailed eulogy that God recounted from him. He took into account his Lord's favour from his birth to his return to Him and considered himself absolutely poor and needy before Him such that he regarded himself unable to do anything.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 382.

Another instance is that he attributed his sickness to himself, saying, “*and when I get sick, it is He who cures me.*” Although sickness is an event, it is not unrelated to God; apparently he wanted to say that God, the Beautiful, does not perform an act which the servant may mistakenly regard as negative. Moreover, in the Qur’an, there are some prayers which Prophet Abraham offered in the old age:

When Abraham said, ‘My Lord! Make this city a sanctuary, and save me and my children from worshiping idols. My Lord! Indeed they have misled many people. So whoever follows me indeed belongs to me, and as for someone who disobeys me, well, You are indeed all-forgiving, all-merciful. Our Lord! I have settled part of my descendants in a barren valley, by Your sacred House, our Lord, that they may maintain the prayer. So make the hearts of a part of the people fond of them, and provide them with fruits, so that they may give thanks. Our Lord! Indeed You know whatever we hide and whatever we disclose, and nothing is hidden from Allah on the earth or in the sky. All praise belongs to Allah, who, despite [my] old age, gave me Ishmael and Isaac. Indeed my Lord hears all supplications. My Lord! Make me a maintainer of the prayer, and my descendants [too]. Our Lord, accept my supplication. Our Lord! Forgive me and my parents, and all the faithful, on the day when the reckoning is held.’ (Ibrahim, 35-41).

In talking about his requests, Prophet Abraham began his supplication revealing the great extent of his hope in God’s mercy. For example, after he said, “*and save me and my children from*

worshipping idols,” he expressed his requests as follows: “*My Lord! Surely they have led many people astray.*” By this prayer, Prophet Abraham meant that he was waiting for God’s instructions and orders, and he considered himself obliged to wait for them. He also expressed his readiness for God’s purpose, that is, guiding the people. Likewise, after Prophet Abraham said,

*O our Lord! Surely I have settled a part of my offspring
in a valley unproductive of fruit near Your Sacred
House, our Lord! That they may keep up prayer;
therefore, make the hearts of some people yearn towards
them and provide them with fruits,*

he mentioned his purpose as follows, “*that they may be grateful.*” Referring to a sacred and great goal for any request indicates the courtesy of the one who prays.

Prophet Abraham also showed courtesy to God whenever he asked for something, mentioning a Divine name such as “Forgiving”, “Merciful”, and the “Hearer of prayer”. He repeated the name (رب) “My Lord” in every prayer, because Lordship of God is the means of a servant’s connection to Him and is an opening for every prayer.

Another instance of Prophet Abraham’s courtesy to God is that he said, “And whoever disobeys me, You surely are Forgiving, Merciful.” In other words, he did not curse them; rather, he finished his words with two names of God, a means of showering men with blessings and salvation because he wanted his people to be saved and God’s generosity to increase.

After praising God, Prophet Abraham said in his supplication:

*My Lord: Grant me wisdom, and make me join the
righteous. And ordain for me a goodly mention among
posterity. And make me of the heirs of the Garden of*

Bliss. And forgive my father, for surely he is of those who have gone astray. And do not disgrace me on the day when all are raised (Shu'ara', 83-87).

Prophet Abraham's politeness is revealed in the above supplication with the name "My Lord" (رب). This shows that the Manager of the universe is God. Then, he only asked for true and lasting blessings, the best of which were "wisdom," joining the righteous, and a good reputation in the future. This kind of politeness indicates that one should not ask great people for trivial things.

In his other prayer, "My Lord! Grant me of the righteous," (Saffat, 100), Prophet Abraham considered several issues. First, he asked for a child. Second, he sought refuge in God from having a vicious child. Third, he changed his prayer from a worldly one to a spiritual one, hence, he offered a prayer which God approved of.¹⁸ Moreover, his method of prayer teaches people the language of prayer as well as the type of requests we should have so that worldly requests are granted, that include otherworldly outcomes.

3. Courtesy of Prophet Moses

In various instances, the Qur'an recounts Prophet Moses' conflicts with others. When he was in Egypt, he killed that Coptic Egyptian man, striking him a blow, though of course, he was justified in doing so. Nonetheless, when he examined the ways of confronting immoral behaviour and discovered there were better solutions, he accepted the responsibility for his action, telling God, "My Lord! Surely I have done wrong to myself, so You forgive me. So [Allah] forgave him; surely He is the Forgiving, the Merciful," (Qasas, 16). The etiquette of

¹⁸ ibid. vol. 6, p.383.

servitude requires man to take notice of his fault more even though his action is permissible.

The etiquette of praying to God requires that the servant only expresses his need and does not utter words that can be interpreted as him guiding God on how to grant his request. Hence, when he left Egypt and entered Midian, he drew water from the well for Prophet Jethro's daughter and rested while hungry under a tree in the shade. Expressing his need, he said, "My Lord! I am indeed in need of any good You may send down to me!" (Qasas, 24).

Another prayer was said on the first day of his prophethood when he received Divine revelation: "[Moses] said: 'He said, 'My Lord! Open my breast for me. Make my affair easy for me. Remove the hitch from my tongue, [so that] they may understand my discourse.' (Ta-ha, 25-28). Then, in order to emphasize he did not pray in his personal interests but in the public interest, he added, "So that we glorify You much," (Qasas, 33). The purpose of my prayer is that all Your servants and I glorify and remember You a great deal.

In addition, explaining all the crimes of a person and elaborating them is considered an indifference and disrespect for the addressee's status. Polite people do not regard recounting all events for a superior as appropriate, and sometimes when there is no way but relating the events, they apologize to the superior. Hence, when Prophet Moses was disappointed with his people, he did not curse them from the onset, or elaborate the crimes of Pharaoh's people. Instead, he briefly said, "O' God! These people misguide Your servants, so they take away Your blessings and do not give them the opportunity for mischief." Of course, only after he had found out that destruction of Pharaoh's people was in the interest of the believers and good for the Divine

religion, he cursed them. He did not resort to speculation and surmise, and this is the necessary etiquette of talking with God.

Moses said, 'Our Lord! You have given Pharaoh and his elite glamour and wealth in the life of this world, our Lord, that they may lead [people] astray from Your way! Our Lord! Blot out their wealth and harden their hearts so that they do not believe until they sight the painful punishment.' (Yunus, 88).

Another act of courtesy by Prophet Moses was that although this curse was phrased briefly, he earnestly beseeched God and fervently prayed to Him while repeating "Our Lord".

Also, after Prophet Moses chose seventy people for the place of meeting, and they were killed by thunderbolt, he wished they became alive. Although he did not express his wish, from his tone it can be concluded that he wanted them to survive. To change God's wrath to compassion, he sought God for forgiveness:

Moses chose seventy men from his people for Our tryst, and when the earthquake seized them, he said, 'My Lord, had You wished, You would have destroyed them and me before. Will You destroy us because of what the fools amongst us have done? It is only Your test by which You lead astray whomever You wish and guide whomever You wish. You are our master, so forgive us and have mercy on us, for You are the best of those who forgive.' (Araf, 155).

Prophet Moses began with "forgive us" and appeased the Divine wrath with the hope that he might pave the way for the Divine blessing to continue. Through his courtesy, his request was granted while he had not expressed his need and had not explicitly asked for

his people being resurrected after their destruction. Likewise, after he had angrily returned from the place of meeting and protested severely to his brother, he told God, admitting his fault, “*He said, ‘My Lord, forgive me and my brother, and admit us into Your mercy, for You are the most merciful of the merciful.’*” (Araf, 151).

When his people disobeyed him and did not enter the sacred land, he told God, He said, “*My Lord! I have no power over [anyone] except myself and my brother, so part us from the transgressing lot*” (Ma’idah, 25).

The act of courtesy referred to in the above verse is that although he intended to talk about his people’s reprehensible opposition and shameful disobedience to him, he did not declare his intention explicitly; it was indirect: “I have power only over myself and my brother.” This referred to Prophet Moses’ people disobedience to him. To understand his difficult situation in this story, we must have complete knowledge of the event:

Thereupon Moses returned to his people, indignant and grieved. He said, ‘O my people! Did not your Lord give you a true promise? Did the period [of my absence] seem too long to you? Or did you desire that your Lord’s wrath should descend on you and so you failed your tryst with me?’ (Taha, 86).

From the context, it can be understood that when he returned from Mount Tur to his people, although he was full of rage, he politely attracted their attention to God because he said, “Has not your Lord promised you?” He used the word “Lord” referring to God because using the pronoun under such circumstances is discourteous.

In this story, Prophet Moses’ people committed a great wrong-doing and perished as a result of a powerful earthquake because they had

wanted to see God and were not content with hearing His voice. Verse 55 of the chapter *al-Baqarah* reported their words, “*And remember you said: O Moses! We shall never believe in you until we see Allah manifestly.*” Prophet Moses knew if he had returned to his people alone, telling them of his entourage’s death, they would have accused him of murder and eventually disbelieve in him, resulting in the fruitlessness of his call to God; thus, he wanted the dead ones by the earthquake alive. However, due to his situation and position, he could not explicitly express his intention, and he considered his entourage who gravely sinned and earned Divine wrath as deserving the Divine favour once again and return to this world. He wanted not to utter his request explicitly, so as to make God’s mercy overshadow His wrath and arouse His kindness, he said, “*O Lord! You could have destroyed them long before,*” (Araf, 155). In other words, if this had happened before, I would not be accused of killing my entourage. In order to be courteous, he said in question form: It does not befit You and Your mercy to rebuke some people because of fools among them, “*Would You destroy us for the deeds of the foolish ones among us?*” (Araf, 155). Afterwards, he still did not make his request explicitly, but humbly said, “*You are our Wali (Protector): so forgive us and give us Your mercy; for You are the best of those who forgive*” (*al-Araf*, 155).

Prophet Moses put his request and prayer between two attributes of God, namely His *wilayah* and forgiveness. Then he made his request, saying, “*Forgive us and give us Your mercy.*” Prophet Moses considered referring to these two attributes as enough, and avoided specifying his main request – his entourage’s restoration to life because he wanted to express his humbleness and shamefulness.

Otherwise, undoubtedly by this sentence he meant making his request, even though he did not specify it.

Eventually, God restored Prophet Moses' entourage to life: "*Then We raised you up after your death that you may give thanks,*" (*al-Baqarah*, 56). No doubt if it had not been for his prayer granted, God would have not raised up those who He had destroyed by His punishment.¹⁹

Prophet Moses made his request indirectly, and this was both a courtesy and a method that urges the addressee to grant the request.

Some do not admit committing sins and flaws, and seek to justify their wrong behaviour throughout their lives. In the case with Prophet Moses, whenever he had a flaw, he admitted it. When he went to Pharaoh with his brother, Aaron, on God's orders, he said, "*Surely we are the messengers of the Lord of the worlds. Then send with us the children of Israel*" (*al-Shu'ara*, 16-17) and stop enslaving them. "*Pharaoh said: Did we not bring you up as a child among us, and you stayed among us for [many] years of your life? And you did [that] deed of yours which you did, and you are one of the ungrateful,*" (*al-Shu'ara*, 18-19).

This word is considered Pharaoh's objection to Prophet Moses. Pharaoh meant, "Do you think we do not know you? Are not you the child we brought up? We know you and remember your actions; why do you suddenly speak of prophethood? And you have a corrupt past record, so how do you claim to be a prophet?" In response, Prophet Moses said:

He said, 'I did that when I was astray. So I fled from you, as I was afraid of you. Then my Lord gave me judgement and made me one of the apostles. As for that

¹⁹ *ibid.*, vol.8, p.355.

favour, you remind me of it reproachfully because you have enslaved the Children of Israel.' (Shu'ara, 20-22)

Prophet Moses first admitted the action they had attributed to him even though this was not the first issue referred to by Pharaoh, which was that of bringing up Prophet Moses and their surprise with his prophethood.

These three verses include Prophet Moses' response to Pharaoh's objection. From comparing this response to Pharaoh's objection, it can be concluded that he analysed the objection, inferred three issues from it, and responded to them. First, Pharaoh considered his prophethood unlikely and said that it was improbable that a person whose past record we knew about would become a prophet, and the verse, "*Did we not bring you up as a child among us, and you stayed among us for [many] years of your life?*" (Shu'ara, 18) entails the above assumption of Pharaoh. Second, Pharaoh considered Prophet Moses' deeds evil and called him a corrupt criminal, and the verse, "*And you did [that] deed of yours which you did,*" (Shu'ara, 19) entails this meaning. Third, Pharaoh considered his enslaving Prophet Moses a favour to him, and the verse, "*and you are one of the ungrateful,*" (Shu'ara, 19) involves this issue. Naturally, Prophet Moses should have answered the second objection first, and then the first and third ones and he did so. Thus, the verse, "*I did it then while I was of those unable to see the right course,*" (Shu'ara, 20) is his answer to Pharaoh's second objection that he was a criminal. However, in order not to infuriate the Coptic's present there, he did not refer to murder directly.²⁰

²⁰ *ibid.*, vol. 15, p. 365.

When making a mistake in applying general rules to instances, ones' confessing to faults and errs, not only is it not considered a demerit, but it is also necessitated by wisdom. Acknowledging one's fault before the people paves the way for admitting errs before God because this way, God is regarded as the real and absolute rightful owner.

