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Shia Theology and Beliefs

Vol. 2

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Shia Theology and Beliefs

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Translators Foreword

Although utmost care has been taken to translate the hadiths and verses of the Quran quoted in this work in an appropriate manner, yet in some instances a precise translation that would be understandable for an English speaking audience could not be made. Thus in some minor cases, the meaning of the verse or hadith has been presented without a literal translation of the original Arabic. The same trend has also been used in translating the main text of the book.

Due to cultural differences between the audiences intended in the original Persian script of the text and the English translation, some sections of the book have been slightly modified to take these differences into account. Some small sections have also been removed.

The transliteration used is in accordance with the following table:

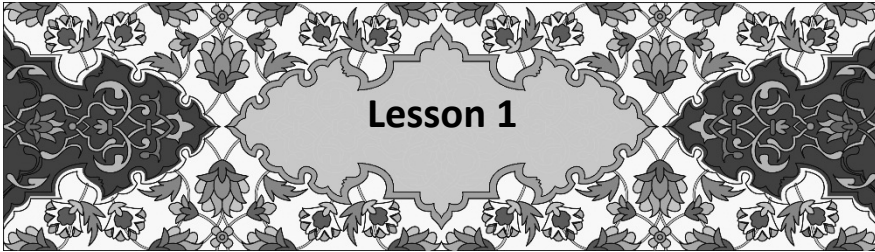
Symbol	Transliteration	Symbol	Transliteration	Vowels:	
ء	'	ط	ṭ	Long:	
ب	B	ظ	ẓ	اَ، آ	ā
ت	T	ع	`	و	ū
ث	Th	غ	gh	ى	ī
ج	J	ف	f	Short:	
ح	ḥ	ق	q	ـَ	a
خ	Kh	ك	k	ـِ	u
د	D	ل	L	ـِ	i
ذ	dh	م	M	Diphthongs:	
ر	R	ن	N	أو	au, aw
ز	Z	ه	h	أى	ay
س	S	و	w		
ش	sh	ى	y		
ص	ṣ	ة	a, at		
ض	ḍ	ال	al-, l-		



CHAPTER 1:

Imamate





The Importance of Knowing and Recognizing the Imams



We will start this section by speaking about the importance of having belief in the Imams and recognizing them and their station. Those that oppose the Imams try to dismiss this very important topic as being a mere historical difference that is irrelevant today. In the current lesson we will speak about the importance of Imamate in the Islamic Belief.



One of the most fundamental articles of faith in Shia Islam is the belief in the leadership of immaculate guides sent by God after the death of Muhammad, peace be upon him and his family. Historically, the issue of imamate was the very first and most important topic that became a cause of difference between the followers of the Prophet of Islam. This became a hot topic of debate and scholarship among the scholars of all Islamic sects.¹ Shia scholars have dedicated many chapters among their historical, exegetical, hadith, polemic, and apologetic books to this topic.² Many early Shia scholars have written treatises about the issue of imamate and held apologetic debate sessions in this regard.

The first step in understanding the concept of imamate is to define imamate in a correct and detailed manner and then show that it is a fundamental issue for Muslims and Muslim societies.

1- The Definition of Imamate

Imamate means to lead and Imam is defined in Arabic lexicons as a person that leads a group regardless of that leader being guided and just or astray and unjust.³ Among Muslim scholars Imamate is the station of religious and political leadership after the Prophet of Islam, peace be upon him and his family. According to the Sunni scholar Taftāzānī Imamate is:

¹ Nāshī al-Akbar, *Masā'il al-imāma*, p. 177.

² Yazdī Muṭṭlaq, *Imāmat pajūhī*, p. 22 (citing *Mu`jam mā nuqil `an al-rasūl wa ahl al-bayt*, vol. 5, p.133 & vol. 10, p. 69).

³ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-`arab*, vol. 12, p. 24.

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“The general leadership in affairs related to this world and the hereafter as a successor of the Prophet.”¹

Other Shia and Sunni scholars have more or less agreed to this meaning.²

The issue of imamate has been referred to in the Quran using different terms. The word Imam and its plural form *a'imma* have been mentioned in twelve verses. In all these verses the word Imam is used to refer to a leader or leadership.³

Two other words come to mind when speaking about imamate: Shia and Sunni. Shia literally means follower or helper⁴ and Sunni is someone who follows a custom.⁵ When these words are used in relation with Imamate a more detailed definition is intended. Shia is considered as someone who believes that after the Prophet of Islam the station of imamate is the sole right of Imam Ali b. Abī Ṭālib and eleven people from his descendants who were selected by God and publicly announced by the Prophet. The Shia believe that they must follow these twelve Imams. On the other hand Sunnis believe that the Prophet was succeeded by three caliphs and after them by Imam Ali.⁶

¹ Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ-i maqāṣid*, vol. 5, p. 232.

² See Al-Qūshjī, *Sharḥ-i tajrīd al-`aqa'id*, p. 365; Ījī, *Sharḥ-i mawāqif*, vol. 8, p. 376; Astarābādī, *al-Barāhīn alqaṭi'a fī sharḥ-i tajrīd al-`aqa'id al-sāṭi'a*, vol. 3, p. 205; al-Ḥillī, *Nahj al-ḥaq wa kashf al-ṣidq*, p. 171; al-Ardabīlī, *Al-Ḥāshiyā `alā ilāhiyāt al-sharḥ al-jadīd lil-tajrīd*, p. 178.

³ See Quran, 2:124; 9:12; 15:79; 17:71; 21:73; 32:24; 25:74; 11:17; 28:5 & 41; 46:12; 36:12.

⁴ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-`arab*, vol. 8, p. 88.

⁵ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-`arab*, vol. 13, p. 220.

⁶ Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa l-niḥal*, vol. 1, p. 146 and Al-Ṭabarī, *Tuḥfat al-abrār fī manāqib a'immat al-aṭhār*, p. 131.

2- The Importance of Investigating the Issue of Imamate

Imamate is a fundamental article of faith and all Muslims must investigate it. At least three areas must be studied and pondered upon in this regard:

a- Imamate from the Perspective of `Aql and Reason

Is it possible that God had introduced a successor to the Prophet? If yes, who? If there is the smallest possibility that such a person was indeed introduced that had authority over the people and was assigned by God as a guide and teacher of His Religion, then it would be rational to search for this individual and find him. If such a person exists but we don't strive to find him, then we will have no excuse on Judgment Day.¹

b- The Role of Imamate in the Islamic Belief

The Quran and hadith are unanimous that imamate plays a major role in Islamic belief and theology. For example the Quran states:

“O believers! Obey God and obey the Messenger and those that possess authority among you.”²

According to this verse, it is compulsory to obey those that possess authority and this obedience has been mentioned alongside obeying God and His Messenger. However, before those that possess authority are obeyed, they must be recognized and there is no way to recognize these people but by thorough and detailed investigation of historical texts and

¹ Šāfi Golpāygānī, *Nizāmi imāmat wa rahbarī*, p.1.

² Quran, 4:59.

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scripture and no one will be excused for not trying to recognize these figures.¹

The significance of imamate among other fundamental Islamic beliefs is explained by Imam al-Bāqir while interpreting the verse “You are a warner and for every nation there is a guide”²:

“The Messenger of God is the warner and in every age there is a guide from among us that guides [the people] to what the Prophet of Allah has brought.”³

This hadith shows the importance of imamate and its everlasting role as a system of guidance that God has put in place after the death of the Prophet. Without the station of imamate religion is incomplete and will not reach perfection. Imam al-Riḍā states:

“Imamate is what makes religion complete ... he who thinks God, Mighty and Majestic Be He, has not completed His Religion has refuted the Book of Allah and he who refutes the book of Allah is an infidel.”⁴

The Prophet of Islam taught the laws, customs, and teachings of Islam that the people of his age needed. However, there were other teachings that were not mentioned because the time had not yet come for them to be applied. There are also many theological issues that have not been explained in detail. These were conveyed to his successor Imam Ali and

¹ Ṣāfi Golpāygānī, *Nizāmi imāmat wa rahbarī*, p.1.

² Quran, 13:7.

³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 191; al-`Ayyāshī, *al-Taḥfī*, vol. 2, p. 204; and Astarābādī, *Ta`wīl al-āyāt*, p. 236.

⁴ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 198; al-Nu`mānī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 217; al-Ṣadūq, *al-Amālī*, p. 674.

the Imams from his descendants to be made manifest in the future when needed.¹

It is clear that the belief in imamate is an article of faith and believing in the correct religion is not possible but by first recognizing the Imams and their guidance. Furthermore, the importance of recognizing the Imams has been explicitly mentioned by the Prophet:

“He who dies without recognizing the Imam of his age has died a death of ignorance.”²

c- The Consequences of Disregarding the Imams

The role that the Imams play in protecting Islam can be better understood by studying the results of ignoring the Imams throughout history. After the Prophet passed away, the Abbasids and Ummayyads took the reins of leadership and installed ruthless and corrupt tyrants like Yazīd and al-Manṣūr al-Dawāniqī that oppressed the people in every manner possible.³

If people had referred to the Imams, innovations would not have been introduced and the corrupt and unworthy would not have taken over the leadership of the Islamic society and would not have deviated it from the straight path that was founded by the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family.

¹ Al-ʿAskarī, *Naqsh-i aʿimmih dar iḥyāʾi dīn*, vol. 2, p. 25.

² Al-Barqī, *al-Maḥāsīn*, vol. 1, p. 153.

³ Al-Ṭabarī, *al-Tārīkh*, vol. 1, p. 279 and vol. 4, p. 225; al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-khulafā*, pp. 137 & 223; al-Yaʿqūbī, *al-Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 190; and Ibn Qutayba al-Dīnawarī, *al-Imāma wa l-siyāsa*, p. 223.

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These great deviations and corruptions were initiated when the leadership of Islam was taken from its righteous owners and given to the ignorant that had no share in it, who then proceeded to perform all kinds of un-Islamic and unjust acts in the name of Islam.¹

What occurred in the battles of Jamal, Nahrawān, and Şiffin where a large group of Muslims stood against Imam Ali using weak arguments, were all the results of the Islamic society being led by those that are unworthy of this position.

Thus, it is of great importance that all Muslims peruse the issue of Imamate without prejudice and investigate their religious beliefs and defend them with all their might.²

Questions:

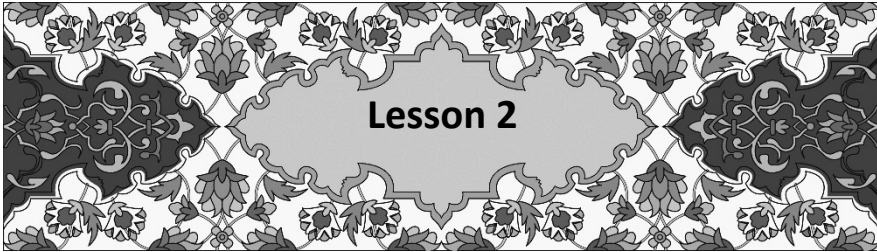
- 1- How is Imamate defined in Arabic? Show that the Quran intends the same meaning when it uses this word.
- 2- How is Imamate defined by Islamic scientists?
- 3- If someone argued with you that studying Imamate and issues related to it are useless, how would you respond to him? Use an argument from scripture and an argument from reason.
- 4- Present an applicable reason that shows the importance of studying the concept of Imamate.

¹ See Al-`Askarī, *Naqsh-i a`immih dar ihyā`i dīn* and al-Sharaf al-dīn, *al-Naşş wa l-ijtihād*.

² Mişbāḥ Yazdī, *Āmūzish `aqa`id*, p. 295.

Research:

- 1- What does the term “death of ignorance” (*maytata jāhiliyya*) in the hadiths narrated from the Prophet of Islam mean?
- 2- Make a list of innovations (*al-bid`a*) introduced into Islam after the death of the Prophet by the Caliphs and present them in class.



The Need for Imams



In the previous lesson we spoke about the importance of knowing and recognizing the Imams. In the current lesson we will explain why we need Imams to guide and lead us. The current lesson will pave the way for a more rigorous investigation on the Imams and their characteristics.



When speaking about the Imams it is usually preferred to explain their characteristics first. However, a question that arises in this regard is why do we need the Imams in the first place? We will start this lesson by answering this question.

1- Explaining Religion

Islam is the last and most perfect religion of God that has guaranteed to fulfill humankind's material and spiritual needs. The Quran which contains all the means for the guidance of humans refers to itself as:

“An explanation for mankind and a guidance.”¹

“A proclamation for mankind”²

Some of the realities that the Quran refers to are explicit and clear while others are implicit or not detailed. It is for this reason that we as normal people cannot use the complete guidance of the Quran without the help of divine teachers.

The Quran states in a number of verses that its statements need to be further explained or clarified. The duty of explaining all religious matters and the verses of the Quran have been delegated to the Prophet of Islam, peace be upon him and his family. God states in the Quran:

“And We did not send down the Book unto you except that you may clarify for them what they differ in and as a guidance and mercy for the believers.”¹

¹ Quran, 3:138.

² Quran, 14:52.

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“And We sent down the remembrance (Quran) to you so that you may clarify what has been sent down to them and so that they may ponder.”²

The Quran further states that a special group of people possess the knowledge of its verses:

“They are clear verses in the chests of those that have been bestowed with knowledge and only the unjust deny Our signs.”³

God has willed the existence of a knowledgeable person in every age and time that explains and clarifies the verses of the Quran. Obviously, this person must possess divine knowledge or else he will fail in explaining the verses of the Book and the hidden aspects of the verses.

The subjects discussed in the Quran without going into detail, encompass a large section of this book. These include verses on beliefs, ethics, politics, and commerce. Without the existence of a divine figure capable of explaining these verses, many different aspects of Islam will remain unknown. As an example:

All Muslims are unanimous that the daily prayers are the most important method of worshiping God and they are the pillars of our religion. However, in the Quran, there are nearly no details about how to perform these prayers and the Quran cannot be used as a guide for saying our prayers. On the other hand, all Muslims are unanimous about many aspects of the prayers including the number of prayers and the

¹ Quran, 16:64.

² Quran, 16:44.

³ Quran, 29:49.

units (rak`a) that must be recited. Where have these details come from? These details how been explained by the Prophet himself:

“Pray in the same manner that you see me praying.”¹

Following this example there must be people after the Prophet to explain the verses that the Prophet had not explained because the Prophet did not explain all the verses of the Quran during the limited time that he was in this world. Even in subjects such as the prayers whose different aspects were explained by the Prophet, many hadiths were either destroyed or distorted by the ignorant or the hypocrites. Sunni scholars have also testified to this matter.²

In the same manner that we need the Prophet of Islam to understand the verses of the Quran, we also need his true successors who have the capabilities to explain both the Quran and the statements of the Prophet.

2- Resolving Differences and Creating Unity

One of the responsibilities of the Prophet of Islam is to resolve any differences that arise and to unite the Islamic nation based on Divine realities. The Quran clearly points to this meaning:

¹ Al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 1, pp. 540-542 and Ibn Abī Jumhūr, *ʿAwāli l-līʾālī*, vol. 3, p. 85.

² Al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 1, p. 91 and Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Ṭarāʾif fī ma`rifati madhāhib*, vol. 3, p. 85.

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“And we did not send down the book to you but [for the purpose] that you may clarify for them what they have disagreed on, and as a guidance and mercy for the believers.”¹

On the other hand, the Quran states that one of the most important duties that all believers have is to refer to the Prophet of Islam where they disagree and wholeheartedly accept his judgment:

“No, by your Lord, they will not [be true] believers until they ask you for judgment in their disputes and then they feel no objection in their hearts toward what you have judged and they submit completely.”²

If the Prophet leaves without a successor, there would be no one to sort out religious and social differences and the people would have no one to refer to. Thus there must exist people bestowed by divine knowledge that dispel the differences and distinguish between the path of guidance and that of misguidance and deviation.³

3- Preventing the Deviation of Religion

In normal conditions, the guidance and legacy of the Prophet of Islam would gradually become distorted. The temptations of Satan, the hypocrites, and those that have worldly desires along with the human tendency toward falsehood, have always resulted in the corruption of religious truths.

¹ Quran, 16:64.

² Quran, 4:65.

³ See al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, p. 363-363 and al-Majlisī, *Ḥaq al-yaqīn*, vol. 1, p.37.

These deviations are sometimes in the form of additions, omissions, or distortions in religious scripture or revelations or the creation of false religions and beliefs to prevent people from attaining the true religion of God. In the case that there is no Imam, God's proof will not be completed on subsequent generations and the goals for which Prophets and Messengers were dispatched will not be realized.

4- Implementing Religion and Divine Laws

The Divine Religion is a program and way of living life. The main goal of Prophets and apostles is to implement this way of life in our social and private lives. Manmade schools of thought usually don't bother to apply their doctrines and delegate others to implement their teachings. Divine leaders on the other hand, not only consider themselves responsible for implementing their programs, they also hold great importance for and consider it a major duty to apply divine teachings.

This attitude can be observed in the life of the Prophet of Islam. From the first day of his proclamation, while striving to propagate and distribute the enlivening teachings of Islam, he would also work toward upbringing a faithful people and society. His efforts finally came to fruit when he established *Madīnat al-Nabī* (the City of the Prophet).

Historical documents and narrations show that the Prophet was worried about the Islamic society up until his death and had made a number of recommendations to prevent its disruption and collapse.

One can conclude that implementing divine laws and programs are a part of his mission that must be continued after him. Evidently, this mission could not have been accomplished but by the continuation of

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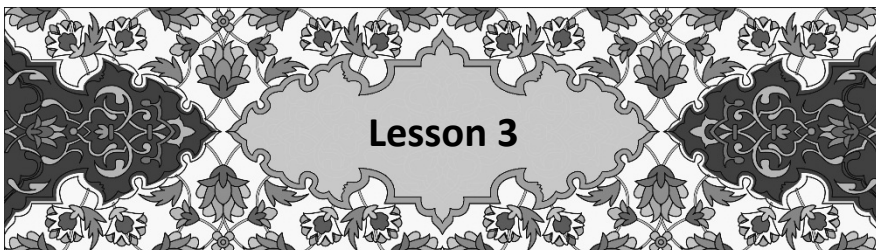
the newly founded Islamic society and establishing the system of Imamate and leadership.

Questions:

- 1- Using the Quran prove that the Prophet's main mission in distributing and propagating divine revelations and teachings, is only possible through the Imamate of the righteous.
- 2- By who and how can unity be achieved in the Islamic nation? What role do the Imams play in this regard?
- 3- How is religion deviated and what responsibility do the Imams have in this regard?
- 4- How can we argue in favor of the station of Imamate by paying attention to the fact that religion must be implemented in society?

Research:

- 1- Why do you think the followers of different religions distort their religions once their Prophets pass away?
- 2- What duties do the Imams Have? Name some and discuss them in class.



Lesson 3

Appointing the Imams



In the previous lesson we spoke about the importance of the existence of Imams. In the current lesson we will address a very important question: Can the people living in a society choose an Imam themselves?



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Leadership and guidance are an indispensable element of society. People have two choices in this regard: they can either select an Imam themselves or accept God's decree and submit to whoever God appoints to this position. We will now show that a true Imam and guide cannot be chosen by the people and it is only God that can introduce an Imam to us.

1- Argument from Reason that an Imam Cannot be Selected by the People

By observing an election, the candidates, and the voters, one can easily reach the conclusion that it is impossible for people to select a Divine Imam. These arguments come to mind:

- a. Humans need knowledge and understanding to make correct selections and decisions. The level of understanding depends on the importance of the subject being decided upon. For someone to be able to judge and understand the responsibilities that rest upon the Imams (as explained in the previous lesson), they must have very deep and broad knowledge about the different aspects of these issues. Obviously, no single person has this capability. Even if all the people on earth assist each other to select such a person they will be incapable of performing this task because they still would not have the necessary knowledge to select the person that has these capabilities, because these capabilities are usually not obvious or outward attributes.
- b. Even if we find someone that fits the criteria for being an Imam, there is no guarantee he will be selected for this position.

Because most people elect based on their own personal desires and political swaying not the merits of the person being decided upon.

- c. Elections have sometimes resulted in long-lasting quarrels and differences between political factions and rival groups. Imamate is supposed to be a cause of unity not disunity. Elections that result in disunity cannot be used as means to select someone whose goal is to create unity.

2- Arguments from Scripture

The verses of the Quran show that an Imam cannot be selected or elected by people. God has clearly stated that appointing Imams is not the task of the people. The Prophet and his progeny, peace be upon them, have iterated the same meaning using the verses of the Quran and by showing the splendid station of the Imams. We will now proceed to explain this in more detail.

a- Verses of the Quran

According to the Quran, Imamate is an exalted station and only God can appoint someone to be an Imam. For example, Abraham was only appointed as an Imam by God after he passed difficult tests:

“And when Abraham’s Lord tested him by words and completed them upon him then said ‘I appoint you as an Imam for the people.’”¹

¹ Quran, 2:124.

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As we explained earlier, Imamate in its most comprehensive sense is the guidance and guardianship of people in all outward and inward aspects. According to the Quran, Imamate, like Prophethood, is a station that one can only be appointed to by God. This meaning can be seen in the verses where God appoints Adam and David as his successors on earth:

“And when your Lord said to the Angels ‘I am placing a successor on earth.’”¹

“O David! We made you a successor on earth so judge the people truthfully.”²

In all these verses, a successor is someone who judges between people using religious law and justice. This meaning has been agreed upon by both Shias and Sunnis.³

Furthermore, God has warned the believers that they must completely submit to Gods will where He or the Prophet make a decree:

“Your Lord creates what He wills and He chooses, and they have (no right) to choose. God is free from and exalted above what they associate with Him.”⁴

“No faithful man or woman has the right to make a decision once God and His Messenger issue a command. Whoever disobeys God and His Messenger has evidently gone astray.”¹

¹ Quran, 2:30.

² Quran, 38:26.

³ See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi` li-aḥkām al-qur`ān*, vol. 1, p. 264 and Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-qur`ān al-karīm*, vo. 1, p. 73.

⁴ Quran, 28:68.

Imam al-Riḍā, peace be upon him, states that in the aforementioned verse the command issued by God is the Imamate of the Imams and those that disregarded this command and appointed others to this station have:

“Deliberately turned away from what God, His Messenger, and his Ahl al-Bayt have chosen and have preferred their own choice (over the choice of Allah).”²

b- Hadith and Narrations

In the words of the Prophet and the Imams, peace be upon them, many narrations can be found that emphasize the Imams must be selected by God. In the subsequent sections we will mention a number of hadiths from the Prophet in this regard. However, we will first refer to a relevant narration from Imam al-Riḍā that also explains this topic from the viewpoint of reason and `aql.

Shortly after Imam al-Riḍā entered Khurāsān, a heated discussion occurred about the issue of Imamate among a group of people in the Jāmi` Mosque of Marw. They would each would explain their thoughts and beliefs about the station of Imamate. One the participants who was a follower of the Imam came to Him and explained what had happened. The Imam stated a lengthy and comprehensive hadith about the attributes of the Imams and their station. We will mention a section of this hadith here:

“Is there anyone that can truly attain the Ma`rifa of the Imams or has the abilities to choose them? Of course not! The reasons

¹ Quran, 33:36.

² Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 201 & al-Ṣadūq, *Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, vol. 1, p. 220.

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err, minds become puzzled, intellects become bewildered, sights become tired, the Exalted become belittled, sages become perplexed, the patient become deprived, preachers become speechless, intellectuals become ignorant, poets become tired, authors become weak, and the eloquent stutter, when trying to describe a station from their stations or a virtue from their virtues and they admit to their weakness and incapability. Then how do they expect to completely describe an Imam or praise him as he truly is? Or understand something from his affairs or find someone to take his place or fulfil needs like him? No, it is impossible for he is like a star [far] from the hands that try to reach it and those that try to describe it. No one has the ability to choose someone [with these characteristics] and the reasons cannot [perceive] it. Where can someone like this be found?!"¹

In this hadith, Imam al-Riḍā explains that because the Imam has such an exalted station compared to normal people, it is impossible for normal people to fully recognize an Imam because they do not have complete knowledge about his attributes.

Both `aql and scripture show that it is impossible for us to recognize the Imams as they truly are. The only way to recognize the Imams is through divine revelations. God chooses those that are the worthy of this station by his boundless knowledge. He appoints them through his Prophet to succeed him and take up the task of guiding the Islamic nation.

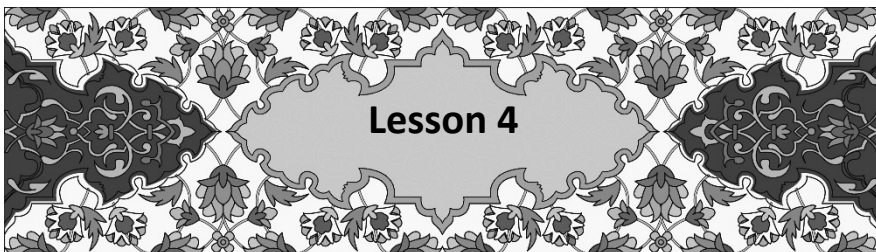
Questions:

¹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, p. 201 & al-Ṣadūq, *Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, vol. 1, p. 219.

- 1- Use `aql to show that an Imam can only be appointed by God.
- 2- How can one use the Quran to show that only God can appoint an Imam?
- 3- Mention a few verses of the Quran where it is stated that the Imams and caliphs/successors have been appointed by God.
- 4- What principle do you think Imam al-Riḍā based his arguments upon when stating that only God can appoint the Imams?

Research:

- 1- Study the history of Islam after the Prophet passed away and show the catastrophes the Islamic nation suffered because the people chose an Imam themselves instead of agreeing with the Imam appointed by God?



Attributes of the Imams



In the previous lesson it became clear that humans are incapable of choosing Imams and Imams can only be appointed by God. In the current lesson we will speak about the attributes of divine Imams. By knowing and understanding these attributes, we will be more capable of recognizing the true Imams.



The Imams and true successors of the Prophet, peace be upon them, have many attributes. In this lesson we will explain three of the most important ones.

1- Immaculacy (al-`isma)

As we mentioned in the section on prophethood, immaculacy (*al-`isma*) is defined in Arabic lexicons as protection or prevention. In the current context, immaculacy means to be free from or far from something and is used to refer to someone that is protected and free from sins and errors.¹ Because of the following reasons, Imams must be immaculate and free from sins and errors:

- a. Imams are the successors of the Prophet in things such as explaining religion, guiding people, and dispelling important religious and social disagreements. To perform these tasks in a correct manner, the Imams must be immaculate like the Prophet. In the same manner that the Prophet is free from sins and errors and his immaculacy is a reason to believe in him as a Messenger from God, Imams must also possess these characteristics.²
- b. An Imam can only fully perform his responsibilities if he is fully and completely obeyed. If an Imam commits sins and mistakes like ordinary people, then his actions and commands are no longer reliable and are sometimes correct and sometimes incorrect. Common-sense judges that such a person should not be obeyed in all that he commands for he has no means of

¹ Muṭahharī, *Majmū`iyi āthāri shahīd Muṭahharī*. Vol. 2, p. 158.

² Muṭahharī, *Majmū`iyi āthāri Shahīd Muṭahharī*. Vol. 4, p. 741.

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knowing when he is erring.¹ In other words, people will not obey an Imam that is not immaculate and will not trust him.

- c. One of the attributes of the Imams that has been mentioned in the Quran is immaculacy. In verse 2:124 God states to Abraham that he has been given the station of Imamate. When Abraham asked God to appoint his descendants to this station he received the response: "The unjust (wrongdoers) will not attain my covenant."²

Shia scholars have used this verse as an argument for the Immaculacy of the Imams for only immaculate people fit the criteria of not being wrongdoers and unjust (either toward others or toward themselves). On the other hand, the attribute of being unjust applies to all times and even if someone repents they still cannot become Imams.³

2- Knowledge

Imams must possess divine knowledge for like the Prophets, their main duty is to guide people in their religious, moral, social, and personal affairs. Like Prophets they must possess a correct knowledge that cannot be discredited or refuted. On the other hand, in the same manner that Prophets are empowered by God with administrative skills to manage society and stand up against tyrants, the Imams must also possess these skills and knowledge.

¹ Al-Ḥillī, *al-Alfain*, p. 155.

² Quran, 2:124.

³ Al-Ḥillī, *al-Alfain*, p. 61; Ibn Shādhān, *al-Īdāh*, p. 60; and Shubbar, *Ḥaq al-yaqīn fi ma`rifat usūl al-dīn*, vol. 1, p. 134.

The Quran mentions two such skills in the story of Joseph:

“[Joseph] said assign me to the stores of the land for I am a good protector and knowledgeable.”¹

This verse shows that Imams must necessarily possess knowledge relevant to their duties. If for worldly tasks such as managing the stores one must possess knowledge, then administering the worldly and religious affairs of humanity cannot be accomplished but by having abundant and complete knowledge. Being a ‘good protector’ also shows that an Imam must have the necessary attributes to protect what he is administering. These include having the ability to plan, be trustworthy, and have related knowledge and skills.

As we previously mentioned, God bestows the Imams and some of his special servants from His knowledge. According to some narrations, this knowledge is comprehensive and very detailed and cannot be compared with the knowledge possessed by ordinary people.

3- Supremacy

Since the Imam has the task of guiding the Islamic nation, he must be supreme and above all in all virtues and stature. Because of this reason, the Imams have been the most exalted and worthiest of people in all ages and times. The prophet described Imam Ali in the day of Ghadir in this manner:

¹ Quran, 12:55.

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“O people! Consider Ali as the best (among you) for he is the most virtuous of the people after me from among all men and women.”¹

Regardless of this narration being specific to Imam Ali or applicable to other Imams, this narration shows that Ali is the most virtuous of the people. This virtuosity is absolute and encompasses all aspects imaginable including his right to be an Imam.

Since the Imams are the successors of divine Prophets, it would be worthy that they possess the same moral traits that God has attributed to them. According to Imam al-Riḍā in a lengthy narration about the Imams:

“The Imam is unique in his era. No one can reach his [station] and no sage is equal to him. No substitute can be found for him and he has no similitude or counterpart. All virtuous are for him without him asking for them or having attained them. Rather they have been bestowed unto him by the Virtue Giver and Bestower.”²

We will now mention a number of these virtuous.

a- Forbearance and Certitude

God states in this regard:

¹ Al-Ṭabrisī, *al-Iḥtijāj*, vol. 1, p. 60; al-Fattāl, *Rauḍat al-wā`izīn*, vol. 1, p. 93; and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 37, p. 208.

² Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, p. 201 & al-Ṣadūq, *Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, vol. 1, p. 219.

“When they showed forbearance and were certain about our signs, We made some of them Imams that guide by our command.”¹

One criterion for becoming an Imam is to show forbearance for the sake of God. Those that are worthy of the station of Imamate, will show forbearance when they are tested by God so that it becomes clear that they are truly God’s servants.²

b- Complete Servitude of God

According to the Quran, servitude toward God is another trait of the Imams:

“And we made them Imams that guided by our command and we revealed to them how to perform good deeds, perform the prayers, and give alms (*zakāt*) and they constantly worshipped Us.”³

The divine guides and Imams have always been righteous, monotheists, and in God’s servitude even before they were bestowed with the stations of Imamate and Prophethood. And for this reason, God bestows them with many more blessings.⁴ It should be noted that the preconditions mentioned in this verse are a necessity of being an Imam.

c- Humility

¹ Quran, 32:24.

² Ṭabāṭabā’ī, *Tarjomiyyi tafsīr al-mīzān*, vol. 1, pp. 412-413.

³ Quran, 21:73.

⁴ See Makārim, *Tafsīr nimūnih*, vol. 13, p. 456 & Ṭāliqānī, *Partuwī az Qur’ān*, vol. 1, p. 294.

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It has been mentioned in many narrations that when Imam Ali became the caliph of the Muslims, he would personally walk in the Bazars, help the astray, and assist the needy. When he passed the merchants he would read this verse to them:

“We have made the abode of the hereafter for those that do not seek mightiness and corruption on earth and the end belongs to the righteous (*muttaqīn*).”¹

Then he would say:

“This verse has been revealed about the just and humble from among the rulers and those that possess power from among the people.”²

Generally speaking, the station of Imamate is granted to those that are above all others in virtues. The virtues and morals of the Imams are many and cannot be enumerated in such a short lesson. Attributes such as justness, bravery, thoughtful actions, and wisdom are just a number of these attributes. Those more interested can refer to the relevant sources.³

Questions:

¹ Quran, 28:83.

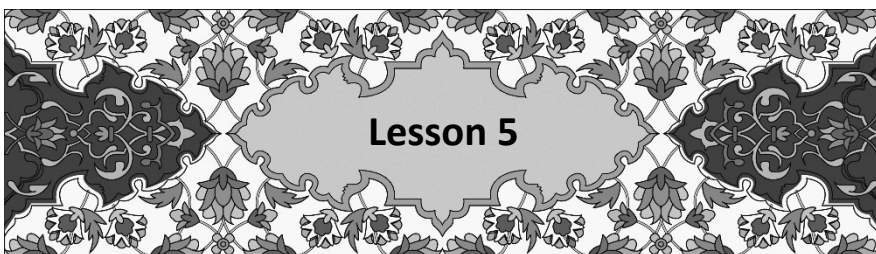
² Ibn `Asākir, *Tārīkh damishq*, vol. 42, p. 489; al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-ma`ānī fi tafsīr al-qur`ān*, vol. 20, p. 125; *Muttaqī Hindī*, *Kanz al-`ummāl*, vol. 13, p. 180, no. 36538; al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma` al-bayān*, vol. 7, p. 420; and Ibn Biṭrīq, *Umdat `uyūn shihāḥ al-akhbār fī manāqib imām al-abrār*, p. 308, no. 511.

³ Rey Shahrī, *Dānishnamiye Qur`ān wa ḥadīth*, vol. 10, the section on the Ahl al-bayt.

- 1- What is the definition of immaculacy (*al-`isma*) and why must the Imams be immaculate?
- 2- How is an Imams knowledge different from the knowledge of ordinary people?
- 3- In what virtues must the Imams be exalted above all others and why?
- 4- What principle do you think Imam al-Riḍā based his arguments upon when stating that only God can appoint the Imams?

Research:

- 1- Find three instances where Sunni scholars have testified that Imam Ali is more virtuous than the first three caliphs. Mention your sources.



Recognizing the Imams



In the previous lesson we spoke about the attributes of the Imams and showed that the successors of the Prophet must necessarily be Knowledgeable and immaculate. We also showed that the Imams must be morally above others in their private and social lives and in a general sense in all aspects of their lives. In the current lesson we will explain how it is possible to find and recognize such a person.



As we previously showed, one the main duties of the Imams is to explain religious laws and theology and to defend the tenets of religion. This is only possible if the Imam has sufficient knowledge about religion and its laws and teachings and is also immaculate in his knowledge and actions.

However, being immaculate and fully knowledgeable are not obvious and outward traits and are not recognizable by normal means.¹ So what means are at our disposal to recognize true Imams and how are people supposed to make this distinction in every age and era? Three main means exist:

1- Scripture

We used scripture (the Quran and hadith) in the previous lessons to show that Imams can only be appointed by divine decree and people have no role in selecting the Imams. We will now show that scripture itself is one the means of recognizing the Imams. Since it would be meaningless for God to appoint an Imam without introducing him to the people, whenever god appoints an Imam He also introduces him and this introduction is not possible but through the Quran and sayings of the Prophet.

Since differences first arose about the topic of Imamate, the Imams and their followers argued that this issue has been explicitly mentioned in scripture. After the council of Saqīfa where Abū-Bakr became the first Caliph, a group from among the Muhājirīn and Anṣār that believed Imamate was the right of Imam Ali decided to pull Abū-Bakr down from the pulpit of the Prophet to show their opposition to him. Imam Ali

¹ Al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-murād*, p. 366.

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opposed this idea and instead suggested that they remind Abu-Bakr and his followers about the statements that the Prophet had uttered about the Imamate of Imam Ali while he was alive. They agreed and when Abū-Bakr and a number of the Muslims were present in the Prophet's Mosque they argued against them in this manner.¹

Even though Imam Ali was not present himself during the council of Saqīfa to defend his rights, he would frequently speak about the issue of Imamate every chance that he had. During the debate sessions of the six-man council appointed by Umar to select his successor, Imam Ali argued for his rights by using a number of well-known narrations such as the Hadith of Ghadir and the Hadith of Manzila.²

These events all show that the use of scripture to argue in favor of the Imamate of the Imams has always been a principle of Shia thought and Shia scholars, by the use of arguments based on the teachings of the Imams, have defended this belief using the Quran and sayings of the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family.³

2- Miracles

Miracles are another means by which true Imams can be recognized. As we explained in the section on Prophet-hood, miracles are extraordinary feats accompanied with claims about having a divine station. Miracles have specific attributes that can be considered as clear signs about the truthfulness of the person that produces them:

¹ Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Khiṣāʾi*, vol. 2, pp. 461-465.

² See Ibn Abī I-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha*, vol. 6, p. 134 and *Amīnī, al-Ghadīr*, vol. 1, pp. 327-331.

³ Rabbānī Gulpaygānī, *Imāmat dar bīneshe islāmī*, last chapter.

- No one can reproduce or imitate a miracle by using normal worldly means.
- No one can challenge the person that produces a miracle.
- A miracle is usually produced after a direct confrontation with the claimant about his claims.¹

If someone performs such an extraordinary feat and claims that he possesses the station of Imamate, then it would be conclusive that he is truthful in his claims.

It is an integral part of Shia belief that God manifests extraordinary feats at the hands of the Imams that are the closest of servants to him.² God has given the Imams a power by which they can perform miracles when they deem it necessary. These miracles are usually used to prove the Imamate of the Imams. We will mention one such incident here:

One day Imam al-Sajjād passed by Muhammad b. Ḥanafiyya. Muhammad stood up, saluted him, kissed his forehead, and then referred to him as his master. One of the followers of Muhammad who witnessed this scene came to Muhammad and stated: “I believed that you were our Imam and it was compulsory for us to obey you. Yet, when you met that young man you referred to him as your master!” Muhammad responded that he truly believed Imam al-Sajjād was his Imam and that he had once challenged him about this station and the Imam had proposed that they ask the Ḥajar al-aswad³ to judge between them. Muhammad had at first refused and had argued that a lifeless rock cannot judge between them. But he ultimately agreed when the Imam stated: “An Imam that

¹ See Makārim Shīrāzī, *Panjāh dars usūl `aqa'id barāye javānān*, lesson 4.

² Amīnī, *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 3, p. 402.

³ The black rock that is embedded in the corner of Ka`ba.

lifeless things do not converse with is not an Imam.” They had then proceeded to recite their prayers and then Imam al-Sajjād had faced the Ḥajar al-aswad and had stated: “I ask you by He Who has entrusted you with the covenant of His servants so that you may testify about those that fulfilled their promise, to inform us which from among us is the Imam?” By God the rock started speaking and said: “O Muhammad! Leave this affair to your nephew for he is more worthy of this position than you and he is your Imam.”¹

3- Virtues and Morals

Another means for recognizing the Imams is to study their individual and social behavior and character. As we previously mentioned an Imam must have a number of important attributes such as Immaculacy and knowledge. His virtues must also be above the virtues of all other people. The only person that can be an Imam is someone that possesses these attributes.

For this reason, since early times, Shia scholars have used the virtues of the Imams to argue in their favor and have enumerated and mentioned these virtues in their debates and have compared them with the virtues of other claimants to the station of Imamate to prove their supremacy in this regard. The many books that have been authored to cover these subjects throughout history have usually had one goal in mind and that is to prove the Imamate of the Shia Imams.²

¹ See al-Ḥillī, *Dhaub al-nuḍḍār*, p. 52; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 46, p. 22 & 29; and al-Rāwandī, *al-Kharā'ij wa l-jawāriḥ*, vol. 1, p. 257.

² For example see Ibn Shahr Āshūb, *Manāqib āli abī Ṭālib*; Ibn Biṭrīq, *ʿUmdat `uyūn shiḥāḥ al-akhbār fi manāqib imam al-abrār*; and al-Shāmī, *al-Durr al-naẓīm fī manāqib a'immat al-hāmīm*.

