



Seeking Closeness

to

Imam-e-Asr
(a.t.f.s.)



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Author : Dr. Ali Haratiyan
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Publisher's Foreword

In 1965, a Bohri Alawi Muslim with pure intention went for the Search of Truth about the Imamate of the Imams after Imam Jafar-e-Sadiq (a.s.). In his sincere efforts he was helped by an Aalim-e-Rabbani Maulana Sayed Gulam Askari Sahab.

By the grace of Allah, he came to the conclusion that after Imam-e-Sadiq (a.s.), Imam Moosa Kazim (a.s.) is the TRUE and DIVINELY appointed Imam. By 1970, there were about six Bohra families who accepted the Shia Ithna-Ashari Faith. In 1971, a Jamaat – 'Bohra Shia Ithna Ashari Jamat' was formed and registered with the Charity Commissioner to take care of the new families.

Since then its members have tried to spread the truth through various platforms and media. Among their endeavours in spreading the true Islam is publication of Islamic literatures. The first book printed by the Jamaat was 'From Darkness towards Light - A True story of an Ismaili Mustali Bohra accepting Shia faith.

Thereafter, the Jamaat has published several books like Who is your Imam ?, Wilayat Ahle Bait (a.s.), Miracles of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), Crying for Imam Husain (a.s.), The war of Siffin, Ghaibat of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), Companions & Enemies of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), Anger, The Human Resource Management Polices outlined by Imam Ali (as) etc.

Keeping with the needs of time in mind, the Jamaat has developed an app – Zikr e Masoomeen (a.s.). It has around 200 clips of Masaeb of Masoomeen (a.s.) and their companions

recited by learned scholars of the shia society. The app also contains an audio book – Tajalleeyat Hikmat – It has sayings of Ameerul Momeneen Ali ibne Abi Talib (a.s.) classified into around 200 topics.

We are pleased to publish this book Seeking Closeness to Imam-e-Asra (a.t.f.s.). This book was translated by the young team of thepromisedmahdi.com

This book is written by Dr. Ali Haratiyan in Persian and translated into Urdu by Az-Zehra Publication. The book talks about the period of ghaibat, the state of Imam (a.s.) in ghaibat, reminders for shias in this era to seek nearness to Imam (a.s.).

We dedicate this book to our master, Imam Zamana (a.t.f.s.), the beloved, the hope of humanity, the Light of Allah, the Proof of Allah on this earth. May Allah accept our endeavours.

Bohra Shia Ithna Ashari Jamat

Preface

The *Wilayat* of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) is an ocean, unfathomable. Any person — depending on his *marefat* (knowing) love — can advance in this ocean till he reaches the rank of Janabe Salman (a.r.), who was addressed by Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.a.) as ‘He is from my Ahle Bait.’

The Master of the virtuous ones, Imam Ali ibn Abi Taleb (a.s.) describes the extreme solitude and sufferings of his last son (a.t.f.s.) in the following words:

صَاحِبُ هَذَا الْأَمْرِ الشَّدِيدِ الطَّرِيدِ الْفَرِيدِ الْوَحِيدِ

“The Master of this serious affair (responsible for providing salvation to entire humanity) is companionless, in distress and forsaken.”¹

In these dark days of *ghaibat* (occultation), narrating Imam’s (a.t.f.s.) travails is beneficial for a Shia and a true believer. Thus, seeking help from Janabe Narjis Khatoon (s.a.), the mother of Hazrat Hujjat Ibnul Hasan (a.t.f.s.), the solitude of Imam Asr (a.t.f.s.) has been penned down in this book, albeit briefly.

The object of this book is to reduce the predicament of Imam Mahdi (may our souls be sacrificed for him) and to provide his heart with some solace and subsequently gain the honor of

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 51, p. 120

inviting ourselves for a few fleeting moments in the sacred presence of Yusuf-e-Zahra (a.s.) in these difficult times for him.

We say it utmost sincerity and a heavy heart that one of the great examples of the afflictions faced by Imam (a.s.) is that a lowly sinner like me wishes to pick up the pen for Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) and grieve over this historical neglect and make others attentive towards the sufferings and oppressions and sufferings of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.); fulfill all the rights of Hazrat (a.t.f.s.) and invite and create an atmosphere for others to pray for his early reappearance.

Shabaan 15, 1426 Hijri

Ali Haratiyaan.

The Wish

Oh my Master! I wish that people remember me as a ‘slave of Mahdi.’ How I wish that at the time of my birth the *azaan* of your love was whispered into my ear. How I wish, that I was ransomed in your name. The earring of being in your service should have been pierced in my ears. How I wish my lips were familiarized with your name and I always remained in your refuge.

Oh my master! It would have been so nice had the first words to come out from me would have been your illustrious and pure name. How I wish, when I was learning to speak, my relatives should have made me say ‘Ya Mahdi.’

How I wish, my cradle was the cradle of your *marefat*. How I wish, the teacher in my first class should have taught me how to love you and trained me to write your beautiful name.

In these days of powerful leaders, no one guided me towards your pavilion. When I grew up, no one made it known to me that you are the chief of this universe.

My geography book didn’t mention ‘*Zeetouwa*¹’ or ‘*Razwaa*.’

In my history class I wasn’t informed about your *ghaibat* and the afflictions and the loneliness that has fallen upon you.

¹ Zeetouwa is a mountain near Makka and Razwaa is a mountain on the western side of Madina. We read in Dua-e-Nudbah — How I wish I knew, where have you stationed yourself; on Razwaa? Somewhere else or on Zeetouwa?

In my religion class I wasn't told that you are indeed the '*Gate of Allah*' and the '*Devout one of His religion*'.¹

Alas! The prose and poetry of your holy existence wasn't taught in the literature class.

Sadly, in the drawing class, I wasn't made to draw your kind visage. Why was I made to write an essay on 'Whether knowledge is better or wealth?' When, indeed, I should have written a composition on you or your reappearance or on the ways to please you. Without you neither wealth is good or knowledge is better.

How I wish, besides other languages, I was taught the language in which one converses with you. The language which is close to man's innate nature and is a sympathetic companion. When I was striving to learn foreign languages, how I wish, I was told by someone that he knows every language and dialect including those of the birds².

¹ We read in Ziyaraat-e-Aale Ya Seen: السلام عليكم يا باب الله وديان دينه

² Abu Hashim Jafri, who was amongst the followers of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.), narrates: Once I was blessed with the honor of meeting Imam (a.s.). Imam (a.s.) spoke to me in Hindi and I couldn't reply him correctly. There was a bucket full of pebbles which was lying near Imam (a.s.). Imam Haadi (a.s.) picked one pebble and put it in his holy mouth. Then, Imam (a.s.) did me a favor by asking me to keep the same pebble in my mouth. I swear by Allah! I hadn't even left that place and I could speak in 73 different languages, one of which was Hindi. (Reference: Al Qatrah, page 675; Manaqibe Shahr-e-Ibne Aashoob, vol 4, pg 408; Kashful Gummah, vol 2 pg 297). Aba Sult says: Imam Reza (a.s.) would talk to people in their respective language...Imam (a.s.) was surprised and he told me, 'Oh Aba Sult, Allah does not appoint a Hujjat (over the people) who doesn't know their language.' Behaarul Anwaar, vol 26, pg 190.

When I was being educated about the movements of electrons in my science class, it was indeed a clue for me to understand that the whole universe, other than Allah, was revolving around your blessed existence.

When I was learning all types of complex formulae in Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry, how I wish I was taught the easy procedure to connect with you.

I cannot forget the anecdote I read in my childhood about the wise man who, while passing through a graveyard, was stunned to read the tombstones where the ages of the departed ones were three, four or eight years. Stupefied at the sight of it, he asked if these people had died in their childhood. He was told that here the age of the people was reckoned with the number of years they had spent to acquire knowledge and this was the yardstick to figure out how old they were.

I wish on that day itself my teacher, regardless of digressing, should have informed me about the tradition on *marefat* of Imam (a.s.)¹ which, from the Shia point of view — in effect means to stay attentive towards Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) and gain his recognition, love, amity and in particular, disassociate from his enemies in real life.

In Physics we were told about the refulgence of light but I couldn't fathom that you are the '*Light of Allah*' and your noble being is the destination of "*Allah guides to His light whomsoever He wishes.*"² I was told that the speed of light (about 300000 km per second) but it wasn't even indicated the extent of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) vision. I wasn't told that Imam (a.s.),

¹ The tradition "One who dies without recognizing the Imam of his time, dies the death of an ignorant," is one of the most famous tradition and both — Shia and Sunni — have constantly quoted it.

² Surah Nur (24): 35

in a fleeting moment, has the authority to survey the worlds and the galaxies and keep himself up-to-date about everything.

When I participated in social studies, no one advised me to enroll my name in the ‘university of recognition’ and love of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.). My young age did not allow me to comprehend that *marefat*, too, has stations and ranks.

I wasn’t aware that the positions, such as that of teachers, engineers and professors, are man-made which comes in handy for trade, wealth, authority and fame. I wasn’t aware that there are bigger positions than these.

Gradually, leaving behind the grim atmosphere of the college I stepped into a university where the air was even more deceiving. It was a *bazaar* for buyers of arrogance and self-conceit. The tools of negligence were always readily accessible and available. The ambiance remained trapped in the hazards of bad-tempered knowledge, painted in the western values of broad mindedness and sham, where such things like ‘so and so European book or magazine has published such and such thing which was translated from America,’ qualified as knowledge. The knowledge of Ahle Bait (a.s.), which is the real heavenly knowledge, wasn’t spoken even in few words.

O my Master! No one in the university informed me about you. No one hoisted the flag of your name. There was nobody to direct me towards you. No teacher illustrated your qualities except during the course of short lessons on Islamic teachings and history of Islam. These were the source for students to get a brief insight. But that too not in the name of propagating the religion. Instead, it was only limited in the name of cultural sittings, at the time of congregational prayers, during an outing, while travelling or it was limited till the Holy Quran or Nahjul Balagah prize-winning competitions. It didn’t go beyond this. However, even during these occasions you were

not mentioned. In these days, too, your remembrance was far away from the hearts.

After acquiring knowledge, the vagaries of life and the worry of earning a livelihood fooled me and prevented me from thinking about you.

Despite all this, I found you in the depths of my conscience. A little later I managed to search you with my heart's eye. Through the heart, I feel your blessed presence in me and it feels as if I was born-again. Without you, life is not worth living. And if somebody like me manages to reach you after a lengthy period of neglectfulness then he has the right to feel he has had a rebirth. Following these difficulties, he has the right over you that you save him from the calamities and afflictions of the last era. In order to thank Allah, he also keeps the right to gently keep his forehead on earth and say:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي هَدَانَا لِهَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْلَا أَنْ
هَدَانَا اللَّهُ

“All praise is for Allah Who guided us to this, and we would not have found the way had it not been that Allah had guided us”¹

Even if you pore over the entire universe, you will not find a friend like Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) because:

- You may not remember him but he always remembers you.
- You may desert him but he never abandons you.
- You may oppress him a lot, but he never stops granting

¹ Surah A'araf (7): 43

favours.

- You may not pray for him but he remembers you while praying to Allah.
- You may avoid him but he is always keeping you in mind.
- You may continuously be a cause of anguish for him, but he removes your angst.
- You may not be a reason for him to hold his head high but he becomes the medium of bringing honor and distinction to you.
- You may be negligent towards his state, but he's never negligent of your affairs.
- Although you may not recognize his entity and presence but he's always at hand to help you regardless of where you are.
- If you avoid contacting him, he gives the message of getting together.
- Although you may not defend him, he will never leave you unguarded.
- You may have broken his heart thousands of times but still, you will always find him ready to accept your apologies.
- You may repeatedly break the promises that you've made to him, but he never blocks the road that leads up to him.
- You may not be fond of him but he does like you. You may not be any good for him but he's the most trustworthy keeper of your secrets.
- You may not be of any help to him but he will always

- back and support you.
- If you've done a small service for him, he will not hold back on showering his entire kindness and generosity on you.
 - You may not have guarded his honor but still he shields and protects you.
 - If you have not given him his dues, he gives you a loan.
 - If you are an inept and a transgressive child, he is a gracious and a compassionate father.
 - If you have not been a fair brother to him, he will still adopt a brotherly attitude with you.
 - If you have deserted him at a time when he was overtaken by calamities then you will find him helping you out during your difficult times.
 - He in no way is dependent on you. On the contrary you are entirely reliant on him.

Yes, dear readers!

The secret to secure favors from Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) is to stay focused on him. By regularly entreating to Hazrat Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) himself or his infallible ancestors we can establish a consistent hearty contact with him. Make no mistake! Imam (a.s.) is not beyond our reach. He is with us every second. He's closer to us than our aorta (aorta is the main artery through which blood leaves the heart before it flows through the rest of the body). Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.), May Allah hasten his reappearance, is connected with the entire humanity and not just with a specific sect, group or a caste or with a particular religion. His benevolence encompasses the poor, wealthy, learned, ignorant, good-doers, sinners and to the extent that even non-Muslims benefit from it. He doesn't need a secretary

or a watchman. The moment you intend, your heart will find him everywhere. Everybody can find him without any time constraints, preparation or intermediary. Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) can be contacted and for it one has to just say '*Ya Saahebaz Zamaan!*'

Although we've raised a wall near our work and have deprived ourselves from hearing his pleasant voice, our Master (a.s.) is replying our calls which we are unable to hear. Even though we have veiled our eyes and have denied ourselves his absorbing charm, he is looking at us. By no means we should say, 'Where am I and where Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.)?' Will we ever stay far away from our parents due to certain mistakes? No. Then he's more caring and loving than a doting father. He loves each one of us like he would love his beloved son or a daughter.

Twelve hundred years of solitude

The loneliness of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.)

My Master! My lonely and beleaguered Master! The distressed son of Fatemah (s.a.)! The chief of Aale Muhammad (a.s.)! The benevolent father of the universe! I wish to discuss your loneliness. Aloneness that continues since twelve hundred years. That loneliness over which the sky and the earth weep incessantly. That lonesomeness which even your followers fail to comprehend. That solitude over which your ancestors (a.s.) had grieved over before you were born.

I am at loss and don't know with which chapter to begin this ode. Which volume of this moving book should I begin with? Which line, which page and which lesson should I read? This picture — of sorrow and loneliness — has weakened me.

Where do I begin? Should I express this saga in my own words or in someone else's? Should I tell the past generations, complain to the present one or the enemies? Should I complain with the masses or the elite classes? Should I speak with those who offend you?¹ Should I talk to those who interpret your merciful and compassionate hands as hands that will shed blood? Should I protest with those who introduce your flashing sword in such a manner that even your friends feel intimidated? Or should I have a word with those who say you are not reachable for the masses? Or should I address those

¹ Ehtejaj-e-Tabarsi; vol. 2, p. 289 (The Tawqee to Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Hilal Karkhi)

who feel seeing you is impossible? Or should I talk to those who invite people towards their desires in your name? Or should I talk to those who give hope to people of your coming but they themselves assume that your reappearance is far-off? Should I have a word with those who describe you as per their fancies and not as your holy being actually is? Should I complain to those who take your occultation as a state of your non-existence?

My Master! It looks like all elements have conspired to keep your holy being all alone. Iblees' army is focusing on this day and night. I am not aware of the people who love you and sincerely wish for your early reappearance. Only Allah or you are aware of this. But I know it for a fact that you have been in occultation for close to twelve hundred years and Iblees' agents, which includes armies of men and jinn as his aids, have repeatedly found success. They don't want you to reappear and consequently they have managed to further darken the already dark night of occultation.

I start from myself. For, whoever starts from one's own self makes matters of reappearance easier for himself. I wish to come back to you. I have full faith that you will not take into account my injudicious past. I know that you will accept my repentance and accommodate me with yourself. I understand that during my negligent moments, days and years you would pray for me. I would evade you. But still you, like a gracious and compassionate father, would keep a steady eye on me. I seek your forgiveness...I seek your forgiveness.

Who do I complain to? Not only do those who are not aware of you but do even the honorable believers and pious individuals have the patience to hear the story of your being all alone? O Allah! How strange is this loneliness? How thick and coarse is this curtain!

Yes, it is possible that the talk of Imam-e-Asr's (a.t.f.s.) solitude may sound strange. Possibly, one may ask that can Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.) ever be lonely? And perhaps, other individuals may treat this kind of an interpretation as weakness in faith or call it a masterwork of the writer's talent, sentiments and perception. Or some people, considering this to be common knowledge, take this as a minor issue because we more often than not talk less about the loneliness of all the Imams (a.s.). The Master of the Pious, Imam Ali (a.s.) is universally acknowledged as the First of the Oppressed Ones.

Every year, during Ayyam-e-Fatemi, we shed tears and beat our chests remembering the calamities, oppression and torture faced by Janabe Fatemah Zahra (s.a.). We should continue doing it. In every misfortune we cry incessantly over the Chief of Martyrs (a.s.) and his dignified Ahle Bait (a.s.).

Our heart is filled with gloom and sorrow the moment we hear the name Jannatul Baqee. Our eyes can't stop shedding tears when we remember the loneliness of Imam Moosa ibn Jafar (a.s.) inside the Baghdad prison.

Imam Ali ar-Reza (a.s.) is called as the most 'Helpless of Strangers' (*Ghareebul Ghurbah*). The tenth and the eleventh Imam (a.s.) were given the title of 'Askariyaan' because these two Imams (a.s.) spent their entire life in the prison of Bani Abbas caliphs. Can anything more oppressive than this be imagined?

But despite of all this we've thought very little about the loneliness of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.). Truth be told, we have not thought about him at all. The lack of awareness and unfamiliarity with Imam-e-Asr's (a.t.f.s.) loneliness and the neglectfulness about his aloneness is indeed Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.)'s 'helplessness.'

The interpretations of supplications, ziyarats, and narrations

from the Infallible Imams (a.s.) on the Twelfth Imam (a.s.) is an eye-opener because the manner in which it describes the oppression on Imam (a.s.) and his helplessness. It pains and stings in such a way when it reveals to us that the pious being of Imam (a.t.f.s.) — the pivot on which the world revolves — is in reality the ‘Most Helpless of Strangers.’

At this stage we would like to present a few verses of Holy Quran and traditions that are relevant to our subject.

Ghaibat an era of Imam (a.s.)'s helplessness and loneliness

Remembering the oppression and most severe loneliness of his missing son Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) says:

The one (Imam) who is responsible for the salvation of entire humanity is forlorn, helpless and alone.¹

In another narration we find Imam Moosa ibn Jafar (a.s.) saying:

هُوَ الظَّرِيدُ الْوَحِيدُ الْغَرِيبُ الْغَائِبُ عَنِ أَهْلِهِ الْمَوْتُورُ
بِأَبِيهِ

“He [Imam Mahdi (a.s.)] is alone, without a friend and a helper, a stranger who is far from his homeland and followers, who till now is yearning to avenge the blood² of his grandfather³.”