From Prophet Moses' biography, it can be concluded that in order to be courteous to God, one should use words such as "Lord" and take the public interests into account when praying to God. Also, when an issue may deface others, it should be mentioned very briefly, and no matter how small one's request is, it should be made humbly and modestly. Sometimes it is necessary to offer prayer indirectly in order to be courteous. Under all circumstances, even when one is truly upset, God's names should be used carefully, and one should admit his errs and slips.

4. The courtesy of Prophet Jesus

After birth, Prophet Jesus started to talk in order to calm her mother down and absolve her of blames. His first words were "Surely I am the servant of Allah." According to Abul-Mahasin, "When Mary pointed to Jesus, meaning: 'Ask him about this,' her people were ready to stone him. When Jesus started to speak, they said, 'This is so surprising,' and asked him, 'O boy! Who are you?' but he turned away his head. Then, Zachariah said, 'O boy! If you are ordered to speak, tell me who you are.' Jesus said, 'Surely I am the servant of Allah.'"²¹ This portrays the pride he took in servitude to God. Not only was he adorned with this acknowledgement, but he also ordered others to be adorned with it. There he said, "*Children of Israel!*

²¹ Jurjani, Abul-Mahasin. *Gazir Qur'anic Commentary*. Vol.6, p.19.

Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord' (Ma'idah, 72). In Prophet Jesus' doctrine, the pillar of life is worship of – and servitude to – God. His words were a model for others to follow. There are some Qur'anic verses containing Prophet Jesus' communication with God. According to the Holy Qur'an:

And when Allah said: O Isa son of Maryam! Did you say to men, Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah, he said: Glory be to You, it did not befit me that I say what I had no right to [say]; if I had said it, You would indeed have known it; You know what is in my mind, and I do not know what is in Your mind, surely You are the great Knower of the unseen things. I did not say to them anything save what You did enjoin me with: That worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord, and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when You did cause me to die, You were the watcher over them, and You are witness of all things. If You should chastise them, then surely they are You servants; and if You should forgive them, then surely You are the Mighty, the Wise (Ma'idah, 116-118).

In the above verses, Prophet Jesus showed courtesy to God when:

1. He considered God exempt from what is below His dignity, and before he regarded himself exempt from what they attributed to him, he regarded God exempt from what they attributed to Him.²²
2. Instead of saying, "I have not said so," he said, "I am not entitled to say something so that I may deny later. It does not befit me that I say what I have no right to say."

²² This point can be found in *al-Maraghi Qur'anic Commentary*, vol. 7, p.62.

3. He considered God great by saying: “Is it possible that one says something outside the knowledge of God, Who knows the Unseen?” Hence, he said, “If I had said so, God would have known it first. God knows what is in our hearts, and we do not know His intention.”

4. He said, “I am completely obedient to God and have done what He ordered, that is, servitude to Him.”

5. According to Prophet Jesus, *wilayah* and order are exclusive to God, and so far, He has ordered Jesus to stay among them, and Jesus has been obedient to him. Now Jesus also obeys what He orders.

Elsewhere, when the disciples asked for food insistently and put pressure on him to request it from God, he said, “*O Allah, our Lord! Send down to us food from Heaven which should be to us a solemn festival, to the first of us and to the last of us, and a sign from You, and grant us means of subsistence, and You are the best of the Providers*” (*Ma'idah*, 114).

Examining his words, we can see the remarkable difference between the disciples' words and his. First, he considered this food “a solemn festival” belonging to him and his people. Second, he summarized the disciples' long word about the benefits of its descent, such as their reassurance and knowledge about his veracity, and their testifying the food into “a sign from You.” Brevity before God is also considered a courtesy.²³

Third, as it was difficult for him to make this request as he was under pressure, he started his prayer with “O Allah, our Lord!” combined, while other prophets used to start their prayer with “O Lord!” This

²³ The late Allameh Tabataba'i also referred to this point in *al-Mizan Qur'anic Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 414.

addition to his prayer resulted from his courtesy because of his difficult situation.

Fourth, he mentioned “eating,” in which the disciples had preferred to their other purposes last, thus adorning it. After he said, “And grant us means of subsistence,” he added, “You are the best of the Providers,” so that it can be considered praise of God.²⁴ This way, he modelled courtesy to God for his people using appropriate titles for Him and offering grand requests with reference to spiritual matters.

5. The Courtesy of Prophet Muhammad

As Prophet Muhammad was very polite and observant of all moral etiquettes, he put God’s orders perfectly into practice. The Qur’anic instructions in practice constitute his practical courtesy. In the Qur’an, God reveals two points regarding Prophet Muhammad’s prayer. Addressing Prophet Muhammad, God said, “*And say: My Lord! Make me to enter a goodly entering [Medina], and cause me to go forth a goodly going forth [from Mecca], and grant me from Your power to assist [me against enemies]*” (*Israa*, 80).

To pray to God in a good form, show your dependence on Him and make it clear to everyone that God’s competent hands manage all your affairs. Then, in terms of content, refer to the main secrets of victory. The correct method is as follows:

1. One’s thoughts, sayings and actions should be cleansed of fraud, deception, guile and anything against honesty and truthfulness.
2. This honesty must be preserved not only at the beginning, but also in the middle and end of the course of action.

²⁴ This point can be found in *al-Mizan Qur’anic Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 414, and Razi, Fakhr-u-Din. *al-Kabir Qur’anic Commentary*, vol.6, p.109.

3. One must admit that he or she cannot do anything alone, that is, a person cannot overcome all problems relying on his or her own power, telling Him: “O God! Help me, provide me with some friends, and grant me sound reason, self-sacrificing friends, willpower, and wisdom to help me on this path.”

According to Khajeh Abdullah Ansari,

Some Qur’anic commentators considered this verse as related to Prophet Muhammad’s leaving Mecca and entering Medina. Others thought it to relate to the conquest of Mecca and entering, then leaving Mecca. Still others believed the verse meant entering and leaving prophethood. Other commentators referred to various aspects.²⁵

Any entry and exit must be accompanied by the three above factors. Although Qur’anic commentators mentioned many issues as occasions of revelation of this verse, no issue is specific and an exception to others. This prayer with its flawless structure and content is granted only before the time of keeping vigil and morning call to prayer. God kept Prophet Muhammad immune from dangers through this prayer. Hence, obeying this order, he taught people how to pray and demonstrated a model behaviour to his Ummah.

Conclusion

In general, the method of Arch-Prophets for praying to God was to address God as “Lord” and then to make their requests. The relationship between requests being granted and politeness when talking to God lies in expressing servitude to and accepting God’s

²⁵ Khajeh Abdullah Ansari, *Kashf-ul-Abrar* Qur’anic Commentary. Vol.5, p.610.

Lordship. Perhaps it can be said that this unity is of a higher rank compared to Unity in Divine Creation and the like, and that the entire universe is God. Lordship of God is the means of man's relationship with God and the opening to prayer. This is so significant that the major claim of polytheists is polytheism in Lordship. This fact can be inferred from several Qur'anic verses and the history of prophets and their peoples.

Another act of courtesy is that man asks God only for true and lasting blessings, the most prominent one is "*hukm*," that is, *shari'ah* and joining the righteous and having a good reputation among those who would come in future because if prayers are limited to issues of low value, the status of the addressee is also represented proportionately low.

Another instance of politeness is that man only expresses the reality in his mind and does not request God for something whose merits and demerits he does not know of. Thus, when he asks God for something, either he must know that it is absolutely desirable, or if it may not be in his interests, he should ask God to grant his prayer, taking his interests into account. No servant must exceed his knowledge and ask God whose merits and demerits are unknown.

Still another polite behaviour is that although all affairs are in God's hands, one must attribute undesirable states such as sickness and poverty to himself and the desirable ones to God, the same way Prophet Abraham practiced this act of courtesy and attributed his sickness to himself and said, "*When I get sick, He heals me*," in order to demonstrate that nothing but beautiful acts are performed by God.

The last act of politeness is that along with every request, one should mention a name from among the beautiful names of God in

accordance with his request, for example, the “Forgiving”, “Merciful”, and “All-hearing”. He should also repeat the word “Lord” in all prayers and requests.

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A WOMAN OF PARADISE:
THE REBELLIOUS QUEEN OF PHARAOH
FATEMAH MEGHJI

ABSTRACT: Perspectives about the ideal Muslim woman continue to be a kaleidoscope of various readings of different Muslim women throughout history. The four women of paradise, as cited in the hadith literature, refer to: Lady Maryam (Mary), Lady Asiyah (the wife of Pharaoh), Lady Khadijah (the wife of Prophet Muhammad), and Lady Fatimah (the daughter of the Prophet).¹ Although they are all considered to be historical figures and there is much to be said about them, only the first two have been mentioned in the Qur'an, and only Lady Maryam is mentioned by name. Lady Maryam and Lady Asiyah are particularly noted in the chapter al-Tahrim as *mathal*, or role-models and examples for all of mankind. In this paper, we hope to provide a brief biographical sketch as well as an analysis of the verses related to Lady Asiyah from classical Sunni and Shi'i commentaries of the Qur'an. We also hope to touch on the attention that her famous sentence in Surah al-Tahrim has warranted from the gnostics (*urefa*) in exegetical commentaries by the likes of Allamah Tabatabai (d.1981).

¹ In some hadith literature, albeit much rarer, 'Aisha, the daughter of Abu Bakr and the wife of the Prophet (s) is also cited to be amongst the women of heaven. However, the general consensus is that the four are the ones who are mentioned here. This is what Suyuti also cites in his tafsir al-*Durr al-Manthur*. Shi'i hadith literature also refer to the four mentioned here.

of her Lord and His Books, and she was one of the obedient. [66:11-12]⁴

They are noted as examples worthy of emulation due to their dedication to the truth and their relationship with God. While Lady Maryam, on account of her importance and her crucial role in Christianity, has been explored in much depth in Islamic literature, Lady Asiyah has not warranted as much attention. This may be because Lady Maryam is referred to more frequently in the Qur'an: She has been mentioned by name in the Qur'an thirty-four times and a chapter has been titled after her.⁵ On the other hand, in the verses regarding Lady Asiyah, she is not mentioned by name. Nevertheless, her place as one of the few women mentioned in a positive light in the Qur'an, her piety as an example for all of mankind, and her status as one of the four women of paradise in hadith literature, gives her a status in Islamic literature much unlike most other women. In this paper, we hope to provide a brief biographical sketch as well as an analysis of the verses related to Lady Asiyah from classical Sunni and Shi'i commentaries of the Qur'an. We also hope to touch on several points that her famous sentence in Surah al-Tahrim has warranted in exegetical commentaries by the likes of Allamah Tabatabai (d.1981), a gnostic (*'arif*). In the words of George Archer:

She has been translated repeatedly to become whatever a given epoch needs her to become. She has been the figure of a surrogate mother who intercedes on behalf of

⁴ The text and translations for all verses of the Qur'an, unless quoted from another text, have been taken from www.tanzil.net and are the translations of Ali Quli Qarai.

⁵ A quick search of the word Maryam on www.tanzil.net brought forth this number.

endangered children. She has been a symbol of purification by water and conversion to new ways of life. She has been a martyr at the hands of an evil tyrant, and most recently, she has been kindling for feminist readings of Islam.⁶

Outline

In this piece, we hope to briefly explore the verse in Surah al-Tahrim that speaks about the Lady Asiyah's famous words and her rank as an example for those who believe. In order to explore the verse, benefit from its wisdom, and truly take Lady Asiyah as an example, we will peruse various commentaries to see what the exegetes have said about her and the verse in question. We will explore a handful of Sunni and Shi'i commentaries, and then summarize the most valuable points.

To begin with, we will briefly sketch a summary of her life in Islamic literature. Following this, we will explore various commentaries: both Sunni and Shi'a and what they have said about Lady Asiyah. We will begin by exploring two Shi'i tafasir: Allamah Tabarsi's *Majma al-Bayan*, and Allamah Tabatabai's *Tafsir al-Mizan*. We have chosen *Majma al-Bayan* and *Tafsir al-Mizan* due to their significant contributions to the world of Shi'i tafasir. They are arguably the two most significant and comprehensive tafasir produced by Shi'i scholars and are of the most influential. We will then explore two Sunni tafasir: Tabari's *Jami al-Bayan fi Ta'wil al-Qur'an*, one of the oldest Qur'anic exegeses in our reach, and Suyuti's *al-Durr al-Manthur*.

⁶ George Archer, "A Short History of a Perfect Woman: The translations of the "Wife of Pharaoh" Before, Through, and Beyond the Qur'anic Milieu," *MATHAL* 3, no. 1 (2013): 1, <http://ir.uiowa.edu/mathal/vol3/iss1/2>.

These two, are primarily traditional *tafasir* focused on citing traditions. Due to the scant exploration of Shi'i tafasir in English, we have chosen to pay particular attention to Shi'i tafasir on the verse, especially Allamah Tabatabai's in-depth exploration of the verse. We will also explore the plausible reasons why she has been mentioned in the Qur'an as an example to all believers and in the hadith as one of the four women of paradise. As such, we will go through the points that we ourselves found notable to take lessons from in the hopes of doing *tadabbur* (deep thinking/pondering) on the words of the Almighty.

