

Moment by Moment Expectation of the Savior

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Introduction

During their missions, all the Prophets and Apostles have emphasized the fact that a savior will arrive at the end of time who will implement the government of justice over the globe. This news has been heard since the human being appeared on the earth. Allah has indicated this promise in all the early scriptures and commanded humans throughout ages to wait for the manifestation of the kingdom of Allah. The Holy Quran also gives glad tidings of the day for which all the believers of the world are enthusiastically awaiting, and confirms that the righteous and virtuous servants of Allah shall finally inherit the earth:

"The earth is Allah's. He gives it as a heritage to whom He wills, and the end is for the watchful.
(7:128)"

The Most Glorious also said:

"And indeed We wrote in the Psalm (Zabur) after the reminder that My righteous servants shall inherit the earth." (21:105)

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In a number of verses in Quran Allah has emphasized that what He has promised will certainly take place. For instance:

"Verily that which you are promised is true. (51:5)" "And Allah shall never break His Promise. (22:47)" "Surely, Allah shall never fail to keep the promised event. (3:9)" "Glory to our Lord! Truly the promise of our Lord is a fulfilled one! (17:108)" Besides the indications in the Quran and the early scriptures, the testimonies of the last Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF) that have been narrated by all Islamic schools in numerous traditions leave no doubt that this promise will be fulfilled by the hand of a man from his progeny. The Sunnis have narrated:

The Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF) said, "Even if only one day has remained for the duration of the world's existence, Allah shall prolong that day to send a person from my Ahl al-Bait whose name is the same as my name... He shall fill out the earth with peace and justice just as it has

been filled with injustice and tyranny."^[1]

The above tradition shows that although Allah may delay this divine promise even as much as the last days of the world's duration, nevertheless it will certainly take place. As such, all the true believers should expect its happening through the hands of the Mahdi of the family of .(Muhammad (PBUH&HF

The signs before reappearance of al-Mahdi (AS)

There are many traditions narrated by all Islamic schools where the Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF) has portrayed the events just prior to the uprising of al-Mahdi (AS). The Shi'ite traditions that have been narrated from the Prophet (PBUH&HF) and the Imams of Ahl al-Bait (AS) provide much more details for the events that are supposed to take place before the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (AS). Some of these signs are about the hard condition of people in the world before his reappearance. For instance, Abu Hamza al-Thumali and Abu Basir both narrated:

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (AS) said, "The Qa'im shall not rise until after a great fear from people, the earthquake, afflictions, trials, and the disease have inflicted people, the war between Arabs, great disagreement between people, break ups in their religion, changing their state such that the wishers wish death every morning and night due to the greatness of what is observed, and the eating of people by people. The rising of (al-Qa'im) shall be at the time of despair and hopelessness of people for finding any opening/relief."^[2]

On the other hand, some signs are about the miraculous events that will happen just prior to the rising of al-Qa'im. For instance, there will be a lunar eclipse at the end of the month of Ramadhan. The eclipse at the end of the month is a supernatural phenomenon that has never happened before. Badr Ibn Khalil al-Azdi narrated:

I was sitting with Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (AS) when he (AS) said, "There shall be two signs before the rising of al-Mahdi (AS) that have not occurred since Adam (AS) descended on the earth. The sun shall be eclipsed in the middle of the month of Ramadhan and the moon (shall be eclipsed) in the end of that month." A man in the presence said, "O Son of the Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF)! The sun shall be eclipsed in the end of the month and the moon in the middle." The Imam replied, "I know what you say. But these are the signs that have never [happened since Adam descended."^[3]

The possibility of canceling the signs of the reappearance

The reported signs were the information that Allah willed about their occurrence in future and were in effect at the time that the Imams (AS) spoke about them. In other words, with their vision in the knowledge of what had been willed to happen, the Imams (AS) mentioned some of the signs that Allah had willed and planned at that time. However, Allah has not promised the occurrence of the planned signs, and thus all such signs are subject to change due to Allah's new decision (al-Badaa).

The traditions state that amongst all the signs there are few signs that are definite, which means it is unlikely that Allah changes His will on their occurrence. Thus, they are very likely to take place before the advent of Imam al-Mahdi (AS). Umar Ibn Hanzala narrated: Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said, "There are five definite signs before the rising of al-Qa'im, which are: (the rising of) al-Yamani and al-Sufyani, the (heavenly) cry/call (by Gabriel which will be heard all over the world), the murder of Nafs al-Zakiyya, and the sink (of the Sufyani army) into (the land of) al-Baydaa (located between Mecca and Medina)."[4]

Even for such definite signs Allah reserves al-Badaa. Al-Badaa is the origination of a new plan by Allah. We will discuss the phenomenon of al-Badaa and its significance in the next section. Allah may change those of the definite wills that are not categorized as His Sunan or His promises. For instance, Allah informed us through His Apostle (PBUH&HF) that before the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (AS), al-Sufyani would certainly rise. This is a definite will, but it is not categorized as a promise. It is just an insisted future event meaning that it is unlikely that Allah cancels His permission for the occurrence of this event, though it is still possible. According to the following tradition, Allah may make Badaa even in such insisted news. Dawud

Ibn al-Qasim al-Ja'fari narrated:

We were with Imam al-Jawad (AS) when the issue of Sufyani was brought up and the traditions which state that his advent is of the definite matters. I said to Imam al-Jawad (AS), "Does Allah make Badaa in the definite matters?" He (AS) replied, "Yes." I said, "Then, we have a fear that Allah makes Badaa in (the rising of) al-Qa'im." The Imam replied, "al-Qa'im is of the promises, and Allah does not break His promises (referring to verses 3:9 and 13:31)."[5]

In other words, Allah will not fail in any of His promises including the annihilation of injustice and the establishment of the government of justice on the earth by Imam al-Mahdi (AS). This was Allah's testimony in verses of Quran that we quoted in previous section. However, Allah may make Badaa on the time of reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (AS) and may advance or postpone it. Moreover, He may cancel the occurrence of the definite signs that were supposed to take place before the Imam's (AS) advent, as the above tradition explained. The question that may arise here is that what the significance of canceling a sign by Allah is. To answer this,

let us first discuss the notion of al-Badaa. This is one of the complex issues that has confused many people's minds, and consequently the enemies of the Ahl al-Bait (AS) have taken the .advantage of this confusion to attack our faith

The Badaa and its significance

There are many pieces of evidence in the Quran and the traditions expressing that Allah may change what He has already willed and He may initiate a new will. However, as we discussed earlier, there is an exception for His Sunan and His promises that He has chosen not to change at all. The will of Allah is the creation of Allah. Thus, this change only occurs to the created information and does not imply a change in His Eternal Knowledge/His Essence. In other words, the novelty occurs in Allah's action, and not in Allah's Essence. Allah eternally knew what He would change later. By al-Badaa, only the created information that has been visible (al-Shahada) for the vice-regents of Allah becomes invisible (al-Ghaib) and vice versa. The visible information is about what Allah has willed to happen in the past and in the future (Ilm Ma Kan wa Ma Yakun), and the invisible information is about all other infinite possibilities that Allah has not willed to happen (Ilm Ma Lam Yakon).