Someone inquired from Chief of Martyrs Imam Husain (a.s.):

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 51, p. 120

² موتور is said to be that person who wants to avenge the blood of the one who was oppressed and tortured but he is not getting an opportunity to take revenge. It is for this reason that in the ziyarat of Chief of Martyrs (a.s.) we read 'الْمَوْتُورُ' because till now his and his companions' killing has not been avenged

³ Kamaluddin, vol. 2, p. 361 (Chapter 34, Tradition No. 4)

“Are you the Master of this affair?” He said: No! The Master of this affair is the one who will withdraw himself and dwell in a distant land and seek to avenge the massacre of his father.”¹

Regretfully, Imam-e-Zaman’s (a.t.f.s.) loneliness and helplessness will continue till he reappears. As The Master of the Pious, Ali ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) says: “Our Mahdi (from the time of his birth till his reappearance) will be lonely and helpless.”²

Describing the circumstances of Imam-e-Asr’s (a.t.f.s.) reappearance, Imam Sadeq (a.s.) told Mufazzal:

“O Mufazzal, he will reappear alone. He will arrive alone inside Masjidul Haram. He will be holding the covering of the Kaaba in a situation where the dark night would have engulfed everything and he will be all by himself.”³

His birth will be hidden, just like Hazrat Moosa (a.s.)’s and the Pharaohs of his time would have resolved to kill him.

It is really tragic that the birth of the Last Divine Proof (a.s.) from the family of Imamah was forced to be kept a secret even from his uncle and it is even more unfortunate that during occultation, Hazrat (a.s.) has to live a hidden life away from his home. At the time of reappearance, too, he will be alone and he will arrive inside the Masjidul Haram in a state of helplessness.

¹ Kamaluddin, vol. 2, p. 318

² Mikyalul Makarim, vol. 1, p. 129

³ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 53, p. 7

Ghaibat — an era of staying aloof for Imam (a.s.)

Imam Sadeq (a.s.) says,

“For the Master of this affair is an unavoidable occultation. During this period of occultation he will remain aloof from the people even though Madina is such a nice place.”¹

Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) in his last moments, when on the threshold of achieving martyrdom, willed to his beloved son:

“O my son, it’s compulsory that you dwell in a distant and hidden place, far away from the people because every friend of Allah has dangerous enemies who are obtrusive in the matters.”²

Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.), too, expressing his father’s wish, says,

“The promise which my beloved father [Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.)] had taken from me was correct that I should lead a hidden and secretive life so that I can keep my matters secret and keep myself safe from the deceit of the deviated ones and the corruption of a deviated nation.”³

Sayyed-e-Sajjad, Imam Ali ibn Husain (a.s.) says:

¹ Isbatul Hudaat, vol. 3, p. 445

² Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 52, p. 35

³ Kamaaluddin, vol. 2, p. 447, chapter 43, Tradition No. 19

“Our Qaem (a.t.f.s.) will have a few similarities with six Prophets (a.s.). He will have a long life like Hazrat Nuh (a.s.). His upbringing will be guarded and he will lead a life separated from the people. He will remain in the state of worry and occultation like Hazrat Moosa (a.s.). People will contradict his rights as they did with Hazrat Esa (a.s.). Like Hazrat Ayyub (a.s.) he will find comfort after severe hardships and like the Last of Prophets (s.a.w.a.) he will rise with the sword.”¹

So many years have passed and that great personality has remained out of sight, living in a distant land without anybody knowing him and the world along with its inhabitants is left deprived from his gracious presence. However, this deficiency can be ended through repentance and prayers for his early reappearance.

We find in traditions that during the period of occultation there are some people who get the honor of presenting themselves before Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.). They carry out his instructions and to a certain extent his solitude is reduced. If any of them pass away then someone else takes their place. Likewise, Hazrat Khizr (a.s.) is also among his companions and adherents. He is among those who are present with him in his loneliness. As Imam Ali ibn Moosa Ar-Reza (a.s.) says:

“Hazrat Khizr (a.s.) drank from the nectar of life. Thus, he is alive and will not die till the trumpet is blown. Indeed, he comes to us and he greets us. His voice is audible and the Almighty Allah will remove the loneliness of our Qaem (a.s.) during his occultation through the companionship of Khizr. He will be familiar with him and will have sympathy for his

¹ Al-Mohajjat ul-Bayzza, vol. 4, p. 338

*loneliness.*¹

¹ Isbatul Hudaat, vol. 3, p. 48; Hayatul Quloob, vol. 1, p. 285

Ghaibat — a period of distress for Imam (a.s.)

While interpreting this verse of Holy Quran:

أَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ

Is HE (not the best) who answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him and removes the Evil.¹

Imam Jafar Sadeq (a.s.) says:

This verse is revealed about the Qaem (a.s.) from the progeny of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). By Allah he is the distressed one. He will offer two units (rakat) of prayers near Maqame Ibrahim and pray to Allah. Allah will answer his prayers and remove his difficulties and shall make him the Caliph on the earth.²

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) says:

By Allah! He [Hazrat Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)] is so distressed that is said about him 'Is HE (not the best) who answers ...³

It is for this reason we recite in Dua-e-Nudba:

¹ Surah Naml (27) : 62

² Tafseer-e-Qummi, vol. 2, p. 129

³ Al-Ghayba an Numani, p. 95

أَيْنَ الْمُضْطَّرُّ الَّذِي يُجَابُ إِذْعَا؟

Where is the distressed who is answered when he calls upon Allah?

In the explanation of this statement it is said: Any person who holds a position or a rank, however, after being delegated to the rank has been kept away from this status by the people who have usurped his position and stop him from doing his duty and he does not have the authority to exercise his rights and his enemies do not want him to perform his duty or mission then such a person is called مضطر (the distressed one).

Now, what can be more distressing in the universe than the fact that the Divine Proof of Allah (a.s.) and the Preacher of Holy Quran and religious commandments, even though present, has been left watching from the sidelines how the oppressive, tyrant rulers — hypocrites and those given to debauchery — wish to distort the Holy Quran and finish off the traditions and customs of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Furthermore, they want to change the face of Islam and cause harm to their lovers and followers and make them an object of ridicule and insults.¹

We read the following words in the famous recommended dua of Imam-e-Asr's (a.t.f.s.) first deputy:

So, O My Lord, the One who dismisses adversities. When a distressed person calls upon You, You accept his plea and free him from his grief and agony. Therefore, remove the adversities of Your Friend.²

¹ Sharhe Dua Nudba, Alwi Taaqaani:253

² Jamal Al Usboo: 319

Ghaibat — an era of confinement for Imam (a.s.)

A few traditions clearly talk about Imam (a.s.) being ‘bounded’ while in occultation. In some other instances, based on the discourses of the Infallibles (a.s.), same inference can be drawn, As Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) says:

The Master of Affairs will have four signs of four Prophets in him. The signs of Hazrat Moosa (a.s.), Hazrat Esa (a.s.), Hazrat Yusuf (a.s.) and Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.a.).

The sign of Hazrat Moosa (a.s.) in him will be the fear and the distressed state. The sign of Hazrat Yusuf (a.s.) in him will be like staying in confinement. The sign of Hazrat Esa (a.s.) will be that the people will be divided over giving him his right. Some will say he has died while others will say he hasn’t died and he will rise with the sword like Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.).¹

Imam Husain (a.s.), too, says:

“My ninth son (from his lineage) will have signs of Hazrat Yusuf (a.s.) and Hazrat Moosa (a.s.) in him.”²

Based on this the Infallibles (a.s.), in their supplications, have prayed for Imam-e-Asr’s (a.t.f.s.) ‘deliverance’ (فرج) and ‘happiness.’

¹ Alamat wal Tabseerat, p. 94

² Al Muhajjatul Al Baizaa, p. 338, Tradition No. 4

In one of his detailed supplications, which he taught to his companion Abdullah ibn Sinan on the day of Aashura, Imam Sadeq (a.s.) prayed:

اللَّهُمَّ وَحِجْلُ فَرَجِ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَاجْعَلْ صَلَوَاتِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَاسْتَنْقِذْهُمْ مِنْ أَيْدِي الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْبُضِلِّينَ
وَالْكَفَرَةَ الْجَا حِدِيْنَ

O My Allah! Hasten the appearance of Aale Muhammad and keep Your benedictions upon him and save him from the hypocrites, deviants and spiteful disbelievers.¹

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) says:

His resemblance with Yusuf (a.s.) is that, like how Allah had solved his problem in a moment [Hazrat Yusuf (a.s.) had rightly predicted the dream of the Egyptian emperor and as a consequence he was released from prison). Similarly, the order of reappearance and waiting will be informed in a moment.²

In certain sentences of the salawat of Abul Hasan Zarrab from of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) it has come:

وَخَلِّصْهُ مِنْ أَيْدِي الْجَبَّارِيْنَ

(O Allah), save him [Imam Mahdi (a.s.)] from the

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 101, p. 305, Tradition no. 4; Sahife Mahdi, p. 241-247

² Kamaluddin : p. 329 (chapter 32, Tradition 12)

hands of the tyrants.

In his correspondences with Sheikh Mufeed (a.r.), Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) has used the words *فَمَا يَجْبِسُنَا* which means that he has indicated the reprehensible actions and characters of his Shias as the reason for his confinement.

The moments of imprisonment passing in occultation

Pray that the duration of this time lessens

Every passing second of it is like being in jail

Have some sympathy on your lovers...O Master!

Ghaibat — an era of anxiety for Imam (a.s.)

We had said that Imam Sajjad (a.s.), while drawing similarities between Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) and the Prophets (a.s.), had compared his ‘trepidation anxiety and occultation’ to that of Prophet Moosa (a.s.).¹

Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) while briefing Kumayl says:

اللَّهُمَّ بَلَى لَأَتَخَلَّوْا الْأَرْضُ مِنْ قَائِمٍ لِلَّهِ بِحُجَّةٍ إِمَّا
ظَاهِرًا مَشْهُورًا وَإِمَّا خَائِفًا مَغْمُورًا

O My Allah (this is certain) never will this world be devoid of a Divine Proof notwithstanding if he is manifest or recognized or whether he is in a state of fear or angst hidden from the eyes of the people.²

In some narrations the word ‘Fear’ (خائف) has been categorically used for Hazrat Baqiyatullah (a.s.). As Imam Sadeq (a.s.) says:

“There will be an occultation before reappearance for Qaem (a.s.)” Zorarah says, ‘I asked Imam: Why?’ Imam replied: “He will be apprehensive of being

¹ Al Muhajjatul Al Baizaa, p. 338, Tradition no. 4

² Nahjul Balagah saying 139

*killed.*¹”

One of the reasons of Imam (a.s.)’s fear is the apprehension of being killed. This fear isn’t a psychological fear or uneasiness or in negative sense. But instead it is a question of insecurity (lack of supporters). It was on the basis of this insecurity that Hazrat Moosa (a.s.) had exited Egypt. As Holy Quran says: **فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ (Moosa) exited from the city in fear, and awaiting.**

The prayer which follows Ziyarat-e-Aale Yaseen, in this too, Imam (a.s.) is referred to as the ‘vigilant and fearful’

المُرْتَقِبِ الخَائِفِ

We are aware that Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) is from the treasures of Allah and gift of all the glad tidings given by the Prophets and there are lot of responsibilities on him. Like establishing justice and for that it is also necessary that he protects himself. More so, the oppressors and tyrants have narrowed down the living space and hence Imam (a.s.) had to go into seclusion. His father and grand fathers were martyred either by sword or poison and it is for this that Imam Mahdi (a.s.) was compelled to agree and live his life far from the clutches of the oppressors. The cause for this insecurity is due to non-availability of companions and helpers.

There could be other reasons for Imam (a.s.)’s fear. For instance, the apprehension of a long-extended occultation. Or the fear of delay in his reappearance. Another reason for Imam (a.s.)’s apprehension could be the believers who may become the victims of difficulties and afflictions in the era of occultation and as a consequence find themselves in Iblees’ trap and stray from the straight path of Imamat.

¹ Kamaaluddin, vol. 2, p. 281 (chapter 44, Tradition no. 7)

Allah has promised.

وَلِيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ بَعْدَ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا

He will most certainly, after their fear, give them security in exchange.¹

¹ Surah Nur (24): 55

Ghaibat — an era of oppression on Imam (a.s.)

It has been narrated from Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) that at the time Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s.) reappearance, Allah will send a Hashmite youth towards the inhabitants of Mecca for the completion of argument. He will tell him:

*'Go to the dwellers of Mecca and say: I am the representative of so and so who has sent me to you. He has said: We Ahle Bait (a.s.) are a mercy, the rich deposits of prophetic mission and succession. We are from the family of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and the sons of Prophets (a.s.). We are the oppressed ones and victims of cruelty. We are sidelined. Since the time the Noble Messenger (s.a.w.a.) passed away our rights are being wasted. We seek assistance from you. You also come and help us.'*¹

In another tradition, the fifth Imam (a.s.) reveals the excerpts of Imam-e-Asr's (a.t.f.s.) speech near the Kaaba. He says:

(O People) I place Allah as a witness over you. I adjure everyone, who hears my speech today, to inform the absent of it. I ask you with the right of Allah, the right of His messenger and with my right, for I have a right of kinship to the messenger of Allah, to support us and to protect us from those, who have wronged us. We have been wronged, offended, expelled from our homes,

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 52, p. 307, Tradition no. 81

*separated from our families, deprived of our rights and our honor and virtues have been distorted by the evil people.*¹

The late Haaji Sayed Ismael Sharfee would say:

I had left my place to visit the revered holy places. I was busy praying inside the *haram* of Imam Husain (a.s.) and I went there because prayers are accepted near the headstone of Chief of Martyrs (a.s.). At that moment a wish in my heart took birth and that of gaining the honor of meeting my master Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.). I was busy praying when I suddenly sighted a luminous face. After conveying my salaam, I said, ‘O my Master, who are you?’ *He answered, ‘I am the most oppressed person of this world.’*²

Imam Husain (a.s.) in a state of spiritual inspiration told one of the scholars of Qum.

*“Our Mahdi (a.s.) is an oppressed one in his own era. Talk about it as much as possible and write about it as much as you can. Whatever you discuss about him is like as if you have remembered all the Infallibles (a.s.). Because all of them are one in terms of Infallibility, Wilayat and Imamat. But as this is Mahdi (a.s.)’s era he should be spoken about as much as possible. I once again emphasis that talk about our Mahdi (a.s.) as much as you can and write about him. Our Mahdi (a.s.) is an oppressed one. And whatever is read and written should be about him.”*³

¹ Al-Ghayba An Nomani : 81

² Translation of Sahife Mahdiyyah (a.s.) : 58

³ Ibid

Ghaibat — an era of waiting for Imam (a.s.)

In traditions the present time is also referred to as a period of the Awaited One (منتظر). Muntazar (Awaited One) is also one of Imam (a.s.)'s title and that is because the hearts of the believers are restless with regards to his reappearance and his imminent arrival. The Imam (a.s.) is himself eager and waiting for Allah's command to reappear and to help the friends of Allah and remove the difficulties of his followers. In this regard there is a supplication which is recited when one leaves the house on the day of Eid-ul-Fitr.

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَىٰ وَلِيِّكَ الْمُنْتَظِرِ أَمْرَكَ الْمُنْتَظِرِ لِفَرَجِ
أَوْلِيَّائِكَ

*O Allah, salutations be on your vicegerent who is waiting for your command and the one who is waiting for the deliverance of your friends.*¹

It is clear from this that every moment of Occultation is harsh and severe on Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.). Particularly because Imam (a.s.) is aware of whatever transpires in the world and is also informed about the state of Shias. He is aware of the threats from the oppressive, tyrannical, disbelieving and hypocrite

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 91, p. 17, Tradition no. 4; Iqbalul Amaal (narrated from Misbah Kafemi)

rulers. On the other hand, during the era of occultation, his hands are not even free to establish justice and equality and wipe out oppression and cruelty. It is but natural that Imam (a.s.), at any moment, is waiting to hear from Allah to execute the tasks which he has been assigned because the basic condition for reappearance is the preparedness of the masses and alertness and prayers regarding him. Thus, it can be said: Imam (a.s.) is waiting for his Shias to be alert, wakeful and cautious during occultation.

Regarding the lengthening of occultation and Imam (a.s.) living a hidden life, the Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) was saddened and hence Imam would invoke avidly:

يَا بَنَ خَيْرَةِ الْأُمَمِ مَتَى تُنْتَظَرُ

*O the son of the best of mothers, till when can one wait?*¹

¹ Yanabi al Mawwadah (Published by Daarul Uswah) 3-434 (chapter 99, tradition no.4). The author of Yanabi al Mawwadah has narrated from the book of Siffin (Abul Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad Madaeni) and he narrates from Bashratul Islam (printed in Najaf Ashraf) page 80 (last of chapter two).

Chashme Andaaz (printed Afaaq, second edition) 109 narrated from Sharh ibn Abil Hadeed

Ghaibat — an era of Imam Mahdi (a.s.)’s helplessness

One of the verses of Holy Quran is very famous in connection with Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.). Imam (a.s.) had himself recited this verse before his noble father (a.s.) at the time of his birth and seven days after his birth. It is the fifth verse of Surah Qasas:

وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ آيَةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ

And We desired to bestow a favor upon those who were deemed weak in the land, and to make them the Imams, and to make them the heirs.

Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) explains the above verse in the following way:

“The word ‘weak’ (مستضعفين) means Aale Muhammad (a.s.). Allah will make their Mahdi reappear after a hard and rigorous period and will honor him and will humiliate, disgrace and despise his enemies.¹

It is narrated from Imam Jafar Sadeq (a.s.)

Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) while looking at Imam Ali (a.s.) and his two sons Imam Hasan (a.s.) and Imam Husain (a.s.) said crying:

¹ Al Ghaybat of Shaikh Tusi, p. 113

“The two of you will be rendered helpless (مستضعفين).”

Mufazzal narrates from Imam Jafar Sadeq (a.s.): I asked Imam (a.s.) what did Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) mean?

He (a.s.) said: Means that the two of you (Imam Hasan (a.s.) and Imam Husain (a.s.)), will be victims of tyranny. The Almighty Allah says: And We desired to bestow a favor — the example of this verse will be found in our family till the Day of Judgment.¹

The meaning of Mustazafeen is different from ‘to be weak.’ To be weak means one is feeble. But Mustazafeen is said to be that person who has been compelled or forced to become weak. The Ahle Bait (a.s.) are and were in no way feeble.

But the pages of history bear testimony that they were forced to become weak by individuals who were worshippers of Taghoot (centers of disobedience) and thus they were deprived of their rights.

Anyway, those who soothe the weak and the oppressed, help them and even acknowledge Imam Mahdi (a.s.) as a hope for the weaker ones, they should not ignore the fact that the foremost of all who have been weakened is the holy being of Imam (a.s.) himself. And if the radiant personality of Imam (a.s.)’s reappears, then all the weak ones will find the way to salvation.

Disrespectful Accusations

You may have, perhaps, come across individuals who are of the opinion that the holy being of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) is someone who will wield his sword blindly, will set off rivers of blood, will chop-off heads and will go on a rampant carnage.

¹ Maani al-Akhbaar, p. 79

More upsetting than this is the fact that these individuals pass on their skewed thinking to others and thus tamper the benevolent being and the justice-oriented persona of Imam (a.s.) in the minds and thoughts of others. Consequently, they instill fear in the minds of many with regards to Imam (a.s.)'s blessed reappearance, which dissuades them to pray for his early arrival.