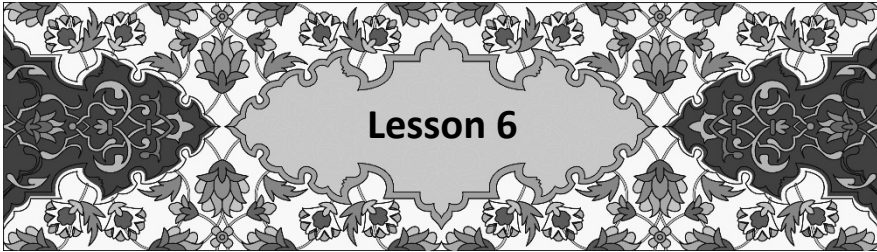
One can say that this method of introducing the Imams was first used by the Prophet of Islam himself who would frequently point out Imam Ali's virtues and his supremacy over others.

Questions:

- 1- How is appointing an Imam related to scripture?
- 2- Show that an Imam can only be recognized through Divine decree and scripture?
- 3- How can miracles be used to recognize Imams? How are Prophets different from Imams in this regard?
- 4- How can virtues and morals be used to recognize true Imams? What attributes can be recognized by this manner?

Research:

- 1- Mention at least three of Imam Ali's virtues that have been recorded in Sunni books.



The Prophet and Twelve Successors



In the previous lesson we spoke about three means for recognizing true Imams. One of these means was scripture. From hereon we will use scripture to further explore the issue of Imamate. In the current lesson we will study the narrations that state the successors of the Prophet are twelve in number.



The topic of Imamate can be studied in two different contexts. The first is a general sense where the necessity of the existence of Imams, the need for Imams, attributes of the Imams, and the means of recognizing the Imams are explained. The second is a more specific sense where the Ahl al-bayt and twelve Imams are explicitly introduced as the true Imams and their characteristics, attributes, and virtues are explained. In the current lesson we will show that in a general sense it is accepted among all Muslim sects that the Imams are twelve in number.

1- Twelve Successors in Sunni Narrations

According to Sunni narrations the successors of the Prophet are twelve in number. Even though these narrations are numerous, they fail to mention the names of the Imams and only refer to their number and the conditions of the times that they live in.

In the six authentic Sunni collections (the *Ṣiḥāḥ al-sitta*) the following narration has been narrated from Jābir b. Samra:

“Islam will always be strong while it is (governed by) twelve successors.”

Jābir states that the Prophet had said something that he hadn't understood. He had asked his father and his father had replied:

“The Prophet said: ‘They are all from the tribe of Quraysh.’”¹

Al-Muttaqī al-Hindī mentions many narrations from Sunni sources that state the successors to the Prophet are twelve and they are all from the

¹ Al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 9, p. 81, no. 7222; al-Muslim, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, p. 1452, no. 1821; and al-Gulpaygānī, *Muntakhab al-athar*, vol. 1, pp. 17-99.

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Tribe of Quraysh. Some of these narrations have used different words instead of 'strong' such as impenetrable, victorious, and established.¹

Sunni scholars have struggled to match these twelve Imams with Islamic rulers and leaders. Throughout the ages and centuries many different candidates have been mentioned but have all been unconvincing. After examining the different proposals and candidates and criticizing them, a contemporary Sunnis scholar states:

“There is no doubt about the authenticity of the narration. A number of (Sunni) scholars have enumerated the foretold Mahdi among these twelve ... as we previously mentioned the preferred opinion is that the twelve successors were concluded by the Umayyad ruler Hishām b. `Abd al-Malik and there is no doubt that religion was established and victorious during their reign.”²

This opinion fails to explain the narration in an acceptable manner for Hishām was the tenth Umayyad caliph and if we add to these the first three caliphs before `Uthmān we end up with thirteen successors.

No matter how the aforementioned narration is justified, the Shia Imams are the only group that conform to it. They are all from the tribe of Quraysh, Hashemites, and from the Prophet's household. Imam Ali states in this regard:

“Through us they ask for guidance and through us blindness is dispelled. The Imams are from the (tribe of) Quraysh and have

¹ Al-Hindī, *Kanz al-`ummāl*, vol. 12, pp. 32-34.

² Al-Bastawī, *al-Mahdī al-muntaẓar fī ǧau' al-aḥādīth wa l-āthār al-ṣaḥīḥa*, pp. 332-337.

been placed among the Hashemites. Except for them, no one is worthy of this (station) and no ruler is legitimate.”¹

2- Twelve Imams in Shia Narrations

According to the Shia belief, the twelve Imams are Imam Ali, Imam Ḥasan, Imam Ḥusayn, and nine of Imam Ḥusayn’s immaculate descendants. The first is Imam al-Sajjād and the last is Imam Mahdi the son of Imam al-`Askarī. According to the Quran, these noble individuals are immaculate, possessors of divine knowledge, and are the true teachers and interpreters of the Quran. Imam Ali and the eleven Imams from his descendants, which have been appointed by God, are the successors of the Prophet and God’s delegates and his proofs on earth. Currently the station of Imamate is in the hands of the twelfth Imam, Imam al-Mahdi.

It has been stated in numerous narrations in the Shia corpus that the Imams are twelve in number. In some narrations all or a number of the Imams have been mentioned by their names. We will study these narrations in the next lessons.

To sum it up, both Sunni and Shia sources state that the successors to the Prophet are twelve people. In the next lessons we will analyze the Imams presented by each group.

Questions:

- 1- Show evidence from Shia scripture in favor of twelve successors to the Prophet.

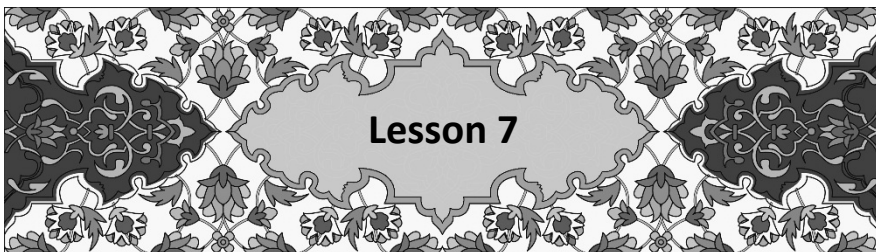
¹ Al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāgha*, sermon 144, p. 201.

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- 2- How have the twelve successors been mentioned in Sunni narrations and how can these narrations be used to prove the Imamate of the Shia Imams?
- 3- How do Sunni scholars justify the narrations about the twelve successors? Mentions two cases and show that these justifications are incorrect.

Research:

- 1- Using verses of the Quran show that the successors to some of God's greatest Prophets are also twelve in number.



The Ahl al-Bayt in the Quran and Scripture



In the previous lesson, using Shia and Sunni sources we showed that the Imams are twelve in number. In the current lesson, using the keyword 'Ahl al-Bayt,' we will try to recognize the successors to the Prophet and the Imams.



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According to many Shia and Sunni narrations, the term 'Ahl al-Bayt' has a special meaning apart from its literal definition.¹ The Ahl al-Bayt is used to refer to the Prophet of Islam, his daughter Fatima, and the twelve immaculate Imams.

1- The Ahl al-Bayt in the Quran and Scripture

The term Ahl al-Bayt has been mentioned in the Quran in the verse known as the verse of Taṭhīr (purification). There are many narrations that explain this verse from different perspectives. The story that led to the revelation of this verse can be summed up in this manner:

One day the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, went to Ummi Salama's² house. Since he was waiting for an important revelation about his family members, he asked her to not allow anybody into the house.

Meanwhile, Fatima had prepared a food for the Prophet and went to Ummi Salama's house. The Prophet asked her to bring Ali and his two sons to him as well. Fatima returned with them a short time later. Imam Ḥasan and Imam Ḥusayn were small children at that time.

The Prophet asked Ummi Salama to perform some prayers while he, Fatima, and the others prepared the food and gathered around it. The Prophet would never eat a meal unless one of his wives was present but today was different. This meal was prepared for the Ahl al-Bayt and no one else was to eat from it and that is why the Prophet did not ask Ummi Salama to join them. A few moments later the archangel Gabriel descended and revealed the following verse:

¹ Ahl al-Bayt means household or family members.

² One of the Prophet's wives.

“Verily God has willed to remove all uncleanness from you Ahl al-Bayt and completely purify you.”¹

The Prophet then spread his robe over Imam Ali, Fatima, Imam Ḥasan, and Imam Ḥusayn then lifted his hands toward the sky and started supplicating:

“O Allah! These are my Ahl al-Bayt and very special to me. O Allah! Remove all uncleanness from them and completely purify them.”

When Ummi Salama witnessed this scene she came forward to join them under the Prophet’s robe but the Prophet stopped her. Ummi Salama inquired in confusion that was she not also one of the Ahl al-Bayt?! The Prophet replied, you are in good standing and you are one of the wives of the Messenger of God.²

The chain of narrators of this narration are so numerous and the hadith has been narrated on the authority of so many people that it can no wise be questioned or discredited and can easily be considered as mutawātīr. This narration is so well known in the Islamic circles that the day that the event occurred on has been named the Day of Kisā’ (robe) and the five immaculate people that the verse was revealed in favor of have been referred to as the Companions of the Kisā’ (robe).³ The narration is also referred to as the Hadith of Kisā’.

¹ Quran, 33:33. This verse is known as the Verse of Taṭhīr.

² See al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 93; al-Ḥimyarī, *Qurb al-asnād*, p. 129; al-Ṭabrisī, *al-Iḥtijāj*, vol. 1, p. 119; and al-Ṣadūq, *al-Khiṣāl*, vol. 2, p. 550.

³ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, vol. 3, p. 259, vol. 4, p. 107, and vol. 6, p. 292; al-Muslim, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 7, p. 130; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 152; al-Nisā’ī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol. 5, p. 108; al-Hindī, *Kanz al-`ummāl*, vol. 13, pp. 603 & 649; and

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Other than Imam Ali, Imam Ḥasan, and Imam Ḥusayn, the other Imams are enumerated among the Ahl al-Bayt in the verse too. Imam al-Ṣādiq states in this regard:

“The verse ‘Verily God has willed to remove all uncleanness from you Ahl al-Bayt and completely purify you,’¹ refers to the Imams and [accepting] their guardianship. Whoever enters it has entered the house of the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family.”²

This is how Imam Ali narrates the same story:

“I went to see the Messenger of God at Ummi Salama’s house and the verse ‘Verily God has willed to remove all uncleanness from you Ahl al-Bayt and completely purify you,’³ had just been revealed. The Messenger of God said: ‘O Ali! This verse has been revealed about you, my two grandsons, and the Imams from your descendants.’ I said: ‘O Messenger of God! How many are the Imams after you?’ He replied: ‘You O Ali, then your sons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. Then after Ḥusayn his son Ali, then after Ali his son Muhammad, then after Muhammad his son Ja`far, then after Ja`far his son Mūsā, then after Mūsā his son Ali, then after Ali his son Muhammad, then after Muhammad his son Ali, then after Ali his son Ḥasan, then after Ḥasan his son al-Ḥujja who is from the descendants of [Imam] Ḥasan. I found their names inscribed in this manner on the pillars of the Throne. When I

Ḥusaynī Mīlānī, *Bā pīshwāyane hidayatgar*, vol. 2, p. 202. To see the many other references and sources regarding this event see Rey Shahrī, *Ahl al-bayt fi l-kitāb wa l-sunna*.

¹ Quran, 33:33.

² Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 423.

³ Quran, 33:33.

asked God about them He replied that they are the pure and immaculate Imams after you and their enemies are far from my mercy.”¹

Apart from these narrations, the Imams after Imam Ḥusayn, peace be upon them, would refer to themselves as the Ahl al-Bayt as mentioned in the Verse of Taḥtīr. For example, Imam al-Ṣādiq states:

“We are the tree of knowledge and we are the household of the Prophet and in our homes Gabriel descends and we are the stores of God’s knowledge and we are the mines of His revelations. Whosoever follows us is saved and whoever falls behind meets demise.”²

2- Virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt in the Quran

The virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt can be clearly found in the Quran. The verses speaking about this matter are so obvious that even Sunni interpreters have mentioned them in their books.

a- The Verse of Taḥtīr

According to the verse of Taḥtīr, God has willed that the Ahl al-Bayt be free from all uncleanness. This verse points to their immaculacy as their greatest virtue. This virtue is reserved for fourteen pure and divine lights and no other person related to the Prophet has a share in it.

¹ Al-Khazāz, *Kifāyat al-athar fi l-naṣṣ `alā al-a’immat l-ithnā `ashar*, p. 155; al-`Āmilī, *al-Jawāhir al-saniyya*, p. 558; and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 36, p. 336.

² AL-Ṣadūq, *al-Amālī*, p. 307; Ibn Bābiwayh, *al-Imāma wa l-tabṣira*, p. 133; Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 26, p. 240.

b- Verses from the Surah of al-Insān

Shia and Sunni interpreters are unanimous that verses 76:5-22 of the Quran have been revealed about the Ahl al-Bayt. It is for this reason that it is stated that the Surah of al-Insān has been revealed about Imam Ali:

“As for the righteous, they will drink from a cup whose flavor is camphor. A water that the servants of God drink from and make it flow in abundance. They fulfil their vows and they fear the day whose badness is evident and widespread. And for His love, they feed the needy, the orphan, and the captive. [They say] we feed you for the sake of Allah and do not want from you a reward nor gratitude. We fear a grim and harsh day from our Lord. So God will protect them from the ills of that day and will present them with freshness and joy.”¹

From an ethical viewpoint, self-sacrifice has a higher moral status than bestowal. Because he who bestows gives from what he does not need but he who makes a self-sacrifice gives from what he needs himself. The verses that we mentioned are an example of the self-sacrifice of the Ahl al-Bayt.

Imam Ali, along with his wife and two children were fasting for three consecutive days. They only had a loaf of barley bread to eat every night and each night when the time came to break their fast, someone would knock on their door and ask for food. So in three nights, for the sake of God, they gave away the loaf of bread to a needy person, an orphan, and a captive. This self-sacrifice was so sincere that God revealed Surah 56 of the Quran in their honor and praised their noble act.

¹ Quran, 56:5-11.

The statements in this verse show that the Ahl al-Bayt are righteous, fulfil their vows, are God-fearing, have forbearance, and because of their actions will be rewarded with the greatest bounties in the hereafter.

c- The Verses of Light (āyāt al-nūr)

Verses 35-37 of the surah of Nūr (light), also speak about the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt. In these verses, God introduces Himself as light and source of guidance for all creatures then describes the similitude and example of his light in this manner:

“Allah is the light of the heavens and earth. The example of his light is a lamp surrounded by glass in a niche as if it is a shining star; kindled from a blessed olive tree that is neither eastern nor western. Its oil is nearly shining even though fire has touched it. A light over a light. God guides who He wants by His light. God gives many examples for the people and God is well aware of all things. In houses that God has given permission to be exalted and His name to be mentioned in. He is glorified there in the morning and evening. Men that trade and financial dealings do not distract them from remembering God, performing prayers, and giving alms. They fear a day that the hearts and sights will be overturned.”¹

Interpreters of the Quran have written lengthy and greatly differing statements about the meaning of niche, light, and the glass surrounding it. These discussions fall out of the scope of this book. However, we can

¹ Quran, 24:35-37.

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state with certainty that the Imams are one of the greatest examples of God's Light that is the source of guidance for mankind.¹

Shia and Sunni exegetist have narrated that when the verse "In houses that God has given permission to be exalted ..." was revealed a man rose and asked about these houses and the Prophet replied these are the houses of the Prophets. Then Abu-Bakr rose and asked is the house of Ali and Fatimah one of these houses? The Prophet replied: Yes, and from the best of those houses.²

According to the aforementioned verses not only the Ahl al-Bayt are a sign of God's light, they have also been blessed with these virtues:

- Like the light of God, they guide mankind toward belief in God and His recognition.
- Their houses have been exalted by the Will of God.
- God is always remembered in their houses and worldly affairs do not distract them from God and worshipping him.
- The occupants of their houses are engaged in glorifying God every morning and evening.
- They have true belief in the hereafter and they fear their destiny and Judgment Day.

3- Virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt in Scripture

¹ See Makārim Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr nimūnih*, vol. 14, p. 472; al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 195; and al-Ṣadūq, *Man lā yaḥḍurhu l-faqīh*, vol. 2, p. 615.

² Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, vol. 5, p. 50; al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma` al-bayān*, vol. 7, p. 144; al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 104; and Farsi translation of *Tafsīr al-mīzān*, vol. 15, p. 196.

The virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt can be found in many narrations that have been mentioned in Shia and Sunni hadiths. In the current lesson we will briefly introduce two narrations.

a- The Hadith of Thaḡalayn (the Two Weighty Things)

The Hadith of Thaḡalayn is one the most famous and most well-known narrations about the Ahl al-Bayt that shows their exalted nature and status and their role in the guidance of mankind. This hadith has been recorded in numerous Sunni sources. Al-Nisā'ī narrates from Zaid b. Arqam that when the Prophet of Islam was returning from his last Hajj pilgrimage he said to the people at the Ghadir of Khum:

“I leave among you two weighty things. One is greater than the other. The Book of God and my progeny. Be careful how you deal with them after me for they will not separate from each other until they are returned to me at the Pond [of Kowthar].”¹

According to this narration, the Quran and Ahl al-Bayt are inseparable from each other. Furthermore, in a more complete version of this narration that has been recorded in both Shia and Sunni sources, it has been stated that: “As long as you grasp these weighty things you will not go astray. Do not overtake them for you will perish and do not try to teach them anything for they are more knowledgeable than you.”²

¹ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, vol. 3, pp. 14 & 17; al-Nisā'ī, *Sunan al-kubrā*, vol. 5, p. 45; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, vol. 2, p. 401; al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-qur`ān al-`aẓīm*, vol. 12, p. 271; and al-Qundūzī, *Yanābī` al-mawadda*, vol. 1, p. 65.

² See al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, vol. 2, p. 60; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Ṣawā'iq*, p. 89; Amīnī, *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 3, p. 119; al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 294; and al-Ḥuwayzī, *Tafsīr nūr al-thaḡalayn*, vol. 5, p. 605.

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Many virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt can be extracted by carefully examining the Hadith of Thaqalayn. According to this hadith, by grasping the Quran and Ahl al-Bayt no one would go astray and this is only possible if both of these weighty things are immaculate and free from all kinds of errors in all their aspects. Furthermore, the stature and role of the Ahl al-Bayt in guiding the people is so great that it has been mentioned alongside that of the Quran.

b- The Hadith of the Ark (Safīna)

The Hadith of the Ark is another narration from the Prophet recorded by both Shia and Sunni sources about the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt:

“The example of the Ahl al-Bayt among you is like Noah’s Ark. He who boards it is saved and he who turns away from it drowns.”¹

This narration is another witness to the immaculacy of the Ahl al-Bayt and the great role they play in guiding mankind. For according this narration being saved and guided is only possible by taking refuge in the Ark of the Ahl al-Bayt and this is only possible if the Ahl al-Bayt are immaculate and will not guide us astray.

Other narrations refer to the Ahl al-Bayt as the stars of the sky that guide us.²Their knowledge is referred to as an orchard abundant in fruit,

¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Bishārat al-muṣṭafā*, p. 88; Al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu`jam al-ausat*, vol. 4, p. 10 and *al-Mu`jam al-ṣaghīr*, vol. 1, p. 139; Ibn `Abd al-Birr, *al-Inbāh `alā qabā'il al-ruwāt*, p. 41; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmi` al-ṣaghīr*, vol. 1, p. 373 and vol. 2, p. 533; Al-Hindī, *Kanz al-`ummāl*, vol. 12, pp. 94, 95, and 98.

² “My Ahl al-Bayt in this nation are like the stars in the sky. Whenever one disappears another rises,” (al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 1, p. 281, citing the Prophet of Islam).

and they considered and as the Gate of Remission¹ (Bāb al-Ḥiṭṭa) in the sense that they must be respected and obeyed.

4- Virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt in Duas² and Ziyārat³

The many duas, supplications, and ziyārats that have been mentioned in the Shia corpus are a rich source of the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt. From among these sources, the Ziyārat al-Jāmi`at al-Kabīra narrated from Imam al-Hādī, stands out as one the most comprehensive pieces.⁴ This ziyarat mentions many of the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt using detailed and eloquent statements.⁵ This is how the ziyarat starts:

“Peace be upon you O household of Prophethood, the location of Messengership, the place where the angels frequent, the place where revelations descend, the mine of mercy, the treasure chests of knowledge, the peaks of tolerance, the origins of generosity, the leaders of the nations, the guardians of blessings, the roots of the righteous, pillars of the virtuous, the governors of [God’s] servants, the foundations of the lands, the gates of faith, the trustees of the Merciful, the

¹ “There example in this nation is like the Gate of Remission,” (Al-Ṭabarī, *Bishārat al-muṣṭafā*, p. 88 and al-Ṣadūq, *al-Amālī*, p. 74). The Gate of Remission is located in Jerusalem and the Israelites were ordered by God to enter it with humility (*Sharḥe āghā jamāl khānsārī bar Ghurar al-ḥikam*, vol. 6, p. 186)

² A dua is a prayer or supplication. Many Duas have been recorded in collections like *Mafātīḥ al-jinān* or *Muhaj al-da`awāt*.

³ A ziyārat or visitation prayer is a religious text recited when visiting the holy shrines of the Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them.

⁴ Other examples include Ziyārat Amīn-Allāh and Du`ā Nudba.

⁵ For an explanation and exegesis on the statements mentioned in this ziyarat see Rey Shahrī, *Tafsīre Qur`āne nāṭiq ya sharḥe ziyārate jāmi`eye kabīreh* and Mīlānī, *Bā pīshwāyane hidayatgar*.

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progeny of the Prophets, the finest of messengers, and the children of the one chosen by the Lord of the Worlds, and God's Mercy and Blessing.

“Peace be upon the Imams of guidance, and the lights in darkness, and the banners of piety, the possessors of intellect and insight, the refuge of the people, the heirs of the Prophets, the most exalted example, the fairest call, the proofs of God upon the inhabitants of the world, the hereafter and this world, and God's Mercy and Blessing.”¹

In short, by studying the many ziyārats that have been narrated from authentic sources, one can enumerate the many virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt. These virtues can also be found in other Shia and Sunni sources and are all rooted in the Quran.

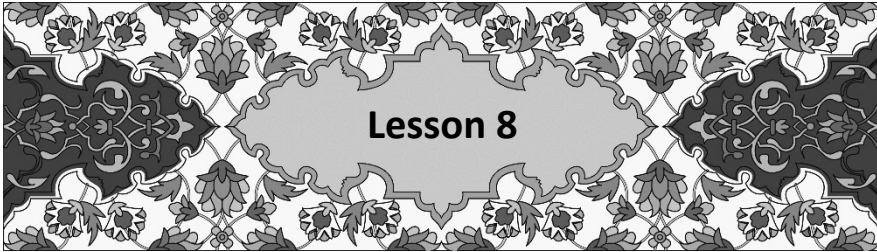
Questions:

- 1- How can one argue in favor of the Imamate of Imam Ali and his descendants using the verse of Taḥhīr and the Hadith of Kisā'?
- 2- Mention five virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt that can be found in the Surah of al-Insān and the Verse of Nūr?
- 3- Using the Hadith of Thaḡalayn prove the Imamate of the Ahl al-Bayt and their knowledge and immaculacy.
- 4- How can the Hadith of the Ark be used to prove the Imamate and immaculacy of the Ahl al-Bayt?

¹ Al-Ṣadūq, *Man lā yaḥḍurhu l-faqīh*, vol. 2, p. 610 & al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, vol. 6, p. 96.

Research:

- 1- Find another narration that can be used to prove the knowledge and immaculacy of the Ahl al-Bayt and find where it has been recorded in Sunni and Shia sources.



Lesson 8

Virtues of the Lady Fatimah



In the previous lessons we spoke about the status and virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt and presented arguments for their Imamate and Guardianship. Fatimah has a special place among these shining stars. This lesson is dedicated to the Lady Fatimah.



The virtues of Fatimah al-Zahrā are so numerous that they cannot be enumerated. In this lesson we will briefly mention a number of these virtues. It must be noted here that even though Fatimah possessed the necessary conditions to be an Imam, but she was not appointed to this station and she is not considered a successor of the Prophet. As we previously explained, to be appointed an Imam one must possess a number of qualifications, however one can only become an Imam by divine decree.

1- Immaculacy

As we mentioned in the previous lesson, Fatimah is one of the Companions of the Kisā and according to the verse “Verily God has willed to remove all uncleanness from you Ahl al-Bayt and completely purify you,”¹ she is immaculate.

Tha`labī narrates from Ummi Salama in his tafsīr of the Quran that the Prophet of Islam was in his house when Fatima came to him holding a silk cloth. The Prophet asked her to call her husband and two sons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. When they all arrived they ate a meal together then the Prophet spread his robe over them and said:

“O Allah! These are my Ahl al-Bayt and progeny. Remove all uncleanness from them and completely purify them.”

It was here that the verse of Taḥhīr was revealed. When Ummi Salama witnessed this scene she asked the Prophet if she was also part of this

¹ Quran, 33:33. This verse is known as the Verse of Taḥhīr.

group. The Prophet replied, you are in good standing [but not part of this group].¹

According to the Verse of Taḥḥīr Fatimah is immaculate and by God's Grace free from all uncleanliness and sins.

2- Knowledge

Another virtue of Fatima is that she is a Muḥaddath. A Muḥaddath is someone that can hear the voice of the angels and is the recipient of divine knowledge by this means.² According to many narrations the angels would converse with Fatimah and would inform her about the exalted station that she had with God. Imam al-Ṣādiq states:

“Fatimah is called Muḥaddatha because the angels would descend from the heavens and would address her in the same manner that they would address Mary daughter of `Imran. They would say: ‘O Fatimah! God has chosen you and purified you and has exalted you above all the women of the world.’”³

Fatimah had a book that is usually referred to as the Muṣḥaf of Fatimah. This book is about three times the size of the Quran but is completely different from the Quran.⁴ This is how Imam al-Ṣādiq describes it:

“Fatimah lived after the Messenger of Allah for seventy-five days. She was greatly saddened by her father's death and

¹ Al-Tha`labī, *al-Kashf wa l-bayān `an tafsīr al-qur`ān*, vol. 8, p. 43.

² See al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 177 & al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣā`ir al-darajāt*, p. 323.

³ Al-Ṣadūq, *ʿIlal al-sharāyī`*, vol. 1, p. 182 (Chapter on the reason that Fatimah has been named Muḥaddatha) & al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā`il al-imāma*, p. 81.

⁴ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, p. 239 & al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣā`ir al-darajāt*, p. 152.

Gabriel would come to her and would comfort her due to her father's death and would dispel her sorrows and inform her about her father and his place. He would also inform her about what would happen to her progeny and Ali would write these down. This is the Book of Fatimah."¹

Evidently, Fatimah's knowledge was not limited to the Book of Fatimah for she was raised in the Prophets house and had greatly benefited and learned from his divine knowledge. Fatimah was probably one of the best disciples of the Prophet of Islam and in the same level as Imam Ali. The Sermon of Fadak² clearly testifies to this. Although Fatimah only displays a small portion of her virtues and knowledge in this sermon it is still considered as one of the most eloquent Arabic sermons ever delivered.³

Apart from being eloquent, the Sermon of Fadak consists of theological concepts that clearly show Fatimah had been immersed in the springs of divine knowledge. It also shows her deep loyalty to the Imam of her time as she intensely defended Imam Ali in this sermon and argued against those that usurped his rights.

3- Devotion and Servitude

¹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, p. 239 & al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, p. 152.

²Fadak was the name of a rural area north of Medina that was surrendered to the Prophet by the Jews without the use of force and became his property by Divine decree. The Prophet then bestowed it to Fatimah. After the Prophet passed away Abu-Bakr seized this land from Fatimah without her consent. Fatimah then proceeded to deliver a passionate sermon in the Mosque of the Prophet that is known as the Sermon of Fadak (*Khuṭbatu fadak*). The sermon begins with the Praise of God and the Ahl al-Bayt and includes a defense of Imam Ali and his imamate and a protest to the illegal seizure of Fadak.

³Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Balāghāt al-nisā'*, p. 12.

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The Prophet of Islam described Fatimah to Abū Dhar in this manner:

“God has filled the heart and body of my daughter Fatimah with faith and certitude.”¹

It has been narrated that no one was more devout than Fatimah and she would stand in worship for so long that her legs would swell.² Abān b. Taghlib narrates that he asked Imam al-Ṣādiq about the reason that Fatimah is called Zahrā.³ He had replied that every day in the morning, midday, and at sunset when performing her prayers, she would shine with light before The Commander of the Believers (Imam Ali) and the people of Medina would also observe this from within their homes.⁴

4- An Exemplar for the Believers

The characteristics and roles of a Muslim woman can be observed in Fatimah in the best and most perfect manner possible. It is for this reason that she is considered the Master of all women and a perfect exemplar for them. Hijab, modesty, chastity, nurturing children, tending to the affairs of her home, and being trustworthy are some of the most important duties of Muslim women. Fatimah excelled above all other women in all these tasks.

Imam Ali narrates an example of her modesty and chastity:

¹ Al-Rāwandī, *Al-Kharā'ij wa l-jawāriḥ*, vol. 2, p. 531 & Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 43, p. 29.

² Ibn Shahr Āshūb, *al-Manāqib*, vol. 3, p. 341 & Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 43, p. 84.

³ Literally means to shine or illuminate.

⁴ Al-Ṣadūq, *ʿIlal al-sharāyi*, vol. 1, p. 181.

“One day a blind man asked permission to enter the house of Fatima. [When he came in] Fatimah put on her hijab. The Prophet said to her: ‘He cannot see you. Why did you cover yourself?’ She replied: ‘I can see him even though he cannot see me and he can still smell [my scent].’ The Prophet then said: ‘I testify that you are a part (*biḍ`a*) of me.”¹

Her children Imam Ḥasan, Imam Ḥusayn, and Zaynab are clear testimonies that she is the greatest exemplar one could have for nurturing children. These exalted souls were at the pinnacle of morals, ethics, and human virtues. They upheld justice and fairness and helped the needy and the oppressed. They lived in peace with their friends and those that disagreed with them and set great examples for humanity. Yet, these were the same people that stood up against the tyrants of their times either by fiery speeches or resistance and shook the pillars of their injustice.

Fatimah is not only an exemplar for women she is also an exemplar for men. Imam Mahdi states:

“The daughter of the Prophet is a fine example for me.”²

5-Compassion and Kindness

She was entitled the Mother of Her Father (*ummi abīhā*)³ by her father, Prophet Muhammad. This shows the sheer amount of kindness and compassion that she showed toward him. She was not only kind toward her father but toward all believers too. It was for this reason that while

¹ Al-Rāwandī, *al-Nawādir*, p. 14 & Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 43, p. 91.

² Al-Ṭabrisī, *al-Iḥtijāj*, vol. 2, p. 466 & al-Ṭūsī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 286.

³ Abu l-Faraj, *Maqātil al-ṭālibīn*, p. 57;

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praying she would first pray for others then for her family and herself. Imam Ḥasan narrates that:

“I saw my mother Fatimah standing in her prayer niche on a Friday night. She was constantly bowing and prostrating until twilight. I would hear her praying for the believers and mentioning their names in her prayers but she would not pray for herself. I asked her: ‘O Mother! Why don’t you pray for yourself as you pray for others?’ She replied: ‘First the neighbors then the household.’”¹

The virtues of Fatima are more than can be enumerated in these few pages.² The goal of this lesson was to mention only a few of her virtues and show the exalted station that she possesses alongside the Imams.

Questions:

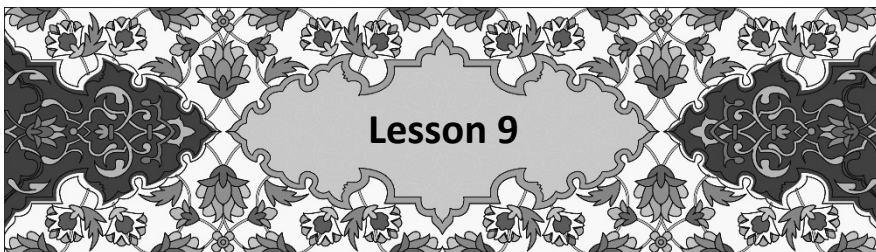
- 1- What is the meaning of al-Muḥaddath and why is Fatima considered a Muḥaddatha?
- 2- What do you know about the Muṣḥaf of Fatima?
- 3- Name five of Fatima’s greatest virtues.
- 4- Why do you think Fatima is not referred to as in Imam even though she possesses all the conditions of being an Imam?

¹ Al-Ṣadūq, *ʿIlal al-sharāʿi*, vol. 1, p. 181.

² For detailed works about Fatimah see Mīrjahānī, *Jannat al-ʿāshima*; al-Amīnī, *Faṭimat al-Zahrāʾ*; Qazwīnī, *Faṭimat al-Zahrāʾ az wilādat tā shahādat*; and Mūsawī, *Ṣiddiqiye shahīdeh*.

Research:

- 1- Study the sermon of Fadak and separate the subjects it contains into different categories.
- 2- Research the contents of Muşhaf of Fatima and its history. Present your work in class.



The Imamate of Imam Ali in the Quran



In the previous lessons we briefly spoke about the exalted station of the Imams and showed that only these pure souls can be the righteous successors of the Prophet. In the next lessons we will present arguments for the Imamate of each of the Imams. We will start with Imam Ali, peace be upon him.



Many verses of the Quran and narrations point to the Imamate of Imam Ali. We will briefly mention and explain some of these verses here.

1- The Verse of Guardianship (Wilāya)

One of the verses of the Quran that speaks about the Imamate of Imam Ali is the Verse of Guardianship. God states in this verse:

“Your Guardian (*Walī*) is only God, His Messenger, and those that believe and perform the prayers and give alms while they are bowing. And those that accept God, His Messenger, and the believers as their Guardians, then they (are the) party of God and verily victorious.”¹

According to this verse, only God, His Messenger, and the believers described in this verse are our Guardians.

In Arabic lexicons two main meanings have been mentioned for the word *walī*. According to al-Jauharī, *wilāya* means nearness.² Ibn Fāris expresses a similar meaning. However, they both state a second meaning for this word, namely being the guardian of someone or something or taking care of the affairs of a town, deal, or anything similar.³ Fīrūzābādī mentions nearness and also to rule or govern as definitions for *wilāya*.⁴

Other lexicons have more or less mentioned the same meanings. Some have even mentioned many different meanings for the word *Walī* such as to rule, to start an act, or to dominate something.⁵ Others have gathered

¹ Quran, 5:55-56.

² Al-Jauharī, *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, vol. 6, p. 2528.

³ Ibn Fāris, *Mu`jam maqā`īs al-luḡa*, vol. 6, p. 141.

⁴ Fīrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*, vol. 4, p. 401.

⁵ Al-Anīs, *al-Mu`jam al-wasīṭ*, under the section on *Walī*.

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all the different definitions for this word in one place. These include: Guardian, one who has authority over another, king, assistance, support, friendship, kindness, nearness, and royal land.¹

From all the different definitions for the word walī in the Verse of Wilāya, it can be shown that the only meaning that fits the context is Guardianship or having absolute authority over another. This can be deduced by paying attention to the words used in the verse.

The verse starts with the word *‘innamā* (lit. only). This shows that our guardians and those that have absolute authority over us are only God, His Messenger, and a group of the believers with distinct qualities. On the other hand the word walī cannot mean friend or supporter for it is the belief of Shia and Sunni exegetists that according to the Quran the believers are friends with or support each other:

“The believing men and women support each other.”²

According to the verse of Wilāya, the word Walī must have a meaning that is only unique to the three individuals mentioned in it. The only meaning that can have this quality is guardianship and absolute authority.³ Thus the verse is stating that only these three individuals have absolute authority over you.⁴

¹Yazdī Muṭṭlaq and others, *Imāmat pajūhī*, p. 181.

²Quran, 9:71. See al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, vol. 2, p. 308; al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 12, p. 26 & 54; vol. 15, p. 211; and vol. 16, p. 131; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi` al-bayān*, vol. 3, p. 374; and etc.

³ The same meaning can also be seen in verse 33:6 of the Quran: “The Prophet has more authority over believers than themselves.”

⁴ See Muwaḥḥidī, *Imāmat taṭbiqī*, pp. 116-132.

The next step is to identify the believers mentioned in this verse that pay alms while they are bowing. All Shia and many Sunni exegetists have mentioned that this verse has been revealed about Imam Ali, the Commander of the Believers.¹ We will only mention one such narration here from a Sunni source.

Al-Tha`labī narrates in his tafsīr from Abū Dhar that one day he was praying alongside the Prophet in the Mosque. A beggar asked for help but no one gave him anything. Imam Ali was bowing at that moment and gestured to him with one of his fingers that had a ring on it. The beggar went to him and took the ring. When the Prophet observed this he faced the sky and said:

“O God! My brother Moses prayed to you and said: ‘O Lord! Relieve my chest, make my mission easy, and remove the knot from my tongue so they understand what I say. And appoint me a minister/helper from my family. My brother Aaron. Greatly support me by him.’²And You responded: ‘We will strengthen you by your brother and we will grant you two authority.’³ O Lord! I am Your Prophet Muhammad and the one that You have purified. O God! Relieve my chest, make my mission easy, and remove the knot from my tongue so they understand what I say. And appoint me a minister/helper from my family. My brother Ali. Greatly support me by him”

¹ These Sunni tafsīrs include but are not limited to Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *al-Tafsīr*; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi` al-Bayan*; al-Ḥasakānī, *Shawāhid al-tanzīl*; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi` li aḥkām al-Qur`ān*; al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa asrār al-ta`wīl*; and al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*.

² Quran, 20:25-31.

³ Quran, 28:35.

Abū Dhar then said that By God the Messenger of God had barely finished this statement when Gabriel appeared and revealed the verse of Wilāya.¹

2- The Verse of *al-Indhār* (Warning)

When the verse “Warn your close kinsmen”² was revealed, the Prophet asked Imam Ali to invite his close relatives for a meal. The next day all the guests gathered at Abu-Ṭālib’s house where he showed them a sign of his Prophethood then stated:

“O children of Abd al-Muṭṭalib! God has not sent a Messenger but that he has appointed for him from his family a brother, a minister, an executor of his will, and an heir. He has appointed for me an heir just as He had appointed for the Prophets before me.”

Then the Prophet inquired as who would believe in him and become his brother, minister, and successor. He repeated these words for three times and no one replied except for Ali who stood up every time to announce his faith in the Prophet. The Prophet then referred to Ali and said:

“He is my brother, the executor of my will, my minister, and my successor among you. Listen to him and obey him.”³

¹ Al-Tha`labī, *al-Kashf wa l-bayān `an tafsīr al-qur`ān*, vol. 4, p. 80. Also see al-Ḥasakānī, *Shawāhid al-tanzīl*, vol. 1, p. 230 & al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-qur`ān*, vol. 4, p. 102.

² Quran, 26:214.

³ See Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Sa`d al-su`ūd*, pp. 105-16.

It should be noted that the Prophet knew the only person that would accept his call would be Ali but he inquired three times to his guests to show them Ali's exalted station and to complete God's proof upon them.

This story is known as the Narration of the Day of the House (*hadith yawm al-dār*) in Islamic scripture and has been narrated by both Shia and Sunni sources.¹

3- The Verse of *al-Tablīgh* (Conveying)

After the Prophet performed his last Hajj pilgrimage, the following verse was revealed to him at a place called Ghadir Khum when he was on his way to Medina:

“O Messenger! Convey what has been descended unto you from your Lord and if you do not - then you have not conveyed His message - and God will protect you from the people.”²

Shia exegetists are unanimous that that this verse was revealed at the Ghadir of Khum. Many prominent Sunni scholars also hold this position.³

¹ The narration can be found with some variations in the following Sunni sources: al-Ṭabarī, *al-Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 63; al-Ṭabarī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 19, pp. 74-75; Ibn Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 2, p. 62; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa l-nihāya*, vol. 3, p. 39; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, vol. 1, p. 224; al-Ḥalabī, *al-Sīra*, vol. 1, p. 322; al-Daḥlān, *al-Sīra*, vol. 1, p. 196; Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha*, vol. 13, p. 211; Ibn `Asākir, *Tārīkh Damishq*, vol. 1, p. 87; and al-Hindī, *Kanz al-`ummāl*, vol. 15, p. 115.

