

CONCEPT OF MAHDI IN EARLY SHIA AUTHORSHIP

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Abstract

The concept of Mahdi cannot be overemphasized. It is no doubt a concept which attracts many writers and intellectuals to deliberate, focus and shed light on. It is not limited to a faith or tradition such as Islam and not the other ones. The idea that a peacemaker will reappear and fills the world with justice after it has been filled with injustice and disbelief can be traced in all heavenly creeds in addition to other creeds such as Hindus, Zoroastrians and western civilization. People of different religions and traditions maintain such a faith and are anxiously awaiting the arrival of such a powerful and commanding figure under God's guidance and protection. Each religion and tradition recognizes such a divine leader with different name and specific titles. Muslims refer to him as Mahdi, Hindus call him *Maitreya*, *Zoroastrians* refer to him Izadan, Christians call him a Just Leader, the westerners refer to him as Great Spirit and so on.

The concept enjoys more prominence and attention within the Shias. It is regarded by the Shiite as one of the five roots or principles of religion. It is also an integral part of their belief system. It is viewed by them as direct obligation and by the 'Sunnis' indirect obligation. In the first instance, the last step becomes equal to all the other steps preceding it and no difference between all the steps. In the latter instance, all the steps depend on the last one. Meaning without upholding the last one, all the preceding steps are rendered invalid. The early Shia authorships such as Kulaini's *al-Kafi*, Tusi's *Ghaybah*, Numani's *Ghaybah* and Saduq's *Kamal al-Din* discuss the concept of Mahdi in details. These books look at the concept in different fields such as the birth of Mahdi, his occultation and appearance, signs of his appearance, prohibition of fixing the time for his appearance, preparations for his appearance and so on.

The fact that the followers of all religions and traditions maintain such a belief is an indication to the existence of such a belief and not forgetting that each faith or tradition has a different unique way of looking at it. It highlights how the belief in the future savior or peacemaker is integral part of every faith and tradition. It also brings to mind that the concept is real and not a myth and that the world is waiting the appearance of a just leader. Books have been written and scholars have added their voices in this regard. However, I should point out here that the concept occupies a prominent and profound estate within the Shiite school of thought. Many of the books published in this regard are short of looking at the traces of the concept in the Shia early authorships. This paper studies, investigate and analyzes the traces of the concept of Mahdi in early Shiite Authorship. It will also shed more lights from the Quran on the Shiite perspective as well as from the various traditions.

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CHAPTER (1)

INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF MAHDI AMONG DIFFERENT FAITHS

The concept of Mahdi is continuing to be a locus of contention within the religion of Islam. It has been examined by the Muslim scholars through Qur'an and Prophetic traditions. Likewise, you find the concept attract non-Muslim scholars from both Christianity and Judaism as well as other faiths and traditions. Believing in the appearance of the universal peacemaker is pivotal to the concept of Mahdi within the religion of Islam as well as within other faiths and traditions. Even though there are differences of opinion in the belief of the existence of the peacemaker and his appearance, the belief however existed amongst many of the ancient traditions and communities.

The concept originates from the divine nature of mankind. I must point out here that the narrations in relation to the concept of Mahdi in other faith and traditions do not necessarily agree with the Shiite tradition regarding the same. They, however, highlight the existence of such concept in other traditions. The introduction will present different beliefs of previous nations about the concept.

CONCEPT OF MAHDI IN THE WEST

The concept of the advent of the just leader is not exclusive to religions, but a universal concept whose manifestations can be traced in the cultures of different nations.

Ayatollah Nasir Makarim Shirazi's *A preface to Leadership*, while discussing the concept of waiting for the appearance of just leader among different western nations and undermining such general belief by some persons, the author went ahead to mention the names of five leaders who arose from Britain: "James Naylor", "Joanna Southcott", "Richard Brothers", "John Nichois Thom" and "Henry James Prince"; and quotes the existence of such concept, even among the North American Indians, from "Bernard Barber", American sociologist, in the paper titled "Acculturation and Messianic Movements"; Among the north American Indians this concept is prevalent that one day, the Great spirit will come and lead them to the heaven on the earth....

We also read from the book titled "*On Advent and Signs of Advent*", that it is possible to find the concept of Mahdi among Scandinavians, Mexican aboriginals and many more".¹

CONCEPT OF MAHDI IN THE OLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

We read the following in the prophecy of Habacuc, " For behold, I will raise up the Chaldeans, a bitter and swift nation, marching upon the breadth of the earth, to possess the dwelling places that are not their own'.²

¹ Shirazi Nasir Makarim, 80/12/28, *Hukumat Jahani Mahdi*, Qom-Islamic Republic of Iran, Nasl Jawan, p.27.

² The Holy bible, the prophecy of Habacuc, chapter 1:6, page 1164, translated from the Latin Vulgate, Douay-Rhems Version.

In *“psalm of David”*, we read: “ for the wicked shall be cut off; but those who wait for the Lord shall possesses the land”.³

“But his will is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he shall mediate day and night”.⁴

We also read “ for those blessed by the Lord shall possess the land, but those cursed shall be cut off”. It is also mentioned that “ the righteous shall possess the land, and dwell upon it forever”.⁵

“Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and shalt thou break them in pieces like a potter’s vessel”⁶

We read in the Book of Isaiah a discussion which is referred to as full of metaphors:

“Here is my Servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight, he will bring justice to the nations”.⁷

“..... but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked”.⁸

“Righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins”.⁹

“ the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and a little child shall lead them”. “ they shall not hurt or destroy in my entire holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters covers the sea”.¹⁰

We read on the concept of Mahdi in the New Testament

“When the son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats”¹¹

The new testament also says: “ thus you to be prepared, for the son of man will come at a time you do not expect” and we also read “ but father, no one knows of that day and hour, not the angles and not even the son. So stay alert and supplicate, because you do not know when that time will arrive”.

³ The Holy Bible, translated from the Latin Vulgate, Douay Rhems Version 1609,1582
Psalm 37:9, p. 695.

⁴ Ibid. p. 639.

⁵ Bible Psalm37:29.

⁶ Ibid. p. 675.

⁷ Ibid. p. 922.

⁸ Ibid. p. 893.

⁹ Ibid. p. 893.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 893.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 1294.

CONCEPT OF MAHDI IN HINDU'S HOLY BOOK

"We read in Hindu's book "*Basek*" that: "a just commander near the ends of time will end two worlds. The commander is the leader of angels and mankind. The truth is with him and he will get hold of what are hidden with the seas. Earth, and skies".¹²

We read in "*Vasishata Yoga*"

"At the end, the world will return to the one who loves God and is from his special servants, and his name is "auspicious and blessed"!

We read in book "*Didah*": " after the destruction of the world, a king will appear in End of Days who is the leader of all creatures, and his name is "Mansour" and conquers the entire world; and converts to his religion".

We also read from the

Hindu's Brahman scriptures: "..... the hand of God will appear and the last successor "*Maitreya*" will rise and conquers the east and the west of the world; and guides creatures".

We read in "*Patike*"

" When the day ends and the world begins anew; and becomes alive and the king of the new kingdom appears; from the children of two great leaders of the world, one of them honor of End of Days and the other one and even his guardian whom his name is " Pashan" and the name of that new kingdom is " the guide"; he becomes the king rightfully and is the successor of Rama and rules and has many miracles"¹³

CONCEPT OF MAHDI IN ZOROASTRIAN BOOK

Ayatollah Nasir Makarim writes in his book: We read in "Zand" " Then, Izadan will be aided by Ahoora Mazda and will gain a great victory against Ahrimans. It is after Izadan victory that human beings will become prosperous".

In "*Jamasp Namag*" regarding the concept of Mahdi that " A man will rise from the land of Arabs.... A man with great head, great body and great legs and following the religion of his forefather and with great army and moves forward Iran and constructs the lands and fills the earth justice".

¹²Makarim, *Hukumat Jahani Mahdi*, p.24.

¹³ Ibid. p. 25.

We also read in the same book that “ when their empire was defeated decisively in “*Qadesieh war*” the third yazdgerd turned to his great castle, “Mada’in” and said “ Bless you; I will leave now and shall return with one of my descendants who has not reappeared yet”¹⁴

CONCEPT OF MAHDI IN OTHER TRADITIONS

According to Ayatollah Nasir Makarim Shirazi in his *Hukumat Jahani Mahdi*: Sadeq Hedayat writes “ accordingly, the hope of a great universal peacemaker had been available in the hearts of all monotheists and not only this hope has record in the followers of major religions, like Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians and Muslims, but it is possible to find its signs in the ancient books of the Chinese, beliefs of Hindus, among Scandinavians and even between ancient Egyptians; also Mexican aboriginals and like them”.

The above demonstrate that the concept is universal, real and not a myth. It is not an old concept which attracts many writers and thinkers to deliberate on. The Qur’an discusses it in conjunction with the divine promise enshrined in the previous scriptures “ Before this We wrote in the *Psalms*, after the Message (given to Moses): My servants the righteous, shall inherit the earth.”¹⁵ The *Psalms* is the book given to prophet David known as “Dawood” in Arabic language, and the Message here is referring to the book given to Prophet Moses known as “*Tawrat*”. This divine promise has to happen one day even if only a day of the world remained. Prophet Muhammad said: “Even if only one day of the world remained, Allah would extend that day until He sends a man from my household.” This verse clearly indicate that divine promise will happen and that there are no differences of opinion amongst different religions in this regard.