This is being cruel to a personality whose being is all about love, affection, compassion and mercy. Even certain religious-minded individuals jokingly or carelessly say negative things about Imam (a.s.). For instance, they talk about Imam-e-Zaman's (a.t.f.s.) sword slicing either theirs or someone else's throats.

On one radio program (In Iran), which was related to Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.), they tried to know the views of the students of one of the schools in Tehran on the subject of reappearance. They discovered that 70% of the students didn't want Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.) to reappear. When they were asked the reason, they said, "If Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.) comes he will decapitate us."

This is indeed a shocking state of affairs. One feels like crying tears of blood and tearing the shirt-front. Can anything crueller be imagined than this?

He is that kind-hearted Imam (a.s.) who is the source of life not only for his friends and followers, but even his enemies are breathing and earning their livelihoods due to him. That very Imam (a.s.) is more compassionate than a doting father, more affectionate than a caring mother and more helping than a brother. That very benevolent Imam (a.s.), after who's reappearance we know that there will not be a single drop of tear in an orphan's eye and there will be no deaths due to hunger. No one will writhe in pain, no (innocent) will stay in

prison, all borrowers will have done with their loans, no poor will have to sleep on the street and no table mat will be devoid of bread. That sympathetic Imam (a.s.) who will take revenge on behalf of the oppressed ones and protect those who were harassed in the past. That Imam (a.s.) who has promised to put to rest all miseries and remove all difficulties and enrich the impoverished. To introduce him as someone who is happy to wield his sword ruthlessly and shed blood is appalling and an unpardonable crime.

If we have only been highlighting his lightning swordsmanship till now, then we need to implore Allah the Exalted for forgiveness, and beseech Him to pardon us for being blasphemous towards a holy being who is indeed a manifestation of mercy.

The fact is that that the holy being Hujjat Ibne Hasan (a.t.f.s.) is the seal of Imamatus exactly like the Last of Prophets (s.a.w.a.). He is the Mercy for the entire universe.¹ His epithets are كاشف البلوى (remover of misfortunes) and غوث رحمة الواسعة (the succor and one with far-reaching mercy)² and كهف (Cave - a place of safety). All these titles of Hazrat (a.s.) have repetitively come in traditions, supplications and salutations.

In Ziyarat-e-Jamea Kabeera, in which Imam Ali ibn Muhammad Haadi (a.s.) has specified the best of ways to acquaint ourselves with Imamatus — has remembered the Ahle Bait of Prophet (a.s.) as the source of mercy, those with extreme forbearance, humility, magnanimity, the real fountainhead of love, the removers of sorrow and those who alleviate afflictions.

¹ 'And through his son 'M' 'H' 'M' 'D' I will complete it.' From the subject that he will be a mercy for the entire universe. Usool-e-Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 528 (Hadith-e-Lauh)

² Ziyarat-e-Aale Yaseen: والغوث رحمة الواسعة

Imam Reza (a.s.) says:

An Imam is a caring companion, a sympathetic father and a bigger helper than a brother and is more beneficent than what a mother is to her infant child and is a refuge for the servants of Allah.¹

In the era of occultation, the Almighty Allah has made Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) a refuge, safe haven and one who renders justice to the vulnerable and helpless. He is an Imam (a.s.) who will provide salvation and in the light of reliable traditions he will be most gracious with all and good-natured. In his era of reappearance, he will invite people towards the true religion in a friendly manner. He will impart astonishing knowledge on the Heavenly Book. He will complete the argument on every place and every being through admonishments, advises and teaching that will be suitable for the age. Even if someone may be partly inclined to accept the truth, he will attain the truth and slowly and gradually the People of the Book will bring faith in him like this.

However, care needs to be exercised. When plants and roses are groomed, some unwanted weeds, too, grows up along with them. These may prove to be counter-productive for the growth of plants and roses. Therefore, it is necessary to uproot these blades of weeds. For this the razor-sharp justice of Allah is needed. When the Justice of Allah is in place, the oppressors will be annihilated and tortured ones will heave a sigh of relief. The group of despots, who refuse to tread the straight path or don't pay heed to advices and do not respond after being cautioned, will then be brushed aside.

Have you ever contemplated why the holy being of Imam (a.s.)

¹ Usool-e-Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 200 (Kitabul Hujjat)

is remembered as the Peacock of Heavens?¹ Perhaps the subtlety behind this comparison is that when a peacock spreads its wings, he dazzles the eyes. When Hazrat (a.s.) reappears, he will amaze the onlookers and leave their intellects surprised with his heavenly being and divine character.

We read the following in Ziyarat of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.):

السَّلَامُ عَلَى رَبِّيعِ الْإِنَامِ وَنَضْرَةِ الْإَيَّامِ

Peace be upon the spring of hearts and freshness of the day

In Dua-e-Ahad we ask Allah:

Oh Allah, through him re-establish your cities and grant Your servants a true life.

Imam (a.s.) is an unswerving spring and cause of energy, freshness and eternal life. The true nature and life of man will manifest itself when he reappears. It will be that occasion when everyone will have a true taste of life and tranquility. If it will really be like this, then how would one describe the way we are currently living our lives?

We should be certain that we aren't aware of the blessings which will come into existence following his reappearance. We are also ignorant of the fact that through the abundantly generous and efficient hands of Yusuf-e-Zahra (s.a) humans will be getting good deeds, relief, blessings, beauty and perfection as gifts. At the time of Imam (a.s.)'s auspicious reappearance mankind will get unimaginable gifts of faith, comfort and peace. The following are some traditions in this context:

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 51, p. 91

The Noble Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) says:

“My nation will enjoy so many blessings during Mahdi’s (a.s.) rein that none of it would have been witnessed before.”¹

I give you the glad tidings about Mahdi (a.s.), who will be sent towards the people. The people staying on earth and in the heavens will be contented and happy with him.²

All nations will come under his refuge, like how the honey bees who seek refuge in their queen. He will make justice so common in the entire world that Islam will regain its lost glitter. He will not wake up a sleeping one rudely nor will he shed the blood of an innocent.³

He will acquaint the hearts with the worship and obedience. The lap of justice will be spread everywhere. Through him Allah will batter the fort of lies. Barbarity and oppressive tendencies will be annihilated and the shackle of lowliness and degradation around people’s neck will be removed.⁴

There’ll be no or poor. People will want to give charity but they will not find a needy person. Whoever they will try and offer wealth, will say that he is not in need of anything.⁵

The birds will be chirping in their nests. The fishes will be in a playful mood in the water. Dried springs will again gush forth and the plantations will multiply.⁶

The inhabitants of skies and earth will love him. There will be

¹ Muntakhabul Asar, p. 473

² Jaamea Ahadeesus Shia, vol. 1, p. 34

³ Muntakhabul Asar, p. 478

⁴ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 51, p. 104

⁵ Musnad Ahmad, vol. 2, p. 53

⁶ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 52, p. 304

more rain and the earth will spread its greenery everywhere so much that those living will wish that the dead ones come to life to witness this form of justice.¹

The skies will continuously shower mercy. No seed will remain under the ground and everything will grow. Wealth will be showered on everybody on this day in a manner that when anybody says, “O Mahdi! Please grant me?” They will be told...take whatever you wish!²

Ameerul Momeneen Ali ibn Abi Taleb (a.s.) says:

*When one of my sons will reappear then the affairs of the people will ease so much that the dead ones will visit each other and spread the good news of his reappearance.*³

There will be plenteous rains and the earth will manifest its greenery. Animosity and malevolence will vanish from the hearts. Wild and domestic animals will live in such a harmony that a woman can safely walk from Iraq to Syria and on this long road which will have a sizeable population, her footsteps will land only on the grass that grows on the ground despite the fact that her adornments will be on her, no beast will attack her. She will keep walking on this peaceful road without an iota of fear in her heart.⁴

Imam Sadeq (a.s.) says:

When Mahdi will reappear his clothes will be similar to that of Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) and he will strictly

¹ Al Tashreef, p. 146

² Eqdud Durar, chapter 7, p. 195

³ Kamaaluddin, vol. 2, p. 653 (chapter 57, Tradition no. 17)

⁴ Mikyalul Makarim, vol. 1, p. 101.

*act on Holy Prophet's (s.a.w.a.) conduct.*¹

In traditions it is clarified that, due to the blessing of Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.)'s presence, his conduct and policies, people will be free from poverty and hunger. They will be needless of materialistic wealth. Hazrat (a.s.) will call them: *"Come, this is the same thing for which you would fight with your relatives and would even spill each other's blood to get hold of it. You would even leave your religious duties. You were guilty of doing things which were forbidden by Allah."* After this he will grant them so much wealth that no one would have ever given to them.²

Authentic reports reveal that in his time all diseases will have a cure. The blind will have their eye-sight restored. There will be considerable rain. No piece of land will be barren but it will have plantations or flowers blooming on it. The earth will have a lush green appearance and every tree will bear fruits. The bodies will be healthy and ages will even cross the hundred-year barrier. The time of the days and the years will increase tenfold. Farmers will gain maximum harvest from their lands. Animosity will remain far from the hearts and people will be very benevolent with each other. Not only this but the human intellect will achieve perfection and predators will lose their attacking instincts. Sheep and wolves, cows and lions will live together. Wealth will be abundant and greed and avarice will be extinct in such a way that one will not be able to find a beggar to give charity.

Children will play with snakes and scorpions without any danger. All the evils will be extinct and the people will sincerely worship Allah the Exalted and they will not associate anyone or anybody with Him.

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 54, p. 47, Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 114

² Al-Ghayba An Nomani, p. 342

Territorial restrictions will be repealed and every inch of earth will be governed by one authority. Any person wishing to travel from the East to West will have the right to travel without any hindrance. No one will stop anyone. Why shouldn't it be like this? Hasn't Allah created all the species and the universe for this household? In Hadis-e-Kisa we read the words of Allah:

O My angels! O Residents of My Heavens! Verily, I have not created a canopy-like sky, the stretched earth, the illuminated moon, the bright sun, the rotating planets, the flowing oceans and the ships that sail in it, but for the love of these Five.¹

It's worth reminding here that, traditions say, much of bloodletting will occur in the world prior to the reappearance and that is mainly due to self-inflicted wars. The super powers of the world will fight each other, as Imam Reza (a.s.) says:

Before Qaem's (a.t.f.s.) rise there will be such killings and massacres that will not even stop for a moment.²

That said, we don't deny that Qaem (a.s.) will rise with the sword. That is because there are numerous traditions that have emphasized on this. But it is beyond question that Imam-e-Asr's (a.t.f.s.) sharp-edged Zulfeqaar and Hazrat (a.s.)'s strength and wrath will befall those who have continually smothered justice and killed innocent and helpless individuals and struck the sword of disbelief and malice on the friends of Allah — who don't understand any other language but that of a sword.

For those who roam the streets, gullies and bazaars to fulfill their daily needs and strive hard in pursuit of their sustenance — if these people do commit mistakes inadvertently, through

¹ Mafatihul Jinan, Hadis-e-Sharif-e-Kisa

² Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 52, p. 152 (Quoted from Qurb al Asnaad)

ignorance or are lured by someone to commit an error — then there is no evidence present to suggest that their heads will roll in front of Allah and his vicegerent. These individuals may be filled with fear and apprehension though one cannot find a reason for it. Because, after the reappearance of Imam Mahdi's (a.t.f.s.), not only most of his followers will welcome him but a greater part of the general population will be inclined towards him due to their innate nature and will bring faith due to Hazrat (a.s.) after witnessing his character, method and qualities.

Those who are immersed in polytheism, disbelief and hypocrisy, will naturally, tremble at hearing Hazrat (a.s.)'s distinguished name. They are apprehensive of his reappearance, much like the kings of Bani Abbas (or like the Pharaoh who was alarmed of Hazrat Musa (a.s.)'s birth) who imposed all possible restrictions on the eleventh Imam (a.s.), which included keeping him under close watch. They felt in their own illusory ways that they could stop the promised Imam from coming into this world and they were ready to martyr this heavenly son.

Amr Hadeed, which Imam (a.s.) will bring along with him at the time of reappearance, has been explained in different ways in the traditions of noble Imams (a.s.). This makes it amply clear that true Islam hasn't reached the people yet.

If a teacher is absent from the class for some reason and doesn't explain the subject to his students, will it be fair that when he returns to the class, he will test the students for the lesson which he had not taught? Can such an action then be expected from the most beneficent of teacher, who will reappear, to provide absolute salvation to mankind, their guidance and grooming of humanity? It is true¹ that Imam (a.s.) will

¹ This is a warning for us so that we recognize the origin of recognizing

interrogate the chief of oppressors, tyrants and the perpetrators of injustice with a good degree of severity. But Imam (a.s.) will inspire and guide a majority of those who were victims of these tyrants.

The fear of Imam (a.s.)'s sword is predominantly found in the Shia community and that to in a strange manner. It's hard to fathom why we get overwhelmed with fear when we are frequently seeking help from Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) and other Infallible Imams (a.s.). These magnanimous personalities are aware of our condition and regardless of being familiar with our sins, blemishes and mistakes, how well they treat us. They don't drive us out of their presence. Instead, they fulfill our needs. Despite of this grace and nobility of our own Infallible Imam (a.s.) what is the reason then, to be scared or frightened of him?

Imamat and solidify the pillars of our recognition and fortify our determination to work with the feeling of submission and pleasure for Imam (a.s.). We need to keep the faith that Imam-e-Asr (a.s.) is the absolute truth and whatever comes out of his blessed lips is the word of Allah and the true religion. The truth is with Imam (a.s.), in Imam (a.s.) and on his side. How wretched and strayed are those people who, in the name of Quran and Sunnat, which is a figment of their own sick mindset and not the real Sunnat, will argue and go to war with Hazrat Wali-e-Asr (a.s.) at the time of reappearance. According to narrations Imam (a.s.) will have endure such difficulties at the hands of these individuals which will be more in severity as compared to the harm and affliction borne by the Noble Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.). The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was raised among such people who due to their ignorance and arrogance were worshipping woods and stones. But this nation has lived on the diet of forgery for the last 1400 years and has been delivering their own interpretations ridiculous stories and innovations in the name of Islam, and they are even practicing it. Naturally then, it will be an onerous task to teach true Islam to these people.

On the eve of Me'raj Almighty Allah informed His Messenger (s.a.w.a.) concerning Imam Mahdi (a.s.):

He will make lawful what I've made lawful and make unlawful what I have prohibited. I will take revenge from My enemies through him. Allah's representatives and servants will be comforted by his arrival and his afflicted Shias will find cure.¹

Imam Sadeq (a.s.) tells Ibrahim Karkh:

*O Ibrahim, he will remove the woes and sorrows of Shias after a lengthy calamitous, frightening and horrifying period which will be severe and grueling.*²

It is hard to believe that a benevolent leader, who prays for his sinning followers in front of Allah and will specifically come to grant cure and remove the sorrow from the heart of his afflicted Shias will put them to sword when he reappears. Sayed ibn Tawoos (r.a.) says I heard Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.) saying the following prayer in the holy cellar (Samarra) at dawn:

O Allah! It is certain that our Shias have been created from the rays of our light and our superior teenat (dust). They have committed excessive sins relying on their love for us. If the sins (that they have committed) is related to me, then forgive them, for, it will be a cause of happiness to us. If they have harmed each other then, establish reconciliation between them. Please improve their conditions and give them even my part of the Khums so that they are contented. Make them enter Paradise and save them from fire of Hell and because of their sins do not consider them at par with Your

¹ Behaar ul Anwaar, vol. 36, p. 245, Tradition no. 58

² Behaar ul Anwaar, vol. 15, p. 144

*enemies.*¹

Certainly, Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) has a kind eye over his Shias, who are his spiritual children. The examples of which are plenty and can be found in the narrations of the Infallibles (a.s.):

*We are happy in your happiness and sorrowful in your sorrow.*²

Imam Ali (a.s.) says:

*None of our Shias fall sick, but that we too fall ill with them. None of them get sorrowful but that we too are sad in their sadness....*³

Keep in mind that by this, we don't intend to start the trend of inclining the people towards sins. As, the sins committed by the Shias annoy and offend Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.). But this too should be kept in mind that not all the companions of Ameerul Momeneen Ali ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.) were at par with Salman, Abu Zar and Miqdad, or like Zurarah and Hesham ibn Hakam, who were friends and companions of Imam Sadeq (a.s.). This is because among the followers of the Noble Imams (a.s.) there were obeying ones and sinners, the just ones and transgressors too. So, did then the Pious Imams (a.s.) abandon their friends and sincere ones, who were involved in sins or put them to sword? Certainly, the answer to this will be in the negative.

We come across some narrations which even give preference to Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) over other Imams in some aspect. As

¹ Behaar ul Anwaar, vol. 53, p. 302; Jannatul Mawaa, Hakayat 55

² Behaar ul Anwaar, vol. 26, p. 140-141 quoted from Basaaer al Darajaat

³ Behaar ul Anwaar, vol. 26, p. 140, Tradition no.11 and p.154 Tradition no. 43 quoted from Basaaer al Darajaat

those people were living their lives in the presence of an Imam and thus, they could benefit from their blessed presence. They could get their answers directly from them. They could visit their Imam (a.s.). But in this period of occultation, the Shias are akin to that child whose benevolent father has gone on a long journey and he doesn't have the affectionate shelter over his head.

In one of his poems, Sayed Halawi¹ has complained to Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) about the Shias' plight, indignation and sorrow. This poem was recited in one of the gatherings and when one of the great personalities of Najaf-e-Ashraf got the opportunity to present himself in front of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.), he was told: *Ask Sayed not to trouble my heart so much. This affair is in Allah's hand and not in my hands. Keep praying so that Allah eases my reappearance.*²

To summarize things, we should abstain from criticizing the pious being of Imam Mahdi (a.s.). Furthermore, we should prevent to paint an unrealistic and stern picture of Imam (a.s.) and not frighten his friends and justice-loving people from his reappearance.

By creating an atmosphere of fear and anxiety among the people regarding the reappearance through devilish means is akin to a group of rogues or hooligans who are distancing a youth from his family and putting him on a wrong path and when this youth attempts to return to his family he will be told: If you return, your father will punish you and possibly kill you.

The representatives of Shaitan have deprived the humankind to live their lives under the tutelage of their spiritual father and to

¹ Sayed Haider bin Sayed Suleiman Hilli (1246-1304) is counted amongst the famous poets in the history of Shias.

² Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 53, pp. 331-336 (Jannatul Mawah)

prevent them from returning, they keep citing the fear of sword.

Self-inflicted deprivation

One hundred and twenty four thousand divine prophets were sent to guide mankind. What treatment did mankind mete out to these illustrated ambassadors of Allah? Some were chopped into two pieces! Some were set alight alive! Some were mercilessly beheaded! Some were deemed as insane and magicians. The rest were refuted. Apart from a handful of believers there was none to bring faith in them.

The eleven, oppressed and infallible Shia Imams (a.s.), too, were oppressed and martyred one after the other by the despots in power.

Now, there remains just one deliverer of salvation for all human beings. There is none besides him and no other way of deliverance. It is therefore desirable that one should seek refuge in the treasure (the inheritor of accomplishments of the prophets and vicegerents and their fruit too) of Allah who remains on the face of the earth. One should hold on to the Great Imam (a.s.) (who is Haadi and Mahdi).