² Quran, 5:67.

³ For example see al-Amīnī, *al-Ghadīr*; Qāḍī Nūrullāh, *Iḥqāq al-ḥaq*; Sharaf al-Dīn, *al-Murajj`āt*; and al-Muẓaffar, *Dalā'il al-Ṣidq*.

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After this verse was revealed, the Prophet gave orders for the pilgrims to gather in one place. He then gave a lengthy sermon and at the end held Ali's hand, rose it toward the sky, then said:

“O people! Who has more authority over the believers than themselves?”

The people replied that God and His Messenger know better. Then the Prophet: God has authority over me and I have authority over the people. He then said:

“Whoever that I had authority over, now Ali has authority over.”

The Prophet repeated this statement three (or four) times then started supplicating: O God! Love those that love him and have enmity toward those that have enmity toward him. Assist those that assist him and abandon those that abandon him. Make truth be with him wherever that he goes. Finally he said:

“Those that have witnessed this must convey it to those that are absent.”

The Prophet then gave orders for a tent to be erected and the pilgrims would come to Imam Ali group by group and pledge their alliance to him and congratulate him.¹

¹ Abu Dāwūd, *al-Sunan*, vol. 1, p. 2; Ibn Māja, *al-Sunan*, vol. 1, p. 26; al-Tirmidhī, *al-Sunan*, vol. 3, p. 213; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, vol. 3, p. 323 & 404; al-Qundūzī, *Yanābī` al-mawadda*, vol. 1, p. 78; The main part of this narration has been recorded in al-Nisā'ī, *al-Sunan*, vol. 5, p. 45;

Some Sunni apologists claim that the Verse of Tablīgh is not related to the event of Ghadir because the verses before and after it are unrelated to this event.¹ This argument is unacceptable because there are many instances in the Quran where the context frequently changes between consecutive verses or even in a single verse. For example while speaking about a certain battle the Quran explains a religious law or while speaking about Jews and Christians it addresses the Muslims.²

Another question that might come to mind is why hasn't the name of Imam Ali been mentioned in the Quran and why doesn't the verse explicitly name Imam Ali?

We already explained in lesson 32 that not everything has been mentioned in the Quran. For example the Quran orders us to perform the Hajj pilgrimage but does not mention how the Hajj is to be performed. On the other hand, there are many other verses in the Quran that have been revealed about Imam Ali and his virtues. If Imam Ali's name was explicitly mentioned in the Quran, there would be a great risk of the Quran being distorted by the opponents to remove his name.

And finally, this also serves as a test for the believers. A true believer will submit to the statements of the Prophet even if they have not been explicitly mentioned in the Quran.

Questions:

- 1- To Prove the Imamate of Imam Ali using the verse of Wilāya what points should be taken into account?

¹ For example see Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-minār*, vol. 6, p. 466;

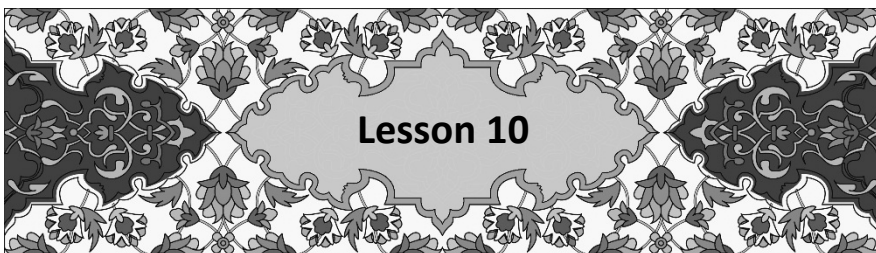
² See Makārim Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr nimūnih* under this verse.

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- 2- Why do you think the Prophet introduced Imam Ali as his successor at such an early state during the event of Yawm al-dār?
- 3- Use the verse of Tablīgh and the hadith of Ghadir to prove the Imamate of Imam Ali, the fact that Imam Ali was chosen by God, his Immaculacy, and his knowledge.

Research:

- 1- Find another verse in the Quran that can be used to prove the Imamate of Imam Ali.



The Imamate and Virtues of Imam Ali in the Sayings of the Prophet



In the previous lesson we presented a number of arguments for the Imamate of Imam Ali from the Quran. The last verse that we examined was the verse of Tablīgh. We showed that this verse was revealed during the event of Ghadir Khum. In the current lesson we will present more evidence for the Imamate of Imam Ali from the sayings of the Prophet. We will start with the Hadith of Ghadir.



During his life, the Prophet of Islam announced Imam Ali as his successor in numerous places and spoke of his many virtues. An important point that he would emphasize was that he had no say in selecting his successor and his successor was chosen by God Himself. We will mention two famous narrations in this regard in the next section.

1- The Hadith of Ghadir

The hadith of Ghadir is one of the most evident arguments for the Imamate of Imam Ali. We will first examine the authenticity of this hadith then we will explain how it proves the Wilāya and Imamate of Imam Ali.

1-1- The Reliability of the Hadith of Ghadir

The hadith of Ghadir is one of the most famous hadiths about the Wilāya of Imam Ali. It has been narrated by at least 110 of the companions and 84 of the Tābi'īn.¹ Apart from Shia scholars at least 360 Sunni scholars have mentioned this hadith in their books. For example al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Māja,² part of the *Ṣiḥāḥ sitta* collection, have narrated this hadith. Ibn Ḥanbal the well-known Sunni scholar narrates it in his *al-Musnad*.³ Other scholars that have extreme prejudice against Shias like al-Dhahabī

¹ According to Sunni belief, the companions are those narrators that have seen the Prophet and the Tābi'īn are those that have seen the companions and have been in contact with them.

² Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Sunan*, vol. 5, p. 297 and Ibn Māja, *al-Sunan*, vol. 1, pp. 55-58.

³ Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, vol. 1, pp. 84, 88, 118, 119, 152, 281, 331, and 370.

and Ibn Ḥajar have testified that many of the chain of narrators that narrate this hadith are authentic.¹

Apart from these, Sunni scholars have mentioned many instances where the Ahl al-Bayt or their supporters have argued in their favor using the Hadith of Ghadir. For example, it has been narrated that Imam Ali reminded his opponents about the Hadith of Ghadir in a number of places including in the six-man committee appointed by Umar to select his successor, during the reign of `Uthmān, and during the Battles of Jamal and Şiffin.²

Apart from Imam Ali, Fatima, her children Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, `Abd Allah b. Ja`far, `Ammār Yāsir, Qays b. Sa`d b. `Ibāda, `Umar b. `Abd al-`Azīz (the Umayyad caliph), and Ma`mūn (the Abbasid caliph) have all argued using this hadith. Even `Amr b. `Āṣ reminded Mu`āwiyya in a letter about this event to show to him that he was well aware of Ali's exalted station compared to that of Mu`āwiyya and his father.³

1-2- The Meaning of the Hadith of Ghadir

To gain a correct understanding of the Hadith of Ghadir the following issues must be addressed:

¹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥh al-bārī*, vol. 7, p. 61 and al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, vol. 3, p. 1043.

² Al-Khārazmī, *al-Manāqib*, p. 217. Also see al-Hindī, *Kanz al-`ummāl*, vol. 13, pp. 157-158. Similar reports can be found in Hamawī, *Farā'id al-simtayn*, chap. 58; Ibn Ḥātam, *al-Durr al-naẓīm*, vol. 1, p. 116; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Şawā'iq al-muḥriqa*, p. 126; Al-Ṭūsī narrates two other reports (al-Amālī, p. 332, no. 667 and p. 556, no. 1169) from Ibn `Uqda and Ibn Abī l-ḥadīd's *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha*. More sources can be found in al-Amīnī, *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 1, pp. 159-162.

³ See al-Amīnī, *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 1, pp. 159-213.

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Some Sunni scholars have stated that the word *Maulā* in the Hadith of Ghadir means friend or helper.¹ Their intention is to deny the Imamate of Imam Ali. We showed that *Maulā* is someone who has complete authority over another. Al-Amīnī has mentioned 27 definitions for the word *Maulā* from different lexicons. The most important of these being: Having authority over something, master, someone who loves another, assister, and someone who possesses an affair or has authority over it.² After explaining the different definitions Al-Amīnī states:

“After examining different Arabic lexicons we have concluded that the true meaning of *Maulā* is nothing but having authority over another thing and this meaning encompasses all other meanings for this word. All the other meanings have been derived from this meaning.”³

He then mentions many examples from Arabic literature and exegeses from prominent Arab figures to prove his claim.

Furthermore, there are a number of witnesses to this claim in the Hadith of Ghadir itself:

1. Before stating that Ali has Authority over those that the Prophet himself had authority over, the Prophet had asked a question: “Who has more authority over the believers than their own selves?”⁴ This shows that the word *Maulā* used by

¹ Al-Āmidī, *Ghāyat al-marām fi `ilm al-kalām*, p. 321; Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-maqāṣid*, vol. 5, p. 273; and *Sharḥ al-mawāqif*, vol. 8, p. 360.

² Al-Amīnī, *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 1, p. 362.

³ Al-Amīnī, *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 1, p. 368.

⁴ The Prophet was referring to the verse: “The Prophet has more authority over the believers than themselves.” (Quran, 33:6).

the Prophet after this question refers to authority not friendship.

2. Those present in that ceremony and those that heard the event afterwards – including many who were proficient in Arabic literature – all understood the word *maulā* to mean having authority. From that time onwards to the present time, poets and those acquainted with literature, have understood the same meaning and this is itself a clear argument in favor of the word *maulā* meaning leader or Imam. We will present a number of examples:

Ḥassān b. Thābit Anṣārī – who was present during the Event of Ghadir, asked the Prophet of Islam for permission to compose a poem about the events that occurred. He then read some poetry lines aloud including:

“And he said to him: O Ali! Rise for I am content with you being a guide and an Imam after me.”¹

The Prophet confirmed these statements and prayed for Ḥassān.

Umar and Abu-Bakr too stepped forward and congratulated Ali on this occasion. Abu-Bakr said:

“Well done! You have become my master and the master of all faithful men and women.” Umar said: “May it be pleasant for you O son of Abu-Ṭālib! You have become my master and the master of all faithful men and women.”²

¹ See al-Amīnī, *al-Ghadir*, vol. 1, p. 387 & vol. 2, p. 34.

² Ahmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, vol. 4, p. 281; al-Ṭabarī, *al-Tārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 428; and Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Ṣawāʾiq al-muḥriqa*, p. 26. Many other sources have been mentioned in al-Amīnī’s *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 1, pp. 239 – 246.

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Obviously, congratulating Ali using these words would only make sense if he was appointed as an Imam.

3. It is morally unacceptable to gather a large group of people for hours under the heat of the sun, only to inform them that Ali is their friend and assister. Such a scenario would only make sense if the Prophet wanted to announce a very important message.

2-The Hadith of Manzila

Another important hadith from the Prophet that implies that the Imamate and successorship of Imam Ali is the hadith of Manzila.¹

During one of his battles where the Prophet was fighting against the invading Roman forces in a place called Tabūk, North of Arabia, the Prophet left Ali behind in Medina so he would protect the city from the mischiefs of the Hypocrites. When Ali inquired as to why he should be separated from the Prophet, the Prophet replied:

“Are you not content that your station compared to mine is the station of Aaron compared to the station of Moses, except that there will be no Prophet after me? It is not fitting that I go somewhere but that you [remain] as my successor.”²

This hadith is so virtuous that even Ali’s enemies have testified to it. For example when Mu’āwiyya insulted Ali in one of his gatherings, Sa`d b.

¹ Manzil literally means station.

² Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, vol. 1, p. 709; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 37, chap. 53 (The narrations about the Imamate of the Commander of the Believers and using them to argue in his favor).

Abī Waqqāṣ - who was also Ali's enemy – interrupted Mu'āwiyya and said: Ali has three virtuous that if I had only one of them it would have been more enjoyable for me than having red-haired¹ camels: The Hadith of Manzila, the story of the banner (in the battle of Khaybar), and the story of Mubāhila.²

2-1- The Meaning of the Hadith of Manzila

According to this hadith Imam Ali possesses all the stations that Aaron had except for Prophet-hood. The Quran narrates that Moses asked God:

“Appoint a vizier for me from my family. My brother Aaron. Strengthen me by him. And make him an associate in my mission.”³

In another verse, Moses says to Aaron:

“Take my place (succeed me) in my nation.”⁴

In the same manner that Aaron was Moses's brother and his associate and vizier in his mission to guide the people, Imam Ali too is the Prophet's brother, associate, and vizier.

2-2- Some Questions and Answers

¹ A very prized camel among Arabs.

² Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 7, p. 120.

³ Quran, 20:29-32.

⁴ Quran, 7:142.

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The opponents try to undermine this hadith by casting doubt on its meaning and purpose. We will respond to these attempts here:

Question: This hadith was limited to the time that the Prophet was alive, right after the Battle of Tabūk, and is not applicable after his death.

Answer: This hadith has been uttered by the Prophet in numerous places and times such as when the Prophet blocked all doors that opened into his mosque except the door to Ali's house¹ and when he ordered all the Muslims to enter into a Pact of Brotherhood with each other.²

The terms like vizier and succession used in this hadith also show the fact that this statement is true at all times not just the time when it was first uttered.

Question: Aaron passed away before Moses and never succeeded him. With this fact in mind how can one prove Imam Ali's Imamate?

Answer: Aaron's death has no difference in this regard. His successorship is established regardless of him outliving Moses or dying before him. Aaron took Moses's place when Moses was absent in the same manner that Ali took the Prophet's place after he passed away. Anyway, the Prophet has used other similitudes that dispel this doubt altogether:

“O Ali! Your station compared to me is the same station Hibat-Allah had with regard to Adam, and the same as Sam with regard to Noah, and the same as Isaac with regard to Abraham, and Aaron with regard to Moses, and Simon with

¹ Ibn Maghazilī Shāfi`ī, *al-Manāqib*, p. 255;

² Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Faḍā'il al-ṣaḥāba*, vol. 2, p. 663.

regard to Jesus, except that there will be no Prophet after me.”¹

This statement clearly speaks about succession and shows that the doubt about Aaron is unfounded.

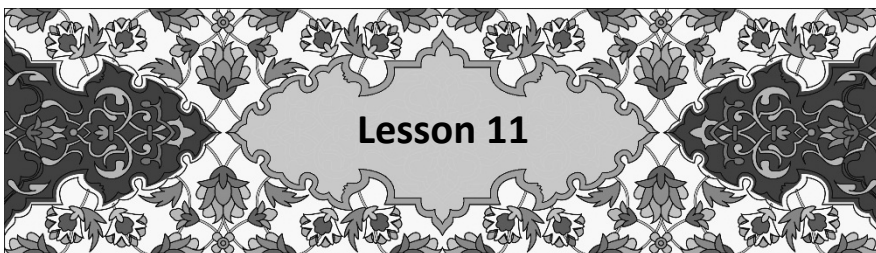
Questions:

- 1- What arguments can be used to prove the veracity of the hadith of Ghadir?
- 2- What is the meaning of Maulā in the hadith of Ghadir? How do you respond to those that cast doubts on this meaning?
- 3- Aaron died while Moses was still alive. With this point in mind, how can one use the hadith of Manzila to prove Imam Ali was the successor of the Prophet?

Research:

- 1- Refer to al-Ṭabrisī, *al-Iḥtijāj*, the chapter on the arguments of Imam Ali with Abu-Bakr. What verses from the Quran does Imam Ali use to prove his Imamate and how does Abu-Bakr respond?

¹ Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Amālī*, p. 46; Ibn `Uqda, *Faḍā'il Amir al-mu'minīn*, p. 102; and al-Neyshābūrī, *Rauḍat al-wā'izīn*, vol. 1, p. 101.



The Imamate and Virtues of the Imams after Ali



In the previous lesson we presented a number of arguments for the Imamate of Imam Ali. These arguments can at times be used to prove the Imamate of the Imams after Imam Ali too. In the current lesson we will present parts of scripture that speak about the Imamate of the twelve Imams.



In the first lessons of this section, we presented a number of arguments that stated all of the Prophet's successors are Imams. On one hand we mentioned narrations agreed upon by all sects of Islam that stated the successors of the Prophet are twelve in number, and on the other hand we showed the only group that fit this criteria are the twelve Imams from the Ahl al-Bayt. We then used the Quran and hadith to show that the Ahl al-Bayt are the twelve purified Imams, Fatima, and the Prophet himself, peace be upon them all.

In the current lesson we will present a number of other hadiths and verses that prove the Imamate of the twelve Imams.

1- The Verse of Auli I-Amr (Those that Possess Authority)

One of the verses that can be used to prove the Imamate of the Imams is the following verse:

“O you who have become believers! Obey Allah and Obey the Messenger and those that possess authority from among yourselves.”¹

In this verse God orders the believers to obey Himself and the Prophet. This is obvious. However, it is not clear who is intended by the third group. We will speak about the third group in this section. First two things have to be made clear: what is the meaning of ‘obeying’ and who are those that ‘possess authority’?

¹ Quran, 4:59.

1-1- The Meaning of 'Obeying'

In the same manner that obeying Allah and the Prophet is absolute and has no conditions, obeying the Auli I-Amr is absolute and has no conditions. This opinion has been expressed by Shia and some Sunni exegetists. For example Fakhr Rāzī states:

“In this verse God has given the order to obey the Auli I-Amr in a strict manner. Whoever God orders us to obey in a strict manner must be immaculate from wrongdoings (*ma`ṣūm min al-khata'*) ... thus it has been shown that the Auli al-Amr in this verse must be immaculate without a doubt.”¹

Ṭabāṭabā'ī writes in this regard:

“The verse states that the Auli I-Amr must be obeyed without any condition ... and the Auli I-Amr must be immaculate in the same manner that the Messenger of God is immaculate.”²

1-2- Who are the Auli I-Amr?

Sunni exegetists have enumerated a number of peoples and groups that they believe can be considered Auli I-Amr. These include rulers,³ religious scholars,⁴ military commanders, and the companions of the Prophet.⁵ Considering the fact that one of the most important attributes of the Auli I-Amr is immaculacy, none of the aforementioned groups fit this criteria.

¹ Fakhr al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, vol. 10, p. 113.

² Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mīzān fi tafsīr al-qur'ān*, vol. 4, p. 391.

³ Al-Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi` li aḥkām al-qur'ān*, vol. 5, p. 259 and al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, vol. 2, p. 95.

⁴ Al-Ālūsī, *Tafsīr rūḥ al-ma`ānī*, vol. 5, p. 65.

⁵ Al-Āndulusī, *Tafsīr baḥr al-muḥīṭ*, vol. 3, p. 278.

However, some Sunni scholars claim that since the Umma is unanimous (*ijmā`*) that these people are the Auli I-Amr, then they must be immaculate.¹ To accept this argument a number of questions must be answered. First, what is the meaning of Auli I-Amr and how is it related to the *ijmā`* of the Umma? Second, are all Muslims unanimous on this claim? Third, if *ijmā`* occurs on a topic, how can one be sure that an error has not occurred? If a group of Muslims are unanimous about a topic (such as a group of people disobeying the Prophet and appointing someone else as his successor), then on what basis is their opinion free from error?²

To answer these questions, we have no choice but to ask the Prophet of Islam about the Auli I-Amr. For he is the true interpreter of the Quran and knows its meaning. Jābir b. `Abdullāh al-Anṣārī narrates that when the verse of Auli I-Amr was revealed I asked the Prophet: “We understand who Allah and His Prophet are, but who are the Auli I-Amr that God has made their obedience like His own obedience?” The Prophet replied:

“O Jābir! They are my successors and the leaders of the Muslims. The first is Ali b. Abī Ṭālib, then Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, then Ali b. Ḥusayn ... (and the Prophet named the twelve Imams).”³

2- The Hadith of Fatima’s Tablet (Lauḥ)

¹ Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-kabīr*, vol. 10, p. 144.

² For a detailed discussion see Ṭabāṭabā`ī, *al-Mizān fi tafsīr al-qur`ān* (translation), vol. 4, p. 625-629.

³ Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 1, p. 253; al-Khazāz al-qumī, *Kifāyat al-athar fi al-naṣṣ `alā a`immat al-ithnā `ashar*, p. 53; al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-ghumma fī ma`rifat al-a`imma*, vol. 2, p. 509; and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 36, p. 250.

The Hadith of the Tablet is a narration that mentions the twelve Imams, their names, and some of their characteristics. This is how Imam al-Ṣādiq narrates this hadith:

“One day my father, Muhammad b. Ali al-Bāqir, said to Jābir b. `Abd-Allah al-Anṣārī: ‘O Jābir! I must speak with you privately, when do you have some free time?’ Jabir replied: ‘Whenever you wish.’ So my father spoke with him one day privately and said: ‘O Jābir! Tell me about the Tablet that you saw in the hand of my mother, Fatima, peace be upon her, and the things that she informed you about that have been inscribed therein.’ Jābir replied: ‘I swear by God that I met your mother Fatima while the Prophet, peace be upon them, was still alive and I congratulated her on the birth of Ḥusayn. I saw in her hand a green tablet and thought that it was made of emerald. I saw in it a white writing that was [shining] like sunlight. I said to her: “May my father and mother be sacrificed for you, O daughter of the Messenger of God! What is this tablet?” She replied: “This tablet was gifted by God to the Messenger of God. It contains the name of my father, my husband, my sons, and the names of the heirs from my children. My father gave it to me to make me happy.” She then gave me the tablet and I copied it contents.’ My father said: ‘O Jābir! Can you show it to me?’ Jabir replied positively and they walked to Jābir’s house. My father then showed him a piece of parchment and said: ‘O Jābir! Look at your paper while I read aloud from mine.’ So Jābir compared his own writing with what my father read to him and by God there was no difference not even in a single letter. Jābir said: ‘I swear by God that I saw written in the Tablet in this exact manner: In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful. This is a writing from Allah the

Undefeatable and All-Wise to Muhammad His Prophet, His Light, His Ambassador, His Veil (*ḥijāb*) ...”¹

3- Narrations that Mention the Number of Imams or their Names

Many different narrations have been recorded in the Shia corpus that speak about this topic. We will mention a few of these here. It has been narrated from the Messenger of God that:

“The Imams after me are twelve in number. The first is Ali b. Abī-Ṭālib and the last is the Qā’im. They are my successors, my heirs, and those that possess my authority. They are God’s proof over my nation after me. Those that testify to their (station) are (true) believers and those that deny them are infidels².”³

Salman al-Farsi narrates that he asked the Prophet to name his successors. The Prophet replied:

“The first and their master is Ali b. Abū-Ṭālib, then my two Grandchildren (from Fatima), then the Adornment of the Worshippers Ali b. al-Ḥusayn, then Muhammad b. Alī the one that Opens the Knowledge of the Prophets, then the Truthful Ja`far b. Muhammad, then his son al-Kādhim who will have the

¹ Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Ghayba*, pp. 143- 146; al-Ṭabrisī, *al-Iḥtijāj*, vol. 1, pp. 67-68; and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 36, pp. 195-197.

² Based on some narrations and verses, the word Infidel (*kāfir*) used in this context means that they disbelieve in the Imams. It does not mean that they are not Muslims. In the same manner that the words Muslim and mu’min have two different meanings.

³ Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 1, p. 259 and al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-ghumma fī ma`rifat al-a`imma*, vol. 2, p. 507.

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same name as Mūsā b. `Imrān, then his son Ali who would be martyred in a foreign land, then his son Muhammad, then the two truthful ones Ali and al-Ḥasan, then the Proof, the One who will rise and awaits during his occultation. They are my progeny and are from my blood and flesh. Their knowledge is my knowledge and their ruling is my ruling. God will not allow those that harass me (by harassing) them to attain my intercession.”¹

Ibn `Abbās narrates that a Jew by the name of Na`thal came to the Prophet and asked some questions. The Prophet responded to them. He then said:

“O Muhammad! [Your responses] were correct. Then tell me about the executor of your will (*waṣī*). For there is no Prophet but that he has an executor of his will and our Prophet Moses appointed Yūshi` b. Nūn for this position.”

The Prophet replied:

“The executor of my will and my successor is Ali b. Abī Ṭālib, then my two grandson’s - from my daughter - al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn who will be followed by nine righteous Imams from the progeny of Ḥusayn ... after the passing of Ḥusayn his son Alī, after the passing of Alī his son Muhammad, after the passing of Muhammad his son Ja`far, after the passing of Ja`far his son Mūsā, after the passing of Mūsā his son Ali, after the passing of Ali his son Muhammad, after the passing of Ali his son Ḥasan, and after the passing of Ḥasan his son Ḥujja b. al-

¹ Al-Khazāz al-qumī, *Kifāyat al-athar fi al-naṣṣ `alā a`immat al-ithnā `ashar*, pp. 101-102, no. 25 and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 36, p. 290.

Ḥasan b. Alī. These are twelve Imams the same in number as the twelve Israelite leaders.”¹

These were only a few narrations from the many that have been narrated in the Shia corpus. ²

4- Narrations that Only Mention One or Some of the Imams

Apart from the narrations that mention the names of all the Imams, there are many narrations that refer to only one or some of the Imams, at times without even mentioning their names.

The reason that these narrations do not mention the names of all the Imams is due to the conditions of the time that the narration was stated by an Imam or the Prophet, peace be upon them. At times the intention was to introduce the immediate successor to one of the Imams, so the Imam only named his successor. At other times, the intent of the narration was to make another point and it was not necessary to mention all the Imams, such as when the Prophet would speak about Imam Ali and his two sons.

These narrations are many in number and we will not mention them here. Those interested can refer to the many books authored in the Shia corpus about the topic of Imamate. ³

¹ Al-Khazāz al-qumī, *Kifāyat al-athar fi al-naṣṣ `alā a`immat al-ithnā `ashar*, pp. 11-14 and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 36, p. 284.

² For example see al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, Kitāb al-ḥūjja; al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*; and al-Khazāz al-qumī, *Kifāyat al-athar fi al-naṣṣ `alā a`immat al-ithnā `ashar*.

³ For example refer to al-`Āmilī, *Ithbāt al-hudāt bi l-nuṣūṣ wa l-mu`jizāt*.

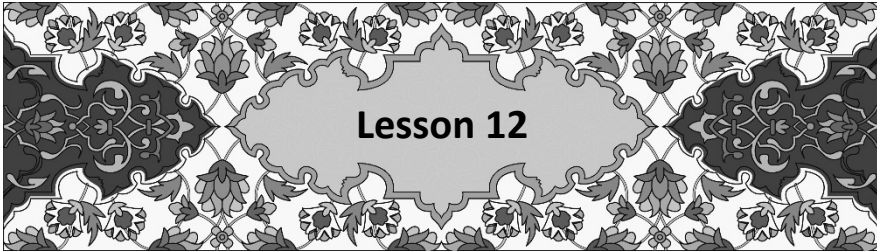
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Questions:

- 1- Prove the Imamate and Immaculacy of the Ahl al-Bayt using the Verse of Auli l-Amr.
- 2- What does the Tablet of Fatima say about the Imamate of the Imams?
- 3- Why do some narrations mention all the Imams and others only refer to one or some of the Imams?

Research:

- 1- Other than using explicit statements, what methods did the Prophet and Imams, peace be upon them, use to introduce their immediate successors?



The Imamate of Imam Mahdi



In the previous lessons we spoke about the Imamate of the Imams. However, it is necessary to go into more details when speaking about the Imamate of Imam Mahdi and the events that will occur after his reappearance. We will first speak about the 'belief in a Savior' in previous religions then we will present arguments for the Imamate of Imam Mahdi.



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In every age there exists a Proof from God to guide those seeking guidance and to complete God's proof upon the transgressors. During the history of Islam, the Imams have played this role using a variety of methods based on the social and political conditions of their times. However, after the martyrdom of the eleventh Imam and the beginning of the Imamate of Imam Mahdi, a new era was ushered in with unique characteristics. This era is referred to as the Age of Occultation (*al-ghayba*). The next sections are dedicated to this topic.

1- Belief in a Savior

The belief that a savior will appear who will save mankind from all forms of tyranny and will create peace and justice once and for all is deeply rooted in the scripture of many religions and the history of many civilizations. Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and Buddhists, all believe in this better future even though they describe it in different terms and manners.¹

All Islamic sects, regardless of the differences in their beliefs, are unanimous about the appearance of Imam Mahdi in the end of time. According to Ibn Khaldūn:

“Know that all Muslims throughout the ages have been unanimous that without doubt a man from the Ahl al-Bayt will appear who will assist the religion (of Islam) and will manifest

¹ See the first two chapters of *Farhang wa tamaddune jahān dar `asre maw`ūd*.

justice. The Muslims will follow him and he will rule the Islamic lands. He will be called the Mahdi.”¹

The belief in the Mahdi is rooted in the Quran and Hadith. Many verses of the Quran speak about the Mahdi. According to some researchers, at least forty-five verses of the Quran are directly related to Imam Mahdi.²For example:

“And we wrote in the Psalms after the remembrance that the Earth will be inherited by my righteous servants.”³

Shia and Sunni exegetes have all stated that according to this verse, the nation of Muhammad will eventually conquer all lands including the lands of the disbelievers.⁴It has been narrated from the Prophet that:

“If there remains only one day until (the end of) the world, God will elongate that day until a man from my Ahl al-Bayt will rise who will fill the Earth with justice in the same manner that it has been filled with tyranny and injustice.”⁵

¹ Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Tārīkh*, vol. 1, p. 311.

² See al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 51, p. 44 and al-Baḥrānī, *al-Maḥajja fī mā nazala fi l-Qā'im al-ḥujja*.

³ Quran, 21:105.

⁴ See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi` al-bayān*, vol. 17, p. 139; al-Tha`labī, *al-Kashf wa l-bayān `an tafsīr al-qur`ān*, vol. 6, p. 313; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 22, p. 23; and Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-qur`ān*, vol. 14, p. 330.

⁵ Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 180; al-Ṣadūq, *Man lā yaḥḍurhu l-faqīh*, vol. 4, p. 177; and Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ṣadūq, *al-Imāma wa l-taḥsīr*, p. 11. This hadith has also been mentioned in Sunni sources with slightly different wording: Abū Dāwūd, *al-Sunan*, vol. 2, p. 309; al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu`jam al-awsat*, vol. 2, p. 55; al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu`jam al-kabīr*, vol. 2, p. 55; and al-Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmi` al-ṣaḡhīr*, vol. 2, p. 438.

2- Imam Mahdi in Scripture

Imam Mahdi, the twelfth Imam of the Shias was born on 15th of Sha`bān, 255 AH in the city of Samarra. His father was Imam Ḥasan al-`Askarī and his mother was Narjis Khātūn a descendant of Yashū`ā and from the Progeny of Sham`ūn b Ṣafā. He thrived in the household of Prophethood until the year 260 AH when his father passed away and the station of Imamate was entrusted to him.

Islamic scripture is abundant¹ with hadiths and narrations that speak about Imam Mahdī. These narrations have been narrated from the Prophet, Fatima, and the twelve Imams, peace be upon them all. Many famous scholars have authored books on this topic. Earlier works include Nu`mānī's *al-Ghayba*; al-Ṣadūq's *Kamāl al-dīn*; and al-Ṭūsī's *al-Ghayba*. We will now mention some of these narrations. It has been narrated from the Prophet that:

“My successor and your Imam after me is Ali b. Abū Ṭālib. After him my successors and your Imams are his sons Ḥasan then Ḥusayn. Then nine men from the progeny of Ḥusayn, one after the other. They are your Imams and my successors upon you. The ninth is the one who will rise from among the Imams. He will fill (the Earth) with fairness and justice in the same manner that it will be filled with tyranny and injustice.”²

It has been narrated from Imam Ali:

“The Qā'im from among us will be absent for a long time ... His birth will be in secret and he will be in occultation so that

¹ Large collections of these hadiths have been gathered in many books such as Gulpaygānī's *Muntakhab al-athar fī Imām al-thānī `ashar*.

² Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 36, p. 246.

when he rises he will not have pledged allegiance to anybody.”¹

It has been narrated from Imam Ḥasan that:

“There is no one from among us except that he has [no choice but] to pledge allegiance to a tyrant of his time, except for the Qā’im. The Spirit of Allah, Jesus son of Mary will pray behind him [in the congregational prayers]. By the [power] of God his birth will be in secret and he will be hidden so that he will not have pledged allegiance to anyone when he rises. He is the ninth from the progeny of my brother Ḥusayn.”²

It has been narrated from Imam al-Ḥusayn:

“The ninth from my progeny will possess a custom from Joseph and a custom from Moses son of `Imrān. He is the one who will rise from among us Ahl al-Bayt. God will organize his affairs in a single night.”³

It has been narrated from Imam al-Sajjād:

“The Qā’im from among us will have two occultations. One will be longer than the other ... the long occultation will extend so much that many of the believers in this affair [meaning imamate] will no longer believe in it. Only those will remain steadfast who have strong certitude and correct recognition.”⁴

¹ Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, p. 303.

² Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, p. 316 and al-Khazāz al-qumī, *Kifāyat al-athar fi al-naṣṣ `alā a’immat al-ithnā `ashar*, p. 225.

³ Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, p. 317. According to other narrations these customs are occultation and secret birth.

⁴ Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, p. 324.

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Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī narrates that he asked Imam al-Ṣādiq about the occultation and the narrations that are mentioned about it. He replied:

“The occultation will occur for the sixth from my descendants. He is the twelfth Imam of guidance after the Prophet. The first is Ali b. Abī Ṭālib and the last is the one who will rise with the truth. The Remnant of God on Earth (*Baqiyat-Allāh*), the Owner of Time (*Ṣāhib al-zamān*).”¹

When Imam al-Kādhim was asked about the Qā'im he replied:

“He is the fifth from my descendants. He will be in occultation for a very long time.”²

It has been narrated that Imam al-Riḍā said to Di`bil:

“O Di`bil! The Imam after me is my son Muḥammad. After Muḥammad his son `Alī. After `Alī his son Ḥasan. After Ḥasan his son the Proof (*al-Ḥujja*), the one who will rise. He will be awaited during his occultation and will be obeyed after his appearance.”³

Abū Ja`far al-Ḥāshimī narrates that:

“I said to the eleventh Imam: ‘Your grandeur prevents me from asking you a question. Do you allow me to ask you?’ He replied: ‘Ask.’ I said: ‘O my Master! Do you have a son?’ He

¹ Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, pp. 33 & 342.

² Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, p. 361.

³ Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, p. 372.

replied: ‘Yes.’ I asked again: ‘If something happens to you where do I ask him (or about him)?’ He replied: ‘Medina.’”¹

According to another narration, Imam Ḥasan al-`Askarī showed his son to one of his followers and said:

“He is your master after me.”²

As we previously mentioned, many narrations have been narrated from the Prophet and Imams about Imam Mahdi, his attributes, birth, occultation, longevity, awaiting his appearance, the signs of his appearance, and his government. Some of these will be gradually mentioned in the next lessons.

Questions:

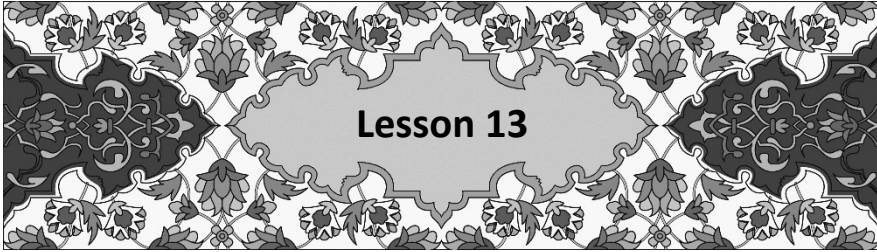
- 1- Mention examples from religions other than Islam and non-religious groups that show their belief in a savior.
- 2- Categorize the concepts that the Prophet and Imams have mentioned in their statements when speaking about Imam Mahdi.
- 3- What customs from Joseph and Moses will Imam Mahdi possess?

Research:

Find a single narration from Sunni sources that proves the Imamate of Imam Mahdi.

¹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol.1, p. 328.

² Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol.1, p. 328.



The Occultation of Imam Mahdi



In the previous lesson we spoke about the general belief in a savior and mentioned some examples from different religious and non-religious groups. In the current lesson we will speak about Imam Mahdi's occultation, his longevity, and the duties of his followers in his absence.



After the birth of Imam Mahdi, due to political reasons and Divine Wisdom and Prudence, Imam Mahdi was kept hidden from most people by his father. After the martyrdom of his father, Imam Mahdi went into occultation by the order of God. The wisdom behind his occultation will only be known fully after he appears, although some reasons for his occultation have been mentioned in the narrations. For example according to some narrations, If he didn't go into hiding, he would have been killed by the tyrants of his time.¹

Imam Mahdi has two occultations. The minor occultation that lasted sixty-nine years from 260 – 329 AH. And the major occultation that started from 329 AH and is still in effect today.² During the minor occultation, Imam Mahdi communicated with the people through four deputies or ambassadors. These were Uthmān b. Sa'īd, Muhammad b. Uthmān, Ḥusayn b. Rūḥ, and Alī b. Muhammad al-Samurrī. These four deputies would send letters and funds to Imam Mahdi and would receive the responses and convey them to the Shias of his time. However, after the death of the fourth deputy and by the order of Imam Mahdi, this line of communication came to an end³ and the major occultation started.

During the major occultation, there is no longer any communication between the people and the Imam through an intermediary. According to a number of narrations, during this period, the religious affairs of the people must be resolved by scholars who must possess strict attributes such as knowledge, justness, wisdom, and acting in accordance with scripture. These scholars must be above all other scholars of their time in

¹ Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 2, p. 481 & al-Rāwandī, *al-Kharā'ij wa l-jarā'ih*, vol. 2, p. 955.

² Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 340 & al-Ṭūsī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 395.

³ Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 395 & al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 2, p. 516.

this regard. The Imam is God's proof upon them and they are the Imam's proof upon the people.¹

1- The Meaning of Occultation

Occultation does not mean that Imam Mahdi is completely hidden and isolated from the people. Rather, it means that under normal circumstances, we cannot meet or see him voluntarily. At times we may even meet him or speak with him without knowing that that person was the Imam. In Shia narrations, this situation has been referred to as a custom from Joseph² for he saw his brothers and recognized them but they didn't recognize him. According to other narrations, every year Imam Mahdi attends the Hajj pilgrimage. He sees and the people and recognizes them, but the people do not recognize him although they see him.³ Imam al-Ṣādiq states in this regard:

“He will walk in their markets and will step on their carpets but they will not recognize him until God gives him permission to introduce himself to them.”⁴

2- Benefiting from a Hidden Imam

One the most important questions related to Imam Mahdi's occultation is: How do we benefit from a hidden Imam? In many narrations, Imam

¹ Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 291; al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 2, p. 484; and al-Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'a*, vol. 27, p. 140.

² Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 1, p. 28 & vol. 2, p. 340; Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ṣadūq, *al-Imāma wa l-tabṣira*, p. 121; and al-Nu`mānī, *al-Ghayba*, pp. 163-164.

³ Al-Ṣadūq, *Man lā yaḥḍurhu l-faqīh*, vol. 2, p. 520; Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 2, p. 440; and al-Ṭūsī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 362.

⁴ Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 1, p. 145 & al-Nu`mānī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 164.

