
معرفت
عجل الله تعالی فرجه
امام عصر

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Ma‘rifah of Imam al-‘Asr (atfs)

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Knowing the Imam of the Age

May Allah hasten his noble reappearance

Book Information
Author: Sayyid Muhammad Bani Hashimi, born 1339 AH solar
Title: *Ma'rifat-e Imam-e 'Asr, 'Ajjalallahu Ta'ala Farajahu*
Author: Muhammad Bani Hashimi

Amir al-Mu'minin Imam Ali (as) said:

إِنَّ قيمةَ كُلِّ امرِئٍ وَ قَدرَهُ مَعرِفَتُهُ

"Indeed, the worth and rank of every person is determined by his knowledge and recognition."
(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 2, p. 184)

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as) said:

فَإِنَّ المَعرِفَةَ هِيَ الدِّرايَةُ لِلرِّوايَةِ، وَ بِالدِّرايَاتِ لِلرِّوايَاتِ يَعلُو المُؤمِنُ إلى أَقصى دَرَجاتِ الإيمانِ.

"Indeed, ma'rifah is the understanding of the narration. Through understanding the narrations, a believer rises to the highest degrees of faith."
(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 2, p. 184)

Dedication

I dedicate this work, on behalf of my beloved father and mother, to the sacred presence of the Standard-Bearer of Karbala and the luminous Moon of Bani Hashim, **Hazrat Abu'l-Fadl al-Abbas (as)**.

About the Book

Ma'rifat-e Imam-e 'Asr (as) is the title of a book whose principal subject is not the Imam of the Age (as) himself, but rather **the ma'rifah of the Imam**.
Although, in accordance with the discussion, some windows have been opened toward understanding certain attributes and perfections of this beloved Imam, the

primary purpose of this book is to explain the **unique position of ma'rifah of the Imam of the Age (as) within religion**, together with the practical effects and implications that follow from possessing this ma'rifah.
Therefore, the reader should not expect that merely by studying this book he or she will attain a ma'rifah worthy of the Imam of the Age (as). That subject itself requires a separate book, several times larger than this one, and it deserves even greater attention and consideration from scholars and specialists.
At this point, we recommend to our respected readers that, in order to benefit from this book more fully and comprehensively, they should certainly read **Chapters One and Two of Part Two of the book *Aftab dar Ghorbat***.
The points explained there are necessary for gaining a clearer understanding of the principal objective of ***Ma'rifat-e Imam-e 'Asr (as)***. However, in order to avoid repetition, those discussions have not been reproduced in this book.

After eight years since the publication of ***Ma'rifat-e Imam-e 'Asr (as)***, the third edition is now being presented to the devotees of that exalted Imam with the following improvements:
1. The wording and content of the book have been completely edited, and the necessary terminology has been applied appropriately throughout each section.
2. Additional material has been incorporated into all sections of the book, particularly Part Two, wherever it was considered necessary.
3. The material that appeared in the second edition (1379 AH solar) under the title **"Appendix to Part One"** has now been incorporated into its appropriate place in Part Two.
4. The sections and chapters of the book have been reorganized in a more systematic manner into **four parts comprising a total of twenty chapters**. Within these chapters, all the discussions have been arranged under clearly defined subheadings.

Part One

In the first part, an effort has been made to present a clear meaning of **“ma‘rifah of the Imam of the Age (as)”** and to properly explain its position within the entire system of servitude to Allah—the very purpose for which human beings were created.
The central role of **ma‘rifah of the Imam (as)** in establishing the precise meanings of **Islam, faith, disbelief, polytheism**, and other such concepts is also clarified.

Part Two

In the second part, we have focused on deepening our understanding of the meaning of **ma‘rifah of the Imam (as)** and explaining its unique value within the complete body of religious teachings.
In this discussion, some of the special perfections of the **Ahlul Bayt of Purity and Infallibility (as)** have been portrayed.
We then explain the role of **tawalla and tabarra** in religious commitment, followed by an explanation of the relationship between **ma‘rifah of the Imam (as)** and obedience to, or disobedience of, Allah.

Part Three

Part Three is devoted to explaining the value and importance of **ma‘rifah of the Imam of the Age (as) during the period of occultation (ghaybah).**

Part Four

Finally, in the last part, the **effects and practical implications of this ma‘rifah** are discussed in ten chapters.
May this humble effort, with the approval and endorsement of **Hazrat Qamar Bani Hashim, Abu’l-Fadl al-Abbas (as)**, be accepted in the sacred presence of **Hazrat Baqiyyatullah—may our souls be sacrificed for him**, and may it strengthen the hearts of his devotees and prove beneficial to his friends and followers.
Sayyid Muhammad Bani Hashimi
Ordibehesht 1383 AH solar — Rabi‘ al-Awwal 1425 AH

Preface to the Second Edition

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

I offer boundless praise and gratitude to Allah for granting this insignificant servant the opportunity to compile a collection of narrations concerning **"ma'rifah of the Imam of the Age (as)."**

During the four years since its publication, this work has been beneficial to many of the devotees of that noble Imam, all of whom have been worthy of believing in and acting upon these narrations.

I request all these dear brothers and sisters to pray to Almighty Allah on behalf of the author as well, asking Him to grant the author the ability to act according to the teachings contained in this book, and not to deprive him of their sincere prayers.

One of the fundamental foundations of the discussion concerning **"ma'rifah of the Imam of the Age (as)"** is the subject of **ma'rifah itself**, together with its laws, characteristics, and essential features.

Perhaps the most important of these is that **ma'rifah is something created and bestowed by Allah.**

Although this discussion is necessary and essential for understanding the material presented in the book, sufficient explanation had not originally been provided regarding it. This led to the emergence of certain questions and ambiguities at the beginning of the book.

This prompted the author to prepare and organize, to the extent of his limited ability, a discussion concerning **ma'rifah and its principles and characteristics.**

Initially, it was intended that this material would be published as the preface to the second edition of this book. However, because the discussion became lengthy and developed an independent scope beyond the specific subject of ma'rifah of the Imam (as), it was ultimately decided to publish it as a separate book entitled ***Gowhar-e Qudsi-ye Ma'rifat*** **(The Sacred Jewel of Ma'rifah)**.

This was published at the beginning of the year 1378 AH solar.

Accordingly, ***Gowhar-e Qudsi-ye Ma'rifat*** is, in reality, a complement to ***Ma'rifat-e Imam-e 'Asr (as)*** and constitutes one of its essential and fundamental foundations.
Without studying it, the discussion concerning **ma'rifah of the Imam of the Age (as)** cannot be fully understood.
Therefore, I respectfully request the readers of this book not to neglect a careful study of ***Gowhar-e Qudsi-ye Ma'rifat***.

Now, by the grace of the Lord, as the second edition of ***Ma'rifat-e Imam-e 'Asr (as)*** is being made available to its readers, another deficiency in the book has also been addressed through the addition of an appendix at the end.
This appendix, entitled:
"Disassociation from the Imams of Disbelief Alongside Allegiance to the Imams of Guidance (as)"
has been prepared concerning the extremely important subject of **tabarra—disassociation from the enemies of the Imams (as).**
Although the subject of **bara'ah** has been discussed repeatedly in the original book in connection with the discussions on ma'rifah and wilayah of the Imam (as), the overall structure of the book had lacked an independent treatment of this subject from the outset.
This shortcoming has now been remedied through the grace and special attention of the Imam of the Age (as).
It is hoped that the other shortcomings of the book will likewise be gradually corrected in the future through the useful observations and guidance of our respected readers.
O Allah, hasten the reappearance of our Master, the Master of the Age, for his sake and for the sake of his purified forefathers.
Sayyid Muhammad Bani Hashimi
Shahrivar 1379 AH solar

Preface to the First Edition

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

Most of us have heard, at least to some extent, the famous hadith:

مَن ماتَ وَ لَم يَعرِف اِمامَ زَمانِهِ ماتَ ميتَةً جاهِلِيَّةً

"Whoever dies without knowing the Imam of his time dies the death of the Age of Ignorance."

This narration has been transmitted from the Holy Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله) by both Shi'a and Sunni sources. Each of us understands it according to our own conception of what it means to know the Imam of the Age (as).

We all understand that this knowledge cannot be achieved merely by knowing the Imam's name and lineage. After all, those who deny him, as well as non-Muslims, may also possess such information about him.

Therefore, the term **ma'rifah** in this noble hadith conveys a meaning that goes beyond merely having such information.

Each person may explain this deeper meaning according to the extent of his own understanding and ma'rifah.

Even so, at this stage, the importance of the matter may still not be sufficiently clear to us.

Its significance becomes fully apparent when we encounter narrations that describe both the consequence of failing to know the Imam and the effect of knowing him.

One such noble narration is from **Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as):**

مَن ماتَ وَ لَيسَ لَهُ اِمامٌ، فَميتَتُهُ ميتَةٌ جاهِلِيَّةٌ. وَ مَن ماتَ وَ هُوَ عارِفٌ لِاِمامِه، لَم يَضُرَّهُ تَقَدَّمَ هذَا الاَمرُ اَو تَاَخَّرَ. وَ مَن ماتَ وَ هُوَ عارِفٌ لِاِمامِه، كانَ كَمَن هُوَ مَعَ القائِمِ عليه السّلام فى فُسطاطِهِ.

"Whoever dies without having an Imam, his death is the death of the Age of Ignorance. Whoever dies while possessing ma'rifah of his Imam, it does not harm him whether this matter comes sooner or is delayed. And whoever dies

while possessing ma‘rifah of his Imam is like one who is with al-Qa’im (as) in his tent.”
(*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 371, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, Chapter: “One Who Knows His Imam…”, Hadith 5)
The matter now takes on a much deeper significance, and an important question naturally arises:
How can ma‘rifah of the Imam (as) have such tremendous importance? What exactly is this knowledge and recognition of the Imam (as) that it can produce so many effects and blessings?

Experiencing the time of the reappearance of **Hazrat al-Mahdi (as)** and being present in his tent is an immense blessing and one of the greatest aspirations of his devotees.
What, then, is this **ma‘rifah of the Imam** whose effect is such a tremendous virtue? And how can it be attained?
This book has attempted to provide a clear and simple answer to these questions, so that, through studying it, the reader may, to the extent possible, come to understand the various dimensions of this subject and recognize his own responsibility concerning it.
The method adopted for explaining these matters is based exclusively on referring to the **narrations of the Ahlul Bayt (as)**. Every form of merely speculative rational preference has deliberately been avoided.
For this reason, numerous narrations have been cited throughout the book. At times, one narration is explained through one or several other narrations.
Thus, this book is essentially a **journey through the narrations concerning “ma‘rifah of the Imam (as)”**, with only brief explanations provided regarding them.
Consequently, for specialists and researchers, ample scope remains for careful examination, analysis, and deeper investigation of these discussions.
At the same time, so that readers who are unfamiliar with Arabic do not find the book tiring or difficult to study, **every narration, without exception, has been translated accurately and completely.**

In this way, respected readers who do not know Arabic can understand the discussions simply by reading the translations.

Structure of the Book

The book consists of **two parts**:

1. **The Importance of Ma‘rifah of the Imam of the Age (as)**
2. **Ma‘rifah of the Imam of the Age (as) During the Period of Occultation**

Part One

The first part begins with a relatively detailed discussion of the importance of knowing the Imam in general and its position within the overall system of beliefs. This discussion is primarily theological and doctrinal in nature.

The various points are then applied specifically to the recognition of **Hazrat al-Mahdi (as) as the Imam of the present age.**

Part Two

The second part begins with a brief discussion of the characteristics and conditions of the period of occultation.

Particular attention is given to the **difficulty of remaining committed to religion during this period.**

The second chapter then discusses the fact that **ma‘rifah of the Imam (as) is the only means of preserving one's religion during the period of occultation.**

The third chapter examines how ma‘rifah of the Imam (as) is attained during the occultation, what characteristics it possesses, and what effects it produces in those who possess it.

This discussion appears under the title:

“How to Attain Ma‘rifah of the Imam of the Age (as)”

This chapter is the **practical conclusion and distilled essence of the entire book**. It opens the path for those who yearn for the ma‘rifah of the Imam (as).

It is hoped that it will benefit all those who love and follow him.

Finally, I offer my apologies before the sacred presence of **Hazrat Wali-e-‘Asr (as)** for any shortcomings or errors in the way the narrations have been used or explained.

I also ask our dear readers to overlook and forgive any mistakes or shortcomings they may find.

Shahrivar 1375 AH solar

Sayyid Muhammad Bani Hashimi

Part One: The Value and Manner of Servitude to Allah

Introduction

Chapter 1: Worship with Ma'rifah — The Purpose of the Creation of Human Beings

The Correct Meaning of Purposefulness in Allah's Actions

Introduction

When we speak of **purposefulness in divine actions**, we must bear in mind that Allah is not like human beings, who first conceive a goal or a number of goals and then perform actions in order to achieve them.

Such a conception cannot be applied to the Sacred Essence of the Lord. We cannot say that Allah decides to perform an action because He is influenced by certain motives or incentives. This is a characteristic of created beings, and attributing it to Allah would be an instance of **false anthropomorphism (tashbih)**.

The Purpose of the Agent and the Purpose of the Act

Some have explained the difference between purposefulness in human actions and in divine actions in the following way:

The purpose behind a human being's actions is to remove some deficiency from himself, whereas Allah has no deficiency whatsoever. Therefore, having a purpose in His actions cannot mean that He seeks to remove a deficiency from Himself. Rather, a divine act is purposeful when it removes a deficiency from a created being.

For example, when a person drinks water or eats food, he does so in order to relieve his thirst or hunger. In this way, he removes a deficiency from himself and reaches a perfection that he previously lacked.
This is why it is said that the purpose behind a human being's actions is the **purpose of the agent (fa'il)**.
But this meaning cannot apply to the actions of Allah. He does not perform an action in order to fulfill a need within Himself or to attain some perfection or happiness.
The purpose of Allah is to bring His creatures to the perfections appropriate to them.
For example, Allah creates a human being and then places him upon a path through which he can attain perfection. In this way, He removes the deficiencies of that human being and brings him toward the perfections appropriate to him.
The realization of these perfections in the human being may be regarded as Allah's purpose in creating him. But in reality, these perfections are the **goal of the human being**, while Allah's purpose is that His creature should attain perfection.
For this reason, it is said that the purpose in divine actions is the **purpose of the act**, with the creatures themselves being the object referred to by "the act."
But does this explanation really solve the problem of comparing Allah with His creatures?

The End or Final Cause of an Act

The answer is that even the **purpose of the act** cannot properly be regarded as the *ghayah*—the final end or goal—of Allah's actions.
A **ghayah**, or goal, is something that causes an agent to act.
For example, a person's goal in drinking water is to relieve his thirst, which constitutes a form of perfection for him. It is precisely this desired perfection that causes him to drink water.
Thus, the goal of an act becomes the cause of the agent's acting.
That which brings an agent into action is called the **ghayah**, or **final cause ('illah ghā'iyyah)**.
This is why philosophers say:

“The final cause is the cause of the efficient cause.”
In the case of divine actions, according to the explanation under consideration, this final end would be the perfection attained by the creature.
The purpose of Allah in creating His creatures would therefore be to bring them to the perfections appropriate to them.
Accordingly, the creature's perfection—for example, the removal of thirst in the case of a human being—would be the final end that causes the agent, Allah, to act.
This makes it clear that attributing a **ghayah** to divine actions—even if we call it the “purpose of the act”—is still not permissible. The reason is that this ultimately implies that Allah performs His actions under the influence of some motive or incentive.
The problem arises because the purpose—even when described as the purpose of the act—is ultimately being attributed to Allah.
One says:
“Allah's purpose is to bring His creature to perfection.”
But the moment purposefulness is attributed to Allah, the concept of *ghayah*—that is, something that causes an agent to act—enters into our conception of the Sacred Divine Essence.

If it is said that this concept has nothing to do with the Divine Essence, then we ask:
What, then, does it mean to say that the final purpose of Allah's action is the “purpose of the act”?
But if, in any case, we intend to attribute this purpose to Allah—and there appears to be no way of avoiding this—then it necessarily follows that the Sacred Essence of the Lord is, in some sense, influenced by motives and incentives.
Therefore, even if we explain the purpose of creation by saying:
“I did not create in order to gain any benefit; rather, I created so that I might bestow generosity upon My servants,”
the problem of comparing Allah with His creatures still remains.

The reason is that we have ultimately regarded something—namely, **bestowing generosity and benefiting His creatures**—as the motive and effective factor behind the activity of Allah, the Most High.
And this itself amounts to attributing deficiency to Him.
Any being whose essence or actions are, in some way, influenced by something other than itself is not absolutely self-sufficient. In this respect, it resembles created beings in their dependence and need.

A Motive Additional to the Essence or Identical with the Essence?

It might be argued that considering Allah to have a motive or incentive behind His actions would be incorrect only if that motive were something **additional to His Sacred Essence**.
But if the motive were identical with His Essence, then Allah would not be influenced by anything other than Himself and would not be dependent upon anything else.
However, this assumption presents an even more fundamental problem.
The very concept of a **motive (dā'i)** implies that something other than the essence of the agent causes that agent to act.
It is not meaningful to suppose that the essence of something itself becomes the cause of its own acting.
A **ghayah** is something that brings an agent into action. If the ghayah were identical with the agent itself, it would necessarily mean that the agent brings itself into action.
This is meaningless.
If the existence of the essence itself is sufficient for the agent to act, then there is no need for a separate "motive" for the action.
And if the existence of the essence is not sufficient, then how can it be supposed that the motive is identical with the essence itself?
Pay close attention to this point.
We must not forget that the agent under discussion here—the Sacred Essence of the Lord—is an Essence in which **no multiplicity or plurality can be conceived**.

Therefore, it is impossible to suppose that one aspect within Him becomes the motive for another aspect.
Thus, although we may verbally use the expression **"a motive identical with the Essence,"** we must understand that, in reality, we have not expressed a meaningful concept by doing so.
Fundamentally, the concept of a motive or incentive for an action cannot be applied or attributed to an Essence that cannot be influenced in any way.
By speaking in this manner, we have attributed to Allah a concept that cannot properly be applied to Him, and this is incorrect.
It would be similar to saying that Allah occupies a place, but because occupying a place necessarily entails deficiency and limitation, we then say:
"Allah occupies a place, but His place is neither material nor physical!"
The original assumption itself is incorrect.
Occupying a place is inherently connected with being physical, and the idea of occupying a **non-physical place** is internally contradictory.
Likewise, **purpose and finality**, insofar as these concepts are meaningful and comprehensible to us, necessarily imply that the being possessing a purpose or goal is, in some manner, influenced by something other than itself.
For this reason, attributing such a concept to the Sacred Essence of the Lord is incompatible with His transcendence and absolute sanctity.

The Wisdom in Allah's Actions

Of course, we understand that denying purposefulness in divine actions—in the sense explained above—does **not** mean attributing meaningless or futile actions to Allah, the Most High.
We absolutely believe that Allah is **al-Hakim, the All-Wise**, and rationally we cannot attribute any form of futility or purposelessness to His Sacred Essence.
However, the fact that divine actions are wise does not necessarily mean that we can provide an explanation or analysis of Allah's purposefulness by comparing Him with created beings.

Since, on the basis of rational necessity, we know Allah to be free from every deficiency and defect, we accept in a general sense that **no unwise action can ever proceed from Allah**.
But this belief does not authorize us to speak about divine wisdom by drawing analogies with created beings.
A detailed treatment of this subject requires greater precision and investigation, which will be left for its appropriate place.

The Purpose of the Creator or the Purpose of the Creature?

In any case, the purpose of the preceding discussion is to clarify this reality:
When we speak about Allah having a purpose in His actions, we do **not** mean something that causes Allah to act.
Rather, the correct meaning must be sought in the **creatures themselves**.
In the present discussion, we are specifically referring to creatures who possess **intellect and free choice**.
Therefore, we may understand the purpose as the fulfilment of the **divine obligation and Shari'ah** prescribed by Allah for His free and responsible creatures.
Thus, the purpose of Allah in creation means the purpose that Allah, the Most High, has **appointed for His creatures**.
If they move along the path that their Lord has prescribed for them, they will attain the purpose for which they were created.
If they choose a different path, they will not attain that purpose.
Therefore:
The purpose of the creation of every creature possessing free will is that it should act according to what its Creator has asked of it.
This meaning of purposefulness is very different from that concept of purpose or final end which serves as the cause that brings an agent into action.
Here, we are not discussing the motive behind Allah's actions, nor are we asking what caused Allah to create.
Rather, we are speaking solely about the **purpose that rational and free creatures are supposed to pursue**.

With this understanding of purposefulness, whether creatures move toward fulfilling the divine purpose or, through their misuse of free choice, fail to do so, **Allah's creation is purposeful in either case**.
This applies to rational and free creatures, including human beings.
Purposefulness concerning creatures that do not possess free choice requires further explanation, but that lies outside our present discussion.
Therefore, whenever the **Book of Allah** or the illuminating words of the **Ahlul Bayt (as)** speak about Allah's purpose in creating human beings—or any other creature possessing free will—we must understand those statements according to this correct meaning.

Voluntary Servitude Before Allah

Introduction

We all want to know what Allah's purpose was in creating human beings so that we may bring ourselves into harmony with it and place ourselves upon the path that our Creator has intended for us.
After all, no one except the Creator of the human being can define the purpose of human existence for him.
Allah has explicitly stated:

وَما خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“I did not create the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me.”
(Surah al-Dhariyat 51:56)
As we can see, the purpose of Allah's creation of the jinn and human beings is that they should fulfil their responsibility of **servitude and worship of Him**.
Here, Allah does not say that He created them so that He Himself might achieve some particular objective.
Rather, He has related the purpose of creation to something whose fulfilment lies within the **choice of the jinn and human beings**.
This shows that, as explained earlier, the purpose of Allah's creation is in reality the purpose that **He has prescribed for His creatures**, and He has asked them to move toward its realization.

Allah's Creative Will and Legislative Will

This purpose is nothing other than **servitude to Allah**.
However, this servitude must not be forced or involuntary.
Otherwise, it would conflict with human free choice, which is itself one of the highest perfections granted to human beings.
Therefore, the worship that Allah has designated as the purpose of creation is **voluntary worship**.
Allah shows human beings the path of servitude, but He does not compel them to enter that path against their will and choice.
Allah has asked human beings to be His servants.
This request is a **legislative will (irādah tashrī'iyyah)**, not a **creative will (irādah takwīniyyah)**.
Human choice has no role in the realization of Allah's **creative will**.
For example, Allah has willed that every human being should be born from a particular father and mother. This is His creative will, and human desire and choice have no role in its realization.
Sometimes this divine will is also expressed as an **"command" (amr)**.
A creative command means Allah's creative will whose realization is unavoidable and involuntary, depending upon no one's desire or will except that of the Sacred Essence of the Lord.
Allah says:

إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

"His command, when He intends a thing, is only that He says to it, 'Be!' and it comes to be."
(Surah Ya-Sin 36:82)
This is the **creative will of Allah, the Most High**.
But there is another type of divine will: His **legislative will**.
This is expressed through His commands and prohibitions directed toward rational beings possessing free choice, such as human beings.
For example, Allah commands:

“Establish the prayer.”
(Surah al-Baqarah 2:43)
And He prohibits backbiting:
“Let not some of you backbite others.”
(Surah al-Hujurat 49:12)
In such cases, Allah has willed that human beings perform the prayer and refrain from backbiting.
However, whether this will is actually fulfilled depends upon the human being's **free choice**.
A person may, through his own choice, fail to do what Allah has commanded and commit what He has prohibited.
He may abandon the prayer and engage in backbiting.
This is Allah's **legislative will**, and it does not necessarily come to pass.
Allah Himself has willed that the human being, while possessing free choice, should voluntarily place himself upon the path of his Lord's legislative will.
The divine decision that human beings should possess free choice is itself a **creative will**.
A human being does not choose whether or not to be a free agent. He has been created as one.
But once he has been created with free choice, he becomes subject to the commands and prohibitions of his Creator, so that through the proper use of his choice, he may place himself upon the path of servitude.
Therefore, Allah has decreed:

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ

“Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him.”
(Surah al-Isra’ 17:23)
This decree is a **legislative decree**, not a creative one. Its actual realization has been left to the human being's own choice.

In light of the above, in the verse under discussion—where the purpose of human creation is described as worship and servitude to Allah—the role of Allah is simply to issue His commands and prohibitions to human beings.

Whether the servant obeys or disobeys is left to the servant himself.
Therefore, while explaining this noble verse, **Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as)** said:

خَلَقَهُمْ لِيَأْمُرَهُمْ بِالْعِبَادَةِ

"He created them so that He might command them to worship Him."
(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 5, p. 314, Hadith 5, quoting *'Ilal al-Shara'i'*)
Therefore, the meaning of **"purpose"** when used in translating this noble verse is nothing other than the **legislative will of Allah, the Most High, concerning the jinn and human beings**.
He shows the path of servitude to the jinn and human beings—who possess free choice—and they, through their own choice, either enter the path of worship or refuse to follow it.
In either case, Allah's creation does not become futile or meaningless.
In other words, if some human beings, through their misuse of free choice, do not place themselves upon the path that Allah has prescribed for them, it cannot be said that Allah's creation of those people was futile.
Allah asked them for **voluntary servitude**; He did not intend that they should be His servants by compulsion.
Had Allah's will in this matter been a creative will, He would not have left the path of disobedience open to human beings.

Human Trial and Examination

The very fact that Allah has left the path open—what is referred to as **takhliyat al-sabīl**, leaving the way open—is evidence that Allah Himself has willed that human beings should worship Him **by their own desire and free choice**.
This is why the matter of **ibtilā' (trial)** and **imtihān (testing)** also arises here.
We read in the Holy Qur'an:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ

"And He is the One who made you successors upon the earth and raised some of you above others in degrees, so that He may test you through what He has given you."
(Surah al-An'am 6:165)

And He says:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

“He is the One who created death and life so that He may test you as to which of you is best in deeds.”
(Surah al-Mulk 67:2)

Differences in Creation: A Means of Testing

The differences that Allah has placed among human beings provide the circumstances through which He tests them precisely by means of those differences.
If all human beings possessed exactly the same advantages and no one had any distinction over another, there would also be little incentive among them to oppress one another or violate each other's rights.
This point is clearly established in our narrations.
For example, **Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as)** says:
“When Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, brought forth the descendants of Adam (as) from his loins in order to take from them the covenant concerning His Lordship and concerning the prophethood of every prophet... Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, said to Adam: ‘Look. What do you see?’
Adam (as) looked at his descendants while they were in the form of particles...
Adam (as) said: ‘O my Lord... For what purpose did You create them? What do You seek from them by taking this covenant from them?’
Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, said: ‘That they worship Me, associate nothing with Me, believe in My messengers, and follow them.’
Adam (as) said: ‘O my Lord, why do I see some of these particles greater than others? Some of them have abundant light, some have little light, and some have no light at all?’
Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, said: ‘This is how I created them so that I may test them in all their circumstances...’
Adam (as) said: ‘O my Lord, if You had created them all in one form, with the same measure, the same nature, the same disposition, the same colour, the same lifespan, and equal provision, then none of them would have oppressed

another, there would have been no jealousy or hatred among them, and they would not have differed from one another in anything.'
Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, said: 'O Adam... Through My knowledge, I created differences among them... There is no alteration in My creation. Indeed, I created the jinn and mankind only so that they may worship Me. I created Paradise for those among them who obey and worship Me and follow My messengers—and I have no concern beyond that. And I created the Fire for those who disbelieve in Me, disobey Me, and do not follow My messengers—and I have no concern beyond that.
I created you and created your descendants without having any need whatsoever for you or for them. Rather, I created you and created them only to test you and them, to see which of you performs the better deeds in the life of this world, during your lives and before your deaths.
It is for this reason that I created this world and the Hereafter, life and death... Paradise and Hell... And through My all-encompassing knowledge, I created differences among their forms, bodies, colours, lifespans, provisions..."
(*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 8, *Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr*, final chapter, Hadith 2)

Therefore, the purpose of human creation is both **servitude to Allah** and **being tested by Allah**.
These two can ultimately be summarized as follows:
The purpose of human creation is for the human being, through his own free choice, to enter the path of servitude that Allah has placed before him through the Prophets, Messengers, and Imams (as), and thereby be tested.
Had this path not been intended to be voluntary, Allah, the Most High, would never have created the circumstances through which human beings could stumble into sin and disobedience.
Nor would He punish them in the Hereafter.
Thus, since voluntarily moving along the path of servitude to Allah is what He has legislatively willed, even if—hypothetically—all human beings were to fail to follow this path through their own misuse of free choice, it could not be said that their creation was futile or incompatible with divine wisdom.

Moreover, comparing the actions of Allah with human actions in order to determine what constitutes wisdom is fundamentally inappropriate.

Allah Does Not Prevent Human Beings from Sinning

The expression **“lā ubālī”**, which appears twice in this narration in the words attributed to Allah, teaches us a very precise point—particularly concerning those who disbelieve in Allah, disobey Him, and thereby become deserving of the Fire of Hell.

Regarding such people, Allah says:

لَا أُبَالِي

That is:

“I do not concern Myself with it.”

The meaning is that if people, through their own misuse of free choice, disobey Allah and make themselves deserving of Hell, Allah does not prevent them from committing those sins and, consequently, does not prevent them from entering Hell.

This is because the proof has been completed against them, and Allah intended to test them through the freedom and choice He had granted them.

Once they themselves have chosen otherwise, their entering Hell is not something that Allah prevents.

Therefore, if Allah had wanted all human beings to be His servants through **creative will**, He would either not have granted them freedom of choice at all, or, having granted them freedom, He would have placed obstacles in the path of committing sins so that they would be prevented from disobedience.

Allah Himself knows better than anyone how He could make His creatures completely obedient to Him.

But expressions such as **“lā ubālī”** and similar statements found in some Qur'anic verses and narrations demonstrate that this is not what Allah has willed.

And we can observe this in practice.

When human beings embark upon the path of sin and disobedience, it is not the case that an obstacle invariably appears in their way and forces them to turn back. On the contrary, people often succeed in doing precisely what they desire—namely, opposing the command of their Lord.
There have been countless criminals and oppressors throughout history whose path Allah has left completely open, allowing them to commit whatever sins and injustices they choose.
We have all witnessed such people throughout history.

The existence of such evidence shows that Allah's policy is not to employ every possible means to force human beings onto the path of servitude.
This is despite the fact that **all apparent and hidden powers are under His control**, and even the thoughts and imagination of human beings are under the creative power of their Lord.
At any moment and in any situation, if He so willed, He could completely erase the thought of performing an action from a person's mind or cause him to forget it.
Yet ordinarily, none of this occurs.
Human beings, through their own misuse of free choice, become deserving of divine punishment, and Allah does not prevent them from reaching that consequence.

The Overall Conclusion

The overall conclusion of this discussion is that Allah, through His **legislative will**, which does not conflict with human free choice, has willed that the jinn and mankind should be solely His servants.
He has made this very servitude the means through which human beings are tested.
And a test can only be genuine when human beings possess **freedom and choice in their voluntary actions**, and when the path to disobedience remains open to them.

Therefore, although the purpose of human creation is that human beings should **voluntarily enter the path of servitude**, whether individual human beings actually worship or refuse to worship does not affect this divine purpose.
The matter is entirely **legislative (tashrī'ī)** and is in no way **creative (takwīnī)**.

The Foundation and Basis of Servitude to Allah

Introduction

Now that we understand that Allah has asked human beings for **conscious and voluntary worship**, we must examine what constitutes the foundation and basis of worship.
If acts such as **prayer, fasting, Hajj**, and other acts are called worship, what exactly makes these acts worship?
In the narrations transmitted to us from the **Ahlul Bayt of Purity and Infallibility (as)**, the foundation and basis of worship has been identified as **ma'rifah of Allah**.
For example, **Imam Ali al-Ridha (as)** says:

أَوَّلُ عِبَادَةِ اللهِ مَعْرِفَتُهُ

"The first and foundational act of worshipping Allah is ma'rifah of Him."
(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 3, p. …)

Worship Founded upon Ma'rifah

The word **"first" (awwal)** in this noble tradition means the **foundation and basis**, not the first point in a temporal sequence. It does not mean that servitude to Allah is based on the ma'rifah of Allah only at its beginning and that ma'rifah has no role in the subsequent stages of worship.
The ma'rifah of Allah is the root and foundation of all acts of worship. It is like a spirit flowing through the body of every act of worship—such as prayer. Without it, those acts are devoid of the reality and essence of worship. To establish this point, however, we must first understand the meaning of **"ma'rifah of Allah"** as it

is attributed to a human being and as something connected with his own choice, in accordance with what is found in the Book and the Sunnah.

The Actualization of Ma'rifah Is Not a Matter of Choice

As a preliminary point, we should note that every rational person realizes, through his own conscience, that the actual occurrence of **ma'rifah** does not depend upon his choice. The coming into existence or absence of any particular knowledge does not depend upon the person who acquires that knowledge, nor upon his choice or desire. A human being finds himself passive with respect to the actual acquisition of knowledge. The narrations of Ahlul Bayt (as) also make this point clear:

قُلتُ لِأَبی عَبدِاللهِ علیه السّلام: أَلمَعرِفَةُ مِن صُنعِ مَن هِیَ؟ قالَ: مِن صُنعِ اللهِ. لَیسَ لِلعِبادِ فیها صُنعٌ.

I asked Imam al-Sadiq (as), "Whose work is ma'rifah?" He replied, "It is the work of Allah. The servants have no role in bringing it about."
(*Al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 163, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, chapter "Al-Bayan wa al-Ta'rif wa Luzum al-Hujjah," hadith 2.)
It is Allah who grants ma'rifah to whichever of His servants He wills. At the summit of all forms of ma'rifah is the ma'rifah of Allah Himself. This particular ma'rifah has a special characteristic unlike other forms of knowledge: although the ma'rifah of Allah is attained by a human being, Allah does not thereby become something sensory, intellectually comprehensible in the ordinary sense, or an object of imagination. For this reason, there is a particular sense of **bewilderment and awe** in ma'rifah of Allah that is not found in other forms of knowledge. This characteristic makes the fact that ma'rifah of Allah is not within human choice even clearer.
In any case, the actual occurrence of ma'rifah does not depend upon our choice, and this is even more evident in the case of ma'rifah of Allah than in other forms of knowledge.[1]

The Human Being's Role in Accepting or Rejecting Ma'rifah

We must therefore ask: **What role does the human being have in ma'rifah?**
In this regard, Imam al-Sadiq (as) has stated:

لَیسَ لِلّهِ عَلَی خَلقِهِ أَن یَعرِفُوا. وَلِلخَلقِ عَلَی اللهِ أَن یُعَرِّفَهُم. وَلِلّهِ عَلَی الخَلقِ إذا عَرَّفَهُم أَن یَقبَلُوا.

“Initially, Allah has no obligation toward His creatures that they should acquire ma‘rifah. Rather, it is the right of the creatures upon Allah that He make Himself known to them. And once He has made Himself known to them, it is the right of Allah upon His creatures that they accept it.”
(*Al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 164, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, chapter “Hujaj Allah ‘ala Khalqihi,” hadith 1.)

The important point here is that **knowing something does not necessarily mean accepting it or submitting to it**. A truth, or even a number of truths, may become completely clear and evident to a person, yet because of a wrongful choice he may refuse to accept them and decline to submit to them.

This acceptance and submission is an act of human choice. It is an act of the heart and soul rather than an action of the physical limbs, and therefore it cannot be perceived through the senses. If, after recognizing a truth, a person submits himself to that truth which has become clear to him, we say that he has **accepted the ma‘rifah**. If he refuses to submit, we say that he has rejected and denied it.

The conscience of a rational person also confirms this reality: after acquiring ma‘rifah, a human being can have one of two spiritual and inner responses to it. Either he submits to the recognized truth wholeheartedly and accepts it, or, despite having recognized it, he opposes it and refuses to surrender to it. There are many people who, when confronted with numerous truths, choose the second path.

It is at this point that such a person becomes deserving of blame and reproach. Every rational person considers it reprehensible to reject a truth once it has become known and clear to him.

But with regard to the **actual acquisition of ma‘rifah**, a person who has been deprived of it is not deserving of blame—provided that he did not neglect the necessary preliminary steps for attaining it. This is because whether he actually becomes an ‘arif or not was not within his choice.

However, if he is negligent in taking the voluntary steps necessary for attaining ma‘rifah, or if, after ma‘rifah has been attained, he adopts an attitude of obstinacy and denial, then he certainly becomes deserving of blame.

For this reason, human reason itself judges that when a truth becomes known and clear to a person, he **must submit to it**. This "must" is a rational obligation that governs the human being.
The narrations likewise confirm and emphasize this point: the right of Allah over human beings is that once He grants them ma'rifah, they should not reject it but should accept it.

The Most Necessary Ma'rifah for the Human Being

Regarding the ma'rifah of Allah, Imam al-Sadiq (as) has said:
إِنَّ أَفضَلَ الفَرائِضِ وَأَوجَبَها عَلَى الإِنسَانِ مَعرِفَةُ الرَّبِّ وَالإِقرارُ لَهُ بِالعُبُودِيَّةِ.
"Indeed, the most excellent and most obligatory of all obligations upon a human being is the ma'rifah of the Lord and acknowledging one's servitude to Him." (*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 36, p. 407, hadith 16, from *Kifayat al-Athar*.)
Since the ma'rifah of Allah is the highest form of ma'rifah and stands at the summit of all forms of knowledge, and since all other blessings become available to a person through accepting it, the acceptance of the ma'rifah of Allah is therefore the greatest and most virtuous of obligations.
In this tradition, the expression **"ma'rifah of the Lord" (ma'rifat al-Rabb)** is presented as a voluntary act that is obligatory upon a human being. This voluntary act is nothing other than **accepting Allah's introduction of Himself** to the human being.
From this we can conclude that sometimes the very act by which a rational person **accepts ma'rifah** is itself referred to as "ma'rifah." Generally, wherever ma'rifah is described as something produced or accomplished by a human being, this is what is meant—not the act by which Allah makes Himself known, which is the work of Allah and is not within human choice.

The Ma'rifah of Allah: The Spirit of Worship

Now that we understand what is meant by the "ma'rifah of Allah" in the language of the narrations, it becomes easy to understand that the reality of acts such as

prayer, fasting, Hajj, and so forth being acts of worship depends upon the ma‘rifah that the worshipper possesses concerning Allah, the Most High.

The **intention of seeking nearness to Allah (qasd al-qurbah)** and the **intention of obeying His command (imtithal al-amr al-ilahi)**—without which an act cannot be considered worship—arise from this very ma‘rifah within the human being.

In general, what establishes an act such as prayer as an act of worship is not merely bowing and prostrating, standing facing the qiblah, reciting words of remembrance, or performing other physical actions. All of these become **prayer** only when the worshipper performs them as an act of submission before his Lord and Creator, motivated by obedience to His command and with the intention of drawing nearer to Allah, thereby fulfilling the duty of servitude according to His instructions.

It is precisely this complete submission before the Lord that is called **ma‘rifah of Allah**.

This meaning of ma‘rifah of Allah is not merely a preliminary step toward worship. Rather, it is both the **beginning and the end**. As explained above, it is like a spirit flowing through the body of every act of worship, such as prayer. Without it, the act is devoid of the reality of worship.

This is why it has been narrated that Amir al-Mu’minin Imam Ali (as) said:

اَلعِلمُ أَوَّلُ دَليلٍ، وَالمَعرِفَةُ آخِرُ نِهايَةٍ.

“Knowledge is the first guide, and ma‘rifah is the final destination.”

(*Ghurar al-Kalim wa Durar al-Hikam*, hadith 773.)

What is meant is that ma‘rifah is the **final stage of the path of servitude and worship**. Servitude begins with knowledge and ma‘rifah, and ultimately reaches ma‘rifah as well.

This is because the spirit and reality of servitude is itself ma‘rifah. A person’s ma‘rifah motivates him to worship Allah, and through that worship he acquires further ma‘rifah—but at higher levels.

Each degree of servitude grants a person greater ma‘rifah, which in turn becomes the motivation for greater servitude. That greater servitude then produces an even higher degree of ma‘rifah, which drives the human being toward higher levels still.

In this way, the journey of servitude continues, propelled by the motivating force of ma‘rifah, until the Most High Allah determines how far the human being may ascend in acquiring ma‘rifah.
The highest form of ma‘rifah available to the human being is the **ma‘rifah of Allah**, as explicitly stated in the traditions. Amir al-Mu’minin Imam Ali (as) says:

مَعرِفَةُ اللهِ سُبحانَهُ أَعلَى المَعارِفِ.

“The ma‘rifah of Allah, Glorified is He, is the highest of all forms of ma‘rifah.”
(*Ghurar al-Kalim wa Durar al-Hikam*, hadith 1270.)

The Relationship Between Action and Ma‘rifah

Imam al-Baqir (as) has explained the relationship between action and ma‘rifah in the following words:

لَا يُقبَلُ عَمَلٌ إِلّا بِمَعرِفَةٍ، وَلَا مَعرِفَةَ إِلّا بِعَمَلٍ، وَمَن عَرَفَ دَلَّتهُ مَعرِفَتُهُ عَلَى العَمَلِ، وَمَن لَم يَعرِف فَلَا عَمَلَ لَهُ.

“No action is accepted without ma‘rifah, and there is no ma‘rifah without action. Whoever possesses ma‘rifah will be guided by his ma‘rifah toward action, while whoever does not possess ma‘rifah has no action.”
(*Tuhaf al-‘Uqul*, the concise sayings of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as), hadith 24.)
Thus, on the one hand, **ma‘rifah is a condition for the acceptance of action**, while on the other hand, genuine ma‘rifah cannot exist without action.
Ma‘rifah has effects, and those effects become manifest in a person’s actions. A person’s ma‘rifah is always a guide for his conduct. Without ma‘rifah, action is completely devoid of value—just as a body without a spirit has no true value.
As explained earlier, the spirit and reality of acts of worship such as prayer, Hajj, and zakat is the ma‘rifah possessed by the person performing them. In reality, this ma‘rifah constitutes the motivation and foundation of his worship.

The Criterion of Human Superiority

On this basis, the greater a person’s ma‘rifah becomes, the greater the value of his actions—and consequently, the greater his own value becomes.
In principle, the only criterion by which the superiority of a human being is determined is his **ma‘rifah**. Acts of worship also grant a person greater virtue and

value when they are performed upon the foundation of a higher degree of ma‘rifah.

It has been narrated from the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (as):

بَعضُكُم أَكثَرُ صَلَاةً مِن بَعضٍ، وَبَعضُكُم أَكثَرُ حَجًّا مِن بَعضٍ، وَبَعضُكُم أَكثَرُ صَدَقَةً مِن بَعضٍ، وَبَعضُكُم أَكثَرُ صِيامًا مِن بَعضٍ، وَأَفضَلُكُم أَفضَلُكُم مَعرِفَةً.

“Some of you perform more prayers than others. Some of you perform more Hajj than others. Some of you give more charity than others, and some of you fast more than others. Yet the best among you are those who possess the greatest ma‘rifah.”

(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 3, p. 14, hadith 38, from *Sifat al-Shi‘ah*.)

This tradition establishes **ma‘rifah as the criterion of superiority**. The person whose ma‘rifah is more complete and correct possesses greater value.

The value of prayer, Hajj, charity, and fasting is likewise proportionate to the degree of ma‘rifah possessed by the person performing them. If ma‘rifah is removed, what remains is merely a series of physical actions without spirit or meaning, which cannot truly be called servitude to Allah.

Therefore, worship must be accompanied by ma‘rifah in order to possess value. The Messenger of Allah (saww) instructed us regarding worship:

اُعبُدِ اللهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَراهُ، فَإِن كُنتَ لَا تَراهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَراكَ.

“Worship Allah as though you see Him. For even if you do not see Him, He surely sees you.”

(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 77, p. 74, hadith 3, from *Makarim al-Akhlaq*.)

The practical way to realize the instruction of the Messenger of Allah (saww) is to increase one’s ma‘rifah of Allah. The greater a person’s ma‘rifah becomes, the more he experiences Allah as present and watching over his actions.

The highest degree of ma‘rifah of Allah is expressed in terms of **“seeing” Him.** This seeing, of course, is not through the physical eyes. Rather, it is a seeing through the reality of faith, as narrated:

قالَ: يا أَميرَ المُؤمِنينَ، هَل رَأَيتَ رَبَّكَ حينَ عَبَدتَهُ؟ فَقالَ: وَيلَكَ! ما كُنتُ أَعبُدُ رَبًّا لَم أَرَهُ. قالَ: وَكَيفَ رَأَيتَهُ؟ قالَ: وَيلَكَ! لَا تُدرِكُهُ العُيونُ فِي مُشاهَدَةِ الأَبصارِ، وَلكِن رَأَتهُ القُلوبُ بِحَقائِقِ الإيمانِ.

It was asked of Amir al-Mu'minin (as), "O Amir al-Mu'minin, did you see your Lord when you worshipped Him?"
He replied, "Woe to you! I would not worship a Lord whom I had not seen."
He was then asked, "And how did you see Him?"
He replied, "Woe to you! The eyes cannot perceive Him through physical sight, but the hearts see Him through the realities of faith."
(*Al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 98, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, chapter "Fi Ibtal al-Ru'yah," hadith 6.)
This **vision of the heart** is the highest degree of ma'rifah of the Lord. If a person is granted such ma'rifah, his worship acquires extraordinary value, as exemplified by the worship of Amir al-Mu'minin (as), the leader of those who affirm the Oneness of Allah.
Others, too, should strive to increase their ma'rifah of their Lord until they perceive Allah as present and watching over them, and worship Him with this awareness.
The more this quality increases within a person, the greater nearness to Allah his worship brings him. He consequently comes closer to the purpose and goal of worship—which is a higher and more perfect ma'rifah of Allah.

The Purpose of the Creation of the Human Being

In light of the points discussed above, the explanation given by Sayyid al-Shuhada Imam al-Husayn (as) concerning the purpose of the creation of Allah's servants becomes completely clear. He says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِنَّ اللهَ ـ وَاللهِ ـ مَا خَلَقَ العِبادَ إِلّا لِيَعرِفُوهُ، فَإِذا عَرَفُوهُ عَبَدُوهُ، فَإِذا عَبَدُوهُ استَغنَوا بِعِبادَتِهِ عَن عِبادَةِ مَن سِواهُ.

"O people! By Allah, Allah did not create His servants except that they should attain ma'rifah of Him. Once they attain ma'rifah of Him, they worship Him; and once they worship Him, through their worship of Him they become independent of worshipping anyone other than Him."
(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 23, p. 93, hadith 40, from *Kanz al-Fawa'id* of al-Karajuki.)
Here, Imam al-Husayn (as) identifies the purpose of the creation of Allah's servants as, first and foremost, **ma'rifah of Allah**, and then, at the next stage, worshipping Him.

This becomes completely clear when we consider the importance of ma'rifah and its role in the worship of Allah. If worship is performed without ma'rifah, it has no real value at all.
Therefore, the purpose of the creation of human beings is that they should first attain ma'rifah and then engage in worship. In reality, their ma'rifah is what should motivate and guide their worship—not worship without ma'rifah, which, in reality, is not worship at all.

Here is the next section translated in the same terminology and style, preserving the distinctions the author makes between **ma'rifah, iman, and Islam**.

Chapter 2: The Different Categories of Allah's Servants in Their Worship of Him

Ma'rifah and Faith

Introduction
With regard to that form of ma'rifah which is the work of the human being and his voluntary act—namely, accepting and submitting to the ma'rifah of Allah—we can understand **faith (iman)** in religious terminology as being equivalent to the ma'rifah of Allah.
This is because faith, too, is that inner submission of the heart which constitutes the voluntary act of the believing person. It is itself an act of the heart, and the other actions of a human being also arise from this inner submission.
It is therefore appropriate to define faith through the traditions of Ahlul Bayt (as).
Imam al-Sadiq (as) was asked, "Which act is most virtuous in the sight of Allah?"
He replied:

مَا لَا يَقبَلُ اللهُ شَيئًا إِلّا بِهِ

"That without which Allah accepts nothing."
He was asked, "What is that?"
He replied:

الإِيمَانُ بِاللهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلٰهَ إِلّا هُوَ أَعلَى الأَعمَالِ دَرَجَةً وَأَشرَفُهَا وَأَسنَاهَا حَظًّا.

“Faith in Allah, there being no deity except Him, is the highest in rank, the noblest, and the most excellent of all deeds.”
He was then asked, “Would you explain what faith is? Is faith a combination of words and actions, or is it merely words without action?”
He replied:

الإِيمَانُ عَمَلٌ كُلُّهُ، وَالقَولُ بَعضُ ذَلِکَ العَمَلِ.

“Faith is entirely action, and speech is one part of that action.”

Faith Expressed Through the Limbs

The reason behind the question of whether faith consists merely of words or of both words and actions was the distinction commonly made between **Islam and faith**.
In the establishment of Islam, verbal declaration alone is sufficient. In other words, once a person verbally testifies to the Oneness of Allah and the prophethood of the Messenger of Allah (saww), this is sufficient for him to be regarded as having entered Islam, even if he does not inwardly possess that belief in his heart.
The question, therefore, was whether faith is the same, or whether it must be accompanied by action.
The answer of Imam al-Sadiq (as) is that faith is, in reality, nothing other than **action**, and speech is itself one of those actions and is a necessary component of faith.

The Distribution of Faith Among the Limbs

The foundation of faith is an act of the heart. Its effects, however, appear in the various limbs and faculties of the human being. One of these is the tongue, through which a person must express what he has accepted inwardly.
The continuation of the same tradition explains that Allah has distributed the duties of the believer among his limbs and faculties, assigning each of them its particular share of faith. At the center and foundation of all these actions is the action of the heart. The Imam explains both the nature of the heart’s action and its importance in relation to the actions of the limbs:

فَلَيسَ مِن جَوارِحِهِ جارِحَةٌ إِلّا وَقَد وُكِّلَت مِنَ الإِيمَانِ بِغَيرِ مَا وُكِّلَت بِهِ أُختُهَا. فَمِنهَا قَلبُهُ الَّذِي بِهِ يَعقِلُ وَيَفقَهُ وَيَفهَمُ، وَهُوَ أَمِيرُ بَدَنِهِ الَّذِي لَا تَرِدُ الجَوارِحُ وَلَا تَصدُرُ إِلّا عَن رَأيِهِ وَأَمرِهِ.

“Every one of his limbs and faculties has been assigned a particular duty with respect to faith, different from the duty assigned to the others. Among them is his heart, through which he reasons, understands, and comprehends. It is the commander of his body, and the other limbs neither undertake nor refrain from an action except according to its judgment and command.”

Ma‘rifah of the Heart

The Imam (as) then explains the duties assigned to each of the limbs. Regarding the heart, he says:

فَأَمّا مَا فَرَضَ عَلَى القَلبِ مِنَ الإِيمَانِ فَالإِقرارُ وَالمَعرِفَةُ وَالعَقدُ وَالرِّضَا وَالتَّسلِيمُ بِأَن لَا إِلٰهَ إِلّا اللهُ وَحدَهُ لَا شَرِيکَ لَهُ إِلٰهًا وَاحِدًا لَم يَتَّخِذ صَاحِبَةً وَلَا وَلَدًا، وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ صَلَوَاتُ اللهِ عَلَيهِ وَآلِهِ، وَالإِقرارُ بِمَا جَاءَ مِن عِندِ اللهِ مِن نَبِيٍّ وَكِتَابٍ. فَذَلِکَ مَا فَرَضَ اللهُ عَلَى القَلبِ مِنَ الإِقرارِ وَالمَعرِفَةِ، وَهُوَ عَمَلُهُ ... وَهُوَ رَأسُ الإِيمَانِ.

“As for what Allah has made obligatory upon the heart as part of faith, it is acknowledgment, ma‘rifah, conviction, acceptance, and submission: that there is no deity except Allah alone, without partner; that He has taken neither a wife nor a child; that Muhammad (saww) is His servant and Messenger; and acknowledgment of what has come from Allah in the form of prophets and divine Books.

This is what Allah has made obligatory upon the heart in the form of acknowledgment and ma‘rifah, and this is the heart’s own action ... and it is the **head and foundation of faith**.”

(*Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 33, *Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr*, chapter “Faith Is Distributed Among All the Limbs of the Body,” hadith 1.)

It can be seen that what has been made obligatory is precisely what is required in accepting and embracing ma‘rifah. Acknowledgment, conviction, acceptance, and submission all come down to **accepting and embracing Allah’s introduction of Himself**. All of these are voluntary acts of the human being.

Whoever performs these acts possesses faith with a **head** or foundation. Without them, faith is without a head. And faith without its head is like a body without a head: it dies and cannot possess life.

The Difference Between Islam and Faith

We can therefore see that the head and foundation of faith is that ma‘rifah which constitutes an act of the human heart.
Such ma‘rifah is not merely awareness of realities such as Divine Unity and prophethood. Rather, it belongs to the category of **belief and conviction**.
Conviction (*i‘tiqad*) means establishing a bond and connection of the heart with a reality. A believer is not someone who merely knows that there is a God or that there is a prophet. Rather, a believer is one who, with his entire being—and foremost through his heart—submits to this reality and possesses within himself a state of acknowledgment and acceptance.
This is precisely the distinction between **Islam and faith**.
The Holy Qur’an says:

قَالَتِ الأَعرَابُ آمَنَّا قُل لَم تُؤمِنُوا وَلَكِن قُولُوا أَسلَمنَا وَلَمَّا يَدخُلِ الإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُم.

“The desert Arabs said, ‘We have believed.’ Say: ‘You have not believed; rather, say, “We have submitted,” for faith has not yet entered your hearts.’”
(Qur’an 49:14)
When Imam al-Sadiq (as) was asked about this verse, he said:

أَلَا تَرَى أَنَّ الإِيمَانَ غَيرُ الإِسلَامِ؟!

“Do you not see that faith is different from Islam?!”
(*Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 24, *Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr*, chapter “Islam Protects the Blood...” hadith 3.)
Thus, the difference between Islam and faith lies precisely in this **inner acceptance and submission of the heart**, which exists in faith but is not necessarily present in Islam.
The meaning of Islam here is that status upon which certain legal rulings—such as ritual purity and other jurisprudential rulings—are based. For this reason, it may be called **“juridical Islam” (Islam fiqhi)**.

This is the Islam that is established through the verbal declaration of the two testimonies of faith (*shahadatayn*) and does not depend upon what is present in a person's heart.
Another tradition therefore expresses the difference between Islam and faith in these words:

الإِيمَانُ إِقرارٌ وَعَمَلٌ، وَالإِسلَامُ إِقرارٌ بِلَا عَمَلٍ.

"Faith is acknowledgment together with action, whereas Islam is acknowledgment without action."
(*Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 24, *Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr*, chapter "Islam Protects the Blood...," hadith 2.)
The **iqrar** mentioned here means verbal declaration, rather than inward acknowledgment and submission of the heart.
Likewise, the "action" referred to here is an action that reflects the acceptance and submission of the heart, not merely an external physical act which, in itself, possesses no value.
Therefore, even the verbal declaration made in Islam, when it does not arise from submission of the heart, is not called "action" in this sense. But when the heart submits and genuine inward conviction comes into existence, that same verbal declaration becomes an **action of the tongue** and acquires value.
This is because the criterion of an action's value is the **conviction and ma'rifah of the heart**.

Islam as a Condition for Faith

At the same time, it must be understood that this very verbal declaration is a **necessary condition for faith**. In reality, faith cannot be established without Islam.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

الإِيمَانُ هُوَ الإِقرارُ بِاللِّسَانِ، وَعَقدٌ فِي القَلبِ، وَعَمَلٌ بِالأَركانِ ... فَقَد يَكُونُ العَبدُ مُسلِمًا قَبلَ أَن يَكُونَ مُؤمِنًا، وَلَا يَكُونُ مُؤمِنًا حَتّى يَكُونَ مُسلِمًا، فَالإِسلَامُ قَبلَ الإِيمَانِ وَهُوَ يُشارِكُ الإِيمَانَ.

"Faith consists of verbal acknowledgment, conviction in the heart, and action through the limbs... A servant may be a Muslim before he becomes a believer, but he cannot be a believer until he is a Muslim. Thus, Islam precedes faith and is a part of it."

(*Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 27, *Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr*, chapter "Another Chapter on Islam Before Faith," hadith 1.)
Therefore, it should not be said that only the heart matters and that the action of the tongue is unimportant. Rather, **juridical Islam is a necessary condition for the realization of faith**.

A Comprehensive Definition of Faith

In light of everything discussed above, if we wish to give a comprehensive definition of faith, we should understand it as **ma'rifah whose effects become manifest through the limbs and actions of a human being**.
Amir al-Mu'minin Imam Ali (as) says:

الإِيمَانُ مَعرِفَةٌ بِالقَلبِ، وَإِقرارٌ بِاللِّسَانِ، وَعَمَلٌ بِالأَركَانِ.

"Faith is ma'rifah of the heart, acknowledgment by the tongue, and action through the limbs."
(*Nahj al-Balagha*, Fayz al-Islam edition, Wisdom 218.)
Verbal acknowledgment and outward action acquire value when they arise from ma'rifah of the heart.
Therefore, the foundation of faith is **ma'rifah**, whose effects become manifest in the body. Consequently, the higher and more perfect a person's ma'rifah is, the greater the excellence of his faith.
The Messenger of Allah (saww) said:

أَفضَلُكُم إِيمَانًا، أَفضَلُكُم مَعرِفَةً.

"The best among you in faith are those who are best in ma'rifah."
(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 3, p. 14, hadith 37, from *Jami' al-Akhbar*).

Outward Islam and True Islam

Introduction

Sometimes the term **Islam** refers merely to a verbal declaration, which does not necessarily entail acceptance and submission of the heart. At other times, however, Islam is referred to as **"religion" (din)**.

Religion means a creed, way, and system of life. Divine religion means the way and manner of serving Allah and the path of servitude before the Almighty Lord. In this sense, religion is not established merely through a verbal declaration; rather, its scope also encompasses the heart and one's beliefs.
Let us hear what the Qur'an says:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِندَ اللهِ الإِسلَامُ.

"Indeed, the religion with Allah is Islam."
(Qur'an 3:19)
And:

وَمَن يَبتَغِ غَيرَ الإِسلَامِ دِينًا فَلَن يُقبَلَ مِنهُ وَهُوَ فِي الآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الخَاسِرِينَ.

"Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will certainly be among the losers."
(Qur'an 3:85)

Declaring Islam with the Tongue

In these verses, Islam is referred to as **religion**—and as the religion with which Allah alone is pleased, and upon which reward and consequences in the Hereafter are based.
Clearly, this Islam is different from **outward Islam**, which merely gives rise to certain worldly legal effects and rulings and provides no benefit to a person in the Hereafter.
In our traditions, this outward Islam, whose effects are confined to this world, is described as follows:

الإِسلَامُ يُحقَنُ بِهِ الدَّمُ، وَتُؤَدَّى بِهِ الأَمَانَةُ، وَتُستَحَلُّ بِهِ الفُرُوجُ، وَالثَّوَابُ عَلَى الإِيمَانِ.

"Through Islam, blood is protected, trusts are to be honored, and marriage becomes lawful. But reward is based upon faith."
(*Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 24, *Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr*, chapter "Islam Protects the Blood...," hadith 1, from Imam al-Sadiq (as).)
Through Islam, a person's blood is protected, trusts are to be fulfilled, and marriage becomes lawful. But reward and recompense are based upon **faith**.
These effects belong to that verbal declaration whose validity extends only for as long as a person is alive. From the moment of death onward, none of these

worldly effects remain. They are part of the worldly consequences of Islam, but they have no effect upon a person's eternal salvation.
What benefits a person in the Hereafter is **faith**, which must be added to this outward Islam.
Therefore, a person's true felicity is achieved only through faith. For a Muslim, true felicity concerns his Hereafter and the Day of Resurrection, not merely a set of legal rulings that remain applicable in this world for as long as he is alive.
Thus, those who verbally declare Islam but do not submit inwardly to Allah and His Messenger (saww) will derive no benefit in the Hereafter from their outward Islam.
Some traditions also refer to this outward Islam as **"faith of the tongue"**:

فَإِنَّ قَومًا آمَنُوا بِأَلسِنَتِهِم لِيَحقِنُوا بِهَا دِمَاءَهُم، فَأَدرَكُوا مَا أَمَّلُوا. وَإِنَّا آمَنَّا بِکَ بِأَلسِنَتِنَا وَقُلُوبِنَا لِتَعفُوَ عَنَّا، فَأَدرِكْنَا مَا أَمَّلنَا.

"Some people professed faith with their tongues in order to preserve their blood, and thus they attained what they had hoped for. We, however, have believed in You with our tongues and our hearts so that You may forgive us; therefore, grant us what we hope for."
(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 98, p. 88, from *Iqbal al-A'mal*, part of the supplication of Abu Hamzah al-Thumali.)
Faith merely expressed by the tongue is not genuine and true faith. It is the same outward, verbal Islam.
This is why Imam al-Sajjad (as) stated that those people professed faith with their tongues merely to protect their blood.
True faith exists when **both the tongue and the heart submit**.
Likewise, only those who have believed with their hearts can hope for the forgiveness and pardon of Allah. With merely verbal faith, one can expect only the worldly effects of Islam.

The Reality of Islam

When Islam is presented as **religion**, therefore, it means true Islam—the Islam of genuine submission of the heart—which is inseparable from faith but exists together with it.

Regarding Islam in the context of verse 3:19 of the Qur'an, it has been narrated from the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (as):

الَّذِي فِيهِ الإِيمَانُ.

"[It is the Islam] in which faith is contained."
(*Tafsir al-Burhan*, vol. 1, p. 274.)
Thus, the religion of Islam is not merely outward Islam, nor is it Islam stripped of faith. Rather, **faith is a condition for its realization**.
Amir al-Mu'minin Imam Ali (as) has defined this true Islam as follows:

لَأَنسَبَنَّ الإِسلَامَ نِسبَةً لَا يَنسِبُهَا أَحَدٌ قَبلِي وَلَا يَنسِبُهَا أَحَدٌ بَعدِي إِلَّا بِمِثلِ ذَلِکَ. إِنَّ الإِسلَامَ هُوَ التَّسلِيمُ، وَالتَّسلِيمُ هُوَ اليَقِينُ، وَاليَقِينُ هُوَ التَّصدِيقُ، وَالتَّصدِيقُ هُوَ الإِقرارُ، وَالإِقرارُ هُوَ العَمَلُ، وَالعَمَلُ هُوَ الأَدَاءُ. إِنَّ المُؤمِنَ لَم يَأخُذ دِينَهُ عَن رَأيِهِ، وَلَكِن أَتَاهُ مِن رَبِّهِ فَأَخَذَهُ. إِنَّ المُؤمِنَ يُرَى يَقِينُهُ فِي عَمَلِهِ، وَالكَافِرُ يُرَى إِنكَارُهُ فِي عَمَلِهِ.

"I shall define Islam in such a way that no one before me has defined it in this manner, nor will anyone after me define it except in the same way.
Indeed, Islam is **submission**. Submission is **certainty**. Certainty is **affirmation**. Affirmation is **acknowledgment**. Acknowledgment is **action**, and action is the fulfillment and discharge of what is required.
A believer does not take his religion from his own opinion. Rather, his religion comes to him from his Lord, and he accepts it.
The certainty of a believer is seen in his actions, while the denial of a disbeliever is seen in his actions."
(*Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 45, *Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr*, chapter "The Definition of Islam," hadith 1.)
In defining Islam, the Imam (as) uses the expression **"nisbah."** A *nisbah* is like an identity document or identification record. The *nisbah* of Islam, therefore, is its defining identity—its essential characteristics.
An identity document contains the essential characteristics by which its bearer is identified. In the same way, Amir al-Mu'minin's (as) definition of Islam presents the essential characteristics without which Islam cannot truly be understood.
The reality of Islam is nothing other than **submission**.
The spirit of servitude to Allah is submission to Him. And ma'rifah, in reality, is the acceptance and submission to Allah's introduction of Himself.

Therefore, the expression **“submission”** is exceptionally precise and comprehensive.
The necessary consequence and result of this submission is **certainty (yaqin)**. Certainty is that firm conviction which becomes deeply rooted in a person’s soul and brings him to complete acknowledgment and affirmation before his Lord.
The spirit of action consists of acknowledgment, acceptance, contentment, and submission to Allah, the Most High, from which outward manifestations—the actual fulfillment of one’s duties—also arise.
The difference between a believer and a disbeliever, therefore, lies in the fact that the believer submits to Allah and chooses as his religion whatever Allah has prescribed for him. The disbeliever, on the other hand, pays no heed to what Allah has revealed and instead acts according to his own judgment and personal preference.
In reality, the disbeliever is not a servant and obedient follower of his Lord; rather, he follows his own desires and inclinations.
This is the fundamental difference between the believer and the disbeliever. What appears in the actions of these two individuals is a reflection of what exists within their hearts.
If a believer performs prayer, for example, that action demonstrates the certainty present in his heart and confirms his submission to Allah, the Most High.
Therefore, merely performing outward actions does not by itself establish that a person is truly engaged in servitude and worship. Rather, these actions are a **display of his inward belief**.
Likewise, the disbeliever’s refusal to pray is a mirror reflecting his obstinate heart and rebellious spirit.
It is this state of **denial and rejection (inkar and juhud)** that produces disbelief, just as it is the spirit of obedience and submission that makes a person a believer.
This submission and complete surrender is precisely the **voluntary ma‘rifah** that we identified with faith.

The Reality of Disbelief

Introduction

Having understood the reality of Islam and faith, we must also develop a correct understanding of the reality of **kufr (disbelief)**.
The Holy Qur'an says:

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا.

"Indeed, We showed him the way, whether he chooses to be grateful or ungrateful."
(Qur'an 76:3)
Imam al-Sadiq (as), explaining this verse, said:

إِمَّا آخِذٌ فَهُوَ شَاكِرٌ، وَإِمَّا تَارِكٌ فَهُوَ كَافِرٌ.

"Either he takes and follows it, in which case he is grateful; or he abandons it, in which case he is a disbeliever."
(*Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 384, *Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr*, chapter "Al-Kufr," hadith 4.)
In other words, guidance comes from Allah. Once the correct path of servitude has been made known, if a person accepts it, he is a believer; and if he refuses to accept it, he becomes a disbeliever.
Thus, faith and disbelief arise after the path of guidance has been made clear. If, after this, a person deliberately turns away from the path of servitude through his own wrongful choice, he becomes a disbeliever.
Imam al-Baqir (as) says:

كُلُّ شَيءٍ يَجُرُّهُ الإِقرارُ وَالتَّسلِيمُ فَهُوَ الإِيمَانُ، وَكُلُّ شَيءٍ يَجُرُّهُ الإِنكَارُ وَالجُحُودُ فَهُوَ الكُفرُ.

"Everything that arises from acknowledgment and submission is faith; and everything that arises from denial and rejection is disbelief."
(*Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 387, *Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr*, chapter "Al-Kufr," hadith 15.)
This is another expression of what Amir al-Mu'minin (as) stated earlier: what is seen in the mirror of a believer's actions is his submission and certainty, while what is seen in the mirror of the actions associated with disbelief is denial and rebellion.
The outward appearance of an action is not the criterion. What matters is its **inner spirit**: does it conform to the spirit of servitude and submission to Allah or not?

If it does, it is faith; if it does not, it is disbelief.

What matters is **which belief and ma'rifah have motivated the action**. When a person knows the truth, does he act out of obedience to his Lord, or does he choose the path of rebellion and disobedience?

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

مَعنَى الكُفرِ كُلُّ مَعصِيَةٍ عُصِيَ اللهُ بِهَا بِجِهَّةِ الجَحدِ وَالإِنكَارِ وَالاِستِخفَافِ وَالتَّهاوُنِ فِي كُلِّ مَا دَقَّ وَجَلَّ.

"The meaning of disbelief is every act of disobedience to Allah that is committed through denial, rejection, treating the matter with contempt, or taking it lightly—whether the matter is small or great."

(*Tuhaf al-'Uqul*, p. 344, section containing the sayings of Imam al-Sadiq (as), "His Words Describing Love," section on the nature of departing from faith.)

The reality of disbelief, therefore, is that a person lacks the spirit of servitude and obedience to Allah.

Consequently, a person does not become a disbeliever merely because he fails to obey a command of his Lord. Rather, if his failure to obey arises from **refusal to submit, denial, or treating the Lordship and authority of Allah, the Most High, with contempt**, then it becomes a cause of disbelief.

In such a case, there is no difference between a minor and a major sin. For someone who has fundamentally chosen not to obey, it makes no difference whether the command of his Master is considered small or great.

What matters is the **spirit of submission and servitude**, which is absent in such a person.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

إِنَّ اللهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ فَرَضَ فَرَائِضَ مُوجِبَاتٍ عَلَى العِبَادِ، فَمَن تَرَكَ فَرِيضَةً مِنَ المُوجِبَاتِ فَلَم يَعمَل بِهَا وَجَحَدَهَا كَانَ كَافِرًا...

"Indeed, Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, has prescribed obligatory duties for His servants. Whoever abandons one of these obligatory duties, does not act upon it, and denies it, is a disbeliever..."

(*Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 383, *Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr*, chapter "Al-Kufr," hadith 1.)

The Difference Between Kufr and Fisq

In general, it can be said that a person does not become a **kafir** merely because he fails to carry out something that Allah has commanded. It may be that such failure has not extinguished within him the spirit of submission and acknowledgment of servitude toward Almighty Allah. It is possible for a person to disobey Allah while still not having completely departed from the path of servitude and from the spirit of acknowledging His Lordship.

إِلٰهِي لَمْ أَعْصِكَ حِينَ عَصَيْتُكَ وَأَنَا بِرُبُوبِيَّتِكَ جَاحِدٌ وَلَا بِأَمْرِكَ مُسْتَخِفٌّ... وَلَا لِوَعِيدِكَ مُتَهَاوِنٌ وَلٰكِنْ خَطِيئَةٌ عَرَضَتْ وَسَوَّلَتْ لِي نَفْسِي وَغَلَبَنِي هَوَايَ(2) ...

"My God, I did not disobey You when I disobeyed You while denying Your Lordship, nor did I regard Your command as insignificant... nor did I treat Your warning with indifference. Rather, a sin presented itself before me, my soul made it appear attractive to me, and my desires overcame me..."

No one becomes a **kafir** merely by committing a sin, so long as he does not deny Allah's Lordship or regard His command and decree as insignificant. In the terminology of religious teachings, such a person is called a **fasiq**.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

مَعْنَى الْفِسْقِ فَكُلُّ مَعْصِيَةٍ مِنَ الْمَعَاصِي الْكِبَارِ فَعَلَهَا فَاعِلٌ أَوْ دَخَلَ فِيهَا دَاخِلٌ بِجِهَةِ اللَّذَّةِ وَالشَّهْوَةِ وَالشَّوْقِ الْغَالِبِ فَهُوَ فِسْقٌ وَفَاعِلُهُ فَاسِقٌ خَارِجٌ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ بِجِهَةِ الْفِسْقِ. فَإِنْ دَامَ فِي ذٰلِكَ حَتَّى يَدْخُلَ فِي حَدِّ التَّهَاوُنِ وَالِاسْتِخْفَافِ، فَقَدْ وَجَبَ أَنْ يَكُونَ بِتَهَاوُنِهِ وَاسْتِخْفَافِهِ كَافِرًا(1) .

"The meaning of **fisq** is that a person commits one of the major sins, or enters into it because of pleasure, desire, or an overpowering inclination. Such an act is fisq, and the one who commits it is a **fasiq**, and by virtue of his fisq he has departed from faith. But if he persists in that state until he reaches the point of treating the matter with indifference and regarding it as insignificant, then because of that indifference and disregard, he becomes a kafir."

If committing one or several sins becomes easy for a person to the extent that he no longer cares about committing them, this condition can gradually lead him to **istikhfaf**—regarding the commands and prohibitions of Almighty Allah as insignificant and treating them with indifference. This is **kufr**.

It can therefore be seen that **iman** is realized when a person accepts the truth (2) that he has come to know.
That truth, above all, is the absolute Lordship of Allah. Submission to this Lordship means servitude before the Lord. If this state does not exist within a person, he has departed from the path of servitude and becomes a kafir.

Doubt in Ma'rifah

This absence of submission can occur in two ways.
Sometimes a person adopts a state of hostility and obstinacy and explicitly denies the ma'rifah of Allah and belief in Him. This is an intense form of kufr.
At other times, the matter does not reach this degree of **juhud** and denial. Rather, a state of hesitation and uncertainty arises concerning complete submission to the ma'rifah of Allah and everything that follows from it.
This second state is also, in reality, a denial of the truth—a refusal to submit and humble oneself before it. Although it is not as severe as the first state, it does not differ from it in its basic nature of denial. The difference between the two is only one of degree: the strength or weakness of the state of denial. For denial itself is a reality that exists in different degrees.
Therefore, the state of **shakk** (doubt) regarding ma'rifah—which in reality is doubt concerning submission to and acceptance of it—is a lesser degree of kufr, and such a person is certainly a kafir.

Voluntary and Involuntary Doubt

It should not be assumed that **shakk** is merely an involuntary psychological state and that a person who doubts is therefore not responsible and cannot be regarded as a kafir.
It is true that a state of doubt and uncertainty can arise involuntarily. However, when its cause is voluntary, the doubt itself becomes voluntary and therefore falls within the scope of divine obligation and prohibition.
What lies within a person's اختیار is that when a truth becomes clear to him, he should submit to it and should not allow himself to doubt the obligation of submitting to and accepting it.

This refusal to doubt the obligation of submission is a voluntary act of a rational human being. When he does this, he attains the state of tranquility, reassurance, and **sakinah** that is an effect of iman.
But if he does not act with confidence and peace of mind in accepting the truth, and instead hesitates and delays, a state of doubt arises within him. This is one of the manifestations of denial and kufr.
The voluntary act of doubting is referred to as **rayb**, while its effect upon the soul is called **shakk**. Therefore, whoever wishes to avoid falling into doubt must refrain from hesitation concerning complete submission to whatever he has understood to be true. The intellect itself judges that such submission is obligatory.
Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (as) says:

لَا تَرْتَابُوا فَتَشُكُّوا، وَلَا تَشُكُّوا فَتَكْفُرُوا(1) .

"Do not entertain doubt, lest you fall into shakk; and do not fall into shakk, lest you become kafir." (2)

Doubt as a Degree of Denial

Apparently, the prohibition against **shakk** in this statement actually refers back to the prohibition against **rayb** and hesitation mentioned in the first part of the statement, rather than constituting a separate prohibition.
The reason such a person is considered a kafir is that this state itself constitutes a form of **juhud** and denial, as indicated in certain narrations:

...فَدَخَلَ عَلَيْهِ أَبُو بَصِيرٍ فَقَالَ: يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللهِ، مَا تَقُولُ فِيمَنْ شَكَّ فِي اللهِ؟ فَقَالَ: كَافِرٌ يَا أَبَا مُحَمَّدٍ. قَالَ: فَشَكَّ فِي رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ؟ فَقَالَ: كَافِرٌ. ثُمَّ الْتَفَتَ إِلَى زُرَارَةَ فَقَالَ: إِنَّمَا يَكْفُرُ إِذَا جَحَدَ(1) .

"Abu Basir came to Imam al-Sadiq (as) and said: 'O Abu Abdillah, what do you say regarding one who doubts Allah?' He replied: 'He is a kafir, O Abu Muhammad.' He asked: 'What about one who doubts the Messenger of Allah (saww)?' He replied: 'He is a kafir.' Then the Imam turned toward Zurara and said: 'He only becomes a kafir when he denies.'"
The final sentence of this narration indicates that the **shakk** mentioned here is a degree of denial.
Of course, the word *shakk* is sometimes used in another sense, which is not what is being discussed here. If something is unknown to a person and he does not

understand it, it may be said that he is uncertain about what it is. In reality, this meaning of shakk is a form of ignorance and has no connection with the type of doubt under discussion here.

We are speaking of the kind of doubt that occurs **after knowledge and ma'rifah have already been established**, and which arises through a person's own choice. Such doubt is blameworthy. Once a person has acquired knowledge of something, he should not behave toward it as though it were something uncertain.

This can nevertheless happen. A person may have certainty about something while behaving toward it as though it were merely doubtful. Death is an example. Many people are completely certain that death will occur, yet they behave toward it as though it were an uncertain possibility.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

لَمْ يَخْلُقِ اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ يَقِينًا لَا شَكَّ فِيهِ أَشْبَهَ بِشَكٍّ لَا يَقِينَ فِيهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ(2) .

"Allah, Mighty and Majestic, has not created a certainty in which there is no doubt that resembles a doubt in which there is no certainty more than death."

Although the occurrence and inevitability of death are exceedingly clear and among the most certain realities, people's behavior toward it is such that they act as though they have no certainty about it whatsoever, treating its occurrence as completely doubtful.

This is the meaning behind the advice of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (as):

لَا تَجْعَلُوا عِلْمَكُمْ جَهْلًا وَيَقِينَكُمْ شَكًّا. إِذَا عَلِمْتُمْ فَاعْمَلُوا، وَإِذَا تَيَقَّنْتُمْ فَأَقْدِمُوا(1) .

"Do not turn your knowledge into ignorance and your certainty into doubt. When you know, act upon what you know; and when you attain certainty, proceed to act."

Turning certainty into doubt and knowledge into ignorance means treating something certain as though it were doubtful, and treating one's knowledge as though one were ignorant. In such a situation, a person loses the **itmi'nan** and tranquility that arise from knowledge and certainty, and becomes afflicted with doubt. The origin of this doubt is his own misuse of choice.

The Mustad'af: Neither a Believer nor a Kafir

Introduction

Both iman and kufr are dependent upon recognition of the truth. If a person submits to what he has come to know, he belongs to the people of iman; and if he refuses to submit, he is a kafir.
But someone for whom the truth has not become clear at all has neither the path of iman and submission open before him nor the possibility of becoming a kafir. No introduction or presentation of the truth has actually reached him in a way that would enable him either to accept or reject it.
Such people, provided they have not been negligent in failing to recognize the truth, are called **mustad'af**. Their status and responsibility have been clarified in the Qur'an and Sunnah.
Imam al-Baqir (as) was asked about the **mustad'af**, and he said:

هُوَ الَّذِي لَا يَهْتَدِي حِيلَةً إِلَى الْكُفْرِ فَيَكْفُرَ، وَلَا يَهْتَدِي سَبِيلًا إِلَى الْإِيمَانِ؛ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يُؤْمِنَ وَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يَكْفُرَ. فَهُمُ الصِّبْيَانُ وَمَنْ كَانَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ عَلَى مِثْلِ عُقُولِ الصِّبْيَانِ، مَرْفُوعٌ عَنْهُمُ الْقَلَمُ(2) .

"The mustad'af is one who has no way by which he can reach kufr and become a kafir, nor does he have a path by which he can reach iman. He is unable to believe and unable to disbelieve. They are children, and those among men and women whose intellect is like that of children. The pen of responsibility has been lifted from them."
The intellect is the means by which a person distinguishes truth from falsehood. This same intellect leads a rational person toward submission to the truth.
One who is deprived of this divine gift does not comprehend the obligation of submitting to his Lord and is therefore not deserving of being held accountable or punished. For this reason, Almighty Allah has lifted religious responsibility from such people.

Definition of the Mustad'af

Those who have not been guided to Islam may, however, themselves be responsible for failing to recognize the true religion.
For example, suppose a Christian knows that Islam, unlike Christianity, claims that a prophet appeared after Jesus (as), and he considers that claim potentially true. His intellect requires him to investigate the matter and determine whether the Islamic claim is true or false.

If he makes no effort to investigate and, as a result, the truth never becomes clear to him, then the fault lies with him. Such a person is an **ignorant person who is at fault (jāhil muqassir)**.

A *jāhil muqassir* differs from a *jāhil qāsir*—one who has not fallen short in seeking the truth—and therefore he is not considered a mustad'af. The path to knowledge was open to him, but through his own misuse of choice he deprived himself of it. Such a person may not even know what conclusions he would have reached had he investigated. But this does not remove his responsibility. The fact that he did not know what he would have discovered does not excuse his failure to investigate when reason required him to do so.

Therefore, Almighty Allah knows those who are genuinely mustad'af and is able, on the Day of Resurrection, to hold those who were negligent accountable and then punish them for the shortcomings and negligence they committed.

The following narration from Imam al-Sadiq (as) refers to such people:

مَنْ عَرَفَ اخْتِلَافَ النَّاسِ فَلَيْسَ بِمُسْتَضْعَفٍ(1) .

"Whoever is aware of the differences among people is not a mustad'af."

The Ultimate Fate of the Mustad'afin

If a person is genuinely a mustad'af, Almighty Allah has not specified or announced his final fate in this world. Rather, his case has been left for the Hereafter.

Allah may deal with this group—the mustad'afin—according to His **'adl** or according to His **fadl**.

If He deals with them according to His justice, this may concern those matters that are established by the independent judgments of the intellect (*mustaqillāt al-'aqliyyah*)—for example, that oppression is intrinsically forbidden. This is an intellectually established prohibition, regardless of whether such people were guided to Islam.

With respect to such matters, Allah may deal with them according to His justice, holding them accountable and punishing them for their voluntary actions. It is also possible that He may deal with them through His grace and forgive them.

Which of these two will occur will become clear in the Hereafter. It has not been determined and announced for them in this world.
The following narration helps clarify the matter:

عَنْ زُرَارَةَ ... قَالَ: قُلْتُ لَهُ: مَا تَقُولُ فِي قَوْلِهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ: «إِلَّا الْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ حِيلَةً وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ سَبِيلًا»؟ ... فَقَالَ: وَاللهِ مَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا كَافِرِينَ(3) .

Zurara says: "I asked him about the statement of Almighty Allah: *'Except the mustad'af men, women, and children who are unable to devise a means and cannot find a way'* (4:98)."
He replied:
"By Allah, they are neither believers nor kafirs."
It appears that Zurara had a different conception of the mustad'afin. Therefore, he asked the Imam: If these people ultimately enter Paradise, then they will be believers; and if they enter Hell, then they will be kafirs.
The Imam replied:

وَاللهِ مَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا كَافِرِينَ، وَلَوْ كَانُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ لَدَخَلُوا الْجَنَّةَ كَمَا دَخَلَهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ، وَلَوْ كَانُوا كَافِرِينَ لَدَخَلُوا النَّارَ كَمَا دَخَلَهَا الْكَافِرُونَ...

"By Allah, they are neither believers nor kafirs. Had they been believers, they would have entered Paradise just as the believers enter it. And had they been kafirs, they would have entered the Fire just as the kafirs enter it..."
Therefore, those among the mustad'afin who ultimately enter Paradise do not enter it in the same manner as the believers. And if some of them enter Hell, they do not enter it in the same manner as the kafirs.
How do believers enter Paradise?
Since the believers are included in the divine promise, it can be said that they have acquired an entitlement to Paradise. Of course, Allah's original promise of Paradise to them is itself based upon His **fadl**. But once the promise of Paradise has been made to them and they have submitted to Allah in accordance with His commands, then—hypothetically speaking—if Allah were not to fulfill His promise to them, it would constitute injustice toward them. Allah is exalted above all injustice.
Thus, on the basis of Allah's justice and His promise, they enter Paradise.

The mustad‘afin who enter Paradise, however, have received no such promise. Therefore, none of the divine rewards is due to them on the basis of justice. Whatever they receive is through Allah's **fadl**. If they are not rewarded, no injustice has been done to them.
Thus, even if they enter Paradise, they do not enter it in the same manner as the believers.
The same principle applies to the mustad‘afin who enter Hell. Their reckoning differs from that of the kafirs.
For the kafirs, the **hujjah** has been completed against them, and Allah's warnings concerning them have become binding. As for the mustad‘afin, even if they enter Hell because of actions concerning which the hujjah had been completed against them, they had not heard the divine warnings through the Prophets or Imams (as) in this world, nor had the descriptions of Hell reached them.
Their situation is therefore different from that of the kafirs in this respect.
It consequently becomes clear that entering Paradise is not necessarily an indication of being a believer, nor is entering Hell necessarily an indication of being a kafir. Those who are neither believers nor kafirs—the mustad‘afin—may also ultimately enter either Paradise or Hell.
Zurara once again asked Imam al-Baqir (as):

أَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ أَمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ النَّارِ؟ فَقَالَ: اتْرُكْهُمْ حَيْثُ تَرَكَهُمُ اللهُ.

قُلْتُ: أَفَتُرْجِئُهُمْ؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ، أُرْجِئُهُمْ كَمَا أَرْجَأَهُمُ اللهُ، إِنْ شَاءَ أَدْخَلَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ بِرَحْمَتِهِ، وَإِنْ شَاءَ سَاقَهُمْ إِلَى النَّارِ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَلَمْ يَظْلِمْهُمْ.

“Are they among the people of Paradise or among the people of Hell?”
He replied:
“Leave them where Allah has left them.”
I asked: “Do you defer their matter?”
He said:
“Yes. I defer them just as Allah has deferred them. If He wills, He will admit them into Paradise through His mercy; and if He wills, He will drive them toward the Fire because of their sins, and He will not have wronged them.”

Why the Final Fate of the Mustad‘afin Is Not Known Before the Resurrection

Therefore, Almighty Allah will clarify the matter of the mustad‘afin on the Day of Resurrection. In this world, He has not assigned them a definitive status regarding their ultimate fate; rather, He has left their matter to His own will.
According to the principles established by the Qur’an and Sunnah, the destiny of all human beings was, in one sense, already known and determined in the realms preceding this world.
However, firstly, with regard to some people, the possibility of **bada’**—a change in what has been decreed—exists, such that it cannot be said that the final destiny of every individual was definitively fixed before this world.
Secondly, although the Prophet (saww) and the Imams (as) knew what had previously been decreed, they generally did not intend to make judgments about people's final destinies on that basis, except in particular cases.
Therefore, in practice, they taught their followers that regarding the mustad‘afin, one should maintain a general belief that their matter has been left to the will and divine decree of Allah, without insisting upon determining their ultimate status.

The Difficulty of Identifying the Mustad‘afin

One final point concerning the mustad‘afin is that, in light of the definition given above, identifying the actual individuals who qualify as mustad‘af is extremely difficult and, in some cases, altogether impossible.
This is because determining whether someone is genuinely a mustad‘af generally depends upon establishing an inward matter of the heart—something that is neither outwardly visible nor easily ascertainable.
Therefore, discussions concerning the mustad‘afin are generally applicable in the form of **conditional propositions**. Determining particular individuals as actual instances of mustad‘af is not a simple matter.
For this reason, it is possible that someone may be regarded as a kafir according to the outward standards of the Shari‘ah while in reality being a mustad‘af.
Our duty in this world is to deal with such a person according to the outward rulings of the Shari‘ah.

For example, we can never apply the legal rulings of Islam to a Christian merely because there is a possibility that, in reality, he may be a mustad‘af. If he truly is a mustad‘af, that reality will become clear on the Day of Resurrection, and it is possible that he may enter Paradise through Allah's mercy.
But this possibility does not alter our worldly legal responsibility toward him. Even if such a person ultimately enters Paradise, his status remains distinct from that of the believers. As we have seen, even if the mustad‘afin enter Paradise, they do not enter it in the same manner as the believers.
Thus, the reckoning and ultimate status of the mustad‘afin—whose individual identification can be established completely only through Allah's knowledge—will remain distinct from that of both the believers and the kafirs.

Part Two: The Ma‘rifah of the Imam — The Only Path to Servitude to Allah

Introduction

Chapter 1: The Lofty Position of the Imams (as) and the Ma‘rifah of Them

The Role of the Prophets in Presenting the Path of Servitude

The manner in which Allah is to be worshipped, if it is to be accepted by His Sacred Essence, must be communicated by Allah Himself.
Through reason, we can understand that we must worship Allah, our Lord and our Benefactor. However, that same reason also tells us that, regarding the way and manner in which He is to be worshipped, we must take our guidance from Allah Himself.
This is especially so because we know that Allah has not left us to ourselves, allowing us to worship Him in whatever manner we choose. Rather, He has sent

messengers from Himself to teach us the way of servitude to Him, and through this He has completed His proof (*hujjah*) against us.
Therefore, we cannot worship Him in whatever manner we happen to desire.
In principle, the very benefit of **nubuwwah** and **imamah** for human beings is that they learn the correct path of servitude to Allah and do not proceed along this path according to their personal opinions and preferences.
A rational person also regards Allah's sending of messengers and raising of prophets as something appropriate and praiseworthy. Therefore, when such a person encounters the Prophets and the Divine Guides, he recognizes the true religion and strives to bring himself into conformity with it.
When one of those who denied the existence of Allah asked Imam al-Sadiq (as): "According to your belief, is Allah unable to reveal Himself to His creatures so that they could see Him and know Him and worship Him with certainty?"
The Imam (as) replied:

لَيْسَ لِلْمُحَالِ جَوَابٌ.

"There is no answer to something that is impossible."
Seeing Allah through physical, sensory observation is impossible. And when something is impossible, the question of whether Allah has the power to do it or not does not even arise. This is why the question of that atheist had no answer.
Immediately after this question went unanswered, he asked:

فَمِنْ أَيْنَ أَثْبَتَّ أَنْبِيَاءَ وَرُسُلًا؟

"Then from where do you establish the existence of prophets and messengers?"
The Imam (as) replied:

إِنَّا لَمَّا أَثْبَتْنَا أَنَّ لَنَا خَالِقًا صَانِعًا مُتَعَالِيًا عَنَّا وَعَنْ جَمِيعِ مَا خَلَقَ، وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ الصَّانِعُ حَكِيمًا مُتَعَالِيًا، لَمْ يَجُزْ أَنْ يُشَاهِدَهُ خَلْقُهُ وَلَا يُلَامِسُوهُ فَيُبَاشِرَهُمْ وَيُبَاشِرُوهُ وَيُحَاجَّهُمْ وَيُحَاجُّوهُ، ثَبَتَ أَنَّ لَهُ سُفَرَاءَ فِي خَلْقِهِ يُعَبِّرُونَ عَنْهُ إِلَى خَلْقِهِ وَعِبَادِهِ، وَيَدُلُّونَهُمْ عَلَى مَصَالِحِهِمْ وَمَنَافِعِهِمْ وَمَا بِهِ بَقَاؤُهُمْ وَفِي تَرْكِهِ فَنَاؤُهُمْ.

فَثَبَتَ الْآمِرُونَ وَالنَّاهُونَ عَنِ الْحَكِيمِ الْعَلِيمِ فِي خَلْقِهِ، وَالْمُعَبِّرُونَ عَنْهُ جَلَّ وَعَزَّ. وَهُمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءُ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ وَصَفْوَتُهُ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ؛ حُكَمَاءَ مُؤَدَّبِينَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ، مَبْعُوثِينَ بِهَا، غَيْرَ مُشَارِكِينَ لِلنَّاسِ مَعَ مُشَارَكَتِهِمْ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ وَالتَّرْكِيبِ فِي شَيْءٍ مِنْ أَحْوَالِهِمْ، مُؤَيَّدِينَ مِنْ عِنْدِ الْحَكِيمِ الْعَلِيمِ بِالْحِكْمَةِ(1) .

“When it became established for us that we have a Creator and Maker who is transcendent above us and above everything He has created, and that this Maker is Wise and exalted, it became impossible for His creatures to see Him or touch Him, so that He might directly interact with them and they with Him, and so that they might debate with one another.

Therefore, it became established that He has ambassadors among His creatures who communicate His message to His creatures and servants, guide them toward what is beneficial and advantageous for them, and inform them of that through which their existence is preserved and the abandonment of which would lead to their destruction.

Thus, there must be those among His creation who command and prohibit on behalf of the All-Wise, All-Knowing One, and who communicate His message. They are the Prophets (as) and His chosen ones from among His creation: wise men who have been disciplined and educated through wisdom and sent with wisdom. Although they share with other human beings in their physical creation and constitution, they are distinguished from them in their other characteristics and are supported with wisdom by the All-Wise, All-Knowing God.”

If Allah had wished, He could have communicated directly with all His creatures. This would not be more difficult for Him than communicating directly with a select group and speaking to others through them.

However, this is not how He has acted in practice. We observe that, generally speaking, human beings do not have a reciprocal, direct communication with Allah.

Of course, every person can speak to his Lord and engage in intimate supplication (*munajat*) with Him, and Allah hears everyone's words; no intermediary is required for this.

But human beings' becoming aware of Allah's will, His pleasure, and His displeasure is something that, for humanity in general, has not been communicated without an intermediary. (1)

The Position of Divine Ambassadorship and Communicating on Behalf of Allah

The transcendence of Allah above the attributes of His creatures necessarily means that none of His creatures can directly confront Him and engage in conversation with Him.
Such a relationship cannot be established from the human side with Allah. It is only Allah, the Most High, who establishes such a relationship with whomever He wishes, appointing that person as His **safir** and **mu‘abbir** among the people.
Therefore, this means of communication is closed from our side. It is Allah who establishes such a relationship with whomever He chooses.
He also provides signs by which people can recognize with whom Allah has established such a relationship. These signs are the **miracles** manifested through the hands of the Prophets and Imams (as).
Holding a position granted by Allah necessarily requires that the chosen individual be supported and confirmed by his Creator and never depart from the path of Allah's pleasure.
The very nature of being Allah's ambassador and communicator on His behalf requires that this person's words and actions constitute a **hujjah** for others.
If people were to entertain the possibility that such a person could make mistakes or errors, they would no longer be able to place confidence in anything he conveyed from Allah. This would defeat the very purpose of Allah's sending messengers and raising prophets.
Therefore, possessing divine knowledge and wisdom in which error has no place, together with the perfection of **‘ismah**—divine preservation and protection—is necessary for holding the position of Allah's **safir** and **mu‘abbir**.

Allah's Identification of the Divine Guides

The characteristics described for Allah's chosen ones are not things that human beings can create in someone according to their own wishes and preferences. Nor can human beings, merely through their own intellect, necessarily recognize those who possess such characteristics.

Therefore, both the granting of these characteristics and the identification of those who possess them must come from Allah Himself.
Allah grants these qualities to whomever He chooses, and He Himself introduces and identifies these individuals.
For example, recognizing the quality of **'ismah** is beyond the capacity of the human intellect.
At most, within a very limited sphere that religion itself has taught us, we may determine whether a Prophet or Imam acts in accordance with divine guidance or not. But this, in itself, is not 'ismah.
'Ismah means divine preservation and protection from every possibility of error and deviation. This is not an outwardly visible characteristic that can be detected through the senses or established directly through ordinary rational observation.
Therefore, the only way to become certain that such a characteristic exists in Allah's chosen ones is for Allah Himself to establish signs through which these individuals can be recognized.
One such sign is the **miracle**—an extraordinary act demonstrating that divine power, rather than human power, is present in Allah's chosen one. It is a power that cannot be acquired through ordinary human faculties.
Once the prophethood of a messenger has been established, our **awsiya'** are also identified by that messenger as being appointed by Allah.
When determining the truth of such a claim, we must not encounter anything incompatible with the position of divine ambassadorship and communicating on behalf of Allah. If such incompatibility is found, it becomes clear that the person is falsely claiming a divine position and office.
For example, Allah's chosen ones must be the most knowledgeable human beings concerning Allah, and their words and actions must bring a person to a deeper understanding of the Oneness of Allah.
If, hypothetically, they were ignorant or only partially informed about Allah and His commandments, and themselves required other human beings to guide and teach them, then their words could not be relied upon.
Here the wisdom of the profound supplication taught by Imam al-Sadiq (as) becomes clear:

اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي نَفْسَكَ، فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ لَمْ تُعَرِّفْنِي نَفْسَكَ لَمْ أَعْرِفْ نَبِيَّكَ.
اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي رَسُولَكَ، فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ لَمْ تُعَرِّفْنِي رَسُولَكَ لَمْ أَعْرِفْ حُجَّتَكَ.
اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي حُجَّتَكَ، فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ لَمْ تُعَرِّفْنِي حُجَّتَكَ ضَلَلْتُ عَنْ دِينِي(1) .

"O Allah, make Yourself known to me. For if You do not make Yourself known to me, I will not know Your Prophet.
O Allah, make Your Messenger known to me. For if You do not make Your Messenger known to me, I will not know Your Hujjah.
O Allah, make Your Hujjah known to me. For if You do not make Your Hujjah known to me, I will go astray from my religion."
This is a supplication that Imam al-Sadiq (as) taught specifically for the period of the **ghaybah** of Imam al-'Asr (as).
Its meaning is that knowledge of the Prophets of Allah comes through knowing Allah and through His identification of them, while knowledge of Allah's Hujjah comes through the Prophets.
Knowledge of Allah Himself does not require the mediation of anyone else.

Allah Is Known Through Allah, and the Messenger Through His Messengership

Allah is known through Allah Himself. But the Messenger of Allah is known through the **risalah** that he has received from Allah.
Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (as) says:

اعْرِفُوا اللهَ بِاللهِ، وَالرَّسُولَ بِالرِّسَالَةِ(1) .

"Know Allah through Allah, and know the Messenger through his messengership."
What is the messengership of the Messenger?
It is to make human beings more acquainted with the God known through their innate nature (*fitrah*), and to advance them along the path of deeper knowledge of Him and greater servitude to Him.
Although a person does not initially come to know Allah through the Prophets—instead, he knows Allah through Allah Himself—the Prophets are the ones who preserve human beings upon the path of knowing Allah.
Their words, their actions, and their entire lives are an invitation toward **tawhid** and servitude to Allah. (2)

This is also the best means of recognizing the true Prophets and distinguishing them from false claimants to divine ambassadorship and prophethood.
Therefore, the greatest and most important proof of the truthfulness of the Prophet, and the strongest testimony to his truthfulness, is the Sacred Essence of the Lord Himself, Who says:

قُلْ أَيُّ شَيْءٍ أَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً ۖ قُلِ اللهُ شَهِيدٌ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ(3) .

"Say: 'What is the greatest testimony?' Say: 'Allah is witness between me and you.'"
The reason for this is that the words and commands of the Prophet of Islam (saww) advance a person along the path of knowing Allah.
The best way to understand the truthfulness of the Messenger is for a person to examine whether his invitation leads toward the very God whom he knows through his innate nature, and whether his words serve as a reminder of that same innate recognition.
The mission of all the Prophets of Allah was to cultivate human beings for the ma'rifah and worship of Almighty Allah. Acting upon their teachings advances a person along this path.
Therefore, the foundation of a Prophet's messengership and prophethood is established through Allah Himself and through His identification of that Prophet. Once the Messenger's risalah has been accepted, following the path to which he invites practically makes a person more knowledgeable of Allah and more deeply His servant in the presence of His Sacred Essence.

The Chosen Nature of the Divine Guides

Introduction
If this is the case, then those who are to serve as teachers and guides for humanity on the path of servitude to Allah must themselves have attained the greatest possible share of **ma'rifah** of Almighty Allah and servitude to Him. In other words, they must be His sincere and devoted servants, to such a degree that Allah Himself has brought them to the rank of **ikhlas**—complete sincerity and purity in servitude.
The Holy Qur'an says:

“And remember Our servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, possessors of strength and insight. Indeed, We purified them with a special quality: the remembrance of the Hereafter. And indeed, in Our sight they are among the chosen and the best.”

(Surah Sad 38:45–47) (1)

The Prophets of Allah have been kept pure through Allah Himself, and Allah protects them from error and sin. For example, concerning Prophet Yusuf (as), we read:

“And she certainly desired him, and he would have desired her had he not seen the proof of his Lord. Thus We turned away from him evil and indecency. Indeed, he was among Our sincerely purified servants.”

(Surah Yusuf 12:24) (2)

References:

(1) Surah Sad (38), verses 45–47.

(2) Surah Yusuf (12), verse 24.

The Rank of Ikhlas in Servitude to Allah

When Allah wishes to protect someone from falling into sin, it is sufficient for Him to intensify His **ma‘rifah** within that person to such a degree that he sees Allah as present and watching over his actions. When this inward awareness becomes strong within a person, he no longer pursues sin. And the more this state becomes manifest, the more he gradually reaches a point where he even forgets the thought of committing sin.

Likewise, the more intensely a person remembers death and the Hereafter, the less he will approach sin. Through all these means, Allah can protect His chosen servants from deviation and error.

Therefore, Allah’s purifying and protecting His chosen servants does not mean that He removes their free will. Rather, Allah brings them to such a state that, through their own choice and free will, they do not incline toward evil.

For example, when Prophet Yusuf (as) saw the proof of his Lord, he did not even form an intention to commit the sinful act. (1) What exactly that divine proof was is not important here. What is important is that Allah does not abandon His

chosen servants to themselves. He preserves them throughout the path of servitude to Him.
Allah's purification and protection of His chosen servants is so certain and explicit that even Satan has despaired of being able to influence them:
"He said: By Your might, I shall surely mislead them all, except Your sincerely purified servants among them."
(Surah Sad 38:82–83) (2)

Footnotes:

(1) Imam al-Ridha (as) said:
لَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهِ، وَلَوْلَا أَنْ رَأَى بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ، لَهَمَّ بِهَا كَمَا هَمَّتْ بِهِ، لَكِنَّهُ كَانَ مَعْصُومًا، وَالْمَعْصُومُ لَا يَهُمُّ بِذَنْبٍ وَلَا يَأْتِيهِ. وَلَقَدْ حَدَّثَنِي أَبِي عَنْ أَبِيهِ الصَّادِقِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ أَنَّهُ قَالَ: هَمَّتْ بِأَنْ تَفْعَلَ، وَهَمَّ بِأَنْ لَا يَفْعَلَ.
"Indeed, she desired him. And had he not seen the proof of his Lord, he would have desired her just as she desired him. However, he was **ma'sūm**, and the ma'sūm neither intends to commit a sin nor commits it. My father narrated to me from his father, Imam al-Sadiq (as), that he said: She intended to commit the act, whereas he intended not to commit it."
Thus, Prophet Yusuf (as), through the divine care and assistance of Allah, not only did not intend to commit the sin, but because of divine **'ismah**, he intended not to commit it.
'Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha (as), vol. 1, p. 201.
(2) Surah Sad (38), verses 82–83.
It becomes clear that Allah even made His sincerely purified servants known to Satan and manifested their special characteristic of **'ismah** to him, so that all creation would know that the position of these chosen ones is different from that of others and that Allah Himself has undertaken to protect them.
Divine grace, however, is not limited merely to protecting these noble personalities from dangers. Rather, Allah gives them special care throughout every stage of their upbringing and spiritual formation, so that they are developed exactly according to what He desires and approves.