There are numerous verses in Quran that prove Allah's hands are open to originate or change anything in His creation. For instance:

"And the Jews said, 'The hand of Allah is tied up'. Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for what they uttered. Nay, His hands are outstretched. (5:64)"

"Allah erases whatever He wills and records/establishes (likewise), and with Him is the Mother-Book. (13:39)" "Thy Lord creates whatever He wills, and He chooses. No choice have they (in what He has not permitted, or in leadership as per another Hadith). Glory to Allah! And far is He above the partners they ascribe! (28:68)"

"If He so wills, He removes you and brings in a New Creation. Nor is that (at all) difficult for Allah. (14:19-20; 35:16-17)" "Every day He brings in a (new) matter/situation. (55:29)" "He increases in the creation what He wills, for Allah has power over all things. (35:1)" "Nor is an individual's life prolonged, nor does anything decrease from his life span, except that it is (being reflected) in a Book. All this is easy for Allah. (35:11)"

In a very long discourse narrated from Imam Ali (AS), he has stated the following regarding al-Badaa:

Imam Ali (AS) said, "As for he who denies al-Badaa, (it would suffice that) Allah said in His Book, 'So turn away from them, and you are not blameworthy (51:54)' (by which) Allah, the exalted, intended their destruction on the earth at that time. Then, Allah rectified for them by

His mercy, and made Badaa regarding to their destruction, and revealed to His Apostle, 'And remind, for reminding benefits the Believers (51:55)'.

A similar case is His saying, 'But Allah was not to punish them whilst you were amongst them; nor was He to punish them whilst they ask for forgiveness. (8:33)' Then Allah made Badaa (by revealing), 'But what plea have they that Allah should not punish them when they keep out (men) from the Sacred Mosque? (8:34)' Similarly, it is His saying, 'If there are twenty tolerant amongst you, they will overcome two hundred, and if there are a hundred (like them) amongst you, they will overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve. (8:65)' He then made Badaa and said, 'Now, Allah lightened your (burden) for He knew that there is a weakness in you. Thus, if there are a hundred tolerant amongst you, they will overcome two hundred, and if there are a thousand (like them) amongst you, they will overcome two thousands by the leave of Allah.

And Allah is with those who are patient.

(8:66)' This way, Allah carried out the matter in the abrogating (Nasikh) and the abrogated/cancelled (Mansukh). This shows the reformation of what was originated. Furthermore, it is His saying, 'Allah wipes off whatever He wills and records (likewise), and with Him is the Mother-Book. (13:39)' Hence, does He wipe off except that which existed [i.e., its will was existent]? And, does He record except that which did not exist [i.e., its will was non-existent]? There are many examples like these in the Quran..."[6]

In another verse of the Quran, Allah stated:

"Why had not there been a township (among those We decreed to destroy) whose people would accept faith so that their faith should have profited them, except for the People of Jonah (Yunus)? When they believed, We removed from them the chastisement of ignominy in the life of this world, and permitted them to enjoy (their life) for a while. (10:98)"

The above verse points to a glaring example of al-Badaa that took place for the People of Prophet Yunus (AS) whose calamity was kept off and prevented. Due to their rejections and disbelief, they became subjected to the severe wrath of the Almighty. At the time that the punishment was about to manifest, Prophet Yunus (AS) distanced himself from them and went far away. Upon his leave, people came to their senses and suddenly changed their behavior and became mindful of Allah. They pleaded for mercy from the Almighty Allah from the depth of their hearts. Subsequently, Allah decided to avert the calamity that was about to inflict them all. Another example for Allah's change of decision is when we pray to Him. If Allah chooses to respond to our prayer, He initiates real change in the outside world and may re-plan our future.

Allah states in the Quran:

"Call on Me so that I answer you (40:60)".

My Lord would have not concerned Himself with you if it were not for your call (upon Him).
(25:77)"

There are sayings from the Imams (AS) that show Allah may cancel a decisive/confirmed decree (Qadhaa al-Mubram) regarding a worldly punishment that is about to take place, just due to the Du'aa of His servant. It is narrated:

Imam Musa al-Kadhim (AS) said, "I advise you to Du'aa. Certainly Du'aa and request from Allah, the Mighty and the Majestic, drives away an affliction that was planned, was passed, and all that was remaining was its execution (Imdhaa). When Allah is implored, He averts the affliction an amazing averting."^[7]

As we have seen, there are massive pieces of evidence in the Quran that clearly disprove the doctrine that states "the Pen has dried up for all future events". In contrast, the followers of Ahl al-Bait (AS) do not emulate the Jews who considered Allah had concluded the matter. We believe Allah's hands are open to do as He wills and chooses. Nevertheless, Allah does not act without purpose. The changes in decree have educational purposes for people including the Prophets and the Imams, peace be upon them. Although people are usually unaware of the details of all such changes, yet by realizing the general concept of al-Badaa, one will truly understand that everything is in the hand of Allah and He is able to do all things at any time, and that it is never too late for Him to do anything He wills.

It demonstrates the absolute freedom of Allah in all His actions and that He is never restricted by His own creations, including His previous will. Moreover, it removes the suspicion of compulsion and non-revocable pre-destination, and gives the sinners hope that Allah may totally revive their past and future. It encourages them to strive hard, to implore Allah, and to act upon good deeds with the hope that Allah may fix their deeds and may change their fate.

Zurara Ibn A'ayun and Hisham Ibn Salim narrated: Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said, "Allah was not worshipped to the extent that He was worshipped due [to al-Badaa. Allah was not glorified as much as He was glorified due to al-Badaa."^[8]

The sudden nature of the advent of al-Qa'im (AS)

The Shia and the Sunni traditionalists have narrated that the advent of Imam al-Mahdi (AS) will be rectified by Allah within just one night. In other words, its time is very unpredictable and depends on Allah's sudden choice of action and his advent will take place miraculously. The Sunnis have narrated from Muhammad Ibn Hanafiyya (RA) and Imam Ali (AS) that the Holy Prophet (PBUH&HF) said:

"al-Mahdi is of us Ahl al-Bait (AS); no doubt, Allah will rectify his matter within a night."^[9] In

some other traditions, the Imams (AS) stated that the time of the rising of al-Qa'im (AS) is like the time of the Hour of resurrection, which is completely unpredictable and is known only by Allah. The time of resurrection has not yet been decreed and Allah shall enforce it suddenly once He wills. Di'bil narrated:

Imam Ali Ibn Musa al-Ridha (AS) said, "The Imam after me is my son, Muhammad (AS), and after him is his son Ali (AS), and after Ali is his son al-Hasan (AS), and after al-Hasan is his son the Proof of Allah who shall stand (al-Hujjat al-Qa'im). He is awaited during his occultation and is obeyed during his manifestation. Even if there remains from the life of the world but a single day, Allah shall expand that day until he rises and fills the world with justice in the same way that it was filled with tyranny and injustice. But when? As for news of the time (of reappearance),

indeed my father told me having heard it from his father who heard it from his ancestors who heard it from Ali (AS) that it was asked from the Prophet (PBUH&HF), 'O the Apostle of Allah! When will al-Qa'im from your offspring appear? He said, 'His similitude is the similitude of the Hour (of resurrection). None but He shall manifest it at its time. It is heavy for the heavens and the earth. It will not come to you unless suddenly. (7:187)'" Allah stated in Quran: "They ask thee about the Hour - when will be its appointed time? Say, The knowledge thereof is with my Lord (alone). None but He shall manifest it at its time. It is heavy for the heavens and the earth. It will not come to you unless suddenly. They ask thee as if thou were eager in search thereof. Say, The knowledge thereof is with Allah (alone), but most men know not. (7:187)"

In fact, the traditions state that some of the Quranic terms and verses that apparently refer to the day of resurrection alternatively refer to the day of rising of al-Qa'im (AS). These terms include, "the hour (al-Saa'a)"[10], "the hereafter (al-Akhira)"[11], "the days of Allah (Ayyam Allah)"[12], "the day of the religion (Yawm al-Din)"[13], etc. One of the most important common specifications of both events is their sudden, unexpected, and miraculous manifestation. Once Allah makes Badaa and creates His decree on the sudden advent of Imam al-Mahdi (AS), the first one who will become aware of it is the Imam (AS) himself through inspiration.

