The Fracturing of the ʾUmmah
in the time of
ʾImām Jaᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq



& The Search *for* The ʾImām عليه السلام

notes for a talk to be given by:
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إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

ʾinnamā yurīdu-llāhu li-yudẖhiba ʿankumu-r-rijåsa
ʾahla-l-bayti wa yuṭahhirakum taṭåhīrā

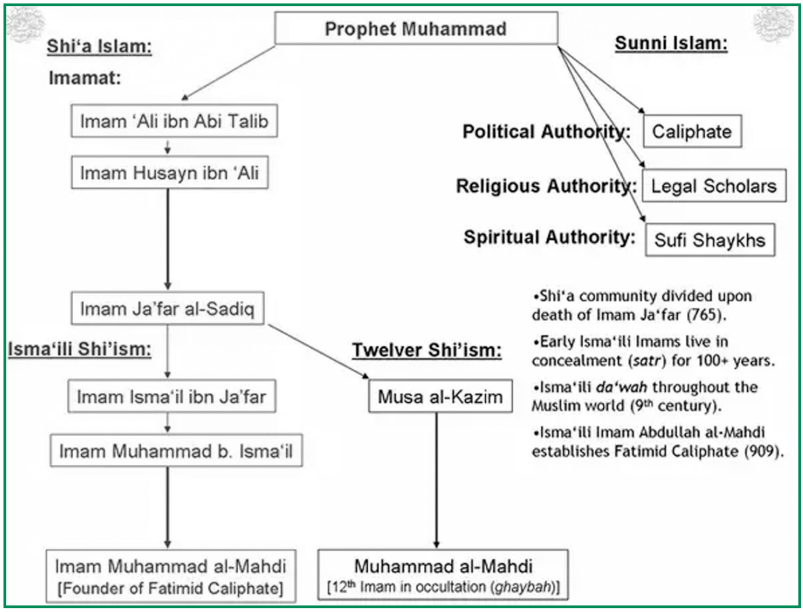
Allāh only wishes to remove impurity from you
oh People of the House
and to purify you with a thorough purification.
(Sūrah al-ʾAḥzāb 33:33)



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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم



ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣadiq ﷺ is the son of ʾImām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ﷺ, son of al-ʾImām Zayn al-ᶜĀbidīn ﷺ, son of ʾImām al-Ḥusayn ﷺ, son of ʾImām ᶜAli ﷺ. Jaᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ was born on the eighth of Ramadan in the year 83 H. His mother was the daughter of al-Qāsm, whose great grand-father was the first Caliph, ʾAbu Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddīq ﷺ, father of Muḥammad ibn Abu Bakr ﷺ, the brother of ᶜĀʾisḫah ﷺ. He was raised by ᶜAlī ﷺ, who said: "Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr ﷺ is my son but from the line of Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddīq ﷺ."

Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ spent his life in worship and acts of piety for the sake of Allāh. He rejected all positions of fame in favor of isolation and detachment (*ᶜuzla*/عزلة) from this world. A contemporary, ᶜUmar ibn Abī al-Muqdam, said, "When I look at Jāᶜfar ﷺ I see the lineage and the secret of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ united in him."

Jaᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ received from the Prophet ﷺ two lines of inheritance: the secret of the Prophet ﷺ through ᶜAlī ﷺ and the secret of the Prophet ﷺ through Abū Bakr ﷺ. In him the two lineages met and for that reason he was called the Inheritor of the Prophetic Station (*Maqām an-Nubuwwa*) and the Inheritor of the Truthful Station (*Maqām aṣ-Ṣiddiqiyya*). In him was reflected the light of the knowledge of Truth and Reality. That light shone forth and that knowledge spread widely through him during his lifetime.

ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ is the last individual to be recognized by all Sẖīᶜah as an ʾImām (*except* the Zaydiyyah), and is revered by traditional Sunni Muslims as a transmitter of Ḥadīṯẖ, as well as being widely known both as a jurist (الفقيه) and a mystic (صوفي سري).

He was a teacher at the end of the Umayyad dynasty and beginning of the ᶜAbbāssids, a period during which central authority was weak, allowing ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ to teach freely at his school in Madīnah in which he trained upwards of four thousand students, including both Abū Ḥanīfa and Mālik ibn Anas, founders of two major Sunni schools of law, the Ḥanafiyyah and the Mālikiyah. ʾImām Jaᶜfar ﷺ is also cited in a wide range of historical sources, including aṭ-Ṭabarī, al-Yaqūbī, al-Masūdī, and adẖ-Dẖahabī who recognize his contribution to Sunni tradition and ʾIsmāᶜīlī scholars, such as Qāḍī an-Nuᶜmān, recorded his traditions (*ʾaḥadīṯẖ*) in their scholarly writings. In addition, ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ had a large following among scholars and among many across the wide Muslim community who saw him as the ʾImām of the Time (ʾImām az-Zamān/امام ازمان).

ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ, the sixth Sẖīᶜah ʾImām (*fifth* Niẓarı ʾImām), married Fāṭima bint al-Ḥasan, a descendant of Ḥasan ibn ᶜAlī ﷺ, with whom he had two sons, ʾIsmāᶜīl ibn Jāᶜfar ﷺ and Abdullah al-Aftah. Following his first wife's death, he purchased an Andalusian or Berber slave named Ḥamīdah Kẖātūn ﷺ (حميدة خاتون), freed her, trained her as an ʾIslāmic scholar, and then married her. She bore him two more sons: Mūsā al-Kāḍẖim (موسى بن جعفر الكاظم ﷺ), the seventh Twelver ʾImām, and Muḥammad ad-Dibāj. She is revered by the Sẖīᶜah, especially women, for her wisdom. Ḥamīdah Kẖātūn ﷺ was known as Ḥamīdah the Pure. ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ used to send her women to learn the Way of ʾIslām and said "Ḥamīdah is free from every impurity like an ingot of pure gold."

The ʾIsmāᶜīlīs take their name from their acceptance of the ʾImām ﷺ ʾIsmāᶜīl ibn Jāᶜfar ﷺ, the appointed (*naṣṣ*) spiritual successor to ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ . Here they differ from the Twelvers (اثنا عشرية /*ʾitẖnāᶜasẖraiyyah*), who accept Mūsā al-Kāḍẖim ﷺ (Kāẓim), a son of ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ, by Ḥamīdah Kẖātūn ﷺ, as the true Imām ﷺ.

This difference marks the end of one world
and the beginning of many others.

Effectively the life and time of ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ marks the end of a singular and unified community (*ʾummah*/أمة) of ʾIslām and the beginning of its division into different schools and sects. These continue into the present time and are the direct link to the strategy of "divide and conquer" used both by Muslims against each other, (Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Pakistan, Saᶜūdīa etc.), and non-muslims of all stripes and types against the world-wide supra-national community (*ʾummah*) of Muslims who share, after ʾImām Jaᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ, a common, but divided, legacy of a community, often at war with itself and parts of itself – both from within and from without.

أخبرنا أبو العباس قاسم بن القاسم السياري بمرو ثنا أبو الموجه حدثنا أبو عمار : ثنا الفضل بن موسى عن محمد بن عمرو عن أبي سلمة عن أبي هريرة : أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم قال : افترقت اليهود على إحدى و سبعين فرقة أو اثنتين و سبعين فرقة و النصارى مثل ذلك و تفترق أمتي على ثلاث و سبعين فرقة (المستدرك)

"Abu Hurayrah (ﷺ) relates that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:
'The Jews were divided into 71 or 72 sects as were the Christians.
My Ummah will be divided into 73 sects." (al-Mustadrak)

and further

— and on the other hand —

the differences among the blessed Companions (Ṣaḥāba) ﷺ, their Successors ﷺ, and leading jurists was of this nature. It was not for nothing but to heal the breaches that this difference was called by the Prophet ﷺ a 'mercy' (*raḥmah*) for the community (*ʾummah*).

Differences among the ʾImāms ﷺ are also considered a blessing.

As for the four Sunni schools, two of which directly derive from teachings of ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ, the differences between these four schools (*madẖāhib*/مـــذاهـــب), the Sẖāfiᶜī, Mālikī, Ḥanafī and Ḥanbalī are not that great as they all are members of the *Ahl as-sunnah wa-j-jamāᶜah*. As all the *Fuqahāʾ*/*Muḥaddatẖīn*/*ʾĀʾimmah*, including the five great founders of the *madẖāhib*, are *as-salaf aṣ-ṣaliḥ* even if they differ in details of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and theology (*ᶜaqidah*): ultimately *all* are members of the *dīn* of ʾIslām.

We easily see that both *Sunni* and *Sẖīᶜah* branch from a single tree:

The Tree of ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ

But if we can all agree upon the question of origins
there remains the question as to who or where the ʾImām ﷺ is?
The True ʾImām ﷺ of the time in which *we* live.

HERE & NOW

because the only one who really knows the truth *and* reality
effectively *and* absolutely,
is the ʾImām ﷺ of this Time.
(*al-ʾimām az-zamān*).

The only human being in the world with the true authority!
An authority initially passed from the Prophet ﷺ to ᶜAlī ﷺ
and then by the direct selection (*naṣṣ*/نَـــص) and the clear injunction
of each succeeding ʾImām ﷺ from ᶜAlī ﷺ down into the present.
The ʾImām is the only one ﷺ who *knows* exactly what is going on in
this time and place and space *and* who alone has the *authority* to act.



But how would you know the ʾImām ﷺ even if you saw him ﷺ?
And all of this is made that much more difficult owing to the fact
that for the *ʾiṯnāᶜasẖariyyah* (Twelvers) the ʾImām ﷺ is hidden,
in occlusion — (*gẖaybah*/غيبة) — in occultation — since 874 CE

"No one shall see me unless Allāh ﷻ makes me appear.
"My reappearence will take place after a very long time
when those who have grown tired of waiting and are of weak faith
will say,
'What! Is he still alive?'
My reappearence depends solely upon Allāh!
Those who propose a certain time for my reappearence are liars."

With regards to advice for his followers during his absence he is reported to have said,

"Refer to the transmitters of our traditions,
for they are my proof (*ḥujjah*/حجة) unto you
and I am the Proof of Allāh unto them."

He went on to say "Anyone who claims to have a message from me
is a liar and is not to be trusted or believed."

Truly a grand conundrum.

For the Sunnis it is less problematic as they exist in the realm of *waḥī*
and, for the most part, have not crossed into the land of *walāyah*.
As such they live a protected (or, perhaps, purblind) existence.
Who is or is not the ʾImām ﷺ is not a big problem for them!
They have their own issues and their discussions are often heated.
Indeed some Sunnis proclaim other Sunnis to be unbelievers
due to differences regarding certain points in jurisprudence(*fiqh*)
which can lead to excommunication for apostasy
by accusing other Muslims to be a *kafr* or an unbeliever
(*takfīr*/تكفير)!
Battles rage in certain parts of the Muslim world due to such views.
Wars go on and you may be beaten or shot dead
as the result of your view on a particuar theological point
even tho the act of proclaiming *takfīr* is considered a major offence.
In the absence of the ʾImām ﷺ there is no True Authority
and this is the problem!
No one really knows The Truth even those who think they do.
Think, oh Muslim reader or listener, of the time when the *qiblah* (قبله)
was changed from al-Quds to the Kaᶜabah (الكعبة) in Makkah.
Imagine after 13 years facing the same direction, the Prophet ﷺ
suddenly, while he was in the midst of the mid-day (*ṣalāt aḍḥ-dḥuhr*
/صلاة الظهه) prayer, received the following revelation (*waḥī*/وحي).

قَدْ نَرَىٰ تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ ۖ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا ۚ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۚ وَحَيْثُ مَا
كُنتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ ۗ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ ۗ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ

"We have certainly seen the turning of your face,
[Oh Muḥammad],
toward the heavens.
We will surely turn you to a qiblah with which you will be pleased.
So turn your face toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām
And wherever you are, turn your faces toward it
The Inviolable Place of Prostration." i.e. the Kaᶜabah (الكعبة)

And those who have been given The Book
Know that it is The Truth from their Lord.
And Allāh is not unaware of what they do
(2:144).

And with that he ﷺ, who had been facing towards *al-Quds* (القدس) in the Holy Land (*al-Arḍu-l-Muqadasah*) for 13 years, turned in Madīnah to face the Kaᶜbah in Makkah, and those praying behind him did so as well. Can any Muslim imagine that happening today?

This is what Authority *is*!
Unquestionable and Absolute!
This was the Messenger — The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ,
of whom Allāh says
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ
Oh you who believe.
Obey Allāh and obey the Messenger.

Those who pass the boundary line from *nubuwwah* to *walayah* or from *waḥī* to *wilayah* are passed into the continuum of the *wilayah* which, by nature, looks forward rather than back

The continuum is the moment of revelation in the present,
the moment of revelation is not only 1450 years ago but right now,
in the present
as long as the spark shall last
– the glint –
from
The Messenger — The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ

[Please read my essay, "*The Promise is for Allāh*" (البيعة لله) which thoroughly details the events surrounding the event referred to as Gẖadir al-Kẖumm where the Prophet ﷺ, having completed the farewell Ḥajj, stopped at a watering place before the Ḥajj caravan split up and the Ḥujājun went back to their tribal lands. The Prophet ﷺ took the occassion to reveal a Sign (*āyāt*/آيات) from Allāh which would bring the Ḥajj to its final conclusion and allow ʾIslām to have a way forward after his death which he rightly knew was immanent.]

أنا مدينة العلم، وعلي بابها
فمن أراد العلم، فليأت الباب

ʾAnā madīnatu-l-ʿilm wa ʿAlī bābuhā;
Fa-man ʾarāda-l-ʿilm fa-l-yati-l-bāb

I am the city of knowledge and ʿAlī is its gate;
so whoever desires knowledge, let him enter the gate.
(*al-Mustadrak*, by al-Hakīm, *Fadaʾil as-Saḥaba*, by Aḥmad Ibn Hanbal)

The Prophet ﷺ said:
man kanat mawlāhu fa-ʿalī mawlāhu
"One who has me as his master has ʿAlī as his master."

عن شعبة، عن سلمة بن كهيل، قال: سمعت أبا الطفيل يحدث، عن أبي سريحة رضي الله عنه – أو زيد بن أرقم رضي الله عنه (شك شعبة) – عن النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وصحبه وسلم، قال: من كنت مولاه فعلي مولاه. • وقد روى شعبة هذا الحديث، عن ميمون أبي عبد الله، عن زيد بن أرقم رضي الله عنه، عن النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وصحبه وسلم.•

"Sẖuʿbah al-Ḥajjāj relates from Salman bin Kuhayl: I heard this from Abū Tufayl that Abū Sarīhah ﷺ – or Zayd bin Arqām ﷺ – related that the Prophet ﷺ said: 'One who has me as his master has ʿAlī as his master.' Sẖuʿbah has related this tradition from Maymūn Abi ʿAbdullāh, who related it on authority of Zayd bin Arqām ﷺ who related it from the Holy Prophet ﷺ."

ʿAsqalānī said in *Fatẖu-l-bārī* (7:74): "Tirmidẖī and Nasāʾī narrated the tradition and it is supported by numerous chains of transmission."

Albānī says in *Silsilatu-l-ʾaḥādītẖ* that it is sound (*ṣaḥīḥah*) (4:331 #1750), and that its chain of authorities is sound according to the conditions of both al-Bukẖārī and Muslim.

The Prophet ﷺ said: "ʿAlī is from me and I am from ʿAlī and no one represents me *except* ʿAlī." *Sunan ibn Majāh*, Ḥadītẖ No.119. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to ʿAlī ﷺ : "Your position to me is like the position of Hārūn to Mūsā, except that there will be no Prophet after me." Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukẖārī, Volume 5, Book 59, Ḥadītẖ Number 700. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim Book 031, Ḥadītẖ Number 5913.

At the beginning of his mission the Prophet ﷺ said in a speech: (at the home of Hazrat ʾAbū Ṭālib ﷺ (ابو طالب) who was a brother of the father of the Prophet ﷺ, ᶜAbdullāh ibn ᶜAbd al-Muṭṭalib ﷺ, who had died before his ﷺ birth.

"Who amongst you shall support me in this matter and who will be my brother (*sẖaqīq*/شقيق), the executor of my will (*waṣī*/وصى), and my successor (*wārisẖ*/وارث)?"

All the listeners, with the exception of ᶜAlī ﷺ, who was the youngest among them, kept silent.

ᶜAlī ﷺ responded by saying: "I will be your helper, Oh prophet of Allāh."

The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ then put his hand on the back of the neck of ᶜAlī ﷺ and said: "This is my brother, executor of my will and successor; therefore, listen to him and obey him."

Those present laughed and derisively said to ʾAbū Ṭālib: "Allāh has commanded you to listen to your son, and for you to obey him!"[1]

Ibn Hisẖām recorded that: ᶜAlī ﷺ ʾIbn Abī Ṭālib was the first male to believe in the Messenger ﷺ and that ᶜAlī ﷺ prayed with him while he was only ten years old. [2]

The first three people to offer prayers were Muḥammad ﷺ, his wife Kẖadījah bint Kẖuwaylid (خديجة بنت خويلد) ﷺ and ᶜAlī ﷺ.[3] This event took place in front of the Kaᶜbah.

ᶜAlī ﷺ said: "I was the first one to accept ʾIslām at the hands of the Holy Prophet."[4]

This acceptance on the part of ᶜAlī ﷺ would have happened sometime between 610 CE, when Muḥammad ﷺ started sharing his experiences with Jibrīl ﷺ with his immediate family, and 612 CE, when the Prophet ﷺ first began preaching in public in Makkah

Ibn Katẖīr says: "It is clear that Muḥammad's family believed before every other – his wife Kẖadījah, his freedman Zayd and the Wife of Zayd, Umm Ayman and ᶜAlī and Warakah bin Nawfil."[5]

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1. Reported as Ṣaḥīh in The *Tarikẖ* of at-Tabarī, The *Tarikẖ* of ibn Asākir, *ad-Durr al-Mantẖūr* of as-Suyuti and *al-Mukẖtaṣar* of Abul Fida
2. Biography of the Prophet, by Ibn Hisẖam, v1, p245
3. History aṭ-Ṭabarī, v2, p65
4. *Tarikẖ*, by al-Kẖatīb al-Bagẖdādī, v4, p333
5. *Tarikẖ al-Kẖulafāʾ*, by as-Suyuti, p33

al-Ḥākim also narrated that: Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ said that the Prophet ﷺ said: "The first one of you to drink from the Basin (*hawḍ al-kawṯar* / حوض لكوثر) on the Day of Judgment is the first Muslim from among you, ᶜAlī, the son of ʾAbū Ṭālib."[6]

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا وكيع ثنا شعبة عن عمرو بن مرة عن أبي حمزة مولى الأنصار عن زيد بن أرقم قال أول من أسلم مع رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم علي رضي الله تعالى عنه

ᶜAbdullāh narrated to us, he said, 'My father, Wakiᶜ, said, "Sẖuᶜbah narrated to us from Amru bin Murrah from Abu Hamzah Mawla al-Anṣārī from Zayd bin ʾArqām who said, "The first person to embrace ʾIslām with the Prophet ﷺ is ᶜAlī ﷺ."

Forward twenty years until just before the event of Gẖadīr Kẖumm when the following *ʾayāt* was revealed to the Prophet ﷺ.

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ وَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ
وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

yāā ʾayyuha-r-rasūlu balligẖ mā ʾūnzila ʾilayka mir-rabbika
wa-il-lam tafᶜal famā ballagẖta risālatah
wa-llāhu yaᶜṣimuka mina-n-nāsiʾ
inna Allāha lā yahdi-l-qawma-l-kāfirīn

Oh Messenger!
Make known that which has been revealed to you from your Lord,
for if you do not, you will not have conveyed His message.
Allāh will protect you from the people.
Truly Allāh does not guide people who hide the Truth.
(Sūratu-l-Maʾidah 5:67)

These are his ﷺ words:

> "Oh people, Allāh, the Most Kind, the Omniscient, has told me that no messenger lives more than half the age of he who had preceded him. I think I am about to be called (to die) and thus I must respond. I am responsible and you are responsible, then what do you say?" They said, "We witness that you have informed, advised and striven. May Allāh bless you." He said, "Do you not bear witness that there is no deity but Allāh and that I, Muḥammad, am His servant and messenger, and that His Garden is true?"

6. *al-Mustadrak*, by al-Ḥākim, v3, p112

> "His Hell is true, Death is true, the Resurrection after death is true, that there is no doubt that the Day of Judgment will come, and that Allāh will resurrect the dead from their graves?" They said, "Yes, we bear witness" He said, "Oh Allāh, bear witness." Then he said, "Oh people, Allāh is my Lord and I am the lord of the believers. I am worthier of believers than themselves. Of whomsoever I have been Master (*mawla*/مـــولـــى), ᶜAlī is to be his Master. Oh Allāh, be a supporter of whoever supports him and an enemy of whoever opposes him and direct the *Ḥaqq* (Truth) to ᶜAlī."