For example, Allah revealed to the mother of Prophet Musa (as) that she should place him in a chest and cast it into the river. He then placed him in the care of Pharaoh, who was the enemy of Allah and of Musa, and said:

“And I bestowed upon you love from Me, so that you would be brought up under My eye.”

(Surah Ta-Ha 20:39) (1)

Allah placed a special love for Prophet Musa (as) in the hearts of others, including Pharaoh, so that everyone would love him and Musa (as) would be raised and nurtured in the manner Allah desired.

Thus, Almighty Allah places the upbringing of His chosen servants under His special mercy and particular divine care, preparing them for their divine mission and causing pure and absolute servitude to Him to become manifest within them.

In continuation of these verses, Allah says:

“And I chose you for Myself.”

(Surah Ta-Ha 20:41) (2)

Allah, the Exalted, describes Prophet Musa (as) as one specially prepared and chosen by Him because He nurtured him throughout every stage of his life according to His own pleasure.

The other chosen servants of Allah have likewise been under His special care. Therefore, the divine guides have always been the best and purest of His servants.

References:

(1) Surah Ta-Ha (20), verse 39.

(2) Surah Ta-Ha (20), verse 41.

Worshipping Allah Through Submission to His Chosen Servants

Introduction

After Allah has introduced His chosen servants to the people, what is required of the people is to **submit to and accept the ma‘rifah of those chosen ones**.

This is precisely the same responsibility that falls upon people after they come to know Allah Himself. Once Allah has made Himself known, their duty is to accept and submit to Him; thereafter, with regard to His Messengers and divine **Hujjaj**, they have the same responsibility.

The traditions concerning the obligatory **ma'rifah** upon human beings are, in fact, generally not restricted to ma'rifah of Allah alone.
Consider, for example, the following noble tradition from Imam al-Sadiq (as), which we cited in the first chapter of the previous section:

لَيْسَ لِلَّهِ عَلَى خَلْقِهِ أَنْ يَعْرِفُوا، وَلِلْخَلْقِ عَلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يُعَرِّفَهُمْ، وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى الْخَلْقِ إِذَا عَرَّفَهُمْ أَنْ يَقْبَلُوا.

"Allah has no obligation upon His creation that they must know Him. Rather, the right of the creation upon Allah is that He make Himself known to them. And once He has made Himself known to them, Allah has the right upon His creation that they accept Him." (1)
As can be seen, the tradition does not specify the object of **ma'rifah**. It is therefore not merely describing ma'rifah of Allah; rather, it also encompasses **ma'rifah of the divine Hujjaj**.
Reference:
(1) *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 164, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, chapter "Hujaj Allah 'ala Khalqihi," hadith 1.

The Necessity of Knowing the Messenger (saww)

Just as the duty of people, after knowing Allah, is to accept and submit to Him, so too, after recognizing His chosen servants, their duty is to accept and acknowledge them.
This acceptance—which is obligatory both rationally and according to revelation—is expressed as **ma'rifat al-Imam**, the recognition of the Imam, which is obligatory upon people.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) has said:

إِنَّ أَفْضَلَ الْفَرَائِضِ وَأَوْجَبَهَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ مَعْرِفَةُ الرَّبِّ وَالْإِقْرَارُ لَهُ بِالْعُبُودِيَّةِ ... وَبَعْدَهُ مَعْرِفَةُ الرَّسُولِ وَالشَّهَادَةُ لَهُ بِالنُّبُوَّةِ، وَأَدْنَى مَعْرِفَةِ الرَّسُولِ الْإِقْرَارُ بِنُبُوَّتِهِ، وَأَنَّ مَا أَتَى بِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ أَوْ أَمْرٍ أَوْ نَهْيٍ فَذَلِكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ.

"Indeed, the most excellent and most obligatory of duties upon a human being is the **ma'rifah of the Lord and acknowledgment of servitude to Him**... Then comes the ma'rifah of the Messenger and bearing witness to his prophethood.
The minimum degree of ma'rifah of the Messenger is that a person acknowledge his prophethood and acknowledge that whatever he has brought—whether a Book, a command, or a prohibition—is from Allah, the Mighty and Majestic." (2)

Here we see that **ma‘rifah has been interpreted as iqrar—acknowledgment and acceptance**. This is the share of the human being and his voluntary act after Allah, the Exalted, has introduced His Messenger.

The **ma‘rifah of the Imam (as)**, who is the successor of the Messenger of Allah (saww), is likewise regarded as obligatory after the ma‘rifah of the Messenger (saww). This will be discussed in the chapters that follow.

Reference:

(2) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 36, p. 407, hadith 16, from *Kifayat al-Athar*.

In summary, Almighty Allah has determined the path of servitude to Him, and this path is exclusively through **knowing His chosen servants and submitting to the position and divinely granted authority that their Lord has bestowed upon them**. No one’s worship is accepted by Allah except through this path.

Therefore, if someone imagines that he has recognized Allah and acknowledged His Lordship, and bows his head in submission before His sacred presence, yet denies—or even remains in doubt or hesitation regarding—the only path that Allah Himself has established for His worship, then in reality he is not a servant of Allah. Rather, he is following his own desires, inclinations, and personal judgment. If such a person is truly submitted to his Lord, then what is preventing him from accepting the very gateway through which Allah has ordained that He be worshipped?!

The truth is that such a person has not truly accepted Allah as his **Rabb**, his Master, and the One who possesses authority and choice over him.

Satan’s Arrogance in Refusing to Prostrate before Adam (as)

The incident that occurred at the creation of Prophet Adam (as) is a lesson for all those who imagine that Allah can be worshipped according to their own inclinations and previous assumptions.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

…قَالَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ: اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ، فَسَجَدُوا لَهُ، فَأَخْرَجَ إِبْلِيسُ مَا كَانَ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِنَ الْحَسَدِ فَأَبَى أَنْ يَسْجُدَ، فَقَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: مَا مَنَعَكَ أَلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ؟ فَقَالَ: أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ، خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ.

فَأَوَّلُ مَنْ قَاسَ إِبْلِيسُ، وَاسْتَكْبَرَ، وَالِاسْتِكْبَارُ هُوَ أَوَّلُ مَعْصِيَةٍ عُصِيَ اللَّهُ بِهَا. فَقَالَ إِبْلِيسُ: يَا رَبِّ، أَعْفِنِي مِنَ السُّجُودِ لِآدَمَ وَأَنَا أَعْبُدُكَ عِبَادَةً لَمْ يَعْبُدْكَهَا مَلَكٌ مُقَرَّبٌ وَلَا نَبِيٌّ مُرْسَلٌ. فَقَالَ اللَّهُ: لَا حَاجَةَ لِي إِلَى عِبَادَتِكَ، إِنَّمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُعْبَدَ مِنْ حَيْثُ أُرِيدُ، لَا مِنْ حَيْثُ تُرِيدُ. فَأَبَى أَنْ يَسْجُدَ، فَقَالَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى: اخْرُجْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَجِيمٌ، وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ لَعْنَتِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ(2)(1) .

“Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, said to the angels: ‘Prostrate before Adam.’ So they prostrated before him.

Then Iblis brought out the envy that was in his heart and refused to prostrate. Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, said:

‘What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you?’

He replied:

‘I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay.’

Thus, Iblis was the first one to use analogy. And he became arrogant. Arrogance was the first act of disobedience by which Allah was disobeyed.

Then Iblis said:

‘My Lord, excuse me from prostrating before Adam, and instead I will worship You with a form of worship with which neither a near angel nor a sent Prophet has worshipped You.’

Allah said:

‘I have no need of your worship. I only wish to be worshipped in the manner that I wish, not in the manner that you wish.’

But Iblis refused to prostrate. So Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, said:

‘Get out from it, for you are accursed, and indeed My curse shall be upon you until the Day of Judgment.’” (3)

We see that Satan was not, outwardly, denying Allah’s divinity or His Lordship. Indeed, when he called upon Allah, he said: **“O my Lord” (Ya Rabb).**

However, because he refused to acknowledge and accept the virtues and position of Allah’s **khalifah**, Prophet Adam (as)—foremost among them being his divinely granted vicegerency—he became arrogant (4) and proposed another path of worshiping Allah, different from the path Allah Himself had established.

Yet the spirit and reality of servitude to Allah is that **His command must be obeyed**. An act is truly worship only when it is performed with the intention of fulfilling His command, together with submission and surrender to His will.

If this condition is absent, then no matter how much Satan, a human being, or any other creature strives and exerts himself, his effort is not worship of Allah. Rather, it is rebellion and disobedience against Almighty Allah.

The path of servitude to Allah is determined and established by Allah Himself, and He has made it inseparable from **submission to and acceptance of the divinely appointed position of His chosen servants**.

References

(1) Surah al-A'raf (7), verse 12.

(2) Surah Sad (38), verses 77–78.

(3) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 11, p. 141, hadith 7, from *Tafsir al-Qummi*.

(4) According to numerous traditions transmitted from the Imams (as), Allah's command to prostrate before Adam (as) was given as a means of honoring and exalting him, and so that those who prostrated would acknowledge and affirm his virtue.

Amir al-Mu'minin Imam Ali (as) describes the reason for the obligation of prostrating before Adam (as) in these words:

لَكِنِ اعْتِرَافًا لِآدَمَ بِالْفَضِيلَةِ

"Rather, it was in acknowledgment of Adam's virtue."

Tafsir Kanz al-Daqa'iq, vol. 1, p. 355, quoting *Al-Ihtijaj*.

The virtue of Prophet Adam (as), however, was also due to the fact that he was the bearer of the lights of the Fourteen Infallibles (as). Satan refused to submit and humble himself before these sacred lights and therefore refused to prostrate before Adam (as), ultimately becoming a kafir.

Part of a statement of Imam Hasan al-Askari (as) on this matter is:

أَمَرَ اللَّهُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ بِالسُّجُودِ لِآدَمَ تَعْظِيمًا لَهُ وَأَنَّهُ قَدْ فَضَّلَهُ بِأَنْ جَعَلَهُ وِعَاءً لِتِلْكَ الْأَشْبَاحِ الَّتِي قَدْ عَمَّ أَنْوَارُهَا الْآفَاقَ. فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسُ، أَبَى أَنْ يَتَوَاضَعَ لِجَلَالِ عَظَمَةِ اللَّهِ وَأَنْ يَتَوَاضَعَ لِأَنْوَارِنَا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ، وَقَدْ تَوَاضَعَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كُلُّهَا، فَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَتَرَفَّعَ، وَكَانَ بِإِبَائِهِ ذَلِكَ وَتَكَبُّرِهِ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ.

"Allah commanded the angels to prostrate before Adam, honoring him, and because He had favored him by making him a vessel for those luminous forms whose light had spread throughout the horizons.

So they all prostrated except Iblis. He refused to humble himself before the majesty of Allah's greatness and refused to humble himself before our lights, the Ahlul Bayt. All the angels humbled themselves, but he became arrogant and exalted himself. Through that refusal and arrogance, he became one of the disbelievers."

Tafsir Kanz al-Daqa'iq, vol. 1, p. 358, quoting *Sharh al-Ayat al-Bahirah*.

From this tradition and similar narrations, it can be understood that the cause of Satan's disbelief was his refusal to acknowledge the virtues and divinely granted stations of Allah's chosen successors—Prophet Adam (as) and the sacred lights of the Fourteen Infallibles (as).

Thus, the path of servitude to Allah is not something that a person may invent according to his own preferences, reasoning, or previous assumptions. **Allah alone determines how He is to be worshipped.** True servitude means accepting His command, submitting to His chosen representatives, and worshipping Him precisely through the path that He Himself has established.

Satan's Lack of Heartfelt Faith in Allah

Yes; if a person's faith is not merely limited to verbal acknowledgment, but he has truly believed in the Almighty Allah with his heart, then the necessary consequence of such faith is complete submission to the command of the Almighty Lord.

Amir al-Mu'minin Imam Ali (as) says:

إِنَّ الْإِيمَانَ قَدْ يَكُونُ عَلَى وَجْهَيْنِ: إِيمَانٌ بِالْقَلْبِ، وَإِيمَانٌ بِاللِّسَانِ، كَمَا كَانَ إِيمَانُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ عَلَى عَهْدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَمَّا قَهَرَهُمْ بِالسَّيْفِ وَشَمِلَهُمُ الْخَوْفُ. فَإِنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا بِأَلْسِنَتِهِمْ وَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ قُلُوبُهُمْ. فَالْإِيمَانُ بِالْقَلْبِ هُوَ التَّسْلِيمُ لِلرَّبِّ. وَمَنْ سَلَّمَ الْأُمُورَ لِمَالِكِهَا لَمْ يَسْتَكْبِرْ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ، كَمَا اسْتَكْبَرَ إِبْلِيسُ عَنِ السُّجُودِ لِآدَمَ، وَاسْتَكْبَرَ أَكْثَرُ الْأُمَمِ عَنْ طَاعَةِ أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ، فَلَمْ يَنْفَعْهُمُ التَّوْحِيدُ كَمَا لَمْ يَنْفَعْ إِبْلِيسَ ذَلِكَ السُّجُودُ الطَّوِيلُ. فَإِنَّهُ سَجَدَ سَجْدَةً وَاحِدَةً أَرْبَعَةَ آلَافِ عَامٍ لَمْ يُرِدْ بِهَا غَيْرَ زُخْرُفِ الدُّنْيَا وَالتَّمْكِينِ مِنَ النَّظِرَةِ(1) .

"Indeed, faith can be of two kinds: **faith of the heart and faith of the tongue**, just as the faith of the hypocrites during the time of the Messenger of Allah (saww)

was when he had overcome them by the sword and fear had encompassed them. They believed with their tongues, but their hearts did not believe.
Faith of the heart is submission to the Lord. Whoever entrusts all matters to their rightful Owner does not become arrogant against His command, just as Iblis became arrogant against prostrating before Adam, and as most nations became arrogant against obeying their Prophets. Therefore, their belief in Divine Oneness did not benefit them, just as that lengthy prostration did not benefit Iblis.
For he performed a single prostration that lasted four thousand years, but he intended by it nothing other than the adornment of this world and securing the opportunity for a respite."
We know that after Satan was expelled from the presence of Allah, he requested that he be allowed to remain alive until the Day of Judgment. Here, the Imam (as) explains that his four-thousand-year prostration was for this very reason: if one day he were to ask Allah for a respite, his request would be granted. (2)
This was nothing other than a worldly objective. That prostration did not benefit Satan and did not help him at the very moment when it should have protected him from falling into error, because the spirit of servitude was absent from his actions. His actions did not make him a completely devoted servant of Allah.
The same was true of most of the earlier nations. Although they accepted Divine Oneness, because they did not submit to their Prophets, even their belief in tawhid did not benefit them and did not bring them from the valley of misguidance onto the path of guidance.
Therefore, the only path of salvation is **submission to the Prophets and the divine Hujjaj, who are the chosen servants of the Lord**.

Reference:

(1) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 27, p. 175, hadith 20, from *Al-Ihtijaj* of al-Tabrisi.

Footnote (2):

There is no need to assume that Satan possessed knowledge of the unseen in order to accept this explanation. It is sufficient to say that the purpose of Satan's four-thousand-year prostration was not sincere servitude to Allah. Rather, in his own calculation, he wanted to acquire a position and standing before Allah through this act, so that he could eventually make worldly use of the position he

had supposedly attained. This possible anticipation is sufficient to explain Satan's wrongful intention.

The Station of Khilafah for the Hujjaj of Allah

Introduction

Allah has given His specially chosen servants the title **Khalifatullah — the vicegerent of Allah**.

Regarding the creation of Prophet Adam (as), we read:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً

"And when your Lord said to the angels: Indeed, I am going to place a vicegerent upon the earth."

(Surah al-Baqarah 2:30) (1)

But in what sense was Prophet Adam (as) called the **Khalifah of Allah**?

Allah has no likeness or similarity with any created being such that someone could become His successor in the ordinary sense. So what does **khilafah** mean here?

A successor or representative of a person is someone who, when direct access to that person is unavailable, manages his affairs on his behalf. Those who wish to establish a relationship with the person being represented know that they can accomplish this by approaching his representative.

Of course, Allah is never absent from His creation. However, as explained previously, the two-way channel of communication from the servant toward Allah does not become available simply through a person's own desire and choice. Therefore, we turn to Allah's **Khalifah** in order to receive from him that which we have no independent means of obtaining ourselves.

He is the one who has a connection with Allah, is informed of Allah's will, does not confuse the word of Allah with anything else, and is protected from the influence of satanic insinuations.

The ‘Ismah of Allah’s Khalifah

From this it becomes clear that the title **Khalifatullah** applies only to the divinely chosen and infallible Hujjaj of Allah. No one other than them can properly be described by this title.

The traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (as) likewise use **Khalifatullah** in this very sense. Imam al-Baqir (as) has narrated from his noble grandfather, Amir al-Mu’minin Imam Ali (as), an explanation of the verse under discussion:

قَالَ: «إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً» لِي عَلَيْهِمْ، فَيَكُونُ حُجَّةً لِي عَلَيْهِمْ فِي أَرْضِي.

“He said: ‘Indeed, I am placing a vicegerent upon the earth’—a vicegerent of Mine over them, so that he may be My Hujjah against them upon My earth.”

The continuation of the tradition contains another statement from Almighty Allah:

إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَخْلُقَ خَلْقًا بِيَدِي، أَجْعَلُ ذُرِّيَّتَهُ أَنْبِيَاءَ مُرْسَلِينَ، وَعِبَادًا صَالِحِينَ، وَأَئِمَّةً مُهْتَدِينَ. أَجْعَلُهُمْ خُلَفَائِي عَلَى خَلْقِي فِي أَرْضِي، يَنْهَوْنَهُمْ عَنِ الْمَعَاصِي، وَيُنْذِرُونَهُمْ عَذَابِي، وَيَهْدُونَهُمْ إِلَى طَاعَتِي، وَيَسْلُكُونَ بِهِمْ إِلَى طَرِيقِ سَبِيلِي، وَأَجْعَلُهُمْ حُجَّةً لِي(1) .

“Indeed, I intend to create a creature with My hands, and I shall make from his descendants sent Prophets, righteous servants, and rightly guided Imams.

I shall make them My vicegerents over My creation upon My earth. They will prevent them from sins, warn them of My punishment, guide them toward obedience to Me, lead them onto My path, and I shall make them My Hujjah over them.”

It is clear from this passage that the station of **Khalifatullah** belongs exclusively to Allah’s chosen Hujjaj. Therefore, attributing this title indiscriminately to all human beings is completely unacceptable.

This is a divinely established station that no one can simply disregard and say:

“I want to be a servant of Allah, but I have nothing to do with His Khalifah, who is the only gateway to His servitude.”

This is not possible. For denying Allah’s Khalifah and refusing to submit to him is, in reality, a denial of Allah Himself and of His Lordship.

Reference:

(1) *Tafsir Nur al-Thaqalayn*, vol. 1, pp. 51–52.

Ma‘rifah of the Divine Successors: An Essential Requirement, Not Merely a Means

Of course, this discussion should not lead us to think that submission to Allah’s successors and Messengers has merely a **instrumental (tariqiyyah)** function for discovering Allah’s laws, while accepting their prophethood or Imamate has no intrinsic importance of its own.

No. This is not the case.

What Allah has required, first and foremost, is acceptance of the **divine station of His chosen servants**, followed thereafter by receiving the divine commands through them.

In other words, acceptance of them has both **subjective/intrinsic significance (mawdhu‘iyyah)** and **instrumental significance (tariqiyyah)**.

Acknowledgment of their prophethood or Imamate stands at the forefront of all obligations after accepting the ma‘rifah of Allah and occupies the highest position among the things that earn Divine pleasure—as indicated in the traditions, including an example cited earlier.

After that, discovering Allah’s pleasure and displeasure in all matters is possible only by referring to them.

Therefore, a believer who has faith in Allah has **two responsibilities** toward these divinely chosen personalities:

1. To accept the personalities themselves and submit to their divinely granted station and office.
2. To accept what is conveyed and expressed through them.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

مَنْ زَعَمَ أَنَّهُ يَحِلُّ الْحَلَالَ وَيُحَرِّمُ الْحَرَامَ بِغَيْرِ مَعْرِفَةِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَمْ يُحِلَّ لِلَّهِ حَلَالًا وَلَمْ يُحَرِّمْ لَهُ حَرَامًا. وَإِنَّ مَنْ صَلَّى وَزَكَّى وَحَجَّ وَاعْتَمَرَ وَفَعَلَ ذَلِكَ كُلَّهُ بِغَيْرِ مَعْرِفَةِ مَنِ افْتَرَضَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ طَاعَتَهُ، فَلَمْ يَفْعَلْ شَيْئًا مِنْ ذَلِكَ؛ لَمْ يُصَلِّ وَلَمْ يَصُمْ وَلَمْ يُزَكِّ وَلَمْ يَحُجَّ وَلَمْ يَعْتَمِرْ وَلَمْ يَغْتَسِلْ مِنَ الْجَنَابَةِ وَلَمْ يَتَطَهَّرْ وَلَمْ يُحَرِّمْ لِلَّهِ حَرَامًا وَلَمْ يُحِلَّ لِلَّهِ حَلَالًا. لَيْسَ لَهُ صَلَاةٌ وَإِنْ رَكَعَ وَإِنْ سَجَدَ، وَلَا لَهُ زَكَاةٌ وَلَا حَجٌّ. وَإِنَّمَا ذَلِكَ كُلُّهُ يَكُونُ بِمَعْرِفَةِ رَجُلٍ مَنَّ اللَّهُ جَلَّ وَعَزَّ عَلَى خَلْقِهِ بِطَاعَتِهِ وَأَمَرَ بِالْأَخْذِ عَنْهُ. فَمَنْ عَرَفَهُ وَأَخَذَ عَنْهُ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ(1) .

“Whoever claims that he can declare the lawful to be lawful and the unlawful to be unlawful without knowing the Prophet (saww) has, in reality, neither declared any of Allah’s lawful things lawful nor any of His unlawful things unlawful.
And whoever performs prayer, gives zakat, performs Hajj and ‘Umrah, and does all of these things without knowing the one whose obedience Allah has made obligatory upon him, has in reality performed none of these acts.
He has neither prayed, nor fasted, nor given zakat, nor performed Hajj or ‘Umrah; he has neither performed the ritual bath for janabah nor purified himself; he has neither declared anything forbidden by Allah to be forbidden nor anything lawful by Allah to be lawful.
He has no prayer, even if he bows and prostrates. He has no zakat and no Hajj.
All of this is only realized through knowing a person upon whose obedience Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, has bestowed a favor upon His creation and commanded them to receive from him.
Thus, whoever knows him and takes from him has obeyed Allah.”

Reference:

(1) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 27, p. 176, hadith 21, from *‘Ilal al-Shara’i‘*.

Therefore, **both conditions are necessary for salvation: ma‘rifah and akhdh—knowing and receiving/accepting**.

One cannot simply content himself with acting upon their instructions while paying no attention to the personalities themselves.

The Prophets and their successors are not merely channels or transmitters through which divine laws reach humanity. Beyond this function, **knowing them personally and recognizing their divinely granted attributes and position is itself a condition of servitude to Allah**.

That is why genuine submission to them necessarily encompasses both aspects together. Falling short in this matter is not something that can simply be overlooked or forgiven by Allah.

Doubt Regarding the Station of Allah's Khalifah

The importance of this submission is such that if a person even harbors doubt regarding the divinely granted station of Allah's chosen successors, he does not receive Divine care or attention from his Lord.

It is narrated that among the Children of Israel there was a family in which, whenever any member of the family supplicated before Allah for forty nights and asked Him for a need, he would never return empty-handed.

Then one of them spent forty nights in **tahajjud** and supplication, asking Allah for his need, but his request was not granted.

He went to Prophet Isa (as), complained about his condition, and asked him to pray for him.

Prophet Isa (as) performed ablution and stood for prayer. He then supplicated to Allah. Allah responded to His Prophet:

يَا عِيسَى، إِنَّ عَبْدِي أَتَانِي مِنْ غَيْرِ الْبَابِ الَّذِي أُوتِيَ مِنْهُ. إِنَّهُ دَعَانِي وَفِي قَلْبِهِ شَكٌّ مِنْكَ. فَلَوْ دَعَانِي حَتَّى يَنْقَطِعَ عُنُقُهُ وَتَنْتَثِرَ أَنَامِلُهُ، مَا اسْتَجَبْتُ لَهُ.

"O Isa! My servant has come to Me through a door other than the one through which one must come to Me. He has called upon Me while there is doubt about you in his heart.

Even if he were to call upon Me until his neck were severed and his fingers fell apart, I would not answer him."

Prophet Isa (as) turned toward the man and said:

تَدْعُو رَبَّكَ وَأَنْتَ فِي شَكٍّ مِنْ نَبِيِّهِ؟

"You are calling upon your Lord while you have doubt regarding His Prophet?"

The man replied:

يَا رُوحَ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتَهُ، قَدْ كَانَ وَاللَّهِ مَا قُلْتَ، فَادْعُ اللَّهَ لِي أَنْ يَذْهَبَ بِهِ عَنِّي.

"O Spirit of Allah and His Word! By Allah, it was exactly as you have said. So pray to Allah that He remove this doubt from me."

Prophet Isa (as) prayed for him, and Allah accepted his repentance and accepted him, and he returned to the same standing as the other members of his family. (1)

Reference:

(1) *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 400, *Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr*, chapter "Al-Shakk," hadith 9.

It can be seen that even this degree of falling short in submission to the Prophet and Hujjah of Allah caused the man to be deprived of Divine favor.

As explained earlier, the state of **shakk** arises in a person because of hesitation and uncertainty regarding his duty of submission.

The man from among the Children of Israel, although he did not regard himself as free from fault, asked the Prophet of his time to pray to Allah to remove his doubt—and Allah did remove that doubt.

Thus, although the actual occurrence of doubt is not itself a voluntary act, its emergence can nevertheless be connected to a person's own voluntary choices.

A person must therefore remain vigilant. Even a moment of negligence, carelessness, or failure to fulfill one's duty may cause a person to slip permanently into the abyss of destruction.

After that, it is not known whether Allah's grace will come to his aid and bring him among the people of salvation. It is entirely possible that he may never emerge from that state.

Therefore, **even for a single moment, negligence in submitting to Allah's chosen servants is not permissible.**

The Chosen Among the Chosen of Allah

Introduction

Among all those whom Allah has specially chosen, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saww) and his purified Ahlul Bayt (as) possess certain characteristics that distinguish them from all others. Therefore, they may rightly be described as **the chosen among the chosen**.

It is narrated that Prophet Sheeth (as), the successor of Prophet Adam (as), inherited from his father a written document containing matters concerning the ranks of the prophets and the divine successors, as well as the superiority of the Fourteen Infallibles (as) over all others. Here, we mention some passages from

that document, particularly the questions asked by Prophet Adam (as) and the answers given by Allah.

The document begins with these words:

بِسمِ اللهِ الرَّحمنِ الرَّحيم. لا اِلهَ اِلّا اَنا الحَیُّ القَیُّومُ... . خَلَقتُ عِبادی لِعِبادَتی. وَ اَلزَمتُهُم حُجَّتی. اَلا اِنّی باعِثٌ فیهِم رُسُلی وَ مُنَزِّلٌ عَلَیهِم کُتُبی. اُبرِمُ ذلِکَ مِن لَدُن اَوَّلِ مَذکورٍ مِن بَشَرٍ اِلی اَحمَدَ نَبیّی وَ خاتَمِ رُسُلی. ...

"In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. There is no deity except Me, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting... I created My servants so that they would worship Me, and I established My proof over them. Indeed, I shall send My messengers among them and reveal My Books to them. I shall establish this firmly from the time of the first human ever mentioned until Ahmad, My Prophet and the Seal of My Messengers..."

Prophet Adam (as) then asked:

قالَ آدَمُ علیه السّلام: مَن هؤُلاءِ الرُّسُلُ؟ وَ مَن اَحمَدُ هذا الَّذی رَفَعتَ وَ شَرَّفتَ؟ قالَ: کُلٌّ مِن ذُرِّیَّتِکَ. وَ اَحمَدُ عاقِبُهُم وَ وارِثُهُم.

"Adam (as) asked: 'My Lord, who are these messengers? And who is this Ahmad whom You have elevated and honored?'

He said: 'All of them are from your descendants, and Ahmad is the last of them and their inheritor.'"

Adam (as) then asked:

قالَ: یا رَبِّ بِما اَنتَ باعِثُهُم وَ مُرسِلُهُم؟ قالَ: بِتَوحیدی. ثُمَّ اُقَفّی ذلِکَ بِثَلاثِمِاَةٍ وَ ثَلاثینَ شَریعةً اَنظَمُها وَ اَکمَلُها لِاَحمَدَ جَمیعاً.

"Adam (as) asked: 'My Lord, for what purpose will You raise and send them?'

He said: 'To call people to My Tawhid. Thereafter, I shall establish three hundred and thirty revealed laws, the most orderly and complete of which I shall give entirely to Ahmad.'"

Allah then showed Prophet Adam (as) the forms of the prophets and messengers, together with their successors, in the form of luminous spirits. In this presentation, Adam (as) saw that some possessed greater rank and radiance than others. When he asked his Lord about the reason, Allah replied:

اِنّی اَنَا اللهُ. لا اِلهَ اِلّا اَنَا الرَّحمنُ الرَّحیمُ العَزیزُ الحَکیمُ، عالِمُ الغُیُوبِ وَ مُضمَراتِ القُلُوبِ. اَعلَمُ ما لَم یَکُن مِمّا یَکُونَ کَیفَ یَکونُ، وَ ما لا یَکُونُ لَو کانَ کَیفَ یَکُونُ.

“I am Allah; there is no deity except Me—the Beneficent, the Merciful, the Mighty, the Wise, Knower of the unseen and of what is concealed within hearts. I know what does not exist but will come into existence, and how it will be when it comes into existence; and I know that which does not exist, and if it were to exist, how it would be.”

Then Allah says:

وَ اِنّی اطَّلَعتُ – یا عَبدی – فی عِلمی عَلی قُلُوبِ عِبادی، فَلَم اَرَ فیهِم اَطوَعَ لی وَ لا اَنصَحَ لِخَلقی مِن اَنبیائی وَ رُسُلی. فَجَعَلتُ لِذلِک فیهِم رُوحی وَ کَلِمَتی وَ اَلزَمتُهُم عِبءَ حُجَّتی وَ اصطَفَیتُهُم عَلَی البَرایا بِرِسالَتی وَ وَحیی. ...

“O My servant, through My knowledge I examined the hearts of My servants, and I found none among them more obedient to Me and none more sincere in seeking the welfare of My creation than My prophets and messengers. Therefore, I placed My Spirit and My Word among them, entrusted them with the burden of My proof, and chose them above all creatures to convey My Message and My Revelation...”

The Superiority of the Fourteen Infallibles (as) over the Prophets of Allah

Thus far, the virtues of all the divinely chosen ones have been described. The continuation of the narration specifically emphasizes the superiority of the Fourteen Infallibles (as) over the other chosen servants:

ثُمَّ اطَّلَعتُ علی قُلوبِ المُصطَفَینَ مِن رُسُلی، فَلَم اَجِد فیهِم اَطوَعَ لی وَ لا اَنصَحَ لِخَلقی مِن مُحَمَّدٍ خِیَرَتی وَ خالِصَتی. فَاختَرتُهُ عَلی عِلمی وَ رَفَعتُ ذِکرَهُ اِلی ذِکری. ثُمَّ وَجَدتُ کَذلِکَ قُلُوبَ حامَّتِهِ اللّائی مِن بَعدِهِ عَلی صِفَةِ قَلبِهِ فَاَلحَقتُهُم بِهِ وَ جَعَلتُهُم وَرَثَةَ کِتابی وَ وَحیی وَ اَرکانَ حِکمَتی وَ نُوری. وَ آلَیتُ بی اَن لا اُعَذِّبَ بِناری مَن لَقِیَنی مُعتَصِماً بِتَوحیدی وَ حَبلِ مَوَدَّتِهِم اَبَداً.

“Then I examined the hearts of those whom I had chosen from among My messengers, and I found none among them more obedient to Me and more sincere in seeking the welfare of My creation than Muhammad, My chosen and purified one. So, with My knowledge, I chose him and elevated his remembrance alongside My own remembrance.

Then I found the hearts of his close family members who came after him to possess the same quality as his heart. Therefore, I joined them to him and made them the inheritors of My Book and My Revelation, and the pillars of My Wisdom and My Light.

And I swore by Myself that I would never punish with My Fire the one who meets Me while holding firmly to My Tawhid and to the cord of love for them."
Thus, we can explicitly regard the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saww) and the Ahlul Bayt (as) as **the chosen among the chosen of Allah**.
The wisdom indicated in this narration is that Allah, through His eternal knowledge, knew that even if these personalities had been created under the same circumstances as other creatures, they would still have been the most obedient to Him and the most sincere in seeking the welfare of His creation. For this reason, He granted them distinctions and privileges that He did not grant to others.
Up to this point, the comparison has been between the Fourteen Infallibles (as) and the prophets and messengers of Allah, establishing their superiority over the latter.

The Superiority of the Fourteen Infallibles (as) over the Angels

Now let us consider their position in comparison with the angels, who do not disobey Allah and are therefore regarded as among those brought nearest to Him. The following narration deserves attention.
The Messenger of Allah (saww) said:

ما خَلَقَ اللهُ خَلقاً اَفضَلَ مِنّی وَ لا اَکرَمَ عَلَیهِ مِنّی.

"Allah has not created any creature better than me, nor one more honored by Him than me."
Imam Ali (as) asked:
"O Messenger of Allah, are you superior, or is Jibra'il?"
The Prophet (saww) replied:

یا عَلِیُّ، اِنَّ اللهَ تَبارَکَ وَ تَعالی فَضَّلَ اَنبیاءَهُ المُرسَلینَ عَلی مَلائِکَتِهِ المُقَرَّبینَ. وَ فَضَّلَنی عَلی جَمیعِ النَبیّینَ وَ المُرسَلینَ. وَ الفَضلُ بَعدی لَکَ – یا عَلِیُّ – وَ لِلاَئِمَّةِ مِن بَعدِکَ. فَاِنَّ المَلائِکَةَ لَخُدّامَنا وَ خُدّامُ مُحِبّینا.

"O Ali, indeed Allah, Blessed and Exalted, has preferred His messengers over His angels brought near to Him, and He has preferred me over all the prophets and messengers. After me, superiority belongs to you, O Ali, and to the Imams after you. Indeed, the angels are our servants and the servants of those who love us."
Then the Prophet (saww) recited:

اَلَّذينَ يَحمِلُونَ العَرشَ وَ مَن حَولَهُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمدِ رَبِّهِم وَ يَستَغفِرُونَ لِلَّذينَ آمَنوا

“Those who bear the Throne and those around it glorify their Lord with His praise and seek forgiveness for those who believe.”

He explained that this seeking of forgiveness is **by virtue of our wilayah**.

The Prophet (saww) then said:

يا عَلِيّ، لَو لا نَحنُ، ما خَلَقَ اللهُ آدَمَ وَ لا حَوّاءَ وَ لَا الجَنَّةَ وَ لَا النّارَ وَ لَا السَّماءَ وَ لَا الأَرضَ. وَ كَيفَ لا نَكُونُ اَفضَلَ مِنَ المَلائِكَةِ وَ قَد سَبَقناهُم اِلَى التَّوحيدِ وَ مَعرِفَةِ رَبَّنا عَزَّوَجَلَّ وَ تَسبيحِهِ وَ تَقديسِهِ وَ تَهليلِهِ؟!

“O Ali, had it not been for us, Allah would not have created Adam, Eve, Paradise, Hell, the heavens, or the earth. And how could we not be superior to the angels when we preceded them in Tawhid, in ma‘rifah of our Lord, Mighty and Majestic is He, and in glorifying, sanctifying and affirming His Oneness?”

The Prophet (saww) continues:

لِاَنَّ اَوَّلَ مَا خَلَقَ اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ اَرواحُنا فَانطَلَقَنا بِتَوحيدِهِ وَ تَمجيدِهِ، ثُمَّ خَلَقَ المَلائِكَةَ. فَلَمّا شاهَدُوا اَرواحَنا نوراً واحِداً، اِستَعظَموا اُمُورَنا فَسَبَّحنا، لِتَعلَمَ المَلائِكَةُ اَنّا خَلقٌ مَخلُوقونَ وَ اَنَّهُ مُنَزَّهٌ عَن صِفاتِنا. فَسَبَّحَتِ المَلائِكَةُ لِتَسبيحِنا وَ نَزَّهتهُ عَن صِفاتِنا.

“For the first thing Allah, Mighty and Majestic, created was our spirits. He caused us to proclaim His Tawhid and magnify Him. Then He created the angels.

When they saw our spirits as a single light, they regarded our position as extraordinary. So we glorified Allah, so that the angels would know that we are created beings and that He is far above and free from our attributes. Thus, the angels glorified Allah in response to our glorification and declared Him far above our creaturely attributes.”

When the angels witnessed the greatness of their rank, the Fourteen Infallibles (as) proclaimed:

لا اِلهَ اِلّا اللهُ

“There is no deity except Allah.”

This was so that the angels would know that there is no deity except Allah, and that the Ahlul Bayt (as) are servants, not deities who should be worshipped alongside Him or instead of Him.

So the angels also said:

لا اِلهَ اِلّا اللهُ

When they witnessed the greatness of their position, they proclaimed:

اللهُ اَکبَرُ

“Allah is Greater.”
This was so that the angels would know that Allah is greater than anything that can be encompassed or reached, and that He possesses supreme and exalted majesty.
When the angels witnessed the honor and power that Allah had granted them, they said:

لا حَولَ وَ لا قُوَّةَ اِلّا بِاللهِ العَلِیِّ العَظیمِ

“There is no power or strength except through Allah, the Most High, the Most Great.”
Thus the angels learned that there is no power or strength except through Allah and said the same.
Then, when they witnessed the blessings Allah had bestowed upon them and the obligation of obeying them, they said:

اَلحَمدُللهِ

“All praise belongs to Allah.”
This was so that the angels would know that Allah deserves praise for the blessings He had bestowed upon them. The angels then said:

اَلحَمدُللهِ

Thus:

فَبِنَا اهتَدَوا اِلی مَعرِفَةِ اللهِ تَعالی وَ تَسبیحِهِ وَ تَهلیلِهِ وَ تَحمیدِهِ.

“Through us, they were guided to the ma‘rifah of Allah Most High, to glorifying Him, affirming His Oneness, and praising Him.”
Then Allah created Adam (as), placed us within his loins, and commanded the angels to prostrate before him as a means of honoring and showing respect to us, who were present in his loins.
Their prostration was worship of Allah, honor toward Adam (as), and obedience to Allah's command because we were present within Adam's lineage.
The Prophet (saww) therefore says:

فَکَیفَ لا نَکُونُ اَفضَلَ مِنَ المَلائِکَةِ وَ قَد سَجَدُوا لِآدَمَ کُلُّهُم اَجمَعُونَ؟!

“How, then, could we not be superior to the angels, when all of them, every one of them, prostrated before Adam?”

The Secret Behind the Superiority of the Fourteen Infallibles (as)

This narration not only explicitly establishes the superiority of the sacred lights of the Fourteen Infallibles (as) over the prophets and messengers of Allah and over His angels brought near to Him; it also explains the **secret of this superiority**.
That secret is their precedence over others in **Tawhid, ma‘rifah of Allah, and declaring Allah far above all deficiencies and limitations**.
This point is extremely important.
As explained in the first chapter of the previous section, the purpose of creation is servitude before Allah, and this very purpose is the criterion by which the rank of one servant over another is determined. At the same time, the foundation of servitude to Allah is ma‘rifah of Him and acknowledgment of one's servitude before Him.
Therefore, the Fourteen Infallibles (as), having preceded all others and excelled all others in this realm, attained the highest rank and station before Allah.
It should be noted that the matter referred to in this narration concerns the **realm of spirits**, before the earthly creation of Adam (as). At the end of the narration, there is a brief reference to the creation of Adam's earthly body and to the placing of the light of the Fourteen Infallibles (as) within his loins.
In any case, Allah Most High taught the angels Tawhid, sanctification and transcendence through these sacred lights. Therefore, before the earthly human beings came into existence, the means through which the angels were guided were these very Fourteen Infallibles (as). This is why they hold a rank above the angels.

The Superiority of the Fourteen Infallibles (as) over All Creation

Another event occurred in the account of the angels' prostration before Adam (as), and recounting it is relevant to our present discussion.
Imam Ali al-Ridha (as) says:

اِنَّ آدَمَ لَمّا اَکرَمَهُ اللهُ تَعالی ذِکرُهُ بِاِسجادِ مَلائِکَتِهِ لَهُ وَ بِاِدخالِهِ الجَنَّةَ، قالَ فی نَفسِهِ: هَل خَلَقَ اللهُ بَشَراً اَفضَلَ مِنّی؟ فَعَلِمَ اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ ما وَقَعَ فی نَفسِهِ فَناداهُ: اِرفَع رَأسَکَ یا آدَمُ فَانظُر اِلی ساقِ عَرشی. فَرَفَعَ آدَمُ رَأسَهُ فَنَظَرَ اِلی ساقِ العَرشِ فَوَجَدَ عَلَیهِ مَکتوباً: لا اِلهَ اِلّا اللهُ. مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللهِ. عَلِیُّ بنُ اَبی طالِبٍ اَمیرُ المُؤمِنینَ. وَ زَوجَتُهُ فاطِمَةُ سَیِّدَةُ نِساءِ العالَمینَ. وَ الحَسَنُ وَ الحُسَینُ سَیِّدا شَبابِ اَهلِ الجَنَّةِ.

“When Allah, Glorious is His Name, honored Adam by commanding His angels to prostrate before him and by admitting him into Paradise, Adam thought to himself: ‘Has Allah created any human being superior to me?’
Allah, Mighty and Majestic, knew what had entered his heart and called out to him:
‘Raise your head, O Adam, and look toward the ساق of My Throne.’
Adam raised his head and looked toward the Throne. Upon it he found written: ‘There is no deity except Allah. Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Ali ibn Abi Talib is the Commander of the Faithful. His wife, Fatimah, is the Mistress of the women of the worlds. And al-Hasan and al-Husayn are the masters of the youth of Paradise.’”
Adam (as) asked:

یا رَبِّ مَن هؤُلاءِ؟

“My Lord, who are these?”
Allah, Mighty and Majestic, replied:

مِن ذُرِّیَّتِکَ. وَ هُم خَیرٌ مِنکَ وَ مِن جَمیعِ خَلقی. وَ لَولا هُم ما خَلَقتُکَ. وَ لا خَلَقتُ الجَنَّةَ وَ النّارَ، وَ لَا السَّماءَ وَ الاَرضَ.

“They are from your descendants. They are better than you and better than all My creation. Had it not been for them, I would not have created you, nor would I have created Paradise and Hell, nor the heavens and the earth.”
Therefore, there is no doubt that, among all of Allah's creation, there are no creatures more noble and excellent than the Fourteen Infallibles (as). He has granted them distinctions and honors that He has not granted—and will not grant—to anyone else among His creation.
It is appropriate here to consider some passages from **Ziyarat al-Jami‘ah al-Kabirah**, transmitted from Imam al-Hadi (as), concerning the Ahlul Bayt (as):

آتاكُمُ اللهُ ما لَمْ يُؤتِ اَحَداً مِنَ العالَمينَ. طَأطَأَ كُلُّ شَريفٍ لِشَرَفِكُم. وَ بَخَعَ كُلُّ مُتَكَبِّرٍ لِطاعَتِكُم. وَ خَضَعَ كُلُّ جَبّارٍ لِفَضلِكُم. وَ ذَلَّ كُلُّ شَيءٍ لَكُم.

"Allah has granted you what He has granted to none among the worlds. Every person of nobility lowers himself before your nobility. Every possessor of pride bows in obedience to you. Every tyrant submits before your excellence, and everything is humbled before you."

The Incomprehensibility of the Rank of the Fourteen Infallibles (as)

Before giving human beings their earthly form, Allah, in the realms preceding this world, introduced Himself to the spirits of all His creatures. After introducing Himself, He introduced the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saww) as His Messenger and Prophet, and the Imams (as) as His Wali to all His creatures.

In this way, the greatness and exaltedness of their rank and station became clear to everyone before they entered this world. This recognition was so profound that all creatures understood that they could not even aspire to attain the rank of the Fourteen Infallibles (as).

Ziyarat al-Jami'ah al-Kabirah states:

فَبَلَغَ اللهُ بِكُم اَشرَفَ مَحَلِّ المُكَرَّمينَ وَ اَعلى مَنازِلَ المُقَرَّبينَ وَ اَرفَعَ دَرَجاتِ المُرسَلينَ؛ حَيثُ لا يَلحَقُهُ لاحِقٌ وَ لا يَفوقُهُ فائِقٌ وَ لا يَسبَقُهُ سابِقٌ وَ لا يَطمَعُ فى اِدراكِهِ طامِعٌ.

"Thus Allah brought you to the noblest station of those who are honored, the highest ranks of those brought near, and the loftiest degrees of the messengers—a rank that no one can reach, no one can surpass, no one can precede you in attaining, and no one can aspire to comprehend."

The Ziyarat continues by encompassing every category of creation:

حَتّى لا يَبقى مَلَكٌ مُقَرَّبٌ وَ لا نَبِيٌّ مُرسَلٌ وَ لا صِدّيقٌ وَ لا شَهيدٌ وَ لا عالِمٌ وَ لا جاهِلٌ وَ لا دَنِيٌّ وَ لا فاضِلٌ وَ لا مُؤمِنٌ صالِحٌ وَ لا فاجِرٌ طالِحٌ وَ لا جَبّارٌ عَنيدٌ وَ لا شَيطانٌ مُريدٌ وَ لا خَلقٌ فيما بَينَ ذلِكَ شَهيدٌ اِلّا عَرَّفَهُم جَلالَةَ اَمرِكُم وَ عِظَمَ خَطَرِكُم وَ كِبَرَ شَأنِكُم وَ تَمامَ نُورِكُم وَ صِدقَ مَقاعِدِكُم وَ ثَباتَ مَقامِكُم وَ شَرَفَ مَحَلِّكُم وَ مَنزِلَتِكُم عِندَهُ وَ كَرامَتَكُم عَلَيهِ وَ خاصَّتَكُم لَدَيهِ وَ قُربَ مَنزِلَتِكُم مِنهُ.

"Until there remained no angel brought near, no messenger sent, no truthful one, no martyr, no scholar, no ignorant one, no lowly one, no excellent one, no righteous believer, no wicked sinner, no rebellious tyrant, no defiant Satan, nor

any other creature among all that lies between these categories, except that He made them aware of the majesty of your affair, the greatness of your position, the magnitude of your station, the completeness of your light, the truthfulness of your appointed positions, the firmness of your rank, the nobility of your place and station before Him, your honor in His presence, your special distinction with Him, and the nearness of your station to Him."

Thus, all creation possessed a complete recognition of the special characteristics of the rank of the Fourteen Infallibles (as) before acquiring their earthly creation in this world.

Yes, this world is the abode of heedlessness and forgetfulness concerning the events and realities of the worlds that preceded it. Allah Himself has willed that human beings forget what they had previously known and then be tested anew in this world.

However, the fact that those matters are forgotten does not in any way undermine their reality or existence, which is established through reliable transmitted evidence.

The Ma'rifah of Ahlul Bayt (as) — The Foundation of Every Divine Rank

Just as Allah, the Exalted, has placed Ahlul Bayt (as) above all His creatures and granted them virtues and distinctions that no one could even aspire to attain, He has likewise made the **ma'rifah of these sacred personalities the only path to drawing near to Him and receiving His special grace and attention**.

As explained earlier, ma'rifah of them means that once a person comes to understand their divinely appointed rank and position, he must respond with complete submission and wholehearted acknowledgment of it. The greater a person's certainty and steadfastness on this path, the greater will be his honor, rank, and station before his Lord. This reaches such a degree that even the great prophets and chosen ones of earlier nations, despite attaining the station of prophethood and messengership, did so through the blessing of their ma'rifah of and devotion to Ahlul Bayt (as).

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

مَا نُبِّئَ نَبِيٌّ قَطُّ إِلَّا بِمَعْرِفَةِ حَقِّنَا وَ بِفَضْلِنَا عَلَى مَنْ سِوَانَا

“No prophet was ever granted prophethood except through knowing our right and acknowledging our superiority over all others.”

If **prophethood**, which is among the highest of divine stations, is attained through ma‘rifah and acknowledgment of the excellence of Ahlul Bayt (as), then all other distinctions that Allah has granted—or will grant—to any human being, and every perfection attained by anyone, likewise comes through this very path and for this very reason.

This can be established through transmitted evidence.

One day, Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilali asked Miqdad to relate the finest thing he had heard from the Messenger of Allah (saww) concerning Amir al-Mu’minin Ali (as). In response, Miqdad narrated a tradition from the Messenger of Allah (saww), part of which is as follows:

وَ الَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ، مَا أَرَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ وَ لَا اتَّخَذَهُ خَلِيلًا إِلَّا بِنُبُوَّتِي وَ الْإِقْرَارِ لِعَلِيٍّ بَعْدِي. وَ الَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ، مَا كَلَّمَ اللهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا وَ لَا أَقَامَ عِيسَى آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ إِلَّا بِنُبُوَّتِي وَ مَعْرِفَةِ عَلِيٍّ بَعْدِي. وَ الَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ، مَا تَنَبَّأَ نَبِيٌّ إِلَّا بِمَعْرِفَتِي وَ الْإِقْرَارِ لَنَا بِالْوِلَايَةِ، وَ لَا اسْتَأْهَلَ خَلْقٌ مِنَ اللهِ النَّظَرَ إِلَيْهِ إِلَّا بِالْعُبُودِيَّةِ لَهُ وَ الْإِقْرَارِ لِعَلِيٍّ بَعْدِي.

“By Him in whose hand is my soul, Allah did not show Ibrahim the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, nor did He take him as a Khalil, except through my prophethood and his acknowledgment of Ali after me.

By Him in whose hand is my soul, Allah did not speak to Musa directly, nor did He make Isa a sign for the worlds, except through my prophethood and the ma‘rifah of Ali after me.

By Him in whose hand is my soul, no prophet ever attained prophethood except through my ma‘rifah and acknowledgment of our wilayah.

And no creature ever became deserving of Allah’s special attention except through servitude to Him and acknowledgment of Ali after me.”

(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 40, p. 96, hadith 116, from the *Book of Sulaym ibn Qays*.)

It can be seen that the conclusion of this narration establishes a general principle: **whoever wishes to become worthy of the special attention and grace of Allah, the Exalted, must submit to the servitude of Allah and acknowledge the divinely**

granted stations of Ahlul Bayt (as). This principle has no exception anywhere in the realm of creation.

The Imam (as) as the "Face of Allah" — Wajh Allah

In light of this point, the meaning behind certain expressions used in the Qur'an and narrations concerning Ahlul Bayt (as) becomes clearer—expressions such as **"Face of Allah" (Wajh Allah), "Tongue of Allah" (Lisan Allah), "Gate of Allah" (Bab Allah), "Hand of Allah" (Yad Allah)** and others. We shall now explain them.
Abu al-Salt asked Imam al-Ridha (as) about the meaning of the narration:

إِنَّ ثَوَابَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللهُ النَّظَرُ إِلَى وَجْهِ اللهِ تَعَالَى

"Indeed, the reward of saying 'There is no god but Allah' is looking upon the Face of Allah, the Exalted."
The Imam (as) replied:

يَا أَبَا صَلْتٍ، مَنْ وَصَفَ اللهَ تَعَالَى بِوَجْهٍ كَالْوُجُوهِ فَقَدْ كَفَرَ؛ وَ لَكِنْ وَجْهُ اللهِ أَنْبِيَاؤُهُ وَ رُسُلُهُ وَ حُجَجُهُ صَلَوَاتُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِمْ، هُمُ الَّذِينَ بِهِمْ يُتَوَجَّهُ إِلَى اللهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ وَ إِلَى دِينِهِ وَ مَعْرِفَتِهِ. وَ قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى: «كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ * وَ يَبْقَى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ». وَ قَالَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ: «كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ». فَالنَّظَرُ إِلَى أَنْبِيَاءِ اللهِ تَعَالَى وَ رُسُلِهِ وَ حُجَجِهِ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ فِي دَرَجَاتِهِمْ ثَوَابٌ عَظِيمٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ. وَ قَدْ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ آلِهِ وَ سَلَّمَ: مَنْ أَبْغَضَ أَهْلَ بَيْتِي وَ عِتْرَتِي، لَمْ يَرَنِي وَ لَمْ أَرَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ.

"O Abu al-Salt! Whoever describes Allah, the Exalted, as having a face like other faces has committed disbelief. Rather, the Face of Allah refers to His prophets, His messengers, and His Hujjahs, may Allah's blessings be upon them. They are the ones through whom one turns toward Allah, Mighty and Majestic, and toward His religion and His ma'rifah.
Allah, the Exalted, has said: 'Everyone upon it will perish, while the Face of your Lord will remain.' And He, Mighty and Majestic, has said: 'Everything shall perish except His Face.'
Therefore, looking upon the prophets, messengers, and Hujjahs of Allah, upon the stations that they possess, is a great reward for the believers on the Day of Resurrection.

The Prophet (saww) has also said: ‘Whoever bears hatred toward my Ahlul Bayt and my progeny will neither see me nor will I see him on the Day of Resurrection.’”
(*‘Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha*, vol. 1, pp. 115–116.)
Thus, the reason the Hujjahs of Allah—and foremost among them Ahlul Bayt (as)—are called the **“Face of Allah”** is that the word *wajh* in Arabic means the face, direction, orientation, or side toward which one turns.
The reason a human face is called *wajh* is that a person is recognized through his face; in reality, the human face determines the direction toward which the person is oriented. Likewise, when someone wishes to turn his attention toward another person, he turns his face toward him. Thus, the face of a person is the means through which others direct their attention toward that person.
The same meaning is intended when this expression is used concerning Allah, without implying any resemblance between Allah and His creation.
Everything other than Allah is His creation. Those beings who are called the **Face of Allah** are, in terms of their being created, no different from His other creatures. Their unique distinction is that **they are the means and path through which creation turns toward Allah**, and divine religion and ma‘rifah are attained by human beings only through turning toward them.
This is why they are called the Face of Allah. They are the only path available to one who wishes to worship Allah and submit to the ma‘rifah of his Lord.
And this station has been granted to them by Allah Himself. All divine offices and stations are established by Allah’s own appointment, and no one can attain such a station except through His designation.
However, one must not imagine that the Hujjahs of Allah are intrinsically incapable of perishing, in the sense that their destruction would be rationally impossible. That is not the case. All created beings are capable of perishing, and in terms of being created, they are no different from other creatures. The only One who does not perish is Allah Himself.
If something is created, its eventual disappearance or perishing is not rationally impossible. However, when Allah causes the rest of creation to perish, He does not cause these chosen ones to perish. They remain for as long as Allah wills—not

in their earthly physical bodies, but in their **luminous station**, which Allah granted them at the beginning of creation and which is not taken away from them by their worldly death.
Imam al-Baqir (as), explaining the verse:

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ

said:

مَعْنَاهُ: كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا دِينَهُ. وَ نَحْنُ الْوَجْهُ الَّذِي يُؤْتَى اللهُ مِنْهُ. لَمْ نَزَلْ فِي عِبَادِهِ مَا دَامَ اللهُ لَهُ فِيهِمْ رَوِيَّةٌ. فَإِذَا لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ فِيهِمْ رَوِيَّةٌ، رَفَعَنَا إِلَيْهِ فَفَعَلَ بِنَا مَا أَحَبَّ.

I said, “May I be your ransom, what is *rawiyyah*?”
He (as) said:
اَلْحَاجَةُ

“Its meaning is: everything other than His religion shall perish. And we are the Face through which one approaches Allah. We remain among His servants as long as Allah has a *rawiyyah* concerning them. When He no longer has a *rawiyyah* concerning them, He raises us to Himself and does with us whatever He wills.”
The narrator asked, “May I be your ransom, what is *rawiyyah*?”
He (as) replied:
“Need.”
(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 24, p. 193, hadith 13, from *Tafsir al-Qummi*.)
Allah’s “need” concerning His creation means that He wishes to bestow His grace upon them and place them upon the path of ma‘rifah and servitude to Him. According to this noble narration, as long as Allah wills to accomplish this purpose among His creation, He preserves the Imams (as) among them and does not remove them from the earth. These sacred personalities are the channel and path of divine guidance and the only means through which Allah is to be known. When Allah no longer wills to carry out this purpose among His creation, He removes them from among the people and does with them whatever He wills. Therefore, it cannot be said that their perishing is intrinsically impossible. Rather, this matter depends upon the will and purpose of Allah concerning them and concerning His servants.

A Comprehensive Narration Concerning the Stations of Ahlul Bayt (as)

The late al-Kulayni has transmitted a comprehensive narration concerning some of the stations of Ahlul Bayt (as), in which Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

إِنَّ اللهَ خَلَقَنَا فَأَحْسَنَ خَلْقَنَا، وَ صَوَّرَنَا فَأَحْسَنَ صُوَرَنَا، وَ جَعَلَنَا عَيْنَهُ فِي عِبَادِهِ، وَ لِسَانَهُ النَّاطِقَ فِي خَلْقِهِ، وَ يَدَهُ الْمَبْسُوطَةَ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ بِالرَّأْفَةِ وَ الرَّحْمَةِ، وَ وَجْهَهُ الَّذِي يُؤْتَى مِنْهُ، وَ بَابَهُ الَّذِي يَدُلُّ عَلَيْهِ، وَ خُزَّانَهُ فِي سَمَائِهِ وَ أَرْضِهِ. بِنَا أَثْمَرَتِ الْأَشْجَارُ وَ أَيْنَعَتِ الثِّمَارُ وَ جَرَتِ الْأَنْهَارُ. وَ بِنَا يَنْزِلُ غَيْثُ السَّمَاءِ وَ يَنْبُتُ عُشْبُ الْأَرْضِ. وَ بِعِبَادَتِنَا عُبِدَ اللهُ، وَ لَوْلَا نَحْنُ مَا عُبِدَ اللهُ.

“Indeed, Allah created us and perfected our creation. He formed us and perfected our forms. He made us His eye among His servants, His speaking tongue among His creation, and His extended hand over His servants in compassion and mercy. He made us His Face through which He is approached, His Gate which directs toward Him, and His treasurers in His heavens and His earth.

Through us the trees bear fruit, the fruits ripen, and the rivers flow. Through us the rain of the heavens descends and the vegetation of the earth grows. Through our worship Allah is worshipped, and had it not been for us, Allah would not have been worshipped.”

(*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 144, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, Bab al-Nawadir, hadith 5.)

“The Eye of Allah,” “The Tongue of Allah,” and “The Hand of Allah”

Apart from the title **“Face of Allah”**, which we have already explained, several other expressions are applied to Ahlul Bayt (as) in this narration.

One of them is **“Eye of Allah” (*‘Ayn Allah*)**.

The eye is the means through which a human being sees. If someone wishes to observe and bear witness to the actions of others, he does so through his eyes. Allah, the Exalted, has appointed these sacred personalities as witnesses over His servants and observers of their deeds, so that they may also testify concerning their actions on the Day of Resurrection. It is therefore possible that the expression **“Eye of Allah”** is used in this sense, as Allamah al-Majlisi has suggested in *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 24, p. 202.

This does **not** mean that Allah needs His chosen ones in order to witness or observe the actions of His servants. Absolutely not. Allah possesses complete

knowledge and awareness of the outward and inward states of His servants without appointing anyone as a witness over them.
Rather, in addition to being Himself the Witness, He has also appointed these chosen ones as witnesses—just as He has appointed groups of angels to serve as witnesses over them.
Another expression is **"Tongue of Allah" (*Lisan Allah*)**.
The tongue is the means through which a person speaks and expresses what he wishes. Allah, the Exalted, has spoken to humanity through His ambassadors and Hujjahs and has made them the means through which His commands and what He desires from His servants are conveyed.
Thus, their being called the **Tongue of Allah** is clear.
The expression **"Hand of Allah" (*Yad Allah*)** is another title used for these sacred lights.
The narration itself makes clear that the hand here refers to the **hand of divine mercy and compassion**. In other words, the mercy and compassion of Allah reach creation through them.
These pure and sacred personalities are the means and cause of every divine blessing in the world. The narration itself gives examples such as the coming of rain, the ripening of fruits, the growth of vegetation, and the bearing of fruit by trees.
The same applies to spiritual blessings: they alone are the means through which divine grace reaches creation, and others benefit from the table of divine blessings through their blessing. The blessing of divine guidance reaches all creation only through them.
Therefore, the **Hand of Allah** is a figurative expression for the manifestation of divine mercy and power, represented in the existence of the Fourteen Infallibles (as). The shadow of this divine hand has extended—and will continue to extend—over all creation from the beginning of creation until its end, because every blessing reaches creation through this channel.

The Imams (as) as the "Gate of Allah"

The expression **"Gate of Allah" (*Bab Allah*)** was also used in the aforementioned narration, and its meaning is clear.

A door is the place through which one enters a house. If someone wishes to enter the house of the ma'rifah and servitude of Allah, he must enter through the door that Allah Himself has appointed. One cannot—and should not—enter the house through any other door.

The Qur'an says:

وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنِ اتَّقَىٰ ۗ وَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا

"Rather, righteousness is that one should have taqwa; and enter the houses through their doors."

(Qur'an 2:189)

If a person wishes to attain the goal of servitude and ma'rifah of Allah, he must enter through the door that Allah Himself has established. Otherwise, he will not reach his intended destination.

This is why the narration concludes:

لَوْلَا نَحْنُ مَا عُبِدَ اللهُ

"Had it not been for us, Allah would not have been worshipped."

The Imams (as) taught creation the path of servitude to Allah. Indeed, according to the narrations, even the angels learned the lessons of tawhid, Divine transcendence, and sanctification from these sacred lights.

Therefore, had they not existed, the door to servitude to Allah would have been closed.

Again, this does not mean that Allah is in need of them. Rather, **Allah Himself opened this door for His worship**. More than anything else, this is an expression of the grace and honor that Allah bestowed upon these sacred lights, thereby granting them greater nearness to Him.

For this reason, they themselves are the most complete and sincere in servitude to Allah among all creation. The honor of being servants of Allah was granted to them more fully than to anyone else.

Hence the statement:

بِعِبَادَتِنَا عُبِدَ اللهُ

“Through our worship Allah is worshipped.”
That is, no one is capable of worshipping Allah in the manner in which He truly deserves to be worshipped as they do.
At the same time, they have always acknowledged their own incapacity and shortcomings before the right of Allah’s servitude. This very acknowledgment is itself a consequence of the profound ma‘rifah of Allah that they possess.

The Meaning of “Through Us Allah Is Worshipped” and “Through Us Allah Is Known”

There is another narration from Imam al-Baqir (as), in which he says:

بِنَا عُبِدَ اللهُ، وَ بِنَا عُرِفَ اللهُ، وَ بِنَا وُحِّدَ اللهُ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى، وَ مُحَمَّدٌ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ آلِهِ وَ سَلَّمَ حِجَابُ اللهِ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى.

“Through us Allah is worshipped. Through us Allah is known. Through us Allah, Blessed and Exalted, is affirmed as One. And Muhammad (saww) is the veil of Allah, Blessed and Exalted.”
(*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 145, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, Bab al-Nawadir, hadith 10.)
The realization of servitude to Allah through them has two dimensions.
The first is **their own ma‘rifah and worship of Allah**, and the second is **their unique mediation in the worship of others**, because they are the means through which all creation is guided toward Allah.
Therefore, every monotheist found anywhere in creation has attained tawhid through the blessing of their existence.
This is why the Prophet Muhammad (saww) has been called the **“Veil of Allah.”**
“Veil” here means **a means or intermediary**. The Prophet (saww) and his noble Ahlul Bayt (as), being intermediaries between Allah and creation, are the veil of Allah between Him and His creation.
Certainly, this does not mean that some created thing has placed itself between Allah and creation as an independent barrier. Rather, it means that creation has been commanded to make the ma‘rifah of these sacred personalities the means through which it worships and knows Allah. Without them, Allah would not have been known and worshipped in the manner He Himself has ordained.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

اَلْأَوْصِيَاءُ هُمُ أَبْوَابُ اللهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ الَّتِي يُؤْتَى مِنْهَا، وَ لَوْلَاهُمْ مَا عُرِفَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ، وَ بِهِمِ احْتَجَّ اللهُ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى عَلَى خَلْقِهِ.

"The successors are the Gates of Allah, Mighty and Majestic, through which He is approached. Had it not been for them, Allah, Mighty and Majestic, would not have been known. And through them Allah, Blessed and Exalted, has established the proof against His creation."

Thus, in order to make the relationship between **the ma'rifah of the Imam (as)** and **the ma'rifah of Allah** even clearer, we shall now examine the subject of **"Knowing the Imam"** in greater detail.

A Drop from the Ocean of the Ma'rifah of the Imam (as)

Introduction

As explained earlier, the **ma'rifah of Allah and His Messenger (saww)** is an act brought about by Allah Himself. Created beings have no role in granting this ma'rifah. Rather, once ma'rifah has been bestowed, their responsibility is to submit to it and accept it.

The same applies to the **ma'rifah of the Imam (as)**. The human being's role in knowing the Imam (as) is to submit to the introduction and identification that Allah Himself has provided.

Therefore, we must first examine how Allah has introduced the Imams (as). This divine introduction has taken place in two ways: first, by identifying **their persons and identities**, and second, by identifying **the qualities and characteristics that Allah has bestowed upon them**.[1]

After this introduction, the responsibility of the human being is to recognize those very persons as possessing those divinely bestowed qualities, to believe this in his heart, and to submit to it sincerely and wholeheartedly.

If we were to mention all the special distinctions of the Imams (as), the discussion would become extremely lengthy and would go beyond the scope of this book. Therefore, we shall suffice with mentioning only some of the most important ones, by way of indication.

Imam al-Ridha (as) says:

اَلْإِمَامُ أَمِينُ اللهِ فِي خَلْقِهِ، وَ حُجَّتُهُ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ، وَ خَلِيفَتُهُ فِي بِلَادِهِ، وَ الدَّاعِي إِلَى اللهِ، وَ الذَّابُّ عَنْ حُرَمِ اللهِ. اَلْإِمَامُ الْمُطَهَّرُ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ، وَ الْمُبَرَّأُ مِنَ الْعُيُوبِ، الْمَخْصُوصُ بِالْعِلْمِ، الْمَوْسُومُ بِالْحِلْمِ، نِظَامُ الدِّينِ، وَ عِزُّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ، وَ غَيْظُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ، وَ بَوَارُ الْكَافِرِينَ.

"The Imam is Allah's trustee among His creation, His Hujjah over His servants, His Khalifah in His lands, the one who calls toward Allah, and the defender of the sacred rights of Allah.

The Imam is purified from sins and free from defects. He is the one to whom knowledge has been exclusively granted and who is distinguished by forbearance. He is the order and foundation of religion, the honor of the Muslims, the source of anger and frustration for the hypocrites, and the downfall of the disbelievers." (*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 200, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, Bab Nadir Jami' fi Fadl al-Imam wa Sifatihi, hadith 1.)[2]

If we properly understand even these few characteristics, they are sufficient to establish complete submission and wholehearted devotion to the Imam (as)—let alone when the other characteristics and distinctions of these exalted personalities are also made known to us.

We have already explained the expression **"Khalifat Allah."** It became clear that the means through which creation can establish a connection with Allah and discover what pleases or displeases Him is exclusively through connection with His Khalifah and by recognizing his words as the expression of Allah's will.

Such a person is not overcome by satanic influences, and Allah protects him from the harms and dangers caused by Satan. This is why the Imam (as) has been described as:

اَلْمُطَهَّرُ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ

"Purified from sins."

This expresses the station of **'ismah** possessed by the Imams (as).

The Imams (as) are those from whose mouths nothing emerges except the word of revelation. When they command something, their command is the command of Allah; and when they prohibit something, their prohibition is likewise the prohibition of Allah.

Another expression is:

الْمَخْصُوصُ بِالْعِلْمِ

“The one exclusively endowed with knowledge.”
This means that the Imam (as) is the one to whom **all knowledge has been granted exclusively**. Allah has not created any form of knowledge without the Imam (as) possessing awareness of it.
Therefore, if anyone else wishes to acquire any portion of knowledge, then since all knowledge is with the Imam (as), he must receive it exclusively from him and must not turn elsewhere.
Only such a person can therefore truly be Allah’s Hujjah over His servants in every respect.
A **Hujjah** is a decisive and conclusive proof. Since the Imam (as) possesses these unique distinctions, his words, actions, and tacit approvals (*taqrir*) constitute Allah’s Hujjah over the people, showing them the correct path of servitude to Allah.
If people were genuinely and wholeheartedly to submit themselves to the Imams (as) and entrust themselves to them, the divine religion would become properly ordered within society; the Muslims would attain honor; the hypocrites would be angered; and the disbelievers would be overcome.
We shall soon discuss the expression **“Amin Allah fi khalqihi” — Allah’s trustee among His creation** in greater detail.

The Imam Is the Unique One of His Age

The continuation of Imam al-Ridha’s (as) statement is:

اَلْإِمَامُ وَاحِدُ دَهْرِهِ، لَا يُدَانِيهِ أَحَدٌ، وَ لَا يُعَادِلُهُ عَالِمٌ، وَ لَا يُوجَدُ مِنْهُ بَدَلٌ، وَ لَا لَهُ مِثْلٌ وَ نَظِيرٌ، مَخْصُوصٌ بِالْفَضْلِ كُلِّهِ مِنْ غَيْرِ طَلَبٍ مِنْهُ لَهُ وَ لَا اكْتِسَابٍ، بَلِ اخْتِصَاصٌ مِنَ الْمُفَضِّلِ الْوَهَّابِ.

“The Imam is the unique one of his age. No one can approach his rank. No scholar can equal him. No substitute can be found for him, and he has no equal or counterpart.
He is exclusively endowed with every virtue, without having sought it from Allah or acquired it through his own effort. Rather, it is a distinction granted to him by the One who bestows virtue, the Most Generous Giver.”

The Imam (as) must be recognized in precisely this manner. In none of his qualities should we regard anyone as his equal or counterpart. In every respect, we must recognize him as unique and without equal, to such an extent that we are certain that **all virtues are exclusively under his possession and authority**.
The expression:

مَخْصُوصٌ بِالْفَضْلِ كُلِّهِ

"Exclusively endowed with every virtue"
means that whenever Allah grants anyone any grace or virtue, that blessing originally belongs to the Imam (as), and the Imam has superiority and precedence over every recipient of that virtue in every respect.
In other words, no perfection reaches any creature except while preserving the Imam's priority and precedence over it with respect to that perfection.
Therefore, in every blessing and virtue they possess, human beings should regard themselves as indebted to the Imam (as).

The Wilayah of the Imams (as) over the Believers

This characteristic of the Imam (as) is what the religious tradition refers to by the term **wilayah**. The greatness of the station of the Prophet (saww) and the Imams (as) can be understood clearly through this concept.
The Qur'an states:

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللهُ وَ رَسُولُهُ وَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَ يُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَ هُمْ رَاكِعُونَ ۝ وَ مَنْ يَتَوَلَّ اللهَ وَ رَسُولَهُ وَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ اللهِ هُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ

"Indeed, your Wali is only Allah, His Messenger, and those who believe—those who establish prayer and give charity while bowing. And whoever takes Allah, His Messenger, and those who believe as his Wali, then indeed the party of Allah are the victorious."
(Qur'an 5:55–56.)[1]
At its proper place, it is established from this verse that the group of believers who give charity while bowing refers to **Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (as) and the Imams (as) from his descendants**, who, according to the explicit divine designation in the Qur'an, possess the station of wilayah over all believers.

It is also established that the meaning of **wilayah** in this verse is **guardianship, authority, and having greater right of disposal over the believers**. Another expression for this same station is used in the Qur'an concerning the Prophet (saww), where Allah says:

اَلنَّبِيُّ أَوْلَى بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ

"The Prophet has greater authority over the believers than they have over themselves."
(Qur'an 33:6.)[2]
One whose authority over a person is greater than that person's authority over himself is such that, whenever he wills something, his will must be given precedence over the individual's own will.
Allah, the Exalted, has granted this station to these sacred personalities. Therefore, **their wilayah is Wilayah Allah**, and they themselves are **Awliya' Allah**—those who possess authority over the believers by Allah's appointment. Accordingly, if believers are truly believers, then just as they submit to the wilayah of Allah and His Messenger (saww), they must likewise humble themselves and submit to the wilayah of the Imams (as), recognizing no independent authority or decision-making power for themselves in opposition to them.
The term **wilayah** is used for the Imams (as) in numerous narrations. By examining its meaning carefully, we can arrive at important truths concerning the ma'rifah of the Imam (as).
The word **wali**, in the sense of a guardian or caretaker, refers to someone under whose care and authority an individual or group has been placed, and to whom the responsibility of protecting and looking after them has been entrusted.
For example, a father possesses **wilayah** over his young child. In reality, the child has been entrusted to him so that he may, to the extent of his ability, protect and care for him and provide for his basic material and spiritual needs.
An immature child cannot properly recognize his own interests and harms. In this regard, his support and reliance are his parents. If he entrusts himself to them and walks while holding their hand, he remains protected from dangers and harms. Otherwise, he does not possess the ability to protect himself.

The child's greatest source of hope is his parents. Whenever hardship or difficulty arises, he turns toward them and seeks a solution by taking refuge in them.
The relationship of the Imams (as) with ordinary human beings is similar to the relationship of a father with his young and immature children, who are unable to fully understand their own benefit and harm and therefore must turn to their father in all matters.
Allah has entrusted the responsibility of protecting and caring for people to His Awliya', while in return He has required them to direct people toward the path of servitude and ma'rifah of Allah, the Exalted.
If human beings take refuge in these Awliya' of Allah and place themselves under their education and instruction, they will certainly be placed upon the path of servitude to Allah.
These Awliya' are not people who lack knowledge of what must be done, nor do they lack the power to accomplish it. Allah has granted them both the **knowledge and power necessary for the proper spiritual education of human beings**, and has also entrusted extensive authority to them.
Allah has complete confidence in their use of what has been entrusted to them: they do not fall short or show the slightest negligence in preserving and exercising it. Rather, they fulfill their divine responsibility in the best possible manner.

The Delegation of Authority to the Imams (as) — Tafwid

The expression **"Amin Allah fi khalqihi" — Allah's trustee among His creation**, mentioned in the earlier narration, may refer to precisely this meaning: the Imams (as) are trustworthy custodians concerning those affairs of creation that Allah has placed in their authority, and they never betray that trust in the slightest.
The matter goes even further.
Allah does not hold them accountable in the same way for what He has entrusted to them. Rather, He has granted them complete authority to act according to what they themselves deem appropriate.
However, their will is the same as Allah's will. They do not desire anything except what Allah desires. Therefore, they are not subject to accountability or reproach concerning the wilayah that they exercise over the people.

The Qur'an says concerning Prophet Sulayman (as), who possessed an immense kingdom:

هَذَا عَطَاؤُنَا فَامْنُنْ أَوْ أَمْسِكْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

"This is Our gift, so bestow or withhold without reckoning."
(Qur'an 38:39.)[1]
According to the Qur'an, Prophet Sulayman (as) was granted authority over the wind and air, spoke with animals, and possessed a kingdom that was extraordinarily extensive and influential.
According to the narrations, the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad (saww), possessed everything that the previous prophets had been given, in addition to things that had not been given to them.
Imam al-Kazim (as) says:

مَا آتَى اللهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ نَبِيًّا مِنْ أَنْبِيَائِهِ شَيْئًا إِلَّا وَ قَدْ آتَى مُحَمَّدًا صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ آلِهِ مِثْلَهُ، وَ زَادَهُ مَا لَمْ يُؤْتِهِمْ.

"Allah, Mighty and Majestic, did not give any prophet anything without giving Muhammad (saww) its equivalent, and He additionally granted him things that He had not given them."
(*Al-Kafi*, vol. 6, p. 281.)[2]
Once, a person was sitting in the presence of Imam al-Sadiq (as) when another man entered and asked the Imam about a verse of the Qur'an. The Imam answered him.
Then another person entered and asked about the very same verse, and the Imam gave him an answer different from the first.
The narrator says:
"I said to myself, 'How can he be making so many mistakes?'"
At that moment, a third person entered and asked about the same verse, and the Imam gave an answer different from both the first and second answers.
I then understood that the matter concerned **taqiyyah**.[1]
The Imam (as) then turned toward me and said:

إِنَّ اللهَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ فَوَّضَ إِلَى سُلَيْمَانَ بْنِ دَاوُدَ فَقَالَ: «هَذَا عَطَاؤُنَا فَامْنُنْ أَوْ أَمْسِكْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ». وَ فَوَّضَ إِلَى نَبِيِّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ آلِهِ وَ سَلَّمَ فَقَالَ: «مَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَ مَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا». فَمَا فَوَّضَ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللهِ فَقَدْ فَوَّضَهُ إِلَيْنَا.

“Indeed, Allah, Mighty and Majestic, delegated authority to Sulayman ibn Dawud, saying: ‘This is Our gift, so bestow or withhold without reckoning.’
And He delegated authority to His Prophet, saying: ‘Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it, and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it.’
Therefore, whatever Allah delegated to the Messenger of Allah, He has also delegated to us.”
(*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 265, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, Bab al-Tafwid ila Rasul Allah (saww) ..., hadith 2.)[4]
Therefore, the matter is one of **delegation (*tafwid*)**.
Such delegation takes place only when these individuals have reached the degree of trustworthiness required in every respect. Allah has recognized them as trustworthy and has granted them the qualifications necessary for this responsibility, making them custodians of what has been entrusted to them.
Thus, delegating authority to them does not remove the affairs of creation from Allah’s control. Rather, they certainly educate and cultivate Allah’s servants exactly as Allah desires, guiding them toward the perfection that Allah wills for them.
For this reason, our duty as human beings, in every situation and concerning every matter, is to turn to them and ask from them.
However, it is not their duty to answer every person in every circumstance. They have the authority to act as they choose.
The narrator says:
“I asked Imam al-Ridha (as) concerning the verse:

فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

‘So ask the people of remembrance if you do not know.’[1]
He said:

نَحْنُ أَهْلُ الذِّكْرِ، وَ نَحْنُ الْمَسْؤُولُونَ

‘We are the people of remembrance, and we are the ones who are to be asked.’
I asked, ‘So you are the ones who must be asked and we are the ones who must ask you?’
He said, ‘Yes.’
I then asked, ‘Is it obligatory upon you to answer us?’
He said:

لَا، ذَاكَ إِلَيْنَا، إِنْ شِئْنَا فَعَلْنَا، وَ إِنْ شِئْنَا لَمْ نَفْعَلْ. أَمَا تَسْمَعُ قَوْلَ اللهِ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى: «هَذَا عَطَاؤُنَا فَامْنُنْ أَوْ أَمْسِكْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ»؟

'No. That is up to us. If we wish, we answer; and if we wish, we do not answer. Have you not heard the statement of Allah, Blessed and Exalted: "This is Our gift, so bestow or withhold without reckoning"?'"

(*Al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 210, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, Bab Anna al-Dhikr ..., hadith 3.)[2]

This delegation of authority to the Imams (as), which is referred to as **tafwid**, is completely different from the false doctrine held by the **Mufawwidhah**.

They believed that certain affairs had been removed from the power of Allah and that created beings possessed independent authority over them.

According to our belief, however, the affairs of guiding, teaching, and educating the people have been entrusted to Ahlul Bayt (as),[1] and **their hearts are vessels of the Divine Will**. Nothing enters their hearts except what Allah wills.

A man named **Kamil ibn Ibrahim al-Madani** once came to Imam al-Mahdi, **Baqiyyatullah (ajtf)**, to ask about this very issue.

Before he could say anything, the Imam (ajtf) said:

جِئْتَ تَسْأَلُ عَنْ مَقَالَةِ الْمُفَوِّضَةِ، كَذَبُوا، بَلْ قُلُوبُنَا أَوْعِيَةٌ لِمَشِيَّةِ اللهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ، فَإِذَا شَاءَ اللهُ تَعَالَى شِئْنَا، وَ اللهُ يَقُولُ: «وَ مَا تَشَاؤُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللهُ.«

"You have come to ask about the doctrine of the Mufawwidhah. They have lied. Rather, our hearts are vessels for the will of Allah, Mighty and Majestic. When Allah, the Exalted, wills something, we will it. And Allah says:

'You do not will unless Allah wills.'"

(Qur'an 76:30.)[1] [2]

(*Al-Khara'ij wa al-Jara'ih*, vol. 1, p. 459.)[2]

Another narration states:

إِنَّ اللهَ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى جَعَلَ قُلُوبَ الْأَئِمَّةِ مَوْرِدًا لِإِرَادَتِهِ، وَ إِذَا شَاءَ شَيْئًا شَاؤُوهُ، وَ هُوَ قَوْلُهُ: «وَ مَا تَشَاؤُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللهُ.«

"Indeed, Allah, Blessed and Exalted, has made the hearts of the Imams a place into which His will enters. Whenever He wills something, they will it. And this is His statement:

'You do not will unless Allah wills.'"

(*Tafsir al-Burhan*, vol. 4, p. 416.)[3]

Yes, if Ahlul Bayt (as) did not possess such a station, then granting them such extensive authority would indeed constitute the false **tafwid**.
But since they possess this divinely bestowed station and are the recipients of Allah's special grace and attention, their will concerning the people is precisely what Allah wills for them.
Allah has commanded His servants to worship Him and attain ma'rifah of Him, and He has made these sacred personalities fully qualified in every respect to direct people toward that objective.

Imam al-Sadiq's (as) Description of the Imam

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

فَالْإِمَامُ هُوَ الْمُنْتَجَبُ الْمُرْتَضَى، وَ الْهَادِي الْمُنْتَجَى، وَ الْقَائِمُ الْمُرْتَجَى. اصْطَفَاهُ اللهُ لِذَلِكَ وَ اصْطَنَعَهُ عَلَى عَيْنِهِ فِي الذَّرِّ حِينَ ذَرَأَهُ، وَ فِي الْبَرِيَّةِ حِينَ بَرَأَهُ، ظِلًّا قَبْلَ خَلْقِ نَسَمَةٍ عَنْ يَمِينِ عَرْشِهِ، مَحْبُوًّا بِالْحِكْمَةِ فِي عِلْمِ الْغَيْبِ عِنْدَهُ. اخْتَارَهُ بِعِلْمِهِ وَ انْتَجَبَهُ لِطُهْرِهِ، بَقِيَّةً مِنْ آدَمَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ، وَ خِيَرَةً مِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ نُوحٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ، وَ مُصْطَفًى مِنْ آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ، وَ سُلَالَةً مِنْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ، وَ صَفْوَةً مِنْ عِتْرَةِ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ آلِهِ وَ سَلَّمَ. لَمْ يَزَلْ مَرْعِيًّا بِعَيْنِ اللهِ يَحْفَظُهُ وَ يَكْلَؤُهُ بِسِتْرِهِ، مَطْرُودًا عَنْهُ حَبَائِلُ إِبْلِيسَ وَ جُنُودُهُ، مَدْفُوعًا عَنْهُ وَقُوبُ الْغَوَاسِقِ وَ نُفُوثُ كُلِّ فَاسِقٍ، مَصْرُوفًا عَنْهُ قَوَارِفُ السُّوءِ، مُبَرَّأً مِنَ الْعَاهَاتِ، مَحْجُوبًا عَنِ الْآفَاتِ، مَعْصُومًا مِنَ الزَّلَّاتِ، مَصُونًا عَنِ الْفَوَاحِشِ كُلِّهَا.

"The Imam is the chosen one, the one approved and accepted by Allah; the guided one who is sought; and the one whose uprising is awaited with hope.
Allah selected him for this purpose and specially nurtured him under His own watchful care—both in the realm of *Dhar* when He brought him forth and among creation when He brought him into existence. Before creating any human soul, He established him as a shadow on the right side of His Throne, beloved and endowed with wisdom in the knowledge of the unseen that is with Him.
He chose him through His knowledge and selected him because of his purity: a remnant from Adam (as), one chosen from the descendants of Nuh (as), selected from the family of Ibrahim (as), a descendant of Isma'il (as), and the chosen one from the progeny of Muhammad (saww).
He has always remained under Allah's watchful care. Allah protects him and guards him beneath His covering. The snares of Iblis and his armies are driven

away from him; the attacks of darkness and the insinuations of every sinful person are repelled from him; accusations of evil are kept away from him. He is free from defects, protected from afflictions, preserved from slips, and safeguarded from every form of indecency."
(*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 204, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, Bab Nadir Jami' fi Fadl al-Imam wa Sifatihi, hadith 2.)[1]
Now that the personality and station of the Imam (as) have been described in this manner, Imam al-Sadiq (as) continues:

فَلَيْسَ يَجْهَلُ حَقَّ هَذَا الْعَالِمِ إِلَّا شَقِيٌّ، وَ لَا يَجْحَدُهُ إِلَّا غَوِيٌّ، وَ لَا يَصُدُّ عَنْهُ إِلَّا جَرِيٌّ عَلَى اللهِ جَلَّ وَ عَلَا.

"No one remains ignorant of the right of such a learned one except one who is wretched. No one denies him except one who has gone astray. And no one turns away from him except one who is audacious against Allah, Glorious and Exalted."
(*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 205, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, Bab Nadir Jami' fi Fadl al-Imam wa Sifatihi, hadith 2.)[1]

References and Notes

1. For a detailed explanation of the ma'rifah of Allah's names and attributes, and its various levels, see *Aftab dar Ghorbat*, Part Two, Chapter Two.
2. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 193, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, Bab Anna al-A'immah (as) Khulafa' Allah 'Azza wa Jalla ..., hadith 2.
3. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 26, p. 281, hadith 29, from *Basa'ir al-Darajat*.
4. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 40, p. 96, hadith 116, from *Kitab Sulaym ibn Qays*.
5. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 24, p. 193, hadith 13, from *Tafsir al-Qummi*.
6. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 144, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, Bab al-Nawadir, hadith 5.
7. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 145, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, Bab al-Nawadir, hadith 10.
8. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 200, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, Bab Nadir Jami' fi Fadl al-Imam wa Sifatihi, hadith 1.
9. Qur'an 5:55–56.
10. Qur'an 33:6.
11. Qur'an 38:39.
12. *Al-Kafi*, vol. 6, p. 281.

13. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 265, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, Bab al-Tafwid ila Rasul Allah (saww) ..., hadith 2.
14. Qur'an 16:43.
15. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 210, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, Bab Anna al-Dhikr ..., hadith 3.
16. Qur'an 76:30.
17. *Al-Khara'ij wa al-Jara'ih*, vol. 1, p. 459.
18. *Tafsir al-Burhan*, vol. 4, p. 416.
19. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 204, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, Bab Nadir Jami' fi Fadl al-Imam wa Sifatihi, hadith 2.
20. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 205, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, Bab Nadir Jami' fi Fadl al-Imam wa Sifatihi, hadith 2.
Textual footnote from the source: The differing answers given by the Imams (as) to the same question, which occurred on a number of occasions in their lives, may have had various causes, one of which was taqiyyah. Therefore, merely because the Imam (as) gave different answers, one cannot assume error on his part, since the Imams (as) are infallible.
Textual footnote concerning tafwid: The discussion here—and throughout this discussion—is not about the delegation of the provision of sustenance or the creation of servants to the Imams (as). The subject under discussion is exclusively their role in **guiding and educating people**. For a detailed explanation of the Imam (as) as the means of divine blessings in the realm of *takwin*, see *Aftab dar Ghorbat*, Part Two, Chapter One, under the heading **"The Imam (as) as a Divine Blessing in the Realm of Takwin."** A fuller explanation of the delegation of authority (*tafwid*) to the Imams (as) is also given there.
Textual footnote concerning ma'rifah by name and attribute: For a detailed explanation of knowing the Imam through his name and attributes, and the various levels of such ma'rifah, see *Aftab dar Ghorbat*, Part Two, Chapter Two.

Chapter Two

The Relationship Between Faith and the Ma‘rifah of the Imam (as)

The Duty of Knowing the Imam (as)

Introduction

What has been discussed so far constitutes only a glimpse of the characteristics of the Imams (as), as reported in their own traditions. Our duty as human beings is to submit to these divinely bestowed perfections and accept them. Our role in the ma‘rifah of the Imam (as) is precisely this acceptance of Allah’s own introduction of him. This is the very **ma‘rifah of the Imam (as)** that has been placed upon us as an obligation after the ma‘rifah of Allah and His Messenger (saww).

In continuation of the tradition in which **ma‘rifah of Allah** and then **ma‘rifah of the Messenger** were mentioned as the most excellent of the obligatory duties, the following is stated:

وَ بَعدَهُ مَعرِفَةُ الاِمامِ الَّذی بِهِ یُؤتَمُّ، بِنَعتِهِ وَ صِفَتِهِ وَ اسمِهِ فی حالِ العُسرِ وَ الیُسرِ. وَ اَدنی مَعرِفَةِ الاِمامِ اَنَّهُ عِدلُ النَّبِیِّ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم – اِلّا دَرَجَةَ النُّبُوَّةِ – وَ وارِثُهُ وَ اَنَّ طاعَتَهُ طاعَةُ اللهِ وَ طاعَةُ رَسُولِ اللهِ وَ التَّسلیمُ لَهُ فی کُلِّ اَمرٍ وَ الرَّدُّ اِلَیهِ وَ الاَخذُ بِقَولِهِ وَ یَعلَمُ اَنَّ الاِمامَ بَعدَ رَسُولِ اللهِ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم عَلِیُّ بنُ اَبی طالِبٍ، وَ بَعدَهُ الحَسَنُ، وَ بَعدَهُ الحُسَینُ، ثُمَّ عَلِیُّ بنُ الحُسَینِ، ثُمَّ مُحَمَّدُ بنُ عَلِیٍّ، ثُمَّ اَنَا، ثُمَّ بَعدی موسَی ابنی، وَ بَعدَهُ عَلِیُّ ابنُهُ، وَ بَعدَ عَلِیٍّ مُحَمَّدٌ ابنُهُ، وَ بَعدَ مُحَمَّدٍ عَلِیٌّ ابنُهُ، وَ بَعدَ عَلِیٍّ الحَسَنُ ابنُهُ، وَ الحُجَّةُ مِن وُلدِ الحَسَنِ.

Reference: *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 36, p. 407, hadith 16, from *Kifayat al-Athar*.

“And after it [the ma‘rifah of the Messenger] is the ma‘rifah of the Imam whom one follows—knowing his attributes, his qualities, and his name, both in times of hardship and in times of ease.

The minimum degree of ma‘rifah of the Imam is that he is the equal counterpart of the Prophet (saww)—except for the rank of prophethood—and his heir; that obedience to him is obedience to Allah and obedience to the Messenger of Allah; that one submits to him in every matter, refers matters back to him, and accepts his word.

And one must know that after the Messenger of Allah (saww), the Imam is Ali ibn Abi Talib; after him, al-Hasan; after him, al-Husayn; then Ali ibn al-Husayn; then Muhammad ibn Ali; then I; then after me, my son Musa; after him, his son Ali; after Ali, his son Muhammad; after Muhammad, his son Ali; after Ali, his son al-Hasan; and al-Hujjah is from the descendants of al-Hasan."

According to this statement, the **minimum obligatory level of our ma'rifah of the Imam (as)** consists of two parts:

First: Belief in the virtues and attributes of the Imam (as), together with the duties that we have toward him.

Second: Knowing each of the Imams individually, by their names and lineage.

Five Duties of the Ummah Toward the Imam (as)

The first part of the minimum required ma'rifah includes the following matters:

1. Believing that, apart from the rank of Prophethood, the other characteristics of the Prophet (saww) are also possessed by the Imam (as)

In brief, what is meant by **Prophethood** here is the establishment of the Shari'ah and being the recipient of legislative revelation.

The revelation of the religion and Shari'ah was completed for the Prophet (saww). Whatever the Imams (as) communicate concerning religious rulings and beliefs, they learned entirely from the Messenger of Allah (saww); legislative revelation is not directly sent to them.

Of course, revelation other than legislative revelation—which includes matters relating to particular events and circumstances—was directly given to the Imams (as).[1] However, revelation concerning such matters does not constitute the rank of Prophethood, because it contains no legislation.

Therefore, it is possible for the Imam (as) to hear the revelation of the Shari'ah that is brought by Jibril to the Messenger of Allah (saww), and even to see Jibril, while the actual recipient of that revelation is the Prophet (saww), not the Imam (as). In other words, Jibril is the bearer of the legislative revelation to the Messenger of Allah (saww), while the Imam (as) is a witness and observer of the matter.

It has been narrated from Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (as) that the Messenger of Allah (saww) said to him:

اِنَّکَ تَسمَعُ ما اَسمَعُ وَ تَرى ما اَرى اِلّا اِنَّکَ لَستَ بِنَبِیٍّ وَ لکِنَّکَ لَوَزیرٌ. وَ اِنَّکَ لَعَلى خَیرٍ.

"O Ali! You hear what I hear and you see what I see, except that you are not a prophet; rather, you are a minister. And indeed, you are upon goodness."

Reference: *Nahj al-Balagha* (Fayz al-Islam), Sermon 234 (*al-Qasi'ah*).

Thus, apart from the rank of Prophethood, all the other perfections of the Messenger of Allah (saww)—including knowledge, 'ismah, wilayah, and so forth—are possessed by the Imam (as). Therefore, he is the heir to all the attributes of the Messenger of Allah (saww), with the exception of Prophethood.

Footnote 1

By "matters" is meant particular matters of which the Imam (as) becomes aware through divine revelation—for example, what events will occur in the future or what is taking place in the hearts and inner states of people. Such matters are not part of the Shari'ah.

The Shari'ah consists of general principles that encompass beliefs, ethics, and general rulings.

Revelation concerning particular matters does not constitute the rank of Prophethood, because there is no legislation involved in it. Therefore, it is possible for the Imam (as) to hear the revelation of the Shari'ah that is brought by Jibril to the Messenger of Allah (saww), and even to see Jibril, while the recipient of the revelation is the Prophet (saww), not the Imam (as). Jibril is the bearer of the revelation of the Shari'ah to the Messenger of Allah (saww), while the Imam (as) witnesses and observes the matter.

2. Obedience to the Imam (as) is, in reality, obedience to Allah and His Messenger (saww)

Obedience to the Imam (as) is not independent of obedience to Allah and His Messenger (saww). Rather, obedience to the Imam is obedience to Allah and obedience to the Messenger of Allah.

3. In every matter, without exception, one must submit to the judgment of the Imam (as)

Submission means that once the Imam's position on a matter becomes known to us, we should have no hesitation about acting upon it. Accepting the Imam's position should not be difficult or burdensome for us. Rather, we should readily submit ourselves to him, whether or not the matter appears clear and understandable to us from our own perspective.

4. Everything must be referred back to the Imam (as)

This means that in every matter—whether relating to beliefs, ethics, social affairs, or personal matters—the first step is to refer to the Imam (as). Until we have referred the matter to him, we should not assume with certainty that what we have understood is correct.

Thus, for example, concerning the details of beliefs such as Tawhid, Resurrection, and so forth, or concerning religious rulings and ethics, the primary reference and source must be the traditions of the Imams (as), rather than the opinions of individuals or reliance upon our own incomplete understanding or that of others.

5. After referring to the Imam (as), one must adopt his position

Our referring to the traditions should not be an attempt to impose our personal opinions upon them or to interpret the hadith according to our individual understanding and preferences. Rather, in practice, whatever is understood from the traditions of the Imams (as) must be given precedence over everything else.

In light of these points, it becomes clear that the degree of a person's ma'rifah of the Imam (as) depends upon the extent to which these five matters are realized within him.

The more complete and profound these matters are, the higher his ma'rifah will be; and the less complete they are, the more deficient his ma'rifah will be. Therefore, merely on the basis of a claim or superficial recognition, one cannot claim to possess ma'rifah of the Imam (as).

The Second Part: Knowing the Specific Imams (as)

The second part of the tradition refers to the identification of the individuals who are the Imams (as), and it includes the twelve Imams of the Twelver Shi'ah.
This demonstrates that Imamate is not merely a general concept whose particular application has been left to individuals to determine. Rather, the Imams (as) are specific individuals whose names and lineage must be known and believed in.
Therefore, the belief of certain Shi'ah sects—such as the Zaydiyyah—that recognizing any individual from the Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet (saww) as Imam is sufficient for belief in Imamate is rejected.

The Introduction of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) in Ziyarat al-Jami'ah al-Kabirah

Introduction

The Ahl al-Bayt (as) can be known only and exclusively through their own statements, which are, in reality, Allah's own introduction of them.
Therefore, in order to become acquainted with them, we must refer exclusively to their traditions. Rational discussion, in this matter, cannot take us to the intended destination.
One of the finest transmitted proofs that beautifully introduces these sacred personalities is the collection of expressions narrated from Imam al-Hadi (as) in **Ziyarat al-Jami'ah al-Kabirah**.
Here, we will make a brief and passing journey through some passages of this Ziyarat that bring us closer to their ma'rifah, and we invite the respected readers to contemplate carefully upon the meanings of the expressions contained in this noble Ziyarat.

The God-Given Perfections of the Imams (as)

The opening portions of this Ziyarat contain indications of the divine stations of the Imams (as), as well as their divinely bestowed virtues and perfections:

اَلسَّلامُ عَلَيكُم يا اَهلَ بَيتِ النُّبُوَّةِ وَ مَوضِعَ الرِّسالَةِ وَ مُختَلَفَ المَلائِكَةِ وَ مَهبِطَ الوَحيِ ... وَ ساسَةَ العِبادِ ... وَ اَبوابَ الايمانِ وَ اُمَناءَ الرَّحمنِ.

“Peace be upon you, O People of the Household of Prophethood, the station of the Divine Messengership, the place frequented by the angels, the landing place of revelation ... the administrators of the affairs of the servants ... the gates of faith, and the trustees of the All-Merciful.”

The Ahl al-Bayt (as) have been appointed by Allah to administer and manage the affairs of His servants. Allah has deemed them trustworthy and has complete confidence in them concerning the responsibility entrusted to them, such that they will never deviate in any way from the will of Allah.

اَلسَّلامُ عَلى اَئِمَّةِ الهُدى وَ مَصابيحِ الدُّجى ... وَ كَهفِ الوَرى.

“Peace be upon the Imams of guidance, the illuminating lamps in the darkness ... and the refuge of creation.”

The Ahl al-Bayt (as) are the leaders and exemplars on the path of guidance. In the darkness of ignorance and misguidance, they are the illuminating lamps that show the Straight Path.

Allah has made them a place of safety and refuge for the people, so that they may seek refuge in them.

اَلسَّلامُ عَلَى الدُّعاةِ اِلى اللهِ وَ الاَدِلّاءِ عَلى مَرضاةِ اللهِ ... وَ المُظهِرينَ لِاَمرِ اللهِ وَ نَهيِهِ وَ عِبادِهِ المُكرَمينَ الَّذينَ لا يَسبِقُونَهُ بِالقَولِ وَ هُم بِاَمرِهِ يَعمَلُونَ.

“Peace be upon those who invite toward Allah and those who guide to that which pleases Allah ... those who manifest His command and His prohibition, and the honored servants of Allah who do not precede Him in speech and who act according to His command.”

Calling people toward Allah is the fundamental mission of the Prophet (saww) and the Imam (as), and this was also the central focus of the activities of all the prophets.

Allah’s pleasure and displeasure become clear to human beings only through the Ahl al-Bayt (as). Their words and actions manifest the commands and prohibitions of Allah.

They are the honored servants of Allah who neither speak nor act except in accordance with the command of their Lord. They have no independent desire of their own before the will of Allah.

رَضِيَكُم خُلَفاءَ فی اَرضِهِ ... وَ اَنصاراً لِدينِهِ ... وَ تَراجِمَةً لِوَحيِهِ وَ اَركاناً لِتَوحيدِهِ وَ شُهَداءَ عَلی خَلقِهِ وَ اَعلاماً لِعِبادِهِ وَ مَناراً فی بِلادِهِ وَ اَدِلّاءَ عَلی صِراطِهِ. عَصَمَكُمُ اللهُ مِنَ الزَّلَلِ وَ آمَنَكُم مِنَ الفِتَنِ وَ طَهَّرَكُم مِنَ الدَّنَسِ وَ اَذهَبَ عَنكُمُ الرِّجسَ وَ طَهَّرَكُم تَطهيراً.

“He chose and approved you as His vicegerents upon His earth ... as helpers of His religion ... as interpreters of His revelation, pillars of His Tawhid, witnesses over His creation, signs for His servants, beacons in His lands, and guides to His path. Allah protected you from error, granted you security from trials, purified you from impurities, removed all defilement from you, and purified you with a complete purification.”

One of the responsibilities of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) is to be the helpers of the religion of Allah. That is, Allah preserves and safeguards His religion through them. The belief in the Tawhid of Allah within the hearts of His servants is established upon the existence of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), and they are the ones who show the path toward Allah.

Thus far, only a glimpse of the perfections of the Imams (as) has been presented.