Mufadhdhal Ibn Umar narrated:

On the commentary of verse, "Then, when it is knocked in Naqur (74:8)", Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said, "Certainly, of us will be an Imam who will be victorious and will be concealed. Once Allah, the Glorious, wills to manifest his affair, He shall impact his heart with a hint, and thereupon, he will emerge and will rise by the authority of Allah, the Glorious." [14] Moreover, Abu Jarud narrated:

I said to Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (AS), "May I be sacrificed for you, inform me about the holder of this matter." The Imam (AS) replied, "He turns from the most fearful person to the most confident one overnight, and his program will be revealed to him in a matter of one night and one day." I asked, "Is this revealed to him?" The Imam (AS) replied, "O Aba Jarud, this is not the revelation of the prophethood. Rather, it will be a revelation similar to the one that He gave to Maryam, the daughter of Imran, to the mother of Moses, and to the honeybee. O Abu Jarud, the Qa'im of the family of Muhammad (PBUH&HF) is more honorable than Maryam, the mother of Moses, and the honeybee!"[15]

The sudden change of the state of Imam Mahdi (AS) from the state of fear to the state of security, which is also pointed out in verse, "He will most certainly, after their fear, give them security in exchange (24:55)," shows that even the Imam (AS) does not know the time of his uprising until Allah initiates Badaa and makes it a knowable reality and permits his rising. Thus, like his followers, the Imam (AS) is himself an expectant. Of the titles that have been mentioned in the traditions for Imam al-Mahdi (AS) are: "the expected (al-Muntadhar)" and "the expectant (al-Muntadhir)".

All the above pieces of evidence, among others, prove that the time of the rising of Imam al-Mahdi (AS) is of suspended matters (Mawquf) and that his coming is very unpredictable and sudden. This event will be one of the greatest manifestations of Allah's power, which will take place at the time that most people would consider it unfeasible. Allah will suddenly make Badaa and will fully accommodate the Imam's advent within one night. Although the rising of al-Mahdi (AS) is in Allah's will, the time of his rising has not yet been decreed

Moment by moment expectation due to the unpredictability of the time of rising

The Shia authorities narrated:

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said to his companions, "Be more hopeful on the things that you consider far-fetched than that which you presume very likely. Verily, Musa Ibn Imran (AS) went to bring fire (to provide heat and light) for his family and he came back to them while he was an Apostle, and this way, Allah rectified the matter of His servant and His Prophet, Musa (AS), within a night. In the same way Allah shall treat al-Qa'im, the twelfth of the Imams (AS). He shall rectify his matter in one night and shall take him from discomfort and concealment into the light of relief and reappearance."[16]

There are many other Shi'i transmitted traditions, which convey the similarity of the sudden advents for some ancient Prophets (AS) with that of Imam Mahdi (AS).[17]

The following tradition also shows that we should expect the rising of al-Qa'im at every

moment and make ourselves ready for his arrival because his coming is very unpredictable. It is narrated:

Imam Ja'far Ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq (AS) said, "Expect the command/kingdom of your master in every day and night of your (life), and Allah (said) 'Every day He brings in a (new) matter/situation. (55:29)'." [18]

The notion of continual awaiting/expecting and hoping to see the golden days of the earth at any moment has many positive benefits in our lives. It constantly reminds us the absolute power of Allah. A faithful servant who believes Allah has power to do all things, does not consider anything far-fetched for Him. Moreover, so long as we expect the Imam (AS), we are hopeful for a better future and will not be disappointed by the difficulties and the problems of our present life no matter how severe they are. In addition, when we realize that Allah may advance the advent of al-Qa'im (AS) to a very near future, we do our best to prepare our spiritual state to receive him. In the last part of this work, we will discuss our duties as the expectant of al-Qa'im (AS), which would lead to Allah's satisfaction so that Allah might decide to waive the remaining time of occultation.

As we have seen, the existence of al-Badaa plays a central role in our way of expecting al-Qa'im (AS). Due to the possibility of Badaa, the fore-told signs are subject to change. If the signs were unchangeable there would be no point to wait all the time and in every moment. Having faith in change and alteration by Allah, everyone would keep himself ready every morning, every evening and all the time in between to receive the Imam (AS). According to the traditions, waiting for the Imam (AS) at any moment is the best deed and the most significant act. Such action is meaningful only when the changes in the aforementioned signs are possible. A person who has no faith in alteration of signs and thinks of the reappearance of Imam (AS) after sighting of the signs is actually waiting primarily for the sighting of signs and then for the Imam (AS). Such an individual may deny Imam al-Mahdi (AS) if he reappears without the signs being fulfilled. To the contrary, the traditions give prime importance to the promise of the reappearance of the Imam (AS) and consider the appearance of the signs as an inferior issue. Abu Ubaida al-Hadhaa narrated:

I asked Imam al-Baqir (AS) about this matter (i.e., the rising of al-Mahdi (AS)). He (AS) replied, "Because you expect that it comes to you in a (certain) way, do not deny it (if it happens in another way)." [19]

It is now clear that we should wait for the reappearance of Imam (AS) and not for the sign, and should not consider reappearance before witnessing the foretold signs impossible. It is only in this situation that imploring Allah to hasten the reappearance of Imam (AS) is meaningful.

Allah is free to shower His blessings any time He wants. He has created a leader for this task so long ago and has kept him on call in concealment. He can order the reappearance of the Imam (AS) even before the sighting of signs or can change the signs for his early rise. Much more than any of His followers, our Imam (AS) is eagerly waiting for receiving Allah's .permission at any moment

The significance and the purpose of specifying the signs

Specifying the signs before the time of reappearance has its own advantages and benefits. Since the time of reappearance is not known to people, the only way to describe the reappearance is to describe its signs. Observing any of the mentioned signs strengthens one's faith in the reappearance of Imam (AS) and increases his anticipation. Although whatever indications were given by the Imams (AS) regarding the incidents which are to occur are totally based on the previous decreed decisions, they should not be ignored and should not be considered as insignificant. These signs were not given for the purpose of predicting the time of reappearance, or for urging people to search the scientific data to estimate the time of the occurrence of the sign itself. They, rather, become a reminder for people only after they occur miraculously. Once a sign occurs, the believers realize that it was amongst the signs that they were foretold, and thus, their faith and confidence will increase, and they will realize that the time of reappearance is closer than ever. Keeping in mind the issue of al-Badaa, all the mentioned signs before his arrival, even if they finally occur, they may happen miraculously in an unpredictable manner. As we have seen in the second section, some of the signs such as an eclipse of the moon at the end of the month can only happen miraculously. Even for some other signs that can occur naturally and can be predicted by the available physical information, they may still occur supernaturally and thus their predicted schedules may be proven wrong. The more interesting observation is that, one of the mentioned signs at the end of the time is the rising of the sun from the west, which shows that Allah will miraculously change the direction of the heavenly bodies, and thus, all astronomical data will change according to the new movements. This means that all timely predictions based on the available astronomical data will be proven false due to this single miracle of Allah.

Thus, instead of worrying about the time of the occurrence of the cancelable or at least the unpredictable signs before the rising of Imam al-Mahdi (AS), one should care about keeping faith in the Imam (AS) and following his Sunna. Only in that way, will one be safe from the afflictions of the end of time no matter if those signs finally occur or not. If some the signs

occur he will gain more hope and energy that the appointed time is fast approaching, and if he did not observe the signs he will still remain hopeful to receive the Imam (AS) because he believes that Allah is never restricted by His creation including His previous will and has power .to do all things at any moment

Will there be any confusion in Identifying al-Qa'im (AS)?