One thing that hurts the Shia community is that generation after generation is getting indifferent with regards to the occultation of Imam (a.s.). Rather than understanding its significance they've taken it for granted. Many assume that the continuation of Imam (a.s.)'s occultation is the norm and that the role of the opponents and the followers has no bearing on its getting extended.

It's extremely important to be attentive towards this point. Allah has empowered humans with free will. He has created them with the power to choose between good and evil. If this wasn't the case then the concept of reward and punishment

will be meaningless. The process of accounting, heaven and hell would have been useless. The sinners wouldn't be interrogated, held accountable and punished. What's more, the good-doers wouldn't be declared as the rightful claimants of rewards and honor. It is for this reason that Allah did not force the humans to accept the invitation of the Prophets. It is for this same reason that the Divine Prophets would carry out their tasks by giving glad tidings and warnings. The same is the case with the Infallible Imams (a.s.). In fact it can even be said that the Prophets (a.s.) were appointed to communicate the Divine message and guide the people, while the same is not the responsibility of the Imams (a.s.)

Adherence is the only means of happiness

The traditions of Imams (a.s.) that have reached us, describe the Imam as a Kaaba. In order to visit the House of Allah, people put up with many hardships during their sojourn and they circumambulate the Holy House with utmost sincerity. But, the Kaaba never moves from its place for anyone.

If the Almighty Allah and our Infallible Guides (a.s.) have informed us about the impending martyrdom of Chief of Martyrs (a.s.), or have spoken about Imam-e-Asr's (a.t.f.s.) occultation before his birth i.e. the way the people will treat him or what will transpire. This doesn't mean that we believe in oppression and begin imagining that most definitely it will happen the way it has been said. Perhaps it is possible that the purpose to foretell these things is to wake the people up from their deep slumber and make them aware of their follies before these incidents happen to make amends. This is much like a doting father advising his son the dangers of keeping bad company, choosing the wrong path and profane schools of thought.

It's indeed sad that some people assume that it was Imam-e-

Asr (a.s.)'s destiny which has made him disappear from the eyes of the masses and it will be the case till Allah wishes and in the interim we are free to act individually. We hear some persons say something to the tune of this: He will come and reform the earth when Allah wishes.

Some others opine: The world is still not ready for him and the earth is still not primed for him. We are also uninformed about the timing of his arrival.

These two groups should be said: If praying for him is futile then in the traditions of the Infallible Imams (a.s.) — for the salvation of mankind — why is there so much emphasis on praying for his reappearance? Hasn't Quran laid on emphasis on this divine tradition?

“Allah doesn't change the fate of a nation until they change their own destiny”¹

A tradition from Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.), which was conveyed in the last days of his life, while addressing one of his companion informed him that 70th year of Islamic calendar would be when the difficulties will give way to wellbeing.²

It is for this reason that Abu Hamza Somali asked Imam Baqir (a.s.): O Master! Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) had said that things will be easygoing in the year 70 A.H. then why it hasn't happened?

Imam Baqir (a.s.) replied: *Had the people paid attention to the Imam of their time then they would have reached their true destination in this year itself.* Meaning they would returned to the Imamate of Imam but because the Chief of Martyr (Imam

¹ Surah Ra'd (13): 11

² Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 42, p. 223, Tradition no. 32

Husain a.s.) was left alone this affair has been postponed.”¹

The reason because of which mankind deprived itself from one of the biggest divine blessing is colossal in nature and cannot be felt at this moment. The fact is that the point of this great big tragedy and deprivation started off when Imam Ali (a.s.) was disregarded as the rightful successor of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). It all began when the Noble Messenger’s (s.a.w.a.) decree was ignored and the Door to Prophet’s (s.a.w.a.) knowledge was shut and the door of Janabe Fatemah Zahra’s (s.a.) house was set on fire. Mankind continues till date to bear that whip and pay the price of this calamity. It is true that a certain group, in its greed to grab power, absolute-power that is, threw open the garbage bin of Saqifa. But all those who remained reticence in this affair are equally responsible for Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) staying put in his house and the martyrdom of his revered wife.

In this way mankind, too, got arrested in this great calamity. It is for this reason that we find in Ziyarat-e-Aashura (which is a charter for Tabarra) that the ones who usurped the right of Aale Muhammad (which indeed is a big oppression on mankind.) have been repeatedly cursed and disassociated with.

If one after the other, the Pious Imams (a.s.) were ruthlessly martyred at the hands of despots and Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) disappeared from the eyes of the rebels and the people, then this isn’t based on a certain divine decree. It is due to the (poor) selection of the people.

In one tradition Imam Sadeq (a.s.) says:

“Allah’s certain decree is that if he bestows a blessing on someone, the blessing will remain till a sin is not committed. The confiscation of a blessing is due to the

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 4, p. 114, Tradition no. 39

sin committed."¹

Furthermore, Imam Jafar Sadeq (a.s.) says:

*"If Allah sends his wrath on someone then he removes us (Ahle Bait) from amongst them."*²

The thing that shouldn't have occurred, has occurred and as a consequence, the humankind has let a divine blessing slip out of their hands and this severe deprivation continues till date.

Now, what are we supposed to do? How do we save ourselves from this self-inflicted trouble? How do we salvage ourselves from this self-inflicted deprivation; and come out of this dark age of occultation to reach the luminous world of reappearance?

How do we get back the real life? Is it possible to heal a 1400 year old wound?

If this is how things are then the best way forward is to turn towards the luminously guiding sayings and redeeming the universal message of the Family of Revelation (a.s.). It is the Grace of Allah and our good fortune that our benevolent and caring Imams (a.s.), in the early period of Islam, in particular Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) right at the onset of his occultation, have demarcated the path to salvation. As providing guidance is the responsibility of Imam, Imam has not at all refused to lead.

Undoubtedly, following these rules in this impeding era and self-inflicted deprivation will put one on to the road to salvation. It guarantees happiness, in it lies our honor in this life as well as the hereafter. It is the prime condition for a good

¹ Tafseer-e-Ayyashi, vol. 2, Sura Ra'd (13) : 11

² Usool-e-Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 343 (Kitaab-ul-Hujjah, Chapter of Ghaibat, p. 80, Tradition no. 31)

ending, a source of progressing on the divine straight path. Undoubtedly, the spirit of Shiaism is obey their Imams (a.s.) unconditionally.

Signs on the path to salvation

If our goal is to bring about an early reappearance and request for the days when we can meet Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) then we need to ponder over the letters written by Hazrat (a.s.), true traditions, inspirational guidance and those who have got the opportunity to present themselves in his blessed presence. Then there are three stages of guidance concerning this chivalrous Imam which is worth considering:

- (1) The days of minor occultation.
- (2) The time of Imam (a.s.)'s letters, wherein he has written to Shaikh Mufeed (a.r.).
- (3) From the time of issuance of letters to the current times.

Imam-e-Zaman's (a.t.f.s.) commands during Minor Occultation :

Addressing his Shias through his second special representative Muhammad ibn Usman (r.a.) during the period of Minor Occultation Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) says:

Pray more and more for the reappearance, in it lies your betterment and bliss¹.

There are two very important points present in this command from the Imam (a.s.).

1. Excessive prayers: Meaning there shouldn't be any

¹ Kamaluddin, vol 2, p. 485 (chapter 45, Tradition no. 4); Ehtejaj, vol 2, p. 499; Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 53, pp. 181-182, Tradition no. 10

satisfaction over little prayers. The truth is that the heart of those who are awaiting him shouldn't be dejected or uninterested while waiting for him and they shouldn't panic while being desirous of his reappearance.

2. Comfort and happiness in all affairs are exclusively related to reappearance.

We find in the book Mikyalul Makarim:

At a time when the disbelievers ruled the Islamic world and the people were living a life of depression and sorrow, once a believing and pious woman saw a distinguished scholar in her dream, in which he said:

If a believer prays for his Master's reappearance in the same way as he does when he is in poor health, in debt or like a person who cries incessantly to rid himself of a difficulty—in a manner which suggests that separation from Imam-e-Zaman (may our souls be sacrificed on him) has upset him, made him restless, shattered his heart and has left him distressed—then this prayer will lead to two things: Either Imam (a.s.) will reappear soon or the sorrow and suffering around the praying believer will be removed. He will be relieved from adversities and calamities and happiness shall return for him.¹

While addressing Ahmad ibn Ishaq-e-Qummi (r.a.) Imam Hasan Al-Askari (a.s.) said:

*I swear by Allah! My son's occultation will be so long that none will be saved from destruction save those whom Allah will keep steadfast on the belief of Imamate and the one who will get the opportunity to pray for his reappearance.*²

¹ Mikyalul Makarim; vol 1, p. 460

² Kamaaluddin, vol. 2, p. 384, (chapter 38, Tradition no. 1)

If what the Imam (a.s.) had wished for was adhered to during the minor occultation, then certainly we would have been freed from the self-induced deprivation. But alas! The path which he had shown wasn't taken and for that the period of occultation has kept on prolonging. Also, if the letters (Tawqees) of Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.)'s to Shaikh Mufeed (a.r.) was paid heed to, then the means of salvation would have been acquired and the good fortune of meeting him wouldn't have got delayed. Sadly, till date the Shias haven't functioned the way they ought to have functioned and the only way of salvation, i.e., is belief in the Imamate of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) in order to advance his reappearance, wasn't practiced upon. (Complete faith in Imam-e-Asr (a.s.)'s Imamate and prayers for his early reappearance wasn't performed).

A *Tawqee* from Imam (a.s.) to Shaikh Mufeed

This *Tawqee* (a signed letter) was written to Shaikh Abu Abdillah Muhammad ibn Numaan Mufeed (r.a.) (who is regarded as one of the greatest Shia scholar) in early parts of the Major Occultation. The thing worth noting here is that Imam (a.s.) has termed this period of occultation (which is 90 years during Shaikh Mufeed's era) as the period of delay and has made some pertinent points to awaken the people. As this letter is a bit lengthy we present a few parts.

May Allah grant the Taufeeq (grace) to our Shias for His obedience. If our Shias would have remained united and would have been steadfast in fulfilling their pledge, there would not have been any delay in our meeting with them. They would have been blessed with our meeting and our presence through their recognition and their truthfulness. But the thing which has delayed our reappearance and has distanced us from them is the news that we get about their deeds which we dislike and

don't expect from them.¹

There are couple of important points worth noting in the letter:

1. With regards to obeying Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.), there is a sense of weakness and differences found in the hearts when it comes to being loyal.
2. The Shia being perpetrators of sins.

A reminder of this point is indeed very important that committing of sins means not fulfilling our duties in the sacred court of Imam-e-Asr (a.s.).²

This letter was issued towards the end of 412 A.H. Today, despite a thousand years having passed, how many gatherings or how many unions have been convened to perform what was promised? Have the Shias gathered or united to fulfill their promises made to their Leader?

Alas! The shortcomings and the failure to fulfill the promise of Allah has deprived the Shias and the humankind of the greatest of blessings. This trend of negligence continues till date. Hazrat (a.s.) himself has said, *“Benefitting from me in the era of occultation is like benefiting from the sun which has been covered by the clouds.”*³

What this blessed tradition highlights is that the sun in itself is a resplendent body but when it gets obscured by the clouds, it's in a state of occultation and its being, needs to be searched. The sun of Imamat, too, in entirety is a being of kindness and mercy. It is the people who are reluctant to accept his divine governance. This is because of the sins committed by them

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 53, p. 176, Tradition no. 7

² Tradition of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) which we have discussed before.

³ Kamaluddin, vol. 2, p. 485 (chapter 45, Tradition no. 4); Behaarul Anwaar; vol 53, p. 181, Tradition no. 10

they have shrouded his nice being in the black cloak of their negligence and sinfulness. It is for this reason that Shaikh Tusi (a.r.) says:

One should not imagine that God is the reason for Imam (a.s.)'s occultation. None should think such from one's own perspective. The destruction of truth and the fear of masses' reluctance to obey and submit to him is the cause of the occultation. When these (causes) are removed and people are inclined towards his obedience and are readily willing to submit to him then reappearance will become obligatory.¹

There's a famous quote from Khwajah Naseeruddin Tusi (r.a.) elaborating this truth.

وَجُودُهُ لُطْفٌ وَتَصَرُّفُهُ لُطْفٌ آخِرٌ وَعَدَمُهُ مِنَّا

The existence of Imam is a grace of Allah and the other divine grace is his authority. His occultation is because of us.²

The explanation to this is the divine final word from Hazrat Zahra (s.a.) in which the silence of the people and their practical insensitivity has been condemned. It was for this reason that Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) had to stay put at home.

مَثَلُ الْإِمَامِ مَثَلُ الْكَعْبَةِ إِذْ تُوتَى وَلَا تَأْتِي

The example of an Imam is like Kaaba. One has to turn towards it and it doesn't turn towards anybody.

Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) is the desired Kaaba of mankind. Mankind should, for the betterment of this world and hereafter, turn towards his threshold, and always be around his

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 52, p. 92, Tradition no. 7

² Kashful Murad, p. 362

noble being. Is there any other way left for the success of humankind except that one is obedient to Allah and bow one's head to the command of Allah and return towards the Ahle Bait (a.s.)?

Isolation in Occultation

Given Imam (a.s.)'s heartache, which is expressed in the letter to Shaikh Mufeed (r.a.), it is evident that the ways to reach Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) in the minor occultation had not been put into practice. The same continues till date. As a consequence, the grief, sorrow and the sufferings on this honorable soul keeps increasing by the day. The feeling of loneliness, oppression, alienation, negligence from others and the lack of recognition on part of the Shias towards the Divine Proof has prepared the residents of the heavens and earth to weep over Imam Zaman (a.t.f.s.).¹ It is true that many Infallible Imams (a.s.) were mourning over his isolation, innocence and occultation years or even centuries before the birth of this honorable being.

Imam Sadeq (a.s.) was indeed seen sitting on the ground, lamenting like a mother who has lost her son. Tears rolled down his cheeks as he said: *My dear! Your occultation has stolen my sleep and has troubled my heart. It has ruined the tranquility of my heart...My dear! Your occultation has brought on my being a life-threatening catastrophe from which releasing*

¹ Imam Reza (a.s.) says: It is certain that a seditious incident will take place in which even the most self-assured and reliable will be left unnerved. This sedition will come to the fore when a son from my progeny will come through the third Imam after me will be made to disappear by the Shia Ithna Ashari because of which the habitants of heavens and earth will grieve. The remaining part of the narration can be referred in Kamaluddin, vol. 2, p. 370; Ghaibat-e-Shaikh Tusi, p. 283.

*one is difficult.*¹

Do you know that in the traditions of the Infallibles, the Shias and the lovers of Ahle Bait (a.s.) have been encouraged to pray for the promised reappearance of Aale Muhammad (a.s.)? In the 1200 hundred long years of this major occultation, the world is seeing oppression, injustice, sins and rampant innovations taking place. For every innocent blood that is being shed, or every drop of tear trickling down an orphan's eye or from the eyes of the oppressed or for every sigh that comes out from the heart of an afflicted one — all these are witnessed by the Imam (a.s.) and all these things are all the more disturbing for his already gloomy heart. Isn't this the case? Isn't it true that the sufferings, oppression and bloodletting of the Last Proof of Allah is more than the sorrows of all Ahle Bait (a.s.)?

The pain, torture and tears of his respected mother who grieved in the house of sorrow (Baitul Huzn) following the death of her father Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) are indeed shattering and heart-rending. But it lasted no more than couple of months. Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) loneliness and staying put in house too was restricted for a quarter of a century. The time Hazrat Imam Moosa Kazim (a.s.) spent in the prison, as documented, was at the most 21 years. But 1173² years have passed since the birth of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) and this most capable and most courageous person is left wandering in occultation.

What patience! What perseverance and what great strength does he possess! How long and agonizing is this wait.

It is natural that when an individual from a family is arrested in

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol 51, p. 219, Tradition no. 9

² 1186 years now!

difficulties then you will find that those associated with him or the people of his nation are willing to help him at every step. They are worried and run from pillar to post to help him. They sacrifice their status and riches purely with the intention to rid him of his difficulties. These things indeed have been regularly witnessed.

But doesn't the Shia teachings and belief tell us that the Imam of the era is dearer than the near and dear ones? Don't we recite this in Ziyarat-e-Jamea Kabeera?

بِأَبِي أَنْتُمْ وَأُمَّيْ وَنَفْسِي وَأَهْلِي وَمَالِي

May my father, mother and myself and my family and my wealth be sacrificed on you (Ahle Bait (a.s.)).

So, come let us vow to give up sinning and pray for the reappearance of Imam (a.t.f.s.) so that the lock on the prison of occultation is broken and it frees our Master, who is more dearer to us than our lives, from the miseries we have brought upon him.

It is often seen that when a child or a traveler is slightly late to reach home, the relatives and friends are left worried and restless with the fear that perhaps he or she has met with an accident. They set out to search for the person. Pause for a while and ponder, that how distressed or restless are we and the Shia community at large over the long delay in the arrival of the Last Proof of Allah (a.t.f.s.) and what have we done to find him? Have we ever thought on these lines?

We have been witnessing and hearing that if a person is oppressed and killed while he is innocent, then the only thing the family members seek is quick revenge so that they find some solace. And if this innocent whose blood has been spilled, happens to be divine blood, that of the beloved of Noble

Messenger (s.a.w.a.), a part of the Chief of ladies of the universe Janabe Zahra (s.a.) and also of the Chief of the Youth of Paradise. If it is the blood of his son, his beloved, of the one who is the owner of infallibility and purification, then what are we supposed to do?

Don't we read in Dua-e-Nudba that our Master Hujjat Ibne Hasan (a.s.) will seek revenge for the martyrs of Karbala and Janabe Zahra (s.a.).

We find in the speeches of Allama Amini (r.a.) that when the burning door was felled on Janabe Zahra (s.a.) she let out a cry, 'Oh My son Mahdi!' Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) says, "The remains of the wood which was used to burn the house of Siddiqae Tahera (s.a.) is in our possession. It will be passed from one hand to other till it reaches the hands of our Qaem (a.s.)."¹

Imam Sadeq (a.s.) says: One of the rights we have upon our Shias is that after every namaz they should raise their hands and say:

يَا رَبِّ مُحَمَّدٍ حِجْلٍ فَرَجِ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ

'O Lord of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) hasten the reappearance of Aale Muhammad (a.s.)'

يَا رَبِّ مُحَمَّدٍ احْفَظْ غَيْبَةَ مُحَمَّدٍ

'O Lord of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) protect (the religion) in the occultation of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.)'

يَا رَبِّ مُحَمَّدٍ اِنْتَقِمِ لِبَنَةِ مُحَمَّدٍ

'O Lord of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) avenge (the

¹ Sharhe Dua-e-Simaat, Al-Haj Shaikh Ali Akbar Nahawandi, p. 192

martyrdom) of the daughter of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.).¹

Dibil Khuzaei, who is considered to be a brave and renowned poet in the history of Shia faith, presented an elegy in front of Imam Reza (a.s.) which would end in the Arabic letter of ‘Ta’. When he reached on these verses:

وَقَبْرٌ بِبَغْدَادٍ لِنَفْسٍ زَكِيَّةٍ
تَضَبَّتْهَا الْحَبَانُ بِالْغُرَفَاتِ

The grave of one among the Aale Muhammad (a.s.) is in Baghdad which is purer than breathing [The blessed tomb of Imam Moosa ibn Jafar (a.s.)]. Allah has granted him a place in heaven.