The Conduct of the Imams (as) in Fulfilling Their Divine Responsibilities

The next portion of the Ziyarat contains indications of the conduct of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), and of how they fulfilled what Allah had entrusted to them:

فَعَظَّمتُم جَلالَهُ. وَ اَكبَرتُم شَأنَهُ. وَ مَجَّدتُم كَرَمَهُ. وَ اَدَمتُم ذِكرَهُ. وَ وَكَّدتُم ميثاقَهُ. وَ اَحكَمتُم عَقدَ طاعَتِهِ. وَ نَصَحتُم لَهُ فِی السِّرِّ وَ العَلانيَةِ. وَ دَعَوتُم اِلی سَبيلِهِ بِالحِكمَةِ وَ المَوعِظَةِ الحَسَنَةِ. وَ بَذَلتُم اَنفُسَكُم فی مَرضاتِهِ. وَ صَبَرتُم عَلی ما اَصابَكُم فی جَنبِهِ. وَ اَقَمتُمُ الصَّلاةَ. وَ آتَيتُمُ الزَّكاةَ. وَ اَمَرتُم بِالمَعرُوفِ. وَ نَهَيتُم عَنِ المُنكَرِ. وَ جاهَدتُم فِی اللهِ حَقَّ جِهادِهِ. حَتّی اَعلَنتُم دَعوَتَهُ، وَ بَيَّنتُم فَرائِضَهُ، وَ اَقَمتُم حُدُودَهُ، وَ نَشَرتُم شَرائِعَ اَحكامِهِ، وَ سَنَنتُم سُنَّتَهُ، وَ صِرتُم فی ذلِكَ مِنهُ اِلَی الرِّضا، وَ سَلَّمتُم لَهُ القَضاءَ، وَ صَدَّقتُم مِن رُسُلِهِ مَن مَضی.

“You magnified His majesty, exalted the greatness of His station, and glorified His generosity. You kept His remembrance alive continuously and strengthened His covenant. You firmly established the bond of obedience to Him.

You sincerely advised for His sake, both secretly and openly. You invited toward His path through wisdom and good admonition. You sacrificed your lives in pursuit

of His pleasure, and you remained patient with whatever afflictions befell you in His way.
You established prayer, paid the zakat, commanded what is right, forbade what is wrong, and strove in the way of Allah with the striving that is truly due to Him.
Until you proclaimed His call, explained His obligations, established His prescribed limits, spread the laws of His rulings, and established His Sunnah.
Through all of this, you acted in such a manner that you attained His pleasure; you submitted to His decree for His sake, and you affirmed the truthfulness of those of His messengers who had preceded you."
This portion of the Ziyarat clearly demonstrates that the Ahl al-Bayt (as) successfully fulfilled the test concerning what Allah had entrusted to them and carried out their mission in the best possible manner.
All the expressions mentioned above relate to safeguarding the sanctity of Allah and, in summary, to making people acquainted with the duties they have toward their Lord.
This was the principal mission of the Imams (as), and in fulfilling this responsibility they held nothing back. They remained patient through all the severe afflictions and calamities that befell them, and they demonstrated immense striving in making the call of Allah public.
All of them—with the exception of the final Hujjah, who is Allah's divinely preserved treasure—were martyred along this path. Not even for a moment did they experience wavering or doubt in their course. They remained in complete submission to the will of their Lord.
They acted upon this path in such a manner that Allah became pleased with them:

صِرتُم فی ذلِکَ مِنهُ اِلَی الرِّضا

"Through this, you attained His pleasure."
So much so that both friend and foe acknowledged that:

اَللهُ اَعلَمُ حَیثُ یَجعَلُ رِسالَتَهُ.

"Allah knows best where to place His Messengership."
Reference: Qur'an 6:124.
This section establishes the practical meaning of **ma'rifah of the Imam (as)**: it is not merely knowing the names and virtues of the Imams, but submitting to their

divinely established authority, referring matters to them, accepting their guidance, and giving their transmitted teachings precedence over personal opinion.

The Imams (as) — The Criterion of Truth and the Pleasure of Allah

Now that it has become clear what the Ahl al-Bayt (as) actually did in fulfilling their divine responsibilities, the third portion of the Ziyarat is presented as a conclusion to the second portion:

فَالرّاغِبُ عَنكُم مارِقٌ. وَ اللّازِمُ لَكُم لاحِقٌ. وَ المُقَصِّرُ فى حَقِّكُم زاهِقٌ. وَ الحَقُّ مَعَكُم وَ فيكُم وَ مِنكُم وَ اِلَيكُم. وَ اَنتُم اَهلُهُ وَ مَعدِنُهُ. وَ ميراثُ النُّبُوَّةِ عِندَكُم. وَ اِيابُ الخَلقِ اِلَيكُم. وَ حِسابُهُم عَلَيكُم.

“Whoever turns away from you has departed from the religion. Whoever remains attached to you reaches the destination. Whoever falls short concerning your rights is ruined. The truth is with you, within you, from you, and toward you. You are its people and its source. The inheritance of Prophethood is with you. The return of creation is to you, and their reckoning is upon you.”

These are among the highest stations that Allah has granted to His specially chosen servants. Their basis, as is evident from the expressions of the Ziyarat, is the preceding portion of the Ziyarat.

In the previous section, it became clear that the conduct of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) was an indication of the pleasure of Allah and a practical embodiment of His religion. They possessed no independent pleasure or displeasure of their own. Their pleasure and displeasure were completely subsumed within the pleasure and displeasure of Allah, and they invited people toward nothing except Allah and His servitude.

Therefore, whoever does not accept their call and rejects them has, in reality, rejected Allah; and whoever accepts them has, in reality, accepted the call of Allah.

Thus, turning away from the Ahl al-Bayt (as) is, in reality, turning away from Allah and departing from His religion.

Likewise, whoever does not recognize this divine station of theirs and imagines that he can become acquainted with the pleasure and displeasure of Allah and worship Him through some other path has brought ruin and misery upon himself.

This is because falling short concerning the rights of the Imams (as) leads a person away from the path toward which they guide humanity, and this can result in nothing but his ruin and destruction.
In other words, Allah, the Almighty, has made the only way of safeguarding His own rights the safeguarding of the rights that the Ahl al-Bayt (as) have over creation.
He has made them the sole manifestation of His pleasure and satisfaction, the interpreters of His revelation, and the indicators of the path of His servitude. Thus, in practice, whoever does not safeguard their rights in this respect is not protected from error or from becoming exposed to the deception of Satan. Allah has guaranteed that whoever remains attached to them will never be led to ruin. Therefore, falling short in recognizing this station and rank of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) takes a person, both in belief and in practice, outside the guaranteed path of servitude to Allah.
The best expression conveying these meanings is precisely what appears in the Ziyarat:

وَ الحَقُّ مَعَكُم وَ فيكُم وَ مِنكُم وَ اِلَيكُم وَ اَنتُم اَهلُهُ وَ مَعدِنُهُ.

“The truth is with you, within you, from you, and toward you, and you are its people and its source.”
The truth is always with the Ahl al-Bayt (as), and it never becomes separated from them. Indeed, truth originates from them and ultimately returns to them. There is no truth that does not flow forth from them.
Therefore, the one who belongs to the people of truth is the one who possesses ma‘rifah of the Imam and does not separate himself from them or from fulfilling their rights.
And because truth is embodied in them, the reckoning of creation on the Day of Resurrection is also connected with them. In the Hereafter, people's deeds are measured according to the criterion of truth. When certain individuals themselves constitute the criterion of truth in all their actions, they consequently become the point of reference and the criterion by which the deeds of creation are reckoned.

اَمرُهُ اِلَیکُم. مَن والاکُم فَقَد والَی اللهَ. وَ مَن عاداکُم فَقَد عادَی اللهَ. وَ مَن اَحَبَّکُم فَقَد اَحَبَّ اللهَ. وَ مَن اَبغَضَکُم فَقَد اَبغَضَ اللهَ. وَ مَنِ اعتَصَمَ بِکُم فَقَدِ اعتَصَمَ بِاللهِ. اَنتُمُ السَّبیلُ الاَعظَمُ وَ الصِّراطُ الاَقوَمُ وَ شُهَداءُ دارِ الفَناءِ وَ شُفَعاءُ دارِ البَقاءِ ... وَ البابُ المُبتَلی بِهِ النّاسُ. مَن اَتاکُم نَجی. وَ مَن لَم یَأتِکُم هَلَکَ.

“His affair has been entrusted to you. Whoever takes you as his allies has taken Allah as his ally. Whoever is hostile toward you has been hostile toward Allah. Whoever loves you has loved Allah. Whoever hates you has hated Allah. Whoever holds fast to you has held fast to Allah.

You are the greatest path, the most upright way, the witnesses in the abode of transience, and the intercessors in the abode of permanence ... and you are the gate through which people are tested.

Whoever comes to you is saved, and whoever does not come to you is ruined.”

In light of the meanings of the preceding expressions, it becomes clear that love and enmity toward Allah are known exclusively through love and enmity toward the Ahl al-Bayt (as). Consequently, whether a person is among those who attain salvation or those who are ruined depends upon accepting or rejecting the wilayah of the Ahl al-Bayt (as).

Refutation of the False Doctrine of Delegation

In view of what has been discussed, one may say that Allah has made the Imams (as) fully responsible for His affairs in this world and the Hereafter, but without this entailing the false doctrine of **tafwid**—delegation in the sense of independence from Allah.

The following expressions of the Ziyarat serve as evidence for this:

اِلَی اللهِ تَدعُونَ. وَ عَلَیهِ تَدُلُّونَ. وَ بِهِ تُؤمِنُونَ. وَ لَهُ تُسَلِّمُونَ. وَ بِاَمرِهِ تَعمَلُونَ. وَ اِلی سَبیلِهِ تُرشِدُونَ. وَ بِقَولِهِ تَحکُمُونَ.

“You invite toward Allah. You guide people to Him. You believe in Him and submit yourselves to Him. You act according to His command. You guide people toward His path, and you judge according to His word.”

The expressions above remove any possibility of the false doctrine of tafwid, so that no one may imagine that if a person's salvation or wretchedness depends upon remaining attached to or separated from the Ahl al-Bayt (as), then authority has somehow passed out of Allah's hands.

No, this is not the case.

Rather, the Ahl al-Bayt (as) are the criterion of people's salvation and wretchedness precisely because they invite only toward Allah, show His path, submit to Him, act according to His command, and judge according to what He has willed.

What the Ahl al-Bayt (as) possess and act upon represents the highest manifestation and embodiment of servitude. Allah has made these perfect servants of His the criterion of truth and reality in the realm of servitude.

As another conclusion from the preceding passage, the Ziyarat continues:

سَعِدَ مَن والاكُم. وَ هَلَکَ مَن عاداكُم. وَ خابَ مَن جَحَدَكُم. وَ ضَلَّ مَن فارَقَكُم. وَ فازَ مَن تَمَسَّکَ بِكُم. وَ اَمِنَ مَن لَجَاَ اِلَيكُم. وَ مَن سَلِمَ مَن صَدَّقَكُم. وَ هُدِیَ مَنِ اعتَصَمَ بِكُم. مَنِ اتَّبَعَكُم فَالجَنَّةُ مَأواهُ. وَ مَن خالَفَكُم فَالنّارُ مَثواهُ. وَ مَن جَحَدَكُم كافِرٌ. وَ مَن حارَبَكُم مُشرِکٌ. وَ مَن رَدَّ عَلَيكُم فی اَسفَلِ دَرَکٍ مِنَ الجَحيمِ.

“Successful is the one who takes you as his allies, and ruined is the one who is hostile toward you. Deprived is the one who denies you, and astray is the one who separates himself from you.

Triumphant is the one who holds fast to you, and secure is the one who seeks refuge in you. Safe is the one who affirms your truth, and guided is the one who clings firmly to you.

Whoever follows you—Paradise is his abode. Whoever opposes you—the Fire is his dwelling.

Whoever denies you is a disbeliever. Whoever fights you is a polytheist. And whoever rejects you will be in the lowest depth of Hell.”

All of these are consequences of believing in the Imams (as) as the criterion of truth, as was explained in the preceding section.

The Station of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) in All the Realms of Existence

This criterion is not restricted to any particular realm or world. Rather, it extends throughout all the realms of existence.

Therefore, the Ziyarat continues by pointing to the same reality: the pleasure and displeasure of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) are the criterion of truth and falsehood, as well as of Paradise and Hell.

Consequently, their stations are not restricted to the period of their earthly lives, nor even to the realm of this world. Rather, from the beginning of creation,

throughout the worldly realm, and even after the end of this world until the establishment of the Resurrection, these virtues have existed and will continue to exist:

اَشهَدُ اَنَّ هذا سابِقٌ لَكُم فيما مَضى وَ جارٍ لَكُم فيما بَقِىَ.

“I bear witness that this has preceded you in what has passed, and continues for you in what remains.”

A Glimpse of the Existential Blessings of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) for Us

The Ziyarat then discusses the luminous creation of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) and the stages that followed it, which became the source of many forms of goodness and blessing for all creation:

خَلَقَكُمُ اللهُ اَنواراً فَجَعَلَكُم بِعَرشِهِ مُحدِقينَ؛ حَتّى مَنَّ عَلَينا بِكُم فَجَعَلَكُم فى بُيُوتٍ اَذِنَ اللهُ اَن تُرفَعَ وَ يُذكَرَ فيهَا اسمُهُ. وَ جَعَلَ صَلَواتَنا عَلَيكُم وَ ما خَصَّنا بِهِ مِن وِلايَتِكُم طيباً لِخَلقِنا وَ طَهارَةً لِاَنفُسِنا وَ تَزكِيَةً لَنا وَ كَفّارَةً لِذُنُوبِنا.

“Allah created you as lights and made you surround His Throne, until He bestowed His favor upon us through you and placed you in houses concerning which Allah has permitted that they be raised and that His Name be mentioned therein.
And He made our prayers upon you and the wilayah with which He has specially favored us a means of purity for our creation, purification for our souls, purification for us, and an expiation for our sins.”

Therefore, the stages following the luminous creation of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), and Allah's introducing us to them, constitute a favor that Allah has bestowed upon us. They have never needed us for their servitude, nor do they need us now. Rather, it is we who need the Ahl al-Bayt (as) in order to become purified and to remain upon the correct path of servitude to Allah.

Allah has bestowed His favor upon us through them so that we may follow the path of guidance.

Unfortunately, however, we have witnessed how the leaders of divine guidance and the finest well-wishers of humanity—who never even demanded any reward or payment from people for fulfilling their mission—were subjected so unjustly to the oppression of this very ignorant and unjust humanity.

All of their predecessors were martyred at the hands of those who outwardly claimed to be followers of the Messenger of Allah (saww).

The visitor to the Imams (as), through deep conviction in their stations, reaches a point where he wishes to sacrifice himself, all his relatives, and all his possessions for them, and he says:

بِاَبی اَنتُم وَ اُمّی وَ نَفسی وَ اَهلی وَ مالی! مَن اَرادَ اللهَ بَدَاَ بِکُم. وَ مَن وَحَّدَهُ قَبِلَ عَنکُم. وَ مَن قَصَدَهُ تَوَجَّهَ بِکُم.

“May my father, my mother, myself, my family, and my wealth be sacrificed for you!
Whoever seeks Allah begins with you. Whoever affirms His Oneness has received [the teachings of Tawhid and the other foundations of religion] from you. And whoever intends Allah as his destination turns toward Him through you.”
In these expressions, the Ahl al-Bayt (as) are presented as the exclusive means of turning toward Allah and as occupying the foremost position among all forms of ma‘rifah, particularly belief in Tawhid.
Careful attention to the expression:

مَن وَحَّدَهُ قَبِلَ عَنکُم

“Whoever affirms His Oneness has received [it] from you”
makes this reality clear to us: all religious knowledge—particularly true Tawhid—can be acquired only through the Ahl al-Bayt (as).
Whoever does not learn the knowledge of Allah from them and does not submit to their other teachings will eventually fall into **tashbih** and will be unable to remain a true monotheist.
The reality of history also bears witness to this matter: every great human thinker who, in the Tawhid of Allah, did not submit to the school of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) eventually fell into the trap of tashbih and was unable to remain protected from the evil of shirk and atheism.

بِاَبی اَنتُم وَ اُمّی وَ نَفسی! بِمُوالاتِکُم عَلَّمَنَا اللهُ مَعالِمَ دینِنا.

“May my father, my mother, and myself be sacrificed for you! Through our wilayah and allegiance to you, Allah has taught us the landmarks and essential features of our religion.”
The reality is that had we not had the Ahl al-Bayt (as), and had we not known them, we would have known nothing of Islam and would have remained in the darkness of ignorance and misguidance.

The Pleasure of the Imam (as) — A Necessary Condition for the Forgiveness of Sins

Toward the end of the Ziyarat, the visitor addresses the Wali and Hujjah of Allah and recites:

يا وَلِيَّ اللهِ، اِنَّ بَينى وَ بَينَ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ ذُنُوباً لا يَأتى عَلَيها اِلّا رِضاكُم. فَبِحَقِّ مَنِ ائتَمَنَكُم عَلى سِرِّهِ وَ استَرعاكُم اَمرَ خَلقِهِ وَ قَرَنَ طاعَتَكُم بِطاعَتِهِ، لَمّا استَوهَبتُم ذُنُوبى وَ كُنتُم شُفَعائى؛ فَاِنّى لَكُم مُطيعٌ. مَن اَطاعَكُم فَقَد اَطاعَ اللهَ. وَ مَن عَصاكُم فَقَد عَصَى اللهَ. وَ مَن اَحَبَّكُم فَقَد اَحَبَّ اللهَ. وَ مَن اَبغَضَكُم فَقَد اَبغَضَ اللهَ.

“O Wali of Allah! Between me and Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, there are sins which nothing can remove except your pleasure.
So, by the right of the One who entrusted you with His secret, appointed you responsible for the affairs of His creation, and joined your obedience with His obedience, I beseech you to seek the forgiveness of my sins and to be my intercessors, for I am obedient to you.
Whoever obeys you has obeyed Allah. Whoever disobeys you has disobeyed Allah. Whoever loves you has loved Allah, and whoever is hostile toward you has been hostile toward Allah.”
Apart from emphasizing the matters discussed previously, two important points deserve attention here.
The first is that a necessary condition for the forgiveness of a person's sins is that the Wali of Allah becomes pleased with him.
Allah has made the pleasure of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) His own pleasure to such an extent that unless their pleasure is attained, Allah is not pleased with His servant either.

The Imam (as) as the Shepherd and Guardian of the Ummah

The second point is the expression:

اِستَرعاكُم اَمرَ خَلقِهِ

“He appointed you responsible for the affairs of His creation.”
This demonstrates that Allah has entrusted the matter of guiding creation to the Imams (as) and made them responsible for it.

The term **ra‘i** refers to one who is responsible for looking after and caring for one or more things or persons.
A shepherd of a flock of sheep is also called a **ra‘i**, because that shepherd is responsible for preserving, caring for, and nurturing those sheep.
Similarly, Allah has made the Ahl al-Bayt (as) the shepherds of the Islamic Ummah and made them responsible for protecting, caring for, and guiding the Ummah toward Allah and His divine religion.
In return, Allah has asked the people to turn toward their appointed authorities and teachers, submit to them, and regard their commands as the commands of Allah and their prohibitions as the prohibitions of Allah.
If a person entrusts himself in this manner to the Awliya’ of Allah, he need no longer fear misguidance. For they themselves provide the necessary assistance and protect him from dangers—just as a shepherd protects his sheep from dangers and does not allow any of them to become prey to a wolf or something similar.
This is another expression of the **wilayah of the Imams (as)**, meaning their guardianship and authority over creation.
Imam al-Baqir (as) said to Muhammad ibn Muslim:

كُلُّ مَن دانَ اللهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ بِعِبادَةٍ يَجهَدُ فيها نَفسَهُ وَ لا اِمامَ لَهُ مِنَ اللهِ، فَسَعيُهُ غَيرُ مَقبُولٍ وَ هُوَ ضالٌّ مُتَحَيِّرٌ وَ اللهُ شانِئٌ لِاَعمالِهِ. وَ مَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ شاةٍ ضَلَّت عَن راعيها وَ قَطيعِها فَهَجَمَت ذاهِبَةً وَ جائِيَةً يَومَها. فَلَمّا جَنَّها اللَّيلُ بَصُرَت بِقَطيعِ غَنَمٍ مَعَ راعيها فَحَنَّت اِلَيها وَ اغتَرَّت بِها فَباتَت مَعَها فى مَربَضِها. فَلَمّا اَن ساقَ الرّاعى قَطيعَهُ اَنكَرَت راعِيَها وَ قَطيعَها، فَهَجَمَت مُتَحَيِّرَةً تَطلُبُ راعِيَها وَ قَطيعَها، فَبَصُرَت بِغَنَمٍ مَعَ راعيها فَحَنَّت اِلَيها وَ اغتَرَّت بِها، فَصاحَ بِهَا الرّاعى: اِلحَقى بِراعيكِ وَ قَطيعِكِ فَاَنتِ تائِهَةٌ مُتَحَيِّرَةٌ عَن راعيكِ وَ قَطيعِكِ. فَهَجَمَت ذَعِرَةً مُتَحَيِّرَةً تائِهَةً، لا راعِيَ لَها يُرشِدُها اِلى مَرعاها اَو يَرُدُّها. فَبَينا هِيَ كَذلِكَ اِذا اغتَنَمَ الذِّئبُ ضَيعَتَها فَاَكَلَها.

“Everyone who worships Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, through an act of worship in which he exhausts himself, but does not have an Imam appointed for him by Allah—his efforts are not accepted. He is astray and bewildered, and Allah is displeased with his deeds.
His example is like that of a sheep that has lost its shepherd and its flock. It wanders back and forth throughout the day. When night comes, it sees a flock of sheep with their shepherd. It feels drawn toward them and is deceived by them,

imagining them to be its own flock, so it spends the night with them in their enclosure.
When the shepherd drives his flock away [in the morning], it finds the shepherd and the flock unfamiliar. So it wanders about in confusion, searching for its shepherd and its flock.
Then it sees another flock of sheep with their shepherd. It feels drawn toward them and is deceived by them. The shepherd calls out to it: 'Go to your shepherd and your flock! You are lost and confused, having become separated from your shepherd and your flock.'
So it runs away frightened, bewildered and lost. It has no shepherd to guide it to its pasture or to return it to its proper place. While it remains in this condition, the wolf seizes the opportunity created by its helplessness and devours it.
And likewise, by Allah, O Muhammad! Whoever among this Ummah begins his day without having an Imam appointed by Allah, the Mighty and Majestic—an Imam who is manifest and just—begins his day astray and lost. And if he dies in this condition, he dies the death of disbelief and hypocrisy."
Reference: *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 183, Kitab al-Hujjah, chapter **"The Ma'rifah of the Imam and Referring Matters to Him,"** hadith 8.
In this noble tradition, the Imam (as) has been compared to the shepherd, while the Ummah has been compared to the flock of sheep.
The Muslim who has accepted Islam but has not accepted the Imam appointed by Allah is compared to a sheep that has lost its shepherd and flock. It seeks refuge here and there, encounters different groups, and each group treats it in its own way. Either they do not provide it with shelter, or it does not find within them the sense of security and refuge it seeks.
Therefore, it continues wandering from one place to another until, while remaining in this state of confusion, it becomes prey to the wolf of the wilderness and is destroyed.
A Muslim who has no Imam is likewise.
Because he is a Muslim, he wants to worship Allah. He makes efforts and struggles in worship, but he does not follow the path through which he is supposed to acquire his religion.

Every so often, he becomes attracted to a particular group or school. At first, he regards that group as faithful and knowledgeable of Allah, and is deceived by its outwardly Islamic appearance. Or he is attracted by the apparently beautiful acts of worship they perform and joins them.
But after some time, he realizes that what he is seeking is not there. Instead of becoming closer to the ma'rifah and worship of Allah, he has moved farther away from them. Therefore, he leaves that group.
The **dark night** is an allusion to ignorance and misguidance.
The fact that he spends the night among them means that he does not know who they really are; he has been deceived by their outward appearance and therefore joins them.
But the **morning** signifies the moment when the light of knowledge shines upon his heart and he recognizes the misguided and unbelieving reality of that group. He can no longer remain with them, because he does not find their leader or guide qualified to lead toward Allah.
This describes his condition with respect to certain intellectual and ideological groups.
With regard to some other schools and their followers, he may see them from a distance and perceive them as apparently righteous, and thus be deceived by their outward appearance of Islam. But when he approaches them, they reject him from the very beginning because he adheres to matters that they do not accept. Therefore, they cannot regard him as one of their companions or co-religionists.
Thus, he is rejected by them as well.
In this way, he finds no place of security or refuge. He finds no school or religious path that can lead him to what he is seeking. He becomes repelled by and rejected from everything he has encountered.
Thus, he remains bewildered.
On the one hand, he cannot abandon belief in Allah and the Resurrection, nor can he deny the Messengership of the Prophet of Islam (saww). On the other hand, what he has seen and heard from the various schools does not answer his questions and objections or remove his doubts concerning matters of belief.

Thus, he remains bewildered and feels that he has nowhere to turn.
This condition continues until eventually Satan accomplishes his purpose. One of these false intellectual currents—or some individual who has no qualification whatsoever to understand religion—leads him astray and causes him to become shaken and faithless concerning the very foundations of religion: belief in Allah, the Resurrection, and Prophethood.
Of course, this loss of faith may not necessarily be explicit or public. Rather, a person may retain the names of religion, Allah, and the Resurrection while becoming inwardly empty of their reality.
Such a person may continue performing his prayers while inwardly doubting Allah and the truthfulness of the Prophet (saww), and may possess little genuine belief in the Resurrection.
Whoever dies in such a condition does not possess true belief in Islam, Allah, and the Messenger of Allah (saww). Rather, he has died in a state of disbelief and hypocrisy.
Some contemporary intellectual currents that also claim to represent intellectual enlightenment provide a good example of the truth of these statements.
There are individuals who have no insight into religion and no specialized qualification, yet claim expertise in understanding religion. Others are deceived by them and, without realizing what is happening, lose their religious beliefs from their very foundations.
The problem originates from the fact that neither these individuals nor their followers possess a correct ma‘rifah of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), nor do they understand that matters of religion must be referred to them. Consequently, they gradually sink into the abyss of disbelief and misguidance.
Yes, this is the consequence of failing to know the Imam (as) and failing to recognize his obligatory rights.
Therefore, preservation of Islam—that is, Tawhid, Prophethood, and Resurrection—is possible only for those who have accepted the wilayah of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) and their guidance in matters of religion.

The reason for this is that access to correct beliefs and proper servitude to Allah is impossible through any path other than revelation, and it is only the Ahl al-Bayt of ‘Ismah and Purity who are the interpreters of divine revelation.
Therefore, whoever has brought any correct teaching in religion—whether concerning beliefs, ethics, or rulings—has acquired it, directly or indirectly, from them, even if he himself is unaware of this fact.
The best evidence for this claim is the traditions that have reached us from the Prophet (saww), the purified Imams (as), and Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (sa) concerning the Tawhid of Allah, the Most High.
Since Tawhid is the fundamental and sole foundation of Islam and of every divine religion, it is possible, through this very subject, to recognize their truth and the falsehood of others.
In this regard, we find that the most precise and subtle points concerning Tawhid—points that correspond perfectly with the fitrah and conscience of rational human beings—have been expressed exclusively through the Ahl al-Bayt (as).
Others—whether false claimants to Imamate or anyone else—have neither spoken nor written even a single line comparable to those teachings.
Whatever the greatest human thinkers throughout the history of religions and philosophy have produced cannot be compared with even a single statement of the Ahl al-Bayt (as).
Anyone who becomes acquainted with the Tawhidi teachings of the Imams (as) and compares them, even to some extent, with human intellectual traditions will clearly recognize this reality.
None of the human thinkers has been able to keep humanity balanced upon the boundary of Tawhid—the rejection of both **ta‘til** and **tashbih**. Ultimately, they have slipped into one of these two abysses.
But in the school of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), the more familiar a person becomes with their teachings, the closer he comes to the true consciousness of Tawhid, and he never slips into either ta‘til or tashbih.
This is something that can be confirmed by anyone who develops a profound familiarity with the Tawhidi teachings of the Qur’an and the traditions.

With these explanations, it becomes clear that the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) concerning Tawhid are one of the manifestations of their shepherding of the Islamic Ummah.
Whoever makes them his reference and source of reliance remains protected from deviation and error in this matter.

Removing the Misunderstanding in Comparing the Imam (as) to a Shepherd

It should not remain unsaid that comparing the Imam (as) to a shepherd and the Ummah to a flock of sheep does **not** mean that human beings, without the guidance of the Imam (as), are incapable of distinguishing any good from evil and are just like sheep that blindly follow their shepherd. Such an interpretation of this analogy is completely incorrect and contrary to reality.
In every analogy, there is always a common aspect between the *mushabbah* (the thing being compared) and the *mushabbah bihi* (that to which it is compared). This common aspect is the basis and foundation of the analogy. Apart from this particular aspect, the other characteristics of the *mushabbah bihi* cannot be transferred to the *mushabbah* without evidence or indication showing that this was intended by the speaker.
In the analogy under discussion, human beings have been compared to a flock of sheep in the sense that they do not possess sufficient knowledge to discover the path to their eternal felicity. Just as a flock of sheep cannot distinguish the right path from danger unless a shepherd guides them, human beings likewise require guidance.
At the same time, even sheep possess a small degree of understanding and awareness. For example, they recognize dangers such as wolves and flee from them. Yet this limited degree of awareness is not sufficient to save them from the mistakes and deviations that threaten them. Thus, a sheep—insofar as it is a sheep—does possess some recognition of what is beneficial and harmful to itself. Human beings, however, possess a far higher degree of understanding and awareness than sheep, and this is called **intellect (‘aql)**. It is one of the greatest distinctions and sources of human superiority over animals. Yet intellect alone is

not sufficient to bring human beings to the degrees of human perfection—which means complete servitude to Allah. This very characteristic constitutes the point of resemblance between human beings and sheep: both require a shepherd.
The important point is that this very intellect recognizes the human need for the infallible leaders appointed by Allah. It makes evident to a person his own inability to traverse the path of servitude to Allah correctly and completely without their assistance.
Therefore, the following of the Imams (as) by intelligent human beings is in no way blind or without reason. The necessity of doing so is affirmed by human intellect itself. Thus, we cannot regard the following of the divine leaders by rational people as something arising from ignorance—or, in a manner of expression, as "sheep-like" following.
The comparison of the Ummah to a flock of sheep should not be allowed to produce such a biased and erroneous misunderstanding.

The Ma'rifah of the Imam (as)—The Source of All Good

Introduction

The preceding discussion makes clear that knowing and following the Ahl al-Bayt (as) is not merely a matter of devotional obedience (*ta'abbud*); rather, it is required by human reason. A person who knows Allah has no path toward Him other than the path that Allah Himself has established, and through any other path he cannot know what brings about Divine pleasure or displeasure.
A rational person who has no access to the unseen does not follow someone who is just as ignorant and unaware as himself. Rather, he seeks someone who possesses complete knowledge of what he himself does not know. Once he recognizes such a person, he has no further hesitation or deliberation about the necessity of following him.

The Rational Basis for the Necessity of Following the Imam (as)

Therefore, human beings turning to the Pure Imams (as) is an instance of the ignorant referring to the knowledgeable, and is a rational judgment. It is not merely an arbitrary or purely devotional command.

Just as a rational person, in his material and worldly affairs, refers to a knowledgeable person or specialist whenever he is ignorant of something, and approaches every matter through its proper means, intellect dictates the same principle in spiritual and eternal matters.
Thus, in discussing the necessity of knowing the Imam (as), attention has been drawn to precisely this rational principle. Imam al-Baqir (as) says:
يَا أَبَا حَمْزَةَ، يَخْرُجُ أَحَدُكُمْ فَرَاسِخَ فَيَطْلُبُ لِنَفْسِهِ دَلِيلًا، وَ أَنْتَ بِطُرُقِ السَّمَاءِ أَجْهَلُ مِنْكَ بِطُرُقِ الْأَرْضِ، فَاطْلُبْ لِنَفْسِكَ دَلِيلًا.
"O Abu Hamzah! When one of you sets out to travel several *farsakhs*, he seeks a guide for himself. Yet you are more ignorant of the paths of the heavens than you are of the paths of the earth. Therefore, seek a guide for yourself."
— *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 184, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, chapter "The Ma'rifah of the Imam and Referring Matters to Him," hadith 10.
The "paths of the heavens" are the paths of Divine guidance that have been taught through revelation to certain individuals. Whoever possesses this knowledge must, by the judgment of reason, be followed.
If, apart from the Fourteen Infallibles (as), anyone in the Muslim Ummah possessed such knowledge, it would also be possible to follow that person. However, this knowledge is confined to the Fourteen Infallibles (as) among the Muslim Ummah; therefore, our following must likewise be confined to them. Whether someone likes or dislikes this fact does not alter the truth. We are, in any case, dependent upon their knowledge. Therefore, whether we desire it or not, we have no alternative but to follow them.

The Imams (as) as the Gates of Allah

This is precisely why the Imams (as) are called **"Bab Allah" — the Gates of Allah**. If someone wishes to reach his destination, he must take this path; there is no way of reaching the destination through any other route.
It is exactly like the case of a person who becomes ill. Reason dictates that he consult a physician. If a sick person were to say, "I want healing directly from Allah, and therefore I will not go to a doctor. I will remain at home and pray until Allah heals me," all rational people would criticize him. The reason is that someone who seeks healing from Allah must pursue the means through which

Allah has established healing; in this example, consulting a physician is assumed to be that means.

Of course, in this example, there is no physician who has been specifically appointed and designated by Allah. But in the matter of Imamate, the entire emphasis is upon turning to those whom Allah, the Most High, has appointed and whom He Himself has called **“the Gates of Allah.”**

Therefore, for those who have understood, even to some degree, the virtues and perfections of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), the necessity of following them is a rational judgment, not merely a purely devotional command.

The narrations contain comparisons between the fundamental obligations of Islam and the matter of wilayah. One example is the following:

عَنْ زُرَارَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ: بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسَةِ أَشْيَاءَ: عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ وَ الزَّكَاةِ وَ الْحَجِّ وَ الصَّوْمِ وَ الْوِلَايَةِ.

قَالَ زُرَارَةُ: فَقُلْتُ: وَ أَيُّ شَيْءٍ مِنْ ذَلِكَ أَفْضَلُ؟ قَالَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: الْوِلَايَةُ أَفْضَلُ، لِأَنَّهَا مِفْتَاحُهُنَّ وَ الْوَالِي هُوَ الدَّلِيلُ عَلَيْهِنَّ.

Zurārah narrates from Imam al-Baqir (as), who said:

“Islam has been built upon five things: prayer, zakat, Hajj, fasting, and wilayah.”

Zurārah said: “I asked: Which of these is the most excellent?”

He (as) said: “Wilayah is the most excellent, because it is their key, and the one who possesses wilayah is the guide to them.”

— *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 18, *Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr*, chapter “The Pillars of Islam,” hadith 5.

If there were no knowledge of the Messenger of Allah (saww) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as), neither prayer, nor fasting, nor Hajj, nor zakat, nor any other ruling of religion would be clear to us.

The same applies to matters of belief. Amir al-Mu’minin Ali (as) says:

إِنَّ اللهَ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى لَوْ شَاءَ لَعَرَّفَ الْعِبَادَ نَفْسَهُ، وَ لَكِنْ جَعَلَنَا أَبْوَابَهُ وَ صِرَاطَهُ وَ سَبِيلَهُ وَ الْوَجْهَ الَّذِي يُؤْتَى مِنْهُ. فَمَنْ عَدَلَ عَنْ وِلَايَتِنَا، أَوْ فَضَّلَ عَلَيْنَا غَيْرَنَا، فَإِنَّهُمْ عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ لَنَاكِبُونَ. فَلَا سَوَاءٌ مَنِ اعْتَصَمَ النَّاسُ بِهِ، وَ لَا سَوَاءٌ حَيْثُ ذَهَبَ النَّاسُ إِلَى عُيُونٍ كَدِرَةٍ يَفْرَغُ بَعْضُهَا فِي بَعْضٍ، وَ ذَهَبَ مَنْ ذَهَبَ إِلَيْنَا إِلَى عُيُونٍ صَافِيَةٍ تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِ رَبِّهَا، لَا نَفَادَ لَهَا وَ لَا انْقِطَاعَ.

“If Allah, Blessed and Exalted is He, had willed, He could have made Himself known to His servants directly. But He made us His gates, His path, His way, and the direction through which one must approach Him.

Therefore, whoever turns away from our wilayah, or prefers someone else over us, has certainly deviated from the Straight Path.
Those to whom people have clung are not equal to us. People have turned toward turbid springs, some of which flow into one another, whereas those who have come to us have turned toward pure springs that flow by the command of their Lord, whose water neither runs out nor ceases."
— *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 184, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, chapter "The Ma'rifah of the Imam and Referring Matters to Him," hadith 9.
Allah has made the Ahl al-Bayt (as) the means of drawing near to Him. In everything—even in Tawhid and the ma'rifah of the One Allah—they are the means of Divine grace. Until a person turns to them, he does not attain true Tawhid and genuine ma'rifah of Allah, and whatever he acquires does not provide him with the necessary protection and guidance.
Those who turned toward others did not turn toward the pure spring of knowledge and ma'rifah. Even if others have acquired some share of the water of ma'rifah, they have mixed it with mud and other impurities and have therefore remained deprived of pure Divine ma'rifah. Consequently, they have fallen away from Allah's Straight Path.
The spring of ma'rifah that contains no impurity, and whose pure water has not been contaminated by anything, flows only from the hearts and mouths of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). Only this spring can quench those who thirst for ma'rifah.
Their knowledge has no end, and no one who comes to their spring returns thirsty.
So why would an intelligent person who has recognized such individuals turn toward others, or hesitate in surrendering himself to the Ahl al-Bayt (as)?
If a person receives everything from the Imams (as), he becomes independent of everyone else and can acquire all goodness by accepting their wilayah and guardianship over himself.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:
نَحْنُ أَصْلُ كُلِّ خَيْرٍ، وَ مِنْ فُرُوعِنَا كُلُّ بِرٍّ، فَمِنَ الْبِرِّ التَّوْحِيدُ وَ الصَّلَاةُ وَ الصِّيَامُ وَ كَظْمُ الْغَيْظِ وَ الْعَفْوُ عَنِ الْمُسِيءِ وَ رَحْمَةُ الْفَقِيرِ وَ تَعَهُّدُ الْجَارِ وَ الْإِقْرَارُ بِالْفَضْلِ لِأَهْلِهِ.

“We are the root of every good, and every righteousness is among our branches. Among the forms of righteousness are Tawhid, prayer, fasting, restraining anger, forgiving the wrongdoer, showing mercy to the poor, caring for the neighbor, and acknowledging excellence in the one who is worthy of it.”
— *Rawdat al-Kafi*, p. 242, hadith 336.
Since the Ahl al-Bayt (as) are the products of Allah’s grace and favor, they are the root and source of every good. All goodness consists of the branches and fruits of the existence of the tree of the Ahl al-Bayt (as).
At the head of all goodness is belief in the Tawhid of Allah, the Most High—which is the foundation of religion—and then come the remaining forms of goodness, which are the branches of religion. Both the foundation and branches of religion are attained through the ma‘rifah and wilayah of the Ahl al-Bayt (as).

The Human Need for the Imam (as) in the Fundamentals and Branches of Religion

In those matters of the fundamentals and branches of religion that lie outside the domain of rational discovery, and where *ta‘abbud* alone must govern, the human need for the guidance of the Awliya’ of Allah is obvious and clear.
Fasting and prayer are rulings whose obligation a person cannot discover through intellect alone. But once the Hujjah of Allah and the tongue of Divine revelation explain a person’s duty, he follows it through *ta‘abbud*.
However, most religious matters are not like this.
In the fundamentals of religion—especially Tawhid—and also in many branches, particularly inward ethical matters, human intellect possesses a particular illumination. The Tawhid of Allah accords with human *fitrah* and intellect. Intellect clearly affirms that Allah must be understood as being beyond both *ta‘til* and *tashbih*.
Likewise, restraining anger, forgiving wrongdoers, treating one’s neighbor properly, and similar matters are rational matters whose goodness a rational person can understand.

What is important in such matters is preserving a person upon the correct and rational path. This objective cannot be achieved if a person is simply left to himself.

Human beings require purification and proper training. Without this, although a person may initially know many matters, he may very quickly deviate from the correct path and lose what he possesses.

When the spark of correct belief in Tawhid arises in a rational person, he immediately affirms it. However, human ideas and incorrect influences prevent him from preserving that correct belief. The whispers of Satan—whether satanic or human—can prevent him from continuing upon the correct path.

Therefore, although Tawhid is extremely clear and almost self-evident within the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), unfortunately many people—even those who have seen and heard the traditions of the Imams (as) on this subject—have been unable to protect themselves from the harmful influence of human thought because they did not approach those traditions with humility and submission. As a result, they began interpreting and reinterpreting Qur'anic verses and narrations according to their own frameworks.

Such people are examples of those who, both intellectually and practically, have preferred others over the Ahl al-Bayt (as). Instead of measuring the teachings of others about Tawhid against the words of the Imams (as), they made the teachings of others their foundation and then interpreted the narrations accordingly.

For this reason, although the matter of Tawhid in the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) is among the most self-evident of truths, it has nevertheless remained concealed from many thinkers and students of religion.

Thus, human beings require an infallible teacher and educator even in matters that are not purely *ta'abbudi*. They must entrust themselves to him so that, through his instructions and according to his educational program, they may develop and remain protected from deviation.

If this is the situation regarding knowledge of Allah—the clearest matter of all—then, *a fortiori*, the same applies to knowledge of the Prophet, knowledge of the Imam, and knowledge of the Resurrection, which constitute the foundations and

principles of religion. The *ta‘abbudi* dimensions in these matters are even greater than in Tawhid.

In any case, every good originates from the Ahl al-Bayt (as), and by holding fast to them one can attain it:

إِنْ ذُكِرَ الْخَيْرُ كُنْتُمْ أَوَّلَهُ وَ أَصْلَهُ وَ فَرْعَهُ وَ مَعْدِنَهُ وَ مَأْوَاهُ وَ مُنْتَهَاهُ.

“If goodness is mentioned, you are its beginning, its root, its branch, its source, its refuge, and its end.”

— *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 102, p. 132, from *‘Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha (as)*; phrases from *Ziyarat al-Jami‘ah al-Kabirah*.

The Imams (as) are the foundation and branch of goodness, the root and branch of righteousness, its beginning and its end, and the source of all goodness. Goodness is whatever they say or do.

The Imam (as)—The Compassionate Father and Merciful Mother

What educator or teacher could be better than those who have been nurtured by the grace and favor of Allah, the Most High?

Allah has entrusted the wilayah and guardianship of the people to them, and they attend to their followers with the utmost love, nobility, generosity, and compassion. They act as fathers and mothers toward them with complete concern.

Imam al-Ridha (as) says:

اَلْإِمَامُ الْمَاءُ الْعَذْبُ عَلَى الظَّمَاءِ وَ الدَّالُّ عَلَى الْهُدَى وَ الْمُنْجِي مِنَ الرَّدَى ... اَلْإِمَامُ الْأَنِيسُ الرَّفِيقُ وَ الْوَالِدُ الشَّفِيقُ وَ الْأَخُ الشَّقِيقُ وَ الْأُمُّ الْبَرَّةُ بِالْوَلَدِ الصَّغِيرِ وَ مَفْزَعُ الْعِبَادِ فِي الدَّاهِيَةِ النَّآدِ.

“The Imam is the sweet and refreshing water for one who is thirsty, the guide toward guidance, and the one who saves from destruction... The Imam is the affectionate companion, the compassionate father, the brother who is like oneself, the righteous mother toward her young child, and the refuge of the servants in a severe calamity.”

— *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 200, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, chapter “A Rare Comprehensive Tradition Regarding the Virtues and Attributes of the Imam,” hadith 1.

A compassionate father, upon seeing his child walking along the wrong path or making a mistake, gently and lovingly prevents him from persisting in that mistake and, at any cost, saves him from falling into deviation.
A brother does not abandon his brother in times of difficulty and hardship. A person who has a brother like himself never feels completely alone.
A merciful mother loves her child even more than herself. She is willing to endure every hardship and difficulty in the child's place so that the child does not suffer or fall into calamity.
All of these qualities—and even more—are gathered in the blessed existence of the Imam (as). Allah has appointed such a noble being as the educator, father, and mother of His servants.
Whoever accepts the wilayah of such an Imam places himself under the protection and within the shade of the love and compassion of such a personality. He need not fear any danger, nor should his heart remain anxious about anything. What father can be found who is more compassionate, more knowledgeable, more capable, more pious, more God-knowing, and more capable of helping than the Imam (as)?
There are things that the Imam (as) can do which no father or mother could ever accomplish for their child.
A person who possesses such a Wali and has entrusted himself to him—whenever he is about to slip, whenever he does not understand, whenever his lower desires overcome him, or in any other such circumstance—has his educator and guardian watching over him. With all the qualities described concerning the Imam (as), he will never abandon his child.
When a child has not yet learned to walk, or when he wishes to enter a path in darkness that he has never traveled before, he places his hand in his father's hand. Even if his eyes are closed, he is confident that he will reach his destination and will not stray from the path.
The servants of Allah are like children who must travel the path of servitude to Allah hand in hand with their educator and father so that they remain protected from the evil of the devils along this path.

But someone who has no Imam and has not accepted the wilayah of such a personality is like a fatherless child who does not know the way, yet wishes to travel a path through childish movements and stumbling—a path in which even grown men have fallen.
Is this possible?
Such a person has no refuge and feels without protection when confronted by difficulties. The people of ma'rifah, however, regard the Imam (as) as their refuge.

Two Forms of Guidance by the Imam (as)

According to Shi'a belief, the guidance provided by the Imam (as) takes two forms:

1. **Irshad al-Tariq / Providing the Path** (*irā'at al-tarīq*)
2. **Isal ila al-Matlub / Bringing One to the Destination** (*īṣāl ilā al-maṭlūb*)

The first means showing the path to an ignorant person so that he himself may walk along it.
The second means moving the ignorant person—not by his own feet, but by the feet of his educator and guide. The person must not separate himself from the Imam (as), so that through accompanying him he reaches the desired destination.
Therefore, the Imam's (as) exercise of wilayah over individuals may take either of these two forms, or both simultaneously.
Of course, the manner in which this occurs is according to the Imam's own choice regarding how much grace and affection he wishes to extend toward those under his guardianship:
هَذَا عَطَاؤُنَا فَامْنُنْ أَوْ أَمْسِكْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ.
"This is Our gift; so bestow it or withhold it without reckoning."
— Qur'an 38:39.
If we wish to receive a greater share of their favor, we must increase our devotion and love for them and, by every possible means, attract their attention and pleasure toward ourselves.
In view of all the foregoing, the value and importance of the **ma'rifah of the Imam (as)** becomes clear. Whoever gains access to this precious jewel and "greatest elixir" has, in reality, gained access to the source of all goodness and abundant الخير.

Regarding the wisdom mentioned in the verse:

وَيُؤْتِ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا

“And whoever is granted wisdom has certainly been granted abundant good.”
— Qur’an 2:269.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

طَاعَةُ اللهِ وَ مَعْرِفَةُ الْإِمَامِ.

“Obedience to Allah and the ma‘rifah of the Imam (as).”
— *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 185, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, chapter “The Ma‘rifah of the Imam and Referring Matters to Him,” hadith 11.

Wisdom is firm knowledge that cannot be penetrated by weakness or become unstable. Along the path of guidance, the strongest foundation is obedience and submission to Allah together with the ma‘rifah of the Imam (as), which is the only means through which obedience to Allah can truly be realized.

Whoever knows his Imam and accepts his wilayah acquires all goodness. Whoever does not know his Imam possesses no true goodness.

Therefore, **abundant good (*khayran kathiran*) is none other than the ma‘rifah of the Imam (as).**

Imam-Recognition—The Only Foundation of the Ma‘rifah of Allah

Introduction

In the discussion concerning the ma‘rifah of Allah, it was pointed out that the granting of ma‘rifah comes from Allah Himself. After Allah introduces Himself, if a person accepts that ma‘rifah and submits to it, he has fulfilled his duty regarding the ma‘rifah of Allah.

Such a person may be called a person who knows Allah.

By this expression, however, what is meant is a **believer in Allah**, not merely someone for whom the truth has become intellectually clear.

It is possible that the proof has been completed against someone and Allah has brought him to the ma‘rifah of Himself, yet until that person submits to it, he is not called one who knows Allah.

Thus, a person who knows Allah is one who, after attaining ma‘rifah, also affirms it.
In this discussion, therefore, we use the term **“ma‘rifah of Allah”** in the sense of an act voluntarily performed by a human being—namely, acceptance and submission to the ma‘rifah that Allah has granted.

Definition of Correct Ma‘rifah of Allah

In light of this meaning, the discussion now concerns the fact that **knowledge of Allah without knowledge of the Imam is impossible**.
The meaning of knowing the Imam, likewise, is that after Allah introduces the Imam (as), the person accepts that introduction and submits to it, thereby fulfilling his own duty concerning the ma‘rifah of the Imam.
Such a person is called one who knows the Imam—meaning one who believes in the Imam and has accepted his Imamate.
We can now affirm that belief in Allah without belief in the Imam is impossible.
For if a person has truly submitted to Allah and is His servant, then regarding the gate of servitude and the only path that Allah Himself has accepted as the means of worshipping Him, he must likewise possess a state of submission and acceptance.
Imamate and wilayah are the gate that Allah has opened for His servitude, and He has made worship possible only through this gate.
Therefore, it cannot be accepted that a person claims to know Allah while refusing to submit to this matter.
Whoever believes in Allah as his Lord must also accept His Prophet as His Prophet and His Imam as his Imam.
Otherwise, if he has hesitation or doubt concerning any one of these, then in reality he has doubted the ma‘rifah of Allah and therefore does not possess true ma‘rifah of Allah.
Thus, the ma‘rifah of the Imam (as) is an inseparable requirement of the ma‘rifah of Allah.
Abu Hamzah al-Thumali says:
قَالَ لِي أَبُو جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: إِنَّمَا يَعْبُدُ اللهَ مَنْ يَعْرِفُ اللهَ، فَأَمَّا مَنْ لَا يَعْرِفُ اللهَ، فَإِنَّمَا يَعْبُدُهُ هَكَذَا ضَلَالًا.

قُلْتُ: جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ؛ فَمَا مَعْرِفَةُ اللهِ؟ قَالَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: تَصْدِيقُ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ وَ تَصْدِيقُ رَسُولِهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ آلِهِ وَ مُوَالَاةُ عَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ وَ الِائْتِمَامُ بِهِ وَ بِأَئِمَّةِ الْهُدَى عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ وَ الْبَرَاءَةُ إِلَى اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ مِنْ عَدُوِّهِمْ. هَكَذَا يُعْرَفُ اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ.

Imam al-Baqir (as) said to me:

“Only the one who knows Allah worships Allah. As for the one who does not know Allah, he only worships Him in this manner, in misguidance.”

I said: “May I be sacrificed for you! What is the ma‘rifah of Allah?”

He (as) said:

“Affirming Allah, the Mighty and Majestic; affirming His Messenger (saww); having wilayah and allegiance to Ali (as); taking him and the Imams of guidance (as) as one’s leaders; and dissociating oneself before Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, from their enemies. This is how Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, is known.”

— *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 180, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, chapter “The Ma‘rifah of the Imam and Referring Matters to Him,” hadith 1.

It can be observed that accepting the Prophet as the Prophet and the Imam as the Imam is itself included within the ma‘rifah of Allah.

This is because belief in Allah is impossible without belief in the gate of servitude to Allah.

Another tradition on this subject has been narrated by Jabir al-Ju‘fi from Imam al-Baqir (as):

إِنَّمَا يَعْرِفُ اللهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ وَ يَعْبُدُهُ مَنْ عَرَفَ اللهَ وَ عَرَفَ إِمَامَهُ مِنَّا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ، وَ مَنْ لَا يَعْرِفُ اللهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ وَ لَا يَعْرِفُ الْإِمَامَ مِنَّا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ، فَإِنَّمَا يَعْرِفُ وَ يَعْبُدُ غَيْرَ اللهِ هَكَذَا . وَ اللهِ . ضَلَالًا.

“Only the one who knows Allah and knows the Imam from among us, the Ahl al-Bayt (as), truly knows Allah and worships Him.

And whoever does not know Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, and does not know the Imam from among us, the Ahl al-Bayt (as), has in fact known and worshipped other than Allah in this manner—by Allah—in misguidance.”

— *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 181, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, chapter “The Ma‘rifah of the Imam and Referring Matters to Him,” hadith 4.

Such a person, in reality, has followed his own desires instead of Allah. In the language of the Qur’an, he is therefore among the most misguided:

عَنْ أَبِي الْحَسَنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ فِي قَوْلِ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ: «وَ مَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنِ اتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ بِغَيْرِ هُدًى مِنَ اللهِ» قَالَ: يَعْنِي مَنِ اتَّخَذَ دِينَهُ رَأْيَهُ بِغَيْرِ إِمَامٍ مِنْ أَئِمَّةِ الْهُدَى.

Regarding the saying of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic:

“And who is more astray than one who follows his own desire without guidance from Allah?”

— Qur’an 28:50.

Abu al-Hasan (as) said:

“It means one who makes his own opinion his religion instead of taking it from an Imam among the Imams of guidance.”

— *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 374, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, chapter “Regarding the One Who Worships Allah Without an Imam…,” hadith 1.

Therefore, denying the Imam (as) is, in reality, a denial of Allah, the Most High.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

كَانَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ إِمَامًا، ثُمَّ كَانَ الْحَسَنُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ إِمَامًا، ثُمَّ كَانَ الْحُسَيْنُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ إِمَامًا، ثُمَّ كَانَ عَلِيُّ بْنُ الْحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ إِمَامًا، ثُمَّ كَانَ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ إِمَامًا. مَنْ أَنْكَرَ ذَلِكَ كَانَ كَمَنْ أَنْكَرَ مَعْرِفَةَ اللهِ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى وَ مَعْرِفَةَ رَسُولِهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ آلِهِ.

“After the Messenger of Allah (saww), Amir al-Mu’minin Ali (as) was the Imam; then al-Hasan (as) was the Imam; then al-Husayn (as) was the Imam; then Ali ibn al-Husayn (as) was the Imam; and then Muhammad ibn Ali (as) was the Imam. Whoever rejects this is like one who rejects the ma‘rifah of Allah, Blessed and Exalted is He, and the ma‘rifah of His Messenger (saww).”

— *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 181, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, chapter “The Ma‘rifah of the Imam and Referring Matters to Him,” hadith 5.

The narrator himself then realizes that his Imam of the time is Imam al-Sadiq (as), and he presents this understanding to him three times.

The Precise Meaning of “Guidance” and “Misguidance” in the Qur’an

At this point, the meaning of **“guidance” (*hidayah*)** becomes clear to us. A person is not among those who are truly guided until he acknowledges the wilayah of the Imams (as). What is accepted by Allah, the Most High, is neither Tawhid without

Prophethood nor Prophethood without Imamate. All three must come together for **“guidance” (*hidayah*)** to be realized. Otherwise, a person has not emerged from **“misguidance” (*dalalah*)**.

The Holy Qur’an states:

وَإِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ لِمَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَى

“Indeed, I am Most Forgiving toward the one who repents, believes, performs righteous deeds, and then attains guidance.”

— Qur’an 20:82.

This means that Allah’s forgiveness encompasses those who, in addition to repentance, faith, and righteous action, have also attained guidance.

Therefore, even when those three are present, guidance has not yet necessarily been realized.

So what is guidance, and how is it realized?

Imam al-Baqir (as), while explaining this very verse, answers the question:

وَ اللهِ لَوْ أَنَّهُ تَابَ وَ آمَنَ وَ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَ لَمْ يَهْتَدِ إِلَى وِلَايَتِنَا وَ مَوَدَّتِنَا وَ مَعْرِفَةِ فَضْلِنَا، مَا أَغْنَى ذَلِكَ عَنْهُ.

“By Allah! Even if a person repented, believed, and performed righteous deeds, but was not guided to our wilayah, our love, and the recognition of our excellence, none of those things would benefit him.”

— *Tafsir al-Burhan*, vol. 3, p. 40, hadith 8.

Then what is meant by repentance, faith, and righteous action in this verse?

The answer to this question is also found in the words of Imam al-Baqir (as):

أَمَّا التَّوْبَةُ فَمِنَ الشِّرْكِ بِاللهِ، وَ أَمَّا الْإِيمَانُ فَهُوَ التَّوْحِيدُ لِلَّهِ، وَ أَمَّا الْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ فَهُوَ أَدَاءُ الْفَرَائِضِ، وَ أَمَّا الِاهْتِدَاءُ فَبِوُلَاةِ الْأَمْرِ وَ نَحْنُ هُم.

“Repentance means repentance from associating partners with Allah. Faith means affirming the Tawhid of Allah. Righteous action means fulfilling the obligatory duties. And as for attaining guidance, it is through the possessors of authority (*Wulat al-Amr*)—and we are they.”

— *Tafsir Furat ibn Ibrahim al-Kufi*, vol. 1, p. 257, hadith 351.

Likewise, regarding the meaning of *ihtida’*—“attaining guidance”—in this verse, Dawud al-Raqqi says:

“I went to Imam al-Sadiq (as) and asked him: ‘What is this [guidance] that comes after repentance, faith, and righteous action?’
He (as) replied:
مَعْرِفَةُ الْأَئِمَّةِ. وَ اللهِ. إِمَامٍ بَعْدَ إِمَامٍ.
‘It is the ma‘rifah of the Imams. By Allah, [it means] knowing each Imam, one after another.’”
— *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 27, p. 198, hadith 64, from *Fada’il al-Shi‘ah*.

Shirk of the One Who Rejects Wilayah

Therefore, a person who knows Allah, believes in Him, and acts according to the Divine commandments, but has not come to know and submit to the wilayah and Imamate of all the Imams (as), has still not emerged from misguidance and is not among those who attain salvation.
Such a person may even consider himself a believer. But if the truth of the *Wulat al-Amr* has become clear to him and he has nevertheless refused to submit to them, then in reality he is a **mushrik**, not a *muwahhid*, even though he himself may not understand how he has become a mushrik.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:
إِنَّ اللهَ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى أَخْبَرَ الْعِبَادَ بِطُرُقِ الْهُدَى وَ شَرَعَ لَهُمْ فِيهَا الْمَنَارَ وَ أَخْبَرَهُمْ كَيْفَ يَسْلُكُونَ فَقَالَ: «وَ إِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ لِمَنْ تَابَ وَ آمَنَ وَ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَى». وَ قَالَ: «إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ». فَمَنِ اتَّقَى اللهَ فِيمَا أَمَرَهُ، لَقِيَ اللهَ مُؤْمِنًا بِمَا جَاءَ بِهِ مُحَمَّدٌ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ آلِهِ. هَيْهَاتَ! هَيْهَاتَ! فَاتَ قَوْمٌ وَ مَاتُوا قَبْلَ أَنْ يَهْتَدُوا وَ ظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا وَ أَشْرَكُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ.
أَنَّهُ مَن أَتَى الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا اهْتَدَى، وَ مَنْ أَخَذَ فِي غَيْرِهَا سَلَكَ طَرِيقَ الرَّدَى. وَ صَلَ اللهُ طَاعَةَ وَلِيِّ أَمْرِهِ بِطَاعَةِ رَسُولِهِ، وَ طَاعَةَ رَسُولِهِ بِطَاعَتِهِ. فَمَنْ تَرَكَ طَاعَةَ وُلَاةِ الْأَمْرِ، لَمْ يُطِعِ اللهَ وَ لَا رَسُولَهُ. وَ هُوَ الْإِقْرَارُ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ.
“Indeed, Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, informed His servants of the paths of guidance, established beacons for them along those paths, and taught them how to travel upon them. He said:
‘Indeed, I am Most Forgiving toward the one who repents, believes, performs righteous deeds, and then attains guidance.’
And He said:
‘Allah accepts only from the God-fearing.’

Therefore, whoever exercises God-wariness regarding what Allah has commanded him will meet Allah as a believer in what Muhammad (saww) brought.
Far! Far from it!
A people were lost and died before attaining guidance. They thought that they had believed, yet they committed shirk without realizing it.
Indeed, whoever enters the houses through their doors has attained guidance, while whoever approaches them from anywhere other than their doors has followed the path of destruction.
Allah has joined obedience to His *Wali al-Amr* with obedience to His Messenger, and obedience to His Messenger with obedience to Himself. Therefore, whoever abandons obedience to the *Wulat al-Amr* has not obeyed Allah nor His Messenger.
And this is the acknowledgment of what has been sent down from Allah, the Mighty and Majestic."
— *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 182, *Kitab al-Hujjah*, chapter "The Ma'rifah of the Imam and Referring Matters to Him," hadith 6.
The reason such people are considered mushriks is that their duty, as people of Tawhid, was to submit exclusively to Allah and not associate anyone with Him in His servitude and worship.
However, in practice, instead of obeying the very Allah whom they had recognized and accepted, and instead of following in worship the path that He Himself had established, they chose, according to their own judgment and personal preference, a path other than the one prescribed by Allah.
In reality, they wanted to enter the house through a door other than its proper door.
This is, in reality, **shirk**, even if they themselves were not aware that it was shirk.
This is not because they did not know that their duty was to obey the Messenger (saww) and the Imam (as). Rather, they knew this, but had not understood the deeper implication that refusing to submit before the Hujjah of Allah takes a person out of the domain of Tawhid and leads him into shirk.
Thus, they became mushriks in a way of which they themselves were unaware:
أَشْرَكُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“They committed shirk without realizing it.”
A person who becomes a mushrik does not necessarily have to be conscious of all the implications of his belief. Once he knew his duty and the proof had been completed against him, he is not excused before Divine justice.
The idol-worshippers explicitly deny Allah, the Most High. Likewise, those who deny the Imams (as) are denying one whose denial, according to the explicit traditions cited above, amounts to denial of Allah.
Allah has treated the denial of His Hujjah as equivalent to denial of Himself. Therefore, it may be said that one who denies the Imamate and wilayah of the Pure Imams (as) is, in reality, a denier of Allah—even though, for certain worldly considerations, some legal rulings concerning these two groups differ.

Degrees of Denial of Imamate

Denial of Imamate has different degrees. Some are more severe, while others are less severe.
A person who has recognized the Imams (as) as the infallible leaders of Allah and His Divine Hujjahs, but does not submit to their Imamate, is a denier of them. This applies whether he explicitly rejects their Imamate or does not explicitly deny it but nevertheless refuses to accept it.
This condition itself is a form of denial and rejection.
A more severe degree is for someone to oppose the Imams (as) and regard disassociation from them as a means of drawing near to Allah.
All these states constitute denial of the Imamate of the Imams (as), which, according to the command and judgment of Allah, is equivalent to denial of Allah Himself.
Of course, because these degrees of denial differ from one another, some of their legal rulings also differ.
For example, hostility toward the Imams (as) causes a person, in worldly legal terms, not to be treated as a Muslim; his body is not considered pure in the same manner as that of Muslims, and consuming an animal slaughtered by him is not permitted for Muslims, and so forth.
Such rulings do not apply in the lower degrees of denial.

In any case, despite the differences in the degree of their denial, those who reject the Imamate of the Imams (as) share one common condition: **they have not submitted to the Imamate of the Imams (as)**. It is in this respect that they are described as kafirs and mushriks.

It must be emphasized, however, that they themselves may not know or understand that denying the Imamate of the Imams (as) is, in reality, denial of Allah. Their ignorance or heedlessness does not alter the fact of their kufr and shirk:

أَشْرَكُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

"They committed shirk without realizing it."

Allah, the Most High, says:

إِنَّ اللهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَ يَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ

"Indeed, Allah does not forgive that partners be associated with Him, but He forgives anything less than that for whomever He wills."

— Qur'an 4:48.

Therefore, the most important matter in religion is precisely **Imamate and wilayah**, for they guarantee everything else. Without them, nothing—not even Tawhid, which is the foundation and spirit of religion—has sufficient guarantee for being realized correctly.

If the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) concerning Tawhid did not exist, people who know Allah would never have remained upon the correct path of knowing Him. All would have fallen, under the influence of satanic suggestions, into misguidance and *tashbih* concerning the Creator, the Most High.

Today, even though our hadith collections are filled with the Imams' (as) sermons and teachings concerning Tawhid, and these teachings have been available to many Muslim thinkers throughout the centuries, we still observe that the true followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (as)—those who are truly people of Tawhid—are very few in comparison with others.

How much more would this be the case if the Ahl al-Bayt (as) had not existed and had not spoken these words?

In that case, it could be said that no true *muwahhid* would remain.

In any case, denial of Imamate and wilayah is denial of the foundation and basis of religion. It takes a person outside the domain of Tawhid and into the realm of shirk.

Of course, as stated earlier, there is no contradiction in Allah, the Most High, establishing certain worldly rulings for this group of mushriks, for reasons of Divine wisdom, whereby some of their outward religious rulings may coincide with those of believers.

For example, if those who reject wilayah do not harbor hostility toward the Ahl al-Bayt (as), their bodies are considered pure. Non-Muslim mushriks who openly deny Allah, however, do not have this ruling.

This worldly ruling does not remove them from being kafirs and mushriks. It has merely been established for certain worldly considerations and ends with their death; it has no consequence in the Hereafter.

The Denier of the Imam (as)—A Muslim Who Is a Kafir

In light of this, it cannot be argued:

"Since the Shi'a do not regard those who deny the Imams (as) and reject their statements as kafirs and non-Muslims, therefore wilayah and Imamate cannot be an essential component of faith; otherwise, denying it would result in heresy and apostasy."

Yes, the Shi'a regard those who deny the Imams (as) as Muslims, while at the same time considering them kafirs.

This kufr is **kufr in opposition to iman, not Islam**.

Kufr that stands in opposition to Islam causes *ilhad* and *irtidad*. But kufr that stands in opposition to iman can coexist with Islam.

Therefore, a Muslim can be a kafir, while this kufr does not necessarily cause him to become an apostate or fall outside the outward legal category of Islam.

Thus, although Imamate is an essential component of faith—indeed, its foundation and spirit—its denial, when outward Islam is preserved, does not remove a person from the worldly legal category of Islam.

The Messenger of Allah (saww) says:

حَدَّثَنِي جَبْرَئِيلُ عَنْ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ جَلَّ جَلَالُهُ أَنَّهُ قَالَ:

مَنْ عَلِمَ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا وَحْدِي، وَ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدِي وَ رَسُولِي، وَ أَنَّ عَلِيَّ بْنَ أَبِي طَالِبٍ خَلِيفَتِي، وَ أَنَّ الْأَئِمَّةَ مِنْ وُلْدِهِ حُجَجِي، أَدْخِلُهُ الْجَنَّةَ بِرَحْمَتِي، وَ نَجَّيْتُهُ مِنَ النَّارِ بِعَفْوِي، وَ أَبَحْتُ لَهُ جِوَارِي، وَ أَوْجَبْتُ لَهُ كَرَامَتِي، وَ أَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْهِ نِعْمَتِي، وَ جَعَلْتُهُ مِنْ خَاصَّتِي وَ خَالِصَتِي. إِنْ نَادَانِي لَبَّيْتُهُ، وَ إِنْ دَعَانِي أَجَبْتُهُ، وَ إِنْ سَأَلَنِي أَعْطَيْتُهُ، وَ إِنْ سَكَتَ ابْتَدَأْتُهُ، وَ إِنْ أَسَاءَ رَحِمْتُهُ، وَ إِنْ فَرَّ مِنِّي دَعَوْتُهُ، وَ إِنْ رَجَعَ إِلَيَّ قَبِلْتُهُ، وَ إِنْ قَرَعَ بَابِي فَتَحْتُهُ.

وَ مَنْ لَمْ يَشْهَدْ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا وَحْدِي، أَوْ شَهِدَ بِذَلِكَ وَ لَمْ يَشْهَدْ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدِي وَ رَسُولِي، أَوْ شَهِدَ بِذَلِكَ وَ لَمْ يَشْهَدْ أَنَّ عَلِيَّ بْنَ أَبِي طَالِبٍ خَلِيفَتِي، أَوْ شَهِدَ بِذَلِكَ وَ لَمْ يَشْهَدْ أَنَّ الْأَئِمَّةَ مِنْ وُلْدِهِ حُجَجِي، فَقَدْ جَحَدَ نِعْمَتِي، وَ صَغَّرَ عَظَمَتِي، وَ كَفَرَ بِآيَاتِي وَ كُتُبِي. إِنْ قَصَدَنِي حَجَبْتُهُ، وَ إِنْ سَأَلَنِي حَرَمْتُهُ، وَ إِنْ نَادَانِي لَمْ أَسْمَعْ نِدَاءَهُ، وَ إِنْ دَعَانِي لَمْ أَسْتَجِبْ دُعَاءَهُ، وَ إِنْ رَجَانِي خَيَّبْتُهُ، وَ ذَلِكَ جَزَاؤُهُ مِنِّي، وَ مَا أَنَا بِظَلَّامٍ لِلْعَبِيدِ.

“Jibril narrated to me from the Lord of Might—Majestic is His Glory—that He said: Whoever knows that there is no deity except Me alone, that Muhammad is My servant and Messenger, that Ali ibn Abi Talib is My Khalifah, and that the Imams from his descendants are My Hujjahs, I shall admit him into Paradise through My mercy, save him from the Fire through My pardon, grant him permission to dwell in My nearness, make My honor incumbent upon him, complete My blessing upon him, and make him among My chosen and purified servants.

If he calls Me, I shall answer him. If he invokes Me, I shall respond to him. If he asks Me for something, I shall give it to him. If he remains silent, I shall initiate [My favor] toward him. If he does wrong, I shall have mercy upon him. If he flees from Me, I shall call him. If he returns to Me, I shall accept him. And if he knocks upon My door, I shall open it for him.

But whoever does not testify that there is no deity except Me alone; or testifies to this but does not testify that Muhammad is My servant and Messenger; or testifies to this but does not testify that Ali ibn Abi Talib is My Khalifah; or testifies to this but does not testify that the Imams from his descendants are My Hujjahs—such a person has denied My blessing, belittled My greatness, and disbelieved in My signs and My Books.

If he seeks Me, I shall veil him from Myself. If he asks Me, I shall deprive him. If he calls Me, I shall not hear his call. If he invokes Me, I shall not answer his supplication. If he places his hope in Me, I shall disappoint his hope.

That is his recompense from Me, and I am not unjust to My servants."
— *Kamal al-Din*, chapter 24, hadith 3.
It can be observed from this narration that the one who rejects the wilayah of the Imams (as) possesses no standing or position before Allah, the Most High.
Even belief in Tawhid and Prophethood—and even belief in the Imamate of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (as)—if accompanied by rejection of the remaining Imams (as), does not bring about Divine favor.
According to everything discussed above, **all goodness and blessings are attained only through accepting the wilayah of all the Imams (as)**.
The above tradition presents only one glimpse of the immense blessings and favors of Allah that are granted to the people of wilayah and ma'rifah of the Imams (as).

Wilayah — A Necessary Condition of Tawhid

In this regard, there is a famous hadith known as the **Hadith of Silsilat al-Dhahab (the Golden Chain)**, because eight Infallible personalities are present in its chain of transmission. This hadith relates to the time when Imam al-Ridha (as), while travelling from Madinah toward Marw, reached Nishapur. As he was leaving, the scholars of hadith came to him and said:
"You are leaving us; will you not relate a hadith to us so that we may benefit from it?"
The Imam (as), while seated in his litter, extended his blessed head from it and said:

سَمِعتُ اَبی موسَی بنَ جَعفَرٍ یَقُولُ: سَمِعتُ اَبی جَعفَرَ بنَ مُحَمَّدٍ یَقولُ: سَمِعتُ اَبی مُحَمَّدَ بنَ عَلِیٍّ یَقولُ: سَمِعتُ اَبی عَلِیَّ بنَ الحُسَینِ یَقُولُ: سَمِعتُ اَبی الحُسَینَ بنَ عَلِیٍّ یَقولُ: سَمِعتُ اَبی اَمیرَالمُؤمنینَ عَلِیَّ بنَ اَبی طالبٍ علیهم السّلام یَقولُ: سَمِعتُ النَبِیَّ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم یَقولُ: سَمِعتُ اللهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ یَقُولُ: لا اِلهَ اِلّا اللهُ حِصنی. فَمَن دَخَّلَ حِصنی، اَمِنَ مِن عَذابی. (فَلَمّا مَرَّتِ الرّاحِلَةُ نَادانا:) بِشُروطِها. وَ اَنَا مِن شُروطِها(1) .

"I heard my father Musa ibn Ja'far say: I heard my father Ja'far ibn Muhammad say: I heard my father Muhammad ibn Ali say: I heard my father Ali ibn al-Husayn say: I heard my father al-Husayn ibn Ali say: I heard my father Amir al-Mu'minin Ali

ibn Abi Talib (as) say: I heard the Prophet (saww) say: I heard Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, say:

'La ilaha illallah is My fortress. Whoever enters My fortress is safe from My punishment.'

When the Imam's mount had moved away, he called out to us:

'With its conditions—and I am one of its conditions.'"

(1) *'Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha (as)*, Chapter 37, Hadith 4.

Thus, the word of Tawhid—**La ilaha illallah**—becomes a means of salvation from Divine punishment only when it is accompanied by the **wilayah of the Imams (as)**. In reality, pure Tawhid is actualized only in this manner.

Therefore, the wilayah of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) possesses the same effect as the word of Tawhid itself:

عَنِ الرِّضا، عَن اَبيهِ، عَن آبائِهِ، عَن عَلِيِّ بنِ اَبی طالِبٍ عليهم السّلام، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم عَن جَبرَئيلَ، عَن ميكائيلَ، عَن اِسرافيلَ، عَن اللَّوحِ، عَنِ القَلَمِ قالَ: يَقولُ اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ: وِلايَةُ عَلِيِّ بنِ اَبی طالِبٍ حِصنی. فَمَن دَخَلَ حِصنی، اَمِنَ مِن عَذابی(1) .

"Imam al-Ridha (as) narrated from his fathers, from Ali ibn Abi Talib (as), from the Prophet (saww), from Jibra'il, from Mika'il, from Israfil, from the Tablet, and from the Pen, who said that Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, says:

'The wilayah of Ali ibn Abi Talib is My fortress. Whoever enters My fortress is safe from My punishment.'"

(1) *'Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha (as)*, Chapter 38, Hadith 1.

The two hadiths above correspond to one another completely. The reason is that the **wilayah of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) is the spirit of Tawhid of Allah, the Exalted, and its guarantor**.

It is possible for someone to appear outwardly to be a person of Tawhid, but if he is not a person of wilayah, his Tawhid is not accepted. Conversely, if someone is truly a person of wilayah of Amir al-Mu'minin (as), then not only is his Tawhid accepted, but he has also acknowledged the Prophethood and Messengership of the Noble Prophet (saww).

This is because the wilayah of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) and the other Imams (as) is the **spirit and foundation of both Tawhid and Prophethood**.

Thus, as the contemporary poet has said:

“Tawhid, Prophethood, and Imamate—all three are contained in saying: ‘Ali is the Wali of Allah.’” (2)

Of course, what is meant here by “saying” is **inner belief and conviction**, not merely uttering the words with the tongue without heartfelt belief.

(2) *Khalvatgah-e Raz*, Habib Chaychian.

Introducing Amir al-Mu’minin (as) in His Own Words

A rational person, once he recognizes Ali (as), cannot but submit to his wilayah and his authority over himself. Amir al-Mu’minin (as) introduces himself in the following words:

اَنَا الهادی، اَنَا المُهتَدی، وَ اَنَا اَبُواليَتامی، وَ المَساكينِ وَ زَوجُ الاَرامِلِ. وَ اَنَا مَلجَاُ كُلّ ضَعيفٍ وَ مَأمَنُ كُلّ خائِفٍ. وَ اَنَا قائِدُ المُؤمِنينِ [اِلَی الجَنَّةِ]. وَ اَنَا حَبلُ اللهِ المَتينُ. وَ اَنَا عُروَةُ اللهِ الوُثقی وَ كَلِمَةُ اللهِ التَّقوی. وَ اَنَا عَينُ اللهِ وَ لِسانُهُ الصّادِقُ وَ يَدُهُ. وَ اَنَا جَنبُ اللهِ الَّذی يَقُولُ: «اَن تَقولَ نَفسٌ يا حَسرتی عَلی ما فَرَّطتُ فی جَنبِ اللهِ».(1) وَ اَنَا يَدُ اللهِ المَبسوطَةُ عَلی عِبادِهِ بِالرَّحمَةِ وَ المَغفِرَةِ. وَ اَنَا بابُ حِطَّةٍ. مَن عَرَفَنی وَ عَرَفَ حَقّی، فَقَد عَرَفَ رَبُّهُ. لِاَنّی وَصِیُّ نَبِيِّهِ فی اَرضِهِ وَ حُجَّتُهُ عَلی خَلقِهِ. لا يُنكِرُ هذا اِلّا رادٌّ عَلَی اللهِ وَ عَلی رَسُولِهِ(2).

“I am the guide; I am the one who has been guided. I am the father of orphans and the destitute, and the husband of widowed women. I am the refuge of every weak person and the place of safety for every fearful person.

I am the leader of the believers [toward Paradise]. I am the firm rope of Allah. I am the unbreakable handle of Allah and the Word of Allah signifying piety. I am the Eye of Allah, His truthful tongue, and His hand.

I am the **Janb of Allah**, concerning which He says:

‘Lest a soul should say: Alas for me, for what I neglected with regard to the Janb of Allah.’

I am the Hand of Allah extended over His servants with mercy and forgiveness. I am the **Bab of Hittah**.

Whoever knows me and knows my right has indeed known his Lord, because I am His Prophet’s successor on His earth and His Hujjah over His creation. None denies this except one who rejects Allah and His Messenger.”

(1) Surah al-Zumar (39): 56.
(2) *Ma‘ani al-Akhbar*, pp. 17–18.
The word **Janb** means the side or flank of a person. Therefore, when something is extremely close to a person, it may be described as being at his side.
Amir al-Mu’minin (as), although he is a servant and creation of Allah, is called **Janb Allah** on account of his immense proximity to Allah, the Exalted. Thus, falling short concerning his right is regarded as falling short concerning Allah.
The other expressions used in the above hadith have already been explained previously.
The important point we derive from this hadith is precisely that **ma‘rifah of the Lord is impossible without ma‘rifah of the Imam (as) and recognition of his right**. This is because denying the Imam (as) and his right is, in reality, a denial of Allah and His Messenger.

Chapter Three: The Role of Tawalla and Tabarra in Religious Commitment

The Reality of Faith: Love and Hatred for the Sake of the Ahl al-Bayt (as)

Introduction

It became clear in the preceding discussions that the reality of religion and the spirit of Islam is **devotion and submission before the presence of Allah, the Exalted**. Therefore, if acts of worship are to produce their intended effect, they must create this very state within the worshipper.

From this perspective, it can be said that acts of worship such as prayer, fasting, Hajj, zakat, and so forth have all been prescribed so that they may make the servant submissive to Allah and His servant in the manner that Allah desires. If they do not produce such an effect, they are devoid of spirit and are merely outward displays—just like dolls that have the shape of human beings but possess none of the qualities of humanity.

Being human is not related merely to a person's outward form. Rather, it is the **spirit of the human being** that gives the body its value as a human being.

The Spirit of Worship: Humility Before Allah

Accordingly, the spirit of acts of worship is **submission and devotion to Allah, the Exalted**. Actions performed without submission to the Lord are like a body without a soul and a form without life.

Therefore, if a state of **'ujb**—self-admiration and self-conceit—arises in the worshipper, it causes all his deeds to be ruined. Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

مَن دَخَلَهُ العُجبَ هَلَکَ(1) .

"Whoever becomes afflicted with self-admiration is ruined."

(1) *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 313, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-'Ujb, Hadith 2.

How many people there are who have become distant from Allah through precisely these acts of worship, while imagining that they have thereby drawn closer to Him!

The Messenger of Allah (saww) says:

قالَ اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ: ... .اِنَّ مِن عِبادِیَ المُؤمِنینَ لِمَن یَجتَهِدُ فی عِبادَتی فَیقُومُ مِن رُقادِهِ وَ لَذیذِ وَسادِهِ فَیَتَهَجَّدُ لِیَ اللَّیالِیَ فَتَتعَبُ نَفسُهُ فی عِبادَتی، فَاَضرِبُهُ بِالنُّعاسِ اللَّیلَةَ وَ اللَّیلَتَینِ، نَظَراً مِنّی لَهُ وَ اِبقاءً عَلَیهِ. فَیَنامُ حَتّی یُصبِحُ فَیَقُومُ وَ هُوَ ماقِتٌ لِنَفسِهِ زارِئٌ عَلَیها. وَ لَو اُخَلّی بَینَهُ وَ بَینَ ما یُریدُ مِن عِبادَتی، لَدَخَلَهُ العُجبُ مِن ذلِکَ فَیُصَیِّرُهُ العُجبُ اِلَی الفِتنَةِ بِاَعمالِهِ فَیَأتیهِ مِن ذلِکَ ما فیهِ هَلاکُهُ لِعُجبِهِ بِاَعمالِهِ وَ رِضاهُ عَن نَفسِهِ حَتّی یَظُنَّ اَنَّهُ قَد فاقَ العابِدینَ وَ جازَ فی عِبادَتِهِ حَدَّ التَّقصیرِ فَیَتَباعَدُ مِنّی عِندَ ذلِکَ وَ هُوَ یَظُنُّ اَنَّهُ یَتَقَرَّبُ اِلَیَّ(2) .

“Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, said:
‘Among My believing servants is one who strives intensely in My worship. He rises from his sleep and his comfortable bed and spends nights in vigil for Me, to such an extent that his body becomes exhausted and weary in My worship.
Out of My consideration for him and in order to preserve him upon the path of servitude, I cause him to become sleepy for one or two nights. As a result, he sleeps until morning. When he rises, he is displeased with himself and reproaches himself.
But if I were to leave him to himself so that he could worship Me according to his own desire, he would become afflicted with self-admiration because of those acts of worship. That self-admiration would cause him to become deluded by his deeds, and through this delusion he would be ruined because of his conceit regarding his deeds and his satisfaction with himself.
Eventually, he would imagine that he had surpassed all other worshippers and had gone beyond every limit of inadequacy in his worship. At that point he would become distant from Me, while imagining that he is drawing closer to Me.’”
(2) *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 60, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Rida bi al-Qada’, Hadith 4.
If acts of worship do not increase a person's submission to Allah along the path of servitude, then instead of bringing him closer to the presence of his Lord, they cause him to become distant from Allah's pleasure.
This is where, at times, a sin can become better before Allah than a good deed. Amir al-Mu’minin (as) says:

سَیِّئَةٌ تَسُوؤُکَ خَیرٌ عِندَاللهِ مِن حَسَنَةٍ تُعجِبُکَ(1) .

“A bad deed that causes you distress is better before Allah than a good deed that causes you self-admiration.”

(1) *Nahj al-Balagha* (Fayz al-Islam), Wisdom 43.

A wrong deed that causes a person to feel distressed over having committed it drives him toward repentance and supplication before Allah, seeking that He overlook his shortcoming. This very state is an expression of servitude and submission before Allah, the Exalted.

But a good deed that causes a person to become self-admiring and pleased and delighted with himself awakens within him the spirit of egotism. The greater a person becomes in his own estimation, the less he sees himself as small and humble before his Lord. This distances him from the reality of servitude.

Therefore, the criterion and measure of servitude to Allah is **not merely performing acts of worship**. These acts constitute worship only when they make a person submissive to Allah and obedient to His command.

For this reason, Allah sometimes prevents His believing servant from performing a good deed that would destroy the spirit of servitude within him. Allah does this because He seeks the good of His believing servant and therefore acts in such a way that he does not become afflicted with self-admiration.

Of course, this Divine care applies specifically to the believers. These are the people who have placed themselves under the **wilayah and guardianship of their Lord**, entrusting their own choice and welfare to Him. They are certain that Allah knows what is in their best interest better than anyone else and that He does nothing except what is good and beneficial for them.

This is where the matter of being **pleased with Allah's decree (rida bi al-qada')** acquires particular importance.

The believing servant knows that if he accepts the wilayah and guardianship of his Lord, then whatever happiness or hardship he encounters is ultimately for his good, and there is no evil in it for him.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

فيما اَوحَى اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ اِلى موسَى بنِ عِمرانَ عليه السّلام: يا موسَى بنِ عِمرانَ، ما خَلَقتُ خَلقاً اَحَبَّ اِلَيَّ مِن عَبدِيَ المُؤمِنِ. فَاِنّى اِنَّما اَبتَليهِ لِما هُوَ خَيرٌ لَهُ. وَ اُعافيهِ لِما هُوَ خَيرٌ لَهُ. وَ اَزوى عَنهُ ما هُوَ شَرٌّ لَهُ لِما هُوَ خَيرٌ لَهُ. وَ اَنَا اَعلَمُ بِما يَصلَحُ عَلَيهِ عَبدى. فَلَيَصبِر عَلى بَلائى، وَ لَيَشكُر نَعمائى، وَ لِيَرضَ بِقَضائى، اَكتُبهُ فِى الصِّدّيقينَ عِندى، اِذا عَمِلَ بِرِضائى وَ اَطاعَ اَمرى .

(**1**)

“Among what Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, revealed to Musa ibn ‘Imran (as) was:
‘O Musa ibn ‘Imran! I have not created any creation more beloved to Me than My believing servant. I only test him because there is good for him in it. I grant him well-being because there is good for him in it. And I keep away from him what is harmful to him because there is good for him in that.
I know better than anyone else what is beneficial for My servant. Therefore, let him be patient with My trials, let him give thanks for My blessings, and let him be pleased with My decree. I shall record him among the truthful ones with Me when he acts according to what pleases Me and obeys My command.’”
(1) *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 61, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Rida bi al-Qada’, Hadith 7.
This is an example of Allah exercising **wilayah and guardianship over His believing servant**: He manages him in the best possible manner and does not allow him to enter a path that is not beneficial for him—even when the outward appearance of that path may be the performance of acts of worship and good deeds.

The Exercise of Divine Wilayah over the Believing Servant

Thus, servitude to Allah ultimately consists in a person being submissive before Him and being pleased with whatever He has chosen for him—whether it accords with his own wishes or goes against them.
Such a person has truly accepted **Wilayat Allah**, and a person's being a believer is also identified through precisely this quality.

…عَمَّن ذَكَرَهُ، عَن اَبی عَبدِاللهِ علیه السّلام قالَ: قُلتُ لَهُ: بِاَیِّ شَیءٍ یَعلَمُ المؤمِنُ بِاَنَّهُ مُؤمِنٌ؟ قالَ: بِالتَّسلیمِ لِلّهِ وَ الرِّضا فیما وَرَدَ علَیهِ مِن سُرورٍ اَو سَخَطٍ(1) .

The narrator says:
“I said to Imam al-Sadiq (as): ‘How can a believer know that he is truly a believer?’ He said:
‘Through submission to Allah and being pleased with whatever comes to him, whether it is something pleasing to him or something displeasing to him.’”
(1) *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 62, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Rida bi al-Qada’, Hadith 12.

At this point, it becomes clear that all acts of worship, if they are truly worship of Allah, must produce this effect within the spirit of the worshipper.
Prayer, fasting, Hajj, and so forth, when performed in the manner that is pleasing to Allah, lead a person toward being pleased with what pleases Allah and displeased with what displeases Him.
The believing servant does not independently establish his own pleasure or displeasure in relation to Divine pleasure and displeasure. He loves whatever his Lord loves and detests whatever Allah dislikes.
The more a person's love and hatred conform to Divine love and hatred, the greater his share of faith.
This matter is expressed in our hadiths under the heading of **al-hubb fi Allah wa al-bughd fi Allah**—love for the sake of Allah and hatred for the sake of Allah.
The Messenger of Allah (saww) says:
يا عَبدِاللهِ، اَحبِب فِی اللهِ. وَ اَبغِض فِی اللهِ. وَ والِ فِی اللهِ. وَ عادِ فِی اللهِ. فَاِنَّه لا تُنالُ وِلایَةِ اللهِ اِلّا بِذلِکَ. وَ لا یَجِدُ رَجُلٌ طَعمَ الایمانِ، وَ اِن کَثُرَت صَلاتُهُ وَ صیامُهُ، حَتّی یَکونَ کَذلِکَ(2). ...

“O servant of Allah! Love for the sake of Allah. Hate for the sake of Allah. Establish your allegiance for the sake of Allah, and oppose for the sake of Allah. For the wilayah of Allah cannot be attained except through this.
No person tastes the flavor of faith, even if his prayer and fasting are abundant, until he becomes like this...”
(2) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 69, p. 236, Hadith 1, from *‘Ilal al-Shara’i‘*, *‘Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha (as)*, and *Amali al-Saduq*.

Love and Hatred for the Sake of Allah — The Criterion of the Degree of Faith

Al-hubb fi Allah means that a person loves for the sake of Allah and because of Him. All of his loves should be for Allah's sake. He should love a person or a thing because Allah loves it, and he should dislike whatever Allah dislikes because it is disliked by Allah. His love and hatred in every matter should be for Allah's sake. Such a person has, in reality, accepted Allah as his Wali and guardian. He has no independent will of his own before Him; he has effaced his own desire within the will of Allah and desires nothing except what He desires.

This is the spirit of faith.
If a person has no share of this state whatsoever, he does not taste the flavor of faith, even if he is devoted to prayer, fasting, and other acts of worship.
Every act of worship, if it creates such a state within a person, enables him to taste the flavor of faith. Otherwise, faith remains tasteless to the soul.
The degree of each person's faith is proportionate to the degree of **hubb fi Allah** and **bughd fi Allah** within him. Therefore, love and hatred for the sake of Allah constitute the criterion for the degree of faith.
For this reason, when Imam al-Sadiq (as) was asked whether love and hatred are part of faith, he replied:

وَ هَلِ الايمانُ اِلّا الحُبَّ وَ البُغضُ؟(1) !

"Is faith anything other than love and hatred?!"
(1) *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 125, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Hubb fi Allah wa al-Bughd fi Allah, Hadith 5.
The spirit of all actions is a person's love or aversion toward the one whose obedience or disobedience is involved.
The spirit of obedience is that it be performed out of love for Allah and for the sake of fulfilling His command. The fact that acts of worship must be performed with the intention of **qurbatan ilallah**—seeking nearness to Allah—demonstrates precisely this reality.
The spirit of disobedience, on the other hand, is aversion and hatred toward Allah. Thus, the positive or negative value of actions ultimately returns to this love and hatred.
According to the Imams (as), the criterion of religious commitment is precisely this **love and hatred based upon religion**. If such love and hatred do not exist within a person, he has no share in religion.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

كُلُّ مَن لَم يُحِبَّ عَلَى الدّينِ وَ لَم يُبغِض عَلَى الدّينِ فَلا دينَ لَهُ(1) .

"Everyone who does not love on the basis of religion and does not hate on the basis of religion has no religion."
(1) *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 127, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Hubb fi Allah wa al-Bughd fi Allah, Hadith 16.

Thus, the degree of a person's religious commitment is proportionate to the degree of his religiously grounded love and hatred.

Loving the Friend of Allah and Opposing His Enemy

Now that this is established, we must determine what is beloved to Allah and what is disliked by Him, and who is beloved to Allah and who is disliked by Him, so that a person may recognize the axis around which Divine love and hatred revolve and may use it to assess his own faith.

The person addressed by the Messenger of Allah (saww) in the previous hadith asked him precisely this question:

"How can I know whether my love and hatred are for the sake of Allah? Who is the friend of Allah, so that I may befriend him? And who is His enemy, so that I may oppose him?"

In response, the Prophet (saww) pointed toward Amir al-Mu'minin (as) and said:

وَلِيُّ هذا وَلِيُّ اللهِ، فَوالِهِ. وَ عَدُوُّ هذا عَدُوُّ اللهِ، فَعادِهِ. والِ وَلِيَّ هذا، وَ لَو اَنَّهُ قاتِلُ اَبيکَ وَ وَلَدِکَ. وَ عادِ عَدُوَّ هذا، وَ لَو اَنَّهُ اَبُوکَ اَو وَلَدُکَ(2) .

"The friend of this one is the friend of Allah, so befriend him. And the enemy of this one is the enemy of Allah, so oppose him.

Befriend the friend of this one, even if he were the killer of your father or your child. And oppose the enemy of this one, even if he were your father or your child."

(2) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 69, p. 236, Hadith 1, from *'Ilal al-Shara'i'*, *'Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha (as)*, and *Amali al-Saduq*.

This is the axis around which Divine love and hatred revolve.

A person can therefore recognize the state of his own faith through the degree of his love for Amir al-Mu'minin (as) and his friends, and his hatred toward his enemies.

The Ahl al-Bayt (as) — Allah's Beloved by Their Very Essence

A person who wishes for all his loves and hatreds to be for Allah and in His way must pay attention to the fact that, according to numerous narrations transmitted

by both Shi'a and Sunni sources, the beloved of Allah is the Noble Messenger of Allah (saww).

This very title demonstrates that, in the sight of Allah, he is the most beloved of His creation, having been uniquely given the title **Habib Allah**—the Beloved of Allah.

Following him are the Ahl al-Bayt (as), who are inseparable from him in this distinction.

As explained previously, these Fourteen Infallibles (as) are the **Chosen among the chosen of Allah**. In reality, they are the only beloved ones of Allah.

This means that if anyone or anything else is beloved to Allah, it is because of its connection and attachment to them. Apart from its attribution to the Ahl al-Bayt (as), it is not beloved to Allah in and of itself.

In **Ziyarat Aal Yasin**, transmitted from Imam al-Mahdi (ajtf), we recite:

أُشهِدُکَ یا مَولایَ اَنّی أُشهِدُ ... اَنَّ مُحَمَّداً صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم عَبدُهُ وَ رَسُولُهُ؛ لا حَبیبَ اِلّا هُوَ وَ اَهلُهُ(1) .

"I call you to witness, O my Master, that I bear witness ... that Muhammad (saww) is His servant and His Messenger; **there is no beloved except him and his Ahl al-Bayt.**"

(1) *Al-Ihtijaj* of al-Tabrisi, vol. 2, p. 317.

Allah, the Exalted, created all other things because of His love for them.

This reality is expressed in the noble **Hadith al-Kisa'** in the following words:

فَقالَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ: یا مَلائِکَتی وَ یا سُکّانَ سَماواتی، اِنّی ما خَلَقتُ سَماءً مَبنِیَّةً وَ لا اَرضاً مَدحِیَّةً وَ لا قَمَراً مُنیرا وَ لا شَمساً مُضیئَةً وَ لا فَلَکاً یَدُورُ وَ لا فَلَکاً تَسری وَ لا بَحراً یَجری، اِلّا لِمَحَبَّةِ هؤُلاءِ الخَمسَةِ الَّذینَ هُم تَحتَ الکِساءِ. فَقالَ الاَمینُ جَبرَئیلُ: یا رَبِّ وَ مَن تَحتَ الکِساء؟ فَقالَ اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ: هُم اهل بیت النُبُوَّةِ وَ مَعدِنُ الرِّسالَةِ. وَ هُم فاطِمَةُ وَ اَبُوها وَ بَعلُها وَ بَنُوها(2).

"Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, said:

'O My angels and O inhabitants of My heavens! I did not create a constructed heaven, an outspread earth, an illuminating moon, a shining sun, a revolving celestial sphere, a moving firmament, or a flowing sea except for the love of these five who are beneath the Cloak.'

The trustworthy Jibra'il asked:

'O my Lord! And who are those beneath the Cloak?'

Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, said:

‘They are the People of the Household of Prophethood and the source of Messengership. They are Fatimah, her father, her husband, and her sons.’”
(2) *Ihqaq al-Haqq*, vol. 2, p. 556, citing *‘Awalim*.
Thus, it may be said that the only beloved ones of Allah are the Ahl al-Bayt (as), and that the other created beings were created because of love for them.
Therefore, the axis of **hubb fi Allah and bughd fi Allah**—love for the sake of Allah and hatred for the sake of Allah—becomes **love and hatred for the sake of the Ahl al-Bayt (as)**.
This is what the Qur’an presents as the recompense for the Messenger's mission:
«قُل لا اَسَالُكُم عَلَيهِ اَجراً اِلّا المَوَدَةَ فِى القُربى(1) .»
“Say: [O Prophet,] I do not ask of you any reward for it except **love and affection for my near relatives**.”
(1) Surah al-Shura (42): 23.
The word **mawaddah** is applied to a form of love that has practical and outward manifestations. This differs from **mahabbah**, which can also refer simply to an inward matter of the heart, regardless of whether it produces outward effects.
The term **al-qurba** refers to the Ahl al-Bayt (as), and the expression **fi al-qurba** in this verse is analogous to **fi Allah**.
Therefore, the meaning of the verse is that the recompense for the mission of the Messenger of Allah (saww) is **to establish one's love and affection upon the axis of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) and for their sake**.
If *mahabbah* is understood as “loving,” then *mawaddah* means “expressing and practicing that love”—an affection that exists within the heart and is also manifested outwardly.
It should also be noted that the expression **fi al-qurba** has a broader meaning than **li al-qurba**.
Had the recompense for the Messenger's mission been *mawaddah li al-qurba*, it would have meant simply loving and showing affection toward the Ahl al-Bayt (as). However, **fi al-qurba** encompasses all expressions of love and affection that ought to be manifested **for the sake of the Ahl al-Bayt (as)**. It also encompasses hatred toward their enemies.

In any case, what is important is that **our loves should revolve around the Ahl al-Bayt (as) and should be for their sake**, because love centered upon the Ahl al-Bayt (as) is, in reality, love centered upon Allah, the Exalted.

Mawaddah fi al-Qurba — The Spirit of Servitude to Allah

Therefore, **hubb fi Allah**—love for the sake of Allah—when actualized in practice, ultimately returns to **hubb and bughd fi al-qurba**: love and hatred for the sake of the Ahl al-Bayt (as).

This is precisely what constitutes the foundation and spirit of servitude to Allah. In other words, only the person who loves the Ahl al-Bayt (as), hates their enemies, befriends their friends because of his love for the Ahl al-Bayt (as), and opposes their enemies because of their enmity toward the Ahl al-Bayt (as) is truly engaged in the servitude of Allah.

In general, all of his loves and hatreds must be for the sake of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). He should not approve of anything except what they approve of, and should not be displeased with anything except what they dislike.

This is the **reality of faith and the spirit of servitude to Allah**. Whoever seeks a path toward the nearness and pleasure of Allah must proceed exclusively through this route:

»قُل ما اَسالُكُم عَلَيهِ اَجراً اِلّا مَن شاءَ اَن يَتَّخِذَ اِلى رَبِّهِ سَبيلاً(1) .«

“Say: [O Prophet,] I do not ask of you any reward for it, except that whoever wishes may take a path toward his Lord.”

(1) Surah al-Furqan (25): 57.

The path that Allah has placed before such a person is **mawaddah fi al-qurba**. Thus, although the word “reward” (*ajr*) has been used here, in reality it is the human being himself who benefits through *mawaddah fi al-qurba*. The Ahl al-Bayt (as) have no need for this *mawaddah*:

»قُل ما سَاَلتُكُم مِن اَجرٍ فَهُوَ لَكُم(2) .«

“Say: [O Prophet,] whatever reward I have asked of you, it is for yourselves.”

(2) Surah Saba’ (34): 47.

In light of the preceding discussion, the reason for the great emphasis found in our narrations upon **love for the Ahl al-Bayt (as)** and hatred toward their enemies becomes clear.

One of the expressions used in this regard is that their wilayah and hatred toward their enemies constitute the **strongest of the bonds of faith**.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

قالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم لِاَصحابِهِ: اَیُّ عُرَی الایمانِ اَوثَقُ؟ فَقالوا: اللهُ وَ رَسُولُهُ اَعلَمُ. وَ قالَ بَعضُهُم: الصَّلاةُ. وَ قالَ بَعضُهُم: الزَّکاةُ. وَ قالَ بَعضُهُم: الصِّیامُ. وَ قالَ بَعضُهُم: اَلحَجُّ وَ العُمرَةُ. وَ قالَ بَعضُهُم: اَلجِهادُ.

فَقالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ: لِکُلٍّ ما قُلتُم فَضلٌ وَ لَیسَ بِهِ. وَ لکِن اَوثَقُ عُرَی الایمانِ: اَلحُبُّ فِی اللهِ وَ البُغضُ فِی اللهِ وَ تَوالی اَولیاءِ اللهِ وَ التَّبَرّی مِن اَعداءِ اللهِ(1) .

“The Messenger of Allah (saww) said to his companions:

‘Which of the bonds of faith is the strongest?’

They replied: ‘Allah and His Messenger know best.’

Some said: ‘Prayer.’

Some said: ‘Zakat.’

Some said: ‘Fasting.’

Some said: ‘Hajj and ‘Umrah.’

And some said: ‘Jihad.’

The Messenger of Allah (saww) then said:

‘Each of the things you have mentioned possesses merit, but none of them is [the strongest bond]. Rather, the strongest of the bonds of faith is:

love for the sake of Allah, hatred for the sake of Allah, allegiance to the friends of Allah, and disassociation from the enemies of Allah.’”

(1) *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 125, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Hubb fi Allah wa al-Bughd fi Allah, Hadith 6.

The **friends of Allah** are those whom Allah introduced in the Hadith al-Kisa’, while the enemies of Allah are their enemies.

Love and hatred for the sake of Allah means that we love whatever is beloved to the friends of Allah and regard as an enemy whatever is hated by them.

The Messenger of Allah (saww) says:

وِلايةُ عَلِيّ بنِ اَبى طالِبٍ وِلايَةُ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ. وَ حُبُّهُ عِبادَةُ اللهِ. وَ اتِّباعُهُ فَريضَةُ اللهِ. وَ اَولِياؤُهُ اَولياءُ اللهِ. وَ اَعداؤُهُ اَعداءُ اللهِ. وَ حَربُهُ حَربُ اللهِ. وَ سِلمُهُ سِلمُ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ(2) .

"The wilayah of Ali ibn Abi Talib is the wilayah of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic. Loving him is the worship of Allah. Following him is an obligation from Allah. His friends are the friends of Allah, and his enemies are the enemies of Allah. Fighting him is fighting Allah, and being at peace with him is being at peace with Allah, the Mighty and Majestic."

(2) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 38, pp. 31–32, Hadith 9, from *Bisharat al-Mustafa*.

Accordingly, **tabarra** from the enemies of Allah means disassociation from the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). This tabarra is a necessary consequence of accepting the wilayah of the Imams (as) and cannot be separated from it.

Tabarra from the Enemies of Allah as an Act of Worship

Disassociation from the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) is itself, in and of itself, an act of worship and a means of attaining nearness to Allah.