Biographical Sketch of Lady Asiyah

The entry on Asiyah in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, published by the University of Leiden, says:

ASIYAH. This is the name given by the commentators to Pharaoh's wife, who is twice (xxviii, 9 and Ixvi, n) mentioned in the Kur'an. She plays the same part as Pharaoh's daughter in the Bible, so that there is obviously confusion. In the second passage these words are put into her mouth: "My Lord, build me a house with thee in Paradise, and deliver me from Pharaoh and his doings and deliver me from the wicked". In connection with this passage it is related that Asiyah endured many cruelties at the hands of Pharaoh because of her faith (she was an Israelite); and finally he even caused her to be cast down upon a rock; at her prayer God took her soul to himself, so that only the body fell on the stone.—It is also related that Pharaoh scourged

her to death, but on Moses' praying to God she did not feel any pain. J. Horovitz explains the name as a corruption of Asenath, the name of Joseph's wife in Gen. xli, 45.⁷

Not much is said about her story, and information on her life is indeed limited, despite a perusal of hadith and tafsir literature. Shaykh Rizwan Arastu, in his recent *God's Emissaries: Adam to Jesus* does a good job of collecting related hadith sources and piecing her story together. As such, we have used the author's work as a reference point from which we will be narrating her story in brief, and we have also cited the sources that he has used.

According to the most common Muslim rendition of events, Lady Asiyah was the wife of Pharaoh and was actually an Israelite.⁸ Her father's name was Muzahim and it is reported that she was barren, much to the Pharaoh's dismay. As noted in the entry of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, in the Biblical tradition, this female figure is played by the Pharaoh's daughter, not his wife.

She is mentioned two times in the Qur'an, in two different scenarios. The first is when she finds Prophet Musa (a), still an infant, floating in a basket and suggests to the Pharaoh that they keep him:

وَقَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرْتُ عَيْنٍ لِي وَلَكَ لَا تَقْتُلُوهُ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ
وَلَدًا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

⁷ H.A.R Gibb, THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM, VOLUME I (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 710.

⁸ Rizwan Arastu, GOD'S EMISSARIES: ADAM TO JESUS (Dearborn: Imam Mahdi Association of Marjaya, 2014), 344. It is mentioned in Ibn Athir's history that she was Israeli, and that she was barren in Bihar al-Anwar. Bihar al-Anwar, Volume 13, p.38, tr. 9, as cited here in Arastu's *God's Emissaries*.

Pharaoh's wife said [to him], '[This infant will be] a [source of] comfort to me and to you. Do not kill him. Maybe he will benefit us, or we will adopt him as a son.' But they were not aware. (28:9)

Thus, it is through her encouragement (and God's master-plan) and mercy over the child (perhaps increased due to her alleged barrenness, Arastu notes) that Prophet Musa (a) is raised in the house of Pharaoh, all the while being fed and cared for by his birth mother. In fact, according to a narration in *Bihar al-Anwar*, it is Lady Asiyah who named him: "Let us call him Moses, because I found him in the water among the reeds."⁹ Arastu notes that in Egyptian, "*mu* meant 'water' and *sa* meant 'tree' or 'reed.'"¹⁰ Arastu also notes that Prophet Musa's mother befriends Asiyah and that the two connect over their faith. He does not however, cite the source for this.¹¹

The second occasion in which she is mentioned in the Qur'an is in Surah al-Tahrim, where her station as a pious woman is noted and can be understood through her words, and where God presents her as an example for all of those who believe. The verse reads:

وَصَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا امْرَأَتٌ فِرْعَوْنُ إِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا
فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

Allah draws an[other] example for those who have faith:
the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, 'My Lord! Build me

⁹ Arastu, *GOD'S EMISSARIES*, 344. Translated and originally cited from *Bihar al-Anwar*, Volume 13, p.4 and p.7, tr. 7.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid, 344.

a home near You in paradise, and deliver me from Pharaoh and his conduct, and deliver me from the wrongdoing lot.’ (66:11)

The common story narrated behind this verse is that this is what she said at the time of her death, when she was murdered by the Pharaoh for her belief in God. Although her assassination is not specifically stated in the Qur’an, it has been mentioned in the hadith and tafsir literature quite extensively, with little to no qualms amongst commentators and Muslim scholars.

In Arastu’s rendition of events, heavily based on Allamah Majlisi’s (d.1698) *Bihar al-Anwar*, Lady Asiyah “had always been devoted to Moses and to the one God he served and had despised her husband. She too had managed to conceal her beliefs from her husband all these years. But as she saw her husband’s brutality spiral out of control, she grew more eager to disavow him, no matter what the cost.” After she saw him murder one of his servants and all of his children by burning them alive owing to their belief in God, Lady Asiyah cursed Pharaoh and his actions. He accused her of being insane to which she said, “I am not insane. I believe in God, who is my Lord, your Lord, and the Lord of all realms.” At this, he decided to punish and torture her severely. The description in the hadiths is quite gory and explicit, saying that “He forced her to lie on her back in the hot sand and had her wrists and ankles bound with rope and staked to the ground. He proceeded to torture her to force her to recant.” It is here that she is said to have uttered the phrase mentioned in the Qur’an, imploring Allah to build her a house in paradise in proximity to Him. It is reported that she sees paradise

and smiles before her soul is taken from her body due to the “pleasure of God’s acceptance.”¹²

With this brief introduction, we will now enter our discussion of Qur’anic exegetical literature, beginning with three Shi’i exegetes.

Shi’i Commentaries

Majma al-Bayan

Tafsir Majma’ al-Bayān was written by Abū Ali Faḍl ibn Ḥasan Ṭabarsī (d.1154), more commonly known as Allamah Tabarsi. This tafsir, written in Arabic, was modelled after Shaykh Tusi’s (d.1067) historical tafsir *al-Tibyan*. In his discussion on this verse, Allamah Tabarsi states that Lady Asiyah attained faith when she saw the miracle of Prophet Musa (a) in his competition against the magicians (i.e. when his rod turned into a snake that devoured that of the magicians). He goes on to say that:

... because her faith became apparent to Pharaoh, he forbade her (from her faith). As such, Lady Asiyah refused and rejected the Pharaoh’s demands, and as such, the Pharaoh (may God’s curse be upon him), crushed her hands and feet with a nail under the burning sun. He then ordered that a large rock be put over her chest. As death approached, she said ‘My Lord! Build me a home near You in paradise.’ Then, God the Almighty brought her towards paradise and (currently) she is eating and drinking in paradise (narrated from

¹² Arastu, *God’s Emissaries*, 408, referencing *Bihar al-Anwar*, Volume 13, p. 164, tr. 7.

Hasan and Ibn Kaysan). It has also been said that she saw a castle in paradise made from pearls and that is when God took her soul from her body. After that, the large rock was thrown onto her soulless body, so she never felt the pain from it and from Pharaoh's torture. Salman says: She was being tortured under the sun, and every time they would leave her alone, the angels would surround her and she would see a castle in paradise.¹³

With regards to the next part of the verse where she says "and deliver me from Pharaoh and his conduct," Tabarsi says that this is referring to his 'din', i.e. religion.¹⁴

Tafsir al-Mizan

One of the most influential contemporary Shi'i exegesis of the Qur'an is Allamah Tabatabai's (d. 1981) *Tafsir al-Mizan*. Although the fifteenth century (according to the *hijri* lunar calendar) saw a plethora of new exegetical works from amongst Shi'as, the most influential and pivotal work of the century was none other than the exegesis of the entire Qur'an written by the well-known Iranian mystic and philosopher, Allamah Tabatabai. As such, we have chosen to use his work in order to address the verse. As a mystic with his own philosophy and unique hermeneutics in Qur'anic exegesis, Allamah Tabatabai references several points in the commentary of this verse that point to a deeper understanding of the verse. Due to its

¹³ Fadl ibn Hasan Tabrasi, *Majma al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an Volume 10*, (Tehran: Naser Khosrow Publications, 1993), 480. Accessed with *Jami al-Tafasir*, NOOR Software. Translation rendered by myself.

¹⁴ Ibid.

importance, brevity and depth in content, we have chosen to translate and include most of the commentary related to this verse here.

Allamah Tabatabai begins by saying that when Lady Asiyah makes her prayer of “My Lord! Build me a home near You in paradise,” in a sense, God is summarizing all of her hopes and wishes in the path of her worship. He goes on to say that:

... when the faith (*iman*) of a person reaches perfection, their exterior (*dhahir*) and interior (*batin*) will be fully in line with each other, i.e. one’s heart and tongue will be in unison with each other. Such a person will not say anything except that which they will do, and they won’t do anything except that which they say. And they don’t entertain hopes, and their tongues do not say anything, except for that which they seek to do with their actions. Because God brought this lady forth as an example, and alluded to her special status in her worship, he narrates the prayer that she called with, and (it is this prayer) that shows the type of her holistic obedience to Him. Throughout her life, it was exactly this wish that she was after -, that God would build a home for her in paradise, and that He would save her from the Pharaoh and his evil actions. So, the wife of Pharaoh implored to her Lord for mercy, and this request was to become close to God. This closeness to God had preference over closeness to the Pharaoh. This closeness to the Pharaoh was also accompanied by every type of pleasure; In his court, she could find everything that her heart desired, and even those wishes that didn’t usually reach a

person, could be found there. As such, it is obvious that the wife of Pharaoh had closed her eyes from all of the pleasures of the life of this world. And this was not because it was not in her reach, but rather, all of these were available in abundance to her. Even with that, she had closed her eyes from it, and she was attached to the glory that lied with God, and to His proximity. She had attained faith in the unseen, and stood strong and upright with her faith until she left this world.

And this step that the wife of Pharaoh took in her path to serving God, is a step that can be an example for anyone who wants to follow in this path. It is because of this aspect that God summarized her hopes and her state throughout her entire life in one short prayer; a prayer that does not give any meaning except that she had cut herself off from all comforts of this world, from anything that caused inattention to God, that she has sought refuge with her Lord, and that except for attaining proximity to God, she has no other wishes or desires, and that she is choosing a home in His house of mercy.

It has been said that the name “wife of Pharaoh” who is an example for the believers, has been mentioned in the traditions as *Asiyah*. When she says “*My Lord! Build me a home near You in paradise,*” in this prayer, she is requesting a home that should both be in proximity to God and also in paradise, and this is to the fact that in paradise. Homes are in proximity to God, (in the same

way that) God has said: “*They are living and provided for near their Lord,*” (3:169).

In addition to this, one’s presence in proximity to God and closeness to him is a special type of intangible spiritual blessing, whereas a permanent home in paradise is a tangible spiritual blessing, and as such, it makes sense that a servant of God would request both from Him...¹⁵

The reason that Allamah Tabatabai’s points with regards to this verse are so significant and extraordinary is because he touches on the idea that this is perhaps not a prayer that literally came out of Lady Asiyah’s mouth, but that this is something where “God summarized her hopes and her state throughout her entire life in one short prayer.” Here, the narrator is being attributed to God. It is true that He is narrating her reality and truth, and that does not affect the truth of her saying this; however, it could be said that this quote is speaking from the language which is a reflection of the true state and reality of matters, as opposed to a literal and explicit language referring to something she said with her physical mouth. Taking this into consideration, her words take on a deeper significance. They are not simply the words of a martyr dying in pain and under torture, but rather a reflection of her spiritual reality. With this in mind, we can later explore the notable points and lessons that we can derive from this verse and her story in depth.

¹⁵ Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai trans. Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Musawi Hamadani, *Tarjume Tafsir al-Mizan Volume 19* (Qum: Islamic Publications Office of Seminary Masters Association Qum Islamic Seminary, 1995), 577. Accessed with *Jami al-Tafasir*, NOOR Software. Translated from the Farsi with reference to the original Arabic by myself.

Sunni Commentaries

Jami al-Bayan fi Ta'wil al-Qur'an

Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d.923), in his famous tafsir *Jami al-Bayan fi Ta'wil al-Qur'an*, mentions some of the traditions and points that were stated in the Shi'i tafasir discussed above. In the stories of the prophets, there is considerable overlap between the Sunni and Shia tradition and this should not come as a surprise.

With regard to Lady Asiyah, Tabari says, "The disbelief of her spouse did not harm her, and she was a believer in God, and it was from the *qada* (destiny) of God in His creation that 'No bearer shall bear another's burden' (17:15), and that each soul gets what it has earned."¹⁶ He also narrates a tradition that Allamah Tabarsi also narrated from Salman (here, unlike Tabarsi, Tabari mentions the entire chain of narrators), with regards to Lady Asiyah seeing a vision and her soul leaving her body before the punishment was inflicted on her by the Pharaoh. He also mentions other traditions which we have cited and will not repeat here.

He also discusses God's justice and every person's autonomy in their destiny. With regards to Lady Asiyah, he says with certainty: "By God, the disbelief of her husband will not harm his wife whilst she was obeying Her Lord, so that you will know that God is a just judge and He does not take His servant except with their own sins."

¹⁶ Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir Al-Tabari, *Jami al-Bayan fi Ta'wil al-Quran Volume 28*, (Beirut: Dar al-Marifat, 1992), 110. Accessed with *Jami al-Tafasir*, NOOR Software. Translation rendered by myself.

فوالله ما ضر امرأته كفر زوجها حين أطاعت ربها، لتعلموا أن الله حكم
عدل، لا يؤاخذ عبده إلا بذنبه.¹⁷

Al-Durr al-Manthur

Abū al-Faḍl ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad Jalāl al-Dīn al-Khuḍayrī al-Suyūṭī (d.1505) in his tafsir, *Dar al-Manthur*, mentions Lady Asiyah, before his commentary on the verse in question (i.e. 66:11), in the fifth verse of Surah al-Tahrim which reads as follows:

It may be that if he divorces you his Lord will give him,
in [your] stead, wives better than you: [such as are]
muslim, faithful, obedient, penitent, devout and given to
fasting, non-virgins and virgins. [Q.66:5]

Suyuti narrates from Tibrani from Ibn Mardawiyah, from Buraydah that, “God has promised His Prophet (s) in this verse, that he will marry him to the non-virgin, Asiyah (a), the wife of Pharaoh, and to the virgin, Maryam, daughter of Imran.”¹⁸ Since neither Lady Asiyah, nor Lady Maryam was alive at the time of the Prophet (s), it is self-evident that this marriage is supposedly going to take place in the afterlife.