Then he said,

> "Oh my people, I will go ahead of you and you will arrive at my Pond of Abundance (*hawḍ al-kawtẖar*) which is wider than the distance between Baṣra and Sanᶜā. It has receptacles numerous as the stars, and two cups of gold and two of silver. I will ask you about the two weighty things that I have left for you when you come to me to see how you dealt with them. The greater weighty thing is the message from Allāh (*al-qurʾān*). One end is in the hand of Allāh and the other is in your hands. Keep it and you will not deviate. The other weighty thing is my family (*ᶜitrat*). The Merciful, The All-Knowing told me that they will not separate until they come together at my Pond." (Muslim)

A similar narration of the ḥadīṯ goes as follows:

> "Oh people! Reflect on the Qurʾān and comprehend its verses. Look into its clear verses and do not follow its ambiguous parts, for by Allāh, none shall be able to explain to you its warnings and its mysteries. Nor shall anyone clarify its interpretation, other than the one that I have grasped his hand, brought up beside myself, (and lifted his arm), the one about whom I inform you that whomever I am master of, ᶜAlī is his master (*mawla*/مولى). ᶜAlī Ibn Abi Ṭalib is my brother, the executor of my will (*wasiyyah*/وصـــيـــة), whose appointment as your leader and guardian has been sent down to me from Allāh, the Mighty, the Majestic." (Saḥih Tirmiḏī, v2, p298, also *Muṣnad* ʾImām Ḥanbal, *Misḫkat al-Maṣābīḥ* by Tabrīzī.)



Through this investiture or appointment (*naṣṣ*/نَـــــص) the future of ʾIslām was guaranteed going forward, for the Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله had by the Order of Allāh تعالى, invested ᶜAlī عليه السلام[7] with the station of *walayah* (authority and guardianship) and by so doing transmuted the function of revelation (*waḥi*/وحـــي) which is now, and was then, his alone, to the function of *walayah* (ولايـــــة) and, by so doing, consequently raised ᶜAlī عليه السلام to the position of absolute spiritual authority, guidance and guardianship of the Muslim community (*ʾummah*/ أُمة)

Two important functions of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله were to reveal the divine law to people and to guide them to Allāh تعالى.

With the death of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وآله, the first function, divine legislation (*waḥi*/وحي), was, and is, completed for all time.

But the second function of guiding people and preserving and explaining the divine law is continued by the ʾImāms عليهم السلام, for how else would we truly understand what is contained in the Revelation?

Muḥammad al-Baqir عليه السلام, the fifth ʾImām and father of ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq عليه السلام, explaining why the ʾImāms عليهم السلام are needed, said: "So that the world may remain in righteousness, thus Allāh تعالى withholds chastisement from the world while a Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله or ʾImām عليه السلام is upon it, for Allāh has said 'Allāh will not chastise them while you are among them' (8:33)' and the Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله said 'the stars are safety for the people of the heaven and the members of my family are safety for the people of the earth.' By "members of my family" is meant the ʾImāms عليهم السلام ... as "through them Allāh تعالى gives sustenance (*rizq*) to His servants and through them His lands prosper and the rain falls from the heavens, and the earth gives out its blessings."

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7. and, by extension, those future ʾImāms عليهم السلام of the time who in turn will receive the *naṣṣ* (for we all must die) and live to serve as the guardian protectors of ʾIslām, unseen for the most part, and almost unknown in the present time.

The holder of the prophetic mission must be followed by one who is both the keeper and teacher of the Qurʾān because the Qurʾān in its vastness contains esoteric depths and hidden meanings as well as superficial contradictions which require expanlation (*ṭāʾwīl*/طاويل).

For instance a layman might receive a copy of a book dealing with advanced astronomy or the relationship of antiparticles and anti-hydrogen or Bose-Einsteinian condensates or nano-particles but how much of such a book would any layman *really* understand?

And the Qurʾān does not originate from a human mind or set of thought processes but rather from Allāh تعالى the Creator of the Universe and all that it contains — and how to understand that?

In short there *must* be a living Teacher, a Guide. One who truly understands what it is that Allāh تعالى is saying and what تعالى Allāh means. Meaning which can be manifested not by ordinary knowledge, but by an inspired heir who is the Proof (*ḥujjah*/الحجة) of Allāh.

Divine knowledge is attainable only through divine revelation or inspiration! While the Prophet ﷺ was the "legislative prophet" (*nabi at-tashŗi*), the continuation of the "esoteric or inner prophecy" (*nubuwah al-baṭinīyah*) is through *walayah*. The role of the ʾImām عليه السلام in society is equivalent to the role of the heart/mind in the body.

The Divine Truth or the True Religion (*dīn al-haqq*/دين الحق) has two aspects: exoteric (*ḍḫāhir*/ظاهر) and esoteric (*bāṭin*/باطن). The exoteric side is revealed by the Prophet ﷺ through Qurʾān and his Sayings (*ḥadīṯḫ*) to the generality (*al-ᶜāmm*/العام) of people, but the esoteric (hidden or inner) side is the mission of the ʾImāms عليهم السلام in the course of time through explaining the Inner Esoteric meaning and interpretation of the Qurʾān (*ṭāʾwīl*/طاويل) to the exceptional (*kḫaṣ*/الخاص).

As the exoteric/*ḍḫāhir* speaks of *Sḫarīᶜah* (شريعة) in a like manner the esoteric/*bāṭin* speaks of *Ḥaqīqah* (حقيقة) – not in the matter of succession but rather as a matter of simultaneity. *Ḥaqīqah* is based on the spiritual meaning of Qurʾān. The kinship between the Prophet ﷺ and ʾImāms عليهم السلام is the sign of their *walayah*, not the basis for their *walayah*. The real faithful are those whom "Allāh has written faith upon their hearts:"

أُولَئِكَ كَتَبَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَأَيَّدَهُمْ بِرُوحٍ مِنْهُ

ʾūlāāʾika kataba fī qulūbihimu-l-ʾīmāna wa ʾayyadahum bi-ruḥim-minh

He has written secure faith in their hearts
and strengthened them with the Spirit from Himself.
(58:22)

and further

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

ʾinnamā walīyyukumu-llāhu wa rasūluhū wa-l-dẖīna ʾāmanū
surely your only protectors are Allāh and His Messengers
and those who have truly attained to faith,
(5:55)

وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ

wa mañy-yatawalla-llāhu wa rasūlahu wa-l-ladẖīna ʾāmanū
fa-ʾinna ḥizba-llāhi humu-l-gẖālibūn
and whoever takes Allāh and His Messenger
and those who have truly attained to Faith for protectors
surely they are from the Party of Allāh and they shall be victorious.
(5:56)

Only if *walayah* (ولاية) is obtained or reached is faith perfect!

There **must** be a guardian in every age to protect the religion against any additions or subtractions after the Prophet ﷺ who has revealed the religion and this is the ʾImām ﷺ – *the* Teacher – *the* Guide who leads to and explains what we do not know.

The Qurʾān is the silent ʾImām, the ʾImām is the speaking Qurʾān; the ʾImām is the Guide through whom Qurʾān remains alive.

"He who knows himself knows his Lord."

من عرف نفسه فقد عرف رب

(مرسل/*mursal* الإمام علي (عليه السلا

But knowing Allāh ﷻ without His theophanic form (مـــزار) is difficult if not impossible. The ʾImām ﷺ is the one who not only carries the human knowledge of Allāh but, more importantly, the one who can explain it. Without him we are trapped either in *tāʾṭīl* (تـاطـيـل) which is the divesting or the apophatic negation of all the attributes of Allāh or *tasẖbīh* (تشبيه) – equating Allāh with some *thing* (شيءٌ):

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ ۖ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

laysa ka-mitẖlihi sẖayun — wa huwa-s-samīᶜu-l-baṣīr
He is not like any thing — and He Hears All – Sees All.
(42:11)

But if He not like any *thing* how does He hear? How does He see?
Where are His Eyes? Where are His Ears?
Who has the answer?
The ʾImām ﷺ
And among the attributes of the ʾImām ﷺ are that he is the Proof.
The Ḥujjah — الحجة

The *Ḥujjah* means the proof or the guarantee by Allāh ﷻ to humanity; as the presence of the *Ḥujjah*, hidden or apparent, is necessary in all times, this presence expresses the metaphysical reality of the *Ḥujjah* and the inseparability of Prophetology from Imamology. From the Time of Ādam, ﷺ Allāh has sent ʾImāms ﷺ to guide the people towards Him who are His Proof to those who worship Him.

ʾImām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ﷺ stated, "... the ʾImām is the Proof of Allāh to His servants and the earth can not remain without the Proof of Allāh to His servants."

If the *Walī* is the one who has the most love for and devotion to Allāh ﷻ, so then the *Ḥujjah* is the one upon whom He has bestowed His most intimate Divine knowledge.

The *Ḥujjah* is a single individual in any given human era who represents the "proof" of Allāh to humanity and who possess a relationship with Allāh that is greater than anyone else. The ʾImām ﷺ who is the *ḥujjah* of his time functions as the ultimate mediator between Allāh and humanity, as the ʾImām ﷺ has the greatest understanding needed for interpretation (*ṭāʾwīl*/طـــاويـــل) of the Qurʾān. As such the ʾImām ﷺ is the only one who can properly resolve conflicting interpretations of the words in the Qurʾān, which means that the ʾImām ﷺ is the ultimate authority over divine knowledge.

The ʾImām ﷺ that is *Ḥujjah* is *Ḥujjah* by several different proofs.

The first proof of an ʾImām ﷺ who is *Ḥujjah* is based on the role of the ʾImām ﷺ as mediator between Allāh ﷻ and human beings.

The appointment of ᶜAlī ﷺ as the first ʾImām ﷺ in the sixth period of Prophethood (Ādam ﷺ, Nūḥ ﷺ, ʾIbrahīm ﷺ, Mūsā ﷺ, ᶜĪsa ﷺ and Muḥammad ﷺ) was continued by ᶜAlī ﷺ who passed it to his first son al-Ḥasan ﷺ and from al-Ḥasan ﷺ it was passed to his second son al-Ḥusayn ﷺ, who, in turn, passed the divine knowledge onto his son Zayn al-ᶜAbdīn ﷺ and thence to the son of Zayn al-ᶜAbdīn ﷺ Muḥammad al-Bāqir ﷺ and from him to ʾImām Jaᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ who formalised the teaching as to just how the succession was to be transmitted through *naṣṣ* (نـــــص), (about which more later, but let me first continue with the proofs of the Ḥujjah).

The second proof that an ʾImām ﷺ is a *Ḥujjah* is shown by the inner guidance that the ʾImām ﷺ provides for human beings by dint of his being a channel of divine grace — a grace which comes to him inwardly from the suprasensible dimensions which is to say: not perceptible by the senses and experience of the material realm.

The ʾImām ﷺ, with his extensive knowledge of the different levels of human behavior and spiritual faith, is able to influence the thoughts and the inner beings of others to aid them in the process of the refinement of their souls. The guidance of the ʾImām ﷺ from Allāh gives him the ability to lead and influence other human beings, another reason why the ʾImām ﷺ is the *Ḥujjah* or proof of Allāh.

The third proof that the ʾImām ﷺ is the *Ḥujjah* is based on his immunity from the pollution of sin, as he is free from committing human error or mis-interpreting the Qurʾān, as such errors and mis-interpretations would lead to human error and sin on the part of those who depend upon him for teaching and guidance. A man who commits sin is not fit to lead, for, due to to his own sinful behavior and mis-interpretations of Qurʾān, he can spread both sin and mis-interpretation of our only real and true source of Guidance which *is* the Qurʾān. Therefore a sinner is denied the rank of ʾImām ﷺ and cannot be the Ḥujjah of Allāh for humanity.

The fourth proof that the ʾImām ﷺ is *Ḥujjah* is deduced by reason that the Grace of Allāh keeps His creatures in a state of obedience and keeps them away from disobedience. If Allāh were to order people to do something He knows a human cannot do, or will have difficulty doing, He would, by so doing, contradict His own aim. Therefore, Allāh gives humanity a *Ḥujjah* to help lead human beings toward Allāh and, in turn, toward their own spiritual perfection.

The human *Ḥujjah* in this world is filled with spiritual guidance and helps direct man towards Allāh, which is also what the ʾImām ﷺ does, which is why the ʾImām ﷺ is also, besides other functions, he who fulfills, the Proof (*Ḥujjah*) of, and for, Allāh ﷻ.

The last justification of the necessity of the *Ḥujjah* comes from the understanding that, without the *Ḥujjah*, the world would not exist. for the world cannot exist even for a moment without the ʾImām ﷺ who is the *Ḥujjah* of Allāh ﷻ. For as ʾImām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ﷺ said, "If the ʾImām ﷺ were to be removed from the earth even for an hour, the earth would swallow up its inhabitants just as the sea swallows people." The idea that the ʾImām ﷺ, who is *Ḥujjah*, is always present helps support the fact that Allāh, the Creator and Guarantor of the ʾImām ﷺ, is always present to human beings.

Understanding that from this the ultimate and intimate connection between the existence of the ʾImam and the Proof of his being, we need to understand how the ʾImām becomes the ʾImām through the process of transmission known as *Naṣṣ* or the divinely inspired designation of each ʾImām ﷺ by the previous ʾImām ﷺ.

This principle of the act of transmission was formulated by ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ, and it is one of the doctrinal formulations (*fatāwa*) for which he is most well known. Incidentally the traditions (*ʾaḥadīṯḫ*) recorded by ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ are said to be more numerous than those recorded from all the other ʾImāms combined. As the founder of "Jāᶜfari jurisprudence" (*Fiqh al-Jāᶜfariyyah* or the Jāᶜfarī Madḫab), ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ is known to have elaborated the doctrines of *Naṣṣ* and *ʾIṣmah* (عصمة) (the incorruptiblity of the ʾImāms ﷺ), as well as *Taqiyyah* (تقية), or dissimulation, which allows one under attack for their religious beliefs or even under suspicion to pretend to be other that what it might appear to others that what they are, or might have been would have appeared to them to be otherwise.

Indeed the question of succession after the death of both ʾImām Ismāᶜīl ﷺ and aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ was the cause of division among Sḫīᶜah who considered his eldest son, Ismāᶜīl ﷺ (who had died before his father) to be the next ʾImām, and those who believed his third son Mūsā al-Kāḍḫim (*aka* Mūsā al-Kāẓim), by his second wife and ʾIslamic scholar, Ḥamīdah Kḫatūn, known as Ḥamīdah the Pure, was the ʾImām. The first group became known as the Ismāᶜīlīs and the second, larger, group was named Jāᶜfari or Twelvers or ʾImāmis.

Returning to the doctrine of transmission or *Naṣṣ*:



الإمام يعرف الإمام الذي من بعده فيوصي إليه

The Imām knows the one who will be the Imām after him,
and so he passes his inheritance on to him.
ʾImām Jaᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq, (al-Kulayni, ʾUṣūl al-Kāfi Vol. 1, p. 277)

And when the Command or Order of Allāh came to ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ to hand over his office, he summoned his dignitaries and specially deserving followers, just as it was done by the ʾImāms and Prophets ﷺ before him, and handed over authority to his eldest son ʾIsmāᶜīl ﷺ, by the Command of Allāh and His inspiration (*ʾilhām*/إلهام), making them witnesses of his appointment. Thus, ʾIsmāᶜīl ﷺ became the Gate to Knowledge as were all the ʾImāms ﷺ before and after him.

This happened when ʾIsmāᶜīl ﷺ was seven years old. His father designated him as the next Master of the Time (*saḥib al-waqt*) and declared him to be the Master of Religion (*ṣāḥib ad-din*) and to be his heir among his other sons from whom he guarded ʾIsmāᶜīl ﷺ, and also kept him away from contact with the public. Thereafter his education went on solely under ʾImām Jāᶜfar's ﷺ direct supervision.

This was held to be true by ᶜAbd al-Karīm al-Sẖahrastānī who said that ʾIsmāᶜīl ﷺ "was the designated ʾImām after Jāᶜfar, and the sons of Jāᶜfar also agreed."

In modern times such disparate voices as Paul Walker and W. Ivanow have both reached much the same conclusion.

"Our oldest and presumably most reliable authorities agree that Jāᶜfar designated his son Ismāᶜīl to succeed him as Imām." Paul Walker, (*The Cambridge History of Egyp*t, Vol 1. 121) "According to the overwhelming majority of the available sources, both sectarian and of their opponents, ʾImām Jāᶜfar appointed as his successor his eldest son Ismāᶜīl, by his first wife, a highly aristocratic lady, and the great grand-daughter of al-Hasan." (W. Ivanow, (*Ismailis and Qarmatians*, 57)

From these understandings and accounts certain principles regarding the *Naṣṣ* become clear – importantly that *Naṣṣ* is neither a secret nor is it hidden and, importantly, must be made known publically!

The process begins when the ʾImām of the time (*ʾimām az-zamān*/امام الزمام) "sees" by spiritual insight that one of his sons has been essentially given or endowed with, the same "gift" as he has which is, as we have explained earlier, the capacity to provide guidance for the community (*ʾumma*) and to explain and explicate the meanings of the Qurʾān in general and certain verses (*ʾāyāt*/ايات) specifically, as well as to explain the Divine Law in a manner which allows people to grasp the "whys and wherefores" of the Sẖarīᶜah.

This "seeing" is referred to in Arabic as *kasẖf* (كشف), which technically means "unveiling" and is etymologically related to (مكشف / *mukasẖafa*), disclosure by divine irradiation of the essence connoting familiarity with unseen things hidden behind veils which, in the case of the ʾImām ﷺ, is a gift rather than the result of the spiritual struggle of purifying the heart undergone by spiritual seekers which can also lead, albeit in a more limited way, to the "parting of the veils" granting a familiarity with the unseen (*al-gẖayb*/الغيب) — a term which possesses multiple intricate meanings stemming from the figurative translation "the depths of the well." Given that the bottom of the well is visually concealed as a result of its depth, its contents are not determinable. *al-Gẖayb* therefore refers to that which is absent, hidden, or concealed but for the ʾImām ﷺ, who is, by the nature of *who* he is, blessed with inborn *kasẖf*, enabling him to not only see the depths of the well or the unseen, (*al-gẖayb*/الغيب) but, very importantly, what is hidden beneath it.

Through this gift he is granted to see *who* is to be the next receptor of the ʾImāmate. Since he, the ʾImām ﷺ, is a human who must die, it is absolutely necessary that this issue of sucession and continuity be resolved as soon as possible even if, as the case may be, he does not immediately announce his 'sighting' to the *ʾummah*, but that *he knows* without doubt and beyond question who exactly the next ʾImām ﷺ is and when the time is right makes it known – publically.

Of course, in certain instances, usually stemming from oppression, *taqīyyah* or dissumultation may have to be observed, as it was, for instance, due to conflicts between the Ummayads and the ᶜAbbāsids, in the time of ʾImām Aḥmad al-Wafī, ʾImām Muḥammad at-Taqī and ʾImām Abdullāh ar-Raḍī ﷺ, the three veiled ʾImāms who followed the son of ʾImām Iṣmāᶜīl ﷺ — Muḥammad al-Mahdi ﷺ.

But although the three "*veiled*" (*satr*/ستر) Imāms prior to ʾImām ᶜAbdullah al-Maḥdi bin-Amr Illāh ﷺ (who was both the fourth Daᶜi of the ʾIsmaīʾīli Daᶜwah and, more importantly, the first openly proclaimed Fāṭimid Kẖalīfah *and* ʾImām), were known in the circle of the Daᶜwah (the *actual* name of both the Fāṭimi and Ismāᶜīlī schools) and, even during their veiled "hiddeness" directed the affairs of the school ranging from tax (*zakāt*/زكاة) collection to intercontinental communication between the Fāṭimīyūn (فاطميون) Islands (*jazāʾīr*/جزايرة), as well as social services for the poor and destitute. They also conducted *taᶜlīm* after *joumuᶜah* for local members of the Daᶜwah, as well as knowledegable travellers and initiates from afar.

Again and again we must stress the important, indeed crucial, function of the ʾImām ﷺ both as the source of guidance *and* the explanation of Qurʾān. The need to understand these explanations may change from generation to generation due to social and technological changes, which always arise as time passes, and the explanation of one hundred years ago no longer suffices.

For instance think of the space shuttle upon and in which a Muslim travelled. How do we understand the Order to pray five times a day when there are twenty days in one day, and what is the direction of prayer (*qiblah*/قبلة) when you are many miles above the earth?

Not to mention questions of medical ethics when, for instance, it becomes possible to transplant a heart or a kidney or even eyes. Whose eyes are they and who am I who has someone else's heart?

And these are questions in worldly or semi-worldly dimensions which are over-shadowed by many other-worldly concerns.

When the ʾImām ﷺ is openly present, religion is not a static phenomena and an unchanging set of rules but a phenomena that is, and must be, responsive to change and fluctuation, perhaps not in absolute essentials like prayer, fasting, zakat etc. – the *arkān ad-dīn* (اركان الدين) or *ʾummu ul-kitāb* – but definitely in the case of allegorical meanings as in *muḥkam* and *mutasẖābihah* (محكم و متشابه).

Who is there who can explain and teach these meanings absolutely correctly and without any ambiguity, but the ʾImām ﷺ? Yes, there are scholars in both the Sunnī and Sẖīᶜāh communities, but inevitably their explanations are filtered through their own subjective realities. Only if the ʾImām ﷺ is present can we be absolutely and 100% sure that what we hear or read is without any doubt *the* Truth!

Hence the absolute need for the ʾImām ﷺ, for without the ʾImām ﷺ, there is always the possibility of error, no matter how knowledgable the scholar (*ᶜālim*/عالم) or arbiter of jurisprudence (*faqīh*/فقيه).

As ᶜAli ﷺ was to the Prophet ﷺ so is the ʾImām ﷺ in relation to ᶜAli ﷺ and hence by extension to the Prophet ﷺ.

In short, and in Truth (*al-ḥaqq*/الحق), there is no continuity of the *dīn* save when the ʾImām ﷺ is present without ***any*** ambiguity and this has not been the case in the Muslim world, save for the ʾIsmāᶜīlīs, since the ocultation. Hence, the importance of the ʾImām and the need for both Sunni and Sẖīᶜāh to understand this without doubt.

