TA'WIL AL-DA'A'IM

by al-Nu'man ibn Muhammad, Judge of the Judges under al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah al-Fatimi

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Dedication

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To those affiliated with al-Azhar, the greatest Islamic university in the world; and to the founder of Cairo, greatest of the cities of the Islamic world, the first of the Fatimid caliphs in the lands of Egypt, al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah, from whose university I graduated after graduating from its sister institution, the Sayfiyya University in Surat, India.

Then God made it possible for me to establish a number of Arabic institutes and colleges in Pakistan, following the educational curricula of al-Azhar. — Muhammad Hasan al-A'zami

Symbols of the Original Manuscripts

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- ع = Dar al-Kutub al-A'zamiyya, Karachi, Pakistan.
- ح = Library of the Hakimiyya School, Burhanpur, India.
- ز = Library of Dr. Zahid 'Ali, Hyderabad Deccan, India.
- س = Library of the Sayfiyya University in Surat, India.
- ي = Library of Mulla Yunus Shakib, director of the Fatimid Literary Administration in Surat, India.

Editor's Introduction

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About one hundred and fifty years ago, a Fatimid revival was renewed in India through the head of the Fatimid Isma'ili da'wa, the learned investigator 'Abd 'Ali Sayf al-Din, the Fatimid da'i mutlaq. He founded a large university in the city of Surat, not far from Bombay. Surat was the historic city that had been a center of the East India Company, the instrument of British colonialism.

Before this revival, Fatimid scholars gave their lessons to their students in private circles held in their houses or in the mosques of their quarters. After the establishment of this university it became a meeting-place for students and teachers, forming a scholarly family that included people from India, Hadramawt, and elsewhere. It was among the most important scholarly institutions for the propagation of the Arabic language.

Study at this university was completed in three stages: the stage of the outward science (al-'ilm al-zahir), corresponding to the licentiate or bachelor's degree; the stage of ta'wil, corresponding to the master's degree; and the stage of philosophy, or the haqiqa, corresponding to the doctorate.

The founder of the university himself undertook the teaching of the advanced sections. Among those who completed their studies there was Tayyib Zayn al-Din, an ancestor of the famous Bohra religious leader Dr. Mulla Tahir Sayf al-Din, whose title was al-da'i al-mutlaq.

In this connection I mention that my ninth ancestor, the martyr Sayyid Nithar 'Ali, one of the great scholars of his age, met the founder of this university. A debate took place between them which ended in agreement on the necessity of working for Islamic unity and rapprochement between the Muslim groups. My martyred ancestor then sought to realize this desired unity practically within his own family and among the families of his friends and relatives by arranging ties and marriages between families of different Islamic schools. These connections came close to embracing all the well-known Islamic communities. It is therefore not surprising that I have relatives belonging to many of these groups. At that time non-Fatimids were not permitted to enter this university.

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This was what made it possible for me to enter it through the Fatimid Shi'i gate, just as I later entered al-Azhar University through the Sunni Hanafi gate. At the Fatimid university I completed all three stages, and I also supervised the students there, just as I was shaykh of the Indian riwaq at al-Azhar.

No sooner had Dr. Mulla Tahir Sayf al-Din assumed charge of the university than he tightened its organization and imposed strict conditions for admission, even upon the Fatimids themselves. Hope is placed in the era of his son and successor, Muhammad Burhan al-Din, for greater ease and openness, on the basis of what I have personally known of his tolerance, his love of good, and his efforts to bring about reconciliation.

It became customary at this university to be very strict concerning access to its secret library, which contains a precious collection of the Fatimid heritage. This heritage was transferred from Egypt to Yemen and then, many centuries ago, to the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent.

When I came to Cairo about twenty-five years ago, I brought with me a number of Fatimid documents. Some of my Egyptian university friends borrowed them, foremost among them the late Professor Dr. Muhammad Kamil Husayn, who obtained his doctorate on a Fatimid subject.

On the occasion of the millennial celebration of Cairo and al-Azhar I presented to the Egyptian National Library the Diwan of Tamim ibn al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah al-Fatimi, and the Library printed it. When I learned on this visit that its copies had been exhausted, I presented it again, with its large introduction, for republication. I also presented Jami' al-Haqa'iq, an epitome of the eight hundred lectures delivered about a thousand years ago at al-Azhar by the Fatimid chief da'i Hibat Allah al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirazi, as transmitted by the Fatimid da'i Hatim ibn Ibrahim ibn al-Husayn al-Hamidi. I likewise submitted an introduction dealing with Fatimid-Isma'ili terminology and symbols and with the life of al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirazi.

Method of Establishing the Text of Ta'wil al-Da'a'im

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The present text has been established from manuscripts held in the libraries of the Fatimid Sayfiyya University in Surat, the Zahidiyya Library in Hyderabad Deccan, and the library of the Hakimiyya School in Burhanpur, India.

The work is found under this title in the libraries just mentioned. The copy submitted to the Egyptian publishing house is the only copy in Dar al-Kutub al-A'zamiyya in Karachi, Pakistan; it had already been collated against the three manuscripts named above. We also checked the text against a fourth copy in the library of Mulla Yunus Shakib, director of the Fatimid Literary Administration in Surat, India.

Arabic Manuscripts from the Fatimid Era

When the Fatimid caliphate came to an end in Egypt, the Fatimids transferred their private library to Yemen, where they possessed a Fatimid state and where Egypt had maintained close relations in that period. When the leaders of Fatimid thought later moved to India, they carried with them this heritage, which included hundreds of books composed by Fatimid caliphs and their da'is. The library remained in the custody of their religious leaders for many centuries. Around it there came into being something like a small polity, with its position, administration, councils, and ministers. Among its chief treasures were the writings of the caliph al-Mu'izz and other caliphs, and of da'is such as al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirazi, Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani, Ja'far ibn Mansur al-Yaman, and others.

In my effort to reach this Fatimid treasure I spent ten years moving among their Sayfiyya University in Surat, their secondary school in Burhanpur, and the Zahidiyya Library in Hyderabad Deccan. I had strong ties with the university, the school, and the library, and I eventually succeeded in copying and having copied dozens of manuscripts. I gave specimens of them to some friends in Egypt, Lebanon, and London, and some of those friends printed them many years ago.

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Some scholars also obtained university degrees on the basis of these materials. Of the Fatimid books that I copied or had copied after comparison with old and rare manuscripts, only a small number has yet been printed, although they are much sought after in the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent. Among them is the Diwan of Tamim ibn al-Mu'izz al-Fatimi, which the Egyptian National Library printed after I supplied it in a corrected text.

The Book Ta'wil al-Da'a'im and Its Author

Three Fatimid da'is became especially famous and their writings widely known: al-Qadi al-Nu'man, who lived through the reigns of four Fatimid caliphs from al-Mahdi, founder of the state, onward; Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani, chief da'i in the reign of the caliph al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah; and Hibat Allah al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirazi, in the reign of al-Mustansir bi-Allah. Al-Qadi al-Nu'man preceded the other two, served as their model, and was the great legislator of the Fatimid school.

The present book, Ta'wil al-Da'a'im, is an interpretation and clarification of al-Nu'man's celebrated Da'a'im al-Islam, which was printed in Cairo. Another of his well-known books is Asas al-Ta'wil, which al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirazi translated into Persian; a copy of that translation is in my library in Karachi.

His Name, Title, and Family

A study of al-Qadi al-Nu'man had already been published under the title 'Al-Qadi al-Nu'man: a Fatimid Author and Jurist' in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society in London, and a very brief notice of his life is also found in the Encyclopaedia of Islam.

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He was Abu Hanifa al-Nu'man ibn Abi 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Mansur ibn Ahmad ibn Hayyun al-Tamimi al-Maghribi. He lived in the first half of the fourth century AH, the tenth century CE. His year of birth is not known, although there are indications that he was born near the end of the third century AH. He died in Cairo in Jumada II 363 AH and the Fatimid Imam al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah prayed over him.

In the literature of the Isma'ili da'wa he is known as 'our master, Judge of the Judges and Chief Da'i, al-Nu'man ibn Muhammad.' Historians often shorten this to 'al-Qadi al-Nu'man' in order to distinguish him from Abu Hanifa, founder of the Hanafi school. Ibn Khallikan and Twelver Shi'i authors sometimes call him 'Abu Hanifa al-Shi'i.'

He served al-Mahdi bi-Allah, founder of the Fatimid state, during the last nine years of al-Mahdi's reign. Under the second Fatimid caliph, al-Qa'im bi-Amr Allah, he was appointed judge of Tripoli. Under the third caliph, al-Mansur bi-Allah, he became judge of al-Mansuriyya. He reached the highest rank under the fourth caliph, al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah, founder of Fatimid Cairo and of al-Azhar, who raised him to the office of Judge of the Judges and Chief of the Da'is.

Al-Qadi al-Nu'man was a man of many gifts, abundant learning, and wide knowledge: a deep and prolific scholar and a just judge. Little detailed information concerning his private life and character has reached us. It appears that he devoted himself to legal and philosophical studies and to the composition of his many and varied books. The confidence placed in him by al-Mu'izz made him the caliph's judicial adviser, and he assisted his Imam in matters concerning the da'wa. He laid down the foundations of Fatimid law and is therefore regarded as the greatest of the Fatimid jurists and legislators.

Fatimid transmitters state that he composed nothing without consulting the Imams of his age. They regard his most authoritative work, Da'a'im al-Islam and its ta'wil, as deriving in substance from al-Mu'izz himself rather than from the independent judgment of his chief judge. Da'a'im al-Islam remained the official legal code from the age of al-Mu'izz to the end of the Fatimid state, as is shown by a letter written by the caliph al-Amir bi-Ahkam Allah to his da'i in Yemen.

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Indeed, this book still governs the life of the Bohra community, followers of the Fatimid caliphs in the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent, Yemen, and Hadramawt. In India, Pakistan, and elsewhere it is relied upon in personal status and family law. It is striking that Islamic legislation in India even now preserves something of laws that were applied in Egypt in the Fatimid age.

The value of Da'a'im al-Islam is also shown by the many abridgments made for judges and students. Among these are Mukhtasar al-Athar, al-Yanbu', al-Iqtisad, collections of jurisprudence, glosses, versified manuals, and other later works. All are abridgments or derivatives in jurisprudence taken from Da'a'im al-Islam. Al-

Nu'man's influence is also evident in the fact that his sons inherited something of his authority: both 'Ali and al-Husayn attained high judicial rank and themselves wrote on the law.

In general, al-Nu'man founded a distinguished family of judges and was himself a very prolific author. Forty-four books are attributed to him. Eighteen are preserved, fourteen more are reported to have existed, and twenty-two have been lost and have not yet been traced.

The Book Ta'wil Da'a'im al-Islam

This is the title by which the work is commonly known. Its fuller title is 'The Training of the Believers through Divine Assistance in the Inner Knowledge of Religion.' It is the work generally called Ta'wil al-Da'a'im. The book is in two parts and is devoted to the inward interpretation of the legal rulings set out in Da'a'im al-Islam. Al-Nu'man died before completing it. It is regarded as the second most important of his works after Da'a'im al-Islam.

The Principal Sources and Leading Figures of the Fatimid Da'wa

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The Standing of Ta'wil al-Da'a'im among the Fatimids

The principal written authorities among the Fatimids are five books:

1. Da'a'im al-Islam, by al-Nu'man ibn Muhammad.

2. Ta'wil al-Da'a'im, by al-Nu'man ibn Muhammad, Judge of the Judges of al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah al-Fatimi.

3. Rahat al-'Aql, by Ahmad Hamid al-Din ibn 'Abd Allah al-Kirmani, chief da'i of the Fatimids in the reign of al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah.

4. Al-Anwar al-Latifa fi al-Haqiqa, on the philosophy of origin and return, by the Yemeni da'i Tahir ibn Ibrahim al-Harithi.

5. Al-Majalis al-Mu'ayyadiyya, together with its epitome Jami' al-Haqa'iq, by the Fatimid chief da'i Hibat Allah ibn Musa al-Mu'ayyad in the reign of al-Mustansir bi-Allah.

Among the other important books are al-Dhakhira, Kanz al-Walad, Asrar al-Nutaqa', and Sara'ir al-Nutaqa'. Two of the major works, Da'a'im al-Islam and Rahat al-'Aql, had already been printed. The remaining works were still in manuscript in the editor's possession and were being prepared for publication.

The leading authorities and imams of the Fatimid school are named as three: al-Qadi al-Nu'man ibn Muhammad al-Maghribi; Ahmad Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani; and Hibat Allah ibn Musa al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirazi, chief da'i in the reign of al-Mustansir bi-Allah.

For the benefit of the reader, we place before him this detailed list of the most important Fatimid works that have not yet been published. We are making sincere efforts to correct them, establish their texts, and arrange their chapters and sections, so that these deposits of history, which remained throughout the centuries in the secret Fatimid treasuries of Yemen and the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent, may be brought to light.

Important Fatimid Books Preserved in the Libraries of Pakistan, India, and Yemen

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1. Jami' al-Haqa'iq, an epitome of eight hundred lectures by al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirazi (two volumes).

2. Sara'ir al-Nutaqa' on ta'wil, by Ja'far ibn Mansur al-Yaman.

3. Asrar al-Nutaqa', by one of the Fatimid da'is.

4. Kitab al-Kashf (The Book of Unveiling).

5. Tasmiyat al-Abwab wa-Tasmiyat al-Aytam (Naming of the Gates and Naming of the Orphans).

6. Al-Risala al-Lazima concerning the month of Ramadan and its time.

7. An epistle of glad tidings concerning Imam al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah.

8. An abridgment of the admonitory epistle and related epistles of Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani.

9. Al-Anwar al-Latifa fi al-Haqiqa, by Tahir ibn Ibrahim, a Fatimid da'i.

10. Al-Dhakhira, by 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Walid.

11. An abridgment of Suwar al-Kutub in explanation of the inner essence of the haqiqa.

12. A section from the third division of the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity concerning the completion of a cycle and the beginning of the cycle of unveiling.

13. Kanz al-Walad fi al-Haqiqa, by Ibrahim ibn al-Husayn al-Hamidi.

14. An abridgment of Zahr al-Ma'ani.

15. Al-Shumus al-Zahira.

16. Mafatih al-Kunuz.

17. An abridgment of Lubb al-Ma'arif.

18. An abridgment of Jala' al-'Uqul.

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19. An abridgment of al-Majmu' al-Sharif fi al-Haqa'iq.

20. An abridgment of Tuhfat al-Qulub.

21. An abridgment of al-Idah wa-l-Bayan.

22. An abridgment of the epistle Zahr Badhr al-Haqa'iq, by Hatim ibn Ibrahim.

23. An abridgment of al-Risala al-Jami'a.

24. An abridgment of Risalat Tuhfat al-Murad, by 'Ali ibn al-Husayn.

25. An abridgment of the Epistle of the Ninety-Ninth Question.

26. Al-Masa'il al-Sab'un (The Seventy Questions).

27. Al-Mujadalah al-Amiriyya (The Amiri Disputation).

28. An abridgment of a work on periods and Qur'anic readings, by Ja'far ibn Mansur.

29. An abridgment of Kitab al-Ibtida' wa-l-Intiha', by Ibrahim ibn al-Husayn.

30. Risalat al-Bayan.

31. Al-'Ishrun al-Mi'a, as titled in the catalogue.

32. Ta'wil al-Zakat, by Ja'far ibn Mansur.

33. Kitab al-Shawahid wa-l-Bayan.

34. Druze epistles.

35. The first half of Ta'wil al-Da'a'im, by al-Qadi al-Nu'man.

36. The seventh part of 'Uyun al-Akhbar.

37. Kitab al-Iqtisad, by al-Qadi al-Nu'man.

38. Supplications of Imam al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah al-Fatimi.

39. An untitled book concerning the Universal Adam and related subjects.

40. Al-Majalis al-Mustansiriyya (printed in Egypt).

41. Al-Ghara'ib wa-Hudud al-Din.

42. Al-Rada' fi al-Batin.

43. Al-'Alam wa-l-Qalam.

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44. Ta'wil al-Shari'a.

45. Kitab al-Riyad.

46. A work catalogued as Mumayyizat al-Haqa'iq / distinctions of the realities.

47. Taj al-'Aqa'id.

48. Thirteen epistles.

49. The first part of Ithbat al-Imama (Proof of the Imamate).

50. Kitab al-Aqwal al-Dhahabiyya.

51. Kitab al-Masabih.

52. Kitab al-Wasiyya.

53. Ad'iyat al-Yanabi'.

54. Kitab al-Wa'z wa-l-Tashwiq.

55. Tanbih al-Hadi wa-l-Muhtadi, by Muhammad Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani.

56. Risalat al-Tadhkira.

57. A work catalogued under the title al-'Aqd / al-'Iqd.

58. Diwan of 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Walid.

59. Diwan of 'Abd Allah.

60. Tanbih al-Ghafilin.

61. The first part of Mukhtasar al-Athar.

62. Al-Akhbar fi al-Fiqh.

63. Kitab al-Yanbu'.

64. Al-Muntakhaba.

65. Kitab al-Hawashi.

66. Minhaj al-Fara'id.

67. A work on virtues and merits.

68. Majalis on various subjects.

69. Asas al-Ta'wil, in the Persian translation of al-Mu'ayyad, preserved in Dar al-Kutub al-A'zamiyya.

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70. A work on the da'wa catalogued under Afhas / Abhas al-Da'wa.

71. Dhat al-Bayan.

72. Kitab al-Najah.

73. 'Uyun al-Akhbar, volumes one through four.

74. Sharh al-Akhbar, volumes one through seven.

75. Al-Azhar, first, second, and third parts.

76. Kitab Muntaza' al-Akhbar.

77. Al-Majalis al-Qa'imiyya.

78. Majmu' al-Tarbiya.

79. Diya' al-Basa'ir.

80. Al-Risala al-Wahida.

81. Diya' al-'Uqul.

82. Risalat Diya' al-Hulum.

83. Al-Idah wa-l-Tabsir.

84. Risalat al-Ibana wa-l-Tasrih.

85. Risalat al-Munabbih.

86. Majalis al-Nush wa-l-Bayan.

87. Al-Mabda' wa-l-Ma'ad.

88. Kitab al-'Aqida.

89. Risalat al-Muqiza.

90. Diya' al-Albab.

91. Risalat Nabdh Sabil al-Najat.

92. Ajwibat al-Masa'il.

93. Twenty Questions.

94. Al-Jawhar al-Thamin fi Ta'wil Ya-Sin.

95. Kitab Masa'il al-Ta'wil.

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96. Al-Tadhkirat / a collection of reminders.

97. Risalat al-Tadhkira in refutation of the Shi'a.

98. Majmu' Rasa'il al-Shi'a.

99. Riyad al-Jinan.

Printed Fatimid Books

100. 'Uyun al-Akhbar, printed in India.

101. Da'a'im al-Islam, two volumes, printed in Cairo with the editing and introduction of Asaf A. A. Fyzee, former Indian ambassador to Egypt.

102. Al-Sira al-Mu'ayyadiyya, printed in Cairo with the editing and introduction of Dr. Muhammad Kamil Husayn.

103. Diwan al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirazi, printed in Cairo with the editing and introduction of Dr. Muhammad Kamil Husayn, professor at Cairo University.

104. Al-Majalis al-Mustansiriyya, printed in Cairo with the editing and introduction of Dr. Muhammad Kamil Husayn.

105. Rahat al-'Aql, printed in Cairo in 1954 with the editing of Dr. Muhammad Mustafa Hilmi and Dr. Muhammad Kamil Husayn.

106. Al-Himma fi Adab Atba' al-A'imma, printed in Cairo with the editing of Dr. Muhammad Kamil Husayn.

107. Al-Sijillat al-Mustansiriyya, printed in Cairo with the editing of Dr. 'Abd al-Mun'im Majid.

108. Itti'az al-Hunafa, printed in Cairo with the editing of Dr. Jamal al-Din al-Shayyal.

109. Asas al-Ta'wil, printed in Beirut with the editing of Amir 'Arif Tamir.

110. The Diwan of Tamim ibn al-Mu'izz al-Fatimi, printed in Cairo with the editing of the editor of the present book.

Some Fatimid Isma'ili Terminology and Symbols

The following material is drawn from al-Anwar al-Latifa fi al-Haqiqa by the Fatimid da'i Tahir ibn Ibrahim al-Harithi, and from Ta'wil al-Da'a'im by al-Qadi al-Nu'man ibn Muhammad al-Maghribi. The editor identifies the manuscripts by the sigla given above.

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From Book Four, chapter three: The ten hudud of the world of religion are the Natiq, the Wasi, the Imam, and the seven ranks beneath them. They correspond to the ten Intellects in the world of ibda'. These religious hudud are therefore called the intellects of the world of nature. Al-Mu'ayyad alludes to this when he says that the intellects of nature draw their support from the Intellects of ibda', and that the lights of their heaven kindle the places upon which their rays fall. The seven subordinate hudud correspond to seven Imams from the family of the truthful Prophet, ending with Isma'il and Muhammad ibn Isma'il.

From Book One, chapter four: Tawhid is knowledge of the ranks of the hudud; tanzih is to deny divinity of them; and tajrid is to strip names and attributes from God, exalted is He. This concise statement requires explanation. Knowledge of the hudud is of two kinds. The outward knowledge identifies the person who occupies a rank and his station; in this the friend and the opponent, and even ordinary people, may share. The inward knowledge belongs especially to the people of gnosis among the people of truth: it concerns the beginning of the existence of a hadd, the end toward which it proceeds, and the limit at which it terminates. This is a very difficult knowledge, reached only by those who have disciplined themselves in truth, remain connected to the awliya of God, and receive from them. It is not possessed by one whose knowledge falls short. I shall therefore explain something of it, to assist our brethren in understanding the tawhid of God. The nearest of the hudud to us is the mukasir, and whatever is established concerning the lower rank is, by analogy, established concerning what is above it.

Above the mukasir is the ma'dhun; above him the da'i mutlaq; above him the da'i al-balag; above him the da'i al-du'at, or Bab al-Abwab; above him the hujja; and above the hujja the Imam. The Fatimids hold that the Imamate remains in the line of al-Tayyib ibn al-Amir bi-Ahkam Allah, whom they count as the twenty-first Imam. After him comes the Imam of the age and Pole of the era, and the Imamate continues in his descendants, one son succeeding another, until their number reaches one hundred; then begins the age of complete manifestation, which they call the Cycle of Unveiling. They support this with a transmitted report

concerning Fatima al-Zahra and a symbolic gift associated with the number one hundred. When al-Amir bi-Ahkam Allah was killed, 'Abd al-Majid, his cousin, assumed the kingship and was given the title al-Hafiz. From this title they infer that kingship had become a trust to be preserved and restored to its people, since al-Hafiz was not a son of the Imams nor, in their doctrine, the lawful heir of the Imamate.

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After al-Amir, the rule of al-Hafiz and his descendants continued through al-Zafir, al-Fa'iz, and al-'Adid until their house came to an end with the rise of the Ayyubids. Al-Tayyib, however, was concealed in Yemen. Da'is mutlaq were appointed there and the great period of concealment began. The da'is in Yemen reached twenty-three in number; after that the da'wa was transferred to India, where another succession of da'is was established. When the last of one line was killed through the intrigue of a rival, communication from the concealed Imam ceased. In order to prevent the community from being scattered, the scholars appointed a deputy to the deceased da'i until an authentic instruction should reach them from their concealed Imam. The office then remained inherited among the descendants of that deputy.

The text names among the later representatives 'Abd al-Qadir Najm al-Din ibn al-Da'i Tayyib Zayn al-Din, his brother 'Abd al-Husayn Husam al-Din ibn al-Da'i Tayyib Zayn al-Din, then Muhammad Burhan al-Din ibn 'Abd al-Qadir Najm al-Din, then 'Abd Allah Badr al-Din ibn 'Abd al-Husayn Husam al-Din, then Tahir Sayf al-Din ibn Muhammad Burhan al-Din, and then Muhammad Burhan al-Din. It states that all of them are regarded as deputies of the Imams.

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The list of da'is continues with the following names, each accompanied in the Arabic source by a year of death and a burial place: 'Abd Allah Fakhr al-Din ibn 'Ali; Hasan ibn 'Abd Allah; 'Ali ibn 'Abd Allah; Idris ibn al-Hasan; Hasan ibn Idris; Husayn ibn Idris; 'Ali Shams al-Din ibn al-Husayn; and Muhammad 'Izz al-Din. Thereafter the line of the da'is mutlaq in India is listed: Yusuf ibn Sulayman; Jalal ibn Hasan; Dawud ibn 'Ajab Shah; Dawud ibn Qutb Shah; 'Abd al-Tayyib Zaki al-Din ibn Dawud; 'Ali ibn Hasan; Qasim Zayn al-Din ibn Firshan; Qutb al-Din al-Shahid ibn Dawud; Fayr Khan Shuja' al-Din ibn Ahmad; Isma'il Badr al-Din ibn Mulla Raj; 'Abd al-Tayyib Zaki al-Din ibn Badr al-Din; Musa Kalim al-Din ibn al-Da'i Zaki al-Din; Nur al-Din ibn al-Da'i Kalim al-Din; Isma'il Badr al-Din ibn Adam Safi al-Din; Ibrahim Wajih al-Din ibn 'Abd al-Qadir Hakim al-Din; Hibat Allah al-Mu'ayyad ibn al-Da'i Wajih al-Din; 'Abd al-Tayyib Zaki al-Din ibn al-Da'i Badr al-Din; Yusuf Najm al-Din ibn al-Da'i Zaki al-Din; 'Abd 'Ali Sayf al-Din ibn al-Da'i Zaki al-Din; Muhammad 'Izz al-Din ibn al-Shaykh Jiwaji; Tayyib Zayn al-Din ibn al-Shaykh Jiwaji; and Muhammad Badr al-Din ibn al-Da'i Sayf al-Din.

The text then warns that it is wearisome to consider these men only from the standpoint of kingship and worldly rule, without also considering the religious conception of the Imamate held by their followers.

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The followers of the Fatimids known as the Bohras have believed, from the beginning until the present, that the Imamate is an inheritance passed by explicit designation among the descendants of Fatima al-Zahra. In their doctrine the Imamate is sometimes manifest and sometimes concealed, according to the requirements of circumstances, but it remains continuously among them.

The Imamate remained joined to political rule from the time of al-Mahdi bi-Allah in the Maghrib until the age of al-Amir in Egypt. In the caliphate of al-Mustansir a dispute arose between him and his son Nizar and ended in the killing of Nizar, though the remainder of Nizar's followers, headed by Hasan ibn Sabbah, continued their movement. The conflict remained intense through the age of al-Amir. Al-Amir himself wrote in defense of his own position in the caliphate and of the Imamate of his father al-Musta'li. The Nizari opposition, according to

this account, plotted against al-Amir and he was stabbed. Before the danger reached its end, al-Amir secretly sent his young son al-Tayyib away with trusted da'is and entrusted him to Queen al-Hurra Arwa bint Ahmad, the last of the Sulayhid rulers of Yemen who supported the Fatimid da'wa.

The belief related here is that the Imams from the descendants of Fatima al-Zahra will number ninety-nine and that the hundredth Imam will be the Qa'im bi-Amr Allah, at whose appearance the Resurrection is established. It is also related that Ja'far al-Sadiq designated his eldest son Isma'il to the Imamate; the Isma'iliyya are named after him. The Imamate was then concealed so that enemies could not reach the Imam. Three Imams after Muhammad ibn Isma'il remained concealed while their da'is spread their teaching and collected the religious dues. The Imamate then appeared in the Maghrib with al-Mahdi, and the rule of the Imams expanded until they made Egypt their capital under al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah. The text then refers to the later division of the followers into the Musta'li-Tayyibi and Nizari lines.

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Returning to the doctrinal text: When the substance of the lower hadd is refined and its essence purified, it may rise through many ranks unknown and inaccessible to others, drawing near to the First Originator until it reaches the highest human rank, which is the first of the angelic ranks. It then becomes a place upon which God's revelation descends and a house among His houses. God alludes to this in the verse: 'In houses which God has permitted to be raised and in which His name is remembered; therein men glorify Him morning and evening, men whom neither trade nor sale distracts from the remembrance of God and the establishment of prayer.' The verse itself makes clear that these 'houses' are the hudud, for it calls them 'men.' Their 'establishment of prayer' means the establishment of the da'wa, of which outward prayer is the symbol and without which religion does not stand.

Other human persons may outwardly share the same human form, but their dispositions are not equally refined. Some decline and move farther from the First Origin until they reach the lowest human ranks and then the distorted forms below them. Thus the spiritual ascent or descent of the human being depends upon obedience, knowledge, and purification.

A note adds that after the division between the Musta'li-Tayyibi and Nizari communities, the Tayyibi da'wa continued in Yemen and later in Gujarat and Surat. It names 'Abd 'Ali Sayf al-Din as a major da'i in India and founder of the Sayfiyya Fatimid University in Surat, and records the succession through Muhammad 'Izz al-Din, Tayyib Zayn al-Din, Muhammad Badr al-Din, 'Abd al-Qadir Najm al-Din, 'Abd al-Husayn Husam al-Din, and Mulla Tahir Sayf al-Din. It also states that a community in Yemen and India called the Sulaymani Bohras claims that its own line of da'is remains connected with the concealed true Imam.

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In animals too there is a lesson for anyone who reflects. Domestic animals such as cattle, sheep, and camels resemble predatory beasts in bodily composition, for all are made of flesh, blood, bone, sinew, veins, skin, hair, and the like. Yet tame animals become food for the human being, God's vicegerent on earth, and by their relation to him move toward ascent along the straight path represented by the human form. Predatory beasts flee from the human being and oppose him, moving instead toward descent and greater distance from the First Origin. Though made of the same bodily materials, the two are not equal. In the same way there is a vast difference between obedient and disobedient souls.

From Book One, chapter five: The soul of the hadd called the mukasir becomes subtle, pure, and elevated through the purity of its subject and through what reaches it of divine sciences and angelic secrets. These refine it until it takes on an angelic disposition and a divine coloring. When a seeker approaches him with

sincere loyalty, sound intention, and pure inner disposition, and he speaks to him and imparts angelic speech and divine knowledge such as had never occurred to his mind or reached his hearing, the seeker is bewildered and captivated. He comes to recognize the hadd's majesty and the greatness of his precedence.

He then realizes that this hadd himself depends upon the ranks above him, and that each higher rank in turn depends upon what is above it, through the bodily hudud to the Imam, and from him through the ranks of the immaterial Intellects until the First Intellect, in which all originated beings and inventions terminate. He then realizes the bewilderment of the First Intellect before its Originator and returns from attributing divinity to any of the bodily or spiritual hudud, despite recognizing their greatness. He affirms divinity to God alone, who has no god beside Him.

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The seeker therefore declares God transcendent above the bodily hudud, which are limited by spatial limit, and above the spiritual hudud, which are not so limited. He then strips from God even the names, attributes, descriptions, and relations that the mind had affirmed, and returns to a state of bewilderment before Him, intercession through Him, and submission. Only then is he a true monotheist, one who practices tanzih and tajrid with knowledge, religion, certainty, and recognition. This is the tranquil soul to whom it is said: 'O tranquil soul, return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing.' It is tranquil through what it has known, content with the judgment of its Lord, and pleasing to Him and to all the hudud whose knowledge it has reached. Praise be to God who guided us to this; we would not have been guided had God not guided us.

From Book Two, chapter one: God, toward whom thoughts do not dare to reach and to whom imaginations and inner notions do not ascend, originated the world of ibda', called also the world of command, the world of intellect, the world of sanctity, the world of purity, the world of overflow, and the spiritual world. He originated it all together, at once, without any prior thing from which it was made, without anything accompanying it as a peer, and without any cause compelling Him. He brought its beings from nonexistence into existence through pure generosity. It is the nature of the generous and powerful to bestow, and of the mighty and knowing to give freely; He had no need of them and did not act in vain, for He is exalted above need and futility.

He brought them into existence as luminous spiritual forms, resembling human forms in upright configuration while differing from fleshly bodies, which are dense and dark. These luminous forms were equal in the first perfection of existence, life, power, and capacity. There was at first no difference, superiority, excess, or deficiency among them, by the justice of God, for the just one's justice is even and the generous one's generosity reaches all. As the Qur'an says: 'Had it been from other than God, they would have found in it much discrepancy.'

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The author cites Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani's Rahat al-'Aql: in the abode of ibda' and inbi'ath there is no impediment arising from matter, for those beings are separate forms not tied to matter. Their existence therefore does not unfold through time but occurs at once, like the sudden shining of sunlight or the illumination of a dark house by a lamp. In that first state none of the Intellects preceded another in existence; they were equal in their first perfection, though not yet protected from error and lapse in action.

From Book Two, chapter two: One of those luminous forms considered itself and the others of its kind and knew that it and they had an Originator unlike them. It denied divinity of itself and of its peers, affirmed divinity to its Originator, bore witness to His oneness, acknowledged servitude, glorified Him, humbled itself, and sought Him through its intellect. Divine supports and spiritual confirmations flowed to it from its Originator, and the overflowing knowledge and spreading light that are God's 'word' became connected with it. This

knowledge is also called the command; the Qur'an says, 'He casts the Spirit of His command upon whom He wills of His servants.' It is called the Holy Spirit because the First Intellect is the Holy, and this flowing knowledge is a spirit connected to it from God.

Through that knowledge the First Intellect became a perfect, complete, eternal, universal Intellect. Through it are everlasting permanence, comprehensive knowledge, glory, majesty, splendor, bliss, and protection from error. By it the Intellect encompassed all things in knowledge and knew what had been and what would be. Yet this only increased its humility, submission, bewilderment before the greatness of its Originator, and fear of Him. Hence the verse: 'Only those of His servants who have knowledge fear God.' God made this Intellect a veil and a gate: approach is through it and the highest divine Name and noblest station are associated with it.

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From Book Two, chapter three: After the First Intellect, two of the luminous forms are described as the first two inbi'aths. One preceded the other. It looked upon itself and upon those of its kind, realized that they had an Originator unlike them, denied divinity of itself and them, and affirmed it to the Originator. It glorified the First Intellect because the First Intellect had preceded it in declaring the oneness and transcendence of the Originator. It acknowledged the First Intellect's precedence, excellence, and rank. Its materials, blessings, confirmations, and observations were therefore joined to it, and the limitless divine light reached it. It attained the second perfection and became a complete, universal, eternal, protected Intellect. The difference between it and the First was only the rank of precedence: this one was inbi'ath, whereas the First was ibda'.

The author cites Rahat al-'Aql: if the manner of ibda' were the same as the manner of inbi'ath, ibda' would itself be inbi'ath and inbi'ath would be ibda'. The First Intellect independently undertook the affirmation of its Originator's oneness and transcendence without a predecessor. For this reason it surpassed those of its kind and deserved the noble names: the Ibda', the First Originated, the First Existent, the Reality, the First Living One, Unity, the First One, the Complete, the First Perfection, the First Eternal, the Intellect, the First Knower, Power, the First Powerful, Life, the First Living, Precedence, the First Preceder, Protection, and the first possessor of the ages and aeons.

The second is called the First Inbi'ath because it was first in that station, the 'Follower' because it followed the First Intellect, the Second Intellect because it was second in the act of tawhid, tanzih, and tajrid, the Tablet because it receives the ray of the Pen—which is the First Intellect—and the Universal Soul because, after the First, it is the noblest and most excellent of its world.

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The First Intellect joined with the First Inbi'ath, made it its veil and the gate to obedience of itself and of its Originator, and established the da'wa in that world through it. Seven luminous forms answered one after another. Each acknowledged the Originator and His transcendence, confessed the rank and precedence of the First Intellect and the right of the one following it, and glorified the hadd above it. Their essences were ennobled, their degrees rose, and the divine light flowing from the First Intellect through the Second reached them. By it they attained the second perfection, salvation, protection, bliss, mercy, and grace. This is the meaning of al-Kirmani's statement that seven Intellects existed from the First Intellect and the First Inbi'ath, each deriving through the one above it.

From Book Three, chapter five: The third form, called the Second Inbi'ath, followed the First Inbi'ath but failed to recognize its station. It imagined itself equal to it. Its sustaining connection was therefore cut off, its essence became dark, and it fell, bewildered, to the horizon of the Ninth Intellect after having been third. When it perceived the rank of the one above it, it awoke from heedlessness, recognized its error and lapse,

reflected upon their cause, and turned humbly to the nearest Intellect above it. It confessed that it had exceeded its limit and forgotten the rank that preceded it. It repented, submitted, sought forgiveness, and used all the ranks above it as means of approach to its Lord.

The immaterial Intellects showed compassion toward it, and holy supports and higher confirmations reached it. Its essence became fully illuminated, it was freed from darkness, attained the second perfection, entered the luminous world, and became one of the ranks of mercy. This is the spiritual Adam after his repentance, alluded to in the Qur'anic verse: 'Then Adam received words from his Lord, and He turned toward him; truly He is the Accepter of repentance, the Merciful.'

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The 'words' received by Adam are the seven immaterial Intellects. They are called words because they are related to the First Intellect, upon which the name 'Word' properly falls, for it was first to utter the word of sincerity by bearing witness to the divinity of its Originator. That testimony is its practical worship; its intellectual worship is the knowledge it attained of the Originator's divinity and oneness. The seven are therefore called 'words' by derivation from it, and they are called the world of Intellect, the world of ibda', and the world of sanctity because of their relation to it. Though they reached the utmost excellence and perfection, the First Intellect surpassed them by its precedence, worship, knowledge, and action. Praise be to God who favored us with knowledge withheld from others and made us among its bearers and treasurers. May God bless Muhammad and his family.

From Book Four, chapter one: Having completed discussion of the world of ibda', the author turns to the world of bodies and the beginning of its formation. Within the Second Inbi'ath, which had become the Tenth, many forms had become separated from the higher order and were divided into three parties. The first denied divinity of themselves and their kind and affirmed it to their Originator; they glorified the First Intellect but passed over the First Inbi'ath, just as the Tenth had once done. These forms were related to the Tenth as its spouse, enclosing what it enclosed of conception, reflection, and thought; this is the spiritual Eve. The second party acknowledged the Originator but rejected the First Intellect and First Inbi'ath, imagining themselves equal to them. The third party, when the da'wa was established in the abode of ibda', denied and acted arrogantly: they neither affirmed the oneness of their Originator nor adhered to any of the Intellects. They were the most unbelieving and resistant of the three parties.

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From Book Three, chapter two: When the Tenth repented, responsibility for saving these groups was imposed upon it, because it had been their leader and a cause of the error of some of them. 'Whoever breaks a bone must set it.' It therefore stood in the place of the First in relation to them, called the three parties, rebuked them, and admonished them. They did not respond but increased in darkness and distance. They mixed with one another and accumulated like clouds and mist.

They then moved from themselves by three primordial motions. The first produced length, beginning in heat and the ascendant Aries and ending in cold and the setting Libra. The second produced breadth, beginning in moisture with Capricorn and ending in dryness with Cancer. The third sought mutual encounter and produced depth. These motions occurred under divine providence for the sake of the Tenth Intellect, which had been charged with their salvation. The purpose was that their purification could occur only through forms resembling the human spiritual forms, within place, time, severe trials, and testing. What became subtle and pure would rise; what persisted in error would fall. Hence the philosophers' saying that man is the first of the cycle and the last of action.

From Book Four, chapter three: The accumulated substance intermingled until matter and form appeared. Form was more subtle; matter more dark and dense. Divine providence made some things active instruments, like the male—the world of the spheres—and some receptive, like the female—the world of the elemental mothers. The spheres were formed from the subtlest part of the mixed substance, corresponding to the first party, which had affirmed the Originator and glorified the Intellect, though it had shared in the descent of the other parties.

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After the Tenth's repentance and commission to save them, the first party regretted its descent and sought release and repentance, but because it had already fallen into the realm of density it could not return directly. It was therefore made into spheres, stars, and zodiacal constellations, and through its repentance it became an instrument for drawing the other two parties upward during their descent.

From Book Four, chapter four: The arrangement of the spheres began like the formation of the human being, step by step. The sun corresponds to the point of the compass and to the human heart, the center of innate heat. The sphere of the moon corresponds to the head and is the center of moisture and cold. Saturn corresponds to the feet and is the center of cold and dryness. The remaining arrangement continued until the whole became like a body, called the absolute body, corresponding to the human body. The encompassing sphere was made its spirit because it is the most subtle and noble and moves the whole body within itself once every day and night. The sun follows it in rank because, after the encompassing sphere, it was first in repentance and in glorifying the Intellect and affirming the oneness of God. Its radiant light filling heaven and earth was made its reward. The lights of the other stars and constellations likewise correspond to what each had previously achieved, for the balance of justice omits neither small nor great.

From chapter five: The lines formed in the middle of the accumulated things intersected and produced the first depth. Mixture and what is mixed gathered there, and the elemental qualities appeared: heat and dryness, heat and moisture, cold and dryness, and their combinations. What coagulated from them became the earth, the rock-like densest and darkest element.

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The earth corresponds to the third party, which had neither affirmed the Originator nor adhered to any of the Intellects. The subtler elements—fire, air, and water—correspond to the second party, which affirmed God but did not adhere to the higher Intellects. The sphere turned around the center and the stars cast their rays toward the rock from all directions. They found no passage into it. Around it remained a subtle smoke that had not congealed with the rock or mixed with the elemental mothers. By divine providence this smoke belonged to the first party. When the rays reached the rock and found no entrance, they united with portions of the smoke and each ray returned toward its origin bearing with it a share of that smoke. Thus the ray of each star and what had joined it became a sheath or vehicle belonging to that star.

From Book Five, chapter one: The spheres moved a second time and cast their rays toward the rock. Again no opening was found. The rays returned toward their places, but because this motion was weaker than the first, the force of return was insufficient and the rays broke off before reaching their original stations. They mixed with what they touched of the elemental body and formed a separate sphere called the sphere of the breeze (nasim). Through the blending of these rays its nature became balanced and it became the life of every animal. It is also called the flowing sea. In reality it is the sphere of water surrounding the earth. What reaches cavities in the earth, accumulates and presses upon itself, becomes water and appears as springs whose flow continues so long as they remain connected to that source and are replenished by rain.

Because many books discuss the philosophy of the Intellects, origin and return, and ta'wil, the editor says that he will merely direct the reader to those books and include only what is necessary here, pointing in particular to Rahat al-'Aql.

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The cited passages continue: 'The second pathway, fourth enclosure: concerning the First Inbi'ath, which is the Second Intellect, called in divine terminology the Pen ...'; 'The third pathway, fourth enclosure: concerning the Second Inbi'ath, the first of those who stand by potentiality, called in divine terminology the Tablet ...'; 'The fourth pathway, fourth enclosure: concerning the Kursi, the near angel, which is the first mover ...'; and 'The fifth pathway, fifth enclosure: concerning the Throne, which is the first mover insofar as it is moving ...'.

Interpretation of the Prayers

Ta'wil al-Da'a'im, in the fifth session of the third part, states that prayer in ta'wil is like the da'wa. For this reason the supplication transmitted for one who hears the adhan includes the words, 'Here I am, O caller to God.' Not every outward mu'adhdhin is inwardly the caller to prayer. The caller to God is the Messenger in his age, every Imam after him in his own age, and whoever is appointed by the Messenger or Imam to call to what has come from God. Hence the verse: 'O our people, answer the caller to God and believe in Him.'

The five prayers of each day and night correspond inwardly to the five da'was of the messengers of firm resolve. The messengers of firm resolve are five: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him. Adam was not among those of firm resolve, for God says: 'We had already made a covenant with Adam, but he forgot, and We found in him no firm resolve.' Therefore the law of Muhammad contains five prayers each day and night, each corresponding to the da'wa of one of those five messengers. The noon prayer corresponds to Noah, the first of them; the afternoon prayer to Abraham, the second; the sunset prayer to Moses, the third; the night prayer to Jesus, the fourth; and the dawn prayer to Muhammad, the fifth. God commanded him to establish prayer outwardly and inwardly.

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From the seventh session: Prayer corresponds to the first one who rose with the da'wa, Muhammad, while purification corresponds to his asas, 'Ali. This is also indicated, according to the text, by the letters of their names: salat and Muhammad each have four letters in Arabic; wudu' and tuhr each have three, and 'Ali has three. Thus acknowledgment of Muhammad's prophethood is not sound without acknowledgment that 'Ali is his wasi after him, just as outward prayer is not sound without purification. Hence the saying that ablution is the key to prayer, and the Prophet's saying, 'I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate; whoever seeks the city must come through the gate,' together with the verse, 'Enter houses through their doors.'

At the beginning of the book the verse 'He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, creation after creation' is interpreted inwardly as follows: the 'mothers' are those who receive benefit from those above them and then benefit those below them; their wombs are the inward knowledge they possess, within which they move those who receive from them from one rank to another. The 'three darknesses' outwardly mean the darkness of the belly, the womb, and the placenta. Inwardly, darkness signifies concealment and secrecy. Three hudud surround the initiate: the Imam, from whom his origin comes; the hujja, to whom the teaching passes from the Imam and who upholds it; and the one appointed by the hujja for those beneath him. Cutting the newborn's umbilical cord from the placenta signifies cutting the respondent away from the outward doctrine and religious clothing he held before entering the da'wa, when he had received it from the opinions of the people of innovation and error rather than from the Imam of the people of truth.

In Arabic usage, the musalli is also the horse that comes immediately after the winner in a race.

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Accordingly, sending blessings upon Muhammad is interpreted as acknowledging those from the Imams who follow him and believing in their Imamate. The supplication 'O God, bless Muhammad' thus includes the meaning: cause the Imamate to continue after him in his progeny and join it to him.

From Ja'far al-Sadiq, in the first session of the fifth part of Ta'wil al-Da'a'im: when you begin the prayer, raise your hands without passing the ears, extend them, and say the takbir. This takbir is the opening takbir. Raising the hands is obligatory according to many, though they differ about its limit. The established report from the People of the House is not to raise them beyond the ears. In ta'wil, the two hands symbolize the Imam and the hujja, while the seven openings of the face symbolize the seven natiqs. Raising the hands until they align with those openings therefore signifies acknowledgment, at the beginning of the da'wa, of the Imam, the hujja, and the seven natiqs, without separating any of them. Saying 'God is greater' signifies the testimony that God is greater and more exalted than everything, and that the natiqs, Imams, and hujjas—although God joined obedience to them with obedience to Himself—are servants under His lordship whom He established over His creation and appointed to convey from Him.

From the ninth session of the third part: Ja'far al-Sadiq says that the first time of the noon prayer is when the sun declines from the middle of the sky toward the west. The noon prayer corresponds to the Imam of the age. The sun inwardly symbolizes the wali of the age; its rising signifies his appearance and establishment, and its setting his departure and the end of his command.

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The Messenger of God in his age was like the sun from the time God sent him until his religion was perfected and he established his wasi. God revealed on the day when the Prophet established the walaya of 'Ali at Ghadir Khumm: 'Today I have perfected for you your religion, completed My favor upon you, and approved Islam for you as religion.' After this the Prophet inclined toward departure from this world to the return prepared for him. The interval between that event and his death was seventy nights. In ta'wil this is the sun's decline after seven hours of the day. The number seven is also represented by the seven letters of the names Muhammad and 'Ali in Arabic—four in Muhammad and three in 'Ali. The sun's decline therefore symbolizes the Prophet's departure to the place of return God prepared for him.

Al-Mu'ayyad's View on Ta'wil

Al-Mu'ayyad held that the Qur'an contains meanings beyond those circulated on the tongues of the common people, meanings extracted by those whom God authorized to derive them. God says: 'Had they referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, those among them who can draw conclusions from it would have known it.' The Book itself declares that the Qur'an has ta'wil: 'None knows its ta'wil except God and those firmly rooted in knowledge'; 'that We may teach him the ta'wil of events'; and 'they denied that which they did not encompass in knowledge and whose ta'wil had not yet come to them.' The Prophet is also reported to have said: 'I am the master of the revelation, and 'Ali is the master of the ta'wil.'

The science of ta'wil is the knowledge of the outcome—what a matter ultimately comes to. The Qur'an says, 'That is better and finer in ta'wil,' meaning better in outcome. The word ta'wil derives from the verb ala, 'to return' or 'to resort to'; a person resorts to what protects him in hardship. The ta'wil of the Qur'an is of this character: it is that to which the text finally returns.

Explanation of Fatimid Terminology

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1. The Natiq: the messenger among the possessors of firm resolve; symbolized by the letter n.

2. The Wasi: the right-hand minister and successor of the Natiq; symbolized by w.

3. The Imam: each guiding Imam after the Wasi in his own age until the cycle is completed; symbolized by a.

4. The Hujja: in relation to the Imam, like the Wasi in relation to the Natiq; symbolized by h.

5. Bab al-Abwab, or Da'i al-Du'at: below the Hujja and above the other da'is; symbolized by b.

6. Da'i al-Balag: below the Da'i al-Du'at and above the remaining da'is; symbolized by gh.

7. The Da'i Mutlaq: below the Da'i al-Balag; the representative of the Imam in the period of concealment; symbolized by q.

8. The Ma'dhun: the deputy of the Da'i Mutlaq in the period of concealment; symbolized by dh.

9. The Mukasir: the rank following the Ma'dhun in the period of concealment; symbolized by m.

10. The Mustajib: the complete believer/respondent; symbolized by j.

These ten designations express the ten bodily or earthly hudud. Their spiritual counterparts are the ten Intellects. The text then gives the terminology for those spiritual ranks: the First Intellect, symbolized by 'ayn; the Second Intellect, symbolized by tha'; and the seven Intellects, symbolized collectively in the system of letters described by the author.

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These ten degrees belong to the ordered structure of knowledge. Their possessors may rise toward the rank of the Imam and thereafter, degree by degree, toward the stations of the Intellects. The author refers the reader to al-Anwar al-Latifa for the full explanation.

Rahat al-'Aql explains that the ten ranks consist of three universal ranks and seven subordinate ranks. The three universal ranks are: first, risala, the overflowing of blessing through the establishment of the laws of practical outward worship in revelation and shari'a, by which souls enter existence and attain the first perfection; second, wisaya, the reception of the whole blessing and the establishment of the laws of inward intellectual worship through ta'wil, by which souls assume the everlasting form and attain the second perfection; and third, imama, the command and government of the entire community according to the usages of religion, through which outward and inward cultivation are maintained and souls are drawn toward existence.

The seven subordinate ranks concern, in sequence, judgment and decisive speech, balance of opinions and beliefs, proof by demonstration of the higher hudud and the return, teaching of intellectual worship and ta'wil, explanation of the lower hudud and their cycles, taking the covenant and explaining the boundaries of the religion and its domain, and the practice of mukasara and just guidance toward truth. Each function is assigned to the appropriate rank among the Bab, Hujja, Da'i al-Balag, Da'i Mutlaq, Ma'dhun, and Mukasir.

The source then places the higher and lower hudud in parallel columns. Among the lower hudud are the Natiq, the Asas, the Imam, the Bab, the Hujja, the Da'i al-Balag, the Da'i, the Ma'dhun, and the Mukasir; the text aligns them with cosmological ranks and describes the function belonging to each.

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The table continues: the third existent corresponds to the Imam and the rank of command; the fourth to the Bab and the rank of decisive speech; the fifth to the Hujja and the rank of judgment between truth and falsehood; the sixth to the Da'i al-Balag and the rank of demonstration and teaching the return; the seventh to the Da'i and the explanation of the higher hudud; the eighth to the next subordinate rank and the explanation of the lower hudud together with outward worship; the ninth to the Ma'dhun Mutlaq and the taking of the covenant from the respondent; and the tenth to the natural realm, corresponding to the Mukasir, whose task is the care of souls and drawing them to worship and obedience.

From Book Two, chapter five: The virtuous person represented by the Tenth Intellect continues his da'wa until he brings forth from it a son who takes his place. This 'bringing forth' does not mean creation by ibda' in the literal sense; rather, in this world the two persons correspond to ibda' and inbi'ath in the world of Intellect. The one who establishes the station is called, by correspondence, ibda', and the son whom he brings forth from his da'wa is called inbi'ath.

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When the father appoints his son by explicit designation and then passes to the abode of God's honor, the son succeeds him in the rank corresponding to the Tenth Intellect for the administration of the world of nature. When another like him is brought forth, the earlier rank ascends, and so the hierarchy rises one station after another: the fourth to the third, the third to the second, and the second to the First Intellect. The rank of the First Intellect is the station of unity, which no other Intellect attains; it is the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary. The rank immediately beneath it is the Garden of Refuge, in which the rewarded among the spiritual and bodily beings ultimately arrive, each according to the order of ascent.

The Qur'an alludes to this in the words, 'At the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary, near which is the Garden of Refuge.' The Prophet said that in the Garden is what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and what has never occurred to a human heart. The text says that the glory, elevation, radiance, joy, greatness, and splendor prepared there for God's friends cannot be fully described, only approximated.

The person who ascends directly to the rank of the Tenth after completing his earthly station is exceptional, because through him the structure of ibda' is renewed after the long period of the cycle. He is, as it were, the quintessence of all the worlds, while the other ranks are parts in relation to him.

From Book Three, chapter one: The designated son and successor of this virtuous person becomes a khalifa over the world of religion. He establishes the da'wa in his own world, summons people to the oneness and worship of God, and rescues souls submerged in the sea of nature and imprisoned by it. He in turn brings forth from his da'wa the one who will succeed him, just as his own predecessor had brought him forth.

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The succession continues until the appointed number or duration is completed. The station in which the intermediate ranks wait is the barzakh alluded to in the verse: 'Behind them is a barrier until the day they are raised.' The text speaks of a blameworthy barzakh for the people of evil and of the completion of a vast number of forms and a cycle measured in thousands of years.

When the cycle reaches its completion, their Qa'im arises from the da'wa of his father. The ranks waiting in the barzakh are joined to him so that each becomes, as it were, a member of his luminous form. When he leaves his body and passes from this world he becomes a pure holy immaterial Intellect, and what occurred among the higher immaterial Intellects is repeated in him, differing only by the rank of precedence. The text connects this to the prophetic report that God has one hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets and to the Qur'anic statement that the first and the last will be gathered for the appointed time of a known day.

The text identifies that known day with the cycle of unveiling and speaks of the reckoning, reward, and punishment occurring before the Qa'im. The Qa'im then brings forth from his own da'wa a son who will succeed him and himself ascends toward the rank of the Tenth Intellect.

From Book Three, chapter two: When his period ends, a cycle of concealment begins. His son succeeds him and the da'wa becomes weaker because the cycle of unveiling has reached its limit and the Book its appointed term. The Imams become extremely concealed while the power of opposition becomes strong. After a period described as three thousand years, the first Natiq of the cycle of concealment, Adam, arises and the order differs from that of the preceding age. A seven-thousand-year period is then received.

From Book Three, chapter three: At the completion of those three thousand years, the Imam of that time establishes Adam as the Natiq. Adam sets hudud and lays down laws, then appoints an Asas to succeed him in his community and passes to the abode of God's honor.

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The Imamate then continues from Imam to Imam until the completion of Adam's cycle. The second Natiq, Noah, arises by command of the Imam of his age, identified in this system as Hud. His opponent is named as 'Uj ibn 'Anaq. Noah establishes laws and a shari'a different from the first, appoints his Wasi, and the Imamate continues until the completion of his cycle.

Abraham then arises by the command of the Imam of his age, identified as Salih, and his opponent is Nimrod ibn Canaan. Abraham lays down his laws and appoints his Wasi, Isma'il; the Imamate continues among his descendants until the end of his cycle. Moses arises by command of the Imam of his age and his opponent is Pharaoh. Jesus then arises by command of the Imam of his age, identified here as Khuzayma, and does as those before him had done until the end of his cycle.

Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him, arises by command of the Imam of his age, whom the text identifies as Abu Talib. His opponents are Abu Lahab and Abu Jahl. He appoints his Wasi, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, and passes to the abode of God's honor. The Commander of the Faithful completes his period and designates his son al-Hasan as a trustee and al-Husayn as the permanent Imam. The Imamate then proceeds in succession through the cycle of the Imams to Muhammad ibn Isma'il, after which the text describes further cycles of caliphs, witnesses, and substitutes, culminating in the Qa'im of the Resurrection. The seven-thousand-year period is identified as the cycle of concealment, the present world, in accordance with the report that the age of the world is seven thousand years.

Ta'wil al-Da'a'im

Authored by al-Nu'man ibn Muhammad, Judge of the Judges of al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah al-Fatimi. Edited and verified by Muhammad Hasan al-A'zami, Dean of the College of Arabic Language in Karachi, one of the scholars of al-Azhar and the Fatimid Sayfiyya University in India.

PART ONE

The First Session of Part One

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, who brings forth the rain, apportions sustenance, and creates His servants in the wombs of their mothers, creation after creation. May God bless Muhammad, His Prophet, the best of created beings, and the Imams from his radiant, guiding progeny.

You have already heard, O believers, how in the ranks of religion you pass from one state to another, just as you pass through the stages of outward creation. The creation of religion has its counterpart in the inward meaning, according to God's words: "Then We produced him as another creation; so blessed is God, the best of creators," and His words: "He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, creation after creation."

Its inward interpretation is what you have heard in the principles already laid down: the 'mothers' in the inward sense are those who receive benefit from those above them and in turn give benefit to those below them. Their 'wombs' are, at first, the inward knowledge that they possess, within which the beneficiaries are moved from one state to another. This is the creation of religion. God's words concerning 'three darknesses' refer outwardly to what surrounds the fetus: the darkness of the belly, the darkness of the womb, and the darkness of the placenta enclosing it, while the womb is enclosed by the belly. In the inward sense darkness signifies secrecy and concealment, for night is a likeness of the inward and of the one who bears it. Three ranks surround the initiate: the rank of the Imam, who is the source from whom the teaching comes; the rank of the Hujja, to whom it passes from the Imam and who upholds it; and the rank of the one appointed beneath him to convey it to those who seek benefit.

God's wali began with you when you responded to his da'wa. He imposed upon you his covenant and pledge, and at that moment, in the inward representation, you were like newborn children in the outward world. The first thing done with a newborn is to determine what it is: male or female, sound in its limbs or impaired in any of them. Likewise, when the da'i takes the covenant from a respondent, he must examine the respondent's condition and determine whether he is fit to become one who gives benefit - which is the likeness of the male - or whether he is to remain one who receives benefit - which is the likeness of the female. This is known from the person's perception, intelligence, discernment, dullness, and aptitude, and from whether his condition is sound or deficient.

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After the newborn's state has been recognized, it is treated in the way most suitable to it, just as the outward condition of an infant is set right at birth by anointing and cleansing its body, setting its limbs in order, cutting the umbilical cord, binding it, and doing the other things needed so that the child is not disturbed and its constitution is not spoiled.

The cutting of the newborn's cord from the placenta to which it had been attached, and the casting away and burial of that placenta once it has become dead matter after the child emerges from it, has an inward likeness. The placenta symbolizes the outward religious condition of the believing respondent before he enters the da'wa: the religious clothing and doctrine he formerly held, which he did not receive from the Imam of the people of truth but took from the opinions of the people of innovation and error. Cutting the cord and separating the child from the placenta signifies cutting oneself off from that former condition and rejecting it. Just as the placenta is cast away and regarded as foul after having enclosed the infant, so the responding

believer rejects the outward doctrine of the people of falsehood and clothes himself instead in the outward and inward doctrine of the people of truth.

The small piece of cord left attached after cutting, which is tied and cauterized until it dries and falls away, symbolizes what may initially be left with the respondent of an imperfect conception of divine unity - an outward conception that can remain close to associationism. God says that many who profess belief in Him nevertheless associate partners with Him. The initiate may be left temporarily with what he knows at that stage, while being told that he will later be brought to the true reality of God's unity and to the knowledge that God is exalted beyond every likeness, counterpart, and opposite. He is not to become settled upon anthropomorphism or associationism. The binding and cauterizing of the cord is the likeness of this provisional restraint; when the true knowledge of God's unity is made clear, the false conceptions that had remained with him fall away like the infant's dried cord after a few days.

What is done to set right the outward body of the newborn signifies what the responding believer must receive, after the covenant is taken from him, of the outward science of the shari'a which God has commanded His servants to establish and by which He has obligated them to act. God's wali has already set this out for you extensively in Da'a'im al-Islam, beginning with what is proper in this matter and permitting no substitute for it.

Some who had followed a different path rejected this and said: 'This is merely the outward doctrine we already knew.' They did not understand that one who has no outward form is like a person whose nakedness is exposed and whose shame is uncovered, and is outside the religious community. Those whose way was such turned away, while those whom God guided toward right conduct accepted it. People occupy differing ranks in this: some excel and benefit fully, some are intermediate, and some fall short.

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The differences among people in learning the outward religion are numerous. Yet the obligation remains what has been explained: to cast off the outward forms of the opponents that were established for the community through their opinions, analogical reasoning, and desires, and to take the outward religion from God's awliya, to whom it came from His Messenger, may God bless him and grant him peace. Some of you learned this well and others lagged behind in it.

Then God's wali brought you to the inward rank likened to suckling. In that stage he established for you the principles of ta'wil, speaking in inward symbols and at times making matters explicit, so that this knowledge might become rooted in your hearts according to what was appropriate. He kept you in this stage for the equivalent of the two full years required for suckling in the outward world. Here too you differed: some preceded and others lagged behind.

When the time came, God's wali did not withhold those who had advanced because of those who had fallen behind. He expanded for the advanced the next rank, the rank of upbringing after weaning. This present majlis is the beginning of that stage. From here he begins with you the ta'wil of what is contained in Da'a'im al-Islam, from its beginning to its end, so that you may know the inward meaning of what God has outwardly imposed upon you, including what He has made lawful and unlawful and the judgments and ordinances of His religion.

Whoever receives this teaching, masters it, and becomes proficient in it is in the likeness of one who has reached the age of marriage, whose sound judgment has been recognized, who is entitled to take possession of his property and dispose of it like a person fully competent in his affairs. God's wali does not withhold from such a person what is due to him. Whoever falls short remains in the likeness of one who continues under guardianship until sound judgment is perceived in him. This is the third stage, as you have heard. In the outward life, after the three periods following birth, the child comes to the limit of maturity: first the newborn

whose body is set right, then the suckling fed on milk, then the child after weaning, and after that the mature person. God has ordered all of this through His gentleness in the manner He approves and that His wali approves for you. There is no power and no strength except through God.

The first report mentioned in Da'a'im al-Islam is the saying of the Messenger of God: 'You will surely follow the paths of the communities before you, step for step and exactly, until, if they entered the hole of a lizard, you would enter it.' This is a well-known report transmitted by both the elite and the generality. A similar report says: 'You will follow the ways of those before you, cubit for cubit and span for span, until, if they entered the nest-hole of hornets, you would enter it.' The hornets' nest is a hole they build from clay, resembling the cells that bees make from wax to breed in.

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Bees build their cells of wax and afterward place honey in them, whereas hornets do not. A swarm of hornets is called dabr. You have already heard, among the principles unfolded for you and read to you in the inward stage likened to suckling, that every class of animals has corresponding classes among human beings. In inward interpretation animals are used as symbols for people, and the Qur'an and the transmitted teachings refer to them in this way. God says: 'There is no creature on the earth nor bird flying with its two wings except that they are communities like you; We have neglected nothing in the Book.' Thus all animals and birds may serve as likenesses for human servants.

You have heard some of these likenesses and, God willing, you will hear others in their proper places. The crawling things, vermin, and harmful creatures of the earth symbolize the rabble, the low and undisciplined masses among people. Bees symbolize the believers. It is reported: 'The believers are like bees; if the birds knew what was in their bellies they would eat them.' In the same way, if the unbeliever knew the believer's excellence, knowledge, and wisdom, he would seek to kill him out of envy.

Hornets symbolize the common and ignorant adherents of falsehood who imitate the people of faith. A hornet resembles a bee and even imitates the making of its dwelling, yet it builds with clay rather than wax and has no honey within it. So too those who imitate the people of truth while remaining among the common adherents of falsehood have no real good with them despite the resemblance they assume.

The lizard is likewise one of the creeping creatures. The Prophet therefore used the lizard's hole and the hornets' nest as likenesses for the da'was and paths of evil and base people, and informed the community that it would imitate those earlier nations in following their own rabble, villains, and low people. And so it happened: people followed the base and wicked, made them their leaders, and attributed lies to the Messenger of God, claiming that he had commanded obedience to any imam even if he were a black, mutilated slave. They followed men of no worth and set them up as imams apart from God's true awliya. This is the ta'wil of the report.

The same principle appears in Jacob's words to Joseph: 'Thus will your Lord choose you and teach you the interpretation of reports.' As for the literal lizard's hole and the hornets' nest, people do not in fact enter them, so the saying cannot be soundly understood in that outward sense alone. Likewise God's saying that they will not enter the Garden 'until the camel passes through the eye of the needle' has an interpretation that will be explained in its proper place, God willing.

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Da'a'im al-Islam also transmits from al-Baqir Muhammad ibn 'Ali that Islam is built upon seven pillars: walaya, which is the greatest of them and through which, and through the wali, knowledge of the rest is attained;

purification; prayer; zakat; fasting; pilgrimage; and jihad. These, as he said, are the pillars, foundations, and roots of Islam that God has imposed upon His servants. In inward ta'wil each has a corresponding likeness.

Walāya has the likeness of Adam, peace be upon him, because he was the first whose walāya God made obligatory. God ordered the angels to prostrate to him, and prostration signifies obedience, which is walāya. Nothing else was then imposed upon them. They all prostrated except Iblis, as God has related. Thus the trial concerning Adam was the trial of walāya, and Adam was its likeness. All creation must acknowledge his walāya; one who denied him would not be benefited by acknowledging those who came after him, for Adam is the root of those messengers, prophets, and Imams whose walāya God made obligatory, and he is their father and the father of humankind.

Purification has the likeness of Noah, peace be upon him. He was the first one raised and sent by God to purify the servants from the acts of disobedience and sins into which they had fallen after Adam. He was the first nāṭiq after him, the first of the resolute messengers possessing revealed laws. God made the sign with which Noah came water, which He made the means of purification and called purifying.

Prayer has the likeness of Abraham, peace be upon him. He built the Sacred House and established the Station. God made the House the qibla and the Station a place of prayer. God relates his words: 'I have turned my face toward Him who originated the heavens and the earth, as one inclining to the truth, and I am not of the associators.' This turning of the face is the opening of prayer for those who pray.

Zakat has the likeness of Moses, for he was the first to summon to it and to be sent with it. God says: 'Has there come to you the story of Moses, when his Lord called him in the sacred valley of Tuwa: Go to Pharaoh, for he has transgressed, and say: Would you purify yourself?' The first matter God commanded Moses to invite Pharaoh toward was purification. Fasting has the likeness of Jesus, peace be upon him, for the first instruction addressed through him to his mother was that she should say to anyone she met: 'I have vowed a fast to the Compassionate, so today I shall not speak to any human being.'