With regard to the verse in question, i.e. verse 11, Suyuti also cites many of the same hadiths that have been narrated above (albeit some of them with different syntax but identical meaning). He mentions the hadith wherein the Pharaoh’s disbelief did not harm Lady Asiyah

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, *Al-Darr al-Manthur fi Tafsir al-Ma’tur Volume 6*, (Qum: Publication of Ayatollah Mar’ashi Najafi Library, 1984), 244.

in the slightest and that she had a vision of her home in paradise while she was being tortured under the sun.¹⁹ With regard to her vision, Suyuti mentions a few different traditions which we thought were worthy of citing here:

1. From Ibn Abi Shibah and Abd ibn Hamid and Ibn Jarir and Ibn al-Mundhir and... from Salman: “The wife of Pharaoh was being tortured under the sun, and when they would leave her (for a short period of respite), the angels would surround her and she would see her home in paradise.”
2. From Abu Ya’la and al-Bayhaqi (with a reliable chain from Ibn Hurayrah): “The Pharaoh had tied his wife to four poles by her hands and feet, and when they would leave her, the angels surrounded her. Then she said ‘My Lord, build for me, near you, a house in paradise,’ and then she was shown her house in paradise.”
3. From Abd ibn Hamid from Ibn Hurayrah: “The Pharaoh had tied his wife by four poles and laid her down on her chest, and he put on her chest a millstone... so, she raised her head to the sky and said ‘My Lord, build for me, near you, a house in paradise...’ so God opened her house in paradise and she saw it.”

²⁰ ففرج الله عن بيتها في الجنة فرأته

It is interesting to note the Arabic words that are usually used in these traditions, especially the word *kashafa* which is commonly associated with supernatural visions where one perceives a reality usually beyond

¹⁹ Ibid, 265.

²⁰ Ibid.

the perception of others. In the last tradition cited, the word *faraja* is used which is also interesting due to its association of being an opening and a type of comfort for a person, which seems to be why God showed Lady Asiyah her home in heaven: to comfort her passing from this world as she was being tortured by Pharaoh.

MIGRATION OF LADY FATIMA AL-MA'SUMAH TO QUM¹

FARZANEH NIKOO-BORESHRAD²

TRANSLATED BY MAHBOOBEH MORSHEDIAN

ABSTRACT: After the demise of the Prophet, the Imams and their followers, the Shi'as were continuously oppressed by the usurpers of the government. In this political climate, the Shi'as—under the Imams' overt and covert guidance—objected to the usurping regimes through either a) uprising and martyrdom or b) migration. In these migrations, women along with men were remarkably present in the political and social arenas, as they played a crucial role in conveying the Shi'a message and transferring their money to the Imams. Lady Ma'sumah was among the women who—following the forced migration of Imam al-Ridha in the time of al-Ma'mun's rule – migrated from Medina to Iran on the pretext of visiting Imam al-Ridha. In this article, after reference to general reasons for her migration, fourteen reasons for her migration to Qum—the centre of Shi'ism—are mentioned. Qum is currently the largest centre for dissemination and propagation of Shi'ism in the world owing to this blessed migration.

¹ *The Shi'a Women Quarterly.*

² In charge of education and research in Tehran Islamic Propagation Organisation.

Introduction

Lady Fatima al-Ma'sumah was at the peak of existential perfection and at the height of the manifestation of God's beauty. Her spiritual and divine character was a perfect example for those who hope in the mercy of God on the Day of Judgement, and a clear role model for those who seek to reach spiritual excellence, and conscious growth. She struggled tirelessly in the way of God and knew her time requirements, migrating in the way of God to support wilayah and raising people's awareness of the Ahlul Bayt's teachings. She began her historic migration from Medina to disseminate the hadiths of her revered grandfathers and disclose the Abbasid oppression until she, not having seen her brother, passed away in Qum, making her holy shrine a shelter for all Shi'as and an active centre for the dissemination of Shi'a culture.³

This article addresses the political and social conditions of the time of Imam al-Ridha and the reasons for Lady Ma'sumah's migration from Medina to Qum-Iran. It examines the Shi'as' conditions and migration as a method of protest to the status quo (the usurping Abbasid rule) and to investigate the role of Lady Ma'sumah as a migrant and its underlying causes.

Migration

One way the Shi'a protested to the unjust governments was through migration. Due to the increased persecution of the Shi'as, especially the Ahlul Bayt and their offspring, negative publicity against the Ahlul Bayt, as well as arrest, torture, exile and imprisonment of lovers

³ From "Migration of Karimah" by the author of this article, Qum, Wilayah Fajr, 1381 solar.

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of the Ahlul Bayt⁴, and the plunder of wealthy Shi'as' property, they decided to migrate from their homeland.

In the Arabic language and literature, *hijrah* and *muhajirah*, both mean migration or leaving one's homeland. According to *Majma' al-Bahrayn*, "Whoever leaves his hometown to seek knowledge, perform hajj, or to live in a city where he obeys God but is separated from worldly issues, has migrated to God and His Messenger."⁵ Thus, as for the migrant, it was reported, "The migrant is somebody who abandons whatever God has made haram for him, abandons falsehood, and becomes truth-seeking. Whoever eagerly embraces Islam is called the migrant."⁶

In Islam, migration is traced back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad and Muslims' migration to Abyssinia.⁷ It continued in the time of the Imams as an effective strategy to save the Shi'as' lives and spread Shi'ism. Also, the migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina paved the way for the establishment of an Islamic government and the spread of Islam.

During the Imamate of twelve Shi'a Imams, considering the rule of usurpers and their crackdown on Shi'ites and Imams' offspring, the Shi'a resorted to migration as an effective means of performing their duties. They usually migrated to secure places or remote impassable

⁴ Muhammad ibn Babe-Wayh (Sheikh Saduq), 'Uyun Akhbar al-Rida, translated by H.R. Mustafiz and Ali Akbar Ghaffari, Tehran, Saduq, 1373 solar, vol. 2, pp. 233-234.

⁵ Ali Akbar Mahdipour, Karimah of Ahlul-Bayt, Qum, Haziq publications, 1374 solar, p. 91.

⁶ Ibid., P. 92. « المهاجر من هاجر ما حرّم الله عليه، و المهاجر من ترك الباطل إلى الحق. من دخل الاسلام طوعا فهو مهاجر »

⁷ Abd-ul-Hamid Hiba-tul-llah ibn Abi al-Hadid, Commentary on Nahj-ul-Balaghah, researched by Muhammad A. Ibrahim, Qum, Ismailian Publications, vol. 4, p. 74; Muhammad ibn Sa'ad, Tabaghat Al-Kubra, vol. 1, p. 207.

mountainous areas to be immune from the government, to teach Islam, and to highlight the unjust practices of the government through migration to the intended areas, thus fulfilling their socio-political duty.⁸

The Imams approved of migration, especially under the Abbasid rule, which aimed to put the Shi'as under pressure and persecute them, and which spread suppression and hypocrisy in society.⁹ According to Imam al-Ridha, "The one who migrates to another land for the sake of his religion, although as short a distance as one foot, will enter Heaven and accompany Prophet Muhammad and Prophet Abraham."¹⁰

The Alawid migration to Iran

The government continuously persecuted the Alawids and Sadat; if they protested to maltreatment, they were prosecuted on the slightest pretext and suspicion. To escape from the adverse political and social situations, to secure their lives, property and honour, and to fulfil their duties, the Shi'as migrated. Iran was always a safe land to Sadat.

Since the first century A.H., the Shi'as migrated to Iran¹¹, and their migration accelerated in its second half. After migration to Iran, a large number of Alawids dwelled in different cities and areas such as

⁸ M.K. Khajawiyani, *ibid*, p 110.

⁹ Abul-Faraj Isfahani, *Maqatil-al-Talibin*, translated by Sayyid Hashim Rasuli Mahallati, Tehran, 1349 solar, p. 477.

¹⁰ Fadl ibn Hassan Tabarsi, *Majma'ul-Bayan*, vol. 3, Tehran, Islamiyyah Publications, 1374 solar, p. 100.

«مَنْ هَجَرَ بَدِينَهُ مِنْ أَرْضٍ إِلَى أَرْضٍ وَإِنْ كَانَ شِبْرًا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ اسْتَوْجِبَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكَانَ رَفِيقَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ وَ مُحَمَّدٍ «
«صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ»

¹¹ Rasul Ja'farian, *From the Rise of Tahiriyan to the Decline of Kharazmshahian*, Tehran, the Cultural Institute of Contemporary Knowledge and Thought, 1378 solar, p. 97.

Qum, Rey, Isfahan, Gorgan¹², Aweh, Kashan and Sabzewar¹³ and settled there next to other Arab tribes. The Shi'as propagated the true Shi'ism¹⁴ there, and this has always been welcomed by Iranians.

The impact of migration

The Alawids' migration to Iran had crucial politico-social effects, even in terms of urban development and unity of people in that region. Due to their good conduct, positive effects on public opinions, and Alawid character, the Alawids very soon won the people's support. Winning the people's trust, they gradually became their leaders.¹⁵ They also played a key role in regional development through taking part in socio-political events, thus exercising their influence. For example, Yahya ibn Abdullah, a companion of Husayn ibn Ali (a martyr in the Fakh event) migrated to Iran and settled in Deilam after the defeat of the Fakh uprising and martyrdom of his companions.¹⁶ With his presence there, "they were convinced that he was entitled to leadership, so they paid allegiance to him. People from different cities gathered around him and gradually became reputable."¹⁷

The migration of other Alawids to various parts of Iran, including Rey, Kashan, Qum, Gorgan and Tabarestan indicated their strong and

¹² ibid.

¹³ M.K. Khajawiyani, ibid, p. 11; Abul-Fida, Taqwim Al-Bildan, translated by A. Ayati, Tehran, 1349 solar, p. 487.

¹⁴ See also Baha'u-Din Muhammad ibn Hassan ibn Esfandiari, Tabaristan History, corrected by Abbas Iqbal, Tehran, Iqbal Publications, 1366 solar, vol. 2, quoted from Rasul Ja'farian, ibid, p. 98.

¹⁵ Rasul Ja'farian, ibid, pp.98-99.

¹⁶ Abul-Faraj Isfahani, ibid, p 430.

¹⁷ Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Tabataba (Ibn-ul-Taftaqy), Fakhri History, translated by Muhammad Wahid Gulpaygani, Tehran, the Centre for Translation and Publication of Books, 1350 solar, p. 265.

influential presence in the regions, active in the politico-social and urban development.

The migration of the Ash'arites to Qum in 94 A.H. and their endeavour to develop it until the time Lady Ma'sumah entered it revealed their positive impact.¹⁸

Migration of women

With the advent of Islam, there appeared a new attitude towards humiliated women that was unprecedented. Through such a change of attitude towards women, they indeed became active in such arenas, having a sense of identity and independence. In the time of Prophet Muhammad, women were active, passionate and serious participants in all fields. Women's migration to Abyssinia and Medina, allegiance to the Prophet, and war indicate events documented in the history of the early Islam. They also reflect Islam's profound attitude towards women and her abilities.

In the Qur'an, like men, women are required, if possible, to migrate from the land of disbelief to the land of justice to preserve their faith and safeguard their beliefs.¹⁹ In migration to Abyssinia²⁰ and Medina,²¹ women accompanied men and knowingly chose to migrate due to their sincere love for Islam and the Prophet. Despite the

¹⁸ Ali Akbar Mahdipour, *ibid.*, p. 17; Ahmad Banpour, *Life and Extraordinary Acts of Lady Ma'sumeh*, Alef Publications, 1374 solar, p. 23.

¹⁹ al-Ahzab: 20; al-Anfal: 72; Nisa: 97 & 98, al-Mumtahina: 8; Az-Zumar: 10; Ale-Imran: 195; al-Ankabout: 56.

²⁰ Abd-ul-Hamid Hiba-tul-Allah ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Commentary on Nahj-ul-Balaghah*, vol. 4, p. 74 (Eighty-three men and eighteen women migrated to Abyssinia).

²¹ Muhammad ibn Ya'qub Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, corrected by Ali Akbar Ghaffari, vol. 1, Tehran, Maktabah AlSaduq, 1381 A.H., p. 377; Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 19, Tehran, Darul-Kutub al-Islamiyah, 1366 solar, p. 350.

domination of Jahili thoughts in society, these migrations were approved of and emphasised in the Qur'an as well as the Prophet's sayings and actions.²²

Under the rule of the Umayyads and the Abbasids, the Sadats and companions of the Ahlul Bayt accused of defending wilayah and Imamate and being a Shi'a—were always persecuted by government agents.²³ According to historians, 30,000 women were imprisoned during the rule of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, who was the most bloodthirsty ruler.²⁴

However, although the government put them under pressure and persecuted them, women not only were not intimidated but also encouraged their husbands to defend Ahlul Bayt, performing their duties best when necessary.

Political pressure on – and economic sanctions against – the Shi'as included both women and men. At times the government inflicted such severe poverty and deprivation that under the rule of Mutawakkil, the “Alawid women sometimes did not have enough veils to recite their prayers and so shared a cover, performing their prayers in turn.”²⁵ Under such circumstances, along with men, the

²² Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *ibid.*, vol. 40, p. 160.