Backing up one step I want to try to make clear, though any explanation I may provide is fraught with vast possibilities for misunderstanding, that by "*continuity*" I mean that – yes we may almost endlessly engage in interpretation on multiple levels in what is and what happened in the course of the first five or six centuries of ʾIslām but after those times (and arguably before those times) until we reach the time of the anti-ʾUṣulī neo-Kẖarajite Wahhabi Salafist or ʾIkẖwāni schools of thought from the 1800 CE era forward, there was a long period of stagnation and endless recycling apparent in the fact that as late as 1900 CE 95% of Sunnis were ʾUṣulī (traditionalists or principalists) Muslims who held to the traditions of one of the four Sunni schools of Jurisprudence (*madẖāhib*), which for the most part are Asẖᶜarite-Māturīdī theology mixed with the sprituality of the al-Gẖazalī school of Sūfism which emanated principally from the post-Fāṭimīd al-Azhar in Cairo.

And with the occultation of the 12th ʾImām ﷺ in the *ʾitẖnā ᶜasẖariyyah* branch of the Sẖīᶜah, both are bereft of a functional ʾImām ﷺ so that Sẖīᶜah ʾUṣulīs are not really all that different from Sunni ʾUṣulīs, traditionalists or principalists, though their position or stance appears different in certain dimensions. Functionally both have no manifest living *acting* ʾImām ﷺ so all their explanations, decisions, (*fatāwā*/فتاوى) can only emanate from the *marjaᶜ tāqlīd* or the *marjaᶜ dīnī* (مرجع تاقليد او مرجع ديني) who in the end are *elected* or *selected* by others, who, as far as can be known, have not received the *Naṣṣ* and, hence, are without any *real* Authority, as the ʾImām is hidden in extreme occlusion and nobody knows, or has access, to him. The only school, or *ṭariqah* (their choice of cognomen), which actually lays claim to a living functioning ʾImām are the ʾIsmāᶜīlīs.

They alone claim an entirely unbroken line of succcession stretching back over forty-nine individuals each of whom claim the *Naṣṣ*, though an impartial examination of that claim finds three, or perhaps four, questionable gaps or breaks beginning with ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ (which is yet another reason for our truly understanding what happened in reality at the time of the 'death' of his son, ʾImām Ismāᶜīl ﷺ, who some claim was caused to disappear during the lifetime of his father, as a mystery, intended to protect him from enemies who sought his death, and as a test for his followers (*wa-Llāhu ᶜAlim*) in the questionable era of the *Dāᶜiyyūn* (or the callers) ʾImām Aḥmad Wafī, ʾImām Mūḥammad at-Tāqī and ʾImām ᶜAbdullāh ar-Raḍī or az-Zakī ﷺ from their various centers for the *Daᶜwah* (دعوة) in what is now Syria, Jordan and Palestine.

Then again there is another 'questionable' gap in the succession. According to the Niẓārī ʾIsmaīᶜīlīs after the death of the eighth Fāṭimīd ʾImām,ʾAbū Tamīm Maᶜadd al-Mustanṣir bi-Llāh ﷺ, the succession was again put into doubt when the regent, (Mālik al-Afdal, the son of the then military commander of the Fāṭimīds, Badr al-Jamālī,) decreed the youngest son by the second wife of Mustanṣir bi-Llāh, ʾImām al-Mustaᶜlī ﷺ, to be the 8th Kẖalīfah as well as the ʾImām thus bringing into question from whence came the *Naṣṣ*? It is from this line the Mustaᶜlī branch of ʾIsmaīᶜīlīs emerge.

The ascent of ʾImām al-Mustaᶜlī was however contested by his first wife's eldest son, ʾImām an-Niẓār ﷺ, who was defeated in the civil and military upheaval following the death of al-Mustaṣir, and died in prison in Alexandria. Acccording to some, he had a son, ʾImām al-Hādī ﷺ, to whom he gave the *Naṣṣ* and who was taken, first to Alamūt by Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ, and later settled in one of the nearby safe towns below Alamūt and was gradually surrounded by family members secreted out of Egypt. This family lived for two generations under the fortress of Alamūt and it was from this family that the Niẓārī *ṭarīqah* or branch of the ʾIsmāᶜīlīs emerged.

On the other hand the Mustaᶜlīs first settled in the Yemen and then gradually gained a foothold in 11th Century CE western India (mainly in Gujarat) through the efforts of *daᶜiyyūn* (callers) and itinerant traders and are found today in many western cities of India, Pakistan, Yemen and East Africa under the name of *Dawoodi Bohras* under their leader, the *Dāʾī al-Muṭlāq* (The Unrestricted Caller).

The Mustaᶜlī mode of practice is observed along fairly normative Muslim lines, meaning they pray five times a day (though joining the Dẖuhr and ᶜAṣr and the Magẖrib and the ᶜIsẖa), attend a masjid, fast in Ramaḍān, perform Ḥajj and Umrah and pay Zakat and are included as Muslims under the conditions of the Amman Message.

They do *not* however profess to having an openly manifest ʾImām but rather, after their 21st ʾImām went into concealment, the leadership of the community was entrusted to the hands of one called Daᶜī al-Muṭlaq or the Unrestricted Caller — a post created by one of the few women Ḥujjāt of ʾIslām, as-Sayyidah al-Ḥurra of the Sulayhid Dynasty of Yemen[8], who was certified as *Ḥujjāt* by ʾImām Maᶜadd al-Mustanṣir bi-Llāh ﷺ in 1084. It was under her direction that *daᶜiyyūn* (callers) were first sent to India, resulting in the emergence of the afore-mentioned Bohra (Traders) sect.

As the Mustaᶜlī emerged out of Yemen and integrated themselves into Gujerat in India, the Niẓaris were mainly centered in what is now northern Iran and Northern Syria, as a result of the dynamic efforts of Rasẖīd ad-Dīn Sinān (The Old Man of the Mountain).

The Niẓārīs are the largest branch of the ʾIsmāᶜīlīs and the second largest branch of the overall Sẖīᶜah community, numbering some 15-20 million, who live in 25 countries and are presided over by Sẖah Karīm al-Ḥusaynī, popularly known as the Agẖa Kẖan, who is the openly declared and functional 49th ʾImām ﷺ in the Niẓārī line.

The Niẓārī teachings emphasize human reasoning and intellectual effort (*ijtihād*/اجتهاد) under the direct authority of the ʾImām, in contrast to imitation (*taqlīd*/تقليد) in conformity with legal precendent or scholarly decisions, without necessarily examining or having to consider the scriptural basis or reasoning behind the decision.

Furthermore the Niẓārī teachings emphasize pluralism, meaning the acceptance of racial, ethnic, cultural intra-religious differences, as well as a strong emphasis on political, social and gender justice.

However questions arise concerning the line of succession which date back to the time of the three "*veiled*" Imāms, then to Alamūt and finally to the 1866 decision of the High Court of Bombay known as the "Aga Khan Case" which recognized the authenticity of the Aga Khan's claims by the British Raj, under whom he served militarily.

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8. another woman was the Ḥujjāt of the Prophet Isa ﷺ, Mary Magdalen ﷺ.

To briefly recapitulate these questions of succession:

Prior to Alamūt we have the questions arising from the time of the Dāᶜiyyūn in Syria as to just who exactly were ʾImām Aḥmad al-Wāfī, ʾImām Muḥammad at-Taqī and ʾImām Abdullāh ar-Rāḍī ﷺ, the three ʾImāms who followed the son of ʾImām Iṣmāᶜīl ﷺ.

Next there are the questions that arise after the death of the eighth Fāṭimīd ʾImām, ʾAbū Tamīm Maᶜadd al-Mustanṣir bi-Llāh ﷺ. After his death the succession was put into doubt when the regent, Mālik al-Afdal (the son of the military commander of the Fāṭimīds, Badr al-Jamālī) named the youngest son of ʾImām al-Mustanṣir ﷺ, (by his second wife) to be the 9th ʾImām and who, consequently, they gave their allegiance though this was disputed.

The question of the succession after Alamūt arises from the events surrounding the ʾImām an-Niẓār ﷺ. who died in prison in Alexandria but who, acccording to some, had a son – ʾImām al-Hādī ﷺ to whom he gave the *Naṣṣ*. This son was taken first to the fortress of Alamūt by Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ ﷺ and later settled in one of the nearby protected towns in the valleys below Alamūt, where he was gradually surrounded by family members secreted out of Egypt. As we mentioned this family lived for two or three generations below Alamūt and it was from them the Niẓarī ʾIsmaīᶜlīs arose and, from whom the Agẖa Kẖan ultimately claims descent and legitimacy.

This possibly autobiographical information is found in *Sargudẖasẖt-i-Sayyidnā,* the main source for the background and the early life of Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ ﷺ who according to this was was born in the city of Qom in the 1050's CE to a family of Twelver Sẖīᶜāh.

Early in his life, his family moved to Rayy, a city in Persia that has had a history of radical thought since the 9th Century CE.

It was in this center of religious matrices that Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ, who held to the Twelver school of thought and practice, developed a keen interest in metaphysical matters. From the age of 7 to 17 he was home schooled by the *ʾulemā* and mastered philosophy, astronomy. mathematics and geometry as well as a number of languages,

Rayy was also home to the activities of ʾIsmāᶜīlī callers in the Jibāl. At the time,ʾIsmāᶜīlīsm was a growing movement in Persia and other lands east of Egypt. The Persian ʾIsmāᶜīlīs firmly supported the *Daᶜwah* (call) directed by the Fāṭimid caliphate based in Cairo.

The ʾIsmāᶜīlī Daᶜwah worked on three layers: the lowest was the "foot soldier" or *fidᶜāī*, followed by the *rafīk* or "comrade", and then the *dāᶜī* or "the caller". It has been suggested that the popularity of the ʾIsmāᶜīlīs, in what was then Persia, was due to the people's dissatisfaction with the Seljuk rulers, who had removed local rulers.

In Rayy, young Ḥasan came in touch with one Amira Darrab, a *rafīk*, who introduced him to the ʾIsmāᶜīlī doctrine. Ḥasan was initially unimpressed but his interest gradually grew after participating in many passionate debates on the merits of the Ismāᶜīlī way. Seeing the conviction of Darrab convinced Ḥasan to delve deeper into ʾIsmāᶜīlī doctrines and beliefs and ultimately convinced him to take the ʾIsmāᶜīlī way.

Some historians have postulated that Ḥasan's keeping company with members of the Fāṭimiyyun was leaked to the anti-Fāṭimid and anti-Sẖīᶜah vizier Niẓām al-Mulk, leading to Ḥasan leaving Rayy and heading out to what was then Fāṭimid Cairo in 1076.

Ḥasan took about 2 years to reach Cairo. Along the way he toured many other regions that did not exactly lie in the general direction of Egypt but were on *his* way. Isfahan was the first city that he visited. Here he was hosted by one of the dāᶜis of his youth, a man whose name was Resi Abu-Faḍl and who had taught the youthful Ḥasan in Rayy. In Isfahan he further instructed Ḥasan in the ʾIsmāᶜīlī way.

From Isfahan he went to Caucasian Albania (current Azerbaijan), hundreds of miles to the north, and from there he traveled through Armenia where he attracted the ire of Christian priests and, following a heated discussion, he was thrown out of town.

He then turned south and traveled through northern Iraq and then to Damascus in Syria and south to al-Quds in Palestine from where he left for Egypt. Autobiographical fragments exist which date his arrival in Cairo to 30 August 1078 CE where he swore allegiance to the Fāṭimid Caliph and took up formal studies under two *dāᶜiyyayn*.

As he proceeded with his studies, he came to be looked upon with eyes of respect among those vested with authority.

His austere and devoted commitment to the *Daᶜwah* gained him an audience with the chief *dāᶜī* of the region: ᶜAbdu-l-Mālik ibn Attasẖ, who was very impressed with the young Ḥasan and promoted him to the rank of Deputy Caller (*dāᶜī al-maʾdẖūn*) in the *Daᶜwah*.

It is unclear how long he stayed in Egypt but three or four years is the usually accepted estimate. He continued his studies there, and became a full-time Dāᶜi after which he returned to Persia.

Whilst he was in Cairo, studying, he incurred the displeasure of the Chief of the Army, Badr al-Jamālī (see page 21). This may have been a result of the fact that Ḥasan supported ʾImām Niẓār ﷺ, the ʾImām al-Mustanṣir's ﷺ elder son, as the next ʾImām. Ḥasan was briefly imprisoned by Badr al-Jamālī but the collapse of the minaret of the jail was taken to be an omen in favor of Ḥasan and he was soon released and deported. The ship that he was traveling on was wrecked and he was rescued and taken on to Syria. Traveling via Aleppo and Baghdad, he terminated his journey at Isfahan in 1081.

His life now was totally devoted to the mission of the Daᶜwah.

He travelled extensively throughout Persia. In northern Persia, touching the south shore of the Caspian Sea, are the mountains of Alburz. These mountains were home to a people who had traditionally resisted attempts at both Arab and Turkish subjugation and was also a home for Sẖīᶜah teaching. The news of this ʾIsmāᶜīlī *dāᶜī*'s activities reached the Seljuq vizier, Niẓām al-Mulk, who dispatched his soldiers with the orders for his capture but he evaded them, and went deeper into the mountains where he began a search for a home base for the Daᶜwah.

This search for a base from which to direct the Daᶜwah ended when, in 1088, he found the castle of Alamūt in the Rudbar area (modern Qazvin in Iran). It was a fort that stood guard over a valley that was about fifty kilometers long and five kilometers wide. This fortress had been built *circa* 865 CE. Legend has it that it was built by a king who saw his eagle fly up to and perch upon a rock, a propitious omen, the importance of which this king, ibn Marzuban, understood. Likening the perching of the eagle to a lesson given by it, he called the fort *Aluh Amu(kh)t*: the "The Teachings of the Eagle".

In Ḥasan's takeover of the fort he employed a patient and deliberate strategy, which took the better part of two years to put into effect.

First he sent his callers and their comrades to win over the inhabitants of the villages in the valley below the fort.

Next, key people amongst the people of the valley were introduced to the Daᶜwah, and finally, in 1090, he took over the fort with the help of local people who had accepted the Daᶜwah.

Ḥasan gave the former owner a draft drawn on the name of a local wealthy landlord and told him to obtain the promised money from this man; when the landlord saw the draft with Ḥasan's signature, he immediately paid the amount to the owner, astonishing him. Another, probably apocryphal, version of the takeover states Ḥasan offered 3000 gold dinars to the owner of the fort for the amount of land that would fit in a buffalo's hide. The terms having been agreed upon, Ḥasan cut the hide into strips and linked them into a large ring around the perimeter of the fort, whose owner was thus undone by his own greed.

In any case after establishing Alamūt he thereafter devoted himself so faithfully to study, that in the nearly 35 years he dwelt there he never left the fortress, except twice when he went up to the roof. This reported isolation is questionable given his extensive recruiting and organizational involvement in the growing ʾIsmāʿīlī insurrections in Persia and Syria. Whatever the truth is about his isolation Ḥasan was highly educated and was known for austerity, studying, translating, praying, fasting and directing the activities of the Daʿwah. He knew the Qurʾān by heart, could quote extensively from the texts of most Muslim sects, and along with philosophy, he was well versed in mathematics, astronomy, alchemy, medicine, architecture, and the major scientific disciplines of his time – and here I strongly suggest the reader look into our Essay and the books on Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ listed below in the footnote concerning who he was and what lay behind the establishment of Alamūt, which was the center for propagation of Niẓarī thought and the headquarters for the efforts to preserve and further the original Fāṭimī Daʿwah[9].

During Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ's life and after his death, two new ʾImāms, the son and grandson of ʾImām al-Hādī ﷺ, were born at Alamūt and received the *Naṣṣ*: ʾImām Muḥtadī ﷺ and ʾImām Qāhir ﷺ.

Then came a man who is a figure of great controversy known to us as Ḥasan II, to whose name is attached the epithet, ʿ*Alā Dḫikrihi-s-Salām* – on whose remembrance be peace.

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9. Daftary, Farhad, *Hasan-i-Sabbāh and the Origins of the Nizārī Ismā'īlī Movement*, Daftary, Farhad, *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Ismā'īlīs* and Hodgson, Marshall, *The Order of Assassins. The Struggle of the Early Nizārī Ismā'īlī Against the Islamic World.*

Ḥasan ᶜAlā Dẖikrihi-s-Salām (حسن على ذكره السلام) ﷺ, also known as Ḥasan II, was the hereditary ʾImām of the Niẓāri ʾIsmāᶜīlīs from 1162 until 1166 and ruled parts of Persia and Syria from Alamūt.

Had that been all there was to it he would not be much remembered or remarked upon and he would have passed, forgotten by most, into the pages of, mainly, ʾIsmāᶜīlī history. However he did something which shocked the whole Muslim – world not just the Sẖīᶜah ʾIsmāᶜīlīs but the *whole* Muslim world – Sunni *and* Sẖīᶜah.

In 1164 Ḥasan II ﷺ, ʾImām of the Niẓārī school of ʾIsmāᶜīlī ʾIslām, proclaimed the Qiyāmah (القيامة), literally the Rising, but understood by most Muslims to mean "the Day of Resurrection", and by so doing he brought about, at least in Alamūt and the lands ruled from Alamūt, the abrogation of many of the outer Laws of the Sẖariᶜah.

The concept of Qiyāmah in exoteric ʾIslām means the End of the World and the Day of Judgment. But in the esoteric interpretations of ʾIsmāᶜīlī ʾIslām, Qiyāmah is the beginning of an era of spiritual renaissance where the spiritual dimensions of ʾIslām are practiced openly and spiritual truths become widely known, and certain of the more exoteric/ritualistic/ethnic/tribal aspects of ʾIslām are abrogated. Fāṭimid ʾIsmāᶜīlī texts from the 10th-11th century describe the anticipated arrival of the Qiyāmah era by a future Fatimid ʾIsmāᶜīlī ʾImām. These expectations were fulfilled by the declaration of Qiyāmah by ʾImām Ḥasan ᶜAlā Dẖikrihi-s-Salām (على ذكره السلام) ﷺ.

Declaration of the Qiyāmah

Only two years after his accession, ʾImām Ḥasan ᶜAlā Dẖikrihi-s-Salām ﷺ, openly conducted an esoteric ceremony known as the *Qiyāmah* at Alamūt, whereby the ʾImām ﷺ once again became visible to his community of followers in and outside of the Niẓārī ʾIsmāᶜīlī community. Given that the traitor Juwaynī, during the time of the Mongol invasion, undertook the burning of the ʾIsmāᶜīlī libraries at Alamūt (which could have provided much more reliable testimony about Niẓārī ʾIsmāᶜīlī history), scholars have been dubious about Juwaynī's narrative but are forced to rely on it given the absence of alternative sources. Fortunately descriptions of this event are also preserved in Rasẖīd ad-Dīn's narrative and recounted in the *Haft Bab Baba-yi Sayyidna*, written 60 years after the event, and the later *Haft Bab-i Abī Isḥaq,* an ʾIsmāᶜīlī book of the 15th century AD.

However, Rasẖīd ad-Dīn's narrative is based on Juwaynī, and the Niẓārī sources do not go into specific details. Since very few contemporary Niẓārī ʾIsmāᶜīlī accounts of the events have survived, it is unlikely that anyone will ever know the exact details of this event.

In any case there was no *total* abrogation of *all* law – only certain exoteric rituals, like the *form* of Ṣalāt, Fasting in Ramaḍān, Ḥajj to Makkah were altered. The Niẓārīs however continued to perform ʾIslāmic forms of worship, except these altered rituals were termed esoteric and spiritually oriented. For example, "true prayer is to remember Allāh ﷻ at every moment; true fasting is to keep all bodily organs away from whatever is unethical and forbidden and ethical conduct is enjoined at all times; true Zakāt is to have enough to live on and the rest is consigned to those poorer than you, the homeless indigent or to those who make sure the funds are at hand and that distribution of *zakāt* truly works without hint of graft or bribery, to those whose hearts have to be reconciled (*taṣālaḥ*/تـصـالـح), to those who are enslaved, and those under the crushing weight of debt, for those who work for all of those above without asking anything in return (*fī sabīli-llāh*), to the traveller or wayfarer." "This is an obligation from Allāh – all-Knowing, all Wise." (aṭ-Tawba 9:60)

إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَٰتُ لِلْفُقَرَآءِ وَالْمَسَٰكِينِ وَالْعَٰمِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَالْمُؤَلَّفَةِ
قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِى الرِّقَابِ وَالْغَٰرِمِينَ وَفِى سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ
ۖ فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ



Imagine a world in which all, **including governments**, paid zakāt!

That is only the outer skin of religious obligations. The deeper dimension concerns what the tongue says, to what the ears listen, to what the eyes see, where feet walk and for what the hands reach.

So in spite of what people say about what ʾImām Ḥasan ᶜAlā Dẖikrihi-s-Salām ﷺ did or did not do when he conducted that esoteric ceremony known as *Qiyāmah* at Alamūt, he ensured that the ʾImām ﷺ was once again visible to his community of followers both in and outside the local Niẓārī ʾIsmāᶜīlī community.

The ʾImām was once again in full public view and back in action!

This spiritual station (*maqām*) only lasted for a year and a half after his declaration of the Qiyāmah. According to Juwaynī, ʾImām Ḥasan ᶜAlā Dẖikrihi-s-Salām ﷺ, was fatally stabbed in the ʾIsmāᶜīlī castle of Lambasar by his brother in law, Hasan Namwar.

He was succeeded by his son, ʾImām Nūrudīn Muḥammad ﷺ, who refined and explicated the doctrine of Qiyāmah in far greater detail.