Mahdi's occultation has been compared to the sun when it is covered by the clouds. Imam Mahdi himself states in a letter:

“During my occultation, (you will) benefit from me in the same manner that (you) benefit from the sun when the clouds have covered it from the eyes.”¹

The hidden Imam and the sun covered by the clouds have many common aspects:²

- The sun is the center of the solar system and the planets revolve around it and Imam Mahdi is the center of creation.
- It is due to the existence of the sun that life is possible on earth. In the same manner we owe our lives and everything that we have to Imam Mahdi.
- The sun never ceases to shine. Whoever, wants to benefit from the sunshine will face toward the sun. Sunlight still reaches us in the cloudiest of days. In the same manner, Imam Mahdi never ceases to provide us with lights of guidance even when we do not see him.
- We live on Earth in the comfort created by the warmth of the sun. In the same manner we owe the comfort in our lives to Imam Mahdi. If it was not for him, God knows how we would have been afflicted by our enemies. Imam Mahdi states in a letter to al-Mufid: “We do not fail to protect you and we do not forget about you. If that was the case, you would have been

¹ Al-Şadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 2, p. 485.

² See Amulī, *Uşariye khilqat dar bariyeh imame zamān*, p. 85.

afflicted with hardships and the enemies would have uprooted you.”¹

3- The reason for Imam Mahdi’s Occultation

As we previously mentioned, the real reason behind Imam Mahdi’s occultation is a Divine secret that will only be revealed after his appearance. `Abd-Allah b. Faḍl al-Ḥāshimī narrates:

“I heard Imam al-Ṣādiq say: ‘The owner of this affair will definitely have an occultation. Those that seek falsehood will be in a state of skepticism during this period.’ I asked, Why [will he go into occultation]? He replied: ‘Because of a reason that we do not have permission to inform you about.’ I asked, what is the wisdom behind his occultation? He replied: ‘The same wisdom that was behind the occultation of the previous Proofs of God. In the same manner that the wisdom behind Khiḍr wrecking the ship, killing the boy, and fixing the wall were not revealed to Moses except when the time came for each of them to go their separate ways. O son of Faḍl! This is an affair from the affairs of God and a mystery from his mysteries. When we understand that God is All-Wise we will testify that all his actions have a wisdom even if the wisdom is not apparent to us.’”²

Obviously, we cannot know the main reason and wisdom behind Imam Mahdi’s occultation however, some secondary reasons for his occultation have been mentioned in scripture.

¹ Al-Ṭabrisī, *al-Iḥtijāj*, vol. 2, p. 495 and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 53, p. 175.

² Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 2, p. 482.

3-1- A test for the People

Imam Mahdi's occultation is considered a test for the Shia. Imam al-Husayn states:

“There are twelve guided ones (*Mahdi's*) from among us. The first is the Commander of the Believers, Ali b. Abī Ṭālib, and the last is the ninth from my descendants. He is the one who will rise with the truth. By him God will give life to earth after its death and will make the religion of truth victorious over all religions even if the disbelievers detest it. He will have an occultation in which a group of people will apostate and others will remain steadfast. They will be mocked and asked: ‘If you are truthful, then when will this promise be fulfilled?’¹ Be aware! Those that practice forbearance during his occultation in the face of mockery and denial, are like those that participated in battles alongside the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family.”²

It has also been narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq that his occultation is a test for the Shias.³

3-2- So he Wouldn't be Forced to Pledge Allegiance to the Tyrants of his Time

Imam Mahdi is in occultation so that when he appears, he would not have pledged allegiance to any of the tyrants and rulers of his time:

¹ Quran, 10:48.

² Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 1, p. 317.

³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 337 & al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 2, p. 342.

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“The Qā’im from us will be born secretly and will go into occultation so that when he appears he will not have pledged allegiance to anybody.”¹

3-3- To Protect his Life

God will protect Imam Mahdi by taking him into occultation. It has been narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq that:

“The one who will rise will go into occultation before he rises because he fears that he will be killed.”²

3-4- Our Actions

Creating a world government can only be achieved when people in general are ready to accept such an order. This will be achieved gradually by social and political changes in the world arena. On the other hand, the government of Imam Mahdi is based on justice and the law of God. Many rulers and the normal populace are not willing to live under such conditions. Imam Ali delivered a sermon at Kūfa and stated:

“Be aware that God’s earth will not become empty of a Proof from God. However, God will make the people blind from seeing him because of their injustice, unfairness, and transgression to themselves.”³

¹ Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 1, p. 303.

² Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 2, p. 481.

³ Al-Nu`mānī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 141.

4- Awaiting his Faraj (Relief)

The importance of awaiting Imam Mahdi's relief has been referred to in many narrations. According to some of these narrations, awaiting his relief (*faraj*) has been considered as one of the greatest forms of worship:

“The most virtuous of deeds is awaiting relief (*faraj*).”¹

“Awaiting Relief (*intizār al-faraj*)” is a title given to a number of deeds and duties that those that believe in a Savior, Muslims that have belief in the Mahdi, and Shias that await him must undertake. The purpose of these actions is to hasten his relief and make ourselves and our societies ready for his appearance and his rule. These duties can be found in the comprehensive works of Shia scholars.² In this section we will mention only a handful of these duties:

- Knowing (*ma`rifat*) Imam Mahdi and gaining insight about him.
- Loving Imam Mahdi.
- Supplicating and asking God to give him permission to appear.
- Paying attention to him on a daily basis, creating a bond with him, and pledging allegiance to him specially by reading the Dua of `Ahd everyday.
- Striving to assist him.
- Striving for the betterness of society and the creation of an environment where the Shia can live a peaceful and comfortable life.

¹ Al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-ghumma fī ma`rifat al-a`imma*, vol. 2, p. 207 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 78, p. 208.

² For example see Sadr al-Islam al-Hamadānī, *Waḏā'if al-anām fī ghaybat al-imām* and al-Isfahānī, *Mikyāl al-makārim fī fawā'id al-du`ā li l-Qā'im*.

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- Improving desirable traits in ourselves and our families so that we can tread the path that he approves of.
- Asking him to assist us in our hardships and to help us improve ourselves so that we can worship God in a more satisfactory manner.
- Giving charity and alms on his behalf.
- Performing good deeds – like helping the needy or reciting Quran - on his behalf.¹
- Guiding people toward him.
- Awaiting his appearance.
- Performing all that he is content with (such as wajib and mustahab deeds) and refraining from doing what he dislikes (such as sins and things that are haram).

5- His Long Age

Due to his long occultation, Imam Mahdi's age is very long. His longevity is a Divine miracle. Although his age is not uncommon among the people of older generations, it is very unusual among the current generation. Since no one knows when he will appear, he will live until God gives him permission to rise and even after that.

In Shia narrations, the longevity of Imam Mahdi has been likened to that of Noah. It has been narrated from Imam al-Sajjād that:

“In the One Who Will Rise, there is a custom from Noah and that is long age.”²

¹ Wājib and compulsory deeds like the daily prayers cannot be performed on his behalf.

² Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 1, p. 322.s

According to the Quran, Noah guided his tribe for 950 years of his life.¹ God is Omnipotent and can do what he desires. Increasing the age of a human from say 80 years to ten thousand years is an easy task for Him. The existence of people with long ages clearly shows this. Even today, scientists are researching on how to increase life-expectancy and reduce or even completely stop aging in humans.

Although the longevity of Imam Mahdi might seem unusual at first, but it does not contradict reason, science, or religious facts. In fact, it is conformance with the Quran and scripture.²

Questions:

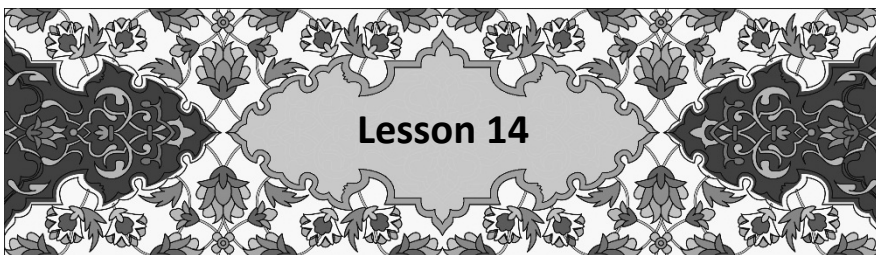
- 1- What is Imam Mahdi's occultation?
- 2- How do people benefit from Imam Mahdi during his occultation?
Make use of the narrations that have compared him to the sun.
- 3- If the people are always in need of the Imam, then why has he gone into occultation?
- 4- What is the meaning of Awaiting Relief (*intizār al-faraj*) and how can we accomplish this task?
- 5- Prove the longevity of Imam Mahdi using reason and scripture.

Research:

Find the doubts related to the longevity of Imam Mahdi and respond to them in class.

¹ Quran, 29:14.

² See Mahdī Kamrān, *Dīrīstīye ḥaḍrate Mahdī*; Ali Akbar Mahdīpūr, *Rāze ṭūle `umre imāme zamān az dīdgahe `ilm wa adyān*; and Ḥusayn fereydūnī, *Ākharīn panāh*.



The Reappearance of Imam Mahdi



The occultation of the last Divine Guardian will come to an end by his reappearance and the universal government prophesied by God's Prophets will begin.

In the current lesson we will speak about the conditions of his appearance, the characteristics of the era of his appearance, and an overall picture of his government.



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In scripture, there are numerous references to the ‘conditions’ and ‘signs’ of his appearance that will occur before the appearance of Imam Mahdi. These conditions refer to changes in personal and social states of people. The signs refer to events that will occur preceding his appearance or at the same time. It should be noted that these signs are not definite and some of them might not occur.

1- Society Before His Appearance

In the Shia corpus many hadiths exist that speak about the Conditions of the Hour (*‘ishrāṭ al-sā`a*). The hour in these hadiths refers to either the appearance of Imam Mahdi or Judgment Day. In many of these hadiths, two main subjects are discussed: a- people losing faith or indulging in sins, b- widespread injustice and tyranny. These result in a society that is on the verge of moral collapse. The following narrations report more details:

“The Messenger of God said: ‘What will be your condition when your women become corrupt and your youth disobey God and you do not enjoin good and forbid wrong.’ Someone said ‘Will this really happen?’ The Prophet replied: ‘Yes! And worse than that. What will be your condition when you enjoin wrong and forbid good?’ Again someone said ‘Will this really happen?’ The Prophet replied: ‘Yes! And worse than that. What will be your condition when you consider good wrong and consider wrong good?’”¹

“A time will come when there will remain nothing from the Quran but its text and nothing from Islam but its name. The people will be called Muslims while they are the farthest

¹Al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-uqūl*, p. 49.

people from Islam. Their mosques will thrive but they will be empty of guidance. The scholars of those times are the worst scholars that reside under the shadow of the sky. From them mischief arises and to them it returns.”¹

“The one who will rise [will appear] when men make themselves like women and women make themselves like men. Men will be content with men and women with women ... fake testimonies will be accepted while true ones will be rejected. Bloodshed, fornication, and usury will be considered normal.”²

When these occur, true believers will be belittled and saddened. They can only deny these acts by their hearts. Innovations will appear in religion and the people’s beliefs will be based on their personal opinions and lusts. The Quran and its rules will be ignored and large sums of money will be spent to disobey God. The rulers will reject the believers and will embrace the infidels.³

2- Signs of His Appearance

A series of special events will occur just preceding Imam Mahdi’s appearance. We will mention the most important ones here.

2-1- The rebellion of al-Sufyānī and Sinking of Earth in Baidā’

From among the signs of his appearance is the rebellion of al-Sufyānī. It has been narrated from Imam al-Şādiq that:

¹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 308 (citing Imam Ali)

² Al-Şadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 1, p. 330.

³ See al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 52, chapter 25 and vol. 6, chapter 5.

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“The rebellion of al-Sufyānī in the month of Rajab is a definite [sign of his appearance].”¹

Al-Sufyānī is from the descendants of Sufyān b. Mu`āwiyya. He is wicked and cold-hearted. He will bury alive the mother of his own child, because he fears she will give-away his hiding place.²

After committing countless atrocities, Al-Sufyānī dispatches an army to counter Imam Mahdi. When they reach the land of Baidā' near Medina, they sink into the earth and are annihilated. Imam al-Bāqir states:

“When the commander of al-Sufyānī’s army reaches Baidā’ a caller will call out from the sky: ‘O Baidā’! Destroy these people,’ and they will all sink into the ground.”³

2-2- A Call from the Sky

According to Shia narrations, in the month of Ramadan two calls will be heard in a single day. Imam al-Bāqir states:

“These two calls will definitely occur before the appearance of Imam Mahdi. The first is the sound of Gabriel that will be heard from the sky. The second is the sound of Satan that will be heard from the ground. May God not have mercy on him.”⁴

“At daybreak a call will be heard from the sky that states the truth is with Ali and his followers. Then at the end of the day Satan will cry out that the truth is with Sufyānī and his

¹ Al-Nu`mānī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 300.

² Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, p. 651.

³ Al-Nu`mānī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 279.

⁴ Al-Nu`mānī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 254.

followers. At this time the followers of falsehood will start having doubts.”¹

According to the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, this statement is part of the call:

“O people! The time of the tyrants has come to an end and the affairs are now in the hands of the best person from the nation of Muhammad.”²

2-3- Murder of Nafs al-Zakiyya (the Pure Soul)

According to some narrations, Nafs al-Zakiyya is a descendant of Imam Ḥusayn³ and part of Imam Mahdi’s army. He is tasked by Imam Mahdi to convey his message to the people of Mecca. He does so but is brutally murdered in Masjid al-Haram⁴ during a ḥarām month.⁵ According to one narration, fifteen days after this atrocity, Imam Mahdi will rise and start his mission.⁶ According to another narration, the Pure Soul is a descendant of Imam Ḥasan who will be martyred alongside seventy righteous people.⁷

¹ Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 2, p. 652.

² Al-Mufid, *al-Ikhtishāṣ*, p. 208.

³ Al-ʿAyyāshī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 64.

⁴ The grand mosque of Mecca in which all creatures are safe and even a fly cannot be killed.

⁵ Haram months are months where war and bloodshed is forbidden and extra caution must be exercised from committing other sins.

⁶ Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 2, p. 649 and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 52, p. 307.

⁷ Al-Mufid, *al-Irshād*, vol. 2, p. 368 and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 52, p. 220. See al-Ṭūsī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 464.

2-4- The Uprising of al-Yamānī

Another sign of the appearance of Imam Mahdi is the uprising of a man from Yemen. Imam al-Ṣādiq introduces him in this manner:

“The uprising of a man from Yemen who is from the descendants of my Uncle Zaid.”¹

He also states:

“There is no banner [from among those that will uprising] that is more guided than the banner of al-Yamānī; for he guides to the truth.”²

Some traditions state that when al-Yamānī uprises, we should join his uprising for his banner is that of guidance. No Muslim must oppose him and those that oppose him will have no abode but Hell.³ According to other traditions, al-Khurāsānī and his army will join the army of al-Yamānī. They will then fight with the army of al-Sufyānī and defeat him.⁴

2-5- The Uprising of al-Khurāsānī

The uprising of al-Khurāsānī is another sign of the appearance of Imam Mahdi. Al-Khurāsānī and his uprising have been mentioned in a number of traditions alongside the uprising of al-Yamānī.⁵

¹ Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Falāḥ al-sā'il*, p. 171 and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 83, p. 63.

² Al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād*, vol. 2, p. 375.

³ Al-Nu`mānī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 256.

⁴ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 52, pp. 272-275.

⁵ See al-Nu`mānī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 255 and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 52, pp. 210, 217, 232, 233, and 234.

3- The Government of Imam Mahdi and All-Encompassing Justice

Believing in the global government of Imam Mahdi is a core principle of the belief in Mahdawiyya. After the forces of truth and falsehood engage in a fierce battle, by the Grace of God, truth becomes victorious and tyrants either submit or are destroyed. It is then that the rule of Justice will be established.

In Imam Mahdi's government those that Submit to the Will of God will be honored and the hypocrites and their followers will be disgraced.¹ Those that have been unjustly belittled will become leaders and will inherit the earth.² God's promise to the righteous will be fulfilled and they will become the rulers of earth and the religion that God is content with will be spread all over earth and fear will give its place to safety and security.³ The world as we know it will exist no more. The earth will bring forth its bounties and the sky will shower down with mercy.⁴

All the knowledge brought by the Prophets of the past and with the people will be 2 words from the 27 words of knowledge before his appearance. When he appears he will make manifest the remaining 25 words of knowledge.⁵ By putting his hand on anyone's head he will increase their intellect and forbearance.⁶ He will speak to his followers from far away distances and they would be able to see and hear him.⁷ He

¹ Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Iqbāl al-a`māl*, p. 60 (Dua of Iftitāḥ)

² Quran, 28:5.

³ Quran, 24:55.

⁴ Al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-ghumma fī ma`rifat al-a'imma*, vol. 2, p. 465.

⁵ Al-Rāwandī, *al-Kharā'ij wa l-jawāriḥ*, vol. 2, p. 841.

⁶ Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamal al-dīn*, vol. 2, p. 675.

⁷ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 241 and al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, p. 408.

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will dispel weakness and will cure the sick.¹ He will make the world secure and peaceful and no one would violate the rights of others.² Overall, he will fill the world with justice and fairness in the same manner that it has been filled with injustice and unfairness.³

During his reign poverty will be eradicated. There will remain no hungry person unless he is fed. People will be showered with all kinds of blessings and bounties. The sky will always provide rain and the earth will sprout with vegetation.⁴ He will distribute wealth among all people – regardless of them being righteous - and will act justly.⁵

During his reign all people will become wealthy.⁶ No injustice will remain and according to Imam al-Şādiq, justice will enter people's houses in the same manner that heat and cold enters their houses.⁷ All the world will develop and thrive.⁸ According to Imam al-Bāqir:

“By his hand God will make His religion victorious over all religions even though the infidels detest it ... no deity will be worshipped on earth except God. Idols, false gods, and similar icons will burn.”⁹

Imam Ali states in another narration:

¹ Al-Nu`mānī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 317.

² Al-Şadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 2, p. 372.

³ Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 178.

⁴ Al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-ghumma fi ma`rifat al-a`imma*, vol. 2, p. 473.

⁵ Al-Ghayba, *al-Nu`mānī*, p. 230.

⁶ Al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-ghumma fi ma`rifat al-a`imma*, vol. 2, p. 483.

⁷ Al-Nu`mānī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 297.

⁸ Al-Şāfi, *Muntakhab al-athar*, p. 482.

⁹ Al-Şadūq, *Kamāl al-dīn*, vol. 2, p. 331.

“There will remain no abode except that the testimony of ‘there is no God but Allah and there is no Prophet but Muhammad’ will be called out in it every morning and every afternoon.”¹

Ultimately, the righteous will rule and the corrupt will be eradicated, once and for all.

4- Conditions for Creating a Just World Government

For Imam Mahdi’s world government to be created three conditions must be met:

- The existence of a flawless constitution and set of laws. These can be found in the Quran and the Knowledge bestowed to the Ahl al-Bayt.
- The existence of someone that implements the constitution and makes no errors and commits no mistakes. This person is none other than Imam Mahdi.
- The existence of devout followers that are willing to serve the Imam to the last drop of their blood so that justice and fairness can be established.

From the three aforementioned conditions, the first two have been met. The third will materialize when those that await Imam Mahdi dedicate the personal and social aspects of their lives to serve their Imam and gain his approval and satisfaction.

¹ Astarābādī, *Ta’wīl al-āyāt*, p. 663.

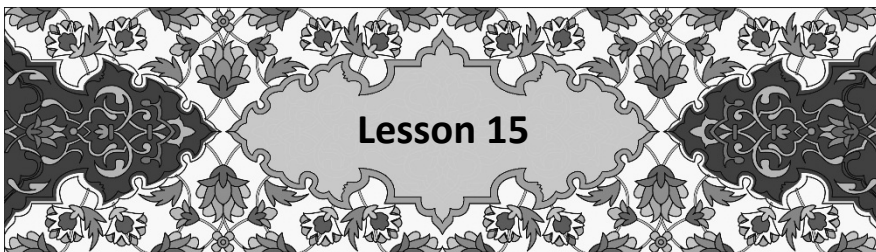
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Questions:

- 1- How are the signs for Imam Mahdi's appearance and conditions for his appearance different?
- 2- What is the Call from the Sky and the Sinking of the Earth in Baidā'?
- 3- What are the rebellions of al-Sufyānī, al-Yamānī, and al-Khurāsānī and how are they related?
- 4- Name some of the characteristics of Imam Mahdi's government?

Research:

Make a list of the characteristics of Imam Mahdi's government. In your opinion what is the most important characteristic?



Our Duties Towards the Imam



In the Previous lessons we spoke about Imam Mahdi, his status, characteristics, occultation, and his appearance. We explained that he will end corruption and will spread righteousness throughout the earth.

What all Prophets and faithful believers throughout history had yearned for will finally come into being. In the current lesson we will examine our duties towards the Imam.



Discussions on the issue of Imamate are usually concluded by speaking about our duties towards the Imams. For if we perform these duties correctly, we will not only become closer to God and the Imams, but we will also attain salvation in the hereafter. We will now list these duties.

1. Ma`rifa¹ and Recognizing the Imam

What we mean by ma`rifa in this regard, is our recognition of his characteristics, traits, stature, rank, and his rights. Since the path to Divine Guidance can only be reached through the Quran and the Fourteen Infallibles, then having ma`rifa about them is equal to having ma`rifa about Divine Guidance. And to attain Divine Guidance we have no choice but to attain ma`rifa about the fourteen infallibles. According to Imam al-Şādiq:

“He who dies while he has no ma`rifa about his Imam, has died the death of [those that died during the time of] ignorance² (jāhiliyya).”³

Ignorance is a lack of understanding and the disobeying of Divine rulings and values. It is a continuation of the Era of Ignorance. He who does not adhere to the core pillars of Islam, even if he outwardly adheres to Islamic customs, lives a life of ignorance. According to Imam al-Şādiq in the aforementioned hadith, ignorance means:

¹ Ma`rifa does not have a clear-cut English translation but can roughly be defined as our knowledge, understanding, and insight about the Imam, recognition of his stature and his rights, and submitting to his will.

² Jāhiliyya or the Time of Ignorance refers to the era in Saudi Arabia just preceding the advent of the Prophet of Islam.

³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 377; al-Barghī, *Maḥāsīn*, vol. 1, p. 92; and al-`Ayyāshī, *al-Taḥsīn*, vol. 1, p. 252.

“Denial of God (*kufr*), hypocrisy (*nifāq*), and deviation.”¹

Having ma`rifa about the Imam has many results including: increasing our ma`rifa about God, becoming learned about our beliefs, learning the way of servitude toward the Imam, having a perfect exemplar for all aspects of this world and the hereafter, and being guided toward the path of salvation.

It must be emphasized that the only way to gain true ma`rifa about the Imams is to refer to the teachings and statements of the fourteen infallibles. For one cannot simply come by this ma`rifa by only using logic and thought.

2. Love (Mawadda)²

Another duty that we have toward the Imam is to love him and have great affection for him. After recognizing the Imam, we must love him more than we love our dearest loved ones such as our parents and children and we must prefer his will over our own. This very meaning can be found in the Quran where God has made the reward for Prophet Muhammad’s Messengership great love and affection towards those are closest to him:

“Say: I ask you no reward but great love towards those that are closest to me.”³

When Imam al-Bāqir was asked about this verse he responded:

¹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, p. 377 & Ibn Ḥusayn al-Bābiwayh, *al-Imāma wa l-tabṣira*, p. 82.

² *Mawadda* means having great love, devotion, and affection for somebody.

³ Quran, 42:23.

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“By God this has been made compulsory for the people by God about the Ahl al-Bayt of Muhammad.”¹

Imam al-Ṣādiq states about the same verse:

“God has made having affection for us compulsory. So whoever loves us has held fast to an obligation and whoever dislikes us has rejected an obligation.”²

Obviously, we will benefit most ourselves from loving the Ahl al-Bayt for the true reward of the Prophet will be handed to him by God Almighty. According to the Quran:

“Say: What I have asked you as a reward is for your own [benefit]. My [real] reward is only with God.”³

Furthermore, by loving the Ahl al-Bayt we will be guided toward the paths of guidance:

“Say: I do not ask you for a reward, except from those that wish to take a path towards their Lord.”⁴

3. Love and Disassociation (*Tawallā wa Tabarrā*)

Tawallā means to accept the guardianship of the Ahl al-Bayt, loving them, submitting to their orders, and assisting them in the face of

¹ Al-Barghī, *al-Maḥāsīn*, vol. 1, p. 144 & Ibn Ḥayyūn, *Da`ā'im al-Islām*, vol. 1, p. 68.

² Al-Barghī, *al-Maḥāsīn*, vol. 1, p. 144. See al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 23, chap. 13: “There Love is the Reward for Messengership”.

³ Quran, 34:47.

⁴ Quran, 25:57.

opposition. Tabarrā means disassociating with the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt and detesting them.

One cannot love the Ahl al-Bayt but not detest their enemies at the same time. Loving the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt is equal to having enmity towards the Ahl al-Bayt.¹ It is impossible to be friends with the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt and also love the Ahl al-Bayt at the same time. According to Imam al-Ṣādiq:

“Those that love us are not equal to those that hate us. [Loving us and hating us] will never be found at the same time in the heart of anybody. God has not placed two hearts in the chest of anybody² so that they may love by one and hate by the other.”³

Tawallā and tabarrā are one of the most important parts of having faith. Faith is made of three main aspects: ma`rifa by the heart, testifying by the tongue, and acting by the limbs.⁴ Tawallā and tabarrā have the same three aspects. It has been narrated from the Prophet that:

“There are 4 groups of people that I will intercede on their behalf on the Day of Judgment even if they come forth with the sins of all the people on earth: a- Those that help my Ahl al-Bayt, b- Those that fulfill their urgent needs, c- Those that

¹ Imam Ali states in this regard: “The following are your enemies: your enemy, the enemy of your friends, and the friends of your enemy.” (Al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāgha*, wisdom no. 295)

² Quran, 33:4.

³ Astarābādī, *Ta`wīl al-āyāt*, p. 439; Thaqaḥfī, *al-Ghārāt*, vol. 2, p. 910; and al-Mufid, *al-Amālī*, p. 233.

⁴ Al-Ṣadūq, *Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, vol. 1, p. 226 and *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 27.

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love them by their hearts and their tongues, d- Those that defend them by their hands.”¹

According to Imam al-`Askarī, loving the Ahl al-Bayt and detesting their enemies by the heart and tongue is a part of “having forbearance during afflictions”^{2,3}

Tawallā and tabarrā have results in this world and the hereafter. From the most important results in this world is the forgiveness of our sins. It has been narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him that:

“Loving us Ahl al-Bayt, drops sins in the same manner that a strong gust drops leaves from trees.”⁴

It is clear than when the heart is cleansed and purified from sins, one can more easily grasp divine teachings and practice them and also increase ma`rifa.

As we mentioned in the hadith from Imam al-Riḍā, tawallā will result in the Ahl al-Bayt interceding on our behalf in the hereafter. According to another narration from Imam al-Ṣādiq, tabarrā will result in the forgiving of our sins on Judgment day.⁵ Since tawallā and tabarrā are inseparable, we can conclude that whatever effects and results one has, the other will too.

¹ Al-Ṣadūq, *Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, vol. 1, p. 258 & al-Ṣāfi, *Kifāyat al-athar*, p. 299.

² Quran, 2:177.

³ *Tafsīr al-Imam al-Askarī*, p. 594.

⁴ Al-Ṣadūq, *Thawāb al-a`māl*, vol. 1, p. 187 & al-Ḥimyarī, *Qurb al-asnād*, p. 39. Also see al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 8, p. 340.

⁵ Al-Ṣadūq, *Thawāb al-a`māl*, vol. 1, p. 170. See al-Barqī, *al-Maḥāsīn*, vol. 1, p. 265 & al-Daylamī, *A`lām al-dīn*, p. 448.

4. Seeking knowledge from Them

Another duty that we have toward the Imams, is to seek knowledge from them. We mentioned in the first section of this book that God has endowed the Prophet and Ahl al-Bayt with the knowledge of the religion and the interpretation of His Book.¹ That clear Book that encompasses the knowledge of all things.² Since the Ahl al-Bayt have complete knowledge about religion, among other things, then we must refer to them and seek their knowledge. Imam Ali stated to Kumayl in this regard:

“O Kumayl! If you seek knowledge only from us then you will be enumerated as one of us.”³

According to this hadith, to be considered a true follower of the Ahl al-Bayt, we should seek our religious knowledge from the Ahl al-Bayt. Imam al-Bāqir said to two inquirers who were seeking knowledge from other sources:

“If you go to the east or the west, you will not find a correct knowledge except for what has been emitted from us Ahl al-Bayt.”⁴

¹ “Rather they are clear signs (or verses) in the chests of those that have been given knowledge” (Quran, 29:49).

² “There is nothing moist or dry, except that it is (mentioned) in the Clear Book” (Quran, 6:59).

³ Al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-`uqūl*, p. 171 & al-Ṭabarī, *Bishārat al-Muṣṭafā*, p. 25.

⁴ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 399 & al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, p. 10.

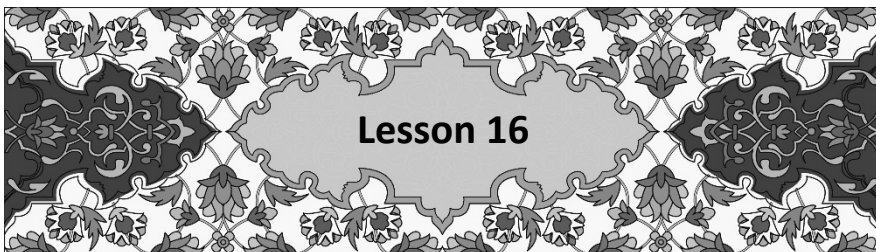
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Questions:

- 1- Using the hadiths of the Ahl al-Bayt, show that recognizing and having ma`rifa about the Imams is a definite principle of our beliefs.
- 2- What is meant by having ma`rifa about the Imams? What are the outcomes of this ma`rifa?
- 3- Is it correct to say that loving the Ahl al-Bayt is a necessity of being a Muslim? Argue using the Quran.
- 4- How are tawallā and tabarrā related? Name the three degrees that they have.
- 5- How do tawallā and tabarrā help us in attaining salvation?

Research:

Using Shia scripture, show that after the Prophet of Islam, the Ahl al-Bayt and Imams are the only source for gaining knowledge and insight about our religion and religious beliefs.



Scholars as General Delegates of the Imam During his Occultation



The Imamate and its responsibilities are continued by Imam Mahdi during our time. The Imam's main responsibility is the guidance of the people even while in hiding. However, in many cases, direct interactions are needed with the people. This is achieved by the help of just scholars. In the current lesson, we will speak about the general delegation of some of the Imam's duties to scholars that meet some strict recommendations.



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Ever since the major occultation started, a topic of debate has been about leadership in religious matters. Since the Imams had foresaw such a time using their God-given knowledge, they gradually helped the Shia to prepare for such a time. On the one hand the Imams would frequently speak about the occultation and the difficulties and dangers that the Shia would face, and on the other hand, they would introduce a selected elite as their representatives among the people as a means of gradually making them familiar with the conditions of Imam Mahdi's occultation.

The minor occultation was a crucial part of becoming ready for the harsh conditions of the major occultation. During the seventy years of the minor occultation, apart for the Four Ambassadors, no ordinary person could make direct contact with the Imam and the Shia community had no choice but to communicate through these four representatives.

In a letter that the Imam wrote to the last ambassador, the end of the minor occultation and the start of the major occultation was announced. However, before that, and in a letter that he wrote to the second ambassador, he had replied to the inquiries of Isḥāq b. Ya`qūb about what to do during the events that occur during his occultation, he had replied:

“And during the events that occur, refer to those that narrate our hadiths for they are my proof upon you and I am God’s Proof (*ḥujjat Allah*).”¹

According to this hadith, when special events occur during the Ghayba of Imam Mahdi, we must refer to those learned scholars that are the narrators of the words and wisdoms of the Ahl al-Bayt. Obviously, merely

¹ Al-Ṣadūq, *Kamal al-dīn*, vol. 1, p. 484; al-Ṭūsī, *al-Ghayba*, p. 291; and al-`Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 27, p. 140.

being a narrator of the hadiths of the Ahl al-Bayt is not enough in this context but is the most important factor.

The necessity of the existence of a group of learned scholars has been emphasized in the Quran. God says:

“All believers cannot leave [their living-places] to become learned in religious [sciences] but a number of people from every group should do this and they must warn their people [about their religious teachings] when they return so that they may become aware [of God’s laws].”¹

According to this verse, a group of people from among the Muslims must become learned in all aspects of religion, then they must set off to propagate what they have learned to other peoples, specially their own people.

The Imams have emphasized the importance of becoming learned in religious matters in many places. Imam al-Şādiq explains ‘wisdom’ in the following manner:

“Wisdom means having ma`rifa and becoming learned in religion. He who becomes learned from among you is wise. The death of no believer makes Satan happier than the death of a learned person.”²

It has also been narrated from him that one’s faith is not complete until he possess three traits, the first is becoming learned in religion.³

¹ Quran, 9:122.

² Al-`Ayyāshī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 151. See al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 38.

³ Al-Barghī, *al-Maḥāsīn*, vol. 1, p. 5. See al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 32.

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In matters where a judge is required, the Imams have also prohibited us from referring to anyone other than righteous learned scholars. It has been narrated from `Umar b. Ḥanẓala that he asked Imam al-Ṣādiq about two people that have differences and want to settle their differences. What must they do? The Imam replied:

“They must seek someone from among you (Shias) who narrates our hadith, has insight about what we have made halal and haram, and knows our laws. They must accept his judgment for I have made him a judge upon you. If he judges in accordance with our teachings but they do not accept from him, then they have belittled the rule of God and have rejected us and those that reject us have rejected God.”¹

The Imam then continues to explain how to choose these judges and how to decide which ones meet the conditions set in this hadith. Narrations like these form the base for *ijtihād*.

During the Ghayba of Imam Mahdi, these scholars are the general delegates of the Imam in the domain specified by the Imams. What we mean by ‘general delegates’ is that these people have not been appointed directly by the Imam but have been selected based on the merits and guidelines laid out by the Imams.

The eleventh Imam further describes in another narration the traits of those scholars whose statements must be accepted:

“From among the learned ones (*fuqahā*) those who protect themselves [from sins], guard their religion, oppose their desires (*hawā*), and are obedient to their master, then it is

¹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 67 & vol. 7, p. 412; and al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 6, p. 218.

upon the common people to accept their words (yuqallidūh)

”¹

Learned scholars with the aforementioned traits have been appointed as a source of guidance for us by the Imams and we must not disobey their ruling. On the other hand, these scholars must always consider themselves in the presence of the Imams and in accordance to their teachings under all conditions and guide the Shia in the best possible manner. In this regard, the learned scholars carry a heavy burden of responsibility with respect to the Shia community. They must issue fatwas for their social and cultural needs, but must also strive to keep the community calm and peaceful and protect it from internal and external strife.

Questions:

- 1- Mention one verse of the Quran that implies the necessity of the existence of a group of learned scholars to guide the common people.
- 2- How did the Ahl al-Bayt gradually prepare the Shia community to follow the example of the learned scholars?
- 3- According to the Ahl al-Bayt in what areas must we follow the guidance of the learned scholars?
- 4- How must differences be resolved between Shias under the rule of unjust rulers?

¹ Al-Ṭabrisī, *al-Iḥtijāj*, vol. 2, p. 458; *Tafsīr al-Imam Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī*, p. 300; and al-ʿĀmilī, *Wasāʿil al-Shīʿa*, vol. 27, p. 131.

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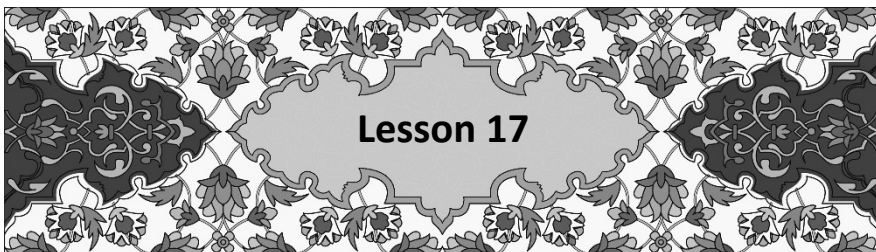
Research:

What traits must one possess to be eligible for general delegation of Imam Mahdi and what duties do the learned scholars have during the Ghayba of Imam Mahdi?




CHAPTER 2: **The Hereafter**






The Hereafter (*Ma`ād*) and its Importance



Belief in the hereafter is another principle of among all Muslims and is inseparable from other Islamic teachings. In the first step, we will become familiar with what is meant by the hereafter, then we will explain its status in Islamic theology and show how it can affect all aspects of our private and social lives.



Believing in life after death is common among all divine and many non-divine religions. This principle is directly related to God's Justice and Wisdom.¹

Since the belief in the hereafter is based on reason, throughout history it has been accepted among many intellectuals. However, what happens in the hereafter and its details are out of our reach and can only be explained by God's Prophets and Messengers.

1. The Meaning of Ma`ād

Ma`ād has been defined in lexicons as returning, or the time or place of returning.² In the Islamic belief, Ma`ād refers to the return of the soul to the materialistic body in the hereafter. It is then that the people will be judged for their actions and will dwell in Heaven or Hell.³

2. The Importance of Ma`ād

How humans live their lives depends on how they view themselves and what they consider as salvation. Someone who sees himself as a mere materialistic being and his life as a few days that he lives in this world, considers salvation as material gains in this world and plans his life in a manner to fulfill these goals. But he who sees a world after this world and does not consider death as the end but rather the start of the everlasting world, will plan his life in a manner to live a life of prosperity and happiness in the hereafter. Such a person will consider moral and

¹ See the chapter about God's Justice in the current book.

² Fīrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*, vol. 5, p. 67 & al-Rāghib, *al-Mufradāt*, p. 594.

³ Ja`far Subḥānī, *Usūl `aḳāyide islāmī*, p. 95; Makārim Shīrāzī, *Ma`ād wa jahān pas az marg*, pp. 249-251; al-Majlisī, *Ḥaḳ al-yaḳīn*, pp. 385-386; and Qazwīnī, *Bayān al-furqān*, vol. 3, p.2.

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ethical acts as a means of attaining salvation in the hereafter. Hardships of this world will neither make him lose hope nor affect his aims of striving for the hereafter.

These two differing points of view, manifest themselves in the private and social lives of both parties and result in different actions and attitudes. Believing in the hereafter and an everlasting reward or punishment, plays a great role in respecting the rights of others and going out of ones way to help the needy. In a society where such beliefs prevail, much less effort and resorting to force is needed to upkeep justice and implement law and order. If these beliefs are acted upon on a global scale, then many of the problems and issues of the modern world would disappear.

One should have in mind that the most important part of believing in the hereafter, is not related to this world but to the hereafter itself. This world is nothing compared to what will come. It is for this reason that special attention has been given to the hereafter in the Quran. The verses related to the hereafter are even more numerous than the verses related to Tawḥīd and the Oneness of God. Heaven and Hell,¹ the eternal abodes of the righteous and the wicked, have been mentioned in the Quran in many places. The description of Heaven and its bounties and the description of Hell and its torments have also been mentioned numerous times.² The sheer amount of these verses are enough to show the importance of this topic.

¹ The words heavens (*jannāt*) and Heaven (*janna*) have been repeated 69 and 66 times in the Quran respectively. Hell (*jahannam*) and inferno (*jaḥīm*) have been repeated 77 and 25 times respectively.

² See Quran, 56:11-23, 27-34, and 52-54.

3. The Results of Believing in Ma`ād

According to what we stated in the previous sections, the belief in the hereafter plays a crucial role on our actions and attitude. The results of such a belief can be summarized as follows:

- Striving for what will result in our salvation in the hereafter and keeping away from what will result in punishment and hellfire.
- We will see the world as a garden where we plant the seeds whose crops we will harvest in the hereafter. Thus we will choose carefully what we plant for we will reap what we sow.
- We will not forsake God's orders and will not commit what he has prohibited.
- Believing in the hereafter helps us endure difficulties and will diminish our fright of death. Instead of living with a constant fright of death, death will be viewed as a doorway to a better world.
- When one believes in another world, then his wishes and aims will not be limited to this materialistic world. He won't believe that life is meaningless. He will not lose hope and will live a spiritual life with hope about the future.
- When we know that the hereafter has precedence over this world, then we will plan accordingly and will not let the troubles and the temptations of this world to interrupt our aims and get in our way.