This meaning can be understood from the following passages of **Ziyarat 'Ashura**:

يا اَباعَبدِاللهِ، اِنّى اَتَقَرَّبُ اِلَى اللهِ وَ اِلى رَسُولِهِ وَ اِلى اَميرِالمُؤمِنينَ وَ اِلى فاطِمَةَ وَ اِلَى الحَسَنِ وَ اِلَيکَ بِمُوالاتِکَ وَ بِالبَرَاءَةِ مِمَّن قاتَلَکَ وَ نَصَبَ لَکَ الحَرب وَ بِالبَرَاءَةِ مِمَّن اَسَّسَ اَساسَ الظُّلمِ وَ الجَورِ عَلَيکُم ... . وَ اَتَقَرَّبُ اِلَى اللهِ ثُمَّ اِلَيکُم بِمُوالاتِکُم وَ مُوالاةِ وَلِيِّکُم وَ بِالبَرَاءَةِ مِن اَعدائِکُم وَ النّاصِبينَ لَکُم الحَربَ وَ بِالبَرَاءَةِ مِن اَشياعِهِم وَ اَتباعِهِم(1) .

"O Abu 'Abdillah! I seek nearness to Allah, to His Messenger, to Amir al-Mu'minin, to Fatimah, to Hasan, and to you through my allegiance to you and through disassociation from those who fought against you and waged war against you, and through disassociation from those who laid the foundation of oppression and injustice against you...

And I seek nearness to Allah, and then to you, through my allegiance to you and allegiance to your wali, through disassociation from your enemies and those who raised war against you, and through disassociation from their followers and those who followed their path."

(1) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 101, p. 294.

Thus, just as we seek nearness to Allah, the Exalted, through the wilayah of the Imams (as), we also seek nearness to Him through **bara'ah from their enemies**.

As we read in another passage of Ziyarat ‘Ashura, disassociation from the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) is a valuable blessing that Allah bestows upon a person:

فَاَسَاَلُ اللهَ الَّذی ... رَزَقَنِی البَرَاءَةَ مِن اَعدائِکُم اَن یَجعَلَنی مَعَکُم فِی الدُّنیا وَ الآخِرَةِ(1) .

“So I ask Allah, Who... has granted me the blessing of disassociation from your enemies, to make me with you in this world and the Hereafter.”

(1) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 101, p. 295.

Apart from this aspect, the necessity of **tabarra from the enemies of the Imams (as)** can be discussed from several perspectives.

1. Tabarra as a Means to the Actualization of Religious Commitment

Introduction

For recognizing the correct religion and the proper path of servitude to Allah, **disassociation from the enemies of the Family of Allah (as)** is necessary.

If we wish to acquire religion as the correct method of serving Allah and to act according to it, we inevitably need to recognize the enemies of religion and know what they did in order to divert it from its proper course.

Religion is conveyed through the Messenger of Allah (saww) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as), and we are obligated to accept the guardianship and authority of these Divine friends and to embark upon the path of servitude under their guidance.

In the same way, we have a duty to recognize the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) to the extent necessary for us to distinguish the valley of misguidance and avoid falling into error in matters of religion.

In reality, what is necessary is to recognize the deviations and departures from the original religion. Becoming acquainted with the leaders of misguidance is necessary because it makes us aware of their innovations and deviations.

Amir al-Mu’minin (as) explained this meaning in a sermon delivered at a place called **Dhu Qar**, saying:

وَ اعلَمُوا اَنَّکُم لَن تَعرِفُوا الرُّشدَ حَتّی تَعرِفُوا الَّذی تَرَکَهُ وَ لَم تَأخُذُوا بِمیثاقِ الکِتابِ حَتّی تَعرِفُوا الَّذی نَقَضَهُ وَ لَن تَمَسَّکُوا بِهِ حَتّی تَعرِفُوا الَّذی نَبَذَهُ... . وَ لَن تَعرِفُوا التَّقوی حَتّی تَعرِفُوا الَّذی تَعَدّی. فَاِذا عَرَفتُم ذلِکَ، عَرَفتُمُ البِدَعَ وَ التَّکَلُّفَ وَ رَایتُمُ الفِریَةَ عَلَی اللهِ وَ عَلی رَسُولِهِ ... وَ رَاَیتُم کَیفَ هَدَی اللهُ مَن هَدی(2) .

“Know that you will never recognize the path of right guidance until you recognize the one who abandoned it.

You will never uphold the covenant of the Book until you recognize the one who violated it.
And you will never hold fast to it until you recognize the one who cast it aside...
And you will never recognize piety until you recognize the one who transgressed against it.
When you acquire this recognition, you will recognize the innovations and the impositions upon religion, and you will see the fabrications and false accusations made against Allah and His Messenger... and you will see how Allah guided those whom He guided."
(2) *Al-Kafi*, vol. 8, p. 390, Hadith 586.
This statement of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) makes it clear that in order to recognize guidance, one inevitably needs to recognize **misguidance and its people**.
We must recognize both the innovators and their innovations so that we can distinguish religion from what is other than religion.
Amir al-Mu'minin (as) says in another sermon:

وَ اِنَّما بَدءُ وُقُوعِ الفِتَنِ مِن اَهواءٍ تُتَّبَعُ وَ اَحكامٍ تُبتَدَعُ يُخالَفُ فيها حُكمُ اللهِ يَتَوَلّى فيها رِجالٌ رِجالاً. اَلا اِنَّ الحَقَّ لَو خَلَصَ، لَم يَكُنِ اختِلافٌ. وَ لَو اَنَّ الباطِلَ خَلَصَ، لَم يَخفَ عَلى ذى حِجىً. لكِنَّهُ يُؤخَذُ مِن هذا ضِغثٌ وَ مِن هذا ضِغثٌ فَيُمزَجانِ فَيُجَلَّلانِ مَعاً. فَهُنالِکَ يَستَولِى الشَّيطانُ عَلى اَولِيائِهِ وَ نَجَا الَّذينَ سَبَقَت لَهُم مِنَ اللهِ الحُسنى. اِنّى سَمِعتُ رَسُولَ اللهِ صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم يَقُولُ: كَيفَ اَنتُم اِذا لَبِستكُم فِتنَةٌ يَربُو فيهَا الصَّغيرُ وَ يَهرُمُ فيهَا الكَبيرُ يَجرِى النّاسُ عَلَيها وَ يَتَّخِذوُنَها سُنَّةً فَاِذا غُيِّرَ مِنها شَىءٌ قيلَ قَد غُيِّرَتِ السُّنَّةُ.

"The beginning of the occurrence of tribulations is nothing other than desires that are followed and rulings that are innovated, in which the command of Allah is opposed, and through which some people take others as their guardians and authorities.
Know that if truth were pure and unmixed, there would be no disagreement. And if falsehood were pure and unmixed, it would not remain hidden from any person of understanding.
But a handful from this and a handful from that are taken and mixed together, and both become intermingled and concealed.
It is then that Satan gains control over his friends, while those for whom goodness has already been decreed by Allah attain salvation.

I heard the Messenger of Allah (saww) say:
‘How will you be when a tribulation overtakes you in which the young grow up and the old grow old, people act according to it, and adopt it as a Sunnah? Then, whenever anything from it is changed, it will be said: “The Sunnah has been changed!”’”
Amir al-Mu’minin (as) then explains how such innovations became established:

The Deliberate Introduction of Innovations into Religion by the Earlier Caliphs

Amir al-Mu’minin (as) then turned toward those around him from among his family, his Shi‘a, and his close companions, and said:

قَد عَمِلَتِ الوُلاةُ قَبلی اَعمالاً خالَفُوا فیها رَسُولَ اللهِ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم مُتَعَمِّدینَ لِخِلافِهِ، ناقِضینَ لِعَهدِهِ، مُغَیِّرینَ لِسُنَّتِهِ. وَ لَو حَمَلتُ النِاسَ عَلی تَرکِها وَ حَوَّلتُها اِلی مَواضِعِها وَ اِلی ما کانَت فی عَهدِ رَسُولِ اللهِ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم لِتَفَرَّقَ عَنّی جُندی حَتِی اَبقی وَحدی اَو قَلیلٌ مِن شیعَتِیَ الَّذینَ عَرَفُوا فَضلی وَ فَرضَ اِمامَتی مِن کِتابِ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ وَ سُنَّةِ رَسُولِ اللهِ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم.

“The rulers before me carried out practices in which they opposed the Messenger of Allah (saww), deliberately contradicting him, violating his covenant, and changing his Sunnah.
Had I compelled the people to abandon those practices and restored them to their proper places and to the state in which they had been during the time of the Messenger of Allah (saww), my army would have dispersed from around me, leaving me alone, or only a small number of my Shi‘a would have remained—those who had recognized my superiority and the obligation of my Imamate from the Book of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (saww).”
Amir al-Mu’minin (as) then gives approximately twenty examples of practices that the earlier rulers had introduced as innovations and which he was unable to change.
He then says:

وَ اللهِ لَقَد اَمَرتَ النّاسِ اَن لا يَجتَمِعُوا فى شَهرِ رَمَضانَ اِلّا فى فَريضَةٍ وَ اَعلَمتُهُم اَنَّ اجتِماعَهُم فِى النَّوافِلِ بِدعَةٌ، فَتَنادى بَعضُ اَهلِ عَسكَرى مِمَّن يُقاتِلُ مَعِىَ: يا اَهلَ الاِسلامِ، غُيِّرَت سُنَّةُ عُمَرَ! يَنهانا عَنِ الصَّلاةِ فى شَهرِ رَمَضانَ تَطَوُّعاً! وَ لَقَد خِفتُ اَن يَثُورُوا فى ناحِيَةِ جانِبِ عسكَرى. ما لَقيتُ مِن هذِهِ الأُمَّةِ مِنَ الفِرقَةِ وَ طاعَةِ اَئِمَّةِ الضَّلالَةِ وَ الدُّعاةِ اِلَى النّارِ(1) !

“By Allah, I commanded the people not to gather in the month of Ramadan except for the obligatory prayer, and I informed them that gathering to perform voluntary prayers in congregation was an innovation.

But one of the members of my army, among those who fought alongside me, cried out:

‘O people of Islam! The Sunnah of Umar has been changed! Ali is preventing us from performing voluntary prayer during the month of Ramadan!’

I feared that they might rise up in rebellion somewhere within my army.

What I have witnessed from this community—their division and their obedience to the Imams of misguidance and those who call toward the Fire!”

(1) *Al-Kafi*, vol. 8, p. 58, Hadith 21.

This is one example of the innovations that Amir al-Mu’minin (as) encountered. We see how those who did not recognize these innovations as innovations, but rather regarded them as Sunnah, stood against Amir al-Mu’minin (as) and opposed the Imam of guidance.

Following the Imams of Misguidance

In the statement of Amir al-Mu’minin (as), we encountered the expression **“Imams of misguidance and those who call toward the Fire.”**

We should understand that this discussion has a Qur’anic foundation. In the noble *Usul al-Kafi*, there is a chapter entitled:

باب أنّ الائمّةَ فى كتابِ اللهِ امامانِ: امامٌ يَدعوا الى اللهِ و امامٌ يَدعُو إلى النّارِ

“That the Imams in the Book of Allah are of two kinds: an Imam who calls toward Allah and an Imam who calls toward the Fire.”

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

اِنَّ الاَئِمَّةَ فى كِتابِ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ اِمامانِ. قالَ اللهُ تَبارَکَ وَ تَعالى:«وَ جَعَلناهُم اَئِمَّةً يَهدُونَ بِأَمرِنا» (2) لا بِاَمرِ النّاسِ؛ يُقَدِّمُونَ اَمرَ اللهِ قَبلَ أَمرِهِم وَ حُكمَ اللهِ قَبلَ حُكمِهِم. قالَ: «وَ جَعَلناهُم اَئِمَّةً يَدعُونَ اِلَى النّارِ»؛ (3) يُقَدِّمُونَ اَمرَهُم قَبلَ اَمرِ اللهِ وَ حُكمَهُم قَبلَ حُكمِ اللهِ وَ يَأخُذُونَ بِاَهوائِهِم خِلافَ ما فى كِتابِ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ(1) .

“Indeed, the Imams in the Book of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, are of two kinds.
Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, says:
‘And We made them Imams who guide by Our command.’ (2)
—not by the command of the people. They place the command of Allah before their own command and the judgment of Allah before their own judgment.
And He says:
‘And We made them Imams who call toward the Fire.’ (3)
They place their own command before the command of Allah and their own judgment before the judgment of Allah, and they follow their desires in opposition to what is in the Book of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic.”
(1) *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 216, Kitab al-Hujjah, Bab Anna al-A’immah fi Kitab Allah Imaman, Hadith 2.
(2) Surah al-Anbiya’ (21): 73.
(3) Surah al-Qasas (28): 41.
It should be noted that Allah's **appointing** of the Imams of guidance differs from His appointing of the Imams of misguidance.
The appointment of the Imams of misguidance does not mean that Allah is pleased with or legislatively permits what they do. Rather, this appointment refers to **Divine ontological permission (idhn takwini)**. In other words, Allah does not prevent them from carrying out their actions.
In another hadith, Imam al-Baqir (as) says:

لمّا نَزَلَت هذِهِ الآيَةُ: «يَومَ نَدعُو كُلَّ اُناسٍ بِإمامِهِم» (2) قالَ المُسلِمُونَ: يا رَسُولَ اللهِ، اَلَستَ اِمامَ النِاس كُلِّهِم اَجمَعينَ؟ قال: فَقالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم: اَنَا رَسُولُ اللهِ اِلَى النّاسِ اَجمَعينَ، وَ لكِن سَيَكُونُ مِن بَعدى اَئِمَّةٌ عَلَى النّاس مِن اَهلِ بَيتى؛ يَقُومُونَ فِى النّاسِ فَيُكَذَّبُونَ وَ يَظلِمُهُم اَئِمَّةُ الكُفرِ وَ الضَّلالِ وَ اَشياعُهُم. فَمَن والاهُم وَ اتَّبَعَهُم وَ صَدَّقَهُم، فَهُوَ مِنّى وَ مَعِىَ وَ سَيَلقانى. اِلّا وَ مَن ظَلَمَهُم وَ كَذَّبَهُم، فَلَيسَ مِنّى وَ لا مَعِىَ وَ اَنا مِنهُ بَرىءٌ(3) .

“When this verse was revealed:
‘On the Day We shall call every people with their Imam.’ (2)
the Muslims said:
‘O Messenger of Allah! Are you not the Imam of all people?’
The Messenger of Allah (saww) replied:

‘I am the Messenger of Allah to all people, but after me there will be Imams over the people from among my Ahl al-Bayt. They will rise among the people, but they will be rejected, and the Imams of disbelief and misguidance and their followers will oppress them.
Whoever takes them as his allies, follows them, and affirms them is from me, is with me, and shall meet me.
Indeed, whoever oppresses them and rejects them is not from me, nor is he with me, and I am free of him.’”
(2) Surah al-Isra’ (17): 71.
(3) *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 215, Kitab al-Hujjah, Bab Anna al-A’immah fi Kitab Allah Imaman, Hadith 1.
Thus, just as the path of guidance has its Imams, the valley of misguidance also has leaders who ultimately take their followers toward the Fire.

The Imams of Disbelief — The Root of Every Evil

The Imams of disbelief, by opening the path of misguidance, prevented people from stepping onto the path of guidance and thereby deprived them of all forms of goodness.
To understand what they did to the religion of Allah, we may refer to a supplication transmitted from Imam al-Sadiq (as).
The Imam (as) stated that it is among our rights over our Shi‘a and friends that they should not leave their place of prayer before reciting this supplication.
A portion of this supplication reads:

اَللّهُمَّ وَ ضاعِف لَعنَتَکَ وَ بَأسَکَ وَ نَکالَکَ وَ عَذابَکَ عَلَی اللَّذَینِ کَفَرا نِعمَتَکَ وَ خَوَّنا رَسُولَکَ وَ اتَّهَما نَبِیَّکَ وَ بایَناهُ وَ حَلّا عَقدَهُ فی وَصِیِّهِ وَ نَبَذا عَهدَهُ فی خَلیفَتِهِ مِن بَعدِهِ وَ اَدَّعَیا مَقامَهُ وَ غَیَّرا اَحکامَهُ وَ بَدَّلا سُنَّتَهُ وَ قَلَّبا دینَهُ وَ صَغَّرا قَدرَ حُجَجِکَ وَ بَدَءا بِظُلمِهِم وَ طَرَّقا طَریقَ الغَدرِ عَلَیهِم وَ الخِلافِ عَن اَمرِهِم وَ القَتلِ لَهُم وَ اِرهاجِ الحُرُوبِ عَلَیهِم وَ مَنعِ خَلیفَتِکَ مِن سَدِّ الثَّلمِ وَ تَقویمِ العِوَجِ وَ تَثقیفِ الأَوَدِ وَ اِمضاءِ الاَحکامِ وَ اِظهارِ دینِ الاِسلامِ وَ اِقامَةِ حُدُودِ القُرآنِ(1) .

“O Allah, multiply Your curse, Your might, Your punishment, and Your torment upon those two who disbelieved in Your blessing, betrayed Your Messenger, accused Your Prophet of falsehood, separated themselves from him, broke his covenant concerning his successor, abandoned his covenant concerning his successor after him, claimed his position for themselves, changed his rulings,

altered his Sunnah, turned his religion upside down, belittled the rank of Your Hujjahs, initiated oppression against them, opened the way for treachery against them, opposition to their command, their killing, and the instigation of wars against them, and prevented Your Khalifah from repairing the breaches, correcting the crookedness, rectifying the deviations, implementing the rulings, manifesting the religion of Islam, and establishing the limits of the Qur'an."
(1) *Muhaj al-Da'awat*, p. 334.
The actions of the Imams of misguidance resulted in the door of oppression against the Ahl al-Bayt (as) being opened and the path of treachery against them being made easy.
For this reason, they are the leaders of misguidance, and others have followed and continue to follow them, walking along the path that they opened.
Thus, the root and origin of every kind of evil, deviation, and corruption ultimately goes back to them.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

عَدُوُّنا اَصلُ كُلِّ شَرٍّ وَ مِن فُرُوعِهِم كُلُّ قَبيحٍ وَ فاحِشَةٍ(1) .

"Our enemies are the root of every evil, and every ugly and immoral act is among their branches."
(1) *Al-Kafi*, vol. 8, p. 242, Hadith 336.
Every ugly deed originates from the Imams of disbelief because they diverted the path that Allah, the Exalted, had established for human beings to serve Him.
They confined the Ahl al-Bayt (as)—the teachers of Tawhid and servitude for humanity—to their homes and presented themselves in their place.
The result was that people were not nurtured by the Divine teachers and were not educated in the school of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). Consequently, the door to every kind of ugly and reprehensible action was opened before them.
A person who needs the assistance and training of a Divine educator, if deprived of this blessing and subsequently afflicted with various forms of deviation and sin, then more than anyone else, those who caused him to be deprived of the blessing of that educator bear responsibility for it.
However, this does not diminish anything from the person's own sin and responsibility—provided, of course, that he is not among the **mustad'afin**.

In general, one cannot expect those who place themselves under the wilayah of the enemies of the Imams (as) to become people of obedience and **wara'**.
Goodness is the fruit that grows upon the blessed tree of the wilayah of the Imams of guidance (as), while evil deeds are the bitter fruits of the accursed tree of the wilayah of the Imams of disbelief and misguidance.
The stronger a person's connection with the Ahl al-Bayt (as), the more he will be inclined toward performing good deeds.
Conversely, whoever distances himself from the wilayah of the Imams of guidance and comes under the guardianship of their enemies—the Imams of disbelief and misguidance—will, in proportion to the strength of his connection and relationship with them, become suited to committing evil and become a person of disobedience.
Here, an important and subtle discussion arises concerning some followers of the Imams of disbelief who outwardly appear to be people of obedience and piety. The good deeds of such people have not actually grown upon the tree of their own existence. Rather, they are borrowed and artificial, like an apple growing upon a colocynth tree.
That fruit is not the product of that tree. It has grown elsewhere and has merely been attached to this tree.
Explaining the secret behind this important reality requires a detailed and precise discussion, which we are not undertaking at present.

The Responsibility of the Imams of Disbelief for All Crimes

What concerns us here is the reality that Allah, the Exalted, appointed teachers and educators for humanity, and the Noble Messenger of Allah (saww) introduced them.
However, the leaders of misguidance blocked the path to this pure and clear source and instead placed muddy water before the people.
Therefore, the burden and consequence of people's sins indirectly falls upon them.
The poet Kumayt said to Imam al-Baqir (as):
"I asked him to tell me about the state of those two."
The Imam (as) replied:

وَ اللهِ یا کُمَیتُ، ما اُهریقَ مِحجَمَةٌ مِن دَمٍ وَ لا اُخِذَ مالٌ مِن غَیرِ حِلِّهِ وَ لا قُلِبَ حَجَرٌ عَن حَجَرٍ اِلّا ذاکَ فی اَعناقِهِما(1) .

"By Allah, O Kumayt! No amount of blood—even the quantity contained in a cupping vessel—is shed, no wealth is taken unlawfully, and no stone is turned over another stone, except that its burden is upon the necks of those two."

(1) [Source as cited in the original text.]

Every crime that is committed and every unlawful act that is performed, in addition to its perpetrator being deserving of accountability, places a burden of sin upon the Imams of misguidance.

This is because they prevented people from being educated in the school of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), and from learning piety and purity.

In another narration from Imam al-Baqir (as), it is reported:

ما اُهرِقَت مِحجَمَةُ دَمٍ إِلّا وَ کانَ وِزرُها فی اَعناقِهِما اِلی یَومِ القِیامَةِ مِن غَیرِ اَن یَنتَقِصَ مِن وِزرِ العامِلینَ شَیءٌ(2) .

"No blood, even to the amount contained in a cupping vessel, is shed except that its burden remains upon the necks of those two until the Day of Resurrection, without anything being diminished from the burden of those who actually committed the deeds."

(2) [Source as cited in the original text.]

2. Tawalla and Tabarra — Conditions for the Acceptance or Rejection of Deeds

An Introduction

Another aspect that must be taken into consideration in explaining the necessity of disassociation from the enemies of Allah is that **tabarra**, together with **tawalla** toward the Ahl al-Bayt (as), is a condition for the acceptance or rejection of all deeds and acts of worship.

In light of what was discussed earlier regarding the importance of **hubb fi Allah** and **bughd fi Allah**, it becomes clear that the ma'rifah and wilayah of the Imam (as) constitute the reality and spirit of every act of worship. Therefore, if someone performs all acts of worship but does not possess wilayah toward the Household of the Messenger (as) and enmity toward their enemies, none of those acts

possesses its spiritual reality. They are merely an outward display of worshipping Allah.

For this reason, such deeds are not accepted in the Divine Presence; rather, they are rejected.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

مَن عَرَفَ الاِمامَ مِن آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم وَ يَتَوَلّاهُ ثُمَّ عَمِلَ لِنَفسِهِ بِما شاءَ مِن عَمَلِ الخَيرِ، قُبِلَ مِنهُ ذلِکَ وَضُوعِفَ لَهُ اَضعافاً کَثيرةً فَانتَفَعَ بِاَعمالِ الخَيرِ مَعَ المَعرِفَةِ ... وَ کَذلِکَ لا يَقبَلُ اللهُ مِنَ العِبادِ الاَعمالَ الصّالِحَةِ الَّتى يَعمَلُونَها اِذا تَوَلَّوُا الاِمامَ الجائِرَ الَّذى لَيسَ مِنَ اللهِ تَعالى.

“Whoever knows an Imam from the family of Muhammad (saww) and accepts his wilayah, and then performs whatever good deeds he wishes for his own sake, those deeds are accepted from him and multiplied many times over. Thus, through his ma‘rifah, he benefits from his good deeds...

Likewise, Allah does not accept from His servants the righteous deeds they perform when they have accepted the wilayah of a tyrannical Imam who is not from Allah, the Exalted.”

‘Abdullah ibn Abi Ya‘fur said to him: “Has Allah, the Exalted, not said:

مَن جاءَ بِالحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيرٌ مِنها وَ هُم مِن فَزَعٍ يَومَئِذٍ آمِنُونَ

‘Whoever brings a good deed shall have something better than it, and they shall be secure from the terror of that Day’ (27:89)?

Then how can a righteous deed be of no benefit to someone who has accepted the wilayah of the Imams of oppression?”

Abu ‘Abdillah (Imam al-Sadiq) (as) replied:

“Do you know what the ‘good deed’ referred to by Allah, the Exalted, in this verse is? It is **the ma‘rifah of the Imam and obedience to him**.

And Allah, Mighty and Majestic, has said:

وَ مَن جاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَكُبَّت وُجُوهُهُم فِى النّارِ هَل تُجزَونَ اِلّا ما كُنتُم تَعمَلُونَ

‘And those who bring an evil deed will be thrown face-first into the Fire. Are you recompensed for anything other than what you used to do?’ (27:90)

What Allah intended by ‘the evil deed’ is **denial of the Imam who is from Allah, the Exalted**.

Then Abu ‘Abdillah (as) said:

مَن جاءَ يَومَ القِيامَةِ بِوِلايَةِ اِمامٍ جائرٍ لَيسَ مِنَ اللهِ وَ جاءَهُ مُنكِراً لِحَقِّنا، جاحِداً لِوِلايَتِنا، اَكَبَّهُ اللهُ تَعالى يَومَ القِيامَةِ فِى النّار.

“Whoever comes on the Day of Resurrection with the wilayah of a tyrannical Imam who is not from Allah, and comes before Him while denying our right and rejecting our wilayah, Allah, the Exalted, will throw him face-first into the Fire on the Day of Resurrection.” (3)

Thus, the fundamental criterion and essence of religious commitment is **acceptance of the wilayah of the Ahl al-Bayt (as)**. Without it, no deed is of benefit.

Now, if a person, despite recognizing the Imams of guidance (as), chooses to oppose them and expresses hatred and enmity toward them, then such a person has completely departed from the path of religion. None of his good deeds will benefit him while he maintains hostility and hatred toward the Ahl al-Bayt (as). Such a person has not entered into servitude to Allah at all. He has opposed the very axis of servitude and obedience to Allah. Therefore, even if he performs a good deed, in reality he has treated the worship of Allah as something to be mocked and ridiculed.

For this reason, it has been narrated from Imam al-Baqir (as):

سَواءٌ عَلى مَن خالَفَ هذَا الاَمرَ، صَلّى اَو زَنى.

“For one who opposes this matter [wilayah], it makes no difference whether he prays or commits adultery.” (1)

And Imam al-Sadiq (as) has said:

اِنَّ النّاصِبَ لَنا اَهلَ البَيتِ لا يُبالى صامَ اَم صَلّى، زَنى اَم سَرِقَ. اَنَّهُ فِى النّارِ. اِنَّهُ فِى النّار.

“Indeed, the one who bears enmity toward us, the Ahl al-Bayt, does not care whether he fasts or prays, commits adultery or steals. He is in the Fire. He is in the Fire.” (2)

The essence of religious commitment is to remain upon the path of servitude to Allah. This is realized exclusively through acceptance of the wilayah and Imamate of the Imams (as) and disassociation from their enemies. It is this that determines the value of a deed.

Therefore, one who has not accepted wilayah will not be saved by his deeds. In the sense that he will be in the Fire, his good deeds and his sins are alike in their failure to bring him salvation.

Of course, a sin never ceases to be a sin, and committing sins will increase such a person's punishment. However, his good deeds, insofar as they do not make him successful and attain eternal felicity, do not differ from his evil deeds in this particular respect.

The Importance of the Outward Form and Structure of Worship

Thus, the spirit of every act of worship is **tawalla** toward the Ahl al-Bayt (as) and **tabarra** toward their enemies.
However, it must also be understood that the form and outward structure of deeds are important as well. One must not think that since the wilayah and ma'rifah of the Imams (as) are the spirit of all deeds, we may therefore be satisfied with this spirit and pay no attention to their physical form and structure. This way of thinking is completely incorrect.
Just as the spirit of an act demands a particular reality, its outward form and physical structure must also be performed precisely according to what Allah has prescribed. Not the slightest negligence in this regard is acceptable.
Even during the period when the Imams (as) were physically present, there were sometimes people who attempted to misuse the great emphasis placed by the Imams on wilayah and ma'rifah. They therefore attributed incomplete and distorted statements to them. The Imams (as) reacted severely to such claims and did not allow deviant people to misunderstand or distort their words.
For example, once Imam al-Sadiq (as) was informed that a man named **Abu al-Khattab** was narrating from him:

اِذا عَرَفتَ الحَقَّ فَاعمَل ما شِئتَ.

"When you have recognized the truth, then do whatever you wish."
In response, he said:

لَعَنَ اللهُ اَبَا الخَطّابِ! وَ اللهِ ما قُلتَ لَهُ هكَذا. وَ لكِنّی قُلتُ لَهُ: اِذا عَرَفتَ الحَقَّ فَاعمَل ما شِئتَ مِن خَيرٍ يُقبَل مِنکَ.

"May Allah curse Abu al-Khattab! By Allah, I did not say this to him. Rather, I said to him:
'When you have recognized the truth, then do whatever good deed you wish, and it will be accepted from you.'" (1)

What is meant here by recognizing the truth is **accepting the matter of the Imamate and wilayah of the Imams (as)**, which is the criterion and standard of faith.
One who possesses their ma‘rifah has, in reality, fulfilled the condition for the acceptance of deeds. Therefore, whatever good deed he performs will be accepted from him.
A good deed is an act whose outward and inward aspects conform to what Allah, the Exalted, has commanded. And such an act is accepted only from a person who possesses faith.

Faith and Righteous Deeds — Two Necessary Conditions for Felicity

In general, therefore, the acceptance of deeds has two conditions:
First: The deed must be performed in accordance with what Allah has prescribed.
Second: The person performing it must be a person of faith and possess ma‘rifah of the Imams (as).
Both of these conditions are necessary for a deed to be accepted.
If an action is intrinsically good, such as prayer, but the person performing it does not possess wilayah and ma‘rifah, performing it is of no benefit to him. It is as though he had not performed the prayer at all.
Just as a person who prays without wudu has, in reality, not performed a valid prayer, likewise, if one who denies the Imam (as) performs a series of outward actions resembling prayer, he has not truly performed the act of worship known as prayer.
As explained previously, the wilayah and ma‘rifah of the Imams (as) are the spirit of every act of worship and the reality of faith. Without them, no good and worthy deed can benefit a person.
Therefore, Imam al-Sadiq (as), continuing his statement concerning the words of Abu al-Khattab, said:
اِنَّ اللهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ يَقولُ: «مَن عَمِلَ صالِحاً مِن ذَكَرٍ اَو اُنثى وَ هُوَ مُؤمِنٌ فَاُولئِکَ يَدخُلُونَ الجَنَّةَ يُرزَقُونَ فيها بِغَيرِ حِسابٍ». وَ يَقُولُ تَبارَکَ وَ تَعالى: «مَن عَمِلَ صالِحاً مِن ذَكَرٍ اَو اُنثى وَ هُوَ مُؤمِنٌ فَلَنُحيِيَنَّهُ حَياةً طَيِّبَةً.«

“Allah, Mighty and Majestic, says:

‘Whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer, such people shall enter Paradise and shall be provided therein without reckoning.’ (40:43)
And the Blessed and Exalted says:
‘Whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer, We shall surely give him a good life.’” (16:97)
A righteous deed is an action that is good and praiseworthy in itself. However, the person who performs the righteous deed also has a decisive role in whether that deed benefits him and is accepted in the Divine Presence.
If the one performing it is a believer, the deed is accepted. Otherwise, it does not benefit him with regard to his ultimate salvation and eternal felicity, even though it may produce good and beneficial effects in this world, or may even result in some reduction of punishment in the Hereafter.
But according to the Divine sunnah, it does not result in his attaining eternal felicity.
Essentially, the difference between Islam in its outward sense and faith can be summarized in precisely this matter.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:
اَلاِسلامُ هُوَ الظاهِرُ الَّذی عَلَیهِ النّاسُ: شَهادَةُ اَن لا اِلهَ اِلّا اللهُ وَحدَهُ لا شَریکَ لَهُ وَ اَنَّ مُحَمَّداً عَبدُهُ وَ رَسولُهُ وَ اِقامَ الصَّلاةَ وَ ایتاءُ الزَّکاةَ وَ حَجُّ البَیتَ وَ صِیامُ شَهرِ رَمَضانَ. فَهذَا الاِسلامُ. وَ الایمانُ مَعرِفَةُ هذَا الاَمرِ مَعَ هذا. فَاِن اَقَرَّ بِها وَ لَم یَعرِف هَذَا الاَمرَ، کانَ مُسلِماً وَ کانَ ضالّاً.

“Islam is this outward state upon which people stand: bearing witness that there is no deity except Allah alone, without partner; that Muhammad (saww) is His servant and Messenger; establishing prayer; giving zakat; performing the Hajj of the House; and fasting the month of Ramadan.
This is Islam.
And faith is the **ma‘rifah of this matter [Imamate and wilayah] in addition to all of this**.
If a person acknowledges all of this but does not possess ma‘rifah of this matter, he is a Muslim, but he is nevertheless astray.” (2)
Islam without faith is merely an outward form.

An action is truly an act of worship of Allah only when it arises from and is rooted in a person's heartfelt belief and submission to the Almighty Lord.
As expressed in the narrations, a believer is one whose actions demonstrate his certainty and inner conviction. The value of worship is, in reality, connected to that inner certainty.
But when such belief and certainty are absent, the action becomes an outward form without substance and possesses no true value.
Thus, a person may be a Muslim and the juridical effects of Islam may apply to him in this world, while in reality he may be astray.
For guidance is realized through the realization of **faith**, not through Islam without faith.

The Guidance of the Wali of Allah in All Deeds

In a narration from Imam al-Baqir (as), in which the foundations of Islam are identified as five things—prayer, zakat, Hajj, fasting, and wilayah—the Imam, while comparing wilayah with the preceding four foundations, says:

ذِروَةُ الاَمرِ وَ سَنامُهُ وَ مِفتاحُهُ وَ بابُ الاَشياءِ وَ رِضَا الرَّحمنُ الطّاعَةُ لِلإمامِ بَعدَ مِعرِفَتِهِ. اِنَّ اللهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ يَقُولُ: «مَن يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَد اَطاعَ اللهَ وَ مَن تَوَلّى فَما اَرسَلناکَ عَلَيهِم حَفيظاً». اَما لَو اَنَّ رَجُلاً قامَ لَيلَهُ وَ صامَ نَهارَهُ وَ تَصَدَّقَ بِجَميعِ مالِهِ وَ حَجَّ جَميعَ دَهرِهِ وَ لَم يَعرِف وِلايَةَ وَلِيِّ اللهِ فَيُوالِيهِ وَ يَكوُنَ جَميعُ اَعمالِهِ بِدَلالَتِهِ اِلَيهِ، ما كانَ لَهُ عَلَى اللهِ جَلَّ وَ عَزَّ حَقٌّ فى ثَوابِهِ وَ لا كانَ مِن اَهلِ الايمانِ.

“The highest point and summit of the matter, its key, the gateway to all things, and that which brings about the pleasure of the All-Merciful is **obedience to the Imam after knowing him**.
Allah, Mighty and Majestic, says:
‘Whoever obeys the Messenger has indeed obeyed Allah; and whoever turns away, We have not sent you over them as a guardian.’ (4:80)
Consider this: even if a man spends his nights in worship, his days fasting, gives all his wealth in charity, and performs Hajj throughout his entire lifetime, but does not know the wilayah of the Wali of Allah so as to befriend him and have all his deeds guided by him, then he has no right before Allah, Mighty and Majestic, to receive any reward for them, nor is he among the people of faith.” (2)

What Allah wants is that people's deeds be performed under the guidance and direction of those whom He Himself has appointed as the **wali, guardian, and one vested with authority over the believers**.
Once they accept their wilayah, they must place all their actions, without exception, under their wilayah and guardianship.
Nothing is excluded from this matter.
Whether the actions of a person's limbs, the acts of his heart, or his thoughts—all of them must come under the umbrella of the wilayah and guidance of the Imams (as).
Only in this state can a person truly be described as a servant of Allah.
If he refers to the Imams (as) only in matters that he personally likes, while in matters he dislikes he follows his own inclination and judgment, then he is not exclusively a servant of Allah. Rather, in his servitude he has made himself, his own opinion, and his own judgment a partner alongside Allah.
Therefore, he is not a believer, and the rewards and recompense promised to believers do not apply to him.

The Good Deeds of the Mustad'afin Do Not Entail Reward

Imam al-Baqir (as), continuing his statement, refers to these very people in a manner that has been misunderstood by some deviant thinkers. He says:

اَولئکَ المُحسِنُ مِنهُم یُدخِلُهُ اللهُ الجَنَّةَ بِفَضلِ رَحمَتِهِ.

"Allah will admit those among them who are good-doers into Paradise by virtue of His abundant mercy." (1)
The late 'Allamah Majlisi, in explaining this statement, presents two possibilities, one of which he considers more apparent. (2)
The interpretation he prefers is that the word **"those" (ulā'ika)** refers to the **mustad'afin among those who reject wilayah**.
That is, these are people who, without any negligence or fault on their part, have been deprived of the blessing of knowing the Imams (as). As explained in the first part of this book, they are among those whose affair is **"deferred to the command**

of Allah" (murja'una li-amr Allah). In other words, their ultimate fate is entrusted to Allah.

According to the statement of Imam al-Baqir (as), Allah's command regarding them is that if they are not people of oppression and crime, but rather people who perform good and righteous deeds, Allah will admit them into Paradise through His abundant mercy.

The expression **"by virtue of His mercy" (bi-fadli rahmatihi)** indicates that the entry of such people into Paradise is not due to a Divine promise made specifically to them.

This is because immediately before this, the Imam said:

ما كانَ لَهُ عَلَى اللهِ جَلَّ وَ عَزَّ حَقٌّ فی ثَوابِهِ.

"He has no right before Allah, Mighty and Majestic, to receive reward for his deeds."

People of faith attain entitlement to Paradise through the promise of Allah. However, no such promise has been made by the Lord to the mustad'afin who perform good deeds.

Therefore, even if they enter Paradise, they will not be like the believers who enter Paradise.

Yes, although Allah's promise to the believers itself proceeds from His grace—and no one, merely by obeying his Lord, can independently claim an entitlement to the Divine promise of reward—once this promise has been communicated, the people of faith acquire a right with respect to their Lord.

Non-believers, however, whether they are righteous or criminal, have no such right before Allah.

Therefore, the entry of righteous non-believers into Paradise, if it occurs, is due to an additional grace of Allah toward them, not because they have acquired a right through a Divine promise.

Another point that can be understood from the expressions of the Imam (as)—**"by virtue of His mercy"** and **"he has no right before Allah to receive reward"**—is that the entry of righteous mustad'afin into Paradise does not mean that their deeds have been accepted in the Divine Presence.

Thus, even if we consider them **excused** because of their mustad'af status and lack of negligence, this excuse does not establish that they are **rewarded** for their deeds.
A person may properly be called *ma'jur*—one who receives reward—when his deed conforms to what Allah, the Exalted, has desired and he therefore falls under the Divine promise of reward.
Yet, according to the explicit statement of Imam al-Baqir (as), this group has no right to receive reward from Allah.
More precisely, their entry into Paradise is not the **reward** for their good deeds. Allah has established conditions for the acceptance of deeds, foremost among them being **faith**. Since these people do not possess faith, they do not fall under the Divine promise concerning the acceptance and reward of deeds.
Therefore, even if, despite their good deeds, they were not admitted to Paradise, no injustice would have been done to them, because they had no right against Allah.
This is why we say that they cannot be considered *ma'jur*—people who have earned reward.
Likewise, in the technical terminology of Islamic jurisprudence, the good deeds of these mustad'afin cannot be described as **mujzi**.
A *mujzi* deed is an act performed in accordance with the Divine obligation and which, precisely for that reason, discharges a person's duty.
These people did not come to know their Divine obligations. However, because they are mustad'af, they are excused for failing to act upon those obligations.
This excuse does not mean that their good deeds are *mujzi* in the sense of fulfilling their Divine obligations.
In light of these explanations, the ignorance—or, if we do not call it ignorance, the deliberate bias—of the author of the following statements regarding the narration of Imam al-Baqir (as) becomes clearly evident:
"We see that Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as) considers those who understood the rulings of Islam through a path other than the Imam whom the Shi'a regard as the Hujjah of Allah, and acted upon those rulings, to be people of Paradise, provided they are *muhsin* and not oppressors. From this it becomes clear that even if their

deeds contradict the actual ruling of Allah, those deeds are *mujzi* and deserving of reward." (1)

Because of this very mistake—which he committed either knowingly or unknowingly—this writer makes another grave error in interpreting the statement of Imam al-Baqir (as).

He says:

"The ma'rifah of the Imam is instrumental (*tariqiyyah*), not intrinsic (*mawdu'iyyah*), because it is merely a means of knowing the rulings of religion. It is unlike belief in Allah and the Resurrection, which have an intrinsic and substantive status." (2)

It is extremely astonishing that he derives precisely the opposite conclusion from the explicit statement of the Imam (as).

The Imam clearly states that even if a person performs prayer, fasting, zakat, and Hajj, but performs all of these without the wilayah of the Wali of Allah, his deeds have no reward whatsoever.

What expression could be clearer than this for establishing that the **ma'rifah of the Imam (as) possesses intrinsic significance**?

If this writer had not been motivated by an ulterior purpose, would he not have understood this clear and explicit point?

References:

1. *Al-Kafi*, vol. 8, p. 103, hadith 75.
2. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 85, p. 264, from *Balad al-Amin*.
3. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 27, p. 170, hadith 11, from *Amali al-Tusi*.
4. *'Iqab al-A'mal*, p. 452, hadith 17.
5. *'Iqab al-A'mal*, p. 452, hadith 18.
6. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 27, p. 173, hadith 18, from *Ma'ani al-Akhbar*.
7. *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 24, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, chapter "Islam Protects the Blood…," hadith 4.
8. *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 19, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, chapter "The Pillars of Islam," hadith 5.
9. *Mir'at al-'Uqul*, vol. 7, p. 108.

10. Ni‘matullah Salihi Najafabadi, *Majmu‘ah-yi Maqalat*, “Maqalah-yi Wahdat-e Islami,” p. 177.
11. Ni‘matullah Salihi Najafabadi, *Majmu‘ah-yi Maqalat*, “Maqalah-yi Wahdat-e Islami,” p. 176.

The Wilayah of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) as the Means of Testing Creation in This World and Before It

From the discussions presented earlier, we have understood that the foundation of faith is **ma‘rifah of the Imam (as) and acceptance of his wilayah**.
This is a definitive Divine sunnah that has operated throughout all creation and continues to do so. It governs all the inhabitants of the heavens and the earths that Allah has created. It is not restricted to human beings living on the earth within the solar system, nor is it exclusive to the Ummah of the Seal of the Prophets (saww).
This sunnah was already in operation before the earthly creation of human beings, from the very time the light of existence of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) was created.
In one of the narrations concerning the Mi‘raj, the great Messenger of Islam (saww) said:

لَيلَةَ اُسرِیَ بی اِلَی الجَلیلِ جَلَّ جَلالُهُ، اَوحی اِلَیَّ: ... یا مُحَمَّدُ، اِنّی خَلَقتُکَ وَ خَلَقتُ عَلِیّاً وَ فاطِمَةَ وَ الحَسَنَ وَ الحُسَینَ وَ الاَئِمَّةَ مِن وُلدِهِ مِن سِنخِ نورٍ مِن نُوری. وَ عَرَضتُ وِلایَتَکُم عَلی اَهلِ السَّمواتِ وَ اَهلِ الاَرَضینَ. فَمَن قَبِلَها کانَ عِندی مِنَ المُؤمِنینَ. وَ مَن جَحَدَها کانَ عِندی مِنَ الکافِرینَ.
یا مُحَمَّدُ، لَو اَنَّ عَبداً مِن عَبیدی عَبَدَنی حَتّی یَنقَطِعَ وَ یَصیرَ کَالشَّنِّ البالی، ثُمَّ اَتانی جاحِداً لِوِلایَتِکُم، ما غَفَرتُ لَهُ حَتّی یُقِرَّ بِوِلایَتِکُم(1) .

“The night I was taken on the heavenly journey to the Majestic One, Glorious is His Majesty, He revealed to me:
‘O Muhammad, I created you, and I created Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, Husayn, and the Imams from his descendants from a substance of light from My Light. I presented your wilayah to the inhabitants of the heavens and the inhabitants of the earths. Whoever accepted it became, in My sight, one of the believers. And whoever rejected it became, in My sight, one of the disbelievers.

O Muhammad, if one of My servants were to worship Me until he became completely worn out and reduced to the condition of a worn-out waterskin, and then came to Me while rejecting your wilayah, I would not forgive him until he acknowledged and affirmed your wilayah.'"

(1) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 27, p. 200, hadith 67, from *Manaqib Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Shadhan*.

Indeed, the criterion of faith is **acknowledgment of the wilayah of the Ahl al-Bayt (as)**.

Before human beings came into this worldly realm, they were tested by Allah through the freedom and choice He had granted them, and the subject of that test was the wilayah of the Ahl al-Bayt (as).

Just as this is the means of Divine testing in this world, the sign of their wilayah is love for those sacred personalities.

The Messenger of Allah (saww) said:

لَو اَنَّ عَبداً عَبَدَاللهَ بَينَ الصَّفا وَ المَروَةِ أَلفَ عامٍ ثُمَّ اَلفَ عامٍ ثُمَّ اَلفَ عامٍ حَتّی یَصیرَ کَالشَّنِّ البالی، ثُمَّ لَم یُدرِک مَحَبَّتَنا، کَبَّهُ اللهُ عَلی مِنخَرَیهِ فِی النّارِ. ثُمَّ تَلا: «قُل لا اَسَالُکُم عَلَیهِ اَجراً اِلَّا المَوَدَّةَ فِی القُربی(1) .»

"If a servant were to worship Allah between al-Safa and al-Marwah for one thousand years, then another thousand years, and then another thousand years, until he became like a worn-out waterskin, but did not attain love for us, the Ahl al-Bayt, Allah would throw him upon his nostrils into the Fire."

Then he recited:

قُل لا اَسَالُکُم عَلَیهِ اَجراً اِلَّا المَوَدَّةَ فِی القُربی

"Say: I ask of you no reward for it except affection toward my near relatives." (42:23)

(1) *Majma' al-Bayan*, commentary on verse 23 of Surah al-Shura.

Ma'rifah of the Imam (as) — The Beginning and the End of Every Act of Worship

In any case, the foundation and spirit of all acts of worship is the **ma'rifah and wilayah of the Ahl al-Bayt (as)**.

If the servants of Allah have learned prayer, fasting, Hajj, zakat, and other acts of worship, it has been through the blessing of knowing the Household of the Messenger (as). Had they not been present, no one would have known prayer, fasting, and the other acts of worship.

And if these acts are to produce their proper effects, they must make the worshipper firmer and more steadfast in his ma'rifah and wilayah of the Ahl al-Bayt (as).

Therefore, it can be said that the **beginning and the end of every act of worship is the ma'rifah of the Prophet (saww) and the Imams (as)**.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

ما مِن شَيءٍ بَعدَ المَعرِفَةِ يَعدِلُ هذِهِ الصَّلاةَ. وَ لا بَعدَ المَعرِفَةِ وَ الصَّلاةِ شَيءٌ يَعدِلُ الزَّكاةَ. وَ لا بَعدَ ذلِکَ شَيءٌ يَعدِلُ الصَّومَ. وَ لا بَعدَ ذلِکَ شَيءٌ يَعدِلُ الحَجَّ. وَ فاتِحَةُ ذلِکَ كُلِّهِ مَعرِفَتُنا. وَ خاتِمَتُهُ مَعرِفَتُنا(2) .

"After ma'rifah, nothing is equal to this prayer in importance and value. And after ma'rifah and prayer, nothing is equal to zakat. After that, nothing is equal to fasting. And after that, nothing is equal to Hajj.

And the beginning of all of this is our ma'rifah, and its conclusion is also our ma'rifah." (2)

The foundation of **ma'rifah** is ma'rifah of Allah, the Exalted, which is the spirit and reality of servitude to Him.

However, as explained earlier, the necessary consequence of knowing Allah is knowing His Messenger (saww) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as). Thus, before performing any act of worship, one must first submit to the wilayah of the Fourteen Infallibles (as), and then learn the acts of worship from them.

Therefore, the rank of ma'rifah of the Imam (as) precedes every act of worship. On the other hand, the result of every act of worship is greater ma'rifah of Allah, and this in turn manifests itself in greater ma'rifah of the Ahl al-Bayt (as).

Thus, **ma'rifah of the Imam (as) is the essence and distilled substance of all acts of worship**. Since it is the spirit of all of them, it is inseparable from any act of worship.

The Obligation of Wilayah Under All Circumstances

This is why we find that all other acts of worship may, under certain circumstances, cease to be obligatory upon a person, whereas the wilayah of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) is not like this.

Wilayah is an affair of the heart, and its obligation is never lifted under any circumstances.

Abu Hamzah al-Thumali narrates from Imam al-Baqir (as):

بُنِيَ الاِسلامُ عَلى خَمسٍ: اِقامُ الصَّلاةِ وَ ايتاءُ الزَّكاةِ وَ حَجُّ البَيتِ وَ صَومُ شَهرِ رَمَضانَ وَ الوِلايَةُ لَنا اَهلَ البَيتِ. فَجُعِلَ فى اَربَعٍ مِنها رُخصَةٌ، وَ لَم يَجعَل فِى الوِلايَةِ رُخصَةٌ. مَن لَم يَكُن لَهُ مالٌ، لَم يَكُن عَلَيهِ الزَّكاةُ. وَ مَن لَم يَكُن عِندَهُ مالٌ، فَلَيسَ عَلَيهِ حَجٌّ. وَ مَن كانَ مَريضاً، صَلّى قاعِداً، وَ اَفطَرَ شَهرَ رَمضانَ. وَ الوِلايةُ صَحيحاً كانَ اَو مَريضاً، اَو ذا مالٍ اَو لا مالَ لَهُ، فَهِىَ لازِمَةٌ [واجِبَةٌ](1) .

“Islam is founded upon five things: establishing prayer, giving zakat, performing Hajj of the House, fasting the month of Ramadan, and wilayah toward us, the Ahl al-Bayt.

A concession has been granted concerning four of these, but no concession has been granted concerning wilayah.

One who has no wealth is not required to pay zakat. One who does not possess the means is not required to perform Hajj. One who is ill may pray while sitting and may break the fast of Ramadan.

But wilayah remains necessary—whether a person is healthy or ill, whether he possesses wealth or has no wealth. It is binding [obligatory].” (1)

Khisaal, Chapter of the Five, hadith 21.

Prayer is the most important practical branch of religion, yet under certain circumstances it is completely lifted from women without even requiring them to make it up later.

At times of illness, standing in prayer may cease to be required, and if a person is unable even to pray while sitting, this requirement is further reduced until prayer reaches the level of gestures and indications, and even the inward mental intention of its components.

Other branches of religion, such as Hajj, zakat, and fasting, likewise cease to be obligatory under particular circumstances.

The only matter concerning which no concession has been granted for anyone, under any circumstances, is the **wilayah of the Ahl al-Bayt (as)**.
As long as a person remains alive and legally accountable, his obligation regarding this matter of the heart does not cease.
Of course, this is the **minimum obligation** that a person has with regard to accepting the wilayah of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). Expressing this inward conviction may itself become obligatory in different forms under particular circumstances.

Ma'rifah and Denial of the Imam (as) — The Criterion of Faith and Disbelief

An Introduction

Considering the importance of ma'rifah and wilayah of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), and the fact that they constitute the spirit and foundation of all deeds and acts of worship, we can regard their presence or absence as the criterion of faith and disbelief. The narrations strongly emphasize this matter.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

نَحنَ الَّذينَ فَرَضَ اللهُ طاعَتَنا. لا يَسَعُ النّاسُ اِلّا مَعرِفَتَنا. وَ لا يُعذَرُ النّاسَ بِجَهالَتِنا. مَن عَرَفَنا كانَ مُؤمِناً. وَ مَن اَنكَرَنا كانَ كافِراً. وَ مَن لَم يَعرِفنا وَ لَم يَنكِرنا، كانَ ضالّاً حَتّى يَرجِعَ اِلَى الهُدَى الَّذِى افتَرَضَ اللهُ عَلَيهِ مِن طاعَتِنَا الواجِبَةِ. فَاِن يَمُت عَلى ضَلالَتِهِ، يَفعَلُ اللهُ بِهِ ما يَشاءُ(1) .

"We are those whose obedience Allah has made obligatory.
People have no option but to know us, and people are not excused on account of their ignorance of us.
Whoever knows us is a believer, and whoever denies us is a disbeliever.
And whoever neither knows us nor denies us is astray until he returns to the guidance that Allah has made obligatory upon him—our obligatory obedience.
If he dies while remaining in his misguidance, Allah will deal with him as He wills." (1)

Al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 187, Kitab al-Hujjah, chapter "The Obligation of Obeying the Imams," hadith 11.

Ma'rifah of the Imam means **accepting and fulfilling the Imam's right after recognizing him**.

Accordingly, ma‘rifah stands in opposition to denial.
When ma‘rifah is sometimes translated simply as “knowledge” or “recognition,” it must be understood that what is intended is not merely information or intellectual awareness of the Imam's right.
Rather, it means **inward acceptance and submission to that right**, which may be expressed as belief and conviction.
Thus, an **Imam-knower** is one who accepts the Imam (as) as Imam and submits to him.
Likewise, denying the Imam (as) means that after knowing his right, a person refuses to submit to it and does not accept it.

The Mustad‘af or the One Who Is Astray

Accordingly, those who have absolutely no information concerning the Imams (as), their station, or their Divine office, and who are not at fault for this lack of knowledge, are technically referred to as **mustad‘af** or **dal**.
These are people who have not been guided to the correct path.
Of course, it was not obligatory upon Allah to make every one of His servants acquainted with the straight path of the wilayah of the Imams (as).
With regard to such people, insofar as the Hujjah has been completed against them, they may have a basis for accountability and punishment; however, the determination of their ultimate fate is entrusted to the Divine command.
Allah may deal with them according to His justice or His grace. In any case, the matter remains within His authority, and He does whatever He wills.
What is certain, however, is that He does not wrong them.
Thus, before Allah, human beings fall into three categories:
Believers, disbelievers, and mustad‘afin.

The Denier of the Imam (as) Is Both a Disbeliever and a Polytheist

The criterion for this classification is ma‘rifah, denial, and lack of knowledge concerning the Imam (as). In reality, this same matter also constitutes the criterion of faith or disbelief with respect to Allah, the Exalted.

Allah has made the existence of the Imam (as) a sign and distinguishing criterion for faith, disbelief, mustad'af status, and shirk.
Imam al-Baqir (as) says:

اِنَّ اللهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ نَصَبَ عَلِيّاً عليه السّلام عَلَماً بَينَهُ وَ بَينَ خَلقِهِ. فَمَن عَرَفَهُ كانَ مُؤمِناً. وَ مَن اَنكَرَهُ كانَ كافِراً. وَ مَن جَهِلَهُ كانَ ضالّاً. وَ مَن نَصَبَ مَعَهُ شَيئاً كانَ مُشرِكاً. وَ مَن جاءَ بِوِلايَتِهِ دَخَلَ الجَنَّةَ. وَ مَن جاءَ بِعَداوَتِهِ دَخَلَ النّارَ(1) .

"Indeed, Allah, Mighty and Majestic, established Ali (as) as a sign and distinguishing criterion between Himself and His creation.
Whoever knows him is a believer; whoever denies him is a disbeliever; whoever is ignorant of him is astray; and whoever establishes something alongside him [in his Divine-appointed station] is a polytheist.
Whoever comes with his wilayah will enter Paradise, and whoever comes with enmity toward him will enter the Fire." (1)
Shirk with respect to Allah consists in choosing, in opposition to the path that He has established for servitude to Him, another path of one's own making.
Allah, the Exalted, has made the ma'rifah of the Imams (as) the sole path of servitude to Him and accepts only the one who worships Him through this path.
Therefore, if someone assigns another individual or other individuals a share alongside the Imams (as) in their Divine-appointed stations, he has in reality adopted a path of servitude other than the Straight Path established by Allah and has associated another with Allah.
Such a person is, in reality, a **mushrik**.
Although outwardly he may be a Muslim and, for certain worldly considerations, the rulings of Islam may apply to him in this world, these worldly legal rulings do not alter his underlying reality or ultimate fate.
Thus, the denier of the Imam (as) is, from one perspective, a **kafir**, and from another perspective, a **mushrik**.
Therefore, just as the ma'rifah of the Imam is both **the path to Tawhid and its sign and fruit**, enmity toward the Imam is likewise both **a path to shirk and a sign and fruit of shirk**.

The Imams of Kufr as Idols for Their Followers

For this reason, the leaders of misguidance who oppose the Ahl al-Bayt (as) have been described as **idols**, because they are those who divert servants away from the path of Tawhid.

Abu Hamzah al-Thumali narrates from Imam al-Baqir (as), who said:

يا اَباحَمزَةَ، اِنَّما يَعبُدُ اللهَ مَن عَرَفَ اللهَ. وَ اَمّا مَن لا يَعرِفُ اللهَ، كَاَنَّما يَعبُدُ غَيرَهُ هكَذا ضالّاً.

قُلتُ: اَصلَحَکَ اللهُ؛ وَ ما مَعرِفَةُ اللهِ؟

قالَ: يُصَدِّقُ اللهَ وَ يُصَدِّقُ مُحَمَّداً رَسُولُ اللهَ صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم فى مُوالاةِ عَلِيٍّ عليه السّلام وَ الاِئتِمامِ بِهِ وَ بِاَئِمَّةِ الهُدى مِن بَعدِهِ وَ البَراءَةِ اِلَى اللهِ مِن عَدُوِّهِم. وَ كَذلِکَ عِرفانُ اللهِ.

قالَ: قُلتَ: اَصلَحَکَ اللهُ؛ أَىُّ شَىءٍ اِذا عَمِلتُهُ اَنَا استَكمَلتُ حَقيقَةَ الايمانِ؟

قالَ: تُوالى اَولياءَ اللهِ، وَ تُعادى اَعداءَ اللهِ، وَ تَكُونُ مَعَ الصّادِقينَ كَما اَمَرَتَ اللهُ.

قالَ: قُلتُ: وَ مَن اَولياءُ اللهِ؟

فَقالَ: اَولياءُ اللهِ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللهِ صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم وَ عَلِيٌّ وَ الحَسَنُ وَ الحُسَينُ وَ عَلِيُّ بنُ الحُسينِ وَ عَلِيُّ بنُ الحُسينِ عليهم السّلام، ثُمَّ انتَهَى الاَمرُ اِلَينا، ثُمَّ ابنى جَعفَرٌ. وَ أَومَأَ اِلى جَعفَرٍ وَ هُوَ جالِسٌ. فَمَن والى هؤُلاءِ، فَقَد والى اَولياءَ اللهِ وَ كانَ مَعَ الصّادِقينَ كَما اَمَرَهُ اللهُ.

قُلتَ: وَ مَن اَعداءُ اللهِ اَصلَحَکَ اللهُ؟

قالَ: الاَوثانُ الاَربَعَةُ. قالَ: قُلتُ: مَن هُم؟ قالَ: أَبُو الفَصيلِ وَ رُمَعُ وَ نَعثَلُ وَ مُعاوِيَةُ وَ مَن دانَ دينَهُم. فَمَن عادى هؤُلاءِ، فَقَد عادى اَعداءَ اللهِ(1) .

“O Abu Hamzah, only one who knows Allah truly worships Allah. As for one who does not know Allah, it is as though he is worshipping other than Him, wandering astray in this manner.”

I said: “May Allah rectify your affairs. What is the ma‘rifah of Allah?”

He said:

“It is to affirm Allah and to affirm Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah (saww), with regard to the wilayah of Ali (as), following him as Imam, following the Imams of guidance after him, and declaring oneself before Allah free from their enemies. This is also what knowing Allah means.”

I said: “May Allah rectify your affairs. What is the act that, if I perform it, will cause me to attain the complete reality of faith?”

He said:
“To maintain wilayah toward the friends of Allah, to oppose the enemies of Allah, and to be with the truthful ones, as Allah has commanded you.”
I asked: “Who are the friends of Allah?”
He said:
“The friends of Allah are Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah (saww), Ali, Hasan, Husayn, and Ali ibn al-Husayn (as). Then this matter came to us, and then to my son Ja‘far.”
He pointed toward Ja‘far (as), who was sitting there.
“Whoever maintains wilayah toward these individuals has maintained wilayah toward the friends of Allah and has been with the truthful ones, as Allah commanded him.”
I asked: “And who are the enemies of Allah, may Allah rectify your affairs?”
He said:
“The four idols.”
I asked: “Who are they?”
He said:
“Abu al-Fasil, Ruma‘, Na‘thal, and Mu‘awiyah, and whoever follows their religion. Whoever opposes these people has opposed the enemies of Allah.” (1)
(1) *Tafsir al-‘Ayyashi*, vol. 2, p. 116; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 27, p. 57, hadith 16.

The Meaning of Worshipping a Created Being

As the Imams (as) have explained, if someone obeys a created being in disobedience to the Creator, then in reality he has **worshipped that created being**.
It has been narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (as):

لَيسَتِ العِبادَةُ هِيَ السُّجُودَ وَ لَا الرُّكُوعَ. وَ اِنَّما هِيَ طاعَةُ الرِّجالِ. مَن اَطاعَ مَخلُوقاً فى مَعصِيَةِ الخالِقِ، فَقَد عَبَدَهُ(1) .

“Worship is not merely prostration or bowing. Rather, it is obedience to people. Whoever obeys a created being in disobedience to the Creator has, in reality, worshipped him.” (1)
(1) *Tafsir ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi*, vol. 2, p. 29.

Likewise, concerning the following noble verse:

اِتَّخَذُوا اَحبارَهُم وَ رُهبانَهُم اَرباباً مِن دُونِ اللهِ وَ المَسيحَ بنَ مَريمَ وَ ما اُمِرُوا اِلّا لِيَعبُدُوا اِلهاً واحِداً لا اِلهَ اِلّا هُوَ سُبحانَهُ وَ تَعالى عَمّا يُشرِكُونَ(1) .

"They took their scholars and monks, and the Messiah, son of Mary, as lords besides Allah, even though they had only been commanded to worship one God; there is no deity except Him. Glory be to Him, and Exalted is He above what they associate with Him." (9:31)

Numerous narrations from the Ahl al-Bayt (as) explain that the way these people worshipped their scholars and monks and regarded them as lords was not that they literally prostrated or bowed before them.

The Unconscious Shirk of Those Who Deny Wilayah

In reality, if people had explicitly called others to worship them, no one would have accepted such an invitation.

Rather, they declared what Allah had made lawful to be unlawful for the people and what Allah had declared unlawful to be lawful—that is, they introduced innovations into religion. The people followed them in these rulings, and in this manner they fell into the worship of other than Allah and into shirk **without realizing it themselves**.

Abu Basir narrates from Imam al-Sadiq (as), who, concerning this very verse, said:

أَما وَاللهِ ما دَعَوهُم اِلى عِبادَةِ اَنفُسِهِم، وَ لَو دَعَوهُم لَما اَجابوهُم، وَ لكِن اَحَلُّوا لَهُم حَراماً وَ حَرَّمُوا لَهُم حَلالاً فَعَبَدُوهُم مِن حَيثُ لا يَشعُرُونَ(2) .

"Indeed, by Allah, they did not call the people to worship themselves. Had they done so, the people would not have responded to them.

Rather, they made unlawful things lawful for them and made lawful things unlawful for them, and thus the people worshipped them **without realizing it**." (2)

(1) Qur'an 9:31.

(2) *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 398, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, chapter "Shirk," hadith 7.

The important point in this discussion is precisely the qualification **"without realizing it" (min haythu la yash'urun)**.

This demonstrates that if someone falls into shirk in worship and worships other than Allah, it is not necessary for him to be consciously aware that he has done so.
On the one hand, such a person knows that he should not follow an innovator. Therefore, the Hujjah has been completed against him, and he is responsible for his negligence.
On the other hand, he may not realize that his following of the innovator has caused him to become a **mushrik**.
This lack of awareness does not alter the reality of the matter. He truly becomes a mushrik even though he himself is unaware of this fact.
Accordingly, the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), whom their followers obey, are in reality their objects of worship. And every object of worship other than Allah is, in reality, an **idol (but)**.
Therefore, their followers are, in reality, idol-worshippers.
This is why, in the terminology of the Imams (as), expressions such as **wathan** (idol), **sanan** (idol), **Lat**, **'Uzza**, **Jibt**, and **Taghut** have been used regarding the Imams of kufr. (1)(2)(3)

Part Two, Chapter Three

The Role of Tawalla and Tabarra in Religious Commitment

The Effects and Implications of Wilayah and Bara'ah

Introduction

Wilayah and bara'ah are two mighty branches of the tree of Tawhid. The fruit that grows from the branch of wilayah is love for the friends of Allah, while the fruit of the branch of bara'ah is hatred toward the enemies of Allah.

No one can truly possess wilayah toward the Ahlul Bayt (as) while remaining deprived of bara'ah toward their enemies.

Someone said to Imam al-Sadiq (as), "So-and-so has wilayah for you, but he is weak in disassociating himself from your enemies." The Imam (as) replied:

هَيهاتَ! كَذَبَ مَنِ ادَّعى مَحَبَّتَنا وَ لَم يَتَبَرَّأ مِن عَدُوِّنا.

"Never! The one who claims to love us while not disassociating himself from our enemy has lied."

(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 27, p. 58, hadith 18, from *al-Sara'ir*.)

How can someone love a person while remaining indifferent toward that person's enemy?!

Wilayah and bara'ah, and their fruits—love and hatred—are inseparably connected. Indeed, faith itself is summed up in this love and hatred:

وَ هَلِ الايمانُ اِلّا الحُبَّ وَ البُغضُ؟

"Is faith anything other than love and hatred?"

(*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 125, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Hubb fi Allah wa al-Bughd fi Allah, hadith 5.)

The Importance of Sending Salawat upon the Ahlul Bayt (as)

Our love for the Ahlul Bayt (as) manifests itself through certain acts, one of which is sending salawat upon Muhammad and the Family of Muhammad (as). The narrations contain strong emphasis on this practice.

ما فِی المیزانِ شَیءٌ اَثقَلُ مِنَ الصَّلاةِ عَلی مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ.

“There is nothing heavier in the Scale of deeds than sending salawat upon Muhammad and the Family of Muhammad (as).”
(*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 494, Kitab al-Du‘a, Bab al-Salat ‘ala al-Nabi (saww), hadith 15.)
Of course, sending salawat upon the Prophet (saww) should always be accompanied by salawat upon his Ahlul Bayt (as). This is what constitutes complete salawat.
Imam al-Baqir (as) once heard a man clinging to the curtain of the Ka‘bah and saying:

اللّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلی مُحَمَّدٍ.

“O Allah, send blessings upon Muhammad.”
The Imam (as) said to him:

یا عَبدَاللهِ، لا تُبتِرها. لا تَظلِمنا حَقَّنا. قُل: اللّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلی مُحَمَّدٍ وَ اَهلِ بَیتِهِ.

“O servant of Allah, do not cut it short. Do not wrong us concerning our right. Say: ‘O Allah, send blessings upon Muhammad and his Ahl al-Bayt.’”
(*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 495, Kitab al-Du‘a, Bab al-Salat ‘ala al-Nabi (saww), hadith 21.)
The importance of sending salawat reaches such a degree that the Messenger of Allah (saww) said:

مَن ذُکِرتُ عِندَهُ فَنَسِیَ الصَّلاةَ عَلَیَّ، خَطِئَ بِهِ طَریقَ الجَنَّة.

“Whoever has my name mentioned in his presence and then forgets to send salawat upon me has lost the way to Paradise.”
(*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 495, Kitab al-Du‘a, Bab al-Salat ‘ala al-Nabi (saww), hadith 19.)

Allah’s Curse upon His Enemies

Just as sending salawat is a sign of love for the Ahlul Bayt (as), a sign of hatred toward their enemies is to invoke Allah’s curse upon them.

In Arabic, **la‘n** has been defined as الإبعاد والطرد من الخير, meaning “to distance and expel from goodness.” The meaning of **la‘nah** has also been explained as الدعاء عليه, that is, supplicating against someone. Thus, just as salawat is a supplication for goodness, mercy, and blessings, la‘n is a supplication against someone and a request that he be distanced from the goodness of this world and the Hereafter. When Allah curses someone, it means that He distances that person from His blessings and goodness.

The Qur’an explicitly states that Allah has cursed those who harm the Messenger of Allah (saww):

اِنَّ الَّذينَ يُؤذُونَ اللهَ وَ رَسُولَهُ لَعَنَهُمُ اللهُ فِى الدُّنيا وَ الآخِرَةِ وَ اَعَدَّ لَهُم عَذاباً مُهيناً.

“Indeed, those who offend Allah and His Messenger—Allah has cursed them in this world and the Hereafter, and He has prepared for them a humiliating punishment.”
(Qur’an 33:57.)

Cursing the Enemies of the Ahlul Bayt (as)

Here, using the Qur’an and reliable hadith sources—even sources of the Ahl al-Sunnah—it is possible to establish that cursing the enemies of the Ahlul Bayt (as) is permissible and, indeed, obligatory.

For the sake of brevity, we will mention only a few examples and refer those interested to detailed works that have discussed this subject. Among them is *Nafahat al-Lahut fi La‘n al-Jibt wa al-Taghut* by the late Muhaqqiq al-Karaki, which has also been translated into Persian under the same title. Another work on this subject is *Risalah-yi Tawalla wa Tabarra* by Shaykh Jawad Karbala’i.

In the respected work *Fada’il al-Khamsah*, there is a chapter entitled:

“The Saying of the Prophet (saww): Fatimah is a part of me; whoever angers her has angered me.”

The author cites narrations from authoritative Sunni sources such as *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, *Sahih al-Tirmidhi*, and *Sunan Abi Dawud*. All of these narrations convey the meaning that the Messenger of Allah (saww) said that whoever hurts and angers Fatimah (sa) has hurt and angered him.

For example, consider the narration transmitted in *Sahih al-Bukhari*:

هِیَ فاطِمَةُ بَضعَةٌ مِنّی ... یُؤذینی ما آذاها.

“She is Fatimah, a part of me … whatever hurts her hurts me.”
(*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-Nikah, Bab Dhab al-Rajul ‘an Ibntihi; cited in *Fada’il al-Khamsah*, vol. 3, p. 184.)
The same wording is also found in *Sahih Muslim* and *Sahih al-Tirmidhi*.
Now consider the report of Ibn Qutaybah in *al-Imamah wa al-Siyasah*.
When Abu Bakr and Umar visited Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (sa) while she was ill, she said to them:

نَشَدتُکُما اللهَ، سَمِعتُم قَولَ رَسُولِ اللهِ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم: رِضا فاطِمَةَ مِن رِضایَ. وَ سَخَطُ فاطِمَةَ مِن سَخَطی. فَمَن أَحَبَّ فاطِمَةَ ابنَتی، فَقَد اَحَبَّنی. وَ مَن اَرضا فاطِمَةَ، فَقَد اَرضانی. وَ مَن اَسخَطَ فاطِمَةَ، فَقَد اَسخَطَنی.

“I ask you by Allah: Did you hear the Messenger of Allah (saww) say: ‘Fatimah’s pleasure is my pleasure, and Fatimah’s displeasure is my displeasure. Whoever loves my daughter Fatimah has loved me; whoever pleases Fatimah has pleased me; and whoever angers Fatimah has angered me’?”
They replied, “Yes, we heard this from the Messenger of Allah (saww).”
Fatimah (sa) then said:

فَاِنّی اُشهِدُ اللهَ وَ مَلائِکَتَهُ اَنَّکُما اَسخَطتُمانی فَما اَرضَیتُمانی. وَ لَئِن لَقیتُ النَّبِیَّ، لَاَشکُوَنَّکُما اِلَیه.

“I call Allah and His angels to witness that you have angered me and have not pleased me. And if I meet the Prophet (saww), I shall certainly complain to him about you.”
Abu Bakr then began to weep. Fatimah (sa) said to him:

وَ اللهِ لَاَدعُوَنَّ اللهَ عَلَیکَ فی کُلِّ صَلاةٍ اُصَلّیها.

“By Allah, I shall invoke Allah against you in every prayer that I perform.”
(*al-Imamah wa al-Siyasah*, p. 14.)
Note: The supplied text cites this report from Ibn Qutaybah’s work. The translation preserves the source attribution as given in the text.

- [The supplied text’s footnote 1: *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-Nikah, Bab Dhab al-Rajul ‘an Ibntihi; cited from *Fada’il al-Khamsah*, vol. 3, p. 184.]
- [The supplied text’s footnote 2: *al-Imamah wa al-Siyasah*, p. 14.]

- [The supplied text's footnote 3: Muhaqqiq al-Karaki's *Nafahat al-Lahut fi La'n al-Jibt wa al-Taghut* and Shaykh Jawad Karbala'i's *Risalah-yi Tawalla wa Tabarra*.]
- [The supplied text's footnote 4: *Fada'il al-Khamsah*, vol. 3, p. 184.]

In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, the following is also narrated:

فَغَضِبَت فاطِمَةُ بَنتُ رَسُولِ اللهِ صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم فَهَجَرَت اَبابَكرٍ فَلَم تَزَل مُهاجَرَتُهُ حَتّى تُوُفِّيَت.

"Fatimah, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah (saww), became angry with Abu Bakr and withdrew from him, and she continued in that state until she passed away."

(*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-Jihad wa al-Siyar, Bab Fard al-Khums, vol. 2, p. 186.)

Elsewhere in the same book it is stated:

فَوَجَدَت فاطِمَةُ عَلى اَبى بَكرٍ فى ذلِکَ فَهَجَرَتهُ فَلَم تُكَلِّمهُ حَتّى تُوُفِّيَت.

"Fatimah became angry with Abu Bakr over this matter, withdrew from him, and did not speak to him until she passed away."

(*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-Maghazi, Bab Ghazwat Khaybar, vol. 3, p. 55.)

Thus, according to these cited Sunni sources, those who usurped the rights of the Ahlul Bayt (as) caused Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (sa) to become hurt and angry. According to the statement of the Prophet (saww) transmitted in those same sources, hurting Fatimah (sa) is hurting the Messenger of Allah (saww). And Allah has declared in the Qur'an that those who hurt His Messenger are subject to His curse.

The Messenger of Allah (saww) also cursed the one who wronged Lady Fatimah (sa). Ibn 'Abbas reports that the Prophet (saww) said concerning Fatimah (sa):

اللّهُمَّ العَن مَن ظَلَمَها.

"O Allah, curse whoever has wronged her."

(*Amali al-Saduq*, majlis 24, hadith 2, pp. 69–70.)

The Imams (as) themselves were also committed to cursing the enemies of the Ahlul Bayt (as).

For example, *al-Kafi* reports:

سَمِعنا اَبا عَبدِاللهِ عليه السّلام وَ هُوَ يَلعَنُ فى دُبُرِ كُلِّ مَكتُوبَةٍ اَربَعَةً مِنَ الرِّجالِ وَ اَربَعاً مِنَ النِّساءِ، فُلانٌ وَ فُلانٌ وَ فُلانٌ وَ مُعاوِيَةُ. وَ يُسَمّيهِم. وَ فُلانَةُ وَ فُلانَةُ وَ هِندٌ وَ اُمُّ الحَكَمِ اُختُ مُعاوِيَةَ.

“We heard Abu ‘Abdillah (Imam al-Sadiq) (as) cursing, after every obligatory prayer, four men and four women: so-and-so, so-and-so, so-and-so, and Mu‘awiyah—and he would name them—and so-and-so woman, so-and-so woman, Hind, and Umm al-Hakam, the sister of Mu‘awiyah.”
(*Al-Kafi*, vol. 3, p. 342.)
Thus, invoking la‘n was a practice to which the Imams (as) were committed, and they also instructed their followers regarding it.
In Ziyarat Ashura, whose recitation has been strongly emphasized, the enemies of the Ahlul Bayt (as) are cursed at several points. Among the passages we recite is:
اللّهُمَّ العَن اَوَّلَ ظالِمٍ ظَلَمَ حَقَّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ ... . اللّهُمَّ خُصَّ اَنتَ اَوَّلَ ظالِمٍ بِاللَّعنِ مِنّی وَ ابدَأ بِهِ اَوَّلاً ثُمَّ الثّانِیَ ثُمَّ الثّالِثَ ثُمَّ الرّابِعَ. اللّهُمَّ العَن یَزیدَ بنَ مُعاوِیَةَ خامِساً وَ العَن عُبَیدَاللهِ بنَ زیادٍ وَ ابنَ مَرجانَةَ وَ عُمَرَ بنَ سَعدٍ وَ شِمراً وَ آلَ اَبی سُفیانَ وَ آلَ زِیادٍ وَ آلَ مَروانَ اِلی یَومِ القِیامَةِ.

“O Allah, curse the first one who wronged the right of Muhammad and the Family of Muhammad … O Allah, single out the first wrongdoer for Your curse on my behalf, and begin with him first, then the second, then the third, then the fourth. O Allah, curse Yazid ibn Mu‘awiyah as the fifth, and curse ‘Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad, Ibn Marjanah, ‘Umar ibn Sa‘d, Shimr, the family of Abu Sufyan, the family of Ziyad, and the family of Marwan until the Day of Resurrection.”
(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 101, p. 296, hadith 1, from *Kamil al-Ziyarat*.)
Here we briefly point out that if the families of Abu Sufyan, Ziyad, and Marwan are all included in the curse, the reason given is that they were pleased and delighted with the actions of their forefathers. As we read in the same Ziyarat:
وَ هذا یَومٌ فَرِحَت بِهِ آلُ زیادٍ وَ آلُ مَروانَ بِقَتلِهِمُ الحُسَینَ صَلَواتُ اللهِ عَلَیهِ.

“And this is the day on which the families of Ziyad and Marwan rejoiced at the killing of Husayn, may the blessings of Allah be upon him.”
Whoever is pleased with the action of a people is considered a partner in their action.
Imam al-Ridha (as) is reported to have said:
ذُرّیّاتُ قَتَلَةِ الحُسَینِ علیه السّلام یَرضَونَ بِاَفعالِ آبائِهِم وَ یَفتَخِرُونَ بِها. وَ مَن رَضِیَ شَیئاً کانَ کَمَن اَتاهُ. وَ لَو اَنَّ رَجُلاً قُتِلَ بِالمَشرِقِ فَرَضِیَ بِقَتلِهِ رَجُلٌ فِی المَغرِبِ، لَکانَ الرّاضی عِندَ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ شَریکَ القاتِلِ.

“The descendants of the killers of Husayn (as) are pleased with the actions of their fathers and take pride in them. Whoever is pleased with something is like one who has committed it. Even if a man were killed in the East and another man in the West were pleased with his killing, the one who is pleased would, in the sight of Allah, be a partner of the killer.”
(*‘Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha*, vol. 1, p. 273.)

Supporting the Ahlul Bayt (as) through Cursing Their Enemies

Another point that makes the importance of cursing the enemies of the Ahlul Bayt (as) even clearer is that cursing them has been regarded as one of the ways of supporting the Ahlul Bayt (as).
Someone said to Imam al-Sadiq (as):

يَابنَ رَسُولِ اللهِ اَنّی عاجِزٌ بِبَدَنی عَن نُصرَتِکُم وَ لَستُ اَملِکُ اِلّا البَراءَةَ مِن اَعدائِکُم وَ اللَّعنَ. فَکَیفَ حالی؟

“O son of the Messenger of Allah, I am physically unable to support you, and I possess nothing except disassociation from your enemies and cursing them. What, then, is my condition?”
Imam al-Sadiq (as) replied:

حَدَّثَنی اَبی عَن اَبیهِ عَن جَدِّهِ عَن رَسُولِ اللهِ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم اَنَّهُ قالَ: مَن ضَعُفَ عَن نُصرَتِنا اَهلَ البَیتِ فَلَعَنَ فی خَلَواتِهِ اَعداءَنا، بَلَّغَ اللهُ صَوتَهُ جَمیعَ الاَملاکِ مِنَ الثَّری اِلَی العَرشِ. فَکُلَّما لَعَنَ هذَا الرَّجُلُ اَعداءَنا لَعناً، ساعَدُوهُ وَ لَعَنُوا مَن یَلعَنُهُ ثُمَّ ثَنَّوا فَقالُوا: اللّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلی عَبدِکَ هذا الَّذی قَد بَذَلَ ما فی وُسعِهِ وَ لَو قَدَرَ عَلی اَکثَرَ مِنهُ لَفَعَلَ. فَاِذا النِّداءُ مِن قِبَلِ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ: قَد اَجَبتُ دُعاءَکُم وَ سَمِعتُ نِداءَکُم وَ صَلَّیتُ عَلی رُوحِهِ فِی الاَرواحِ وَ جَعَلتُهُ عِندی مِنَ المُصطَفَینَ الاَخیارِ.

“My father narrated to me from his father, from his grandfather, from the Messenger of Allah (saww), who said:
‘Whoever is unable to support us, the Ahlul Bayt, but curses our enemies in the privacy of his solitude, Allah conveys his voice to all the beings of authority, from the earth to the Throne.
Whenever this man curses our enemies, they assist him and curse the one whom he curses. Then they do something further and say: “O Allah, send blessings upon this servant of Yours who has done everything within his capacity, and had he been capable of doing more, he would have done so.”

Then a call comes from Allah, the Mighty and Majestic: “I have answered your supplication, heard your call, sent blessings upon his spirit among the spirits, and placed him, in My sight, among the chosen and righteous.”””
(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 27, p. 222, hadith 11, from *Tafsir al-Imam al-ʻAskari*.)
Based on what has been explained, cursing the enemies of the Ahlul Bayt (as) is among the effects and implications of bara’ah.
One of the benefits of keeping this practice alive is that the enemies of Allah remain known. Thus, successive generations, by recognizing the enemies of Allah and disassociating themselves from them, remain protected from deviating from the path of religion. In addition, through this, they draw closer to Allah and to the Ahlul Bayt (as).

The Pleasure and Displeasure of the Ahlul Bayt (as) — The Criterion of Truth and Falsehood

Introduction
In light of the preceding discussion, an important conclusion emerges: the truth or falsehood of anything can be recognized through the pleasure or displeasure of the Ahlul Bayt (as) toward it.
The reason is that truth never separates from the Ahlul Bayt (as), nor do the Ahlul Bayt (as) separate from truth. Rather, the sign that something is true is the pleasure of the Ahlul Bayt (as) concerning it.
The following hadith has been transmitted by both Shia and Sunni sources from the Messenger of Allah (saww):

اَلحَقُّ مَعَ عَلِيٍّ. وَ عَلِيٌّ مَعَ الحَقِّ. لا يَفتَرِقانِ حَتّى يَرِدا عَلَيَّ الحَوضَ.

“Truth is with Ali, and Ali is with truth. They shall never separate until they both come to me at the Pond.”
(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 38, pp. 26–40, where sources for this narration from both Shia and Sunni works are cited.)
What is important in these narrations is that Amir al-Mu’minin Ali (as) is introduced as the criterion of truth and reality. The purpose is not that there exists

some external standard by which truth is first determined, after which it is claimed that Amir al-Mu'minin (as) never deviates from that standard.
Rather, the matter is the opposite: the truth of something is recognized through the pleasure of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) toward it, while its being false is known through his displeasure toward it.
A narration also transmitted by Sunni sources states:

رَحِمَ اللهُ عَلِيّاً. اللّهُمَّ اَدِرِ الحَقَّ مَعَهُ حَيثُ دارَ.

"May Allah have mercy upon Ali. O Allah, make truth revolve with him wherever he turns."
(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 38, p. 38, hadith 14, from *al-Tara'if*, citing *Sahih al-Bukhari*.)
Therefore, the criterion of truth and falsehood is, fundamentally, the pleasure and displeasure of the Ahlul Bayt (as).
In Ziyarat Aal Yasin, we read:

فَالحَقُّ ما رَضيتُمُوهُ. وَ الباطِلُ ما سَخِطتُمُوهُ. وَ المَعروفُ ما اَمَرتُم بِهِ. وَ المُنكَرُ ما نَهَيتُم عَنهُ.

"Truth is that with which you are pleased, and falsehood is that with which you are displeased. Ma'ruf is that which you have commanded, and munkar is that from which you have forbidden."
(*Al-Ihtijaj* of al-Tabrisi, vol. 2, p. 317.)

The Meaning of Divine Pleasure and Displeasure

Rida (pleasure) and sakhat (displeasure) are concepts that properly apply to created beings. We have no right to attribute to Allah the meaning that we ordinarily understand from these concepts when applied to creatures.
If such expressions are attributed to Allah, they cannot imply any limitation or state within the Divine Essence.
Therefore, when it is said that Allah is pleased with something or displeased with something else, it does not mean that He becomes happy or upset in the way human beings do. Rather, it means that He has designated reward for the former and punishment for the latter.
But how do we know what is the object of His pleasure and what is subject to His displeasure?

This is understood through the pleasure and displeasure of the Friends of Allah, whom He has chosen.
Someone asked about the following verse:

فَلَمّا آسَفُونَا انتَقَمنا مِنهُم.

“So when they angered Us, We took retribution from them.”
(Qur’an 43:55.)
Imam al-Sadiq (as) replied:

اِنَّ اللهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ لا يَأسَفُ كَاَسَفِنا. وَ لكِنَّهُ خَلَقَ اَولياءَ لِنَفسِهِ يَأسَفونَ وَ يَرضَونَ وَ هُم مَخلُوقُونَ مَربُوبُونَ، فَجَعَلَ رِضاهُم رِضا نَفسِهِ وَ سَخَطَهُم سَخَطَ نَفسِهِ. لِاَنَّهُ جَعَلَهُمُ الدُّعاةَ اِلَيهِ وَ الاَدِلّاءَ عَلَيهِ. فَلِذلِکَ صارُوا كَذلِکَ. وَ لَيسَ اَنَّ ذلِکَ يَصِلُ اِلَى اللهِ كَما يَصِلُ اِلى خَلقِهِ، لكِن هذا مَعنى ما قالَ مِن ذلِکَ.

“Indeed, Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, does not become grieved as we become grieved. Rather, He created for Himself Friends who become grieved and pleased, while they themselves are created beings sustained by Him. He therefore made their pleasure His own pleasure and their displeasure His own displeasure, because He made them callers toward Him and guides to Him. That is why they possess such a station.
It does not mean that what reaches Allah reaches Him in the same manner that it reaches His creation. Rather, this is the meaning of what He has said concerning such expressions.
He has said:
‘Whoever shows hostility toward a friend of Mine has openly declared war against Me and called Me to war.’
And He has said:
‘Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah.’
And He has said:
‘Indeed, those who pledge allegiance to you are actually pledging allegiance to Allah. The Hand of Allah is above their hands.’
All of this, and everything similar to it, carries the meaning that I have explained to you. The same applies to pleasure, anger, and all other expressions of this kind.”
(*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 144, Kitab al-Tawhid, Bab al-Nawadir, hadith 6.)

Allah is far above having the attributes of created beings ascribed to Him. Whatever is abstracted from created beings remains deficient, even if various limitations and qualifications are removed from it, whereas Allah is free from every deficiency.
Therefore, attributing such attributes to Him in their created sense necessarily entails likening the Sacred Divine Essence to creation.
Accordingly, whenever attributes of created beings are attributed to Allah in the Qur'an or narrations, they carry the meaning explained in the above hadith. In summary:

The Friends of Allah are manifestations of His pleasure and displeasure.

Whatever they approve of is that for which Allah, the Exalted, has established reward and recompense. Whatever they disapprove of is that which leads to His punishment and Hell.
Their hearts are the locus of Allah's will, and nothing contrary to what Allah wills has a place within them.
This is why the criterion for a person's entering Paradise or Hell is their pleasure and displeasure.
Obedience to them is obedience to Allah.
Pledging allegiance to them is pledging allegiance to Allah.
Hurting them is hurting Allah.
Waging war against them is waging war against Allah.
Loving them is loving Allah.
And so on.
In short, these are the ones who are truly entitled to be called **Khalifat Allah**, as was explained earlier concerning this title.

Creation, Both Tikwini and Tashri'i, Based upon Love for the Ahlul Bayt (as)

Here it can be said that the foundation and axis of Allah's creation—both in **takwīn** and in **tashrī'**—has been love for the Ahlul Bayt (as).

One of the narrations concerning the Mi‘raj of the Messenger of Allah (saww) states:

قالَ لِیَ الجَلیلُ جَلَّ جَلالُهُ: یا مُحَمَّدُ، مَن تُحِبُّ مِن خَلقی؟ قُلتُ: اُحِبُّ الَّذی تُحِبُّهُ اَنتَ یا رَبّی. فَقالَ لی جَلَّ جَلالُهُ: فَاَحِبَّ عَلِیّاً. فَاِنّی اُحِبُّهُ وَ اُحِبُّ مَن یُحِبُّهُ وَ اُحِبُّ مَن اَحَبَّ مَن یُحِبُّهُ. …

“The Majestic One, exalted is His Majesty, said to me: ‘O Muhammad, whom among My creation do you love?’

I said: ‘I love whoever You, O my Lord, love.’

He then said to me: ‘Then love Ali, for I love him, and I love whoever loves him, and I love whoever loves the one who loves him…’”

Then Allah said:

یا مُحَمَّدُ، اِنّی اَطَّلَعتُ عَلی قُلُوبِ عِبادی فَوَجَدتُ عَلِیّاً اَنصَحَ خَلقی لَکَ وَ اَطوَعَهُم لَکَ. فَاتَّخِذهُ اَخاً وَ خَلیفَةً وَ وَصِیّاً. وَ زَوِّجهُ ابنَتَکَ. فَاِنّی سَاَهَبُ لَهُما غُلامَینِ طَیِّبَینِ طاهِرَینِ تَقِیَّینِ نَقِیَّینِ. فَبی حَلَفتُ وَ عَلی نَفسی حَتَمتُ اَنَّهُ لا یَتَوَلّی عَلِیّاً وَ زَوجَتَهُ وَ ذُرِّیَّتَهُما اَحَدٌ مِن خَلقی اِلّا رَفَعتُ لِواءَهُ اِلی قائِمَةِ عَرشی وَ جَنَّتی وَ بُحبُوحَةِ کَرامَتی وَ سَقَیتُهُ مِن حَظیرَةِ قُدسی. وَ لا یُعادیهِم اَحَدٌ اَو یَعدِلُ عَن وِلایَتِهِم . یا مُحَمَّدُ . اِلّا سَلَبتُهُ وُدّی وَ باعَدتُهُ مِن قُربی وَ ضاعَفتُ عَلَیهِ عَذابی وَ لَعنَتی.

“O Muhammad, I have looked into the hearts of My servants and found Ali to be the most sincere of My creation toward you and the most obedient of them to you.

Therefore, take him as your brother, successor, and وصي. Marry your daughter to him. For I shall grant the two of them two pure, wholesome, pious, and purified sons.

By Myself I have sworn, and upon Myself I have made it binding, that whoever among My creation accepts the wilayah of Ali, his wife, and their descendants, I shall raise his banner to the base of My Throne, My Paradise, and the center of My special honor, and I shall give him to drink from the sanctuary of My holiness. And whoever opposes them—or, O Muhammad, turns away from their wilayah—I shall deprive him of My love, distance him from My nearness, and multiply My punishment and curse upon him.”

Allah further said:

يا مُحَمَّدُ، اِنَّکَ رَسُولی اِلی جَمیعِ خَلقی. وَ اِنَّ عَلِیّاً وَلِیّی وَ اَمیرُالمُؤمِنینَ. وَ عَلی ذلِکَ اَخَذتُ میثاقَ مَلائِکَتی وَ اَنبِیائی وَ جَمیعِ خَلقی وَ هُم اَرواحٌ مِن قَبلِ اَن اَخلُقَ خَلقاً فی سَمائی وَ اَرضی، مَحَبَّةً مِنّی لَکَ. یا مُحَمَّدُ. وَ لِعَلِیٍّ وَ لِوَلَدِکُما وَ لِمَن اَحَبَّکُما وَ کانَ مِن شیعَتِکُما وَ لِذلِکَ خَلَقتُهُ مِن طینَتِکُما.

"O Muhammad, you are My Messenger to all of My creation, and Ali is My Wali and the Commander of the Believers.

Upon this matter I took the covenant from My angels, My prophets, and all My creation, when they were still spirits, before I had created any creation in My heaven or My earth.

This was out of My love for you, O Muhammad, and for Ali, your descendants, and those who love you both and are among your Shia. For this reason I created them from your clay."

Allah further said:

یا مُحَمَّدُ ... اِنّی جَعَلتُکُم مِحنَةً لِخَلقی اَمتَحِنُ بِکُم جَمیعَ عِبادی وَ خَلقی فی سَمائی وَ اَرضی وَ ما فیهِما لِاُکَمِّلَ الثَّوابَ لِمَن اَطاعَنی فیکُم وَ اُحِلَّ عَذابی وَ لَعنَتی عَلی مَن خالَفَنی فیکُم وَ عَصانی. وَ بِکُم اُمَیِّزُ الخَبیثَ مِنَ الطَّیِّبِ.

"O Muhammad … I have made you a means of trial for My creation. Through you I test all My servants and My creation in My heavens and My earth and whatever is within them, so that I may complete the reward of those who obey Me concerning you, and make My punishment and curse applicable to those who oppose Me concerning you and disobey Me. Through you I distinguish the impure from the pure."

Then Allah said:

یا مُحَمَّدُ، وَ عِزَّتی وَ جَلالی، لَولاکَ ما خَلَقتُ آدَمَ. وَ لَولا عَلِیٌّ ما خَلَقتُ الجَنَّةَ. لِاَنّی بِکُم اَجزِی العِبادَ یَومَ المَعادِ بِالثَّوابِ وَ العِقابِ ... فَلا یَدخُلُ الجَنَّةَ لَکُما عَدُوٌّ. وَ لا یَدخُلُ النّارَ لَکُما وَلِیٌّ. وَ بِذلِکَ اَقسَمتُ عَلی نَفسی.

"O Muhammad, by My might and My majesty, had it not been for you, I would not have created Adam. And had it not been for Ali, I would not have created Paradise.

For through you both I shall recompense My servants on the Day of Return with reward and punishment …

Therefore, no enemy of you two shall enter Paradise, and no friend of you two shall enter the Fire. By this I have sworn upon Myself."

(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 18, pp. 399–400, hadith 101, from *Kashf al-Yaqin*.)

It can be observed that love and hatred toward the Family of Prophethood and the Ahlul Bayt of Revelation (as) are the axis around which Divine love and hatred revolve. On the Day of Resurrection as well, this very love and hatred become the basis of Allah's reward and punishment.

In light of what has been discussed, we can readily understand the meaning of this narration from Imam al-Sadiq (as):

لِكُلِّ شَيءٍ اَساسٌ. وَ اَساسُ الاِسلامِ حُبُّنا اَهلَ البَيتِ.

"Everything has a foundation, and the foundation of Islam is love for us, the Ahlul Bayt."

(*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 46, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab Nisbat al-Islam, hadith 2.)

The Degrees of Paradise and Hell Based upon Love and Hatred toward the Ahlul Bayt (as)

It should not be forgotten that hatred toward the enemies of the Ahlul Bayt (as) is an inseparable consequence of love for them. The degrees of Paradise and the levels of Hell likewise take shape in proportion to the degree of love and hatred toward the Ahlul Bayt (as).

The Messenger of Allah (saww) said:

فِي الجَنَّةِ ثَلاثُ دَرَجاتٍ. وَ فِي النّارِ ثَلاثُ دَرَكاتٍ. فَاَعلى دَرَجاتِ الجَنَّةِ لِمَن اَحَبَّنا بِقَلبِهِ وَ نَصَرَنا بِلِسانِهِ وَ يَدِهِ. وَ فِي الدَّرَجَةِ الثّانِيَةِ مَن اَحَبَّنا بِقَلبِهِ وَ نَصَرَنا بِلِسانِهِ. وَ فِي الدَّرَجَةِ الثّالِثَةِ مَن اَحَبَّنا بِقَلبِهِ.

وَ فِي اَسفَلِ الدَّرَكِ مِنَ النّارِ مَن اَبغَضَنا بِقَلبِهِ وَ اَعانَ عَلَينا بِلِسانِهِ وَ يَدِهِ. وَ فِي الدَّرَكِ الثّانِيَةِ مِنَ النّارِ مَن اَبغَضَنا بِقَلبِهِ وَ اَعانَ عَلَينا بِلِسانِهِ. وَ فِي الدَّرَكِ الثّالِثَةِ مِنَ النّارِ مَن اَبغَضَنا بِقَلبِهِ.

"There are three degrees in Paradise and three levels in the Fire.

The highest degree of Paradise is for the one who loves us with his heart and supports us with his tongue and his hand.

The second degree is for the one who loves us with his heart and supports us with his tongue.

The third degree is for the one who loves us with his heart.

And at the lowest level of the Fire is the one who hates us in his heart and supports those who oppose us with his tongue and his hand.

At the second level of the Fire is the one who hates us in his heart and supports those who oppose us with his tongue.
At the third level of the Fire is the one who hates us in his heart."
(*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 27, p. 93, hadith 53, from *al-Mahasin* of al-Barqi.)
In this narration, the **"hand"** represents a person's power and capabilities.
One who employs his power and resources in supporting the Ahlul Bayt (as) is at the highest degree of friendship and attachment to them.
Conversely, the person who employs his power and resources in opposing them is regarded as among their most hostile enemies and therefore occupies the lowest levels of Hell.
Thus, wilayah and bara'ah are not merely internal attitudes. Their reality manifests through the heart, the tongue, and the practical use of one's abilities and resources. Love for the Ahlul Bayt (as) finds its completion in allegiance to them, while allegiance necessarily entails disassociation from those who oppose them.

Part Two, Chapter Four

The Salvation of the People of Faith through Wilayah

The Ma‘rifah of the Ahlul Bayt (as) — The Criterion of a Person’s Worth

Introduction

It was established in Part One that Islam, as a religion, is the inner faith and submission to the presence of Allah, the Exalted.

Now that we understand the reality of faith and the spirit of Islam to consist of accepting the wilayah of the Ahlul Bayt (as) and disassociating oneself from their enemies, we may say that, in the terminology of the Qur’an and Sunnah, religion is equivalent to the ma‘rifah of the Ahlul Bayt (as) and submission to them—which necessarily entails disassociation from their enemies.

For this reason, under the verse:

اِنَّ الدّينَ عِندَ اللهِ الاِسلامُ

“Indeed, the religion with Allah is Islam.”
(Qur’an 3:19)

Imam al-Baqir (as) said:

اَلتَّسليمُ لِعَلِيّ بنِ اَبى طالِبٍ عليه السّلام بِالوِلايَةِ.

“[Islam means] submission to Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) through accepting his wilayah.”
(*Tafsir al-Burhan*, vol. 1, p. 274.)

Religious Commitment Means Submission to the Wilayah of the Imams (as)

Submission to Amir al-Mu’minin (as) is, in reality, submission to Allah, the Exalted. Obedience to the Imams (as) is inseparable from obedience to Allah and His Messenger (saww). Rather, the only way submission and obedience to Allah can truly be realized is through submission to the wilayah of the Ahlul Bayt (as). Therefore, religion is ultimately summarized in accepting the wilayah of the Ahlul Bayt (as). This is the foundation and reality of religion, while the other

components sometimes mentioned in defining religion are secondary in relation to this foundation.
All good deeds, whether obligatory or recommended, are branches of religion. When performed properly, they deepen a person's state of submission to Allah and to the Ahlul Bayt (as).
Thus, religious commitment truly refers to the spirit of submission and servitude to Allah, while outward deeds are its effects and consequences. The value of deeds likewise lies in the spirit and reality they are meant to possess. If the reality of religion is absent from them, the physical acts are merely outward forms that possess no value.

Comparing the Sin of a Religious Person with the Good Deed of a Person without Religion

For the sake of comparison, a religious person whose actions are not all good and praiseworthy is better and more valuable than a person without religion whose actions may appear beautiful and good.
The reason is that the former possesses a share of the reality of religion, whereas the latter, despite performing apparently good deeds, possesses only the outward appearance of goodness. Those actions do not reflect the spirit of servitude and submission before Allah.
No one can deceive Allah through apparently good deeds.
What matters is ma'rifah and inner submission, and all deeds should arise from that ma'rifah. When they do, their effect is to increase the person's inner ma'rifah. If such ma'rifah is absent, none of those deeds has any true value and they are rejected in the presence of Allah.
For this reason, Amir al-Mu'minin (as) warned us:

اَيُّهَا النّاسُ! دينَكُم! دينَكُم! تَمَسَّكُوا بِهِ. وَ لا يَزِيلَنَّكُم وَ لا يُرَدَّنَّكُم اَحَدٌ عَنهُ. لِاَنَّ السَّيِّئَةَ فيهِ خَيرٌ مِنَ الحَسَنَةِ فى غَيرِهِ. لِاَنَّ السَّيِّئَةَ فيهِ تُغفَرُ وَ الحَسَنَةُ فى غَيرِهِ لا تُقبَلُ.

"O people! Guard your religion! Guard your religion! Hold firmly to it. Let no one cause you to depart from it or turn you away from it.

For a bad deed within it is better than a good deed outside it, because the bad deed within it is forgiven, whereas the good deed outside it is not accepted." (*Ma'ani al-Akhbar*, pp. 185–186.)

A **hasanah** is an action that is good and praiseworthy in itself, irrespective of the intention of the person performing it.

A **sayyi'ah** is an action that is bad and blameworthy in itself, regardless of the performer's inner intention.

A religious person is one who is travelling upon the path of servitude to Allah, and whose good deeds demonstrate the spirit of submission and acceptance of the Lordship of his Lord.

If such a person commits a sayyi'ah, he has, in reality, neglected his duty. Allah, out of His mercy and grace, has promised forgiveness and pardon for such a sin. Such a person himself is beloved to Allah, even though the sinful act he committed is hated in the Divine presence.