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Pilgrimage has the likeness of Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, because he was the first to establish the rites of the pilgrimage in their true form and to institute its Sunna. The Arabs and other peoples had performed pilgrimage to the House in the age of ignorance, but they did not establish its rites as they should. God says of them: 'Their prayer at the House was nothing but whistling and clapping.' They circumambulated naked. In the lesser pilgrimage that the Prophet performed before the conquest of Mecca, after making a truce with its polytheist inhabitants, one of the first things he forbade was that any naked man or woman should thereafter circumambulate the House.

They had also set up idols around the House and worshipped them. When God opened Mecca to His Messenger, he broke and removed the idols, established the practices and rites of the pilgrimage, restored its landmarks by God's command, and imposed its obligations. Pilgrimage was the concluding one of the obligatory works, just as Muhammad was the Seal of the Prophets.

After pilgrimage, only jihad remains among the seven pillars. Its likeness is the seventh Imam in the cycle which you have heard described as the seventh after the nāṭiq. Through him God gathers people upon his command. He leaves no one who persists in opposing the religion of Islam and the limits of faith without bringing the matter to its conclusion. He is one of the Imams of Muhammad, the last Imam from his progeny and da'wa, and his call precedes the transfer to the next revealed order. Through this God gives him an excellence corresponding to jihad. Muhammad himself was distinguished over the messengers before him by two additional likenesses: pilgrimage and jihad. Because the one whose likeness is jihad belongs to

Muhammad's da'wa and shari'a and is one of his descendants and Imams of his religion, Muhammad also established jihad along with the pilgrimage.

At the time of the final Imam, jihad is no longer an ordinary act like the earlier works, for the opportunity for action has reached its conclusion. God says: 'On the day when some of the signs of your Lord come, no soul will benefit from its faith if it did not believe before or earn some good through its faith.' For this reason Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets, has the likeness of pilgrimage, which is the seal of the works and is imposed once in a lifetime; it does not escape a person so long as he lives if he can perform it, and if he dies under certain conditions it may be performed on his behalf. These likenesses also run through the sevenfold cycles of the Imams.

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In each sevenfold cycle of Imams, the first has the likeness of walāya because his walāya is the first obligation concerning that cycle; the second has the likeness of purification; the third of prayer; the fourth of zakat; the fifth of fasting; and the sixth of pilgrimage, according to the likenesses of the nāṭiqs already explained. The sixth completes the sixfold order, just as Muhammad is called the Seal of the Prophets and completes the prophetic order. The seventh is the strongest of them and through him the matter is completed; his likeness is jihad, as has already been explained.

These are the likenesses of the seven pillars that are the pillars of Islam, and their likenesses among the nāṭiqs and Imams. They too are the pillars of religion upon which its establishment rests. Understand these likenesses, O believers, so that you may be among the people of knowledge. God says: 'These are the similitudes We set forth for humankind, but none understands them except those who know.' May God make you among those who know and act upon what they know; may He protect you from the ignorance of the ignorant, the bewilderment of the astray, and the error of the falsifiers; and may He grant you success in what pleases Him, purifies you before Him, and draws you near to Him. May God bless Muhammad and his family.

The Second Session of Part One

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God with abundant, continuous, enduring praise. May God bless the Prophet Muhammad and the people of his House, from whom God has removed defilement and whom He has purified completely.

Da'a'im al-Islam discusses faith (īmān) and Islam and states that each is distinct from the other: faith includes Islam, whereas Islam does not necessarily include faith. The outward explanation of this is given in Da'a'im al-Islam. Its inward meaning is that Islam has the likeness of the outward (ẓāhir), while faith has the likeness of the inward (bāṭin). Both must be established, both must be affirmed together, and one must act according to what each requires. Establishing one without the other is not sufficient, nor is affirming one while denying the other. The inward is not established except after the outward has been established, just as a person does not become a believer until he has first become a Muslim.

Imam Muhammad ibn 'Ali represented the outward and inward by two circles, one inside the other. He made Islam the outer circle, which is manifest, and faith the inner circle, which is hidden. This figure is given in Da'a'im al-Islam itself. By it he made clear that Islam corresponds to the outward and faith to the inward, and that no outward form stands without an inward reality and no inward reality is established without an outward form.

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Among the sayings of the Imams, blessings be upon them, is that faith consists of speech, action, and intention. Speech has the likeness of the outward. Uttering the two testimonies is what causes a person to enter the religious community; when he testifies to them, the judgment of Islam applies to him. The prescribed action under the rule of the shari'a has the likeness of the inward, because much of a servant's action is concealed from other people and lies between the servant and his Lord. If he says, 'I purified myself, prayed, fasted, paid the zakat, and learned what God made obligatory for me,' he is not required to produce proof or witnesses for what concerns only his obligation before God, except where another person's right is involved. In what lies between him and God he is entrusted, while God knows him and recompenses him accordingly.

Whoever says that faith is speech without action, as the Murji'a said, occupies the position of one who says that religion has an outward form with no inward reality. Da'a'im al-Islam has already shown the corruption of that doctrine.

Intention, without which speech and action are not sound, is the conviction and resolve of the heart. The heart, in ta'wil, has the likeness of the Imam, as has already been explained. Whoever does not acknowledge the walāya of the Imam of his age possesses neither a sound outward nor a sound inward religion. Nor can belief in the walāya of the Imams be sound except after belief in the mission of the messengers, who are the roots of the revealed laws and the ones who established them. The Imams follow them in those laws and take from them what has come into their hands. Every prophet has Imams who uphold his shari'a until its appointed term and until the cycles of his Imams are completed. It is therefore necessary to affirm all the messengers and Imams, to act according to the law of the messenger governing one's age and the command of its Imam, and to disavow everyone who separates himself from the messengers and Imams or claims the station of one of them without right.

Da'a'im al-Islam also speaks of faith being imposed upon the bodily members. You have already heard the inward ta'wil of the members and what they symbolize.

As for the saying that 'faith is all action, while speech is part of that action,' its ta'wil is that the inward, which is the likeness of faith, is entirely action: no part of it is devoid of an act, whether an act of the limbs or a conviction of the heart. That too is an act, as Da'a'im al-Islam explains.

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There is another aspect to the saying that faith is all action. Since faith, as already explained, has the likeness of the inward, and action likewise has the likeness of the inward, the two expressions point to a single reality. It is as though the saying means: the inward remains inward in its entirety and nothing of it should be disclosed before its proper time, for when something hidden is disclosed it becomes outward.

The saying that 'speech is part of action' means that the outward, before it appears, was itself contained within the inward. Once it is disclosed it becomes outward, and is thus a part of what had been inward. Everything brought by one of God's messengers, whenever God sent him with something not publicly brought by the messengers before him, had already existed in God's knowledge. God disclosed it to whichever of His messengers He willed, even if He had not commanded those earlier messengers to proclaim it. Before God permitted the messenger charged with delivering it to make it public and imposed it upon that messenger's community, it was hidden knowledge with God and with those messengers to whom He had entrusted it.

God had informed them of those who would come after them and of what those later messengers would bring. This was among the secret and inward knowledge entrusted to the elect among their followers whom they established as proofs over their communities. Whatever of the inward is made manifest on the tongues of

prophets and Imams becomes outward, though it was inward before that. This continues until the last Qā'im among the Imams of Muhammad and his progeny, the master of the Resurrection, arises. Then the inward is unveiled in full and the regime of outward practice comes to its conclusion. God says that on the day when some of His signs come, faith will not benefit a soul that had not believed before or earned good through its faith. He also says: 'On the day the shin is uncovered and they are called to prostrate, they will not be able.' The 'shin' is something ordinarily covered and then uncovered; in inward interpretation this indicates unveiling, and the inability to prostrate means that the time in which obedience through prescribed action benefited people has passed.

Da'a'im al-Islam further explains what faith imposes upon the bodily members. The obligation of the heart is confession, knowledge, firm conviction, contentment, and submission: that God is one, there is no deity but He, alone without partner; that He is One, Unique, Self-Sufficient, having neither consort nor child; that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger; and that every prophet and scripture that truly came from God is to be acknowledged. This is what is imposed upon the heart in confession and knowledge.

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The outward sense of this obligation is as Da'a'im al-Islam states: these are the beliefs that bind the human heart. Its inward ta'wil is that the heart has the likeness of the Imam, and this confession and knowledge are required of the Imam in his own person. The hearing, sight, tongue, hands, and feet are the chief bodily organs and the heart is their ruler and commander. Their inward counterparts are the ranked authorities (ḥudūd) of the Imam, who are the chiefs of the people while the Imam is their possessor and chief.

God has imposed upon every bodily organ a portion of faith according to the power, receptivity, and capacity He placed within it. Sight is obliged to look at what it is commanded to look at and to lower itself from what it is forbidden to see. Hearing is obliged to listen to what it is required to hear and to turn away from listening to what is forbidden. The tongue is obliged to speak what God has required it to say and to remain silent concerning what He has forbidden. The hands are obliged to take up and perform what is obligatory and to refrain from what is prohibited. The feet are obliged to walk toward what is required and to stop where movement is not permitted.

The same is true of the inward counterparts of these organs among the ranks of God's awliya. Each holder of a rank has a limit appointed for him: he must perform what he has been commanded to perform, refrain from what he has been forbidden, and carry out what he has been authorized to do. Each has his own task, and no other shares it with him, nor may he trespass into another's function. In the body, speech belongs to the tongue, sight to the eye, hearing to the ear, grasping and striking to the hands, and walking and standing to the feet. A person does not see with the tongue, hear with the eye, or speak with the ear. Likewise each rank among the agents of God's awliya has a function that does not pass to another. The lesser bodily members follow and serve these principal organs, just as the rest of creation is commanded to follow those whom God's awliya have appointed over them.

Da'a'im al-Islam says that faith increases and decreases according to what the servant does and believes. Inwardly, the bāṭin likewise increases and decreases in a person according to his practice and conviction. If he guards it, observes its limits and inward conditions, and fulfills what he has covenanted concerning it, God opens for him an increase. If he falls short, the increase and reinforcement he receives are diminished in proportion to that shortcoming. For this reason believers differ in degrees of knowledge even when they hear the same teaching: their degrees correspond to the care with which they preserve it and the degree to which they fail in it. A person who neglects its limits and abandons its obligation may fail to understand anything of it even though he has heard it.

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God describes such people: 'Among them are those who listen to you until, when they depart from you, they say to those who have been given knowledge: What did he say just now? Those are the ones whose hearts God has sealed and who follow their desires. But those who are guided, He increases them in guidance and gives them their God-consciousness.'

Da'a'im al-Islam also says that faith consists of degrees and stations. In the same way, the science of inward ta'wil has limits and degrees through which the believers ascend, as you yourselves witness and through which you are now being raised.

As for the distinction between faith and Islam, and the statement that faith includes Islam while Islam does not necessarily include faith, we have already explained its likeness outwardly and inwardly. A believer who is newly connected to the da'wa should not be begun with the inward before the outward. He must first be taught the true outward knowledge transmitted by the Imams from the Messenger of God, until what he cannot lawfully remain ignorant of has been conveyed to him. Only afterward is the inward science opened to him.

We have explained that Islam has the likeness of the outward and faith the likeness of the inward. Thus a person who comes while following a religion other than Islam is not to have the covenant of faith taken from him nor be raised to its rank until the covenant of Islam is first taken from him: he must confess the Messenger, enter his shari'a, and disavow the contrary condition he formerly followed. Once he does this he has become a Muslim. Then the covenant of faith is taken from him, recognition of his Imam is opened to him, and he is advanced through the limits of faith after he has been made to understand the genuine outward teaching received from the Imams. One who is not a Muslim should not be raised to the rank of faith; likewise one who has no knowledge of the outward should not be advanced into the inward. This is how the statement that faith includes Islam while Islam does not include faith applies both outwardly and inwardly.

Da'a'im al-Islam relates from 'Ali that Islam is confession, whereas faith is confession together with knowledge. Speech has the likeness of the outward, and confession is speech, so it too has the likeness of the outward. Faith corresponds to knowledge, which is an act of the heart; and the heart, as already explained, has the likeness of the Imam. When outward and inward are joined, both believed and acted upon, the result is genuine, unmixed faith. Outwardly likewise, confession and knowledge constitute complete faith when the obligatory acts complete them.

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Da'a'im al-Islam relates from 'Ali: 'Knowledge is from God - a proof, favor, and blessing. Confession is a favor that God bestows upon whomever He wills among His servants. Knowledge is God's making in the heart, and confession is the heart's action through God's favor, protection, and mercy. Whoever God has not made to know has no proof established against him concerning what he cannot know; he must stop and refrain concerning what he does not know. God does not punish him for ignorance itself, but rewards him for acts of obedience and punishes him for acts of disobedience. None of this occurs except by God's decree, measure, knowledge, and Book, yet without compulsion; for if people were compelled they would be excused and could not be praised. Whoever is ignorant must refer to us whatever is difficult for him.' God says: 'Ask the people of remembrance if you do not know.'

The ta'wil of 'knowledge is from God, a proof, favor, and blessing' is that true knowledge - the science of ta'wil - is likewise God's proof over His servants, His favor to them, and His blessing upon them. The statement that confession is a favor God bestows upon whomever He wills also signifies that the authentic outward

knowledge transmitted from the Imams is among the favors God bestows upon those whom He guides to learn it.

The saying 'whoever God has not made to know has no proof against him' means inwardly that one who has responded to the da'wa of God's awliya, believed them, and entered their covenant - the covenant whose obligations and prohibitions have already been explained - has established the outward and inward of his religion by observing that covenant, even if he has not yet learned further sciences, provided he has not had access to learning or his life ends before he can do so. Knowledge of the outward religion and of ta'wil is not attained all at once; it is reached through seeking and through access to those who possess it.

Whoever responds to the da'wa of the Imam of his age and enters his covenant thereby becomes a believer. He must act according to the covenant. When something is unclear, he is to stop concerning it and ask about it, as 'Ali commanded. Thereafter he must seek knowledge, outward and inward, according to his capacity. Whatever he learns raises his excellence in proportion to that knowledge; whatever remains beyond him after sincere effort is excused. God says that He raises in degrees those who believe and those who have been given knowledge, and asks: 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?' 'Ali said: 'The worth of every person is what he does well.'

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The ta'wil of the saying 'knowledge is God's making in the heart' is that faith comes through the Imam, whose likeness is the heart. The saying 'confession is the action of the heart' signifies that the authentic outward knowledge is not established except through an Imam.

The statement that nothing occurs except by God's decree, measure, knowledge, and Book, yet without compulsion, means that God's mercy, which He causes to reach His servants through the hands of His awliya, is something He Himself has decreed, measured, and bestowed upon them. It does not arise from their independent invention or from themselves. They do not compel people to remain in ignorance by withholding the bounty God has given them when people sincerely seek it, for if they did that those people would be excused in their ignorance. Nor do they compel people to enter their affair, for if people were compelled there would be no praise in their obedience.

Understand, O believers, the ta'wil of what God's wali has already explained to you outwardly. God has charged you with knowing it and acting upon it outwardly and inwardly. Compete with one another in learning it. Whoever is ignorant of something must not remain upon his ignorance; whoever doubts must not persist in doubt; whoever forgets must not remain in forgetfulness. Ask for clarification of what you do not know or doubt, remember what you have forgotten, and return to hearing what you neglected or overlooked. May God assist you in fulfilling what He has imposed upon you, protect you from neglecting it and turning away from it, and make you among those whose actions He approves. May God bless His Prophet and the Imams from his House and grant them peace. God is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs.

The Third Session of Part One

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, the Praiseworthy, for what He has bestowed of His favors. May God bless Muhammad, His Prophet, and the Imams from his progeny and His awliya.

Da'a'im al-Islam relates the saying of the Commander of the Believers, 'Ali: 'The least by which a servant becomes a Muslim is that God makes Himself known to him and he acknowledges obedience to Him; that He

makes His Prophet known to him and he acknowledges his prophethood; and that He makes known to him His proof on earth and His witness over His creation, so that he believes in his imamate.' He was asked: 'Even if he is ignorant of everything else?' He replied: 'Yes - provided that when he is commanded he obeys, and when he is forbidden he desists.' This confirms what has already been explained: confession of God, affirmation of His Messenger, and acceptance of him constitute Islam, whose likeness in ta'wil is the outward. This is the first thing a person must know and believe so that he may be a Muslim and then become a believer.

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'Ali's words that God should make Himself known to the servant so that he acknowledges obedience, and make His Prophet known so that he acknowledges his prophethood, describe the degree of Islam and the path of the people of the outward. Islam, as already explained, has the likeness of the outward. The people of the inward do not reach the inward until they pass into the degree of faith. That is the next part of 'Ali's saying: God makes known to the servant His proof on earth and His witness over His creation, and the servant believes in his imamate. Thus a person is not a believer until he has first become a Muslim, and after Islam he advances through knowledge to the degree of faith.

Accordingly the respondent should not be addressed with inward mysteries until he has first been instructed in the outward teaching transmitted from the Imams and knows what is required of him in establishing the manifest religion. That is the likeness of Islam. Only afterward should he be opened to the inward knowledge, which is the likeness of faith. This is the order according to which God's wali has moved you through the limits of God's religion.

Many da'is destroyed many respondents because they violated this order. They began by opening the inward to them and neglected speaking to them of the outward. The respondents consequently cast aside and treated lightly what God had imposed upon them in the outward religion, neglected it, and were ruined by that neglect.

'Ali also said that whoever acknowledges God and His Messenger, knows the Imam of his age, and believes in his walāya is a believer even if he remains ignorant of other matters, provided that when commanded he obeys and when forbidden he desists. This is what has already been explained concerning the respondent when the covenant is taken from him: if he binds himself to what is in it and acts accordingly, he is a believer even before he has learned all the sciences. He must, however, seek them and acquire understanding of religion as far as he is able; what he does not know he must not presume to decide, but must ask about it.

Then 'Ali said: 'The least by which a servant becomes an associator is that he adopts as religion something God has forbidden, claiming that God commanded it, and sets it up as a religion by which he worships the one who allegedly commanded it, though that object of worship is other than God.' This confirms God's saying: 'They took their rabbis and monks as lords apart from God.' The Messenger explained that this occurred when those leaders made things lawful or unlawful for them and they accepted those rulings as religious law.

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'Ali then said that the least by which a servant goes astray is that he fails to recognize God's proof on earth and His witness over His creation, whose obedience God commanded and whose walāya He made obligatory. Such a person is like one who has taken a road without knowing where the road he seeks actually lies. The road, in ta'wil, is the Straight Path, and its likeness is the Imam. Whoever does not know him and turns aside from him is astray.

As for what Da'a'im al-Islam says concerning walāya toward God's awliya, we have already explained that walāya has the likeness of the first nāṭiq, Adam. God gathered in him the knowledge of the prophets. It was a secret entrusted with him, hidden and inward, and from him it passed from one to another among God's

prophets and the Imams of His religion. Among the words of 'Ali in a longer discourse is: 'You must obey those concerning whom you are not excused through ignorance. The knowledge with which Adam descended, and by which the prophets were distinguished, is present in the Seal of the Prophets and in the pure ones from his progeny. Where then are you being taken, and where are you wandering?'

For this reason walāya has the likeness of the inward. It is conviction of the heart, and the heart, as we have said, has the likeness of the Imam. The inward knowledge is the hidden treasure of the Imam. Whoever truly affirms the walāya of the Imams from the House of the Messenger of God affirms the reality of the inward; whoever denies their walāya denies the inward. The inward knowledge is found only with the Imams. They are its treasurers, its bearers, and those joined to it. It is their distinguishing miracle: God distinguished them through the knowledge of ta'wil just as He distinguished their ancestor Muhammad through the revealed text (tanzīl), which He made his miracle and by which He challenged creation to produce its like. Likewise He made the knowledge of ta'wil distinctive to the Imams of religion from the family of the Messenger.

Arabic often calls a thing by the name of what accompanies, adheres to, or corresponds to it. In this sense the Book may have the likeness of the Imam, because the Qur'an accompanies every Imam: he acts by it, relies upon it, and possesses its knowledge. God commanded His Messenger to say: 'God is sufficient as a witness between me and you, and whoever possesses knowledge of the Book.' This refers to his legatee 'Ali, to whom he entrusted that knowledge, and to the Imams descended from him to whom it passed. The Arabs also use the word imam for a book; commentators said concerning God's words, 'We have enumerated everything in a clear Imam,' that it means a book.

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Among the passages cited in Da'a'im al-Islam concerning walāya is God's saying: 'Your wali is only God, His Messenger, and those who believe - those who establish prayer and give zakat while bowing. Whoever takes God, His Messenger, and those who believe as wali: indeed the party of God are the victorious.' The address is directed outwardly to all believers. God likewise says: 'The believing men and believing women are awliya of one another.' We have already explained that walāya is one of the pillars of Islam. God commanded obedience to those vested with authority and joined obedience to them with obedience to Himself and His Messenger: 'Obey God, obey the Messenger, and those vested with authority among you.' In the same way He joined their walāya to His walāya and the walāya of His Messenger: 'Your wali is only God, His Messenger, and those who believe.' This is an obligation God imposed upon the believers.

Walāya in its root meaning is hearing and obedience. If the passage meant what the generality claim - that 'those who believe' here means every person who believes in God and His Messenger - it would be impossible to distinguish which among them are commanded to hear and obey and which are entitled to such obedience. Every one of them would have to obey every other, even though their desires differ, their hearts and opinions are opposed, and among them are obedient people, sinners, people who oppose, and people who are themselves opposed. God knew all this concerning them and would not impose an obligation whose proper object could not be identified or whose performance could not be soundly established.

The word 'believer' can indeed apply broadly to anyone who believes in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, prophets, Imams, and awliya, because the root of faith is affirmation. God says, in the words of Jacob's sons, 'You would not believe us even if we were truthful,' meaning 'you would not affirm what we say.' But it is also well known in the Arabic language in which the Qur'an was revealed that an expression may be general in form while a particular group is intended.

God says: 'Those to whom the people said, ‘The people have gathered against you.’' It is impossible for 'the people' in both occurrences to mean every human being: the speakers themselves were among people, those addressed were among people, and those said to have gathered were only some people. Thus the expression is general while the referent is particular. The same happens constantly in Arabic speech: a person says, 'I met the scholars,' 'I saw the kings,' 'I heard the people speaking,' or 'I witnessed the armies,' although he means only those whom he actually met, saw, heard, or witnessed.

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So too God's saying 'Your wali is only God, His Messenger, and those who believe' does not mean every believer, because the address itself obliges the believers to accept the walāya of a specific group from among them. The 'believers' intended here are the Imams. God joined obedience to them with obedience to Himself and His Messenger when He said, 'Obey God, obey the Messenger, and those vested with authority among you,' just as He joined their walāya to His walāya and the walāya of His Messenger.

The name 'believer' nevertheless applies in other passages to all who believe in God and His Messenger. Moses says: 'Glory be to You; I repent to You, and I am the first of the believers.' God says: 'The Messenger believes in what was sent down to him from his Lord, and the believers - each believes in God'; and: 'Say: I believe in what God has sent down of Book.' Hence context determines whether the name is general or particular.

God also says: 'Those who believe in God and His messengers - those are the truthful and the witnesses with their Lord.' Yet not every person who outwardly believes in God and His Messenger is thereby a 'truthful one' and a 'witness' in the technical sense. God tells us that in every community there is a witness: 'How will it be when We bring from every community a witness and bring you as a witness over these?' and: 'The prophets and the witnesses will be brought.' Thus the truthful and the witnesses intended among the believers are the Imams. Many people outwardly profess belief while still falling into associationism, as God says: 'Most of them do not believe in God except while associating others with Him.'

Likewise the verse 'The believing men and believing women are awliya of one another' means that the Imams are awliya of the believers beneath them, and their walāya is obligatory for all believers below them. The Imams themselves are awliya of one another as well, for every Imam first stood as a follower under the Imam before him before he became Imam, while the Messenger is the Imam and wali of all the Imams. This is the meaning of believers being awliya of one another.

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Walāya therefore exists both from the one who possesses authority and toward the one over whom authority is exercised. The designation 'believers' can include them all, while a Qur'anic address that is general in its outward wording can refer inwardly to only some of them.

God says: 'Your wali is only God, His Messenger, and those who believe, those who establish prayer and give zakat while bowing.' Outwardly, all believers who perform God's obligations establish prayer, give zakat, and bow. Yet God singles out the walāya of those described in this verse. If the description were taken as referring equally to every believer, the difficulty already explained would return. Prayer and zakat, as Da'a'im al-Islam makes clear, are among the obligations of faith imposed upon the Imams as well as upon the rest of the believers. But what is intended here by those who establish prayer, give zakat, and bow is the Imams, for they establish prayer and give zakat in the complete reality of these acts, outwardly and inwardly.

Outwardly, the prayer made up of standing, bowing, prostration, sitting, and testimony is at its highest when performed in congregation, and some prayers - such as the Friday prayer and the two festival prayers - are not

properly performed except in congregation under an Imam. Thus the Imams are those who truly establish prayer. As for zakat, the servants are commanded to deliver what is due to them, and the Imams in turn are charged with giving it to those entitled to it and spending it in its proper avenues. Thus they are those who truly give zakat. Their bowing signifies their obedience to God and His Messenger.

Inwardly, prayer is the da'wa, which the Imams establish. Wealth in the inward is knowledge, and giving its zakat is to bring forth from that knowledge the portion God has required its possessors - the Imams of His religion - to bestow upon those who deserve it. Hence the Prophet's saying: 'Everything has a zakat, and the zakat of knowledge is to spread it.' The Imams therefore establish prayer, give zakat, and bow in the complete outward and inward senses, and it is they whom God intended.

The general transmitters themselves relate that this verse was revealed concerning 'Ali when, while bowing, he gave his ring in charity to a beggar who passed by him. Da'a'im al-Islam also relates that Muhammad ibn 'Ali was asked about God's words 'Your wali is only God, His Messenger, and those who believe.' When asked who 'those who believe' meant, he said: 'We are the ones meant by that.' He was also asked about the many Qur'anic addresses beginning, 'O you who believe,' and explained that in some of them 'Ali is the first, best, and most distinguished of those intended after the Messenger of God.

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It is not permissible to understand every occurrence of 'O you who believe' as referring without distinction to every believer. Muhammad ibn 'Ali said that in some such passages 'we' - the Imams - are intended, and that 'Ali is the first, the best, and the most distinguished of them after the Messenger of God. This confirms what has been explained: the designation 'faith' can gather both the Imams and those below them, while particular Qur'anic passages elevate certain ranks of the believers over others.

Many Qur'anic expressions that the generality have claimed for themselves are, in this interpretation, directed especially to the Imams: 'Thus We made you a middle community that you may be witnesses over humanity and the Messenger a witness over you'; 'These similitudes We set forth for people, but none understands them except those who know'; 'those vested with authority among you'; 'God commands you to render trusts to those entitled to them and, when you judge between people, to judge with justice'; 'in that are signs for those who discern'; 'in that are signs for people of understanding'; 'be with the truthful'; 'He has placed no hardship upon you in religion'; 'the truthful and the witnesses'; 'for every people there is a guide'; 'those firmly rooted in knowledge'; and 'then We caused those of Our servants whom We chose to inherit the Book.' There are many more examples which, God willing, you will hear in what follows. May God make you among those who understand what they hear. May He bless Muhammad the Prophet and his pure family. God is sufficient for us and is the best disposer of affairs.

The Fourth Session of Part One

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, the giver of every blessing. May God bless Muhammad, the Prophet of the community, and the chosen, elect Imams from his progeny.

As for what Da'a'im al-Islam says concerning knowledge and the people of knowledge: by 'knowledge' in this context is meant the knowledge transmitted from God's awliya, His prophets, and the Imams of His religion, blessings and peace be upon them. By 'the scholars' are meant those very awliya in the primary and true sense. Whoever learns from them may also be numbered among the scholars figuratively because of following and belonging to them, just as God says, 'Whoever follows me is of me.'

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Not everyone who knows some particular thing is therefore one of the true scholars intended here. A person may be knowledgeable about evil, knowledgeable about good, or knowledgeable about a craft, profession, or worldly matter. There are innumerable branches of knowledge whose practitioners are called 'learned' in ordinary speech, yet they are not thereby among the scholars in the true religious sense.

Likewise, whoever invents a doctrine, adopts it as knowledge, derives it from another person without authoritative transmission, or extracts it from his own opinion does not thereby possess the true knowledge described here. Such people and their sciences are called 'knowledge' and 'scholars' only figuratively, as has already been explained.

God says: 'Rather, it is clear signs in the breasts of those who have been given knowledge.' The ones intended are His awliya; the phrase cannot mean indiscriminately every person who happens to know something. Likewise He says: 'God raises in degrees those among you who believe and those who have been given knowledge.' The knowledge intended is the true knowledge transmitted from God's awliya.

The Prophet said: 'Perhaps a bearer of jurisprudence is not himself a jurist, and perhaps a bearer of jurisprudence carries it to someone more understanding than he.' As explained earlier, this may refer to a person who carries jurisprudence but does not act upon what he carries. It can also be understood according to the figurative use of the names 'jurisprudence' and 'jurist.' In Arabic fiqh means knowledge and the faqīh is one who knows, though conventional usage came especially to apply it to knowledge of lawful and unlawful matters. Thus someone may be called learned figuratively while lacking the reality of the knowledge intended here.

Da'a'im al-Islam also relates from 'Ali: 'The scholar should not be ashamed, when asked about what he does not know, to say: I do not know.' This shows that a person may be called a scholar while remaining ignorant of part of knowledge - namely, one of those beneficiaries who learn from God's awliya and are attributed to knowledge figuratively rather than essentially.

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Among the proofs that the true scholars are God's awliya is the report in Da'a'im al-Islam from the Messenger of God: 'Learn from a scholar of my household, or from one who learned from a scholar of my household, and you will be saved from the Fire.'

The Messenger of God also said: 'The upright ones of every generation will carry this knowledge, repelling from it the distortion of the ignorant, the claims of the falsifiers, and the interpretations of the extremists.' The 'upright' here are the Imams. They are the bearers of true knowledge, with which they were entrusted and for whose explanation they were established. They repel from it corrupt alteration, false interpretation, and the doctrines that the misguided attribute to it out of their own opinions and desires.

We have also said that one who does not act according to what he knows is not counted as a scholar in the full reality of knowledge. Da'a'im al-Islam relates the Prophet's saying: 'The beginning of knowledge is silence.' This means the silence of the seeker before the one from whom he receives instruction: he must leave off verbal objection and disputation concerning what is being taught to him. His silence must also be joined to an inward intention not to reject in his heart what he hears. If the listener objects verbally to his instructor, or if his heart turns away from what is taught, he is deprived of the benefit of what he hears.

Moses, peace be upon him, was deprived of continued companionship with the learned servant when he objected to matters whose knowledge had not yet been disclosed to him. Likewise a person who hears words

but does not attend to them with his heart does not benefit. God speaks of those who listen to the Prophet and, after leaving him, ask the people of knowledge, 'What did he say just now?' They did not comprehend or retain what they heard because their hearts did not turn toward it.

The next degree is 'spreading it': that is, spreading what the listener has been authorized to disclose, not what he has been commanded to conceal. To spread what one was forbidden to spread and to disclose what one was ordered to keep secret is betrayal and transgression. Then the Prophet mentioned action upon knowledge, making action one of the defining parts of knowledge. Whoever does not act according to his knowledge is therefore not complete in knowledge and is not a scholar in the true sense.

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The Prophet said: 'Whoever learns knowledge in his youth is like an inscription carved in stone; whoever learns it when old is like writing upon water.' Youth here has the likeness of turning toward knowledge, for a young person is at the stage of advancing, strengthening, and completing his powers. Old age is the opposite and has the likeness of turning away. The meaning therefore returns to the principle already given. Many who seek and hear knowledge while young in outward age do not attend to it, preserve it, or benefit from it, while an elderly person may turn sincerely toward it, accept it, and benefit. The intended ta'wil is eagerness for knowledge and aversion to it, not merely outward chronological youth and age.

The Prophet also said: 'Excellent is knowledge as the minister of faith; excellent is forbearance as the minister of knowledge; excellent is gentleness as the minister of forbearance; and excellent is softness as the minister of gentleness.' We have explained that faith has the likeness of the inward, while knowledge can apply to both outward and inward. When knowledge assists faith outwardly and the believer becomes knowledgeable, knowledge completes and strengthens his faith. To be a 'minister' is to assist and support.

Forbearance is an excellent minister for knowledge because forbearance is the opposite of foolishness and wastefulness. God says: 'Do not give the foolish your property.' A believing scholar who does not squander his knowledge or place it where it does not belong is like one who does not waste his wealth. If he gives knowledge to someone unfit for it, he is like one who squanders wealth. Hence the saying: 'Do not give wisdom to those unworthy of it, for you would wrong wisdom; and do not withhold it from those worthy of it, for you would wrong them.'

Gentleness is an excellent minister for forbearance because gentleness means moderation and proper measure. The Messenger said that when God desires good for a household He introduces gentleness into their way of life. Thus knowledge too should be placed with its people in measured fashion, neither extravagantly nor stingily. God praises those who, when they spend, neither squander nor are miserly but take a balanced course between the two.

Softness is an excellent minister for gentleness. Softness is the opposite of severity. The scholar who places knowledge with those entitled to it, in its proper place and with measured gentleness, should also make his side mild toward them rather than being harsh and coarse. God says to His Prophet concerning the believing people around him: 'It was by mercy from God that you were gentle with them; had you been harsh and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you.'

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Da'a'im al-Islam relates from Abu 'Abd Allah Ja'far ibn Muhammad: 'Seek knowledge and adorn it with forbearance and dignity. Be humble toward those whom you teach knowledge, and do not be tyrannical scholars, lest your false conduct carry away your truth.' This has the same meaning as the teaching just given and explains it further.

As for the saying of the Messenger of God recorded in Da'a'im al-Islam, 'The likeness of the people of my House among you is like Noah's Ark: whoever boards it is saved and whoever remains behind is drowned,' the expression 'the people of my House' means those who uphold his da'wa - the Imams from his descendants, blessings be upon them. The 'house' has the likeness of the da'wa, just as the Ark has the likeness of the da'wa. Whoever enters the house is secure, and whoever boards the Ark is saved.

Arabic may name something by the name of what accompanies it and remains joined to it. The Prophet therefore described those who belong to his 'house' - his da'wa - as his household. He compared his da'wa with Noah's da'wa because, just as those who remained outside Noah's da'wa were destroyed while those who entered it were saved, so too those who abandon Muhammad's da'wa are destroyed and those who enter it are saved. Noah was the first of the great law-bearing messengers after Adam, and Muhammad was the last of the great law-bearing messengers; hence the comparison between their saving calls.

Da'a'im al-Islam also transmits the saying: 'There is no rest for the believer except at meeting God or at recognizing His proof.' Inwardly this applies first to the Imam, then to his Hujja, and then to those beneath them who convey from them by their authorization to a listener who truly receives and accepts. True rest through their recognition means the lasting rest in the abode of permanence. It does not mean worldly ease, for the people of true guidance often endure the greatest toil and hardship in this world. God says: 'By time, humankind is surely in loss, except those who believe, do righteous deeds, and exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to patience.'

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The Messenger of God is also reported in Da'a'im al-Islam to have said: 'Whoever loves this world, love of the hereafter departs from his heart; and whenever God gives a servant knowledge and he increases in love of the world, God increases in anger toward him.' In inward interpretation the world has the likeness of the outward, because the world is present and visible, while the hereafter has the likeness of the inward because it is hidden from sight.

Thus the inward meaning is that whoever inclines exclusively toward outward knowledge, loves it, and rejects and hates the inward loses the love of the inward from his heart. We have already said, however, that one must not turn to one dimension while abandoning the other. Both outward and inward must be embraced together, because neither is sound without the other.

The saying, 'Whenever God gives a servant knowledge and he increases in love of the world, God increases in anger toward him,' refers to true knowledge - inward knowledge - being granted to someone who then grows in attachment to the outward alone and turns away from the inward. God increases in anger toward him because he has preferred one dimension over the other after God commanded him to affirm and embrace both together.

Da'a'im al-Islam further relates the Prophet's saying: 'My companions are like the stars; whichever of them you follow, you will be guided.' It also explains that 'my companions' cannot mean, as the generality claim, every person who physically accompanied him. After his death those companions differed and fought one another. If every one of them had been an equally valid object of imitation, then the followers of each side in their fighting would have been rightly guided even when killing followers of the other side, and the opposing side could make the same claim.

The companions whom the Prophet commanded people to follow are therefore the Imams from his descendants, peace be upon them. They are his companions in the true sense because they accompanied and upheld his command, remained steadfast upon what he brought, and did not abandon it. Mere outward

companionship of bodies does not of itself confer the excellence of the person accompanied upon the companion. A believer may accompany an unbeliever, and a righteous person may accompany a wicked one.

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God relates the example of two companions, one a believer and one an unbeliever: the unbeliever entered his garden while wronging himself and said that he did not think it would ever perish and did not think the Hour would come; his companion, while speaking with him, said: 'Do you disbelieve in Him who created you from dust, then from a drop, then fashioned you as a man? But He is God, my Lord, and I associate no one with my Lord.' Thus mere companionship is not the criterion; true companionship is conformity to the Prophet's command.

The one who is truly 'knowing' in an absolute sense is God alone, without partner, for He knows by His essence. Anyone beneath Him who is called a knower is so only figuratively and by what God has taught him. People differ in degrees according to what God teaches them. God says to His Messenger: 'He taught you what you did not know.' The Messenger knew in reality through the teaching of God, and likewise he taught the people only what God had taught him.

God says: 'Just as We sent among you a Messenger from yourselves, reciting to you Our signs, purifying you, teaching you the Book and wisdom, and teaching you what you did not know.' He also says: 'He it is who sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His signs, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom, though before that they were in manifest error.' Outwardly, the Book here is God's revealed Book, and wisdom is what the Messenger explained and transmitted from God. Inwardly, the Book has the likeness of the Imam, as has already been explained, and wisdom has the likeness of inward ta'wil.

The Messenger therefore taught his community both outward and inward, according to their ranks, stations, and what was required for the people of each level. This is among God's greatest favors, in accordance with His words that He has lavished upon people His blessings outward and inward. The Messenger would not teach them the outward without the inward, nor the inward without the outward. Rather, God completed His manifest and hidden blessings through him.

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The Messenger taught them the revealed Book, explained what the Sunna made obligatory, made known to them the Imam of their age after him and the obligation of the Imamate among the chosen from his descendants, and entrusted the knowledge of ta'wil to the one he established in his place so that this knowledge would be the distinguishing proof of the Imamate. Each Imam in succession likewise taught and entrusted the one who would succeed him and stand in his place among the community.

True knowledge, then, is the knowledge that comes from God. God alone is the Knower by His own essence, and His awliya are the true scholars beneath Him because He teaches them from His knowledge. Whoever learns from them is counted among the scholars in accordance with what he has received. This is the knowledge that benefits, which God has made obligatory for His servants to learn; people occupy differing degrees within it. The Messenger said: 'Learn from a scholar of my household - meaning the Imam - or from one who learned from a scholar of my household - meaning the Imam's Hujja - and you will be saved from the Fire.' Other disciplines may be called knowledge conventionally, but whatever contradicts this true knowledge is not knowledge in the inward reality. It is the forbidden and the false, and whoever adopts it is astray, while one who teaches it to others leads them astray. May God protect you, O company of the awliya, from

misguidance, make you among the people of guidance, and benefit you through what He has taught you. May God bless our master Muhammad, His Prophet, and the Imams from his progeny. God is sufficient for us; excellent is the Protector and excellent is the Helper.

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God as He is worthy to be praised for the abundance of His gifts and favors. May God bless Muhammad, His Prophet, and the chosen awliya from his progeny.

As for what Da'a'im al-Islam says concerning purification: outward purification is ablution and washing with water, and tayammum with clean earth for the one permitted to use it, in order to remove the states of bodily impurity. Inward purification is purification through knowledge and through what knowledge makes obligatory, from the states and corrupt acts of the soul. God says: 'We sent down from heaven purifying water.' He also says that He sends down water from heaven 'to purify you by it, to remove from you the defilement of Satan, to strengthen your hearts, and to make your feet firm.'

It has already been explained that water has the likeness of knowledge. Just as outward water purifies the body from outward impurities, knowledge purifies the soul from inward impurities and from destructive, evil acts. Purification also occurs through performing what knowledge requires. God says: 'Take from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them to grow.' The Messenger of God said that the prescribed legal penalty is a purification for the offence for which it becomes due, and that fever is a purification from sins for the person whose sins God forgives through it.

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God says concerning Abraham: 'When We assigned to Abraham the place of the House: Do not associate anything with Me, and purify My House for those who circumambulate, those who stand, and those who bow and prostrate.' If purification of the House meant only washing its walls with water, that command would not explain what occurred in its history. The House was inhabited after Abraham by the chosen descendants of Ishmael, but later the affair changed, polytheists took possession of it, and idols and pagan practices were introduced. When God sent Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, He revealed: 'The associators are unclean, so let them not approach the Sacred Mosque after this year of theirs.' The Messenger then expelled them from the sacred precinct. Thus the purification of the House was the establishment there of God's awliya and the removal of His enemies, not merely outward washing with water.

God also said to His Messenger Muhammad: 'O you who are wrapped up, arise and warn; magnify your Lord; and purify your garments.' After commanding him to warn, He commanded him to begin by purifying his garments.

Garments in ta'wil have the likeness of the outward, because garments are manifest. God therefore commanded the Messenger to establish the outward form of the shari'a and to cleanse it from the filth of the unbelievers of the age of ignorance and from the religious practices they had inserted into the outward religion. In the same way, as has already been explained, when a person is being taught faith, he must begin by establishing and purifying his outward practice from the outward forms of the people of falsehood before the inward knowledge is opened to him.

Many commentators from the generality themselves interpreted 'purify your garments' as something other than merely washing clothing with outward water. Some said it meant, 'Purify yourself from sins,' with the garments standing for the person. Others said: do not wear your garments while engaged in lying, wickedness, or sin, but be pure of such things. Others interpreted it as shortening the garments; still others observed that the Arabs say, 'I clothed so-and-so in a garment of disgrace and shame,' meaning that they attributed blame

and defect to him. Thus they all sought a meaning beyond ordinary washing, circling around the inward sense without reaching it.

The root principle is that bodily impurities are cleansed outwardly with water, while the impurities of the spirits are cleansed inwardly by knowledge and wisdom. This is also connected with the report that the Messenger came through noble loins and purified wombs, meaning that his lineage passed only through lawful union and not through fornication, as was widespread in the age of ignorance.

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God says concerning the Imams from the Prophet's descendants: 'God only desires to remove defilement from you, People of the House, and to purify you completely.' This strengthens what has been said concerning the purification of spirits inwardly through knowledge and wisdom. There are many examples of this kind, and to enumerate them all would prolong the discourse.

Many exhortations toward purification are also transmitted from the Messenger of God, and, as already explained, their meanings apply to the inward as well as to the outward. Among them is the report in Da'a'im al-Islam that he said: 'My community will be gathered on the Day of Resurrection bright-faced and white-limbed from the traces of ablution.' Ghurra is the white mark on the forehead of an animal, and tahjīl is whiteness on its legs. If this statement were carried only on its literal outward sense - that the entire community of Muhammad would be resurrected with those physical markings - it would amount to a form of disfigurement, and that is not what is intended.

The Messenger also made clear in Da'a'im al-Islam that the true 'community of Muhammad' in the complete sense includes the Imams from his progeny. In Arabic one says, 'So-and-so is the ghurra of his people,' meaning their best and most distinguished person, and 'so-and-so is the most radiant and white-limbed,' meaning that his excellence is manifest as the marked horse is distinguished from an unmarked herd. The brightness from ablution therefore signifies distinction through the purification of true knowledge and obedience.

Da'a'im al-Islam also relates that when the Messenger of God was taken by night to heaven he was asked, 'Concerning what does the highest assembly dispute?' He said, 'I do not know,' until he was taught. He was then told that they dispute concerning perfecting ablution in severe cold, taking many steps to the congregations, and waiting for one prayer after another. He also said: 'Shall I not direct you to what effaces sins and faults? Perfecting ablution at difficult times, and waiting for prayer after prayer.' Severe cold and other hardships make the use of water difficult outwardly. Inwardly, perfecting purification in hardship signifies cleansing oneself of sins through repentance and compelling the soul to abandon them even though it inclines toward immediate desires.

Taking many steps to congregations means outwardly walking to the congregations of those who pray in the mosques. Inwardly it means going to the congregations of the people of the da'wa, whose likeness is prayer. Waiting for prayer after prayer signifies waiting for the da'wa of one Imam after the da'wa of another Imam, certain that God will uphold their cause and exalt their word. The fact that the highest assembly - the angels - dispute concerning these matters indicates the greatness of their merit and rank.

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...and [the Imam is] the bearer of His knowledge, the possessor of His summons, his heir, and the master of the age after him. Prostration signifies the rank of the Imam: obedience to him, belief in his Imamate, acknowledgment of his walaya, and recognition that he is the means between God and His servants. They are commanded to take from him, accept from him, remain with him, declare lawful what he declares lawful, and

prohibit what he prohibits from God. This corresponds to what God related concerning His command to the angels to prostrate to Adam, when He set Adam over them, taught him what they did not know, and made them need him in that respect. It also corresponds to the prostration of Jacob to Joseph when Joseph was distinguished by excellence and placed in the position of Imamate. In each case obedience and submission were required.

Thus the outward limits of prayer—standing, sitting, bowing, and prostrating—correspond to the inner limits of the da'wa, the summons to God and to His awliya. Prayer is the outward likeness of that summons, and the outward ordinances of prayer likewise have inner counterparts in the science of ta'wil.

Among these is what we cited from the Da'a'im concerning thorough performance of ablution and making the water reach the eyes. In the inner sense this means making one's purification from the filth of sins complete through knowledge, of which water is the symbol.

What is related concerning a person who does not complete his ablution, bowing, prostration, and humility, so that his prayer is khidaj, means that the prayer is deficient. In Arabic, khidaj signifies corruption or invalidity; it is said that a she-camel akhdajat when she casts her fetus before it is complete. So whoever is deficient in either the inner or outward requirements of prayer has rendered his prayer defective in that respect.

The saying of 'Ali, "Purification is half of faith," also has an inner meaning. Faith is of two kinds: renunciation of falsehood and its people, and entry into the truth and among its people. We have explained that prayer represents renunciation of falsehood and its people, and prayer itself is called faith. When the direction of prayer was changed to the Ka'ba, the Muslims asked the Messenger of God whether the reward for their previous prayers would be lost, and God revealed, "God would never cause your faith to be lost," meaning their prayer. Thus prayer is called faith. In the inner sense too it is faith, because the da'wa gathers together the whole of faith.

As for what is related in the Da'a'im from the Messenger of God: "Whoever perfects his purification and then walks..."

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"...to the mosque is in prayer so long as he does not invalidate [his state of purity]." Its inner meaning is that mosques symbolize, in the inner sense, the da'is and the gates leading to the awliya of God, each according to its rank. Whoever sincerely repents, desires the da'wa, and goes toward the one who will summon him is counted among the people of the da'wa by virtue of his intention, until he is actually summoned. If he dies before that, he is among those whose reward has fallen due with God, as God says: "Whoever leaves his home emigrating to God and His Messenger, and death overtakes him, his reward has already become incumbent upon God."

Likewise it is related from the Messenger of God that among those in the shade of the Throne on the Day when there will be no shade but His is a man who leaves after completing his ablution and walks toward one of the houses of God intending the prayer, but death overtakes him before he reaches it.

As for the statement in the Da'a'im, "There is no prayer without purification," its ruling is the same outwardly and inwardly. Outward prayer is not valid without ritual purity; whoever prays without it must purify himself and repeat the prayer. In the same way, no da'wa to the inner truth is valid or beneficial for a person, and no covenant of the awliya of God may properly be taken from him, until he is purified from sins and has renounced falsehood in its entirety and all of its people. If he is summoned and the covenant is taken from him while he merely renounces falsehood with his tongue but persists inwardly in what requires renunciation, the

da'wa does not benefit him and he is not one of its people until he repents and dissociates himself from that from which dissociation is required. Once he is purified from it, the covenant may be taken anew, just as outward purification must be restored. God says: "Leave the outward aspect of sin and its inward aspect."

Likewise, al-Sadiq is reported in the Da'a'im to have said: "God accepts no prayer except with purification." An act that God does not accept, even though outwardly it resembles a good deed, is nothing and gives its doer no benefit. God says: "We shall turn to whatever deeds they did and make them scattered dust."

It is also related in the Da'a'im from the Messenger of God and from 'Ali that a person who remains in a state of ablution may perform whatever prayers he wishes so long as he does not invalidate it. The Messenger of God, on the day of the conquest of Mecca, performed all the prayers with a single ablution...

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...and there is consensus on this. Renewing ablution for every prayer is recommended but is not an obligatory duty.

Its inner meaning is that when a person has been summoned, has renounced falsehood and its people, and has purified himself—this being the inner purification we have described—then a circumstance may arise that requires a new covenant to be taken from him, such as the succession from one Imam to the Imam who follows him, or some other cause requiring believers to renew the pledge. If the believer remains upon the purity of faith and has introduced no invalidating matter into it, he is not required, when the covenant is renewed, to formulate afresh his renunciation of falsehood and its people, for he is already free of them. If, however, he repeats and reaffirms that renunciation as a renewal and confirmation, it is good and carries reward, just as renewing ablution does outwardly.

This is among God's blessings. He says, "He has lavished upon you His blessings, outward and inward." Understand, O company of the awliya, the inner aspect of what God has required of you outwardly and inwardly. Establish both the outward and the inward as He has commanded and required. May God assist you in that and open its understanding to you. God's blessings and peace be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, and upon the Imams from his progeny.

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, the One known through the knowledge of the hudud. Blessings be upon the best of creation, Muhammad, the Seal of Prophethood, and upon his rightly-guiding, rightly-guided family.

Know—may God have mercy upon you, O company of brethren—that the destruction of those who intend to travel the path of faith often comes through bad training and through being made to bear foods harmful to them, according to the manner in which those da'is entrusted with their affairs have raised them. Some da'is open up knowledge to them without an ordered method, and diseases then enter their religion just as diseases enter the bodies of children when they are not raised according to a sound regimen and are made at the beginning to consume coarse foods. Bodily illnesses may even destroy some of them.

The wali of God, in what he has charged you with concerning your religion, has followed the path laid down by the awliya of God and the limit they established. Whoever among you has remained sound and whose affair has prospered, it is through God's granting him success and through his own attentiveness to what he was addressed with and made to bear. If weakness or deficiency has entered any of you, it has been through a failure to attend properly and through turning away from much that was said. God guides each by His favor

and grants all success in what pleases Him through the breadth of His mercy and through what His wali seeks of the rectification of his community.

At the beginning of this teaching it was said to you that what you are now hearing is the inner meaning of what you first began with. The believer must begin by establishing the outward practice of his religion. God's wali laid this out for you in the book...

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...Da'a'im al-Islam. You heard it, it was repeated to you, and you were tested in it so that you would establish the outward form of your religion as God commanded you. It is not permitted for you to abandon any of it. This is the religious path carried by the awliya of God from their ancestor Muhammad, His servant and Messenger, and it rejects whatever contradicts it among the outward forms of religion distorted by distorters, invented by innovators, and followed by those who later went astray through their opinions and whims.

What remains for believers who respond to God's awliya, when they respond to them, is to reject the outward forms of those falsifiers—forms they established by analogy and personal opinion and innovated through arbitrary burdens and passions—and to establish the outward religion of God by which He commanded His servants to worship Him on the tongue of His Messenger Muhammad. The Imams of His servants transmitted it from him, one after another in every age, each living Imam receiving it from his predecessor in a witnessed succession back to their Prophet.

This outward doctrine transmitted among them from the Messenger of God is what the wali of God has set out for you in the book Da'a'im al-Islam so that you may act by it, establish it, and reject all contrary outward doctrine of the people of falsehood. You have heard it and continue to hear it outwardly in full. The proof stands against whoever opposes it. Whoever among you establishes it has taken his portion and fulfilled his Lord's obligation; whoever discards it or falls short has only the portion corresponding to his deficiency.

May God make you, O company of the awliya, among those who perform what they are commanded and desist from what they are forbidden. In this teaching the wali of God has spread out for you as much of the inner meaning of that outward practice as should be explained, so that you may know it and establish both the outward and inward dimensions of what God has imposed upon you. In this way God completes His blessing upon you, as He says, "He has lavished upon you His blessings, outward and inward." His religion, which He has chosen for you, is among the greatest blessings He has bestowed. You are to desist from what He has forbidden outwardly and inwardly, just as He commanded in the verse, "Leave the outward aspect of sin and its inward aspect."

You have already heard in this teaching and those before it many principles which you must preserve and act upon, so that what comes afterward may be understood through them. You have learned that water has, in the inner sense, the likeness of esoteric knowledge. God says, "We made from water every living thing." Humanity was created in two aspects and from two substances: a subtle, living substance, namely the spirit, and a visible, dense substance, namely the body. God made the life of bodies depend upon outward water, by which the bodies of His servants live, from which comes what they eat and drink. He made the life of spirits depend upon knowledge, which corresponds inwardly to water, and through it their spirits live...

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...and understand. Whoever has no knowledge is among those of whom God says, "Dead, not alive; and they do not perceive when they will be raised." It is therefore incumbent on the believer who responds to the command of God's awliya to turn toward knowledge and learn it, so that his spirit may live by it. If he does not

do so, he is like an animal possessing a body and a spirit but no knowledge. God says of people of this sort, "They are only like cattle; rather, they are further astray from the path."

The believer's rank in faith is in proportion to the knowledge he acquires. Hence the saying of 'Ali, "The value of every person is what he does well." God has made water in the outward realm both drink and purifier, and likewise with its inner counterpart, knowledge. Drinking water inwardly corresponds to retaining and learning knowledge; purification by water inwardly corresponds to using knowledge to cleanse oneself of the filth of acts of disobedience and sins by abandoning them and dissociating oneself from them. The explanation and proofs of this have already been given.

You have heard in what preceded of this teaching the ta'wil of the inner meanings in the beginning of the Book of the Da'a'im: the reports concerning walaya, knowledge, and the learned. The discussion reached the chapter on purification.

The Da'a'im then mentions the occurrences that require ablution—that is, those that invalidate ablution and require purification outwardly: excrement and wind issuing from the anus; urine and madhy, a fluid issuing from the sexual organ because of sexual desire without intercourse; anything issuing from the front or rear passage; and overpowering sleep which separates a person from his awareness so that he no longer knows what he is doing. If he sleeps lightly while remaining aware of himself, no ablution is required. A full ritual bath is required after sexual intercourse, after menstruation, for an unbeliever when he embraces Islam, and for the deceased before burial.

These outward occurrences requiring purification have inner counterparts from which one must purify oneself by knowledge, just as outwardly one purifies oneself from them with water. Excrement corresponds to unbelief (kufr), and the knowledge by which one is purified from it is faith in God. Urine corresponds to associationism (shirk), which has degrees and levels; the knowledge that purifies from it is the affirmation of God's unity and the rejection of opposites and likenesses as partners with Him. Wind issuing from the anus corresponds to...

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...hypocrisy (nifaq). The knowledge by which one is purified from it is repentance, abandoning it, certainty, sincerity, and affirmation of God, His prophets, His awliya, and the Imams of His religion.

Sleep corresponds to heedlessness. If heedlessness comes between a person and the understanding of anything required in his religion, he must purify himself from it by knowledge: he must examine the matter in a way that awakens him and alerts him to the religious duty by which God has bound him. But if his heedlessness comes only from some worldly occupation or labor, while the believer remains firmly established in his religion, then it does not invalidate anything of his state. A believer cannot avoid such things altogether. This is like one who sleeps but still senses and hears what occurs around him; sleep has not come between him and his awareness, and outwardly such sleep does not invalidate his purity. The same is true inwardly, as we have described.

Madhy, the fluid emitted from the sexual organ without intercourse, corresponds to doubt. Outwardly it is not the emission that truly necessitates the full bath; it arises from imagination and thought. Inwardly, doubt is likewise removed and purified by the knowledge that brings certainty and sincerity and dispels doubt and hesitation.

The discharge that requires the full ritual bath corresponds inwardly to sexual intercourse. Intercourse inwardly is the joining of the believing learner with the person who bestows knowledge and wisdom upon him

and his hearing that knowledge from him. That is the inward coupling. The tongue of the speaker corresponds to the male organ, the ear corresponds to the female organ, and the fluid emitted in intercourse corresponds to knowledge passing from the tongue into the ears. If it reaches the heart and the heart retains it, this is like the water reaching the womb. By God's power, a child then comes into being; likewise life arises in the heart when knowledge and wisdom are cast into it and carried.

If one hears that knowledge but does not retain it, it is like fluid produced in intercourse that does not reach the womb: pleasure may occur, but there is no result. The same is true of one who hears wisdom but fails to understand and retain it. And if the fluid reaches the womb but nature does not preserve and develop it, it is lost; likewise knowledge and wisdom may be heard and retained for a time, then forgotten and lost, so that the hearer gains no benefit.

One who does not hear what is delivered to him because he turns away and occupies himself with something else is like intercourse in a place other than the proper one: the speaker may take pleasure in what he delivers and benefit from saying it, but the one addressed neither receives its pleasure nor derives benefit from it.

Intercourse without ejaculation outwardly corresponds to an instructor who alludes and speaks symbolically about knowledge and wisdom without fully disclosing it...

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...and nocturnal emission corresponds to an instructor who delivers knowledge and wisdom while inattentive and without directing his heart toward what he says. This resembles the outward state of a sleeping person, who inwardly symbolizes the heedless. When instruction is delivered in this way, the hearer does not benefit and it does not reach his heart, just as no pregnancy results from a nocturnal emission and the fluid does not reach the womb. Hence the saying of one of the sages: when speech comes forth from the heart, it falls into the heart; when it comes forth only from the tongue, it does not pass beyond the ear.

Purification outwardly from whatever issues from the front passage corresponds inwardly to purification from whatever speech issues from an instructor but fails to reach the learner, just as things other than semen may issue from the male organ—blood, worms, stones, and the like—and outwardly require ablution.

Purification from what issues from the rear passage other than excrement corresponds to purification from a person's acts other than unbelief: sins, offenses, and faults from which he must cleanse himself by knowledge, repentance, seeking forgiveness, and correction.

Menstruation in women corresponds to offenses that occur among learners and become incumbent upon them. When they turn back and repent, they purify themselves by knowledge through firmly resolving not to return to them, for learners are symbolized by women.

The washing of an unbeliever when he embraces Islam with outward water corresponds inwardly to the purification by knowledge of one who enters faith.

The washing of the dead before shrouding and carrying them to the grave has, in one aspect of ta'wil, the likeness of one who becomes an unbeliever after having believed. Outward death corresponds inwardly to unbelief. This meaning has even passed to the common people, who interpret God's saying, "Was he who was dead and We gave him life..." in this way; and there are other Qur'anic references to death that they explain as unbelief.

If a believer apostatizes and later responds again to the summons of Islam, he must be purified by knowledge. His outward shrouding symbolizes his being re-established upon the outward law, and his burial in the grave

symbolizes his remaining among the people of the outward alone, who are likened to the dead and to graves. Hence God's saying, "Competition in worldly increase distracts you until you visit the graves," that is, until you resort to the people of the outward...

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...and incline toward those who follow something other than the outward doctrine of God's awliya, because of the worldly abundance and advantages one hopes to obtain through them.

Similarly, when an apostate from faith repents and seeks to return to the da'wa, he is not to be summoned immediately. He must first be restored to the outward practice upon which he had formerly been. When he establishes it and becomes sincere in it, he is summoned again. This resembles the dead person being brought out from the grave, whose likeness is the outward realm. This is one aspect of the ta'wil. There is another aspect which is fundamental, and we shall mention it when the rites of funerals are discussed and explain the difference between the two meanings, God willing.

These are general principles concerning the occurrences that require purification outwardly and inwardly. Understand and preserve them so that, when you hear their branches, you will already have grasped and recognized the roots. You will continue, God willing, to hear the development of these matters in this teaching and in later teachings, each principle coming in its proper place. May God benefit you by what you hear.

All the occurrences requiring purification, outwardly and inwardly, which you have heard, are called hadath because they are things brought about by the one who does them—except intercourse, which outwardly is called janaba. Inwardly, as we have explained, it symbolizes the joining of instructors with learners. This is not itself a sinful innovation or offense. Full bathing is nevertheless required after it outwardly because inwardly it symbolizes purification by knowledge from associationism, unbelief, hypocrisy, and all sins and acts of disobedience. For that reason the outward bath encompasses the whole body, corresponding to the comprehensive inward purification from all forms of the filth of sin.

As for the rule that ablution is not required when something leaves the body by a route other than the customary exit of hadath, its inner meaning is that if a person does something of this sort without deliberate intent—because he forgot, erred, or was compelled—there is no blame upon him, just as this is recognized outwardly. God says, "Except for one who is compelled while his heart is secure in faith." And the Messenger of God said, "God has lifted from my community [liability for] their mistakes, their forgetfulness, and what they are compelled to do." Thus outwardly an emission is not called hadath unless it exits by the two customary passages, and inwardly an act is not treated as a deliberate hadath unless a person intentionally brings it about by his own will.

As for what the Book of the Da'a'im says concerning the etiquette of relieving oneself, including concealing the private parts and lowering the gaze from them, this is required of the believer...

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...but an unbeliever has no inviolability in this respect. The private part is the place from which hadath issues and what surrounds it.

It is related that a man's 'awra is what lies between his navel and knees, whereas a woman's entire body is 'awra. Its inward meaning is as follows. Men, as we have explained, symbolize the instructors who impart knowledge and wisdom to the believers beneath them. They are arranged in ranks, one above another. Every instructor is symbolized by a male, and every learner by a female. The learner must conceal everything entrusted to him by the instructor; in this respect he is like the woman whose whole person must be covered.

The instructor, however, should not disclose all that he possesses to a learner. Rather, he should give him portions of wisdom and knowledge, revealing to each according to his capacity, while retaining something hidden from the one below him so that his superiority and rank remain established.

What a man must cover is described as three areas of his body. God says: "O you who believe, let those whom your right hands possess and those among you who have not yet reached puberty ask permission of you at three times: before the dawn prayer, when you put aside your garments at noon, and after the night prayer—three times of privacy for you." By "those who believe" here are meant the instructors; by "those whom your right hands possess," the learners under their authority who have not yet been granted full authorization; and by "those who have not reached puberty," the learners who are restricted, including those authorized in part but who have not reached the rank of unrestricted authority.

The instructors are therefore commanded to conceal from them what belongs to these three 'awras and not open to them the kinds of knowledge lying within their limits until the proper time and rank has been reached.

Likewise concealment is required when relieving oneself—whether in defecation, urination, other occurrences of hadath, or intercourse. In the inner sense this means that the dealings of instructors with learners are to take place privately and under concealment in whatever knowledge and wisdom they deliver to them. By such teaching they remove from them the unbelief, associationism, hypocrisy, and sins whose symbols have already been explained. The covenants taken from them, the teachings imparted, and the truths made known to them must therefore occur in secrecy, just as the outward counterparts we have described are concealed, exact correspondence for exact correspondence.

Hence the command to conceal the private parts, to choose secluded places for defecation, urination, and other bodily needs, and to conceal oneself during intercourse, all have outward and inward applications as we have explained.

The prohibition against urinating or defecating in water, and against pouring water upon them, has the inner meaning that one must not mix the drinking of knowledge with associationism or unbelief, for excrement and urine symbolize these things and water symbolizes knowledge...

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...The place of relieving oneself corresponds to the da'wa, because within it one is cleansed from unbelief, associationism, hypocrisy, and every act of disobedience. We have explained that excrement, wind, and urine issue from the rear and front passages, and that within the da'wa a person is purified by knowledge from what they symbolize and from every sin.

It is related from the Messenger of God that he looked toward the privy and said to 'Ali: "O 'Ali, this place has twelve limits. Whoever does not know them has not completed the realities of faith, nor truly known me, nor truly known you."

The first is that one should not enter it except wearing sandals. The sandal symbolizes the outward law: no one should enter the da'wa unless he is established upon the outward religion of Islam.

When entering, one places the left foot first. This means that entry into the da'wa occurs through the hujja, for the administration of the da'wa belongs to him. One covers the head until leaving; the qibla symbolizes the Imam, whom one must not confront with unbelief or associationism. When sitting to relieve oneself, one leans

upon the left leg, meaning that in renouncing unbelief one relies upon the hujja, to whom the affair of the da'wa belongs.

One does not remain in the privy for a long time: inwardly, one must not linger in falsehood but hasten to dissociate oneself from it. One does not cleanse oneself with dung or bone: that is, one does not purify oneself by obsolete or corrupt teachings, but only by the knowledge of the wali of one's age, not by the knowledge of the people of falsehood. One uses an odd number of cleansing stones: inwardly, one's purification rests upon the knowledge of the Imam of the age, his hujja, and his bab.

One cleanses oneself with the left hand. One does not pour the water directly upon the excrement but moves away from it and then washes and performs ablution; the inner meaning of this has already been explained.

One does not speak until leaving: this means that the person from whom the covenant is being taken remains silent and listens carefully to what is said to him. Upon leaving, one puts the right foot forward: inwardly, this means that his reliance is now upon the Imam of his age.

These are the inner meanings of the twelve limits. Outwardly they are rules of etiquette in ritual purity and should be observed. Whoever does not know them has not completed the realities of faith, as the report says, and no one fully knows their truth or completes the realities of faith except one who reaches the summons of truth.

Praise God, then, O believers, for making you among its people. May God assist you in praising and thanking Him. God's blessings be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, and upon the Imams from his progeny, the righteous ones of his family, forever and ever. God is sufficient for us, and He is the best trustee.

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You now know, O company of brethren, what you were required to hear in this teaching concerning the ta'wil of the Book of Da'a'im al-Islam from its beginning through the end of the chapter on the etiquette of relieving oneself.

Next comes the chapter on the characteristics of ablution. Listen to its interpretation and know with certainty and sincerity that the ta'wil and inner meanings you hear are the causes and meanings underlying the outward practices by which you have been commanded to worship. Each confirms, bears witness to, and points toward the other, and each obliges you to establish and act upon what God has prescribed in it and to know what He has required to be known. Do not reject anything of either the outward or inward dimensions, do not make light of any command, and do not neglect it. Establish both outward and inward as God commanded.