This is the mostly accepted and received account of what, afterall, is a hugely significant event in the Muslim world – but little remarked under the big tent of Sunni ʾIslām and usually accompanied with a comment along the lines of, "What can you expect from Sẖīᶜī?" and is treated only tangentially, if at all, in the Twelver world itself.

But, exactly in this act, the ʾImām revealed ﷺ – the possibilities and the capacity of what an ʾImām ﷺ can do.

Things can change!

But things used to change, as for instance in the account we gave on page nine when during a *dẖuhr* (mid-day) *ṣalāt* on the outskirts of Madinah, the Prophet ﷺ received the Revelation which resulted in changing the Qiblah from al-Quds to Makkah after 13 years.

But that was the Prophet ﷺ and Ḥasan II was a much later descendant who was changing the canonical revealed *Orders* of Allāh ﷻ.

This exactly marks or delineates the line between *waḥi* and *walayah*.

If you accept that the Transmission by the Prophet ﷺ to ᶜAlī ﷺ was vaild, and that a constituent element of that bestowal was that ᶜAlī ﷺ, in turn, had the capacity to bestow the Transmission (*al-ᶜahd*/العهد) to whom he chose (and were thus chosen), and so on from al-Ḥasan to al-Ḥusayn to ᶜAlī Zaynu-l-ᶜAbdīn to Muḥammad al-Baqr and then to Jaᶜfar ﷺ then when does it stop or does it stop?

For instance the Niẓari ʾIsmāᶜīlīs of the present time consider Sẖah Karīm al-Ḥusayni (*aka* the Agẖa Kẖan) to be the 49th consecutive living ʾImām ﷺ in accord with the Doctrine of the ʾImāmate precisely as defined by ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ in his teaching on the *al-ᶜahd*: "*Naṣṣ* is the Divinely inspired designation of each ʾImām ﷺ by the previous ʾImām ﷺ." By Niẓamī belief each ʾImām in the line and the tree (*silsilah wa sẖajarah*/سلسلة و شجرة) is the recipient of the *naṣṣ* and all its powers for as ʾImām al-Bāqir ﷺ said "If the ʾImām ﷺ were to be removed from the earth even for an hour, the earth would swallow up its inhabitants just as the sea swallows people."

The idea that the ʾImām ﷺ is always present also helps support the reality that Allāh, the Creator and Guarantor of the ʾImām ﷺ, is also always present to human beings. This is all clear and in order for the Muslim especially one who comes from a Ṣūfīc background.

But what if?

But what if somebody is not who he says he is or even, others say he is or even think he is? – what then?

Is the ʾImām *truly* the recipient of the Naṣṣ? and, importantly, can it be incontrovertibly proven, because if it can't then doubt is cast on the whole structure of the succession and its authenticty:

1. The first questionable period is the time of the *Dāᶜiyyūn* – ʾImām Aḥmad Wāfī, ʾImām Mūhammad at-Tāqī and ʾImām ᶜAbdullah ar-Raḍī or az-Zākī ﷺ who, from their centers of operation in what is now Syria and Palestine, finally emerged into the time of the first openly declared Fāṭimī ʾImām, ᶜAbdullah al-Mahdi bi-Llāh ﷺ. Were the *Dāᶜiyyūn* who they claimed to be or were they simply sincere followers of earlier ʾImāms who wanted to keep the Daᶜwah alive? Who they were in reality is not of great lasting significance but the continuity of the Daᶜwah *was* and *is* of utmost significance.

2. The time after the death of the eighth Fāṭimīd ʾImām, Maᶜadd al-Mustanṣir bi-Llāh ﷺ, after whose death the succession was again put into doubt when the regent, Mālik al-Afdal, the son of the then military commander of the Fāṭimīds, Badr al-Jamāl, who was neither Ḥusaynī and not even from Ahlu-l-Bayt, but who was instrumental in pushing forward his son-in-law, the youngest son of the second wife of ʾImām al-Mustaᶜali ﷺ, to be openly declared the 9th ʾImām of the ʾIsmāᶜīlī Mustaᶜli branch (*ṭariqah*) .

3. The time when ʾImām Ḥasan II, ᶜAlā Dẖikrihi-s-Salām ﷺ, conducted an openly esoteric ceremony known as "*al-Qiyāmah*" at Alamut, where-by the ʾImām ﷺ once again became visible to his community after three gererations behind the veil (*satr*/ستر).

Some people of the time took ʾImām Ḥasan II to be an imposter and not the son of the ʾImām al-Qahir ﷺ at all but rather a grandson of the Kiya Buzurg-Ummid (*esteemed old man*/بـــــزرگ) that Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣabah had left in charge of Alamūt at the time of his death in 1124.

4. The time of the 1866 Agẖa Kẖan Case in Bombay when, the British Raj certified that the Agẖa Kẖan, who served the British Raj, was really the legitimate inheritor of the Jāᶜfarī Ismāᶜīlī ʾImāmate.

This decision opened the coffers of the Kẖojā (Kẖawājā/کواجا/*Farsī*) to the Agẖa Kẖanis which allowed for the financial stability and well being of the Agẖa Kẖan, his family and, most importantly, the charitable world wide community, as that is where the money mostly went and goes, as seen by the many good works and world wide social upliftment projects of the Agha Khan Development Network and associated groups of, what is termed, the "Ismāᶜīlī Ṭariqah".

A careful perusal of various encylopediæ and surfing the net will dredge up many conflicting and differing views on this subject from fully committed ʾIsmāᶜīlīs to disgruntulted ex-ʾIsmāᶜīlīs to accounts of mass defections of Kẖojā people from being Sẖīᶜah to Sunni as well as various conspiracists and religious theroists.

To most people in our times, if they even note it, its all about media events where an older man called an 'imam' is weighed in gold or one sees pictures of him or his family members opening schools or hospitals or standing with world statesmen or university presidents receiving various awards, degrees or honorary citizenships.

His public utterances are along the lines of, "Tolerance, openness and understanding toward other peoples' cultures, social structures, values and faiths are now essential to the very survival of an interdependent world. Pluralism is no longer simply an asset or a prerequisite for progress and development, it is vital to our existence." His worldly works center around mercy, compassion and dignity all of which emerges directly from his commitment to ʾIslām.

To the common majority, (*āmm*) all of this is "nice" but much ado about nothing, as they have not taken the preliminary steps along the way of understanding the authentic teachings of the ʾImāms ﷺ.

But to those actively involved in understanding the Way of Walāyat and the way *beyond* both Sunni and Sẖīᶜah *ʾuslūlī* thought, understanding the question of the ʾImām ﷺ is a crucial question, for the world appears one way if there *is* an ʾImām ﷺ and in a totally different way if there should prove to be *no* living visible ʾImām.

Functionally for all intents and purposes and apparent reality, most Muslims *are* living in a world that appears bereft of an ʾImām ﷺ.

But go back to the events of the *qiyāmah* as proposed by Ḥasan ᶜAlā Dẖikrihi-s-Salām ﷺ and leave aside his legitimacy or lack of same, in the end how many really care, be they Muslim or non-Muslim?

As we noted, in less than a year and a half after his declaration of the Qiyāmah,ʾImām Ḥasan, ʿAlā Dẖikrihi-s-Salām ﷺ was, according to Juwaynī, stabbed to death in the ʾIsmāʿīlī castle of Lambasar by his brother in law, Ḥasan-i-Namavar and was succeeded by his "son" ʾImām Nūrudīn Muḥammad ﷺ, who went on to refine and explain the doctrine of the 'Qiyāmah' in greater detail.

There are those who say that ʾImām Nūrudīn Muḥammad ﷺ was not the "son" of ʾImām Ḥasan ʿAlā Dẖikrih as-Salām ﷺ but rather was the son of one of the families who were rescued by Ḥasan as-Sabāḥ from the line of ʾImām Niẓār ﷺ, ʾImām al-Mustanṣir's ﷺ elder son, who had been settled by Ḥasan as-Sabāḥ in the valley below Alamūt in the small town of Qaṣr Kẖan.

ʾImām Nūrudīn Muḥammad ﷺ from the time he was only nineteen, and in the face of strong opposition, went on to refine and explain the doctrine of Qiyāmah and the teachings of Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣabaḥ, in depth and great detail, which was very much welcomed, by the inhabitants of Alamūt and those aligned with Alamūt, who must be understood to be eager adherents of the inner (*bāṭini*) gnostic Ismāʿīlī teachings.

He spent 44 years trying to work out the details of the Qiyāmah.

Most importantly he showed that *the true spiritual reality* of the ʾImām was what was important and those who could perceive this. *and* achieve a personal transformation were the successful ones.

In their minds and hearts the *Qiyāmah* was entirely consequential as the door to a new age in which ritual and spirit came into balance.

It made sense even if for Muslims, then and now, such an event is nothing less than anathema, apostasy and fraudulent disbelief (*kufr*).

If ʾImām Ḥasan ʿAlā Dẖikrihi-s-Salām was not "really" the ʾImām ﷺ he, in his brief time, functioned *as* the ʾImām ﷺ and, for many, the idea of a spiritual descent rather than a direct genetic blood descent could easily be accomodated and a fit could be found.

In short, under the tutelage of Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣabaḥ the deeper people (*kẖaṣṣ*) of Alamūt, and those in accord with them, and those who came after them, developed a framework of thought in which the spirit eclipsed blood for, as long as the teaching was consequential, in the end the spirit was what mattered.

In the "*Assassins of Alamut*" under the rubric of the Doctrine of Resurrection, we find this:[10]

10. Anthony Campbell "Assassins of Alamut", © Iran Chamber Society

"The essence of the Resurrection (*qiyāmah*/قيامة) is that it was the fulfillment of the established ʾIsmāʿīlī expectation of the Millenium. ʾIsmāʿīlī eschatology had always predicted that the ʾImām of the Ressurection would come to usher in the rule of openness, when ʾIsmāʿīlīs would no longer have to 'dissimulate' by obeying the ritual law — for now that longed for day had finally dawned.

"Clearly. however, it had not done so in quite the way that the older ʾIsmāʿīlī scholars (علماء) had expected. The Ressurrection was supposed to be a cataclysmic event on a world scale, but now the world went on just as before, indeed outside the ʾIsmāʿīlī territories the great proclamtion *of qiyamah* was almost entirely unknown. But for the ʾIsmāʿīlīs everything had changed and they were now living in a new age; tho everything on the physical plane went on just as before, the change must be internal and spiritual. The *Qiyāmah* meant, in fact, the dawning of a new phase of consciousness, a truly *new age*.

"The esoteric interpretation of religion had always been fundamental to ʾIsmāʿīlīsm but under the Fāṭimids the teaching was that both aspects, esoteric and exoteric, must be given full weight. If you remained at the exoteric level you could never hope to advance spiritually, but this didn't mean that the exoteric religious forms had no importance. In a metaphor used by Abū Firās, the exoteric form of religion is the shell of the egg, which protects the yolk, (the delicate truths hidden within), from damage.

"The Niẓarīs of the Ressurrection, however, threw away not just the shell of the egg but the white as well and concentrated all their attention on the yolk — the Secret of Secrets."

Further on we read, "The new teaching was supposed to have literally cosmic reverberations. The events at Alamūt were thought to have vast significance, set against the ʾIsmāʿīlī cosmology of cyclical time. All space and time were focused on the Rock of Alamūt on that fateful day in Ramaḍān when the Ressurrection was proclaimed." – in the end, of course, the dream could not last, as the son of Nūrudīn, Ḥasan III, brought the ʾIsmāʿīlī community, with great resistance, back to normative ʾIslām by reinstating Sẖariʿah law; but even had he not done so, the vision would have crumbled and dissolved, as has every attempt to create a perfect society on earth ... "Niẓarism at the period of the Ressurrection was an anomaly ..." and remains so ... and yet the Qiyāmah *was* proclaimed.

We, along with Campbell, might say, "when the doctrine was taken undiluted it proved to be too strong a medicine."

And when one actually looks back at the period of the *Dāᶜiyyūn* (the callers), when a small group who had managed to trace the ʾImāmat among Muḥammad ibn ʾIsmāᶜīl's lineal descendants (because the status and location of the ʾImāms was not known to the community at large), the concealed ʾIsmāᶜīlī ʾImāms began to propagate the faith through *Dāᶜiyyūn* from its base in Syria and Palestine. This was the start of the spiritual beginnings of the Organisation of the Daᶜwah that would later play an important part in all ʾIsmāᶜīlī branches especially among the Niẓāris and the Mustaᶜlīs.

According to some, the eighth thru tenth ʾImāms, al-Wāfī, at-Tāqī and ar-Rāḍī ﷺ, remained hidden, working, raising money and serving the Daᶜwah from centers in Syria and Palestine.

The eleventh ʾImām, ᶜAbdullāh al-Mahdī bi-Llāh ﷺ, in the guise of a trader, fled persecution at the hands of the ʾAbbāsīds, who found ʾIsmāᶜīlī beliefs not only unorthodox, but also threatening to their *status quo*. He made his way to Sijilmāsah, a city in the independent Magẖribi emirate ruled by one Prince Yasaʾ ibn Midrar and lived there, hidden at first, with his son among the people of Sijilmāsah.

According to legend, ᶜAbdullāh and his son by so doing were fulfilling a Berber prophecy that they had learned about that al-Mahdi ﷺ would come from Mesopotamia (al-ʾIrāq/العـــراق) to Sijilmasa. During times of Ḥajj the *Dāᶜiyyūn* had made contact with the Kutāma Berbers of North Africa, who, after many meetings during the times of Ḥajj, had gradually absorbed the ʾImāmī teaching from a dedicated *Dāᶜi*, Abu ᶜAbdullāh asẖ-Sẖīᶜī, and had taken to heart the message of the Daᶜwah and signified that they would welcome ʾImām ᶜAbdullāh al-Mahdi bi-Llāh ﷺ and his son ᶜUbaydullāh ﷺ, with the result that ʾImām ᶜAbdullāh al-Maḥdī bi-Llāh ﷺ migrated to Sijilmasa and became the openly declared eleventh ʾImām ﷺ.

The *Dāᶜi* was responsible for the conversion as well as the mental and spiritual well being of his students. The *Daᶜī* was a guide and light from the ʾImām. The relationship of the *Daᶜī* and student was akin to that of Sẖaykẖ and Murīd. The student desired Allāh and the *Dāᶜi* could bring him to Allāh by causing him to recognize the ʾImām, who possessed the knowledge of the Oneness. The *Dāᶜi* and ʾImām were the spiritual mother and father of ʾIsmāᶜīlī believers.

Were ʾImāms al-Wāfī, at-Tāqī and ar-Rāḍī ﷺ really direct blood and genetic descendents of Muḥammad al-Mahdi ﷺ and his father, ʾImām ʾIsmāᶜīl bin Jāᶜfar, ﷺ, the son of ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ, or were these men simply deeply devoted servants of the *idea* of the ʾImām? Or were they loyalists who kept the lines and channels of understanding open, when all seemed lost or unknown, and the possibility of the existence of the real ʾImām in truth was in doubt?

If questions arose over time as to exactly 'who was who?' there are no questions and there is no question about the event of Gẖadir al-Kẖumm and by extension the status of al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, ᶜAlī Zayn-ul-ᶜAbdīn, Muḥammad al-Baqir and Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ.



So, you see, in the end, all of these encounters with the ʾImām ﷺ, real or putative, actual or imagined, trace back to ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ, whose life and times mark the beginning, and in some ways, the end of the openly public ʾImāmī 'movement' as such.

Up until his time there was no disagreement as to who was who and what was what and everything concerning the ʾImāmate was both in full public view and known to the ʾummah even if not always accepted. After ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ, and in spite of his legally defining the station of the ʾImām and its Transmission (*an-Naṣṣ*), the whole general consensus (*ʾijmāᶜ*/اجماع) fell apart and, instead of an *outwardly* united ʾummah, we are now left with two major Sẖiᶜah schools and four[11] recognised Sunni schools (*madẖāhib*/مذاهب).

We have explained, in some detail what happened in the case of ʾImām ʾIsmāʾīl ﷺ and his younger brother, Mūsā al-Kaḍẖim ﷺ (al-Kaẓim) but what of those who became known as Sunni Muslims?

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11. actually there were numerous *madẖāhib* after the time of Jāᶜfar ﷺ but most of them quickly became extinct or merged with other schools until there were only four (or five if one accepts the fatwa of Sh. Maḥmud Sẖaltūt of al-Azhar that recignizes the Jāᶜfari school) that were generally accepted by the Sunnis.

I have regularly given the weekly kẖutbah (Friday sermon) for more than twenty years primarily at Sunni masājid (there are hundreds of these *khutāb* available on our website)[12]. My teacher and sẖaykẖ, Dr. Ibrahīm al-Baṭawī ﷺ taught at al-Azhar and was a close friend of Sẖaykẖ ᶜAbdu-l-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd ﷺ who was Sẖaykẖ al-Azhar and (1973-78) connected to Sẖaykẖ Maḥmud Shaltūt (1958-63), an earlier Grand Sẖaykẖ of al-Azhar and responsible for the *fatwa* of 1960 recognizing *five* schools of jurisprudence but, when the occasion arises, and I happen to mention that there are *five* schools of jurisprudence, I am routinely questioned after the kẖutbah by someone who starts out, "Brother, you said there are *five* school of jurisprudence (*madẖāhib*) but every one knows there are only *four* schools of jurisprudence." And then I mention ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ and also the fatwa of Sẖaykẖ Maḥmud Sẖaltūt concerning ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ and the next line usually goes something like, "But brother, he was a Sẖīᶜah." And then I have to drop, what for him is a bombshell, "Yes he is considered in our time to be Sẖīᶜī, but did you know he was the teacher of Abū Ḥanīfa and Mālik ibn ʾĀnas, founders of the Hanafiyah and Mālikiyah schools of Sunni Jurisprudence? Additionally among his more than four thousand students in Madinah were Wāṣil ibn ᶜAṭā, founder of the Muᶜtazilah school as well as Ṣufiyan atẖ-Tẖawrī and, some say, that asẖ-Sẖāfᶜī from time to time also engaged with him in religious discussion." Furthermore when I tell the person that ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ is generally revered by main-stream Usulī Sunnis (here I do **not** refer to neo-Kẖarajite Salafis, Wahhabis, Takfiris, Ikẖwanis etc) as a transmitter of Ḥadīthẖ and a prominent jurist and that his mother Farwah bint Qasim, was the great-granddaughter of Abu Bakr ﷺ and that in the houses of his mother's family he also had frequent discussions with Qasim bin Muḥammad bin Abū Bakr, who was the grandson of Abū Bakr ﷺ and a man who was highly respected in Madīnah."

Usually when I give my interlocutor this information they are amazed and they ask, "Are you sure of all that brother?" and when I tell them, "Yes! I am sure," they most often say something along the lines of, "Well I'll have to look that up when I get home."

No doubt there must be a lot of amazed "brothers" who hit the books and the internet when they get home on those days.

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12. GreenMountainSchool.Org

Actually that "Sunni connection" was one of the major incentives for my writing this essay and including it in this compilation of essays on the Ahlu-l-Bayt ﷺ whose background life stories are not well known to many in the contemporary Muslim community; Sunni and Sẖiʿah. We Muslims at the beginnings of the 21st century CE need to become more knowlegeable about the lives of those Muslims who have become as strangers to us, save in a sentimental way, especially in light of the Ḥadīṯẖ narrated by Muslim (145) from ʾAbū Hurayrah ﷺ who said: The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: "ʾIslām began as something strange and will revert to being strange as it began, so give glad tidings (*tūba*) to the strangers."

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ
بَدَأَ الإِسْلاَمُ غَرِيبًا، وَسَيَعُودُ كَمَا بَدَأَ غَرِيبًا، فَطُوبَى لِلْغُرَبَاءِ

as-Sindī says in *Hasẖiyat Ibn Majah:*

"Strange" refers to the small number of its adherents. The basic meaning of stranger (*gẖarīb*/غـريـب) is being far from one's homeland but "... and will revert to being strange" refers to the small number of those who will adhere to its teachings even though its followers are many. " ... so give glad tidings to the strangers" refers to those who follow its commands. Ṭūbā (glad tidings/طـوبـى) literally means "blessedness" and refers specifically to a great tree in Paradise.

Of this tree the Turkish poet Meḥmed Yazicioglu wrote, "It is a tree that grows downwards as its roots are in heaven. Through its radiance all the heavens are lit from end to end flooding every tent and palace, every lane and every square. Such a tree is Ṭūbā that the Gracious One has hidden in its sap whatever there may be of gifts and presents both good and fair."

This shows that supporting ʾIslām and following its commands may require that one leave one's homeland, physically and metaphorically, and should be patient in bearing the difficulties of being a stranger, part of which is loneliness as was the case in the beginning.

In *Sẖarh Saḥīh Muslim*, an-Nawawī quoted al-Qadī ʾIyād as saying, concerning the meaning of this ḥadīṯẖ: "Islam began among a few individuals, then it spread and prevailed, then it will be reduced in numbers until there are only a few left, as it was in the beginning."

Further in *Fatāwa al-Lajnah al-Daᶜimah*, 2/170 we find:

"The meaning of this ḥadīṯ is that ʾIslām began as something strange; when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ called people to ʾIslām, no one responded except a few people here and there. At that time it was something strange because its people were like strangers amongst others and they were few in number and weak, in contrast to the great numbers and strength of their enemies, who persecuted the early [and present day] Muslims. Then some of them migrated to Abyssinia (Habash), fleeing for the sake of their religion from tribulation and to save themselves from persecution and oppression. Later the Prophet ﷺ, at the command of Allāh ﷻ, himself migrated to Madīnah, after suffering intense persecution, and Allāh ﷻ fulfilled his hopes, supported His Prophet ﷺ and granted him victory.