As for a person without religion, because he has not submitted himself to Allah or entered through the door of servitude to Him, he himself is hated by Allah. Even if he performs a good deed, because it does not arise from submission and servitude to Allah, it is not accepted in His presence and has no true value.

Therefore, the sin committed by a religious person is, with respect to its ultimate outcome—not with respect to the intrinsic nature of the act itself—better than the good deed performed by a person without religion.

The former may be forgiven by Allah, whereas none of the latter's deeds constitutes, in reality, obedience to Allah and therefore is not accepted.

In summary, Allah seeks servitude from human beings, and servitude ultimately consists of accepting the wilayah of the Ahlul Bayt (as).

Acts of worship acquire value when they are performed upon this path. Otherwise, no good deed remains of lasting benefit to a person.

What constitutes a person's true religious personality is his ma'rifah and wilayah, not merely his acts of worship.

Therefore, the people of ma'rifah themselves are beloved to Allah with respect to their religious personality, even though forgiveness has been promised concerning their evil deeds.

Conversely, those who deny wilayah are themselves disliked by Allah, and their good deeds do not alter the personality deprived of the light of faith.

Separating a Person's Religious Personality from His Deeds

A person's ultimate destiny—his happiness or misery—depends upon his faith or disbelief.

If a person's religious personality is accepted by Allah from the perspective of faith and religious commitment, he is among those who attain salvation. Otherwise, he is destroyed.

Good deeds are beneficial to a person only when the person himself is good. When good deeds are performed on the path of servitude to Allah, they are accepted by Him. This occurs when a person has accepted the wilayah of the Ahlul Bayt (as). Otherwise, none of those deeds is performed upon the path Allah desires, and therefore they are rejected.

Of course, the sins committed by the people of wilayah negatively affect their spiritual and inner personality, and they may even cause them to depart from the path of servitude.

But if this does not happen—meaning that the believer does not lose his faith—the hand of Allah's wilayah and guardianship will not allow him to remain in the darkness of sin.

Ultimately, Allah will bring him out of that darkness and lead him into the light of repentance and Divine forgiveness.

This wilayah, of course, is specific to the believers: those who have accepted the wilayah of the Prophet (saww) and his noble progeny, thereby placing themselves under the care and guardianship of these great personalities.

'Abdullah ibn Abi Ya'fur says:

"I said to Imam al-Sadiq (as):

'I have extensive dealings with people, and I am greatly astonished by those who do not have wilayah for you and consider themselves followers of so-and-so and so-and-so, yet they are trustworthy, truthful, and faithful to their promises.

At the same time, there are people who have accepted your wilayah, yet they do not possess that same trustworthiness, truthfulness, and faithfulness to their promises. How can this be?'

When the Imam (as) heard this, he sat upright, turned toward me angrily, and said:

لا دينَ لِمَن دانَ اللهَ بِوِلايَةِ اِمامٍ جائِرٍ لَيسَ مِنَ اللهِ. وَ لا عَتَبَ عَلى مَن دانَ بِوِلايَةِ اِمامٍ عادِلٍ مِنَ اللهِ.

"One who worships Allah through the wilayah of a tyrannical Imam who is not appointed by Allah has no religion. And there is no blame upon one who worships Allah through the wilayah of a just Imam appointed by Allah."

I said, 'They have no religion, and these people are not to be blamed?'

He said, 'Yes! They have no religion, and these people are not to be blamed.'

Then he said:

اَلا تَسمَعُ لِقَولِ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ: «اللهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذينَ آمَنُوا يُخرِجُهُم مِنَ الظُّلُماتِ اِلَى النُّورِ»؟ يَعنى مِن ظُلُماتِ الذُّنُوبِ اِلَى نُورِ التَّوبَةِ وَ المَغفِرَةِ؛ لِوِلايَتِهِم كُلَّ اِمامٍ عادِلٍ مِنَ اللهِ. وَ قالَ: «وَ الَّذينَ كَفَرُوا اَولِياؤُهُمُ الطّاغُوتُ يُخرِجُونَهُم مِنَ النُّورِ اِلَى الظُّلُماتِ». اِنَّما عَنى بِهذا اَنَّهُم كانُوا عَلى نُورِ الاِسلامِ، فَلَمّا اَن تَوَلَّوا كُلَّ اِمامٍ جائِرٍ لَيسَ مِنَ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ، خَرَجُوا بِوِلايَتِهِم اِيّاهُ مِن نُورِ الاِسلامِ اِلى ظُلُماتِ الكُفرِ فَاَوجَبَ اللهُ لَهُمُ النّارَ مَعَ الكُفّارِ. «فَاُولئِکَ اَصحابُ النّارِ هُم فيها خالِدُونَ.«

"Do you not hear the words of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic:

'Allah is the Wali of those who believe; He brings them out of the darknesses into the light'?

This means: from the darknesses of sins into the light of repentance and forgiveness, because of their wilayah for every just Imam appointed by Allah.

And He said:

'As for those who disbelieve, their guardians are the Taghut; they bring them out of the light into the darknesses.'

What this means is that they were upon the light of Islam. But when they accepted the wilayah of every tyrannical Imam who was not appointed by Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, through their wilayah for him they departed from the light of Islam and entered the darknesses of disbelief.

Thus Allah made the Fire obligatory for them together with the disbelievers:

‘They are the companions of the Fire; they shall remain therein forever.’”
(*Al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 375, Kitab al-Hujjah, Bab Fi Man Dana Allah ‘Azza wa Jalla bi-Ghayr Imam min Allah Jalla Jalaluh, hadith 3.)
(Qur’an 2:257.)
This narration explicitly refers to the lack of religion of those who deny wilayah, even if they possess good deeds. Conversely, it explicitly states that the people of wilayah themselves are not to be blamed, apart from their sins, which are indeed worthy of condemnation.
In other words, their religious personality retains its value as long as they remain people of faith.
Their blameworthy deeds and qualities must be condemned, but their wilayah and faith are not to be condemned.
The people of ma‘rifah are themselves good, even if their deeds may be bad.
The deniers, on the other hand, are themselves bad, even if their actions may be good.
That is, we praise their good actions, but condemn them as persons because they are not travelling upon the path of servitude to Allah.

The Salvation of the People of Faith through the Blessing of the Wilayah of the Imams (as)

The Darkness of Sins

The promise made to the people of faith is that if their record of deeds is blackened by sins, Allah will not abandon them to themselves. Rather, He will create the means through which they are purified:

اَللهُ وَلِیُّ الَّذینَ آمَنُوا یُخرِجُهُم مِنَ الظُّلُماتِ اِلَی النُّورِ.

“Allah is the Wali of those who believe; He brings them out of the darknesses into the light.”
(Qur’an 2:257.)
Imam al-Sadiq (as) has explained the meaning of “darknesses” as the darknesses of sins. Regarding this verse, he said:

یَعنی مِن ظُلُماتِ الذُّنُوبِ اِلَی نُورِ التَّوبَةِ وَ المَغفِرَةِ.

“It means: from the darknesses of sins into the light of repentance and forgiveness.”
Indeed, sins contaminate and darken the heart and soul of a human being.
It is narrated from the same noble Imam (as) that he said:

اِذا اَذنَبَ الرَّجُلُ خَرَجَ فی قَلبِهِ نُکتَةٌ سَوداءُ فَاِن تابَ انمَحَت وَ اِن زادَ زادَت حَتّی تَغلِبَ عَلی قَلبِهِ فَلا یُفلِحُ بَعدَها اَبَداً.

“When a person commits a sin, a black spot appears in his heart. If he repents, it is erased. But if he increases in sin, that blackness increases until it overcomes his heart. After that, he will never attain success.”
(*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 271, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Dhunub, hadith 13.)
Sins cause the human heart to become blackened and dark. If a person does not repent and continues committing sins, this darkness eventually encompasses the entire heart, leaving no path to felicity.
This occurs when a person loses his faith and dies without religion.
Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as) said concerning this:

ما مِن عَبدٍ اِلّا وَ فی قَلبِهِ نُکتَةٌ بَیضاءُ. فَاِذا اَذنَبَ ذَنباً، خَرَجَ فِی النُّکتَةِ نُکتَةٌ سَوداءُ. فَاِن تابَ، ذَهَبَ ذلِکَ السَّوادُ. وَ اِن تَمادی فِی الذُّنُوبِ، زادَ ذلِکَ السَّوادُ حَتّی یُغَطِّیَ البَیاضَ. فَاِذا غُطِّیَ البَیاضُ، لَم یَرجِع صاحِبُهُ اِلی خَیرٍ اَبَداً. وَ هُوَ قَولُ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ: «کَلّا بَل رانَ عَلی قُلُوبِهِم ما کانُوا یَکسِبُونَ.«

“There is no servant except that there is a white spot in his heart.
When he commits a sin, a black spot appears upon that white spot. If he repents, that blackness disappears.
But if he persists in sins, that blackness increases until it covers the whiteness.
When the whiteness has been covered, its possessor will never return to goodness again.
This is the saying of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic:
‘No indeed! Rather, what they used to earn has rusted upon their hearts.’”
(Qur’an 83:14.)
(*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 273, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Dhunub, hadith 20.)
Thus, every sin contaminates and darkens the human heart to some degree. If a person does not repent and continues committing sins, darkness eventually encompasses the entire heart, leaving no path toward his felicity.

The Purity of the People of Paradise

We have understood that every sin darkens the human heart according to its degree, and that a person possessing an impure heart cannot enter Paradise. Therefore, until the effects of the contamination caused by sins are removed from the heart, a person cannot ultimately attain a good end and enter Paradise.
Imam al-Baqir (as) said:

الذُّنُوبُ كُلُّها شَديدَةٌ. وَ اَشَدُّها ما نَبَتَ عَلَيهِ اللَّحمُ وَ الدَّمُ. لِاَنَّهُ اِمّا مَرحُومٌ وَ اِمّا مُعَذَّبٌ. وَ الجَنَّةُ لا يَدخُلُها اِلّا طَيِّبٌ.

"All sins are severe. The most severe among them are those upon which flesh and blood grow, because such a person is either granted mercy or subjected to punishment. And none enters Paradise except one who is pure."
(*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 270, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Dhunub, hadith 7.)
Several fundamental points are emphasized in this noble narration.

First:

All sins, without exception, are severe.
The severity of sin is due to the seriousness of its ugliness and its punishment. Disobedience to the Lord, in whatever form and at whatever level, is extremely ugly.
If a person understands the ugliness of sin, he realizes that by committing even a single sin, he becomes deserving of severe punishment from Allah.
It is true that some sins are called **major sins (kaba'ir)** and others **minor sins (sagha'ir)**. However, this classification is made by comparing sins with one another.
Otherwise, every sin in itself—without comparing it with other sins—is extremely ugly because it constitutes disobedience to the Generous and Merciful Lord and therefore makes a person deserving of severe punishment.

Second:

Among all sins, the sin upon which a person's flesh and blood grow is more severe and weighty.
If a person's livelihood is acquired through unlawful means, or if he fails to pay his financial obligations—such as khums—or if his wealth contains the rights of other

people (**mazalim al-'ibad**), then in all these cases he is nourished through unlawful wealth, and his flesh and blood grow upon what is haram.
The same applies if a person persists in committing a sin or sins and remains engaged in them for a prolonged period.
This too is a manifestation of flesh and blood growing upon what is unlawful.
According to the statement of Imam al-Baqir (as), such sins are the most severe sins because they have the greatest and deepest effect upon a person's spiritual contamination. In reality, they darken and defile the human heart more than other sins.

Third:

There are two ways in which a person can be purified from the evil effects of sins.
Either Allah forgives the person who committed those sins and grants him His mercy, or he is purified from the contamination of those sins by experiencing various forms of punishment.
The greater and more severe the sins, the more difficult it is to remove their effects, and consequently the more severe the punishments that may threaten the person.
However, to the extent that a person's sins are forgiven and pardoned by Allah, the corresponding punishment is also removed from him.

Fourth:

The reason a sinner must either be forgiven or punished is that a person cannot enter Paradise until he has been purified from the contamination of his sins.
Allah has designated Paradise exclusively for the pure. Therefore, no one can enter Paradise while still carrying the contamination of sin.
The conclusion that can be drawn from this noble narration is that, in order to attain eternal felicity, a person must emerge from the darkness of sins and enter the light of Divine forgiveness.
This transformation can occur in two ways.
One of them is pleasant and easy for the servant, while the other is unpleasant and difficult.

The best and most desirable path for a person is to receive Allah's forgiveness and mercy for all his sins, without having to undergo punishment for any of them. But if this does not occur, then the only remaining path to entering Paradise is to be purified from the contamination of sins through the various punishments of Allah.

Cleansing Through the Fire of Hell

The most severe form of divine punishment that a believer may possibly face is the Fire of Hell. It is more intense than all other forms of punishment and far more difficult to endure. This punishment is for those among the Shia who have committed the greatest sins in comparison with others and who, if they are not granted Allah's forgiveness and mercy, can only be purified through the Fire of Hell.

It is narrated from Imam Hasan al-Askari (as) that he said:

قِيلَ لِرَسُولِ اللهِ صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم: فَهَل يَدخُلُ جَهَنَّمَ اَحَدٌ مِن مُحِبّيكَ وَ مُحِبّى عَلِيٍّ عليه السّلام؟ قالَ: مَن قَذَرَ نَفسَهُ بِمُخالَفَةِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ عَلِيٍّ وَ واقَعَ المُحَرَّماتِ وَ ظَلَمَ المُؤمِنينَ وَ المُؤمِناتِ وَ خالَفَ ما رُسِمَ لَهُ مِنَ الشَّريعاتِ، جاءَ يَومَ القِيامَةِ قَذِراً طَفِساً.

يَقُولُ مُحَمَّدٌ صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم وَ عَلِيٌّ عليه السّلام: يا فُلانُ اَنتَ قَذِرٌ طَفِسٌ لا تَصلُحُ لِمُرافَقَةِ مَواليكَ الاَخيارِ وَ لا لِمُعانَقَةِ الحُورِ الحِسانِ وَ لَا المَلائِكَةِ المُقَرَّبينَ. لا تَصِلُ اِلى ما هُناکَ اِلّا بِاَن تُطَهِّرَ عَنکَ ما هاهُنا. يَعنى ما عَلَيکَ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ. فَيُدخَلُ اِلَى الطَّبَقِ الاَعلى مِن جَهَنَّمَ فَيُعَذَّبُ بِبَعضِ ذُنُوبِهِ(1) .

The Messenger of Allah (S) was asked: **"Will anyone among those who love you and those who love Ali (as) enter Hell?"**

He replied:

"Anyone who has defiled himself by disobeying Muhammad (S) and Ali (as), committing forbidden acts, oppressing believing men and women, and failing to follow the religious laws prescribed for him will be raised on the Day of Judgment in a state of impurity and filth.

"On that day, Muhammad (S) and Ali (as) will say to him: 'O so-and-so! You are impure and filthy. You are not fit to accompany your righteous masters, nor are you worthy of embracing the beautiful houris, nor of being in the company of the angels who are near to Allah. You cannot reach what is there until you cleanse from yourself what is here'—meaning the sins that you carry.

“Then he will be admitted into the highest level of Hell, where he will be punished for some of his sins.”
(1) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 154, hadith 11, from the Tafsir of Imam Hasan al-Askari (as).
Indeed, a person who commits sins defiles and contaminates himself. For this reason, he is deprived of entering Paradise and of being in the company of his masters. Until he is cleansed of the filth of his sins, he cannot attain those heavenly blessings.
The most severe form of divine punishment in the Hereafter manifests itself as the Fire of Hell. Those among the believers who have committed major sins are purified through the Fire of Hell. However, because of their faith and love for the Ahl al-Bayt (as), they are punished in the highest level of Hell, where the punishment is comparatively lighter.
The narration continues:
هؤُلاءِ اَشَدُّ مُحِبّينا عَذاباً وَ اَعظَمُهُم ذُنُوباً. لَيسَ هؤُلاءِ يُسَمَّونَ بِشيعَتِنا وَ لكِنَّهُم يُسَمَّونَ بِمُحِبّينا وَ المُوالينَ لِاَوليائِنا وَ المُعادينَ لِاَعدائِنا. اِنَّ شيعَتَنا مِن شَيَّعَنا وَ اتَّبَع آثارَنا وَ اقتَدى بِاَعمالِنا.
“These people, among those who love us, have the most severe punishment and the greatest number of sins. They are not called our Shia; rather, they are called those who love us, those who are devoted to our friends, and those who oppose our enemies. Indeed, our Shia are those who follow us, follow in our footsteps, and take our actions as their example.”
According to the usage of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), the term **Shia** truly applies to someone who, in addition to believing in the wilayah of the family of the Messenger, is also committed in practice to following those holy personalities. If a person does not do so, then the title **muhibb**—one who loves them—is more appropriately applicable to him.
Of course, on some occasions, the term **Shia** has also been used for someone whose connection to them is limited to belief alone. (1) In such cases, attention must be paid to the difference in meaning intended by the word in each particular context.
In any case, among the people of faith—those who possess belief in the Ahl al-Bayt (as)—those who have committed major sins, if they are not granted Allah’s

forgiveness and mercy, must be purified through the Fire of Hell so that they become worthy of entering Paradise and benefiting from its blessings.
Through such severe and painful punishment, they emerge from the darkness of their sins and enter into the light of divine forgiveness.

Purification from Sins Through Enduring the Hardships of the Day of Judgment

Another means by which a person may be purified from the pollution of sins is through enduring the hardships of the Day of Judgment.
On that day, apart from the Fire of Hell—which is extraordinarily distressing—there will be hardships in the gathering place of Resurrection, each one of which will be extremely difficult and painful for a human being to endure.
It is possible that a believer may be purified from some of his sins through the Fire of Hell, and from other sins through enduring some of the hardships of the Day of Judgment.
In the same noble tradition, it is narrated from the Messenger of Allah (S):

مِنهُم مَن يُصيبُهُ الشَّدائِدُ فِي المَحشَرِ بِبَعضِ ذُنُوبِهِ ثُمَّ يَلقِطُهُ مِن هُنا وُ مِن هُنا مِن يَبعَثُهُم اِلَيهِ مَواليهِ مِن خِيارِ شيعَتِهِم كَما يَلقِطُ الطَّيرُ الحَبَّ.

“Among them are those who, because of some of their sins, are afflicted with the hardships of the gathering place on the Day of Judgment. Then some of the chosen Shia, whom their masters have sent to them, pick them up from here and there, just as a bird picks up grains.”
Here, in order to make the painful nature of the hardships of the Day of Judgment somewhat easier to understand, it is useful to consider an example mentioned in the Holy Qur’an:

»يا اَيُّهَا النّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُم اِنَّ زَلزَلَةَ السّاعَةِ شَيءٌ عظيمُ * يَومَ تَرَونَها تَذهَلُ كُلَّ مُرضِعَةٍ عَمّا اَرضَعَت وَ تَضَعُ كُلُّ ذاتِ حَملٍ حَملَها وَ تَرَى النّاسَ سُكارى وَ ما هُم بِسُكارى وَ لكِن عَذابَ اللهِ شَديدٌ(1) .«

“O people! Be mindful of your Lord, for indeed, the earthquake of the Hour is a tremendous thing. On the Day when you see it, every nursing mother will be distracted from the child she is nursing, and every pregnant woman will miscarry her pregnancy, and you will see people as though they are intoxicated, although they are not intoxicated. Rather, the punishment of Allah is severe.”

(1) Surah al-Hajj (22): 1–2.

Encountering such scenes and experiencing these hardships is itself a painful and severe form of punishment.

Amir al-Mu’minin (as), in his letter to the people of Egypt, said:

يا عِبادَ اللهِ، اِنَّ بَعدَ البَعثِ ما هُوَ اَشَدُّ مِنَ القَبرِ، يَومَ يَشيبُ فيهِ الصَّغيرُ وَ يَسكُرُ فيهِ الكَبيرُ وَ يَسقُطُ فيهِ الجَنينُ وَ تَذهَلُ كُلُّ مِرضِعَةٍ عَمّا اَرضَعَت، يَومٌ عَبُوسٌ قَمطَريرٌ، يَومٌ كانَ شَرُّهُ مُستَطيراً، اِنَّ فَزَعَ ذلِکَ اليَومِ لِيُرَهِّبُ المَلائِکَةَ الَّذينَ لا ذَنبَ لَهُم(2) .

“O servants of Allah! Indeed, after the resurrection there is a day that is more severe than the grave. It is a day when children will become grey-haired, adults will lose their senses, and pregnant women will miscarry their unborn children, and every nursing mother will become distracted from the child she is nursing. “It is a gloomy, intensely distressing day—a day whose evil will spread everywhere. Indeed, the terror of that day will frighten even the angels who have no sins.”

(2) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 7, p. 103, hadith 16, from Amali al-Tusi.

These are some of the hardships of the Day of Judgment that occur before a person’s record of deeds is examined and his final fate is determined.

If a person can properly imagine these realities, he may be able to understand, at least to some degree, how severe the hardships of the gathering place of Resurrection will be.

However, as long as a person remains in this world, it is impossible for him to fully comprehend the realities of those hardships. Only those who have witnessed things resembling such calamities in this world can, by comparing them with what they have experienced, gain some sense of the nature of the punishments of the Hereafter.

Even they, however, must understand that the intensity of the hardships of the gathering place is far greater than any calamity they may have witnessed in this world.

In any case, through experiencing these hardships, another group of sinful believers will be purified and become worthy of entering Paradise.

Purification in This World Through Trials and Afflictions

Up to this point, we have discussed those who are purified from the pollution of their sins in the Hereafter.

But those whose sins are fewer and lighter, if they are not granted divine forgiveness and mercy, may be purified through worldly hardships and afflictions. This form of purification is easier for a person than enduring punishment in the Hereafter, because worldly afflictions are, by comparison, far lighter than the afflictions of the Hereafter.

The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

وَ مِنهُم مَن يَكُونُ ذُنُوبُهُ اَقَلَّ وَ اَخَفَّ فَيُطَهَّرُ مِنها بِالشَّدائِدِ وَ النَّوائِبِ مِنَ السَّلاطينِ وَ غَيرِهِم وَ مِنَ الآفاتِ فِى الأَبدانِ فِى الدُّنيا لِيُدَلّى فى قَبرِهِ وَ هُوَ طاهِرٌ(1) .

“Among them are those whose sins are fewer and lighter. They are purified from those sins through hardships and calamities that come from rulers and others, and through afflictions that affect their bodies in this world, so that they descend into their graves in a state of purity.”

(1) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 154, hadith 11, from the Tafsir of Imam Hasan al-Askari (as).

One of the secrets and underlying purposes of worldly afflictions is that when a person commits sins, he becomes deserving of divine punishment. Allah, the Most Generous—Who could punish him for those sins through various forms of punishment in this world or the Hereafter—may instead purify him from the pollution of his sins by subjecting him to certain hardships and sufferings in this world.

The oppression and injustice inflicted upon him by powerful people, and the illnesses that afflict him, are among the consequences through which he may be purified from the sins he has committed. By enduring these hardships, through Allah’s grace and favor, he becomes purified and may face no punishment after death.

Although this form of purification is harder and heavier for him when compared with Allah simply forgiving his sins altogether, if Allah were to decree punishment for those sins in the worlds after death, it would be far more severe and difficult for him to endure.

Thus, according to **Allah's Justice ('adl)**, he is punished, but according to **Allah's Grace (fadl)**, his punishment is reduced.

In this regard, a person named **Ya'qub ibn Shu'ayb** said to Imam al-Sadiq (as): "There is a person who commits many different sins, yet he is a person who possesses knowledge of and wilayah toward the Ahl al-Bayt (as). What will be the fate of such a person?"

The Imam replied:

هذا يُرجى لَهُ. وَ النّاصِبُ لا يُرجى لَهُ. وَ اِن كانَ كَما تَقُولُ، لا يَخرُجُ مِنَ الدُّنيا حَتّى يُسَلِّطَ اللهُ عَلَيهِ شَيئاً يُكَفِّرُ اللهُ عَنهُ بِهِ اِمّا فَقراً وَ اِمّا مَرَضاً(1) .

"There is hope for the good end of such a person. But there is no such hope for the one who is hostile to the Ahl al-Bayt (as). And if he is truly as you have described, he will not leave this world until Allah causes something to befall him through which He expiates his sins—either poverty or illness."

(1) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 6, p. 161, hadith 27, from al-Mahasin of al-Barqi.

It is clear that because of the value Allah has placed upon wilayah and love of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), He may provide a means within this world through which a person is cleansed of the pollution of his sins and ultimately attains a good end. But one who does not possess the precious gift of wilayah has no such hope of a good end.

Purification from Sins Through the Hardship of Dying

Introduction

Another means by which a person may be purified from the pollution of sins in this world is that Allah makes the process of a believer's death difficult, so that through enduring this suffering he is purified and leaves this world in a state of purity.

The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

وَ مِنهُم مَن يَقرُبُ مَؤتُهُ وَ قَد بَقِيَت عَلَيهِ سَيِّئَةٌ فَيَشتَدُّ نَزعُهُ وَ يُكَفَّرُ بِهِ عَنهُ. فَاِن بَقِيَ شَيءٌ وَ قَوِيَت عَلَيهِ، يَكُونُ لَهُ بَطَرٌ وَ اضطِرابٌ فى يَومِ مَوتِهِ فَيَقِلُّ مَن يَحضَرَتِهِ فَيَلحَقُهُ بِهِ الذُّلُّ فَيَكَفَّرُ عَنهُ(1) .

"Among them are those whose death approaches while a sin still remains upon them. Their death throes therefore become severe, and through this their sin is expiated.

“If something remains and their sins are greater than what can be expiated through the hardship of dying, they will experience distress and agitation on the day of their death, to the extent that those around them will withdraw from them. Thus, humiliation and disgrace will befall them, and through this their sins will be expiated.”

(1) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 154, hadith 11, from the Tafsir of Imam Hasan al-Askari (as).

It can be observed that the severity of the punishment is considered in relation to the severity of the sin. If the hardship of dying is not sufficient to serve as an expiation for their sins, another form of punishment overtakes the person at the time of death: experiencing humiliation and disgrace before those around him. This psychological pressure then becomes a means through which he is purified from his sins.

In this same regard, it is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (as), concerning a group of sinful people from his Ummah:

اِنَّهُ اِذا كانَ ذلِکَ، اِبتَلَی اللهُ تَبارَکَ وَ تَعالی اَحَدَهُم فی جَسَدِهِ. فَاِن كانَ ذلِکَ كَفّارَةً لِذُنُوبِهِ، وَ اِلّا ضَيَّقَ اللهُ عَلَيهِ فی رِزقِهِ، فَاِن كانَ ذلِکَ كَفّارَةً لِذُنُوبِهِ، وَ اِلّا شَدَّدَ اللهُ عَلَيهِ عِندَ مَوتِهِ حَتّی يَأتِیَ اللهَ وَ لا ذَنبَ لَهُ ثُمَّ يُدخِلُهُ الجَنَّةَ(1) .

“If the believers are sinful, Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, afflicts them with bodily trials and illnesses. If this becomes an expiation for their sins, then that is sufficient. Otherwise, Allah constricts their provision and they become afflicted with poverty. If this becomes an expiation for their sins, then that is sufficient. Otherwise, Allah makes their death difficult for them until they come before Allah with no sin remaining, and then He admits them into Paradise.”

(1) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 6, p. 161, hadith 26, from al-Mahasin of al-Barqi.

In this way, the punishment experienced by a believer in this world corresponds to the degree of ugliness and gravity of his sins.

The greater a person’s contamination through sin, the more severe his worldly punishments may become, continuing until the time of his death.

However, it should not be overlooked that a correspondence between the ugliness of a sin and the severity of its punishment is not something necessary or invariable. Rather, it ultimately depends upon the will and determination of the Creator of the universe.

According to His established Sunnah—which does not restrict His absolute authority—Allah deals with sinners in this manner. Nevertheless, with regard to any particular believer or any particular sin, He may act contrary to the pattern He has established.

What has been transmitted in the traditions describes the divine Sunnahs that Allah Himself has established.

As for which group of believers becomes subject to which divine Sunnah, this depends not only upon the severity and gravity of their sins, but also upon the will of Allah with regard to them, including the extent to which He chooses to deal with them according to His **Grace (fadl)** or His **Justice (‘adl)**.

Another tradition from Amir al-Mu’minin (as) has been narrated concerning this matter:

ما مِنَ الشّيعَةِ عَبدٌ يُقارِفُ اَمراً نَهَيناهُ عَنهُ فَيَمُوتُ حَتّى يُبتَلى بِبَلِيَّةٍ تُمَحَصُّ بِها ذُنُوبُهُ اِمّا فى مالٍ وَ اِمّا فى وَلَدٍ وَ اِمّا فى نَفسِهِ حَتّى يَلقَى اللهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ وَ ما لَهُ ذَنبٌ. وَ اِنَّهُ لَيَبقى عَلَيهِ الشَّىءُ مِن ذُنُوبِهِ فَيُشَدَّدُ بِهِ عَلَيهِ عِندَ مَوتِهِ(1) .

“No Shia servant commits an act that We have forbidden him from committing except that, before his death, he is afflicted with a trial through which his sins are purified.

“This trial may affect his wealth, his children, or himself, until he meets Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, with no sin remaining upon him.

“And if something of his sins still remains, his death will be made difficult for him because of it.”

(1) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 6, p. 161, hadith 26, from al-Mahasin of al-Barqi.

As mentioned earlier, which particular affliction a believer experiences ultimately depends upon Allah’s will concerning him.

Everything discussed here concerns the people of faith. The situation of the disbelievers is different and is not presently under discussion.

We will only point out one matter: sometimes death may be easy and painless for a disbeliever, while it may be difficult for a believer. This should not lead one to imagine that Allah loves the disbeliever more than the believer.

Different Ways in Which a Believer and a Disbeliever May Die

Imam al-Sadiq (as) was asked how it is that a disbeliever may sometimes die easily, while some believers also experience an easy death; yet, on the other hand, there are both believers and disbelievers who undergo great difficulty at the time of death. In other words, the question was whether faith and disbelief themselves are the causes of an easy or difficult death.

The Imam (as) replied:

ما كانَ مِن راحَةٍ لِلمُؤمِنِ هُناکَ فَهُوَ عاجِلٌ ثَوابِهِ. وَ ما كانَ مِن شَديدَةٍ، فَتَمحيصُهُ مِن ذُنُوبِهِ لِيَرِدَ الآخِرَةَ نَقِيّاً مُستَحِقّاً لِثَوابِ الأَبَدِ لا مانِعَ لَهُ دُونَهُ. وَ ما كانَ مِن سُهُولَةٍ هُناکَ عَلَى الكافِرِ، فَلِيُوَفّى اَجرَ حَسناتِهِ فِي الدُّنيا لِيَرِدَ الآخِرَةَ وَ لَيسَ لَهُ اِلّا ما يُوجِبُ عَلَيهِ العَذابَ. وَ ما كانَ مِن شِدَّةٍ عَلَى الكافِرِ هُناکَ، فَهُوَ ابتِداءُ عَذابِ اللهِ لَهُ بَعدَ نَفادِ حَسَناتِهِ. ذلِكُم بِاَنَّ اللهَ عَدلٌ لا يَجُورُ.

"Whatever ease a believer experiences there [at the time of death] is an immediate reward granted to him. And whatever hardship he experiences is a means of purifying him from his sins, so that he may enter the Hereafter pure and deserving of eternal reward, with nothing remaining to prevent him from receiving it.

As for whatever ease a disbeliever experiences there, it is so that the reward of his good deeds may be fully given to him in this world, so that when he enters the Hereafter, nothing remains for him except that which makes him deserving of punishment.

And whatever hardship the disbeliever experiences there is the beginning of Allah's punishment upon him after the reward of his good deeds has been exhausted. This is because Allah is Just and does no injustice."

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 6, p. 153, hadith 6, from *'Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha (as)*.

Thus, the ease experienced by a believer at the time of death is an instance of receiving an early reward, while the hardship he undergoes at that time serves to purify him from his sins. In this way, he enters the Hereafter clean and purified, with nothing preventing him from deserving eternal reward.

The ease with which a disbeliever may die, however, is so that he may receive the full recompense for his good deeds in this world. Then, when he enters the Hereafter, nothing remains for him except those deeds that warrant punishment.

If a disbeliever experiences hardship at death, that hardship is in fact the beginning of his divine punishment, after he has already received the recompense for his good deeds.
All of this is because Allah is Just and does not wrong anyone.
Accordingly, believers who have committed sins may receive the consequences of their wrongful deeds before death. Likewise, disbelievers who have performed good deeds may receive their recompense in this world before they die. If their good deeds are numerous, the ease of their death may complete the recompense due to them.
But those disbelievers who have already received the recompense for their good deeds before death have no remaining good deed for which death would be made easy. They may therefore experience hardship when their souls are taken.
Hence, both believers and disbelievers may experience either an easy or a difficult death, depending upon their good and bad deeds. Faith and disbelief, therefore, are not by themselves the immediate cause of whether death will be easy or difficult; rather, a person's deeds play the determining role in the manner in which he experiences death.

Purification in the Realm of Barzakh (the Grave)

So far, four ways have been mentioned through which sinful believers may be purified from the contamination of their sins. Two of these forms of purification occur in this world before death, while two take place on the Day of Resurrection. There remains another form of purification, which belongs to the realm after death and before the Resurrection. This is known as the realm of the grave and **Barzakh**.
The Messenger of Allah (saww) is reported to have said:

فَإِن بَقِيَ شَيءٌ أُتِيَ بِهِ وَ لَمّا يُلحَد فَيُوضَعُ فَيَتَفَرَّقُونَ عَنهُ فَيُطَهَّرُ.

"Then, if anything [of the contamination of his sins] still remains, he is brought while he has not yet been buried. He is then placed in the grave, and when those around him disperse and leave him, he is purified [in the realm of the grave]."
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 154, hadith 11, from *Tafsir Imam Hasan al-Askari (as)*.

When a person dies, if he has not already been purified through the hardships of this world, his punishments of Barzakh may begin even before his burial. Once he is buried, these punishments may continue until he is completely purified from the contamination of his sins before the Resurrection begins, or at least until a portion of that contamination has been removed before the Day of Resurrection.

Two Examples of Punishment in Barzakh

Before referring to Qur'anic verses and traditions concerning this subject, we shall mention two accounts concerning punishment in Barzakh before burial.
The first was related by the distinguished scholar and eminent hadith scholar, the late Shaykh 'Abbas al-Qummi. He said:
"One day I had gone to Wadi al-Salam in Najaf al-Ashraf to visit the graves and the souls of the believers. Suddenly, from a place some distance away from where I was standing, I heard a sound like that of a camel being branded with a hot iron. It was crying and wailing so terribly that it seemed as though the entire ground of Wadi al-Salam was shaking from the sound of its cries.
I hurried in that direction, intending to rescue the camel. But when I came closer, I saw that there was no camel at all. Instead, a corpse had been brought there for burial, and those terrible cries were coming from that corpse. Yet the people responsible for burying him were completely unaware of them and were calmly going about their work."
Ma'ad Shinasi, vol. 1, pp. 137–138.
The second account concerns one of the great scholars of Najaf al-Ashraf, the late Ayatullah Sayyid Jamal al-Din Golpaygani. During his youth, he studied in Isfahan and was a classmate and study partner of the late Grand Ayatullah Haj Aqa Husayn Borujerdi. It has been narrated from him:
"During my youth, when I was in Isfahan, I studied ethics and spiritual discipline under two great teachers, the late Akhund Kashi and Jahangir Khan, who were my mentors. They had instructed me to leave Isfahan on Thursday nights and Friday nights and go to the Takht-e Foulad cemetery. There I was to spend some time reflecting upon death and the world of souls, perform some worship, and return in the morning.

My usual practice was to go there on Thursday and Friday nights, spend an hour or two walking among the graves and mausoleums in contemplation, then rest for a few hours. Afterwards, I would rise for the night prayer and munajat, perform the morning prayer, and then return to Isfahan.

One winter night, the weather was extremely cold and snow was falling. I left Isfahan and went to Takht-e Foulad to contemplate the souls and inhabitants of that realm. I entered one of the chambers there and intended to open my bundle, eat a few morsels of food, and then sleep until around midnight, when I would wake and occupy myself with the acts of worship I had been instructed to perform.

At that moment, someone knocked at the door of the mausoleum. A corpse belonging to one of the relatives of the owner of the mausoleum had been brought from Isfahan. They wanted to leave it there overnight so that the Qur'an-reciter responsible for the mausoleum could recite beside it, and they would return in the morning to bury it. They placed the corpse there and left, while the reciter began reciting the Qur'an.

Just as I opened my bundle and was about to eat, I saw the angels of punishment arrive and begin punishing the deceased—these are the exact words of the late scholar. They struck him on the head with fiery clubs so intensely that flames rose toward the sky. Cries came from the dead man as though the entire vast cemetery were shaking. I do not know what kind of sin he had committed....

Yet the Qur'an-reciter was completely unaware of all of this. He sat calmly beside the corpse, continuing his recitation.

The sight overwhelmed me. My body began trembling and my face lost its colour. I gestured to the caretaker of the mausoleum to open the door because I wanted to leave. He could not understand me. I tried to speak, but my tongue had become locked and would not move. Finally, I managed to make him understand that he should open the latch because I wanted to go.

He said, 'Sir, the weather is cold, snow has covered the ground, and there are wolves on the road. They may tear you apart.'

I tried to make him understand that I simply could not bear to remain there, but he still did not understand my condition. Eventually, I dragged myself toward the room. He opened the door and I left.
Although the distance to Isfahan was not very great, I reached there with tremendous difficulty and fell to the ground several times on the way. When I finally returned to my room, I became ill for an entire week. The late Akhund Kashi and Jahangir Khan would come to my room, comfort me and give me medicine. Jahangir Khan would even prepare kebab for me and force me to eat it until, little by little, I regained some strength."
Ma'ad Shinasi, vol. 1, pp. 140–142.

The Concern of the Imams (as) for Their Shi'ah in Barzakh

According to what has been transmitted from the Ahlul Bayt (as), their concern for the people of faith relates particularly to their condition in the grave and Barzakh. A narrator reports that Imam al-Baqir (as) said:

وَ اللهِ اَتَخَوَّفُ عَلَيكُم فِى البَرزَخِ.

"By Allah, I fear for you in Barzakh."
When he was asked, "What is Barzakh?" the Imam (as) replied:

اَلقَبرُ مُنذُ حينَ مَوتِهِ اِلى يَومِ القِيامَةِ.

"It is the grave, from the moment of a person's death until the Day of Resurrection."
Al-Kafi, vol. 3, p. 242, hadith 3.
The fact that the Imam (as) expressed concern regarding the Barzakh of the Shi'ah indicates that the consequences and effects of the sins of the believers are manifested particularly in the realm of the grave.
Since the punishment of the Resurrection is more severe and difficult, Allah has willed that believers experience the consequences of their sins in Barzakh and thereby become purified, so that they may face less divine punishment on the Day of Resurrection.
Furthermore, the intercession of the Ahlul Bayt (as) in Barzakh is not exercised as extensively as it will be on the Day of Resurrection. Although Allah has granted

them both the power and permission to intercede extensively in Barzakh, according to their own statements, they do not assist the people of wilayah in the grave in the same manner and to the same extent as they will on the Day of Resurrection.

For this reason, they have given believers serious warnings concerning the punishment they may have to endure for their sins in Barzakh.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) is reported to have said:

وَ اللهِ ما اَخافُ عَلَيكُم اِلّا البَرزَخَ. فَاَمّا اِذا صارَ الاَمرُ اِلَينا، فَنَحنُ اَولى بِكُم.

“By Allah, I fear nothing for you except Barzakh. But when the matter comes to us, then we have a greater claim over you [than anyone else].”

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 6, p. 214, hadith 2, from *Tafsir al-Qummi*.

When the Imam (as) says, «اِذا صارَ الاَمرُ اِلَينا» — “when the matter comes to us” — this does not mean that the Imams (as) lack the power in Barzakh to attend to the condition of their Shi‘ah or determine their affairs.

They are not incapable of exercising their wilayah in any realm. Rather, the divine order, and the will of the Imams (as)—which is in complete harmony with the will of Allah—is that, as a general rule, the people of faith should experience the consequences of their good and bad deeds in Barzakh.

The Intercession of the Ahlul Bayt (as) in Barzakh

Experiencing the effects of one’s sins in Barzakh is a general rule established by the Imams (as) themselves. Their intercession in Barzakh should therefore be understood as an exception to this general rule.

An example of the intercession and assistance of the Ahlul Bayt (as) in Barzakh is the following account narrated by the late Mulla Abu al-Hasan Mazandarani:

“I had a learned and pious friend named Mulla Ja‘far, the son of the righteous scholar Mulla Muhammad Husayn, who was from Mazandaran and lived there. In the year when a widespread epidemic of cholera broke out and claimed many lives, a large number of Mulla Ja‘far’s fellow townsmen died before him and appointed him executor over their properties.

He took possession of all those properties, but before he was able to distribute them according to their proper religious purposes, he himself died of cholera, and all of those properties were lost.

Mulla Abu al-Hasan says: During a year in which I had been blessed with visiting the holy shrines and residing near the grave of our master Abu ‘Abdillah al-Husayn (as), one night I saw a man in a dream with an iron chain around his neck, from which flames of fire were rising. Two men held the two ends of the chain. The man’s tongue was hanging out of his mouth and had fallen upon his chest.

When he saw me from a distance, he pulled himself toward me. As he came closer, I realized that he was Mulla Ja‘far. I was greatly astonished.

Just as he attempted to speak to me and ask for help, they pulled the chain backwards and dragged him away, preventing him from saying anything. He approached me a second time, but again they pulled him back in the same manner. A third time he managed to come near me, yet once again he was unable to say anything.

Seeing him in this condition filled me with intense fear and distress. I cried out loudly and awoke.

One of the scholars sleeping beside me woke because of my cry. I told him what I had seen. It was then the time of munajat, when the gates of the courtyard and the sacred shrine were being opened.

I said, ‘We should get up and go to the sacred shrine. After performing the ziyarat, we should seek forgiveness for Mulla Ja‘far. If what I have seen is a true dream, perhaps Allah will have mercy upon him.’

We rose and did so.

Nearly twenty years passed after that, and I received no further news concerning Mulla Ja‘far’s condition. I believed that the state in which I had seen him in the dream was due to some failure on his part concerning people’s property during the year of the epidemic.

Eventually, Allah blessed me with the pilgrimage to His House. After completing the rites of Hajj, as we were preparing to return to Madinah, I became seriously ill and was unable to move.

When we entered Madinah, I said to my companions, ‘Wash me, change my clothes, and take me to the sacred shrine of the Messenger of Allah (saww). I fear that death may not give me enough time and I may be deprived of this blessing.’ They fulfilled my request.

As soon as I entered the blessed Rawdah, I fainted. They laid me down in a corner and went about their affairs.

When I regained consciousness, they lifted me and brought me close to the sacred enclosure. After performing the ziyarat, they took me behind the blessed enclosure, near the house of al-Siddiqah al-Tahirah Fatimah (as), which is one of the places of ziyarat.

I sat there and performed as much ziyarat as I was able. I asked her for healing and said, ‘Many traditions have reached us stating how deeply you love your son Husayn (as). I live beside his noble grave. I beseech you by his right to grant me healing.’

I then addressed the Messenger of Allah (saww), presented my needs before him, and requested his intercession for friends of mine who had departed this world and were resting beneath the earth. I mentioned each one of them by name.

When I reached the name of Mulla Ja‘far, I remembered that dream. My state changed completely. I pleaded intensely with the Messenger of Allah (saww), asking him to seek forgiveness and intercede for Mulla Ja‘far.

I said, ‘Twenty years ago I saw him in a dream in a terrible condition. I do not know whether it was a true dream or merely a confused dream.’

I offered as much supplication and humble pleading on his behalf as I could. Afterwards, I felt a sense of lightness and relief within myself. I stood up and returned home. Through the blessing of Hazrat Fatimah al-Zahra (as), no trace of my illness or weakness remained.

I then left Madinah. At Uhud—the famous mountain outside Madinah and our first stopping place on the journey—we remained for one day. I visited the martyrs of Uhud, then lay down in a corner and fell asleep.

In my dream I saw Mulla Ja‘far coming toward me. His face was joyful. He was dressed in white, wearing a turban with its end beneath his chin, and carrying a staff in his hand.

When he came near, he greeted me and said:
‘What an excellent brother and friend you have been! This is how a friend should treat his friend. Throughout this period I had been afflicted with hardship, severity, suffering and distress. But you had not yet risen from your place in the sacred shrine of the Messenger of Allah (saww) when I was delivered from the punishment.
‘Two or three days ago, they took me to a bath and cleansed me of all impurities and filth. The Messenger of Allah (saww) sent me this garment, and al-Siddiqah al-Tahirah Fatimah (as) bestowed this cloak upon me.
‘Alhamdulillah, my condition has now become good and my affair has ended well. I have now come to accompany you on your departure and to give you glad tidings. Be at ease: you will return home safely, and all the members of your family are well and healthy.’
I awoke from the dream filled with gratitude and happiness.”
The Dead Speak with Us, pp. 49–53, quoting *Dar al-Salam* of Mirza Husayn Nuri.
This account, and others like it, shows that the power of the Messenger of Allah (saww) and his Ahlul Bayt (as) remains fully effective in the realm of Barzakh, just as it is in this world and on the Day of Resurrection. Whenever they will, they may come to the aid of their friends.
Nevertheless, as explained above, their general practice in Barzakh is not to intervene in this manner, and they exercise this divinely granted power only in exceptional circumstances.
Consider the following true dream:
“Haj ‘Ala al-Din Ilkhani writes in a note he sent to the author:
‘One Thursday night I was blessed with visiting Hazrat ‘Abd al-‘Azim (as). After the ziyarat, while I was in the sacred courtyard of Hazrat ‘Abd al-‘Azim, my eyes fell upon a large canopy erected in front of the portico of his blessed shrine. It caught my attention.
‘I remembered the late Haj Ja‘far, because he had paid the expenses for that canopy *qurbatan ila Allah*—seeking nearness to Allah. I performed a ziyarat and recited al-Fatihah on his behalf, then returned home.

‘That night I saw him in a dream. I was sitting in a room resembling a religious gathering where people would enter and sit down. Suddenly, I saw Haj Ja‘far enter through the door. He was wearing extremely dirty and torn clothes.
‘The moment I saw him, I remembered that he had passed away. I addressed him and said, “Haji Ja‘far! Why are your clothes so dirty and worn out?”
‘Without answering my question, he said, “So-and-so! I beg you, help me! I am in great difficulty. They will not release me under any circumstances until I settle the rights and accounts of the people. See my son Mas‘ud and tell him to settle the people’s accounts so that they may release me.”
‘As though I were speaking to a living person, I replied, “I saw Mas‘ud and told him to settle my account and pay your debts. He told me, ‘Once our inheritance proceedings are completed, I will pay my father’s debts....’”
‘Suddenly, Haj Ja‘far interrupted me and said, “Tell him that here they do not recognize inheritance proceedings!”
‘I said to him, “Go and take hold of the hem of Fatimah al-Zahra (as),” because during his worldly life he had great love for her and for the pure Imams (as).
‘He replied, “Do you think Hazrat Zahra (as) is an ordinary woman whose garment I can simply grasp? Do I even see her that I might seek her help? How exalted is the station of Allah! And the station of Fatimah al-Zahra (as) is beneath the station of Allah!”
‘Then he said, “I will tell you something: when it comes to the rights of people, Allah does not listen to anyone’s plea!”
‘I awoke from the dream.
‘The following morning I telephoned his son Mas‘ud and asked him to pay the debts owed to people. With my cooperation, a portion of his father’s debts was repaid.
‘A year passed after that dream. Again, on a Thursday night, I saw him in a dream.
‘This time Haj Ja‘far was wearing very fine black clothes. His face and appearance were clean, and he had become thin—in contrast to before, when he had been very overweight and had an unpleasant appearance.
‘As soon as he saw me, he said, “So-and-so! May Allah reward you! You were of tremendous help to me.”’”

The Dead Speak with Us, pp. 70–72.
Indeed, if a person is able to reach the Ahlul Bayt (as) and they will to intercede for him, he may be delivered from any punishment in Barzakh.
However, since Allah has not willed this to be the general rule, and the Ahlul Bayt (as) never will anything contrary to the Divine Will, most sinful Shi'ah in Barzakh do not receive such direct intervention from their leaders. Cases such as that of the late Mulla Ja'far Mazandarani must therefore be regarded as exceptions.
The situation on the Day of Resurrection, however, is different. There, the intercession of the Ahlul Bayt (as) will extend widely and comprehensively to the believers.
Even there, however, neither the time at which intercession will reach each individual nor the extent of that intercession has been specified. No one knows at what point during the events of the Resurrection, or to what degree, he will receive intercession.
It is even possible that, in some cases, intercession may reach a person only after he has endured hundreds of thousands of years of the Fire of Hell.
This subject will be explained in greater detail in the discussions that follow.

The Pressure of the Grave for Believers

In any case, after death the people of faith will encounter the effects of each of their sins and, at the appropriate stage, face the consequences of their deeds.
One example of this concerns one of the companions of the Messenger of Allah (saww), **Sa'd ibn Mu'adh**.
When news of Sa'd's death reached the Prophet (saww), he ordered that Sa'd be washed and personally attended the washing and shrouding of his body. He then joined the funeral procession barefoot and without placing his cloak over his shoulders.
During the procession, the Prophet (saww) would sometimes take hold of the right side of the bier and at other times the left, until Sa'd was brought to the grave. The Prophet (saww) personally entered the grave and laid Sa'd's body in it. He then said, "Bring me stones and clay." With his own blessed hands, he filled the gaps between the bricks that had been placed over the grave, saying:

إنّی لَاَعلَمُ أنَّهُ سَبیلی وَ یَصِلُ البِلی اِلَیهِ. وَ لکِنَّ اللهَ یُحِبُّ عَبداً اِذا عَمِلَ عَمَلاً اَحکَمَهُ.

“I know that [Sa‘d’s body] will decay and that deterioration will eventually reach it. But Allah loves a servant who, when he performs a task, does it properly and firmly.”

That is, he does not perform his work carelessly or superficially, but completes it correctly and thoroughly.

After the burial, Sa‘d’s mother addressed him and said, “O Sa‘d, may Paradise be pleasant for you!”

The Messenger of Allah (saww) said to her:

یا اُمَّ سَعدٍ، مَه! لا تَجزِمی عَلی رَبِّکِ. فَاِنَّ سَعداً قَد اَصابَتهُ ضَمَّةٌ.

“O mother of Sa‘d, stop! Do not speak with such certainty concerning your Lord, for Sa‘d has indeed undergone the pressure [of the grave].”

In some traditions, the Prophet’s words to Sa‘d’s mother have been narrated as:

یا امَّ سعد، لا تَحتِمی علی الله.

The meaning of the Prophet’s statement remains the same.

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 6, p. 261, hadith 102, from *Al-Kafi*.

The Messenger of Allah (saww) then left the funeral, and the people returned with him. They said:

“O Messenger of Allah! We saw you do things for Sa‘d that we have never seen you do for anyone else. You accompanied his funeral barefoot and without your cloak!”

The Prophet (saww) replied:

اِنَّ المَلائِکَةَ کانَت بِلا رِداءٍ وَ لا حِذاءٍ، فَتَأَسَّیتُ بِها.

“The angels were without cloaks and without footwear, so I followed their example.”

They said, “We also saw you sometimes take hold of the right side of the bier and sometimes the left.”

He replied:

کانَت یَدی فی یَدِ جَبرَئیلَ آخُذُ حَیثُ یَأخُذُ.

“My hand was in the hand of Jibra’il. Wherever he took hold, I took hold as well.”

It thus became clear that a great number of angels, including Jibra'il al-Amin, had participated in Sa'd's funeral procession.
According to another tradition from Imam al-Sadiq (as), seventy thousand angels attended the funeral of Sa'd.
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 6, p. 261, hadith 102, from *Al-Kafi*.
The people then asked the Prophet (saww) in astonishment:
"You ordered that he be washed, you performed the funeral prayer over him, and you personally placed him in his grave. Yet after all this, you said that Sa'd experienced the pressure of the grave?!"
The Prophet (saww) replied:

نَعَم؛ اِنَّهُ كانَ فی خَلقِهِ مَعَ اَهلِهِ سُوءٌ.

"Yes, because there was some harshness in his conduct toward his family."
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 6, p. 220, hadith 14, from *'Ilal al-Shara'i'* and *Amali al-Saduq*.
This is an example of punishment in Barzakh for the wrongful actions of a believer. Despite Sa'd's lofty position, he was not exempt from its consequences.
It is significant that the participation of the Messenger of Allah (saww) and the divine angels in his funeral—even the Prophet (saww) personally placing him in the grave and completing his burial—did not prevent this punishment from taking place.
The pressure of the grave is among the most severe punishments of Barzakh that a sinful believer may experience immediately after burial.
The Messenger of Allah (saww) is reported to have said:

ضَغطَةُ القَبرِ لِلمُؤمِنِ كَفّارَةٌ لَمّا كانَ مِنهُ مِن تَضييعِ النِّعَمِ.

"The pressure of the grave for a believer is an expiation for his having wasted the blessings [of Allah]."
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 6, p. 221, hadith 16, from *Thawab al-A'mal* and *Amali al-Saduq*.
Wasting divine blessings means that a person fails to use them in the manner commanded and approved by Allah, or even misuses those blessings in disobedience to his Lord.
The punishment in Barzakh for such ingratitude is the pressure of the grave.

Unfortunately, neglect and ingratitude toward divine blessings are widespread among the people of faith. It is for this reason that when Abu Basir asked Imam al-Sadiq (as) whether anyone among the believers escapes the pressure of the grave, the Imam (as) replied:

نَعوذُ بِاللهِ مِنها. ما اَقَلَّ مَن يَفلِتُ مِن ضَغطَةِ القَبرِ!

"We seek refuge in Allah from it! How few are those who escape the pressure of the grave!"
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 6, p. 261, hadith 102, from *Al-Kafi*.

Punishment by Fire in Barzakh

Besides the pressure of the grave, other forms of punishment may also befall the people of faith in Barzakh.
One example is the account concerning the late Haj Husayn Jalowdar Shushtari. The author of *The Dead Speak with Us* relates the following:
"Aqa Sayyid Muhammad Tabataba'i Shushtari, the son-in-law of the late Sayyid Muhammad Imam Shushtari, wrote the following to me:
'The late Haji 'Alirida Sughrachi Shushtari, who lived to the age of 110 and died approximately twenty years ago, was a well-known person in Shushtar. He related:
"'My grandfather had initially been a builder and later became a master builder. He was extremely fond of me when I was a child. He would take me with him to construction sites, and I learned the trade under his supervision.
"'By the time I was seventeen, I had become a capable builder in Qal'eh Tal, which is situated in Izeh near Malamir. There was a wealthy khan—the chief of a tribe—who came to Shushtar and said to my grandfather, "Give us a builder whom I can take to our village at Qal'eh Tal to build a bathhouse for us."
"'My grandfather introduced me to him. I went with the khan to Qal'eh Tal. We worked for six months making and laying the bricks. The bathhouse was almost finished and only some minor work remained.
"'Then someone arrived from Shushtar and said to me, "Alirida, your grandfather has died. Even the fortieth day after his death has passed."

“‘I became extremely distressed because I loved my grandfather very much. I went to the khan and told him that I had to return to Shushtar. He said, “Finish your work first and then go.”
“‘I paid no attention. In the middle of the night, I joined a caravan heading toward Shushtar.
“‘When I arrived, I found that my grandfather had indeed died. I went to Aqa Sayyid Muhammad, the Friday prayer leader of Shushtar, and asked, “Sir, do you know of any supplication through which a person can see someone who has died in a dream?”
“‘He directed me to the late Mulla ʻAbbas Shabab and said, “Go to Mulla ʻAbbas. He has such a supplication.”
“‘I went to Mulla ʻAbbas Shabab. He wrote a supplication for me and gave me instructions. He said, “At night, when you are about to sleep, perform wudu’, offer two rakʻahs of prayer, place this supplication beneath your head, and go to sleep.”
“‘I did as he instructed.
“‘As soon as I fell asleep, I saw in my dream a hot wilderness and a dry desert. There was someone suspended in fire, engulfed in flames.
“‘I went closer and saw that it was my grandfather!
“‘I said, “Grandfather! Your prayers, fasting and other deeds were all good. Why, then, are you in this condition?”
“‘He replied, “You are right.” Then he pointed toward someone in the distance and said, “It was that person’s fault.”
“‘I went toward the man and saw him suspended upside down, his head toward the ground and his feet above him, engulfed in flames.
“‘I asked, “What is your story?”
“‘He replied:
“‘“I am Haj Husayn Jalowdar. This is what happened to us. Our family was large and our house was too small. Next to our house was a large property belonging to two girls who had inherited it from their father.
“‘“For a long time I asked the two girls to allow me to purchase a portion of their property and add it to my own house because our family was large and we lacked space.

“‘“They said, ‘We will not sell our father’s inheritance.’
“‘“One day your grandfather was doing construction work in our house. We said to the girls, ‘Since the builder is already here, allow us to demolish the dividing wall and move it forward a little.’
“‘“They said, ‘We do not agree.’
“‘“We then went to the local khan and said, ‘Please come and advise them.’
“‘“The khan came and called them. He said, ‘So-and-so, come here! So-and-so, come here! Sell a portion of your house to this man.’
“‘“They replied, ‘Khan, we will not sell our father’s inheritance.’
“‘“The khan said, ‘Nonsense! Damn you!’ Then he turned to us and said, ‘Go ahead and take possession of it.’
“‘“Following the khan’s order, we demolished the boundary wall and incorporated part of their land into our house.
“‘“Now I am trapped here, and your grandfather is trapped over there.
“‘“I have a request of you which may provide a way out for us. Go to my house. It is in the alley beside Shaykh ‘Ali Mosque. Enter the alley and continue along the left side until you reach the end. There is a large double door. That is our house.
“‘“When you enter the passageway, there is a staircase. Go up above the passage. There is a small room in which two former doorways have been bricked up. Behind the second bricked-up doorway there is a small jar containing twenty-seven liras—gold coins. No one knows about them.
“‘“Give those coins [to settle the matter], so that perhaps we may be delivered from this wasteland. My eldest son is named Muhammad ‘Ali.”’
“‘Haj ‘Alirida continued:
“‘I awoke from the dream. At the first call to the morning prayer, I rose and performed the Fajr prayer. Then, following the signs and directions I had been given in the dream, I set out.
“‘Although I was from the Mowkahi district and had never been to the Ashkafti neighbourhood and did not properly know its alleys, I followed the directions from the dream until I reached Shaykh ‘Ali Mosque.
“‘I entered the alley I had been shown and continued until I reached its dead end. There I saw the large courtyard door exactly as it had been described.

“‘I knocked. A young man opened the door.
“‘I asked, “What is your name?”
“‘He replied, “Muhammad ‘Ali.”
“‘I said, “I need to speak with you for an hour.”
“‘He said, “Please allow me first to perform the morning prayer before it becomes qada’.”
“‘It was close to sunrise. He performed his prayer and then returned.
“‘I said, “Your father, Haj ‘Ali, is suffering in Barzakh. You must do something to help him.”
“‘He replied, “I know that a portion of our courtyard was usurped and taken unjustly. After my father died, each heir took his share of the inheritance and left. I cannot resolve this matter by myself, because I would have to pay those two women and I cannot afford it.”
“‘I said, “Your father gave me a message. He said there is a staircase beneath the passageway. Above it is a small room containing two false doorways that were bricked up with thin bricks. Behind the second one, he said, ‘I have twenty-seven Ottoman liras that no one knows about. I had kept them for an emergency, in case I was ever left without money and needed to spend them. That situation never arose, so the liras remained where they were, and no one knows about them.’”
“‘I said to Muhammad ‘Ali, “Bring a hammer and I will show you where to break the wall. Of course, since this is your house, you have the authority to open it.”
“‘He brought a hammer.
“‘I said, “Your father showed me this spot. Break through this thin wall.”
“‘He broke it open. The very same small jar appeared, and inside it were twenty-seven liras.
“‘Together, we took the coins to the Husayniyyah of the late Haj Shaykh Ja‘far Shushtari. His son, Aqa Shaykh Muhammad ‘Ali, was present. We explained the entire matter.
“‘The late Shaykh sent for the two women and had them brought to the Husayniyyah. He placed all the liras before them and said, “Take as much as you wish and absolve the deceased of his liability.”

“‘The women took seven liras and said, “May the rest be pleasant and lawful for him!”
“‘That very night, Haj Husayn was seen in a dream. He said, “May you be rewarded with goodness! You have delivered us from that wasteland.”’”
The Dead Speak with Us, pp. 144–147.
This is another example of punishment in Barzakh. It illustrates the precision of divine accounting and punishment, while also showing that when Allah’s grace embraces a person, the means for removing his punishment may be provided even within Barzakh itself.

The Condition of Human Beings in Barzakh

If we wish to classify the condition of people in the realm of Barzakh, it is useful to consider a tradition from Imam al-Jawad (as).
He narrates from his noble forefathers that someone asked Amir al-Mu’minin (as):

صِف لَنَا المَوتَ

“Describe death [or the state of Barzakh] for us.”
The Imam (as) replied:

عَلَى الخَبيرِ سَقَطتُم. هُوَ اَحَدُ ثَلاثَةِ اُمُورٍ يَرِدُ عَلَيهِ: إمّا بِشارَةٌ بِنَعيمِ الاَبَدِ؛ وَ إمّا بِشارَةٌ بِعَذابِ الاَبَدِ؛ وَ إمّا تَحزينٌ وَ تَهويلٌ وَ اَمرُهُ مُبهَمٌ لا يَدرى مِن اَيِّ الفِرَقِ هُوَ.

“You have come to one who is fully informed. It is one of three things that comes upon a person: either glad tidings of everlasting bliss; or tidings of everlasting punishment; or grief and terror, while his affair remains uncertain and he does not know to which group he belongs.”
The Imam (as) then explained:

فَاَمّا وَلِيُّنَا المُطيعُ لِاَمرِنا، فَهُوَ المُبَشَّرُ بِنَعيمِ الاَبَدِ. وَ اَمّا عَدُوُّنَا المُخالِفُ عَلَينا، فَهُوَ المُبَشَّرُ بِعَذابِ الاَبَدِ. وَ اَمَّا المُبهَمُ اَمرُهُ الَّذى لا يَدرى ما حالُهُ، فَهُوَ المُؤمِنُ المُسرِفُ عَلى نَفسِهِ لا يَدرى ما يَؤُولُ اِلَيهِ حالُهُ يَأتيهِ الخَبَرُ مُبهَماً مَخُوفاً ثُمَّ لَن يُسَوّيَهُ اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ بِاَعدائِنا لكِن يُخرِجُهُ مِنَ النّارِ بِشَفاعَتِنا.

“As for our wali who is obedient to our command, he receives glad tidings of everlasting bliss. As for our enemy who opposes us, he receives tidings of everlasting punishment.

“As for the one whose affair remains uncertain and who does not know what his condition will be, he is the believer who has transgressed against himself through sin. He does not know what his condition will ultimately lead to. The news that reaches him is uncertain and frightening.

“Yet Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, will never place him on the same level as our enemies [in remaining eternally in punishment]. Rather, He will eventually bring him out of the Fire through our intercession.”

The Imam (as) then warned:

فَاعمَلُوا وَ اَطيعُوا وَ لا تَتَّكِلُوا وَ لا تَستَصغِرُوا عُقُوبَةَ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ. فَاِنَّ مِنَ المُسرِفينَ مَن لا تَلحَقُهُ شَفاعَتُنا اِلّا بَعدَ عَذابِ ثَلاثِمِائَةِ اَلفِ سَنَةٍ.

“Therefore, act and obey! Do not rely [upon our intercession without acting], and do not regard the punishment of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, as insignificant. For among those who have transgressed against themselves are some whom our intercession will not reach until after three hundred thousand years of punishment!”

Ma‘ani al-Akhbar, p. 288, hadith 2.

This noble tradition clearly distinguishes between believers who act righteously and observe divine taqwa, and believers who persist in sin.

Only those who obey the commands of the Imams (as) receive, at death, glad tidings of everlasting bliss. Sinful believers, however, may remain in a state of uncertainty and anxiety, fearful of what their fate will be, until their condition is finally resolved.

It is even possible that they may endure punishment for as long as three hundred thousand years before ultimately benefiting, because of their faith, from the intercession of the Ahlul Bayt (as).

Therefore, as the tradition itself emphasizes, the people of faith must not become complacent merely because of their faith and wilayah. They must not become negligent regarding their deeds and obligations while expecting felicity in the Hereafter without action.

Even one year, one month, one day—or indeed one hour—of divine punishment is beyond what a person can bear, let alone three hundred thousand years.

One cannot therefore become indifferent toward righteous action merely in the hope of receiving the intercession and assistance of the Ahlul Bayt (as), because no one knows when this divine grace will reach him.

The Different Forms of Purification and Intercession

Based upon the statement of the Messenger of Allah (saww), as narrated by his noble descendant Imam Hasan al-Askari (as), we have so far discussed five forms through which the people of faith may be purified from the contamination of their sins.

This noble tradition describes different stages of purification according to the degree of a believer's spiritual contamination.

The first stage concerns those whose contamination is lighter in comparison with others. The mildest form of punishment consists of the trials and hardships of this world, which constitute the first stage of purification.

At the next stage, the agonies of death and the hardship involved in the departure of the soul serve to purify sinful believers.

The third stage consists of the various punishments of Barzakh.

If a person's contamination is greater than can be removed through these first three stages—up to and including Barzakh—then the matter reaches the Resurrection and its severe ordeals.

The continuation of the tradition describes the fourth and fifth stages of purification:

فَإِن كانَ ذُنُوبُهُ اَعظَمَ وَ اَكثَرَ، طُهِّرَ مِنها بِشَدائِدَ عَرَصاتِ يَومِ القِيامَةِ. فَإِن كانَت اَكثَرَ وَ اَعظَمَ، طُهِّرَ مِنها فِی الطَّبَقِ الاَعلی مِن جَهَنَّمَ.

"Then, if his sins are greater and more numerous, he will be purified from them through the severe ordeals of the arenas of the Day of Resurrection. And if they are still more numerous and greater, he will be purified from them in the uppermost level of Hell."

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 154, hadith 11, from *Tafsir Imam Hasan al-Askari (as)*.

The tradition then indicates that this fifth stage concerns believers who have committed the gravest sins and must therefore endure the greatest punishment. We previously quoted and explained this portion of the tradition.

Within each of these five stages—two in this world, one in Barzakh, and two on the Day of Resurrection—further forms and degrees may also be conceived, though discussing them is not necessary here.

What should be noted is that these forms of purification are not mutually exclusive. Several of them may occur in the case of the same sinner.

A person may be purified from the contamination of some sins through worldly trials, from others through punishment in Barzakh, and from still others through punishment in the Hereafter. It is also possible for someone to be purified from all his sins exclusively in this world, exclusively in Barzakh, or exclusively on the Day of Resurrection.

Divine grace and the intercession of the Ahlul Bayt (as) may also operate at any of these stages.

Some of a person's sins may be forgiven in this world, others in Barzakh, and still others on the Day of Resurrection. Likewise, the intercession of the Ahlul Bayt (as) may reach a sinful believer in any of these realms.

Intercession can occur in this world, in Barzakh, and on the Day of Resurrection. However, as explained previously, according to the will of the Lord—which is also the will of the Ahlul Bayt (as)—extensive intercession in Barzakh is not the general rule for sinful believers.

Rather, the general and predominant rule is that believers experience in Barzakh the consequences and effects of their acts of obedience and disobedience.

In any case, no believer knows when he will be freed and purified from the contamination of his sins—whether in this world, in Barzakh, or on the Day of Resurrection—or what form of punishment may bring about that purification. Likewise, he does not know which of his sins may be forgiven through the intercession of the Ahlul Bayt (as), or through some other manifestation of divine grace.

For this reason, the people of faith remain, until the end of their lives, between concern and uncertainty regarding how Allah will ultimately deal with them.

With respect to every sin, there must always remain both hope in divine pardon and mercy, and fear of punishment and retribution—in this world, in Barzakh, and on the Day of Resurrection.
As Amir al-Mu'minin (as) stated, the fate of sinful believers from the Ummah of the Prophet (saww) remains uncertain to them and accompanied by fear and apprehension, until eventually the intercession of the Ahlul Bayt (as) reaches them.

Who Are the True Shi'ah?

A man once sent his wife to Hazrat Fatimah al-Zahra (as) to ask whether he was one of the Shi'ah of the Ahlul Bayt (as).
Hazrat Fatimah (as) replied to the woman:

قُولی لَهُ: اِن کُنتَ تَعمَلُ بِما اَمَرناکَ وَ تَنتَهی عَمّا زَجَرناکَ عَنهُ، فَاَنتَ مِن شیعَتِنا. وَ اِلّا فَلا.

"Tell him: If you act according to what we have commanded you and refrain from what we have forbidden you, then you are among our Shi'ah. Otherwise, you are not."
When the woman conveyed the answer of Hazrat Fatimah (as) to her husband, he became deeply distressed and said:
"Woe to me! Who is there who does not commit sins and mistakes? Then I shall remain in the Fire of Hell forever! For whoever is not among their Shi'ah will never leave the Fire!"
The woman returned to Hazrat Fatimah (as) and related her husband's words.
She replied:

قُولی لَهُ: لَیسَ هکَذا. شیعَتُنا مِن خِیارِ اَهلِ الجَنَّةِ. وَ کُلُّ مُحِبّینا وَ مُوالی اَولِیائَنا وَ مُعادی اَعدائَنا وَ المُسَلِّمُ بِقَلبِهِ وَ لِسانِهِ لَنا، لَیسُوا مِن شیعَتِنا اِذا خالَفُوا اَوامِرَنا وَ نَواهینا فی سائِرِ المُوبِقاتِ. وَ هُم مَعَ ذلِکَ فی الجَنَّةِ وَ لکِن بَعدَ ما یَطَهَّرُونَ مِن ذُنُوبِهِم بِالبَلایا وَ الرَّزایا اَو فی عَرَصاتِ القِیامَةِ بِاَنواعِ شَدائِدِها اَو فِی الطَّبَقِ الاَعلی مِن جَهَنَّمَ بِعَذابِها اِلی اَن نَستَنقِذَهُم بِحُبِّنا مِنها وَ نَنقُلَهُم اِلی حَضرَتِنا.

"Tell him: It is not as you think. Our Shi'ah are among the chosen people of Paradise.

“As for all those who love us, who are loyal to our friends, who oppose our enemies, and who submit to us with their hearts and tongues—if they violate our commands and prohibitions by committing destructive sins, they are not among our [true] Shi‘ah.
“Nevertheless, they will be among the people of Paradise—but only after they have been purified from their sins through trials and afflictions [in this world], or through the various hardships in the arenas of the Day of Resurrection, or through punishment in the uppermost level of Hell, until we rescue them from it because of their love for us and bring them into our presence.”
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 155, hadith 11, from *Tafsir Imam Hasan al-Askari (as)*.
The differences in the manner through which people are purified from the contamination of their sins depend upon the extent and severity of those sins.
If a person’s sins are fewer, purification and cleansing may take place in this very world, without being deferred to the punishment of the Resurrection, which is vastly more severe and difficult than worldly trials and afflictions.
But if a person has committed many sins and become deeply contaminated by them, his purification may be deferred until the Resurrection and even the punishment of Hell.

The Certain Stage of the Believers’ Salvation

The conclusion of the preceding discussions is that, by virtue of Allah’s promise:

اَللهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذينَ آمَنُوا يُخرِجُهُم مِنَ الظُّلُماتِ اِلَى النُّورِ

“Allah is the Wali of those who believe; He brings them out of the darknesses into the light.”
all believers will eventually be brought out of the darkness of their sins and into the light of divine forgiveness.
This may occur in different ways and at different stages—in this world, in Barzakh, or, at the latest, on the Day of Resurrection.
What is certain and common to all the people of faith is that they will ultimately enter Paradise and will eventually be purified from the contamination they acquired through committing sins.

This is what we mean by a **good end (‘aqibat bi-khayr)**. Such people are described as those who attain felicity and salvation.
In other words, the people of faith will not remain eternally in divine punishment. Even if the purification of some of them requires entering the Fire of Hell, their punishment will not be everlasting. After a period of time—which may even amount to three hundred thousand years—they will eventually be brought out of it.
Therefore, believers are not the **people of Hell** and are not properly described as those who belong to Hell.
The people of Hell are those who remain there forever and never leave it.
For believers burdened with grave and serious sins, the punishment of Hell serves as a means of purification. For the actual people of Hell, however, its punishment is not purifying.
They are the people of wretchedness and remain objects of divine displeasure.
Thus, the punishment of Hell does not always, and for everyone, have the function of **purification**. It has this function only for believers.
And this is granted to them solely through the blessing of their **wilayah**.
In the noble verse:

اَللهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذينَ آمَنُوا

“Allah is the Wali of those who believe,”
Allah has described Himself specifically as the Wali of these people.
It is through accepting the wilayah and guardianship of the Imams (as) that they are granted such an ultimate end.
Whoever accepts their wilayah has, in reality, placed himself beneath the protection of their guardianship and entrusted his affair to them. In accordance with their wilayah, they do not ultimately abandon those who have sought refuge with them. Eventually, they come to their aid—whether in this world or in the Hereafter.
Those who are outside faith, however, do not possess such a refuge.
In reality, they have not accepted the divine guardianship and wilayah that is manifested in the guardianship and wilayah of the Messenger of Allah (saww) and his noble Ahlul Bayt (as).

Even if they possess outward Islam—which itself is a light and guidance from Allah—by opposing those whom Allah appointed as the guardians of the Muslims and instead following the imamate of unjust leaders who were not appointed by Allah, they have failed to submit to what Allah made obligatory upon them. Allah therefore leaves them to themselves and does not grant them this special protection.

As a result, they become vulnerable to the deceptions of Shaytan, leave the light of Islam, and descend into the darknesses of kufr. In this manner, they become deserving of the everlasting punishment of Allah.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

اِنَّ اللهَ لا يَستَحيِى اَن يُعَذِّبَ اُمَّةً دانَت بِإمامٍ لَيسَ مِنَ اللهِ وَ اِن كانَت فى اَعمالِها بَرَّةٌ تَقِيَّةً. وَ اِنَّ اللهَ لَيَستَحيِى اَن يُعَذِّبَ اُمَّةً دانَت بِإمامٍ مِنَ اللهِ وَ اِن كانَت فى اَعمالِها ظالِمَةً مُسيئَةً.

“Allah does not refrain from punishing a community that serves Him through an Imam who is not from Allah, even if that community is righteous and God-fearing in its deeds.

“And Allah refrains from [eternally] punishing a community that serves Him through an Imam from Allah, even if in their deeds they have been unjust and sinful.”

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 376, Kitab al-Hujjah, chapter “Concerning One Who Serves Allah Through an Imam Who Is Not from Allah,” hadith 5.

Modesty and shame, in their literal human sense, are attributes of created beings and cannot be attributed to Allah. When such expressions are used in relation to Allah, what is intended is their appropriate effect or implication.

With respect to modesty, for example, when a human being feels ashamed of doing something, he refrains from doing it. Likewise, Allah has established certain matters from which He does not will to depart or act contrary to what He Himself has decreed.

In some traditions—including the one above—this unwavering divine will is expressed in the language of “modesty” or “shame.”

Accordingly, the established and unchanging divine sunnah is that Allah will never subject the people of wilayah—those who worship Allah through accepting the

Imamate of the Imam appointed by Him—to everlasting punishment. Ultimately, He will forgive them.
The opposing group, however, will not receive this ultimate forgiveness.
Our interpretation of the "punishment" mentioned in the above tradition as **everlasting punishment** is based upon considering all the traditions transmitted on this subject together.
In many of those traditions, punishment is not denied absolutely. Rather, depending upon the degree to which a person has contaminated himself through sin, punishment in Barzakh or on the Day of Resurrection is explicitly affirmed.
Therefore, those traditions that apparently deny punishment absolutely must be understood in light of other traditions that affirm temporary or limited punishment.
The punishment that is certainly excluded for the people of wilayah is therefore **everlasting punishment**.

The Prophet's Satisfaction and the Final Salvation of the Believers

The ultimate salvation of the believers is also implied by the promise Allah made to His noble Messenger (saww):

وَ لَسَوفَ يُعطيکَ رَبُّکَ فَتَرضى

"And surely your Lord will give you until you are satisfied."
(Qur'an 93:5)
According to the traditions of the Imams (as), what Allah grants His Messenger (saww) includes the right of the **Great Intercession (al-Shafa'ah al-'Uzma)** on behalf of the believers.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) is reported to have said:

رِضا جدّی أَن لا يَبقى فِی النّارِ مُوَحِّدٌ.

"The satisfaction of my grandfather [the Messenger of Allah (saww)] is that no muwahhid should remain in the Fire."
According to the usage of the Imams (as)—as established in the preceding discussions of this book—a **muwahhid** is one who possesses true ma'rifah of the Imam.

A person who acknowledges Allah as God but does not accept the prophethood of the Final Messenger (saww), or does not believe in the Imamate of the Imams (as), is not regarded as a person of complete Tawhid in this sense.
Therefore, the satisfaction of the Messenger of Allah (saww) is that all those who truly believe in the wilayah of the Imams (as) should ultimately be delivered from the Fire.
The expression:
لا يَبقى — "shall not remain"
in the above tradition also indicates an important point: some believers may first enter the Fire of Hell and subsequently be brought out of it through the intercession of the Messenger of Allah (saww).
Thus, the promise concerns their **final salvation**—not necessarily exemption from every stage of punishment or purification before that salvation is reached.

Faith at the Time of Death

To understand precisely and correctly what has been said concerning the people of faith, it is necessary to pay attention to an important and subtle point.
In the present discussion, a **believer (mu'min)** means someone who, at the time of death, believes in the wilayah and Imamate of the Imams (as) and leaves this world with faith.
It is entirely possible for a person to be a believer before death, yet no longer possess faith when the moment of death arrives.

Firmly Established Faith and Entrusted Faith

According to what is understood from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, a person's faith may be of two kinds: **firmly established faith (iman mustaqarr)** and **entrusted faith (iman mustawda').**
The Noble Qur'an states:

»وَ هُوَ الَّذی اَنشَأَکُم مِن نَفسٍ واحِدَةٍ فَمُستَقَرٌّ وَ مُستَودَعٌ.«

"And He is the One who brought you into being from a single soul; then there is one who is firmly established and another who is entrusted."

(Qur'an 6:98)

The two expressions **mustaqarr** and **mustawda'** have been interpreted in traditions from the Imams (as) as referring to two kinds of people of faith.

Imam al-Baqir (as) said:

المُستَقَرُّ مَا استَقَرَّ الايمانُ فی قَلبِهِ فَلا يُنزَعُ مِنهُ اَبَداً. وَ المُستَودَعُ الَّذی يُستَودَعُ الايمانَ زَماناً ثُمَّ يُسلَبُهُ. وَ قَد كانَ الزُّبَيرُ مِنهُم.

"The mustaqarr is the one whose faith has become firmly established in his heart and will never be taken away from him. The mustawda' is the one in whom faith is entrusted for a period of time and is then taken away from him. Al-Zubayr was among this second group."

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 69, p. 222, hadith 8, from *Tafsir al-'Ayyashi*.

In general, therefore, people's faith is of two kinds. For some, faith is firmly established and enduring. For others, it is merely entrusted to them temporarily. For the second type, the expression **mu'ar**—"borrowed" or "loaned"—is also used. Both terms indicate that this kind of faith is temporary and unstable.

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 69, p. 222, hadith 7, from *Qurb al-Isnad*; and p. 223, hadith 13, from *Tafsir al-'Ayyashi*.

An example given of such borrowed faith is **al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam**, the cousin of the Messenger of Allah (saww). Despite his distinguished earlier record of faith in Allah and His Messenger (saww), and despite his firm defence of Amir al-Mu'minin (as) during the events of Saqifah, his faith was eventually taken away and he left this world without faith.

Concerning al-Zubayr's earlier faith, Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

لَقَد مَشَی الزُّبَيرُ فی ضَوءِ الايمانِ وَ نُورِهِ حينَ قُبِضَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صلی الله عليه و آله و سلم حَتّی مَشی بِالسَّيفِ وَ هُوَ يَقُولُ: لا نُبايعُ اِلّا عَلِيّاً.

"Indeed, when the Messenger of Allah (saww) passed away, al-Zubayr walked in the radiance and light of faith, to the extent that he went forth with his sword saying: 'We will pledge allegiance to no one except Ali (as).'"

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 69, p. 223, hadith 10, from *Tafsir al-'Ayyashi*.

It is therefore clear that at the time of the Prophet's (saww) passing, al-Zubayr was not a hypocrite. Rather, he was a believer and was the fourth person, alongside Salman, Abu Dharr and Miqdad, who remained steadfast in defending the Imamate and succession of Amir al-Mu'minin (as).

Yet this very person eventually reached a point where he was prepared to wage war against Amir al-Mu'minin (as) and even incited others to fight him. Ultimately, he lost his faith and died in a state of disbelief.

Such a tragic end may await anyone whose faith is merely borrowed.

The question, then, is: who possesses firmly established faith, and who possesses entrusted faith?

Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

اِنَّ اللهَ جَبَلَ النَبِيّينَ عَلى نُبُوَّتِهِم فَلا يَرتَدُّونَ اَبَداً. وَ جَبَلَ الاَوصياءَ عَلى وَصاياهُم فَلا يَرتَدُّونَ اَبَداً. وَ جَبَلَ بَعضَ المُؤمِنينَ عَلَى الايمانِ فَلا يَرتَدُّونَ اَبَداً.. وِ مِنهُم مِن اُعيرَ الايمانَ عارِيَةً، فَاِذا هُوَ دَعا وَ اَلَحَّ فِى الدُّعاءِ، ماتَ عَلَى الايمانِ.

"Allah has fashioned the Prophets upon their prophethood, so they never turn away from it. He has fashioned the awsiya' upon their successorship, so they never turn away from it. And He has fashioned some of the believers upon faith, so they too never turn away from it.

"But among them are those to whom faith has been given as a loan. If such a person supplicates and persists earnestly in supplication, he will die upon faith."

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 419, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Mu'arin, hadith 5.

Since the Prophets and their awsiya' are Allah's Hujjahs over the people, and Allah communicates with people through them, they have been divinely protected from error and deviation. Allah has guaranteed both their faith and their prophethood or successorship.

There is therefore no possibility that they will deviate in conveying the divine message or carrying out the divinely entrusted successorship. The position of these two groups is clear.

As for the rest of the believers, Allah has also guaranteed the faith of some of them, but no such guarantee exists for everyone else.

Ordinary people—apart from the Prophets and their awsiya'—therefore fall into two groups: those whose faith is **mustaqarr**, and those whose faith is **mustawda'**.

If people wish to be among those whose faith remains with them until the moment of death, then before anything else they must take their religion and beliefs exclusively from the Book of Allah and the Sunnah. In acquiring their religion, they must not turn toward apparently rational personal preferences, inherited or imitative beliefs, or interpretations that have no sound foundation.

Divine Tawfiq in Attaining Firmly Established Faith

The great Shi'ah hadith scholar and author of the unparalleled work *Al-Kafi* narrates, in the introduction to his noble book, a tradition from the Imam (as) concerning this very matter:

مَن اَخَذَ دينَهُ كِتابِ اللهِ وَ سُنَّةِ نَبِيِّهِ صَلَواتُ اللهّ عَلَيه وَ آلِهِ، زالَتِ الجِبالُ قَبلَ اَن يَزُولَ. وَ مَن اَخَذَ دينَهُ مِن اَفواهِ الرِّجالِ، رَدَّتهُ الرِّجالُ.

"Whoever takes his religion from the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet (saww), the mountains will move before he moves away from his religion. But whoever takes his religion from the mouths of men will be turned away from his religion by men."

Introduction to Al-Kafi, p. 7.

Taking one's religion "from the mouths of men" means following and imitating, without proof, personalities whose beliefs are weak and without firm foundation—even though they may speak extensively in the name of reason and rationality.

A person who acquires his religion in this manner may lose it in exactly the same manner.

The late 'Allamah al-Kulayni, explaining this noble tradition, writes:

مَن اَرادَ اللهُ تَوفيقَهُ وَ اَن يَكُونَ ايمانَهُ ثابِتاً مُستَقِرّاً، سَبَّبَ لَهُ الاَسبابُ الَّتى تُؤَدِّيهِ اِلى اَن يأخُذَ دينَهُ مِن كِتابِ اللهِ وَ سُنَةِ نَبِيِّهِ صَلَواتُ اللهِ عَلَيهِ وَ آلِهِ بِعِلمٍ وَ يَقينٍ وَ بَصيرَةٍ. فَذاکَ اَثبَتُ فى دينِهِ مِنَ الجِبالِ الرَّواسى. وَ مَن اَرادَ اللهُ خِذلانَهُ وَ اَن يَكُونَ دينُهُ مُعاراً مُستَودَعاً، سَبَّبَ لَهُ اَسبابَ الاِستِحسانِ وِ التَّقليدِ وَ التَّأويلِ مّن غَيرِ عِلمٍ وَ بَصيرَةٍ.

"When Allah wills to grant someone tawfiq and to make his faith firm and established, He provides for him the means that lead him to take his religion from the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet (saww), with knowledge, certainty and insight. Such a person is firmer and more steadfast in his religion than the firmly rooted mountains.

"But when Allah wills to leave someone to himself and for his religion to be borrowed and entrusted, He allows for him the means of following personal preferences, imitation, and interpretation without knowledge and insight."

Introduction to Al-Kafi, p. 8.

Both **tawfiq** and **khidhlan** are from Allah.

If, according to al-Kulayni's statement, divine tawfiq embraces a person, the means are provided for him not to rely in religion upon anything other than sound reason, the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet (saww), and his pure 'Itrah.
He will not give weight to every opinion or personal preference merely because it is presented under the title of "the judgment of reason." He will not consider himself—or anyone else—entitled to introduce personal opinions and viewpoints into religion. He will not blindly imitate personalities, nor will he permit anyone to impose interpretations unsupported by transmitted evidence upon religious proofs or to depart from explicit religious texts.
If he slips in any of these areas, he becomes exposed to divine khidhlan—being left without that special divine assistance.
Thus, one factor in the stability of a person's religion is the strength of its doctrinal foundations, and this can be attained only through serious and profound commitment to the Qur'an and hadith.

The Sign of Firmly Established and Entrusted Faith

Another essential factor is attention to one's deeds and commitment to obeying the commands of religion.
This factor is so important that it has been emphasized as the decisive outward sign by which firmly established faith may be distinguished from entrusted faith.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

اِنَّ الحَسرَةَ وَ النَّدامَةَ وَ الوَيلَ كُلَّهُ لِمَن لَم يَنتَفِع بِما اَبصَرَهُ وَ لَم يَدرِ مَا الاَمرُ الَّذى هُوَ عَلَيهِ مُقيمٌ اَنفَعٌ لَهُ اَم ضَرٌّ.

"All regret, remorse and woe belong to the one who does not benefit from that whose truth he has come to recognize, and who does not know whether the course upon which he persists is beneficial to him or harmful."
The narrator asked:

فَبِمَ يُعرَفُ النّاجى مِن هؤلاءِ جُعِلتُ فِداکَ؟

"May I be sacrificed for you! How can one recognize, among these [believers], the one who will attain salvation?"
The Imam (as) replied:

مَن كانَ فِعلُهُ لِقَولِهِ مُوافِقاً فَاَثبِتَ لَهُ الشَّهادَةُ بِالنَّجاةِ. وَ مَن لَم يَكُن فِعلُهُ لِقَولِهِ مُوافِقاً، فَاِنَّما ذلِکَ مُستَودَعٌ.

“Whoever’s actions correspond to his words [and beliefs], then testify for him that he is among those who will attain salvation. But whoever’s actions do not correspond to his words [and beliefs], his faith is merely entrusted.”
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 419, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, chapter “On the Sign of Borrowed Faith,” hadith 1.
This noble tradition is both deeply sobering and highly instructive.
The people of faith must recognize the value of Allah’s grace toward them. True appreciation of this blessing is realized by making proper and full use of the blessing of faith and the wilayah of the Ahlul Bayt (as).
If a believer fails to benefit from this unparalleled blessing, nothing may remain for him except regret, remorse and punishment.
Here, the blessing of **basirah**—spiritual and religious insight—and **tafaqquh fi al-din**, deep understanding of religion, plays an essential role, because it teaches a person how to benefit correctly from the blessing of faith. A believer must understand how to derive the greatest spiritual benefit from his faith.
What is particularly emphasized in this tradition is that one must **act according to one’s faith and profession of belief**.
The Arabic word **qawl** can refer both to belief and to spoken words. Here, what is intended is speech that accompanies and arises from genuine belief.
Thus, if a person believes and claims that the Imams (as) speak on behalf of Allah, and that what they have taught leads human beings to eternal felicity, then his actions must correspond to that belief.
If they do, he may be regarded as one of those who will attain salvation.
If not, his faith remains borrowed and may be taken away from him before the moment of death.
The late ‘Allamah al-Majlisi, explaining the final sentence of this noble tradition, writes:

»وَ مَن لَم يَكُن فِعلُهُ لِقَولِهِ مُوافِقاً» اَی بِاَن يَكُونَ قَولُهُ حَقّاً وَ فِعلُهُ باطِلاً كَما هُوَ شَأنُ اَكثَرِ الخَلقِ «فَاِنَّما ذلِکَ مُستَودَعٌ» ايمانُهُ غَيرُ ثابِتٍ فيهِ. فَيَحتَمَلُ اَن يَبقى عَلَى الحَقِّ وَ يَثبُتَ لَهُ الايمانُ وَ تَحصُلَ لَهُ النَّجاةُ وَ اَن يَزُولَ عَنِ الحَقِّ وَ يَعُودَ اِلَى الشِّقاوَةِ وَ يَستَحِقَّ الوَيلَ وَ الحَسرَةَ وَ النَّدامَةَ.

“‘Whoever’s actions do not correspond to his words’ means that his belief and speech are true while his actions are false—as is the condition of most people.

“‘His faith is merely entrusted’ means that his faith is not firmly established within him. It is therefore possible that he may remain upon the truth, that faith may become firmly established in him, and that he may attain salvation. But it is also possible that he may depart from the truth, return to wretchedness, and become deserving of woe, regret and remorse.”
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 69, p. 219, under hadith 2.
As the late ‘Allamah al-Majlisi states, many believers follow in practice a path different from what they profess and believe.
Such people are among those whose faith is borrowed. For this reason, there is serious cause for concern regarding their final end.

Faith Can Be Lost in a Single Day

This matter is so sensitive that a person may change his course within a single day, moving from faith to disbelief or from disbelief to faith.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

اِنَّ العَبدَ يُصبِحُ مُؤمِناً وَ يُمسی کافِراً، وَ يُصبِحُ کافِراً وَ يُمسی مُؤمِناً. وَ قَومٌ يُعارُونَ الايمانَ ثُمَّ يُسلَبُونَهُ وَ يُسَمَّونَ المُعارينَ.

“A servant may begin the morning as a believer and reach the evening as a disbeliever; and he may begin the morning as a disbeliever and reach the evening as a believer. There are also people to whom faith is loaned and then taken away from them. They are called the mu‘arin—those to whom faith has been loaned.”
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 418, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Mu‘arin, hadith 2.
Those who possess the precious jewel of wilayah and the elixir of Imamate must therefore exercise great vigilance, lest through committing sins they make themselves deserving of losing this incomparable divine blessing.
Such a punishment does not require a long period of time. It may occur within a single day—or even within a single hour.

All Believers Are Already in Paradise in This World

How beautifully Imam al-Sadiq (as) expressed this truth when someone in his gathering said:

اَسأَلُ اللهَ الجَنَّةَ.

“I ask Allah for Paradise.”
The Imam (as) replied:

اَنتُم فِی الجَنَّةِ. فَاسأَلُوا اللهَ اَن لا یُخرِجَکُم مِنها.

“You are already in Paradise. So ask Allah not to take you out of it.”
They said:

جُعِلنا فِداکَ نَحنُ فِی الدُّنیا!

“May our lives be sacrificed for you! We are still in this world!”
The Imam (as) asked:

اَلَستُم تُقِرُّونَ بِامامَتِنا؟

“Do you not acknowledge our Imamate?”
They replied, “Yes.”
The Imam (as) then said:

هذا مَعنَی الجَنَّةِ الَّذی مَن اَقَرَّ بِهِ کانَ فِی الجَنَّةِ. فَاسأَلُوا اللهَ اَن لا یَسلُبَکُم.

“This Imamate is the meaning of Paradise. Whoever acknowledges it is in Paradise. So ask Allah not to take it away from you.”
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 102, hadith 11, from *Al-Mahasin* of al-Barqi.
Indeed, Paradise lies in the belief in and acknowledgment of the Imamate and wilayah of the Imams (as), because ultimately it is this that leads a person to Paradise.
Those who possess this priceless blessing must therefore strive to preserve it through supplication and humble pleading before Allah, together with the utmost vigilance and care. They must not make themselves deserving of losing it through their wrongful deeds.
Thus, in addition to what was quoted earlier from ‘Allamah al-Kulayni in the introduction to *Al-Kafi*, there are two further important means of preserving this incomparable blessing:
persistent and earnest supplication that faith remain until the moment of death, and protecting one’s religion and faith through wara‘—scrupulous restraint from sin.

Supplication for the Preservation of Faith Until Death

Many supplications and recommendations have been transmitted concerning the preservation of one's religion. We shall mention some of them.

1. "Our Lord, Do Not Let Our Hearts Deviate"

One of the beautiful Qur'anic supplications concerning this matter is:

»رَبَّنا لا تُزِغ قُلُوبَنا بَعدَ اِذ هَدَيتَنا وَ هَب لَنا مِن لَدُنکَ رَحمَةً اِنَّکَ اَنتَ الوَهّابُ.«

"Our Lord! Do not let our hearts deviate after You have guided us, and grant us mercy from Yourself. Indeed, You are the Bestower."

(Qur'an 3:8)

The word **zaygh** means deviation and turning away from the truth.

The very fact that this supplication is taught in the Noble Qur'an shows that if Allah's mercy does not embrace a person, his heart may deviate from faith and truth and fall into misguidance.

Commenting on this noble verse, Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

اَکثِرُوا مِن اَن تَقُولُوا: «رَبَّنا لا تُزِغ قُلُوبَنا بَعدَ اِذ هَدَيتَنا». وَ لا تَأمَنُوا الزَّيغَ.

"Frequently say: 'Our Lord! Do not let our hearts deviate after You have guided us.' And never consider yourselves secure from deviation."

Tafsir al-'Ayyashi, vol. 1, p. 164, hadith 9.

2. A Supplication After Every Obligatory Prayer

Another supplication taught for this purpose has been narrated as a ta'qib after the obligatory prayers.

Muhammad ibn Sulayman al-Daylami said to the Imam (as):

"May I be sacrificed for you! Your Shi'ah say that there is firmly established faith and entrusted faith. Teach me something which, if I recite it, will make my faith complete and prevent it from being lost."

The Imam (as) said:

قُل فی دُبُرِ کُلِّ صَلاةٍ فَريضَةٍ. رَضيتُ بِاللهِ رَبّاً وَ بِمُحَمَّدٍ نَبِيّاً وَ بِالقُرآنِ کِتاباً وَ بِالکَعبَةِ قِبلَةً وَ بِعَلِّی وَلِيّاً وَ اِماماً وَ بِالحَسَنِ وَ الحُسَينِ وَ الاَئِمَّةِ صَلَواتُ اللهِ عَلَيهِم. اللّهُمَّ اِنّی رَضيتُ بِهِم اَئِمَّةً، فَارضَنی لَهُم. اِنَّکَ عَلی کُلِّ شَیءٍ قَديرٌ.

"Say after every obligatory prayer:

‘I am pleased with Allah as my Lord, with Muhammad as my Prophet, with the Qur’an as my Book, with the Ka‘bah as my qiblah, with Ali as my wali and Imam, and with al-Hasan, al-Husayn, and the Imams—may Allah’s blessings be upon them—as my Imams.

O Allah, I have accepted them as my Imams, so make me pleasing and acceptable to them. Indeed, You have power over all things.’”

Tahdhib al-Ahkam, vol. 2, p. 109, hadith 180.

3. A Dhikr After the Fajr and Maghrib Prayers

Another supplication for this purpose has been transmitted as a ta‘qib after the Fajr and Maghrib prayers.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

مَن قالَ فی دُبُرِ صَلاةِ الفَجرِ وَ دُبُرِ صَلاةِ المَغرِبِ سَبعَ مَرّاتٍ: «بِسمِ اللهِ الرَّحمنِ الرَّحیم لا حَولَ وَ لا قُوَّةَ اِلّا بِاللهِ العَلِیِّ العَظیمِ» دَفَعَ اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ عَنهُ سَبعینَ نَوعاً مِن اَنواعِ البَلاءِ ... وَ اِن کانَ شَقِیّاً، مُحِیَ مِنَ الشَّقاءِ وَ کُتِبَ مِنَ السُّعَداءِ.

“Whoever says seven times after the Fajr prayer and seven times after the Maghrib prayer:

بِسمِ اللهِ الرَّحمنِ الرَّحیم لا حَولَ وَ لا قُوَّةَ اِلّا بِاللهِ العَلِیِّ العَظیمِ

Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, will repel from him seventy kinds of affliction... and if he is among the wretched, he will be erased from among the wretched and written among the felicitous.”

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 531, Kitab al-Du‘a’, chapter “What Is Said in the Morning and Evening,” hadith 25.

Perseverance in this noble dhikr can take a person out of wretchedness and lead him toward felicity.

A person’s ultimate felicity or wretchedness becomes clear at the time of death. If he leaves this world with faith, he is felicitous; otherwise, he is wretched.

Amir al-Mu’minin (as) is reported to have said:

حَقیقَةُ السَّعادَةِ اَن یَختِمَ الرَّجُلُ عَمَلَهُ بِالسَّعادَةِ. وَ حَقیقَةُ الشَّقاء اَن یَختِمَ المَرءُ عَمَلَهُ بِالشَّقاءِ.

“The reality of felicity is that a person’s deeds end in felicity, and the reality of wretchedness is that a person’s deeds end in wretchedness.”

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 5, p. 154, hadith 5, from *Al-Khisal*.

The criterion of ultimate felicity and wretchedness is therefore the end of a person's affair—the state in which he reaches death.
A person must therefore continually pray that his life and deeds end well.

4. "Do Not Make Me One of Those Whose Faith Is Borrowed"

Another supplication for this purpose has been transmitted from Imam al-Hadi (as):

اَكثِر مِن اَن تَقُولَ: «اللّهُمَّ لا تَجعَلنی مِنَ المُعارینَ وَ لا تُخرِجنی مِنَ التَّقصیرِ».

"Frequently say:
'O Allah, do not make me one of those whose faith is borrowed, and do not take me out of the state of regarding myself as falling short [in worshipping You].'"
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 73, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, chapter "Acknowledging One's Shortcomings," hadith 4.
The latter part means that, through Allah's grace and care, a person should continue to regard himself as falling short in fulfilling the right of his Lord, despite all his effort and striving in worship. He should never imagine that he has fully discharged what is due to Allah.
In this noble supplication, we explicitly ask Allah to make our faith firmly established and enduring.

5. Supplication on the Day of Ghadir

Another example is a supplication transmitted from Imam al-Sadiq (as) among the devotional acts of the Day of Ghadir.
Although this noble supplication was not transmitted specifically for the subject under discussion, it is recited on the Day of Ghadir—the day on which the covenant of wilayah and faith is renewed—and has therefore been mentioned here.
Toward its conclusion we recite:

اللّهُمَّ اِنّی اَسالُکَ ... اِن تُبارِکَ لَنا فی یَومِنا هذا ... وَ تَمُنَّ عَلَینا بِنِعمَتِکَ وَ تَجعَلَهُ عِندَنا مُستَقِرّاً ثابِتاً وَ لا تَسلُبَنا اَبَداً وَ لا تَجعَلَهُ عِندَنا مُستَودَعاً. فَاِنَّکَ قُلتَ: «فَمُستَقَرٌّ وَ مُستَودَعٌ». فَاجعَلهُ مُستَقِرّاً ثابِتاً.

"O Allah, I ask You... to bless this day of ours for us... and to favour us with Your blessing; to make it [Imamate and wilayah] firmly established and enduring within

us; never to take it away from us; and not to make it something merely entrusted to us.

For You Yourself have said: **‘Then there is one who is firmly established and another who is entrusted.’**

So make it firmly established and enduring [within us until death].”

(Qur’an 6:98)

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 98, p. 307, hadith 2, from *Iqbal al-A‘mal*.

Apart from the examples mentioned above, many other devotional acts and supplications have been transmitted on different occasions concerning this same subject. For the sake of brevity, we shall not quote them here.

Those interested may refer to the valuable book *Ba Pesaram dar Sakarat* by Sayyid Mujtaba Bahrayni, pp. 134–160.

Chapter Five: The Relationship Between Faith and Deeds

We now turn to the relationship between **faith and deeds**. By "deeds" in this discussion, what is meant is **obedience and disobedience**—that is, obeying or disobeying the commands of the Shari'ah.

Safeguarding Faith Through Wara'

A third factor that has been strongly emphasized for preserving and safeguarding one's religion and faith is the observance of **wara'**.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

اِتَّقُوا اللهَ وَ صُونُوا دينَكُم بِالوَرَعِ.

"Observe taqwa before Allah and safeguard your religion through wara'."
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 76, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Wara', hadith 2.
Wara' means maintaining a protective distance from what is certainly haram. A person conducts himself in such a way that he can be confident that he will not fall into what Allah has forbidden.
This is not achieved merely by observing the legal rulings of fiqh at the level of what is obligatory and what is forbidden. **Fiqh** explains the divine rulings and boundaries. Through it, the limits between halal and haram, obligatory and recommended, and so forth, are clarified.
When something is declared "haram," it means that a person must not cross that boundary.
Wara', however, involves a form of rational precaution through which a person seeks assurance that he will not fall into what is haram.
Sometimes this precaution concerns the ruling itself, and sometimes it concerns its application to a particular case.
Precaution regarding a ruling arises, for example, when the evidence of the Shari'ah does not provide a jurist with sufficient certainty that something is forbidden, such that he could issue a fatwa declaring it haram. In such a situation, wara' means avoiding matters whose ruling is uncertain and which may possibly fall within what is forbidden.