The first matter mentioned in the Da'a'im in the chapter on the characteristics of ablution is forming the intention (niyya). It is said that there is no ablution without intention, just as it is said regarding all acts that there is no act without intention. The Messenger of God said: "Actions are only by intentions, and each person has only what he intended. Whoever's migration was to God and His Messenger, his migration was to God and His Messenger; and whoever's migration was for worldly gain or for a woman he wished to marry, his migration was to that for which he migrated."

You have already heard in this teaching that the inward likeness of intention is walaya. Whoever does not accept the walaya of God's awliya, whose walaya He has imposed upon the servants, has no act accepted from him, just as no outward act is properly expected to be accepted without intention. If a person abstained from food and drink for a day or several days without intending the fast, he would not thereby be a fasting person. The same principle applies to all acts.

You have also heard that outward purification with water corresponds inwardly to purification by knowledge taken from God's awliya. Such purification cannot occur except after acknowledging their walaya, just as outward purification cannot occur without intention. Intention therefore corresponds to walaya.

After intending ablution, one is commanded to pronounce God's name at its beginning, saying, "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful." The "name of God" inwardly is the wali of God in every age, whoever he may be, for he is the guide of the people of his age to God and through him they know Him, just as the name of a thing points to that thing and by it the thing is known. Thus pronouncing the name of God at ablution signifies that the believer acknowledges that through the wali of the age he has attained to this knowledge and recognized it. When the respondent's covenant is taken—the inward counterpart of purification—he is to hold this belief.

If he forgets or is ignorant of this and later comes to recognize it, no blame lies upon him, just as outwardly one who forgets or does not know the formula incurs no blame and pronounces God's name when he remembers...

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...for it is reported: "There is no prayer without ablution, and no ablution for one who does not mention the name of God over it." Its inner meaning is that prayer symbolizes the da'wa, as explained before, and purification symbolizes the covenant by which sins and acts of disobedience are removed. When the respondent accepts the covenant, responds sincerely to it, and believes in it, he returns as on the day his mother bore him, with no sin upon him, and begins his work thereafter anew. Thus inwardly no one enters the da'wa except through the covenant, just as outwardly it is said that there is no prayer except with purification.

In another aspect of ta'wil, prayer symbolizes the first one who established the da'wa in which it was prescribed, namely Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him. This follows the principle already mentioned, that a thing may be called by the name of what accompanies and is inseparably associated with it. Purification then symbolizes his foundation (asas), 'Ali, blessings be upon him. It is said that the very words indicate this: "salat" is of four letters and "Muhammad" of four, while "wudu'" is of three letters and "'Ali" likewise of three. Thus no acknowledgment of Muhammad's prophethood is sound unless one acknowledges that 'Ali is his legatee after him, just as no outward prayer is valid without purification.

For this reason it is also said that ablution is the key to prayer. Likewise one reaches the Prophet only through his legatee. The Messenger of God said: "I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate; whoever desires the city must come through its gate." God also says: "Enter houses through their doors." The examples, indications, and witnesses for this and similar matters are many, and each will be given in its proper place, God willing.

It is also related that if one omits the naming formula but otherwise purifies himself, only the places of ablution need be washed. Its ta'wil is that if, before the covenant is taken, the respondent has already recognized what we have described—namely that through the wali of God he has reached the point he has reached—this recognition is a general purification for him. If he did not recognize this through ignorance or forgetfulness, then later, through the covenant and knowledge, he recognizes what was incumbent upon him concerning it, his sincere return and belief suffice for him.

Outward ablution concerns seven bodily members. Four are obligatory, as God says: "O you who believe, when you rise for prayer, wash your faces and your hands to the elbows, wipe your heads, and [wash] your feet to the ankles." Three are established by the Messenger of God as Sunna: cleansing after relieving oneself, rinsing the mouth...

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...and drawing water into the nose. The four obligatory acts symbolize the ranks of the Natiq, while the three sunnas symbolize the ranks of the Asas. The beginning is therefore, as we have said, with the ranks of the Asas, since access to the Natiq is through him; otherwise the outward obligations would have been mentioned first.

God's saying, "O you who believe, when you rise for prayer," is explained in the Da'a'im as rising from sleep. We have already explained that sleep symbolizes heedlessness. Before responding, the respondent remains heedless of the affair of God and His awliya, like one asleep outwardly. He may awaken because a da'i breaks through his heedlessness and alerts him, or he may awaken of himself, just as one sleeping may awaken on his own or be awakened by someone else.

When he wishes to pray, he goes first to the privy. We have explained that this symbolizes the da'wa, within which he divests himself of every unbelief, associationism, hypocrisy, and fault, just as one relieves oneself outwardly of the bodily filth that symbolizes these things. Thus the one who seeks outward purification first removes bodily impurities, while inwardly the one who seeks inward purification first dissociates himself from all such falsehood.

He then turns to receiving knowledge and wisdom. These correspond, as already explained, to the water that is the source of outward life, just as knowledge is the source of enduring inward life for the spirits.

The one who seeks ablution outwardly therefore goes to the vessel containing the water with which he will purify himself and places it on his right side. In the inner sense, this is like the respondent going to the instructor from whom he receives knowledge. The instructor is the vessel; the knowledge contained in him is the water. Placing the vessel on the right signifies that the respondent receives this from the instructor through the wali of his age, whose likeness is the right hand. Taking the water with the right hand has the same meaning.

As for washing the two hands before putting them into the vessel, if there is filth upon them, and permitting them to be put in without washing if there is no filth—as related in the Da'a'im—the two palms symbolize the ranks governing night and day: the hujjas of the Natiq and his Asas, and the Imam and his hujja. When the order is complete, each of the twelve regions of the earth has a hujja. The regions of the earth are twelve. In each there is a concealed da'i, symbolizing an hour of the night, and an authorized manifest da'i who breaks through the outward doctrine for the people of the outward and, when someone responds, directs him onward. Such a da'i symbolizes an hour of the day. Thus there are twenty-four of them: twelve corresponding to the hours of night and twelve to the hours of day.

Every responding believer must know their rights and their likenesses within the soul, as God says: "We shall show them Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the Truth." The four fingers of each hand...

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...by which grasping and opening are performed symbolize those ranks through whom the Natiq takes hold of and extends the affairs of the servants when their order is complete and sound. Washing the hands before putting them into the vessel therefore symbolizes purification and repentance from having criticized any of those ranks, belittled one of them, diminished his status, intended harm toward him, or denied his right. One must purify oneself from such faults through knowledge and repentance.

A person whose hands bear no impurity symbolizes one who has committed no such offense against them, or one who lived when some of those ranks were not present, or did not know them. Such a person has no purification to perform from that fault, just as outwardly one whose hands are clean may, if he wishes, put them into the vessel without washing them first.

We have already explained the symbolism of the fingers: the thumb symbolizes the Messenger, the index finger his Asas, the middle finger the Imam, the next finger the hujja, and the little finger the gate (bab) of his da'wa. Grasping and opening are performed with the four fingers, while the thumb stands apart yet closes over them; it is strongest and completes the grasp. Likewise the affairs of God's awliya, the Imams of His religion, are completed through the Messenger, blessings and peace be upon him.

As for what is related in the Da'a'im that cleansing after relieving oneself is not obligatory because of wind issuing from the anus or because of sleep, though cleansing in such cases is good for one seeking additional merit—cleansing here meaning washing the front and rear passages, which is done before ablution—we have already said that excrement symbolizes unbelief, urine associationism, and wind issuing from the anus hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy in language means opposition. Whoever opposes the command of the wali of the age, or any part of it, is a hypocrite to the degree of his opposition, even while still believing in his walaya and dissociating himself from his enemies. Hence the saying of the Messenger of God: "Protective jealousy is from faith, and lack of it is from hypocrisy," meaning that abandoning proper jealousy concerning one's sacred household was called hypocrisy even though the person still professed Islam.

A hypocrite does not enter outright unbelief unless he dissociates himself from God's awliya and believes in the walaya of their enemies. If he does that, he joins the party he has taken as allies and leaves the party whose walaya he has abandoned. God says: "Whoever among you takes them as allies is surely one of them."

There is, however, another kind of hypocrisy whose people have not left the walaya of God's awliya even though they oppose aspects of their command. God describes them as "wavering between this and that, belonging neither to these nor to those," and says: "By your Lord, they do not believe until they make you judge concerning what arises between them and then find no constriction in themselves concerning what you have decided..."

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..."and submit in full submission." They are not unbelievers so long as they have not taken the unbelievers as their allies.

The other class are those who opposed the Prophet's command and went outside his walaya. Of people such as these God says: "When the hypocrites come to you, they say, 'We bear witness that you are the Messenger of God.' God knows that you are His Messenger, and God bears witness that the hypocrites are liars," until the verse: "That is because they believed, then disbelieved."

This explains the ruling on hypocrisy and its different classes. Those among the generality who are associated with theology and learning recognized only one face of hypocrisy and therefore differed among themselves: some said hypocrisy is unbelief and the hypocrite is an unbeliever; others said hypocrites are not unbelievers.

The inward meaning of the rule that cleansing after relieving oneself is not required because of wind or sleep is as follows. Wind symbolizes hypocrisy. Ablution is nevertheless required for one who has sunk deeply into sleep because he does not know whether wind may have passed from him without his awareness. Inwardly,

one who becomes inattentive to his own religious state and fails to examine it—sleep symbolizing that heedlessness—may perhaps have fallen into hypocrisy without realizing it because of his negligence.

Unbelief and associationism toward God and His awliya, by contrast, do not ordinarily arise merely through heedlessness in a person who has not deliberately intended them, because they involve dissociation from the walaya of God's awliya and entrance into the walaya of their enemies. There are, however, subtle forms of associationism that can enter under conditions of heedlessness. Thus 'Ali said: "Some forms of shirk are more hidden than a black ant upon a black stone in a dark night."

Similarly, excrement and urine—which symbolize unbelief and associationism—are ordinarily perceptible because their substance is present, except for a very slight amount whose substance and trace cannot be perceived. Purification after sleep therefore comes under this principle.

The reason cleansing after relieving oneself is not required for the sleeper or for one who merely passes wind is that such cleansing was prescribed to remove a tangible trace; where no substance is present, the washing falls away. Whoever nevertheless washes for greater cleanliness and additional merit acts well, just as one who renews ablution without a new hadath acts well.

Likewise inwardly, if a person has been touched by hypocrisy without adopting unbelief or associationism, he is not required, when his covenant is renewed, to repeat his dissociation from unbelief and associationism, since he has not believed in either of them. If he does repeat that dissociation, it is better. But if unbelief or associationism entered him and he then repented and returned to the wali of his affair, when the covenant is taken from him anew he must explicitly dissociate himself from all of it.

If, in addition, he has abandoned the outward religion of Islam, the inward covenant is not taken from him until he has first been restored to the outward practice from which he departed, after renouncing what he entered into. All these are degrees, and according to their measure a person has inward and outward occurrences of hadath requiring purification.

As for what is related in the Da'a'im concerning cleansing oneself with stones and similar substances such as baked earth and pottery fragments...

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...or with dung, bones, charcoal, fruit-stones, and similar things: inwardly these correspond to the doctrines and interpretations of the people of the outward which they have introduced through their own opinions. Dung symbolizes their newly invented opinions, and bones symbolize them themselves, for inwardly they are dead. One may not purify oneself by any of their knowledge or by anything they have invented through opinion.

The proper basis of purification is water, whose likeness is the true knowledge taken from God's awliya according to the limits and ranks they have established. We have explained how purification by it occurs. If someone cannot find water or cannot use it, he may cleanse himself with stones, clods of earth, pottery fragments, wool, cotton, or the like. Outwardly this is the rule for one who cannot find water or is prevented from using it by some impediment.

Its inward counterpart is the respondent who cannot find a da'i from the higher ranks to give him the knowledge normally received from the da'is—knowledge whose likeness is water—but finds instead a ma'dhun, an authorized agent. The ma'dhun has permission only to break through the outward doctrine for people of the outward and has not been authorized to conduct the full summons. His likeness is the stone or earth. God says, "Among the stones are those from which rivers gush forth, and among them are those that

split and water comes out," and He says, "We caused springs to gush from the earth." Water emerges from stone and earth, while its origin is from heaven, as God says, "We sent down water from heaven in due measure and lodged it in the earth."

Inwardly, heaven symbolizes the Natiq and earth the Samit. "Natiq" applies to the Messenger in his age and to the Imam in another age; "Samit" applies to the Asas, the Prophet's legatee, and to the hujja, the Imam's legatee. The affair passes to each after his predecessor. The descent of water from heaven to earth therefore symbolizes knowledge passing from the Natiq to the Asas, then onward to the hujjas, lawhiqs, da'is, ma'dhuns, and others, each according to his measure.

As water is distributed through the earth into great rivers and lesser streams, channels, springs, wells, pools, and other bodies, differing in abundance and quality—some sweet, some salty, some wholesome, some stagnant—so knowledge is distributed among the ranks. You will hear the explanation of this in the chapter on waters, God willing.

If the learner cannot find a da'i of a higher rank from whom he may benefit and purify himself by knowledge, he may go to a ma'dhun beneath them and take benefit from what he has until he finds a higher rank. Cleansing with stones and earth therefore symbolizes benefiting from the knowledge of the ma'dhuns, which is near to the knowledge of the da'is above them. Cleansing with cloth and similar materials...

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...such as wool, cotton, flax, and the like symbolizes inwardly benefiting from the outward knowledge of the Imams, for garments and the materials from which they are made symbolize the outward law. If the responding learner finds nothing else, this suffices until he finds something higher.

A period may pass at the beginning of his affair in which he is addressed only with the outward duties he must establish. In the same way the wali of God first opened matters for you through the Book of the Da'a'im and gave you a comprehensive account of outward knowledge. Many da'is abridge this and restrict themselves to only a little of it, and by such excessive abbreviation they may destroy the very one whose spiritual life they seek, because he fails to establish the outward religion properly. You will hear, God willing, further explanation in the chapter on tayammum concerning purification with earth when water cannot be found.

Direct your hearts, may God have mercy on you, to understanding, retaining, and reflecting upon what you hear. Act upon what you are commanded to act upon. Know that the outward practices God has required you to establish are obligatory upon you; they are indications of the inward meanings you hear and witnesses to them. Likewise the inward bears witness to the outward. May God thereby complete upon you His outward and inward blessings, as He says in His Book. The inward blessing is among the greatest, because through it one reaches the lasting and permanent blessings. Leave, as He commanded, both the outward and inward aspects of sin. May God assist you in fulfilling what He has prescribed, preserving what He has taught you, and acting upon what He has made obligatory, and may He open to you an increase from His bounty and favor. Blessings be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, and upon the Imams from his family.

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God whose existence is indicated by what He has manifested of His originated creations, pointing to His unity. Blessings be upon Muhammad, the Seal of His prophets, with the blessing taught by His awliya.

O responding awliya, you have heard in this teaching the inner meanings that were laid out for you. Now you will hear what follows. Whoever among you has understood and retained what he heard should guard it and then carefully preserve what he hears next. Whoever was inattentive to what preceded should awaken for what is to come, ask about what he does not know, and not allow what you hear to pass over you while you turn away, as reminders pass over the hearing of beasts, other animals, and heedless people. May God protect you from all that and open for you the preservation of religious knowledge until you reach certainty.

After what you heard from the Da'a'im concerning cleansing after relieving oneself, it is commanded that cleansing be done with the left hand while water is poured upon it with the right. Its inner meaning is that the right hand here symbolizes the Imam and the left the hujja. Knowledge, whose likeness is water, reaches the hujja only from the Imam, just as outwardly water reaches the left hand from the right.

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Cleansing after relieving oneself, as explained before, symbolizes purification through the covenant in the da'wa from the occurrences of sin. The da'wa and the covenant belong to the hujja once the Imam establishes him and prepares him for his office, just as outward cleansing is performed specifically with the left hand.

After that come washing the face and arms to the elbows, wiping the head with both hands, and washing the feet with the left hand or wiping them with both hands. Their inward meaning is the purification of what these members symbolize through the outward knowledge of the Imam and the inward knowledge of the hujja. Its explanation will come in its proper place, God willing.

If the person performing ablution cannot cleanse himself with the left hand because of an impediment, he may use the right. Likewise inwardly, the Imam may personally establish the da'wa and take covenants, and he may authorize da'is to do so, until he appoints his hujja—the one to whom his affair passes after him. He then entrusts the administration of the da'wa and inner knowledge to that hujja while he himself assumes the establishment of the outward religion and worldly governance and the affairs of its people.

This is the pattern of every prophet until he establishes an Asas, and of every Imam until his rank is complete. Such an appointment is not possible immediately; time is required so that he may test the person whom he will establish, find him satisfactory under trial, and so that God may show in him signs proving that he is the one to whom the office should be entrusted, together with the knowledge inherited through his fathers and the divine assistance and insight granted to him. This is the inward counterpart of cleansing with both hands.

As for the outward command to wash the hand used in cleansing after the cleansing is completed, until the smell of impurity has disappeared, its inner meaning follows what has already been said. The one who cleanses himself inwardly must continue cleansing without a fixed number for as long as any stain remains. He must not cease until there is no visible trace upon him of any previous unbelief, associationism, hypocrisy, heedlessness, or doubt. Doubt corresponds to madhy, which arises from imagined intercourse and desire without the reality of intercourse. Likewise doubt lacks the reality of certainty.

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When the respondent has cleansed himself from all of that, he must consider the one who taught him—the person who called him, took his covenant, and trained him. He must thank him for that so as to deserve further benefit, and he must examine anything that might bring deficiency upon that teacher because of something ugly arising through him or an error committed by him. He must remove such things from himself so that the one who instructed him remains free of blame in the speech of others because of him, with no defect or disgrace attached to him among either the elite or the common people. This corresponds to removing the lingering smell from the hand used for cleansing.

We have said that the hand used in cleansing symbolizes the one who teaches him knowledge and wisdom, takes his covenant, and enters him into the da'wa. The respondent therefore owes him gratitude, recognition of his right, knowledge of his rank, and loyal conduct, guarding himself so that no deficiency reaches him from his direction. He owes the same to the ranks above him, both human and spiritual.

God has commanded kindness toward parents. The highest "parents" among humankind are the Prophet of every religious law and his Asas. Thus the Prophet said to 'Ali, "I and you, O 'Ali, are the two fathers of the believers." Likewise God says, "the creed of your father Abraham," because Muhammad followed Abraham's summons, and Abraham is therefore his father and his creed his ancestral creed.

Below the Prophet and Asas, in every age, are the Imam and hujja and then the lower ranks until the da'i and ma'dhun. Among every pair of adjacent ranks, the higher resembles the father and the lower resembles the mother. The respondent must therefore honor each of them, know his right and measure, thank him, praise him, and guard his own conduct so that he does not bring upon him deficiency, criticism, or blame by his own actions—just as outwardly a child should not bring dishonor upon his parents but must treat them well and thank them.

God has especially favored you, O believers, in that the person who has undertaken the taking of your covenant, your training, and your instruction in knowledge and wisdom is the master of your age and Imam of your time directly, without an intermediary below him. Through this He has distinguished you over the generality of those who passed before you, except for a small number of people like you who were similarly favored. Recognize, then, the measure of God's blessing upon you, thank Him for it, and thank the wali of your affair according to what is due.

Guard yourselves as God has commanded, lest through what you do ignorant people utter words that diminish the rank, honor, or greatness God has given him. Even if such speech does not harm God's awliya themselves, it may turn weak and ignorant people away from them and make their affair appear blameworthy in the eyes of such people. Therefore cleanse your hands...

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...and purify them after purifying yourselves, outwardly and inwardly, as God has prescribed. May God assist you in this, open the way for you in fulfilling all that He has required, and help you preserve the limits of your religion and carry out the worldly duties He has placed upon you.

As for what is related in the Da'a'im concerning cleansing oneself with the left hand, washing first the front passage and then the rear, and not washing both together, its inner meaning is that the front passage symbolizes the inward and the rear passage the outward.

There are manifest indecencies and outward offenses that are forbidden—such as adultery, theft, and similar acts whose outward prohibition the community agrees upon. Their examples are many and their full enumeration would be lengthy; each will be discussed in its own chapter. The outward religion requires purification and repentance from them, but in taking the covenant from the respondent it is still necessary to mention them explicitly.

They are not, however, combined in instruction with hidden and inward obscenities. Rather, the instructor begins with the hidden matters, awakens the learner to them, alerts him to what he may be heedless of, forbids them, and purifies him by imparting the wisdom concerning them. Then he mentions what the learner already recognizes outwardly and warns him concerning it and takes his covenant in regard to it, lest he make

light of it and imagine that silence about it signifies permission. This is the inward counterpart of the prescribed order in washing the front and rear passages.

As for what is stated in the Da'a'im concerning rinsing the mouth and drawing water into the nose after cleansing oneself, their inner meaning is as follows. The mouth here symbolizes the Natiq—the Prophet in his own time and the Imam in his age. The nose symbolizes the Prophet's Asas, and in another age the Imam's hujja.

Knowledge and wisdom, taste, touch, food, and drink—by which the visible body lives—are received through the mouth. Likewise the establishment of the outward religion, together with knowledge and wisdom, comes through the Imam. This is the inward nourishment and breath by which spiritual life is maintained.

Breath, through which bodily life also exists, enters through the nose. This symbolizes inner knowledge which the Imam delivers to his hujja and which reaches respondents through that hujja, just as breath from within the mouth passes to the nose. A person may also breathe through the mouth when an obstruction prevents breathing through the nose. Likewise the Imam may himself carry out inward instruction before establishing his hujja, as we have already mentioned. For this reason a person can breathe through the mouth, but he does not eat, drink, or speak through the nose, because the Imam may administer the whole affair of the community alone, whereas the hujja does not independently assume the Imam's function unless...

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...there is an Imam together with him. Rinsing the mouth and drawing water into the nose therefore symbolize acknowledgment of the Imam and the hujja and obedience to them.

As for what is stated in the Da'a'im concerning passing the index finger and thumb over the teeth while rinsing the mouth so as to clean them, we have already said that the thumb symbolizes Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him, and the index finger symbolizes 'Ali. The teeth symbolize the hudud and the persons appointed to the da'wa, through whom the believers are trained just as teeth assist in taking nourishment. Their purification is through the purity of the two foundations of the religious law, the Prophet and the wasi, and by following their Sunna. The respondent must therefore be trained in accordance with that pattern. This is part of the explanation, and its fuller account will come, God willing, when the tooth-stick (siwak) is discussed.

The Da'a'im also states that rinsing the mouth and drawing water into the nose are not part of the original obligatory core of ablution, since God did not explicitly mention them, but the Messenger of God practiced them. They are therefore a Sunna in ablution. One should not intentionally abandon or neglect them, yet a person who omits them out of ignorance or forgetfulness is not required to repeat his ablution.

We have explained that the mouth here symbolizes the Imam and the nose the hujja, and that rinsing and inhaling symbolize acknowledgment of the Imam and the hujja. God did not name them explicitly in the Qur'an by their names, just as He did not explicitly name Muhammad's successor and his hujja there by name, but the Messenger did designate them. If the covenant is taken in a time in which the da'is may speak openly of them and do not have to conceal them, then the person taking the covenant must be informed of them by name and acknowledge them. But if this occurs in a time of taqiyya, omission of the naming is sufficient, just as outwardly one who omits rinsing and inhaling because of ignorance or forgetfulness is excused. Forgetfulness here symbolizes postponement: their mention may be delayed because of the need to conceal them.

In the inner symbolic order, rinsing the mouth and inhaling through the nose can also apply to the paired ranks below the Imam and hujja, down to the da'i and ma'dhun, just as the symbolism of the two parents also extends through those paired ranks. This and similar extensions arise from the many witnesses and indications that support this science, as has already been explained.

The Da'a'im next commands washing the face after rinsing the mouth and inhaling through the nose, and this is the first of the obligatory acts. In inner ta'wil the face symbolizes the Prophet in his age and the Imam in his time, for through each of them the people of his age turn toward God...

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...and he is the "face of God" through whom one approaches Him. In the face are representations of the seven Natiqs: the two eyes, two ears, and the other senses whose functions converge in the head and face. Touch may be perceived by the hand and by the whole body; likewise God gathered in the Natiq the instruments of benefit for the servants.

Thus washing the face inwardly symbolizes acknowledgment of the Imam of the age, the seven Natiqs, and the seven Imams who succeed one another between every two Natiqs. Their ranks, qualities, states, and the duty of obedience to them have already been explained. Washing the face gathers together acknowledgment of all these meanings and is begun first because the face contains the likenesses of them. Washing it with both hands symbolizes acknowledgment of both the outward and inward dimensions of the Messengers and Imams.

As for what is related in the Da'a'im concerning washing the face thoroughly, passing the fingers through the beard, and causing the water to reach the skin—and that if the water passes through the beard and reaches the skin that is sufficient without combing through it—its inner meaning is complete affirmation and confirmation of all God's prophets and the Imams of His religion, faith in all of them from first to last, and making no distinction between any of them, as God commands His sincere believers: "The Messenger believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and so do the believers; each believes in God, His angels, His Books, and His messengers: we make no distinction between any of His messengers."

As for washing the arms to the elbows, the two arms symbolize the Imam and hujja, as already explained, and by extension the paired ranks beneath them. Washing them means acknowledging them. Washing each arm to the elbow, the limit of the limb, signifies recognition of its entire rank from beginning to end.

Washing each arm with the other symbolizes establishing the inner meaning of the hujja upon the outward doctrine of the Imam, and establishing the outward doctrine of the Imam upon the inner meaning of the hujja; it means believing in the obligation of both outward and inward and affirming both. Whenever a question or uncertainty concerning an inner matter is referred to the highest outward authority, its proper face and ruling become clear. Likewise the outward is tested by the inward because the two correspond and balance one another. Whatever is ugly, good, lawful, or unlawful outwardly has its corresponding inner meaning. Thus washing the two arms one with the other symbolizes the mutual confirmation of outward and inward...

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...each bearing witness to, proving, strengthening, and confirming the other, with neither departing from the other's rule.

The Da'a'im commands moving rings when washing the hands so that water reaches beneath them, and likewise removing anything that prevents water from reaching the skin in ablution or bathing. Its inner meaning

is that acknowledgment of the ranks of the Natiq and Asas must be made without any barrier of doubt, hesitation, or anything else that prevents complete submission, recognition, and sincerity.

After washing the arms to the elbows, the Da'a'im commands wiping the head. In inner ta'wil the head signifies the leader, as it does in ordinary language: the head of anything is its highest, noblest, and most excellent part. The head houses the brain, in which are the intellect and the senses and upon which life depends; if it is destroyed the senses and intellect cease, and if it perishes its owner dies. Wiping the head therefore symbolizes acknowledgment of the master of the religious law, Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him.

The Da'a'im says that the head is wiped from its top toward the forehead and also from its top toward the nape, without disturbing the hair, merely passing the hands over it. The inner meaning is that hair grows from the head and symbolizes the outward law brought by Muhammad, while beneath it is an inward meaning concealed by it. Wiping upon the hair without disturbing it means maintaining the outward order, concealing the inner meaning, and revealing nothing of it to one who is still in the state of ihram—that is, one not yet released to receive the inward mysteries—just as a person in ihram may not cut or disturb the hair of his head until leaving ihram. Disturbing the hair exposes the skin. For this reason the wiping is over the visible surface of the head, going forward and backward from the center.

The Da'a'im also commands wiping the outside and inside of the ears together with the head. The ears symbolize the Asas and the hujja, because the ear receives what comes from the mouth. The mouth symbolizes the Natiq; the ear therefore symbolizes the one who receives and comprehends his speech—the Prophet's Asas and the Imam's hujja.

Hence it is related that the Messenger of God recited, "and that a receptive ear may retain it," and said to 'Ali, "You are that receptive ear, O 'Ali." Wiping the ears therefore symbolizes acknowledgment of the Asas and hujja in both their outward and inward dimensions, for each in his rank holds the affair of the inner meaning, and when the affair passes to him he also comes to hold the outward...

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...so acknowledgment must include both aspects.

As for washing or wiping the feet, and the teaching that wiping is the obligatory act: the body stands and is supported upon the two feet; they bear it and carry it. They therefore symbolize the Imam and hujja, who sustain the world of their age, bear its burden, move its people among their ranks, and direct them in the affairs of religion to where they ought to go. The same symbolism extends to the paired ranks below them down to the da'i and ma'dhun, each bearing of the affairs of creation what God has placed upon him and directing people within what he has been authorized to direct.

Wiping the feet therefore symbolizes acknowledgment of the Imam and hujja and of the paired ranks beneath them, together with knowledge of the rights due to them. Washing symbolizes obedience, while wiping symbolizes acknowledgment. Thus, for every limb God commanded to be washed, its inner counterpart requires active obedience to the rank it symbolizes; for every limb commanded to be wiped, its inner counterpart requires acknowledgment of that rank.

Washing is more complete and is commanded thoroughly because obedience must be complete in matters small and great. Even washing necessarily includes the passing of the hand over the limb; likewise obedience and acknowledgment occur through two faculties: confession by the tongue and belief in the heart, just as the hand passes over the whole member being washed.

As for wiping splints and bandages, or wiping the place of an amputation, when a limb normally requiring washing or wiping is injured, bound, or lost and water would harm it or removal of the binding would be dangerous: the inward meaning is that the inner reality symbolized by that limb has become absent from the respondent and its knowledge has not reached him, nor has he found someone able to open that knowledge to him, because some impediment prevents it or because that rank has ceased to be manifest during a period of trial. In such a case, outward purification alone suffices him, just as one afflicted by these bodily conditions may wipe over what covers the limb or over what remains visible while what is absent or inaccessible is excused. Such states are among the trials from which refuge is sought from God, just as one seeks refuge from bodily illnesses and afflictions.

The Da'a'im also forbids wiping over leather socks, footwear, stockings, gloves, turbans, veils, or anything else covering the limbs of ablution when no illness prevents removal and the washing or wiping of the actual limb commanded by God. The generality permit such wiping, but it is not valid. Its inward meaning is that the coverings placed over these limbs symbolize the outward doctrine of the people who claim inward knowledge while departing from the true outward law...

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...The believer may not acknowledge that doctrine or any part of it. Outwardly he must remove such coverings from the limbs and wash what God commanded to be washed and wipe what He commanded to be wiped. Inwardly he must similarly cast aside the outward doctrine of false esotericists, refuse to turn toward it, and instead accept both the outward and inward teachings of the people of truth. This is the inner meaning of rejecting the practice of wiping over such coverings.

As for the recommendation in the Da'a'im to wash or wipe the limbs of ablution three times each, this has an inner interpretation according to the ranks of the Natiqs. The Prophet said concerning a triple ablution, "This is my ablution and the ablution of the prophets before me." Its inner meaning is acknowledgment and obedience in relation to the Natiq, Asas, and Imam according to their ranks.

Using water twice corresponds to acknowledgment and obedience to the Natiq and Asas. The Messenger of God said, "This is the ablution of one whose reward God doubles." Performing each act once corresponds to the Imams, and the Messenger said, "This is the ablution without which God accepts no prayer," meaning inwardly obedience to the Imams, for God joined obedience to them with obedience to Himself and His Messenger. No act is accepted from a person except through this.

Know, then—may God have mercy on you, O company of the awliya—the knowledge and practice by which God has required you to worship Him in the outward and inward dimensions of your religion. Recognize the measure of the blessing He has bestowed upon you through this and thank the One who granted it to you. Bless the one through whom God has caused it to reach you and whose gratitude He has made obligatory upon you. May He increase you, as He promised the grateful, from His gifts and abundant favors, and complete those favors upon you outwardly and inwardly as He declared in His Book. May God open this to you, grant you success in it, and assist you through the excellence of His mercy. Blessings be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, and upon the Imams from his family.

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God with the praise of one who truly knows the right of praising Him, renders it sincerely, and understands its reality. Blessings be upon Muhammad and his family with the blessing of one who knows how blessings upon him are to be offered...

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...upon him and upon them, recognizing their excellence and rights and humbling himself before them.

You have heard, O brethren, the ta'wil of what was established for you in the Book of the Da'a'im concerning the outward practices God has required you to establish both outwardly and inwardly, together with their inner meanings, through the end of the discussion of wiping the feet among the characteristics of ablution. You will now hear what follows.

Many a hearer turns away from what he hears, neither retaining it nor benefiting from it. True hearing and sight belong to the hearts. Therefore bring your hearts forward toward what you hear, holding it with sincere belief, effort, desire, and insight, so that it may flourish and become firmly established within you. Seed and planting grow only in good and generous soil, which receives and absorbs water. Hard ground causes water to run across its surface because of its hardness and barrenness, and whatever seed or planting may grow in it is spoiled because it does not accept the water.

May God make you among those who accept what is poured upon them by the one who teaches and trains them, who respond to it and turn toward it, as He commanded His believing servants: "O you who believe, respond to God and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life." The believer who knows the religion is living, while the ignorant person is dead, as God says: "Dead, not alive; and they do not know when they will be raised." May God make you among the living in this world with a life joined to the enduring life of the Hereafter.

Among what you have heard from the Da'a'im is the prohibition against placing the washing or wiping of some limbs of ablution before others, and the command to perform them in the order in which God mentioned them: "Wash your faces and your hands to the elbows, wipe your heads, and your feet to the ankles." We have said that these four are the obligatory acts of ablution, while cleansing after relieving oneself, rinsing the mouth, and inhaling water into the nose are Sunnas. These three Sunnas are nevertheless begun before the obligations, and we have explained the reason for this.

The reason some limbs may not be advanced before others and why washing and wiping must follow the order laid down by God and His Messenger, without bringing forward what they delayed or delaying what they advanced, is as follows. Ablution begins with washing the two hands. We explained that inwardly the hands symbolize the ranks of God's awliya who are appointed between them and the servants and through whom access to them is attained. If a person has disparaged, criticized, insulted, or harmed any of these ranks, or denied a right due to them, it is not proper for him to seek access through them while remaining in that state. He must first purify himself through repentance and make his love sincere for all of them, knowing their rights. This comes first because these ranks are the first through whom the respondent comes to recognition and by whom he seeks access to the wali of the affair. Hence washing the hands, when impure, is the first act before ablution...

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...If the hands are not impure, their washing is not obligatory and the person may put them into the vessel if he wishes. This symbolizes one who is free of any attack upon the hudud, or a time when the Imam has not yet appointed lower ranks. If the person nevertheless washes clean hands for additional cleanliness, it is good. Inwardly this resembles the respondent affirming the greatness of the ranks of the affair whether they are presently appointed or not. This too is good and carries merit.

Next comes washing the private parts from impurity. No obligatory cleansing is prescribed merely for passing wind, though doing so for additional cleanliness is good and meritorious. We have already explained that

cleansing after excrement and urine symbolizes purification through repentance, knowledge, and wisdom from unbelief and associationism after dissociation from them. This too is among the first things required of the respondent, because walaya is not valid except after bara'a—dissociation—and a person is not a believer until he has renounced unbelief and associationism.

Next come rinsing the mouth and inhaling water into the nose. We have said that the mouth symbolizes the Natiq, the Messenger, while the nose symbolizes the Asas, his wasi. Through the mouth come articulation and nourishment by which life is sustained, while through the nose comes breathing, by which life also exists. The meaning appropriate to each has already been explained. After renouncing unbelief, associationism, and hypocrisy, the respondent must therefore begin with acknowledgment of the Messenger and his wasi, obedience to them, and knowledge of what is due to them, because the Messenger is the possessor of the shari'a and the wasi is the foundation of the community.

Next comes washing the face. We have said that the face contains seven openings: the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and mouth, and that inwardly they symbolize the seven Natiqs: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad—blessings and peace upon them—and the final Qaim from the Prophet's progeny, the Lord of the Resurrection. The reason for this symbolism has already been explained.

Thus after dissociation from unbelief, associationism, and hypocrisy, the respondent must possess knowledge, faith, and confirmation concerning Muhammad, his wasi 'Ali, the six Natiqs—Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad—and the final Imam, the Lord of the Resurrection. He is the "Last Day" whose mention occurs repeatedly in God's Book...

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...The seven days are likenesses of these seven: Sunday corresponds to Adam; Monday to Noah; Tuesday to Abraham; Wednesday to Moses; Thursday to Jesus; Friday to Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him and all the messengers. God gathered in Muhammad the knowledge and excellence of the prophets and completed them through him. Saturday corresponds to the seventh from his progeny and from the people of his da'wa and creed, the final Imam.

God created the heavens and earth, as He declares, in six days. In the same way all command, prohibition, creation, action, and knowledge within the religious laws of these six Natiqs belong to the six periods of work. The age of the final Imam is an age in which there is no [new] work, only recompense; it is the Day of Resurrection. God states in many places that on that Day no act of a doer will then be newly accepted. This subject is extensive and will be explained fully in its proper place, God willing.

We have also already said that between every two Natiqs the Imamate passes successively through seven Imams, one after another, until the next Natiq is the seventh among them. Likewise the final Imam is himself seventh. Washing the face therefore symbolizes acknowledgment of these cycles and obedience to their possessors. The respondent cannot dispense with this after acknowledging the Messenger, as God says: "The Messenger believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and so do the believers. All believe in God, His angels, His Books, and His messengers; we make no distinction between any of His messengers." He also mentions belief in the Last Day in many places in His Book.

Next comes washing the hands to the elbows. We have explained that inwardly the two hands symbolize the Imam and hujja, and that washing them to the elbows symbolizes acknowledgment of the Imam and hujja and obedience to them. After acknowledging God's prophets and messengers, the respondent must therefore know the Imam of his age and his hujja if the hujja has been appointed, or know that the Imam must appoint

one if he has not yet done so, for the affair will pass to him after the Imam. One must be instructed concerning this to the completion of its rank. This is the inward likeness of washing the hands to the elbows.

Then comes wiping the head and the feet. We have said that the head symbolizes the chief of the shari'a, Muhammad, and that the two feet symbolize the Imam and hujja, who bear the world of their age and move through the ranks and degrees of the religion just as the two feet bear the body and move it from place to place. Washing symbolizes obedience and wiping acknowledgment. After the respondent has acknowledged and believed in the Natiqs, the Imam of his age, and his hujja, he must then...

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...acknowledge all that the Messenger brought from God and all that the Imam and hujja bring from the Messenger. Thus the outward order of ablution in the shari'a descends in this sequence, first to last, according to the Sunna of the Messenger. Whatever the Messenger established came to him from God, as He says: "Say: I only follow what is revealed to me," and: "By the star when it descends: your companion has neither strayed nor erred, nor does he speak from desire; it is only revelation revealed."

Therefore everything the Messenger commanded concerning the establishment of God's religion came to him from God just as surely as the text of the Book came to him. For this reason the outward performance of ablution begins with matters transmitted in the Sunna before those explicitly stated in the Book: the sequence itself is divinely ordered, as we have explained, and nothing should be advanced or delayed from its proper place.

Hence the Da'a'im states that it is forbidden to put one limb of ablution before another and commands that washing and wiping follow the order prescribed by God and His Messenger. If someone begins with what God and His Messenger placed later, he must repeat the ablution until it is performed in the proper sequence from the beginning.

The Da'a'im also forbids excessive interruption of ablution: a person should not wash some limbs, then leave them and become occupied with something else for a long time, and later return to complete the ablution upon what he previously did. Such an ablution does not suffice; he must start again from the beginning.

Its inward meaning is that when the da'i takes the covenant from a respondent—this covenant being symbolized by purification—and begins to recite part of it, then an intervening matter causes him to stop, the two separate, and a long period passes before he resumes, he should not simply continue the wording from where he stopped. Rather, he should restart the covenant from the beginning. If the interruption occurred while both remained in the same sitting and he resumed before they separated and before the person from whom the covenant was taken forgot what had already been said, then he may continue from the point reached.

Likewise outwardly, if a person interrupts ablution, he may continue so long as the water has not dried from the limbs already washed. The drying of the water here symbolizes the respondent forgetting what was previously said to him. If the interval is short and he has not forgotten, this is like the water still being present because little time has passed.

It is also outwardly commanded that ablution not be interrupted without a valid reason. Inwardly too, one taking the covenant should not interrupt it before completion except for an unavoidable cause. If the cause disappears immediately before the respondent forgets what preceded, the taking of the covenant may continue from that point...

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...but if a long time passes, the covenant must be restarted from the beginning. To interrupt it without cause is not permitted either for the one taking it or the one receiving it.

The one taking the covenant must turn fully toward the person from whom he takes it, both in spoken words and intention, and must not occupy himself with something else. The one receiving it must likewise turn with hearing and heart toward what he hears and not be distracted by anything else. Neither should break the process with words unrelated to the covenant or to what confirms it. The recipient should receive it with the same attention as a person at prayer, or as a preacher and those listening to his sermon: none should turn away from what he is engaged in or speak of something unrelated. It has been said that the sermon is part of the prayer. Prayer inwardly symbolizes the da'wa; just as such distractions are invalid in prayer, they are invalid in the da'wa.

It is also commanded in ablution to begin with the right side of the two hands and feet, washing or wiping the right one first. The inner meaning is that, as already explained, the right symbolizes the Imam while the left symbolizes the hujja. The Imam is superior in his own rank and time and should be mentioned first when the covenant is taken, before the hujja.

Likewise the person receiving the covenant must begin by establishing the outward law, which the Imam oversees, before the inward teaching, which the hujja administers by the Imam's delegation. We have already explained that the covenant is not taken from anyone until he has entered Islam, and that the respondent's first stage of knowledge and training is to establish what God has made obligatory outwardly. He is first instructed in the outward obedience transmitted from the Messenger: purification, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, pilgrimage, jihad, and the lawful and unlawful.

When he is firmly grounded in this, has cast aside the outward doctrine of the people of falsehood, accepts the outward doctrine of the people of truth, acts by it, and believes it, then afterward the inner teaching is opened to him and he is moved through its ranks and degrees according to what is appropriate for him.

Understand, O brethren, the knowledge whose outward and inward dimensions God has imposed upon you. Establish outwardly and inwardly what He has commanded, complete it, counsel one another concerning it, and compete in it. May God assist you in obeying Him, grant you success in what pleases Him, and enable you to show gratitude for what He has bestowed and to which He has guided you. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, and upon the Imams from his progeny. God is sufficient for us, and He is the best trustee.

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God as is His due. Blessings be upon Muhammad, His Messenger and servant, upon 'Ali, and upon the Imams from his progeny.

You have heard—may God benefit you by what you hear and not make it a proof against you in religion—the inner interpretation of what is contained in the Book of the Da'a'im from its beginning through the end of the chapter on ablution for prayer. What follows in the Da'a'im is the discussion of the kinds of water by which purification may be performed, what invalidates such water, and what does not.

You have already heard in the inner interpretation that outward water corresponds inwardly to knowledge. Just as visible bodies live outwardly by visible water, so spirits live inwardly by knowledge and wisdom. Just as outward bodies are cleansed by outward water, so inward spirits are purified through inward knowledge.

God says: "He sends down upon you water from heaven to purify you by it, to remove from you the defilement of Satan, to strengthen your hearts, and to make firm your feet." He also says: "We give it as drink to the cattle and to many human beings We have created. We have distributed it among them so that they may remember, yet most people refuse everything except ingratitude." Inwardly it is knowledge that removes Satanic defilement; by it God makes the believers firm and strengthens their hearts. He distributes it among them so that they may remember, yet most people, as He says, are ungrateful, and only the small number praised in His Book truly affirm it.

Outward water gives life to bodies and produces the vegetation from which nourishment comes. Likewise knowledge, which is its inward likeness, gives spirits the enduring life of the abode of permanence in the Hereafter. Hence God's saying: "Had they remained upright upon the path, We would have given them abundant water to drink." The intended water here inwardly is knowledge, for outward water is given by God to righteous and wicked alike, believer and unbeliever alike.

As for His saying, "We give it as drink to the cattle and to many human beings We have created," the "cattle" here symbolize God's awliya and the means He has appointed between Himself and His servants, while the "many human beings" are those who respond to them...

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...The Da'a'im then discusses sea water and other waters. Water fit for both drinking and purification is sweet water, which itself has degrees of sweetness, delicacy, and heaviness. Some water may be lawful to drink and harmless if it touches something but may not be used for purification, such as rosewater, blossom-water, and distilled or extracted waters. Some water, if its color, smell, or taste is altered by filth, is neither lawful to drink nor fit for purification. Other water may have its color, smell, or taste changed by something lawful and clean—such as honey, milk, dates, raisins, or food—so long as it has not become intoxicating. It may still be drunk and does not make what it touches impure, but it cannot be used for ritual purification. Still other water may change in color, smell, or taste merely because it has stood for a long time in vessels or reservoirs without being contaminated by impurity; such stagnant water may still be used to wash and purify and may be drunk.

Every one of these kinds of water has an inward likeness in knowledge. The basic principle is that outward water is used for two things: purification and drinking. Purification corresponds to the outward, because by water one cleans what appears of the body or garment when filth or dirt has visibly attached to it. Drinking corresponds to the inward, because water that is drunk enters the interior of the body and flows through its hidden parts.

Sweet, pure water that may both be used for purification and drunk symbolizes knowledge that applies jointly to outward and inward matters and is intended for both. The believer must use it and act by it in both the outward and inward dimensions of religion. Neither aspect is restricted to the exclusion of the other; rather, they emerge together from one source and proceed in harmony. This is the greater part of the knowledge you hear from God's awliya: its inward confirms its outward, its outward confirms its inward, and the two correspond without contradiction.

Water that may be used for purification but is not fit to drink symbolizes knowledge intended only for the outward and not for the inward. This is like the initial outward instruction given to the respondent before its

inward meaning is opened to him. If the respondent attempts by himself to force an inward meaning out of it and apply it inwardly without authorization, it will be harsh and unpalatable to him and may harm him, just as sea-water or salt water is drunk only under compulsion and provides no benefit, and excessive drinking of it may kill.

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The degrees of sweetness in water correspond to the differing states of those who carry knowledge. All water originally descends from heaven, as God says: "We sent down water from heaven in due measure and lodged it in the earth." Its original state is sweet, but the earth through which it passes and the vessels into which it is placed may change it. Likewise the origin of knowledge is from God's awliya, while alteration occurs according to the conditions of those through whom it passes beneath them.

Water that may be drunk and does not make what it touches impure, but is not valid for ritual purification because something lawful has mixed with it, symbolizes knowledge concerned specifically with inward matters. It may be used inwardly but does not, by itself, constitute the complete purification that must embrace both outward and inward. Complete purification is only by comprehensive knowledge received from God's awliya and directed toward purifying respondents to their da'wa.

Thus water used for purification but not drinking symbolizes knowledge directed to outward matters alone, while water drunk but not used for purification symbolizes knowledge directed to inward matters alone. In the true religion neither dimension is inherently impure. Stagnant water altered merely by age symbolizes knowledge transmitted from earlier awliya. Its age and the fact that its wording or form has changed with time do not harm it. Nevertheless, knowledge taken from the Imam of the age is nearer, higher, nobler, sweeter, and purer, just as recently fallen rainwater is freshest.

The Da'a'im also states that water purifies but is not itself purified by something else. Outward water is the instrument by which other things are purified; no other substance makes water more essentially pure. Likewise knowledge is the purifier of the servants, and nothing is purer than knowledge so as to purify knowledge itself.

As for the rule that sea water is purifying and its dead animals lawful: we have explained that sea water can serve outward purification even though the great sea is salty and not ordinarily fit to drink. Fresh flowing water derived from it has the rule of fresh water. The meaning of "its dead animals are lawful" will be discussed, God willing, in the chapter on foods; a portion of its interpretation was mentioned earlier in connection with the saying, "Two dead things have been made lawful for you."

The Da'a'im further states that water is not made impure by anything so long as the name and qualities of water still properly apply to it. But if something mixes with it, transforms it, and predominates over it so that it is no longer truly called water and instead takes the name of what has overcome it, then its legal status changes. Likewise inwardly, knowledge itself is not corrupted merely because something alien comes into contact with it so long as its true nature remains recognizable...

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...even if falsehood is mixed into it by ignorant or confused speakers. If what is alien predominates over it so that its reality is no longer recognizable, it may not be used.

This is among the meanings of God's saying: "Do not clothe truth with falsehood." Inwardly, true knowledge should not be so mixed with falsehood that its truth becomes obscured. The outward counterpart is water

upon which impurity has prevailed: just as one may neither drink such water nor purify with it, so knowledge dominated by falsehood is fit for neither outward nor inward religious use.

The Da'a'im also discusses a well located near a privy. If filth from the privy does not enter the well or leave visible traces in it, the water is not condemned simply because of proximity. Inwardly this is like the knowledge of speakers and disputants: the mere fact that words of innovators and opponents are nearby does not invalidate true knowledge when none of their falsehood has entered or transformed it. The well symbolizes a person in whom knowledge has been gathered; if he keeps his knowledge sound and free from the intrusions of falsehood, the truth in him remains pure.

The rule concerning a dog urinating in water, where the water is not condemned unless the impurity enters and affects it, likewise symbolizes that the barking and reviling of the people of falsehood do not by themselves corrupt true knowledge. Their speech is like the dog's barking and their blame like its urine: it does not alter the truth unless it is admitted into the body of the teaching and allowed to predominate over it.

The Da'a'im also states that water is not made impure merely because some animal falls into it and dies, unless the animal's decay or other trace changes the water. Inwardly, if a person of false doctrine or corrupt practice falls among people of knowledge, his mere presence does not invalidate the knowledge they possess. The harm comes only if what he carries is allowed to mix with it and change it. When such alteration occurs, the affected portion must be removed or overwhelmed by an influx of sound knowledge, just as contaminated well-water may be drawn off until the impurity disappears or a pool may be restored by a sufficient inflow of pure water.

The first part of the Book The Training of the Believer through Divine Assistance in the Inner Knowledge of Religion is complete. There follows Part Two of the Book The Training of the Believer through Divine Assistance in the Inner Knowledge of Religion.

PART TWO

The First Session of Part Two

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God as He has informed us in His Book and as He has made praise obligatory upon His servants by obligating the acts through which His praise is rendered. Blessings be upon the best of creation, Muhammad His Prophet, and upon the chosen family of his House.

You have heard, O company of the awliya, the ta'wil of what is in the Book of the Da'a'im from its beginning through what precedes the section entitled "The Purification of Bodies, Garments, Ground, and Mats."

God says: "And purify your garments." In this chapter the Da'a'im relates from the Messenger of God and from the Imams of his progeny commands to wash whatever impurity touches the body or garment and to cleanse the earth or mat upon which one prays, for prayer is not valid upon a mat that has been soiled.

The outward body symbolizes the outward dimension of knowledge and practice. If something impure enters or attaches to it—an evil statement or corrupt action—then neither one who seeks entry into the da'wa nor one who has already entered and wishes to continue upon it should proceed until that impurity is purified...

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...before entering the prayer, whose inward likeness is the summons to faith. If a garment or body is touched by impurity while one is already in prayer, one must not continue until it is washed away.

As for cleansing the garment, mat, earth, or any other surface upon which the worshipper stands, prostrates, or relies during prayer, inwardly these symbolize the principles, foundations, ranks, and degrees upon which the respondent stands and relies in the soundness of his faith. He may not rely upon any such thing if it contains the impurity of unbelief, associationism, or any other defilement until that impurity has been removed. This is the general principle concerning bodily, garment, mat, and ground impurities, outwardly and inwardly.

Among its detailed rules, the Da'a'im relates from 'Ali that if urine touches a garment it is to be washed twice: water is poured upon it, the cloth rubbed and wrung, then water is poured a second time, it is rubbed again and wrung. Its inner meaning is that urine, as explained, symbolizes associationism, which is subtler than unbelief, and some kinds of it are more hidden than others.

'Ali said that some forms of shirk are more hidden than a black ant upon a black stone in a dark night. Associationism enters through many doors: taking gods besides God; taking patrons other than His awliya; making religion from human opinions and declaring lawful and unlawful on that basis. God says, "They took their rabbis and monks as lords besides God." The Messenger explained that whoever declares something lawful or forbidden on the opinion of any creature has taken that person as a lord besides God. The branches and related forms are many.

Urine, the symbol of shirk, is unlike excrement in that a small amount may soak invisibly into what it touches rather than remain plainly visible. Because it penetrates the garment, washing twice is required so that no trace remains after a single washing. The Messenger said: "Guard yourselves against urine; guard yourselves against the punishment of the Fire." Likewise one must be vigilant against shirk because it too may be hidden.

As for the Da'a'im's rule that the urine of a male infant may be cleansed by pouring water over it from one side until it runs out the other, while the urine of a female child is washed...

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...the male child symbolizes the instructor and the female child the learner. Whatever subtle element resembling shirk may enter an instructor is, by virtue of his knowledge and recognition, less entrenched than what may enter a learner, who is more liable to be affected by it.

If the location of an impurity on a garment is unknown, the whole garment is washed. Its inward meaning is that if a person knows with certainty that some form of unbelief or shirk has entered his outward religious state but does not know exactly what it is, he must repent and seek release from all unbelief and shirk, dissociate himself from both in their entirety, and make his faith sincere.

The Da'a'im also commands washing blood from the body and garments just as other impurities are washed away. Blood inwardly symbolizes knowledge while it remains in its proper place. Blood is life so long as it remains in the body; when it leaves, the body dies, and drawing it out is an injury to the body. Likewise whoever places knowledge outside its proper place commits an error and sin. He must remove it and cease taking it outside the proper rank. If he deliberately does so, he has transgressed, and it becomes unlawful for one who hears such misplaced knowledge to accept and believe any of it, just as blood is pure while within the body but becomes impure once it has left it.

The small amounts excused outwardly, such as a slight sprinkling of blood or flea blood so long as it is not excessive, symbolize slight allusions and discreet symbols from knowledge that escape beyond their proper place without full disclosure.

The command to wash intoxicating drink from a garment symbolizes purification from the knowledge of the people of falsehood when it touches the outward religion and corrupts it. One must cleanse oneself from it by true knowledge, whose likeness is water. Just as intoxicating drink may neither lawfully be drunk nor used outwardly, the false knowledge it symbolizes is likewise unlawful inwardly.

The permission concerning a wet garment touching the body of one in a state of janaba or a menstruating woman, and concerning their sweat and physical contact, has this inward meaning: we have explained that the junub symbolizes the one who opens knowledge to another, while the menstruating woman symbolizes the respondent who has committed an offense. There is no harm in outward interaction with them merely by such contact.

Likewise, touching dry impurity without any of it adhering to one's hand symbolizes discussing the doctrines of the people of falsehood or disputing with them, so long as one does not believe, adopt, or internalize any part of it.

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The Da'a'im permits the dung and urine of animals whose flesh may be eaten, provided those animals do not themselves feed on impurities. If they do feed upon filth, their dung and urine become impure. Animals whose flesh is lawful symbolize believers. Dung and urine are the waste remaining from food and drink after the useful essence by which bodies are nourished has been extracted.

Food and drink symbolize knowledge and wisdom, which nourish spirits just as food and drink nourish bodies. If a believer receives true knowledge and wisdom and benefits from their pure essence, whatever lesser residue remains with him does not necessarily corrupt another person's outward state if it touches him. Yet such residue is not something to be sought or used as nourishment, just as one does not ordinarily eat the dung or drink the urine of lawful animals even though they are not legally impure. Use is permitted only exceptionally for treatment where necessity requires it. Likewise inwardly, one may occasionally make limited therapeutic use of such secondary or imperfect material when there is a need.

If, however, a person who has entered the da'wa of faith has previously learned the doctrines of the people of falsehood, then what remains of that knowledge and touches the outward or inward state of another is impure. This is like the dung, urine, flesh, milk, and eggs of animals that feed upon filth: they remain forbidden and impure until the animal is separated from impurity and fed clean food. The complete interpretation will be given in the chapter on foods, God willing.

The Da'a'im also permits rain-mud so long as impurity has not clearly predominated over and altered it. Mud is a mixture of water and earth. Water symbolizes knowledge and earth symbolizes the believers. For this reason 'Ali was called Abu Turab, "Father of Dust," because after the Messenger he is the father of the believers. When water mixes with earth it becomes mud; likewise when knowledge mingles with believers, there arises the shared knowledge in which they exchange and deliberate.

So long as this is not altered by the knowledge of the people of falsehood, it remains pure. If false knowledge mixes with and changes it, it resembles mud altered by impurity. Yet if the earth predominates and absorbs the impurity so that its trace disappears, it becomes clean again. Hence the saying that the earth purifies one part of itself by another.

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The Da'a'im states that one who walks upon impure ground and afterward walks upon clean ground has his feet purified. Another inward meaning of this is that clean earth symbolizes the hujja of the people of truth, while impure earth symbolizes the proof or spokesman of the people of falsehood. Whoever relies upon the latter is touched by their impurity; when he leaves them and relies upon the people of truth, he is purified by their purity.

The Da'a'im also states that if sunlight falls upon ground touched by impurity, and the sun dries away the moisture and removes the substance and smell of the impurity, the earth becomes pure. The sun symbolizes the Imam. He purifies creation from the filth of their sins and from what afflicts them.

The Da'a'im forbids prayer in a graveyard, a privy, and a bathhouse. Prayer symbolizes the summons to faith. A graveyard symbolizes a gathering place of the people of falsehood, who sit and assemble there as the dead—their likenesses—are gathered in a cemetery. A da'i should therefore not summon a respondent to faith in their midst.

The privy symbolizes the places of their newly invented doctrines, which they attend only in order to discharge and produce those innovations, not in order to purify themselves. The bathhouse symbolizes a place where the nakedness of their religion is exposed, just as the nakedness of those within a bathhouse is visible. A da'i of the believers must not carry out the summons in such places or among their people while they remain in those conditions.

Prayer is permitted in sheepfolds. Sheep symbolize the believers, and their folds symbolize the assemblies and meeting places of believers. There is therefore no harm in a da'i summoning a respondent among them.

Prayer in camel resting-places is forbidden except in necessity, after the place has been swept and sprinkled with water. Camels symbolize the Imams, and their resting-places symbolize the private assembly of each Imam in his time. A person appointed by the Imam to call the believers should not use the Imam's own assembly for that purpose except under necessity, and then only after removing the rabble and unsuitable persons from it. Sweeping the place symbolizes clearing such people away; sprinkling it with water symbolizes filling it with knowledge at the time of the summons, in reverence for its rank.

The same applies to synagogues and churches, which symbolize the assemblies of the people of falsehood. If emptied of their people, or if one is forced to use the houses of polytheists, they are swept and sprinkled and prayer may then be performed. Sweeping means removing the polytheists; sprinkling means spreading knowledge there because of the recent presence of the polytheists, in honor of faith...

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...just as the call to prayer is proclaimed in churches when they are converted to the worship of God.

Likewise prayer is permitted in garments belonging to polytheists so long as they have not worn them and no impurity is present. Inwardly, this means that an outward form that happens to exist among them may be used when it agrees with the outward law of Islam; the call to the outward truth can employ what is outwardly sound even if its former owner was not.

Understand—may God give you understanding, teach you, and benefit you. Blessings be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, and upon the Imams from his progeny.

The Second Session of Part Two

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, the possessor of praise, bounty, power, and dominion. Blessings be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, the Seal of the prophets, upon 'Ali his wasi, the best of the legatees, and upon the noble Imams from his progeny.

You have heard, O believers, the ta'wil of what is in the Book of the Da'a'im from its beginning through the end of the chapter on purifying bodies, garments, and ground. What follows is the discussion of the tooth-stick (siwak).

Siwak means cleaning the teeth, either with the thumb and index finger of the hand or with a stick held between them. We have previously explained that the mouth symbolizes the Imam because within it is the tongue that expresses things and the faculty of taste, and through it comes the nourishment by which the outward body lives. Likewise through the Imam comes inward life for the spirits by knowledge and wisdom.

The teeth in the mouth symbolize the ranks appointed under the Imam. The front teeth are twelve: four canines, four incisors, and four lateral incisors, with each type occurring as pairs. The four canines symbolize the four greatest da'is to whom the Imam entrusts his summons for himself. They are the senior ranks among his hudud. Each of these four calls, by the Imam's command, two further da'is, making twelve da'is in all, one for each of the twelve regions of the earth. They also symbolize the twelve months of the year.

Hence God's saying: "Indeed the number of months with God is twelve months in the Book of God from the day He created the heavens and earth; of them four are sacred. That is the upright religion." The four sacred months symbolize those four who are the foremost among the twelve. Another likeness is found in God's address concerning Abraham: "And when Abraham said, 'My Lord, show me how...'

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...He said, "Do you not believe?" Abraham had asked God to show him—meaning to give him insight, support, and guidance concerning how believers are given life through the da'wa. God had already strengthened and increased him in that matter. "Do you not believe?" means: have you not already come to know, through your own call to faith and through being trained in it by knowledge and wisdom, enough to benefit others? He said, "Yes, but so that my heart may be reassured," meaning: so that it may be settled by Your supporting me.

God said: "Take four birds and incline them to yourself," meaning: call four men and establish them as hudud. "Then place a portion of them upon every mountain," meaning: appoint from them over every region one man, together with the two whom each of them calls. "Then call them; they will come to you swiftly. And know that God is Mighty, Wise." Thus God answered Abraham's request and gathered for him the summons of the whole earth, completing for him its hujjas. Every religious law has connected with it such appointed ranks and respondents to its da'wa.

Likewise God says: "We took the covenant of the Children of Israel and raised among them twelve chiefs." These also correspond to the twelve signs of the zodiac. Thus the Prophet in his time and the Imam in his age each has this number of da'is who carry the affair of the da'wa. There may, however, be a period before a hujja or da'is are established, as already explained.

Cleaning the teeth with the index finger and thumb and passing them over these teeth symbolizes adherence to the Sunna of Muhammad—whose likeness among the fingers is the thumb, strongest and most firmly established, distinct from the others yet completing their grasp—and to the Sunna of his wasi 'Ali, whose

likeness is the index finger, with which praise, indication, and testimony are made, just as inwardly such things are made through the wasi.

Passing these two fingers over the teeth whose inner likenesses are the hudud means acknowledging those ranks, accepting the Sunnas transmitted through them once they are established, and believing in their excellence even before their outward appointment. Hence one who uses the tooth-stick is said to "perform the Sunna." The tooth-stick of the prophets and awsiya signifies their establishment of these lower ranks, while using an actual stick symbolizes their dealing with these ranks through intermediaries between them and the Prophet and wasi—namely the Imams. Thus the Imam's likeness is also the siwak: by means of the support of the two origins he removes from the hudud what clings to them of the filth of opposition and keeps them clean through constant supervision. For the respondent, the siwak likewise symbolizes his connection to the Imam through those ranks when they have been appointed and established.

This is the root of the inner meaning of the siwak. Its outward practice is known and should be maintained outwardly and inwardly, just as outward purification and all other obligations should be maintained.

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Behind the front teeth upon which the siwak is principally used are the molars. There are normally sixteen of them, four on each side of each jaw, though some people have more or fewer. Together with the twelve front teeth they make twenty-eight teeth, corresponding to the twenty-eight stations of the moon among the stars.

The legal blood-money for the teeth is divided differently between the front and back teeth; the complete compensation for all of them totals one thousand dinars. The inner interpretation of those amounts will be explained, God willing, when blood-money is discussed.

The molars also symbolize ranks beneath the hudud represented by the front teeth. They are intermediaries between those higher ranks and the respondents. Just as food is first cut by the front teeth and then ground by the molars, so the summons is first carried by the chief da'is of the regions and then by lower ranks who train and prepare the respondents.

The four teeth immediately adjoining the canines symbolize the doors of the four chief da'is. Each of those four has a gate, and the remaining ranks complete the full number. The siwak may be applied to these teeth as well, and doing so is meritorious though the principal duty concerns the front teeth. The detailed symbolism of the varying number of teeth in different people and animals would require lengthy explanation and belongs elsewhere.

The Da'a'im relates that the Messenger of God, when he rose at night, used the siwak. In inner ta'wil, rising at night symbolizes standing for the inward teaching, because night symbolizes the hidden dimension. Hence it is said that night is "kafir" in the lexical sense of "covering," because darkness covers things. The Messenger's use of the siwak when standing at night therefore symbolizes his supervision and correction of the hudud who carried the inner ta'wil to the respondents whenever he established the inward summons.

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It is also related that when the Messenger traveled he carried six things with him: a vial, scissors, a kohl-container, a mirror, a comb, and a siwak. The Prophet's travel was never travel in the sense of withdrawing alone from his family; he traveled with his household and companions. The symbolism of ordinary travel will be discussed in its proper place.

The Messenger's traveling with his family and companions symbolizes his conveying to them inner knowledge and wisdom, while their traveling with him symbolizes their seeking it from him. The vial represents what he retained of knowledge and wisdom in order to impart it to them. Perfume symbolizes subtle spiritual knowledge which is forbidden to the one still in the state of ihram until he leaves that state and reaches the appropriate rank. Keeping perfume in a vial symbolizes guarding and protecting such knowledge from those not entitled to it, just as a person reserves perfume for intimates and those he wishes to honor.

The scissors symbolize removing from knowledge whatever extends beyond the proper limit of the inward meaning and does not correspond to it, just as scissors cut excess hair of the moustache that hangs below the lip or hair of the head that passes beyond its proper limit. Thus when the Prophet instructed learners, he gave each class of people the portion of knowledge and wisdom appropriate to them.

The kohl-container holds kohl. Inwardly, kohl symbolizes knowledge that removes doubt from the insights of respondents, just as outward kohl clears what clouds physical sight.

The mirror symbolizes showing the respondent his own condition. Hence the saying, "The believer is the mirror of the believer," meaning that one sincerely advises the other and shows him his faults so that he may correct them.

The comb symbolizes knowledge by which the outward order is arranged, for hair symbolizes the outward. The siwak, as explained, symbolizes supervising and correcting the hudud through knowledge.

These six items which the Messenger carried when traveling therefore symbolize six forms of wisdom by which he instructed each rank of respondents according to its measure and corrected whatever among them required correction. Outwardly he carried these six objects for the care of his body, and their outward use points to their inward meaning.

The Da'a'im also relates his saying: "The siwak sweetens the mouth and pleases the Lord. Gabriel never came to me without urging me to use the siwak, until I feared that I might wear away the front of my teeth."

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Its inner meaning follows what has already been explained: by supervising the hudud the inward da'wa is made sound and pleasant, and this is among the acts of God's awliya that please Him. The Prophet's saying that he feared wearing away the front of his teeth through the frequency of Gabriel's urging means that he feared excessive questioning, scrutiny, and insistence in examining the condition of his hudud. In Arabic one may say that a person "wears someone down" by persistent questioning. The Prophet therefore feared burdening the hudud by too much continual supervision, discipline, and correction, just as outwardly excessive use of a tooth-stick could wear the teeth.

His saying, "Three things were given to the prophets: perfume, wives, and the siwak," has inward meanings: perfume signifies the subtle knowledge of their da'wa; wives symbolize the people and ranks beneath them through whom their summons is continued; and the siwak symbolizes their supervision of those ranks.