Questions:

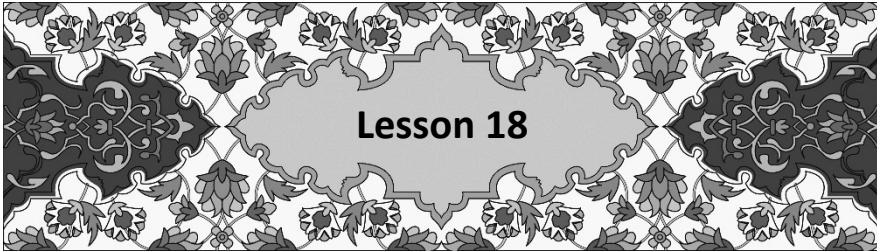
- 1- What is the definition of Ma`ād?

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- 2- Why is belief in the hereafter important? Explain from personal and social perspectives.
- 3- How does believing in the hereafter affect the lives of believers?

Research:

Find verses in the Quran that speak about the results of believing in the hereafter and categorize them.



Arguments for the Existence of the Hereafter



In the previous lesson we spoke about the hereafter, its importance, and how it affects our actions in this world. In the current lesson we will speak about the arguments used in the Quran to prove the hereafter.



1. Arguments for the existence of the hereafter

To prove the existence of the hereafter, it suffices to refer to the sayings of God's Prophets for we previously showed that these figures only speak the truth. Regardless, the Quran puts forward a number of proofs and arguments in this regard. From among these arguments, we will mention two in this lesson. These arguments are based on `aql and have been frequently used in Shia scripture.

a. God's Wisdom (*Hikma*)

According to this argument: God is Wise and He who is Wise does not engage in idle and useless acts. A wise person's actions have meaningful purposes. The creation of man has a meaningful purpose too. Humans have great capacities that are not limited to the material world. The material world is rarely rewarding except after enduring hardships and the rewards are usually short lived. What is the meaning of life if it's constantly fettered with hardships and misery? When we ponder on our lives from birth to death, it is obvious that if our lives were limited to this era and everything would end with our deaths, then our creation would be in vain and would have no meaning or purpose, and this does not conform to God's Wisdom. Thus from the viewpoint of God's wisdom, our lives shouldn't be limited to this world. The Quran points to this matter in the following verses:

“Do you think that We created you in vain and you will not return to Us?”¹

¹ Quran, 115:23.

“And we did not create the skies and earth in vain but rightfully, and the Hour will truly come.”¹

a. God’s Justice (*`Adl*)

Humans are free to do good or bad. On the one hand there are devout people that dedicate their life to doing good and helping others, and on the other hand there are evil people that commit all sorts of crimes and injustices. However, the first group are usually not rewarded for their actions in this world and the criminals not only don’t pay for their injustice but usually live a life of wealth and prosperity.

Essentially, this world does not have the capacity to serve justice in many cases. For example, someone who has killed thousands of people can only be executed once in return and that at most would compensate for one of the deaths that he has been responsible for. If justice is to be served he must be held accountable and punished for all his crimes and must also compensate those that he has killed. This can never occur in this world and God’s justice in these cases must become manifest in another place.² If God wanted to punish the people in this world for their crimes then no living creature would remain alive in it.³ But God does not do this and gives the wrongdoers a chance to repent and return to God. If they don’t, they will ultimately face justice:

¹ Quran, 15:85.

² “And God has created the skies and earth truthfully so that every soul will be repaid for their actions and they will not be wronged” (Quran, 45:22).

³ Quran, 16:61.

“Do not think that God is unaware of what the wrongdoers commit. He has given them time until the Day that the eyes will be fixed in a stare.”¹

What can be understood from the verses of the Quran is that in this world many crimes will go unpunished for this world is where the people are tested and if they are immediately punished for their crimes then no one would dare to commit a crime and the test would be meaningless. God also gives the sinners a chance to repent by not immediately punishing them.

2. Why Some People Don't Believe in the Hereafter

People refuse to believe in the hereafter for a number of reasons. Some of these reasons are based on belief and spirituality and others are related to the mind and actions. In this section we will mention a number of reasons that have been mentioned in the Quran.

a. Ignorance

Some people deny the hereafter due to sheer ignorance and their lack of knowledge about the creation of this world. According to the Quran these people state:

“Our life is limited to this world. We die and we live and the passing of time (eventually) kills us. They have no knowledge about this and they are merely speculating.”²

¹ Quran, 14:42.

² Quran, 45:24.

Whenever the Quran mentions the deniers of the hereafter, it usually describes their arguments as being guesses, speculations, or conjectures.¹ Sometimes denial² is due to lusts and desires³ to an extent that the denier will not accept otherwise under any condition.⁴

b. Forgetting that God is Omnipotent

Some people deny the hereafter because they believe it is impossible for someone that has died and turned into dust to come back to life. In many verses of the Quran, God reminds us of His omnipotence and that not only are these things possible, rather for God, they are very easy.

b.1. The Creation of the Skies and Earth

Sometimes God refers deniers to his power by mentioning the skies and the earth and reminding them that He who has created these also has the power to give life to the dead:

“Do they not see that He who has created the skies and the earth and did not become tired while doing so, can give life to the dead and He has power over all things.”⁵

b.2. The Creation of Man

¹ See Quran, 28:39, 18:36, 38:27, 45:32, and 84:14.

² “On that day woe be upon the deniers. Those that deny the Day of Judgment. It is not denied except by those that transgress and sin” (Quran, 83:10-12).

³ “Rather man prefers to continuously indulge in dissolution” (Quran, 75:5).

⁴ “And they swore to God in the strongest terms that God would not resurrect those that have died. (Resurrection) is a true and certain promise but most people do not know” (Quran, 16:38).

⁵ Quran, 46:33.

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In other places the Quran reminds deniers that they seem to have forgotten their original creation by God. The Quran states that the same one that created them the first time, can easily create them again and give them life after their death. One day one of these deniers came to the Prophet of Islam while holding a decomposed bone in his hand. He squeezed the bone until it crumbled then blew it away from his hand and said to the Prophet: Do you think your God can give life to this?!¹ God revealed the following verse in response:

“And he showed us an example while he had forgotten his original creation, then said: ‘Who gives life to the bones after they crumble?!’ Say: ‘He who originally created it will give it life again and he has Knowledge about all creations.’”²

b.3. Examples in Nature

In some verses God refers to resurrection in nature as an example of how people will be resurrected in the hereafter:

“God is he who sends the winds and they raise a cloud and we drive it to a dead land and we give life back to earth after its death; resurrection will occur in the same manner.”

“And from His signs is that you see the earth humble and we descend water unto it, then it sprouts and swells. He who gives it life also resurrects the dead for He has power over all things.”³

c. An Excuse to Do Whatever they Want

¹ Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Amālī*, p. 19 & al-Mufīd, *al-Amālī*, p. 246.

² Quran, 36:78-79.

³ Quran, 41:39.

When we believe in the hereafter, we create a certain number of red lines that we would not cross because we know we would be held accountable in the hereafter:

“Does man assume that we will not assemble his bones? Rather we are capable of remaking his fingertips. But man prefers to continuously indulge in dissolution.”¹

In this verse, God responds to the doubts of the deniers and implies that in many cases, denial is due to the desire to indulge in unrighteous acts.

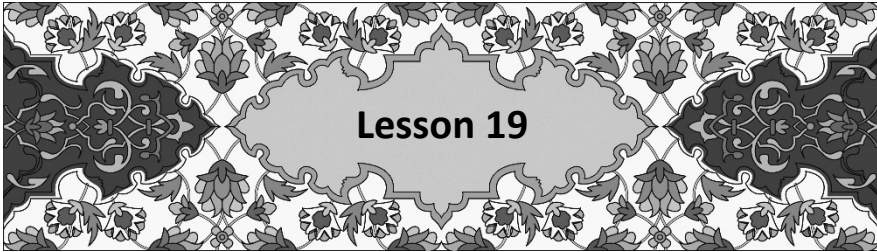
Questions:

- 1- How can the existence of the hereafter be proved using God’s Wisdom?
- 2- How can the existence of the hereafter be proved using God’s Justice?
- 3- Mention one verse from the Quran for the different reasons that people deny the hereafter?
- 4- How does the Quran remind us that God is Omnipotent and can easily resurrect the dead?
- 5- Why do people that want to be free to do whatever they want deny the hereafter?

Research:

Create a new argument for the existence of the hereafter using the verses mentioned in this lesson.

¹ Quran, 75:3-5.



Death and its Agonies



In the previous lessons we spoke about the hereafter and believing in it. We showed that the existence of the hereafter can be proved using logical arguments and scripture and denying the hereafter is either due to ignorance or forgetting about God's Omnipotence. In this lesson and the coming lessons, we will speak about the different stages of the hereafter until Judgment Day.



Between this world and our eternal abode are a number of stages. These include: death, grave, Barzakh, rising, the bridge of Şirāt, and weighing the deeds. These will be further explored in the next sections.

With the arrival of death, the chapter of our lives in this world comes to an end and the chapter of the hereafter begins. Immediately after death we enter the first stage: the grave. In this lesson we will speak about death and its agonies.

1. There is no Escape from Death

It is a custom of God that all living creatures experience death. The Quran states this matter in a number of verses:

“Wherever that you may be, death will reach you even if you are in soaring towers.”¹

“Every soul will taste death.”²

In another verse, we are further reminded that even the Prophet dies:

“And we made no man before you immortal. If you die, then will they be immortal?!”³

2. Remembering Death

Even though all Prophets and Messengers have constantly reminded humanity that this world will come to an end and we would all ultimately die, we humans seem to constantly forget that our final abode is in the

¹ Quran, 4:78.

² Quran, 3:185, 21:35, and 29:57.

³ Quran, 21:34.

hereafter and instead of striving for prosperity in that abode, we waste our lives for prosperity in this world. If we forget about death then we will no longer benefit from always having it in mind. Seeing death in front of us and always reminding ourselves about it, helps us to strive more for the hereafter. According to the Prophet of Islam:

“The cleverest of people are those who remember death the most.”¹

Furthermore, death quickly takes the joy out of many pleasures, and is by itself the single most efficient remedy for many unrighteous lusts and desires. Imam Ali sates in this regard:

“Remember death as much as you can, for it destroys pleasures and separates you from lusts.”²

3. The Fear of Death

We fear death for a number of reasons. These reasons include:

- Attachment to the material world: When one is attached to this world, his whole life and his achievements will be limited to this world. Such a person yearns for immortality and strives to make the most out of his life and enjoy it to the fullest extent. Anything that comes between him and his worldly desires will greatly irritate or frighten him. Nothing plays this role greater than death and that is why death becomes the worst nightmare for such a person.

¹ Al-Ṣadūq, *Man lā yaḥḍurhu l-faqīh*, vol. 4, p. 395.

² Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Amālī*, p. 27. Also see Ibn Ash`ath, *al-Ja`fariyāt*, p. 199; al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-`uqūl*, p. 178; and Al-Mufīd, *al-Amālī*, p. 264.

- Fear of Annihilation: For some people death is equal to annihilation and this instills fear in their hearts.
- Fear of Being Punished: For those that believe in the hereafter or at least believe it to be probable, death is viewed as the beginning of Judgment Day and they fear that they will be punished for their sins and what they have committed. The Quran uses the Jews as an example: “They will never wish [for death] because of what they have committed and God is well-aware of the wrong-doers.”¹

When the third Imam was inquired about the reason we fear death he replied in this manner: “You destroyed (your abode in) the hereafter and developed (your abode) in this world, so (obviously) you detest being transferred from a prosperous place to a ruin.”²

4. In the Presence of Death (*Iḥtiḍār*)

Death occurs when one’s time is up and the soul leaves the body. However, this does not occur immediately and usually takes some time. This condition is referred to as the time of *iḥtiḍār* and the person experiencing it is called the *muḥtaḍar*. These words are derived from the root ḥ-ḍ-r meaning presence. This term is probably used because of the presence of angels or the Angel of Death or the presence of the loved ones of the person dying by his side.

¹ Quran, 62:7.

² Al-Ṣadūq, *Ma`āni l-akhbār*, p. 389.

5. The Daze of Death (*Sakarāt al-Mawt*¹)

Death on the one hand means leaving all and everything that you loved or were attached to behind, and on the other hand is the start of an unknown and uncertain journey. These cause a great deal of misery and agonies for the person dying and usually result in a daze and state of confusion and intoxication. This state is referred to as the daze of death. The Quran refers to this event in the following manner:

“The daze of death finally came with the truth, that was what you were trying to keep away from.”²

This is how Imam Ali describes the state of death:

“Death has terrifying hardships that cannot be fully described or be fully grasped by the minds of the inhabitants of this world.”³

6. Witnessing the Infallibles and the Angel of Death

Death is different for every person depending on whether they were a believer or disbeliever and whether they were righteous or unrighteous. The Angel of Death (Azrael) is present on every deathbed. His duty is to extract the soul from the body of every living creature by God’s command. However, in many cases this duty is delegated to other angels and the person dying will witness the angel responsible for this task. The angel of death appears to every person in a different face.

¹ Literally stupor or intoxication of death.

² Quran, 50:19.

³ Al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāgha*, p. 341, sermon 221.

The Prophet and the Imams are also present during death. Their presence along with the glad-tidings that they bring, changes the agonies of death to serenity and peace for the believers. On the other hand, they are a harbinger of misery and torment for the disbelievers and the hypocrites.¹

According to al-Majlisī, the hadiths that speak about the presence of the infallibles during death are *mutawātir*. For example this is what Imam Ali said to one of his followers called Ḥārith:

“O Ḥārith! Every believer and disbeliever will certainly see me (during) death.”²

During this period, the Angel of Death is completely under the command of the Imams and extracts the soul in the manner that they recommend. They give instructions to the Angel to take the souls of the believers with gentleness and mercy.³

Azrael can take the souls of many people in an instant. It has been narrated that on one of the occasions that the Prophet had ascended to the skies (*mi`rāj*) he had asked Azrael about this issue. He had replied:

“God has made the entire world to me like a coin that a man holds in his hands and flips it in whatever manner that he pleases. I visit every household five times every day. When a household weeps for their deceased I call out that do not weep

¹ Al-Majlisī, *Ḥaq al-yaqīn*, p. 402.

² Al-Majlisī, *Ḥaq al-yaqīn*, p. 402 and *Bihār al-anwār*, vol. 6, p. 180, chapter “What Believers and Disbelievers See During Death and the Presence of the Imams During that Time”

³ Al-Majlisī, *Ḥaq al-yaqīn*, p. 404.

the deceased for I will return and return until no one remains from you.”¹

7. The Difference Between the Death of a Believer and a Disbeliever

The death of a believer occurs in peace and serenity however a disbeliever’s death is harsh and painful. This is how the Quran describes these events:

“Those whose lives the Angels take while they are pure, are addressed: ‘Peace be upon you! Enter Heaven as a result of your deeds.’”²

“If you see the Angels taking the lives of the disbelievers, (you will see them) hitting them on their faces and their backs (while saying to them) taste the burning torment.”³

The same or similar statements can be found in the narrations regarding the death of believers and non-believer. Imam al-Şādiq was asked to describe death. He had replied:

“For a believer it is like the most pleasant fragrance that he smells and falls to sleep due to its fragrance; and all fatigue and pain will leave him. For a disbeliever it is like the bites of vipers and stings of scorpions and even more painful.”⁴

¹ Al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p.5.

² Quran, 16:32.

³ Quran, 8:50.

⁴ Al-Şadūq, *Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, vol. 1, p. 274. Also see al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 134 and al-Şadūq, *Man lā yaḥḍurhu l-ḥaḳīh*, vol. 1, p. 135.

However there are always exceptions. For example, if a believer has not lived a righteous life he will suffer a painful death as compensation for his sins. On the other hand a disbeliever who has lived a righteous life will die peacefully as a last reward for his righteous actions.¹

These are only a few parts of scripture that explain what happens during death. The reason so much emphasis has been placed on these topics is due to their inevitability and importance and the fact that we must all prepare ourselves for such a day. Preparing ourselves for death, will result in eternal salvations and bounties, even if at times it is hard and unpleasant. It is like consuming a bitter tea to prevent illness.²

Questions:

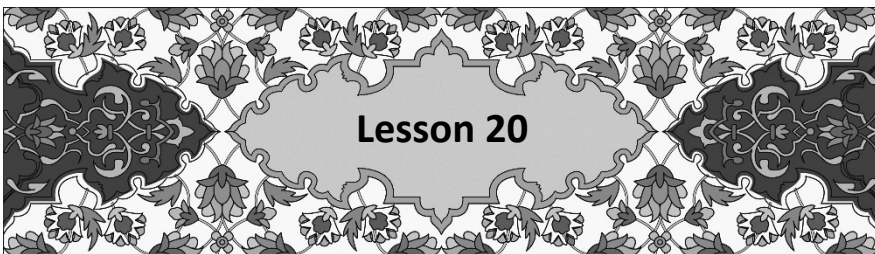
- 1- What is death and what is the meaning of *iḥtiḍār*?
- 2- Why do we fear death?
- 3- What is the daze of death?
- 4- How is death for a righteous believer and how does it occur for him?
- 5- How is the death of disbelievers different from the death of believers? How about the death of unrighteous believers and righteous disbelievers?

Research:

Death has been described in scripture as being similar to going asleep. Refer to the Quran and hadiths and find the similarities between death and sleeping.

¹ Al-Ṣadūq, *Ma`āni l-akhbār*, p. 289; al-Ṣadūq, *l'tiqādāt al-imāmiyya*, p. 54; and al-Shu`ayrī, *Jāmi` al-akhbār*, p. 168.

² Al-Ṣadūq, *Ma`āni l-akhbār*, p. 290 and *l'tiqādāt al-imāmiyya*, p. 55;



The Grave and Barzakh



In the previous lessons we spoke about death and how it occurs. In the current lesson we will speak about the state between death and resurrection that is referred to in Islamic scripture as the World of Barzakh.



Barzakh literally means a barrier or means of separation between two things.¹ In religious circles it is considered as the period between death and resurrection. After separating from our bodies, our souls reside in the World of Barzakh until Judgment Day. Thus Barzakh can be referred to as both the time and place between this world and the hereafter.

1. Barzakh in Scripture

The Quran not only speaks about the existence of Barzakh, it also describes the states of believers and non-believers in this world. According to the Quran, the martyrs that give their lives for the sake of God are alive and thriving on the sustenance provided by God:

“And do not consider those that have been killed in the path of Allah as dead. They are well alive and receiving sustenance in the presence of their Lord.”²

The Quran also narrates the requests of the infidels after they have died and refers to Barzakh in response:

“Until the time of their death comes and they will say: ‘Lord return me (to the material world) so that I may perform righteous acts regarding what I have left behind.’ Never! It is merely a word that they speak [but will not perform], and Barzakh awaits them until the Day of Resurrection.”³

¹ Al-Rāghib, *Mufradāt*, p. 118.

² Quran, 3:169.

³ Quran, 23:99-100.

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Although all Shia will ultimately enter Heaven, but for some, Barzakh is a place where they will be purified from their sins. This is how Imam al-Şādiq describes Barzakh:

“I am worried about your state in Barzakh ... that is the period one is in his grave from his death to Judgment Day.”¹

There is no doubt about the existence of a world between death and Judgment Day. One’s state in the world of Barzakh is determined by his beliefs and actions in this world. The believers receive sustenance while the infidels ask to be returned to the world of the living due to what awaits them. Barzakh is the beginning of Heaven or Hell. Imam Sajjād was asked about the verse: “Barzakh awaits them until Judgment Day.”² He replied:

“That is in the grave. [The infidels] will have a miserable livelihood. By God the grave is either a garden from the gardens of Heaven or a pit from the pits of Hell.”³

2. Place and Duration of Barzakh

As we mentioned in the previous sections, Barzakh starts with death and ends with Judgment Day. The things that occur in Barzakh can be divided into two sections. First, those that occur in the grave and are related to both the body and the soul. Second things that occur after this period and are only related to the soul. Depending on how things turn out for the deceased in the grave, the soul will then be sent to a Barzakh related

¹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 242.

² Quran, 23:99-100.

³ Al-Şadūq, *al-Khişāl*, vol. 1, p. 119 & al-Rāwandī, *al-Da`awāt*, p. 244.

heaven or hell. The believers will reside in Wādī al-Salām in Najaf and the infidels will be taken to the land of Barhout in Yemen.

3. The Grave, the First Stage of Barzakh

The grave is both the first stage of Barzakh and also the first camp of the hereafter. According to the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family:

“The grave is the first camp of the hereafter. Whoever attains salvation in this stage, the next stages will be easier for him. And whoever does not attain salvation, then the next stages will not be any less severe.”¹

This and similar hadiths show the importance of the grave and its pivotal role in determining what the deceased will expect in the next camps of the hereafter. If one passes the stage of the grave successfully then he will pass the next stages successfully too. However, if one fails the stage of the grave, more hardships await him in the next stages. Thus it is of utmost importance that we prepare ourselves for the grave and what is expected of us in this crucial stage.

3.1. Questioning and Answering in the Grave

The most important part of the grave is where the deceased will be asked about a number of important issues. Correct responses to these questions will make the next stages much easier. Naturally, we would be in an advantageous position if we prepare for these questions beforehand.

¹ Al-Shu`ayrī, *Jāmi` al-akhbār*, p. 169 & al-Fatāl, *Rauḍat al-wā`izīn*, vol. 2, p. 494.

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Two angels called Nakīr and Munkar¹ are responsible for questioning us. One approaches us from the right and the other from the left. According to the Prophet this event folds out in the following manner:

“God has two Angels called Nākir and Nakīr. They will descend upon the deceased and question him about his Lord, Prophet, religion, and Imam. If he responds correctly they hand him over to the Angels of Paradise and if he stutters (or cannot respond) he will be handed over to the Angels of Punishment.”²

Imam al-Sajjād explains these questions in more detail:

“The two Angels Munkar and Nakīr will come to question you and make you take a hard test. Be aware that the first thing that they ask you about is the Lord that you worshipped and the Prophet that was sent to you. Then the religion that you adhered to and the (Holy) Book that you recited. Then the Imam whose guardianship you had accepted. Then your life and what you had used it for. Then how you made money and what you spent it on.”³

When the two angels appear, the soul will temporarily return to the body. This stage is the only stage after death where the soul and body are together again. Imam al-Bāqir states:

¹ According to some narrations they are called Nākir and Nakīr.

² Al-Rāwandī, *al-Da`awāt*, p. 280. See al-Ṭūsī, *al-Amālī*, p. 348; al-Kūfī al-Ahwāzī, *al-Zuhd*, p. 88; and al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, p. 498.

³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 172 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 6, p. 223.

“When he (the deceased) is put in his grave, the soul is returned to the body and the Angels of the grave will arrive and test him.”¹

Thus the deceased is questioned in the grave while the soul has returned to the body.² It has been explained in other narrations that the soul does not return completely to the body – thus the body does not come back to life – rather the connection of the soul with the body is only to the extent that it can comprehend the questions and reply to them.³

Another point mentioned in the ahadith is that a believer’s righteous acts and morals will assist him in responding to the questions asked from him:

“When a believer enters his grave his prayers (*ṣalāt*) are on his right side, zakat is on his left side, acts of kindness will drizzle on him, and forbearance will be near him. And when the two assigned angels come to him, forbearance will say to the prayers and zakat: assist your companion and if you can’t I will.”⁴

¹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 234 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 6, p. 259.

² Obviously the return of the soul occurs for those whose whole body is in the grave. For those whose bodies have been torn apart or decomposed, the mechanism of questioning is different.

³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 239 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 6, p. 264.

⁴ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 240 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 6, p. 265.

Shia Theology and Beliefs

It can be deduced from scripture that in the grave only the beliefs and major topics will be accounted for, however on judgment day we will be questioned about the smallest and largest of our deeds and beliefs.¹

3.2. Being Squeezed and Tormented in the Grave

After the questioning session with the angels is finished and the believers are separated from the non-believers, another chapter of the grave starts. In this chapter the believers that had sinned will experience a harsh squeezing from all sides and the non-believers will experience the first torments of the afterlife. Those that will not experience the squeezing are few in number. Abū-Başīr narrates that he asked Imam al-Sadiq will all people experience the squeezing in the grave. He replied:

“I seek refuge to Allah from it. Those that do not experience it are very few.”²

This squeezing doesn't occur only in the grave. When someone dies, they will experience it regardless of where their body is laid to rest. Imam al-Sadiq was asked about someone who has been crucified and whether they would experience the squeezing. The Imam replied:

“The Lord of the earth is also the Lord of the air. God will order the air to squeeze that person much harder than someone who is in the grave.”³

¹ Al-Ḥillī, *Mukhtaṣar al-baṣā'ir*, p. 401. Also see al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 6, chap. 8: “What occurs in the Barzakh, grave, its torments and questions, and other related topics.”

² Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 236.

³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 241.

When the squeezing occurs the soul is partially returned to the body and will completely feel this event.

3.3. The Deeds that Result in Torment in the Grave

Due to the severity of the torment in the grave, it is of utmost importance that we understand what deeds and actions will result in this torment and refrain from them. Some of these deeds have been mentioned in Shia scripture. As we previously mentioned, the main questions asked in the grave are about God, the Prophet, the Quran, the Imams, how we spent our lives, and how we made money and how we spent it. Not responding correctly to questions related to beliefs are equal to kufr and will result in punishment for the duration of Barzakh. Those that do respond correctly to these questions will then be questioned about their deeds and morals and depending on how they have acted. They will receive no punishment or only a temporary punishment to purify them from their sins. The Prophet states:

“A believer is squeezed in the grave as an atonement for the blessings (*ni`ma*) that he has wasted.”¹

Failing in answering the questions asked by the Angels are another cause for torment in the grave. Recognizing the Imam of your time results in blessings and failing to recognize him results in torment. Imam al-Bāqir states:

“You will be asked about the Ḥujja that stands among you. The believer will be asked: ‘What is your opinion about so and so (Imam).’ He will respond: ‘He is my Imam.’ When he responds in this manner he would be told: ‘Sleep and May God make

¹ Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Amālī*, p. 540.

your eyes drowsy!’ Then a door to Heaven will be opened for him and he will benefit from its breeze until Judgment Day. The infidel will be asked: ‘What is your opinion about so and so (Imam).’ He will respond: ‘I’ve heard about him but I don’t know who he is.’ When he responds in this manner he would be told: ‘So you don’t know?!’ Then a door to Hell will be opened and he will receive its heat until Judgment Day.”¹

According to other narrations, being bad-tempered,² tattling, and not washing urine that splashes on your clothes or body³ also lead to torment in the grave.

On the other hand, there are a number of good deeds that can reduce or completely nullify the torment in the grave. These include reciting the Sura of Nisa on the night before Friday and also reciting the Sura of Mulk and Ayat al-Kursī. Fasting 4 days from the month of Rajab, always having wuḍū’, making complete bows during prayers, and performing Hajj pilgrimage have similar results. Furthermore, if one dies on a Friday or the night before it, he will be exempted from torment in the grave.⁴

4. Connection Between the Deceased and the Living

According to some verses of the Quran and hadiths, those dwelling in the Barzakh are alive and can become aware of what occurs in this world. However, the amount of this awareness and connection is limited by the deceased’s status and stature. Ishāq b. `Ammār narrates:

¹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 237 and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 6, p. 262.

² Al-Ṣadūq, *‘Ilal al-sharāyi’*, vol. 1, p. 310.

³ Al-Ṣadūq, *‘Ilal al-sharāyi’*, vol. 1, p. 309.

⁴ See al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 6, chap. 8 (*Aḥwāl al-barzakh wa l-qabr wa ‘adhābah*).

I asked Imam al-Kāẓim: “Do the deceased visit their families?” He replied, “They do.” I asked: “At what intervals?” He replied: “Every week, every month, or every year depending on their status.” I asked: “In what figure?” He replied: “In the figure of a small bird that will sit on the wall (of their house) and will watch them. If he sees them in a state of goodness he will become happy and if he sees them in an unpleasant state or poverty he will become sad and sorrowful.”¹

According to another hadith, during these visitations, the believers will see from their families what will make them happy and those things that will make them sorrowful will be concealed from them, but the exact opposite occurs for non-believers.²

On the other hand, the deceased do not have complete freedom to know about everything that occurs in the world of the living and only have access to what God allows them to have access to. Thus, when the soul of a newly deceased person joins them, they gather around him and enquire about their loved ones:

“When the soul of a new deceased person joins the other souls it will be said leave him alone (for some time) for he has survived a frightening event. Then they will ask him: ‘How was so and so person doing?’ If he replies that he was still alive they will have hope (that he too would be saved) but if he replies he has already died, they will cry out ‘he has been lost’ (i.e. he has not been saved from the torments of the grave).”³

¹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 230 and al-`Āmilī, *al-Fuṣūl al-muḥimma*, vol. 1, p. 327, chap. 70 (The souls of the believers will visit their families after their death).

² Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 230 and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 6, p. 256.

³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 234.

5. Returning from Barzakh to the World of the Living

As we previously stated, the non-believers will ask to be returned to the world of the living but their request will be rejected:

“Until the time of their death comes and they will say: ‘Lord return me (to the material world) so that I may perform righteous acts regarding what I have left behind.’ Never! It is merely a word that they speak [but will not perform], and Barzakh awaits them until Judgment Day.”¹

However, in special cases the dead have been brought back to life either as miracles² or as a proof of Judgment day:

“Or [consider such an example] as the one who passed by a village which had fallen into ruin. He said, ‘How will Allah bring this to life after its death?’ So Allah caused him to die for a hundred years; then He revived him and asked, ‘How long have you been at this place?’ The man replied, ‘I have remained a day or part of a day.’ He said, ‘Rather, you have remained one hundred years. Look at your food and your drink; it has not changed with time. And look at your donkey. We will make you a sign for the people. And look at the bones [of your donkey] how We raise them and then We cover them with flesh.’ And when it became clear to him, he said, ‘I know that God has power over all things.’”³

6. Heaven and Hell in Barzakh

¹ Quran, 23:99-100.

² As an example, Jesus would bring the dead back to life (Quran, 5:110).

³ Quran, 2:259.

According to the Quran and hadith, there are two types of heavens and two types of hells. The first type are of this world and the second type are of the hereafter. The worldly heaven and hell have dawns and dusks and are in use until Judgment Day. On the other hand the heavens and hells of the hereafter have no dawns or dusks for there is no darkness in Heaven and no light in Hell. The following verse speaks about both types of hells:

“The people of the Pharaoh were encircled with severe retribution. Fire is presented to them every morning and evening. And on Judgment Day they will suffer the most severe of retributions.”¹

This verse speaks about two hells. One that exists before judgment day and has mornings and evenings. This is a hell that exists in Barzakh. The other hell that is much more severe is presented to them on Judgment Day. The following verse refers to heaven in Barzakh:

“They will receive their sustenance therein every morning and evening.”²

This verse speaks about a heaven that has mornings and evenings. The heavens of the hereafter don't have mornings and evenings and the heavens in this verse refer to the Barzakh.³

After initial questioning and examination, the believers and infidels are separated and each enter the abode that they deserve. The souls of the believers will enter the heaven of Barzakh and will enjoy its bounties and

¹ Quran, 40:45-46.

² Quran, 19:62.

³ See al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 6, p. 218.

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the souls of the infidels will enter the hell of Barzakh and will be tormented.¹

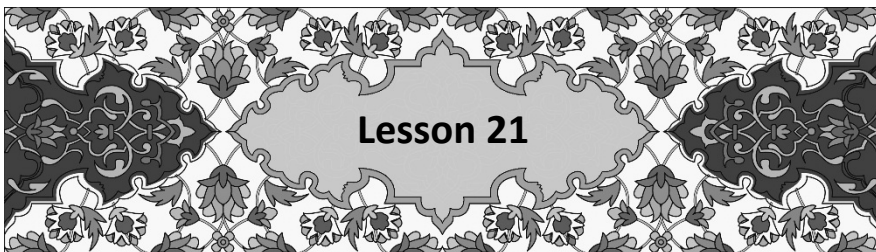
Questions:

- 1- Using a verse of the Quran and a hadith, explain where and when Barzakh occurs?
- 2- How and in what manner are we questioned in the Barzakh?
- 3- What is the difference between being accounted for in Barzakh and on Judgment Day?
- 4- What is meant by being squeezed in the grave? Which people experience it?
- 5- How are the deceased connected to the world of the living? Using the Quran mention examples of people coming back to life.
- 6- Using verses of the Quran show that heaven and hell exist in the Barzakh and that these are different from the heaven and hell of the hereafter.

Research:

According to some narrations, only some people will experience heaven and hell in Barzakh. Find more information about this issue.

¹ Al-Amālī, *al-Ṣadūq*, p. 290.



Judgment Day



In the previous lessons we spoke about death, the grave, and Barzakh. Barzakh and anything related to this world, ends on Judgment Day. In this lesson we will describe Judgment Day using the different names used to refer to it in literature, then we will speak about the signs of Judgment Day.



Although the time of Judgment Day has not been revealed by God and it has been emphasized that it will occur abruptly and unexpectedly,¹ signs have been mentioned in scripture that prelude this event. We will first use the different names used to refer to this day in the Quran to gain a better understanding of the events that will unfold therein.

1. The Names of Judgment Day

Judgment day is when the real apocalypse will occur. Destruction and changes will take place on scales never witnessed before. The events that unfold, have each been referred to by specific names in the Quran.

About eighty different names have been used in the Quran to refer to this day. The most common name is “the Day of rising/standing” (*yawm al-qiyāma*) or the day that we will stand before our Lord.² This name has been repeated about seventy times in different verses. “The Last Day” (*yawm al-ākhir*)³ and “The Day of Retribution” (*Yawm al-dīn*)⁴ have also been used multiple times.

¹ “They ask you about the Hour: When will it occur? Say: Only my Lord knows and it is only He who will reveal it at its time. It is harsh for the skies and earth. It will not happen but abruptly” (Quran, 7:187). According to narrations in al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 45 & p. 303, this verse refers to Judgment Day and according to a hadith in al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 53, p. 1, this verse refers to the appearance of Imam Mahdi. Also see Quran, 47:18;

² “The day that (all) the people will stand before the Lord of the Worlds” (Quran, 83:6).

³ Quran, 2:8.

⁴ Quran, 1:4.

Other names include “The Day of Reckoning” (*Yawm al-ḥisāb*)¹ because everyone will be accounted for their deeds, “The Day of Separation” (*Yawm al-faṣl*)² because the good and bad will be separated from each other, “The Day of Gathering” (*Yawm al-jam`*)³ because all people will be gathered before God, “The Day of Regret” (*Yawm al-ḥasra*)⁴ because people will be regretful, “The Day of Forgetting”⁵ (*Yawm al-taghābun*),⁶ and “The Day of Immortality” (*Yawm al-khulūd*)⁷ because there will be death no more.

Some verses refer to Judgment Day using the catastrophic events that will occur in the Skies and earth:

“The Day that the earth will turn into another earth and the Sky too.”⁸

Others describe people’s behavior:

“The Day that secrets will be revealed.”⁹

“The Day that man flees from his brother.”¹⁰

¹ Quran, 38:16.

² Quran, 37:21.

³ Quran, 42:7.

⁴ Quran, 19:39.

⁵ According to Imam al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, the Day of forgetting is the day that those that will reside in Heaven forget about those that are in Hell. See al-Ṣadūq, *Ma`āni l-akhbār*, p. 157.

⁶ Quran, 64:9.

⁷ Quran, 50:34.

⁸ Quran: 14:48.

⁹ Quran, 86:9.

¹⁰ Quran, 80:34.

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Other names show that Judgment day will be severe and difficult:

- A massive day¹
- A great day²
- A painful day³
- An encompassing day⁴

Other names show that Judgment Day will definitely occur:

- The Day of Truth (*Yawm al-ḥaqq*)⁵
- The Day that there is no Doubt About (*Yawmun lā rayba fīh*)
- The Inevitable Day (*Yawmun lā maradda lah*)

God never breaks His promise⁶ and has emphasized that he is truthful in this promise:

“There is no God but Allah. He will definitely gather you for Judgment Day that there is no doubt about. And no one is more truthful in His words than God.”⁷

Judgment Day is so definite that a Sura of the Quran is named the Inevitable (*al-Ḥāqqa*) to refer to it. In this Sura God states that humans cannot comprehend (the severity) of Judgment Day then narrates the story of the tribes that denied His retribution:

¹ Quran, 6:15.

² Quran, 11:3.

³ Quran, 11:26.

⁴ Quran, 11:84.

⁵ Quran, 30:43.

⁶ Quran, 3:9.

⁷ Quran, 4:87.

“The Inevitable! What is the Inevitable? And what will make you comprehend the Inevitable? The (tribes of) Thamūd and `Ād denied the frightening calamity. Thamūd were destroyed by the thunder. `Ād were destroyed by a violent roaring wind.”¹

2. The Signs of Judgment Day²

In religious scripture, the signs of judgment day and the signs of the appearance of Imam Mahdi have both been referred to using the term “Signs of the Hour” (*ashrāt al-sā`a*). Some of these signs refer to only one of these events while some signs refer to both events. Since Judgment Day will not occur until his appearance, all the signs of Imam Mahdi’s appearance can also be considered signs of Judgment Day.³ Some of these signs have been mentioned in the Quran:

“And when the word is fulfilled against them, we will bring out for them a creature that walks on earth (*Dābbat al-arḍ*) who will speak with them and state that the people did not have faith in Our signs.”⁴

“So be on watch for a day that the sky brings forth an obvious smoke. It will cover the people; this is truly a painful torment!”⁵

¹ Quran, 69:1-6.

² Most if not all the signs mentioned in this lesson are the signs of the appearance of Imam Mahdi – Translator.

³ Although Judgment Day will occur a very long time after the appearance of Imam Mahdi – Translator.

⁴ Quran, 27:82.

⁵ Quran, 44:10-11.

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“Until the time when Gog and Magog are freed and they flow down from every hill. And the true promise nears fulfillment and the disbelievers will stare (in fright) and say: O our Lord! We neglected this event and we were wrongdoers.”¹

These signs have been explained in detail in different hadiths. They can roughly be arranged into two categories: 1- Signs that appear in the sky or earth and the uprising of special people. 2- Characteristics and actions of people living in the times preceding these events.

According to one narration from the Prophet:

“The Hour will not be established until ten signs appear: al-Dajjāl, a smoke, the sun will rise from the west, appearance of a creature that will walk on earth (*Dābbat al-arḍ*), Gog and Magog, the earth will sink in three places: the east, the west, and the Arabian Peninsula, and a fire that will appear in the lowest lands of Aden.”²

Al-Dajjāl is a man or group of people that will try to deviate the people from the path of Guidance and Justice but will be crushed by Imam Mahdi.³ According to different hadiths, the creature that will walk on earth (*Dābbat al-arḍ*) is Amir al-mu'minīn Ali, peace be upon him, that will return to life again. He will possess the staff of Moses (the sign of power) and the ring of Solomon (the sign of governance) and will

¹ Quran, 21: 96-97.

² Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Khiṣāl*, vol. 2, p. 431. Many of the signs mentioned in this hadith will occur before the appearance of Imam Mahdi – Translator.

³ Makārim Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr nimūnih*, Vol. 21, p. 402.

separate the believers from the hypocrites.¹ According to some exegetes the smoke is a thick smoke that will cover the sky before Judgment Day.²

From the second type of signs one can refer to forsaking the obligatory prayers, giving in to lusts and desires, loving worldly wealth and selling the hereafter for worldly gains, increase in homosexuality, men dressing like women and women dressing like men, increase in divorce, the rule of tyrants and despots, and treachery.³

As we stated, many of these signs occur before the appearance of Imam Mahdi and since the appearance of Imam Mahdi, raj`a, and their rule are all signs of judgment day, then these signs can also be considered signs of Judgment Day too. Some of these signs will most probably occur before Imam Mahdi's appearance but will no longer exist after his appearance and his just rule will continue until Judgment Day.