At other times, the ruling of the Shari‘ah itself is clear, but it is uncertain whether a particular case falls under that ruling. Here too, wara‘ requires avoiding doubtful cases.

Matters whose prohibition is not certain are called **shubuhat**—doubtful or ambiguous matters—whether the uncertainty arises from not knowing the relevant facts or from uncertainty concerning the ruling itself.

Wara‘ is therefore a virtue attained not merely by refraining from what is definitely haram, but also by avoiding doubtful matters—things which are not known to be haram but which may lead into, or resemble, what is forbidden.

The purified Imams (as) have said:

اَورَعَ النّاسِ مِن وَقَفَ عِندَ الشُّبهَةِ.

“The person possessing the greatest wara‘ is the one who stops when faced with a doubtful matter.”

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, p. 305, hadith 25, from *Al-Khisal*.

Precaution in matters of religion is itself a judgment of reason. Reason tells a person that before reaching the boundary of what is definitely forbidden, he should stop so that he can be confident that he will not fall into haram.

If a person continually walks exactly along the boundary, the possibility of slipping across it is considerable. Therefore, to ensure that he does not fall into what is forbidden, reason tells him: **exercise precaution.**

We exercise precisely this kind of rational precaution in worldly and material affairs. Whenever a serious danger exists, we do not behave carelessly.

For example, we would never walk along the frozen edge of a cliff and tell ourselves, “We have no certainty that we will fall.”

Rather, we would say that since the possibility of falling is a reasonable and serious possibility, precaution is required by reason. We therefore keep enough distance from the edge to be confident that we will not fall.

If such precaution is considered wise in worldly and material matters, then it is even more appropriate in matters of religion, where the possible harm is far deeper and more serious.

Amir al-Mu’minin (as), advising Kumayl ibn Ziyad—one of his closest companions—said:

يا كُمَيلُ، اَخُوکَ دينُکَ. فَاحتَط لِدينِکَ بِما شِئتَ.

“O Kumayl! Your religion is your brother. So take whatever precaution you wish for the protection of your religion.”

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 258, hadith 4, from *Amali al-Tusi*.

Amir al-Mu’minin (as) did not merely give this advice in a general setting. He specifically addressed Kumayl, who was among his close and distinguished companions.

Therefore, those who possess wilayah and ma‘rifah of the Imams (as) should take such instructions as a model for their own conduct and behaviour. They should not instead search for some way—even one contrary to precaution—to declare permissible that which remains doubtful.

The Messenger of Allah (saww), through a very instructive example, warned his Ummah about the necessity of avoiding doubtful matters:

اِنَّ لِكُلِّ مَلِکٍ حِمًى. وَ اِنَّ حِمَى اللهِ حَلالُهُ وَ حَرامُهُ. وَ المُشتَبِهاتُ بَينَ ذلِکَ. كَما لَو اَنَّ راعِياً رَعى اِلى جانِبِ الحِمى، لَم تَلبَث غَنَمُهُ اَن تَقَعَ فى وَسَطِهِ، فَدَعُوا المُشتَبِهاتِ.

“Every king has a protected boundary. And the protected boundary of Allah is His halal and His haram, while doubtful matters lie between the two.

“It is like a shepherd who grazes his flock beside a protected enclosure; it will not be long before his sheep enter into it. Therefore, leave the doubtful matters.”

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 259, hadith 6, from *Amali al-Tusi*.

When a person continually moves close to the boundary of what Allah has forbidden, he may fall into haram without even realizing it.

If a shepherd allows his sheep to graze immediately beside a protected area, he cannot be confident that they will respect its boundary and remain outside it. Such a careless shepherd may suddenly realize that his sheep have entered the forbidden area, when it is already too late.

Human beings are much the same.

If we continually remain right beside the boundaries of what is forbidden, thinking that we should extract the maximum possible benefit from what is technically halal, we may eventually fall into what is clearly haram without even realizing it.

Both reason and transmitted teachings therefore direct a person to remain with what is clearly halal and not pursue doubtful matters, so that he remains safe from the danger of falling into what is certainly forbidden.
This is not an area for carelessness or undue leniency, because the possible loss is serious and may be irreparable. If a person loses his religion, that loss cannot simply be compensated for later.
Reason therefore calls upon a person to adopt the path of precaution.
With this explanation, it becomes clear how religion can be protected and safeguarded through wara‘.
A believer, fearing that his faith might be taken away from him, flees from every sin. He never considers himself free to treat any sin—even a single sin—with indifference or carelessness.
No one knows which of his sins may bring upon him Allah’s displeasure. Therefore, he does not regard any sin as insignificant.
Amir al-Mu’minin (as) said:

اِنَّ اللهَ تَبارَکَ وَ تَعالی ... اَخفی رِضاهُ فی طاعَتِهِ. فَلاتَستَصغِرَنَّ شَیئاً مِن طاعَتِهِ. فَرُبَّما وافَقَ رِضاهُ وَ اَنتَ لا تَعلَمُ. وَ اَخفی سَخَطَهُ فی مَعصِیَتِهِ. فَلا تَستَصغِرَنَّ شَیئاً مِن مَعصِیَتِهِ. فَرُبَّما وافَقَ سَخَطَهُ وَ اَنتَ لا تَعلَمُ. ...

“Indeed, Allah, Blessed and Exalted... has concealed His pleasure within acts of obedience to Him. Therefore, never regard any act of obedience to Him as insignificant, for perhaps His pleasure lies within it while you do not know.
“And He has concealed His displeasure within acts of disobedience to Him. Therefore, never regard any act of disobedience to Him as insignificant, for perhaps His displeasure lies within it while you do not know...”
Kamal al-Din, chapter 26, hadith 4.
A person does not know which particular sin may prevent him from leaving this world with faith.
Sometimes a person pays little attention to a particular sin, yet that very sin becomes a serious obstacle to his faith at the time of death.

The Effect of a Mother's Displeasure at the Time of Death

It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (as) that during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah (saww), a man from Madinah became seriously ill and his illness eventually led to his death.

As the man was dying, the Messenger of Allah (saww) came to his bedside and prompted him to say:

لا اله الّا الله

But the man was unable to utter the words; his tongue had become unable to speak.

The Prophet (saww) prompted him once again, but he still could not say them.

A woman was sitting near his head. The Prophet (saww) asked:

"Does this man have a mother?"

The woman replied:

"Yes, O Messenger of Allah. I am his mother."

The Prophet (saww) asked:

"Are you pleased with him or not?"

She replied:

"No. I am displeased with him."

The Messenger of Allah (saww) said to her:

فَاِنّی اُحَبُّ اَن تَرضی عَنهُ.

"I would like you to be pleased with him."

She replied:

"O Messenger of Allah, for the sake of your pleasure, I am now pleased with him."

The Prophet (saww) once again prompted the dying man to say:

لا اله الّا الله

This time the man was able to say:

لا اله الّا الله

The Prophet (saww) then instructed him:

قُل: یا مَن یَقبَلُ الیَسیرَ وَ یَعفُو عَنِ الکَثیرِ، اِقبَل مِنّی الیَسیرَ وَ اعفُ عَنّی الکَثیرَ. اَنَّکَ اَنتَ العَفُوُّ الغَفُورُ.

“Say: O You who accept the little [good] and pardon the great amount [of wrongdoing], accept from me the little and pardon from me the great. Indeed, You are the Pardoning, the All-Forgiving.”
The man recited the supplication.
The Messenger of Allah (saww) then asked him:
“What do you see?”
He replied:
“I see two dark figures who have come toward me.”
The Prophet (saww) told him:
“Recite that supplication again.”
He repeated the supplication.
The Prophet (saww) asked:
“What do you see now?”
The man replied:
“The two dark figures have moved away from me, and two luminous figures have come. The dark ones have gone and I no longer see them. The luminous ones have drawn close to me. They are now taking my soul.”
At that moment, he passed away.
Man La Yahduruhu al-Faqih, vol. 1, p. 132, hadith 347.
This is an example of a sin whose consequences became an obstacle to dying with faith. The person who had committed it may never have imagined that his mother’s displeasure would confront him at such a critical moment.
Other sins may have a similar effect. Therefore, a believer does not regard any sin as trivial or insignificant.

The Effect of Wara‘ in Deepening Faith

We can now better appreciate the importance of Imam al-Baqir’s (as) warning to Jabir ibn Yazid al-Ju‘fi:

مَن كانَ لِلّهِ مُطيعاً، فَهُوَ لَنا وَلِيٌّ. وَ مَن كانَ لِلّهِ عاصِياً، فَهُوَ لَنا عَدُوٌّ. ما تُنالَ وِلايَتُنا اِلّا بِالعَمَلِ وَ الوَرَعِ.

“Whoever is obedient to Allah is our wali, and whoever disobeys Allah is our enemy. Our wilayah cannot be attained except through deeds and wara‘.”

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 75, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Ta'ah wa al-Taqwa, end of hadith 3.

Here, a general principle desired by the purified Imams (as) is being emphasized: **the people of wilayah must be people who act according to the commands of religion.**

The Imams (as) themselves have identified this as a sign and characteristic of those who truly love them.

By the word **"obedient" (muti')** here, what is intended is not someone who never commits a sin. Rather, it refers to a person whose general course of life, because of his love and wilayah of his Imams, is one of acting upon their commands. Such a person strives not to separate himself from the ranks of their followers and not to do anything that gives him the colour and character of their enemies. His established course is obedience to the commands of the Shari'ah. If he slips, he quickly regrets it, reproaches himself, and tries to make amends for his mistake.

As for the word **"disobedient" ('asi)**, if it refers to someone who disobeys Allah out of deliberate hostility and opposition toward Him, then such a person is certainly an enemy of Allah—and whoever is an enemy of Allah is also an enemy of the Ahlul Bayt (as).

However, such an interpretation of the word 'asi seems unlikely in this particular tradition, because the Imam (as) is addressing those who claim to be Shi'ah and lovers of the Ahlul Bayt (as).

Apparently, what is intended is a sinner who does not commit sin out of rebellion or a deliberate intention to oppose Allah, but who has nevertheless been deceived and, through the sin he has committed, has placed himself in the ranks of the enemies of Allah and the Ahlul Bayt (as).

From the perspective of his action, such a person has acted like an enemy of the Ahlul Bayt (as), because he has performed a deed characteristic of their opponents and enemies.

Consider an example.

Suppose there were a gathering consisting of supporters and opponents of the Ahlul Bayt (as), with each group identifiable by the colour of its clothing.

Through his act of disobedience, the sinful believer has temporarily put on the clothing of the opposing group. If a photograph of both groups were taken at that very moment, he too would appear among the opponents.
The great danger is that Allah may cause him to die while he is in precisely that state. If this occurs, it becomes clear that he was among the wretched and failed to place himself among the felicitous.
A person must therefore seek Allah's help and benefit from the guidance of the Imams (as).
The final sentence of the tradition indicates that through serious attention to one's deeds and the observance of wara', a person may attain the wilayah of the Ahlul Bayt (as):

ما تُنالَ وِلايَتُنا اِلّا بِالعَمَلِ وَ الوَرَعِ

"Our wilayah cannot be attained except through deeds and wara'."
The restrictive form of this statement—**"cannot be attained except…"**—makes clear that, even if we do not say that the very foundation of wilayah itself depends upon this, then at the very least **certain degrees of wilayah cannot be attained without wara' and serious commitment to righteous action.**
A person who wishes his faith to become **mustaqarr—firmly established**—and who does not wish to face the danger of losing his faith at the time of death must strengthen and consolidate the foundations of faith within his heart through **wara'**, so that his faith is not lost when confronted by the slightest threat.

The Path to a Good End

Among the instructions of Imam al-Sadiq (as), which he conveyed in writing, is the following:

اِن اَردتَ اَن يُختَمَ بِخَيرٍ عَمَلَکَ حَتّی تُقبَضَ وَ اَنتَ فی اَفضَلِ الاَعمالِ، فَعَظِّم لِلّهِ حَقَّهُ اَن تَبذُلَ نَعماءَهُ فی مَعاصیهِ وَ اَن تَغتَرَّ بِحِلمِهِ عَنکَ وَ اَکرِم کُلَّ مَن وَجَدتُهُ یَذکُرُنا اَو یَنتَحِلُ مَوَدَّتَنا. ثُمَّ لَیسَ عَلَیکَ صادِقاً کانَ اَو کاذِباً اِنَّما لَکَ نَبِیُّکَ وَ عَلَیهِ کِذبُهُ.

"If you wish your deeds to come to a good end, so that your soul is taken while you are engaged in the best of deeds, then hold Allah's right in such high regard that you do not use His blessings in acts of disobedience to Him, and do not become deceived by His forbearance toward you.

“And honour everyone whom you find remembering us [the Ahlul Bayt (as)] with goodness or professing love for us. It is not your responsibility whether he is truthful or lying. You will benefit from your own good intention, while the harm of his lie will fall upon him.”
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, p. 351, hadith 49, from *‘Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha (as)*.
These instructions describe some practical manifestations of **wara‘** to which the Shi‘ah should remain committed so that they may be protected from an evil end.

The Strong Emphasis of the Imams (as) on Wara‘

The Imams (as) were deeply concerned that their followers should observe wara‘. At times, they stated that they would not even regard a person as a true believer unless he possessed wara‘.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

اِنّا لا نَعُدُّ الرَّجُلَ مُؤمِناً حَتّى يَكُونَ لِجَميعِ اَمرِنا مُتَّبِعاً مُريداً. اَلا وَ اِنَّ مِن اتّباعِ اَمرِنا وَ اِرادَتِهِ الوَرَعَ. فَتَزَيَّنُوا بِهِ يَرحَمُكُمُ اللهُ وَ كَبِّدُوا اَعداءَنا [بِهِ] يَنعَشُكُمُ اللهُ.

“We do not regard a person as a believer until he follows all of our commands and sincerely intends to carry them out.
“Know that among the requirements of following our command and intending to fulfil it is wara‘. Therefore, adorn yourselves with wara‘ so that Allah may have mercy upon you, and through it bring distress upon our enemies, so that Allah may strengthen and elevate you.”
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 78, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Wara‘, hadith 13.
The Shi‘ah of the Imams (as) are therefore expected to confront the enemies of the Ahlul Bayt (as) with the strength of wara‘ and, through their righteous conduct, leave no ground for their opponents to attack them.
If the people of wilayah do not possess wara‘, they give the enemies of the Imams (as) an opportunity to criticize and find fault not only with the Shi‘ah themselves, but even with the Imams (as).
In such circumstances, because of the wrongful conduct of some believers, the purified Imams (as) themselves may become the targets of hostility and disrespect.

The extent of this injustice toward the Imams (as) can be seen in the account of a man named **Abu al-Sabah al-Kinani**, who said to Imam al-Sadiq (as):
“What things we have to endure from people because of you!”
The Imam (as) asked:
“What do you have to endure from people because of me?”
He replied:
“Whenever a dispute occurs between us and someone else, he says to me: ‘You wicked Ja‘fari!’”
The Imam (as) asked:
“Do people reproach you because of me?”
He replied:
“Yes.”
The Imam (as) then said:

ما اَقَلَّ وَ اللهِ مَن يَتَّبَعُ جَعفَراً مِنكُم! اِنَّما اَصحابى مَنِ اشتَدَّ وَرَعُهُ وَ عَمِلَ لِخالِقِهِ وَ رَجا ثَوابَهُ. فَهؤُلاءِ اَصحابى.

“By Allah, how few among you truly follow Ja‘far! My companions are only those whose wara‘ is intense, who act for their Creator, and who hope for His reward. These are my companions.”
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 77, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Wara‘, hadith 6.
This, then, is the consequence when a Shi‘ah lacks wara‘—or, more precisely, when he lacks the **strong wara‘** emphasized by the Imam (as).

Imam al-Baqir’s (as) Message to His Followers

We conclude this discussion with a message from Imam al-Baqir (as) addressed to all those who love the Ahlul Bayt (as).
When **Khaythamah** came to Imam al-Baqir (as) to bid farewell, the Imam said to him:

يا خَيثَمَةُ، اَبلِغ مَن تَرى مِن مَوالينَا السَّلامَ. وَ اَوصِهِم بِتَقوَى اللهِ العَظيمِ، وَ اَن يَعُودَ غَنِيُّهُم عَلى فَقيرِهِم وَ قَوِيُّهُم عَلى ضَعيفِهِم، وَ اَن يَشهَدَ حَيُّهُم جِنازَةَ مَيِّتِهِم، وَ اَن يَتَلاقَوا فى بُيُوتِهِم. فَاِنَّ لُقِيّا بَعضُهُم بَعضاً حَياةٌ لِاَمرِنا. وَ رَحِمَ اللهُ عَبداً اَحيا اَمرَنا.

“O Khaythamah! Convey my salam to whomever you meet among our followers. Advise them to observe taqwa before Allah, the Almighty; let the wealthy among them care for the poor, and the strong among them care for the weak.

“Let those who are alive attend the funerals of those among them who die, and let them meet one another in their homes, for their meeting with one another gives life to our cause.
“May Allah have mercy upon the servant who keeps our cause alive.”
The Imam (as) then continued:

يا خَيثَمَةُ، اَبلِغ مَوالينا اَنّا لا نُغنى عَنهُم مِنَ اللهِ شَيئاً اِلّا بِعَمَلٍ وَ اَنَّهُم لَن يَنالُوا وِلايَتَنا اِلّا بَالوَرَعِ، وَ اَنَّ اَشَدَّ النّاسِ حَسرَةً يَومَ القِيامَةِ مَن وَصَفَ عَدلاً ثُمَّ خالَفَهُ اِلى غَيرِهِ.

“O Khaythamah! Convey to our followers that we cannot avail them anything before Allah except through deeds, and that they will never attain our wilayah except through wara‘.
“And the person who will experience the greatest regret on the Day of Resurrection is one who described and proclaimed what is just, but then acted contrary to it.”
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 175, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab Ziyarat al-Ikhwan, hadith 2.
The message of the Imam (as) in this tradition contains two important points. First, the followers of the Ahlul Bayt (as) must care for one another. They should remain aware of one another’s circumstances, assist one another in times of need, and maintain close bonds among themselves.
Second, they must understand that safeguarding and preserving the wilayah of the Ahlul Bayt (as) requires the observance of wara‘.
When the Imam (as) says:
“We cannot avail our followers anything before Allah except through deeds,”
the first and most fundamental meaning of **deeds (‘amal)** is the **deed of the heart**: possessing true ma‘rifah of the Ahlul Bayt (as) and submitting to their wilayah. The value of every outward deed ultimately returns to this inner act of the heart.
At the next level are the commands of the Shari‘ah, which must also be taken seriously and acted upon.
The overall conclusion, therefore, is that what constitutes the foundation of religion and leads a person to salvation in the Hereafter is **ma‘rifah and wilayah of the Ahlul Bayt (as)**—provided that the person leaves this world with that faith.

And in order to preserve and safeguard this faith until the moment of death, complete observance of the divine limits and the Islamic Shari'ah, to the level of **wara'**, is both necessary and indispensable.

The Relationship of Wilayah and Love of the Ahlul Bayt (as) with Obedience and Sin

Now that it has become clear that **religion** is nothing other than ma'rifah of the Ahlul Bayt (as) and acceptance of their wilayah, and that this is manifested in the intensity of one's love for them, we must also recognize another reality: the natural effects of wilayah and love of the Ahlul Bayt (as) are **obedience to their commands and following them**.

The greater the love, the greater and more complete the obedience and following. Allah commands His Prophet (saww):

»قُل اِن كُنتُم تُحِبُّونَ اللهَ فَاتَّبِعُونی يُحبِبكُمُ اللهُ.«

"Say: If you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you."
(Qur'an 3:31)

Love of the Ahlul Bayt (as) is not separate from love of Allah. Therefore, if one who loves the Ahlul Bayt (as) wishes to receive Allah's attention and grace, he must follow the Prophet (saww) and the Imams (as).

Sins are undoubtedly hated by Allah and by the Ahlul Bayt of 'ismah and purity (as). A person who truly loves them cannot remain indifferent and careless about acting upon their commands.

Therefore, if someone is indifferent toward carrying out their instructions, this itself indicates that his claim of love for them lacks sincerity.

Imam al-Baqir (as) explained this reality to Jabir in the following words:

حَسبُ الرَّجُلِ اَن يَقولَ: اُحِبُّ عَلِيّاً وَ اَتَوَلّاهُ ثُمَّ لا يَكُونُ مَعَ ذلِکَ فَعّالاً؟! فَلَو قالَ: اِنّی اُحَبُّ رَسُولَ اللهِ، فَرَسولُ اللهِ صلی الله عليه و آله و سلم خَيرٌ مِن عَلِیٍّ عَليه السّلام، ثُمَّ لا يَتَّبِعُ سيرَتَهُ وَ لا يَعمَلُ بِسُنَّتِهِ، ما نَفَعَهُ حُبُّهُ اِيّاهُ شَيئاً. فَاتَّقُوا اللهَ وَ اعمَلُوا لِما عِندَاللهِ. لَيسَ بَينَ اللهِ وَ بَينَ اَحَدٍ قُرابَةٌ. اَحَبُّ العِبادِ اِلَی اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ (وَ اَكرَمُهُم عَلَيهِ) اَتقاهُم وَ اَعمَلُهُم بِطاعَتِهِ.

"Is it enough for a person merely to say, 'I love Ali and accept his wilayah,' while despite this claim he does not act?

“If he were to say, ‘I love the Messenger of Allah’—and the Messenger of Allah (saww) is superior to Ali (as)—but then did not follow his conduct or act according to his Sunnah, his love for the Messenger of Allah (saww) would be of no benefit to him.

“Therefore, observe taqwa before Allah and act for that which is with Allah. There is no kinship between Allah and anyone. The most beloved servants before Allah, the Mighty and Majestic—and the most honoured in His sight—are those who possess the greatest taqwa and are the most diligent in obeying Him.”

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 74, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Ta‘ah wa al-Taqwa, hadith 3.

In the version of *Al-Majalis* and some other works, the wording **“and the Messenger”** also appears. The late ‘Allamah al-Majlisi regarded this wording as more apparent. See *Mir’at al-‘Uqul*, vol. 8, p. 51.

The Inseparable Relationship Between Faith and Deeds

It appears that in traditions such as the one above, the Imams (as) intended to distinguish **faith (iman)** from Islam in its technical, outward sense—the Islam that is established simply through verbal declaration of the shahadatayn, even without heartfelt belief, and which carries certain juridical effects in this world.

Such outward Islam does not necessarily concern itself with what exists in a person’s heart or with his deeds. Therefore, this kind of Islam does not necessarily accompany faith.

A Muslim who lacks faith may act entirely contrary to what he professes with his tongue. A person of genuine faith, however, cannot be completely indifferent in this way.

This is because faith is an **act of the heart**. A believer cannot remain entirely unconcerned about his deeds.

A Muslim may say something with his tongue and then do whatever he wishes—even if his actions were to reach the extent of killing the Prophet (saww) or the Imam (as).

Faith, however, is not like this. A person cannot merely say—simply with his tongue—“I love the Prophet (saww),” or “I love Ali (as),” and then act however he pleases.

Love is a reality of the heart. It is not like pronouncing the shahadatayn, which may be done hypocritically or for outward appearance. In the very reality of love itself, there can be no mere verbal pretence.

The stronger this inner love becomes within a person, the greater its effect upon his obedience and submission to the leaders of religion.

Therefore, from the above tradition, particularly in light of what ʻAllamah al-Majlisi has stated in his commentary in *Mir'at al-ʻUqul*, we understand the following:

If the people of wilayah, relying upon and taking comfort in their love for Amir al-Mu'minin (as), become negligent in following his Sunnah and conduct, their opponents—those who deny his wilayah—could argue against them:

"We too rely upon our love for the Messenger of Allah (saww), and therefore need not concern ourselves with following his Sunnah and conduct. Since the Messenger of Allah (saww) is superior to Ali (as), if a person can attain felicity merely by loving Ali (as) without acting, then we too can attain felicity by loving the Prophet (saww) without obeying him."

If this argument were accepted, the Shiʻah would have no answer to their opponents.

Of course, as is evident from the wording of the tradition itself, such a statement by the opponents would be nothing more than a claim.

True love for the Messenger of Allah (saww) cannot be separated from love for Amir al-Mu'minin (as). According to the explicit wording of the Qur'an in the verse of Mubahalah, together with the action of the Prophet (saww), the sacred being of Ali (as) is regarded as the **nafs—the very self—of the Noble Prophet (saww)**.

Therefore, one who truly loves the Prophet (saww) must also love Amir al-Mu'minin (as). If he does not love Ali (as), it becomes clear that his claim to love the Prophet (saww) is itself not truthful.

In general, then, those who claim to be Shiʻah must understand that they cannot neglect acting upon the commands of religion and the rulings of the Shariʻah while relying upon their love for the Ahlul Bayt (as).

The audience addressed by Imam al-Baqir (as) in the tradition narrated by Jabir consists precisely of those who claim to be Shiʻah.

At the beginning of that tradition, the Imam (as) says:

يا جابِرُ، اَيَكتَفى مَن يَنتَحِلُ التَشَيُّعَ اَن يَقُولَ بِحُبِّنا اَهلَ البَيتِ؟! فَوَاللهِ ما شيعَتُنا اِلّا مَنِ اتَّقَى اللهَ وَ اَطاعَهُ وَ ما كانُوا يُعرَفُونَ – يا جابِرُ – اِلّا بِالتَّواضُعِ وَ التَّخَشُّعِ وَ الاَمانَةِ وَ كَثرَةِ ذِكرِ اللهِ وَ الصَّومِ وَ الصَّلاةِ وَ البِرِّ بِالوالِدَينِ وَ التَّعاهُدِ لِلجيرانِ مِنَ الفُقَراءِ وَ اَهلِ المَسكَنَةِ وَ الغارِمينَ وَ الايتامِ وَ صِدقِ الحَديثِ وَ تَلاوَةِ القُرآنِ وَ كَفِّ الاَلسُنِ عَنِ النّاسِ اِلّا مِن خَيرٍ وَ كانُوا اُمَناءَ عَشائِرِهِم فِى الاَشياءِ.

"O Jabir! Is it enough for one who claims to be a Shi'ah merely to speak of loving us, the Ahlul Bayt?

"By Allah, our Shi'ah are none but those who observe taqwa before Allah and obey Him.

"O Jabir! They were known only by humility, submissiveness before Allah, trustworthiness, abundant remembrance of Allah, fasting, prayer, kindness toward parents, caring for poor and needy neighbours, those burdened by debt and orphans, truthfulness in speech, recitation of the Qur'an, restraining their tongues from speaking about people except with goodness, and by being trusted by their people in all matters."

These and similar qualities are what the Imams (as) expect from the people of wilayah, and they desire that their followers should be recognized by such characteristics.

The Wilayah of the Imams (as) as the Source of All Goodness

In general, it may be said that righteous deeds are the branches of the fruitful tree of the wilayah and love of the Ahlul Bayt (as).

Conversely, sins and evil deeds correspond to the denial of wilayah and are signs of enmity toward the Ahlul Bayt (as).

A person who regards himself as one of the people of wilayah should not, through his actions, cling to the branches of the tree of hostility toward the Imams (as).

Imam al-Sadiq (as) expressed this reality as follows:

نَحنُ اَصلُ كُلِّ خَيرٍ. وَ مِن فُرُوعِنا كُلُّ بِرٍّ. فَمِنَ البِرِّ التَّوحيدُ وَ الصَّلاةُ وَ الصِّيامُ وَ كَظمُ الغَيظُ وَ العَفوُ عَنِ المُسيءِ وَ رَحمَةُ الفَقيرِ وَ تَعَهُّدُ الجارِ وَ الاِقرارِ بِالفَضلِ لِاَهلِهِ.

وَ عَدُوُّنا اَصلُ كُلِّ شَرٍّ. وَ مِن فُرُوعِهِم كُلُّ قَبيحٍ وَ فاحِشَةٍ. فَمِنهُمُ الكَذِبُ وَ البُخلُ وَ النَّميمَةُ وَ القَطيعَةُ وَ اَكلُ الرِّبا وَ اَكلُ مالِ اليَتيمِ بِغَيرِ حَقِّهِ وَ تَعَدّى الحُدُودِ الَّتى اَمَرَ اللهَ وَ رُكُوبُ الفَواحِشِ ما ظَهَرَ مِنها وَ ما بَطَنَ وَ الزِّنا وَ السَّرِقَةُ وَ كُلُّ ما وافَقَ ذلِکَ مِنَ القَبيحِ. فَكَذَبَ مَن زَعَمَ اَنَّهُ مَعَنا وَ هُوَ مُتَعَلِّقٌ بِفُرُوعِ غَيرِنا.

"We are the root of every good, and every act of righteousness is among our branches. Among these acts of righteousness are Tawhid, prayer, fasting, restraining anger, forgiving the wrongdoer, showing mercy to the poor, caring for one's neighbour, and acknowledging the merit of those who possess it.

"Our enemy is the root of every evil, and every ugly and indecent act is among their branches. Among these are lying, miserliness, tale-bearing, severing ties, consuming usury, wrongfully consuming the property of an orphan, transgressing the limits commanded by Allah, committing indecencies—whether open or hidden—adultery, theft, and every other evil resembling these.

"Therefore, the one who claims to be with us while clinging to the branches of others has lied."

Rawdat al-Kafi, p. 242, hadith 336.

In this noble tradition, Imam al-Sadiq (as) intends to distinguish clearly between the ranks of those who believe in wilayah and the ranks of the enemies of the Ahlul Bayt (as).

If the people of wilayah were to stand on one side and the enemies of the Ahlul Bayt (as) on the other, then from the perspective of our Imams (as), the banner and distinguishing sign of their friends would be **obedience and righteous deeds**, while the banner and distinguishing mark of their opponents would be **sins and evil actions**.

Thus, every good deed that originally arises from the guidance and instruction of the Ahlul Bayt (as), and which is attained through the blessing of their wilayah, is a sign identifying their friends.

If one of their friends commits a sin, however, then through that sin he has, in effect, put on the clothing of the enemies of the Ahlul Bayt (as) and unintentionally placed himself among their opponents.

Of course, so long as such a person has not lost his love and wilayah, he still truly belongs to the group of their lovers. But through his evil deeds, he has taken on the colour of their enemies.

He must therefore, through repentance and seeking forgiveness, free himself as quickly as possible from this artificial appearance and return to the ranks of the people of wilayah.

Do Not Be Deceived!

The natural course, and the one prescribed by the Ahlul Bayt (as), is therefore that **the people of wilayah should also be people of righteous action**.
The greater and higher their love and wilayah become, the greater and better their obedience to the commands of the Ahlul Bayt (as) should become.
For this reason, the Imams (as) strongly warned their followers against becoming negligent in acts of obedience or careless in avoiding sins merely because they relied upon their love for the Ahlul Bayt (as).
Imam al-Baqir (as) said:

وَ اللهِ ما مَعَنا مِنَ اللهِ بَراءَةٌ. وَ لا بَينَنا وَ بَينَ اللهِ قَرابَةٌ. وَ لا لَنا عَلَى اللهِ حُجَّةٌ. وَ لا نُقَرَّبُ اِلى اللهِ اِلّا بِالطّاعَةِ. فَمَن كانَ مِنكُم مُطيعاً لِلّهِ، تَنفَعُهُ وِلايَتُنا. وَ مَن كانَ مِنكُم عاصِياً لِلّهِ، لَم تَنفَعهُ وُلايَتُنا. وَيحَكُم! لا تَغتَرُّوا! وَيحَكُم! لا تَغتَرُّوا!

“By Allah, we possess no guarantee of exemption from Allah, nor is there any kinship between us and Allah. We have no claim against Allah, and we do not attain nearness to Allah except through obedience.
“Therefore, whoever among you is obedient to Allah will benefit from our wilayah, while whoever among you is disobedient to Allah will not benefit from our wilayah.
“Woe to you! Do not be deceived! Woe to you! Do not be deceived!”
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 75, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Ta‘ah wa al-Taqwa, hadith 6, from Imam al-Baqir (as).
The word **bara’ah** in this tradition means exemption and deliverance from the Fire and divine punishment.
When the Imam (as) says that they do not carry such an exemption with them, it means that no one should imagine that merely by accepting the wilayah and love of the Ahlul Bayt (as), he has automatically received a decree guaranteeing exemption from Allah’s punishment.
A person must not think that he may then commit whatever sins he wishes, disobey the Ahlul Bayt (as) however he pleases, and remain completely confident

that under all circumstances he has escaped the Fire of divine wrath and will never face divine punishment.
It is precisely to prevent such a deviation that the Imam (as) says: if a person is on the path of obedience to Allah, our wilayah benefits him; but if he is on the path of sin and opposition to Allah, our wilayah does not benefit him.
He must therefore never allow himself to become deceived or complacent.

The Restraining Effect of Love for the Ahlul Bayt (as) upon Sin

At this point, to clarify how wilayah and love of the Ahlul Bayt (as) benefit a person, it is necessary to explain somewhat the inward and experiential relationship between **wilayah and love**, on the one hand, and **obedience and abstention from sin**, on the other.
As a preliminary point, we should remember that love has different degrees of strength and weakness. Among different people, and even in the same person toward the same object of love, it may increase or decrease.
Not everyone who loves something possesses the same degree of love. Nor does the love of a particular individual necessarily remain fixed and unchanging.
Moreover, every degree of love produces certain effects that may not exist at its lower degrees.
To the extent that a person loves someone, he cannot remain indifferent toward what that beloved loves or hates.
If his love becomes intense, he will never willingly do something that causes pain or displeasure to his beloved. He may not even entertain the thought of doing it.
Consider, then, a person who loves the Ahlul Bayt (as).
When he attends a gathering in which they are remembered and the flame of their love rises strongly within his heart, he experiences himself as loving them more intensely than at other times.
If, in that state, he were asked:
“Are you willing to return to the sins you used to commit?”
From the depths of his heart he would answer:
“No.”
Why?

Because at that moment his whole being feels repelled by everything hated by the Ahlul Bayt (as). Due to the intensity of his love for them, he does not even think of returning to his previous sins.
If that same state remained with him after the gathering ended, he would never pursue sin.
Usually, however, this does not happen. The intensity of his love for them decreases and becomes weaker.
We therefore recognize from our own inward experience that **love of the Ahlul Bayt (as) has the inherent effect of restraining a person from sin**.
In this respect, love of the Ahlul Bayt (as) produces an effect similar to the state of **tawbah—repentance**.
When a repentant person sincerely regrets his past and firmly resolves to abandon sin, his repentance at that moment is genuine. It cannot be said that he is lying in his repentance.
Nevertheless, once that state passes, he may again commit a sin and thereby break his repentance.
The same applies to one who loves the Ahlul Bayt (as). We cannot simply say that a sinful person is necessarily insincere in his love for them.
It is true that a **high degree of love is incompatible with committing sin**, but a person does not always remain at the peak of love. The intensity of his love may decline without his love disappearing altogether.
Thus, the difference lies in the varying intensity and weakness of the state of repentance and remorse, or of the state of attention, devotion and love toward the Ahlul Bayt (as).
An intense degree of love for the Ahlul Bayt (as) prevents a person from committing sin, because the attraction drawing him toward them becomes so powerful that it protects him from falling into the trap of carnal desire and being pulled toward sin.
But as love becomes weaker, this restraining effect also becomes weaker.
It may become so weak that a person's lower desires overpower him.
More dangerous still, in some individuals love for the Ahlul Bayt (as) may, for a time—even if only briefly and temporarily—disappear altogether. In such a state,

the person may no longer hesitate before committing sin and may even become capable of serious wrongdoing.

The Different States of One Who Loves the Ahlul Bayt (as)

The inner state of a person who loves the Ahlul Bayt (as), in relation to their love and wilayah, can therefore possess many different degrees.
For the purposes of the present discussion, these may be divided into **two broad ranges**, each of which itself contains different degrees.
The **first range** is the state in which love and attachment to the Ahlul Bayt (as) and the noble ‘Itrah are alive and intense within a person. He finds himself strongly affected by their attraction and love.
In this state, not only does he refrain from committing sin, he does not even think of committing it. He also feels intense shame and remorse over the sins he committed in the past.
The **second range** is the state in which that fire of love has subsided and the person has lost the intense orientation of his heart toward the Ahlul Bayt (as), yet he has not become inwardly estranged from them.
The bond of his heart has weakened, but it has not been severed.
His attraction toward them has diminished, but it has not disappeared.
If such a person comes under the influence of his lower desires and passions, he may be unable to restrain himself and may consequently slip into sin.
This too depends upon the amount of love remaining in his heart. If the remaining love is strong enough to confront and overcome his lower desires, it will protect him from slipping.
A lover of the Ahlul Bayt (as) within this second range, so long as he has not been overcome by his desires and passions, at least possesses an inward **resolve to obey their commands**.
Having a **resolve to obey and to refrain from sin** is itself an act of the heart. It is different from the actual outward performance of obedience or sin, which may be called **actual obedience** or **actual disobedience**.
Actual obedience means actually performing an act of obedience, while actual disobedience means actually committing a sin.

The **resolve to obey and refrain from sin**, however, refers to an inward state in which a person does not intend to disobey; rather, his intention and settled disposition are to obey the commands of his Imams (as).
This stage precedes the outward occurrence of obedience or sin.
Now, if such a person encounters something that strongly attracts him toward sin, the weakness of his love for the Ahlul Bayt (as) may cause him to be overcome, and he may commit the sin.
Perhaps only a short time later he comes to himself, deeply regrets what he has done, and feels ashamed and embarrassed before his beloved.
Nevertheless, during those moments of sin he slipped: he moved away from the active state of love for his Imams (as) and fell into heedlessness.
In such a state, although the sin itself constitutes disobedience and opposition to Allah and the Ahlul Bayt (as), the sinner himself—despite being guilty of sin—does not necessarily intend hostility toward Allah, nor is he an enemy of the Ahlul Bayt (as).
This is because he did not commit that evil act with the intention of rebellion, defiance, or opposition to Allah and the Ahlul Bayt (as).
For this reason, once he becomes aware of his mistake, he will normally become deeply distressed, regret what he has done, and seek forgiveness at the divine threshold.
Thus, it is possible for one who loves the Ahlul Bayt (as) temporarily and fleetingly to lose the active state of love toward them. In such circumstances, at the very least, through heedlessness he may no longer possess the resolve to obey, and he may even form a resolve to disobey and commit sin.
Yet even then, he does not necessarily intend hostility toward Allah or the Ahlul Bayt (as).
This is the lowest level within the second range.
If such a condition is repeatedly allowed to occur, it becomes dangerous. It may eventually lead to **divine khidhlan**—being deprived of divine assistance—and may result in a person's faith being taken away from him.

But if Allah and the Ahlul Bayt (as) bestow their grace upon him, he repents from his sin. So long as he retains their love and wilayah, the promise of divine forgiveness and mercy continues to apply to him.

The Reciprocal Effect of Love for the Imams (as) and Acts of Obedience

There is another important point.
As a person's love for the Ahlul Bayt (as) increases, his eagerness to perform acts of obedience also increases.
At the same time, however, satanic temptations and opportunities for deception may also become greater.
Therefore, if through the guidance of the Ahlul Bayt (as) he learns the ways of confronting Satan and puts those teachings into practice, he will receive greater tawfiq in performing acts of obedience.
From the other direction, every good deed he performs brings him a higher degree of love for the Ahlul Bayt (as).
Thus, **righteous deeds and the love and wilayah of the Ahlul Bayt (as) have a reciprocal relationship: each strengthens and increases the other.**
Conversely, the weaker and lesser a person's love for the Ahlul Bayt (as) becomes, the more easily and quickly he falls into sin.
And from the other direction, every evil deed a person commits takes him at least one degree farther away from love of the Ahlul Bayt (as) and one degree closer toward hostility and enmity toward them.
Thus, evil deeds likewise have a direct relationship with the weakening of love for the Ahlul Bayt (as) and movement toward opposition to them.

Hostility toward the Ahlul Bayt (as) as a Result of Persisting in Sin

Sometimes a sin that a person regards as insignificant becomes the cause of Allah's displeasure with him. If he persists in sin and becomes careless and indifferent toward it, his condition may eventually lead him to hostility and hatred toward the Ahlul Bayt (as).
Amir al-Mu'minin (as) said:

ما مِن عَبدٍ اِلّا وَ عَلَيهِ اَربَعُونَ جُنَّةً حَتّى يَعمَلَ اَربَعينَ كَبيرَةً. فَاِذا عَمِلَ اَربَعينَ كَبيرَةً، اِنكَشَفَت عَنهُ الجُنَنُ. فَيُوحِيَ اللهُ اِلَيهِم اَنِ استُرُوا عَبدى بِاَجنِحَتِكُم. فَتَستُرُهُ المَلائِكَةُ بِاَجنِحَتِها. فَما يَدَعُ شَيئاً مِنَ القَبيحِ اِلّا قارَفَهُ حَتّى يَمتَدِحَ اِلَى النّاسِ بِفِعلِهِ القَبيحِ. فَيَقُولُ المَلائِكَةُ: يا رَبِّ هذا عَبدُکَ ما يَدَعُ شَيئاً اِلّا رَكِبَهُ. وَ اِنّا لَنَستَحيى مِمّا يَصنَعُ. فَيوحِيَ اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ اِلَيهِم اَنِ ارفَعُوا اَجنِحَتِكُم عَنهُ. فَاِذا فَعَلَ ذلِکَ، اَخَذَ فى بُغضِنا اَهلَ البَيتِ. فَعِندَ ذلِکَ يَنهَتِکُ سِترُهُ فِى السَّماءِ وَ سِترُهُ فِى الاَرضِ. فَيَقُولُ المَلائِكَةُ: يا رَبِّ هذا عَبدُکَ قَد بَقِيَ مَهتُوکَ السِّترِ. فَيُوحِى اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ اِلَيهِم: لَو كانَت للهِ فيهِ حاجَةٌ ما اَمَرَكُم اَن تَرفَعُوا اَجنِحَتِكُم عَنهُ.

“There is no servant except that forty coverings are placed over him until he commits forty major sins. When he has committed forty major sins, those coverings are removed from him.

“Allah then reveals to the angels: ‘Cover My servant with your wings.’ So the angels cover him with their wings.

“Thereafter, he leaves no ugly deed without committing it, until he even begins to boast before people about his evil deeds.

“The angels then say: ‘Our Lord! This servant of Yours leaves no sin without committing it, and we are ashamed of what he does.’

“Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, then reveals to them: ‘Raise your wings from him.’

“When this happens, he begins to develop hatred toward us, the Ahlul Bayt. At that point, his covering is torn away both in heaven and on earth.

“The angels say: ‘Our Lord! This servant of Yours has been left with his covering torn away.’

“Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, reveals to them: ‘Had Allah desired good for him, He would not have commanded you to raise your wings from him.’”

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 279, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Kaba’ir, hadith 9.

If, through carelessness and persistence in sin, a person reaches the point of hatred toward the Ahlul Bayt (as), he loses the very foundation of his religion and faith.

Love and wilayah are the reality of faith and the spirit of religion. Without them, a person will not attain a good end.

The Messenger of Allah (saww) guaranteed Paradise for one who leaves this world with love for the Ahlul Bayt (as):

اَلا وَ مَن ماتَ عَلی حُبِّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ فَاَنَا کَفیلُهُ بِالجَنَّةِ. قالَها ثَلاثاً.

“Know that whoever dies upon the love of the Family of Muhammad, I am his guarantor for Paradise.”
He repeated this three times.
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 125, hadith 53, from *Bisharat al-Mustafa*.

The Effects of Dying with Love or Hatred toward the Ahlul Bayt (as)

In general, all the traditions that describe the people of love and wilayah of the Ahlul Bayt (as) as felicitous and saved refer to those who **leave this world in that state**. In some traditions, this condition is explicitly stated.
Regarding the noble verse:

»قُل لا اَسالُکُم عَلَیهِ اَجراً اِلّا المَوَدَّةَ فِی القُربی«

“Say: I ask of you no reward for it except love for my near relatives.”
(Qur’an 42:23)
It has been narrated from the Messenger of Allah (saww):

مَن ماتَ عَلی حُبِّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم ماتَ شَهیداً. اَلا وَ مَن ماتَ عَلی حُبِّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم ماتَ مَغفُوراً لَهُ. اَلا وَ مَن ماتَ عَلی حُبِّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم ماتَ تائِباً. اَلا وَ مَن ماتَ عَلی حُبِّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم ماتَ مُؤمِناً مُستَکمِلَ الایمانِ. اَلا وَ مَن ماتَ عَلی حُبِّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم بَشَّرَهُ مَلَکُ المَوتِ بِالجَنَّةِ ثُمَّ مُنکَرٌ وَ نَکیرٌ. اَلا وَ مَن ماتَ عَلی حُبِّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم یُزَفُّ اِلَی الجَنَّةِ کَما تُزَفُّ العَرُوسِ اِلی بَیتِ زَوجِها. اَلا وَ مَن ماتَ عَلی حُبِّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم جَعَلَ اللهُ زُوّارَ قَبرِهِ المَلائِکَةَ بِالرَّحمَةِ. اَلا وَ مَن ماتَ عَلی حُبِّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم ماتَ عَلَی السُّنَةِ وَ الجَماعَةِ. اَلا وَ مَن ماتَ عَلی بُغضِ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صلی الله علیه و آله و محمد جاءَ یَومَ القِیامَةِ مَکتوباً بَینَ عَینَیهِ: آیِسٌ مِن رَحمَةِ اللهِ. اَلا وَ مَن ماتَ عَلی بُغضِ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم لَم یَشُمَّ رائِحَةَ الجَنَّةِ.

“Whoever dies upon the love of the Family of Muhammad (saww) dies as a martyr.
“Know that whoever dies upon the love of the Family of Muhammad (saww) dies forgiven.
“Know that whoever dies upon the love of the Family of Muhammad (saww) dies repentant.

“Know that whoever dies upon the love of the Family of Muhammad (saww) dies as a believer whose faith is complete.
“Know that whoever dies upon the love of the Family of Muhammad (saww) is given the glad tidings of Paradise by the Angel of Death, and then by Munkar and Nakir.
“Know that whoever dies upon the love of the Family of Muhammad (saww) will be escorted toward Paradise just as a bride is escorted to the home of her husband.
“Know that whoever dies upon the love of the Family of Muhammad (saww), Allah will appoint the angels of mercy as visitors to his grave.
“Know that whoever dies upon the love of the Family of Muhammad (saww) dies upon the Sunnah and the community of truth.
“Know that whoever dies with hatred toward the Family of Muhammad (saww) will come on the Day of Resurrection with these words written between his eyes: ‘Despairing of the mercy of Allah.’
“Know that whoever dies with hatred toward the Family of Muhammad (saww) will not smell the fragrance of Paradise.”
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 27, pp. 111–112, quoting the author of *Al-Kashshaf* and al-Tha‘labi.
Thus, all the promises given to those who love the Ahlul Bayt (as), and conversely all the warnings directed toward their enemies, relate to the **state in which they die**.
Since no one knows with certainty what his own state will be at the moment of death, a lover of the Ahlul Bayt (as) cannot become complacent in this world merely because of his present love and wilayah. He cannot rely upon his present state while becoming careless about his deeds or indifferent toward observing the commands of the Shari‘ah.

Part Three: Ma‘rifah of Imam al-‘Asr (atfs) During the Ghaybah

Chapter One: The Essence of Religion — Ma‘rifah of Imam al-‘Asr (atfs)

Ma‘rifah of Imam al-‘Asr (atfs) — A Necessary Condition of Religious Commitment

From the preceding discussions, it became clear that true religious commitment is realized only through **ma‘rifah of the Imam (as)**.
Thus, one who truly knows the Imam has, in reality, also known Allah and the Prophet (saww). As long as ma‘rifah of the Imam (as) exists, the very foundation of religion remains preserved.
Conversely, one who does not possess ma‘rifah of the Imam has, in reality, not truly accepted Tawhid and Prophethood either. According to the Qur’an and the Sunnah, such a person is regarded as being without true religion.
The point to be discussed now is that everything stated thus far concerning ma‘rifah of the Imam (as) is ultimately concentrated in the ma‘rifah of the **last Imam and the Hujjah of Allah—the sacred existence of Hazrat Hujjat ibn al-Hasan (atfs).**
One who accepts the Imams appointed by Allah must necessarily believe in the last of them—the living Imam who exists in the present age.
Acceptance of the previous Imams without belief in the Imam of the Age (as) is of no benefit.
For this reason, it has been said:

لا يَكُونُ العَبدُ مُؤمِناً حَتّى يَعرِفَ اللهَ وَ رَسُولَهُ وَ الأَئِمَّةِ وَ كُلَّهُم وَ اِمامَ زَمانِهِ وَ يَرُدَّ اِلَيهِ وَ يُسَلِّمَ لَهُ.

“A servant will not be a believer until he knows Allah, His Messenger, all of the Imams, and the Imam of his own time; and until he refers matters to him and submits to him.”
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 180, Kitab al-Hujjah, Bab Ma‘rifat al-Imam wa al-Radd Ilayhi, hadith 2, from Imam al-Baqir or Imam al-Sadiq (as).
Although the tradition explicitly mentions ma‘rifah of **all the Imams**, it then separately mentions the Imam of one’s own time. This is an instance of

mentioning the particular after the general in order to emphasize its special importance.
It demonstrates the central role that ma'rifah of the Imam of every age plays in the realization of faith.
All previous forms of ma'rifah, without ma'rifah of the Imam of one's own time, are of no benefit to a person and do not bring him out of irreligion and misguidance.
What brings a human being out of irreligion and the belief of Jahiliyyah into the light of faith and divine guidance is none other than **ma'rifah of the Imam of his time**.
This meaning has been narrated from the Noble Prophet (saww) by both Shi'ah and Sunni sources:

مَن ماتَ وَ لَم يَعرِف اِمامَ زَمانِهِ، ماتَ ميتَةً جاهِلِيَّةً.

"Whoever dies without knowing the Imam of his time dies the death of Jahiliyyah."
Kamal al-Din, chapter 38, hadith 9. The late 'Allamah al-Amini has also cited the Prophet's tradition from a number of Sunni sources, including *Sahih Muslim*. See *Al-Ghadir*, vol. 10, p. 360. It should be noted that in some Shi'ah sources, including *Al-Kafi*, the tradition has also been transmitted with different wording.
To die a **death of Jahiliyyah** means to die without true knowledge of Allah and the Messenger of Allah (saww).
Therefore, one who has not attained ma'rifah of the Imam of his time has, in reality, not emerged from the misguidance of the Age of Ignorance, whose people did not truly know Allah and His Messenger.
Consequently, ma'rifah of Allah and His Messenger, if it does not lead to ma'rifah of the Imam of the Age (as), will not benefit a person or make him truly religious.
Regarding the above expression, someone asked Imam al-Sadiq (as):

»جاهِلِيَّةً جَهلاءَ اَو جاهلِيَّةً لا يَعرِفُ اِمامَه؟«

"Does it mean a Jahiliyyah of complete ignorance, or merely a Jahiliyyah in the sense that he does not know his Imam?"
The Imam (as) replied:

جاهِلِيَّةَ كُفرٍ وَ نِفاقٍ وَ ضَلالٍ.

“A Jahiliyyah of kufr, hypocrisy, and misguidance.”
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 377, Kitab al-Hujjah, Bab Man Mata wa Laysa Lahu Imam..., hadith 3.
In other words, the absence of ma‘rifah of Imam al-‘Asr (as) results in **kufr, hypocrisy, or misguidance**.
A person may lack ma‘rifah because Allah has not made the Imam of the Age (as) known to him, without any negligence or failure on his own part. Such a condition is called **dalal—misguidance**—and is synonymous here with **istid‘af**.
In this state, the person is not at fault, but he nevertheless remains deprived of divine guidance and true religious commitment.
The states of kufr and hypocrisy, however, relate to someone for whom the divine identification has taken place, but who has fallen short in accepting and submitting to it.
This can take two forms.
Either he openly expresses his denial and refusal to submit, which is called **kufr**, or he conceals that denial, which is **nifaq—hypocrisy**.
In all three cases, the person has ultimately remained outside the path of servitude to Allah and does not attain a good end if he dies in that state.

Ma‘rifah of Imam al-‘Asr (atfs) as an Objective in Itself

In reality, if a person knows the Imam of the Age (as) yet refuses to submit to him, he loses everything.
All good deeds and righteous actions are accepted from a person when accompanied by ma‘rifah of Imam al-‘Asr (as); without it, none of them is accepted.
It should not be imagined that all this emphasis upon the importance of ma‘rifah of Imam al-‘Asr (as) exists merely because the rulings of religion and the Shari‘ah are obtained through him.
In other words, the value of ma‘rifah of Imam al-‘Asr (as) is not merely **instrumental (tariqiyyah)**—as a means of learning the branches and practical rulings of religion.
Beyond this, and more importantly, ma‘rifah of Imam al-‘Asr (atfs) possesses **intrinsic and objective significance (mawdu‘iyyah)**.

Indeed, the very reality of religion is summed up in ma'rifah of him.
More fundamentally than worshipping Allah through prayer, fasting, Hajj and the other acts of worship, Allah is worshipped through **ma'rifah of the Imam of the Age (as)**.
Belief in his Imamate, referring to him, and submitting to him are themselves among the highest expressions of servitude to Allah and constitute the spirit of all acts of worship.
Above everything else, Allah is served through this belief and acceptance of wilayah.

The Purpose of Creation: Ma'rifah of Imam al-'Asr (atfs)

Everything stated above regarding ma'rifah of Imam al-'Asr (as) possessing objective significance applies in relation to everything **other than ma'rifah of Allah**.
This is because everything—including ma'rifah of the Imam (as)—has an instrumental role in relation to **ma'rifatullah, the ma'rifah of Allah**.
Acting according to the Shari'ah and submitting to the Prophet (saww) and the Imam (as) acquire their value because they lie upon the path of submission to Allah, the Exalted.
Fundamentally, the value of everything lies in the degree to which it makes a human being more humble and submissive before Allah.
The previous discussions may therefore be summarized as follows:
Ma'rifah of Imam al-'Asr (as) is a means to ma'rifah of Allah, and it is a unique and irreplaceable means for which there is no substitute.
At the same time, ma'rifah of the Imam (as) possesses objective significance in itself. All the commands of religion remain unacceptable unless they lead the person toward submission and humility before the Imam (as) and his wilayah.
Thus, servitude to Allah ultimately requires that a person submit to ma'rifah of the Imam of his time and fulfil his responsibilities toward him.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) narrated:

خَرَجَ الحُسَينُ بنُ عَلِّي عليه السّلام ذاتَ يَومٍ عَلى اَصحابِهِ فَقالَ بَعدَ الحَمدِ لِلّهِ جَلَّ وَ عَزَّ وَ الصَّلاةِ عَلى مُحَمَّدٍ صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم: يا اَيُّهَا النّاسَ، اِنَّ اللهَ – وَ اللهِ – ما خَلَقَ العِبادَ اِلّا لِيَعرِفُوهُ، فَاِذا عَرَفُوهُ عَبَدُوهُ، فَاِذا عَبَدُوهُ استَغنَوا بِعِبادَتِهِ عَن عِبادَةِ مِن سِواهُ.

فَقالَ لَهُ رَجُلٌ: بِاَبى اَنتَ وَ اُمّى يَابنَ رَسُولِ اللهِ، ما مَعرِفَةُ اللهِ؟ قالَ عليه السّلام: مَعرِفَةُ اَهلِ كُلِّ زَمانٍ اِمامَهُمُ الَّذى يَجِبُ عَلَيهِم طاعَتُهُ.

One day Imam Husayn ibn Ali (as) came before his companions and, after praising Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, and sending blessings upon Muhammad (saww), said:

“O people! By Allah, Allah did not create His servants except that they should attain ma‘rifah of Him. When they attain ma‘rifah of Him, they worship Him; and when they worship Him, through worshipping Him they become independent of worshipping anyone other than Him.”

A man then asked:

“May my father and mother be sacrificed for you, O son of the Messenger of Allah! What is ma‘rifah of Allah?”

Imam Husayn (as) replied:

“It is that the people of every age know the Imam of their time, whose obedience is obligatory upon them.”

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 23, p. 93, hadith 40, from *Kanz al-Fawa’id* of al-Karajuki. The first part of this tradition was cited earlier.

If what has been discussed from the beginning of this book up to this point has been properly understood, it becomes easy to accept that **ma‘rifah of Allah cannot be realized except through ma‘rifah of the Imam of the Age (as).**

It is for this reason that Imam Husayn (as) interpreted ma‘rifah of Allah in terms of ma‘rifah of the Imam of one’s age.

This does not mean that Allah, the Exalted, is the Imam of the Age, nor that the Imam of the Age is Allah. Nor is there any question whatsoever of incarnation, indwelling, or unity between them.

Rather, the point is simply this:

If a person knows his Imam as he ought to be known and submits to him, the greatest thing he receives through the guidance of the Imam (as) is that he is

preserved upon the path of ma‘rifah of Allah and is enabled to attain its higher degrees.
And this ma‘rifah of Allah is itself the source of every virtue.

The Wisdom Granted to Luqman

Ma‘rifah of the Imam is therefore the source and fountainhead of every good for the one who possesses it, and it guarantees his complete felicity. Through possessing this ma‘rifah, he attains everything.
This is the very ma‘rifah referred to in the Qur’an as **hikmah—wisdom**, where Allah says concerning Luqman:

»وَ لَقَد آتَينا لُقمانَ الحِكمَةَ.«

“And indeed We granted Luqman wisdom.”
(Qur’an 31:12)
According to Imam al-Sadiq (as), the **hikmah** mentioned in this verse was Luqman’s ma‘rifah of the Imam of his own time.
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 24, p. 86, hadith 1, from *Tafsir al-Qummi*.
Thus, the purpose of creation—which is to know and worship Allah, the Almighty—when brought into the realm of practical realization, can be summed up in a single expression:

Ma‘rifah of Imam al-‘Asr (atfs).

Only those who have attained this station have fulfilled the purpose for which they were created. Otherwise, they remain distant from what Allah has willed for them.

Chapter Two: Religious Commitment During the Ghaybah

Divine Displeasure and the Ghaybah of the Imam (as)

Allah, the Exalted, introduced the Imams from the Ahlul Bayt of the Prophet (saww) for the guidance of humanity, so that by referring to them people might be saved from misguidance and attain eternal felicity.
This was Allah’s greatest blessing upon mankind, because, as we have seen, the only means of divine guidance are these Fourteen Infallibles (as).

The Muslim Ummah was granted the honour of living alongside thirteen of these noble personalities and having the opportunity to benefit directly from their presence. Unfortunately, despite this opportunity, only a very small number made proper use of it. Nevertheless, until the time of the last Imam (as), Allah did not deprive people of the blessing of the direct presence of the Imams (as).
It should be understood that when Allah grants a person a blessing without that person having any inherent entitlement to it, this divine favour is called **fadl—divine grace**.
If, after some time, Allah takes that blessing away, no injustice has been committed against the person, because he never possessed an inherent right to receive it in the first place. The withdrawal of such a blessing is therefore entirely consistent with **'adl—divine justice**.
Allah is under no obligation always to deal with everyone solely through His fadl. At times He acts through His grace, and at other times according to His justice. Both are based upon wisdom.
At the same time, there is no necessity that we human beings must always comprehend the wisdom behind Allah's differing treatment of His creatures. Whatever He does—whether through justice or grace—is certainly wise, whether or not we understand its wisdom.
Even where understanding the wisdom behind Allah's actions is possible, it is generally through transmitted evidence that such understanding becomes available; it does not necessarily lie within the independent reach and discernment of human reason.

An Established Divine Practice Concerning the Withdrawal of Blessings

One of the divine practices explained in the Qur'an and the traditions is:

»اِنَّ اللهَ لا يُغَيِّرُ ما بِقَومٍ حَتّى يُغَيِّرُوا ما بِاَنفُسِهِم.«

"Indeed, Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves."
(Qur'an 13:11)
And:

»ذلِکَ بِاَنَّ اللهَ لَم يَکُ مُغَيِّراً نِعمَةً اَنعَمَها عَلى قَومٍ حَتّى يُغَيِّرُوا ما بِاَنفُسِهِم.«

“That is because Allah would never change a blessing which He had bestowed upon a people until they change what is within themselves.”
(Qur’an 8:53)
Imam al-Baqir (as) said:

اِنَّ اللهَ قَضى قَضاءً حَتماً لا يُنعِمُ عَلى عَبدِهِ نِعمَةً فَيَسلُبُها اِيّاهُ قَبلَ اَن يُحدِثَ العَبدُ ذَنباً يَستَوجِبُ بِذلِکَ الذَّنبِ سَلبَ تِلکَ النِّعمَةِ. وَ ذلِکَ قَولُ اللهِ: «اِنَّ اللهَ لا يُغَيِّرُ ما بِقَومٍ حَتّى يُغَيِّرُوا ما بِاَنفُسِهِم.»

“Allah has issued an irrevocable decree that when He bestows a blessing upon His servant, He does not take that blessing away from him until the servant commits a sin through which he becomes deserving of the withdrawal of that blessing. “This is the meaning of Allah’s statement: ‘Indeed, Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves.’”
Tafsir Nur al-Thaqalayn, vol. 2, p. 488.
This divine practice is one manifestation of Allah’s mercy preceding His wrath. Thus, although withdrawing a blessing from a community is not in itself an injustice toward them, according to the principle Allah Himself has established, they are not deprived of that blessing until they respond to it with ingratitude and fail to appreciate it.
With this introduction, we may say that although the complete wisdom behind the Ghaybah of Imam al-‘Asr (as) has not been made clear to us—and according to the traditions concerning this matter, its reason will become apparent after his Reappearance—one of the reasons and wisdoms mentioned for the Ghaybah relates directly to the people themselves: **Allah’s displeasure with the ungrateful Ummah of the Prophet (saww).**
The blessing of the presence of the Imams (as) was an immense act of divine grace toward the Muslim Ummah. Unfortunately, through their own sins, people became deprived of this blessing, and as a consequence of Allah’s displeasure with His creation, Imam al-‘Asr (as) was concealed from their sight.
Imam al-Baqir (as) said:

اِذا غَضِبَ اللهُ تَبارَکَ وَ تَعالى عَلى خَلقِهِ، نَحّانا عَن جِوارِهِم.

“When Allah, Blessed and Exalted, becomes displeased with His creation, He removes us from their proximity.”
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 343, Kitab al-Hujjah, Bab fi al-Ghaybah, hadith 31.

The availability of the Imams to the people, so that they could easily and directly refer to them, was an instance of Allah's fadl. Removing the Imam from ordinary accessibility is consistent with divine 'adl.

Divine grace had preceded this justice, but Allah's displeasure brought about a transition from grace to justice—and this displeasure itself was the consequence of the Muslims' own disobedience and sins.

In any case, it cannot be denied that being deprived during the Ghaybah of ordinary and direct access to Imam al-'Asr (as) is among the greatest forms of deprivation, and nothing else in life can truly replace it.

We are therefore neither pleased nor content with this deprivation. We are distressed by it—but not displeased with Allah, for there is no ground for dissatisfaction with His justice. Rather, we are displeased with ourselves, with our own sins, and with those whose conduct brought about the causes of this divine displeasure.

This becomes even more serious when we know that through the Ghaybah of the Imam (as), Allah tests the Ummah, and many who possess ma'rifah of the Imam will fail and be disgraced in this trial.

The Severe Test of Remaining Religious During the Ghaybah

One of the wisdoms of the Ghaybah, according to transmitted evidence, is **imtihan—divine testing**.

It is a test in which many Shi'ah will not succeed.

Imam al-Kazim (as) said:

اِنَّهُ لابُدَّ لِصاحِبِ هذَاالاَمرِ مِن غَيبَةٍ حَتّى يَرجِعَ عَن هذَا الاَمرِ مِن كانَ يَقُولُ بِهِ . اِنَّما هِيَ مِحنَةٌ مِنَ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ امتَحَنَ بِها خَلقَهُ.

"There must inevitably be a Ghaybah for the Master of this Affair, to the extent that even some of those who profess belief in this matter will turn away from it. "It is nothing but a trial from Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, through which He tests His creation."

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 336, Kitab al-Hujjah, Bab fi al-Ghaybah, hadith 2.

This particular test concerns those who already believe in Imamate. Others have failed at earlier stages and have not even reached this level of testing.

Now, during the Ghaybah of the final Imam, Allah distinguishes those who remain firm from those whose faith is weak and whose understanding is superficial.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

اَما وَ اللهِ لَيَغيبَنَّ اِمامُكُم سِنيناً مِن دَهرِكُم. وَ لَتُمَحَّصُنَّ حَتّى يُقالَ: ماتَ. قُتِلَ. هَلَکَ. بِاَيِّ وادٍ سَلَکَ؟! وَ لَتَدمَعَنَّ عَلَيهِ عُيُونُ المُؤمِنينَ وَ لَتُكفَؤُنَّ كَما تُكفَأُ السُّفُنُ فى اَمواجِ البَحرِ.

“Know that, by Allah, your Imam will certainly remain in Ghaybah for years of your lifetime, and you will certainly be subjected to severe testing and purification, until it is said: ‘He has died! He has been killed! He has perished! Into which valley has he gone?’
“The eyes of the believers will certainly shed tears for him, and you will be overturned just as ships are overturned by the waves of the sea.”
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 336, Kitab al-Hujjah, Bab fi al-Ghaybah, hadith 3.
A person must therefore be firmly grounded in his beliefs so that these hardships and adversities do not cause him to slip or become weak in his convictions.
For this reason, we should be deeply grateful to our Imams (as), who warned us about the dangers and pitfalls of the Ghaybah even before that period began.

The Fading of the Imam’s Remembrance During the Ghaybah

The trial of the Ghaybah will reach such a point that most of those who profess belief in the Imamate of the Hidden Imam will turn away from their belief. His name will seldom be mentioned and his remembrance will fade among the people.
Saqr ibn Abi Dulaf narrates:

سَمِعتُ اَباجَعفَر مُحَمَّدَ بنَ عَلِيِّ الرِّضا عليه السّلام يَقُولُ: اِنَّ الاِمامَ بَعدى، اِبنى عَلِيٌّ. اَمرُهُ اَمرى. وَ قَولُهُ قَولى. وَ طاعَتُهُ طاعَتى. وَ الاِمامُ بَعدَهُ ابنُهُ الحَسَنُ. اَمرُهُ اَمرُ اَبيه. وَ قَولُهُ قَولُ اَبيه. وَ طاعَتُهُ طاعَةُ اَبيهِ.

ثُمَّ سَكَتَ. فَقُلتُ لَهُ: يَابنَ رَسُولِ اللهِ، فَمَنِ الاِمامُ بَعدَ الحَسَنِ؟ فَبَكى عليه السّلام بُكاءً شَديداً ثُمَّ قالَ: اِنَّ مَن بَعدَ الحَسَنِ ابنُهُ القائِمُ بِالحَقِّ المُنتَظَرُ.

فَقُلتُ لَهُ: يَابنَ رَسُولِ اللهِ، لِمَ سُمِّيَ القائِمَ؟ قالَ عليه السّلام: لِاَنَّهُ يَقُومُ بَعدَ مَوتِ ذِكرِهِ وَ اِرتِدادِ اَكثَرِ القائِلينَ بِاِمامَتِهِ.

“I heard Abu Ja‘far Muhammad ibn Ali al-Ridha—Imam al-Jawad (as)—say: ‘The Imam after me is my son Ali. His command is my command, his word is my word, and obedience to him is obedience to me.

‘The Imam after him is his son Hasan. His command is the command of his father, his word is the word of his father, and obedience to him is obedience to his father.’
“The Imam then became silent.
“I asked: ‘O son of the Messenger of Allah! Who is the Imam after Hasan?’
“The Imam (as) wept intensely and then said:
‘After Hasan is his son, **al-Qa’im bi’l-Haqq, the one whose Reappearance is awaited**.’
“I asked: ‘O son of the Messenger of Allah! Why is he called al-Qa’im?’
“He replied:
‘Because he will rise after his remembrance has died away and after most of those who profess belief in his Imamate have turned away from their belief.’”
Kamal al-Din, chapter 36, hadith 3.
Indeed, disloyalty and failure to appreciate the living Imam will become so widespread during the Ghaybah that his name and remembrance will fade within society, and most of those counted among his Shi‘ah will lose the kind of belief in his Imamate that they ought to possess.

Losing One’s Religion Without Realizing It

The severity of this matter becomes even clearer when we understand that a person may lose his belief **without even realizing that it is happening**.
Nor does such a transformation necessarily require a long period of time. A single morning to evening may be enough for a person to lose his religion.
Imam al-Baqir (as) said:

لَتُمَحَّصُنَّ يا شيعَةَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم تَمحيصَ الكُحلِ فِي العَينِ. وَ اِنَّ صاحِبَ العَينِ يَدرى مَتى يَقَعُ الكُحلُ فى عَينِهِ وَ لا يَعلَمُ مَتى يَخرُجُ مِنها. وَ كَذلِکَ يُصبِحُ الرَّجُلُ عَلى شَريعَةٍ مِن اَمرِنا وَ يُمسى وَ قَد خَرَجَ مِنها؛ وَ يُمسى عَلى شَريعَةٍ مِن اَمرِنا وَ يُصبِحُ وَ قَد خَرَجَ مِنها.

“O Shi‘ah of the Family of Muhammad (saww)! You will certainly be subjected to such testing and purification as kohl is removed from the eye.
“A person knows when kohl is placed in his eye, but he does not know when it disappears from it.

“In the same way, a man may begin the morning upon the path of our affair, yet by evening he has departed from it; and he may begin the evening upon the path of our affair, yet by morning he has departed from it.”
Ghaybat al-Nu‘mani, chapter 12, hadith 12.
The Imam’s address in this tradition is to all Shi‘ah, and therefore includes even the followers of the Imams (as) who lived during the period of their presence.
If such a danger existed for those who had the opportunity to live in the presence of an Imam (as), then how serious is the danger for the Shi‘ah during the Ghaybah, when they have been afflicted by this deprivation and left in a state of bewilderment and uncertainty!

Imam al-Sadiq’s (as) Tears over the Trials of the Believers During the Ghaybah

It was precisely the severity of the trials and hardships of the Ghaybah that caused Imam al-Sadiq (as) to weep in grief over the believers who would live during that time.
Sadir al-Sayrafi narrates that he, together with Mufaddal ibn ‘Umar, Abu Basir and Aban ibn Taghlib, entered the presence of their master Imam al-Sadiq (as).
They found the Imam (as) sitting upon the ground, wearing a Khaybari cloak over his shoulders. He was weeping like a grief-stricken mother who had lost her child. Sorrow and anguish were visible upon his blessed face; his appearance had changed, and tears had moistened the area around his eyes.
In that state, the Imam (as) was addressing Imam al-Mahdi (as) with words that Sadir has transmitted.
They then said to him:
“O son of the best of mankind! May Allah never cause your eyes to weep. What event has caused your tears to flow? What has brought you to such mourning?”
The Imam (as) sighed deeply and said:

نَظَرتُ فی کِتابِ الجَفرِ صَبیحَةَ هذَا الیَومِ. وَ هُوَ الکِتابُ المُشتَمِلُ عَلی عِلمِ المَنایا وَ البَلایا وَ الرَّزایا وَ عِلم ما کانَ وَ ما یَکُونُ اِلی یَومِ القِیامَةِ الَّذی خَصَّ اللهُ بِهِ مُحَمَّداً صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم وَ الاَئِمَّةَ مِن بَعدِهِ علیهم السّلام. وَ تَاَمَّلتُ مِنهُ مَولِدَ قائِمِنا وَ غَیبَتَهُ وَ اِبطاءَهُ وَ طُولَ عُمرِهِ وَ بَلوَی المُؤمِنینَ فی ذلِکَ الزَّمانِ وَ تَوَلُّدَ الشُّکُوکِ فی قُلُوبِهِم مِن طُولِ غَیبَتِهِ وَ ارتِدادَ

اَکثَرِهِم عَن دینِهِم وَ خَلعَهُم رَبقَةَ الاِسلامِ مِن اَعناقِهِم؛ اَلَّتی قالَ اللهُ تَقَدَّسَ ذِکرُهُ: «وَ کُلَّ اِنسانٍ اَلزَمناهُ طائِرَهُ فی عُنُقِهِ» – یَعنِی الوِلایَةَ – فَاَخَذتَنِی الرِّقَّةُ وَ استَولَت عَلَیَّ الاَحزانُ.

"This morning I looked into the Book of al-Jafr. It is the book containing knowledge of deaths, calamities and afflictions, and knowledge of what has occurred and what will occur until the Day of Resurrection—knowledge which Allah has specially granted to Muhammad (saww) and the Imams after him (as).
"I reflected in it upon the birth of our Qa'im, his Ghaybah, the delay concerning him, the length of his life, the trials of the believers during that period, the doubts that will arise in their hearts because of the prolonged Ghaybah, the turning away of most of them from their religion, and their removing from their necks the bond of Islam concerning which Allah—Exalted is His remembrance—has said:
'And every human being, We have fastened his ta'ir to his neck' (Qur'an 17:13), meaning **wilayah**.
"My heart was overcome with tenderness, and grief overwhelmed me."
Kamal al-Din, chapter 33, hadith 51.
This compassion and grief concerned those who would lose their connection with the Imam of their time, become afflicted by doubt and uncertainty in their beliefs, and thereby fall into apostasy and irreligion.
This was what caused Imam al-Sadiq (as) to weep centuries before the period of Ghaybah arrived.

Safeguarding One's Religion During the Ghaybah

As discussed, the greatest danger threatening us during the Ghaybah of Imam al-'Asr (as) is the danger of **losing correct belief and becoming deprived of religion**. For this reason, strong and repeated instructions have been given concerning the protection of one's religion during the Ghaybah.
Imam al-Kazim (as) said:

اِذا فُقِدَ الخامِسُ مِن وُلدِ السّابِعِ، فَاللهَ اللهَ فی اَدیانِکُم لا یُزیلَنَّکُم عَنها اَحَدٌ.

"When the fifth descendant of the seventh Imam disappears, then beware—beware concerning your religion! Let no one cause you to be removed from it."
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 336, Kitab al-Hujjah, Bab fi al-Ghaybah, hadith 2.

Safeguarding one's religion during the Ghaybah is not an easy matter. Nor is it accomplished merely by making an inward decision that one wishes to preserve it. Everything has its proper means through which it must be attained. One who does not enter through the proper way should not expect to reach the desired result. The preservation of religion likewise has its own proper means.

Carefulness Concerning the Food of the Soul

One of the means of safeguarding religion is to exercise control over the books and publications one reads, the material one listens to, and the things one watches.

All of these must be approached carefully and deliberately.

Until a person is confident that what he is reading, watching or listening to is intellectually and doctrinally sound and will not weaken his beliefs, he should not expose himself to it.

Not every book should be read.

One should not sit and listen to everyone.

The gateway of the heart should not be opened to every stranger or unqualified person.

Just as a person does not eat food until he is satisfied that it is safe, nor does he obtain his food indiscriminately from anyone and anywhere, he should likewise not receive beliefs, opinions and ideas from just anyone or place his trust in everyone.

The Qur'an instructs us:

»فَلیَنظُرِ الاِنسانُ اِلی طَعامِهِ.«

"Let the human being look carefully at his food."

(Qur'an 80:24)

This food includes not only the nourishment of the human body, but also the nourishment of the soul and mind.

For this reason, when Imam al-Baqir (as) was asked about the meaning of **"his food"** in this noble verse, he said:

عِلمُهُ الَّذی یَأخُذُهُ مِمَّن یَأخُذُهُ.

"It is his knowledge which he acquires; he must consider from whom he acquires it."

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 96, hadith 38, from *Al-Mahasin* of al-Barqi.

A person should therefore be even more careful about the nourishment of his soul—the thoughts and ideas that enter him—than he is about the food of his physical body.

Until he is confident that something will not harm his religion, he should not expose himself to it.

Sometimes, under the name of "research" and motivated by what appears to be intellectual open-mindedness, a person turns to books and articles while lacking the scholarly competence necessary to distinguish what is correct from what is false.

Then, while imagining that he is conducting research, he easily loses what he once believed. Gradually, he begins to doubt matters about which he had previously possessed certainty.

By the time he realizes what has happened, it may already be too late. His mind and heart may have become so filled with false statements and deviant ideas that truth no longer finds a place within him, and he begins to react with hostility toward every sound idea.

Such blindness of the heart may occur through reading a single article in a single day—from morning to evening.

The speed at which deviation takes place depends upon the strength or weakness of a person's intellectual and religious foundations.

If those foundations are very weak, he may be unable to withstand an idea that appears attractive on the surface but is corrupt in reality. He then falls first into doubt and hesitation, and eventually into denial.

These dangers threaten believers during the Ghaybah more seriously than at other times. To preserve one's religion in such circumstances, a person must therefore exercise great vigilance.

It is for this reason that Shi'ah jurists have ruled against reading misleading works—traditionally discussed under the heading of **kutub al-dallah**—for a person who lacks the scholarly ability to examine, refute and distinguish their false claims. Such rulings are rooted in the transmitted teachings of the Imams (as). Out of their love and concern for their followers, and because they did not want their

religion and beliefs to become easily exposed to deviation and corruption, the Imams (as) gave these instructions.
Acting upon this guidance is one of the ways of protecting and safeguarding religion during the Ghaybah.
In the presence of so many paths of deviation, one who is able to remain steadfast, preserve sound beliefs, and not depart from the path of the Ahlul Bayt (as) possesses a very great distinction, and his struggle is extraordinarily valuable.
Our traditions compare holding firmly to one's religion during the Ghaybah to holding and stripping a branch covered with sharp thorns with one's bare hand. This vividly expresses the difficulty of remaining religious during this period.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

اِنَ لِصاحِبِ هذَا الاَمرِ غَيبَةً المُتَمَسِّکُ فيها بِدينِهِ کَالخارِطِ لِلقَتادِ. ثُمَّ قالَ هکَذا بِيَدِهِ. فَاَيُّکُم يُمسِکُ شَوکَ القَتادِ بِيَدِهِ؟! ... اِنَّ لِصاحِبِ هذَا الاَمرِ غَيبَةً. فَلَيَتَّقِ اللهَ عَبدٌ وَ لَيتَمَسَّکَ بِدينِهِ.

"The Master of this Affair will have a Ghaybah during which the one who holds firmly to his religion will be like a person who strips the thorns of the qatad tree with his hand."
The Imam (as) then demonstrated the action with his hand and said:
"Which of you can grasp the thorns of the qatad with his hand?...
"The Master of this Affair will indeed have a Ghaybah. Therefore, let the servant observe taqwa before Allah and hold firmly to his religion."
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 335, Kitab al-Hujjah, Bab fi al-Ghaybah, hadith 1.
Qatad is a hard, thorny tree whose thorns are sharp like needles. In Arabic usage, stripping the thorns of the qatad by hand became a proverbial expression for an extremely difficult and painful task.

Living as a Stranger in One's Religion

The conditions of the Ghaybah are not calm or free of danger.
The circumstances are such that a person must never become heedless of the threats facing his religion. Neglecting these dangers may itself result in the loss of religion.
A person must think seriously about his own ultimate welfare and must not allow the difficulties and concerns of worldly life to distract him from his eternal felicity.

In the expression used in the traditions, he must **take hold of his religion and flee with it**.
That is, he should flee from those enemies who, in various forms, seek to damage his religion.
Not everyone possesses the ability to confront an enemy and defeat him.
Protecting oneself is more important than anything else.
Imam al-Jawad (as) said:

اِذا ماتَ ابنی عَلِیٌّ، بَدا سِراجٌ بَعدَهُ ثُمَّ خَفِیَ. فَوَیلٌ لِلمُرتابِ! وَ طوبی لِلغَریبِ الفارِّ بِدینِهِ!

“When my son Ali [Imam al-Hadi (as)] passes away, a lamp will appear after him [Imam al-Askari (as)], and then that light will become hidden [with the Ghaybah of the Twelfth Imam (as)].
“So woe to the one who falls into doubt! And blessed is the stranger who flees with his religion!”
Ghaybat al-Nu‘mani, chapter 10, hadith 37.
During the Ghaybah, living as a **stranger** can better protect a person against deviation.
This is a quality that believers inherit from their own lonely and hidden Imam—Hazrat Baqiyyatullah (atfs), may our souls be sacrificed for him.
What has been presented here is only part of the picture that the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (as) give us of religious commitment during the Ghaybah of the Imam (as).
In view of all these difficulties, the essential question now becomes:
What is the way out, and how can a person escape these dangers while preserving his religion intact?
In the next chapter, we will seek the answer to this question in the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (as).

Chapter Three: Ma‘rifah of the Imam — The Only Way to Preserve Religion During the Ghaybah

Asking Allah for Ma‘rifah During the Ghaybah

The question of what one should do during the Ghaybah of the Imam (as), and where the path to salvation is to be sought, was raised even during the time of the earlier Imams (as), and they themselves provided the answer.

Those questions and answers are directly relevant to us today. We should therefore be grateful to our Imams (as) for having guided us concerning this matter.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

اِنَّ لِلغُلامِ غَيبَةً قَبلَ اَن يَقُومَ ... . غَيرَ اَنَّ اللهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ يُحِبُّ اَن يَمتَحِنَ الشّيعَةَ. فَعِندَ ذلِکَ يَرتابُ المُبطِلُونَ.

“The young man will have a Ghaybah before he rises... However, Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, wishes to test the Shi‘ah. At that time, the people of falsehood will fall into doubt.”

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 337, Kitab al-Hujjah, Bab fi al-Ghaybah, hadith 5.

Zurarah, who narrates this tradition, then asked the Imam (as) what his duty would be if he were to live until that time.

The Imam (as) replied:

اِذا اَدرَکتَ هذَا الزَّمانَ فَادعُ بِهذَا الدُّعاءِ: اَللّهُمَّ عَرِّفنی نَفسَکَ. فَاِنَّکَ اِن لَم تُعَرِّفنی نَفسَکَ، لَم اَعرِف نَبِیّکَ. اللّهُمَّ عَرِّفنی رَسُولَکَ. فَاِنَّکَ اِن لَم تُعَرِّفنی رَسُولَکَ، لَم اَعرِف حُجَّتَکَ. اللّهُمَّ عَرِّفنی حُجَّتَکَ. فَاِنَّکَ اِن لَم تُعَرِّفنی حُجَّتَکَ، ضَلَلتُ عَن دینی.

“If you live to see that time, then recite this supplication:

‘O Allah, grant me ma‘rifah of Yourself, for if You do not make Yourself known to me, I will not know Your Prophet.

O Allah, grant me ma‘rifah of Your Messenger, for if You do not make Your Messenger known to me, I will not know Your Hujjah.

O Allah, grant me ma‘rifah of Your Hujjah, for if You do not make Your Hujjah known to me, I will go astray from my religion.’”

The Role of Du‘a in Attaining Ma‘rifah

Two important points deserve attention in this instruction of Imam al-Sadiq (as). The first is that the Imam instructs us to **pray**. One must turn to Allah, seek His help, and ask Him for rescue and protection. This is an extremely important principle.

If a person relies even slightly upon himself, or upon other people who are no different from himself, and begins to place confidence in his own deeds—in what he has studied, in the services he has performed, or in similar things—then this very reliance upon something other than Allah can become a cause of his slipping and falling into the abyss of destruction and loss of religion.

If Allah were to leave a person to himself even for a moment and withdraw His tawfiq from him, none of that person’s deeds would be of any benefit, nor would anyone be able to take him by the hand and save him:

»مَن يَهدِ اللهُ فَهُوَ المُهتَدِ وَ مَن يُضلِل فَلَن تَجِدَ لَهُ وَلِيّاً مُرشِدا.«

“Whomever Allah guides is truly guided; and whomever He leaves astray, you will never find for him a guiding guardian.”

(Qur’an 18:17)

Allah’s “leading astray” does not mean that He compels a person into misguidance and thereby forces him toward Hell. Allah is far above such a thing. Rather, it means the withdrawal of divine tawfiq and leaving a person to himself.

Therefore, one must rely solely upon Allah’s grace and favour and turn to the door which He Himself has opened for guidance and assistance.

The Qur’an says:

»وَ أتُوا البُيُوتَ مِن اَبوابِها.«

“Enter houses through their doors.”

(Qur’an 2:189)

The doors of Allah’s guidance are none other than the Ahlul Bayt of purity and infallibility (as).

Amir al-Mu’minin (as) said:

نَحنَ البُيُوتَ الَّتی اَمَرَ اللهُ بِها اَن تُؤتی مِن اَبوابِها. ... فَمَن تابَعَنا وَ اَقَرَّ بِوِلايَتِنا، فَقَد اَتَی البُيُوتَ مِن اَبوابِها. وَ مَن خالَفَنا وَ فَضَّلَ عَلَينا غَيرَنا، فَقَد اَتَی البُيُوتَ مِن ظُهُورِها.

“We are the houses which Allah has commanded people to enter through their doors...
Whoever follows us and acknowledges our wilayah has entered the houses through their doors. And whoever opposes us and gives preference to others over us has entered the houses from their backs.”
Al-Ihtijaj of al-Tabrisi, vol. 1, p. 338.
A person must therefore turn toward Allah only through these divinely appointed doors, so that he may become the recipient of His favour.
It is with this belief that one should pray before Allah.
Without du‘a, a person does not receive Allah’s attention:

»قُل ما يَعبَأُ بِكُم رَبّى لَولا دُعاؤُكُم.«

“Say: My Lord would not pay any attention to you were it not for your supplication.”
(Qur’an 25:77)
Belief in this reality has a special importance before Allah: a person must understand that even after fulfilling all his duties, he must never rely upon his own deeds.
This is why the supplications transmitted from the Infallibles (as) repeatedly emphasize this truth.
For example, in Du‘a al-Iftitah, which is attributed to Imam al-‘Asr (as), we find the following noble words, derived from the Qur’an:

اَلحَمدُ لِلّهِ الَّذى هَدانا لِهذا. وَ ما كُنا لِنَهتَدِىَ لَولا اَن هَدانَا اللهُ.

“All praise belongs to Allah who guided us to this, and we would never have been guided had Allah not guided us.”
That is, it is Allah who has guided us to wilayah and Imamate.

The Importance of Transmitted Supplications

Another important aspect of du‘a is giving special attention to the **ma’thur supplications**—the supplications transmitted from the Infallibles (as).
Although a person is permitted to call upon Allah in any language and with any wording, provided that what he says is correct, Allah has appointed the Prophets

and the Imams (as) to teach people how to worship Him and how to establish their relationship with their Lord.
It is therefore better that a person also learn from them **how to pray**, and call upon Allah in the manner they themselves have taught.
The effect possessed by transmitted supplications is not necessarily present in supplications composed by ordinary people.
Moreover, when a supplication transmitted from the Infallibles (as) reaches a person, he should recite it as they themselves have taught it. He is not free to alter its wording according to his personal preference by adding to it or removing from it.
This principle is explicitly stated in one of Imam al-Sadiq's (as) instructions specifically concerning the period of the Ghaybah of Imam al-'Asr (as).
At the beginning of the tradition, the Imam (as) says:

سَتُصيبُكُم شُبهَةٌ فَتَبقَونَ بِلا عَلَمٍ يُرى وَ لا اِمامِ هُدىً. لا يَنجُو مِنها اِلّا مِن دَعا بِدُعاءِ الغَريقِ.

"A state of confusion will afflict you in which truth and falsehood will become confused, and you will remain without a visible standard and without an Imam of guidance present before you. No one will be saved from it except the one who recites the Supplication of the Drowning Person."
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 52, p. 149, hadith 73, from *Kamal al-Din*.
'Abdullah ibn Sinan, the narrator of the tradition, asked:
"What is the Supplication of the Drowning Person?"
The Imam (as) replied:

يا اللهُ يا رَحمنُ يا رَحيمُ يا مُقَلِّبَ القُلُوبِ، ثَبِّت قَلبى عَلى دينِکَ.

"O Allah! O Rahman! O Rahim! O Turner of hearts! Keep my heart firm upon Your religion."
'Abdullah ibn Sinan then repeated the supplication in this form:

يا مُقَلِّبَ القُلُوبِ وَ الاَبصارِ، ثَبِّت قَلبى عَلى دينِکَ

"O Turner of hearts **and sights**, keep my heart firm upon Your religion."
Although what he had added was in itself true, Imam al-Sadiq (as), drawing his attention to the importance of preserving the exact wording transmitted by the Infallible, said:

اِنَّ اللهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ مُقَلِّبَ القُلُوبِ وَ الاَبصارِ، وَ لكِن قُل كَما اَقُولُ: يا مُقَلِّبَ القُلُوبِ ثَبِّت قَلبی عَلی دِينِکَ.

"Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, is indeed the Turner of hearts and sights. But say it as I say it:

'O Turner of hearts! Keep my heart firm upon Your religion.'"

In this instruction, which specifically concerns the Ghaybah of the Imam (as), the emphasis is once again upon du'a and seeking help from Allah.

Particularly significant is the name the Imam (as) gives this supplication: **Du'a al-Ghariq—the Supplication of the Drowning Person.**

A *ghariq* is someone who is drowning. Here it refers to a person caught in the waves of trials and tribulations during the Ghaybah and unable to rescue himself. Such a person needs someone to take him by the hand and save him.

The Supplication of the Drowning Person is therefore taught to him so that he may know **whom to ask for help and what to ask Him for.**

Fear of Losing One's Religion During the Ghaybah

Being conscious of the reality that believers during the Ghaybah are in danger of drowning in a sea of corruption and deviation can itself be extremely beneficial. If a person recognizes the illness, he will search for its cure. One who feels no pain will not seek treatment.

Unfortunately, during the Ghaybah of the Imam (as), many believers fail even to recognize the sensitivity and danger of their situation.

They sit comfortably and without concern in a ship that is being struck from every direction by dangerous waves, while at every moment there is a possibility that the vessel may break apart.

Only those who know what is happening outside—those who recognize the storminess of the sea and the weakness of the ship—feel alarmed.

Others remain peacefully seated in the ship, occupied with their ordinary affairs.

During the Ghaybah, very few people truly recognize the dangers of the age and understand the critical nature of its conditions.

The duty of those who do understand is to awaken others and warn them, so that they too may begin to think seriously and become at least half as concerned about

their religion as they are about their worldly affairs, rather than remaining indifferent and careless about preserving their faith.
Once a person truly understands the sensitivity of the period of Ghaybah and the difficulty of remaining religious within it, he will pray sincerely from the depths of his heart.
He will raise his needy hands before his Lord and seek refuge in the care and assistance of the Imams (as), asking them to rescue him from this critical condition and bring him safely to the shore of salvation and felicity.
In summary, we must firmly believe that if we possess heartfelt faith in Allah, the Prophet (saww), and the Imam (as), and if we have remained firm and steadfast in this belief, it has been solely through the grace and favour of Allah.
We must never attribute this blessing to ourselves.
If we reflect correctly, then the more Allah's favours upon us increase, the more deeply we recognize within ourselves that we did not inherently deserve them. As a result, our prayers and humble supplications before Allah become more sincere and heartfelt.
Indeed, the further a person advances upon the path of guidance, the more he needs divine assistance.
As he progresses upon that path, he must correspondingly increase his tawassul through the divinely appointed doors of guidance and cry out from the depths of his heart:

اللّهُمَّ لا تُمِتنی میتَةً جاهِلیَّةً. وَ لا تُزِغ قَلبی بَعدَ اِذ هَدَیتَنی.

"O Allah! Do not cause me to die the death of Jahiliyyah, and do not cause my heart to deviate after You have guided me."
This is part of the supplication transmitted for after the 'Asr prayer on Friday, narrated from the First Deputy of Imam al-Mahdi (as), in *Jamal al-Usbu'* of Sayyid ibn Tawus, chapter 47, p. 315, and *Kamal al-Din*, chapter 45, hadith 43.
The human heart is the place upon which divine guidance descends, and its turning is in the hands of Allah; man does not independently control it.
And the "Hand" of Allah, through which His guidance reaches His servants, is represented by the sacred existence of the Prophet (saww) and his noble Ahlul Bayt (as).

One must therefore seek their means of approach and ask Allah for guidance.

The Content of Supplications During the Ghaybah

The second point that deserves attention in Imam al-Sadiq's (as) instruction—

اَللّٰهُمَّ عَرِّفنی نَفسَکَ ... ضَلَلتُ عَن دینی

"O Allah, grant me ma'rifah of Yourself... otherwise I will go astray from my religion"—

is the content of this noble supplication.

It asks for:

ma'rifah of Allah, ma'rifah of the Messenger of Allah (saww), and ma'rifah of the Imam (as).

These constitute the foundations of religion, while other matters are regarded as its branches.

In Part Two of this book, it was explained in detail that when a person possesses ma'rifah of the Imam (as) and remains committed to his wilayah, he has in reality also attained the other two forms of heartfelt ma'rifah.

This is because when a person holds firmly to the rope of the Imam's wilayah, the first blessing he receives is correct Tawhid, acknowledgment of the ma'rifah of Allah, and commitment and submission to His servitude.

For this reason, at the end of the supplication we say that if we do not know Allah's Hujjah—the Imam (as)—the result will be deviation from religion.

This is not merely because failure to know the Imam results in ignorance of religious laws.

It is certainly true that the rulings concerning the branches of religion must be learned from the Ahlul Bayt (as). But more important than the branches are the **foundations of religion and the principles of belief**, and ma'rifah of the Imam (as) is the axis and essence of all of them.

Without it, even Tawhid and ma'rifah of Allah will not benefit a person; while with it, in practice, all true beliefs become accessible to him.

Therefore, to say that **"religion is ma'rifah of the Imam (as)"** is neither an exaggeration nor a loose manner of speaking.

What a person seeks above all in this supplication and in Du‘a al-Ghariq is **correct ma‘rifah of Imam al-‘Asr (atfs) and firmness and steadfastness in that ma‘rifah**.
If this is attained, everything else follows.
If it is not attained, nothing else will ultimately benefit a person.

The Virtue of Remaining Firm upon the Wilayah of the Imam (as) During the Ghaybah

If, despite all the hardships and difficulties of the Ghaybah, a person—through Allah’s grace and the assistance of the Ahlul Bayt (as)—remains steadfast in the ma‘rifah of the Imam (as), accepts his wilayah, and does not depart from the path of faith, his faith possesses extraordinary value.
Because such a person believes in an Imam who is in Ghaybah and hidden from his sight, he possesses a distinction over those who lived during the physical presence of the Imams (as) and submitted after witnessing clear signs before them.
The Messenger of Allah (saww) said:

يا عَلِيُّ، وَاعلَم اَنَّ اَعجَبَ النّاسِ ايماناً وَ اَعظَمَهُم يَقيناً قَومٌ يَكونونَ فى آخِرِ الزَّمانِ لَم يَلحَقُوا النَّبِيَّ وَ حَجَبَتهُمُ الحُجَّةُ فَآمَنُوا بِسَوادٍ عَلى بَياضٍ.

“O Ali! Know that the most remarkable of people in faith and the greatest of them in certainty are a people who will live in the latter times.
“They will not have met the Prophet, and the Hujjah will be concealed from them, yet they will believe through black upon white.”
Kamal al-Din, chapter 25, hadith 8.
“Black upon white” may refer to the written texts of the Qur’an and the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (as), upon which believers during the Ghaybah rely for their faith.
In another tradition, when the Prophet (saww) mentioned Hazrat al-Qa’im (as), he said:

طوبى للصابرين فى غيبته! طوبى لمقيمين على محبتهم! اولئک من وصفهم الله فى كتابه فقال: «الذين يؤمنون بالغيب. ...»

“Blessed are those who remain patient during his Ghaybah! Blessed are those who remain steadfast in their love for them [the Imams]!
“They are the ones whom Allah has described in His Book when He said:
‘Those who believe in the unseen.’”

(Qur'an 2:3)
Tafsir al-Burhan, vol. 1, p. 54, hadith 6.
When a person witnesses with his own eyes the miracles and signs proving the truth of the Ahlul Bayt (as), believing in them and submitting to them is naturally much easier than when those signs are not directly witnessed.
A person living during the Ghaybah must rely upon their transmission in history and hadith, yet his faith may become like the faith of one who witnessed those realities with his own eyes and heard them with his own ears.
The people who lived during the physical presence of the Imams (as) were tested in one manner, while those who live during the Ghaybah are tested in another.

The Brothers of the Prophet (saww) During the Ghaybah

The most important element of the test for the people of the Ghaybah is precisely this **faith in the unseen**.
Such faith is so valuable that during his own lifetime the Prophet (saww) referred to these believers as **his brothers**.
One day, while among a group of his companions, the Prophet (saww) prayed:

اللهم لقنى اخوانى

"O Allah! Bring me together with my brothers."
He repeated this prayer twice.
The companions around him asked:
"O Messenger of Allah! Are we not your brothers?"
He replied:

لا، اِنَّكُم اَصحابى؛ وَ اِخوانى قَومٌ فى آخِرِ الزَّمانِ آمَنُوا وَ لَم يَرَونى، لَقَد عَرَّفَنيهِمُ اللهُ بِاَسمائِهِم وَ اَسماءِ آبائِهِم مِن قَبلِ اَن يُخرِجَهُم مِن اَصلابِ آبائِهِم وَ اَرحامِ اُمَّهاتِهِم. لَاَحَدُهُم اَشَدُّ بَقِيَّةً عَلى دينِهِ مِن خَرطِ القَتادِ فى اللَّيلَةِ الظَّلماءِ اَو كَالقابِضِ عَلى جَمرِ الغَضا. اُولئِکَ مَصابيحُ الدُّجى؛ يُنجيهِمُ اللهُ مِن كُلِّ فِتنَةٍ غَبراءَ مُظلِمَةٍ.

"No. You are my companions. My brothers are a people who will live in the latter times. They will believe in me although they have not seen me.
"Allah has made them known to me by their names and the names of their fathers even before He brings them forth from the loins of their fathers and the wombs of their mothers.

“For each one of them, remaining steadfast upon his religion will be more difficult than stripping the thorns of the qatad tree on a dark night, or like holding in one’s hand the burning ember of the ghada tree.
“They are the lamps in the darkness. Allah will save them from every dark and obscure trial.”
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 52, p. 124, hadith 8, from *Basa’ir al-Darajat*.
Ghada is a tree whose wood retains fire and heat for a long time and therefore produces particularly good charcoal.
Remaining religious during the Ghaybah is thus compared to holding the burning ember of this tree in one’s hand. Since its intense heat remains for a long time and does not quickly cool, it provides a vivid image of the extraordinary difficulty of preserving one’s religion throughout the Ghaybah.

The Scarcity of True Believers During the Ghaybah

A believer who remains steadfast in this manner will possess the virtues described in the traditions.
Unfortunately, however, such people are exceedingly rare.
The Messenger of Allah (saww) said:
اِنَّ عَلِیَّ بنَ اَبی طالبٍ اِمامُ اُمَّتی وَ خَلیفَتی عَلَیها مِن بَعدی. وَ مِن وُلدِهِ القائِمُ المُنتَظَرُ الَّذی یَملَأُ اللهُ بِهِ الاَرضَ عَدلاً وَ قِسطاً کَما مُلِئَت جَوراً وَ ظُلماً. وَ الَّذی بَعَثَنی بِالحَقِّ بَشیراً اِنَّ الثابِتینَ عَلَی القَولِ بِهِ فی زَمانِ غَیبَتِهِ لَاَعَزُّ مِنَ الکِبریتِ الاَحمَرِ.
“Indeed, Ali ibn Abi Talib is the Imam of my Ummah and my successor over it after me. From his descendants will be the awaited Qa’im, through whom Allah will fill the earth with justice and equity just as it will have been filled with injustice and oppression.
“By the One who sent me with the truth as a bearer of glad tidings, those who remain steadfast in their belief in him during his Ghaybah will be rarer than red sulphur.”
Kamal al-Din, chapter 25, hadith 7.
The reward of such people is compared with that of those who fought alongside the Prophet (saww) in the earliest days of Islam and were martyred—indeed, the reward of each is described as equivalent to that of **one thousand martyrs of Badr and Uhud**.

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (as) said:

مَن ثَبَتَ عَلى مُوالاتِنا فى غَيبَةِ قائِمِنا، اَعطاهُ اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ اَجرَ اَلفِ شَهيدٍ مِن شُهَداءِ بَدرٍ وَ اُحُدٍ.

“Whoever remains steadfast upon our wilayah and love during the Ghaybah of our Qa’im, Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, will grant him the reward of one thousand martyrs from the martyrs of Badr and Uhud.”

Kamal al-Din, chapter 31, hadith 7.

When a person understands the true value of something, he pursues it willingly and eagerly. He spares no effort to obtain it, and every hardship he must endure in preserving it becomes easier for him to bear.

Blessed, therefore, is the one who truly understands the value of **faith in the unseen**.

Attaining the Reward of Assisting the Imam (as) at the Time of His Reappearance Through Ma‘rifah

From what has been discussed, it becomes clear that all virtue and value in the servitude of Allah ultimately return to possessing ma‘rifah of the Imam (as) and remaining committed to it.

If a person possesses this precious elixir, he lacks nothing in respect of what Allah desires from him.

If we add another premise to this principle, an important conclusion emerges. That premise is this:

Ma‘rifah of the Imam (as) is a matter of the heart.

Its natural result is love and wilayah toward him, together with the desire to assist him at the time of his Reappearance and to serve beneath his banner.

Seeing the Imam with one’s physical eyes is neither an essential component of this inner ma‘rifah nor a necessary condition for it.

There were many people who lived during the physical presence of the Imams (as), or even of the Prophet (saww), yet possessed no ma‘rifah of them whatsoever.