As for his saying, "If people knew what is in the siwak, a man would sleep with it beneath his covering," the man inwardly symbolizes the instructor. He should constantly supervise those beneath him among the hudud and respondents, both in their outward affairs—symbolized by the covering—and in their inward condition beneath that covering. The siwak thus stands between and attends to both outward and inward.

The Prophet also said: "Clean the pathways of the Qur'an." He was asked, "What are the pathways of the Qur'an, O Messenger of God?" He replied, "Your mouths." We have said that the mouth symbolizes the Imam.

Cleaning it means keeping the Imam free from anything the believer might bring upon him that he dislikes or that might give his enemies grounds to speak against him. The siwak here therefore means constant watchfulness and self-correction.

His saying, "Were it not that I would make things difficult for my community, I would have made the siwak obligatory with every ablution; whoever is able to do so should not abandon it," means inwardly that supervising these hudud in the da'wa should accompany the purification symbolized by ablution. It is recommended rather than universally obligatory, but whoever is capable should not neglect it.

Understand, then—may God have mercy upon you, O company of the awliya—the knowledge by which God has required you to worship Him outwardly and inwardly. Establish both dimensions as He has commanded. May God assist you, grant you success, and open it to you. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, and upon the Imams from his progeny. God is sufficient for us, and He is the best trustee.

The Third Session of Part Two

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God with the praise of one who knows the right of praise and renders it sincerely to the One who deserves it. Blessings be upon Muhammad, the Messenger of God and His Prophet, and upon the Imams from his progeny, the best of His chosen ones.

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You have heard, O brethren, the explanation and ta'wil of the Da'a'im al-Islam from its beginning through the point reached in the preceding majlis in the chapter on the siwak.

What follows is the report from the Messenger of God that Gabriel came to him and said: "O Muhammad, how can the angels descend among you when you neither use the siwak, nor cleanse yourselves with water, nor wash the joints of your fingers?"

The inner meaning of these matters has already been explained. The siwak inwardly is the cleansing of the twelve front teeth, which symbolize the twelve hudud, according to the Sunna of the Prophet—whose likeness among the fingers is the thumb—and of his wasi—whose likeness is the index finger. The Prophet and wasi supervise and discipline the ranks beneath them, while each Imam and hujja likewise supervises the corresponding ranks in his own time.

"You do not cleanse yourselves with water" has likewise been explained: cleansing with water symbolizes purification by knowledge from the stain of falsehood until it entirely disappears from the respondent.

The finger-joints are the joints of the hand. We have explained that they symbolize ranks of the outward and inward order, just as the twelve hours of night and the twelve hours of day symbolize paired ranks. Each of the four fingers contains three joints, making twelve in each hand. Their symbolism therefore parallels that of the twelve front teeth, and the report emphasizes the need to attend carefully to all of them outwardly and inwardly.

The Prophet's saying that "the siwak is half of ablution, and ablution is half of faith" has the following inward meaning. The siwak, as explained, is the supervision of the ranks beneath the Prophet and their adherence to his and his wasi's Sunnas. Ablution is purification from every form of falsehood and dissociation from it. Faith consists of walaya and bara'a—allegiance and dissociation—so bara'a is one half of faith. Ablution symbolizes that half, and the siwak is one of the Sunnas within ablution; the symbolic relation follows accordingly.

Next is his saying: "No man rises in the depth of night to his siwak, uses it, purifies himself and perfects his purification, then goes to one of the houses of God, except that an angel comes to him and places its mouth upon his mouth. Nothing comes forth from his interior except that it enters the angel's interior, and on the Day of Resurrection the angel comes as an intercessor and witness for him."

Its inner meaning is that night symbolizes the inward realm, while the man symbolizes the instructor in relation to learners beneath him, whose likeness is that of women. When an instructor rises to impart inward knowledge, cleanses himself by the Sunna of the two origins and by attending to the twelve hudud...

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...and stands in that way for the wali of his age, this is the inner meaning of the saying that he then proceeds to one of the houses of God, and an angel comes and places its mouth upon his mouth. The "angel" here symbolizes the wali of his age. If the instructor carries out the wali's da'wa according to the limits laid down for him and remains within those limits, then whatever inner ta'wil issues from him—this being what is meant by "nothing comes forth from his interior"—falls into the "interior of the angel," meaning that what he delivers is fully included within the true knowledge held by his wali and agrees with it. On the Day of Resurrection the wali will testify for him that he conveyed the message on his behalf and will intercede for him because he transmitted it correctly without addition or deficiency. He deserves such intercession because he has taken a covenant with the Compassionate and fulfilled that covenant.

Next is the saying of the Messenger: "Use the siwak crosswise, not lengthwise." Outwardly this means that one moves the finger or tooth-stick across all the teeth in a single sweeping direction, from one side to the other, rather than rubbing each tooth separately from top to bottom. Inwardly it means that the learner and instructor alike should attend to all the hudud we have described and not confine their concern to only one of them.

Next is his saying that rubbing with the thumb and index finger counts as a siwak for ablution. The Arabic expression refers to rubbing the teeth thoroughly. It is related that when the Messenger rose at night he rubbed his mouth with the siwak. Inwardly this means that if the Imam has not yet established lower ranks for respondents to follow, the respondents may be guided by the Sunnas they have received directly from him and from his fathers through the Messenger and wasi. Likewise, in taking and giving the covenant and in training those beneath them, the instructors may act by the established Sunnas of the Messenger and wasi.

The Da'a'im next relates that the Messenger forbade using certain fragrant trees for the siwak, including fragrant basil-like plants and pomegranate wood, saying that doing so injures the vessels of the mouth. These are not normally used as tooth-sticks outwardly.

It is also related concerning Paradise that the Messenger said Gabriel gave him glad tidings of a house there made of qasab in which there is no noise and no weariness...

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God says: "As for one who is among those brought near, then there is rest, fragrant provision, and a Garden of bliss." Rayhan in Arabic refers to the fragrant tips and blossoms of sweet-smelling plants and is a general name for pleasant aromatic herbs, though it is especially used for basil because of its persistence and fragrance. As for pomegranates, God says in describing the two gardens: "In both are fruit, date-palms, and pomegranates."

Although these things are praiseworthy and are said to be in Paradise, in the symbolic da'wa they correspond to certain subordinate ranks that are not to be relied upon for the purifications from falsehood. Whoever

makes them the basis of such purification brings corruption into his religion. Thus 'Ali said that such a tooth-stick damages the vessels of the mouth. The best siwak is from the arak tree. Its inward likeness is the Imam, or one whom the Imam appoints to the da'wa and to the purification of God's servants through it. It is called arak because through it the learner sees the landmarks of his religion and acquires recognition through knowledge.

The Da'a'im then begins the discussion of tayammum. Tayammum is the ablution of necessity. God says: "O you who believe, when you rise for prayer, wash your faces..." until: "If you are ill, or on a journey, or one of you comes from the privy, or you have touched women and you find no water, then seek clean earth and wipe your faces and hands with it. God does not wish to place hardship upon you, but He wishes to purify you and complete His favor upon you so that you may be grateful. Remember God's favor upon you and His covenant by which He bound you when you said, 'We hear and obey.' Fear God; surely God knows what is within the breasts."

The address is to believers—those who have responded to God and His Messenger by answering the Prophet's da'wa. This is confirmed at the end of the passage by the reminder of God's covenant upon them.

We have already explained the inner interpretation of "when you rise for prayer, wash your faces and your hands..." through the command regarding full bathing after janaba. That includes the general symbolic meaning of ablution and ritual bathing.

As for "if you are ill," inwardly the sick person is the outward respondent who is too weak to travel to the person who can impart knowledge to him...

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...God says concerning those unable to migrate: "Was not God's earth spacious enough for you to emigrate therein? Their refuge is Hell—an evil destination—except the weak among men, women, and children who have no means and cannot find a way. Those, perhaps God will pardon."

As for "or on a journey," the traveler inwardly is one who has gone away from his settled place and separated from his people. Inwardly this symbolizes one who has become separated from the people of his da'wa and from the instructors to whom he would normally resort.

Then God says: "or one of you comes from the privy, or you have touched women, and you find no water." In inner ta'wil this means that such a person is among the weak believers unable to reach an instructor because of distance, or among those from whom qualified instructors have been cut off and cannot reach them. If, in that condition, they commit sins requiring purification—unbelief, associationism, hypocrisy, or the like—these correspond, as already explained, to the impurities that invalidate ablution: urine, excrement, and wind from the rear passage.

"One of you comes from the privy" is a euphemism for these things, because ghait in Arabic originally means a low-lying place where people used to go for privacy when relieving themselves.

"Or you have touched women" is a euphemism for intercourse. We have already explained that intercourse symbolizes the opening of knowledge between instructor and learner and that it necessitates purification by the knowledge exchanged between them. The legal rule applies outwardly to lawful and unlawful intercourse alike. In this verse, however, the symbolic reference is specifically to unlawful intercourse: inwardly, it is the respondent taking instruction from someone among the people of falsehood or from a person within the true da'wa who has not been authorized to open such knowledge.

If a respondent has done any such thing and cannot find "water"—that is, true knowledge from its rightful people—or cannot reach the authorized instructor who would purify him, he should not remain in that state. God says: "If only, when they wronged themselves, they had come to you and sought God's forgiveness, and the Messenger had sought forgiveness for them, they would have found God accepting and merciful." He also says: "Take from their wealth a charity by which you purify and cleanse them."

Thus if a person commits something requiring purification but lacks an authorized instructor or is too weak to reach him, he must not remain without purification, just as outwardly one who has no water or cannot use it must not remain impure...

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...Rather, he performs tayammum: he intentionally seeks clean raised earth and wipes his face and hands with it, and this serves as purification in place of the water he cannot find or use.

Earth inwardly symbolizes the believer. Thus God says that on the Day of Judgment the unbeliever will say, "Would that I were dust," meaning in this interpretation: would that I had been a believer, when he sees what God has granted the believers and how He punishes the unbelievers. Likewise the Messenger called 'Ali "Abu Turab," Father of Dust, meaning that after him 'Ali is the father of the believers. Another report makes this explicit: "I and you, O 'Ali, are the two fathers of the believers."

Therefore, when the person whose condition we have described cannot find an instructor who can give him the inner knowledge that purifies, he should not remain as he is. He should go to a believing person who possesses recognition and is clean of the impurities of unbelief, associationism, and hypocrisy, confess to him what has happened and what he has committed, and take from him enough of the outward knowledge of the people of truth to remove the falsehood that touched him. This suffices until he finds a true instructor, just as tayammum with clean earth suffices outwardly until water is found.

This is the basic inner meaning of tayammum. Understand it—may God grant you understanding and knowledge, preserve you, and have mercy upon you. Blessings be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, and upon the Imams from his household. God is sufficient for us, and He is the best trustee.

The Fourth Session of Part Two

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, hidden from physical sight and inwardly present within the subtle realities of things, while the signs of manifestation point to Him. Blessings be upon our master Muhammad, the Seal of the prophets, upon 'Ali his wasi, Commander of the Believers, and upon the rightly guided Imams from their progeny.

You have heard, O believers, the ta'wil of what is established in the Book of Da'a'im al-Islam concerning the outward religion from its beginning through the start of the chapter on tayammum. You have learned the inner meaning of tayammum with earth for one who cannot find water: it is the purification of a weak believer who commits an offense in religion but cannot find the person who possesses the required knowledge. He purifies himself temporarily through a just believer, receiving outward knowledge from the truthful Imams until he can reach an authorized instructor. The distinction between the inward "sick person" and "traveler" for whom tayammum is allowed has also been explained.

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The Da'a'im next relates from 'Ali that one who cannot find water should not perform tayammum until near the end of the prayer time, after having searched for water. Inwardly, if a believer has committed something requiring purification through true knowledge, he must seek that knowledge and should not hasten immediately to an unauthorized person to obtain only outward instruction. He must exert himself in seeking an authorized instructor. Only when he has exhausted his ability and reaches the latest point at which he knows he will not find such a person may he turn to a trustworthy believer and take enough outward knowledge from him to remove the falsehood he has committed.

This corresponds outwardly to the person who has invalidated his purity but cannot find water: he does not perform tayammum until he has searched for water up to the end of the prayer time; if he still cannot find it, he then seeks clean earth and performs tayammum.

Ja'far ibn Muhammad is also reported to have said that the purity of one who has performed tayammum is not invalidated unless he commits a new hadath or finds water. Once water is found he must purify himself with it; if he does not, his tayammum is invalid. If he later wishes to pray and again has no water, he must perform tayammum anew, because finding and then abandoning the water has interrupted the validity of the prior tayammum.

Its inward meaning is that if a believer who has committed an offense cannot find true knowledge and therefore purifies himself temporarily through outward knowledge, and then later finds an authorized instructor but does not go to him to receive from him, his previous provisional purification is no longer sufficient. If he subsequently loses access to that instructor without having taken from him, he must once again go to a pure, recognized believer and take from the outward knowledge of God's awliya as he did before. His deliberate failure to receive from the authorized instructor once he found him is itself an occurrence that breaks the earlier purification, just as finding water and then failing to use it breaks the validity of tayammum.

Al-Sadiq also said that if a person finds water after performing tayammum but before beginning the prayer, the tayammum no longer suffices and he must purify with water; if no water is available, he performs tayammum again. But if a corresponding change of circumstances occurs after a person has entered a valid da'wa or rank and nothing has actually invalidated his state, he remains upon what he was upon unless and until the new authorized source truly becomes available to him.

He also said that a person may perform as many prayers as he wishes with one tayammum so long as he does not invalidate it and does not find water. The inner meaning follows the same principle.

Next comes the statement: "Tayammum is the ablution of necessity." Its explanation has already begun...

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The inward meaning of the actual manner of tayammum is as follows. When a person intends tayammum, he strikes both palms once upon the earth, then shakes one hand against the other, then wipes his face once with the tips of the four fingers of both hands from above the eyebrows down to the lower face, whether every part is touched or not. Then he places the fingers of the left hand upon the fingers of the right from the roots of the fingers, without the thumb, and draws them toward their tips; then he does the same with the right hand upon the left. This single tayammum takes the place of both complete ablution and the full bath from janaba.

Its inner meaning is that the person performing tayammum turns toward the believing person from whom he will take what he needs, as already explained. Striking the earth with both hands symbolizes acknowledgment of the Imam and hujja. Shaking the hands afterward means removing from them what has clung to them of the

earth: the earth symbolizes the believer to whom he has turned out of necessity. By shaking it off, he recognizes that this believer is not connected with the Imam and hujja in the same authorized way as the fully commissioned ranks of the da'wa. He therefore removes from his belief any notion that this person occupies one of those official ranks, even though he takes from him what necessity requires.

Wiping the face with the four fingers symbolizes acknowledgment of the four-and-twenty hudud together with the seven Natiqs, after acknowledgment of the Imam and hujja. The twenty-four are the ranks previously likened to the hours of night and day: twelve hours of night and twelve of day. Each of the four fingers has three joints, making twelve joints in each hand. These correspond to the twelve great da'is who govern the twelve regions and symbolize the hours of night because they are people of the inward. Each of them has a gate beneath him who breaks through the outward doctrine for people and directs respondents upward; these gates symbolize the twelve hours of day because their work begins with the manifest outward teaching.

Wiping the face with both hands also symbolizes acknowledgment of the seven Natiqs, represented by the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and mouth, together with the Imam and hujja, represented by the faculties of nourishment and breathing. A believer who joins with a believing person who instructs him must acknowledge all these ranks. We have already said that wiping symbolizes acknowledgment while washing symbolizes obedience.

Thus the face and hands, which were washed in ablution, are merely wiped in tayammum, while the head and feet, which were wiped in ablution, are omitted. The reason is that the ordinary believer to whom the weak person turns in necessity has not been granted authority requiring obedience in a specific office. Therefore active obedience to him falls away; what remains is acknowledgment of those above him whose acknowledgment is obligatory.

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Because acknowledgment has taken the place of obedience in this situation, it is not repeated unnecessarily. A single tayammum suffices, just as the minimum valid ablution may be performed once. The same would apply if the weak believer were to turn to a da'i from among higher ranks who had not been authorized to open this particular knowledge: he still could not go beyond the outward teaching permitted to him.

This is the ta'wil of the manner of tayammum in this stage of spiritual training.

Al-Sadiq's saying that tayammum is the complete ablution and purification from janaba means inwardly that what the weak believer receives from the believing person he has approached suffices to purify him from the falsehood he has committed and from an improper opening of knowledge with one from whom such opening was not permitted, just as though he had received the full purification from an authorized da'i—provided that such a da'i is genuinely unavailable or impossible to reach. If the believer merely neglects the authorized source despite being able to reach him, the provisional substitute does not suffice.

'Ali is also reported to have said that a person who cannot find actual earth may strike his hands upon dust and perform tayammum with it. Similarly, if one cannot find bare soil, he may use the dust that has gathered upon a garment, felt, saddlecloth, or similar object.

Its inner meaning is that if the weak believer cannot openly find a suitable believer from whom to receive what will remove the wrong he has committed, he should seek one who is concealed and take even the smallest amount that can reach him from a pure believer of the kind already described. Dust is still earth in a subtle and dispersed form, and inwardly symbolizes the hidden believer.

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Tayammum may not properly be performed with lime, stone, ashes, or similar materials unless actual dust is present upon them. Inwardly, the weak believer may seek purification only from a believer, for earth symbolizes the believer. The other materials symbolize unbelievers, hypocrites, and ordinary people of the outward who have not responded to the true da'wa. One who has fallen into such a condition should not go to these people or take from them what he imagines will purify him.

If, however, persecution and trial become so severe that believers must conceal themselves among such people and hide within them, just as a small amount of earth or dust may lie upon stone, ash, or other unsuitable surfaces, then the weak believer may take what he needs from a pure believer who is concealed among them. Likewise the dust that settles upon garments, felt, and similar things symbolizes believers hidden among ordinary outward people and outwardly appearing to be of them because of taqiyya.

The Imams also said: "There is no tayammum in one's settled residence except because of an impediment." We have already explained that the inwardly ill person is the weak believer. They further allowed tayammum for a man in town who is surrounded by crowds and cannot get through them to the water before the prayer time arrives. He may perform tayammum, pray, and then repeat that prayer once he can reach the water and purify himself.

Inwardly this corresponds to a respondent who cannot reach the da'i because of the great number of other respondents crowding around him and preventing access. He may temporarily rely upon the outward knowledge held by believers who received it from God's awliya and act by it. In this respect he resembles one who has reached the outskirts of the da'wa while still seeking and desiring access but is prevented only by the obstacle described. God says: "Whoever leaves his home emigrating to God and His Messenger and then death overtakes him, his reward has already become incumbent upon God."

The Messenger also said: "One who sits in the mosque waiting for the prayer is in prayer so long as he does not invalidate his purity." Prayer, as explained, symbolizes the da'wa, while the mosque symbolizes the da'i. Sitting in it symbolizes reaching and remaining near the da'i. When the believer who was prevented by the crowd finally reaches the da'i and the covenant is taken from him, this is like reaching the water and purifying with it. Repeating the prayer after having previously prayed by tayammum symbolizes entering the true inward da'wa after having relied only upon the outward teaching of the believers.

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The earlier prayer is not itself the full inward da'wa even though merit was obtained for seeking it; that is why it must be "repeated" once full access is gained. Inwardly, the actual da'wa is completed only when the covenant is taken.

Understand, O company of the awliya, the knowledge by which God has commanded you to worship Him outwardly and inwardly. Establish both dimensions according to what He has required. May God assist you through the excellence of His mercy. Blessings be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, and upon the righteous and pure Imams from his progeny. God is sufficient for us, and He is the best trustee.

The Fifth Session of Part Two

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God who is exalted yet is not remote from any of His creation because of His exaltedness, and who is near without any creature sharing His place, for He

is not bounded by place. Blessings be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, servant, and Messenger, and upon the pure Imams of guidance from his family.

You have heard, O brethren, the explanation of the Book of the Da'a'im from its beginning through part of the chapter on tayammum. What follows is the statement of 'Ali concerning a person who is at a well but has no bucket or means by which to draw the water and therefore cannot reach it: he performs tayammum.

Its inner meaning is that a believer has committed an offense in religion and finds an authorized instructor but cannot actually reach him and has no intermediary or means by which to establish contact. In such a case he may suffice with what he receives from a trustworthy believer of the outward religious knowledge transmitted from the pure Imams, according to the principle already explained, until he finds an authorized instructor and receives from him the inward purification properly required.

Next comes the saying of the Imams that one who has wounds or an illness and fears harm to himself if he washes may perform tayammum; likewise if he fears the cold will kill him. Inwardly, as already explained, the "sick" person who is permitted tayammum is the weak believer unable to reach the fully authorized instructor. Illnesses are of many kinds, and so are the causes that produce inward weakness among the spiritually weak.

As for the saying that if he fears the cold will kill him he may perform tayammum...

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...but if he does not fear this, uses water, and dies, he is a martyr: inwardly, this means that a person who knows himself to be weak and of little capacity for receiving inward knowledge, and fears that what he receives may carry him into unbelief or misguidance, should restrict himself to the outward knowledge of God's awliya until he acquires sufficient strength to bear the inward meaning. He should not expose himself to destruction when weakness and doubt are likely to overtake him.

But if he does not reasonably fear such harm, seeks the inward truth, and is actually strong enough to bear it, yet the person teaching him gives him something inappropriate which destroys him because of his own poor judgment in delivering it, then the learner has been spiritually killed without having intended his own destruction. He is therefore likened metaphorically to one killed unjustly and called a martyr.

The true martyrs are God's awliya among His prophets and the Imams of His religion. Whoever joins himself to them may be named among them by attribution and metaphor, as God says: "Whoever among you takes them as allies is one of them," and Abraham says: "Whoever follows me is of me."

The instructor whose inappropriate teaching has killed the learner is treated as the killer. If he deliberately intended the harm, he falls under God's saying: "Whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, abiding therein..." If he did not intend the learner's death and the harm came by mistake, then the act corresponds to accidental killing, concerning which God says: "It is not for a believer to kill a believer except by mistake." The full interpretation of these matters will come, God willing, in the chapters on retaliation and blood-money.

The Da'a'im next relates from the Imams that if a person possesses only a small amount of water and fears that if he uses it for ablution or bathing he will die of thirst, he should perform tayammum and preserve the water for drinking. God says: "Do not kill yourselves; surely God is merciful to you."

Its inner meaning is that a person who has committed a religious offense requiring purification through knowledge may find with his instructor only enough knowledge to preserve and strengthen his basic faith, but

not enough additional instruction to remove fully the particular impurity he has acquired. In such a case his condition is like that of one who cannot find sufficient water for purification...

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...Inwardly he may therefore rely temporarily upon a trustworthy believer who gives him from the outward knowledge of God's awliya enough to remove the impurity of what he has committed, until he finds a true instructor. Meanwhile he should remain firm upon the faith that the true instructor has already established in him. This is like a person who has too little water for purification because he must preserve it for drinking and therefore performs tayammum with earth until he finds enough water to purify himself.

The Imams also said that if a traveler finds only a small amount of water and fears that using it for ablution or bathing will cause him to die of thirst, he should perform tayammum and keep the water for himself. Likewise if the water is in a place where going to obtain it exposes him to thieves, wild animals, or some danger of destruction, he may perform tayammum.

Its inner meaning is that a weak believer who has committed a religious offense and cannot remove its impurity except through an instructor who is in a place dangerous to reach—because an oppressive ruler from among the people of rebellion, symbolized by wild beasts, or a harmful aggressor against believers, symbolized by thieves, may discover, kill, or turn him away from his religion—need not seek that instructor while the danger remains. He may suffice, as already explained, with outward knowledge taken from a trustworthy believer until he can safely reach a true instructor without fear or taqiyya. This outward and inward concession is from God's mercy toward His creatures and His easing of hardship for them.

The Imams further ruled that a traveler who finds water offered at an expensive price must buy it if he possesses the price, because in that case he has effectively found water and may not perform tayammum—unless paying the price would deprive him of what he needs for survival or expose him to destruction, in which case he need not buy it and may perform tayammum.

Inwardly this means that a person cut off from the people of his da'wa, who commits a sin requiring purification through the knowledge of a true instructor, may find such an instructor only on the condition of spending from his wealth. If he can afford what is required, he must give it. But if the payment would ruin him materially, or cause doubt and corrupt belief to enter him so that he would be spiritually harmed or destroyed, he should not do so. He may then rely temporarily upon outward knowledge from the awliya of God, received through an approved believer...

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...until he has enough means to spend without harm, or until his insight becomes strong enough that the expenditure becomes easy and a source of joy because he understands its excellence, or until he finds a compassionate and gentle instructor who deals with him gradually and seeks his salvation with kindness.

If, however, what he has committed is of a kind for which such expenditure is truly obligatory and no other purification can replace it, and access to the necessary knowledge is possible only through that expenditure, then he remains under the obligation until he becomes able to fulfill it.

This is among the meanings of God's saying: "There is no blame upon the weak, nor upon the sick, nor upon those who find nothing to spend, if they are sincere toward God and His Messenger. There is no way against those who do good; God is Forgiving, Merciful. Nor upon those who came to you that you might provide them mounts, and you said, 'I can find nothing upon which to carry you'; they turned away with their eyes

overflowing with tears from grief that they could find nothing to spend. The way is only against those who ask leave of you while they are rich; they are content to remain with those who stay behind."

The application of such rulings varies according to times, circumstances, and capacity. At times the awliya may impose greater strictness because wisdom requires strictness in that age; at other times they may grant greater latitude because the age requires gentleness and ease.

'Ali is also reported to have said that there is no harm if a man has intercourse with his wife while traveling even though he has no water; afterward he performs tayammum. Inwardly, travel symbolizes leaving the settled place of the da'wa and separation from the community of believers. Intercourse between a man and his wife symbolizes the opening of knowledge between a respondent and a person authorized to disclose it.

If an authorized instructor opens knowledge to one whom he is permitted to instruct, the relation is like lawful intercourse with a wife or lawful bondwoman. If he opens knowledge to one whom he has not been authorized to instruct, their relation is like adultery. If someone who has permission to address the public but has not been granted permission for a particular inner disclosure opens such knowledge to another male instructor, the relation resembles illicit intercourse between males: the one speaking takes the active position and the one receiving the passive. Likewise, if an unauthorized respondent opens inner knowledge to another respondent like himself, their relation resembles illicit sexual conduct between women.

Thus intercourse with one's wife during travel when no water is present symbolizes an authorized opening of knowledge to a legitimate learner after both have left the ordinary settled environment of the da'wa...

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...The instructor may then give him outward truth or symbolic hints of the inward meaning without explicit unveiling. In that circumstance he is like a traveler who has had intercourse without having water: complete inner purification is not immediately available, so both suffice temporarily with the outward substitute until they reach a place where fuller opening is permitted.

The Messenger was asked about such a case and said: "Go to your family and perform intercourse; then perform tayammum, and you will be rewarded." The questioner said: "O Messenger of God, will I be rewarded?" He replied: "Yes. If you approach what is lawful you are rewarded, just as if you approached what is unlawful you would sin." Inwardly, this means that an authorized instructor who opens knowledge to one whom he is permitted to instruct, and does so only to the degree appropriate for him, is rewarded and receives merit for it.

This is the end of the chapter on tayammum in the Book of the Da'a'im. In this majlis and the preceding ones you have heard what God's awliya have said concerning its outward rule, and from the wali of your age, the possessor of your affair and master of your time, you have heard the inner meaning according to what is required in the stage of instruction in which you have been placed.

His saying and command have repeatedly been made clear to you: establish the outward dimension of these duties and all else by which God has commanded you to worship, and establish their inward dimension as well, just as was taken from you in covenant and pledge when you heard and accepted it. You made yourselves responsible before God and His wali. Therefore establish both outward and inward religion. Let nothing incline you away from either dimension so that you reject, neglect, or fall short in it.

The outward is not valid without its inward meaning, nor is the inward valid unless the outward has first been established. There will never be a day in which religion is lifted from you as long as religious obligation

remains. Beware—beware greatly—of anyone who embellishes for you, confuses you, or causes the thought to arise in your minds that any obligatory outward or inward duty has fallen away from you. Those who claimed something like what you possess yet perished did so because they abandoned the outward after being impressed by what they heard of the inward. Those who oppose you on the other side perished because they restricted themselves to the outward and denied the inward.

May God assist you in fulfilling His obligations and all that He has required of you in His religion. Blessings be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, and upon the Imams from his progeny. God is sufficient for us; He is the best Protector and the best Helper.

The Sixth Session of Part Two

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, who has rendered intellects incapable of encompassing the limit of His attributes and who originated creation by His wisdom. Blessings be upon Muhammad, His Prophet chosen from His creation, and upon the righteous guiding Imams from his progeny.

You have heard, O brethren, the explanation and ta'wil of what was laid out for you previously in the Book of Da'a'im al-Islam concerning the outward knowledge of the lawful and unlawful, through the end of the chapter on tayammum. What follows is the discussion of the purity of foods and drinks.

Food and drink inwardly symbolize knowledge and wisdom. Just as outward bodily life is sustained by food and drink, so the inward life of souls is sustained by knowledge and wisdom. You have already heard that water inwardly symbolizes knowledge, and you have heard the Qur'anic indications supporting that interpretation. You have also heard the explanation of the different kinds of water—what is clean, what becomes impure through contamination, what changes when mixed with other substances, and the inward counterpart of each ruling.

Food is similar. If impurity enters food, or if something mixed with it changes its nature, its outward and inward legal status changes. It may cease to bear its former name and come under the name and ruling of what has predominated over it. This is the general principle concerning the purity and impurity of food and drink outwardly and inwardly.

At the beginning of this chapter the Da'a'im relates from al-Sadiq that he was asked about a dining cloth or vessel on which wine had been poured: may one eat from it? He replied that if it has dried completely there is no harm.

Its inner meaning is that wine and similar intoxicating drinks symbolize forms of knowledge too obscure, subtle, or overpowering for the ordinary hearer to bear or understand. God created people, as He says, in stages and degrees, and He preferred some over others. Everything has its proper measure. God does not burden a soul beyond what He has given it, nor beyond its capacity. People recognize outwardly that if a vessel is loaded beyond its capacity it bends or breaks, and if a body is burdened beyond its strength it is crushed.

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Hence God relates the prayer of the believers whom He praises: "Our Lord, do not lay upon us a burden as You laid upon those before us. Our Lord, do not burden us with what we have no strength to bear." In Arabic, isr means a heavy burden. A covenant may likewise be called an isr because it contains serious obligations.

No creature can bear all knowledge without limit. God alone knows the entirety of knowledge, for He is One, Majestic and Mighty. He created the angels in ranks, placing some above others and preferring them in strength and condition. Of one He says: "Taught by one mighty in power, possessed of strength."

Likewise the Messenger said: "Charity is not lawful for the rich nor for one possessing strength and sound limbs," meaning one who has power to work and earn. God taught every angel according to the strength He had given that angel. He likewise assigned His prophets and awliya different degrees and placed upon each of them only the amount of knowledge suited to his capacity and strength. He commanded them to treat those entrusted to them in the same way: give every class of people only what they can bear according to their rank.

For this reason the Messenger especially designated his wasi, whom he established after himself, as the one most capable of receiving what he possessed. He described 'Ali as the most knowledgeable, the best in judgment, and the one into whom he deposited the greatest portion of wisdom. This shows the breadth of 'Ali's understanding and the strength of his capacity.

If knowledge beyond a person's capacity is poured upon him, it confuses and overwhelms him. Such knowledge, inwardly, resembles intoxicating drink for one unable to bear it. It is not lawful for him to hear it, nor lawful for another to cause him to hear it.

Hence the saying of the Messenger: "Whoever gives wine to a beast or a child will bear its burden [of sin]." The beast inwardly symbolizes one who has not responded to the summons of truth. God compares such people to cattle and says: "They are only like cattle; rather, they are further astray from the path." The child inwardly symbolizes a respondent who has not yet reached the rank of unrestricted authorization. If one opens to an unresponsive person, or to a respondent who has not reached the proper limit, knowledge whose equivalent is intoxicating drink, one harms him by giving him what he cannot bear.

By contrast, some subtle forms of knowledge are like pure water and lawful drink for those able to receive them; they do not alter or corrupt their condition. God describes the people of Paradise as being served by immortal youths "with cups, ewers, and a goblet from a flowing spring"...

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..."from which they suffer neither headache nor intoxication." God also says: "Therein are rivers of water unaltered, rivers of milk whose taste does not change, rivers of wine delightful to those who drink, and rivers of purified honey." He declares that all these are in the Garden.

The Garden inwardly symbolizes the da'wa because it is the means of reaching the Garden. Everything described as being within it has inward counterparts within the da'wa. The very word janna is derived from concealment and covering, and the da'wa and the ranks within it are likewise concealed.

Ma'in in Arabic is flowing water. The Qur'an nevertheless also describes wine within the Garden. Thus, as we have explained, the same inner knowledge may in one state resemble water and in another resemble wine. It is lawful for those capable of bearing it, whose state it does not corrupt, but unlawful for one who cannot bear it, for whom it would resemble intoxicating wine.

Hence God's saying, "They suffer neither headache from it nor intoxication." Some exegetes said this means they do not become exhausted by drinking it, as people in this world eventually become tired of a drinking session. Others said it means they do not suffer the headache produced by earthly wine. This second interpretation is more correct, because elsewhere God says: "There is no ghawl in it, nor are they intoxicated by it." Ghawl means headache or harm; nazf refers to depletion or loss, as one says a well is exhausted when

its water is gone or a man's blood is depleted when it has drained away, and one may call a drunken person nazif because his reason has gone.

Some interpreters understood "they are not intoxicated by it" to mean that none of their merit is diminished by what they spend there. Inwardly this is also true: knowledge never diminishes the merit of one who deserves and can bear it. But if it is given to one who neither deserves nor can bear it, it can destroy him and strip away the merit he previously possessed. This is a general statement of the ta'wil of wine; its full explanation will come, God willing, in the chapter on drinks.

The rule that a dining cloth or serving table touched by wine may be used once it has dried means inwardly that dining cloths, tables, dishes, and all food and drink vessels symbolize the da'is and what they contain of knowledge and wisdom. Their ranks rise and fall as vessels differ in value and status. If what touches them of "wine" has dried—meaning that they have received no more subtle knowledge than they can bear and have properly assimilated it—then they remain pure and it is permissible to take from them...

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...because they have received only their proper share of knowledge, what they could bear, retain, and contain. This is like the wine that has dried upon a vessel outwardly. But if such knowledge remains manifestly overpowering within them and alters their state beyond their capacity, it is not permissible to turn toward them or take from them.

The Da'a'im next relates that al-Sadiq, Ja'far ibn Muhammad, was asked about mouse droppings falling into flour. He said: if its location is known, remove it; if it is not known, there is no harm. Flour is a kind of food and therefore inwardly symbolizes knowledge, while the mouse symbolizes the hypocrite.

The Messenger called the mouse a fuwaysiqa, a "little corrupter." Its inward counterpart is one who introduces innovations into religion. If a hypocrite inserts into religious knowledge something he has innovated in order to mix truth with falsehood—as God says, "Why do you clothe truth with falsehood?"—then if that false addition is known and identifiable it must be removed and rejected. If it is hidden and the truth has overwhelmed and absorbed it so completely that it no longer appears, it does not corrupt the whole. This is like what we explained concerning impurity falling into water: if its substance visibly alters the water, the water is spoiled until the impurity is removed; if the water overwhelms and consumes it so that no trace remains, the water is not corrupted. The mouse-dropping in flour follows the same principle outwardly and inwardly.

The Da'a'im next says that if a dog or mouse eats from bread or food, the portion from which it ate and what immediately surrounds it is cut away, and the rest may be eaten. This follows the same principle.

Dogs inwardly have different symbolic meanings according to their differing outward states. Hunting dogs symbolize junior da'is and ma'dhuns. Their hunting of wild animals symbolizes the da'is' and ma'dhuns' drawing respondents through argument and breaking through their prior outward doctrines. Guard dogs symbolize people who defend believers even though they possess no spiritual rank themselves and may receive worldly payment for doing so, just as dogs are rewarded with food. Such people are among those concerning whom the Messenger said: "God may support this religion through a people who have no share [in the Hereafter]."

Other dogs symbolize unbelievers: those that attack people and bite them but neither hunt nor guard. God used the dog as an image of an unbeliever when He said: "Recite to them the story of the one to whom We gave Our signs, but he cast them off, so Satan followed him and he became one of the erring. Had We willed

We could have raised him by them, but he clung to the earth and followed his desire; his likeness is like that of a dog: if you attack it, it pants, and if you leave it, it pants..."

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..."That is the likeness of the people who denied Our signs. So relate the stories that perhaps they may reflect."

There are also praiseworthy symbolic dogs, such as the dog of the Companions of the Cave. The Messenger also said, "Dogs are a community among the jinn." The word jinn is related to concealment; thus inwardly they may symbolize people within the concealed da'wa of truth. Among them are righteous and wicked, as there are among human beings. God says, "Devils from mankind and jinn inspire one another with embellished speech in deception," while in praise of some of the jinn He says: "Say: it has been revealed to me that a group of the jinn listened..." through the remainder of the account.

Understand these likenesses, O believers, for God—the most truthful of speakers—says: "These are the parables We set forth for people, but none understand them except those who possess knowledge." May God give you understanding and knowledge, grant you success, and make you steadfast. Blessings be upon Muhammad the Prophet and upon his pure family. God is sufficient for us, and He is the best trustee.

The Seventh Session of Part Two

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God before whose attribute the intellects fall short, yet who created His servants with the innate capacity to affirm and know Him. Blessings be upon the best of His messengers, Muhammad His Prophet, and upon the Imams from his progeny.

You have heard, O brethren, the ta'wil of what is in the Book of the Da'a'im from its beginning through the opening of the chapter on the purity of foods and drinks.

Next comes what is related from Baqir al-'Ilm, Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, who was asked about a mouse falling into clarified butter. He said: if the butter is solid, throw away the mouse and the portion surrounding it and eat the rest; if the butter is liquid, the whole is spoiled and may not be eaten, though it may be used as lamp oil.

The Commander of the Believers similarly said concerning animals that fall into clarified butter, honey, milk, or oil and die there: if the substance is liquid, pour away the milk, but the oil and clarified butter may be used for lamps. Concerning oil he added that one may, if one wishes, make soap from it.

They also said that if an animal falls into one of these substances and comes out alive, it does not spoil it, and that if a creature without blood falls into it, whether it dies or not, it does not spoil it. The inner interpretation is that oil, clarified butter, milk, and similar foods and condiments all symbolize knowledge and wisdom, by which spirits are nourished inwardly just as bodies are nourished by these things outwardly...

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...and by which sound inner vision is illuminated, just as oil used in lamps gives light outwardly. By contrast God describes certain people as blind even though their physical eyes see: "Deaf, dumb, blind, so they do not return," and: "Is one who knows that what has been sent down to you from your Lord is the truth like one who is blind? Only people of understanding take heed."

The mouse inwardly symbolizes the hypocrite, as explained. The Arabic word munafiq is related to the nafq, a tunnel in the earth used by a mouse or jerboa, which enters by one opening and leaves by another. In the same

way the hypocrite enters faith by one door and leaves it through another. He has inwardly lost life even if some outward connection to knowledge remains.

The death of an animal in the food or drink symbolizes one who reaches knowledge and wisdom beyond what he can carry, because he is given more than his proper share; the knowledge intoxicates, confuses, and destroys him, just as a creature may perish by drowning when it falls into water or another liquid.

If, together with this, the person carries doctrines from the people of misguidance and mixes them with truth so as to disguise truth with falsehood—as God says, "O People of the Book, why do you clothe truth with falsehood?"—then the knowledge he has received is corrupted by what he has mixed into it. Neither he nor another may act upon or believe that mixed teaching, just as liquid food becomes forbidden when a blood-bearing creature dies in it.

When a creature dies inwardly by losing living knowledge, this corresponds to the "death" God mentions when He says, "Dead, not alive," meaning the unbelievers. By contrast, if something falls into a substance and comes out alive without changing it, this symbolizes a person entering true knowledge and then leaving it without corrupting or altering it.

If a creature without blood dies in the food or drink and does not spoil it, its inward likeness is a person who enters the knowledge of truth but possesses no other false doctrine to mix into it; he may fail because his capacity was too weak for what he received, but his personal failure does not corrupt the knowledge itself.

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Understand—may God grant you understanding—the knowledge by which He has required you to worship Him outwardly and inwardly. May He assist you and open it to you.

The rule that if a blood-bearing creature dies in solid oil or clarified butter only the portion immediately surrounding it is spoiled, while the rest remains usable, has this inner meaning: a person who perishes after entering knowledge may have had access only to a limited portion of it, because the knowledge was closed and restricted rather than broadly disseminated to him. Only the portion that he reached and mixed with his falsehood is spoiled; what he never reached and never altered remains sound.

As for the permission to use contaminated oil or clarified butter for lighting, or to make soap from the oil, even though it may not be eaten and makes what it touches impure: inwardly, knowledge that has been mixed with falsehood may not be believed or practiced as religion. Nevertheless, people of discernment and sound insight may examine it, compare it, and distinguish its truth from its falsehood. Just as a lamp gives light only to those whose eyes can see and gives no benefit to the blind, such investigation is useful only to people with knowledge, insight, and penetration. One without these qualities should not examine such corrupted material.

Making soap from the oil and using it to wash garments symbolizes another permissible use for the person who possesses discrimination. One who can extract what is sound from corrupt teaching, hold it firmly, and transform its form from falsehood back toward truth—just as a craftsman transforms oil into solid soap—may use the resulting insight to remove doubt and corruption from the outward religion, whose likeness is a garment.

This process is undertaken together with true knowledge, symbolized by pure sweet water. Just as garments are cleaned with water and soap, so sound knowledge together with a carefully extracted lesson from error may cleanse the outward religious understanding of confusion and corruption. But this is to be done only by

one qualified and authorized to do it, just as a person ordinarily washes only his own garment or one he has been permitted to wash...

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...of another's garment. Understand the ta'wil, O people of understanding. For every blessing God has bestowed upon you in your religion there is an outward and inward dimension, as He says: "He has lavished upon you His blessings, outward and inward." Likewise everything He has forbidden you has both an outward and inward aspect, as He says: "Leave the outward aspect of sin and its inward aspect," and: "My Lord has only forbidden indecencies, what is outward of them and what is inward."

The Da'a'im next begins the discussion of cleanliness and the purification of bodies. We have already explained that outward cleansing with water from filth and dirt symbolizes inward purification through knowledge from acts of disobedience and sins. Cleanliness inwardly means keeping oneself distant from such things, avoiding them, and guarding against them. The inwardly clean person is the chaste and scrupulous person who keeps away from disobedience to God; sins inwardly correspond outwardly to dirt and filth.

Thus at the beginning of this chapter the Messenger is reported to have said: "What a bad servant is the filthy one," meaning outward dirtiness, while the same applies inwardly to one who is morally and spiritually filthy.

Next comes the saying of 'Ali: "Let each of you prepare himself for his wife as he likes his wife to prepare herself for him." Outwardly this means that a man should clean and groom himself so that his wife does not see him filthy, just as he does not like to see her in that state. Inwardly, the instructor—the da'i or any rank above him who instructs others—should be scrupulous and clean of sins and acts of disobedience so that the learner who receives from him sees him in that condition and takes him as an example. Since he wants the learner to become clean and calls and commands him to this, the instructor himself must not be contrary to what he commands and teaches.

Next is the saying of the Messenger: "Wash the hands of children from the smell and grease of food, for Satan smells it." Outwardly this is a useful rule of cleanliness. Inwardly, children symbolize restricted learners who have not reached the rank allowing them to disclose knowledge to others. Washing their hands of food-grease means restraining them and taking their hands so that they do not point to, hint at, or reveal anything of what they have heard before they are authorized to do so; otherwise those distant from God's awliya and unresponsive to their da'wa—who inwardly symbolize devils—may seize upon those hints.

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The word shaytan is derived from shatana, "to become distant," because Satan is one who is far removed.

Next is the Messenger's saying: "Whoever wants the good of his household to increase should perform ablution when food is brought." Outwardly, washing the hands when food is served is recommended and is a cause of blessing and good. Inwardly, one who has purified himself by the knowledge he has received, cleansing himself from sins before seeking an increase of knowledge and wisdom—whose likeness is food because it gives life to inward spirits as physical food gives life to bodies—will have that knowledge multiplied for him through his instructor. The "house" inwardly is the place and source from which benefit comes, and the increase in it is an increase of true inward good.

Likewise the Messenger's saying, "Whoever performs ablution before his food will live in abundance and be protected from bodily affliction," means inwardly abundance of knowledge and wisdom and protection from corruption in the outward practice of religion, for the body symbolizes the outward while the spirit symbolizes the inward.

Next comes the Commander of the Believers' dislike of washing the hands with flour, bread, or dates after eating, and his saying that this drives away blessing. Washing the hands outwardly after food removes its odor. We have explained that inwardly this symbolizes taking hold of learners during their training and preventing them from spreading or hinting at knowledge they have received before they are authorized, just as the smell of food may reveal to another what has been eaten.

If a person outwardly attempts to remove the smell of one food by rubbing his hands with another food, the second food's smell remains even if the first is gone. Inwardly this means that if the instructor wants to restrain a learner from divulging what he has received, he should not do so by opening yet more knowledge to him merely as a means of reinforcement. That would add further material to what he already possesses rather than truly restrain him. He should instead bind him firmly through admonition, obligation, and explicit prohibition against disclosure, allusion, and signaling until he is authorized.

If the instructor tries to reinforce secrecy by opening additional knowledge which the learner cannot bear, he may become the cause of the learner's losing what was already given because he has burdened him beyond his capacity. This is why 'Ali said that washing food from the hand with food drives away blessing...

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...The greatest blessing is the blessing of religion, and its being driven away from a servant means its loss and interruption when he fails to protect it with the care and preservation that are due.

May God make you, O company of the awliya, among those who preserve the blessings He has bestowed upon them, recognize their right, and guard them properly. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, and upon the Imams from his progeny. God is sufficient for us, and He is the best trustee.

The Eighth Session of Part Two

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, whose existence is witnessed through acknowledgment in the hearts of the people of divine unity. Blessings be upon Muhammad, the Prophet of the community, and upon the Imams from his family.

The discussion you have heard concerning the ta'wil of the Book of the Da'a'im has reached the saying of Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali: "Ablution before and after food is the blessing of the food."

We have already explained that ablution in this context means washing the hands. Washing them before eating symbolizes cleansing oneself from the stains of sins before listening to knowledge, whose inward likeness is food and by which inward souls live just as outward bodies live by food. Washing after the meal symbolizes concealing and protecting the knowledge after receiving it, because outwardly the purpose of washing after eating is to remove the food's odor from the hands.

Thus whoever first reforms himself, guards himself from what God has forbidden, and practices scrupulousness before receiving knowledge, and then after hearing it preserves what has been entrusted to him, conceals what he was commanded to conceal, and keeps secret what he was ordered to keep secret, will find blessing and benefit in the knowledge he has received.

This is the ta'wil of the saying, "Ablution before and after food is the blessing of the food." Baraka means increase and multiplication. Outwardly too, washing the hands before and after eating is commanded and recommended and is among the forms of cleanliness required by the religious law.

Next is the saying of 'Ali that Satan is eager for the traces and smell of food, so when one of you goes to his bed he should wash from his hand the smell of what he has eaten. We have explained that the inward "Satan" is one who has become separated from the wali of his age and far from him through denial and rejection, the word shaytan being derived from distance. His eagerness for the smell of food means that when he senses a believer has acquired some knowledge, he tries to extract a hint, symbol, indication, or allusion from him and uses every stratagem to obtain it. Washing the hands of food-smell therefore symbolizes the believer guarding what has reached him of knowledge and wisdom so that nothing can be extracted from him in this way.

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One who does not wash his hand of the food-smell inwardly is one who gives indications or hints of wisdom to those forbidden from it even though he has not been authorized to do so.

The saying, "when one of you goes to his bed," means concealment and secrecy. Preserve, then, O believers, the secret of your religion and do not disclose or hint at it to "devils"—those who follow a different path from yours, or one from among you who rebels against your affair. God mentions the devils of mankind and jinn who inspire one another. Here "inspiration" can mean gesture and signaling, as in the verse, "He signaled to them to glorify God morning and evening." Whoever does this toward those not entitled to knowledge has followed the prompting of Satan.

Outwardly, washing the hands of food-smell is itself part of the Sunna.

The Da'a'im next relates that the Messenger forbade removing the basin used for washing hands until it was full. Outwardly, the basin is the vessel receiving the water from everyone's washing. Proper etiquette is not to remove it before the entire group has washed, nor to empty it after each person so that the next person begins with an empty vessel, as some who do not know the Sunna may do.

Inwardly, the one instructing a group should not direct the command of secrecy and nondisclosure only to some learners while neglecting others. He should not address a few and then stop before the remainder, nor single out one person alone. Rather, he should address all of them together, because a collective admonition is firmer and more effective in establishing the obligation upon everyone.

Next, Baqir al-'Ilm, Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, said: "The master of the house performs ablution last among the people." The house symbolizes the da'wa and its master the da'i. If he admonishes a group to conceal what they have heard and keep it away from those unworthy of it, he must also bind himself by the same rule.

There is no fixed restriction outwardly or inwardly that would prevent him from washing first if circumstances of honor and hospitality require it. Thus the master of a house may, when hosting someone he especially honors, allow that guest to wash first or wash before the others depending on proper etiquette. Likewise inwardly, if the da'i first binds himself to secrecy before admonishing those beneath him, that is good and beautiful; if he admonishes them first and binds himself afterward, there is no blame so long as he preserves the obligation within himself and guards what is entrusted to him.

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The Da'a'im next reports that the Messenger was asked: "What is this cleaning between things?" He replied: "Cleaning in ablution is between the fingers and nails, and cleaning after food is between the teeth. Nothing is harder upon the two angels of a believer than to see something of food between his teeth while he stands in prayer."

We have already said that fingers and teeth inwardly symbolize the hudud of God's awliya. Cleaning between the fingers during ablution therefore symbolizes purifying, by knowledge, the relation between every two adjacent ranks.

Cleaning food from between the teeth symbolizes that no unresolved remainder of knowledge should be left suspended between two ranks. Whatever has become sound, established, and proven should be used. This corresponds to food that remains between the teeth but comes out merely through movement of the tongue; such food may be swallowed. What cannot be dislodged except by force with a toothpick corresponds to a matter of knowledge that has not become firmly established and therefore should be discarded rather than used.

Thus the outward Sunna concerning food between the teeth is that what is naturally loosened by the tongue may be swallowed, while what must be forced out with a toothpick is spat out. The fuller explanation will come, God willing, in the chapter on foods.

As for the saying that nothing is harder upon a believer's two angels than seeing food between his teeth while he stands in prayer: prayer inwardly symbolizes the da'wa. The two angels here symbolize those appointed to preserve and supervise the believer—at the highest level the Imam and hujja, and below them the ranks established for the safeguarding of believers down to the da'i and ma'dhun. God says: "No indeed, but you deny the Judgment; over you are guardians, noble scribes, who know what you do." Their knowledge of what believers do includes what becomes outwardly manifest to them and whatever God wills to make known to them of what people conceal...

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...and whatever else He wills to make known to them so that He may recompense people for it in the Hereafter; while He conceals from those guardians whatever He wills and pardons whatever He wills.

God's awliya and those whom they appoint to watch over the deeds of His servants do not know every hidden thing, as ignorant slanderers falsely claim of them, attributing to them knowledge of what they have never asserted. Rather, God teaches each of them and discloses to each from the unseen only according to his rank and degree and according to what He wills. He alone possesses all knowledge of the unseen and all knowledge without qualification.

Hence God says: "Knower of the unseen; He does not disclose His unseen to anyone except a messenger whom He has approved. Then He appoints guards before him and behind him... and He encompasses what is with them and has counted everything in number." God alone knows all the unseen. He discloses from it to whichever of His messengers and religious hudud He wills, in whatever measure He wills, and grants each of them such strength and insight as He wishes for observing the affairs of those servants entrusted to them.

Among the reports is the saying of the Messenger: "The believer sees by the light of God." In this meaning "believer" includes the Messenger, the Imam, and the ranks beneath them, for the name of faith gathers them all. God says: "The Messenger believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and the believers; all believe in God."

Similarly 'Ali once said to one of the hudud he had appointed, after that man informed him of something concerning people entrusted to his care: "It is as though you look upon the unseen through a thin veil." Al-Sadiq likewise said: "Beware of our insight concerning you, for we look upon you by the light of God."

Reports from God's awliya concerning things that had happened or would happen in the affairs of the servants are too numerous to recount here. Such matters belong to what God disclosed and strengthened them with according to their respective ranks and degrees.

Even a wali beneath the level of one formally authorized in a religious office may, if the substance of his faith and sincerity is pure, sometimes form an intuition that proves true. According to the matter involved, such a thought may be conjecture, impression, or inspired understanding. People commonly experience this in varying degrees through a favor God bestows upon them. The same principle applies to dreams. The Messenger said: "The truest dream is the dream of a believer..."

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...or of an angelic kind, meaning a disclosure granted by the angel entrusted with the affairs of the servants, or by an Imam, or by one of the ranks appointed by God's awliya.

The Messenger also said: "A true dream is one part out of forty-six parts of prophecy." It is among God's bestowals and the signs by which He gives guidance. Other thoughts occurring within the soul arise from a person's own condition and have only the value appropriate to their source.

For this reason the Messenger said that when a person sees in sleep something pleasing, he may relate it to someone he trusts or to one capable of interpreting it well; if he sees something hateful, he should not allow it to govern him or spread it among those who would misuse it. Some scholars of dream interpretation said that the soundness of a dream is connected with the truthfulness of the one who sees it.

As for the report that a vision may be "upon the wing of a bird" until it is interpreted and then settles according to the interpretation, this warns against handing subtle matters to one who has no right understanding. One should not entrust what has been disclosed to him to ignorant people who claim knowledge of the unseen. To God belongs the greatest wisdom and the most exalted example. May He make you among those who are not deceived by what they hear and who do not deceive others through what they do not know.

Blessings be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, and upon the Imams from his progeny. God is sufficient for us, and He is the best trustee.

The Ninth Session of Part Two

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, the Praiseworthy, who is more deserving of praise than every created thing. Blessings be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, and upon the Imams from his progeny, the best of His creation.

The discussion of the ta'wil of the Book of the Da'a'im has reached what follows concerning cleanliness after food and the remaining rulings of this chapter...

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The Da'a'im relates from 'Ali: "Clean between the teeth from the traces of food, for this is health for the canine teeth and molars."

The inner interpretation has already been introduced. The four canine teeth symbolize the four principal da'is who are the foremost among the twelve da'is governing the twelve regions. They also correspond to the four sacred months and to the four birds mentioned in God's command to Abraham, "Take four birds and incline them to yourself." The full explanation has already been given.

The nawajidh are the molars next to the canines; each major da'i has a corresponding "molar" beneath him, namely his gate or subordinate rank. What remains of food between a canine and its neighboring molar symbolizes a portion of knowledge received from these ranks which the learner did not initially understand or retain, just as food can remain unnoticed between the teeth while one is eating.

If, afterward, the person moves his tongue over it and it comes free by itself, it follows the ruling of ordinary food, as explained: it may be swallowed. But if it can be extracted only with force by a toothpick, it is to be spat out rather than eaten.

Inwardly, if a matter of knowledge that was not initially understood later becomes clear through renewed reflection and careful consideration, so that the learner accepts and comprehends it naturally, then it has become like food that comes free without force; he may believe it, act upon it, and benefit from the knowledge of the one who taught him. But if it still cannot be accepted except by coercion and forced reasoning, like food forcibly dislodged by a toothpick, then neither he nor another should derive religious benefit from it. What a person is compelled to say or do without inward assent does not benefit him, just as he is not harmed by a sinful act forced upon him while his heart remains secure in faith. God says: "Except one who is compelled while his heart is at rest in faith."

Thus 'Ali's saying that cleaning between the teeth preserves the health of the canine and molar inwardly means that following this rule preserves the soundness of the da'wa of the principal da'i and of the ranks beneath him.

Next comes al-Sadiq Ja'far ibn Muhammad's prohibition against using reed, pomegranate, or fragrant basil as a toothpick, together with his statement that using the toothpick properly brings provision. The ta'wil of the prohibited materials has already been explained at length in the discussion of the siwak...

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As for the saying that cleaning between the teeth brings provision, its inner meaning is that one who rejects from knowledge what he cannot bear, turns away from it, and does not apply what his instructor has delivered when it is not lawful for him to use it, acts in a way that draws further benefit from his instructor. A sound instructor gives each learner only as much knowledge and wisdom as he can carry and profit from.

The Da'a'im next relates the Messenger's saying: "Circumcision is part of the primordial disposition (fitra)."

Outwardly, circumcision is cutting away the foreskin covering the glans of the male organ, and for females removing the small projecting portion at the entrance of the vulva. Fitra in Arabic means the initial creation or origination. God says: "The fitra of God upon which He created mankind," and calls Himself "Originator of the heavens and earth." Ibn 'Abbas is reported to have said that he did not fully understand the phrase "Originator of the heavens and earth" until he heard two Bedouins disputing over a well, one saying, "I began it," meaning "I was the first to dig it."

Thus the Messenger's saying that circumcision belongs to the fitra indicates outwardly that the original creation of the male child is with the glans exposed; as the fetus develops, a fold of skin extends and covers it. Some children are born with the glans already exposed and do not require circumcision; this is not uncommon. The additional fold is therefore treated as something that developed after the primary form and is removed so that the body returns to the condition of its first creation.

Its inner interpretation follows the principle already explained: the male organ symbolizes the tongue and its act symbolizes speech; the female organ symbolizes the ear and its faculty symbolizes hearing. Thus the

exchange of knowledge between instructor and learner inwardly resembles sexual union between a man, symbolizing the instructor, and a woman, symbolizing the learner.

Circumcision inwardly symbolizes uncovering the inward meaning for one who has become entitled to receive it. The inward meaning is primary, while the outward law was created as a covering and protection for it. Therefore a child before circumcision symbolizes one who has not yet been opened to the inward knowledge...

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...When it becomes proper to open that knowledge to him and he is actually instructed, this is inwardly his "circumcision." Hence outwardly one says after circumcision that the child has been "purified." The same interpretation applies, as appropriate, both to the instructor and to the learner.

Female circumcision—removing the projecting portion from the female organ—symbolizes cutting off whatever the learner, whose likeness is the woman, begins to expose of inward knowledge before authorization. Until the learner reaches the rank of those permitted to speak openly, he must restrain and cut off such disclosure.

Next is the saying of the Messenger: "No uncircumcised person is left in Islam until he is circumcised, even if he has reached eighty years of age." Outwardly, the uncircumcised person is one who has not undergone circumcision. Inwardly, whoever submits to God's awliya and responds to their da'wa is not to remain only upon the outward form he previously possessed. The inward meaning must be opened to him and wisdom taught to him even if he has reached the greatest age and is no longer, in ordinary outward custom, someone expected to study. There still remains knowledge which he is not permitted to remain ignorant of.

Hence the Messenger's saying: "Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim man and woman."

The Da'a'im next relates that the first person to circumcise was Abraham. When he had reached an advanced age, God revealed to him: "Purify yourself." He trimmed his moustache. Again he was told, "Purify yourself," and he clipped his nails. Again he was told, "Purify yourself," and he removed the hair of his armpits. Again he was told, "Purify yourself," and he shaved the pubic region. Again he was told, "Purify yourself," and he circumcised himself.

Its inward meaning is that Abraham was the first to whom the true inner knowledge was opened in a complete unveiling. Before him, the inward realities were known through allusion, symbols, and indications without the degree of disclosure granted to Abraham. Hence God says: "Thus We showed Abraham the dominion of the heavens and earth so that he might be among those possessing certainty," and: "When Abraham said, 'My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead...'"—whose ta'wil has already been explained.

Abraham was therefore the first whom God strengthened with broad expansion in knowledge and for whom He unveiled the concealed secret of wisdom. The followers of every later religious law were commanded to follow and emulate him. His creed is the upright Hanifite creed with which God sent Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him, after falsifiers had altered it, so that Muhammad would revive and re-establish it.

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Among this is His saying, exalted and majestic: ‘the creed (milla) of your father Abraham.’ The root of milla in the language is a period or span of time. The Arabs say, ‘We remained in the place for a long while,’ using related forms with one meaning. From this the name for religious creeds was derived, because the people of every religion remain upon it for a period of time; thus one says ‘the creed of Abraham’ and the like.

As for what is related concerning Abraham: when he was told, ‘Purify yourself,’ he trimmed his moustache; then he was told, ‘Purify yourself,’ and he clipped his nails; then he was told, ‘Purify yourself,’ and he plucked his armpits; then he was told, ‘Purify yourself,’ and he shaved the pubic hair; then he was told, ‘Purify yourself,’ and he circumcised himself. The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, explained all of this. Its outward form is an image of uncovering the inward meaning for one who is entitled to it. When the moustache grows beyond its limit and covers the lip, its likeness is that of the outward overcoming the inward; for that reason the moustache is to be trimmed.

The Messenger of God said: ‘Trim the moustaches and let the beards grow.’ That is, leave them until their hair becomes abundant, as in the saying of God, ‘until they became numerous.’ Clipping the nails likewise represents cutting away what extends beyond its proper limit and covers the inward beneath it. Plucking the armpits and shaving the pubic hair remove hair from what lies beneath it, and so too do the other acts of purification. These commands were repeated to Abraham, peace be upon him, and he performed them, so that the witnesses and proofs in the outward might multiply for what they signify inwardly.

In the same sense is the saying of ‘Ali, peace be upon him: ‘O company of women, when you circumcise your daughters, leave a little of it, for that is brighter for their complexions and more pleasing to their husbands.’ Its interpretation is that one who receives the inward teaching should not pour out everything he has heard, nor utter all of it. He should restrain himself from disclosing what he has heard of the batin and should not converse about it with one who has not been joined with him under the covenant, nor even with one who shares the covenant merely in order to teach him, until permission is given. If his instructor, or one above his instructor, questions him in order to test what has reached him and whether he has retained it, he may answer with what he has learned and preserved. By answering correctly he preserves and confirms his knowledge, and this makes him more pleasing in the sight of the one who teaches him.

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For when an instructor knows that the learner has preserved what was taught to him and has stood firmly by it, the learner becomes more esteemed in his eyes, just as the outward report says that such restraint makes a woman more pleasing to her husband. In the inward interpretation husbands are the instructors. Outwardly too, the woman from whom something is left and who is not excessively cut is more pleasing to husbands.

In the same way is the saying of ‘Ali, peace be upon him: ‘Hasten the circumcision of your children, for it is purer for them.’ Its interpretation is that the da‘i should hasten, with those whom he calls—who in the interpretation are his children by religious birth—to uncover for them the science of ta’wil after the covenant has been taken from them. He should not leave them bewildered without insight or thirsty without being given drink. His statement that this is ‘purer’ means purity of religion and faith. Outwardly as well, when the boy remains uncircumcised, dirt may gather between the glans and foreskin, so hastening circumcision is cleaner and is therefore commanded and recommended.

Likewise is the saying of the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace: ‘Do not circumcise a girl until she reaches seven years.’ Its interpretation is that the responder is not restrained from publicizing the batin until he has reached seven boundaries; after that the inward meaning is disclosed to him and he is restrained and held back from disseminating it, as has already been explained. What comes forth from the sexual organ is an image of making the inward public. The seven boundaries are: first, recognition of the Imam of his age and the obligation of his walaya, without which deeds are not accepted; second, instruction in the obligations and sunnas of purification, without which God accepts no prayer; third, instruction in the obligations and limits of prayer, the pillar of religion; fourth, instruction in the limits of the obligatory zakat, without which prayer is not accepted; fifth, instruction in the fast by which God has bound His servants; sixth,

instruction in the pilgrimage imposed on whoever is able to find a way to it; and seventh, instruction in the jihad imposed on the believers with their persons and their possessions.

When the learner has been brought to these seven outward boundaries, the pillars and obligations of Islam, he is then raised by symbolic instruction in ta'wil and by subtle explanation, little by little. He is taken from boundary to boundary, as God says: 'You shall surely ride stage after stage,' until he reaches the measure of his worthiness. Upon this very pattern the wali of God trained you: he spread before you the Book of the Pillars of Islam and caused it to be read to you.

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He allowed it to remain among you for a period of time and permitted copies to be made for whoever requested them, because it belongs to the outward religion by which God has bound you and is the first thing you must learn in order to practice what it contains. Then he nurtured you for the period of two years with the subtleties of wisdom, like the nursing of a child. After that he uncovered for you the inward meaning of the outward duties by which God has bound you. God willing, he will raise you from one degree to another according to what is due to you. Whoever has not learned what is required of him in the outward aspect of his religion is still less likely to know its inward aspect.

You are now bound by concealment and secrecy concerning what has been opened to you of ta'wil until the wali of God is satisfied with one of you and releases him from that restriction, just as the covenant of God was taken from those before you. Preserve this among yourselves. This is the inward likeness of the saying, 'Do not circumcise the girl until seven,' for once a learner has reached the seven and has been shown the inward of revelation, he must not of his own accord raise himself to the dissemination of any of it until permission is given to him and he is released. May God make you among those who faithfully tend what has been entrusted to them, preserve what they have been charged to preserve, fulfill His obligation, and discharge His trust. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, and upon the Imams from his progeny.

The Tenth Session of Part Two

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, Creator of what He created without a preceding model; and may God bless Muhammad His Prophet and the Imams from his progeny. Hearts, as 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, peace be upon him, said, are vessels, and the best of them are the most capacious. Therefore receive with your hearts, O believers, so that you may understand what you hear; for when a vessel cannot contain anything it becomes useless. You have heard from the ta'wil of what is in the Book of the Da'a'im up to the point now reached.

It is related from the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, that he said: 'Take from the hair of the temples and from the sides of the beard; make the beard even; remove the hair from the nape; trim the moustaches; let the beards grow; clip the nails; and do not imitate the People of the Book. Let no one allow his moustache, pubic hair, or armpit hair to grow long, for Satan takes them as hiding places.' It is also related that whoever believes in God and the Last Day should not leave his pubic hair for more than forty days. Another report commands removing some of the hair at the temples and from the sides of the beard and what lies near the lower lip. Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali, peace be upon him, said: 'Trim the moustaches, for the Umayyads do not trim theirs.' Outwardly all of this belongs to the sunna, natural cleanliness, and the removal of ugliness.