²³ The issue of women's presence and their defence of Wilayah and Imamate dates back to the time of Prophet Muhammad. After his demise, this defence soared through Lady Zahra's measures and continued in the Imams' time. However, this article mostly deals with the era of Imam Rida and the reasons' for Lady Ma'sumah's migration. Accordingly, Shi'a women's measures are also addressed (See Zabihullah Mahallati, *Rayahin a-Shari'ah*, the 5th ed., Tehran, Dar-ul-Kutub al-Islamiyah, 1368 solar, vol. 4, p. 389; Abul-Faraj Isfahani, *ibid.*, p. 599; Sheikh Abbas Qummi, *Safinah al-Bihar*, Tehran, Sinayi Publications, 1344 solar, vol. 2, p. 446).

²⁴ Ali ibn Hussain al-Mas'oudi, *Murawij-a-Dhahab*, Beirut, Dar-ul-Andalusia, 1965 A.D., vol. 3, p. 166.

²⁵ Abul-Faraj Isfahani, *ibid.*, p. 599.

women helped the Alawids in their own way. They played an important role in conveying the message of Shi'ism. This especially increased in the era of Imam Musa al-Kadhim, who through some organisations²⁶ welcomed women's participation and assigned important roles to women in these secret organisations²⁷ because women easily kept close contacts without raising the governmental suspicion. They pretended to visit their relatives, and these relations contributed to transmitting Shi'ism messages, information, and properties.

Perhaps that is why Ma'mun attempted to penetrate into the Imams' houses and spied on them through giving his daughters' hands in marriage to Imam al-Ridha²⁸ and Imam al-Jawad.²⁹ His daughters informed him of who entered the Imams' houses.

Political activities of Imam Musa al-Kadhim's daughters

According to the historical accounts, Imam Musa al-Kadhim's daughters were mostly modest, virtuous and pious jurists, Islamic scholars and hadith narrators.³⁰ They disseminated Islamic sciences and the Prophet's hadiths among women of Medina. A wife of Imam Musa al-Kadhim, Umm-e Ahmad, was fully trusted by him. When travelling to Iraq, Imam al-Kadhim entrusted all the trusts, informed her of his martyrdom, introduced the next Imam to him, and advised

²⁶ Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *ibid.*, volume 48, p. 232, p. 252, and p. 253.

²⁷ Zabihullah Mahallati, *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 358; S. J. Ale Bahr-ul-Olum, *Tohfah-ul-Amm Fi Sharh Khutbat-ul-Ma'alam*, Najaf, 1324 A.H., vol. 2, p. 78.

²⁸ Ali ibn Hussain al-Masoudi, *ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 52; Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Dala'il-ul-A'immah*, Beirut, a-Dirasat al-Islamiyyah, 1413 A.H., p. 208 & 209.

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ Hassan Jalali Azizian, *The Fourteen Infallibles' Offspring*, Tehran, Mihraban Publications, 1378 solar, p. 162.

her to give all the trusts to Imam Ridha after his martyrdom. After the martyrdom of the 7th Imam, Umm-e Ahmad gave all deposits to the rightful Imam and introduced him to the reliable people, playing a crucial role well.³¹

Under the harsh and oppressive Abbasid rule, Imam Musa al-Kadhim's daughters—each according to her abilities and duties—played important roles, delineating imamate and wilayah, and raising women's awareness. It is noteworthy that all of them were religious scholars who endeavoured to narrate reliable and documented hadiths on the virtues of Imam Ali and Ashura to perpetuate Wilayah, and to introduce the Imam of their time.³²

Among Imam Kadhim's daughters, Lady Fatimah al-Ma'sumah,³³ like her pure forefathers and following in Lady Zainab's footsteps, stood against threats from the tyrannical government and its pressures on the Ahlul Bayt. In addition to her narrations³⁴ on Ghadir Khumm³⁵ and wilayah and Imamate³⁶, she took a socio-political measure,

³¹ Muhammad ibn Ya'qub Ya'qubi Kulayni, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 316-317; Zabihullah Mahallati, *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 358.

³² Z. Ayatollahi, *Woman, Religion, & Politics*, Tehran, Social and Cultural Council of Women, 1380 solar, p. 140.

³³ Fatimah al-Ma'sumah is Imam Musa al-Kadhim's daughter, who was born in Medina in Dhul-Qa'dah 1st 173 A.H. Her mother's name was Najmah. She entered Qum on Rabi'-ul-Awwal 23rd 201 A.H. when she was 28 years old. Seventeen days later, she passed away there from disease (Mirza Hussain Noori, *Mustadrak al-Wasa'il*, 1407 A.H., vol. 8, p. 257; Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *ibid.*, p. 309; Muhammad ibn Ya'qub Ya'qubi Kolaini, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 476).

³⁴ Muhammad Sharif Radi, *Athar al-Hujjah*, Qum, Dar al-Kitab, 1332, p. 8 and 9.

³⁵ Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Jazari, *Asna al-Matalib*, vol. 8, Tehran, 1402 A.H., p. 196; Muhammad Hadi Amini, *Fatima daughter of Imam Musa al-Kadim*, Qum, 1363 solar, p. 62.

³⁶ Muhammed ibn Babawayh (Sheikh Saduq), *Amali*, introduction and translation by M.B. Kamare'i, Tehran, Islamiyyah Publications, 1362 solar, p. 82.

accompanying her brothers in struggle against the government and choosing to migrate in protest to it and the status quo.

Her migration

One year after Imam Ridha had painfully³⁷ said goodbye to his household and was forced to leave Medina to Marw,³⁸ Lady Ma'sumah also left Medina along with some of her brothers on the pretext of visiting her brother, Imam Ridha. According to authentic hadiths (*mutawatir*), she became ill on her way to Marw and passed away after reaching Qum.³⁹

Reasons for her migration

As for the reasons for Lady Ma'sumah's migration to Iran, it can be said the critical socio-political conditions in the Abbasid era lay behind her migration. Under such circumstances, Lady Ma'sumah decided to migrate from Medina to Iran. The following possibilities can be taken into account:

1. According to historical accounts, Lady Ma'sumah was the sister of Imam Ridha, both born to the same mother.⁴⁰ Her love for Imam Ridha was so profound that—in addition to other aspects—from an

³⁷ Muhammad ibn Nu'man Mufid (Sheikh Mufid), *al-Irshad*, p. 310; Ali bin Isa al-Arbely, *Kashf-ul-Ghummah fi Ma'rifah al-A'immah*, Tabriz, Maktabah Bani Hashemi, 1381 A.H., vol. 3, p. 65, 66 and 87; Sheikh Saduq, *Uyun Akhbar al-Rida*, the 2nd ed., p. 140; Abul-Faraj Isfahani, *ibid.*, p 562 and 563.

³⁸ Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *ibid.*, vol. 49, p. 117; M Pishwa'i, *The Conduct of the Religious Leaders*, the 10th ed., Qum, Imam Sadiq Institute, 1379 solar, p. 477.

³⁹ Mohammadreza Hakimi, *Lady Ma'sumah and the city of Qom*, the 2nd ed., Qum, Islamic Propagation Office, 1369 solar, p. 40; Abul-Faraj Isfahani, *ibid.*, p 501; Ahmad ibn Ya'qub (Ibn Wadiah), *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 332; Sheikh Abbas Qummi, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 376.

⁴⁰ Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *ibid.*, p. 309; Hassan Jalali Azizian, *ibid.*, p 161.

emotional perspective, she could never bear being parted from her brother. For this reason, she set out for Marw to visit him.

2. Known as 'Fatimah al-Kubra', she was virtuous and highly regarded in the Prophet's household, and this indicates that she was so influential a spiritual leader in her family that according to historical accounts, Lady Ma'sumah was the most virtuous⁴¹ in terms of knowledge, piety and modesty.⁴² Due to her influence on her family members, she chose to migrate to show her protest to the government's measures and to disclose illegitimacy of the rulers. When the Shi'ites in Medina and other cities heard the news of her journey, they wondered why she had left her hometown and family members.

3. Because of her wisdom and intelligence, she did not lose sight of Imam Ridha's political measures and the way he had said farewell to his family. His departure from Medina indicated a journey with no return, ending in his martyrdom. This triggered a negative attitude to the government and prepared Ahlul Bayt to hear news of his martyrdom. Understanding the situation, Lady Ma'sumah discovered that she would never visit Imam Ridha. Therefore, eager to see her Imam and brother, she set out for Khurasan so that she would follow in his footsteps.⁴³

⁴¹ Sheikh Abbas Qummi, *Muntahal-Amal*, corrected by Ali Muhadithzadeh, Qum, Dawari Publications, 1370 solar, vol. 2, p. 273.

⁴² Among the daughters of Imam Musa Kadhim, only Fatimah al-Kubra was known as "Ma'sumah" which means infallible (i.e., away from the lesser and greater sins). After her demise, Imam Rida gave her this epithet (Zabihullah Mahallati, *ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 35).

⁴³ Ahmad Banpour, *ibid.*, p. 34.

4. When Lady Ma'sumah realised that her step brothers intended to visit Imam Ridha, she decided to accompany them to Khurasan. These five men were born either to Imam Ridha's mother or to other wives of Imam Musa al-Kadhim.⁴⁴

5. According to some historians, one year after Imam Ridha's migration, she decided to visit him, leaving Medina for Marw. "Her five brothers, Fadl, Ja'far, Hadi, Qasim, and Zaid as well as some of her nephews and some handmaidens⁴⁵ accompanied her. According to this hypothesis, the mass migration of family members and the Imams' offspring could reveal the significance of this migration to the people of Medina, that is, they wondered why the Ahlul Bayt migrated collectively.

6. It is said that when in Marw, Imam Ridha wrote a letter to Lady Ma'sumah and handed it to a reliable servant of his to be delivered to her in Medina. After receiving that letter, she prepared to migrate from Medina.⁴⁶ The reason why Imam Ridha wrote that letter to Lady Ma'sumah, and its content that led her to migrate along with her brothers, are not clear-cut issues in historical accounts. They are cited in one book without any reference. However, this hypothesis can be considered a possible reason.

7. Understanding the political situation and learning from the past measures of the government in the time of her holy father, Lady Ma'sumah predicted that she would have a hard time in Medina after

⁴⁴ Mirza Muhammad Malik-ul-Kuttab Shirazi, *Riyadh-ul-Ansab*, p. 160.

⁴⁵ Ali Akbar Mahdipour, *ibid.*, p. 172.

⁴⁶ Ali Akbar Mahdipour, *ibid.*, p. 493, quoted from Dakhil al-Sayyid Hassan, *Man la Yahduhul-Khatib*, Beirut, 1412 A.H., p. 461.

Imam Ridha's martyrdom. She could remember the government's violating the Ahlul Bayt's sanctity⁴⁷ and did not forget its plundering their properties and its officials' brutality. She could guess that after martyrdom of Imam Ridha—her supporter—the Ahlul Bayt would be persecuted by the regime. Hence, before receiving the news of her brother's martyrdom, she had a plausible excuse to leave Medina. In order to perform her duty, she took the opportunity to save the Ahlul Bayt's lives, taking great pains to migrate.

8. In line with the usual practice of the Alawids, Lady Ma'sumah chose to migrate in order to escape the tyranny of government, to disseminate and propagate Islam, to disclose the Abbasid's hypocrisy in religious issues, to reveal the oppression towards the Ahlul Bayt, and to raise public awareness of Imamate and Wilayah. Like Imam Ridha, who raised the public awareness of the Ahlul Bayt and their position, as well as the role of Imam in the Islamic society through his awakening speech in his journey from Medina to Marw, Lady Ma'sumah along with her brothers took the opportunity to gain freedom and delineate religious issues. Despite the difficult journey and separation from her homeland and friends, she started her migration. According to historical accounts, both during her migration and after Imam Ridha's martyrdom, her brothers and nephews were present in the different parts of the vast Muslim world including Fars, Egypt, Rey, Qum, and Khurasan. Protesting to the usurping regime, they attracted people to themselves and embarked

⁴⁷ When the cursed and wretched Jalludi went to Imam Rida's house to plunder their jewelry and property, Ahl-ul-Bayt were not immune from transgression and violation of their sanctity and privacy even though the 8th Imam was present in Medina, so something worse could have happened in his absence (Sheikh Saduq, 'Uyun Akhbar al-Rida, vol. 2, p. 161).

on uprisings until each was martyred somewhere by the Abbasid government.

9. The absence of Imam Ridha in Medina was quite tangible because he—as the Imam—had supported the followers of Ahlul Bayt and given them hope, but then in another country he was waiting for his martyrdom alone in the court of the Abbasid usurpers. In his absence, Medina had a petrifying, gloomy, and silent atmosphere. Without any guardian in Medina, the Ahlul Bayt were waiting for news of his martyrdom in Khurasan. Lady Ma'sumah could not tolerate this painful waiting. This atmosphere paved the way for migration of Imam Musa al-Kadhim's offspring so that under a reasonable and justifiable pretext of visiting their brother, they could set out for a safe land and live among the lovers of Ahlul Bayt—despite the difficult journey and separation from their family. They aimed to spread the dynamic concept of Imamate in a Muslim land through the congenial atmosphere created by the lovers of Ahlul Bayt there.

10. When sure about Imam Ridha's martyrdom in the future in Khurasan and the possibility of a crackdown by the government and even its attempt to kill Imam Musa al-Kadhim's offspring, the Ahlul Bayt began their migration. Before any conflict and prevention of their leaving Medina, Lady Ma'sumah and her brothers—in timely anticipation of the future—left Medina for Iran to raise public awareness. They intended to live among people who would help them to rise against the Abbasid government and who were known for their love for Ahlul Bayt.