History shows that some of the foremost and most bitter enemies of our divine leaders were precisely those who had lived for years alongside the Ahlul Bayt (as) and had personally encountered them under many different circumstances.
Ma'rifah of the Imam (as) is that inner recognition and heartfelt acceptance without which seeing the Imam every month, every week, or even every day will have no beneficial effect.
Of course, when a person already possesses ma'rifah, physically seeing the Imam (as) will deepen his ma'rifah, increase his devotion and submission, and provide him with the opportunity to express his readiness to assist the Imam at the time of his Reappearance.
From these two principles, we may therefore conclude that if a person possesses ma'rifah of the Imam (as), and consequently possesses genuine readiness to assist him, but through no fault of his own is deprived of meeting him and serving in his presence, it is entirely possible that Allah will grant him the reward of one who lives to witness the Imam's Reappearance and fulfils his duty within his army. Allah may thus not deprive him of this immense blessing and tremendous reward. Accordingly, when a person truly knows his Imam, whether or not the outward government of the Imams is established during his lifetime will not cause him any loss. He may be counted like those who live to witness the uprising and government of their Imam and take their place among his soldiers.
Fudayl ibn Yasar asked Imam al-Sadiq (as) concerning the noble verse:

»يوم ندعو كل اناس بامامهم«

"The Day when We shall call every people with their Imam."
(Qur'an 17:71)
The Imam (as) replied:

يا فُضَيلُ، اِعرِف اِمامَکَ. فَاِنَّکَ اِذا عَرَفتَ اِمامَکَ، لَم يَضُرَّکَ تَقَدَّمَ هذَا الاَمرُ اَو تَأَخَّرَ. وَ مَن عَرَفَ اِمامَهُ ثُمَّ ماتَ قَبلَ اَن يَقُومَ صاحِبُ هذَا الاَمرِ، کانَ بِمَنزِلَةِ مَن کانَ قاعِداً فی عَسکَرِهِ لا؛ بَل بِمَنزِلَةِ مَن قَعَدَ تَحتَ لِوائِهِ.

"O Fudayl! Know your Imam.
"For if you know your Imam, it will not harm you whether this affair [the establishment of the rightful government] comes sooner or later.

“Whoever knows his Imam and then dies before the Master of this Affair rises will be like one who was sitting in his army—no, rather, like one who sat beneath his banner.”
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 371, Kitab al-Hujjah, Bab annahu man ‘arafa Imamahu..., hadith 2.
For those who long to live until the uprising and Reappearance of their Imam, this is among the greatest glad tidings and most precious promises.
It should deepen their appreciation of the importance of ma‘rifah of Imam al-‘Asr (atfs), as well as their commitment to the signs, consequences and practical requirements of that ma‘rifah.
Even during the time of the earlier Imams (as), some companions who had heard descriptions of al-Qa’im (as) and the virtue of living until his Reappearance would express to the Imams (as) their heartfelt desire to witness the establishment of the rightful government.
In response, the Imams (as) would emphasize **ma‘rifah of the Imam**.
One such person was Abu Basir.
He asked Imam al-Sadiq (as):

تَرانی اُدرِکُ القائم علیه السّلام؟

“Do you think that I will live to see al-Qa’im (as)?”
The Imam (as) replied:

یَا اَبابَصیرٍ، اَلَستَ تَعرِفُ اِمامَکَ؟

“O Abu Basir! Do you not know your Imam?”
Abu Basir replied:

ای وَاللهِ وَ اَنتَ هُوَ.

“Yes, by Allah—and you are he.”
As he said this, he took the blessed hand of the Imam (as) in his own hand.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) then said:

وَ اللهِ ما تُبالی یا اَبابَصیرٍ اَلا تَکُونَ مُحتَبِیاً بِسَیفِکَ فی ظِلِّ رِواقِ القائِمِ صَلَواتُ اللهِ عَلَیهِ؟!

“By Allah, O Abu Basir! Why should it concern you if you are not physically present, with your sword at your side, beneath the pavilion of al-Qa’im—may Allah’s blessings be upon him?”

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 371, Kitab al-Hujjah, Bab annahu man ‘arafa Imamahu..., hadith 4.
This was the reassurance given to one who deeply longed to witness the Reappearance of al-Qa’im (as).
The Imam (as) regarded ma‘rifah of the Imam of one’s own time as sufficient for attaining the reward associated with that sincere longing and thereby drew attention to the extraordinary importance of such ma‘rifah.
Likewise, during the Ghaybah, believers who long to witness the Reappearance and uprising of their Imam should strive as much as possible to deepen their ma‘rifah of him.
They should become increasingly familiar with his virtues and perfections, understand their duties toward him, recognize the signs and practical requirements of ma‘rifah, and strive with the utmost seriousness to embody them in their own lives—so that, **insha’Allah, they may leave this world with a good end and with their faith intact.**

Up to this point, we have discussed the virtue and importance of ma‘rifah of Imam al-‘Asr (atfs) during his Ghaybah.
It is now necessary to examine, to some extent, the characteristics and qualities of this ma‘rifah, so that we may understand **what kind of ma‘rifah produces the effects described in the traditions, and what its requirements and signs are.**
Ma‘rifah in its essence is an affair of the heart. Its effects and consequences, however, may include both inward states of the heart and outward actions.
In the final part of the book, in order to complete the discussion, we will examine the most important of these matters and clarify the practical conclusions of what has been discussed so far.
We will present the most important of them in **ten chapters**.

Part Four: The Effects and Requirements of Ma‘rifah of Imam al-‘Asr (as)

Chapter One: The Soundness of Ma‘rifah

The first quality required of a ma‘rifah that can save a person from deviation and loss of religion during the Ghaybah of the Imam (as) is that it must be **sound and correct**.

Without this, there is no assurance that a person possessing such supposed ma‘rifah will remain steadfast upon the wilayah and Imamate of the Imams (as).

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (as) said:

اِنَّ لِلقائِمِ مِنّا غَيبَتَينِ اِحداهُما اَطوَلُ مِنَ الأُخرى ... .وَ اَمَّا الأُخرى فَيَطُولُ اَمَدُها حَتّى يَرجِعَ عَن هذَا الاَمرِ اَكثَرُ مَن يَقُولَ بِهِ. فَلا يَثبُتُ عَلَيهِ اِلّا مَن قَوِىَ يَقينُهُ وَ صَحَّت مَعرِفَتُهُ وَ لَم يَجِد فى نَفسِهِ حَرَجاً مِمّا قَضَينا وَ سَلَّمَ لَنا اَهلَ البَيتِ.

“Indeed, the Qa’im from among us will have two Ghaybahs, one of which will be longer than the other...

“As for the second, its duration will become so prolonged that most of those who profess belief in this affair will turn away from it.

“No one will remain steadfast upon it except the one whose certainty is strong, whose ma‘rifah is sound, who finds no discomfort within himself concerning what we have decreed, and who submits to us, the Ahlul Bayt.”

Kamal al-Din, chapter 31, hadith 8.

This condition applies to every kind of ma‘rifah—whether ma‘rifah of Allah, ma‘rifah of the Messenger (saww), or ma‘rifah of the Imam (as).

In general, every form of religious ma‘rifah must be sound and in accordance with what Allah has intended.

But what is the criterion for determining whether ma‘rifah is sound?

How can we be certain that a particular understanding is correct?

The Criterion for the Soundness of Ma‘rifah

The answer becomes clear when we consider the definition of **ma‘rifah** given by the Ahlul Bayt (as).

Imam al-Baqir (as), addressing his son Imam al-Sadiq (as), said:

يا بُنَيَّ، اِعرِف مَنازِلَ الشّيعَةِ عَلى قَدرِ رِوايَتِهِم وَ مَعرِفَتِهِم. فَاِنَّ المَعرِفَةَ هِيَ الدِّرايَةُ لِلرِّوايَةِ. وَ بِالدِّرايات لِلرِّوايات يَعلُو المُؤمِنُ اِلى اَقصى دَرَجاتِ الايمانِ. اِنّى نَظَرتُ فى كِتابٍ لِعَلِيٍّ عليه السّلام فَوَجَدتُ فِى الكِتابِ اَنَّ قيمةَ كُلِّ امرِيٍ وَ قَدرَهُ مَعرِفَتُهُ.

“O my son! Recognize the ranks and degrees of the Shi‘ah according to the extent of their narration and their ma‘rifah.
“For ma‘rifah is the understanding and comprehension of the narration.
“It is through deep understanding of the narrations that a believer rises to the highest degrees of faith.
“I looked into a writing of Ali (as), and I found written therein:
‘The worth and rank of every person is according to his ma‘rifah.’”
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 184, hadith 4, from *Ma‘ani al-Akhbar*.
The entire principle is contained in these words.
From the perspective of our Imams (as), ma‘rifah is inseparably connected with **understanding the narrations**.
This itself provides the criterion for identifying sound ma‘rifah: in every field of religious knowledge, the relevant traditions are the standard by which the correctness of one’s ma‘rifah in that field is measured.
For example, in the ma‘rifah of Allah, the criterion by which a correct understanding of Allah is distinguished from an incorrect one is the body of traditions transmitted concerning this subject.
This makes clear the importance of referring to the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (as) in every field of religious knowledge.
It is also a measure of a person’s degree of faith.
A person benefits from the perfection of faith to the extent that he possesses deep understanding of the traditions of the Imams (as).
Therefore, if someone approaches religious knowledge without reference to the traditions and derives his understanding from sources other than hadith, he should not expect his ma‘rifah to necessarily be sound.
The value Amir al-Mu’minin (as) assigns to each person depends upon that person’s ma‘rifah, while the soundness of ma‘rifah itself is measured by reference to the traditions and by a deep understanding of them.

True Knowledge Is Found Only with the Ahlul Bayt (as)

The reason why conformity with the traditions is the criterion for sound ma‘rifah lies in a fundamental reality:

True knowledge is obtained only through the Ahlul Bayt (as).

By “knowledge” here is meant that luminous reality which Allah places in the heart of whomever He wills to guide.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

لَيسَ العِلمُ بِالتَّعَلُّمِ. اِنَّما هُوَ نُورٌ يَقَعُ فی قَلبِ مَن يُرِيدُ اللهُ تَبارَکَ وَ تَعالی اَن يَهدِيَهُ.

“Knowledge is not attained merely through learning. Rather, it is a light that enters the heart of the one whom Allah, Blessed and Exalted, wills to guide.”

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 1, p. 225, hadith 17.

There is no error or mistake in this knowledge.

When Allah wills to guide a person, He leads him to the correct path through the light of knowledge.

True knowledge, therefore, is always correct and corresponds with reality.

It is human forms of knowledge that are susceptible to error, whereas divine knowledge and ma‘rifah are always true and sound.

Allah has made the sacred hearts of the Fourteen Infallibles (as) the source and repository of this light. He has instructed others who seek knowledge to refer only to them.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) said to Yunus ibn Zabyan:

اِن اَرَدتَ العِلمَ الصَّحيحَ، فَعِندنَا اَهلَ البَيتِ. فَنَحنُ اَهلُ الذِّكرِ الَّذينَ قالَ اللهُ: «فَاسأَلُوا اَهلَ الذِّكرِ اِن كُنتُم لا تَعلَمُونَ.»

“If you seek sound knowledge, then it is with us, the Ahlul Bayt.

“For we are the People of Remembrance concerning whom Allah has said:

‘Ask the People of Remembrance if you do not know.’”

(Qur’an 16:43)

Wasa’il al-Shi‘ah, vol. 18, p. 49, hadith 30, from *Kifayat al-Athar*.

This is the only path through which true knowledge can be sought. Outside this path, true divine knowledge cannot be obtained.

Imam al-Baqir (as) said:

وَ اللهِ لا يُوجَدُ العِلمُ اِلّا مِن اَهل بيت نَزَلَ عَلَيهِم جَبرَئيلُ.

“By Allah, knowledge is not to be found except through the household upon whom Jibra’il descended.”

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 91, hadith 19, from *Basa’ir al-Darajat*.

Therefore, whenever a truth becomes known to a person, its ultimate origin necessarily returns to the Ahlul Bayt (as), even if the person himself is unaware of this fact.

Imam al-Baqir (as) said:

اَما اَنَّهُ لَیسَ عِندَ اَحَدٍ مِنَ النّاسِ حَقٌّ وَ لا صَوابٌ اِلّا شَیءٌ اَخَذُوهُ مِنّا اَهلَ البَیتِ.

“Know that there is no truth or correct understanding among the people except something that they have ultimately taken from us, the Ahlul Bayt.”

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 94, hadith 31, from *Al-Mahasin* of al-Barqi.

The source of every correct teaching and every true religious ma‘rifah is therefore the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt (as).

Had their teachings not existed, no one would have possessed sound ma‘rifah.

This origin in the Ahlul Bayt (as) is itself the criterion by which the correctness of a belief is measured. If a belief does not conform to what they have taught and cannot in any way be traced back to them, then it is certainly false and without foundation.

Imam al-Baqir (as) said:

کُلُّ ما یَخرُجُ مِن هذَا البَیتِ، فَهُوَ باطِلٌ.

“Everything that does not come from this House [the House of Revelation] is false.”

Wasa’il al-Shi‘ah, vol. 18, p. 50, hadith 34, from *Basa’ir al-Darajat*.

The highest degree of faith, therefore, is for a person to bind himself to receiving no religious teaching or belief from anyone except the Ahlul Bayt (as), and to submit exclusively at their door.

If he does so, he may attain the honour of being counted as **“one of us, the Ahlul Bayt.”**

Amir al-Mu’minin (as) said to Kumayl ibn Ziyad al-Nakha‘i:

یا کُمَیلُ، لا تَأخُذ اِلّا عَنّا، تَکُن مِنّا.

“O Kumayl! Take nothing except from us, and you will be counted as one of us.”

This is among the greatest honours that a lover of the Ahlul Bayt (as) can attain. Although he may be deprived during the Ghaybah of the blessing of physically living in the presence of the Imam of his time, by binding himself faithfully to the

traditions of the Imams (as), even in the age of Ghaybah he can attain such an exalted rank.

Steadfastness Through Sound Knowledge

Therefore, if a person wishes to possess sound and correct religious ma‘rifah, he must seek knowledge from none other than the Ahlul Bayt (as). He must not give preference to the products of human thought over the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt (as), nor should he combine and intermingle the two.

If he follows this path, his ma‘rifah will be supported by such strength of certainty that no doubt or objection will weaken his beliefs. He will become so firm that even if the mountains were to move, he would not.

During the Battle of Jamal, Amir al-Mu’minin (as) said to Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah:

تَزولُ الجِبالُ وَ لا تَزُل.

“The mountains may move, but you must not move. Remain steadfast.”

Nahj al-Balaghah (Fayd al-Islam), Sermon 11.

This instruction of Amir al-Mu’minin (as) should also be applied to faith and belief. The practical way to achieve such steadfastness is for a person to acquire his beliefs through their correct source and not place his trust in anything obtained through another path.

The movement of mountains is gradual and imperceptible. A believer, however, must attain such certainty in his ma‘rifah that not even imperceptible shifts occur within it.

Only then can he be confident that no idea will shake him and that he will not fall into doubt or hesitation concerning his sound beliefs.

Doubt is one of the most dangerous afflictions threatening a person’s faith and certainty.

During the Ghaybah of the Imam (as), we encounter many different ideas and beliefs, each of which can, in its own way, expose a person’s ma‘rifah to doubt and uncertainty.

No matter how educated a person may be, and no matter how familiar he may be with the views and arguments of different people, as long as he has not acquired

his beliefs from the original source of ma'rifah, he will not be secure from the danger of doubt concerning them.
Obtaining one's beliefs from their true source is therefore one of the most important means of protecting faith against doubt and whisperings.
If a person is concerned about preserving his religion during the Ghaybah, he must pay careful attention to the channel through which he acquires it and place his trust only in what has reached him from the Ahlul Bayt (as).
The Imam (as) said:

مَن اَخَذَ مِن كِتابِ اللهِ وَ سُنَّةِ نَبِيِّهِ صَلَواتُ اللهِ عَلَيهِ وَ آلِهِ، زالَتِ الجِبالُ قَبلَ اَن يَزُولَ. وَ مَن اَخَذَ دينَه مِن اَفواهِ الرِّجالِ، رَدَّتْهُ الرِّجالُ.

"Whoever takes his religion from the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet—may Allah's blessings be upon him and his family—the mountains will move before he moves.
"But whoever takes his religion from the mouths of men will be turned away from his religion by those very men."
Introduction to the noble book *Al-Kafi*.

Allah's Glad Tidings to People of Understanding

Sometimes it is said that a person should listen to every opinion and then choose the best from among them. On this basis, all ideas and schools of thought are placed side by side and approached in the same manner.
We repeatedly see people attempting, through this method and according to their own understanding and judgment, even to determine how the traditions of the Infallibles (as) should be treated. At the very foundation of their approach, they make no distinction between human thought and divine teaching.
They then seek support for this approach from the Qur'anic verse:

»فَبَشِّر عِبادِ الَّذينَ يَستَمِعُونَ القَولَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ اَحسَنَهُ اَولئِکَ الَّذينَ هَداهُمُ اللهُ وَ اُولئِکَ هُم اَولُواالاَلبابِ.«

"So give glad tidings to My servants—those who listen to the word and follow it in the best manner. They are the ones whom Allah has guided, and they are the people of understanding."
(Qur'an 39:18)

They interpret the verse to mean that one should listen to **every statement**—taking the definite article in *al-qawl* (القول) as comprehensive—and then choose the best from among them.

They further argue that Allah has promised guidance to those who adopt this method and has described them as people of sound intellect.

However, because they have not referred to the Ahlul Bayt (as), they have erred even in understanding the correct meaning of this very verse and have interpreted it according to personal opinion.

When Abu Basir asked Imam al-Sadiq (as) about this verse, the Imam replied:

هُمُ الْمُسلِّمُونَ لِآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم الَّذينَ اِذا سَمِعُوا الحَديثَ لَم يَزيدُوا فيهِ وَ لَم يَنقُصُوا مِنهُ؛ جاؤُوا بِهِ كَما سَمِعُوهُ.

"They are those who submit to the Family of Muhammad (saww). When they hear a hadith, they neither add anything to it nor subtract anything from it; rather, they convey it exactly as they heard it."

Tafsir Nur al-Thaqalayn, vol. 4, p. 482, hadith 35.

Thus, *al-qawl* in the noble verse refers to a particular kind of speech: **the true word and the correct teaching**.

The definite article here indicates something already specified and known. The verse therefore concerns those who, upon hearing the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (as), submit to them and remain committed to them without altering or manipulating them.

Accordingly, **"they follow the best of it"** does not mean that they select the best from among a collection of different and competing opinions. Rather, it refers to following the hadith in its best manner—or to the best manner of following it. The best manner of preserving and following a hadith is to transmit it and act upon it without altering or distorting it. These are the people whom Allah has guided.[1]

[1] The necessity or permissibility of interpreting a hadith contrary to its apparent meaning in cases where this is required does not undermine this discussion. Correct interpretation has its own principles and criteria, and observing them is itself an instance of "following in the best manner."

The noble verse does not speak of a promise that these people **will be guided in the future**. Rather, it describes them as people who **have already been guided**, and who therefore know how the traditions of the Family of Muhammad (saww) must be approached.

These are the true **ulu al-albab—people of sound understanding**.

They have recognized the limitations of their own knowledge and intellect. Precisely because they recognize these limitations, they know that their deficiencies must be remedied by referring to the Ahlul Bayt (as).

They therefore allow no hesitation or doubt to enter their submission to them, nor do they consider themselves entitled to interfere with the wording or meaning of the traditions according to their own preferences.

It thus becomes clear that sound ma‘rifah cannot be attained except through submission to the Ahlul Bayt (as).

The conclusion is that one should not listen indiscriminately to every claim, pursue every idea, or welcome every school of thought.

Different ideas and intellectual tendencies can endanger the health of a person’s heart and soul. Under the name of “research,” a person should not expose himself indiscriminately to every intellectual tendency and place himself in the path of every form of deviation, because there is no guarantee that he will emerge unharmed from the mire of distorted views and ideas.

The very requirement of reason and discernment is to exercise caution and avoid fabricated systems and schools of thought whose connection to the source of Revelation cannot be trusted.

Until a person is confident that an intellectual school draws from a divine source, he should not approach it with uncritical confidence. If he himself is not qualified to assess such matters, he should refer to those who possess the necessary expertise.

The same principle applies to the human body. A person does not entrust his physical health to just anyone; he first seeks assurance that the person advising him is a qualified physician.

The health of a person's soul and heart is far more valuable than the health of his body. Whatever sensitivity he shows in protecting his physical health, he should exercise even greater care in protecting his soul.
The true physicians of the human soul and intellect are the Imams (as). Those who have acquired their beliefs from them are qualified to be consulted for guidance.

Chapter Two: Submission to the Divine Command Concerning the Imam (as)

Submission as a Condition of Ma'rifah

Another effect and requirement of ma'rifah of the Imam (as) is **submission to him**. Indeed, sound ma'rifah cannot be attained without this submission.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

اِنَّكُم لا تَكُونُونَ صالِحِينَ حَتّى تَعرِفُوا. وَ لا تَعرِفُونَ حَتّى تُصَدِّقُوا. وَ لا تُصَدِّقُونَ حَتّى تُسَلِّمُوا.

"You will not be among the righteous until you possess ma'rifah. You will not possess ma'rifah until you affirm and acknowledge, and you will not truly affirm until you submit."
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 181, Kitab al-Hujjah, Bab Ma'rifat al-Imam wa al-Radd Ilayh, hadith 6.
Tasdiq here means heartfelt belief, acknowledgment and affirmation. Until this exists within a person, he cannot be counted among those who possess ma'rifah. Thus, tasdiq is a condition of ma'rifah, while **taslim—submission—is a condition of tasdiq**.
Ma'rifah, therefore, cannot be attained without submission.
When all three—submission, affirmation, and ma'rifah—are present, a person enters the ranks of the righteous.
Consequently, one who does not submit to the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt (as) cannot truly possess ma'rifah and wilayah of them, nor can he be counted among the righteous.
Submission to the commands and prohibitions of the Imams (as) is, in fact, a requirement of even the lowest degree of ma'rifah of the Imam (as).
As previously quoted from Imam al-Sadiq (as):

اَدنی مَعرِفَةِ الاِمامِ اَنَّهُ عِدلُ النَّبیِّ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم اِلّا دَرَجَةَ النُّبُوَّةِ وَ وارِثُهُ وَ اَنَّ طاعَتَهُ طاعَةُ اللهِ وَ طاعَةُ رَسُولِ اللهِ وَ التَّسلیمُ لَهُ فی کُلِّ اَمرٍ وَ الرَّدُّ اِلَیهِ وَ الاَخذُ بِقَولِهِ.

"The lowest degree of ma'rifah of the Imam is to know that he is the counterpart of the Prophet (saww), except for the rank of prophethood, and that he is his heir; that obedience to him is obedience to Allah and obedience to the Messenger of Allah; and that one must submit to him in every matter, refer matters to him, and then accept his word concerning them."

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 36, p. 407, hadith 16, from *Kifayat al-Athar*.

If a person has not reached the stage of referring matters to the Imam (as) and submitting to him, he cannot truly be considered a believer.

Submission itself, of course, has different degrees. The more complete a person's faith becomes, the higher the degree of his submission.

Its minimum degree is that a person fundamentally resolves to obey and submit to the Imams (as).

In general, it may be said that faith itself cannot exist without submission—at least in its lowest degree.

It has been said:

لا یَکُونُ العَبدُ مُؤمِناً حَتّی یَعرِفَ اللهَ وَ رَسُولَهُ وَ الاَئِمَّةِ کُلَّهُم وَ اِمام زَمانِهِ وَ یَرُدَّ اِلَیهِ وَ یُسَلِّمَ لَهُ.

"A servant will not be a believer until he possesses ma'rifah of Allah, His Messenger, all the Imams, and the Imam of his own time, and until he refers matters to him and submits to him."

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 180, Kitab al-Hujjah, Bab Ma'rifat al-Imam wa al-Radd Ilayh, hadith 2, from Imam al-Baqir or Imam al-Sadiq (as).

This is one of the essential requirements for preserving the soundness of one's religion during the Ghaybah.

For this reason, as we saw earlier, after mentioning the condition of sound ma'rifah, it was said:

وَ لَم یَجِد فی نَفسِهِ حَرَجاً مِمّا قَضَینا وَ سَلَّمَ لَنا اَهلَ البَیتِ.

"And he finds no discomfort within himself concerning what we have decreed and submits to us, the Ahlul Bayt."

Kamal al-Din, chapter 31, hadith 8.

Shirk and Kufr as the Consequence of a Lack of Submission

The submission intended here is **submission of the heart**.
A person must willingly and wholeheartedly accept what the Ahlul Bayt (as) desire and command, without finding their judgment difficult to accept within himself. This matter is so subtle and important that even if someone outwardly performs all religious obligations, but this inward state of submission—at least at its minimum level—has not yet developed within him, he remains completely deprived of true faith and may even fall within the category of shirk.
In general, the degree of a person's faith corresponds to the degree of his inward submission. To the extent that his submission is deficient, he is affected by degrees of shirk.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

لَو اَنَّ قَوماً عَبَدُوا اللهَ وَحدَهُ لا شَريکَ لَهُ وَ اَقاموا الصَّلاةَ وَ آتَوُا الزَّکاةَ وَ حَجُّوا البَيتَ وَ صامُوا شَهرَ رَمَضانَ ثُمَّ قالُوا لِشَيءٍ صَنَعَهُ اللهُ اَو صَنَعَهُ النَّبيُّ صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم اَلّا صَنَعَ خِلافَ الَّذى صَنَعَ، اَو وَجَدُوا ذلِکَ فى قُلُوبِهِم، لَکانُوا بِذلِکَ مُشرِکينَ. ثُمَّ تَلاهذِهِ الآيَةَ: «فَلا وَ رَبِّکَ لا يُؤمِنُونَ حَتّى يُحَکِّمُوکَ فيما شَجَرَ بَينَهُم ثُمَّ لا يَجِدُوا فى اَنفُسِهِم حَرَجاً مِمّا قَضَيتَ وَ يُسَلِّمُوا تَسليماً». ثُمَّ قالَ اَبوعَبدِالله عليه السّلام: فَعَلَيکُم بِالتَّسليمِ.

"If a people were to worship Allah alone without associating any partner with Him, establish prayer, pay zakat, perform Hajj to the House, and fast the month of Ramadan, but then, concerning something Allah or the Prophet (saww) had done, they were to say, 'Why did He not do otherwise?'—or even if they merely felt such an objection within their hearts—they would thereby become mushriks."
The Imam (as) then recited this verse:
"But no, by your Lord! They will not truly believe until they make you the judge concerning what arises in dispute among them, then find within themselves no discomfort concerning what you have decided, and submit with complete submission."
(Qur'an 4:65)
Imam al-Sadiq (as) then said:
"So it is incumbent upon you to submit."
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 398, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Shirk, hadith 6.

We can therefore see that the state of **taslim** is realized when a person is inwardly satisfied and content with what the Ahlul Bayt (as) have done or taught, and does not find its acceptance burdensome within his heart.

The Way to Attain Submission to the Imams (as)

The path to true submission is for a person to strive in every matter to act according to the wishes of the Imams (as), without maintaining an independent opinion or decision in opposition to them.
He should always give preference to their wish and judgment—which, during the Ghaybah, are sought through tawassul to the Ahlul Bayt (as) and through referring to their traditions—over his own wishes and those of others.
It is precisely this quality that raises a person to the higher degrees of faith.
A man once said to Imam al-Sadiq (as):
“My master, how often I hear you mention Salman al-Farsi!”
The Imam (as) replied:

لا تَقُل سَلمانَ الفارسیَّ، وَ لکِن قُل سَلمانَ المُحَمَّدیَّ.

“Do not say ‘Salman al-Farsi.’ Rather, say ‘Salman al-Muhammadi.’”
Then he asked:

اَتَدری ما کَثرَةُ ذِکری لَهُ؟

“Do you know why I mention him so often?”
The man replied that he did not.
The Imam (as) said:

لِثَلاثِ خِلالٍ: اِحداها ایثارُهُ هَوی اَمیرِالمُؤمِنینَ علیه السّلام عَلی هَوی نَفسِهِ...

“Because of three qualities. The first is that he gave preference to the desire of Amir al-Mu’minin (as) over his own desire...”
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 22, p. 327, hadith 33, from *Amali al-Tusi*.
The other two qualities were:

حَبُّهَ لِلفُقَراءِ وَ اختِیارُهُ اِیّاهُمُ عَلی اَهلِ الثَّروَةِ وَ العَدَدِ وَ حُبُّ العِلمِ وَ العُلَماءِ.

“His love for the poor and his preference for them over people of wealth and social standing, and his love for knowledge and the people of knowledge.”

If Salman attained such a rank that Imam al-Sajjad (as) described him as **“one of us, the Ahlul Bayt,”** one of his most important qualities was his complete submission to the Imam of his time.
Imam al-Sajjad (as) said:

اِنَّما صارَ سَلمانُ مِنَ العُلَماءِ لِاَنَّهُ امرُؤٌ مِنّا اَهلَ البَيتِ.

“Salman became one of the people of knowledge because he is a man from us, the Ahlul Bayt.”
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 190, hadith 25, from *Basa’ir al-Darajat*.
Salman’s submission was such that Amir al-Mu’minin (as) did not necessarily have to issue him an explicit command. Once Salman knew what the Imam desired concerning a matter, he gave that desire preference over his own without waiting for an order.
This quality is therefore higher than merely obeying and carrying out the Imam’s explicit commands.
The word **hawa** here means a desire or inclination—something the Imam may not even have verbally expressed or issued as a formal command.
One of the conditions for attaining the rank of **“minna Ahl al-Bayt”—“one of us, the Ahlul Bayt”**—is thus to submit to the Imams (as) to the degree exemplified by Salman.
Earlier we also cited Amir al-Mu’minin’s (as) instruction to Kumayl ibn Ziyad:

لا تَأخُذ اِلّا عَنّا، تَكُن مِنّا.

“Take nothing except from us, and you will be one of us.”
During the Ghaybah, this can primarily be realized through submission to the traditions of the Imams (as) and through a disciplined commitment to referring to their hadith in all matters—whether matters of belief, ethics, or practical conduct. At a time when ordinary direct access to the Imam (as) is not possible, even greater caution is required. Intellectual and practical commitment to the traditions must never be regarded as insignificant.
This inward submission is the **reality of faith and the spirit of religion**.
Imam al-Sajjad (as) said:

اِنَّ دينَ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ لا يُصابُ بِالعُقُولِ النّاقِصَةِ وَ الآراءِ الباطِلَةِ وَ المَقاييسِ الفاسِدَةِ، وَ لا يُصابُ اِلّا بِالتَّسليمِ. فَمَن سَلَّمَ لَنا سَلِمَ. وَ مَنِ اقتَدى بِنا هُدِىَ. وَ مَن كانَ يَعمَلُ بِالقِياسِ وَ الرَّأىِ هَلَکَ. وَ مَن وَجَدَ فى نَفسِهِ شَيئاً مِمّا نَقُولُهُ اَو نَقضى بِهِ حَرَجاً، كَفَرَ بِالَّذى اَنزَلَ السَّبعَ المَثانِىَ وَ القُرآنَ العَظيمَ وَ هُوَ لا يَعلَمُ.

"Indeed, the religion of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, cannot be attained through deficient intellects, false opinions, or corrupt analogies. It can be attained only through submission.

"Whoever submits to us remains safe; whoever follows our example is guided; and whoever acts upon analogy and personal opinion is destroyed.

"Whoever finds within himself discomfort concerning something that we say or judge has disbelieved in the One who revealed the Seven Oft-Repeated Verses and the Great Qur'an, while he himself does not even realize it."

Kamal al-Din, chapter 31, hadith 9.

The great danger is that a person may not himself realize or understand the gravity of the error he has committed, while nevertheless falling into shirk or kufr. Indeed, religious commitment cannot be realized except through complete submission to the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt (as). No one should give precedence to his own understanding and opinion—or those of others—over their traditions.

Submission to the Hadith During the Ghaybah

One of the signs of submission to the Imam (as) during the Ghaybah is submission to the traditions of the Imams (as).

The body of hadith that has reached us from the Ahlul Bayt (as) may be examined from two perspectives:

its transmission (*sudur*) and its indication or meaning (*dalalah*).

With regard to *sudur*, the chain of transmission of a hadith is examined.

If, after examining its chain, a person becomes certain that a particular narration is fabricated or falsely attributed, there is no longer any need to examine its meaning, and there is no obligation to accept its content, whatever that content may be.

However, if examination of the chain does not establish with certainty that the narration is fabricated—which is generally the case with narrations contained in the recognized Shi'ah hadith collections—the question of its meaning and indication then arises.

This applies whether the narration is *mutawatir* and certain in its transmission, or whether its transmission is probabilistic, as in the case of a *khabar al-wahid*. In both cases, according to the author, one is required to observe the relevant principles of religious commitment toward its purport.[1]

[1] A *khabar al-wahid* is a narration transmitted from the Infallible by one or more trustworthy narrators, but whose number does not reach a level that produces certainty that it was issued by the Infallible. The obligation to act upon such a report is established through the proofs discussed in *Usul al-Fiqh*. A narration with an unknown chain upon which no qualified scholar has relied falls outside the present discussion. We have no obligation regarding its content, and we leave judgment concerning whether or not it was actually issued by the Infallible to the Infallibles (as) themselves.

With respect to *dalalah*, some narrations correspond with what is already familiar and accepted by us, and no conflict arises.

Other narrations, however, may appear to conflict with what a person already knows or considers correct.

This latter situation occurs particularly with **mutashabih traditions**—traditions whose intended meaning is not immediately clear and which are capable of bearing two or more interpretations.

Submission to the hadith must include everything that has reached us from the Imams (as), particularly this second category, which may initially appear incompatible with our previous understanding.

In such a situation, submission requires a person to seek to bring his previous assumptions into conformity with the content of the hadith, rather than trying to force the hadith into conformity with what he had already accepted beforehand. The reason is that realities may exist of which we are entirely unaware, and the hadith may be pointing to one of those realities.

The criterion for the correctness of a hadith is not its conformity with our understanding.

Complete knowledge of all realities and sciences belongs uniquely to the sacred Fourteen Infallibles (as).

Therefore, when a narration transmitted from them agrees with what a person already believes, there is no difficulty in accepting it.
But if it does not agree with his previous assumptions, his first effort should be to **complete and correct his own understanding in the light of the hadith**.
If this proves impossible, his duty is to stop and refer the matter back to the Imams (as) themselves.
He is never entitled simply to deny it.

The Difficulty of Bearing the Traditions of the Imams (as)

We should not forget that, according to the Imams (as) themselves, not everyone is capable of bearing all the knowledge and traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (as).
Even believers acquire the capacity to bear them only under particular conditions and through special divine favour.
A person who possesses such capacity may easily understand and accept many traditions transmitted from the Imams (as) that others are unable either to comprehend or to bear.
Therefore, merely because the meaning of a hadith does not conform to what a person previously believed, he has no right to reject or discard it.
The Messenger of Allah (saww) said:

اِنَّ حَديثَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صَعبٌ مَستَصعَبٌ لا يُؤمِنُ بِهِ اِلّا مَلَکٌ مُقَرَّبٌ اَو نَبِيٌّ مُرسَلٌ اَو عَبدٌ امتَحَنَ اللهُ قَلبَهُ لِلايمانِ. فَما وَرَدَ عَلَيکُم مِن حَديثِ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَواتُ اللهِ عَلَيهِم فَلانَت لَهُ قُلُوبُکُم وَ عَرَفتُمُوهُ فَاقبَلُوهُ. وَ مَا اشمَأَزَّت قُلُوبُکُم وَ اَنکَرتُمُوهُ، فَرُدُّوهُ اِلَى اللهِ وَ اِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَ اِلى العالِمِ مِن آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَليهِم السّلام. وَ اِنَّمَا الهالِکُ اَن يُحَدَّثَ بِشَيءٍ مِنهُ لا يَحتَمِلُهُ فَيَقُولُ: وَ اللهِ ما کانَ هذا شَيئاً! وَ الاِنکارُ هُوَ الکُفرُ.

“Indeed, the hadith of the Family of Muhammad (saww) is difficult and demanding. None believes in it except an angel brought near, a messenger sent by Allah, or a servant whose heart Allah has tested for faith.
“Therefore, whatever reaches you from the traditions of the Family of Muhammad—may Allah’s blessings be upon them—and your hearts are receptive to it and you recognize it, then accept it.
“But whatever causes your hearts to recoil and you are unable to recognize or accept, refer it back to Allah, to the Messenger, and to the knowledgeable one from the Family of Muhammad (as).

“The one who is truly destroyed is the person to whom something from our traditions is narrated which he is unable to bear, and he then says: ‘By Allah, this is nothing!’—rejecting it altogether.
“And rejection is kufr.”
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 189, hadith 21, from *Basa’ir al-Darajat*.
Submission therefore requires that when a hadith cannot be reconciled with what has already become established in a person’s mind, he must not immediately adopt an attitude of denial or weaken the hadith merely on that basis.
Rather, he should seek its explanation and interpretation from the Ahlul Bayt (as) themselves.
This may be achieved by referring to scholars deeply acquainted with the traditions and teachings of the Imams (as).
If such qualified scholars are unavailable, the final course is **tawaqquf—to withhold judgment**.
That means refraining from making a definitive judgment and leaving the matter unresolved until, insha’Allah, its meaning becomes clear through the Ahlul Bayt (as) themselves.
It is not necessary for every person to understand the meaning of every hadith. Failure to understand a narration does not justify rejecting it or forcing an interpretation upon it.

Rejecting a Hadith Because One Cannot Bear It

The most beloved companions of the Imams (as) are those who understand their traditions well and, through deep comprehension, are able to accept them.
By contrast, the most disliked are those who, when they fail to understand a hadith and find it incompatible with what they had previously accepted, reject it and become averse to accepting it.
Such an attitude is, in reality, a rejection of the wilayah of the Imams (as), because acceptance of their wilayah necessarily requires complete submission to them—even when their words do not conform to what we ourselves had regarded as correct.
Imam al-Baqir (as) said:

اَما وَ اللهِ اِنَّ اَحَبَّ اَصحابی اِلَیَّ اَورَعُهُم وَ اَفقَهُهُم وَ اَکتَمُهُم لِحَدیثِنا. وَ اِنَّ اَسوَاَهُم عِندی حالاً وَ اَمقَتَهُم اِلَیَّ الَّذی اِذا سَمِعَ الحَدیثَ یُنسَبُ اِلَینا وَ یُروی عَنّا فَلَم یَعقِلهُ وَ لَم یَقبَلهُ قَلبُهُ اشمَأَزَّ مِنهُ وَ جَحَدَهُ وَ کَفَرَ بِمَن دانَ بِهِ وَ هُوَ لایَدری لَعَلَّ الحَدیثَ مِن عِندِنا خَرَجَ وَ اِلَینا اُسنِدَ فَیَکُونُ بِذلِکَ خارِجاً مِن وِلایَتِنا.

“Know, by Allah, that the most beloved of my companions to me are those who possess the greatest wara‘, the deepest understanding of religion, and the greatest care in concealing our hadith where concealment is required.

“And the worst of them in my sight, and the most detestable to me, is the one who hears a hadith attributed to us and narrated from us, but does not understand it and whose heart cannot accept it; he becomes repelled by it, rejects it, and condemns the one who believes in it.

“Yet he does not know—perhaps that hadith truly came from us and was indeed attributed back to us. Through this, he may place himself outside our wilayah.”

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 186, hadith 12, from *Basa’ir al-Darajat*.

If a person accepts only those traditions that support his own theories, while rejecting whatever does not confirm his intellectual position, then in reality he has not accepted the wilayah of the Imams (as) over himself.

He is merely following his own opinions and views.

To accept **wilayah** means to recognize one’s *wali* as possessing authority and priority over oneself and others.

The necessary consequence of this belief is that one gives preference to the Imam’s judgment and desire over the judgment and desire of anyone else.

It does not mean following him only when his words agree with one’s own beliefs, while rejecting or reinterpreting his words whenever they do not.

A person who behaves in this manner has, in reality, never followed the Imams (as) at all.

Even in those cases where he appears to follow them, he is actually following his own belief, which merely happens to coincide with what is found in the traditions.

The criterion of correct belief is **what has been taught in the hadith**, whether or not it agrees with what we previously believed.

Only then can it truly be said that a person has accepted the wilayah of the Ahlul Bayt (as).

This is the duty concerning traditions whose attribution to the Ahlul Bayt (as) has been accepted and concerning which there is no doubt.
As for traditions whose attribution to the Imams (as) is not absolutely certain—such as *akhbar al-ahad*, or narrations relied upon by devout and expert Shi'ah scholars such as the late al-Kulayni and 'Allamah al-Majlisi even though a formally reliable chain has not been transmitted for them—they cannot be rejected merely because they fail to conform to our understanding and beliefs.
The criterion for the truth of a statement and the correctness of its attribution to the Imams (as) is not its conformity with our limited understanding.
Those who consider themselves followers of the Imams (as) therefore cannot remain indifferent even toward material attributed to them merely on this basis.

When the Meaning of a Hadith Appears to Conflict with the Judgment of Reason

A question may arise here in response to this approach:
If this is the case, what becomes of the value of reason and self-evident rational truths?
If something transmitted as a hadith of the Ahlul Bayt (as) conflicts with an established rational certainty, can it still not be rejected?
If even such a statement cannot be rejected, then the sacred Imams (as) would no longer be regarded as free from falsehood and error. The soundness of their teachings—and even their own truthfulness—would then become open to question, because all these matters have themselves been accepted through the definitive judgment of reason, and the conclusions cannot contradict their own foundation.
The answer to this question has itself been given in the traditions, and reason likewise confirms it.
A man came to Imam al-Sadiq (as) and said:

جُعِلتُ فِداکَ؛ اِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَیَأتینا مِن قَبلِکَ فَیُخبِرُنا عَنکَ بِالعَظیمِ مِنَ الاَمرِ فَیُضیقُ بِذلِکَ صُدُورُنا حَتّی نُکَذِّبَهُ.

"May I be sacrificed for you! A man comes to us from your direction and reports from you something of tremendous weight. Our hearts become so constricted at hearing it that we eventually deny it altogether."

The Imam (as) asked:

أَلَيسَ عَنّى يُحَدِّثُكُم؟!

“Does he not narrate it to you from me?”
The narrator replied:
“Yes.”
The Imam (as) then asked:

فَيَقُولُ لِلَّيلِ اِنَّهُ نَهارٌ وَ لِلنَّهارِ اِنَّهُ لَيلٌ؟!

“Does he say that night is day and that day is night?”
The narrator replied:
“No.”
The Imam (as) then said:

رُدَّهُ اِلَينا، فَاِنَّکَ اِن کَذَّبتَ فَاِنَّما تُکَذِّبنا.

“Then refer it back to us and leave its judgment to us, for if you deny it, you are in fact denying us.”
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 187, hadith 14, from *Basa’ir al-Darajat*.
The example given by the Imam (as)—calling night day and day night—illustrates a statement that plainly contradicts a self-evident rational truth.
If something transmitted as a hadith contradicts a clear and self-evident judgment of reason in this manner—such that the contradiction is like saying that night is day or day is night, and no reconciliation is possible—then in such a case we are not religiously required, on the basis of submission to the Imams (as), to accept that meaning.
But not every apparent conflict is of this kind.
Not every tension between a narration and our understanding reaches the level of an actual contradiction.
Where no such decisive contradiction exists, the duty is to bring our own beliefs, as far as possible, into conformity with the transmitted hadith. If that cannot be done, we leave its knowledge to the Ahlul Bayt (as).

Different Forms of Conflict Between Reason and Transmitted Text

A conflict reaching the level of genuine contradiction arises only when the judgment of reason in question is **self-evident and innate**—that is, when it

belongs to the *mustaqillat ʻaqliyyah*, the independently evident judgments of reason.

An example is the judgment that **injustice is evil**.

Every rational human being recognizes such a judgment. Its recognition is not restricted to those who have received formal education or studied philosophy. It is innate and does not depend upon acquired learning.

At the same time, the transmitted hadith would have to be a **nass** in its meaning—that is, its wording would have to be so explicit that no alternative meaning to the apparent one could reasonably be intended.

Only under these two conditions would the self-evident judgment of reason and the explicit meaning of the hadith stand in genuine contradiction.

If, however, the hadith can be understood in a way that does not conflict with a self-evident rational judgment, then the duty is to understand it in that manner, even if that interpretation differs from its initial apparent meaning.

We follow a similar method with certain verses of the Holy Qur'an.

Since the transmission of the Qur'an is certain, if the apparent meaning of a verse conflicts with a self-evident judgment of innate reason, we interpret the verse in a manner other than its initial apparent meaning.

For example, some verses may outwardly appear to imply **compulsion (*jabr*) in man's voluntary actions**.

Such an apparent meaning conflicts with the self-evident judgment of innate reason.

In such a case, we do not weaken or question the transmission of the Qur'an. Rather, we conclude that the apparent meaning is not what Allah intended.

In this way, the contradiction between the Qur'anic text and the self-evident rational proof is removed.

However, if, beyond merely removing the contradiction between reason and revelation, we wish to identify the **precise intended meaning** of the Qur'anic verse, we require sufficient evidence and contextual indications to establish the correct meaning that differs from the apparent one.

If such evidence and indications are insufficient, we may remain unable to determine the verse's precise intended meaning, even though we remain certain that its initial apparent meaning was not intended.
This distinction should be carefully noted.
The same method must be applied to traditions transmitted from the Imams (as).
If the apparent meaning of a hadith contradicts an independently self-evident rational judgment, we become certain that the apparent meaning of the hadith was not intended.
We may or may not possess sufficient evidence to determine its correct, non-apparent meaning.
In either case, there is no genuine conflict between reason and transmitted revelation.
This applies when the hadith is **not a nass**, meaning that its wording allows an interpretation other than its initial apparent meaning.
But suppose this is not possible.
Suppose a transmitted hadith cannot bear any meaning other than its apparent one—in other words, it is a *nass* in that meaning—and at the same time it explicitly contradicts a self-evident judgment of reason.
In that case, it would be like saying that night is day and day is night.
If, hypothetically, such a case were to be found among narrations contained in recognized Shi'ah books, we would have no obligation to accept the meaning of that narration or act according to its content.

One's Duty Regarding Mutashabih Verses and Traditions

We are required to accept wholeheartedly what has reached us from the Ahlul Bayt (as), just as we accept the verses of the Qur'an, and to have faith in all of it.
However, there is no requirement that we must necessarily understand the meaning of every single report transmitted from them, just as we are not required to know the meaning of every verse of the Qur'an.
We accept the *mutashabih* verses of the Qur'an even when we do not necessarily understand their correct meaning.
For example, concerning the noble verse:

»وَ ما رَمیتَ اِذ رَمَیتَ وَ لکِنَّ اللهَ رَمی«

“And when you threw, it was not you who threw, but Allah threw.”
(Qur’an 8:17)

We are certain that this verse does not negate the Prophet’s (saww) free choice in the act of throwing, because the verse itself addresses him as the one who performed the act, and he was neither compelled nor forced to do so.

Nevertheless, we may not know the precise meaning of the verse.

In such a case, we do not reject the verse. Rather, we believe in it even if we do not fully understand its meaning.[1]

[1] This noble verse is among the *mutashabih* verses for someone who does not know its correct meaning. In general, whether a verse is *muhkam* or *mutashabih* is relative and varies according to a person’s knowledge or ignorance. A verse may be *muhkam* for one person and *mutashabih* for another. Amir al-Mu’minin (as) said: المتشابه ما اشتَبَه على جاهلِهِ — “The *mutashabih* is that which becomes unclear to the one who does not know its intended meaning.” (*Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 92, p. 382, hadith 15, from *Tafsir al-ʿAyyashi*.) Thus, if a person knows what is intended by the above verse, it will no longer be *mutashabih* for him. The verse does not state a universal rule; rather, it specifically addresses the Prophet (saww) concerning the Battle of Badr, when he took a handful of sand and dust and threw it toward the faces of the Quraysh. This act produced a miraculous effect, and it is with respect to this effect that the Prophet’s “throwing” is attributed to Allah—not in the sense that the Prophet’s voluntary act itself was Allah’s act. (See the narrative commentaries under this noble verse.)

Our duty concerning the hadith is the same.

The meaning of a particular hadith may not be explicitly clear to us, and several possible meanings may be conceivable. In such a case, the hadith is among the *mutashabihat*, and we may be unable to determine its meaning with certainty. This inability, however, should not affect our faith in its having been issued by the Infallible. We must accept the traditions even when we cannot determine their precise meaning with certainty.

More generally, we should never assume that the meanings of the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (as) must necessarily fit within the boundaries of our own assumptions and accepted ideas.
Several possible interpretations of a hadith may occur to us, and we may imagine that its meaning must necessarily be one of them. We may even suppose that these possibilities exhaust all rational alternatives, while in reality certain assumptions already present in our minds have confined us to those particular possibilities.
It is therefore entirely possible that an Imam (as) may have said something for which we are unable to conceive a reasonable meaning, yet if someone were hypothetically able to ask the Imam himself, the Imam could explain a meaning that had never occurred to anyone else—and that meaning would contain no conflict whatsoever with the independently self-evident judgments of reason. Such a possibility is entirely reasonable.

Seventy Meanings for the Traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (as)

It has been narrated from the Imams (as) themselves that they could explain as many as seventy meanings for their words, all of which could be consistent with the wording of their hadith.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

إِنَّ الكَلِمَةِ مِن كَلامِنا لَتَنصرِفُ عَلى سَبعينَ وَجهاً، لَنا مِن جَميعَها المَخرَجُ.

“Indeed, a word from our speech can bear seventy meanings, and for all of them we have a way of explaining it.”
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 184, hadith 5, from *Ma‘ani al-Akhbar*.
Two points are indicated in this hadith.
First, each statement of the Imams (as) may bear many meanings, described here as reaching seventy.[1]
Second, the Imams (as) themselves are capable of deriving and explaining all of those meanings from the wording of the hadith. In other words, if they wished to explain to someone what they intended by a particular statement, they could show how those meanings arise from the words themselves.

[1] The number seventy may perhaps indicate multiplicity rather than an exact numerical limit.
Such a task is naturally beyond the capacity of ordinary people.
A religious scholar must have extensive familiarity with the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (as) and must understand the foundations of their teachings across the various fields of ma'rifah before he can acquire the ability to derive and understand even some of these dimensions.
For this reason, the Imams (as) strongly emphasized **tafaqquh** and deep understanding of their traditions. In their terminology, only someone deeply acquainted with their teachings deserves to be called a **faqih**.
Such *fiqh* cannot be attained unless a person becomes aware of what is conveyed implicitly, rather than explicitly, in their words.
The beginning of the previous hadith states:

حَديثٌ تَدريهِ خَيرٌ مِن اَلفٍ تَرويهِ. وَ لا يَكُونُ الرَّجُلُ مِنكُم فَقيهاً حَتّى يَعرِفَ مَعاريضَ كَلامِنا.

"One hadith that you understand deeply is better than a thousand hadith that you merely narrate. And no one among you will be a faqih until he recognizes the implicit dimensions of our speech."
The word **ma'arid** (مَعاريض), the plural of *mi'rad*, refers to the underlying or implied purport of speech.
A meaning explicitly conveyed by words is *musarrah*—an expressly stated meaning—whereas a meaning intended indirectly or implicitly is called a *mi'rad*.
A statement may have one explicit meaning together with one or more implicit meanings, all of which may have been intended by the speaker.
Ordinary people generally understand only the explicit meaning of a statement.
Someone familiar with the speaker's intellectual approach, however, and aware of the contextual and verbal indications surrounding his words, may also understand its implicit and allusive meanings according to the depth of his familiarity.
The same applies to the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (as).
Those who are not deeply familiar with their teachings in different fields generally understand only the explicit meaning.
But deep familiarity with their intellectual method and approach, together with knowledge of the different circumstances in which they spoke—such as *taqiyyah*

and similar conditions—and knowledge of their companions and narrators, some of whom were at times unable to bear certain truths and before whom the Imam may have employed *tawriyah*, can all contribute to understanding the implicit meanings of the words of the Imams (as).

According to the Imams (as), a **faqih** is someone familiar with these factors that affect the understanding of their words.

Such a person is able to comprehend the words of the Imams (as) deeply. Without this, one merely derives their apparent meanings, and this is not the *fiqh* intended by the Imams (as).

Fiqh means deep understanding. One who reaches only the surface and apparent meanings of speech has not yet attained true *fiqh*.

A Faqih's Method of Approaching Hadith

We must therefore approach the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (as) with great caution.

A hadith may appear to us capable of bearing only one or a few meanings, with no other possibility occurring to our minds. If those possible meanings appear incompatible with self-evident rational truths, we still do not have the right simply to discard or reject the hadith.

The reason is that the Infallible speaker may have intended another meaning—or several other meanings—that have never occurred to us.

We may say only that meanings which genuinely contradict independently self-evident rational truths cannot have been intended by the hadith.

Whether some other meaning can be derived from it, however, is generally not something everyone is qualified to determine. Such judgment belongs to a faqih who understands the *ma'arid* and deeper dimensions of the speech of the Imams (as).

During the Ghaybah of Imam al-'Asr (as), such comprehensive *fiqh* across all branches of the sciences and teachings of the Ahlul Bayt (as) is rarely found. Nevertheless, among the great Shi'ah scholars there have been many who, in different areas of practical law and conventional *fiqh*, were deeply familiar with the approach and method of the Ahlul Bayt (as), the circumstances surrounding

their words, and the relevant contextual indications, and who understood many of the implicit dimensions of their teachings.

One reason for this is that, in the field of practical rulings, scholars have generally shown a greater degree of religious submission to the hadith. The duty of **taslim** toward juridical traditions has, in general, been observed by the great Shi'ah jurists.

Unfortunately, outside the field of practical *fiqh*—particularly in matters of belief, which are even more important than practical rulings, and in the interpretation of non-juridical verses of the Qur'an, and then in the field of ethics and the rulings pertaining to the heart—the number of scholars who have adopted the path of complete submission to the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (as), considering themselves first and foremost responsible for discovering the belief and teaching of the Ahlul Bayt (as) concerning every issue, has been much smaller.

The reality is that only such people can fully claim that accepting the words of the Ahlul Bayt (as) is not inwardly difficult for them.

Scholars and thinkers differ in their degrees in this regard. The greater a person's submission, the closer he comes to the kind of *fiqh* approved by the Imams (as). If such submission is absent, referring to the hadith merely becomes a search for supporting evidence for one's own ideas or those of others. Such an approach has no value before Allah and the Ahlul Bayt (as).

Many people cite traditions when presenting their views. This alone is not evidence that they have submitted to the Imams (as).

It is repeatedly observed that one or more *mutashabih* traditions are made the foundation of a theological argument, while numerous clear and firmly established traditions are set aside under various pretexts—such as weakness of chain, the supposedly limited intellectual level of the Imams' audience, or similar explanations.

This is not submission to the Ahlul Bayt (as).

A person who—whether deliberately or unknowingly—makes human thought the foundation of his beliefs, and then cites from the available traditions only those that confirm his intellectual position while disregarding the rest, or reinterpreting them to fit his own framework, is not truly submitting to the Ahlul Bayt (as).

Such a person may speak extensively about the wilayah and Imamate of the Imams (as), and may verbally and practically express great love and devotion toward them, but all of this is distinct from sincere and complete adherence to their teachings and school.

Nor should a person assume merely because someone cites a number of traditions in his speech or writing, or proclaims adherence to the Imams (as), that he has attained true submission.

Recognizing this quality is not simple, nor is everyone qualified to judge it.

A person would himself need expertise in the particular field, possess the necessary scholarly foundations for identifying the approach and method of the Ahlul Bayt (as), and have sufficiently studied and examined the relevant traditions before being qualified to make such a judgment.

In any case, entering this field and progressing toward the kind of *fiqh* approved by the Imams (as) is extremely difficult. It cannot be attained merely through studying Arabic literature, logic, *fiqh*, *usul*, and similar disciplines.

Most of these subjects are useful and necessary. Alongside them, however, acquiring the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt (as) in matters of belief is also essential.

Yet all of these are **necessary conditions, not sufficient conditions**, for attaining true *fiqh*.

Another indispensable condition is seeking refuge in the care of the Ahlul Bayt (as) themselves and asking them for assistance and guidance.

Every movement along every path ultimately requires divine grace and favour, but in the pursuit of religious knowledge this need is even more serious and essential than in other disciplines.

Religious scholars and thinkers are, in certain respects, more exposed than others to the dangers of deviation and error. Satan's influence upon the path travelled by religious scholars and thinkers can be deeper and more dangerous.

For this reason, their tawassul to all the Infallibles (as), and especially to the Hidden Imam, Hazrat al-Mahdi (atfs), must be greater and more constant than that of others.

The Need for the Imams' (as) Special Favour in Bearing Their Traditions

The necessity of such attention and tawassul becomes even clearer when we understand that no one can truly bear their knowledge without the special grace and favour of the Imams (as) themselves.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

اِنَّ حَديثَنا صَعبٌ مُستَصعَبٌ ... لا يَحتَمِلُهُ مَلَکٌ مُقَرَّبٌ وَ لا نَبِيٌّ مُرسَلٌ وَ لا مُؤمِنٌ مُمتَحَنٌ.

"Indeed, our hadith is difficult and demanding... Neither an angel brought near, nor a messenger sent by Allah, nor a believer whose faith has been tested can bear it."[1]

[1] There are two possibilities concerning what is meant by **hadithuna—"our hadith"** in this narration and similar traditions. The first is that it refers to all the teachings and statements of the Ahlul Bayt (as). The discussion in the text is based on this interpretation. For the second possibility, which is preferred by the author of *Mikyal al-Makarim*, see vol. 2, pp. 463–466. It should also be noted that both interpretations may be correct together, each representing a different aspect of what the Imam (as) intended.

Abu Samit, the narrator of the hadith, says that he asked:

فَمَن يَحتَمِلُه جُعِلتُ فِداکَ؟

"May I be sacrificed for you! Then who can bear it?"

The Imam (as) replied:

مَن شِئنا يا اَبَاالصّامِتِ!

"Whomever we wish, O Abu Samit!"

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 192, hadith 34, from *Basa'ir al-Darajat*.

It thus becomes clear that unless a person who reads or hears the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (as) receives the particular attention and favour of the Imam (as), he will not truly comprehend their meaning.

To "bear" a hadith does not merely mean to read or memorize it. It means that the hadith finds a place within the person's heart and is inwardly accepted by him. And this requires the special grace of the Imam (as).

Thus, every student of religious knowledge who refers to the traditions of the Imams (as), with respect to every hadith he truly understands and accepts in his

heart, requires the attention and favour of the Imam (as). Without that favour, he cannot truly bear anything of their knowledge.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) did not categorically deny the ability of every angel brought near, every messenger sent by Allah, and every tested believer to bear the traditions.
In other words, the Imam did not mean that absolutely no individual belonging to these three groups is capable of receiving their teachings.
What is denied is the ability of those among these three groups who have **not** received the particular favour and will of the Imam (as) to bear their ma'rifah.
Thus, whenever anyone from these three groups receives such a blessing, it is only through the will, favour, and attention of the Imam (as).
Once this point is understood, the necessity of constant tawassul to Imam al-'Asr (atfs), and of adopting the means that attract his attention—particularly for those seeking the knowledge of the Ahlul Bayt (as)—becomes even clearer.

Haste Is Incompatible with Submission

One of the areas in which believers are tested concerning submission during the Ghaybah of Imam al-'Asr (atfs) is their submission regarding **the prolongation of the Ghaybah**.
Our Imams had foretold its prolongation even before the Ghaybah began.
Nevertheless, enduring it is extremely difficult and painful for true believers.
Those who genuinely feel the pain of the Imam's (as) absence experience the calamity more intensely with every day and every hour by which his Reappearance is delayed, and enduring it becomes increasingly difficult for them.
The greater the calamity, the greater the patience it requires.
Therefore, in order not to lose their patience in bearing the calamity of the Imam's Ghaybah, believers must seek help from Allah.
An example of asking for such patience is found in a supplication transmitted to us from 'Uthman ibn Sa'id al-'Amri, the first deputy of Imam al-'Asr (atfs):

اَللّٰهُمَّ ... ثَبِّتنی عَلی طاعَةِ وَلِیِّ اَمرِکَ الَّذی سَتَرتَهُ عَن خَلقِکَ فَبِاِذنِکَ غابَ عَن بَرِیَّتِکَ وَ اَمرِکَ یَنتَظِرُ. وَ اَنتَ العالِمُ غَیرُ المُعَلَّمِ بِالوَقتِ الَّذی فیهِ صَلاحُ اَمرِ وَلِیِّکَ فِی الاِذنِ لَهُ بِاِظهارِ اَمرِهِ وَ کَشفِ سِترِهِ. فَصَبِّرنی عَلی ذلِکَ حَتّی لا اُحِبَّ تَعجیلَ مَا

اَخَّرتَ وَ لا تَأخيرَ ما عَجَّلتَ وَ لا اَكشِفَ عَمّا سَتَرتَهُ وَ لا اَبحَثَ عَمّا كَتَمتَهُ وَ لا اُنازِعَکَ فی تَدبيرِکَ وَ لا اَقُولَ: لِمَ وَ كَيفَ وَ ما بالُ وَلِيِّ الاَمرِ لا يَظهَرُ وَ قَدِ امتَلَاتِ الاَرضُ مِنَ الجَورِ؟! وَ اُفَوِّضَ اُمُورى كُلَّها اِلَيکَ.

“O Allah... make me steadfast in obedience to the guardian of Your command whom You have concealed from Your creation. It is by Your permission that he has entered Ghaybah from Your servants, and he awaits Your command.

“You are the Knower who has not been taught, and You know the time in which the welfare of the affair of Your wali lies—the time when You will permit him to manifest his cause and remove the veil of his concealment.

“So grant me patience in this matter, so that I do not desire the hastening of what You have delayed, nor the delaying of what You have hastened; so that I do not seek to uncover what You have concealed, nor investigate what You have kept hidden; so that I do not dispute with You concerning Your planning, nor say: ‘Why? How? Why does the Wali al-Amr not appear when the earth has been filled with injustice?!’

“Rather, let me entrust all of my affairs to You.”

Kamal al-Din, chapter 45, hadith 43.

The danger that threatens a person’s faith during hardship and calamity is the loss of patience and the development of dissatisfaction with divine decree and destiny. A believer must remain content with Allah’s decree under all circumstances and must not be dissatisfied with what Allah has willed for him.

Of course, some hardships and afflictions may arise because of sins committed by the person himself, when Allah wills to punish him in this world and therefore subjects him to hardship.

In such a case, he should be displeased with his own sin, which may have become the cause of divine punishment and worldly recompense through the descent of calamity. But he should not be displeased with Allah’s action.

Submission before Allah requires that his heart remain content with Allah’s will—which, in such a case, is an expression of His justice.

The Ghaybah of Imam al-‘Asr (atfs) is likewise a calamity for believers. Although its principal reason will not become fully clear before his Reappearance, according to what was discussed at the beginning of the previous section, it is a consequence

of divine justice: the sins of the people themselves have made them deserving of the displeasure of their Merciful Lord.
We must therefore be dissatisfied with our own shortcomings and ingratitude, and those of others, while at the same time remaining content with the Ghaybah of the Imam (as) and its prolongation insofar as it is required by divine justice. Being content with the prolongation of the Ghaybah is, in reality, being content with the act of Allah.
A condition of faith is that a person should inwardly be content with everything Allah does concerning him.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

اِعلَموا اَنَّهُ لَن يُؤمِنَ عَبدٌ مَن عَبيدِهِ حَتّى يَرضى عَنِ اللهِ فيما صَنَعَ اللهُ اِلَيهِ وَ صَنَعَ بِهِ على ما اَحَبَّ وَ كَرِهَ.

"Know that no servant of Allah will truly have faith until he is content with Allah concerning whatever Allah does with him, whether it is something he likes or dislikes."
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 78, p. 217, hadith 93, from *Rawdat al-Kafi*.
A believer is therefore one who remains content with Allah both in what is pleasing to him and in what is unpleasant.
Thus, although the Ghaybah of Imam al-'Asr (atfs) is among the most painful and distressing matters for believers, they endure all its bitterness without objecting to the will of their Lord.
One of the dangers threatening believers' faith during the Ghaybah is precisely the loss of patience and endurance and becoming dissatisfied because of its prolongation.
A sign of this condition is **haste concerning the Reappearance of the Imam (as)**, which our traditions call *isti'jal*.
Isti'jal has different degrees. The weaker a person's submission, the stronger his haste becomes. At its most severe level, it may even lead a person to deny the divine promise itself.
Hastiness concerning the Reappearance can destroy a person's faith and lead him to ruin.
Imam al-Jawad (as) said:

يَهلِكُ فيهَا المَستَعجِلُونَ. وَ يَنجُو فيهَا المَسَلِّمُونَ.

“During it [the Major Ghaybah], those who hasten will perish, while those who submit will be saved.”
Kamal al-Din, chapter 36, hadith 3.
Thus, one manifestation of submission during the Ghaybah is that a person does not lose patience because the Reappearance has been delayed and remains inwardly content with Allah’s will in this matter.

Submission Is Fully Compatible with Du‘a for the Hastening of the Faraj

Praying for the hastening of the faraj of Imam al-‘Asr (atfs) does not conflict in any way with submission concerning the duration of the Ghaybah, nor is such du‘a an instance of *isti‘jal*.
To understand this properly, two fundamental points concerning du‘a in general must be considered.

Du‘a Is Beloved to Allah

The first point is that Allah has made the supplication of His servant one of the highest forms of worship and one of the finest means through which He directs His favour toward His servants.
Amir al-Mu’minin (as), in his advice to Imam al-Hasan (as), said:

اِعلَم اَنَّ الَّذی بِیَدِهِ خَزائِنُ السَّمواتِ وَ الاَرضِ قَد اَذِنَ لَکَ فِی الدُّعاءِ وَ تَکَفَّلَ لَکَ بِالاِجابَةِ وَ اَمَرَکَ اَن تَسالَهُ لِیُعطِیَکَ وَ تَسترَحِمَهُ لِیَرحَمَکَ وَ لَم یَجعَل بَینَکَ وَ بَینَهُ مَن یَحجُبُهُ عَنکَ.

“Know that the One in whose hands are the treasures of the heavens and the earth has permitted you to call upon Him and has undertaken to answer you. He has commanded you to ask Him so that He may give to you, and to seek His mercy so that He may have mercy upon you. And He has placed no barrier between you and Himself that would conceal Him from you.”
Nahj al-Balaghah (Fayd al-Islam), Letter 31.
Du‘a means calling upon Allah, while *su’al* means asking Him for something.
Du‘a may or may not be accompanied by a request. Sometimes a person calls upon Allah without asking Him for anything in particular. At other times, he both calls upon Him and asks Him for something.

Both are beloved to Allah and are among the acts He has approved for His servants.
Beyond this, Allah even loves persistence in asking Him.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

اِنَّ اللهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ كَرِهَ اِلحاحَ النِاسِ بَعضِهِم عَلى بَعضٍ فِي المَسأَلَةِ وَ اَحَبَّ ذلِکَ لِنَفسِهِ.

"Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, dislikes people persistently asking one another, but He loves such persistence when it is directed toward Himself."
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 475, Kitab al-Du'a, Bab al-Ilhah fi al-Du'a, hadith 4.
Thus, not only are du'a and asking Allah beloved to Him, but He even loves persistence in asking Him.[1]

[1] Of course, concerning worldly matters where a person does not know whether what he seeks is pleasing to Allah or truly beneficial for him, persistence may not be in his best interest unless his supplication is made conditional upon its conformity with what Allah knows to be good for His servant.

The Effect of Du'a in Changing Divine Decree and Destiny

The second point is that Allah has made the supplication of His servant an effective cause in changing divine decree and destiny.
This is a manifestation of His perfect kindness and grace toward His servants: through their du'a, they may hope for a change in what Allah has decreed.
It is narrated from the seventh Imam, Imam Musa al-Kazim (as):

عَلَيكُم بِالدُّعاءِ. فَاِنَّ الدُّعاءَ لِلهِ وَ الطَّلَبَ اِلَى اللهِ يَرُدُّ البَلاءَ وَ قَد قُدِّرَ وَ قُضِيَ وَ لَم يَبقَ اِلّا اِمضاؤُهُ.

"It is incumbent upon you to supplicate, for supplication to Allah and asking from Allah repels a calamity even after it has been measured out and decreed, with nothing remaining except its execution."
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 4, p. 470, Kitab al-Du'a, Bab Anna al-Du'a Yaruddu al-Bala' wa al-Qada', hadith 8.
Taqdir means measuring or determining the particulars of something, and the time at which an event occurs is among the matters included in its determination.
Qada' is Allah's command to His agents, such as the angels, to carry out a matter.
Imda' is the stage at which that matter actually occurs externally.

Divine *taqdir* and *qada'*, so long as the decreed matter has not been finally executed, can be changed through du'a.
Thus, supplication and asking Allah, in addition to being acts of worship and servitude in themselves, can affect the destiny of the supplicant and of others.

Du'a Does Not Conflict with Contentment with Divine Decree

Once these two points concerning the value of du'a and its effect upon divine determinations are understood, it becomes clear that asking Allah for something does not conflict with being content with His decree.
Allah Himself has opened the door of du'a and asking to His servants. He loves them to turn to Him through this door and ask Him to remove their afflictions and hardships.
Indeed, He has made this very asking one of the highest forms of worship.
Therefore, praying and asking Allah to remove hardship is itself an act of submission to His **legislative decree (*qada' tashri'i*)**.[1]

[1] Legislative decree, in contrast to creational decree, concerns the voluntary actions of Allah's servants and refers to His commands and prohibitions. Whatever is the object of Allah's creational decree necessarily occurs. But what is the object of His legislative decree—what Allah commands or prohibits—may or may not occur depending upon the voluntary choice of human beings. Here Allah has willed that His servants freely supplicate to Him and ask Him to remove their hardships so that He may repel those hardships from them. If they do so, they have submitted to His legislative decree; if they do not, they have acted contrary to it.

The sign of a servant's true submission is that whether Allah grants his request or does not grant it at the time the servant desired, he remains content with what Allah has chosen for him and harbours no inward objection to divine decree and destiny.
With this explanation, it becomes completely clear that praying for the hastening of the faraj of Imam al-'Asr (atfs) does not conflict with submission concerning the prolongation of his Ghaybah.
The Ghaybah of the Imam (as) is the greatest affliction and calamity confronting us.

Allah has determined that people should be afflicted by the absence of the Imam of their age until the pain of this calamity penetrates their entire being, until they lose hope in everything and everyone else, and then, with burning hearts and in a state of desperation, cry before Allah and ask Him to hasten the faraj of their Master.

This very crying from the pain of separation from the Imam (as), and praying for the hastening of his faraj, is itself worship and servitude to Allah.

At the same time, it can also have an effect in bringing forward the time of his Reappearance.

Concerning the relationship between du'a and the shortening of a calamity, Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (as) is reported to have said:

ما مِن بَلاءٍ يَنزِلُ عَلى عَبدٍ مُؤمِنٍ فَيُلهِمُهُ اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ الدُّعاءَ اِلّا كانَ كَشفُ ذلِکَ البَلاءِ وَشيكاً. وَ ما مِن بَلاءٍ يَنزِلُ عَلى عَبدٍ مُؤمِنٍ فَيُمسِکُ عَنِ الدُّعاءِ اِلّا كانَ ذلِکَ البَلاءُ طويلاً. فَاِذا نَزَلَ البَلاءُ فَعَلَيكُم بالدُّعاءِ وَ التَضَرُّعِ اِلَى اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ.

"No calamity descends upon a believing servant and Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, inspires him to supplicate concerning it except that the removal of that calamity is near.

"And no calamity descends upon a believing servant and he refrains from supplicating concerning it except that the calamity becomes prolonged.

"Therefore, when calamity descends, it is incumbent upon you to supplicate and humbly plead before Allah, the Mighty and Majestic."

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 471, Kitab al-Du'a, Bab Ilham al-Du'a, hadith 2.

The expression **"inspiration to supplicate"**, attributed in this hadith to Allah, reveals an important reality: if, during a calamity, a person finds himself moved to du'a, he should recognize that he has received Allah's favour.

Not everyone is granted the tawfiq to turn to his Lord in supplication at the time of hardship.

Therefore, the very act of making du'a during affliction is itself a sign that the person has turned toward divine grace and mercy, which is something greatly praiseworthy.

Moreover, if a person is granted the tawfiq to supplicate, he may hope that the removal of the hardship is near and that Allah, by inspiring him to make du'a, has

provided him with a means of deliverance—provided that he appreciates this divine gift and makes full use of it.

The Effect of Du‘a for the Hastening of the Faraj in Bringing Forward the Reappearance

From this we can understand that praying for the hastening of the faraj of Imam al-‘Asr (atfs) can have an effect in bringing about the faraj and advancing the time of his Reappearance.

An example of such an advancement occurred in the case of Bani Israel.

According to a narration from Imam al-Sadiq (as), Allah had decreed that the descendants of Ibrahim through his wife Sarah—the Children of Israel—would be delivered from the oppression of Pharaoh through Prophet Musa (as) and Harun (as) after four hundred years.

However, through their crying and pleading before Allah, Bani Israel succeeded in bringing the promised relief forward by one hundred and seventy years.

The Imam (as) said:

فَلَمّا طالَ عَلى بَنى اِسرائيلَ العَذابُ، ضَجُّوا وَ بَكَوا اِلَى اللهِ اَربَعينَ صَباحاً. فَاَوحَى اللهُ اِلى مُوسى وَ هارَونَ يُخَلِّصُهُم مِن فِرعَونَ، فَحَطَّ عَنهُم سَبعينَ وَ مِائَةَ سَنَةٍ.

“When the period of suffering became prolonged for the Children of Israel, they cried out and wept before Allah for forty mornings. Allah then revealed to Musa and Harun that they should deliver them from Pharaoh, and thus He reduced their appointed suffering by one hundred and seventy years.”

Imam al-Sadiq (as) then said:

هكَذا اَنتُم لَو فَعَلتُم لَفَرَّجَ اللهُ عَنّا. فَاَمّا اِذ لَم تَكُونُوا فَاِنَّ الاَمرَ يَنتَهى اِلى مُنتَهاهُ.

“The same applies to you. If you were to do this, Allah would bring about our faraj. But if you do not, the matter will continue until it reaches its appointed end.”

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 52, p. 131, hadith 34, from *Tafsir al-‘Ayyashi*.

This is a remarkable warning to believers during the Ghaybah.

If they truly desire the faraj of their Imams from Allah, they must recognize and take seriously the path that the Imams (as) themselves have placed before them and strive earnestly to follow it.

A subtle point contained in this noble hadith, and an important lesson for those who pray for the hastening of the faraj, lies in the expression:
عَنّا — "from us / for us."
In other words, the du'a, crying, and pleading of the Shi'ah can bring forward the **faraj of the Ahlul Bayt (as)**.
Therefore, one who prays for the hastening of the faraj should, before anything else and above everything else, ask Allah for the relief of his own Master, Leader, and Beloved.

Chapter Three: Love for the Ahlul Bayt (as)

Love — A Sign of Complete Faith

Love (*mahabbah*) for the Ahlul Bayt (as) is another sign of those who possess ma'rifah of the Imam (as), particularly during the Ghaybah.
The importance of this love is evident from the fact that it has been described as the very foundation of Islam.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

لِكُلِّ شَیءٍ اَساسٌ. وَ اَساسُ الاِسلامِ حُبُّنا اَهلَ البَیتِ.

"Everything has a foundation, and the foundation of Islam is love for us, the Ahlul Bayt."
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 46, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab Nisbat al-Islam, hadith 2.
For this reason, our traditions describe love for the Ahlul Bayt (as) as the highest and most excellent form of worship.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

اِنَّ فَوقَ کُلِّ عِبادَةٍ عِبادَةً. وَ حُبُّنا اَهلَ البَیتِ اَفضَلُ عِبادَةٍ.

"Above every act of worship there is another act of worship, and love for us, the Ahlul Bayt, is the most excellent act of worship."
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 27, p. 91, hadith 48, from *Al-Mahasin* of al-Barqi.
In a hadith from the Noble Prophet (saww) in which he introduced all the Imams (as), the following is stated specifically concerning acceptance of the wilayah of Imam al-'Asr (atfs):

مَن اَحَبَّ اَن یَلقَی اللهَ وَ قَد کَمُلَ ایمانُهُ وَ حَسُنَ اِسلامُهُ، فَلیَتَوَلَّ الحُجَّةَ صاحِبَ الزَّمانِ المُنتَظَرَ.

“Whoever wishes to meet Allah while his faith is complete and his Islam is sound should accept the wilayah of al-Hujjah, the awaited Sahib al-Zaman.”
At the end of the hadith, the Prophet (saww) said:

فَهؤُلاءِ مَصابيحُ الدَّجى وَ اَئِمَّةُ الهُدى وَ اَعلامُ التُّقى. مَن اَحَبَّهُم وَ تَوَلّاهُم، كُنتُ ضامِناً لَهُ عَلَى اللهِ تَعالى بِالجَنَّةِ.

“These are the lamps in the darkness, the Imams of guidance, and the signs of taqwa. Whoever loves them and accepts their wilayah, I guarantee Paradise for him before Allah, the Exalted.”
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 36, p. 296, hadith 125, from *Fada’il* of Shadhan ibn Jibra’il.
Faith begins with wilayah and love for the Messenger of Allah (saww) and reaches completion with wilayah and love for Hazrat al-Hujjah (atfs).
Without love for the Hidden Imam (atfs), therefore, complete faith cannot be attained.
The higher the degree of faith, the greater the love for him. Conversely, the greater this love becomes, the more complete the person’s faith becomes.
The intensity of one’s love for Imam al-‘Asr (atfs) is therefore an important sign of the completeness of one’s faith.

Attaining Love Through Submission

Love for the Ahlul Bayt (as) is not something Allah grants casually to everyone. Just as the original ma‘rifah of Allah, the Messenger (saww), and the Imam (as) is a grace and favour from the Lord, love for the Imam (as) is an even greater divine favour granted to those who possess ma‘rifah.
The best means of attracting Allah’s grace and favour in this regard is **complete submission to the Ahlul Bayt (as).**
Imam al-Baqir (as) said to Abu Khalid al-Kabuli:

وَ اللهِ – يا اَبا خالِدٍ – لا يُحِبُّنا عَبدٌ وَ يَتَولّانا حَتّى يُطَهِّرَ اللهُ قَلبَهُ. وَ لا يُطَهِّرُ اللهُ قَلبَ عَبدٍ حَتّى يُسَلِّمَ لَنا وَ يَكونَ سِلماً لَنا.
فَإذا كانَ سِلماً لَنا، سَلَّمَهُ اللهُ مِن شَديدِ الحِسابِ وَ آمَنَهُ مِن فَزَعِ يَومِ القِيامَةِ الأكبَرِ.

“By Allah, O Abu Khalid, no servant will love us and accept our wilayah until Allah purifies his heart. And Allah will not purify a servant’s heart until he submits to us and is completely at peace with us.

“When he is at peace with us, Allah will protect him from the severity of the Reckoning and grant him security from the greatest terror of the Day of Resurrection.”
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 194, Kitab al-Hujjah, Bab Anna al-A’immah (as) Nur..., hadith 1.
If the heart is not pure, love and wilayah of the Ahlul Bayt (as) cannot truly settle within it.
And purity of heart is attained through being in a state of **silm**—complete peace, harmony, and submission—toward the Ahlul Bayt (as).
Therefore, whoever seeks greater love for the Imam (as) must strengthen this state of *silm* within himself as much as possible.
The higher the degree of submission, the purer the heart becomes; and the purer the heart becomes, the greater its love for the Imam (as).

Weeping for the Imam (as) as a Result of Intense Love

Love is an affair of the heart, and its intensity corresponds to the depth of the lover’s ma‘rifah and wilayah toward the beloved.
The greater the ma‘rifah, the greater the love.
One sign of intense love is that merely remembering the beloved, recalling separation from him, or remembering the hardships and calamities that have befallen him causes the lover’s heart to tremble and tears to flow from his eyes.
Out of His grace and generosity, Allah has made these very tears a means of purifying the heart and removing the stains of sin from the lover.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said to Fudayl ibn Yasar:

يا فُضَيلُ، مِن ذَكَرَنا، اَو ذُكِرنا عِندَهُ، فَخَرَجَ مِن عَينِهِ مِثلُ جَناحِ الذُّبابِ، غَفَرَ اللهُ لَهُ ذُنُوبَهُ وَ لَو كانَت اَكثَرَ مِن زَبَدِ البَحرِ.

“O Fudayl! Whoever remembers us, or in whose presence we are remembered, and tears flow from his eyes even to the extent of the wing of a fly, Allah will forgive his sins even if they are more numerous than the foam of the sea.”
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 44, p. 282, hadith 14, from *Qurb al-Isnad*.
Such a reward is due to the greatness of the rank of the Imam (as) and the value of loving him. It is not dependent upon the personal merit of the lover.

The one who weeps does not therefore need to have independently earned or deserved such a reward. It is purely a manifestation of Allah's grace toward one who loves the Ahlul Bayt (as).

During the Ghaybah, the burning pain of separation from Imam al-'Asr (atfs), the suffering of being deprived of his presence, and remembrance of the hardships and sorrows endured by his sacred person are among the things that bring tears to the eyes of those who possess ma'rifah.

We previously quoted Imam al-Sadiq (as):

اَما وَ اللهِ لَيَغيبَنَّ اِمامُكُم سَنيناً مِن دَهرِكُم ... . وَ لَتَدمَعَنَّ عَلَيهِ عُيُونُ المُؤمِنينَ.

"Know, by Allah, your Imam will certainly remain in Ghaybah for years of your lifetime... and the eyes of the believers will certainly shed tears for him."

Kamal al-Din, chapter 33, hadith 35.

How precious, then, are those burning hearts, tearful eyes, cries, and lamentations for the Imam (as), when Imam al-Sadiq (as) himself prayed for such people.

Mu'awiyah ibn Wahb says that he saw Imam al-Sadiq (as) in sajdah, supplicating for the visitors to the grave of Sayyid al-Shuhada', Imam al-Husayn (as), saying:

...اِرحَم تِلکَ الاَعيُنَ الَّتی جَرَت دُمُوعُها رَحمَةً لَنا. وَ ارحَم تِلکَ القُلُوبَ الَّتی جَزَعَت وَ احتَرَقَت لَنا. وَ ارحَمِ الصَّرخَةَ الَّتی كانَت لَنا...

"...O Allah, have mercy upon those eyes whose tears have flowed out of compassion for us. Have mercy upon those hearts that have become restless and burned for us. And have mercy upon those cries and lamentations that have been raised for us..."

Kamil al-Ziyarat, p. 117.

Such restlessness and cries may also arise from the pain of separation from Imam al-'Asr (atfs) during his Ghaybah.

It is therefore not without significance that **Du'a al-Nudbah** has been prescribed for four great days of celebration for the Muslims: **Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Eid al-Ghadir, and Friday.**

These four days are among the finest occasions Allah has appointed for the descent of His mercy upon the believers, and all of them have a particular connection with the sacred existence of Hazrat al-Mahdi (atfs).

On Friday, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha, the prayer and sermon of the occasion are to be led by the Imam (as). On Eid al-Ghadir, the Muslims renew their allegiance to the Imam appointed by Allah.

At a time when the Master of these days is absent from sight, believers should therefore lament and call out in longing for their Beloved:

اَينَ الطّالِبُ بِدَمِ المَقتُولِ بِكَربَلاءَ؟

"Where is the one who will seek vengeance for the one slain in Karbala?"

اَينَ المُضطَرُّ الَّذى يُجابُ اِذا دَعا؟

"Where is the distressed one whose prayer is answered when he calls?"

In this same du'a, those who love the Imam (atfs) pour out their hearts before their Beloved:

يَابنَ طه وَ المُحكَماتِ، يَابنَ يس وَ الذّارِياتِ، يَابنَ الطُّورِ وَ العادِياتِ ... .لَيتَ شِعرى اَينَ استَقَرَّت بِكَ النَّوى! ... .عَزيزٌ عَلَيَّ اَن اَرَى الخَلقَ وَ لا تَرى وَ لا اَسمَعَ لَکَ حَسيساً وَ لا نَجوى! ... .عَزيزٌ عَلَيَّ اَن اَبكِيَکَ وَ يُخذُلَکَ الوَرى. ... !

"O son of Ta-Ha and the decisive verses! O son of Ya-Sin and al-Dhariyat! O son of al-Tur and al-'Adiyat!... If only I knew where your journey has taken you and where you have settled!...

"It is unbearable for me that I should see all of creation while you remain unseen, and that I should hear neither your voice nor your whispered speech!...

"It is unbearable for me that I should weep for you while the people abandon you!..."

Then they seek someone to share their grief and lamentation:

هَل مِن مُعينٍ فَأُطيلَ مَعَهُ العَويلَ وَ البُكاءَ؟! هَل مِن جَزُوعٍ فَأُساعِدَ جَزَعَهُ اِذا خَلا؟! هَل قَذِيَت عَينٌ فَساعَدَتها عَينى عَلَى القَذى؟!

"Is there anyone to help me, so that together with him I may prolong my lamentation and weeping?

"Is there anyone overcome with grief, so that when he is alone I may join him in his grief?

"Is there an eye wounded by sorrow, so that my eye may join it in bearing that pain?"

Iqbal al-A'mal, pp. 297–298.

When these words rise from the burning hearts of those who love the Imam (atfs) on the days of Eid, they are a sign of the depth and intensity of their love for their Hidden Imam.

Friendship with the Friends of the Imam (as) and Enmity toward His Enemies

One of the necessary consequences of loving the Imam (as) is that a person who loves him should befriend his friends and oppose his enemies. This has been particularly emphasized during the Ghaybah of the Imam (as). The Messenger of Allah (s) said:

طُوبى لِمَن اَدرَکَ قائِمَ اَهلِ بَیتی وَ هُوَ یَأتَمُّ بِهِ فی غَیبَتِهِ قَبلَ قِیامِهِ وَ یَتَوَلّی اَولِیاءَهُ وَ یُعادی اَعداءَهُ. ذٰلِکَ مِن رُفَقائی وَ ذَوی مَوَدَّتی وَ اَکرَمِ اُمَّتی عَلَیَّ یَومَ القِیامَةِ.

“Blessed is the one who lives in the time of the Qa’im from my Ahlul Bayt, follows him during his Ghaybah before his uprising, befriends his friends, and regards his enemies as enemies. Such a person will be among my companions and those dear to me, and among the most honoured members of my Ummah in my sight on the Day of Resurrection.”

Kamal al-Din, ch. 25, h. 2.

It can be seen that friendship with the friends of the Imam (as) and enmity toward his enemies are not separate from accepting his wilayah and Imamate. Rather, they necessarily accompany one another.

Another glad tiding is found in a tradition from Imam Musa al-Kazim (as):

طُوبی لِشیعَتِنَا المُتَمَسِّکینَ بِحَبلِنا فی غَیبَةِ قائِمِنَا الثّابِتینَ عَلی مُوالاتِنا وَ البَراءَةِ مِن اَعدائِنا. اُولئِکَ مِنّا. وَ نَحنُ مِنهُم. قَد رَضُوا بِنا اَئِمَّةً وَ رَضینا بِهِم شیعَةً. فَطُوبی لَهُم. ثُمَّ طُوبی لَهُم. هُم وَاللهِ مَعَنا فی دَرَجاتِنا یَومَ القِیامَةِ.

“Ṭuba belongs to our Shi‘ah who, during the Ghaybah of our Qa’im, hold firmly to our rope [of wilayah], remain steadfast in their loyalty to us and in disassociation from our enemies. They are from us and we are from them. They are pleased with us as their Imams, and we are pleased with them as our Shi‘ah. So Ṭuba is theirs; indeed, Ṭuba is theirs! By Allah, on the Day of Resurrection they will be with us in our ranks.”

Kamal al-Din, ch. 34, h. 5.

Regarding the meaning of **Ṭuba**, Abu Basir narrates from Imam al-Sadiq (as) that he first said:

طُوبى لِمَن تَمَسَّکَ بِاَمرِنا فی غَیبَةِ قائِمِنا فَلَم یَزِغ قَلبُهُ بَعدَ الهِدایَةِ.

"Ṭuba belongs to the one who holds firmly to our affair during the Ghaybah of our Qa'im and whose heart does not deviate after having been guided."

Abu Basir then asked, "May I be sacrificed for you, what is Ṭuba?" The Imam (as) replied:

شَجَرَةٌ فِی الجَنَّةِ اَصلُها فی دارِ عَلِیِّ بنِ اَبی طالِبٍ علیه السّلام وَ لَیسَ مِن مُؤمِنٍ اِلّا وَ فی دارِهِ غُصنٌ مِن اَغصانِها. وَ ذلِکَ قَولُ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ: «طوبی لَهُم وَ حُسنُ مَآبٍ».

"[Ṭuba] is a tree in Paradise whose root is in the house of Ali ibn Abi Talib (as), and there is no believer whose house does not contain a branch from its branches. This is what Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, means when He says: 'Ṭuba is for them, and an excellent final abode.'"

(Qur'an 13:29)

Kamal al-Din, ch. 33, h. 55.

From these traditions we can understand that friendship with the friends of the Ahlul Bayt (as) and disassociation from their enemies are among the most important consequences of ma'rifah of the Imam (as).

This is, first and foremost, a matter of the heart. If someone is among those who love the Ahlul Bayt (as), a believer should love that person in his heart and should not harbour hatred toward him. That person may commit sins or objectionable acts. In such a case, one should disapprove of and detest his wrongful actions and, where appropriate, forbid him from wrongdoing. Yet the person himself, so long as he remains a lover of the Ahlul Bayt (as), should still be loved.[1] Personal interests or disputes should not turn us into his enemy. Rather, his love for the Ahlul Bayt (as) should always take precedence over our personal gain or loss. Indeed, such a person should even be preferred over someone who possesses admirable moral qualities but is not among the lovers of the Ahlul Bayt (as). In other words, the fundamental criterion of this friendship should be love for the Ahlul Bayt (as). This is one of the divine tests for the people of ma'rifah, through which the sincerity of their love for the Ahlul Bayt (as) is put to the test.

[1] Imam al-Ridha (as) said:

كُن مُحِبّاً لِآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ اِن كُنتَ فاسِقاً وَ مُحِبّاً لِمُحِبّيهِم وَ اِن كانُوا فاسِقينَ.

"Be a lover of the Family of Muhammad even if you are a sinner, and love those who love them even if they are sinners."

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 69, p. 253, h. 33, from Da'awat al-Rawandi.

The Importance of Fulfilling the Rights of One's Brothers in Faith

After this first stage, which pertains to the heart, comes the stage of action: observing and fulfilling the rights of the people of wilayah. The greater a person's seriousness and concern in fulfilling these rights, the deeper and more firmly rooted his love for the Ahlul Bayt (as). Conversely, the less attention he gives to these rights, the weaker and less firmly established his love for them.

Those who possess love and wilayah are referred to in the traditions as **mu'min**—believers. Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

ما عُبِدَاللهُ بِشَیءٍ اَفضَلَ مِن اَداءِ حَقِّ المُؤمِنِ.

"Allah has not been worshipped through anything better than fulfilling the right of a believer."

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 170, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab Haqq al-Mu'min 'ala Akhih, h. 4.

On another occasion, when Mu'alla ibn Khunays asked Imam al-Sadiq (as) about the rights of a believer, the Imam replied:

سَبعُونَ حَقّاً لا اُخبِرُکَ اِلّا بِسَبعَةٍ. فَاِنّی عَلَیکَ مُشفِقٌ اَخشی اِلّا تَحتَمِلَ.

"There are seventy rights. I shall tell you only seven of them, for I am concerned about you and fear that you may not be able to bear [the responsibility of fulfilling] them."

He then described those seven rights:

لا تَشبَعُ وَ یَجُوعُ. وَ لا تَکتَسی وَ یَعری. وَ تَکُونُ دَلیلَهُ وَ قَمیصَهُ الَّذی یَلبَسُهُ وَ لِسانَهُ الَّذی یَتَکَلَّمُ بِهِ. وَ تُحِبُّ لَهُ ما تُحِبَّ لِنَفسِکَ. وَ اِن کانَت لَکَ جارِیَةٌ بَعَثتَها لِتُمَهِّدَ فِراشَهُ. وَ تَسعی فی حَوائِجِهِ بِاللَّیلِ وَ النَّهارِ. فَاِذا فَعَلتَ ذٰلِکَ، وَصَلتَ وِلایَتَکَ بِوِلایَتِنا وَ وِلایَتِنا بِوِلایَةِ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ.

"You should not be full while he is hungry, nor clothed while he is without clothing. You should be his guide, the shirt that he wears, and the tongue with which he speaks. You should love for him what you love for yourself. If you have a maidservant, send her to prepare his bed for him. You should strive to fulfil his needs by night and by day. When you do this, you have joined your wilayah to our

wilayah, and our wilayah is joined to the wilayah of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic."

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 174, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab Haqq al-Mu'min 'ala Akhih, h. 14.

The expressions used in this tradition are remarkably clear and expressive. A believer should be to his brothers in faith like clothing and a tongue. Just as clothing protects a person from nakedness and harm and gives him a dignified appearance, a believer should protect his brother from danger and disgrace. Likewise, the tongue is the means through which a person expresses his needs and communicates with others. A believer should therefore be such that other believers can benefit from him and from whatever means he possesses in order to fulfil their needs.

A maidservant serves her master. In the same way, if a believer possesses any means through which he can serve his brothers in faith, he should not withhold it. That means may be money and material resources, or it may be his reputation, social standing, or professional position. All such means should be placed at the service of believers. If fulfilling a believer's need requires him even to devote part of the night—the usual time for rest—he should not hold back or prefer his sleep over helping his brother.

These are only some of the rights believers have over one another. Anyone who seriously wishes to be a "friend of the friends of the Ahlul Bayt (as)" must therefore give serious attention to fulfilling these rights.

Relieving the Difficulties of the Imam's Friends

The duty to fulfil a believer's rights becomes even more serious when that believer personally approaches his brother in faith seeking help with a need or difficulty. Generally speaking, before someone has approached us for help, our responsibility may be less direct. But when a believer comes to us with a request, this itself is a divine test. If a person considers himself a believer and a lover of the Ahlul Bayt (as), he should regard his believing brother's approach as a mercy from Allah sent toward him.

Imam Musa al-Kazim (as) said:

مَن اَتاهُ اَخُوهُ المُؤمِنُ فی حاجَةٍ، فَاِنَّما هِیَ رَحمَةٌ مِنَ اللهِ تَبارَکَ وَ تَعالی ساقَها اِلَیهِ. فَاِن قَبِلَ ذٰلِکَ فَقَد وَصَلَهُ بِوِلایَتِنا وَ هُوَ مَوصُولٌ بِوِلایَةِ اللهِ. وَ اِن رَدَّهُ عَن حاجَتِهِ وَ هُوَ یَقدِرُ عَلی قَضائِها، سَلَّطَ اللهُ عَلَیهِ شُجاعاً مِن نارٍ یَنهَشُهُ فی قَبرِهِ اِلی یَومِ القِیامَةِ، مَغفُوراً لَهُ اَو مُعَذَّباً. فَاِن عَذَرَهُ الطّالِبُ، کانَ اَسوَأَ حالاً.

"When a person's believing brother comes to him with a need, that approach is nothing but a mercy from Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, which He has sent toward him. If he accepts it [and undertakes to fulfil the need], he has connected it to our wilayah, while our wilayah is connected to the wilayah of Allah. But if he turns him away from his need while having the ability to fulfil it, Allah will set over him a fiery serpent which will bite him in his grave until the Day of Resurrection, whether he is ultimately forgiven or punished. And if the person who sought his help excuses him, his condition will be even worse."

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 196, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab Qada' Hajat al-Mu'min, h. 13.

A person who approaches another to have his need fulfilled has, in a sense, placed his dignity and honour in that person's hands. Since a believer possesses great honour before Allah, Allah does not wish such a person to be humiliated or treated lightly. For this reason, one who has the ability to fulfil his need but refuses to do so is threatened with punishment in the grave—even if he is ultimately among those who are saved, he must still undergo that punishment until the Day of Resurrection.

A particularly important point in this tradition is that the Imams (as) regard fulfilling the need of a believer as something connected to their own wilayah. Whoever loves them should therefore, because of that very love, regard helping a believer as an extension of the wilayah of the Imams (as), intending through it to fulfil his duty and honour the right of the wilayah of the Infallibles (as).

Regarding the final sentence of the tradition—"if the person seeking help excuses him, his condition will be even worse"—the late 'Allamah al-Majlisi has suggested[1] that this may be because excusing the person who turned him away reveals the needy believer's nobility and good character. Such a person therefore possesses a higher degree of faith and consequently has an even greater right upon his believing brother. Turning away such a person is therefore uglier and more blameworthy than turning away someone who does not possess this degree of

good character and nobility. Hence, the punishment for rejecting him is more severe.

[1] *Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 74, p. 330.*

In any case, turning a believer away empty-handed is in no way pleasing to Allah. A person should do whatever lies within his ability for his brother in faith, whether or not his effort ultimately succeeds. Even if he is unable to solve the problem, an extraordinary reward awaits him for sincerely trying.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

مَن مَشى فى حاجَةِ اَخيهِ المُؤمِنِ يَطلُبُ بِذلِکَ ما عِندَاللهِ حَتّى تَقضى لَهُ، کَتَبَ اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ لَهُ بِذلِکَ مِثلَ اَجرِ حِجَّةٍ وَ عُمرَةٍ مَبرُورَتَينِ وَ صَومِ شَهرَينِ مِن اَشهُرِ الحُرُمِ وَ اعتِکافِهِما فِى المَسجِدِ الحَرامِ. وَ مَن مَشى فيها بِنِيَّةٍ وَ لَم تُقضَ، کَتَبَ اللهُ لَهُ بِذلِکَ مِثلَ حَجَّةٍ مَبرُورَةٍ. فَارغَبُوا فِى الخَيرِ.

“Whoever strives to fulfil the need of his believing brother, seeking through it what is with Allah, until that need is fulfilled, Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, records for him a reward equal to an accepted Hajj and ‘Umrah, the fasting of two of the sacred months, and i‘tikaf during those two months in al-Masjid al-Haram. And whoever strives for it with [a sincere] intention but the need is not fulfilled, Allah records for him the reward of an accepted Hajj. Therefore, be eager in doing good.”

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 194, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab Qada’ Hajat al-Mu’min, h. 9.

Allah therefore loves the very effort made to resolve the needs of believers and grants reward for it. If the effort succeeds, the reward is greater; but even if it does not succeed, the one who sincerely tried still receives his reward.

There is yet another case: a person knows that he does not possess the means to fulfil his believing brother’s need, but when approached, his heart becomes genuinely concerned and he sincerely wishes that he could help. If the necessary means were available to him, he would certainly use them for that purpose. Such a person, although practically unable to do anything, receives an extraordinary reward merely because of this sincere intention of the heart.

Imam al-Baqir (as) said:

اِنَّ المُؤمِنَ لَتَرِدُ عَلَيهِ الحاجَةُ لِاَخيهِ فَلا تَكُونُ عِندَهُ فَيَهتَمُّ بِها قَلبُهُ، فَيُدخِلُهُ اللهُ تَبارَکَ وَ تَعالى بِهَمِّهِ الجَنَّةَ.

“A believer may be approached regarding a need of his brother which he does not have the means to fulfil, but his heart becomes deeply concerned about it. Because of that sincere concern, Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, admits him into Paradise.”

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 196, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab Qada’ Hajat al-Mu’min, h. 14.

These traditions show that, in the sight of Allah, even more important than what believers actually manage to do for one another is the spiritual and heartfelt attitude they have toward one another. The lovers of the Ahlul Bayt (as) should share such warmth, sincerity, and closeness that the true value of the wilayah and love of the Ahlul Bayt (as) becomes evident to everyone, both in this world and in the Hereafter.

Chapter Four — Constant Remembrance of the Imam (as)

Another effect and sign of ma‘rifah of the Imam (as) is remembering him on different occasions—and even continuously and constantly. This state is itself a result of love. When a person loves someone, he remains mindful of the beloved in proportion to the intensity of his love. The bond of the heart may become so strong that he is simply unable to forget the beloved.

Thus, during the Ghaybah of the Imam (as), although the people of ma‘rifah are deprived of seeing him outwardly, they never allow his remembrance to disappear from their hearts.

A person asked Imam Musa al-Kazim (as) about the verse:

وَ اَسبَغَ عَلَيكُم نِعَمَهُ ظاهِرَةً وَ باطِنَةً

“And He has completed His blessings upon you, outwardly and inwardly.” (Qur’an 31:20)

The Imam (as) replied:

اَلنِّعمَةُ الظاهِرَةُ الإِمامُ الظاهِرُ. وَ الباطِنَةُ الإِمامُ الغائِبُ.

“The outward blessing is the manifest Imam, and the inward blessing is the hidden Imam.”

The narrator then asked whether one of the Imams would enter Ghaybah. The Imam (as) replied:

نَعَم؛ يَغيبُ مِن اَبصارِ النّاسِ شَخصُهُ، وَ لا يَغيبُ عَن قُلُوبِ المُؤمِنينَ ذِكرُهُ. وَ هُوَ الثّانى عَشَرَ مِنّا.

“Yes. His person will disappear from the sight of the people, but his remembrance will never disappear from the hearts of the believers. He is the twelfth from among us.”
Kamal al-Din, ch. 34, h. 6.
Those without faith may forget him because they do not truly know him. But how can someone who knows him and possesses ma‘rifah and wilayah of him forget him? During the Ghaybah, the believers’ bond with their Imam should be so strong that they never become heedless of his remembrance and nothing distracts them from remembering their beloved.

Degrees of Remembering the Imam (as)

According to the late Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Musawi Isfahani, author of the valuable book *Mikyal al-Makarim fi Fawa’id al-Du‘a lil-Qa’im (as)*, believers differ in their remembrance of their Master according to their degrees of faith and their levels of ma‘rifah and certainty. The state of some of them in remembering their Master is like that described by the poet:

اَللهُ يَعلَمُ اَنّى لَستُ اَذكُرُكُم
فَكَيفَ اَذكُرُكُم اِذ لَستَ اَنساكُم

“Allah knows that I do not remember you—
for how could I ‘remember’ you when I never forget you?”
Mikyal al-Makarim, vol. 2, p. 308.
The author of *Mikyal al-Makarim* then gives a number of reminders concerning how the remembrance of Imam al-‘Asr (as) may be kept alive throughout the day and night. We reproduce the translation of his words here:
“When morning comes, know that the life Allah has given you is through the blessing of that noble Imam (as). Therefore, thank him and thank Allah Most High for the blessing He has granted you. Guard yourself carefully, lest you use this blessing for something that does not please him, for that would become a cause of misery and a heavy burden upon you.
“If you find yourself exposed to a sin, remember that your Master sees you in that ugly condition and unpleasant state. Out of respect for him, abandon that sin.