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Its inward sense is as we have already explained: hair and nails symbolize the outward. Whatever of the outward overcomes the inward, covers it, and exceeds its proper limit must be removed, while the inward must be uncovered for those responders who are entitled to receive it. We have also explained that ‘Satan’ in ta’wil is one who has become distant from the wali of his age by denying him and opposing his command; the name is derived from distance. Those satans who have become distant from the awliya of God hide behind the outward, choose it alone, reject and deny the inward, refuse to sit with its people or listen to it, and confine their gatherings and hearing to the outward and its people.

The saying that Satan takes such hair as ‘hiding places’ means that if the outward is allowed to remain until it rises above and subdues the inward, and if its adherents are allowed to appear and overcome the people of truth when one has power over them, they take refuge in it, cling to it, and make it their settled place. The Arabic expression used for these hiding places denotes places in which one sits or remains.

In the same sense is the saying of the Messenger of God: ‘Whoever clips his nails on Friday, God removes disease from his fingertips or puts healing into them.’ Outwardly, clipping the nails on Friday is recommended because Friday is the day on which the believer should cleanse and purify himself, use perfume, and wear the best clothing he possesses. The duties of Friday, outward and inward, will be discussed in their place. Inwardly, the nails are the outward and what lies beneath them is the inward. That part of the nail which extends beyond what is beneath it is like the outward doctrine of those common people who claim that religion is wholly outward and has no inward meaning. Clipping it signifies cutting off, invalidating, and removing that assertion, through belief and teaching that religion and everything God created possess an outward and an inward, as He says: ‘Of everything We created a pair, that perhaps you may remember.’ Thus the protruding part, outward without an inward beneath it, is removed while the nail itself remains with its inward.

The command to perform this on Friday signifies that this ta’wil is to be practiced within the dispensation of Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, because Friday among the days is his likeness. The first day, Sunday, is the likeness of Adam, the first of the natiqs; Monday is the likeness of Noah, the second; Tuesday of Abraham, the third; Wednesday of Moses, the fourth; Thursday of Jesus, the fifth.

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Friday is the likeness of Muhammad, may God bless him and his family and all the messengers, for through him God gathered their affair and sealed it, and there is no prophet after him. Saturday is the likeness of the Qa’im of the Resurrection from his progeny, the last of the Imams. He is counted among the natiqs because he is the seal of the Imams, and his excellence over them is like Muhammad’s excellence over the prophets before him. The Sabbath was made a symbol of him in the law of Moses: it is a day on which no work is done, just as in the age of the Qa’im of the Resurrection there will be no further religious work of the former kind. This is what God means by the day when some of the signs of your Lord come, on which a soul’s faith will not benefit it if it had not believed before or earned good through its faith. Faith is all work, as has been explained in the Book of the Da‘a’im; this is a long matter whose full explanation belongs elsewhere.

The saying that God removes disease from the fingertips and puts healing in them means that whoever inwardly performs what has been described in the ta’wil of clipping the nails has the corruption that entered his religion removed from the hudud of religion, which are represented by the fingers. In its place God establishes knowledge and wisdom by which the breast is healed.

It is also related that the Messenger of God said to men, ‘Cut your nails,’ and to women, ‘Let your nails grow, for that is more beautiful for you.’ Men, as we have explained, symbolize instructors who uncover for a learner the inward beneath the outward and cut away from him the belief that what should be uncovered must remain hidden once permission has been given. An instructor is inwardly disfigured if he refuses to disclose the permitted measure of the batin to those whom he is charged to teach. Women symbolize learners. For them, retaining what they have not been authorized to disclose is more beautiful; they are not to expose the inward as an instructor does after reaching the proper rank. Thus, just as clipping a man’s nails close is more becoming outwardly, while leaving some length in women’s nails is said to be more beautiful, each rank has its proper inward discipline.

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Among the same matters is the saying of the Messenger of God: ‘Whoever keeps hair should treat it well’; and his saying to Abu Qatada concerning his long hair: ‘Honor it and treat it well’; and the saying: ‘Good hair is part of the clothing God gives, so honor it.’ Caring for hair is by washing, combing, oiling, and the other things commanded in relation to it. Its inward meaning is that, since hair represents the outward, the believer is required to attend to the outward aspect of his religion, establish it well, and maintain it as God commanded. Whoever does not establish both the outward and inward of his religion stands upon nothing of it. God says: ‘Say: O People of the Book, you are upon nothing until you uphold the Torah and the Gospel.’ In the interpretation, the revealed books point to the outward and inward ordinances by which the people of each age are bound. They are commanded to establish the outward obligations—performing the prescribed duties, rendering trusts, observing restraint and chastity, and refraining from indecencies and prohibited acts—and to establish their inward meanings as well.

Therefore establish that, O believers, and preserve it without negligence. This is the interpretation of treating the hair well, inspecting it, and caring for it, as related from the Messenger of God, outwardly and inwardly. Inward observance is even more emphatic and deserving of establishment, for it belongs to the religious duty by which God has bound His servants. He has promised reward for establishing it and threatened punishment for neglecting it and committing what is prohibited within it.

It is also related that the Messenger of God said: ‘Whoever has hair, let him part it; otherwise God will part it for him on the Day of Resurrection with a parting of fire.’ Outwardly, the sunna is to part the hair of the head in the middle and lay each side toward its side, and if it is long to braid it, not to leave all of it standing upright, which is ugly and resembles the practice of some non-Arabs who leave their hair unparted.

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Its inward meaning is that the outward is not to be left to rise over the inward and conceal it altogether, so that instructors reveal nothing of it to learners. Rather, they must make manifest from the inward the measure that should be disclosed in every age and time, and to each class of responders according to their ranks and worthiness. This is like the skin of the head that becomes visible along the part when the hair is divided, whereas it would be hidden if the hair covered it all.

In the same sense is the saying of the Messenger of God: ‘Whoever recognizes the excellence of his gray hair and honors it, God will secure him from the terror of the Day of Resurrection’; and his saying: ‘Three things extinguish the light of a servant: cutting off the affection of his father, changing his gray hair with black dye, and casting his gaze into chambers.’ It is also related that al-Mahdi billah, peace be upon him, saw an old man who had dyed his beard black and said, ‘This man has disfigured his natural form.’ Honoring gray hair, knowing its merit, leaving it unplucked and unchanged are required in the outward law, except for the concession to

dye in war in order to impress the enemy, since a young man appears more formidable because he is stronger and more enduring.

Inwardly, sound gray hair is the likeness of soundness in the outward religion. The Messenger of God said: 'Gray hair is light, so do not pluck it.' Many reports command preserving it and honoring those who possess it. Inwardly, this means preserving the sound outward practice of religion from corruption and not abandoning it, which would be like plucking the gray hair, nor altering it into something other than its true condition, which would be like changing its color. Honoring believers who preserve the sound outward religion, with piety and restraint, is obligatory. The concession to dye in war symbolizes that a believer ordinarily marked by humility, dignity, calm, and forbearance may, when confronting an enemy in battle, show sternness and force and leave aside the gentleness that adorns him in other stations. Understand this, may God grant you understanding.

As for the saying, 'Three things extinguish the light of the servant: cutting off the affection of his father, changing his gray hair with black, and placing his gaze into chambers,' the interpretation of changing gray hair has already been given. Cutting off the affection of the father is forbidden outwardly and inwardly. Outwardly it is severing the affection owed by children to their fathers; inwardly the fathers are the instructors, and the affection owed to them and to those believers whom they love is obligatory upon those whom they have instructed.

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Casting the eyes into chambers is likewise forbidden outwardly and inwardly. A person may not look into other people's houses without their permission. In the same way, the believer must not look into matters of knowledge from which he has been barred and concerning which a restriction has been placed upon him until those entitled to grant permission authorize him. Understand, O believers, what you have been charged to establish in the outward and inward aspects of your religion; establish it and preserve it. May God grant you success in what He loves and approves. Blessings be upon Muhammad His Prophet and upon the pure Imams from his progeny. God is sufficient for us, and excellent is the Trustee, the Patron, and the Helper; there is no power and no strength except through God, the High, the Great.

PART THREE

The First Session of Part Three

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PART THREE OF THE BOOK: The Training of the Believer by Instruction in the Inward Meaning of the General Ordinances of Religion. THE FIRST SESSION OF PART THREE. In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God with a praise that is always continuous and never exhausted, just as His blessings continue without exhaustion. May God bless the chosen one of His creation, Muhammad His Prophet, and the Imams from his progeny.

What follows, O believers, from the interpretation of the Book of the Da'a'im is the discussion of the purification of skins, bones, hair, and wool. Its interpretation is that skins, hair, and wool are the likeness of the outward, while bones are the likeness of the inward. The totality of what is related from the Messenger of God and from the Imams of his progeny, peace be upon them, concerning animals whose meat is lawful is that their wool and hair, when shorn from them while they are alive and washed, are pure and may be used for clothing and for prayer. The same applies to their skins and bones when they are lawfully slaughtered. If they die without lawful slaughter, the ruling changes; and its inward counterpart will now be explained.

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The inward likeness of lawful slaughter returns to what has already been explained concerning the taking of the covenant. An animal that dies without slaughter is like one who, after having believed, dies in unbelief. If an animal falls ill, it is like one whose religion has been afflicted by a defect. If lawful slaughter reaches it before it dies, its likeness is a believer whom an instructor reaches in time, rescues from what has afflicted him, and brings back to soundness. If slaughter does not reach it, it is like one who disbelieves after faith and strips himself of religion.

An animal whose meat is unlawful, even if killed, is the likeness of an unbeliever or hypocrite; the various classes will be explained in their place. Just as an animal whose meat is forbidden is not lawfully slaughtered for eating, so idolaters and unbelievers may not have the covenant of the da‘wa taken from them until they accept Islam and enter under the rule of the shari‘a. Some beasts symbolize hypocrites. The wild goat, for example, bares parts of itself, just as hypocrites expose the shameful defects of their religion. Its hair is not treated like sheep’s wool, which symbolizes the believers and may be used while the sheep are alive; and after lawful slaughter their meat, skins, bones, and the rest become pure and useful. This is the likeness of the repentance of hypocrites and the covenant being taken from them after truth has made their outward and inward pure, so that the da‘wa, represented by prayer, can properly be applied to them.

As for the inward doctrines of the people of falsehood, they are impure and no one is summoned to them or commanded to practice them. Yet it is not forbidden to examine, collect, or hear them when the purpose is to refute the people of falsehood, expose their defects, and explain them to believing brothers so that their insight may be strengthened. This resembles making use of parts of animals whose flesh is not lawful to eat: benefit may be taken from them without taking them as food. But whoever gathers those doctrines in order to believe in them, or acts upon them as though they were lawful, has entered into what is forbidden. Reports from the Messenger of God concerning skins and carrion distinguish in the same way between what may be used and what may not be adopted as pure for worship.

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God says: ‘The idolaters are impure.’ In the same sense Abu Ja‘far Muhammad ibn ‘Ali, peace be upon him, said: ‘Prayer is not performed in the skin of carrion even if it has been tanned seventy times. We, the People of the House, do not pray in the skins of carrion, even when they have been tanned.’ Its interpretation is that the Imams from the House of Muhammad do not call those who respond to their da‘wa by means of the outward doctrines of the people of falsehood—doctrines invented through opinion, analogy, and preference—but only by the outward teaching transmitted from their grandfather, the Messenger of God.

It is related that he was asked about sheepskins when those of lawfully slaughtered animals are mixed with those of carrion and are made into garments. He said that if one wears them, one should not pray in them unless one knows them to be pure. It is also related that the Messenger of God possessed a fur garment from Iraq which he would remove when prayer approached. ‘Ali reports that he heard the Messenger of God say: ‘Do not make use of carrion skin, bone, or sinew.’ Then on the following day they passed a dead young sheep on the road, and the Messenger of God said: ‘Why did its owners not make use of its skin?’ ‘Ali asked how this agreed with the previous prohibition. He replied that it may be used as a covering that does not come into contact with something pure while both are wet, so that impurity is transferred.

This agrees with what has been stated outwardly and inwardly: there is no harm in looking into the outward teachings of the people of falsehood in order to recognize their corruption, provided nothing of them adheres to the heart. Ja‘far ibn Muhammad, peace be upon him, was asked about the furs of fox, sable, and other beasts. He said they may be worn but prayer is not performed in them, nor upon any skin of beasts of prey, nor

upon the skin of an animal whose flesh is unlawful. Outwardly, such animals are not lawful food, and their skins are therefore not fit for prayer. Inwardly, the same distinction is observed between knowledge that may be known for refutation and knowledge that may be adopted as religion.

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Some animals, though their flesh is not lawful, are not blameworthy in themselves—the cat, for example, is even praised in certain respects. We have already explained its inward likeness: it is not one from whom the outward or inward covenant is taken. Accordingly, its flesh is not eaten and prayer is not performed in its skin.

‘Ali, peace be upon him, said that the price of the skins of beasts of prey is unlawful gain. Abu Ja‘far forbade buying and selling the skins of carrion. The rule is general for every prohibited thing: it may not lawfully be bought or sold. The Messenger of God said: ‘God cursed the Jews: fats were forbidden to them, so they sold them and consumed their price.’ Its inward interpretation is that it is not lawful to give or receive payment for any of the knowledge of the people of falsehood, outward or inward, or for anything prohibited in the manner already explained. Taking or giving such a price is forbidden.

Abu Ja‘far also disliked human hair and said that whatever falls from a human being is carrion; likewise, whatever is severed from the limbs of a living animal is carrion and is not eaten. Its inward meaning follows what has been established: the hair of an animal whose flesh may not be eaten is not pure for prayer when cut from it, and man is not an animal whose flesh may be eaten—God says, ‘Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would abhor it.’ We have also explained that shaving human hair symbolizes removing the outward when it has overwhelmed the inward. This does not mean that the outward itself becomes lawful to despise or abandon; rather, one does not take as religious authority the outward doctrine of one from whom no covenant has been taken.

The same principle appears in what is cut from a living animal before lawful slaughter: it is carrion. Lawful slaughter, as has been said, represents the taking of the covenant. In this connection the story of Abraham and his son is interpreted. Abraham says: ‘My son, I see in a dream that I slaughter you; consider what you think.’ The slaughter signifies taking the covenant of succession from the one who is to bear the weight of the Imamate. Abraham, because Isaac was present with him in Syria and was the son of Sarah, initially thought by his own judgment that the succession should pass to Isaac.

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But that matter was not to be settled by Abraham’s independent opinion. Sleep in the interpretation signifies heedlessness, as has been explained. God called to him: ‘O Abraham, you have fulfilled the vision. Thus do We reward those who do good.’ He awakened him from this lapse as a favor, since Abraham was among the doers of good, and did not leave him to the judgment he had formed by himself. ‘You have fulfilled the vision’ means: you have acted according to what you saw by your own view and thought correct. Then God says: ‘We ransomed him with a mighty sacrifice.’ That is, He released Isaac from what Abraham had intended and commanded Abraham to assign the succession to Ishmael. He magnified the matter and said: ‘We blessed him and Isaac, and among their descendants are the doer of good and the one who plainly wrongs himself.’ Abraham and Isaac were not blamed for what they had discussed and intended; rather, both were blessed. The righteous among their progeny are the Imams and those who follow them and profess their Imamate, while the wrongdoers are those who turn away from the Imams and separate themselves from their followers.

The text then turns to menstruation. Outwardly menstruation is an ailment affecting women, and the women in the inward sense, as has been explained, are the responders and learners. The general inward meaning of menstruation is a defect and corruption entering a responder’s religion, on account of which he is barred from

hearing wisdom and from remaining in the assembly of the da‘wa, just as a menstruating woman may neither perform prayer nor enter the mosque. The instructor must not impart wisdom to such a responder until he has purified himself from the fault through repentance, withdrawal from it, and complete abandonment of the corruption that entered his religion.

Intercourse with a menstruating wife is forbidden until the flow ceases and she is purified. Some jurists held that intercourse becomes lawful when the blood stops even before washing, while others held that it remains unlawful until she has washed with water; the latter is the established teaching from the Imams, though the former report also has an aspect of interpretation. The cessation of the blood is like the learner’s abandoning the corrupt belief in word, act, and intention. When the instructor knows that he has done so and has repented, he may speak to him in a manner that confirms for him the corruption of what he had held and the soundness of what he has returned to. That confirmation is like washing with water. Once the matter has been firmly established and purified in him, the instructor may again open to him the wisdom that had formerly been withheld.

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Thus the report permitting intercourse after the menstrual blood has stopped but before washing corresponds to an instructor’s confirming to the learner the falsity of what he had followed and the truth of what he has returned to. The report forbidding intercourse until the woman washes corresponds to forbidding the instructor to resume full inward instruction merely because the learner has outwardly abandoned the error; the matter must be purified and confirmed by knowledge. This is the required rule in the outward and the inward, and it is not lawful to oppose it. Understand what you hear, may God grant you understanding, teach you, and give you success in what He has taught you. Blessings be upon Muhammad His Prophet and the Imams from his progeny.

The Second Session of Part Three

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to Him who fulfilled His promise to His awliya and gave them the earth to inherit, settling them in Paradise wherever they please. May God bless the best of His creation and servants, Muhammad His Prophet, and the Imams of the community from among his descendants.

What follows from the interpretation of menstruation is the ruling that if a menstruating woman becomes pure but finds no water with which to wash, she performs tayammum, prays, and her husband may approach her if he wishes. Its interpretation follows what has already been said of tayammum as a purification of necessity. If a believer commits a fault in religion and cannot find an authorized instructor who can purify him with the true knowledge, he should seek a knowledgeable, trustworthy believer and purify himself through that person’s outward knowledge until he finds an instructor possessing the reality. This is also the path of one who has been trained by outward knowledge in a place where the full instructor is not present. Having done so, he may remain among the believers and hear wisdom according to what is permitted.

It is also related that when a menstruating woman becomes pure she makes up the days of fasting she missed during Ramadan, but she does not make up the prayers she missed. In the inward sense, prayer is the da‘wa and fasting is concealment. A believer who commits a fault is barred from the discourse of wisdom and from attending its assemblies; while in that condition, he neither receives nor transmits the inward teaching. When he repents and is purified by knowledge, the rule differs for what was missed in the da‘wa and for the trust of concealment, as will now be explained.

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When he has repented and been purified, he is not required to make up every assembly of the da‘wa that he missed, but he is required to keep concealed what was entrusted to him before and what will be entrusted to him afterward. In the same way, a menstruating woman makes up the fast, whose inward meaning is concealment, but not the prayer, whose inward meaning is the da‘wa.

Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, permitted a husband to enjoy a menstruating wife provided she wears a covering from below the navel to the knees, and said that he may enjoy what lies outside the covering. ‘Mubashara’ literally means the touching of skin to skin, the word being derived from bashara, skin. We have explained that skin symbolizes the outward. Therefore it is not forbidden for an instructor to converse with a learner who has committed a religious fault about outward matters, nor for the learner to hear them. The prohibition concerns the inward wisdom represented by intercourse in the prohibited place. Thus, just as outwardly enjoyment outside the covered area is permitted, inwardly the instructor may discipline and correct the learner by outward teaching without imparting the concealed wisdom. In this case the benefit is for the learner’s correction, even though he is not yet receiving the full inward knowledge.

The Imams also taught that a man who approaches a menstruating woman has done what is unlawful and must seek God’s forgiveness and repent; giving charity in addition is commendable. The woman bears the same responsibility if she consented, but if she was compelled she bears no blame. If the man did not know of her menstruation because she concealed it, the sin is upon her and not upon him. Inwardly, if an instructor knowingly communicates wisdom to a learner who has committed a fault requiring repentance and purification, both speaking and hearing are prohibited. If the learner did not seek such instruction and the instructor, knowing his condition, disclosed it of his own accord, the burden is upon the instructor. If the instructor did not know of the learner’s fault because the learner concealed it, the burden is on the learner. He must inform his instructor of what has occurred, repent before him, and ask God’s forgiveness.

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The instructor then seeks forgiveness for him and purifies him as already explained. If the learner conceals his state and persists in it, everything he hears while remaining in that condition becomes a burden upon him and gives him no benefit. Outwardly, a free woman must not conceal menstruation from her husband, nor a slave-woman from her master, so that he does not approach her before she has purified herself with water; inwardly, water is knowledge by which the learner is purified.

God says: ‘If, when they wronged themselves, they had come to you and asked God’s forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found God Ever-Returning, Merciful. But no, by your Lord, they do not truly believe until they make you judge concerning what disputes arise among them, then find no resistance in themselves to what you decide and submit with full submission.’ You have heard the likeness of this repeatedly, O believers. Preserve it and do not endanger yourselves by persisting in what destroys you. You find God’s mercy at the one in whose keeping He has placed it, as a refuge to which you may flee. God did not cut the people of any age off from this mercy after the passing of their prophets; rather, He established for every generation successors who perform for them what the prophets performed. Thus He accepts repentance and does not cut off the excuse of His servants.

The Imams said that when bleeding continues beyond the menstrual period, the woman is mustahada. Menstrual blood is thick, dark, foul-smelling, whereas the blood of istihada is thin and not foul. When the menstrual blood comes, she follows the rules of menstruation; when it ceases, she purifies herself, uses a pad of cloth or cotton, performs ablution for every prayer, and becomes lawful to her husband. They recommended that she wash for each pair of prayers: one washing for noon and afternoon, one for sunset and

evening, and one separately for dawn. If a believing woman does this seeking reward, God removes the ailment from her. Its inward meaning is that a responder may commit a fault, repent and abandon it, yet afterward be troubled by passing doubts and whisperings without believing or persisting in them. Such passing thoughts do not make it unlawful for him to hear wisdom, nor do they prohibit his instructor from discussing it with him; but he must guard himself, ward them off, and protect himself from them as far as he can, just as the woman protects herself from the flowing blood.

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Performing ablution for each prayer symbolizes purification through knowledge for every summons or religious station. The recommended washings for pairs of prayers symbolize a fuller purification by knowledge in relation to successive messengers, while Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, has a special station of his own; the detailed explanation belongs to the discussion of prayer. Distinguishing menstrual blood from the blood of istihada signifies distinguishing settled corruption in belief from passing doubts and thoughts. The two are not the same.

The Imams were asked about a woman who sees blood during days that are ordinarily days of purity. If it resembles menstrual blood, she is treated as menstruating; if it is thin blood, it is a ‘kick from Satan’: she performs ablution, prays, and her husband may approach her. The same ruling is given for a pregnant woman who sees blood. Inwardly, thin blood represents passing doubts and deceptive thoughts that arise in a believer without his accepting them as belief. What is required is that he remove them with knowledge and certainty, as ablution removes the effect of the thin blood. If it is true menstrual blood, the stricter rule already described applies.

These passing doubts are called a ‘kick from Satan’ because such whisperings are cast by the satans—those who have become distant from the awliya of God through denial and opposition. Weak believers are exposed to thoughts of doubt and suspicion through what such people cast at them.

Abu Ja‘far Muhammad, peace be upon him, said: ‘We command our women during menstruation to perform ablution at the time of every prayer, complete the ablution, protect themselves with a pad, face the qibla without intending an obligatory prayer, and glorify, magnify, and declare God’s oneness. They do not enter a mosque or recite the Qur’an.’ Someone told him that al-Mughira claimed he had said that a menstruating woman makes up the prayer. He replied: ‘Al-Mughira has lied. No woman of the household of the Messenger of God, nor any of our women, ever prayed while menstruating. They were only commanded to remember God in the way we have described, as an encouragement toward excellence and because it is recommended.’ Inwardly, the ‘women’ of the Imams are the hujjas and senior da‘is. If one of these falls into a religious fault and reports it to the Imam, he may be disciplined by delay, commanded to desire and seek restoration, and temporarily cut off from imparting wisdom and from teaching those below him until his state is corrected.

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This is illustrated by al-Mughira, who had been one of the senior da‘is attached to Muhammad ibn ‘Ali, peace be upon him. He altered the da‘wa and introduced grave innovations, whereupon the Imam of the age repudiated him, declared himself free of him, cursed him, and pronounced him a liar. Al-Mughira remained in concealment, so the Imam’s hand could not reach him to punish him openly. He persisted and refused to accept the removal of his authority, claiming that once the Imam had authorized him he could not silence him. He therefore falsely attributed to the Imam the statement that a menstruating woman must pray, intending by that outward claim to support his own assertion that he was still permitted to call others while inwardly ‘impure.’ The Imam exposed the corruption of his claim and the falsehood he had attributed to him.

‘Ali, peace be upon him, said: ‘A menstruating woman does not recite the Qur’an, enter a mosque, approach prayer, or have intercourse until she becomes pure.’ Inwardly, a responder who has introduced a religious fault cannot rightly engage with his instructor in the inward teaching until he has purified himself. Reciting the Qur’an signifies recognition and walaya of the Imam of the age; entering the mosque, approaching prayer, and intercourse have been explained through their inward counterparts in the da‘wa.

Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, said: ‘If a woman who is in retreat in the mosque menstruates, she leaves the mosque until she is pure.’ In the language, i‘tikaf means remaining in a place; God says of the Sacred Mosque that those who remain there and those who come from outside are alike. A mosque inwardly symbolizes the instructor, and those who remain in it symbolize responders who cling to him and stay close to his teaching. If one of them commits a fault in religion, he may no longer remain close to the instructor or hear inward teaching from him. He must withdraw, inform him of what has happened, repent, abandon it, and not return to his former close companionship and inward discussion until the instructor has purified him. The instructor likewise, when he learns of the fault, must keep the learner at a distance and refrain from communicating wisdom until he is purified.

Al-Sadiq also said: ‘If a woman becomes pure from menstruation during the time of a prayer and then neglects to wash, she must make up that prayer.’ Its interpretation is that once the offender has abandoned his fault, he must seek to receive what of wisdom he missed after his purification becomes possible.

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The meaning is that, after he has abandoned what he committed, he should hasten to receive whatever wisdom he missed. Understand, O believers, what God has charged you with in the outward and inward, for the two are joined to one another: each bears witness to, corresponds with, and confirms the other. What is obligatory outwardly is likewise obligatory inwardly. Neither is adequately established without the other. What God has forbidden inwardly cannot be made lawful outwardly, nor what He has forbidden outwardly be made lawful inwardly. Beware lest the distortions of the deviators and the doubts of the satans turn you away from this. God says: ‘Leave the outward of sin and its inward’; and: ‘Say: My Lord has only forbidden indecencies, what is outward of them and what is inward’; and He has bestowed upon you His blessings, outward and inward. The greatest blessing is the religion by whose establishment He has bound His servants. May God make you among those who tend it as it ought to be tended and establish it as it ought to be established. Blessings be upon Muhammad His Prophet and upon the Imams from his progeny.

The Third Session of Part Three

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God; no servant can discharge the praise due to Him, however sincere and continuous his praise, because of the abundance of His blessings. May God bless those He has chosen from His servants, Muhammad His Prophet and the Imams from his progeny.

What follows from the discussion of menstruation is the report from al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, that the sign by which a woman knows she has become pure is that she inserts a piece of cotton into the place of bleeding; if nothing adheres to it and she removes it clean, the menstruation has ended. This is the outward criterion for knowing the cessation of menstruation. Inwardly, the menstruating woman is, as already explained, the learner who has committed a fault in religion and must repent sincerely and free himself from it. Testing herself with cotton or another clean material signifies that he must test himself regarding the cause through which he fell into the fault. If he finds that his heart no longer inclines toward it and nothing of it

remains attractive to him, then the corruption has left him. But if his soul still accepts it or inclines toward it, he remains upon the corrupt state and must renew his repentance until all doubt and inclination are cut off.

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‘Ali, peace be upon him, said that washing after menstruation is like washing after janaba; and if a woman begins menstruating while in a state of janaba, one washing suffices for both. The inward meaning follows what has already been explained concerning janaba and menstruation. Intercourse is the likeness of intimate discourse between instructor and learner; the knowledge exchanged in that discourse is the means of purification, for knowledge inwardly is like pure water outwardly. Menstruation in women is the likeness of a religious fault in the learners. Therefore, when the offender abandons the fault, repents before his instructor, and the instructor opens wisdom to him again, that opening itself purifies him in religion from what he committed. There is no need for the instructor to devise a separate body of knowledge merely as a second purification; the knowledge by which he continues the learner’s proper religious training suffices, just as one washing suffices for the woman who had both conditions.

The text then turns to istibra’. Outwardly, istibra’ means that when a man who has had intercourse with a slave-girl intends to sell her, he waits through a menstrual period before selling her, in order to make sure that she is not pregnant by him or by another. Likewise, a divorced woman who has been approached by her husband does not marry again until she has completed the prescribed waiting period; the interpretation of the waiting period will be discussed in its proper place.

The general inward sense is based on what has repeatedly been explained: women symbolize those who receive knowledge from those above them, and men symbolize those who impart knowledge to those below. This relation continues through the ranks, higher and lower. Therefore, when an instructor intends to transfer a learner from his own charge to another instructor, whether higher or lower, so that the latter may undertake his training and instruction, he must first perform istibra’ with him. That is, he must question him about the wisdom and knowledge he has received and determine what has been retained correctly, altered, increased, or diminished. Otherwise, something derived from the first instructor might later be misattributed to the second, just as pregnancy from a previous man would confuse bodily lineage.

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This examination is also required so that the learner does not conceal anything relevant. The Qur’anic prohibition against women concealing what God has created in their wombs applies inwardly to the concealment of knowledge already received. The purpose is the preservation of lineage: outwardly the lineage of children, and inwardly the lineage of teaching. No statement should be attributed to an instructor who did not impart it, and no teacher should be held responsible for an error introduced by another.

The Messenger of God rebuked a man who had purchased a pregnant slave-girl and then approached her, and the Imams taught that a purchased pregnant slave must not be approached until she gives birth. Inwardly, one who comes to a new instructor already ‘pregnant’ with knowledge from a former teacher must not immediately be filled with additional inward teaching. The new instructor must first allow him to ‘bring forth’ what he carries: he must hear the learner’s account of what he was taught, approve what is sound, reject what is corrupt, and explain what is correct. If he proceeds without this examination, the bodies of knowledge become mixed, just as bodily seed may be confused when a pregnant woman is approached by another man.

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The rule is therefore that a learner carrying knowledge from one who instructed him before should not receive new inward instruction from another until he has set forth what he carries. Whatever the new instructor

approves he confirms for him; whatever he rejects he corrects and shows him the sound meaning. If this is not done, and he is given further wisdom without the former teaching first being examined, the result is inwardly like a man approaching a woman pregnant by another before she has delivered and become pure from the consequences of childbirth.

The Messenger of God said: 'Perform istibra' of the slave-girl whom a man has approached through one menstrual period.' Outwardly, when a man has approached a slave-girl and then wishes to sell her, he does not sell her until she menstruates and becomes pure, so that she is sold in a state known to be free of pregnancy. Inwardly, if an instructor wishes to hand a learner over to another instructor, he must examine him before the transfer. If he finds corruption in the learner's understanding he corrects it; if the learner has altered, added to, or diminished what he received, the instructor explains the matter and sets him right. This is the likeness of the slave-girl's purification by a menstrual period before sale. Once the learner has been purified from every alteration and fault, he may be transferred; and the first instructor should not then open to him further new wisdom, lest the teaching again become mixed and require another examination.

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Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, was asked about a slave-girl purchased from a woman and whether the buyer may approach her without istibra'. He said that istibra' is required as a precaution lest the seller have sold her while she was not clear of pregnancy, but if the seller is trustworthy and states that she has already been examined, her statement may suffice, though the buyer's own examination is still good. Inwardly, a learner may have been attached not to a fully authorized instructor but to a trustworthy believer who could guide him in outward conduct and piety without opening the batin to him. Such a person resembles a woman in this comparison, because he is himself a recipient from one above rather than an authorized giver of the inward teaching. When the learner later reaches an authorized instructor, there is no strict obligation to examine him regarding an inward knowledge he never received; yet examining his state is still good.

The saying that the responsibility for istibra' lies upon the seller means that the principal duty to examine a learner before transfer falls upon the instructor who formerly trained him, because he is responsible for what he conveyed and for any alteration that entered it. The instructor to whom the learner is transferred does well if he examines him too, but it is not his primary obligation when the former instructor is trustworthy and has already done so.

Al-Sadiq also said that if a man frees his slave-girl and then marries her himself, he need not perform a new istibra'; but if he marries her to another man, istibra' is required. Its inward meaning is that when an instructor releases a learner from one form of dependence and then himself resumes direct instruction, there is no need to re-examine knowledge that remained within the same pedagogical relation. But if the learner is handed to a different instructor, his state and what he carries must be tested first.

'Ali, peace be upon him, said that a man who has purchased a slave-girl may enjoy from her what is short of intercourse before istibra'. Inwardly, the new instructor may converse with the transferred learner concerning outward matters, signs, symbols, and general training, but he does not uncover for him the inner ta'wil until he has examined and tested what he already carries.

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Understand, O believers, and retain what you hear. May God grant you understanding, teach you, give you success, make you firm, give you insight, and guide you. Blessings be upon Muhammad His Prophet and the Imams from his progeny.

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God who has made praise an act of gratitude for the greatness of His blessings. May God bless Muhammad His Prophet and the Imams, his legatees.

Among what follows from the explanation already heard is the saying of the Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him, concerning a slave-girl who is purchased when pregnancy is feared: she is to be examined for forty-five nights. Its interpretation follows the principle already stated. An instructor may receive a learner from another and fear that the learner has heard from his previous teacher, or from someone else, things the new instructor does not approve and does not wish to be mixed with what he will now teach. He should therefore examine him across the corresponding inward boundaries. Night represents the inward; each night signifies a limit, division, or section of the inward knowledge through which the learner is tested.

‘Ali also said that if a slave-girl has committed fornication she must undergo istibra’. Inwardly, this is the learner who has listened to or taken inward knowledge from an unauthorized person who had no right to instruct him. Such reception is unlawful for both the learner and the one who gave it, and it resembles fornication in the outward law. The authorized instructor must therefore examine him carefully concerning whatever he has acquired from elsewhere before proceeding with his training.

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Ja‘far ibn Muhammad, peace be upon him, said that if a man unlawfully approaches a slave-girl belonging to others and later purchases her, a child she bore from the unlawful act does not inherit from him, because the Messenger of God said: ‘The child belongs to the bed, and the adulterer has the stone.’ A child of fornication is not attached in lineage to the man who fathered it unlawfully. The man who later purchases the woman must still perform istibra’ before approaching her, lest she already be pregnant by him from the unlawful act. If she is pregnant from the fornication, the child is not legally attributed to him; but a later child conceived after lawful ownership and after istibra’ belongs to him.

Inwardly, if an instructor gives inward knowledge to a learner who is not of his da‘wa and whom he has not been authorized to teach, it is like fornication. If that learner later comes lawfully under his charge, the instructor may not count as part of his authorized teaching whatever was communicated before the learner entered his proper rank, nor should the learner attribute that unauthorized teaching to the legitimate relation. The instructor must first examine him and separate what was formerly received unlawfully from what he will now impart under the covenant.

The same principle appears in the saying that if a man purchases a slave-girl while she is menstruating, he may approach her once she becomes pure. Inwardly, if a learner transferred to an instructor has committed a fault in religion, both the learner and the instructor must fulfill the purification required by that fault. Once this has been completed, the instructor may open ta’wil to him and resume his training.

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The Imams also ruled concerning two slave sisters that their owner may not combine them in intercourse. If he approaches one, he does not approach the other until the first has left his ownership; if he approaches the second while both remain his property, the first becomes unlawful to him until the second leaves his ownership. The same principle applies to free sisters in marriage: one man may not be married to two sisters at the same time.

The inward meaning is that the covenant of the da‘wa is taken from responders one by one. A single covenant is not ordinarily contracted over two separate responders as though they were one party, unless they had already been individually bound and a later collective renewal is required. If many responders are present, the one authorized to take the covenant may recite the terms and conditions to them together, but the actual bond and confession of faith is concluded with each one separately, just as in a sale a buyer may address a group of sellers together but the ownership of each item is concluded with the person to whom it belongs.

The covenant is itself called a bay‘a, a pledge or sale, because God says: ‘God has purchased from the believers their persons and their possessions,’ and concerning those who pledged allegiance to the Messenger: ‘Those who pledge allegiance to you only pledge allegiance to God; the hand of God is above their hands.’ For this reason the covenant is called a bay‘a, and the one taking the covenant and the one entering it clasp hands, after the example of the Messenger of God, who took the pledge by hand from men, though not from women. From the same practice comes the expression ‘he gave the clasp of his hand’ when a covenant is concluded.

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The striking of palm against palm in a sale became a sign of mutual consent, agreement, and willing acceptance; from it the Arabs say that a people ‘agreed together’ upon an affair. Thus taking the covenant from one responder after another corresponds to the prohibition of combining two sisters: one does not merge two responders into a single personal covenant.

The responders are brothers in faith, as God says that the believers are brothers. The people of the shari‘a are all brothers because the Prophet, the bearer of the law, is inwardly their father. God says, ‘the creed of your father Abraham,’ and in another recitation concerning the Prophet: ‘The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves, and his wives are their mothers.’ It is also related that the Messenger of God said to ‘Ali: ‘I and you, O ‘Ali, are the two fathers of the believers.’ ‘Ali was the hujja of the Messenger and, during the Prophet’s life, stood toward him as the authorized recipient and transmitter stands toward the source of teaching. After the Prophet, ‘Ali occupied his station. The same pattern descends through the paired ranks: one above is like the father, while the one who receives from him and serves as his gate or authorized intermediary is like the mother; those receiving from them are like children and are therefore brothers and sisters to one another in the inward order.

A woman captured while she has a husband must undergo istibra’. Inwardly, this is like a learner who had belonged to a false da‘wa and, when the people of truth prevail, comes into the hands of an instructor from among them. What he carries must be examined and purified before full inward instruction is given to him.

It is related that ‘Umar asked the Commander of the Faithful about a woman whom non-Arabs had seized and violated by force. ‘Ali said that no legal punishment fell upon her because she had been compelled; she was to be placed in the keeping of a trustworthy Muslim until she had menstruated once and then returned to her husband. Inwardly, if a believer of the true da‘wa is overcome by people of falsehood who force their teachings upon him, then afterward returns to his instructor, he is not blamed for what was imposed upon him if he did not accept or desire it. Nevertheless, the instructor examines him lest something of what they said have remained in his heart, correcting whatever trace is found.

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This inward ruling applies when a responder of the true da‘wa has been overpowered by people of a false da‘wa, or by people who have altered and changed what they were originally called to, and they force him to listen to and hear what they have adopted. When he later returns to his instructor, the instructor must

examine him, lest something of what they said under compulsion has entered his heart, affected him, or inclined him toward them. But there is no blame upon him if he did not believe it, accept it, seek it, or consent to it, just as no legal punishment falls on a woman violated against her will.

This concludes the discussion of purification from the Book of the Da‘a’im. You have heard the outward rulings and, for each of them, the corresponding inward ruling in the religion. God willing, you will likewise hear the interpretation of everything by which God has bound you in the outward and inward aspects of your religion. The inward is the secret of religion, its core and its adornment. Knowledge of it is found only with the awliya of God, whom He has entrusted with it and made its treasurers. Its ta’wil is the explanation of which God said: ‘Then surely upon Us is its explanation,’ and: ‘We sent down to you the Reminder that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them.’ God has bound His servants to establish both outward and inward. What He has made lawful outwardly has its lawful inward counterpart, and what He has forbidden outwardly has its forbidden inward counterpart.

People have divided over this into three parties. Two are astray and one is guided. The first of the astray parties are the great mass of common people. Some of them are overcome by ignorance and turn away from knowledge; they are, as God says, ‘like cattle, rather even further astray.’ Others claim learning, attach the name of knowledge to themselves, but travel a road other than its road, turning away from its people and seeking it from themselves or from those who do not possess it. They go astray and lead many others astray. Both groups are united in ignorance of the inward and in denying it, while limiting the outward to what their leaders and chiefs have imposed on them.

The second astray party consists of people who once attached themselves to the people of truth and then departed from them. They learned something of the inward, accepted it, but became ignorant of the outward and turned away from it, limiting themselves to the batin just as the first party limited itself to the zahir. Some still verbally acknowledge the outward but do not know its limits or rulings, its lawful and unlawful things. Their concern is the inward alone; when questioned about an outward duty they belittle the question out of ignorance or to hide their ignorance. Others go further and abandon the outward completely, nullifying its rulings, rejecting its lawful provisions, and permitting its prohibitions. They have abolished the outward just as the first party abolished the inward.

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The third party is the party of guidance: those who follow the awliya of God in the outward and inward of God’s religion, believe in both, and know their limits and degrees. These worship their Lord as He is to be worshipped by establishing what He imposed upon them in both aspects. May God make you, O company of the awliya, among them and among their number; may He teach you what He has imposed and make you among those who establish it as He commanded.

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God who created His servants and did not leave them abandoned in their worship, but sent them messengers to guide them. May God bless Muhammad, the seal of His messengers, and the Imams of guidance after him.

You have already heard, O believers, the ta’wil of the outward matters concerning the religion that were established for you in the Book of the Pillars of Islam: the ta’wil of walaya, the first pillar, and the ta’wil of purification, the second pillar. You will now hear the ta’wil of prayer, the third pillar. Listen to it with hearing, remembrance, humility, and submission. Preserve what you hear and do not waste it, for one who preserves

what is entrusted to him and acts upon it deserves its reward, while one who forgets and wastes what he was entrusted with has from his memory only what may one day testify against him. May God make you among those who benefit from the blessings He has bestowed upon you.

Prayer, in ta'wil, is the likeness of the da'wa. This is why the supplication taught for hearing the adhan includes the words: 'Here I am, O caller to God.' Not every person who outwardly calls the adhan is, in the inward sense, the Caller to God. The true caller to God is the Messenger in his age, every Imam after him in his age, and those whom the Messenger or Imam appoints to call to what has come from God. God says: 'O our people, answer the caller to God and believe in him'; and: 'Whoever does not answer the caller to God cannot frustrate Him on earth.' He also says of the Prophet: 'When the servant of God stood calling upon Him.' Thus the awliya of God are the callers and warners under the Lord of the age.

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For this reason one who hears the adhan says, 'Here I am, O caller to God,' because the outward prayer to which the muezzin calls is the outward likeness of the inward da'wa. The da'wa is obligatory upon all who fall under it just as prayer is obligatory upon all who fall under the outward shari'a. In the supplication said at the iqama and at standing for prayer one says: 'O God, Lord of this complete summons and this established prayer.' The summons is mentioned together with prayer because it is its inward meaning.

God says: 'Surely prayer restrains from indecency and wrongdoing, and the remembrance of God is greater.' The actual forbidding of indecency and wrongdoing occurs in the inward through the da'wa, where command and prohibition are taught, while the outward prayer is the bodily act and worship by which God has bound creation. He has bound them likewise by its inward counterpart. In the chapters that follow, the details of prayer will provide witnesses and proofs for this correspondence.

Among the first reports in the Book of the Da'a'im is the saying of God: 'Prayer is prescribed for the believers at appointed times,' and His saying: 'Remember Me and do not forget Me.' Outward prayer is one of the blessings with which God has bound believing servants and for which He rewards them. He has also said that He has lavished upon them His blessings, outward and inward. The inward blessing corresponding to prayer is the establishment of the da'wa of truth in every age, just as the outward prayer is established every day and night. In the establishment of the da'wa is the soundness of religion, of the world, and of all the servants. The Messenger of God said: 'The delight of my eye was placed in prayer,' meaning its outward and inward together.

Ja'far ibn Muhammad, peace be upon him, interpreted the verse: 'Set your face toward the religion as a hanif.' He said that God commanded His Messenger to establish the religion, inclining away from all idol worship, purely and sincerely. Inwardly, the 'face' of the Messenger is his wasi through whom he faces the community. God therefore commanded him to establish 'Ali, peace be upon him, for the religion: during the Prophet's life to maintain its inward order, and after his death to maintain its outward order and to appoint for the inward those whom he in turn would establish, just as the Prophet had established him.

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The word hanif in Arabic denotes inclination. Some lexicographers say a hanif is a Muslim who faces the Sacred House upon the creed of Abraham; others say he is so called because he does not bend away from anything of his religion, or because he inclines away from all other religions toward tawhid. The Messenger of God said: 'The religion most beloved to God is the generous, easy hanifiyya, the creed of Abraham, in which there is no constriction or hardship.' The inward meaning is that the Prophet establishes his wasi facing the Lord of the age and sets him as an Imam before the people, just as the Imam in outward prayer stands before the congregation facing the qibla.

Abu Ja‘far Muhammad ibn ‘Ali, peace be upon him, said that God imposed five prayers in the day and night and named them in His Book. He cited: ‘Establish prayer from the decline of the sun until the darkness of night, and the recitation of dawn; surely the recitation of dawn is witnessed.’ The decline of the sun marks noon, and between that decline and the darkness of night are four prayers; the recitation of dawn is the fifth. He also cited: ‘Establish prayer at the two ends of the day and in the near parts of the night,’ and: ‘Guard the prayers and the middle prayer.’ The middle prayer is Friday prayer, and on other days the noon prayer, the first prayer performed by the Messenger of God and lying between the dawn and afternoon prayers.

The inward interpretation is that the five prayers in every day and night correspond to the five da‘was of the messengers of firm resolve who patiently bore what they were commanded to bear. God told Muhammad: ‘Be patient as the messengers of firm resolve were patient.’ The five are Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, peace be upon them. Adam was not among the messengers of firm resolve, for God says: ‘We had already taken a covenant from Adam, but he forgot, and We found in him no firm resolve.’ Since prayer as a whole is the image of the da‘wa of truth, the five prayers correspond to these five great prophetic da‘was.

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The noon prayer, the first, corresponds to the da‘wa of Noah, the first of the messengers of firm resolve. The afternoon prayer, the second, corresponds to Abraham, the second. Sunset, the third, corresponds to Moses; the night prayer, the fourth, to Jesus; and dawn, the fifth, to Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace. Thus God commanded Muhammad to establish prayer outwardly and to establish the inward da‘wa as well.

‘From the decline of the sun until the darkness of night’ means outwardly the time beginning with the sun’s turning from the meridian toward the west and extending into night. Inwardly, the day symbolizes the outward and the night the inward. The command therefore signifies establishing the da‘wa in both outward and inward according to the pattern of those who came before. God said to Muhammad: ‘We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him,’ thereby placing his mission in continuity with theirs.

The four prayers between noon and night—noon, afternoon, sunset, and night—correspond to the sequence of prophetic missions before Muhammad’s own. The recitation of dawn is then his own da‘wa. The Qur’an joined with the dawn symbolizes what God joined to Muhammad as his appointed complement and heir: his wasi, ‘Ali, peace be upon him. The recitation of dawn is ‘witnessed’: God, His angels, the possessors of knowledge, and the believers bear witness to the authority and succession of the wasi, just as the Prophet’s mission itself was witnessed.

God then says: ‘And from the night, keep vigil with it as an additional devotion for you; perhaps your Lord will raise you to a praised station.’ Night, as stated, is the inward, and keeping vigil in it signifies rising to maintain the inward da‘wa. The ‘additional devotion’ is a gift beyond the basic obligation; in Arabic nafila also signifies a grandchild. The wasi and, after him, the Imams from the Prophet’s progeny are therefore the additional divine gift through which the Prophet’s outward and inward authority continue.

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The ‘praised station’ is attained through establishing both the outward and inward. God further says: ‘Say: My Lord, cause me to enter with a truthful entrance and bring me out with a truthful exit, and grant me from Yourself a supporting authority.’ His truthful entrance is his entering into the burden of the trust he was commanded to carry; his truthful exit is his leaving it after conveying it to those commanded to receive it and transmitting its burden to his wasi. The supporting authority is his wasi, through whom he is aided against his

enemies and through whom his authority is maintained. God granted all of this to him through ‘Ali, peace be upon him.

The verses surrounding this passage in Surat al-Isra’ also concern attempts to turn the Prophet away from what had been revealed to him, and requests that he substitute someone else for ‘Ali. God says: ‘They almost tempted you away from what We revealed to you, that you might invent against Us something else; then they would have taken you as an intimate friend. Had We not made you firm, you might almost have inclined toward them a little.’ Elsewhere their demand is expressed as: ‘Bring a Qur’an other than this, or change it.’ The full demonstration of these verses is lengthy and belongs to its proper place.

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God who made praise the opening of His Book and the utterance of the people of Paradise when they attain His reward. May God bless Muhammad, the seal of His messengers, and the chosen Imams from his progeny.

It is related in the Book of the Da‘a’im that on the night of the Ascension God imposed fifty prayers upon the Prophet in each day and night. The Prophet continued to ask for easing on behalf of his community until they were made five, as related in a lengthy report. Its inward meaning follows what has already been said: the five prayers correspond to the five da‘was of the messengers of firm resolve, while prayer as a whole represents the da‘wa of the prophets and Imams established by God according to His unchanging sunna. When fifty prayers were first imposed, the Prophet was commanded in the inward sense to gather and establish the pattern of fifty prophetic messengers; then the command was reduced to the five messengers of firm resolve, the principal bearers of the great laws.

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The reports then discuss the number of rak‘as, what is recited aloud and silently, and the forms of prayer. The obligatory rak‘as of the five daily prayers total seventeen, while the sunna prayers amount to approximately the same number. Prayer appears in seven principal forms. The first is the normal prescribed prayer. The second is the eclipse prayer, which differs in form, having two rak‘as with five bowings in each. The third is the prayer of the sick or one who cannot stand, who prays sitting, lying on his side, or reclining and, if unable to bow and prostrate, indicates them by motions of the head or eyes. The fourth is the prayer of fear, which has a form different from prayer in security and may be shortened drastically in battle. The fifth includes prayers for rain, the festivals, and Friday, which retain the general structure of prayer with special conditions. The sixth is the funeral prayer, without bowing and prostration. The seventh is the invocation of blessing upon the Prophet, which is uttered by the tongue without bodily movements.

These seven outward forms correspond to seven inward forms of the da‘wa associated with the six natiqs—Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, peace be upon them—and the final Qa’im. The six prophetic da‘was all require religious works, though their laws differ, as God says: ‘For each of you We appointed a law and a path.’ The seventh, the blessing upon the Prophet without bodily acts, corresponds to the da‘wa of the final Qa’im, the Lord of the Resurrection, because when he rises the former form of work is lifted and the Resurrection is established. God says: ‘On the day when some signs of your Lord come, no soul’s faith will benefit it if it did not believe before or earn good through its faith.’

The seventeen obligatory rak‘as correspond in one reckoning to the principal bearers through whom the religion is established: the five law-giving messengers and the twelve organized calls or ranks by which their

teaching is carried in the regions of the earth. The exact numerical correspondences are signs and witnesses, and their explanation is developed through the following discussion.

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God says of the messengers: ‘He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah, and what We revealed to you, and what We enjoined upon Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.’ The Arabic word shari‘a originally denotes a place at the side of a river or water source where one enters to drink. From this came its use for what God lays down for His servants in religion, because it is the path by which they reach the water of divine knowledge. Knowledge in the inward interpretation is water. The prophet, Imam, or appointed teacher from whom that knowledge is taken is like a river, pool, vessel, or other receptacle of water, each according to his rank and the measure of knowledge he contains. Hence an exceptionally learned man may be called ‘a sea.’

A shari‘a is therefore a portion of the water made accessible to those who come to drink. What God legislated for the servants is a portion of the knowledge entrusted to His prophets, set out in forms suitable for them. Likewise, every place containing water is an image of one of the hudud of God who have been appointed to the servants. The size and type of the vessel correspond to the rank and measure of knowledge entrusted to each. The Arabic word also denotes a broad, open road. The awliya of God and the hudud of His religion are such roads, because through them the servants are guided to the destination God wills for them.

Watering places and roads differ in size, appearance, and type, but all convey drinkable water or lead to the destination. So too the laws of the prophets differ, though the knowledge, religion, and truth within them are one. No one may drink from every watering place indiscriminately; a people take what has been made lawful and appropriate for them in their own shari‘a.

The seventeen obligatory rak‘as signify the completeness of the religious order in another numerical arrangement: five principal prophetic laws and twelve organized summonses spread across the regions of the earth. When religion is complete, these da‘was support it just as the visible prayer supports Islam. The Messenger of God said: ‘Prayer is the pillar of religion, and one who abandons prayer has no share in Islam.’ This applies to the outward prayer and to the inward da‘wa. The outward was made a guide to the inward. Whoever holds fast to the guide and follows it does not stray from the straight road; whoever turns away from it is in danger of falling into the paths of error.

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The saying that the sunna is approximately equal to the obligatory prayer means inwardly that the sunna corresponds to the wasi, while the obligatory prayer corresponds to the messenger. Every law-giving messenger had a wasi through whom his dispensation continued; and each successor also received from a predecessor. Thus the sunna stands alongside the obligation as the wasi stands alongside the prophet. The details for each prayer are explained in their proper places.

The noon prayer, the first of the five, corresponds in one more specific reckoning to Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, because he was the first to establish the five daily prayers in their present form. It consists of four rak‘as, like the four letters of the name Muhammad in Arabic. He performed it after seven hours of the day, and the seven signify the combined letters of his name and the name ‘Ali—four and three—or, in another witness, the seven natiqs and the seven Imams who succeed one another between two natiqs.

There are sunna prayers before and after noon because the da‘wa existed before Muhammad and continues after him. The afternoon prayer also has four rak‘as and corresponds to the Qa’im of the Resurrection from Muhammad’s progeny. There is a call before him but none after him. Noon and afternoon therefore share a

connected time, separated only by the measure needed to perform the intermediate prayer. Inwardly, the Qa'im belongs to the dispensation of Muhammad and to his progeny; their affair is one. God honored Muhammad by making the final Qa'im one of his Imams and descendants, just as He made Muhammad himself the seal of prophets and did not replace his shari'a with another.

The sunset prayer, with three rak'as, corresponds to Adam, whose Arabic name has three letters. Before Adam there was no prior human prophetic da'wa of this order, whereas after him other da'was followed. Sunset occurs at the mingling of light and darkness, and this represents Adam's coming with both outward and inward elements, with the inward still expressed largely through signs and symbols.

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The Qur'an relates that when night covered Abraham he saw a star and said, 'This is my Lord.' In the inward interpretation, before that point he did not yet know the hidden knowledge; the star symbolizes the da'i who called him and brought him into the inward stage represented by night. Thus sunset prayer is a sign of the beginning of the inward call after the day-prayers that represent the outward call.

The three rak'as of sunset also correspond to the Imam, the hujja, and the da'i through whom the inward summons proceeds. The fact that there is no prayer immediately before sunset, while there is prayer after it, signifies that before entering the da'wa the responder has no true prayer in its complete sense; after entering, his prayer is complete because he establishes both outward and inward and recognizes the Imam. The Messenger of God said: 'Whoever dies without recognizing the Imam of his age dies the death of ignorance.'

The night prayer corresponds in one reckoning to the four chief naqibs among the twelve naqibs. It is a night prayer and therefore belongs to the inward order. A prayer precedes it and another follows it, just as the inward hierarchy has those before and after. In another explanation, the night prayer is linked to the hujja: there was a hujja before him and, when he dies, another hujja follows.

The witr prayer is three rak'as, with sitting after the first two and then rising for the third. The first two signify Muhammad and 'Ali, his wasi; the third signifies the Qa'im from their progeny, Lord of the Resurrection. The sitting and salutation separating the two from the third signifies the interval between the Prophet and the final Qa'im. The two sunna rak'as before dawn symbolize the Imam and hujja during concealment, because they are performed in the dimness of early morning. The dawn prayer itself, two rak'as, corresponds to al-Mahdi and his hujja, peace be upon them, who stand at the end of the concealment of the Imams and lift the darkness from the community, establishing both outward and inward openly, just as dawn is the mingling of darkness and light.

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The dawn prayer is likewise at the mingling of light and darkness. As sunset prayer was a sign of Adam, the first to establish outward and inward religion, so dawn prayer is a sign of al-Mahdi and his hujja, peace be upon them, the first to restore and manifest together the outward and inward after the concealment of the Imams and the bewilderment of the community. Reciting aloud in the night prayers and silently in the day prayers signifies that ta'wil is made manifest to its people in the inward da'wa, while it is concealed in the outward da'wa. The witnesses and examples for these correspondences are many: some symbols can signify several related ranks because many proofs converge in them, while others are restricted to known limits according to the ordered hierarchy of religion and the proper training of believers. Understand this, may God grant you understanding and insight, and make you grateful for what He has added to you of strength and blessing.

The Seventh Session of Part Three

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God whom visible things cannot contain and whom created evidences cannot encompass. May God bless His chosen one from the worlds, Muhammad His Prophet, and the pure Imams from his progeny.

What follows from what you have heard of the ta'wil of the Book of the Da'a'im is the chapter on desirable acts in prayer, encouragement toward it, and the merit of establishing it. The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, said: 'The best of your bodies, the best of your lifetimes, and the best of your deeds is prayer.' He also said: 'Prayer is an offering that brings every pious person near'; and: 'The face of your religion is prayer'; and he exhorted: 'I charge you with prayer, for it is the pillar of religion and the support of Islam; do not neglect it.'

In the inward, prayer is—as already explained—the da'wa of the people of truth. Outward prayer is known. The best deeds and the means of salvation are to establish prayer outwardly together with its inward counterpart; neither outward without inward nor inward without outward is complete. Prayer is an offering for every pious person because through it believers draw near to God, and it is the face of their religion because nothing of religion is accepted without it. By it the servants turn toward their Lord, and it is the pillar on which religion stands and the support by which Islam is maintained.

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Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali, peace be upon him, instructed that those whom his followers meet should be told: 'Guard your tongues and restrain your hands; hold fast to patience and prayer, for God is with the patient.' Ja'far ibn Muhammad, peace be upon him, said: 'I know nothing, after knowledge of God, better than prayer.' Inwardly, after recognition of the wali of the age there is nothing better than hastening into his da'wa, entering it, and acting according to what one is commanded within it. The outward prayer is part of that action.

Muhammad ibn 'Ali, peace be upon him, also commanded that his mawali—those who had accepted his walaya and answered his da'wa—be enjoined to observe scrupulous avoidance of what God has forbidden, to guard their tongues against falsehood and unlawful speech, to restrain their hands from prohibited acts, to be patient in avoiding God's prohibitions and patient in obedience to Him, to establish His obligations, and to uphold prayer outwardly and inwardly. All these are among the matters taken upon the responder when he enters the true da'wa.

'Ali, peace be upon him, said: 'Prayer is the pillar of religion. It is the first of the son of Adam's deeds that God examines. If it is sound, He examines the rest of his deeds; if it is not sound, He examines no deed of his. One who abandons prayer has no share in Islam.' Its inward meaning is that one who does not answer the da'wa of the Imam of his age, take him as wali, obey him, and enter the summons of truth has not established the inward prayer. Because the covenant of the da'wa includes the command to establish prayer outwardly and inwardly, recognition and entry come before the acceptance of all other works. If a person dies after truly entering the da'wa and confessing the obligation of prayer before the time of any prayer reaches him, he is of the people of salvation, even though he did not yet perform one. Conversely, if a man spends his life performing the outward prayer but rejects the wali of his age, his prayer does not benefit him because his deeds are not examined without true recognition. If, after entering the da'wa, he neglects an outward obligation taken upon him, he has neglected a prescribed duty and his judgment is with God: He may forgive him or punish him.

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The Messenger of God said: ‘Satan continues to fear the believer so long as he preserves the five prayers. When he neglects them, Satan becomes bold against him and casts him into grave sins.’ Outwardly, this concerns abandoning the prescribed prayers. Inwardly, it concerns neglecting the assemblies of the da‘wa and the hearing of wisdom. When a believer abandons his outward and inward prayer, those who have become distant from the wali of the age—deniers, hypocrites, and their like, who are the inward satans—become bold enough to cast upon him the great deceptions by which he may be led astray. When he is constant in prayer outwardly and inwardly, they fear him because they know him to stand upon certainty and insight and that their deceit will not be accepted.

It is related that the servant is nearest to God when he is in prayer. The believer is truly God’s servant because he has submitted to the One who possesses his affair. When he stands in prayer, outwardly and inwardly, turns wholly toward it, and is sincere in it, he draws near to God’s good pleasure—not by nearness of place or bodily distance, for God is exalted above place. Arabic usage calls one man ‘nearer’ to another when he is specially attached to him even though their bodies may be far apart.

The Messenger of God said: ‘Whoever perfects his ablution, performs his prayer well, pays the zakat of his wealth, restrains his anger, imprisons his tongue, gives kindness, asks forgiveness of his Lord, and offers sincere counsel to my Household has completed the realities of faith, and the gates of Paradise are open to him.’ These qualities are praiseworthy outwardly and inwardly. Perfect ablution inwardly is complete purification from sins and offenses. Performing prayer well means maintaining its outward times and limits and fulfilling the covenant and duties of the da‘wa that are its inward. Paying zakat outwardly concerns wealth, while its inward is connected with knowledge; the full explanation will come in the chapter on zakat. Restraining anger inwardly means not being resentful toward truth, whether it accords with one’s desire or opposes it, and not objecting to what the awliya of God determine.

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Guarding the tongue outwardly means refraining from falsehood and forbidden speech. Inwardly, it includes keeping the secret of the awliya and speaking of inward knowledge only in the manner and to the people authorized for it. Giving kindness outwardly is material help and generosity; inwardly it is giving from the knowledge one has been permitted to communicate, guiding one who has gone astray and enriching one who is poor in understanding. Asking one’s Lord for forgiveness is seeking covering and protection from the consequences of fault. The word rabb in Arabic may also mean master or owner, as in the story of Joseph; in the religious hierarchy, each rank has one who trains and tends those below it.

Sincere counsel to the Household of the Prophet is owed outwardly to his family and inwardly to the people of his da‘wa. The report ‘Religion is sincere counsel’ extends that counsel to God, His Messenger, the Imams of the believers, and the believers themselves. Thus, to complete the realities of faith is to fulfill the whole body of obligations taken in the covenant of truth. For one who does so, the gates of Paradise are open: in the next world the gates of divine mercy are not shut against him, and in this world the Imams do not withhold from him the mercy and knowledge appropriate to his rank.

Abu Ja‘far, peace be upon him, addressed the seeker of knowledge: ‘Pray before there comes upon you a time in which you find neither night nor day for prayer.’ Outwardly this urges the servant to act before death and incapacity overtake him. Inwardly, the seeker of knowledge is one seeking entrance into the da‘wa; he is urged to enter and establish the inward prayer while access to the true summons and its people is open, before concealment, persecution, or death removes the opportunity. The day symbolizes the outward and the night the inward, so the warning embraces both dimensions of prayer.

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The Messenger of God also compared prayer for its performer to a man entering before a ruler: the ruler gives him his full attention until he has finished presenting his need. Likewise the Muslim, when he enters prayer, must attend to it and remain within its proper speech until he completes it. Inwardly, the Muslim is one established in the outward shari‘a who wishes to enter the true da‘wa. The ‘ruler’ is the authority appointed to take the covenant. The responder stands before him, listens carefully, speaks only where he is commanded to speak, and answers what is asked of him, just as the person at prayer limits his words to what belongs to prayer. When the covenant is completed, the one taking it releases him as the praying person leaves prayer with the salutation; the clasping of hands seals the bond already described.

It is related from the Messenger of God that in Paradise there is a tree from whose root emerge piebald horses that neither defecate nor urinate, prepared with saddles and bridles of gold and adorned with pearls and rubies. The people of the highest ranks mount them and pass those beneath them. The people of Paradise ask: ‘Our Lord, by what did these servants of Yours attain such honor?’ It is said to them: ‘They fasted by day while you ate; they stood by night while you slept; they gave charity while you withheld; and they struggled while you held back.’

The inward interpretation begins from God’s saying: ‘For whoever fears the station of his Lord are two gardens.’ One garden is outward and one inward. The Garden promised in the next world is the inward and final reward; the outward garden in this world is the da‘wa of truth, in which believers delight in wisdom and knowledge and thereby reach the eternal Garden. The tree in the report symbolizes the Lord of the age. People and religious ranks are frequently represented by trees; the Messenger of God said: ‘People are from diverse trees, but I and ‘Ali are from one tree,’ and God compared the good word to a good tree whose root is firm and whose branches are in heaven. The horses coming from the tree are the hujjas and appointed bearers who issue from the Lord of the age; their variegated color signifies the varieties of knowledge and wisdom they carry.

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The horses are saddled—that is, prepared so that knowledge may be taken from them—and bridled—that is, restrained from speaking except within the limits placed upon them. Their saddles of gold and their adornment with pearls and rubies signify the precious wisdoms and sciences with which they are equipped. Their neither defecating nor urinating signifies that they do not introduce into religion the corruptions whose outward symbols were explained earlier under excrement and urine. The people of ‘Illiyyun are those of lofty degrees in the religion. Their mounting the horses signifies their mastery of and movement through the ranks of the da‘wa; God says of horses, mules, and donkeys that He created them ‘for you to ride and as adornment.’ Those beneath them are believers of lower degrees.

‘They fasted by day while you ate’ means inwardly that they concealed the secret of the awliya of God that had been taken from them, while others disclosed what should have remained concealed. ‘They stood at night while you slept’ means that they maintained and served the inward da‘wa while others were heedless; night symbolizes the inward and sleep heedlessness. ‘They gave charity while you withheld’ means that they guided those who had gone astray and supplied knowledge, with permission, to those who lacked it, while others withheld authorized benefit. ‘They struggled while you held back’ means that they strove against their souls in what the soul calls them toward but God has prohibited.

This is the inward sense of the report in brief, while its outward meaning is known. Believers are required to practice all of it outwardly and inwardly and to establish both aspects so that they may attain the good of both abodes and the delight of both gardens. They must not neglect any of it, nor cross into what has been

forbidden them. Establish the outward and inward of your religion, O believers, and you will deserve what God has promised for doing so. May God make you among those who preserve, tend, carry, and guard it. Blessings be upon Muhammad His Prophet and the rightly guided Imams from his progeny.

The Eighth Session of Part Three

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God whom eyes do not perceive and thoughts do not encompass, who is present without being contained by place. May God bless Muhammad His Prophet, the best of the messengers, and the pure Imams from his progeny.

Among what follows from the outward obligations and rulings is the saying of the Messenger of God: 'Whoever commits a sin and becomes fearful because of it should perfect his ablution, then go out to an open place on the earth where no one sees him, pray two rak'as, and say: O God, forgive me my such-and-such sin; for that is an expiation.' Outwardly, this is good for one who intends sincere repentance. Inwardly, perfecting ablution is what has already been explained: purification by knowledge. The earth inwardly signifies the hujja, and any place upon it in which prayer is performed represents one of the da'is appointed between the awliya of God and His servants.

Therefore, whoever commits a fault in religion should go to the one to whom his affair has been entrusted, reveal his sin before him, and purify himself by what that teacher gives him of wisdom and by the measures of repentance he prescribes. The two rak'as symbolize his return into the da'wa and his renewed obedience to the rank through whom he approaches God. God says: 'If, when they wronged themselves, they had come to you and asked God's forgiveness and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found God Ever-Returning, Merciful.' God has established intermediaries among His creation as mercy and relief. This concerns sins between the servant and his Lord. As for wrongs committed against other servants, repentance requires restoring their rights and freeing oneself from their claims.