The occurrence of the signs indicates that the rising of al-Qa'im is about to take place. The question that may arise here is that, since the signs may change or may be cancelled, will there be any confusion for people to recognize Imam al-Mahdi (AS) once he starts his mission? Moreover, if there would be no confusion that he is the promised Mahdi (AS), why would then people oppose him?

According to the traditions, once Allah let Imam al-Mahdi (AS) rise, all people around the world, believers and disbelievers likewise, will become aware of him immediately and without any shadow of doubt. In the first tradition quoted below, the rising of Imam al-Mahdi (AS) is compared to the rising of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH&HF), which took place very clearly. In the second tradition, it is mentioned that his rising will be as clear as sunshine and will be identified by all people. Jabir narrated:

Imam al-Baqir (AS) said, "The similitude of the rising of al-Qa'im from our Ahl al-Bait is that of the rising of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH&HF). And the similitude of any of us Ahl al-Bait who rises before the rising of al-Qa'im is that of a little bird who tries to fly but falls down from its nest and becomes the toy of children."[\[20\]](#)

Narrated Jabir Ibn Yazid:

Imam al-Baqir (AS) said, "Be calm so long as the heavens and the earth are calm/in place, i.e., do not rise against anyone. Verily your matter (i.e., the rising of al-Imam) shall not take place secretly as it shall be a sign from Allah, not from people. Be hold! It shall be brighter than sunshine so much so that it shall not remain hidden from the righteous and the evildoer (likewise). Do you know morning/dawn? It shall be like the dawn and there shall be no hidden thing in it."[\[21\]](#)

As per another tradition, Imam al-Ridha (AS) explained the sentence, 'Be calm so long as the heaven and the earth are calm' as 'Be calm so long as the heaven is calm from the call (of Gabriel) and the earth is calm from sinking the army (of al-Sufyani).'[\[22\]](#)

Thus, there is nothing to worry about identifying Imam al-Mahdi (AS) once he rises. We only should worry about our belief before his rising since believing in him after his rising is not beneficial. Those who will oppose Imam al-Mahdi (AS) when he rises will not have any doubt

that he is Imam al-Mahdi (AS). They will oppose him since they did not believe in his sayings and practices, as it does not match with their innovations and the innovations of their ancestors.

We do not know of anything brighter than sunshine, which could be sensed by our faculties. The reappearance Imam Mahdi (AS) will be clearer than that, and no one would remain ignorant about Imam al-Mahdi (AS) when he starts his mission. However, no one would be able to believe in him if he denied/disbelieved him (his existence, his rights, or his Sunna) before the time of his reappearance; or, it is better say, believing in him at that time would be of no use for a disbeliever. It is just like believing in Allah on the Day of Judgment, which will be of no benefit for the disbelievers. Those who remain doubtful about his existence during the time of occultation will have no way to escape from his sword once they meet him (AS). Allah stated in Quran:

"... On the day that certain signs of thy Lord do come, no one would benefit from believing in (that sign) if he did not believe (in that) before, or such belief is no good for him. Say, 'Wait! We too are waiting/expecting'. (6:158)" Ibn Ri'ab narrated that on the commentary of the above verse, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (AS) said:

"The 'Signs' are the Imams (AS), and the 'expected sign' is al-Qa'im (AS). On that day, no one would benefit from believing in (that sign) if he did not believe in him before his rising by sword even if such person believed in (the Imamate of) his ancestors, peace be upon them." [23] The bad news, however, is that most of those who believe in Imam al-Mahdi (AS) will doubt his existence over time due to the length of the time of occultation and because of various types of afflictions that befall people during this period. Therefore, when the Imam (AS) starts his mission, the believers will be very few in number. Saqr Ibn Dulf narrated:

I asked Imam al-Jawad (AS) why Imam al-Mahdi (AS) is called al-Qa'im. He (AS) wept and replied, "Because he will rise after his remembrance is dead (in the society) and when most of the believers in his Imamate have turned back (from their belief)." I asked why he is called al-Muntadhar (the awaited). He (AS) replied, "Because there shall be an occultation for him whose period shall be prolonged. The sincere ones shall wait for him, the doubtful ones shall deny him, the rejecters shall ridicule his remembrance, and the proposers of time (for his reappearance) shall increase. In that period, those who hasten in movement (al-Musta'jilun) shall perish, and those who submit (to Allah's commands and decrees) shall be saved." [24]

Another tradition is narrated by Mufadhhal Ibn Umar, who said: I heard Imam al-Sadiq (AS) saying, "Be hold! By Allah, your Imam shall disappear for a number of years in your lifetime and you will be afflicted with hardship until some people say he (AS)

has died or has been killed, which valley is he in? Verily the eyes of the believers shall remain full of tears for him, and you will be overturned like the ships are overturned in the waves of the sea. None would survive but those from whom Allah has taken oath, whom He has written faith in their heart, and has helped them by a spirit from Him. And there shall appear 12 confusing banners that will not be recognized from each other." I cried and said, "What could we do at that time?" He (AS) looked towards the beam of sunshine that was in the room and said, "O the servant of Allah! Do you see this sunlight?" I said, "Yes." He (AS) continued, "By Allah! Our matter (i.e., the rising of al-Mahdi once it comes) is more evident than this sun."^[25]

In addition, it is narrated from Ali Ibn Ja'far that: Imam al-Kadhim (AS) said, "When the fifth (offspring) from the seventh of the Imams disappears, then, I adjure you by Allah to watch for your religion so that no one would take it away from you. Without doubt, there shall be an occultation for the holder of this matter until such time that (most) people who believe in his Imamatus would leave their belief. Verily this (occultation) is but a test by Allah, the Glorious, for his creation."^[26]

Musa al-Baghdadi narrated: I heard Imam Hasan al-Askari (the eleventh Imam) saying, "I see that you will differ after me concerning my successor. Whoever accepts the Imams after the Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF) but denies my son is like a person who accepted all the Prophets and the Apostles but denied the prophethood of Muhammad, the Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF). And whoever denies (Muhammad) the Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF) is like one who has denied all the Prophets. This is because obeying the last of us is like obeying the first of us and denying the last of us is like denying the first of us. Beware! Verily, for my son there shall be an occultation during which all people shall fall into doubt except those whom Allah protects."^[27]

Notice that according to the traditions, denying the transmitted teachings of Ahl al-Bait (AS) is equivalent to denying the Ahl al-Bait (AS). Thus, some of those who claim to believe in Imam Mahdi (AS) as the twelfth Imam during the time of occultation will oppose him after his rise because they used to oppose their teachings and used to follow their own inventions. Fudhail

Ibn Yasar narrated: I heard Imam al-Sadiq (AS) saying, "When our Qa'im (AS) rises he will face the ignorance of people more severe than what the Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF) faced during the days of al-Jahiliyya." I asked, "Why should it be so?" The Imam replied, "The Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF) came to people who were worshipping the stones and the carved wood. However, our Qa'im (AS) shall come to people who will all interpret the Book of Allah against his interpretation, and will argue with him by that. By Allah, al-Qa'im shall enter his justice inside their houses, just as

the heat and the cold enter them." [28]

During the period of occultation, people gradually leave the traditions of Ahl al-Bait (AS) and interpret Quran according to their own opinion, and prefer the words of fallibles to the words of infallibles. Consequently, many religious instructions will be forgotten as if they had never been a part of the religion. On the other hand they consider many man-made products as if they really have been a part of the religion. When Imam al-Mahdi (AS) comes, he will fight all the innovations and will restore the truth of the religion. For this reason, at the beginning of his

mission, many people think he has brought a new religion. Muhammad Ibn Ijlan narrated: Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said, "When our Qa'im rises he shall call people anew to Islam and shall guide them to the things that were annihilated and from which people had turned away. He is called Mahdi because he will guide people to the thing from which they have been separated.