Imam Reza (a.s.) said: Will you like it if I add a couple of couplets to your elegy, which will make it complete?

Dibil said: Why not, O Son of Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.).

Then Imam (a.s.) said:

وَقَبْرٌ بِطُوسٍ يَا لَهَا مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ
تَوْقَدَ فِي الْأَحْشَاءِ بِالْحَرَاقَاتِ
إِلَى الْحَشْرِ حَتَّى يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ قَائِمًا
يُفَرِّجُ عَنَّا الْهَمَّ وَالْكَرْبَاتِ

¹ Sahife Mahdi, p. 195

² Uyoon al Akhbar ar-Reza (a.s.), vol 2, p. 267

One grave is in the city of Toos, too, which has been engulfed by a great calamity. It is a calamity of such proportion which can set a person alight from inside till the time when Allah will send the Qaem from among us. He will bring to an end the sorrow and grief in us.

This narration tells us why an early reappearance of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) is of great importance to Imam Reza (a.s.).

Addressing Aba-Abdillah al-Husain (a.s.) in Ziyarate Nahiya-e-Muqqadasa, Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) says:

Oh my lonely grandfather! As I have been hindered by the course of time and as (Allah's) decree has prevented me from helping you, and as I could not fight those who fought you, and was not able to show hostility to those who showed hostility to you, I will, therefore, lament you morning and evening, and will shed blood in place of tears, out of my anguish for you and my sorrow for all that befell you.¹

Today almost 1400 years have passed since the heart-wrenching events of Karbala but even now the tribulations and martyrdom of the sons of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the consequent imprisonment of the progeny of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) particularly that of princess of patience and courage, Janabe Zainab Kubra (s.a.) continues to draw tears and blood from the eyes of our master. If our blessed master weeps incessantly for the Chief of Martyrs (a.s.) then what is our responsibility?

Then shouldn't we do something to stop the tears of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.)? Shouldn't we fervently pray for the early reappearance of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) so that he can seek avenge from the killers and enemies of Aale Muhammad (a.s.)?

¹ Sahife Mahdiyah, p. 584

The author of Mikyalul Makarim writes: The preeminence and virtue associated in praying for the early reappearance of our Master Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) is much more than its reward. For that, it is enough that the revenge for the killing of Sayyedus Shohada (a.s.), which is the responsibility of every believer, will be fulfilled through Imam Mahdi (a.s.), of whom Sayyedus Shohada (a.s.) is the real father.¹

Afflictions on Imam Mahdi (a.s.) in his own words

When the Late Haji Shaikh Muhammad Jafar Jawadi got the opportunity to present himself before Imam (a.s.), he found him sorrowful. When he asked Imam (a.s.) of his state, He (a.s.) replied:

“My heart is bleeding! My heart is bleeding...!”²

Late Haji Muhammad Ali Fashandi says:

I had come with my wife to Qum and was performing the rituals inside Masjid-e-Jamkaran. I saw a person with a spiritual glow on his face entering the courtyard of the mosque coming towards the mosque. I told myself that this spiritually glowing Sayed must be tired and thirsty due to the harsh sun and the summer heat. With this thought I handed him a bowl of water. When he was handing me the bowl after drinking from it, I said, ‘Sir, please pray to Allah that He provides all the comfort to Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) so that the time of his reappearance nears. Hearing this he said, *‘Our Shias don’t like us as much as they like drinking water! If they would have wished they would have prayed for me and the time of*

¹ Translation of Mikyalul Makarim, vol 1, p. 530

² Sahihfe Mahdiyyah, p. 52

*reappearance would have arrived.”*¹

A renowned, devout scholar from Najaf travelled to Karbala, where he had the privilege to meet Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.), Imam (a.s.) told him:

“O Man, look here (towards the corner of my poor grandfather and below the golden tomb) where the prayers are answered. No one is attentive towards me and prays for my reappearance.”

Then Imam (a.s.) exhibited the powers of his Wilayat and made this pious scholar to listen to the desires and wishes of the people around. Everyone present were praying for their own special needs. Imam (a.s.) said: *Did you hear? In these visitors, there’s none who is saying: O Allah! Hasten the reappearance of Mahdi.*²

The Sweet Smell of Reappearance

A person was left paralyzed down from his waist following a car accident. He travelled to Masjid-e-Jamkaran and did Tawassul with Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.) to cure him. He says: All of a sudden a beautiful smell had filled the Masjid. I saw that Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.), Imam Husain (a.s.), Qamar-e-Bani Hashim Hazrat Abbas (a.s.) and Imam Mahdi (a.s.) were present. Seeing them, I was left in a state of trance and couldn’t really understand what was happening when suddenly Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) looked towards me, which brought tranquility to my heart. Then he (a.s.) said:

“You have been cured and you tell others to pray for my reappearance. The reappearance, InshaAllah, is near.”

¹ Shayaftagaan Hazrat Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), vol. 1, p. 155

² Majaalis-e-Muau dash, p. 13, Article by Aqaa Hashimi Neza d

This incident took place in the Mahe Muharram of 1414 A.H.¹

Once a son of a great scholar dreamt that he along with his father were privileged to present themselves in front of Hazrat Baqiyatullah (a.s.). He asked Imam (a.s.), “O son of Holy Prophet, Has the time of your reappearance arrived? So that the eyes of those who see your handsomeness and reappearance are left enlightened?”

He (a.s.) said: There are only few certain signs remaining (for my reappearance) and it is possible that it may take place in some time. But in these days it is obligatory upon you to keep praying (for my reappearance).²

¹ Karaamaat of Imam Mahd (a.s.), pp. 10-11

² Shayafagaan Hazrat Mahdi (a.t.f.s.): vol. 1 84-185

Special favours on the Shias

It is because of the blessings of the holy presence of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) that the entire universe is drawing its sustenance. Moreover, it is because of him (a.s.) that the skies and earth are at their respective places.¹ Ameerul Momeneen Ali ibn Abi Taleb (a.s.) says:

“If the earth is devoid of a divine representative even for a fleeting moment, then its inhabitants will be wiped out.”²

With these special favors, the hidden leader, as it is evident in his letter to Shaikh Mufeed (a.r.), regularly bestows the best of favors on the Shia community, as he says:

“We aren’t negligent of your affairs and if we were (negligent), then tribulations would have befallen on you and the enemy would have shredded you.”³

Similarly, this too is attributed to Hazrat (a.s.):

“If this wasn’t the case, that we mend your affairs and treat you with kindness and grace, then your abhorrent actions would have caused us to avoid you and not see you with kindness.”⁴

Don’t these special grants, kindness and greatness from Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) create a sense of embarrassment in a person? Don’t we feel that we should be ready to compensate for the

¹ Mafatihul Jenan, Dua-e-Adeelah

² Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 51, p. 113

³ Ehtejaj, vol. 2, p. 223

⁴ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 53, p. 179

disloyalty, disobedience and oppression shown towards our benevolent Imam (a.s.)?

At the end of this discussion it is necessary to raise the point that if there is a lot of stress put on the hastening of the reappearance then it shouldn't come across as if — God forbid — Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) is in need of our prayers. We are aware that Allah is never dependent on His slaves. It is for this we find in Quran:

“... If you are ungrateful, you and those on earth all together, most surely Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praised.”¹

Similarly, this chaste family is free of need from other creations of Allah, as Aba Abdillah, Imam Husain (a.s.) says:

“Everyone is in need of Him, (but) He doesn't need anyone.”²

For example, if Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) readies people to battle the *Naakeseen* (the oath breakers of allegiance), the *Qaaseteen* (the unjust) and *Maareqeen* (the renegades) or if Aba Abdillah Imam Husain (a.s.) raises the cries of *هل من ناصر لي* in the desert of Karbala (Is there anyone to help me..) or Imam-e-Asr (a.s.) invites people to pray for his early reappearance this, make no mistake, doesn't mean that these great personalities of the religion and the dear ones of Allah are in need of the people. Rather, it is their compassion that wants to guide the masses towards salvation. Very much like the martyrs of Karbala who by helping the Chief of Martyrs (a.s.) have gained such status in the eyes of Allah which is a cause of desire and envy for others.

Imam-e-Asr (a.s.) says in a Tawqee:

¹ Surah Ibrahim (14): 8

² Muntakhabul Athar, p. 309

“I have received reports that a group from amongst you is spreading apostasy in the religion. They are creating doubts and bewilderment in the hearts related to their Leader. This is a cause of grief for us but it is for your own good not mine because Allah is with us and with Him being with us, we aren’t dependent on anybody else as the truth is with us. On this basis if anyone forsakes us, it will not leave us scared or worried. We are created by Allah and the people are created by us.”¹

¹ Translation of Mikyalul Makarim, p. 81 copied from Ehtejaj, vol. 2, p. 278

The way forward

The status of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) in our lives

When Masjidun Nabi was constructed, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) would initially give sermons reclining on a dried date tree trunk which was left in the courtyard of the mosque. But when number of people started to swell in the mosque, the companions, after a discussing it among themselves, decide to erect a pulpit for the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) so that the people could see their beloved leader. Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), too, gave his permission, so a pulpit with couple of planks and a platform was built.

When the first Friday arrived, the Noble Messenger (s.a.w.a.) waded through the crowd, leaving the tree trunk behind and walked towards the pulpit. As he was about to mount on the pulpit, suddenly there the date tree trunk let out a loud wail much like how a mother weeps over a dead son. Hearing the heart-breaking cries of the tree trunk, even the crowds started to cry.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) stepped down from the pulpit, put his arms around the tree, caressed it and said, "Don't be disturbed," and went towards the pulpit. He then said to the people, *"Oh people! This dead tree is expressing its love and fondness for the Messenger of Allah and is getting upset due to this separation. But there are some who aren't even slightly perturbed if they are close or far away from me. Had I not*

embraced it and caressed it would have cried like this until the Day of Judgment."¹

It is a point to stop and ponder. One dried tree began to cry aloud on getting separated from the Messenger (s.a.w.a.) that too when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was well within its sight. What's gone wrong with us that we aren't even able to see the Imam of our time and are far away from him? Yet we are busy in our daily lives? We remember everything and everybody barring our Imam!

Sayed Kareem, a person who earned his living by sewing clothes, is counted amongst the fortunate ones, who had the blessings and honor to meet the divine representative of Allah in occultation. He would meet Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.) in his humble room.

It's written that one day Imam (a.s.) told this fortunate man:

"Sayed what will you do if you don't see me for a week?"

Sayed Kareem replied, "Oh my master, I will die!"

Imam (a.s.) said, *"If this wouldn't have been the case then I wouldn't come to meet you."*

Let other things be, if just few (not all) develop such traits and a group of Imams (a.s.) lovers become extremely sad and restless for him, then will it not be possible to see the reappearance?

Ours is a small story, of someone who has lost his father. We are like those children whose immature thought process doesn't make them realize in how big a calamity they are trapped in. But those who are grown up and understand the depths of a tragedy express their empathy, as Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) says, *"More than losing one's father, getting cutoff*

¹ Behaarul Anwaar: vol. 17, pp. 366-367

from his Imam with no means to reach him, is the most severe form of orphan-hood.”¹

In some newspapers there is a column for missing people in which the details of those lost are carried alongside a photograph and contact details. In some cases they also promise to suitably reward those who find the missing person. Overall there is a sense of desperation in the tenor of those who are in search of the loved ones.

Who amongst us is so distressed or anxious to find our Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.)? Is there a criterion to see him and find a place in his pious company?

Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) says:

“A servant does not believe till he prefers me over himself, my progeny over his progeny, my family over his family, my life over his life.”²

What do we do if our child doesn't come on time from the school? Surely, we don't sit back and wait. We set out in the streets and lanes searching with the hope that all's well and no untoward incident has occurred.

How many in the Shia community consider Imam-e-Zaman's (a.t.f.s.) occultation to be a cause of grief and distress and wish to find a cure for this pain? How many people have you seen, who, albeit temporarily, have relinquished their lavishness in view of this affliction? Do you know of anyone who has forsaken his sleep, hunger or thirst even once in this cause?

If we were handed a questionnaire which asks us to list our needs priority-wise, then how many percent would put the reappearance of Imam (a.s.) right at the top?

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 2, p. 2, Tradition no. 1

² Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 27, p. 86, Tradition no. 30

If an angel descends from the skies and tells us, “I will certainly fulfill a wish of yours,” then how many of us will ask for our most important need: The reappearance of Imam Asr (a.s.)? When we go for ziyarat, at the times when our prayers are heard, at a time when our hearts are broken and tears are trickling down from our eyes, how many of us first pray for the reappearance of Imam (a.s.) then our needs?

In true sense, what position does Imam-e-Asr (a.s.) occupy in our lives? It is central or peripheral? We must say, regretfully, that in some people’s life, our Master doesn’t find space even at the edge.

If someone invites us to his house, asks us to join him at the food table, we try our very best to reciprocate the affection he has shown towards us. Then what has happened to us, that we sit along with our kith and kin, with our fellow countrymen, with our friends and in fact with the entire creation of Allah due to Imam (a.s.)’s generosity break bread yet we are still not loyal to him?

It’s saddening to know that the youngsters of our community have more information about film stars, sports stars, external and internal affairs rather than their religious figureheads and in reality our personal and collective lives is bereft of Imam-e-Asr (a.s.).

Most Shias have unclear and very little knowledge about of twelfth Imam (a.s.)’s. They may not be clear, in true sense, about the reason for Imam (a.s.)’s occultation and reappearance, but how much do they know about the other eleven Imams (a.s.)?

A few years of drought breaks the back of the farmers and with a broken heart we offer Namaz-e-Istesqaa — bareheaded and barefooted — even if there’s a little possibility of rain. Isn’t it appropriate for us that the 1200 years of *ghaibat* which in true

sense are the dry years and an era of dearth of integrity, in which misfortune has become our fate, in this world and hereafter. In which protecting the religion is as difficult a thing as keeping fire on the palm. Shouldn't we then hit the road that lead to plains and deserts to pray for the reappearance and hastening of deliverance?

The Bani Israel did the same and got their prayers answered. Their young and old, women and children, went into the wilderness and in order to get freedom from Firaun they prayed to Allah to send a Messiah who would rescue them. Thus, Allah reduced His wrath upon them by advancing the reappearance by 170 years.

We are always engrossed in prayers for our personal and worldly needs regardless of it getting approved or not. But we pray very little for the hastening of the reappearance or to gain proximity to Imam (a.s.) even though all the Infallible Imams (a.s.) have categorically said that the effectiveness of the prayers will be very powerful in bringing the reappearance closer.

The Imam (a.s.) is really very forlorn during the journeys taken for Ziyarat and in seeking refuge. Has it ever happened that we have opened the Mafatihul Jenan to recite the Ziyarat of Saheb-e-Amr (a.s.) and pondered over its sentences? When we travel to the holy places how many days do we spend in Samarra?

To seek nearness to Allah, to gain the good fortune in this world and hereafter and to save themselves from the Divine wrath the people should turn towards the door of the Ahle Bait (a.s.). If they don't do this, they will only be harming themselves and with their own hands they will provide the means for their destruction in this world and hereafter. Then, they themselves will be responsible for it.

Repentance, the need of the hour

We need to look back at those who have repented. We may then realize the responsibility of repenting is more on the Shias. That is because the map to the well-being of society is in their hands. In other words, the keys of reappearance is in their hands.

In traditions relating to Imam-e-Asr (a.s.)'s reappearance, it is mentioned:

“When the number of steadfast followers reaches to the same number as those present in the battle of Badr (313), then it will become essential upon the Imam to rise.”¹

In true sense, the lengthy duration of 1200 years which began with the occultation and still continues, there ought to have been at least few in the Shia history who should have thought about it seriously and with great determination. This tradition should have triggered a determined commitment in them to prepare the ground for the blessed reappearance of Imam-e-Asr (a.s.). The period of occultation will then not get extended and the loneliness of Imam (a.s.), who is more dear to us than our lives, will come to an end. Then due to the Shias, the state of the people of the world wouldn't have remained the same as we are witnessing today.

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 100, p. 49. Similarly, Imam Jawad (a.s.) says: *When 313 sincere people are completely ready, Allah will command Imam Mahdi (a.s.) to reappear.* (Mikyalul Makarim: vol 1, pg 138)

The coming Shia generations, too, will be addressed with this same question. It is appropriate that each one of us is attentive towards this bitter truth, mull over it and question ourselves — what is our role in lengthening the occultation of Imam (a.s.) and what should we do to hasten the reappearance of this great personality?

How does our Master want us to wait?

How can we help Imam (a.s.) in this day and age?

It is enough to leave us embarrassed to know that the Imam of our time always remembers us, while we are heedless of his presence. If we are looking forward to the reappearance of this Divine Guide then, this great personality is waiting to see us wake up from a sleep of negligence.

Isn't it about time that we believe that the Leader who will guide us to salvation is alive? Isn't it about time that not only we ourselves believe in it, but also instill the belief in others that we have no other option but to take refuge at the doorstep of our beloved?

Certainly, we all need to believe that we are in front of him and our beloved Imam (a.s.) is more close to us than our very own selves.

Be assured, that the Imam-e-Asr (a.s.) knows us better than what we do and he watches whatever we do. Everything uttered by us is heard by him even before it reaches our ears.

Haven't his holy ancestors said: "Even if you move your lips inside your houses we understand what you are saying."¹

We believe that a record of all our actions are presented to Imam (a.s.) every week and Imam (a.s.) takes a look at it. Sadly,

¹ The writer of Mikyalul Makarim has reported this tradition in his book and explained it.

this doesn't stop us from committing sins.

By Allah! Even if a small child looks at our actions don't we then care about our character and behavior? Don't we try and change ourselves? What impudence is this then that we openly and shamelessly commit sins in front of the Divine eyes and witness? We don't even look at him and even if we look, we don't recognize him. But he looks at us, recognizes us and keeps a tab on our condition. If we were to truly acknowledge the presence of Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.) in this world and find ourselves present in front of him every night and we know that he is aware of our actions, will we then still keep blundering and committing sins?

Be assured that all the graces, virtues and achievements are in this universe due to the blessings of the grand Divine representative (a.s.). Everything present is due to his favors and wonders.

Surely, Shaitan will dwell in the homes of Shias in the last era so that he drives them out of the paradise just like Hazrat Adam (a.s.) and Hazrat Hawwa (s.a.). It shouldn't happen that even we walk into his trap and get thrown out of the paradise of Imamat. A believer can't get stung by the same hole twice.¹

¹ Once, in a gathering hosted by Imam Sadeq (a.s.) someone expressed the desire of finding paradise. He (a.s.) said: "You are in heaven right now, pray to Allah that he doesn't expel you from heaven." People asked Imam (a.s.), "May we be sacrificed for you, we are still in the world." He (a.s.) said, "Don't you acknowledge Imamat?" They said, "Of course." He (a.s.) said, "Imamat is heaven, whoever accepts it is in heaven. Pray to Allah that this is not snatched away from you." (Behaarul Anwaar, vol 68, pg 102)

Come let us not leave Imam alone

May the cries of Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) هل من معين؟ (Is anyone with us?) in this Karbala of occultation not go unheard. Let not the clamor of Kufa stop Hujjat ibn Hasan (a.s.)'s call for help from reaching our ears. It shouldn't happen that we leave Baqiyatullah (a.s.) alone.