CHAPTER (2)

CONCEPT OF MAHDI IN SHIA BELIEF

Shia beliefs are based on the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and his family. Although it’s root stems from the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet and his progeny. It does not negate the use of intellect. It is both textual and rational without contradiction between the two. The main areas of focus according to Shia belief are “ knowing God, God’s Justice, Prophet-hood, Divine Leadership, and Resurrection Day (*Ma’ad*).” These five are referred to by Shias as “ principles or roots of religion (*Usul Al-Din*). Shia Muslim must follow these five principles of religion in addition to practicing the ten branches of religion which is referred to as “ *Furu Al-Din*”.¹⁶ Although the basis of religion according to Shia belief are the five principles stated above.

Imamate is among the five fundamental principles a Shia must follow. It is a divine leadership for the religious and political affairs of the Islamic nation. It is a divine authority and office, for the Imams similar to the prophets are chosen by God”. In other words, the Shia holds a view that God instructed

¹⁴ *Hukumat Jahani Mahdi*, p.24.

¹⁵ Q. 21:105.

¹⁶ Misbah Yazdi, 2008, *Durus fil Aqedah al-Islamiyyah*, Beirut, Dar Rasul Al-Akram- Beirut-Lebanon, pp. 5&6.

the Prophet to appoint the “twelve Imams”, starting with his cousin Ali and ending with Mahdi, as his successor.

Shia scholars agreed that the doctrine of Imamate is one of the five fundamental principles even though they differ in their expressions regarding that. Scholars such as Khomeini in his book “*al-taharat*”¹⁷, Sheikh al-Tabrizi in his responses to religious queries affirm that the doctrine of Imamate is one of the principles of Shiite sect belief. On the other hand, scholars such as Sheikh Al-Saduq, Mufid, Al-Tusi, al-Murtadha, Al-Hilli, Al-Ansari, Al-khoei insist that the doctrine of Imamate is one of the principles of religion.¹⁸ And this doesn’t mean that whoever refuses to uphold the doctrine of Imamate as one of the principles is no longer a Muslim. This is because the standard in Islam is what Prophet Muhammad said: “ Bearing witness that there is no God but Allah protects one’s blood from being shed as well as his property from being destroyed”. Imam Ali also said: “Whoever upholds the doctrine of monotheism, doctrine of prophet-hood and Islam, doesn’t hate us and doubt in the doctrine of Imamate, he is a Muslim and mercy has to be shown on him”. Therefore, according to Shiite, not upholding the doctrine of Imamate doesn’t necessarily means one is out of Islam and cannot be called a Muslim any more. It simply means one of the following two meanings according to Shia Scholars:

Imam al-Hakim states in his book “ *Al-mustamsik*’’: The traditions recorded regarding the doctrine of Imamate are of two groups;

1. Islam is founded based on the doctrine of Imamate. Imam Reda say: “ the doctrine of Imamate is the foundation of Islam and its branch”. Imam Baqir also said: Islam is built on five things: prayers, fasting, poor-rate, pilgrimage and “*Al-wilayat*”, and that the “*Al-wilayat*” is more cherished than the rest” This first group indicates that the doctrine of Imamate is the foundation of Islam.
2. Whoever ignores the doctrine of Imamate is in vain but still regarded as Muslim. Imam Baqir said: “whoever wakes up and doesn’t have Imam appointed by God, is in vain”.
3. Whoever ignores the doctrine of Imamate is in vain but still regarded as Muslim. Imam Baqir said: “whoever wakes up and doesn’t have Imam appointed by God, is in vain”. In another tradition, Zurarat asked Imam Ja’far Al-Sadiq as to the meanings of prophetic sayings “ The one who does not know his Imam will die a death of “*Jahiliyyah*”¹⁹. He responded: it is a death of the one in vain”. Therefore, not upholding the doctrine of Imamate doesn’t take a person out of Islam but makes a person remains in vain and darkness. That is why Imam al-Hakim hold the view that the doctrine of Imamate is a prerequisite of faith (Iman) and not prerequisite of becoming a Muslim. In other words, real and a complete belief is dependent on how a person upholds the doctrine of Imamate.

The second meaning is what Sayed Al-khoei mentioned “the doctrine of Imamate is one of the principle of religion” simply referred to “*Din Waqi*” (Real) and not “*Din l’tibari*”(recognized). Meaning the doctrine of Imamate is one of the principles of “*Din Waqi*” and not that of “*Din l’tibari*”.²⁰

¹⁷ Khomeini, *Kitab al-Taharat*, 1389 H, Arabic version, v.3, p. 325.

¹⁸ Khoei, *al-Tankeeh*, v. 3, p. 83.

¹⁹It is an Islamic concept of “ignorance of divine guidance or the state of ignorance of the guidance from God” or “Days of ignorance” referring to the barbaric condition in which Arabs found themselves in pre-Islamic Arabia (in the non-Islamic sense).

²⁰khoei, *al-Tankeeh*, v.3, p.83.

It simply means whoever bears witness that God is One and that Prophet Muhammad is His messenger is a Muslim irrespective of whether he upholds the doctrine of Imamate or not. Although upholding the doctrine of Imamate determines the level of one's devotion and faithfulness. Therefore, the doctrine of Imamate occupies a profound estate within the Shiite school of thought and it is one of the five principles of religion. The main Shia beliefs in the doctrine of Imamate are as follows:

1. **The twelve divine Leaders:** The Shiite hold that the only legitimate successors of the prophet Muhammad are twelve divine leaders from the progeny of the Prophet. Companion of the Prophet Salman Farsi narrates from the Prophet: "The divine leaders' after me are according to the number of the princess of Israelites and they were twelve in number." Then the prophet put his hand on Husain and said: "there will be nine from his offspring and the ninth is their Mahdi who will spread justice on earth after has been filled up with injustice and oppression....."²¹
2. **"Ismat"²² of the twelve divine leaders and Fatima:** The Shiite believe in fourteen infallibles, Prophet Muhammad, his daughter and the twelve divine leaders.²³
3. **The belief in Mahdi:** Believing in Mahdi as last savior from the offspring of the Prophet is widely accepted by all Muslims. Except that unlike the other Muslims, the Shias believe that Mahdi by the leave of God is alive. And that this concept is compatible with the concept of the twelve Imams which is sanctioned by the prophetic tradition "Whoever dies not knowing the Imam of his time has died the death of "Jahiliyyah". The concept of Mahdi within the Shia theology emanates from this belief and that Mahdi is the seal of all the twelve Imams and he is the current legitimate successor of Prophet Muhammad. Shias believe in the necessity of the presence of divine leadership in any time. And that the world cannot be empty of his presence.

It is unanimously accepted that Prophet Muhammad is the seal of prophet-hood and that there has not being and will never be a Prophet after him.²⁴ The revelation also stopped upon the demise of the prophet. Even though the Qur'an which was revealed to the Prophet to guide the nation is still available in the midst of people. The Qur'an needs a teacher and a trainer to enlighten people. In other words, Qur'an needs "*Mufasssir*" (interpreter) and "*Munaffiz*" (implementer). This means the purpose of prophetic mission is ongoing and that cannot be achieved except through the presence of a teacher who is acquainted with what is within the Qur'an. And this person according to Shia belief should be infallible. He should be of a highest standard of moral character. Prophet Muhammad said: "I was only sent to perfect moral character".²⁵ And it is through this that man will reach practical and intellectual perfection, which is the purpose of existence. "to Allah amount up all Words of purity: it is He exalts each deed of righteousness".²⁶

In short, the Qur'an was sent down to remove mankind from the moral and intellectual darkness into world of light. Qur'an says: "A Book which We have revealed unto thee, in order that thou mightiest lead mankind out of depths of darkness into light".²⁷ "He is the one who sends to his servant manifest

²¹ Bihar *al-Anwar* v.36, p. 290.

²² "Is a male or female given name meaning purity, chastity or modesty and in classical Arabic infallibility, immaculate, impeccability, faultlessness".

²³ Q.33:33.

²⁴ Q. 33:40.

²⁵ Tabrisi, *Tafsir majma al-bayan*, v.1, p.333.

²⁶ Q. 35:10.

²⁷ Q. 14:1.

signs, that he may lead you from the depths of darkness into the light".²⁸ This aim cannot be achieved except through a man who is protected by Allah from wrong doings. If not, how would the one in darkness lead others from the depths of darkness? According to Shia belief, understanding the in- depth of the Quran would have not been possible if not because of the presence of such a personality in the world. And the Qur'an would have turned means of divisions instead of unity. Shiite scholars then asked the following question: " how is it possible for Allah who is particular about the role of man's cheek to send down the Qur'an for the purpose of leading man to salvation and then refuse to appoint someone to preserve it after the demise of the Prophet?

According to Shia belief, this highlights the importance of the prophetic saying " Whoever dies not knowing the Imam of his time has died the death of "Jahiliyyah". In my opinion, this provides a general understanding of the concept of Mahdi within the Shia theology. Another narration was reported from Imam Rida who wrote to MA 'moon: " if the earth is left without an Imam it will sink..... whoever dies not knowing the Imam of his time has died the death of "Jahiliyyah".²⁹ If Allah leaves the world without an Imam, it will be either because of lack of possibility, or Allah's lack of ability, or lack of wisdom, and all the three possibilities cannot be imagined in relation to Allah. Therefore, Imam is present at all time. Textual argument is based on the Qur'an and the traditions of the prophet and Imams of Ahlul bait. We will shed more light on the concept of Mahdi within Qur'an from the Shia perspective.