He is called al-Qa'im because of his rise for the truth." [29]

Thus, the opposition against Imam Mahdi (AS) is not due to people's failure in identifying him. It is rather due to their disbelief in the original laws of the religion, their overlooking of the transmitted traditions, and their following man-made ideas and opinions in the domain of religion.

Is lack of the occurrence of signs a reason for the delay in Relief?

If Imam Mahdi (AS) has not appeared yet, it is not because certain signs did not take place, but because people do not follow the commandments and the instructions of Ahl al-Bait (AS). In a

Tawqi' from Imam al-Mahdi (AS) it is written that:

"If our followers—may Allah grant them success for His obedience—all had truly kept their covenant (with us) the blessing to meet us would not have been postponed and they would have seen us with true recognition. Nothing holds us back from them except that which reaches to us (of their actions) that we dislike and that which we do not consider proper for them." [30] Moreover, Muhammad Ibn al-Faraj narrated:

Imam Baqir (AS) wrote to me, "When Allah becomes angry at His creatures, He makes us away from their proximity." [31] Imam al-Mahdi (AS) wrote the following to one of his special deputies, namely Muhammad Ibn Uthman (RA), in response to people's questions about what

was the cause of occultation:

Imam Mahdi (AS) said, "... As for the reason for the occurrence of occultation, Allah, the Mighty and the Majestic, states, 'O ye who believe! Ask not questions about things which, if made plain to you, may cause your dislike. (5:101)' There was no one amongst my fathers except that a Bai'a (oath) of a tyrant of his time was placed on his neck. But I will rise while I do not have any Bai'a on my neck to any of the tyrants. As for my benefit during my occultation, it is like the

benefit of the sun (for people) when the clouds make it absent from the eyes. Certainly I am amnesty for the inhabitants of the earth just as the stars are amnesty for the inhabitants of the heaven. Thus, close the doors of question over what is not related to you and do not charge yourself with what you have been discharged to know. (Instead) increase your Du'aa to hasten the Relief (al-Faraj), for this is indeed your relief..."[32]

Referring to verse 5:101 in the above Hadith as a response to people's query for the reason behind occultation shows that our disobedience has been one of the major reasons for occultation, which is also supported by previously quoted traditions

How can we become an expectant of al-Qa'im (AS)?

It is, now, clear that the problem of occultation is due to the ugly actions that we have committed, and that we have not submitted to the traditions of Ahl al-Bait (AS). Allah, the most merciful, has assigned for us an Imam who is ready to relieve us, but we have turned away from his commands and the commands of his ancestors. This has caused the wrath of Allah in the form of occultation. Our only chance for relief is to try to seek the pleasure of Allah and His Hujja (AS) so that Allah may waive the remaining time of occultation. But how can we do that? We cannot seek the pleasure of Allah by inventing some duties during the time of occultation according to our opinion. The Ahl al-Bait (AS) have already mentioned the specific duties that we have during the time of occultation, and we cannot add to it. Wasting our time on searching the astronomical data and proposing time for the Imam's reappearance will only displease Allah. It will also serve the impostors who try to take the advantage of astronomical events for their own agenda, as well as those who want to weaken our faith about Imam al-Mahdi (AS) by claiming that these alleged signs did not accompany his reappearance, and thus making us doubtful about his existence.

Below are some of the things we can do to seek the pleasure of Allah and His Hujja (AS) so that Allah may decide to waive the remaining time of occultation. There are many traditions :that support each item below, but here I only quote a few

True Recognition of the Imam (AS)

As the first step, we should have the true recognition of the Imam al-Mahdi (AS) with all his exclusive rights. This is one of the most important conditions for his expectants and is their prime duty. Recognition (Ma'rifat) is not just to know their name and their lineage. In a primary level, recognition means to acknowledge their rights and authorities, while in an advanced level

it is to acknowledge their light (Nur). Fudhail Ibn Yasar narrated: I asked Imam al-Sadiq (AS) about Allah's saying, "On the day that We shall call every group with their (respective) Imam. (17:71)" The Imam (AS) replied, "O Fudhail! Know your Imam, for if you have real understanding of your Imam, postponement or advancement of this matter (al-Faraj) shall not hurt you. He who recognizes his Imam and dies before the rising of the holder of this matter, he is like the one who is sitting in his army. Nay, he is like the one who is sitting under his banner."[\[33\]](#)

Notice also that the above tradition has a pointer to the issue of al-Raj'a (earthly return). The true Imam-cognizant is of the Imam's soldiers and will return to this world by Allah's leave to help the Imam (AS) once he rises. In another tradition, it is narrated: Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said, "The lowest limit of the recognition of Imam is that He is the peer of the Prophet (PBUH&HF) without the degree of prophethood and is his inheritor, and that obedience to him is obedience to Allah and obedience to His Apostle, and submitting to him in all matters and returning every (religious) issue to him and taking his words."[\[34\]](#)

Furthermore, Sadir narrated:

Imam Baqir (AS) said, "Certainly, people are charged with three obligations: Recognition (Ma'rifa) of the Imams, submission to them in what reaches them (of their instructions), and referring to them in any disagreement (in religious matters)."[\[35\]](#) Moreover, Ibrahim al-Ziyad narrated:

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said, "He who claims to recognize us but adheres to other handholds is a liar."[\[36\]](#) The traditions are quite clear that a person who does not refer to Ahl al-Bait (AS) in every religious issue has not recognized Ahl al-Bait (AS) as the guiding Imams. The religion belongs to Allah and any one who has really acknowledged this fact, seeks the knowledge of religion only through His vice-regents. Seeking guidance and religious knowledge from other .than Ahl al-Bait (AS) is equivalent to denying them as His vice-regents

Learning our duties and submitting to words of the Imam (AS)

The expectants should learn about the instructions of Ahl al-Bait (AS) and act upon their commands, which are available to us in the form of Hadith. This can only be achieved if we study the traditions of Ahl al-Bait (AS) in a regular basis and submit to their words: Imam al-Sajjad (AS) said, "Surely, the religion of Allah shall not be intercepted by the deficient intellects, false opinions, and corrupt criteria. It shall not be grasped except by submission. He who submits to us shall be safe. He who accepts our guidance shall be guided. He who acts upon analogy (Qiyas) and opinion (Ra'y) shall perish. And he who feels difficulty in his heart in

accepting our sayings or our verdicts, has disbelieved in the One who sent Quran, the Great, while he does not know." [37] Imam Ali (AS) said the following in one of his sermons given in

Nahj al-Balagha:

"Look at the people of the Prophet's family. Adhere to their direction. Follow their footsteps because they shall never let you out of guidance and shall never throw you into destruction. If they sit down, you sit down, and if they rise up you rise up. Do not go ahead of them for you will go astray, and do not fall behind them for you will perish." [38]

Yazid Ibn Abd al-Malik narrated:

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said, "Visit each other since this would revive your hearts and would cause reminding of our traditions. Our traditions cause affection among you. If you follow them you will be guided and saved, and if you abandon them you will be misguided and perished. Thus [act upon them and I guarantee your salvation." [39]

Educating others about the religion

As an expectant, we should also teach what we know from Ahl al-Bait (AS) to other qualified individuals, narrate their traditions, and transfer what has been conveyed to us from their knowledge:

Imam al-Ridha (AS) said, "May Allah bless he who revives our matter/kingdom." He was asked, "How is your matter/kingdom revived?" The Imam (AS) replied, "To learn our knowledge and to teach them to the people. Verily, if people know the beauty of our sayings, they will follow us." [40] Those who wish to see the kingdom of al-Qa'im (AS) in near future, should learn and act upon the instructions of Ahl al-Bait (AS) first, and then teach them to those who are willing to know. There is a series of wonderful traditions from the Prophet (PBUH&HF) and the Imams (AS)—one from each in consecutive order—narrated by Imam Hasan al-Askari (AS) in his Tafsir, which are known as the traditions of "The Orphans of Family of Muhammad (PBUH&HF)". I only quote the first one, which belongs to the Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF): The Imam al-Askari (AS) said, "As for Allah's saying 'and the Orphans (4:36)', indeed the Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF) said, "Allah, the Glorious, has urged (people) to be kind towards the orphans, due to the severance of their links with their fathers. Therefore, he who protects and shields them, Allah shall protect him. He who honors them, Allah shall honor him. He who touches his hand over the head of an orphan—out of kindness toward him—Allah places for him in Paradise for every strand of hair that passed under his hand, a castle more expansive than what the universe encompasses, and within which is whatsoever the souls desire and the eyes cherish and therein shall they remain forever. (Referring to Verse 43:71)."