By Allah! The painful past itself is too much for him. The split head of Imam Ali (a.s.), the fractured ribs of Janabe Zahra (s.a.), the shattered liver of Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba (a.s.), the noble head of the martyr of Nainawah raised on a spear, the wound of imprisonment of Janabe Zainab's (s.a.), for which there can be no solution but reappearance, is needed to calm his kind heart.

Fortunate are those who are still in the holy presence of this Sun. There is no veil between this divine representative of Allah and we the desolated ones, except psychological. The clouds of negligence and sins have hidden his beautiful radiant presence from our eyes.

We, who keep talking about the occultation, wait for his reappearance. There are some who have soared and have reached the clouds. They are perched upon the clouds and have acquired a direct view of the sun.

The conscious of the universe testifies that the reappearance is near. Oh Allah! It shouldn't happen that someone precedes us. It shouldn't be a case where the justice-seeking world and purified nature stands for his reception to pay allegiance to Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) and we are left behind.

In the case of the Prophets (a.s.), we get to see that it was only those who were quick in expressing their love and attachment for Yusuf-e-Zahra (a.s.), were the ones who saw the medal of Uloom-Azm¹ shining on their chests.

The martyrs of Karbala, who said 'Labayk' on their Imam (a.s.)'s call and remained steadfast, have left mankind. But now the opportunity remains to help Imam-e-Asr (a.s.) and hasten to get ourselves counted among his helpers.

¹ There's a narration from Imam Baqir (a.s.): Allah, before creating the universe, while taking a pledge from the Messengers of His kingdom in Aalam-e-Arwah on the Prophethood of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and Imamat of Imam Ali (a.s.) and his successors, said: Mahdi is the one through whom I will help My religion, manifest My kingdom, take revenge from My enemies and everyone, willingly or unwillingly, will bow in front of Me. The Uloom Azm Prophets immediately expressed their willingness on Imam Mahdi (a.s.) but Prophet Adam (a.s.) did not accept or refuse it (that is because he was left stupefied in sincere awe of this savior of humanity and took a little while to respond) and as a consequence he lost out on being an Uloom Azm Prophet. (Kaafi vol. 2, p. 8, Kitabul Imaan wa Kufr, Bab Akheruz Zaman 3, tradition 1. For further reference, refer to Elalush Sharaei, p. 122, chapter 101, Tradition nos. 1-2, Tafseer Kanzul Daqaeeq, vol. 3, p. 326

Come let us once again recognize our Imam (a.t.f.s.)

According to the Shia belief, good fortune and true religiosity can only be achieved with true recognition (*marefat*) of Ahle Bait (a.s.) and by obeying them. Even if someone matches 70 prophets in committing good deeds but doesn't love Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) and his infallible sons (a.s.), then none of his actions is worth accepting. Similarly, recognizing the Imam (a.s.) saves one from the death of ignorance — as it has been established by the reliable and famous tradition quoted by both Shias and Sunnis.

“The one who dies without recognizing the Imam of his time, dies the death of ignorance.”

An important point which rises from this is that even if someone recognizes the eleven Imams and is even devoted to them but falls short of doing it when it comes to the 12th Imam (a.s.) then too he will leave this world as an ignorant.

Imamat is one of the fundamentals of religion (Usool-e-Deen) and with *taqleed* not permitted in it. Hence, it becomes obligatory for every believer to recognize the Imam of the time to save himself from the death of ignorance. He would then be able to answer with ease the questions he will be asked from the first night in his grave until the Day of Judgment regarding his belief and the blessing of Imamat.

Knowing Imam-e-Zaman (a.t.f.s.) doesn't mean that one should stay satisfied by just knowing his name, genealogy,

place and time of birth even if the intellects are errant and deep thinkers perplexed. Each one of us is required to lead in showing our strength, profound love and obedience.

Millions like Shaikh Tusi and Shaikh Ansari can't repay for a single breath of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) — may our lives be sacrificed on him.¹

The personal traits, accomplishments, status of the Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.) hasn't fully dawned on the people. It, indeed, is so disappointing that most minds are unaware of the true value and status of the Imam.

Imam Ali ar-Reza (a.s.) says: An Imam is only one of his kind in an era. No one comes close to him in status. No scholar can compete with him. No one like him has taken birth and no one is similar or like him.

There are countless narrations from the Infallibles (a.s.) which indicate towards this fact. No one can be compared to Ahle Bait (a.s.) and principally, it is not permissible to compare this Holy Family (a.s.) with others.²

Say for instance, if someone compares Imam (a.s.)'s greatness with others, calling him a galaxy and others as atoms rotating around him or calls Imam (a.s.) an ocean and sees others like a droplets or sees him like a sun and others as a candle then this person is making a mistake because an Infallible Imam (a.s.) just cannot be compared to anything or anybody.

Once during a dua, somebody took the name of Grand Ayatollah Sayed Husain Tabatabai Boroujerdi in the same sentence as Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), the late marja was left so

¹ Lecture of Ayatullah Waheed Khorasani to the students of MArkaz Mahdaviyat Year 1381 AH.

² Behaarul Anwaar: vol. 22, p. 406 and vol. 23, p. 117

agitated by it that he angrily shouted, “Ask him to keep quiet! Who am I and what am I that you are taking my name with that of the pious and holy name of Imam-e-Zaman (a.s.)?”

In our society, there is a deplorable aspect that some individuals and certain groups, through some philosophical arguments, via community schools, political issues, Sufism, mystical gamesmanship, and by printing colorful and divergent books claim that this is the way to reach Allah. This is where they err as according to divine school and Shia teachings the only gateway to reach Allah in any given era is the Imam of the time. Other than him, all the other ways to reach Allah and his satisfaction are closed and that is because it is Allah’s Will that Ahle Bait (a.s.) remain the only means to reach Him. It is for this that any individual, who while sidestepping the family of revelation and Imam of the time tries to reach Allah, according to his own opinions or whims and fancies, then he is like the one who is wasting his life. Not only will he hold no importance in the eyes of Allah but he will be subject of Allah’s wrath and anger.

A person asked Aba Abdillah Imam Husain (a.s.): “What is Marefat of Allah?”

He (a.s.) replied,

“It means that in every era, the Imam of the time whose obedience is mandatory for all, should be recognized.”¹

There was a family in Bani Israel that whenever a member from it prayed for something, the wish would most surely be fulfilled. However, when one of them prayed continuously for forty nights, his plea was not accepted. That person came to Prophet Esa (a.s.) and asked him the reason for the non-acceptance of his prayers. Prophet Esa (a.s.) turned to Allah in

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 23, p. 83, Tradition no. 40

prayer to know the reason. Allah sent a revelation, “Oh Esa! My servant did not take the right path while approaching me. He was remembering Me in such a state where his heart entertained doubts regarding you. If he keeps remembering Me in such a state for so long that even if his neck breaks and limbs become lifeless, I will not respond.”¹

It is based on this that while reciting Ziyarat-e-Aale Yaseen, after pledging allegiance to Eleven Imams (a.s.), we in a distinctive way declare and announce our allegiance for Imam-e-Asr (a.s.). That is because in the current era he is: The Right Path, The way to Bliss, The Ship of Salvation, The Trusted One of Allah, The Great Divine Sign, The Deputy and Caliph of Allah, The Vicegerent of Allah, The True Guardian, Friend of Allah, The Absolute Truth, The Repository of Divine Knowledge, The Inheritor of Prophets’ Knowledge and Miracles, The path to Allah, The Hand of God, The Eyes of Allah, The Proof of Allah, The Light of Allah, The Face of Allah, The Head of Allah, The Divine Secret, The Refuge of the Nation, The Blessed Intermediary, The Standard Bearer of Guidance Towards Allah’s Sayings, The Firm Rope of Allah, The Friend of the believers, The Guardian of Affairs, The Guardian of Bounties, The Security of the Era, The Master of Time, The Great Remainder of Allah (may our lives be sacrificed on him).

We read the following in the ziyarat:

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا سَبِيْلَ اللَّهِ الَّذِي مَن سَلَكَ غَيْرَهُ
هَلَكَ

¹ Usool-e-Kaafi, vol. 2, p. 400 (Kitab Imaan wal Kufr, Chapter of Doubt, Tradition no. 9)

“Peace be upon you, O the Path to Allah, ruined is the one who doesn’t walk on it.”¹

أَشْهَدُ أَنَّ بَوْلَايَتِكَ تُقْبَلُ الْأَعْمَالُ، وَتُزَكَّى الْأَفْعَالُ، وَ
تُضَاعَفُ الْحَسَنَاتُ وَ تُمْحَى السَّيِّئَاتُ، فَمَنْ جَاءَ
بَوْلَايَتِكَ، وَاعْتَرَفَ بِإِمَامَتِكَ قَبْلَكَ أَعْمَالُهُ، وَصَدَّقَتْ
أَقْوَالُهُ، وَتَضَاعَفَتْ حَسَنَاتُهُ، وَهُجِيَتْ سَيِّئَاتُهُ، وَمَنْ
عَدَلَ عَنَّا وَوَلَايَتِكَ، وَجَهَلَ مَعْرِفَتَكَ، وَاسْتَبَدَلَ بِكَ
غَيْرَكَ، كَبَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَنْخَرِهِ فِي النَّارِ، وَلَمْ يَقْبَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ
عَمَلًا وَلَمْ يُقِمَّ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا

“I bear witness that all deeds will be acceptable only through your mastership, the actions will be purified, and the goodness will increase, the transgressions will be obliterated. Actions of every person who firmly believes in your mastership and acknowledges your Imamatus will be eligible for acceptance. His talk will be endorsed, his good actions will be doubled and evil deeds be wiped out. And the one who refuses your mastership, is ignorant of your recognition and places somebody in your place then Allah will throw him in hell fire headlong and Allah will not acknowledge his actions and on the Day of Judgment his deeds will have

¹ Mafatihul Jinan, Ziyarate Saheb Al-Amr; Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 102, p. 117

no credence on the scale of deeds.”¹

We must, with utmost sincerity, pray to Allah to grant us His recognition, the recognition of His Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and His Proof (a.t.f.s.) and drown ourselves in the light of knowledge and awareness. If we recognize him thus as he ought to be recognized and for his love we don't slip in our actions, then there will come a time when the divine light will manifest on us and even the love of the near relatives will be overwhelmed by it.

Even now, if we don't ransom ourselves on his feet, then it will be a result of our weak recognition. We are negligent of our duties due to our lack of recognition. We don't seek the connection between the Creator and the created for want of recognition. We are more interested in chasing the means to fulfill our (worldly) ambitions and we overlook the blessed being who is the link between the heavens and the earth. It is for this reason that it has been emphasized to recite this dua during Ghaibat.

اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي نَفْسَكَ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ لَمْ تُعَرِّفْنِي نَفْسَكَ لَمْ
 أَعْرِفْ نَبِيَّكَ اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي رَسُولَكَ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ لَمْ
 تُعَرِّفْنِي رَسُولَكَ لَمْ أَعْرِفْ مُجَّتَكَ اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي مُجَّتَكَ
 فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ لَمْ تُعَرِّفْنِي مُجَّتَكَ ضَلَلْتُ عَنْ دِينِي

¹ Mafatihul Jinan, Ziyarat of Saheb Al-Amr (a.s.) while entering the in the holy cellar. Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 102, p. 117.

Praying for early reappearance

There is an urgent need to end heedlessness in the Shia society and among the followers of Imam (a.s.). That is because the occultation of Imam Zaman (a.t.f.s.) is turning into a routine affair and it is for this reason that we are becoming negligent of our Imam (a.s.), who is present and keeping a close eye on us. It is necessary that we make the people aware of this shortcoming and find a remedy for this ailment.

When we perceive the era of occultation as a period of imprisonment for Imam (a.t.f.s.), then the Shia society, which is deprived of his divine presence, will consider his absence as a self-inflicted deprivation of Allah's biggest blessing and will realize that life without Imam (a.s.) is no life at all. Then, with absolute sincerity we will pray for Imam (a.s.)'s early reappearance. The real reason for the delay in Imam (a.s.)'s reappearance is the slackness of the people.

And perhaps, the definition of "till the earth is filled with injustice and inequality" is also this. Due to excessive oppression and injustice, people become attentive towards the trampling of their rights and realize that reformation is beyond their capacity. As a result, they will come towards the grace, benevolence and justice of Imam-e-Asr (a.t.f.s.). Then their pleas will reach Allah in shape of fervent supplications and will get the honor of being fulfilled.

Prayers are expressions of helplessness and intense requests. They are made by an absolutely weak servant in front of the Most Mighty of the powerful. He who can do whatever He

desires. Therefore, when the talk veers towards the early reappearance of Imam (a.s.), then it is incumbent to discuss about supplications. That is because in reality, prayers have special status and are absolutely effective. If this wasn't the case then the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the Infallible Imams (a.s.) wouldn't have ordered us (to pray for early reappearance) through various traditions. Thus, it is obligatory for us to raise our hands in prayers. Even for a moment we shouldn't be dejected from the infinite mercy of Allah. Just like a distressed person who untiringly prays for his personal problems and repeatedly entreats before the Holy Imams (a.s.). Similarly, for this vital issue, which in reality is the solution for every spiritual and material problems for us and for the universe, one should not lose hope and if one has been negligent till now, then there is still time for us to make amends.

The great Shia scholar — Sayed Ibne Tawoos (r.a.) — who had the blessed opportunity to meet Imam Zaman (a.t.f.s.) and whom the Imam (a.s.) has addressed as 'son,' and who was aware of great name of God and divine secrets, has addressed his son as follows:

Know that from among your needs, the most important one should be for the one in whose refuge you find guidance and support; and that is the Imam of your time. Thus, you should first pray for him in your namaz, fasts and supplications and then for your own self later. The reason for praying for Imam first is that, the world and the inhabitants of the world exist only because of his blessed presence. This is that enlightening truth that, by Allah, whoever doesn't realize it due to sheer negligence of laziness is in clear error — an error that will only bring shame.

Are you still wondering why our Imams or our guides have given utmost importance to this particular issue? Have you drawn your attention towards this important matter? I once

again stress that after what has been said above, there is no excuse left for you to not pray for the early appearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) on priority basis.¹

In conclusion: For the early reappearance of Imam e Asr(atfs), prayers are a deciding factor and for those who consider themselves to be loyal, loving, knowing and pious Shias, it is necessary for them to pray for the early reappearance of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.).

¹ Falahus Saail: 44

Miraculous effects of prayers

One book that extensively details the blessings and effects of prayers (dua) and is a priceless gift for the Shias and lovers of Imam Zaman (a.t.f.s) during occultation is *Mikyalul Makarim Fi Fawaid Ad-Dua Lill Qaem (a.s.)*. This book was written on Imam Mahdi (a.s.)'s instructions. The title of the book was also chosen by Imam (a.s.) himself. The study of which is very beneficial for the lovers of Imam Mahdi (a.s.).

In the first volume of this book, the respected late author has enlisted 102 benefits in praying for the early reappearance after researching various verses of the Holy Quran and traditions. We'll list a few here.

- It is one of the most appreciated actions in the eyes of Allah and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and is a cause for their satisfaction.
- Sins are forgiven and condemnable deeds are transformed into commendable deeds.
- It results in obeying and respecting Allah the Almighty and The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)
- The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.) will intercede for him/her.
- It is being loyal to the covenant of Allah, and discharging the compensation of Prophethood.
- It is a cause of acceptance of prayers, eliminate of calamities and misfortunes and it brings in abundance of blessings and sustenance.

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- One is inclined to see him in wakefulness or sleep.
 - One gets the chance to come back to life into the world again during the period of reappearance.
 - It reinforces the mastership of Imam Zaman (a.s.).
 - It is the means of salvation from the chastisement of the hereafter.
 - One becomes eligible for divine help.
 - It increases the lifespan.
 - It takes one to the reward of gaining knowledge.
 - One who prays for reappearance will be raised up with Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.).
 - The supplicant becomes eligible for the prayers of Imam Zaman (a.s.).
 - It makes the supplicant most proximate to the Almighty Allah and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.).
 - The supplication gets admitted to Paradise with the guarantee from Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and His Eminence.
 - One gets the reward of helping the oppressed (because the Imam is the most oppressed person of the world).
 - One gets the reward for avenging the blood of Imam Husain (a.s.).
 - The supplicant will be able to intercede for seventy thousand sinners.
 - On Judgment Day the prayers of Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) would be with him.
 - The supplication will enable the supplicant to enter Paradise without accounting.

- It is a means to injure the face of Shaitan.
- It is a means of security from thirst on the Day of Judgment.
- Angels are present in gatherings of supplication for early reappearance.
- One gets the reward of martyrdom in the company of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and being under the standard of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.).
- In the hereafter the supplicant will get a rank higher than that of the martyrs.
- The supplications of Lady Fatemah Zahra (s.a.) will be in favor of the supplicant.
- All the sorrows of the world and the hereafter would be dispelled of the supplicant.
- The angels would pray for the supplicant.

We know that supplications for reappearance are effective in the hastening of reappearance. This should drive the ingenious believer to pray for the salvation and reappearance of their leader. The Almighty Allah will then definitely create for them ways through which they would be able to recognize their Imam and become attentive to him. More efforts in this regard will thus follow.

Praying for the reappearance of the Awaited Imam is the most effective and important act, upon which every Shia must persevere and must not forget it in any circumstances and must not leave any stone unturned in this regard. No excuse is acceptable for leaving this prime responsibility. Indeed, believers in the Imamate of the proof of Allah, have a responsibility towards him from their social, individual, political, financial and academic aspects.

Among the most important issues of the present age is the matter of financial assistance of Imam Zaman (a.s.).

It is a pity that in Shia society there is not much awareness about Imam Asr (a.t.f.s.). People should read and know about Imam Zaman (a.s.) and they should gain recognition about this promised one of the universes. Apparently, such means are scarce. However, in the corners of the world there are individuals and organizations that are sincerely endeavoring to make people aware of the living divine proof. What has been done so far and what is being done is very less compared to what should have been done.

More pitiable is the fact that we witness today that many enemies of Ahle Bait (a.s.) are spending billions of dollars in order to spread deviated beliefs through misguided sects in all the corners of the world including in Islamic countries. But we, who are the followers of Ahle Bait (a.s.), are unaware of our responsibility.