Another prophetic tradition to highlight the concept of Mahdi within Shia belief " I am leaving behind two things among you, the book of Allah and my Ahlul bait, both will not be separated until at the fountain of *kauthar*". Meaning Ahlul bait will always be with the Qur'an and since Qur'an is still alive, Ahlul bait are also alive. And according to Shia belief, the current representative of Prophet Muhammad and his household is Mahdi. Al-Shablanjee said in *Nur Al-Absar*: " It is reported unanimously from the Prophet that Mahdi is from his family who will fill in the world with Justice".³⁰ Ibn Abu Al-Hadid said: " It is agreeable among all Muslims that the world will come to an end after the reappearance of the Mahdi"³¹ Zaini Dahlan also said: " The narrations reported regarding appearance of Mahdi are many and agreed upon by the Muslims".³²

The purpose of creation and prophetic mission according to the Qur'an can be summarized into the following four points:

1. Shining the earth with the glory of its Lord through worship and acknowledgment in order that it reflect verse "And the earth will shine with the Glory of its Lord:"³³
2. Giving life to the earth through knowledge and faith after its death in order that it reflect verse "know ye all that God giveth life to the earth after its death!"³⁴

²⁸ Q. 57:9.

²⁹ Ahmad Ibn Hmbal, *Musnad*, v,.1 p. 96, *Commentary of Nahj Al-Balagha*, v. 9, p.155.

³⁰ *Nur al-Absar* p. 189.

³¹ Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Commentary of Nahj Al-Balagah*, v. 10, p. 96.

³² *Al-Futoohat al-Islamiyah*, v. 2, p. 338.

³³ Q. 39:69.

³⁴ Q. 57:17.

3. Establishment of divine state of justice and removal of falsehood in order that it reflect "And say: " Truth has now arrived, and Falsehood perished: for Falsehood is (by its nature) bound to perish." ³⁵
4. Promoting justice amongst people in order that it reflect " We sent aforetime our messengers with Clear signs and send down with them the Book and the Balance (of right and wrong), that men may stand forth in justice". ³⁶

Shia scholars hold the view that all the above reasons would be realized under the leadership of the Mahdi " who will fill the earth with justice after it has been filled with injustice". ³⁷

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN PROPHET MUHAMMAD AND MAHDI IN SHIITE BELIEF

The Mahdi according to Shia belief is prophetic manifestation in the sense that Prophet Muhammad is the seal of prophet-hood and Mahdi is the seal of succession. Prophet Muhammad is the opener of divine mission and Mahdi is the conclusion of the mission. The tradition says: " The Mahdi is from us; he concludes the religion the way we begun"³⁸ It is also reported: "Allah opened and began through you and will conclude and seal through you".³⁹ Shias through the above mentioned confirm that both physical and spiritual qualities of the Prophet will manifest in the personality of Mahdi. Abdullah reported that the Prophet said: "A man will appear from my nation, he bears my name, and moral character, he will fill the world with justice after it has been filled with injustice".⁴⁰

Among the prophetic manifestation in the personality of the Mahdi is prophetic general mercy. The Prophet was generally merciful to both those who agreed and disagreed with him, the same way Mahdi will be generally merciful to people irrespective of their stances towards him. Imam Ali is said: " Prophet Muhammad was patient for the pleasure of God, pardoned people when they called him a liar, when Abu Lahab stood on his way, God granted him the permission to ask for how he wants him to deal with Abu Lahab, the Prophet replied: " I am sent as mercy to humanity"⁴¹ Saeed Al-Khudri reported that prophet Muhammad said: " I give you glad tidings of the coming of the Mahdi who will fill the world with justice after it has been filled with injustice, the residents of the earth and heaven will be pleased with him, he will distribute resources amongst people in a correct manner, a man then asked the prophet: what is the meaning of distribution in a correct manner, he replied: equally amongst people".⁴² And in another version, the prophet says: " his time of appearance will be a blessing for my nation, the good and the bad ones".⁴³

Prophet Muhammad was kind and merciful in his moral character with people. The Qur'an says: "It is part of the Mercy of Allah that thou dost deal gently with them Wert thou severe or harsh-hearted,

³⁵ Q. 17:81.

³⁶ Q. 57:25.

³⁷Khurasani, Wahid, *Introduction to the Roots of Religion*, v. 1, Second version, Publication: School of Imam Baqir Ulum-Qom, p. 479.

³⁸ *Al-Sawa'iq Al-Muhriqah*: 163.

³⁹ *Al-Kafi*, v. 4 p. 576.

⁴⁰ *Sahih Ibn Habban*, v. 15 p. 238.

⁴¹ *Al-Ihtijaj*, v. 1, p. 315.

⁴² Ahmad Ibn Hambal , *Musnad*, v. 3, p. 37.

⁴³Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi,2008, *Kanz Al-Ummal*, Damascus, Risalah publication, v. 14, p. 274.

they would have broken away from about thee.”⁴⁴ Prophet Muhammad according to the Qur’an was piece of humbleness, affectionate and love. The Qur’an describes his moral character “And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character”⁴⁵ According to Shiite belief, this beautiful moral character will manifest in Mahdi, the awaited Savior. Imam Ja’far Al-Sadiq said: “The Mahdi will be amongst people like the way Prophet Muhammad used to be amongst people”⁴⁶ Imam Ja’far Al-Sadiq was asked of the commentary of the Qur’an 5:54 “O ye who believe! if any from among you turn back from his Faith, soon will Allah produce a people whom He will love as they will love Him, - lowly with the believers, mighty against the rejecters, fight in the way of Allah, and never afraid of the reproaches of such as find fault....., he replied: it was revealed in the Mahdi and his companions”.⁴⁷

Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad within two decades managed to build a friendly, loving and caring society. He made people who were in logger heads with one another to love and care for another. And according to Shiite belief, Mahdi will also build the same type of a society where the language will be love. The Qur’an describes the society built by the prophet “ Some part is due to the indigent Muhajiris, those who were expelled from their homes and their property, while seeking Grace from Allah and His Good pleasure, and aiding Allah and His Messenger: such are indeed the sincere ones. But those who before them, had homes in Medina and had adopted the Faith, - show their affection to such as came to them for refuge, and entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to the (latter), but give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot). And those saved from covetousness of their own souls, - they are the ones that achieve prosperity.”⁴⁸ The above verses beautifully paint the picture of the society which was built by the Prophet Muhammad. It beautifully described how the “*Ansar*” were happy to receive “*Muhajiris*” and how they provided shelters and all the necessities of life to “*Muhajiris*” who migrated from Mecca. According to Shiite belief, Mahdi will also build a friendly, loving and caring community where members of the community will strive to reach out to one another. Shias believe Mahdi will establish such a community through two principles; love and community caring and development. Ismael reported that he had informed Imam Ja’far Al-Sadiq that they had a lot of Shias in their community, Ja’far Al-Sadiq asked: do they reach out to the poor amongst them, do they forgive and care for one another? Ismael replied: no, Imam Ja’far then replied: these are not my Shias”. In another tradition, Imam Ja’far asked: will you refuse helping a brother who comes to you seeking for a help? The above traditions demonstrate what will Mahdi community be like. He will lead, reform and transform the community the way Prophet Muhammad did. The Qur’an describe the community the Prophet was sent to in the first place and how he transformed it within few decades as I highlighted above. Qur’an says the community before the coming of the prophet were at the brink of entering the fire of hell. “ ... and ye were on the brink of the pit of Fire...”⁴⁹ The community was filled with superstitions, weak in faith, weak in morals, weak in governance and administration, and empty of the belief in the beginning and the end. Qur’an describe what they used to chant amongst themselves “ And they say: “What is there but our life in this world? We shall die and we live, and

⁴⁴ Q. 3:159.

⁴⁵ Q. 68:4.

⁴⁶ Al-Numani, *Al-Ghaybah*, section 13, p.236.

⁴⁷ *Tafsir al-Qummi*, v.1, p.170.

⁴⁸ Q. 59: 8 & 9.

⁴⁹ Q. 3:103.

nothing but time can destroy us.”⁵⁰ To them life is only this world and there will be nothing after death. This same community was transformed to be a force to reckon with by the prophet and Qur’an reminded them after transformation of who they were before “ and remember with gratitude Allah’s favor on you; for you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love,”⁵¹

Mahdi on the other hand will fill the world with justice after it has been filled with injustice. That is why Mahdi is referred to by the Shias as “reformer” or “peacemaker” or “ Savior of mankind”. It is from this perspective that Shiites believe Mahdi is the legitimate successor of the prophet and he will ensure during his appearance that all that was taught or brought by the prophet are fully implemented.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MAHDI IN SHIITE BELIEF

Birth of the Mahdi- The Shiites believe Mahdi was born on Friday the 15th of Shaban 255 A.H in the city of Samarra. The prophet says: “ the Book of Allah and his Ahlul Bait will never separate until they join him at the pool of “Kauthar”.” The point is if Mahdi is not born yet, there will be separation between the Qur’an and the Ahlul Bait. The prophet said: there will be no separation and therefore Mahdi is born and he is alive.⁵²

Mualia ibne Muhammad related that Imam Hasan Al-Askari sent to him a ‘*tawqee*’⁵³: Then, Zubair thought that he would murder one in such circumstance that my progeny would be cut off. See, how the power of Allah has become apparent, and the proof of Allah has already given birth.”⁵⁴ Ahmad bin Hasan Qummi relates: Imam Hasan Al-Askari sent a letter; “a son is born, he is kept hidden and concealed. We have shown him only to selected people.”⁵⁵

Glad tidings of Imam Ali Naqi, companions and slaves regarding the birth of the Mahdi

Tatman khabar Bashar Bin Sulaiman reported: “ Abul Hasan Imam Ali Naqi said to his sister Hakeema: “ O daughter of Prophet of Allah you take her to your house and give her instruction about the obligations and recommended acts. For she is the wife of Imam Hasan Al-Askari and the mother of Al-Qaim”.⁵⁶

Ibrahim the companion of Imam Hasan Al-Askari reported: “ Hasan Al-Askari sent to sheep with this letter, ‘*Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*. These are from my son Mahdi. You partake in it and also distribute to our Shias’ .⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Q. 45:24.