"With the help of Allāh ﷻ ʾIslām spread throughout the world;

"This continued for a long time, then division and dissent spread among the Muslims and weakness and failure increased gradually, until ʾIslām once again has become something strange as it was in the beginning. But this is not because of small numbers, because at this time there are more than one and a half billion Muslims, but because many Muslims now do not hold to the Book of Allah ﷻ and the ʾItrat (progeny/عـتـرت) [Ḥadīṯ aṯ-Thaqalayn] of His Prophet ﷺ, so they have become distracted and turn to competing in worldly matters, like those who came before them, and fight amongst themselves for leadership and wealth so that the enemies of ʾIslām found a way in, colonized our lands, humiliated us and so ʾIslām has returned to being strange as it was in the beginning."

A number of scholars are of the opinion that this Ḥadīṯ of the Strangers gives glad tidings of a second victory of ʾIslām after it has become something strange again. They base this on the wording used by the Prophet ﷺ when he said, "… will revert to being strange as it began." So just as following the initial strangeness and alienation, the Muslims were victorious and ʾIslām spread, this will happen again after the second period of strangeness and alienation.

This view is more likely to be correct, and is supported by what is proven in the ʾaḥadīṯ about the Mahdī ﷺ and the return of ᶜIsā ﷺ at the end of time, when ʾIslām in the form of the Way of Truth (*dīn al-ḥaqq*/دين الحق) (9:33/48:28/61:09) will spread its light over all.

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ ۚ

huwa-l-ladḫīī ʾarsala-rasūlahū bi-l-hudā
wa dīnī-l-ḥaqqī li-yuḍḫhirahu ᶜala-d-dīni kullih
It is He Who has sent His Messenger with Guidance
and the Religion of Truth which He will cause to shine over all.
(48:28)

And Allāh is the Source of our strength.
May Allāh send blessings and peace upon our Prophet Muḥammad
and upon his *family*.

ﷺ

I bring up this subject of the "Stranger" and strangeness because in our time Muslims have increasingly become estranged from their own history and the knowledge of what and, importantly, *who* that history is except, as I said, in a "soft" sentimental fashion.

For instance, going back to the subject of the weekly kẖutbah. I usually say "ᶜalayhi salām" or "ᶜalayha salām" when mentioning a member of the family of the Prophet ﷺ. This often leads to one of the "brothers" accusing me of being a Sẖīᶜī (often purposefully mis-pronounced in the form of an obscenity). Then I remind that person that *all* Muslims when they make their *ṣalāt* recite the following recitation known as *aṣ-Ṣalātu-l-ʾIbrāhīmiyyah*:

اللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ. اللّٰهُمَّ بَارِكْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا بَارَكْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ

Allāhumma salli ᶜala Muḥammad wa ᶜala ʾālī Muḥammad
kama ṣallāita ᶜala ʾIbrāhīm wa ᶜala ʾalī ʾIbrāhīm
innaka ḥamīdun majīd,
wa bārik ᶜala Muḥammad wa ᶜala ʾāli Muḥamad kama bārakta ᶜala ʾIbrāhīm wa ᶜala ʾāli ʾIbrāhīm innaka ḥamīdum-majīd.

O Allāh! Praise Muḥammad, and the *family* of Muhammad, as You Praised ʾIbrāhīm, and the *family* of ʾIbrāhīm; You are indeed Worthy of Praise, Full of Glory. And send blessings on Muḥammad, and the *family* of Muhammad, as you send blessings on ʾIbrāhīm, and the *family* of ʾIbrāhīm; You are Worthy of Praise, Full of Glory.

I then say, "if you ask the blessings of Allāh on the Family of Muḥammad ﷺ and also on the Family of ʾIbrāhīm ﷺ in every Ṣalāt why should it disturb you if I say '*Alayhi-s-Salām*' (peace be upon him (or *her* as the case may be) when I mention one of the members of his ﷺ family ﷺ when you yourself, and indeed all Muslims who pray[13], say the same thing every time they make their Ṣalāt?"

By dint of your reasoning "that only Sẖīᶜah seek blessings on his family" or that seeking blessings on his family is a *bidaḥ* (hateful innovation) or worse, *ḥaram* (something forbidden), are then all people who pray somehow guilty in your eyes of *ḥaram* or *bidaḥ*?"

Again there is the familiar reaction only now they don't ask, "Are you sure?" since the matter is self evident but hidden either by their lack of knowledge of Arabic or their unconsciousness of what they are actually saying in their *ṣalāt* or, maybe, it is a case of a lack of hard realization of the real meaning in favor of a soft sentimentality.

All of this is the fallout from what happened to the Muslim ummah after the time of ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ right down to the present wars in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, where, on a daily basis, and despite the most basic laws and tenets of ʾIslām, Muslims (putative Sunnis and Sẖīᶜah alike) murder, rape, torture, shoot, stab, burn and bomb other Muslims on a daily basis and do it with the help of the Anglo/Euro/Americans and Russians (none of whom care about ʾIslām) along with the financial and military help of the 'King' of *Saudi* Arabia and the 'Supreme' Leader (*rahbar-e moʾaẓẓam*) of Iran.

The Prophet ﷺ saw all of this coming when he spoke of the 73 sects that would eventually engulf the Muslim Ummah; indeed we find it first in the Qurʾān when Allah ﷻ says, (Sūrah 23. Ayāt 52-53:)

وَإِنَّ هَـٰذِهِۦٓ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَٰحِدَةً

And surely this your religion is one religion

wa ʾinna hadẖihi ʾumatukum ʾummatan waḥidata

But they cut their religion among themselves into groups and sects and then began the arguments, cursing, bad mouthing until finally the wars of Muslims on Muslims – all saying "Lā ʾillaha-Llāh".

13. Incidentally according to recent surveys, it is only 40% of the Muslim ʾummah who actually perform their *ṣalāt* (prayers) on a regular basis.

And as the Prophet ﷺ said to the people of his own time:

أنتم في زمان قليل قراؤه كثير فقهاؤه وسيأتي زمان كثير قراؤه قليل فقهاؤه

"You are living during a time when few have memorized (Qurʾān)
while many have understood it,
but a time will come when many will have memorized (Qurʾān)
while few have understood it."

and further, according to Abu Daʾūd:

ألا إن من قبلكم من أهل الكتاب افترقوا على ثنتين وسبعين ملة وإن هذه الملة ستفترق على ثلاث وسبعين ثنتان وسبعون في النار و واحدة في الجنة

Verily the people before you from the People of the Book
split into seventy-two sects. This *dīn* will split into seventy-three;
seventy-two are in the Fire and one is in the Garden.

and this is where we are at the present!

On top of this sorry state every one belonging to one of the seventy-*two* other sects seem to believe that is *they* who will be in the Garden and eveyone else will be in the Fire – all save one – *them*.

A real question facing Muslims today is whether there is anything we can "*do*" about the situation which appears to be one of self destruction, or do we simply wait for the end of time and the appearence of al-Maḥdi ﷺ and the return of the Prophet ʿIsā ﷺ?

Some of us, rather than being reduced to an either/or dilemma, have taken heart from the saying of ʾImām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ﷺ:

"If the ʾImām ﷺ were to be removed from the earth even for an hour, the earth would swallow up its inhabitants just as the sea swallows people," and rather than arguing and fighting have embarked on the search for the ʾImām of this Time – our Time.

for

من مات و لم يعرف امام زمانه مات ميته جاهليه

man māta wa lam yaʿrif ʾimāma zamānahi māta mītah jāhilīyyah

The one who dies without knowing the ʾImām of the time,
dies the death of Jāhilīyah

Alternative ḥadīṯ which provide a slightly different perspective:

Narrated Abū Dāʾūd from Kẖarijah ibn Musab from Zayd ibn ʾAslam from ibn Umar who said: I heard Rasul-u-Llāh ﷺ say that: "whoever dies without *an* ʾimām dies the death of Jahilyyah."

حدثنا أبو داود قال حدثنا خارجة بن مصعب عن زيد بن اسلم عن بن عمر قال
سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول من مات بغير امام مات ميتة جاهلية

Ibn Abu Aṣm, in his book *as-Sunnah*, page 489, records this ḥadīṯ̱:

من مات وليس عليه إمام مات ميتة جاهلية

"Whoever dies without having *an* ʾimām dies the death of a Jahl."

al-Albanī in his commentary writes: "إسناده حسن ورجاله ثقات".

"Its chain is *ḥasan* and all of its narrators are *ṯ̱iqāt*."

ʾImām Muslim has recorded this in his Saḥiḥ, *Kitāb al-ʾImarah*:

من مات وليس في عنقه بيعة مات ميته جاهلية

"Whoever dies without having *bayah* on his neck, (to *an* ʾimām) dies the death of Jahiliyyah."

The major, and most important, difference between these versions of the ḥadīṯ̱ is the difference in the wording:

The one who dies without knowing *The ʾImām* of the Time,
dies the death of Jāhilīyah (oblivion or ignorance)

and;

whoever dies without *an ʾīmām* dies the death of jahiliyyah

Whoever dies without having *an ʾīmām* dies the death of Jahiliyyah.

The difference being "*The ʾImām*" and "*an ʾīmām*".

When we look to a standard definition of "ʾimām" we find: "ʾImām (إمـام / *ʾimām*, pl. أئـمـة / *ʾāʾimmah*) is the name of an ʾIslāmic leadership position. It is most commonly used as the title of a prayer leader in a mosque and Muslim community among Sunni Muslims. In this context, ʾimāms may lead ʾIslāmic prayer services, serve as community leaders, and provide religious guidance."

But when we look more deeply we find that for Sẖīᶜah Muslims, the word "ʾImām ﷺ" has a more central meaning and exalted role in their understanding of ʾIslām through the concept of ʾImāmah.

This "concept of ʾImāmah" is the direct result of events stemming from the time of ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ and, though it was innate from the time of ʾImām ᶜAlī ﷺ, it became cannonical, for the Sẖīᶜah after him as in *asẖ-Sẖīᶜatu ᶜAlī* (followers of ᶜAlī ﷺ).

Both Twelver and ʾIsmāᶜīlī Sẖīᶜah believe that the *ʾāʾimmah* ﷺ are chosen by Allāh ﷻ to be perfect examples for the faithful and to lead humanity in all aspects of life. Further they also believe that all the *ʾāʾimmah* ﷺ chosen are free from committing any sin. They are impeccable which is called *ᶜiṣmah* (عصمة), (literally "protection"), which is incorruptible innocence or the ability to avoid any act of disobedience, in spite of having the power to disobey Allāh ﷻ.

ᶜIṣmah is a divine grace bestowed on a selected human being by Allāh ﷻ that grants that person, who is known as *the* ʾImām ﷺ, a pure constitution, firmness against opponents and the spirit of tranquillity which is an internal peace known in Arabic as *as-Sakīnah* (السكينة), which is also one of the Names of Allāh ﷻ.

In addition to the more generic meaning of an *ʾimām* as one who is the leader of prayer and worship in a *masjid* and one who serves as a leader in the community and one who provides religious guidance *the* ʾImām ﷺ (as such) is considered as infallible (*maᶜṣūm*/ معصوم). This describes a human who is free from error in leading people to belief and in perceiving and communicating divine knowledge.

As such *the* ʾImām ﷺ**,** through the process of *Naṣṣ*, which we mentioned earlier, is a direct inheritor of the Prophet ﷺ through ᶜAlī ﷺ and, of necessity, is immune from error and sin in order that he may perform the mission of upholding and promoting the religion (*dīn*), explaining and interpreting (*taʾwīl*) the Qurʾān, and establishing a pure ethical system by which people may lead their lives.

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّـهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

ʾinnama yurīdu-llāhu li-yuẖdẖiba ᶜankumu-r-rijåsa ʾahla-l-bayti wa yuṭahhirakum taṭåhīrā

Allāh only wants to remove impurity from you
people of the House, and to purify you with a thorough purification.
(33:33)

As ᶜAli ﷺ was to the Prophet ﷺ**,** so is the ʾImām ﷺ in relation to Ali ﷺ and hence by extension to the Prophet ﷺ**.**

Just so, and we repeat what ʾImām al-Bāqir ﷺ said, "If the ʾImām ﷺ were to be removed from the earth even for an hour, the earth would swallow up its inhabitants just as the sea swallows people."

Without the ʾImām ﷺ we would not be but, that being so, we are left with a tremendous problem.

We know he ﷺ is here but where is he ﷺ?

The Sunnis barely even admit his existence or conflate him with the Mahdi ﷺ, who is supposed to be coming but not quite yet here despite sensational reports on the Internet that he is here and was supposedly born in such a such year and on such a such day but none of those reports fit even the basic prerequisite Sunni hadīṯ for him ﷺ.

For the Twelvers (*ʾiṯnāᶜasẖariyyah*) he ﷺ is here *but* is here in a state known as Occultation (*gẖaybah*/غـيـبـة) meaning he is here but is hidden or shielded or has disappeared, *but* will one day return fully manifest and fill the world with peace, justice and mercy.

The *ʾiṯnāᶜasẖariyyah* believe that in 873 CE, after the killing of his father, ʾImām al-ʾAskarī ﷺ, the twelfth Imam was hidden from the authorities of the ᶜAbbāsid caliphate as a precaution. His whereabouts were disclosed only to a select few. Four close associates of his father became mediators or deputies (*safīr*/سـفـيـر) for the ʾImām ﷺ with his followers, until the year 941 CE. This period is considered to be the first or Minor Occultation (*gẖaybah*).

When believers faced difficulty, they would write their concerns and send them to his deputy. The deputy would then receive the reply of the ʾImām ﷺ, endorse it with his seal and signature, and return it to the concerned parties. The deputies also collected *zakat* and *kẖums* on his behalf. For the Sẖīᶜah, the idea of consulting a hidden ʾImām was not something new, as the two prior Sẖīᶜah ʾImāms ﷺ had, on occasion, met with their followers from behind a curtain.

The Minor Occultation and the System of the Deputy

According to Twelvers, under the critical situation brought about by the ᶜAbbāsids, ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ was the first to create an underground system of communication in the Sẖīᶜah community.

From the time of ʾImām ᶜAlī ar-Riḍā ﷺ (aka ᶜAlī Reẓa), the ʾImāms were under the direct control of the ᶜAbbāsid authorities and direct contact between the ʾImām ﷺ and the community was often disconnected. The situation led to the increase in the role of deputies. who undertook certain tasks of the *ʾAʾimmah* ﷺ to release the ʾImāms ﷺ from the political pressures of the ᶜAbbāsids. After ʾImām al-ʾAskarī ﷺ four deputies acted in succession:

1. ʿUtẖmān ibn Saʿid al-Aṣadī
2. Abu Jāʾfar Muḥammad ibn ʿUtẖmān
3. Abu-l-Qaṣim Ḥusayn ibn Rūḥ al-Nawbakẖtī
4. Abu-l-Ḥasan ʿĀlī ibn Muḥammad aṣ-Ṣamarrī

In 941 CE (329 AH), the fourth deputy announced a statement by Muḥammad al-Maḥdi that the deputy would soon die and that the office of deputy would end, and the Major Occultation would begin. The fourth deputy died six days later, and the Twelvers continue to await the ʾImām's عليه السلام re-appearance. In the same year, many notable scholars such as ʿAlī ibn Babwayh Qummī and Muḥammad ibn Yaqūb Kulaynī, the learned compiler of *al-Kāfī,* also died.

Major Occultation

The Major Occultation denotes the second longer portion of the Occultation which continues to the present day. Twelver Sẖīʿah believe, based on the last deputy's deathbed message, that the Twelfth ʾImām decided not to appoint another deputy (ambassador/سفير). Thus, aṣ-Ṣamarrī's death marked the beginning of the second and Major Occultation. According to the last letter of Muḥammad al-Mahdī عليه السلام addressed to ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad aṣ-Ṣamarrī.

"From the day of your death [adressing the last deputy] the period of my major occultation will begin. Henceforth, ***no one*** will see me, unless, and until, Allāh سبحانه وتعالى causes me to appear. My reappearance will take place after a very long time when people will have grown tired of waiting and those who are weak in their faith will say: "What! Is *he* still alive?"

"Rest assured, no one has a special relationship with Allāh. Whoever denies me is not from my (community). The appearance of the Relief depends solely upon Allāh. Therefore, those who propose a certain time for it are liars.

"As to the benefit of my existence in occultation, it is like the sun behind the clouds. Though eyes do not see it – yet it shines." (*Kitāb al-Kafī*, al-Kulaynī)

With regard to advice for his followers during his absence, he is reported to have said: "Refer to the transmitters of our traditions, for they are my *ḥujāj* (proofs) unto you as I am the proof unto them."

Without wishing in any way to deride the beliefs of either the Sunnis or the Twelvers (*ʾIṯnāᶜasẖāriyyah*), both of these explanations leave a lot to be desired when you, for instance, take into account the saying of ʾImām al-Bāqir ﷺ which we have twice before mentioned and, **must** necessarily, heavily emphasize: "If the ʾImām ﷺ were to be removed from the earth even for an hour, the earth would swallow up its inhabitants just as the sea swallows people."

All Sẖīᶜah schools claim that the ʾImām ﷺ is *here*, albeit with different understandings, of what "*here*" means, but on an earth containing 7½ billion+ people the question remains — exactly where?

On the other hand most Sunnis (and a minority of Sẖīᶜah) believe the ʾImām (al-Mahdī/المهدى) ﷺ has not yet been born and his exact identity is known only to Allāh ﷻ. Either they do not believe that the world would swallow up its inhabitants (which manifestly it has not) or they don't, in Truth, know what they are talking about which is to say, as politely as possible, that, sadly, they are very mistaken.

If, on the other hand, we take the view of the ʾIṯnāᶜasẖāriyyah, who say that he is alive but "hidden" (*gẖayb*), then we have to somehow believe that he has been in this state since 941 CE (329 AH) for 1076 years or, originally, since 873 CE, after the death of his father ʾImām al-ʾAskarī ﷺ, the eleventh ʾImām, for it was then that the twelfth ʾImām ﷺ was hidden from the authorities — for some one thousand one hundred and forty-four years (1,144), which is a very long time to say the least.

Of course with Allāh ﷻ all things are possible.

We know, for instance, from Sūrah al-Ankabut (29:14), the Prophet Nūḥ ﷺ (Noah) 'preached' for "one thousand years less fifty" or 950 years and Prophet Ādam ﷺ in Genesis (5:4) lived 930 years. Though there is no specific age for Ādam ﷺ given in Qurʾān, inferring from ʾibn Katẖīr's *Qiṣāṣ al-ʾAmbiyāʾ*, we might say Ādam ﷺ lived more than a thousand years.

Given that Ādam ﷺ comes at the beginning of this cycle of sacred history (not to be confused with secular world history) (see *Cyclical Time and Ismāʾīlī Gnosis* of H. Corbín) and al-Mahdī ﷺ comes at the end of the present Cycle, one could existentially understand that it is within the realm of sacred probability that the ʾImām ﷺ could possibly still be alive even though 'hidden' (*gẖayb*).

However most of us do not see him, whereas in the cases of both Ādam ﷺ and Nūḥ ﷺ they were both visible and active throughout their lives which, according to the Twelvers is certainly not the case with the 'Hidden' Imām ﷺ as the last Ambassador made very clear:

"Henceforth, no one will see me, unless and until Allāh makes me appear. My reappearance will take place after a very long time when people will have grown tired of waiting and those who are weak in their faith will say: 'What! Is *he* still alive?'"

So from the ʾIṯnāʿasẖāriyyah perspective even if it is possible it remains a far stretch, both in the length of time and the lack of outward evidence of the ʾImām ﷺ being in action in a world so desperately in need of his manifest being, even if that fits the saying "Those who are weak in their faith will say: "What! Is *he* still alive?"

The ʾIsmāʿīlī Niẓārīs claim, however, that the ʾImām *is* quite alive and, by their calculations based on their *silsilah* (chain) or *sẖajarah* (tree) which lists by name every ʾImām ﷺ prior to the present one, the 49th ʾImām ﷺ, Sẖah Karīm al-Ḥusaynī, is the manifest ʾImām of this time and has retained many of the original Fāṭimid teachings of social and spiritual good works as well as service to humanity, which, in his case, takes the form of establishing schools, hospitals and social services in some of the neediest areas of the world.

However, in spite of the existence of these chains and trees there remain questions arising from the three, or perhaps four, questionable periods regarding the succession, since, according to Niẓārī teaching, the transference of the *Naṣṣ* must be clear and there can be absolutely ***NO*** gaps in the chain between one ʾImām ﷺ and the next.

The first question occurred between the time of Muḥammad bin ʾIsmāʿīl's ﷺ 'disappearence' in the late 8th century and the reappearence of Fāṭimid Imāms in the late 9th century. The second from the time of the death of Niẓār ﷺ in the 11th century to the time of Ḥasan ʿala Dẖikri Salām ﷺ in the late 12th century and the third between the fall of Alamūt in 1256 and the emergence of ʾImām Kẖalīl Allāh ﷺ in the 18th century. The possible fourth questionable time occurs in 1866 and events surounding the "Bombay Case" when the then "Aga Khan" was acknowledged to be the "official" ʾIsmāʿīlī Niẓārī ʾImām by the British Government

It was at this point I was about to conclude this essay with my final thoughts but when I had submitted the text for review the consensus of opinion was that I had somehow not fully explicated the Twelver perspective and not given enough consideration to the five ʾImāms ﷺ who followed ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ if you disallow the claim that ʾImām Ismāᶜīl ﷺ had conferred the *Naṣṣ* on his first born son, ʾImām Muḥammad ibn Ismāʾīl ﷺ, and taken the progression from ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ which goes as follows: (please see charts)

7. Mūsā al-Kāẓim bin Jāᶜfar ﷺ or The One who Controls his Temper, the son of his second wife, Hamida, a Berber from North Africa.