“And if an opportunity for a good deed presents itself, hasten to perform it. Know that it is a divine blessing which Allah Most High has granted you through the blessing of your Master. Thank Allah for it, and offer that deed as a gift to your Master and the Imam of your time. With the tongue of your heart and your speech, say:

يا اَيُّهَا العَزيزُ مَسَّنا وَ اَهلَنَا الضُرَّ وَ جِئنا بِبِضاعَةٍ مُزجاةٍ فَاَوفِ لَنَا الكَيلَ وَ تَصَدَّق عَلَينا اِنَّ اللهَ يَجزِى المُتَصَدِّقِينَ.

“‘O mighty one! Distress has afflicted us and our family, and we have come with meagre goods. So give us full measure and be charitable toward us. Indeed, Allah rewards those who give charity.’”
(Qur’an 12:88)

“In all circumstances, remain humble and submissive, like an insignificant servant standing obediently in the service of his master. Every morning and evening, offer your salam to him—the salam of a servant longing to see his Master and burning with the pain of separation; the salam of a sincere devotee whose tears flow down his cheeks and who believes that he is standing in the presence of his Master.

“When the time for prayer arrives, remember the state of your Master as he stands before Allah, Majestic is His Majesty. Follow his example by praying with presence of heart, humility of body, and by turning your attention away from everything other than Allah Most High.

“Know that your success in doing this is only through the blessing of your Master, and that this worship will not be accepted from you except through your wilayah, obedience, and ma‘rifah of him. The more your obedience, ma‘rifah, and submission to him increase, the more Allah Most High will increase your rank, reward, honour, and distinction.

“When you finish your prayer, make that noble Imam (as) your means and intercessor before Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, so that your prayer may be accepted. And before making any other supplication, begin by praying for him because of the greatness of his right and the abundance of his favours upon you.

“Whenever you have a need or a serious difficulty befalls you, present it before him and plead before him so that he may intercede before Allah Most High for its

removal from you. For he is the means toward Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, and the Gate of Allah through which one enters. Allah, Mighty is His Glory, has said:

وَ أتُوا البُيُوتَ مِن اَبوابِها

"'Enter houses through their doors.'"
(Qur'an 2:189)
Translation of Mikyal al-Makarim, vol. 2, pp. 443–444.
If a person possesses correct ma'rifah of the station of the Imam (as), he understands that this very remembrance is itself among the greatest acts of worship. Because of its importance, we have been taught to ask Allah for it:

...وَ لا تُنسِنا ذِكرَهُ.

"[O Allah] … do not cause us to forget his remembrance."
Kamal al-Din, ch. 45, h. 43.
Remembering the Imam has two dimensions: keeping him present in one's own heart and actively mentioning him. The first is an act of the heart; the second is an outward act. The first benefits the person himself, while the second benefits both himself and others. A person can—and should—create the means through which the Imam (as) is remembered by himself and by others, so that neither he nor they become heedless of him.

Participating in Gatherings Where the Ahlul Bayt (as) Are Remembered

Our Imams have strongly encouraged the establishment of gatherings in which the Ahlul Bayt (as) are remembered, as well as participation in such gatherings.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said to Dawud ibn Sirhan:

يا داوُودُ، اَبلِغ مَوالِيَّ عَنّي السَّلامَ وَ اَنّی اَقُولُ: رَحِمَ اللهُ عَبداً اجتَمَعَ مَعَ آخَرَ فَتَذاكَرَ اَمرَنا. فَإنَّ ثالِثَهُما مَلَكٌ يَستَغفِرُ لَهُما. وَ مَا اجتَمَعَ اثنانِ عَلی ذِكرِنا اِلّا باهَی اللهُ تَعالی بِهِمَا المَلائِكَةَ. فَإذا اجتَمَعتُم فَاشتَغِلُوا بِالذِّكرِ. فَإنَّ فی اجتِماعِكُم وَ مُذاكَرَتِكُم اِحياءَنا. وَ خَيرُ النّاسِ مِن بَعدِنا مَن ذاكَرَ بِاَمرِنا وَ دَعا اِلی ذِكرِنا.

"O Dawud, convey my salam to my followers and tell them that I say: May Allah have mercy upon a servant who meets with another person and they discuss our affair together. Their third companion is an angel who seeks forgiveness for them. No two people gather together in our remembrance except that Allah Most High takes pride in them before the angels.

“Therefore, whenever you gather, occupy yourselves with remembrance, for your gathering and your discussion bring our affair to life. The best people after us are those who discuss our affair and invite others to our remembrance.”
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 1, p. 200, h. 8, from Amali al-Tusi.
This shows the immense blessings and benefits contained in gatherings formed for the remembrance of the Ahlul Bayt (as). So much so that if people gather out of heedlessness and neglect but the Imams (as) are not remembered in that gathering, it will become a source of regret for them on the Day of Resurrection. Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

مَا اجتَمَعَ فی مَجلِسٍ قَومٌ لَم یَذکُرُوا اللهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ وَ لَم یَذکُرُونا اِلّا کانَ ذلِکَ المَجلِسُ حَسرَةً عَلَیهِم یَومَ القِیامَةِ.

“No group of people gathers in an assembly in which they neither remember Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, nor remember us, except that the gathering will become a source of regret for them on the Day of Resurrection.”
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 496, Kitab al-Du‘a, Bab Ma Yajibu min Dhikr Allah ‘Azza wa Jalla fi Kulli Majlis, h. 2.
The remembrance of the Imams (as) is kept alive through mentioning their virtues and their sufferings, as well as through narrating their traditions and recalling their way of life. For this reason, believers have been strongly encouraged to visit and meet one another, one of the principal purposes being to narrate the traditions of the Imams (as) and remember their virtues and sufferings.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

تَزاوَرُوا. فَاِنَّ فی زِیارَتِکُم اِحیاءً لِقُلُوبِکُم وَ ذِکراً لِاَحادیثِنا. وَ اَحادیثُنا تُعَطِّفُ بَعضَکُم عَلی بَعضٍ. فَاِن اَخَذتُم بِها رَشَدتُم وَ نَجَوتُم. وَ اِن تَرَکتُمُوها ضَلَلتُم وَ هَلَکتُم. فَخُذُوا بِها وَ اَنَا بِنَجاتِکُم زَعیمٌ.

“Visit one another, for your visits bring your hearts to life and cause our traditions to be remembered. Our traditions create affection among you. If you hold fast to them, you will be rightly guided and saved; but if you abandon them, you will go astray and perish. Therefore, hold fast to them, and I guarantee your salvation.”
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 186, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab Tadhakur al-Ikhwan, h. 2.
Indeed, there is no path to true guidance and felicity except acting upon the teachings transmitted from the Imams (as). In gatherings held by their friends, the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (as) should therefore be recalled so that those present may become people of felicity and salvation.

More generally, the remembrance of the Imams (as) is nourishment for the believer's heart and soul. Allah has made their wilayah and love a source of life for hearts. Whoever seeks a living heart must therefore keep the affair of their wilayah alive within his heart.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) asked Fudayl:

تَجلِسُونَ وَ تُحَدِّثُونَ؟

"Do you sit together and narrate traditions to one another?"
Fudayl replied, "Yes."
The Imam (as) said:

اِنَّ تِلکَ المَجالِسَ اُحِبُّها. فَاَحیُوا اَمرَنا یا فُضَیلُ. فَرَحِمَ اللهُ مَن اَحیا اَمرَنا.

"I love such gatherings. So, O Fudayl, keep our affair alive. May Allah have mercy upon the one who keeps our affair alive."
He then said:

یا فُضَیلُ مِن ذَکَرَنا، اَو ذُکِرنا عِندَهُ، فَخَرَجَ مِن عَینِهِ مِثلُ جَناحِ الذُّبابِ، غَفَرَ اللهُ لَهُ ذُنُوبَهُ وَ لَو کانَت اَکثَرَ مِن زَبَدِ البَحرِ.

"O Fudayl, whoever remembers us, or in whose presence we are remembered, and a tear as small as the wing of a fly comes from his eye, Allah will forgive his sins even if they are more numerous than the foam of the sea."
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 44, p. 282, h. 14, from Qurb al-Isnad.
Tears may flow because one remembers the sufferings of the Imams (as) and feels compassion for them; because of the burning pain of separation from the Hidden Imam (as); or because of the intensity of one's love and wilayah for the Ahlul Bayt (as). Whatever the cause, such tears purify the heart and wash away a person's sins.
Imam al-Ridha (as) said:

مَن ذُکِّرَ بِمُصابِنا فَبَکی وَ اَبکی لَم تَبکِ عَینُهُ یَومَ تَبکِی العُیُونُ ... . مَن جَلَسَ مَجلِساً یُحیی فیهِ اَمرُنا، لَم یَمُت قَلبُهُ یَومَ تَمُوتُ القُلُوبُ.

"Whoever is reminded of our sufferings and therefore weeps and causes others to weep, his eyes will not weep on the Day when eyes will weep… Whoever sits in a gathering in which our affair is kept alive, his heart will not die on the Day when hearts die."
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 44, p. 278, h. 1, from Amali al-Saduq.

Shedding tears over the sufferings of the Ahlul Bayt (as) is a sign of a heartfelt bond with those sacred personalities, such that their sorrow causes pain in the heart of the one who loves them. This very bond of the heart draws divine favour toward a person. Even if tears do not actually flow from the eyes, heartfelt tenderness and compassion can still become a means of forgiveness.
Imam al-Baqir (as) said:

اَما اَنَّهُ لَيسَ مِن عَبدٍ يُذكَرُ عِندَهُ اَهلُ البَيتِ فَيَرِقُّ لِذِكرِنا اِلّا مَسَحَتِ المَلائِكَةُ ظَهرَهُ وَ غَفَرَ لَهُ ذُنُوبُهُ كُلُّها اِلّا اَن يَجِيءَ بِذَنبٍ يُخرِجُهُ مِنَ الايمانِ.

“Know that there is no servant in whose presence the Ahlul Bayt are remembered and whose heart becomes tender at our remembrance except that the angels stroke his back and all his sins are forgiven—unless he commits a sin that takes him out of faith.”
Rawdat al-Kafi, p. 101, h. 72.
The final part of this tradition is a warning to all believers: if, because of their love for the Ahlul Bayt (as), they possess tearful eyes and burning hearts, they must not become heedless of their sins. No one knows which sin may expose him to divine displeasure.[1] Therefore, every sin that may bring Allah’s displeasure upon a believer—if he is not forgiven—could potentially become a cause of losing his faith. In light of what was previously discussed concerning entrusted faith (**iman mustawda‘**) and its signs,[2] a believer remains fearful and cautious regarding every one of his sins, lest a single sin deprive him of being included in the promise given by Imam al-Baqir (as).
[1] According to the tradition of Amir al-Mu’minin (as) cited on p. 266 of this book, Allah has concealed His displeasure among acts of disobedience.
[2] See p. 256 of this book.

Chapter Five — Learning and Teaching the Knowledge of the Imams (as)

We have already seen the virtue of keeping the affair of the Ahlul Bayt (as) alive. It is now appropriate to consider one of the best ways of accomplishing this—a method identified by the Imams (as) themselves. This is among the most important consequences and effects of ma‘rifah of the Imam (as), particularly during his Ghaybah.

Imam al-Ridha (as) said:

رَحِمَ اللهُ عَبداً اَحيا اَمرَنا.

“May Allah have mercy upon the servant who keeps our affair alive.”
Harawi, the narrator of the tradition, asked:

وَ كَيفَ يُحيِى اَمرَكُم؟

“How does one keep your affair alive?”
The Imam (as) replied:

يَتَعَلَّمُ عُلُومَنا وَ يُعَلِّمُهَا النّاسَ. فَاِنَّ النّاسَ لَو عَلِمُوا مَحاسِنَ كَلامِنا لَاتَّبَعُونا.

“He learns our knowledge and teaches it to the people. For if people knew the beauty of our words, they would certainly follow us.”
Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 30, h. 13, from Ma‘ani al-Akhbar and ‘Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha (as).
The emphasis here is on acquiring and conveying the knowledge of the Ahlul Bayt (as), and the way to accomplish this is by referring to and transmitting their own traditions.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

تَلاقَوا وَ تَحادَثُوا العِلمَ. فَاِنَّ بِالحَديثِ تُجلَى القُلُوبُ الرّانِنَةُ. وَ بِالحَديثِ اِحياءُ اَمرِنا. فَرَحِمَ اللهُ مَن اَحيا اَمرَنا.

“Meet one another and discuss knowledge together. Through hadith, tarnished hearts are polished, and through hadith our affair is kept alive. May Allah have mercy upon the one who keeps our affair alive.”
‘Awali al-La’ali, vol. 4, p. 67.
Learning the knowledge of the Ahlul Bayt (as)—which is the true and sound knowledge—purifies a person and leads him toward genuine felicity. At the same time, the best way to draw hearts toward them is to spread their knowledge and convey their teachings. When these teachings are presented correctly, people will see that no other words possess the freshness and beauty of the words of the Imams (as); no speech penetrates the heart like theirs, accords so naturally with the human fitrah, receives the confirmation of sound reason, and is affirmed by the conscience.

How much better, then, that people should be invited toward the Ahlul Bayt (as) through their own teachings, so that the Ahlul Bayt themselves become the testimony to the truth of their own path.

A believer must therefore seek the knowledge of the Ahlul Bayt (as) for himself and also invite others to learn it. This is an extremely serious responsibility, particularly during the Ghaybah. If people remain indifferent to it, irreligion will engulf society and no one will remain safe.

Imam al-Hadi (as) said:

لَولا مَن يَبقى بَعدَ غَيبَةِ قائِمِنا مِنَ العُلَماءِ الدّاعينَ اِلَيهِ وَ الدّالّينَ عَلَيهِ وَ الذّابّينَ عَن دينِهِ بِحُجَجِ اللهِ وَ المُنقِذينَ لِضُعَفاءِ عِبادِ اللهِ مِن شِباكِ اِبليسَ وَ مَرَدَتِهِ وَ مِن فِخاخِ النَّواصِبِ، لَما بَقِيَ اَحَدٌ اِلّا ارتَدَّ عَن دينِ اللهِ، وَ لكِنَّهُمُ الَّذينَ يُمسِكُونَ اَزِمَّةَ قُلُوبِ ضُعَفاءِ الشّيعَةِ كَما يُمسِكُ صاحِبُ السَّفينَةِ سُكّانَها. اُولئِکَ هُمُ الاَفضَلُونَ عِندَ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ.

“Were it not for those scholars who remain after the Ghaybah of our Qa’im—those who call people toward him, guide them to him, defend his religion through the proofs of Allah, and rescue the weak servants of Allah from the snares of Iblis and his rebellious followers and from the traps of the enemies of the Imams—not a single person would remain except that he would turn away from the religion of Allah.

“But these scholars hold the reins of the hearts of the weak among the Shi‘ah just as the captain of a ship holds its rudder. They are the most excellent people in the sight of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic.”

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 6, h. 12, from Ihtijaj al-Tabrisi and Tafsir Imam Hasan al-Askari (as).

In this tradition, the Imam (as) clearly explains the responsibility of scholars during the Ghaybah. Above all else, they must invite people toward the Hidden Imam and guide them to him—الدّاعينَ اِلَيهِ وَ الدّالّينَ عَلَيهِ. This can be achieved by keeping his remembrance alive, mentioning his virtues and merits, and conveying the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (as) concerning Imam al-‘Asr (as).

At the same time, learning and teaching the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt (as) is among the best ways of inviting people toward the Imam (as), and scholars must never neglect this responsibility.

A scholar during the Ghaybah must not call people toward himself or invite them to become devoted to his own personality. Rather, he should be like a bridge across which the lovers of the Imam (as) pass until they reach their true destination: the wilayah and ma'rifah of the Imam.
Connection and relationship with Imam al-'Asr (as) do not require someone to present himself as an intermediary, call people toward himself under that title, and display his own extraordinary experiences or karamat before them.
The scholar's role is to kindle the light of love and wilayah of Imam al-'Asr (as) within the hearts of those who have become heedless of their true Benefactor and, confused and restless, search from one refuge to another. Remembering the Imam (as) and conveying his teachings lights this lamp within their hearts. Thereafter, they themselves travel the path, drawn by the attraction of the Imam (as) himself.
Removing doubts and clearing away obstacles is the responsibility of scholars; establishing the actual connection and captivating hearts is the work of the Imam (as) himself. True religious scholars should embody these qualities and take pride in them. When they do so, they are indeed among the best people in the sight of Allah.

Chapter Six — Awaiting the Faraj of Imam al-'Asr (as)

One of the most important effects and consequences of ma'rifah of Imam al-'Asr (atfs) is awaiting his faraj. In our traditions, awaiting the faraj has been described as the greatest act of worship.
The Messenger of Allah (s) said:

اَفضَلُ العِبادَةِ اِنتِظارُ الفَرَجِ.

"The greatest act of worship is awaiting the faraj."
Muntakhab al-Athar, section 10, ch. 2, h. 16.
Here, awaiting any relief and deliverance from Allah Most High is described as one of the highest forms of worship.[1] But when this awaiting concerns the faraj of the Imams (as), particularly during their Ghaybah, it possesses special virtues referred to in the traditions. We shall mention a few examples.

[1] A detailed explanation of this subject may be found in the author's book *Suluk-e Muntaziran*.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

مَن ماتَ مِنكُم وَ هُوَ مُنتَظِرٌ لِهذَا الاَمرِ كَمَن هُوَ مَعَ القائِمِ فی فُسطاطِهِ.

"Whoever among you dies while awaiting this affair [the appearance of the Imam] is like one who is with the Qa'im in his tent."

The Imam paused for a moment and then said:

لا، بَل كَمَن قارَعَ مَعَهُ بِسَيفِهِ.

"No; rather, he is like one who fights alongside him with his sword."

Then he added:

لا وَاللهِ اِلّا كَمَنِ استُشهِدَ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللهِ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلّم.

"No, by Allah! He is like one who was martyred alongside the Messenger of Allah (s)."

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 52, p. 126, h. 18, from Al-Mahasin of al-Barqi.

Such a state, however, is not granted to everyone. This immense blessing belongs only to those who possess complete understanding and deep ma'rifah of the Imam (as) and his Ghaybah, and who are not superficial or limited to outward appearances like others. Such people will be superior to the people of every other age.

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (as) said:

يا اَبا خالِدٍ، اِنَّ اَهلَ زَمانِ غَيبَتِهِ القائِلينَ بِإمامَتِهِ وَ المُنتَظِرينَ لِظُهُورِهِ، اَفضَلُ مِن اَهلِ كُلِّ زَمانٍ. لِاَنَّ اللهَ تَبارَکَ وَ تَعالی اَعطاهُم مِنَ العُقُولِ وَ الاَفهامِ وَ المَعرِفَةِ ما صارَت بِهِ الغَيبَةُ عِندَهُم بِمَنزِلَةِ المُشاهَدَةِ وَ جَعَلَهُم فی ذلِکَ الزَّمانِ بِمَنزِلَةِ المُجاهِدينَ بَينَ يَدَی رَسُولِ اللهِ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلّم بِالسَّيفِ. اُولئِکَ المُخلِصُونَ حَقّاً وَ شيعَتُنا صِدقاً وَ الدُّعاةُ اِلی دينِ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ سِرّاً وَ جَهراً.

"O Abu Khalid! The people living during his Ghaybah who believe in his Imamate and await his appearance are superior to the people of every age. This is because Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, has granted them such intellect, understanding, and ma'rifah that the Ghaybah becomes for them like direct witnessing.

"In that age, He places them at the rank of those who fought with the sword before the Messenger of Allah (s). They are the truly sincere ones, our genuine

Shi‘ah, and those who call people toward the religion of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, secretly and openly.”
Kamal al-Din, ch. 31, h. 2.
Those described as superior to the people of every age possess two qualities: belief in the Imamate of Imam al-‘Asr (atfs), and awaiting his appearance. These two qualities make them true Shi‘ah and people who call others toward the religion of Allah both openly and privately.
The essence of the religion of Allah is ma‘rifah of the Imam of the Age (as). Therefore, inviting people toward the religion of Allah means inviting them toward ma‘rifah of and connection with this Hidden Imam. One of the signs of genuine awaiting during the Ghaybah is precisely this: inviting others, openly and privately, toward Imam al-‘Asr (atfs).

Regarding the Appearance as Near

Awaiting is fundamentally a state of the heart. This state comes into existence when a person never loses hope in the appearance of the Imam (as) and never regards it as remote.
During the Ghaybah, the one who truly awaits keeps his eyes fixed upon the appearance of his Imam morning and evening. He never considers it distant. Possessing this state of heart during the Ghaybah is pleasing to Allah and a cause of salvation.
Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

اَقرَبُ ما يَكُونُ العَبدُ اِلَى اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ وَ اَرضى ما يَكُونُ عَنهُ اِذَا افتَقَدُوا حُجَّةَ اللهِ فَلَم يَظهَر لَهُم وَ حُجِبَ عَنهُم فَلَم يَعلَمُوا بِمَكانِهِ، وَ هُم فى ذلِکَ يَعلَمُونَ اَنَّهُ لا تَبطُلُ حُجَجُ اللهِ وَ لا بَيِّناتُهُ. فَعِندَها فَليَتَوَقَّعُوا الفَرَجَ صَباحاً وَ مَساءً.

“The servant is closest to Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, and Allah is most pleased with him when the people lose sight of Allah’s Hujjah, he does not appear before them, he is concealed from them, and they do not know his whereabouts—yet they know that Allah’s proofs and clear signs never cease to exist. At such a time, they should expect the faraj morning and evening.”
Kamal al-Din, ch. 33, h. 17.
Regarding the appearance as near is a state of the heart. It reflects a person’s certainty and firm belief in the promised appearance of Imam al-‘Asr (as). Since no

fixed time has been given for it, its occurrence remains possible every morning and every evening.[1]

[1] A detailed, evidence-based explanation of this point may be found in *Suluk-e Muntaziran*.

Considering the appearance to be near is different from **isti'jal**—impatiently demanding or hastening it—which is incompatible with taslim. Isti'jal is, in reality, a failure to remain content with Allah's decision concerning the time of the Imam's appearance. Regarding it as near, by contrast, is itself a manifestation of taslim, because Allah is pleased with this attitude and the Imams (as) have instructed their followers to possess it.

Indeed, the absence of this state—despairing of the appearance even for a limited period, or regarding it as remote even during a particular period—is itself counted among serious sins.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

هَلَكَتِ المَحاضيرُ.

"The *mahadhir* will perish."

The narrator asked, "Who are the *mahadhir*?"

The Imam replied:

اَلمُستَعجِلُونَ.

"Those who impatiently hasten [the affair]."

He then added:

وَ نَجَا المُقَرَّبُونَ.

"And those who regard it as near will be saved."

Ghaybat al-Nu'mani, ch. 11, h. 5.

Mahadhir is the plural of *mihdar*, meaning one who runs excessively or hastily. Such impatience can ultimately lead a person toward deviation and loss of belief. By contrast, those who continue to regard the appearance as near are among the people of salvation.

In Du'a al-'Ahd we recite:

اِنَّهُم يَرَونَهُ بَعيداً وَ نَراهُ قَريباً.

"They regard it as distant, while we regard it as near."

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 102, p. 112, narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (as), from Misbah al-Za'ir.

However, regarding the appearance as near does not mean assigning a date to it. Predicting the time of the appearance is just as far removed from Allah's pleasure and the practice of the purified Imams (as) as impatiently demanding it. Our Imams dealt firmly with those who attempted to assign a time for the appearance and declared such time-setters to be liars.

Once, a person asked Imam al-Sadiq (as):

جُعِلتُ فِداکَ؛ اَخبِرنی عَن هذَا الاَمرِ الَّذی نَنتَظِرُهُ مَتی هُوَ؟

"May I be sacrificed for you! Tell me, when will this affair [the appearance] which we are awaiting take place?"

The Imam (as) replied:

کَذَبَ الوَقّاتُونَ. وَ هَلَکَ المُستَعجِلُونَ. وَ نَجَا المُسَلِّمُونَ.

"Those who set a time are liars. Those who impatiently hasten will perish. And those who submit will be saved."

Ghaybat al-Nu'mani, ch. 16, h. 11.

Thus, those who promise people that the appearance is about to occur at a particular time, imagining that this will bring people closer to Imam al-Zaman (as) or prepare the ground for his appearance, are themselves going astray and may lead others into error as well.

The duty of the one who awaits is to remain in taslim before Allah's decree concerning the time of the appearance. While he must never pass a morning or evening in despair of the appearance of the Hidden Imam (atfs), he must also guard himself against impatience and must not mislead himself or others by speculative claims that the appearance is imminent.

Therefore, regarding the appearance as near must never be confused with predicting its time. The former is praised; the latter is condemned. They are entirely distinct matters.

This raises a question: if the appearance may be expected every day and night—indeed, at every moment—what purpose is served by the signs that have been mentioned as signs of the appearance?

Recognition of the Appearance Does Not Depend upon Its Signs

To answer this question clearly, one fundamental point must first be understood: None of the signs mentioned in the traditions for the appearance of Imam al-'Asr (as) is absolutely inevitable in occurrence. In other words, the Imam's appearance may take place without any of those signs occurring.

This is because all these signs are subject to **bada'**. Until they actually occur, the possibility that they may be changed or removed is not excluded.

For any given sign, either no fixed time has yet been determined for its occurrence—in technical terms, it has not reached the stage of **taqdir**—or, even if its time has been determined, Allah has not yet decreed its occurrence, meaning it has not reached the stage of **qada'**.

Even when Allah has decreed its occurrence, so long as it has not actually taken place externally, Allah may still cause it not to occur. This latter category includes those signs which have explicitly been described as **hatmi**—inevitable or definite—such as the uprising of the Sufyani, which is counted among the definite signs of the appearance.[1]

[1] *Ghaybat al-Nu'mani, ch. 18, h. 4.*

Calling such signs "definite" does not mean that they are beyond bada'. Rather, it means that, in addition to divine taqdir, Allah's qada' has also become attached to their occurrence. In other words, their occurrence has been firmly decreed. Yet until they actually occur, the possibility of bada' remains.

The stage at which this possibility ceases is described in our traditions as the **imda'**—the final execution—of the decree:

فَإِذا وَقَعَ القَضاءُ بِالإمضاءِ فَلابَداءَ.

"When the decree reaches the stage of execution, there is no longer any bada'."
Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 149, Kitab al-Tawhid, Bab al-Bada', h. 16.

The execution of the decree means its actual occurrence in the external world. Before that stage, the possibility of bada' applies to divine determinations in general.

For example, Allah may determine a particular lifespan for someone and inform the angel charged with taking souls that the person's soul is to be taken at a specified time. This communication represents the divine qada'. According to this

terminology, that person's death would therefore be regarded as a definite matter. Yet through a good deed performed by the person—such as giving charity or maintaining family ties—Allah may exercise bada' regarding that decree and extend his life. Since the divine decree had not yet reached the stage of execution, it remained subject to bada'.

The same applies to the uprising of the Sufyani. Although it has been described as definite, the traditions explicitly state that bada' can occur regarding it.

Abu Hashim al-Ja'fari asked Imam al-Jawad (as): since the uprising of the Sufyani has been described in the traditions as definite, can Allah exercise bada' regarding something definite—

هَل يَبدو للهِ فِي المَحتوم؟

The Imam (as) replied:

نَعَم.

"Yes."

Abu Hashim then said: "In that case, we fear that bada' may occur regarding the very uprising of the Qa'im!"

The Imam (as) replied:

اِنَّ القائِمَ مِنَ الميعادِ. وَ اللهُ لا يُخلِفُ الميعادَ.

"The Qa'im is among the promised matters, and Allah does not break His promise."

Ghaybat al-Nu'mani, ch. 18, h. 10.

Thus, the appearance itself is not subject to bada', although even its so-called definite signs may be. This applies all the more strongly to the remaining signs. The actual time of the Imam's appearance, however, is subject to bada', and until the appearance occurs there remains the possibility of its being advanced or delayed.[1]

[1] A detailed treatment of this subject, together with fuller evidence, may be found in *Suluk-e Muntaziran*.

The signs mentioned in the traditions should therefore not be treated as absolutely inevitable. There is no problem in considering them as possibilities rather than certainties. Some may have been mentioned as warnings to believers

so that they would become better prepared for the Imam's appearance, or there may be other wisdoms behind them which we do not know.
What is certain, however, is that recognizing the actual appearance of Imam al-Mahdi (as) does not depend upon observing these signs. His uprising will itself be open and manifest. In some traditions, his affair is compared to the brightness of the sun, than which nothing in the sensible world is clearer.
Imam al-Baqir (as) said:

اِنَّ اَمرَكُم لَيسَ بِهِ خِفاءٌ. اَلا اِنَّها آيَةٌ مِنَ اللهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ لَيسَت مِنَ النّاسِ. اَلا اِنَّهَا اَضوَأُ مِنَ الشَّمسِ لاتَخفى عَلى بِرٍّ وَ لا فاجِرٍ. اَتَعرِفُونَ الصُّبحَ؟! فَاِنَّها كَالصُّبحِ لَيسَ بِهِ خَفاءٌ.

"Your affair [the appearance and faraj] contains no obscurity. Know that it is a sign from Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, not something originating from people. Know that it is brighter than the sun, so that it will remain hidden from neither the righteous nor the wicked. Do you recognize the morning? It will be like the morning, in which there is no obscurity."
Ghaybat al-Nu'mani, ch. 11, h. 17.
When the appearance of the Imam (as) will be clearer than the sun and hidden from no one, knowing the signs of the appearance is not essential for recognizing it.
We may therefore say that ignorance of these signs does not harm a person's genuine state of awaiting. One must instead be careful that excessive preoccupation with discussions about the signs—subjects which are often naturally fascinating to hear and discuss—does not overshadow our actual responsibilities toward the Hidden Imam or distract us from the duties that presently rest upon us.

The Intention of the One Who Awaits to Assist the Imam (as)

The person awaiting the appearance prepares himself to assist the Imam (as) when he becomes manifest. During the Ghaybah, this readiness is realized through a firm decision and sincere intention.
Regarding the value of intending a good deed, the Messenger of Allah (s) said:

نِيَّةُ المُؤمِنِ خَيرٌ مِن عَمَلِهِ.

"The intention of the believer is better than his action."

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 84, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Niyyah, h. 2.

A believer intends many good deeds which he may never have the opportunity to perform. Moreover, in actually performing some deeds, he may become afflicted with riya' and lose the sincerity he possessed at the level of intention. Perhaps this is one reason why the intention to perform a good deed has been regarded as better than the deed itself.

Out of His grace and generosity toward the believer, Allah grants him reward for his sincere intention.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) said:

اِنَّ العَبدَ المُؤمِنَ الفَقيرَ لَيَقُولُ: يا رَبِّ ارزُقنى حَتّى اَفعَلَ كَذا وَ كَذا مِنَ البِرِّ وَ وُجُوهِ الخَيرِ. فَاِذا عَلِمَ اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ ذلِکَ مِنهُ بِصِدقِ نِيَّةٍ، كَتَبَ اللهُ لَهُ مِنَ الاَجرِ مِثلَ ما يَكتُبُ لَهُ لَو عَمِلَهُ. اِنَّ اللهَ واسِعٌ كَريمٌ.

"A poor believing servant may say: 'My Lord, grant me provision so that I may perform such-and-such acts of righteousness and good.' If Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, knows that his intention is sincere, He records for him the same reward that He would have recorded had he actually performed those deeds. Indeed, Allah is All-Bountiful and Generous."

Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 85, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Niyyah, h. 3.

On this basis, correcting and purifying one's intention is of extraordinary importance to a believer. His intention should be sincere for Allah and for the Imam (as).

It is on this basis that Imam al-Sadiq (as) counted himself among those who would have assisted Sayyid al-Shuhada' Imam al-Husayn (as) in Karbala and regarded himself as sharing in the reward of the martyrs of that day:

اِنّى لا اُخرِجُ نَفسى مِن شُهَداءِ الطُّفُوفِ وَ لا اَعُدَّ ثَوابى اَقَلَّ مِنهُم. لِاَنَّ مِن نَيَّتِى النَّصرَةَ لَو شَهِدتُ ذلِکَ اليَومَ. وَ كَذلِکَ شيعَتُنا هُمُ الشُّهَداءُ وَ اِن ماتُوا عَلى فُرُشِهِم.

"I do not consider myself outside the martyrs of Karbala, nor do I regard my reward as less than theirs, because my intention is that, had I been present on that day, I would have assisted [Imam al-Husayn (as)]. Likewise, our Shi'ah are martyrs even if they die upon their beds."

Mikyal al-Makarim, vol. 2, p. 228, quoting the commentary on Al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah by Sayyid Ni'matullah al-Jaza'iri.

Therefore, someone who counts the days—and indeed the moments—awaiting the appearance of Imam al-‘Asr (as), if he is sincere and genuinely intends to assist the Imam purely for his sake, loses nothing if he does not live to see the time of the appearance. Even during the Ghaybah, he receives the reward of having lived to see the appearance and of striving alongside the Imam (as).
The reason is that, as far as assisting the Imam (as) is concerned, what lay within his own choice was precisely this spiritual readiness and heartfelt determination. The external realization of that assistance depends upon circumstances whose presence or absence is not under his control but rests with Allah. Therefore, if Allah does not grant him the opportunity to be physically present, He does not, through His grace and generosity, deprive him of the reward of assisting the Imam.
Among those who awaited the appearance of Imam al-‘Asr (as) was a man named ‘Abd al-Hamid al-Wasiti, who lived during the Imamate of Imam al-Baqir (as). Once, after describing his state of awaiting and speaking with the Imam about the Qa’im of the Ahlul Bayt (as), he asked:

فَاِن مِتُّ قَبلَ اَن اَدرِکَ القائِمَ علیه السّلام؟

“What if I die before I live to see the Qa’im (as)?”
The Imam (as) replied:

اِنَّ القائِلَ مِنکُم اَذا قالَ: اِن اَدرَکتُ قائِمَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلّم نَصَرتُهُ، کَالمُقارِعِ مَعَهُ بِسَیفِهِ.

“Whoever among you sincerely says, ‘If I live to see the Qa’im of the Family of Muhammad (s), I will assist him,’ is like one who fights alongside him with his sword.”
Rawdat al-Kafi, p. 81, h. 37.
The realization of such conviction and intention in a person is the result of correct ma‘rifah of Allah, the Messenger (s), and the Imam (as), together with an understanding of their rights.
Amir al-Mu’minin (as) said:

اِلزَمُوا الاَرضَ. وَ اصبِرُوا عَلَی البَلاءِ. وَ لا تُحَرِّکُوا بِاَیدیکُم وَ سُیُوفِکُم فی هوی اَلسِنَتِکُم. وَ لا تَستَعجِلُوا بِما لَم یُعَجِّلهُ اللهُ لَکُم. فَاِنَّهُ مَن ماتَ مِنکُم عَلی فِراشِهِ وَ هُوَ عَلی مَعرِفَةِ حَقِّ رَبِّهِ وَ حَقِّ رَسُولِهِ وَ اَهلِ بَیتِهِ، ماتَ شَهیداً وَ رَفَعَ اَجرَهُ عَلَی اللهِ وَ استَوجَبَ ثَوابَ مانَوی مِن صالِحِ عَمَلِهِ وَ قامَتِ النِیَّةُ مَقامَ اِصلاتِهِ بِسَیفِهِ. وَ اِنَّ لِکُلِّ شَیءٍ مُدَّةً وَ اَجلاً.

“Remain where you are and be patient in the face of trials. Do not move your hands and swords in pursuit of what your tongues desire, and do not impatiently hasten that which Allah has not hastened for you.
“For whoever among you dies upon his bed while possessing ma‘rifah of the right of his Lord, the right of His Messenger, and the right of his Ahlul Bayt, dies as a martyr. His reward rests with Allah, and he becomes deserving of the reward of the righteous deed which he intended to perform. His intention takes the place of drawing his sword. Indeed, everything has its appointed duration and term.”
Nahj al-Balaghah, Subhi Salih edition, Sermon 190.
A particularly significant point in this noble tradition is the importance of recognizing the rights of Allah, the Messenger (s), and the Imam (as)—a recognition that itself arises from ma‘rifah of them. The greater a person’s ma‘rifah, the better he understands their rights and the more clearly he recognizes his duties toward them. Here we can appreciate more deeply the importance of what was discussed in Part Two of this book concerning ma‘rifah of the Imam (as).
Thus, the true one who awaits during the Ghaybah is the person who says, both with his tongue and in his heart:

نُصرَتی مُعَدَّةٌ لَکُم.

“My assistance is prepared for you [O Ahlul Bayt].”
Ihtijaj al-Tabrisi, vol. 2, p. 317, from Ziyarat Aal Yasin.
If all the followers of Imam al-‘Asr (as) possessed such a state during the Ghaybah, then, according to the promise of the Imam himself, they would not remain deprived of seeing him, and for them the state of Ghaybah would give way to presence.
Imam al-Mahdi (atfs), in his tawqi‘ to the late Shaykh al-Mufid, said:

لَو اَنَّ اَشیاعَنا – وَفَّقَهَمُ اللهُ لِطاعَتِهِ – عَلَی اجتِماعٍ مِنَ القُلُوبِ فِی الوَفاءِ بِالعَهدِ عَلَیهِم. لَما تَأَخَّرَ عَنهُمُ الیُمنُ بِلِقائِنا وَ لَتَعَجَّلَت لَهُمُ السَّعادَةُ بِمُشاهَدَتِنا عَلی حَقِّ المَعرِفَةِ وَ صِدقِها مِنهُم بِنا.

“If our Shi‘ah—may Allah grant them success in obeying Him—were united in their hearts in faithfully fulfilling the covenant that rests upon them, the blessing of meeting us would not have been delayed for them, and the happiness of seeing us

would have been hastened for them through their true and sincere ma‘rifah of us.”
Ihtijaj al-Tabrisi, vol. 2, p. 325.

Expressing the Intention to Assist Through Renewal of the Pledge of Allegiance

To keep alive one’s intention of assisting the Imam (as), it is highly beneficial for a person to express this intention verbally and to make a covenant and pledge with Allah that he will never neglect or fall short in fulfilling it. It is for this very purpose that the concept of pledging allegiance (*bay‘ah*) to the Imam of the Age (as) during the period of Ghaybah becomes relevant.
In reality, *bay‘ah* is the verbal expression of one’s heartfelt intention to obey and assist the Imam (as). It is repeated on various occasions, and in this way the pledge is “renewed”—that is, made fresh once again. For example, in Du‘a al-‘Ahd, which is recited every morning, the pledge of allegiance to the Imam (as) is renewed in these words:

اللّهُمَّ اِنّی اُجَدِّدُ لَهُ فی صَبیحَةِ یَومی هذا وَ ما عِشتُ مِن اَیّامی عَهداً وَ عَقداً وَ بَیعَةً لَهُ فی عُنُقی لا اَحُولُ عَنها وَ لا اَزُولُ اَبداً. اللّهُمَّ اجعَلنی مِن اَنصارِهِ وَ اَعوانِهِ وَ الذّابّینَ عَنهُ وَ المُسارِعینَ اِلَیهِ فی قَضاءِ حَوائِجِهِ وَ المُمتَثِلینَ لِاَوامِرِهِ وَ المُحامینَ عَنهُ وَ السّابِقینَ اِلی اِرادَتِهِ وَ المُستَشهَدینَ بَینَ یَدیهِ(1) .

“O Allah! On this morning of my day, and on every day that I live, I renew before him the covenant, pledge, and allegiance that I bear upon my neck for him, from which I shall never turn away or withdraw. O Allah! Make me among his supporters and helpers, among those who defend him, who hasten to him in fulfilling his needs, who obey his commands, who protect him, who hasten to carry out his wishes, and who attain martyrdom before him.”
(1) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 102, p. 111, from *Misbah al-Za’ir*.
A covenant that embraces all these aspirations and brings these hopes to the tongue of the one who awaits the Imam truly transforms him. Each day that he renews this pledge, his determination and resolve become stronger, and he finds himself better prepared than before to remain faithful to his covenant.
A person who spends his life in such a state, when he sees death approaching while his Master has still not reappeared, burns with longing from the depths of

his being. He weeps in sorrow for the joy of the Household of Muhammad (s), grieving that after a lifetime of waiting, he is about to leave this world without attaining his cherished hope and without having the opportunity to assist his Master.

The Outcome of a Lifetime of Waiting

Let us now see how the Imams (as) treated people who lived in such a state. Mas‘adah narrates:

I was in the presence of Imam al-Sadiq (as) when an elderly man, bent with age and leaning upon his staff, entered and offered his salam. The Imam (as) returned his greeting. The old man then said, “O son of the Messenger of Allah (s), give me your hand so that I may kiss it.” The Imam extended his hand, and the old man kissed it. He then began to weep.

The Imam (as) asked, “O old man, why are you weeping?”

He replied, “May I be sacrificed for you! For a hundred years I have remained waiting faithfully for your Qa’im. I keep saying, ‘This month, this year!’ But now my age has advanced, my bones have grown weak, and my death has drawn near, yet I still do not see what I love concerning you. I see you being killed and driven from your homes, while I see your enemies flying high with their wings. How can I not weep?!”

At this, the blessed eyes of the Imam (as) filled with tears, and he said:

يا شَيخَ، اِن اَبقاکَ اللهُ حَتّی تَری قائِمَنا، کُنتَ فِی السَّنامِ الاَعلی. وَ اِن حَلَّت بِکَ المَنِیَّةُ، جِئتَ یَومَ القِیامَةِ مَعَ ثَقَلِ مُحَمَّدٍ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلُم؛ وَ نَحنُ ثَقَلُهُ. فَقالَ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلّم: اَنّی مُخَلِّفٌ فیکُمُ الثَّقَلَینِ فَتَمَسَّکُوا بِهِما لَن تَضِلُّوا: کِتابَ اللهِ وَ عِترَتی اَهلَ بَیتی.

“O old man! If Allah keeps you alive until you see our Qa’im, you will be in the highest rank. But if death reaches you before that, then on the Day of Resurrection you will come with the precious legacy (*thaqal*) of Muhammad (s)—and we are his *thaqal*. For he (s) said: ‘I am leaving among you two precious things. Hold firmly to them and you will never go astray: the Book of Allah and my progeny, my Ahlul Bayt.’”

The old man said, “After hearing this good news, I am no longer troubled; my heart is at peace.”

The old man did not know who the Qa'im of the Ahlul Bayt (as) would be. The Imam therefore introduced him, explaining that the Qa'im (as) would be the son of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as), from the lineage of Imam al-Hadi (as), and so on, until he would be from the descendants of Imam al-Sadiq (as). Then the Imam said:

يا شَيخُ، وَ اللهِ لَو لَم يَبقَ مِنَ الدُّنيا اِلّا يَومٌ واحِدٌ، لَطَوَّلَ اللهُ تَعالى ذِكرُهُ ذلِکَ اليَومَ حَتّى يَخرُجَ قائِمُنا اَهلَ البَيتِ. اِلّا اَن شيعَتَنا يَقَعُونَ فى فِتنَةٍ وَ حَيرةٍ فى غَيبَتِهِ. هُناکَ يُثَبِّتُ اللهُ عَلى هُداهُ المُخلِصينَ. اللّهُمَّ اَعِنهُم عَلى ذلِکَ(1) .

"O old man! By Allah, even if only one day remained of the life of this world, Allah, exalted is His remembrance, would prolong that day until our Qa'im from the Ahlul Bayt rises. Be aware that during his Ghaybah our Shi'ah will be afflicted with trials and bewilderment. At that time, Allah will keep those who are sincere steadfast upon His guidance. O Allah, assist them in this!"

(1) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 36, p. 407, h. 17, from *Kifayat al-Athar*.

A similar incident occurred with another elderly man during the time of Imam al-Baqir (as). Hakam ibn 'Utaybah, who witnessed the event, narrates:

I was in the presence of Imam al-Baqir (as), and the house was full of people. An elderly man entered, leaning upon his walking stick. He stood at the doorway and said, "Peace be upon you, O son of the Messenger of Allah, and the mercy and blessings of Allah." The Imam replied, "And upon you be peace, and the mercy and blessings of Allah."

The old man then greeted those present, and they returned his greeting. He turned toward Imam al-Baqir (as) and said:

»يَابنَ رَسُولِ اللهِ، اَدنِنى مِنکَ جَعَلَنى فِداکَ. فَوَ اللهِ اَنّى لِاُحِبُّکُم وَ اُحِبُّ مَن يُحِبُّکُم. وَ وَاللهِ ما اُحَبُّکُم وَ اُحِبُّ مَن يُحِبُّکُم لِطَمَعٍ فى دُنيا. وَ اِنّى لَاُبغِضُ عَدُوَّکُم وَ اَبرَأُ مِنهُ. وَ وَاللهِ ما اُبغِضُهُ وَ اَبرَأُ مِنهُ لِوَترٍ كانَ بَينى وَ بَينَهُ. وَ اللهِ اِنّى لِاُحِلُّ حَلالَکُم وَ اُحَرِّمُ حَرامَکُم وَ اَنتَظِرُ اَمرَکُم. فَهَل تَرجُو لى جَعَلَنِىَ اللهُ فِداکَ؟«

"O son of the Messenger of Allah! Bring me close to you, may I be sacrificed for you. By Allah, I love you and I love those who love you. By Allah, my love for you and for those who love you is not because of any worldly desire. I hate your enemy and disassociate myself from him. By Allah, I do not hate him or disassociate myself from him because of any personal grievance between him and me. By Allah, I regard as lawful what you have declared lawful, and as unlawful

what you have declared unlawful, and I await your affair. Since this is my state—may Allah make me your sacrifice—is there hope for me?"

Imam al-Baqir (as) said, «اِلیَّ. اِلیَّ.» — "Come closer to me. Come closer to me," until he seated the old man beside himself.

He then said to him, "O old man! A man once came to my father, 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (as), and asked him this very question. My father replied to him:

اِن تَمُت، تَرِدُ عَلی رَسُولِ اللهِ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلّم وَ عَلی عَلِیٍّ وَ الحَسَنِ وَ الحُسَینِ وَ عَلِیِّ بنِ الحُسَینِ وَ یَثلُجُ قَلبُکَ وَ یَبرُدُ فُؤادُکَ وَ تَقَرُّ عَینُکَ وَ تَستَقبَلُ بِالرُّوحِ وَ الرَّیحانِ مَعَ الکِرامِ الکاتِبِینَ لَو قَد بَلَغَت نَفسُکَ هاهُنا – وَ اَهوی بِیَدِهِ اِلی حَلقِهِ. وَ اِن تَعِش، تَرَی ما یُقِرُّ اللهُ بِهِ عَینَکَ وَ تَکُونُ مَعَنا فِی السَّنامِ الاَعلی.

"If you die, you will come to the Messenger of Allah (s), 'Ali, Hasan, Husayn, and 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (as). Your heart will be cooled, your soul comforted, and your eyes delighted. You will be welcomed with rest and fragrance, together with the noble recording angels, when your soul reaches here"—and he pointed with his hand toward his throat. "And if you remain alive, you will see that by which Allah will delight your eyes, and you will be with us in the highest rank."

When the old man heard this, he said, "O Abu Ja'far, what did you say?"

The Imam repeated his father's words.

The old man exclaimed, "Allahu Akbar! If I die, I will come to the Messenger of Allah (s), 'Ali, Hasan, Husayn, and 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (as); my eyes will be delighted, my heart comforted, and I will be welcomed with rest and fragrance alongside the noble recording angels when my soul reaches here. And if I remain alive, I will see what will delight my eyes and will be with you in the highest rank?!"

He then began to weep intensely until he fell to the ground. When those present saw his state, they too began to weep and lament. Imam al-Baqir (as) wiped the tears from the old man's eyes with his own fingers.

The old man raised his head and said, "O son of the Messenger of Allah (s), may Allah make me your sacrifice, give me your hand."

The Imam gave him his hand. The old man kissed it, placed it upon his eyes and cheek, then lifted his garment from his chest and abdomen and placed the Imam's hand upon them.

He then stood up, said farewell, and departed. Imam al-Baqir (as) continued looking at him as he walked away. Then the Imam turned to those present and said:

مَن اَحَبَّ اَن يَنظُرَ اِلى رَجُلٍ مِن اَهلِ الجَنَّةِ فَلْيَنظُر اِلى هذا.

“Whoever wishes to look upon a man from the people of Paradise should look at this man.”

Hakam ibn ‘Utaybah said, “I had never seen a gathering of mourning like that gathering,” because of the intensity with which everyone had wept. (1)

(1) *Rawdat al-Kafi*, p. 76, h. 30.

Indeed, this is the outcome of a person who spends an entire lifetime loving the Ahlul Bayt (as) and their friends, bearing aversion toward their enemies, accepting what the Imams (as) have declared lawful and unlawful, and burning with longing while awaiting the affair of the Ahlul Bayt (as).

At the conclusion of our discussion on the virtue of awaiting the Faraj, we can now understand one aspect of Imam al-Sadiq’s (as) words to Abu Basir. Abu Basir asked him:

»جُعِلتُ فِداکَ؛ مَتَى الفَرَجُ؟«

“May I be sacrificed for you; when will the Faraj come?”

The Imam replied:

يا اَبابَصيرٍ، اَنتَ مِمَّن يُريدُ الدُّنيا؟!

“O Abu Basir! Are you among those who seek this world?!”

Then he said:

مَن عَرَفَ هذَا الاَمرَ فَقَد فُرِّجَ عَنهُ بِانتِظارِهِ(1) .

“Whoever possesses ma‘rifah of this affair [Imamate and wilayah], his very waiting for it is itself a Faraj for him.”

(1) *Ghaybat al-Nu‘mani*, ch. 25, h. 3.

What Faraj could be greater than having a good end and ultimately being in Paradise in the company of the Ahlul Bayt (as)? Of course, there are other aspects of this divine Faraj that those awaiting the Reappearance may experience even in this world, but a detailed discussion of them belongs elsewhere. (2)

(2) Those interested may refer to the book *Suluk-e Muntaziran*.

So let us ask Allah never to deprive us of waiting for that beloved, hidden Imam:

...وَ لا تُنسِنا ذِكرَهُ وَ انتِظارَهُ(3) .

"O Allah! … Do not cause us to forget his remembrance or the awaiting of him."

(3) *Kamal al-Din*, ch. 45, h. 43.

This sentence forms part of a supplication transmitted to us through the First Deputy of Imam al-'Asr (as), which those awaiting his Reappearance recite during the period of Ghaybah after the 'Asr prayer on Friday.

Chapter Seven

Praying for the Hastening of the Faraj of Imam al-'Asr (as)

A person who lives in expectation of the Reappearance of Hazrat Wali al-'Asr (may Allah hasten his Faraj) has, as his greatest aspiration in life, the Faraj and relief of the awaited Imam. His greatest sorrow is the hardship and suffering that reaches the Imam of his time during the period of Ghaybah. He therefore considers it his duty to strive to remove the Imam's grief, sorrow, and afflictions, and he does not neglect anything within his ability toward this end.

In light of this, it should be understood that the greatest and most important Faraj for Imam al-'Asr (as) is Allah's permission for his Reappearance. This will be the Faraj of the Imam himself as well as the Faraj of all the Prophets and awliya' of Allah.

The most effective means of seeking this is to pray for the hastening of the Imam's Faraj. This is another essential requirement and sign of possessing ma'rifah of him during the period of Ghaybah. The importance of this supplication is such that a claim to ma'rifah and wilayah of the Imam without praying for his Faraj would be an exaggerated claim.

The Imams' (as) Supplications for the Hastening of the Faraj of Imam al-'Asr (as)

The Imam (as) himself taught this blessed practice to all his lovers from the very moment of his birth.

Hakimah Khatun, his honoured paternal aunt, saw him after his birth prostrating with his face upon the ground, raising his index fingers toward the sky and saying:

»اَشهَدُ اَن لا اِلهَ اِلّا اللهُ وَحدَهُ لا شَریکَ لَهُ وَ اَنَّ جَدّی رَسُولُ اللهِ وَ اَنَّ اَبی اَمیرُالمُؤمِنینَ«. ...

"I bear witness that there is no deity except Allah, alone, without partner; and I bear witness that my grandfather is the Messenger of Allah and that my father is Amir al-Mu'minin…"

He then named the remaining Imams until he reached himself. Thereafter, he prayed to Allah:

اللّهُمَّ اَنجِز لی وَعدی. وَ اَتمِم لی اَمری. وَ ثَبِّت وَطاَتی. وَ اَملِاِ الاَرضَ بی عَدلاً وَ قِسطاً(1) .

"O Allah! Fulfil for me the promise You have made to me. Bring my affair to completion. Make my steps firm, and through me fill the earth with justice and equity."

(1) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 51, p. 13, h. 14, from *Kamal al-Din*.

Praying for the hastening of the Faraj of Imam al-'Asr (may Allah hasten his Faraj) was also a practice observed insistently by the earlier Imams (as). For example, on the morning of the twenty-first of the blessed month of Ramadan, after performing the Fajr prayer, Imam al-Sadiq (as) went into prostration. At the conclusion of a relatively lengthy supplication, he prayed:

...اَسالُکَ بِجَمیعِ ما سَاَلتُکَ وَ ما لَم اَسالُکَ مِن عَظیمِ جَلالِکَ ما لَو عَلِمتُهُ لَسَالتُکَ بِهِ، اَن تُصَلّیَ عَلی مُحَمَّدٍ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلّم وَ اَهلِ بَیتِهِ وَ اَن تَأذَنَ لِفَرَجِ مِن بِفَرَجِهِ فَرَجُ اَولیائِکَ وَ اَصفِیائِکَ مِن خَلقِکَ وَ بِهِ تُبیدُ الظّالِمینَ وَ تُهلِکُهُم. عَجِّل ذلِکَ یا رَبَّ العالَمینَ.

"O Allah! I ask You by everything through which I have asked You, and by those aspects of Your immense Majesty through which I have not asked You—such that, had I known them, I would have asked You by them as well—to bless Muhammad (s) and his Ahlul Bayt, and to grant permission for the Faraj of the one through whose Faraj comes the Faraj of Your awliya' and Your chosen servants among Your creation, and through whom You will destroy and bring an end to the oppressors. Hasten this, O Lord of the worlds!"

The narrator says that after the Imam raised his head from prostration, he asked, "May I be sacrificed for you! I heard you praying for the Faraj of one whose Faraj will be the Faraj of Allah's chosen servants and awliya'. Are you not that person?"

The Imam replied:

»لا. ذاک قائم آل محمد صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم«.

“No. He is the Qa’im of the Household of Muhammad (s).”

After mentioning some of the signs associated with the rising of the Qa’im (as), the Imam instructed:

تَوَقَّع اَمرَ صاحِبِکَ لَیلَکَ وَ نَهارَکَ. فَاِنَّ اللهَ کُلَّ یَومٍ فی شَأنٍ. لا یَشغُلُهُ شَأنٌ عَن شَأنٍ. ذلِکَ اللهُ رَبُّ العالَمینَ(1) .

“Await the affair of your Master by night and by day, for Allah is every day engaged in an affair. No affair distracts Him from another affair. Such is Allah, the Lord of the worlds.”

(1) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 98, pp. 158–159, from *Iqbal al-A‘mal*.

The final statement points to the fact that the timing of the Reappearance is among matters in which *bada’* may occur. In other words, at any moment Allah may decree concerning it something that had not previously been determined in that form. Therefore, praying for the hastening of the Imam’s Faraj can have a real and decisive effect upon the timing of the Reappearance.

An especially significant point in this hadith is the statement about which the narrator asked the Imam. It teaches us that praying for the hastening of the Faraj of Imam al-‘Asr (as) is, in reality, praying for the Faraj of all Allah’s chosen servants—from the noblest of creation, the Final Messenger (s), to the successors of the Prophets and the angels of Allah—all of whom await the time of the Reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (as).

In Du‘a al-‘Ahd, we ask Allah:

اللّهُمَّ وَ سُرَّ نَبِیَّکَ مُحَمَّداً صلی الله علیه و آله و سلّم بِرُؤیَتِهِ وَ مَن تَبِعَهُ عَلی دَعوَتِهِ(2) .

“O Allah! Bring joy to Your Prophet Muhammad (s) through seeing him, and to all those who followed the Prophet in his call.”

(2) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 102, p. 112, from *Misbah al-Za’ir*.

Thus, when we pray for the hastening of the Faraj, our concern should not be limited to our own comfort and relief, so that in reality we are merely praying for ourselves. Rather, our intention should be to seek the Faraj of the Imam (as) himself—although, of course, through his Faraj relief will come to all the believers as well.

Praying for the Hastening of the Faraj as a Means of Salvation from Destruction

The most important benefit of praying for the hastening of the Faraj of Imam al-Zaman (as) is that, when it arises from belief in his Imamate, it protects the supplicant from the destruction of his religion during the period of Ghaybah.
Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as) said to Ahmad ibn Ishaq:

يا اَحمَدَ بنَ اِسحاقَ، مَثَلُهُ فی هذِهِ الأُمَّةِ مِثلُ الخِضرِ وَ مَثَلُهُ مَثَلُ ذِی القَرنَینِ. وَ اللهِ لَیَغیبَنَّ غَیبَةً لا یَنجُو فیها مِنَ الهَلَکَةِ اِلّا مَن ثَبَّتَهُ اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ عَلَی القَولِ بِإمامَتِهِ وَ وَفَّقَهُ فیها لِلدُّعاءِ بِتَعجیلِ فَرَجِهِ.

"O Ahmad ibn Ishaq! His example in this Ummah is like that of Khidr and like that of Dhu al-Qarnayn. By Allah, he will certainly enter such a Ghaybah that no one will be saved from destruction during it except the one whom Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, keeps steadfast in belief in his Imamate and grants the tawfiq during it to pray for the hastening of his Faraj."
The following day, when Ahmad ibn Ishaq again came into the presence of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (as), he asked:

»فَمَا السُّنَّةُ الجارِیَةُ فیهِ مِنَ الخِضرِ وَ ذِی القَرنَینِ؟«

"What is the precedent of Khidr and Dhu al-Qarnayn that will apply to him?"
The Imam replied:

»طُولُ الغَیبَةِ یا اَحمَدُ«.

"The prolonged Ghaybah, O Ahmad."
Ahmad ibn Ishaq then asked:

»یَابنَ رَسُولِ اللهِ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلّم وَ اِن غَیبَتَهُ لَتَطُولُ؟«

"O son of the Messenger of Allah (s), will his Ghaybah truly be prolonged?"
The Imam replied:

ای وَ رَبّی حَتّی یَرجِعَ عَن هذَا الاَمرِ اَکثَرُ القائِلینَ بِهِ وَ لا یَبقی اِلّا مَن اَخَذَ اللهُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ عَهدَهُ لِوِلایَتِنا وَ کَتَبَ فی قَلبِهِ الایمانَ وَ اَیَّدَهُ بِرُوحٍ مِنهُ(1) .

"Yes, by my Lord! It will be prolonged until most of those who profess belief in this affair turn away from it, and none will remain except those from whom Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, has taken the covenant of our wilayah, in whose hearts He has inscribed faith, and whom He has strengthened with a spirit from Himself."

(1) *Kamal al-Din*, ch. 38, h. 1.

It can be seen from this hadith that praying for the hastening of the Faraj of Imam al-‘Asr (as) is given such importance that it is mentioned alongside belief in his Imamate—the very foundation and axis of faith. Together, these two are presented as the means by which a person’s religion is preserved during the period of Ghaybah.

Another important point is that both of these pillars—belief in the Imamate and praying for the hastening of the Imam’s Faraj—depend upon divine tawfiq. This shows that when Allah wills to protect someone during the Ghaybah from the danger of losing his religion, He grants that person the tawfiq to pray for the hastening of the Faraj of Imam al-‘Asr (as). Those who are deprived of this divine grace and attention may slip and move away from the Straight Path.

Therefore, one must continually ask Allah for guidance and tawfiq and must never rely upon oneself. If Allah leaves a person to himself, he may lose even the very means of salvation—belief in the Imamate and wilayah. The end of the hadith itself warns that most of those who profess belief in the Imamate will turn away from that belief.

Turning Away from the Imamate During the Ghaybah

Turning away from belief in the Imamate may happen very easily, even without the person himself realizing it. It is not necessary for someone openly to deny the Imamate of the Imams (as) or speak against them. A person may preserve the terminology of “Imamate” and “the Imams” while adopting, under those same names, an incorrect and deviant interpretation of Imamate and wilayah—an interpretation that has not been derived from the source of Revelation and the teachings of the Imams (as) themselves.

In such a case, he may in reality be denying the spirit of Imamate and the true meaning of wilayah without even realizing it.

The criterion is not merely mentioning the words “Imamate” and “the Imams.” Their content and meaning must conform to the Book and the Sunnah if they are to preserve a person from irreligion. Many forms of deviation from religion arise from precisely such incorrect beliefs concerning Imamate. The matter is therefore extremely subtle and requires great vigilance.

Our earlier emphasis upon the first condition of ma‘rifah—namely, that it must be sound and correct—was intended precisely to prevent this hidden danger. A person must continually correct his beliefs according to the criterion of the Book and the Sunnah and, in matters of religious ma‘rifah, must not rely upon anything other than the verses of the Qur’an together with the hadiths transmitted from the purified Imams (as).

It is entirely possible for a false idea or deviant belief to contaminate a person’s mind so deeply that, without realizing it, he begins interpreting even the Qur’an and the narrations under the influence of that false idea. Consequently, although he may quote hadiths as evidence, the actual spirit and essence of his belief has not been taken from the Imams (as). Rather, its foundation has been imported from elsewhere and merely given the outward appearance of being based upon narrations.

This is not the sound ma‘rifah that a person is required to possess. Turning away from belief in the Imamate may occur in precisely this form.

The most effective protection, therefore, is that Allah does not leave a person to himself, while the person, for his part, turns to no door other than the door of the Ahlul Bayt (as) and places his trust nowhere else. In this way, he may remain steadfast in belief in the Imamate and wilayah and, by joining this steadfastness with prayer for the hastening of the Faraj of Imam al-‘Asr (as), remain protected from destruction during the period of Ghaybah.

The command to “pray for the hastening of the Faraj” must therefore be taken with the utmost seriousness and importance. In accordance with the instruction of Imam al-Zaman (as), one should engage in it abundantly:

اَكثِرُوا الدُّعاءَ بِتَعجيلِ الفَرَجِ. فَإِنَّ ذلِکَ فَرَجُكُم(1) .

“Pray abundantly for the hastening of the Faraj, for indeed, in that lies your Faraj.”

(1) *Kamal al-Din*, ch. 45, h. 4.

The Faraj of the one who prays consists, above all else, in attaining a good end and preserving the soundness of his religion at a time when most of those who profess belief in the Imamate will turn away from it. Thereafter come the spiritual and material openings that Allah, the Exalted, grants him through the blessing of praying for the Faraj of Imam al-Zaman (as).

Chapter Eight

Assisting Imam al-‘Asr (as)

Assisting Allah

In the Holy Qur’an we read:

«اِن تَنصُرُوا اللهَ يَنصُرْكُم وَ يُثَبِّت اَقدامَكُم(1) .»

“If you assist Allah, He will assist you and make your feet firm.”
(1) Surah Muhammad (47):7.
And:

«وَ لَيَنصُرَنَّ اللهَ مَن يَنصُرُهُ(2) .»

“Allah will certainly assist whoever assists Him.”
(2) Surah al-Hajj (22):40.
How can Allah be assisted? What does it mean to speak of assisting Allah?
The answer to this question becomes clear from the hadith cited at the end of Chapter Three of Part Two. In that hadith, Imam al-Sadiq (as) explained the meaning of Allah’s pleasure and anger, waging war against Allah, obeying Him, causing grief to Allah, pledging allegiance to Him, and other similar expressions. In summary, all these matters refer to Allah’s awliya’ and chosen servants, while Allah has attributed them to Himself. Obedience to Allah is realized through obedience to His wali; pledging allegiance to Allah means pledging allegiance to His wali; waging war against Allah means waging war against His wali, and so on. In general, attributes and actions that properly belong to created beings and cannot literally be attributed to Allah are to be understood in this manner.
In light of this general principle, it can be said that assisting Allah means assisting His awliya’. In reality, whoever assists the Imams (as) has assisted Allah. Therefore, the divine promise of assistance applies to those who assist their Imams.
This is another of the duties of those who possess ma‘rifah, and one of its most important effects.

Of course, during the Ghaybah of the Imam (as), the form that such assistance takes differs from what is possible during his physical presence. It was for this reason that, in our discussion of *intizar*, we spoke of the "intention to assist the Imam (as)." It became clear from the hadiths that if, during the Ghaybah of the Imam of his time, a person possesses a sincere and firm intention and determination to assist him when he reappears, Allah grants him the reward of actually doing so.

However, beyond the intention and resolve to assist—which are themselves extremely important and necessary—the one awaiting the Reappearance must also do whatever lies within his ability to assist the Imam during the period of his Ghaybah.

Assisting the Imam During His Ghaybah

It is possible to assist the Imam (as) even during his Ghaybah. Imam al-Husayn (as) said:

فَقَد اَخبَرَنی جَدّی اَنَّ وَلَدِیَ الحُسَینَ یُقتَلُ بِطَفِّ کَربَلاءَ غَریباً وَحیداً عَطشاناً. فَمَن نَصَرَهُ فَقَد نَصَرَنی وَ نَصَرَ وَلَدَهُ القائِمَ. وَ مَن نَصَرَنا بِلِسانِهِ، فَاِنَّهُ فی حِزبِنا یَومَ القِیامَةِ(1) .

"My grandfather informed me that my son Husayn will be killed on the plain of Karbala, a stranger, alone and thirsty. Therefore, whoever assists him has assisted me and has assisted his descendant, the Qa'im. And whoever assists us with his tongue will be among our party on the Day of Resurrection."

(1) *Mikyal al-Makarim*, vol. 1, p. 507, from *Ma'ali al-Sibtayn*.

Sayyid al-Shuhada' (as) addressed these words to his companions on the night of 'Ashura. Their meaning is that everyone should assist his Imam and leader by whatever means are within his ability.

Such assistance acquires a particular virtue during the Ghaybah of the Imam (as). The Seventh Imam (as) said concerning this:

اَما عَلِمتَ اَنَّ اَفضَلَ الشُّهَداءِ دَرَجَةً یَومَ القِیامَةِ مَن نَصَرَ اللهَ وَ رَسُولَهُ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلّم بِظَهرِ الغَیبِ وَ رَدَّ عَنِ اللهِ وَ رَسُولِهِ صلی الله علیه و آله و سلّم(1) .

“Do you not know that among the martyrs of the highest rank on the Day of Resurrection is the one who assists Allah and His Messenger (s) in their absence and defends Allah and His Messenger (s)?”
(1) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 25, p. 313, h. 77, from *al-Kashshi*.
Thus, the physical presence of Allah’s Messenger (s) or the Imam (as) is not a condition for assisting and defending them. The Imam (as) can be assisted even during his Ghaybah.

Assisting the Imam (as) with One’s Tongue

Assisting the Imam during the period of Ghaybah can take various forms. (2) One of these is assisting him through one’s tongue.
In general, anyone who uses his speech to turn people’s hearts toward the Ahlul Bayt (as) and keep their remembrance alive is assisting them. This may be done by reciting elegies, composing poetry about them, mentioning their virtues, or teaching and explaining their knowledge and ma‘arif through the transmission and explanation of their hadiths. All of these are examples of assisting the Ahlul Bayt (as) with one’s tongue, and all remain possible during the period of Ghaybah.
(2) The various forms of assisting Imam al-‘Asr (as)—through the heart, tongue, and actions—have been discussed in detail in Part Four of the book *Aftab dar Ghurbat*.
Di‘bil al-Khuza‘i was among the poets and elegists devoted to the Ahlul Bayt (as). On one occasion, during the days of ‘Ashura, he came into the presence of Imam al-Ridha (as). As soon as the Imam saw him, he said:

مَرحَباً بِکَ یا دِعبِلُ! مَرحَباً بِناصِرِنا بِیَدِهِ وَ لِسانِهِ!

“Welcome, O Di‘bil! Welcome to the one who assists us with his hand and his tongue!”
The Imam then made room for Di‘bil beside himself and seated him there. He asked him to recite poetry mourning the tragedy of his oppressed and lonely grandfather, Imam al-Husayn (as), saying:

یا دِعبِلُ، اِرثِ الحُسَینَ علیه السّلام. فَاَنتَ ناصِرُنا وَ مادِحُنا ما دُمتَ حَیّاً. فَلاتَقصُر عَن نَصرِنا مَااستَطَعتَ(1) .

“O Di‘bil! Recite an elegy for Husayn (as). As long as you live, you are our supporter and our eulogist. Therefore, do not fall short in assisting us to the extent of your ability.”

(1) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 45, p. 257, h. 15.

This instruction of the Eighth Imam (as) also applies to believers living during the period of Ghaybah: they should assist their Imam by every means available to them.

In general, every effort made to promote and elevate the name and remembrance of the Imams (as), and to spread their knowledge and ma‘arif, is an instance of assisting them. Allah’s promise of assistance therefore embraces all those who strive in these ways. His promise is that He will assist them and make them steadfast.

This is one of the greatest glad tidings for the lovers of the Imam (as) during the period of Ghaybah, when the danger of losing one’s religion and slipping from the path threatens them more than at other times. Therefore, whoever wishes to receive this great grace of Allah and place himself under the protection of divine assistance and support should strive, to the best of his ability and through every possible means, to assist the Ahlul Bayt (as). Allah may then protect him from the dangers of the period of Ghaybah and support him at moments when he is in danger of slipping.

The sacred existence of Imam al-Zaman (as) is a manifestation of Allah’s grace and mercy. Whoever assists him in any way draws the Imam’s grace and attention toward himself and thereby places himself within the radiance of divine mercy.

One form of assisting the Imam (as) with one’s tongue—one that brings him happiness and joy—is praying for the hastening of his Faraj. The Imam (as) regards this as an act of kindness done to him by the supplicant, and therefore does not leave such kindness unanswered. Whoever prays for the Imam (as) thereby draws the Imam’s own blessed supplication toward himself and becomes a recipient of his kindness.

During the reign of the ‘Abbasid ruler Mutawakkil, there lived in Isfahan a man named ‘Abd al-Rahman who was a Shi‘ah. He was once asked, “How did you come to believe in the Imamate of ‘Ali al-Naqi (as)?”

He replied:
“I witnessed an incident that caused me to become a Shi‘ah. I was a poor man, but I was eloquent and bold in speech. One year, the people of Isfahan sent me together with a group of others to Mutawakkil’s court to present a complaint.
“When we arrived at the entrance of the court, an order was issued by Mutawakkil for ‘Ali ibn Muhammad al-Ridha (as) to be summoned. I asked one of those present, ‘Who is this man whom they have ordered to be brought here?’
“He replied, ‘He is one of the ‘Alawis whom the Rafidis regard as their Imam.’ He then added, ‘It appears that Mutawakkil has summoned him in order to kill him.’
“I said, ‘I will not leave this place until I see this man and discover what kind of person he is.’”
‘Abd al-Rahman continues:
“He arrived riding a horse, while the people stood in rows on his right and left, looking at him. As soon as I saw him, love for him entered my heart. I began silently praying for him, asking Allah to protect him from the evil of Mutawakkil.
“He continued through the crowd, looking toward the mane of his horse and turning neither to the right nor to the left, while I continued praying for him inwardly.
“When he came directly opposite me, he turned toward me and said:
اِستَجابَ اللهُ دَعاءَکَ. وَ طَوَّلَ عُمرَکَ. وَ کَثَّرَ مالَکَ وَ وَلَدَکَ.
“May Allah answer your prayer, prolong your life, and increase your wealth and your children.”
“I trembled in awe of him and fell among my companions. They asked, ‘What has happened to you?’ I replied, ‘Nothing is wrong,’ and I did not tell them what had happened.
“After this incident we returned to Isfahan. Through the blessing of his supplication, Allah opened ways of earning wealth for me, so that today the property inside my house alone is worth one million dirhams, apart from the wealth I possess outside my home. Allah has also granted me ten children, while I have now passed seventy years of age. And I believe in the Imamate of the one who knew what was in my heart and whose supplication for me Allah answered.” (1)

(1) *Khara'ij* of Qutb al-Rawandi, vol. 1, pp. 392–393.
This is only a small example of the Imam's (as) kindness toward someone who prayed for him even though, at that time, the man did not yet believe in his Imamate.
Then what of a person who truly believes in the Imamate and wilayah and prays for the Imam of his time concerning that which brings him greater joy than anything else—the hastening of his Faraj? Could such an act of kindness possibly remain hidden from the Imam (as)? Could it be possible that he would show no attention or favour toward the person who prays for him? Certainly not.
Allah's promise is that He will assist the one who assists Him—and this assistance comes through the Imam (as).

Chapter Nine

Awareness of the Presence of Imam al-'Asr (as)

Imam al-'Asr's (as) Attention toward the Believers

According to Shi'ah belief, and on the basis of the transmitted evidence, the Imam (as) is aware of the deeds and conditions of all Allah's creatures—whether they are upon the earth, in the heavens, throughout the celestial realms, or wherever else they may be. Among all of them, however, he has a special care and attention toward the believers.
An example of this can be seen in the following hadith.
Rumaylah narrates:
During the time of Amir al-Mu'minin (as), I became severely ill. On a Friday, I began to feel somewhat better. I said to myself, "Nothing would be better than to pour some water over myself and go to perform the prayer behind Amir al-Mu'minin (as)."
So I did so and went to the mosque.

When the Imam ascended the pulpit, my illness suddenly became severe again. After Amir al-Mu'minin (as) left the mosque and entered a place known as "al-Qasr," I entered with him.

He said to me, "O Rumaylah, I saw you writhing in pain!"

I replied, "Yes," and explained my illness to him and why I had come to attend the prayer.

He then said:

يا رَميلَةُ، لَيسَ مِن مُؤمِنٍ يَمرَضُ اِلّا مَرِضنا بِمَرَضِهِ. وَ لا يَحزَنُ اِلّا حَزِناً بِحُزنِهِ. وَ لا يَدعُو اِلّا اَمَّنَا لِدُعائِهِ. وَ لا يَسكُتُ اِلّا دَعَونا لَهُ.

"O Rumaylah! No believer becomes ill except that we are affected by his illness; nor does he become sorrowful except that we share in his sorrow. He does not supplicate except that we say 'Amin' to his supplication, and when he remains silent, we supplicate for him."

I said, "O Amir al-Mu'minin, may I be sacrificed for you! This may be so concerning those who are here with you in al-Qasr, but what about those who are in the far corners of the earth?"

He replied:

يا رَميلَةُ، لَيسَ يَغيبُ عَنّا مُؤمِنٌ فى شَرقِ الاَرضِ وَ لا فى غَربِها(1) .

"O Rumaylah! No believer in the east or the west of the earth is hidden from us."

(1) *Basa'ir al-Darajat*, Part 5, ch. 16, h. 1.

When Imam al-'Asr (as) has such care and attention toward the believers, what greater blessing could there be than for a person to pray, above all else, for the hastening of the Imam's own Faraj, while entrusting the fulfilment of his own needs to him?

The Imam (as) is far too generous for someone to remember him while he forgets that person. He himself stated in his blessed *tawqi'* to Shaykh al-Mufid (may Allah have mercy upon him):

فَاِنّا نُحيطُ عِلماً بِاَنبائِكُم. وَ لا يَعزُبُ عَنّا شَىءٌ مِن اَخبارِكُم... . اِنّا غَيرُ مُهمِلينَ لِمُراعاتِكُم وَ لا ناسينَ لِذِكرِكُم(2) .

"We have full knowledge of what happens to you, and nothing concerning your affairs is hidden from us… We do not neglect caring for you, nor do we forget your remembrance."

(2) *Al-Ihtijaj* of al-Tabrisi, vol. 2, p. 323.
It is therefore clear that although Imam al-'Asr (as) lives in Ghaybah and is hidden from the sight of people, he is aware of what takes place throughout the east and west of the world and has a special care and attention toward the believers.
His blessed physical body is hidden from the sight of people in general, yet at the same time his encompassing presence extends over their bodies and souls, such that nothing of their outward or inward condition is hidden from his penetrating vision, and no one lies outside the authority of his wilayah.
Concerning the one whom we address in the Ziyarat of Friday with the words:
«اَلسَّلامُ عَلَیکَ یا عَینَ اللهِ فی خَلقِهِ(1) ».
"Peace be upon you, O Eye of Allah among His creation,"
(1) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 102, p. 215, from *Jamal al-Usbu'*,
it cannot be said that he is unaware of the circumstances and conditions of Allah's servants or that his presence does not encompass them.
Likewise, during his Ghaybah we address him with the words:
«اَلسَّلامُ عَلَیکَ یا حُجَّةَ اللهِ الَّتی لاتَخفی(2) ».
"Peace be upon you, O Hujjah of Allah who is not hidden!"
(2) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 102, p. 117, from *Mazar al-Shahid* and *al-Mazar al-Kabir*.
The fact that the Imam (as) is described as "not hidden" points to his encompassing knowledge and awareness throughout the world of existence.

Awareness of the Imam's (as) Presence During the Ghaybah

What is important is that a person inwardly realizes this truth and feels this all-encompassing presence with his entire being. When this happens, the Ghaybah becomes, for him, like direct witnessing, and he constantly experiences himself as being in the presence of the Imam of his time.
He will then naturally, and without artificial effort, observe the proper etiquette and reverence due to that sacred being with the utmost seriousness. Through this, the way toward attaining "strength of certainty" during the Ghaybah becomes easier for him.
There is a way to attain this state—this awareness of the presence of the Hidden Imam—which has been indicated in certain hadiths.

Imam al-Sajjad (as) said to Abu Khalid al-Kabuli:

يا اَبا خالِدٍ، اِنَّ اَهلَ زَمانِ غَيبَتِهِ القائِلينَ بِإمامَتِهِ وَ المُنتَظِرينَ لِظُهُورِهِ، اَفضَلُ مِن اَهلِ كُلِّ زَمانٍ. لِاَنَّ اللهَ تَبارَکَ وَ تَعالى اَعطاهُم مِنَ العُقُولِ وَ الاَفهامِ وَ المَعرِفَةِ ما صارَت بِهِ الغَيبَةُ عِندَهُم بِمَنزِلَةِ المُشاهَدَةِ(3) . ...

"O Abu Khalid! The people living during the period of his Ghaybah who believe in his Imamate and await his Reappearance are superior to the people of every other age. This is because Allah, Blessed and Exalted, has granted them such intellect, understanding, and ma'rifah that the Ghaybah has become for them like direct witnessing…"

(3) *Kamal al-Din*, ch. 31, h. 2.

Indeed, this state can be attained through a deeper and more complete ma'rifah of all the foundations of religion.

The basis and root of every ma'rifah is ma'rifah of Allah, which must become an inwardly realized reality for a person. If one's recognition of Allah, as taught in the hadiths of the Ahlul Bayt (as), becomes an inwardly realized awareness, it will naturally make one's conduct and actions pleasing to Allah.

The same applies to knowing the Prophet and knowing the Imam. All of these forms of ma'rifah must be sound—that is, they must conform to what has come in the Book and the Sunnah, without being intermixed with human ideas. Among them, knowing the Imam holds a particular importance, as discussed in Part Two of this book.

Another effective factor in attaining this state—the awareness of the Imam's presence—is acting upon the duties discussed in this Part. These duties are the requirements and effects of ma'rifah of the Imam (as). If they are carried out seriously, a spiritual affinity between the follower and the Imam of his time gradually increases. It is this spiritual affinity that increasingly prepares the ground for an inward awareness and witnessing of the presence of the Hidden Imam.

At times, in order to make such realities tangible to their Shi'ah, the Imams (as) would lift certain veils and show them truths that normally remained hidden.

Abu Basir narrates:

I entered the mosque with Imam al-Baqir (as) while people were coming and going. The Imam said to me, "Ask the people whether they can see me."

Whenever someone passed by, I would ask him, "Did you see Abu Ja'far (as)?"

He would reply, “No,” even though the Imam was standing beside me.
Then Abu Harun al-Makfuf, who was blind, entered. The Imam said, “Ask this man.”
I asked him, “Did you see Abu Ja‘far (as)?”
He replied, “Is he not the one standing right here?”
I asked, “How did you know?”
He replied, “How could I not know, when he is a radiant and shining light?!”
Abu Basir continues:
I then heard the Imam speaking to a man from Africa. He asked him, “How is Rashid?”
The man replied, “I left him alive and firm in the correct belief, and he sends you his salam.”
The Imam said, “May Allah have mercy upon him.”
The man asked, “Has he died?”
The Imam replied, “Yes.”
He asked, “When?”
The Imam replied, “Two days after you left.”
The man said, “By Allah, he was not ill and had no ailment”—for a person normally dies as a result of illness or some affliction.
I, Abu Basir, asked, “Who was that man?”
The Imam replied, “He was one of the people of our wilayah who loved us.”
Then he said:

اَ تَرَونَ اَن لَيسَ لَنا مَعَكُم اَعيُنٌ ناظِرَةٌ وَ اَسماعٌ سامِعَةٌ؟! بِئسَ ما رَاَيتُم! وَ اللهِ لا يَخفى عَلَينا شَيءٌ مِن اَعمالِكُم. فَاَحضِرُونا جَميعاً وَ عَوِّدُوا اَنفُسَكُمُ الخَيرَ وَ كُونُوا مِن اَهلِهِ تُعرَفُوا. فَاِنّى بِهذا آمُرُ وُلدى وَ شيعَتى(1) .

“Do you think that we have no watching eyes and listening ears concerning you?! What a poor assumption you have made! By Allah, nothing of your deeds is hidden from us. Therefore, all of you should regard us as present with you. (2) Accustom yourselves to doing good, and become people of goodness so that you may be known by it. Indeed, this is what I command my children and my Shi‘ah.”
(1) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 46, p. 243, h. 31, from *al-Khara’ij wa al-Jara’ih*.
(2) Apparently, the meaning is: “Regard us as present, and consider yourselves to be in our presence.”

Indeed, it is possible for a blind person to perceive the presence of the Imam of his time while those who possess physical sight remain unable to see him.
The Imam (as) is a radiant and shining light whose perception does not depend upon physical eyesight. If the heart possesses sight, it perceives him and becomes aware of his presence.
What truly matters is spiritual affinity and a heartfelt bond with that sacred being. The Imam's (as) instruction to us is that we should always regard ourselves as being in the presence of the Imams (as), train ourselves in good deeds until goodness becomes habitual to us, and become so firmly established among the people of goodness that we come to be known by it.

Chapter Ten

Wara‘ of the Friends of Imam al-‘Asr (as)

Observing the Ways of the Imams (as) During the Ghaybah

A person who sees himself as being in the presence of the Imam of his time will, in proportion to the ma‘rifah he has of him, strive not to depart from what pleases him and not to do anything that causes his displeasure. This is one of the clearest signs of the people of ma‘rifah during the Ghaybah of the Imam (as).
Amir al-Mu’minin (as) says:

اللّهُمَّ لابُدَّ لَکَ مِن حُجَجٍ فی اَرضِکَ حُجَّةٍ بَعدَ حُجَّةٍ عَلی خَلقِکَ یَهدُونَهُم اِلی دینِکَ وَ یُعَلِّمُونَهُم عِلمَکَ لِکَیلا یَتَفَرَّقَ اَتباعُ اَولِیائِکَ؛ ظاهِرٌ غَیرُ مُطاعٍ، اَو مُکتَتِمٌ خائِفٌ یَتَرَقَّبُ، اِن غابَ عَنِ النّاسِ شَخصُهُم فی حالِ هُدنَتِهِم فی دَولَةِ الباطِلِ، فَلَن یَغیبَ عَنهُم مَبثُوثُ عِلمِهِم وَ اَدآبُهُم فی قُلُوبِ المُؤمِنینَ مُثبَتَةٌ وَ هُم بِها عامِلُونَ(1) .

“O Allah! You must certainly have Hujjahs upon Your earth, one Hujjah after another over Your creation. They guide them toward Your religion and teach them Your knowledge, so that the followers of Your awliya’ do not become scattered. Some of Your Hujjahs are manifest but are not obeyed, while others remain concealed, fearful and watchful. Even if their persons are hidden from the people

during a period of truce under the rule of falsehood, the knowledge they have spread does not disappear from the people, and their ways remain firmly established in the hearts of the believers, who act upon them."
(1) *Ghaybat al-Nu'mani*, ch. 8, h. 2.
Two matters are treated as especially important in this noble hadith. The first is referring to the knowledge and ma'arif of the Imams (as), and the second is acting according to their ways and conduct in every aspect of life.
Both are possible during the Ghaybah of the Imam (as), although neither is as easy as it is during the period of his presence. Therefore, the absence of ordinary access to the Imam (as) cannot be an excuse for neglecting either of these duties.
We have already discussed the necessity of referring to the hadiths of the Ahlul Bayt (as), which contain their knowledge and ma'arif. Here, we shall explain the second duty to some extent.
The word آداب **(adab)** is the plural of دأب **(da'b)**. *Da'b* means one's manner, habit, or customary practice, (1) which we have rendered here as "ways" or "traditions." What is intended in this context are the qualities, habits, and ways transmitted from the Imams (as). We are required to act upon them, not merely believe in them.
(1) *Al-Mu'jam al-Wasit*, p. 267.
Believing in them and accepting them inwardly is one stage; the second stage is the necessity of acting upon them. This second stage is just as necessary as the first. For this reason, our hadiths place great emphasis upon **ijtihad** and **wara'**, to the extent that they have been counted among the pillars of religion.
During the time of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as), a blind man came to him and said, "O son of the Messenger of Allah! Do you know of my love, devotion, and wilayah toward you?"
The Imam replied, "Yes."
The man said, "I have a question. Since I am blind, do not travel about much, and cannot always come into your presence, I would like you to answer it for me"—meaning that he wanted a comprehensive answer by which his religious duty would become clear.
The Imam said, "State your request."

He said, “Tell me the religion by which you and your Ahlul Bayt worship Allah, so that I too may worship Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, according to that same religion.”

The Imam (as) replied:

اِن كُنتَ اَقصَرتَ الخُطبَةَ فَقَد اَعظَمتَ المَسأَلَةَ. وَ اللهِ لَأُعطِيَنَّکَ دينی وَ دينَ آبائِیَ الَّذی نَدينُ اللهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ بِهِ: شَهادَةُ اَن لا اِلهَ اِلّا اللهُ، وَ اَنَّ مُحَمَّداً صلی الله علیه و آله و سلّم رَسُولُ اللهِ، وَ الاِقرارُ بِما جاءَ بِهِ مِن عِندِاللهِ، وَ الوِلايَةُ لِوَلِيِّنا، وَ البَراءَةُ مِن عَدُوِّنا، وَ التَّسليمُ لِاَمرِنا، وَ انتِظارُ قائِمِنا، وَ الاِجتِهادُ، وَ الوَرَعُ(1) .

“You have spoken briefly, but you have asked a tremendous question. By Allah, I shall certainly tell you my religion and the religion of my forefathers by which we worship Allah, the Mighty and Majestic: bearing witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad (s) is the Messenger of Allah; acknowledging what he brought from Allah; wilayah toward those who have wilayah toward us; bara’ah from our enemies; submission to our command; awaiting our Qa’im; striving diligently; and wara‘.”

(1) *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 22, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab Da‘a’im al-Islam, h. 10.

Accepting what the Prophet (s) brought from Allah and submitting to it is primarily an inward matter and, above all, includes belief in the Imamate and wilayah of the Imams (as).

Ijtihad and wara‘ likewise have an inward foundation, but their outward implications and effects are also extremely important.

Here, **ijtihad** is derived from *juhd*, meaning effort and striving. What is meant is earnestness in observing the halal and haram of the Shari‘ah and not being negligent in acting upon its rulings.

Indifference toward the practical observance of the rulings of the Shari‘ah is incompatible with servitude and religious commitment, which are necessary consequences of submission to and acceptance of the wilayah of Allah, the Messenger of Allah (s), and the Imam (as).

Therefore, the more complete a believer’s commitment is in fulfilling his religious duties and observing their prescribed limits, the greater his share of commitment and submission to Allah and the Ahlul Bayt (as), and consequently the stronger his religious commitment. Conversely, to the extent that he is careless and negligent in these matters, he is correspondingly deficient in submission.

The Role of Wara‘ in Religious Commitment

Wara‘ refers to the disposition of “guarding and protecting one’s religion”—that is, a person considers the practical preservation of his religion to be of the utmost importance.

When an extremely valuable object is entrusted to someone and he accepts responsibility for protecting it, how does he treat it? Certainly, he places it somewhere where he is confident that no harm will reach it and no danger will threaten it. If there is a place where he suspects—even without certainty—that the object might be exposed to harm, he will never place it there.

A person who has this same attitude toward his religion—which is his most precious and valuable possession—is a person of wara‘.

Therefore, a **wari‘**, a person possessing wara‘, is someone who avoids not only what is definitely forbidden, but also doubtful matters, because he fears that failure to avoid doubtful matters may eventually draw him into what is haram. He wishes to conduct himself in such a way that he can be confident his religion will remain protected. Therefore, in doubtful situations he exercises caution and does not enter them recklessly.

He is like someone walking beside a terrifying ravine. If he walks right along its edge, he cannot be sure that he will not fall. He therefore takes precautions and keeps some distance from the edge, so that a minor slip will not send him plunging into the depths.

In this sense, wara‘ is like the thread of a rosary that holds all its beads together, while acts of worship are like the beads themselves. As long as the thread remains intact, the beads remain together in order. But if the thread breaks, the beads scatter and the rosary itself ceases to remain intact.

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (as) says:

اَلوَرَعُ نِظامُ العِبادَةِ. فَإِذَا انقَطَعَ الوَرَعُ، ذَهَبَتِ الدِّيانَةُ. كَما اَنَّهُ إِذَا انقَطَعَ السِّلكُ اتَّبَعَهُ النِّظامُ(1) .

“Wara‘ is the thread that holds acts of worship together. When wara‘ is severed, religious commitment disappears, just as when the string is broken, that which was held together by it also falls apart.”

(1) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 70, p. 37, from *Amali al-Tusi*.

Thus, observing the obligatory acts and refraining from the forbidden acts—the earnest pursuit of which is called ijtihad—must be accompanied by wara‘ if it is to safeguard a person’s religion.

For this reason, Imam al-Sadiq (as) has said that ijtihad without wara‘ is of no benefit:

اِعلَم اَنَّهُ لا يَنفَعُ اجتِهادٌ لا وَرَعَ فيهِ(1) .

“Know that striving in which there is no wara‘ is of no benefit and bears no fruit.”

(1) *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 76, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr, Bab al-Wara‘, h. 1.

Apparently, the benefit that cannot be obtained through ijtihad alone is the preservation and protection of religion, something that can only be achieved through wara‘.

A person asked Imam al-Sadiq (as):

مَا الَّذى يُثبِتُ الايمانَ فِى العَبدِ؟

“What makes faith firmly established within a servant?”

The Imam (as) replied:

اَلَّذى يُثبِتُهُ فيهِ الوَرَعُ(2) .

“That which makes it firmly established within him is wara‘.”

(2) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 70, p. 304, h. 19, from *al-Khisal*.

It therefore becomes clear that ijtihad and wara‘ are distinct from one another, while at the same time both must exist together. Wara‘, however, is a higher degree than ijtihad.

The highest limit of ijtihad is to abandon sins, while the highest degree of wara‘ is to stop when confronted with doubtful matters.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

اَورَعُ النّاسِ مَن وَقَفَ عِندَ الشُّبهَةِ ... . اَشَدُّ النّاسِ اجتِهاداً مَن تَرَکَ الذُّنُوبَ(3) .

“The person with the greatest wara‘ is the one who stops when faced with a doubtful matter… and the person who strives most intensely is the one who abandons sins.”

(3) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 70, p. 305, h. 25, from *al-Khisal*.

Assisting the Ahlul Bayt (as) Through Wara‘

At the conclusion of this discussion on wara‘, it should be remembered that, as explained in Part Two of this book, the foundation of religion is belief in the Imamate and wilayah of the Ahlul Bayt (as) and submission to them. This is the very reality of Islam and iman.

What protects this foundation from corruption, however, is the disposition of guarding and preserving it through observance of the divine rulings. This is wara‘. For this reason, the Imams (as), who by Allah’s command have undertaken the care and salvation of their friends, have strongly emphasized wara‘. They have described the observance of wara‘ as a form of assistance that the lovers of the Ahlul Bayt (as) render to the Imams themselves.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) said to one of his followers:

وَاللهِ اِنَّكُم لَعَلى دينِ اللهِ وَ مَلائِكَتِهِ. فَاَعينُونا عَلى ذلِکَ بِوَرَعٍ وَ اجتِهادٍ(1) .

“By Allah, you are upon the religion of Allah and His angels. So assist us in this matter by means of wara‘ and striving.”

(1) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 70, p. 306, h. 27, from *Amali al-Tusi* and *Amali al-Mufid*.

The Imam’s instruction is, in effect: **Assist us in preserving your own religion.** Although, outwardly, the preservation of our religion appears to concern us personally, the Imams (as), because of their love for the good end of their followers and because they regard themselves as their awliya’ and guardians, cannot remain indifferent to the preservation of their religion.

Their grace and care must, in reality, come to the aid of the people of wilayah so that they do not fall at dangerous points along the path and are able to preserve themselves.

What we can do is assist them in saving us through our wara‘ and striving, rather than burdening them with the consequences of our sins.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

عَلَيكُم بِالوَرَعِ. فَاِنَّهُ الدّينُ الَّذى نُلازِمُهُ وَ نَدينُ اللهَ بِهِ وَ نُريدُهُ مِمَّن يُوالينا. لا تُتعِبُونا بِالشَّفاعَةِ(2) .

“Hold fast to wara‘, for it is the religion to which we adhere and by which we worship Allah, and it is what we desire from those who have wilayah toward us. Do not burden us with having to intercede for you!”

(2) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 70, p. 306, h. 29, from *Amali al-Tusi*.

Ultimately, what saves a person and brings about his felicity in the Hereafter is the intercession of the Ahlul Bayt (as). When even Allah's nearest angels, His sent Prophets, and His tested believers are in need of their intercession, the situation of sinful servants such as ourselves is perfectly clear.

Imam Musa al-Kazim (as) says:

اِذا كانَت لَکَ حاجَةٌ اِلَى اللهِ فَقُل: اَللّهُمَّ اِنّى اَسالُکَ بِحَقِّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ عَلِيٍّ ... فَاِنَّهُ اِذا كانَ يَومُ القِيامَةِ لَم يَبقَ مَلَکٌ مُقَرَّبٌ وَ لا نَبِيٌّ مُرسَلٌ وَ لامُؤمِنٌ مُمتَحِنٌ اِلّا وَ هُوَ يَحتاجُ اِلَيهُما فى ذلِکَ اليَومِ(1) .

"When you have a need before Allah, say: 'O Allah, I ask You by the right of Muhammad and 'Ali…' For when the Day of Resurrection comes, there will remain no angel brought near, no sent Prophet, and no tested believer except that on that Day he will be in need of these two."

(1) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 8, p. 59, h. 81, from *Da'awat al-Rawandi*.

Of course, the need of the infallible ones—including the Prophets and angels—for the Ahlul Bayt (as) is not for salvation from divine punishment. Rather, the assistance of the Prophet (s) and 'Ali (as) raises their degrees and stations.

In general, however, no one on the Day of Resurrection is independent of the intercession of the Prophet (s).

Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

ما اَحَدٌ مِنَ الاَوَّلينَ وَ الآخِرينَ اِلّا وَ هُوَ يَحتاجُ اِلى شَفاعَةِ مُحَمَّدٍ صلى الله عليه و آله و سلّم يَومَ القِيامَةِ(2) .

"There is no one among the first and the last except that he will be in need of the intercession of Muhammad (s) on the Day of Resurrection."

(2) *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 8, p. 42, h. 31, from *al-Mahasin* of al-Barqi.

The intercession of the Ahlul Bayt (as) is, of course, not separate from the intercession of the Prophet (s). Whoever is interceded for by them is as though the Prophet (s) himself has interceded for him.

Since all our hope for a good end and felicity in the Hereafter rests upon the assistance and intercession of the Ahlul Bayt (as), we should not act in a way that makes our intercession burdensome for them.

It is for this reason that they have instructed us to observe wara', so that by observing it we may receive their intercession without placing our leaders under such a burden—**insha'Allah Ta'ala**.

Summary of the Most Important Duties of the Shi‘ah During the Ghaybah

At the conclusion of this Part, we shall briefly list the subjects discussed so that we may once again review the most important duties of the lovers of the Imams (as) during the period of Ghaybah and strive to put them into practice:

1. To hold sound beliefs that conform to the Book and the Sunnah.
2. To submit completely to everything that has reached us from the Imams (as) through their hadiths.
3. To continually seek recourse (*tawassul*) to the Ahlul Bayt (as) in order to understand their ma‘arif and observe them in practice.
4. To express love for the Ahlul Bayt (as) through every possible means.
5. To love the people of faith and give serious attention to fulfilling their rights.
6. To strive to remove the difficulties and hardships of the friends of the Imam (as).
7. To maintain disassociation from and opposition to the opponents of the Ahlul Bayt (as).
8. Not to forget the Imam (as), particularly during the period of his Ghaybah.
9. To weep over the sufferings of the Ahlul Bayt (as), together with refraining from sins and observing taqwa.
10. To acquire the knowledge of the Imams (as) and teach it to others.
11. To await the Faraj of Imam al-Zaman (atfs).
12. To regard the time of the Reappearance as near without fixing a specific time for it.
13. To possess a firm and serious intention to assist the Imam (as) at the time of his Reappearance.
14. To renew one’s pledge of allegiance to Imam al-Mahdi (atfs) on various occasions.
15. To be earnest and persistent in supplicating for the hastening of the Faraj of Imam al-‘Asr (atfs).
16. To assist the Ahlul Bayt (as) through every possible means.
17. To remain aware of being in the presence of the Hidden Imam (as).
18. To train oneself to perform good deeds until goodness becomes habitual.

19. To strive diligently (*ijtihad*) in acting upon the rulings of religion.
20. To protect and preserve one's religion through wara'.

These are the most important qualities that the people of ma'rifah and wilayah of the Imams (as) should possess during the period of Ghaybah. In this way, if they leave this world before the Reappearance of the Imam (as), their death will not be a death of Jahiliyyah, and their not having lived during the period of the manifest presence of Imam al-'Asr (as) will cause them no loss.

Further details concerning these duties, as well as other responsibilities of the servants toward the Hidden Imam (as), may be found in Chapter Eight of *Mikyal al-Makarim fi Fawa'id al-Du'a lil-Qa'im (as)*.

Concluding Supplication

We conclude with passages from a supplication dictated by the First Deputy of Imam al-Zaman (as), Abu 'Amr 'Uthman ibn Sa'id al-'Amri, who instructed that it be recited during the Ghaybah of the Imam (as).

The late Sayyid ibn Tawus has included this supplication among the recommended acts of Friday, within the supplications recited after the 'Asr prayer. Its contents set out, to a considerable extent, the duties of those awaiting the Reappearance:

اَللّهُمَّ وَ لا تَسلُبنَا اليَقينَ لِطُولِ الاَمَدِ فى غَيبَتِهِ وَ انقِطاعِ خَبَرِهِ عَنّا. وَ لا تُنسِنا ذِكرَهُ وَ انتِظارَهُ وَ الايمانَ بِهِ وَ قُوَّةَ اليَقينِ فى ظُهُورِهِ وَ الدُّعاءَ لَهُ وَ الصَّلاةَ عَلَيهِ حَتّى لا يُقَنِّطَنا طُولُ غَيبَتِهِ مِن قِيامِهِ وَ يَكُونَ يَقينِنا فى ذلِکَ كَيَقينِنا فى قِيامِ رَسُولِ اللهِ صلى الله عليه و آله وَ ما جاءَ بِهِ مِن وَحيِکَ وَ تَنزيلِکَ.

وَ قَوِّ قُلُوبَنا عَلَى الايمانِ بِهِ حَتّى تَسلُکَ بِنا عَلى يَدَيهِ مِنهاجَ الهُدى وَ المَحَجَّةَ العُظمى وَ الطَّريقَةَ الوُسطى. وَ قَوِّنا عَلى طاعَتِهِ وَ ثَبِّتنا عَلى مُتابَعَتِهِ. وَ اجعَلنا فى حِزبِهِ وَ اَعوانِهِ وَ اَنصارِهِ وَ الرّاضينَ بِفِعلِهِ. وَ لا تَسلُبنا ذلِکَ فى حَياتِنا وَ لا عِندَ وَفاتِنا حَتّى تَتَوَفّانا وَ نَحنُ عَلى ذلِکَ لا شاکّينَ وَ لا ناکِثينَ وَ لا مُرتابينَ وَ لا مُكَذِّبينَ(1) .

"O Allah! Do not deprive us of certainty because of the prolonged duration of his Ghaybah and the absence of news of him from us. Do not cause us to forget his remembrance, awaiting him, faith in him, firm certainty in his Reappearance, supplication for him, and sending blessings upon him, so that the length of his Ghaybah does not cause us to despair of his rising.

Let our certainty concerning his rising be like our certainty concerning the mission of the Messenger of Allah (s) and concerning the revelation and Scripture that he brought from You.
Strengthen our hearts in faith in him, until, through him, You lead us upon the path of guidance, the great and clear highway, and the straight and balanced way. Strengthen us in obedience to him and make us steadfast in following him. Place us among his party, his helpers, his supporters, and those who are pleased with his actions.
Do not deprive us of these blessings during our lives or at the time of our deaths, until You cause us to die while remaining upon them—neither doubting, nor breaking our covenant, nor wavering, nor denying."
(1) *Jamal al-Usbu'*, ch. 47, p. 316; *Kamal al-Din*, ch. 45, h. 43.
Amin, Lord of the Worlds.

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