⁵¹ Q. 3:103.

⁵² *Mustadrak al-Hakim*, v.3, p. 10.

⁵³ Signature and approval from the Imam.

⁵⁴ *Bihar al-Anwar*. 51 p. 4.

⁵⁵ *Bihar al-Anwar*, v. 51 p. 23.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*. p. 6.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*. p. 28.

Ahmad ibne Ishaq narrates: " Then Imam Hasan Al-Askari entered with a child aged around 3 years upon his shoulders and said, if his esteem had not been intended I would never have shown him to you. This is my son whose name and title is the same as the Holy Prophet."⁵⁸

Abu Ghanim the slave of Imam Hassan Al-Askari reports: " A son was born to Abu Muhammad whom he named Muhammad, on the third day he took the new born before his companions and said, after me he is your master and for you he is my successor. This is the Qaim who shall be awaited when the earth is filled with injustice and tyranny, he will fill it with justice and equity."⁵⁹The above traditions are according to the Shiite belief regarding the birth of the Mahdi unlike the Sunni belief regarding the same. Sunni assert that Mahdi has not come yet because the Prophet said in the tradition that Mahdi will appear at the end of times, he said: " Before the day of judgement, a man will emerge, he will be a descendent from my family. His name will be like mine, and his father's name is like my father's name. He will fill earth with justice and fairness."⁶⁰And in another narration, " angel will go with him and announce: O people, this the khalifah of Allah al-Mahdi so follow him, and he will be supported by one thousand angels. And in Makkah will await him three hundred highly ranked pious Muslims and they will pledge allegiance to him. Based on the above narrations and the likes Sunni hold the view that yes, it is possible that Mahdi is born but only God knows and so they cannot claim with certainty that Mahdi is born.

Imamate at Childhood: According to Shiite belief, Imamate is a divinely appointed position for the management of people's affairs as well as guiding them to the peak of humanity. Based on this, Shia believe Mahdi succeeded his father as Imam and legitimate successor of the prophet at a very young age. Imam according to Shia cannot be selected by people but an appointment based on divine decree. Shias believe the doctrine of Imamate is among the five principles of religion as we demonstrated earlier on. It is for this reason that the Qur'an discusses the prophet-hood of a child in Chapter 19 verse 12 "(To his son came the command): O Yahya! Take hold of Book with might, and We gave him Wisdom even as young". This verse supports the idea that prophet is divinely appointed and since Imam is the successor of the prophet, he must also be divinely appointed. Both are theological issues and cannot be left for people to decide.

Furthermore, Fakhr Al-Din Al-Razi explains about the prophet hood of Yahya in the above verse " the word '*hukm*' in the verse means prophet-hood, God strengthened his mind during his childhood and then revealed to him; and that God sent Yahya and Issah when they were young, unlike the way He sent Musah and Muhammad when they were already adults"⁶¹.

God says: "But she pointed to the babe. They said: "How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?" He said: "I am indeed a servant of Allah: He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet; and He hath made me blessed whosoever I be, and hath enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live;"⁶² Qanduzi Hanafi after mentioning the birth of the Mahdi writes: "They said God gave him wisdom at childhood and made him a sign for the whole world like the way he said about Yahya in

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 51.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 5.

⁶⁰ Abu Dawood in his *Sunan and ibn Habban* from the route of Ibn Masood.

⁶¹ *Tafsir Fakhr al-Din al-Razi*, v.11, p. 192.

⁶² Q. 19:21.

Qur'an 19:12 "O Yahya! Take hold of Book with might, and We gave him Wisdom even as young" and Issah in Qur'an 19:21 "But she pointed to the babe. They said: "How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?" He said: "I am indeed a servant of Allah: He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet; and He hath made me blessed whosoever I be, and hath enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live" and God will prolong the matter of the Mahdi like in the case of Issah.⁶³

Muhammad ibn Hilali said: " I received letter from Imam Hasan Al-Askari two years before his death informing me of his successor, and received another letter three days before his death"⁶⁴ Umar Ahwazi also writes: " Imam Hasan Al-Askari showed me his son and said to me: this will be in charge of the affairs after my departure from this world"⁶⁵

Mahdi in Occultation: Occultation is one of the specifications of the Mahdi within the Shiite belief. Shias do not believe in the miraculous nature of the occultation. It is rather normal in the sense that Mahdi lives amongst people, eat, drink, travels, gets sick, become well, gets tired, take a rest, become sad and happy. Absentee is just title and that people are unable to recognize he is the Mahdi son of Hasan. And narrations indicate to this effect especially those reported by his deputies: "Indeed the in charge to this matter attend hajj gathering every year, he sees people and recognizes them, and they see him and not recognize him".⁶⁶ Meaning they are unable to identify him with the unique specifications.

In another narration reported from Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq: "In Qaim there is tradition from Musah, tradition from Yusuf, tradition from Issah, and tradition from Muhammad, the tradition from Musah is that Musah was scared and conscious, - if he wasn't exposed to the unjust he was not going to be scared, and this according my understanding simply means his occultation is normal, it was easy for the unjust to reach him and that is why he was very conscious- as for the tradition from Yusuf, his brothers talked and payed allegiance to him but did not recognize him, they-did not know he was Yusuf, - the same way in case of the Qaim, he interacts with people but they do not recognize him- as for the tradition from Issah, it is tourism, he moves from town to town and from place to place, and for the tradition from Muhammad, it is the sword"⁶⁷. The conclusion here is that the occultation of the Mahdi is normal and not miraculous and a supplication in addition to the above among Shias support this idea. "O Allah, be, for your representative, the *Hujjat*, son of Al-Hasan, your blessings be him and his forefathers, in this hour and in every hour, a guardian, a protector, a leader, a helper, a proof, and an eye. Until you make him live on the earth, in obedience (to you) and cause him to live in it for a long time"⁶⁸ The fact that Shias pray for the safety of the Mahdi shows that his occultation is not miraculous. He needs protection from the unjust and thus the meaning of the of supplication quoted above.

Furthermore, according to Shiite belief the occultation of Mahdi is of two types; minor and the major occultation. The minor one lasted for a period of 69 years from the year 260 AH to the year 329 AH. And human factor is behind the minor occultation, meaning Mahdi disappear from people when his

⁶³ Sulaiman Huseini, 1320 H, *Yanabi' Mawaddah*, Beirut, Al-A'lami publication, p. 454.

⁶⁴ *Al-Kafi*, p. 328, hadith 1

⁶⁵ *Ibid* p. 328.

⁶⁶ *Kamal al-Din*, section 43 p. 440,

⁶⁷ *Ibid*. p. 28.

⁶⁸ *Misbah al-Mutahajjid*: No. 630.

home was attacked by the enemies. Although he kept his contact with people through four of his representatives namely; 'Uthman ibn Saeed al-Umari, Muhammad ibn 'Uthman, Husain ibn Ruh and Ali ibn Muhammad al-Sumari.

The connection with people stopped after the death of the fourth representative and that is when the minor occultation turned into major occultation. And according to Shiite belief, the major occultation is based on divine decree and not by choice. And this occultation is referred as "complete occultation". Mahdi wrote to his fourth and final representative: "O Ali ibn Muhammad Al-Sumari, may Allah grant you and your brothers great reward, you will die and have only six months to depart from this world, prepare yourself and don't pass over the mantle of the leadership to anyone, the complete ghaybah has begun, there is no reappearance except through Allah's permission and that will only happen after a long period of time and that people's heart are hardened".⁶⁹ Therefore, the major occultation according to Shiite belief is by Allah's decree and permission. Mahdi also plays crucial roles of preparing for his reappearance in the occultation. Muslims are also expected according to this belief to play an important role in preparing for his reappearance. The role is referred to as "*Al-Intidhar*". Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: "The best of all deeds is to wait for the reappearance"⁷⁰

I personally believe Mahdi is in charge of a state till today and his state is a state within states and it is functional. The system of this state is interconnected throughout the world and millions of faithful people are affiliated to this state. There is not a single event in the world except that Mahdi is aware of it through the system and the faithful who are affiliated to it. An ordinary person may be part of this system without noticing and this could be as a result of the order he receives from someone above him who may be directly connected to the system and so on. This system or network is mentioned in Shiite supplication such as "*Ummu Dawood*". Supplication of *Ummu Dawood* is a great supplication which is been recited by the Shias on the 15th of the Islamic month of *rajab*. "O Allah, bless *Al-abbad, al-awtad, al-subah, al-ubad, al-mukhliseen, al-zuhad, and Ahlul jiddi and ijtiha*"⁷¹. These are men according to Shiite belief who are actively involved in protecting the state of Mahdi which is within states. In short, the reason for his occultation is to protect him from unjust people and their atrocities. Although people are not denied his blessings during this period of occultation.

Mahdi to be followed by prophet Issah: The Shia believe that prophet Issah will follow and imitate Mahdi during his reappearance. They believe prophet Issah will come back to the world not as a prophet but a servant of God who will serve in the state of Mahdi.

CHAPTER (3)

MAHDI IN THE QUR'AN: Shia perspective

Let us now examine some of the verses of the Qur'an which Shiite believe according to narrations highlight the concept of Mahdi:

⁶⁹ *Kamal al-Din*, section 45&44, p. 516.

⁷⁰ *Kamal al-Din*, section 55, H. 3, p. 644.

⁷¹ Abbas Qummi, 1998, *Mafatih al-Jinan*, Beirut, Rasul Akram publication, p.213.