Then the Imam (AS) continued, "More severe than the orphanage of this orphan is that of the one who has been orphaned from his Imam, [whose link with his Imam has been severed,] who is unable to reach him, and who does not know his commandments on those of religious laws that he is in need of them. Behold! For any of our followers who possesses knowledge of our sciences, this [other] person—the one ignorant of our path, who is severed from seeing us—is thus an orphan under his guardianship. Then, behold! Whosoever (of our followers) guides and instructs him, and teaches him our path, he shall be with us in the loftiest companionship [a special degree in Paradise where the Prophets and the Imams reside]. My father reported this [to me, from his forefathers, from the Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF)]."[41]

Purifying our love for the Imam (AS)

We need to clean up our heart from the dirt so that the light of Allah could move in with the fullest magnitude. We should purify our love and affection for Ahl al-Bait (AS), and keep aloof from their enemies: Imam al-Baqir (AS) and Imam al-Sadiq (AS) narrated that the Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF) said, "Everything has a principle, and the principle of Islam is the love of us Ahl al-Bait." [42] Also:

Imam al-Ridha (AS) said, "The perfection of religion is: accepting our Wilaya and keeping aloof from our enemy." [43] In another Hadith we read: Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said, "He who claims to love us but he does not keep aloof from our enemy, is a liar." [44] Abu Jarud narrated:

About the verse "Allah has not assigned unto any man two hearts within his body (33:4)", Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said, Ali Ibn Abi Talib, peace be upon him said, "Allah does not gather our love and the love of our enemy within a human's heart. Certainly, Allah did not give two hearts to man ... Thus, he who (really) loves us will purify his love for us like the purification of gold by fire, which does not leave any dirt in it. Therefore, if you want to know how much you love us, you should test your heart; if you have shared the love our enemies in your heart, you are not of us and we are not of you. Allah is their enemy, and so are 'Gabriel and Michael, and Allah is the enemy of the disbelievers. (2:98)'" [45] Moreover, al-Alaa Ibn al-Fudhail narrated:

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said, "He who loves a disbeliever has indeed hated Allah, and he who hates a disbeliever (for the sake of Allah) has indeed loved Allah." Then he (AS) said, "The friend of the enemy of Allah is an enemy of Allah." [46]

When a person really loves someone, and see that another person shows hostility to his friend, it is naturally expected that he opposes and dislike his friend's enemy; otherwise, it shows that such love was not a true one, it was rather only a show due to hypocrisy. This is purely a

rational reality, which is also testified in Quran:

"You will not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day, but love those who opposed Allah and His Messenger, even though they were their fathers, their sons, their brothers, or their kindred... (58:22)"

Thus, true love is always accompanied with true hate, and one does not really love Ahl al-Bait (AS) unless he also becomes a hater of their enemies. Several authorities narrated: Imam Baqir (AS) said: "... Is religion other than love and hate?" He (AS) then recited: "but Allah has made you love the Faith and has made it beautiful in your hearts, and He has made you hate disbelief, wickedness, and rebellion. Such indeed are those who grow in righteousness (49:7)", and "they love those who migrate towards them (59:9)", and "Say, If ye truly love Allah, Follow me: Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (3:31)"[47]

The last quoted verse in the above Hadith shows that even following Allah's commandments is the result of loving Allah. Fudhail Ibn Yasar has also narrated a similar Hadith from Imam al-Sadiq (AS) with the difference that the Imam (AS) said: "Is faith other than love and hate?"[48] Another interesting tradition states that the religion is but love. This is consistent with the above-quoted traditions since hating the enemies of Allah should only be for the sake of loving Allah. Thus, we come to our previous conclusion that hating is not an independent issue. It is rather a natural resultant of true love. In other words, having true love alone for Allah rationally implies having hatred against His enemies. In fact, hating the enemies of Allah is a duty and is of the best deeds. The Sunni and the Shia traditionists have unanimously reported: The Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF) said: "The best deeds are love for the sake of Allah and hate for the sake of Allah." He (PBUH&HF) also said in another Hadith: "Love for the sake of Allah is a duty (Faridha) and hate for the sake of Allah is a duty."[49] Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said: "Whoever doubts in the disbelief of our enemies and those who have wronged us, is a disbeliever."[50] Sulaiman al-A'mash narrated: Ja'far Ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq (AS) narrated from his father that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH&HF) said, "O Ali! If a servant worships Allah for a thousand years, Allah shall not accept from him except by means of your Wilaya and the Wilaya of the Imams in your offspring. And verily your Wilaya shall not be accepted except by means of keeping aloof from your enemies and the enemies of the Imams in your offspring. This is what Gabriel has informed me 'thus let [him who will, believe (it), and let him who will, reject (it) (18:29)'"[51]

Keeping alive the Remembrance of the Imam (AS)

One of our important duties during the time of occultation is to remember our Imam (AS) more often in gatherings and in private, and to make gatherings for his remembrance. Ali Ibn Abi Hamza narrated:

I heard Imam al-Sadiq (AS) saying, "Our Shia are compassionate amongst each other. When they hold a private meeting they remember Allah. Verily, the remembrance of us is of the remembrance of Allah. When we are remembered, Allah has been remembered, and when our enemy is remembered, Satan has been remembered."[\[52\]](#)

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said to Dawud Ibn Sarhan, "O Dawud, offer my greetings to my friends and deliver this message to them that Allah blessed a servant who gathers with another to make the remembrance of our matter, and in that case, the third among them is an angel who asks forgiveness for them. When two servants gather for our remembrance Allah reminds His glory to His angels (for having such servants). Thus, when you gather spend your time on remembering (us) since your gathering and your remembering makes us live. And the best people after us are those who remind to our matter and invite to our remembrance."[\[53\]](#)

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) asked Fudhail Ibn Yasar, "Do you assemble with your friends and narrate traditions?" He said, "Yes, may I be sacrificed for you." He (AS) said, "I hold dear such gatherings as it will revive our matter. May Allah have mercy on he who revives our matter. O Fudhail! He who remembers us or being reminded about us and this brings tears out of his eyes even to the extent of a wing of a fly, Allah will forgive his sins even if they are greater than [\[the scum of the sea.\]](#)[\[54\]](#)

Awaiting the relief

We need to keep hope for relief from Allah, expect the reappearance of al-Qa'im (AS) at any moment, and truly believe that Imam al-Mahdi (AS) is the only solution for our tragedies in the world. A true expectant is constantly improving his spiritual state by acting upon the instructions of Ahl al-Bait (AS) and observing piety. According to the traditions, this is the Jihad (struggle) of an expectant during the time of occultation. This way, he persistently and increasingly makes himself more eligible to receive al-Qa'im (AS). The following Mutawatir