The fact that graves of many Imams' offspring are located in Iran proves this hypothesis, especially given the fact that most of them

were Imam Musa al-Kadhim's offspring. His sons, namely Imam Ridha's brothers, migrated to Iran to raise ignorant people's awareness and to pave the way for Shi'a uprisings in Iran. On their way to Iran, this mass migration raised the question as to why the Prophet's household and descendants chose to leave their ancestral land. In the course of time, it was proved that this migration occurred on time because later many brothers of Imam Ridha and the Prophet's descendants who stayed in Arabia were martyred by the Abbasid regime.⁴⁸

11. The Abbasid government always feared the Ahlul Bayt and the Alawids in the Muslim lands. With increased revolts and uprisings, they became sensitive to the Ahlul Bayt, always employing spies and informants to watch their actions and behaviour. The Abbasid regime took every opportunity to persecute the Shi'ites on false pretexts. Lady Ma'sumah predicted that after the martyrdom of Imam Ridha, the government would not permit them to leave Medina and keep in touch with the Shi'ites. Approaching the time of Imam Ridha's martyrdom, she prepared the Ahlul Bayt to migrate to Iran. To the Abbasid government, this was a convincing reason, and government agents could not prevent them from leaving Medina. However, the

⁴⁸ The uprising of Imam Musa Kadhim's son, Ibrahim, who accused Ma'mun of killing his brother and who was finally poisoned by Ma'mun (Ibn al-Khaldoon, Introduction, corrected by M. Parwin Gonabadi, vol. 3, Tarhan, 1345 solar, p. 115). The uprising of Zayd ibn Musa against the Egyptian government; he was poisoned by Ma'mun (Mushakilah a-Nas li Zamanihim, p. 29). Ahmad ibn Musa's uprising along with three thousand soldiers and according to some narrations, twelve thousand ones in Baghdad. He finally came to Shiraz, where he, along with his brother, Muhammad 'Abid, and his companions was martyred by Qaltagh Khan (a government agent) after some battles (A.A. Takhsid, Alawid Sadats' Uprisings, p. 169). Haroun and Fadl ibn Musa, who accompanied Lady Ma'sumah and were martyred in Saweh (Muhammad Ali Rowdati, Jami' al-Ansab, Isfahan, Mehr-A'in Publications, 1355 solar, p. 56).

government was still suspicious about their departure. According to some reports, on their way to Iran, government agents attacked the caravan of the Ahlul Bayt and left their journey unfinished through poisoning or killing them in battles. According to a historian:

Haroon ibn Musa, along with 22 Alawids, was heading for Khurasan. The head of this caravan was Imam Ridha's sister, Lady Ma'sumah. Ma'mun ordered his security forces to attack the caravan and injure and disperse them. Haroon was also wounded and then killed by government. They even poisoned Lady Ma'sumah in Saweh, and she was martyred some days later in Qum.⁴⁹

Also, some historians acknowledged that the Saweh governor, who was an implacable enemy of the Ahlul Bayt, had his men attack and martyr all her companions. Deeply sorrowful, Lady Ma'sumah became ill and passed some days later in Qum.⁵⁰

12. Due to her mission and duty, and her knowledge of the future, Lady Ma'sumah started her migration. Hakimi said, "That great lady was inspired by God and far-sighted. She came to Qum because of the future of Qum and its prospective centrality—due to her grave located in it."⁵¹ In numerous hadiths and narrations before her birth, the Imams had given the news of a pure land as "the sanctuary for Prophet's Muhammad's household", where a lady from among the

⁴⁹ Muhammad Ali Rowdati, *ibid.*, p. 56.

⁵⁰ Mirza Muhammad Malik-ul-Kuttab Shirazi, *ibid.*, p. 160.

⁵¹ Muhammad-Rida Hakimi, *ibid.*, p. 40.

Ahlul Bayt [with her name mentioned] would pass away,⁵² and her burial place would be the land where lovers of the Ahlul Bayt and the Shi'as would gather and from where Islamic teachings would be disseminated. Knowing and prepared for this Divine providence, Lady Ma'sumah started her migration.⁵³

In authentic (mutawatir) hadiths, it is reported that when Lady Ma'sumah got seriously sick in Saweh, she asked about Qum. Seventeen days after she had reached Qum, she passed away.⁵⁴

13. Since the time of Imam Sadiq, integrated Alawid centres have been formed in Qum, Rey, Khurasan and Mazandaran. The presence of the Imams' offspring and Sadats among the Shi'as increasingly strengthened and integrated these centres, and they were considered a potential source for uprising and a threat to the rule of Abbasids. Hence, the Abbasid rulers diligently monitored them and attempted to prevent anything that would lead to their solidarity and unity. On the other hand, the Alawids and the Ahlul Bayt knew about such centres, and when migrating, they regarded them as the most secure bases where people truly loved the Ahlul Bayt. Accordingly, informed

⁵² Most traditions were reported from Imam Sadiq, who said, "Know that there is a Haram for God, and it is Mecca; there is a Haram for the Prophet, and it is Medina; and there is a Haram for Imam Ali, and it is Kufa. Know that the Haram of I and my offspring is Qum. Know that Qum is our small Kufa. Know that Heaven has eight doors, three of which opens from Qum. A lady from among my offspring, called Fatima the daughter of Musa al-Kadim, will pass away there. Through her intercession, all our Shi'as will enter Heaven" (Qadi Nurullah Shushtari, *Majalis al-Mu'minin*, Tehran, Islamiyah Publications, 1354 solar, vol. 1, p. 83; M.B. Majlisi, *ibid.*, vol. 60, p. 216; Abdul-Jalil Qazwini Razi, *al-Naqas*, Tehran, 1358 solar, p. 196).

⁵³ Perhaps Imam Musa al-Kadim named all his daughters Fatimah so that the chosen lady, "Fatimah al-Kubra" who would pass away in Qum could remain anonymous, but at the time of her migration to Qum, she became known to everybody.

⁵⁴ Sayyid Ja'far Ale-Bahr-ul-'Olum, *ibid.*, p. 36; M.B. Majlisi, *ibid.*, p. 50, p. 312.

of such places, Lady Ma'sumah migrated to Iran to be delivered from the Abbasid rule and to propagate and reinforce Shi'ism.

Among the factors in her migration, the following can be taken into account: joining Imam al-Ridha and visiting her beloved brother, reinforcing Shi'ite bases, and establishing a strong Shi'a organisation. Due to its zero-tolerance policy for Alawids, thus dispersing them, the Abbasid government was always ready to attack and eradicate the Shi'as. After Lady Ma'sumah and her brothers had left Medina for Iran, government agents secretly kept the Ahlul Bayt's caravan under surveillance to prevent their solidarity and thus any threat to the government.

14. The fact that Lady Ma'sumah did not get married is also worthy of note. It has been suggested: "Under the rule of Haroon al-Rashid (the Abbasid caliph) when there was suppression of dissenters, her father was imprisoned for a long time, and Alawids and Imams' offspring were limited overwhelmingly and lived in difficult social conditions, Lady Ma'sumah could not marry."⁵⁵ However, it is very likely that the main reason for not marrying was that there was no one who could match her in her high understanding, piety and devotion to God. If Imam Ali were not there Lady Fatimah also did not have any match (*kufw*) to marry. In his will, Imam Musa al-Kadhim gave Imam al-Ridha the authority to decide about his properties, manage the Ahlul Bayt, and give permission for marriage of his sisters and nieces.⁵⁶ In

⁵⁵ Muhammad Rida Hakimi, *ibid.*, p. 40.

⁵⁶ A part of his will reads as follows, "None of my daughters should be married off by their maternal brothers, kings, or their paternal uncles but after consulting with Imam Rida. If they do so, they have opposed God, His Prophet and have quarreled with God because he knows

his eloquent and exact will, Imam Musa al-Kadhim gave careful attention to the issue of Imamate and Wilayah since the Imams can be the best guide by virtue of their profound insight and knowledge of their time as well as their awareness of the Abbasid's plots and deceits. In the time of Umayyads and Abbasids sometimes there were political and forced marriages between Ahlul Bayt and government, and this could be dangerous, affecting Prophet's household negatively. For this reason, Imam Musa al-Kadhim gave the authority to Imam al-Ridha to manage this issue after him so he—through his ijtihad, awareness and superior religious and political knowledge—could make sure that the Ahlul Bayt would not become a puppet for the government.

The prediction by – and discernment of – Imam Musa al-Kadhim were very effective, as later the Abbasid government used marriage as means of penetrating into Imam al-Rida's family and forced the him and Imam Jawad to marry their daughters.

According to the historical accounts, Lady Ma'sumah did not marry perhaps because there was nobody matching her in terms of virtues. "As is reported, after Lady Zahra and Lady Zainab, it was Lady Ma'sumah who was the most virtuous lady in the Prophet's Ahlul Bayt."⁵⁷

The second possible reason is that considering her future and probable dangers in her journey and her possible love for – and

better about his family's interests and benefits in terms of marriage. Thus, whoever is or is not married by him should obey him" (Muhammad ibn Ya'qub Kulayni, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p 317.)

⁵⁷ Hassan Jalali Azizian, *ibid.*, p 162.

attachment to – her prospective family [as a result of marriage] which was an obstacle to the fulfilment of her duties, she did not marry so that she could start the migration and leave her homeland with peace of mind, establish a safe and secure base for the lovers of the Ahlul Bayt and migrants oppressed by the government, and create a centre for dissemination of Islamic sciences and teachings through her demise in a place far from her homeland.

Conclusion

Throughout history, the Ahlul Bayt have always been exposed to aggression and harassment by the usurpers of Caliphate. Since the inception of Caliphate, these usurpers formed a dishonest foundation to eradicate Imamate through deception, hypocrisy and religious pretension. However, the true Shi'as gathered around Imams to show that in the opposition between the truth and falsehood, they could resort to Imamate and the Imams' guidance to save the society from disbelief and hypocrisy, and establish the rule of justice under the leadership of the true heirs of Imamate and caliphate.

The wealthy, tyrannical, and pretentious rulers who could not tolerate the Ahlul Bayt and the Shi'as persecuted believers with the aim of eradicating them. Through economic sanctions, political pressures, cultural invasions and psychological propaganda, they attempted to deceive people and preserve their ephemeral worldly government. However, they were not aware of the fact that God had promised that truth would triumph over the falsehood, and had also willed that the deprived would be inheritors of the earth: "*And We desired to show favour unto those who were oppressed in the earth, and to make them examples and to make them the inheritors,*" (Qasas, 4).

In the economic and political life of Imam Rida and his beloved sister, Lady Ma'sumah, some events caused Imam Rida to be confined to the corrupt Abbasid court on the pretext of his becoming successor to Caliphate by Ma'mun, and—like his pure ancestors—he was finally poisoned and martyred due to his old enemy's grudge. After the migration of her Imam, Lady Ma'sumah had also left her homeland and had migrated from Medina to Iran until she got sick, and passed away and was buried in Qum.

Various reasons which can be examined from different perspectives have been given for Lady Ma'sumah's migration. However, on the whole, it can be concluded from the above discussion that Lady Ma'sumah's love for Imam Ridha went beyond the blood relations. This love can be traced back to the seeking and following the truth by the Ahlul Bayt, who always looked for the Divine path, followed their Imams, and treaded the path of truth through resorting to Imamate, the Qur'an and the Prophet's progeny.

In this path, they never feared hardships, adversity and government persecution and never succumbed to their enemy despite being oppressed. Rather, they stood strongly and firmly against the oppressors and fulfilled their duties, welcoming martyrdom, migration, imprisonment, and struggle with open arms.

In the struggle against the ruling oppression and disbelief, gender does not make any difference; both females and males act in accordance with their missions. Considering the political and social situations existing in her society, Lady Ma'sumah chose to migrate

along with her brothers. She had innocently welcomed the hardships in this path until she passed away and was buried by her Imam.⁵⁸ Hence, due to her efforts to fulfil her duties and by virtue of her excellent personality and manners, she is known as “Ma’sumah”,⁵⁹ (meaning the Infallible Woman),⁶⁰ “the female intercessor with God on the Day of Judgement,”⁶¹ and “Ale Taha Hadith narrator”.⁶²

Lady Ma’sumah’s migration to Qum had various impacts. Her presence in Qum led the Alawids and Sadat migrants and lovers of the Ahlul Bayt to flock to this city from all over the world. This

⁵⁸ At the burial service of Lady Ma’sumah, two disguised men riding horses (i.e., Imam Rida and Imam Jawad) appeared from the sandy area (the present-day river). They came quickly and prepared her for burial. One of them entered the grave and the other picked up her pure body and gave it to the former to be buried. After the burial service, they went away, riding their horses and speaking to nobody (M.B. Majlisi, *ibid.*, vol. 48, p. 290 and vol. 60, p. 219; Muhammad Qummi, *The History of Qum*, p. 213; Sheikh Abbas Qummi, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 376).

⁵⁹ After the death of Fatima al-Kubra, Imam Ridha first gave her the epithet of “Ma’sumah” (the Infallible Lady) and said, “Whoever visits Lady Ma’sumah’s holy shrine in Qum, it is as if he visited me [my holy shrine]” (Mirza Muhammad Taqi Khan Sepehr, *Nasikh a-Tawarikh*, Tehran, Islamiyah Publications, 1363 solar, vol. 3, p. 68; Zabihullah Mahallati, *ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 35).