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Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali, peace be upon him, interpreted God's saying, 'Those who guard their prayers,' as referring to the obligatory prayer. He said: whoever performs it at its time, knowing its right and preferring nothing over it, has by it a guarantee from God that He will not punish him; but whoever performs it outside its proper time, without knowing its right and preferring other things over it, his affair is with God—if He wills He forgives him and if He wills He punishes him.

The inward meaning is that prayer has an outward and an inward, and neither suffices without the other. Its inward is the da'wa of truth, and the 'appointed time' of the inward prayer is the time when the Imam of the age rises and establishes his summons. Whoever hastens to him at that time, knows his right, and prefers nothing over him has a security from the Fire. Whoever turns away from the da'wa and enters it only after a delay from the time of the Lord of the age's rising, while not having recognized its right and having preferred something else to it, is left to God's judgment. The same pattern applies to the outward prayer.

A man asked the Messenger of God to pray that God admit him into Paradise. He said: 'Help me on your behalf by abundant prostration.' Prostration outwardly is known, and inwardly it is obedience. Whoever obeys the wali of his age in what he commands and multiplies the 'prostration' of obedience assists the intercession sought for him.

'Ali, peace be upon him, said: 'The five prayers expiate what is between them so long as the major sins are avoided,' and connected this with God's saying: 'Good deeds remove evil deeds; that is a reminder for those

who remember.' Inwardly, the five prayers are the five da'was of the messengers of firm resolve—Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, peace be upon them. Whoever truly adheres to the divinely instituted shari'a of his messenger and fulfills what was laid upon him therein receives expiation for lesser faults between the great obligations, provided he avoids the major prohibitions.

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God says: 'If you avoid the major things you are forbidden, We shall expiate your lesser evils and admit you by a noble entrance.' The major sins are, in this interpretation, the obligations God has made inviolable and the great indecencies He has altogether forbidden. Their comprehensive form is what is taken from a believer under the covenant of the awliya of God. Whoever knowingly violates or abandons what he covenanted upon has entered the major offenses. Lesser faults and minor defects are also to be avoided, and the believer must not treat any of them lightly. If he falls into one without persistence or contempt for God's command, then while maintaining the covenant he may hope for pardon. It has been wisely said: abandoning a sin is easier than seeking repentance from it.

The Messenger of God said: 'The worst of thieves is the one who steals from his prayer.' Outwardly this is the person who diminishes the limits of his prayer and does not complete its bowing, prostration, and other requirements. Inwardly it is one who diminishes what was laid upon him in the covenant of the da'wa, fails to fulfill what he obligated himself to fulfill, or takes away from its duties while still claiming to belong to it.

The Messenger of God also said: 'Whoever does not perfect his ablution, bowing, and prostration—his prayer is khidaj,' that is, deficient and incomplete. Its outward meaning is clear. Inwardly, he has not completed purification from the sins from which he was commanded to purify himself, or he persists in something of them; or he does not obey the wali of his age and the person appointed over him in everything included in the covenant of the da'wa. Even if he fulfills most of what he was charged with, his standing in the da'wa is deficient to the extent of what he leaves undone. The realities of faith are not complete until all the conditions taken under the covenant are fulfilled.

'Ali, peace be upon him, said: 'Prayer is a balance; whoever gives full measure receives full measure.' The inward prayer, the da'wa of truth, is likewise a balance for the one who enters it. Whoever fulfills what was taken from him deserves the promised reward. God says: 'Fulfill My covenant, and I will fulfill your covenant.'

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The Messenger of God said: 'Two light rak'as performed with complete form are better than standing all night.' Complete form in outward prayer means completing the bowing, prostration, standing, sitting, testimony, and all the prescribed limits without diminution. Inwardly it means establishing the obligations of the da'wa and faithfully fulfilling the covenant. One who does this is better than one who spends much time seeking subtle inward interpretations—symbolized by standing at night—while failing to perform the fundamental obligations that were laid upon him. Such a person is like one who spends the night in supererogatory prayer while having neglected the obligatory prayer.

'Ali, peace be upon him, said: 'The one who does not complete his prayer is like a pregnant woman who carries until her delivery approaches and then miscarries: she remains neither pregnant nor the mother of a living child.' Inwardly, the person who takes the covenant of the da'wa but does not complete what was taken from him resembles one who has received wisdom, carried knowledge, and approached the point where its fruit should appear, but then fails to act upon it. He is neither a bearer of knowledge from whom good fruit is expected nor one who has obtained the fruit and reward of acting upon it. The parable is exact for one who fails to complete the covenant, just as outward prayer is incomplete when its required form is not fulfilled.

Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, said that when the worshipper rises in prayer, mercy descends upon him from the horizon of heaven to the earth, the angels surround him, and an angel calls: 'If this worshipper knew what he possesses in prayer, he would never turn away from it.' Inwardly, the responder who enters the da'wa receives wisdom descending from the wali of the age, whose likeness is heaven, through his hujja, whose likeness is the earth. He receives of it according to his rank and worthiness. The angel who calls to him is the person who has been entrusted with his training and guidance, informing him of the excellence of the true da'wa so that, if he knew its worth fully, he would never turn away.

The Messenger of God said: 'The deed most beloved to God is prayer, and it is the last counsel of the prophets.' There is nothing better than for a man to wash, purify himself, perform complete ablution, go out where no one sees him, and bow and prostrate before God. Outwardly, this is known; inwardly it signifies purification from sins and entrance into the da'wa in sincerity and obedience.

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The last counsel of the prophets is prayer because, when a prophet's transfer from this world approaches, he appoints his wasi and commands him to continue the da'wa that the prophet himself maintained during his life. He does not hand the da'wa to another until his own mission has reached completion. Thus the succession of the inward prayer is among the final matters each prophet entrusts.

The instruction to pray where no human eye sees him signifies inwardly acting in a place where none of the people of the mere outward can interfere or look into the secret. Bowing and prostration symbolize acknowledgment and obedience to the wali of command and to the person he appoints over the believer. The saying that the servant is nearest to God in prostration has already been explained: there is no spatial nearness to God; rather, nearness is through righteous action and obedience.

When Iblis sees the believer prostrating he says: 'Woe to me! This one obeyed and I disobeyed; he prostrated and I refused.' Prostration inwardly is obedience. The name Iblis is connected with despair, for he despaired of God's mercy through persistence in disobedience. So too one whose desire overcomes him, whose wretchedness dominates him, and whose sin carries him into persistence without repentance becomes, by that persistence, like one despairing of his Lord's mercy. When such a person sees the obedient and worshipping, he recognizes the salvation they possess and his own loss.

It is also related that when the Muslim enters prayer, God turns His face toward him and appoints an angel to gather the Qur'an from his mouth word by word; when the worshipper turns away, God turns away from him and leaves him to the angel. Inwardly, entering the state of prayer is entering the da'wa of truth. The 'face of God' is His wali through whom the people of each age turn to Him, for God is exalted above the attributes of bodies. God's turning toward the responder is the wali's accepting him into the da'wa. The angel appointed over him is the teacher who has been given authority over his upbringing, understanding, and guidance. Gathering the Qur'an from his mouth means taking from him the covenant and confession concerning the Imam of his age, for the Imam is the living gatherer of what God has required of the people of that age, just as the written Qur'an gathers the commands addressed to them.

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The Qur'an is the likeness of the Imam of the age because God has gathered in him for the people of that age everything by which He has bound them, just as He gathered the outward commands in the written Qur'an and commanded people to follow it. The statement that when the worshipper turns away God turns away from him and leaves him to the angel means that God has commanded His awliya to turn away from one who turns away from them after explanation and proof have been completed. God says: 'Turn away from them,' and:

‘Turn away from them, for you are not blameworthy; but remind, for reminding benefits the believers.’ Yet the awliya, even when they turn away from one who has turned away, do not cease to remind him through intermediaries and through those who have been assigned to care for him. This is the meaning of being left to the angel. Understand, may God grant you understanding and insight and benefit you by what you hear. Blessings be upon Muhammad, the seal of the prophets, and the Imams from his progeny.

The Ninth Session of Part Three

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God whom eyes do not see and hidden thoughts do not encompass. May God bless Muhammad His Prophet, the chosen one of creation, and the pure Imams from his progeny.

What follows from the ta’wil of the Book of the Da‘a’im after the discussion of desirable acts in prayer is the discussion of the times of prayer. Outwardly, the times of prayer are the hours of day and night in which the prayers are performed. Inwardly, the times of prayer—that is, the times of the da‘wa of truth—are the periods in which the wali of each age establishes his summons, whether by himself or by those whom he appoints to establish it.

Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, said: ‘Every prayer has two times, a first and a last, and the first is better. No one should make the last time his regular time; the last was made for the sick, the infirm, and the one who has an excuse. The beginning of the time is God’s good pleasure, while the end of the time is God’s pardon. A man may perform prayer at the later time, yet what he missed of the first time is better for him than his family and wealth.’ Outwardly, one should therefore hasten to prayer at the beginning of its time, though the excused are permitted to delay it. Inwardly, the first time is the period in which the Imam’s da‘wa is first established, and the believer should hasten to enter it. The last time is the later period before that da‘wa is withdrawn or the Imam’s earthly life ends.

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God loves that servants race toward the da‘wa rather than remain behind. He says: ‘The foremost, the foremost—those are the ones brought near.’ No one should deliberately make delay his habit without an excuse, just as the later time of prayer was made for the sick and for one hindered by a valid cause. Inwardly, sickness here may be doubt or weakness; God has extended the duration of the da‘wa so that one who is temporarily unable to reach it may still enter when the hindrance is removed. This is mercy, expansion, and kindness from God toward His servants.

‘The beginning of the time is God’s good pleasure and the end is God’s pardon’ means that whoever hastens to the true da‘wa when it is first established enters under God’s good pleasure. God says of those who pledged allegiance beneath the tree: ‘God was pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you beneath the tree.’ Whoever enters later, after delaying until the end of the time, but does so sincerely and fulfills its obligations, may be pardoned for the delay. God describes later believers as saying: ‘Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith.’

The saying that what a worshipper misses of the first time is better for him than his family and wealth means that a responder who enters the da‘wa only after a delay has lost something of the excellence and knowledge reached by those who preceded him. What he missed by not entering at the first opportunity is more valuable than worldly family and possessions. There are degrees between the beginning and end of the appointed time.

God says: ‘Not equal among you are those who spent and fought before the victory; those are greater in degree than those who spent and fought afterward.’

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Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, said that the first time of the noon prayer is the decline of the sun from the middle of the sky toward the west. The Book of the Da‘a’im describes the outward signs by which this is known. We have already explained that the noon prayer corresponds to Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace. The sun inwardly symbolizes the wali of the age, whether prophet or Imam, and its rising symbolizes his appearance and the beginning of his authority.

The Prophet’s time is like the course of the sun from its rising until its decline. When God perfected through him the religion that He had sent him to establish, He commanded him to establish his wasi. This is signified by the verse revealed on the day he declared the walaya of ‘Ali at Ghadir: ‘Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My blessing upon you, and approved Islam as your religion.’ After fulfilling this, the Prophet inclined toward departure from this world and toward the return prepared for him with God. Between that event and his death were seventy nights. This is represented by the sun’s beginning to decline after seven hours of the day; the number seven is a witness to the combined letters of the names Muhammad and ‘Ali and to the ordered ranks already described.

The time of the afternoon prayer begins after the noon prayer and its intervening sunna; outwardly the two share an extended period. Abu Ja‘far Muhammad ibn ‘Ali, peace be upon him, was once taken to the upper room of Ibrahim. He descended, asked whether the sun had declined, and when told that it had, performed the sunna of noon, then the noon prayer, the sunna after noon, and then the afternoon prayer. Al-Sadiq said that the last time of the afternoon prayer is when the sun becomes yellow.

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The Messenger of God said: ‘Perform the afternoon prayer while the sun is still high, white, and clear,’ meaning before its light alters and weakens. Inwardly, the noon prayer is the da‘wa of Muhammad and the afternoon prayer is the da‘wa of the Qa’im of the Resurrection from his progeny. Because the Qa’im belongs to Muhammad’s dispensation and household, the two prayers share one broad time. The decline of the sun at noon has already been interpreted as the Prophet’s completion of his mission and movement toward his return; the yellowing of the sun at the end of afternoon represents the final stage of the Qa’im’s da‘wa when his worldly state changes as death approaches. With his passing, that form of the da‘wa ends and the creation is gathered, as God has informed.

Al-Sadiq said that the first time of the sunset prayer is when the disk of the sun disappears beneath the western horizon. As already explained, the sunset and night prayers, both belonging to the night, symbolize the inward da‘wa of ta’wil. Its outward historical beginning is after the passing of the Messenger of God, symbolized by the setting of the sun, when his wasi ‘Ali, peace be upon him, stood with the inward interpretation. The Messenger had said that ‘Ali would fight after him concerning the ta’wil of the Qur’an just as the Prophet himself had fought over its revelation. Thus the first major da‘wa of the inward after the Prophet was the da‘wa of ‘Ali.

Al-Sadiq said that the first time of the late-night prayer is when the red twilight in the western horizon disappears, and its last time is midnight. He also said that the night prayer may be prayed whenever one wishes after the prescribed evening prayer, with witr after it. The disappearance of the twilight and the complete darkness of night signify a da‘wa that has become wholly inward, without outward manifestation. The three rak‘as of witr symbolize Muhammad, ‘Ali his wasi, and the Qa’im from their progeny; sitting and

saluting between the first two and the third symbolizes the interval during which the inward da‘wa is concealed.

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The third rak‘a of witr therefore symbolizes al-Mahdi, peace be upon him. The interval marked by sitting and salutation indicates the period between the Messenger and the manifestation of al-Mahdi, during which the Imams observe concealment and taqiyya. The fact that no prayer is performed after witr except the dawn prayer signifies that no Imam should openly establish the final da‘wa before al-Mahdi’s rising.

Reports from the Imams strongly warn against premature uprising. Muhammad ibn ‘Ali, peace be upon him, warned his brother Zayd when Zayd sought to rise openly: ‘The likeness of one from this House who rises before the rising of their Mahdi is like a young bird that leaves its nest before its wings are strong; it can only fall into the hands of children who play with it.’ He warned him not to become the one crucified at the refuse heap of Kufa. He also told a group of his Shi‘a, after narrating the Prophet’s glad tidings concerning al-Mahdi and describing the signs of his appearance, that if anyone from the House called them to rise before those signs appeared, they should not answer him—even if the caller were his own son, pointing to Ja‘far, peace be upon him.

Many reports from the Messenger of God announce al-Mahdi and describe the restoration of religion through him and the destruction of oppression and innovation. Among them are: ‘Al-Mahdi is from my descendants; he completes my affair, revives my sunna, and seeks the blood-right of my Household’; and: ‘Through us God opened the religion and through us He will seal it; through us He rescued you from unbelief and through us He will rescue you from tribulation.’

The two rak‘as of dawn are permitted shortly before actual dawn, but the first time of the dawn prayer itself is when dawn spreads across the eastern horizon; its last time is when the opposite horizon reddens before sunrise. Inwardly, dawn prayer is the da‘wa of al-Mahdi, and its two rak‘as symbolize him and his hujja. The mingling of light and darkness represents his public establishment of both outward and inward after the long night of concealment.

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God says: ‘He is the One who made the night for you to rest in and the day giving sight.’ In the same way, after ‘Ali, peace be upon him, the inward da‘wa remained largely in concealment and stillness until al-Mahdi rose. Only the outward obligations were maintained publicly, without an Imam openly declaring himself and summoning all people to the full inward order.

The two sunna rak‘as before dawn are called ‘the two rak‘as of dawn’ because they belong to the approaching dawn even when performed shortly before it. They symbolize the da‘wa that preceded al-Mahdi and was related to him. Al-Mahdi was one of the two principal figures signified, for he had been the hujja of the Lord of that concealed da‘wa before the command passed to him. After a period of concealment he made his status known as the Mahdi of the community. Thus the two rak‘as may be performed before dawn, corresponding to his hidden relation to the prior da‘wa, but are preferably performed after dawn’s appearance, corresponding to his open manifestation of his own da‘wa and declaration of his station.

The end of dawn prayer when the western horizon reddens points toward the imminent rising of the sun. Inwardly, the state of the Imam who follows al-Mahdi remains only a relatively short period before the greater manifestation represented by the full rising of the sun. Understand these likenesses, O believers, for God says: ‘These are the parables We set forth for people, but none understands them except those who know.’

May God make you among those who understand and benefit by them and establish their outward and inward obligations. Blessings be upon Muhammad His Prophet and the Imams from his progeny.

The Tenth Session of Part Three

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, true in His promise and standing with justice among His servants. May God bless the guides of the community, Muhammad His Prophet and the chosen Imams from his progeny.

What follows from the interpretation of the Book of the Da‘a’im is the saying of Abu Ja‘far and Abu ‘Abd Allah, peace be upon them: ‘Do not perform a supererogatory prayer while an obligatory prayer that you missed remains due; first perform the obligation.’ Abu Ja‘far also said: ‘God does not accept supererogatory acts until the obligatory acts have been performed.’ A man asked him how this applied. He said: ‘If you owed a day from Ramadan, would it be proper to perform a voluntary fast before making it up?’ The man said no. He replied: ‘Prayer is the same.’

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The interpretation is that the obligatory prayers correspond to the natiqs whose obedience and laws were imposed upon the communities to which they were sent. Supererogatory prayers correspond to their wasis. In Arabic a nafila is something given or performed voluntarily after an obligation; it may also mean a grandchild, as in the verse concerning Abraham: ‘We bestowed upon him Isaac, and Jacob as a nafila.’ The Imams are likewise the descendants of the descendants of the Messenger.

The walaya and obedience of the wasis are introduced by the natiqs who establish them and call people to their authority. A natiq does not compel people during his life to accept his wasi by the same outward force with which he may compel submission to his own prophetic authority and law; rather, he identifies the wasi as the one who will possess authority after him, and those who obey and support the wasi during the natiq’s life do so as a voluntary excellence. When the authority passes to the wasi, however, recognition of him becomes part of the obligatory religious order. Whoever then denies him may be opposed just as deniers of the preceding prophetic authority were opposed.

Thus no one may enter the da‘wa of the Imam of the age without first entering the da‘wa of Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, and belonging to his shari‘a. If a person from another religion, or an unbeliever, wishes to enter the Imam’s da‘wa, he must first confess the Messenger of God, believe everything he brought, and enter Islam. He must also confess the prophets and messengers whom Muhammad declared to be true. If he denies even one whom the Prophet affirmed, he cannot properly enter the da‘wa of the Imam until he believes in and confesses them all.

This is the inward meaning of the statement that God does not accept supererogatory prayer before the obligatory prayer. The same order applies outwardly to missed obligations: an obligation that remains due is made up before one busies oneself with voluntary acts. As for the regular sunna prayers connected to an obligatory prayer within its proper time, their inward likeness has already been explained as the acknowledgment of the hujjas before and after the Lord of the age within the ordered covenant.

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Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, commanded delaying the noon prayer slightly in severe heat, because after the sun’s decline people need time to gather. Its inward meaning is that intense heat symbolizes the excuses and afflictions by which people may be hindered from reaching the awliya of God. God says of those who excused

themselves from struggle: ‘They said: Do not go forth in the heat. Say: the Fire of Hell is hotter, if only they understood.’

We have explained that the noon prayer corresponds to the da‘wa of Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, and that every Imam’s da‘wa belongs to and is attributed to his da‘wa because all of it proceeds upon his shari‘a and creed. Delaying the prayer slightly in extreme heat therefore signifies that when an Imam sees that people are hindered from answering by temporary obstacles and excuses, he may delay the open manifestation of the da‘wa until those obstacles lessen, rather than exposing it at a moment when most potential responders would be unable to reach it. His hujjas and da‘is should act similarly when establishing the da‘wa under conditions of danger or obstruction.

Al-Sadiq also said that Friday prayer is performed at the time of the sun’s decline. Friday is the sixth day, and it symbolizes Muhammad, the sixth of the natiqs. God gathered in him the excellence and knowledge of those before him and added to him from His bounty; hence the name Friday, the day of gathering. Friday prayer corresponds to his da‘wa. The da‘wa of every Imam after him proceeds through it, as does the da‘wa of every hujja and appointed caller in the age of an Imam. To pray Friday at the time of the decline means that the Imam and the da‘i establish the outward da‘wa of Muhammad at the beginning of its appointed manifestation, while the delay represented by cooling the prayer signifies delaying the disclosure of the inward until the excuses and obstacles have been removed.

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Al-Sadiq permitted combining noon with afternoon, and sunset with the late-night prayer, during travel, and even in congregational mosques while resident when there is an excuse such as rain, cold, wind, or darkness. The two prayers are joined with one adhan and two iqamas: the adhan and iqama are given for the first prayer, then after it is completed the iqama is given for the second. It is preferable, when combining, to perform the first at the end of its time and the second at the beginning of its time, though performing both in the first time is also sufficient.

The inward meaning follows what has already been explained. Noon corresponds to the da‘wa of Muhammad, and afternoon to the Qa’im of the Resurrection from his progeny. The Qa’im’s da‘wa is from Muhammad’s da‘wa because he belongs to his household, shari‘a, and line. The shared time of noon and afternoon is therefore one continuous religious dispensation, ordinarily separated by the sunna prayer, which symbolizes the hujjas and intermediary ranks.

Likewise sunset and the late-night prayer correspond to stages of the inward da‘wa: sunset to the beginning of its establishment by ‘Ali, peace be upon him, after the Messenger, and the late-night prayer to the continuation of that inward da‘wa through the Imams under concealment and taqiyya. Between them too are supererogatory prayers symbolizing the hujjas and appointed intermediaries.

Combining the prayers when rain, cold, wind, darkness, travel, or another excuse prevents normal performance signifies that when obstacles or conditions of concealment prevent the regular establishment and public identification of the hujjas, their explicit mention may be omitted from the public da‘wa until conditions allow them to be established and manifested. The Imam may bear the affair directly until he is able to appoint and announce his hujja. Thus the da‘wa remains continuous from Muhammad to the final Qa’im, even during periods in which the intermediary ranks cannot be publicly displayed.

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The same principle appears in combining noon and afternoon at ‘Arafat and sunset and night at Muzdalifa during pilgrimage; their particular interpretation will be given in the chapter on pilgrimage, God willing.

Omitting the second adhan when two prayers are joined signifies the omission of a separate public declaration of the da‘wa for the intermediary hujja when circumstances prevent his establishment. The detailed inward interpretation of the adhan and iqama will come later.

It is also related: ‘Whoever misses a prayer should perform it when he remembers it.’ Inwardly, whoever missed a da‘wa that was binding upon him must ‘make it up’ when he comes to remember and understand it by believing in it, confessing it, and acknowledging its rightful bearer. Thus a responder may enter the da‘wa of an Imam while having failed, without a valid impediment, to enter the da‘wa of a previous Imam. He must then confess and affirm the earlier Imam’s authority and da‘wa. The same applies in principle to the prophets and Imams who preceded him, as has already been explained.

A report relates that the Messenger of God once camped in a valley and asked who would keep watch over them during the night. Bilal said that he would. Bilal fell asleep and all the people slept until the heat of the sun awakened them. The Messenger asked, ‘What has happened, Bilal?’ He replied: ‘The same One who took your souls took mine, O Messenger of God.’ The Prophet then said: ‘Move away from this valley in which this heedlessness overtook you, for you are in a valley of Satan.’ They moved, performed ablution, Bilal gave the adhan, they performed the two rak‘as of dawn, and then made up the dawn prayer.

Inwardly, one who misses the da‘wa of al-Mahdi, symbolized by dawn prayer, through the heedlessness cast upon him by the satans—those distant from the awliya of God through denial—must separate himself from them, enter the da‘wa of the wali of his own age, and confess as true the da‘wa of the Imam whom he failed to join, just as a missed prayer is made up after the person awakens.

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Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, said: ‘If a prayer is missed until the time of another prayer enters, and there is ample time, begin with the missed prayer and then perform the prayer whose time is present. But if only enough time remains for the present prayer, begin with it and afterward make up the missed one.’ Inwardly, whoever reaches the da‘wa of a living Imam must not delay entering it. If he failed to join the da‘wa of the Imam before him because that da‘wa had ended or a valid obstacle prevented him, he enters the da‘wa of the present Imam and then confesses and affirms the authority of the one who passed before, according to the principle already given.

Al-Sadiq was asked about a man who forgot the noon prayer until he had prayed two rak‘as of the afternoon prayer. He said: ‘Let him count them as noon and begin the afternoon anew.’ If he had completed the afternoon prayer before remembering noon, he should count what he performed as noon and then pray afternoon. If he forgot sunset until he had prayed two rak‘as of the late-night prayer, he should complete the night prayer and then perform sunset. Asked why the rulings differ, he replied that no prayer is performed after the afternoon prayer, while after the late-night prayer one may perform what one wishes. If one forgets sunset altogether until the night prayer, one performs sunset and then the night prayer.

Its inward meaning follows the correspondence already established: noon is the da‘wa of Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, and afternoon is the da‘wa of the Qa’im of the Resurrection from his progeny. Every Imam who succeeds another enters through and continues the da‘wa of the one before him, except that the final Qa’im has no successor of the same kind after him. His hujja calls to him before his public appearance. Whoever answers the hujja before the Qa’im rises has entered the Qa‘im’s da‘wa and is among the believers; whoever refuses until the Qa’im appears cannot then be benefited by a faith that had not existed before, according to God’s saying: ‘On the day when some signs of your Lord come, no soul’s faith will benefit it if it had not believed before.’

Whoever answers the da‘wa of the Qa’im but had not properly confessed the da‘wa of Muhammad must first establish that confession, because the later da‘wa is not separate from the earlier one; it is one continuous truth. Likewise, whoever enters the da‘wa of an Imam while having failed to recognize the Imam before him must affirm the preceding Imam and then continue under the living Imam. The Imams also taught that a prayer performed before its time must be repeated and does not suffice. Inwardly, one may not take upon oneself the da‘wa of an Imam whose appointed time has not yet arrived and whose predecessor’s da‘wa has not yet been completed. The ordered times of the outward prayer therefore preserve the ordered succession of the inward da‘wa.

Part Four of the Book of the Training of the Believers in the Limits of the Inner Knowledge of Religion

The First Session of Part Four

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, who has judged among the servants in His wisdom and apportioned among them according to His justice. May God bless the best of His servants, Muhammad, His Messenger, and the Imams from his descendants.

What follows continues what has preceded in this chapter of the ta'wil of what is in the Book of the Pillars of Islam.

Concerning the call to prayer and the iqama: the inner interpretation of the call and the iqama is the summons to the true da'wa. Its likeness, as has already been explained, is the outward prayer to which one is summoned by the call. Thus its inner reality is the true da'wa to which the da'is summon, just as the muezzins summon people to the outward prayer. This is the general principle in the interpretation of the call to prayer.

At the opening of the discussion in the Book of the Pillars of Islam it is related from 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, peace be upon him, that he was asked about the claim of the common people that the reason for the institution of the adhan was a dream seen by a man of the Ansar, whom they say was 'Abd Allah ibn Zayd, who informed the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, and that the Prophet then ordered the adhan. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn became angry at this and said, in substance: Revelation descends upon your Prophet, yet you claim that he took the adhan from 'Abd Allah ibn Zayd! The adhan is the face of your religion. He related from his father, from 'Ali, peace be upon him, that God sent down an angel when the Messenger of God was taken on the Night Journey. He mentioned the report of the Ascension at length and said that God sent an angel such as had not been seen in heaven before that time or after it, and the angel gave the adhan and then the iqama. Gabriel said to the Prophet, “O Muhammad, this is how the call is made for the prayers.” Thus the Master of the Worshippers, 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, rejected the statement of those who said that the beginning of the adhan came from a dream seen by one of the Ansar.

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They claimed that 'Abd Allah ibn Zayd saw in a dream a man giving the call to prayer, and that he told the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, of it. They further claimed that another man agreed with him concerning the wording of the call, and that the Messenger of God approved it and ordered Bilal to call the people by it. They said this in order to establish opinion and personal approval as a principle in the religion of God. But 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, peace be upon him, declared that the adhan is the face of the religion, because it is the beginning of the summons to it and the means by which attention is drawn to it.

The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, said: “Prayer is the face of your religion; prayer is the pillar of religion; and there is no share in Islam for one who abandons prayer.” This makes it obligatory to establish both its outward and its inward dimensions and all of their limits. The outward adhan is

among the limits of the outward prayer, and its inward meaning is among the limits of the inward prayer, namely the true da'wa.

It is also related from al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, that in the time of the Messenger of God the words “Come to the best of works” were part of the adhan, but afterward they were removed from it. In the Book of the Pillars we have mentioned the pretext by which those responsible justified removing them, and their argument and the argument of those who followed them. When we come to the detailed form of the adhan we shall, God willing, explain why those words belong to it.

The Messenger of God also said that if people knew the merit in certain acts they would cast lots for them: the adhan, going early to the Friday prayer, and the first row. The interpretation is that the adhan, outwardly, is the proclamation and summons to the outward prayer; inwardly it is the proclamation and summons to the true da'wa. Both have great merit and reward for those who perform them sincerely. Going early to the Friday prayer is like hastening to the da'wa of Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, and after him to the da'wa of the Imams from his progeny. Their da'wa is the da'wa of the Messenger, for they summon to his law and to the reviving of his sunna which the people of falsehood seek to efface.

The first row is like those who are foremost in answering the true da'wa. Just as those who reach the mosque first have the first row and one is forbidden to step over people to seize it, so in the da'wa rank belongs according to precedence. All of this, outwardly and inwardly, is commended, and its merit and reward are great.

The Messenger of God said that the muezzins will be raised on the Day of Resurrection with the longest necks among the people, proclaiming the testimony that there is no god but God. In the Book of the Pillars it is explained that the length of their necks means their looking expectantly toward the mercy of their Lord, fearless because of the goodness of their state, unlike the condition of the guilty whom God describes as lowering their heads before their Lord.

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In the inner interpretation, necks signify the outward aspect, because the neck is manifest and not concealed. An example of this usage is the account of Solomon: “When, in the evening, the standing, swift horses were displayed before him, he said, ‘Indeed I preferred the love of good things to the remembrance of my Lord until they were hidden by the veil. Bring them back to me.’ Then he began to stroke the legs and necks.” The common people have claimed that Solomon was distracted by his horses until the sun set and the afternoon prayer was lost to him, so that he struck the horses’ necks and hamstrung them. Such an interpretation is false and would ascribe to one of God’s friends an act of corruption against animals that had committed no sin.

Matters such as this must be understood through both their outward form and their inward meaning. Sometimes a report intends only the outward sense; sometimes it intends an inward sense expressed through an outward image. This is well known in Arabic speech and in the language of the people of knowledge, who use one thing as a figure for another and strike similitudes by one thing for another. The Qur'an itself contains many examples of this. God says to His Prophet not to move his tongue hastily with the revelation, for God undertakes its gathering and recitation. He also says concerning Solomon that the “standing horses” were shown to him. Their standing with one leg raised and the tip of the hoof touching the ground is a known description in Arabic.

In the inner interpretation these horses are the senior da'is who stand within the limit set by their Imam and his Hujja. Solomon’s reviewing them means his examining what they had conveyed in the concealed da'wa, testing their reports concerning what they had transmitted from him.

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When those da'is were presented to Solomon and he heard what they had transmitted from him in the concealed da'wa, he approved it and was pleased with what he heard from them. Then, after they had been withdrawn behind the veil, he said in meaning that he had loved the good represented by them because it was connected with remembrance of his Lord. The horses in the report are thus a similitude of the bearers of the da'wa. The Messenger of God said, “Good is bound in the forelocks of horses until the Day of Resurrection.” Solomon’s

being occupied with their good means his concern with what they had transmitted of knowledge and interpretation, not his neglect of the remembrance of God.

His words “Bring them back to me” mean that those Hujjas were returned to him. “Then he began to stroke the legs and necks” signifies that he refined them and purified them through knowledge and wisdom and increased them in recognition when he was satisfied with their conduct. In Arabic, wiping and stroking can signify removing harm and impurity. The Messiah was called al-Masih because he was purified of every fault; one who adorns and improves another can likewise be spoken of with this root. People also say that a man “wipes” people when he treats them with knowledge and wisdom and improves their condition.

The legs signify the inward aspect, because they are concealed, as in the verse “On the day when the shin shall be uncovered,” that is, when the hidden matter is disclosed at the rising of the Resurrection. The necks signify the outward aspect because they are visible. Thus the outward and inward qualities of the da'is were corrected and refined.

Accordingly, the muezzins in the outward sense are those who uphold the right of the outward adhan and publicly proclaim it. The muezzins in the inward sense are the da'is of the truth who uphold the right of the summons according to their knowledge of the inward reality. They are, through this, those who stand most upright in the outward religion as well, and upon that state they will be raised.

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This is the interpretation of the statement that their necks will be long on the Day of Resurrection: they will have stood firmly in the manifest aspect of their religion in this world. Whoever among the outward or inward muezzins is not like this does not fall under the praise of the report; the praise concerns those among them whose conduct is virtuous and whose outward and inward states are complete.

After the Messenger of God had mentioned the merit of the adhan, he was asked whether his community might fight one another with swords to obtain its merit. He replied that this would not happen, and that the task would pass to the weak among them. The interpretation is that, outwardly, those who regularly undertake the adhan are often from among the weak and humble people. Likewise, in periods of fear and concealment the hidden true da'wa has commonly been undertaken by weak and obscure men, so that they may mingle with people and conceal themselves among them. This was the state of the da'wa until God manifested it through the appearance of the Mahdi of the Imams, the one who tore away the covering of darkness.

The Prophet’s foretelling of this weakness points to the periods in which the people of the true da'wa would conceal themselves and be regarded as insignificant. He said in another report, “The believer is weak in himself but strong in his religion,” and it is also reported that many a weak, dusty man in worn garments, if he were to swear by God, would have his oath fulfilled. Such was often the state of the friends of God among the communities, except when God strengthened one of them to aid His religion and punish His enemies.

The outward show of force and harshness in the world is commonly found among tyrants and unbelievers, because this world is their temporary abode and place of enjoyment. God describes them as stronger in power and more numerous in wealth and children. The friends of God and their followers have therefore often been counted among the weak in this world. Yet God strengthens whom He wills among them and makes them prevail over His enemies, sometimes by proof and sometimes by outward victory. Some messengers were sent bearing the sword, while others were sent in weakness and concealment. Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, remained for a period in weakness and then God supported him through jihad, strengthened him against his enemies, and made the religion manifest through him.

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God describes the believers as humble toward the believers and mighty against the unbelievers. Thus the da'is to the inward prayer, which is the true da'wa, were described as weak because of their condition of concealment, even though in the religion itself they were strong. The same principle applies to those who summon to the outward prayer.

Understand, O believers, what God has caused you to benefit from, and may He make you among those who act upon what they hear. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets, and upon the Imams from his pure progeny.

The Second Session of Part Four

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, who is not encompassed by imaginations that they might describe Him, nor perceived by the senses that they might define Him. May God bless Muhammad, the best of His creation, and the chosen guiding Imams from his progeny.

What follows continues what has been read of the ta'wil of the Book of the Pillars of Islam.

It is related from 'Ali, peace be upon him, that he said, “There was nothing concerning which I wished more that I had asked the Messenger of God than the adhan for al-Hasan and al-Husayn.” Its interpretation is that he wished the Messenger of God had publicly summoned people to the authority of al-Hasan and al-Husayn and explicitly designated them to the Imamate after him, just as the Prophet had summoned people to the walaya of 'Ali and explicitly designated him on the Day of Ghadir Khumm and on other occasions. On that day he had the people called together by the proclamation that the prayer was assembling, until they gathered, and then he stood among them and proclaimed 'Ali’s walaya. Although the Prophet had already entrusted 'Ali with knowledge of how the Imamate would pass through his progeny, 'Ali wished that the Prophet had made the matter of al-Hasan and al-Husayn equally explicit to the people, so as to reinforce the Imamate of the Imams from his progeny. This public proclamation is the “adhan” which he wished to have heard from the Messenger of God. God says: “And a proclamation from God and His Messenger to the people on the day of the greater pilgrimage that God is free of obligation to the polytheists, and so is His Messenger,” meaning a public announcement from God and His Messenger.

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The word adhan itself means public notification and proclamation. In this sense, the public designation of the Imams would have been an “adhan” to the people concerning them. 'Ali did not lack knowledge of their rank; rather, he desired a further public proof against those who would oppose them.

The same interpretive principle applies to the several phrases of the call to prayer. “God is greater” indicates recognition that God is above all limitation, while the testimony that there is no god but God declares His absolute unity. The testimony that Muhammad is the Messenger of God signifies acceptance of the Natiq and of the revealed law he brought. The summons “Come to prayer” is the summons to obedience and to the true da'wa; “Come to success” calls to the salvation that lies in responding to it; and “Come to the best of works” indicates that this response is the best of deeds.

The Messenger of God said, “Prayer is the pillar of religion,” “There is no share in Islam for one who abandons prayer,” and that prayer is the first of a person’s deeds to be examined: if it is sound, the rest of the deeds will be considered, and if it is unsound, the rest will not be considered. These reports concern both the outward prayer and its inward reality, the da'wa. The words “Come to the best of works” were therefore among the adhan, and whoever removed them removed a declaration that response to the true summons is the best of works and thereby harmed his own striving.

In the iqama the words “The prayer has arisen” are repeated. Their meaning is that the da'wa of the Natiq has been established in his age and that the da'wa of the Imam has been established in his time; on the inward plane it also announces the establishment of the Hujja’s da'wa. Thus the outward and inward calls each have their proper station.

At the close of the adhan the testimony “There is no god but God” is repeated twice, while at the close of the iqama it is said once. The adhan is the similitude of the summons of the Natiq and his Hujja together, while the iqama is the similitude of the Hujja’s particular summons. The two testimonies therefore correspond to the two ranks, whereas the single testimony in the iqama corresponds to the one whose call it particularly represents.

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The call and the iqama thus both proclaim God's unity, while denying divinity to the Natiq, the Wasi, the Imam, and the Hujja, all of whom are servants and creatures under the lordship of God. This safeguards the true doctrine against exaggeration concerning the holders of these ranks.

It is related from 'Ali that the muezzin faces the qibla during the adhan and iqama, but when he says "Come to prayer" and "Come to success" he turns his face to the right and left. The muezzin is the similitude of the da'i to the lord of his age; the qibla is the similitude of the Lord of the Age. Facing the qibla therefore signifies directing the summons toward the Imam and making him the object to whom the da'wa points. Turning right and left when saying "Come to prayer" and "Come to success" signifies turning from the Imam toward the people to summon them to him.

Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, said that the adhan is to be recited deliberately, while the iqama is to be recited quickly. The interpretation is that the adhan represents the general summons to the Natiq, which is explained openly and at length, whereas the iqama represents the more particular summons to the Hujja. Those who have already accepted the Natiq can be addressed concerning the Hujja more quickly and through allusion. Thus the outward difference in recitation is a sign of the inward difference between the two calls.

It is also required that there be an interval between the adhan and the iqama. Its interpretation is that there is necessarily an interval and a period between the da'wa of the Natiq and the establishment of the Hujja's particular da'wa. The Hujja's call is established only after the Natiq's call has taken root and the circumstances for establishing the Hujja have become suitable.

It is related that when the Messenger of God heard the muezzin he repeated his words. But when the muezzin said "Come to prayer," "Come to success," and "Come to the best of works," he said, "There is no power and no strength except through God." The takbir in the call signifies recognition of the Natiq and his Hujja beneath God's absolute greatness, and the testimony of unity declares that God is higher, greater, and more majestic than all of them.

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The Messenger of God therefore repeated the words of the call as an affirmation and sincere confession. When he heard the summons directed toward himself and toward obedience - "Come to prayer, come to success, come to the best of works" - he said, "There is no power and no strength except through God," acknowledging that no one can respond to that summons except by God's power and enabling grace.

Understand the similitudes of your religion and its interpretation. May God increase you in knowledge and benefit you by it. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, and upon the righteous Imams from his progeny.

The Third Session of Part Four

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, exalted above being seen as a bounded person and transcending all corporeal form. May God bless the one He chose for the message and those whom He honored afterward with the Imamate: Muhammad, the master of the prophets; 'Ali, his Wasi, the best of the successors; and the noble Imams from their progeny.

What follows is from the ta'wil of the Book of the Pillars of Islam. The Messenger of God used to say when the iqama was recited: "O God, Lord of this complete call and of the prayer now established, grant Muhammad his request, raise him to the lofty degree and the means of approach, and accept his intercession for his community." The interpretation follows what has already been explained: prayer is the outward form of the da'wa and the da'wa is the inward reality of prayer. Thus "Lord of the complete call" means the complete summons to God and to the authority of His Wasi, while "the established prayer" means its establishment both outwardly and inwardly.

It is related from 'Ali that three people display helplessness if they fail to do what is required: a man who hears the muezzin but does not repeat what he says; a man who encounters a funeral but does not greet its people and does not help carry the bier; and a man who finds the Imam prostrating but neither magnifies God nor prostrates with him. The first of these has already been interpreted in relation to the adhan: repeating its words signifies accepting the proclamation of God's unity, the mission of His Messenger, and the obligations of the da'wa.

The Messenger of God instructed that when the muezzin says "God is greater," one should say, "God is greater"; when he testifies that there is no god but God, one should make the same testimony; when he testifies that Muhammad is the Messenger of God, one should affirm the same; and when he says, "The prayer has arisen," one should say, "O God, establish it, perpetuate it, and make me among the best of its people."

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When the muezzin has said "The prayer has arisen," those present are to cease ordinary speech and prepare for prayer. The inward interpretation is that the adhan, as already stated, is the summons to the Imam's da'wa, while the iqama is the summons to the Hujja's inward da'wa. When that inward summons has been made to the respondents, they must listen attentively to the da'i and not occupy themselves with other speech. If the Imam has not yet come forth to lead the outward prayer, there is no harm in some of them speaking to arrange their rows; inwardly this signifies the ordering of ranks before the commencement of instruction.

It is also related that there is no harm in melodic beauty in the adhan provided the muezzin pronounces the letters clearly and gives full articulation to the testimonies. The inward interpretation is that the da'i must not obscure the teaching for those whom he summons. He must explain clearly what he calls them to, making his speech intelligible, ordered, and well delivered. The pleasing cadence signifies excellence in expression, not distortion of the meaning.

Whoever gives the adhan and the iqama and then prays will, it is said, have rows of angels praying behind him; and if he gives only the iqama there will still be angels with him. In the inward meaning, one who summons people both to the outward and to the inward dimensions of the true da'wa will have respondents from both classes, while one whose task is only the inward summons will have those appropriate to that rank.

There must in particular be both an adhan and an iqama for the dawn and sunset prayers. We have already explained that the sunset prayer is the similitude of the beginning of the inward da'wa, while the dawn prayer is the similitude of the da'wa of the Mahdi, peace be upon him. At the beginning of the inward da'wa it must be made clear that the servants are required to uphold both the outward and the inward, lest those who are called to the inward alone imagine that the outward obligations have fallen away from them. The same clarification is required in the da'wa of the Mahdi and of the Imams from his progeny.

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It is related from 'Ali that a man may pray by himself without adhan or iqama. Its interpretation is that a person who remembers his own covenant with God and keeps what has become obligatory upon him need not summon another person unless he is authorized to do so. Yet if he admonishes and reminds his brothers of the truth, there is good and reward in that, just as a person who prays alone may give the adhan and iqama voluntarily even though they are not obligatory upon him. God says, "They enjoin one another to truth and enjoin one another to patience."

It is also related that the adhan is to be given only when the proper time has arrived. Al-Sadiq said that there is no harm in giving the dawn call shortly before the break of day, although giving it at the proper time is better. The inward interpretation is that no one should publicly summon to an Imam before the Imamate has come to him. Yet there was license to announce beforehand the coming of the Mahdi, because his advent had been promised and glad tidings had been given of it. Nevertheless, his actual da'wa after the command had become his was better and more complete than what had preceded it, for once he had arisen the duty was to respond to him.

The reports concerning Bilal and the adhan also show that the one who calls people outwardly is not necessarily the one who leads them in prayer. Likewise, in the inward da'wa, a man may be authorized to summon

respondents while the taking of their covenant, their formal instruction, and the governing of their rank remain with the one placed above him.

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It is related from 'Ali that there is no harm in speaking during the adhan and iqama. Ja'far ibn Muhammad said likewise, except that after the words “The prayer has arisen” unnecessary speech should cease, save for some necessity. The inward interpretation is that one who is engaged in summoning to the true da'wa should not break off his summons out of preference for some other matter. If necessity requires him to speak of something else, there is no blame upon him, but he should not deliberately abandon the da'wa for it.

Al-Sadiq said that there is no harm if a man gives the adhan without ritual purity, although purity is better; but he should not give the iqama except in a state of purity. We have already explained that the states requiring purification signify sins from which repentance is required. A person who calls to the true da'wa should not be persisting in what the da'wa itself forbids. If he calls while having a fault from which he can repent, his call may still be valid, but it is better that repentance precede his summons. As for the particular inward da'wa, signified by the iqama and occurring immediately before entry into prayer, its bearer should be purified of sins just as the one who gives the iqama outwardly should be ritually pure.

It is also said that the muezzin should not call while seated except when ill or mounted, and that he should not give the iqama except standing on the ground unless prevented by an incapacity. Its interpretation is that one should not summon people to the true da'wa while himself sitting apart from it and refusing to enter it, except when some legitimate impediment excuses his condition. The mounted person signifies one who is being borne in the da'wa by his da'i along the path of truth.

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It is related from 'Ali that there is no harm in one person giving the adhan for another. Its interpretation is that one da'i may summon to the outward aspect of the true da'wa and another to its inward aspect according to their authorization.

It is also said that women are not required to give the adhan. As has been explained, women in the inner interpretation signify those who receive knowledge, the mustafids. The mustafid is not charged to summon others to what he himself has only recently received, unless permission has been given. If a woman does give the adhan and iqama outwardly there is no harm; inwardly, if a receiver repeats what he has learned for his own confirmation, that is acceptable, but he is not thereby authorized to make a public summons to others.

A report from Ja'far ibn Muhammad concerns a man who hears part of an adhan, or the afternoon adhan when it has reached him, and whether what he has already heard suffices him. The inward meaning is that one who has received and preserved the summons to the true da'wa and has accepted what it requires need not repeat the same summons to himself. But he may not, merely because he has understood it, assume authority to summon others unless that authority has been granted to him.

Another report speaks about payment for the adhan. Payment taken by a muezzin from the people merely for calling them to what is an obligation may be illicit gain. Likewise, one who calls people to the true da'wa should not make his benefit from them the motive of his summons. Counsel, commanding what is right, and enjoining truth and piety are obligations among believers, and one does not sell what has been imposed as an obligation. There is, however, no harm if the Imam supports a person whom he has appointed to this service from the lawful revenues which may be expended for such purposes.

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There is another inward aspect to this ruling: a person who summons people to the true da'wa should not himself be one who needs to learn from those whom he summons what the true da'wa requires. It is blameworthy for a man to call others to good while acting contrary to it, or to forbid evil while practicing it. Thus both the outward rule and its inward meaning command integrity between the summons and the conduct of the summoner.

Understand, O believers, what you have been commanded to establish outwardly and inwardly. May God aid you in doing so. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, and upon the Imams from his progeny.

The Fourth Session of Part Four

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, whom times do not encompass so that ages should pass over Him, and whom directions do not surround so that places should contain Him. May God bless Muhammad, the Messenger and Imam of the believers, and the chosen Imams from his progeny.

What follows from the interpretation of the Book of the Da'a'im is the saying of 'Ali, peace be upon him: whoever hears the call to prayer while he is in the mosque and then leaves it is a hypocrite, except for a man who intends to return or one who is without ritual purity and goes out to purify himself. Outwardly the ruling is plain. Inwardly, the mosque signifies the assembly of the true da'wa, where believers gather to hear wisdom and to have the covenant of the Imams confirmed upon them. Whoever reaches such an assembly and then leaves it out of aversion is like a hypocrite, unless he leaves for a valid necessity while intending to return, or because he must remove from himself a fault from which purification is required.

It is also transmitted that the muezzin should be the most sincere in counsel among the people, the strongest in religion, and the clearest in speech. Since the muezzin inwardly signifies the person authorized to summon people to the true da'wa, he must be eloquent in the language of those whom he addresses, knowledgeable in the lawful and unlawful and in the limits of religion, and capable of making clear the outward and inward matters to which he calls.

Ja'far ibn Muhammad, peace be upon him, said that there is no adhan for a voluntary prayer. This accords with what has already been explained: the adhan signifies the public summons to the manifest da'wa, whereas the voluntary prayer signifies a subsidiary act that does not require such a general proclamation.

He also said that there is no harm in the adhan of a blind man if he knows the time correctly; Ibn Umm Maktum used to give the adhan for the Prophet while blind. Inwardly, blindness signifies one who has not attained direct vision of the hidden reality; if he has nevertheless been correctly guided and knows what he has been authorized to convey, he may guide another to that same truth.

'Ali once saw a tall minaret and ordered that it be lowered, for a muezzin should not be raised so high that he can look into people’s private quarters. Outwardly this protects privacy; inwardly it forbids looking into concealed sciences and hidden matters for which one has not received permission.

The Messenger of God also ordered that the adhan be spoken in the right ear of a newborn and the iqama in the left, and this was done for al-Hasan and al-Husayn. The newborn inwardly signifies the newly admitted respondent. The adhan signifies establishing him upon the outward declaration of the true call, and the iqama signifies establishing him upon its inward covenant, so that the testimony of divine unity and sincere allegiance may protect him from deviation.

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The newborn respondent is therefore taught first the confession and the manifest principles by which the true da'wa is known, and then the inward obligations that arise from the covenant. The two ears receive the two proclamations just as the believer receives the outward and inward aspects of the religion.

The Messenger of God said: when the ghilan trouble you, give the call to prayer. The Arabs used the word ghilan for beings or sorcerous apparitions that mislead a traveler from his road. Inwardly they signify those who departed from the inward truth after knowing something of it, cast off the restraint of religion, declared lawful what had been forbidden, and confused truth with falsehood by twisting words from their proper places. They mislead those who listen to them from the straight path. The remedy is to renew the summons of the true da'wa, just as the outward adhan restores the traveler’s direction and repels fear.

The discussion then turns to mosques. Outwardly, mosques are the houses in which people gather for prayer, and they differ in rank. The Sacred Mosque signifies the Lord of the Age, whether prophet or Imam. Just as people are commanded to journey to the Sacred Mosque from every region, the people of every horizon are obligated to turn to the wali of their age. The mosque of the Messenger signifies the Hujja. The mosque of Jerusalem signifies his Gate, the greatest of the naqibs and the Gate of the Gates. The congregational mosques of the cities signify the great naqibs and senior da'is, while the smaller tribal and neighborhood mosques signify subordinate da'is according to their ranks.

God says of such houses that He has permitted them to be raised and His name to be remembered in them, and describes men whom neither trade nor sale distracts from remembering God, establishing prayer, and giving what is due. Outwardly these verses include the houses of worship; inwardly they include the assemblies and persons through whom remembrance, knowledge, and the true da'wa are maintained.

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'Ali, peace be upon him, said: “There is no prayer for the neighbor of the mosque except in the mosque, unless he has an excuse or an illness.” When asked who is the neighbor of the mosque, he replied: “Whoever hears the call.” Inwardly, one who hears the summons of the true da'wa is not excused from responding to the authorized da'i unless a genuine impediment prevents him. If prevented, he preserves for himself the limits already known to him—walaya, the obligations God has imposed, and avoidance of what He has forbidden—until the impediment is removed and he can return to the assembly.

The Messenger of God said that one prayer in the Sacred Mosque equals one hundred thousand prayers, one in the mosque of Medina ten thousand, one in the mosque of Jerusalem one thousand, one in the great congregational mosque one hundred, one in a tribal mosque twenty-five, one in a market mosque twelve, and a man’s prayer alone in his house counts as one. The outward report states differing merits. Inwardly, the increase corresponds to the rank of the source from whom knowledge and the covenant are received: the nearer the recipient is to the highest authorized limits, the greater the merit and strength of what he receives.

Thus the Sacred Mosque corresponds to the Lord of the Age, the mosque of Medina to his Hujja, Jerusalem to the Gate, the city mosques to the senior da'is, and the smaller mosques to lesser da'is. A reminder or admonition given outside an established assembly has its value, but not the rank of knowledge received in the properly ordered da'wa.

The author reminds the believers that God has favored them by placing over them a wali and those authorized by him to instruct, nurture, and establish the da'wa. They are therefore to recognize the greatness of this favor and thank God for it.

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The Messenger of God said that remaining in the mosque while waiting for the prayer is worship, and that whoever makes the Qur'an his discourse and the mosque his home is built by God a station in Paradise. 'Ali, peace be upon him, said that waiting from one prayer to another is better than guarding a frontier. Outwardly this praises remaining in the mosque for prayer, knowledge, and remembrance. Inwardly it signifies remaining close to the assembly of one’s da'i, taking knowledge from him and awaiting further instruction.

It is also reported that the mosque longs for a person accustomed to frequent it when he is absent, and rejoices at his return as one friend rejoices at the return of another. This is an example of the figurative speech used in revelation and tradition. A building of stone does not literally feel longing; the inward referent is the da'i whose assembly the mosque represents. A virtuous da'i misses the believers who habitually receive instruction from him and rejoices when they return.

The text therefore distinguishes reports that are commands and prohibitions, which necessarily possess an outward obligation and an inward correspondence, from reports that are parables or descriptions, where the intended sense may be primarily inward. God strikes similitudes for people, but only those with knowledge understand them.

The believer is urged to understand what God has opened to him of these similitudes, to give thanks for the knowledge granted, and to preserve both the outward command and its inward truth.

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The author completes the discussion by emphasizing that the life and "building" of a mosque is the presence of worshippers and the remembrance of God, while the life of its inward counterpart is the presence of believers, the transmission of wisdom, and obedience to the divine hierarchy. To neglect or corrupt such an assembly is therefore a grave loss, while maintaining it is among the works by which religion is preserved.

He invokes blessing upon Muhammad and the truthful Imams from his pure progeny and closes the session with prayer that the believers be among those who understand the knowledge taught to them and give thanks for it.

The Fifth Session of Part Four

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, the One who is not one by numerical counting, the Mighty who is not described as a body. May God bless Muhammad, by whom every rightly guided person is guided from error, and the guided Imams from his family.

What follows continues the interpretation of mosques. 'Ali, peace be upon him, said: "Sitting in mosques is the monasticism of the Arabs; the believer's sitting place is his mosque and his hermitage is his house." Outwardly, this encourages sitting in mosques for prayer, waiting for prayer, seeking knowledge, and remaining at home rather than roaming in unlawful pursuits. Inwardly, it signifies the believer's attachment to the assembly of his da'i, where he receives knowledge and benefit; that assembly is, in this sense, his spiritual home.

The Messenger of God said: "Keep from your mosques your raised voices, your buying and selling, and your weapons; perfume them every seven days and establish places of purification in them." Outwardly these are rules of respect for the mosque. Inwardly, "raising the voice" includes a respondent elevating his own word above that of his da'i, claiming to know more, boasting of rank, or disputing in a manner that expresses superiority. God forbade believers to raise their voices above the voice of the Prophet; the same principle of respect applies to every authorized rank beneath him.

A teacher may raise his voice enough to make the teaching clear, but a respondent should not use loudness as a form of contention against one above him in rank.

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The prohibition of buying and selling in mosques means outwardly that mosques are not to be turned into marketplaces. Inwardly, it prohibits respondents from occupying the assembly of wisdom with mutual trading in knowledge among themselves while the authorized instructor is teaching. They have come to listen to what he gives them, to attend carefully, and to remain silent when the divine teaching is recited, as God says: "When the Qur'an is recited, listen to it and be silent."

Weapons are likewise kept from the mosque when their presence would cause harm. Inwardly, the believer does not enter the assembly armed with contentious arguments and hostile disputation against the people of the da'wa. The mosque is a place for remembrance, not quarrelling, rivalry, or harm.

The instruction to perfume and clean the mosques is outwardly literal. Inwardly, the assembly of the da'wa is to be purified from corrupt speech, suspicion, rancor, and every spiritual impurity that would offend those present. The da'i and respondents should preserve the dignity of the place and the knowledge given there.

The text also speaks of placing water and facilities for purification near mosques. Inwardly, knowledge that cleanses faults and teaches repentance must be available to those who approach the da'wa, so that they do not enter its deeper instruction while persisting knowingly in impurities of conduct.

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A weapon may be brought into a mosque only when secured so that it does not harm anyone; an unsheathed or dangerous weapon is not to be carried among the worshippers. Likewise, one who brings forceful argument or knowledge into an assembly must use it under discipline and not as a means of injuring believers.

The outward places of ablution and purification are kept so that one who needs purification can cleanse himself before prayer. Inwardly, the respondents are taught what they need in order to purify themselves through repentance, correction, and knowledge before receiving what belongs to the higher assembly.

The text disapproves spitting or leaving filth in the mosque, and directs that any such impurity be buried or removed. The inward counterpart is corrupt speech or behavior arising among those present in an assembly of wisdom. If a respondent commits such an error, he should not display or spread it among his companions. He should remove it through correction and repentance and not allow it to remain as a source of corruption.

Likewise the mosque is said to be distressed by filth. This does not mean that stone and timber literally feel pain; rather, it is another parable for the da'i, whose inward assembly the mosque represents. The da'i is grieved by corruption, disorder, and indecent conduct among the respondents, and seeks to remove them from his gathering.

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The Messenger of God prohibited carrying out legal punishments in mosques, raising voices there, reciting lost-property announcements, drawing swords, shooting arrows, buying and selling, and similar acts. Outwardly, each prohibition preserves the sanctity and safety of the place. Inwardly, the authorized instructor does not turn the assembly of wisdom itself into a place of humiliating punishment or public contention. If a respondent needs correction, he may be admonished appropriately, but the purpose of the assembly remains instruction and remembrance.

'Ali, peace be upon him, said: “Keep your Jews, your Christians, and your children away from your mosques,” and in another transmission, “your Sabaeans, your insane, and others,” with a warning of degradation if the sanctity of the mosque is violated. Outwardly, the report concerns those not entitled to enter the mosque in the condition described. Inwardly, it signifies that people who remain fixed in beliefs hostile or alien to the covenant are not to be admitted to the concealed assembly while they persist in those states.

Those who merely wish to play with the da'wa, those incapable of understanding what is said, and those who have not renounced a contrary allegiance are not given access to hidden wisdom. The prohibition is not based on bodily identity but on the inward condition symbolized by the outward categories in the interpretation.

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The author explains that the term Sabaean can signify one who leaves one religion and enters another. The early Arabs said of a person who entered Islam that he had “Sabaeanized,” meaning that he had left his former religion. In the inward interpretation, a person who has left the true da'wa after entering it, or who remains attached to a hostile doctrine, is not to be admitted again to the concealed assembly until he repents and returns to the required allegiance.

The text then uses reports comparing certain deviant tendencies within the Muslim community to Jews or Christians. Such comparisons are similitudes, not assertions that those people literally belong to another religion. Those who diminish the rank God established for 'Ali and the Imams are compared to the Jews who diminished Jesus; those who exaggerate 'Ali beyond the rank of servant and wali are compared to Christians who exaggerated concerning Jesus. The correct path is neither diminution nor divinization, but recognition of the rank God and His Messenger established.

Likewise, those who depart from the true call after entering it are likened to Sabaeans. Those who approach the concealed assembly merely for play or curiosity are like children who enter a mosque only to play. The ignorant who cannot understand the teaching are not burdened with what they cannot comprehend until they are prepared.

God says, “The polytheists are unclean, so let them not approach the Sacred Mosque.” Inwardly, one who joins the walaya of another to the walaya of the rightful Imam while persisting in that association is not admitted to the inward sanctuary until he renounces it. The author exhorts the believers to understand these inward limits while also establishing the outward commands.

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The discussion concludes by warning against both deficiency and excess concerning the friends of God. Whoever lowers them beneath the divinely established station denies God’s appointment; whoever raises them to divinity or prophethood beyond what God assigned commits another falsehood. Both errors corrupt the balance of the true da'wa.

The believer is to preserve the outward sanctity of mosques and the inward sanctity of the assemblies they signify, allowing access to hidden knowledge only according to authorization and readiness. Blessings and peace are invoked upon Muhammad and the Imams of his progeny.

The Sixth Session of Part Four

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, singular in the height of majesty, unique in sovereignty, greatness, and glory. May God bless Muhammad, His Messenger, and the pure Imams from his progeny.

The Messenger of God forbade a person in a state of major ritual impurity from sitting in the mosque. 'Ali, peace be upon him, interpreted the Qur'anic phrase “nor in a state of major impurity, except when passing through” as permitting passage but not remaining. Outwardly, one who is junub may pass through according to the stated rule but does not sit and worship there until purified.

Inwardly, the person in major impurity signifies one who has received knowledge and then contaminated himself by grave disobedience. He is not fit to sit in the assembly of wisdom and hear the discourse of the true da'wa while knowingly persisting in the impurity of sin. He may pass through without participating, but he must purify himself through repentance and knowledge before taking his place among the assembly.

The Messenger also forbade one who has eaten garlic from approaching the mosque because its odor harms the worshippers. Inwardly, a respondent who has taken in corrupt doctrine or offensive speech should not spread it among his companions in the assembly. He first removes its effect from himself and does not trouble others with what has corrupted his own state.

'Ali, peace be upon him, when entering the mosque, said words of peace upon the Prophet, upon himself and the righteous servants of God. Inwardly, the one entering an assembly of the true da'wa acknowledges that peace and obedience belong to God, His Messenger, the Imams, and those who faithfully convey from them.

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'Ali said that among the rights of the mosque is that when one enters it one should pray two rak'as; among the rights of those two rak'as is that the Opening of the Qur'an be recited; and among the rights of the Qur'an is that one act according to what is in it. Inwardly, the two rak'as signify acknowledgment of the Imam and the Hujja upon entering the true da'wa.

The Opening of the Book consists of seven verses and is identified with the “seven oft-repeated” mentioned by God. In the interpretation, these correspond to the seven Natiqs or to the seven Imams in a cycle, according to the aspect under discussion. The Qur'an in its living inward sense corresponds to the Lord of the Age, who explains and embodies its command. Thus reciting the Opening in each rak'a signifies acknowledgment of the ordered divine limits, while acting according to the Qur'an signifies obeying both its outward command and the authorized interpreter of its inward meaning.

The Messenger of God said: “Whoever builds for God a mosque, even as small as the nesting hollow of a sandgrouse, God builds for him a house in Paradise.” The sandgrouse makes a very small hollow in the earth for its eggs. Inwardly, birds have been used as similitudes for da'is; the small nesting place therefore signifies even the smallest legitimate place established for an authorized da'i to summon people. Whoever establishes even such a small place for the true call, in sincerity and authorization, receives its corresponding reward.

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The Messenger of God forbade praying without a sutra, a barrier placed before the worshipper, even if it is only like the rear part of a saddle. Inwardly, this signifies that the concealed da'wa must be protected by a veil from those who are not entitled to hear it. Even a minimal barrier is required where secrecy is necessary.

'Ali said that every camel has a devil upon its hump and discouraged prayer directly toward a camel. The camel, in one interpretation, signifies the Imam; the “devil” signifies his enemy and one who stands apart from him in hostility. The ruling teaches that no one is to set himself up as a caller directly in the presence of the Imam without the proper veil and authorization, as though occupying the Imam’s station.

Al-Sadiq disliked a person praying while a sleeping man lay directly in front of him, and disliked a man praying level with a woman unless he stood ahead of her. Inwardly, sleep signifies heedlessness. The da'i should not address one who is utterly heedless as though he were an attentive respondent; first the person must be awakened to understanding. The man signifies the instructor and the woman the recipient; they are not equal in function within the instructional act. The teacher stands ahead in rank while teaching, as the Imam stands before the congregation.

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The Messenger of God said that if one prays toward a barrier he should draw near to it, because Satan may pass between him and it. Inwardly, the concealed call should take place within a secure veil, not in a place where outsiders can listen secretly and carry away what they hear. The barrier should be near enough to make the protection real, not merely nominal.

The report compares the space to the resting place of a bull. Cattle have elsewhere been used as similitudes of Hujjas; the resting place of the bull therefore indicates that the protected place of inward teaching is connected with the station of the Hujja, to whom the concealed call belongs.

Al-Sadiq disliked images placed in the direction of the qibla. The qibla in inward interpretation signifies the Hujja for the people of the inward da'wa and the foundation of the law for the people of the shari'a. God told the Prophet that He saw him turning his face toward heaven and would turn him toward a qibla with which he would be pleased. Inwardly, this signifies the designation of 'Ali and the direction of the people toward the divinely appointed successor.

Images before the qibla signify people who imitate the friends of God, assume their stations without right, and present themselves to the people as though they were true objects of allegiance. The believer is forbidden to turn toward such imitations in place of the authentic divine authority.

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Al-Sadiq was asked about a mosque established within a house: if the owner later wishes to move it from its place or enlarge the house by taking in part of it, is there harm? He said there is no harm. Inwardly, a senior da'i who has been authorized to appoint subordinate da'is in regions entrusted to him may transfer one of them from one area to another or reduce the territory previously assigned to him, when such authority belongs to his office.

The discussion then turns to the Imamate. The imam of the outward prayer signifies the Imam of truth. The imam of a particular mosque corresponds to the spiritual rank represented by that mosque. Thus the imam of the Sacred Mosque signifies the Imam of the Age—not because any created person is equated with God, but because the outward hierarchy serves as a similitude for the inward order. The imam of the Prophet’s mosque signifies the Hujja; the imam of Jerusalem signifies the Gate of the Hujja, the greatest of the naqibs and the Gate

of the Gates; the imams of the great city mosques signify senior da'is; and the imams of smaller tribal mosques signify lesser da'is.

Just as mosques differ in size, excellence, and honor, the da'is differ in rank, breadth of knowledge, and merit. This is the general principle of the relationship between the Imamate of the outward prayer and the Imamate of the inward da'wa. The author closes by asking God to give the believers understanding, insight, and increase in favor, and invokes blessings upon Muhammad and the Imams of his household.

The Seventh Session of Part Four

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, the Creator who is unlike the created, exalted beyond every limitation by which limited servants are described. May God bless Muhammad, His Prophet, and the chosen and rightly guided Imams from his progeny.