Questions:

- 1- Categorize the different names of Judgment Day and show what aspects of Judgment Day each group refers to.
- 2- Using verses of the Quran show that Judgment Day is inevitable.
- 3- What are the "Signs of the Hour" (*ashrāt al-sā`a*)? Name some examples.

¹ Makārim Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr nimūnih*, Vol. 21, p. 552.

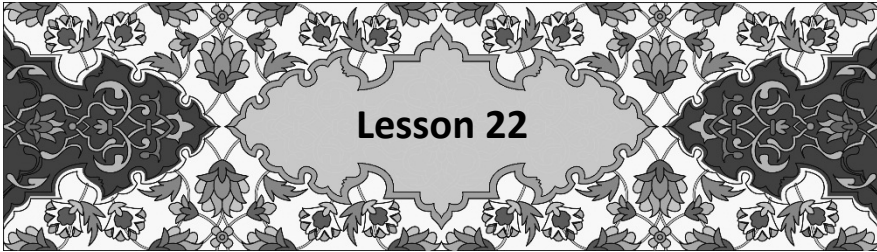
² Makārim Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr nimūnih*, Vol. 21, p. 163. According to al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 290 this event occurs during raj`a.

³ Al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 303. Also see al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 6 (Chapter on the Signs of the Hour).

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Research:

Categorize the End of Time (*ākhir al-zamān*) signs and show which refer to the appearance of Imam Mahdi and which refer to Judgment Day.



The Stages of Judgment Day



In the previous lesson we introduced a number of preliminary topics related to Judgment Day. We showed that Judgment Day is inevitable and enumerated some of its signs. We also showed that an overall description of Judgment Day can be found using its names. In the current lesson we will speak about the different stages of Judgment Day.



What we mean by the *stages* of Judgment Day are a series of events that start by the onset of Judgment Day and ultimately result in us entering Heaven or Hell. These events can be categorized in the following manner: Blowing in the Trumpet (*nafkh al-ṣūr*), resurrection (*nashr*), gathering (*hashr*), opening of the Book of Deeds, examination of our deeds, testifying of the witnesses, scales of justice, the Bridge, the Pond, intercession, reward and punishment, nullifying of deeds (*ḥabṭ wa takfir*), and Heaven or Hell. We will briefly explain each event.

1. The Events Before Judgment Day

Just preceding Judgment Day apocalyptic events will occur that are so horrific that even the angels –that commit no sins - will become terrified. Imam Ali, peace be upon him, describes these events in the following manner:

“The day that youngsters become old, the elderly become disoriented, fetuses drop from the wombs, those that suckle their infants will abandon them, a hard and horrendous day whose terror will be widespread. The fear of that day will even terrify the angels that have committed no sins.”¹

Imam Ali’s statements are a repetition of what has been mentioned in the Quran in this regard:

“O people! Heed your Lord for the Quake of the Hour is a great event. On that day you will see every breastfeeding (mother) neglecting what it is breastfeeding, every pregnant being will

¹ Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Amālī*, p. 28.

deliver (its child), and people will seem intoxicated while they are not intoxicated, and God's punishment is very severe.”¹

Although the quake of Judgment Day is incomparable to the events of this world, in this world too, similar events like earthquakes, hurricanes, and tsunamis can create such reactions in people.²

2. Blowing the Trumpet

Trumpets are blown to announce an important event. Judgment Day is an event so great that history has not witnessed anything like it. Thus, its announcement will be proportional to its importance. The Trumpet will be blown twice and each time, it will have a different outcome on the world. When it is blown the first time, all living creatures except those that God Wills will die. When it is blown the second time, all creatures will become alive again. This event has been stated in the following verse of the Quran:

“And the Trumpet will be blown and all those in the skies and earth will die/pass out, except those that God wills. Then it will be blown another time and they will all rise and await/look.”³

When the trumpet is blown the earth and the skies will all be affected:

“When the Trumpet is blown once, the ground and mountains will be lifted and crushed into one piece. In that day (the great)

¹ Quran, 22:1-2.

² Makārim Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr nimūnih*, vol. 14, p.8.

³ Quran, 39:68.

happening will happen. The sky will tear apart and will become very frail.”¹

“The Trumpet will be blown and all living creatures will be destroyed, all those that can speak will become speechless, towering mountains and hardened earthbound masses will break down. Their rocks will turn into flowing liquid and their bases flat plains.”²

The angel that will blow the Trumpet is called Iṣrāphīl. The Trumpet will create a deafening sound that will cause living creatures to die. The Trumpet has two bells. One toward the sky and another toward the ground. The distance between them is the distance between the sky and the earth. The sound from each bell causes death in the inhabitants of the place the bell points to. Then God orders Iṣrāphīl to die, and he too will pass away.³ Then God will bring Iṣrāphīl back to life again and will order him to blow the Trumpet again and all creatures will become alive. It is then that the main events of Judgment Day will commence.

3. Resurrection (al-Ba`th wa l-Nashr)

The Resurrection is referred to using two words in the Quran: al-Nashr and al-Ba`th. These words have a similar meaning: that is coming back to life again after death. The second blow in the Trumpet is a call for resurrection⁴ that will cause everyone to walk toward their Lord:

¹ Quran, 69:13-16.

² Al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāgha*, p. 310.

³ Al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 252 and *al-Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyya*, Dua no. 3, p. 43.

⁴ Al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2, pp. 252 & 403.

“That day that the Trumpet is blown and you will come in large groups.”¹

According to the verse “and Barzakh awaits them until the Day of Resurrection,”² with the start of resurrection, Barzakh effectively comes to an end and Judgment Day starts. Resurrection, like Judgment Day, is inevitable:

“The Hour will come without doubt and God will resurrect those that are in their graves.”³

God sometimes likens resurrection to dry land that sprouts into life when irrigated:

“God is He Who sends the winds and they stir/raise a cloud/clouds and we drive them to a dry land and we give life to earth after its death and resurrection occurs in the same manner.”⁴

In other verses God compares our lives and deaths to the growth of plants:

“And God made you grow from the earth like plants. He then returns you to it and then brings you out of it.”⁵

¹ Quran, 78:18.

² Quran, 23:99-100.

³ Quran, 22:7.

⁴ Quran, 35:9.

⁵ Quran, 71:17-18.

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It has been mentioned in a number of hadiths that resurrection and coming back from the dead, occurs in the same manner that rainwater gives life to dry earth:

“When God Wills to resurrect what He has created, the sky will rain for forty days, then the bones will come together and meat will grow (on them).”¹

Not only meat and bones but the finest details of our body are recreated again:

“Does man think that we will not/cannot bring together his bones again? Of course we can and we can restore his fingertips.”²

It is clear from the aforementioned verses and hadiths that resurrection is physical. Meaning that the soul is returned to our physical worldly body and it is brought back to life again. The soul and body then pass the stages of Judgment day until they ultimately reside in Heaven or Hell.

4. The Gathering (*Ḥashr*)

The next stage of Judgment Day is referred to as the Gathering. After being resurrected, people are gathered in a single place and await the next stage of Judgment Day that is examination of the deeds. This gathering is probably the most important stage of Judgment Day. This event has been referred to in many verses of the Quran:

¹*Al-Qumī*, vol. 2, p. 253; Ibn Sa‘īd, *al-Zuhd*, p. 88; and al-Ṣadūq, *al-Amālī*, p. 177.

² Quran, 75:3-4.

“The Day that He will gather you all for the time of the gathering. That day is the day of forgetting.”¹

This stage is one of the hardest stages of Judgment Day:

“The most terrifying events that people will experience are three: a- when they are being born into this world and see this world after coming out of their mothers’ wombs, b- when they die and see the hereafter and its inhabitants, c- and when they are resurrected and see rulings that they had not witnessed in this world.”²

5. Opening the Book of Deeds

Another stage of Judgment Day is where the Book³ of our deeds is opened. In this book all our actions are recorded to the smallest detail. The disbelievers and wrong-doers will be terrified when their Book is opened:

“The Book will be laid down and you will see the criminals fearful because of what is in it. They will say: ‘Woe to us! What is this Book?! Nothing small or big has been left out from it and they have all been included.’ And they will see their deeds present (before them) and your Lord will not treat anyone unjustly.”⁴

¹ Quran, 64:9.

² Al-Şadūq, *‘Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, vol. 1, p. 257; Muhammad b. Ḥasan, *Rauḍat al-wā‘iẓīn*, vol. 2, p. 497; and al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-ghumma*, vol. 2, p. 293.

³ This Book is simply referred to as ‘Book’ (*kitāb*) in scripture.

⁴ Quran, 18:49.

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So when and by whom has this book been recorded? According to scripture, God has assigned to each person angels whose job is to record our words, and actions:

“There are Guardians over you. Honorable scribes. They know what you do.”¹

One of these angels resides on our right and the other on our left. They watch over us and don’t miss a word that we utter:

“When the receivers/meeters receive/meet; while sitting on the right side and left side. He utters nothing except that there is an observer ready beside him.”²

The angel on the right is tasked with writing good deeds and the one on the left tasked with righting bad deeds.³ Finally on Judgment Day when the Book is opened, we will see all our actions, minor and major, scribed therein, as if we had just performed them moments ago. It has been narrated:

“Imam al-Şādiq said: ‘On Judgment Day when someone is handed his Book he is ordered to read it.’ The narrator asked: ‘Does he recognize what is in it?’ The Imam replied: ‘He remembers and there remains no moment, no word, no step that he has taken, and no deed, except that he will remember it like he had done it an hour ago. And that is why they will

¹ Quran, 82:10-12.

² Quran, 50:17-18.

³ Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Sa`d al-su`ūd*, p. 235 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 5, p. 324.

say: "Woe to us! What is this Book?! Nothing small or big has been left out from it and they have all been included."¹²

The manner that one receives his Book depends on his actions and beliefs. True believers will be handed their Book from their right side, while those that are not believers will receive their books from behind them or from their left side. Based on how one receives his book, it would immediately be clear if he would be saved or would suffer. This event is described in the Quran in the following manner:

"And those that receive their books by their right hand will receive an easy reckoning and will return to their kin with happiness. But those that receive their books from behind them will pray for their own demise and will enter a blazing fire."³

"But he who receives his Book from his left side will say: 'I wish I had not been handed my Book and I did not know about my reckoning.'"⁴

Being handed the book from the right side is a sign of respect and from behind or left side a gesture of belittlement.

Questions:

- 1- What are the different stages of Judgment Day? Name them in order.

¹ Quran, 18:49.

² Al-`Ayyāshī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 328.

³ Quran, 84:7-12.

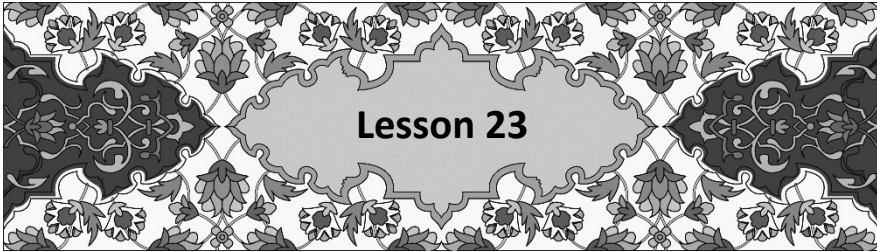
⁴ Quran, 69:25-26.

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- 2- What events occur when the Trumpet is blown the first and second time?
- 3- Using verses of the Quran explain what is meant by 'resurrection' and 'gathering'. How are these two events different from each other?
- 4- How does the Quran describe the recording of our deeds and the manner that they are presented to us on Judgment Day?

Research:

Show using verses of the Quran that 'resurrection' and 'gathering' occur for the material body not just the soul. Categorize the verses.



Reckoning and the Witnesses



In the previous lesson we spoke about the different stages of Judgment Day. These stages start with the commence of Judgment Day and include resurrection and gathering and the opening of the Book of our Deeds. In the current lesson we will explain how the deeds are reckoned on Judgment Day.



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After resurrection, gathering, and the handing out of the Book of Deeds, the time for reckoning and judgment starts. It is here that the Book of Deeds is scrutinized. The Day of Reckoning (*Yawm al-ḥisāb*), that has been mentioned a number of times in the Quran refers to this moment. Once everyone's actions have been accounted for and their destinations determined, the Day of Gathering turns into the Day of Separation.

Why is this stage needed and why are our deeds accounted for? In worldly courts, the goal of the hearing is to find the truth and shed light on the hidden aspects of a crime. But in a court whose Judge is God, there are no unknowns, then what is the purpose of such a hearing? The answer is simple. God knows about all our deeds and intentions, but we are the ones that might protest God's Judgment. God brings us to this hearing and shows us why His ruling is flawless and why we have been rewarded or punished in so and so manner.

In this stage we will be reckoned for all our words, actions, and intentions: hidden and apparent or large and small. We will be reminded of all these actions even if we have forgotten about them:

“The Day that God will resurrect them all and will inform them about their deeds. God had kept account of it but they had forgotten it, and God witnesses everything.”¹

1. The Place of Reckoning

¹ Quran, 58:6.

It can be inferred from some hadiths that a special place is prepared for judgment and reckoning. One of the most important topics that we will be questioned about is how we treated God's bounties and blessings, the most important of these being the Ahl al-Bayt. Some verses of the Quran simply state that on Judgment Day we will be stopped and questioned:

"Stop them! They must be questioned."¹

In others it has been stated that we will be questioned about God's blessings:

"Then on that Day, you will be questioned about the blessings."²

The above two verses have been explained in many hadiths. It has been narrated from the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, that:

"A man does not take a step on Judgment Day unless he has been questioned about four things: 1- How he has spent his life, 2- How he has passed his youth, 3- How he made money and how he spent it, and 4- loving us Ahl al-Bayt."³

Imam al-Ṣādiq was inquired about the blessings in the aforementioned verse. He replied:

"Us Ahl al-Bayt are the 'blessing' by which God has blessed His servants. By us they became united after they had differences. By us God brought their hearts close to each-other after they

¹ Quran, 37:24.

² Quran, 102:8.

³ Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Amālī*, p. 39; Ibn Abī l-Jumhūr, *ʿAwālī al-ʿālī*, vol. 1, p. 99; also see al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 7, chap. 11 (*Muḥāsibat al-ʿibād*).

were bitter enemies. By us God guided them to Islam. This is the blessing that never ends. God will question them about this blessing - meaning the Prophet and his progeny - which He had blessed them with.”¹

Without doubt, the greatest goal in this world is to attain true guidance and there is no blessing greater than guidance. One cannot be guided except through God’s Messengers and Proofs (*hujaj*) that have been sent for exactly this mission. Thus, God’s greatest blessing is the one that results in our guidance and that is none other than the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt.

2. Different Types of Reckoning

Not all people are judged in the same manner on Judgment Day. Some enter Heaven or Hell without being completely judged or without scrutinizing their actions in detail.² For example those that receive their Books from the right side will be given an easy judgment:

“And those that receive their books by their right hand will receive an easy reckoning.”³

On the other hand those that disregard God will have a severe reckoning:

¹Faiḍ Kāshānī, *Tafsīr al-ṣāfi*, vol. 5, p. 370 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 7, p. 258. Also see al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 6, p. 280 and al-Barqī, *Maḥāsin*, vol. 2, p. 400.

² Al-Ṣadūq, *Ma’āni l-akhbār*, p. 262 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 7, p. 263.

³ Quran, 84:7-12.

“They will have a severe reckoning and their abode will be Hell.”¹

Another factor that will decide the level that one’s actions are scrutinized on Judgment Day is the amount of `aql that God has bestowed upon them in this world:

“The more `aql God has given to someone in this world, the more in depth He will scrutiny (that person’s actions) during judgment.”²

3. Witnesses to Our Deeds

Just like most court hearings, witnesses are called to prove the guilt or innocence of the defendant. It has been stated in some hadiths that some people deny any wrongdoing once they have been presented with their Book of Deeds. This is when God summons the witnesses. The witnesses are so reliable that their testimonies cannot be denied. We will now introduce these witnesses:

a- God, the Prophet, and the Imams

God’s testimony is above all other testimonies. God’s attributes such as being All-Knowing, Aware, Watchful, and a Witness suffice for God to be a reliable witness. God isn’t just a witness over us, he is also a witness over all other witnesses. The Quran frequently reminds us of this fact:

¹ Quran, 13:18.

² Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 11 & al-Barghī, *Maḥāsin*, vol. 1, p. 195.

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“God is Well-Aware of what you do.”¹

“God is witness to what they do.”²

Other verses introduce the other witnesses to our deeds:

“Do (what you want) because God, His Messenger, and the believers will witness your deeds.”³

According to many narrations, the ‘believers’ in this verse are the Imams.⁴ God has given the Prophet and Imam’s a means by which they witness our actions and can testify in our favor or against us on Judgment Day.

Also, each nation has a witness over them. The Prophet of Islam has such a high stature on Judgment Day, that he is introduced as the witness over all these witnesses:

“The Day that We will dispatch in every nation a witness from among themselves and We will bring you as the witness over these.”⁵

“So how shall it be when We bring a witness from every nation and We bring you as a witness over these.”⁶

b- Angels

¹ Quran, 2:234; 2:271; 3:180; 31:29; 57:10; 58:3; 58:11; and 64:11.

² Quran, 3:98.

³ Quran, 9:105.

⁴ Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, pp. 219 & 424; and Al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣā’ir al-darajāt*, p. 427.

⁵ Quran, 16:89.

⁶ Quran, 4:41.

The same angels that record our deeds will be summoned as witnesses to our actions. When the guilty deny any wrongdoing, these angels will testify against them:

“Their deeds will be presented to them but they will deny and say: we have committed none of these acts. Then the angles that had recorded their deeds will testify against them.”¹

c- Limbs and Body Parts

By God’s Power, the body parts and limbs of the guilty will speak and testify against them. This spectacular event has been mentioned in many verses and hadiths:

“Today we will seal their mouths and their hands will speak to us and their legs will testify to what they had committed.”²

“Until they reach it and their ears, eyes, and skins will testify against them (because of) what they have committed. They will say to their own skins: Why have you testified against us? They will reply: The same God that has made everything speak has made us speak. He created you in the first place and to Him you will return.”³

When the angels testify against the guilty, some will deny any wrongdoing and will not accept the testimony of the angels. It is here that God will make their body parts speak and testify against them:

¹ Al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol.2, p. 264 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 7, p. 312.

² Quran, 36:65.

³ Quran, 41:20-21.

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“When God gathers the people on Judgment Day and hands them their Book of Deeds, they will read it and will deny that they have committed anything. Then the angels will testify against them but they will claim: ‘O Lord! These are your angels and they will testify in your favor (regardless of our innocence).’ Then they will swear that they have committed none of those things; and that is what God states: ‘They will swear for Him in the same manner that they swear for you.’¹ It is then that God will seal their mouths and their body parts will state what they had committed.”²

d- The Earth

The earth is another witness to our deeds that will testify to the acts that have been committed on it. The Quran states:

“On that day it will narrate its stories.”³

It has been narrated from the Prophet that these stories are the acts performed on it that it will testify to:

“Its stories are its testimonies to the deeds of every man and woman that they have performed on it. It will state: so and so did so and so on so and so day. These are its stories.”⁴

e- Day and night

Each day and each night also testify to what they have witnessed. It has been narrated from Imam al-Şādiq, peace be upon him, that:

¹ Quran, 58:18.

² Al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol.2, p. 216 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 7, p. 312.

³ Quran, 99:4.

⁴ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 7, p. 97.

“Every day that arrives says to man: ‘O son of Adam! Do good deeds today so that I testify to it before your Lord on Judgment Day, for you had not seen me before today and you will not see me after today.’ And when night comes it states the same thing.”¹

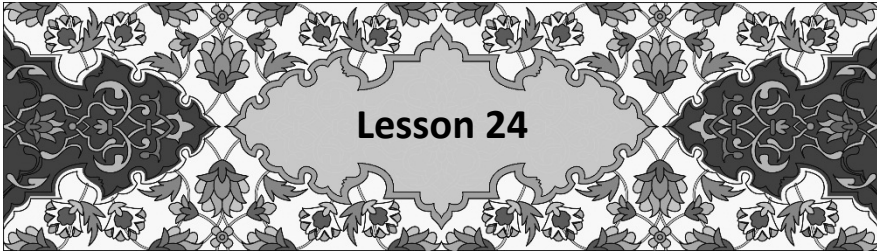
Questions:

- 1- Why are we judged on Judgment Day when God is the All-Knowing and knows about all our actions? Answer using the Quran.
- 2- Which witnesses testify about our deeds on Judgment Day? Use verses of the Quran or hadith as references.
- 3- How are different people judged in different manners on Judgment Day – such as having detailed lengthy hearings or short quick hearings? How is this compatible with God’s Justice?

Research:

According to a number of hadiths, the amount of `aql that God has given to someone determines the detail and scrutiny of their reckoning. Find these hadiths and state how `aql can play such a role.

¹ Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 455.



The Scales of Justice and the Bridge



In the previous lesson we spoke about the different stages and aspects of Judgment and Reckoning. The final two stages of Judgment are the Scales of Justice and the Bridge. We will speak about these in the current lesson.



1. The Scales of Justice

Different scales are used to weigh different things. The Scales of Judgment Day are used to weigh our deeds. Belief in the Scales is a necessity of Shia belief in the same manner that belief in the Book of Deeds and the witnesses on Judgment Day are a necessity of our beliefs. Once we reach the stage where our deeds are scaled it will become clear how much our deeds are worth and what our true status is. The Quran refers to these scales in the following manner:

“On that Day the weighing of the deeds is definite. Those whose weights are heavy will become prosperous. And those whose weights are light are those that have harmed themselves by wronging Our Signs.”¹

“Those whose weights are heavy will have a life of satisfaction. But those whose weights are light will inhabit Hell.”²

It has been narrated from Imam Ali, peace be upon him, that:

“The ‘heaviness’ or ‘lightness’ of the weights (in the previous verse) refer to the reckoning when the good and bad deeds are weighed. Good deeds will make the scale heavier and bad deeds will make it lighter.”³

The scales are not physical. According to a narration from Imam al-Şādiq, peace be upon him, the scales are the Prophets and their successors.⁴ According to this narration, our deeds will be weighed

¹ Quran, 7:8-9

² Quran, 101:6-9.

³ Al-Şadūq, *al-Tawhīd*, p. 267.

⁴ Al-Şadūq, *Ma`ānī l-akhbār*, p. 31 & Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, p. 419.

against the deeds of the Prophets and their successors. Thus, the closer our actions and deeds are to those of the Prophets, the heavier they will be. As in all other stages of Judgment Day, the love of the Ahl al-Bayt will help us successfully pass this stage too. It has been narrated from the Prophet that:

“Loving me and my Ahl al-Bayt will benefit you in seven frightening places: during death, in the grave, during resurrection, when the Books of Deeds are handed out, during reckoning, when the scales are set up, and at the Bridge.”¹

2. The Bridge of Şirāt

Şirāt literally means path. This word has been mentioned in the Quran for example in verse 1:6 where we pray to God to guide us to the straight Şirāt (path). Şirāt is also the name of the bridge that crosses over hell and reaches the gates of Heaven.² Belief in the existence of the Şirāt is a necessity of religion that we must all believe in. The Şirāt of the hereafter is the same as the one in this world. According to many hadiths the straight Şirāt (path) refers to Imam Ali and the Imams from his progeny. Whoever deviates from the Şirāt of this world and disobeys them in words or actions, will deviate from the Şirāt of the hereafter in the same

¹Al-Khazāz, *Kifāyat al-athar*, p. 109; al-Şadūq, *al-Amālī*, p. 10; and Al-Şadūq, *Faḍā'il al-shī'a*, p. 267.

² Verse 1:6 refers to both the straight path in this world and the Bridge in the hereafter. See *Tafsīr al-imām al-'Askarī*, p. 34 & al-Şadūq, *Ma'āni l-akhbār*, p. 32.

manner. The Bridge of Şirāt has been described as being thinner than a hair and sharper than a blade.¹

Depending on the outcome of every people's reckoning they will cross the Bridge in a different manner. Some will cross like lightning, others will sprint, some will walk on it, some will walk on all fours, and some will be hanging from the bridge half-burning.²

The Bridge will have three arches each representing an important deed:

“The Bridge has three arches. On the first is trustworthiness (*al-amāna*) and bonding with relatives (*al-raḥim*), on the second is ṣalāt, and on the third is God's Justice and there is no Deity but Him. The people are forced to tread on it and will be stopped (on the first arch) by *al-amāna* and *al-raḥim*. If they manage to pass through they will be stopped by ṣalāt. If they manage to pass through they will reach The Lord of the Worlds, Mighty and Majestic be He. This is the meaning of the verse: ‘Your Lord is on the lookout.’³ Some of the people on the Bridge will be hanging by a hand, others will be holding fast with one leg while the other leg is slipping. The angels around it will pray: ‘O Tolerant! Forgive and pardon and save them (*sallim*).’ The people will be falling from the Bridge into fire and when someone is saved by God's mercy and crosses it He will praise God.”⁴

¹ Al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 312 & al-Qumī, *al-Taḥṣīn*, vol. 2, p. 421.

² Al-Amālī, *al-Ṣadūq*, p. 177; al-Ahwāzī, *al-Zuhd*, p. 92; and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, chap. 22.

³ Quran, 89:14.

⁴ Al-Qumī, *al-Taḥṣīn*, vol. 2, p. 421 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 65.

To cross the Bridge one must successfully pass other stages too. These include the deeds God has made compulsory upon us, one of the most important being the acceptance of the wilāya of the Ahl al-Bayt in this world. All people will be stopped and questioned about this very important issue¹ and this is the meaning of the verse “Stop them! They must be questioned.”²

3. The Pond of Kowthar

The Pond of Kowthar is a pond in heaven bestowed by God to Muhammad, peace be upon him and his progeny. Its water is whiter than milk and sweeter than honey. Whoever drinks from it will never become thirsty again and will be saved and who does not drink from it will be damned. The keeper of the Pond is Amir al-Mu’minīn Ali, peace be upon him. He will quench the thirst of his friends and followers by its water and will drive away his enemies from it.³It has been narrated from the Prophet of God that:

“Whoever wants to be saved from the horrors of that Day should accept the guardianship of the one I appoint as their guardian (*walī*) and must follow my heir (*waṣī*) and the successor after me, Ali b. Abī Ṭālib. For he is the keeper of my Pond. He will drive away his enemies from it and will quench the thirst of his friends. He who does not drink from it will always be thirsty and will not be given water, and he who

¹*Tafsīr al-imām al-ʿAskarī*, p. 405. See al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 498 & al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, p. 222.

² Quran, 37:24.

³ Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Amālī*, p. 227.

drinks from it will never meet any hardship and will never become thirsty again.”¹

4. Manifestation of the Exalted Rank and Eminence of the Prophet and the Imams

The great rank of the fourteen infallibles will become apparent for everyone on Judgment Day. God has made them in charge of the events of Judgment Day and their role will be evident in all different stages. For example, during reckoning we will be asked about their love:

“The people will come to you and their reckoning will be upon you.”²

They are the Witnesses and the Scales. Passing the Bridge of *Şirāt* is only possible by having obedience toward them and they are God’s Straight Path. They will have the right to intercede and will do so on behalf of those that love them. They are the keeper of the Pond of Kowthar and will quench those that will be saved from it. The Banner of Judgment day called *Liwā’ al-ḥamd* (The Banner of Praising), will be held by Ali and God will appoint him as the allocator of Heaven and Hell (*qasīm al-janna wa l-nār*).³

¹ Al-Şadūq, *al-Amālī*, p. 280.

² A section from the *Ziyārat al-Jāmi`a*

³ Al-Şaffār, *Başā’ir al-darajāt*, p. 415 & al-Mufīd, *Tafdīl amīr al-mu’minīn*, p. 29,

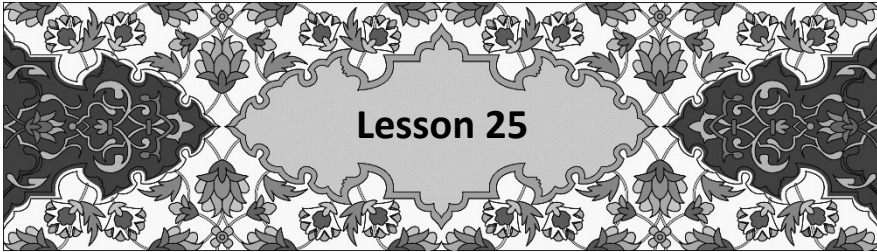
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Questions:

- 1- Using the Quran and hadith show that our deeds will definitely be weighed by the Scales of Justice.
- 2- What is the Şirāṭ in the hereafter and how is it related to the Şirāṭ in this world?
- 3- What is the Pond of Kowthar and how are the Prophet and Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them, related to it?

Research:

Why do you think the exalted rank and eminence of the Fourteen Infallibles will be made manifest on Judgment Day? Use hadith to explain in detail.



Lesson 25

Intercession (*Shafā`a*) on Judgment Day



One of the important events that occurs on Judgment Day is called intercession. In Shia belief, intercession will definitely occur by Gods permission. In the current lesson we will examine intercession and its different aspects.



1. The Definition of Intercession

Intercession means intervening on behalf of another. In religious context, it refers to intercession on behalf of someone for the forgiveness of their sins or for the fulfillment of their wishes. On Judgment Day, a select few that have permission from God, will intercede on behalf of the believers that have sinned and will ask God to forgive them and save them from punishment.

2. Belief in Intercession

A true believer must believe in intercession. Denying intercession on Judgment Day is equal to leaving the Shia belief. Imam al-Riḍā states:

“He who testifies to the Oneness of God ... believes in the ascension (*mi`rāj*), questioning in the grave, the Pond, intercession, creation of Heaven and Hell, The (Bridge of) *Ṣirāt*, the Scales, resurrection, reward and punishment, and reckoning, then that person is a true believer and a follower of us Ahl al-Bayt.”¹

3. Intercession in the Quran

Verses of the Quran that speak about intercession can be separated into two categories. The first category deny that anyone can intercede on behalf of another. For example:

¹ Al-Ṣadūq, *Ṣifāt al-shi`a*, p. 50.

“Donate from what we have bestowed upon you before the Day arrives in which there is no bargaining, no friendship, and no intercession.”¹

“And no intercession will be accepted for it and no ransom.”²

The second category state that intercession will occur:

“No one will intercede in His presence except by His permission.”³

“The intercession of many of the angels of the sky will be useless except after God gives permission to who He wills and is satisfied with.”⁴

What can be inferred from these two types of verses is that no one can change the course of God’s justice. Intercession is only possible by the permission of God and no one can intercede on behalf of another independent of God’s will.

4. The Intercessors on Judgment Day

As we said the only people that can intercede are those that have permission from God. So who are these people? According to different hadiths, the Prophets, their successors, scholars, and martyrs have been introduced as the intercessors of Judgment Day. From among this group, the Prophet of Islam and the Imams hold a special position. It has been narrated from the Messenger of God:

¹ Quran, 2:254.

² Quran, 2:48.

³ Quran, 2:255.

⁴ Quran, 53:26.

“I will definitely intercede on Judgment Day and my intercession will be accepted, Ali will also intercede and his intercession will be accepted, and my Ahl al-Bayt will intercede and their intercession will be accepted.”¹

“Three groups will intercede with God and their intercession will be accepted: The Prophets, then the scholars, then the martyrs.”²

5. Those Eligible for Intercession

Generally, those eligible for intercession must meet the conditions required for intercession. True believers that have inflicted themselves with sins will be eligible while infidels, polytheists, and the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt will not. It has been narrated from the Messenger of God:

“There will be no intercession for those that had doubts, polytheists, infidels, and deniers. Intercession will be for the true believers that believe in the Oneness of God.”³

“The enemies of Ali will remain in Hell for eternity and there will be no intercession on their behalf.”⁴

It must also be noted that paying attention to the compulsory prayers (ṣalāt) and not forsaking them is very important in this regard. It has been narrated that Imam al-Ṣādiq gathered his kin and followers on the last hour of his life and said:

¹ Ibn Shahr Āshūb, *al-Manāqib*, vol. 2, p. 165 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 43.

² Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Khiṣāl*, vol. 1, p. 156 & al-Ḥimyarī, *Qurb al-asnād*, vol. 1, p.2.

³ Al-Ṣadūq, *l'tiqādāt al-imāmiyya*, vol. 1, p. 15 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 58.

⁴ Al-Ahwāzī, *al-Zuhd*, p. 88 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 361.

“He who neglects his prayers will not attain my intercession.”¹

6. The Sins Eligible for Intercession

Another issue that must be addressed is what sins are eligible for intercession? In a general sense, it can be inferred from different hadiths that sins related directly to God are eligible for intercession, while what has been committed against other people can only be forgiven if the person that we have wronged forgives us. However, there are exceptions and in cases where the wrongdoer has truly repented but has no means to compensate his wrongdoings, God will Bestow the person that has been wronged with many blessings until he becomes satisfied and forgives the wrongdoer.

Overall, although there is no doubt that intercession occurs and it is a cause of hope for many of us that have transgressed and sinned, we should always bear in mind that to be eligible for intercession, we must strive to meet the conditions needed to be blessed with this bounty.

Questions:

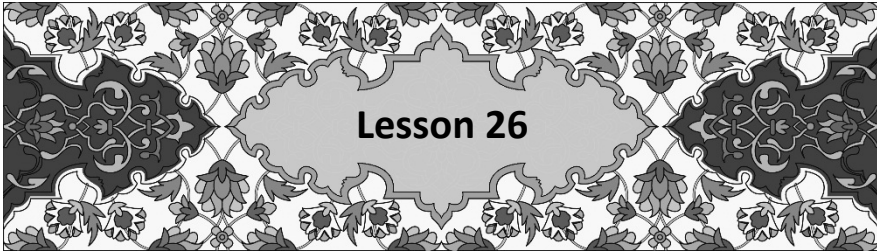
- 1- What is the meaning of intercession?
- 2- Mention verses of the Quran that deny intercession will occur. What aspect of intercession are these verses referring to?
- 3- Using verses of the Quran state the different groups that can intercede on our behalf.
- 4- Which group of people and which sins are not eligible for intercession.

¹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 270.


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Research:


What is the difference between the sins that are eligible for intercession and those that are not?



Heaven



After judgment and reckoning is concluded, the righteous will settle in heaven. In this lesson and the next lesson we will speak about Heaven and its bounties.



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Ultimately, after passing all stages of Judgment Day, the people will be separated into two groups: the righteous faithful and the guilty. Each of these two groups will be given what they had been promised in the world. The first group will receive God's bounties and the second His wrath to compensate for their wrongdoings. Those that have done good will receive ten times worth of what they have done as reward. Those that have done bad will be punished only the equivalent of their sin:

“Whoever comes with a good deed will be given ten times its equivalent and whoever comes with a bad deed will be punished equivalent to it and they will not be dealt unjustly.”¹

Heaven is the eternal abode of the righteous. All goodness can be found therein. Being rewarded with heaven is a great accomplishment that is frequently referred to in the Quran as the “Great Achievement.”²

1. The Names of Heaven

Heaven is referred to using many different names in the Quran. The most frequent name that has been used more than a hundred times is ‘janna.’ Janna literally means a garden or orchard. Heaven as has been described in the Quran has countless gardens. The other names of Heaven are usually a compound consisting of janna and another word for example: the Garden of Eternality (*al-khuld*), the Garden of Eden (*`adan*), the Garden of Blessings (*al-na`im*), the Garden of Abode (*al-ma`wā*), and the Garden of Paradise (*al-firdows*).

¹ Quran, 6:160.

² For example Quran, 4:13; 5:119; and 9:72.

2. The Degrees of Heaven

The aforementioned names each refer to a degree of Heaven. It has been narrated from the Prophet that the highest degree is called the Heaven of Paradise:

“Heaven has a hundred degrees. Between every degree is the distance between the sky and the Earth. The highest degree is Paradise from which flow the four rivers of Heaven. When you supplicate to God ask Him for Paradise.”¹

Our rank and status in the hereafter is directly related to our actions and beliefs in this world.

3. The Gates of Heaven

Heaven also has different gates. It has been narrated from Imam Ali, peace be upon him, that eight gates open into Heaven and each gate has been assigned for the entry of a group of people. For example, one gate is for the Prophets and their successors, another for martyrs, and another for the Shia and those that love the Ahl al-Bayt.²

To each gate a number of gatekeeper angels are assigned that welcome those that have been allowed to enter Heaven:

“Those that have taken heed of their Lord will be guided to Heaven in groups. When they reach it and its gates are opened

¹ Al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma` al-bayān*, vol. 3, p. 498 & *Tafsīr al-ṣāfi*, vol. 3, p. 268.

² Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Khiṣāl*, vol. 2, p. 408 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 121.

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the gatekeepers will say to them: peace be upon you! You have done well. Enter it forever.”¹

The angels that reside in heaven are referred to in the ahadith as “sadnat al-jinān”² and are supervised by the custodian angel of heaven called Riḍwān.

4. The Difference Between the Blessings (ni`ma) of Heaven

The blessings of Heaven are innumerable and their quality unimaginable. The blessings of this world are limited and accompanied with hardships and sorrows and cannot be compared with those of the hereafter:

“I have prepared for My servants (bounties) that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined.”³

This is how Imam al-Bāqir, peace be upon him, describes the bounties and blessings of heaven:

“The inhabitants of Heaven are alive and will never die. They are awake and will never sleep. They are wealthy and will never become needy. They are happy and will never become sad. They laugh and will never cry. They are honored and will never be belittled. They are humorous and will never scowl at each-other. They are happy and forever cheerful. They eat and will never be hungry. They drink and will never become thirsty.

¹ Quran, 39:73.

² Imam al-Sajjād, *al-Ṣaḥīfat al-sajjādiyya*, dua no. 3.

³ Al-Ḥillī, *Uddat al-dā`ī*, p. 109 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 191.

They wear clothes and will never be without clothes. And they ride and will always visit each-other.”¹

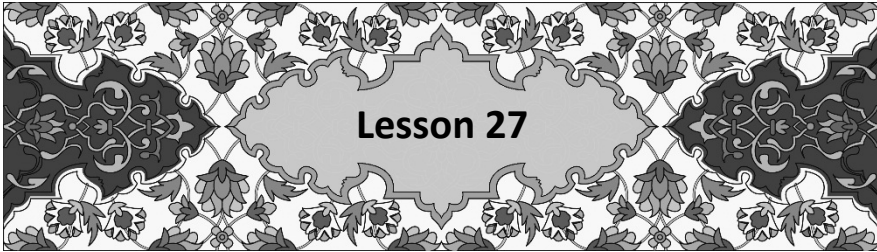
Questions:

- 1- Why does Heaven have different degrees and what is the difference between these degrees?
- 2- Write everything that you know about the custodians of Heaven and their duties.
- 3- How do you think the degrees, gates, and blessings of heaven are related?

Research:

What relationship will true Shias in Heaven have with the Prophet and Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them?

¹ Al-Mufīd, *al-Ikhtisāṣ*, p. 358 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 220.



Lesson 27

The Bounties and Blessings of Heaven



For true believers, the last stage of Judgment Day is Heaven and its endless blessings which is the direct result of their righteous deeds. In this lesson we will speak about Heaven's blessings and show that they are both spiritual and material in quality.



Heaven is the place of enjoyment and pleasures. In the same manner that there are physical and spiritual pleasures in this world, there are similar pleasures in the hereafter. However, the physical pleasures of the hereafter do not diminish unlike the same pleasures in this world. The inhabitants of heaven do not experience the side effects that are usually accompanied with worldly pleasures.¹ For example death which is the most important thing that destroys pleasures is non-existent in heaven. Furthermore, they are not threatened by old age, illness, blindness, deafness, sorrow, sadness, pain, poverty, and distress. On the other hand, immoral acts like jealousy, enmity, and quarreling do not occur in Heaven for Heaven is the abode of the righteous. In these conditions one does not experience anything that would diminish joy and pleasure.²

It is evident that humans cannot imagine or comprehend the quality of the blessings of Heaven, for they are limitless and do not diminish. A child only sees pleasure in his toys and snacks and has no idea about the pleasures of youth and adult-age. In the same manner, we cannot comprehend the pleasures of the hereafter and can only rely on Divine reports about their characteristics.