⁶⁰ It is said that Ayatullah Mar’ashi had made a lot of efforts to find the grave of Lady Zahra until in his dream, he was told to resort to Lady Ma’sumah’s holy shrine (the Generous Lady from among Ahl-ul-Bayt) because God willed Lady Zahra’s grave to remain hidden. The same glory and magnificent were given to the grave of Lady Ma’sumah’s grave (A.A. Mahdipour, *ibid.*, p. 44).

⁶¹ Shi’a belief in intercession of Ahl-ul-Bayt is an important tenet of Shi’ism. Among the Infallibles, two female intercessors on the Day of Judgement are referred to: Lady Zahra and Lady Ma’sumah. Hence, a sentence in her Ziyarah given by Imam Rida reads as follow, “O’ Fatimah! Intercede for us in Heaven” (M.B. Majlisi, *ibid.*, vol. 102, p. 266; Muhammad Qummi, *ibid.*, p. 74).

⁶² Some authentic and well-known hadiths were reported from Lady Ma’sumah with its chain of narrators. Generally, they refer to salvation of Shi’a, attention to and love for Ahl-ul-Bayt, and the Prophet’s words on the day of Ghadir Khumm. According to these Hadiths, the neglect of prophethood, Imamate and Wilayah was the main factor in the social corruption after the Prophet’s demise (Muhammad Sharif Razi, *Athar al-Hujjah*, p. 84; Ahmad Banpour, *ibid.*, p. 63, 67; M.B. Majlisi, *ibid.*, vol. 68, p. 77).

gradually resulted in the concentration of resources in it and its development. Among the other fruits of her migration to Qum are the establishment of a base of Shi'a teachings and Islamic seminaries there and dissemination of Ja'fari Jurisprudence from Qum.

Qum, with its long history, played a significant role in propagating Shi'ism in the Islamic world, training Shi'a political, jurisprudential and scientific elites, brave Shi'a scholars who struggled in the way of God, and the lovers of Ahlul Bayt. Thanks to the blessed presence of the 8th Imam, Ali ibn Musa al-Rida, in Mashhad and Lady Ma'sumah in Qum, and due to their proximity to God and their great souls, Iranians have always been showered with divine blessings and mercy.

Let us finish this paper with a hadith from Imam Rida: "Whoever visits her holy shrine while knowing her right [her high spiritual rank] will enter Heaven."⁶³

⁶³ Husayn (Tabatabai) Boroujerdi, *Jami' Ahadith a-Shi'a*, vol. 12, Qum, 1399 A.H., p. 617; Abdullah Bahrani, *'Awalim*, Qum, 1409 A.H., p. 230; M.B. Majlisi, *ibid.*, vol. 102, p. 265 & 247 and vol. 48, p. 316. «مَنْ زَارَهَا عَارِفًا بِحَقِّهَا فَلَهُ الْجَنَّةُ»

COMMUNITY BUILDING IN ISLAM, PART IV¹

MOHAMMAD ALI SHOMALI

ABSTRACT: Having a shared identity working towards a joint cause is vital for a healthy community. In doing so, a community must share specific qualities in order to be successful. This series of papers offers a glimpse into the importance of community-building and Prophet Muhammad's efforts to implement it. Character traits such as truthfulness, trustworthiness, justice, unity, moderation, humbleness, enjoining good and forbidding wrong, and maintaining a healthy balance in working for this world to eventually lead to a blissful hereafter were illustrated. Another important quality of a successful community is their implementation of justice, also one of the principles of Shi'i Islam. This article expands on Allah's justice in the Qur'an, early controversy on the meaning of Allah's justice, the Shi'a view of justice, the necessity for establishing social justice, having just leaders, and examples of justice observed by the Ahlul Bayt.

Introduction

One of the vital qualities of an Islamic Community is its commitment to justice. In the previous part, verses 181 and 159 of the Chapter

¹ This series is based on a nine-session course conducted by the author on Community Building at the Islamic Centre of England in London in 2009.

A'raf were reflected on. Verse 159 is about a group of followers of Prophet Musa, and verse 181 then generalises the same theme:

وَمِن قَوْمِ مُوسَىٰ أُمَّةٌ يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ

Among the people of Moses is a nation who guide [the people] by the truth and do justice thereby.

وَمِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا أُمَّةٌ يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ

Among the people of Moses is a nation who guide [the people] by the truth and do justice thereby.

So among the people created by Allah there is a group, a community of people, who guide and judge truthfully.

These truthful people also observe justice. In what follows we study aspects of divine justice and then try to explore more the notion of social justice, a concept especially important for followers of the Ahlul Bayt, because justice has historically been considered as one of the principles of Shi'ism. In addition to the Unity of God, prophethood and resurrection – which are recognised by all Muslims and indeed by the followers of all Abrahamic faiths – the followers of the Ahlul Bayt have particularly emphasized on two other things: justice and Imamate. For this reason, it is essential to talk about justice, and in particular social justice.

Divine justice in the Qur'an

In the Qur'an, Allah frequently speaks of His justice. Of course, there is no verse of the Qur'an in which Allah introduces Himself as being '*Ādil*' because this is usually used in the Qur'anic usage only for human beings. However, what is mentioned is that Allah is not a *ẓālim*; Allah does not oppress or do injustice. Therefore, all Muslims

have emphasised that Allah is Just and does not do any injustice, but, as will be explained later, there has been disagreement amongst them on the meaning of justice.

First, we will read some verses of the Qur'an about Divine Justice and then proceed to examine the theological differences that exist amongst Muslims on this topic.

In in the Qur'an, Allah states that He is not in the least unjust to His servants (3:182, 8:51, 22:10). Thus, not even the slightest amount of injustice is exercised by God. In His creation and in His treatment of human beings, whether in this world or the hereafter, it is impossible that Allah commits any form of injustice towards His servants. A few examples among many:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِلْعَبِيدِ

Whoever acts righteously, it is for his own soul, and whoever does evil, it is to its detriment, and your Lord is not tyrannical to the servants. (41:46)

مَا يُبَدِّلُ الْقَوْلُ لَدَيَّ وَمَا أَنَا بِظَلَّامٍ لِلْعَبِيدِ

The word [of judgement] is unalterable with Me, and I am not tyrannical to the servants.' (50:29)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ وَإِنْ تَكَ حَسَنَةً يضاعفها وَيؤتِ مِنْ لَدُنْهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Indeed Allah does not wrong [anyone] [even to the extent of] an atom's weight, and if it be a good deed He doubles it[s reward], and gives from Himself a great reward. (4:40)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ النَّاسَ شَيْئًا وَلَكِنَّ النَّاسَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

Indeed Allah does not wrong people in the least; rather it is people who wrong themselves. (10:44)

Thus no Muslim would doubt that God does not commit any form of injustice.

Earlier controversy about the meaning of Allah's justice

In the early days of Islam, there was a disagreement about the meaning of justice. Some Muslims were of the opinion that by definition, God is just; they attempted to simplify the issue and thus avoid an important question by holding that whatever God does is just and hence, by definition, God does not do any injustice. Because if we say justice is what God does, then injustice is what God does not do. These people were the Ash'arites who believed in some form of what is known in the West as Divine Command Theory – the idea that justice, or in a more general sense, good, is whatever is commanded or done by God. There is no possibility for us to either question God's actions or to comment on whether they are just or not. Indeed, they believe that we have to understand what justice is by looking at what God does or what He says; whether God sends good people to Heaven or to Hell, it is all up to Him, and either action is just.

However, the Shi'a and the Mu'tazilites had a different attitude towards justice. To them, justice is an objective matter, possible to understand it rationally. So first, we should believe justice is real and objective and then proceed to understand it rationally. It is not necessary to be religious to understand that, for example, we should not physically abuse and mistreat a child, or misappropriate the

property of other people. It is obvious to any rational person that these are examples of injustice.

The followers of the Ahlul Bayt believe that justice is something that exists in reality; whether we are religious or not, we have the ability to understand and discern the difference between what is just and what is not just. Of course, we may need to refer to religious texts regarding details, but initially this understanding is essential to have even prior to becoming faithful. The Ash'arites believed that if we deny the ability of human beings to distinguish between what is just or unjust, then eventually we cannot even prove the existence of God, nor can we verify the truth of religion. This became a heated debate between early Muslim theologians and continues to the present day.

The Shi'a view of justice

The Shi'a held to the ideas of intrinsic goodness and badness, and intrinsic and rational justice. They maintained that justice is real and possible for us to understand its principles rationally. For this reason, the followers of the Ahlul Bayt chose justice as one of the principles of their faith to distinguish themselves from those who denied this necessary understanding of justice.

This is a theological debate, which requires a great deal of time to properly and adequately analyse and discuss it. However, we can briefly say that for the Shi'a, the issue of Divine Justice is not merely something that we must believe about God so that, for example, when we die we will be able to say 'God is Just' when questioned about this. On the contrary, justice is an important factor in our lives and in deciding what type of person we should be and what type of society we should have. In other words, for the followers of the Ahlul Bayt,

Divine Justice must be echoed in our relationships with each other. If God is Just, He expects us to be just. If He treats us with justice, we also must treat each other with justice.

Necessity for the establishment of social justice

Allah has sent the prophets with an important mission, as mentioned in the Qur'an. This is one of the arguments, among many, that prove the necessity of social justice:

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ

Certainly We sent Our apostles with manifest proofs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that mankind may maintain justice. (57:25)

Our scholars have discussed the various meanings of 'al-mizān' ('the Balance') in depth. Some think it is Islamic Law whilst others hold it to be the ability of mankind to differentiate between what is good or bad, and what is right or wrong. Others believe that this 'Balance' is the Qur'an itself, and so it is mentioned for emphasis. But what is most important is that Allah provided us with enough guidance to understand our duties, and in particular, to be able to strike a balance which, as previously explained, is of great necessity for a true Islamic community.

Mankind must establish social justice

From the verse 57:25, we understand that the reason Allah provided the prophets with Books and the Balance (or Scale) was to guide and help people in establishing justice. It is important to note that it is not the prophets who are expected to establish social justice. They have not been sent to do everything for us so that we sit idly by, and just

enjoy social justice once the prophets have made efforts and established it.

For example Allah explains when Prophet Musa told some of the Bani Israel to enter the Holy Land, they replied that in this land there were strong and powerful people, and so they were afraid to enter. They told Prophet Musa to go along with *his* Lord fight them, so that when those people were destroyed and peace was established, they would arrive to enjoy it.²

However this attitude is certainly not accepted by Allah. We are not permitted to remain idle, waiting for Allah and His prophets to do everything for us. The reality of the matter is that the prophets have come to guide us, but in the end, we who are to establish social justice. In general, the Qur'an tells us:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ

Indeed Allah does not change a people's lot, unless they change what is in their souls. (13:11)

Allah's Justice must be reflected in society

Divine Justice must be reflected and echoed in society. Our Lord is Just, and therefore He expects us to have a just society in which there is equity, no discrimination, and everyone can progress according to their talents and efforts. Furthermore, in such a society, people can attain nearness to Allah. If we want people who are spiritual and

² The Qur'an 5:24:

They said: "O Moses! while they remain there, never shall we be able to enter, to the end of time. Go thou, and thy Lord, and fight ye two, while we sit here (and watch)."

religious, who have time and energy to focus on their spiritual needs, we need to have a just society, because when there is no justice, the energy of people is wasted, their talents are disregarded, and tyrants and unjust rulers waste everything. Of course, it is still possible to have good people under such conditions but only truly dedicated people can become good in a society which is unjust. However, when we have social justice, then the masses can become good.

Observing justice

In Chapter al-Nahl, a beautiful verse summarises Islamic teachings, and if we implement this verse then surely ninety percent of our problems would disappear:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ
وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

Indeed Allah enjoins justice and kindness and generosity towards relatives, and He forbids indecency, wrong, and aggression. He advises you, so that you may take admonition. (16:90)

So God asks, and indeed commands us, to observe justice and benevolence, to do good to ourselves and to others, and to give what is needed to our relatives. On the other hand, Allah asks us not to do injustice or ugly actions - a simple yet concise and profound verse. If we observe justice and do good to each other, by first looking after our own relatives and the people we know, society will become free of problems or crises.

Justice as a requirement for important positions

Shi'a jurists have emphasised on the condition of justice in many cases in jurisprudence as a requirement or a qualification for many

positions. For example, we believe that imam of a masjid who leads the prayer must be just. This means that not only must he not do injustice to others, he must not even commit any injustice to himself by committing sins. This shows that even if someone lives alone in a desert, there is still the opportunity to be just or unjust. Though other people are not present, that person may still be unjust to himself or herself by committing sins. In Chapter *Divorce*, Allah says:

وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ لَا تَدْرِي لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ أَمْرًا

...and whoever transgresses the bounds of Allah certainly wrongs himself. You never know maybe Allah will bring off something new later on. (65:1)

So if we commit a sin such as missing just one compulsory prayer, lying, or eating impermissible foods, we are doing injustice, to ourselves. We read in the Supplication of Kumayl:

ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي

I have wronged myself.

Furthermore, if, for example, someone has the potential to become a very good person but is then satisfied with something lower than that, then they are doing injustice to themselves. If someone has the ability to become a top scholar and then wastes their time, energy and talents, they are doing injustice to themselves. If someone is capable of being a good driver and does not drive properly, then they are doing injustice to themselves. So injustice to ourselves is when we disregard or waste our talents, energies, potentials, time and resources at our disposal.

Some may think that we do injustice to Allah, but this can never happen. In reality we are doing injustice to ourselves, not to Allah.