8. ʾImām ᶜAlī Ibn Mūsā ﷺ or ᶜAlī Reza, The Pleasing One,

born one month after the death of his grandfather ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ

9. ʾImām Muḥammad Ibn ᶜAlī ﷺ
or at-Taqī, The One who fears Allāh, and al-Jawād, The Generous.

10. ʾImām ᶜAlī Ibn Muḥammad ﷺ
or al-Hadī, The Guide, or an-Naqī, The Pure One.

11. ʾImām Ḥasan Ibn ᶜAlī ﷺ or al-ᶜAskarī, Captive of the Army.

and finally

12. ʾImām Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan ﷺ or al-Mahdi, The Guided, al-Ḥujjah, The Proof and al-Qāʾim, The One Who Rises, who is also commonly called the Hidden or Occluded ʾImām.

As it was never my intention to write an account of the ʾĀʾimmah (الأئمة) I have not gone into greater detail concerning the above Itẖnā-ʾasẖariyyah ʾĀʾimmah ﷺ because of the reality that their ability to operate openly and freely as ʾĀʾimmah ﷺ was severely curtailed by both the Umayyads and ᶜAbbāsids, whose leaders repeatedly imprisoned then and reputedly poisoned each of them save the last, who, at the age of 5, was forced into Occlusion in order to survive.

It is widely understood that ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ publically designated his first son Ismāᶜīl ﷺ as his successor, though others claim Ismāᶜīl, who was sickly and pre-deceased his father, was named as ʾImām only as a ruse (*taqiyyah*) to shelter his full brother ᶜAbdullāh al-Aftah ﷺ from the Ummayads and the Abbasids.

Importantly from al-Aftah ﷺ came the ʾImāms of the Satr (veil/ستر) al-Wafī ﷺ, at-Taqī ﷺ and ar-Raḍī ﷺ, father of al-Mahdi Billah ﷺ, founder of the Fāṭimid Caliphate and first open Fāṭimid ʾImām ﷺ.

The question of who was the true successor of ʾImām Jāʿfar ﷺ is of extreme importance as he was the last ʾImām recognized by all Shīʿah *and* Sunnī schools. He united all the disparate sects as he was descended from ʾImām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalib ﷺ through his father, and the Righteous Caliph Abu Bakr aṣ-Ṣadiq ﷺ on his mother's side. Moreover the over-whelming majority of Ṣūfī chains of initiatic lineage go through ʾImām Jāʿfar ﷺ, who was designated Sẖaykẖ al ʿUlamāʾ and ʾImām al-Fuqahā as he was widely acknowledged as the most knowledgeable man of the ʾIslāmic world of that time.

For Sẖiʾah and Ṣūfī Muslims, the true successor of ʾImām Jāʿfar ﷺ is the inheritor of his authority, knowledge, and spiritual legacy; and the true lineage of ʾImāmah continues the spiritual virtues, mystical teachings and authoritative knowledge of ʾImām Jāʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ.

But how exactly does that line continue and who are the true inheritors? And, perhaps more importantly, if someone has the *Naṣṣ* in our time, how or where can we see it manifest, as the point and reason for an ʾImām ﷺ is to lead, guide and protect the ʾUmmah.

In fact and in truth, at least from the perspective of this observer, we cannot really talk or think about Sẖīʿism without there being a manifest ʾImām and the fact that the majority of the Sẖīʿah understand him to be in occlusion and so not directly available to the ʾUmmah to the point where his last deputy, ʿĀlī ibn Muḥammad aṣ-Ṣamarrī, brought a letter from the Occluded ʾImām to the ʾUmmah stating:

"From the day of your death [addressing the last deputy aṣ-Ṣamarrī] the period of my major occultation will begin. Henceforth, no one will see me, unless and until Allāh ﷻ makes me appear. (and to repeat) "My reappearance will take place after a very long time when people will have grown tired of waiting and those who are weak in their faith will say: 'What! Is *he* still alive?'"

"Rest assured, no one has a special relationship with Allāh. Whoever denies me is not from my community. The appearance of the Relief depends *solely* upon Allāh. Therefore, those who propose a certain time for it [my re-appearence] are liars."

So whoever the six were that followed ʾImām Jāʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ it ends with an ʾImām who is in occlusion and, contrary to the prerequisites of the office of the ʾImām ﷺ, is *manifestly* not fulfilling the outer duties, obligations and responsibilities of an ʾImām ﷺ.

Instead we have a school called the Twelvers (*Itŧnā ʿAsŧhariyyah*) which in actuality is functionally not very much different from the Sunnīs (save for active acceptance of Walayah (ولايـــة)) except for a kind of underlying residual belief in *an* ʾImām but an ʾImām who is hidden – and thus for all intents and purposes incapable of actually, and actively, guiding and leading the community (*ʾummah*) except, perhaps, in the most hidden, subtle or stealthy of ways.

This is the situation of the Twelvers and has been since aṣ-Ṣamarrī delivered that last message of ʾImām Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ﷺ.

We understand the reasoning whereby the ʾImāmah (after Occultation was declared) was absorbed into the offices of various Mujtahid scholars and the legists who followed – but a Mujtahid is not an ʾImam, because the *Naṣṣ* certifying the ʾImam ﷺ is missing but exists through elections or selections carried out by other humans, rather than by Divine selection and guidance which does not differ in essence or actuality from how Abu Bakr ﷺ, ʿUmar ﷺ and Utŧmān ﷺ *et.al.* gained or acceded to the office of the Caliphate (*kŧulafāʾ*).

Again we repeat — "Who does not know the ʾImām of the Time dies in ignorance (*jahl*)." because the only one who effectively and absolutely really knows the truth and reality *is* the ʾImām ﷺ of this Time. The *ʾimam az-zamān* is the sole governor in and of the world with the *true* authority which originally came from the Prophet ﷺ to ʾAlī ﷺ and then, thru direct designation (*naṣṣ*/نَـص) and the clear injunction of each succeeding ʾImām ﷺ, from ʾAlī ﷺ to the present. It is this being ﷺ alone who finally and absolutely *knows* exactly what is going on in this time and place and space and who alone has any real authority to act or to command the Muslim community.

The six ʾImāms ﷺ who followed ʾImām Jāʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ were all basically prisoners of the ʿAbbāssids and died in Iraq under their custody, most of them, according to ʾImāmī reports, by poisoning. With the exception of ʾImām ʿAlī Reẓa ﷺ they all died young and thus, in truth and in *reality* none of them were able to carry out the full functions, at least outwardly and manifestly, of an ʾImām ﷺ.

We cannot say esoterically, or even spiritually, what functions they performed as virtual or actual prisoners of the political authorities. What we can say is they kept the *Itŧnā ʿAsŧhariyyah* alive and provided support for the cause of the ʾImāmīs. But beyond that ...

which now bring us to the subject of:

The Quest of the ʾImām through Purification of the Heart

فَمَا آمَنَ لِمُوسَىٰ إِلَّا ذُرِّيَّةٌ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ عَلَىٰ خَوْفٍ مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِمْ أَنْ يَفْتِنَهُمْ

But no one, save a few of his people, trusted Mūsā
out of fear that Pharaoh and their own chiefs would persecute them.
(10:83)

As with Mūsā ﷺ so was the case of the response to the Prophet ﷺ. Those those who initially came forward were not tribal elders, notables and chiefs but a few friends, some youth, poor people and slaves.

Similarily the Companions of the ʾImām az-Zamān ﷺ will be few.

According to most accounts they will number only 313 – the same number as those who, against all odds, won the Battle of Badr.

However, some hadīṯ state that the number of his ﷺ companions will be far greater than 313 and as many as ten thousand.

A hadīṯ from ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ says that "The ʾImām will not appear unless the size of his group is completed."

Upon being asked how many his companions would be, he replied, "Ten thousand" (and implied that the 313 are generals).

Likewise, Abu Basīr narrates, "A man from Kufa asked ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ how many they were and that people said that their number was the same as the number of warriors in the Battle of Badr. Then ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ answered that, He ﷺ won't appear unless with a powerful army numbering no less than ten thousand."

Other ḥadīṯ quote the number to be at least twelve thousand and some others cite fifteen thousand. Other ḥadīṯ state that the ʾImām ﷺ will have no less than a hundred thousand helpers. *Allāhu ᶜalim*!

انّهم حكام الأرض وعماله عليها وبهم يفتح شرق الأرض وغربه

Verily they are the rulers of the earth and his agents in it,
and with them he conquers the east of the earth and its west.

But most reliable and solid reports cite 313 as the core number who will see him, talk to him and actually know him. and reports stating the number of companions to be more than 313 imply that the larger numbers are *helpers* who will join forces and serve under him.

When you consider that there are presently some 7½ billion+ people in the world we are talking about a very small number of people in any case and, if you just consider the base number of 313, the number is minuscule and it is very unlikely that any of us, by these accounts, will ever get to know the ʾImam ﷺ and thus most of us will die in ignorance (*jahl*). A very depressing prospect to say the least!

So what then is the hope for us – or in truth is there any?

In my own studies (and suffering and distress rising from the realisation of the odds including the superior spiritual and moral qualities of those 313 and my own lack of such superior qualities) I despair and have become almost resigned to dying as an ignorant Muslim – *al-ḥamdu lī-Llāh* a Muslim – but, sadly, an ignorant *jahl* one.

In the course of my studies and search I have come across an alternative – but one which is fraught with peril – the peril being that of self-delusion – but desperate people are known to take chances.

It is the responsibility of every seeker of the ʾImām ﷺ to prepare for his ﷺ appearence by their *own* efforts and not to passively await the return of a semi-mythical being from a far and distant realm. In reality *no one* will come and do what we ourselves will not do.

The ʾImām ﷺ is not our servant or a house-keeper, who will come and clean up the mess we ourselves have made of this world. There are no shortcuts to the Supreme Reality. There are no easy ways out. If we seek relief then we must expect it to come from our own hands and from out of the depths of our own hearts.

Only those who have made the inner Ḥajj of the heart (*qalb*/قلب) and given *bayʿah* to the ʾImām ﷺ who exists both in and out of time and space, approach the degree of companions of the ʾImām ﷺ. Only then do the physical requisites of the ʾImām ﷺ become incidental, as we find ourselves under the direct tutelage and the guidance of the ʾImām ﷺ who, in reality, is Hidden within our own heart.

Inevitably a moon *must* exist in this night. Anyone who does not attain the knowledge during the time when the moon appears in its real essence, how should they acquire (this knowledge) at a time when the sun is only manifest behind a cloud or a veil (*satr*/*ḥijāb*)?

It is from attaining this knowledge we become from among "those who believe and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allāh for surely in the remembrance of Allāh do hearts find rest." (13:28)

In the vision of the heart the seeker encounters the ʾImām ﷺ in his form of Light. This knowledge entails becoming whole and is equivalent to individual resurrection in which the remoteness or imminence of the End of Time brings no harm, as due to one's search, one already entered the tent of the ʾImām ﷺ even if one doesn't know it.

It should also be understood that in the past *six thousand* years of the "night of the faith" the ʾImām ﷺ became fully manifest only occasionally. These manifestations are not *maᶜnawi*, i.e., those in which he appears in his full glory, so the knowledge of him, in his real essence, is not fully attained. On the contrary in the millennium marking the completion of the spiritual cycle of the seven great ones (*ʾulu-l-ᶜazm*/أولو العزم) – Adam, Nūḥ, ʾIbrāhīm, Mūsā, ᶜIsā, Muḥammad ﷺ and al-Mahdi ﷺ – the Awaited ʾImām ﷺ can be recognised in his *real* nature because on that day his manifestation is complete. In these six thousand years he can only be recognised directly thus:

The manifestation of the ʾImām is a mystery.
Do not associate it with any ordinary person.
Because for the believer who is passing through the Resurrection
(*qiyāmah*/القيامة)
it is immaterial whether he is absent or present.

This is the key to a great secret and the end of much useless specualtion into who, how, why, what, where and when? The fact is that the ʾImām ﷺ *is* because, as we know by now, if *he* ﷺ weren't *we* wouldn't be, as we would have long ago been swallowed by the sea.

يَمْحُو اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيُثْبِتُ وَعِنْدَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ

yamḥu-llāhu mā yasẖāʾu wa yatẖbutū wa ᶜindahu ʾummu-l-kitābi

Allāh erases whatever He wills or confirms it.
The Mother of the Book is with Him.
(13:39)

Be *aware*, for you are stepping into the realm about which it is said, "Our teaching is extemely arduous, very difficult; the only ones who can stand it are a Prophet ﷺ sent from Allah ﷻ, an angel of Proximity, or a faithful believer whose *heart* has been tested by Allāh, Most High, for faith." In this realm of search, as I mentioned before, there is always the possibility for the seeker to fool his or her self because how do *you* discern between what is real and what is not?

If you seek the ʾImām ﷺ in the realm of three dimensional time and space and find him ﷺ, then you know him without doubt since he ﷺ is right before your eyes, you can touch his hand, hear his voice; but when you seek him ﷺ within the heart, how do you really know that what you have found or sensed is *really* real and not just an apparition emerging out of your own deep and desperate desire?

In the created, material world the posterity (*awlad*/أولاد) of everything is always similar (in properties) to its progenitors (*salaf* /سلف) so that the son takes the place of the father.

The same is true of the spiritual world, and the world of primal realities (*amrī*), with the adversaries who maintain this on the basis of their *sẖariᶜat* (law), the "people of order" (*ahl-i-tarattub*) from their doctrine (*taᶜlim*), and the "people of (Divine) unity" (*ahl-i-waḥdat*), i.e., the Ḥujjah, from the Divine assistance (*taʾyid*). It should also be importantly noted that the manifestation of the ʾImām ﷺ) in all these worlds is relative (*ʾidafī*), not absolute (*ḥaqīqī*).

If it were absolute, it would have the power to rule the world of "possibles" (*mumkināt*/المكنات). The term "relative" (*idafī*) is applied to something that resembles something else (in certain respects), but is essentially different from it, as a mirage resembles water, or a reflection in a mirror is necessarily different from what it resembles.

The real, or absolute (*ḥaqīqī*) is something that ***is*** the original true reality, not as water is resembled by a mirage, nor an original object reflected in a mirror. It is what it is (*ḥaqīqī*) and nothing is like it,

So Raʾis Ḥasan says in a poem:-

You are a being that appears as a man to men,
before the eyes of men, in this world;
In the form of a man you are and with men you remain.

You come among men not showing your real face, because in your pure and attributeless essence you are, in Truth, void of every form. If you appear amongst men, you are a man, if you come amid spirits then you are a spirit, You grant them their existence as well as govern them.

"The vision of the eye is limited but the vision of the heart transcends all the barriers of time and space." (ʾImām Alī ﷺ)

In another poem Raʾis Ḥasan says *On the Recognition of the ʾImām:*

"The reason why you have received the illusory attributes,
and why they became incalculable for the world,
is that every religion, whether it be true or false, good or bad,
invented its own way (of worship) and calls you by a different name.
Of all these names and attributes, which appeared,
a garden rose up with young trees saying: "I was a Hidden Treasure."
You take part in all these coming only from you.
There comes the existence of all these, inherent in various beings.
But in the eyes of the Truth; in your real essence;
you are really void of all the attributes and ***all*** the names."

And Kẖwaja Naṣr says:

"Oh you, in whose existence is a possibility of being for the world.
Oh you, in whose protection is the safety of mankind!
As a person you are the manifestation of the Divine Light,
And in the view of reason
You are the source of the different kinds of creations of the world.
You come appearing to the eyes of all creatures, but remain hidden
even from the Universal Reason in your mysterious power.
All three worlds are with you, and you are with all of them."

Both the material and spiritual worlds come from you, but You are from all of them. Therefore it is to be understood, that only the manifestation of the ʾImām ﷺ in these worlds is their real cause, not anything else.

Reading these few poetic flashes it is only clear how unclear it all is and can be. What do you really see? What do you really know?

You are left in this endless state of unknowing and so, for most of us, tho we seek the unimpeachable reality of substance but, as we see and *is* clear, the odds remain enormous (313 out of 7½ Billion+).

And even, on occassion when you have every reason to think you have actually seen or actually been in the company of the real tangible four dimensional ʾImām ﷺ still — how do you *really* know?

Here is a tenth century story of one man's meeting with the ʾImām ﷺ:

A Persian man made the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) to Makkah – a journey of about 2,000 kilometers from his home in Hamadan and on the way back, a day out of Makkah, he lost his way and his travel companions.

In the morning he found himself wandering alone in the desert but, placing his trust in Allāh, he suddenly saw a garden that neither he nor anyone else has ever heard of or seen before. He enters it.

At the door of a pavilion within the garden two young men dressed all in white await him and lead him to another handsome young man of seemingly supernatural beauty. To the Ḥajji's fearful and awestruck astonishment, he learns that he is in the presence of the ʾImām ﷺ of the Time. The latter speaks to him about his future Appearance and finally, addressing the lost man by name, asks him whether he wants to return to his home and family.

Certainly, he wants to do so! The ʾImām ﷺ signals one of his aides, who gives the traveler a purse with travel money and takes him by the hand, and guides him back out through the gardens. They walk together until the traveler sees a group of houses, a *masjid*, and shade trees that seem familiar to him. Smiling, the aide asks him: "Do you know this land?" "Near where I live in Hamadan"' he replies, "there is a city called Asadābad in Kunar Province, which looks very much like this place." The aide says to him, "But you are in Asadābad!" Amazed, the traveler realizes that he is actually a few kilometres from his home. He turns around to look more closely and when he turns back the young aide is no longer there and he is alone, but the bag of coins he was given him are still in his hand.

But what are the odds of this?

Again what is 313 in 7½+ billion or even 4,000 in 7½+ billion?

Yes it is possible ... but...? Pretty long odds!

So given impossible odds it all goes back to the purification of the heart if we can hope to see some result always bearing in mind, as we have stressed, it is so easy to fool your self. But unless you want to die ignorant, in the *jahaliyyah*, there is no real alternative.

There are of course numerous guide books to the purification of the heart but even with all of the books if there is no Guide; – a living human being who has made the journey and returned, one is left 'browsing' and that is a very questionable method. Allāh ﷻ says:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ

Qad ʾaflaḥa man tazakka

"Successful is the one who purifies (his soul)."

Of course it would all be much easier if the whole set of problems that arose in the time of ʾImām Jāʿfar ﷺ had not come into being and we could simply find the ʾImām ﷺ but Allāh ﷻ continually holds out the hope and promise and it is really quite clear that ...

اَلَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ اَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

"Those who believe and whose hearts find rest
in (or by) the remembrance of Allāh;
surely by the remembrance of Allāh do hearts find rest."
(13:28)

and this again is like the ʾayat we mentioned earlier,

اللّٰهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتّٰى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ

Allāh does not change a people
until they first change what is in themselves.
(13:11)

If one can put these two things together it is possible to come to the internal reality of what, in the time of ʾImām Jāʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ, was an outer reality, by which I mean that when he ﷺ began teaching in Madinah afer the death of his father ﷺ in 114 H. it was possible to go to Madinah and study with him, put questions to him, talk with him, pray with him even, possibly, eat with him, After his death in 148 H. that was over and slowly and then more rapidly we entered into the realm, in which we now live, in which the ʾImām ﷺ is, for all intents and purposes, hidden for the vast majority (save for 313) of us and inaccessable in the extreme. BUT some of us have heard of him and some of us (over the centuries) have even sought to find him, both out of love and out of the fear of dying in ignorance. Some have found him ﷺ or, even better, he ﷺ has found them.

Thru internal visualization (*muraqabah*) a way has been opened up to us, not through speculation or delusion, by which we may come to know the ʾImām of our Time and that Way comes through the Purification of our Heart (*taṭahīran qalbinā* /تطهير قلبنا) and learning how to *be* in the barzakh (برزخ) – that is – neither here nor there.

Simply knowing that doesn't make it any easier but it does give us the certainty of a possbility and a way out from under huge odds.

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي . . .

Today, I have perfected your religion for you,
and completed My Favor upon you ...
(5:3)

According to canonical and most frequently reiterated ʾImāmī exegesis, this part of the third ayat of *Sūrah al-Māāʾidah* or "The Table Spread" concerns the Revelation for the Dispensation (*Naṣṣ*) of the *wālaya* of ʾAlī ﷺ to the Prophet ﷺ ... and by extension to ourselves; ʾinshaʾLlāh thru the actual vision of the ʾImām ﷺ, he may speak to us and we may hear from his lips his spoken words.

This verse establishes *wālaya*, loyal friendship towards the *ʾaʾimmāh* ﷺ as a religious duty, for it is only thru internalizing their spoken teachings (teachings preceding directly from their lips) that we can apprehend the meaning constituted through the *walāya* revealing the true prophetic message *taʾwīl* (تأويل) contained in the actual *waḥī.*

"The Friends — his children — are — one by one — nourished,
by the portions placed upon His Table."

This is why, for many reasons (and ... there are yet others), we have stressed so heavily over the past few years the necessity of moving on and not looking back — take what you need and move on.

If one has found the Way then the Way must be taken, and the Way – by virtue of its own definition – is always moving on.

Revelation (*waḥī*/وحي) gives way to Protection (*walī*/ولي).

But, it must be understood, tho *waḥī* leads to *walī*, yet *ʾislam* remains.

وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ ۚ

wa dīni-l-ḥaqqi-li-yuḍẖhirahu ᶜala-d-dīni kulliḥ
The religion (*dīn*) of Truth
which He shall cause to shine forth over all.
(48:29p)

وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

wa raḍītu lakum al-ʾislām dīnan
and We have favored you with the *dīn* of ʾIslām.

the Way of surrender = the Way of peace
the Way perhaps best defined in Sūratu-l-Fatḥ ʾāyāt 28 as:

دِينِ الْحَقِّ

The Religion of Truth

But before we see this *Religion of Truth* manifest we will see the appearance of tribulations; the loss of honesty; the disappearance of knowledge; the spread of *riba*, drugs and alcohol and regarding these things as permissible; competition in erecting tall buildings; lots of killing; time passing quickly; adornment of the *masājid*; prevalence of *sẖirk*; the spread of immorality; wide spread stinginess; heavy rains and floods but little growth of vegetation, earthquakes, volcanos; climate change; landslides; bombs falling on the innocents; the disappearance of the righteous; neglect of the *sunnah*; much lying; outright false testimony; everywhere instances of violent death; and the wish for death; suicides; increase in the numbers of "Romans" (militarist secular materialist consumers) and fighting with them (as now in Syria, Iraq and the Yemen). This is our everyday reality *now*.







Now, as you the reader can see, the signs are coming more quickly: According to a ḥadīṯẖ of Abu Hurayrah ﷺ, the Prophet ﷺ said: "The signs will come one after another, like beads slipping down a string." Narrated by al-Tabarāni in *al-Muʿjam al-Awsat*.

All of this began slowly and then gradually it became possible to observe the increasingly rapid destruction of the united interconnected homogenous *dīn* of ʾIslam — the so-called *big tent*.

Consider:

As late as 1900 more than 95% of Sunnī Muslims were what are called ʾUsūlī traditionalists, adhering to the scholarship of the four schools (*madẖāhib*) of Asẖʾarite-Maturidī theology and jurisprudence whilst spiritually embracing the Ṣufism of al-Gẖazalī and taking Azhar (and similar schools) as the basis for thought *and* practice.

But in the 1700's Muḥammad ibn ᶜAbdu-l-Wahhāb (1703–1792), a religious reformer from a village called Diriyah in a remote sparsely populated region of Najd in central Arabia, founded the movement now known as Wahhābism He advocated a purging of wide-spread Sunnī practices such as Mawlid an-Nabī ﷺ, veneration of saints (*ʾawliyā*), visiting their tombs (*maqamāt*), seeking their intercession; all practiced across the Islamic world, but which he considered idolatry (*sẖirk*), impure and 'reprehensible' innovation (*bidᶜah*/بدعة). Eventually in 1744 he formed a pact with a local tribal militant, Muḥammad bin Saᶜūd, offering political obedience and promising that protection and propagation of the Wahhābi movement would mean "power and glory" and rule of "lands and men. for Āl Saᶜud"

The alliance between followers of ᶜAbdu-l-Wahhāb and Muḥammad bin Saᶜūd's successors, the House of Āl Saᶜūd, proved to be a durable one. The Āl Saᶜūd continued to maintain its politico-religious alliance with the Wahhabi sect through the waxing and waning of its own political fortunes over the next 150 years, leading to the proclamation of the 'so-called' *Kingdom* of Saᶜūdī Arabia in 1932, and then into the present when Ibn ᶜAbdu-l-Wahhāb's teachings are the official aggressively intolerant state-sponsored anti-Usulī neo-Kẖarijite Takfirī Fundamentalist sect of ʾIslām in *"Saᶜūdī*" Arabia.

With funding from petroleum exports, the movement underwent explosive growth beginning in the 1970's and gained world-wide influence. The US State Department has estimated that over the past four decades Āl Saᶜūd pumped over $80bn into 'charitable' foundations in an attempt to replace mainstream 'Usulī' Sunnī ʾIslām with Wahhabism. This harshly intolerant anti-social militant sect led directly to the so-called 'Islamic State' and all of its evil excesses.

Coupled with radical neo-Kẖarijite, psuedo-Salafī, Takfirī/Wahhabism is the parallel political ideology of The Muslim Brotherhood - a transnational Sunni ʾIslām***ist*** organization founded in March 1928 in ʾIsmāīlīa, Egypt by Ḥassan al-Banna as a would be religious but. in fact, political/social movement which has spread throughout the Sunnī world and in 2012 sponsored a political party in Egypt which, briefly, elected a populist government after the 2011 Spring uprising.

The Brotherhood's stated goal is to instill the Qurʾān and the Sunnah as the "sole reference point for...ordering the life of the Muslim family, individual, community ... ***and*** state". Its mottos include "Believers are but Brothers", "Islam is the Solution", "Allāh is our objective; the Qurʾān is the Constitution; the Prophet is our leader; Jihad is our way and death for the sake of Allāh is our wish." Not hard to see where this lead, and leads, no matter how short lived.

These two groups of anti-ʾUsūlīs, along with a growing number of connected brands such as al-Qaʿida, ISIS, Dāʿisẖ and the "Don't Knows" have reduced the world of ʾUsūlī Sunnī ʾIslām from some 95% in 1900 to some 70% or less at present. People won't admit to this and give lip service to the past, but the reality is plain to see.

The whole *takfirī* movement is primarily a war against ʾUsūl with it's first targets Asẖʿarites and Ṣufis. A war sometimes 'hot' with persecution and killing and sometimes 'cold' where *takfīr* is believed, pronounced and taught – clearly evident in the invective on the internet.

Coupled with this is the difficulty of earning a living in what are economic slave states, resulting in the average Muslim being so tired at day's end that there is neither time nor the aspiration (*himma*/الهمة) needed to really study the *dīn,* much less to recite Qurʾān aloud on a regular basis. Life has so worn people down that in addition to *not knowing*, they simply *don't care* unless a major crisis arises or death occurs in which case they run to the Qurʾān and make a lot of *duʿāʾ*.

Much of this can be traced back to the break-up and fracturing of the more-or-less unified ʾIslam that existed after the death of ʾImām Jāʿfar ﷺ**,** which gradually, and then rapidly, has led to what *is* now.

Again that is why the search for the ʾImām ﷺ is so crucial for, as we have tried to clarify in this essay, without contact with the living and manifest ʾImām ﷺ we shall die the death of ignorance and suffer the results of that ignorance in the after-life. But for ...

The Quest for the ʾImām ﷺ thru the Purification of the Heart.

"Oh you whose soul is at peace.
Return to your Lord pleased and well pleasing.
Enter (the ranks of) My worshippers and enter My Garden."

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ
ارْجِعِي إِلَى رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَرْضِيَّةً
فادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِ وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي



But how does this take place?

Mirza al-Ḥusayn Nūrī presents a masterful summary of practices required for the vision of the ʾImam ﷺ.

"One can become a confidant of secrets and worthy of being introduced into the close circle of the elect thanks to learning and its application, through total piety, knowledge, beseeching, repentance and the purification of the soul from all impurities, doubts, uncertanties, errors and vices ... however the goal here is not to indicate an absolutely certain method to attain the vision since, even if all the religious obligations, rules and principles are observed, and all that is unlawful, or even ill-advised, abandoned, there are other preliminary veiled and secret factors that are not revealed and only explained to those who are worthy. The aim here is to indicate a path that will *perhaps* enable the good sent - *the vision* - even in a dream, to benefit the seeker and lead to access to the ʾImām of the Time.

It is also possible that each individual will be obliged to accomplish a specific action chosen from the pious deeds and conduct (*sunnah*) inherited from the Prophet ﷺ according to the seekers personal situation, time, place and capabilities. He may discover this practice by sustained attention and contemplation, by *dẖikr*, by *muraqabah,* or seeking help from someone else, wise and intelligent, who is capable of inner perception (*kashf*) who can point the way.

It may be that a certain word or deed might better suit an individual and for sure the rate of success varies greatly according to time, place and capabilities, One person may give alms (*ṣadaqah*), another may teach, a third may focus on *ṣalat*, or fasting (*sawm*) or *ḥajj*.

However there are certain conditions one must follow in all cases. Fulfill the *farḍ,* avoid unlawful things, respect ritual purity with regard to food, drink and clothing; and **always** have pure intentions.

Given all that it still may come down to something as *simple* as in the *ḥadīṯ* of the Prophet ﷺ "He who sincerely worships Allāh for forty mornings, Allāh ﷻ will cause sources of knowledge to rise up from his heart." or something as *simple* as "He who has a request to make to Allāh ﷻ and seeks to see Us (We, the ʾImāms) and to know his situation before Allāh ﷻ ought for three consecutive nights to perform full ablutions (*gẖusl*) and pray secretly through us. Then ʾinsẖallāh he wll see Us, he will be pardoned thanks to Us and his situation before Allāh ﷻ will be revealed to him." Also there is a duᶜa called *Duᶜāʾ al-Ahd* in which one pledges Allegiance (*Ahd*) to the ʾImām az-Zamān ﷺ which should be read daily without fail!

In all cases may we be united in the practice of *dẖikr* which brings rest to our hearts, "for surely in the remembrance of Allāh do hearts find rest." And may we all benefit from the Grace and Mercy of Allāh ﷻ. We pray that through the *dẖikr* of the Presence in the heart we may gaze upon the face of the Perfect Being – the ʾImām ﷺ – the Face that derives from the mystery of the Light of Walaya that we have seen by the Eye of the Heart and by the Eye that is I.

Thus may our innermost self be educated and may we reach the station of total effacement (*fanāʾ*) and truly enter the Garden.

Dear reader: If you have read through to this point it is my deep hope you will have understood something of what is involved in the search for the ʾImām of the Time.

ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ said, "Not everyone who intends to do something can do it. Not everyone who is able to do something will be granted success but when intention, ability, success and correctness all come together then happiness is perfected." As ʾImām ᶜAlī ﷺ said, "Whoever knocks persistently ends up entering." (إن شاء الله)

27 Ramaḍān 1438 / 21 June 2017
Green Mountain, Virginia

Neither Here nor There — A Thought within the Mind in relation to: The Perpetual Return of the ʾImām ﷺ

Sẖahāb ad-dīn Suhrawardī ﷺ, in his treatise: *Book of Conversations* wrote about a world where there are cities whose number is impossible to count; cities among which our Prophet ﷺ himself named The Emerald Cities of Jabalqa and Jabarsa as well as the Interworld city of Hurqalya – where pilgrims of the spirit may contemplate and within them find everything that is the object of their highest desires and aspirations. Cities or spaces or places between the *ʿalamatu-l-mulk* or the physical world of the dunyāʾ and the angelic world of *ʿalamatu-l-malakūt* – which one encournters both upon death and also in states of deep meditation as well as lucid dream states.

Over the past one thousand plus years, in contradistinction to popular beliefs of most Sunnis and Shīʿah, there has been a small number of *ʿurafāʾ* who have maintained that the ʾImām az-Zamān ﷺ has long ago ascended from the *ʿalamatu-l-mulk* to a world unseen by physical eyes – a world in between the *ʿalamatu-l-mulk* or the physical world of the *dunyāʾ* and the angelic world of *ʿalamatu-l-malakūt* to an inbetween world known as the *Barzakẖ* (بـــــرزخ) – a world – a world neither here nor there – in which there is a city – or perhaps a thought within the mind – encountered in states of deep meditation or lucid dreams which are called *ruyāʾ* (رويـــــاء), a true or veridical dream vision, mentioned, among other places, specifically in Sūrah Fatẖ 48:27 – "Allāh has fulfilled the Vision (*ruʾyā*) of His Messenger in Truth." (لَقَدْ صَدَقَ اللّهُ رَسُولَهُ الرُّؤْيَا بِالْحَقِّ).

Whilst there are people (of whom we have written extensively in the preceding pages) who are seeking the ʾImam az-Zamān ﷺ, most, because they are caught up in internal strife and impurity (*fiṭnah*), do not find him and conclude he is in a hidden state or in occlusion, not understanding that it is ***they*** themselves who are occluded due to their own impurity, and the Imām ﷺ in Truth is quite present for, indeed, as we have learned, the world could not exist without his being present. We may say that the vision of the ʾImām ﷺ and, in time, and with great perseverence, the meeting with the ʾImām ﷺ depends on the Purification of the Self or the Heart which brings about the real event of the face-to-face meeting with the ʾImām ﷺ.

Thus it is not some hypothetical date in time which we must be anticipating and waiting for but, rather, the return which takes place when we, thru the guidance of a true teacher, reach the state of 'no-state' – the state of *fanāʾ* (فناء) – of passing away and annihilation, a breaking down of the individual ego and recognition of the fundamental singular unity of Allāh, the self and the creation as a whole accompanied by the awakening of the *rūḥu-l-qudus* (Holy Spirit/روح القدس) within our being so we may finally and actually "see" the ʾImām ﷺ.

We might say that the vision of, or sighting, of the ʾImām ﷺ can be likened to sensing the Oneness of Existence or *Waḥdatu-l-Wujūd*.

As I wrote earlier there is the great danger in this approach of fooling your self. Many ships have disappeared in this sea and almost every century has seen the advent of some psuedo-Mahdi. Our ability to fool our selves is immense, nevertheless the Supreme Governing Reality (*al-Ḥaqīqah*) is not bound by the constraints of time/space, culture, individual consciousness, belief or desire. What is – ***is*** – and neither hope nor misplaced belief can change what is.

All of the imposters in the world can arise claiming to sit on the seat of the ʾImām ﷺ but that cannot invalidate Reality. Prophet ʿIsā ﷺ told us, "by their fruits you shall know them." (Matthew 7:16)

— what is real ***is*** real —

We can define, codify, center our realities around certain memes and paradigms which we may subjectively fixate upon and grow attached to but nevertheless all of these individual realities are in the end governed supremely by one singular and immutable Reality – the Ḥaqqīqah, the Supreme Reality, ***the*** Truth (al-Ḥaqq).

Once you have truly embarked upon the mystical journey to the Golden Masjid on the Green Island (*Jaziratu-l-Kẖaḍra*) within the White Sea beyond the oceans of the elements, you will find the true teacher – the ʾImām of your being. When you understand this, then any idea of a physical return of the ʾImām ﷺ (real or imagined) is incidental to Spiritual Reality for the perpetual return is not bound by the constraints of time and space nor is it hastened by mourning and tears. We must understand the words uttered by the 12th ʾImām ﷺ for those who had (and have) ears to hear. "If our followers were firm in their promise and whole hearted in their being then our meeting would never have been delayed."

The communal delay of the Qāʾim ﷺ from the time of ʾImām Jāʿfar ﷺ to an unknown time in a future generation was a reaction to human insufficiency and spiritual unpreparedness. Our individual hope is only in our own whole hearted committment, for Allāh ﷻ wants only perfection for us, but if we do not accept His invitation to perfection then the Will of Allāh changes in response to *our* rejection.

Imām ʿAlī al-Hadī ﷺ said, "If your ʾImām goes into hiding, expect freedom from grief [to come from] beneath your own two feet."

It is the responsibility of every follower and seeker to prepare for the ʾImām ﷺ by their own efforts. The ʾImām ﷺ will not come and do what we will not do. The ʾImām ﷺ is not our servant who will come and clean up the mess we our selves have made. There are no shortcuts; nor easy ways out. If we seek relief then we must expect it to come from beneath our own feet. Once we give *bayʿah* to the ʾImam ﷺ who lives beyond and outside the boundaries of time and space – only then does the physical return of the ʾImam ﷺ become incidental as we find ourselves under the instruction and guidance of the ʾImām ﷺ hidden within our own True Self – present simultaneously in the past, present and future. Having attained the state of al-Kẖidr, the Green Man, the ʾImam hidden from the material senses is present in the *qulūb (hearts)* of his true supporters.

ʾImām ar-Riḍā ﷺ said, "Neither his body can be seen nor his name mentioned." One who is not in the same spiritual state cannot perceive him and will never recognize him even if he is standing right next to you. Only through giving *bayʿah* to him alone and traversing this path is it that your ʾImām ﷺ can take you on the path of perfection as the boundaries of "you" and "he" melt away disintegrating what you once called "your" self.

The rise of the ʾImām ﷺ takes place first within the heart (*qalb*) of the True Believer (*muʾmin*) and secondarily through the manifestation of the Divine Will – on earth as it is in Heaven.

ʿIlm is not extensive learning but, rather, it is a light that Allāh ﷻ places in the innermost heart of whom so ever He wills.

ʾImām Jāʿfar ﷺ says, "Whoever has not been blessed by Allāh with an inner teacher – the teaching of others will be of no use."

4 Rajab 1439 - Nowruz - Spring Equinox - 21 March 2018

last corrected 15 Sẖaʿban 1439 – 1 May 2018 and once again in Ramaḍān 1439

By way of a very brief afterword:

When I completed writing this essay during the month of Ramaḍān and had my editors go through it I noted their comments concerning the lack of material about the six ʾImāms ﷺ who followed Imām Jāʿfar ﷺ according to the ʾImāmī Sẖīʿah and added a few words on them – and only a *few* – for my initial intention in writing this essay as I have said was not to write a history of the ʾImāmate but rather to point to the fracturing of the ʾUmmah in the times following ʾImām Jāʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ and – more importantly – the effect that has had on experiential knowledge of the ʾImām in light of the ḥadīṯ – "Who does not know the ʾImām of the time dies in ignorance."

I can only hope that the deep significance and overwhelming import and the urgent warning stemming from that ḥadīṯ have reached the mind and the heart or the heart/mind of the reader before it is too late and the reader dies in ignorance (*jahl*) even if he/she seemingly has lived a life in accord with all the tenets of ʾIslām, outer and inner.

For my own self I lived most of my life after embracing ʾIslām some 55 years ago trying both exoterically and esoterically to do just that only to understand after the death of my Sẖaykẖ, Dr. Ibrahīm al-Batawī ﷺ, that I did *not* know the ʾImām ﷺ and my life has been lived in sheer terror since I awoke to my ignorance of the ʾImām ﷺ.

This has affected every aspect of my life and I have done everything I could (and can do) to rectify my ignorance as I do not want to die ignorant like the people of the *jāhiliyyah* whom I see every day walking the streets of where I live in present day America and, in retrospect, for many years in the so-called 'Muslim world' whose descent into ignorance is clearly to be seen as, for instance, in the "Muslims" who bomb, rape and torture other "Muslims" everyday.

I am convinced that by employing the methods of Purification of the Heart in conjunction with daily practice of the *Duʿāʾ al-Ahd* while actively observing all inner and outer requisites of ʾIslam, ʾImān and ʾIḥsān, working for Peace and Justice and Mercy, both in one's self and in the world, is the work of the ʾImām ﷺ in and of our time and all times. The Prophet ﷺ told us:"...a man from my family (progeny/*ʿiṭrat*/عـطـرت) will come who will fill the entire world with peace and justice just as it now filled with injustice and tyranny."

May we live to see it!

An Historical Footnote

As I wrote earlier, "my initial intention in writing this essay was not to write a history of the ʾImāmate but rather to point to the fracturing of the ʾUmmah following ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ and – more importantly — the effect that has had on experiential knowledge of the ʾImām in light of the ḥadīṯ – "Who does not know the ʾImām of the time dies in ignorance." that remains my intention *but* once again, after I had completed the suggested changes, I submitted the essay to my editors and what came back this time was that ... yes ... even though it was not your intention to write a history of the early ʾImāms ﷺ or the ʾImāmate, nevertheless you have brought together a lot of material which essentially outlines, in a fairly concise form, material which is not widely known among "mainstream" Muslims who, for the most part, are only dimly aware of historical realities and, because your earlier essays concentrate, for the most part, on spiritual realities or questions, many people when they start making their way through this essay are going to be exposed to certain historical facts and material they have not been exposed to prior to this reading, and will want you to be more explicit, especially about what is behind the ḥadīṯ,

من مات و لم يعرف امام زمانه مات ميته جاهليه

man māta wa lam yaᶜrif ʾimāma zamānahi māta mītah jāhilīyyah

The one who dies without knowing the ʾImām of the time,
dies the death of Jāhilīyah.

but you have, instead, taken them on a *tour de l'horizon* of early (and later) Sẖīᶜah structural formations and concerns."

To which I replied to the editors, "Yes, that is true but unless you understand the relationship between Revelation (*waḥī*/وحـــــــي) and Protection (*walī*/ولـــــــي) or, perhaps, Sanctuary or even Refuge, you cannot understand the necessity of the ʾImām ﷺ throughout time. The reason and meaning behind the search for the ʾImām ﷺ of this Time, if you hope to prosper spiritually, is to trade in your ignorance (*jahl*) for knowledge (*ᶜilm* or, more importantly, *maᶜrifah*)."

The editors agreed but one said, "Even so, still you have left out an important school — that of the Zaidiyyah (الزيدية) of Yemen."

I had to think for a while about that because, strictly speaking, the Zaidiyyah, are not really part of any line of the *ʾAʾimmāh* ﷺ**.** Whilst ᶜAlī ibn Abī Ṭalib ﷺ, Ḥasan ibn ᶜAlī ﷺ, and Ḥusayn ibn ᶜAlī ﷺ and Zayn al-ᶜAbdin ﷺ are all recognized ʾImāms ﷺ, the founder of line of the Zaidiyyah, Zayd ibn ᶜAlī, the grandson of Ḥusayn ibn ᶜAlī ﷺ, lacked the *Naṣṣ* which had been bestowed on Muḥammad al-Baqir ﷺ, and, in turn, on Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ. To this Zaydīs reply that any individual who (1) is a descendent of either ʾImām Ḥasan ﷺ or Imām al-Husayn ﷺ, and (2) has sufficient knowledge may be considered as an ʾImām, especially and *most* importantly (3) if he stands up against the oppressors he is to be considered an ʾImām in "an absolute sense" for, in this light, Muḥammad al-Baqir ﷺ, and Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ are only "relative ʾImāms" because they did not and indeed refused to rise up against the oppressors of their time.