1. "Or, who listen to the (soul) distressed when it calls on Him, and Who relieves its suffering and makes you (mankind) inheritors of the earth?"⁷²

The verse highlights that God listen to the call of the distressed when he calls on him, but the question here is who is distressed? As far as I am concerned there are two opinions in relation to who is a distressed. The first opinion is what is mentioned in 'Tafsir al-mizan' by Tabatabai. According to him, distressed in this verse is refereed to someone who resorted to God and that is based on two verses of the Qur'an. The first verse is "And your Lord says: " Call on Me; I will answer your prayer"⁷³ Qur'an 40:60 This verse indicates that true supplication is accepted but short of details on what is a true supplication. The second verse is the verse in discussion (Qur'an 27:62) explains what constitute true supplication and that is the supplication of the distressed. ⁷⁴ This simply means the word "*Mudtarr*" in the verse in question is referring to someone who has exhausted every means to relieve himself of suffering but couldn't and then decided to resort to God as the final and only solution.

The second opinion is that the distressed in this verse refers to the awaited Mahdi and this opinion is based on two reasons:

- (a) Traditions: Muhammad Ibn Muslim reported from Imam Baqir as saying regarding the verse in discussion: it is revealed in "Al-Qaim" and when he reappears, he will put on a turban, pray next to Ka'ba, humbled and his request will not be rejected"⁷⁵ There is also another tradition reported by the Salih ibn Aqabat from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq that: "the verse is revealed in Qaim of Aali Muhammad, he is by God the distressed, he will offer two cycles of prayers next to Ka'ba, his supplication would be accepted, he would be relieved of sufferings and be made the representative on the earth".⁷⁶
- (b) Contextual: the context of the verse indicate that the word distressed refers to Mahdi, and this is because of the sentence afterwards "and makes you (mankind) inheritors of the earth". The verse says: "*Khalifatul Ardh*" and not saying: "*khalifatun fil Ardh*" and different between the two sentences. The second sentence is applicable to all because every human being can play a role of "*Khalifatun fil Ardh*". In fact, every human being who makes good use of the earth and nature in accordance the law of nature laws can also be termed as "*khalifatun fil Ardh*". On the other hand, the second sentence "*Khalifatul Ardh*" is greater than the first, it refers to the one who has been given the authority over the entire earth, and the entire treasures of the earth submit to him. The Qur'an explores the two sentences in different places. It talks about Adam: "Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on the earth"⁷⁷ And in another verse it talks about Dawood " O David! We did indeed make thee a vicegerent on earth"⁷⁸. On the other hand, when Qur'an talks about prophet Muhammad's nations, it says "*Khalifatul Ardh*" instead of "*Khalifatun fil Ardh*". It is for this reason Shias hold the view that the nation of Prophet Muhammad is granted permission by Allah to be in charge of the administration of the

⁷² Q. 27:62.

⁷³ Q. 40:60.

⁷⁴ Tabatabai, *Al-Mizan*, v. 15 p. 381.

⁷⁵ *Ta'wil al-Ayat*, 1:403, H. 6, *Bihar al-Anwar* 51&59, hadith 56.

⁷⁶ *Tafsir al-Qummi*, v. 2, p. 129, *Bihar al-Anwar*, 51: 48, hadith 11.

⁷⁷ Q. 2:30.

⁷⁸ Q. 36:26.

entire universe. And this permission will come to effect during the appearance of Mahdi. Therefore, one of the verification of the distressed in this verse according to Shia is Mahdi.

2. "That which is left you by Allah is best for you, if ye (but) believed! but I am not set over you to keep watch! Qur'an 11:86

The word "*Baqiyyatullah*" in the verse according to Shia scholars refers to the remaining manifestation of God in the universe, it is applicable to awaited savior for these reasons: (a) it is reported in Al-Kafi from Umar Ibne Zahir, from Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq: "a man asked Imam Ja'far if he is allowed to call Al-Qaim by the title of Amir al-mu'mineen? The Imam replied: No, that is a title given to Imam Ali by Allah and no one is allowed to use it except him, the man then asked, how do we send salutation to Al-Qaim, the Imam replied: peace be upon you O *Baqiyyatullah*, then the Imam recited "That which is left you by Allah is best for you, if ye (but) believed!"⁷⁹ Therefore, "*Baqiyyatullah*" refers to the awaited Imam, as he is the remaining manifestation of God. (b) The condition in the verse emphasize that "*Baqiyyatullah*" refers to Mahdi. Although Tabatabai's *Al-Mizan* refers to "*Baqiyyatullah*" as profit out business. If indeed "*Baqiyyatullah*" in this verse refers to a profit from business, then the conditional sentence in the verse "if ye (but) believed" would be pointless. This is because profit from a business transaction could be good for a believer or non-believer and it's not only to a believer. The verse makes "*Baqiyyatullah*" good for only believers. And according to Shiite belief, this is applicable only to hope of believers and none other than the Mahdi. And he is the good which is made condition for believers in this particular verse.

"It is Who hath sent His messenger with guidance and the Religion of truth, to proclaim it over all religion, even though the pagans may detest"⁸⁰

Abu Abdullah al-Kanji in his book "*Al-Bayan fi Akhbar sahib zaman*" writes: "the concept of Mahdi is being discussed in both the Qur'an and traditions of Prophet Muhammad, as for the Qur'an, Saeed ibne Jubair explains in the interpretation of the verse "to proclaim it over all religion, even though the pagans may detest" said: it is Mahdi from the progeny of Fatima"⁸¹. You will find something close to this view in both *al-Kafi* and *Kamal al-din*.

It is reported in al-Qurtabi that all the kings of the world are four, two believers and two non-believers. The believers are Sulaiman son of David and Alexandra, and the two non-believers are Nimrud and Bekhtansar, and the world would be ruled by the 5th person from amongst this nation, for Allah says: "to proclaim it over all religion" and that's al-Mahdi"⁸² "Who believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them"⁸³

Al-Fakhr al-Razi writes: (Some Shias said: "the meaning of the unseen in the verse in question refers to Al-Mahdi the awaited whom Allah promised his appearance in both the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition, Allah says in the Qur'an: "Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work

⁷⁹ Al-Kafi, 1:411,212, hadith 2.

⁸⁰ Q. 9:33.

⁸¹ Khorasan Wahid, *Introduction to Roots of Religion*, v. 1, p. 472.

⁸² *Al-Jami li-Ahkam al-Qur'an*, v.11 p. 48.

⁸³ Q. 2:3

righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them;”⁸⁴, as for the prophetic tradition, the prophet said: “Even if only one day of the world remained, Allah would extend that day until a man from my family appears, he bears both my name and title, he will fill the world with justice after it has been filled with injustice” and no that restricting absolute without reason is null and void. ⁸⁵ it is clear Fakhr al-din underscore that Qur’an discusses the concept of Mahdi with reasons. And that according to Shiite belief, believing in the concept of Mahdi is one of the verification of believing in the unseen.

3. “ And (Jesus) shall be a sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of judgement): therefore, have no doubt about the (hour), but follow ye Me: this is straight Way” .⁸⁶

Ibn Hajar said:” (Muqatil ibne Sulaiman and those who subscribed to his views amongst the commentators of the Qur’an maintain that the verse in discussion was revealed in the Mahdi)”⁸⁷

4. “And who is more unjust than he who forbids that in places for the worship of Allah, Allah’s name should be celebrated? -whose zeal is (in fact) to ruin them? It was not fitting that such should be themselves enter them except in fear. For them there is nothing but disgrace in this world, and in the world to come, an exceeding torment”⁸⁸. It is written in *Jami al-Bayan* from Asbat and al-Sadi that Allah’s saying “ but disgrace in this world” means if the Mahdi appears and opens Constantine, he will kill them” and that will be a disgrace”⁸⁹.

Durr al-Mansur and al-Qurtabi report from Qatada and from Sadi: “ the disgrace in this world refers to the uprising of Mahdi and the opening of Amuriyah, and Constantine and so on.”⁹⁰

5. “They say: “Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?” Say: “ The Unseen is only for Allah (to know), then wait ye: I too will wait with you.”⁹¹

The verse discusses the stance between Prophet Muhammad and the non-believers, the non-believers demanded that the Prophet provide another sign and reason for his mission in addition to Qur’an. We need another sign from you in addition to the Qur’an to prove the authenticity of your mission. The Prophet replied: there will be another sign, meaning his mission is supported by not only the Qur’an, but with two signs, “ Say: “ the Unseen is only for Allah” meaning there is another sign which is still in occultation, “Say: “ the Unseen is only for Allah, then wait ye: I too will wait with

⁸⁴ Q.:33.

⁸⁵ *Al-Tafsir al-Kabir*, v. 2, p. 28.

⁸⁶ Q. 43:61.

⁸⁷ *Al-Sawahi’q al-Muhriqah*, p. 162, *Faiz al-Qadir*, v. 5, p. 383, *Yanabi Mawaddah*, v.2, p. 453, and v.3, p. 345.

⁸⁸ Q. 2:114.

⁸⁹ *Jami al-Bayan* in his interpretation of this verse v. 1, p. 399.

⁹⁰ *Al-Durr al-Mansur*, v. 1, p. 264, *Jami li-Ahkam al-Qur’an*, v. 2, p. 79.

⁹¹ Q. 10:20.

you.” Imam Ja’far Al-Sadiq said: “ The sign is the Unseen and the Unseen is the *Hujjat*”. The appearance of Mahdi according to Shias is a miracle like the Qur’an.

6. “Know ye (all) that Allah giveth life to the earth after its death! already have We shown the Signs plainly to you, that ye may learn wisdom”⁹²

According to Shiite belief, the earth will regain its life after death through the establishment of justice by Mahdi.