What follows continues the general discussion of the Imamate. The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, said: “The Imam of a people is their envoy to God; therefore place before you in your prayer the best of you.” 'Ali, peace be upon him, likewise said: “Do not put your foolish men forward in your prayer or over your funerals, for they are your envoys to your Lord.” Outwardly, this requires that the people’s leader in prayer be among the best of them. Inwardly, it means that the Imam can only be the best person of his age, and that no one should be appointed over the true da'wa except the most excellent person suited to that rank.

The word “envoy” means one who comes before a king on behalf of a people. In like manner the holders of these spiritual ranks come before God on behalf of the people of their times and bear witness concerning them. God says, “How will it be when We bring from every community a witness?” and, “The prophets and the witnesses will be brought,” and, “Those are the truthful and the witnesses with their Lord.” The da'is are likewise witnesses concerning the people of their times regarding the acts they have observed among them.

'Ali said that a sick person should not lead healthy people, except that this was permitted to the Messenger of God in his illness. Inwardly, illness signifies corruption in religion, as in the verse, “In their hearts is a disease, so God increased their disease.” One whose religion is corrupt should not lead those whose religion is sound. The Messenger and the Imams from his progeny are exempt from this inward illness, for God has protected them from it; therefore their outward physical illness does not diminish their right to lead.

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Muhammad ibn 'Ali, peace be upon him, said that there is no harm in prayer behind a slave if he is learned in the law and no one more learned is present among his people. Inwardly, the slave is a similitude of a recipient who has not yet reached the full rank of one authorized independently. If necessity requires that such a person act and one above him has authorized him, he may undertake for those like himself what his authorization permits.

It is also related from 'Ali that he allowed prayer behind a blind man. The interpretation follows what has already been said regarding a blind muezzin: blindness signifies one who has not yet attained direct inward sight. If he is correct in what he knows and follows sound guidance, he may be authorized to teach or lead others in what he knows.

'Ali forbade prayer behind one afflicted with leprosy, one with severe skin disease, the insane, one who had been legally punished, a child born of fornication, and others whose states were defective. He also said that a Bedouin should not lead emigrants, a restricted person should not lead those who are free, a hermaphrodite should not lead men, a woman should not lead men, a mute should not lead those who can speak, and a traveler should not lead residents. These outward rules have corresponding inward similitudes.

The leper and the one afflicted with an incurable skin disease signify people whose religion has become gravely corrupt and whose cure can come only through the Lord of the Age, by God’s permission. The insane person signifies one who lacks sound understanding. The person upon whom a legal penalty has been carried out

signifies one who has transgressed a limit of God and has been disciplined for it. The child of fornication signifies one who has taken a covenant or taken authority over others without authorization.

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The Bedouin signifies one who once entered the da'wa and then withdrew from it and ceased to attend to it. Such a person cannot properly lead one who has remained established in it. The castrated man signifies one from whom the power to benefit and instruct others has been removed for a reason. The person of ambiguous sex signifies one whose spiritual rank is uncertain and who has not been clearly proven to have reached the level of an authorized teacher; until he is tested, he should not lead one whose rank is known. The woman signifies the recipient of knowledge, who may not lead one who has been authorized to transmit. The mute signifies one who lacks the ability to explain, and therefore should not lead one who is articulate in the teachings. The traveler signifies one who has departed from the settled station of the da'wa and from the company of the da'i and believers; such a person should not lead those established in their proper station.

Al-Sadiq said: “Do not count prayer behind a nasibi or a Haruri as prayer. Treat him like one of the pillars of the mosque and recite for yourself as though you were alone.” A nasibi is one who openly sets himself in hostility toward the people of truth. If necessity and fear compel a believer to pray behind him outwardly, the believer is not to recognize him as Imam but is to pray for himself as though alone. Inwardly, this means that if a person is compelled under taqiyya to enter a false da'wa, he is not to recognize the false leader as Imam. He is to keep belief in the Imam of his Age and refuse to grant to the false leader the spiritual authority that belongs only to the true da'i.

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Abu Ja'far Muhammad, peace be upon him, said: “Do not pray behind a nasibi, and there is no honor for him, unless you fear that you will become known or pointed out. Then pray in your houses first and afterward pray with them, making your prayer with them voluntary.” Its interpretation is as before. If a man outwardly enters the gathering of a false party because of fear, while inwardly retaining the covenant of the Imam of his Age, his true act of worship is that which accords with the truth, and what he performs with them under compulsion is merely an outward accommodation.

The same principle applies when a da'i who formerly belonged to the true da'wa changes, alters the teaching, rebels against the Imam, takes possession of a region without permission, and nevertheless continues to use the Imam’s name. A believer who fears his power may outwardly attend his gatherings, while inwardly recognizing only the true Imam and counting only the true da'wa as binding.

A report states that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab once led the dawn prayer while in a state requiring major purification, and afterward said the people had to repeat the prayer. 'Ali said: “If the Imam’s prayer is corrupt, the prayer of the people is corrupt. You must repeat, and so must they, for the people bow and prostrate with their Imam.” Inwardly, when a da'i errs in a matter of the da'wa or introduces an innovation into it, both he and those who followed him in that matter must repair the error. It is not enough for the da'i alone to correct himself while his followers remain established upon what he mistakenly taught them.

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The Messenger of God said that the one who should lead a people is the person who is most knowledgeable in the Book of God. God taught His Messenger what was needed so that he might explain it to the people. Knowledge is a light that God places in the heart of whom He wills. The inward meaning of the Qur'an is connected with the Lord of the Age, the light by which God guides His servants. God says, “God is the Light of the heavens and the earth; the similitude of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp...” The interpretation of this verse has already been given: the light is a similitude of God’s friends through whom He illuminates His religion and guides His servants. 'Ali described the friends of God as “a light for whoever is guided by them.”

Thus the outward meaning of “Let the most knowledgeable in the Book of God lead you” is that the imam of prayer should be the most learned in the Qur'an. Its inward meaning is that the da'i of a people should be the

most knowledgeable in the outward and inward meanings of the Qur'an, in what God has made lawful and unlawful, and in the judgments and rulings of the religion.

The Messenger of God also said: “The people of every mosque have the greatest right to the prayer in their own mosque, unless an amir is present, for then he has greater right to the Imamate than the people of the mosque.” Outwardly, the regular imam of a mosque leads its people unless a superior ruler is present. Inwardly, the da'i of a locality has the greatest right to its people, unless the one who appointed him or someone above him in the ranks of God’s friends is present. Then the superior rank leads the da'wa and the local da'i stands under his command until he departs.

Al-Sadiq said that the people should be led first by the one earliest in hijra; if equal, by the one best in recitation; if equal, by the most learned; if equal, by the eldest. The owner of the mosque has the greatest right to his mosque. Inwardly, these are principles of precedence: earlier entry into the true da'wa, greater knowledge, deeper understanding, and precedence in rank are all grounds of priority.

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The owner of the da'wa likewise has the greatest right to his da'wa so long as he has not been lawfully removed from it. Understand these matters, O believers. May God guide and aid you. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad and his pure progeny.

The Eighth Session of Part Four

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, veiled from His creation and not perceived by eyes, beyond the qualities of things so that He is not conceived by thought. May God bless Muhammad, His Prophet, and the righteous Imams from his progeny.

Al-Sadiq said that when a man leads one other man in prayer, he places him at his right side; when he leads two or more, they stand behind him. This is the outward sunna. Its inward interpretation is that one person standing beside the Imam is a similitude of the Imam’s Hujja, who is the bearer of the covenant and the one to whom the Imamate passes in due order. When there are many followers they stand behind him, signifying the ranks of those who receive instruction from the Imam and those whom he has authorized in the da'wa.

'Ali said that there is no harm if people follow the prayer of the Imam while they are outside the mosque, when the mosque is full. Inwardly, when the assembly of the da'i is full and not everyone can hear him directly, some may gather near it and receive the teaching from one who transmits the da'i’s words to them, provided the connection and order of instruction are maintained.

Al-Sadiq said: “If you pray alone, lengthen the prayer, for it is worship; if you pray with a people, lighten it and pray according to the capacity of the weakest among them.” The prayer of the Messenger of God when he led people was complete but light. Inwardly, the teacher should not burden recipients beyond their capacity; when alone with knowledge he may contemplate at length, but when instructing others he should communicate in a measure they can bear.

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The reports continue to regulate the order of congregational prayer and thereby the order of spiritual ranks. One who receives should not be placed in a station beyond his capacity, while one who teaches must preserve the limits of those under him. Leadership is not merely honor but responsibility for those who follow.

It is related that the one who leads should avoid prolonging what burdens the weak, the sick, the elderly, or those who have needs. Inwardly, the da'i likewise considers the conditions of the respondents, giving each the amount of wisdom suited to his strength and readiness and not disclosing to him what would confuse or harm him.

The outward arrangement of one follower at the Imam’s right and larger groups behind him remains a visible figure of the hierarchy of the da'wa: the Hujja is nearest the Imam; those beneath are ordered in ranks according to knowledge, authorization, and precedence.

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The same principle applies to the conduct of the Imam in the congregational prayer. If he has a legitimate reason to shorten, pause, or alter what is not essential, he acts for the welfare of those behind him without violating the obligatory limits. The inward Imam and da'i likewise governs the delivery of knowledge according to what preserves the religion and benefits those under his care.

A congregation should not be disorderly. Those closest to the Imam are to be people of understanding and knowledge so that, if some occurrence prevents him from continuing, the one qualified to take his place may do so. Inwardly, this signifies that the highest ranks near the Imam must be held by those whom he has prepared to preserve the order of the da'wa.

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The discussion then turns to the rows. The rows of prayer are similitudes of the ranks of the believers in the true da'wa according to precedence, knowledge, and works. The first row belongs to those foremost in merit, and subsequent rows correspond to subsequent ranks. A person must not claim a rank before those who have preceded him or push past them to a station that is not his.

If, however, a person grows in knowledge and fulfills what is required for a higher degree, his station may change according to the order established by the Imam. Conversely, a person whose conduct falls short may be moved back. Thus the arrangement is not arbitrary but corresponds to merit as recognized within the divinely ordered hierarchy.

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The report that the best rows for men are the first and the best rows for women are the last is interpreted in the same way. Men are similitudes of those who give benefit and instruction; women are similitudes of those who receive. The benefactors are nearer the head of the da'wa according to their ranks. The recipients are most praiseworthy when they know the rights of those above them, maintain humility, and do not strive to equal a teacher whose rank they have not reached.

The outward arrangement of women behind the men, with the farthest row being best for them, thus expresses inward modesty and recognition of rank. The teaching is not contempt for the recipient; rather, it preserves the proper relation between the one who gives and the one who receives.

The Ninth Session of Part Four

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Reports about the shade of the Throne are interpreted in relation to the religion itself. The “Throne” in ta'wil is the divine knowledge and religion borne by God’s friends; its “shade” is the protection given to believers who take refuge in the true da'wa and act upon that knowledge. On the Day of Resurrection there will be no shelter apart from the shelter God grants through obedience to the truth.

When a person leaves his house, perfects his purification, and walks to one of God’s houses to fulfill an obligation, his outward act has an inward likeness. God says, “Whoever leaves his house emigrating to God and His Messenger and then death overtakes him, his reward has become incumbent upon God.” The “house” may signify the false doctrine or corrupt school in which a man had settled. If he leaves it with sincere intention to enter the true da'wa and dies before reaching the da'i, while firmly repudiating his former error, he is counted among the people of the truth by virtue of his intention. Thus the intention of the believer may be better than his deed, because he may intend a good he is prevented from completing.

Perfecting purification in hardship signifies complete repentance and cleansing oneself from sins through true knowledge despite the resistance of the lower soul. Walking to the mosques signifies striving toward the true da'wa and toward the assemblies of its people to hear knowledge and wisdom. Waiting for one prayer after another signifies waiting for one assembly of instruction after another and remaining constant in the da'wa.

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The Messenger of God said that the best rows for men are the first, and the best rows for women the last. When asked why, he explained the merit of the first row for men. Inwardly, the rows are ranks of respondents according to their precedence in the da'wa and the excellence of their works. The first row belongs to those who arrived first and fulfilled what was required of them. One who comes later must not leap over those before him, just as a person in the mosque should not step over people to seize the front row.

The men signify those who benefit others - the messengers, Imams, Hujjas, naqibs, da'is, and authorized teachers - and they possess degrees, one above another. God says, “Those messengers, We preferred some of them above others,” and, “We raised some of them above others in degrees,” and, “God will raise those among you who believe and those who have been given knowledge in degrees.” The best people in each level of the da'wa correspond to the first rows.

Women signify the recipients. Their excellence lies in recognizing the rights of those who give them knowledge, not forcing themselves toward a rank they have not been granted, and remaining humble before the guides. The outward last row of women is therefore the inward image of restraint from pressing too close to a rank that belongs to another.

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Outwardly, women stand behind the rows of men, and among their rows the farther row is more removed from the men. The text states that a similar principle will be discussed again in the chapter on funerals. Inwardly, distance signifies greater restraint, humility, and recognition of spiritual precedence.

Understand, O believers, what is recited to you and what you hear. May God grant you understanding and protect you from error. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad and the righteous Imams of his progeny.

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, exalted beyond the estimation of those who would encompass Him and too subtle for the subtleties of those who imagine. May God bless Muhammad, the Prophet, and the Imams from his progeny.

'Ali, Commander of the Believers, said: “The first row is the best; it is the row of the angels. The best place is on the Imam’s right.” Its interpretation follows what has preceded: the rows signify the degrees of the respondents in the true da'wa according to merit and precedence. The angels are the holders of the highest ranks among God’s friends. In Arabic, “angel” is connected with the meaning of message and sending, and God says that He chooses messengers from among the angels and from among mankind. Thus the first row should outwardly contain the most excellent and knowledgeable people of the mosque, just as inwardly the highest ranks are held by the messengers, Imams, and those entrusted with God’s commands.

Those nearest the Imam should be people capable of taking his place if something happens to him. This corresponds to the ordering of the spiritual hierarchy, in which the one immediately below a holder of rank is prepared to succeed him according to the command of the Imam.

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Ja'far ibn Muhammad said that if there is no space in the row, there is no blame in standing where a place is available; and the reports command believers to straighten their rows, align their shoulders, close the gaps, and not differ among themselves, lest Satan enter among them as small black lambs move through openings in a flock.

Outwardly, straightening the rows, closing gaps, and keeping equal alignment are among the obligations and disciplines of congregational prayer. Inwardly, they signify that the people of every rank in the da'wa must stand properly within the limits assigned to them. No one should trespass into a rank above or below his own. If a vacancy appears in a rank and a person is qualified to fill it, he should strive to fulfill what is required so that the rank may be completed. Thus the people of each degree become equal in the conditions and works required of that degree.

If people violate these limits, disagreement enters among them and “Satan” passes between them. The satanic ones here are the enemies of God’s friends who exploit rivalry and ambition for leadership in order to divide believers.

The Prophet’s comparison to small black lambs moving through a flock illustrates the way such adversaries slip through openings created by disorder and jealousy. Therefore the servants are commanded to preserve their limits and remain joined in obedience.

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'Ali related that the Messenger of God said to him: “O 'Ali, do not stand in the 'aykal.” 'Ali asked what that meant, and the Prophet replied: “That you pray alone behind the rows.” Outwardly, it is disliked for a person to stand alone behind the rows when there is room in them. If no place is available, he waits for another person or prays alone only when necessary.

The inward interpretation is especially connected with 'Ali. The Messenger of God had raised him above all ranks beneath prophethood; therefore it was unfitting for him outwardly to stand in a place lower than the station represented by his true inward rank. Similarly, a person should not abase himself below a divinely assigned spiritual station out of false humility, nor claim a station above it.

Al-Sadiq was asked about a man who joins a congregation but finds no one else in his row because the row before him is full. He said that in such a case he may pray alone behind them. He also said: “Join the row as much as you are able; if the place becomes constricted, move forward or backward as needed, and there is no harm.” Inwardly, when a respondent reaches a degree for which there is not yet another person alongside him, he may remain alone in that degree until one of equal rank joins him.

The Tenth Session of Part Four

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'Ali said that if a man cannot enter a row, he should stand opposite the Imam, for that is better than opposing the order of the row. Inwardly, the place directly opposite the Imam signifies the rank of the Hujja. Thus the report points, in its inward aspect, to the special degree nearest the Imam rather than to unauthorized competition with those who preceded one in other ranks.

Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali said that the rows should be complete and continuous. Between two rows there should be only enough space for a person’s body when he prostrates. Outwardly, this permits each row to bow and prostrate without obstruction. Inwardly, between every two spiritual ranks lies the limit of obedience appropriate to the lower rank. The person in the lower degree reaches what is above him only through fulfilling the obedience represented by prostration. Thus the spacing of rows is a visible similitude of the ordered limits through which believers ascend.

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The teaching continues that the best rows for women are their last, because the farther they are from the men, the more fully the outward discipline is preserved. Inwardly, as stated, this signifies the recipient’s humility before those who bestow knowledge and his refusal to thrust himself into the degree of one authorized to give benefit.

Take heed, O believers, of what is conveyed to you. May God grant you understanding, inspire gratitude for His favor, and protect you from error. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad, His Messenger, and the Imams from his pure household. There is no power and no strength except through God, the Most High, the Mighty.

The session opens again with praise of God, who transcends every measure and estimate, and with blessings upon Muhammad and the Imams. The text then repeats and expands the doctrine of the rows: the first row is the row of the angels, and the place at the Imam’s right is the most excellent position. The inward meaning is the precedence of the divinely appointed ranks and the need for the most qualified people to stand nearest the Imam.

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The reports state that God and His angels bless those who complete the rows. Ja'far ibn Muhammad said that when space is lacking one should stand where the row allows and avoid breaking the order. The Messenger of God commanded: “Straighten your rows, align your positions, and do not differ, lest Satan enter among you.”

The inward interpretation is that the people of the da'wa must preserve the equality and order proper to every rank. Whoever sees a deficiency in a rank for which he is qualified should strive to fill it, but no one should advance beyond his appointed limit. Disorder in rank produces disagreement, and disagreement gives the enemies of truth an opening to sow division.

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The prohibition against standing alone behind the rows is repeated with the report addressed to 'Ali. Outwardly it is a rule of congregational order. Inwardly it signifies that a person should occupy the rank God and His wali have set for him. 'Ali, whose station was immediately below the Prophet, was not to place himself in an outward position symbolically lower than that which corresponded to his true inward rank.

When a row is genuinely full and a newcomer finds no place, he may stand behind it alone until another joins him. Inwardly, one who reaches a new degree may for a time stand alone in it until another reaches the same degree. The rule preserves both humility and the real distinctions of rank.

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When a person cannot enter the rows, standing opposite the Imam is preferable to violating the existing order. The inward likeness is the special station of the Hujja in relation to the Imam. The rows of outward prayer represent the degrees of the people of the true da'wa: the first row the foremost in faith and works, the positions nearest the Imam the highest ranks, and all later rows the subsequent degrees.

Abu Ja'far’s instruction that the rows be close enough for proper prostration signifies inwardly that each spiritual degree is joined to the next through the obedience required for ascent. No degree is reached by arbitrary claim; it is reached through fulfillment of the duties and limits that connect the ranks. Thus the visible order of the congregation is a sign of the invisible order of the da'wa.

Part Five of the Book of the Training of the Believers in the Limits of the Inner Knowledge of Religion

The First Session of Part Five

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Part Four ends with a further instruction concerning women standing in prayer. Muhammad ibn 'Ali, peace be upon him, said that when women pray they should not stand directly in front of men or alongside them unless there is some barrier between them. Outwardly this is part of the order of prayer. Inwardly, men signify those who give benefit and women those who receive it; therefore the receiver is not to advance to the station of the giver or place himself on the same level. If, however, the giver is in a condition of concealment and taqiyya, he may deal with the recipient under a veil so that outward behavior does not reveal the spiritual relation between them.

Thus ends Part Four of the Book of the Training of the Believers in the limits of the inner knowledge of religion.

Part Five begins. In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, whom the subtleties of understanding cannot define and whom the most exact thoughts cannot encompass. May God bless Muhammad, the Prophet and Messenger, 'Ali his pure and excellent Wasi, and the Imams from their progeny.

What follows continues the interpretation of what is in the Book of the Pillars concerning the descriptions and sunnas of prayer.

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The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, said: “Actions are only by intentions, and every person has only what he intended.” Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali, peace be upon him, said that a man should not enter prayer until he has formed its intention; and if he prays with the intention of prayer and does not mingle something else with it, it is accepted from him when its outward and inward aspects are sound.

Its interpretation is what has already been explained: inwardly, intention is like walaya. No act is valid or accepted without the belief that gives it direction, just as no outward deed is accepted without an intention. Therefore whoever enters the true da'wa, whose likeness is the inward prayer, must enter it sincerely, believing that it is for God alone, just as the worshipper outwardly intends prayer for God.

'Ali, peace be upon him, interpreted the verse “So pray to your Lord and sacrifice” as referring to raising the hands in the opening takbir. Al-Sadiq said: when you begin the prayer, raise your hands but do not raise them beyond your ears; spread the palms and then say the takbir. This is the opening takbir, and the raising of the hands with it is among the established acts. The fingers and the openings of the face are used in the interpretation as signs of the seven Natiqs, while the two hands signify the Imam and the Hujja. Thus raising the hands in the opening takbir signifies confession of the Imam, the Hujja, and the seven Natiqs, while proclaiming “God is greater” declares that God is greater and more exalted than all of them. Although He has joined their obedience to obedience to Him, they remain His servants and creatures.

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Al-Sadiq said that the opening of prayer is the takbir and that one who omits it must repeat the prayer. The takbir makes the things that were formerly permitted forbidden to the worshipper until the prayer is completed. Outwardly, once a person has entered prayer with intention, purity, facing the qibla, and the opening takbir, ordinary speech and acts incompatible with prayer become forbidden until he gives the salam.

Its inward interpretation is that when a respondent enters the true da'wa and the covenant is taken from him, he enters a state resembling ihram. It is no longer permitted for him to disclose the wisdom and secrets he hears except where permission is given. He remains bound by this covenant until the proper authority releases him and authorizes him to speak, just as the worshipper remains bound by the prayer until the concluding salutation.

'Ali instructed that after the opening takbir one should say: “I have turned my face toward Him who created the heavens and the earth, inclining to truth and submitting, and I am not of the polytheists. My prayer, my sacrifice, my life and my death are for God, Lord of the worlds, with no partner. This I have been commanded, and I am of the Muslims.” Ja'far ibn Muhammad added that after this orientation one seeks refuge in God, the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing, from the accursed Satan.

Inwardly, the respondent who reaches the true da'wa is made to recognize God’s limits and their ranks and to know that they are means leading to Him. Yet God is the end of all ends, the Creator of all things, the God of those on earth and in the heavens, the Knower of the unseen and the seen. The people of the da'wa worship Him alone and do not associate anyone with Him. Their life and death are for Him, and everything to which they are called within the true da'wa is part of affirming His unity.

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“I have turned my face” means: I have directed my purpose toward the One who created the heavens and the earth. “Hanif” means turning away from every object besides Him that might be taken as a god. “Muslim” means surrendering oneself to Him and submitting to His judgment. “I am not of the polytheists” means that no one is associated with God. “My prayer and my sacrifice” mean the da'wa to which the believer has been summoned and every act of nearness performed within it; “my life and my death” means the entirety of his existence and return to God.

The author connects this confession with Abraham, peace be upon him, and the verses in which God showed Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth so that he might be among those who have certainty. The “kingdom of the heavens” includes what God has entrusted to His angels and chosen messengers; the “kingdom of the earth” includes what He has entrusted to His awliya, Imams, and those set by them as intermediaries and limits among His servants.

When night covered Abraham and he saw a star, he said, “This is my lord”; then when it set he rejected it. In the inner interpretation, the night signifies concealment at the beginning of his entry into the true da'wa. The star is a da'i by whom servants are guided, as travelers are guided by stars. Abraham at first saw a greatness in that guide which he had not yet understood in its proper relation, then, when he was shown the higher limit above him, he knew that the first was not the ultimate lord. The same occurred with the second and third signs until he reached recognition of the limit beyond all created limits and declared: “I have turned my face toward Him who created the heavens and the earth, a hanif, and I am not of the polytheists.”

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Thus Abraham confessed the unity of the Creator and recognized that every spiritual rank below Him is created, governed, and sustained by Him. This confession is required of everyone entering the true da'wa, so that admiration for the knowledge, power, or wisdom of a human guide does not lead him to exceed the guide’s proper rank. The outward wording therefore protects the inward teaching from exaggeration.

Seeking refuge from Satan means seeking refuge in God from the enemies who have distanced themselves from His friends and from every power that would divert the respondent from sincere devotion and from what he has been commanded to uphold in the da'wa.

The Messenger of God instructed the worshipper to direct his gaze toward the place of prostration and forbade him to raise his eyes to heaven or look about during prayer. Ja'far ibn Muhammad explained the verse “Those who are humble in their prayer” by lowering the gaze. Turning entirely away breaks the prayer.

In the inward interpretation, prostration signifies obedience to the Imam. Keeping the gaze on the place of prostration therefore signifies directing the heart toward obedience to the Imam of the Age. Raising the eyes or looking right and left signifies turning away from him. The Imam is like the qibla in interpretation: whoever completely turns from the qibla outwardly invalidates the prayer; likewise, whoever turns away from the Imam of his Age and follows another abandons his walaya and his da'wa.

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The Messenger of God once saw Anas ibn Malik praying while looking around the mosque and said: “O Anas, pray the prayer of one bidding farewell, as though you will never pray another prayer. Keep your gaze on the place of your prostration, know neither who is on your right nor who is on your left, and know that you stand before One who sees you though you do not see Him.” This completes the teaching on humility and focused attention.

Understand, O believers, the interpretation of the outward acts you have been commanded to establish, so that you may establish their inward reality as well. The covenant taken upon you contains all of these obligations. May God make you among those who fulfill His covenant and do not break it, and may He grant you His mercy and pleasure. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad and the Imams from his progeny.

The Second Session of Part Five

The session opens with praise of God, Possessor of majesty and honor, and blessings upon Muhammad and his household.

The Messenger of God said: “Prayer is built upon four shares: one share is perfecting purification, one is bowing, one is prostration, and one is humility.” The text proceeds to interpret these four foundations.

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Perfect purification outwardly means completing the ablution according to its limits. Inwardly it signifies sincere repentance and cleansing from sins through knowledge. Bowing signifies recognition of and obedience to the Hujja. Prostration signifies recognition of and obedience to the Imam. Humility signifies submission of the whole person, both outwardly and inwardly, to the command of God through the divinely appointed hierarchy.

The text emphasizes that no outward act is sufficient when its inward meaning is rejected, and no claim to inward knowledge justifies abandoning the outward obligation. The two are joined. The one who purifies his limbs but persists in sin has not fulfilled the full meaning of purification; the one who claims inward obedience while neglecting the outward prayer has likewise failed to establish the sign that bears witness to that obedience.

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The standing posture of prayer signifies standing firm in what one has been commanded in the da'wa and facing the Imam of the Age, just as the outward worshipper stands facing the qibla. The two feet are kept in their proper position, and unnecessary movement is avoided. Inwardly, this is constancy in the two aspects of religion and refusal to depart from one spiritual limit to another without right.

Necessity may permit an outward exception, and inwardly compulsion may excuse one who outwardly conceals what he believes, provided his heart remains firm in faith. The Qur'anic principle “except one who is compelled while his heart is secure in faith” is cited, as is the Prophetic statement that God has excused the community for error, forgetfulness, and what they are compelled to do.

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Al-Sadiq instructed that when standing in prayer one should not fold the right hand over the left or the left over the right in the manner associated with the People of the Book, but should let both hands hang naturally. This is the sunna taught by the Imams of guidance.

Its inward interpretation is that the one receiving instruction must not hide one of the two chief spiritual limits while displaying the other when both have been made manifest to the people of the true da'wa. The right hand signifies the Imam and the left the Hujja. Each has its proper station, and neither is to be erased by subordinating it falsely to the other.

The author reminds the believers that everything in the outward religion, whether small or great, possesses an inward meaning. God says: “Of everything We created pairs, that perhaps you might remember.” Thus the outward and inward dimensions correspond and bear witness to one another.

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The session closes by urging the believers to preserve both dimensions of the religion and by invoking blessings upon Muhammad and the pure Imams.

The Third Session of Part Five

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, whom no subtle understanding can encompass, though human beings cannot even fully comprehend the construction of the smallest creature, much less the heavens, the earths, and all that is between them. May God bless Muhammad and the Imams from his progeny.

The discussion now turns to recitation in prayer and to the several limits of standing, reciting, bowing, and prostrating.

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The opening of every rak'a with the Opening of the Book is interpreted through the seven verses of al-Fatiha and the traditional explanation that they are the “seven oft-repeated.” They signify the seven Imams who succeed one another between two Natiqs, as days follow one another in a week, continuing in ordered cycles until the Resurrection. God’s words to Muhammad, “We have given you the seven oft-repeated and the mighty Qur'an,” are therefore interpreted as the seven Imams from his progeny together with the great foundation of his da'wa.

The “mighty Qur'an” in the inner interpretation is connected with the foundation (asas) of Muhammad’s call, namely his Wasi 'Ali, peace be upon him. Reciting al-Fatiha and another sura in each rak'a signifies acknowledging the Imam of the Age and his Hujja within the true da'wa. The addition of “amin” after al-Fatiha, practiced by the common people, is rejected; inwardly it is compared to inserting into the ordered company of God’s awliya one who does not belong to it.

The text also discusses the relative length of recitation in the dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and night prayers. Inwardly, the longer, moderate, and shorter recitations correspond to differences in the duration and scope of the several da'was represented by those prayers, and to the amount of teaching concerning the Imams and Natiqs appropriate within each.

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If a worshipper begins one sura and then wishes to leave it for another before reaching its midpoint, there is generally license to do so; but certain suras have special rules, especially “Say: He is God, One” and, in Friday prayer, Surat al-Jumu'a and Surat al-Munafiqun.

Inwardly, when an authorized teacher begins a branch of wisdom with a respondent, he may move to another branch before completing the first if wisdom requires it, provided he has not carried the first so far that abandoning it would leave the teaching defective. But if he begins the doctrine of divine unity, he should not abandon it for another subject, because tawhid is the foundation of all instruction, unless the circumstances require returning to the specifically prescribed teachings of the Friday da'wa.

Friday is the similitude of the da'wa of Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, and Friday prayer the similitude of his summons and of the summons of the Imams from his progeny, since they all call to his shari'a. Surat al-Jumu'a commands the believers to hasten to God’s remembrance when the call for Friday is made; inwardly, this is hastening to the da'wa of Muhammad in his age and to the da'wa of each Imam who represents him thereafter. Surat al-Munafiqun exposes the condition of the hypocrites, so its recitation warns the believers against the inward hypocrisy that opposes the true da'wa.

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The Messenger of God forbade reciting less than a complete sura in the obligatory prayer and forbade joining two suras after al-Fatiha in a single obligatory rak'a, while allowing greater flexibility in supererogatory prayer. Inwardly, the required recitation signifies the complete acknowledgment of the Imam and Hujja in what is obligatory; one should neither omit part of that necessary doctrine nor mix into it unrelated material. In voluntary admonition and informal instruction there is more latitude.

'Ali interpreted the command “Recite the Qur'an with measured recitation” as meaning: do not scatter it like poor dates and do not rush through it like poetry; pause at its wonders, move the hearts by it, and do not make the end of the sura your sole concern. The inward teaching is the same: the da'i must not rush through wisdom merely to finish speaking. He must explain it carefully, pause at what requires reflection, and cause the hearers’ hearts to engage with what is said.

Al-Sadiq was asked how loudly the Imam should recite. He cited the verse, “Do not be too loud in your prayer nor too quiet in it, but seek a way between.” The outward recitation should therefore be moderate. Inwardly, the true da'wa is likewise neither to be exposed indiscriminately nor concealed absolutely. It is given in the measure suitable to each time, place, rank, and person.

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Moderation is then illustrated with several scriptural examples. The cock that cries at every time and every place is used as a figure for a da'i who exceeds proper limits, proclaiming what should not be proclaimed and failing to observe the order of time and authorization. The ass is also used as a figure in the Qur'an: some asses are strong and useful, while others are sluggish and defective. So among da'is there are eloquent, learned, disciplined men and others whose explanation is poor and whose knowledge is slight.

The Qur'anic verse likening those who were charged with the Torah but did not bear it properly to a donkey carrying books is interpreted as describing those who carry the outward religion but do not establish its inward reality. Likewise, a person may carry inward knowledge yet fail to perform the obligation of transmitting it correctly. The image warns both kinds of bearer.

The word “ambassador” and the language of books and messengers are discussed. The angels are God’s messengers; in the inner hierarchy the term “angel” is also applied analogically to those entrusted with the affairs of the servants and sent to convey the command through ordered ranks until it reaches the prophets and, from them, the people.

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The principle of moderation is supported by verses such as: “Do not keep your hand chained to your neck, nor extend it altogether,” and the description of the servants of God who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor miserly. The Messenger of God said, “The religion of God lies between the extremist and the deficient,” and, “The best of affairs is the middle course.”

The believer should therefore take from the da'wa the measure conveyed to him by those authorized over him, with balance and proper discipline. He should not, out of ambition, seek knowledge not yet entrusted to him or push himself beyond the degree he has reached, lest he be destroyed by exceeding his limit.

Understand, O believers, the discipline of God’s friends and fulfill what has been entrusted to you. May God aid you and guide you to what pleases Him and brings you near to Him. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad and the righteous Imams of his household.

The Fourth Session of Part Five

Page 273

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, the Beginning without beginning, whom the courses of time do not encompass and whom no created limit reaches. May God bless Muhammad, the best of creation, and the pure Imams from his progeny.

Al-Sadiq said that recitation in prayer is a sunna and not one of the foundational obligations in the same manner as the opening takbir, bowing, and prostration. If one forgets the recitation there is no repetition of the prayer, but if one deliberately abandons it, the prayer is to be repeated because one may not intentionally abandon an established sunna.

Inwardly, the opening takbir is entry into the da'wa, bowing is obedience to the Hujja, and prostration is obedience to the Imam. A person who has responded to the Imam of the Age, accepted his covenant, and obeyed him and those appointed by him has fulfilled the foundational obligations of the da'wa. Recitation signifies seeking and hearing the wisdom of the da'wa. Deliberately abandoning knowledge and the assemblies in which it is taught is therefore a grave departure from the true da'wa, while inability, forgetfulness, or a genuine excuse is treated differently.

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Seeking knowledge, listening to wisdom, and attending the assemblies of the true da'wa are obligations according to one's capacity. The Prophet said that seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim man and woman. But no one is held responsible for what is beyond his ability. God says that He does not burden a soul beyond its capacity. A person of limited memory or understanding who sincerely seeks, attends, and strives is not blamed for what he cannot retain.

Persistent effort nevertheless has its reward. The one who continually seeks knowledge will usually acquire some share of it, and if he does not, his sincere intention is still rewarded. The Prophet said, "Perhaps a bearer of knowledge is not himself learned, and perhaps he carries knowledge to one more learned than himself." This applies both to one who seeks knowledge but cannot fully comprehend it and to one who knows but fails to act upon what he knows.

The Messenger of God raised his hands at three points: the opening takbir, the takbir for bowing, and upon raising his head from bowing while saying, "God hears the one who praises Him." These correspond inwardly to three major stations within the seven limits of prayer: entry into the da'wa, recognition of the Hujja, and orientation toward recognition of the Imam. At each of these, raising the hands recalls confession of the Imam, Hujja, and Natiqs while the takbir affirms that God is greater than all created ranks.

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The seven limits of prayer are enumerated: the opening consecration; standing facing the qibla; recitation; bowing; prostration; the testimony; and the concluding salutation. Inwardly they correspond respectively to entry into the true da'wa, standing in the command and facing the Imam, seeking and hearing knowledge, recognizing and obeying the Hujja, recognizing and obeying the Imam, seeking advancement and release into authorized teaching, and the final permission that releases one from the restrictions of concealment.

The chain of recognition is ordered: the authorized person points to the da'i; the da'i points to the Hujja; the Hujja points to the Imam; the Imam points to the Natiq, the bearer of the shari'a; and the Natiq points to God and makes Him known by what has come from Him. Knowledge is thus transmitted through a connected chain, like a raised report with an isnad from one to another.

When the worshipper raises his hands after bowing and says "God hears the one who praises Him," he is again in a standing position, which signifies action. The later takbirs are given while descending and prostrating, so the hands are not raised in the same way. The outward form thus corresponds to the inner distinctions among the stations.

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Al-Sadiq instructed that in bowing one places the palms on the knees, spreads the back straight, and neither lifts nor drops the head. It is related that if water were poured upon the Prophet's back while he bowed, it would remain level. The fingers are spread over the knees. Outwardly this expresses firmness and balance in bowing; inwardly the believer must likewise be firm and balanced in obedience to the Hujja.

In bowing one says three times, "Glory be to my Lord, the Mighty, and praise be to Him." Bowing in Arabic conveys bending, humbling, and obedience. It is distinct from prostration, although both are forms of submission. The Qur'an distinguishes them in the command "Bow and prostrate." Both are acts owed to God alone outwardly. Their inward analogies to obedience toward the Hujja and Imam do not mean that these persons are worshipped; rather, obedience to them is obedience to God because He commanded it.

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The word "Subhan" is explained as declaring God free and innocent of every false attribution. Thus "Glory be to my Lord, the Mighty" declares that God is exalted above comparison, likeness, partner, or rival. Repeating it three times while bowing emphasizes that neither the Natiqs, nor the Imams, nor the Hujjas - despite the greatness of their stations - share in divinity. They are all servants of God.

The Messenger of God said, "There is no obedience to a creature in disobedience to God." The title "Lord" may be used in ordinary Arabic of a master or owner, but in the glorification of prayer "my Lord, the Mighty" means God, Lord of the worlds, who alone is the ultimate object of worship and glorification.

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Other supplications are also transmitted for bowing. Among them is: "O God, to You I bow, in You I believe, upon You I rely, and You are my Lord. My hearing, sight, hair, skin, flesh, blood, nerves, bones, and all that my feet bear have humbled themselves to You, without arrogance, weariness, or disdain for Your worship."

These words confirm the interpretation already given. Every act of humility toward one whom God has commanded the believer to obey is, in its ultimate meaning, humility to God. Those divinely appointed persons are themselves the most humble and obedient of creation because of their greater knowledge of Him. The obligations of worship therefore bind them more emphatically, not less.

The statement that one's face, hearing, sight, and limbs prostrate signifies the submission of the whole human being and, by analogy, the submission of the spiritual ranks and all created beings to God. The Qur'an says that those in the heavens and earth, the sun, moon, stars, mountains, trees, animals, and many people prostrate to Him. Thus the interpretation never licenses worship of any created limit; it affirms that all ranks are servants through whom God guides His servants to worship Him.

The Fifth Session of Part Five

Page 279

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, before whom there was no "before" and after whom there is no end. May God bless His Messenger Muhammad and the guiding Imams from his progeny.

Al-Sadiq said that when you raise your head from bowing, say, "God hears the one who praises Him," then quietly say, "Our Lord, to You belongs praise." Those behind the Imam say the latter phrase quietly when he says the former, unless one is appointed to relay the Imam's voice to those who cannot hear him.

Inwardly, whoever has reached the true da'wa should praise God for the favor by which He has brought him to it and made known to him the station of His awliya. The da'i reminds those whom he has summoned that God hears their praise and knows their belief. They, in turn, praise God for the guidance they have received. The

authorized relayer who makes the Imam's words heard to others has an inward likeness in one appointed to transmit teaching from a superior rank.

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Among the invocations after bowing are: "Our Lord, to You belongs praise; praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds, Possessor of dominion, greatness, majesty, and power. O God, forgive me, have mercy on me, mend me, raise me, and provide for me, for I am in need of whatever good You send down to me." Such supplication is recommended outwardly.

Inwardly, after reaching recognition of the Hujja, the respondent should ask God for increase in knowledge and rank, while thanking Him for what has already been granted. The Qur'an commands: "Ask God of His bounty." The Prophet also encouraged persistence in supplication, saying that whoever continually knocks at a door is near to having it opened. The believer should therefore persist in seeking higher degrees of knowledge through proper means.

Al-Sadiq instructed that when descending to prostration the worshipper should put his hands to the ground first. The inward meaning follows what has already been explained: prostration signifies obedience, especially obedience to the Imam, and the hands again signify acknowledgment of the Imam and Hujja on whom the believer relies in entering that obedience.

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The outward form of prostration is described carefully: the palms are spread on the ground, the fingers directed near the ears, the elbows held away from the ground, the forehead and nose firmly placed down, the hands brought out from the sleeves, and the forehead placed directly upon the ground or upon what is lawful for prostration. One should not prostrate on the wrapped part of a turban; at least a portion of the forehead the size of a dirham should touch.

Inwardly, the firmness of the limbs in prostration signifies firmness of the whole person in obedience to the Imam. The believer is to establish that obedience in the heart and all the faculties and to act upon everything the Imam commands. The hands placed alongside the face again evoke confession of the Imam and Hujja together with the seven Natiqs represented by the openings of the face.

In prostration one says three times, "Glory be to my Lord, the Most High." Other transmitted invocations include: "O God, to You I prostrate, in You I believe, upon You I rely, and You are my Lord and God. My face has prostrated to the One who created it and opened its hearing and sight. Praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds." Between the two prostrations one asks for forgiveness, mercy, restoration, and elevation. When rising, one may rely on the hands and say, "By Your power and strength I stand and sit."

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The text then turns to the tashahhud. Its inward interpretation has been mentioned previously: when the respondent reaches the proper limits of the true da'wa and becomes worthy of being released from the restrictions of concealment, he asks his wali for authorization and for advancement.

The phrase "All greetings belong to God" uses a word whose Arabic sense includes sovereignty and dominion. The worshipper's request is thus interpreted as a desire that God grant him command over himself and, when he is qualified, permission to benefit others by calling them to what he himself has received. The tashahhud is also described as the "sermon of the prayer," just as the formal address of a suitor is called a khutba because it introduces the matter sought.

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The session continues with the wording of the tashahhud, blessings upon Muhammad and his household, and the supplications made before the concluding salutation. Each of these outward formulas affirms the same hierarchy already explained: praise and dominion belong to God; Muhammad is His Messenger; the Imams are His chosen

awliya; and every request for advancement is made under God’s command and not by claiming independent authority.

The concluding salutation is permission to leave the restricted state of prayer. Inwardly it resembles the release of one who, after completing the required stages, is authorized to speak and act in accordance with the knowledge entrusted to him. Until that release, he remains bound to silence concerning what has been placed in trust.

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The text records numerous recommended prayers and invocations associated with the close of prayer and with seeking nearness to God. Their wording varies, but their purpose is one: confession of need, praise of God, request for forgiveness and mercy, and desire for increase in guidance.

Inwardly, these several forms of supplication correspond to the variety of ways by which da'is address respondents according to their eloquence, capacity, and spiritual need. The outward phrases differ, yet all are directed to asking from God; likewise the forms of the true da'wa differ in expression while all aim at nearness to God and seeking His bounty.

The author therefore does not require a single verbal formula beyond what has been transmitted, but insists on preserving the purpose: humility, request, and orientation to God through the true guidance.

The Sixth Session of Part Five

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, without limit in pre-eternity and without numbered end in everlastingness. May God bless Muhammad, the best of creation, and the Imams from his chosen household.

The discussion concerns speech and actions during prayer. Outwardly, speech other than the prescribed takbir, recitation, glorification, and supplication is not permitted, nor are unrelated actions that interrupt the prayer. Inwardly, when a person has entered the true da'wa and the covenant has been taken from him, he may not disclose its secret or speak of what he has heard where he has not been given permission.

'Ali said that whoever speaks deliberately in prayer must repeat it; one who speaks through forgetfulness has a different ruling according to the transmitted reports. Inwardly, deliberate disclosure of the entrusted secret is a breach of covenant that requires repair and renewed discipline, while an unintended slip is judged according to intention and circumstance.

Page 285

The text discusses small movements, gestures, answering necessities, and the difference between deliberate interruption and an act done from forgetfulness or compulsion. The principle is that the worshipper should remain occupied with prayer and not with what is foreign to it. Inwardly, the people of the true da'wa are to remain occupied with the command entrusted to them and not divert themselves to rival claims, worldly ambition, or unlicensed speech.

What necessity allows outwardly has an inward counterpart in taqiyya and unavoidable circumstance. God does not burden a person beyond ability, but the believer must distinguish genuine necessity from carelessness.

Page 286

Reports are cited concerning greeting, replying by gesture, correcting the Imam, and other limited acts during prayer. The outward law allows what preserves the prayer without turning it into ordinary conversation. Inwardly, a respondent may communicate what is necessary for preserving the order of the da'wa, but he may not turn the entrusted assembly into a place of unrestricted speech.

The author repeatedly returns to the rule that the outward sign and the inward meaning support one another. A believer should not seize upon the inward interpretation as a pretext for abandoning the outward discipline, nor cling to the outward form while violating the covenant that gives it meaning.

Page 287

The treatment of actions in prayer continues with accidental movement and acts that are tolerated because they do not destroy the form of prayer. In the inner teaching, minor human weakness does not sever a person from the true da'wa so long as he does not deliberately oppose its foundations. What breaks the bond is conscious abandonment, betrayal, or persistent contradiction of what the covenant requires.

The text accordingly urges believers to maintain attention, dignity, and restraint both in their visible worship and in the guarded life of the da'wa.

Page 288

The session concludes with warnings against distraction and unnecessary occupation during worship and with prayers that God protect the believers in both the outward and inward religion. Blessings and peace are invoked upon Muhammad and the Imams from his progeny.

The Seventh Session of Part Five

Page 289

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, manifest without being contained and inward without being hidden. May God bless Muhammad and the Imams from his household.

The Messenger of God forbade excessive yawning in prayer and other signs of heedlessness. Inwardly, such distraction signifies negligence toward the true da'wa and occupation with matters contrary to what the believer has been commanded.

The text also discusses hair and bodily grooming during prayer, cupping while fasting, and singling out Friday for fasting. Hair has previously been interpreted as a sign of the outward aspect of religion. Therefore unnecessary binding or manipulation of it during prayer becomes an image of constricting or altering the outward law while claiming to uphold the inward. The outward must instead be allowed to stand according to its transmitted form while the inward is established with it.

Cupping, which removes blood, is interpreted as opening discourse concerning inward knowledge. Blood sustains bodily life, while knowledge sustains the life of religion. Yet corrupted blood can damage the body, just as corrupt additions to knowledge damage the religion. Therefore inward knowledge is not to be disclosed in the period of concealment until permission is granted.

Page 290

The prohibition against singling out Friday for fasting is interpreted by saying that concealment of the secret is not restricted to the da'wa of the Messenger alone. The same guardedness belongs to the da'wa of every Imam after him according to the circumstances of his age.

Reports concerning counting verses in prayer are interpreted as remembering, inwardly and silently, the awliya who are God’s signs. Such counting is to remain within the heart rather than being turned into an ostentatious proclamation. The author urges believers to establish both the revealed practice and its interpretation.

Page 291

The session continues with matters of distraction and bodily conduct in prayer. Acts that indicate negligence, vanity, or deliberate turning away from the qibla are discouraged or forbidden. Their inward counterparts are

negligence toward the Imam, vanity about one's own knowledge, and turning from the divinely established hierarchy toward unauthorized leadership.

The lesson is consistent: attention of the body is a sign of attention of the heart, and fidelity to outward limits trains the believer to remain faithful to the inward covenant.

Page 292

The text distinguishes acts done intentionally from those caused by weakness, illness, compulsion, or forgetfulness. Outward rulings differ accordingly. Inwardly, a person is judged according to whether he knowingly rejected a limit of the da'wa or merely fell short through incapacity while remaining sincere and submissive.

The believer is therefore commanded to avoid both carelessness and harsh judgment of what is genuinely excused.

Page 293

Further reports concern modest bodily actions and the preservation of composure in prayer. The worshipper should not make the prayer resemble ordinary activity. Inwardly, one admitted to an assembly of wisdom should not behave as if the entrusted teaching were common conversation; reverence for the source of knowledge and for its limits must shape his conduct.

Page 294

The session closes by commanding believers to preserve the obligations and sunnas of both the outward and inward religion and to guard everything entrusted to them. May God make them among those who faithfully keep what He has required. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad and the guided Imams from his progeny.

The Eighth Session of Part Five

Page 295

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, the High without separation and the Near without physical contact. May God bless Muhammad and the guided Imams from his pure progeny.

Al-Sadiq was asked about carrying a sword in prayer. He said that a sword worn by the worshipper is like a cloak. The clothes worn in prayer generally signify the outward aspect of the da'wa, while prayer signifies its inward aspect. The outward summons to Islam may be supported by the sword and jihad; the concealed inward da'wa is not established by coercion. Thus a sword carried in prayer but not used is like a cloak: present as part of the outward order, but not the instrument of the inward summons.

For this reason the Imam carries a sword in the Friday and festival prayers, and warriors may pray wearing their swords. The "sword" of the concealed true da'wa, however, is the tongue of compelling proof, used by those authorized to argue against opponents. People are not forced into the inward da'wa as they may be compelled to submit outwardly to political rule.

'Ali said that a woman may pray in a long garment and head covering if they cover her, though an additional wrap is better. Abu Ja'far said that one may pray in leather socks and sandals if one wishes. These outward garments also have inward similitudes: clothing signifies the manifest order that covers and protects the inward reality.

Page 296

The two feet covered by footwear signify inward matters because the feet themselves are concealed, while the shoes signify outward forms. The text continues by comparing various garments to degrees of outward practice,

emphasizing that what covers and adorns the body in visible worship represents the visible law that protects the hidden teaching.

The author insists that the inward interpretation does not remove the requirement of modest clothing in the outward prayer. Rather, the outward and inward are paired: correct clothing outwardly and correct adherence to the shari'a inwardly reinforce one another.

Page 297

Reports concerning silk, wool, leather, and garments from different sources are discussed according to their permissibility in prayer. In the interpretation, lawful garments correspond to sound outward doctrines and practices through which the inward teaching may be approached; unlawful or impure garments correspond to false outward claims that cannot properly bear the inward prayer.

The same principle applies to adornment. God commands believers to take their adornment at every mosque. Outwardly this includes cleanliness and decent dress. Inwardly it signifies entering the assemblies of the true da'wa adorned with knowledge, obedience, humility, and fidelity rather than with ignorance or hypocrisy.

Page 298

The session continues with the difference between what merely covers the body and what constitutes proper adornment. Inwardly, bare minimum outward conformity differs from the excellence of a believer whose conduct displays the beauty of the religion. The text encourages the better state while preserving the distinction between obligatory and recommended acts.

Page 299

The discussion returns to the relation between clothing and prayer and closes by urging believers to establish the inner prayer while remaining clothed in the sound outward religion. May God make them among those who fulfill what has been imposed and preserve it with proper care. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad and the Imams of his household.

The Ninth Session of Part Five

Page 300

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, whose loftiness is beyond the reach of eyes and whose nearness encompasses the secret speech of hearts. May God bless Muhammad, His Prophet, and the excellent Imams from his progeny.

Ja'far ibn Muhammad said there is no harm in prostrating upon what grows from the earth, provided it is not ordinarily eaten, such as mats and similar things. Reports are given that the Messenger prayed on a mat, that al-Sadiq permitted prayer on a khumra, and that 'Ali ibn al-Husayn prayed on a woven hair mat. Al-Sadiq also permitted prayer on woolen garments and said generally that what may lawfully be worn and prayed in may, in appropriate cases, be used beneath the worshipper.

A khumra is explained as a small woven mat made from palm leaves and bound with thread, large enough for the place of prostration; when larger, so that the whole body can rest upon it, it is a full mat. Inwardly, prostrating upon what grows from the earth signifies obedience to the Imam through an authorized intermediary. Obedience to the holders of command is obedience to God and His Messenger because God Himself commanded it.

Page 301

Al-Sadiq forbade the worshipper to prostrate upon the sleeve of the garment he is wearing and ordered that the hands be uncovered and placed upon the ground or upon what is laid over it. The Messenger likewise forbade

prostrating upon one's own garment merely to avoid direct contact where the established practice requires otherwise.

Inwardly, one may not make one's own outward status, personal following, or self-made covering into the foundation of obedience. The obedience represented by prostration must rest upon the divinely established order, not upon what the individual has wrapped around himself.

The discussion then moves toward Friday and the special merit attached to its night and day, the assemblies held in it, and the divine light associated with the true knowledge.

Page 302

Knowledge is described as light, following the Prophet's statement that knowledge is a light God places in the heart of whom He wills. God's awliya are likewise lights for the servants, and the Messenger of God is the most excellent of them and the greatest in light. The special qualities of Friday are therefore interpreted through the da'wa of Muhammad and the light of the guidance that proceeds from him.

The text relates reports about one who dies on the night or day of Friday being protected from the punishment of the grave or freed from the Fire. The fuller interpretation of death is reserved for the chapter on funerals; here the general point is that a believer who passes from one state to a better state within the outward or inward true da'wa is protected from punishment in this world and the next.

Page 303

The report that prayer is permitted throughout Friday because the Fire is not kindled on that day is interpreted by reference to the special rank of Muhammad's da'wa. The call made on the night of Friday signifies the da'i's summons to the concealed true da'wa and the encouragement given to respondents concerning its merit.

Understand, O believers, the interpretation that you hear. May God give you understanding and success through it. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad, His Prophet, and the Imams from his progeny.

Page 304

The session closes with the same teaching: outward acts connected with Friday bear inward witness to the da'wa of Muhammad and to the gathering of believers around its light. The believer is to preserve the outward practice while understanding its inward significance.

The Tenth Session of Part Five

Page 305

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, who is exalted without change or removal and near without motion or transition. May God bless Muhammad, master of mankind, and the Imams from his progeny, the best of those who have passed and those who remain.

'Ali said: "It is near that one of you will remain behind until he comes to the mosque only on Friday; then he will remain further behind until he comes to Friday prayer once and leaves it once; then he will continue to delay until he no longer comes to it at all, and God will seal his heart."

Its interpretation follows what has already been explained: the mosques signify the assemblies of the da'is to the true da'wa. Regular attendance is commanded and carries merit, just as regular attendance at the outward mosques does. A respondent who has access to an assembly every day but neglects it without excuse, then attends only occasionally, is wasting the favor granted to him. If he persists until he abandons the assembly entirely, the result is the sealing of his heart, so that he no longer hears or understands wisdom.

Page 306

The text warns against habitual neglect. A person does not fall away all at once; he first becomes careless in small matters, then allows larger absences, until the heart becomes accustomed to separation. The outward requirement of Friday attendance thus trains the believer to constancy in the assemblies of knowledge.

The believer is instructed to distinguish genuine excuses from laziness. Illness, fear, and unavoidable impediment have their rulings, but mere indifference is spiritually destructive.

Page 307

Reports concerning preparation for Friday, purification, cleanliness, and early attendance are interpreted according to the same principles already applied to purification and hastening to prayer. Outward washing signifies inward repentance; clean garments signify sound outward religion; perfume signifies good reputation and the sweetness of knowledge; walking early to the mosque signifies hastening to the da'wa before others and seeking wisdom with eagerness.

The one who comes first has a greater reward outwardly; inwardly the one who precedes others in sincere response and good works has a higher rank, subject always to the judgment of the Imam and the divinely ordered hierarchy.

Page 308

The Friday sermon is treated as a form of public teaching. Its outward requirements - attention, silence, order, and the authority of the khatib - signify inwardly the authority of the da'i and the duty of respondents to listen when wisdom is delivered. Casual conversation during the sermon resembles distraction or unauthorized speech during an assembly of the da'wa.

The two sermons and the prayer that follows are signs of the relation between proclamation, explanation, and obedient response. The sermon prepares and admonishes; the prayer establishes the act. Inwardly, knowledge precedes action, and the da'wa calls the believer to both understanding and obedience.

Page 309

The session closes with the command to preserve Friday and the assemblies of the true da'wa, to avoid the gradual hardening of the heart, and to thank God for the favor of access to guidance. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad and the Imams from his pure progeny.

Part Six of the Book of the Training of the Believers in the Limits of the Inner Knowledge of Religion

The First Session of Part Six

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The preceding discussion closes with the command to hasten toward the remembrance of God in what is good, for God does not command indecency. 'Ali, peace be upon him, is reported to have walked to the Friday prayer barefoot, carrying his sandals in his left hand. Inwardly, the person entering the true da'wa is not to discard the outward religion nor make it his ultimate object; rather, he carries it with him and acts upon it according to what has been commanded. The sandal has already been interpreted as a similitude of the outward aspect, as in the story of Moses, “Remove your sandals; you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa.”

Thus ends Part Five of the Book of the Training of the Believers, and Part Six begins.

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, Possessor of grace, praise, bounty, generosity, beneficence, gifts, and wisdom. May God bless Muhammad, the Prophet of mercy, 'Ali his Wasi and chosen one, and the Imams from their progeny.

'Ali ibn al-Husayn, peace be upon him, used to attend the Friday prayer with unjust rulers out of taqiyya but did not count that prayer as sufficient; afterward he prayed the noon prayer for himself. Ja'far ibn Muhammad said: “There is no Friday prayer except with a just Imam.” 'Ali said: “There is no valid judgment over the people, no execution of the legal penalties, and no Friday prayer except through an Imam.”

The inward interpretation follows what has already been said: Friday prayer is a similitude of the da'wa of Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, and likewise of the da'wa of the Imams from his progeny, because they summon to his da'wa. Therefore Muhammad’s da'wa is not rightly established except by the just Imams who are his successors and by those whom they appoint. Whoever claims their place without belonging to their order is not to be obeyed except where taqiyya requires outward compliance, just as the outward Friday prayer behind usurping rulers is attended only under compulsion and is not counted in place of the true obligation.

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'Ali said that people who come to Friday prayer fall into three classes. One comes for idle talk and ostentation; that is all he receives from it. Another arrives while the Imam is preaching and prays; God may give him or withhold according to His wisdom. A third comes before the Imam appears, prays what is written for him, then sits remembering God until the Imam comes; for him the Friday is an expiation until the next Friday and for three additional days, because God says that one who brings a good deed receives ten times its like.

'Ali also said that he would rather wait for Friday from early on than arrive after the Imam has stood and then step over people’s necks. Outwardly this means hastening to Friday when the call is made, as God says, “O you who believe, when the call is made for prayer on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of God.” One who arrives before the call or waits in the mosque receives the reward of waiting for prayer. The Messenger of God said that the one who sits in the mosque waiting for prayer is in prayer so long as he does not invalidate his state.

Inwardly, the believer should await the rise of the true da'wa even before the da'i appears. Al-Sadiq told some of his followers: “Await our command and the arising of the one who calls to us; awaiting relief is worship.” Once the da'i stands to call to the truth, it becomes obligatory to hasten and not remain behind. God says, “The foremost, the foremost - those are the ones brought near.” One who deliberately waits until the ranks have formed and then seeks to step over those who preceded him is like one who violates the ordered rows already interpreted earlier.

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The person who attends Friday for idle talk, rivalry, or ostentation is like one who enters the true da'wa merely to boast of what he learns, compete with the learned, or dominate the ignorant. The Prophet said: “Actions are only by intentions, and every man has only what he intended.” He also warned that one who seeks knowledge in order to rival scholars or dispute with fools has only that corrupt intention as his share. Entry into the da'wa must therefore seek God and the Hereafter, not a worldly advantage.

The statement that Friday expiates what lies between it and the next Friday is interpreted as the wiping away of the believer’s faults during the period of the da'wa whose covenant he has accepted, so long as he remains established in it.

Al-Sadiq said that when the Imam stands to preach, silence becomes obligatory upon the people. Inwardly, when the da'i stands to take the covenant from respondents or to impart wisdom, they must be silent and listen to what he takes from them or recites to them. The Qur'an itself commands: “When the Qur'an is recited, listen to it and be silent, that you may receive mercy.” The Messenger of God likewise forbade speech once the Imam has begun the sermon.

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'Ali said there is no ordinary speech while the Imam is preaching. Ja'far ibn Muhammad said that people should not speak until the Imam finishes the sermon; afterward, before the prayer begins, they may speak if they wish. During the sermon the people face the preacher and listen attentively.

Ja'far explained that the sermon was made in place of two rak'as taken from the four rak'as of noon prayer. Therefore the sermon is like prayer and what is forbidden in prayer is forbidden during it. The outward ruling corresponds inwardly to the gravity of the da'i’s teaching: the assembly of instruction is not a place for distraction or competing speech.

He also described the form of the Friday sermon. The Imam ascends the pulpit and sits. The muezzins call. He then stands, preaches and admonishes, sits briefly, rises again for a second sermon in which he supplicates, and then the iqama is given and he prays two rak'as aloud. 'Ali is likewise reported to have greeted the people when he ascended the pulpit.

Inwardly, ascending the pulpit signifies the da'i’s elevated rank over those whom he teaches. Sitting upon it signifies his assumption of the station in which he makes himself known and accessible to the respondents. The call of the muezzins before him signifies the call of the authorized summoners who gather the people to him. Their turning their faces toward the preacher and listening signifies the respondents’ acceptance and attention to the one who calls them.

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The first sermon, which contains admonition, signifies the establishment of the outward shari'a by the Natiq: commanding prayer, zakat, fasting, pilgrimage, and the other laws of Islam; encouraging observance and warning against neglect. The short sitting between the two sermons signifies the interval after the Natiq’s establishment of the manifest law and before the establishment of the concealed inward da'wa through the Hujja. The second sermon, in which supplication predominates, signifies that concealed da'wa, in which the people are called to the awliya of God.

The two rak'as of Friday prayer correspond to these two da'was, the manifest and the concealed. The recitation is aloud because the knowledge and wisdom of both are made clear in their proper station. The Imam’s greeting when he ascends the pulpit signifies the special favor with which the da'i addresses those who have responded to him.

Ja'far ibn Muhammad said that the Imam on Friday should perfume himself, wear his finest clothing, and put on the turban. Outwardly these are recommended preparations for the prayer. Inwardly, fragrance signifies knowledge and wisdom, while clothing signifies the outward religion. The one who stands to conduct the true

da'wa should therefore possess the knowledge needed by those whom he teaches, while maintaining and beautifying the outward law rather than discarding it.

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The turban signifies the establishment of the outward status of the person's superior and the honor of the divinely appointed ranks above him. The da'i should manifest respect for the Natiq, the Asas, the Imam, the Hujja, and those above his own degree, even during periods of concealment and taqiyya, and should not act as though the station belonged independently to himself.

Al-Sadiq said that the established sunna is for the Imam on Friday to recite Surat al-Jumu'a in the first rak'a and Surat al-Munafiqun in the second, and to recite the qunut in the second rak'a after finishing the recitation and before bowing. Inwardly, the first rak'a is the da'wa of the Natiq to the outward shari'a; the second is the da'wa of the Hujja to the inward reality.

Surat al-Jumu'a speaks of God sending among the unlettered a messenger from among themselves who recites His signs to them, purifies them, and teaches them the Book and wisdom. The "unlettered" in this interpretation are the respondents; the messenger among them is the Natiq in his age and, after him, the Imam who stands in his place for that age. He teaches them the Book and wisdom - the outward and inward knowledge of the religion.

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The sura also compares those who were charged with the Torah but did not bear it properly to a donkey carrying books. The donkey is here a similitude of one who possesses outward knowledge gathered from books and opinions but does not establish its truth in action or inward recognition.

The words addressed to those who "became Jews" are interpreted of those who turned back from following the Imams. The command to wish for death, if they are truthful, is interpreted with reference to the Qa'im and the final judgment, for "death" brings the condition of things to an end just as the Qa'im brings false claims to judgment. Those who know what they have sent before do not desire his coming because they fear the reckoning that will occur through him.

Surat al-Munafiqun is recited in the second rak'a because the second rak'a signifies the concealed da'wa of the Hujja. Hypocrisy appears particularly in those who verbally acknowledge the Messenger but deny the authority of his Wasi and the Imamate after him. Thus the hypocrites say, "We bear witness that you are the Messenger of God," yet their inward denial exposes the falsehood of their claim.

The preacher's right hand placed upon the pulpit signifies reliance upon public admonition and manifest wisdom, while his left hand upon the sword signifies that the manifest da'wa may be defended by force against those who reject it. The concealed da'wa, however, depends upon compelling proof rather than coercion.

Ja'far ibn Muhammad said that one who catches one rak'a of Friday prayer adds another after the Imam's salam. If he misses both, he prays the four rak'as of noon. Inwardly, one who catches the da'wa of Muhammad and enters the concealed da'wa through the Hujja has joined both aspects. One who misses the concealed Friday-da'wa but remains within Islam stands only upon the manifest shari'a, represented by the noon prayer. Understand what your Lord has commanded and its interpretation. May God grant you understanding and success. Blessings and peace be upon Muhammad and the Imams from his progeny.

The Second Session of Part Six

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, who gives abundantly from His bounty and accepts the servants' gratitude in return for His grace and generosity. May God bless Muhammad, the best of His prophets and messengers, and the guiding Imams from his progeny.

The discussion now concerns the prayers of the two festivals. The festivals are three in this treatment: Friday, whose interpretation has already been explained, then the Festival of Breaking the Fast and the Festival of Sacrifice. Friday prayer has been interpreted as the da'wa of the Imams, which is the da'wa of Muhammad because the Imams call to his religion. The concealed Friday da'wa runs from 'Ali, Commander of the Believers, through the line of the Imams to the Mahdi.

Fasting signifies concealment and secrecy. Breaking the fast signifies the Mahdi, peace be upon him, because through him God manifested the previously concealed da'wa, proclaimed it openly, established it, and removed the covering and concealment whose likeness was fasting. His arising and the manifestation of his da'wa are joy for the believers, peace, and tranquility, just as those who fast rejoice at breaking the fast and at the festival.

Between the Festival of Breaking the Fast and the Festival of Sacrifice are sixty-seven days, and the three days of tashriq make seventy days. These are the days of the pilgrimage. God says, “The pilgrimage is in well-known months.” The author connects these numbers with inward ranks and periods already interpreted elsewhere. The Festival of Sacrifice signifies the Qa'im, peace be upon him. The days of eating, drinking, and remembrance after the sacrifice signify the rest and security of the believers after the establishment of the Resurrection and after their enemies have been overcome.

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'Ali said that he liked a man to free himself from worldly occupations on four nights of the year: the night of the Festival of Breaking the Fast, the night of the Festival of Sacrifice, the middle night of Sha'ban, and the first night of Rajab, devoting them to prayer and remembrance of God. Outwardly this is recommended worship. Inwardly, nights have previously been interpreted as the Hujjas of the Natiqs and, at lower ranks, the Gates and other intermediaries of the hierarchy. The night of the Festival of Breaking the Fast therefore signifies the Hujja of the Mahdi, while the night of the Festival of Sacrifice signifies the Hujja of the Qa'im. Rajab and Sha'ban, within the ordered months, likewise correspond to specific limits already discussed.