Allah, the mighty and high says Surah Baqarah (2: 245) in the Holy Quran:

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ
أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْسُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

**“Who is it that will offer of Allah a goodly gift, so
He will multiply it to him manifold, and Allah
straitens and amplifies...”**

Each of us must have witnessed this holy verse inscribed on the banners of charitable organizations. Why is it written in bold letters? It is only so that it may become the focus of attention of the passersby and that people are encouraged to participate in charitable deeds. We are heedless of the fact that this

announcement of the Almighty Allah in the path of recognition is regarding the salvation of mankind. It is for the Mastership and devotion to the caliph of Allah. When Imam Jafar Sadeq (a.s.) was asked about his verse, he said:

“(This verse) is revealed about being attached to the Imam.”¹

Similarly, he (a.s.) says in another tradition:

“The Almighty Allah does not seek loan from what is given to the people because of need. In fact every right that belongs to God is in fact of His Wali (legatee).”²

He (a.s.) also mentioned to one of his companions:

“Nothing is more loved by Allah than that dirham which is expended for the Imam (a.s.). Certainly on the Day of Judgment, Allah will make that dirham equal to the mountain of Ohad.”³

When Ayatullah Musawi Isfahani, author of *Mikyalul Makarim Fee Fawaidud Dua Lil Qaem*, talks about the difficulties of the era of occultation, he also mentions that among the responsibilities of the Shias during occultation, is to do good towards the Imam (a.s.). He explains through numerous traditions that:

It is the duty of a believer that he must set apart a share of his wealth and property in the service of Imam (a.s.). He should continue this every year. This is obligatory for all whether, rich or poor, whether lowly or exalted, woman or man. There is no difference with regard to social status. However, each has to

¹ Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 537, Kitabul Hujjah, Baab Sile Imam 129, Tradition nos. 2 & 4.

² Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 537, Tradition no. 3.

³ Kaafi, vol. 1, p. 537, Tradition no. 6.

contribute depending upon his capability. Traditions have mentioned the dedication of a part of our wealth to Imam Zaman (a.s.) but there is no fixed amount for it because apparently it is a highly recommended act and the Holy Imams (a.s.) have likened it to a compulsory duty.

Shaikh Kulayni (a.r.) quotes Imam Sadeq (a.s.) through reliable sources in his book Al-Kaafi. Imam (a.s.) says: One dirham spent in doing favor to the Imam is better than two million dirhams spent in other charitable deeds.¹

And in another tradition from His Eminence, Imam Sadeq (a.s.) it is mentioned with regard to the following verse:

وَالَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ

And those who join that which Allah has bidden to be joined.²

The Imam said: It was revealed with regard to the relationship of Aale Muhammad (a.s.) and it is also about your relatives. Then he said: Do not be of those who take only one meaning from it.³

In the same book it is narrated from Abu Abdullah Imam Sadeq (a.s.) that he said: One who thinks that the Imam is in need of what he takes from the people, is an infidel, it is not except that the people are needful that the Imam accepts from them. Allah, the Mighty and Sublime says:

بِهَا وَصَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ

¹ Kaafi, vol. 2, p. 156

² Surah Raad (13): 21

³ Kaafi, vol. 2, p. 156

وَتَزَكِّيهِمْ

Take alms out of their property, you would cleanse them and purify them thereby.¹

There is an excellent tradition from Imam Jafar Sadeq (a.s.) in Furu-e-Kaafi:

“One dirham spent in Hajj expenses is better than a million dirhams spent in some other good way; one dirham that reaches the Imam is equal to spending a million dirhams in Hajj expenses.”²

Pondering a little on this statement of Imam (a.s.) makes one realize that today supposing if someone spends one rupee for Hajj, it is as if he has spent a million rupees in other charitable ways. In exactly the same way, if someone spends one rupee in the path of Imam Asr (a.s.) it is equal to spending a million rupees in an accepted Hajj. According to a simple calculation, one rupee spent in the way of Imam Zaman (a.s.) is equal to a thousand million spent in some other charitable ways. And it is not amazing also, as it is the very foundation of Shia beliefs.

We believe that Allah, the mighty and high created the whole universe, including the stars and planets and all the creatures, men, jinns and angels, etc only for the sake of Ahle Bait (a.s.) and man is created only that he may recognize the path of divine obedience through *marefat* of Imam and obedience and he should adopt this path; that is why there is so much value of the recognition of the Imam. Therefore, it is necessary for the believers to act on this matter seriously.

It is a matter of pity that this practice has not spread among us

¹ Surah Taubah (9): 103

² Translation of Mikyalul Makarim, vol. 2, p. 353

Shia as it should and not everyone acts upon it. Therefore it is necessary that the followers of Hazrat Baqiyatullah-e-Azam(a.s.) revive this practice, which is a necessary and effective way of assisting Imam Asr (a.s.). We should all act upon this in a serious manner.

We have often seen that when a dear one of a family passes away thousands are spent in his numerous ritual rites. It is spent in various things like flowers, food and other things. This expense is on an occasion that people gather to offer condolences to the relatives of the deceased and for social aims. People join in these social and rituals only on the promise of a dinner. How nice it would be if such expenses are incurred on the propagation of the culture and teachings of Ahle Bait (a.s.)? Wouldn't the souls of our deceased be more satisfied by this?

Such examples are applicable in every sphere. In the rituals and celebrations of 15th Shaban, much is spent on lighting and serving sweets etc. More important than this is serving food for the intellects and increasing the level of our recognition and making the people aware of the cognition of Imam Asr (a.s.) and explaining about his occultation and victimization of the Imam. We should act upon this with seriousness and popularize this. We should give maximum preference to this matter, because making the Shia aware of recognition of His Eminence is more important than feeding them with sweets, which sweeten their mouth only for some moments and remain in their system only for some time.

The best act in this regard is writing, compilation, printing and publication of books on the subject of Imam Zaman (a.s.), which creates awareness in people.

Although those who are not capable of writing or publishing books they can at least contribute monetarily so that these valuable books may be circulated widely in order to create

eagerness among more people to read and thus the seed of love for Ahle Bait (a.s.) is planted in their hearts. Then they may accommodate this promised one in their affections and may get the benefit of this great service, regarding which traditional reports have hinted. Apart from all that it invites the bestowals and attention of Imam Asr (a.s.).

If someone says I am not a good orator that people should pay attention to me and neither am I capable of writing books; and I am not even able to contribute financially; at least one can keep himself engrossed in the remembrance of Imam Zaman (a.s.) and every moment we should pray for his early reappearance and also encourage others for the same.

We should remember that it does not mean that we should keep away from social and individual activities; on the contrary along with the fulfillment of these duties, we should always have contact with the Imam of our time and pray for his reappearance, which is the most important social and individual responsibility.

To pray for the early reappearance of Hazrat Baqiyatullah (a.s.) is the best way or remembering this heavenly treasure in whether one is alone or in company of others. This is also a sign of ones faith as Imam Musa Kazim (a.s.) says:

“His being would be concealed from the view, but the hearts of the believers would not be heedless of his remembrance.”¹

This remembrance would make us secure from the deviation and destruction of the last age.

Come, let us under the light of verses of Quran and traditional reports, especially the messages of Imam Asr (a.s.), become the

¹ Kaafi, Vol. 2, Pg. 487, Kitabud Dua, Chapter of Congregation in Supplications, 17, Tradition nos. 1 & 3.

implication of the statements of the heavenly book.

قُلْ اِيْمَا اَعْظُمُ بَوَاحِدَةٍ اَنْتُقُوْمُوا لِلّٰهِ مَشْنٰى وَفُرَادٰى
ثُمَّ تَتَفَكَّرُوْا

“Say: I exhort you only to one thing, that rise up for Allah’s sake in pairs and individually and then think.”¹

In moments of solitude, along with seeking forgiveness we should pray to Allah for the reappearance of Imam (a.s.). And when we gather together at our holy places, at the sanctuaries of infallibles and in other places, like Masjids, Imam Bargah and in religious gatherings, along with sincere repentance, we should pray for the reappearance of the avenger of Aale Muhammad (a.s.) and beseech the Almighty God to send him soon.

¹ Surah Saba (34):46

Individual and congregational supplications

We should always keep in mind supplication for early reappearance especially in gatherings of believers, and particularly in programs which are related to Ahle Bait (a.s.). Imam Jafar Sadeq (a.s.) says:

“When forty persons gather for supplicating and they implore Allah for the solving of their problems, the Almighty Allah grants their supplications. And if instead of forty there are only four persons and they gather and supplicate, Allah, the Mighty and Sublime multiplies it ten times and accepts their supplication. And if not even four persons are present and only a lone individual supplicates forty times, the Almighty Allah will grant his wish.”¹

Imam Jafar Sadeq (a.s.) also said:

*“Whenever something troubled my respected father, he used to gather ladies and children and supplicate; and they used to recite: Amen.”*²

Devotees and followers of Ahle Bait (a.s.), mourners of the Chief of the Martyrs (a.s.) and those who participate in gatherings of mourning and religious organizations, should know that expression of loyalty to the Holy Imams (a.s.),

¹ Kaafi, vol. 2, p. 487, Kitabud Dua, Chapter of Congregation in Supplications, 17, Trs. 1 & 3.

² Ibid.

whether during mourning or celebration, it is a moment of obtaining the pleasure of Imam Zaman (a.s.). In all those conditions, especially when tears are flowing from the eyes, the heart is aggrieved one should pray for the early reappearance of the son of His Eminence, Aba Abdullah al-Husain (a.s.) and avenger of his pure blood. We thus recite in Ziyarat Ashura: *I beg Allah, who honored you above others, to be generous towards me on account of you, and give me the opportunity to be with the victorious Imam, the descendent of Muhammad (blessings and peace be on him and on his children) at the time of the final and decisive struggle against Allah's enemies.*

It is also mentioned in the book of *Mikyalul Makarim* that His Eminence, Baqiyatullah (a.s.) says:

*“If a believer, in a gathering of mourning, after the narration of the calamities of Imam Husain (a.s.) prays for me, I also pray for him.”*¹

It is also narrated from Allamah Amini (r.a.) that he said:

“One who, after the Salawat, says ‘and hasten their victory (wa ajjil farajahum)’ I will make him share in the reward of writing the book of Ghadeer.”

Speakers, orators and poets of Ahle Bait (a.s.), in their speeches, couplets, poems and elegies, should make Imam Asr (a.s.) as the point of focus and in the moments of acceptance of supplications they should not become heedless for praying for the reappearance of Imam Asr (a.s.).

It is narrated from Shaikh Hasan Samarrai, who was a very devout orator of Iraq that he said: During the time, I was in Samarra, one Friday, at the time of Noon Prayer, I went to the Holy Cellar (Sardab) in the afternoon and saw that there was

¹ Mikyalul Makarim, vol. 1, p. 333.

no one present there, so I focused my attention to the place of Imam Zaman (a.s.). At the moment I heard a voice behind me, speaking in Persian.

“Tell my Shia and followers to appeal to Allah in the name of my aunt, Lady Zainab (s.a.) and pray for my early reappearance.”¹

¹ Shaifatgaan Hazrat Mahdi (a.s.), vol. 1, p. 251

Deception of Shaitan

Some people feel that before praying for reappearance it is necessary to purify ones inner self in order to make one eligible for supplication. This is a great mistake and it is possible that it is an instigation of Shaitan. By involving us in the obtaining of self-purification, he might seize the moments of opportunity and the self-purification will also be lost. Additionally we should remember that supplication itself is an important part of eligibility and purification of the self. Since, Ahle Bait (a.s.) are the very essence of the verse of purification. The only way of self-purification is getting attached to this pure family.

When the Shaitan was expelled by Allah he demanded from Allah to grant him respite till the end of the world as a recompense for thousands of years of his worship. Shaitan asked Allah: O Lord, give me respite till the day the creatures are raised. The Almighty Allah said: You are given respite till the known hour.¹

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) says regarding the death of Shaitan at the time of reappearance:

“In the holy verse the ‘known hour’ implies the advent of the Qaem of Aale Muhammad (a.s.), when he would stage an uprising, Iblees would come near Masjid Kufa dragging on his knees and he would be saying: Woe upon this time. He would then be caught by his

¹ Surah Hijr (15): 32-39.

forelocks and beheaded. That is the known hour, when his tenure would end.”

Imam Ali Reza (a.s.) also says in the exegesis of this verse:

“When everyone would know the time of the death of Shaitan, that same is the time of the reappearance of our Qaem.”¹

It is because of this that the Shaitan in all his attacks and excuses and through his helpers tries to turn away the attention of people from Imam Zaman (a.s.) and all his efforts are focused on delaying the time of reappearance.

¹ Kamaluddin, vol. 2, p. 371, Chap. 35, Tradition no. 5.

A beneficial reminder

A weakness found in speakers, writers, researchers and progressive minded people is that we pay more attention to the marginal issues and are heedless of the core of reappearance. We focus all our practical capacity to secondary and less important issues, but remain heedless of awaiting and praying for the reappearance. It is correct that some issues like discussing and listening to, reading and writing about signs of last period of time is attractive and sweet, but it is our responsibility to identify His Eminence, and to pray for him and this is more important than recognizing the signs of reappearance.

Imam Hasan (a.s.) told the late Ayatullah Mirza Muhammad Baqir Faqih Imaani in a dream: Explain to the people from the pulpits and order them that they should repent and pray for the hastening of the reappearance of Hazrat Hujjat(a.s.). To pray for the advent of His Eminence is not like the Funeral Prayer, which is *Wajib Kifai*; that if some people perform it, others are exempted from it. It is like the Five-time obligatory prayers, which is equally obligatory on every eligible and female. Such is the obligation to pray for the reappearance of Imam Zaman (a.s.).

If we have so far not acted on our obligation; and have been heedless in praying for seeking revenge for Aale Muhammad (a.s.), come let us make a vow to the Almighty Allah and beseech sincerely to the court of Almighty. O Lord, if since the beginning of my life till date, there is an action of mine, which has earned Your pleasure, like for example an accepted Hajj,

Ziyarat of the Holy Imams (a.s.) and descendants of Imams, recitation of Quran, participation in congregational Prayer, alms (Sadaqah), favoring others, doing a good turn to relatives, devotions, mourning for Imam Husain (a.s.), supplications and other recommended acts; then this very moment in lieu of all my good deeds, hasten the reappearance of the savior of the world and from today make each of my acts which earn Your pleasure to be a cause of his early reappearance.

O Lord, do not make me heedless from the remembrance of my master even for a moment.

At this juncture Haaj Shaikh Ahmad Kaafi Khorasani (r.a.), the ardent follower of Imam Zaman (a.s.) makes the following statement about the loneliness of Imam Mahdi (a.s.):

O Shias! By God, our master is coming. By God, our supporter is arriving. Master, everyone is targeting us, and this is the fate of one who has no guardian. May I be sacrificed on you, O Hujjat Ibne Hasan, the Shia are almost decimated. O son of Fatemah, your followers are exhausted! O Mahdi of Quran! Your supporters are losing heart. Please beseech God for your reappearance. Your separation was enough for me that my enemies are chastising me; that if your master had existed, he would have arrived.

O my master, our children have grown up, the youth have reached old age and a group of elderly persons has also died, but they could not glimpse you. By God, O people, your supplications have effect, your wails are effective.

The Imam himself said to the late Majlisi (r.a.): *Majlisi, tell the Shias to pray for me.*

Now let us supplicate. O God, I adjure You by the broken back of Lady Fatemah Zahra (s.a.), I adjure You by the tearful face of

Lady Fatemah Zahra (s.a.), O God, I adjure you by the severed head of Imam Husain (a.s.), that You hasten the reappearance of Imam (a.s.).

Different Supplications and Ziyarats

We should not think that in supplicating for reappearance that it is sufficient only to recite *Dua Faraj* and ending of Salawat with praying for hastening of reappearance (*wa ajjil farajahum*). There are other supplications, Ziyarats, ritual Prayers and recitations etc. through which it is possible to create an ideal connection with Hazrat Mahdi (a.t.f.s.)- the pivot of the universe. One of them being Salawat of Abul Hasan Zarrab Isfahani, regarding which Sayyid Ibne Tawoos says:

If someone is unable to perform the rituals of Friday, which are especially regarding Hazrat Sahibul Amr (a.s.), he should in no case forget the recitation of this Salawat as a secret is concealed in it, which the Almighty Allah has informed us of.¹

Seeking mediation in the court of Imam Asr (a.s.)

It is unfortunate that a few followers of Ahle Bait (a.s.), in their supplications, entreaties, etc., rarely direct their attention to Imam Zaman (a.s.). They hardly pose their requests to him.

¹ The best book regarding this subject, which has been published and circulated among Shia people is the book of Sayyid Murtada Mujtahidi, entitled, *Sahifa Mahdiya*, which is also translated into many languages. We advise all the Shia people who await the reappearance of Imam Zaman (a.s.) to read this book and contemplate upon it and should derive benefit from the etiquette of supplicating and gain proximity to Imam Zaman (a.s.).

Although all the members of Ahle Bait (a.s.) are from the same effulgence, but since this is the period of the Imamate of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) and the Masoomeen (a.s.) have also instructed us to present our requests to our living Imam, and continue to seek help from him as he is the Master of the time and this age belongs exclusively to him.

No work of Imam (a.s.) is suspended because of occultation. His works are not dependent on his physical presence in society. Just as his holy ancestors; that in spite of them not being present in the world, the whole universe is under their control. In the same way the destiny of the mankind is in his hands and the supplications of the people are accepted because of him.

From this aspect, today when the Imamate belongs to Imam Zaman (a.s.), we seek the mediation of the holy infallibles in our problems; these personalities finally transfer our requests to their descendant, who is the leader of this time. As was the case with Muqaddas Ardibeli (r.a.) when he presented his academic problems before the grave of Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.), the latter instructed him to go to Masjid-e-Kufa and inquire from the Imam of his time.¹

Allamah Fazil Mamqani says: I had the honor to be in the presence of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in the courtyard of Masjidul Haraam; when after the prayer I mentioned my requests to him, he said:

“Mamqani, this is the time of my son, Mahdi, take your requests to him.”²

Similar is narrated from a Sayyid. He dreamt that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.), Imam Ali Reza (a.s.) and Imam

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 52, p. 174

² Mauood, Sh. 18 & 19.

Asr (a.s.) have come to his house. The Sayyid stood up in respect. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.a.) took his seat, but the two Imams continued to stand. Then Imam Ali Reza (a.s.) complained about the Russians that his Shia were facing hardships because of them and ask him to do something about it. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said: Today the world is being run by Hujjat Ibne Hasan, complain to him.¹

The conclusion is that while seeking mediation and assistance from the Holy Imams, one should not ignore Imam Zaman (a.s.). We shouldn't forsake the rights of our live, aware and kind leader. We should pray to the Imam in every place and in every position and all the time and not remember him only at the time of taking an oath. The Imam is always accessible to us; we should consider his being as the greatest divine bounty and we should not be heedless of maintaining contacts with him. We had mentioned that he has not appointed a clerk to manage his correspondence; therefore, whenever one calls him, he is there to help out. We find that he is even more affectionate than a father, more loving than a mother, more proximate than a brother and more loyal than a friend or relative. In spite of all our weakness and defects he is kind to us. Even his enemies are secure from him. When they living and getting sustenance from him, how can he abandon his followers and devotees?

If the position of the Imam is like that of an affectionate father – as it indeed is as such – and we regard ourselves among his children; then naturally as we interact with our biological father and confide in him, we can in the same way, speak to our spiritual father always. We can share with him and reveal to him what we would not even mention to our closest confidants.