Imam Baqir said: “Allah will give life to the earth after its death through the rising of Mahdi”⁹³

Imam Sadiq also said: “ It simply means he will give life to the earth after its death through the establishment of justice by the Mahdi during his appearance”⁹⁴

Furthermore, there are two contextual meanings to this verse regarding the concept of Mahdi:

a) We read in the preceding verse: “ Has not Time arrived for the Believers that their hearts in all humility should engage in the remembrance of Allah and of the Truth which has been (to them), and that they should become like those to whom was given revelation aforetime, but long ages passed over them... ”⁹⁵, the expression “ long ages passed over them” contextually indicate that long ages passed over the people of the book in waiting for the appearance of Moses when he disappeared from them. They waited for Moses and that of Issah after Moses “ their hearts grew hard, for many among them are rebellious transgressors”, the verse highlight that long ages will pass over the nation of prophet Muhammad the way it happened to the nations before. Meaning they will pass by long ages of waiting and that they should be careful not to be affected like the previous nations “ but long ages passed over them, their hearts grew hard, for many among them are rebellious transgressors”. Therefore, the expression “ but long ages passed over them” contextually highlights that the following verse which talks about the life of the earth after long ages of awaiting refers to the concept of Mahdi.

b) “ Know ye (all) that Allah hath giveth life to the earth after its death”, the Arabic wording of the earth in the verse is “ *Al-Ardh*” instead of “ *Ardhan*”, meaning all the earth, when will all the earth be given life after it’s death? The earth before the appearance of Mahdi will be subjected to spiritual and material death such as earthquake, volcano and so on. The life of the earth after it’s death will happen on the day which Prophet Muhammad said: “ Even if only a day remains for the resurrection to come, yet Allah will send a man from my family who will fill this world with justice and fairness, just as it initially was filled with oppression”⁹⁶

The narration of Al-Mufaddal ibn Umar from Imam Ja’far Al-Sadiq support this meaning. The Imam mentioned in relation to the commentary of the verse “And the earth shine with the Glory of its Lord”⁹⁷ “ its Lord means leader of the earth” he then asked the Imam, what will happen when he

⁹² Q. 58:17.

⁹³ *Kamal al-Din*, 668, H. 13.

⁹⁴ Numani, *Al-Ghaybah*, section 32.

⁹⁵ Q. 57:16.

⁹⁶ Tusi, *Al-Ghaybah*, Section 180, hadith 139.

⁹⁷ Q. 39:69.

appears? he replied: people will be independent of the light of the sun and the moon and then get inclined towards the light of the Imam”⁹⁸

Therefore, Mahdi according to Shiite belief is the manifestation of God’s divinity on earth and this is the meaning of “ And the earth shine with the Glory of its Lord” meaning with the light of Mahdi”.

7. “ If such were our Will, We could send down to them from the sky a Sign, to which they would bend their necks in humility”⁹⁹.

The word “ Sign” in this verse is interpreted to mean the calling and proclamation which would be heard from the heaven during the appearance of Mahdi¹⁰⁰ The calling will be “ verily the proof of God has appeared next to the holy house of God, follow him, the truth is with him”.¹⁰¹

8. “ And We wish to be Gracious to those who were being depressed in the land, to make them leaders (in Faith) and make them heirs.”¹⁰²

Imam Ali said: “ the world will go against us like the way one denounces his child and there after he recited the verse “ And We wish to be Gracious to those who were being depressed in the land, to make them (in Faith) and make them heirs” .¹⁰³

The concept of Mahdi in Shiite belief system cannot be overemphasized. It occupies a very prominent position within the school of thought of Ahlul bait. The above verses of the Qur’an are among the verses that Shia hold in relation to the concept of Mahdi in the Qur’an.

CHAPTER (4)

The Concept of Mahdi in “ Al-Ghaybah”

“*Al-Ghaybah*” is a book written by Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibne Ja’far known as ibne Abi Zainab al-Numani. He is trustworthy, revered and regarded among the renowned Shia narrators of traditions during the beginning of fourth century AH. The book comprises of twenty-six sections in different subjects such as the occultation of Mahdi, his qualities, the era of appearance and so on. Historically, this book is second to ‘Al-Kafi’ and in terms of recognition, it is included among the most recognized books of Shias. And in terms of quality, it is one of the independent book written about the occultation of Imam Mahdi. The book highlights the concept of Mahdi in the following manners:

1. **The Doctrine of Imamate in Qur’an and Hadith:** The doctrine of Imamate was explained by Prophet Muhammad to the delegates who came to him from Yemen. Prophet during the conversation

⁹⁸ *Tafsir al-Qummi*, v. 2, p. 253.

⁹⁹ Q. 26:4.

¹⁰⁰ *Tafsir Ruh al-Ma’ani*, v. 19, p. 60.

¹⁰¹ *Yanabi’ al-Mawaddah*, v. 3, p. 297, In *Tafsir nusbi* v. 2, p. 1184.

¹⁰² Q. 28:5.

¹⁰³ *Nahj al-Balagha*, al-hukm 209, *Dalaail Al-Imamah*, p. 450, *Al-Irshad*, v.2, p. 180, *Al-Ghaybah* by Tusi, p. 184, *Yanabi’ al-Mawaddah*, v.3, p. 272.

indicated to the appearance of Mansur from Yemen who will support his vicegerent. "The delegate asked the prophet as to who will be the vicegerent? He replied: he is the one God commanded you to follow, he recites " And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and not be divided among yourselves". They asked: O Prophet of God, explain to us what is this rope? He replied: " except when under the covenant from Allah and from men", the covenant from Allah is His Book, and covenant from people is my vicegerent. He said: Allah revealed in him: " Lest the soul should (then) say: 'Ah! Woe is me! – In that I neglected (my duty) towards Allah," they asked O prophet! What is towards Allah? He replied: Allah says in him: " The Day that wrong-doer will bit at his hands, he will say, oh would that I had taken a (straight) path with the Messenger!". He is my vicegerent and a means to me after my death".¹⁰⁴

The conversation continued until it transpired to them the vicegerent is Ali. Even though the conversation is specifically pointing to Ali but that will not stop us from including all the other Imams of Ahlul Bait. The criteria in the doctrine of Imamate is to believe in all the 12 legitimate successors of the Prophet.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq was asked regarding the Imams, he said: " whoever denies any one of those alive is equal to denying those who are dead".¹⁰⁵ Sections one to seven focus more on the general doctrine of Imamate, number of the Imams, Imams in the Sunni books, except that section five uniquely highlight the concept of Mahdi and that it is not acceptable for anyone to claim the position of Imamate during the last hour. Imam Abu Abdullah Ja'far explains the verse "On the Day of Judgement wilt thou see those who told lies against Allah; - their faces will be turned black; Is there not in Hell an abode for the Haughty? He says: it refers to the one who claim to be Imam and he is not"¹⁰⁶

Imam Baqir also said: " Whoever raises a banner before the appearance of Mahdi is a juggernaut"¹⁰⁷

2. **The occultation of Mahdi and that he is the final Imam:** Sections 8 to 10 look at the occultation of Mahdi and the seal of succession. Kumayl reported from Imam Ali as saying when he held his hand: " The earth will not be empty of a rising proof of Allah be it known or unknown to people"¹⁰⁸ Imam Ali Rida said: " The earth will not be left alone without Imam and if its left alone, it will perish"¹⁰⁹

On the occultation of Mahdi, Imam Musah al-Kazim was asked of the interpretation of the verse: " Say: "See ye? – If ye stream be some morning lost (in the underground earth), who then can supply you with clear – flowing water? He replied: if you lose your Imam, who will bring you a new one?"¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴Numani, *Al-Ghaybah*, Section 2, p. 46- 48.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 128.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 111.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 115.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 136.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 139.

¹¹⁰Numani, *Al-Ghaybah*, Section 2, p. 181.

Imam Ja'far said: " The Qaim will be in occultation before he appears, a man asked: why? He replied: he is scared of his life"¹¹¹

3. **Appearance of Mahdi:** Sections 14 to 20 of the book discuss the appearance of Mahdi, signs of his appearance, prohibition of timing of appearance, people's approach to Mahdi during his appearance. Imam Abu Abdullah Ja'far Ibne Muhammad said: " There will be signs from Allah for His servants before the appearance of Al-Qaim, Muhammad Ibne Muslim asked: What are the signs? He replied: saying of Allah: " Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in good or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere", the Imam said: the believers will be tested and be given glad tidings during the appearance of Mahdi"¹¹²

In another tradition, Imam Ali was asked what is the meaning of the verse " But the sects differ among themselves: and woe to the unbelievers because of the (coming) Judgement of a Momentous Day", he replied: wait for the appearance after three signs. He was asked: what are the signs? He said: differences among the people of Syria, the black banners from Khorasan and dread in the month of Ramadan. He was asked: what is the dread in the month of Ramadan? He replied: haven't you heard the saying of Allah" If (such) were our will, we could send down to them from the sky a sign, to which they would bend their necks in humility", it is a sign that a young girl will be away from her numbness, the one asleep will be awakened, and the seitan will be scared"¹¹³

These traditions and others outline some of the signs for the appearance of Mahdi. You will find out that section 15 focuses more on the prohibition of predicting time of appearance. For example; Imam Ja'far was asked about Qaim, he replied: those who specify time are liars, we, the Ahlul bait don't give time, then he said: Allah refuses but to go against those who predict the time of appearance"¹¹⁴

Mahdi will be coming but as to when will he be appearing exactly depend on Allah and people's readiness to serve under his leadership. Furthermore, if you examine the book, you will find out that section 21 highlights the situation of Shias before and after the appearance of Mahdi. Sections 22, 23, 25 and 26 look at some specifications of the Mahdi such as type of supplication he will compose, his age, period of his leadership after appearance and the merits of the one who knows him. For example; you will find a tradition which says: " Al-Qaim will rule for a period of nineteen years and few months"¹¹⁵ This is one of the early authorship of Shia and the traces of the concept of Mahdi cannot be overemphasized.