Hadith is narrated with all these three wordings:

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH&HF) said, "The best worship/deed/Jihad of my community is awaiting the relief."[\[55\]](#) It is also narrated that:

Imam Musa al-Kadhim (AS) said, "... and the most superior worship after the recognition is waiting for the relief."[\[56\]](#) Moreover, Abu Basir narrated:

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) narrated from his father from his ancestors from the Leader of the Faithful

(AS) who said, "The taker of our command shall be with us tomorrow in the divine sacred courtyard [i.e., our place in Paradise]. The waiter of our command/kingdom is like the one who is rolling on his blood in the path of Allah." [57] Observing patience and expecting is not an easy task, and is much more difficult than making haste, since the former requires holding back one's desire and controlling oneself. It is the greater Jihad and the best deed and worship. If one continues to be in such state, Allah has guaranteed deliverance for him. Abd al-Hamid al-

Wasiti narrated:

I said to Imam al-Baqir (AS), "We leave our marketplace while we wait for this kingdom." The Imam (AS) replied, "O 'Abd al-Hamid, do you think that the one who controls himself for the sake of Allah, Allah will not make an opening for him? By Allah! Allah shall certainly make an outlet for him. May Allah have mercy on him who holds back his soul for our sake. May Allah have mercy on he who revives our matter." I asked, "What if I die before I receive al-Qa'im (AS)?" The Imam (AS) replied, "Anyone of you who says, 'Had I met the Qa'im of the family of Muhammad (PBUH&HF) I would have helped him', he is like the one who is hitting (the enemies) by his sword beside al-Qa'im. Nay! He is like the one who has been martyred beside him." [58]

Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Abi Nasr narrated:

Imam al-Ridha (AS) said, "How praiseworthy are patience and awaiting the relief! Have you not heard the saying of the righteous servant (mentioned in Quran), 'and watch for I too am watching with you (11:93)' and 'You await and I too am awaiting (7:71)'? Thus, be patient because relief will come after (people's) despair. Certainly, those who were before you were more patient than you... What is the matter with you that you do not possess your souls and do not have patience until Allah, the Glorious, brings what you want? Verily this command/kingdom does not come in the way that people want. It is the command/kingdom of Allah, the Glorious, and His decree and (will happen with) patience. Certainly only he who fears to lose would hasten." [59]

In addition, Abu Basir narrated:

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said, "Do you want me to inform you about the things without which Allah shall not accept any act from His servants?" Abu Basir said, "Yes". The Imam (AS) continued, "To bear witness that there is no god but He, Muhammad (PBUH&HF) is His servant and His Apostle, to acknowledge what Allah commanded, to believe in our exclusive guardianship, to disassociate from our enemies, to submit to the Imams, to have piety (against sins) and hard effort (in obedience), to adopt peace of mind, and to await al-Qa'im (AS). Certainly, we will have a government that Allah shall bring it when He wills. Whoever is delighted to be of the

companions of al-Qa'im should wait, and should act with piety and good morals. If he continues to be an expectant and dies before the advent of al-Qa'im, he will have the reward of he who has received al-Qa'im. Thus, try hard (in obedience) and wait, and may you taste its [sweetness, O the group that is covered with (Allah's) mercy!]"[60]

Imploring Allah for a hasty relief of the Imam (AS)

Ahl al-Bait (AS) have emphasized that during the time of occultation we should make much supplication to Allah that He would hasten the relief. In his letter to his special deputy, Imam al-Mahdi (AS) wrote:

"As for the manifestation of relief, it depends on Allah and those who specify time for it are liars... Increase your Du'aa for hastening the Relief (al-Faraj), for this is indeed your relief..."[61]

There are two meanings for the above tradition. The first meaning is that the relief of Imam al-Mahdi (AS) would result in relief from our sufferings. The other meaning is that the very act of praying for the relief of Imam al-Mahdi (AS) would be recompensed with personal relief from our problems even before the advent of Imam al-Mahdi (AS) (i.e., before the time for general/universal relief).

There is a famous supplication from Imam al-Sadiq (AS), known as "The Supplication of the Covenant (Du'aa al-Ahd)", which is to be recited in every morning. The Imam (AS) said that the one who recites and calls upon Allah by this covenant for forty mornings, will be of the soldiers of al-Qa'im (AS), and if he dies before his rising, Allah will resurrect him from his grave during his advent, and will also give him the reward of 1000 good deeds and removes 1000 of his sins for each word of this supplication. The last sentences of this precious supplication are as follows:

"O Allah! Show me the rightly guided face (of Imam al-Mahdi (AS)), the praiseworthy brightness (of his face), and enlighten my vision by looking at him. Hasten his reappearance, make his arrival smooth, widen and clear his path, and make me tread on his way. Implement his kingdom and strengthen his back. O Allah! Give life to Your cities by him and revive Your servants through him, for surely You have said—and Your word is truth—"Corruption prevailed on the land and the sea because of what men's hand have earned (30:41)" Thus, O Allah, manifest for us Your friend and the son of Your Prophet's daughter, whose name is the same as that of Your Apostle, so that he does not prevail anything from falsehood except that he tears it to pieces, establishes the truth, and makes it real. O Allah! Appoint him as a refuge for Your oppressed servants and a helper for the one who does not find any helper for himself

except You. Make him the one who renews what has been suspended/abolished of the laws of Your book, and the one who re-erects the science of Your religion and the customs of Your Prophet, Allah's blessings be upon him and his family. O Allah! Make him among those whom you have protected from the evils of the aggressors. O Allah! Delight Your Prophet Mohammed, Allah's blessings be upon him and his family, by making him visible and (delight) the one who follows him on his call, and have mercy on our poverty after his (disappearance). O Allah! Remove this sorrow (of occultation) from this nation by his presence, and hasten for us his reappearance. Certainly, they [i.e., the disbelievers] consider it far-fetched while we consider it near. By Your mercy O the most merciful!" Then you say, "Hasten! Hasten! O my master, O the master of the era!"[62]

Thus, during the period of disappearance of Imam Mahdi (AS), the most important supplication of the believers to Allah is to ask for his reappearance and the manifestation of his kingdom over the earth by which all problems of humanity will be resolved. The sentence, "the disbelievers consider it far-fetched while we consider it near" shows that the believers expect this kingdom in a very near future and only the disbelievers consider this expectation unrealistic. Moreover, the sentences such as "O Allah! Hasten his reappearance, make his arrival smooth, widen and clear his path" in this supplication shows that Allah may change the decreed situation at the time of his reappearance, may lessen the hardship of his mission due to the change in situation, and may bring near his arrival. By asking Allah to hasten his reappearance from the bottom of our heart, Allah may make Badaa and advance his mission, just as He advanced the mission of Prophet Musa (AS). In a very inspiring and thought-provoking Hadith, Fadhl Ibn Abi Qurra narrated:

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said, "When the period of punishment on the Children of Israel was prolonged, they wailed and cried to Allah for 40 mornings. Thereupon, Allah revealed to Moses (AS) and Aaron (AS) to release them from the Pharaoh, and in this way, He reduced their punishment 170 years." Then, the Imam (AS) continued, "This is the case for you too, and if you do the same Allah shall certainly relieve us. However, if you avoid it, this matter [i.e., the calamity before al-Faraj] shall surely continue up to its last stage."[63]

The suffering is a hint to the believers that they should implore Allah with humility. Allah said in Quran:

"Before thee We sent towards many nations, and We afflicted them with suffering and adversity, that they might call/beseech (Us) in humility. (6:42)"