Everyone can present his request to the Imam in his own

¹ Shaifatgan Hazrat Mahdi, vol. 2, p. 284

language and seek the mediation of this divine representative in every problem. The only requirement is to have his remembrance and feeling in the heart and soul. What is required is that we should fulfill all that is needed to remain in constant contact with him as is expounded in the following verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا
اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

“O you who believe! be patient and excel in patience and remain connected...”¹

This verse commands us to maintain contact with Imam Asr (a.s.).

We who have been heedless till now, let us all begin by first seeking forgiveness for our past misdoings and then request:

We who have always caused distress you; we are your sinful and guilty children and we love an affectionate father like you. We hope of being forgiven by you and hope that we would earn your pleasure again.

O Imam, who is more affectionate than a father! In spite of all the defects do not keep us deprived of your affectionate glance and do not leave us in this tumultuous period because this attention of yours is my only support to remain secure from the deception of Shaitan.

O my great master, your gracious glance is a means of being in front of you; which has still maintained shame and modesty in me. And it is due to this that I am able to save myself from acts which would cause distress and humiliation at the time of your

¹ Surah Aale Imran (3):201.

reappearance or during the horrifying time of Qiyamat.

O embodiment of love and affection! Pray to Allah that I may perform such acts which earn His satisfaction and your pleasure, as what pleases you indeed pleases the Almighty Allah.

Pray for us that we become an embellishment for you and not be a disgrace for you.

Pray to Allah that we may get the *Taufeeq* (opportunity) to understand the depth and weight of your loneliness and victimization. And every moment the love, regard and recognition for you should increase along with the increase in the hatred for your enemies, too.

Please pray to God not to make us heedless of your remembrance even for a moment and give us the good sense to pray for your reappearance and removal of your distress and not to make death a barrier between us and your reappearance.

My master! Your recognition is a divine bestowal. It is an effulgence (*noor*), which Allah puts in the heart of whoever He pleases. Since everyone does not have the means to augment his recognition request you to kindly give us one drop at a time from the endless ocean of your recognition. Please do give us the fortune to remain steadfast on your love and recognition.

Imam Asr (a.s.) is the 'equal of Quran'¹ and 'one who shows the path of guidance'.² That is why we should search for the straight path in the court of this Wali of Allah. So that due to this attachment we may not forgo the world and the hereafter and that we may succeed in the divine test.

During these perilous times, dangers loom over our religious

¹ Taali kitabullah.

² Al-Imamud Dai Alal Huda.

values. The shimmer of this world, its deception and the avarice are the first hurdle and these are followed by the Shaitan's vow to Allah, to deviate the human beings.

On the other hand, we find that traditional reports talk of complex trials and examinations in the last age. To keep one's faith secured in such circumstances a tough task. To remain firm on one's belief, to have faith in an unseen Imam is as difficult carrying fire on the palm of the hand. In these circumstances patience and steadfastness are required more than deep faith.

Another danger that lurks is the wayward and unrestrained thinking which has become customary. Religious doubts and philosophical views are showcased with each one trying to sell his wares. Wine is being sold in place of water. Deviation instead of guidance. Disbelief and polytheism in the name of pure faith. This is why traditional reports regards such traders as the bandits of religion and beliefs. It should remain clear that to follow such things will not result in anything, except being confused and worried and drowning in the waves of deviation. But in order to leave this path, to achieve salvation and to emerge successful in the tests of the last period, it is necessary that we should not get caught in the snarl and we should remain attached to the reality as this is the secret of success.

There is no other option except to follow the guidance of the unique one of his time (That is Imam Mahdi(a.t.f.s.)). We cannot compare his and his forefathers' traditions to the philosophical schools of thoughts, followers of Sufi sects, claimants of gnosis and pseudo claimants of scholasticism. We regard the statements of the Holy Imams (a.s.) as the final proof in exegesis of Quran and understanding of Quran, as they are equals of Quran. In this sensitive period of occultation in which it is not possible to reach the Imam directly, it is only

the traditions recorded from our Imams which are equals of Quran. These are accessible to us and our Imams have ordered us to refer to the narrators of their traditions.

Have we in the real sense contemplated over a single tradition of the infallibles?

Whereas we spend hours on reading newspapers and magazines and watching films and serials; satire and comedy programs and those who are in the fold of culture and literature they continue to repeat the compositions of poets and composers. They contemplate deeply upon it; but it is a pity that they fail to read even single tradition of the infallibles, whereas the statement of the infallibles is real effulgence (noer).¹

Statements from the infallibles is the ideal way of perfection.² They enliven the heart and soul. Is it not astonishing that we spend our life and our valuable time in the talks of common people and are heedless of the statements of the divinely guided leader?

In the deadly storm of the last period of time it is only Imam Asr (a.s.) who is the ark of salvation.³ Then whether in times of hardships, mischiefs and in attacks of Iblees our eyes were focused on the ark of salvation? Or our attention was caught by his holy being? It is correct that only one who is sinking knows the value of the ark of salvation and who is fighting for his life with the waves; come let us recognize the value of this great blessing.

It is a pity that most of us have forgotten the presence of the ark of salvation. Our eyes are not in search of his glimpse at all.

¹ Kalamokum Noorun.

² Amrokum Rushdun.

³ Al-Imamo safeenatun Najaat.

Our life and soul are not in welcome of his arrival. We have reposed our confidence on straws to save us, but we are heedless of the true ark of salvation. It is only Imam Asr (a.s.) who is the firm refuge.¹ He is the helper of the world² and he attends the call of all those who call out to him. It is a pity that we fail to focus our attention on him and to seek his mediation.

If the beggar is slow in asking then how the giver can be blamed?

After getting attached to this beloved Imam each moment of life guarantees salvation. Relationship with the master will give value to life and religiosity and we will remain safe from calamities and dangers.

Come, let us become ardent fans of Imam Zaman (a.s.) and every day and night reserve some moments of privacy with him, so that the compass of our life may swivel towards the pivot of the world and make the people attached to the world of real existence. We should make the call of 'O Mahdi' run like blood in our veins. And then every beat of our heart should say: Al-Ajal (hasten!) or O Baqiyatullah! We should do this at least once, and not for fulfillment of our wishes, but only for the sake of His Eminence. We should never forget that he is the master of the age and the security of the world. We should not regard ourselves as the in-charge of the house as in addition of being the master of the age he is also the master of place. We should not forget that by being away from him, life is death and that without his recognition it is a death of ignorance. Let us make every moment of the life alive with his remembrance.

Let us regularly give Sadaqah for the safety of Imam Zaman (a.s.), keep fast, offer sacrifice and mention '*wa ajjil farajahum*'

¹ Al-Kahful Haseen.

² Ghiyasul Muztarril Mustakeen.

with every Salawat, wishing for his reappearance. Let us say '*ahlik aduwwahum*' and give proof of distancing from his enemies. Let us remain eager for his glimpse and count each moment of his arrival.

If we are remembering and seeking help from Imam Zaman (a.s.) in our difficulties and needs, we should remember him in our happiness as well. Let us gather our wealth, life and honor for the reappearance of His Eminence; as it is the best provision of the hereafter.

We should await in such a way that others should perceive the fragrance of anticipation from us; we should embellish our household with the insurance policy of the master of the age: we should name our children as Mahdi and Mahdiya. You should believe that recognition of Imam Zaman (a.s.) and ideal connection with him is more important than the computer class.

Once in a while we should go to Jamkaran. In fact we should establish Jamkaran in our hearts and decorate our houses with the remembrance of Mahdi as there is no distance between him and us.

The story of Sayyid Ibne Tawoos and Sayyid Bahrul Uloom and Sayyid Karim Peendooz, the old lock maker, Abu Rakhe Hamami and Ustad Jafar Bandevali all these persons are sufficient to establish the proof on all. It is important that our every moment should be for pleasing Imam Asr (a.s.). How nice it would have been if we remained attentive to the report of reappearance. The call bell of our house should ring the sound of O Mahdi! We should not only pray for reappearance during prayers in prostration and bowing, but should begin our day with the call for joining the ranks of the master of the age and begin every Friday anticipating the news of the reappearance of the Imam.

We know that it is possible for the matter of reappearance to be finalized in a moment; that is why the call of '*Anaa Baqiyatullah*' can echo in the universe at any point of time. When the world begins to lament the further delay in reappearance at Asr on Fridays, why shouldn't we also lament with the universe? Why the occultation of Imam (a.s.) should be a night of restlessness for us? At the time of the New Year we should adjure Allah in the name of this 'changer of the hearts' that this year He should make us and everyone else attentive to Imam Zaman (a.s.) and also turn the attention of the Imam to us so that our conditions may change for the better.

During this dark period of occultation of Imam Zaman (a.s.) the hearts are beating and the breathing goes on the breasts. Everywhere the traces of life are found. Thus, every blessing which is reaching us and every dinner table on which we sit and enjoy the bounties, all of them are due to the holy presence of Imam Zaman (a.s.). When the whole world is his guest, we should not forget our benefactor. We are certain that separation is not possible between the Quran and Progeny (Itrat). The Book of Allah makes us attentive to the Imam. When we open the Quran, we should not forget the partner of Quran and we should not be like those who say: The Book of Allah is sufficient for us. We should learn the exegesis of Quran from the Speaking Quran of the time.

When we stand up for prayer, we should keep in mind the statement of: *Make our Prayer accepted*.¹ And at the time of uttering: *And keep us on the straight path*, we should keep in mind that the straight path in this age is the holy being of Imam (a.s.).

¹ Mafatihul Jinaan, Dua Nudbah [O God, make our Prayers accepted through the mediation of Imam Asr (a.s.)].

If we have the good fortune of performing the Hajj, we should not forget the innate Qibla, the real Hajj is circumambulating around the Imam. The best implication of enjoining good is making the society aware of the Imam of the time and no evil is greater than being heedless of our beloved.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) says in the sermon of Ghadeer:

“O people, I am the straight path of the Almighty Allah, following whom is the order of God and after me it is Ali and after him, his descendants from his progeny.”¹

Strengthen the training of your children with his love and polish their minds with the shine of the grace and kindness of His Eminence. Make them fervent devotees of the Imam so that they may be proud of having such an Imam.

Our life should be spent in performing good deeds and gaining the pleasure of Imam Asr (a.s.). When this happens, you can be sure that we would not have to search for the Imam. His Eminence would call us to his presence or he would pray for us. And he would remove evil from us, our family and friends and include us among his special bestowals.

Wilayat is the basis of religion; prayer, fasting, Hajj and Zakat are secondary issues. The branches cannot make us careless of the roots. In this age the path of guidance and the ark of salvation is the holy being of Hujjat Ibne Hasan (a.s.). But we should remember that the claim of his Wilayat is baseless without hatred towards his enemies.

¹ Tafseer Burhan, vol. 1, p. 74.

Effects of Supplications

When some people are told to pray for the reappearance of the Imam they say that when the Almighty Allah wants the Imam will reappear. Another group says expressing despair: The Imam will not arrive so soon. What should we tell these people?

On the basis of traditions the Holy Imams (a.s.) have time and again emphasized to the Shia on praying for the reappearance and have declared that the supplications of people in this regard are definitely effective.

Imam Jafar Sadeq (a.s.) says regarding supplicating for reappearance and its effects:

“When chastisement and calamities increased on Bani Israel, they lamented and supplicated in the court of the Almighty for forty days, then the Almighty Allah sent revelation to Musa and Harun to deliver Bani Israel and He advanced this by 170 years.”

Then Imam (a.s.) said:

“Your case is also such that if you do this, the Almighty Allah would deliver through us; but if not, the matter will definitely reach its destined end.”¹

Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Musawi Isfahani (r.a.) says at one point:

“From the traditional reports which have reached us it is clear that the reappearance of the Imam of the time is from the affairs

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 52, p. 52

that are subject to change (Bad'aa – that is, it may be advanced or postponed.”¹

At another occasion, Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Musawi Isfahani (r.a.) says:

“When the occultation of Idrees became prolonged, people joined in repentance and turned to Allah. The Almighty Allah, in turn, made him reappear and removed the distress and hardships of the people.

Qaem is also like that; such that if people were to unite in repenting for their sins and have a firm determination to help and support the Imam, the Almighty Allah would make him reappear.”²

The late Faqih Imaani says:

“It is seen in many supplications, sentences of Ziyarats and also traditional reports that the matter of the reappearance of Imam (a.s.) is a definite and unchangeable promise of the Almighty Allah, but the time of fulfillment of this promise is not appointed which can be postponed or advanced. It is also proved through some reports that if the supplications of believers fulfill all the conditions and requirements, they would definitely be effective in hastening reappearance.”³

Encouragement of the Imams for praying for reappearance shows that though a time is fixed for it (reappearance); it is subject to change also. It is correct that occultation is a divine secret and there is definitely an appointed time for reappearance, but it is in any case possible that the reappearance may be advanced or it can be further delayed and this belief is

¹ Translation of Mikyalul Makarim, vol. 1, p. 34.

² Translation of Mikyalul Makarim, vol. 1, p. 34.

³ Shewa Yaari Qaim Aale Muhammad (a.s.), p. 75.

also not opposed to the fundamental belief of the Shia about 'Bad'aa' (change of destiny).¹

The late Allamah Majlisi (r.a.) explains the traditional reports about Dua and narrates from Imam Jafar Sadeq (a.s.) as follows:

*“Supplicate and do not say that its time has passed and now what is destined will happen.”*²

In its explanation, Allamah Majlisi says:

“It is necessary to believe in Bad'aa, because Allah, the mighty and high is powerful over the issues of each day. That is why He erases whatever He likes and establishes whatever He likes. That is why destiny is not an obstacle to supplications, because change is possible in the tablet (lauh). Apart from this, supplication itself is from the causes of destiny that is why we are commanded to supplicate.”³

On the contrary, it is clear that if we are heedless of the prolongation of the occultation of the Imam of our time and the issues of occultation and do not in a united way, express the desire for his reappearance, the Almighty Allah will make the reappearance to occur at its latest hour; and we don't know it is possible that the latest hour may also arrive. That is why we cannot on any occasion fix a time for his reappearance and that is why those who fix a time for his reappearance are condemned and falsified. But other than this there are numerous reports, which inform the believers that the time of reappearance is near

¹ The dictionary meaning of Bad'aa is to become apparent and in the Shia terminology, it is a destiny which is subject to change. Believing in Bada emphasizes that the Almighty Allah is the absolute supreme one and He is not helpless in changing destined matters.

² Usool-e-Kaafi, vol. 2, p. 466, (Kitabud Dua, Chapter of excellence of Dua, vol. 3).

³ Translation of Sharh Usool-e-Kaafi, vol. 4, p. 21.

and hint that one should not be heedless in supplicating for reappearance.

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) says:

Man is also not helpless due to the destined matters; on the contrary the path of deliverance is open for him and through performance of good deeds, he can change his destiny.

“Wait for the reappearance every morning and evening.”¹

Imam Ali Raza (a.s.) also remarks:

“It is not except that the matter of reappearance (like Qiyamat) would appear suddenly for you.”²

Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) says:

“Indeed, the Almighty Allah would reform his affairs overnight.”³

We are duty bound to regard the reappearance as near; as following the Quran, we recite in Dua Ahad:

“Please hasten his advent as people regard it to be far and we know it to be near.”

Once in Bahrain, the Shias came under great stress, due to which they asked from the Nasibi ruler of that place respite for three days, so that they might pray to Imam Asr (a.s.) and beseech him to solve their problem. During the first two nights the representatives of Shias could not obtain any results. At the dawn of the third night, Muhammad bin Isa (r.a.) was bestowed the good fortune of the presence of Imam Zaman (a.s.) in which

¹ Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 52, p. 185.

² Kamaluddin, vol. 2, p. 373, Chapter 35, Tradition no. 6.

³ Kamaluddin, vol. 2, p. 377, Chapter 36, Tradition no. 1.

the Imam solved the enigma of the pomegranate and exposed the fraud of the minister.

An important point of this anecdote is that when Muhammad bin Isa asked the Imam why he did not appear on the first or the second night, Imam (a.s.) replied:

“If you had asked for respite of only one night, you would have achieved your objective that night only.”¹

Indeed, you are the protector and the refuge, the acceptor of requests and the remover of grief and sorrow and he is dispeller of distress.

No refuge is more stable than him and neither is any helper more sincere and kinder than him. No supporter is stronger than him and no hand is nobler and generous than him. Come let us all together request God:

“And change his fear into security.”²

The Yusuf (beloved) of Lady Fatemah Zahra (s.a.) for almost 1200 years in such a prison which has been constructed by the heedlessness of Shia, the disobedience of people, the ignorance of deviations, the denial and apostasy, the selfishness and power-hunger. It is constructed by the killings of the worldly tyrants. The key of its lock is in our own hands. Come let pray together for his early reappearance:

O God, among the Ahle Bait (a.s.) we have not seen anyone as distressed as Lady Zainab Kubra (s.a.) on the eleventh eve of Muharram. I adjure You in the name of the oppressed aunt of Imam Asr (a.s.) circling around Sayyidus Sajideen. The rushing of this Holy lady to the burnt-down tents. I adjure You by her running to the Al-Qama stream. I adjure You by the wails of

¹ Darus Salam, Iraqi, p. 92.

² Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 89, p. 251.

those orphans who were lashed by the enemies and running to take refuge with their aunt. I adjure You by the midnight prayer recited by Lady Zainab (s.a.) in sitting position the night after Ashura, 61 A.H. and by her shackled hands and wounded forehead, please hasten the reappearance of the avenger of the Ahle Bait (as).

O Lord, Prophet Yaqub (a.s.) continued to weep for forty years because of separation of his son, till the pupils of his eyes turned white, but at last when he met Yusuf his vision was restored. O Lord, neither do we possess recognition, like that of Yaqub nor love like him. Please forgive our heedlessness, I adjure you by the honorable mother of the Imam, Janabe Zahra (s.a.), please bestow to the Yusuf of Zahra freedom from the prison of occultation.

“O God, do not deprive us of certainty due to the lengthening of the period of occultation and because of unawareness about our master and do not take away the taufeeq regarding his remembrance, his awaiting and faith on him, certainty in his reappearance, praying for him and invoking blessings on him.”¹

O One who exalts whoever He likes!

Through the rising of Imam Zaman (a.s.) maintain the respect and honor of Ahle Bait (a.s.) and the true Shia.

O One who degrades whoever He likes!

By issuing the command for reappearance, degrade the infidels and hypocrites.

O Lord, overlook our negative acts. I beg by Your great name, by the verses of Your Quran, by the speaking Qurans, please issue the command of the reappearance of Imam Zaman (a.s.)

¹ Mafatihul Jinaan (Ziyarat Sahibul Amr): Allahumma laa Taslunba yaqeen litooolil amad.

this very moment.

O the most hearing of those who hear! Please accept our supplications and cancel the remaining period of occultation for the sake of the sanctity of Aale Muhammad (a.s.) and spread the call of 'I am Baqiyatullah' in each corner of the world.

Imam Sadeq (a.s.) was indeed seen sitting on the ground, lamenting like a mother who has lost her son. Tears rolled down his cheeks as he said: *My dear! Your occultation has stolen my sleep and has troubled my heart. It has ruined the tranquility of my heart...My dear! Your occultation has brought on my being a life-threatening catastrophe from which releasing one is difficult.*

(Behaarul Anwaar, vol. 51, p. 219, Tradition no. 9)



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