CHAPTER (5)

The concept of Mahdi in Kamal Al-Din and Tamam Al-Nimat

¹¹¹ Ibid. p. 182.

¹¹² Ibid. p. 259.

¹¹³ Ibid. p. 261.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 305.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 353.

This book is written by Muhammad ibne Ali ibne Al-Husain Ibn Babawayh Qummi who died in the year 381 and popularly known as Sheikh Al-Saduq. Historically this book is third to Al-Ghaybah of Al-Numani. This book is written purposely by the author to remove doubt regarding the occultation of Mahdi. It is also said: " Sheikh Saduq was inspired and instructed by Imam Mahdi in his dream to write such a book". One unique thing about this book is that it provides details in some subject compared to other books of the same prominence. Another important aspect of the book is that the narrations are the products of Qom, Ray and Neishapur seminaries. Unlike the other two books of al-Ghaybah (Numani and Tusi) which are the product of the seminary of Hadith in Bagdad.

It is one of the early authorships of Shia regarding the concept of Mahdi and it comprises of 58 sections of two volumes. The book focuses on the occultation of Imam Mahdi, signs of his appearance and related topics. Sheikh Saduq cited examples from the occultation of different Prophets in trying to prove the authenticity of occultation of Mahdi. The book also talks about the biography of Mahdi from birth to occultation through prophetic traditions and that of the Imams of Ahlul Bait. The second volume of this book focuses mainly on the concept of Mahdi and that is from the section 33 to section 58 even though we will indicate to some narration in the first volume regarding the concept of Mahdi. For example; Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq reported from prophet Muhammad as saying: " The Mahdi is one of my sons, he bears my name and title, he resembles me in intellect and creation, he will be hidden from people to the extent some will lose hope and allow themselves to be misled, then he will appear to fill in the world with justice after it has been filled with injustice".¹¹⁶

We read in section 31 another tradition highlighting the concept in terms of his occultation and preparation for his appearance. Imam Zayn Al-Abideen said to Aba Khalid in a long conversation: " The people of his time who affirm his divine leadership and wait for his appearance are superior in status than people of any other time, because God has blessed them with intellect, cognition and understanding and with that Mahdi's affairs become manifest to them although he is hidden from them physically".¹¹⁷

Section 32 refers to Mahdi as one of the verification of the verse " That which is left you by Allah is best for you, if ye (but) believed". Imam Baqir said: " When he appears, he will lean on the Ka'ba, 313 men would sit around him, and the first thing to come out of his mouth will be the verse in question, and thereafter he will say: " I am that which is left for you by Allah on his earth and His proof and vicegerent over you, and no Muslim would send salutation to him except that he says: " Peace and blessing on you O that which is left by Allah".¹¹⁸ One wouldn't have understood the meaning of "Baqiyyatullah" without this beautiful explanation from Imam Baqir.

The sections 33 to 38 present what were reported and narrated from the Imams of Ahlul bait regarding the concept of Mahdi and his occultation. For example; Imam Ja'far said: " whoever affirms the belief in all the Imams and denies that of Imam Mahdi he will be regarded like someone who affirms the belief in all the prophets and denies the prophet-hood of Muhammad, the Imam was then asked: who is Mahdi? He replied: the 5th from the 7th child, his personality will be hidden from you...."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Sheikh Saduq, 1991, *Kamal Al-Din and Tamam al-Nimat*, Section 25, p. 272, v. 1, hadith 4.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. p. 300.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p. 310.

¹¹⁹ Sheikh Saduq, 1991, *Kamal Al-Din and Tamam Al-Nimat*, Section 32, p. 313, v. 2, hadith 1.

The Imam also said regarding the interpretation of the verse: “ The day that certain of the signs of thy Lord do come, no good will it do to a soul to believe in them then if it believed not before nor earned righteousness through its faith”, the signs are the Imams, and the awaited sign is the Qaim”¹²⁰ Dawood Ibne Kathir reported from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq on the interpretation of the verse “ Who believe in the Unseen”¹²¹ the Imam said: whoever affirms the appearance of the Qaim is the one who has the truth”¹²²

And in hadith number 20 of the same section, the Imam was asked about Allah’s saying: “ A.L.M. This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah. Who believe in the Unseen”¹²³ he said: “those who fear Allah are the Shias of Ali, and the Unseen is the proof he is hidden from people, and the reason for that is Allah’s saying: “ They say: Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord? Say: The Unseen is only for Allah (to know), then wait ye: I too will wait with you.”¹²⁴ We realize from this tradition that the Imam explains the Unseen in the verse refers to the awaited Qaim. It is like the Imam wanted to say: there are two kinds of the Unseen: the awaited and the non-awaited, the non-awaited is Allah because it is not possible to see him or feel Him with five senses.¹²⁵ On the other hand, the awaited one will eventually appear. So when the verse says: “ The Unseen is for Allah, then wait ye”, it focuses on the awaited one and that is no one else but the Mahdi. You will appreciate this is one of the verification of the Unseen and it is not exclusive. In another tradition, Imam Hasan al-Askari said: “ Mahdi is like Khidr and Zulqarnayn, he will be in occultation and no one would be saved except the one who affirms his divine leadership and remember to pray for his appearance.”¹²⁶

The book in section 39 look at the danger of denying the presence of Qaim who is one of the twelve. Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq said: the prophet said: “ whoever denounces al-Qaim from my children has indeed denounces me”.¹²⁷ And in another tradition Al-Sadiq Ja’far Ibne Muhammad said: “ The Imam is the medium between people and Allah, whoever knows him is a believer and he is a non-believer who refuses to accept him”¹²⁸

Section 43 of volume two looks at the possibility of meeting the Qaim, ability to talk to him as well as viewing his occultation as normal as oppose to the claim that his occultation is miraculous by nature. Meaning, Mahdi lives with people, travels, get sick and cured, become sad and happy even though people are unable to recognize and identify him. Some of his deputies reported to have said: “ The flagbearer of this matter attend the occasion (*hajj*) every year, he sees people and recognize them, they see him and are unable to recognize him”.¹²⁹

The book also looks at the question of waiting for the appearance of which is integral part of the concept of Mahdi within the Shia belief. Every Shia according to the belief system is expected to play a

¹²⁰ Ibid. p. 316.

¹²¹ Q. 2:3.

¹²² Ibid p. 320

¹²³ Q. 2:1-3.

¹²⁴ Q. 10:20, *Kamal Al-Din and Tamam Al-Nimat*, v.2, p.320 &31, hadith 20.

¹²⁵ Q. 6:103.

¹²⁶ Ibid. p. 357.

¹²⁷ Ibid. p. 379.

¹²⁸ Ibid. p. 379.

¹²⁹ Sheikh Saduq,1991, *Kamal Al-Din and Tamam Al-Nimat*, Section 32, v.2, p. 404, v.2.

crucial role during the major occultation in preparing for the appearance. The prophet said: "The best of all deeds of my nation is to wait for the appearance"¹³⁰

And in another tradition, Imam Rida said when he was asked about the appearance: "God says: 'then wait: I am amongst you, also waiting'".¹³¹ Imam Rida also said: "the best way is to wait patiently for the appearance, haven't you heard Allah's sayings" and watch ye! for I too am watching with you!"¹³², "then wait: I am amongst you, also waiting"?¹³³ Have patient because the appearance will happen after people have given up, those before you were more patient than you"¹³⁴

To wait simply means to prepare the grounds for the appearance through promoting righteousness and forbidding evilness.

In conclusion, the book addresses some of the signs for the appearance of Mahdi. These signs are what will inform people as to whether the time of the appearance is close by or not. The signs also bring about sense of urgency so that one is able to strategically position himself for the arrival of Mahdi. The book highlights different forms of signs for the appearance. For example; Imam Ja'far Sadiq said: "among the signs of his appearance are Gabriel's voice from heaven, Satan's voice, follow and obey the first voice and be careful not to be affected and examined by the second voice".¹³⁵

CHAPTER (6)

The concept of Mahdi in "Kitab al-Ghaybah" by Sheikh Tusi

It is said: the title of the book wasn't given by the author himself, it is believed the title "Al-Ghaybah" was given by Agha Buzurg Tehrani- either in his book "Al-zaree at ilaa tasaneef al-Shia" or in his introduction to the book in question.¹³⁶ The book is among the most recognized early Shia authorships and like the previous books, it focuses on the concept of Mahdi. The author first looks at the concept of "Al-Ghaybah" thereby establishing the authenticity of the divine leadership of Mahdi in general. In doing so, he presented introduction such as the need for divine leadership in each era, the necessity of Mahdi's infallibility and his presence amongst people. One unique thing about this book is the fact that for each and every discussion, the author provides the reader with either textual or rational proof to support his argument. He then shifted the discussion to some Shia sects such as 'Waqifiyya', 'Muhammadiyya', 'Fathiyyat' who refuse to accept the divine leadership of the awaited Mahdi. He then looked at the proofs for the authenticity of the occultation of Mahdi and that he is from the family of Imam Husain. Sheikh Tusi said: "there are two ways when deliberating about the occultation of the Imam of the time: 1. If the necessity of divine leadership is proven at all times, and that the general public who are fallible cannot be left alone without a leader who is infallible, knowledgeable, present or hidden.... 2. Discussion about the occultation of the son of Al-Hasan is integral part of proving his divine leadership, and the one who is against us in this is to either accept his divine leadership and ask for the

¹³⁰ Ibid. p. 584.