The believer should therefore devote himself to righteous acts in relation to the awliya and their appointed Gates, just as he devotes himself to worship on the outward nights.

The Messenger of God preached on the day of sacrifice and said: “This is the day of shajj and 'ajj.” Shajj is the shedding of the blood of the sacrifices; if a person’s intention is sincere, the first drop is expiation for every sin. 'Ajj is raising the voice in supplication to God. He swore that no one departs the place except forgiven, save one who persists stubbornly in a major sin and refuses to abandon it.

The outward meaning is the excellence of the day of sacrifice, the sacrificial animals, and supplication. Inwardly, the day of sacrifice signifies the age of the Qa'im. The shedding of the animals’ blood signifies the destruction of his unbelieving and hypocritical enemies, through whom God will avenge the truth until none of them remains in dominion upon the earth and the religion belongs wholly to God.

The ranks of sacrificial animals correspond to ranks among those enemies: the leaders are like camels, those below them like cattle, their followers like sheep, and the lowest among them like goats. It is fitting that the Imam himself slaughter the camel, because the Qa'im himself will strike down the greatest leaders among his enemies. The merit attached to a man slaughtering his own sacrifice points likewise to the merit of the believer who personally fights those whom he is permitted to fight in that age.

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The recommendation to perform the ritual washing for the two festivals is interpreted as purification from sins and moral corruption in the ages of the Mahdi and the Qa'im. Purity and cleanliness are good at all times, but they are especially emphasized on these two days because of the special inward significance of the two festivals.

The Messenger of God used to eat before going out to the prayer place on the Festival of Breaking the Fast, taking dates or raisins. 'Ali disliked eating on the day of sacrifice until returning from the prayer. Abu Ja'far said: whoever can eat and drink before going to the prayer place on the day of breaking the fast should do so, but on the day of sacrifice he should not eat until he returns and has sacrificed.

Inwardly, fasting signifies concealment. The breaking of the fast signifies the Mahdi, and the prayer of that festival signifies his da'wa. The Imam before the Mahdi had already alluded to him and mentioned his coming before the Imamate came to him; this is like tasting a little food before going out for the festival prayer. By contrast, the day of sacrifice signifies the Qa'im, and the command to abstain from food until after the festival prayer and sacrifice signifies that the hidden interpretation is not to be fully disclosed until the Qa'im has arisen, defeated his enemies, and established his command. Only then is the inward meaning opened without concealment.

The verse “On the day when the shin is uncovered and they are called to prostration but are unable” and other verses concerning the coming of the Lord’s command are connected with that final unveiling, when the period of work has ended and the Resurrection begins. At that point deeds are no longer initiated but are recompensed.

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The supplications recited on Friday and on the two festivals signify the call to the Imam. The different outward occasions represent the different da'was already explained.

Al-Sadiq said that when one goes out to the two festival prayers one should wear one’s finest clothes and use one’s finest perfume. He cited the verse: “O children of Adam, take your adornment at every mosque, and eat and drink, but do not be extravagant; indeed He does not love the extravagant.” The same practice applies to Friday and the two festivals.

Inwardly, Friday signifies the da'wa of Muhammad, the Festival of Breaking the Fast the da'wa of the Mahdi, and the Festival of Sacrifice the da'wa of the Qa'im. Fragrance signifies knowledge; clothing signifies the outward religion. Therefore the believer should possess knowledge and display sound outward conduct in all three da'was.

Al-Sadiq also said that the Imam should wear a cloak and turban on the festival, in winter or summer. Their interpretations have already been given: the visible garments signify the outward order and the honor of the ranks above the one who stands to lead.

The Messenger of God permitted weapons to be carried at the festival prayers when circumstances required. Inwardly, the two festival days signify the Mahdi and Qa'im, both of whom confront enemies. The Mahdi was the first among the Imams to establish the manifest struggle in this manner, while the Qa'im will bring the struggle against the enemies to its completion. The prayer and sermon being held in the open ground likewise correspond to confronting the adversary openly.

'Ali used to walk barefoot in five situations, carrying his sandals in his left hand: the Festival of Breaking the Fast, the Festival of Sacrifice, Friday, visiting the sick, and attending a funeral. He said these were places belonging to God and he loved to be barefoot in them.

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The sandal, as already explained, signifies the outward aspect. One who enters the true da'wa should not throw the outward religion away, but neither should he act from old outward habits before learning the proper form established by the true guidance. He holds to the outward order and waits to be taught how it is rightly used. This is the meaning connected with God’s command to Moses: “Remove your sandals; you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa.” It does not mean abandoning the outward law entirely, but refraining from using what one formerly assumed until its correct use is known.

The sick person signifies one who is in doubt. Visiting the sick signifies attending to him, strengthening him, and seeking to restore him from doubt. The one who attempts this must remain firmly attached to the outward religion while he deals with the doubtful person. A funeral signifies a believer’s transfer from one spiritual rank to a higher one. The one who washes, shrouds, and carries the deceased is a figure for the superior who prepares and advances the believer from one degree to another. Even in such inward work, the outward religion is not discarded.

The author concludes that God did not establish any outward command, Prophetic sunna, or act of an Imam as a meaningless custom. Every such thing has a cause and an inward indication corresponding to it. God says: “Of everything We created pairs, that perhaps you may remember.” Thus the outward bears witness to the inward and the inward to the outward.

The Third Session of Part Six

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, thanked for the abundance of His favors, gifts, and bounty. May God bless Muhammad, His Prophet, and the Imams from his household.

Ja'far ibn Muhammad said that the two festival prayers are not to be performed under covered porticoes or inside houses, because the Messenger of God went out for them beneath the open sky and placed his forehead upon the earth. 'Ali was once asked to appoint someone to pray in the mosque with weak people on the festival day, but he refused, saying that he disliked instituting a practice the Messenger of God had not instituted. Ja'far ibn Muhammad also related that the Messenger permitted young women to go out to witness the festival gathering.

The interpretation follows what has already been said: the two festivals signify the Mahdi and the Qa'im, and going out to the open prayer place with weapons signifies their open confrontation with opponents. The Mahdi is the first of the two to establish the manifest struggle, while the Qa'im, the Seal of the Imams, brings it to its completion. Therefore the festival prayer is held in the open rather than hidden in houses or enclosed mosques. Young women signify those who have not yet fully entered the true da'wa; they may be allowed to witness the gathering and the condition of the believers in a way that encourages them toward faith, without necessarily being initiated into all that is entrusted to the full respondents.

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The people are to face the Imam when he gives the festival sermon. Outwardly this is attentiveness to the preacher; inwardly the preacher is a similitude of the da'i, and those who respond to him turn their attention toward him and listen.

There is no adhan or iqama for the two festival prayers, nor a supererogatory prayer before them. The prayer comes before the sermon, unlike Friday, where the sermons precede the prayer. Inwardly, going out to the festival is like going out to confront the enemy. A separate summons is not required at that moment because the command to go forth has already been established within the da'wa. The people go out in obedience to the Imam and hear his command in the place of confrontation.

The festival prayer has two rak'as and the recitation is aloud. Beginning with the prayer before the sermon signifies the believers’ immediate obedience to the Imam upon going out, while the sermon afterward signifies the Imam’s exhortation, command, prohibition, encouragement to struggle, and rebuke of those who fall short.

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The first rak'a of the festival prayer begins with the opening takbir, then al-Fatiha and a sura, followed by five additional takbirs, and then the takbir for bowing. The second rak'a contains recitation followed by four additional takbirs and then the takbir for bowing. Qunut is made between the takbirs.

The ordinary meanings of takbir, bowing, prostration, testimony, and salam have already been explained. The five additional takbirs in the first rak'a signify the five resolute messengers, while proclaiming “God is greater” declares that God is greater than them and that they remain His created servants. The four additional takbirs in the second rak'a signify the four great naqibs already discussed in the hierarchy, again with the confession that God is greater and that these persons are His servants obligated to obey Him and the awliya above them.

The qunut between the takbirs signifies supplication concerning the enemies of the awliya. The prescribed recitation of Surat al-Shams and Surat al-Ghashiya is connected with the mention in those suras of God’s

friends, their opponents, and the fate that overtook those opponents. Their recitation therefore suits the festival's inward likeness to the struggle against the enemies.

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The Messenger of God would return from the festival prayer by a different road from the one by which he had gone out. Inwardly, going out to the festival signifies going toward the enemy for struggle, whereas returning signifies going back to the believers and their homes. Because the two intentions are opposed, the two roads are made different as a visible sign.

Al-Sadiq was asked about a person who does not attend the festival prayer. He said that there is no festival prayer except with a just Imam, but one who misses it, whether man or woman, may pray four rak'as at home: two corresponding to the festival prayer and two to the sermon. Inwardly, one who does not accompany the just Imam in the struggle, when excused from doing so, must nevertheless remain firmly established in the true da'wa and in the obligations represented by the prayer.

'Ali said that people of remote settlements who do not attend the festival and travelers are not under the same obligation as residents close to the Imam. Inwardly, those distant from the Imam's presence who do not even know that he has gone out, or who possess a legitimate excuse, are not blamed for failing to join the particular struggle. General jihad is not imposed upon every person in every circumstance unless the enemy's attack makes it necessary.

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Al-Sadiq said that when five or more people are present together with a just Imam in a town, they must gather for Friday and the two festivals. The number five is connected with the five resolute messengers through whom God gathered the principal affairs of religion, and also with the hand and its five fingers through which human beings accomplish many affairs. The text refers back to the earlier explanation of the four persons first appointed beneath the Imam together with the Imam himself.

During 'Ali's caliphate, Friday and a festival once fell on the same day. He prayed the festival prayer and permitted those who lived far away to depart, then prayed the Friday prayer in the mosque with those who remained. Inwardly, the da'wa of the festival - whether that of the Mahdi or the Qa'im - does not abolish the da'wa of Muhammad. When the later Imam establishes his own divinely assigned call, he also establishes the Messenger's call; therefore the two prayers can be joined in one day without contradiction.

The takbir of the days of tashriq is also explained. It begins, according to the transmitted reports, after the dawn prayer on the Day of 'Arafa and continues through the prescribed prayers into the days after the sacrifice. Men and women say it, and after each obligatory prayer the believers proclaim God's greatness, unity, praise, and gratitude for guidance and provision.

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The days of tashriq, three days after the sacrifice, signify the period after the Qa'im has completed the destruction of his enemies and the believers have become secure and established. Just as the pilgrims rest after completing the rites and sacrifice, the believers rest after the burden of struggle has been removed. The final Resurrection then becomes the true abode of rest and settlement.

The takbir in those days signifies the believers' glorification of God, their confession of His unity, and their gratitude for what He has granted them and for the fear and hardship He has removed. They affirm that even the wali through whom God gave them victory is still a servant under God's lordship. This is the meaning of takbir in every spiritual rank.

The discussion then turns to forgetfulness in prayer. Forgetfulness in the outward prayer is a similitude of heedlessness in the true da'wa. Whoever neglects a limit, forgets it, or allows it to be lost must repair what he has missed, just as the worshipper repairs what he has forgotten in the outward prayer.

Abu Ja'far said that one who forgets the opening consecration must repeat the prayer. Inwardly, the opening takbir signifies sincere confession that divinity belongs to God alone and that God is greater than every created rank, including the Imam who calls to Him. Whoever enters the da'wa imagining that the Imam himself possesses divinity, as the extremists and heretics claim, has entered upon a corrupt belief. He must abandon that belief and enter the true da'wa again with the correct confession of God's unity and the proper understanding of the Imam as God's servant.

Al-Sadiq was asked about one who doubts whether he bowed. He said that while still standing he should bow and afterward perform the prostrations of forgetfulness. Inwardly, bowing signifies obedience to the Hujja and prostration obedience to the Imam; doubt concerning one of these obligations must be repaired by renewed obedience and acknowledgment.

The Fourth Session of Part Six

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, the First without number and the Last without end. May God bless Muhammad, master of the righteous, and the pure and excellent Imams from his progeny.

Al-Sadiq was asked about a man who is praying and does not know whether he has prayed one rak'a or two. He said that if he has already sat and recited the testimony, then the testimony stands unless he becomes certain that he has prayed only one; in that case he rises and completes the second. If he has not sat for the testimony, he builds upon what is certain and performs the two prostrations of forgetfulness.

Inwardly, if a person doubts whether, upon entering the true da'wa, he truly acknowledged the Hujja of the Lord of the Age and pronounced the proper confession, then if he has already passed beyond that limit and completed what follows, the earlier act is presumed sound unless he knows with certainty that it was omitted. If he is still within that stage, he must establish the confession with certainty. In all of this he remains bound to obedience to the Imam of his Age.

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If a worshipper doubts whether he has prayed two or three rak'as, or three or four, he follows the detailed rulings transmitted from the Imams: he builds upon certainty, completes what may be missing, and in certain cases adds two rak'as after the salam which will count either as completion of the obligatory prayer or as a supererogatory prayer if the obligation was already complete. In every such case the prostrations of forgetfulness are performed after the salam.

The inward interpretation is that the several rak'as signify the obligations of obedience to the Imam and Hujja. Bowing signifies obedience to the Hujja and prostration obedience to the Imam. A two-rak'a prayer therefore represents these two essential obediences; where there are four rak'as, the first pair again signifies what is due to the Imam and the second pair what is due to the Hujja in the ordered repetition of the limits. If a person doubts or forgets one of these obligations, he must restore it in the corresponding manner and remain under the obedience of the Imam.

If someone forgets the bowing and has already prostrated, he must repeat the prayer; if he forgets a prostration, he performs it after the salam when he remembers; if he forgets the testimony, he performs the prostrations of forgetfulness. If he forgets the concluding salam, the salam contained in the testimony may suffice in the circumstances described. Inwardly, forgetting bowing means neglecting obedience to the Hujja; because the Hujja is the door through which the Imam is reached, one who bypasses that door has corrupted his entry. Forgetting a later act after correct entry can be repaired through repentance and renewed obedience.

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Al-Sadiq said that if someone forgets recitation but performs the bowing, prostration, and takbir correctly, there is no repetition of the prayer; if he deliberately abandons recitation, however, he must repeat it. Outwardly this distinguishes inadvertent omission from deliberate abandonment. Inwardly, recitation signifies hearing and receiving the wisdom of the da'i. If a believer forgets some of what he heard but maintains the foundations of obedience, he is not thereby expelled from the true da'wa; he should resume learning later. But deliberate contempt for knowledge and intentional rejection of the instruction is a rejection of an obligation and requires a new beginning.

If a person forgets the first sitting for the testimony and remembers before bowing in the third rak'a, he sits and recites the testimony; if he remembers only after bowing, he continues and later performs the prostrations of forgetfulness. The inward meaning is that testimony, praise, blessings on the Messenger and Imams, and supplication all resemble the preservation and recollection of the wisdom received. Their omission through forgetfulness is repaired in a way corresponding to the stage at which the omission is remembered.

A report tells how the Messenger of God once completed only two rak'as, whereupon Dhu al-Yadayn asked whether the prayer had been shortened or the Prophet had forgotten. When the people confirmed that only two had been prayed, the Prophet completed the prayer, gave the salam, and then performed two prostrations of forgetfulness. Inwardly, one who inadvertently omits an obligation of the da'wa must complete what was lacking and afterward renew obedience to the Imam.

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Abu Ja'far said that if someone forgetfully adds something to the prayer, then if he had already completed the fourth rak'a correctly and sat for the proper testimony, the prayer is complete and the two prostrations of forgetfulness suffice. But if he had not completed the obligatory limits correctly and then added further acts, he must begin the prayer again.

Inwardly, if a person has fulfilled the true limits of the da'wa and afterward, through forgetfulness, adds something not required, the addition does not destroy what was already established; he corrects himself through obedience to the Imam. But if he did not establish the proper limits and then went beyond them, his whole course has been built upon error and he must begin again according to the prescribed order.

Ja'far ibn Muhammad said that one who forgets and does not know whether he has added to or diminished the prayer performs the two prostrations of forgetfulness. Inwardly, a person who is merely uncertain about a possible deficiency is not judged as having sinned until certainty appears; his duty is to remain obedient to the Imam and correct what becomes known.

The Imams also taught that once a person has passed from one act of prayer into the next, a doubt about the act already completed is disregarded unless certainty establishes the omission. Thus, if he doubts about the opening takbir after bowing, about bowing after prostrating, or about prostration after rising, he continues. Inwardly, the same principle holds: a believer who has left one spiritual limit and entered the next is not to destroy certainty by later suspicion.

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A person who forgets while praying behind an Imam has no separate burden for what the Imam bears, and one who forgets in a supererogatory prayer is not treated like one who omits an obligation. Inwardly, the follower sincerely obeying the Imam of his Age is protected in matters for which the Imam’s guidance bears responsibility, and omission in a matter not imposed as a duty is not judged as omission of a duty.

The Messenger of God said: “God has pardoned my community for error, forgetfulness, and what they are compelled to do.” A man from the Ansar complained of obsessive doubt in prayer until he no longer knew whether he had increased or decreased it. The Prophet instructed him, when such whispering came, to strike his left thigh with the right finger and seek refuge in God, saying, “In the name of God, by God; I rely upon God; I

seek refuge in God, the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing, from the accursed Satan." The Prophet did not order him to repeat everything about which he merely doubted.

Al-Sadiq was asked about one whose doubts recur continually. At first he said that a genuine doubt may require repetition, but if the same thing becomes habitual the person is to disregard it: "Do not accustom the wicked one to breaking the prayer, lest you make him eager for it." Inwardly, satanic whispering is the casting of doubts and ambiguities into the hearts of believers by the enemies of God's friends. One who is troubled by them should seek refuge in God and refer what is unclear to the wali of his affair.

The discussion then turns to interrupting prayer. The interruption of the outward prayer is a similitude of interruption of the true da'wa.

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'Ali said that if a man is praying and sees a child crawling toward a fire or toward the edge of a roof, or sees a sheep entering the house to spoil something, there is no harm in moving to prevent the harm while keeping his face toward the qibla; he then builds upon his prayer. If the danger cannot be prevented except by completely breaking the prayer, he breaks it, removes the danger, and afterward begins the prayer anew.

Inwardly, a person engaged in one of the limits of the true da'wa should not abandon that duty for trivial matters. But if he sees a believer about to fall into serious error, or a wrongdoer about to destroy property or corrupt something entrusted to the believers, he may intervene. If he can do so without leaving his present duty, he does; if not, he leaves it temporarily to avert the greater harm and then returns. The same applies to a teacher engaged in instructing a respondent who becomes aware of an urgent danger to another believer or to the community.

The Messenger of God said that if a person experiences a real state that invalidates purity during prayer, he should leave, perform ablution, and begin the prayer again. But no one should abandon the prayer merely because he imagines that something happened unless he detects a sign or is certain. 'Ali once suffered a nosebleed while leading people; he took a man by the hand, placed him in his position, left to wash the blood away, and then prayed for himself.

Inwardly, whoever introduces a real corruption into his religion must purify himself from it through knowledge and repentance. If the correction can be made without turning away from the spiritual qibla, he repairs it and continues; if he has actually turned away from the foundation, he must begin again.

The Fifth Session of Part Six

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God for bounty, favor, beneficence, generosity, and liberality. May God bless Muhammad, His Prophet, and 'Ali, his chosen successor, and the rightly guided, pure Imams from their progeny.

What follows from what has already been discussed in this book is the account of the prayer of one who has been preceded by part of the prayer. This is a person who comes upon a congregation praying behind an imam after they have already performed part of the prayer. Its counterpart in the inward interpretation is one who comes to a group of respondents who are receiving instruction from their instructor after some of the instruction has already passed. He is not to cut off the instructor's speech and force him to return to its beginning. Rather, he listens from the point at which the discourse has reached, until the instructor has completed for those already present what he had opened to them. Afterward he asks about what preceded his arrival, and the instructor opens that for him so that his benefit may be completed.

'Ali, peace be upon him, said: If one of you is preceded by the imam in part of the prayer, let what he catches with the imam be the beginning of his own prayer. Let him recite for himself between the imam's recitations if the imam gives him time; and if he cannot recite, let him continue. Thus, if a man enters the final evening prayer after the imam has completed one rak'a, what he catches with the imam is counted as the beginning of his own

prayer. When the imam gives the salam, he does not give the salam with him, but rises and completes what remains.

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Ja'far ibn Muhammad, peace be upon him, was asked about a man who entered prayer with a people after they had preceded him by one rak'a. He said that the man joins them in what is their second rak'a, but it is his first. When they sit, he sits with them without settling fully. When they rise for the third, it is his second, and he recites in it. When they raise their heads from prostration, he may sit briefly enough to recite a light testimony, then rises before they bow. When they sit in the fourth, he sits with them without settling fully. When the imam gives the salam, he rises and performs the rak'a that remains for him, then sits, bears witness, gives the salam, and departs.

'Ali, peace be upon him, said concerning one who has missed one rak'a of the sunset prayer that he sits whenever the imam sits. The imam's second rak'a is the latecomer's first; he therefore sits with him without settling. The imam's third is the latecomer's second, and there he sits and recites the first testimony. When the imam gives the salam, the latecomer rises and performs a rak'a in which he recites the Opening of the Book; that is his third. He then sits, recites the second testimony, gives the salam, and departs.

Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali, peace be upon him, similarly taught that what the latecomer catches with the imam is to be regarded as the beginning of his prayer, and what he has missed is completed afterward. Inwardly, what a person first receives on entering the true da'wa is the beginning of his own instruction even though those before him have already passed through earlier limits.

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If the latecomer joins the imam after two rak'as, he makes what he catches the beginning of his prayer. He sits with the imam at the imam's final testimony but counts it, for himself, according to his own place in the prayer. When the imam gives the salam, he rises before giving the salam himself and completes two rak'as if the prayer is one of four, or one rak'a if it is the sunset prayer. If he has caught only one rak'a with the imam, he counts it as his first and, after the imam's salam, completes all that remains.

This is the outward rule. Its inward meaning is that if a person enters a degree of the true da'wa after others have preceded him through some of its degrees or limits, he begins with what he now receives and builds upon it in proper order. When the common session has ended, if what preceded his arrival was already known to him he recalls it so that his knowledge agrees with that of his companions; if he did not know it, he asks the instructor to teach it to him, until his benefit is completed just as the latecomer completes his prayer.

Abu Ja'far and Abu 'Abd Allah, peace be upon them, said that if a man catches the imam before he bows, or while he is bowing and before the imam raises his head, he has caught that rak'a. If he does not catch him until after the imam has risen from bowing, he may enter with him, but he does not count that rak'a. 'Ali, peace be upon him, said that whoever catches the imam bowing pronounces one takbir and bows with him, and the rak'a is counted for him.

Inwardly, if a respondent reaches an instructor while he is still explaining the obligatory obedience due to the Hujja of the age, and he enters the covenant while that limit is still being taught, he has caught that session. But if he arrives only after the instructor has completed that defining limit, he must later receive its equivalent, for the essential matter has already passed him.

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Ja'far ibn Muhammad, peace be upon him, was asked about a man whom the imam had preceded by one rak'a and who, after the imam gave the salam, forgot to complete what he had missed and gave the salam and departed with the people. He said: He performs by himself the rak'a that he missed, bears witness, gives the salam, and departs. Inwardly, one who has been preceded in one of the limits of the da'wa, then forgets at the end of the session to recall or learn what he missed, must perform afterward what forgetfulness caused him to omit.

He was also asked about a latecomer when the imam becomes ritually invalid during the prayer and places the latecomer in front of the people. He said that the substitute completes the imam's prayer; when he reaches its end he signals to those behind him so that they may give the salam for themselves and leave, while he rises and completes the portion that he himself had missed, without publicly announcing it by takbir.

Its inward interpretation is that an instructor may become unable, because of some occurrence, to complete the instruction he has begun, and may appoint in his place one who entered later. That person completes for the group the discourse belonging to the instructor. When the common instruction is complete he indicates that the others may depart; then he remains to complete for himself what had passed before his entrance. Such a responsibility belongs only to one who understands the limits of the true da'wa, just as leadership of the outward prayer belongs to the people of understanding in the law.

It is also transmitted that the imam should remain seated in his place after the salam until those who were late have completed what they missed. Inwardly, the instructor should not immediately leave his session; he remains for a time so that those who missed some of the teaching can recall it or ask him about it.

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The discussion then turns to children and those who have not yet reached full maturity. Their outward condition resembles those born upon the natural disposition and holding to the outward law before they have reached the inward da'wa. Those who have begun to understand and approach maturity resemble people who reach the call of truth and prepare to enter its covenant. When they attain the true maturity of religion, the covenant of the Imam of the age becomes binding upon them.

'Ali, peace be upon him, said: When a boy understands and can recite something of the Qur'an, he is taught the prayer. He also said that a child is commanded to pray when he understands, and to fast when he is able. Inwardly, when one of the people of the outward call has developed understanding sufficient for the concealed da'wa, he is invited to it. If he responds, he is charged with its requirements, its covenant is taken from him, and he bears from its secret only what he is able to keep.

'Ali ibn al-Husayn, peace be upon him, used to instruct the children under his care to pray noon and afternoon together at one time, and sunset and the final evening prayer at one time. When asked about this he said that it was easier for them and more likely to make them hasten to prayer rather than neglect it and find it burdensome. He did not burden them with anything beyond the obligatory prayers and said that once they were able to perform the prayer they should not be made to delay the prescribed prayer.

Inwardly, the instructor should treat weak respondents gently. He may abridge and combine instruction for them, presenting in a concise way the calls represented by the paired prayers, so that the teaching does not become long, wearisome, or burdensome before their strength has developed.

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Muhammad ibn 'Ali, peace be upon him, said that children are commanded to pray when they can understand and bear it. When asked at what age, he said: when they are six years old. Inwardly, this signifies passing through six of the limits of religion; after them comes the seventh limit, the limit of maturity. Yet God may bestow upon some of His friends what normally belongs to a later degree before they have passed all the usual limits. Thus Jesus, peace be upon him, spoke to the people in the cradle, and John son of Zechariah was given judgment while still a child. These are signs of special divine favor and show that advancement can occur early when wisdom requires it.

Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, said: We command our children to pray and fast, according to their ability, when they are seven years old. It is also related from his forefathers that the Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his family, said: Command your children to pray when they reach seven; discipline them for abandoning it when they reach nine; and separate their sleeping places when they reach ten. This is the outward ruling.

Its inward meaning is that seven indicates the completion of the seven principal limits already explained, the last of which is a limit of maturity. Al-Sadiq also said that in Ramadan a child may be commanded to fast for part of

the day, but when hunger or thirst overcomes him he is told to break the fast. All such commands before maturity are for training and habituation, not because the complete obligation has yet become binding. Likewise, before spiritual maturity a respondent may be gradually trained in the disciplines of the da'wa so that, when the full covenant becomes obligatory, it will not fall upon him suddenly and become heavy.

The Sixth Session of Part Six

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, who accepts praise as gratitude for the greatness of His favors and as acknowledgment of the abundant blessings He has bestowed. May God bless Muhammad, His Prophet, and the Imams from his progeny, His friends.

What follows is the account of the prayer of the traveler. The traveler in the inward interpretation is one who leaves a place in which the true da'wa is established and goes to a place in which there is no da'wa, whether seeking religion and searching for the call of truth, or seeking worldly provision. This is the general correspondence between outward travel and its inward meaning.

In the Book of the Da'a'im it is transmitted that when a traveler undertakes a journey of the distance for which prayer is shortened, whether by land or sea, he shortens three prayers: noon, afternoon, and the final evening prayer, performing two rak'as for each. There is no shortening in the sunset prayer or the dawn prayer.

The Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his family, said: God, blessed and exalted, has presented my community with a gift that He did not present to the earlier communities, as an honor to us. They asked, “What is it, O Messenger of God?” He said: “Breaking the fast and shortening the prayer while traveling. Whoever does not accept this has rejected God’s gift.” 'Ali, peace be upon him, likewise taught that the traveler who accepts shortening and the dispensation of breaking the fast accepts what God has granted.

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Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali, peace be upon him, was asked how many rak'as there are in the traveler’s prayer. He replied that God says, “When you travel through the earth, there is no blame upon you that you shorten the prayer.” He explained that shortening while traveling is obligatory just as completion is obligatory when resident. When it was objected that the verse says “there is no blame upon you,” rather than commanding, “Shorten,” he compared it with God’s statement concerning Safa and Marwa that there is no blame on the pilgrim for going around them, even though that rite is obligatory because God mentioned it in His Book and the Messenger performed it. So too the shortening of prayer was mentioned in the Book and practiced by the Messenger.

The Messenger of God forbade completing the prayer while traveling. Ja'far ibn Muhammad, peace be upon him, said: “I am quit of one who prays four rak'as while traveling.” Abu Ja'far said that one who knowingly prays four must repeat, while one who did so in ignorance and did not know the ruling need not repeat.

Inwardly, the two rak'as retained in the shortened prayer correspond to the outward and inward aspects of the true call. In a land where the concealed da'wa is not established, one who knows it may not openly employ its inward teaching. He adheres to the outward law and keeps the inward concealed. The sunset prayer is not shortened because it signifies the call of 'Ali, peace be upon him, the first of the night prayers; the dawn prayer signifies the call of the Mahdi, peace be upon him, at the opening of the day. Their meanings are fixed and are not reduced.

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The number of rak'as in the prayers that are shortened is connected in the interpretation with the limits and ranks already described. The full set of those prayers points to the recognized limits of the da'wa; shortening indicates that, outside the land of the da'wa, only what can properly be manifested is manifested. Yet acknowledgment of the great messengers and the foundations of religion is never subject to shortening.

The sunset prayer signifies the call of 'Ali, peace be upon him, and the final evening prayer the call of the concealed Imams. The dawn prayer signifies the call of the Mahdi, peace be upon him, whose manifestation is like the emergence of day after night. In the age of a manifest call, outward and inward knowledge may be joined according to its proper rule. In a place where no inward call exists, however, one holds to the outward law and does not disclose what has no authorized recipient.

The same correspondence explains breaking the fast while traveling. Fasting has already been interpreted as concealment. The traveler in the inward sense is in a place where there is no established community to whom the secrets may properly be disclosed; he therefore does not exercise the ordinary form of concealment among initiated believers, but instead keeps to the public form of the law and refrains from disseminating the inward teaching.

Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali, peace be upon him, said that during the day a traveler has no prayer beyond the prescribed prayer, though during the night he may pray voluntarily from its beginning to its end. Inwardly, one who is outside the land of the da'wa does not publicly display matters belonging to the concealed call; yet in conditions of concealment, and with one entitled to receive them, private exchange of wisdom may take place. This resembles voluntary prayer in the night.

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It is also transmitted that when the traveler leaves his city or village intending a journey for which prayer is shortened, he shortens and breaks the fast once he has left its boundary. The city or village signifies, in the inward sense, the domain of the da'wa. When a person passes outside its limit, he follows the rules already described for one who is beyond it.

The distance at which shortening applies is expressed as two barids, a barid being twelve miles. Inwardly, the measure corresponds to the limits represented by the twelve Hujjas. One who has passed beyond the domain in which those limits are established has entered the state represented by travel.

Certain travelers do not shorten because their ordinary occupation itself consists in continual movement: the ruler who travels throughout his territory, the collector who travels in his work, the merchant in his trade, the hunter, the warrior, the Bedouin seeking pasture, and the cultivator in relation to his labor. Their inward counterparts are those whose religious function requires them to move among people and to carry out their assigned duty. The ruler resembles the Imam; the collector one who gathers what is due from believers; the merchant resembles the da'i who trades, as it were, in knowledge; the hunter is one who seeks and captures hearts for the call; and the cultivator is one who sows knowledge and wisdom where he has been authorized to do so.

Such people, when their duty carries them into a place without an established da'wa, may still make known what their office requires among those entitled to receive it. Their movement does not place them in precisely the same position as an ordinary traveler who has no such charge.

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Abu Ja'far and Abu 'Abd Allah, peace be upon them, said: If a traveler stays in a place intending to remain ten days, he fasts and completes the prayer. If he intends less than ten days, he continues to shorten and to break the fast. If he forms no definite intention but says each day, “I will leave today” or “I will leave tomorrow,” he shortens until thirty days have passed; after that he completes. Inwardly, stable residence within the domain of the true da'wa restores the full obligations appropriate to residence, while uncertainty and temporary presence retain the condition of travel.

They also taught that a traveler should not lead residents in prayer, nor should a resident lead travelers in a way that confuses their respective obligations. If a traveler does lead residents, he gives the salam after two rak'as and the residents complete what remains. Inwardly, one who is outside his proper domain of instruction should not assume an office beyond what has been entrusted to him. If circumstances require him to teach, he conveys only what his condition permits, while those established in the full order complete what belongs to them from their own authorized source.

Abu 'Abd Allah, peace be upon him, said that if a person forgets a prayer while traveling and remembers it while resident, he makes it up as the traveler's prayer; if he forgets it while resident and remembers while traveling, he makes it up as the resident's prayer. The inward meaning is that a missed obligation is made good according to the condition under which it originally became due, not according to the later condition in which it is remembered.

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It is transmitted from the Messenger of God, 'Ali, Abu Ja'far, and Abu 'Abd Allah, peace be upon them, that a traveler has a dispensation to perform voluntary prayer while riding, in whatever direction his mount turns. He indicates bowing and prostration with his head, making the indication for prostration lower than that for bowing. The prescribed prayer, however, is performed on the ground facing the qibla. This was accepted by both the particular and the general body of Muslims.

Inwardly, voluntary prayer signifies the call of the Hujja. One outside the land of the da'wa is not charged with publicly establishing that call and directing people to it in the formal manner represented by facing the qibla. He may, however, incline toward it and indicate it according to circumstance. The prescribed prayer signifies the manifest law of the Natiq, which must be maintained in every land and may not be abandoned. Thus God's statement, "Whichever way you turn, there is the face of God," has its proper application without abolishing the fixed qibla of the obligatory prayer.

The People of the House also taught that one praying in a ship that turns should face the qibla at the opening takbir and continue turning with it as far as he is able. If he cannot stand, he prays seated and prostrates as he can. The ship, in the inward interpretation, signifies the da'wa of truth in a time when falsehood is dominant. Whoever boards it is saved from drowning in falsehood, just as those who boarded Noah's ark were saved. Damage to the ship signifies an occurrence introduced into the da'wa; its turning signifies the disturbance of the da'wa under persecution. Whoever knows the Imam must turn with him wherever the circumstances of concealment require, maintaining his obedience even when the outward situation changes.

The Seventh Session of Part Six

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, who heals whom He wills and tests whom He wills, and whose judgment is wisdom. May God bless Muhammad, His Prophet, and the Imams from his pure progeny.

What follows concerns the prayer of the sick. Illness in the inward interpretation is a defect or weakness that prevents a believer from performing some obligation in the complete manner. As the bodily sick person performs prayer according to his ability, so the spiritually weak person is charged according to what he can bear while maintaining the foundation of obedience.

The traditions teach that a sick person prays standing if able; if he cannot stand he prays seated; if unable to sit he prays lying on his side, facing the qibla as far as possible; and if even that is beyond him he indicates bowing and prostration with his head or eyes. God does not burden a soul beyond its capacity. The prescribed act is therefore not abandoned merely because its perfect bodily form cannot be performed.

Inwardly, the same rule applies to one whom weakness, fear, lack of knowledge, or another hindrance prevents from fulfilling a religious duty in its complete form. He is not released from the root of obedience. He performs what he can, preserving the direction toward the wali of his age and the covenant by which he is bound. His deficiency is excused to the extent that the impediment is real rather than chosen.

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The sick person who can stand for part of the prayer stands for as long as he can, and sits when he becomes unable. If he can bow but cannot prostrate on the ground, he bows and makes a lower indication for prostration.

If he cannot move his body sufficiently, intention and remembrance remain according to his capacity. The form changes because of necessity, but the prayer itself is not discarded.

The inward meaning is that the believer who can fulfill some of the limits of the true da'wa must fulfill those he can. Weakness in one matter does not justify abandoning the others. If he can uphold the obedience represented by standing but is deficient in the knowledge represented by one of the later acts, he maintains the former and seeks assistance in the latter. The more complete act is not replaced by the lesser except where incapacity makes replacement necessary.

The Imams taught gentleness toward the sick and warned against imposing upon them what would cause harm. The law itself distinguishes between deliberate neglect and inability. Inwardly, the instructor likewise distinguishes between stubborn refusal and genuine weakness in the respondent. He does not burden one who lacks capacity with a measure of wisdom that would confuse or injure him; rather, he gives him what preserves faith and increases strength until he is able to bear more.

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If illness prevents a person from performing the ordinary purification or from using water, he follows the dispensation already explained for purification according to ability. Likewise, if pain makes long recitation impossible, he recites what he can. The obligation is measured by capacity, but a person does not claim incapacity while he is able.

In the inward sense, water signifies knowledge. One prevented from receiving a fuller measure of knowledge does not therefore become exempt from the obedience already known to him. He acts according to what has reached him and seeks increase when the hindrance disappears. The believer must be truthful about his condition, for God knows hidden weakness and hidden negligence alike.

The prayer of the sick therefore demonstrates a general principle: the outward ordinances have fixed roots and variable forms appropriate to circumstances. Their inward counterparts likewise preserve the fixed roots of faith, covenant, and obedience, while instruction and action are adjusted according to the recipient’s strength. Whoever can perform a matter in its complete form has no excuse to replace it with a lesser form; whoever truly cannot is not charged beyond his capacity.

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It is transmitted that the sick person who is unable to recite more than the Opening of the Book in the prescribed prayer may be satisfied with that, and that in bowing and prostration a single glorification may suffice where illness prevents more. The inward meaning is that if an impediment prevents a believer from carrying out all that is due to the Hujja and the Imam, he performs the minimum that preserves the obligatory bond. The Opening of the Book signifies the foundation of the call, and a single sincere glorification signifies the believer’s sincere declaration that the Imam and Hujja are free of the faults attributed to them by their enemies.

This is not a license for one who is healthy and capable to diminish what is required. It is a dispensation for one whose weakness is real. The distinction between the two is itself part of justice, for equal treatment of the able and unable would be injustice.

The traditions also speak of one who loses consciousness. If he recovers, he makes up what is required according to the ruling transmitted concerning the prayers that passed during the loss of consciousness. Inwardly, unconsciousness resembles heedlessness. One who has been heedless of the limits of his religion and then awakens from that heedlessness must repair what his neglect caused him to miss, to the extent that the obligation remains upon him.

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The text next turns to the prayer of fear. Outwardly, this is the prayer performed when facing an enemy. Since prayer inwardly signifies the call of truth, the prayer of fear signifies the form in which the call is maintained during danger from hostile powers.

Ja'far ibn Muhammad, peace be upon him, was asked whether both the traveler's prayer and the prayer of fear are shortened. He said: Yes, and the prayer of fear is more entitled to shortening than the traveler's prayer when there is no fear in the journey. The inward meaning follows what has already been said: shortening during travel signifies limiting oneself, outside the domain of the da'wa, to what may safely be manifested. In a time of fear from hostile rulers, concealment is even more necessary. The believer holds firmly to the outward law while concealing the inward teaching whose disclosure would expose the Imam, the Hujja, or the believers to harm.

The Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his family, performed the prayer of fear with his companions at Dhat al-Riqa'. He divided them into two groups: one faced the enemy and the other stood behind him. He prayed a rak'a with those behind him; then they moved to the place of the first group while the others came and completed their portion with him, so that protection against the enemy was never abandoned.

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Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, explained that in the sunset prayer the first group performs two rak'as with the imam and the second performs the corresponding portion so that each group receives recitation. Inwardly, when the Imam lives under the domination of the people of falsehood and must act in fear and precaution, he does not assemble all respondents openly around the concealed teaching. He instructs one group while another provides concealment and protection, then exchanges them. Each receives what is necessary, but neither the Imam nor his followers expose the hidden order to enemies.

Thus, in a time of severe persecution, instruction is restricted to the necessary limits and the manifest law is maintained without disclosing what would bring danger upon the Imam, his Hujja, or the believers. This is the inward counterpart of shortening the prayer of fear.

Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali, peace be upon him, was asked about prayer in extreme danger when men cannot perform bowing and prostration. He said that they indicate them while mounted or standing. If even indication is impossible, they pronounce a takbir in place of each rak'a. Inwardly, when the ordeal becomes so severe that the believers cannot openly establish any part of the concealed call, they restrict themselves to affirming God's unity and magnifying Him in words that no enemy can condemn, while keeping the inward allegiance concealed.

The text then turns to the eclipse prayer. An eclipse occurs outwardly to the sun or moon. The sun has already been interpreted as the Imam and the moon as the Hujja. Thus an eclipse inwardly signifies an occurrence that causes the Imam or Hujja to be hidden from the believers.

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'Ali, peace be upon him, related that the moon was eclipsed while Gabriel was with the Prophet. The Prophet asked what it was, and Gabriel said that the moon is more obedient to God than the people and has never disobeyed its Lord since it was created; the eclipse is a sign and admonition. When the Prophet asked what action is best at such a time, Gabriel said: prayer and recitation of the Qur'an.

Inwardly, when an ordeal causes the Imam or Hujja to be hidden from believers, the best action is to hold fast to the limits of the true da'wa, establish what is required of them, and remember the instruction they have received. Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, said that when the sun or moon was eclipsed, the Messenger would say to the people, "Hasten to your mosques." Since mosques signify the da'is, the inward command is that, when the Imam and Hujja are concealed by an ordeal, believers should resort to their authorized da'is and seek protection through them.

The eclipse prayer for the sun, moon, and other signs is one prayer consisting of ten bowings and four prostrations. The worshipper begins with takbir, recites the Opening and a long sura, then bows for a length comparable to the recitation. He rises, recites again, and bows again, repeating this until five bowings have been performed before the two prostrations. He then rises for the second half and does likewise.

The multiplication and lengthening of the bowings signify repeated and sustained obedience to the Hujjas during the concealment of the Imam or his Hujja, and the long standing and glorification signify steadfastness in the limits of religion and prolonged purification from wrongdoing until God removes the ordeal.

The Eighth Session of Part Six

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, who knows the hidden things of the unseen and the most concealed secrets, for with Him what is secret and what is proclaimed are alike. May God bless Muhammad, the seal of the prophets, and the pure Imams from his progeny.

What follows continues the interpretation of the eclipse prayer. It is transmitted that one who recites in the eclipse prayer from the long suras and recites with deliberation has done well; if he recites from the middle-length or shorter suras, that suffices. 'Ali, peace be upon him, is reported to have recited suras such as al-Rum, Ya Sin, al-Kahf, and Ha Mim. There is no single fixed sura required.

Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, permitted dividing a sura among the successive standings: the worshipper may recite part of a sura, bow, then rise and continue from the place where he stopped. If he continues the same sura, he need not repeat the Opening of the Book at every standing; reciting a complete sura in each standing is better where possible.

Inwardly, recitation signifies opening the knowledge and wisdom of the true da'wa. The teaching should, where possible, be delivered in complete and well-ordered limits. Yet if circumstances require it to be divided, a sufficient portion may be given at each stage so long as the meaning is completed and no essential limit is lost.

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'Ali, peace be upon him, once performed the eclipse prayer and finished the prescribed prayer before the eclipse had ended. He then remained in his place of prayer, supplicating and remembering God, and the people remained with him doing the same until the eclipse cleared. Inwardly, believers should continue turning toward the limits of the true da'wa with supplication, sincerity, and remembrance for as long as the ordeal remains. When God removes it, they praise and thank Him as He deserves.

Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, was asked about a person in the eclipse prayer when the time of an obligatory prayer enters. He said that the eclipse prayer may be continued so long as there remains sufficient time for the obligatory prayer; if he fears that the prescribed time will pass, he interrupts the eclipse prayer and performs the obligatory prayer. Likewise, if an eclipse begins at the time of a prescribed prayer, he begins with the prescribed prayer.

The inward meaning is that, during an ordeal, supplication and special turning to God remain subordinate to obligations whose appointed time must not be lost. If another obligatory limit of the da'wa becomes due, it takes precedence where delay would cause its loss. The extraordinary condition does not abolish ordinary obligation.

He was also asked about an eclipse after the afternoon prayer or at another time in which ordinary voluntary prayer is disliked. He said: Perform the eclipse prayer whenever the eclipse occurs. Inwardly, supplication and adherence to the wali during an ordeal are not restricted to an ordinary time; the need itself establishes the occasion.

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Al-Sadiq was asked about an eclipse that befell people while traveling when they did not perform the eclipse prayer. He said that they should have performed it. Inwardly, an ordeal that reaches believers outside the domain of the da'wa still requires from them the same sincerity, supplication, and adherence to the limits of religion as it does from those who are resident within it.

He also said that the eclipse prayer for the sun and for the moon is fundamentally one, except that the prayer for an eclipse of the sun is longer. Inwardly, the duties of supplication, humility, and adherence are the same

whether the Imam or the Hujja is concealed, but the concealment of the Imam is graver and calls for greater effort according to the higher rank of the Imam.

The same form of prayer is performed for earthquakes, severe winds, darkness, and other extraordinary signs. Inwardly, whatever alarming event befalls the believers and causes fear for themselves or their religious order requires them to turn to God with supplication, humility, and steadfast attachment to the limits of the true da'wa, just as they do when the Imam or Hujja is hidden by an ordeal.

If a person sleeps through an eclipse and never knows of it until it is over, there is no make-up prayer according to the ruling transmitted here. Inwardly, one who was genuinely unaware of the ordeal and had no opportunity to perform the special supplication cannot afterward recreate the occasion once God has removed it. The appropriate response after deliverance is praise and gratitude.

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The eclipse prayer may be performed in an open place, especially when the length of the eclipse makes a prolonged prayer desirable, though the sunna for a congregation is to perform it in the mosque. Inwardly, the turning to God during an ordeal should take place in a setting where the believer can remain devoted to it until relief comes. The preferred collective setting is with the da'is, whose likeness has already been given as the mosques. Whoever cannot reach them performs the duty wherever he is able.

The text then turns to the prayer for rain. Outwardly, seeking rain is asking God, mighty and majestic, to send rain when drought afflicts the people and rain is withheld at the season in which it is needed. Inwardly, the rain descending from heaven corresponds to knowledge and wisdom descending from the Imam through his Hujja and those whom he establishes for his call. By that knowledge the believers live in their religion, just as bodies live by the plants and provisions produced by rain.

When that knowledge is withheld, believers should turn sincerely to God with supplication, humility, and repentance, asking that what gives life to their souls be restored. This is the general inward meaning of seeking rain.

God says concerning Moses: “When Moses sought water for his people, We said: Strike the rock with your staff, and twelve springs gushed forth from it; each people knew its drinking place.” Inwardly, Moses asked God to establish for his people a source from which the knowledge and wisdom of the true call would reach them. The staff signifies his Hujja, and the twelve springs signify the twelve principal limits through whom knowledge was distributed to the groups entitled to receive it.

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The Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his family, went out to the place of prayer and sought rain. Outwardly he asked for physical rain; inwardly, for his community he established the means by which the rain of knowledge would descend, just as Moses had done for his people.

Ja'far ibn Muhammad, peace be upon him, said that the prayer for rain is performed in an open place. The Imam goes out in tranquility, dignity, humility, and supplication, with the people. Its prayer is like the prayer of the two festivals: two rak'as with the takbirs already described. The preacher then ascends the pulpit. After a short sitting he rises and turns his cloak, putting what was on the right upon the left and what was on the left upon the right, as the Messenger and 'Ali did. He remembers God loudly, praises Him, glorifies Him, declares His unity and greatness, increases supplication, faces right and left, admonishes the people, urges them to seek forgiveness, and seeks rain from God for His servants. Going out on Monday is recommended, and the people go out as they do for the festival prayers.

The inward interpretation of the prayer and sermon follows what was already explained for the festivals. Turning the cloak signifies the correspondence between the outward aspect of the Imam and that of the Hujja and the concealment of inward knowledge beneath the outward form. The reversal also expresses hope that God will change hardship into relief and barrenness into abundance.

The text then introduces the interpretation of the witr prayer, the two rak'as before dawn, and the qunut.

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It has already been explained that the three rak'as of witr signify the calls of the Prophet, 'Ali, and the Mahdi, peace be upon them. The first rak'a signifies Muhammad, the second 'Ali and the Imams after him, whose call was concealed during the period of precaution, and the third the Mahdi, whose concealed call became manifest. The qunut after bowing in that final rak'a signifies the public establishment of his call after his Hujja had been established and his manifestation had come.

The two rak'as before dawn signify the call to the Mahdi before his appearance. The dawn prayer itself signifies his call after his manifestation. Qunut before the bowing in the dawn prayer signifies that call being announced in advance before the Hujja of the manifest age was publicly established.

The Messenger of God commanded witr. 'Ali, peace be upon him, was strict concerning it and did not permit its neglect. He said that if a person reaches morning without having performed witr, he should perform it after morning comes. The inward meaning is that acknowledgment of these three calls—the Prophet, his Wasi, and the Mahdi—is necessary, and one who has failed to recognize one must repair that deficiency when knowledge reaches him.

Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali allowed witr upon a mount, while 'Ali commanded the two rak'as of dawn both in travel and residence. Their inward meanings concern the constancy of these calls in every condition, inside and outside the land of the da'wa, with the outward form adapted according to circumstance.

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'Ali, peace be upon him, interpreted God's words concerning "the retreat of the stars" as referring to the two rak'as before dawn, and God's words, "Indeed, the recitation at dawn is witnessed," as referring to them also. Inwardly, the stars signify the da'is. Their retreat at the end of the night signifies the final period of the concealed call, when the da'is turn from the hidden Imam toward the expected Mahdi whose appearance draws near. The recitation of dawn signifies the knowledge associated with that approaching manifestation.

It is transmitted that when the Messenger of God missed the dawn prayer he first performed the two rak'as before dawn and then the dawn prayer, whereas 'Ali said that one who misses the two rak'as of dawn does not have to make them up. The first report shows the Prophet's particular devotion; inwardly, when the preparatory call to the Mahdi has already passed and one reaches his manifest call, the earlier preparation does not necessarily require a separate repetition, because its purpose has been fulfilled in the manifestation itself.

Al-Sadiq interpreted God's words, "And in part of the night glorify Him, and at the retreat of the stars," as witr at the end of the night. The last rak'a of witr signifies the Mahdi, and the two rak'as before dawn the establishment of his call before his appearance. In the lifetime of the Imam before him, the Mahdi was designated and his coming announced. Thus the da'is turned toward him as the expected one, and the previous hidden phase drew to its end.

Understand this, assembly of the friends of God, and praise God for the knowledge with which He has favored you. May God grant you success in what pleases Him. May God bless Muhammad, His Prophet, and the Imams from his progeny.

The Ninth Session of Part Six

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, who fashioned creation by His power and apportioned all that He created according to His will. May God bless Muhammad, His Prophet, and the Imams from his progeny.

What follows continues the discussion of witr and the two rak'as of dawn. Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, related that one of his followers complained that sleep prevented him from rising for the night prayer. Whenever he tried to make it up by day, sleep again overcame him, sometimes for a month or two continuously. Abu 'Abd

Allah said: “By God, it is a delight of the eye for him,” but he did not grant him license to abandon witr entirely. He told him to perform witr before dawn.

The preferred time for witr is the end of the night, though it may be performed earlier after the final evening prayer by one who fears that sleep will overcome him. Inwardly, witr signifies, as already explained, the calls of the Prophet, the Wasi, and the Mahdi. Night signifies concealment. The long night between 'Ali and the Mahdi corresponds to the era in which the Imams were concealed from their enemies under precaution, while the da'wa nevertheless preserved the remembrance of the Prophet, the Wasi, and the promised Mahdi. The end of the night signifies the nearness of his manifestation.

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Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, interpreted God’s words, “By the even and the odd,” saying that the even is the two rak'as and the odd the single rak'a in which qunut is made after bowing. One may perform the two rak'as, give the salam, then perform the single rak'a of witr, give the salam, and afterward perform two rak'as seated which are counted as one. There is no further prayer after them until dawn, when the two rak'as before the dawn prayer are performed.

Inwardly, the pair corresponds to the first two calls, and the odd rak'a to the third. God’s order is made complete through both the outward and inward aspects represented in these prayers. The Prophet is reported to have recited in the first rak'a of witr “Glorify the name of your Lord Most High,” in the second “Say: O unbelievers,” and in the third “Say: He is God, One.” These choices unite glorification, dissociation from unbelief, and declaration of divine unity, all of which belong to the inward purification of the believer and to recognition of the divine order.

Qunut is not tied to one fixed supplication. One may supplicate with what God makes easy. Inwardly, opening the respondent to the wisdom of the true da'wa likewise has no single fixed length of speech; the instructor speaks according to the understanding and need of the listener, giving what is appropriate without exceeding the capacity of the recipient.

The text now turns to the sunna and voluntary prayers.

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Prayer is of three kinds. The first is the prescribed prayer, the seventeen rak'as performed in every day and night. In its general inward sense it corresponds to the manifest, open call of the Imam and to the law of the Natiq. The second is the sunna prayer, established by the Messenger of God and performed before and after the prescribed prayers. Its total is thirty-four rak'as in the day and night, paired with the prescribed prayers. Inwardly, it corresponds to the concealed inward call of the Hujja.

That the sunna prayers are approximately double the prescribed rak'as signifies that the concealed teaching includes both preservation of the outward law and exposition of its inward meaning, whereas the manifest call presents the outward obligation in its public form. The third kind is the voluntary prayer, which corresponds generally to inviting to truth, mutual exhortation to goodness, commanding what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and encouraging virtuous action among believers. These works are not imposed upon every individual in one fixed number or form as the prescribed prayers are, but they carry reward for whoever performs them properly.

Thus the prescribed, the sunna, and the voluntary prayers correspond respectively to obligatory public religion, authorized inward exposition, and additional works of guidance and mutual counsel. This is the general account of the three kinds of prayer.

Al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, said that the sunna prayer was made as a protection for the prescribed prayer, so that whatever the servant diminishes, neglects, or forgets in the prescribed prayer may be completed for him by the sunna. Inwardly, the concealed call explains and completes what may have been misunderstood or left incomplete in the outward call.

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Al-Sadiq was asked how many rak'as constitute the sunna together with the prescribed prayer. He said: six rak'as before the noon prayer, called the prayer of the declining sun and the prayer of those who return; four after the noon prayer; four before the afternoon prayer; then the prescribed afternoon prayer, after which there is no prayer until sunset. At sunset one begins with the prescribed prayer, then performs six rak'as of sunna. Before the final evening prayer there are four rak'as and after it four. The night prayer includes the rak'as already described with witr and the two seated rak'as counted as one; and the two rak'as before dawn precede the dawn prayer. The sunna amounts to thirty-four rak'as, twice the number of the prescribed prayer.

Inwardly, the ordering of these prayers corresponds to the succession of the calls. The noon prayer signifies the call of Muhammad, peace be upon him and his family; the sunna before and after it signifies concealed instruction surrounding his manifest call. The afternoon prayer points toward the final Qaim from the progeny of Muhammad, after whose completed rising there is no further worldly da'wa because the age reaches its consummation.

The sunset prayer signifies the call of 'Ali, the first of the Prophet's successors and the foundation of the concealed call in the law. Hence no sunna precedes sunset but a sunna follows it, just as the concealed order followed 'Ali. The final evening prayer signifies the call of the concealed Imams after 'Ali; therefore sunna lies both before and after it. The dawn prayer signifies the Mahdi. Before it lies the concealed call that prepared for him, while after his manifestation the dawn itself has arrived.

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The Messenger of God called the prayer at the declining of the sun "the prayer of those who return." Inwardly, those who return are those who return to God and to the truth after having been in another dispensation. The concealed call preceding the call of Muhammad existed at the end of the dispensation of Jesus; its people returned from the former order to the renewed call of Muhammad when God sent him.

'Ali, peace be upon him, interpreted the words "and after the prostrations" as the two sunna rak'as after the sunset prayer. The sunset prayer signifies 'Ali, and the sunna after it signifies the concealed call through al-Hasan and those after him. The "retreat after prostration" thus points to the transition from manifest obedience to the concealed order that followed when political authority passed outwardly to others.

The merits and encouragements concerning the night prayer similarly belong, in the inward sense, to the call of the concealed Imams in the period when the Imams were hidden under the domination of unjust rulers.

The Messenger and the Imams strongly forbade performing the sunna or voluntary prayer as a congregation in Ramadan or at other times, except where a specific prayer has been legislated in congregation. The inward reason is that the sunna prayer signifies the call of the Hujja, which is concealed, and voluntary prayer signifies individual exhortation to good. Congregational prayer, however, signifies gathering openly around the Imam of the age. No one below the rightful Imam may set himself up as an Imam in the full sense or imitate the rank that belongs to him.

The Tenth Session of Part Six

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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise belongs to God, who spread the earth as a resting place and raised the seven strong heavens by power and wisdom without visible support. May God bless Muhammad, His Prophet, and the Imams from his progeny, the leaders of His servants.

What follows from the Book of the Da'a'im concerns the prostrations of the Qur'an. The Qur'an, as previously explained in the inward interpretation, signifies the master of the age, because he stands by it, explains its judgments, distinguishes its lawful and unlawful, interprets its meanings, and is its living companion. The Messenger of God said that he left among the community two things which, if they held fast to them, would

prevent them from going astray: the Book of God and his progeny, the People of his House; the two would not separate until they came to him at the Pool.

This is like the rope extended from heaven to earth, one end with God and one end in the hands of the people, which God commands them all to hold fast to. It is also like a chain whose links enter one another: the friends of God are joined in succession, each receiving from the one above him, until the chain reaches the divine command. Its end in the hands of the people is the master of their age.

Prostration signifies obedience. The Book of the Da'a'im states that there are fifteen places at which the reciter of the Qur'an and one who listens to him prostrate. They correspond to the obedience due to the Imam, the Hujja, the Gate, and the twelve Naqibs already described.

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The first prostration is at the end of Surat al-A'raf, where God commands remembrance with humility and fear and describes those near Him as not being too proud to worship Him, as glorifying Him, and as prostrating to Him. Its inward meaning is obedience to God; outward prostration at that verse represents the obedience with which His servants submit to Him.

The second is in Surat al-Ra'd, in the passage that speaks of lightning, thunder glorifying God, the angels fearing Him, the futility of those called upon apart from Him, and then says that whoever is in the heavens and the earth prostrates to God willingly or unwillingly, together with their shadows morning and evening. These verses declare God’s power outwardly and inwardly, warn those who resist obedience to Him and to His friends, and show that those called on apart from the true order cannot benefit their followers. The prostration therefore signifies obedience to the friends of God whom He has commanded the servants to obey.

The third is in Surat al-Nahl: “To God prostrates whatever is in the heavens and whatever creature is on the earth, and the angels; they are not arrogant. They fear their Lord above them and do what they are commanded.” It signifies the obedience of the spiritual and bodily creatures, willingly or unwillingly, to the divine order and to those through whom that order reaches them.

The fourth is in the sura of the Night Journey, in the verses describing the Qur'an and those who had been given knowledge before it, who fall upon their chins in prostration when it is recited to them.

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The fourth prostration’s inward meaning is that the Prophet was sent as a bearer of good tidings concerning his Wasi, who would stand after him, and concerning the Imams from his progeny, and as a warner to those who opposed them. The Qur'an was sent in stages so that it might be recited to people over time. Since the Qur'an signifies the master of the age, its distribution corresponds to the succession of the Imams from generation to generation. Those who had been given knowledge beforehand recognize the divine promise when the rightful successor is mentioned; they humble themselves in obedience and affirm that the promise of their Lord is fulfilled.

The fifth prostration is in Surat Maryam, after the mention of the prophets from the progeny of Adam, those carried with Noah, the progeny of Abraham and Israel, and those whom God guided and chose: “When the signs of the Merciful were recited to them, they fell down prostrating and weeping.” As already explained, God’s signs inwardly include His prophets, successors, Imams, and those who follow them. Their prostration signifies their acknowledgment of the authority of God’s friends and their obedience to them.

The sixth is in Surat al-Hajj: “Do you not see that to God prostrates whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth, and the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the beasts, and many of mankind; and upon many the punishment has become due.” Inwardly, the sun signifies the Imam, the moon the Hujja, the stars and mountains the da'is and higher limits, and the trees and beasts the various classes of followers. All of them are ordered beneath God according to their ranks.

The seventh, also in Surat al-Hajj, is: “O you who believe, bow and prostrate and worship your Lord and do good, that you may prosper.” It is a comprehensive command to the believers to obey God in what He has commanded and to worship Him through the ordered acts that lead to success.

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The eighth prostration is in Surat al-Furqan: “When it is said to them, ‘Prostrate to the Merciful,’ they say, ‘And what is the Merciful? Shall we prostrate to what you command us?’ and it increases them in aversion.” Its inward meaning concerns those who, when commanded to obey God and His friends, become arrogant and turn away.

The ninth is in Surat al-Naml, in the story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, where the text condemns their prostrating to the sun instead of God and says that they should prostrate to God, who brings forth what is hidden in the heavens and the earth and knows what people conceal and reveal. The throne of the Queen signifies, in the interpretation, an organized call under its own authority. Their prostration to the sun apart from God signifies obedience to a temporal ruler in place of the divine authority. God alone knows the hidden knowledge deposited with His friends and disclosed through them to the believers.

The tenth is in Surat al-Sajda: “Only those believe in Our signs who, when reminded by them, fall down prostrating and glorify the praise of their Lord, and they are not arrogant.” Since the signs of God inwardly signify His friends, true faith in those signs is demonstrated by obedience to them and by the abandonment of pride.

The eleventh is in Surat Sad, where David realizes that he has been tried, asks forgiveness of his Lord, falls down bowing, and turns in repentance. The detailed interpretation of David’s story belongs to its proper place elsewhere; here the prostration signifies the return to obedience after recognizing the divine test.

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The twelfth prostration is in Ha Mim al-Sajda: “Among His signs are the night and the day, the sun and the moon. Do not prostrate to the sun or to the moon, but prostrate to God who created them, if it is Him whom you worship.” The sun signifies the Imam and the moon the Hujja, while prostration signifies obedience. God has indeed commanded obedience to the Imam and Hujja, but this verse teaches that they are not obeyed independently of God. They are obeyed because God commanded their obedience and created and appointed them. They are not to be raised beyond the rank God gave them or made into gods besides Him.

The thirteenth is in Surat al-Najm: “So prostrate to God and worship.” Its meaning is straightforward: obey God in all He commands and worship Him with the worship that is His due.

The fourteenth is in “When the heaven is split,” where God says: “When the Qur'an is recited to them, they do not prostrate.” Since recitation of the Qur'an corresponds to opening the true da'wa to respondents, the verse describes those who, when the truth is opened to them, do not submit in obedience.

The fifteenth is in “Recite in the name of your Lord”: “No! Do not obey him; prostrate and draw near.” That is: do not obey the enemy of God, but obey His friend and draw near to God through righteous action. The reciter and listener therefore perform outward prostration at these verses, while the instructor and respondent in the true da'wa fulfill their inward meaning through obedience to those whom God has commanded them to obey.

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Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali, peace be upon him, said that four of the Qur'anic prostrations are binding prostrations: those in al-Sajda, Ha Mim al-Sajda, al-Najm, and “Recite in the name of your Lord.” These contain direct commands or descriptions that establish the obligation of prostration. As for the other places, a person has a choice in the sense explained by the jurists, though 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, peace be upon him, loved to prostrate at all of them.

Inwardly, this resembles the division already made in prayer between obligatory, sunna, and voluntary acts. Since prostration is part of prayer and signifies obedience, some instances correspond to obligatory acts of

obedience and others to recommended and meritorious acts. Good works should not therefore be treated lightly merely because they are not all at the same level of obligation.

Ja'far ibn Muhammad, peace be upon him, said: Whoever recites a verse of prostration, or hears it from a reciter whose recitation he is listening to, should prostrate. If it is heard during a prescribed prayer from someone other than the imam, he does not interrupt the prayer improperly; if the imam himself recites it, he prostrates and those praying behind him prostrate with him. An imam should not deliberately choose a sura containing a required prostration in a prescribed prayer in a way that creates confusion.

A prostration of recitation may be made whenever its verse is recited, even at times when ordinary voluntary prayer is not performed, such as sunrise and sunset, and it does not require the full form of a prayer: there is no opening takbir or concluding salam prescribed as for a complete prayer, but the person prostrates, glorifies God, and supplicates as he is able.

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If a verse of prostration is recited during prayer, the worshipper descends into prostration, then rises and resumes the recitation from where he stopped. If the verse comes at the end of the sura, he prostrates, rises, recites the Opening of the Book, and then bows and completes the prayer according to its order.

Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali, peace be upon him, said: If you recite a verse of prostration while seated, prostrate facing the qibla. If you recite it while riding, prostrate in the direction in which your mount is carrying you. The Messenger of God prayed voluntary prayer upon his mount when traveling toward Medina after leaving Mecca, indicating prostration with his head. God says, “Whichever way you turn, there is the face of God.”

The inward interpretation returns to what has already been established: prostration signifies obedience to the wali of the age. Where the Qur'an contains a direct command, obedience to the corresponding divine authority is binding; where it reports the condition of the obedient, the believer must affirm and practice that obedience according to the rank of the command. The outward variations in bodily prostration correspond to variations in circumstance, but the inward direction—obedience to God through the authority He has established—remains fixed.

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This completes the discussion of the interpretation of the limits of prayer. You have heard throughout these sessions that every matter whose ruling has been established must be acted upon and believed outwardly as it was prescribed and made obligatory, and inwardly as its interpretation has been explained. Establish these things, therefore, may God have mercy upon you, and act according to what God has commanded openly and inwardly, secretly and publicly. May God assist you in maintaining it and increase you from His bounty and mercy.

May God bless Muhammad, His Prophet, and the righteous Imams of his progeny, and grant them abundant peace. God is sufficient for us and the best trustee; He is the best protector and the best helper. There is no power and no strength except through God, the Most High, the Magnificent. O God, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, grant them blessing, and grant them peace.

The six parts of the Book of the Training of the Believers were completed, by the praise of God and His assistance. The copying of this book was completed on the twenty-fourth day of the month of Jumada al-Thaniya in the year one thousand and fifty after the Prophetic Hijra—peace be upon its master—in the hand of Muhammad Hasan ibn Imdad 'Ali al-Mubarakpuri al-A'zami. It was written in the Husayni lesson at al-Jami'a al-Fatimiyya in India.

A fourth, incomplete copy was written by Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Adam ibn Ahmad on the twenty-fifth day of Rabi' al-Akhir in the year one thousand and eighty-six after the Hijra of the Prophet—God’s blessings be upon its master.