The Zaidiyyah point out that ʾImām al-Ḥusayn ﷺ through his stand at Karbala established the pre-requisite that all future ʾImāms ﷺ *must* rise up against oppressors and Zayd's insistence on fulfilling that overrode the *Naṣṣ* invested in Muḥammad al-Baqir ﷺ and Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ due to Muḥammad al-Baqir's ﷺ refusal to rise up against the oppressors when asked to do so by Zayd ibn ᶜAlī.

This is a very important point to consider especially in our time when the oppressors (*ḍẖālimīn*/الظالمين) have succeeded in co-opting, for the most part, both "official" or "establishment" Sunni and Sẖiᶜah *ʾIslām*, not all Sunni or Sẖiᶜah Muslims buy it – *al-ḥamdu-li-Llāh*.

Essentially the Zaydīs seem to hold the view that Muḥammad al-Baqir ﷺ and Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ were some kind of aberrant pacifists, a view that persists among Zaydīs right up to the present in light of the Zaydī Ḥūtẖī struggle now taking place in the Yemen. It might be said that Zaydīs find it difficult to remain passive in an unjust world, or in the words of a modern Zaydī leader, Ḥusayn Badruddīn al-Ḥūtẖī, to 'sit in their houses' when oppression surrounds them.

However when this is looked at from the side of Muḥammad al-Baqir ﷺ and Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ, another view emerges as, for instance, in a story concerning a man who came to ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ with a message from Abū Muslim, the Kẖorasani leader of the uprising against the Umayyads, requesting help from ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ.

His response became famous:

ʾImām Jāʿfar ﷺ asked for a candle and burned Abū Muslim's letter, saying to the envoy who brought it, "Tell your master what you have seen." In burning Abū Muslim's letter what he was saying was, "This delivery boy is not one of my men – his time is not my time."

ʾImām Jāʿfar ﷺ also turned down other requests for assistance to other claimants to the caliphate, never advancing his own claims. He had said that even though he, as *the* ʾImām, was the true leader of the Ummah, he would not press his claim to the *political* caliphate.

An ḥadīṯ reported by Ibn Saḥr Asḫūb in his book *al-Manāqib* conveys a similar understanding:

"Once a Kẖorasani chief by the name of Saḥl bin Ḥasan came to ʾImām Jāʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ and asked why the ʾImām wasn't fighting for his rights in spite of the Truth being on his side especially when there were thousands of supporters ready to go to war on his side.

"'ʾImām Jāʿfar ﷺ, with the intention of giving Saḥl bin Ḥasan a practical answer and deep teaching, asked him to sit down and wait for a bit. While he was sitting a servant of the ʾImām ﷺ came in and the ʾImām ﷺ asked her if she had kindled the evening fire to heat the house, to which she replied, "Yes," she had.

"'ʾImām Jāʿfar ﷺ then took Saḥl bin Ḥasan and went to the fireplace in which the fire was now blazing, and told Saḥl bin Ḥasan to enter the fire. Saḥl bin Ḥasan trembled and begged forgiveness from the ʾImam ﷺ and asked not to be burnt, saying he was not ʾIbrahīm ﷺ.

"As this was happening Ḥarūn al-Makkī ﷺ, one of the sincere devoted companions of the ʾImām ﷺ, *happened* to arrive. The ʾImām ﷺ told Ḥarūn al-Makkī ﷺ to enter the blazing fire which Ḥarūn ﷺ immediately did without any question or even hint of hesitation.

"The ʾImām ﷺ then turned to Saḥl bin Ḥasan and began to brief him as to the events currently prevailing in far-off Kẖorasan as if he had been an eye witness to the events taking place there.

"After a while the ʾImām ﷺ asked Saḥl to go and check on Ḥarūn ﷺ. Saḥl found Ḥarūn ﷺ still sitting cross legged in the fireplace, at which point the ʾImām ﷺ asked Saḥl how many of his 'followers' were like Ḥarūn ﷺ to which he replied, 'none, Master". The ʾImam ﷺ then asked Ḥarūn ﷺ to get out of the fire. which he did (with no burns on his body) and the ʾImām ﷺ said: 'I won't make an uprising when I don't have even five such sincere companions — "

Remember this! 'We are very well aware as to exactly when we should stage an uprising!'"

Hopefully, ʾinsẖa-Llāh, this will satisfy my editors' wish to include somehing about the Zaidiyyah.

[Allāh ﷻ aid them in their struggle in the Yemen with the neo-Kẖarajite Takfīrī Saʾūdis and their Anglo/American slave masters.]

I pray this essay will now go to the editors who will finally give me a pass and it can go for printing.

But more than that I hope that this gives the reader some insight into the times of ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ which have led to the world that we Muslims now find ourselves living in.

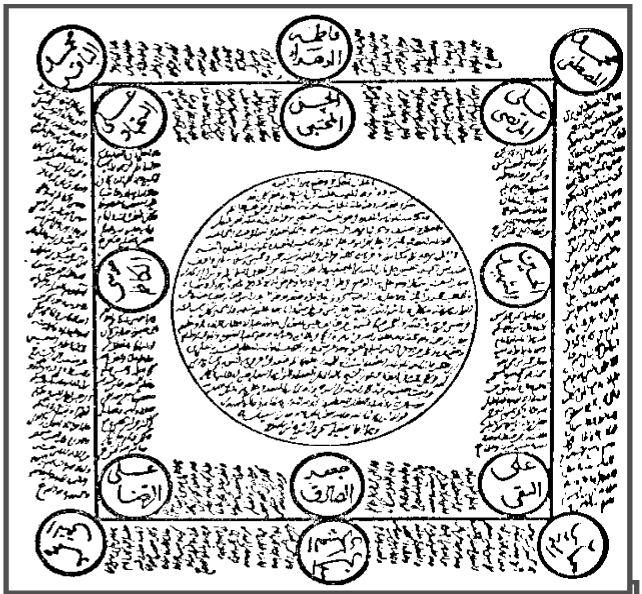
I hope that I am given the opportunity at some other point to actually write about ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ especially for my Sunni brothers and sisters who have little idea of who and what he ﷺ was and did in clarifying the doctrine of the *ʾAʾimmāh* ﷺ, which holds that the ʾImāmate is not a matter of human choice or self-assertion, but that each ʾImām ﷺ possesses a unique knowledge (*ᶜIlm*/علم) which qualifies him for the position. This knowledge came down from the Prophet ﷺ through the line of the immediate descendants of ʾImām ᶜAlī ﷺ transmitted by means of *Naṣṣ* or the divinely inspired designation of each ʾImām ﷺ by the previous ʾImām ﷺ.

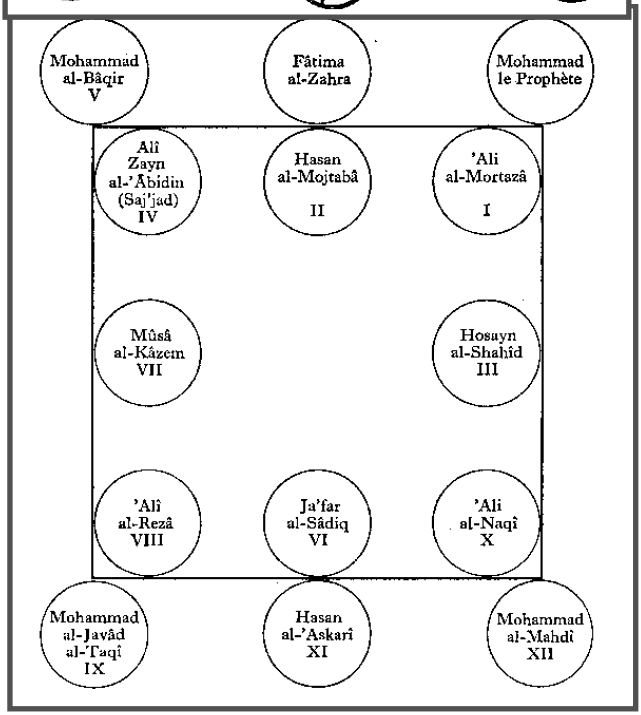
By way of parting let me tell one more story: ʾImām Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ was once asked by the famous mystic Sẖaqīq al-Balkẖi to describe what chivalry (*futūwwah*/فتوة) was. So ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ asked him back, "Well, what do *you* think it is?" Sẖaqīq replied, "If we are given [favors or gifts from someone] we thank them, and if we are not given [anything], we remain patient."

ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ exclaimed: "Even the dogs here in Madinah do that." Then Sẖaqīq asked, "Oh grandson of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, tell me what then is chivalry to you of the Ahlu-l-Bayt?"

ʾImām Jāᶜfar ﷺ replied: "If we are given something, we show appreciation … but even if we are not given anything, we still thank them." (*ar-Risala* of al-Qusẖayrī)

Here follow some charts which I hope will further clarify the lineage of the ʾImāms ﷺ.




Mohammad al-Bâqir V
Fâtima al-Zahra
Mohammad le Prophète
Alî Zayn al-ʾÂbidîn (Saj'jad) IV
Hasan al-Mojtabâ II
ʾAli al-Mortazâ I
Mûsâ al-Kâzem VII
Hosayn al-Shahîd III
ʾAlî al-Rezâ VIII
Ja'far al-Sâdiq VI
ʾAli al-Naqî X
Mohammad al-Javâd al-Ṭaqî IX
Hasan al-ʾAskarî XI
Mohammad al-Mahdî XII

From Haydar Āmulī in *Islam Iranien* by Henri Corbìn:

"In these circles (preceding page) are inscribed the names of the Twelve ʾImāms ﷺ plus the Prophet ﷺ and Fātimah ﷺ or, more exactly, the names of the Fourteen Immaculates ﷺ.

The author (Haydar Āmulī) states that "in a certain aspect, the number of the Immaculates is twelve; in another aspect their number is fourteen. The Twelve ʾImāms ﷺ represent the "esoteric" dimension (*walayat*) of the Reality or the Muhammadan Eternal Light which forms the pleroma of the complete Fourteen with the Prophet ﷺ – or "esoteric" dimension and Fāṭimah ﷺ, his daughter and the "mother" of all the ʾImāms, the "Confluence of the Two Lights" (*majmaᶜ al-nūrayn*); the Light of the Prophecy (*nubūwwah*) and the Light of Protection (*walāyah*).

"The author describes the colors which are a contrast of blue and gold. The Names of the Fourteen are written in a golden red color inside the circles which are lapus lazuli blue (*lazhovard* in Persian).

"The arrangement of the names is no less remarkable. Each of the circles which are located in each of the four angles on the outside of the square bears the name of one of the four persons who, in the pleroma, are named Muhammad. They are – circling the square from top right to bottom left – the following:

"Muḥammad, the Prophet ﷺ

The Fifth ʾImām, Muḥammad al-Baqir ﷺ

The Ninth ʾImām, Muḥammad al-Jawad at-Taqī ﷺ

The Twelfth ʾImam, Muḥammad al-Mahdi ﷺ

The four circles located inside each angle of the square bear the names of the four in the pleroma who are named ᶜAlī ﷺ:

The First Imām, ᶜAlī al-Murtaḍā (المُرتضى , "The Chosen One")

The Fourth ʾImām, ᶜAlī Zayn ul-ᶜAbdīn ﷺ

The Eighth ʾImām, ᶜAlī Reẓa ﷺ

The Tenth ʾImām, ᶜAlī Naqī ﷺ

"In the median line, in the vertical dimension, four circles are symetrically aligned (two at the top and two at the bottom).

Sitting in the top center and dominating the whole set, the first circle bears the name of Fāṭimah the Radiant (*az-zahrāʾ*/الـزهـراء), daughter of the Prophet ﷺ and source of the lineage of the ʾImāms ﷺ.

"Just below, inside the square, is the circle that bears the name of the Second ʾImām, Ḥasan al-Mujtabā (اَلْمُجْتَبَى/The Chosen).

"On the inside in the middle of the line at the bottom of the square is the circle of the Sixth ʾImām, Jāᶜfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ, and below this name in the middle of the outside of the bottom of the square is the name of the Eleventh ʾImām, Ḥasan al-Askarī ﷺ.

"Finally, diametrically arranged at the East and the West inside of the square are the circles bearing the names of the Third ʾImām, al-Ḥusayn ﷺ, the Martyr of Karbala and in the West the name of Seventh ʾImām, Mūsā Kāẓm ﷺ. These two names are not shared by anyone else in the pleroma.

"The large circle at the center of the square is filled with a text very tightly squeezed in stating that the figure in his vision has been recalled to produce a testimony against the thesis of ʾIbn al-Arabi ﷺ which transfers to ᶜIsā ﷺ the quality of the Seal of the Walayat. In truth the circle would have been better left empty to symbolize the inaccessible Divine Unity which can be contemplated from afar only thru the apophatic theology whereas the Fourteen who are arranged all around it are its theophanic figures.

Our Sayyid continues, "The universe is illuminated by the light of the beings within these circles. People were praying audibly honoring the Prophet ﷺ and the Members of His House ﷺ and I was doing the same thing. While I was in this state I heard a voice of an *invisible* who said to me, 'These ones who followed their ancestor, The Prophet ﷺ, are the goal by which being (*wujūd*) aspires and are the manifestation of being (*dẖāhir*) — the Poles (*aqtāb*), the Substitues (*abdāl*). the Pillars (*awtād*) and the Solitary (*afrād*).

"It is through them *walayat* in its universal and particular senses is sealed as prophecy in its universal and particular senses is sealed by their ancestor, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. They are his deputies and proofs (*hujjah*/*hujāj*) both on earth and in the heavens. It is by the last of these, Muḥammad al-Mahdi ﷺ, that the Muḥamaddan Wilayat is sealed, and it is by him that the hour will arise and that thru his death that this world be changed into the hereafter."

Diagramme, Dessiné par Haydar Āmolī, da sa vision dans le ciel nocturne de Baghdad, en 735,1354 (Ms. Istanbul, Carullāh fol, 49ᵇ) Les Quatorze Immaculés (Le Prophète, Fāṭima, les Douze Imàms)

The Ismāʾīlī Fāṭimid Line of Descent from ʾImām Jāʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq ﷺ

6. Ismāʿīl ﷺ, ʾImām Jāʿfar's son and heir, predeceased his father in 755. Accepted as ʾImām by ʾIsmāʾīlīs (opposed by Twelvers).

7. Muhammad ﷺ, Ismāʿīl's son, died under reign of Harun al-Rashid (786–809)

8. Aḥmad al-Wafī (born ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ʾIsmāʿīl (al-Wafī), died 829, 1st Daʿi of the ʾIsmāʾīlī mission, according to ʾIsmāʾīlī tradition, son of Muḥammad ibn ʾIsmāʾīl.

9. Muḥammad at-Tāqī (born Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad (at-Tāqī)), died 840, son of ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad, 2nd Daʿi of the ʾIsmāʿīlī mission.

10. ʿAbd Allāh ar-Raḍī aka az-Zakī (born al-Ḥusayn ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh (ʿAbdullāh ar-Raḍī), died 909, son of Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh, 3rd Daʿi of the ʾIsmāʿīlī mission.

11. Ubayd Allāh al-Mahdi Bi-Llāh, son of al-Ḥusayn ibn Aḥmad, 4th Daʿi of the ʾIsmāʿīlī mission, and 1st Fatimid Caliph, died 934 (see pp. 59)

12. Muḥammad al-Qaīm bi-Amr-illah, leader of the ʾIsmāʿīlīs, who openly announced himself as ʾImām, 2nd Fāṭimid Caliph, died 946

13. ʾIsmāʿīl al-Mansur, 3rd Fāṭimid Caliph, died 953

14. Maʿād al-Muʿizz li-Dīni-llāh, 4th Fāṭimid Caliph, died 975

15. Abū Manṣūr Nizār al-ʿAzīz billāh, 5th Fāṭimid Caliph, died 996

16. Al-Ḥākim bi-Amrillāh, 6th Fāṭimid Caliph, disappeared 1021.

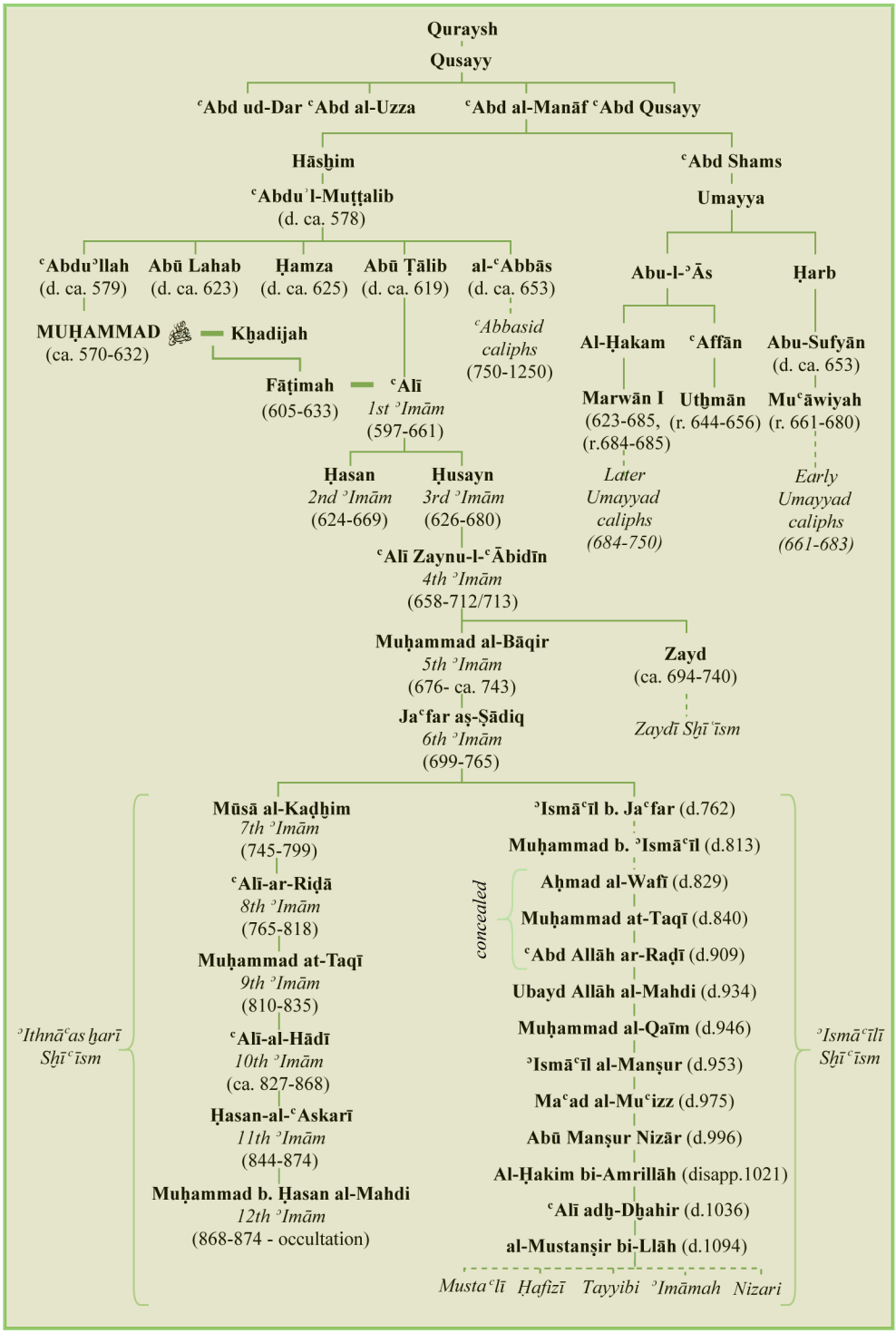
17. ʿAlī aẓ-Ẓāhir li-Iʿzāz Dīn-i-Llāh, son of al-Ḥākim, 7th Fāṭimid Caliph, died 1036.

18. Abū Tamīm Maʿadd al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh, son of ʿAli az-Zahir, 8th Fāṭimid Caliph, died 1094.

Here the line splits into five distinct offshoots:
Mustaʿlī, Ḥafizī, Tayyībi, ʾImāmah, and Niẓarī.

For further details see: Daftary, Farhad (1990). *The ʾIsmāʿīlīs: Their history and doctrines*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, and Halm, Heinz (1988). *Die Schia*. Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft and W. Ivanow, *Ismaili Tradition concerning the Rise of the Fatimids*, Oxford University Press, 1942, London, New York, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras.

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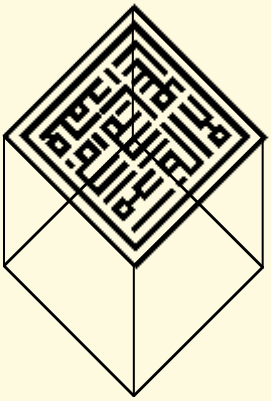


Genealogical relationship of some of the 'A'immah ﷺ to dynasties, sects and other lines of descent



“The Hour will not come
until the Earth has been filled
with injustice, crimes and aggression.
Then a man from my family (ʾītra/إيترا) will come
and he will fill the earth with justice and peace,
just as before it was filled with injustice and aggression.”
(Saḥiḥ on the conditions of Bukẖarī and Muslim)
(reported by Aḥmad 3:36, Ibn Hibban 188800, al-Ḥākim, 4-557)

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