¹³¹ Ibid. p.584, Q. 7:71.

¹³² Q. 11:93.

¹³³ Q. 7:71.

¹³⁴ Ibid. p. 585.

¹³⁵ Ibid. p. 591.

¹³⁶ Al-Dzari'ah ila Tasanif al-Shia, v. 13, p. 79, Introduction of the book, p. 24.

reason of his occultation, we will then be obliged, or he doesn't and if that is the case, then will be no need to ask for the reason for his occultation"¹³⁷

The book also discusses the concept of Mahdi thereby looking at various traditions in relation to his birth, appearance and that he is the son of Al-Husain. Saliman said: I heard from Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq as saying: " Allah presented the story of Al-Qaim to Musah son of Imran".¹³⁸ In another tradition, Imam Ali reported to have said while in Kufa: " Allah will bring out from concealment of al-Mahdi from my family and just before the day of judgment; even if only one day were to remain in the life of the world, and he will spread on this earth justice and equality and will eradicate tyranny and oppression"¹³⁹ The Imam also said: " Allah will bless this nation with a man who is from me and I am from him, through whom Allah will bless the earth and the heaven, drop from the heaven will pour and the blessing from the earth will come out, he will fill the earth will justice after it has been filled with injustice" and that which shows that Mahdi is one of the sons of Husain " The Mahdi is one of the sons of Husain".¹⁴⁰

Zaid ibn Ali is reported to have said: " This awaited is one of the sons of Husain son of Ali and from the progeny of Husain, and he is the oppressed in whose right Allah says: " And if anyone is slain wrongfully, we have given his heir authority (to demand qisas to forgive)"¹⁴¹ , he said: " his heir refers to a man from his family who is among his progeny, then he recited: " And he left it as a Word to endure among those who came after him"¹⁴² , " authority (to demand qisas or to forgive): but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life"¹⁴³ , he said: " his authority" refers to his proof over Allah's creations and that no creation is proof over him"¹⁴⁴

Another trace of the concept of Mahdi from the book is the discussion regarding the obstacle for the appearance of Imam Mahdi. And the author identified lack of safety as the main obstacle. He went ahead to discuss the matter into details and provided solutions through the Qur'an and prophetic traditions. For example; Zurarat reported from Imam Ja'far Sadiq: " The Qaim will be in occultation before his appearance, Imam was asked why the occultation? He replied: he is scared of being killed"¹⁴⁵

I must point out here that Sheikh Saduq in his *Ghaybah* mentioned three factors as reasons for the occultation of the Mahdi: fear from being killed, test for people and unwillingness to pay allegiance to tyrants. It is also reported that" there will be tradition of Musa in Mahdi, that will be fear for his life and his occultation until such time when God grant him permission to appear"¹⁴⁶

The author moved on -before mentioning the deputies of Mahdi and his representatives during the minor occultation- to mention those who had the opportunities to meet Imam Mahdi, some of his miracles and approvals. He also looked into the biographies of those representatives who were praised

¹³⁷ Sheikh Saduq,1991, *Kamal Al-Din and Tamam Al-Nimat*, p. 13.

¹³⁸ Ibid. p. 41.

¹³⁹ Ibid. p. 42.

¹⁴⁰ *Al-Ghaybah* by Tusi, Discussion on **Waqia**, p. 120.

¹⁴¹ Q. 17:33.

¹⁴² Q. 43:28.

¹⁴³ Q. 17:33.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 120.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 208.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 208.

and blamed since from the time of Imam Baqir and thereafter.¹⁴⁷ He then concluded by looking at the age of Mahdi, time and signs of appearance as well as some of his qualities and biography. " His birth was in the year 256 and his father died in the year 60"¹⁴⁸ And it is reported in another tradition that "Mahdi resembles Yunus and he will appear from occultation as youth"¹⁴⁹

The Prophet is reported to have said: " People will pay allegiance to Mahdi between 'rukni' (the black stone) and 'maqam' (Position of Ibrahim), his names are Ahmad, Abdullah and Al-Mahdi, these are his names"¹⁵⁰

One beautiful thing about Sheikh Tusi is that he kept to one subject. He made sure the main subject matter of his discussion is the concept of Mahdi. He tried to approach it by providing rational coherent to the matter rather than sticking to only textual. This in my opinion could be the reason why Scholars such as Allama Hilli, Bahr al-Uloom and Al-tabatabai spoke high of him.¹⁵¹

CHAPTER (7)

The Concept of Mahdi in al-Kafi

Al-Kafi is written by Muhammad ibn Ya'qoob Kulyani al-Razi within a period of twenty years. It is considered the earliest authorship of Shia in the field of Hadith. It is also considered the most accepted and authentic of four primary sources of Shia. The book is made up of three sections namely; root of *al-Kafi*, branch of *al-Kafi* and the fountain of *al-Kafi*. And these sections are distributed in eight volumes of books. However, I found the traces of the concept of Mahdi in volumes one and eight of this book in the following manners:

Salutation to Mahdi: A man asked Imam Ja'far Al-Sadiq if it is allowed to address Imam Mahdi as the leader of the faithful? The Imam replied: the leader of the faithful is a title for Imam Ali, you should send salutation to Mahdi saying: " Peace and blessing on you O *Baqiyatullah*" he then recited the verse: " That which is left you by Allah is best for you, if ye (but) believe"¹⁵²

Prohibition of timing for the appearance: Abu Hamza al-Thumali said: I heard Imam Ja'far saying: Allah has specified time for this matter to happen in 70s, then Allah postponed it to happen in 140s due to the sadness of the killing of Imam Husain, then we informed you and you hid the secret, and since then Allah hasn't informed us of the timing for the affairs " Allah doth blot out or confirm what He pleaseth: with

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 214-261.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 261.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 262.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 281

¹⁵¹ Tusi, *Al-Ghaybah*, p. 5.

¹⁵² Sheikh Kulayni, *Al-Kafi*, 5th Edition, Research work by Ali Akbar Al-Gafari, Publisher: Dar al-Kutub Al-Islamiyah-Tehran, v. 1, p. 411& 412, hadith 2.

Him is the Mother of the Book”¹⁵³ This simply means the timing of the appearance is dependent on a special condition and situation, and once it happens, Mahdi will appear.

Waiting for the appearance of Mahdi: No doubt waiting for the appearance of Mahdi occupies an important position within Shia belief system on Mahdi. This in my opinion means one should believe God is capable of preserving and protecting a person for long period of time due to an important mission. Imam Ja’far Al-Sadiq is reported to have said: “ The custodian of this mission will hide from you and be in occultation to the point people would say: he is dead, he is perished, where is he, people would be confused, no one would be salvaged except the one who remains steadfast... ”¹⁵⁴

Approaching the occultation of Mahdi: Muhammad Ibne Fadhl narrates from Abu Al-Hasan Al-Madi: “ He said: “ I asked him of Allah’s saying: “ Their intention is to extinguish Allah’s light (by blowing) with their mouths”,¹⁵⁵ he said: it means to extinguish the divine leadership of Imam Ali with their mouths, I said: “ But Allah will complete (the revelation of) His Light”, he said: “Allah will complete the divine leadership”, He says: “ Believe, therefore, in Allah and His Messenger, and in the Light which we have sent down” the Light is the divine leader (Imam), I said: “It is He Who hath sent His Messenger with guidance and the Religion of Truth”¹⁵⁶, he said: “ he is the one the Prophet officially crowned as his legitimate successor”, I said: “ to proclaim it over all religion”, he said: “ he will proclaim it over all religion during the uprising of Al-Qaim, he said: Allah says: “ Allah will complete His Light”, the guardianship and leadership of Al-Qaim,” even though the Pagans may detest (it)”, through the guardianship and leadership of Ali”.¹⁵⁷

We understand from the above *hadith* that there is belief in Allah, belief in the prophet and belief in the Light. The belief in the Light means belief in the Light of the Imamate which will be completed by Allah with Mahdi. Imam Ja’far said: “ Whoever recites *Dua Al-Ahad* for forty mornings consecutively, he will be amongst the supporters of our Qaim, and if he dies Allah will grant him for each word thousand goodness and thousand sins are forgiven, the *Dua*: “ O the Lord of the great Light”. The great Light in the *Dua* according to Shia scholars refers to Mahdi. ¹⁵⁸

There are also other traces of the concept of Mahdi in volume 8 of Al-Kafi. For example, we find in page 241 of volume eight tradition on what will happen to people during the appearance of Mahdi. Imam Ja’far said: “When our Qaim rises, Allah will make sure our Shias see him and hear him from wherever he would be stationed”.¹⁵⁹ Meaning the medium of communication will advance in such a way that people will be able to see and hear Mahdi from wherever he will be talking from.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the concept of Mahdi is universal and cannot just be rejected. The appearance of Mahdi will coincide with the coming back of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the appearance of Mahdi is among the signs of the Day of Judgement. The Prophet of Islam established an

¹⁵³ Q. 13:39, Ibid p. 368, Section on prohibition of timing, hadith. 1.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 338 & 339.

¹⁵⁵ Q. 64:8.

¹⁵⁶ Q. 9:33.

¹⁵⁷ Sheikh Kulayni, Al-Kafi, v.1, p. 432, hadith. 91.

¹⁵⁸ Ibn Mashhadi, *Al-Mazar*, p. 663.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 241.

exceptional community which can be described as " the best of the nations". Mahdi with the assistance of the Messiah will ensure the completion and practical actualization of the mission of the Prophet.