If the majority of people on the earth decide to sincerely seek relief (al-Faraj) from Allah and drop their hope from all the fallible leaders, Allah may decide to allow the early rise of Imam

Mahdi (AS) without need for the occurrence of any of the reported definite signs. Notice that we say, "Allah may decide that way", which means this is not an urgent reaction to people's action; it is rather a matter of choice for Allah as is the case for all other actions of Allah. He does what He will. In fact, the traditions of Ahl al-Bait (AS) imply that to the time that people look for other global solutions for their problems, and have hope in other leaders for implementing justice, Allah may delay the rising of al-Qa'im (AS). Hisham Ibn Salim narrated: Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said, "This kingdom shall not appear until every claiming class/group amongst people rule over people so that no one would remain to say, 'Had we ruled we would have implemented justice'. Thereafter, al-Qa'im (AS) shall rise for truth and justice."^[64]

This way, those who claim to be able to implement justice will have chance to rule and will subsequently show their scandalous failure in practice. When people become hopeless from any other alternatives, they will desperately seek for relief (al-Faraj) from Allah from the bottom of their hearts, and it is at that time that they will be ready to receive Imam al-Mahdi (AS). Thus, the sooner people come to their senses, the earlier will be their relief. However, this still depends upon Allah's decision, and He may commence the mission of al-Qa'im (AS) sooner than the time of full global awareness if He wills. Due to His grace, Allah may initiate mercy without people being worthy of it. In one of his supplications, Imam al-Sajjad (AS) prayed to Allah:

"O the initiator of the bounties before becoming worthy of it."^[65]

The grace of Allah does not have any necessary requirement, and Allah may initially bestow it to people if He wills. However, due to His justice, Allah never initiates wrath unless people deserve it by their misconduct. This custom of Allah is also stated in a number of verses in the Quran. For instance:

"(Their manner) is like the manner of the People of Pharaoh and of those before them. They rejected the Signs of Allah, and Allah caught them for their sins; for Allah is Strong and Strict in punishment. That is because Allah will never change the bounty that He hath bestowed on a people until they change that which is in their souls (from obedience to disobedience), and (that is) because Allah is He Who hears and knows (all things). (8:52-53)"

Finally, more than thinking for our relief, we should have sympathy for the loneliness of Imam al-Mahdi (AS) who is forgotten by people in this period, and should pray to Allah to relieve him from the prison of occultation, which was the result of people's evil actions. Asbagh Ibn

Nabata narrated:

The Leader of the faithful (AS) said, "The master of this kingdom is the forsaken, the deserted, [and the lonely one."^[66]

Avoiding a hasty action

The traditions also differentiate between hastening (Isti'jaal) and praying to Allah to hasten the universal government. The former is prohibited while the latter is commanded. For instance,

Abdurrahman Ibn Kathir narrated:

I was with Imam al-Sadiq (AS) when Mahzam al-Asadi came to him and asked him, "May I be sacrificed for you! When will be the time of this rising for which you wait? It has become too long." He (AS) said, "O Mahzam! Verily those who appoint time are liars, and those who hasten (Musta'jilun) shall perish, and those who are submissive (to Allah's orders and decrees) shall be saved."^[67] Ibrahim Ibn Mihzam narrated from his father who said:

We mentioned such and such kings in the presence of Imam al-Sadiq (AS). He (AS) said, "Indeed, people have perished due to their haste (Isti'jal) for this kingdom. Verily, Allah does not hasten for the hasty action of people. For this kingdom there is a final end that will reach it."^[68] In another sermon in Nahj al-Balagha, Imam Ali (AS) said:

"Be steady on the earth, be patient in afflictions, do not move your hands and swords after the liking of your tongues, and do not make haste (Isti'jal) in what Allah has not expedited for you. Thus, any one of you who dies in his bed while he recognizes the rights of Allah and the rights of His Apostle (PBUH&HF) and his Ahl al-Bait (AS) has died a martyr. His reward is on Allah, and he is eligible for the reward of what good acts he has intended to do, since his intention has taken the place of drawing his sword. Certainly, for everything there is a period and an appointed time."^[69]

Allah, the Glorious, also prohibited Isti'jal in Quran in many verses. For instance: "Man is a creature of haste. I shall soon show you My signs. So hasten not! (21:37)" In another famous and very recommended supplication, which is narrated from the first special deputy of Imam Mahdi (AS), both types of action (hastening vs. praying that Allah may hasten) has been mentioned with clear distinction:

"... O Allah! Make me firm on the obedience of the master of Your command whom You have concealed from Your creation and waits for Your command. You know—without being taught—the time that is right for the kingdom of Your master and for giving him permission to manifest his command and to disclose his secret. Thus, grant me patience on it so that I do not like to hasten what You have postponed, nor to delay what You have hastened, nor to disclose what You have concealed, nor to discuss what You have kept secret, nor to argue with You in Your planning, and (so that) I do not say why the master of the affairs does not appear while the earth has been filled out with tyranny, and until I relinquish all my affairs to You. O

Allah! I ask You to show me the master of the affairs while has appeared and manifested his
[command... O Allah! Hasten his relief..."[70

Conclusion

In this work, we have shown that the existence of al-Badaa plays a central role in our way of expecting al-Qa'im (AS). Due to the possibility of Badaa, the fore-told signs are subject to change, the Imam (AS) may reappear at any moment, and our good actions and our supplications for the early arrival of the Imam (AS) may be answered. Having faith in al-Badaa by Allah, everyone would keep himself ready all the time to receive the Imam (AS). According to the traditions, awaiting al-Qa'im (AS) at any moment is the best deed and the most significant act after the recognition of the Imam (AS) and his rights. Moreover, Ahl al-Bait (AS) have instructed us to pray to Allah to make smooth the advent of al-Qa'im, to simplify it, and to lessen the hardships prior and during his mission. Such instructions are meaningful only when
the changes in the aforementioned signs are possible.

The signs were not given for the purpose of predicting the time of reappearance, or for encouraging people to search the scientific data to estimate the time of the occurrence of the sign itself. They, rather, become a reminder for people only after they occur miraculously. Once a sign occurs, the believers will realize that it was amongst the signs that they were foretold, and thus, their faith and confident will increase, and they will realize that the time of reappearance is closer than ever. All the mentioned signs before his arrival, even if they finally
occur, they may happen miraculously in an unpredictable manner.

According to the traditions, once Allah let Imam al-Mahdi (AS) rise, all people around the world, believers and disbelievers likewise, will become aware of him immediately and without any shadow of doubt. Thus, the opposition against Imam Mahdi (AS) is not due to people's failure in identifying him. It is rather due to their disbelief in the original laws of the religion, their overlooking of the transmitted traditions, and their following man-made ideas and
opinions in the domain of religion.

If the Imam (AS) has not yet started his mission, it is not because certain signs did not take place, but because people have deserted Ahl al-Bait (AS) and are hopeful in other alternative solutions. Allah has assigned for people a leader who is ready to relieve them, but they have turned away from him and left him alone. The only way for an early relief is that people of the world come to the understanding that they should turn to him and to his instructions so that Allah may waive the remaining time of occultation. In the last section, we discussed some of the instructions of Ahl al-Bait (AS) that would help an early relief. Acting upon these commandments, among others, prepares us, makes us eligible for receiving Imam al-Mahdi

(AS), and paves the way for the implementation of the kingdom of justice over the earth, by the leave of Allah.

O the Lord of al-Husain! heal the bosom of al-Husain by the manifestation of al-Hujja.

O the Lord of al-Hujja! heal the bosom of al-Hujja by the manifestation of al-Hujja.

O the Lord of the faithful! heal the bosom of the faithful by the manifestation of al-Hujja.

Ameen

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