Even in the case of doing injustice to other people, before we harm others by doing injustice to them, we are firstly harming and doing injustice to ourselves. If someone hurts another person, they are firstly hurting themselves. If, for example, they mistreat, humiliate or insult someone else, before doing this to the other person they have degraded themselves. They have damaged their own dignity before damaging the other person. If someone has a sense of respect and honour for themselves, then they will not mistreat others.

For the followers of the Ahlul Bayt, the concept of justice not only concerns our relationships with others; justice starts from within and then reaches out.

The imam of a masjid, the Friday Prayers leader (imam of Jum'ah), and the narrators of hadith and the scholars are among those people of status who must be just.³

The people who narrate hadith must also be just; if not, then the hadith will be ranked lower. The chain of narrators of a particular

³ Imam Khomeini, in his *Tahrir al-Wasilah*, explains the difference between the a) requirement of justice for the imam of a masjid and b) the imam of Jum'ah. If the people believe the imam of a masjid to be just, it is sufficient. For example, the imam may not personally believe that he is just although the people following him believe he is, so it is valid for those followers to make the intention of following him in congregational prayers and thus receive the increased reward for joining a congregational prayer, whilst the imam has made the intention of individual prayer. Since the imam does not believe he is just, he does not make the intention of being the imam of the congregational prayers and simply says his own prayers. However, in the case of Friday Prayers, Imam Khomeini believed that the imam must make the intention of leading the prayer; therefore, he must himself believe that he is just.

hadith must all be known to be just for that hadith to be authentic (*sahih*), which is the highest ranking for a hadith. If they are not known to be just, then at least they must be honest for the hadith to be considered good (*hasan*) and is ranked lower. It is preferable that they are just, because with a just person, you can trust their entire personality and conduct, but someone who tells the truth but is unjust and commits sins is very much at the verge of moral collapse and could also easily start to tell lies.⁴

The religious authority (*marāji*) must be just and not commit any sins, in addition to being the most knowledgeable. Furthermore, a leader, a judge and witnesses who come to court to bear witness and give their testimony in front of a judge must all be just.

Justice in the history of Islam

The following are some examples in the course of Islam that illustrate emphasis on justice.

Justice observed by the Prophet

In the same year as the Conquest of Mecca, when the Prophet and the Muslims entered peacefully Mecca, a woman from a noble and well-known family committed theft. So the Prophet decided that it was necessary to bring her to justice. Some argued that she came from a rich and noble family, and the punishment would not look good for

⁴ For example, if someone wrongs his neighbour but is a truthful person, one might ask how this relates to the narration of hadith because it is surely sufficient that the person tells the truth. In response, we may say that the person who wrongs their neighbour does not have a just and balanced personality; if they are able to do one wrong action, they would more easily do the second and so forth.

them, but the Prophet did not consent. The Prophet then said something very important: that the reason previous nations had been destroyed was because they administered justice only when the poor committed crimes, whereas it was ignored when the rich did the same.

Imam Ali accepts the Caliphate only to implement social justice

After the death of the third caliph, Imam Ali was forced to accept the Caliphate. Though he had refused to accept it, people insisted and forced him so much that in *Nahjul Balaghah*, Sermon 3, also known as his *Sermon of ash-Shiqshiqiyah*, he explains that the pressure and the size of the crowd was so overwhelming that Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn were knocked down by the crowd and fell under the feet of people. We should remember that Imam Hassan and Imam Husayn were not children at that time; they were young men. Thus, so much pressure was exercised that Imam Ali accepted to become the caliph. Then Imam made the following statement:

أَمَا وَالَّذِي فَلَقَ الْحَبَّةَ، وَبَرَأَ النَّسَمَةَ، لَوْلَا حُضُورُ الْحَاضِرِ، وَقِيَامُ الْحُجَّةِ بِوُجُودِ النَّاصِرِ،
وَمَا أَخَذَ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْعُلَمَاءِ إِلَّا يُقَارُوا عَلَى كِبَالَةٍ ظَالِمٍ، وَلَا سَعَبٍ مَظْلُومٍ، لَأَلْقَيْتُ حَبْلَهَا
عَلَى غَارِبِهَا، وَلَسَقَيْتُ آخِرَهَا بِكَأْسِ أَوْلِيهَا، وَلَا لَقَيْتُمْ دُنْيَاكُمْ هَذِهِ أَرْهَدَ عِنْدِي مِنْ عَنُقَةِ عَنَزْ

Behold, by Him who split the grain (to grow) and created living beings, if people had not come to me and supporters had not exhausted the argument and if there had been no pledge of Allah with the learned to the effect that they should not acquiesce in the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed I would have cast the rope of Caliphate on its own shoulders, and would have given the last one the same treatment as to the first one. Then you would have seen that in my

view this world of yours is no better than the sneezing of a goat.

Imam Ali said that he had no excuse to refuse because so many people were coming to show their readiness to support him; he accepted the caliphate because there were supporters, and he felt great responsibility as a knowledgeable person to do so. Then Imam Ali compares the caliphate to a camel, saying that if the conditions were not like this, he would have put the rope onto the back of the camel and sent it off, and then the people would have seen that he had no interest in dunya. He said that their dunya was less valuable for him than the water that comes out of the nose of a goat. This is the insignificance of dunya for Imam Ali. He accepted the caliphate solely to implement social justice with the availability of supporters.

Those in power should live according to the level of the poor

In Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 208, Imam Ali said: “Certainly God the Sublime has made it obligatory on true believers that they maintain themselves at the level of the humble so that the poor do not cry out over their property.” Ordinary people can be rich, but leaders and the people who hold power such, as the Imam, for example, or the supreme leader, should try to adjust their lifestyle so that the poor do not feel that their leaders are living on another planet and have nothing in common with them.

Responsibility to help the oppressed

The general responsibility of every person not to remain silent in the face of injustice is very important in Islam, especially so in the school

of the Ahlul Bayt. If someone is being treated with injustice and they are in need of our help, we have a duty to go and help them.

There is a story about a treaty called '*Hilf al-Fuḍūl*'. An important event took place during the Era of Ignorance before Islam, when the Prophet was very young. A person went to Mecca for trade. The trader left his property, some possessions and money in safe-keeping with one of the Meccans, but then when he went to collect them, the Meccan denied responsibility and refused to return them. This would frequently occur in Mecca. The wronged could not do anything because there was no justice at that time and because they were strangers and therefore had no supporters.

Thus, the wronged trader went to the top of Mount Abu Qubays and shouted out loud to the people, explaining what had happened to him. Then a group of young Meccans came together and decided to support him. They made a treaty amongst themselves, known as '*Hilf al-Fuḍūl*', in which they would support anyone who was wronged. These young people, including Prophet Muhammad, decided to help that man and this treaty continued to be implemented. Indeed, even after Islam, the Prophet said that if he was called upon to act according to the treaty that they had, he would still continue and help those people.

Thus, this is such an important responsibility that even non-Muslims realised this and acted accordingly. This concurs with what we said about justice being a concept that every person who has reason and conscience would understand it.

The importance of confronting unjust rulers

Therefore, according to Islam, we must react when someone is committing injustice, especially if this injustice is done by those in power. We cannot remain indifferent and inactive in the face of injustice. Prophet Muhammad said, and Imam Husayn has also this quoted from him:

“The best jihad, the best struggle, is to utter the word of justice in front of an unjust leader.”

This is so because the leader is the one who has power. When the rights of people are violated by kings, presidents, caliphs, and so forth, then it is a great struggle to confront them. This is why Imam Husayn stood against Yazid although he knew that the cost would be the loss of his life and the lives of many others, and that his family would be taken captive. However, justice is so important that the Imam could not, and did not, remain silent.

Furthermore, all our Imams, apart from Imam Mahdi (atf), were martyred. This happened precisely because they did not remain silent in the face of oppression. They did not merely want to worship Allah, for example, by visiting Mecca and Madinah to sit in Masjid ul-Haram or in the Masjid of the Prophet and worship. On the contrary, the Imams were extremely concerned about social justice, and because the caliphs rule during their lifetimes were not able to silence them using threats or bribery, they were killed. Due to the great importance of justice, we see that the history of the Shi'a is full of uprisings which were not for material gain but simply to establish justice. If justice was observed, then the Imams did not want anything from this dunya;

they had no interest in power, or other people's property, money or land. What they wanted was justice to be implemented for everyone.

Right of people to protest at injustice

One of the requirements of an Islamic community and in particular of an Islamic government is to allow people to object and protest if they see that there is something wrong with their community or government and that injustice is being committed. In the chapter *Al-Imran*, we read about the concept of enjoining right and forbidding wrong:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ
بِاللَّهِ

You are the best nation [ever] brought forth for mankind: you bid what is right and forbid what is wrong, and have faith in Allah. (3:110)

Enjoining good must always be put into practice. In particular, Imam Ali focused a great deal on this because during the brief period of his Caliphate, which only lasted under five years, he was faced with the implementation of running a government. Imam Ali very much wanted to establish the right of people to protest at injustice, but unfortunately time was too short and after him matters went in the wrong direction again. The Caliphate eventually became like a kingdom once more.

However, during his caliphate, Imam Ali was extremely careful to give people the courage to come and protest and to make complaints about his agents or even about himself, so much so that during his Caliphate he himself was taken to court.

Imam Ali taken to court

Someone claimed that his sword, or a similar object, had been misappropriated by Imam Ali and so he demanded that Imam Ali be taken to court, in which the Imam politely and willingly accepted. The judge did not ask why the Caliph was brought to court because he knew that the Imam was pleased with the situation. Furthermore, when the judge addressed Imam Ali by his 'kunya' or title of 'Abul Hasan' and only addressed the other person by his ordinary name, Imam Ali insisted that they must both be treated equally. Moreover, in the end, Imam Ali lost the case because he did not have enough evidence.

Imam Ali's advice to Malik al-Ashtar

Imam Ali appointed Malik al-Ashtar as Governor of Egypt. Unfortunately, Malik was killed by poisoning before reaching Egypt. However, because Malik was appointed as governor, the Imam gave him instructions to fulfil this role, and those instructions by themselves are crucial as they are Imam Ali's instructions on how to govern. Some have even been quoted by the United Nations in its 2002 Arab Human Development Report.

Fourteen centuries ago, before any philosopher articulated liberty in such a way, Imam Ali made the following beautiful point, found in his letter to Malik al-Ashtar in *Nahj ul-Balaghah*, Letter 53:

The Imam Ali advises Malik al-Ashtar that during his office hours he must allocate a certain amount of time for those who are dissatisfied and displeased and for those who want to approach him with their grievances and their problems, for example if they have been

mistreated by the Governor's agents. During this time he should not do anything else except listen to them. For example he should not be reading something whilst and letting them speak. He must treat them very nicely, give his full attention to them and pay careful attention to their complaints and grievances. So for this purpose he must arrange a public audience for them during which, for the sake of God, he must treat them with kindness, courtesy and respect. These are people who want and need to come and complain. He must not let the army and police be in the audience hall at such times because if guards or police are there, then people will be frightened and unable to speak. So he must not let the army and police be in the audience hall at such times so that those who have grievances against his rule may speak to him freely, unreservedly and without fear.

In Letter 53 in Nahj ul Balaghah, narrating from the Holy Prophet, Imam Ali says that Prophet Muhammad (s) said:

No community, no nation, no society will be mighty, will be strong, will be powerful unless the rights of the depressed, destitute and suppressed are observed.

If there is a society in which people who are weak, poor and oppressed cannot claim their rights then this community or society will not become strong and indeed will perish.

Justice in the light of the history of the Ahlul Bayt

There are two highlights in the history of Islam and the Ahlul Bayt (a). One is the event of Karbala and the other is the advent of Imam Mahdi.

Imam Husayn in Karbala

When we study the history of Imam Husayn (a) and the event of Karbala, we find that the main thing we learn about was that Imam stood against injustice. For example, Imam said:

I see death as salvation and life with the oppressors
as misfortune.

Living a life during which we see that people are being treated unjustly, is really not a life worth living.

In another Hadith from Imam Husayn (a) he said:

O people! Whoever witnesses an unjust ruler permitting acts prohibited by God , breaking Divine Covenants, acting against the Sunnah of the Prophet and treating people sinfully and with enmity, whoever witnesses all this and does not protest in word or deed, God has the right to treat them in the same way that e treats those oppressor.

Therefore if we witness such acts of injustice and remain indifferent, then Allah will treat us in the same way that He treats the person who committed those unjust actions.

Imam Mahdi (atf)

When we read the hundreds of Hadith which are about Imam Mahdi, narrated by both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, we discover that the main

task and achievement of Imam Mahdi is to establish justice. This is his main task at the top of his agenda. Through Imam Mahdi and his supporters, Allah will establish justice and equity, so much so that the earth will be filled with justice and equity after being filled with injustice and discrimination.

So in the ideal society, which will take shape at the end of time and which is the final outcome of the whole history of mankind on this earth, top priority will be given to establishing social justice. A society will be created in which all people are treated equally; no one's right will be disregarded, no one will be humiliated, and no one will be deprived.

Conclusion

Every person firstly has the responsibility of achieving justice within themselves and of giving everything its due right. Our body has some rights over us as well as our soul. After this, our family, children and spouse, friends, neighbours, fellow human beings and even animals and plants, all have rights over us. In order to be just, we must observe all of these rights.

In the case of society, it can only be considered Islamic if full respect is given to the rights of all people and all things in that society. We cannot even disregard the rights of animals, the rights of plants or the rights of nature and the environment. Absolutely everything must be handled with justice. In this way, Divine Justice will be reflected amongst us.

With Allah's support and our best and sincere efforts to firstly be just ourselves, we can then help with the establishment of justice in our society and then throughout the entire world, insha Allah.