The Quran states that whatever the inhabitants of heaven desire, it will be prepared for them and they will be given more than they had asked for:

“Whatever they desire they will have and We have more (in store) for them.”³

¹ Al-Majlisī, *Ḥaq al-yaqīn*, pp. 491-510.

² Al-Majlisī, *Ḥaq al-yaqīn*, p. 491.

³ Quran, 50:35.

Using scripture, the blessings of Heaven can be divided into the following categories.

1. The Size of Heaven

Every inhabitant of heaven is allocated a large dwelling space. It has been narrated that the space given to those residing in the lowest level of Heaven is ten times of that of this world.¹ They will live in great mansions and castles that have been described in the Quran in the following manner:

“But those that heed their Lord will have rooms and rooms built above those while streams flow below them. This is God’s promise and God does not break His promise.”²

Imam Ali asked the Prophet about these rooms and he replied:

“God has built those rooms for His friends. They are made from pearls, rubies, and emeralds. The ceilings are made of Gold and designed with silver. Each room has a thousand golden gates guarded by an angel.”³

Heaven has been described as the abode of peace and immortality. It has no night and its light is not due to the sun or stars. Its light is similar to the time of sunrise or twilight.⁴

¹ Al-Ṣadūq, *al-I’tiqādāt*, p. 127 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 201, chap. 23: Heaven and its Blessings.

² Quran, 39:20.

³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 97; Astarābādī, *Ta’wīl al-āyāt*, p. 721; and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 128.

⁴ Al-Majlisī, *Ḥaq al-yaqīn*, p. 491 & *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p.90 and vol. 6, p. 340.

2. Heavenly Companions

Living alongside the righteous and the friends of God in an atmosphere of wholeheartedness and sincerity, is another blessing of heaven. There is no hatred, jealousy, and enmity between them. They will not make idle talk and state obscenities, rather, they will salute each other and be in constant peace:

“They will not hear therein idle talk and obscenities; only the statement *salāman salāmā* (peace be upon you, peace be upon you).”¹

The Hearts of the people of Heaven is filled with love toward each other to an extent that the Quran describes them as the best of friends.² God will purify their hearts from any form of jealousy and enmity and they will enjoy the brotherly bonds of friendship between them:

“And We will dispel from their hearts all enmity and they will be like brothers, leaning on couches opposite each other.”³

Their gatherings will be on golden sofas studded with jewelry. They will be surrounded with *ḥūrīs* and servants carrying drinks in cups of gold and silver. All kinds of fruit and poultry will be at hand. They will speak with peace.⁴

3. Joy and Happiness

¹ Quran, 56:25-26.

² Quran, 4:69.

³ Quran, 15:47.

⁴ Al-Majlisī, *Ḥaq al-yaqīn*, p. 492.

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The faces of the people of Heaven will be filled with joy and happiness. The Quran states:

“On that day some faces will be blissful.”¹

“You will recognize on their faces freshness due to blessings.”²

4. Food and Drinks

The foods and drinks of heaven are another blessing enjoyed by its inhabitants. Whatever they desire, it would immediately be served to them:

“And whatever fruits that they choose and whatever poultry that they desire.”³

Its drinks are fresh, pure, and pleasant:

“The Heaven that has been promised to the righteous is like (a garden) with streams of pure water, and streams of milk that will not spoil, and streams of wine that the drinkers enjoy, and streams of pure honey. They will have therein every kind of fruit.”⁴

Another blessing in Heaven is the Tree of Ṭūbā. The roots of this tree are located in the house of Prophet and its branches spread over heaven.

¹ Quran, 88:8.

² Quran, 83:24.

³ Quran, 56:21.

⁴ Quran, 47:15.

A part of the sustenance of the inhabitants of heaven is provided by the Tree of Ṭūbā.¹

5. Clothing and Ornaments

The clothes and garments worn by the inhabitants of Heaven and the ornaments and jewelry they are provided with are another blessing they are honored with. This is how they are described in the Quran:

“They will be adorned therein with golden bracelets and will wear green garments of thin and thick silk.”²

Imam al-Bāqir further explains this verse:

“When a believer is entered into his place in Heaven and is crowned with the crown of royalty and honor, he will be clothed with garments of gold, silver, and rubies ... and will be dressed in seventy clothes of silk with different colors and patterns threaded with gold, silver, pearls, and red rubies.”³

6. Heavenly Spouses

People in Heaven enjoy its blessings alongside their spouses that they take comfort in. These spouses are either the same spouses they had in this world, or are other people that have been blessed with becoming inhabitants of heaven. In the case of women, there are also women in

¹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 239; al-Ṣadūq, *al-Khiṣāl*, vol. 2, p. 483; and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 131.

² Quran, 18:31.

³ Al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 247; Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 98; and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 128.

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Heaven that have been created solely to reside in Heaven and be wives of the believers, while the men are only the men from this world.

Unlike marriages in this world where one or both parties might suffer from all sorts of imperfections, in Heaven there is no such thing and the union is in complete perfection.

Some verses simply refer to the spouses as husband or wife while others refer to the women as *hūrīs* or heavenly maidens. For example:

“They will have therein pure spouses.”¹

“Them and their spouses will lean on couches under the shade.”²

“The gardens of Eden that they will enter along with whoever is worthy from among their fathers, their spouses, and their children.”³

“And *hūrīs* like protected pearls.”⁴

“Therein are (maidens) that restrain their eyes and have not been touched by any man or jinn ... they are like rubies and coral.”⁵

The Quran also refers to the women of Heaven using the following verse:

“In them are the best and fairest (women).”¹

¹ Quran, 2:25.

² Quran, 36:56.

³ Quran, 13:23.

⁴ Quran, 56:22-23.

⁵ Quran, 55:56-58.

When Imam al-Ṣādiq was asked about this verse he replied:

“These (women) are the righteous that have attained recognition (*`ārifāt*) of (the truth).”²

7. Heavenly Servants

Those that attain Heaven will be served day and night by heavenly servants. These servants have the visage of young men:

“They are circled by immortal youth. When you gaze at them they will look like scattered pearls.”³

“They are circled by immortal youth who are holding cups, jugs, and goblets of pure drinks.”⁴

8. Unimaginable Blessings

Some blessings of Heaven can be described using similar blessings in this world. Other blessings have nothing similar to them in this world and thus cannot be described using worldly similitudes. The Quran sometimes refers to these blessings that can only be seen by the inhabitants of heaven using the term “Joy for the Eyes” (*qurrata `ayn*). For example:

¹ Quran, 70:55.

² Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 156.

³ Quran, 76:19.

⁴ Quran, 56:17-18.

“And no one knows what joys for the eyes has been stored for them as a reward for their deeds.”¹

Imam Ali states:

“Hearing about anything in this world is more wondrous than seeing it, and seeing anything in the hereafter is more wondrous than hearing about it.”²

9. God’s Satisfaction

Along the bodily and spiritual blessings of Heaven, the Quran mentions another blessing that it refers to as “God’s Satisfaction” (*riḍwān min Allah*) that is considered higher than other blessings:

“God has promised the faithful men and women gardens that flow beneath them streams that they will dwell in forever and fine homes in the gardens of Eden; and God’s Satisfaction is higher (than all of these) and is the greatest achievement.”³

Thus the “greatest achievement” that one can attain in this world and the hereafter is God’s satisfaction. It has been narrated from Imam al-Sajjād regarding this verse, that when the inhabitants of Heaven settle there and partake of its blessings, God will ask them: “Do you want to know what is better than what you are enjoying now?” They will reply: “Our Lord! What is better than this?” God will respond: “The fact that I

¹ Quran, 32:17.

² Al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāgha*, sermon 114, p. 170; Al-Ḥillī, *Uddat al-dā’ī*, p. 109; and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 191

³ Quran, 9:72. Also see 3:15.

am pleased with you and love you is better and greater than the state that you are in.”¹

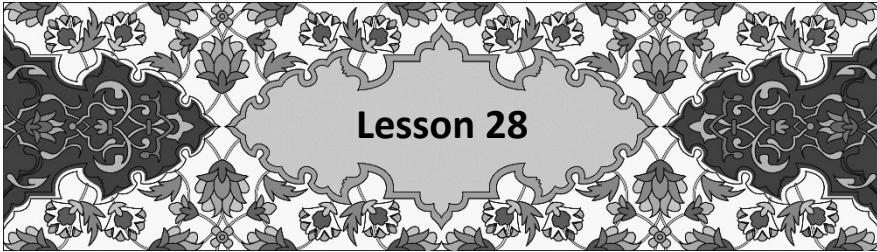
Questions:

- 1- Using the Quran show that Heaven’s blessings are eternal and diverse.
- 2- Using the Quran name three physical/material blessings of Heaven.
- 3- Using verses of the Quran name two spiritual blessings of Heaven.
- 4- The blessings of Heaven are unimaginable yet they have been described in the Quran and ahadith. Explain how this is possible?

Research:

How has the “Satisfaction (*riḍwān*) of God” been described in the Quran and how can one attain this blessing?

¹ Al-`Ayyāshī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2, pp. 96-97.



The Characteristics of Hell



For true believers, the last stage of Judgment Day is Heaven. We spoke about Heaven and its characteristics in the previous lesson. For the guilty, the last stage of Judgment Day is Hell. In the next lessons we will speak about Hell, God's greatest punishment.



Hell is the abode of the guilty and criminals and is the assembly of all sorts of horrors and miseries. For some, it will never end. God has described the fate of those in hell using statements such as great loss,¹ terrible destination,² and wretched abode.³

1. The Names of Hell

Hell (*Jahannam*) has been referred to using many names, the term most used is 'Hell' itself and has been mentioned about seventy times in the Quran. The exact meaning of Hell (*Jahannam*) in Arabic lexicons isn't clear however two definitions are usually used: fire or a deep place. Both these meanings are correct for hell is in fact a deep fiery place.

The Quran refers to Hell using other names too. These names refer to the different levels of Hell.⁴ Fire (*nār*),⁵ Large Fire (*Jaḥīm*),⁶ Blazing Fire (*Sa'īr*),⁷ *Saqar*⁸ which is used to refer to a fire that is so hot that changes the color of things that touch it, the Crusher (*al-Ḥuṭama*),⁹ the Pure Smokeless Flame (*al-Laḏā*),¹⁰ and the Burning Fire (*al-Hāwiyya*).¹¹

In the same manner that the names of Heaven usually refer to a form of enjoyable garden, the names of Hell refer to damning fire.

¹ Quran, 39:15.

² Quran, 4:97 and 115.

³ Quran, 3:197.

⁴ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 245.

⁵ Quran, 2:24.

⁶ Quran, 56:94.

⁷ Quran, 4:10.

⁸ Quran, 74:42.

⁹ Quran, 104:4.

¹⁰ Quran, 70:15.

¹¹ Quran, 101:9.

2. The Levels of Hell

Like Heaven, Hell has different degrees. Each degree is called a darak. The daraks are stacked on top of each other like levels. The difference in levels is due to the difference in the degree of punishments. There are seven levels in Hell and the torment and punishment of each lower level is worse than the one above it. According to the Quran, hypocrites (*munāfiqīn*) will reside in the worst place:

“The hypocrites are in the lowest darak of Hell and you will never find someone that will help them.”¹

In a narration, Imam al-Bāqir names the different levels of Hell and the different punishments therein. The lowest level contains a sealed well. Whenever the well is opened the entirety of Hell blazes into inferno.²

3. The Gates of Hell

According to the Quran, Hell has seven gates:

“And Hell is the promised place for them all. It has seven gates and each gate is assigned to a certain group of people.”³

According to some narrations, each gate is related to one of the levels of Hell⁴ and the inhabitants of each level will each enter through its designated gate. The enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt will enter through the seventh gate:

¹ Quran, 4:145.

² Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 289.

³ Quran, 15:43-44.

⁴ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 245.

“And a gate through which our enemies, those that went to war against us, and those that belittled us will enter. It is the greatest door and the hottest.”¹

4. The Guards of Hell

According to the Quran, Hell has at least three different types of Guards.

a- Al-Zabāniyya

The first set of guards are called al-Zabāniyya:

“Then let him call his supporter. And We will call al-Zabāniyya.”²

According to Imam al-Sajjād, al-Zabāniyya are the angels that will chain the criminals and throw them into hell:

“Al-Zabāniyya are those that are ordered: ‘Take him and chain him and burn him in the blazing fire.’³ They will race toward him and give him no chance.”⁴

b- The Harsh (*Ghilāz*) and Stern (*Shidād*) Angels

These angels are described in the Quran in this manner:

“It is guarded by harsh and stern (angels) that do not disobey what they have been ordered and they will do as commanded.”⁵

¹ Al-Ṣadūq, *al-Khiṣāl*, vol. 2, p. 361 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 285.

² Quran, 96:17-18.

³ Quran, 69:30-31.

⁴ *Al-Ṣaḥīfat al-Sajjādiyya*, dua no. 3 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 56, p. 218.

⁵ Quran, 66:6.

c- The Nineteen Angels

The Quran introduces these angels in the following manner:

“And what makes you know what Saqar is? It does not leave anyone and does not spare anyone. It scorches/peels off the Skin. It is guarded by nineteen.”¹

It should be noted that in the same manner that the guards of Heaven are commanded by the Angel Riḍwān, the guards of Hell are commanded by an angel called Mālik:

“They will say: O Mālik! Ask your Lord to bring death upon us! And he will reply: You will remain here!”²

5. The Torments of Hell

The torments of Hell are the opposite of the blessings of Heaven. In the same manner that we cannot imagine the blessings of Heaven, we cannot imagine the horrors of Hell. Hell is the manifestation place of God’s wrath and retribution and is filled with all forms of physical and spiritual torments like blazing infernos, stinging insects, spoiled uneatable food, grief and regret, and deformed and ugly faces. These torments are so severe that the hardships of this world are nothing compared to them. Imam Ali states:

“All tribulations are relief compared to Hellfire.”³

¹ Quran, 74:27-30.

² Quran, 43:77.

³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, p. 24; al-Ṣadūq, *Man lā yaḥḍurhu l-faqīh*, vol. 4, p. 407; Al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-balāgha*, p. 544; and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 200.

“All tribulations are negligible compared to Hellfire.”¹

The torments will be so severe that the guilty would be willing to sacrifice their loved ones to set themselves free:

“The guilty would wish that they could free themselves from the torments of that day even by sacrificing their own children, their wives and brothers, and even their kin that sheltered them, and even all those that are on earth so that he/they might be saved.”²

The duration and intensity of the torments of the hereafter are incomparable to those of this world. The sufferings and torments of this world eventually come to an end, at times by death itself. However, for many of those in Hell, there is no end to their torments and no death:

“Hellfire is for those that become Kafirs. Their (lives) will never end so that they die, and their punishments will never be lightened. This is how we punish the ungrateful/disbelievers.”³

The torments of Hell are so intense that a small portion of them can destroy this world. This is how Gabriel describes them for the Prophet:

“If a single drop from the food of Hell is put in the water of earth, all its inhabitants will die from its stench. If a single link from the links of a chain (in Hell) whose length is seventy cubits is placed on earth it would melt due its heat. And if a single garment from the garments of Hell is hung between the

¹ Al-Shu`ayrī, *Jāmi` al-akhbār*, p. 117 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 68, p. 93.

² Quran, 70:11-14.

³ Quran, 35:36.

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earth and sky, the inhabitants of the world would die due to its smell.”¹

Hells intense torments, annihilates its inhabitants. But since there is no death there, they will neither die nor be considered alive. The Quran refers to this condition in the following verse:

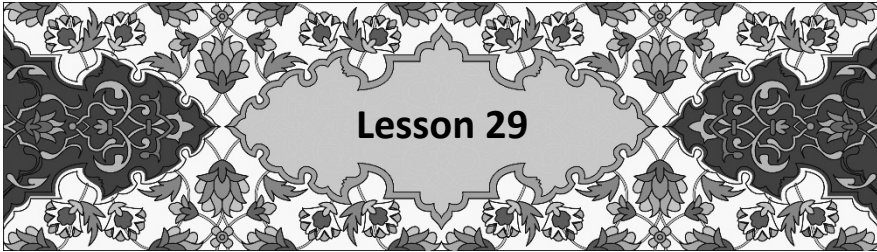
“It is he who will enter the greatest fire. Then he will neither die therein nor be alive.”²

Questions:

- 1- Find the verses that have mentioned the names of Hell and find a detailed definition for each name.
- 2- What is the relation between the gates, levels, and different punishments in Hell.
- 3- Name the Guards of Hell and their duties.
- 4- How are worldly torments different from the torments of Hell?

¹ Al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 81 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 280.

² Quran, 87:12-13.



The Torments of Hell



Hell is the last station of the guilty where they will see the result of their words and actions. In the previous lesson we described the characteristics of Hell. In this lesson we will speak about its torments.



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As we mentioned, Hell is defined as a deep or fiery place. This place is where the harshest and most unimaginable torments occur. In the same manner that the blessings and joys of Heaven are incomparable to those of the world, the torments of Hell are also incomparable to anything on earth. Its torments are so severe that God refers to them as the greatest torments:

“Then God will torment them the greatest torment.”¹

“On that day no one will be tormented like him and no one will be tied up like him.”²

The Quran and hadith have described some of the torments and characteristics of Hell. We will mention these in the next sections.

1. Heat, Depth, and Tightness

The main characteristics of Hell are heat, depth, tightness, and darkness. The Quran refers to hellfire as the greatest fire:

“The most wretched will avoid it and it is he who will enter the greatest fire.”³

The depth of Hell makes its heat even more horrendous. Imam Ali warns us of this unfortunate fate:

“And beware of a fire whose heat is intense and its depth is great.”¹

¹ Quran, 88:24.

² Quran, 89:25-26.

³ Quran, 87:11-12.

Hell with all its vastness, only offers a tight space for each of its inhabitants:

“And when they are thrown into that tight place while chained, they will pray for their own death.”²

2. Foods and Drinks

The inhabitants of Hell are fed all kinds of horrid foods that only increases their torment. These include the Tree of Zaqqūm, boiling water (*ḥamīm*), filthy and bloodied pus (*ghislīn*,³ *ghassāq*,⁴ and *ṣadīd*⁵), thorny bushes (*ḍarī*),⁶ and molten copper (*muhl*).⁷

Each of these foods and drinks have new torments and horrors in store for the guilty. For example, the tree of Zaqqūm grows in the depths of Hell and the inhabitants of Hell are fed from it. Whenever they eat from it their stomachs boil:

“The tree of Zaqqūm is the food of the sinners. It will boil in the stomachs like molten copper. Like the boiling of water.”⁸

“It is a tree that grows from the deepest parts of Hell. Its shoots are like the heads of devils. They will eat from it and fill their bellies with it.”¹

¹ Al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, p. 176 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 306.

² Quran, 25:13.

³ Quran, 69:36.

⁴ Quran, 38:57.

⁵ Quran, 14:16.

⁶ Quran, 88:6.

⁷ Quran, 44:45.

⁸ Quran, 44:43-46.

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Ḥamīm is boiling water. Once the inhabitants of Hell finish eating from the Zaqqūm tree, they are forced to drink ḥamīm:

“You will eat from the tree of Zaqqūm and will fill your stomachs with it. Then you will drink boiling water on top of it. Gulping it down like thirsty camels.”²

Drinking from ḥamīm tears up the intestines:

“They will be fed a boiling water that will cut up their intestines.”³

3. The Garments of Hell

The garments of the inhabitants of Hell are another source of torment. They are forced to wear clothes made of fire or tar:

“Those that become Kafirs will be tailored clothes of fire.”⁴

“Their clothes are made from tar and their faces are engulfed in flames.”⁵

4. Chains and Shackles

The guilty are chained and shackled. This not only immobilizes them but also belittles them:

¹ Quran, 37:64-67.

² Quran, 56:52-55.

³ Quran, 47:15.

⁴ Quran, 22:19.

⁵ Quran, 14:50.

“Catch him and shackle him. Then burn him in the fire. Then chain him with a chain whose length is seventy cubits.”¹

“At that time when they are dragged while their necks have been chained and shackled.”²

It has been narrated from Imam al-Şādiq, peace be upon him, that if a single link from this chain is placed on earth it would melt due its heat.³

5. Snakes and Scorpions

Hell is infested with giant snakes and scorpions. The effect of their bites and stings remains for a long time and torments the inhabitants of Hell. Imam al-Sajjād teaches us to seek refuge to God from these creatures:

“I seek refuge to you from its scorpions and their gaping mouths and its serpents that crackle with their fangs.”⁴

6. Arguing and Cursing

Socializing occurs in Hell in a form of arguing and cursing:

“When those that have been followed disassociate themselves from their followers. Then they will see (God’s) torment and all means of being saved are cut off. Those that have followed will say if we are given another chance we will disassociate from

¹ Quran, 69:30-32.

² Quran, 40:71.

³ Al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 81 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 280; al-Fattāl, *Rauḍat al-wā’iẓīn*, vol. 2, p. 507; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Durū` al-wāqīya*, p. 273; and al-Daylamī, *Irshād al-qulūb*, vol. 1, p. 106.

⁴ Imam al-Sajjād, *al-Şahīfat al-sajjādiyya*, dua no. 33; al-Ṭūsī, *Miṣbāḥ al-mutahajjid*, vol. 1, p. 191; and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 234.

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them in the same manner that they have disassociated from us. God will show them their deeds in this manner so they may suffer in anguish, and they will not exit the hellfire.”¹

“Say enter (Hell) alongside the nations that entered it before you. Whenever a nation enters, it will curse its sister (nation) until they all gather there together. The last ones will say about the first ones: “O Lord! These people led us astray, so punish them twice as much.”²

The people will disassociate themselves from the Devils that had befriended them in this world due to them turning away from God, and had further led them astray:

“We will assign a devil to accompany whoever fails to remember the Merciful. They will prevent them from the Path (of guidance) while they will be thinking that they are rightly guided. Until they come to us and they will say (to the devil): I wish that the distance between us was the length of the east to the west. You are an evil companion.”³

Satan who has misguided many will disassociate from the inhabitants of Hell and blame them for their own wrongdoings:

“Once the matters have been settled Satan will say: ‘God made a true promise to you but I made a promise and broke it. I had no power over you. I merely called you and you obeyed me. So do not blame me but blame yourselves. I cannot help you and you cannot help me. I reject how you used to associate me

¹ Quran, 2:167.

² Quran, 7:38.

³ Quran, 43:36-38.

(with God).’ The transgressors will surely be tormented a painful torment.”¹

7. Anguish and Regret

The previous torments were all physical. We will now speak about the psychological torments of the inhabitants of Heaven. These torments are more severe than physical ones. The greatest psychological torment that the inhabitants of Hell endure is the anguish and regret they experience every second due to blowing their chances in this world. Imam al-Şādiq, peace be upon him states:

“God has created for every person an abode in Heaven and an abode in Hell. When the inhabitants of Heaven settle in Heaven and the inhabitants of Hell settle in Hell, a caller will call out: ‘O inhabitants of Heaven! Rise!’ So they will rise over Hell and their abodes in Hell will be pointed out to them. Then they will be told: ‘These would have been your homes had you disobeyed your Lord.’ When the inhabitants of Heaven realize what great torments they have been saved from, they will become so joyful that if anyone should have died from joy it would have been them. Then (the caller) will call: ‘O inhabitants of Hell! Look up and observe your homes in Heaven!’ So they will look up and will see their homes in Heaven with all their blessings. Then they will be told: ‘These would have been your homes had you obeyed your Lord.’ They would be filled with so much sorrow that if anyone should have died from sorrow it would have been them.”²

¹ Quran, 14:22.

² Al-Şadūq, *Thawāb al-a`māl*, p. 259 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 8, p. 126.

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Losing Heaven and all its bounties and blessings on one hand, and endless torment on the other, is a constant source of sorrow and regret for the people of Hell. The Quran states to the Prophet:

“And warn them about the Day of Regret when the matter is decided while they are heedless and still refuse to believe.”¹

On that day the guilty and transgressors will be in a constant state of regret wishing that they had not befriended those that led them astray:

“On that day the wrongdoer will bite his fingers (due to regret) and will say: ‘I wish I had taken a path alongside the Messenger. Woe unto me. I wish I had not befriended so and so. He led me astray from the Remembrance after it came to me.’ Satan is truly a betrayer of mankind.”²

We can infer from the aforementioned verses and hadith that Hell is replete with terror, torment, and sorrow. Its tortures and tribulations are endless. All hope is lost and its inhabitants are in a constant state of agony and regret.

On the other hand, the inhabitants of Heaven are in a constant state of serenity and Joy. Enjoying endless bounties and blessings: unmatched gardens, mansions, clothes, foods and drinks, spouses, and friends are just a part of their daily routines.

These two contrasting abodes await each and every one of us. Where and in what degree we ultimately end up, depends solely on our own beliefs, actions, and deeds in this world. Denying God and disobeying

¹ Quran, 19:39.

² Quran, 25:27-29.

Him will lead to Hell and believing God and obeying Him will lead to Heaven.

Questions:

- 1- What can be inferred from the Quran about the place and characteristics of Hell?
- 2- Name three physical tortures of Hell.
- 3- What psychological and spiritual tortures exist in Hell?

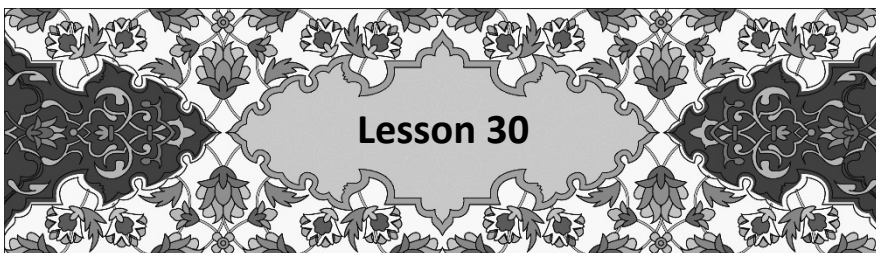
Research:

How does God judge children or the mentally impaired that cannot discern between what is right and what is wrong, in the hereafter?



CHAPTER 3:
The World, Man, and
Society





Skies and Earth



Cosmology is an important subject of discussion in an Islamic world-view. Cosmology is important because it not only displays the world with all its delicate and intricate laws and wonders and opens our minds to its seemingly endless marvels, but also helps us gain deeper recognition of God and His attributes. In the next lessons we will gradually become familiar with concepts related to the unseen and physical world and some of the notable beings that exist therein. The physical world refers to everything that can be comprehended using the five senses while the unseen world refers to those that cannot. We will speak about the sky, earth, humans, jinn, and devils.



Shia Theology and Beliefs

When we speak about Cosmology, we usually only refer to the physical aspect of nature and this world. However, in the Islamic world-view, cosmology follows other goals that help us strive on the path of guidance and gain more insight about our beliefs. These goals include:

- Helping us to ponder on nature and creation.
- Making us familiar with God's attributes such as Omniscience, Omnipotence, and Wisdom.
- Showing evidence that hint to the Oneness of God, Oneness in Actions, and Oneness in Lordship.
- Helping us to see through this material world and understand that it is governed by an unseen creator.
- Create a spirit of love and devotion toward our Creator.
- Help us to be more grateful for what we have been blessed with.

An important aspect of Islamic cosmology is the distinction between the physical from the unseen world. We will now continue to speak about the most notable topics in this regard.

1. The Skies

The Arabic term for Sky is *samā'* which literally means elevated or upright. That is why a roof is also referred to by the same term in Arabic.¹ The word *samā'* and its derivatives have been mentioned about 313 times in the Quran. These derivatives sometimes simply refer to the sky

¹ See Ibn Fāris, *Mu`jam maqā'is al-lughā*, vol. 3, p. 98 & Qarashī, *Qāmūs Qur'ān*, vol. 3, p.332.

as we perceive it, to the air around us, the cosmos, the multiverse, and even greater than that.

1.1. Creation of the Skies

According to the Quran the Skies and the earth were created in six days:

“Your Lord is Allah who created the Skies and earth in six days then settled on the throne.”¹

According to this verse the creation of this world since its beginning to present day, took six days to complete. Day refers to a period of time² whose length we do not know. This is further explained in other verses of the Quran where God refers to the lengths of some days. For example:

“A day in the view of your Lord is a thousand of your years.”³

“The angels and Spirit will ascend towards him on a day whose length is fifty thousand years.”⁴

What we can infer is that the creation of the skies and earth has occurred in six continuous periods.

1.2. The Seven Skies

The Quran informs us that altogether there are seven skies:

¹ Quran, 7:54.

² The same definition can also be found in English lexicons for example according to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary a day can refer to “a particular period of time or history.”

³ Quran, 22:47.

⁴ Quran, 70:4.

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“God is He who created the seven skies.”¹

According to some verses, at first, the skies were in a single gaseous state then God turned it into the seven skies:

“He then attended to the Sky and it was like smoke. He said to it and earth come forth willingly or reluctantly. They replied we will come willingly and He ordained them to become seven skies in two days.”²

According to this verse, out of the six periods in which the skies and earth were created, it took two periods to create the seven skies. We do not know much about the characteristics of these seven skies. All we know is that these skies are layered over each other and the world that we can observe with its stars and planets is related to the first sky and lowest sky:

“He is the One that created the seven skies in layers.”³

“We decorated the sky of the world with the ornament of stars.”⁴

1.3. The Physical Laws that Govern the Skies

According to the Quran, celestial bodies float in their own orbits that prevents them from crashing into each other under normal conditions. After explaining the motion of the moon and sun in the Surah of Yāsīn,

¹ Quran, 65:12.

² Quran, 41:11-12.

³ Quran, 67:3 and 71:15.

⁴ Quran, 37:6 & 41:12.

God states that these two objects will not collide into each other and they are each in their own orbits:

“Each floats in its own orbit.”¹

These orbits are so precise that one can easily predict the future position of the earth.

1.4. Navigation by the Stars

Another use of the stars, aside from being ornaments in the sky, is the ability to use them for navigation:

“He is the one that created the stars for you so you would be guided by them in the darkness of land and sea.”²

1.5. The Creation of Night and Day

Another subject that is related to the creation of the skies is the creation of night and day. The Quran mentions day and night in about thirty verses and wants us to ponder on their creation. Day and night are two signs that point to a Wise Creator. The Quran sometimes states that Day and Night are a sign of His existence:

“And from His signs are night and day.”³

Sometimes it states that God is their creator:

“He is the One that created night and day.”¹

¹ Quran, 36:40.

² Quran, 6:97.

³ Quran, 41:37.

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At other places it states that it has made day and night subservient for our sake:

“And for your sake he made the day and night subservient.”²

And He is the One that:

“Merges day into night and merges night into day.”³

God uses these and other statements to urge us to ponder on day and night. One of the greatest wisdoms of the creation of day and night that we can all understand has been explained in the following verses:

“Say: if God were to make night everlasting over you until Judgment Day, which Deity except God could bring you light? Why do you not listen? If God were to make day everlasting over you until Judgment Day, which Deity except God could bring you night so you could rest in? Why do you not see? Due to his mercy he has created night and day so you can rest in and seek his bounties and so that you may be grateful.”⁴

These verses show that if Earth did not rotate around its axis and part of it was always night and another always day, then it would be impossible to live in it. Thus night and day both point to order, design, and wisdom in their creation.

2. The Earth

¹ Quran, 21:33.

² Quran, 14:33.

³ Quran, 22:61.

⁴ Quran, 28:71-73.

Another important body in the Physical world is the Earth that we live on. Earth has a number of important aspects that have been referred to in scripture.

2.1. Earth's Size and Position

If Earth was twice or half its size, the conditions for life would experience a dramatic change that would make life much harder on Earth. If the position of Earth was considerably further away or closer to the sun, the excess heat or cold would again make life on Earth harder than it is today. Everything has been created with a special design according to its role:

“We created everything according to a measure.”¹

2.2. Earth Floating in Space

The Earth floats in the heavens bound by gravity and motion. This mechanism is referred to in the Quran as the effect of invisible pillars:

“He is the one that has raised the skies without pillars that you can see.”²

“He has created the skies without pillars that you can see.”³

If it were not for these pillars the earth would either collapse into the sun or break free from its gravity and float into space. Both cases would make life on earth impossible.

¹ Quran, 54:49 &

² Quran, 13:2.

³ Quran, 31:20. See al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 328 and al-`Ayyāshī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 203 for a discussion on this verse between Imam al-Riḍā and one of his followers.

2.3. Earth Moves but Seems Motionless

Although the earth has multiple types of motions, to someone that lives on it, it feels completely calm and stationary. The earth revolves around itself at a speed of 1,670 km/h, it revolves around the sun at a speed of 107,000 km/h, and moves through the galaxy at a speed of 720,000 km/h. Yet, its inhabitants do not feel this motion. This calmness has been mentioned in some hadiths and verses of the Quran:

“Did we not make the Earth a resting place/cradle (*mihād*)?”¹

The Arabic words *mahd* and *mihād* can either mean a resting place or a child’s cradle. It is as if humans are children that have been put in the cradle of Earth that has all they need to thrive. God also describes the Earth like a tame obedient animal:

“He is the one that made the earth tame and obedient for you. Thus walk on its paths and eat from its sustenance.”²

God has tamed the Earth for us and has created everything that we need to live on it in peace and serenity:

“God is He who made the Earth a settling place for you.”³

Questions:

- 1- What are the main goals of Islamic cosmology and how is it different from natural cosmology?
- 2- What is meant by the seven skies?

¹ Quran, 78:6.

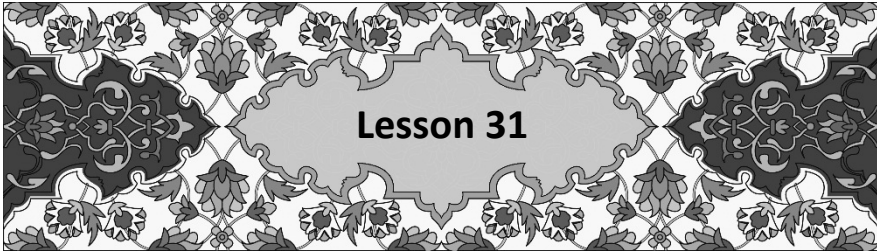
² Quran, 67:15.

³ Quran, 40:64.

- 3- According to the Quran, how is the Earth controlled in the Skies?
- 4- Why does the Earth feel calm although it has different motions?

Research:

Find other extraordinary aspects of the skies and Earth using scientific books and share them in class.



Angels



Some Creatures are not comprehensible in the Physical world and exist in the unseen world. In the next sections we will speak about these creatures. The current lesson is dedicated to Angels.



Angels are an important part of Islamic cosmology. Angels and their attributes have been mentioned in many parts of the Quran and numerous hadiths.

1. The Nature of Angels

Angels can think and decide for themselves and have been bestowed with the blessing of `aql. However, they cannot be comprehended by our senses. Their creation is different from humans. Imam Ali states in this regard:

“They have not been in the loins, nor have they been embodied within the womb, and they have not been created from an insignificant fluid (sperm).”¹

According to Imam al-Şādiq they do not eat, drink, or marry:

“Angels do not eat, drink, or marry. They are alive by the Breeze from (God’s) Throne.”²

According to Imam Ali they do not sleep nor lose awareness:

“They do not become weak, tired, or unaware, and they do not disobey (God) ... their eyes do not become drowsy, they do not make mistakes, their bodies do not become weak, they have

¹ Al-Rađī, *Nahj al-balāgha*, sermon 109, p. 159 & al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, vo. 2, p. 207. Also see al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 56, chap. 23: *Ḥaqīqat al-malā’ika wa şifātihim wa shu’ūnihim wa aṭwārihim*.

² Al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 206 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 56, p. 174.

not been in the loins, nor have they been embodied within the wombs.”¹

2. Infallibility and Servitude

Angels have no carnal desires and lusts. Thus they do not disobey God and always obey His commands:

“Rather, they are honored servants. They do not precede Him in words and obey His commands.”²

The keepers of Hell have also been described using similar statements:

“They do not disobey God’s commands and obey what they have been ordered.”³

Angels never tire from worshiping God:

“Those that are in His presence worship Him without arrogance and do not become weary.”⁴

3. Angels’ Duties

A variety of duties have been assigned to Angels by God. Angels are separated into different groups with different tasks. Some are designated as regulators of the affairs of the world:

“And those (angels) that plan and regulate the affairs.”¹

¹ Al-Qumī, *al-Taḥsīn*, vol. 2, p. 207 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 56, p. 175.

² Quran, 21:26-27.

³ Quran, 66:6.

⁴ Quran, 21:19.

Others are selected as Messengers that among other tasks convey God's messages to His Prophets:

“God selects Messengers from among the angels.”²

“He makes the angles descend alongside the Spirit for his commands unto whoever He wills from among his servants. (He orders them) ‘Warn My servants that there is no Deity but Me, so heed Me!’”³

Other tasks assigned to angels include:

- Asking God to forgive the believers, interceding on their behalf, and assisting them in wars.⁴
- Recording our deeds.⁵
- Separating the souls from the body during death.⁶
- Protecting us.⁷
- Destruction of the Transgressors.⁸

Angels are also present in Barzakh⁹ and the hereafter. As we already mentioned in the previous lessons they play many roles in Heaven¹⁰ and Hell.¹

¹ Quran, 79:5.

² Quran, 22:75.

³ Quran, 16:2.

⁴ Quran, 40:7; 21:28; 3:124-125; and 33:9.

⁵ Quran, 10:21; 43:80; 82:10-12.

⁶ Quran, 6:61; 4:97; 7:37.

⁷ Quran, 6:61;

⁸ Quran, 11:77;

⁹ Quran, 16:28 & 32.

¹⁰ Quran, 39:72.

4. Number and Ranks of Angels

Angels are so numerous in number that they are absolutely incomparable to humans in number. When Imam al-Ṣādiq was asked about this issue he replied:

“By He who in His hand is my life, the angels of God in the sky are definitely more than (the grains) of soil on earth. There is no space in the sky the size of a footstep except that there is an angel there that praises (*yusabbiḥuh*) and glorifies (*yuqaddisuh*) God.”²

Angels also have all sorts of ranks:

“And there is none among us except that he has a determined position. And we stand in line. And we glorify God.”³

Gabriel, Michael, Seraph, and `Izrā`īl hold the highest ranks among the angels. There are also angels that are in a constant state of devotion:

“God has angels that are in a constant state of bowing until Judgment Day and others that are in constant prostration until Judgment Day.”⁴

According to some verses of the Quran, some angels are under the command of other angels. For example `Izrā`īl the Angel of Death

¹ Quran, 74:30.

² Al-Qumī, *al-Taḥsīn*, vol. 2, p. 255, al-Ṣaffār, *Baṣā`ir al-darajāt*, p. 69; and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 56, p. 176.

³ Quran, 37:164-166.

⁴ Al-Qumī, *al-Taḥsīn*, vol. 2, p. 206 & al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 56, p. 174.

commands a group of angels whose task is to extract the souls of those whose time has come.¹

5. Appearance as Physical Beings (*Tamaththul*)

Although angels belong to the unseen realm, they can appear in physical forms in this world. The Quran mentions a few instances where angels have interacted with this world in physical bodies. For example in the stories of Abraham and Lot, the Quran states that the Angels appeared to them in the figure of men and interacted with them.² An angel also appeared to Mary in the figure of a man to inform her that she would give birth to Jesus.³

The essence of angels is unknown to us and we do not know how it is different or similar to material beings like humans and other creatures. What is important, is that we should accept how they have been described in the Quran and narrations and consider them a great group from His creations. They are merely God's servants and are not deities that are worshipped.⁴

Questions:

- 1- How are angels similar to humans?
- 2- How are angels infallible and why is this attribute necessary?
- 3- Name the most important tasks that angels are assigned to using verses of the Quran.
- 4- What is the meaning of *tamaththul*?

¹ Quran, 6:61 and 16:28 & 32.

² Quran, 11:69-83.

³ Quran, 19:17.

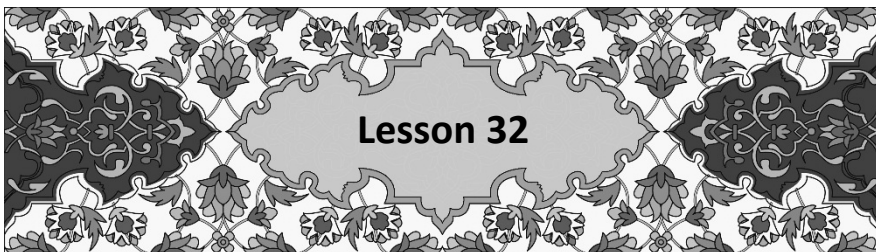
⁴ Makārim Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr Nimūnih*, vol. 18, p. 177.

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- 5- Does believing that angels play an important role in the affairs of this world and have been delegated to perform many tasks by God, mean that we are associating them with God and practicing polytheism?

Research:

Find verses of the Quran that show examples of *tamaththul*. Discuss them with your friends.



Jinn and Satan



In the previous lesson we spoke about angels as the first example of creatures from the unseen realm. The second creatures that we will speak about are the jinn. Although jinn are closer to humans than angels, we have included them among the unseen creatures because they cannot be perceived by our senses under normal circumstances. In this lesson we will speak about jinns and devils.



1. Jinn

Jinn are supernatural beings that cannot be perceived under normal conditions. The existence of jinn has been emphasized in many verses of the Quran and hadiths. For example a Surah of the Quran is called 'Jinn' and narrates the discussions that a group of jinn are having about Islam. Jinn literally means covered or hidden. Some characteristics of jinn have been described in the Quran. We will mention these in the following pages.

1.1 The Essence of Jinn

Humans have been created from soil. Jinn, on the other hand, have been created from fire:

“And He created the Jinn from a flame of fire.”¹

However, it is not clear whether this fire is the same fire that appears when things burn. What we do know is that the difference in their essence allows Jinn to travel long distances in a very short amount of time and perform tasks that humans can only do with specialized tools.

1.2 Jinn Were Created Before Humans

Another fact that can be found in the Quran is that jinn were created before humans:

“And we had created the jinn before (humans) from a hot fire.”²

¹ Quran, 55:15.

² Quran, 15:27.

1.3 Jinn Must Abide by Religious Law

A common aspect of the creation of humans and jinn, is that they too must worship God:

“And I did not create jinn and humans but to worship me.”¹

According to some verses of the Quran God’s Messengers have been dispatched to jinn too:

“O group of jinn and humans! Didn’t messengers from yourselves come to you who read My signs to you and warned you about the meeting of this day?”²

It can be inferred from the Quran that jinn have knowledge, intellect, can speak, can discern between right and wrong, and free will.³ Thus like us humans they too are responsible for their actions. Some of them are righteous and believe in God while others are disbelievers and will eventually end up in Hell:

“And from among us are the righteous and others unlike them; we are different groups ... and those that deviate from the truth are the fuel of Hell.”⁴

1.4 The Relationship Between Humans and Jinn

Jinn can perform tasks that humans need. Some Jinn worked for Solomon or were part of his army:

¹ Quran, 51:56.

² Quran, 6:130.

³ For instance see the verses of Surah al-Jinn in the Quran.

⁴ Quran, 72:11-15.

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“And some jinn worked in his presence by the permission of his Lord ... they would build for him what he wanted from temples, figures, and large bowls.”¹

As we mentioned, under normal circumstances, jinn are incomprehensible using the senses. Before the advent of Islam, they had the ability to infiltrate the skies and eavesdrop. Using this information they would then communicate with humans and make them commit more sins:

“Some humans would seek refuge in some jinn and they would increase their corruptness.”²

Some humans even worshipped jinn and others served them. But after the advent of Islam and the appearance of the Messenger of God, jinn were prevented from eavesdropping:

“And we would sit (in hiding) and eavesdrop in the (skies) and whoever tries to eavesdrop today will find a comet waiting for him.”³

Although rare, relationships still occur today between some humans and jinn.

1.5 Different Types of Jinn

Jinn is also sometimes a reference to other types of creatures, regardless of them being intelligent or not. These even include animals that are usually hidden from humans:

¹ Quran, 34:12-13.

² Quran, 72:6.

³ Quran, 72:9.

“God has the jinn in five groups: some are like wind in the air (invisible), some are snakes, some scorpions, some earth dwelling insects, and some are like humans who will be reckoned and rewarded/punished.”¹

2. Satan

Another creature belonging to the unseen realm is Satan who has been referred to in Islamic scripture numerous times. First we will define the word Satan then we will explain the different topics related to him.

2.1. Definition of Satan

The word Satan (*shayṭān* in Arabic) is derived from the root SH-Ṭ-N which can mean wicked or something that is far from the truth. Thus, the word Satan has been used in the Quran with different meaning in mind:

- It is sometimes simply used as a term to refer to something wicked:
“And in this manner we placed an enemy for every Prophet that are satans from among the jinn and humans.”²
- Sometimes Satan is used in a broader sense to refer to any harmful creature. For instance, Imam Ali, peace be upon him, states:
“Do not drink water from a cracked section of a cup and not from its handle because Satan sits on the crack and handle.”³
- At other times, it refers to the wicked jinn, Iblīs, that deceived Adam and still deceives humans to this day using his army of

¹ Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 60, p. 267.

² Quran, 6:112.

³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 6, p. 385 & al-Barqī, *al-Maḥāsīn*, vol. 2, p. 578.

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devils. In the following section we will refer to Satan by this meaning.

2.2. Satan's Past

Satan has a surprising past that has been narrated in different verses of the Quran. At first Satan was a righteous jinn that was committed to worshipping God. He was so devoted that he reached the degree of the angels. When God created Adam, he commanded Satan and the Angels to prostrate to Adam. Only Satan refused:

“They all prostrated except for Satan who was a jinn.”¹

To justify this act, Satan argued that he was superior to Adam because Adam was made from earth but Satan was made from fire:

“(God) said: ‘What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you?’ He replied: ‘I am better than him. You created me from fire but created him from earth.’”²

Satan failed this very great test. Due to his transgression Satan was revoked of his high rank, exiled, and placed under God's curse³ until Judgment Day:

“He said: exit (from among the angels) for you have been banished and you will be cursed until the Day of Judgment.”⁴

¹ Quran, 18:50.

² Quran, 7:12.

³ The Arabic word used is la`n that literally means being deprived of God's mercy.

⁴ Quran, 15:34-35.

After this commandment, Satan openly expressed enmity toward Adam and asked God to allow him to deviate Adam and his children until Judgment Day. God permitted this but only until an appointed time that only He knows about:

**“He said: ‘O Lord! Give me time until the Day of Resurrection.’
He replied: ‘You are given time but until the appointed day.’”¹**

Giving Satan time and allowing him to deviate humans, are all part of the tests and exams that God has put in place for us:

“He had no power over them except that we wanted to make known those that believe in the hereafter from those that doubt it.”²

2.2. Satan’s Deeds

Satan uses numerous methods to deviate people from the path of God. One method is to tempt people to commit sins. For example Satan tempted Adam and Eve to eat from the forbidden tree by lying and swearing by God that he was telling the truth. By this temptation they ate from the tree and their genitals became exposed and they covered themselves with leaves. That is when their Lord stated: Did I not tell you to keep away from the tree and take Satan as your enemy?³

Another trick used by Satan is to make bad actions seem attractive:

¹ Quran, 15:36-38 & 38:79-81.

² Quran, 34:21.

³ Quran, 7:20-22.

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“He said: O Lord! Since you led me astray I will make (bad deeds) on earth attractive to them and I will lead them all astray.”¹

Satan makes sins seem more enjoyable than they really are and by this way tempts us to commit them. He also makes false promises that he will never honor:

“Satan gives them promises and stirs up desires in them and his promises are nothing but deceit.”²

When people want to give money to charities and good causes Satan induces the fear of poverty in their hearts.³ He also makes us forget⁴ about God and creates enmity amongst the believers:

“Satan constantly wants to create enmity and hatred against you by intoxicants and gambling.”⁵

These acts are never ending and Satan uses every chance to deceive us. Satan is the greatest source outside us that tempts us to commit unfavorable deeds.⁶

It should be noted that none of the methods used by Satan nor his temptations are the cause for our actions. Ultimately, we choose by our own free will to obey Satan or disobey him. Quran reports how Satan argues with the inhabitants of Hell using this point:

¹ Quran, 15:39.

² Quran, 4:120.

³ Quran, 2:268.

⁴ Quran, 6:68.

⁵ Quran, 5:91.

⁶ Quran, 24:21 and 2:268.

“I had no power over you except for the fact that I called you and you answered me. So do not blame me but blame yourselves.”¹

Thus the existence of Satan and his temptations have no effect on our free will and are not the cause of our actions.

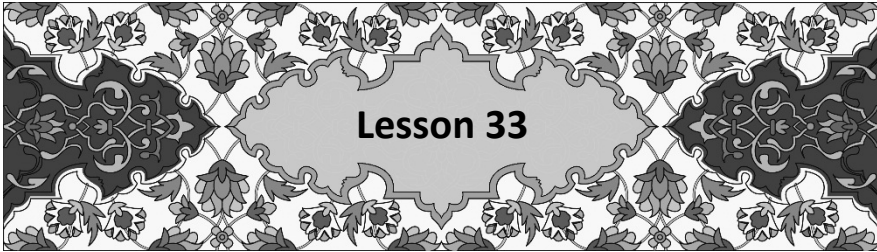
Questions:

- 1- What is the essence of Jinn and how is it different from the essence of angels and humans?
- 2- Using verses of the Quran show that jinn can perform tasks needed by humans?
- 3- What are the different meanings of the word Satan?
- 4- Using verses of the Quran briefly explain Satan’s past.
- 5- What role does Satan play in tempting us and how are we ultimately responsible for our own actions?

Research:

- 1- How many different groups of jinn exist and what role do they play in this world?
- 2- Using the Quran find the relationship between Satan and other devils.

¹ Quran, 14:22.



Anthropology



Human are one of God's most notable creations.

Understanding humans is an important part of understanding this world and the role that we play in it.

Islam, being the perfect religion and source of guidance, has paid great attention to this fact. In this lesson we will speak about anthropology from an Islamic viewpoint.



1- The Definition of Anthropology

In a general sense, anthropology simply means studying and understanding humans. Humans are complicated and have many different aspects. Thus any science that studies humans either in detail or in general or any of their aspects is considered a branch of this science.

Anthropology in modern science is different from that of Islamic sciences. Anthropology from an Islamic aspect is considered to be the science of knowing or understanding one's self and humans are the spotlight of this study because they can move toward perfection and an exalted goal has been put in place for them. According to some scholars, from a religious perspective, humans can reach this goal, salvation, and perfection by pondering on themselves and the innate knowledge that God has placed within them.¹ In religious anthropology, topics such as the creation of humans, its different aspects, and its strengths and capacities are also discussed.

2- The Quality of Religious Anthropology

Different branches of anthropology discuss the different aspects of mankind. However, the non-religious branches are limited in their ability to sufficiently understand the essence of mankind and only religious anthropology can shed light on this issue. The reason is obvious: the only Being that can enlighten us regarding these issues is the same One who has created man in the first-place. We will now mention the different aspects and advantages of Islamic anthropology.

¹Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, *Khodshināsī barāye khodsāzī*, pp. 4-5.

2-1- Universality

Since religious anthropology is based on divine revelations, it has no limits on the scopes it discusses and thus encompasses a broad range of topics. When a specific topic is discussed, it speaks about that issue with all other topics in mind and does not pay to one aspect independently. Because the One speaking about these issues has complete knowledge about humans and their essence:

“Does He not know, He who has created? The One Who is the Subtle and All-Aware.”¹

2-2- Flawless and Free From Error

Religious anthropology is based on the Quran and hadith. Both of these sources are based on revelations from God. These sources are free from error and unlike philosophical, mystical, and empirical anthropology, are not flawed. In religious anthropology, if the sources are proved to be authentic, then one cannot question them. The same cannot be said about other forms of anthropology that are limited by scientific knowledge and the natural sciences. God refers to this advantage in the Quran:

“Do they not ponder on the Quran; if it had come from anybody other than Allah they would have found many contradictions in it.”²

In another verse He affirms that this Book can be trusted:

“This Quran guides to what is most right.”¹

¹ Quran, 67:14.

² Quran, 4:82.

2-3- Creation from Beginning to End

In non-religious anthropology, humans are either studied without having their beginning and end (the hereafter) in mind – such as in empirical anthropology or some branches of philosophical and mystical anthropology – or they are studied without paying enough attention to the beginning and end, in a manner that would not be of benefit if one wants to tread on the path of perfection. However in religious anthropology, the beginning and end are considered two very important pillars of human fate, and the relationship of the present is studied in detail with respect to the past and future. Many verses of the Quran testify to this method. One of the simplest verses is the following:

“We belong to God and to Him we will return.”²

3- The Existential Aspects of Humans

The existential aspects of humans are diverse and have been debated ever since antiquity. We will speak about three such aspects in this section. These include: cognition, desires, and capabilities.

3-1- Cognition

All recognitions related to our intellect and innate knowledge are related to our cognitive aspect. Examples of intellectual recognitions are recognizing God, recognizing His Oneness, recognizing ourselves, recognizing the world around us, and also understanding abstract concepts such as the fact that one must be just or must always be truthful.

¹ Quran, 17:9.

² Quran, 2:156.

3-2 Desires

All people have desires within them. These can be extreme, moderate, or even slight. Many of these desires are inherent and exist from the day we are born, although external factors such as nurturing, society, and family and friends can decrease or increase these for better or worse.¹ These desires include desires that are common between humans and animals such as sex, self-preservation, and protecting offspring. These desires are sometimes called instinct. Other desires are either specific to humans or are rarely seen in animals.

3-3 Capabilities

Another existential aspect of humans is their capabilities. These include the capability to think and decide, creativity, capability to change the environment, and speech. Speech is so universal that even many of the mentally impaired can use it. God states in this regard:

“The Merciful! He taught the Quran. He created man and taught him expression.”²

It must be noted that the three aforementioned aspects have different degrees of importance. The cognitions and recognitions usually hold a higher degree than the other aspects. For before a desire occurs, a recognition must have occurred before it and usually one does not desire what he does not recognize. And once it is desired, it is then that capabilities are used to reach it.

¹ See Quran, 33:67 & 31:15.

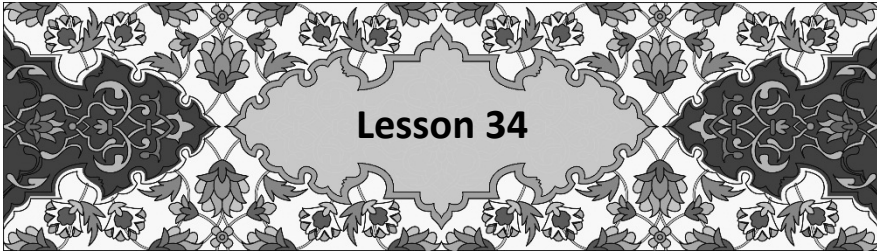
² Quran, 55:1-4.

Questions:

- 1- What is anthropology and what branches does it have?
- 2- How is religious anthropology superior to other forms of anthropology?
- 3- What are three existential aspects of humans and how are they different from each-other?
- 4- How do you think our desires help in this world and in the path toward perfection?

Research:

- 1- Research the different anthropological beliefs of modern materialistic schools of thought and share them in class.



Lesson 34

The Creation of Man



In the previous lesson we briefly spoke about religious anthropology and three different aspects of humans. Anthropology is very broad and encompasses many issues.

One of the most important issues in this regard is understanding the stages of the creation of humans and the formation of their different parts and organs. These issues will be discussed in the current lesson.



The creation of humans is probably the most important topic of anthropology. Since empirical sciences and theories are not totally reliable in this regard, we must first see what the Creator says about these issues then study the empirical sciences based on these teachings.

1- The Beginning of Creation

Humans have a physical and spiritual dimension. We will first discuss the physical dimension. The first human that was created was Adam. After him, his progeny were transferred from one generation to the other in the loins of their fathers and wombs of their mothers.

The Quran states the differing aspects of human creation. According to the Quran, humans are made from earth, soil, water, mud, and semen:

“He produced you from the Earth.”¹

“And We created you from soil.”²

“He is the One that created you from Mud.”³

“He is the One that created a man from water and made for him relationships through blood and marriage.”⁴

“And he created man from a *nutfa*”^{5,6}

¹ Quran, 11:61.

² Quran, 22:5.

³ Quran, 6:2.

⁴ Quran, 25:54.

⁵ *Nutfa* can mean semen, sperm, or the embryonic state right after conception.

⁶ Quran, 16:4.

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We can conclude from these verses that soil is from the Earth and when mixed with water it turns into mud. On the other hand, although humans are created from *nutfa* (except for Adam and Jesus), *nutfa* itself is created by the body through the foods and fluids that the body consumes and all these foods are rooted in the earth. Thus, it becomes evident that we are all created from the Earth, water, soil, and mud.

2- The Creation of Adam

The first human that was created is Adam. According to the following verse Adam was created directly from the earth:

“The example of Jesus in God’s sight is like that of Adam, He created him from soil then said to him ‘be’ and he became.”¹

After the defeat of the idolaters and the expansion of Islam, the Christians of Najrān² sent a group of scholars to Medina to debate with the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family. When they entered the Mosque, they first performed their own rituals then started questioning the Prophet:

- Who is your father?
- Abdullah.
- Who was Moses’s father?
- `Imrān.
- Who was Jesus’s father?

After this question was asked Prophet Muhammad remained silent. The Christians claimed that since Jesus does not have a father, then his

¹ Quran, 3:59.

² Najrān was one the most important Christian centers of Arabia in those times.

father must be God. It was here that the aforementioned verse was revealed to refute their claim: Adam did not have a father either but you do not claim he is the son of God. Jesus is no different from Adam in this regard.¹ This verse also refuted the Jews claim that Jesus was illegitimate.

3- The Creation of Adam's Progeny

The following verse clearly explains that the creation of Adam is different² from his progeny:

“And he initiated the creation of man from mud. Then he made his offspring from an insignificant liquid.”³

4- The Different Stages of the Creation of Humans from Sperm

Islamic scripture goes into more detail about the creation of humans. For example in the following verse different stages of this procedure are laid out:

“And we created man from an extract of clay. Then we made it a sperm/embryo (*nutfa*) in a secure resting place, then we made it like a leech, then we made the leech like a piece of flesh, then we made the piece of flesh bones, then we covered

¹ See al-Qumī, *al-Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 104; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 21, pp. 340 & 344; and Furāt b. Ibrāhīm, *al-Tafsīr*, p. 88.

² See al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān*, vol. 8, p. 259.

³ Quran, 32:7-8.

the bones with flesh, then we turned it into another creation. Blessed be Allah the best of creators.”¹

The first verse states that the beginning of man is from earth. The second verse turns our attention to the fact that offspring are produced by the sperm and embryo that reside safely in the womb. The last stage of creation is the joining of the soul with the body that occurs when the fetus is 4 months old.

5- Blowing the Soul into the Body

After the Quran mentions the stages of embryonic and fetal development it states that the soul is blown into the body which turns it into another creation.² The word blowing (*nafkh*) has been used in five verses: two refer to Adam, two refer to humans in general, and the two remaining speak about Mary.

5-1- Blowing the Soul into Adam

The following verse narrates how God introduced Adam to the angels just before he was created:

“I am creating a human from a dry clay from a molded black mud. When I finish (creating) him and I blow into him from My spirit, then you shall fall down and prostrate to him.”³

According to this verse the soul was blown into Adam after he was physically created.

¹ Quran, 23:12-14.

² Makārim Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr nimūnih*, vol. 14, p.207.

³ Quran, 15:28-29.

5-2- Blowing the Soul into Humans

The following verse states that the soul is blown into every human that is created:

“He is the one that creates in the finest manner everything that he creates. And he initiated the creation of man from mud. Then he made his offspring from an insignificant liquid. Then He completed it, blew in it from His soul, and made ears, eyes, and hearts for you, yet you are rarely grateful.”¹

These verses narrate the beginning of the creation of humans and then the manner by which offspring are created. It then states that once the physical body reaches a certain state of completion the soul is blown into it. This is the only verse of the Quran that speaks about the soul being blown into all humans.

5-3- What is Meant God’s Soul

In many of the verses that we mentioned, God states that He blows His soul into humans or Adam. For example: “From My soul,”² “From Our soul,”³ or “From His soul.”⁴

During the time of the Imams, some people had the wrong impression that a part of God’s soul was within humans. Unlike the beliefs of some religious schools that think we have a piece of God and a piece of Satan in our bodies and we will ultimately turn into God as we near perfection,

¹ Quran, 32:7-9.

² Quran, 15:29 and 38:72.

³ Quran, 21:91 and 66:12.

⁴ Quran, 32:

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we do not have such beliefs. It was due to these misunderstandings that during the times of the Imams, questions like this were asked from them:

“Is there anything from God’s essence in him (meaning humans)?”¹

Other groups thought that this Godly soul only existed within the Imams or Jesus. The Imams actively opposed these beliefs. The soul of God that is blown into humans is not a part of God for God does not have different pieces. Nothing can be added to God or be decreased from Him. The soul that is blown into humans is a creation of God and there is no similitude between God and His creations. The only reason that God refers to it as His soul is because of the exalted stature of this soul. For example God also refers to Ka`ba as His House.² But this doesn’t mean God lives in it. It simply points to its exalted status. It can be concluded from these verses that apart from our physical body, we have something great and exalted within us that is a creation of God and not a part of God.

Questions:

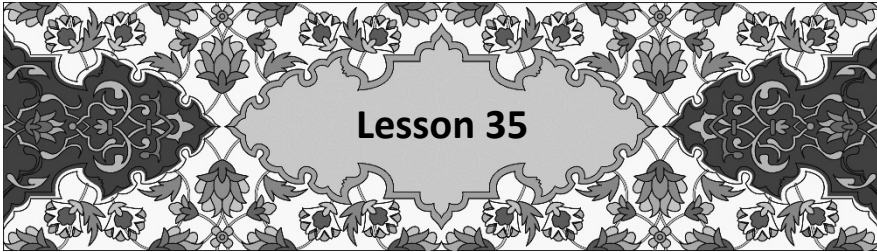
- 1- How does the Quran describe the different stages of the creation of man?
- 2- How is the creation of Jesus similar to Adam?
- 3- How does the Quran describe the time when the soul is blown into the body and at what stage does this event occur?
- 4- Why does God attribute the human soul to himself? Why is the belief that this soul is from the essence of God wrong?

¹ Al-Kashī, *al-Rijāl*, p. 495 and al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 3, p. 292.

² Quran, 2:125 and 22:26.

Research:

- 1- Search the Quran for the words *Insān*, *Ādam*, and *Bashar*. Separate the verses into different categories and discuss the points that come to mind.
- 2- Why do you think God ordered the angels to prostrate to Adam? Discuss the different reasons that come to mind.



Lesson 35

The Reason for the Creation of Man



After we briefly introduced the different aspects of humans, we must now see why humans were created in the first place and how they can achieve perfection. In this lesson we will discuss the reasons for the creation of humans.



From the viewpoint of Islam, the world has not been created in vain. In short but meaningful statements, the Quran rejects the vainness of creation and states that humans have not been left to themselves.¹ For contrary to the belief of the disbelievers, God has not created the skies, Earth, and the things between them without purpose.²

The Quran mentions a number of reasons for the creation of man. We will discuss these reasons below.

1- God's Mercy

According to some verses, the purpose of creation is to be the receiver of God's Mercy:

“If God wanted He could make all people a single unified nation, but they will not cease having differences. Except for those that your Lord has mercy on and for this very reason He created them.”³

God could have created all people similar to each other: All righteous and firm believers. But having faith in this manner would be useless and the similarity wouldn't be in line with the reason for the creation of man. Being forced to be believers without the ability to decide for one's self, is neither a merit nor a means of attaining perfection or achieving heaven or hell. This form of creation is similar to the creation of bees that are constantly striving to make honey or Malaria mosquitoes that have no choice but to nest in swamps.

¹ Quran, 75:36 and 23:115.

² Quran, 38:27.

³ Quran, 11:118-119.

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What makes humans different from other creatures is free will and the ability to choose for themselves. Another characteristic of humans is their ability to think, plan, and be creative. These characteristics help create societies and fulfill their needs.

Differences in beliefs and actions are the natural results of freewill. These differences ultimately result in one group accepting the truth while another denies it. Those that accept the truth and become the recipients of God's Mercy will attain salvation in this world and the hereafter.¹

2- Devotion²

In some verses of the Quran, the reason for creation is to worship God and be devoted to Him:

“And I did not create jinn and humans but to worship me.”³

The greatest degree of humbleness toward God makes itself manifest in His servitude and devotion. God is the only person worthy of being worshipped for no one has shown mercy and showered blessings unto us like Him. We are His servants. A servant belongs to his Master and wills what his Master wills and never ceases obeying his commands. The closer that a servant is to his Master, the more time he will spend in his devotion and will ignore idle tasks, and will be closer to perfection. Thus

¹ Makārim Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr nimūnih* vol. 9, p. 280.

² What we mean by devotion here is the act of worshipping God and servitude.

³ Quran, 51:56.

worshipping God and spending time in His devotion can be considered as the greatest stage of perfection.¹

3- Tests

Another reason for creation is to test us humans:

“He is the One that created life and death to test you (and show) who among you performs better deeds.”²

Ultimately, what we end up with is summarized in what we achieve through life and death. Life and death are a test. All things on Earth have been created with this goal in mind:

“We decorated Earth with everything that is on it, to test them (and show) which one of them performs better deeds.”³

The differences between people are also considered a test in the Quran:

“And He gave some of you higher ranks than others to test you in what He has given you.”⁴

People differ not only in spiritual aspects but also in worldly aspects such as wealth. God states that these differences are also tests.

¹ Makārim Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr nimūnih* vol. 22, p. 388.

² Quran, 67:2.

³ Quran, 18:7.

⁴ Quran, 6:165.

4- Awareness

Some verses state that the reason for the creation of the skies and Earth is to create awareness about God:

“God is He who created the seven skies and from the earth similar to them. He descends the command through them, so that you would know that God has power over all things and His knowledge encompasses everything.”¹

According to this verse the skies and earth were created so that we would become aware that God has immense Power and Knowledge. And when such a God makes a decree or gives a ruling, then that ruling is definitely based on solid knowledge and reasons. Furthermore, once we realize that God is aware of all our secrets and deeds, and that His promises about the hereafter are factual, then we would be more careful of our deeds and actions.

Conclusion

God states the reason for many of His acts in the Quran. A number of verses mention the reason for the creation of humans. We can conclude from these verses that the reason or purpose of the creation of humans is to be the recipients of God’s Mercy and this goal cannot be achieved but by worshipping Him and submitting to His commands. Someone that truly worships God, prefers God’s Will over his own will.

To find out who truly worships God special conditions and tests must be created. The things that occur in our lives are all preludes to these conditions and tests. God creates a condition where we have to choose

¹ Quran, 65:12.

one option from several choices. It is here that the righteous are recognized due to making correct decisions. Thus it can be said that one purpose for our creation is to be tested.

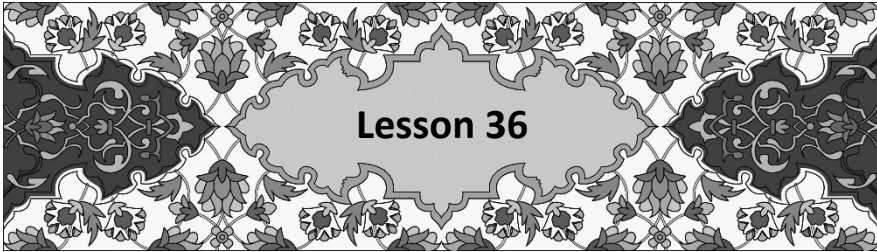
On the other hand, without correct understanding and recognition, one cannot pass God's tests. Thus another purpose of our creation is to gain recognition and understanding about our Lord.

Questions:

- 1- What is the relationship between God's Mercy and the purpose of creation?
- 2- What is meant by worshipping or devotion as one of the purposes of creation?
- 3- What is meant by testing (*ibtīlā'*) and according to the Quran what role do these tests play in our lives?
- 4- State the four purposes of creation using a unified argument? How are these arguments related?

Research:

- 1- Find the different verses of Quran that state the world has a purpose and has not been created in vain.



From Man to Society



We stated in the previous lessons that God's religions pay attention to all aspects of our lives. Our social lives are one of the most important part of being part of a community and living with other people. In this lesson we will first define society then we will discuss the social aspects of humans and the effects that humans and society have on each-other.



Just like our internal capabilities, our social ties can help us attain perfection or move away from it. Thus, understanding the relationship between man and society, is considered an important topic in religious cosmology.

1- The Definition of Society

A society can be considered any group of people that have gathered together with a common goal. For example a group of men that hang around every night or all the people of a town or district. However, from a sociological perspective a community is any group with a common set of laws, customs, or rules that live together.¹

2- Humans are Social

Humans are inherently social creatures and without the social ties that they have within society they will not be able to perform many of their daily tasks or fulfill their needs. Naturally, once someone becomes part of a society they must abide by the rules of that society. Islam, being a religion that has our spiritual and material welfare in mind, not only emphasizes having beneficial social ties, it has also laid out a set of rules to attain this goal.

Being social beings, many aspects of our lives are intertwined with the society we live in. Many of our needs, activities, and occupations can only be defined within the sphere of the society and can only be achieved by distributing different tasks between different people. From another viewpoint, a society can be considered a group of people that are connected through common needs, beliefs, and ideals.

¹Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, *Jāmi' wa tārikh*, p. 24.

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These common social needs and ties, connect the people of society to such an extent that they become like passengers of an airplane or a ship. They will all either reach their destination safely or will be involved in a catastrophe that changes their destinies in the same manner.¹

The Quran also refers to the social aspects of humans in some verses:

“O people! We created you from a male and a female and we made you nations and tribes so you would recognize each-other. The most honorable among you in the sight of God is the most pious. God is the All-Knowing and All-Aware.”²

“He is the One that created a man from water and made for him relationships through blood and marriage.”³

The last verse points to some of the relationships that result in reproduction.

Humans have not been created equal. Some have higher capacities and capabilities from others:

“Do they distribute your God’s Blessings/Mercy? We divided their sustenance in this world and elevated the status of some above others, so that some may exploit (the service) of others. And you Lord’s Mercy is better than what they amass.”⁴

If people were all equal then no one would possess anything more than another and no one could benefit from another. God has created humans different in all their aspects and capabilities: physical, spiritual,

¹ Muṭahharī, *Muqaddami’ī bar jahānbīnī islamī, jāmi’ih wa tārikh*, pp. 17-19.

² Quran, 49:13.

³ Quran, 25:54.

⁴ Quran, 43:32.

intellectual, and emotional. Due to these differences, those lacking in one capability refer to those that can compensate for them. These interactions create links that lead to social life as we know it today. The aforementioned verse points to the fact that humans are social in nature and our social aspects weren't created by other people or forced upon us by them.¹

3- Religion and Society

Islam considers society and social ties an important part of its teachings. Many Islamic laws are related to our interaction with society. Religion and morals in society are considered so important in Islam, that disregarding them is equal to breaking the ties that make up society itself. That is why the Quran provides specific rules on how to live in society and interact with its members.

A society can only move towards perfection when all its members strive in a coordinated manner to create the basis and implement whatever is needed for the growth of morals and protect them from obstacles and nuisances. For example this is one guideline from the Quran:

“O believers! Men should not make fun of other men for they might be better than them, and women should not make fun of other women for they might be better than them. And do not find faults in each other and don't insult each other by using nicknames.”²

¹Muṭahharī, *Muqaddamī'ī bar jahānbīnī islamī, jāmi'ih wa tārikh*, pp. 21-24.

²Quran, 49:11.

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Thus, in an Islamic society, Muslims must refrain from all tasks that will result in breaking the ties of friendship and cause enmity. Furthermore they should not befriend those that will hurt their faith and devotion to God:

“O believers! Do not take your fathers and brothers as friends/guardians if they choose faithlessness over faith. Those that do so are the unjust.”¹

Having faith means freeing one’s self from lowly restraints and connecting ourselves to the limitless God. When we are imprisoned within self-imposed materialistic restraints, we will not have a suitable output or result.

Respecting the privacy of the members of society is another aspect of Islam. Entering into the private space of others such as their homes is not allowed without their permission:

“O believers! Do not enter the houses of other people unless you ask permission and say salām to its inhabitants. That is better for you so that you may become mindful.”²

Islam also prescribes red lines that should not be crossed in social relations between different people. For instance, lustful looking at others and having sexual relations with them is strictly forbidden except between husband and wife:

“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and to protect their private parts (from sin). That is purer for them and God is fully aware of what they do.”¹

¹ Quran, 9:23.

² Quran, 24:27.

The aforementioned examples all show that like all religions, Islam too has paid considerable attention to society and its institutions. Not only does Islam assist us in attaining perfection, it also strives to create a healthy and safe environment to achieve this goal. In Islam, our social identities are recognized as an inseparable part of our lives.

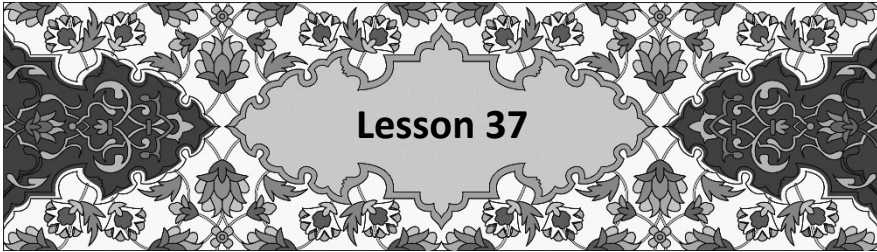
Questions:

- 1- How is society defined from a sociological perspective?
- 2- What do we mean when we say humans are social in nature?
- 3- Mention a few verses that show the role society and social roles play in human life.
- 4- How can we prove the social aspects of Islam using its decrees and moral recommendations?

Research:

- 1- Find examples in the lives of the Ahl al-Bayt that show they too pay special attention to social ties and interactions.

¹ Quran, 24:30.



Society and Government



In the previous lesson we spoke about the important role of society and social ties in our daily lives. In the current lesson we will discuss the viewpoint of Islam about the roles of social institutes, government, religion, and people in society.



In the previous lesson we discussed how society can affect individuals and how people can influence society. These mutual effects and interactions make up parts of Islamic laws and rulings.

Another form of interaction that occurs in society is that which occurs between people and governments and their mutual duties toward each other. The Islamic doctrine of governance, provides a detailed viewpoint about the relationships between people, society, and government and the duties and rights that they have. In this section we will briefly discuss these topics to show how in Islam topics such as the Oneness of God to Imamate, and anthropology to society are interweaved.¹

1- Social Institutions

Social life is created with the goal of fulfilling the needs of its members in the best manner possible and providing them with the resources needed for progression and advancement. This is where social institutions play the most important role. For instance a number of institutions exist to control and regulate commercial relations within the community. These encompass a variety of commercial interactions such as production, distribution, trade, and consumption.

On one hand, some aspects of social life are inevitable. These aspects have two characteristics: a- all societies throughout history have these aspects. B- most people in society will deal with these aspects at some or most times of their lives.

On the other hand, most sociologists consider religion a social institution. Religion is a handbook of living correctly and appropriately and has guidelines for all aspects of our individual and social lives. It not

¹ See Subhānī, *Ulgūyi jāmi` shakhṣiyyati zane musalmān*.

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only encompasses beliefs, morals, and acts of worship but also speaks about different rights such as political, judicial, international, commercial, and civil. Thus it includes all social institutes and encompasses them.¹

Thus, by recognizing different social institutions, Islam has legislated different laws related to them.

2- Islam's View on Government

According to the teachings of Islam, God is the creator and owner of everything:

“Exalted is God, the true King.”²

Ownership is exclusively for God and what others own is only by the permission of God. It is only He that can give or take:

“Say: O God! You are the owner of sovereignty. You give sovereignty to whom You wish and You take sovereignty from whom You wish. You exalt whom You wish and You belittle whom you wish. All goodness is from You and You have power to do anything.”³

“God is the sovereign of the skies and earth. He gives life and takes it. And you have no guardian or helper except for Him.”⁴

¹ Mişbāḥ Yazdī, *Jāmi'ī wa tārikh*, pp. 348-349.

² Quran, 23:116.

³ Quran, 3:26.

⁴ Quran, 9:116.

According to these verses ownership belongs to God and He is the owner of the skies and thus He is the only Guardian and Assister.

God's ownership encompasses all aspects of our lives. His laws and decrees are binding on all and no one can interfere in our lives except Him.¹ The same applies to the selection of community leaders and sovereigns. The leaders of an Islamic community are selected by God and the community must follow those appointed by God:

“Your Lord creates what He wills and He chooses, and they have (no right) to choose. God is free from and exalted above what they associate with Him.”²

“No faithful man or woman has the right to make a decision once God and His Messenger issue a command. Whoever disobeys God and His Messenger has evidently gone astray.”³

Thus in a society of Muslims that have accepted God's rule, someone that rules without authority from God is like someone that claims to be a government minister without being appointed by the prime-minister. Even if he acts justly or strictly abides by the rulings of Islam, he will still be considered illegitimate because he has no authority. That is why in a Muslim society that belongs to God, the leaders must also be appointed by God.

Islamic rulers must have permission from God to rule. This permission is sometimes explicit where specific people are appointed by God or the Prophet and Imams to rule, and sometimes it is a general permission

¹ See `Askarī, *Naqshi a'immih dar ihyā dīn*, vol. 1.

² Quran, 28:68.

³ Quran, 33:36.

given to individuals that have certain characteristics without mentioning specific people.¹

Thus we can conclude that the subject of sovereignty in Islam, is rooted in the sovereignty of God and all sovereigns must have permission from God to attain such a position.

As we previously mentioned, God's sovereignty makes itself manifest in the concept of Imamate where a leader appointed by God, who has been bestowed with Divine knowledge and power, rules and guides the Islamic community. During the occultation of Imam Mahdi, even though he guides us and influences our everyday lives, however the general guidance and management of some aspects of Muslims has been put in the hands of scholars that meet the criteria presented by the Imams. This principle is usually referred to as the wilāyat faqīh.

3- People's Role in Government

It should not be inferred from what we mentioned that people have no role in an Islamic government. Rather it is upon the people to uphold justice by refusing to follow tyrants and usurpers and by following the Prophets, their successors, and the righteous people appointed by them in order to execute the plans of Islam for a bright future:

“We sent Our Messengers with clear proofs and sent with them the Book and scales (of justice) so that the people will uphold justice.”²

¹ See the chapter on Imamate, lesson 46.

² Quran, 57:25.

In places where Islam has not made explicit decrees or new conditions and problems have arisen that have no clear solutions in scripture, Islam has allowed legitimate Islamic governments to come up with new rulings using the basis set out in Islamic scripture. For example it has been narrated from Imam al-Riḍā, peace be upon him that:

“Stating the principles is up to us and it is up to you to extract the details.”¹

According to this hadith, the principles needed to extract specific rulings needed for different situations, have been mentioned in scripture. It is up to the learned scholars in every time and era to use these principles and formulate what the society and people need in their daily lives.

However, in the absence of the Imams, people can choose righteous individuals from among themselves to manage their affairs. These people must act according to Islamic rules both during legislation and implementation of the laws needed to run the community. Thus all the people can become actively engaged in upholding justice. This is the role that people can play in an Islamic government.

Questions:

- 1- What are social institutions? Discuss whether religion is or is not a social institution.
- 2- According to the Quran how are governments related to the sovereignty of God?

¹ Al-`Āmilī, *Wasā'il al-shī'a*, vol. 27, p. 62.

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3- What separates the role of people and the role of religion in an Islamic government?

Research:

1- What role does ijtihād play in managing a society?

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